

hair report



Scenes from the autumn/winter 1996 shows: 1, Pita coiffs Kate Moss's hair at Todd Oldham while Helena Christensen looks on; elegant styles at Donna Karan, 2, and TSE Cashmere, 3; 4, drama at Rifat Ozbek



5 and 7, Orlando Pita sculpted these gravity-defying spikes for Naomi Campbell and Kate Moss at Rifat Ozbek's autumn/winter 1996 show. 6, at the DKNY show Pita created the new season's key style, where the hair is smoothed back from the face and caught up behind the head, allowing strands to escape and hang loose

Meanwhile he's sectioning off my hair and spraying it with John Frieda Instant Boost and Shiner. "I like to use this as a blow-drying lotion," he says. "It's my fave new discovery." (Other much-loved products include Frieda's Frizz-Ease Serum and Kiehl's Leave-In Conditioner.)

Pita's working around my head with his circular brush and hair dryer. There's no terrifying blast, no tugging - everything is extremely gentle. "You get used to being careful when you work with models' hair," he says. "It gets styled so often that it can be in really bad condition." The angle of the brush is crucial: blow-drying for Pita isn't just about styling the hair. "I'm drying to get a good texture," he explains. And as he talks, my hair is slowly transformed into a shining helmet of separated strands. It's thick and glossy, with plenty of bounce and swing. It's the sort of hair that you can run your hands through, push behind your ears - just about anything looks cool. I'm beginning to feel extremely sorry for every woman who has not been beatified with the treatment. "It's so versatile," I falter. "I have to do it like this on shoots," he says. "One picture can call for one look, but in the next shot, you may need something different."

Madonna has famously called Pita an angel, and there is an otherworldly aura about him. In a business that thrives on self-promotion and ego, Pita's manner is quiet and self-effacing. There's something of the ascetic in there too - he doesn't drink coffee and, like some Old Testament prophet, he hasn't washed his hair for 12 years, preferring to rinse it, oil it and then

brush it through with his fingers. And Orlando has beautiful hair, all soft chocolate curls pulled back into a ponytail.

We chat on about models, actresses, the pressure of working at the pace he does (in the next few days, he's working on model-turned-performance artist Veruschka's new look and all the US heavyweight glossies before hopping over to LA to shoot pictures with Madonna and Herb Ritts to publicise the movie *Evita*, for which he designed Madonna's hair). He's telling me the key hair looks for autumn: "Tied up, pulled back. Very simple, very fresh. I think they might have a problem with that in the US, though, because it's not 'coiffed' enough."

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But I'm all for that. Looking at my hair in the mirror as Pita flipped and flopped it, I knew that I had just experienced something that would rarely happen in a salon - I didn't have a version of someone else's hair on my head. I didn't look like Julia Carling or Anthea Turner or the Princess of Wales or any of those women with much-copied hairdos. Instead I looked like me, with my hair, but a version of my hair that was glossy, groomed and versatile.

The next morning I woke up and shook my hair, just for the joy of watching it fall into place. If anything, it looked better than yesterday... heavier, more luxuriant. I couldn't help singing: "I'm combing my hair now... And wondering which dress to wear now... I say a little prayer..."