



TIMELESS

Robert Farber's
Fashion Photography

February 10–August 31, 2025

Walking the Dog, (detail), 1989/2024. Sublimated photograph on Chromaluxe aluminum, 30 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

TIMELESS

Robert Farber's
Fashion Photography

February 10–August 31, 2025

VBMA
VERO BEACH MUSEUM OF ART



Boombbox, 1989/2017. Sublimated photograph on ChromaLuxe aluminum, 60 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Timeless: Robert Farber's Fashion Photography



Robert Farber (b. 1944) is a renowned photographer whose five-decade career spans both commercial and fine art photography. His diverse portfolio includes subjects ranging from fashion and portraiture to still lifes and landscapes, captured around the world. This exhibition features two of Farber's fashion-related series: "Vintage Fashion," which is primarily drawn from his commercial work, and "Deterioration," a series of fashion photographs transformed by the natural aging of their film transparencies. Over time, exposure to heat, humidity, and other environmental factors caused the film to react chemically, resulting in vivid, surreal distortions that give the images an unexpected, almost otherworldly, quality.

Farber, a self-taught artist, began his career as a photographer in New York City in the 1970s. Since then, his work has appeared in major publications such as *Vogue*, *GQ*, *Elle*, and *Vanity Fair*. He photographed numerous editorial advertisements and commercials for major brands such as Christian Dior, Bill Blass, Revlon, Bloomingdale's, Marshall Fields, and Saks Fifth Avenue. Farber captured some of the most iconic models of his time, including Gia Carangi (often considered the first supermodel), Janice Dickinson, Apollonia van Ravenstein, Iman, Beverly Johnson, Carol Alt, Christie Brinkley, and Linda Evangelista. Many of these models appear in the works included in this exhibition, but in some cases the aging of the original film has obscured or altered their features, transforming the images into abstract expressions of fashion and beauty.

Timeless brings these two fashion-related series together in a museum exhibition for the first time, showcasing the breadth of Farber's work in this genre. The show highlights his creative vision, his collaboration with models and brands, and his ability to reflect on the passage of time—whether by referencing past styles or allowing time itself to shape the final image. The exhibition offers a unique perspective on the intersection of Farber's artistic and commercial projects, exploring the lasting impact of his contributions to the world of fashion photography.



Angie 2, 1992/2024. Sublimated photograph on ChromaLuxe aluminum, 30 x 20 inches.
Courtesy of the artist.



Top: *Laundromat*, 1989/2024. Sublimated photograph on ChromaLuxe aluminum, 30 x 40 inches.
Courtesy of the artist.

Fashion Photography in Context

A relatively young genre, fashion photography began to take shape as a fine art practice around 1911, when Edward Steichen accepted a commission from couturier Paul Poiret to create the first “artistic” fashion photograph. In the 1920s and 1930s, magazines like *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* helped elevate the genre, showcasing sophisticated, high-art approaches to fashion. The 1940s and 1950s presented fashion—and, therefore, fashion photography—with both challenges and opportunities for transformation, from material shortages during and after World War II to the extravagant, glamorous clothing of the postwar era, a time of renewed optimism. In the 1960s, as the counterculture and civil rights movements gained momentum, fashion photography became more diverse, spontaneous, and experimental. Robert Farber’s career began in the 1970s, a period during which commercial photography grew rapidly. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, he captured the rise of supermodels and the high-concept editorial shoots that came to dominate the industry.

Paul Martineau, ed., *Icons of Style: A Century of Fashion Photography* (Getty Publications, 2016), 20.



Amazon, 1998. Archival pigment print, 30 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Viva Red Dress, 1977. Archival pigment print, 30 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Gia on the Lifeguard Stand, 1979/2017. Sublimated photograph on Archival pigment print, 30 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



“ Robert sees the world through the eyes of a romantic and he communicates by means of soft movement, flowing shapes and pure nature. I usually associate Robert’s images with romantic symbolism, more in keeping with the traditions of my own generation - antique pillars, steps, soft veils.

—Fashion Photographer, Horst P. Horst (German-American, 1906–1999)

Empire Diner, 1979/2017. Sublimated photograph on ChromaLuxe aluminum, 40 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Deterioration Series

This section features works from Farber's "Deterioration" series that reimagines his earlier fashion photography. The images are created from film that has been exposed to heat, humidity, and other elements over time, causing colorful, surreal distortions. The series is based on Kodachrome transparency films of photographs taken between 1977 and 1984, which had been stored in non-archival plastic sleeves that accelerated their deterioration. Farber did not notice the damage until the early 1990s, but over the following decades he periodically checked them to observe how they changed. In 2013 Farber chose to reproduce the images in large format, both to highlight the effects of their deterioration and to properly preserve the materials, halting further decay. The resulting works are a unique collaboration between the artist's initial vision, the unpredictable passage of time, and Farber's final intervention, which "stopped time" by freezing the moment of deterioration in its current state.

“ Today there are tens of thousands of serious photographers seeking new interpretations of the beauty of the female form. There is but a handful whose work truly interests us by revealing different ways of seeing and understanding this beauty. Robert Farber is one of the very few who is able to delight and please us in this elusive approach to nature. From abstraction to realism he reveals to us his love of the female form. His delightful and beautiful photographs offer a unique pleasure.

—Photographer, Arnold Newman (American, 1918–2006) in 2001

Deterioration #155, 1982/2017. Sublimated photograph on ChromaLuxe aluminum, 48 x 72 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Deterioration #138, 1985/2017. Sublimated photograph on ChromaLuxe aluminum, 48 x 72 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Deterioration #117, 1981/2017. Sublimated photograph on ChromaLuxe aluminum, 72 x 48 inches.
Courtesy of the artist.



Deterioration #133, 1980/2017. Sublimated photograph on ChromaLuxe aluminum, 72 x 48 inches.
Courtesy of the artist.



Deterioration #147, 1983/2017. Sublimated photograph on ChromaLuxe aluminum, 72 x 48 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Cover: *Iman*, 1977/2017. Sublimated photograph on ChromaLuxe aluminum, 60 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.