

Filip & Kito

Kito Muñoz is still finishing high school in his hometown of Cadiz, while Filip Cusic Braut is studying fashion design in Madrid. The two discovered each other on Instagram, became Facebook friends and began to Skype regularly, which lead to Filip visiting Kito in Cadiz. They are each other's main source of inspiration.

How it started

Filip: We used Skype a lot before we met, so I knew what I was going to find: a very handsome, stylish boy. But, to be honest, the two of us had a really good connection from the beginning. When I went to Cadiz, Kito and I decided to shoot and film something together to see what happened, and we felt so comfortable. Then I started to help him with his projects, and he with mine. When Kito and I saw that we had a consistent vision, we decided to try to work together.

Taking a picture

Filip: We don't work only as photographers; we're a creative team. While we are taking a photo or finishing the styling, both of us are aware of every detail: clothing, posing, set distribution, lighting. Pressing the button is just another action. We don't care who presses it.

Filip's a model

Kito: This happens when Filip comes to Cadiz and we're bored. If he comes for just three days, we have no time to look for a model, so we just make a few looks and shoot at home.

Kito's inspirations

Kito: Filip, for sure. And the subjects of Thomas Eakins' paintings. Shots by Vincenzo Galdi. [Early 20th century model] Nino Cesarini inspires me a lot, too. And Claude Cahun's self-portraits are so good.



DOUBLE VISION

A NEW GENERATION OF PHOTOGRAPHY DUOS EXPLAIN WHY TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

Story JANINE LEAH BARTELS

P

hotography power couple Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin – better known as Inez and Vinoodh – captivated the fashion industry in the early '90s with their experimental digital images. Now, in the era of advanced digital photography, with one person looking through the camera lens and another at a computer monitor, there is something to be said about strength in numbers. Photographers have been pairing up over the last two decades, sharing their united vision.

“I remember Mert [Alas] and Marcus [Piggott] started around the same time that Inez and Vinoodh [rose to fame] and that was it! People were like, ‘How does it work being two?’” So says Argentinian photographer Mauro Mongiello, who has worked with partner Sofia Sanchez for the last 18 years. “Now, there are lots [of duos] and I can see why! It’s interesting working with someone else; they help you to understand where you’re going and push you there.”

Mongiello had been living in Paris and returned to Argentina for a family holiday in Buenos Aires, which was where he met Sanchez. He was playing guitar in her sister’s band, she was studying cinema. They decided to create a film together, but, with no way to fund it, they began taking pictures to make money. After eight years, the pair moved to Paris – where they are still based – photographing for *Numéro*, *Interview* and *Vogue Italia*. “We had started doing all these things and fell in love,” says Mongiello. “We were together all the time, and it was natural to do everything together. We worked for 12 years like that, then we split.”

When tensions rose, something had to give. “It’s hard to differentiate between the relationship and the work, which makes it complicated,” explains Mongiello. In order to salvage the professional name they had built together, they ended their romance. They now remain best friends, bound by the love of their art.

Another Argentinian fashion photography couple, Luciana Val and Franco Musso, understand this entangled world all too well. After joining forces in the late '90s, they went on to win at the 19th International Festival of Fashion and Photography at Hyères in 2004, and soon began shooting for the pages of *Vogue Italia*, *Harper’s Bazaar Argentina*, *V Magazine* and *Numéro*, as well as for luxury fashion houses including Gucci, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Lanvin and Givenchy. Their professional and personal lives have merged into one, says Val. “Sometimes, after a hard day at work, we’ll say, ‘Enough about work for today! Let’s change the subject!’ But five minutes later we’ll be talking about work again.”

Somehow, all these photographer duos have found a synergy that works. “We take turns,” says Musso. “Now, with digital photography, the one who is not behind the camera is looking at the monitor, so it is very easy to both look at the same time and exchange opinions.”

It is an open discussion that motivates each partner to strive for an even better image. “We push each other all the time. If I was alone, I would be lazier,” admits Mongiello, and his partner backs him up. “We rely on each other completely – it’s almost like dancing,” says Sanchez. “We know each other so well that we can articulate each other’s vision without even trying. We protect each other from our own weaknesses, making us stronger.”

Where one may falter, the other is there to take over the camera. “We don’t fight about who took the picture,” says Mongiello. “If you work with someone, you have to leave your ego to the side. It’s *our* name.”

Laure & Sarah

French photographers Laure Capdevielle and Sarah Bouchet met at ESAG Penninghen in Paris; Laure was studying architecture and interior design, and Sarah did graphic design. They spent many sleepless nights working together, and, after graduating in 2009, began creating dreamy images as a duo.

Double up

Laure: You’re spending your days with a friend! The faith, the energy – everything is doubled! When you find the right person, it drives you. It sounds cheesy, but we almost never disagree!

Sketching the photo

Laure: We use one camera for still-lives, two when there are models. We put together inspirational images and the artistic direction before a shoot, so we have quite a precise idea of what the shots will look like. Our sketches are often really close to the final images, as we build the sets ourselves.

Painterly aesthetic

Sarah: We like to experiment, but it’s usually a mix of on-set and post-production; more handmade and less on the computer.

Inspiration

Sarah: We have the same inspirations: the work of Sarah Moon; the universe of Dirk Braeckman; the paintings of Morandi; the work of director/artist Julian Schnabel. Going to natural history museums and the seaside, too.

Photo: LAURE & SARAH

“When you find the right person, it drives you. It sounds cheesy, but we almost never disagree!”

“It’s all about the teamwork! Combined efforts, brainstorming and double the energy to achieve a goal”

Val & Musso

Luciana Val and Franco Musso met at a party while attending Manuel Belgrano Fine Arts School in Buenos Aires in the early '90s. There was instant attraction. The two began dating, and as Franco was modelling at the time, they slowly began collaborating together. Naturally, they became a team.

Teamwork

Val: It’s all about the teamwork! Combined efforts, brainstorming and double the energy to achieve a goal. It is much more motivating.

Musso’s differences

Val: He is lot better on all the technical aspects! Also, he likes to set up the lights, and he is nicer and more sympathetic with people than I am. I think he likes black-and-white pictures more than colour, for their high contrasts and shadows.

Val’s strengths

Musso: For me, she’s the engine and the soul of the team! She’s strong with colours and how to combine them. She loves horizontal frames, and she’s more minimalist and dreamy than I am. Also, she’s very practical at solving issues.

Buenos Aires

Musso: Right now, we’re based in Buenos Aires, but we often travel to Europe for work, doing shoots for Argentinian magazines and clients. After many years away [they lived in Paris from 2001 to 2012], we’re reconnecting with the friends we love to work with!

Sofie & Maarten

Photographer Sofie Middernacht first met her partner, Rotterdam-born Maarten Alexander, at a friend's birthday party in her native Belgium. Sofie was living and working in London, and Maarten followed her. They have been shooting together as a duo for two years.

It's all because of Sofie

Maarten: I was super-impressed by her. She was living in London, working in a studio and doing all these amazing things that I dreamt of doing. I had always wanted to go abroad, but I never would have done it if it wasn't for her. Amazing things will happen if she does what she does.

No boundaries

Maarten: Initially, when we realised we had similar interests and a similar

aesthetic, we just wanted to see what would happen. But it was difficult in the beginning. When you work with someone, you can't control everything, so we had to let go of some habits. Luckily, we're a couple. If I worked with a friend, it would be a tricky situation, because you don't have this area where there are absolutely no boundaries. As a couple, you need to sort things out or break up!

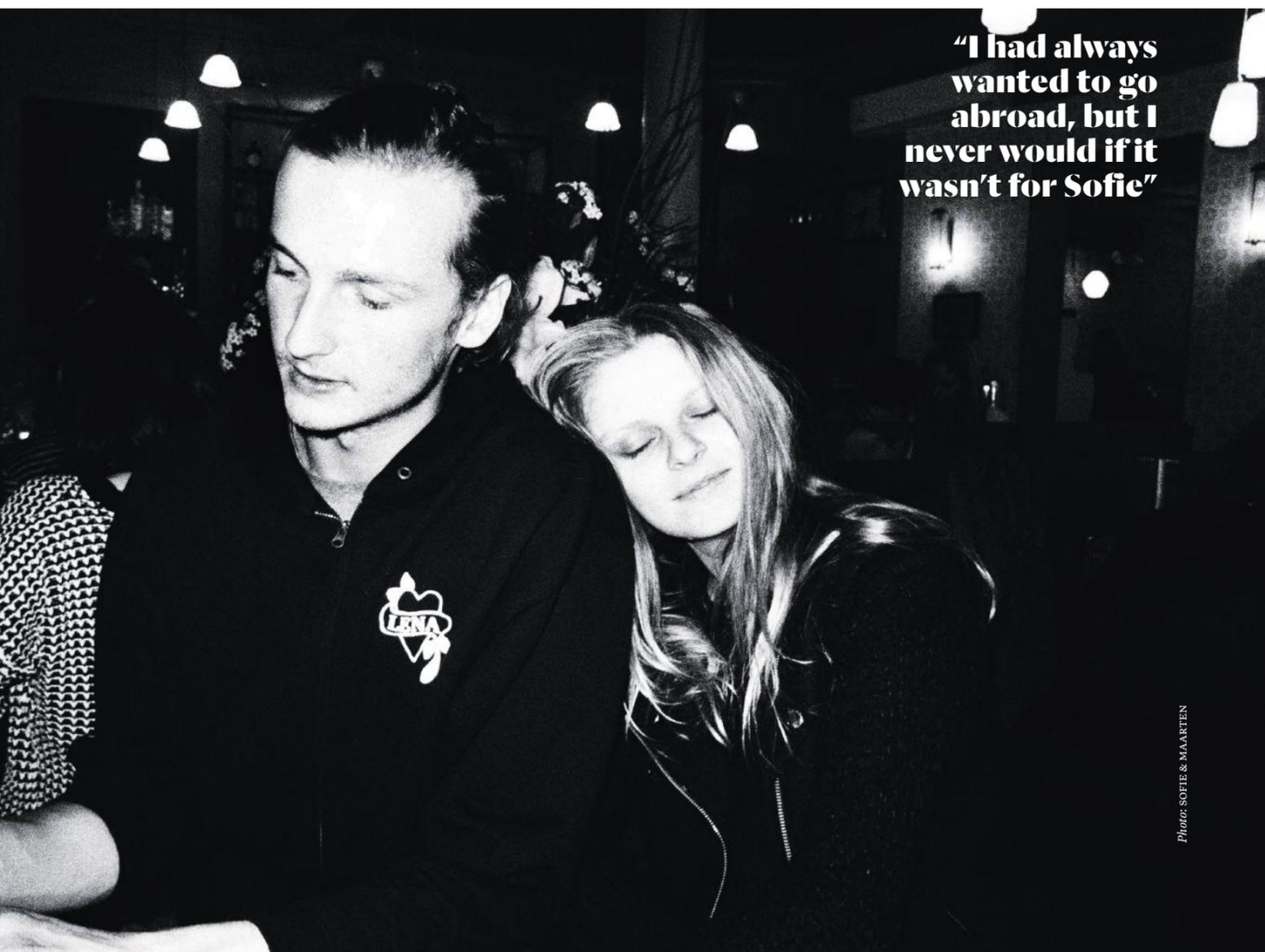
Maarten's strengths

Sofie: His strengths are definitely his technical know-how, and the support he gives me. What I think is amazing is how Maarten can put himself into other people's situation, on set or in his personal life; he has a lot of self-reflection. He can think about what he has done, then come back five minutes

later; he'll even have a theory of why he was doing it, and it actually makes sense rather than just being an excuse. Also, he takes care of business. If I was by myself, I would do everything for free if I liked the person. I would definitely not be here without him.

Having a conversation

Sofie: Sometimes you're not inspired by the model or the styling, so then you need to have a conversation. Luckily, you can do that as a duo. You don't need to have that conversation with yourself any more, because there's someone there who you trust 100 per cent. Then, at the end of the shoot, we'll have the images we wanted. We never know who took what, but both of us are so involved in every picture that we don't care.



"I had always wanted to go abroad, but I never would if it wasn't for Sofie"

Photo: SOFIE & MAARTEN



"No one else can tell which of us took the picture, but we can"

Sofia & Mauro

Argentinian duo Sofia Sanchez and Mauro Mongiello met in Buenos Aires and fell in love while creating images together. After 12 years, they sacrificed their romantic relationship for their work. They have been shooting together for 18 years and are now based in Paris.

The smallest difference

Mauro: We're not exactly the same, and you can see that sometimes when we shoot fashion stories. We'll have the same clothes, girl, hair, moment, camera and light, but somehow the pictures are not the same. The moment when [Sofia] clicks is not the same as when I do. What she communicates with the model is different from what I communicate with the model. No one else can tell which of us took the picture,

but we can. The longer we have been working together, the more we see it.

Capturing celebrities

Mauro: We love shooting portraits; they are a great outlet for us. It's interesting, because you never know what to expect from the person you have in front of you. You get stars who are really professional, but there is always something they won't agree to do. At the end of the day, it's what you manage to get out of this personality, and Sofia is actually great for that. She's really sweet, even though it doesn't show in our pictures. We try to be nice to people.

Being the tall girl

Sofia: I started taking pictures after being inspired by fashion magazines.

I was always very tall [as a child], and I got bullied at school, so, when I was six, my mother bought me my first issue of *Vogue*, in an attempt to make me feel better about myself. She explained to me that models were tall, too. Fashion magazines became my refuge, and I collected them obsessively.

Impressed with Mauro

Sofia: Mauro was full of creative energy. He was the only person I knew who was into the same things I was, and we liked them for the same reasons. I was very impressed by everything he did; he was an amazing musician and performer. He played guitar with my sister in a quite radical punk/riot grrrl band. Mauro was extremely cultivated in art and literature, and so open and sociable.

Photo: SOFIA & MAURO