

## **Anatomy of a photo shoot.(EDITOR'S LETTER)**

Source: Town & Country, Publication Date: 03/01/2006

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FASHION PHOTO SHOOTS are among the most complicated and expensive endeavors for a visually driven magazine such as Town & Country. They cost the most money and require the most planning. There's a lot involved (time, resources and, most of all, talent) and a great deal at stake. One bad-weather day on a Caribbean island can be a costly proposition if the entire crew has to extend its stay. Should a model or a celebrity show up late for a sitting at a studio right here in New York City, it may mean going into overtime. If, in the end, the results are wholly unsatisfactory--it happens rarely, but it happens--then the entire story has to be written off or reshot. (I am wincing at the very thought of it.) Since this is one of the two fashion issues we do every year, I thought I'd try to give you some insight into how complicated fashion photo shoots can be.

As soon as the spring and fall fashion shows in New York, Milan and Paris are over, our fashion editors come to me with their ideas, reinforced by images and examples displayed on large bulletin boards. Once we have established a theme for each story, the long process begins in earnest. Mary Shanahan, T&C's gifted creative director (there are creative directors, and then there is Mary Shanahan), confers with photo editor Casey Tierney and the fashion editor handling a particular story. They discuss which photographers might be best suited to the assignment and whether it should be executed on location or in a studio. They then come back to me (not just once but perhaps several times, depending on the need) with suggestions of people, places and points of view and myriad other details. Still more discussion. When we've lined up the photographer, Casey then has to attend to the tedious business of estimating the cost of each and every shoot. (And if it's too high, more discussion.)

Along the way, things are bound to go awry. The photographer may drop out at the last minute because his or her schedule changes. Maybe the celebrity can accommodate us only on this or that day. A location shifts for various reasons--too complicated to get to, no rooms at the inn, storm warnings. Finally, dates are set (never in stone, however). Arrangements begin to be made. The final selection of models is sealed. We either commission hair and makeup artists locally (not so easy in remote places) or send them from here. All the planning happens at the same time. It's head-spinning.

The next step is to call into our offices the clothes we plan to photograph (and remember, we are borrowing them, not buying them, so we must handle them with the utmost care). That's done by the fashion department, now headed by Amelia Vicini, and it is incredibly time-consuming. If we shoot ten to twelve pieces for a story, we may call in ten times that many so we have choices (dicey, considering that designers often make only one sample of each style they create). Let's not forget that for each piece, there must be accompanying shoes, handbags and other accessories (and when "other accessories" means fine jewelry, it entails hiring experienced guards to protect the merchandise). Again, everything has to be approved and accounted for, right down to the last bangle bracelet. A day or two before the shoot is set to begin, racks and racks of clothes are shown to me for my final okay. I told you it was a complicated process, and we haven't even left the office yet.

But at least we're getting warmer. This was pretty much the way the shoots took place for the March issue. One story, photographed by Olivia Graham, focuses on neutral shades--a big trend this season. It is set inside the greenhouse of a private residence situated in Westchester, New York, which is why we entitled it "The Greenhouse Effect" (page 176). For fashion inspired by 19th- and 20th-century artists, we rented an artist's studio so Brian Doben could work his magic (page 164). Voluptuous Salma Hayek, who appears on our cover and is profiled on page 186, posed for Jim Wright at Hudson Studios in downtown Manhattan. The one semi-exotic location we feature is Puerto Rico, where we shot the story "Hot Stuff" (page 152).

The last stage is receiving the images, editing them and then laying out the story. This is the art department's job, and it is no small undertaking. Each article must look distinctive but must also appear perfectly at home in the pages of Town & Country. Every fashion story should stand on its own but should also blend seamlessly with what precedes and follows it. Above all, each article should feel as if it had been custom-tailored for T&C. This is how it's done, in brief (or, as Casey quipped, "the Cliffs Notes version"). Now you be the judge.