Dubbed “the Debussy of photography” by Cecil Beaton himself, Adolph De Meyer is one of my favourite photographers of the early 20th century. Hired as Vogue’s first-ever staff photographer, De Meyer started at the company in 1913 and continued until 1921 before moving on to Harper’s Bazaar in late 1921. What I find most striking about De Meyer’s work, these photos in particular is the ethereal qualities he is able to capture through simply a camera lens. The hard shadows in contrast to the soft, overexposed lighting create a dream-like effect that truly pops out at the viewer, encapsulating them in said dream. I also find the lace fabric used on the model adds to the celestial ambience of the rest of the image, almost as if she is some kind of angel. That being said, I believe that the inspiration behind the photoshoot is emulating that of a fortune teller looking into her crystal ball. This aspect of the image is another reason why I find it so enduring. I have a deep interest in all things celestial and whimsical such as fortune tellers, crystals, and moon phases and I also do oracle/tarot card readings for myself, friends and family. In Figure 1, her gaze into the camera almost makes it seem as though she is performing the crystal ball reading for the on-looker, inviting them to take part and be the focus of this fantasy-like dream. The way the fabric is draped over the model's arm ever so softly creates a beautiful contrast to the hard, metallic jewellery on her arm. Figure 2 offers a different perspective of the story being told through this image. With a side view as the main focus, it makes me feel as though I am spectating her reading as either a fellow fortune teller or as a mere participant in the room. Although the focus is still very much on the model in this photo, I feel as though the crystal ball is the focal point of the image as it provides us with the question of what it is she may be looking at. I think the same use of contrast in Figure 1 could be applied to the elegant and natural appearance of the flowers versus the harder look and feel of the crystal ball. Overall, these images give off a whimsical, paradisiacal aura that brings the delicate nature of

dreams to life. With De Meyer's use of contrast, both in lighting techniques and in props/fabrics used, his ability to produce beautiful and technically sound imagery is exquisite for that of his time.

Dolores: Adolph De Meyer, 1921 Vogue



Figure 1



Figure 2