

# Drawn to her

Kate Moss's enduring allure is celebrated in a new exhibition of fashion illustration. *Fleur Britten* reports

**K**ate is the one model from the past 30 years who is going to stand out," says the acclaimed British fashion photographer Nick Knight. And when he makes a prediction, it's usually a safe bet. "Look at Alexander McQueen, it's hard to imagine his work without Kate. It's the same for John [Galliano] and Vivienne [Westwood]. She has done some of the most incredible catwalk moments for them."

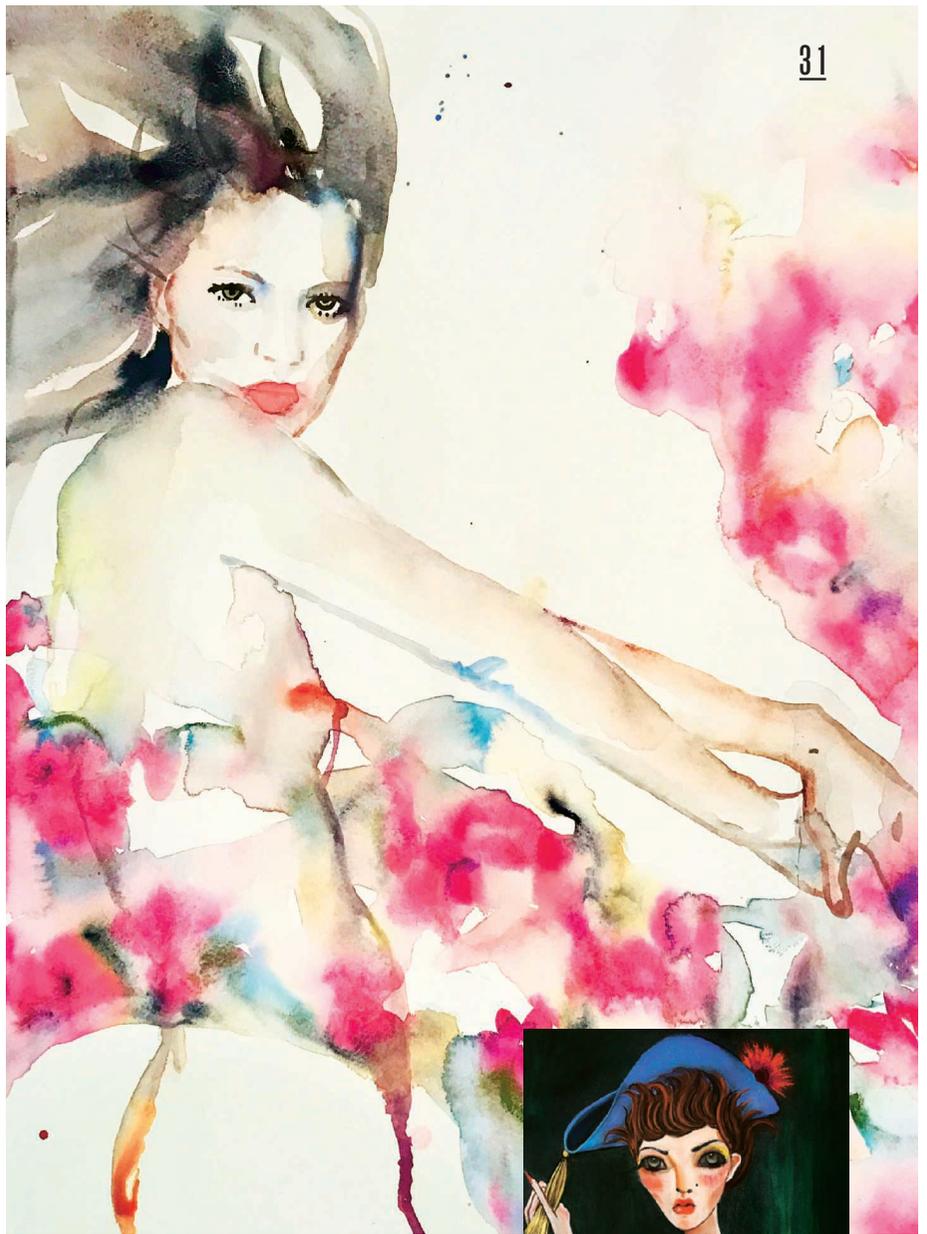
So, when Knight wanted to curate "a really exciting exhibition" to launch the new Belgravia gallery for SHOWstudio, his avant-garde fashion content platform, Moss was the obvious subject. She chose her 25 favourite catwalk outfits, then he and his team approached top fashion illustrators, allocating the looks to the right artist — for example, Versace's SS96 holographic wedding dress to someone who works with metallics.

Just what is it about Kate? How did the girl from Croydon rise above all that incredible competition to become the face of fashion? "She has become symbolic of a freedom of spirit," says Knight, who first shot her in 1994 for *US Vogue*. "She represents counterculture in the same way the Rolling Stones did in the 1960s. And when you see Kate, it's a thrill because you don't often hear from her." What's more, he says, she is "fantastically professional. She really understands how to bring out the narrative in a piece of clothing and how to move to show it off. She reflects everything the designers have been trying to say — it's why they love her so much."

As do the illustrators, it seems. "They all said yes straightaway," Knight says. "A generation of fashion illustrators all much younger than Kate look to her as an icon of beauty." A beauty who has resisted the temptation to try to look like a teenager, he adds. "Kate has accepted her womanliness with grace and dignity, when many believe beauty to be an attribute of youth."

All the works in the exhibition are original and are for sale in the gallery and online, with prices ranging from £85 to £4,500. All, promises Knight, are highly collectible. Because the genre is enjoying a renaissance, prices of fashion illustrations are rising. "Since fashion photography became less experimental, fashion illustration has stepped up to the mark," he says. The most collectible illustrators include Gill Button, Unskilled Worker and Laura Laine. "If you want to buy art, fashion illustration is a good and affordable way to get started." ●

*Moving Kate, SHOWstudio Gallery, 22D Ebury Street, London SW1, opens on Tuesday, free entry; showstudio.com*



Kate's finest moments, from top  
Yves Saint Laurent Couture  
SS93 by Fahren Feingold, £900;  
Vivienne Westwood SS94 by  
Unskilled Worker, £4,500;  
Dior SS98 by Conrad Roset,  
£1,200; Blumarine SS93  
by Suzy Platt, £900