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the house dress: a story of eroticism and fashion

Plenty of ink has been spilled in the name of high fashion (the tuxedo and the cocktail frock each have dozens of tomes devoted to them), but this month, a glamorous underdog gets its commemorative due. Elda Danese's *The House Dress: A Story of Eroticism and Fashion* (Rizzoli) traces the long, surprising history of this humble outfit, traditionally the garment of choice for coupon clippers and Mrs. Roper. But Danese's inspiration was much more sultry: "Sophia Loren. She is the icon of the housedress. On her, its shabbiness is transformed in a sort of sensual relaxation. To me, she looks more real when I see her in such a garment than when I see her wearing lavish and elegant dresses." The uniform of domestic divas was originally designed for "masking ample forms and hiding stains," but it eventually appeared on the runways of fashion's biggest designers. By the time Diane von Furstenberg graced the cover of *Newsweek* in one (of her own design) in 1976, says Danese in *The House Dress*, "the garment worn for housework [had] been turned into a dress that, with different nuances, emphasizes the sexuality of the female body." And how. Just a few years later, Jessica Lange's modest little number would lead to an unforgettably sizzling rendezvous in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, chronicled here along with dozens of other films that prove the house dress to be anything but dowdy.

TRACEY LOMRANTZ



behind the scenes: top design

dani stahl talks hair with fashion designer (and childhood friend) **charlotte ronson**. as the face of **trilliant**, sebastian professional's new shine-boosting product, she's given it some thought.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR HAIR HISTORY.

[Growing up] my twin, Samantha, was a little experimental and creative with her hair. Every time she would want her hair super-short, I would have to get that, too. Ever since then, I sort of clung onto my long, long hair.

YOUR SISTER WAS ALWAYS A HAIR TRAILBLAZER.

She would have florescent hair, or when everyone else was doing that seventh grade flip-your-hair-to-the-side thing, Sam had it longer in the front, shaved in the back, hot pink, bleached...

DID YOU EVER DO SOMETHING THAT YOU REGRETTED?

I did a lot of Sun-In, and turned it orange. I thought it looked good at the time.

WE ALL DID.

And when my mother would have her hair done, she'd be like, "OK girls, do you want a little stripe or highlights?"

YOU COME FROM A HOUSEHOLD OF CREATIVE COIFERS.

Even Mark, my brother, would have the blonde spatters. He would get it teased—it looked like a bird pooped on his head.

HOW DO YOU STYLE YOUR HAIR IF YOU HAVE, LIKE, TWO SECONDS?

If I have to make it kind of look nice, I just put a braid in it so it somehow looks finished. Whenever I go get it done I think, Oh, they'll do something that I wouldn't have thought to do and make me look a little cleaned up, but I'm miserable. I look like I'm going to a bat mitzvah—where everyone has the straight, long hair.

HOW DID SEBASTIAN FIT IN WITH YOUR UNDONE LOOK? THE CAMPAIGN IS A MUCH MORE GLAMMED-UP VERSION OF YOU.

They've been around for a long time and they're a talented team. It was important to stay true to the Charlotte Ronson girl. The theme for my collection for spring

was a girl going to a rock show in the mid-'80s, early '90s—and what she would look like today. So to be true to me and that girl, it is kind of a tousled look.

WHAT WAS THE SEBASTIAN SHOOT LIKE?

It was fun—it was like nothing I've ever been through. It was three days and a lot of touching. I have so much appreciation for models. It's not easy at all, there are all these people watching, and they want you to lift one leg.

WHO'S YOUR HAIR IDOL?

I kind of always liked...

YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF MY HAIR IDOLS.

I feel like mine is way too long.

NO, IT'S AMAZING.

I have to think about who my hair idol is.

YOU CAN, LIKE, TELL ME LATER OR WHATEVER.

