

VANITY FAIR

NOVEMBER 2019

On Art



The *Portraiture* Issue

Exclusive!
Kehinde WILEY
Photograph by
CHRISTOPHER STURMAN

Plus!
ANDY WARHOL
The Sargent of the jet set
by Natasha Fraser-Cavassoni

FREUD AND BACON
by Martin Gayford

Featuring
GILBERT & GEORGE, JONAS BURGERT, DEREK FORDJOUR, SUSIE BOYT,
Sir PETER BLAKE, HANS ULRICH OBRIST, YUKIMASA IDA & WALDEMAR JANUSZCZAK

IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHRISTIE'S

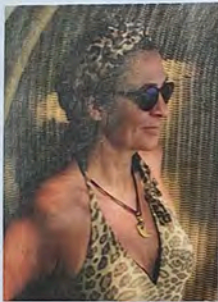
Contributors



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①
Natasha
FRASER-
CAVASSONI

"The King of Pop",
p. 51

Natasha Fraser-Cavassoni is a Paris-based expert on luxury and lifestyle. Her books include *Sam Spiegel: the Biography of a Hollywood Legend* (2003), *Tino Zervudachi: A Portfolio* (2012), *Monsieur Dior: Once Upon a Time* (2014), *Vogue on Yves Saint Laurent* (2015) and the memoir *After Andy: Adventures in Warhol Land* (2017).

②
Martin
GAYFORD

"Mates Portraits",
p. 74

The art critic of *The Spectator* is also the author of books on Michelangelo, Constable, Van Gogh, David Hockney and Lucian Freud among others. In 2016 Martin published *A History of Pictures*, co-written with David Hockney. He was painted by Freud. His latest book, *The Pursuit of Art*, is published this autumn by Thames & Hudson.

③
Catherine
FAIRWEATHER

"The Unflinching Eye",
p. 60

A much-travelled former editor for *Hearst* and *Porter*, now a journalist/writer/travel and culture consultant, Catherine juggles her curated "Fairweather's Friends" journeys abroad with London forays and life in a Somerset longhouse which she shares with her husband, the photographer Sir Don McCullin, and teenage son Max.

④
Maryam
EISLER

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"Gilbert & George", p. 48

The London-based author and photographer co-chairs the Middle East acquisitions committee at the Tate, is a trustee of the Whitechapel Gallery, and sits on the advisory board of Photo London. Maryam's photography is represented by Tristan Hoare in London and Harper's Books in New York. She has authored a number of books, including *Voices East London*.

⑤
Susie
BOYT

"Susie Boyt by Lucian Freud", p. 94

Susie Boyt is the author of six acclaimed novels including *Love & Fame*, as well as the classic memoir of love, loss and hero-worship, *My Judy Garland Life*, which was Book of the Week on Radio 4, shortlisted for the PEN Ackerley Prize and staged at the Nottingham Playhouse. Susie is on the board of directors at Hampstead Theatre in London and also works part-time as a bereavement counsellor.

FRASER-CAVASSONI: GOSSELINK; GAYFORD: MARYAM EISLER; FAIRWEATHER: GOSSELINK; EISLER: GOSSELINK; BOYT: COLLEEN

Ai Weiwei Roots

neugerriemschneider, Berlin
7 September – 19 October

Lisson Gallery, London
2 October – 2 November



Pandemonia

Plastic fantastic, maybe, but behind the seven-foot, ageless, post-Pop art latex characterisation lies a creative genius

Photograph and words by MARYAM EISLER

Why post-Pop? Because Pop alone is just “pastiche and sham” as Pandemonia is sure to declare. Her art uses the Pop art genre but is digital in its inception. As a concept, the work “interacts with culture” and is able to jump mediums and styles. The identity behind the mask also purposefully remains a secret: “A nom de plume gives me vital space to observe the world. In our digital age, we still need mysteries. Not everything should be available on Wikipedia!”

The artist began Pandemonia during the burgeoning signs of social media. In a world of 24/7, the old art world paradigm no longer stands. “Art needs to flow across space and place; it’s about creating a new vision, one which is no longer locked up in the confines of the gallery walls,” she says. A misunderstood artist? Perhaps. Pandemonia’s oeuvre can pose as one thing but be another, “a modern-day Trojan Horse of some sort,” as she puts it. The work has a good dose of situationalism in its genes. “Some people take what I do at face value, and others may think about it. But that is the very idea of art, is it not? It lies in the eye of the beholder.”

Why the name? A direct descendant of *pandemonium*, a cross between confusion and destruction, culminating in creative combustion. “When I first started, I was going out and looking for cracks in the pavement of society; I went ploughing through them. Things shift around us all the time, and it is important to see how people react to these shifts. That is the true function of art.”

An artist on the cusp of advertising, art and people, Panda believes that the line between the commercial and the private worlds are now blurred. She’s also a firm advocate of the artist’s own hand at work. “There is something promethean about making art. One is bringing something out of nothing. Furthermore, the act of creation affects and informs one’s ideas; those come through in original work. Part of art’s charm is that it is made by artists. It’s the human touch reaching out to us across the centuries. It is always the painting that was actually painted by Rembrandt or by da Vinci that is the most sought-after, is it not?”

Her new adventures in painting are led by the utopian idea of absolute freedom: “Painting,” she says, “offers freedom from the physical world. Passing through the picture plane, Pandemonia is unshackled from the here and the now, cast adrift to explore new realms of ideas.” Pandemonia is now a powerful brand, an opinion maker, an influencer in the form of a three-dimensional drawing, a “myth” as she likes to refer to herself, which she has fully inhabited, operated and experienced from all sides. To her, Panda represents “the Other, the unattainable”. What is for certain is that the character reflects our times, one who has the ability “to write her own story across the media”, from the real to the virtual, and vice versa. ■



LIVING DOLL
Pandemonia photographed on July 21, 2019 in London among her movable sculptures and in front of her latest painting *Lost in Toothpaste*

Gilbert & George

The dynamic duo of the British contemporary art world continue to create a pilgrim's journey through life

Photograph and words by MARYAM EISLER

In showcasing their new *Paradisical* series this winter at Sprueth Magers (November 15 to January 25), the artists have chosen a most unlikely, yet appropriate location: Los Angeles, aka the City of Angels, sacred home to “fake religions”, according to Gilbert and George. Humans wish to reach paradise, in one guise or another. “When they go to a nightclub, they want paradise. When they go on holiday, they want paradise. When they go out to eat, they want heavenly food and divine cocktails,” says George. While Gilbert continues: “They’re all searching for paradise, not in the afterlife, but right here on earth. The human god is *right* here.” The other God, the artists proclaim, is “done and dusted with!”

Enlightenment can only be reached when we liberate ourselves from these “horrible religions”. Which is why the duo’s hero is Darwin, with Alan Turing a close second—because the latter “invented a modern world which allows us to liberate ourselves from our brains”. For Gilbert and George, paradise lies on the doorstep of their home and studio in London’s East End. Since the 1960s, the artists have witnessed vast transformations to do with a plethora of faiths, divergent ethnic backgrounds, super-fast economic development, discordant politics and a multi-coloured cultural flux. The East End has been home to exiled communities from the French Huguenots in the 17th century, the Eastern European Jews in the 18th and 19th centuries and the Irish silk weavers in the early 20th century to the Bangladeshi Muslim community of today—a multicultural reality which has led to a unique spirit of enterprise.

“If we think cosmologically, we’re within a tiny walking distance of the tomb of William Blake who invented Humanism. In the same cemetery, you have John Bunyan’s gravestone—the man who wrote *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, the most famous yet least read book on that subject. Across the street, there are the Wesley Brothers who invented Methodism. And then you think of Brick Lane, with a German church and a Russian vapour bath—where they also had the Chinese opium dens frequented by Oscar Wilde.”

The iconoclastic artists feel that their art is a pilgrim’s journey through life in its entirety—confronting real, multicultural, multidimensional lives every time they open their front door. Seeing, smelling, hearing and experiencing life, glitz and grits outside the confines of their home and studio walls. It’s all happening around them. And in the act of creating, they have managed to create a modern language that is entirely their own: one that speaks about the mass of humanity, to a spectrum of fellow Londoners and beyond, in the most accessible way possible. ■



LOVE ALWAYS AND ALL WAYS
 Gilbert & George photographed on July 31, 2019, in their East End studio in front of a detail of “Lion Teeth” from the *Paradisical* series. The artists are sitting on their favourite green male/female chairs, bought in the 1960s and for a long time their only furniture. A uranium-glazed vase by Candy Art Pottery sits on the table to the left; a charger and cider mug by Lauriana Art Pottery are displayed on the right.