FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY

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BY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fashion plays an important role in most people's lives because it is a way of communication. The type of clothes one wears can give away a person's status, age, the social group he belongs to and even his profession.

The type of clothes you wear gives an idea of the type of person you are. Therefore, most people are to some extent aware of the clothes they wear. The public generally want to know what the latest styles are. Fashion photographers can meet that need by displaying fashion pictures in magazines like *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Vanity Fair*, *Elle*, etc to reach a certain group of people. Nowadays, not only women are aware of the importance of fashion. Men are also involved in the fashion world. The target group of most magazines is young adults.

To be a fashion photographer, a feeling for fashion, materials and colour is required. Personally, I am attracted to the beauty of fashion. This involves learning how to take an ordinary garment and turn it into a beautiful photograph and to work professionally with models. I love to make people look attractively dressed with breathtaking and elegant clothing. Lucille Khornak says: "*While the news media focus on harsh realities - the tragedies and brutalities of human behaviour - I choose to focus on beauty*" (Khornak L, 1989).

In this script, the author will be discussing the history of fashion photography during 1913 and 1980 and some of the fashion photographers of that time. The author's work will be discussed, her approach to fashion photography and her work done during the year of 1996, whilst studying third year photography.

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2. A SHORT HISTORY OF FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY.

When the idea of fashion started, the depiction thereof was very modest.
Fashion was portrayed in magazines through the use of drawings until the
1880's when fashion photography replaced the drawings.

The fashion industry started to grow as people realised that fashion
photography could sell better to a large audience through the printed method.
Fashion photography began to develop and more designers, models and fashion
magazines made their appearance. The fashion photographer had to inform the
public of the different styles and names.

There is no certainty about the first fashion photograph, or when it first
appeared. Jacques-Henri Lartique and Robert Demachy presented a
consciousness of fashion in the turn of the century - but it was more a fashion
gesture than fashion photography as such. Before the 1880's the carte-de-visite
was used to document fashion. Carte-de-visite was a standard size photograph,
used for portraiture. It could also be mass produced (Coetsee 1992: 5 & 6;
Bussiahn 1989: 2 & 4).

2.1 SOME FASHION PHOTOGRAPHERS 1913 - 1950

Baron Adolf De Meyer, who could be considered as the father of fashion
photography, started working for Vogue from 1913. By changing the general
idea of fashion photography to fashion artistry; his work became representative
of the style of the decade. His work became graceful and poetic (Beaton &
Buckland 1989: 275). De Meyer used soft-focus and often sacrificed the details
of a garment to create a specific mood. The way De Meyer posed his models
and the way he used accessories, his use of backlighting and the effect he got
by covering his lens with silk gauze became the international standard.

De Meyer's fashion can today be viewed as an expression of its time. Fashion photography became a well - respected artistic profession (Coetsee 1992: 7; Bussiahn 1989: 4; Beaton and Buckland 1975: 275).

In 1924, **Edward Steichen** changed the course of fashion photography. He used clean geometric lines, sharp focus detail and plain backgrounds, breaking the pictorialistic approach. Steichen replaced De Meyer in 1924 when he was hired by Vogue. He created his `chic' look which was epitomised by Marion Morehouse, a celebrated model who personified that look. Morehouse had the look of the 20's, self-reliant, elegant and feminine. Chief editor of Vogue, Conde Nast, told Steichen in the mid twenties: *"Every woman De Meyer photographs looks like a model, you make every model look like a woman"* (Coetsee 1992: 8 & 9; Bussiahn 1989: 4).

George Hoyningen-Huene had a very original approach - architectonic composition and surrealist effects. He used persuasive lighting and a lot of `empty' space. He had his sets built up and used Greek statues. His lights and props were pre-arranged and he used standing models to determine the composition. He was infatuated with Greek classicism. His approach was surrealistic, a first for the photography of that time (Coetsee 1992: 9 & 10; Bussiahn 1989: 5 & 8).

Martin Munikacsi, a Hungarian sport photographer, joined Harpers Bazaar in 1933 and changed the way of fashion photography in the 1930's. He created a realistic effect by taking studio-fashion photography out into the real world. He used spontaneity, informality, documentary realism combined with blur of motion to portray his sports clothes (Coetsee 1992: 9 & 10; Bussiahn 1989: 8).

Cecil Beaton appeared in Vogue in 1926. He was influenced by English portraiture, Renaissance painting, contemporary stage design, Hollywood films and surrealism. His style was exquisite, exotic or bizarre (Bussiahn 1989: 11).

When World War II broke out in 1939, fashion photography in Europe was heavily affected. There was a lack of models, film material and safe locations. Fashion photography was also seen as "non-serious" and that gave fashion photography a severe blow. The fashion produced during that time was designed to be functional, inexpensive, and more appropriate for labour on farms, factories and in the uniformed services. The look of the 1940's was discreet and less flamboyant. One of Beaton's masterpieces produced during war, was a model in front of a bombed-out ruin. The costume she wore was typical of the forties era (Bussiahn 1989: 11).

The `New Look' by Dior made a dramatic entrance into the fashion world in Europe in the late 1940's. It was more a social statement than just fashion. The style symbolized the end of hardship and a revolution against war's restrictions. The fifties brought a new era of fashion photography, an era of new beginnings, recovery and discovery and was characterized by charm and ease (Bussiahn 1989: 14).

Two photographers who dominated the fashion photography for many years were **Richard Avedon** and **Irving Penn**.

Richard Avedon's style was as realistic as his models. He portrayed his models as glamorous but `real' girls. He used pretty models who laughed and smiled, danced, sang in the rain and sipped cognac at café tables. He made his photographs interesting by making use of cropping and placing the models diagonally across the page. His favourite models were Twiggy and Penelope Tree (Coetsee 1992: 14; Bussiahn 1989: 14).

Irving Penn's style was elegant and tasteful. His photographs emphasised formal clarity and sharpness, simplicity of form and geometric precision. His models were sexy but feminine and elegant. He brought out the distinctive quality of each of his models (Coetsee 1992: 14; Bussiahn 1989: 16).

William Klein introduced an ironic attitude to fashion. His models looked tough and independent, a total different look than the early 50's. The models, instead of looking upper class socialities, looked like they're from the back-streets. His location he chose for his photographs seemed to play just as important role as the clothes he introduced (Coetsee 1992: 14 & 15; Bussiahn 1989: 16).

2.2 THE SIXTIES.

The style of the sixties was influenced by anti-war demonstrations, political problems and demands for equal rights for woman. Designs were outrageous and seemed unwearable and it was worn by the fashion conscious people at that time. Styles of clothes and models were extreme and exotic (Coetsee 1992: 16 & 17; Bussiahn 1989: 17).

Famous models during the sixties were Verushka, Penelope Tree and Twiggy. Verushka was six foot two inches and blonde. She was portrayed in a series which showed her transformed into different wild-beasts by face and body make-up. Penelope completely plucked out her eyebrows. Twiggy was very thin and had a boyish look (Coetsee 1992: 16).

Michelangelo Antonioni made a film named "Blow-up" about the photographers and their lifestyles of the sixties. The lifestyles of "The Terrible Three" - David Bailey, Terrence Donavan and Brian Duffy - were also depicted in that film (Coetsee 1992: 16).

In **Diane Arbus**'s photographs of child fashion, it was the children themselves who looked different and not their poses. They didn't look like the ideal models at all but rather like clumsy, dejected children.

2.3 THE SEVENTIES.

Fashion photography during the seventies had a more realistic mood. Fashion photography was affected by things like sexual expression, murder and rape that became part of everyday life (Coetsee 1992: 19). Fashion photographers created a `style' called `Porna-chic' - a style that incorporated sexual fantasy. Violence was portrayed in fashion photography (Bussiahn 1989: 22).

Helmut Newton started to combine wealth, sex and fashion. His work was filled with violence and sexuality. He made use of nudity, dramatic lighting, clashing colours and story telling effects. His models were cool, impeccable and chic. He used sexual themes like sharing love-making and lesbian and homo-sexual relationships (Coetsee 1992: 19; Bussiahn 1989: 22 & 24).

Sarah Moon portrayed an Alice-in-Wonderland fantasy world of fashion. She had a pure-in-heart attitude to her world. Her photographs were soft focused with reflections, double images and blurred visions. Her young, adults-to-be (clinging to their fantasies) looked a little sad and dreamy. The colours and shapes were more important than the glamour of the garments. She used tungsten or daylight and used filters and gauze on the lens. Her trademarks were grainy effects, sensuousness and feminity (Beaton & Buckland 1989: 282; Coetsee 1992: 20; Bussiahn 1989: 29).

2.4 THE EIGHTIES.

Andrea Blanch had a natural style and had a feeling of everyday life. She worked with minimum equipment and artificial lighting and settings. As part of her style, she used very rich colours (Coetsee 1992: 22).

Arthur Elgort's photographs were of intelligent, active modern young men and woman taken at the right moment. His models had to have dancing and acting skills to follow his directions. He preferred a picture that is full of life rather than a picture that looked empty and dead (Coetsee 1992: 22 & 24).

3. THE AUTHOR'S WORK.

In this chapter the author will try to explain what she is trying to accomplish, her style, the equipment she's using, the type of models and location she uses and problems that occurred. The author will also discuss thirteen of the photographs individually. Notice that the author tried to use as many techniques as possible. The reason is to experiment and simply to enjoy fashion photography by making it more interesting.

3.1. THE AUTHOR'S APPROACH TO FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY.

3.1.1 STYLE.

There are certain kinds of photographers in the fashion photography field, like facial, ramp, studio, beauty, glamour, etc. The author would like to classify herself as a location and studio fashion photographer, although she also enjoys doing beauty shots.

The author is still developing her own style and is doing so by experimenting. She tries to experiment with different techniques and approaches and by being open to new ideas. She uses interesting textures and patterns in her photographs like putting plastic on printing paper and then printing the image, by doing a montage or by printing through gauze. Some of the photographs have a very artistic feeling to it. The author's work is still very experimental.

3.1.2 MODELS.

The author is aware of the fact that a model can make or break a photograph but when she notices a garment or location she picks a certain face that will reflect her attitude and feeling towards that garment. She enjoys using the same models but creating different looks and faces. The author doesn't have a favourite model but tries to use models with modelling backgrounds because

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this makes it easier for the photographer if the model knows what she is doing. The models aren't always very beautiful but are people with interesting and attractive features like a sweet smile, a perfect body, etc.

3.1.3 LOCATION.

The author prefers shooting on location rather than in a studio. She prefers the locations to be as plain and simple as possible. She likes to use old dilapidated buildings or flower or grass fields because she wants the scenes to be as natural looking as possible. Sometimes she tries to bring contrast between the garment and the location.

Natural, available light is used when shooting outdoors. The author uses small manual flash for almost every fashion shoot. To the author, flash gives that extra life and brightness in the eyes of the model and photograph. When shooting in the studio her lighting is very simple. She prefers to use at least one softbox in each shot to soften the skin and eyes.

3.1.4 CAMERA FORMAT AND LENSES.

The author only uses the 35mm SLR camera for fashion photography. In her case a Pentax MEF camera. With fashion, one has to move around to create certain looks and to use different angles. Also because the 35mm camera is lightweight, compact and versatile in the handling. She never uses the 6x7 camera or bigger cameras for fashion purposes because of its bulkiness. She never uses a tripod because it limits ones movement. The author only uses a 28mm f/3.5 - 80mm f/4.5 Pentax zoom lens because it gives more possibilities. The quality and sharpness is excellent. The flash she uses is a 2800 Vivitar (Auto thyristor) flash for almost every photograph except for studio shoots.

3.1.5 PROBLEMS.

The biggest problem that the author had to cope with was the weather. The fact that she shoots mostly outdoors depended a lot on what the weather was like. One struggles to get models and garments and when you finally go out for the shoot, it starts raining or it is so hot that the model starts sweating after a while.

Getting beautiful or professional models is difficult because of the fees one has to pay. For the author, being a student, paying for models was out of the question. Arranging for garments wasn't that easy at all. One can't just use anything. It has got to be glamorous and stylish. The author had to do the make-up herself or arrange with the model to do it herself. Transport had to be arranged to get the models to and from the location. There were also incidents when transport, location and garments were arranged but the model didn't show up. Problems might have occurred but one learns to overcome them and to quickly change plans. The author believes that it only made her stronger and more eager to succeed in this course. She enjoyed every shoot.

3.1.6 INFLUENCES.

Fashion itself fascinates the author a lot. When she notices a garment that is striking she can't wait to put it on a beautiful person and to photograph it. She wants to make people look beautiful by applying make-up and putting on elegant clothes. She believes that the outcome of a photograph is motivation for the next shoot. Fashion magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle fashions* made a contribution to inspiration and stimulation of the mind. After paging through one she just wants to go out and take photographs and try something out.

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3.2. DISCUSSION OF THE AUTHOR'S WORK.

Some of the work is very straight forward but I tried to give a certain feature to each photograph to add a little uniqueness.

Plate 1: "Donna Isabella"

The image of Donna Isabella is a personal favourite. I suppose it is because it was so much pleasure shooting and printing the photograph. I used the 35mm with my Pentax 28mm - 80mm zoom lens and a Vivitar 2800 flash, with an aperture of f/ 5.6 and 1/125 sec. I used Fuji film 100 ISO/ASA.

I organized with the model for a shoot and did the make-up myself. After shooting the fifth frame, it started raining and we had to stop shooting because her make-up started to smear. At that moment I thought the shoot was a failure but after developing the film and seeing the contact print I saw potential. I thought of something to help the photograph.

During the printing stage I experimented by using gauze over the printing paper and made the exposure. I am very proud of this canvas like image.

Plate 2: "Debora"

I experimented further with gauze by trying it with a black-and-white photograph.

The shot was taken in the studio with flash lights. A light was placed on the ground between the model and the backdrop, pointing upwards, a strong light from the left and a soft box from the right. I used the 35mm with my zoom lens with an aperture of f/22 and 1/125 sec. I used Ilford FP4 Plus 125 ISO/ASA film.

The result I wanted was a 1930's type of look rendering the winter fashions of that time. I got an antique jacket and used pearls for jewellery. After studying books of fashion of the 30's I tried to style the hair myself according to that period. I took effort in trying to find a model who would represent the 30's the best.

Plate 3: "Innocence Kills"

I saw this white outfit that I wanted to photograph. It was casual and feminine but I needed the perfect background to go with it. We by chance drove passed a church with this big dome-like doors and decided - that's the location. So I organized a shoot, with the model, got the clothing and went to the church. I wanted the photograph to look as feminine as possible (one of the reasons why I used a girl with long curly hair). I think the clothes and the location compliment each other very well because of the white that symbolises innocence and the church door.

The photograph was taken just after sunset. I used the 35mm with my zoom lens and a Vivitar 2800 flash. I used an aperture of f/8 and 1/125 sec on Ilford FP4 Plus 125 ISO/ASA film.

Plate 4: "Red Dress"

I used the 35mm with my zoom lens with an aperture of f/5.6 and 1/125 sec, Fuji film 100 ISO/ASA. and a Vivitar 2800 flash and a filament lamp (just playing a little with light effects). The result was a death like skin colour.

The most important part of the dress (to me) was the top. I was pleased to see that the material came out crisp and sharp on the negative.

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To make this photograph interesting, I decided to print through melted plastic during the printing stage. This gave the photograph an artistic appearance.

Plate 5: "Collar"

After "Red Dress" I wanted to do another picture, only photographing the collar or a part of the dress. This time I tried a different technique.

I used the 35mm with the Pentax 28mm - 80mm zoom lens and a Vivitar 2800 flash, with an aperture of f/11 and 1/125 sec. I used Fujichrome film 100 ISO/ASA and had it developed with the E6 process. I took the slide and printed it through a Kaiser colour enlarger.

The result was very interesting. The actual colour of the dress was blue but came out yellow after printing it. Despite the colour change, you can still see the style of the dress and the texture of the material.

Plate 6: "Pretty in Pink"

I have decided to give this project a more artistic feel.

I used the 35mm with my zoom lens and a Vivitar 2800 flash with an aperture of f/5.6 and 1/125 sec. I used Fuji film 100 ISO/ASA.

The model was placed against a plain white wall, wearing a pink nightgown. After printing the picture, I hand painted the wall with stripes. After printing the photograph, I noticed that the model had very hairy arms and decided to crop it a little tighter.

This photograph took a lot of work and effort but I enjoyed creating it.

Plate 7: "Lisa"

I had to re-shoot this photograph. After printing the first one, I realised that the model didn't have enough make-up on and her face looked blown-out. After redoing her make-up and taking the photograph again, I was happy. The blue dress compliments the models eyes. A suggestion that I would consider is taking the photograph with a soft focus filter to give it a dreamy look.

I used the 35mm with my zoom lens and an aperture of f/11 and 1/125 sec with a flash to highlight the model's eyes and the blue material a little.

Plate 8: "Fur-Coat"

This photograph was taken in the studio with studio flash lights. I used the 35mm camera with an aperture of f/22 and 1/125 sec. I used Fuji film 100 ISO/ASA.

The look I wanted had to compliment the beautiful fur-coat. This was accomplished by creating a 'bushy hair' look. Personally I think that the hair and the coat almost become one. It is a kind of similarity between the hair of the animal and the hair of the model.

A choice had to be made between a blue and a green backdrop. The blue backdrop proved best.

I enjoyed using this model because of her previous modelling experience. She made it very easy for me to get the right composition and pose. Communication between the model and the photographer was no problem here.

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Plate 9: "Karin"

Creating this photograph wasn't only enjoyable but educational as well. It took me weeks of work to get the final print.

The first step was taking a nude of a model with flowers and strings in her hair. After printing the nude, bird feathers were placed on the model to create a bra-top and a little retouching was done to the flowers and strings. The nude was then cut out and stuck onto a paper. Sea sand was used for a background.

For the first and second photograph I used the 35mm camera, 28-80mm zoom lens and the 2800 Vivitar flash with an aperture of f/8 and f/11 and 1/125 sec. In both cases I used Fuji film 100 ISO/ASA.

The montage was scanned through a computer and a few changes were made. I changed the tonal values of the image to give the skin a tanny tone. Parts of the background were changed by using different colours.

This photograph was my first computer print-out but working with photoshop made me so curious and interested that I had to do another computer print - "Flower Girl". I must admit that I was afraid of computers at first but after working on one I have learned to love them. One has got so many possibilities. One can add or take away in a photograph or turn it around or change something. I am deffinitly going to work on my knowledge involving computers.

Plate 10: "Untitled 1"

Photographed in the studio, I used the 35mm and 28-80mm zoom lens with and aperture of f/22 and 1/125 sec. I used Fuji film 100 ISO/ASA.

This photograph is very straight forward although I played around with the lighting during the shoot. The photograph I decided to use was the one with a big shadow at the back. Bracketing played an important role to make the shadow part of the image.

It is a pity that I couldn't afford a make-up artist at this stage because I think that by adding the right make-up to the model's face, she could look really beautiful.

Plate 11: "Dream Girl"

I wanted to create a dream-like image and did so by printing through a patterned transparency during the printing stage. The transparency was placed on the negative and not on the paper. Although one can't really see the detail of the Spanish blouse I got the image that I wanted.

I had problems with my own 35mm camera during this shoot and so I had to use the Technikon's 35mm Pentax K1000 camera. I still used my 28-80mm zoom lens The photograph was taken in the studio with an aperture of f/16 and 1/60 sec. I used Fuji film 100 ISO/ASA.

Plate 12: "Untitled 2"

I used the same model as in "Fur-coat". It has got a very straight forward approach and was taken in the studio.

I used the 35mm Pentax MEF and the 28-80mm zoom lens with an aperture of f/22 and 1/125 sec. I used Fuji film 100 ISO/ASA.

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Plate 13: "Flower Girl"

Flower girl was taken in the studio with the 35mm Pentax K1000 camera and the 28-80mm zoom lens with an aperture of f/16 and 1/60 sec. I used studio flash lights and Fujichrome film 100 ISO/ASA and had it developed E6 process.

I scanned the slide into the computer. I first solarized the image and then changed the backdrop. I made the dress appear red and added a little colour to the flowers and then printed it.

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4. CONCLUSION.

4.1 SUMMARY

After completing this script, I have learned a lot about Fashion Photography and all its components. I got the chance to use my art talents and techniques in my photography. I believe that this experience has made me a better, stronger person. I learned to try new things without being afraid of failure. I learned from my mistakes and tried to improve on them. By doing that I have learned that no job is finished unless it's correct and perfect.

4.2 COMMENTS ON SOUTH AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHY.

I believe that fashion photography in South Africa has a lot of potential. Fashion designers and fashion photographers in South Africa work together to create very professional work and images. Because of political and economical changes years ago, South Africa learned to stand on its "own feet" and we became independent and had our own trademark. Fashion photographers created individual styles. I hope that despite of the fact that circumstances are changing again and that we are now part of "the outside world", fashion photographers keep their individuality. It seems like overseas countries have set a certain norm that we have to live up to. Photographers are tempted to take that style and copy it and just add or take away freedom. They need to have more control over their photographs, their display and printing in the magazine can make it look bad.

I believe that there are a lot of opportunities in South Africa for fashion photographers and I would like to be a part of them.

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APPENDIX A

Figure 1: De Meyer - Male Fashion, date unknown

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Figure 2: Steichen - Marion Morehouse, 1927

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Figure 3: Hoyningen-Huene - "Evening Gown", 1934

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Figure 4: Beaton - "Evening Gown", 1934

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Figure 5: Avedon - "Dovina with Elephants", 1955

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Figure 6: Penn - "Girl in Black and White", 1950

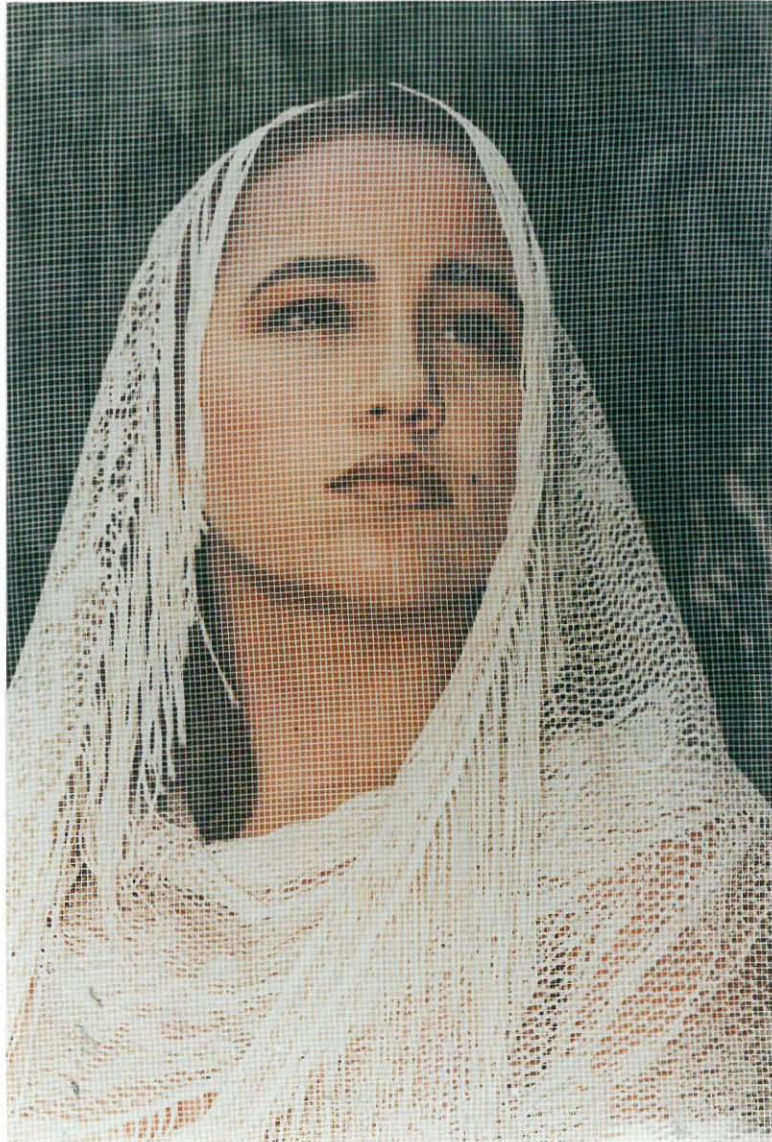Figure 7: Newton - "Lisa Fleeing", 1974

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APPENDIX B - AUTHOR'S WORK.

Plate 1: "Donna Isabella"

Model: Yolandie

Location: Lichtenburg

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Plate 2: "Debora"

Model: Anneri

Location: Studio

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Plate 3: "Innocence Kills"

Model: Sonnet

Location: Trinity Methodist Church, Bloemfontein

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Plate 4: "Red Dress"

Model: Karin

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Plate 5: "Collar"
Model: Karin

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Plate 6: "Pretty in Pink"

Model: Doret

Plate 7: "Lisa"

Model: Doret

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Plate 8: "Fur-Coat"
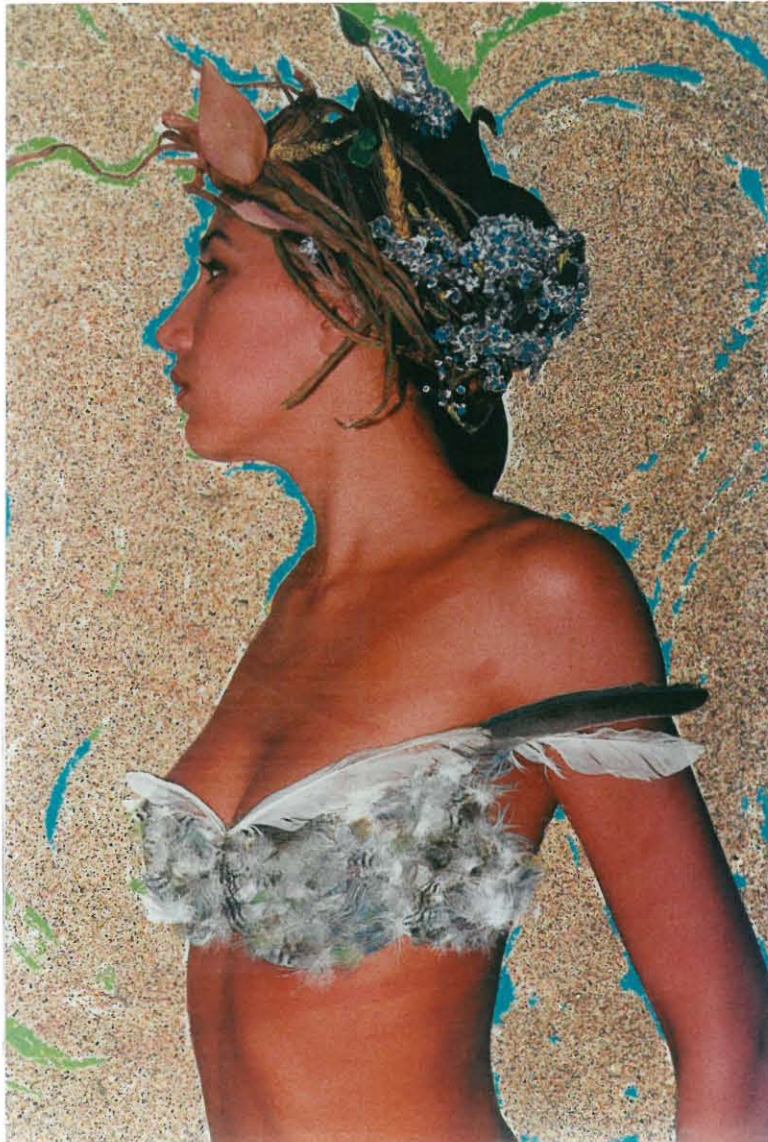
Model: San-Marie

Location: Studio

Plate 9: "Karin"

Model: Karin

Plate 10: "Untitled 1"

Model: Karin (2)

Location: Studio

Plate 11: "Dream Girl"

Model: Martie

Location: Studio

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Plate 12: "Untitled 2"

Model: San-Marie

Location: Studio

Plate 13: "Flower Girl"

Model: Louis

Location: Studio

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