

Starting off
the new
century with a
look at
Helmut Newton

the master series

It is a great pleasure to begin *American Photo* magazine's second decade (and the new millennium) with an issue that will, I am quite sure, go down as one of our most important and most controversial. This special look at the life and work of photographer Helmut Newton is the third in our exclusive *American Photo* Master Series. The first issue in the series was devoted to Richard Avedon at the time of his 1994 retrospective book and exhibition; the second, in 1997, honored French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson and coincided with a stunning show of his work at Paris's Maison Européenne de la Photographie.

The occasion for this issue on Newton is the publishing of what must be one of the most impressive photography books ever: the aptly titled *Sumo*, a 20-by-28-inch, 480-page, 66-pound opus that comes with its own Philippe Starck-designed display table. (It's a bargain at \$1,500—but one of our lucky readers can win a copy courtesy of *AP*; see page 36.)

The impact of the book, however, goes well beyond its size. The images inside—cool, confident, erotic, funny, disturbing—confirm that Newton has been one of the most important photographers of the 20th century, shaping our ideas of fashion, class, sex, and celebrity. For this issue, we've taken a sizable excerpt of the book and mixed in analysis of Newton's career by Philippe Garner, the curator of photography at Sotheby's in London and a close friend of Newton. Though Newton has been putting his thoughts and life on film for almost half a century, he nonetheless remains an elusive figure for many, especially in America. "His work is infused with European history and

sensibility, and it's often not easily accessible to American audiences," says Garner, whose essay (page 86) helps to bring the man and his work more clearly into focus. Newton, 79, participated in the making of this issue from his home in Monte Carlo. He delighted in the idea of seeing his images of nudity, opulence, power—images that are the antithesis of political correctness and are rarely seen in American magazines—published here. "It's my revenge," he says.

Will the photographs in this issue offend some? In many cases, the answer is certainly yes. Newton has claimed a singular artistic territory shaped from his own eventful lifetime of experiences and ideas. In doing so he has created one of the most consistent, complex, and well-crafted bodies of work in the history of photography. "To this question, 'What people do you like to photograph?' my answer is, 'Those I love, those I admire, and those I hate,'" says Newton of his own work (see page 90). Here is a photographer in complete control of his vision. For an artist, there is no higher praise.

The *AP* staff gathers around Helmut Newton's new opus, *Sumo*.



David Schonauer

David Schonauer, EDITOR IN CHIEF

UNMASKING NEWTON

Few figures in photography inspire as many opinions, and questions, as the subject of this special issue, Helmut Newton. His style and subject matter are unmistakable—yet his pictures, like the artist himself, are distinguished by a central mystery. Who is Helmut Newton? Where did he come from? What are the emotional sources of his particular vision? How important is he in the history of photography during the 20th century? The answers, as you will see on the following pages, are as intriguing as the art.

MAKING SUMO

It's not always true that something billed as the "biggest" event of the year really turns out to be big. But the 1999 debut of Helmut Newton's new retrospective volume, which we excerpt in this issue (page 56), is just that. Put out by the German publishing company Taschen, the book measures approximately 20 by 28 inches, weighs 66 pounds, and costs \$1,500—making it huge, figuratively and literally. It's a perfectly fitting vehicle for Newton's

the story behind the biggest book yet

over-the-top imagery. For publisher Benedikt Taschen, the problem was finding a title that would be apt.

"It came by accident," says Taschen. "We already had a series of books called the Jumbo series. I thought of the enormous Japanese sumo wrestlers, and we went with the title *Sumo*. This book deserves this name!"

What inspired a publisher to create a product of this size? "I wanted to produce simply the greatest book for the greatest photographer alive," Taschen says. "I've always admired Newton's work so much, it's like a love affair."

Taschen won Newton over when he showed him a dummy of the book he had in mind. "I took this dummy—

which was very heavy—to Los Angeles and I called him at his hotel, and he came to see me. I said, 'This is the book.' He was very euphoric and surprised, and he phoned his wife, June, immediately: 'You have to see this!' So she came, and that's how it started."

Over three years from concept to publication, June Newton directed the book's picture editing and layout, Taschen says. "She has the eye. She worked together with Helmut and me, but June did 90 percent of the work."

The publication of oversize art volumes called elephant folios dates back to 1826. But Taschen claims that the size of *Sumo* breaks all records for any book with "a significant print run." The Newton book's initial run is 2,500, with an additional 7,500 to be printed by April. "It's more or less hand-bound, so we can do only about 1,500 copies a month," Taschen says. "You could print it even bigger—the problem is the weight and the binding for the book. We had to build a new binding street only for *Sumo*."

They also built a table for it—a stainless-steel foldaway designed by Philippe Starck. "If you have this

huge book, what will you do with it? It does not fit on any shelf," Taschen says. "I think that Starck did a great design for the table because it is solid as well as light."

When *Sumo* was in the binding stage, Taschen realized something was missing. "The title is not mentioned once in the book," he says with a laugh. "We thought so, but we forgot! The name is only on the cardboard for wrapping and for the book display. That's the only place it appears." He laughs again. "Surely everyone will know the name is *Sumo*." ■

Win Newton's book

In honor of this special issue on Helmut Newton, we're giving away a copy of *Sumo* (with display table) to one lucky *American Photo* reader. All you have to do is send a postcard with your name, address, and telephone number to: *Sumo, American Photo*, 1633 Broadway, 43rd Floor, New York, NY 10019. We will pick a winner at random. Be sure you have a place to put this giant masterpiece! (Employees of Hachette Filipacchi Magazines are not eligible. You must be at least age 18 to enter.)

Q&A

BENEDIKT TASCHEN

What was it like to work with Helmut Newton to create *Sumo*?

"The production of the book was terribly difficult. First of all, the Newtons are complete quality freaks—which I appreciate a lot. But sometimes we had to correct the proofs up to five, six, or seven times, partly because of the huge size. If you have a reproduction in the normal size, you certainly can see if it's good or very good reproduction. But in

this blown-up size, you see every detail, let's say, five or ten times bigger. And so you have this quality checking.

And the Newtons are perfectionists.

Both June and Helmut are. First they made the prints—many prints they did new just for the book. Several prints they did two or three times. And by the time we made the proofs out of these prints, there were five or six collections of them. But I like this! It's terrible in a way, but if you see the result, it's

really breathtaking. And you have to do it with quality—if not, you can't look at it.

If you're going to do it big, then you have to do it right.

Absolutely. There is no need just to make a big book. It is very risky to do something like this. Newton doesn't have to do it. He has his reputation, and we have ours, and we both have a lot to lose! But right now we are feeling very good, because we can see the result. It was good to put all the effort into this.

"What I find interesting is working in a society with certain taboos—and fashion photography is about that kind of society," Helmut Newton once said. "To have taboos, then to get around them—that's interesting."

Newton's photos are nothing if not interesting in the way they negotiate the treacherous waters of the taboo. The irony is that in getting around taboos, Newton has made them downright acceptable, if not respectable, at least to a certain segment of the population. In doing so he has had a massive influence not only on fashion photography but on fashion itself. It's an influence that has even trickled down to the street. High-slit skirts, towering stiletto heels, chains, and leather were all a major part of his visual vocabulary long before mainstream high fashion got the message. Now they have migrated from disreputable subcultures into day wear for the daring.

But what the style-conscious debutantes and corporate vice presidents can't reproduce is the luxurious but threatening atmosphere of Newton's work. That is an amalgam of memory, nostalgia, and glamour, grounded in the privileged world of his childhood, which was lost forever—along with almost everything else—when the Nazis began their rampage of total destruction.

Among Newton's influences are Hollywood and European films, from von Stroheim and Hitchcock to B-grade

horror flicks—movies and moviemakers with a dark edge and a twisted sense of humor. It's not surprising that actors, directors, and other Hollywood personages would be among his best portrait subjects. But what does portrait mean? Sigourney Weaver, John Malkovich, David Lynch and Isabella Rossellini, and Jodie Foster are demonstrably themselves in the pictures seen here. But they are also creatures of Newton. Even though John Malkovich is known for pushing the boundaries of acceptability, here he seems a little scarier than usual, while Sigourney Weaver appears even more forbidding than the bellicose, alien-fighting space woman she plays.

Newton has shot celebrities for years, most famously for the pages of *Vanity Fair*. But he eventually tired of these assignments. In an interview with Grace Mirabella he was blunt: "I remember saying to Tina Brown, 'I don't want any more Hollywood bimbos. Get me some criminals and politicians to photograph.'" Some may find the conjunction of subjects amusing—criminals and politicians—but Brown obliged with the likes of Claus von Bulow, who was later acquitted of attempted murder. And Newton found other, weightier subjects as well, including the Italian business tycoon Gianni Agnelli, Prince Rainier of Monaco and his mob of male "compadres," and the French right-wing politician Jean-Marie Le Pen and his Dobermans. —CAROL SQUIERS

NEWTONIAN PHYSICS

A very
luxurious,
threatening
universe

US “These two people have been together for 50 years, have collaborated closely on exhibitions and book publishing, but neither is usually present at the other’s photographic sittings,” writes Newton of the self-portraits and photographs that he and his wife, June, have made of each other. Revealing? Heart-stoppingly so. As curator Philippe Garner points out in his essay (page 86), Newton’s photography is always based on his real-life experiences. In these images, we glimpse a private world made public.

THEM As portraitists, Helmut and June have divided their world into two parts—their lives together and all the rest (see following pages). “What is...interesting...is the fact that neither one [of us] has in any way influenced the other’s way of approaching their subjects,” Newton writes. What are the differences in style? “I can see the truth and simplicity in the portraits of Alice Springs,” he writes. “As for myself, I recognize the manipulation and editorializing in my photographs.”

Where was this picture taken? It was taken in my apartment in Hollywood. He came for 15 minutes, 20 minutes, half an hour. The other one which he almost used has a kind of depressive feeling, a very different picture, dark background, very white skin, red lipstick.

Did you like the pictures when you first saw them? I wasn’t sure. I think when I first saw them I didn’t. I thought, “*Brrr*, that doesn’t look like me.” Then I got over it. I think that’s very common with actors, you know, they are not used to seeing themselves through the vision of a photographer. They like themselves looking natural, the way they are. But they are gorgeous pictures, very beautiful.

He came up to your place. Did he pretty much tell you what to do? Yeah, he’s got a very forceful personality, but he’s a very charming person. He came to my apartment and he said to my makeup guy, “No makeup!” And he shot for 20 minutes—all handheld, no lights, nothing. It was actually funny. The makeup guy had arrived before Helmut came to do my hair, and we were all very concerned, worried, and he walked in. It was as if he just came back from vacation on a boat.

He has photographed a lot of women. How do you think he portrays them? I guess a lot of people who are famous think of Helmut Newton as lots of garish

colors, lots of hard lipstick, lots of women smoking cigarettes, leather; but I think there’s a refinement. A lot of people have imitated his edginess but haven’t gotten this...sophistication.

What’s your feeling about nudes? I think nudes and erotic photographs are not the same thing. It’s not something I am over-interested in, but [Helmut] has brought a completely different language to the nude. There’s a strength instead of being passive. It’s always a very active nude.

Do you think he has created a new aesthetic in nudes in general? He is a forerunner. He definitely is the forerunner of nudes of that era.

What do you like about photography? I love the idea in photography that you have one image for one moment and that’s it. You have something that happened in time.

Do you know what Helmut Newton is going for when he photographs? I think he knows exactly what it’s going to look like before he shoots, so he doesn’t have to hustle, to worry about it. He sees what he wants. The great difference between other photographers and Helmut is that he is so experienced and confident in what he does.... He can walk into a room and see the picture immediately. —JULIAN BENEDIKT

FACING HELMUT

An
interview
with
Jodie Foster

ARTISTIC JOURNEY



a remarkably
rich life
of secrets and
turning points

talking ways, though, he has always been vague about parts of his biography—and has even kept some of it secret.

What we do know is that Newton was born in Berlin in 1920 to a wealthy Jewish family. His father was the owner of a large button-manufacturing business in Germany. A delicate child, Newton claims he was prone to fainting. He bought his first camera, a Zeiss Box Tengor, at the five-and-dime with his own money when he was 12. His first roll of film was shot in Berlin's underground subway, and it came back totally blank except for one frame he had shot above ground. Within a few years he'd decided to become a photographer. "I saw myself as a 'Rasender Reporter,' traveling the world, being famous and widely published," Newton writes.

Newton was fascinated by Martin Munkacsi's reportage for the German illustrated papers and fancied himself a photoreporter; he even got pointers from two photo-journalists. He also began photographing his girlfriends striking the poses they saw in magazines. The latter experience was apparently most compelling, especially compared to his experience in school, which ended for him at the age of 16. "In 1936, I arranged to have myself thrown out of school as a hopeless pupil," says Newton. With his mother's assistance, he became an apprentice to Else Simon, a female fashion-and-portrait photographer who operated a studio under the name of Yva. His father's response to his chosen path has a familiar ring: "My boy, you'll end up in the gutter."

The gutter did have its attractions for a Berlin boy in the 1920s. When he was only 8 or 9, his older brother began showing him the seamy side of Berlin, which was inhabited by prostitutes like the Red Erna, who wore red boots and carried a whip. Newton remembers that "my eyes were poppin' out of my head."

But Newton lived at the other end of the social scale, one in which the family lived well and took their vacations at the kind of posh European spas and hotels

HELMUT NEWTON/ALICE SPRINGS US AND THEN SCALO

"In Yva's
studio, Berlin,
1936"

Helmut Newton doesn't mince words. He once admitted that when he started making his signature photographs of women in medical corsets, he thought he was "sick in the head." It was his wife, June Newton, who encouraged him to reconsider. Despite his straight-



were wonderful," he writes. But they were creatively un nourishing. "I met June, we married, but photographically, much as I loved this country and its people, it did not form me as a photographer nor did my work there amount to anything." He began working for Australian *Vogue* in 1952, which led to a short-lived move in 1957 to London that was "equally sterile and unproductive." Next he went to Paris.

"The moment I hit Paris I knew this was it," he says. "For living and for taking photographs. The life was in the streets. People lived on the streets, in cafés, restaurants. Beautiful women seemed to be everywhere." He found work at *Jardin des Modes* in the late 1950s and in 1961 began a long-running and very fruitful association with French *Vogue* which lasted until 1983. During that period he also photographed for *Elle* and *Marie Claire*, London's *Queen* and *Nova*, and then *Playboy*, *Stern*, and the American and Italian editions of *Vogue*.

Throughout the 1960s, Newton produced elegant, sophisticated images that were often more daring and inventive than the usual fashion photos of the time. In 1963 he even caused a scandal by using the Berlin Wall as a fashion backdrop, posing a model on a wooden podium overlooking the wall from the West Berlin side. But it wasn't until 1971 that he experienced the crisis that would change his life and his photography, when he suffered a major heart attack while he was in New York on a shoot for *Vogue*.

That experience transformed his work, with his wife and partner, June, encouraging this new development. Where his photographs had often had a sexy undercurrent to them, they now became more overtly sexual and added some new elements. The women became bolder and more aggressive, while the situations they found themselves in became more disquieting. Characters from society's margins began to influence his work,



2

that would later become his characteristic backdrops.

That life didn't last long. In 1938, the Nazis stepped up their attacks on Jews. Yva was forced to close her studio, and later died in a concentration camp. Newton fled Germany and ended up in Singapore. Although he has refused to talk about this terrible time—"It's dark, and we keep it that way," he once said—he tried to work as a photojournalist in Singapore, and was briefly a society reporter for the *Singapore Straits Times*. But that didn't

A major heart attack transformed his work.

work out. "I rarely gave the paper the kind of photos they were hoping for," he remembers. "The next few years had little to do with photography; I was busy keeping my head above water and trying to avoid starvation."

In the early 1940s, Newton left Singapore and went to Australia, where he enlisted in the Australian army and served for five years. When he got out, he moved to Melbourne and opened a studio, determined that he would make his living as a photographer. He also met an Australian actress named June Browne. Meanwhile, his family had fled to South America.

In his quest to be a photographer, Newton at first took whatever jobs he could get, doing wedding photos, baby books, and mail-order catalog assignments. "My years in Australia

including prostitutes, fetishists, and cross-dressers. And he also developed his particular mise-en-scènes—sumptuous châteaux, showy hotels, and ancient midnight streets, all of them saturated with a sense of decadence, luxury, and privilege.

His most radical work was published only in European magazines, while American *Vogue* used a milder rendition of his aesthetic vision.

But Newton made his preferences clear with the publication of his first book, *White Women*, in 1976. Many reviewers in the United States skewered it, but still the book took off, selling some 1,500 copies a week in (continued on page 101)



4



HELMUT NEWTON/Alice Springs, US and Them, SCALO

“

These images
are deeply
infused
with Newton's
accumulated
history.

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He achieves a delicate and difficult balance between flattery and caricature. For his subjects are almost without fail seduced by his charm and gratified by his depictions of them; yet the observer can also enjoy the delicious ironies and exaggerations that give the pictures their edge. There is a lot going on in Newton's photographs. They are often characterized by a strong sense of place and are filled with detail, for he loves to work on location. These images are also deeply infused with his accumulated history and experience.

In 1971 Newton collapsed during a photo shoot in New York after suffering a massive heart attack. He was just over 50 and had been enjoying considerable success as a fashion photographer. Swift paramedical attention saved his life, but the incident changed his life forever. It caused him to review his career and to refocus. From then on, he determined that he would sidestep the high-pressure circuit of churning out pages of repetitive fashion pictures and would take only the pictures he really wanted to take. His wife, June, played a crucial role at that time by encouraging Newton to explore and exploit his own life and experience as the best, perhaps only, way to give depth, intensity, and interest to his pictures. Aspects of his personality that had been evident in his work of the 1960s—his taste for the erotic and his cold, even cruel style—came to the fore and made Newton perhaps the most influential figure in his field through the '70s.

Newton's fascination with the erotic, with the darker aspects of sexuality and the interplay of sex, style, and money, somehow underscores every picture he has made. He positioned these previously taboo elements center



FROM THE HELMUT NEWTON/TASCHEN SUMO BOOK

stage in his fashion images, subverting all the accepted canons and provoking his first wave of bad press. He broadened his range to include purely erotic subjects and *portraits mondains*, defining the parameters of the work on which he had built his reputation. His delight in provocation had a practical basis in his realization that a memorable image must be a powerful image and success on the magazine page involved seizing and surprising his audience. For Newton, the greatest enemy was banality.

When Newton determined to mine his own experience as a source of ideas for his photographs, he drew on a remarkable story. Brought up in Berlin, where he was born in 1920, he experienced a very comfortable bourgeois childhood in one of Europe's most exciting cities. He knew the decadent Berlin of the last years of the Weimar Republic, the Berlin of *Cabaret*, of Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel*. He knew Berlin as a hub of creative activity in the arts, particularly photography and cinematography. He was brought up on the images of the picture press that thrived

in this period. The journals that he published many years later, under the title *Helmut Newton's Illustrated*, were specifically conceived in tribute to the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. He carried with him the influence of the avant-garde; of his memories of available-light reportages by Erich Salomon; of the modernist tilted horizons and surprising vantage points of Alexander Rodchenko; of the decadent stylishness of fashion and portrait photographers such as Heinz von Perkammer and Yva (for whom he apprenticed). Perhaps even more important, he carried with him a memory of an old Europe of grand hotels, opulent baroque villas, romantic journeys on steam trains, and an aristocracy with strict codes and protocols, traditions of dress, liveries, elegant manners.

After a period in Singapore, Newton moved on to Australia before eventually settling in Paris in 1960. Here, in the capital of couture, he found a milieu to which he could relate, the haute bourgeoisie and the precious world of high fashion. He would also travel frequently on assignments and would always have an eye for the telling context, the voyeuristic eye and detached curiosity of the outsider, informed by his own experiences, enriched by his appetite for films, paintings, books.

Newton found his strength by bringing his memories and his diverse culture to bear on the present. He has consistently made photographs that are at the very edge of contemporary taste. Ever relevant and in tune with fashion, his work is richly layered with echoes of the past. Not without justification does Newton stress that he is a documentary photographer. His pictures are not fantasies. Every one is based on a reality that he has observed. The contrivance is in his elaborate process of distillation and reconstruction. The news photographer captures what he sees. Newton sets a different pace and photographs what he has seen. His particular formation and mischievous eye ensure that what he has seen is illustrated in the sharpest focus and with a challenging insight.

Philippe Garner is the curator of photography at Sotheby's in London.

NEW

bizarre, beautiful, cold, and crafted



FROM THE HELMUT NEWTON/TASCHEN SUMMO BOOK

understanding the controversial photography of Helmut Newton

The name Helmut Newton can be guaranteed to inspire controversy. His work tends to provoke extreme reactions. Newton has countless fans all over the world. Most are content to enjoy his pictures wherever they are published, in magazines, in books, or on advertising billboards; others go further and feel inspired to dissect and analyze, hoping to unlock the mysteries within the images. College theses and catalog essays have been devoted to the task of deconstructing the elaborate and heavily coded world depicted in Newton's photographs. But rarely do these worthy labors effectively capture Newton's unique equation of fastidiousness, shrewd observation, wicked humor, and perversity.

"Bauwelt
catalog,
1987"

To his fans he is a masterful imagemaker, a sharp and incisive observer of certain extremes of style and behavior whose individualistic way of photographing women has extended our conception of the bizarre and the beautiful. To his detractors he is the profane and misogynistic embodiment of all that is false and corrupting in the world of glossy magazines, an admittedly clever picture maker who long ago sold his soul and his skills to the highest bidders and became a tool of the consumer society.

With a typical love of provocation, Newton gave the title "Gun for Hire" to a presentation of his work a few years ago before a large student audience in Glasgow, Scotland. Rumor had spread that certain more militant members of the audience were positioning themselves in the front rows, poised to throw raw meat at their guest speaker. Newton took his position at the lectern. He launched immediately into a passionate defense of freedom of expression, claiming that he, if anyone, should have earned that right. A German Jew forced by Nazi oppression to flee Berlin in 1938, Newton had been confronted early on by those who sought to curtail artistic and political freedoms. The present-day advocates of political correctness were in his eyes no different from the fascist censors of the Third Reich, "thought police" who should be challenged at every opportunity. His audience did not stir. He then went on to explain the background of his work and his obsessions, speaking with candor and a kind of innocence that defused the potential political tensions. His audience was fascinated and charmed, and not a little surprised to find the expected monster entertaining, funny, and so totally committed to his work that they could not help but respect his integrity.

Newton's photographs are tough, polished, aggressive, cold, and disconcerting. Reflecting the photographer's very particular eye and ceaseless curiosity, they are styled and composed with care and precision, and generate a sense of unease. They constitute, for the most part, a highly sophisticated reportage on the tastes and lifestyle of a privileged milieu. Newton documents the faces, the fashions, the poses, and the pretensions of some of the world's most glamorous people. He makes portraits of celebrities in the high-profile worlds of fashion, film, and the arts, and he is, of course, principally known as a photographer of women.

He has his own rarely conventional ideas of what makes for an interesting subject. Newton derives considerable satisfaction from seeing his much-larger-than-life-size head-and-shoulders shot of Margaret Thatcher hanging in London's National Portrait Gallery. He pictured Vanessa Redgrave in heroic pose, somewhere between an androgynous Joan of Arc and an athlete photographed by Leni Riefenstahl. In Sigourney Weaver he saw a tough beauty, exploiting her height and strength. Newton can always be relied on to give a memorable and unexpected twist to the images of whomever or whatever he photographs.

Helmut Newton photographs a world that he knows and that he has observed minutely for so many decades.

an homage
to photography's
most
interesting and
effective creative
partnership

HELMUT AND JUNE



A strong case could be made that without June Newton there would not be a Helmut Newton as we have come to understand him. Newton's work was transformed in the early 1970s, with the deep, continuing encouragement of his wife (see Biography, page 42). The camera has been an intimate part of their professional and personal lives since the couple met in the 1940s. Using the name Alice Springs, June Newton has photographed many of the same celebrities as her husband. Helmut and June have also photographed each other

and made an extraordinary collection of self-portraits.

In 1998 many of these photos were put together in the book *Us and Them* (Scalo) and exhibited at Paris's Maison Européenne de la Photographie. On the following pages we present a selection. "This book shows the work of two photographers—one who has dedicated his life to photography, the other who has been an actress and a painter before she has taken up the camera seriously if somewhat sporadically," writes Newton in the introduction. Here are two remarkable lives, seen from every perspective.

"Ramatuelle, France, 1975," by Alice Springs

EDGY, NOT PRICEY

45 prints sold for \$24,150. To an extent, the higher prices for Penn and Avedon simply reflect the careful cultivation of the market for those two photographers. But that fact doesn't fully explain the disparity. Wester has another explanation—artistic edginess. "Helmut Newton's work goes to the essence of the psychological conflict behind the purpose of fashion and erotic photography," says Wester. Such imagery isn't for every taste. (If it were, it wouldn't have the emotional power it does.) And unlike a classic by Penn, a Newton print hanging on the living-room wall often invites chilly comments when the neighbors come to visit. "One can't view it comfortably without having to defend one's position," says Wester.

To be sure, there is a dedicated and discerning group of collectors who have admired Newton's work and bought it at auction. "In Europe, Newton is much more in the mainstream of collecting," says Joshua Paillet, owner of A Gallery for Fine Photography in New Orleans. "His



The market for Newton's work is relatively affordable.

The original edition of "Sie kommen I and II" is sold out. Now the images can go for more than \$55,000.

Rick Wester, senior vice president and director of the photography department at Christie's in New York, has been watching the market for Helmut Newton's images for some time. The reason for the interest is simple: While Newton is commonly considered one of the benchmark fashion photographers of our time—up there in the same category of importance as Irving Penn and Richard Avedon—his prints don't sell for nearly as much.

In recent years, individual prints by Avedon and Penn have sold at auction for prices ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000. The record price for Newton, meanwhile, was set in 1993 when his "Private Property" portfolio of

work is in major private, corporate, and museum collections. However, in the United States, his collectors have tended to be individuals. Interestingly, I've sold more of his work to women than men; they're more familiar with his pictures from seeing them in the fashion magazines, and they seem more comfortable with the sophisticated commentary." David Fahey, of the Fahey/Klein Gallery in Los Angeles, says "there is a very consistent market for Helmut Newton's work, and in a certain sense it is not necessarily price sensitive. The collectors for Helmut's work have always been there." The fact of the matter is, though, that Newton's (continued on page 103)

EDITORS' TRIBUTE

Helmut Newton's photos are meant to be seen on the glossy paper of magazines—that is the medium he has shot for since the beginning of his career. In doing so, he has distinguished those publications with style and thought. For this issue, we asked four editors from Europe and America who have memorably published his work for their take on what makes Newton great.

TINA BROWN, chairman and editor in chief, *Talk* "Helmut Newton provides me more visual excitement per page than any photographer I've ever worked with; he's never disappointed me. The power, depth, and provocativeness of his images make any magazine that they appear in memorable and hot. He's funny, sexy, dangerous, and brilliant."

SIEGFRIED SCHOBER, fashion editor, *Stern* "Like every great artist, Helmut Newton is an entertainer, a master craftsman, a dreamer, and a wizard. He invented a new sensual architecture of the body and the face, soft and

the result, perfect, masterly, but still the skin has temperature, the emotion has fire or ice, and the body breathes, the face gleams. That is his art."

GRAYDON CARTER, editor, *Vanity Fair* "It's something to be the most copied photographer in the world. And Helmut is certainly that and a whole lot more. He is a vessel of life and spirit and brilliance. And I love the fact that after more than seven years of working together, he's never tried to get me into heels. Nobody can touch him in what he does. He has the best job in the world."

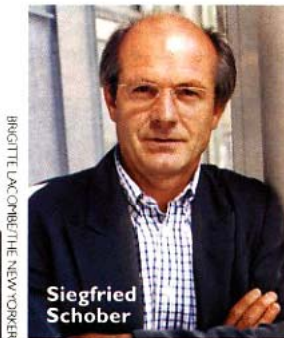
ROGER THÉROND, former editorial director of Hachette Filipacchi publications "My friends at *Paris Match* tip me off: Helmut Newton would like to do photo reporting. I call him up and—in his vague accent that could be from anywhere in the world—I hear the following: 'I've had it with tall girls. Send me on a real news assignment.' I think about it. He needs something powerful, something murky, reminiscent of American

noir movies of the 1950s.

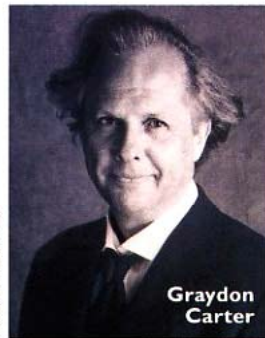
Then we find it: A trial is about to begin that will try suspects in a case that has fascinated France. A 5-year-old child was found dead, drowned, on the bank of a river in a small village in deepest France. The mother is charged with murder. The father has shot his own cousin, who, he



Tina
Brown



Siegfried
Schober



Graydon
Carter

Thoughts on Newton by four famous colleagues

strong, aggressive and relaxed, elementary and refined. The French poet Arthur Rimbaud demanded from the artist: You must be absolutely modern. Helmut Newton is absolutely modern—at any stage of his work—because his life and his photography are always in connection with the rhythm of the world. His photography of women and men, of beauty, horror, emotion, and sensation, can be totally perfect, extremely expressionistic, very cool. They can be erotic and cruel, dark and sweet, provocative and elegant. But you always feel the complex cultural background, a strong mixture of style and formation, and an artistic sensibility that is based on the great tradition of photographers, painters, sculptors, and filmmakers. Very often Newton is himself a painter, a sculptor, or a filmmaker when he does his pictures. He is so unique that one can feel how his eyes and his camera work on the body, how he uses the light on the skin. You can see

believes, committed the crime. A mysterious person has been writing abusive letters, making accusatory phone calls. The atmosphere is scary and explosive. When Helmut walks into court, the entire press corps is there. Photographers welcome him respectfully. Everybody tries to be helpful. He wants to work alone.

"His colleagues go about the job in the usual way: arrivals and departures of the lawyers, magistrates, and of all the actors in the drama. Helmut looks for an angle. One day he tells his assistant: 'Find me a crow.' They find a splendid, stuffed specimen. Helmut sets it up on top of the church tower, across from the courthouse. The picture is more black than it is white, and yet Helmut Newton's style is readily recognizable: mystery, fantasy, and a touch of terror. Helmut got a shot that summed up the whole case. Later on, we offered him two or three other stories. He turned us down." ■