

THE WOMEN OF HARPER'S BAZAAR, 1936-1958

explores the collaborative relationship among Carmel Snow, Diana Vreeland, and Louise Dahl-Wolfe. During their time working together at *Harper's Bazaar*, they transformed it into the definitive American fashion magazine, one that informed, surprised, and delighted readers.



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1. Claire McCardell, bathing suit, 1946. Collection of The Museum at FIT.
2. Carolyn Schnurer, top, 1952. Collection of The Museum at FIT.
3. Charles James, evening gown, c. 1952. Collection of The Museum at FIT.
4. Christian Dior New York, coat, 1954. Collection of The Museum at FIT.
5. Claire McCardell, dress, 1952. Collection of The Museum at FIT.
6. Mainbocher, ensemble, 1948. Collection of The Museum at FIT.

SNOW was the magazine's editor in chief—and a “genius for picking other people of genius,” according to her niece and successor Nancy White. She assembled the *Bazaar* team and provided a vision of what the magazine could be. Snow understood that *Bazaar* needed more than excellent fashion coverage. To this end, she published culturally and intellectually rich content, such as a 1939 Walker Evans photo essay of New York City housing projects. Notable authors and artists—such as Evans, Carson McCullers, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Truman Capote, Lisette Model, and Gertrude Stein—set *Bazaar* apart from other fashion magazines of the time and were crucial to establishing its high standards.

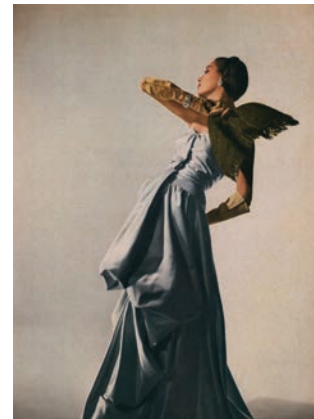
Snow hired **VREELAND** to be *Bazaar*'s fashion editor following the great success of her “Why Don't You?” column. Often lauded as a peerless visual storyteller, Vreeland once said that “fashion must be the most intoxicating release from the banality of the world,” and styled her shoots in ways that conveyed that quality. In a 1946 photo that was taken at the stables of an estate outside Rio de Janeiro, the model, wearing a Claire McCardell jersey bathing suit, is seated with her legs casually folded beneath her. The romantic location and the model's fashionable attire, sun-kissed athleticism, and faultless grooming are Vreeland hallmarks.

Of **DAHL-WOLFE**, Snow said, “From the moment I saw her color photographs, I knew that the *Bazaar* was at last going to look the way I had instinctively wanted my magazine to look.” Dahl-Wolfe used *Bazaar* as a medium for her pioneering work in on-location fashion photography and Kodachrome film, which was launched by Kodak in 1935 and became, despite its complex processing requirements, the first widely used color film. Working with Vreeland, she took fashion photography out of the studio and into the wider world.

The two women shot on location from Morocco to Brazil, creating images such as the 1954 photograph of a model standing on a beach holding an umbrella to shade herself from the sun. This practice of shooting



Photograph by Louise Dahl-Wolfe © 1989 Center for Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents. Collection of The Museum at FIT. Featured in *Harper's Bazaar*, November 1947.



Photograph by Louise Dahl-Wolfe © 1989 Center for Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents. Collection of The Museum at FIT. Featured in *Harper's Bazaar*, April 1947.



Photograph by Louise Dahl-Wolfe © 1989 Center for Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents. Collection of The Museum at FIT. Featured in *Harper's Bazaar*, August 1949.

on location had a lasting impact on fashion photography. When Vreeland became editor in chief of *Vogue* in 1962, for example, she made the on-location fashion shoot a staple of the magazine, a practice that continues today.

Although their individual strengths were remarkable, it was the dynamic collaboration among these three women that proved to be groundbreaking. “Flight to the Valley of the Sun,” a 1942 shoot in Arizona that produced what Vreeland biographer Eleanor Dwight called a “stunning moment in fashion reporting,” is an example. Photographs of the women on location document Vreeland as a stylist: she can be seen arranging a model's headscarf while Dahl-Wolfe captures the scene. The working relationship between the two was so strong that when model Bijou Barrington became too ill to work, Vreeland was able to step in and take her place without any disruption.

The garments included in the *The Women of Harper's Bazaar, 1936-1958* represent important components of a woman's wardrobe at the time: a suit, a day dress, a bathing suit, and an evening gown. A gray wool suit by Mainbocher has exquisite scrollwork on the jacket that sets it apart from more prosaic examples; Claire McCardell's day dress of cotton in a bright, *serape*-inspired weave is an example of American sportswear at its casual, sophisticated best; and Charles James's architectural evening dress embodies the grandeur of eveningwear during this period. Like the photographs chosen for the exhibition, they illustrate Snow's definition of elegance: “good taste with a dash of daring.”

TOGETHER, Snow, Vreeland, and Dahl-Wolfe sought to provide readers with photographs that did more than convey the details of a dress or suit. With their brilliant colors, arresting compositions, and exotic locales, these images presented an idea of fashion as a conduit to a more vivid existence. *Harper's Bazaar* promoted not only clothes, but ideas.

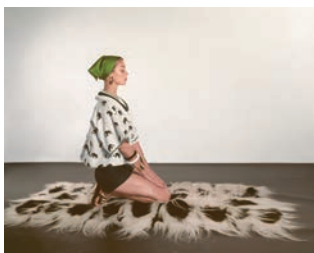
—Taylor Elyse Anderson,
Laura Donovan, Ilene Hacker,
and Nancy MacDonell, curators



Photograph by Louise Dahl-Wolfe © 1989 Center for Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents. Collection of The Museum at FIT. Model Bijou Barrington on location in Arizona. Featured in *Harper's Bazaar*, January 1942.



Photograph by Louise Dahl-Wolfe © 1989 Center for Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents. Diana Vreeland styling model Bijou Barrington on location in Arizona, October 1941.



Photograph by Louise Dahl-Wolfe © 1989 Center for Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents. Collection of The Museum at FIT. Featured in *Harper's Bazaar*, December 1952.



The Women of Harper's Bazaar: 1936–1958 has been organized by the graduate students in the Fashion Institute of Technology's MA program in Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice, with the support of Sarah Byrd and Ariele Elia.

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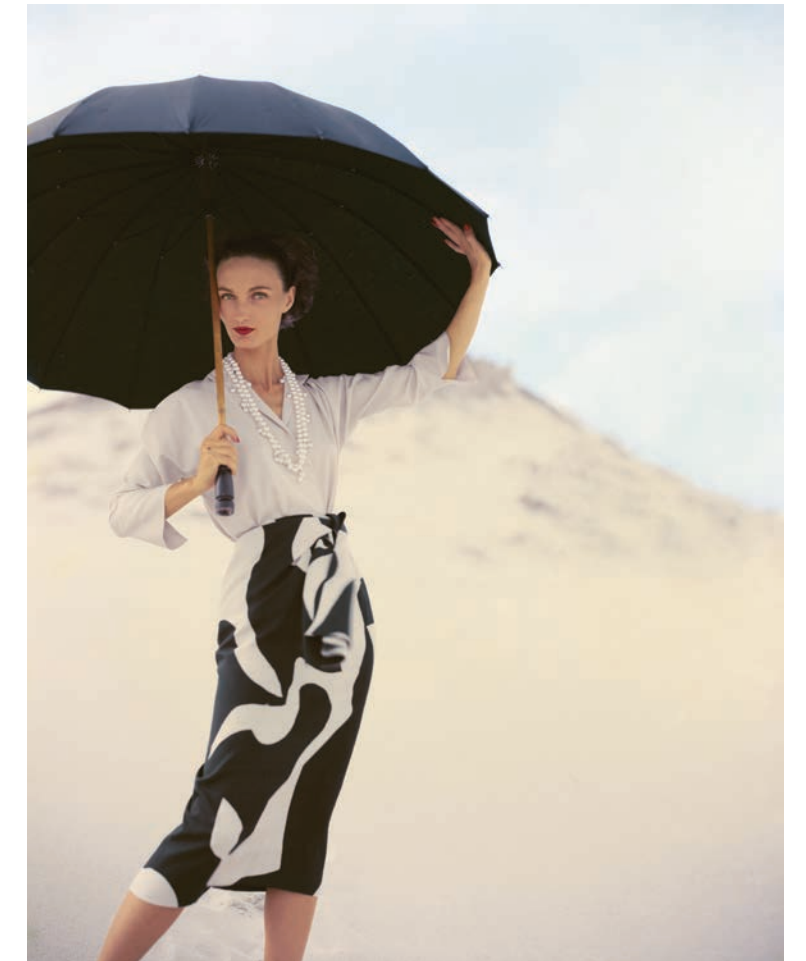
The Museum at FIT is open Tuesday-Friday, noon-8 pm, Saturday, 10 am-5 pm.
 For more information, visit fitnyc.edu/museum or call 212 217.4558

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Inside flap: Photograph by Louise Dahl-Wolfe © 1989 Center for Creative Photography, Arizona Board of Regents. Collection of The Museum at FIT. Featured in *Harper's Bazaar*, May 1946.

The Women of Harper's
BAZAAR
1936-1958



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