

Françoise Huguier

"Lacroix, Spring-Summer 1990-97" (1997)
© Y. Chenot, Paris



Jean Larivière

The "Mirage Series" for "Citizen K" (2001-02) © Y. Chenot

Provided by Daelim Contemporary Art Museum

French fashion photographers chart art trends

'[The photography] is about the body and its environment and the architectural space surrounding the body.'

By Inès Cho
Staff Writer

In fashion photography, a photographer's artistic inspiration must construe the cutting-edge trend of the time and result in immediate commercial hype for a particular fashion. When an ephemeral season in the fashion calendar is over, most images are quickly abandoned along with those old shoes once considered de rigueur on both runways and streets, but just like haute couture masterpieces, a few images live on to shine their timeless beauty even if only in the depth of our closets. They, like any fine work of art, tell stories of our time. In those works, the element of fashion, once

at the top of its form and style, can only become a legacy of life.

Such profundity of life, expressed through the lens of French photographers, is the very fabric of the images in the exhibition "Theater of Fashion," which opened last Friday at the Daelim Contemporary Art Museum in downtown Seoul. The Frenchness in the exhibition, co-organized by the museum and the French Embassy in Korea, is part of events commemorating the 120th anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and Korea.

Commissioned by Agnès de Gouvion Saint-cyr of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, the 96 photographic images, including one video installation, one slide show and nine "look books," realistic depictions of a particular season's look, are part of a vast collection owned by the FNAC (Fonds National d'Art Contemporain). Korea is the only other country than Thailand to exhibit this photography collection, before it returns to France next month.

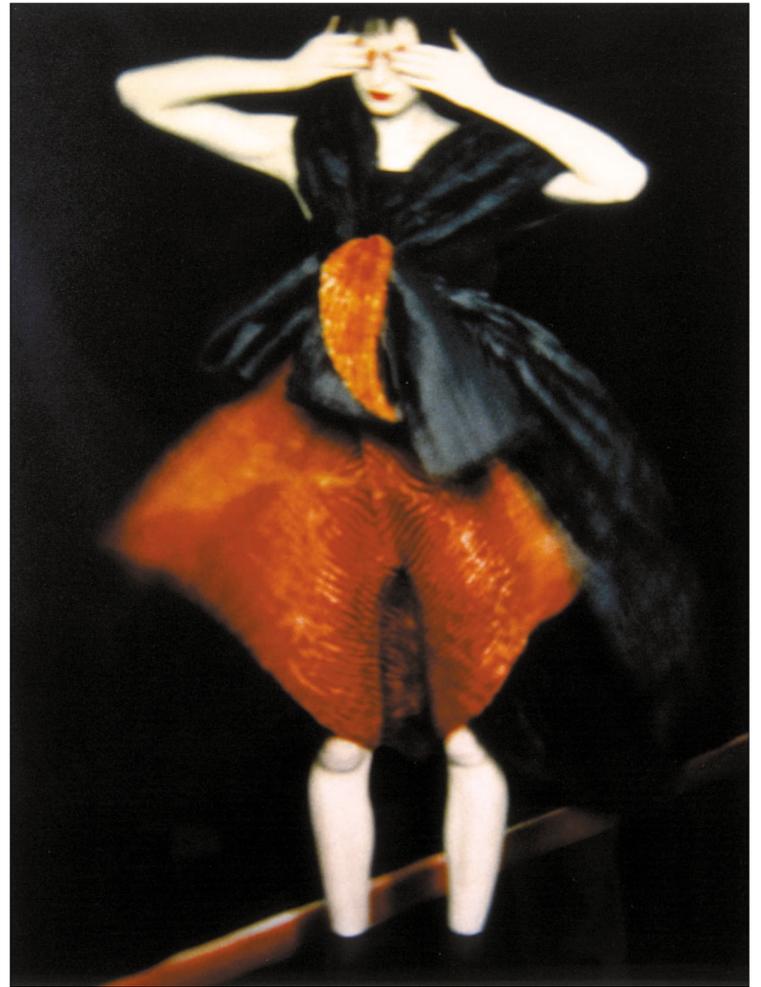
Ji Sang-hyun, the museum's assistant curator, pointed out that the images by fashion photographers — Valérie Belin, Sarah Moon, Frank Perrin, Gérard Uferas and Ines Van Lamsweerde, just to name a few — accurately depicted the fashionable subject matter, works by world-renown fashion designers — Christian Lacroix, Helmut Lang, Chanel, Yohji Yamamoto and the like — while they embraced classic elements of photography.

"[The photography] is about a relationship between the body and the clothes. It's also about the body and its environment and the architectural space surrounding the body," Ms. Ji explained.

"In the frame of photography," she said, "the expression can be cinematic," referring to a glossy, wall-size color photograph of an Alexander McQueen fashion show, titled "Défilé 008" (2004), by Frank Perrin.

Often included in fashion magazines are details artistically and momentarily captured before, during and after a fashion show — be they the back of a high heel in motion, stiffly starched white collars being fixed by a stylist, or the gorgeous but tense face of a model.

The photographs on two floors of



Sarah Moon

"Issey Miyake for Theresa Stewart" (1995)

© Y. Chenot, Paris

the spacious museum chronicle the brief history of artistic trends in modern fashion photography.

In 1999 when minimalism was still in vogue, Valérie Belin worked on the crisp depiction of crumpled wedding gowns thrown on a black floor, in her "Untitled" series, consisting of five post-card-sized black and white photographs.

The contrasting images are by Françoise Huguier, who aptly captured the maximalist glamour and brilliant opulence of French couture by Lacroix and Emanuel Ungaro at height of the designers' careers between 1990 and 1997. An oversized blossom embellished on an evening gown, a fancy headdress atop a heavily made-up face and an elaborately embroidered peplum jacket were once symbols of the Paris haute couture runways.

The 1990s was also the most prolific era of catalogue productions. The exhibition displays some of the most well-executed productions made by David Sims for Yohji Yamamoto. The 1996 spring/summer catalogue shows the art director Marc Ascoli's dabble into '60s pop art styling.

The more current images were taken from the French quarterly magazine, "Citizen K." The four images for the "Mirage Series" by Jean Larivière for "Citizen K" (2001-2) take a surrealist approach, sort of Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds"-meets-"Edward Scissorhands."

All fashion professionals can vividly remember the critically acclaimed Helmut Lang collections from 2003 and 2004. The images taken out from the look books are not only top-notch photographs but also

about fashion industry's significant revival of minimalism for the contemporary buyer.

In fashion photography, the technique of narration, often used in magazine editorials, can only escalate the tension of fashion, thus jump-starting its selling power. The exhibition delves into the narrative skill of two noted photographers, Deborah Turbeville and Sarah Moon, whose black-and-white photographs detail subtle evolutions of style in the 1980s. While Turbeville's "Bohemian series for Yohji Yamamoto" (1983) for Italian "Vogue" brings back the timelessness of vintage photographs, Moon's two juxtaposed photographs, one portrait of a woman and one landscape, as in "Sarah Robertson"/"Tullamore" (1989), take pensive viewers to an otherworldly dimension of fashion photography.

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"The Theater of Fashion" exhibition runs until Sept. 30. Docents (Korean only) are available daily at noon and 3 p.m. free of charge. Daelim Contemporary Art Museum is located near the Gwanghwamun gate in downtown Seoul. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily except for Mondays. Admission is 3,000 won (\$2.50). The nearest subway is line No. 3, Gyeonggokgung station, exit 4, and walk toward the Blue House.

There will be a lecture by Korean fashion photographer Oh Jung-suk at 3 p.m. on Sept. 16 and jazz concerts by the Song Young-ju Trio at 3 p.m. on Aug. 26, Sept. 9 and 23. Admission to the events costs 2,000 won. For more information, call (02) 720-0667 or visit the Web site, www.daelimuseum.org.

Deborah Turbeville

"The Bohemian series for Yohji Yamamoto" (1983) for Italian "Vogue"
© Y. Chenot, Paris



Gérard Uferas

"Fabric of the Dreams: Abraham Palham Haute Couture Spring-Summer 1999" (1999)
© Y. Chenot, Paris

