At the upper levels of photographic education, fashion photography is too often thought of as unworthy of serious consideration, superficial and corrupted by style and commerce, despite its imaginative narrative, cultural relevance, playful subversion, and its profound influence on “fine art” photography of the past 30 years.

The MPS Fashion Photography program is a rigorous one-year intensive program for the technologically proficient photographer who wants to develop a more creative and original body of work through an immersion in the narrative, conceptual and cultural subtext of fashion photography, and with direct engagement with leading figures in fashion and fashion photography in New York City. The faculty consists of some of the most influential and innovative professionals in fashion photography, publishing and photographic criticism.

The MPS Fashion Photography program is premised with the understanding that the genre is a cultural matrix and an engagement with high and low culture that will help to inspire, engage and cultivate original work. The ideal candidate for the program will be fully versed in the technical tools and apparatus of photography and possess professional experience in fashion photography, seeking an immersion in critical thinking and radical invention in a relevant ideological framework.

The goal of the program is the cultivation of an individual sensibility, informed by history and shaped by cultural forces that will withstand the pressure for aesthetic and market compromise, and will profoundly influence and affect the future of the medium.
At the core of the program is a 30-week Critique course as well as the weekly Symposium. The Critique is a weekly gathering in which the students discuss and challenge each other’s work, guided by a faculty-moderator. It is a team effort: Two faculty-moderators take turns conducting the critiques throughout the semester. Symposium is a flexible format that acts as a framework for critiques with fashion photographers, creative directors, museum directors and fashion designers, and for field trips, lectures, readings and exhibitions, and various dialogues with industry professionals. An emphasis is placed on the synthesis of diverse and unexpected cultural information as pictorial inspiration.

Video and its increasing importance in fashion will be central to the program, and what constitutes fashion video will be developed and defined and shaped. The influence of the Internet, social networking, and transformations in media and publishing will be part of the conversation, and each student will be expected to complete a fully realized video piece.

One-semester courses will be held on fashion photography topics such as history, logistics, career development, digital practice, narrative and cinema.

Degree candidates must successfully complete 30 credits, including all required courses, earn a cumulative GPA of higher than 3.0, and create an original, challenging and provocative portfolio of images.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE
The annual SVA MPS Fashion Photography Artist in Residence position names an individual fashion photographer or director, whose work contributes to the ongoing definition of the genre, and provides a framework for involvement with the graduate students. The work of the Artist in Residence represents creativity, innovation and dedication to the evolving genre of fashion imagery. The recipient of the Artist in Residence award will work with the students throughout the school year as well as presenting a lecture on his or her work at the Visual Arts Gallery. Previous Artists in Residence include director Gordon Von Steiner and photographer Erik Madigan Heck.

Ho Chien Chen, MPS 2017.

About the Program
Getting on the Gallery Wall: Two Students Get an Exciting Opportunity for Exposure

Tamara Hansen and Marion Aguas are two of 16 students in the MPS Fashion Photography program who were chosen for a unique opportunity to have their work on display for several months at the Fast Retailing Innovation Center in Manhattan’s fashionable Meatpacking District.
The opportunity came about by a collaboration between the MPS program, Red Hook Labs and Fast Retailing. Red Hooks Labs is a photo studio, gallery and school, whose nonprofit mission is to educate teens and young adults in photography and associated industries and connect them to internship and job opportunities. Fast Retailing is the parent company of fashion brands Theory, Helmut Lang and Uniqlo.

The MPS Fashion Photography students were given an assignment to create a series of photographs inspired by water, the first of four installations interpreting the elements: water, air, fire and earth. The shoots took place at Red Hook Labs, utilizing young adults and teens in the Labs’ educational program as their assistants for the day. We talked to Tamara and Marion about their experiences.

Marion was immediately excited with the theme of the assignment: “I have a strong connection with water and its energy, being a water sign myself. My parents even joked about how it was meant to be because of my last name: Aguas.” How did they approach the theme? Marion: “I watched anything I could about things related to water—nature documentaries, cartoons, YouTube videos of people scuba diving—all my spare time was just consuming all I could related to water imagery.” Tamara said her concept developed over time, “I created different mood boards, talked with the faculty about those, edited and reviewed them again.”

They talk about their experience shooting with the Red Hook Labs’ students. Tamara: “They helped us set up the lighting equipment, prepare the props, and clean and reset for
Marion adds: “It was so great! I’ve never had so many assistants on set! And enthusiastic ones! It was also reassuring that they were familiar with Red Hook Labs, with the equipment room and the facilities available, since they had been taking classes there. So I was definitely comforted having knowledgeable people on my team.”

How did they feel when they saw their images displayed at the exhibition? Marion: “The turnaround for the pictures was very fast—from the time we shot to retouching to printing. It was a relief to accomplish a large task, and very rewarding to see something I worked on printed in such large dimensions and hung in a frame after all the work that had gone into it.” Tamara: “It was the first time that my photos were exhibited in New York. It was exciting and very powerful to see the images hanging at the Fast Retailing headquarters.” Marion agreed, “It was just purely celebratory. It was awesome!”

Marion and Tamara graduated from the program in spring 2017. What’s next? Tamara, a native of Germany, will be working in the city for several months before returning to Europe: “I’m working at the Right Eye in Union Square. It’s an agency that represents cinematographers and directors.” And for Marion? “I’m hoping to assist fashion photographers—hopefully find someone who can be my mentor. I still have a lot to learn, and I would love to be learning on-set now that I’m done with the classroom. I’m definitely going to be shooting more—a lot more. The next big thing coming up is a gallery show at Milk Studios in January that I will be participating in, along with my other recently graduated classmates.”

Tamara Hansen, MPS 2017.
The faculty and guest lecturers include some of the most creative and influential professionals in the industry.”

—Barry Sutton, director of operations
Course Offerings

A sample of our course descriptions follows. All course descriptions can be found online at: sva.edu/mpsfashionphoto/curriculum.

CONCEPT AND NARRATIVE
Similar to cinema, fashion photography is a collaborative medium, and its success lies in the photographer’s ability to work with a crew of individuals to produce the desired image. This course will address the logistics of that effort, and emphasize the importance of creative collaboration. Each student, based on the student’s sensibility and aesthetic, will form a creative team from the ranks of the professional photographic community.

FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY TODAY
The course will use as its premise the notion that the fashion photographer has taken on a role in culture that is unique among other photographers and visual artists in general. By looking at major talents of the very late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, we will see how the idea of a fashion photographer has evolved into a vastly more significant force than in previous eras. Fashion photographers have become celebrities in themselves and beyond just creatively recording trends in fashion, they are often times helping to drive the discourse. Using a geographical jumping off point, topics such as Surreal Los Angeles—Ritts and Rolston, London thru Knight and Day, and Steven Meisel’s New York will be explored. Students will be expected to complete readings on numerous topics as well as completing assignments developed to help focus their creative vision. There will be guest lectures from both the editorial and fine art fields and a possible field trip.

FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY CRITIQUE I AND II
At the conceptual core of the program is the weekly discussion of each participant’s images, followed by a rigorous and thorough analysis of those works. As an intimacy with one another’s work and objectives develops, the work becomes refined through being challenged. A vigorous participation in the conversation about each person’s work, and a balance of generosity and useful criticism is expected.

Anushila Shaw, MPS 2017.
HISTORY OF FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY

This historical survey class covers the beginning and development of fashion photography, including its inception as society reportage; its early flowering alongside Pictorialism, Surrealism and Modernism in the 1920s and 30s; creative developments during the war and the postwar era when the American fashion industry emerged; the great social and stylistic changes of the 60s and 70s, especially in American and British photography; the influence of social liberalization on fashion imagery; the growth and globalization of the fashion image; and the impact of digital photography, the Internet and Photoshop from the 90s to the present.

SEMINAR

With two faculty members working with students as a project team on a rotating basis, this course will support the efforts of each student’s collaborative projects in achieving an original and coherent set of images.

VIDEO AND FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY I AND II

Partly as a result of the rapid transformations in media and publishing, and the influence of the Internet, fashion video has become increasingly important and the subject of much speculation. As a fashion venue, it increases narrative and contributes sound, music and motion. This course will focus on the production of a video short. Sessions will include digital lab time with editing instruction.

SYMPOSIUM I AND II

Throughout the year of study, Symposium acts as a weekly gathering of program participants for an array of activities: guest lectures and guest critiques, trips to museum and gallery exhibitions. The emphasis will be on bringing a broad range of cultural ideas to the conversation, and taking advantage of all the resources that New York offers.

Amanda Picotte, MPS 2017.
Alumni

Mikey Asanin
mikeyasanin.com

Boom Boom Bryan
boomboombryan.com

Dario Calmese
dariocalmese.com

Bon Duke
bonduke.com

Michael Groeger
artinaction.de

Ina Jang
inaphotography.com

Paul Jung
pauljung.co.uk

Peter Ash Lee
peterashlee.com

Wenjun Liang
wenjunliang.com

Ricardo Rivera
ricardo-rivera.com

Tory Rust
toryrust.com

Matin Zad
matinzad.com

Barry Sutton
director of operations, MPS Fashion Photography, SVA

Vince Aletti
photography critic, The New Yorker; curator

Alix Browne
deputy style editor, W Magazine

Bon Duke
photographer, director

Ziggy Le Vin
executive producer, film agent, Art + Commerce/IMG Worldwide

Lyle Rexer
writer; critic; curator; columnist, Photograph Magazine

Rory Satran
editorial director, i-D magazine, US

Ivan Shaw
photography director, Vogue

Carol Squiers
writer; editor; curator, International Center of Photography

To get an up-to-date faculty list and learn more about the faculty, visit sva.edu/mpsfashionphoto/faculty.

Lecturers

Anne Christensen
stylist

Grace Coddington
American Vogue

Petra Collins
photographer

Jessica Craig-Martin
photographer

Tracy Doyle
creative director

Mark Fina
executive creative director, Spring Studio

Alex Galan
Great Bowery

Nathaniel Kilcer
art director, Bruce Weber/ Little Bear Press

Matthew Leifheit
photographer, writer

Glen Luchford
photographer

Quynh Mai
Moving Image & Content

Olivia Bee
photographer

Edward Brachfield
producer

Zoe Bruns
Harper’s Bazaar

Caroline Murphy
agent, MAP

Robert Nethery
photographer

Catherine Newell-Hanson
stylist

Glenn O’Brien
writer, creative director

Justin O’Neil
GQ

Randall Peacock
production, set design

Phyllis Posnick
American Vogue

Bob Recine
hair stylist

Reed & Rader
directors

Emmett Shine
founder/CEO, Gin Lane

Leslie Simitch
VP, Trunk Archive

Mario Sorrenti
photographer

Sølve Sundsbø
photographer

Lindsay Thompson
senior agent

Tim Walker
photographer

Jack Webb
cinematographer

Below is just a sample of guest lecturers who have spoken with our students.
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS
For detailed instructions, visit: sva.edu/grad/howtoapply
Online Application and $80 Application Fee: sva.edu/apply

- Statement of Intent/Personal Statement
- Résumé
- Letters of Recommendation
- Official College Transcript

Some applicants may be required to submit the following:
- Proof of English Proficiency
- Copy of Permanent Residency Card
- Declaration of Finances
- Verification of Finances
- Foreign Transcript Evaluation

DEPARTMENTAL REQUIREMENTS
For specific guidelines about these requirements, visit: sva.edu/grad/deptreq

- Portfolio—accepted at svagrad.slideroom.com
- Writing Sample (Essay)
- Interview

DEADLINES
For information on application deadlines, visit: sva.edu/grad/timeline

IMPORTANT LINKS
- FAQ: sva.edu/grad/faq
- International students: sva.edu/grad/intl
- Tuition and fees: sva.edu/tuition
- Visit SVA: sva.edu/grad/visit

Ho Chien Chen, MPS 2017.
MPS Fashion Photography gave me the support and confidence to push beyond what would have been possible outside the program.”

— Paul Jung, MPS 2013
School of Visual Arts

209 East 23rd Street, NYC
sva.edu/grad