

Atmosphere as language: Deconstructing the staging in fashion photography

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Abstract: Fashion photography, given its communicative function and rhetorical intentionality, constitutes the ideal vehicle for the transmission and externalization of emerging stylistic trends. The creations go beyond simple garment representation, enriching and enhancing them through visual, narrative and symbolic mechanisms. The objective of this article is to analyse the role of atmosphere and staging as crucial elements in fashion photography during the 20th century. Through a qualitative approach that combines bibliographic review and visual analysis of works by A. De Meyer, I. Penn and D. Turbeville, the evolution of atmospheric strategies from the 1920s to the 1970s is examined. It is concluded that atmosphere not only defines visual narrative but generates different emotional typologies ranging from the romantic and sophisticated to the minimalist and intimist.

Keywords: fashion photography, photographic atmosphere, staging, visual narrative, fashion semiotics

Nobody ever discovered ugliness through photographs.
But many, through photographs, have discovered beauty.
Susan Sontag

1. Introduction

Dress is communication, affirmed Umberto Eco (1976, p. 9), adding that fashion is a properly articulated visual language (p. 15). In fact, this can also be said of fashion photography: it is communication and a visual language. Likewise, it should be noted that fashion photography, given its communicative function and rhetorical intentionality, constitutes the ideal vehicle for the transmission and externalization of emerging stylistic trends. From this it

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follows that the main instrument for fashion dissemination is photography, since it is capable of reaching large masses of the population through magazines or the internet (Ventosa, 2016, p. 1).

It was throughout the 20th century that photography gradually emerged as one of the main tools for communicating fashion. In its first decades of existence, while photography was seeking its identity, its future role as an essential tool in constructing fashion's imaginary was not yet glimpsed (Muzzarelli, 2013, p. 159).

In reality, fashion photography was born with a very specific purpose: the dissemination and propagation of trends and styles. Achieving creations that go beyond the simple representation of a garment, since, on one hand, they immortalize it, becoming documents that endure over time, "thus overcoming the ephemeral, seasonal condition" that fashion has (Vélez, 2015, p. 8) and, on the other, they enrich and enhance it through visual, narrative and symbolic mechanisms.

According to Susan Sontag, "to photograph is to confer importance" (2006, p. 49). To this are added other advantages that photography provides, making it a very appropriate instrument for publicizing the latest trends, among them it should be noted that the instantaneousness that characterizes photography allows it to adapt organically to the vertiginous rhythm of the fashion industry. Likewise, its mechanical nature confers upon it a tint of objectivity; while allowing it to faithfully reproduce what it has in front of the lens, which endows it with testimonial value and credibility.

Fashion determines what is worn, but it requires a means of dissemination. "Fashion needs the media to exist and subsist, to spread and extend itself" (Paz, 2020, p. 19). It is fashion magazines that conceptualize "what is trending" based on the representation of proposals that designers show on runways. The structure of the communicative process would be: designer – media – consumer. After the creation of collections, magazines act as communication channels to disseminate fashion. These translate designers' style and their runway proposals into trends (Lacalle, 2006, p. 93). "While the real dress is appreciated by a reduced circle of people, its iconic and verbal version reaches many people" (Ventosa, 2016, p. 3).

Fashion magazines, therefore, constitute a decisive mechanism within the fashion system, since they act as authorized voices, promoting trends and lifestyles through fashion editorials: these being composed of a series of photographs articulated around a narrative. In these micro-stories, a universe is created through the theme, photographer, stylist, location, models and clothing, with all of this creating an atmosphere intended to capture attention and seduce. In these editorials, through the combination of images and text, new and particular meanings are created (Ventosa, 2015, p. 18).

The semiotician Roland Barthes points out that it is not the garments themselves that create fashion's meaning, but the way they are articulated through iconic and verbal structures (2003, p. 22). "The photo caption is for Barthes the secret but effective bridge, totally and exclusively linguistic, in which fashion's meaning is produced and concealed" (Marone, 2021, p. 23). What Barthes calls "written fashion" can be extrapolated to "photographed fashion." In the same way as "written dress," photography not only "makes known" but also "constructs" fashion as a cultural phenomenon through processes of connotation and mythification. This is how R. Barthes expressed it: "increasingly, fashion not only photographs its signifiers, but also its signifieds" (2003, p. 341). This tendency has intensified in contemporary times, where the

massive circulation of digital images has exponentially enhanced photography's capacity to configure fashion discourse, converting the latter into an eminently visual rather than material phenomenon.

Fashion photography has as its fundamental premise the exhibition of new design proposals through the creation of images with great visual attraction power. This is due to the underlying requirement to arouse attention and acquisition desire in the target audience to whom said proposals are directed, which in turn implies betting on the technical and aesthetic quality of the images. It should be added that as Professor Incorvaia (2019) points out, "the image in fashion reaches a superlative value because it represents the yearnings to 'see' and 'see oneself' reflected in the best possible way" (p. 28).

Fashion and fashion photography share an attraction to change, the new and the innovative. Both accentuate the desire to integrate into a social group, but also to differentiate oneself within it. Hence the permanent demand for renewal and innovation, as well as the imperative of originality in their aesthetic discourse. Consequently, creativity and formal experimentation acquire significant relevance in configuring fashion photography's language, constituting themselves as vertebrating elements of its professional practice and its evolution as a discipline.

Fashion photography has its own visual grammar with rules of composition, framing, lighting and colour use that combine in a codified manner. The arrangement of these elements in the frame follows recognizable patterns that generate meaning. This is due to shared codes where each visual element has specific connotations. A minimalist background can communicate elegance and sophistication, while dramatic lighting can evoke mystery or sensuality. Likewise, the model's gestures, poses and expressions function with culturally established meanings. It will not be the same if the model looks directly at the viewer as if she acts oblivious to them. A smile, or the model's slightly open mouth, will equally alter the perception of the message.

When a fashion photograph is taken, a narrative is constructed, transmitting values, aspiring to a lifestyle and communicating identities. Each image tells a story. The meaning will depend on the cultural framework in which it is interpreted because visual codes vary between epochs and societies, and fashion photography adapts to and reflects these changes, functioning as a register of collective imaginaries.

2. Methodology and justification of the topic

Given the omnipresence of fashion and photography in today's society, academic studies that delve deeper into these issues are required. According to Silvia Ventosa, curator of the Barcelona Design Museum, fashion should be represented not only by dresses, complements and accessories, but also by graphic and photographic documents, publications and other media that have contributed, throughout the centuries, to communicate fashion novelties (2016, p. 1). Likewise, as Paul Jobling indicates, fashion photography, as commentary on the times we live in, deserves serious and profound investigation (2001, p. 366).

Through this article we intend to convey the meaning and function of fashion photography. Starting from the premise that photography is a fundamental tool within what is called "the fashion system," which acts as an instrument in service of fashion to make it known to its

audiences and facilitating its understanding, we will try to establish how photography constructs fashion, enhances and enriches it through visual mechanisms (such as lighting, color, contrast, composition, and visual effects), narrative mechanisms (creating a story around a garment, through situations, contexts and characters), and symbolic mechanisms (associating garments with deeper concepts such as social status, values, emotions, or cultural references).

For Eco, fashion has acquired communicative value to such an extent that it has been losing its physical functionality to become a sign (1976, p. 17). How this same thing can be affirmed of fashion photography is what will be attempted to show throughout this article, developing the concept of enrichment and enhancement of the garment through staging and atmosphere.

The main objective will be to focus on the role of atmosphere and staging as a crucial element in fashion photography since these help define the visual and symbolic narrative, as well as connect emotionally with the viewer. It should not be overlooked that fashion is one of the most emotional territories there is; through its emotional connections are created to insert oneself into the universe of desire and trend, thus connecting with audiences.

With this purpose we will situate ourselves in the 20th century, because although photography emerged in the 1820s and splendid portraits made with different photographic techniques in which dress enjoys great importance are preserved, one cannot clearly speak of fashion photography until the 20th century (Bastardes, 2015, p. 12).

To exemplify the role of atmosphere and staging, three internationally renowned photographers have been chosen. First, Adolf de Meyer (1868-1946), has been selected for being a pioneer in establishing the foundations of fashion photography as an artistic discipline. His importance lies in having transferred the aesthetic codes of the pictorialist movement—a movement that sought to elevate photography to the artistic status of painting—to the world of fashion. Second, Irving Penn (1917-2009), an emblematic photographer of the 1950s, represents a turning point in the evolution of fashion photography. His selection is due to his ability to demonstrate that extreme simplicity could be just as powerful as scenographic complexity. By choosing to photograph in the studio with neutral backgrounds and precise lighting, Penn eliminated every superfluous element to concentrate on the essence: the interaction between model, garment and light. And finally, Deborah Turbeville (1932-2013), because she exemplifies in a sublime way the importance of location and scene as narrative elements. Her genius lay in transforming decadent spaces like abandoned palaces or public bathrooms into scenarios charged with meaning.

The approach of the present investigation is qualitative, making use of inductive methodology, in which we study the phenomenon as a whole. The research adopts a descriptive-analytical design that combines two complementary approaches. On one hand, it presents a fundamentally theoretical approach based on a systematic review of existing bibliography and academic research related to fashion photography, visual theory and cultural studies. This bibliographical review encompasses both primary sources (writings by the photographers themselves, critics of the era) and secondary sources (contemporary academic analyses on the subject). On the other hand, it incorporates a qualitative visual analysis of selected photographic works by Adolf de Meyer, Irving Penn and Deborah Turbeville. The selection of these works is based on criteria of stylistic representativeness and historical relevance to illustrate the evolution of staging and atmosphere in fashion photography.

The analysis corpus comprises one representative photograph by each author, selected for their capacity to exemplify different atmospheric approaches. The analysis focuses on elements such as composition, lighting, scenography, visual narrative and symbolic codes.

3. Staging

Staging in fashion photography is the deliberate construction of the visual environment that surrounds the garment and the model. It includes all the elements that the photographer consciously organizes: the location (studio, exteriors, specific spaces), the scenography (objects, sets, backgrounds), the lighting, the colours, the model's poses, and the general atmosphere to be conveyed. It is the scenic space created around fashion to tell a specific story and generate an emotional connection with the viewer, transforming a simple garment into part of a narrative and symbolic universe that communicates values, lifestyles and identities.

Every fashion photograph is a staging, in which an atmosphere and narrative are created through which attention is intended to be captured and seduction achieved.

In 1969, German philosopher Rudolf Arnheim already pointed out that every image is an intentional construction and that every image has a subjective origin (p. 118). However, fashion photography goes further, because reality is not photographed directly, but rather it starts from a preconceived idea; therefore, everything in it is intentional. Another reality is configured; an imaginary universe is created that comes into existence only within the photographic frame. Reality is transformed to endow it with greater evocative power. Thus, fictitious worlds emerge, but ones that preserve convincing verisimilitude. Fashion photography constantly navigates between the imaginary and the believable.

Likewise, to stimulate desire, fantasy and reverie, fashion photography resorts to creating idealized images, moving away from reality, using a language closer to advertising than to reportage. To be effective, stagings must capture attention, and for this it is very important that they be well constructed, hence composition plays such an important role.

In all fashion photography there is always this duality between reality and fiction, with the added value that the dream component arrives in a very organic way through photography. And indeed, "there is no way to suppress the intrinsic tendency of all photography to lend value to its subjects" (Sontag, 2006, p. 49).

Therefore, fashion photography is a construction that has as much representational value as it does seductive value. Since it seeks to persuade and seduce the viewer, using specific visual strategies to generate desire and aspiration toward the products or concepts it presents. Furthermore, through the photographic image, insofar as it is a language that uses a set of shared visual codes, narratives are constructed, transmitting values and lifestyles.

However, it goes beyond this, because fashion photography is a "representation of fashion's language, which emerges from the commercial world and acquires a second life in the cultural universe, converting immaterial and ephemeral images into patrimonial objects" (Ventosa, 2016, p. 1).

These are images that combine aesthetic quality with technical precision and a high degree of creativity. For this reason, among the fundamental requirements that characterize the professional praxis of the photographer specialized in fashion, technical skill and conceptual

innovation capacity stand out particularly, indispensable qualities for the formulation of visual proposals that manage to transcend conventional communicative codes.

4. The author's creativity and formal experimentation in service of creating atmospheres and scenarios

In 1979, historian Nancy Hall-Duncan argued that what distinguishes fashion photography is its intention. Fashion photography represents an ideal, and to achieve this it resorts to creating illusions (p. 10). Suggestive images, enveloping atmospheres and an author's vision is what distinguishes fashion photography. Beyond showing the garment, what is determining in this type of image is the atmosphere that permeates them; of intangible character, this can be minimalist and refined, dramatic and theatrical, dreamlike and fantastic, intimate or provocative and transgressive.

Among the pioneers of fashion photography is Adolf de Meyer (1868-1946), considered the father of fashion photography, who was a precursor in the search for artistry and in elevating the atmosphere of his images to an essential component of his photographic language. Born in Vienna, due to World War I he was forced to emigrate to New York. De Meyer was hired by Condé Nast, owner of several magazines, including *Vogue*. This magazine was aimed at New York high society and intended to show a way of life where refinement and good taste reigned. In 1914, De Meyer's photos appeared published in *Vogue* for the first time.

Adolf de Meyer's great contribution was to create stagings within the studio with a space and atmosphere of refinement very appropriate for presenting fashion designers' collections. For this he used highly ornate sets to transmit the luxury that was only within reach of a few. Influenced by pictorialism, in his images he renounces the sharpness characteristic of photography, advocating for soft and diffuse focuses that confer upon his images a feeling of delicacy. Likewise, through highly orchestrated compositions, the rejection of instantaneity and the blurring of contours, he manages to give importance to atmosphere. The enveloping light and atmospheric sensation provide a sense of reverie and distancing from the viewer (figure 1).

Through exquisiteness, meticulousness and elegance he emphasizes the lifestyle of the early century. He tended to use sophisticated ornaments, such as flowers, to give the idea of access to a privileged world (Ducros, 1999, p. 536). Likewise, he grants great importance to lights and often resorts to backlighting and reflections to transmit splendour. This idea of sophistication was also achieved through the exaggerated poses of the models. De Meyer, as a promoter of fashion photography, managed to transform reality through his images, "reflecting the values of American and European high society to which he was connected" (Susperregui, 2000, p. 288).

In Adolf de Meyer's case, he constitutes an example of romantic atmospheres; as father of fashion photography he would have to create images that would be interpreted as fashion photographs and not as society portraits. Influenced by pictorialism, he resorts to light effects, to creating blurred contours. He recreated luxurious environments to show the refinement, sophistication and exclusive luxury of the upper classes. Likewise, the models' postures and gestures help establish distance from the viewer.



Figure 1. Adolf de Meyer. Fashion study (two models at a table), 1920.

As an example of a creator of minimalist and refined atmospheres, we can cite Irving Penn (1917-2009). Irving Penn's work, along with that of Richard Avedon, marked a turning point in fashion photography of the 1950s, proposing a return to the purely photographic and consolidating New York as the epicentre of photographic creativity. The growing prosperity of the 1950s was also reflected in the field of fashion, causing a boom in fashion magazines, which had large budgets. These magazines would give photographers great artistic freedom, facilitating fashion photography's reach to maturity.

Irving Penn had a professional career always linked to Vogue magazine. He began working for Vogue USA in 1943, first as assistant to art director Alexander Liberman, and later as a photographer. Liberman had a vision of fashion that went beyond its commercial aspect, introducing a much more artistic and creative conception. This new approach to fashion allowed Penn to be given a great margin of freedom to create powerful and attractive images. This is how, in the interest of expressive effectiveness, he was able to use very diverse photographic resources, even borrowed from other photographic specialties such as portraiture or still life.

Fame in the fashion world would come to him in the 1950s, receiving commissions from all over the world since then. One of his greatest achievements was modernizing this photographic genre by changing the scenario on which he situated the models. He photographed models isolated on austere surfaces, often using a grey background, without sets, leaving only the model and her dress. Although he pays attention to clothing and accessories, he eliminates

props. As a general rule, his photographs are characterized by the deliberate omission of temporal references.

He manages to direct attention toward the clothing, eliminating elements in the composition and photographing models against plain backgrounds, so that by isolating the model he manages to enhance the garment; no element distracts. The clothing and the models who wear it are arranged with meticulousness; everything is focused on highlighting the originality and detail of the dress (Kismaric & Respini, 2004, p. 12).

Generally, his stagings tend to be simple and refined. However, the apparent simplicity of his compositions conceals formal complexity. Through naturalness he is capable of achieving sophistication. Nothing is left to chance; he controls every last detail. Irving Penn thus obtains a wise combination of elegance and simplicity, as can be observed in the image "Cristóbal Balenciaga's dress of chiffon petals," published by Vogue in 1950.

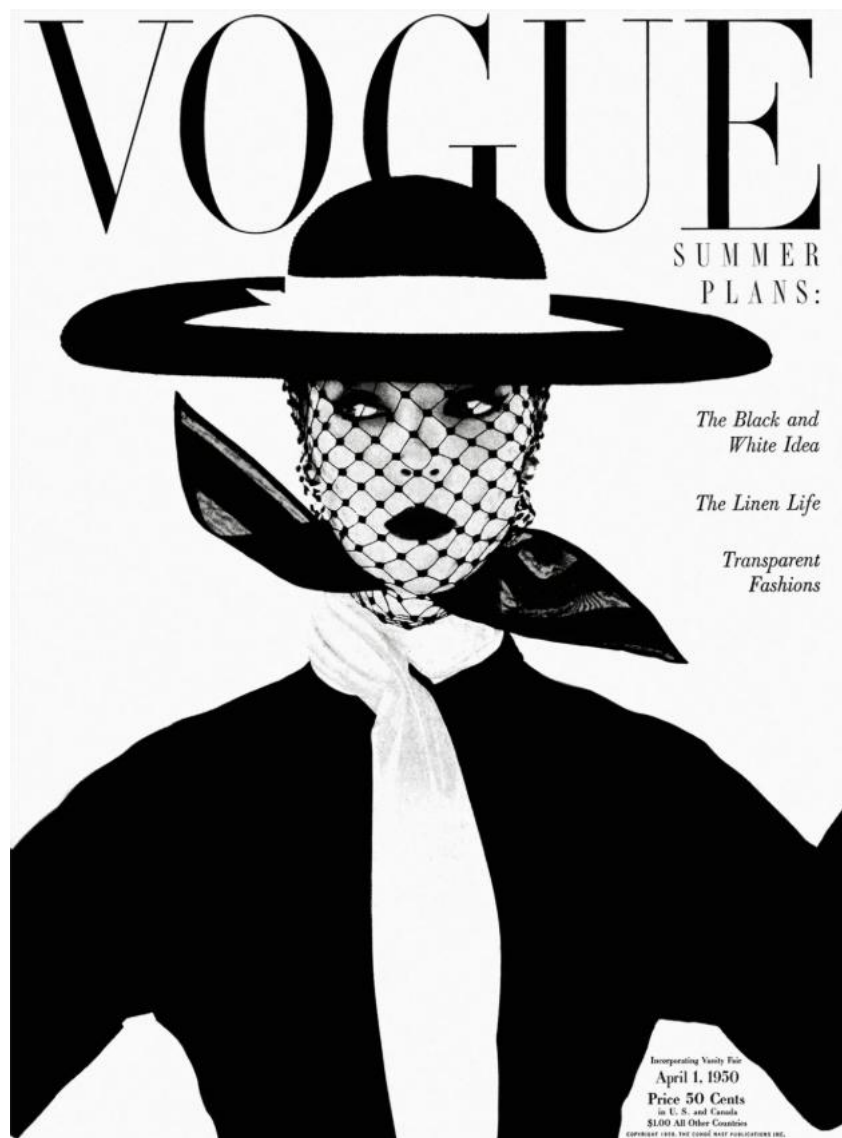


Figure 2. Irving Penn, Vogue cover, April 1, 1950.

Irving Penn's style is also characterized by the search for beauty and perfection, by refined elegance and the naturalness of the models, liberating them from complicated postures. "In his photographs there is no tension, the models maintain an unusual calm before the camera" (Susperregui, 2000, p. 296). In fact, he takes into account the model's personality; his images are sometimes close to portraiture.

Another aspect for which he stands out is his mastery in the use of light; he resorts to soft and natural lighting, thus conferring a very real and simple aesthetic. Through its use he intends that even the most elementary object acquires an internal, almost voluptuous brilliance.

He does not usually work outdoors; he prefers studio work. For Penn, the studio is a place of utmost importance because in this way nothing comes between the photographer and the model or the subject, thus being able to delve deeper and obtain great results. He manages to give life to the objects and subjects he photographs, among other things due to his admirable perception of form.

For his black and white images, he used the platinum salt process, a technique with which he managed to achieve a more brilliant and metallic result. Irving Penn modernized fashion photography of the 1950s through his preference for clean spaces, neutral backgrounds and austere compositions.

Between 1943 and 2004 Penn produced photographs for 165 Vogue magazine covers, making him one of the most prolific cover photographers in the magazine's history. Jean Patchett was the subject of this cover (figure 2), his first in black-and-white, and the first non-colour Vogue cover published since May 1932 (Borelli-Persson, 2017).

American photographer Deborah Turbeville (1932-2013) was a revolutionary figure in 1970s fashion photography, radically transforming the way of understanding space and atmosphere in this genre. Her work is fundamental for understanding how space and atmosphere can become the true protagonists of a fashion image.

The 1970s are characterized by the prominence of youth and music, a period in which fashion becomes accessible to the masses and where seduction prevails over elegance. However, in the case of the photographer we are examining, Deborah Turbeville "redefined fashion photography, moving away from sexual provocation and stereotypes" (Rodríguez, 2023).

Deborah Turbeville escapes from reality by exploring within her inner world memories, desires and reveries, resorting formally to a return to the past. She herself highlighted that she was more interested in creating "atmosphere and mood" than simply photographing clothes (La Force, 2023), an approach that defined her entire career.

Her aesthetic was characterized by images that transmitted solitude, decadence and isolation, contrasting strongly with prevailing fashion photography. She achieves this through the spaces in which she photographs, through the models, through soft or faded colours and other formal elements such as blur, grain and diffuse light.

Space in her photographs does not act as mere decorative background, but as an active narrative element that communicates emotional and psychological states. She frequently contrasts clothing with outdated scenarios that refer to a glorious past. The idea of decadence and the look toward the past are constants in her work. She creates her images outside the studio, in real scenarios, conveniently chosen to transmit meaning.

Regarding the models, they are generally languid and slender women, absorbed in themselves, who do not communicate or look at each other. They transmit their emotions

through their attitudes. The inclusion of female groups characterized by melancholic attitudes that suggest depth and reveal a rich interior life endows her images with a narrative dimension. Her compositions are classical and ordered.

A paradigmatic example is "Bath house," a fashion editorial published in May 1975 in Vogue magazine that caused great controversy among the magazine's readers. Over 10 pages it presented five models in swimwear, using a public street bathroom as the scenario, which conferred a gloomy atmosphere that some interpreted as the representation of a gas chamber. The public did not favourably receive either the setting or the models' attitudes (figure 3).



Figure 3. Deborah Turbeville. Bath house". Nueva York. published in American Vogue, May 1975

Another example of her revolutionary and innovative style is the series created in November 1978, in the forests of Versailles, on Valentino's collection "Women in the Woods". She presents the models among the trees. The scarce light, the scenario, the group's arrangement, as well as their impassive faces and attitudes led people to believe that Deborah Turbeville was trying to recreate a group of French collaborators from World War II. Turbeville always maintained the enigma about the subject (Guerrero, 2015, p. 16). And indeed, through her images she always pursues an evocative and unsettling sensation. The deteriorated space became a metaphor for fragility and nostalgia, completely transforming the meaning of the photographed clothing.

The two mentioned works exemplify her tendency to create open narratives, to suggest incomplete stories, as if they were fragments of dreams. She often resorts to black and white images because it favours the dreamlike character.

Throughout her work, women are the great protagonists of her images. Generally, groups of women, slender, elegant, languid and indolent, in places that refer to a splendid past.

Turbeville employed certain recurring elements such as blur and grainy images, and also the use of photographic papers with varied tones; moreover, she often deteriorated her photographs to give them an aged appearance, thus fusing past and present, achieving an ambiguous temporality, also through the medium.

She creates very special atmospheres, impregnated with decrepit splendour. In Deborah Turbeville's case, clothing is an excuse to express her state of mind. The environment surrounding the character becomes more important than the wardrobe itself. Her photography is an intimate and personal vision that, in turn, seeks to escape from the stereotyped woman. It is characterized by understanding fashion photography as a personal form of art (Ducros, 1999, p. 553).

5. Results

Composition, lighting, colour and texture are not neutral elements, but rhetorical tools that transform the garment into an object charged with meaning. Staging acts as a semiotic amplifier: a jacket photographed in an industrial loft acquires connotations of rebellion and urbanity that the same garment in a classic salon would not have. Atmosphere and staging generate a narrative context that endows the garment with an imaginary and symbolic narrative. We don't see just a dress, but the woman who would wear it, the moment when she would use it, the emotions she would have and those she would arouse.

Regarding the photographers analyzed, we can establish that Adolf de Meyer's images, characterized by soft lights and blurred contours, ethereal compositions and an almost dreamlike atmosphere, demonstrated that a fashion photograph could be both commercial and artistic. De Meyer did not only document garments; he created dream worlds where clothing acquired a poetic dimension. His legacy established that atmosphere could be as important as the garment itself. While his technique was not the most adequate for appreciating the details of the garments, he achieved great success.

Irving Penn marked a turning point in fashion narrative by emphasizing the lines and silhouettes of garments without distractions, managing to transmit elegance, sophistication and timelessness. The simplicity of his images represented a step forward in fashion photography. At the same time, naturalness and simplicity fit very well in the postwar environment, being the visual aesthetic that Vogue imposed in those years. However, behind the apparent simplicity of his images lies meticulous control of light, tones, textures, lines, volumes, silhouettes and composition, resulting in images of refined elegance.

His "less is more" philosophy revolutionized the medium, demonstrating that atmosphere does not always require elaborate scenarios. His work in the 1950s marked the path toward a return to the purely photographic, toward a more direct and conceptually pure fashion photography, where each visual element had a specific function.

Deborah Turbeville was able to demonstrate that space in fashion photography can function as an independent emotional language, capable of generating meanings that transcend the mere presentation of products. While De Meyer created studio atmospheres and Penn reduced them to their minimum expression, Turbeville demonstrated that the real world, but decrepit, could become the perfect stage for fashion. Her images, frequently melancholic,

charged with mystery and strangeness, exemplify how the choice of location is not merely decorative, but constructs the complete visual discourse. With Turbeville, location becomes co-protagonist, creating narratives that transcend the commercial function of fashion photography. In her images underlies the idea of elegance and imperishable beauty. Throughout her extensive career she was able to create her own vision, through highly orchestrated scenes, with stagings full of poetry and mystery, and seeking evocative and unsettling locations that spoke of a past full of splendour.

These three photographers represent a natural evolution: from De Meyer's romantic and sophisticated pictorialism, through Penn's conceptual minimalism, to Turbeville's evocative and narrative power. Together, they illustrate the multiple dimensions that atmosphere can adopt in fashion photography, from the artificial creation of idealized worlds to the poetic appropriation of abandoned spaces.

Through these three photographers studied, who represent three distinct periods: the 1920s, 1950s and 1970s, we have been able to verify how fashion images constitute a clear manifestation of the social and cultural transformations inherent to the historical context in which they are produced (Susperregui, 2000, p. 285). These visual representations operate as semiotic documents that evidence the ideological configurations, aesthetic values and symbolic structures predominant in each period. Likewise, these images function as indicators of social position, assigned roles and the evolution of feminine representation in the sociocultural framework of each historical moment.

Fashion photography transcends the mere search for visual appeal to constitute itself as a specific graphic language, a system of visual codes in which the photographic image functions as a vehicle for aesthetic, social and cultural discourses.

6. Conclusion

In his work "The Fashion System," Roland Barthes already identified how the representation of clothing constitutes an autonomous system of signification with respect to the physical garment, which adds knowledge. Through fashion photography, brands and designers project their identity, values and cultural imaginaries.

Fashion photographs are graphic documents that act as testimony to a time, culture and society, but they are also authored works that stand out for their technical and artistic quality, as has been observed through the three photographers analysed.

Fashion photography does not operate solely as a vehicle for dissemination of clothing creations, but functions as a device that generates signifiers and meanings that contribute to the construction of fashion's aesthetic-cultural discourse.

Fashion photography forms part of the collective ideology of the 20th century, becoming a fundamental element of our cultural identity, shaping social behaviours and creating a sense of belonging that contributes to social cohesion.

In fashion photography, through staging, a constant dichotomy between the representation of the real and the construction of the imaginary is evidenced, since its fundamental objective consists in the elaboration of a persuasive visual illusion. This phenomenon responds to the

intrinsically aspirational nature of the fashion and luxury sectors, which operate as symbolic devices in the configuration of collective desire.

Fashion photography is characterized by a significant paradox, since on one hand it serves as a catalysing agent of inspiration and, at the same time, as a reflection of the aesthetic and cultural transformations characteristic of its historical context. This duality places it in a singular position within the field of contemporary visual production, where it fulfils both a prospective function, by anticipating and configuring new aesthetic paradigms, and a testimonial function, by visually documenting fluctuations in value systems and cultural manifestations of each period. This ambivalence makes fashion photography a particularly relevant object of study for the analysis of processes of construction, dissemination and legitimization of aesthetic canons in contemporary society.

Atmosphere in fashion photography is a crucial element that defines the visual narrative and emotional connection with the viewer. Based on the suggested emotional tone, we can distinguish different types of atmospheres that can be found in this photographic genre.

In Adolf de Meyer's case, he constitutes an example of romantic and sophisticated atmospheres; as father of fashion photography he had to create images that would be interpreted as fashion photographs and not as society portraits. Influenced by pictorialism, he resorts to light effects, to creating blurred contours. He recreated luxurious environments to show the refinement and exclusive luxury of the upper classes. Likewise, the models' postures and gestures help establish distance from the viewer.

In Irving Penn's case, he is distinguished by minimalist and refined atmospheres, characterized by clean spaces, neutral backgrounds and austere compositions. He emphasizes the lines and silhouettes of garments without distractions. He uses uniform and controlled lighting to highlight textures and details, transmitting elegance, sophistication and timelessness.

Regarding Deborah Turbeville, she constitutes an example of intimate and vulnerable atmospheres, resorting to the use of close and intimate framings, showing emotional closeness and apparently spontaneous scenes. She presents models with absorbed expressions and uses soft lighting and diffuse focus that evokes warmth and proximity.

Fashion photography constitutes a complex object of study that demands interdisciplinary approaches, integrating perspectives from visual studies, semiotics, sociology of consumption, gender studies and art history, which enriches academic knowledge.

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