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FT 25



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While the
essence of
greatness in
the fashion
world

is based on the notion of originality, true originals—those who trail-blaze and go where no man or woman has gone before—are few and far between. *FT* has had the privilege of profiling scores of unique thinkers over the past two and a half decades, and each of these Originals has made us look at fashion, art, architecture, design and life in bold and inspiring new ways. I'll never forget the late Alfred Eisenstaedt, the father of photojournalism, who was well into his 80s at the time, making his way through a blinding snowstorm in New York to meet me and my crew for our interview at the Time-Life Building in 1994. His passionate sense of professional commitment was such that he wouldn't dare cancel, and indeed it is passion that ultimately defines these extraordinary individuals.

Often in fashion circles, it's a passion for fantasy that drives them, whether they're dreaming up new worlds or simply turning themselves into mascots for new ways of thinking. Drag sensation RuPaul, who surfaced at the height

of the devastation that was AIDS, was emblematic of a kind of sexual and sensual experimentation that had started to be overtly celebrated by the mid '90s, as pop idols, mega-designers and even movie and TV stars began coming out proudly, paving the way for people to begin being honest with themselves and the rest of society. The first time I met RuPaul was in the late '80s, backstage at a Todd Oldham show. She was accompanied by a shy, lanky young man, who told me he was an avid fan of *FT* as he slipped me his business card. Kevyn Aucoin, then a contributing editor for *Allure* magazine, went on to become one of the greatest makeup artists of our time—a champion of gay rights and one of my most beloved "fashion" friends. Kevyn, who died in 2002 of a brain tumour, was famous for painting his subject's faces while they were lying down, and one rainy night in the summer of '97, he gave me a sensational makeover right in the middle of his Chelsea apartment floor. It was one of the best fashion moments of my career.—*Jeanne*



Douglas Cardinal
Ripple Effect

Architects become “starchitects” when they elevate a building to the realm of art and make our spirits soar. Alberta’s own Douglas Cardinal is a member of this elite priesthood. While fellow Canuck Frank Gehry was slogging it out in the design trenches of LA, Cardinal—as elegant as Oscar de la Renta and as uncompromising as Maria Callas—had already found his voice stringing together bricks with gravity-defying twists and turns. His debut design, 1968’s St. Mary’s Church in Red Deer, Alta., busts out of the prairie soil like a ship full sail, but somehow it still manages to sway in unison with the land, a quality Cardinal attributed to his Métis and Blackfoot heritage. More hits followed, including the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Que., and the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., two of many designs Cardinal puzzled out on the computer. One of the first architects in the world to use Computer Assisted Drafting and Design (CADD), Cardinal inspired Gehry and the entire industry to go digital.—*Alison Garwood-Jones*



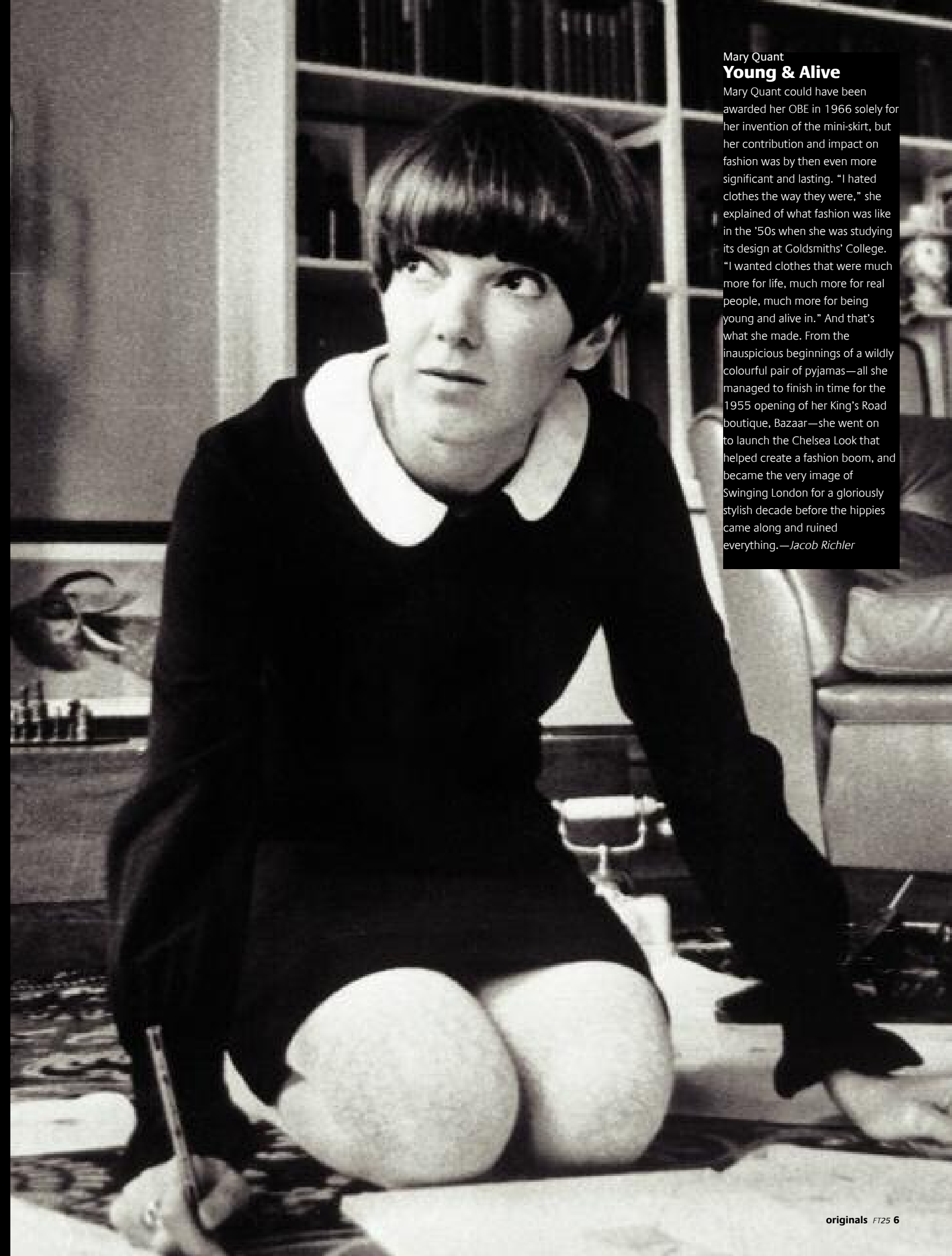
Vidal Sassoon
Cutting Edge

The great modernist Vidal Sassoon understood the link between high design and hair. Before him, women went to the beauty parlor once a week and had their locks washed, teased and sprayed into giant nests (think Tracy Turnblad in *Hairspray*). Split ends and styling errors conveniently got lost in the volume or covered over with headbands. But Sassoon did away with the rollers and choking clouds of spray—a cultural shift as big as losing the corset. His arresting angled bob, made famous by actress Nancy Kwan, was minimalist, low-maintenance and as sleek as a plate-glass window in a Mies van der Rohe skyscraper. Swinging London took note, flooding Sassoon’s Mayfair salon. But Sassoon also went home with his clients; a clever marketer, he made sure they left with enough products to maintain their look. Shampoos and conditioners, with the iconic VS stamped on the bottle, began appearing in showers as women took over washing their own hair. On the grooming front, nothing so revolutionary exists today.—*AGJ*



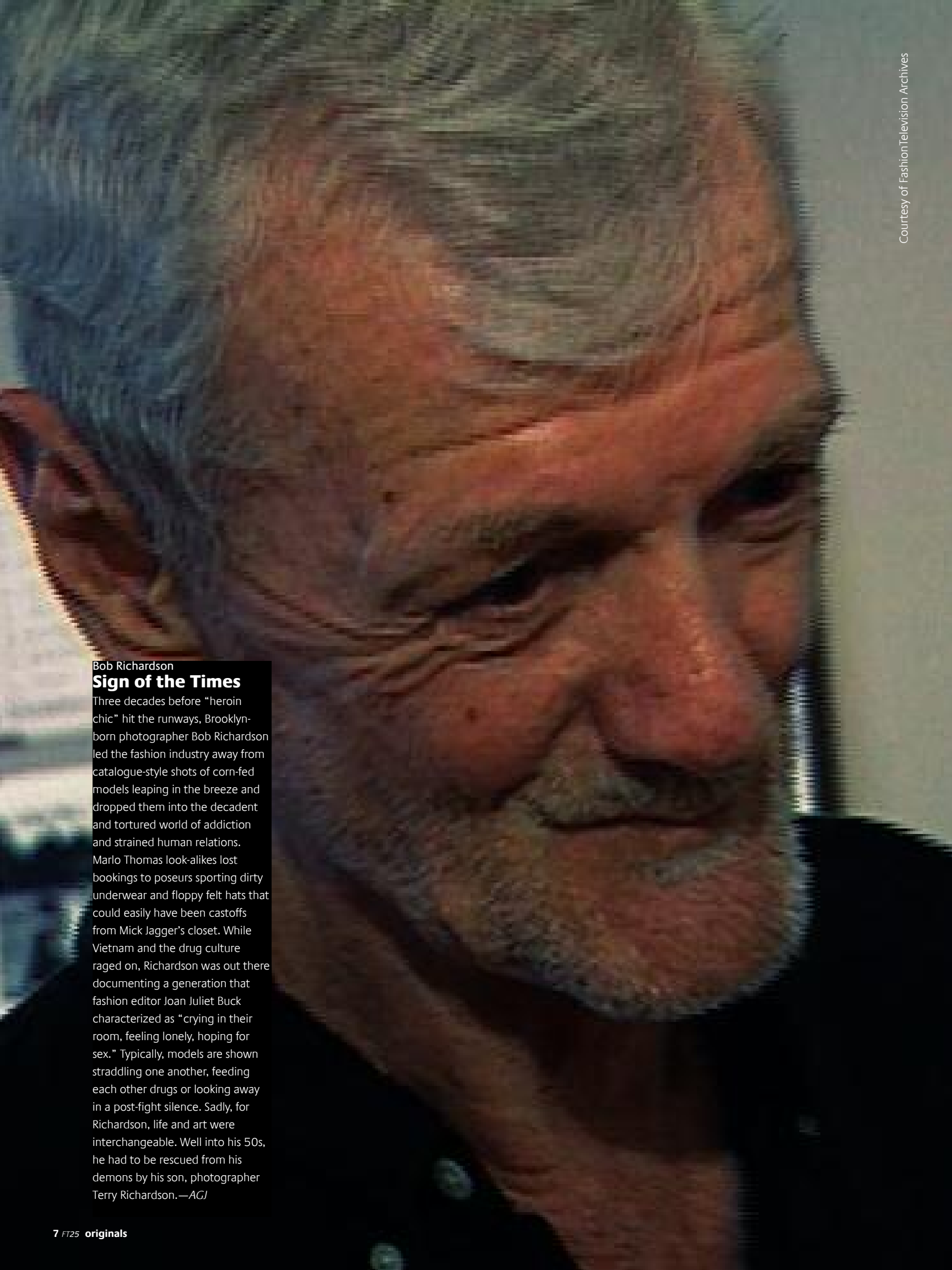
Horst
C'mon, Vogue

The ideal woman of the 1930s was an outdoorsy, up-for-anything gal who could fly planes, ski down mountains and swan dive into Olympic-sized pools. A far more ruthless and terrifying creature, however, slithered onto the scene in a variety of erotically-charged guises created by German-born photographer Horst. Working for American, French and British *Vogue* from the 1930s until the early 1990s, Horst was a master of light and shadow who shot a parade of socialites, movie stars and artists (mostly female) against boiling skies, peering down on us through hooded lids. In between drags on their cigarettes, Horst's women cracked open their corsets and kicked off their shoes, exposing breasts and lacquered toes, before reclining like Odalises high on opium. They also performed in gender-bending top hats and capes, donned more lace than a Goya Duchess and emerged under shafts of raking light in skintight sheaths, hipbones leading the charge. Joan Crawford, Rita Hayworth and Marlene Dietrich all live on as glamorous untouchables from Planet Horst.—AGJ



Mary Quant
Young & Alive

Mary Quant could have been awarded her OBE in 1966 solely for her invention of the mini-skirt, but her contribution and impact on fashion was by then even more significant and lasting. "I hated clothes the way they were," she explained of what fashion was like in the '50s when she was studying its design at Goldsmiths' College. "I wanted clothes that were much more for life, much more for real people, much more for being young and alive in." And that's what she made. From the inauspicious beginnings of a wildly colourful pair of pyjamas—all she managed to finish in time for the 1955 opening of her King's Road boutique, Bazaar—she went on to launch the Chelsea Look that helped create a fashion boom, and became the very image of Swinging London for a gloriously stylish decade before the hippies came along and ruined everything.—Jacob Richler



Courtesy of FashionTelevision Archives

Bob Richardson
Sign of the Times
Three decades before “heroin chic” hit the runways, Brooklyn-born photographer Bob Richardson led the fashion industry away from catalogue-style shots of corn-fed models leaping in the breeze and dropped them into the decadent and tortured world of addiction and strained human relations. Marlo Thomas look-alikes lost bookings to poseurs sporting dirty underwear and floppy felt hats that could easily have been castoffs from Mick Jagger’s closet. While Vietnam and the drug culture raged on, Richardson was out there documenting a generation that fashion editor Joan Juliet Buck characterized as “crying in their room, feeling lonely, hoping for sex.” Typically, models are shown straddling one another, feeding each other drugs or looking away in a post-fight silence. Sadly, for Richardson, life and art were interchangeable. Well into his 50s, he had to be rescued from his demons by his son, photographer Terry Richardson.—*AGJ*



RuPaul
You Go, Girl!
There isn’t a woman on earth who can compete with RuPaul Andre Charles in the leg department. Over seven feet tall in stilettos, with the loping grace of a giraffe and more attitude than Miss Black America, this drag queen, actor, singer and author shimmied her way onto the club scene in the early 1990s belting out anthems like “It’s Raining Men” and her original MTV chart-topping hit, “Supermodel (You Better Work).” Her “love everyone” message was the first to take drag from the gay dance-club scene to daytime TV. “You can call me he. You can call me she. You can call me Regis and Kathie Lee,” she announced, hand planted squarely on hip, “I don’t care. Just call me!” Her sass and winning ways led to duets with Elton John, a popular Christmas album called *Ho, Ho, Ho*, a modeling contract with MAC and, most recently, *RuPaul’s Drag Race*.—*AGJ*



Marc Newson
Living Design

Anyone who has ever put their feet up and caught a jetlagged breath over a gin and tonic in the Qantas First Class lounge at Melbourne or Sydney has to have been impressed by designer Marc Newson's capacity for detail. The spaces seem all of a piece and for good reason: Newson created nearly everything in sight, from the furniture to the table lamps to the cutlery. His biomorphic furnishings can be found in more accessible display nearby in museums like the MoMa in New York and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, but of late, his vehicles have proved to have even more appeal than his furniture. Sure, the \$7,000 price tag for his Biomega MN01 represents a lot of cab fares, but the bicycle is moving art, its plastic frame cast in a single piece of unusual industrial elegance, and manufactured by Aston Martin, makers of Newson's personal ride, an iconic DB4. And his Ford show car, the O21C, does what a show car is supposed to but seldom manages: it brings a fresh perspective to an exhaustively explored subject.—JR



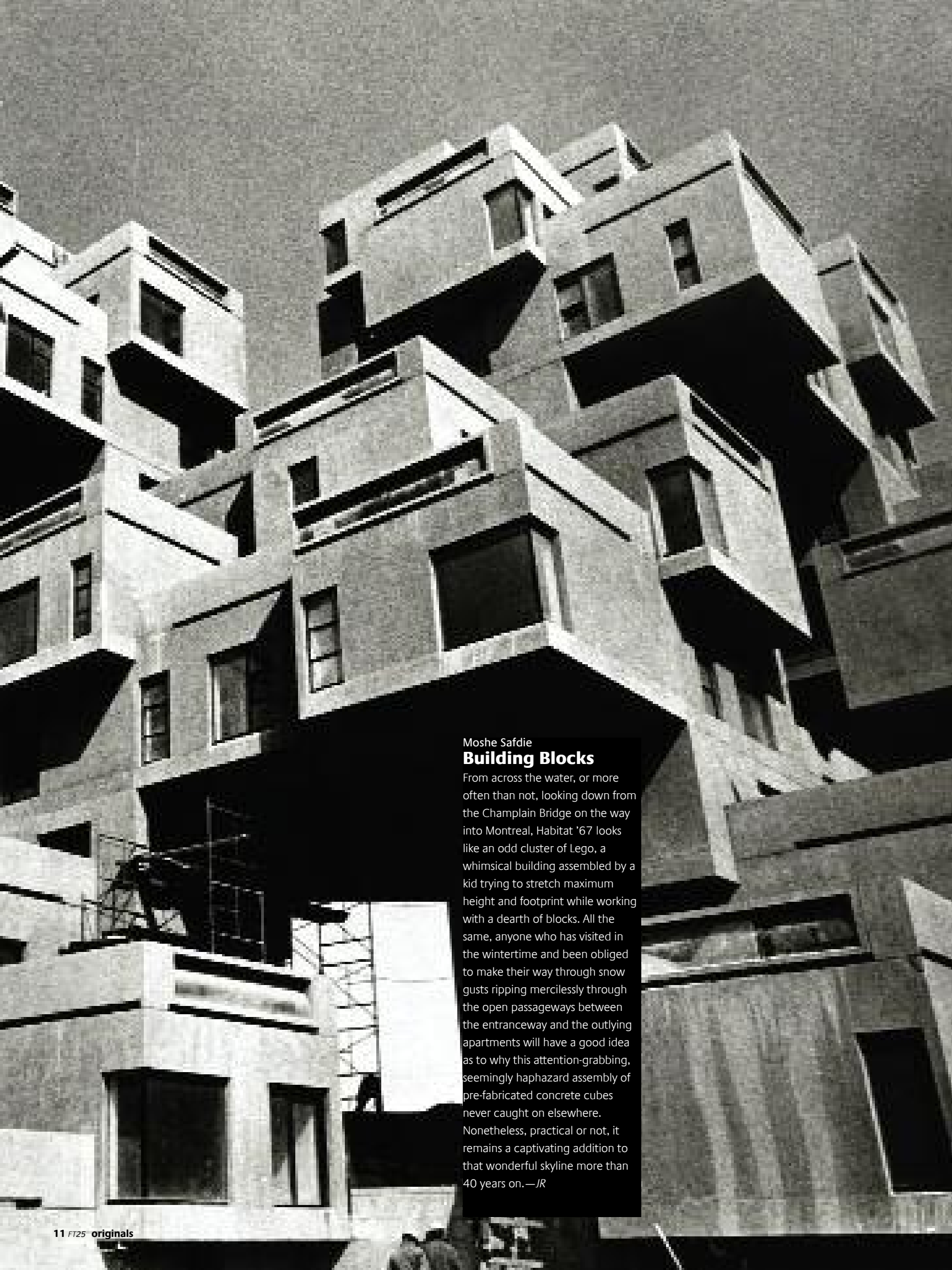
Courtesy of FashionTelevision Archives

“Nowadays,
they can't wait
to get their clothing off.” —Lillian Bassman



Lillian Bassman
Real Women

Women act differently around a female photographer: they stop competing with each other, fretting about their bodies and relax into their natural selves. Lillian Bassman, one of the few female photographers in the 20th century to rise to the top of the fashion heap, knew this and capitalized on it. The go-to girl for Chanel ad campaigns and *Harper's Bazaar* editorials from 1950 to 1965, her classic duotones show women with balletic arms, swan necks and arresting hats laughing and leaning into conversations. The character of Betty Draper in *Mad Men* is portrayed as an avid magazine reader during the Bassman era and someone who understood all too well the pressure men apply to women's body language. (“As long as men look at me that way, I'm earning my keep,” she told her friend Francine in Season One.) Bassman's models thought about this a lot—a key component of the timelessness of her work.—AGJ



Moshe Safdie
Building Blocks

From across the water, or more often than not, looking down from the Champlain Bridge on the way into Montreal, Habitat '67 looks like an odd cluster of Lego, a whimsical building assembled by a kid trying to stretch maximum height and footprint while working with a dearth of blocks. All the same, anyone who has visited in the wintertime and been obliged to make their way through snow gusts ripping mercilessly through the open passageways between the entranceway and the outlying apartments will have a good idea as to why this attention-grabbing, seemingly haphazard assembly of pre-fabricated concrete cubes never caught on elsewhere. Nonetheless, practical or not, it remains a captivating addition to that wonderful skyline more than 40 years on. —JR

Kevyn Aucoin
Face Time

Sharon Stone was said to have lost her breath when the news reached her: Kevyn Aucoin, makeup artist to the stars, was dead at 40.

The man credited with finally fixing Julia Roberts' eyebrows died in 2002 from painkillers he took by the fistful to dull the effects of a pituitary tumour. Tall, but never intimidating, Aucoin had a chair-side manner so genuine that celebs such as Céline, Cher, Audrey Hepburn and Gwyneth Paltrow all called on him when they were feeling wobbly and unpretty. Sure, he was a master of the smoky eye and the nude lip, but his "life energy" was second to none. "You always have the answer within you, just do the work to find it." —AGJ



Peter Minshall
Jump Up!

The world is about change, and nothing will ever change if we stand still, so jump up! That, in a nutshell, is the philosophy of Peter Minshall, the Trinidadian Carnival artist who turned what was once a rum-soaked street party in his hometown Port of Spain into an internationally renowned outdoor opera. Minshall's giant puppets have swayed to the music in the opening ceremonies at three Olympic Games, one Miss Universe pageant and are the inspiration for Toronto's Caribana, North America's largest Caribbean festival. But there's ample substance under "Masman" Minshall's feathers and fluttering silks. His dancers throw their energy into symbolic battles of good and evil, acting out grand narratives on hate, selfishness and prejudice. It's immense, intense and very baroque—and the vision of a man who calls himself a "mulatto spiritual freak," no, wait, "an African, Indian, European, Chinese, Syrian mix-up." —AGJ



Alfred Eisenstaedt
Capturing the Moment

The photography of Alfred Eisenstaedt is synonymous with *Life* magazine, for which he shot royalty, dictators and movie stars like Marilyn Monroe. But most remarkably, it is his 2,500 photo essays of the common man and the everyday moment that are worth a thousand words. Eisenstaedt's career began in Germany, where, injured in WW1, he turned to photography first as a hobby. After falling under the influence of documentary filmmaker Erich Salomon, he embraced photojournalism, turning professional in 1929 before fleeing Nazi Germany for the United States in 1935. The next year, Eisenstaedt became one of the first photographers hired by *Life*, shot its second cover—and then 90 more. —JR

Renzo Rosso
'Sup, Dude!

Today's cool kids are a sick, stupid, scruffy bunch of alpha geeks. No, it's a compliment. For an old dude, Renzo Rosso, the 55-year old founder and chairman of Diesel apparel and accessories, is just as sick (insanely cool) and stupid (risk-taking) because he's put them all on the payroll. Twenty-something singers, dancers and webmasters mope and flirt in his campaign ads and online videos, and make up the majority of his advisors at Diesel HQ in Molvena, Italy. By listening to the demographic he serves, Rosso's 32-year-old company now outsells Levis in the "couture jeans" sector. As Rosso puts it, Diesel's irreverent attitude is about "lifestyle first, and if you like that, you can buy the clothes—or not." Buy we are, to the tune of \$1.7 billion (USD) in 2009. Still, growth for growth's sake isn't enough. Consumers aren't sheep, they're individuals, says Rosso, insisting on mixing up the decor and merchandise in every Diesel store and scaling back the quantity of each item. "Less global, more individual," he shouts through the halls. In this day and age, individuality means "hyper local" and that's as sick as it gets. —AGJ

Levi Strauss
Blue Note

Hipsters, boot-cut, wide-cut, patched, flared, distressed, skinny—is there any fashion staple more versatile than jeans? Like a trusted friend, they respect our mood swings, have us covered on our fat days, accompany us on our adventures as sex kittens and sit with us on the couch when we're feeling like shut-ins. We pay a premium to have them expertly ripped and re-stitched and pair them up with diamonds and stilettos as if to say, "What the whoo" to their proletarian past. Jeans, after all, debuted on the firm backsides of sailors working the docks in Genoa, Italy (bleu de Gênes to the admiring French). Levi Strauss, a Bavarian-born dry-goods salesman, patented the trousers in 1873 as workwear for California gold miners—and probably would have balked to see women tinkering with his pants. Today, the standard of unfashion is right up there with the Little Black Dress on the list of wardrobe must-haves. —AGJ

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