REAL
FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY

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Introduction

The genesis of an exhibition about fashion photography began about five years ago when I became aware of a class in Fashion Photography that was offered in the Photography department at Ringling College. Because the work by the students in that class was so arresting, the Galleries that I program began hosting an exhibition of the work produced in that autumn class the following summer. It has been interesting to observe the varied student approaches to Fashion Photography evolve in that class. The year that Tom Winchester taught the class the resulting images produced by the students were inspired by something new. In hindsight, I would say the students were inspired by Tom Winchester and some of the ideas that he writes about in his essay in this publication. In Winchester's selection of artists for this exhibition and in his essay we see his focus on photographers whose images "portray the millennial era." Winchester's conversation with Charlotte Cotton on the subsequent pages further elucidates the important history and evolution of changes not only in the function of photography in the fashion industry but also the role of photographers outside the recognizable circle within the industry who as importantly reflect our society's interest in how they want to be represented.

The particular works by the artists that Winchester has chosen present a range of subject matter, media and scale in presentation. The compelling quality of this exhibition reminds me of experiencing Richard Avedon's exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1978. Enormous works were mounted on the walls unframed. As in that show the viewer in this one will have a visceral experience with the process of creating an image.

The exhibition experience will also include access to a library of more than seventy books that Winchester has selected from the College's library. The visitor will be able to contextualize the exhibition within the history of photography and specifically photography associated with fashion.

Mark Ormond
Director of Galleries and Curator of Exhibitions

Artists in the Exhibition

Emma Bee Bernstein

Hao Zeng

Natalie Krick

Reed + Rader

Sloan Laurits

REAL Fashion Photography

Tom Winchester. Edited by Amelia Rina.

Fashion photography can be understood as genre motivated by socio-economic conditions. Its identity as a bridge between the worlds of art and business provides a unique opportunity for the genre to serve as an outlet for portraying those conditions as they develop. *REAL Fashion Photography* is an exhibition of images that portray the conditions of the millennial era in the United States. These include a declining economy, a resurgence of civil rights movements, and a shift away from analog technologies. The artists included in this exhibition have seen these transitions first-hand, and their collective works illustrate a development in the genre of fashion photography that can be understood as a visual and contextual thematic emphasis toward realism. The images included portray individuals not just for the purpose of accentuating the particular benefits of a garment, nor do they simply describe a sought after lifestyle. Instead, superlative examples offer an alternative to the superficiality of the past and advocate for equality.

This exhibition brings together commercial imagery with artworks that investigate and critique fashion images, and their role in society. The commercial images have been published in print and online, and the artworks were created for the purpose of being exhibited in the gallery setting. By combining the two, *REAL Fashion Photography* offers a more complete perspective of the characteristics indicative of a trend of realism. The combination allows viewers to see the surprising commonalities between the two seemingly disparate approaches; both the commercial and gallery-based works strive for something more real, more truthful, less fake.

One complication of characterizing today's movement toward realism is that the meaning of the term has been questioned many times throughout history, and became somewhat redefined during the pre-millennial era. Hilton Kramer, in his essay titled "Return of the Realists" (1981) defined realism as a style "that appears to give us an accurate and unembellished account of what we see in the world around us," which is a definition that has been maintained throughout the lifespan of photography.[1] Kramer was writing at a time when artists and theorists were claiming the real world had become fake, and that art could only refer to a simulation. So, he took this new understanding of reality as intrinsic to the dominant style of the time: postmodernism. His essay, "Postmodern: Art and Culture in the 1980s" (1982) includes the statement, "[Postmodernism] is realistic,

1 Hilton Kramer, "The Return of the Realists" in *Revenge of the Philistines: Art and Culture 1972-1984* (The Free Press, New York: 1985), 360.

because it accepts monotony, cliché, and the habitual gestures of a mass-production society as the norm without trying to change them."[2] Such a style seems relevant today, but with the addition that the millennial-era's understanding of reality includes an entirely new perspective on technologies for mechanical reproduction and distribution.

The genre of fashion photography, specifically, has seen movements where aspects of real life were incorporated in its images. The 1990s, for example, saw a generation of photographers working in and around London who serve as a direct precedent for today's movement. Critics and curators like Charlotte Cotton, Eva Respini, Sarah Kismaric, and Eugénie Shinkle have all named the '90s as a high point in the genre because of these London-based photographers who felt motivated to represent aspects of real life, outside of the world of fashion, in their images. These photographers included Corinne Day, Nigel Shafran, Juergen Teller, Nick Knight, Glen Luchford, Craig McDean, David Sims, Mario Sorrenti, and Elaine Constantine, to name a few.

Charlotte Cotton's essay in the accompanying catalog to the Victoria and Albert Museum's exhibition titled *Imperfect Beauty: The Making of Contemporary Fashion Photographs* (2000) states that "The current era of fashion image-making can be distinguished from any other period of its history by the greater degree to which it has made cultural and social themes extending beyond the scope of fashion the conscious subjects of its narratives."[3] She describes how photographs began to "incorporate the distilled signs of 'real life'" and how British photographers during the 1990s became leaders in this stylistic vein by focusing on "a sense of individuality and character."[4] This progression was reaffirmed with The Museum of Modern Art's 2004 exhibition *Fashioning Fiction in Photography since 1990*, curated by Susan Kismaric and Eva Respini, as well as by their essay in the accompanying catalog. Like Cotton, Respini and Kismaric acknowledged the '90s as a decade "marked by a desire to communicate narratives outside the world of fashion," and they name it as a time when fashion photographs began to function as a means to "acknowledge their position as vehicles for an expression of cultural attitudes."[5]

In his contribution to the 2008 essay collection *Fashion as Photograph: Viewing and Reviewing Images of Fashion*, Eugénie Shinkle addresses the topic of realism directly. His essay, "The Line Between the Wall and the Floor: Reality and Affect in Contemporary Fashion Photography," contains a subsection titled "Realism in Fashion Photography," and points to Juergen Teller's use of the "straight-up" style as a an example of how such images function "as both fashion photograph and social document."[6] Shrinkle includes critical voices in the text who claim the realist style is "just

2 Hilton Kramer, "Postmodern: Art and Culture in the 1980s" in *Revenge of the Philistines: Art and Culture 1972-1984* (The Free Press, New York: 1985), 9.

3 Charlotte Cotton, *Imperfect Beauty: The Making of Contemporary Fashion Photographs* (V&A Publications, London: 2000), 6.

4 Cotton, 6.

5 Susan Kismaric and Eva Respini, *Fashioning Fiction in Photography since 1990* (Museum of Modern Art, New York: 2004), 12.

6 Eugénie Shinkle, "The Line Between the Wall and the Floor: Reality and Affect in Contemporary Fashion Photography" in *Fashion as Photograph: Viewing and Reviewing images of Fashion* (I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London: 2008), 217.

another marketing ploy," and that it's "nothing more than an attempt by the world of fashion to shed its commercial image by co-opting the codes of 'legitimate' forms of artistic photography," but he doesn't agree with such an understanding.[7] [8] He and states that fashion photographs "are simply coded differently...they simply require a different kind of interpretive labour, and the identity of their market is based, in part, on its ability to perform this labour."[9]

By the turn of the millennium, the '90s move toward realism, which most people referred to as "grunge," was beginning to appear in the mainstream. Cotton described this development in her 2014 essay "State of Fashion" for *Aperture*: "By the twenty-first century, 'grunge' fashion photography was fully absorbed into the mainstream, forming its own set of stylistic references soon felt in every delinquent shoulder shrug, folded pair or arms, yawn, and eye squint seen in the so-called 'Miss Indie' style of the 2000s."[10] Cotton then goes on to claim that today's cultural and artistic landscape hasn't yet seen a movement as creative as years previous by writing, "this century has so far failed to deliver a climate for image-makers to truly innovate in the radical ways that we saw in the '60s, '70s, and '90s, decades now regarded as fashion photography high points."[11] She partly blames digitization for this climate by acknowledging the effects of "the shift toward the power of postproduction to render an image, and away from the in-the-moment excitement that unfolds on a fashion shoot."[12] Further, in a 2016 interview with *Self Service*, Cotton explains that, because of social media "we are dealing with a culture that's now based on a large database and the behavior of images rather than the behavior and the arbitration of human beings."[13]

This exhibition aims to contribute a generation of artists who are arguably the first digital natives; a generation whose connection to realism incorporates processes as wide-ranging as large-format negatives to 360-degree videos. Technological advancements that emerged during the transition away from traditional processes included a complete revolution in photography's societal role, and each of these artists has an empirical experience of that evolution. So, it is no coincidence they all seem to be approaching their creative practices with an attachment to telling the truth.

This propensity for truth may be explained by the recent yet ubiquitous practice of sharing personal details and images on social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat. We no longer question the power of the network allowing for such unknowably vast distribution, and general concepts like airbrushing and Photoshopping, which have historically contributed to a distrust in the images disseminated by companies wanting to sell you things, may no longer have the same effect they once had.

For this exhibition, these ideas are most overt in the images

7 Shinkle, 217.

8 Shinkle, 217-218.

9 Shinkle, 218.

10 Charlotte Cotton, "State of Fashion," *Aperture* 216, (Fall 2014): 46.

11 Cotton, 46.

12 Cotton, 48.

13 Charlotte Cotton, interview by Ezra Petronio and Claire Thomson-Jonville, *Self Service* no.44 (Spring/Summer 2016): 392.

by Sloan Laurits and the collaborative work by Pamela Reed and Matthew Rader. Laurits, who often employs traditional analog processes like 35mm, medium format, and 8 x 10 inch negatives for his commercial assignments, can be seen as a photographer utilizing obsolete technologies for the purpose of creating something more real. His choices of analog techniques are sometimes contrasted with seemingly unreal depictions in order to accentuate realism, specifically for *8622147-41.tif* (2016), which shows a young man in a full space suit, complete with helmet, and looks like it was taken on the surface of Mars. This is currently impossible, but the image's black border, emblematic of color-negative reversal processes, accentuates the illusion that we're looking at an actual event. When Laurits does employ digital photography, as he does with *BALENCIAGA_006.tif* (2018), he does so in a subversive way by showing the industry's latest digital equipment, which usually remains hidden.

Reed and Rader's images on view exemplify a familiarity with technology that's completely forward-looking. If analog processes represent one end of a continuum of realist approaches informed by digitization, such as Laurits's, then what Reed and Rader are doing represents the other. Their creative approach champions digital technologies with a kind of ease and mastery that navigates uncharted territory for the genre. With inspirations as far-reaching as cartoons and stuffed animals, they create an entirely new world that maintains only a tenuous relation to this one, yet is also rooted in the human experience. They often accomplish this by combining real world models and products with computer generated, three-dimensional animations. The video piece *Winter* (2016), for example, shows a wonderland of falling snow with a model dressed in white, and, as the day fades to night, the model's dress turns to red, and woodland creatures gather around her. The surreal vignette, presented as a 360-degree image on an Oculus GO, becomes a convincing extension of the viewer's perception that offers very little distinction from the real world. Similarly, their series of videos "*Spooky Suburbs*" (2018) also incorporates a combination of real life models with three-dimensional animations, but its relation to realism, instead of being viewable as a convincing 360 experience, conveys a sense of banality. In the videos we see imaginary characters like aliens, the *Powerpuff Girls*, and a hovering robot hedge-trimmer using shearers to trim the bushes. However, because they're all constructed in the everyday setting of a suburban neighborhood, the situations—despite their otherworldliness—seem almost plausible.

In addition to technological advancements, the socio-political fluctuations of the last decade have contributed to the movement of realism in fashion photography. Some influential societal developments, specifically in the United States, include the election of President

Barack Obama in 2008, the repealing of the US Military's discriminatory "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in 2011, and the US Supreme Court's decision to strike down the federal prohibition of same-sex marriage in 2015. Although this country seems to be going through a counter-reformation in the most recent years, with backlashes against Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, and gender-neutral bathrooms, for example, those aforementioned socio-political developments have contributed to a movement of inclusivity in the industry as a whole, and have particularly shown themselves in this era's images.

In *REAL Fashion Photography*, such changes emerge most overtly in the work of Hao Zeng. His works maintains an air of inclusivity that is unique to the millennial era. *Prom* (2017), for example, shows a group of black teenagers enjoying themselves, some paired together as dates and some kissing—a nearly ubiquitous teen experience in the United States. Others videos such as *Love* (2018) and *Family* (2018) depict choreographer Leiomy Maldonado and The House of Amazon, a group of dancers organized around an appreciation for vogueing and its history. Zeng's videos show the dancers vogueing together on a breezy beach, with Maldonado speaking directly to the camera on the topics of what constitutes love and family, oftentimes promoting inclusivity, friendship, and acceptance. These videos beautifully address the advancements of sexual and gender fluidity in our culture, and present voices that today are finally being given their due appreciation.

Emma Bee Bernstein's photographs deal with fashion photography's relation to realism in a way that's blatantly postmodern. By photographing her friends and herself playing roles in elaborately patterned, constructed settings, her work resembles family photography, and places the viewer as a member of her inner-circle. For her 2006 series *Masquerade*, she and her friends acted out manufactured situations that were to be disseminated through photographs, and, in doing so, created images that pointed to an empty, contrived event with dubious veracity. In a review of "An Imagined Space," a posthumous exhibition of *Masquerade* organized by Phong Bui and Linnea Kniaz, *The New York Times* art critic Holland Cotter described Bernstein's work as "like Julia Margaret Cameron channeled through the gothic-surrealist eye of the contemporary artist Anna Gaskell."[14] Cotter's description may have been inspired by images like *Untitled "Antonia in clown suit"* (2006), which resembles the visual style of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, or *Untitled "Self-portrait with red eyes"* (2006), which could be a film still from a Tarantino noir. Through the series' titular reference to Joan Riviere's influential writings, *Masquerade* mixes the postmodern emptiness of Cindy Sherman's "Untitled Film Stills" with the feminist critique intrinsic in Laurie Simmons's "Color-Coordinated Interiors."

14 Holland Cotter. Emma Bee Bernstein: "An Imagined Space," *New York Times*, April 8, 2011: C32.

Natalie Krick, like Bernstein, deals with the fundamental role of photography as a medium for representing reality by photographing herself, her mother, and her sister. She also constructs settings, though hers are created as highly saturated, glossy images that critically satirize fashion imagery. Her work included in this exhibition, which all were created for her series *Natural Deceptions*, were described by Emily Shapiro in *Lens Culture* as tackling "assumptions around beauty standards, motherhood, and the idea that what is visible is actually real." [15] Shapiro goes on to compare her images to the work of Guy Bourdin for their "use of bright, delectable colors."[16] Krick's formalistic in-camera composites disorient the viewer in a flattening out of space similar to something out of the Bauhaus. Shapiro describes this spatial ambivalence and its effects on the viewer: "All these textures and textiles flatten the world inside the photograph rather than filling it. It makes the reality of the photographs feel unfamiliar."[17]

Works by Krick and Bernstein are thematically similar in that they both engage with the fashion system's role in defining the feminist identity of the millennial era. Bernstein wrote that "the work not only explores the impact of fashion photography on ideas of female representation and self-presentation, but also mimics the style and production methods of fashion photography itself."[18] She also explains why photography is the medium best suited to accomplishes this, writing in her 2008 artist's statement: "The camera acts as a vanity mirror, showing us how fantasies of representation are enacted through the cosmetic surface of fashion and design, and filtered through our self-conscious modes of presentation."[19] With regard to Krick's work, Shapiro wrote of *Natural Deceptions* that "By shooting in the style of fashion photography—a language we all know well—Krick offers a taste of something we can recognize while building a new frame of reference—a new visual language of womanhood. It's one we can take with us as we navigate our way through the larger representation of women in media."[20] The two artists represent the gallery-based prowess of this exhibition, and offer a more complete perspective on how the fashion industry has affected society.

REAL Fashion Photography seeks to acknowledge a return to realistic creative practices in the genre of fashion photography. Today's image-makers show a similar approach and style to those who made important images in London during the late '80s and early '90s, specifically the artists and photographers included in exhibitions like *Imperfect Beauty* (2000) and *Fashioning Fiction in Photography since 1990* (2004). By bringing together commercial images from Sloan Laurits, Reed and Rader, and Hao Zeng, and recontextualizing them alongside artworks created by gallery-based artists like Emma Bee Bernstein and Natalie Krick, this exhibition illuminates how images from the fashion system influence the digital world.

15 Emily Shapiro, "Natural Deceptions: Disorienting and Deceiving Portraits of Womanhood" *Lens Culture*: https://www.lensculture.com/articles/natalie-krick-natural-deceptions-disorienting-and-deceiving-portraits-of-womanhood#slideshow, (accessed December 26, 2018)

16 Shapiro, (accessed December 26, 2018)

17 Shapiro, (accessed December 26, 2018)

18 Katherine Bussard, *Emma Bee Bernstein - Masquearde: A Retrospective* (University of Chicago, Chicago: 2010), 11.

19 Emma Bee Bernstein, *Emma Bee Bernstein - Masquearde: A Retrospective* (University of Chicago, Chicago: 2010), 11.

20 Shapiro, (accessed December 26, 2018)

Natalie Krick
Two Self-Portraits
2014

Natalie Krick
Hillary and Mom and our Hands
2014

Natalie Krick
My Mother in Bed with Roses
2015

Natalie Krick
Reflection
2014

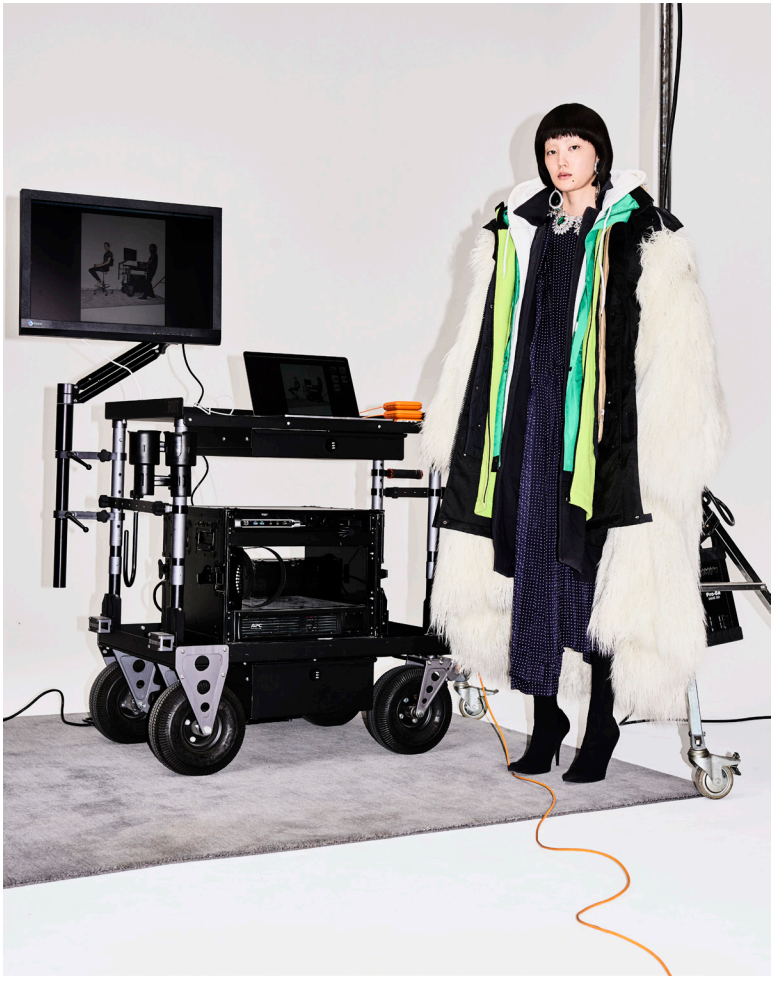
Emma Bee Bernstein
Untitled "Jill Against the Brown Door"
2006

Emma Bee Bernstein
Untitled "Self-Portrait in Blue Floral Robe on Porch"
2007

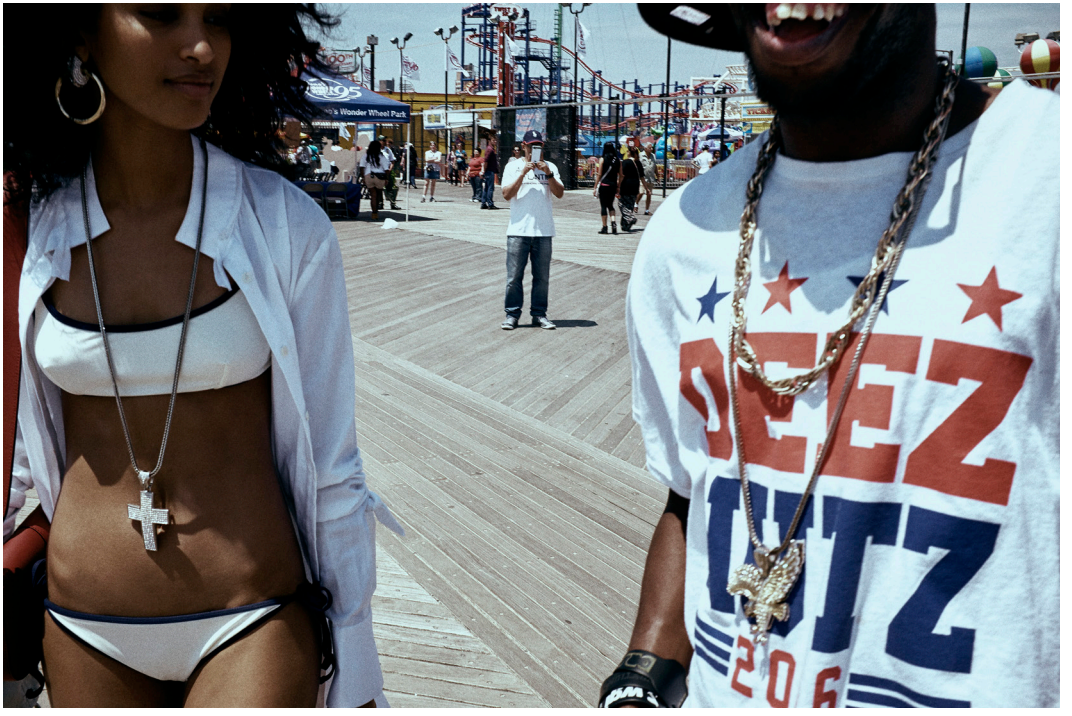
Emma Bee Bernstein
Untitled "Self-Portrait with Red Eyes"
2006

Emma Bee Bernstein
Untitled "Antonia in Clown Suit"
2006

Sloan Laurits
2016_06_26_003_06.jpg
2016



Sloan Laurits
BALENCIAGA_006.tif
2018



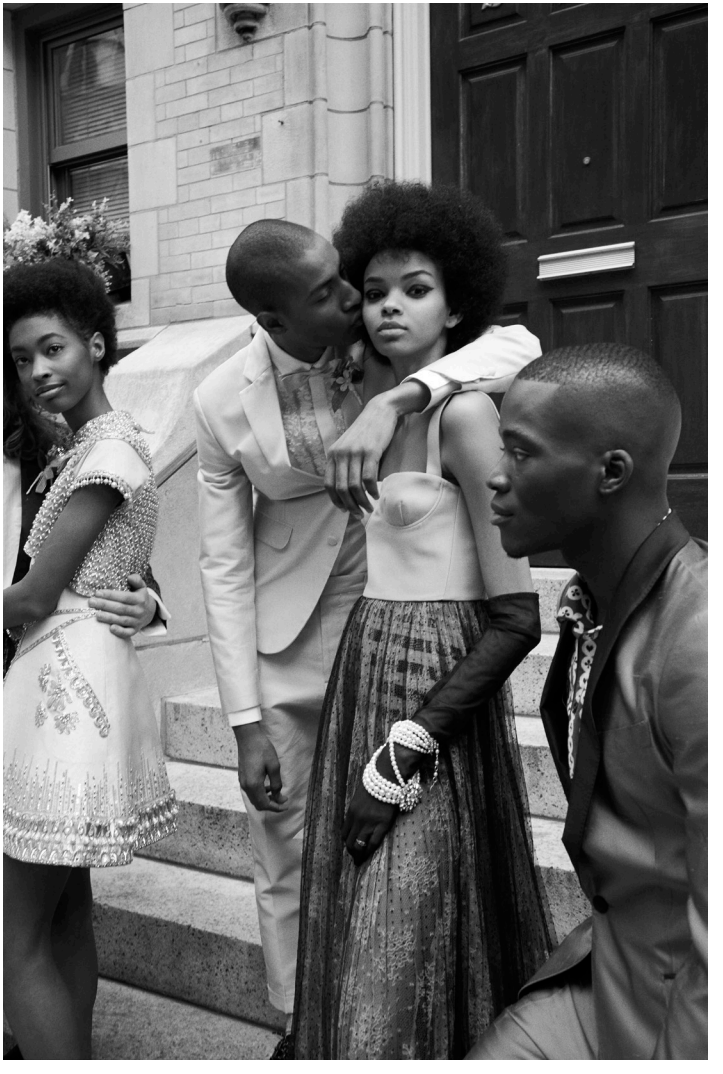
Sloan Laurits
CONEY__SHOT 1_327.tif
2016

Sloan Laurits
8622147-41.tif
2016

Sloan Laurits
SHOT_07_70.tif
2017

Hao Zeng
Zuoye, Manami, Gao
2017

Hao Zeng
Karis
2017



Hao Zeng
Prom
2017

Hao Zeng
Family
2018, Video


accepting yourself, loving everything about yourself,

(Above & Opposite)
Hao Zeng
Love
2018, Video

Reed + Rader
Rooms
2018, Video

Reed + Rader
Spooky Suburbs
2018, Video

Reed + Rader
Dubstep Dinosaurs
2015, 360° Video

Reed + Rader
Winter
2016, 360° Video

Charlotte Cotton in conversation with Tom Winchester

TW: You just mentioned that the '90s movement in London was the last important creative movement in the genre of fashion photography. Maybe that's what *REAL Fashion Photography* can contribute: a new generation of artists dedicated to a similar impulse.

CC: What I see in your selection is something which I feel extremely elated and hopeful about inasmuch as I don't feel I'm looking at a tail-end of a history, I feel like I'm looking at a new chapter. If there's an overarching theme that I see in your selection of artists, and approaches to the fashion image, I would say that it is a reclaiming—and I call it a reclaiming because of my belief that we have a calcification of the fashion image system, particularly in the 2000s—of fashion image-making as a space which is the most sensitive, and the most authentic, in its narration of the socio-political and gender issues of our time. And that, for me, has always been the beauty—and of course the possibility of pushing the technology—of so-called photography or the photographic. That's what excites me about your selection. I can see that there's so much at play, which I associate with a number of photographers, stylists, hair and make-up artists, and art directors who breathed some radical new life into late-20th-century-fashion image making.

Looking at your exhibition selection makes me think about both the mid-1980s, which is the very beginnings of the story in my most recent book *Fashion Image Revolution*, and then another is what happens in the very late 1980s and into the 1990s with what became labelled "grunge" fashion photography. It is amazing to think that in the course of four or five years we had two really radical steps in image-making that looked very different but actually were of a very parallel mindset of creating the most relevant and true visuals of the time. The mid-1980s was a moment when there was a real urge to innovate and make color as expressive and as experimental as, to a certain extent, as it had been, say, the 1930s with Madame Yevonde, or Erwin Blumenfeld in the 1940s, who had really made the first predictive steps in color reprographics. For me, this desire for experimentation and creative pushing at the technological possibilities of image-making resonates with our new territories, particularly of VR and MR, and this idea of creating an entirely visually constructed world. I'm looking at Reed and Rader and I'm thinking, 'Go for it!' I want to see something that I've never seen before, and that resonates back through the history of

fashion photography. There have been moments where magically crazy stuff happens, and it's very much driven by this idea of, 'I just want it to be better. I think it could be bigger. I think it could be better. And I'm going master the technology and drive it through in my way.'

And then of course the other side of it is what happened in the late '80s and the early '90s and the collective proposal made that fashion photography wasn't slave to established ideological ideas of beauty, gender, the significance of wealth—what we used to call the "aspirational" drive of fashion advertising and, to some degree, editorial photo-stories, as a way of serving the inherent biases that tend to constitute "aspirational" base lines. The photographers, stylists, art directors, hair and makeup artists who emerged in London in the late '80s re-wrote the lexicon with street casting models, customizing clothes and using "model's own" style, making pictures in their living rooms, waiting at bus stops, places where they went to school... Their own biographies and experiences were their material to work with and they brought that in to the language of fashion. Of course, that does have a precedent in the late 1950s and early 1960s with what David Bailey, Brian Duffy, and Terence Donovan, et al. were doing—that quality of bringing in all of these signs and symbols of the ordinary onto the pages of fashion magazines. But by the late 1980s there is this real counter-argument to the high-gloss, heavy makeup, big shoulder pads, and glamorization that had become the tired mainstay of fashion with the radicality of making authentic visualizations that were extremely specific to the self-expression of individuality that was born out of youth culture.

What I see in your selection is a reminder that we need to go right back to something that is absolutely personal to their creators, and fashion image-making can have a radicality built in to its fiber. It's a counter-argument to what has become once more the prevailing, generic, middle-ground of fashion photography.

We could talk all day about what we think happened in the 2000s, and why we didn't see a progression of what happened in the late '80s and early '90s. Do you agree that something happened in the 2000s that meant this kind of work that you're showing didn't have any airspace? Or that something happened?

TW: I do. But it's difficult for me to pinpoint what happened because, by the time we came around, people like Juergen Teller, Glen Luchford, and Steven Meisel were very established. They were the giants. I can look at Corinne Day and Nigel Shafran and be like, 'Yeah, I see the counter-culture.' But with Nick Knight, Craig McDean, or Glen, I see the counter-culture and "anti" motivation in their work when contextualized by the history you've outlined, but it's difficult for me to pinpoint what happened because I don't have that perspective.

I think one of the biggest shifts during this period—and this may sound overly simplistic and completely trite—was digitization. That killed not only the working photographer, but it also killed all the magazines. So, at the time, the counter-culture wasn't in print, it was online. It was like "blog time." But maybe one benefit of the terrible economy of the time is that it got rid of people who weren't fully dedicated to it. I mean, I think the result was a movement toward realism because it's a style that reflects the conditions of the time.

CC: I think it's realism in the sense that there's no "dialing it in" in your exhibition. I know there is more to it than matching a format—matching an outmoded format—of how you receive fashion images. There's much more to it, and that's, to me, where the realism is. Fashion photography is alive and well when it's made to bring in ideas, aspects of image-makers' thinking and senses of selfhood, which are from outside the fashion system. That's something that really got closed down in the 2000s.

I think the curtailing of that vitality started with 9/11. Anecdotally, I know what campaigns and editorial stories got canceled in that September, what replaced it, and what happened to day rates. It's not that any of those things, necessarily, were the death of fashion photography, but they changed the criteria of what made a successful fashion image. If you add on to that what happened with digital capture becoming part of the set in the mid-2000s—and the camera's capture being seen on-screen by all present at a shoot—there was a movement away from the image-maker being the holder of the image. Prior to digital capture, the photoshoot crew, including the client, was seeing polaroids and making decisions from there but the main action on-set was the image-maker chasing the agreed polaroid but with no one actually seeing what was getting captured on film. Before digital capture becoming the default process, the photographer could go away and do post-production, and have that privacy and experimentation. Once the digital carousel came on set, it became a "by-committee" process. Everyone is looking at those pictures, and the photographer is more like a crowd manager and the client obtained the determining role. Until the late 1990s, I think what the industry was aiming for was incredible, iconic images; and the image-maker held the power—held the responsibility and the anxiety—and it was their effort and their vision that actually drove things. That really falls apart beginning with 9/11 and by the mid-2000s because of the digital nature of being on-set.

TW: How do you see the use of analog processes in relation to digitization?

CC: Of course, the partial revival of analog processes in the 2010s has brought back the idea of control and authorship being in the hands of the

photographer. I'm thinking of people like Jamie Hawkesworth or Tyrone Lebon, and you frame this in the context of your exhibition narrative too with Sloan Laurits. Everyone has to trust what the photographer is capable of capturing on film, and that's a time-honored strategy to keep sane, and to keep producing work to be proud of. It's not just a symbolic use of analog, it's about reclaiming that space—that in-camera space—to actually look at what's really going on, and to have that intimacy with your subject, which isn't determined by the analysis that a committee would make when looking on-screen.

Another thing I appreciate about the show is I would say that the return to analog processes right through to VR, MR, and CGI are actually on the same spectrum. That's very much what my project *Photography is Magic* is about. I consciously did not make a separation between artists who were going deep in to analog processes and those who are taking the new photographic tools and running with them. Because I think both parts of the technical range of the photographic are motivated by parallel ideas. It's a period of what I call "agnosticism" towards technique. And that's really important in the context of fashion, in that while some people are really good, and really unique, they're all pressured into using the same equipment; they're all expected to provide the same deliverables. It's a very artificial system of image-making in that respect, and what the photographers you're selecting are doing is showing a true relationship with medium, applied to fashion. It's highly mediumistic. But it's not dogmatic in terms of why VR rather than analog. The range is really important to the hopes many of us have for the ecosystem of fashion photography and it having a radical new life.

TW: The socio-economic developments of the mid-2000s also seem to have influenced the millennial approach to fashion photography.

CC: The financial crash of 2008 razed everything in fashion advertising and publishing to the ground. This was coupled with the beginnings of social media and a real questioning about the analytics of what incredible, very expensive, images actually do in terms of sales and influence. Together, these pervasive shifts in culture underpinned the knocking down of the ancient regime of image-making in the magazine publishing world, and that's led to a decade-long existential crisis. Considering all of that, it makes sense that, during the 2000s, those few who had already emerged as great image-makers in the 1980s and 1990s held on to their territory. The list of who was in the top half-dozen or dozen image-makers who created the majority of the campaigns and the editorials of the major magazines stayed pretty much the same through the 2000s. There was very little

room for another group of photographers, stylists, hair and makeup, and young designers to create their own radical moment.

TW: 2008 also saw the election of Barack Obama. 2011 was when "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed. Same-sex marriage wasn't legal until 2015. It seems like these, in additional to digital nativism, are what separate the group included in this show from the "grunge" era. Even today, most of the top photographers are cisgender, straight, white males. Diversity seems to mean something different to millennials, and this idea becomes very acute considering that it took until September of 2018, with Tyler Mitchell, for *Vogue* to allow a black photographer to shoot its cover.

CC: That's very much on my mind too. During the period we discussed, the late '80s and early '90s, part of it was all about rave culture. Spinning off of your idea of realism, they *really were* going to raves, and rave culture was driving this youth movement which was very anti-gender binarism and is one of the pre-cursors for what we finally got around to aligning with gender non-conformity.

Where fashion is amazing is when it is a first-responder to what is actually happening within our world, and within the orbit of life. What's really going to drive this forward is this chance that socioculture provides the little orbit of fashion image-making to do things better. That's what I think is really possible with artists who are gender non-conforming, and who are not white, who are the holders of authentic proximity to the narratives of our time that have barely had even a tokenistic presence in fashion photography in recent years. There's a personal satisfaction of having the chance to now claim space that was held from us. It's about having the chance to makes things that are radically different, and amazing, and something nobody else could have done. That's where I love fashion photography: it can really do that. On the level of realism, that's where I have my highest hopes, as we turn in to 2019, is that realism will reclaim fashion image-making as this highly sentient and reactive visuals of our time.

And when I say that, I'm thinking of the first time I met David Sims. I interviewed him in the mid 1990s, and he described what it was that they were doing in the late '80s and early '90s. He said they just wanted to create the visuals of their time. That's what your exhibition is. Millennials, post-millennials, "Gen Z" own the future, with their understanding of how to mediate and communicate visually, and how to reach others better than any one of those ancient publishing structures within established fashion communication.

There is a need for all of us to understand the politics of online space, and social media, and to be highly cognizant of the fact that these systems

weren't set up to offer us freedom and do become these "echo chamber" enclaves. However, with LGBTQ communities, for example, we know that social media has revolutionized this movement in the sense that, for the first time, we'll have wonderful humans coming in to adulthood having knowledge of people who are like them. This is the counter-argument of us just simply being metadata within these big media systems. It's the need to think beyond the "likes," and to think what it is you're communicating to the community you aspire to, what that back-and-forth is, rather than it being a one-way street. I think the generations coming up now and creating their visuals have it. I think you own it. That's the one shining light that's come out my studies over the last few years around online space, and ideas of privacy: while we've lost a lot, and we've become metadata within these systems, we've also gained a lot, particularly in areas of gender identification and identity politics, because we claim the right to be seen. That's really important—and it's really important that fashion image-making finds a way, with realism, to reflect that.

TW: I read an interview where you said something to the effect of, "You can't have Helmut Newton without feminism." It seems you see ideology as central to both making and viewing fashion photography.

CC: I gravitate towards the history of fashion photography, and contemporary fashion photography, where I feel comfortable with there being a clear or understandable dialogue with the female gaze. When I wrote about Guy Bourdin, that took a lot of soul-searching about somebody who was a misogynist in his own life, even though the tense narratives of gender binarism and bourgeois oppression speak loudly and clearly about the time in which he was working. The enduring impact of Guy Bourdin's photographs—and this is also true, to a certain extent with Helmut Newton—the way that the images were set up on the page; the viewer was definitely "in on the joke." He made so many images where the way that your finger places on the image, or how you turn the page, is built into the image and implicates you within each visual story. It really was as if he was biting the hand that fed him in terms of the fashion system, and never treating the magazine reader with anything other than a respect for their intelligence and their likely gender.

I feel a parallel curiosity with the way in which fashion photography was resuscitated in mid, and late 1980s by young image-makers with their own stories to tell. There's something there which I think is intentionally relational and radical that I believe in. My interest is really the motivations of the makers, and I concentrate on where I think there is real influence, and influence that is generous to the next generation.

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Mark Ormond
Director of Galleries and Curator of Exhibitions

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Tom Winchester
Guest Curator

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