

Steven Meisel 1993 A Year in Photographs

Steven Meisel is one of the most important fashion photographers of his generation. Starting in illustration – to which he attributes his good graphic eye – Steven got his first break as a photographer when a booker at Elite Model Management, invited him to photograph some of their models.

Growing up in the 60s and 70s in New York, he was well aware of the stylistic revolutions taking place in fashion, music and art. It was the time of Warhol and the Factory, of happenings – a time to pick up a camera, make a Polaroid and catch what was going down. In Steven's case, that meant cutting school to track down and photograph models on the street.

'I used to do that a lot. I went to school on 57th Street. I don't know why, but I would always have an Instamatic with me. New York seemed small and back then, you just saw the models all over the place. They were hard to miss.'

A small group of street photographs from these days acts as a prelude to the main exhibition.

1993

1993 ... Things that will happen haven't happened yet. Very few people own cell phones, the internet is in its infancy and we're a decade and more from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and the iPhone. And Steven Meisel – who the previous year has completed *Sex*, his brilliant collaboration with Madonna – is set to embark on a veritable blitz of creativity. Over 12 months he will, among other things, shoot 28 covers for *Vogue* together with 100 editorial stories including a 60-page special on men's fashion for *Per Lui*. His images of men were ground-breaking - nobody at the time shot men as Steven shot them.

1993 was a moment of inspiration for Steven. 'I need to be inspired by great clothes and back then there were so many great designers. It was a great time to be involved with fashion.'

The exhibition is introduced by a set of wallpapers featuring the magazine covers that Steven made in 1993. They are principally from *Vogue Italia*, whose editor Franca Sozzani gave Steven carte blanche to 'do anything as long as it's beautiful.'

For Steven the models are at the heart of everything 'The model is super-important. Majorly, majorly important.' Steven was, perhaps more than anyone, key to the creation of the supermodels and so the exhibition opens with a group shot of the supermodels made for *American Vogue* – an image of Niki, Nadja, Claudia, Naomi, Linda, and Carla walking the studio runway in a carefully choreographed row. Many of them benefited from his determination to cast new and unusual models, girls who people would resist working with because they didn't think they were beautiful enough. Steven saw what no one else saw.

At the heart of the exhibition is a procession of over 100 classic portraits that are by turns classic, subversive, witty and warm. They are amongst the most important fashion photographs ever made.

They arise from a particular moment; a moment before Steven started working with big ideas, commentaries, and concepts. 'It was a moment when I could really focus on what I was doing and, on the people, I loved working with ...'.

The Marta Ortega Perez (MOP) Foundation

The MOP Foundation is defined by three guiding passions: Art, photography, and fashion.

Photography's unique ability to cut across boundaries of language, geography and culture and its easy, often magical, interactions with other disciplines makes it the great unifying art form of our age. As such it is central to the work of the MOP Foundation.

Through its exhibition program the Foundation offers the public a moment to discover the work of true photographic Masters.

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