





Cover Guy

Patrick Demarchelier

BY JILL JOHNSON—"It's a nice magazine actually—it's very nice," enthuses Patrick Demarchelier as he peruses the new issue of *Tear Sheet*. We're sitting on a simple black couch in his unpretentious studio in Chelsea. Photo equipment is strewn about and the walls are decorated haphazardly with an assortment of photos—a *Harper's Bazaar* cover featuring Linda Evangelista, a portrait of Lady Diana—and paintings—some without frames, many askew—which invite the viewer to relax and forget they are sitting in the workplace of one of the greatest photographers of our time. The receptionist, who's dressed in jeans and resembles Gwyneth Paltrow, offers me water—which arrives in a paper cup. Patrick, who is dressed in a blue button-down shirt, jeans, and sneakers, juggles phone calls on the studio line and his cell phone, always speaking in an amiable tone, usually in his native French, sometimes in English with a heavy French accent. He apologizes for keeping me waiting, but I am happy for the time to absorb the surroundings in which the famous faces of Christy Turlington, Cindy Crawford, Gisele Bundchen, Madonna, Bruce Springsteen, Elton John, Robert De Niro, Tom Cruise, Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan, Julia Roberts, Hillary Clinton...have been captured for posterity. Demarchelier is the master of focusing in on the model in motion, and he is also the master of revealing the real person behind the celebrity guise. As I click on my recorder and commence the interview, Mr. Demarchelier gives me his full attention, even the full attention of the room; he says to his assistants, who are busy packing equipment for the day's shoot, "Don't make too much noise now; we're talking."

JJ: You're shooting something today?

PD: Yes, today we're shooting for *Cosmopolitan*, then tomorrow [*Harper's*] *Bazaar*, then [the day] after tomorrow *Bazaar*. And last week we shot the Louis Vuitton campaign, with Karolina Kurkova...[hesitating, like a man who has shot thousands of models and can't keep them straight] Colette, and Carmen Maria. (Pointing at my new nifty digital recorder) What is that?

JJ: It's a digital recorder.

PD: It's recording?

JJ: Yes! Digital, it's great.

PD: (Taking the tiny recorder in the palm of his hand) Yes, it's so cute. It's fantastique! So light; it's like a spy [gadget].

JJ: OK, let's start by going back a few decades. Tell us what your first job was as a photographer?

PD: First job...it's not really a first job; it's the first small steps. At the beginning I wasn't doing fashion. I was doing portraits. I went to fashion by accident actually. I grew up in Normandy and (at the age of 20) I went to Paris, where I tried to find a job at a photo store. Someone gave me a list of people I should see and the first name on the list was a modeling school/agency (Paris Planning model agency). I went there and they hired me right away. Most of the girls couldn't really be models. They [were at the school] to learn how to do their hair and makeup, and we'd do a few pictures for the book. And this is how I came to the modeling/fashion world.

JJ: That was in the 60s?

PD: Yeah, '65 or so.

JJ: How did you train for fashion photography; did you assist?

PD: Yes, I worked for the modeling school for one year and then I assisted for about six months. I assisted Hans Feurer.

JJ: Which photographers did you admire when you started?

PD: Avedon, Penn.

JJ: What was your first big job?

PD: There wasn't really a first big job, because when you're young and just starting, every job is big.

JJ: You've been shooting fashion for four decades. Can you talk through the changes that you've seen in fashion photography through your career?

PD: Fashion photography changes like the clothes. You know, the dress goes longer, longer, then shorter, shorter, and then longer again. The pictures go from more moody pictures to more happy pictures and then back to moody again. The biggest change I've seen is probably in the last five years, with digital coming out and computer retouching.

JJ: Do you think that is changing the art of photography?

PD: It's different than pure photography. You can take the photos and then you can add what you want after. It's not really photography anymore; it's more like a computer photography.

JJ: Do you think it's an improvement?

PD: Yes, everything's an improvement. It's interesting. You open the door to a lot of photographers who couldn't really work before.

JJ: You think that's a good thing?

PD: Yes! You have to go with the times.

JJ: When did you start shooting for *Vogue* and how did you get your foot in the door?

PD: When I came to New York, first I started to work with *Glamour* magazine and *Seventeen* magazine, and then *Mademoiselle*. I worked for *Mademoiselle* for a couple of months, and then *American Vogue* called me, and I started to work for them.

JJ: They called you? That's nice!

PD: Yes, and so I worked for them for about three years or so. Then I stopped working for them and worked more for *British Vogue*,

French Vogue, *Italian Vogue*, and then they called me back a year later and I went back to *American Vogue* for another ten years.

JJ: I noticed on your website (www.demarchelier.net) that you've done a few covers for them.

PD: Right, for *Vogue*, *Mademoiselle*, *Glamour* sometimes, and *GQ*.

JJ: When did you start working for *Harper's Bazaar*?

PD: *Bazaar*, I started about eight years ago, right? *Bazaar* was very bad for a while, then I got a call from Liz Tilberis at *British Vogue* about re-doing *Harper's Bazaar*. I said no, but she called me again and again. And finally I said, "OK, if you do a team I like." I tell her Fabien Baron, and I take Peter Lindbergh with me, and I want to take Steven Meisel too. At the last minute Steven Meisel got a contract for *Vogue*, and I got pissed off. So we go to *Bazaar* and I'm still there now. I have a contract with *Bazaar*, which is doing very well now, and I'm very happy to be working with Kate Betts (editor-in-chief) and Howard Martinez (creative director)—they're great.

JJ: Who do you consider to be the first supermodel?

PD: Supermodels always existed. There was Twiggy, [Jean] Shrimpton... Magazines make a mistake now in not pushing for supermodels. They need star girls to sell the magazines. So now without star models, they put actors on magazines.

JJ: If you could freeze time and bring together four models from any era and make them all 25 years old and shoot them together, who would you choose?

PD: Linda, Twiggy, Shrimpton, uhhh, and one more...Cindy maybe.

JJ: And what makes a supermodel in your eyes?

PD: You create the girl. A supermodel is somebody in demand. So you have to have a personality and imagination, and you have to love your work. Kate Moss. Kate Moss instead of Cindy. Cindy was a great career model—she made a lot of money. Kate is more editorial.

JJ: Who do you think is really up and coming right now?

PD: Now the girls go up and down so quickly. There are more girls than ever and there are a lot of magazines, so it's more political for girls to make it. Now a girl may do every campaign for one year and the next year you don't see her anymore. There's a focus on one or two girls for a year and then they go down again. The best girl who has reached the top of the top lately is Gisele.

JJ: Do you think the magazines and designers are trying to keep the girls from reaching that level, to help control rates?

PD: Yes, the problem is the girl gets to the top and she gets too expensive, so a lot of designers are tired of paying these girls such high fees for fashion shows, no? If you have one campaign you can pay, but if you have ten girls doing a show, it gets expensive.

JJ: What's most important to you when you look through your lens: lines, light, motion?

PD: All of them, but for me, mostly motion.

JJ: Do you draw or paint?

PD: No, but I collect paintings.

JJ: You've shot hundreds of celebrities, musicians, politicians, royalty—can you name a few that stand out in your mind?

PD: A lot of people are interesting, but when I photograph people I don't really look at who they are. I focus on the personality; I don't





really care if they are famous.

JJ: Was anyone surprisingly different from what you expected?

PD: No, because when people come to a photographer, they want to show themselves in a good way and in a good mood, so I maybe don't see the true personality.

JJ: You are the master of putting people at ease. Is there a trick to that?

PD: I like to photograph people the way they are; I don't like to change them. So to do that, you have to make people relax. When people don't try and they just relax—that's when you get the best picture. If you try too much, or are nervous and not confident, you're not going to look good in the picture.

JJ: Who would you like to shoot that you haven't yet?

PD: Uhh, maybe you?

JJ: Any time you want—that certainly would be a huge boost to my dwindling modeling career!

PD: Which agency do you work for?

JJ: New York Model Management, but mostly I focus on the magazine now.

PD: That's good, that's good. It's more interesting.

JJ: Yes, it's nice to make that transition from one side of the casting table to the other. It's probably nice for you to move away from fashion sometimes, and you've taken some incredible photos of wild animals. Which are easier to shoot: models or animals?

PD: Animals, because they're natural. Last year I had a big show in the museum of modern art in Milano with about 400 pictures. I was asked which portrait I liked the best, and I said Puffy—that's my dog on the poster (pointing to the wall in the entranceway, and, like a proud father, handing me a postcard with fluffy Puffy on the front).

JJ: He's adorable! But I suppose people are surprised you pick him over Linda, Cindy, Gisele.... What are you focusing on now?

PD: I do a lot of things: fashion, advertising, portraits, and probably in two or three years I'll do another book and another show.

JJ: In the future will you continue to do all kinds of photography?

PD: Yes, I like photography in general. I don't want to focus on only one thing.

JJ: What type of camera do you use?

PD: I use a lot of cameras: Polaroid, Nikon, Pentax, [ten or fifteen different kinds]....

JJ: Film?

PD: Mostly Kodak, and probably in the next two years we'll go to digital. Digital is getting more and more interesting because the quality is getting better and better.

JJ: OK, now for some fun questions. What have been the best moments of your life?

PD: On vacation with my kids and my wife—we went to Africa on a safari, and it was great. And the best days of your life are when your kids are born, so I have three kids, so three days!

JJ: Do you have boys and girls?

PD: Three boys.

JJ: How old are they?

PD: 23, 19, and 16.

JJ: Are any of them following in your footsteps with photography?

PD: Not so far, no. My oldest son is a broker at Morgan Stanley, and the other two are in school.

JJ: Do they like to hang around when you are shooting supermodels?

PD: No, they never come here. It's funny.

JJ: I would think they'd be selling tickets to their friends at school! And your wife, how did you meet her?

PD: She was a model actually.

JJ: Of course. What is her name?

PD: Mia. We've been married for 25 years.

JJ: Congratulations!

PD: And the last best day we had was when we bought our dog—the best buy we made in our lives, I always say!

JJ: What kind of dog is Puffy?

PD: A dachshund.

JJ: Is there any day you would erase? Any disaster job?

PD: I did a job for *Glamour* a long time ago—a trip—and when we came back the lab ruined the film. So they give you new film, but that doesn't do much for the client!

JJ: If you could create your dream day, what would it be like?

PD: Every day is a dream day.

JJ: What do you do in your leisure time?

PD: I like sailing. I take my family on the sailboat, and I go racing.

JJ: Where do you sail?

PD: Mostly Long Island.

JJ: Do you have a place in the Hamptons?

PD: Yes.

JJ: Do you ever plan to retire?

PD: I hate the term retire—it's so awful! No, what is next after that? It's terrible. If you like what you're doing, you should do it all your life, no?

JJ: Yes, I think it keeps you young. What about your favorite place in the world?

PD: Uhhh, the world is big—there are beautiful places everywhere. You have to make a choice, which is difficult. I like France, Italy, Spain...but I decided to live in New York. I like New York.

JJ: Your favorite restaurant in New York?

PD: Jean Georges, and I go to Cipriani for lunch sometimes. Da Silvano—I go in the summer and sit outside. And we love sushi; we love Nobu.

JJ: Your favorite all-time photo. Puffy, right?

PD: Yes, Puffy.

JJ: Do you have any advice for aspiring photographers?

PD: The best thing to do is to work a lot, and don't listen too much to what other people say—believe in yourself. Work, test, take pictures—you learn by working.

JJ: Advice for aspiring models?

PD: Same thing, work a lot, test, see a lot of people. Take care of yourself—don't go to [clubs] too much, don't take drugs! And hopefully, with some luck, you'll get some big jobs.

JJ: Three words that describe Patrick Demarchelier, the person?

PD: It's tough to describe yourself; can you do that for me?

JJ: OK: gracious, good-natured, genuine. Thanks Patrick!