



Roselyne in Arcangues

Helmut Newton's risqué style was singularly consistent throughout his long career. As Anna Wintour, of American 'Vogue', said: 'Fashion would change, but Helmut's vision didn't.' His set-pieces of predatory women in luxurious surroundings played out a range of stylish sexual fantasies and defined the language of 'porno-chic'. Born in Berlin in 1920, Newton was fascinated by the contrast between his staid bourgeois upbringing and the decadent Berlin nightlife. His first photographs, taken when he was 12 in the Berlin Underground, were inspired by Brassai's night-shots of 'Secret Paris'. At 16 he was apprenticed to the Berlin portrait and fashion photographer Yva (Else Simon), but was forced to flee Nazi Germany. He arrived in Australia in 1940 and established a Melbourne studio in 1946. He took a contract with British 'Vogue' in 1957, but languished amid the inhibited English attitude to sex.

It was with the risk-taking French 'Vogue' that Newton developed his signature style. His best work from this time is included in 'Private property'. Consisting of three suites of 15 photographs each, 'Private property' is a mixture of fashion, portraits and erotica from 1972 to 1983. 'Roselyne in Arcangues' was shot at Château Arcangues for French 'Vogue'. The Amazonian Roselyne participates in the archetypal Newton fantasy of female exhibitionism and male voyeurism, as does 'Woman being filmed, Paris' 1980 (AGNSW collection).

Newton has said: 'I didn't realise until 1974, when Philippe Garnier of Sotheby's pointed it out to me, that I was the portraitist of the high bourgeoisie ... It was like a jolt – that all that leather stuff, the whips, what is called my sexist world, were the keys to unlock the Paris 16th arrondissement apartment, the environment of the very rich.' 1

1. Blonsky M 1990, 'Helmut Newton: private property', Schirmer/Mosel, Munich p 12

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