Bea

In 1962, two young assistants ascended to one of the top spots in magazine design.

Katie Calautti charts Ruth Ansel and Bea Feitler's groundbreaking collaboration at Harper's Bazaar, without which the '60s might never have swung quite so hard.

Ruth.



The history-making collaboration between Ruth Ansel and Bea Feitler came about as the result of a bitter argument.

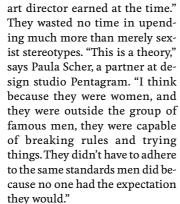
In 1962, Harper's Bazaar art director Marvin Israel was fired on the spot by Editor-in-Chief Nancy White, after he commissioned a cover featuring a model who looked exactly like the magazine's iconic former fashion editor, Diana Vreeland—a heavy-handed insinuation that Vreeland should have been given the top job.

At that moment, Israel's two 24-year-old assistants, Ruth Ansel and Bea Feitler, assumed his role, becoming the first-ever female art directors of *Harper's Bazaar*, and the youngest in the industry. It was the first of many firsts for both women, who were about to change the print design world forever.

The two arrived at their jobs in diametrically different ways. Feitler, born in Rio de Janeiro to Jewish parents who fled Nazi Germany, studied at Parsons School of Design in New York City. After graduation, she returned to Brazil where she worked for the pro-

gressive literary magazine Senhor before moving back to New York in 1961 and accepting a job at Bazaar as an assistant to Israel, her former Parsons professor. Ansel, meanwhile, was born in the Bronx and studied fine art at Alfred University before being introduced to graphic design by her then-husband, Bob Gill. Shortly after Feitler was hired, Ansel landed an interview with Israel. "Although I didn't have a graphic design portfolio, he decided to take a risk and hire me anyway," Ansel once told Creative Review. "He liked the idea that I didn't have to unlearn graphic design clichés."

"They put us together because it bought them time to shop around and look for a male art director to replace us," Ansel explained to Creative Review, recalling her and Feitler's status after Israel's departure. "They never told us that, but we suspected it. But once they discovered that we weren't doing such a bad job, they kept us on. One of the factors that weighted in our favor was that we came pretty cheap. Our combined salary was probably less than an established male



"Bea and Ruth truly complemented each other," says artist and researcher Nicolau Vergueiro. "Being looked at skeptically for being young women in power positions, I think Bea and Ruth, as a duo, allowed each other to be as bold and daring as they could: the power of two." Along with infusing Bazaar with their seemingly boundless youthful energy, Feitler and Ansel also fostered new talent. Photographers Bill King, Diane Arbus, Duane Michals, Bill Silano and Bob Richardson blossomed under their collaborative efforts. Their work throughout their decade-long tenure has come to be seen as quintessential visual representations of a rapidly changing era. This was the decade where space travel, television, plastic surgery and boundary-pushing fashion was on everyone's lips. Gloria Guinness wrote about pornography and the pill within Bazaar's pages. Women wanted feminist commentary on sex, marriage and careers—they were starting to expect more from their fashion magazines-and Feitler and Ansel were all too happy to serve it to them on a Day-Glo platter. They cut and glued and juxtaposed into Bazaar's pages the vitality they experienced on the streets of swinging '60s New York City: freshly emancipated youth, pop art,

Throughout their careers, the designers clung to Ansel's belief that you should "always hire people smarter than you." They both sought to encourage new styles of expression among students—including, in Feitler's case—that of a young Keith Haring.





"They put us together because it bought them time to look for a male art director to replace us."

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rock music and classic cinema. Feitler and Ansel filled the ever-changing wall in their office with torn-out images and photos, using it as a hub of invention. "They were open to accidents, material around the studio, and events surrounding them," graphic designer Philip B. Meggs once wrote for the American Institute of Graphic Arts, of their process. "We were sometimes competitive and often tried to top each other, which kept us on our toes," Ansel told Creative Review. "In the end our work became seamless and inevitably our concepts spilled over into each other's work."

1965 was a year of major milestones for the duo. The February issue featured actor Steve Mc-Oueen as the cover model, marking the first time a man graced the front of any major women's fashion magazine. Model Jean Shrimpton's bracelet-sheathed arm cradling McQueen's face is still one of the most replicated images born of Ansel and Feitler's direction. They also featured supermodel Donyale Luna in the April issue—the first time a black model was pictured in an American fashion magazine.

That April 1965 "Pop" issue remains Ansel and Feitler's bestknown achievement at Bazaar. To this day, it's considered a landmark in both design and content, capturing the dazzling anticipation of the mid-1960s. Aimed at being "a partial passport to the off-beat side of Now," the issue was guest-edited by photographer Richard Avedon. The cover features Shrimpton—the red-hot model of the moment—in a pink cutout space helmet. Some versions even incorporated lenticular technology that made Shrimpton's eye appear to blink.

The creation of that now-iconic cover was a last-ditch, late-night decision. Shrimpton had been shot by Avedon in a hat that everyone hated. As the print deadline passed, "Ruth started to explain that we could cut the shape of the space helmet out of Day-Glo paper," Avedon wrote in a 1968

Graphics piece. "But she never finished because Bea was already cutting... It all happened in minutes—the moment was absolute magic, to watch Bea, the classicist, and Ruth, the modern, work as if they were one person." Though the April 1965 issue was a commercial failure, it won the coveted New York Art Directors Club medal and is heralded as an enduring emblem of the '60s.

Despite their professional accolades, once new editorial leadership arrived at *Bazaar* in 1971, the co-art directors were pushed out. "We became pressured when the magazine lost some of its readership," Feitler once explained in a 1977 *Graphics Today* interview.

In 1972, Feitler joined Gloria Steinem's newly launched Ms. magazine as art director, then moved on to Rolling Stone. In 1978, she created the look for Condé Nast's new publication Self, and in 1981, she began redesigning the premiere issue of Vanity Fair's revival. But she never saw it published—she was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer and passed away in 1982 at the age of 44.

In addition to her magazine work, Feitler had also been a teacher and mentor. "In the late 1970s she used to say she wanted to come back to Brazil and teach design and art direction here," says her nephew Bruno Feitler, who published a book about his aunt in 2012. "Teaching was very inspirational for her."

"She had an eye for talented people and found and nurtured them," says Paula Greif, who was Feitler's student at the School of Visual Arts and her assistant in the mid-1970s. Greif later became the art director of Mademoiselle. "There is a whole generation who can say Bea Feitler gave them their first job." Annie Leibovitz called Feitler her first great mentor. In fact, Leibovitz's move to fashion was Feitler's doing-she introduced the photographer to Vanity Fair, which kicked off a storied partnership.

Ansel, who was the first female art director at *The New York Times*



COVER GIRLS





The style that came to be associated with Ansel and Feitler was defined by their daring and spontaneity. Some of their most striking covers were made by experiment ing with graphic shapes, either achieved through photographic tricks such as the foregrounding of legs on the August 1966 cover (bottom) made to accompany a feature about tights, or through collage, as in the case of the iconic yet commercial ly unsuccessful April 1965 Jean Shrimp ton cover (top). They were also open to eye-catching advances in print: Versions of the April 1965 cover incorporated a form of lenticular technology that made Shrimpton's long-lashed blue eye appear to blink, a technologically-advanced format that further pushed the boundaries of Feitler and Ansel's collage design. Top Photograph by Richard Avedon © The Richard Avedon Foundation

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Magazine in the 1970s, followed by stints at Vogue and House @ Garden, was asked to build on Feitler's vision at Vanity Fair as its first female art director. "It felt strange. I felt very conflicted about it," Ansel explained to Creative Review. "I didn't expect it and I didn't quite know how to handle it. But I did it because I couldn't say no." After almost a decade working with Editor-in-Chief Tina Brown to create an iconic record of the Hollywood-obsessed 1980s, Ansel formed her own design studio in 1992, where she continues to work to this day. Some of her designs include ad campaigns for Versace and Karl Lagerfeld and books for Annie Leibovitz, Peter Beard and Elsa Peretti.

As with many previously unheralded women, Ansel and Feitler's work is experiencing a renewed public fascination. In 2009, Ansel was the subject of the first in a series of books highlighting female graphic designers called Hall of Femmes. And Nicolau Vergueiro has championed Feitler's work since 2017 through a touring exhibition that has shown in Berlin, Oslo and Cologne. "Feitler was part of creating new standards in publication that are still current," he says. "In Ms., her work lays out aesthetics of punk and zine culture, which in turn points to blogs and webpages. In Rolling Stone, she mastered the overlay of images to convey documentarist pictorial essays, a convention in contemporary visual design."

"The great art director Bea Feitler taught me the value of stopping from time to time and looking back at one's work," Leibovitz wrote in her book *Annie Leibovitz*: Portraits 2005-2016. "She said that you learn the most from your own work, and by looking back you find how you need to go forward." Perhaps it is our newfound interest in looking back—particularly at the women who quietly shaped their industries—that is allowing Ansel and Feitler's names to finally be placed among the giants of magazine design.

Photograph: Bea Feitler Portrait (1960s) by Bob Richardson. Courtesy of The New School Archives and Special Collection, The New School, New York, NY.

