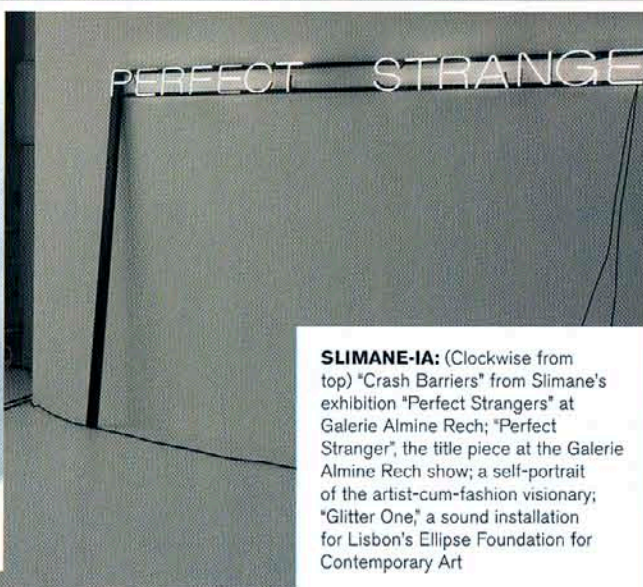
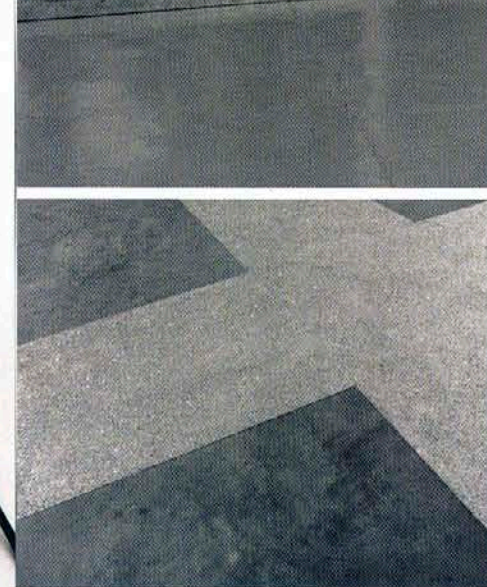


# HEDI METAL

**COOP FLOWN:** Slimane's "Cage One" from his self-curated "Sweet Bird of Youth," exhibited last summer at Arndt & Partner in Berlin



**SLIMANE-IA:** (Clockwise from top) "Crash Barriers" from Slimane's exhibition "Perfect Strangers" at Galerie Almine Rech; "Perfect Stranger", the title piece at the Galerie Almine Rech show; a self-portrait of the artist-cum-fashion visionary; "Glitter One," a sound installation for Lisbon's Ellipse Foundation for Contemporary Art

A FASHION AND DESIGN REBEL, HEDI SLIMANE DEFIES SIMPLE CATEGORIZATION AS AN ARTIST, PHOTOGRAPHER AND CURATOR  
**WRITER: JOHANNA LENANDER**

As creative director of Yves Saint Laurent Homme and Dior Homme, Hedi Slimane ushered in a new age of masculinity: a barely post-adolescent body packaged in skinny jeans, shrunken jackets and dangling scarves. Since then, the scrawny rocker boy has become a mainstream fashion image. But 40-year-old Paris-born Slimane's aesthetic influence extends well beyond the world of couture (from which he, perhaps temporarily, retired last year). While also moonlighting as an interior and furniture designer and guest editor of French newspaper *Libération*, the assiduous Slimane has managed to establish himself as a photographer and installation artist. In fact, his artistic endeavors began long before he ever entered an atelier, when he started taking pictures at age 11 and later studied art history at the Ecole du Louvre in Paris. Over the past four years, Slimane has published four books, shown 11 solo exhibitions and participated in three group shows in prestigious galleries and museums around the world. "He is a true workaholic; he doesn't stop thinking or doing and he's always he Spanish contemporary art museum, Museo de

Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (MUSAC), where Slimane is currently showing a large site-specific installation of photos and videos taken during last year's alternative music event, the Benicàssim Festival.

As he slips in and out of different disciplines and contexts, Slimane's vision remains remarkably constant. "Hedi is an artist who has his own space — his own universe — where he explores the thin line between adolescence and the loss of innocence," says Pérez Rubio. Indeed, Slimane's entire creative vision seems to revolve around two core themes: tender youth and rebellion. The hero of Slimane's universe is the same rebel who shuffled down the Dior catwalks and shows up throughout his work as rock god, rapturous fan or just the kid next door. "I always had a feeling for anything that was emerging. When I was a teenager, I was already aware of the vulnerability and grace of youth," says Slimane. "I started photography at age 11 and street casting at 18, and oddly, the subject all these years has remained unchanged." The same sense of graphic shapes and minimalist aesthetic that defined his clothing and furniture also runs through his black and white photography: both chaotic mosh pit moments and posed studio portraits

are captured with the same serene melancholy.

Slimane's recent installation work appears to be a recreation of the environments he photographs by using readymade materials such as speakers, cuttings from fanzines and stage equipment. "With fashion or photography I always tried to start with depicting the topography that gives context to a subject," says Slimane. In the photo installation "Crash Barriers," pictures of fans at a rock concert are screened on the actual crash barriers that separate fans from the stage at concerts. The sculpture "Cage One" features a barren black cage with speakers mounted on each side from which one can hear the similarly youth-obsessed filmmaker Gus Van Sant play guitar at a very low volume. "Somehow the space around the subject appears to be hostile, manufactured," says Slimane. "It represents order. Against this background, my subject is somehow emotional, lost, restless." That sense of restlessness could also apply to Slimane himself, as he divides his time between LA and Paris and always seems to be on the move, searching for new subjects and images. "He has a radical vision of beauty, a beauty without devices, an ethical beauty," says his Paris gallerist Almine Rech. "He is a romantic, and in a way, an utopist who imagines a different world." ▀