



ARTS & CULTURE

Famous 69-year-old Model Returns to Fashion Show

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Many years ago, Beverly Johnson was one of the original “supermodels.” She walked on the **runways** of **fashion** shows around the world.

Today, Johnson is 69 years old. She is not letting her age stop her from walking the runways again. She has a simple answer for why she decided to return to the fashion world during New York Fashion week: She was asked to.

Johnson, a writer and businesswoman, helped to break barriers for other Black women in the modeling industry. In 1974 at the age of 22, she appeared on the cover of the *American Vogue* magazine. This made her that magazine’s first Black cover model. She had great success in her modeling career. She became a sought-after face for many years, appearing on the covers of hundreds of magazines.

During this year’s Spring New York Fashion Week, Johnson walked the fashion runways for **designers** Sergio Hudson and Bibhu Mohapatra. She was the last model to walk in the Mohapatra show on February 15. The crowd clapped and cheered when they recognized her.

She wore a white, floor-length dress, called a gown, with a **dramatic** black **cape**. She said that she needed a little practice before the show to get the runway walk right.

“After I took that walking lesson, I was fine. It’s a wonderful, beautiful experience,” Johnson told The Associated Press after the show.

She said she is moved by today’s push for more **diversity** and respect of different cultures in the fashion industry.

“All of the models were models of color in honor of Black History Month,” Johnson said as she started to cry. “In 2024, it (will) be my 50th anniversary of that historic cover of being the first Black woman to grace the cover of American Vogue,” she added.

Johnson said Sergio Hudson is a Black designer who is becoming very successful in the fashion industry. “It’s just wonderful to see this.”

When Johnson was first coming up in the fashion industry in the 1970s, she said she did not see this kind of representation by Black designers or models.

Johnson said she enjoyed spending time with the younger models during this year’s New York Fashion Week. She found them “beautiful, elegant, and wonderful.”

She noted one big difference between them and her. And it was not their ages.

“The girls are much taller.” In the Hudson show, she said, no model was under 1.8 meters. Back when she was modeling, she said, 1.5 meters was tall enough.

I’m Anna Matteo.

Brooke Lefferts reported this story for Associated Press. Anna Matteo adapted it for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

runway – *n.* a platform along which models walk in a fashion show

fashion – *n.* the prevailing style (as in dress) during a particular time

designer – *n.* one that creates and manufactures a new product style or design : *especially*: one who designs and manufactures high-fashion clothing

dramatic – *adj.* attracting attention

cape – *n.* a sleeveless outer garment or part of a garment that fits closely at the neck and hangs loosely over the shoulders

diversity – *n.* the condition of having or being composed of differing elements : *especially*: the inclusion of people of different races, cultures, etc. in a group or organization
