

BREAKING THE ICE

DSW partners with Adam Rippon and Mirai Nagasu for a showcase of self-expression.

There is a certain magic about Adam Rippon and Mirai Nagasu. Friends for 11 years, they play off each other seamlessly, finishing each other's sentences. Even when no one is watching, Adam and Mirai dance together. They genuinely laugh together. They giggle at inside jokes. They smile whether or not the camera's clicking.

And that's the thing about these two. They're actually friends. And they're actually real (really cool) people. They're the kind of people you'd want at a party because they *are* the party.

Arguably one of the most expressive and entertaining figure skaters ever, Adam Rippon has a rapid-fire wit and famously impeccable eyebrows. His resume is long: bronze medalist, *Dancing with the Stars* winner, political pot-stirrer, and LGBTQ activist.

And Mirai Nagasu—this girl never backs down. Ever. A bronze medalist—and the first American woman to land a triple axel at the Olympics (!)—is a study in opposites. She's tenacious but charming, strong but sweet. And America is obsessed.

They are icons with social-media-proven track records of being totally and unapologetically themselves. And DSW is literally a warehouse full of opportunities for self-expression. It was an instant, obvious match.

So we recently spent a foggy L.A. day with these two, swapping stories about style icons, taking risks, and how shoes are an essential part of self-expression.

When asked about his style, Adam said, "It's pretty classic and casual, but with a fun twist. Kind of wild but still everyday wearable." For our photoshoot, he's styled in floral suit shorts, silky tracksuits, and camo sneakers. But it's his confidence—and his smize—that really stand out.

"You know, since the Olympics and *Dancing with the Stars*, I've seen myself taking more risks in my style because I've been exposed to different styles of clothing," he said. "Then I'm like, 'You know what—I'm just going to wear it.' And just kind of challenge myself. It's always those first few steps out the door that are the most uncomfortable," he added. "And then you just rock it. And you feel so good about it."

Although a self-proclaimed tomboy, Mirai looks right at home in Vans and floral heels alike. Between sets, she thoughtfully riffles through clothing options, tries on hats and shades, and cuddles her pup Lincoln.

"Lazy chic!" she quipped when asked about her style. "I like to look good, but I like to be as comfortable as possible."

"Figure skating has made me appreciate the nuances and art to style," Mirai continued. "I'm all about trying new things and products and new looks. Makeup is my thing. In figure skating, you get one costume and you wear it all season. But the makeup is always evolving and so is my style."

Adam added, "I love the idea of being able to show my different sides and personalities through my style. Shoes are a huge part of that."

When asked about her own shoe collection, Mirai laughed and said, "So. Many. So, so many. Heels, flats, tennis shoes, workout shoes, hiking shoes...a lot. I mean, a girl has *got* to have options."

Maintaining their identities while being hurtled into fame doesn't seem to faze these two. Their style, their

personalities, their *vibes* seem to just be getting stronger—even as celebrities, international companies, and fans want in on their lives.

“I don’t think it all really has hit me yet because it’s all been so much, so fast,” Adam said. “It hasn’t hit me, everything that I’ve gotten to do and all the people I’ve gotten to meet. I just take it day by day.”

Mirai is equally chill about everything. “I feel really grateful for this opportunity to tell my story. Because I was raised by my immigrant parents who started with nothing, my roots are really strong. Honestly, I just try to be myself at all times. I never forget where I’m from and I don’t let it all get to my head.”

Over the past 11 years, Adam and Mirai have faced tons of challenges (and wins!) together. They became so close, Mirai’s mother would pack Adam a lunch to take with him to the rink. Then four years ago, they were eating burgers on Mirai’s roof, consoling each other after both missing out on the 2014 Games. Things are...a bit different now, and Mirai suggested a reenactment of their rooftop sob—complete with fries and coordinating sneakers. “This is full circle. We’re celebrating! These right here are celebratory cheeseburgers,” Adam said.

So what’s next? Surprise! It might not be skating—at least not for Adam. (Someone get this man a talk show host gig *now*.) But both friends are dedicated to using their platforms for good—to advocate for others, to share stories, to inspire, to help.

“Skating has taught me so many important things that sports usually do—about hard work, about goal setting,” Adam said. “And I’m so grateful for everything that it’s taught me. So no matter what, I will always try to stay connected to the ice.”

After years of experiences, challenges, triumphs, and viral tweets, Adam and Mirai have learned a thing or two about being themselves—and being role models. “I remember being a young kid and not feeling like I had somebody to look up to,” Adam said. “So I try to be *that* person.”

“This is all sort of fresh for me, trying to be a role model,” he continued. “But it’s important for me to embody those personality traits that are important for young people to see.”

Adam, the first openly gay American man to qualify for the Winter Olympics, has already given today’s youth (and millennials, and Gen X-ers, and Baby Boomers...) someone to look up to. But, as he points out, it’s just a “fun fact” about him—just like he’s the oldest of six kids, or from Pennsylvania, or

the oldest first-time Olympian since 1932.

“I guess somebody had to be the first,” he said when discussing his “openly gay athlete” title so many news outlets gave him. “But it’s so not important. And it’s not the reason I’ve been able to accomplish so many things. It’s just a fact about me, not a defining characteristic.”

He went on: “Embrace all of the things that make you different, because those are the things that set you apart.”

Mirai has a dedicated fan base of her own that loves her for never giving up, for speaking her mind, and for making—as Mirai says—*herstory*.

“There will always be people who don’t like what you do or what you say,” she said. “But just forget about them. Be true to you. Always be unapologetically yourself.”

Team DSW couldn’t agree more.