

P E T E R



dignity and also being upfront about this device. Those off-scene elements not only appeared in his indoor studio sets, but also when he was shooting at his favourite locations. He especially loved the beach of Deauville in winter, and it featured in many of his images. "The beach is neutral. As a backdrop, it doesn't dominate, and you only see the girls. I don't really like the studio. I love natural light and places where there is nothing, where you can pretty much create what you want," he explained in 1994 in Vogue Italia's 30th anniversary issue. Isolated beaches, moon-like deserts and wind-swept cliffs say a lot about the kind of female image he loved to transmit. "In the past, in photographs, women were defined by the environments around them: the streets, the shops, the cars, Fifth Avenue. For me, women are simply themselves. So I focus on the basics," he said in 2014, again in the pages of Vogue Italia. In any case, he established his way of representing women back in the 1980s: without rhetoric and going against the style of the time. He portrayed women in their natural state, without touch-ups, gorgeous with all their marks and imperfections. "I didn't want to recreate the women of the 1940s or 1950s like other people," he declared to Vogue Italia in 1994. "I never asked for that type of makeup or those hairstyles. I didn't have a reason to. I preferred to find interesting women. If you're strong and have personality, whatever you wear becomes personal."

Lindbergh was one of the first to support Linda Evangelista. He recalled the exact moment when the top model came into her own as the icon adored by designers and photographers for more than two decades. "I was the one who recommended she cut her hair. All the magazines wanted her after she was seen in Vogue Italia in a photo taken in my studio, where she had short hair and was wearing a white shirt," he said in 1994. As well as Evangelista and Helena Christensen, there were other models who entered his personal orbit. They became his creative muses and starred as constant protagonists in a photographic series that showcased month after month in the pages of Vogue Italia. Naomi, whom he photographed for the first issue of Sozzani's editorship (July/August 1988), went from extremely feminine to androgynous. Next came Milla Jovovich, one of his absolute favourites, and then Trish Goff, Guinevere Van Seenus, Kate Moss and Amber Valletta. Lastly, there was the Italian model he adored the most, Mariacarla Boscono, photographed for Vogue Italia's 50th anniversary issue as a neorealist beauty, melancholy and pensive. "The feature is about a woman who is travelling to places she's never seen before. She's trying to find herself," explained Lindbergh, who in this and other photo stories used black and white to create an existentialist allure. Indeed, a sense of mystery is the leitmotif that unflinchingly runs through all of his editorial features: the search for life's meaning expressed by a face, a pose, a certain setting or a certain light.

Then there was his truly original way of seeing women. "For me, there is nothing sexier than personality," he revealed to Vogue Italia back in 1994. "A woman with the courage to be herself is automatically sexy, even if she doesn't wear high heels, a miniskirt, or have three buttons undone." This was a very modern point of view, considering the inclusive, more open direction fashion has taken. In this sense, too, Lindbergh was ahead of the times like few other photographers. And his photographic journey, on the pages of Vogue Italia, is immortal.

End.

F O R V O G U E I T A L I A

PETER AND

by Renata Molho

Peter Lindbergh's is a story of light. Not only the light that he clearly balanced with pure mastery in his inimitable black-and-white photos, but also an inner light that, despite his imposing physique, made him a delicate poet. Marked by a process of subtraction, his idiom was both simple and sophisticated: a cinematographic perspective, sublime sense of composition, and an alchemic mix that represented realism while straying into the world of dreams. He had the underlying melancholy of someone whose sensibility was anchored in an existential question. In a recent interview, he said he was influenced by American photography during the Great Depression: "My imagination was indelibly marked by the blunt realism in the faces immortalised by documentary photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans." His photos with supermodels in the '80s and '90s, portraits of the most famous actresses, and campaigns for the most prestigious brands – via his lens – reveal the essence of a sort of idealised humanity that comes to life precisely because of its imperfections. His aesthetic approach and talent were the secret behind Lindbergh's long-standing professional relationship with Vogue Italia, especially with Franca and Carla Sozzani, which turned into a great friendship.

So, to reconstruct an image of Lindbergh that goes beyond the undeniable quality of his work, our meeting with Carla Sozzani was the perfect place to start. Dressed in black and with her hair nonchalantly tied with a burgundy velvet ribbon, she could have walked straight out of one of his photos. Her recollections are important because she shared some momentous occasions with him: "We organised an exhibition of his here in Milan [in 2012, at the 10 Corso Como gallery], which we later took to Korea. There's that wonderful phase of editing before the exhibition, which is the most thrilling part. I spent many hours with him in his studio in Paris, selecting the photos and deciding on the themes – those things you do every time. One of his great qualities – which Franca had too – was the ability to make you believe you'd chosen that particular photo. But actually everything went just the way he wanted it to... and so the friendship that we'd had for many years grew even stronger. His style was unlike anyone else's" says Carla Sozzani. "He worked as if everything were immediate, as if everything had already been there. But it wasn't true. If you look at the pictures for Vogue, in all of the stories, or in the series he did with machinery for Comme

des Garçons... he created veritable movie sets, and ended up portraying spontaneity." Lindbergh was born on 23 January 1944 in the Polish city of Leszno, which at that time was part of Germany, and he grew up in Duisburg, a city in the Ruhr region. At the age of 18, he moved to Switzerland and then to Berlin, before spending a few months in the city of Arles where his idol Vincent Van Gogh had once lived. After travelling to places like Spain and Morocco, he returned to Germany and studied at the art school in Krefeld, not far from where he grew up. He began to focus on photography in 1971 and instinctively found himself breaking the mould, offering up images that had nothing to do with the stereotypes of the era. Although he wasn't immediately understood, he won a place in the pantheon of outstanding fashion photographers



thanks to his way of representing reality. With his highly personal contextualisation of the subject, he created raw yet rarefied and dreamlike atmospheres. He was totally against retouching photos, and he was rewarded for never betraying his uncompromising vision. A tireless worker, his images had been exhibited in the most prestigious galleries in the world, and at the time of his death he was preparing for the *Untold Stories* exhibition, due to be held at the Kunstpalast Museum in Düsseldorf from 6 February to 1 June 2020. November will see the release of his last big publishing project, a two-volume edition titled *Peter Lindbergh/Dior*. Published by Taschen, it will include archive photos and previously unpublished images. When recently asked what growing older meant to him, he responded: "A flexible and open-minded way of thinking. Today, at over 70 years old, I have a simpler approach

CARLA