

destination



Model Yasmin Brunet



Jardin architecture



Winter flowers



Clean looks



Boys in the jungle print



The Brazilian cut



Sneaker graffiti artist



Patachou



Market prices



Herchcovitch



The Ibirapuera Auditorium



Model makeup



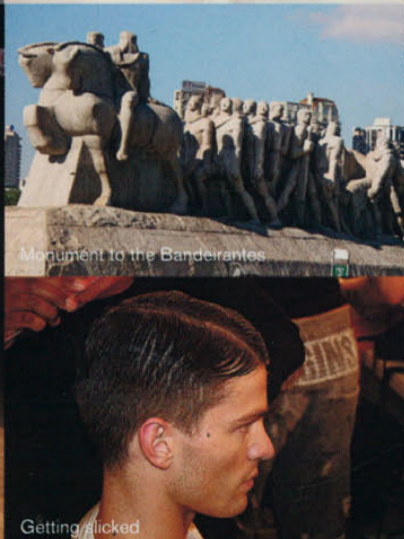
Fashion dog



Bombed bus



Poko Pano



Monument to the Bandeirantes



Palm shields



Tufi Duek

# LOUDER THAN BOMBS

SÃO PAULO FASHION WEEK STARTS MORE WITH A BANG THAN WITH A WHIMPER. THE FUTURE OF BRAZIL MAY DEPEND ON WHAT THE MODELS HAVE ON

There were two different São Paulo spectacles hitting the city on the week of July 12, 2006—and both were designed, with typical Brazilian sensationalism, to get attention. The first was a series of public-bus firebombings and gun sprayings into local banks and police stations, which left six people dead and provided the city, at least momentarily, with a grim echo of the violence that had paralyzed it two months earlier. Ironically, the guilty were already locked behind bars—kingpins of the notorious prison gang called the First Command of the Capital (PCC), who had taken the threat of several key transfers to a maximum security prison in another state as a call to show officials that they still controlled the streets—even if only by the power of a few phone calls. President

Lula, who has long promised to purge the gang rule in a country where justice has often been considered something that gets in the way, and who also happens to be facing a tough re-election bid this year, labeled the faction a "crime industry." This industry is one of the city and the country's most prevailing. The violent attacks underscored the brutal social problems that have plagued Brazil as it tries to become a dependable superpower on the global game board.

Buses engulfed in flames were one working image of the city that week. Another took the runways at the Bienal de Arte Moderna, where São Paulo's Fashion Week celebrated one of the country's other dominant industries—the export of resident beauty and style. For those who usually see high fashion as a superfluous by-product of culture (as, for example, most of the world routinely views art), fashion flexes a tremendous economic muscle in Brazil. Glamour and design are not a side effect but a national pastime, as well as one of the country's more capable exports—in fact it represents the kind of emerging markets that the government has been trying to strengthen for the past few years. The designers who brought their looks down runways packed with editors, TV stars, and visiting buyers kept their silhouettes for Spring/Summer 2007 forceful and body-obsessed—which, in Brazil, is a very beautiful thing. Among the big guns who succeeded in pushing bright glam in tight packages as well as creating a little social disruption, was superstar Alexandre Herchcovitch. His Masculino line pulsed with unexpected and often warring cultures and religions—Jewish Stars of David around necks, Jamaican reggae colored hats, and African-safari patterns on sports coats and army pants competed for status like dissonant groups in a community. Perhaps Herchcovitch, more than any other fashion designer, was trying to emphasize the struggle of classes and cultures in his homeland, offering an alternative style narrative to the expected one of white leisure and skimpy swimwear. Tufi Duek also brilliantly

retooled the standard party dress, concentrating on crisscrossing straps that showed an intense focus on construction—a grid as dramatic as the city's own. Patachou by Tereza Santos also seemed to return to the grid pattern, opening the show with several Mondrian-like design elements of cubist color that seemed to want to start over at a cleaner square. At its best, a sense of trying to revolt seemed to move through collections—not that history went vacated. "There is the daughter of Luíza Brunet," a photographer told me at Patachou, pointing to a blonde model walking in the show. When asked who Luíza Brunet was, he said, "the biggest Brazilian model of the '80s. She was like the Gisele of her day but even bigger." We have come a long way from Ipanema.

In trying to sum up the city, a friend told me he read somewhere that a typical saying in São Paulo went: "We work, so the rest of Brazil doesn't have to." But the city is also known for its nights that border on mornings—a mania of places and long drives and bar tabs counted on tally sheets paid upon exit. Parties were thrown at Gloria, a bi-level club that roared with lights and a spectral hologram of Kate Moss from Alexander McQueen's show. The fashion crowd packed into a tiny new spot called Royal, accessed through a parking garage off of Rua da Consolacao. "We don't have the beach," one Brazilian friend told me while waiting for a model-turned-bartender to take our drink order. "Not like Rio. We have architecture and nightlife. That's what we do here." São Paulo is so large—it is the biggest city in South America with a population over 10 million—and so spread out that a bus burning in one section and a model walking in another is not an unimaginable crash of realities on a single plane. Which reality will prove the meaningful one is a different fact that will play out on future streets. **Christopher Bollen**

São Paulo, July 2006  
Photography Thomas Alexander