

‘The outline has to do with the inside shape as well,’ Paris notes.

‘I think if I had grown up in Paris my illustrations would be different,’ says the artist (whose chosen nom de plume winks at the City of Light, the birthplace of fashion). Though reluctant to make comparisons between his work and that of the artists he admires, Paris’s acknowledged influences are Dutch: Dick Bruna, he of the graphic, one-line rabbit, and Fiep Westendorp, creator of the beloved Jip and Janneke. The silhouettes of these story-book Dutch children are abstracted by being coloured black. ‘From Westendorp I got the idea of drawing faces in profile,’ Paris grants.

Is there significance in the fact that Paris names two children’s illustrators as inspiration? His mother tells us that Paris was drawing on the walls when he was still in the playpen. This might be a key to understanding Paris’s work – for however sophisticated and bold it might be, it also possesses a childlike purity. ‘I think for me, fashion is about shape,’ Paris says.

Yet 20 years into his career he still has to explain what his job is, what illustration is, and rues the fact that there isn’t a more grown-up approach to understanding the art. ‘It’s funny,’ Paris muses, ‘because everyone starts his life by making drawings. Children are encouraged to draw and their works are hung on the wall – and then if you make it your job, no one wants to understand anymore.’

Mature in his career – celebrated in the 110 artworks that follow – and confident in his technique, one nevertheless feels that Paris maintains the ardour of a child’s brimming heart. He delights and lures us with images as irresistible as candy to a babe.

‘Illustration is such a beautiful way of me telling about my all-time love affair – with fashion,’ Paris admits. And so each of his artworks is presented to the world as a valentine.

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He doesn't get very far, usually just to the corner of the drawing. For new forms, silhouettes, bags and shoes, all attention is focused on her. He extends his hand, opens the door, starts the car and allows her to shine without any fuss. There's no escaping it: women reign supreme in fashion.

