

Paz de la Huerta — Lust for Life

Photography — Cristina Stolhe
Styling — Fatima Monjas



Vintage coat, Duarte dress, Paz's own heels & necklace



Alejandro Studio jumpsuit, Paz's own knickers & rings

Paz de la Huerta is in love with life first and foremost, perhaps that's the allure that gave her an electric presence on screen, captivating audiences in a way that is both compelling and unconventional. In person she is no different, equal parts elegant, charming and effusively sensual in her speech and gestures. This belies the tumult of recent years but as we learn Paz is focused on art and redemption as a way forward and what's in store will further delight her fans.

Interview by Gemma Lacey

On first impressions she is ruthlessly elegant, dressed in a sweeping black sheath dress and ice blue coat, she looks every inch the Hollywood actress, and yet in our conversation I discover further depths, she's a true multi-hyphenate and artist, not only writing and painting but also directing her own biography. A compelling storyteller, she has a quick mind and peppers our conversation with interesting anecdotes and beautifully spoken French and Spanish phrases.

When speaking of art she is at her most animated, most notably when talking about her film *Valle de Lágrimas – The Valley of Tears*, a biographical account of her life, told through the lens of a fairytale and describing her struggles with abuse, pain and addiction and ultimate redemption through art. She references the Marlon Brando documentary *Listen to Me Marlon* and her fondness for hearing stories

told through the protagonist's lens, but where her story and Marlon's differ is her focus not on controlling the narrative but using it to create as authentic a dialogue as possible, "It's my voice in a very poetic way with my philosophy on life, telling my story. But it's to tell the truth." We discuss the controversy around Brando too, and she recalls a line from the documentary that struck her, when Brando asks rhetorically, "Are there any answers to injustices?" and she says, "For a long time, I was like, 'Wow, that's powerful.' But then I answered it. I said you answered your own question. It's not because of people like you."

Justice is a topic front-of-mind for Paz at present coming in the wake of the Me Too movement which brought to public attention her years of alleged mistreatment at the hands of Weinstein, which she claims first began when she was 14 and he rented an apartment next

door to her mother. It would be easy to paint Paz as an ingenue at this time, but in her debut performance in *The Object of My Affection* it would be easy to forget she played a 13-year-old girl and not the on-screen siren we later came to admire.

We discuss the impact of this but in doing so can't avoid the obvious conversations around how vulnerable these revelations require women to be, exposing their most personal pain to the broader world. She describes how she explores this in her work, recalling a recent music video she directed and how her subject came to life for her through the lens, "When I started filming her, I started seeing her and I said, 'Just be vulnerable. Just tell the truth. If you're scared, you're scared, start from a place of truth because the truth is the most beautiful thing, you know?'"

She discusses the role truth



This page: Reparto Studio top, Alejandre Studio trousers, Paz's own shoes & jewellery
Opposite page: Nastya&Masha top, Paz's own knickers & jewellery

and vulnerability play in her art for her, "I think being vulnerable is completely rare and I think I'm a very rare person. Even if I'm acting, if it's a happy scene, I always get in touch with the truth first. And for me personally, it's normally sad. I think with everything I've been through it starts from a place of sadness, but if I really feel into the sadness, then I can grab joy and I can drive happiness. Vulnerability is not common these days, I think people live in fear and they put up a wall."

She remains a positive force, even with a well of tumult to draw from, I ask how she maintains this and she replies, "I'm such a free spirit. I'm positive. And I love life and I think if some of these things happened to anyone else, nobody would survive, so I think that's a testament to how much I love life."

Good timing and faith are recurring themes in our conversations but she's also focused on her

own choices and how they shape things. "Your reaction to every circumstance in life is up to you. If you open yourself to God in every form of art, you get closer to God. And this crazy thing about suffering is it does bring you closer to God, ironically."

In this way her worlds unite and we see the true power of Paz's creativity, a unique ability to take our purest and most authentic emotions, no matter what the circumstances and channel them for greater purpose and towards an optimistic future. "I mean, I know people that know the real story and it's not normal, but I don't feel sad for myself. And I don't want anyone to feel sad for me. Like, I think if you're around me right now, you know I'm not negative."

She describes one of her more negative experiences, where she discovered her artwork had been destroyed ahead of a solo art show, with the only evidence of her work

existing in photos she had sent to a lover. In true Paz spirit she responded through art, "I recorded a video of me performing *Vissi d'arte*, from Puccini's *Tosca*, when she goes, 'I've lived for love, I've lived for art. Why in this moment of grief, does God forsake me so?' I was like, all I ever cared about was love, I don't feel sorry for myself and I don't want anyone to feel sorry for me."

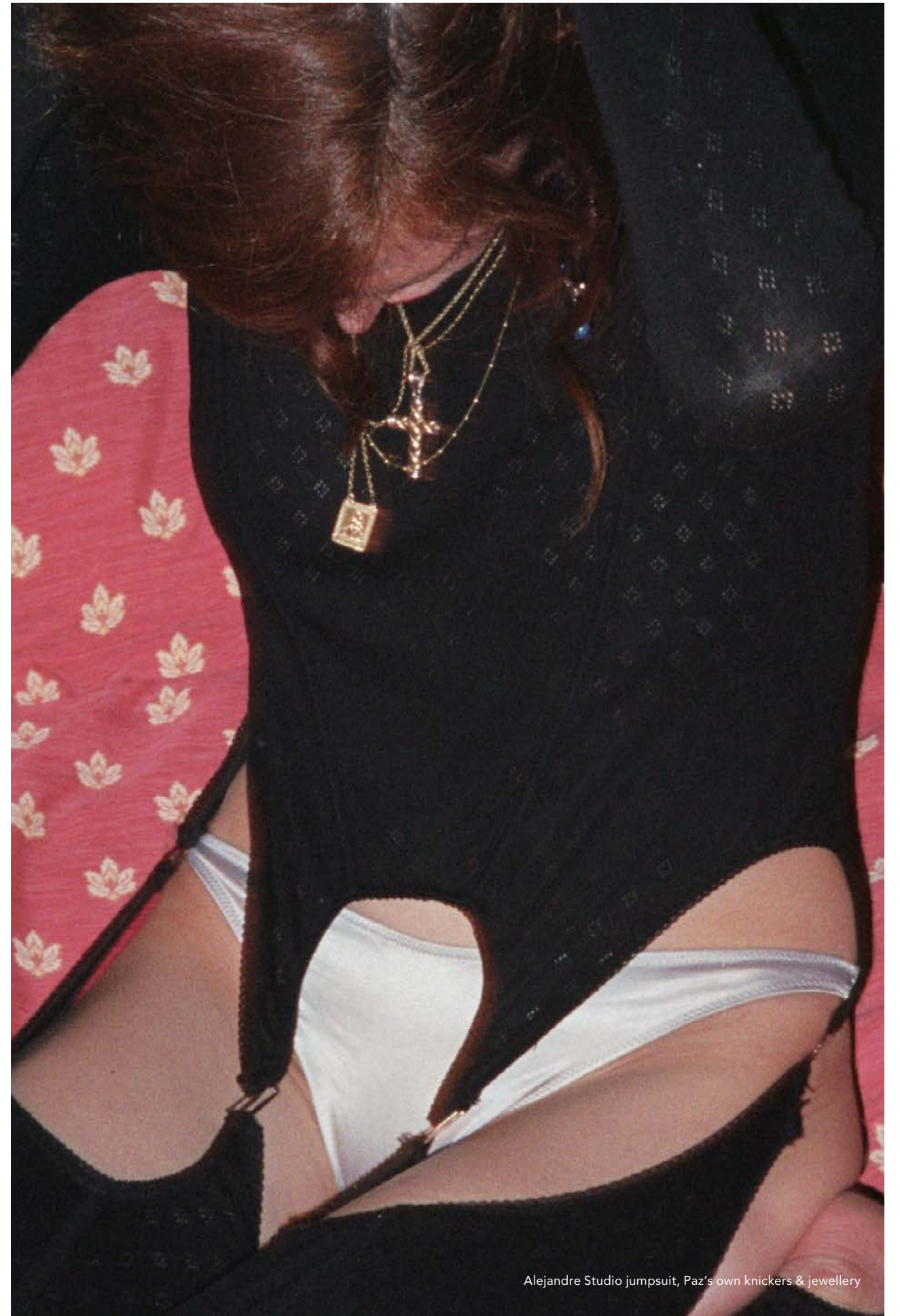
What no one who's met her might mention is where that kind spirit extends to others. We discuss a recent fire where I had lost my belongings and she reminds me that fire is a powerful message and advises me that I was moved by something greater than myself because if not I'd have stayed stuck. We part ways but I'm left with the impression of a powerful woman, driven by a zest for life and a faith in herself which has seen her navigate troubled waters and who will now be able to use her talents to show others a path for this too.



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