

# Backstage VIP

FROM STUDIO 54 TO FASHION WEEK,  
THE PHOTOGRAPHER ROSE HARTMAN WAS  
FIRST IN LINE. SHE TALKS *RUBY WARRINGTON*  
THROUGH HER ARCHIVE

**PHOTOGRAPHS ROSE HARTMAN**

I'm looking at her gold shoes and I'm, like, 'Wow!' You can see she's going somewhere in her lovely cream coat. I see people like that. I'm always looking at how people put themselves together, no matter where it is." At 10.45 on a Tuesday morning, the photographer Rose Hartman (who, I'm guessing, is in her fifties or sixties, but who simply says she is "ageless") is installed in her favourite people-watching spot in Manhattan's West Village, outside a cafe, a stone's throw from the street where she and "Sarah Jessica" live. The girl in the gold shoes hurries past, just going about her business, unaware that today's sartorial choices are causing such a stir.

Hartman, a native New Yorker of Hungarian descent ("and a Jewess — a combination that's already a little more dramatic than most people"), has been documenting women like that girl, both civilian and celebrity, for more than three decades. Her shots are candid and close up. Hartman describes them as "in the moment and in your face". She was doing street style long before the genre was "invented" by today's photo-bloggers. "Or I might have been in Ralph Lauren's studio while he was pinning a model. But people weren't interested in that world,

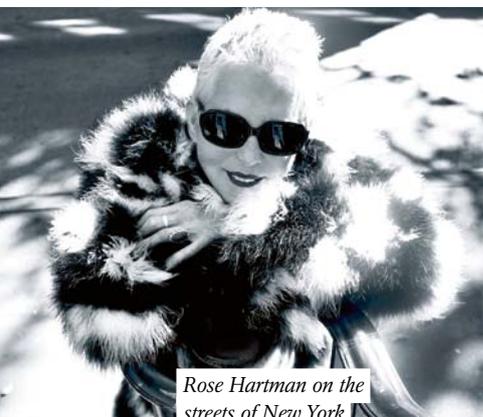
what was going on behind the scenes, then. It was irrelevant. They would be doing Broadway stars, whatever."

Born and raised lower-middle-class in the East Village, Hartman was clever enough to get into the prestigious Hunter College High School. There she began to develop her eye for style. "My mother had a subscription to Vogue. She would say things like, 'Remember, Rose, an educated girl never wears two prints at the same time.' But I would read it and think, 'Oh my God, look at this world.' I knew it was a fantasy world, but still."

The childhood fantasy became a reality at the notorious New York nightclub Studio 54, when the owner, Steve Rubell, gave Hartman and her camera a VIP pass. "Farrah Fawcett is here," she

says, "Elizabeth Taylor is there, and you also have all the young people who work in shops, but look amazing. Only the beautiful, the sexy and the young were invited in." In 1977 Hartman captured Bianca Jagger riding into the club on a white horse, an iconic shot that led to her first book deal and kick-started her career as one of the most loved society snappers on the scene. Her photographs have been published everywhere, including Vogue and The New York Times, and range from Anna Wintour laughing ("You never see Anna smile, but would you smile if thousands of people were taking your photo constantly, with their flashes

**LINDA  
EVANGELISTA**  
*Versace fashion show afterparty,  
New York, 1997*



Rose Hartman on the streets of New York



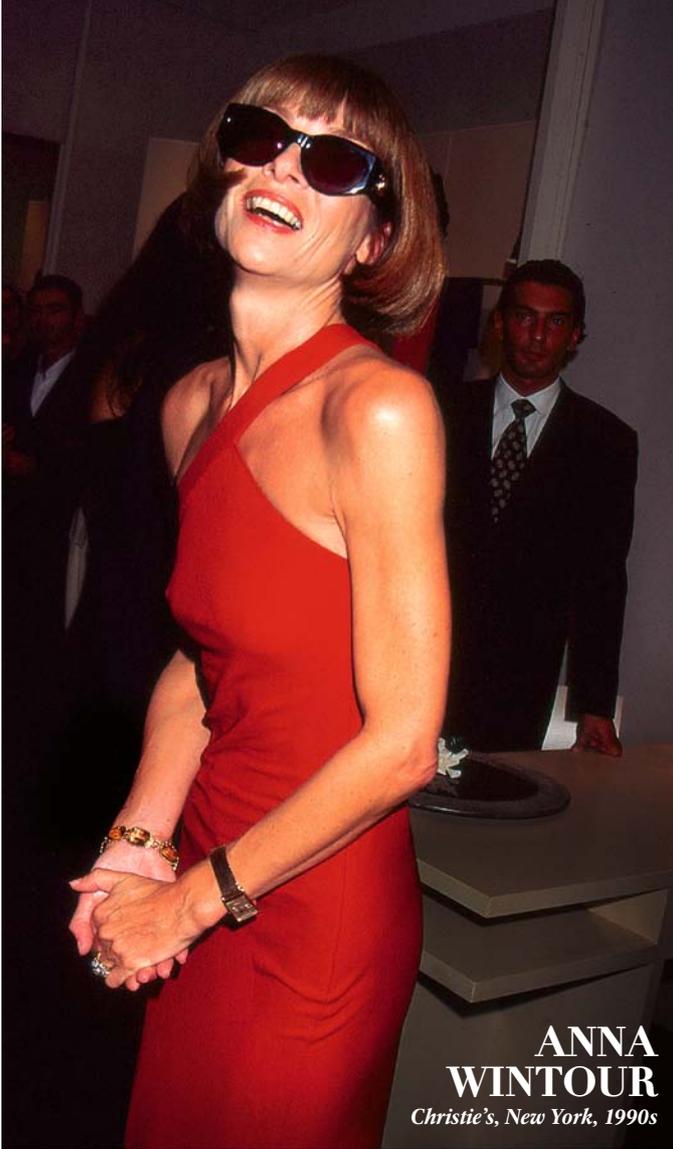
**JERRY HALL AND  
ANDY WARHOL**

*Interview Magazine party, Studio 54, New York, 1978*



**CARLA BRUNI**

*Backstage at the Galliano fashion show, Paris, 1995*



**ANNA WINTOUR**

*Christie's, New York, 1990s*

in your face? It's also why she wears those glasses") to the crazy world of Daphne Guinness ("She went very quickly from being a fabulous style-setter to being protected as if she were a government official. At LaChapelle's opening she was surrounded by security guards who blocked my view").

In the 1980s, being a woman helped her gain access: "It was me and all these tough, aggressive men who dressed like slobs. It embarrassed me to be near them." Once inside what she calls "the chiffon jungle", she found two ways to get her shot. "People look at that picture of Grace Jones in her little straw hat and ask how I got so close. Hello? I walked up to her. I might just say, 'God I love your hat', and everybody responded." Often, though, she preferred to say nothing and just go for her shot. "I wouldn't want to interrupt what was happening on her face."

Indeed, being introduced as the photographer was anathema to her fly-on-the-wall style. She tells a story of the time Basil Charles of Basil's Bar did just that to her in Mustique: "My friends and I were having dinner with Jerry Hall, Iman and David Bowie, and they got so nervous. I was furious. I didn't take my camera out."

With her distinctive bleached-blond crop, Hartman herself is a fixture on the circuit, despite hanging up her camera a couple of years ago. Aside from her new book — "My homage to the women who possess style within and without" — she is now focusing on finding a producer to work on a documentary of her life.

So what did her years of stalking Manhattan's best-dressed teach her about style? "Didn't Diana Vreeland say, 'Style is how you go to bed at night and how you wake up'? It just is. If Lauren Hutton goes out in a pair of jeans and a T-shirt, she's still stylish." She pauses to check out a woman with purple hair, who I've seen working behind the counter at Marc Jacobs, strolling past. "Or I might say this — I can't take my eyes off a woman with style." ●

*Incomparable: Women of Style, by Rose Hartman with a foreword by Anthony Haden-Guest (ACC Editions £29.95) is out now. To buy it for £26.95 (inc p&p), call 0845 271 2135 or visit [sundaytimes.co.uk/bookshop](http://sundaytimes.co.uk/bookshop)*



**DAVID BOWIE AND IMAN**

*Arriving at the theatre, New York, 1992*

**BIANCA JAGGER**

*Arriving at her birthday party at Studio 54, New York, 1977*



**AGYNESS DEYN**

*Stephen Sprouse Tribute, Bowery Ballroom, New York, 2009*

**GWYNETH PALTROW**

*The Four Seasons restaurant, New York, 1995, below right*





**KRISTEN  
McMENAMY**

*Bill Blass fashion show, New York, 1994*

**GRACE JONES**

*Studio 54, New York, 1978*



**NAOMI  
CAMPBELL**

*Victoria's Secret fashion show, Plaza Hotel,  
New York, late 1990s*



**KATE MOSS**

*Fashion Week, New York, 1995*



**BETSEY  
JOHNSON**

*Harley Davidson party,  
New York, 1990s*

**AMANDA  
LEPORE**

*The ladies' room, opening  
night of Arias with a Twist,  
New York, 2011*