

for Nirmala

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ANTON
CORBIJN

HANNIBAL





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ANTON CORBIJN

I was born in 1955 in the village of Strijen on the Dutch island of Hoeksche Waard, where people wore clothes that were either functional or suitable. My parents grew up not knowing any different. They were not mean by any stretch of the imagination, but they stuck to the rules. The idea that you might wear something of significance to another member of the community or because it was trendy either did not exist or was so subtle that this little boy didn't notice. On Sundays, however, everyone dressed up and wore black and this certainly did not go unnoticed as my father was the pastor of the village. My grandfather was a pastor too, as were a few of my uncles, and even my mum had studied theology, so wearing black on Sundays was *de rigueur* and anything more frivolous was frowned upon.

I was about eight or nine years old when everything changed. I began to notice these single-portrait photographs you could buy in the shops or at the hairdresser of four identically dressed guys – and I discovered the Beatles and how differently they dressed and looked to everyone around me.

I had already begun to realise that there was a rock 'n' roll 'thing' happening outside my island on the other side of the water. When I saw these photographs and heard some of the music, I was determined to be part of that world outside my island, a world that I now saw as 'the promised land'.

I was eleven years old when my family moved away to a town in the middle of Holland, where I finally managed to fulfil that urge. I went to record stores, bought music magazines, learned the names of the guys in the bands I liked – and I also noticed how they dressed. Look and sound were intertwined, and influenced how musicians presented themselves to their audience. From that moment on, when my parents could afford it, I tried to dress like someone in a music magazine. I may not have been very convincing as I didn't have the balls to be *that* different from anyone else and I often clearly lacked any kind of direction whatsoever, but I definitely wanted to be different from my parents!

When I started taking photographs around 1972, I became aware that people cared about what they wore for a photograph, and how they wanted to communicate with a bit of help from their clothes. I also became aware of how people judged others by what they wore.

When I moved to London in 1979 and became a photographer for the *NME*, I noticed how the writers and editors always looked at the clothes in the photographs. I don't think I was as aware as they were, however, because I felt I photographed people, not clothes. Despite realising the two were closely linked: clothes and musicians.

My Protestant background always influenced and informed my portrait photography. Mankind. Humanity. Empathy. All three were almost always in the back of my mind and kept me from doing work that lacked a deeper purpose. I probably didn't realise it at the time, but looking back it was simply how I was wired.

I also struggled with the idea of feminine beauty. I simply had no idea what I, as a photographer, could contribute to great beauty. I guess I felt intimidated and this lasted for a long time – until I actually met some models in the 1990s and became more comfortable with them and their beauty. I started to take their photographs, though more often as



My parents Anton and Marietje. Groningen 1972
I shot this with my father's camera, I didn't have one myself yet. They look like I recall them from my youth, stern but not unfriendly.



My friends Peter Lindbergh and Paolo Roversi. Paris 2019

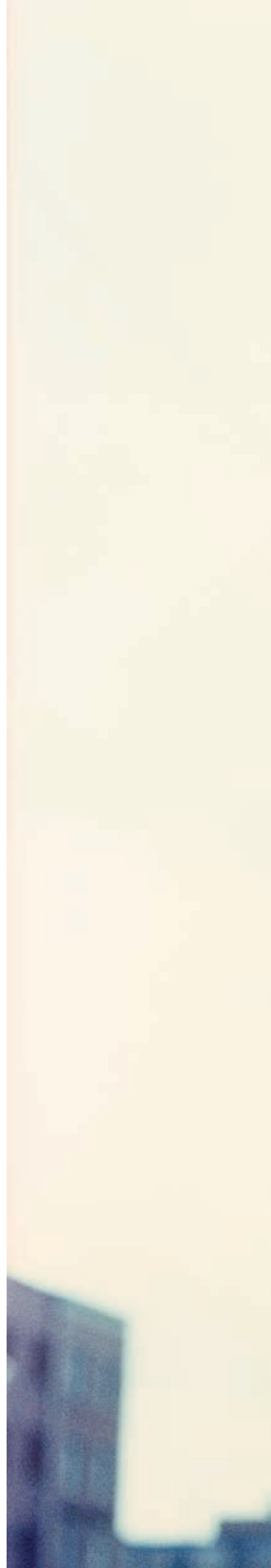


Me as a catwalk model for Yohji Yamamoto. Paris 1996
Not a professional model, obviously. I was slightly reluctant but also proud to be asked.



LEVI'S SCANDINAVIA









HARPER'S BAZAAR

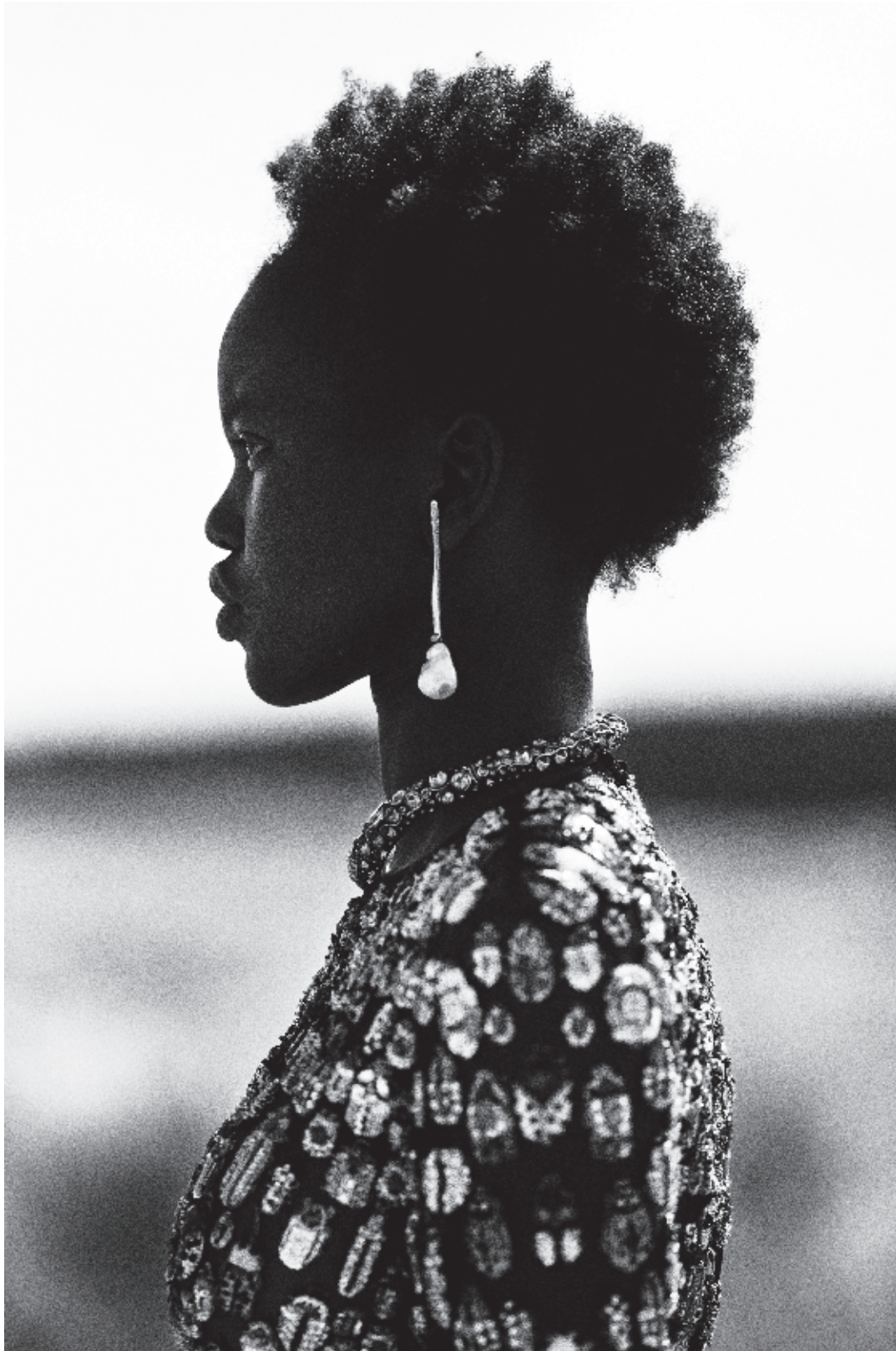












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