



STYLE JUNE 2009 ISSUE

Character Studies

In his three decades taking pictures for *Vanity Fair*, Jonathan Becker has photographed some of the most distinctive characters from the worlds of film, art, literature, politics, and high society. From a preening gossip queen to a pantless designer, to a placid First Lady, here are some of his most memorable photographs.

PHOTOGRAPHER JONATHAN BECKER

JUNE 25, 2009



For a July 2002 profile of restaurateur Elaine Kaufman, the den mother to Manhattan's literary set, Becker photographed her with some of the famous regulars at her Upper East Side saloon. "I see her as the loving oracle of New York," Becker says. "She's one of my favorite people on the planet."



The Charms of Louis Malle

BY MELVIN MOVIEGOER

There is a great quantity of a thing, making love and other things, drinking, smoking, cheating, fighting, dancing, and fiddling: there are bullies pushing about, but the women, knowing picking pockets, gentlemen on the look-out, and while looking up at the troubled dancers and poor old ragged rascals, the light-fingered folk are opening upon their pockets behind. Yes, this is *Vanity Fair*.

Some people consider him immoral altogether, and achieve such, with their accounts and families very likely they are right. But persons who think otherwise, and are of a lady, or a benevolent, or a sincere mood, may perhaps like to step in for half an hour, and look at the performances. There are scenes of all some some dreadful combats, some grand and lofty horse-riding, some scenes of high life, and some of very middling indeed, some love-making for the sentimental, and some light comic business, the whole accompanied by appropriate scenery and brilliantly illuminated with the Author's own candles.

Louis Malle, the director of *Atlantic City* and *My Dinner with Andre*, in *Cahiers, France*, photograph by Jonathan Becker
High: Most successful in *Atlantic City*



drinking, making love and other things, laughing and the contrary, smoking, cheating, fighting, dancing, and fiddling: there are bullies pushing about, but the women, knowing picking pockets, gentlemen on the look-out, and while looking up at the troubled dancers and poor old ragged rascals, the light-fingered folk are opening upon their pockets behind. Yes, this is

MUSIC

Some people consider him immoral altogether, and achieve such, with their accounts and families very likely they are right. But persons who think otherwise, and are of a lady, or a benevolent, or a sincere mood, may perhaps like to step in for half an hour, and look at the performances. There are scenes of all some some dreadful combats, some grand and lofty horse-riding, some scenes of high life, and some of very middling indeed, some love-making for the sentimental, and some light comic business, the whole accompanied by appropriate scenery and brilliantly illuminated with the Author's own candles.

What more has the Manager of the Performance to say? To acknowledge the kindness with which it has been received in all the principal towns of England through which the show has passed, and where it has been most favourably noticed by the respected conductors of the public Pans, and by the Nobility and Gentry. He is proud to think that his Puppets have given satisfaction to the very best company in this empire.

And with this, and a profound bow to his patrons, the Manager retires, and the curtain falls.

There is a great quantity of eating and drinking, making love and other things, laughing and the contrary, smoking, cheating, fighting, dancing, and fiddling: there are bullies pushing about, but the women, knowing picking pockets, gentlemen on the look-out, and while looking up at the troubled dancers and poor old ragged rascals, the light-fingered folk are opening upon their pockets behind. Yes, this is *Vanity Fair*.

Some people consider him immoral altogether, and achieve such, with their accounts and families very likely they are right. But persons who think otherwise, and are of a lady, or a benevolent, or a sincere mood, may perhaps like to step in for half an hour, and look at the performances. There are scenes of all some some dreadful combats, some grand and lofty horse-riding, some scenes of high life, and some of very middling indeed, some love-making for the sentimental, and some light comic business, the whole accompanied by appropriate scenery and brilliantly illuminated with the Author's

Becker made this portrait of the acclaimed French film director Louis Malle in 1975, but it was first published in **Vanity Fair's** prototype issue in 1982, a year before the magazine was relaunched. At the time he took the picture, Becker says, "I was very young and lucky, living in Paris in François Truffaut's maid's room and kicking around with quite a few people from the *auteur* scene, you could call it."



This portrait of Franco Rossellini—sitting cross-legged in his plaid-covered bedroom, with two pairs of glasses on, a cigarette holder in hand, and a teddy bear at his feet—accompanied a posthumous May 1993 profile of the film producer and helps to make clear why Becker remembers him as “a surrealistic character.”

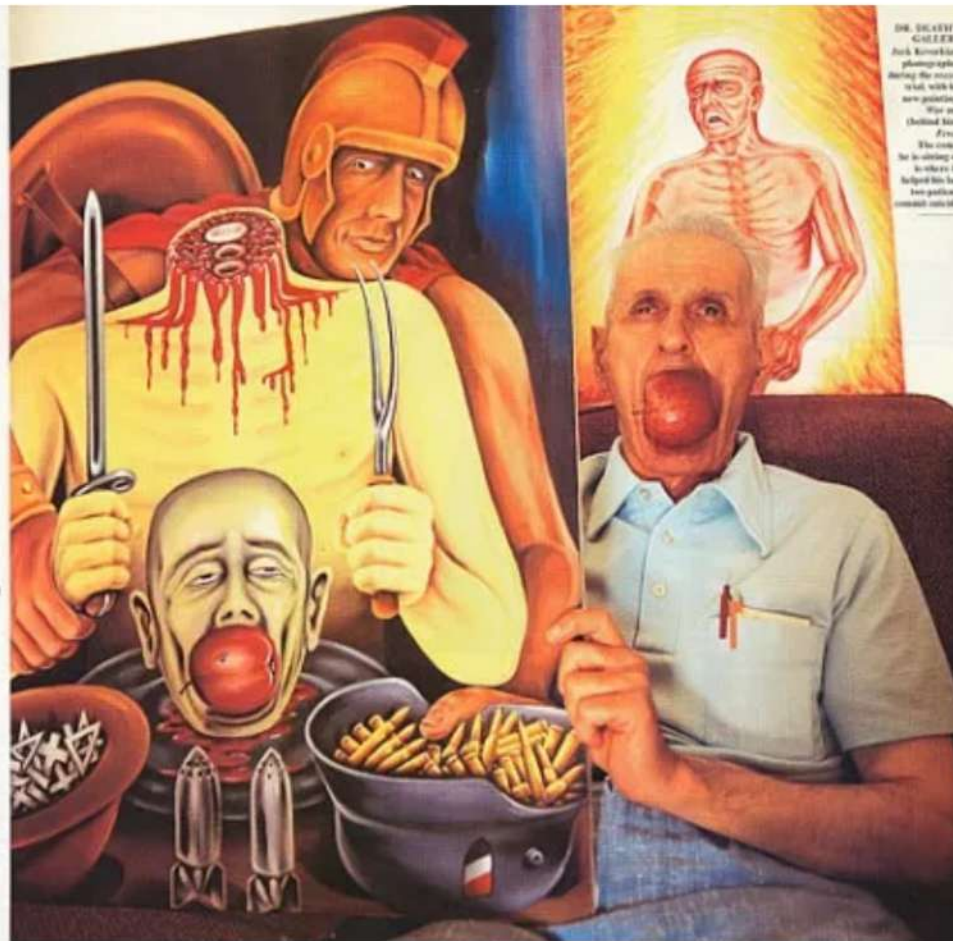
DEATH BECOMES HIM

He has been hailed as the champion of the right-to-die movement and denounced as a ghastly cheerleader for suicide. Jack Kevoorkian has helped 20 people kill themselves, and now that he has been acquitted in the assisted suicide of Patient No. 17, he says he has only just begun. JACK LESSENBERGER enters the strange world of Dr. Death

I want to be executed!" Jack Kevoorkian howls. After sitting calmly in Detroit Recorder's Court all day while his lawyer and the prosecution buggled over not having a jury, he has been ignited by a deputy who ordered him to take his hat off after he left the cavernous basement courtroom.

Now, out of public sight, in a drab little windowless room, he jabs his quipster onto his head. "I should walk up to the bench just like in the movie *Gandhi* and say, I have violated your law and if you have any respect for your system you will give me the harshest

Photographs by JONATHAN BECKER



DR. DEATH'S GALLERY
Jack Kevoorkian, photographed during the recent trial, with his new paintings: "War and (Child) Abuse" (left) and "Dr. Death" (right). The artist, who is sitting on the right, is the doctor who helped his last two patients commit suicide.

"I photographed Jack Kevoorkian on a number of occasions, always to great result," Becker says. "I began to think of him as a muse." This portrait, which appeared in the July 1994 issue of *V.F.*, was the last one Becker took of the assisted-suicide practitioner. "There was trust; he was revealing something of his nature to me in showing me his own painting this way," says the photographer.



LEFT: BECKER

Cornel West, photographed at his home in Boston on February 13, 2002. Despite the situation given to "social movements in the '90s," West, 41, "West is 'actually a very old-fashioned scholar,'" according to his colleague, Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

THE IVY LEAGUE'S ANGRY STAR

Harvard lost one of its top academic names in April, when Afro-American-studies professor Cornel West made a furious exit for Princeton. The trouble began at a private meeting last fall, during which Harvard's famously abrasive new president, Larry Summers, apparently suggested that West was shirking his teaching responsibilities and needed a tighter rein. With Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton riding the waters, the face-off hit the headlines and took on racial overtones. Talking to the scholar at the center of the controversy, as well as sources close to Summers, SAM TANENHAUS turns the race card faceup

T

he announcement on April 12 that Cornel West would resign his professorship at Harvard, where he has taught since 1993, and accept a job at Princeton obscured the most absorbing academic drama in recent memory, one that began innocently enough last October with a routine meeting in Massachusetts Hall, where the president of Harvard University has his office. Only two people were present: Harvard's Massachusetts new president, Lawrence H. Summers, and West, the fashionable star of its movement

CONTINUED BY JONATHAN BECKER

Becker photographed professor Cornel West in February 2002, just before he announced his resignation from Harvard. "He was recovering from illness," Becker notes, "and there was a certain nobility to his carriage."

concentration camp in her who tolerates her right through us.
From her first prominent role, as the cello-playing bitch in *Giorgio* (1961), to her part as the feminist German aristocrat in *The Diamond*, Charlotte Rampling had been acting out an image of herself that was skinned, confident, cruel, perverse, decadent, undogmatic, fatal. She has been in twenty-one films since *The Night Porter*, but what the French refer to as "a sulfurous odor" still clings to her, and it is for this that she is often cast to suggest the darker side of life. Her turn as so-linked to an aura of perversity and risk that when Anne Rice wrote a posthumous sub-masochistic novel, she took Rampling as her last name. Charlotte Rampling has acted out spheres and spheres and spheres and general bad girl.
She has three films about to come out. In *Was Moin Amour* she is a diplomat's wife who conducts a brief affair with a diplomat. In *Muscare* she calmly looks on while her husband, a psychopathic police chief in love with a hermaphrodite, goes over the edge. In *Il O.A.*, which will be released this month, she plays "the suspicious Mrs. Filzweiger." In *Paris by Night*, written and directed by David Han, which she recently finished filming, she is an ambitious and dangerous Trotsky politician. Charlotte Rampling is no longer merely queen, but she is, in film, the midwifed flower of the strange.

I a person the strangeness is welcomed by a rather jolly, very British, matter-of-factness. When I first knew her—slightly—during a period when we both lived in Hollywood, I was struck by her confidence. Even groping for a career stuck at a producer's branch by the sea, she seemed to know exactly which career stick to pick. She was then married to Bryan Forbes, who was also her manager, and had a small fully named library. About a month after the loss of the beach branches, I ran into her on the stairs of the Carlton Hotel at the Cannes Film Festival. She was with a ravishing dark young man. "This is Jean-Michel," she said. "Come up and have a drink in our room." All the conventional reactions crowded in on me: Where was Bryan, and what did she mean, our room? Scandal? What would people think? I had the impression that this was the coolest, most unafraid woman in the world.

She has been married now to Jean-Michel Jacot for ten years. He is the son of music critic, composer Maurice Jacot (Lawrence of Arabia), the author of symphonic music—*they're*, *Espresso*—were huge hits in the late seventies, and the latest from his work has taken in gigantic music-and-light spectacles that encompass entire cities, which he conducts like an agitated elf on a glowing podium surrounded by electronic keyboards. They live in a large house outside of Paris, with a stone wall, a cold iron gate, and German sheep-herds which if pursued, one senses, would attack. A satellite dish captures satellite television for them, and their living room is full of toys, synthesizer keyboards, and *Espresso* that is the equivalent of secondhand Hawaiian shirts. Kidney-shaped tables and sofas from Mollino Avenue in West Hollywood, patterned with quantum splatters, like the amoeba-shaped coffee table are programs for Jean-Michel's citywide happenings: the one that took over Houston in 1986, the one that reversed Lyons during the pope's visit the same year. There is also a toy sheep on a child. (Continued on page 107)

SPOTLIGHT

Citizen Nick

N

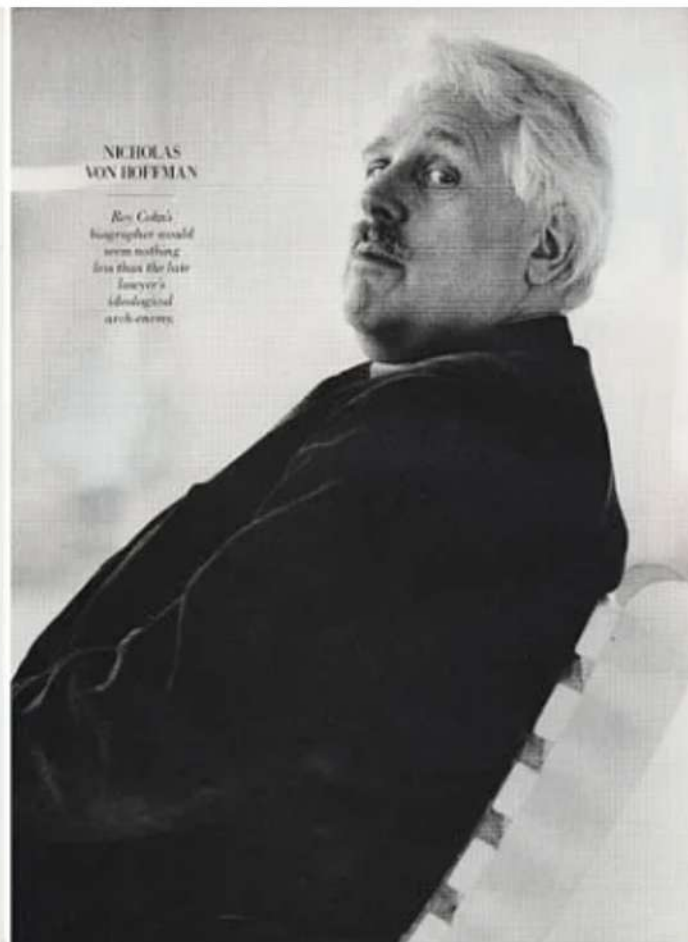
to say Ray

would have died in 1954. If he'd known that journalist Nicholas von Hoffman would write his biography, a longtime leftist who never went to college and learned his politics as a social activist on the streets of Chicago, chronicler of the civil-rights movement and other left-wing conspiracies for the *Chicago Daily News* and the *Washington Post*, author of seven political books, all of them liberal, von Hoffman would have said nothing less than the late lawyer's ideological anti-racism. Which is, of course, why the publishing world finally with such gusto the arrival this month of *Citizen Coke* (just to be confused with a Coke autobiography co-written with former New York Timesman Sidney Zion, Van Hoff, once prominent Big Surpines, but also an objective book. "Coke has rights of her own. And when you become an activist in that struggle, you have to get inside certain personal pressures." Coke, he found, played a largely passive role in establishing the laws of national security in the modern American state. "He was also a lawyer at a time when the lawyers came to power. And it happened—the law became outside the border world—when times of homogeneity were changing." For all that, and the great images of a young attorney prosecuting the Rosenberg and encouraging Senator Joe McCarthy at some hearings, von Hoffman tells Ray Coke is "one of those guys who stood up tall in times depending entirely on what happens to him between the pages of a book. If I have done a really good job, he'll now go into the name of twentieth-century figure who crink Obama, he may just disappear." For Coke, that might have meant an even greater indignity than having von Hoffman as his biographer, being obliged to thank him for it. —MICHAEL SHARPERSON

Photograph by JONATHAN BECKER

NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN

Ray Coke's biographer would seem nothing less than the late lawyer's ideological arch-enemy.



"Nick is a keenly brilliant wit of the rare, nearly extinct subspecies, the warmly human wit," Becker says fondly of the acerbic writer Nicholas von Hoffman, whom he photographed for an April 1988 Spotlight. "I still feel quite fortunate to have met him on this assignment."

MILLER'S CROSSING

Why has Arthur Miller decided to debut his new play, *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*, in London? And why is it funny? JAMES KAPLAN reports from Miller's Connecticut retreat with scenes from the playwright's life and work as Broadway re-stages his thirty-eight-year-old masterpiece, *The Crucible*

Glamour may be out of fashion these days, but a few still walk the earth. Here is Arthur Miller on the veranda of his big Connecticut farmhouse, a tall, powerful old man with long legs, silver hair, a good-size gut. His sparse white hair is combed back biblically. The deep vertical grooves in his face, furrowed for forty years, look like civic sculptures. He's talking about a cast run-through, last spring, of his new play, *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*. "They seemed to read this thing," he says in his Brooklyn gravel voice, "and we couldn't go on, it was so fucking funny. The actors began to just fall all over themselves. I tell you it was thrilling."

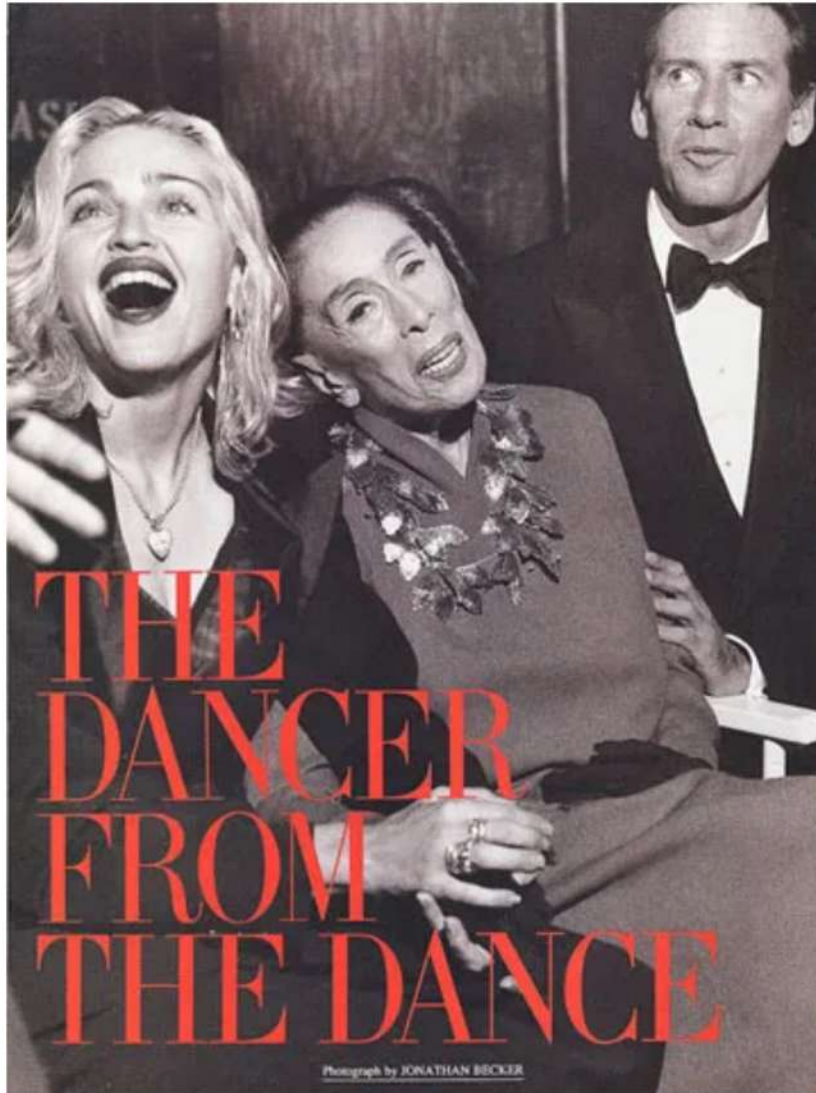
Now, "funny" and "Arthur Miller" are not words most people would automatically put together. But *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*—which tells the story of

Photograph by JONATHAN BECKER

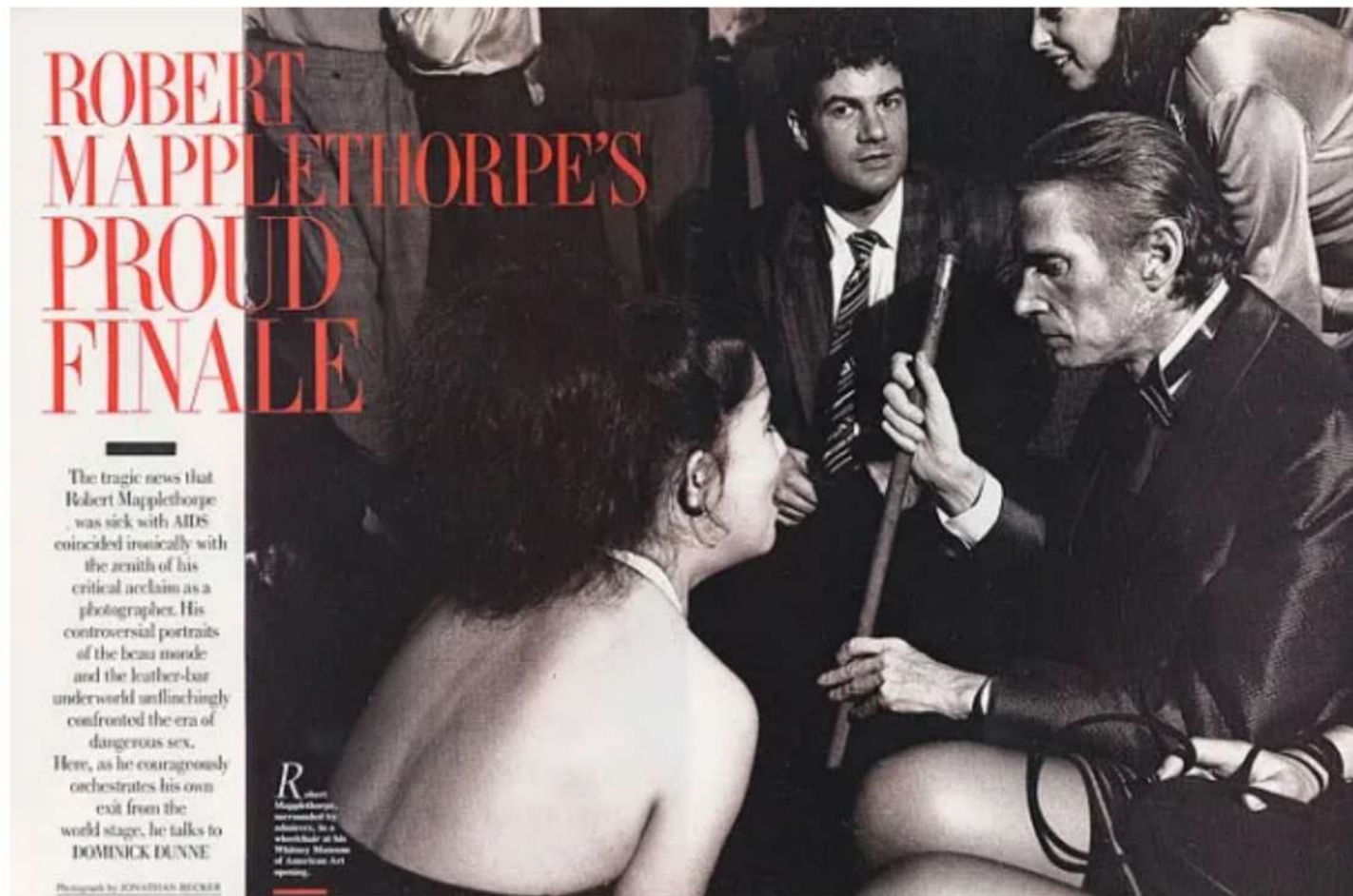


A VIEW FROM THE FARM
Miller and his wife, the photographer Inge Morath, at their 350-acre Connecticut spread.

Becker photographed the celebrated American dramatist Arthur Miller, then 76, with his wife Inge Morath (and their German shepherd), on their 350-acre farm in Roxbury, Connecticut. "It was a remarkably peaceful afternoon," Becker recalls, "characterized by the simplicity that some really great and seemingly complicated people exude." The picture appeared in the November 1991 issue of *V.F.*



After being stymied for a time by Martha Graham's handlers, Becker managed to arrange a backstage photo session with the pioneering choreographer at the last of her galas, in October 1990. She just happened to be flanked by Madonna and Calvin Klein.



Becker recorded this image of Robert Mapplethorpe at the opening of a Mapplethorpe exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1988, when the provocative art photographer—just 42 years old—was dying of aids. “Mapplethorpe himself had a terrible reaction to the picture,” Becker recalls. Mapplethorpe’s biographer Patricia Morrisroe quotes him as saying of the photograph, “It’s freakish, like Diane Arbus.”



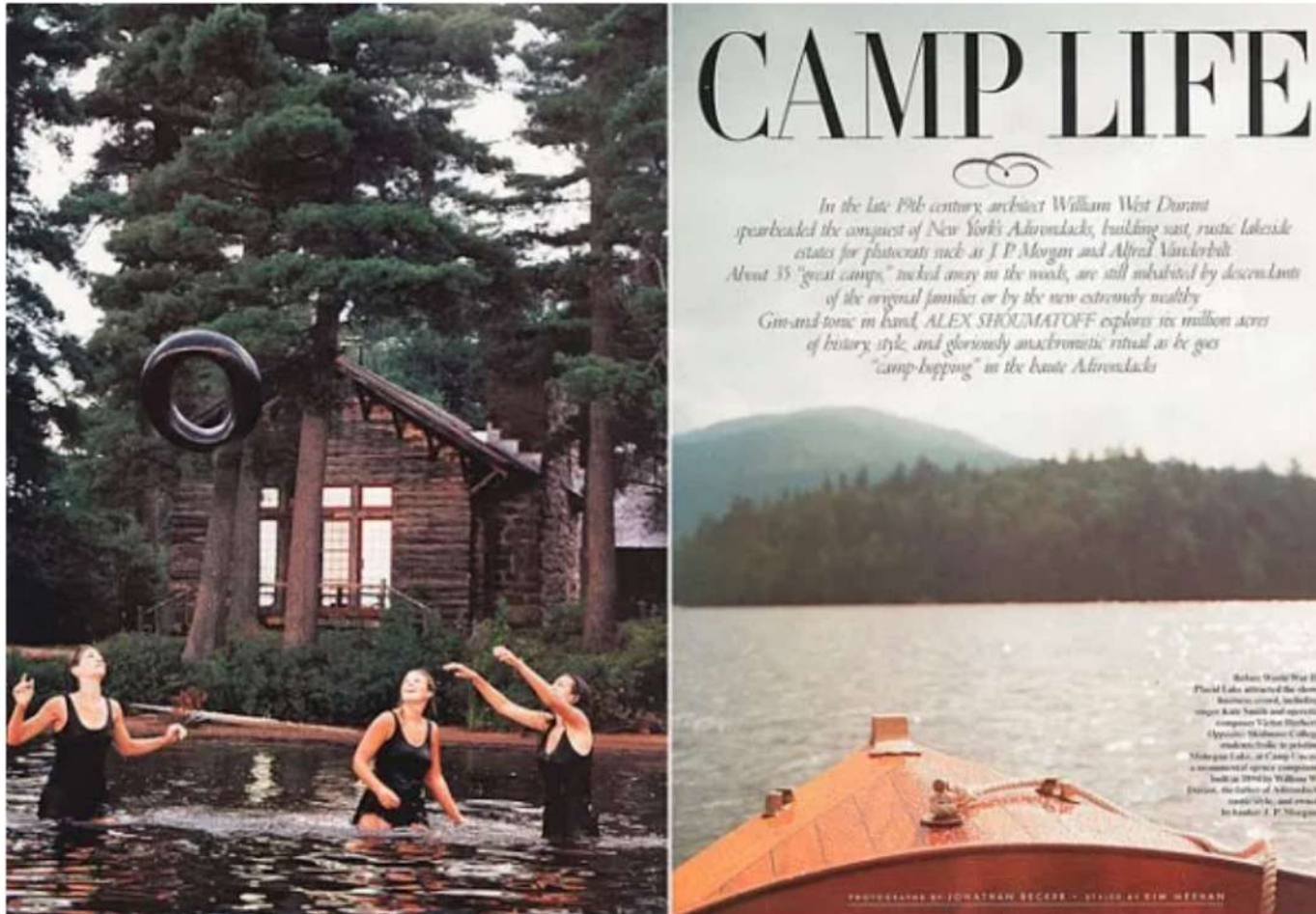
Becker was given exclusive free run of Buckingham Palace for this October 2001 story about Prince Charles, shown here at dinner, with Camilla Parker Bowles seated opposite him. "A huge, unprecedented privilege," the photographer says of his access to the British royal family.



The wedding of Silvia de Castellane to Prince and Duke Pierre d'Arenberg was a marvel of extravagance that Becker documented for the January 1998 issue of V.F. "It was an over-the-top 90s event—1890s maybe," he says.



When Becker went to Bill Blass's Manhattan apartment for a photo session, the designer couldn't decide which suit to wear. "So he invited me into his closet," Becker says. "I told him, 'Just wear what you're wearing,'" which happened to be a jacket and tie but no pants. "He was game." The photograph accompanied *V.F.*'s August 2002 excerpt of Blass's memoir.



"Roaming around the Adirondacks with [reporter] Alex Shoumatoff," as Becker did while taking pictures for a May 1997 article about the "great camps" built there in the 19th century, "felt more like a rogue vacation than a story," he says.



Becker photographed the gossip columnist Cindy Adams and her husband, comedian Joey Adams (who, like his wife, had a regular column in the *New York Post*), in their Fifth Avenue apartment for the March 1990 issue of *V.F.* "They were an amusing, almost cartoon-like couple, with wonderfully absurd senses of humor," says the photographer.



This shot of philosopher/writer/activist Bernard-Henri Lévy in his Paris apartment, taken for a January 2003 profile, gives the sense that, as Becker says, "he lives a life that only an intellectual Frenchman of unimaginable means could concoct." Read "[France's Prophet Provocateur](#)," by Joan Juliet Buck.



Where's Georgette?

Racing to the social heights, that's where. With her husband as George Bush's secretary of commerce, Georgette Mosbacher is the shiniest star of the new administration. And, reports JOHN DAWSON, she runs the swank La Prairie skin-care company

I can't shake hands," said Georgette Mosbacher, coming out to greet me. "I just repaired a nail." She waved one of her fingers to demonstrate and to dry the glue, then left me beyond the reception desk at La Prairie, the skin-care company with annual sales of \$60 million that she purchased in 1988. The last time I had seen Georgette, her copper hair was pulled demurely back from her face. Now it was down, a definite mane, and she was wearing black alligator cowboy boots, black trousers, and a black fitted jacket over a white blouse. She introduced her secretary, who looked a lot like Gloria Vanderbilt, and then we went into Georgette's office, a gray corner room with clouds on the ceiling that looks down on the Plaza Hotel and Central Park. Georgette introduced Adam Mosbacher, a King Charles spaniel that rolled over on his back to be petted, then we sat down at Georgette's desk, a round Empire table, the top a mosaic of light and dark woods, the legs buttressed by bronze angels.

Making an entrance: Georgette Mosbacher and her dog, Adam Mosbacher, coming through the family business, La Prairie.

Georgette looked at her calendar to set up times for us to meet. "It's frustrating," she said. "I have my monthly numbers to get to the bank. I have the 1989 budget to finish for next week. I have the presidential election. I'm in the office every morning before eight, and when I travel it's always with a laptop computer and a fax machine. Recently, there was a hurricane at the White House. I couldn't go, because I had an opening at Nordstrom's. We were supposed to go in a

Photograph by JONATHAN BECKER

"For me, this was the quintessential 80s moment, Georgette Mosbacher coming out her door; it all seemed to be about arrivals," Becker says of this portrait of the Republican hostess and cosmetics executive, which appeared in the same issue of V.F. as Becker's photograph of Robert Mapplethorpe (February 1989).



POURCE
Jocelyne Wildenstein with her five Italian greyhounds in the Rosewood Room of the family's 14-room Manhattan town house, January 11, 1998. The mother of the fillet is on the far right, followed by a Chihuahua.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN BECKER

Jocelyne's Revenge

His-and-her plastic surgery, tigers in a bulletproof glass cave, and a \$350,000 Chanel dress—what could be more over-the-top than the marriage of Alec and Jocelyne Wildenstein? Their divorce: a jet-fueled farrago complete with ebony coffin, naked blonde, and loaded pistol. **GEORGE RUSH** reports

Jocelyne Wildenstein signed their marriage as voidable. Three days earlier, on August 31, her estranged husband, Alec, had found her a letter at their ranch in Kenya, Old Leg, where she had been living for several months. "It is impossible for me to let you come in at #14," Alec wrote, alluding to their 14-room Manhattan town house on East 64th Street. "[I will be] entertaining at home this week."

Jocelyne was angry. Just before midnight on September 2, she arrived at the town house with her two body-

guards. What happened next depends on whom you ask.

Jocelyne says that when she and her assistant were upstairs in the couple's bedroom Alec appeared at the door wearing only a towel. Once he saw her, Jocelyne says, Alec grabbed a loaded nine-mm, semi-automatic and aimed it at her—and continued to do so even after the bodyguards identified themselves. Jocelyne also says she "glimpsed" a naked blonde woman in the bedroom. Alec disagrees, insisting that Jocelyne was nervous when he first saw the bodyguards, whom he mistook for burglars. Once he discovered who they were, Alec says, he quickly put the gun away.

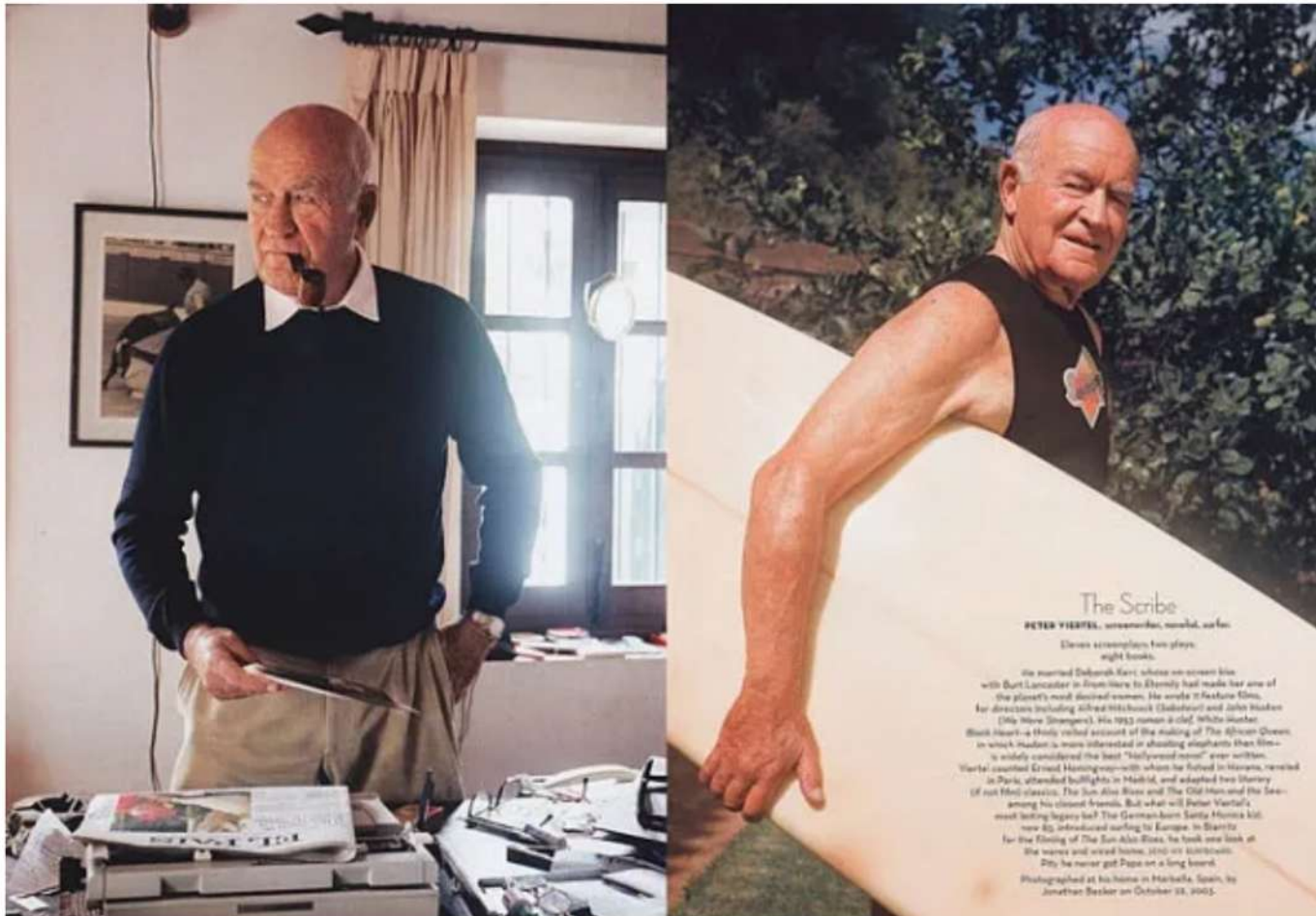
In the end, Alec left the town house—in handcuffs—after one of Jocelyne's bodyguards called the police. "I will see you out on the street," Alec reportedly shouted as police led him away on charges of menacing. He spent 16 long hours in custody, some of it in Manhattan's infamous Tombs, where politicians had plenty to say about the jilted woman an Armani suit and a L'Oréal d'Hermès lipstick. "That day," Alec says of Jocelyne, "I broke

NOVEMBER 1998 283

Becker found Jocelyne Wildenstein, whom he photographed for a March 1998 story about her messy divorce from her art-dealer husband, to be "a magnificently surreal subject." Becker shot her with her pets—including the five Italian greyhounds seen here—in the couple's grand Manhattan town house.



Becker's portrait of Albert Finney, which appeared in that same 2004 Hollywood portfolio, seems to capture the expert character actor's gruff but gregarious demeanor. "As one of the most gifted actors of all time," Becker says, "it seemed like he couldn't help but act."



Becker photographed the screenwriter and novelist Peter Viertel at his home in Marbella, Spain, for *V.F.*'s 2004 Hollywood portfolio. Becker calls Viertel, who was married to the actress Deborah Kerr and was a close friend of Ernest Hemingway's, "one of the last manly men." (Viertel died in 2007.) Indeed, as evidenced in this spread, he was still surfing at age 83.



Many of the Palm Beach grandees Becker photographed for **V.F.**'s authoritative look at the exclusive beach community were reluctant to participate at first, says Bob Colacello, who wrote the February 2004 article. "But once people meet Jonathan, they find that he's so charming, he works with an old-fashioned camera, he doesn't have a lot of assistants—they become much more receptive." Featured in this spread are grandchildren of Palm Beach designer Lilly Pulitzer, wearing her trademark floral patterns (left), and Alynne Massey, the widow of Kentucky Fried Chicken tycoon Jack Massey, on her terrace overlooking the Atlantic.



"I'd rather work than ski," says Becker. "I can't ski anyway—terrible vertigo." So he had no problem shooting residents of Aspen for a March 2003 feature about the Colorado town's allure. Shown here are professional skier and real-estate broker Tim Mooney, hiking in Independence Pass outside Aspen, and Kate McBride Puckett, on her family's ranch.



"It took some persuading to get Nancy Reagan to agree to be photographed," says Bob Colacello, who wrote a July 2009 article about her, which Becker's portraits accompanied. "She finally agreed to take half an hour and do one shot in one location, but it ended up being over three hours and seven different locations." One of those locations was the former First Lady's lawn, with the towers of Century City in the background. Read "[Nancy Reagan's Solo Role](#)," by Bob Colacello.



THE X-RATED EMPEROR

Launching *Penthouse* in 1965 to subsidize his painting, Bob Guccione turned graphic porn, mockraking journalism, and tabloid headlines into one of the greatest success stories in magazine history; the cornerstone of a multi-million-dollar publishing empire. Then it all came tumbling down, thanks to Reagan-era censorship, the Internet, and a series of expensive dreams. Twenty-eight years after quitting as executive editor of *Fiva*, Guccione's magazine for women,

PATRICIA BOSWORTH reconnects with the fallen king, who may have lost his fortune, buried his great love, and alienated his family, but who still remains focused on the future

I

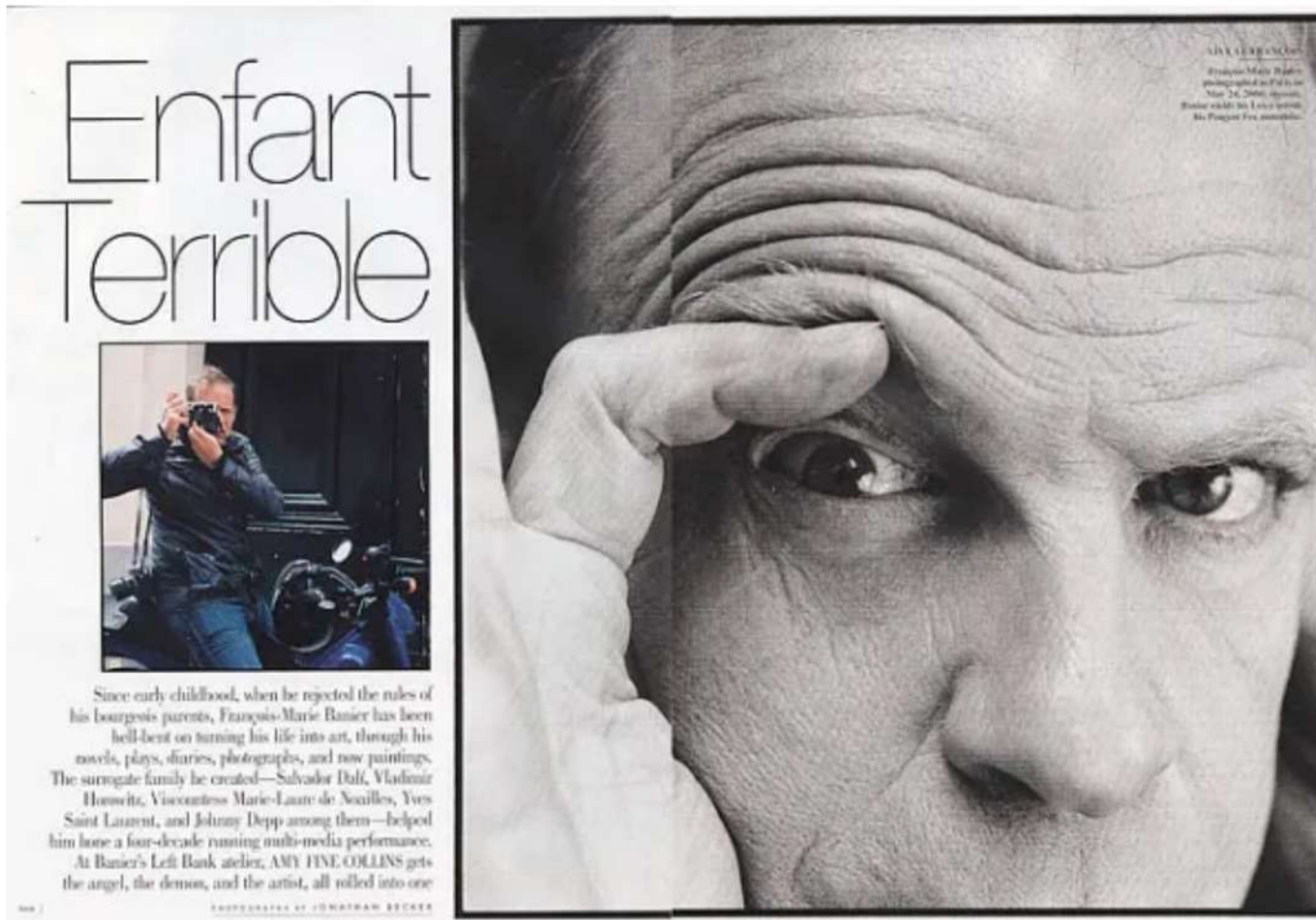
"In broadly assessed at my own optimism," says Bob Guccione, the 74-year-old pioneering pornographer and founder of *Penthouse* magazine. "Whatever I'm facing a crisis—and I'm certainly facing a crisis now—I just fight harder. I know I'm going to survive."

Recent news reports have portrayed Guccione as a broken man. Having lost his entire *Penthouse* empire, he is said to be destitute, camping out in just four rooms of his princely home, on East 67th Street in Manhattan, spending most of his days curled up in bed watching or watching CNN.

"An exaggeration," he insists, attempting to smile. "Exaggeration," repeats his special assistant, Jane Henshaw, to make sure he is understood. In 1998, a doctor performed laser surgery on Guccione's tongue in an experimental cancer treatment, so it is hard to understand him when he speaks. Because he has difficulty speak

CHANGED MAN
Bob Guccione and his girlfriend, April Warren, photographed at his apartment, New York City, December 5, 2004.

When Becker photographed Bob Guccione for a February 2005 article, the pioneering pornographer had lost his *Penthouse* empire and was in danger of being forced out of his palatial Upper East Side home. But he put on a brave face, clasping the hands of his young girlfriend April Warren. "A portrait of an icon in demise," Becker says. Read "[The X-Rated Emperor](#)," by Patricia Bosworth.



Becker took this eyebrow-raising portrait of François-Marie Banier for a profile of the painter and photographer in *V.F.*'s December 2006 Art Issue. "There was a certain compassion going on between us," says Becker. "Wonderful to look a fellow photographer in the eye."



Going to China to photograph the country's art and artists—including Liu Ye, shown here with his muse, Jenny Lui—for *V.F.*'s December 2007 issue was "like landing on an overpopulated moon and being able to communicate with its denizens," says Becker. "One of the best ways to understand a foreign culture is through art." Read "[Art's New Superpower](#)," by Barbara Pollack.



The story of Prince Pavlos and Princess Marie-Chantal of Greece, Becker says, "is an old-fashioned fairy tale." He photographed the couple—seen here with their four children on vacation in Porto Heli, Greece—for *V.F.*'s February 2008 issue. "She's fabulously beautiful, and he's the great gent of all time," Becker says of Marie-Chantal and Pavlos. Read "[A Royal Family Affair](#)," by Bob Colacello.



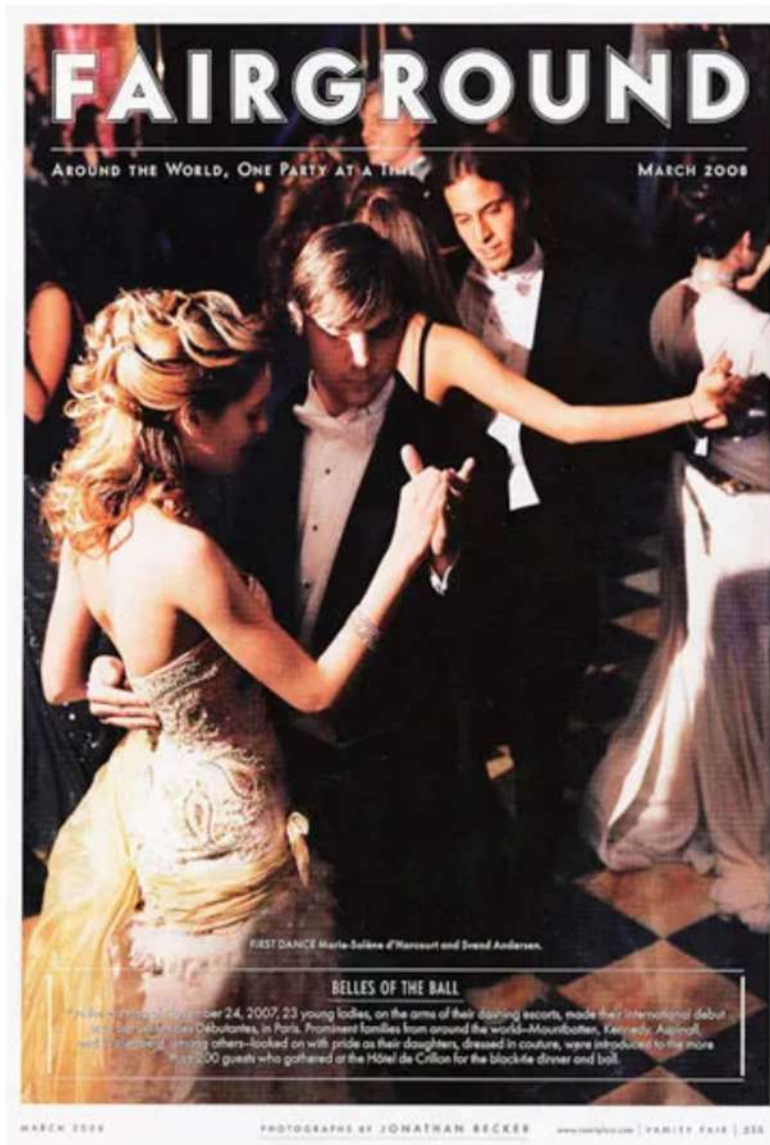
"It's hard to take a bad picture of Nicky Haslam," says Becker of the British interior designer and bon vivant, a contention that is backed up by this shot, from the opening spread of a September 2008 profile. "He's quite the visual man who knows how to collaborate on a picture." Read "[Truly, Madly, Nicky](#)," by Evgenia Peretz.

“Absolutely Excessive!”

Things were eating at Oracle C.E.O. Larry Ellison. His strategy for his software company, the second-largest in the world, seemed flawed. He worried that his new, 454-foot yacht might be too big. His America's Cup bid was a nightmare. But now, settled into his new boat—photographed exclusively for *TIME*—the 61-year-old billionaire is on a fresh tack. As Oracle moves to capture the banking, telecommunications, and retail markets, MATTHEW SYMONDS reveals what it takes to make an angst-ridden mogul happy again.



For an October 2005 profile of [Larry Ellison](#), Becker photographed the software billionaire aboard his gargantuan yacht (the world's longest at the time), the 454-foot *Rising Sun*, seen here at Porto Rotondo, in the Mediterranean. Becker found Ellison to be “the epitome of self-made privilege. The dot-com Gatsby.”



Becker has become a fixture at the annual Bal Crillon des Débutantes at the Hôtel de Crillon, in Paris, where he took this photograph that led off *V.F.*'s March 2008 Fairground section. In fact, he says, "I was even Master of Ceremonies [at the ball] one year—with disastrous results. I offered to do it as a joke, and when I got the invitation my name had been engraved on it."