

*One of Pascal's close friends, also a photographer, recently asked him about his photographic influences - from childhood to the present day. It makes for interesting reading so we present the interview here in its entirety.*

**So Pascal, what are your first memories of photographs and photographers?**

Photography has been with me since I was very small. As a kid, I used to take photos with old family cameras. I became really interested in the process without really knowing why. I would check out photography books in the local library - printing techniques, filters, lighting, looking at the work of famous photographers etc. etc. But all these photographers had equipment that I couldn't possibly afford ; and studios and darkrooms. I couldn't even afford the books! Very frustrating. And my Kodak Cresta II wasn't really up to it!

**And then?**

Later on, I discovered a second hand bookshop and stumbled on the glamorous world of Peter Gowland's pin-ups and the eternal sunshine of California. Seemed to be a really nice guy, with a supportive wife and, in his photography, an obvious respect for his models and their personalities; I think I understood the necessity for this respect even then and I sincerely hope I have succeeded in emulating that respect for my models to this day. His work was highly influential, not so much photographically, maybe, but because it strengthened my desire to do the same thing.

**So you showed an interest in pin-ups ?**

In my late teens I discovered Penthouse, which was still Guccione's personal project then; like Playboy but more accessible. His soft-filter photography was actually very good for the time, even though the grain was the size of golf balls; and he always found beautiful models. Very sensual, very suggestive work - not only the log fire and fur rugs of the night before, but morning sunlight on the model drinking coffee as well, probably wearing, as I remember, thigh-length, black leather boots and an Angora sweater and nothing else. Very sexy. I guess they were his Muses and our Sirens. But I stopped looking at Penthouse when it all began to get a bit too perverse for my taste. The respect was no longer there. With some notable exceptions, it was nothing more than high-budget pornography by other photographers.

I also looked at fashion magazines a lot in my teens, mostly Vogue at that time. I was just as fascinated by the models as I was by the work of the photographers. And a lot of the photographers were rubbish!

### **When did you decide to become a professional photographer?**

Quite simply when I had been working hard and long enough to have saved enough money to buy some decent equipment and open a studio. I worked a lot with model agencies, training and photographing aspiring models. Great for me - and for them I hope. One thing I learned - beauty does not a great model make; neither does it guarantee a good photograph. Attitude is just as important, maybe more so. Aspiring models have humility and are malleable. They want to be good. They make an effort. Some girls would turn up at my studio and I honestly thought they'd come to the wrong address. But we eventually made some really dynamic 'tirages' together. The model agencies were frequently incredulous when they saw the results. And equally incredulous when I didn't succeed with a 'beautiful' girl they'd sent me; I mean, one who couldn't walk down the street without the men gawping and who therefore assumed that my camera would gawp as well. Well it didn't and I didn't and she didn't know how to work with the camera - or me. And worse, didn't want to. Because she'd never had to try before! She had a lot more to learn than the motivated ugly ducklings!

### **Which photographers' names spring to mind as early influences?**

Well, from the Old Testament - Eugene Atget, Alfred Stieglitz, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Brassais, Alvin Langdon Coburn, Man Ray, Ansel Adams, Irving Penn, Ernst Haas. So many. Can't remember them all.

As far as my genre is concerned I found Julia Margaret Cameron's work fascinating. Lartigue also - he was from another world, the world of the rich and glamorous, far from my own reality. And there were lots of anonymous pin-up photographers, of course. Even Alphonse Mucha's photographs - his studies for his illustrations, using prostitutes from the streets of Paris - are fascinating. Even more amazing was that he could turn them into such beautiful women in his posters.

### **And your New Testament?**

I guess my hero was David Bailey. He outgrew the sixties with Marie Helvin's able participation, developing into a very personal and intimate erotic photographer. He is also a great documentary photographer incidentally. I had followed him since his early days when he was working with Jean Shrimpton - the sixties modelling icon. Boy was I jealous. I loved her looks! He was a kind of sixties Lartigue but with a social background diametrically opposed to Lartigue's. His work with Marie was really charged. Not difficult to imagine them working together, on or off camera. However, if *Blow up* was about him and it was accurate, then he was not the greatest psychologist London has ever seen. Another great photographer was Bob Carlos-Clarke. Loved his models, his ideas, his technique. Very sexy, very erotic and very good. Visited one of his exhibitions on Bond Street. Impressive! Christian Vogt's red series was another influence. I have to mention Helmut Newton, of course, though I never understood his attitude to his models from his work. Very impersonal, I thought. And a bit earlier - Richard Avedon and Irving Penn. I would advise all aspiring photographers to check out all these names but especially Lartigue, Cartier-Bresson, Avedon and Ansel Adams. And then Bob Carlos-Clarke.

### **What about today?**

Sante D'Orazio. Available light, available women. He IS Hollywood! La vida loca! His good looks help him get the best from his models for sure. An obese or obnoxious photographer will never get the best out of a beautiful model - or a beautiful woman in general, for that matter! There has to be an attraction. He has worked with two of my favourite film stars - Michelle Pfeiffer and Sharon Stone. AND he succeeded in getting a really great nude shot of the last century's best model, Christy Turlington. That photo - Panoramic View Hotel - is at auction nowadays. Oh man! Christy, call me! It's never too late!

Of course, there are many great fashion photographers around who do great erotic work as well but I can't keep up with their names!

Talking of beautiful models, I have to mention a few of my models, all amateurs by the way. I never use professional models. Too many pre-conceived ideas. Good photography is a two-way street. My models have influenced me too and I am sincerely grateful. They know who they are and I respect their privacy so just first names, in alphabetical order - Anne, Cecilia, Jennie, Kiwi,

Marie-Vanille, Marinette and Thérèsia. A big warm thank you and a hug.  
Charisma, sensuality, femininity, beauty: wonderful models, wonderful people.

### **You say ‘your’ models?**

Yes, I mean the models I work with on my personal projects ; my models as opposed to the subjects of my commissions. If I get e-mails from people asking me to take their photos, I plan working trips around those commissions. From now on, I will be focusing almost exclusively on commissions, visiting Europe and the USA at least twice a year. Just send me an e-mail!

### **You mentioned models and film stars just now. Who would you like to work with today?**

Christy Turlington, Beyoncé, Christy Turlington, Emmanuelle Beart, Christy Turlington, Eva Mendes, Christy Turlington, Lisa Bonet, Christy Turlington and Marie-Vanille. Oh, and Christy Turlington.

### **Any other photographers you like?**

Some of my colleagues are doing really beautiful work with mostly sensational models, even though the silicon is conspicuous by its presence. I’m thinking of Steffan Soell, André Brito, Bruno Bisang, for example, and most of the photographers on the Blue Nudes website. Great photographers, wonderful models. In a completely different genre I currently really appreciate the work of a Japanese woman - Lieko Shiga.

### **Why do all photographers want to take girls’ clothes off?**

What? They don’t! A model agency boss asked me that very question once. At the time I didn’t know the answer. What I should have said to her was - a) I’m not all photographers and b) when photographers stop desiring your models, you have unattractive models. Attractive is the operative word here, is it not? The problem is, most photographers are hopeless working with people anyway, let alone models! When they are asked to work with a model instead of a product, the dirty old man in them takes over, I guess. And they get the rest of us a bad name.

The reason I generally prefer photographing nudes, or people in the nude, is that clothes invariably become a distraction. Nudity is honest, pure, if you like. And the model is 100% herself. Clothes lock the viewer onto a particular image, a particular time, just as specific hairstyles do. Just look at the terrible clothes of the eighties, and those hairstyles! Two exceptions, who are still going strong, were Azzedine Alaia, 'The King of Cling' and Yohji Yamamoto, literally a draper, both of whom understand the combination of clothes and femininity in two completely different ways. I'd love to do fashion work with both of them.

I think just about all portraits should be taken nude, maybe with a towel round her waist if the model is uncomfortable. All I want is a pure, personal and honestly sensual portrait with no distractions. That's all.

Actually, maybe I should clarify something here. I have taken tens of thousands of shots of girls, women, models, sitters over the years - with their clothes on of course. But we had to be in agreement about the choice of clothing; jeans and a tee shirt; a simple dress - figure-hugging Lycra or draped silk; a skirt - short flounce or long and elegant; La Perla lingerie or sports underwear: anything as long as it enhanced the beauty of the person rather than distracted and detracted from it. Of course I love sensual clothes on sensual women!

**You use the word sensual a lot.**

Yes, it's a magic word for me. Sensual - related to the senses. All of them. I love beautiful women. I like incense. I love music. I love food and wine. Tactile sensations - smooth skin, silk, soft hair...

**Why do all photographers fantasize about two girls together?**

Again, I don't agree with you. I personally enjoy working with two girls because as a man I find it a turn on and so do they. But I also have the technical proficiency and the experience that allows me to focus on the poses, the lighting and so on. And there is something so, so sensual about two beautiful girls enjoying each other. I want to document that special feeling with special photos, not in your face exploitation. Look at the early work of David Hamilton, for example. I have strong reservations about his apparent Lolita complex but his early work with young girls together was so charged, so romantic, so completely inoffensive. Nothing obscene but very suggestive. Beautiful.

Two men together definitely do NOT turn me on. Sorry guys. Two men together is aggressive, raw, threatening, not erotic. Exaggerated yang, no yin. I am not prejudging homosexual men; far from it. I'm just saying I don't want to take photos of them. 'Girls just want to have fun' 'Sisters are doing it for themselves' 'Be your own best friend tonight' to quote some songs. Women know what they're doing, know what to do, where to do it, when to do it and I want to capture the result - the pleasure and the ecstasy - in my photos, in an erotically charged and suggestive way, a yin way. One will always be a little yang anyway!

**So why do your models and your sitters agree to it - to 'get naked'?**

Please ask them. Because they want to, of course. If they don't, I don't insist. Although I have been known to ask more than once! The key words are mutual respect, trust, confidence, dignity, beauty, charisma and understanding of mutual goals. I have photographed women in their forties and fifties. They understand. I have photographed girls in their late teens, early twenties. They have another kind of understanding of their bodies and their sexuality. Both are valid in their own ways. Both are exciting. But all my models have absolute confidence in my integrity and respect me - and my work. No confidence - no photos. It's as simple as that.

**Any particular likes and dislikes?**

Oh yes, I'm very opinionated! Likes? Stay-ups - Christmas without the chintzy stuff, to quote another great song. Silk lingerie, gowns, camisoles. Perfumes. Anything that charges the atmosphere.

And all my wonderful models and sitters, of course. If I don't like her, I can't work with her. And if I do, I can.

**What exactly do you mean by a sitter?**

I mean those people who have put themselves in front of me and my camera because *they* wanted to, not necessarily because I asked them; a sitter as in sitting for a portrait. A commission. Somebody who got in touch with me. The sensually aware people who like what I do and who get in touch because they want me to take erotic photos of them.

**And your dislikes?**

Nudes outdoors. With the exception of Bill Brandt's beach nudes, I just don't get it. Nudes are for indoors; bedrooms, hotel rooms etc. I always refused to do bikini shots indoors or lingerie shoots outdoors. C'mon!

**A final word?**

Yes. I'm looking forward to working with more English-speaking Japanese and Asian models in Tokyo. Please do get in touch!

And Christy, of course!