SESSION 17 · UNIT 2 — LIGHT & PERSON · Jan 19, 2027

Helmut Newton and Deborah Turbeville

Newton 1920–2004, German-Australian · Turbeville 1932–2013, American

Fashion photography as mood — power and presence versus atmosphere and decay



Newton: Sie Kommen · 1981

"It's quite true that what I am aiming at, even when I take portraits, is to get a scandalous picture. I would love to be a paparazzo."

— Helmut Newton, interview with Frank Horvat, 1986

"I don't really destroy my images on purpose or try to manipulate them too much — these things just happen on their own."

— Deborah Turbeville, Dazed, 2013

KEY WORKS

- Newton: Big Nudes series, 1980 — power and the female body
- Newton: Sie Kommen, 1981 — the definitive fashion provocation
- Turbeville: Bath House series, Vogue, 1975 — soft focus and unease in a condemned bathhouse
- Turbeville: Unseen Versailles, 1981 — decay and memory at the palace

CONTEXT

Newton and Turbeville pushed fashion photography in opposite directions, both away from the polished commercial ideal. Newton made images of powerful, dominating women — sharp, direct, confrontational. Turbeville worked in blur, grain, and decay: her 1975 Bath House series for Vogue, shot in a condemned New York bathhouse, was criticized on publication for its suggestive, drug-like atmosphere — it's now considered one of the most influential fashion photographs ever made. Both used fashion as an aesthetic argument, not just product photography.

WHY THIS PHOTOGRAPHER

Taught together because the contrast is instructive. Newton is about power and presence — hard light, direct confrontation. Turbeville is about mood and implication — soft focus, atmosphere, unease. Both are relevant to the Estée Lauder brief, where students need images that carry a concept beyond the product.

TURBEVILLE: KEY WORKS



Bath House series · Vogue, 1975



Unseen Versailles · 1981

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Newton's Big Nudes were criticized as objectifying women; defenders said they were images of power. Who is right? Can both be true simultaneously?
2. Turbeville's Bath House images were criticized on publication for their decaying setting and suggestive atmosphere. Why might blur and decay read as transgressive in a fashion photograph — and does that criticism still hold up?

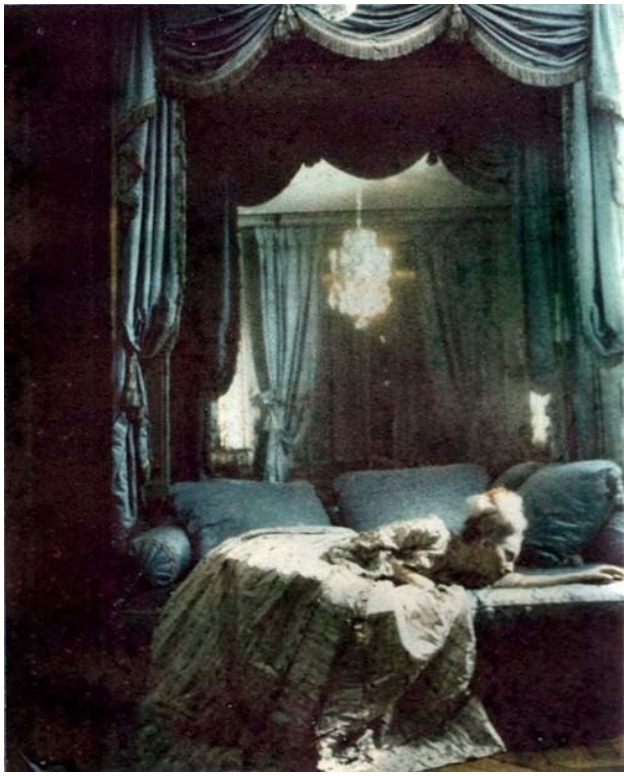
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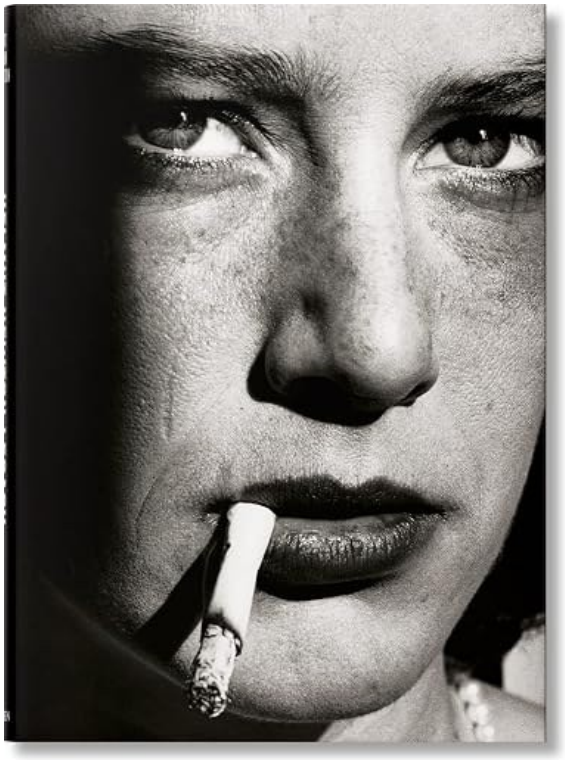
Bath House series (variant) · 1975



Bath House series (bathtub) · 1975



Unseen Versailles (variant) · 1981



Newton: portrait



Newton: doorway scene



Newton: fur coat portrait



Sigourney Weaver, Los Angeles · 1983