









COVER STORY

ast month, while Richard Avedon was playing down his fashion photographer profile by showing Manhattan numerous images he has produced in other genres, another New Yorker, Arthur Elgort, was making personal appearances at the city's book stores and the Staley-Wise gallery to launch Models Manual, which focuses on his 22 years of fashion for Condé Nast and other magazines.

The Condé Nast connection began in 1971, when British Vogue summoned Elgort from Paris to shoot his first major European fashion feature. Aiming then — and since — for a spontaneous and natural look, whether photographing on location or in the studio, Elgort left electronic flash and studio techniques to the likes of Penn, Avedon and Hiro.

With those guys around, I felt there was no need for me to do the same thing and, besides, I was drawn to what was going on in the street. I believe in pictures inspired by real life where, for instance, models behave like people they see sitting at café tables, coming out of buildings and looking around, or walking across the street, casual, relaxed and smiling. I respond when models pick up on living examples and encourage them to watch out for things that just happen every day.'

In the late 70s, fashion had loosened up and in 1980 Vogue's creative director, Alexander Liberman, credited Elgort with capturing the trend photographically. He wrote: With Arthur Elgort a new era opened up of marvellous American young women caught in action, going about their lives. This is what fashion magazines are all about today — the sense of purpose in a modern woman's

Over the years, while shootsuch as China and the Caribbean — Elgort has been clicking away with his so-called 'unofficial camera' in between taking the essential editorial pictures. house these personal shots, he profession at large. model of our time', adorns the racing, a trainer has to be able to carry it off?



Over the years, while shoot-ing for Vogues on both sides of the Atlantic – often in locations

Trevor Gett meets the legendary Arthur Elgort who has written a Models Manual

From the bulging files which experiences with him and in the to see them. Can they wear the times instinct lets you down, you clothes, transform themselves, don't see the potential and they selected over 500 for Arthur Pleased to have known many have the range to wear Comme go to Ellen von Unwerth or some *Elgort's Models Manual.* Christy household names before they des Garçons in the morning and other photographer who thinks Turlington, whom he calls 'the big time, Elgort says: 'In Valentino in the afternoon and they're fantastic. But that's the

cover, and within are behind-the- imagine which horses have what 'It's a little like love at first scenes pictures of her and other it takes to lead the field; photo-sight and if I feel I want to take make the jump with a model, if famous faces who have also graphers need to think like that pictures of a girl for nothing, you're the first, or at least one of talked to Elgort about their about the girls who come along that's a pretty good sign. Some- the first, to help put her on the

fun of it.

'There's a real thrill if you



in the second is the second

 Opposite: typical out-and-about Elgort, on this occasion in China. Top: Here's looking at you - Karen Mulder. Above: Linda Evangelista has eyes only for this singular photographer. © Arthur Elgort.

map. I'll give you a good example: Schiffer and Lauren Hutton. her mother had to send her the money for her test shots and stuff like that. Then, when people saw her pictures, the news travelled fast and the word was out that she was fabulous.'

Evangelista herself recalls: When I went to see Arthur Elgort for the very first time, I knew that a collapsed lung. I promised him that I could do whatever he wanted. I wasn't great right away - but I was trying hard.' For followers of fashion, the rest is history.

Personal traits

Evangelista is only one of the

before my camera quite early on. She's much more of a personality than a clothes-hanger and very serious about the profession.

A crowd gathers

When not modelling she's working out, having facials and She loves them.



terrific. The average working life few have the resilience to reinvent with people'). themselves or to preserve themselves so well that they stick Hardest camera around longer. Some models bees model, as you can see from formats, although the Hasselblad which is crossed and blurred all overcome. Mapplethorpe used the time.'

Manual pictures are what Elgort man — took the pictures, calls 'getting ready', and em- whereas photographers such as brace both fashion shoots and Weegee and Lisette Model had couture presentations. 'Taking personas that overtook the Speed shots while the girls are having Graphics or whatever cameras hair and make-up done is a way they photographed with. With a when I started photographing 'Cindy's dark, voluptuous, obvi- for me to warm up in the way Rollei I can beat most of the Linda Evangelista, she told me ously cover-girl glamour came that performers do. I don't want Hasselblad pictures I see, at to walk out on my set cold and I least on the mailing shots they do find the 'getting ready' business is very related to the actual shoot.

'The excitement that's generated when Karl Lagerfeld, Azzedine Alaia and Christian Lacroix are about to unveil their collections is the closest thing to a is about revered big band tenor it was a very important go-see. I generally taking good care of Broadway opening. I worked at player Illinois Jacquet. His most had just come out of hospital with herself. When a crowd gathers Carnegie Hall when I was a recent effort, Colorado Country, around, she talks with people youngster, took actors' publicity revolves around a five-time world very openly and is not all all con-shots as my first paying job then champion rodeo legend. 'Chandescending. Claudia Schiffer, on did a lot of dance photography nel Four is going to screen Colthe other hand, is not too verbal with Balanchine and the New orado Country in 1995. When it and people are intimidated by York City Ballet, so I understand was shown at the Sundance Film her because she's a big blonde, preparation. For me, it's almost Festival, the cinematographer, bigger than life. But if you ment the fact of the day more than the Morten Sandtroen, won an award. tion movies, she'll talk for hours. show itself and very fascinating He's collaborated with me for to photograph.'

dozens of models whose atti- ally starred in the movies, was his way, Elgort financed it him- projects. This is very encouragtudes and personal traits are dis- thinking of retiring from model- self to allow control over every- ing, but putting a film together is cussed in the book. Others with ling when first I photographed thing except the layout, which an expensive business, so I'll whom Elgort has a good rapport her in 1970. Last year she did a he entrusted to an expatriate have to take a lot more pictures include Cindy Crawford, Claudia session with me again and was Englishman, Steve Hiett, with before the next one'.

whom he collaborated on an earlier book in 1981. Between them, they opted for a small format and a lively Pop Art approach so that the comments and tips given by magazine editors, agency heads, seen-it-all models and Elgort himself would not come across as too didactic.

To market the book, Elgort settled on DAP (Distributed Art Publishers) because 'I saw Lee Friedlander, Larry Clark, Bob Willoughby and Danny Lyon were on their list and that's pretty good company to be in.' A future book will be Camera Crazy, a title which sums up Elgort's feelings ever since he picked up a Nikon at New York's Hunter College and decided to switch from art to photography (he says of art: 'Everything they taught was of a model is about 10 years. A abstract and I wanted to deal

come actresses and some actress- Elgort works happily in most my pictures of Julia Roberts, is something of a bête noire. 'I Andie McDowell, Nicole Kid- use my Hasselblad for an adverman, Uma Thurman and Sharon tisement sometimes when they Stone. Where one activity starts want a very clear image, but it's and another ceases is a fine line the hardest camera for me to one and, with his work, it looks Many of the 500-plus Models as if the Hasselblad - not the send out.'

Elgort's other diversion from fashion is making films. He began with a short on tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon and followed this with a feature-length documentary, Texas Tenor, which five years on television commer-'Lauren Hutton, who has actu- Determined to do the book cials as well as documentary