

# GmbH

We started GmbH in 2016 to tell stories.

As we began looking back at what sparked us to found GmbH a decade ago – and re-visiting our own story – we came across the largely untold fashion history of Berlin.

A century ago, it was not given that Berlin would end up being in the fashion backwaters of Paris or Milan. In the 1920s, Berlin had a vibrant fashion world with couture houses and salons on par with Paris.

As the Nazi regime came to power, they eradicated Berlin's fashion community, not in small part because so many designers, tailors, fashion workers, stores and clients were Jewish. Whether forcibly having their companies or assets taken, being exiled or executed – the continuation of Berlin fashion was forever fractured.

Fashion historian Gesa Kessemeier writes in the prologue of her book 'Modestadt Berlin' published 2025:

*'In the late 1920's a Berlin design talent, Joe Strassner (1898–1970), a visionary of modern cut-outs and the first women's tuxedos, dreams of international recognition. His dream comes true: in 1935, his name appears on the cinema screen right next to that of a design icon: "Dresses Schiaparelli and Strassner," reads the opening credit of Transatlantic Tunnel. By then, Strassner is already living in exile in England. And once again: everyone in the fashion world knows Elsa Schiaparelli (1890–1973) — but no one knows Joe Strassner.*

*(...)But why is it that today no one remembers Berlin fashion designers of the 1920s, who—with their sparkling dance dresses, revealing stage costumes, but also "sporty-masculine" garçonne outfits and elegant coats—played a decisive role in shaping the image of modern, cosmopolitan Berlin?*

That is one of the questions this collection and our anniversary explore.

Can a collection embody a hundred years or even ten years?

Obviously not.

The collection started out with GmbH archetypes, of sleek sportswear that through their unique cuts both enhances and protects the body. Our tailoring got injected with direct inspiration from Berlin's couture past, for instance a collar from a coat by Clara Böhm (whose house operated 1912-1939), pictured in 'Die Dame' in 1934. An emotional part of this research was visiting Julia Schwarz's archive and touching and seeing a hundred years of fashion history.

Select archive pieces from the 1910s through the 1960s, by some of Berlin's largely forgotten designers are incorporated into the show.

These notes can't possibly encompass the incredibly rich fashion history of Berlin. This show opens the door but is also a start of greater project for GmbH – to make fashion accepted as a serious cultural expression in Germany.

Perhaps as a way of finding our place in it too.

As our minority communities are facing increased state repression and marginalisation, as well as the extreme right is marching both figuratively and literally through our streets, GmbH will resist.

We are often questioned on why GmbH is so explicitly political and lectured on how fashion should be unpolitical – this brief history lesson should be enough to negate any such argument.

Benjamin A. Huseby & Serhat Isik

Berlin, July 2026

FOUR PARTNERSHIPS WERE INVALUABLE TO BRING THIS COLLECTION TO LIFE:

**UGG AS EXCLUSIVE FOOTWEAR PARTNER:**

The timelessness of UGG fits naturally within this collection's view on history. We wanted the softness of the footwear to stand in sharp contrast to the collection's mostly structured silhouettes - as if the models were walking almost barefoot. GmbH worked specifically on the Otzo Clog, Shep Loafer, Zora Ballet Flat, the Classic Distort Boot, and Tasman Flex, adding the GmbH hammer studs and giving the footwear a new industrial sheen to fit into the collection's colour palette.

**ic! berlin FOR EYEWEAR:**

As GmbH celebrates its 10 years and ic! berlin marks its 30 year-anniversary in the same year, we came together for a celebration of Berlin craftsmanship. GmbH was able to access ic! berlin's archive and chose iconic styles, largely inspired or actually from the 1990s - including the very first ic! berlin model - all designed and manufactured in their headquarter in Berlin.

**CC-STEDING FOR JEWELLERY:**

This is the second season we have collaborated with the London-based jewellery designers of CC-Steding. Working primarily in silver sterling 925i, they interpreted our show brief of 'going from scally to couture', with a mix of heavy chains and the GmbH diamond-shaped clothing label cut out of silver trays, making each piece unique.

**'BERLINER CHIC' FOR ARCHIVE PIECES:**

Julia Schwarz owner of 'Berliner Chic' is the only major private collector of Berlin fashion in Europe.

Gesa Kessemeier's book published last year, and Schwarz archive and personal research has been an invaluable help to give this collection context.

\*'Desire Paths' are the footpaths made by humans following their own desires, when architecture and urban design become too rigid. They reveal the tension between how planners expect people to move and how they actually move. A fitting metaphor for GmbH perhaps.

WE HAD THE HONOR TO WIN THIS YEARS FCG/VOGUE FASHION FUND AND WOULD LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE INCLUDED, ESPECIALLY THE SUPPORT OF KIKO MILANO AND THE BERLIN SENATE OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND ENTERPRISES.

# GmbH

CREATIVE DIRECTORS BENJAMIN A. HUSEBY & SERHAT ISIK

STYLING ELLIE GRACE CUMMING  
HAIR ALEXANDER DINTER FOR LA BIOSTHÉTIQUE PARIS  
MAKE UP CHRISTIAN FRITZENWANKER FOR LA BIOSTHÉTIQUE PARIS  
CASTING AFFA OSMAN  
MUSIC SIMON PARRIS

ON LOAN FROM 'BERLINER CHIC' - THE ARCHIVE OF JULIA SCHWARZ  
ARE DESIGNS FROM THE HOUSES OF:

DETLEV ALBERS  
HEINZ OESTERGAARD  
STAEBE-SEGER  
SELBACH  
HERRMANN GERSON  
HORMANN & CO  
ZADUCK  
ULI RICHTER  
ADOLF STERN

INTERVENTION MUMI HAIATI  
PRODUCTION ABOUTKOKOMO  
SHOW RUNNER REGINA MURTAZINA  
GMBH STUDIO FARHUD HAMIDI, LEA WALLKÖTTER,  
WAIAN AUNG, MAXI KIM  
STYLIST ASSISTANTS CHARLES EDWARDS, SAMUEL THAPA,  
CHRISTELLE OWONA

SPECIAL THANKS JULIA SCHWARZ  
THE REFERENCE STUDIOS TEAM  
BIRGITTA TOYODA, SEHER AND YUSUF ISIK,  
ODNY HUSEBY AND WAHEED ABDUL MALIK

**UGG**<sup>®</sup>

REFERENCE  
STUDIOS

**ic! berlin**

**BERLIN  
FASHION  
WEEK**

**LA BIOSTHETIQUE**<sup>®</sup>  
PARIS

**INTERVENTION**

FASHION  
COUNCIL  
GERMANY  
**VOGUE  
FASHION FUND**

**KIKO**  
MILANO

Senate Department  
for Economic Affairs, Energy  
and Public Enterprises

**BERLIN**

