



PRESS RELEASE

# AZZEDINE ALAÏA, ARTHUR ELGORT. Freedom.

Curated and directed by Carla Sozzani and Olivier Saillard

**Exhibition from the 23th of January until the 20th of August 2023**

Open every day from 11 am to 7 pm

Full Price: 10€ - Reduced price: 3€

Métro : Hôtel de Ville

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Together, Azzedine Alaïa and Arthur Elgort shaped the freedom of the 80s. At the same time as the fashion designer saw his feminine ideal embodied in the street and by the ever-increasing number of clients, the photographer left the studios, took over the movement and the cities as a natural and new setting. Both actively contributed to renewing the representation of the now assertive, determined, independent woman.

The exhibition presented at the Azzedine Alaïa Foundation compares timeless photographs essential to the designer's iconography, as well as more confidential shots, with Alaïa's most iconic clothes. This osmosis consists of a unique exhibition in Paris dedicated to photography and fashion, whose revival was orchestrated by Alaïa and Elgort.

Playfulness, intuition, and spontaneity were at work here. The future showed that this unbridled game would mark a new chapter in fashion photography, demystifying couture creations to bring them within everyone's reach.

Arthur Elgort was born in New York. Azzedine Alaïa in Tunis. Both hoped that the practise of official art would guide their destiny. Elgort aspired to become a painter and enrolled at Hunter College. Alaïa learned the techniques of sculpture at the School of Fine Arts in Tunis.

Elgort did not feel fulfilled in the discipline he had adopted. Similarly, Azzedine refused to become a second-rate sculptor. While dressmaking work for a select clientele allowed him to finance his studies, the clothes he made built him a reputation as a budding designer whose virtuosity was acknowledged. Alaïa took the risky decision of going to Paris and, in the mid-1950s. His story began.

A similar story characterised the early career of Arthur Elgort. His artistic ambitions deviated when, in the 1960s, he went to a camera shop. He bought a Polaroid camera and learned how to use it, exploring his environment, showing his pictures to his teachers, and abandoning the past. It became clear that his future layed in lenses, dark rooms, and photographic papers. He would be a photographer.

The way they evolved in their discipline in exile was different, however.

While he was preparing to sit behind the gleaming sewing machines at the great Paris maisons, Alaïa's destiny led him to become a mysterious and sought-after private couturier. Simone Zehrfuss, Louise de Vimorin, the Comtesse de Blégiers, Arletty commissioned bespoke garments from him. The women who tracked him down and recommended him gave him a greater understanding of the body and allowed him to perfect his technique. They would be his "school", until Thierry Mugler, his leading admirer, persuaded him to become a fully-fledged fashion designer.



Elgort swapped his Polaroid for a Nikon. He developed a true passion for all types of new and vintage cameras whose techniques and unique features he appreciated. He became a master of the camera. The chief editor of Vogue, Alexander Liberman, saw a few photographs by the newcomer and encouraged him then introduced him to the editors of his illustrious magazine. He did his early shoots in collaboration with Polly Allen Mellen and Grace Coddington.

Within a year he became famous.

The paths of Azzedine and Arthur obviously ended up crossing in Paris. As they worked together on magazine shoots, Elgort and Alaïa shared a dislike for superfluous sets and props, which got in the way of Elgort's photographic vision and Alaïa's sculptural creations.

His black and white photos were intended to look like snapshots. He preferred explosive movement to the clichéd poses of fashion models. He opened the windows of studios to let in the light and turned the street into his theatre. Alaïa instinctively identified not only with his innovative but rigorous approach. When the images were published, it was hard to tell who was acting as a foil for whom: was it the joyful photography that invited to garment to move, or was it the figure-hugging, suggestive dress that provided the movement captured in the image?

The models captured by Elgort's lens and dressed by Alaïa became the ambassadors for new forms of expression where two artistic approaches came together but never clashed.

Linda Spierings, Jeny Howarth, Janice Dickinson, Bonnie Berman, Veronica Webb, Frederique Van der Wal, Naomi Campbell, Christy Turlington, Cindy Crawford, Linda Evangelista, Stephanie Seymour were like divinities dancing on the frieze created by Alaïa and Elgort.

Exhibition catalogue to be published in English and French in January 2023,  
a co-edition of the Fondation Azzedine Alaïa & Damiani, 124 pages

70€ - 78\$ - £65



## ARTHUR ELGORT

Arthur was born in 1940 in New York City. As a teenager he attended Stuyvesant High School and then went on to study painting at Hunter College. Finding the medium too lonely, he decided to try his hand at photography and soon discovered it was a talent. Shortly thereafter he made his debut in British Vogue in 1971. With just one shoot he created not only a sensation but a permanent place in the world of fashion photography.

Arthur's relaxed and easy snapshot style was a breath of fresh air in a world where staged and stiff studio shoots with mannequin-like models were the norm. Arthur encouraged his subjects to move freely in the frame. The models he chose were lively, wore less make-up, and were simply enhanced by the natural light that he favored. Taking his models outside into the "real world," where the clothes he was being asked to photograph would be worn and put to the test, became a signature of his personal style.

Arthur quickly became one of the best-known and most emulated photographers in the world. The risks that he took with his photographic style changed the idea of what a fashion photograph could be and pushed the entire industry forward. For over 50 years Arthur has been a major influence, from his Vogue covers to his luxury-brand ad campaigns, his work is an inspiration. His style and influence created infinite possibilities in the world of fashion photography which he continues to explore today from his base in New York City.



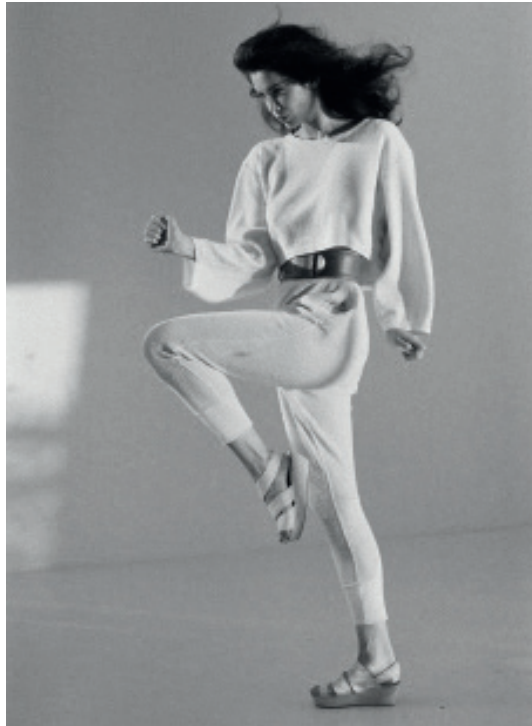
Naomi Campbell and Azzedine Alaïa, Paris, 1986



Naomi Campbell and Azzedine Alaïa, New York City, 1987



Arthur Elgort and Grethe Holby Elgort, New York City, 1987



Linda Spierings, Paris, 1983



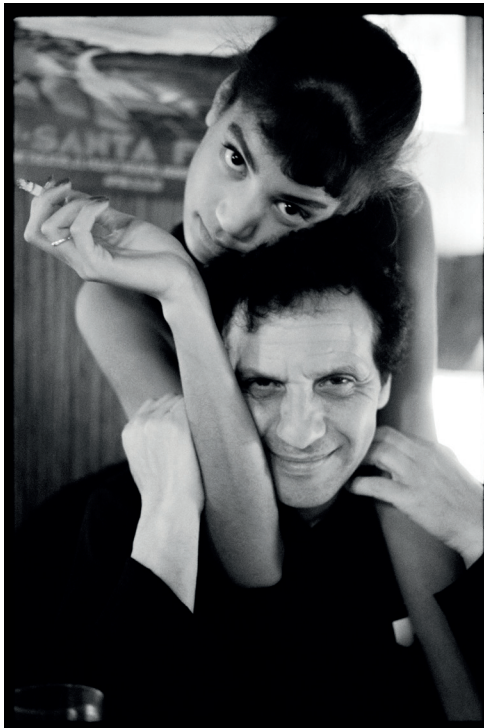
Naomi Campbell and Jennifer Gimenez, Paris, 1986



Christy Turlington, New York City, 1987



Christy Turlington, New York City, 1987



Veronica Webb and Azzedine Alaïa, Paris, 1986



## AZZEDINE ALAÏA FOUNDATION

Azzedine Alaïa lived a life filled with fashion, art, design, architecture, music and theatre.

Mr. Alaïa had been an avid collector in the creative and cultural disciplines for the past fifty years. In 2007, he set about to preserve his own work and his large holdings by founding the Association Azzedine Alaïa, later becoming the Azzedine Alaïa Foundation, with his lifetime partner, and his close friend of forty years, the publisher Carla Sozzani.

The Azzedine Alaïa Foundation has been recognized as a public utility on February 28th, 2020. The Foundation's missions are the conservation and enhancement of the work of Azzedine Alaïa, the pieces he collected throughout his life in the fields of art, fashion and design, the organization of exhibitions, and the support for cultural and educational activities.

The foundation houses its collections in Paris and exhibits Alaïa's own work as well as his collections. It is located at 18 rue de la Verrerie where he lived and work and in Sidi Bou Saïd, the town he loved so dearly.

A bookshop and café, featuring books on fashion and cultural history, are also situated at the heart of the Foundation in Paris.

The Foundation also gives awards to promising visionaries in fashion.

The signature logo of the Azzedine Alaïa Foundation was designed by Julian Schnabel.