

# Scottish National Portrait Gallery – Viviane Sassen In and Out of Fashion



**VIVIANE SASSEN:**

**IN AND OUT OF FASHION**

Exhibition organised by Huis Marseille Museum, Amsterdam

19 October 2013 – 2 February 2014

Scottish National Portrait Gallery

[Nationalgalleries.org](http://Nationalgalleries.org)

Admission free

**One of the most exciting names in contemporary photography will bring her first retrospective exhibition to Edinburgh this autumn.** *In and Out of Fashion* highlights the work of the hugely acclaimed Dutch photographer Viviane Sassen, and will have its only UK showing at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery from 19 October 2013 until 2 February 2014. This exhibition is part of a continuing programme of exhibitions at the Portrait Gallery – including last year's stunning Jitka Hanzlova retrospective – which aim to capture the style and range of current international photography and share it with audiences in Edinburgh.

Sassen's highly distinctive work embraces both fine art and fashion. In 2007 she was awarded the Dutch equivalent of the Turner Prize, the Prix de Rome, for her colourful and dreamlike photographs of Africa (where she has worked regularly since 2002), while her campaigns for fashion houses Carven, Stella McCartney, Miu Miu and M-Missoni, and editorial commissions for magazines such as *Purple*, *i-D*, *Dazed & Confused* and *Pop* have transformed fashion photography in the last decade.

*In and Out of Fashion* is a survey of the best of Sassen's work in fashion from 1995 to 2012, bringing together around 50 photographic prints and vitrine displays, brimming with notes, plans and magazines, selected by the artist, as well as a specially designed installation, in which 200 images are projected onto a mirror in the centre of the exhibition.

The first and only showing of this retrospective in the UK will showcase Sassen's dynamic and daring approach to photography, producing images that explore shape, form and colour in innovative ways. Often obscuring the model's face and depicting the body as a sculptural form that is explored through abstraction, her photographs are bold and idiosyncratic.

Sassen initially studied fashion design and worked as a model, before studying photography from 1992 to 1997. In both areas of her work Sassen has developed a highly personal signature style: her imagery is challenging, flamboyant, formally inventive and occasionally surreal. In contrast to her art work, however, Sassen's fashion photography is made in collaboration, working with a large team of stylists, models and make-up artists. For her, fashion photography is like a 'laboratory', a domain in which she can work spontaneously and intuitively, assisted by a professional team, to perform an experiment.

Working initially for small, underground style magazines, Sassen found herself liberated from the conventions of more corporate fashion photography, and has continued to explore a very playful approach to the medium. The results are visually astonishing: Sassen's images are characterised by an expressive use of bold, ultra-bright colour, and her models often 'melt together' in contorted, intertwined poses, which make the photographs intriguing, mysterious and difficult to pin down.

*In and Out of Fashion* will feature the series *Nudes: A*

*Journey*, which includes selections of early work, made with Emmeline de Mooij, for independent magazines such as *Purple* and *Dazed & Confused*, in which the photographs resemble a record of performance art. For the *Roxane* series, Sassen created 36 portraits of Roxane Danset, the French fashion stylist, which explore a range of styles from the erotic to the surreal and are indicative of the collaborative nature of her work.

Alongside key images from Sassen's recent work for *The New York Times Magazine*, *Self Service*, *Acne*, *Levi's*, *Diesel* and *Louis Vuitton* will be another major body of work, *Foreplay*, in which the artist explores, in a series of almost abstract images, the moments before a fashion shoot begins, offering a fascinating insight into the spontaneous, creative way in which her vision emerges.

*In and Out of Fashion* is Sassen's first retrospective and comes to the Portrait Gallery from Huis Marseille Museum, Amsterdam. A recently published overview of Sassen's fashion work, also titled *In and Out of Fashion*, with essays by Nanda van den Berg and Charlotte Cotton, accompanies the exhibition, published by Prestel.

*In and Out of Fashion* is shown in the Robert Mapplethorpe Gallery at the Portrait Gallery. Named after the renowned American photographer, the Gallery is supported by a very generous donation from The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. This is being used over three years to produce innovative displays, exhibitions and research. Recent exhibitions have included *Edith Tudor-Hart: In the Shadow of Tyranny*, *Jitka Hanzlová* and *Man Ray Portraits*. The Gallery is the first purpose-built photography space of its kind in a major museum in Scotland.