

V MAGAZINE

KATE
GISELE
NAOMI
EVA
CLAUDIA
DARIA
AND ALL
THE GIRLS
WE LOVE
IN THE...

SUMMER SWIMSUIT ISSUE

59

SUMMER 2009



Kate
♡

BY MARIO
TESTINO

KATE MOSS WEARS
MASON MARTIN MARGIELA COAT
DAVID YURMAN EARRINGS

WHERE WE WERE

ARTIST MATTHEW BRANNON NEVER MET A CULTURAL CONCEIT HE COULDN'T SKEWER. IN A FARCICAL "REVIEW" OF NEXT MONTH'S ART BASEL EVENTS, HE LAMPOONS THE BIG CHARACTERS AND INSECURITIES OF THE GLOBAL ART SET

On the plane over, I chew orange Nicorette and Xanax and reread the first half of *A Handful of Dust*. When I check into the Swiss hotel, I bribe the concierge to let me see the onscreen guest list. There are a few new names, but it's the absentees that are the most interesting. Who *didn't* show. If only they had realized that by staying home they would be drawing more attention to themselves than if they had come.

I make sure my room is beside Los Angeles dealer ... and below New York consultant ... That way I can find out if the rumors are really true. The first is confirmed. (Incredible that a grown man struggles with bulimia.) But it's ...'s sad morning Pilates routine that requires I change my room. In the end, I'm in a corner room just past another artist way too excited for his own good. He makes me feel as old as I am, and I do everything I can to avoid him in the hall.

The first night's requisite dinner is at Chez Donati, among curators, museum directors, artists, writers, and a very intoxicated Slavoj Žižek. Beside the sunset-tinged water, I find myself truly enjoying the evening. We discuss which galleries will close, what we're wearing, Daniel Birnbaum's hair, Barack Obama, Mickey Rourke, how many calories are in each dish, how painful cold sores are, and whether or not it's true that if you receive oral sex from someone who has one you can get genital herpes. We try to delineate what was planned before the crash and what is intentional.

Opening night at the fair, I'm impressed by the turnout. You could say that those who have decided to come have gotten over themselves. No one is suffering from the shock that traumatized Frieze or the resentment that consumed the Armory. Like soldiers meeting at base camp, anxious dealers kiss cheeks and shake hands, prepared to fight for survival in an unregulated industry. I stay on the outskirts, not wanting to disrupt business. I slurp complimentary Moët and make mental lists.

The award for most-knocked-off artist goes to Wade Guyton. A few of them really good too. The artist-from-whom-there's-just-too-much-and-no-one-wants-any-of-it goes to ... The artist-who-*isn't*-very-good-but-somehow-I-really-like-tonight goes to ... The artist-who-I-followed-but-now-totally-question goes to ... The best-dressed dealer is undoubtedly ... The worst, without question, is ... The booth-that-looks-the-most-expensive (...) also wins for least-interesting. The most-timid ... The most-obvious ... The most-stuff ... The sure-to-not-get-in-next-year goes to ... The can't-believe-they're-here-this-year ... The people I have to avoid start to exceed those I have to see, so I go home early, proud I haven't said anything I'll regret.

Next day, I run into an old friend from UCLA. We joke about how they named the sections "Unlimited," "Statements," "Premiere," and "Conversations." Please. We avoid discussing how embarrassing it is to be an artist at an art fair. We make plans we won't keep and part. I run into someone else I'm glad to run into, and I'm just on the verge of getting that much-desired Kunstverein show when ..., who is at the top of everyone's most-annoying-artist list, cock-blocks me. He loudly lists all the places he's come across everyone—none of any note. I begin to fear I'm

just as transparent. There's a new app for your iPhone that lets you fake an incoming call. I put it to use and excuse myself. Across the room I take my place on the panel discussion concerning "difficult art." In between answering questions, Andy Stillpass and I slip notes back and forth. I catch myself quoting Lacan and cringe at how obnoxious and insecure it sounds.

The next night, running on fumes, we resign ourselves to drinking at the Kunsthalle. Tom Burr and I pretend we've never met and let a collector explain each other's work to one another. We're surrounded by the few surviving consultants. Without fail they ask you what you saw that you liked. I list the work of five friends, a dead artist everyone likes, and one whose artwork you wouldn't think I would like, just to make it all sound earnest. Sarah Morris rolls her eyes at me. We all stay too long. And then, well, you know what happened.

Just for the record, I love art critics. I've been known to let a few buy me drinks. For most of them, being a critic is really just a part-time job. Most are actually teachers, historians, novelists, curators, or veterinarians—their criticism is only a second income. But it's this role as "critic" that defines them. Dooms them, so to speak. They masochistically and publicly say what we mutter. It's a job with many pitfalls. Most of them burn out after a few years, finding themselves backed into a corner defending words written in an hour's time, years before. All this is to say that we should really get over what happened to ... that night. It was really awful,

and there's nothing funny about it. Especially considering someone lost an eye. We should all feel guilty.

I can't pretend that I don't remember how I ended up where I woke up. Age difference is more distressing in the morning light, and I leave determined to spend my last two days in my hotel room. I finish *A Handful of Dust* and try to read *The Road*, but decide to leave it in the room after twenty pages. I call New York to check my answering machine for the first time in four days. Seems a parrot flew into an open window and none of the neighbors will claim it. It's living off Kashi cereal and shitting all over my new rug. Seems my doctor has decided not to renew my Ambien prescription. Seems I was supposed to be talking at NYU, but failed to turn up, so the class has been cancelled. My new "Hollywood" agent called and wants me to change the art dealer character because he's just too recognizable. The police call to say I have two active driver's licenses. My machine tells me it's full, and I press the pound key to erase all messages.

The thing that that people who say "I told you so" always fail to understand is that no one likes them. **Matthew Brannon**

Where We Were, 2009
 Artwork Matthew Brannon
 Courtesy Friedrich Petzel Gallery, NYC

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