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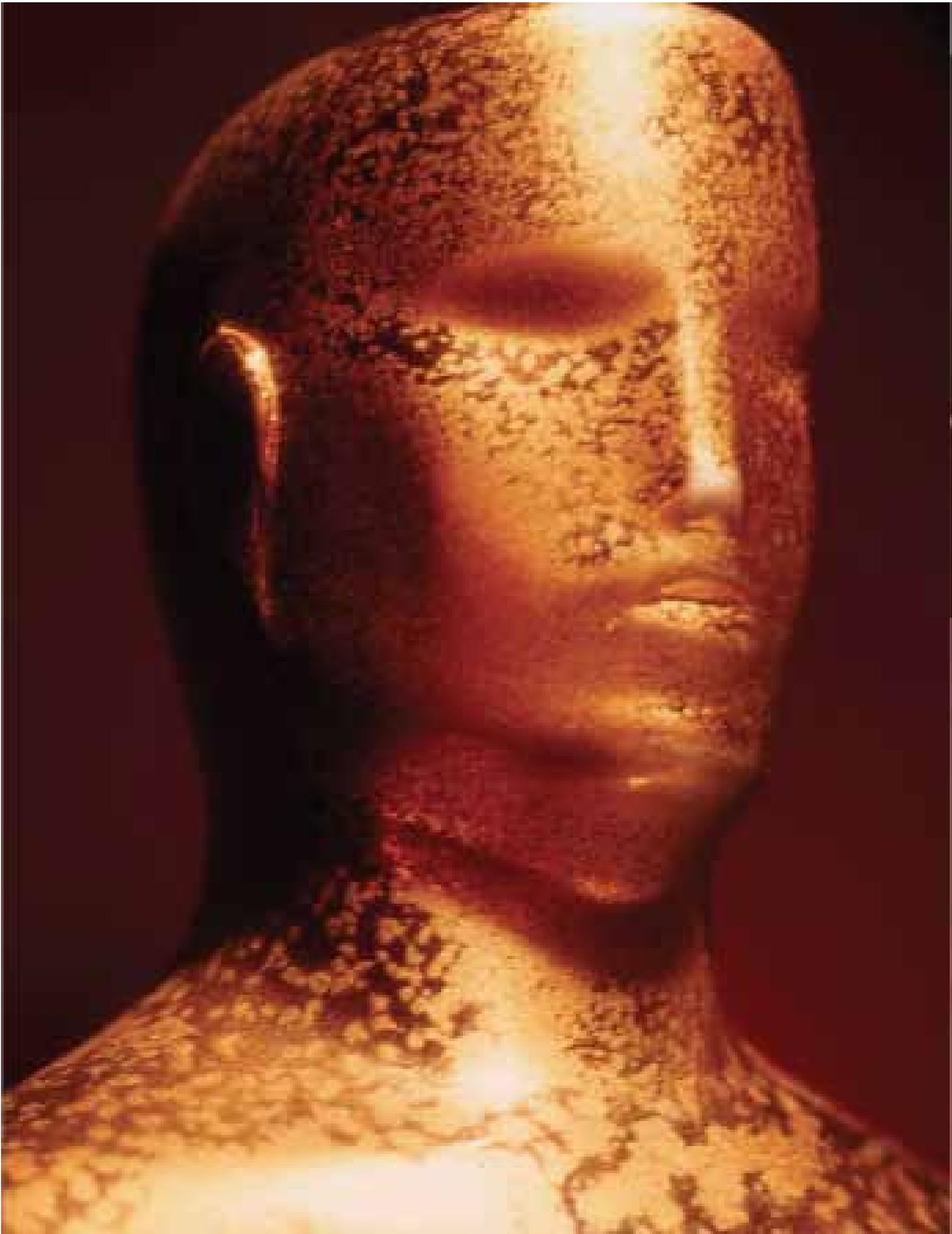
IN CONVERSATION WITH

JEFF

BURTON

FRANCESCO VEZZOLI
142











Hey, it's Vezzoli here, Good morning!

Good evening!

Where are you?

Upstairs in my second bedroom in Silverlake, CA. Where are you?

In an office which has been my temporary home for the last ten years, right in the heart of Milan. Less sexy than Silver Lake, but I can't complain.



I made it sound sexier – I'm in my office too. Is that your office?

The ceiling.

Very nice. Makes me want a cocktail, but it's too early here.

Hey, you are in Hollywood after all!

Haha, there's a lot of room to mingle in Hollywood.

Hollywood can be dangerous. It seems open, then all of a sudden it dawns on you.



Wow, you are prepared!

Wasn't there something like this on the façade of Spago in its heyday?

Hmm. Not familiar with that part of Spago's history. Those were Buffy the Vampire Slayer's eyes, 15 stories high with no text. Really nice.

Please don't think I confused the two things. I would never swap Spago for Buffy ;)

Hollywood is kind of a scary place.

I totally agree. It's the only place where I felt my mental health was in serious danger. That's why I love your work so much! Because to me you are basically the only worldwide acknowledged photographer artist that is capable of showing with elegance the dark side of that moon.

I'm having a Sally Field moment. "You really like me!"

Speaking of the dark side, did you hear the Kenneth Anger phone messages?

YES. But somehow I try to disassociate you from Anger, because I felt the industry punished him for his honesty. He became some sort of scapegoat. Like Capote, but without a Warhol to rescue him.

He's a very punishing character as well as a genius. A true pioneer. I never thought about him in connection to Capote and Warhol, but there is a link. Building up glamor and tearing it down. I can relate to those impulses.

But you are much lighter than Anger, and I mean this in a positive way. If Anger were commissioned a campaign for Cartier, the entire Richemont group would sink haha.

Haha LMAO. Yes, I'm Sally Field in comparison and grateful for that really. :)



"So, if we objectively look at Los Angeles as a character, Los Angeles is a character of mythic proportions. It deals with the birth and death of Gods and Goddesses, dreams and nightmares, success and failure, tragedy and comedy." Jeff Burton

Now I feel like the one without the fabulous Burton quote.

Did you look at movie star portraiture when you were very young?

All the time. Inevitably.



Your name here.

I guess the entire trajectory of my work for the last 15 years was an attempt to get rid of the Hollywood inferiority complex!

If it worked, give me the secret.

I think I have almost recovered, but I have to stay away from LA. As soon as I land there, no matter what, that intoxicating mixture of perfection loneliness and pretentiousness just drives me insane. But if I stay away, I forget and I am safe.

Funny, I find the art world effects with an inferiority complex that is even stronger.

Well I guess so, but there is no real mystery. Look, these are the new uniforms for the police in Denmark!



Chic! Very Tom of Finland!

I know, it's hilarious. Beyond camp. Too much even for me. I wonder how Gore would have commented on this.

He would have loved it!

The portrait you did of him is a masterpiece! That piece of gilded furniture evokes his glorious past, as well as his knowledge in history and the past.



Thank you! Gore was a delight. I shot him twice. The first time I went by myself and was terrified.

Same here. I went alone, to ask him to act in my "Caligula." He was charming and unfazed, and said OF COURSE, I'LL BE YOUR SVETONIUS. I almost fainted! The smartest human being I ever met.

Intimidatingly so, but he was so gentle with me, especially the second time I took his picture. I had printed a Cibachrome print of my favorite from the first session and brought it as a gift for the second session, and I think it touched him. He opened his favorite bottle of Claret for me and drank scotch and we got to hang out for a long time. One of my favorite connections with a subject. He was a true regal. And his knowledge and clarity were supreme. But, he was also funny as hell that day.

We were coming on to the spirits and somehow drugs came up... I told him I had to be careful when it came to cocaine. He said, "What a shame, you have such a lovely nose to do it with."

HAHAHAHAHA

I felt like Greta Garbo in that moment.



At a dinner for my opening at Gagosian, Paris Hilton gate crashed. She was at the height (?) of her fame, and I went there to make a formal introduction to Gore. Of course he had no idea who she was, and turned to me and made a quiet remark: PARIS, WHAT A FUNNY NAME FOR A GIRL.

HAHAHA hilarious!



Technical difficulties...

Love it. Sue Mengers. Never got to meet her. BUMMER.

Yeah, Me neither, funnily enough. I shot her house for Paris Vogue and she just barked orders from her bedroom to her cleaning lady, wondering why I was taking so long in her study. Her Rolodex was a life's work for her and could have been for me, too. LOL

Sounds like the documentary Maximilian Schell did about Marlene Dietrich. You only hear her voice. She never shows up.



Dietrich's lingerie crypt.

Woooooof. I'm getting horny almost. So should we talk about sex?

When it comes to sex, the best thing to do is not talk too much, right? Just DO IT.

Perfect ending for this interview. I am mesmerized. I might just go back home and follow your advice. By the way, I'm so ignorant—I never realized those gorgeous Tom Ford splashy perfume ads were shot by you!



Oh wow, thank you! Tom's been great to work with. Glad you love those.

Honestly, would you take a pic of me one day? I am so vain.

You probably think this song is about you? ;-) Sure, I'm getting good with my iPhone for these selfies to procure hot man meat.

Super, bravo! If you do so then I'll finally put my face on Grindr and get rid of the black square, haha.

Haha, yeah I let the paranoia go for now being on Scruff. It's the only place I feel comfortable being a STAR! Oh wow, that boy's come is still on my arm...

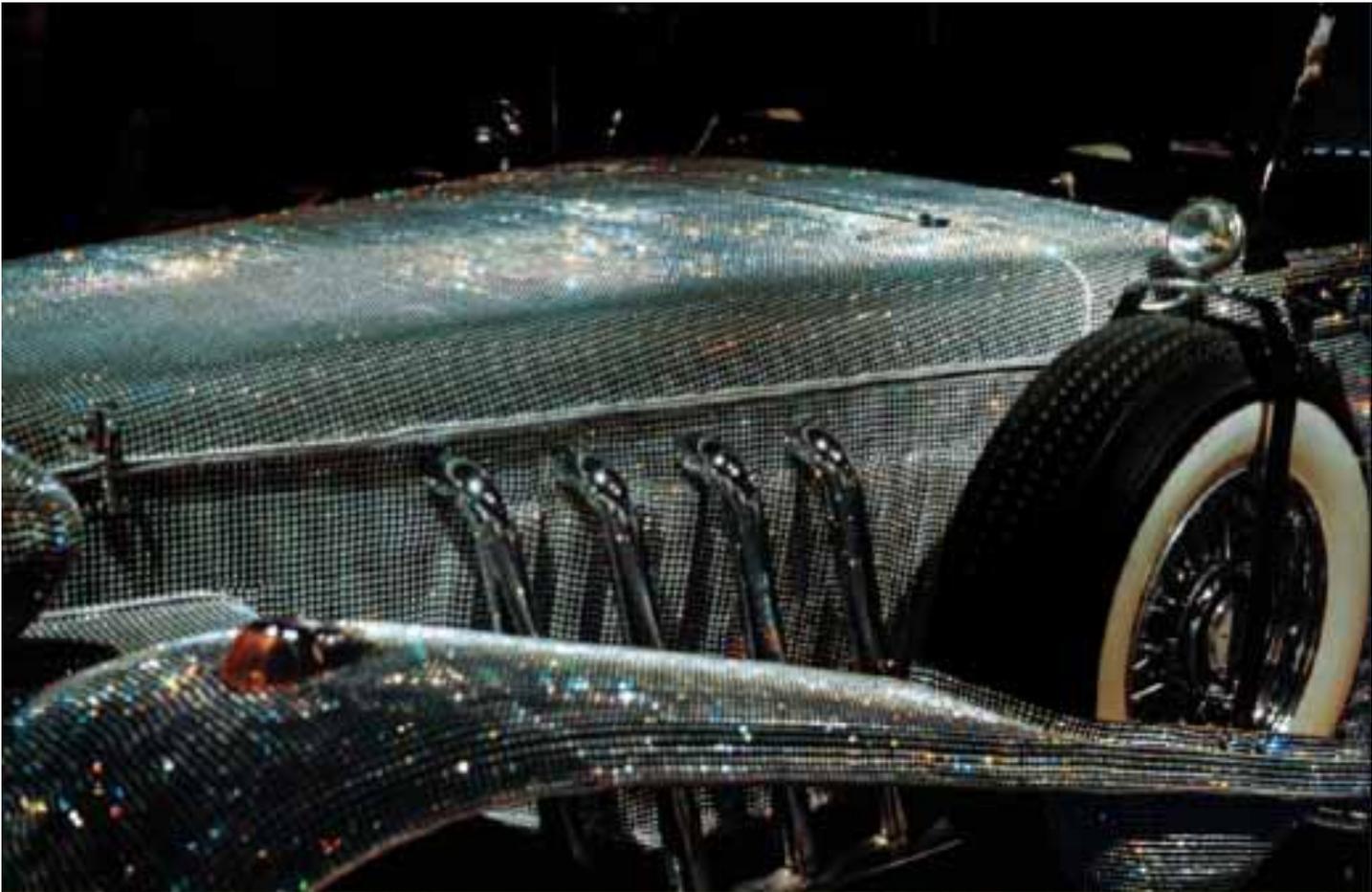
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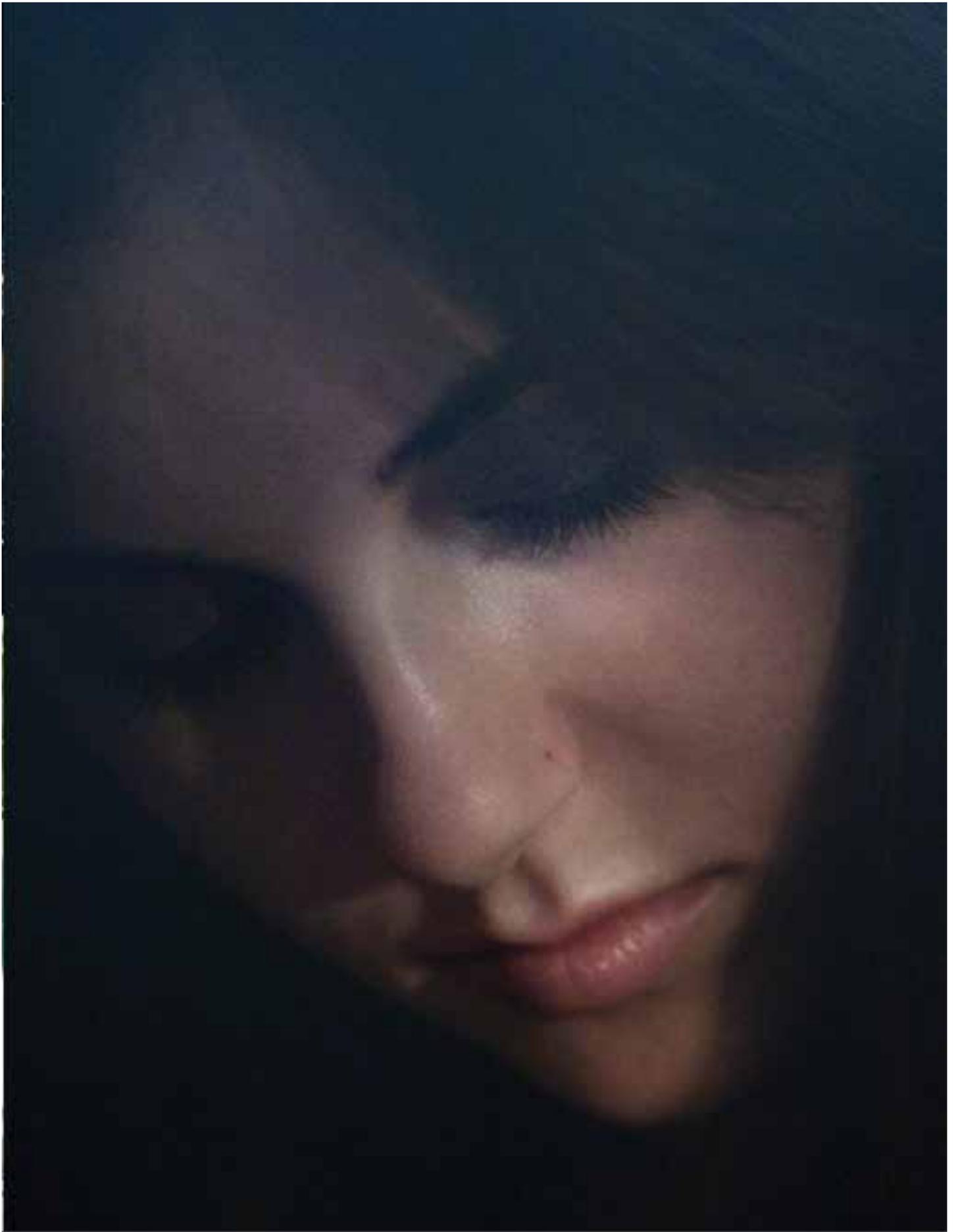
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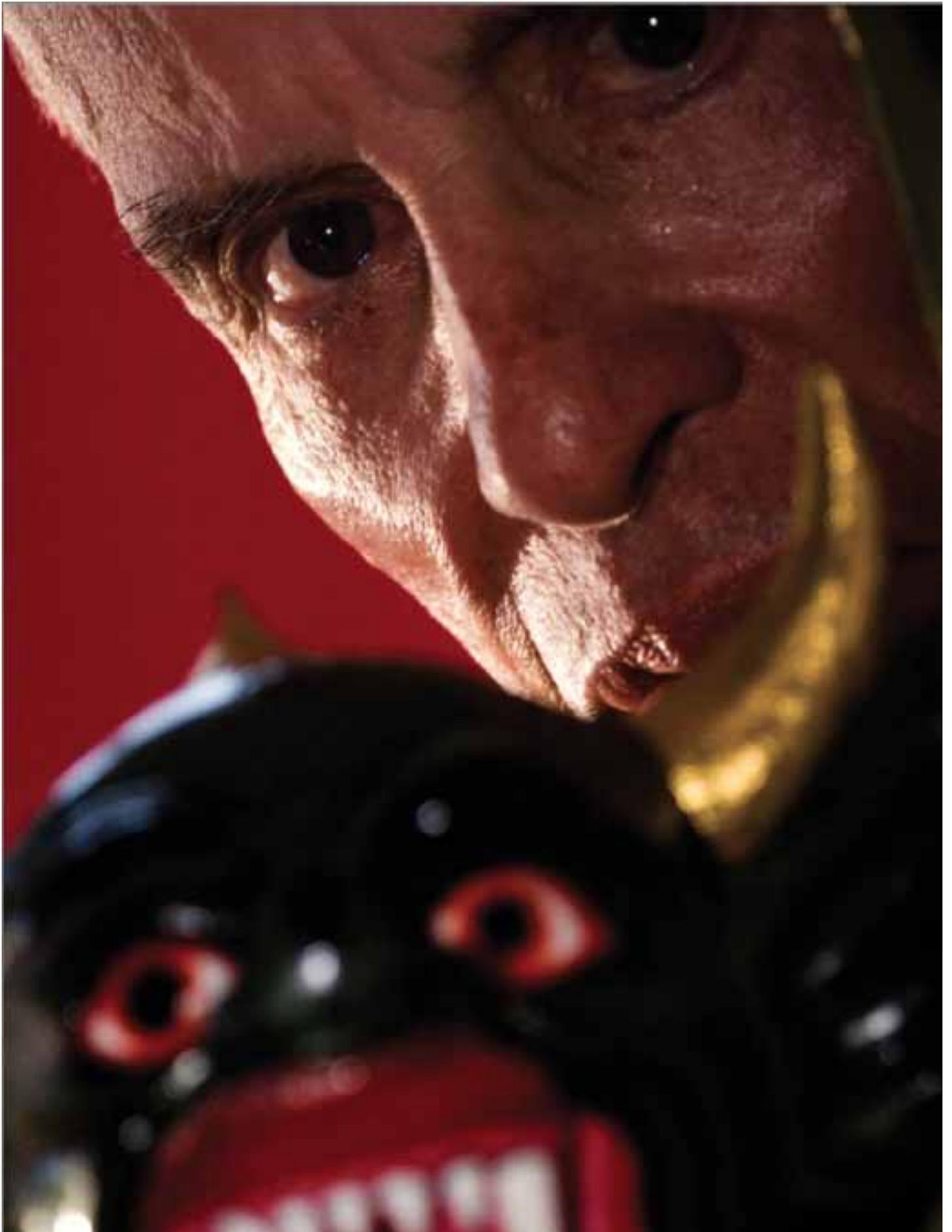
Neglige, 2013; *Oscar*, 2010; *Untitled #141 (Camaro)*, 2000; *Untitled (Laundromat Floor)*, 2008; *Untitled #176 (Hollywood OD)*, 2003; *Roederer*, 2010; *Untitled #211 (Hand in Butt)*, 2006; *Untitled #122 (Rhinestone Car)*, 2000; *Untitled #229 (at Herb Ritts')*, 2007; *Sasha Grey*, 2010; *Kenneth Anger*, 2007; *Untitled #213 (Two Palm Trees)*, 2006; *Untitled (Leopard Phone Case)*, 2013. All images courtesy of the artist; Casey Kaplan, New York; and Franco Noero (Turin).

Jeff Burton (American, b. 1963) is a photographer who lives and works in Los Angeles. He is represented by Casey Kaplan, New York, and Franco Noero, Turin.

Francesco Vezzoli (Italian, b. 1971) is an artist who lives and works in Milan. He is represented by Gagosian Gallery; Almine Rech, Paris/London/Brussels; and Franco Noero, Turin. Vezzoli's solo exhibition "Eternal Kiss" is currently on view at Almine Rech, London, through 3 October; in November, Performa 15 will feature an ambitious new work realized in collaboration with American classical ballet dancer David Hallberg.









Vezzoli, Francesco, "In Conversation With Jeff Burton", Kaleidoscope Magazine, Fall 2015

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SEPTEMBER 4, 2014

ANDREEA DIACONU

Andreea Diaconu takes the cover for our thirteenth issue in a glowing feature shot by Jeff Burton and styled by Alastair McKimm.









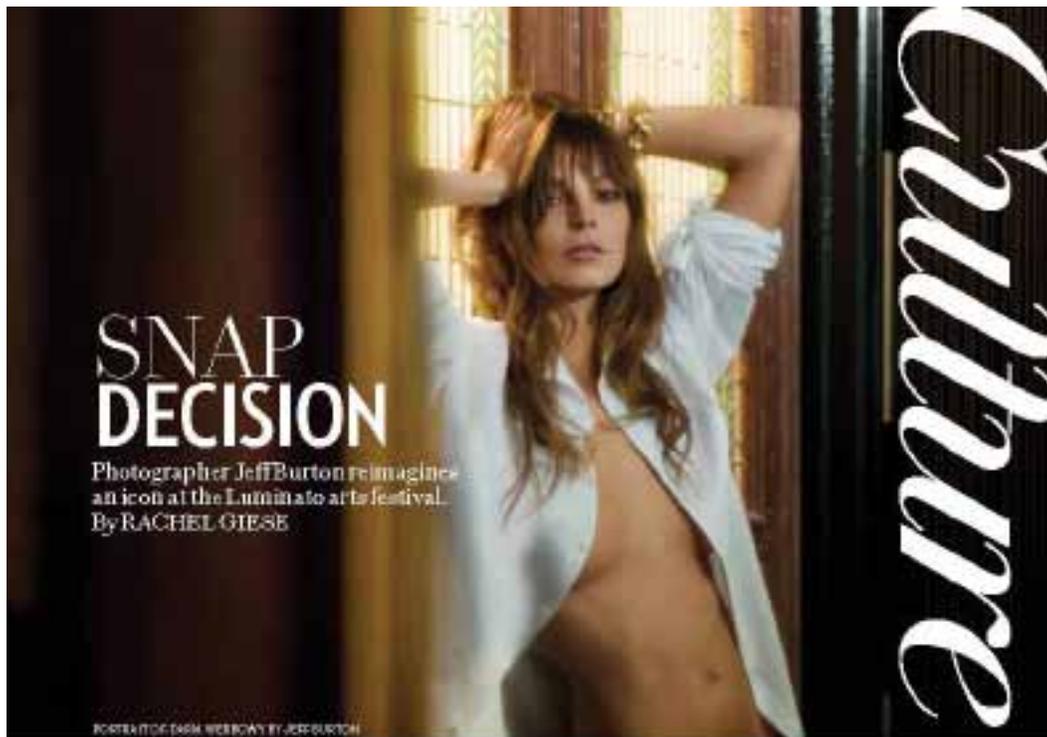
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FASHION

magazine

Summer 2013

SNAP DECISION: Photographer Jeff Burton reimagines an icon at the Luminato arts festival.
 By Rachel Giese



SNAP DECISION

Photographer Jeff Burton reimagines an icon at the Luminato arts festival.
 By RACHEL GIESE

CONSIDER THE ROSE: PRETTY YET TREACHEROUSLY THORN, its fragrance distilled for perfumes and shirts, a symbol of love immortalized by Shakespeare, Racine and so many others.

When it was established in 1936, Lancôme, the French cosmetics firm, adopted the rose as its emblem. To celebrate its 75th birthday in 2011, the company commissioned 30 photographers to interpret the flower. The resulting exhibition, entitled *Rose & Je*, launched in Toronto as June for Luminato, the city's annual arts festival.

Images range from the reverent (Buren Afanador's wedding veil of an overflowing vase) to the erotic (Patrick Demarchelier's pink lips oozing from a naked woman's crotch). One of the simplest yet most striking photographs comes from Los Angeles-based Jeff Burton: A few 16-headed blooms lie scattered underfoot at a flower market. Among the other tableaux, it's a startling reflection on decline and impermanence, flipping all the clichés about the ubiquitous flower on their heads. "Part of the challenge," Burton says, "was figuring out how to approach the subject of the rose in a fresh way. When I saw the flowers on the ground, I was struck by the idea of finding beauty in different kinds of contexts, and of seeing beauty as a

natural experience and not one you have to fabricate."

A noted fashion photographer, Burton has shot *Vogue* and *Canadiana* supermodel Dana Werbooy for Lane Cove and created portraits of celebrities as diverse as Gore Vidal and Tilda Swinton. He also spent years shooting stills in Southern California's thriving adult film business. It was in that most explicit of industries that Burton became interested in "the in-between spaces" and in the implicit, not the overt. Despite the graphic nature of pornography and the blatant money-making demands of advertising, his work becomes, at times, surreal.

"I'm building up glamour and tearing it down simultaneously," Burton explains. "Even as I peel away the glossy surface, I try to keep the fantasy alive." When he was working on his *Rose & Je*... photograph, Burton noticed white flecks in the asphalt under the discarded blooms, finding another dimension to the image. The thorn flowers call to mind Oscar Wilde's maxim about lying in the gutter but looking up at the stars. "I keep my eyes open for the beauty of imperfection," he says. □

EDITOR:
 ELIO IANNACCI



BURTON'S PHOTO FOR *Rose & Je*.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF BURTON

FELDMANN PICTURES#1

images by jeff burton

ON THE OCCASION OF AN EXHIBITION FEATURING HIS MAGAZINE OHIO, THE RENOWNED GERMAN ARTIST HANS PETER FELDMANN ASKED PETER FISCHLI AND DAVID WEISS TO SEND HIM PHOTOGRAPHS THAT THEY DID NOT CONSIDER GOOD ENOUGH TO USE IN THEIR WORK, BUT THAT THEY HAD NONETHELESS NOT THROWN AWAY. SINCE THEN, THESE TYPES OF IMAGES HAVE COME TO BE KNOWN AS FELDMANN PICTURES. INSPIRED BY THIS IDEA, WE DECIDED TO CREATE A NEW COLUMN, IN WHICH WE ASK DIFFERENT ARTISTS TO SHARE A SELECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS THAT THEY KEEP SHUT AWAY IN A DRAWER. WE ARE STARTING WITH THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND ARTIST JEFF BURTON, WHO ALSO GAVE US A PERFECT DESCRIPTION FOR THIS COLUMN: "IT'S LIKE HAVING A STUDIO VISIT WITH SOMEONE YOU TRUST AND SHARING MORE THAN YOU NORMALLY WOULD." HERE IS HIS SELECTION, ENCOMPASSING THE VARIOUS GENRES OF HIS PRACTICE: PORTRAITURE, LANDSCAPE, FASHION, PORN, INTERIORS AND STILL-LIFE.

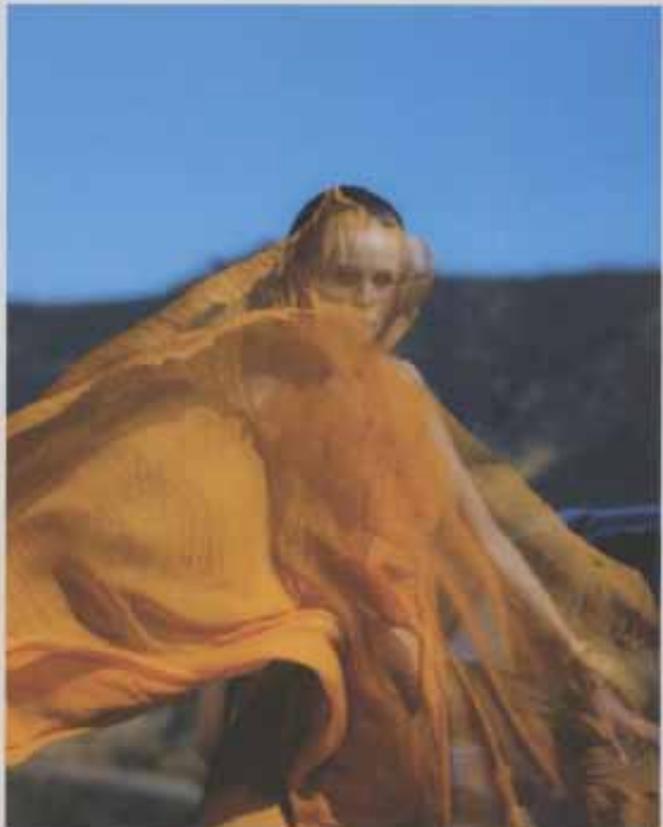
IN OCCASIONE DI UNA MOSTRA A CUI PARTECIPÒ CON LA SUA RIVISTA OHIO, IL FAMOSO ARTISTA TEDESCO HANS PETER FELDMANN CHIESE A PETER FISCHLI E DAVID WEISS DI MANDARGLI DELLE FOTO CHE CONSIDERAVANO NON ABBASTANZA VALIDE DA ESSERE USATE NEI LORO LAVORI, MA CHE NONOSTANTE TUTTO NON AVEVANO ANCORA BUTTATO. DA QUEL MOMENTO IN POI, PER DEFINIRE QUEL GENERE DI IMMAGINI È RIMASTO IL NOME DI FELDMANN PICTURES. ISPIRANDOCI A QUESTA IDEA, ABBIAMO DECISO DI CREARE UNA NUOVA RUBRICA IN CUI CHIEDIAMO AD UN ARTISTA DI CONDIVIDERE ALCUNE IMMAGINI CHE TIENE CHIUSE IN UN CASSETTO. INIZIAMO CON IL FOTOGRAFO E ARTISTA AMERICANO JEFF BURTON, CHE HA ANCHE DATO UNA PERFETTA DEFINIZIONE DEL PROGETTO: "È COME FARE UNO STUDIO VISIT CON QUALCUNO DI CUI TI FIDI, APRENDOTI PIÙ DI QUANTO FARESTI NORMALMENTE." QUI DI SEGUITO LA SUA SELEZIONE, CHE COMPRENDE DIVERSI ASPETTI DELLA SUA PRATICA: RITRATTO, PAESAGGIO, MODA, PORNO, INTERNI, NATURE MORTE.

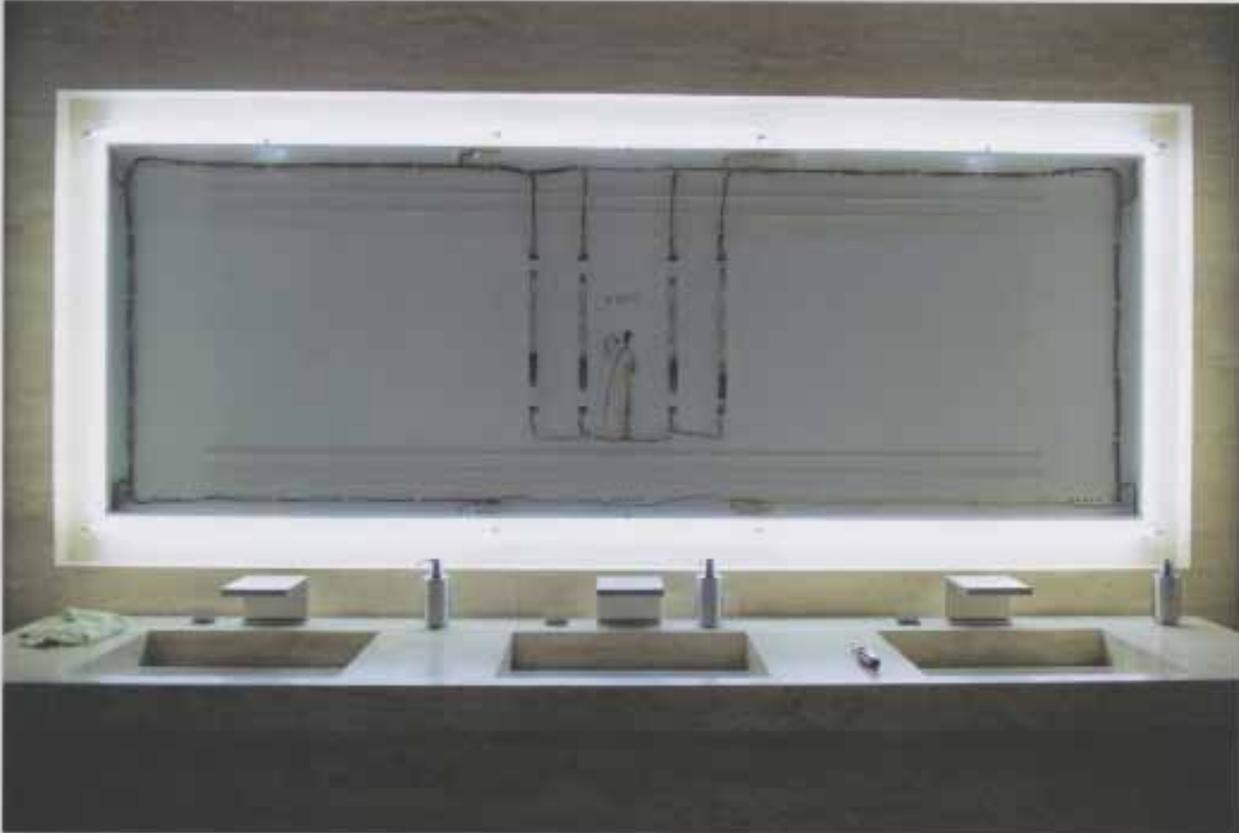
Jeff Burton (1963) is a commercial photographer and artist who lives in Los Angeles. He has held numerous solo shows in the U.S., Japan and Europe. His shoots have appeared in magazines such as 10 Magazine, Fantastic Man, Numéro and Vogue Paris. He has shot campaigns for Tom Ford, YSL and Kris Van Assche.

Jeff Burton (1963) è fotografo professionista e artista. Vive a Los Angeles. Ha svolto numerose mostre personali negli Stati Uniti, in Giappone e in Europa. I suoi scatti sono apparsi su riviste come 10 Magazine, Fantastic Man, Numéro e Vogue Paris. Ha realizzato campagne per Tom Ford, YSL e Kris Van Assche.











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“Porn and Beauty in the California Desert” by Jacqueline Marcus, DAZED and Confused, March 2012.

LAST SHOT:
JEFF BURTON

PORN AND
BEAUTY
IN THE
CALIFORNIAN
DESERT



LA-based photographer Jeff Burton has an innate eye for atmospheric beauty, transforming the raunch of adult films into quixotic images of Hollywood glamour. He spent the 90's working as a stills photographer for gay-porn juggernaut Catalina Video, documenting the schmaltzy ins and outs of the productions.

Intent on breaking the formulaic monotony of xxx action, Burton took covert photos in his own painterly, sun-drenched sensibility, creating fantasies that transcend the crass mercantilism of sex for hire. His voyeuristic tendencies and a fine art background collide on a dreamy haze of SoCal cool. He recalls his heady days on set.

“This picture was taken in 2000 on a porn set in Palm Springs at a classic ranch-style place with tons of bougainvillea on the roof overhang. In order to document the set you have to dance around the cameraman, get on the floor and look from underneath, and then you have to get on something high and you kind of lose your orientation because you're looking to illustrate the action from every possible angle.

Having grown up in puritanical Texas I wanted to divorce myself from judgement. I really identified with the pets that would be around because they looked at it all so differently than we did: as a human watching sex for commerce, there's all this heavy-duty psychosexual, sociological stuff, but to look at it fresh was really freeing.

So, I'm up on this roof trying to get shots of the penetration, because that was the job, but it was

more interesting for me to deviate from the explicitness of graphic sex (which I was shooting all along), and to make a connection between his actions and his pleasure and the beauty of the bougainvillea that was all around. It looks like he's making a vowel sound, as though he's in glorious reverie, and I enjoyed stretching the narrative, twisting it into a different kind of fantasy that was almost more erotic, exciting and pleasureable.

It wasn't all the gristmill of sex for hire. There were really beautiful moments, and it could look like a classical painting sometimes with these nude sculptures just standing around. There's an inbetweenness to this image that's like a cinematic moment between points A and B—you don't know what's happened before and what's happening after. I find that there's a disorienting thing that happens in pleasure and even though I'm beyond conscious when shooting the pictures, there's an element of zoning out.

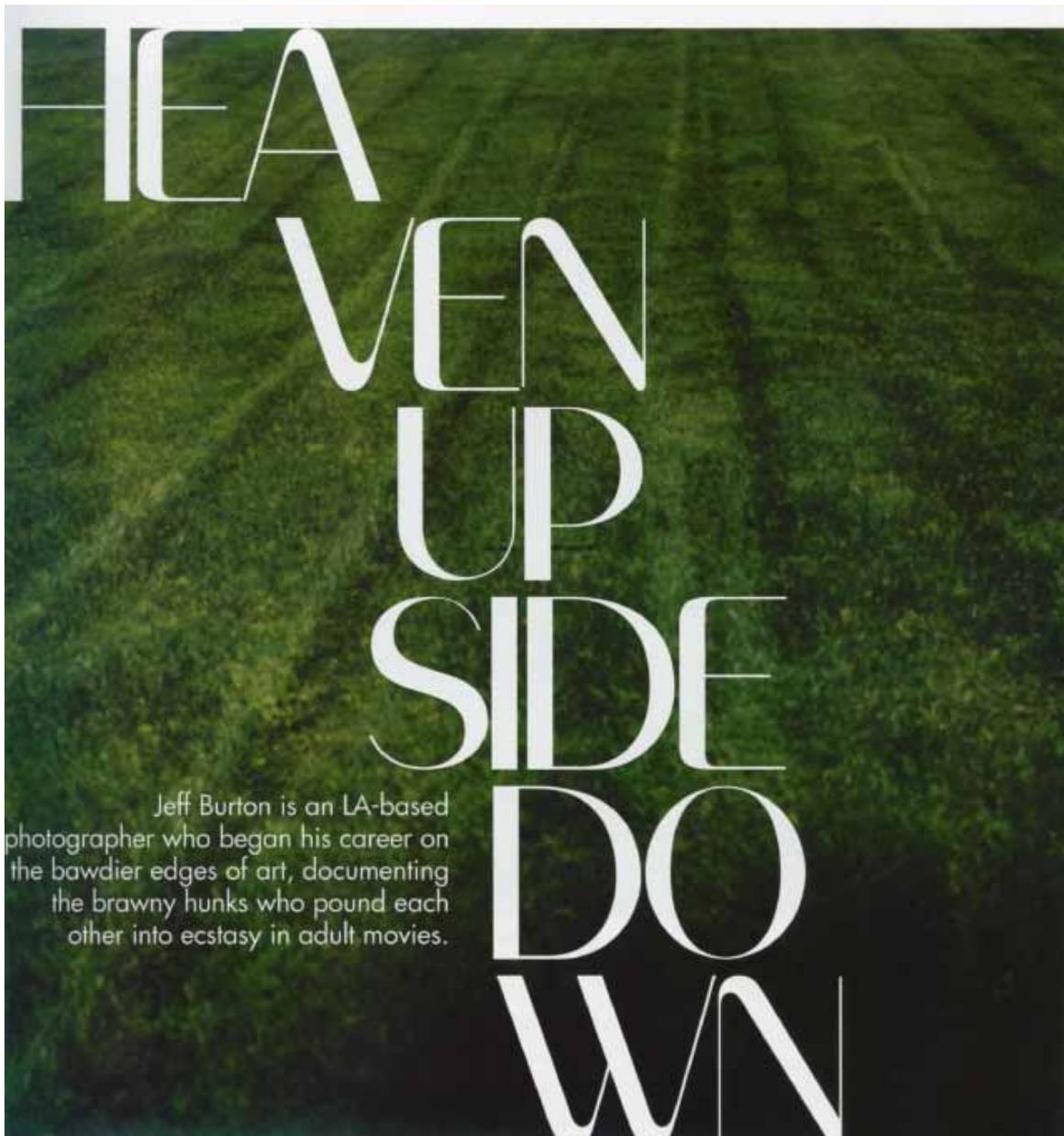
When I was a kid my sister had Hollywood Babylon, the Kenneth Anger book, and it was kind of the first tabloid of its day. I was in love with the idea of distorted glamour, and my desire when I left home was to become an artist and a painter. Growing up in Texas, it seemed like there were things going on in the world that were worth venturing out for, and LA seemed to be the place.”

-TEXT JACQUELINE MARCUS

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Burton, Jeff (photographer), "Heaven Upside Down", by Max Blagg, Ten Magazine, Art Issue no 40, Autumn-Winter 2011, p. 104-113.



palm springs 1993

this VISUAL RECORD OF THE RAW AND THE
FUCKED HAS GRADUALLY MORPHED INTO AN EL-
EGANT AND VARIED BODY OF WORK, MOSTLY

Photographer JEFF BURTON
Text MAX BLAGG



palm springs 1996

PORTRAITURE.

Burton's compassionate eye has caught the high and the low of Hollywood, the glamour and the grit, the struggle toward, "STARDOM", the peddling of spirit and flesh, "the bumping and grinding of strangers". He spoke about the trove of old Polaroids he recently dusted off for Ten.



palm springs 1997

TEN: "YOUR FIRST ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE, AS A KID STRANDED IN THE WILDS OF TEXAS, WAS THE MOVIE THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE?"

JB: "When I saw that movie, somewhere inside my nine-year-old head the idea of glamour got bent into wild, new shapes. There was something so visually abstract and exciting about the bodies of the people all dressed up and messed up. The art direction was so great - that massive ballroom, the Christmas tree to my mind one of the best sculptures of the late 20th century. And, of course, the capsizing, and the decor/decorum going to hell in an instant. Strangers slamming into one another. Hell upside down."

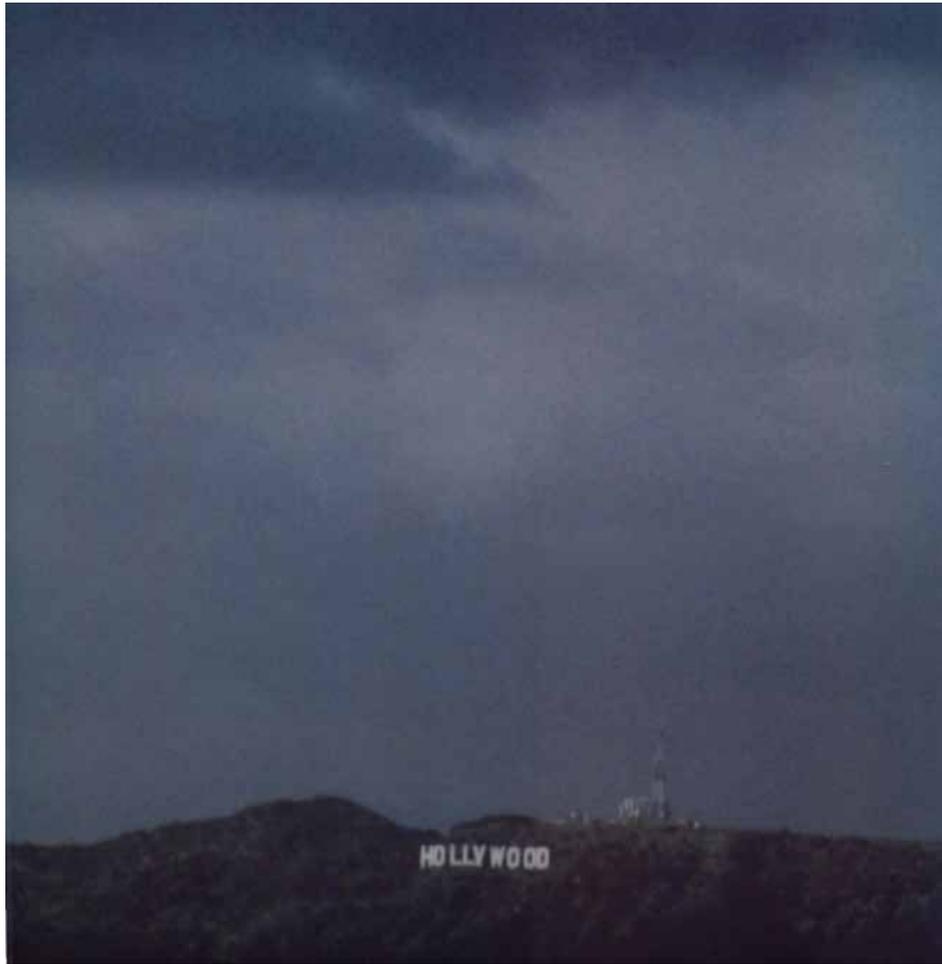
TEN: "AND STELLA STEVENS AS LINDA ROGO, IN THAT OFF-WHITE DRESS IN THE MIDST OF THE MAYHEM... MY IMBD REPORT SAYS ROGO IS AN EX-PROSTITUTE, MARRIED TO A COP PLAYED BY ERNEST BORGNINE, AN UNLIKELY PAIRING OF BEAUTY AND THE BEAST."

JB: "I fell madly in love with Stella's character, Linda. Her styling confused my incipient sexuality even more... She was so pretty in the tight, white sheath... And those perfect breasts... And her gutter mouth. There are probably several thousand gay men and a few dozen straight men in their late forties who know exactly what happened to me."

TEN: "MORE PEOPLE OUGHT TO REALISE THAT THE FIRST STEP TO MAKING YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE IS BELIEVING WHAT YOU SEE AT THE MOVIES, AND THEN GETTING THE HELL OUT OF YOUR HOMETOWN."

JB: "Exactly. I dreamed of meeting Stella for years, and finally did, by some magical coincidence. Then I photographed her a couple of years ago- a crazy Hollywood dream come true, fantasy made real. I used to look at porn mags and say to myself, 'I could do this!' and then I did. Tawdry, impossible dreams, and then they come true. Am I a geisha or a streetwalker? Artist or pornographer- is there a difference? I don't make huge distinctions between making porn images, mainstream movie star portraits, 'artworks'. I'm just working here."

TEN: "LET'S TALK ABOUT THESE STEAMY POLAROIDS. I LOVE THEM AS PHYSICAL OBJECTS, APART FROM THE PLEASURE OF THAT INSTANT RECORDING OF SOMETHING/SOMEONE, THE 'OCULAR PROOF',



HOLLYWOOD 1999

AN AUTHENTIC SECRET DOCUMENT, IN LIVID COLOUR, FRESH FROM THE INNARDS OF THE SX-70.”

JB: I have shoe boxes full of them, like family pictures. They were shot with a Hasselblad with a Polaroid back. My glorified Polaroid machine. These were the kind you peel apart after 90 seconds, and sort of smell like sex.”

TEN: “YES, THEY STILL HAVE A TANGY ODOUR TO THEM.”

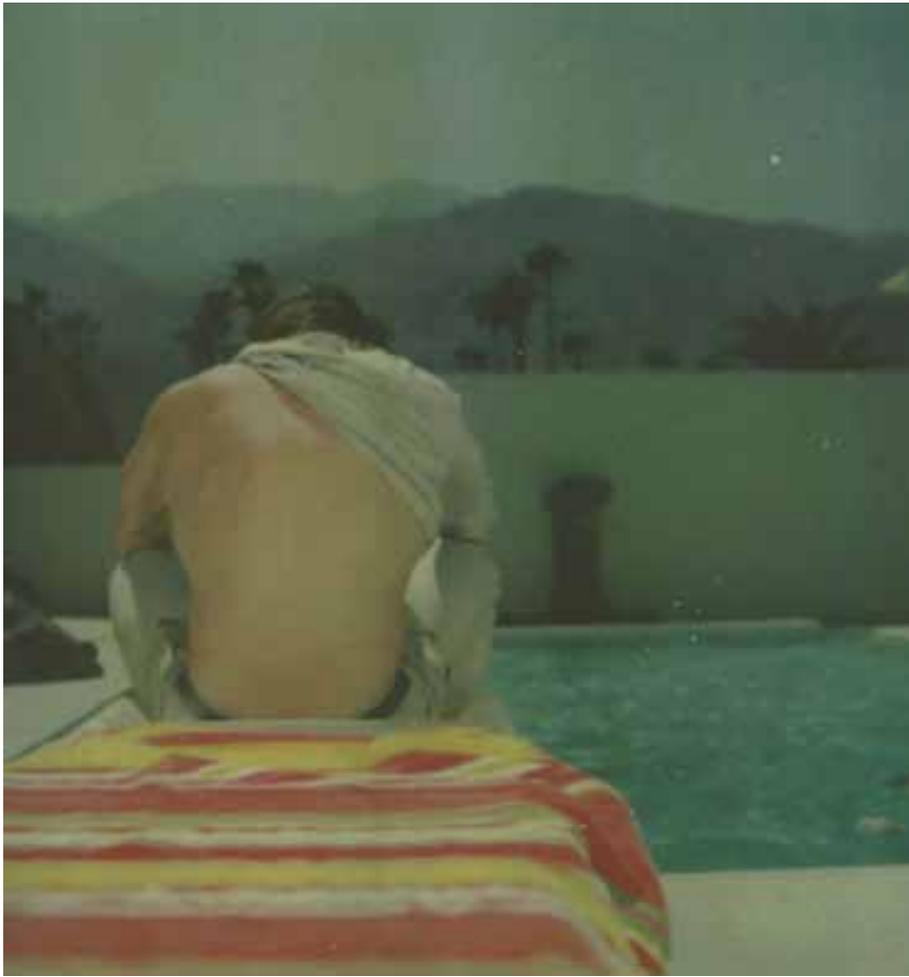
JB: “These are all from the 1990s - taken on set, shooting for the posters and box covers of porn movies. They needed lots of pictures for printed material back then, before the internet. It was also before digital photography killed Polaroid. The companies used to really make ‘movies’ in the 1980s/1990s and also aggressively market them. You had to go to the video store back then to watch them.”

TEN: “I SNEAKED AROUND THE TIMES SQUARE PARLOURS QUITE A BIT MYSELF- I REMEMBER DOING A SHARP TURN ON EXITING AND GETTING BACK INTO THE PEDESTRIAN FLOW AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. NOWADAYS YOU DON’T HAVE TO LEAVE YOUR DESK TO FIND THE MOST OUTLANDISH PORN YOU COULD WISH FOR.”

JB: “Back then I was always sincerely proud to see the posters on the wall, the box covers on the shelves, and the covers I shot for magazines like Playguy, and Honcho, Stroke, etc. I used to call the porn shops ‘my other galleries’. Pointing out my work to friends as we passed - ‘I shot that, and that’, and so on. But I always knew - even at the time - that being there, shooting, was hilarious, ridiculous, beautiful, maybe even sad, and sometimes someplace else altogether. All along, there was something very honest about my relationship with the subjects and the experience.”

TEN: YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS HAVE A REAL WARMTH AND SENSE OF CONNECTION WITH THEIR SUBJECTS, WHICH IS OFTEN NOT THE CASE, ESPECIALLY WITH PORN.”

JB: “I saw it as part of the star-making machinery, which I am still doing in other forms- magazine covers again, portraits of people that people fantasise about, and selling things. The Polaroids are a bit different from most of the work I’ve shown... which tends to have no gravity, no centre, more poetic, hopefully. I was taking my cues from studying painting for years...Pollock, even. Modernist grids...contour continuation, the stuff of high art...I think Warhol once said about sex, ‘It’s so abstract!’ and I get that. In my art I was making abstractions, but invested with... anthropology? I thought of most of this material as belonging to the ‘commercial’ world, although there were some poetic crossovers while I had the Polar-



PALM SPRINGS 1998

oid machine in my hand. These stars of my past - it seems light years away and back again. Or maybe parallel time. I'm so glad I kept them. Look at that one. What a great backyard! I could live there."

TEN: "IT LOOKS LIKE YOU DID LIVE THERE. YOU COULD CREATE A KIND OF MODERN GAY TAROT DECK- THE HUNG MAN RATHER THAN THE HANGED MAN, THE PRINCE OF SWORDS, THE TWO KNIGHTS AKIMBO. THE BENT RIDER. THE LIGHTING IS BEAUTIFUL, TOO

JB: "It's funny because, on the porn sets, sometimes the lighting was so crude and quickly thrown together I'd often find gorgeous lighting shooting from the absolute opposite side of the 'stage'- Ass Backwards will be the title of my autobiography."

TEN: "DO YOU THINK A MOVIE LIKE BOOGIE NIGHTS WAS AN ACCURATE DEPICTION OF THE PORN SCENE?"

JB: "It'd been a long time since I saw it, but I think I remember that all of the performers were portrayed as losers who wanted to be or do other things and were comically bad at those things. It was kind of puritanical and meanspirited in its depiction of the talent. It would have been more effective if they had made some of the actors smart and evolved in addition to being able to perform sexually for the camera. People like that do exist.

TEN: "YOU SEEM TO ENJOY WORKING AT THAT INTERSECTION WHERE THE BEAUTIFUL COLLIDES WITH THE DAMNED. CORNER OF HOLLYWOOD AND BABYLON?"

JB: "That's my address! That book [Hollywood Babylon by Kenneth Anger] was also a huge influence . All the Tinseltown scandals, the rank weeds flourishing in the flowerbed. It really made me want to live here. I also love Anger's films. They were way ahead of their time. I actually got to know Kenneth; he was an amazing mentor. We used to go to the movie together and I did some portraits of him, but we had a falling out Kenneth said, among other things, that my books were printed on cheap paper, so we haven't spoken in a while. It's complicated."

TEN: "CERTAIN ARTISTS MAY BE SACRED, BUT THEY CAN STILL BE MONSTERS. IN YOUR WORK YOU SEEM AT EASE WITH BOTH AGE AND YOUTH. FROM THAT ELEGIAC PORTRAIT OF GORE VIDAL TO A VIVACIOUS 15-YEAR-OLD GIRL LIKE SID WILLIAMS, WHOM YOU SHOT FOR THE COVER OF A RECENT ISSUE OF TEN [SPRING SUMMER 2011]."

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PALM SPRINGS 1998

JB: "Sid is Such a lovely girl .. That was an intense shoot for both of us. I think Hedi Slimane discovered her at Coachella. She's only 15 and I had her modelling out in public in downtown Los Angeles, which can be a little hairy. She's a trouper and a really great human being. Not a hint of pretence. Being a parent would be the end of me, though."

TEN: "WELL SHE HAD FABULOUS PARENTS. THE LATE, GREAT LARRY WILLIAMS AND HER MARVELLOUS MOM THE DIRECTOR LESLIE LIBMAN."

JB: "Leslie was cool. I hope Sid was happy with the cover - aside from her name being misspelled, dammit - and the rest of the shots, and Leslie, too."

TEN: "I'M SURPRISED SHE HASN'T CALLED YOU. WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE LA OFFICE TODAY?"

JB: "Star schedules. Not astrology, unfortunately... Booking hair and makeup, resisting nicotin ... Screening calls. We're working on several projects, one of which is with Tilda Swinton in Greece, a dream date indeed. Cranking all the necessary mechanisms to get close and yet still keep enough distance to continue and not have the dream feel like a nightmare. Mostly, though, it's heaven upside down."

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PALM SPRINGS 1995

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PALM SPRINGS 1996

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SACRAMENTO 1996

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BEVERLY HILLS 1993

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Galleria Franco Noero

Jeff Burton

Polaroids

20 April – 14 May 2011

Galleria Franco Noero gallery is pleased to announce the first exhibition of Jeff Burton's polaroids.

In the early 90's, at the beginning of his professional career as a photographer, Burton fitted his Hasselblad 2 -1/4" with a polaroid back for lighting tests while shooting movie posters for the porn industry, video covers, and stills for printed publicity. Shot over a decade and originally made only for his private use, these photographs bear witness to a process of manufacturing desire, according to a time that now gets the flavour of something past and to an assigned job within which the artist had thought the opportunity to define his own taste for vibrating colours, unexpected details and points of view.

A more sophisticated and constantly changing technology, made easily available by digital photography and internet streaming, has left those polaroids in the dust—of a shoebox in this case—not unlike family photos.

Many aspects of Burton's practice have derived from inspecting the porn environments he became intimate with and by comparing porn's relation and proximity to Hollywood, two closely aligned productions in Los Angeles which paths cross in an unavoidable way, although not as properly distinguished as such. Burton's polaroids reflect on these interactions, and have a different relation to the artist, revealing a stronger intimacy given by their instant quality that does not allow for retouching, rethinking or editing.

Both film industries have influenced one another, and in Burton's case shooting movies with naked porn stars led to influence his later practice of portraying stars from movies wearing designer clothes. The polaroids mark the formative time of Burton's photography, in which the seeming differences between Porn and Hollywood become almost none at all.

Although Burton's trajectory has developed in high-productions in Los Angeles and Europe, these works convey Burton's personal involvement working in an industry which outpour was destined to a non-mainstream circulation, while they are strongly influenced by his living in Los Angeles and get him to portray the very controversial aspects of it, finding his photographic footing on the terrain of fantasy made real and real made into fantasy.

This exhibition is Jeff Burton's fourth solo show with the gallery. Burton's work has been featured in many exhibitions in international Institutions, and the latest ones include: "I want to see how you see", at the Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany, April 2010; "Wall Rockets: Contemporary Artists and Ed Ruscha," at the Flag Art Foundation and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; "Into Me/Out of Me," at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, LIC, NY, which traveled to KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany and to MACRO (Museo d'Arte Contemporanea), Rome, Italy.

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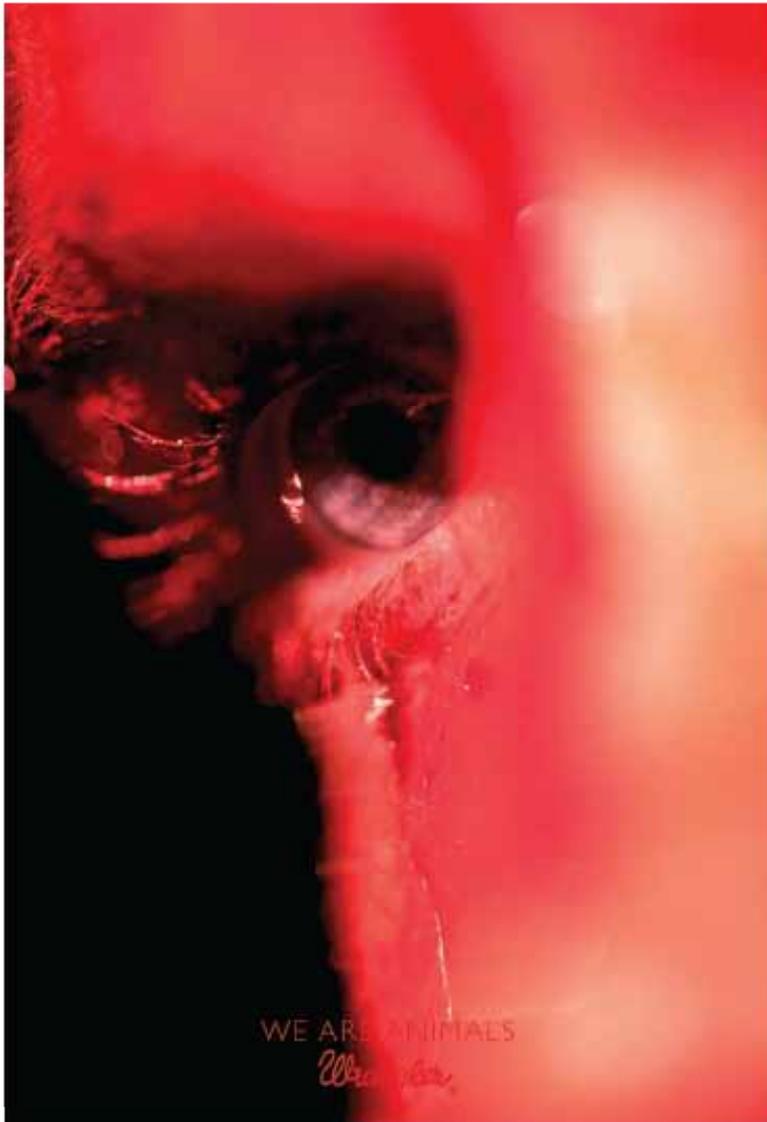
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Williams, Eliza, "We Are Animals," *British Journal of Photography*, May 2011, p. 26-29

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Profile
Wrangler advertising



We Are Animals

If there is one advertising campaign in recent years that has stood out for its use of photography, it's Wrangler. Eliza Williams profiles the work of Paris-based agency Fred & Farid, whose ads have turned around a flagging brand by bringing imagery and spontaneity to the fore.

Today's brands and advertising agencies are, as a rule, risk averse. Those risks that are taken are carefully calculated; ideas are tested and retested via research groups to ensure the correct brand messages are being transmitted.

At the receiving end, though, all this caution is a bit of a bore. Audiences love ads that are surprising: relishing the drumming gorillas and the subservient chickens that occasionally make it into the wider world. And perhaps the most conservative genre of advertising today is the poster ad. The days of the subtle, surreal advertising that we saw in the 1980s, particularly for tobacco companies, seems

long gone as brands increasingly produce billboards that shout rather than intrigue. With this in mind, the release of Parisian ad agency Fred & Farid's first campaign for Wrangler back in 2008 came as something of a surprise.

The campaign centres on photography, but the images are far from the glossy, immaculate shots usually proffered in ads. Instead, a group of wild yet beautiful models are shown cavorting in nature. The brand's product – denim jeans – rarely features and, if it does make an appearance, it is soaking wet and clinging to the models' skin or smeared with mud. The whole series of posters is unexpect-



Jeff Burton shot the 2009 Red ad campaign for VF Europe Wrangler [far left], working with Paris-based agency Fred & Farid under the art direction of Fred & Farid and Feng Huang.

Ryan McGinley drew on inspiration from the animal world to shoot the 2008 VF Europe Wrangler ad campaign *Flare* [left]. He was art directed by Fred & Farid, Juliette Lavoix and Pauline De Montferrand.

All images © Fred & Farid Paris.

ted and exciting and, when they first aired, struck a highly unusual note in the world of denim advertising, which was largely focused on high glamour.

There is a message featured alongside the logo on the ads, which is positioned discreetly on the bottom right of each poster: "We Are Animals". This tag is the ad campaign's "big idea", devised by Fred & Farid as a way of reintroducing the denim brand to a European market that had largely lost interest in it.

"In Europe, Wrangler is linked to the cowboy, you can't escape that reality," says Fred Raillard, co-founder of Fred & Farid. "But the cowboy in Europe was negative... Because the cowboy

means old, white American. It's marlboro, it's John Wayne, it's Bush, who was hated in Europe."

Fred & Farid recognised that to throw away the brand's 125-year-old heritage would be a mistake, however, so instead they searched around for a way to bring the idea of the cowboy up to date and make it appeal to a European audience.

"We tried to extract the values of the rodeo – things like wildness, being on an animal, roughness," says Raillard. "Also the positive aspects of cowboys – environment, nature, living with animals. Living in sync with nature, having courage. We tried to extract some values that could connect with

young people in Europe."

Back to nature

The creative team at the agency struck upon the simple statement that became the brand's slogan. "We tried many different sentences but came back to the simplest one – 'We Are Animals'," remembers Raillard. "By saying this we were highlighting our animality. But also, if you take it from a brand point of view, it was saying that 'we, Wrangler, are animals, strong', you know? It was a really good balance between the past and the future of Wrangler."



The agency knew it had to avoid featuring any animals in the images, and instead express the attitude behind the idea. “We’re talking about human animality, so a big mistake would be to show an animal,” says Raillard. “Then we thought, with such a strong statement, we couldn’t play, we had to really do it. The whole background had to be ‘animal’ – spontaneous, not too intellectual. We set up a way of working on Wrangler that was more spontaneous, more creative. Not to over-rationalise before the shoot.”

Rather than approaching advertising photographers, the team looked to the art world to find the right person to create the images for the campaign.

For the first series of posters they chose Ryan McGinley, who had become known over the past decade for his loose shooting style, honed documenting his friends and acquaintances in New York engaging in parties, sex and general hedonism. “Already in his personal work he was really driven by this whole idea of our animality,” says Raillard. “Also his way of working was exactly what we were looking for... Because here we needed someone who worked with spontaneity and on-stage creativity.”

McGinley, the creative team and the client embraced an experimental approach on the shoot, which took place over two days in the New Jersey

countryside, and set a template for Wrangler shoots going forward. “We try and make it as crazy as we can,” says Raillard. “At the agency we work on different scenarios – for example, with Ryan we went to the location and selected about 20 different places with ideas we could do there. But then we experiment on set. We find ideas and really go with the flow. It gets crazy, it gets completely out of control. The first shoot, people started making love in front of us. In front of the client!”

Free association

Fred & Farid has now completed three separate campaigns for Wrangler, all based around animalistic traits.



with McGinley, focused on “harmony with nature”, while the second, shot by Jeff Burton, was about “impulsion and energy”. The most recent campaign was photographed by Cass Bird, starring stuntmen and women performing various death-defying feats in order to represent “strength and courage”. On the shoots, the photographers are encouraged to work with multiple assistants and essentially direct the action. This results in an enormous number of images, which are then carefully edited later on. The agency also avoids working with professional models for the campaigns, preferring to hire performers who will commit to the wildness of the shoots wholeheartedly.

The freedom given is an unusual

experience for the photographers, who are used to the constraints that often come with commercial work. The second shoot, by Burton, took place in November 2009 in a sand quarry north of Los Angeles. The campaign was subtitled Red. “Fred & Farid approached me with an idea for their Wrangler Red campaign that stressed visual, physical and mental extremes,” says Burton. “I saw it approaching surrealism. Something between a dream, a nightmare, and an opportunity to push extraordinary images to the forefront, transcending the familiar look of advertising.”

The shoot was intense. “It was heaven. It was hell. We played. We suffered,” he continues. “We were wet, freezing cold, laughing, crying, and covered in red. Given the intense circumstances of the shoot, the red seemed like blood – my retinas were stained. For days after the shoot, whenever I closed my eyes, I had visions of faces drenched in red.”

All three shoots were physically risky: on the Ryan McGinley set, a performer collapsed through exposure to cold. In the recent Stunt campaign, photographs of the performers’ injuries even made it into the final cut of images used in the campaign. “This time, they all went for it,” says Raillard. “In some pictures you can see blood – they really hurt themselves. One thing that’s really important is, on Wrangler, we keep everything true, there’s no postproduction, nothing. There’s no framing, it’s all true experience. For instance, when they crash through the window, it’s not sugar, it’s real glass. So some people were really hurt.”

Cass Bird, the photographer for the Stunt campaign, was surprised by the amount of creative freedom she had. “I’ve never experienced a commercial campaign shoot with such a great amount of trust,” she says. “They had a high level of faith in me, and they gave me room to experiment. I was so excited when I saw the swipes. The print campaign presented itself from the

beginning to have a lot of potential. It is hit or miss in this commercial climate to have clients who truly want something that feels groundbreaking. Art directors, agencies and clients want beautiful work to stand behind. Unfortunately, sometimes agencies have to play it really safe, which in turn waters the work down.”

Reaping rewards

Wrangler did take some persuasion from Fred & Farid to make such a bold statement initially, and in particular for it not to place the product centre stage in the images. It was a risk that paid off: We Are Animals is now littered with industry awards and has proven hugely successful with audiences. “Now that it is three years old, they can see the results of the campaign,” says Raillard. “It’s easier each time, now it’s visible what we’re doing and where we’re going with this brand.”

The campaign has had a noticeable influence on denim advertising in general. Ads in this market have long been about more than the products themselves – which are relatively indistinguishable from brand to brand – and have instead focused on presenting a lifestyle choice. But whereas Diesel and Levi’s concentrated on promoting glamour and sexiness in previous campaigns, both are now taking a more earthy approach in their advertising imagery, with Levi’s even using Ryan McGinley to shoot its 2009 Go Forth campaign, which struck a similar, if less edgy, note to We Are Animals. Most important for Wrangler though, is the viral response the campaign provokes in audiences, who no longer see it as simply a print and poster ad campaign but instead eagerly spread the images online. “It creates emotion each time, and people love emotion,” explains Raillard of this effect. “They can’t really rationalise the whole thing, but it touches them.” BJP

www.fredandfarid.com

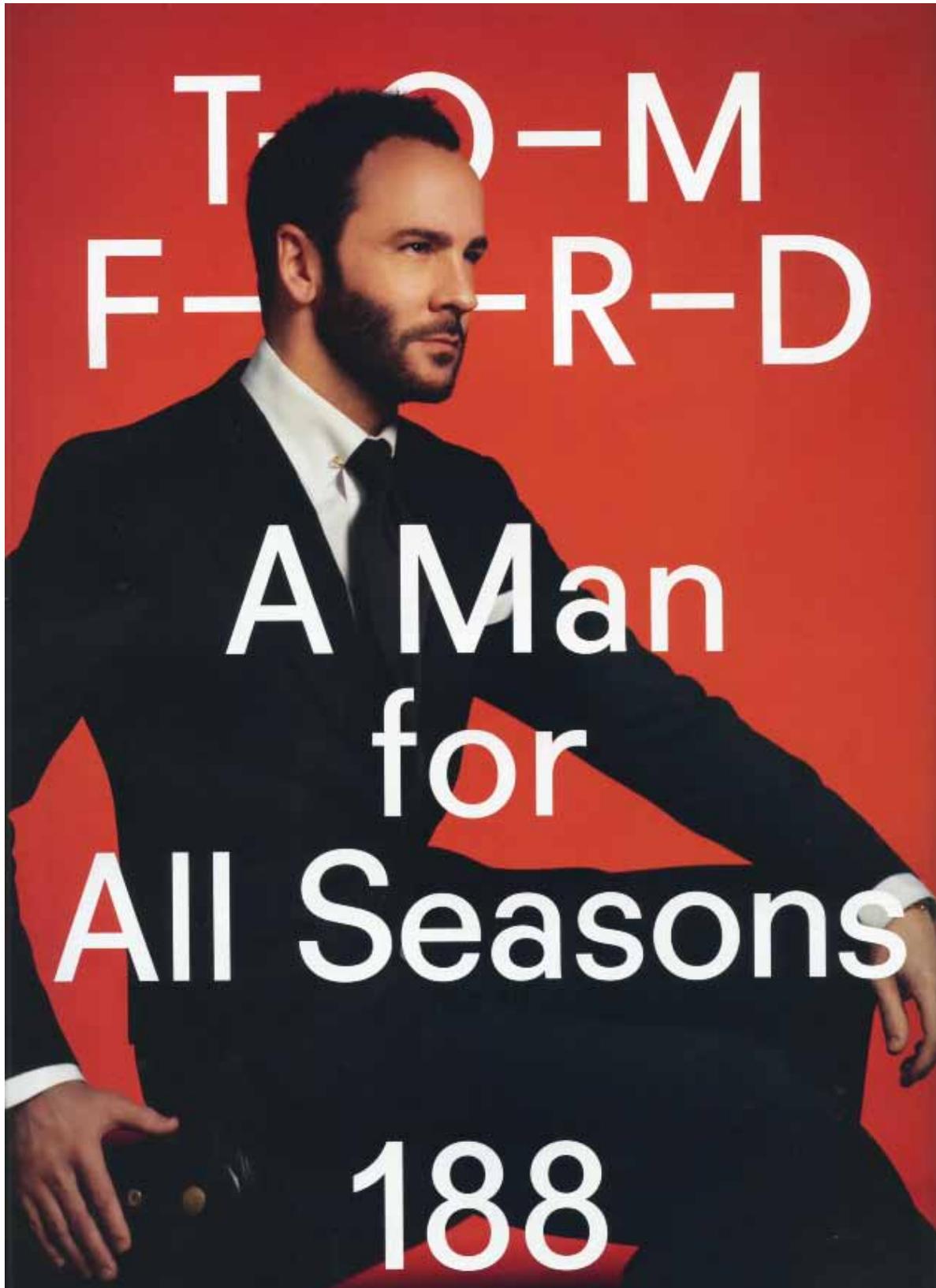
**VF Europe
Wrangler’s
most recent
ad campaign,
Stunt, was shot
and filmed by
Cass Bird, working
with Fred
& Farid and art
directors Juliette
Lavoix and
Céline Moeur.**

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Burton, Jeff (photographer), "Tom Ford: A Man for All Seasons", by Jefferson Hack, *AnOther Man*, Issue no.12, Spring-Summer 2011, cover page and p. 189-197bc, Summer 2009.





AnOtherMan

From his bed in Los Angeles, Tom Ford- fashion powerhouse, film mogul and old school romantic - gives Jefferson Hack an intimate masterclass in how to be a modern gentleman.

Photography Jeff Burton

London. 9pm. "Hello? Tom? Are you there?" After a hellish cacophony of bleeps, a fractured and digitised voice eventually echoes back from Los Angeles: "Are... you ... under... water... Jefferson?" This Skype connection isn't working. We agree to abort - I think - and start again. The dial tone sounds promising this time. "Aaah, that's perfect!" says Ford, finally, in his soft Texan twang. "I'd normally give you a visual but I haven't been able to get dressed yet. I'm sitting here naked in bed." With that, he cracks open a can of Diet Coke and takes a loud swig. He's ready...

JEFFERSON HACK: So, let's see, what do you think being a gentleman means today?

TOM FORD: It's interesting and I really don't mean this in an egotistical way - but I'm often complimented on my manners. I grew up in the American South, where manners are very important. As a child I was not allowed to call any adult, even at the supermarket, anything other than Mister or Miss. And I still do that. I ran into James Galanos the other night - he was an American fashion designer who is now in his 80s - I know him quite well but I still call him Mr Galanos. I'm quite formal I suppose, which some people would call un-modern.

But I think the most important thing about being a modern gentleman - and having good manners - is actually knowing when things are appropriate. It's appropriate to use different language to different people at different times. And I think a lot of people have forgotten any sense of measuring the situation and weighing up how to treat someone.

JH: Who is the most mannered man you've met? What impression did they leave on you?

TF: I would have to say I am!
(Laughs) You know, I treat women very differently from how I treat men and maybe this isn't very modern but I always open doors for women, I carry their coat. I make sure that they're walking on the inside of the street. And that comes from the fact that traditionally women were more physically fragile than we are as men. But this is my recommendation to all straight men. If you want to shag more girls open the doors for them, stand up when they come to the table, stand up when they leave the table. You will be able to get anybody because no one ever does that anymore. I do it at the dinner table and girls just flip-out; they kick their husbands, "Get up! Look at him, why haven't you got up? Look at him, look at his manners. Why don't you do that for me?" It's so seductive.

JH: This is brilliant; I need tips.

TF: But I'm also an equal opportunity stander-upper: so, if a male friend of mine comes to the table I'll stand up and, while I do it half-way as a joke, it's also definitely an acknowledgment.

JH: I need more seduction tips from you because I'm single now. I'm out of practice.

TF: Well, I can give you a lot of seduction tips. No problem. Although - hello! - I'm kind of married and monogamous...

JH: But that can often give you very clear vision.

TF: I guess. It's funny that people always think that I lead this alternate life that I really don't lead. I suppose it's projected in my work and in my imagery.

JH: I don't think it is. For those that read about you in the press, your 24-year relationship with Richard Buckley is a strong part of your personality. And I think that comes out in your work because of the confidence

that gives you to be strong in the ideas and the imagery and the risks that you take... I don't want to put words in your mouth.

TF: No, no. I am relatively fearless in a lot of ways. It doesn't mean I don't have fear but I don't believe in fear stopping me from doing anything. So I'm sure having a very solid home life adds to that, and I also have a very close network of friends. I'm quite balanced really.

JH: What else do you think makes a modern gentleman?

TF: Today a gentleman has to work and traditionally, of course, he didn't. People who do not work are so boring and are usually bored.

And I don't think that they're fully formed people because they don't have any sense of contributing to society. They're not engaged. I think to have something that you work at - whether it's a job at a bank or writing a novel - is so important. You have to have a passion, you have to be passionate, you have to be engaged and you have to be contributing to the world.

JH: Absolutely.

TF: And in addition to manners, which are a show of respect to people around you, I think that dressing is an important part of being a gentleman. What I mean by that is, if your style is a mohawk and a lot of piercings, that's fine. I'm not suggesting that everyone needs to be traditionally dressed. But what I do think is that if you're a gentleman - whatever your style - you should put on the best version of yourself when you go out in the world because that is a show of respect to the other people around you. And putting people ahead of yourself is a mark of a modern gentleman.

JH: That also crosses into certain spiritual thought. Sometimes you can go to the poorest countries

in the world and you can see cultures where people have very little compared to what we have, but they put themselves together in such a way that it shows they have respect for the people around them.

TF: Absolutely, absolutely. Having good manners and taking care of the way you look has nothing to do with money. I was raised with that sort of beaten into me. Not literally beaten into me, but when I was seven years old and lying on the floor watching television. If my mother walked into the room and I didn't stand up and say, "Good morning", I got into trouble. She would say, "Look, get up off the floor now and say hello to me." It made me aware that I wasn't the only person on the planet.

JH: That sounds like a strict upbringing. Was that part of why you felt a need to be in New York and at Studio 54 with a whole scene of people that were completely free from rules and regulations?

TF: No, it wasn't strict. My parents were very liberal and they always supported anything that I wanted to do. They never spanked me or beat me. But, you know, as far back as I can remember we sat down at the dinner table every night at eight o'clock.

JH: When did you leave home? What age were you?

TF: I was 17 but when I went home it had nothing whatsoever to do with escape. If anything my good manners and a conscientious upbringing by my parents helped me in New York.

JH: It allowed you to adapt to different situations?

TF: Totally - and people. When I was 18, I had a boyfriend who was 35 and I spent a lot of time with people at dinner parties who were in their 40s and 50s. Even then I knew how to behave so I was very easily accepted. If anything it gave me great freedom to have experiences I wouldn't have been able to have at

18... I'm listening to myself talk and I hope I'm not sounding pretentious. That's another key to being a modern gentleman: not to be pretentious or racist or sexist or judge people by their background. I believe in a meritocracy: That's why I was so supportive of President Obama because he really did come from a very poor background, as did his wife, and they educated themselves

and went to great schools and now this man speaks English like most Americans have forgotten to speak English. He has a terrific vocabulary. He has perfect grammar and when he was running for president so much of the press called him elitist and I was thinking, "How can he be elitist?" Through determination he has lifted himself to a different plane and now he's being called elitist because he chooses to speak properly when the rest of the country has lost any sense of manners and language and nuance and subtlety.

JH: Does it make you angry living in America?

TF: It does. I am an American and I love America but, right now, I find America very upsetting and fragile and frustrating. When I'm here I can't wait to get back to my home in London.

JH: You have bases in Los Angeles, London and Santa Fe...

TF: Yeah. Well, we, have two places in Santa Fe: a townhouse and a ranch an hour away. And we have a little ski place in Sun Valley, Idaho, which we rarely go to. But mostly I'm between Los Angeles and London.

JH: How does your headspace change between those places?

TF: Well, I prefer London in a lot of ways because of the people. I have great friends in England; I love the sense of humour. They're the best group of people on the planet. Los Angeles has the same thing but a much lower percentage. Meaning, I have good friends here but the mass population of Los Angeles is much less sophisticated than the mass population of London. But there is a negative for me to London, and that's because it's a city and the older I get the more and more claustrophobic I get in cities - I think it's because I grew up in the West. That's what's appealing to me about Los Angeles. Right now I'm looking out of my window at the Pacific Ocean and I can look across the whole of Los Angeles and I can see all of the mountains in the background. I'm surrounded by green and I can't see another house, and yet in an hour, when I finally get dressed, I'll drive down the road to

Sunset Boulevard and I'll be in a city. The expanse, the sun, the air that's what I love about Los Angeles.

JH: Do you feel creative there, in a different way?

TF: I feel very creative here. I feel more creative when I'm isolated than when I'm in a city and surrounded by people. I need to be in the city to, gather information books, films, exhibitions, shop windows, people-watching - and hear everyone's opinions but, then, I need to leave the city to process it and work out what I believe in. I need to be isolated to do that, whether it's working on ideas for a collection or a screenplay.

JH: Is there such a thing as an off-duty Tom Ford?

TF: Yeah, I suppose it's always to do with sports. I'm off-duty when I'm on my horse or skiing or I'm playing tennis. I like those sports because when you're skiing you can't think about anything except not dying. I grew up skiing and probably ski way too fast, but it clears my head because you can't think about anything apart from making this corner or letting out of the way of that tree. It's the same thing when you're on a horse.

JH: You have to be totally present, is that it?

TF: You have to be totally there, even if everything seems calm. The horse might see a reflection of a tin can and might spook, and the next thing you know the horse is up. It's the same with tennis: you've got to watch that little ball, hit that ball, watch that ball, hit that ball. All your worries go out of your head.

JH: If a man's wearing shorts, should he have his socks pulled up or should they be rolled down?

TF: (Gasps) Shorts?

JH: (Laughs) OK... well, should a man ever wear shorts off the tennis court?

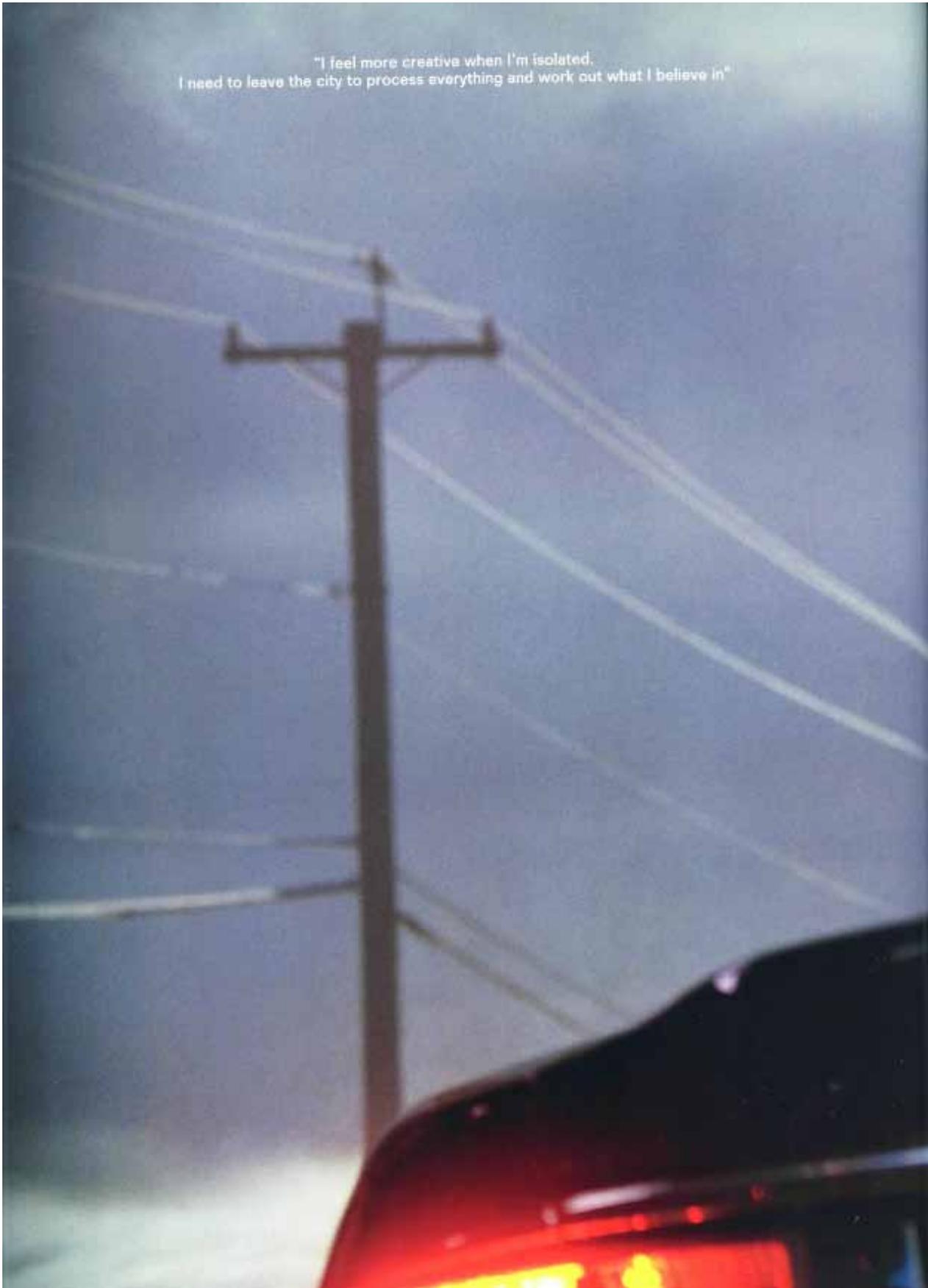
TF: No. Absolutely not. But if I'm on holiday, occasionally I'll put on a pair of shorts with my t-shirt and go barefoot with my towel down to the beach and then take off my top and lie in my shorts, or slip off my shorts and underneath have a bathing suit on - but in the city? Never. That's an American thing, which I just don't get. They walk around in shorts, even the fancy Americans.



"A gentleman today has to work. People who do not work are so boring and are usually bored. You have to be passionate, you have to be engaged and you have to be contributing to the world"

AnOtherMan

"I feel more creative when I'm isolated.
I need to leave the city to process everything and work out what I believe in"



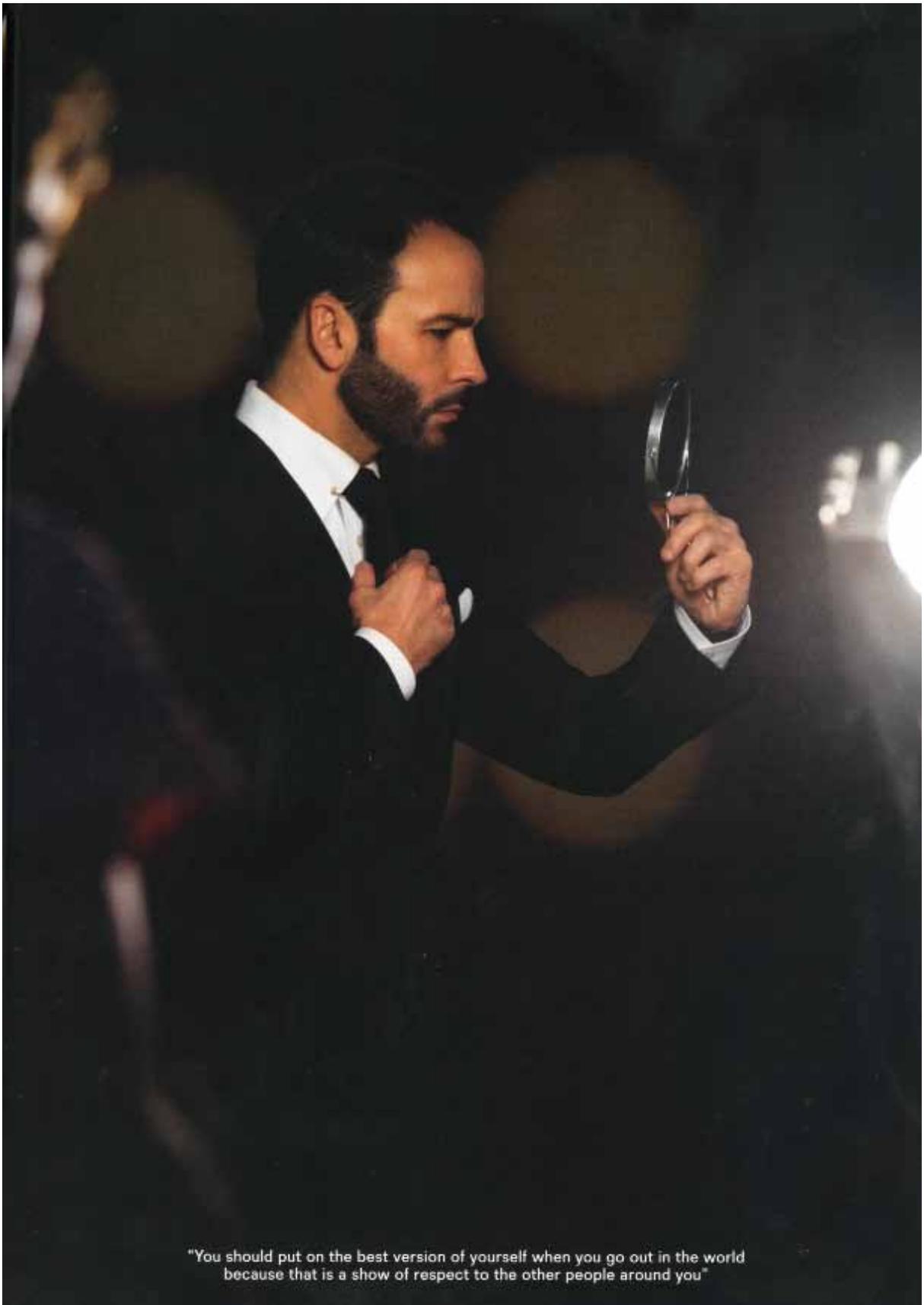
AnOtherMan



AnOtherMan



AnOtherMan



"You should put on the best version of yourself when you go out in the world
because that is a show of respect to the other people around you"

AnOtherMan



"Richard is always teasing me about being like a girl because he can't be mean to me all day and then expect sex"

AnOtherMan

JH: Flip-flops and shorts in the city, what is that?

TF: I know, I hate that! I don't understand it. I don't think that's ever appropriate.

JH: Describe a typical night-in with Richard...

TF: (Laughs) A night in with the two of us? Well, we cook dinner Richard is actually a very good cook.

Then we might get into bed and watch an episode of Glee, then we take the dogs out and I usually take a bath while Richard works on his computer - and we go to sleep.

JH: Do you need much sleep these days?

TF: I'm probably sleeping a lot more. One of the reasons I didn't sleep well before was because I drank so much. When you drink a lot you go to sleep right away but wake up three hours later and can't go back to sleep. Maybe it's just getting older and becoming more comfortable with yourself, but I spend less time worrying about things. I still don't sleep more than five hours a night, but I don't sleep two or three like I did. So, I sleep well now and I get up very early. I'm usually awake by five.

JH: It's all about the mornings!

TF: A lot of people say how wonderful you feel in the morning when you quit drinking, but one of the things I love the most is the night. It's great to come home and actually feel sharp and clear. I mean, listen, I'm not telling everyone to quit drinking - I'm all for drinking and whatever anyone wants to do - but personally, at this point in my life, I'm happy not drinking. Maybe one day I'll start again.

JH: What's your morning ritual nowadays, then?

TF: Well, right now it's 11.10am here in Los Angeles and I'm still naked in bed, which is pretty much my morning ritual. I wake up very early; this morning I was awake at 4:35am and was online and on the phone to London. And when I'm in London I get up early because I can

still speak to LA before they go to bed. So, usually I'm up early on my computer and unfortunately get caught up in everything and don't get out of the house until noon.

JH: Please don't tell me the first thing you see in the morning is a computer screen...

TF: Yes, I sleep with it. It's next to my bed. When the alarm bell goes off, I lift the computer on to my lap.

JH: That's so sad.

TF: (Laughs) And it's the last thing I see before I go to sleep.

JH: Well, I hope you have a really nice screen saver that makes you happy when you flip the lid.

TF: It's a picture of my ranch with my horses.

JH: Beautiful. That's very telling because, I guess, that's where you dream about escaping to.

TF: (Laughs) Actually, I have perfect WiFi at my ranch so I'm usually on my computer when I'm there as well.

JH: I was hoping your morning ritual would be an elaborate and lengthy affair similar to George's in A Single Man.

TF: Well, when I get dressed it is! That process takes me an hour. I go through the ritual of lying in the bathtub, washing my hair, trimming my beard ... How long do you take to get dressed?

JH: About half an hour.

TF: Okay, and do you shave your body hair?

JH: No. What's that like?

TF: I don't do that. I hate it. But every straight man I know in England does. I had dinner with an English friend last night: he's 46 years old, married with three kids and he shaves his testicles and trims his pubic hair! This is a new trend amongst straight men that I just do not understand.

JH: Is he athletic?

TF: I don't know, but just look at straight porn: they've all got their pubic hair trimmed and their testicles shaved. It's the most bizarre thing.

JH: Do you think pubic trimming for men is a good thing? Because for women I think it's essential. I just don't like a wild bush.

TF: Well, personally, I prefer a woman who is closer to natural than closer to waxed.

JH: I don't mean waxed. Natural is okay but trimmed.

TF: I don't like seeing stubble. So, if a man has pubic hair that's five inches long, clip it back to an inch-and-a-half long.

JH: What's the longest you've been without sex?

TF: Years! I don't mean right now, but there have been periods in my life when I have.

JH: Really? How did that make you feel? Frustrated? Angry?

TF: Oh, no - nothing like that. Because I only like having sex with people that I care about.

Richard's always teasing me about being like a girl because I have to like someone to have sex with them. I mean, Richard can't be mean to me all day and then expect that we're going to have sex. It's like ...

JH: That seems to work fine for some people.

TF: Well, it doesn't work with me. He has to have been nice and we have to have had a nice day you can't be an asshole and then all of a sudden...

JH: That means that you're just a big romantic.

TF: Yeah, I'm very romantic.

And I have no interest in having sex with someone that I don't know. I have no interest in having sex with someone that I don't like. And it doesn't have to be a beauty thing. A lot of the time I'm attracted to people who are not necessarily considered beautiful in a traditional way, but they have something. There's something in their eyes a kindness or a sweetness or something interesting about them. Nothing to do with how they look, but, you know, that's why I go to bed with my laptop... (Laughs) There are a lot of good porn sites!

Photographic assistants: Eric Larson, Brooke Kegan, Rene Gomez; Digital technician: Matthew Grover; Retouching: Epilogue Inc; Set design: Jamie Dean at Walter Schupfer Management; Set design assistant: Billy Czyzyk; Production: Carol Cohen; Production assistant: Mary Bell; Props: Leather lounge chair from Thanks for the Memories, Mitchum chair by Mogul; Special thanks to Aston Martin for the Aston Martin DBS Volante

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 THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

Artifacts | Jeff Burton's Fantasy Life Beyond Porn

CULTURE By LINDA YABLONSKY APRIL 19, 2010 4:33 PM

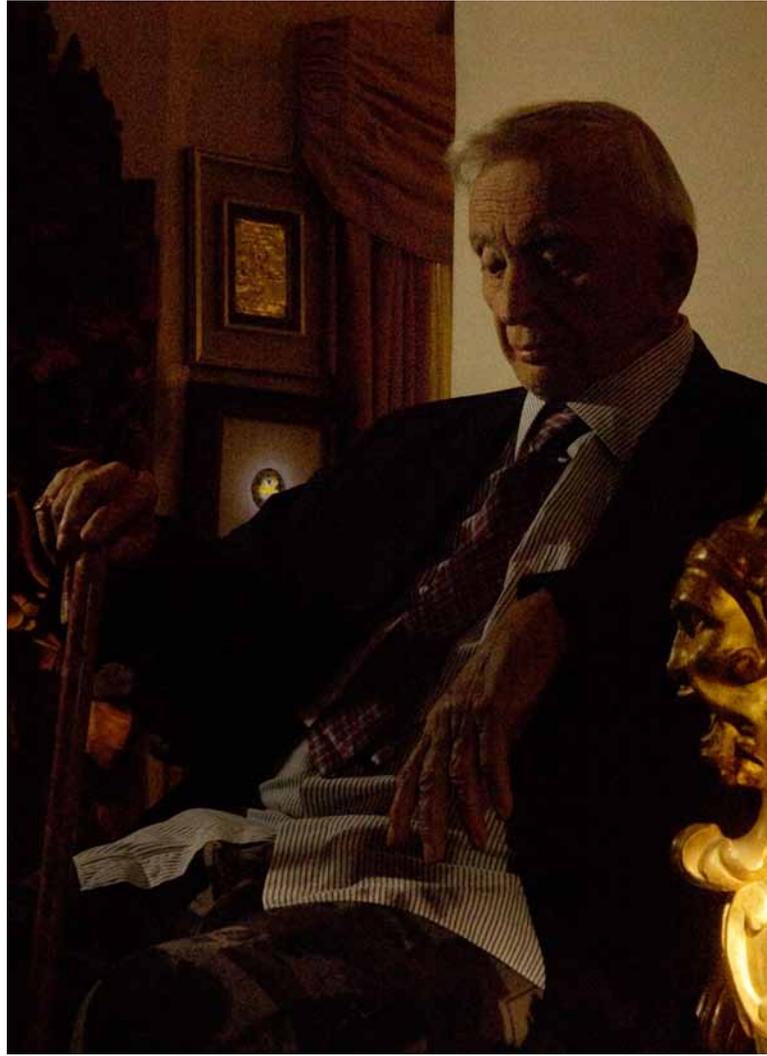


Jeff Burton/Courtesy Casey Kaplan Gallery

Stella Stevens

Jeff Burton was smitten with Stella Stevens the instant he saw “The Poseidon Adventure.” That was in 1972. He was 9. In the movie, Stevens played an ultrachic former call girl who had married a burly cop, Ernest Borgnine, and fell to her death shod in silver platform shoes. The young Burton developed a raging obsession with both Stevens and the film. Thirty-five years later, after working as a still photographer on porn movie shoots in Los Angeles, where he lives, Burton got to direct her himself — for a portrait now hanging in his seventh solo show at the Casey Kaplan Gallery.

In the picture, Stevens is Burton's dream come true: a fantasy image made real. Dressed in a glittering gown and a red fox fur matched to the color of her hair, she looks off to the side with her hand on her hip, a steely dame no one would dare to cross. Hanging nearby is a portrait of the writer Bret Easton Ellis, another “Poseidon” fan, posed in dark shades against the Hollywood skyline at dusk. He looks movie-star suave and slightly dangerous.



Jeff Burton/Courtesy Casey Kaplan Gallery

Gore Vidal

The Stevens portrait was a labor of love; the Ellis resulted from a magazine assignment, as did the other 20 images in the show, simply titled "Portraits." Some faces are instantly recognizable: open-faced Morrissey, glowering Tom Ford, moody Vincent Gallo, gay Chi Chi Larue and the kittenish Annette Schwartz (a friend from his years on porn sets). Others, friends of the photographer, seem familiar and aren't. And with some, like Burton's deeply introspective Gore Vidal, it takes a moment to register the face with the name.

The gallery positions Burton on the blurry line between art and commerce, but that is true of so much photography today, especially in fashion, where almost any image could pass for an ad, while ads can be indistinguishable from conceptual art. The big difference is the prices they command.

Burton works in the George Hurrell tradition of celebrity portraiture, rooted in carefully lit Hollywood glamour. But the pictures in this show look entirely personal. Many are shot extremely close up, making each subject an intimate. Vidal looks particularly vulnerable. Kenneth Anger is almost indistinguishable from the devil mask in his hand. Joaquin Phoenix emerges from a half light that emphasizes a cheekbone and an eye as well as his cleft palate.

None of the photos have been retouched (Schwartz has bloodshot eyes) and all have been printed with a layer of hand-coated varnish that gives them a painting-like texture and considerable warmth. That doesn't show up on a magazine page the way it does on a print — and Burton's are not billboard size but modest, giving the whole enterprise a greater sense of humility than artifice. It's clear that Burton adores each subject without reservation, par for the course in a realm where a public image must be burnished at all costs. But his most striking pictures have an honesty that doesn't follow any script, and it's refreshing to find a commercial photographer whose art is to appeal to his subjects' vanity and flatter us all at once.

"Jeff Burton: Portraits" continues through May 1 at Casey Kaplan Gallery, 525 West 21st Street.

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The New York Times

Fashion & Style

GIMLET EYE

A 6-Acre Preserve Where Artists Roam

By GUY TREBAY

Published: July 28, 2010

Water Mill, N.Y.

ARTISTS and their antics are central to the Hamptons mythos: car crashes, bonfires, wife swapping, boyfriend swapping, dune trysts and drunken carousing, all interrupted by spells of intense creativity under the area's fabled luminous skies.

The artists are pretty well gone now, all but the wealthiest ones. Everybody knows that Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner couldn't find a quarter-share in a renovated chicken coop in a market where even a teardown in Sag Harbor — long since elevated from its lowly status as the poor relation of hamlets like East Hampton — is priced at \$1.8 million. (Admittedly it's just a few doors down from Cindy Sherman's Greek Revival place on Madison Street, but still.)

If the creative types, from William Merritt Chase to Willem de Kooning, who long enlivened culture on the East End are now more memory than active presence, there is at least one holdout for the anarchic spirit of creation. And on Saturday evening, over 600 paying guests gathered at the Watermill Center, the arts complex founded in 1992 by the director Robert Wilson in a former Western Union building hidden in the Water Mill woods, to celebrate those who make art — or anyway, to underwrite their room and board

The theme of the 17th annual Watermill Center benefit was Paradiso, and once you filtered out the kitsch of performers dressed as snow monkeys, the smoking tiki torches and the dreadful weather, it was still possible to recall how much a paradise the Hamptons can seem.

Scattered throughout the six-acre site on Saturday were 24 artworks created and installed for that night and that particular party, a fete that is unlike any other on the East End and possibly anyplace. Is the Watermill Center benefit the party of the season, as some claim? You would have to take that up with fans of the annual Parrish Art Museum benefit or the fund-raiser staged to help Guild Hall in East Hampton. Those events routinely draw out the moguls and the social gratin of the Hamptons, two groups that do not necessarily overlap.

Only the Watermill Center pulls elements of the two worlds together, and then mashes them up with the area's population of seasonally nomadic celebrities (Alan Cumming, Miranda Richardson, Alec Baldwin, Emily Mortimer) along with a posse of the 70 artists from two dozen countries that took residence at the center this year.

Artists made up the labor force for the event, behind the scenes, in the woods and in the trees. They had assistance, of course, from caterers, security goons, the perfumers providing scented leaves for the snow monkeys to distribute to guests and from Mr. Wilson's high-powered friends.

Sharon Stone, for one, played host and auctioneer for an event that ultimately raised \$1.4 million. Briefly, at the start of the evening, the blond star was spotted making her way through a grove at the center, where the tree trunks had been covered from roots to chest height in aluminum foil.

Dappled light filtering through the leaf canopy reflected off the surfaces and cast an odd glow reminiscent of Grade Z movies. It may not be the lighting Ms. Stone is accustomed to, but even without it she was a paragon of ... well, whatever it is that keeps age at bay. (She is 52.)

Her fellow guests teetering along bark-covered paths past weird artworks in their stilettos also called to mind elements of old flicks, specifically those featuring intergalactic molls who always seemed overdressed for trips to Mars. Tiffany Dubin, for instance, the vintage clothing expert and director of business development for Heritage Galleries, wore a cocktail sheath and belt with a jeweled eyeball buckle that was highly reminiscent of the getup Zsa Zsa Gabor favored for her career-defining role as the cruel Venusian scientist in “Queen of Outer Space.”

“Here comes Tiffany Dubin, wood nymph,” Bob Morris, the memoirist, remarked brightly, as Ms. Dubin moved toward and then past him, heading in the direction of an oversize box inside of which a man on a stool sat looking bored while a woman peeled an apple and two other men, naked but for tangled wigs, writhed on the floor: Adam and Eve meet Eiko & Koma.

The woods were literally alive with artists — crawling through the leaf litter, twined in webs in the crotch of a tree (note to self: call exterminator about tent moths), hanging in nets curled in fetal balls.

Apparitions wafted past, like the lunar beauty Marisa Berenson, who meandered through the living installations arm-in-arm with Starlite Randall, her daughter from an early marriage to a rivet king..

Passing the autistic artist and poet Christopher Knowles in a clearing, where he hugged a stele and intoned what sounded like gibberish, Ms. Berenson cocked her pretty head and looked bemused.

“What’s he on?” she said. He was not on anything. He was part of an artwork. This particular one was staged by Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, a Watermill Center artist who was a man once and a member of the industrial rock band Throbbing Gristle and is now a self-styled “pandrogynous” being, given to making oracular statements like “There is no gender anymore.”

If the wood was full of nymphs and gender-various beings, the gravel plaza where drinks were served was packed with sweaty angels. Some, like Joy Marks, had taken the cue to dress in “heavenly” fashion as an excuse to slip on some wings. But Ms. Marks’s wings were wilting in the infernal heat, and all around her people with clothes stuck to their torsos and mascara running down their cheeks struggled to look cool. Only Calvin Klein, accompanied by a person who could have been his grandson, seemed impervious to the atmospheric. No drop of moisture beaded his taut brow.

“I’m dying,” Beth Swofford, the CAA agent and contemporary art collector, said, struggling to restrict all movement while simultaneously engaging in lively discussion with Maja Hoffmann, the art collector and heiress to a pharmaceutical fortune, about the perils of the auction room.

“I kept bidding on this piece by an unknown artist and I didn’t realize it was the wrong lot and then I didn’t want to say afterward, ‘Oh, I didn’t mean it,’ ” Ms. Hoffmann said.

“You didn’t keep the piece, did you?” Ms. Swofford inquired, icily.

There was reason to recall this exchange later in the evening, when Ms. Stone sashayed onto a low stage set amid tables where guests were tucking into white asparagus, ripe figs and prosciutto to auction the first of many works of art donated to the center by Mr. Wilson’s friends.

“If you talk or move or breathe, it’s a bid,” said the actress, whose take-no-prisoners policy as a charity auctioneer is legendary. Suddenly leaping backward when a bug flew up her dress, she recovered her composure quickly and said, “I have this theory that money talks and cash screams, and it has served me very well over the years.”

It did that night as Ms. Stone rapidly roused the audience into bidding twice on an edition of a Robert Wilson sculpture, a menacing bronze chair titled “Winter Tales,” although only one was originally on offer; sold an immense pastel picture by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, and also works by Donald Judd and Marina Abramovic; and then lifted money from the deep pockets around the tent with the ease of a cutpurse.

“Jay, do I hear 30 from you?” Ms. Stone said briskly, of a lot offering a private concert by Rufus Wainwright. Mr. Wainwright, whose boyfriend, Jorn Weisbrodt, is director of the center, had made a bid of his own early in the evening, \$5,000 for a surprisingly tasteful photograph by Jeff Burton, official art photographer of the pornography world, of a man performing an acrobatic act of sexual self-gratification. “I’m on tour so much, Jorn and I can put it above our bed,” Mr. Wainwright explained.

The Jay Ms. Stone was referring to was McInerney, of course, and a stricken look crept over the novelist's face after his hand shot up, committing him to \$30,000, a gesture followed by the realization that no one was acting to raise his bid. Tense seconds became years before Ms. Stone, in a moment of improvisatory genius, suddenly ran around the tent triangulating an on-the-spot deal permitting Mr. McInerney and Mr. Baldwin to share Mr. Wainwright's services, for a total of \$50,000 and change.

It was cheap at the price. Mr. Wainwright made that very clear when, moments earlier, he took to the floor to sing an unaccompanied version of "Over the Rainbow," evoking for a thrilling instant a special realm in whose existence everyone present had some personal stake in believing.

You know the place, the one you get to when you hang a left at the diner onto Highway 27, and join the line of traffic bound for a string of enchanted summer villages where all the happy little bluebirds fly.

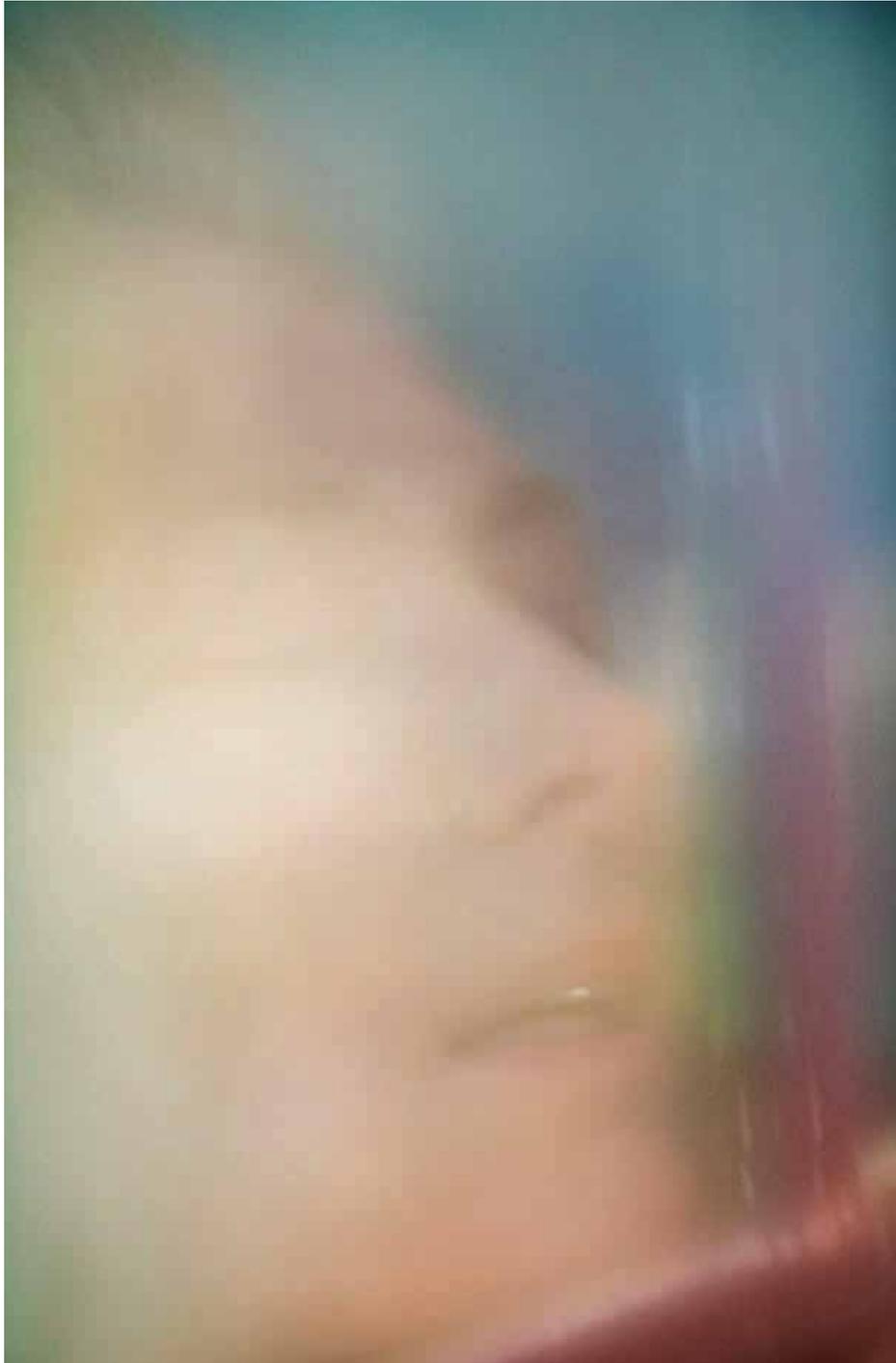
Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/29/fashion/29gimlet.html?ref=fashion>

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Independent Muse

propos recueillis par Hans Ulrich Obrist, portraits Jeff Burton

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THE NEW YORKER

April 13, 2010

FRAMES FROM FICTION: SETS, DOLLS, AND NUDES

Posted by Jessie Wender

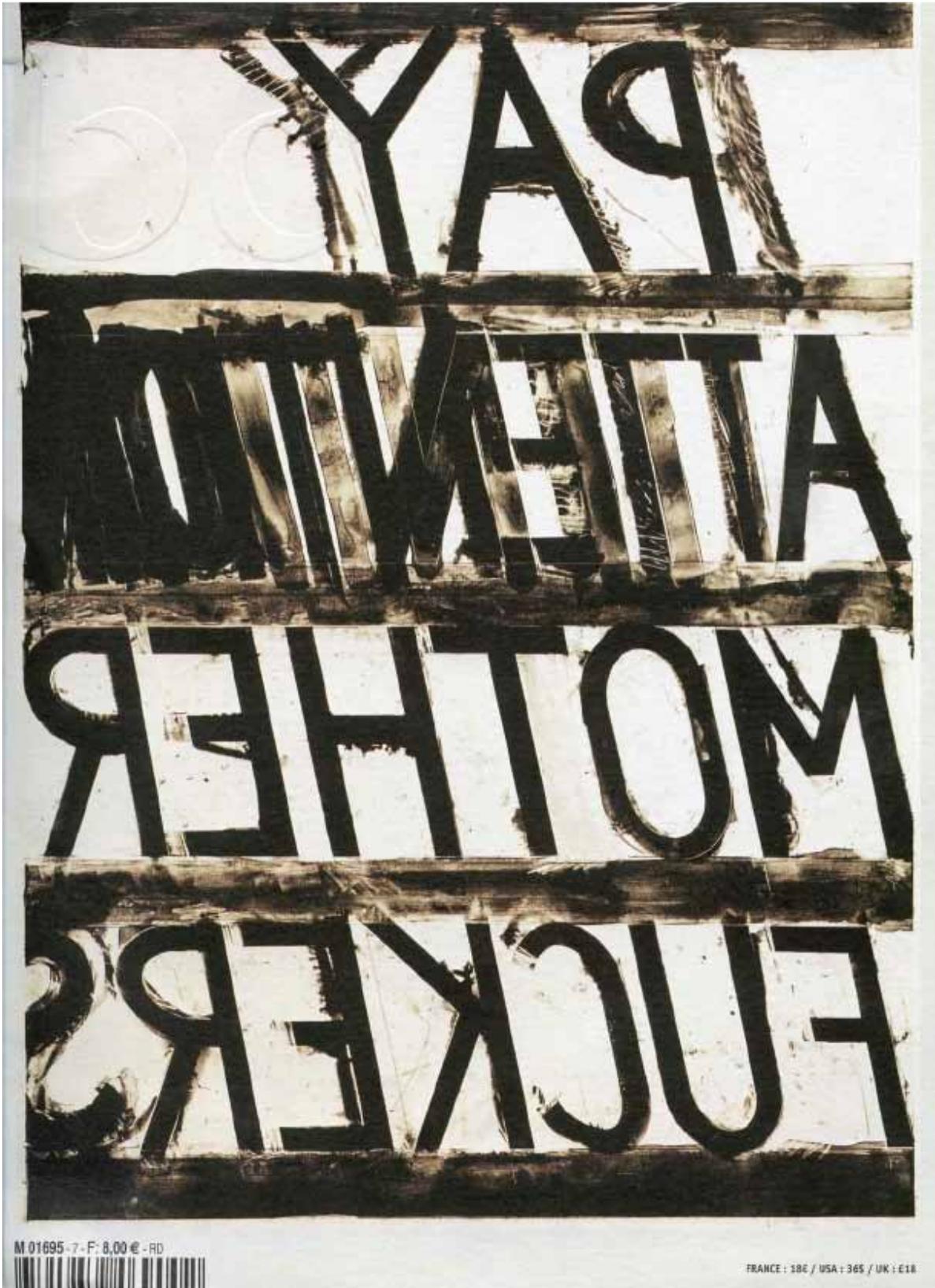


While shooting stills for the porn industry, Jeff Burton kept his camera by his side at all times—on set, but also while driving to and from sets. Burton’s “Untitled #172 (Buffy Eyes)” (2003) is a photograph of a huge fabric billboard at Highland and Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, advertising “Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” Burton writes that he was “interested in the surreal effect it had with landscape and the multiple layers of voyeurism. Complete with surveillance cameras. It was shot in an instant but references effects and ideas that have interested me in my practice for a long time.” A retrospective of Burton’s work is on view at Casey Kaplan Gallery through May 1st.

Read more: <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/photobooth/2010/04/frames-from-fiction-sets-dolls-and-nudes.html#ixzz0IO2ubLS6>

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Burton, Jeff (photographer), "Who's Afraid of the F Word", by Katerina Gregos, *bc*, Brussels, April 14, 2009, *bc*, Summer 2009.





Who's afraid of the F-word

by Katerina Gregos, Brussels, April 14th 2009

L' 'Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write yourself. Your body must be heard.' (Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*)

Who's Afraid of the F-word is a curatorial project in print. As the title infers, the project evokes, in various ways, two words which still today are contested in many ways: feminism and 'the four letter word', both of which relate to issues of corporeality and the body, the central theme of this issue of BC. But mostly, the artists presented here are concerned with issues of representation, and are preoccupied with the body as image. As images of the body have

become increasingly standardized and commodified by the media, fashion, advertising and entertainment industries, it has become more urgent to counteract the unrealistic, hyper-perfect, implausibly 'normalized' and now increasingly 'photoshopped' variants proffered by them. Similarly, questions of gender, sexuality and identity are more often than not dealt with as neat little packages that seem to suggest the commonality of experience—whether female, male or gay. Identity, of course, is a much more fluid, fucked up field and gender is bound up in subjectivities, paradoxes and ambiguities.

The artists whose work is

on view here probe issues of body, gender politics and sexuality, beyond standardized norms and stereotypes. They wrest back control of the image of the body, to deconstruct normative conventions and point to alternative ways of inhabiting and 'displaying' it, while also intimating the constructedness of identity. They are concerned with 'writing the body', to borrow the term by Hélène Cixous, or inferring its relationships in an altogether more subjective, even open-ended way, that highlights the complexity of gender and sexuality. They breach taboos of various kinds, all of them linked to the representation of the physical body, in order to re-signify the notion of gender

and sexuality. In effect, they aim to counteract those representations of the body that have been produced and legitimized by the market, opening up a freer field of interpretation and suggestion. They challenge the stereotypical perceptions of the representation of gender, pointing to a more variable, even shifting notion of identity and sexuality, one in which masculinities and femininities are more intertwined and cross-pollinating rather than located at diametrically opposing poles, and thus suggesting overlapping sensibilities. Feminist undertones may on occasion also abound, but they are not of the old-fashioned,



essentialist, bra-burning type which disavows femininity, rather seen from a more contemporary perspective which acknowledges the complex, multi-layered feminine formation, as well as female and male subjectivity.

At the same time, the work of these artists also encourages us to look beyond the surface, to consider the space in between the dichotomies that the debate around the body often centres on: between exterior and interior, inner and outer worlds, desire and decorum, freedom and repression. In many ways, our understanding, experience and even use of the body is still partial. Though the knowledge is there, many of us have no idea how the body works. Furthermore, we are, in many ways, still unable to reconcile interior and exterior, primeval and ra-

tional, natural disposition and the socially constructed. We still pretty much conceive of the body as a surface or a skin, an externality, and beyond that is a *corps étranger*. This, coupled with the taboos imposed by society, no doubt reinforces the sense of alienation some people feel as regards their own body, a body which they treat as a mere vehicle in which they are temporary occupants. Sexual liberation aside, the contemporary relationship with the body is still not one of total ease. From the increasingly widespread mania with frenetic modes of exercise, the fear of fat, and obsessive narcissism to the apathy, neglect, contempt and self-hatred of the body that lies at the opposite end of the spectrum, at which point and how does one manage to feel comfortable in ones' own skin, so to speak, both physically as well

as metaphorically?

Religion, bourgeois morality and the incessant politics of concealment and repression that go with them have certainly not fostered a better understanding of acceptance of the body, sexuality, and all associated sticky, smelly, messy, viscous functions, not to mention forms of gender alterity. In any case, what is a 'normal' way of inhabiting, experiencing, using, altering and displaying the body? What is 'normal' in terms of sexual impulses and desires? And who is to decide? What we often fail to realize is that the perceptions of the physical body are in a constant process of transformation, in which there is a continuous negotiation of definition, experience, behaviour and cultural coding. In his book *Corpus*, the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy argues that in the light of the technological, bio-

logical, and political changes that have taken place, creating a new understanding of the body becomes even more urgent. Georges Bataille, on the other hand, repeatedly wrote about the repression of the body, and its desires, and about the false—socially constructed—decorum that subjugates and shrouds sexual impulses and other primeval instincts. In many ways, the artists featured in this project, as well as in the pages of the magazine, attempt to grapple with both these issues, while at the same time trying to somehow counteract the stultifying world of reason and social order that has been imposed on the body. In their work, the body becomes a site of transgression that throws into question conventional ideas of representation and accompanying ideas of morality, propriety, and beauty. |||



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Portillo, Mónica. "Entrevista con Jeff Burton." EXIT Imagen y Cultura, V7N29, February/March/April issue, 2008, p. 138 – 153.

Interview with Jeff Burton

Monica Portillo

You have described LA as "a set within a set within a set", where everybody is the object of pervasive viewing.

How do you experience the difference between "being" and "playing" yourself for someone else's gaze?

I find it difficult at times to differentiate between a "true" versus a "performative" self. There is a distinct difference for me specifically between being the voyeur (the photographer) and the exhibitionist (the artist).

In your opinion how is reality constructed through the fascination with watching?

Whatever reality is I'm not certain. What I think I'm noticing might be the unreal in the environments I find myself in, whether it be on a porn set or elsewhere. This notion of the unreal is difficult to address with language. I could talk about odd juxtapositions, disparities in scale, and other strange encounters between the animate and inanimate, but I'd rather let the photographs develop this sensation within the viewer.

LA seems a catalyst of legends where everyday reality and fiction can easily fade into one another, like an endless palimpsest. When arriving there, did you bring specific associations and ideas into it?

I moved to LA to study painting at CalArts. I must admit I chose it over other options because it held the potential (at least in my imagination) for more excitement and glamour. I was strongly attracted to the cinema I saw in Texas. I was landlocked there and films were evidence of other worlds. My influences were mostly from pop culture, record album covers, Hollywood movies, publicity stills, fashion magazines, TV shows... However, Fort Worth also had three world-class art museums. These spaces also offered solitude, visual delight and contemplation for years growing up in an otherwise glacial absence of inspiration. And then, of course, pornography eventually became something very visceral and powerful before I made my way to California. Regarding cinema, when I was 9 years old I saw one of the first disaster films of the 70s: The Poseidon Adventure. Within a singular spectacular event (an ocean liner capsizing on New Year's Eve) all that was known was changed forever. Up was down and down was up. A new way of looking at things was necessary for survival. This notion of climbing from the top to the bottom to reach the surface was very influential in my thought process: concepts of perception and orientation taken for granted could be changed within a blink of an eye. There was one character in particular, Linda Rogo, portrayed by Stella Stevens. She was an ex-prostitute with an extreme will to live. She wasn't a sympathetic character, but for me she was the most beautiful and compelling creature on board. The prostitute operated as the heroine. Sadly, after arduous effort she doesn't make it. This was a huge disappointment. This year I met with Stella and photographed her in vintage and contemporary couture. It was an opportunity to bring Linda back to life 35 years later. To direct and resurrect this unattainable screen goddess I had fantasized about since I was 9; fantasy made real and the real made into fantasy. It brought together personal obsession, performance and fashion.

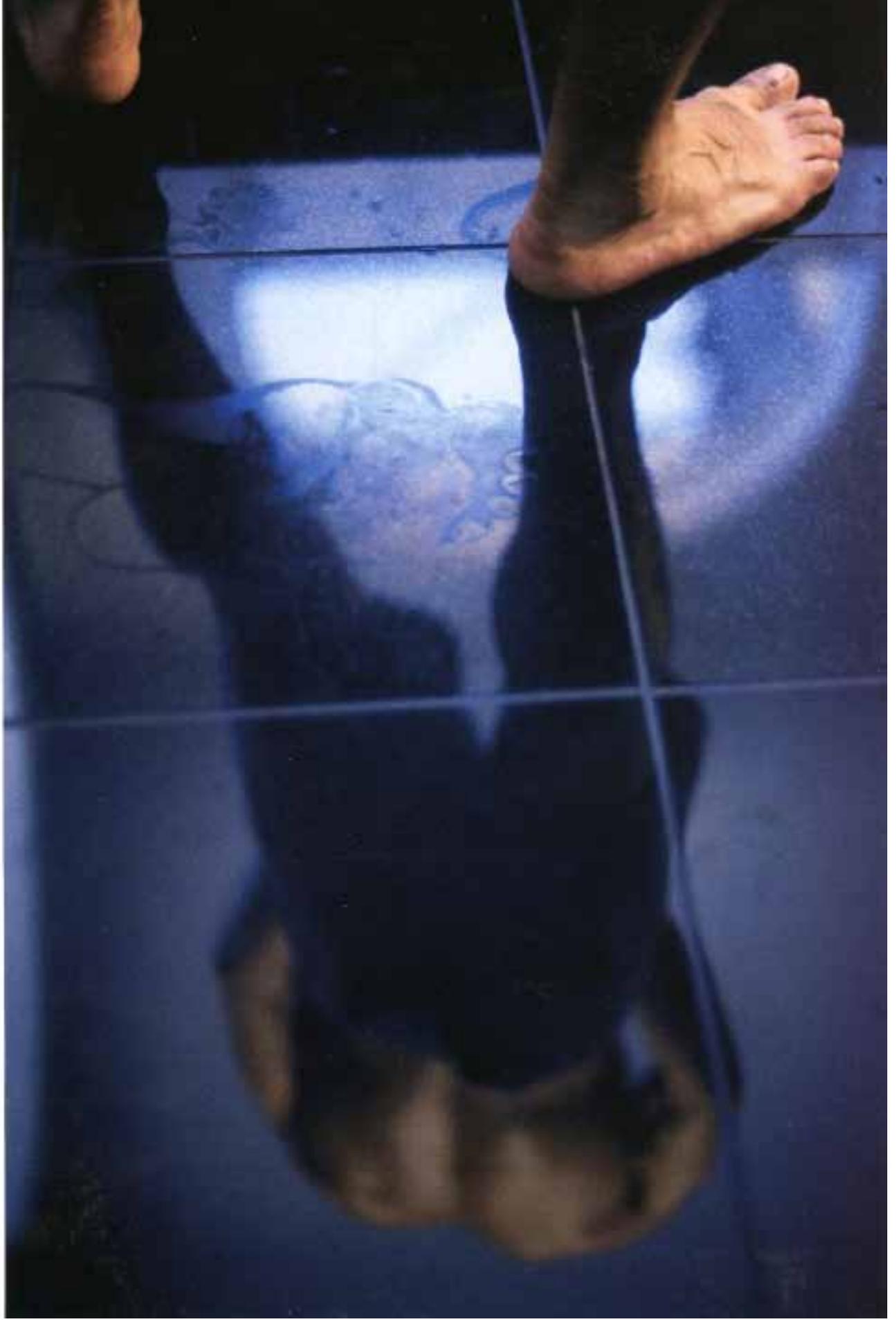
At the beginning, you had some pretty dark ideas about the porn industry. What brought you there?

Primarily, I was very interested in sex like most young people. But, I was a somewhat sheltered 26-year-old when I interviewed to be a still photographer for the sex industry in 1989. I suppose risk and danger are parts in the rites of passage when learning about sex. American culture has portrayed the adult film industry as a sad environment. It's seen as a last resort resulting from failed attempts at more "respectable" occupations. So, I think it was natural to be skeptical at first that I could flourish there. I soon learned that, like most work environments, it was actually more complex and diverse. I had no intentions, at the time, of making my work in porn a part of my art. The need to earn a living tipped the scales to take a chance and push myself. Painting in my studio was somewhat lonely and far from lucrative.

What do you think are the reasons for the frequent divorce of good stories from explicit sexual imagery?

That is a good question that has no easy answer. The answer involves religion, politics, and economics. For most pornography studios, the primary goal is to document hot sex to arouse viewers. In that respect, narrative has been

Jeff Burton. *Untitled #203 (Black Marble)*, 2005. Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York.



artifice to allow pornography to exist within the laws governing obscenity. The contrived narratives within a pornographic film allowed companies to distribute their product with the conceit that the film told a story, therefore was art, and had socially redeeming value. It would seem for some people sex for sex's sake is obscene. Of course, I disagree with this idea that sex in and of itself is not art. There are some interesting side effects of the narrative in the adult film genre: humor and camp, for example. The fact is narrative is not the driving force for sex films. Economically, there are very real limitations to production. A typical crew could be as few as four people. I've worked on films that were made entirely by the same person or shot in one day. Meeting these unrealistic challenges requires a lot of stamina and shared responsibility. I'd also like to point out that amazing sex performance played before the camera is a very specific, demanding, and underrated talent. I wonder if the likes of Meryl Streep or Dustin Hoffman could deliver such a performance or would even if they could. For the sake of optimism, perhaps the homemade explicit material on the Internet of documentary nature might surprise us with a new kind of story in the future. While I have a lot to say about narrative and explicit sex in films having worked in that industry for almost 20 years, my pictures don't reveal in that way. They don't pretend to have a beginning and end. They are more about in-between moments located somewhere else.

You've talked about how intense the porn working environment can get, how unpredictable it can be both in terms of logistics and emotion. What is the effect of an ever-renewed anxiety on your photographic production on the sets?

Oh, anxiety. Well, I'm sure this goes back far before my job on the sets of sex films. To survive the Wild West of Texas as an artist actually took some guts. For me, a side effect of being sensitive and different was hyper-vigilance. Feeling like an outsider, wanting to fit in, and attempting to avoid unwanted attention (a voyeur doesn't want someone looking over their shoulder—it just doesn't work), all this created a situation where I was watching with great attention for signs. Multiply that with an education at CalArts and years devoted to the visual arts and you have someone who is actually paying attention to details. One thing certain on set is that nothing is certain. There are also so many variables beyond my control. Starting with the location itself to the interactions of personalities inserted within it and how they move about it. When can I get a shot? When am I in the way? It's a process of losing and gaining control. Since I am relatively observant of so many elements unfolding simultaneously, full of psychosexual activity, it does produce a certain amount of anxiety. I think the anxiety I experience is an important ingredient in my looking at the situation in different ways.

What interests are at work when you make images which reveal fragments, reflections or hints of hard core instead of straightforward sexual images?

It's important for me to point out that I have taken thousands and thousands of explicit sex images that have been widely circulated in pornographic media. I've also taken a lot of portraiture with direct eye contact with the camera. I'm a much more prolific and published "pornographer" than "artist". In the beginning it was very clear to me which images belonged to "porn" and which belonged to "art". As I continue, this has been more and more difficult for me to discern. There are images in my last book that are not so easy to classify. However, early on, I began taking images in the set environment that didn't reveal the intention or purpose of the image as easily as explicit pornographic images did. That was exciting for me. I began to play with the gaze and see how subjective it could be in that environment. Disrupting the intention of picture taking. The visual hyper-vigilance came into play. Years of studying painting, the classical nude, and the still life came into play as well as abstraction and modernism. I was straying from the strict requirements of the role of pornographer, but the social content was still present. The function of the image itself was brought into question. I found this kind of situation—where form and content pushed and pulled together and apart—opened up interpretation and ideas for me.

While the porn film is being shot, how do you move your gaze amongst the sexual scenes to the decoration? How do you find the images, or rather, do they find you? What makes your gaze stop and shoot an image?



Jeff Burton. Untitled #18 (Dish Washer), 1995. Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York.



Jeff Burton. Untitled #20 (Oven), 1995. Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York.

Well, it's a somewhat schizophrenic headspace. The images and I find each other. While I'm documenting what is expected to satisfy the job at hand, something uncanny will reveal itself. It can be as simple as suddenly noticing that everything in the set happens to be brown, including the talent. A pack of cards is pushed off the table revealing a four of a kind of Queens while the patterned fabric of the pillows echoes the pattern of the cards not overturned. A man's tattoo, while he is servicing his partner, matches the detail of the ornament of her silk stockings. In that way categories like masculine and feminine seem less dependable. These chance events are "real" within a staged environment.

Your photographs set multiple gazes (the actors', the director's, the spectator's, the location's owner's...), plays of presence and absence. While taking the shots, are you aware of these other gazes?

I'm taking all sorts of photographs simultaneously when I'm working on a film set. Some gazes, as you call them, are more transparent in their purpose. Some images imply narrative and some are aimed at titillation and sexual arousal. The images that I find most interesting have a more complex and less specific point of view. You call them multiple gazes. These pictures often contain elements that are struggling to be identified and to gain priority. Interpretation becomes less dependable and meaning less plausible. I'm aware of these elements or "gazes" ricocheting off one another while I'm composing. When these gazes overlap is when I feel I'm onto something.

In your photographs, the center often becomes empty, like in the scene of a crime. There is a lot of theory on the photographic impossibility of (re)producing information, of reconstructing meaning. How do you think your photographs document, induce associations, and therefore are able to 'tell'?

The center is often empty because there is no center. The edge cannot contain the far reaches of imagination and association. I hope the pictures induce associations and lead to a different way of looking. I don't feel they tell complete stories. Your crime question is making me think about something else. I have been able to gain access to photograph other places with different kinds of situations other than the porn sets that my work is mostly known for. For instance, Kenneth Anger, the legendary filmmaker, asked me to document his apartment and his body after a supposed break-in and beating. I also photographed Carlo Mollino's house in Turin. I was interested in his public life as a designer and his private life as a pornographer and how those bodies of work do and don't overlap. My mother said it poetically to me once when I began to explain my occupation to her. She said, "Well... Jeff, beauty comes from strange places. "

Formally, your photographs sometimes seem like a "cadavre exquis", due to the folding and rendering contiguous of otherwise discreet spatial planes (real and reflected, flat and three-dimensional) and objects (bodies and furniture). Is there a strategy to produce failure in the spectator's attempt to find a viewpoint?

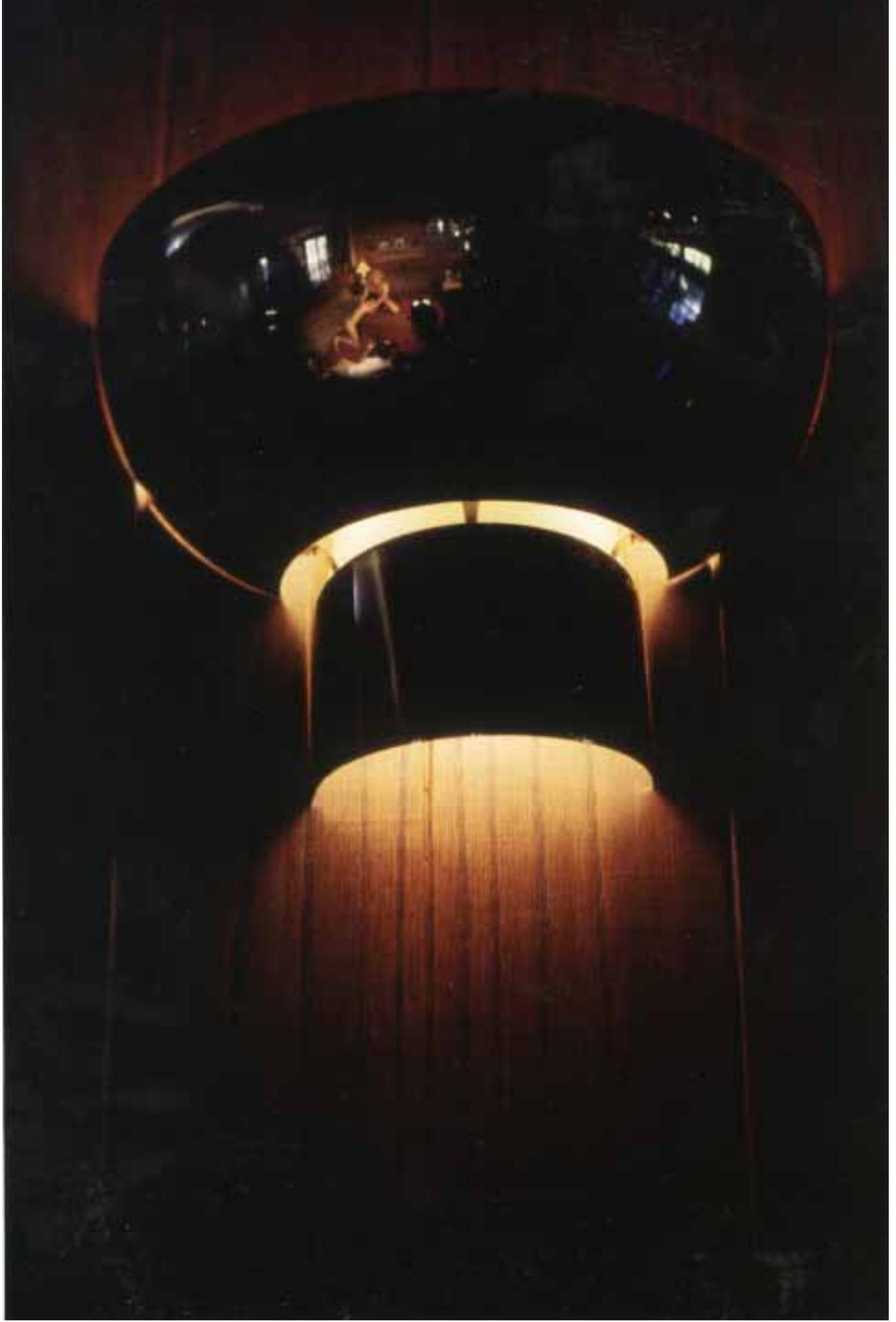
I suppose there may be some modernist painting strategies that are in play. Things like contour continuation, where lines and boundaries between the animate and the inanimate connect and make these "separations" indecipherable. I remember watching the film *The Shock of the New* while I was still living in Texas. Someone said something in that film that had an effect on me: that they were interested in making images that looked like they happened all at once. This notion of contour continuation has this effect. It creates an abstraction, a contemplative space where your eye never really rests or deciphers. My pictures have more to do with formalism struggling with content and the elusive nature of meaning and purpose. The pictures have a more philosophical concern than a self-conscious or overt political strategy.

Which of the sectors you work in —porn, art, fashion—is susceptible to development, change and risk taking?

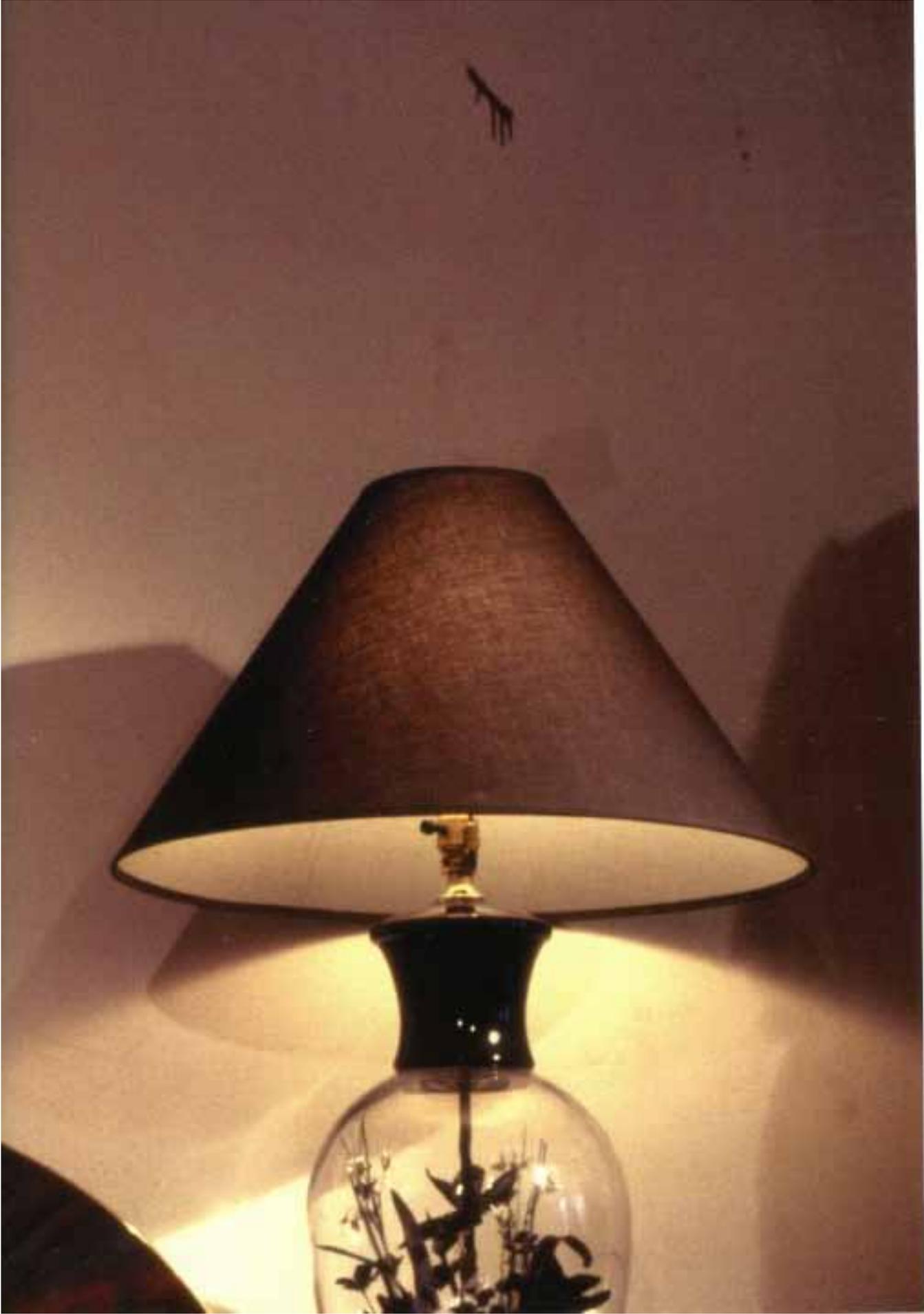
I suppose exhibiting art has the most freedom and personal stamp. However, all three sectors are market driven environments that in the end impose certain requirements and restrictions. My optimism is to resist the impulse to impose boundaries and not necessarily approach taking photographs differently for different venues. This is something I think about. I'm not as interested in the difference between sectors as I am in thinking about their interchangeability and permeability. Maybe that's where this risk is.

Monica Portillo is an independent critic and curator based in London and Madrid.

Jeff Burton. *Untitled #32 (Lighting Sconce)*, 1996. Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York.







Jeff Burton. *Untitled #23 (Flying Cowboy)*, 1995. Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York.

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Beccaria, Marcella. "Jeff Burton." *Domus*, February 2008, p. 118 – 131.

Jeff Burton

FONDAZIONE LIVIO E MARIA GARZANTI, HOTEL DE LA VILLE
December 2007

PISCINA DEL ROYAL HOTEL
December 2007

•Jeff Burton has two professions: he is a photographer for the red-light movie industry, and he is an artist. The first powers the second in a circuit of logical necessity. As a commercial photographer, Burton spends a lot of time on porno movie sets taking live pictures of the actors and actresses and their performances. As aficionados of the genre like to point out, in these days of the digital and of the most sophisticated cinematographic tricks, the porno industry is conspicuous for its unconditioned adherence to reality. Yes, the faces are lifted and wrinkle-free, the bodies siliconised, depilated and tanned; and the rest is certainly lubricated and kept going by Viagra. Nevertheless, it's all true; every act filmed by the cine camera is performed in front of it. The actors don't have stand-ins. The locations are real apartments, villas, hotels and pools. Against this background Burton's images are highly explicit. Since their purpose is to promote the movies, they have to get their message and contents across as directly as possible. Mostly, they are used for DVD covers, but sometimes they are sold to the trade magazines. Burton loves his work as a set photographer, or so he says whenever he is interviewed.

As an artist, Burton spends much of his time on redlight movie sets. The repetition of the gambit here isn't a typo; it's the same because the context does not change. The actors, actresses and locations are identical as well. And the medium chosen is again photography. The pictures, though, are a far cry from the ones he is paid to take, and their quality has made Burton an artist to be reckoned with in the suspicious world of contemporary art. Burton has collected his works into the books that he has published to date, the most recent being *Dreamland* (2001) and *The Other Place* (2005). His

photographs reveal a precise formal system, a leitmotif that prompts him to push the actor's actions out onto the edge of the picture. Thus the "truth" allegedly associated with the porno world is relegated to a limbo. Burton's lens picks out the "spaces in the middle", or the crannies which reality hides within itself. Sometimes he is attracted by details of no apparent value. In one photograph, for example, the intertwining of muscular male bodies creates a sort of frame, the core of the image being structured around the non-forms of clothes and towels dropped onto the floor. In another, the sex act performed in an apartment is totally out of focus and relegated to the background, whereas the outlines of an Empire period chair and of a decorated lampshade are viewed in such a way as to emphasise the incongruous presence of an office stapler resting on a low table. Again, in another photo, the naked body of a man, whose face is not visible, is cut by the right edge of the frame and the whole picture is focused on a crack in the low white wall. In all his works, Burton seems driven by an urge to use the camera as if it were a sharpened scalpel. By drawing its blade over reality and incising notable portions of it, he seeks an intentional ambiguity. He uses the resulting void as a logical trap, deliberately laying it on the images' visual web to capture and titillate individual fantasies.

Burton's encounter with Gio Ponti's architecture came as a further step in his work as an artist. Burton adopts the architecture, furniture and decorative details of Ponti's idiom to interpret them as constructive elements, but he makes them the protagonists of an elegantly reconstructed desire. In the photographs dedicated to the Hotel de la Ville in Forli, the fluid geometry of seating designed by

Ponti is charged with a sense of sensual expectation. The armrests seem to reach out to one another and the space that separates them is electric. In another image, the wavy curves of a curtain are narcissistically mirrored in a table, offering their best side. Again, the exact design of the building's exteriors is veiled in atmospheric reflections, or screened behind a languid vapour. At Sanremo the swimming pool is seen as a sleeping organism, ready to change its shape and skin whenever it awakes. The mosaic pieces turn into iridescent scales, the protuberances into tentacles, the steps into vivid undulations. The whole architectural body is a marine creature, a siren portrayed as it prepares to seduce. As a movie-like interpretation (Burton lives in Los Angeles), the elements that the photographer has chosen from these two works by Ponti seem to stress the fictional potential of the two places. At the same time, albeit from an acutely personal angle, his images hint at ways of reflecting on the actual nature of architecture. By constructing his photographs to arouse the viewer's fantasy, Burton also sparks memories of how architecture can be oriented towards the construction of desire. After all, isn't the desire to live in a certain house, to stay at a particular hotel, or to sit in a special chair precisely what every architect would like to stimulate in people's minds and bodies?

Marcella Beccaria

Contemporary art historian and curator at the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin.

Domus thanks Paola Mazzitelli (Regional office of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Emilia Romagna); Roberto Pasini (Hotel de la Ville, Forli); Peter Müller, Ivana Gior-





HOTEL
CORTINA
ST. PAUL MINN.

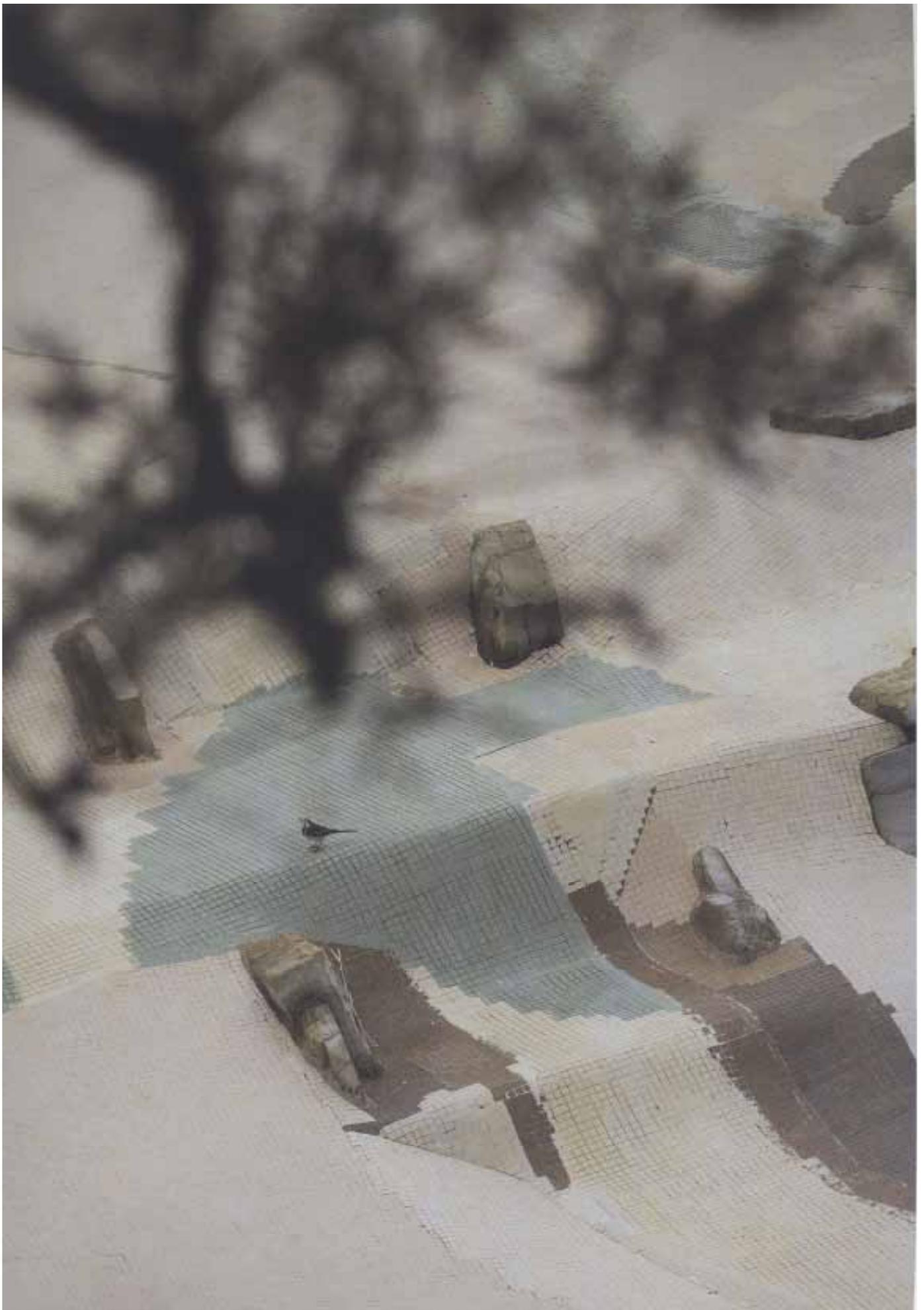




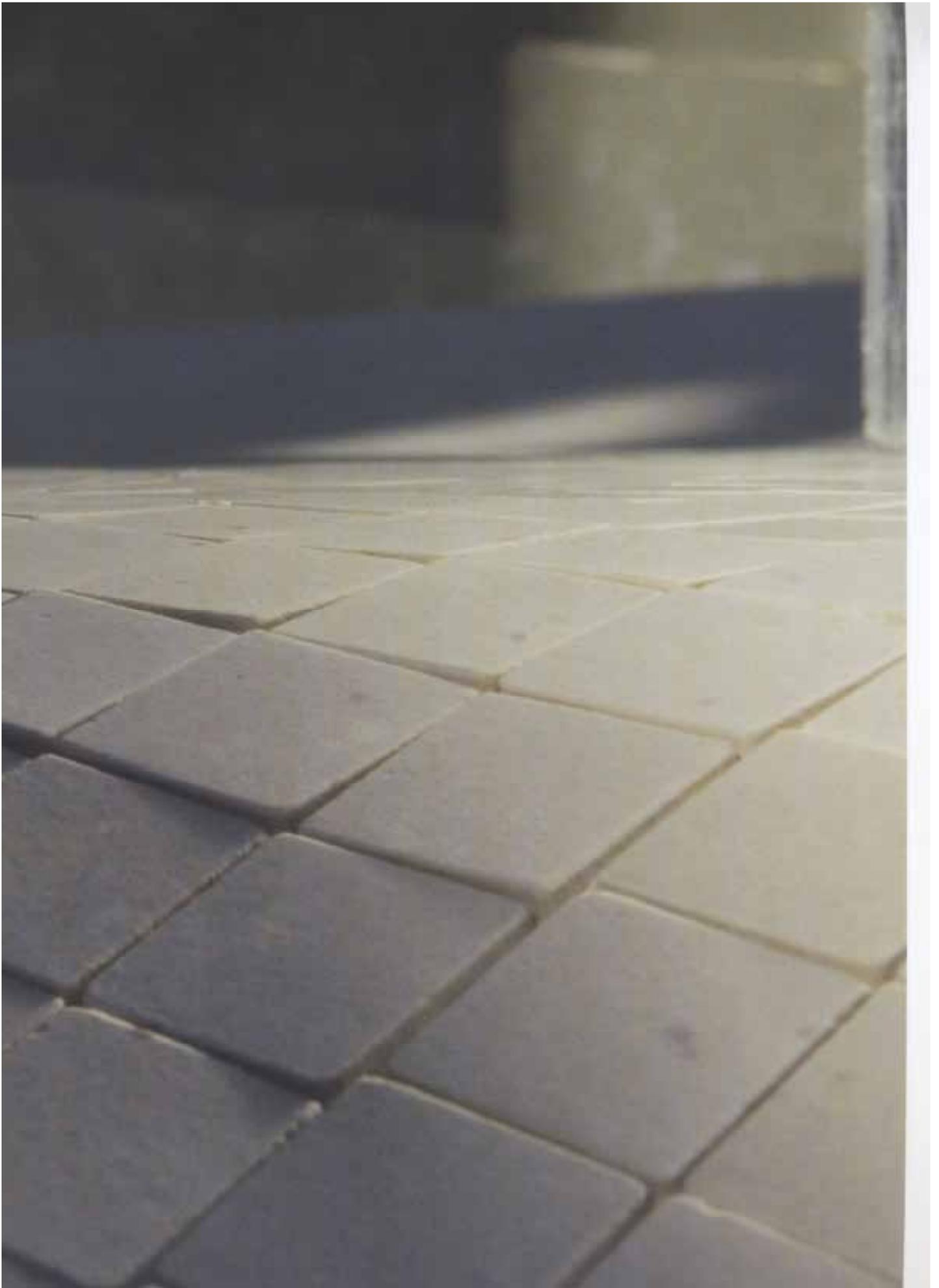
















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Schwendener, Marth, "New Review: Jeff Burton, Casey Kaplan, through Jun 24," Time Out New York, Issue 550, June 15-21, 2006

Art

New Review

Jeff Burton



Casey Kaplan, through Jun 24

L.A. artists often seem haunted by the fact that they work in a town devoted to image production—not art, mind you, but Hollywood entertainment and its seedier sibling, porn. Jeff Burton's photographs move between categories, providing plenty of X-rated titillation, but also ample cues to signal that this is art, not smut.

Gay sex is the subject, but viewed obliquely. In one photograph, the camera focuses on a glass table laden with a low-budget, movie-set buffet; beneath the table, a man receives a blow job. Elsewhere, a man's sweaty footprints take visual precedence over his naked body, while a third image features a close-up of a blue curtain whose taut fastener suggests the crotch of a too-tight pair of pants. Photos of drawings, blocking notes from '70s porn shoots, and strange portraits of filmmaker and Hollywood's Babylon author Kenneth Anger with a broken nose round out the show.



The ghost of Robert Mapplethorpe hovers over Burton's photos, what with their arty gay-sex bent (an image of a man with a fist shoved up his rectum recalls Mapplethorpe's famous self-portrait with bullwhip). But Burton rejects Mapplethorpe's haute moderne techniques (and reliance on Edward Weston), trading the black-and-white of traditional art photography for heavily saturated color and arranging his images to emphasize their eclecticism. These are familiar strategies, borrowed from photo-conceptualists like Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman and Thomas Ruff, but Burton, steeped in the climate of So-Cal media excess, makes them his own. —Marth Schwendener

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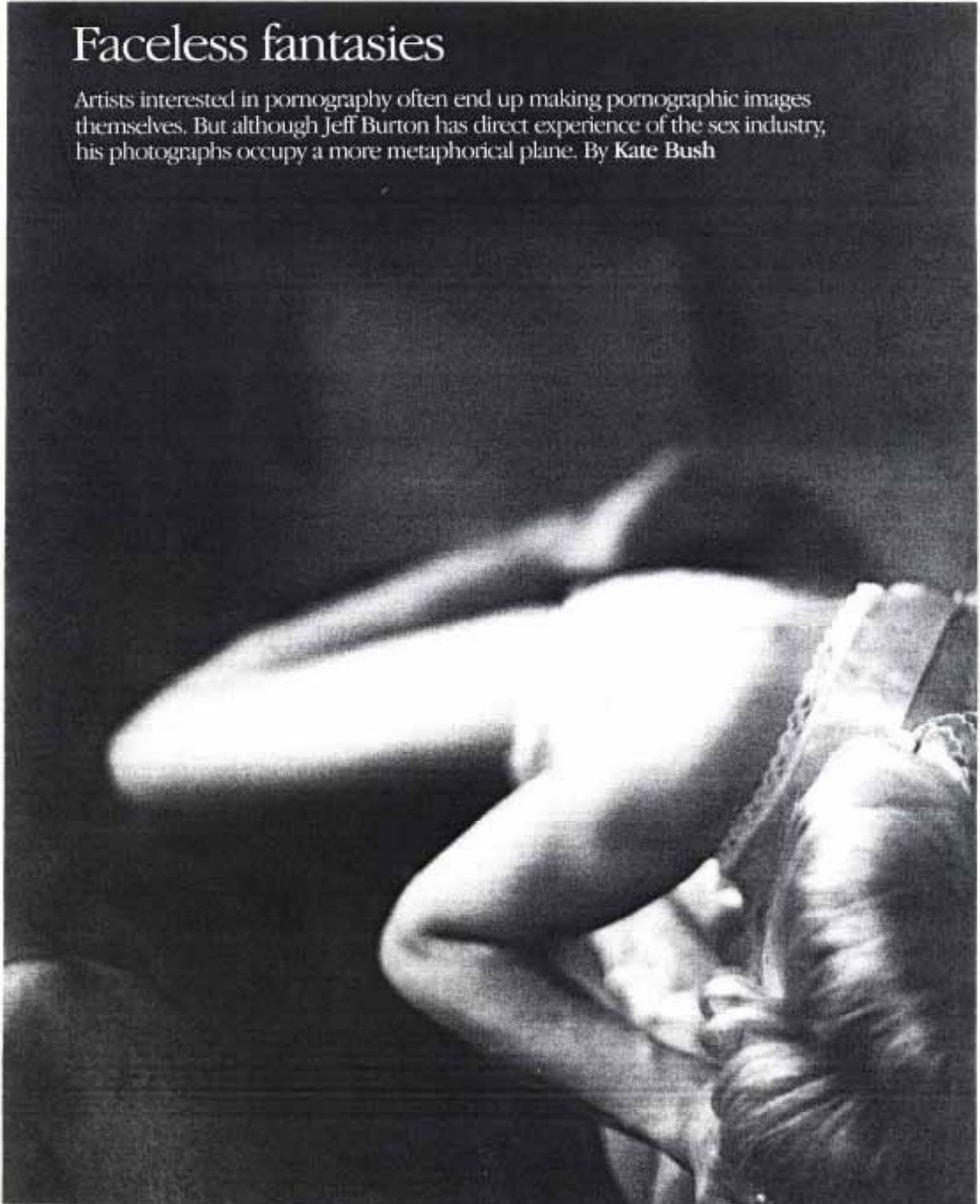
ArtReview

February

INTERNATIONAL EDITION V3N2

Faceless fantasies

Artists interested in pornography often end up making pornographic images themselves. But although Jeff Burton has direct experience of the sex industry, his photographs occupy a more metaphorical plane. By Kate Bush



Jeff Burton's curriculum vitae is well rehearsed by now—schooled as an artist and struggling to live from his painting, in 1989 he answered an ad seeking a photographer at the back of a gay magazine. Fifteen years on and he continues to work in the sex film industry in Los Angeles, as a stills photographer on a variety of hardcore gay and straight porn flicks—as well, it might be noted, as an occasional bit player. Porn taught Burton the technical skills of photography; once learnt, he began to develop simultaneously a different form of picture-making, one which, since the mid-1990s, has secured his artistic reputation.

Given that they each set out to stimulate a viewer, pornography and photography are not, on one level, unrelated. And there's a structural kinship between them too: both commonly feature the serial representation of more or less disconnected moments freed from the constraints of narrative. However, porn pictures tend, like medical and police photographs, to be as direct, descriptive and stylistically neutral as possible; the action is lit from all sides so that every feature of the scene is plainly visible and thus of maximum use to the viewer.

Burton's photographs, conversely, glance away from a central event, to focus on the peripheral objects that set the scene decorative glass baubles, an oriental vase on a side table, a studded leather sofa—while relegating the sexual encounter, figured through fragmented limbs and entwined torsos, to the edge of the frame, or to a hazy middle distance, or (a favourite device) to a reflection in the polished surfaces of mahogany tables and marble floors. Burton's artistic gaze is shy and indirect and his players in the main faceless and anonymous, which positions us, always the photographer's proxy, as voyeurs; as if we were desperate to look, yet at the same time self-conscious of our prurience. With their sexual symbolism and their visual metaphors, and not least with Burton's undeniable formal skills as a photographer, these luscious, ambiguous images are easily received as art. Yet, rich with contradiction, they remain at the same time pure documents of porn and its relentlessly repetitious scenarios.

Anonymous publicity claims that Burton has 'reinterpreted the very concept of pornography', although he might state his own intentions more modestly: 'I am definitely interested in the duality of the appearance and the content—I suppose it is pretty incongruous in that way.' Full of golden

light, impossibly intense colour and carefully sculpted flesh, his photographs render the raw aggressions of hardcore visually seductive, and its sexual transgressions implicit rather than explicit. But does Burton merely beautify the unbeautiful? Does he mitigate the dark dangers of porn and serve it up in luminous yet eviscerated form as art? For art thrives on an ambiguity that in porn would be frustratingly coy. Burton's work might be seen as symptomatic of a broader cultural phenomenon that the media theorist Brian McNair in his book *Striptease Culture* has dubbed 'porno chic', and which he describes as having, from the early 1990s, infiltrated every crevice of high and low culture—pop music, cinema, fashion, fine art, literature, advertising, television—in a way unprecedented since the 1960s and certainly unthinkable so in

Burton's art might be about porn, but it is not in itself pornographic, or even, for that matter, consistently erotic

the 1980s, under the shadow of AIDS, or the 1970s, under the influence of feminism.

From Madonna's *Sex* to Lars von Trier's *The Idiots*, from Kylie's and Britney's videos to Koons's *Made in Heaven*, 'porno chic' is, for its supporters, a positive sign of widespread social ease with all matters sexual, and for its detractors, just another means of pushing a product. 'Porno chic' flirts 'with the form and content of porn'. It isn't porn as such, but 'the representation of porn' distributed within mainstream culture. While 'porno chic' co-opts porn's allure of dangerous transgression, it also subdues those dangers through the force of sheer glamour - an approach arguably parallel to Burton's.

Yet Burton occupies a distinctive position in relation to better known photographers who have also employed the iconography of pornography in an art context. Jeff Koons and Nobuyoshi Araki, for example, are more aggressive provocateurs. They're auteurs who place themselves literally within the frame of their own highly designed and aestheticised pornographic depictions. Both use porn in the service of wider artistic philosophies. For Koons the pornographic imaginary turns flesh, including his own, into product, into consumer capital, thus

according with his larger proposition that everything, art included, is ultimately a commodity. Araki's world view could be described as Sadean in its libertine vision of art and erotica as inseparable symptoms of the same unstoppable human quest for pleasure, with all manner of perversion and sexual corruption (especially when the innocents are willing), embraced, by necessity, along the way. Koons and Araki are artists who make pornographic images: explicit sexual representations intended to excite the viewer's curiosity, sexual and otherwise.

Burton is, by contrast, a pornographer and an artist, a simultaneous insider and outsider, whose imagery derives both from authentic experience and from a place of detached observation. Burton's art might be about porn, but it is not in itself pornographic, or even, for that matter, consistently erotic. This curious position frees him to deploy his images on an expressive and metaphorical level, in antithesis to pornography proper which has to remain emotionally flat or deadpan in order to function. Or, as Susan Sontag put it rather more authoritatively: 'Only in the absence of directly stated emotions can the reader of pornography find room for his own responses.' And it is hard to mistake the metaphoric intent of Burton's work.

Interspersed with the sex scenes, Burton places images of southern California's urban landscape: freeways and parking lots, pool sides, street signs and the ever-ubiquitous Hollywood legend. Those aspirational dreams enshrined forever in Tinsel Town are evoked in concert with the egregious sexual fantasies of the pornographic set. Both places are glittering and good-looking, bathed in a warm light and the promise of instant seduction. And yet Burton's photographs are also washed with a pervasive melancholy, and a strong sense of loneliness, which arises from their compositionally hollow centres and the fact that they are, in the end, no more than documents of fantasies fabricated for the camera.

The Other Place by Jeff Burton is published by Twin Palms, \$60 (www.twinpalms.com)

Opposite: Jeff Burton, *Untitled (Hairnet)*, 2003

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Grant, Catherine, "Reviews, London: Jeff Burton, Sadie Coles HQ," *Flash Art*, January/February, 2004, p. 112

Flash Art

JEFF BURTON
SADIE COLES HQ

R E V I E W S

LONDON

Jeff Burton's new show at Sadie Coles continues his cataloguing of the Hollywood porn scene, shot from the vantage point of an unobserved voyeur, a bit part player situated in the wings, able to capture moments which slide by unnoticed by the rest of the participants. Burton's focus is on a seductive depiction of what is usually portrayed as a seedy industry, eroticizing the hardcore scenes and badly constructed sets so that they are as enticing as a Hollywood blockbuster.

The Hollywood sign itself is a recurring motif in Burton's work, shot in multiple images; at night, in passing, operating as a slogan or backdrop to the fantasies enacted in the sets that Burton frequents. In its one appearance in this exhibition the sign is barely visible, emerging from what seems to be a plate inked up and ready for an impression to be taken from it. In the fetishization of the ink drops and the aluminum of the plate, the word "Hollywood" fades in and out of view so that the viewer is set between reading the sign and reading the luxurious details captured in the enlarged photographic frame. This oscillation—between the (sexual) content of the photograph and the unexpected details that would usually be sidelined— is the key to Burton's images. In the more explicit images in the exhibition, bodies are out of focus, appearing almost as if they were manifestations of the viewer's imagination in the periphery of room, windows, and reflections.

One image shows a fish tank shot in beautiful blue tones, the wall of a swimming pool seen through the glass of the tank. Two men are in the pool, standing one in front of the other, their heads unseen above the water. Their nakedness is simultaneously concealed and coyly brought to the viewer's attention by the placement of a shell strategic in front of what would be a visible penis. Burton's vantage point is one of side-long glances and captured reflections, with the sexuality of the scenes contained in the seductive colors and blurred bodies presented on hyper-glossy photographic plates. When actual sex is pictured, its mundane (or as surprising) as the everyday details that take center stage in Burton's images.

- Catherine Grant

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Clem, Chivas, "Art Reviews: Jeff Burton, Casey Kaplan, through Mar 24," Time Out New York, March 27 - April 3, 2003, Issue 391, p. 54



Art | Reviews

Jeff Burton

Casey Kaplan, through Mar 29

(see Chelsea)

In his current show at Casey Kaplan, photographer Jeff Burton departs from his usual artful documentation of pornographic-film sets to venture into adjacent, though related territory: the portrayal of a male stripper. In a series of large color photos, Burton captures Kevin, a lanky teenager with a slight resemblance to Eminem, performing in circumstances that a gallery statement describes as a "highly private moment that developed publicly in a crowded New Orleans bar." We see the young man pose with reluctant self-assuredness while wearing only white socks, penny loafers and a rather lurid velveteen G-string.

From Robert Mapplethorpe to Larry Clark and Jack Pierson, the gay male body has been presented in a vast array of attitudes, from the self-abnegating to the celebratory. But most often, as critic Gary Indiana once wrote, these representations "echo the normative hypocrisy of a conservative yet sexually 'liberated' age, in which desire is permissible if the desired performs as an economic object rather than a human being." Burton is no exception, but his new images manage to transcend the usually exploitative nature of such work by tempering the apparatus of pornography with a sympathetic, almost melancholic gaze. In contrast to the anonymous voyeurism that marked his past subject matter, these new photos show Burton's



Jeff Burton, *Kevin #6*, 2003.

model not strutting the usual stuff but confronting the camera directly—as naked emotionally as he is physically, the sadness on his face defeating any pleasure he might be proffering. Descriptions of these images may suggest they're more of the same old "sexy" pictures, but Burton's peculiar mix of desire and pathos serves to complicate an otherwise predictable titillating milieu. —Chivas Clem

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Blom, Ina, "Nu: The Nordic Art Review," vol. III, no. 2/01, p. 77.

nu:

THE NORDIC ART REVIEW

Jeff Burton. Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York. 12/1 - 10/2/2001
Ina Blom: In a sense Burton does for Hollywood what countless photographers have done for Paris since the invention of photography: that is, depict the ephemeral 'air' of the place through a studied economy of visual effects swirling around some central metaphor.

If love is in the air in Paris, in Hollywood it is sex or, more precisely, pornography, that is 'in the air'. Or so Jeff Burton's photographs seem to suggest. In a sense Burton does for Hollywood what countless photographers have done for Paris since the invention of photography: that is, depict the ephemeral 'air' of the place through a studied economy of visual effects swirling around some central metaphor. In Paris this is either a glimpse of the Eiffel Tower or the tables of an outdoor cafe. In Burton's Hollywood, it is the big, shakey Hollywood sign that sits up in the hills, catching the sunlight. And there, one would think, the similarities end. For whereas 'love' cannot be depicted, except obliquely, through atmosphere and suggestion, pornography is, of course, counted as the very summit of depiction—a depiction that has become so all-pervasive and so literal-minded that there is nothing left to not-see.

Yet this is not Burton's perspective. In these photos, which have mostly been taken on porn film sets, the pornography is not explicit, but almost entirely atmospheric—and thus perhaps vaguely related to the way in which fashion today draws on the general atmosphere of porn much as it once drew on the general atmosphere of 'Paris'. The linking of Hollywood and porn is, of course, as mythological in its general impact as the linking of Paris and love. The strict hierarchy of movie stars, career spans and degrees of fame (which we are told is the only logic of Hollywood lives) acquires its rarefied consistency against the backdrop of a darker sister industry, which is understood to literally suck up 99.9 percent of the young wannabes who are discharged from grimy Grey-

hound buses every single day of the year. If pornography is second nature to the place, no wonder it seems to cling to the lens like the mindset of a person in a photographic portrait.

Burton's take on this atmosphere, however, does not show it as 'dark'. Actually, the pornographic atmosphere is perpetually sun-drenched. It's as if it's more in touch with the weather of the place and the natural dress code of its inhabitants than the serious film industry with its costumes and elaborate sets. One image in particular seems emblematic. It is a landscape, an idyll. In the foreground we see the top of a row of tombstones. In the middle ground we see the well-tended exotic greenery that is the mark of both expensive graveyards and Hollywood gardens in general, complete with the requisite palms that stretch towards the infinity of the blue sky. And in the background, between the trees and bushes, at the center of the image, we get a glimpse of the distant hillside with the white Hollywood sign. But this pretty depiction of essential Hollywood nature, supremely sunny and self-centered, yet with the inevitable memento mori strategically in place, would not be complete without a final detail. From the left, a sprinkler hidden among the graves sends a single jet of water over the scene, like some made-to-order ejaculation—as if to take away all doubt as to where in the world we are.

Funnily enough, the other images, which often show bodies or body parts, seem far less explicit or readable. The close-up of a tiger tattoo on someone's back, the row of nude male buttocks, the tanned back and golden head of a woman who lies diagonally across some



Jeff Burton, *Untitled #147*, 2000, cibachrome print. Courtesy of Casey Kaplan Gallery.

silky green sheets, the black man who lies pensively on his back on the floor seem curiously neutral: Neutral in the sense that they are monumental, well-composed, beautifully and sometimes even dramatically lit, modestly cut, suitably arty and not in the least tacky. In fact, they give off a sense of easy luxuriousness that has nothing to do with the imagined reality of porn film sets and everything to do with an idealized sensualist dreamscape. It is, rather, the juxtaposition of these images with images from the supposedly more neutral world of objects—colorful towels on a staircase, a golden car on an empty parking lot, a globe in a bedroom, a star on a pavement, shiny leather car seats—a quite precise and particular blend of trivia and throwaway glamour—which anchor the images in a particular reality.

With this strategy, however, Burton achieves a curious effect. With very few exceptions, every narrative of Hollywood is an almost medieval morality fable, with laboriously demonstrative displays of appearance vs. realities. Ev-

ery glittering surface has an underside of sleaze, every ambition is tinged with hubris. Money will only buy more 'emptiness' and success 'comes at a price', such as 'ruthless back-stabbing of your closest friends'. Burton eschews all of this by sticking with a type of imagery that never invites us to detect—or hardly even reflect on—such obvious dualities. The pornographic atmosphere, which is here intrinsic to the very material of the place, is already way beyond good or bad. It is simply an indelible aspect of the way in which things present themselves to the eye. And so, colorful, sunny, 'pornographic' Hollywood becomes as romantically pleasant and nostalgically distant as the Paris of a thousand black-and-white images. Whether or not this is a 'good thing' seems entirely beside the point. •

-Ina Blom

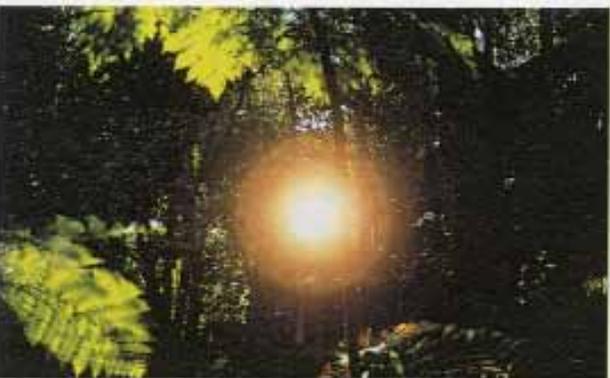
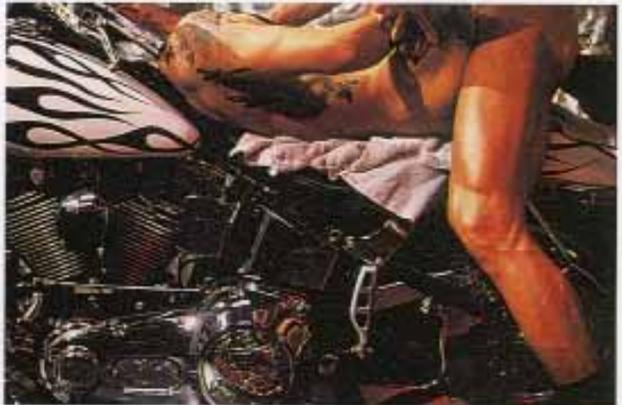
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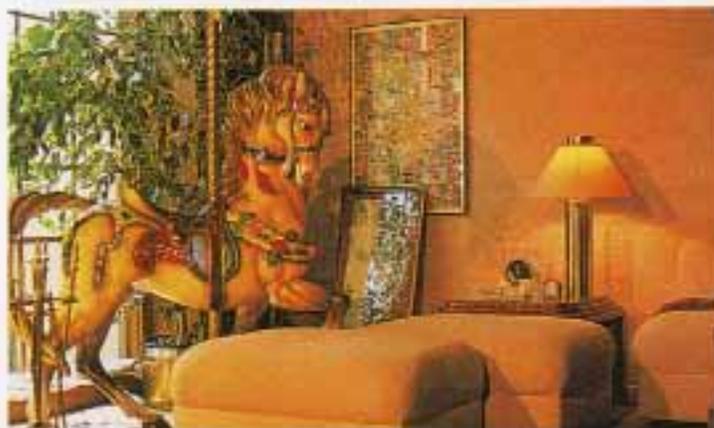
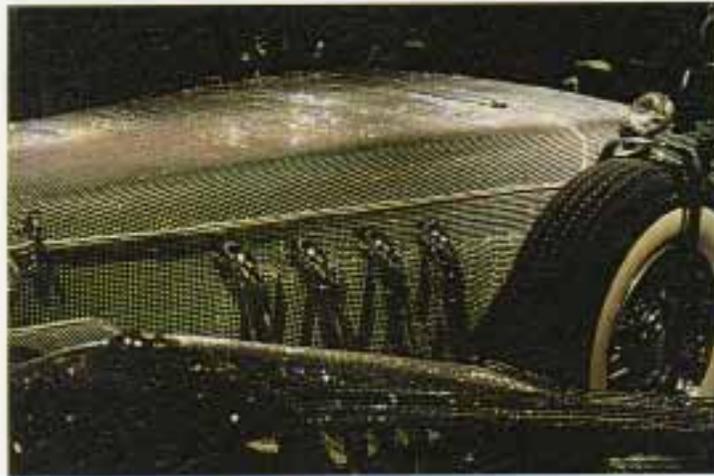
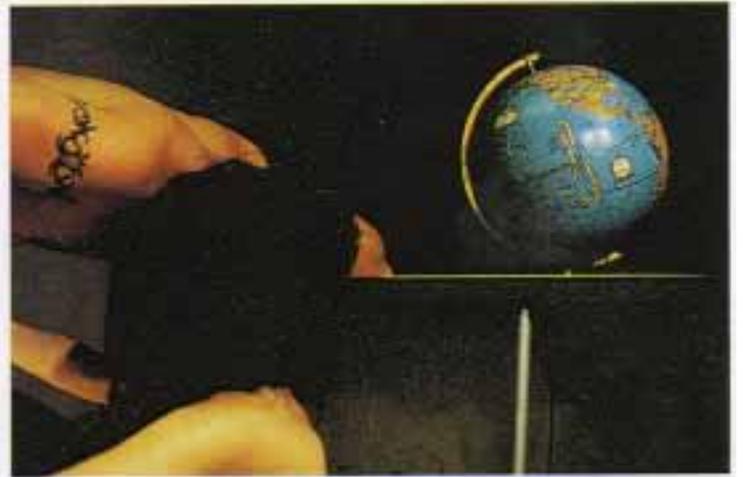
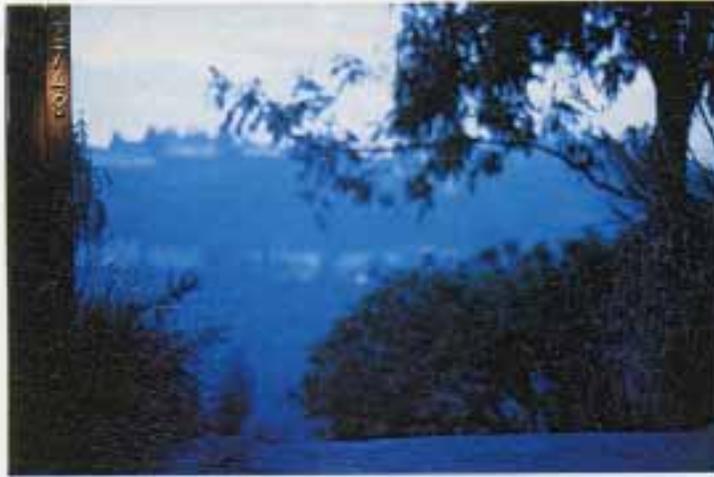
Waldron, Glenn, "The Opposite of Sex," i-D, 2001, p. 92 – 96.

THE OPPOSITE OF SEX

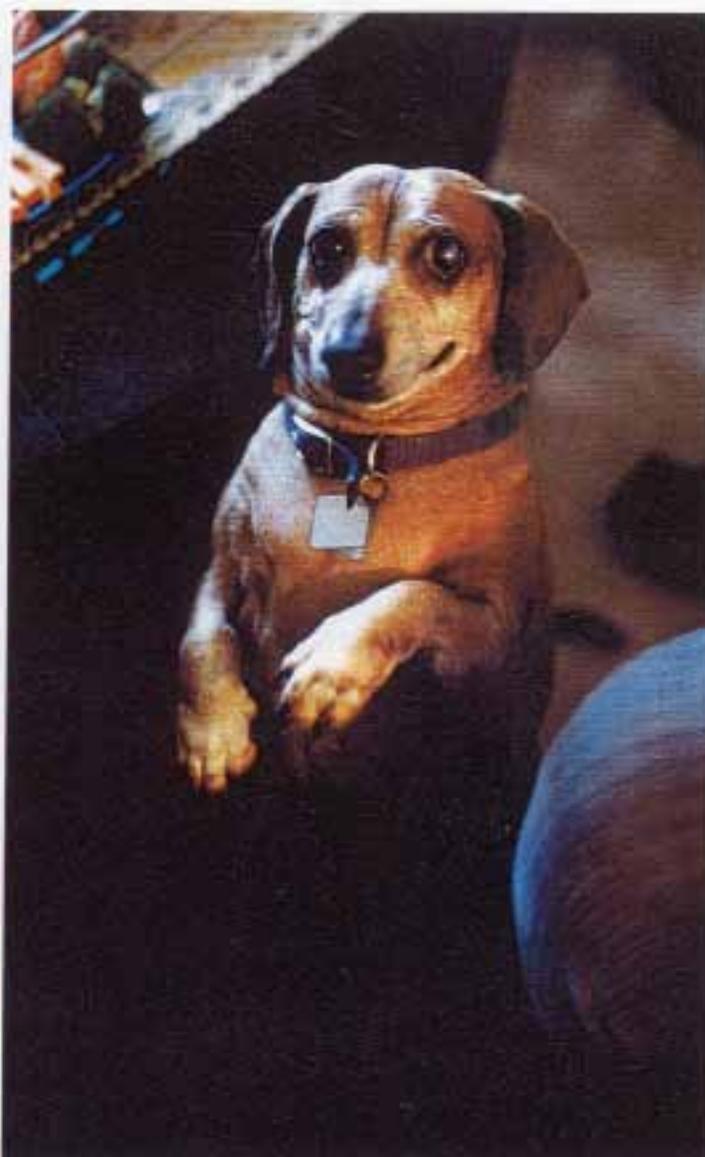
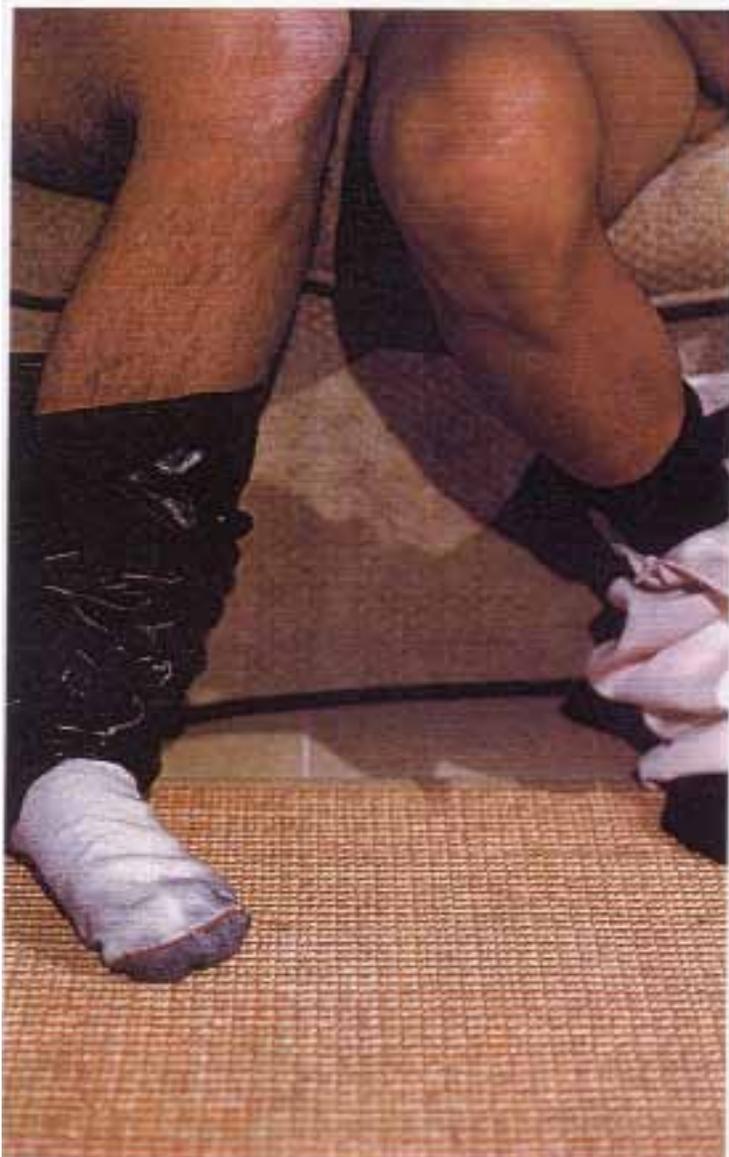
Text by Glenn Waldron

Photography by Jeff Burton





When is porn not porn? When it's Jeff Burton's dreamlike postcards from LA's sex, suburbs, photographs documenting the beauty and banality of the adult film industry. This isn't hardcore...



So I'm lying sprawled out on this secluded beach somewhere in the South of France. There's hardly anyone around and it must be about 80 degrees in the shade. I've stripped off my shirt and put on my shades. Tiny beads of sweat are casually trailing down my stomach into the waistband of my shorts. Man, it feels good to be alive! And then I clock this guy coming out the water. Undeniably cute, maybe ten years older, but looking good on it. Big blue eyes that take in the tiny cove then suddenly fix on me. A brief, cheeky grin and then he's striding in my direction. A moist, glistening vision in navy blue trunks. Nice package. As he approaches, I know instinctively what he's going to say before he even says it.

"Shall we do the interview now?"

Porn is a funny thing to talk about. Jeff Burton, the man towelling off next to me, knows this fact far better than I do. A small, compact figure, with closely cropped hair, Arm and Hammer-endorsed teeth and a sun-baked San Fernando Valley tan, he looks more like a porn star than a photographer. Or pornographer. Or artist. And although he has appeared in several adult videos, he has always chosen small 'non-performing' roles. An airline passenger, a businessman, an escaped convict (though not the one who discovers the true meaning of being sent down). Like I say, porn is a funny thing to talk about.

Sometimes, Jeff sees the funny side too. The humour is there in his work. In his artwork, I should say. For Jeff holds down several jobs. Photographer. Pornographer. Artist. Most likely if you recognise his name, it's through the fruits of this

latter incarnation: colour-saturated, dreamscape postcards from the LA porn industries; hard, golden limbs at rest and motion in arriviste apartments; satin sheets, modern antiques, azure blue swimming pools; the hard-earned, hard-polished sex props of Hollywood's high rent suburbs.

How are they funny? In the smallest, inconsequential details that Burton observes—a neglected sandwich platter brought in by the maid (who later discovers the true meaning of... oh, stop it), four cans of Miller Lite cornering a four-way gang bang, the way a guy kneeling down for anal sex looks like he is praying to heaven. Some of Jeff's observations are funny haha. Some of them are funny peculiar. And some of them really aren't funny at all.

Jeff's main occupation though is commercial stills photographer. He works for Catalina Videos, an LA-based video production company, specialising in narrative-led, hardcore gay porn. The makers of such titles as *Grope Therapy*, *Pizza Boys 3*, *The Slutty Professor* and *Truckstop Daddy*. Boom bang a bang. As well as recording every stage of the action, from coy first glance to obligatory money shot (later to be franchised to a variety of porn mags), he also takes pictures for the video cover and promotional artwork. He has been doing this for 11 years. Way before the solo shows at New York's Casey Kaplan and London's Sadie Coles galleries.

Whether the art came before or after the porn gig is a point of issue: brought up in Fort Worth, Texas, Burton was a shy, nervous kid. "I wasn't especially great at sport and I think I just retreated. I was always painting and drawing." Spending weekends roaming around the small town's fine art museum, Burton found a calling; after school, he enrolled at the Texas Christian University and concentrated on art, "doing paintings that were really out of fashion, completely abstract stuff." Surprisingly, he found the Christian college (firmly entrenched in the buckle of the Bible Belt) to be decidedly enlightened. "It wasn't a wrist-slapping kind of place. I actually found my graduate school in California to be more like that. Everyone else was trying to give some kind of Marxist backbone to their work and make social critiques. I wasn't really interested in being virtuous and creating morality tales. I was more about pleasure."

Burton left Valencia's Institute of The Arts in '89. Shortly afterwards, he spotted an ad for a stills photographer in the back of a gay magazine. "I was trying to paint at the time and was finding it very difficult to make money and also being alone for hours and hours. I decided to apply." Perhaps this is the most confounding detail of Burton's life how a painfully shy, Texan twenty-something could be drawn into the hyper-real existence of the LA sex industry. "Well, I was a consumer of porn for many years," he states, in a flat confessional tone that only talk show-bred Americans can get away with. "When I interviewed and they accepted my work, I felt quite honoured, because I had great respect for other photographers working in the business. Obviously in the beginning, when I first came on set, I was a bit frightened," he recalls. "Because my imagination of what the industry would be like was terrifying. It would be full of all these people being abused, opportunistic monsters taking advantage of young women and boys. My first shoot was in Big Bear, California, up in the mountains and it took two hours to get there, so I had two hours of pure terror." And how was it for you? "Like a dream. Surreal to be around people naked and so comfortable, especially in America where you don't swim nude on the beach like people are around us now. It was a mix of guilt and pleasure and enjoyment and 'do I really belong in this atmosphere?' Sort of like the first day at school." Really? "Yeah, porn school, maybe."

Jeff soon settled into the establishment. "At first, I was a little shy about getting too close into the action. But you get used to that pretty quickly and then it actually becomes quite boring... so repetitious and mechanical." There were, however, advantages to being schooled in such an environment: "One of the great things about the job was that it forced me to use the camera all the time and build my skills up. You have to capture things that happen very quickly, a bit like war photography. And it was then that I began to think about how I could catch a mix of the artificial alongside real performance." Growing technically proficient yet still artistically itchy, he began to tentatively disrupt the narrative, aiming the lens in unexpected directions. "One of the privileges of the stills photographer is that no-one is seeing what you are getting. If I decided to move away to the still life of the room, then it was my private moment. No-one could say, 'you're not supposed to shoot that' and this to me felt a bit naughty compared to taking the shots they wanted. It also gave me the freedom to experiment more, because the stakes were lower. I think the art world, and maybe fashion too, are less accepting of such mistakes."

Documenting the LA myth (itself a minor realisation of the American Dream) in a way that is both supremely fantastical and utterly banal, Burton's moonlighting project has steadily found favour with a curious and increasingly receptive art scene. Later this year his photographs will be seen as part of *The Americans*, a prestigious group show of US artists exhibiting at the Barbican Centre; Burton also has work in the Guggenheim. What is it then that the art world see in this partially glimpsed vision of Californian hedonism for hire? Certainly not shock value; the 37-year-old Texan never attempts a visual assault in the style of Robert Mapplethorpe or Larry Clark, being far too much the self-confessed romantic for such confrontations. Nor are his images more than distantly related to those of pornworld contemporaries like Larry Sultan and Ken Probst; when Burton teases with a bare ankle, a bronzed buttock or a blurred blow job, the effect is less immediate in its provocation, more lingering. The difference between experience and anticipation, perhaps. Or, as one viewer comments, 'I never knew I had such a filthy imagination.'

Is this still porn then? 'The exhibition of sexual activity intended to stimulate erotic feeling'? The day job, in other words (or pictures). Perhaps, according to the artist: "When I first started shooting like this, I found I could record images that really had no function other than my own desire, taking my work away from the obvious and leaving so much more to the imagination. I discovered that there was something powerful by revealing less, that the minority became interesting, more dangerous. It seduced you into the image."

Yet perhaps there is too much smoke and mirrors (and water and glass and crystal) to truly seduce, motifs that leave the viewer always at one remove; the fantasy figures—heaving young boys and braying young girls—always too distant to really get off on; discreetly obscured by a rococo-style armchair and rolling patio doors, is the half-dressed young nu-buck masturbating furiously, adjusting his trouser fastenings or merely opening a jar of olives? Perhaps there is too much innocence and—yes—humour in there as well. A penis with a smiley face drawn on (very Wolfgang Tillmans), a giant inflatable panda peaking out of the shrubbery, an obliging girl laid out on the dining table like a Thanksgiving turkey; consciously naive strokes reminiscent of the way female porn stars sleep in

bedrooms stuffed with childhood cuddly toys. The placid lapdog cautiously drinking from the swimming pool, photos Burton confesses he takes simply for his own pleasure.

And somehow, when it comes down to it, perhaps these pictures are too, well, boring to crack one off over anyway. Too full of Coke cans and Life magazines, glass figurines and candlesticks, pool loungers and carriage clocks, life-cluttering detritus swiftly crushing any prospect of fantasy. Softly-furnished ephemera signifying what Umberto Eco calls 'the wasted time of the porno'—the endlessly banal scene-setting, 'character' development and sub-soap acting necessary for the progression of any hardcore Feature (non-narrative, all-action 'Gonzo' films being a different case altogether). Or, as one observer puts it, the objects you see—a decorative lamp, a can of shaving foam, a styrofoam cup—when you avert your gaze from the things you really want to see.

Whether this visual seduction becomes sexual, Burton argues, is entirely up to you. "I like the work to be really open, I don't like to be didactic, expressing a dogmatic point of view. The images can be really enjoyable, funny as hell or sometimes a little sinister." For the photographer himself, the pictures express a wide range of feelings and associations built up over an 11 year career. "For me, working within the porn industry is a really intense experience psychologically. When it goes well, it's really great. When the actors like each other and the sex is good, it feels as wholesome as anything I've ever known. When they don't like each other and it feels forced, however, it's not like someone disliking their desk job. It's more psychologically destructive. Kind of disgusting. So there's quite a broad spectrum of emotional attachment to the experience for me."

Adopting a formal solution to what New York painters of the '50s and '60s referred to as 'the problem of the edge' (a phrase that's doubly apt when considering LA, the city without a centre), Burton's meticulously cropped tableaux banish any action to the very peripheries of the frame. Meaning narrative must ultimately be imposed by the viewer. A little ironic then that the stories we create from these photographs are perhaps darker, seedier fictions than the world as Jeff sees it. A reminder that hardcore pornography, and the people who create it, will always remain at the very edge of social tolerance, an industry overrun by mac-clad old men duping deflowered ingenues. Boogie Nights without the great soundtrack (and rollerskates). Don't think so? Shut your eyes for a second and imagine what a pornographer looks like. Still disagree?

There's a third person present on the quiet French beach (did you really think it was just me and him? Now who's being porno?). The other guy is the fashion designer Jean Colonna. He is the reason Jeff is here, in the small Riviera town of Hyeres. As part of Hyeres' prestigious festival of fashion and photography, Jean and

"I like to keep the work open. I don't want to create some kind of morality tale. The images can be really enjoyable, funny as hell or sometimes a little sinister"

Jeff are presenting a joint work. The amiable Frenchman, who has previously collaborated with photographers Nan Goldin and Glen Luchford, tracked Jeff down to his Southern Californian home and requested his participation. "When I first saw Jeff's photographs, I thought they were paintings," say Jean, identifying a quality that has led to comparisons with artists from Edward Hopper to Cy Twombly. "The sex, the beauty, the poetry..." ruminates Jean. "I knew then that I wanted to work with him." Trousers round ankles, shirts torn off mid-tussle, dresses hiked up for easier access; the resulting pictures are perhaps not what Colonna had in mind. Or maybe they are. "Jean sent me a box of clothes and said 'do as you want'. So I gave them to a director friend of mine to use in his film. I think he was grateful that he didn't have to worry about a wardrobe," Burton chuckles. "Needless to say, they didn't stay on for very long."

Interspersed with all the usual trademarks of Burton's vernacular languid LA sunsets in luminous colours, fat velveteen sausage dogs basking in the sunshine, man-on-man action refracted in ornately-framed mirrors—the slideshow that the pair exhibit in a darkened room in the Villa Noailles, a suitably evocative crumbling modernist mansion overshadowing the old town, is remarkable. Many of the visitors stay for an hour or more, silently absorbed by the gentle, unerring cadences of the loop, the sweat-stained facts of life transfigured into the most hypnotising of fictions. Underscored by a soft, lilting track from LA art rock band The Golden Palominos, the photographs seem to adopt a plaintive, almost pastoral feel as a line of the song plays over and over. "All that pushing and shoving, and it still leads to nothing." It is strangely beautiful and unbearably sad. Not funny haha in the slightest.

A week later, on the telephone to the guy I exchanged numbers with on the beach. Jeff is back in LA preparing a shoot for shoe designer Ernesto Esposito. He says he can't wait to get back to work. The film work, that is. For anyone who rates the term 'artist' above 'pornographer', perhaps this is a little surprising, that the pull of hardcore is still as strong as ever. Jeff Burton has no plans to leave the business, retiring to the 'higher ground' of art and fashion. The suggestion itself eliciting mild annoyance. "You know, when I first started shooting porn, many people asked why I didn't aspire to do something with integrity, a photojournalist or fashion photographer maybe. I had to forget what people thought of me and just think, 'I don't care, this is what I want to do'," he explains. "I didn't see it as this hierarchy and still don't. I just wanted an interesting life. For me, that's been the reward." •

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Schubert, Lawrence, "Meet Me in Dreamland," *Flaunt*, Holiday 2001, p. 74-79



Untitled 119

MEET ME IN DREAMLAND

written by **Lawrence Schubert** photographed by **Jeff Burton**

The morning after the Coney Island fire of 1907, George Tilyou promised to rebuild his Steeplechase Park—bigger and better—then charged visitors ten cents to tour the smoking ruins. Four years later, when neighboring Dreamland burned to the ground, its owners decided not to rebuild. Instead, they sold the land back to the city at a loss, the price of dreams being somewhat higher than the price of real estate, in Brooklyn at least.

Dreams and dreamlands don't die so easily, however. It is the unofficial nickname of Area 51, and the uncopyrighted name John Waters awarded the renegade film-collective that produced his early "celluloid atrocities." It is the name of a call-in radio show for the paranoid set, and the title of a poem by Edgar Allan Poe. No one owns the deed to Dreamland; not Freud, not Freddy Krueger, not even Jeff Burton—he's just the latest leaseholder. The photog-

rapher's dreamland is located in Los Angeles (the smoking ruins of 20th-century culture, which visitors pay to tour daily), but its longitude and latitude are not so easily mapped. Burton's lush, new Dreamland (powerHouse Books) is a state of mind located in a state of confusion.

A boyish, self-effacing man with the irresistible charm of a slightly naughty altar boy, Burton was reared in Fort Worth, Texas, and studied art at Texas Christian University before exchanging the Heartland for Dreamland. Arriving in Los Angeles in the late '80s, Burton wasted some time at trendy CalArts, but only enough to locate the center of activity in the West Coast art scene and secure his master's degree. Having located the center, the photographer then did what has become the leitmotif of his sly, slippery career—he headed for the perimeter.



Untitled 71

Burton landed squarely in Hollywood's left-of-center epicenter of film fantasy—the San Fernando Valley—where he found work as a still photographer on adult film sets, or as Neely O'Hara called them, "nudies." Any other photographer might have ended his journey there, but Burton's was just beginning.

Despite its pagan reputation, or perhaps because of it, Tinseltown has a very Catholic attitude about sex. Sex in the movies is art, sex movies are smut, and ne'er the twain shall meet. By his photographic sleight of hand, Burton manages to bend the physics of show business to connect two disparate genres in a sort of artistic wormhole. Burton's porn-set pictures take slyness to new heights of precision: There's rarely anything visible that wouldn't pass muster in *Ladies Home Journal*. It's a style-as-metaphor that he perfected in 1999's *Jeff Burton Untitled*, and brings to full

bloom in his latest. The photographer has an affinity for mirrors like Douglas Sirk, and *Dreamland* has more carpeting than Carperteria. The HOLLYWOOD sign is as ubiquitous as the palm trees: Burton has taken John Rechy's *City of Night* and dragged it into the sunlight. The guilt has been replaced with track lighting, the bar is fully stocked, and everyone has brought protection.

No one holds the deed to *Dreamland*. It is an equal access amusement park. The only coin of entry is imagination, and the park never closes. That's the secret of *Dreamland*—it's not what you look for there, it's how you look for it.

And you can't bring back anything but postcards.

Dreamland: Photographs by Jeff Burton, with essay by Dave Hickey, is published by powerHouse Books (www.powerHouse.com).



Untitled 130





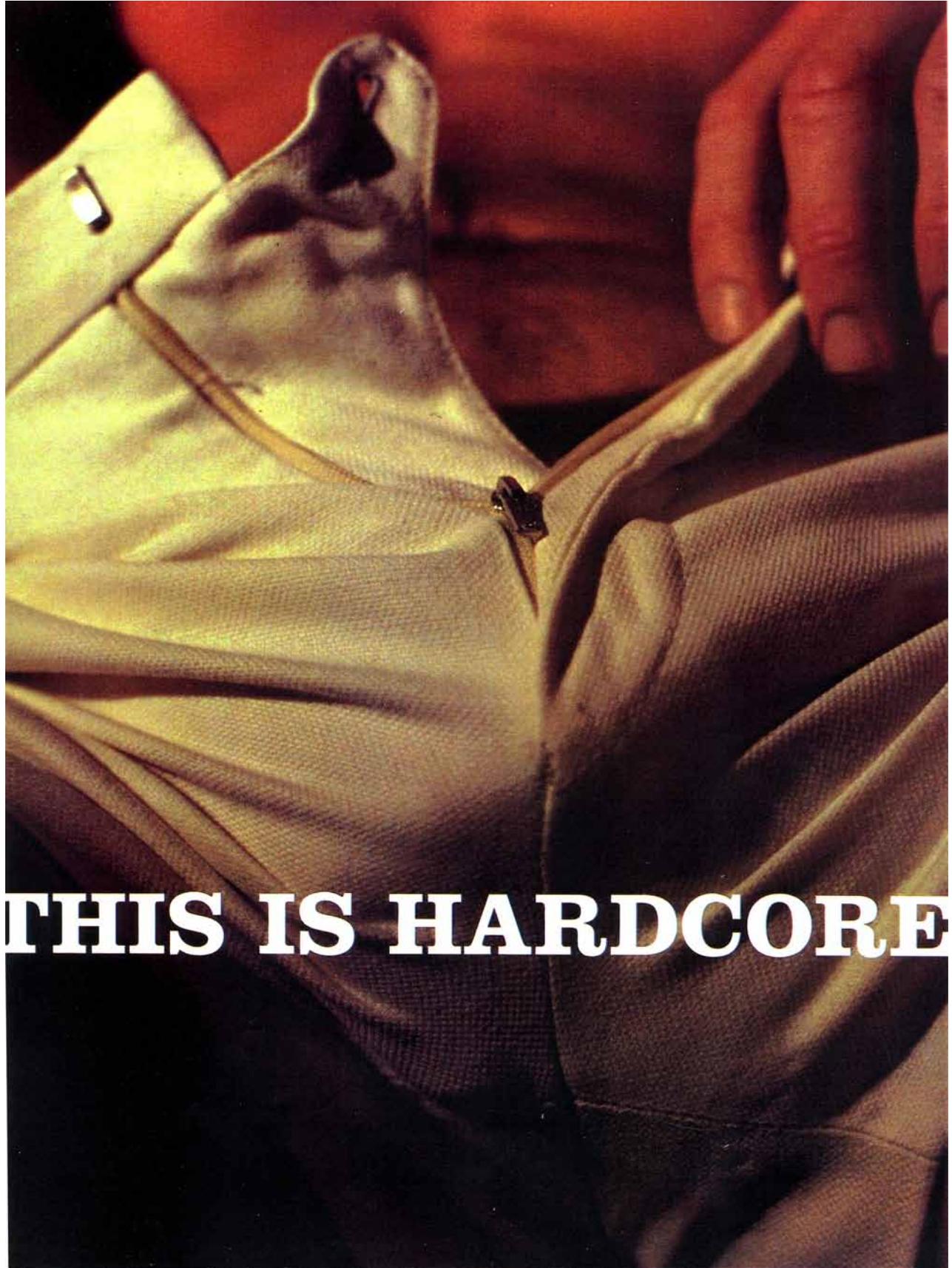
Untitled 133



Untitled 121

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Campion, Chris, "L.A. Porn Photographer Jeff Burton", *Dazed and Confused*, May 2001, p. 77 – 83



THIS IS HARDCORE

L.A. PORN PHOTOGRAPHER JEFF BURTON

• • • CHRIS CAMPION

IN JEFF BURTON'S STILL LIVES OF LA PORN SETS, SOLITARY CARS IN PARKING LOTS TAKE CENTRE STAGE, WHILE BARE BUTTOCKS, OILED BODIES AND COLLAGEN-PUMPED HARD-ONS FADE INTO THE BACKGROUND. THE MESSAGE? THE SEXUALISATION OF ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING - BAR SEX.

Jeff Burton's *Dreamland* depicts a world of wonder where pornographic couplings take place within the polite interiors of Hollywood homes. A ballet of sexual dependency enacted among chintz furnishings. These fragmented impressions also document an unseen story; that of a shy, Texan-born, fine arts graduate who became a stills photographer within the brash and decadent Southern Californian world of hardcore pornography and who retained a degree of innocence in an environment whose sole purpose is to annihilate it.

Existing within a world fraught with symbolic danger, Burton's *Dreamland* has parallels with Lewis Carroll's *Wonderland*. But while Carroll's dream odyssey narrates a child's fall from innocence, Burton's journey has resulted in its renewal. He confesses to being a private consumer of porn before his entry into the industry 11 years ago. "Although I enjoyed watching it," he says, "I was a bit afraid of it, or the idea of how it was created." Driven by a mixture of prurient interest, paralysing fear and a more pressing need to pay the rent, Burton answered a magazine ad looking for people to work on adult film sets. His anxiety at what kind of monsters the industry concealed was such that, on going to the job interview, he instructed his roommate to alert the authorities if he subsequently disappeared.

Gaining employment as a stills photographer, he was required to tip-toe through a panorama of porno set-ups, snapping shots that could be used as production stills. To alleviate the boredom of repetitively focusing on the customary anatomical penetration shots and cum-drenched players, he began to derive his own pleasure from witnessing what was occurring on set outside of the movie camera's gaze. "I started to get interested in disrupting the narrative," he says. "I felt that was the way of making a naughty picture, as opposed to what you would assume I would be doing."

In his essay "The Art Of Fetishism" (from *Fetishism As Cultural Discourse*, Cornell University Press, 1993), Hal Foster's field of enquiry takes in works that exist "between the mundane realm of commodities and the hermetic realm of autonomous art, as in the readymade; between the sexual register of part objects and the social field of objets trouvés, as in the surrealist object".

Burton considers his photographs documents of readymades, turning the camera away, as he does, from the primary purpose of the action towards the fixtures and fittings. From day to day, he doesn't know where he will be asked to show up for work and who or what he will find there. Despite the porno industry's much-vaunted multi-billion dollar gross, productions are invariably low-budget and shoots often take place within the homes of LA's nouveau riche, who rent out their living space cheaply for the privilege of participating as a voyeur to the proceedings.

Despite his long-term involvement in the industry, Burton intimates that, in some form, his anxiety still prevails, flourishing among the sexually-charged chaos on set... "There are times when the action is about to start

and I get a kind of stage fright," he admits. "Even though I'm not going on stage, I get kind of scared because you don't know what's going to happen"

But although he maintains that he is driven by boredom and frustration, it's possible that Burton's "complicity" in the group production of the commodified sex object is associated with feelings of guilt that can only be assuaged by the compulsive fulfilment of his private pleasure; a pleasure that masks the source of his anxiety in a split-second decision to re-frame and re-focus. "Even though it may look as if the centre's empty," he says of his art, "it's more about inferring a chaos on the edge and implying what's going on outside the frame." But captured within the frame is his dream reality.

Foster describes how 17th century Dutch still lifes fetishised commodities brought from exotic locales and traded domestically. The visual intensity of this baroque art elevated the mundane to a heightened reality where objects became "at once phantasmagoric and palpable". Burton maintains that much of the pleasure he obtains from the images is in "composition, levels of focus, dispersion of colour, forms"; in other words, the craftsman-like concerns of the painter's eye.

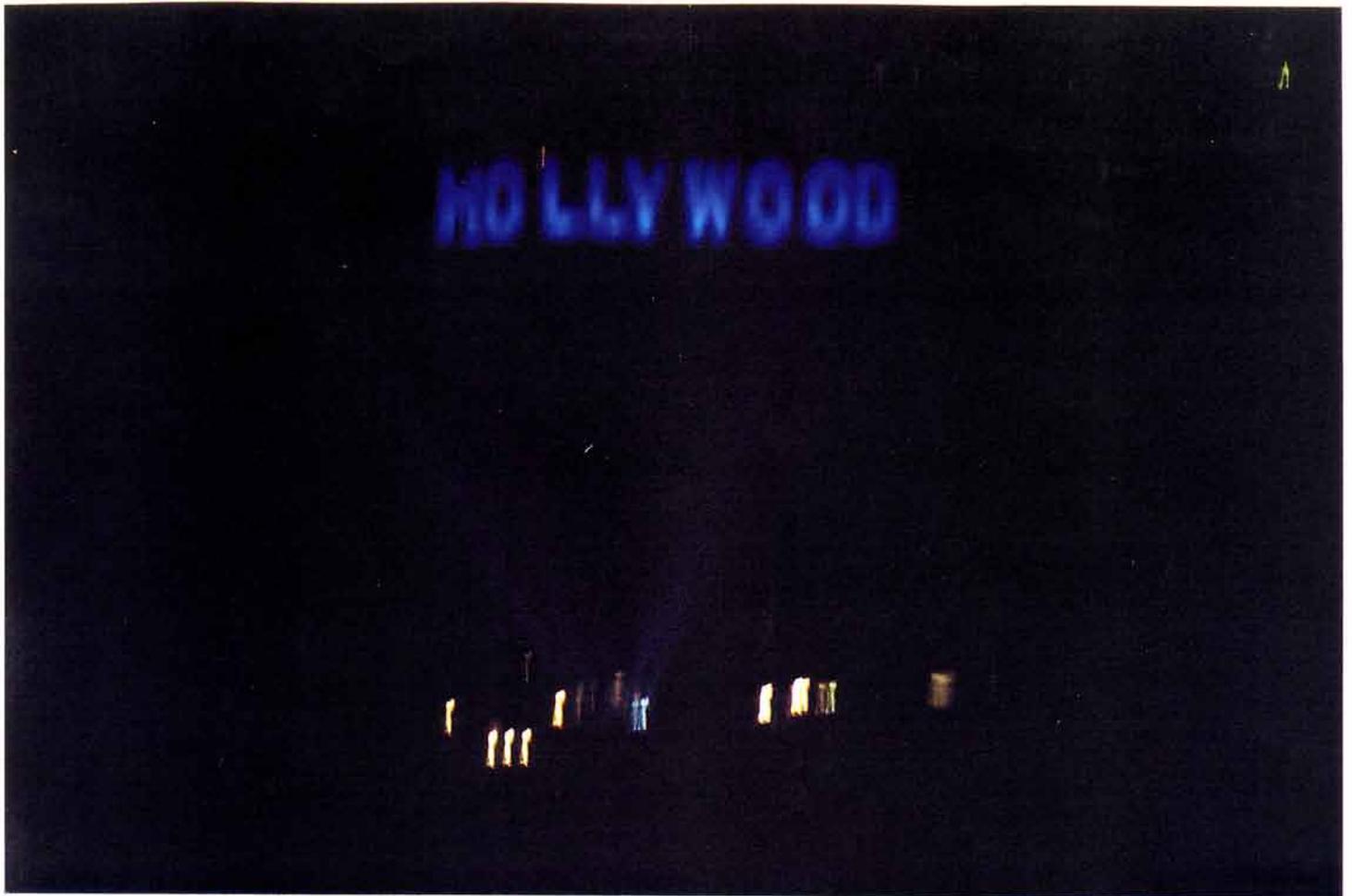
Frequently shot at knee-height, the images evince a child-like view of an adult playground illuminated by the glare of movie lights, cast in saturated colours and deliberately-exaggerated depth-of-field. Desexualised bodies are consistently framed in abstract permutations and configurations, cut-off so that their whole being is denied, and oft-times relegated to the margins of the frame. Tanned and oiled nudes appear like resin statues caught in flagrante delicto. The sex act is frozen in still motion, reflected in textures that catch the photographer's eye. It is the environment that becomes charged with displaced sexual energy.

Burton's spirit photography relies on the spectator's complicity to decode its meaning, playing a game based on delicate visual innuendo. Nymph-like plaster statues become coy spectators to the sexual shenanigans. Trees shoot up erect into vast expanses of blue sky. A cat poses suggestively amongst bordello red silk and fur.

"I love it when we shoot somewhere and there's an animal in the apartment," Burton says. "I almost always get a couple of portraits of the pet. And they're so cute in that atmosphere because they're completely comfortable with it. Any evils you have in the back of your mind are wiped away when you have that sort of a creature on the set."

And there's a sense that Burton is so in thrall to his romantic view of the world that it's hard to leave. "If I move away from it. I'll miss it in a certain way and always want to get back," he maintains, committed to keeping his land of dreams alive.

Dreamland is published by powerHouse Books. www.powerhousebooks.com Images courtesy of Casey Kaplan 10-6, New York



EVEN THROUGH IT MAY LOOK AS IF THE CENTRE'S EMPTY, IT'S MORE ABOUT







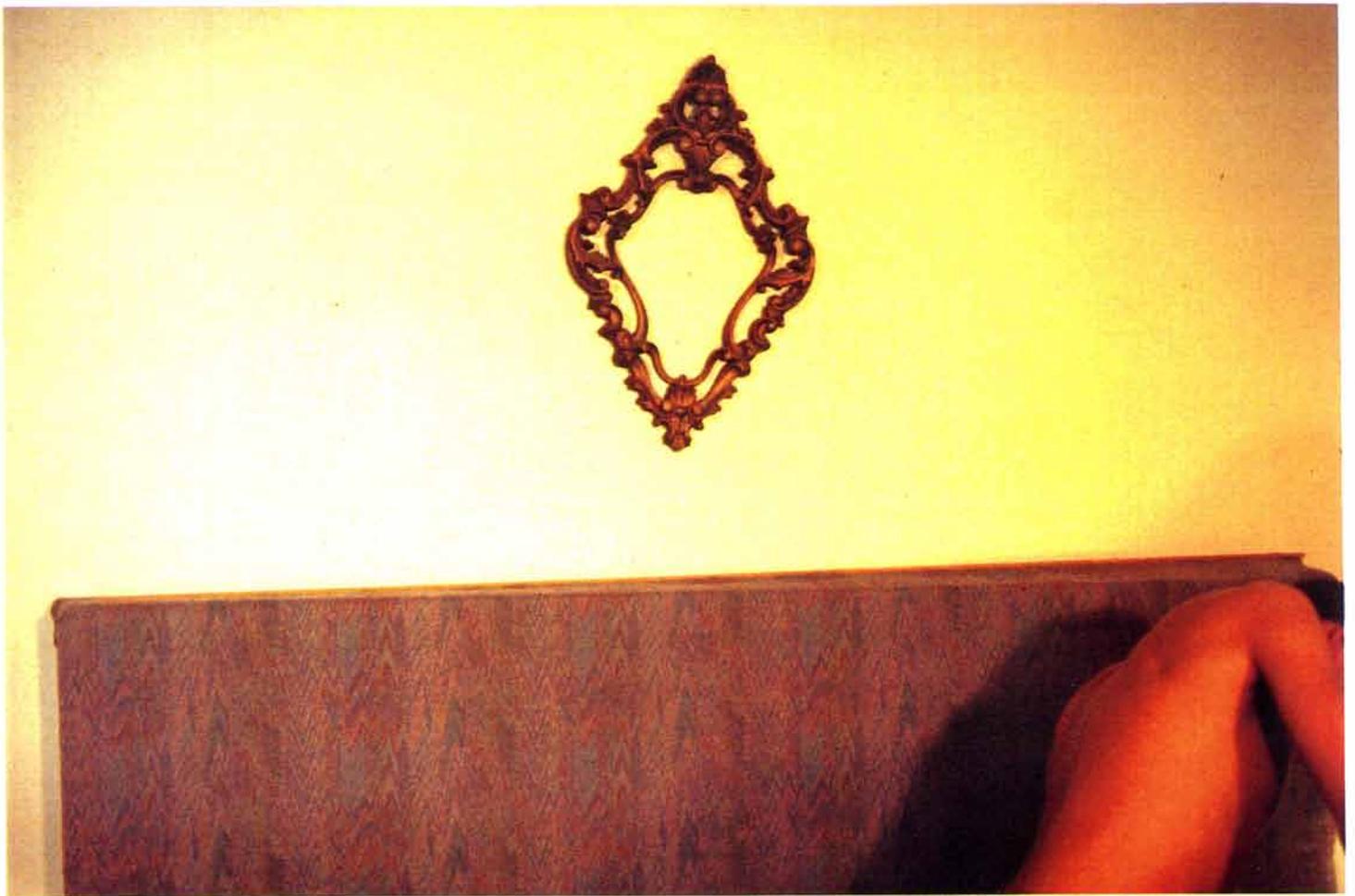
EXISTING WITHIN A WORLD FRAUGHT WITH SYMBOLIC DANGER





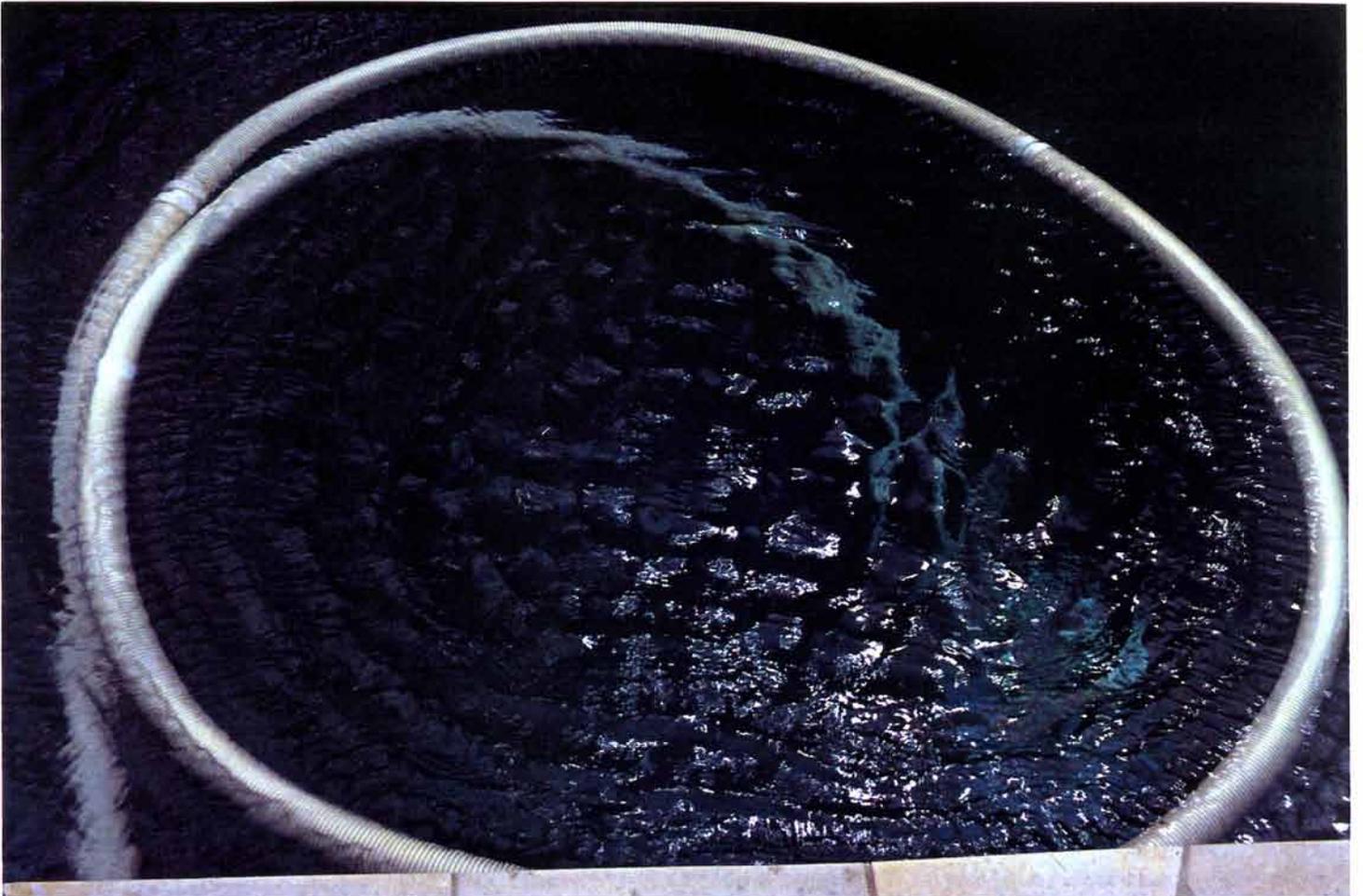
"I ALMOST ALWAYS GET PORTRAITS OF THE PET... BECAUSE THEY'RE COMPLETELY





HILTON'S DREAMLAND HAS PARALLELS WITH LEWIS CARROLL'S WONDERLAND





COMFORTABLE. ANY EVILS YOU HAVE IN THE BACK OF YOUR MIND, ARE WIPED AWAY.

