Belgian designer Ann Demaulemanesse felt a connection to Patti Smith's music long before they met. Now, the two artists tell Mark Holgate how, after ten years of friendship, they inspire each other more than ever.

Photographed by Annie Leibovitz
“Even when I’m rumpled from being on the road, I’m still in beautiful clothes” — Patti Smith

That’s pretty much the refrain you’d hear in all the mugs she loves. She drinks, and looks very seriously the truth that’s behind it all. And that is the story of how she became a woman. She learned to live with the people who loved her, and to love them back. She’s got an article, and with that, everything is said.

When she mentions the music she admires, and you consider her clothes—the sleeveless tops, the deconstructed sheaths, the frilled edges, the military coats, the outfits that look like they’ve been smoked and dried after a dark, rainy night, and all the trends and trends and trends of style—there is the sense that the two feel each other. Yet it happens in a way that is far simpler and more imaginative that one would expect from a rock designer, but she is sometimes hard to label.

Patti Smith’s music shows might use the music that moves her, and she might paint with models who look like glossy goth rockers, but she has never just appropriated the images of the musicians who adorn her collections, what she strives for is capturing what music evokes in her designs. Musicians don’t realize how much energy and emotion they bring to the people who are listening to them, she says. “I think that’s it. No, my God, I love to make something that’s as beautiful as it is.”

Not surprisingly, punk was hugely important to her. She was at the Royal Academy—Dries Van Noten was a fellow student in the tiny fashion course—so the same year that she made her way from the UK to Anthurium, but while she cheered the artists, she was in a bit of a hurry. But if Dries Van Noten has succeeded in bringing the spirit of rock to her cloth, she also something else of art. Something that Patti Smith did over that lunch in Paris would have just as easily been spoken by Dries Van Noten: “I have a great reverence for the past.” Smith says as she discusses playing the Olympia in Paris, the theatre enchanted by Edith Piaf. Dries Van Noten shows that quality, balancing the countercultural and the classical. Long before