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MATERIAL INTEREST

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The house that Sprouse built



That graffiti-apparel trend? The neon colors Kanye likes? You can thank Stephen Sprouse for those, even if you've never seen his work. Sprouse—who died in 2004 at the age of 50—was one of the most buzzed-about designers of the eighties and nineties (even if his sales never quite reached the level of his fame). Inspired by punk, his line reached far beyond the usual CBGB sphere: Bergdorf's and Bendel's were early supporters, and as Roger and Mauricio Padilha make clear in their new visual biography, they were far from his only patrons and ardent fans. For *The Stephen Sprouse Book*, the authors spoke to everyone from Marc Jacobs to his former neighbor and friend Debbie Harry, whom he styled for several albums, and their memories are universally rapturous. Of course, there's no need to take their word for it: The book is lavishly illustrated with Sprouse's drawings, designs, and editorials, like the 1987 sketch below—all of which are best described as, in the words of Simon Doonan, "punk couture." And yet, for all his '77 assonances, his supporters insist he was a forward thinker. "He was before his time," says stylist and editor Sean Byrnes, "He was making things for 2010 in the eighties." If that's so, the time's ripe for a reappraisal; New Yorkers can start at *Rock on Mars*, the Sprouse exhibit that coincides with the book's release at Deitch Projects in January. \$65, available Jan. 9 at Louis Vuitton boutiques and Jan. 13 at amazon.com; for more information, visit thestephensprousebook.com or welovesprouse.com (launching tomorrow)



Spring 1987 collection sketch



Sprouse working on his collaboration with Knoll, 2003



MATTHEW SCHNEIER

Photos: The Stephen Sprouse Book, by Roger Padilha and Mauricio Padilha © Rizzoli New York 2009

1:57 PM, December 16, 2008