



Ellen von Unwerth
LADYLAND

OPERA GALLERY

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Preface

We are proud to showcase the inspiring, provocative and pertinent work of Ellen von Unwerth in a solo exhibition at Opera Gallery London for the first time. One of the most renowned and successful contemporary female photographers, von Unwerth honed her craft and built an immensely successful career in a largely male-dominated industry, gaining worldwide acclaim for her representation and empowerment of women as subject rather than object.

Ellen von Unwerth is the photographer who helped launch supermodel Claudia Schiffer in the early 1990s, first in a picture for *ELLE* and later with the Guess campaign that gave both of them their big break in the fashion industry. From these beginnings, she was pivotal in helping to turn fashion models into icons.

Ever since, the German born photographer has continued to push the limits of her art, celebrating female form, playful personality and overt sensuality, empowering women by presenting them as strong, free and independent.

In all her work, Ellen von Unwerth's charismatic and mischievous persona, forceful spirit and creative integrity are ever present, but through her artistic process the unbridled personality of the subject is explored, revealed and then captured. The results are a body of work idiosyncratically saturated with an evocative whimsy, strident energy and emancipated eroticism.

Opera Gallery London is immensely excited to welcome you to the wonders of 'Ladyland', to celebrate with us the inspiring work of this internationally significant photographer at a critical time of female awakening.



Sébastien Plantin
Director
OPERA GALLERY LONDON

Gilles Dyan
Founder and Chairman
OPERA GALLERY GROUP

ELLEN'S INTERVIEW



WHO ARE THE MOST REMARKABLE PEOPLE THAT YOU HAVE PHOTOGRAPHED AND WHY?

I've had the chance to photograph so many remarkable people that I wouldn't know where to start. In a thirty year career I've shot quite an impressive number of musicians, artists, personalities, models and more. For example, I am very honored and proud to have met and shot David Bowie several times. His personality, was unique, so talented, so handsome, so sexy and charming, so iconic and so unpretentious, all made him exceptionally remarkable.

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF INSPIRATION THAT FEED YOUR WORK?

I take pictures all the time and I am always thinking about new narratives to feed my work. I am lucky that I get inspired by many various sources in life: art, music, cinema, fashion of course but also people in general, a scene that I see on the street, some paparazzi pictures, among many things...

WHO WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO PHOTOGRAPH, FROM ANY POINT IN HISTORY, IF GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY AND WHY?

If I could choose anyone I would photograph Marilyn Monroe and Marlon Brando - together in a bubble bath!

AS ONE OF THE MOST RENOWNED FEMALE PHOTOGRAPHERS IN THE WORLD, DO YOU THINK THAT PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER, BEAUTY AND SEXUALITY HAVE CHANGED IN THE LAST 30 YEARS, AND IF SO HOW?

Of course. Witnessing these changes from a photographer's point of view is truly fascinating. People's reactions, which reflect the perceptions that they have, have evolved tremendously in the past number of years. What was provocative back then, is considered normal today. For example, when I shot two women kissing thirty years ago, people would find it shocking! Now people are more liberated, they are also exposed to an insane number of images everyday.

A LOT OF YOUR IMAGES ARE EXTREMELY SENSUAL, AND COULD BE SEEN AS SEXUALISED. WHAT IS YOUR APPROACH TO EROTICISM AS A THEME?

I think it is important to understand that I photograph women as subjects not as objects. What I want to immortalise is a woman's personality enhanced and exposed. Often, women appear self-assured, having a lot of fun in my pictures, and that is because it is what is actually happening during the shooting. I like to represent the women I photograph as they are, and that means not denying their sensuality, to the contrary, embracing it.

INCREASINGLY, WOMEN ARE STANDING UP AND INITIATING PROTESTS, INSTIGATING GENDER EMPOWERMENT AND DEMANDING GENDER EQUALITY. DO YOU SEE THIS SURGE AS A SIGN OF A RISE IN FEMININE SELF-ESTEEM AND LESS CONCERN ABOUT PUBLIC PERCEPTION OR NEUROSIS OF THE SELF-ENGENDERED BY SOCIETY AND THE MEDIAS PRESENTATION OF WHAT IT IS TO BE THE 'PERFECT' WOMAN?

I perceive the current movements as an inevitable fight that women need to lead. The fight for equality, identity and freedom. I think it is amazing. I actually just created my own magazine, Ellen von Unwerth's VON, and the theme of the first issue is "The Fight Issue". I felt the urge to create this at a time where in fashion you too often you see girls without personality, standing still, doing nothing. I needed to show women portrayed as strong human beings. Women need to express themselves and fight for what they are and what they believe in.

DO YOU PREFER TO WORK IN A PHOTO STUDIO OR ON LOCATIONS?

Most of the time I prefer to work on location. I love places which have a history, I love bars, restaurants, hotels, nature, streets, any places with personality, from the luxurious to the gritty.

HOW DO YOU PLAN AND ORCHESTRATE THE MAKING OF A PHOTOGRAPH IN TERMS OF SETTING, CHARACTER CHOICE ETC...?

I always organise my shoots like movies. Initially I have a narrative in mind, it can often be a mixture of inspirations and I work from that. Which means I write a little story, then cast the people accordingly, choose the location and the crew, and always work with music on set that fits the story!

IS THERE A SPECIFIC REASON WHY YOU CHOOSE TO WORK PREDOMINANTLY WITH FEMALE MODELS?

What I love about shooting female models is what you can build around them, its like playing with dolls: choose the fashion, hair, make up, etc... Endless possibilities! Also, I am more intrigued by the personality of women in general. That said, I've photographed many amazing men, models, actors, artists...

INSTAGRAM AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS NOW HAVE A VERY STRONG PRESENCE WITHIN OUR SOCIETY. DOES SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT THE WORK YOU MAKE AND, IF SO, HOW?

I guess my work now reaches more people than when it was only published inside the pages of a magazine. But it also makes images more consumable in the sense that people can forget images instantly. The quantity we see can become confusing! But, it is a great platform to discover new creative people.

LOOKING BACK AT YOUR CAREER, ARE THERE ANY UNCHARTERED TERRITORIES THAT YOU WOULD STILL LIKE TO EXPLORE?

Well there are always new amazing people to discover. This is why I started my magazine "Ellen von Unwerth's VON". The idea is to give myself a platform and freedom to shoot whom and what I want. Another project in the making is a feature film which I hope to be making in the near future.

HOW WOULD YOU SUM UP YOUR AESTHETIC OR CREATIVE PHILOSOPHY?

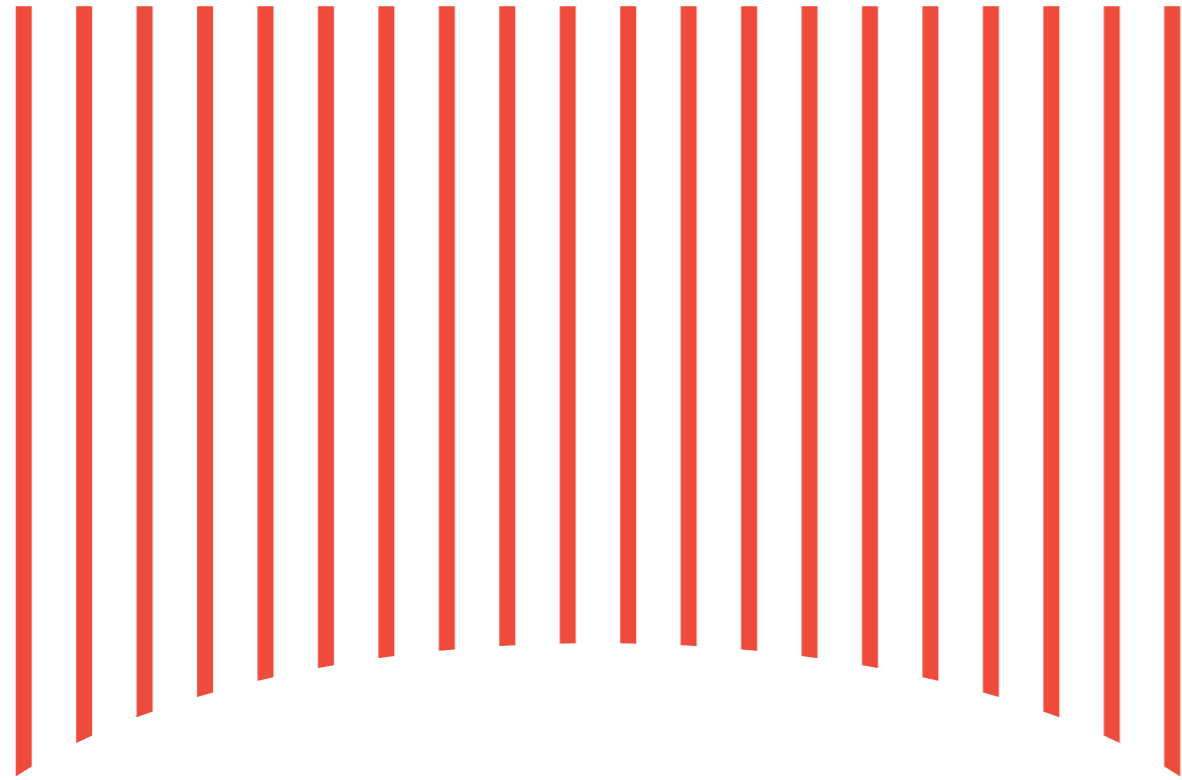
My creative philosophy is very simple and includes everything I do: I love life and I love to capture it. I want to share it with people now and for generations to come.

SUPERMODELS

CLAUDIA SCHIFFER
Mykonos, 1990
from a *Guess* campaign

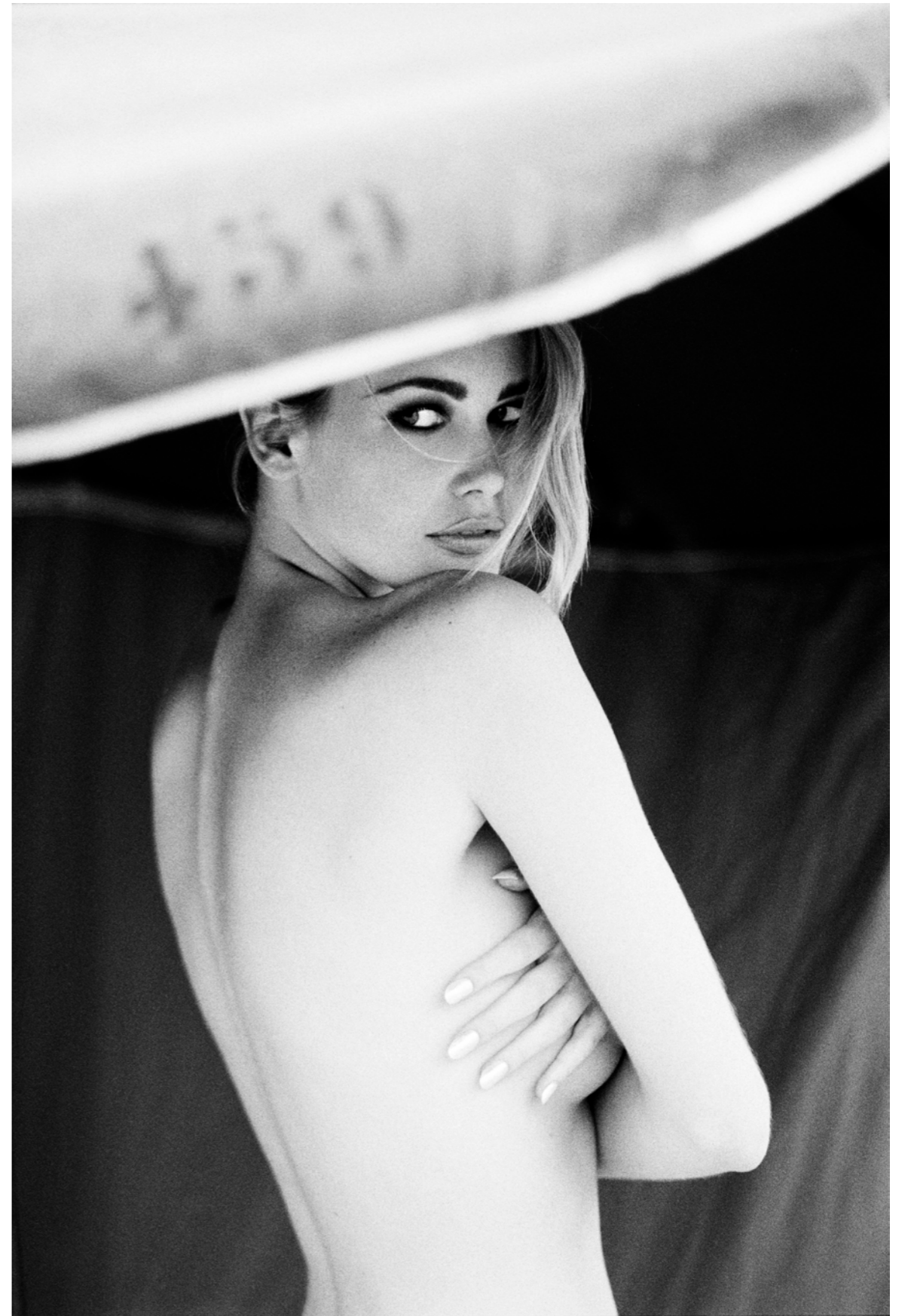
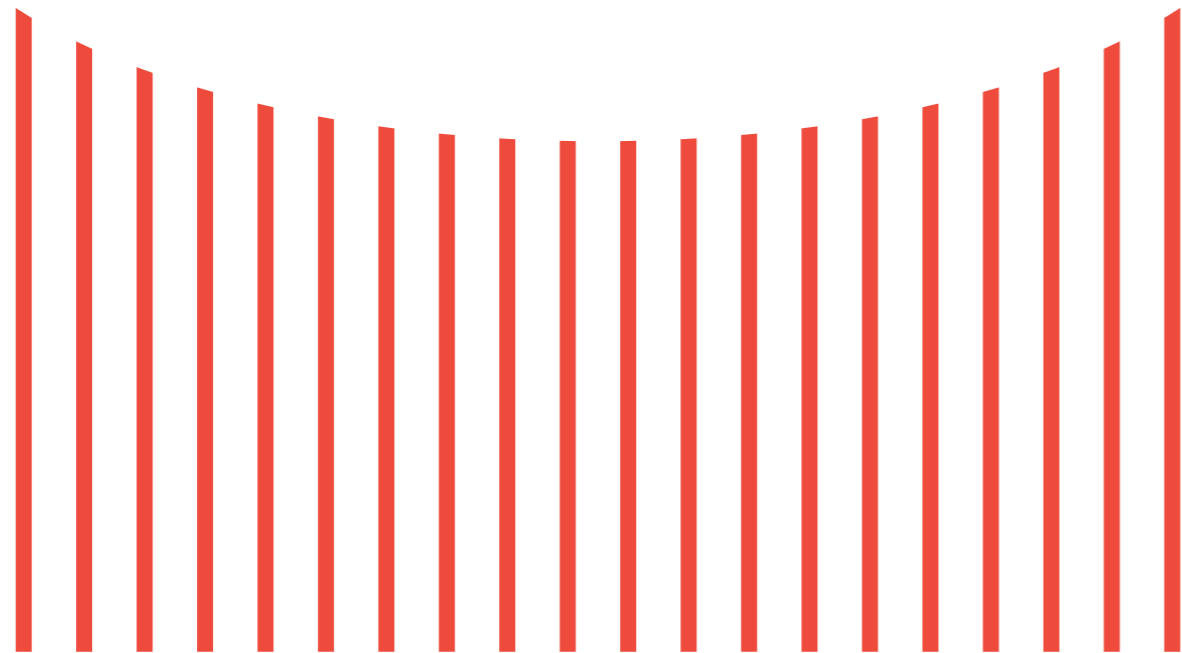
•
BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7





PARASOL
Deauville, 1990
Claudia Schiffer for *Vogue Italy*

•
BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3



CLAUDIA SCHIFFER
Morocco, 1989
from a *Guess* campaign

•
BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3



SMOKING IN BED

New York, 1994

Eva Herzigova

BLACK & WHITE INKJET PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER

150 x 230 cm • 59 x 90.6 in • EDITION OF 3



PENELOPE CRUZ
Paris, 2003
for *Vogue Spain*

•
BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7





NAOMI'S ROLLERS
Los Angeles, 1991
for *Interview Magazine*

BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7



THE TRAMP
Paris, 1993
Eva Herzigova

BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7



RICH BITCH

Paris, 2004

Bianca Balti for *Vogue Italy*

BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7



HAUTE COUTURE

Paris, 1991

Karen Mulder and Deon Bray for *Vogue US*

BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7

NAOMI CAMPBELL
New York, 1994
for Naomi Campbell Album cover *Baby Woman*

•
BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3





ELLE MACPHERSON
New York, 2004
from a *Jimmy Choo* campaign

BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7



MILK
Paris, 1995
Kate Moss for *Vogue US*

•
COLOR INKJET PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
150 x 230 cm • 59 x 90.6 in • EDITION OF 3



BIG IN AMERICA

Los Angeles, 1991
Claudia Schiffer for *Vogue US*
COLOR INKJET PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
150 x 150 cm • 59 x 59 in • EDITION OF 3

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

London, 2014
Naomi Campbell for an *Agent Provocateur* campaign
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3



CHRISTY TURLINGTON AND LINDA EVANGELISTA

Cannes, 1990

for *Vogue Italy*

BLACK & WHITE INKJET PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER

150 x 230 cm • 59 x 90.6 in • EDITION OF 3





KISS ME QUICK
Paris, 2015
Lindsey Wixson for *Vogue Russia*

•
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3



DAFFODIL
Paris, 2015
Lindsey Wixson for *Vogue Russia*

•
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3

KATE AND DAVID
New York, 2003
Kate Moss and David Bowie for *Q Magazine*

•
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3





MONICA BELLUCCI AND VINCENT CASSEL

Paris, 2004

for *Studio Magazine*

BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7

BAVARIA



TREE OF LOVE
Bavaria, 2015
from the book *Heimat*, 2017
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3

SPY DEVICE
Bavaria, 2015
from the book *Heimat*, 2017

•
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7





FRESHLY BLOOMED

Bavaria, 2015
from the book *Heimat*, 2017
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER

120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3

TÊTE-À-TÊTE

Bavaria, 2015
from the book *Heimat*, 2017
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER

120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3





THE BIG CATCH
Bavaria, 2015
from the book *Heimat*, 2017

•
COLOR INKJET PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
150 x 230 cm • 59 x 90.6 in • EDITION OF 3



HEIDI
Kitzbühel, 2003
Eva Riccobono for *Vogue Germany*

•
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7

FRIVOLITIES

DOUBLE TROUBLE
New York, 2008
Charlotte Kemp Muhl and Sarabeth Stroller

•
COLOR INKJET PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
150 x 230 cm • 59 x 90.6 in • EDITION OF 3



NUDES AT THE ROYALTON
New York, 1992
from a campaign for *The Royalton Hotel*

•
BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3



PUDDING

Paris, 2011
from the book *The Story of Olga*, 2012
COLOR INKJET PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
150 x 230 cm • 59 x 90.6 in • EDITION OF 3





LEG SHOW

Rouilly-le-Bas, 2002
from the book *Revenge*, 2003

BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7



ANONYMOUS

Paris, 2013
Anna Ewers and Keke Lindgard for *Numero Cbina*

C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7

CHERRY KISS

Paris, 2011
from the book *The Story of Olga*, 2012
BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7





BACCARAT
Paris, 2007
Raquel Nave for a *Baccarat* campaign
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3



NADJA AUERMANN
Paris, 1994
for *The Face* magazine

•
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7



LA GARÇONNE

Paris, 1991

Nadja Auermann

•
BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7



THE MASK

Paris, 1991

Nadja Auermann for *Vogue UK*

•
BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
50 x 60 cm • 19.7 x 23.6 in • EDITION OF 15

NEVER TRUST
Paris, 2011
from the book *The Story of Olga*, 2012

BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7





◀ PUNISHMENT

Rouilly-le-Bas, 2002
from the book *Revenge*, 2003

BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
120 x 180 cm • 47.2 x 70.9 in • EDITION OF 3

DIAMOND NECKLACE

Rouilly-le-Bas, 2002
from the book *Revenge*, 2003

BLACK & WHITE PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7 ▶



PEACHES
Rouilly-le-Bas, 2002
from the book *Revenge*, 2003

BLACK & WHITE INKJET PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
150 x 230 cm • 59 x 90.6 in • EDITION OF 3





THE PINCH
Bavaria, 2015,
from the book *Heimat*, 2017

•
COLOR INKJET PRINT ON BARYTHÉ PAPER
150 x 230 cm • 59 x 90.6 in • EDITION OF 3

SANGRIA
New York, 2009
Elsa Hosk and Kiki Kang for *Commons & Sense*

•
C-PRINT ON FUJIFLEX PAPER
70 x 100 cm • 27.6 x 39.4 in • EDITION OF 7



BIOGRAPHY

★
Ellen von Unwerth, born 1954 in Germany, gained wide attention with her sensual Guess campaign in the early 1990s, followed by campaigns for Absolut, Agent Provocateur, A.P.C., Aston Martin, Baccarat, Belvedere, Chanel, Chantal Thomass, Crazy Horse, David Morris, Diesel, Dior, Elisabetta Franchi, Ferragamo, G-Star, Guerlain, H&M, Hysterie Glamour, Jimmy Choo, Lacoste, L'Oréal, MAC Cosmetics, Mary Katrantzou, Mercedes-Benz, Miu Miu, Opel, Revlon, Rolex, Shiseido, Tommy Hilfiger, Veuve Cliquot, Victoria's Secret, and many more.

★
She is a regular contributor to magazines all over the world, like Arena, Cosmopolitan, Egoïste, ELLE, Glamour, i-D, Interview, Lula, Numéro, Paper Magazine, Playboy, Stern, The Face, The New York Times, Vanity Fair, and many international Vogue editions (American, French, German, Italian, Russian).

★
Furthermore she directed short films for clients like Azzedine Alaïa, Dior, Guess, and Katherine Hamnett, and a range of commercials and music videos.

★
Her book projects are an important part of her career: Her first book, *Snaps*, was published in 1994, followed by *Wicked* (1998), *Couples* (1999), the photo-novella *Revenge* (2003), *Omahyra & Boyd* (2005), *Fräulein* (2009), *DieSpieler* (2010), the photo-novella *The Story of Olga* (2012), and lately *Heimat* (2017).

★
Her works have been exhibited worldwide, and are part of various collections. Ellen von Unwerth won several prizes, amongst others the first prize at the International Festival of Fashion Photography in 1991, and the LUCIE Award in 2012.



EXHIBITIONS



2018

DEVOTION!
30 YEARS OF PHOTOGRAPHING WOMEN
Fotografiska Museum, Stockholm

DIVAS
Galeria Mario Cohen, Sao Paulo

2017

HEIMAT
Taschen Gallery, Los Angeles
Fotogipfel Festival, Oberstdorf
Immagis, Munich

2016

HAPPY VIEWS
Kamil Art Gallery & Magdalena Gabriel Fine Art, Monaco

WILD WILD WEST
Photokina, Cologne

GOLDIE
Triumph Gallery & Numéro Russia, Moscow

2015

REBEL YOUTH
Archive 18-20 in collaboration with 7POST, Paris

2014

MY WAY
Izzy Gallery, Toronto

2013

PLAYDATE
Staley Wise Gallery, New York

MADE IN AMERICA
Fahey Klein Gallery, Los Angeles

LITTLE BEAST
Acte2galerie, Paris

2012

THE STORY OF OLGA
Camera Work, Berlin

DO NOT DISTURB!
Michael Hoppen Gallery, London

CAUGHT!
Izzy Gallery, Toronto

2011

PHOTOGRAPHS
Fahey Klein Gallery, Los Angeles

BERLIN AT NIGHT
NRW, Düsseldorf

2010

LE CINÉMA D'ELLEN
Le Bon Marché, Paris

2009

FRÄULEIN
Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris
Staley Wise Gallery, New York
Camera Work, Berlin
Michael Hoppen Gallery, London

2007

BE FABULOUS
C5 Art Center, Beijing

2005

OMAHYRA & BOYD
Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris

2003

REVENGE
Camera Work, Berlin
Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris
Staley Wise Gallery, New York



We would like to thank the artist for her trust.

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Cover:

The Mask, Nadja Auermann for *Vogue UK*, 1991
50x60 cm, 19.7x23.6 in

Black & White print on Barythé paper, edition of 15

Back cover:

Daffodil, Lindsey Wixson for *Vogue Russia*, 2015
120 x 180 cm, 47.2 x 70.9 in

C-print on Fujiflex paper, edition of 3

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