

FASHION



The
Story
of a
Lifetime

September 14
2010

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October 17
2010

Kate Moss in torn veil, Marrakech 1993 © Albert Watson

THE EMPTY QUARTER GALLERY

Fashion

the story of a lifetime

Exhibition dates: September 14 - October 17, 2010
Vernissage: Tuesday, September 14, 7-10 pm

Dubai, UAE – The Empty Quarter Gallery opens the exhibition season with a grand show focusing on fashion. Creative gallery director Elie Domit has succeeded in bringing together an exquisite collection of vintage and modern prints by celebrated fashion photographers, whose lifetime stories are inextricably interwoven with 20th century high fashion.

Iconic images, many of which are to be seen in Dubai for the first time, are paired with the remarkable story of Parveen Shaath, a true fashionista avant la lettre from Saudi Arabia. Miss Shaath dedicated her life to the very subject of these photographs, haute couture dresses, collecting the best specimens for the inner circles of Saudi society.

A number of these dresses, by fashion houses of note, such as Belville Sassoon – known to dress royalty – Victoria Royal, and vintage labels like Paul Louis Orrier and Nettie Vogues – who supplied Princess Diana's formal engagement dress – will be on display in the gallery. The result is a museum quality exhibition offering a rare opportunity in the Gulf region to experience the magical power of fashion.

In keeping with the gallery's mission of exploring the photographic dimensions of the Arab world, many of the works have been selected with an eye on the locations where they were shot, such as Lebanon, Morocco or Egypt. Whether born from old-fashioned orientalism or serious engagement with the Arab culture, the world of fashion has a long history of using style elements associated with the Middle East. More than just visual associations, haute couture had and still has a notable clientele from the region, going back to the 1950's, as the story of Parveen Shaath testifies.

Parveen Shaath spent the better part of her life – lifetime if you will – with an undying devotion to all

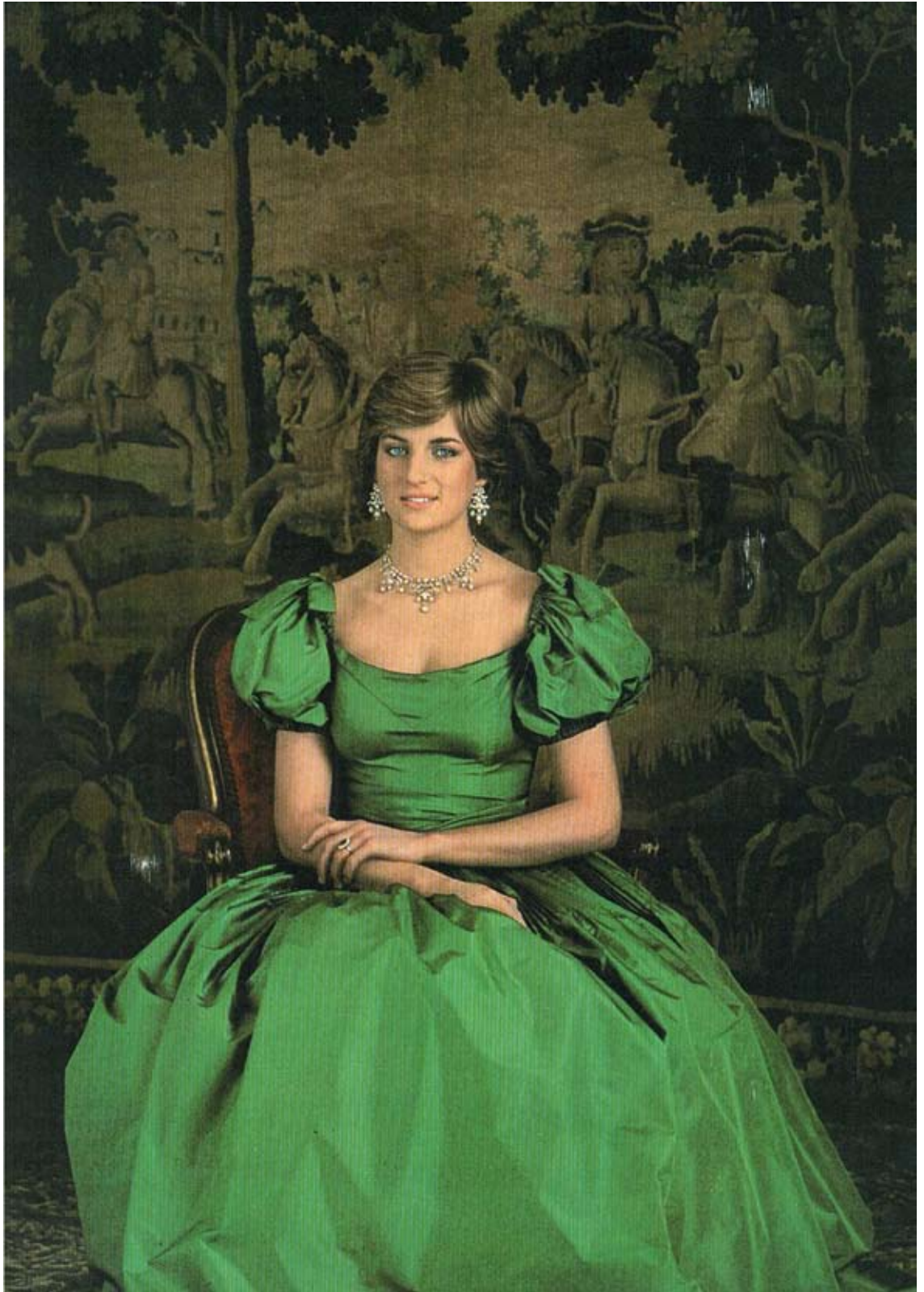
things fashion. With seven sisters and many friends constantly seeking out her taste in putting their best foot forward, she dedicated her life to just that – teaching women how to dress. From the early 1950s up until the late 1990s, Parveen Shaath traveled near and far in search of evening dresses to sell to women in Saudi Arabia. Long before 'fashion week' became the cultural cornerstone of the fashion industry, she made the twice-yearly trek to Europe to handpick each and every piece that she sold, laboring over the details, the cuts, the sizes and the colors she chose to stock her boutique.

In the process, she found herself swept away by the whispered secrets that hide between the folds of floating chiffon, the regal posture that certain types of taffeta demand and the incredible power that clothes can wield.

Like all fashion visionaries, Parveen Shaath knew the power that clothes carry, and her efforts at preserving a part of fashion history are finally reaping the fruits of her labor. In 2010, «So Passé» was set up to bring together her unrivalled collection of vintage, never-before-worn dresses to experience a rebirth. «So Passé» aims to fashionably resurrect a selection from Parveen Shaath's archives of evening wear to be exhibited, admired and revered.

Especially for this occasion, Parveen Shaath has been portrayed by **Aya Atoui**, a Dubai-based emerging photographer, represented by the gallery. These works will be shown as a separate installation.

The photographers brought together in this exhibition are all internationally acclaimed for their lasting contribution to fashion photography, as well as to the history of 20th century photography. Fashion, for them, has become the story of their lifetime.



Original caption: A touch of majesty: Lady Diana Spencer's youthful but regal bearing captured at Highgrove in May (1981). Photo taken by Lord Snowdon (The Queen's Jewels p.36, Leslie Field). Lady Diana wore this necklace again during the visit of King Khalid of Saudi Arabia in June 10, 1981.

Fashion - the story of a lifetime



© Lilian Bassman

Norman Parkinson (British, 1913 – 1990), a celebrated English portrait and fashion photographer, pioneered the use of outdoor color photography and exotic locales in fashion shots. His career lasted over fifty years, creating images for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* as well as snapping super models, celebrities and royalty.

Parkinson felt that women ought not to be confined to studio shots, so he pictured his models out and about, on their way to lunch or appearing, mirage-like, at the edge of a desert oasis. His images are achingly glamorous and superbly composed, but always telling of his adoration and even admiration of women, their charm, intelligence, and humor.



© Norman Parkinson

Lilian Bassman (American, 1917) is a beloved figure in the pantheon of fashion photographers. Her signature style, once described by Richard Avedon as making “visible that heart-breaking invisible

place between the appearance and the disappearance of things,” offers a sensuous and intimate vision of modern women. Her career spans almost the entire ‘golden age’ of photography: she started her career for *Harper's Bazaar* in 1941 and is still actively working as an exhibiting photographer today.

F.C. Gundlach (German, 1926) is considered the most significant fashion photographer of the young Federal Republic of Germany. Spanning more than four decades of fashion photography, his work decisively shaped the perception of fashion in Germany. He set the stage for the ever-changing vogues, defined postures and gestures of models, chose props and locations and thus reflected the ideals of beauty and the history of fashion against a changing social background. His camera work demonstrates an intense depth of field with long perspective lines, so that backgrounds contrast ingeniously with the models and their clothes as the focal point of the image. Even in location shoots with a strong locale, such as in Egypt in front of the statue of Ramses, or amongst Bedouins driving sheep, our attention is always drawn to the garments. In 2003, F.C. Gundlach was appointed founding director of the House of Photography in the Deichtorhallen and dedicated his collection “The human image in photography” as a permanent loan.

William Klein (American, 1928) was an abstract painter and sculptor who grew up in New York and went to work in Fernand Leger's Paris studio. He became interested in photography to record movement in his sculpture and started using a camera. He was soon photographing other things that took his interest, and in 1954 his work was seen by American *Vogue* art director (and another sculptor) Alexander Liberman, who offered him a contract as a fashion photographer. Liberman saw in his work a fresh approach, and one



*F.C. Gundlach - "The Cheops pyramids",
Karin Mossberg and Micky Zenati in Op Art-Fashion
Gizeh/Egypt 1966
Gelatin silver, printed later
129 x 100 cm*

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© Melvin Sokolsky

that seemed to have a certain violence that would move the magazine away from the 'polite' images of Cecil Beaton. Because Klein did not know how to use a studio, took the models out onto the streets to photograph. Later he pioneered the use of wide angle and telephoto lenses for fashion work. From 1955 to 1965 Klein continued to work for Vogue. He was not particularly interested in clothes or fashion, and used this opportunity to research the picture making process by introducing new techniques to fashion photography, making fashion an area of innovation in photography.

Although he worked for Vogue until 1966, he did not consider fashion photography to be his real calling but rather what he calls "serious photographs". By that he meant uncompromising, unadorned documentaries about large cities like New York, Rome, Moscow, and Tokyo. Books about these cities enabled him to enjoy great successes. Around 1962 Klein gave up still photography with the exception of a few jobs for newspapers and advertising - in favor of motion pictures. His politically committed and unconventionally produced motion-picture contributions, including a satire on Vogue, put him in the position of a maverick. Around 1980, Klein returned to still photography, mainly photographing people in crowd situations using an extreme wide angle lens. At this time his earlier shots were rediscovered and given recognition.

Frank Horvat was born in 1928 in a previously Italian part of Croatia. He studied art in Milan, and a meeting in 1951 with Henri Cartier-Bresson decided his fate as a photojournalist. He traveled the world in the early 1950s and sent his work back to magazines such as Life, Paris Match, and Realities. In 1956 he settled in Paris and began to photograph fashion. He was the first to apply the 35mm camera and reportage techniques to fashion photography, creating a new

and more realistic style that profoundly influenced the development of this field in England, France and the United States. Taken in the street, his images of models combined realism and artifice, and won him immediate success. During his long career, Frank Horvat has contributed to every major magazine and his work has been exhibited in Paris, London, Prague, Berlin and New York. His work can be found in the permanent collections of numerous prestigious museums including Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; Kunstbibliothek, Berlin; Museum of Modern Art, New York; the George Eastman House, Rochester.

With a touch of humor and an eye for the humane, **Elliott Erwitt's** (American, 1928) black & white photographs reveal the most basic and candid human emotions. He developed his vision during the post-war rise of documentary photojournalism, and has captured many of life's most poignant ironies through an amusing vernacular. Born in Paris and raised in California and New York, Erwitt has pursued a photographic career in journalism, fashion, and print advertisement. His personal work has been published in countless monographs, and he has been a member of the prestigious Magnum agency since 1953. His photographs are collected and exhibited in museums around the world including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.; the Art Institute of Chicago; and Kunsthhaus, Zurich.

Melvin Sokolsky (American, 1938) was born and raised in Manhattan's Lower East Side during the lean years of the pre-war era. He witnessed the entire spectrum of the human condition played out across a tough and tight-knit community. These experiences were countered by a universe of visual riches found



William Klein
Tatiana, Mary Rose and Camels, Picnic, Morocco, 1958

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in the museums and books he regularly devoured. Melvin spent his days framing and logging precise mental and emotional images long before he had a camera to capture them. At twenty-one these efforts paid off when he was invited to join the photo staff of Harper's Bazaar by Henry Wolf, the magazine's visionary art director. Though he was learning on his feet, Sokolsky was rebellious by nature and would couple his street smarts with his deeply vivid imagination. Melvin Sokolsky is one of the great pioneers in the creation of visual imagery. Admired, awarded, and relentlessly copied, he remains steadfastly ahead of the curve and thoroughly ignited in his seventies. His legacy cemented, Sokolsky is left with a seemingly limitless well of creative energy.

Sarah Moon (French, 1941) studied drawing in Great Britain. After a career in modelling from 1960-1966, she turned to photography in 1970. Moon became famous for her advertising campaign for Cacharel. After 15 years working in fashion, working on commissions from brands such as Vogue, Chanel or Dior, Sarah Moon's career takes a turn when she decides to devote more time to even more personal, more introspective and this time, purely artistic projects, choosing the negative black and white Polaroid as a medium of expression. Moon cites the work of Guy Bourdin as an inspiration and stimulus to move towards fashion. However, one can easily recognize her equal love for the cinema of the thirties, including the German Expressionist movies. The grain, the overall aesthetics of the photographs of Sarah Moon form a constant reference to the origins of the medium. Among the recurring themes that emerge from the work of Sarah Moon include memory, death, childhood, femininity, solitude, always with a certain detachment from reality, bearing elements of the staged, the fictive, the illusive and the dream. Her work is

part of major collections around the world, and has received numerous awards, including a Lucy Award and the famous Prix Nadar for her book 1,2,3,4,5.

Albert Watson (British, 1942) has made his mark as one of the world's most successful fashion and commercial photographers during the last four decades, while creating his own art along the way. Over the years, his striking images have appeared on more than 100 covers of Vogue around the world and were featured in countless other publications, from Rolling Stone to Time to Vibe - many of his photographs have become iconic portraits of rock stars, rappers, actors and other celebrities. (Watson was the official Royal Photographer for Prince Andrew's wedding to Sarah Ferguson.) He also has created the photography for hundreds of successful ad campaigns for major companies, such as Prada, the Gap, IBM, Levi's, Revlon and Chanel, and has directed more than 200 TV commercials and shot dozens of posters for major Hollywood movies. All the while, Watson has spent a lot of his time working on personal projects, creating stunning images from his travels and interests, from Marrakech to Las Vegas to the Orkneys. Much of this work, along with his well-known portraits and fashion photographs, has been featured in museum and gallery shows worldwide. The photo industry bible, Photo District News, named Albert Watson one of the 20 most influential photographers of all time, and he won the 2010 Centenary Award from the Royal Photographic Society.



Sarah Moon
Issey Miyake, 1996
Gelatin Silver print, printed later
20 x 16 inches

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The book section of the gallery will feature an extended range of fine art books, monographs and catalogs covering photography of fashion.

We would like to extend our thanks to the following for their generous support and collaboration, without which this exhibition would not have been possible:

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Staley-Wise Gallery, NY
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Abeer Seikaly
&
Harper's Bazaar

Fashion - the story of a lifetime is sponsored by:

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The Empty Quarter Gallery is devoted to fine art photography, with an emphasis on works exploring the photographic dimensions of the Arab world. Within this framework, the gallery salutes the achievements of the world's finest photographers, and aims to highlight the talent of photographers from the Middle East.

For more information and images for press, please contact:

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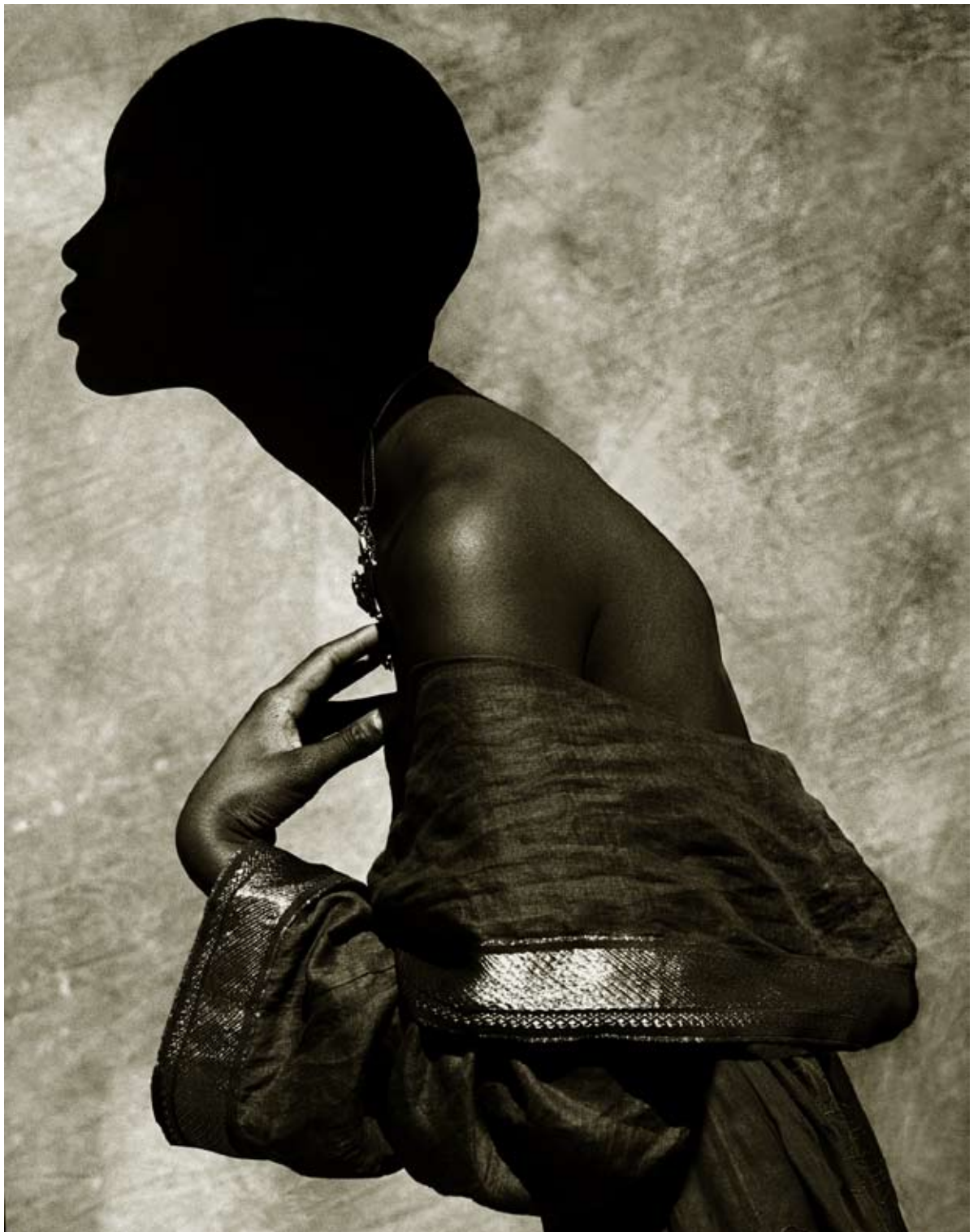
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*Albert Watson,
Naomi Campbell, Palm Springs, 1989, printed later
Archival pigment print
107 x 143 cm*