

metro.pop

the fashion magazine for the rest of us

27

\$5.00 US/\$8.00 CANADA



7 25274 99919 4

WRATH

words_sonya mooney
photos_damien eduardos

028

One wouldn't normally list Cleveland, Ohio, among the top international fashion capitals. But for Sean Bilovecky, the designer behind new upstart menswear label Wrath Arcane, it's the perfect home base for a streetwear-inspired collection that aims to get consumers thinking about their sociopolitical environments as well as the clothes on their backs.

ARCANE



029

"Cleveland is full of a lot of talented people who are unmotivated and unorganized," says Bilovecky. While this reality may have sent other ambitious designers packing, to fashion centers such as New York or Los Angeles, Cleveland natives Bilovecky and his business partner Brian O'Neill took it as a call to arms to change the creative landscape of their formerly bustling industrial city. Aside from the obvious economic advantages—let's face it: studio overhead in Cleveland is much cheaper than in notoriously overpriced Manhattan—Bilovecky and O'Neill were very conscious about making an impact in their hometown and jumpstarting a creative community.

Chalk it up to Bilovecky and O'Neill's no-nonsense midwestern roots, but Wrath Arcane is marked by a sincerity lacking in most commercial clothing brands. And that's exactly how Bilovecky and O'Neill want to position the brand. For them, the days of the current large global fashion conglomerates are numbered. "The clothing industry is practically dead," Bilovecky says. And who can blame him for saying so, when large corporate organizations become further and

further removed from their actual consumers on a daily basis? Even the fashion journalist Suzy Menkes of the *International Herald Tribune* recently addressed the difficulty independent designers face when they try to make a name for themselves outside the conglomerate system.

It's the disconnection between what a large corporation dictates the public wants and what the public actually needs that riles Bilovecky the most. "These huge companies make so much money and make decisions for people they don't even know," he says. Take, for instance, the graphic T-shirts he designed that read "Big Labels are Fucked." It's one of the brand's best sellers and reflects Bilovecky's dissatisfaction not only with the fashion industry itself but also with global corporations in general—and even the United States government. However, Bilovecky and O'Neill do shy away from labeling themselves a "political" company. "I never want to shove anything down anyone's throat," Bilovecky says. They're not fashion's Rage Against the Machine, but they do want to encourage discussion about why the political and

continue →

economic landscape is the way it is. Most of all, they just want people to be conscious and aware of what is happening around them, whether it's in dilapidated downtown Cleveland or in Washington, D.C.

Wrath Arcane's aesthetic can be visually provocative, as with the aforementioned T-shirt. In double-sleeved men's dress shirts, a cuff can be worn folded up to reveal a print that is influenced by typography and by the Cyrillic letters of the Russian alphabet (Bilovecky's girlfriend is Russian). Almost all of the fall collection is marked with some sort of subtle graphic element, but Bilovecky has a way with tailoring as well. In the Separation Jacket, curved seams were used to create tension in the textiles, adding body, form and texture to the garments.

Visually striking as the Wrath Arcane collection may be, it's the decision to create streetwear that Bilovecky and O'Neill and their friends would actually wear—as opposed to, for instance, bespoke suits—that reflects their grassroots commitment to connecting with their consumer. It also doesn't hurt that they are adamant about making all of their clothing in the United States. In fact, they plan to open their own factory in Cleveland in November. It's just another defiant attempt to reform the contemporary global corporate fashion model.

However, dissatisfaction with the current state of the fashion market doesn't preclude Bilovecky and O'Neill from wanting Wrath Arcane to become a large worldwide brand itself someday. Slowly but surely—and, above all, *conscientiously*—Bilovecky and O'Neill want to expand the label into a larger entity. For spring they will be offering a small selection of women's garments and a small men's and women's denim line for the first time. Other plans also include increasing the number of national and international retailers who carry the line. There are even murmurs of creating a Wrath Arcane showroom in Hungary to explore the untapped Eastern European market. But Bilovecky says that no matter how large the company grows, it's the people who matter the most. "You have to hire the right people. If you have good people around you, you will always remember where you come from."

finish ●

030

