Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

ICONS OF STYLE / A CENTURY OF FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY, 1911-2011

Allon Schoener · Wednesday, July 11th, 2018

A stunning, engrossing exhibition! No, you're not a voyeur at The Met Gala in New York nor at the Academy Awards in LA; however, you are exposed to a world of synthesized glamour encapsulating beauty, commerce and art as portrayed by an array of talented photographers conveying the creations of ingenious women's clothing designers displayed on the bodies of women of exceptional visual appeal. The exhibition is rich in contemporary, historical and international connotations. It's a treasure chest of exhilarating images.

Fashion today is a global empire attracting an endless parade of talents: designers, models, photographers, and moguls. Collectively, they contribute to this creatively enhanced commercial phenomenon. In this exhibition, you are exposed to some of the best and most memorable images created by these collaborators over one hundred years. Many were for assignments by fashion magazines, principally *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Others were created for brand promotional campaigns and some were created as unique art objects with no commercial connotation.

Fashion is not exclusively a present day phenomenon; it is an intrinsic and continually evolving cultural trait found in most societies. Sculptural portraits of women in Ancient Rome can be dated by hair styles. In a portrait of Julius Caesar from about 50B.C., we see him with close cropped hair, while a portrait of Hadrian, a succeeding emperor of100 years late, shows him with the equivalent of a Beatles cut of the 1960s. In the wake of the French Revolution, leaders emphasized the elimination of odious class distinctions in dress. They debated vigorously regarding the appropriate attire for citizens and government officials. Their egalitarian proscriptions were not sustained; however, in the wake of the subsequent industrial revolution, personal dress was universally democratized.

Today, we live in a bi-furcated world of fashion: couture and global mass marketing. Couture is the business of designing, making, and selling fashionable custom-made women's clothing. It's functional centers are: Paris. Milan, London and New York where designers present their latest designs in spring and fall shows. Dior, Armani, Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, Marc Jacobs, and a legion of others function in both camps. Most couture is created by teams of seamstresses in designers' studios. Mass marketed clothing is produced throughout the world where manufacturing costs can be sustained at a minimum. Unquestionably, couture is for the wealthy

and super rich. It always has been. Mass market clothing is for everyone else.

What is unique about today's commercial/industrial society is the frequency and speed with which styles change. Andy Warhol's "fifteen minutes of fame" hardly resonates in today's world of instantaneous "instagram princesses." In the photo galleries of The Getty, we can luxuriate in a plethora of fashionable images that have endured the test of time – some a century, some one or more decades while others have a more recent origin offer a very different aesthetic. The collective experience at The Getty provides one with both an aesthetic experience and a remarkable insight into the world of fashion.

1911-1929" / THE BEGINNINGS

Wearing many hats, photographer, curator and author, Edward Steichen might be considered the progenitor of fashion photography. In 1911, the French publisher Lucien Vogel engaged Edward Steichen to create the first artistic fashion photographs. Steichen's "*Blidah Dress by Paul Poiret,"* 1911, with its soft focus is characteristic of the fashion photography style promulgated by Steichen at this time. Keep in mind that photographers of this era utilized a camera that was a bulky contraption equipped with 8 x10 inch glass plate negatives. Consequently, their subjects could be detailed with intense accuracy while being frozen in time and space.

In 1914, American magazine publisher Condé Nast hired Baron Adolf de Meyer as the first full-time fashion photographer at *Vogue.* Subsequently, de Meyer went to Paris in 1922, and Steichen became chief photographer for Condé Nast. From soft focus echoing 19th century romanticism, Steichen evolved into a less picturesque style with sharper imagery responding to the changing times: jazz age and French modernism in art and architecture. His choice of models was a key factor in his success. Lee Miller and Marion Morehouse were among his favorites.

Lee Miller lead an astonishing life. In World War II she became a front line photo journalist, later muse to the Picasso, Eluard circle of artists and writers, then wife of Roland Penrose, eminent British modernist art collector and critic. I met her in London forty years after her modeling career had terminated. In her sixties, she made a striking impression.

Edward Steichen, American born Luxembourg, 1879-1973, Gloria Swanson, 1924, Gelatin silver print. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum

1930-1946 / FROM DEPRESSION TO WAR

From the impact of the The Great Depression in 1929 until the end of World War II in 1945, fashion was inevitably influenced by these cataclysmic events. The Great Depression of 1929 was the worst economic crisis in the history of the United States and World War II was the deadliest war experienced by Western European societies. Elsa Schiaparelli, grande dame of French fashion of this era, said, "In difficult times fashion is always outrageous."

Edward Steichen, American born Luxembourg, 1879-1973, Perfection in Black; Margaret Horan, 1935, Gelatin silver print, Courtesy of and ? Condé Nast, Vogue, November 1, 1935

Cecil Beaton, British, 1904-1980, Fashion is Indestructible, London, 1941, Gelatin silver print, London, Victoria and Albert Museum

Edward Steichen continued to play a major role in fashion photography as director of photography for *Condé Nas*t publications, which included *Vogue.* Steichen manifested his philosophy that art was commercial by joining the staff of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. At this point in his career, his brand of modern fashion photography, abandoned romanticism in favor of clear, clean images echoing the philosophical modernism of the Bauhaus and LeCorbusier.

In the Post-Depression Era, a legion of fashion photographers emerged; among them were: Erwin Blumenfeld, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, Baron Adolf de Meyer, Toni Frissell, George Hoyningen Huene, Horst P. Horst, Martin Munkácsi, and George Platt Lynes among others.

1947-1959 / "THE NEW LOOK" AND MORE

Richard Avedon, American, 1923-2004, Renée, The New Look of Dior, Place de la Concorde, Paris, August 1947, negative 1947, print 1978, Gelatin silver print, The Richard Avedon Foundation, New York. Copyright ? The Richard Avedon Foundation

This one photograph by Richard Avedon, perhaps more than many others, symbolizes "The New Look" created by Christian Dior. The image, like the clothes that it symbolizes, represents relaxed spontaneity that became emblematic of this period.

In the Post World War II expansionist/international/global world. rather than being exclusive, fashion became generic. Although the Dior "New Look" had originated in France, its allure was promulgated by an army of American photographers including: Richard Avedon Lillian Bassman, Marie Cosindas, Hiro, William Klein, Irving Penn, and Bert Stern. Two American photographers, Richard Avedon and Irving Penn, replaced Edward Steichen as principal tastemaker, dominating fashion photography for a generation. Polar opposites, working within the confines of the 8 x 10 inch glass plate camera, Avedon managed to create an aura of spontaneity while Penn manifested a stoic classicism. While other photographers adhered to the 8 x 10 view camera,William Klein adopted the newly available Leica camera for his shoots introducing an aura of spontaneity and informality that resonates to the present moment.

Willy Maywald, German, 1907-1985, "Liszt" Gown by Dior, Paris, 1948, Gelatin silver print, The J.Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles © 2018 Association Willy Maywald / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York ?ADAGP Paris 2016.21

Left: Artist Jimmy Danko, and right: Phil Tarley, Writer of Fabric Magazine's The Critical Eye, examining Lillian Bassman's photograph. (Lillian Bassman, Charles James Dress, Carmen, New York, Platinum silver print, negative 1960 , print later, Collection Richard and Allison Roeder.)

1960-1970 / "THE SWINGING SIXTIES"

Fashion remained relatively restrained during the first half of the decade, but fragmented during the second half into a range of diverse looks: hippie, mod, psychedelic, space age – featuring bright colors and bold designs. In 1965, *Vogue* editor Diane Vreeland, called it " youth-quake." It was a youth oriented movement that was born on the streets of London where designer Mary Quant popularized the miniskirt and hair stylist Vidal Sassoon developed the five-point geometric cut. The Beatles became the global symbol of this new society. Michelangelo Antonio's 1966 film *Blowup* with its hip London setting is a classic testimonial to these dynamic and exciting times.

Dianne Newman; Neal Barr (American, born 1932); United States, North America; 1966; Gelatin silver print; 43.2 × 35.3 cm (17 × 13 7/8 in.); The Getty 2016.94

FROM 1970 / TRANSFORMATIONS

More women entered the workforce and the rise of women's liberation impacted on the clothes that women wore. Ready-to-wear lines by Halston, Anne Klein and Yves Saint Laurent appealed to women who pursued careers while raising families.

At the same time, natural beauty and health-conscious models were celebrated.

Later, hyper sexuality and violence became part of the vocabulary of fashion photography. In the early 1990s, British photographer Corinne Day helped introduce a new type of fashion image – unkempt models in shabby environments. This gritty reality contradicted what had been accepted norms in fashion photography. "Grunge," " heroin chic," and "ultra thin" became standards. Kate Moss' sickly look became a style.

What was now acceptable were products of the digital world and its vehicles: WorldWideWeb, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. Fashion photography of today is a far cry from the high stylized precise images created by Edward Steichen and his cohorts at the beginning of the 20th century.

Helmut Newton, Australian, born Germany, 1920–2004. Woman Examining Man, Saint-Tropez 1975, negative, 1975; print, about 1984. From the Private Property Series, Gelatin silver print, 36 x 24 cm (14 3/16 x 9 7/16 in.) The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Gift of Helmut Newton Foundation © The Helmut Newton Estate. Image courtesy of Maconochie Photography. 2018.34.35

Herb Ritts, American, 1952–2002. Stephanie, Cindy, Christy, Tatjana, Naomi, Hollywood, 1989, Gelatin silver print, 46.8 x 50.3 cm (18 7/16 x 19 13/16 in.) The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Gift of Herb Ritts Foundation © Herb Ritts Foundation 2011.18.28

Glen Luchford, British, born 1968. Kate Moss, Times Square, New York, negative, 1994; print, 2017, Gelatin silver print, 50.8 x 61 cm (20 x 24 in.) The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Gift of Glen and Tanya Luchford © Glen Luchford

Jamel Shabazz, American, born 1960, *Dapper*, negative, 1980; printed later, Digital chromogenic print, 25.4 x 20.3 cm (10 x 8 in. Courtesy of Jamel Shabazz

Scott Schuman, American, born 1968; *Mercer Street, New York, August 25, 2011*, 2011, Pigment print, 30.5 x 21.6 cm (12 x 8 1/2 in.) Courtesy of Danziger Gallery, New York © The Sartorialist, Scott Schuman. Courtesy Danziger Gallery

Scott Schuman, American, born 1968, Style Profile, Ni'ma Ford, December 22, 2011, 2011, Pigment print, 30.5 x 21.6 cm (12 x 8 1/2 in.) © The Sartorialist, Scott Schuman. Courtesy Danziger Gallery

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