

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

VOGUE

Inside “Peter Lindbergh: A Different Vision on Fashion Photography”

Todd Plummer



*Cindy Crawford, Tatjana Patitz, Helena Christensen, Linda Evangelista, Claudia Schiffer, Naomi Campbell, Karen Mulder, and Stephanie Seymour, Brooklyn, 1991. Photo: Peter Lindbergh / Courtesy of Peter Lindbergh, Paris / Gagosian Gallery*

The influence of Peter Lindbergh on how we see fashion today cannot be understated. Of course, when people think of Lindbergh, the original supermodels come to mind; long before the current generation of Snapchat-savvy models, his iconic shot of Linda, Tatjana, and Christy frolicking in their white oxford shirts created the original #SquadGoals. For the first time, an exhibition at the Kunsthal Rotterdam—“Peter Lindbergh: A Different Vision on Fashion Photography”—will offer a robust survey of the photographer’s opus. Lindbergh, who is currently represented by Gagosian Gallery, has had segments of his work included in gallery shows, museum exhibitions, and permanent collections around the world, but this exhibit at the Kunsthal offers a fresh glimpse of the man behind the camera.

A range of never-before-seen personal notes, props, Polaroids, contact sheets, and storyboards will be shown, organized by Lindbergh’s “influences and obsessions,” as curator Thierry-Maxime Lorient explains. Lorient, a former model who worked with Lindbergh in the 1990s, is

also the brains behind the wildly successful “The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier” show that started in Montreal, as well as the Viktor & Rolf retrospective opening at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne next month. Lorient spoke with Vogue.com about why this Lindbergh exhibition might just warrant a flight to Rotterdam.

**“Gaultier” was such a critical and commercial success. How did you decide to do a show on Lindbergh next?**

I have always been interested by the “behind the scenes.” I am very process oriented and mostly interested in the person behind the camera. Lindbergh has a very strong aesthetic that everybody recognizes, and I thought it would be important to share the story of this artist.

Many exhibitions have presented his work, and his work is part of many major permanent collections. But the way this exhibition is built has not been done before—even for other photographers, I think. It is organized by Peter’s influences and obsessions: dance, cinema, conceptual art, fashion, supermodels, and even UFOs.

**What was it like to work with Lindbergh?**

I met Peter almost 20 years ago, when I used to model, and I knew his work quite well already. I wanted, of course, to include the classics, but also unpublished work, personal notes, and a behind-the-scenes look, which is important to show the process of his work. We worked together almost three years on his perfectly archived images, editing from around 10,000 pictures—he has more than half a million in his archives!—and selected 400 for the book and a little bit less for the exhibition.

**What makes Lindbergh’s work so distinctive?**

Lindbergh does not believe in any one standard of beauty. He empowers women with his lens. He believes in pluralistic beauty and cherishes what he calls “traces of life.” Wrinkles, different body shapes, and life stories are important to him. He is inspired by people, not at all by their social status and their fortune or level of fame.

**There is always a sense of timelessness to his images.**

Lindbergh is not attracted to trends at all. He does not go to fashion shows or read fashion magazines on purpose. He prefers to create his own world, reference-free. So if military looks are in one season, you will never have it in his images!

**Some of Lindbergh’s most iconic work is of the ’90s supermodels. Did you have interactions with any of those women in preparing for the show?**

Yes, with many. He still works with them—they grew together—and loves to see what they became. He is very loyal, and the supermodels give it back to him. Many were involved in the exhibition, and they are almost all coming to the opening in Rotterdam this week. Everybody loves Peter!

**How are today’s supermodels different from the girls Lindbergh shot?**

Lindbergh transformed his women into heroines of their time, models who became performers, personalities who became supermodels, to later be known only by their first names. This change was seen as a politically and socially oriented kind of beauty. It became something much more than fashion, more than a matter of being blonde or not blonde, fat or thin, sporty or intellectual. Lindbergh always cherished pluralistic beauties who appealed to other men and women, refusing to standardize criteria of perfection. When he discovered all the supermodels, they were not

prettier than others, they were just different and had unique personalities. Models today are beautiful, and social media has changed everything, I think. Clients often book the girls according to their number of followers, so it is very different.

**Why is Lindbergh's work still relevant today?**

His work says a lot about beauty: natural beauty, inner beauty, differences, and individuality. We live in a world where everything now is retouched. We don't recognize people in magazines anymore. He likes to show truth, reality, and beauty at a different angle. It is very unique and very necessary. Many photographers should look to him as an example.

*“Peter Lindbergh: A Different Vision on Fashion Photography” will be on view at the Kunsthal Rotterdam September 10 to February 12, 2017.*