

**FIRST MoMA EXHIBITION DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY
ON VIEW AT MoMA QNS****Exhibition Focuses on Influences of Cinema and the Snapshot on Fashion Photography*****Fashioning Fiction in Photography since 1990***

April 16-June 28, 2004

MoMA QNS, The Museum of Modern Art, Queens

NEW YORK, April 2004—The Museum of Modern Art presents its first exhibition devoted exclusively to fashion photography, *Fashioning Fiction in Photography since 1990*. Organized by Susan Kismaric, Curator, and Eva Respini, Assistant Curator, Department of Photography, the exhibition is not a survey, but a focused critical consideration of a particularly inventive development in the 1990s, when the reciprocal influences of artistic and commercial photography effected a clear and consistent change within fashion photography. The exhibition demonstrates how the cinema and the amateur or personal photograph inspired the invention of a new visual vocabulary in fashion photography. On view from April 16 to June 28, 2004, *Fashioning Fiction* presents approximately 100 photographs from 13 photographers: Tina Barney, Cedric Buchet, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Nan Goldin, Simon Leigh, Glen Luchford, Craig McDean, Steven Meisel, Cindy Sherman, Mario Sorrenti, Larry Sultan, Juergen Teller, and Ellen von Unwerth. All of the photographs were commissioned and published for editorial features in fashion magazines or for advertising campaigns.

Ms. Kismaric says, “While The Museum of Modern Art has consistently collected and exhibited works by fashion photographers, this is the first exhibition devoted solely to fashion photography, demonstrating what a significant and transitional time the 1990s were for the genre. At the root of the new imagery is the fashion industry’s shift from selling products to selling *lifestyle*. Photographers and advertisers responded to the changing commerce of fashion by abandoning descriptions of the season’s silhouettes and hemlines to tell stories about contemporary life.”

Ms. Respini says, “Fashion photography in the 1990s is marked by a desire to communicate narratives outside the world of fashion. Like fashion, photography relies and thrives on change, not only through advances in technology but, more importantly, through the countless shifting cultural, social, and economic forces. These works demonstrate a convergence and exchange of narrative conventions and techniques.”

In the 1990s, as the culture was increasingly informed by images from television, film, music videos, the Internet, comics, graffiti and art, the magazine publishing industry expanded. The development of desktop publishing and an explosion of new magazines geared towards visually sophisticated and savvy consumer-readers cultivated an intersection of art, fashion, and youth culture. These magazines fostered the work of photographers, stylists, and

editors who were influenced by the cinema or the personal photograph to express ideas and construct narratives that spoke to their generation, creating story lines that imbued the images with dramatic complexity and contributed to the aura of personal intimacy and authenticity.

While the exhibition primarily focuses on works from the 1990s to the present, two groups of works from 1984 and 1985 are included. Cindy Sherman's 1984 Dorothee Bis advertising campaign and Nan Goldin's 1985 series for *View* included precedent-setting images, introducing strategies that would become commonplace in fashion photography by the mid-1990s, among them the presentation of fashion in unglamorous and straightforward formats. Also on view are two of Mario Sorrenti's diaries and several magazines displayed in vitrines that draw attention to the role magazine editors and art directors play in shaping the major shifts in fashion photography. The innovations of fashion magazines such as *W*, *Vogue Italia*, and *Harper's Bazaar* as well as more alternative publications like *Tank* and *Another Magazine* are represented.

The Influence of Cinema

The appropriation of imagery and strategies from cinema by photographers such as Cedric Buchet, Philip Lorca-diCorcia, Glen Luchford, Craig McDean, Cindy Sherman, and Ellen von Unwerth range from the scripting of stories with fully drawn characters to the use of filmic lighting and camera angles. In "Cuba Libre," a 30-page editorial feature in *W* magazine in 2000, Philip-Lorca diCorcia (American, b. 1953) juxtaposed the ordinary against the visually stunning for dramatic effect. Set in Havana, the pictures follow a young woman as she moves through the city, walking down the street, sitting in cafés, hotels, and offices, the narrative sprinkled occasionally with other assorted odd characters and scenarios. Each well-crafted photograph is a frozen moment filled with narrative potential that implies an action that has just happened, or is about to. In "Cuba Libre," diCorcia creates charged moments in a plot, leaving the viewers to connect the dots.

Cindy Sherman (American, b. 1954) has consistently drawn from the vocabulary of cinema—from her seminal *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–80) to her fashion work for designers Comme des Garçons (1994) and Dorothee Bis (1984) and feature work for *Harper's Bazaar* (1993). In her fashion photographs, Sherman uses clothes as props to undermine the desirability of fashion. The pictures are the antithesis of fashion and glamour: instead of perfectly turned out models, her characters are horror film harridans. Just as Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* critique women's roles in society as described by movies, her fashion photographs challenge the glamorous veneer of the industry, concocting characters who are the its ultimate victims.

The mystery and suspense of film noir or horror films permeates Glen Luchford's (British, b. 1968) photographs for Prada's 1997 and 1998 advertising campaigns. Luchford's pictures rely on the narrative

strategies of cinema to create significance: the narrative of the model, rather than the garment, is central. He evokes film noir tradition with dramatic lighting and framing and detailed attention to props, constructing an environment imbued with suspense.

The Influence of Personal Photography

Photographs inspired by personal or amateur photography, such as the snapshot and the family album picture, came to influence fashion photography in the 1990s as much as the cult of cinema. Tina Barney, Nan Goldin, Simon Leigh, Steven Meisel, Mario Sorrenti, Larry Sultan, and Juergen Teller drew on the narrative of everyday life rather than the world of fashion ideals to tell stories that lend familiarity and authenticity to the magazine page. For the premiere issue of the *Village Voice*'s fashion insert, *View*, in 1985, Nan Goldin (American, b. 1953) photographed four friends in undergarments in the Russian baths of New York's Lower East Side. The photographs in the editorial, titled "Masculine/Feminine," resemble casual snapshots, which have more in common with personal mementos than stylized fashion images.

For "The Clients," an editorial made in 1999 for *W* magazine, Juergen Teller (German, b. 1964) photographed some of haute couture's most loyal patrons, such as Vicomtesse Jacqueline de Ribes and Princess Marie-Chantal of Greece, at the fashion designers' Paris ateliers. The photographs are straightforward, uncontrived, and devoid of the elaborate styling and deliberate preparations typical of studio photographs. The subjects are not models posing for a fashion photograph but women who seem to have been caught in a random moment.

The conventions of the family photo album play a strong role in fashion images made during the 1990s. Larry Sultan (American, b. 1946) created narratives reminiscent of images in family albums for the Kate Spade Fall/Winter 2002 advertising campaign. A series of calculated snapshots describe this fictitious family's visit to New York to visit their twenty-something daughter named "Tennessee." "The Lawrence's" are a culturally sophisticated and stylish family photographed hyperrealistically in oversaturated color in a succession of clichéd moments. Sultan's images affirm and recognize their own commerciality and, like many fashion photographs, point to the constructed nature and essential falsity of all fashion photography.

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PUBLICATION:

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication featuring an essay by curators Susan Kismaric and Eva Respini that explores the nature and precedents of contemporary fashion photography; an interview with Dennis Freedman, Creative Director of *W* magazine and Vice Chairman of Fairchild Publications, conducted by the curators that addresses the subject from the perspective of the fashion industry and provides an intimate view of the creation of magazine editorials; and extensive reproductions of the work of the photographers included in the exhibition. The book is published by The Museum of Modern Art. It will be distributed in the United States by Distributed Art Publishers (D.A.P.), New York, and in Europe by Thames & Hudson, London. (Hardcover: \$34.95).

PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

The Museum of Modern Art presents public programs to complement the exhibition. A two-part panel discussion (April 21 and 28) features photographers, critics, curators, and magazine editors who discuss fashion photography in our culture, from the commission of photographs through their dissemination in magazines, advertising, and, in some cases, art institutions. Also, gallery talks feature the exhibition's curators (April 30), as well as photographer Tina Barney (May 21), whose works are in the exhibition. Please see separate press release for more information.

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