



ELLEN VON UNWERTH
HERE COMES
TROUBLE

OPERA GALLERY

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17 NOVEMBER - 15 DECEMBER 2018

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PREFACE

Opera Gallery Beirut is pleased to present Ellen von Unwerth's 'Here Comes Trouble'; the photographer's third solo exhibition with Opera Gallery Group following major success in London and Monaco.

The exhibition celebrates femininity, uniquely expressed by the artist through her thirty-year of profession as a photographer. The specially curated selection of works showcases various periods of her career: from her most iconic black and white photographs of Claudia Schiffer, Naomi Campbell and Kate Moss, to her most recent shots constructing parodies of the typical costumes of Bavaria, the artist's homeland.

At the beginning of the 1990s, when Hollywood actresses dominated magazine covers around the world, the German photographer contributed to the birth of the 'Supermodel' cult. Over the years, she succeeded in digging into the predominantly male environment that is fashion photography.

Her career continued uninterruptedly with success, including winning the International Festival of Fashion Photography prize in 1991 and the LUCIE Award in 2012. In addition to famed photo shoots for the most prestigious magazines (Vogue, Vanity Fair, ID...) she has created advertising campaigns for brands such as Miu Miu, Victoria's Secret, Baccarat and many more. She also published several books since 1994, gathering her work in 9 volumes entitled "Snaps", "Wicked", "Couples", "Omahyra & Boyd", "Revenge", "Fraulein", "DieSpieler", "The Story of Olga" and "Heimat".

As both a woman and a former model, Ellen von Unwerth is in a special and privileged position in understanding her subjects. With her playful and lively way of relating to her models, Ellen von Unwerth has revolutionised fashion photography with her witty and effervescent work. Through her eyes, we discover energetic muses, independent, free and emancipated women that are the undisputed protagonists of the scene.

We are very excited to welcome you to the first Ellen von Unwerth solo show in Beirut and celebrate the inspiring work of this internationally significant photographer at a critical time of female awakening.

Gilles Dyan
Chairman & Founder
Opera Gallery Group

Salwa Chalhoub
Owner & Director
Opera Gallery Beirut

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 uncharted 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.

Claudia Schiffer, Mykonos, 1990
From a Guess campaign
Black & white print on baryta paper, edition of 3
180 x 120 cm / 70.9 x 47.2 in





Parasol, Deauville, 1990

Claudia Schiffer for Vogue Italy

Black & white inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
225 x 150 cm / 88.6 x 59.1 in



Kate Moss II, Paris, 1995

From a Vogue Italy "WILD" story

Black & white inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
150 x 225 cm / 59.1 x 88.6 in

Penelope Cruz, Paris, 2003
For Vogue Spain

Black & white inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
223 x 150 cm / 87.8 x 59.1 in





Big in America, Los Angeles, 1991
Claudia Schiffer for Vogue America
Colour inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
150 x 150 cm / 41.3 x 41.3 in

Milk, Kate Moss, 1995
For Vogue America
Colour inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
207 x 150 cm / 81.5 x 59.1 in



Sofia Boutella, Los Angeles, 2017
For Iris Covet Book magazine
Black & white print on baryta paper, edition of 7
105 x 70 cm / 39.4 x 27.6 in





Elle MacPherson, New York, 2004

From a Jimmy Choo campaign

Black & white inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
219 x 150 cm / 86.2 x 59.1 in

Casual Sunday, London, 2017
Alek Wek for Paper magazine
Black & white inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
225 x 150 cm / 88.6 x 59.1 in



Rich Bitch, Paris, 2004
Bianca Balti for Vogue Italy
Black & white inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
150 x 150 cm / 59.1 x 59.1 in



The Tramp, Paris, 1993
Eva Herzigova for Vogue Italy
Black & white inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
225 x 150 cm / 88.6 x 59.1 in





Anonymous, Paris, 2013
Anna Ewers and Keke Lindgard for Numero China
C-print on Fujiflex paper, edition of 3
120 x 180 cm / 47.2 x 70.9 in

The Mask, Paris, 1991
Nadja Auermann for Vogue UK
Black & white inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
225 x 150 cm / 88.6 x 59.1 in





Baccarat II, Paris, 2007

Raquel Nave for a Baccarat campaign

Black & white print on baryta paper, edition of 3
120 x 180 cm / 47.2 x 70.9 in



Tête-à-tête, Bavaria, 2015
From the book "Heimat", 2017
Colour inkjet print on baryta paper, edition of 3
150 x 225 cm / 59.1 x 88.6 in



Freshly Bloomed, Bavaria, 2015
From the book "Heimat", 2017

C-Print on Fujiflex paper, edition of 3
120 x 180 cm / 47.2 x 70.9 in



Tree of Love, Bavaria, 2015
From the book "Heimat", 2017
C-Print on Fujiflex paper, edition of 3
120 x 180 cm / 47.2 x 70.9 in

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, Hysteria 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

Beauté Fatale
Opera Gallery, Monaco

Ladyland
Opera Gallery, London

DEVOTION! 30 Years of Photographing Women
Fotografiska Museum, Stockholm

Divas
Galeria Mario Cohen, Sao Paulo

2017

Heimat
Taschen Gallery, Los Angeles
Oberstdorf Fotogipfel, 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 Cinema 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

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