CINDY SHERMAN

CINDY SHERMAN – ANTI-FASHION

FOMU HANNIBAL

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FOREWORD

by MAARTJE STUBBE

"It's not about me."[1]

For almost 50 years, trailblazing American photographer Cindy Sherman has been at the forefront of visual art. Her method has remained largely unchanged all this time. She creates characters and places herself in front of the camera – meticulously made up and dressed up in an array of disguises –, evoking various stereotypes from popular culture. These are not self-portraits, as Sherman is keen to stress time and again. While acting out these roles, she explores how women are portrayed in mass media, magnifying stereotypes until they come close to the absurd and the grotesque. In so doing, she seeks to expose narrow views on gender, beauty, and ageing. More specifically, Sherman zooms in on images and identities in Western society and on how photography confirms and sustains social constructs. In her playful portraits, the mirror is turned on the viewer and society. Sherman uses photography as a weapon against itself: not to confirm images but to dissect them.

Today, Sherman's concept is still as powerful as it ever was. She continues to experiment, using the latest developments in photography and mass media to effortlessly capture the zeitgeist and surprise viewers with her characters and subjects. Every photo tells a story. However, the strength of her work lies in its repetition and its commitment to feminist and social issues. Over the years, Sherman has thus compiled an encyclopedia of female archetypes through her photographic works, creating a seemingly endless variety of familiar female images that fuel our imagination. As she explains, the work is not about her as an individual. It is about all of us, about how we present ourselves to the outside world and how we relate to each other.

Cindy Sherman was born in 1954 in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, in the United States. She went on to study art at Buffalo State University from 1972 until 1976, where she became part of a dynamic group of friends and artists who experimented extensively with performance, film, and installations. From the outset, she used herself as a model, with her face serving as her own blank canvas in her earliest photos. Sherman was particularly interested in the power of facial expressions and non-verbal communication. Soon she began to develop characters and storylines. Her first series (Bus Riders) depicted the average kinds of people you might encounter at a bus stop and was, in fact, exhibited on a local bus. Her photographs were just mundane enough to paint an accurate picture of American society. Sherman's work evidences her predilection for film

1 Cindy Sherman in an interview with *The Guardian*, 8 June 2019.

and all its clichés. In 1976, she created a photo series *(Murder Mystery)* based on the structures of a classic Hollywood film noir, developing a very detailed plot for all of her pictures. The series foreshadows *Untitled Film Stills*, which launched Sherman's international career as an artist in the late 1970s.

In 1977, she moved to New York. There she abandoned the complex visual narratives, rising to the challenge of capturing a story in one single image. Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills,* which were made between 1977 and 1980, are considered her most iconic work. In dozens of black-and-white photographs, she poses in the guises of various generic female film characters, from the vamp to the lonely housewife. She stages her pictures with carefully chosen camera angles, poses and lighting, referencing the Hollywood films of the 1950s and 1960s, film noir, B movies, and European arthouse films, with her printed images mimicking the "stills" used to promote such films. Sherman's pictures do not reveal any clues as to their narrative. Instead, she lards them with suspense and mystery: what happened just before this scene? What is happening off-screen? Sherman deliberately chose the name of the series to underline this ambiguity. The *Untitled Film Stills* are clichés of femininity, revealing how mass media, such as film, create and perpetuate stereotypes.

As a young photographer, Sherman's work provided an intuitive and personal response to conceptual art. In those days, choosing photography as your preferred medium was quite unusual: "In the late '70s and into the '80s, I was aware that the painting and sculpture world looked down on people who used photography. At the same time, I felt that the photo world looked down on those who had one foot in the art world." Like her contemporaries Jeff Wall and Louise Lawler, Sherman has managed to build a bridge between these two worlds. Her work brought about a shift in the role and acceptance of photography in the art world.

Besides film, fashion has always been an exciting area of research for Sherman. In the 1970s, she experimented with the effect of clothing and physical transformation. From the 1980s onwards, she began to receive commissions from the fashion industry, both from designers and magazines. She continued to use herself as her sole model, refusing to comply with the rules of fashion photography. Her fashion pictures are the opposite of glamorous, sexy, or elegant. They were seen as provocative, grotesque, and inseparably linked with her artistic oeuvre. In the 1980s and 1990s, Sherman produced a series of striking color photographs in which she disguised herself using prosthetics, masks, and

2 Cindy Sherman in an interview with *Artforum*, vol. 41 no. 7, March 2003.

dolls. She provoked with explicit series such as *The Disasters* (1986–1989) and *The Sex Pictures* (1992), in which she confronted viewers with the strange and ugly aspects of humanity. In her early fashion photographs, Sherman explored the norm by deviating from it to an almost extreme degree. Although a rising star in the art world, her fashion photographs were repeatedly rejected for publication in the 1980s. This changed in the 1990s, however, as more and more designers and photographers began to challenge the prevailing beauty ideals. Deviating from the accepted standard became a strength.

Time and again, Sherman has subjected the dominant visual culture to a critical examination. Since the 2000s, she has been experimenting with digital manipulation of her images, which she prints in increasingly monumental formats. Her recent work reflects the increasing digitalisation of our society and our simultaneous penchant for authenticity. She focuses on the (in)visibility of older women in the media, the rise of social media and influencers, and the straitjacket of masculinity. Her many characters show us that identity is a construct – and, therefore, changeable. Sherman uses humor and intelligence to show us the many faces of humanity.

This newly revised catalog was created for the Cindy Sherman *Anti-Fashion* exhibition at FOMU, Fotomuseum Antwerpen. With our program, we want to sustainably connect with society and promote critical reflection on the medium of photography. We are, therefore, proud and delighted that Cindy Sherman has accepted our invitation to present her first large-scale solo exhibition in Belgium, featuring known and unknown works from leading international collections. *Cindy Sherman – Anti-Fashion*, is the result of many years of research by the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart into Cindy Sherman's fascination with fashion and the interaction between her commissions from the fashion industry and her own artistic oeuvre. First issued by the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and Sandstein Verlag, this catalog examines for the first time ever Cindy Sherman's output from the fashion perspective, with the exhibition and book offering an exciting new look at the oeuvre of this trailblazing artist. At FOMU, the exhibition is guided by a second display titled *Cindy Sherman: Early Works 1975–1980,* featuring the artist's early experiments from her student days and her iconic *Untitled Film Stills*.

This project would not have been possible without the support of many people. First and foremost, we wish to thank Cindy Sherman and her studio manager, Margaret Lee. Thank you for your generous collaboration,

to the point of grotesque distortion. The critical stance of these "mock covers,"[3] which challenged prevailing notions of beauty, is underscored by the artist's explanation that "the idea was parody or making fun – with a little bit of anger in there."[4] By engaging critically with cover models, Sherman sought to interrogate the way the fashion world informs our viewing habits and perception of the role of women. At the same time, the work sheds light on the ambiguous figure of the model, torn between flawlessness and imperfection, abstraction and reality. As early as 1967, in his book *Système de la mode*, Roland Barthes defined the cover girl as a "rare paradox."[5] In keeping with the normative beauty ideals of our society, we reduce or stereotype the model's body to its "pure form." At the same time, however, even this idealized body has individual traits that make it unique.

It was in the early 1980s, when Sherman started receiving commissions from the fashion industry, that she began to radically question fashion-driven behaviors and narrowly prescriptive ideals. Her first patron was New York boutique owner Dianne Benson, who commissioned Sherman in 1983 to produce advertisements for clothes from edgy high-end fashion houses such as Jean Paul Gaultier, Comme des Garçons, and Issey Miyake, which were subsequently published in the March and June issues of *Interview* magazine (see figs. on pp. 70–71). Instead of simply showcasing the garments, Sherman chose to focus on the relationship between her assumed female characters and the designer clothes. Gestures, poses, and moods seem divested of their usual function of foregrounding the outfits. Compared to traditional fashion photography, everything here seems excessive, vulgar, strange: inelegant poses, disheveled hair, smudged makeup, wan complexions, and pronounced rings under the eyes (*Untitled #122*, see fig. on p. 65). One of the photographs shows Sherman wearing a corset by Jean Paul Gaultier and posing in front of a tawdry floral cloth backdrop (*Untitled #131*, fig. 1). Trying to look pretty and sexy, the character comes across as desperately gauche rather than attractive. Her slight frame fails to fill the outfit, which was obviously designed for a larger bust, and she awkwardly places her hands over her private parts – either to maliciously direct our voyeuristic gaze or chastely hide from it. With sly irony, Sherman alludes to the needy passivity and demureness traditionally expected of female figures – a role that pop star Madonna was to overturn completely a few years later when she wore this very Gaultier corset during her provocative *Blond Ambition Tour* in 1990 (fig. 2).[6]

3 Gabriele Schor, *Cindy Sherman: The Early Works 1975–1977*, catalogue raisonné, Ostfildern 2011, p. 71.
4 Paul Taylor, "Face to Face with Cindy Sherman," *New Woman*, March 1989, p. 82.
5 Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard, Berkeley 1990 [1983], p. 258.
6 See Hanne Loreck, "De/constructing Fashion/Fashions of Deconstructions: Cindy Sherman's Fashion Photographs," *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Press, Body & Culture*, vol. 6, no. 3, New York 2002, pp. 13 f. See also idem, "Metamaskerade: Autobiographie. Madonna und Cindy Sherman," in *Fragmente einer Kunst des Lebens. Kunst- und kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Biografie, den Künsten und Medien*, Linda Hentschel, Anja Herrmann, and Carola Muysers (eds.), Freiburg 2008, pp. 139–169.

Madonna: Blonde Ambition Tour. She is wearing a Jean Paul Gaultier conical bra corset. Fig. 2
Feyenoord Stadion – De Kuip – Rotterdam – Holland – 07/24/1990, photo gie Knaeps

Although Sherman's ads for Benson had met with mixed reviews, in 1984 the artist received a commission from the French fashion house Dorothée Bis for *Vogue Paris*.[7] Whereas for Benson Sherman had simply wanted to produce "something out of the ordinary,"[8] in this new series she set out "to shock."[9] The resulting photographs are indeed more extreme. They show off-putting characters with scars, wrinkles, bruises, and bloodstains (*Untitled #133*, *Untitled #132*, see figs. on pp. 73, 76) and conjure an alarming and somber atmosphere. The artist herself explained, "I wanted to make really ugly pictures" and "do something to rip open the French fashion world."[10] The characters seem depressed and suicidal; they look like grotesque caricatures that are suggestive of a wide range of emotions and clinical conditions (*Untitled #137*, fig. 3, *Untitled #138*, see fig. on p. 77).[11] Not surprisingly, Sherman's defiantly idiosyncratic images were rejected by the magazine and remained unpublished. The fashion world was evidently not yet ready to break with its long-standing high-gloss conventions.

Vogue Paris was not an isolated case. *Untitled* of 1990–1991 [Cosmo Cover Girl] is another provocative image that overstepped the limits of acceptability at the time, at least as far as the commissioning editors were concerned (see fig. on p. 86). Intended for the cover of *Cosmopolitan*, it was roundly rejected by the publisher. It shows the artist in the guise of a pregnant woman with exaggerated makeup, a come-hither look, and a wet, ripped blouse that fails to conceal her engorged fake breasts and bulging belly. Her grotesque appearance, which satirized hitherto sacrosanct ideas of motherhood, beauty, and elegance, was considered too disturbing.

Two years later, Sherman was commissioned to illustrate an article for the American edition of *Harper's Bazaar* (see figs. on pp. 90–92). For this she staged herself in clothes from the spring collections of Christian Dior, Jean Paul Gaultier, John Galliano, Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, and Vivienne Westwood. The artist took the commission as an opportunity to conceive a fresh set of bizarre characters, whose fanciful theatricality conjured a less somber atmosphere than her previous fashion photographs. A nymph in provocative pose with lilies (*Untitled #276*, see fig. on p. 85), a lascivious woman (*Untitled #278*, fig. 4), a petulant girl wearing her underpants on her head (*Untitled #279*): the characters in this fashion series evoke fantastical worlds in which irony, play, and lasciviousness are given free rein. In an interview, the artist explained, "The things had a non-functional quality; they were, in

7 "Initially, I had asked Dorothée Bis for a specific collection. Instead, they sent me these ugly and boring pieces of knitwear, just because 'Woolmark' was supposed to pay part of the ad. At first, I was annoyed and felt like canceling the whole thing. But then I started working with it after all. The bizarre, aggressive, or depressive characters that came out of it had nothing to do with knitwear as fashion anymore. And the negative reaction from Dorothée Bis motivated me to go even more extreme and overdo everything they perceived as ugly. That's why I used gross-out makeup and artificial scars, for example, like you see in horror movies. I wanted the characters to be as morbid as the clothes were boring." Translator's note: Sherman's statement has been translated back into English from the German text of the publication. Cindy Sherman, "Cindy Sherman im Gespräch mit Wilfried Dickhoff," *KUNST HEUTE*, no. 14, Gisela Neven and Wilfried Dickhoff (eds.), Cologne 1995, p. 44.

8 Ibid., p. 43.

9 Ibid.

10 Eva Respini, "Will the Real Cindy Sherman Please Stand Up?" *Cindy Sherman*, Eva Respini (ed.), exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York/Munich 2012, p. 33.

11 Some critics have noted that these works mark the start of Sherman's preoccupation with the grotesque; it would eventually find expression in her later series such as the *Fairy Tales* and *Sex Pictures* in the form of bulbous prostheses and hybrid species. See ibid., p. 32.

and of themselves, already rather theatrical and looked like costumes that have an almost object-like life of their own. That's also why the clothes themselves became the subject in this series."[12]

An invitation to participate in the 1994 advertising campaign for Comme des Garçons led Sherman to collaborate with the Japanese designer and company founder Rei Kawakubo, whose groundbreaking designs pushed the boundaries of nineties fashion. In contrast to the negative reception of the 1980s, the fashion world of the 1990s not only warmed to Sherman's unconventional fashion photographs but actively clamored for her images – not because they now adhered to the conventions of fashion advertising but precisely because they distanced themselves from them. In the words of Llewellyn Negrin, the explanation for this paradox lies in the fact that "the economic success of elite industries such as haute couture rests increasingly on their ability to promote themselves as being 'above' commerce."[13] Ads that look like works of art and boutiques that resemble art galleries have since become one of haute couture's main marketing strategies in its quest to deny the commodity status of its products. Sherman's fashion photographs respond to the fashion industry's desire to invest its products with an aura of uniqueness by associating them with the world of high culture rather than the high street. Sherman's fame as an avant-garde artist makes her the perfect fit for fashion houses that want to stand out from mainstream fashion and appeal to a sophisticated and increasingly demanding clientele. As works of art, Sherman's photographs elevate the marketed products above the status of ordinary merchandise and promise an aesthetic experience that goes beyond mere material consumption. It was precisely this aspect that made Sherman's photographs so attractive to the high-end fashion industry. Irrespective of the creative freedom the artist was granted, advertising campaigns of this type are ultimately the result of branding strategy – by the fashion label and photographer alike, with each willing to profit from the other's status. Sherman's works in the campaigns for various fashion houses not only successfully communicate and market corporate values such as originality, creativity, and openness, but they also transmit the sense that the company is capable of constructive self-criticism. At the same time, these international fashion campaigns bring Sherman's work to the attention of a wider public outside the art world, which translates into positive and profitable results for the artist as well.

12 Cindy Sherman, "Cindy Sherman im Gespräch mit Wilfried Dickhoff" (as in note 7), pp. 41 f. Translator's note: Sherman's statement has been translated back into English from the German text of the publication.

13 Llewellyn Negrin, "The Dialectical Nature of Cindy Sherman's Fashion Photographs," *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty*, vol. 11, no. 2, Bristol 2020, p. 129.

Fig. 3 Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #137*, 1984, chromogenic color print, 176.5 × 117.5 cm [70 ½ x 47 ¾ in]

The postcards, posters, and invitations produced for the Comme des Garçons campaign, for which Sherman photographed herself impersonating a range of bizarrely dressed characters, still strike us as bold, cheeky, and provocative because they play with ideas of otherness, with distortion and the grotesque (see figs. on pp. 94–95). However, the transgressiveness and provocative irreverence of Kawakubo's fashion creations, which in turn are clearly inspired by contemporary art, are no less striking than Sherman's anti-fashion photographs. Kawakubo's revolutionary designs, which were often labeled "post-atomic" and "Hiroshima chic"[14] particularly in the 1980s, seem to form a perfect symbiosis with Sherman's photographs and to probe the very limits of what's possible. Throughout its history and especially in the 20th century, fashion (at least avant-garde fashion) has undoubtedly made a point of embracing confrontation and subversiveness – think of the 1920s, when women appropriated hitherto typically male attributes, or of Vivienne Westwood's provocative punk designs in the 1970s. As Gertrud Lehnert points out, fashion ultimately realizes itself "in the pursuit of the new, the unexpected, the unknown, and often the bizarre."[15] Thanks to a synergy of various favorable factors, this quest was pursued with singular urgency in the 1990s and popularized through groundbreaking advertising campaigns.[16]

HYBRIDIZATION AND EXCESSES OF FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY SINCE THE 1990S

Any examination of Sherman's provocative photographs relating to the fashion industry of the 1980s and 1990s must also consider the dynamic developments within the fashion scene and fashion photography of those years. Indeed, radical though they may be, Sherman's photographs consciously or unconsciously draw on the innovative ideas of visionary fashion designers and photographers, who opened up new perspectives for a thriving fashion world and its market. The receptiveness of the fashion world to inspiration and its willingness to absorb imagery from other disciplines, such as art, documentary photography, or film, has given rise to a fluid hybridization. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, the boundaries between art and fashion gradually dissolved: mutual inspiration and creative interaction as well as the willingness to experiment resulted in a wealth of innovative approaches.[17]

The convergence of art and fashion can be traced back to a wider process of change in the world of fashion and fashion photography as the

14 Federica Muzzarelli, *L'immagine del desiderio. Fotografia di moda tra arte e comunicazione*, Milan 2009, p. 103.

15 Gertrud Lehnert, *Mode. Theorie, Geschichte und Ästhetik einer kulturellen Praxis*, Bielefeld 2013, p. 8.

16 On this subject, see especially *Not in Fashion. Mode und Fotografie der 90er Jahre*, Susanne Gaensheimer and Sophie von Olfers (eds.), exh. cat., MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Bielefeld 2010; *Archaeology of Elegance 1980–2000: 20 Years of Fashion Photography*, Marion de Beaupre and Stephane Baumet (eds.), exh. cat., Deichtorhallen Hamburg, London 2002; *Imperfect Beauty: The Making of Contemporary Fashion Photography*, ed. Charlotte Cotton, exh. cat., Victoria & Albert Museum, London, London 2001.

17 Although the creative partnership between art and fashion is a relatively recent phenomenon, there were already interesting junctures between the two disciplines before the late 20th century. For a more in-depth look at the subject, see especially *Modebilder – Kunstkleider. Fotografie, Malerei und Mode 1900 bis heute*, Thomas Köhler and Annelie Lütgens (eds.), exh. cat., Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur, Stiftung öffentlichen Rechts, Berlin, Cologne 2022; *Schnittstellen. Mode und Fotografie im Dialog*, Burcu Dogramaci, Sebastian Lux, and Ulrich Rüter (eds.), Hamburg 2010.

Fig. 9 *i-D Magazine*, Issue 1, August 1980

characteristics, such as hair color, accessories, or backgrounds, using both analog and digital techniques. The result is a gallery of eccentric and sometimes cartoonish characters who, with their affected poses, flamboyant outfits, and relentless pursuit of attention, embody everything that drives today's fashion system: celebrity culture, plastic surgery,[38] bloggers,[39] and influencers. The latter two need the attention of a virtual or real audience to expand their reach and influence. They seek and gain this attention by nurturing a painstakingly staged and curated identity that is constantly updated. Sherman's *Harper's Bazaar 2016* characters also seem to be caught up in this endless pursuit of "likes," "followers," and fame. The artist herself commented, "These women go to [runway shows] and have their limos let them off like two blocks before the show, so they can walk in front of all the photographers and do a little twirl, or a little dance, and get their photos taken."[40] Their lives seem to revolve around getting the perfect shot to prove how fashionable they are and how they can dictate new trends thanks to their self-presentation and brand collaborations. In a way, they recall the "cyber-celebrities"[41] or "queens of street style"[42] (for the most part famous fashion editors) who travel to the international fashion weeks in fashion capitals such as New York, Paris, Milan, Berlin, and London, and whose extravagant outfits are photographed by street-style bloggers and posted on the web. The success of such popular street-style blogs as Scott Schuman's *The Sartorialist*[43] – in which the tradition of street photography can be clearly felt – is also indebted to the role of the city as a backdrop for the photographic staging of fashion in the 20th century.[44] The birth of street fashion photography as a genre occurred in August 1980 in the first issue of the British magazine *i-D*: The magazine's so-called *Straight-Up* section[45] featured images of ordinary people dressed in a unique style, randomly encountered and photographed on the streets of London (fig. 9). The photos exude great immediacy and vibrancy as well as an anti-fashion attitude that has inspired street-style bloggers ever since they first emerged in the mid 2000s. The images in such blog posts combine the street aesthetic with styling from traditional fashion spreads and the atmosphere of celebrity magazines to create the impression of a staged but at the same time random and furtive shot that could have been taken by paparazzi. Sherman's works in the *Harper's Bazaar 2016* series are reminiscent of precisely these kinds of images that are splashed all over street-style blogs and the web in general. By constantly wavering between the conflicting needs for individuality and conformity, her

38 For a more in-depth look at the subject of the close relationship between fashion and cosmetic surgery, as well as so-called makeover culture, see especially Meredith Jones, "New Clothes, New Faces, New Bodies: Cosmetic Surgery and Fashion," *Fashion Cultures Revisited: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.), Routledge, London/New York 2013, pp. 287–295.

39 Agnès Rocamora, "Personal Fashion Blogs: Screen and Mirrors in Digital Self-Portraits," ibid., p. 114.

40 Rachel Wetzler, "'I'm trying to erase myself' – an Interview with Cindy Sherman," *Apollo – The International Magazine*, June 27, 2019.

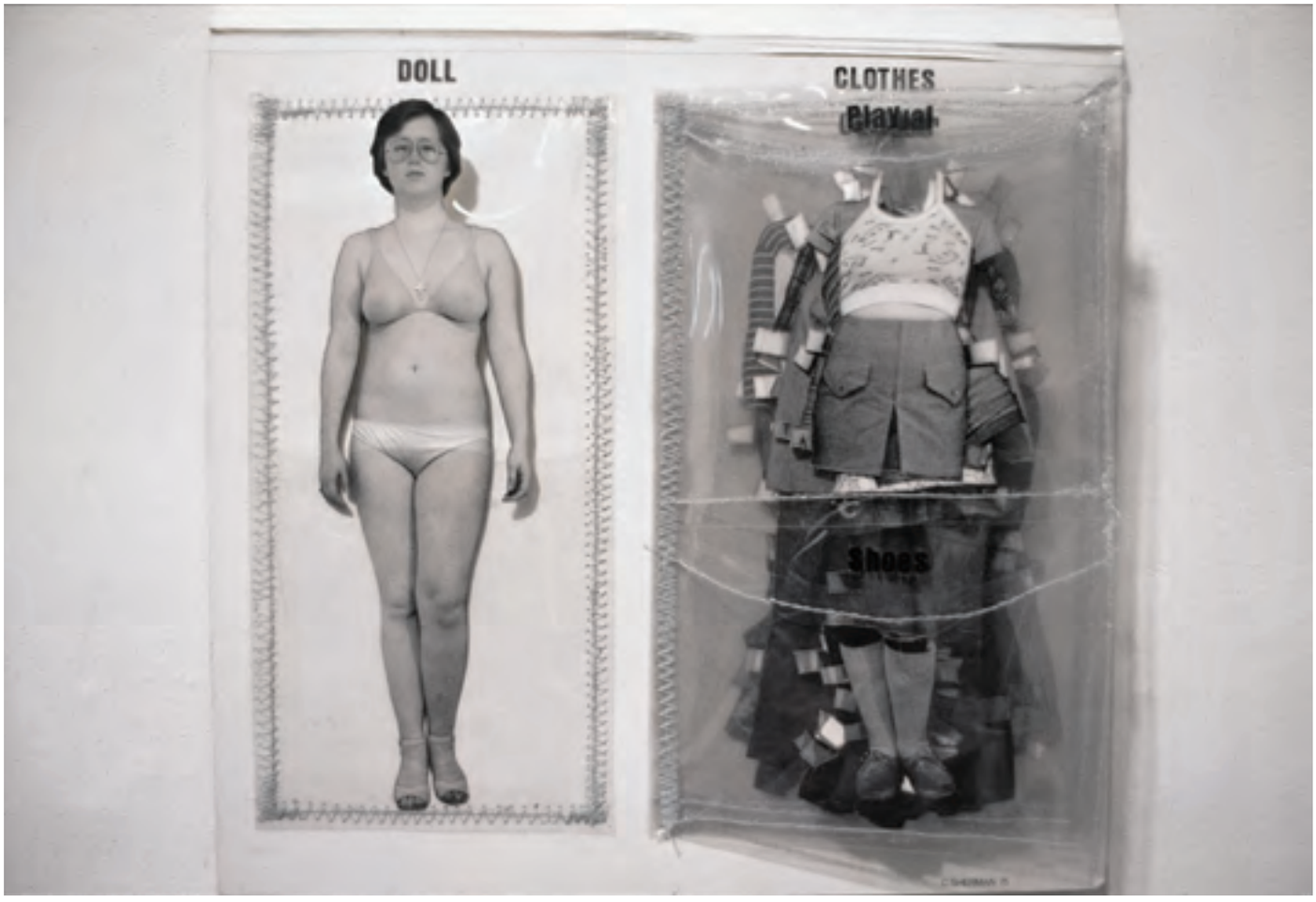
41 Monica Titton, "Styling the Street: Fashion Performance, Stardom and Neo-Dandyism in Street Style Blogs," *Fashion Cultures Revisited* (as in note 38), p. 128.

42 Ibid., p. 132.

43 See Gesa Kessemeier, "Style in the city oder '… what people are really wearing': The Sartorialist. Ein Foto-Modeblog Von Scott Schuman," *Schnittstellen* (as in note 17), p. 106.

44 "In the twenties, fashion photography began to leave the photo studios and, as it moved out into the outside world, it also appropriated its semiotics. This included the urban space," Gabriele Mentges, "Urbane Landschaften im Modebild," *Räume der Mode*, Gertrud Lehnert (ed.), Berlin 2012, p. 137.

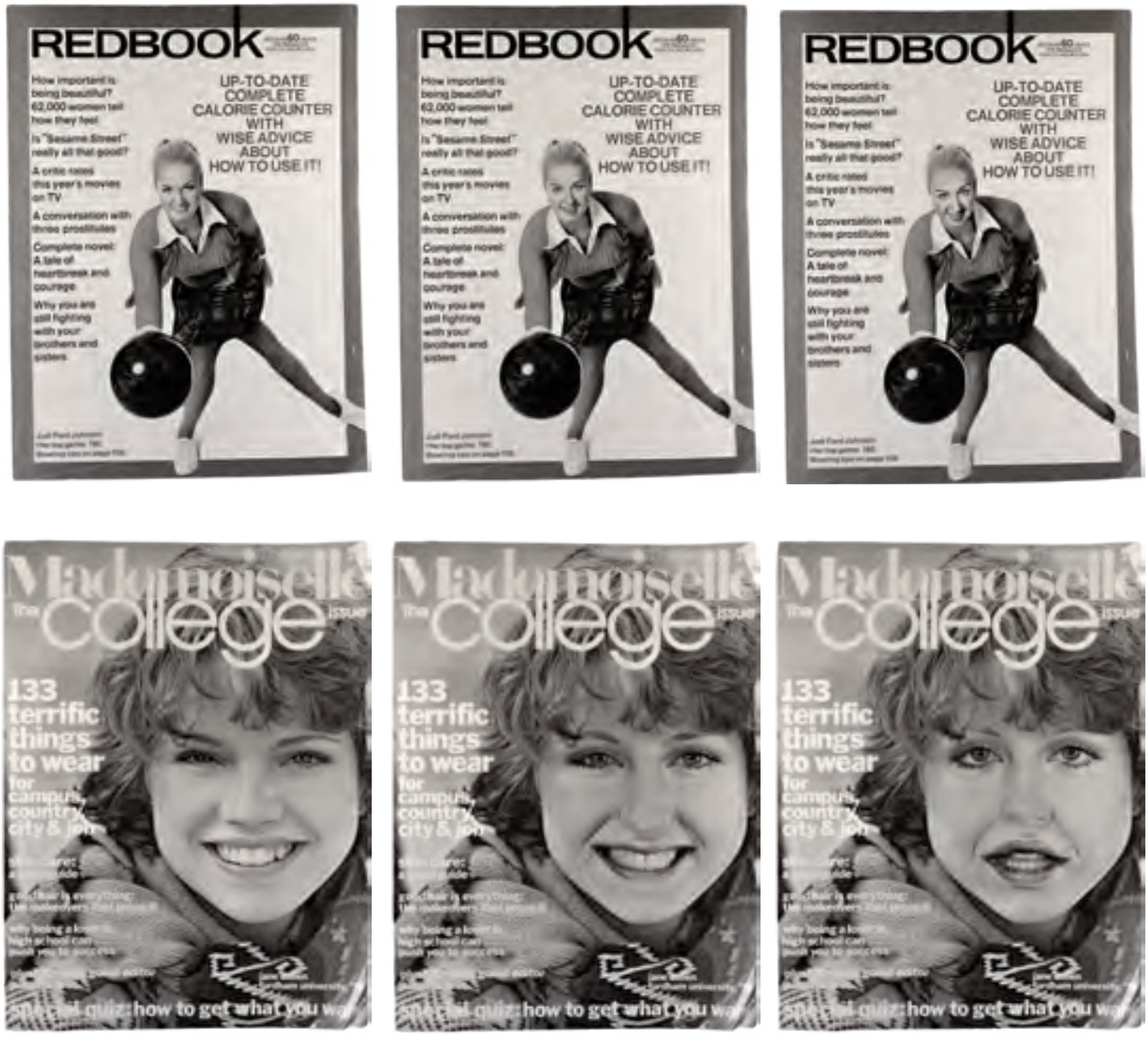
45 On this subject, see Agnès Rocamora and Alistair O'Neil, "Fashioning the Street: Images of the Street in the Fashion Media," *Fashion as Photograph* (as in note 26), pp. 185–199.



Doll Clothes, 1975 (film stills)

Untitled, 1975

Cover Girl (Vogue), 1976/2011
Cover Girl (Family Circle), 1976/2011



Cover Girl (Redbook), 1976/2011
Cover Girl (Mademoiselle), 1976/2011

THE 1980s

Cindy Sherman received her first commission from the fashion world in 1983 from the successful retail entrepreneur Dianne Benson, who had her own Dianne B boutique stores in New York City. In the 1970s and 1980s, Benson collaborated not only with Sherman but also with other local artists such as Peter Hujar and David Wojnarowicz. Unlike the latter two, who worked with models – or even Benson herself – to create promotional photographs for her stores, Sherman took carefully staged pictures of herself in garments of her own choice, designed by, among others, Issey Miyake (*Untitled #117*), Jean Paul Gaultier (*Untitled #122*), and Jean-Charles de Castelbajac (*Untitled #126*). In these photographs, which were published as adverts in Andy Warhol's *Interview* magazine in March and June 1983 and then exhibited at Metro Pictures in New York, Sherman sought to give expression to her assumed characters' relationship to clothing. The characters' shy, introverted poses are at odds with their eccentric sartorial statements and belie the designer fashion industry's promise of empowerment through dress. In her follow-up commission for an ad campaign for the 1984 Dorothée Bis knitwear collection, Sherman took this approach even further. The collection, which she perceived as boring, is no longer the focus of her images but the starting point for her critical examination of the ideals propagated by the fashion industry. Deconstructing and exaggerating the prevailing norms of fashion photography, she did not shoot perfectly styled, attractive models but herself in the guise of seemingly self-effacing women dressed in disheveled, bizarre outfits. These images portray not only the inner decline, the uncanny, and the physically repulsive, but they also shock the viewer with their messy, tangled hairdos and bloody hands. Conceived as anti-advertising and quickly perceived as damaging to the brand, the ads were not run in *Vogue Paris* as originally planned and remained unpublished.

Untitled #122, 1983

Untitled #129, 1983

Untitled #130, 1983

Untitled #117, 1983

Untitled #126, 1983


Interview


COMME des GARÇONS
DIANNE B.

Interview Magazine, March 1983

Untitled #133, 1984

Dorothée Bis, ad, envelope, postcards, 1984

Untitled #132, 1984

Untitled #138, 1984

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Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #414*, 2003,
courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth