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@kabukinyc Kabuki changed the beauty game with his looks for SATC and Moschino **BEAUTY - SPOTLIGHT** From club kid to catwalk, the legendary make-up artist talks us through the inspirations and highlights of his 30-year career

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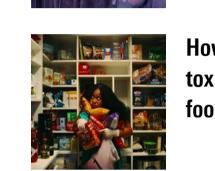
From digital artists to photographers, body sculptors and hair stylists to make-up and nail artists, in our Spotlight series, we profile the creatives tearing up the rulebook in their respective industries.

Kabuki has been redefining our notions of glamour for the past 30 years. Born in Rochdale and raised in Florida, his refined taste was always apparent. An appearance on the TV show Kids World highlighted his opulent drawings, foreshadowing his first foray into make-up – the majestic drag persona Kabuki Starshine, a statuesque nymph who took New York's heady club scene by storm in the 90s. Kabuki appeared on *The Joan Rivers Show in* 1993, made a star cameo walking for Thierry Mugler's AW95

By 1998, he had switched from painting himself to Hollywood royalty, with an invitation from Patrica Field asking him to come on board as the make-up artist for Sex and The City. Using his drag name as a professional sobriquet, Kabuki worked on SATC for season 1 and 2, perfecting Sarah-Jessica Parker's exquisite glow and lightly flushed cheeks that came to embody a paired down approach to 21st-century beauty.

Couture show, capturing imaginations the world over in a look that blended Botticelli's Venus with an

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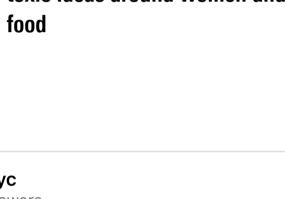
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Growing up, what informed your understanding of beauty and identity and the way you presented yourself visually?

up. It's way more integrated and diversified than when I first hit the scene.

must be having a tremendous effect on what beauty means in the 21st century.

Gone are the days when magazines

alone dictate what will or will not be

seen. And this sometimes overwhelming

Can you tell us a bit about yourself and where you grew up?

in my life and are fundamental to my understanding of beauty. I learned to paint, draw and design first and the impulse to play with make-up grew out of that search for visual excitement. How do you think the industry has evolved since you first started out?

Kabuki: I caught the tail end of when runway shows would have one token black girl for the model line-

His mastery of both intricate, fantastical features and peachy, naturally perfect skin attracted the fashion

world, and he has been working behind the scenes in editorial and runway for nearly two decades.

Kabuki's work for Moschino's AW18 show broke the internet, mixing 60s sophistication with colourful

alien skin tones that transported the viewer to an alternate universe with a rainbow-bright group of Jackie

Os. We spoke to Kabuki about early influences, existing as a living work of art and the highlights of his 30-

Kabuki: I was born in Rochdale in the north of England in 1970. My family moved to Kissimmee, Florida

when I was 10 as my dad was a designer at Disney. Spending my teen years in Kissimmee was less than

exciting, I felt like the 1980s were passing me by and I escaped to NYC as soon as I could, at 19.

Kabuki: I've crossed paths with Boy George a few times over the years and recently had a great

conversation with him at a MAC Cosmetics party. He and David Bowie, were tremendous influences in the

idea of presenting yourself as a work of art. They were 'mainstream' celebrities who opened a door into

worlds of alternative glamour. As a young teen, I found out about the London Blitz scene and the Warhol

factory through my interest in them. The artwork of Aubrey Beardsley, Kay Nielsen and Erté are constants

Kabuki: We certainly have access to different ideas of beauty through technology. Gone are the days when magazines alone dictate what will or will not be seen. And this sometimes overwhelming access

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"We certainly have access to different ideas of beauty through technology.

access must be having a tremendous effect on what beauty means in the 21st century" - Kabuki

Can you tell us a bit about your creative process? Kabuki: I start with a rough idea but a make-up look doesn't come together until I'm working it out on a face. Whether it's a classic beauty look or an over-the-top experimental look, this same rule applies. It's great to have lots of ideas beforehand but I don't force anything and I assess a make-up design as I'm working on it. I'm not advocating this method but a lot of the dramatic looks I'm remembered for came out of nowhere, when I was put on the spot with not very much time. The Kylie Minogue black and orange lightning bolt eye for the *X* album is one example.

What elevates a make-up look from good to great? Kabuki: Integrity. An idea developed and followed through with conviction and skill.

show?

clothing.

afterthought just may turn out to be the essential ingredient that's needed.

Kabuki: A photo of Jackie Onassis was the reference. The inspiration, or should I say challenge, was a phone call from Jeremy Scott. He had the idea to have a group of models as Jackie O in rainbow colours, portraying her as if she was an alien from the 1960s TV show Star Trek. I mixed and tested all of the colours and products myself and made individual, foolproof kits for each model. Everything was labelled

and pre-mixed for their chosen colour. It involved a couple of days prep but was well worth it. I was really

pleased with the resulting technicolour glow and the body make-up stayed on the bodies, not on the

What were your references and inspirations for the beauty at the Moschino AW18

Sometimes I need days to work on intricate handmade 3-D elements but the designing process is usually

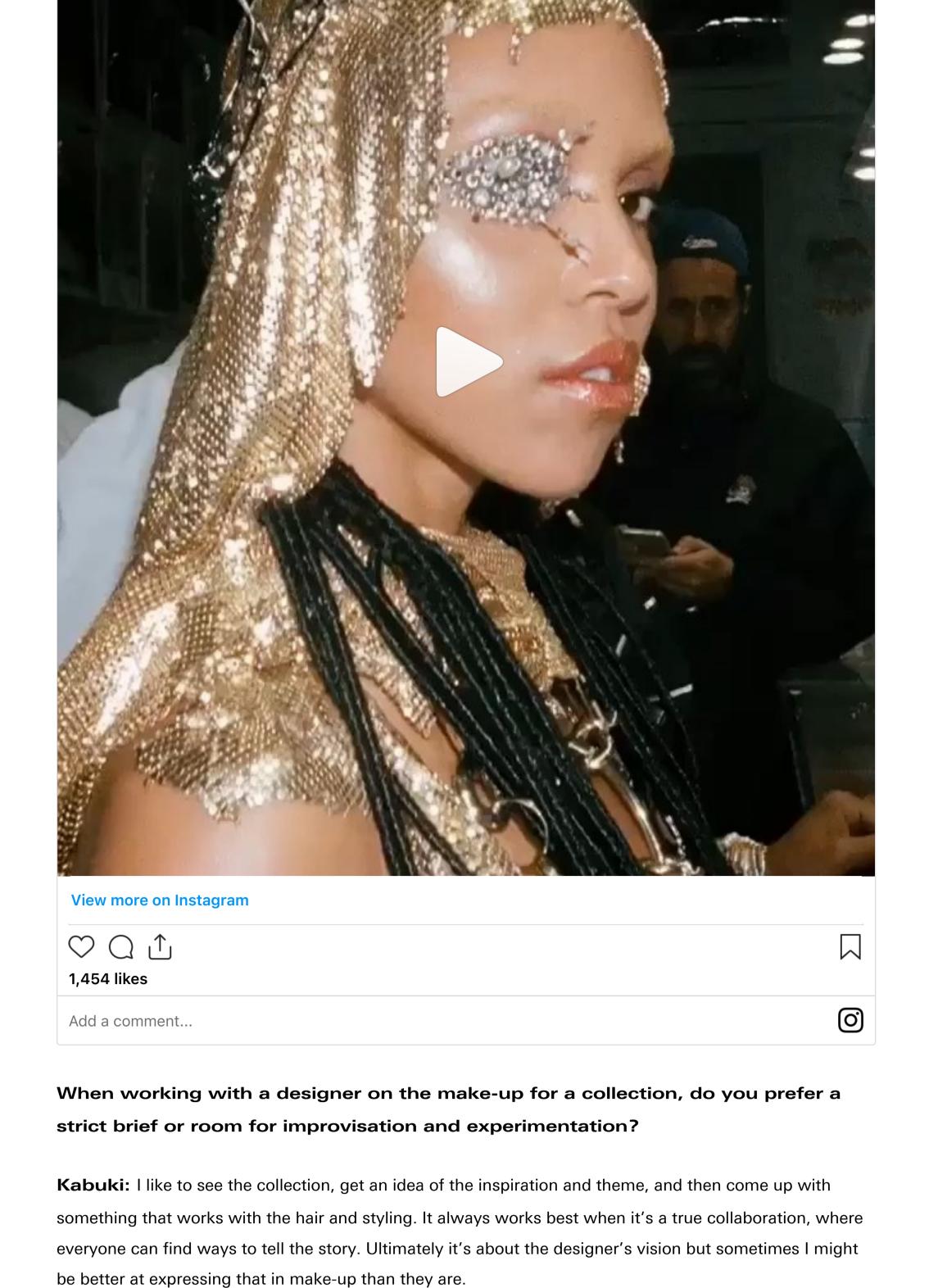
fast and intuitive because it's either working out or it isn't. It's the actual making of the pieces that takes

time especially for fashion shows where you need to make multiples. I've found that it's a good idea to

bring as many elements as I can with me to editorials, particularly if it's a creative type of project. That

piece of glitter paper that I bought nine years ago and tossed into one of my four suitcases as an

A lot of your work has been recreated by make-up artists on social media. Do you enjoy it when people recreate your work? Kabuki: It's flattering to be copied and if someone finds my work inspirational, I'm good with that. They always make changes, intentionally or unintentionally. kabukinyc View profile 58.4K followers 🚺 🎲 fkatwigs



FKA twigs, Kaia Gerber, and Logan Browning are just some of the faces that you've painted recently. Is there anyone that you'd still love to make up? Kabuki: Cher... call me!

Kabuki: My crystal ball is out of batteries but my hope is make-up will continue to be a means of self-

Kabuki: Everyone always asks me about Michael Jackson so I guess that was a big one. He was

the City wasn't just a highlight, it really got the ball rolling for my career. Thanks Patricia Field.

delightful, really kind and human behind the superstar mask. Being plucked out of a crowd to do Sex and

What's been the highlight so far in your career?

expression and empowerment in the way that fashion and art is.

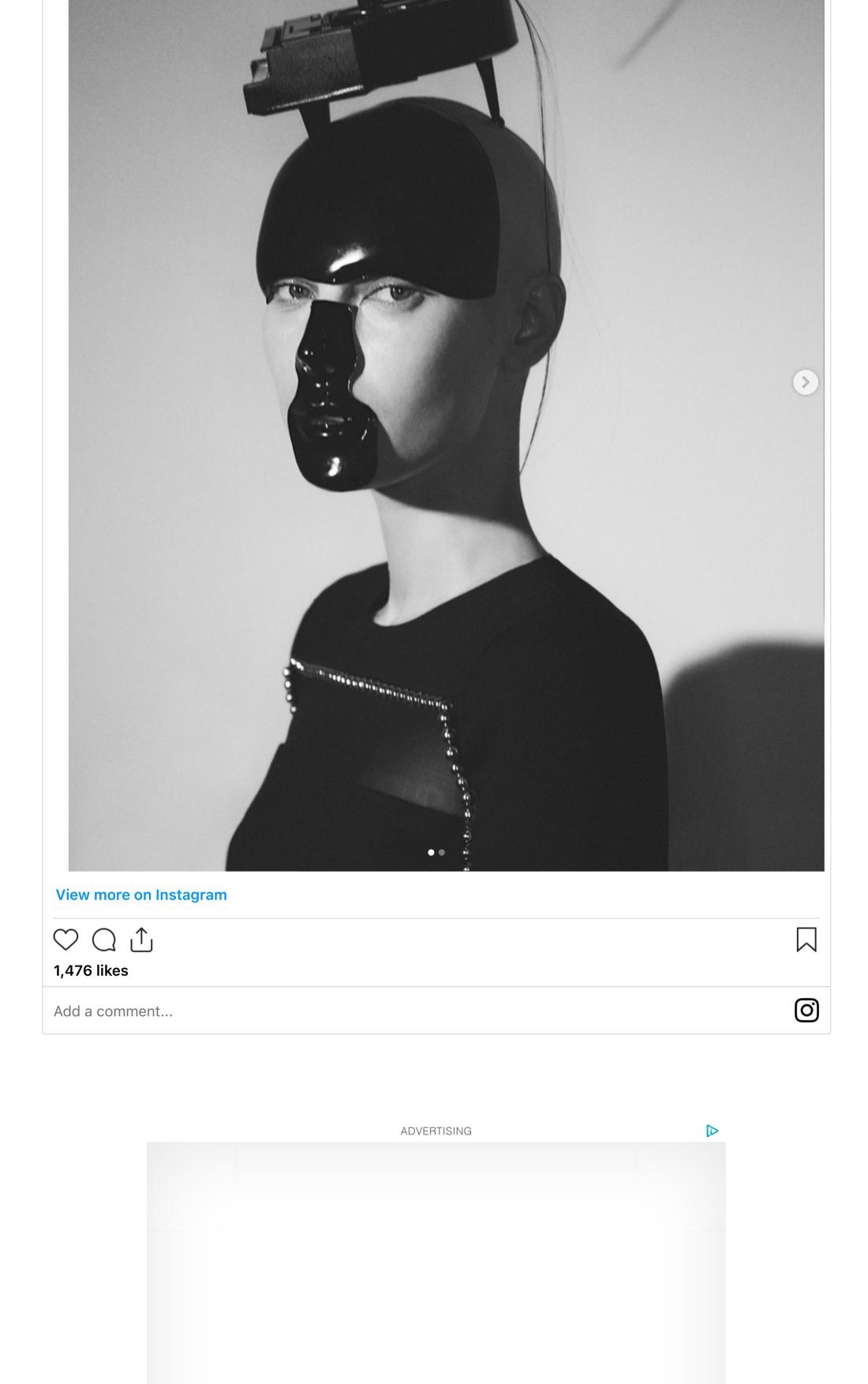
Who would you like to shine a spotlight on next?

What is the future of beauty?

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Kabuki: I worked with hair maestro Bob Recine at the Vogue/CFDA Fashion Fund show and he is

amazing. Last season, I worked with hair god Julien d'Ys on Marni and Moschino. He is something to



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lost in LA



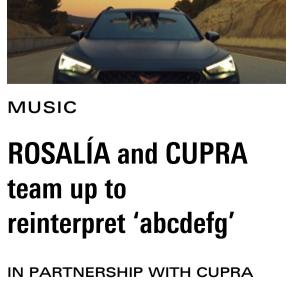


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