

# EMMA SUMMERTON THE RISING STAR

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The Australian born photographer Emma Summerton is one of few female artists who achieved a breakthrough within today's highly competitive world of fashion. Under the title "Kaleidoscope of Fertility" Summerton was commissioned in 2018 to shoot for the German magazine *Stern* and its fashion supplement. As its heading implies, her claim was to tell different stories of women whom she encountered in her private life, such as memories of her mother, in movies or books. Summerton wanted to emphasize particularly that a female photographer has another perception of how women should move and show themselves in front of the camera.<sup>1</sup> Her in-depth knowledge and interest in technical aspects of lighting or filtering out specific color nuances underline her self-imposed task in favor of staging female beauty with the ineffable feeling of fantasy.

After finishing her photography degree in Australia, Summerton moved to London and started to work with the British artist Fiona Banner.<sup>2</sup> On her regular vintage hunts at markets and in shops, the photographer found a pair of shoes by the British designer Terry de Havilland, which became the focus of a series of self-portrait polaroids.<sup>3</sup> She sent those images to the designer and he commissioned her finally to shoot their newest lookbook in 2005.<sup>4</sup> The shoot caught the eyes of the editors of the British magazine *Dazed & Confused* who subsequently published her first fashion editorial.<sup>5</sup> Summerton

has had a very personal relationship to the polaroid as a visual medium since the late '90s. Parts of her early polars functioned as visual love letters to her then partner and, at the same time, the series turned out to be small experiments to find her voice using photography.<sup>6</sup>

And now she is building her international network of commercial clients and regularly shooting editorials as well as covers for high-end fashion magazines. In one of her latest projects Summerton combined photography and painting when she painted over images for the May 2019 issue of German *Vogue*.

The Nicola Erni Collection holds a large number of works by Emma Summerton which she had made for numerous magazines such as *i-D*, *Vogue Italia* or *Vogue Australia*. It was love at first sight when Nicola Erni was suddenly captured by Summerton's photographs flipping through a fashion magazine. She saw way more in the pictures beyond the obvious fashion element: "A touch of something unexpected, a signature of its own ... almost like a 'pop-art take of photography' as a medium," she explained. After several rounds of careful deliberations, Nicola encouraged Emma to produce prints for her collection and fine art prints for the art market. She advised her to be open to having her emerging career and work represented by a renowned art gallery.

The one work currently on view, titled *Janice with a Lister Lady*, was part of Summerton's first story made for Australian *Vogue* in 2014. It started off as a collaboration with the artist Anthony Lister who is considered Australia's premier street artist.<sup>7</sup> The shot took place in various locations in Bondi (Sydney) where he sprayed graffiti works.<sup>8</sup> Summerton not only staged Lister's energy and creativity through previous works but also Lister as an artist drawing the model Janice Alida or creating one of his spray works outside, wearing a crazy outfit. The photographs taken in collaboration with Lister resulted in picture-in-picture scenes often to be discovered within Summerton's visual language. *Janice with a Lister Lady* especially stands out with its movie-like setting and the spontaneous pose adopted by the model Janice Alida, casually walking along the rough wall on which Lister's monumental graffiti can be seen.

Emma Summerton's photographic work and her ability to react brilliantly to changing aspects within the fashion world and fine art photography has recently attracted the attention of a number of institutions and curators. Her images were included in the show titled "Beyond Fashion" at ArtisTree in Hong Kong as well as at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London at the "Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams" show<sup>9</sup>—a rising star indeed!



*Janice with a Lister Lady*, Sydney, 2014  
Archival pigment print  
Image: 89.5 x 131.5 cm