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# *M to M of M/M (Paris)*

## *The Parisian Graphic Design Duo Celebrate Twenty Years of Visual Alchemy*

An illustrated duck on a Björk album cover, a typeface dedicated to Carine Roitfeld and bit-character humanoids populating a deconsecrated chapel feature in this series from two of the most acclaimed creatives of their generation, Michael Amzalag and Mathias Augustyniak, better known as M/M (Paris). Since crossing paths at Paris's Les Arts Décoratifs school, the pair have worked as graphic designers and art directors on distinctive fashion, art and music projects incorporating unconventional typography, print, illustration, photography, film, objects and interior design. Envisioning their commissions as "conversations," M/M (Paris) have collaborated with the likes of photographers Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin, and Mert and Marcus, and designers Riccardo Tisci, Nicolas Ghesquière and Yohji Yamamoto. Invited by Thames & Hudson to produce a monograph of their oeuvre some 12 years ago, the pair have finally collated their trailblazing imagery into a definitive 528-page softback, designed by Graphic Thought Facility, that includes dialogue with close collaborators alongside hundreds of illustrations. "You can't design a book for your own work because it becomes too self-centered," explains Amzalag. "It was important for us to put ourselves in the position that we have put so many others in—what it feels like to put our work in the hands of someone else." Ahead of their 20th anniversary, M/M reveal the secrets behind their innovations.

### **On establishing collaborations...**

**Michael:** Most of our relationships have happened organically. Riccardo Tisci came to the studio to buy some of our posters as he really liked our work. I lived near Nicolas Ghesquière before he was working at Balenciaga. A friend introduced us to Yohji Yamamoto. We met Inez and Vinoodh at an A.P.C. party in Paris and clicked straight away.

### **On translating an artist's message...**

**Mathias:** We think of all of our collaborators as artists. They all have something they want to communicate visually. Each collaboration is about understanding an individual and working out how to communicate their world, in a graphic sense. The work we've done for Björk is a succession of portraits—she's a transformative character.

### **On their love of alphabets...**

**Mathias:** We have always thought of our work as a series of signs and from the beginning we decided that we wanted to create our own "language" so people would immediately be able to recognize our work. Our own typefaces allow us to create our own language; each letter carries meaning. Our own alphabets form part of our collection of tools.

### **On their working dynamic...**

**Michael:** Oliver Zahm came up with the perfect metaphor for our working relationship. He said one is the bone, the other is the muscle. To me, it's the most accurate description of how we work.

*M to M of M/M (Paris) is published by Thames & Hudson in October. Their exhibition Carpetalogue, 1992-2012 runs at Gallery Libby Sellers from October 10–December 15, 2012.*

Tags: Art , Design , Books , London , Paris , Yohji Yamamoto , Illustration , Mert and Marcus , Olivier Zahm , Carine Roitfeld , Vinoodh Matadin , Mathias Augustyniak , Michael Amzalag , Riccardo Tisci , Inez van Lamsweerde , Björk , M/M (Paris) , Thames & Hudson , Graphic Thought Facility , Nicolas Ghesquière , Carpetalogue , Gallery Libby Sellers