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ROYAL
PHOTOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY

David Hurn Home truths and
cake with a Magnum luminary

The creative force
redefining Rey
from Star Wars

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BLACK VANGUARD

The pioneers leading
a revolution in fashion
photography



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A photograph of a person's leg and foot resting on a sand dune under a blue sky. The leg is dark-skinned and is positioned horizontally, with the foot pointing towards the left. The sand is light-colored and the sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall composition is simple and evocative, suggesting a sense of freedom and connection to nature.

**‘WE’RE SENDING
A MESSAGE
THAT **EVERYONE** IS
WELCOME IN FASHION’**

A photography collective is revolutionising the fashion world, argues Antwaun Sargent in this extract from his book *The New Black Vanguard*



FASHION

PREVIOUS PAGES

Dana Scruggs, Nyadhour, Elevated, Death Valley, California, 2019

FACING PAGE,

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Renell Medrano, Slick Woods, Brooklyn, 2018; Tyler Mitchell, Untitled (Twins II), New York, 2017; Ruth Ossai, London, 2017

BELOW

Awol Erizku, Untitled (Forces of Nature #1), 2014

IN SEPTEMBER 2018 *American Vogue*, one of the most influential magazines in fashion, published two covers of Beyoncé. It was her fourth *Vogue* cover, but these images became renowned as they were captured by young black image maker Tyler Mitchell. At just 23 years old, Mitchell became, remarkably, the first African American to shoot the cover of the venerable publication.

The fashion image is a totem. Over the last century photographers have taken commanding pictures of models, celebrities, and people cast from daily life. These images have supplied the mainstream consciousness with both positive and negative representations of beauty and the body, exerting influence on our collective tastes and understandings of identity.

Technology – namely, digital and social media – has changed what we consider to be, and how

we consume, fashion images. We now seemingly encounter them everywhere; but in our image-obsessed culture the cover of a fashion magazine is still regarded as one of the biggest platforms on which photographers can make a statement.

With his groundbreaking shoot Mitchell became a member of a small club of black image makers who have contributed to the magazine's pages over the last century; this group includes Awol Erizku, Lorna Simpson, ●





'Images over the last century have supplied the mainstream consciousness with representations of beauty and the body, exerting influence on our collective tastes'





'Their contemporary portrayals of black life are reframing established paradigms'

• and Gordon Parks, who began working as a *Vogue* staff photographer in the mid-1940s.

The black fashion model and author Barbara Summers noted that black beauty has long been a contested notion in popular culture: 'Beauty is a power. And the struggle to have the entire range of black beauty recognised and respected is a serious one'.

Mitchell's *Vogue* shoot speaks to a shift in who gets to take fashion images and what they represent. The pictures and their makers are a part of a new black

vanguard of photographers, working internationally, across the African diaspora, and creating contemporary portrayals of black life that are reframing established paradigms.

The loose collective, which includes, along with Erizku and Mitchell, Campbell Addy, Nadine Ijewere, Quil Lemons, Namsa Leuba, Renell Medrano, Jamal Nxedlana, Daniel Obasi, Ruth Ossai, Adrienne Raquel, Dana Scruggs and Stephen Tayo are making fashion images that establish the significance of the

black figure – and even more radically, the black creator – as a new ideal in contemporary culture. Their works blur the conventional boundaries between art and fashion. Their images of black models – whether professionals or those cast from the photographers' families, the street, or Instagram – and celebrities draw on such genres as portraiture and documentary, conceptual, and still life, bringing in a whole new set of references and black aesthetics.

The New Black Vanguard's •

ABOVE
Nadine Ijewere,
Untitled III,
2012

FACING PAGE
Namsa Leuba,
Untitled III,
Paris, 2012

