



Pita gave Naomi Campbell's long, straight hair an uncharacteristic look—soft, loose curls—for *Allure*. (The outfit is by Christian Lacroix.)

he started messing around with hair. Nothing unusual; hair was just another kind of material, like Play-Doh. Out on his own, he actually began his career on Wall Street, briefcase and all. But time passed, Orlando was discontented, and by a prescient twist of fate, a friend called to see if he'd fill in for a hairstylist who was unable to make it to a photo shoot. Suddenly, hairstyling seemed like a possibility.

And perhaps because Orlando didn't go to beauty school (he did get experience while working with fashion magazines in Europe), his ideas weren't limited by any traditional rules of coiffure. "I think the 40s and 50s hairdos were very beautiful," he says, "but I've already seen them, and why not try to do something *new* that looks good?"

"If I think I can get a certain shape out of the hair by weaving wire into it, I'll do it," he adds. "I don't think twice about it." And why should he? Many of his more improbable ideas have been very successful indeed. At Gaultier shows, he has adorned hair with everything from hardware to feathers to Hasidic-inspired tendrils. At this spring's Martine Sitbon show, he attached ponytails that looked like giant versions of the tassels that hang off caps at college commencements every spring. Orlando can even build a monument where there was once just a bob (see his toolbox for a small sampling of the hairpieces he uses). The design team of Dolce & Gabbana hire him for what they call his dexterity. Everyone else remarks on his complete lack of ego.

Which isn't to say he's just a regular guy. In fact, he's almost ethereal and, at 32, still uncorrupted by a very materialistic, aggrandizing business. He often takes editorial jobs that give him a lot of creative latitude but little money over advertising ones that would give him a lot of cash. Of course, at this point, he isn't hurting: He has an apartment in New York and a place in Miami, and he tries to rent apartments in Europe when he has to be there for any length of time.

Even so, he's not a careerist. Stylists who've worked with Orlando call him an artist, which might sound like a blatant abuse of the word if it weren't for his masterful hands. Before his time became fully consumed by CK One ads and fashion-show theatrics, he even made some of his own clothes. Recently, he created several full-length gowns out of hair because he felt like it. And he'll admit that on the set of Madonna's video, he had no idea whether the patent-leather notion would even work. It did, in the end, to great video noir effect.

Orlando, a vegetarian who cooks as a therapeutic exercise, doesn't follow recipes. "I guess I approach cooking the same way I do hair," he says. "If I want to eat beans, I'll think of different ways of cooking them. The more spices you try, the more you know what will go with what." ●

Orlando has adorned hair with hardware and built a monument where there once was a bob.

TEST RUN
By Tracy Young

Orlando Pita's helpful hints for home hairstyling fall, for the most part, under the category of Easy for Him to Say. But one of his suggestions this month—for cuts that are growing out—seemed eminently doable, even by me.

First I stared at my bangs in the mirror, trying to decide whether they were growing out or just shaggy. Concluding that it hardly mattered which, I proceeded to follow Pita's advice.

He said to make a low side part, then comb some hair over the bangs to make them disappear. But, I fretted, isn't this what balding men do? Won't my hair look like Frank Sinatra's rug?

Oh, me of little faith. Gone were the chewed-looking bangs. In their place, with the addition of a little judiciously applied gel...a shiny new homemade hairdo. Now, for something in patent leather...



For this *Vogue* photo, Nadja Auermann got one of Pita's constructed do's: A blond Artemis look.