

LA (Cat) Woman

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Self-confessed "Mod-Secretary" and stylist Shirley Kurata is known for her whimsical taste and effortless way of referencing retro aesthetics whilst managing to make them seem fresh and new. It's no wonder everyone from Rodarte to Beck has her on speed dial for shoots and music videos. She also happens to be mama to three cats, so we stopped by her chic home in Silverlake to talk fashion, felines and film.

What's your earliest fashion memory?

SK: I remember I played with Barbies and was obsessed with their little outfits, but then my brother's wife had some Barbies from the sixties and she gave me all their clothes. When I got them, I was like, "Oh my god these clothes are so much better than the ones I have!" So that started my love of the 60s fashion aesthetic growing up. Also, I couldn't begin to express myself through style very much until I was around 10 years old, when I first learned how to sew, so I could start to experiment more with my fashion sense and bring my ideas to life.

And when you studied fashion, did you study design and making first?

SK: Yes, to start with, I was just buying patterns and making them. I took sewing classes in high school, so it was more a case of learning the technical aspect first and then eventually getting good enough to alter the patterns and customise a little bit more.

How did you get into styling?

SK: I started off first as a costumier on TV and film and learned the business that way. Eventually, I met the photographer Autumn De Wilde who I work with all the time. We really clicked and as her career was taking off, we started working together more. This really helped me start styling on my own and develop a good book because, y'know, her work was always so good. So I branched off more into the styling world.

Your early life was obviously very rich in clothes, did your love of cats start then too?

SK: Pretty much! I had two cats that were brothers and then I had a cat called Crawley who passed





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away recently but he was 17 years old. Boo, my other cat, is 16 now too, I've had him for quite a while. We just adopted Fanny and Alexander; they're babies, only around a year and a half old. We fostered them between Christmas and New Year, and it went from being something temporary to something permanent. They're part of the family now.

They have really unusual names, can you tell us a bit about them?

SK: I was trying to find a character duo with a brother and sister because I thought that seemed appropriate, my first idea was Harold and Maud, but then they're not brother and sister; they were lovers. So that wasn't right! I had actually just watched *Fanny and Alexander*, a movie by Ingmar Bergman, just before we acquired them and they're brother and sister so they seemed a perfect choice. Originally, Alex was named Puppy, but it didn't seem like the sort of name I wanted to call him, even though he kind of is like a puppy: very playful and friendly, but I much prefer Fanny and Alexander.

And Boo? How did he get his name? Are you a big Boo Radley fan?

SK: Yeah, the band and the book! We were thinking of names and nothing was working and all of a sudden my boyfriend at the time was like, "Boo?" I was like, "Radley, yes!" It was just a natural fit.

Speaking of film characters, you're known for your love of the 60s and the aesthetic of that time, who stands out as an icon of that time for you?

SK: Anna Karina, I'm a big fan of Goddard films and I've always loved her in his films and her style.

Do you have a favourite movie from that era?

SK: Y'know, it changes, because sometimes I'm like, "I love 2001: A Space Odyssey by Stanley Kubrick" and then other days I really love a Jodorowsky film like *Holy Mountain*. It changes a lot, but those are two of my favourites I think.

You're a big fan of Jodorowsky's film work, and this seems to be enjoying a resurgence right now, why do you think that is?

SK: I think before it was obscure and hard to find and now, thanks to the internet, it's easier to find. It's such a visual film that someone can put a photo from one of

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the movies on Instagram and people will wonder, "What is this?" There was also a documentary that just came out like a year or two ago maybe that also brought the resurgence about.

In terms of wardrobe and style in films, what is your go-to movie or which one excites you in terms of fashion?

SK: I just discovered this channel *Made to Measure* on Apple TV – a dedicated fashion channel. They have runway shows and documentaries but they also have movies so they had *Qui Etes-vous*, *Polly Maggoo?*, A William Klein movie. I had seen it before but I thought, "Oh, I'll watch it again!". That one's a great fashion movie because it opens with her in this crazy space age, sheet metal, fashion show. So I think that's probably one of my favourites.

Are there any particular places that you would really like to shoot that you haven't shot yet?

SK: Well, given I've just started talking about *Qui Etes-vous*, *Polly Maggoo?*, there's a crazy place in that. I don't know if it still exists but in the opening shot, where the fashion show takes place, was a building exterior that was white and almost Gaudi-esque. I would love to do a shoot there if it's still around now. Also, as I'm a huge fan, I would love to do a shoot at a Le Corbusier building, perhaps one of his churches.

Do you have a favourite or most memorable shoot?

SK: There was a shoot for *Pop* magazine where we went to Yellowstone National Park with Rodarte. It wasn't a typical fashion shoot with models, but female scientists who were involved in stem cell research. There was something about seeing these amazing outfits, but out in the trippy, crazy, colourful, almost alien landscape, that was really incredible for me.

Speaking of foreign places, you obviously travel a lot for work, what's your favourite place in the world to go?

SK: I do like going to London because I feel like there's a good fashion energy to the city. Lately though, I'm lamenting the fact that I'm not doing jobs in South East tropical locations like Hawaii or Thailand! That said, Japan is one of my favourite places to visit. I just love the shopping; it's the best in the world and also I like the way old Japan and modern Japan sit well together. That mix is really interesting to me.

Obviously they're big cat fans in Japan as well, have you found any great cat stuff on your travels there?

SK: Yes! Usually, I have to hold back sometimes on buying too many cat themed products. Like, do I need all this cat stuff? I have to get at least some cat stickers or little pins.

Finally, you're an LA native, what's the one place you'd recommend people seeing when they're here?

SK: Well, it's probably not what you expected but I always think Disneyland is just the happiest place on earth.

