

## Fashion

WHAT IS A  
"COOLHUNTER"?  
WE SENT OUR  
FASHION  
CORRESPONDENT  
MARTA  
WENDLINGER TO  
INTERVIEW JULIO  
CESAR AGUILERA, A  
LOCAL  
"COOLHUNTER."

# Searching for style

MARTA WENDLINGER

● So Julio, what exactly is a "coolhunter?"

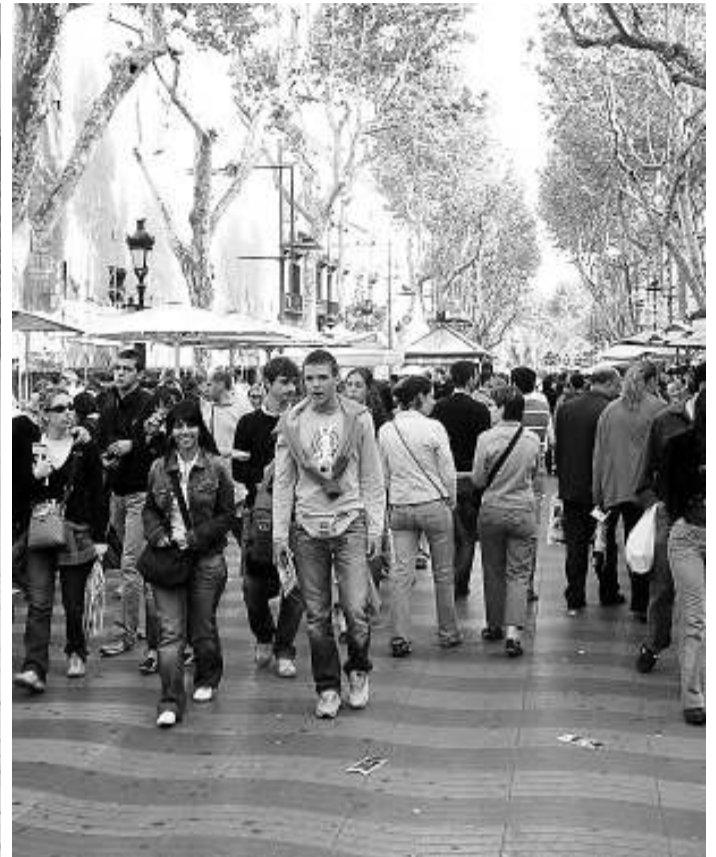
"Before this phenomenon began, businesses themselves imposed new designs, fads, or habits of consumerism on the public. But later they realised that "average people" had a lot to offer in terms of creativity and spontaneous energy and the process reversed. Businesses started hiring individuals simply to observe people and tell them what they saw, in order to use that information when designing and selling their products. For example, sushi wasn't "cool" before... someone just said it was; it was light fare, healthy, aesthetically pleasing to the eye, minimalist, and had an interesting ritual associated with it... So it became popular. Although there have always been five major cities associated with fashion: Paris, Milan, New York, London, and Tokyo, now what's "cool" has been expanded to cities as diverse as Seoul, Moscow, Rio, and Buenos Aires, where people because of "necessity" have become creative."

—How did it all start?

"The phrase first appeared in 1997 in an article featured in *New Yorker* magazine entitled, "The Cool Hunt" written by Malcolm Gladwell, where he simply described what a friend did as a job. That person was no other than Dee Dee Gordon, currently the owner of Look Look, the largest company dedicated to American teen cool-hunting and worth millions of dollars."

—How did you get involved?

"I've always been interested in the "MTV generation," urban tribes such as Goths, Punks, and



Left, coolhunters look for innovative design and style ideas on city streets; right, Julio Cesar Aguilera/M.W.

Mods, and noticed that the term began appearing in a lot of specialised trend magazines. Seeing an opportunity, I started investigating and contacting known "coolhunters" in New York, Milan, and London, developing a relationship with the Milan-based company, The Future Concept Lab, who hired me in 2006 as their Barcelona correspondent to write an in-depth report on what was "cool" in terms of design, home furnishings, fashion, entertainment and culture, food, body-beauty (tattoos, piercings, hair/make-up), technology, and lifestyle."

—What exactly do you do?

"Explore. Walk. Get lost in the city. Talk to people. The street is like a movie ... you always have to have your camera, because if

not, scenes would be lost. But each "coolhunter" has their own concept of what's "cool" – from "snobby to grubby to kitsch" and is ultimately influenced by personal preferences and prejudices. When I walk, I pass posters and graffiti, and pick up flyers as I go, because later I use it all to process that "walk." Coolhunters walk where others don't: down little streets, dead ends, leaving behind traditional, known tourist routes because only then can you discover new bars, strange little businesses, vintage clothing stores, funky t-shirt shops, spontaneous parks, new cuisine restaurants..."

—What qualities must a "coolhunter" have to be successful?

"You have to be a sharp ob-

server of people, sensitive enough to move among people, with a background in design, fine arts, and aesthetics, and it's always helpful to have lived in various countries in order to compare different urban phenomena."

—What the best thing about living in Barcelona?

"I was born in Cuba and have lived in Mexico and Venezuela, but decided years ago that Barcelona was in the process of becoming, and has now become, one of the most vibrant European cities in terms of tourism, immigration, and foreign investment. I wanted to be a part of it. It's a city full of creative people, of design, a meeting place ... a young city where new trends are being born everyday."

## Barcelona Design Week

Design gurus descend on the city spreading the gospel of art as business

GABE ABEYTA CANEPA

● They have a dream. A dream that one day a restaurant's menu will be judged not only by the content of its recipes but also by the quality of its layout.

From November 6th to the 10th the Barcelona Design Centre will hold its annual series of conferences creatively dubbed "Barcelona Design Week" in venues throughout the city. Under the banner of "Better

Design = Better Business", the group hopes to focus on strengthening the relationship between companies in any production or service sector and professionals working in the sphere of design and other creative areas. In addition to this already lofty goal, the conference aspires to the almost zen-like objective of speaking to all those who are guided by knowledge and creativity in their activities. Themes

addressed will include the use of materials as a strategy for innovation, the internationalisation of design services and the distinction between good design and effective design. Other options include nocturnal meeting points at various locations to promote exchanges between companies and designers as well as "open houses" at 16 local design studios. For more information go to [www.bcd.es](http://www.bcd.es)



DesignWeek begins on Monday, November 6th./GABRIEL MASSANA