

SHANTANU AND
NIKHIL MEHRA

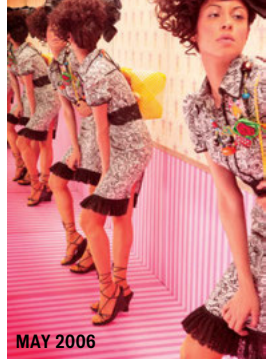


SEEING DOUBLE

As we look back at 20 years of ELLE and *fashion family*, our favourite designer duos tell us why we are better together, says **Kavita Mohandas Rao**

SHANTANU & NIKHIL

The brothers certainly know a thing or two about duality. They balance opposites like a well-tuned circus act: the classic and the contemporary, Indian and international, haute couture and sporty. For instance, they're the only Indian designers to have collaborated with adidas, and in the same breath, bring out a coveted label for modern bridal wear. It's all explained, no doubt, with the varied skill sets they bring to the partnership with Nikhil's creativity



MAY 2006

Vishesh Verma

and Shantanu's marketing know-how. Their philosophy of 'progressive unification' has produced signature pieces like sari gowns, Indo-chic jackets and draped kurtas. The label was launched in 2000, and ELLE listed their A/W 2005-06 collection, The Camel Safari, among the top five shows at Lakmé Fashion Week.

The watershed moment was the cover of the ELLE March 2009 issue, featuring our then newly named ambassador for breast cancer awareness, Sonam Kapoor, airborne in a voluminous white Shantanu & Nikhil gown. It became, Shantanu says, "The starting point of our love for all things gowns. Since then, our brand DNA has primarily focused on contemporary couture for the new age bride, and ELLE has been one of the driving contributors to that change."

Next up are gowns on every red carpet and flagship stores in fashion capitals the world over. Watch this space.



MAY 2007

Nayantara Parikh

Jatin Kampani



DECEMBER 2013

Suresh Natarajan



DECEMBER 2003

Fabien Charvau



DECEMBER 2007

Tarun Khadwal



MARCH 2009

Suresh Natarajan



OCTOBER 2013

Gyálain Yashi

"The powder pastels spread in ELLE April 2015 perfectly captured the romantic mood inspired by the Victorian period"



DECEMBER 2015

Abhey Singh



MAY 2014

Abhey Singh



AUGUST 2013

Tarun Khadwal

Neyanara Panikh

PANKAJ & NIDHI

If Pankaj and Nidhi Ahuja don't win awards at regular intervals, it's probably because Steve Harvey's been reading out the results. Consider this: in 2008, they won the ELLE Style Award for Best Debut; in 2009, the ELLE Best Women's Prêt-a-Porter Award; in 2011, the ELLE Shape Shifters Award; and, in 2012, the Best Designer Award at the ELLE Style Awards.

The last one meant the most because the accompanying article mentioned their daughter, born the same year. This relatable quality weaves itself into their collections. Their inspirations are drawn from world cultures, like Poland's Wycinanki tradition of paper-cutting or

the costumes of Spanish matadors. But they're translated into clothes that speak a universal language.

The couple's work is loved by women who appreciate conversation pieces. The versatility and colour of their clothes are a stylist's delight, and their label's a regular in our fashion features. Any particular favourites? Nidhi says, "The powder pastels spread from ELLE's April 2015 issue. It perfectly captured the romantic mood inspired by the delicate dentelles and fragile laces of the Victorian period." This year is special for Pankaj & Nidhi too; it's their tenth in fashion. And we've got a hunch it's only the first decade of many. ▶



Anushka Nodia

AUGUST 2009



PANKAJ AND NIDHI AHUJA



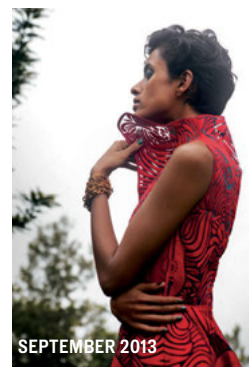
APRIL 2015

Ram Shergill



DECEMBER 2013

Suresh Natarajan



SEPTEMBER 2013

Tarun Vishwa



Colston Julian

MAY 2000

ABRAHAM & THAKORE

"It was like working with friends," says David Abraham, recalling Abraham & Thakore's earliest collaborations with ELLE. When ELLE first lined the racks 20 years ago, he says, "Fashion was a much smaller world, and everyone knew everyone." One of his favourite photographs of himself is a portrait styled by former ELLE stylist Mohan Neelakantan and the first to be shot in Abraham's new home.

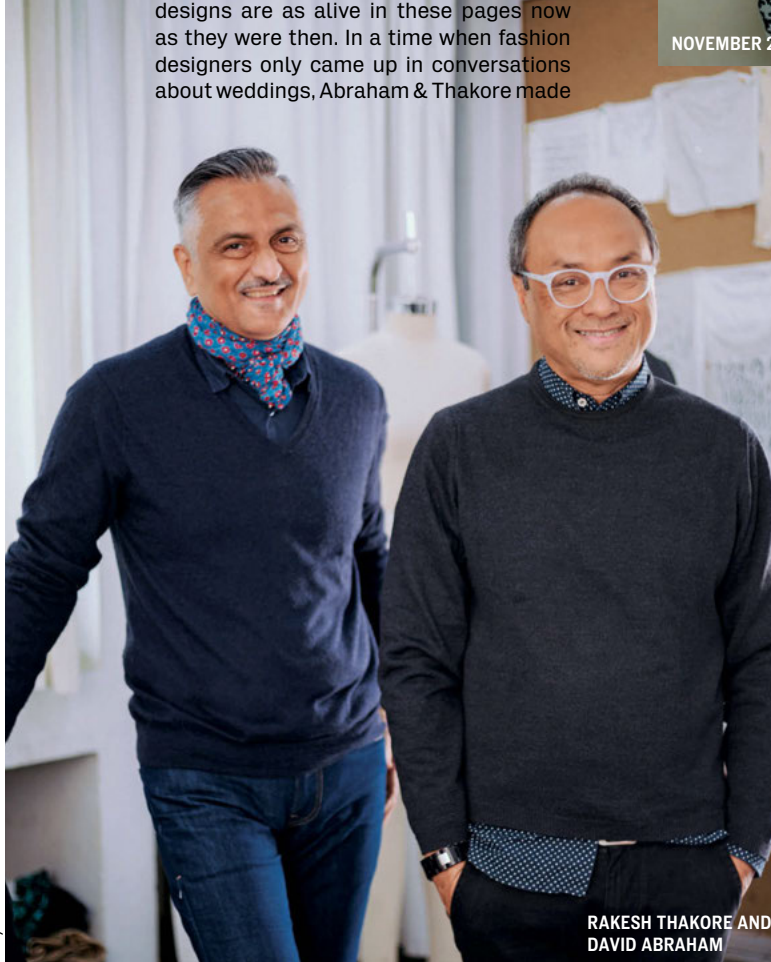
The world, and the industry, has grown exponentially since, but the duo's designs are as alive in these pages now as they were then. In a time when fashion designers only came up in conversations about weddings, Abraham & Thakore made



NOVEMBER 2011

Colston Julian

"ELLE was the first fashion magazine in India. It created a narrative and awareness about fashion, and that fed back into the industry"



RAKESH THAKORE AND DAVID ABRAHAM



Prasad Naik

SEPTEMBER 2013



Bharat Sikka

AUGUST 1998



Tarun Khadwal

JULY 1999



Deepa Parekh

OCTOBER 2003

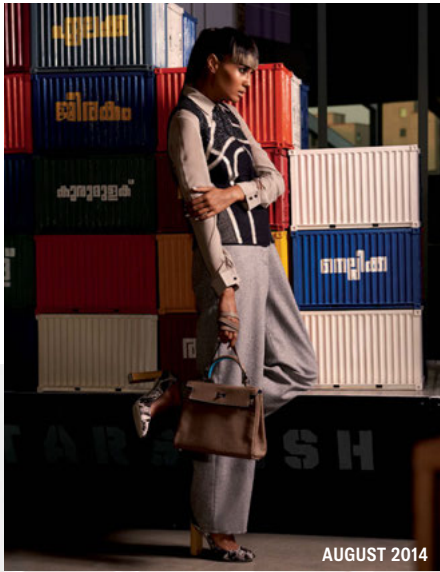


Erikos Andreou

AUGUST 2014

understatement a fashion statement. Time has refined their focus and technique, and they're still as relevant as ever. Case in point: the ELLE July 2015 feature on their upcycled Fall/Winter 2015-16 collection.

Abraham & Thakore stand out for championing fabric, Indian craftsmanship and a modern aesthetic with clothes that are meant to last a lifetime. That's where our world intersects with theirs. "ELLE was the first fashion magazine in India. It created a narrative and awareness about fashion, and that fed back into the industry." After all, we're only as good as the friends we work with. ▶



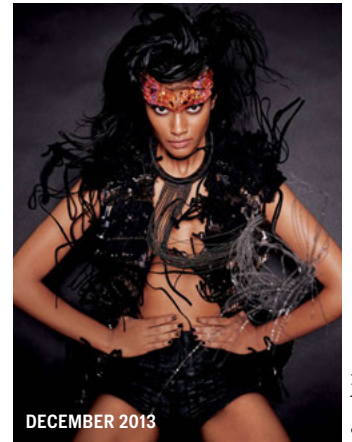
Tarun Vishwa

AUGUST 2014



Suresh Natarajan

MARCH 2009



Suresh Natarajan

DECEMBER 2013

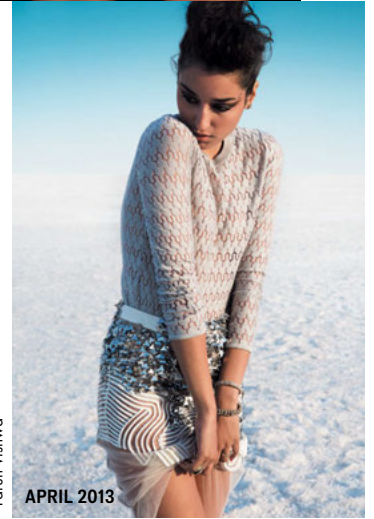
ROHIT GANDHI + RAHUL KHANNA

If 'un-stereotypical' were a dress code, let alone a word, you'd associate it most readily with Rohit Gandhi and Rahul Khanna. They're the go-to designers for traffic-stopping pieces that don't try too hard. Think Freida Pinto's black and white printed dress at the BAFTA party 2013 and Kangana Ranaut's shimmery sheer number on every 'Best Dressed' compilation of 2015.

The duo's intensely detailed yet sharply cut apparel follows an aesthetic that hasn't changed since they first launched their label Cue in 1998. "When we launched Cue," Gandhi recalls, "ELLE was the first to feature us. And we still remember our first exhibition at the Ogaan store. ELLE's continuous support was a great boost."

Not that their spirits needed much lifting. Cue was a hit straight off the bat, thanks to its contrarian blend of wearable western wear for women that never seems too everyday, and is youthful without being flaky. The use of wrinkle-free, climate friendly-fabrics with a hint of sheen was uncommon, and it worked.

The duo then launched its eponymous couture line, and are now concentrating on their diffusion label. Their most memorable ELLE moment? "Winning the ELLE Designer of the Year Award in 2009." ●



Tarun Vishwa

APRIL 2013



Fabien Charreau

DECEMBER 2003



Noyantara Parikh



Francois Mathys

JUNE 2007



Suresh Natarajan

MARCH 2012



Anand Seif

FEBRUARY 2007

RAHUL KHANNA + ROHIT GANDHI

"When we launched Cue, ELLE was the first to feature us. And we still remember our first exhibition at the Ogaan store"