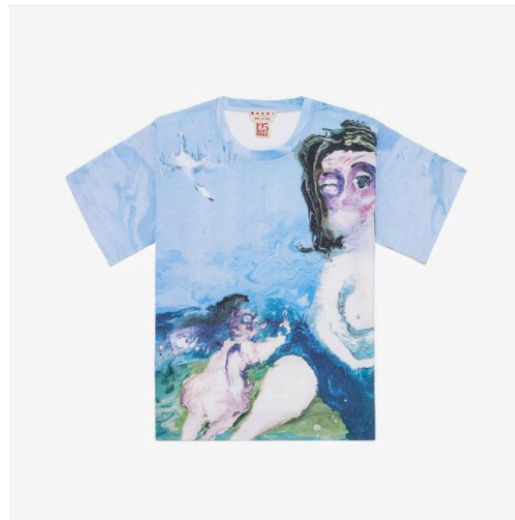


VOGUE Magazine, Issue 40 : 'Can You Define Beauty? These 11 Artists Did for Vogue's 125th Anniversary', by Dodie Kazanjlan, July 12th, 2017



To mark *Vogue*'s one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary this year, we asked a number of artists "What is beauty?"—a *Vogue* question if ever there was one. The idea was to have them make images we could reproduce to raise money for the HIV/AIDS charities God's Love We Deliver and Born Free (one American, one African). Eleven artists, including John Baldessari, Julie Mehretu, Maurizio Cattelan, and Beatriz Milhazes, signed on, and the always creative fashion house Marni agreed to collaborate by using the artworks on limited-edition tote bags and T-shirts.

The fact that so many artists were willing to participate suggests that beauty is no longer considered suspect in contemporary art. The avant-garde in the twentieth century had demoted beauty to mere decoration and sentimentality. "No, painting is not done to decorate apartments," Picasso thundered. "It's an offensive and defensive weapon against the enemy." For artists working today, though, nothing is off-limits; anything is possible. The entire history of art is at their fingertips—just click on Phidias or Botticelli or Fragonard, and see how deep the visual pleasures can go.

The Irish painter Genieve Figgis, who adores François Boucher's luscious nudes, gives us her version of the eighteenth-century French master's *The Muse Erato*. "It is Erato who charms the sight," Figgis says. In her slightly naughty rendering, Erato is "unsure, pausing—her own eye is a black vortex, not knowing how to react or perceive her own image."