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ON THE BACK

Patricia Field may have kissed her Bowery store farewell this year, but the flame-haired fashion legend (and downtown society icon) is hardly out on Skid Row; she's about to make her debut at Art Basel Miami Beach.

by Wendy Sy

photographed by Keith Major

Runway photos by Michael Wittig.
Patricia wears a blouse by Louis Vuitton, pants by Emporio Armani, vest by Steven Pochtar for Furs by PK, shoes by Dolce & Gabbana, and arm gloves and necklace by Patricia Field.





ver coffee in her tiny ArtFashion studio in downtown New York, Patricia Field reveals that she plans to drive to Miami in her 2002 metallic aqua Ford T-Bird with her poodles, Sultana and Bootie. For Art Basel, she and the artists she represents are taking over the White Dot Gallery in Wynwood throughout the month of December to exhibit their ArtFashion collection. It includes classic street clothing pieces (think T-shirts, hoodies, denim tops and motorcycle jackets) with wild, one-of-a-kind painted designs. Among the artists are Scooter LaForge, Kyle Brincefield, Tom Knight, Suzanne Mallouk, Suzan Pitt, Jody Morlock, Iris Barbee Bonner, Ben Copperwheat, SSIK Designs, Steven Wine and Hushi Mortezaie. They are transforming the gallery into an interactive space, displaying a mix of paintings and sculptures as well as photography by Tina Paul and Edward Mapplethorpe.

Fabulous at 74 years young, Field has spent decades in the fashion industry, gaining more recognition and status by the year. Before we knew her as a longtime store owner, and later as a stylist and costume designer, she was an Upper East Side girl, living on 76th between Second and Third, a few blocks from the dry cleaning business her parents owned and operated. She would visit every morning, learning fashion appreciation and entrepreneurial skills from an early age. Field has fond memories of growing up in the city: "I used to run around the East Side by myself. I was free, independent, and could go anywhere I wanted."

At 8 years old, she moved to Whitestone, Queens, after her father passed away and her mother remarried. Fifteen miles from her origins, Field was introduced to suburban life, but the faster-paced city kept drawing her back. She graduated from New York University with a major in liberal arts and, typically for those times, she didn't have a career choice lined up. After seeing an ad for a manager position at the Farkas family department store Alexander's, she applied, and got the job. "I realized it was something I was interested in learning," says Field in her raspy voice. Under her watch, sales in her department rose after Field remerchandised the floor—she got a mannequin, pressed the blouses, made a visual display, and before you knew it items were flying off the racks. She was promoted to assistant buyer, and a year and a half later she moved on to work in the same role at Petrie Stores, which operated under the name Marianne Shops.

In 1966, Field decided to strike out on her own with a boutique. Located on Washington Place in the heart of the NYU buildings, the small space carried Mod styles, which drew in the college girls and cool kids downtown. Five years



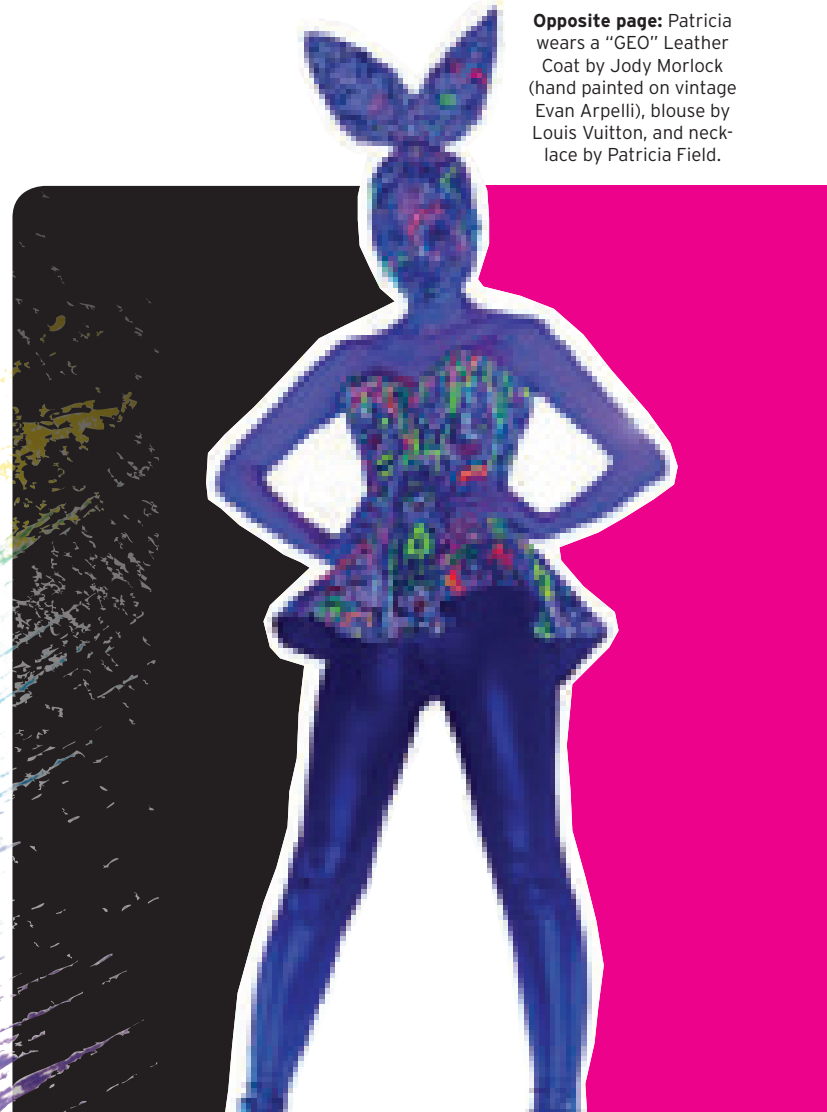
Above: 38th Street Floral Denim Vest and Shorts, STUDeff NYC by Kyle Brincefield.

Bottom: Bunny Ears Mask and Flared Corset Dress, Tom Tom Fashions by Tom Knight.

Opposite page: Patricia wears a "GEO" Leather Coat by Jody Morlock (hand painted on vintage Evan Arpelli), blouse by Louis Vuitton, and necklace by Patricia Field.

"Don't forget, I was born an uptown girl."

—PATRICIA FIELD



later, Field moved to a larger building on East 8th Street, which became *the* go-to shopping spot during the '70s club scene and beyond. You never knew what you would find inside. A studded bustier? A purple wig? A multicolored fur coat? A pre-Caitlyn Jenner trannie or three? "My store was a bazaar and appealed to the younger crowd. It was always transitioning to the zeitgeist of the time," says Field.

She took risks and lived life on the edge, much like Tiger Morse, the uptown socialite who was a predecessor in fashionland and an Andy Warhol muse. "I think we are perceived in the same way," she says. Perhaps it was their shared eccentric style and uptown roots that led Andy Warhol to Patricia Field. "I'll never forget. He said, 'Oh, I'm really pleased to meet you, Patricia, you're famous!' I started laughing because he was really comical," says Field. "I was impressed by his dry wit." But not by his generosity. "Halston, who was one of my best friends, used to call him a cheapskate."

Fast-forward to today, and the social barriers between parts of the city remain, but they have changed. "Uptown has one personality and downtown has another, and as a result, a consciousness started to develop. In the '70s, the East Village was on fire—there were tenement houses and all these artistic young people were moving in. It started to solidify into a lively nighttime area, whereas uptown was dead," says Field. "I think in some areas of the city, it has blended and others have not. High society stays uptown and ventures downtown for amusement. One area that is growing by leaps and bounds today is near the World Trade Center. Residential buildings have developed, Hermès and Saks Fifth Avenue opened up, and now it's packed with people. It's fun to watch the city go through its changes."



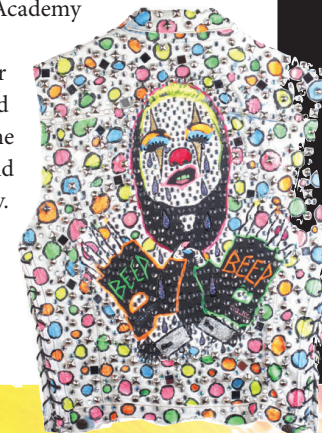
Above: Lightning Tudor Rose Boho Dress by Ben Copperwheat. **Right:** AbFab Patsy Embellished Vest, Tom Tom Fashions by Tom Knight. **Bottom:** Flight Suit, THESEPINKLIPS by Iris Barbee Bonner.



Being a society woman today, Field thinks, is not as glamorous as she imagines it was in the 1930s, like in the movie *The Women*. "You look at fashion as a clue; I see very wealthy women shop at Chanel and walk out head to toe in the brand. I love Chanel and own a lot of their pieces, but dropping a couple hundred thousand dollars and walking out doesn't mean you have style," says Field, who is dressed in a blend of up- and downtown: a black Louis Vuitton blouse and Emporio Armani pants, gold Dolce & Gabbana shoes, leather arm gloves and a pyramid style necklace from her own brand, and a light blue vest made by her friend Steven Pochtar for Furs by PK. "But then there are women like Sarah Jessica Parker. She was perfectly cast in the role of Carrie in *Sex and the City* because she has style and exuded it." Back in the late '80s to early '90s, Field dressed stars in a number of movies and TV series in Miami. She met Parker during the filming of 1995's *Miami Rhapsody*, where they bonded over their love for clothing, accessories and, yes, shoes. Three years later, HBO's *Sex and the City* started and Parker asked Field to come on board as costume designer for the show.

Field's resume grew as she took on her next project, creating the looks for 2006's *The Devil Wears Prada*. She received several honors for her work in TV and film, including two Emmys and a Academy Award nomination.

In 2012, Field once again moved her store to a larger building, this time to 306 Bowery, which combined her old apartment with an empty store behind it. With more space came more business. Upon sitting down in her office one day, Field realized that she'd been running her company for half a century. Real estate companies were calling all the time asking if she wanted to sell the property, but it took a while until she was



Above: Respect the Gap Crop Top and Jeans, THESEPINKLIPS by Iris Barbee Bonner. **Middle:** Madonna Metallic Rainbow Vest, Tom Tom Fashions by Tom Knight. **Bottom left:** Hand Painted Dragon Dress by Jody Morlock. **Bottom right:** Baby Dog Dress by Suzanne Mallouk.



willing to consider the idea. "My store gave me the opportunity to get into the film world and expand my fashion career. I have a golden anniversary with a good reputation, and I thought, 'Why am I driving myself crazy?' It wasn't about the money, I wanted to change the schedule of my life and open it up for... whatever."

Field closed her store on the last day of February this year, but she isn't ready for retirement yet. Currently, she's focusing on the ArtFashion collection (born in her store) and expanding its offerings on her website. In addition to continuing her role as costume consultant on the New York-based TV Land series *Younger*, Field also aims to spend more time in Miami. "It's just easier there," she says. "I love the atmosphere and the mixed culture."

Her plans after Art Basel? Back to the city to see what's next. At the end of the day, Patricia Field knows she will always be a New Yorker. Before stepping outside for a cigarette, she smiles and says, "Don't forget, I was born an uptown girl." ♦

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