

This is one of a series of Fact Sheets on the photo imaging sector developed by industry experts to help people new to the sector understand the different job roles and the skills required in order to succeed. Fact Sheets are based on Job Profiles developed by Skillset. For the full list of *Job Profiles for the Audio Visual Industries*, visit www.skillset.org. We aim to keep this information as current as possible - a fully updated version will be available in the Winter of 2006. All Fact Sheets can be downloaded and printed from our website www.skillset.org/careers. To give us feedback, e-mail careers@skillset.org.

Fashion is one of the most vibrant and exhilarating areas of professional photography. Though only a few top photographers live up to the glamorous image of overseas travel, exotic locations and beautiful models, there is continuous demand across the industry for originality and innovation. Photographers who understand fashion trends and can deliver striking images that sell the look and style of the clothes are much in demand and can command considerable fees.

Fashion photographs are commissioned for a variety of publications, ranging from mail-order catalogues to high-fashion magazines and Sunday supplements. Their working methods, as well as the creative skills required, vary accordingly. Fashion Photographers often work within a team, which includes art directors, editors and other creative support staff.

The work

Fashion Photographers work both in studios and on location to produce imaginative and eye-catching photographs that illustrate and advertise clothes, accessories and lifestyle. They need to understand each client's brand image, the various end uses of images, and be able to work closely with other creative people to fulfil the brief.

Mail-order catalogue photographers must work quickly and economically, with a variety of models and situations, representing the style and features of clothes as accurately and stylishly as possible. They are usually employed by photographic or design studios and may spend days, or weeks, working on a single range of clothing, producing enough photographs each day to fill several catalogue pages. These photographers enjoy the benefits of regular employment, such as a monthly salary and paid holidays, but do not earn as much as practitioners at higher levels of the industry.

High Fashion and Magazine Photographers work from their own studios, on location, or, occasionally, in a studio supplied by their clients. They must be innovative and artistic with an intense interest in – and knowledge of – the latest fashion trends, as well as the history of fashion, art and fashion photography. They must also cultivate and maintain top-level contacts within the fashion industry and the fashion publishing business. The material rewards for these photographers can be extremely high; however, the fashion world can be very fickle and photographers need to continually refresh their visual style to avoid being seen as passé. High Fashion Photographers must therefore use all their charm and interpersonal skills to communicate their passion and creative vision to a very demanding and sophisticated audience.

Essential knowledge and skills

Fashion Photography requires more than just a passing interest in fashion trends. Photographers need to immerse themselves totally in the world of fashion and develop outstanding creative and technical skills that will give their photographs individual character and style. They should also be prepared to experiment and explore new ideas and techniques in their own time, and acquire the level of social and interpersonal skills appropriate to their particular area of operation. They should also be capable of sourcing props and accessories.

- Catalogue Photographers need to be good employees and reliable team players. They need to be respectful, hard-working and able to maintain employers' confidentiality agreements. They must have good communication and organisational skills and be able to control studio or location situations where the photographer, assistants, models, stylists, make-up artists and hairdressers all need to work together towards a common goal. They need outstanding technical skills, and must work closely and quickly to fulfil the client's and designer's creative brief.
- Magazine Photographers supply fashion photographs to weekly or monthly magazines, daily newspapers and weekend supplements. They need strong creative and technical skills in order to



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follow and interpret the picture editor's brief. Excellent management and interpersonal skills are also required, to maintain publishing contacts and arrange the efficient organisation of the studio or location. Magazine Photographers often work via an agency, with the agent taking responsibility for marketing the photographers' work and securing assignments, on a percentage commission basis.

- High Fashion Photographers operate in the upper echelons of the fashion world. They are often high-profile and highly-paid photographers who work either from their own studio, or from a rented studio or location. Their success and elevation to this role is based on experience and track record. This is often the result of years of hard work, during which time these photographers have cultivated a wide range of technical and visual skills, and influential contacts within the industry.

High Fashion Photographers are normally expected to select their own team of assistants and specialists, including stylists, set-builders, scene-painters and models. These photographers are dedicated, hard-working professionals who need to produce unique and innovative images that will not only satisfy the clients' visualisation, but also communicate the zeitgeist of the time. To work in this area demands considerable ambition and dedication since the day seldom ends with the last photograph, and High Fashion Photographers must often continue networking and making new contacts by attending media events and social functions.

Training and qualifications

Fashion Photographers rarely work in quiet studios, with only camera, lights and music for company – they work in busy studios, and must have sufficient experience and composure to operate effectively under pressure. Some colleges and universities offer courses that specialise in fashion photography and employ established photographers as visiting lecturers. These courses provide a sound photographic grounding, and should give the potential Fashion Photographer an idea of what is involved. However working as an Assistant is probably the best preparation for the reality of the fashion world (see the Fact Sheet for Assistant Photographer). This role offers new entrants the opportunity to meet clients, art directors, models, stylists and make-up artists, to hear their discussions with photographers, and to understand the details of the preparation, execution and presentation necessary to the job.

Employers may support work-based qualifications, such as Apprenticeships and NVQ/SVQs. Apprenticeships are available in Photo Imaging, incorporating Key Skills, a Technical Certificate (C&G 6924), and an NVQ at level 2 or 3. NVQ/SVQs are available at levels 2, 3 and 4 in Photography, levels 2, 3 and 4 in Digital Imaging, and levels 3 and 4 in Digital Photography & Imaging. Membership of a professional association such as the Association of Photographers (AOP) or the British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP) may also be beneficial.

Health and Safety

Photographers are likely to be subject to physical stresses from carrying heavy camera equipment and lighting indoors and out, in all seasons, come rain or shine. They should therefore seek advice about appropriate techniques for lifting and moving equipment. In addition, they need to understand Health and Safety legislation and should be capable of assessing and managing the risks and potential dangers associated with the use of electrical lighting, equipment and props. They should also ensure that they have a current Public Liability insurance policy to cover their working practices.

Where to go for more information

Skillset is the Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries. For information about training and professional qualifications, links to the Skillset network of training partners, and access to the comprehensive Skillset course database, visit www.skillset.org
Skillset Careers is the UK's only specialist media careers advice service delivering individual career solutions when and how you need them. For detailed media careers information and advice, contact one of the free careers helplines. Call **0808 300 900** in England (also available to callers from Wales and Northern Ireland) or **0808 100 8094** in Scotland, or visit the website www.skillset.org/careers

The British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP) is a not for profit association of professional image makers that aims to improve standards, develop skills and encourage continuing professional development. The BIPP recognise over thirty colleges across the UK who have proved that they have the resources, facilities and expert lecturers necessary to run an effective professional photographic course. For details of BIPP Qualifications for practising professionals, visit the Membership pages on the BIPP website www.bipp.com. For a list of approved colleges, including those offering the PQE, e-mail mberry@bipp.com. Student membership is available to students attending a vocational course in photography at an educational establishment in the UK. The Institute's journal *The Photographer* is supplied free to all members. **T: 01920 464011**

The Association of Photographers (AOP) is a trade association of professional photographers, who campaign vigorously for photographers' rights and have had a key influence on the development of professional photography in the UK. Their publication *Beyond the Lens* is widely recognised as the definitive industry guide to copyright and licensing law, ethics and business practice. The AOP has a number of affiliated colleges and promotes, maintains and develops relationships between education and the professional industry. It also publishes *IMAGE* magazine, which reports on current trends in professional photography and image making.
www.the-aop.org T: 020 7739 6669

The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) is the industry's 'learned body'. Established over 150 years ago, it aims to promote the art and science of Photography. It awards distinctions that are recognised throughout the world and has established specialist interest groups, and meetings for its members, who are drawn from both amateur and professional photographers. It publishes a monthly Journal. **www.rps.org**