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Be Fabulous (Or Else)

Roxanne Lowit discusses her new exhibition of photos from behind-the-fashion-scene.

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The legendary fashion and celebrity photographer Roxanne Lowit found her calling in the late '70s when her friend, the late fashion illustrator Antonio Lopez, gave her an Instamatic 110 camera. Soon after, Lowit, who had been working as a textile designer, established the art of backstage photography when she became one of the first to document the hectic scene behind

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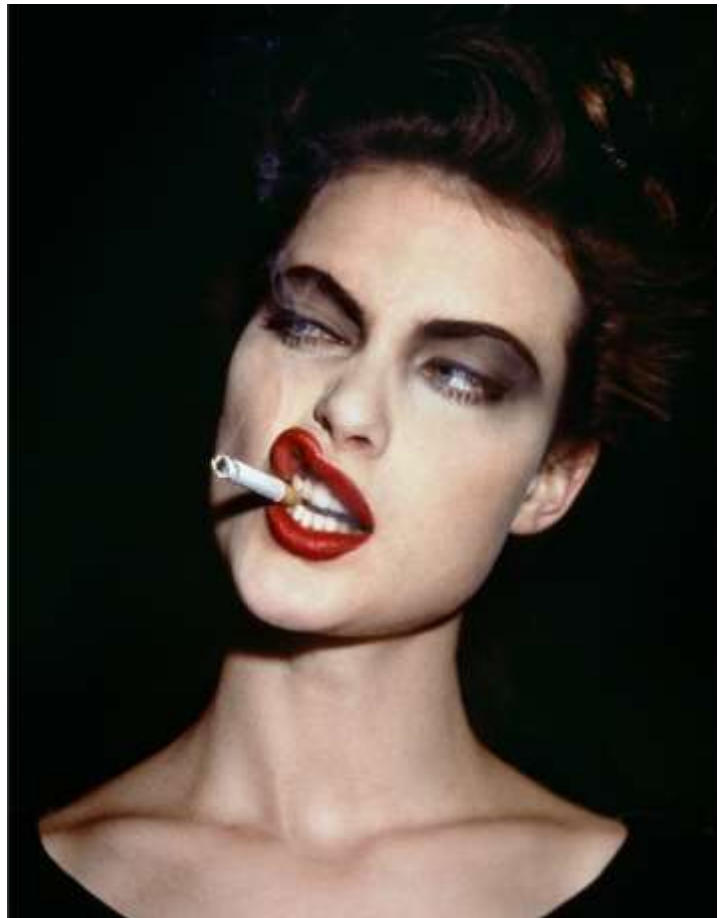
the scene at a Halston show. “I didn’t look like a photographer,” recalled Lowit. “Photographers had these big safari jackets on with huge cameras and lenses hanging off them, and I was much thinner, and wore dresses then and color, and was quite stylish.”

Lowit would go on to capture the fashion world at close range, from the Bacchanalian nights when Yves Saint Laurent and Karl Lagerfeld ruled the Paris fashion scene — “People would dance all night and think they’d live forever,” she remembered — to the height of supermodel stardom in the ‘90s to John Galliano’s Dior couture shows in the aughts to the drag queen scene of the twenty-tens. Now, her photos from the last four decades are the subject of the exhibition “Roxanne Lowit: Be Fabulous,” on view through January 18, 2014, at Steven Kasher Gallery in New York.

In one iconic image from 1990, supermodels Christy Turlington, Linda Evangelista, and Naomi Campbell fool around in a bathtub at the Ritz in Paris. “I don’t know how they got in there, if they got in themselves, or if I encouraged it, or what,” said Lowit. “They were drinking their champagne in the bathtub, cause that makes a good picture. Their feet were going up, and they were laughing.”

Another photo from 1979 captures a New Year’s Eve dinner in New York at Laurent with Salvador Dalí. Lowit didn’t believe that Dalí would actually be there. “Lo and behold, there was Dalí, and he saw me with my camera, so he just took [a guest’s] hand and kissed it for me,” said Lowit. “He performed for the camera.”

Lowit says that secret to her success is having patience to wait for the perfect moment and being in the right place at the right time. “There were just so many things that were amazing, that I was lucky enough to walk through those different worlds,” said Lowit. “It was incredible that I photographed them.”



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"Roxanne Lowit: Be Fabulous" is on view at Steven Kasher Gallery, 521 West 23rd Street, New York, through January 18.