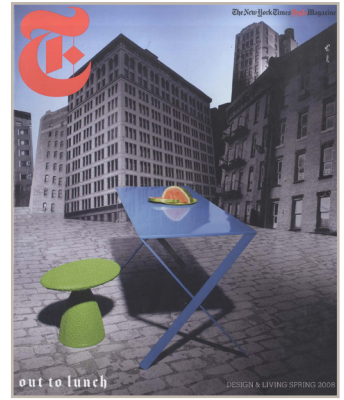


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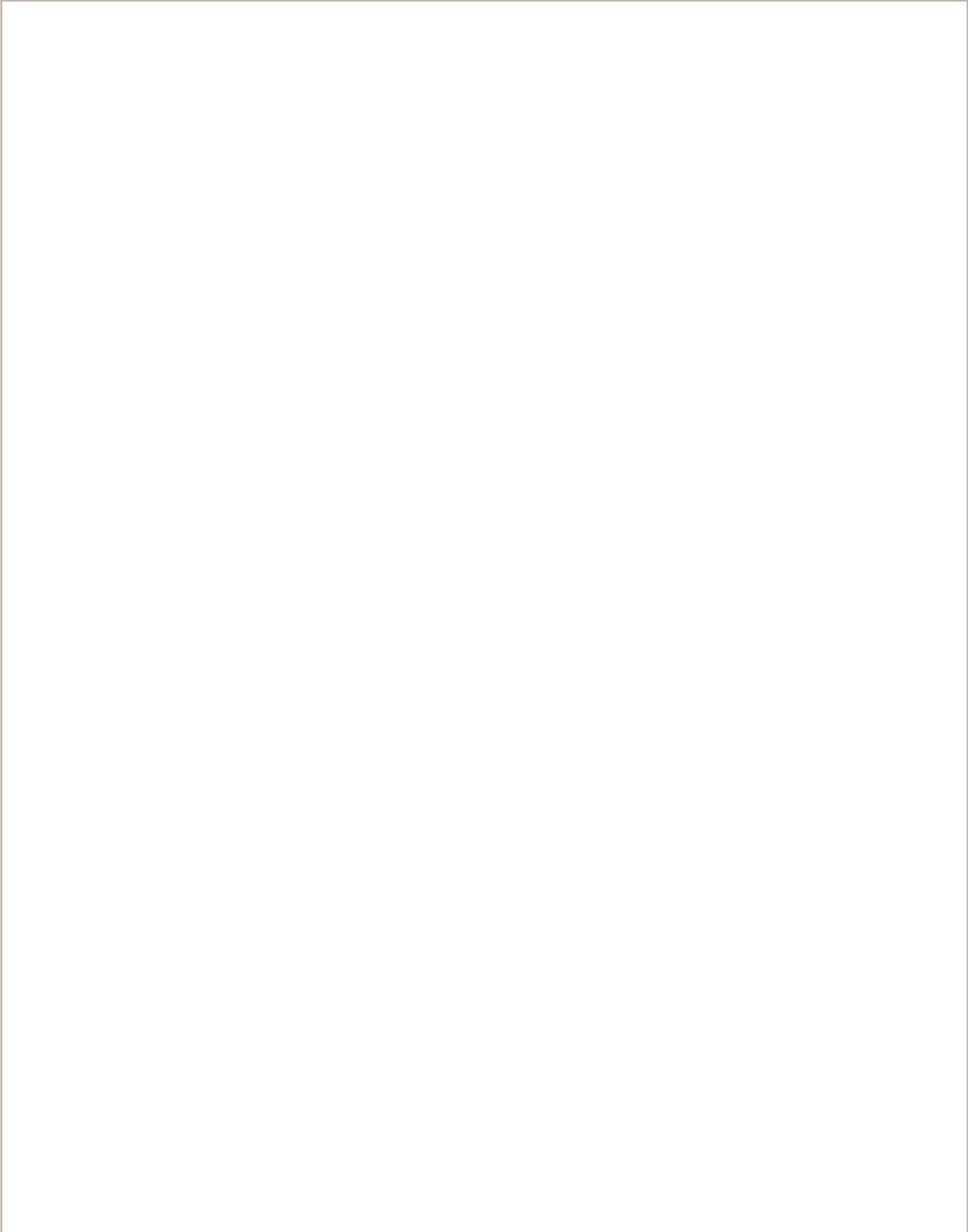
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CHOW, DARLING

CHRISTOPHER KANE, LONDON'S HOTTEST NEW DESIGNER,
ROUNDS UP THE FASHION PACK.

Text by Armand Limnander Photographs by Sofia Sanchez and Mauro Mongiello



THE GUEST LIST

Hugh Devlin
Fashion lawyer

Edward Enninful
Fashion stylist

Daphne Guinness
Fashion collector and designer

Sarah Harris
British Vogue fashion writer

Tammy Kane
Christopher's sister and co-conspirator

Marc Linton
Landscape architect

Russell Marsh
Casting director

Sarah Mower
Vogue contributing editor

Jonathan Saunders
Fashion designer

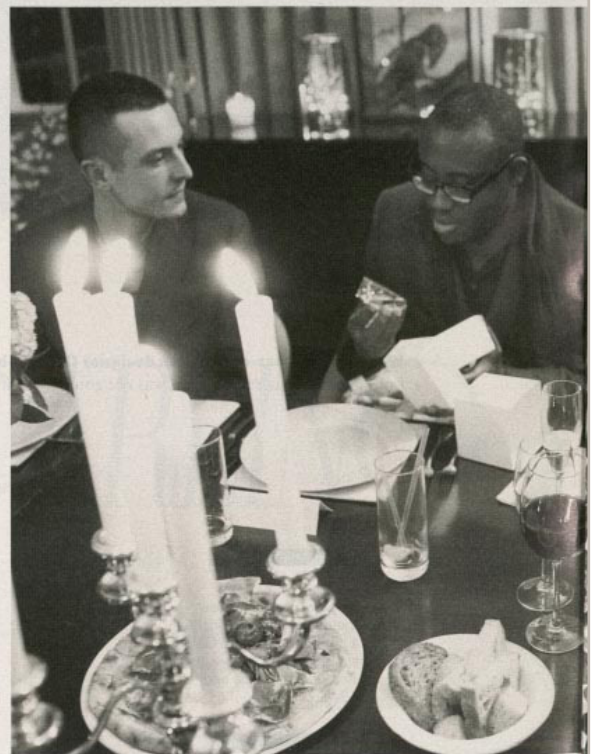
Declan Tomany
Barrister

Judith Watt
Fashion historian and academic

designer. His party-friendly dresses have been snapped up by skinny vixens like Naomi Campbell and the French Vogue editor Carine Roitfeld, as well as by considerably more portly women like Beth Ditto, the lead singer of the band Gossip. Kane makes a point of avoiding run-of-the-mill celebrities, and famously denied Victoria Beckham a free frock. "I've always been into girls who are slightly feral," he said. "I like the idea of an ugly duckling who suddenly discovers she's a sexy swan."

An important influence in Kane's aesthetic development was the spangled universe of Versace — after his body-conscious, neon-accented debut, Donatella whisked him to Milan. It was a dream come true: when he was 12, Kane bought his sister a Versace dress in bright pink latex for her graduation party, which she accessorized with long, straight, bleached-blond hair. "I grew up loving Versace because, especially in Scotland, those clothes looked so amazingly obnoxious and glam," Kane said. Although he turned down a full-time job at Versace to focus on his own line, he has collaborated with Donatella on special projects, and admires the house's highly specific *joie de vivre*. He says one of his most memorable evenings was a Versace dinner in Milan, where the table's centerpiece was a proudly priapic statuette.

For his own soiree, Kane went for somewhat more conventional decorations: on a side table, Apothia candles glimmered like fireflies, guarding a taxidermied owl, while masses of delphiniums, hydrangeas, lilacs and old Dutch roses perfumed the air. Kane ornamented the napery with crystals, and designed the gift totes on each guest's chair. The bags were filled with rings and brooches from his collaboration with Swarovski, as well as a CD of the evening's tracks. ("Maybe God Is Tryin' to Tell





Christopher and his kind Clockwise, from top left: the chef's special; from left, Tammy Kane, Devlin, Harris, Linton and Marsh make table talk; Harris and Tammy Kane, in Christopher Kane dresses; Saunders, Enniful and Tomany inspect a gift bag.



You Somethin'” by Quincy Jones and “Nothing Takes the Place of You” by Toussaint McCall were two of the more soulful ones.) The menu was a mix of Mediterranean and comfort fare — roast chicken, grilled monkfish, radicchio and taleggio risotto. “I suppose in fashion it’s important to stay trim,” he said. “I was chubby as a child, and I remember that my family’s Sunday lunches were usually an endless procession of meat.”

Although the stylist Edward Enninful remarked gleefully that gossip is a sanctioned form of shop talk when you work in fashion, the guests — giddy from several rounds of Champagne and cocktails — had more than enough to discuss. The fashion writer Sarah Mower, in a sinfully chic one-shouldered Margiela gown cinched with a jeweled belt by Kane, declared that, in her experience, growing up Catholic meant dealing with a lifetime of guilt; Kane concurred, adding that every time he has a hangover, he feels like crying. Russell Marsh, who casts Kane’s shows, as well as those of Prada and Dries Van Noten, said he was enamored with the beauty of the people he encountered on a recent trip to Sri Lanka, and was considering approaching local modeling agencies. Hugh Devlin, a fashion lawyer whose family lived a five-minute walk from Kane’s in their




native village of Newarthill, vividly described their hometown: "If you were to give the United Kingdom an enema, Newarthill is where you'd stick in the tube." The fashion historian and lecturer Judith Watt, waving around a chunky cuff she picked up in Africa, declared that Kane was "a natural talent in an industry full of fakes," before turning her attention to the pitfalls of contemporary homosexual style: "Don't you hate the uniform of white muscle T-shirts and jeans? It's so bloody uncreative!"

After dinner, almost everyone huddled around a tiny window to share all manner of cigarettes, although smoking is strictly forbidden at Shoreditch House. "Is that flower arrangement hiding me?" asked Kane's boyfriend, Declan Tomany, a barrister working for the English government. "Christopher doesn't really know I smoke." Jonathan Saunders, another Scottish designer and Kane's good pal, was quick to reply, summing up the evening's general mood: "Welcome to London," he said. "Where everyone loves to break the rules." ■

Birds of a feather

Glimmering candles, above, highlight a stuffed owl. Opposite: Kane chats up Mower, as Enniful and Marsh act up. Inset: Kane designed the gift bags.

 LONDON BRITCHES TO VIEW A VIDEO OF FASHION DESIGNS BY CHRISTOPHER KANE, GO TO NYTIMES.COM/TMAGAZINE.