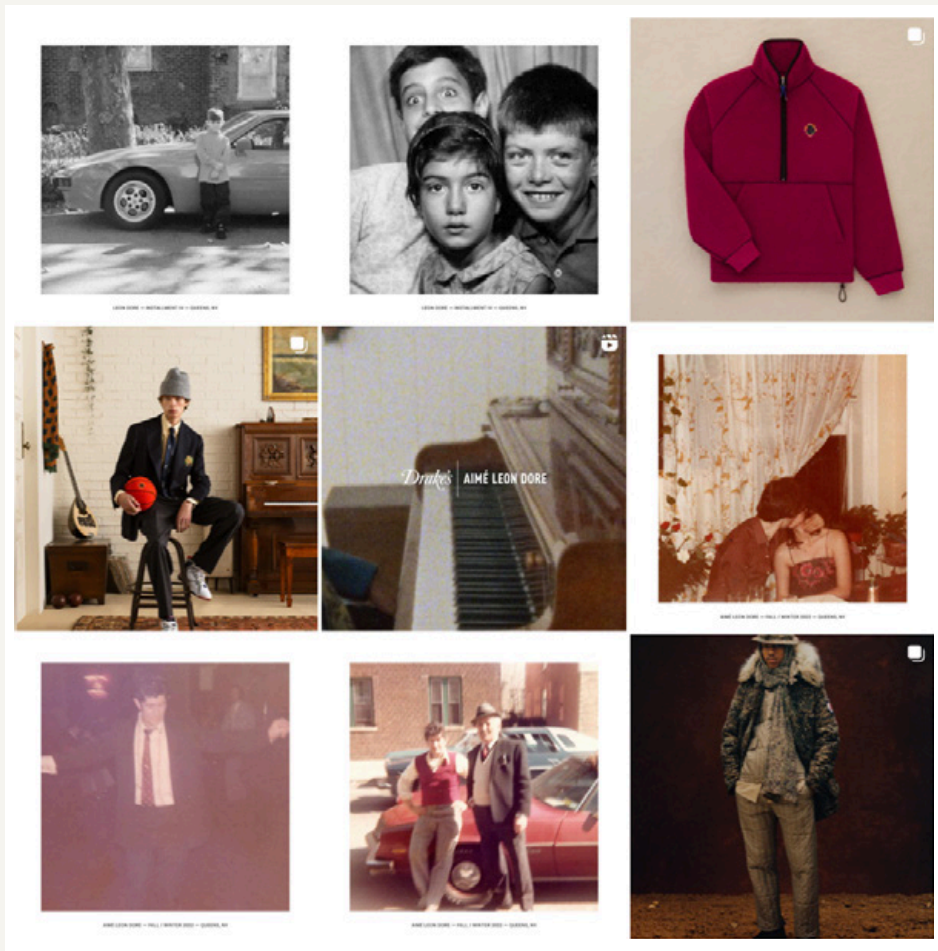


How-To Create A Great Brand



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This is an *indefinitive* exploration of a how-to on creating an engaging brand. It's *indefinitive*, because there is not a single way to create a great brand and my explanation will be somewhat simplistic and short. For some, my explanation will be intuitive, simple, but for many it may be challenging and cryptic. This paper began after a recent walk around the Nolita neighborhood of New York City, and specifically seeing the long lines of people queuing outside the temporary Aimé Leon Dore store. The store is temporary because Aimé Leon Dore is renovating their store on Mulberry street, and so they currently have a small fit-out around the corner with a café. I had past the permanent ALD store many times before, and it always had a long queue, but even more surprising for me was the type of people that gathered around the store. It was as though they had hired actors, styled them, and paid them to hang outside. And while it is possible that a brand might do this, I am confident that it is the success of the ALD brand to attract the type of person whose styles themselves in certain way and relates to the brand. ALD has created and managed a brand that people love and associate with, it is reflective of their lifestyle and culture, and they visit the store as does a religious person attend a church. They do so for inspiration and affinity, to be a part of it. They do to pay homage, to pay their respects to the brand and in hopes of leaving with a token of their experience and of the brand. I dare you to suggest that I am over thinking the dedication that people have to this brand, and to others. A few blocks down from the ALD store was an even longer queue, approximately fifty people deep, waiting to enter the Supreme store. A store that has low quantities of product, and effectively acts more like a museum than it does a retail store selling SKUs. But this not about Supreme, which I have written about before, but about the Aimé Leon Dore brand created by Teddy Santis. Later that day I visited the ALD Instagram page and their website, because while I knew of the brand, I was not actually familiar with the brand and their products. This paper is the result of what I learned and my attempt to explain to someone else what I found to be so profound and successful about the Aimé Leone Dore brand; their product design, the creativity of Teddy Santis, their brand image, and their brand communications. I feel that the ALD Instagram page is a course in how to create an engaging brand. There are other brands that are better case studies offering more profound brand images, more disciplined, higher design-minded, less American and narrative in the story-telling—such as APC or Acne Studios—but such examples are more complicated to explain their power and affect, as they are either more academic or obscure in their references.

To begin, a brand always needs a story. Its needs a why. Why does the organization exist? Walmart exists because they seek to offer people the things they need at the lowest possible price and within a setting of wonder where one can experience the great find. A great brand does not have to be loved by everyone, but will often be loved by those who it best serves. Walmart is a utilitarian brand with some extra. It does best through its physical stores where they can surprise a shopper a with a great deal and find and delight them in the wonder of a five-gallon bar of pickles and a wall of stacked detergent. But it struggles when it tries to replicate this experience online. In the digital space they compete with brands like Amazon, who were

formed online and whose story are rooted in that experience. Walmart is also not a producer brand, like a Louis Vuitton, a brand with a rich legacy of producing the highest quality luggage for the most privileged traveler. Louis Vuitton luggage was not empty cases to contain things, they were traveling pieces of furniture designed exclusively for the wealthy traveler to maintain their high quality of life and be surrounded by the things they felt necessary while away from their homes. Louis Vuitton is rooted in high-craft, high design, and high life. Most people aspire to be able to purchase from the brand, while only few really can. Each of these brands have stories. Every brand has a story. But having a story doesn't make a great brand, it is understanding the story and making decisions as an organization rooted in the story.

Second, a brand has to exist in some form. It may be a retail store or a museum in which case it exists through the physical architecture and the content within. But even a physical brand needs to communicate, it needs to speak. And it does this through visual mediums, whether they be material or digital. The speaking is the brand image. For the physical brand, the architecture and product are also part of the image, but they are fixed, unchanging. The communications are live, active, and continually new. Every brand should have a visual language for how they speak, and it should be rooted in their story.

On the following pages I deconstruct and diagram the Aimé Leon Dore brand through an analysis of their marketing, website, store, and social media—specifically their IG page. I started this analysis with two goals in mind, first to understand why the brand resonated so well to me, even though their fashion design is not what I might purchase, although I do greatly appreciate their look and aesthetic. I wanted to understand what was so engaging to me. The second goal was how to communicate what I found to someone else.

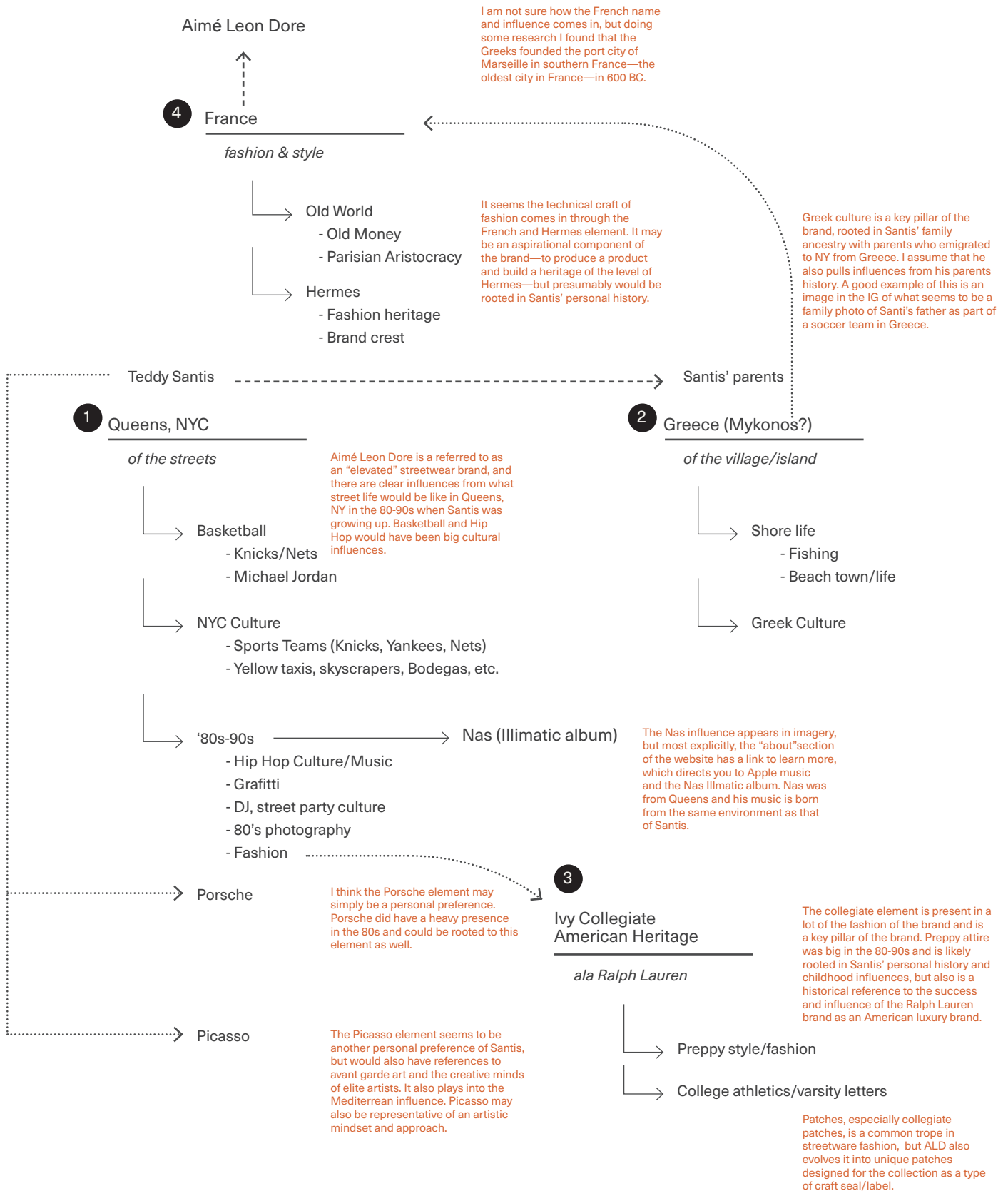
What are seemingly random series of images, is in fact story telling. It tells the story of the brand, which is essentially the creativity of Teddy Santis, the founder and creative director of the brand. That is the overall narrative, Aimé Leon Dore is the product of Teddy Santis' and Teddy Santis is the product of his family lineage, upbringing, experiences, interests, loves, and his creativity. Then, within are a series of short stories mostly about the collections, but also about a way of living, and the inspiration and references of the creative process. The short stories are all rooted in the life of Teddy Santis. Sometimes the images may be more direct references, such as the video and images on the IG page of the fifth generation potter in Athens; the imagery shows the influence of muted earthly tones from the pottery, as well as the landscape, and there is also a focus on craft which then informs the Aimé Leon Dore patch design. Other times the imagery may be less direct, likely selected for their affective qualities and to build the brand image; whether it is a life of being on the streets, part of small community in a fishing village, or a larger culture of basketball. The content is engaging at face-value, but also allows one to engage in an archaeological-type dig (which is what I attempted) on the brand and to understand the norms, values, and cultural meanings of Aimé Leon Dore.

That's all I am going to say. For the rest you need to follow my diagrams. To best understand, I recommend visiting the Aimé Leon Dore Instagram page and website.

<https://www.instagram.com/Aiméleondore/>

<https://www.Aiméleondore.com>

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If you take a single image from one of the Aimé Leon Dore collections, there will be a combination of brand attributes as well as influences for the collection. The brand and product never seems to stray too far. The range and depth of brand attributes outlined on the previous page offer a broad landscape of influences and design language to pull from while staying within the Aimé Leon Dore brand. Using the list on the left you can identify a number of these attributes as elements (props) within the setting.

France

fashion & style

Old World

- Old Money

- French Aristocracy

Hermes

- Fashion heritage

- Brand crest

Queens, NYC

of the streets

Basketball

NYC Culture

'80s-90s

Porsche

Picasso

Greece (Mykonos?)

of the village/island

Shore life

Greek Culture

Ivy Collegiate American Heritage

Preppy style/fashion

College athletics/varsity letters



Design Made Shorts are brief articles on change and design by Founder & Chief Designer Brock Danner. See our website for more: designmadenyc.com