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## Surreal Reels | The Films of Guy Bourdin

[Women's Fashion](#) | BY [AMY THOMAS](#) September 24, 2009 4:50 pm



Courtesy of the Guy Bourdin Estate, 2009

1975 / Vogue UK

[Guy Bourdin](#)'s first fashion shoot for Vogue France in 1955 included an image of a woman wearing a hat below three butchered cow heads with their tongues hanging out. And his oeuvre didn't exactly get less sensational or surreal from there.

Both renowned and reviled for photographs that were often sexually charged and sinister, but always masterfully composed and visually complex, Bourdin revolutionized fashion photography in the latter part of the 20th century. In addition to working with Vogue in France, the United States, Britain and Italy for more than 30 years, the photographer shot for Harper's Bazaar and Photo and created arresting advertising campaigns for Charles Jourdan, Issey Miyake, Chanel, Emanuel Ungaro and Pentax. In an era when wholesome smiles and polyester pantsuits blended into the (faux) woodwork, Bourdin shocked with bare bottoms, bleeding nipples and atmospheres as seedy as Amber Wave's San Fernando Valley and as slick as Joan Collins's lip-gloss.

While his photographs themselves are like mini cinematic experiences, plunging you into daring and thrilling scenarios, Bourdin actually shot 8mm, super 8 and 16mm films. Excerpts from these films will be shown for the first time at Le Bon Marché Rive Gauche in Paris with the exhibition "[Guy Bourdin: Ses Films](#)" (through Oct. 29).

A legendary fashion landmark in its own right, Le Bon Marché is using floating screens, panoramic projections and infinite mirrored boxes throughout darkened galleries to bring Bourdin's stylized worlds to life. The exhibition, curated with the help of his only son, Samuel, encompasses a series of 15 clips of digitized and edited cine films, shot between the '60s and '80s. Fashion meets landscape, black and white merges with color, collages combine with close-ups, and ethereal beauty mixes with hard-core sexuality — the films are every bit as mesmerizing and taunting as his stills.

The work of Bourdin, a born-and-bred Parisian and Man Ray protégé, isn't being confined to his hometown's appreciative gaze — stay tuned for Sean Brandt's forthcoming feature, "When the Sky Fell Down: The Myth of Guy Bourdin."

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