

Gösta Peterson, Photographs 1960s-1970s @Deborah Bell

By [Loring Knoblach](https://collectordaily.com/author/loring-knoblach/) / In [Galleries](https://collectordaily.com/category/galleries/) / June 5, 2023

JTF (just the facts): A total of 34 black-and-white and color photographs, variously framed and matted, and hung against white walls in the main gallery space and in the rear of the gallery.

The following works are included in the show:

- 7 gelatin silver prints, 1966/2006, 1966/2011, 1967/2006, 1971/2011, on 16×20 inch paper (or the reverse)
- 1 gelatin silver print, 1964/2011, on 17×16 inch paper
- 7 gelatin silver prints, 1966/2005, 1967/2005, 1971/2011, 1971/after, 1972/after, 1978/after, on 14×11 inch paper (or the reverse)
- 1 gelatin silver print, 1964, on 16×20 inch paper
- 1 gelatin silver print, 1965, on 14×11 inch paper
- 1 gelatin silver print, early 1960s, on 13×11 inch paper mounted on thin card
- 3 gelatin silver prints, 1965, c1965, 1967, on 10×8 inch paper
- 1 archival inkjet print, 1970/2014, on 22×16 inch paper
- 11 archival inkjet prints, 1964/2014, 1965/2014, 1967/2014, 1968/2014, 1971/2014, 1972/2014, 1979/2014, on 17×11, 17×14 inch paper (or the reverse)
- 1 archival inkjet print, 1967/2014, on 14×11 inch paper
- 2 vitrines with books, magazines, additional prints

No edition information was provided. (Installation shots below.)



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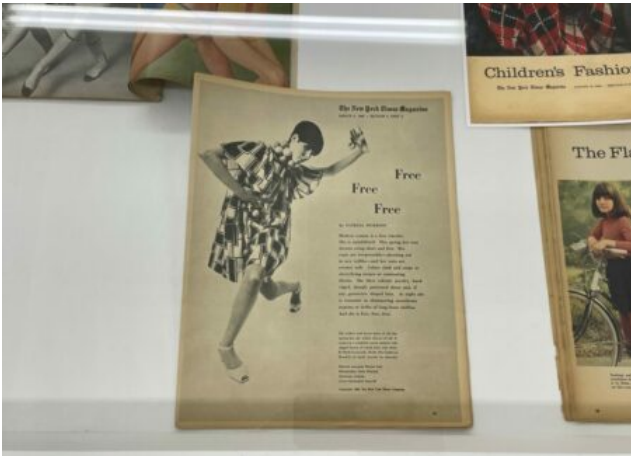
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Comments/Context: Coming out of the 1950s and the classically elegant images of Irving Penn and Richard Avedon, fashion photographers of the 1960s (and on into the 1970s) brought more youthful experimentation into the genre. Many of those working during this period moved out of the quiet confines of the studio and into the bustle of the streets, infusing their pictures with a new sense of freshness and freedom that matched the cultural mood of that moment. William Klein is perhaps best known for channeling this urban energy (and putting his models on rooftops, on crosswalks, and in the midst of traffic), but given the dynamic visual evidence presented in this show, the Swedish-American photographer Gösta Peterson deserves to be better remembered for his similarly bold creations during those transformative years.

Peterson seems to have been consistently looking for something visually unconventional, and depending on the assignment, he variously found it in unlikely locations, unknown models, innovative camera angles, and experimental techniques. His main clients during that time were *Mademoiselle*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *The New York Times Magazine* (among others), and most of the images on view here (in both black-and-white and color) feel

surprisingly brash for editorial work for such esteemed names. Some of this comes from the clothes themselves and their mod lines and space age designs, but Peterson's amplifying boldness comes through again and again, with compositions deliberately pushed away from conventional fashion aesthetics and tropes.

Many of Peterson's most memorable images are built on top of the provocation of an unexpected location for a fashion shoot. He captures models posing atop rusty pods near the ocean, striding past industrial factories, standing in the dirt furrows of a farm field, and shivering in the dunes near the beach, each image quietly pushing on the idea of a "beautiful" or fun-filled setting. Other images similarly upend expected behaviors, from boy scouts wearing groovy glasses and models trying not to fall on roller skates to a "say ah" doctor's office scene interrupted by a light fixture and a lunging model flanked by tall weeds and a shiny watertower.

Perhaps Peterson was simply responding to the cues offered by the fashions he was photographing, but plenty of his compositions from these years turn on echoes of lines and geometries. He uses a large circular black hat as a contrast to the angles of white walls and architectural features in one picture from 1966, and matches the stripes on bathing suits with the fluted columns, brickwork, and concrete walls in the background of another from a year later. In still other pictures, Peterson uses curved staircases as a foil for stretchy dresses and angular poses, and arranges a pair of models so that their outstretched stepping legs make synchronized interlocking lines. He also experiments with underneath camera angles to create visual drama, his low angle accenting the grid patterns on nylons and gathering three scarfed heads into a tight nearly-silhouetted grouping.

One of Peterson's less known claims to fame is that he was the photographer on Twiggy's first modeling assignment in 1967. His images from that shoot capture the spark of her deadpan baby doll allure, with a jaunty black hat used to frame her large eyes. He then merged an up close portrait of her face with a full body portrait that amplified the angles of her thin frame, creating an almost spooky doubled setup that looks straight at the viewer with an unwavering stare. This comfort with photographic experimentation also comes through in two images from 1966, where Peterson used a long exposure and a strobe light to create fan-like patterns of light that curve and surround his models (one of whom is wearing an extravagant feathered hat by Halston.)

Vitrines can sometimes feel like an afterthought of supporting or secondary material in gallery and museum shows, but a selection of Peterson's images made for advertisements for Henri Bendel are worth searching out here. Peterson's wife Patricia was an executive for the department store, and their collaborations ran in *The New York Times* every Sunday for almost a decade (from the late 1970s to the mid 1980s). The consistent combination of a boldly unexpected photograph, the store's recognizable logo, and some small ad copy led to plenty of creative outcomes that fit well with Bendel's elegantly fashion-forward brand.

As seen in this succinct sampler, Peterson's photographs have a splash of flair and personality that sets them apart from more conventional fashion photographs. That embrace of looser freedom was a good match for those publications that wanted to take more risks and cut against predictable approaches, and for the larger counter-cultural mood of the times. These photographs have aged well, and still feel infused with energy and verve; hopefully this small survey will help bring Peterson's name back into the conversation. A playful self portrait included in the show finds him laughingly upended and on his back at the beach, and perhaps that willingness to flip things on their head is what has given his photographs their durable charge.

Collector's POV: The prints in this show are priced between \$9000 and \$25000, with one print NFS. Peterson's work has little consistent secondary market history, so gallery retail likely remains the best option for those collectors interested in following up.

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JTF (just the facts): Published in 2022 by Familia Editions ([here](#)). Softcover (23.5 x 31 cm), 128 pages, with 114 color photographs. In an edition of 500 copies. Edit and ... [Read on.](https://collectordaily.com/marcos-chaves-bem-vindo-ao-rio-welcome-to-nyc/) (<https://collectordaily.com/marcos-chaves-bem-vindo-ao-rio-welcome-to-nyc/>)

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