

Edie Campbell on the Influence of Seoul

By **EDIE CAMPBELL** NOV. 5, 2015

In between modeling during New York and London fashion weeks this September, I took a 48-hour break to fly to Seoul. My younger sister, Olympia, and I went for the opening party of a new store my mum, the British architect Sophie Hicks, had designed and built for the Stockholm-based fashion brand Acne Studios. Initially, it seemed a strange fit: a small piece of Scandinavia in South Korea.

Never before have I been to such a fun shop opening. There was none of that stultifying jadedness of most fashion gatherings. The party was in the wealthy Gangnam area — made world famous by the pop star Psy. One particular high point of the evening was the brilliant performance artist, Mykki Blanco, who as part of her act crawled dramatically through the shrubbery planted around the edge of the store, howling into a microphone. I looked to my mum, who mournfully whispered under her breath: “Not the wild strawberries!”

Seoul is a city of incredibly rapid change. The Acne shop and its neat Scandinavian flowerbeds were, in the not so distant past, fields plowed by oxen. But this is not a city that is shackled by nostalgia for years gone by — change is seen as indisputably good.

I’m not sure what I expected on my first visit to Seoul, but the thing I took away at the end of my journey was the unbelievable energy of the city and its inhabitants, the enthusiasm to do more, and to do it better, faster and harder than anyone else. As we were eating dinner cross-legged on the floor in the fish market, a 20-something man marched up to us, encouraging us to let loose, make mistakes. “This is Seoul!” he shouted. I left the city thinking that my resounding memory of the trip would be a sense of the absurd: of going to drag clubs with California queens and French diplomats after the store party. But that’s not what I’ll remember most. Seoul is a place where not a moment of life is wasted.

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