

# SARAH SILVER

## B I O

Born in Tokyo to parents who traveled the world, Sarah Silver first fell in love with photography while working in her grandfather's darkroom. Shortly after finishing her Master's Degree in Photography at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, she was chosen to shoot for Surface's Magazine's prestigious Avant Guardian issue. Using dancers as models, the fashion shoot marked the beginning of Sarah's love for combining movement and photography.

An established fashion, beauty and movement photographer, Sarah's varied list of clients include Vogue, V, L'Officiel, W, Allure, Proenza Schouler, Pantene, L'Oreal, Nike, Sephora, Revlon, DKNY, AG Jeans, and Target. Sarah has also worked with Tresemmé in an award-winning collaboration for Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week.

Equally comfortable in front of the camera, Sarah made her small screen debut shooting live on Bravo Network's reality series Make Me A Supermodel. She has continued her adventures in television, often appearing on America's Next Top Model, Project Runway and LA Ink.

Recognizing the importance of technology in her approach, Sarah has cultivated relationships with Hasselblad, Broncolor, Moab Paper, Pantone ColorVision Adobe, Eizo and Phase One. Her partnerships with the best innovators in the industry led to her being chosen as a Hasselblad master. In addition to her photography work, Sarah is a featured speaker for Photo Expo in NYC, APA and at universities including Parsons School of Design, The Pratt Institute, and The School of Visual Arts.



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PHOTO: SARAH SILVER DRESS BY: ANNABEL



## Pushing the Limits With LIGHT and SPEED

By Theano Nikitas

Rumors have it that in the late 1800s, railroad tycoon Leland Stanford waged a significant amount of money that a horse's four limbs can be off the ground at the same time while running. To prove his point, Stanford—who owned a horse-training farm—hired Eadweard Muybridge to take what may be considered the first high-speed photographs ever recorded. Muybridge set up 12 cameras with wires that tripped the shutters as the horse passed by. All 12 images were captured in less than a 10th of a second, an amazing feat considering that, at the time, most exposures took more than a minute. But Stanford's theory was verified as Muybridge developed and arranged the plates side-by-side, showing the horse's sequence of movement. Muybridge continued to expand the limits of photography throughout his career, pioneering the study of animals and human locomotion and motion pictures.

Fast forward to 1931 when Harold "Doc" Edgerton developed the electronic strobe at MIT and, like Muybridge, showed us what was invisible to the eye. Edgerton photographed the full motion of a golf swing, a bullet piercing an apple, and a milk drop that took the form of a coronet as it splashed, to name just a few of his iconic images.

Muybridge and Edgerton's groundbreaking work paved the way for today's photographers who are using 21st-century tools to create images that would make those early pioneers of high-speed photography proud. We interviewed two photographers—Sarah Silver and Chris Garrison—to gain insight into how they use light and speed to capture motion. We chose to juxtapose these two photographers not only for their talent and amazing agency, but also because while their goals are (in some ways) the same, the methods they use to achieve those goals are distinctly different. To create images with trails, Silver uses slow shutter speeds with a short flash duration while Garrison pushes shutter speeds to 1/2000th of a second and beyond.

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For New York City-based photographer Sarah Silver, movement and photography are an ostensible symbiosis, creating a synergy that extends from her work with dancers to images she creates for fashion and beauty clients. Capturing motion, says Silver, takes "good gut instinct, quick reflexes and a lot of practice shooting movement." After that, the next challenge is "keeping the images fresh, the work modern and not dated or gimmicky." With a seemingly bottomless well of creativity (and, if you've ever seen her shoot, boundless energy), it's no wonder that Silver keeps pushing the boundaries of her work.

Silver currently shoots with a Hasselblad H4X medium-format camera outfitted with an HDV90K viewfinder, a Phase One IQ140 digital back, and Hasselblad HC 100mm f/2.2, HC 80mm f/2.8, and HC 120mm macro f/4 lenses. When she switched to the H4X from a Hasselblad 503W body/Phase IQ45 digital back, which she often shot tethered, with the camera on a tripod and triggered remotely, Silver went back to the "140mm method of handheld shooting." "I allow myself to shoot a little more loosely," says Silver. "I can be more organic and experimental. The shots come a little more and the new H4X camera has allowed me to be much more connected with the subjects again, and I like that."

For lighting, Silver depends on her Canon-branded Speed Packs to power her Canon-branded strobes, which she triggers with PocketWizard Plus IIIs. She supplements the strobes with continuous light from Canon-branded KobaLis and various modifiers. Naturally, each shoot requires a custom lighting setup, but Silver explains that "I get into habits with light. I like to see how far I can push something until I get bored with it. That's the big add." Silver often boards off using a six-pin Canon-branded barn door (aka 82cm) for beauty, no matter what. So, take us back to the kitchen, because the light that accentuates skin and makeup texture and gives great contrast is tied to them as well.

**Left:** Silver created this image of NYC Ballet principal dancer Sara Mearns for the cover of *Dance Magazine* using rear curtain sync to show Mearns' "explosive" style of dancing.

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Pushing the Limits  
With LIGHT and SPEED



**Above left:** Timing was critical for this perfect water "splash" shot of members of the Stephen Petronio Dance Company—if the water is thrown too soon, it looks like a gigantic mass; too late, and it explodes into micro droplets. **Above right:** Shot for Cosmopolitan magazine, Silver used a slow shutter speed and rear curtain sync to communicate the feeling that the city and its nightlife are "electric."

"To create 'trails' and a sense of motion, Silver uses a slow shutter speed (often averaging between 1/4th to 1 second in mixed lighting) and a stepped-down f/stop for depth-of-field. Strobes are dialed down to 1/2 power but set on a short (just past 1/200th of a second or faster). But, Silver cautions, you need to try different shutter speeds 'to see how you like it. Fabric, the speed of the movement and the placement of the hot lights will all change the outcome. If you go

too crazy and use a super-slow shutter, the look can get too messy."

There are various ways to capture movement, and Silver finds that using asynchronous sync often delivers the perfect balance of blur and sharpness. When asked to photograph New York City Ballet principal dancer Sarah Mearns for the June 2012 cover of *Dance Magazine*, Silver and Mearns discussed various ideas for the shoot and, as Mearns explains, "A lot of the covershoots had been stationary

posed and they didn't really speak to me. I'm never in one position for more than a half-second. That poses are not what I know for. Sarah has that special way to accentuate the movement and we just knew that this was going to be something awesome." Mearns goes on to say that, "We wanted the cover to be like an explosion—that's how people characterize my dancing on stage. We wanted a kind of glamorous explosion of what a ballerina is." Mearns selected flowing dresses that

would not only show off the strength of her legs and body, but would show movement and work well with the lighting. Posing against a gray backdrop and using a fan, Mearns flipped her hair up as Silver captured the image at f/18 and 1/4 of a second. The combination of strobes (one color light at 1/20 and two 60w to stop the action) and hot lights (Kobold 800s for the bum on the hair and skirt) and asynchronous sync not only provided a beautiful trail of movement (along with a sharp image thanks to the flash), but Silver lit the scene to give Mearns' hair a "fiery" look. When everyone saw the image, "the place

emptied," says Mearns.

"To capture trails, Silver says it's important to use the 'rear curtain sync' so that the trail comes before the flash freezes the movement. It gets tricky and you need to take the moment so that they end up where you want them. In the frame and in their movement when the flash goes off."

But the subject doesn't always have to be the one who's moving. Silver often moves the camera (and sometimes even have one of her assistants shake her) for interesting lighting effects, as she did with a series of images she shot outdoors at night for *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Silver

explains, "We wanted to find a way to give the idea that the city and the nightlife is vibrating and what better way to show that the city's electricity shows in the model with undefined edges?"

Whether she's photographing dancers frozen in a firestorm of water or a NYC big-dresser running sequence for *Nike*, Silver's lighting, timing and vision are spot-on at capturing exciting images at the peak of the moment. Visit [www.sarahsilver.com](http://www.sarahsilver.com) and be sure to scroll through the video section to get a behind-the-scenes look at her *Dance Magazine* shoot with Sarah Mearns.



PHOTO: SARAH SILVER, COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE, SARAH SILVER, DANCE MAGAZINE

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Sarah Silver: Putting Motion In Motion | DigitalPhotoPro.com

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### **Sarah Silver: Putting Motion In Motion**

**Sarah Silver's annual collaboration with the Stephen Petronio Company is taking a fresh new turn as the photographer incorporates motion capture in the project**

*By Mark Edward Harris, Photography By Sarah Silver*



*Incorporating motion into her work in more ways than one, Sarah Silver worked video into her annual shoot with the esteemed Stephen Petronio Company dance group for the first time. Silver is known for combining dance portraiture with fashion, and she used her skills with kinetic photography to capture a set of high-impact stills before switching to video for the final aspect of the shoot, an almost orgiastic exploration of movement and dance that follows the troupe as they writhe seductively through gold paint. They had only one take before the set was ruined.*

Creative collaborations can yield magic, proven on a yearly basis in the images resulting from photographer Sarah Silver and choreographer Stephen Petronio's shoots. Two heads and four feet are better than one and two of the same appendages, as this dynamic duo proves.

Silver's fascination with photography began as a child in her grandfather's studio darkroom. Studying classical and modern dance from an equally young age instilled a deep appreciation for that art form. After completing her Bachelor's Degree in Middle Eastern Studies at Vassar College, Silver decided to pursue her artistic passions in the graduate photography program at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

While finishing her Master's Degree, Silver shot a fashion spread using dancers for *Surface* magazine's Avant Guardian issue. She then incorporated the Stephen Petronio Company in her graduate thesis. The two fashion stories from that early collaboration yielded tear sheets in magazines including *Vogue Italia*, *Elle* and *The New York Times*, as well as a yearly project to create visuals for Petronio.

On occasion, Silver makes it to the other side of the camera, appearing on Bravo Network's reality series, *Make Me A Supermodel* (Episode Two) and *America's Next Top Model* photographing "The Vampire Episode."

**DPP:** What was the evolution of your work with choreographer extraordinaire Stephen Petronio?

**Sarah Silver:** My coming-of-age photo shoot was for the Petronio Company for my graduate thesis from SVA here in New York City. I approached Stephen. He gave me, this 23-year-old student, a chance to shoot a professional dance company wearing fashion. It was the birth of this yearly project, the latest being the eleventh I've done with them.

**DPP:** How does that work?

**Silver:** Because I'm given such free rein and because Stephen is such a fantastic collaborator. I take what I do for them every year and let it trickle down into what I do the rest of the year. It colors what I do for fashion and beauty shoots, not the other way around. He shaped my career. He has this great ability to communicate with other creatives—he has collaborated with everybody from Lou Reed and Cindy Sherman to the sculpture maker Anish Kapoor. He has an amazing history as a performer and is very heavy into fashion. He's a trendsetter in many areas. For this year's shoot, we did video for the first time for this dance company.

**DPP:** How did you insert the moving image into your workflow?

**Silver:** I've been doing it for a couple of years now. I realized that photographers that don't do it—I won't say they're becoming dinosaurs—but they're painting themselves into a corner. Being a photographer, being visual, isn't a language of stills anymore. We, as photographers, have the vision and have the voice. Now that we've been given the tools, we have to train that voice. We have to run with it.



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