

Lifestyle Fashion Style

How Patricia Field ‘reunited’ Sarah Jessica Parker and Kim Cattrall



Melissa Singer August 1, 2023 – 5.00am

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Fashion can be a unifying force. Want proof? Patricia Field, the veteran film and television costume director, arguably most famous for her work on *Sex and the City*, managed to do what Hollywood could not – bring feuding actresses Sarah Jessica Parker and Kim Cattrall to the same screen.

Both stars of *Sex and the City* appear in a new biopic, *Happy Clothes: A Film About Patricia Field*, with several scenes showing Cattrall and Field cavorting around Manhattan.



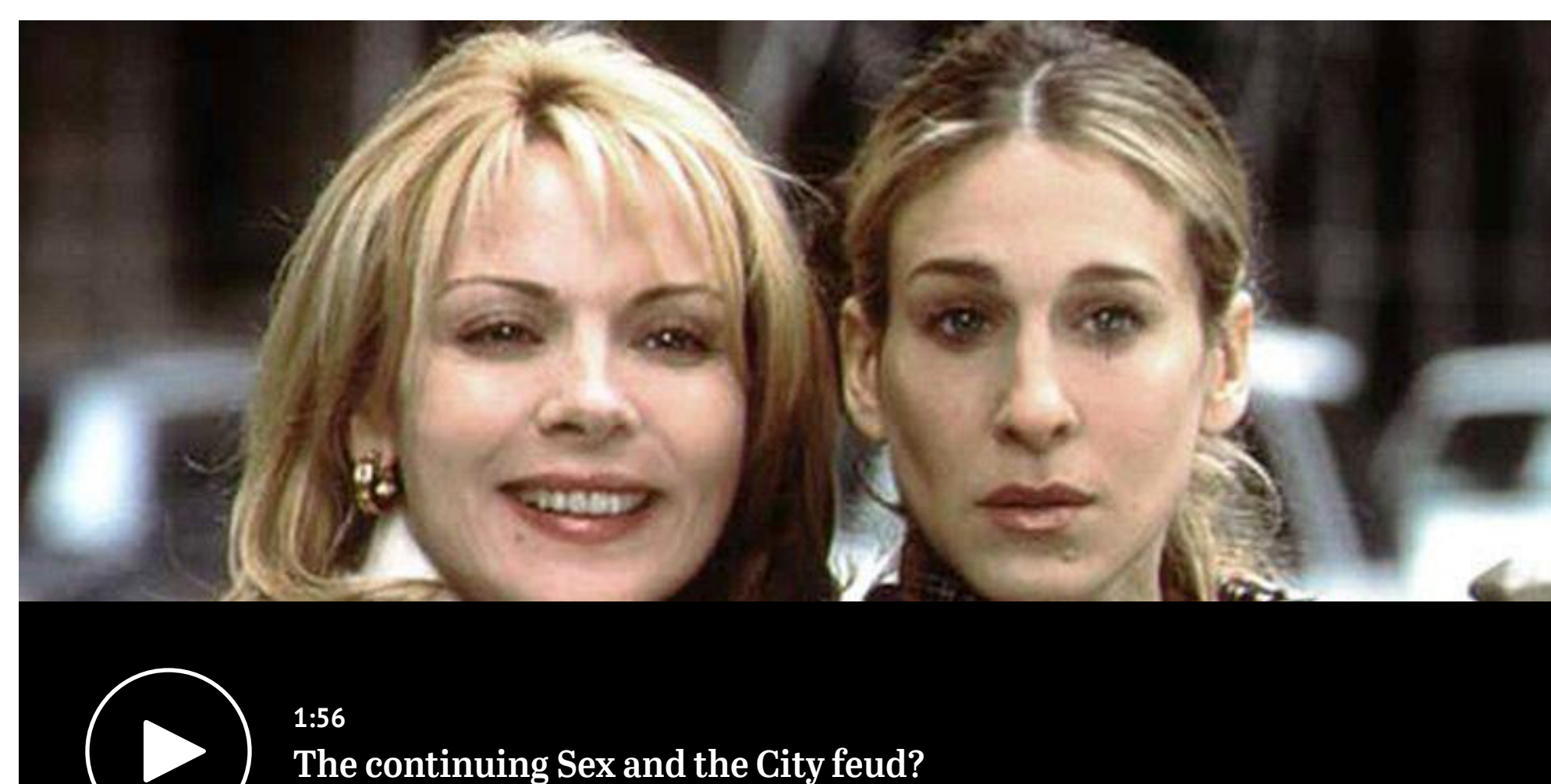
Costume designer Patricia Field (left) and Kim Cattrall have been close since they worked on *Sex and the City* together. GETTY

The two became close during *SATC* and Field now works on Cattrall’s latest show, *Glamorous*, in which she plays a supermodel turned beauty mogul – a kind of *Devil Wears Prada* (another credit that earned Field an Oscar nomination) meets the cosmetics industry.

So strong is the bond between the women that Cattrall only agreed to make a cameo on *Sex and the City* sequel *And Just Like That* if Field dressed her (Field turned down *AITA* due to scheduling clashes with filming for *Emily in Paris*; the show’s costumes are directed by Molly Rogers, Field’s right hand on *SATC*, and Danny Santiago).

Field, 81, says via Zoom that she had been approached numerous times over the years about making a documentary, but it wasn’t until director Michael Selditch ambushed her with a “sizzle reel” that she agreed. Fame, she says in an early scene in *Happy Clothes*, doesn’t sit naturally with her.

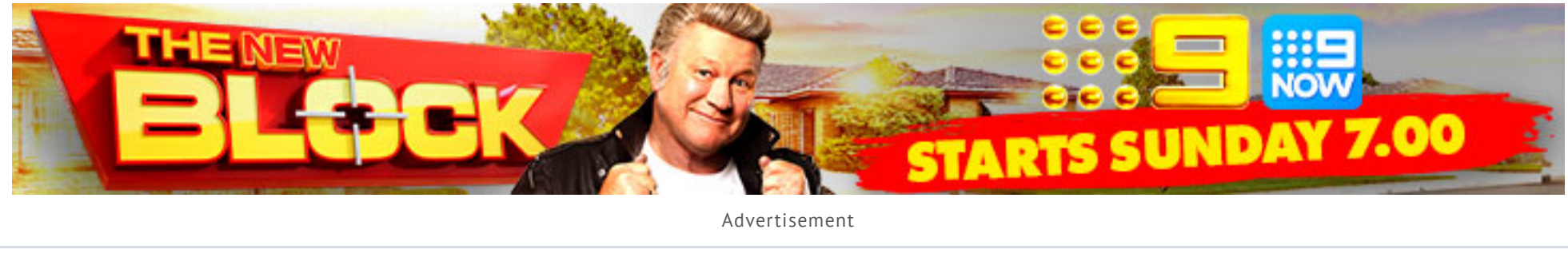
“I’m in over my head. All of a sudden, I became this famous person. I worked, and enjoyed the work, for years but, somehow, recognition found me and in a certain way, I’m a little nervous about it,” she says while puffing on a cigarette – a Field trademark as ubiquitous as her cherry red hair and thick-rimmed glasses.



After Kim Cattrall said that her and Sarah Jessica Parker have ‘never been friends’, the actress responded.

The film’s title is a direct quote from Field, a self-described “exaggeration queen” who often pairs seemingly incongruous combinations on screen – clashing colours, prints and silhouettes – to create a surprising seamlessness.

It’s how one of *SATC*’s most famous outfits – Parker, as Carrie Bradshaw, wearing a tutu on the streets of Manhattan in the opening credits – came to be, even if the show’s creator, Darren Star, didn’t fully comprehend it at first.



“I said, ‘You know, Darren, this is not something trendy, this is something that will last forever, and stay fresh,’” Field says.

And it worked. Fans of the show still buy \$US140 (\$210) replicas of the tutu – Parker has the original – from Field’s gallery in Lower Manhattan, a more sedate space than the store she ran for nearly 50 years, which in the 1980s was a hangout for artists, club kids and future celebrities, including RuPaul and Laverne Cox (John F. Kennedy Jr was reportedly barred once for making anti-trans slurs about the patrons).



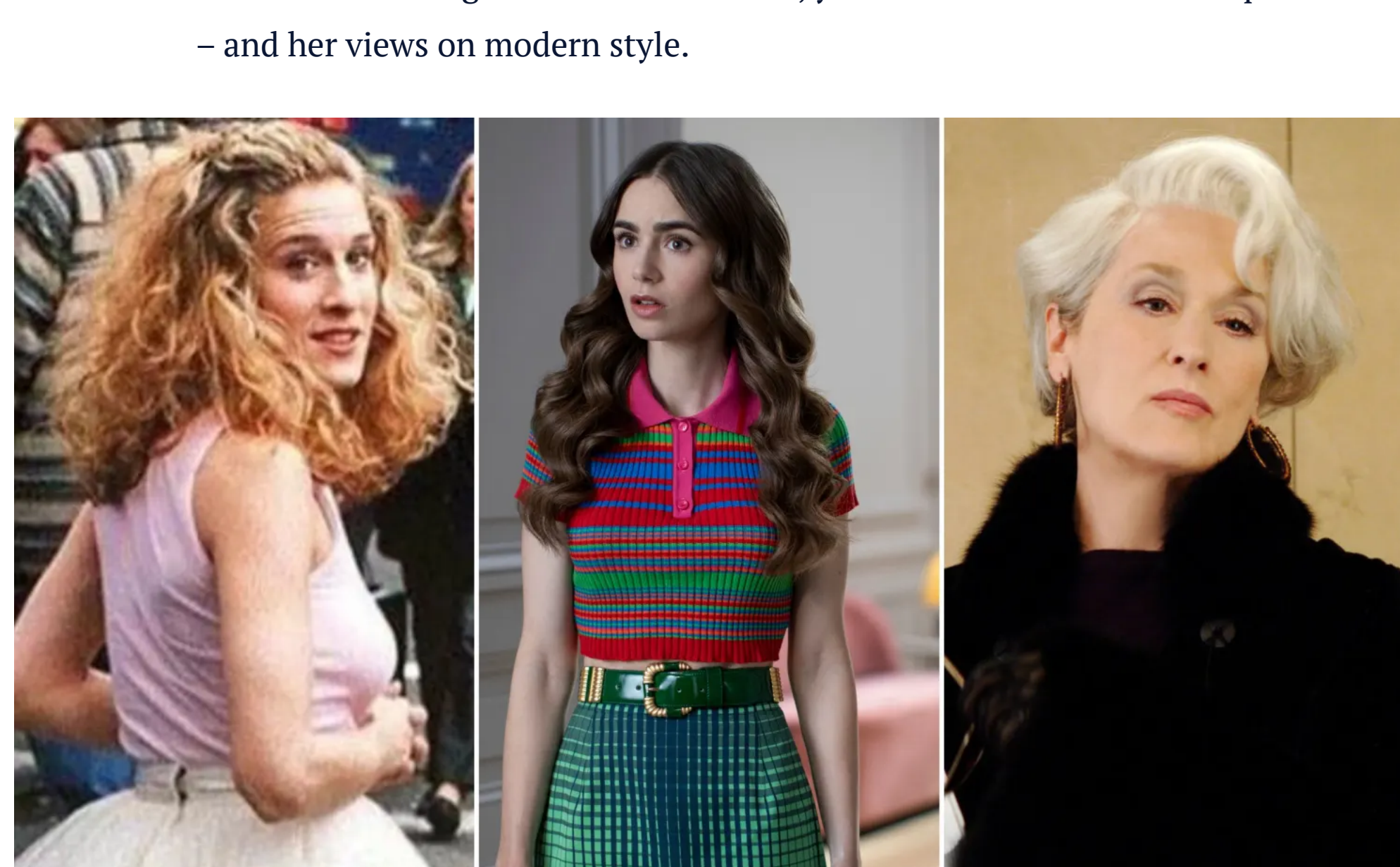
A scene from *Happy Clothes: A Film About Patricia Field*. SAMUELI PAUL

It was also where a young Selditch spent time, but it was only while making the 2019 documentary *American Style* that he zeroed in on Field as a documentary subject.

The film’s opening scene, which shows Field swimming in a pool covered in tiled mosaics, was designed to surprise. “I wanted people to be in the theatre wondering, ‘Am I in the right [movie]?’” he says.

“Yeah, maybe they would anticipate the opening scene would be, like, at a fashion show,” Field adds.

Instead, *Happy Clothes* takes the viewer inside Field’s “process”, scouring vintage fairs for *tchotchkes*, and to fittings with the cast of *Run the World*, billed as an all-black *SATC*. Through these snippets, we’re given a taste of some of Field’s mantras – “As long as the colours match, you can f–k around with the patterns” – and her views on modern style.



Field notes (from left) Sarah Jessica Parker in ‘Sex and the City’, Lily Collins in ‘Emily in Paris’, Meryl Streep in ‘The Devil Wears Prada’. INSTAGRAM/NETFLIX/SUPPLIED

“Today the fashion is so depressing,” she says in the film, later explaining she has grown bored by the overwhelming uniformity of dressing.

“What I call ‘depression wear’ fashion, as opposed to ‘celebratory fashion’ ... Fashion definitely is a reflection of the time that we are living in,” she says.

“I use the example of the 1920s – people were celebratory ... These days it’s more, I don’t know why, but maybe people feel getting overdressed isn’t cool.”

For Field, there ain’t no such thing.

Happy Clothes: A Film About Patricia Field screens at the Melbourne International Film Festival on August 5, 7 and 19. miff.com.au. *The Age* is a festival media partner.

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