

PETER LINDBERGH

NATURAL BEAUTY



Yasmin Le Bon, *The New York Times*, Paris, 1985, gelatin silver print

“To express yourself as you are, without any intentional, fancy way of adjusting yourself, is the most important thing” (Shunryu Suzuki). And for the German photographer Peter Lindbergh, that is what it is all about. In the 1980s, Lindbergh created the super model and influential icons such as Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista, Tatjana Patitz, Cindy Crawford, and Claudia Schiffer, who were to shape our perception of style for years to come. From this time onward, models were stars on a par with fashion designers. Lindbergh discovered them and put them in the spotlight. He liked the fresh breeze they brought to the fashion world. In an interview in the *Huffington Post* he said: “In 1988 everything was beautiful and glamorous, but there were these other women, they had balls, they had brains, they put their hair back and wore no make-up, that was it. That was the change.”¹ Young, cheeky, fresh faced, no feigned poses, no make-up. The fashion they wore hardly played a role either.

Lindbergh, who currently lives in Paris, Arles, and New York, started his career in Paris in 1978. Ever since he contributed to the pages of *Vogue*, *American Harper’s Bazaar*, *Vanity Fair*, *The New Yorker*, *Allure*, and *Rolling Stone*. His photographs have been used in advertisements for Giorgio Armani, Jil Sander, Prada, Donna Karan, Calvin Klein, and Comme des Garçons.

The Nicola Erni Collection showcases high-contrast black-and-white photographs, taken between 1986 and 2014. Among them are Lindbergh’s most iconic fashion photographs, such as the Kate Moss picture taken for *Harper’s Bazaar* in 1994, and the model Amber Valetta as an angel, taken in 1993 in the streets of Manhattan. Another highlight is an image starring not only one model but five super models wearing bodies by

Giorgio di Sant’Angelo and Levi’s jeans: Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista, Tatjana Patitz, Christy Turlington, Cindy Crawford, 1989.

Lindbergh’s high-contrast, very grainy photographs were inspired by early German films and the Berlin Art Scene of the 1920s. When taking photographs Lindbergh often tells a story, regardless of whether it is about machine workers in a factory or aliens who have landed on earth, such as in the picture *Helena Christensen, Debbie Lee Carrington, El Mirage, California* (1990). Often the story defines the image rather than vice versa. When Lindbergh does not tell a story, focussing instead purely on portraiture, it becomes evident what he is looking for: the intensive gaze, the close exchange between photographer and model, between the viewer and the viewed. His models are seldom smiling in any of the pictures, staring instead at their counterpart, their gaze almost boring into the camera lens (*Linda Evangelista, Paris, 1990*). Such eyes prevent the viewer from looking deep into their soul—the models remaining enigmatic, they lend wings to one’s own fantasies, and provoke one’s own feelings. Through their eyes we are drawn into their thoughts. These pictures are like mirrors in which one sees a reflection of oneself. The reason that numerous portraits in the “Images of Women” collections I and II are so powerful is because Lindbergh’s own personality and inner nature are manifested in all of his pictures.

This exhibition does not only show portraits of famous models such as Cara Delivigne, Linda Evangelista, and Uma Thurman, but also two portraits of the collector Nicola Erni herself, taken in Paris in September 2014. It was a privilege to experience the artist working directly—a gentle man who encounters his models in an open, warm-hearted manner, smiling frequently, not intimidating in the least. With astonishment, the viewer directs himself towards the intense gaze, “alternating between evoking challenge and skepticism, conveying strength on the one hand and tenderness on the other.”²

Lindbergh’s pictures exude a completely different beauty than those seen today in fashion magazines. His images reveal his models’ “imperfections” such as wrinkles around the eyes, blemishes on the skin, and freckles. For Lindbergh beauty does not exist without truth. In the opinion of the great magician of fashion photography, one may be perfect but not beautiful. Welcome to the world of the natural devoid of any retouching.

Ira Stehmann

¹ Peter Lindbergh, *The Huffington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/12/peter-lindbergh-super-model-era_n_3913213.html, accessed on 02/22/2015

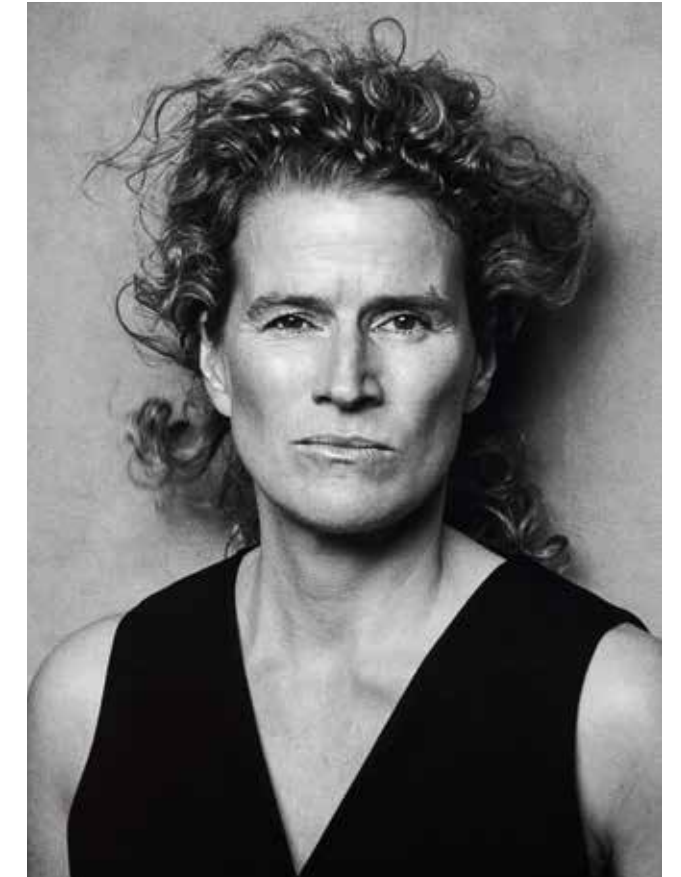
² Cf. <http://www.faz.net/portraetband-zum-70igsten-geburtstag-von-peter-lindbergh-13277094.html>, accessed on 02/22/2015



Uma Thurman, *Vogue Italy*, Downtown, Los Angeles, 2011, gelatin silver print



Nicola Erni, *LittleGrandStudio*, Paris, 2014, gelatin silver print



Nicola Erni, *LittleGrandStudio*, Paris, 2014, gelatin silver print



Linda Evangelista, Paris, 1990, gelatin silver print



Linda Evangelista, Paris, 1990, gelatin silver print



Kate Moss, Harper's Bazaar, Long Island, New York, 1994, gelatin silver print



Linda Evangelista, Vogue Italy, Bahamas, 1989, gelatin silver print



Amber Valletta, Harper's Bazaar, New York, 1993, gelatin silver print



Linda Evangelista, Vogue Italy, Pin Up Studio, Paris, 1988, gelatin silver print



Tatjana Patitz, Azzedine Alaïa, Le Touquet, France, 1986, gelatin silver print



Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista, Tatjana Patitz, Christy Turlington and Cindy Crawford, Vogue UK, New York, 1989, gelatin silver print



Linda Evangelista, Tatjana Patitz, Christy Turlington, Estelle Lefébure, Karen Alexander, Rachel Williams, Los Angeles, 1988, gelatin silver print



Naomi Campbell, Dalmatians/Seeing Spots, Vogue US, Los Angeles, 1990, gelatin silver print



Linda Evangelista, Vogue Italy, 1987, gelatin silver print



Amber Valetta, Angel, Harper's Bazaar, New York, 1993, gelatin silver print



Cara Delevingne, Paris, France, 2013, gelatin silver print



Homage to Diaghilev, Kristen McMenamy, Harper's Bazaar, Studio One, New York, 1992, gelatin silver print