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Simon Doonan and Jonathan Adler Talk
Love, Leggings, and Liberace at 92Y

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When Barneys New York Creative Ambassador Simon Doonan met designer Jonathan Adler, their first conversation was “kind of awkward.”

At least that was Adler’s take.

“I didn’t find it awkward at all,” insisted Doonan. “I was intrigued by him and thought he was very charming and fun. He was wincing from the awkward silences. English people have a different culture. I like an awkward silence; it’s time to catch your breath.”

Since that fateful day, the very busy couple adopted a dog (Liberace), published several books, and were married in 2008 by a rabbi in San Francisco. The alternative was a ceremony in Big Sur, California, officiated by a woman named “Soaring Stargazer.”

Last night the stylish couple spoke at the 92Y in Tribeca, NYC, with Randy Cohen as the moderator. We chatted exclusively with the self-proclaimed “glam rock” meets “hippie” outfitted twosome after the panel.

What do you love most about each other’s style?

JA: I like Simon’s signature style of the Liberty shirt. He used to rock a safari jacket every day, and I miss that. So, this is my public plea for Simon to bring back the daily safari jacket wearing.

SD: I like Johnny’s white jeans. That’s his little signature thing. I make sure I never wear white jeans, so we have little points of differentiation. He never wears a flowery shirt; I never wear white jeans.

JA: It's a struggle.

What happened to the safari jacket?

SD: You know what? The silhouette in general got shorter, so the safari jacket that I have is a bit too long. I need to take it to the tailor and have the middle whacked out of it and raised. So, it's a tailoring issue.

JA: I think it's a tailoring crisis.

SD: Jackets that would look normal five years ago now look too long, because those jackets got shorter.

What are your favorite vintage items that you've held on to?

JA: Simon.

SD: I have a pair of Stephen Sprouse lycra cycle leggings that are printed with mirror writing, circa 1984. I used to wear them to do aerobics at the Sports Connection in West Hollywood.

Do you wear them now?

SD: No, they're too fragile.

You support each other on so many things. Anything that you just can't talk about or find such a difference of opinion?

JA: Yeah. I hate the smell of tea tree oil. Simon's constantly using it to battle his toenail fungus, and, um, it's become a real issue.

SD: He likes to get these horrible squishy pads and put them in the bed. They have memory foam in them, and they smell really horrifying. We are very blunt with each other. We don't hold anything in. We don't really have fights because it's all externalized. I think that's the key to a good relationship: You can really say anything.

JA: *Anything.*

What does the memory foam smell like?

SD: Chemicals.

JA: In Simon's defense, it does smell atrocious, but you know, I do like a squishy bed. I'm sorry.

If your dog wasn't named Liberace—or you got another one—what would you call it?

SD: Yves Saint Laurent had a dog named Moujik. When Moujik died, they got another Moujik. Every French bulldog that Yves had over the years was called Moujik.

JA: He didn't even say like 1, 2 or 3—just Moujik.

SD: Just Moujik.

JA: So, I think it's just Liberace. Liberace *for-ev-a*.

What was your last date night like?

JA: Every night is date night.

SD: If we're home, we snuggle up in front of the TV and have a nice meal, or we go out. We always have a lot to talk about because we have separate work lives that are quite intense, so there's a lot to masticate.

Do you guys ever think about having children?

SD: If we had children, I'd be 250 by the time they went to college.

JA: If we could just jump right to grandchildren, it would be on the table, but nah. We're busy, and we have a niece and a nephew, and we love them. We're good.

Jonathan, you've collaborated with Barnes & Noble. What books did you both read last?

SD: I just read that book called *We Are Rich* [by Dori Carter]. It's really funny. It's about people in Santa Barbra, like Montecito. It was very well written. I enjoyed it.

JA: *The Moon and Sixpence* by Somerset Maugham. It's great. I highly recommend it.

In addition to Barnes & Noble, a casket company wanted you, Jonathan, to design for them. Are there other endeavors that you both agreed was not a right fit?

JA: It's the Andy Warhol paradigm, but I think there's always a better way to engage. Any pop cultural product can always be made better and more fun.