

YOUNG DESIGNERS

# Cool by design

How innovative fashion promotion bodies such as Circuit and ModaFAD helped Barcelona to earn its place at the forefront of European fashion

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● Only a few years ago, things were different. Madrid and Barcelona were constantly competing to become the "Fashion Capital" of Spain; it was an issue of pride and politics. In an attempt to resolve the conflict, the agencies that organize the Cibeles and Gaudi catwalks came together to discuss the possibility of establishing a single catwalk show, in the hope of placing Spain at the forefront of fashion. No agreement was ever reached but things did change in Barcelona; it stopped competing.

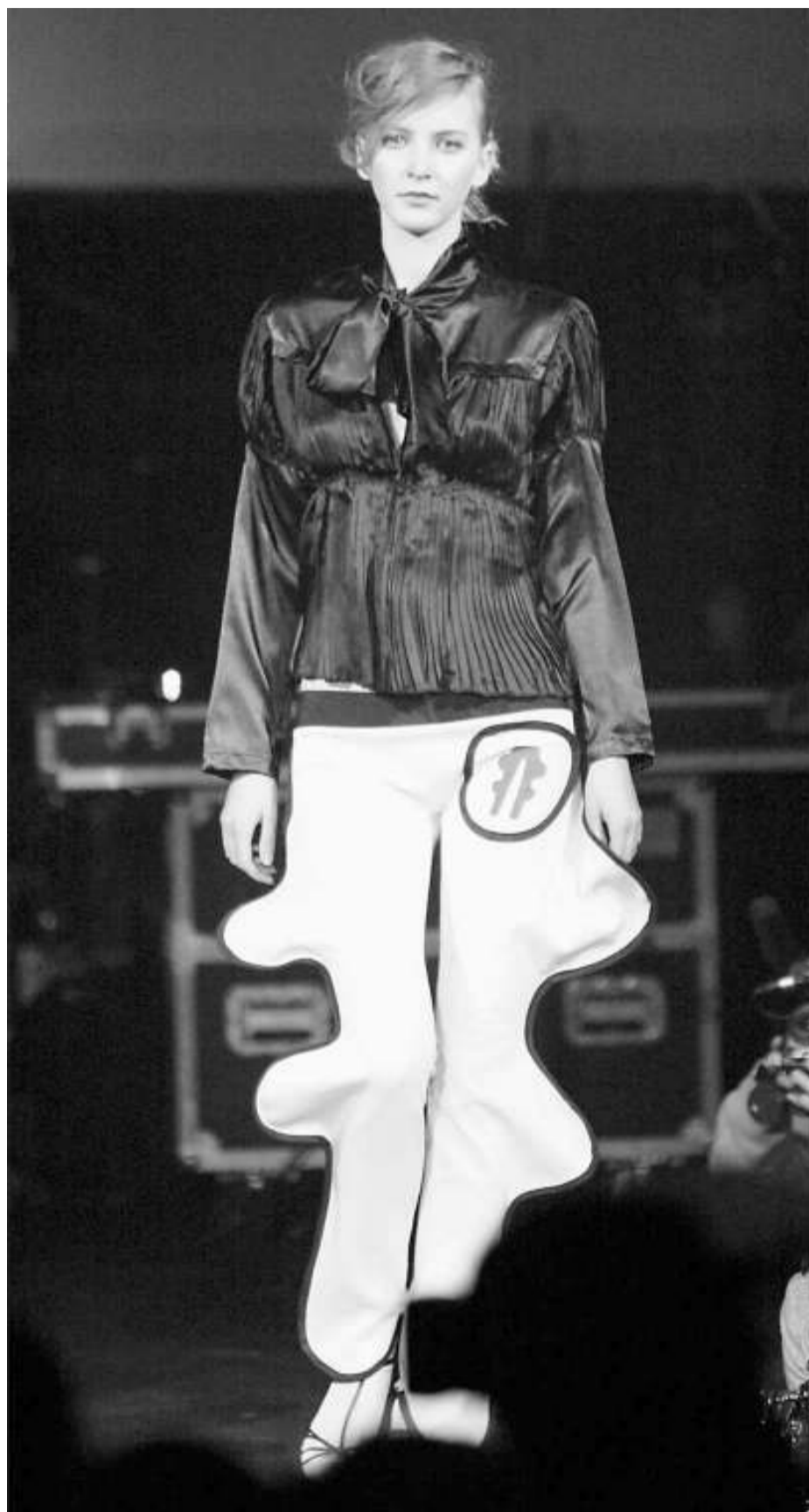
With the establishment in 2000 of Circuit, hailed as the alternative, avant-garde, and innovative forum for young and non-mainstream designers, the "fashion power" in Spain began to shift. Circuit, which has helped to put Barcelona on the style map, became a pioneer, not only in Spain, but in Europe, for taking fashion to the limits by merging different art and design disciplines and finally opening up the fashion world to the public.

But Circuit wasn't the only organisation breaking new ground. Barcelona

counted on ModaFAD, the arm of FAD (Barcelona's Decorative Arts Foundation), whose mission is to promote young fashion designers; those still studying or recently graduated, by providing them with their own *pasarela*, PasaFAD, and by showcasing their talent in MercaFAD, an all day and night affair, a springboard where they get the chance to sell their creations to the public and begin building a client base.

These pioneering forces created a world of their own and made fashion more democratic, opening doors for many; and allowing new ways of "doing fashion". And there's certainly competition to be a part of it; it's hip, challenging, and inventive. Local Catalan, Spanish, and a myriad of international designers from all corners of the globe, Russia, Finland, China, the Americas, to name only a few, come to Barcelona to attend prestigious fashion schools; learn from established designers, participate in the evolving market and ultimately, be discovered.

Barcelona, unlike any other city, offers (continued on page 27)



An outfit from the last February's PasaFAD fashion show for young designers / JUANMA RAMOS



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