

A passion for

By Hunter Drohojowska

A woman with dyed blond hair leaned against one wall surveying Helmut Newton's Private Property, portfolios of black-and-white photographs of fashion models without their fashions. Their sinewy white torsos are bound in cords, in black leather and lingerie, in prosthetic devices. The woman lowered her voice to a husky whisper and confided to a friend, "I think these photographs appeal to men more than women. They make my skin crawl."

Nonetheless, hundreds of women, men and some in-between types came to the reception for the famous German photographer at the G. Ray Hawkins Gallery Tuesday night. The doors opened to the invitation-only crowd at 8, and 30 minutes later the crowd had overfilled the gallery to spill out on the sidewalk. It was impossible to see the pictures, reach the wine-tasting room at the back or move — but nobody seemed to be in a hurry to leave.

Helmut Newton's photos

Newton's friend, the glamour photographer George Hurrell, and Marilyn Grabowska, West Coast photo editor for Playboy, were among the first to arrive. (Newton's pictures have been featured in Playboy and he has used a number of centerfold models.) Hurrell called Newton "a great photographer," but qualified that by saying, "Photographers don't know anything, anyway. They just photograph." Asked if the two had anything in common, with a sly look, Grabowska enthused, "They're both kinky."

Newton's stylish look brought out admirers from film, music and fashion industries:

Jonathan Goodson of Goodson Toddman Productions, liked Newton's photos "as long as they don't have violence. I have problems when they're exploitative

of women."

Harry Dean Stanton could barely move from his corner as he talked to actress Penelope Milford, who plans to open an L.A. branch of her brother's East Village gallery, Piezo Electric. Her partner will be Winter Horton, and the debut group show will be called "Romance and Catastrophe" — which sounds like

something Newton would like.

Joe Bologna and Renee Taylor stopped by, taking a break from "It Had to Be You," which has been running at the Lee Strasberg Center for the Performing Arts for nine months.

Huddled between a pair of Newton's enormous contact sheets of models in bondage we found a lively foursome: actor Rene Auberjonois with critic wife Judith, Howard Hesseman, formerly of "WKRP in Cincinnati" and



Actress Melody Anderson talks photograph with Jennifer Dumas.

Javier Mendoza/Herald photographer

Actors Howard Hesseman, left, Judith and Rene Auberjonois, center, and graphic designer David Byrd gather in a corner to study the work of photographer Helmut Newton.



"One Day at a Time," and graphic designer David Byrd.

Former model and former gallery owner Jennifer Dumas told us she had left art for film and is now working as producer on a project with actress Melody Anderson.

Amazon women dressed to impress were everywhere, and Ceci Cole of the band Mix Mistress was even outfitted in the black leather collar with studs, garter belt and lacy brassiere that have become Newton trademarks.

Standing as tall as many of the women in the room, and quite stylish in his own way with his violet bow tie, was Weston Naef, curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum. When we tried to take his picture, he ducked behind Gil Friesen, president of A & M Records. Camera shy? "I know too much," said Naef, "The eye of the assassin." We wondered if he was shopping. After all, the entire portfolio of 45 black-and-white prints was a mere \$18,000 — and a single image was but \$800. "Our policy on the work of our times is still being formulated," he answered enigmatically. "We should not prejudice it." Then off he went, braving the hoards, to get to the wine-tasting table.

Trailing in his wake, we met Paul Kasmin Jr., son of the famous British art dealer, and a purveyor of photographs. Naef introduced us to photography collector Samuel Wagstaff and his former curator



Weston Naef, curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum, had a lot to look at during the party. Was he shopping for a Newton photo? "Our policy on the work of our times is still being formulated," he answered.

Anne Ehrencranz, who is now at the New York's International Center for Photography.

Wagstaff's first collection was part of the 19,000 photographs recently purchased by the Getty, and he admitted that he has begun to collect anew, "though in a more modest way." Of Newton's work, he opined, "It's always dirty, which I like. If we could all stay dirty how nice it would be." Then added with a chuckle, "An artist is someone who creates a place you've never been to before. Helmut creates a place that only the richest playboys have been to with that sort of girl."

As Naef joined us again, Wagstaff was saying that he hated photography ever since "The Family of Man" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955. It was Naef's 1972 exhibition "Painterly Photography" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1972 that changed Wagstaff's perspective. "I realized that photography was infinitely greater than I had imagined before," he said. There was a shine in Wagstaff's eyes that made us think his passion for photographs was as lusty as ever.

Javier Mendez/Herald photographer



Helmut Newton and his work attracted an SRO crowd to the G. Ray Hawkins Gallery. His portfolio of 45 black-and-white prints is priced at \$18,000 — and a single image is \$800.