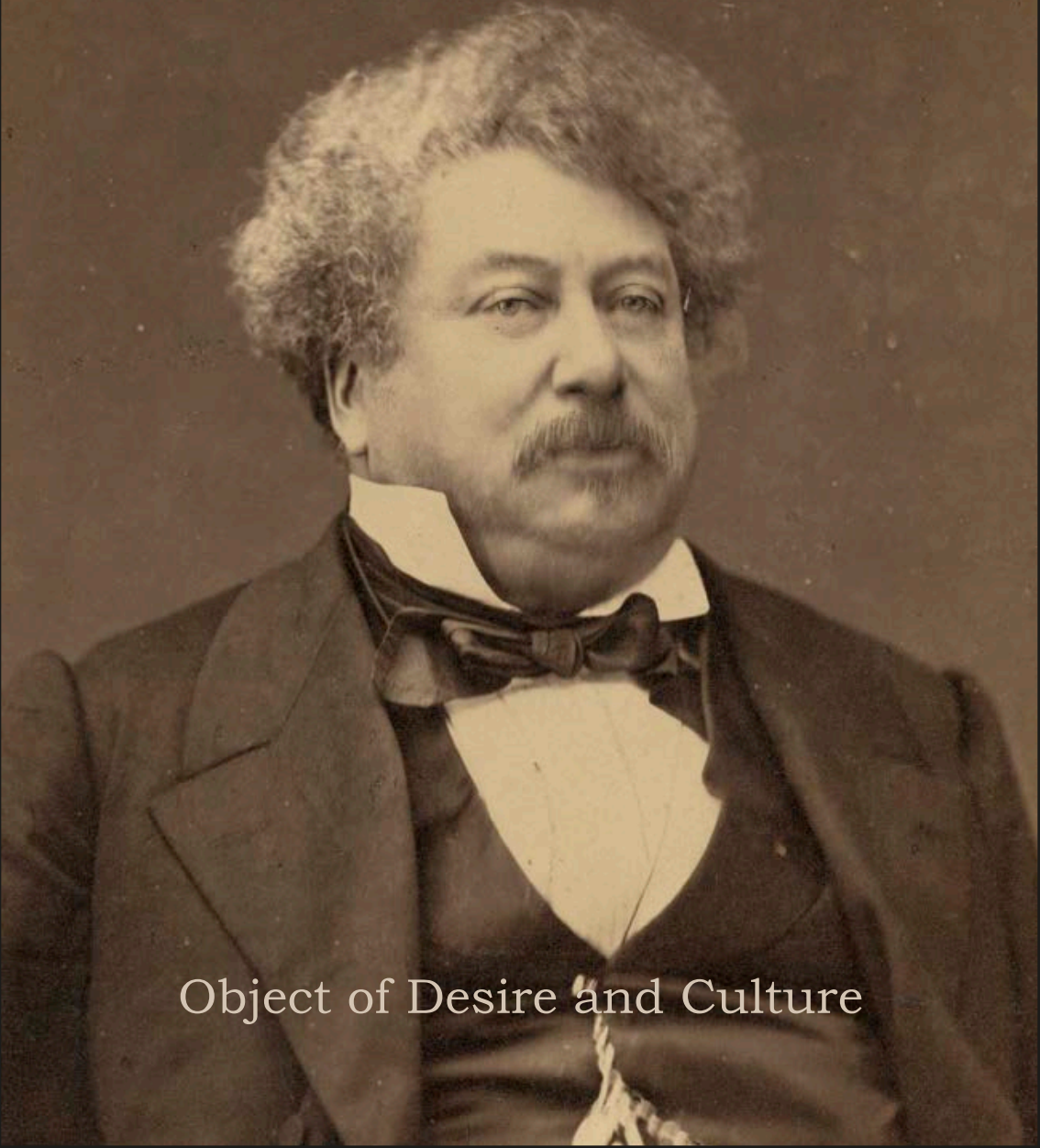


# HAIR



Object of Desire and Culture

Selected prints from Adnan Sezer's exhibition  
at Daniel Blau, London

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**DANIEL BLAU**

51 Hoxton Square  
London N1 6PB  
Tel +44 (0)20 7831 7998

Cover: PIERRE PETIT (1831-1909)  
Portrait of Alexandre Dumas, ca.1865

*Albumen print from a glass negative, mounted, oval-cut, 250 x 185 mm*

## Hair: Object of Desire and Culture

To greater or lesser degrees, but never to a negligible one, civilizations have always directed attention to the nature of hair and its development at different stages of life. This attention does not stem from curiosity, but rather from a desire for knowledge, in particular the understanding of human beings. Although this concern for hair is not strictly speaking a sign of civilization, it nonetheless reveals many of its conventions, in areas as varied as education and mourning, religious beliefs and law, social behaviors and aesthetic principles.

All this is not due solely to concern for form, but rather most often to the vital link between the order of the senses and the social order, with the recurrent practices of past epochs, which the anthropology of myths seeks to grasp. It is like a return to origins, the story of Samson, told in the book of Judges, the story of the extraordinary strength lying in the curls of Samson's hair, cut while he was sleeping by his mistress Dalila, to whom he had revealed his secret and who betrayed him to the Philistine warriors. This is one example of the very widespread belief that life, power, and semen come from the head and are especially present in the hair and beard. Hair is thus associated with "other products of the body containing vital force, able to serve as intermediaries with magical functions (blood, sperm). Hair is thus given specific care, and is associated with specific beliefs and practices", as S. Dayan-Herzbrun has summarized.

Adnan Sezer has brought together a representative body of photos focused on the theme of hair. In these photos we find elements of sociology, history, ethnology as well as bizarre imagery and find examples of cures, practices or beliefs.

Nowadays we might be surprised by this exhibition of bodies from foreign lands – the Indian from the Amazon photographed in Paris for a study conducted by the Ethnographic Society around 1880, or the Eskimos posing for Pierre Petit (1877), in the Jardin Zoologique in the Bois de Boulogne – all these beings torn from their distant homes and essentialized by photography. Indeed, in its positivism, Western modernity sought to sort and classify this imaginary topology, more or less scientifically, as shown by the famous *Tableau chromatique des yeux, de la peau et des cheveux*, presented by Monsieur Broca in 1864 to the Anthropological Society of Paris, and by the extraordinary interest at the end of the 19th century for all sorts of collections. This encouraged studies of hair samples, like those brought back from India by Monsieur de Ujfalvy (1887), or many photo reports, a very exotic example being the documentation provided by Dufour about the festivities accompanying the solemn haircutting of the prince Chandalekha, son of Noroudam, in Phnom Penh in May 1901.

Photography was unable to restrain for very long a never-ending fascination, from the very beginnings of that art, for subjects that pose, as we see in various pictures displayed at the exhibition – the portrait of a “Moslem Sheik” (Egypt, 1870s or 1980s) by Bonfils, or a “Turk from Trebizond” (Turkey, the 1870s), by a Russian photographer. And then there are images like the triptych by the Russian Ermakov (Iran, 1870 or 1880) depicting a father, mother and their child suffering from hypertrichosis, the symptom of a disorder manifested by intrusive hairiness on their faces, staged in a backdrop of familiarity that barely hides the strangeness of the scene.

The photos brought together by Adnan Sezer are too varied to constitute one single object. The collection nonetheless includes several homogenous series including a remarkable one of women whose heads have been shaved,



1. PIERRE PETIT (1831-1909)

Jardin Zoologique d'Acclimatation, Eskimo, Paris, 1877

*Carbon print from a glass negative, mounted on photographer's mount, 98 x 63 mm*

offering a dramatic vision on the theme of hair, linked to the notions of purification and discrimination. The practice of shearing heads figures among the emblematic images of the Liberation of France after World War II. This uncontrolled purge, marked by usually spontaneous exactions, mainly affected women. Shaving a woman's head is at the same time a mutilation, a rite of derision and exclusion, and a sexual punishment for collaboration. It is difficult to remain indifferent to this "hideous carnival", as illustrated in the exhibition by the photo of a procession in the streets of Chartres, led by the father of the young woman. She is carrying her child in her arms. Her own mother, her had also shaved, is walking by her side. There is the shot of a young woman holding a Nazi flag, and a very singular picture of a man exposed to the crowd, seated on a podium, forced to make the Nazi salute. His hair is shaved like Hitler's, and he holds a portrait of the Führer in front of him marked "Adolf". Shaving the hair of women, who were considered to be prostitutes, also supposedly had prophylactic purposes. But the shaving of the women's hair, often seized by occasional photographers, constitutes a specific type of violence that tends to criminalize women's bodies. It is an expiatory violence, a collective punishment aimed at purification. These documents of stigmatization of women's bodies do not only illustrate the disorder of that epoch. They also reveal mob justice for what it is, a political abomination.



2. ANONYMOUS

Perseo Trionfante, Vatican, Rome, ca.1880

*Albumen print from a glass negative, mounted and numbered "N° 1730",  
240 x 182 mm*



3. ANONYMOUS

Female Nudes, Paris, ca.1860-65

*2 albumen prints from glass negatives, collodion, unmounted,  
numbered on print "8" and "43", 205 x 130 mm and 210 x 123 mm*



4. ANONYMOUS

Female Nude, Paris, ca.1880

*Albumen print from a glass negative, unmounted, numbered in the negative "210", 135 x 95 mm*





5. JEAN LOUIS IGOUT (1837-1881)

Male Nude, Paris, ca.1880

6 Albumen prints from glass negatives, unmounted, numbered, 136 x 98 mm



6. DMITRI IVANOVITCH ERMAKOV (Attr. to) (1846-1916)  
Turk of Trabzon, Turkey, ca.1870

*Albumen print from a glass negative, mounted, caption printed in Russian  
"Turk of Trabzon" below the image, 195 x 158 mm*



7. PASCAL SEBAH (1823-1886)

Turkish Women at Home, Constantinople, 1860

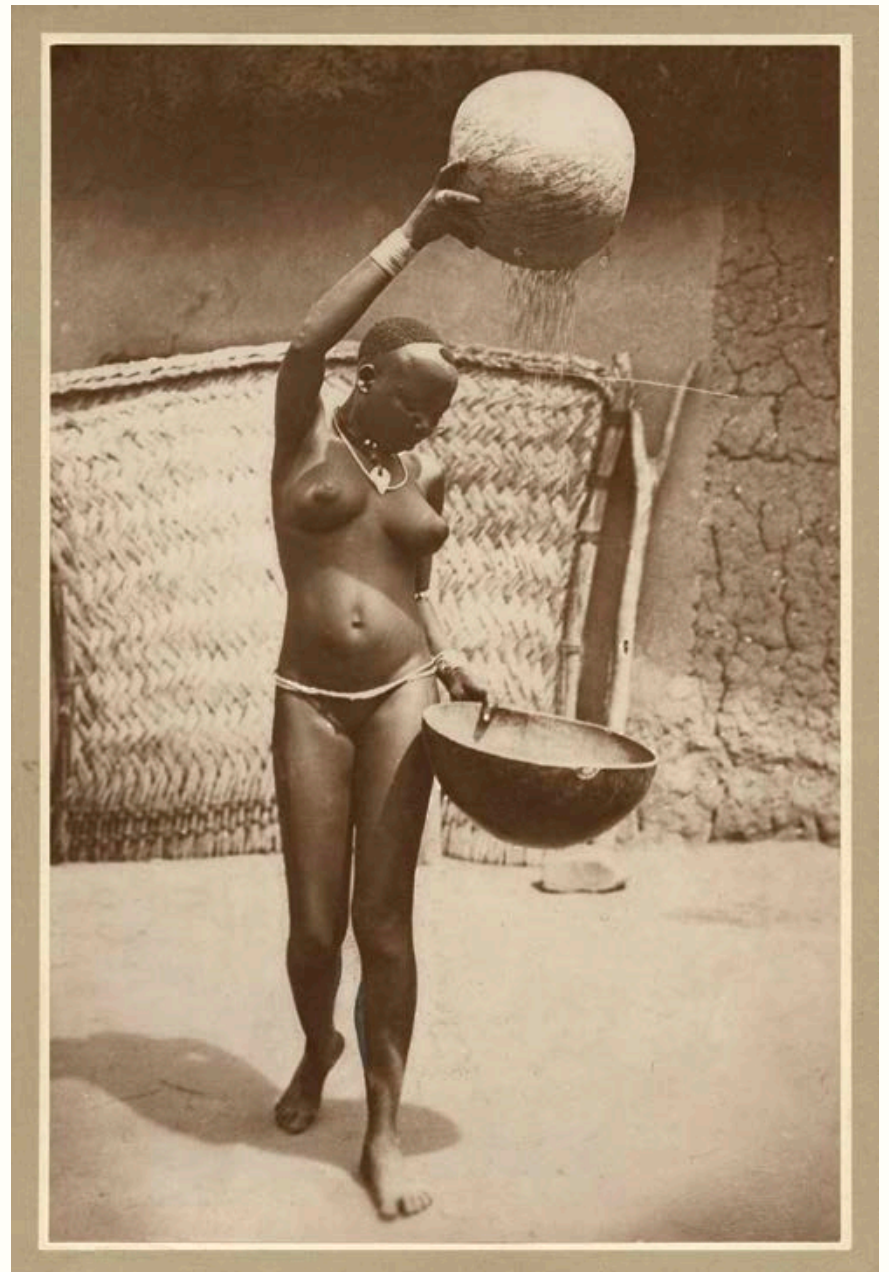
*Albumen print from a glass negative, mounted, numbered in the negative  
"620", annotated "Constantinople - Femmes turques chez elles" on mount,  
260 x 204 mm*



8. EUGÈNE BRUSSAUX

Mission Henri Moll, Eré village, Moundan Woman, 1906

*Silver gelatin print, mounted with hand-written caption below the image,  
275 x 183 mm*

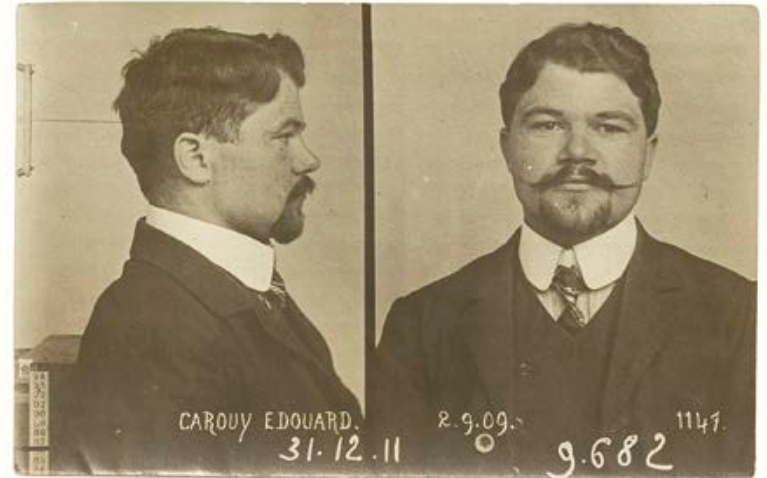




9. ANONYMOUS

Public execution of a member of the "bande des Chauffeurs de la Drôme",  
Valence prison, 22 September 1909

*Silver gelatin print, unmounted, 180 x 240 mm*



10. PHOTOGRAPHIE JUDICIAIRE

I.D. photographs of Jules-Joseph Bonnot and Edouard Carouy,  
dit "Raoul", dit "Leblanc", Paris, 1909-12

*Silver gelatin prints, unmounted, 75 x 118 mm*



11. VARIOUS PHOTOGRAPHERS

A collection of 23 photographs of “Femmes Tondues” at the Liberation  
France, 1944-45

*(Previous page)*

ROBERT CAPA (1913-1954)

Collaborationist is Scorned by her People, Chartres, France, August 26, 1944

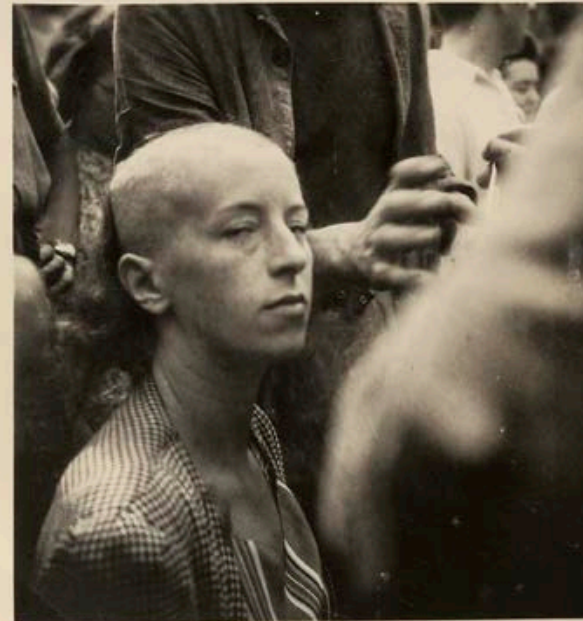
*Silver gelatin print, 180 x 228 mm*

*(Right)*

ANONYMOUS

Fontainebleau, 23 August 1944

*3 silver gelatin prints from an album, inscription “Quelques femmes  
françaises miliciennes et tondues (23 août 1944)”, 85 x 62 mm*





12. YVES BONSERGENT  
Ku Klux Klan Party, USA, 1963

*11 Silver gelatin prints, hand-written annotations on verso, 200 x 305 mm*





13. ANONYMOUS

Transvestite, France, ca.1920-30

*Silver gelatin print, autographed by the model,  
140 x 90 mm*

ADN PATRIMOINE

ADNAN SEZER

adnan@adnpatrimoine.fr  
226 rue Saint-Denis, Paris 2  
sur rendez-vous +33(0) 6 27 52 78 26

I wish to thank Mr. Daniel Blau and his team  
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at his space in London.

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for your help and support.

Back cover: AGENCE RICHTER

Children of Post-War Germany, ca.1946

*Silver gelatin print, 232 x 165 mm*

