

Albert Watson



No single genre can define Albert Watson as a photographer. His obsession with photography is what portrays him best. Anam Karimi shares the greatness that resides in this living legend.

“Your creativity is in your DNA; therefore you have to have a disposition towards it.”

His Scottish accent speaks of many achievements, but humility is one of his greatest. He seems unfazed by the impact he has created on so many photographers, who respect him for his varied and impeccable body of work. His photographs are as striking in colour as they are in black and white, and his versatile talent has established him in every genre he has touched. It is uncertain what Albert Watson will do next to fascinate

the world, as he is ever changing. But you can be sure that you will want to trail him through the journey.

The Path to Brilliance

Growing up in Edinburgh, Scotland, Albert learned photography on his own through books and trial and error. The foundation laid out for him by the college education he received further stirred his creative endeavours. Watson studied graphic design at the Duncan of Jordanstone College of

15 North, Exit 25,
Las Vegas, 2001





116 Christy Turlington, New York City, 1990



Mick Jagger, Los Angeles, 1992

Arts and Design in Dundee and film at the Royal College of Art, London.

After he moved to the US in 1970, his wife Elizabeth gifted him his first camera for his 21st birthday. It was something about the way the camera felt in his hand—it fit just right and felt comfortable and easy. Later that year, Albert was introduced to an art director at the cosmetics powerhouse Max Factor, who offered him his first session of test shots. The company ended up purchasing two of his photographs. By 1976, he got his first job at *Vogue* and set base New York, never looking back.

Proud Moments

Till date, Albert has done more than 250 covers for *Vogue* and has also worked extensively with *Rolling Stone*, *Time* and *Vibe* magazines. He has 600 television commercials to his credit too, and has created iconic posters for Hollywood movies like *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Kill Bill*, *Chicago*, *Sahara* and *Da Vinci Code*.

These projects aside, he takes most pride in a book he compiled for the King of Morocco called *Maroc*, which was dedicated to the country. Albert had just 30 days to photograph the country's people, landscapes and anything else that he fancied; and another 30 days to work only on putting together the book. Despite such a tight time frame, what resulted was a project of passion that is true to the artist's personality.

Along with Irving Penn and Richard Avedon, Albert is one of the few photographers who have been able to smoothly transition from commercial work into the art world. He has had museum and gallery shows worldwide over the last ten years. One of his prints that featured British supermodel Kate Moss fetched USD 108,000 (approx. Rs. 52,00,000) at an auction in Christie's, London in 2007.

Celebrity Favourites

Actors Uma Thurman and Jack Nicholson and musician Mick Jagger are some of the celebrities who love Albert for his work. But he does not shy away from picking his favourite celebrity—noted film director Alfred Hitchcock who was “the most charismatic and the funniest”. He had taken a photograph of Hitchcock holding a dead

“I have, from my Scottish background, a very, very solid work ethic. I’m dedicated to the work, to doing good work and doing things the right way.”



117 Breanna at Fridge, Budget Suites, Las Vegas, 2000



Breanna in Cat Mask,
Las Vegas Hilton, 2001

118

“I’m trying to capture a person’s charisma. I’m looking for something special about their facial geometry.”

More on Albert

- In 1975, Albert won a Grammy for his photograph on the album cover of a band called Mason Proffit.
- Leading photography magazine Photo District News (PDN) lists him as one of the 20 most influential photographers in the world.
- He has shot many successful ad campaigns for big brands like Gap, Chanel, Levis and Revlon.
- His fourth book on Las Vegas will be out in 2010.

OCTOBER 2009

goose and both were wearing matching bow ties, for the Christmas issue of *Harper’s Bazaar* in 1973. Not many people knew that Hitchcock was a gourmet chef who had a fantastic recipe for Christmas goose!

Influences and Inspirations

Albert Watson has no favourite genre. He can deftly switch from landscape photography to portraiture to still life to fashion, from one day to the next. As he has always been open to learning, he has developed an eclectic style that is patented. He believes that the beauty of photography is that there is no need to lock on to one particular style. His main inspirations include Alexander Rodchenko, August Sander, Brassai, Robert Frank, Richard Avedon and Irving Penn.

All in the Details

Albert’s deep interest in graphic design goes hand-in-hand with his photography. This combination is often reflected in his books, more so in *Cyclops*. Titled because he was born one eye blind (in Greek mythology, ‘Cyclops’ is a god with one eye), the book does not have just incredible photographs, but it also features 280 Watson-approved fonts that make each page a delight to read.

Living Photography Through The Years

Albert believes that today, photographers spend their time being consumed with the latest equipment. “I miss superbly lit photographs because now there’s too much use of the soft box, which makes everybody look pretty good,” he says. “But that’s all it is—pretty good. It never looks magnificent or surreal or ‘I’ve never seen that before.’” He also shares his disappointment of seeing a lot of work today that looks exactly like his own or that of other photographers who were big in the 70s and 80s.

But can you blame them? If there was ever a photography style so amazing that it had to be imitated, Albert’s work is a fantastic choice. There is no question that he has influenced photography as greatly as few of his time. And there is no doubt that he will be looked up to for inspiration for as long as the world loves brilliant photography. 📷

Images courtesy: Albert Watson Photography Inc. View more of Albert’s work at albertwatson.com



Naomi Campbell,
Palm Springs, 1989

119



Kate Moss, Marrakech,
Morocco, 1993

BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY

BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY