

Thursday, September 27, 2007

### **dirty pretty things**

Marilyn Minter depicts beauty's underbelly. For the past 30 years, her photo-realist paintings of dirty feet in diamond-studded stilettos, eyelashes clumped with glittery mascara, and teeth chomping down on a glittering tennis bracelet have been among the art world's most direct and dynamic engagements with fashion. On Friday, she'll be at the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York to discuss her work (and celebrate the launch of a new monograph of her art) with Karen Marta, the U.S. founding editor of *Parkett*. But first she talked to us about fashion, art, and Tom Ford.



### **What is your fascination with flawed beauty?**

I wonder if "flawed beauty" is an entirely accurate description, since entropy is the state of the universe. Disorder rules, nails chip, hems come undone, humans sweat. Maybe perfection is the flaw, since it doesn't exist except for maybe a few seconds or the click of a shutter. Fashion photography has gotten so retouched, so contrived that maybe the eye longs for some humanity.

### **So are you criticizing or satirizing fashion photography?**

Neither. Who am I to moralize or criticize? Fashion photography is too difficult for me. I am amazed that fashion photographers come up with new ideas every month on how to shoot clothes on the human figure in a fresh way. It's way too daunting. My interest is in so-called "beauty" and accessories. I've only done two fashion campaigns, and that's for Tom Ford menswear and Optical/Sun. He let me do whatever I want, and all my shots are close-ups. He's probably the only designer that would hire me.

### **How do you think what you do works with Ford's vision and aesthetic?**

Tom and his boyfriend, Richard Buckley, are art collectors and aficionados. They actually knew my work from the art world. In the very few editorial jobs that I've done in the past, the pictures that were chosen were always the most conservative, whereas Tom and I liked the same images for his campaign.

**We heard you went to some of the fashion shows in New York recently. What did you see that you liked?**

I know very little about fashion. Fashion is so consuming and my paintings take way too long for me to do to devote the time to understand its intricacies. I've only seen two shows in my life. Both were Cynthia Rowley and that's because she and her husband, Bill Powers, are my friends.

**What is your beauty or glamour ideal?**

I don't have an ideal. That has never even entered my mind.

**As more artists and designers start collaborating and finding inspiration in each other's work, do you think art and fashion should stay separate or do you believe they're essentially related?**

Roberta Smith, the art critic, once said that "Art is simply a form of light used to illuminate life." I think the most interesting artists make work that illuminate the times we live in.

Ana Finel Honigman