

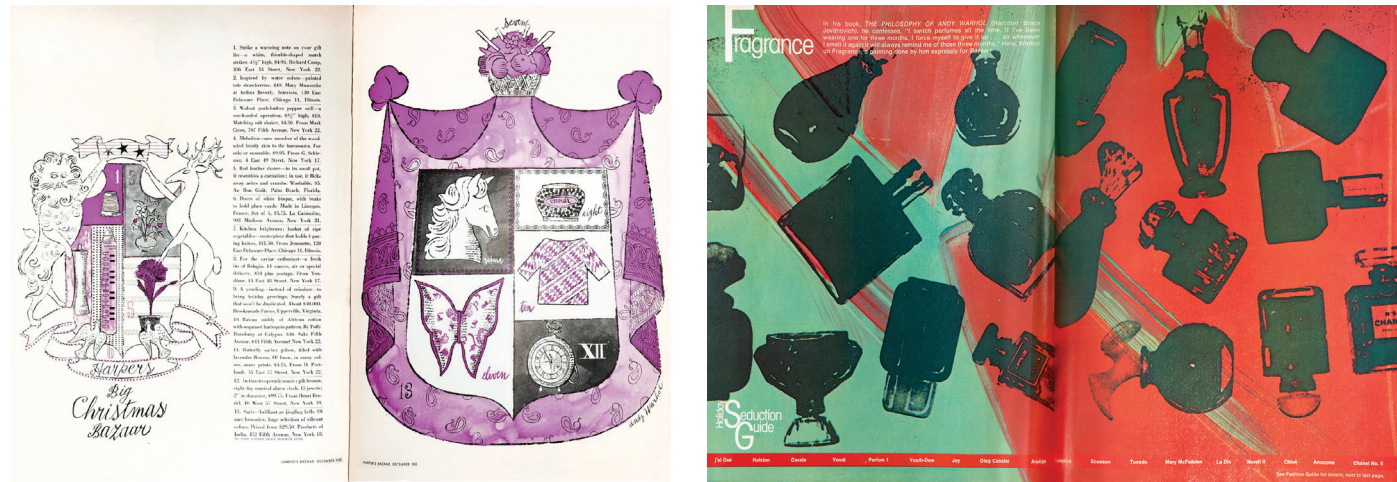
ANDY WARHOL



THE BAZAAR YEARS



With a retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art around the corner, we trace the Pop Art



legend's illustrious career back to his early days at the magazine. **By Christopher Bollen**

Above, clockwise from top left: Spreads from *Bazaar*, January 1955; February 1958; May 1958; December 1979; December 1960; December 1960. Opposite page: A fragrance illustration from the April 1956 issue.

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Before Andy Warhol was famous, before he was even Warhol (he was born Andrew Warhola), the Pop artist extraordinaire was just one of many ambitious young dreamers who moved to New York after college. The figurative painter Philip Pearlstein, a classmate of Warhol's at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, recalls taking the bus to Manhattan with Warhol weeks after graduating, in 1949. "We had our portfolios with us and all of our things in paper shopping bags," Pearlstein says. The two friends landed a sublet in a sixth-floor, cold-water walk-up on the corner of St. Marks Place and Avenue A in the East Village. "There was a bathtub in the kitchen," he says. "Andy took a bath the first day. The water never drained out of it and soon was covered in roaches. We put a tabletop over it, and it became our kitchen table." The inability to bathe was just one of the problems spawned by this creative work-around. "I'll never forget the humiliation of bringing my portfolio up to Carmel Snow's office and unzipping it only to have a roach crawl out and down the leg of the table," Warhol wrote in his 1975 book, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, of his first meeting with *Bazaar*'s then editor in chief. "She felt so sorry for me that she gave me a job."

This began a long and illustrious career, which will be celebrated in November with the blockbuster retrospective "Andy Warhol—From A to B and Back Again," at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art. The exhibition's curator, Donna De Salvo, the Whitney's deputy director for international initiatives, believes that Warhol's magazine work was a foundational step in the artist's evolution—blazing a path toward his radical use of silk-screen printing on canvas in 1962, which changed the game of visual art forever. "Warhol was part of a world where the original image didn't matter so much anymore," De Salvo says. "He was more interested in using source material. And that's exactly what great magazine editors and art directors cared about: how an image reproduced and what it looked like in a layout."

Fashion magazines proved a natural fit for

Warhol, who reveled in images of celebrity, luxury, high culture, and conspicuous consumption. From 1951 to 1964, he produced hundreds of graphic illustrations for Snow and her team—which included the legendary art director Alexey Brodovitch—ranging from ink drawings to photo collages, small frolicking cartoons to dazzling full-color spreads of the latest fragrances, handbags, and shoes (shoes would become one of the artist's specialties). As it turned out, many of Warhol's Pop Art peers also paid the rent in their early years by taking on commercial-art jobs: Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns teamed up as window dressers, while James Rosenquist and Ed Ruscha worked separately as sign painters. But what distinguished Warhol's commercial work from those of his contemporaries is not only that he signed his name to his illustrations—meaning that he took palpable pride in these commissions—but also that he possessed a fully developed, idiosyncratic style that separated him from the competition.

Interestingly, several of Warhol's pages, including a December 1959 gastronomic story on à la mode Christmas dinners and a July 1960 "Fabricology" piece on the fabrics and patterns of the season, incorporate handwritten text by Warhol's mother. Julia Warhola moved to New York in 1952 to be with her son, and Warhol's use of her old-fashioned scrawl could be seen as another vital step in obscuring the presence of the artist's hand in favor of a more remote, Factory-like approach. "He put everyone around him to work," notes De Salvo. Warhol also experimented with an allover grid design, as in an April 1956 story on perfume bottles, that he would later mimic in his approach to repeated silk-screened images like car crashes, electric chairs, and Jackie Kennedy.

In keeping with this creative give-and-take, *Bazaar* had the foresight to permit its wunderkind illustrator to think beyond whimsical ink drawings and test out some of the forms and materials that he was beginning to investigate in his personal cutting-edge work. In the early 1960s, just

as Warhol's fine-art career was on the rise, he began exploring photography, which was faster, less expensive, and offered several versions as opposed to one final image. In both the December 1962 and June 1963 issues of the magazine, Warhol created spreads of photo-booth portraits of established and up-and-coming figures in the arts (the June issue even included self-portraits of the artist looking supremely downtown cool in his sunglasses).

Not only do these phenomenal pages anticipate the Polaroids and cinematic screen tests of Warhol's later work, but they also show a fast-and-loose manner of image-making that would inform the discoveries to come. *Bazaar*, of course, was quick to pick up the energy and excitement of these changing times—and even a more democratic approach to notions of female beauty. In his *Diaries*, Warhol would note that, in 1960, *Bazaar* began shooting "ugly girls with big noses and things," which might sound like an insult but was really a provocative, progressive move toward inclusivity. Warhol would later bring such outliers and unconventional beauties around him in his Factory.

The physical production of a magazine must have been an inspiration to Warhol. His commercial work played a crucial role in his development as an artist because it gave him access to production tools like Photostat and enlarging processes, says De Salvo. Working with art directors and editors also allowed him to sharpen his instincts on the language of commercial culture. "He had the opportunity to work with these super-sophisticated design minds who understood their audience," she explains. "In many ways, his commercial illustrations were collaborative efforts."



portrait of the artist as a young man, who was still trying to figure out his art practice and precisely how he was going to change the world. ■

Christopher Bollen is the author of the novel *The Destroyers*, for which he won the 2018 Prix Fitzgerald.

"Andy Warhol—From A to B and Back Again" opens at the Whitney Museum of American Art on November 12.

FASHION QUEENS

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A paste of egg whites, powdered eggshell, alum, borax, poppy seeds, and mill water was applied to every visible sliver of skin, rendering her deathly white like a religious icon, as opposed to a living, breathing woman. In later life, having lost several of her teeth, she stuffed her cheeks with rags to fill them out. Art historians have coined the phrase the "Mask of Youth" to describe these willfully inaccurate visages, which, like a reverse Dorian Gray, depicted Elizabeth in incongruous fresh-faced splendor while the flesh-and-blood woman withered.

Youth, however, wasn't the only message the queen sought to express: Strength and vivacity were ultimately even more than important to her than any traditional notions of beauty. By the late 16th century she had all but abandoned the idea of "beauty"—instead, the Elizabethan fashion ideal was of the extreme. Her wardrobe conflated conflicting narratives and aims: She was painted in the kind of finery hitherto afforded only to men; in later years, the bulk of her costume, literally filling the frames of her portraits, was akin to that of her father, Henry VIII, her stiff, lace-trimmed collars and auburn wigs like halos around her face.

Looking at Elizabeth's portraits—and the costumes she chose to be rendered in—the meanings are deep and rich. Every gemstone and embroidery pattern on her clothes held

hidden meaning, which can still be read today. Some are obvious: The Rainbow Portrait of 1600, for instance, features the queen with a jeweled serpent of wisdom embroidered on a sleeve and a heavy mantle embellished with realistic human eyes and ears, implying that she was all-seeing and all-hearing. Others are embedded in the meaning of their times, like Elizabeth's penchant for wearing white and black, seen as pure and virginal colors, a notion echoed by the sharp V-shape of her corseted bodices. Pearls represented chastity; she was constantly swathed with them, wearing gowns whose surfaces were puckered with multitudes more. There were plenty of gowns too—an inventory of her wardrobe, drawn up in 1600, showed that she had more than 2,000.

Power, of course, is a fascinating concept in dress. Consider the striking contrast between our perceptions of Elizabeth—ageless, golden Gloriana—and that of Mary, Queen of Scots. Although argued to be the more beautiful of the two, Mary never cemented her image with the success of Elizabeth. One of the rare occasions fashion worked to her advantage seemed entirely accidental: After the death of her first husband, François II of France, in 1560, her grief-stricken appearance, dressed in white (a royal color of mourning in France), led to her being dubbed, admirably, La Reine Blanche. Yet unlike Elizabeth's shrewd media management, Mary was largely unable to influence popular opinion—even in death. Mary was beheaded for treason on Elizabeth's orders, on February 8, 1587; when the executioner held her head aloft, it fell to the ground, leaving an auburn wig in his hand. Mary remains fragile in our minds, a black-clad victim in perpetual mourning.

The memory of Elizabeth, by contrast, has never suffered such indignities. For her, fashion was a tool to reinforce her own sovereignty in the eyes of her people, to emphasize and secure her position. She may have had, as she herself said in her 1588 Speech to the Troops at Tilbury, "the body of a weak and feeble woman," but she wielded it as a weapon. Call it the original power dressing. ■

Alexander Fury is an author, critic, and editor of *AnOther Magazine*. Mary Queen of Scots arrives in theaters December 7.

Above: An illustration of a holiday dish, *Noël Provincial* (detail), from the December 1959 issue. Opposite page: A spread from the November 1962 issue.

CRAZY RICH COUTURE

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quipped. “What if I was?” I replied. The photographer squinted at me dubiously.

While Feiping embodies the current zeitgeist of fashionable women in Asia, the Yeoh sisters undoubtedly represent the future. Rachel and Michelle Yeoh are descended from a distinguished Malaysian-Chinese family. Born and raised in Kuala Lumpur, the fraternal twins attended boarding school in England and have called London home for the past few years. In 2015, they had the honor of being the first Malaysians to debut at Queen Charlotte’s Ball at Kensington Palace, a historic ritual once reserved for Europe’s aristocratic families. Last year, the twins also made their fashion debut, commanding the catwalk in Dolce & Gabbana’s Fall 2017 show in Milan alongside the offspring of stars like Daniel Day-Lewis, Christie Brinkley, and Jude Law.

When we attended the Fendi show together at the monumental Palais Brongniart, I marveled not only at how the Yeoh sisters seemed to know all the right people but also at how they were a study in patrician grace, perfectly poised, while all around them less well-behaved attendees jostled for front-row seats, pranced for attention, and took innumerable selfies. Their composure no doubt comes from having been raised well and growing up around the couturier’s atelier. “We started attending the shows with our mother when we were 11. It’s become a family tradition, a summer ritual that we look forward to every year,” Michelle said, almost wistfully.

That’s because when summer is over, the twins will return to being immersed in their studies. Michelle is about to graduate from law school, while Rachel is finishing up a combined degree in politics, philosophy, and law. “Our family values education a lot and curiosity and intellect, but never at the expense of creativity. You always have to have both sides. I think the essence of life is that we’re here to create, innovate, do something at the very least,” Rachel mused. As if paying heed to her own words, she and Michelle appeared on the catwalk again, at Dolce & Gabbana’s Alta Moda show at a villa overlooking Lake

Como just days after we met up in Paris.

Like most twins, they are preternaturally close. They finish each other’s sentences in the sort of English accent that many a parent would pay a fortune in boarding school fees for their children to acquire. They also share a dress size, but, alas, there’s little swapping going on, as their tastes couldn’t be more different. “Rachel is really experimental and will wear whatever she wants. I make safer choices,” Michelle says. “I dress from the heart,” Rachel tells me over breakfast one morning, gesturing to her red tea-length Ganni wrap dress with black leopard spots. I found it charming that Rachel is equally comfortable wearing Ganni, a moderately priced Danish line, as she is wearing couture.

In fact, this casual embrace of high and low was evident among all the women. Like Astrid from my novels, who showed up at an exclusive party wearing a white dress from Zara, these ladies are as keyed in on high street fashion as they are on couture. At another dinner during the week, Feiping turned up in a pleated lavender Tibi dress, the same one that Heart owns and wore to her art opening at the Ayala Museum in Manila in April. The women brilliantly mix couture pieces with contemporary brands sold at a much lower price point without an ounce of snobbery. Of course, on these ladies, everything looks like couture.

Two days later, attending the Armani Privé show in an elegant, boiserie-paneled salon of the Italian Embassy with Heart, I found myself staring in disbelief at the most spectacular sight. Isabelle Huppert, Kristin Scott Thomas, and Juliette Binoche were sitting across from me. Only three of my four favorite actresses in the whole world. If Catherine Deneuve walked in right now, I knew I would completely lose it. I could already see the headline: **ASIAN AUTHOR GOES CRAZY AT ARMANI**. Heart leaned in and asked, “Kevin, is that Tina Turner in front of us?” Holy Proud Mary, it sure was. How was I ever going to concentrate on the show?

I needn’t have worried. Armani showed 96 looks, far more than any other couturier I’d seen that week, but dress after dress

demanding your attention. I saw exquisite gowns with sequins suggesting sacred geometry, a Jean Cocteau-esque drawing come to life against black velvet, and like the rest of the crowd, Heart and I were transfixed. “Seeing a show like this reminds me why I love going to the couture shows. It’s so therapeutic,” Heart observed. “Asians can be really conservative. It’s hard to express yourself without someone saying something about you. But what I realize is, if you can use your platform of influence to inspire girls to step out of their comfort zone with the way they dress, I think that’s pretty powerful.”

On our last day in Paris, the women took part in a photo shoot at the Ritz, dressed in their favorite looks from the shows. The Yeoh sisters seated among piles of macarons in the Maria Callas suite, adorned in Cartier jewels and delightful pink gowns by Fendi, reminded me of two young duchesses posing for a court portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Heart, standing on a balcony magnificently swathed in an ostrich-feathered Armani Privé creation and Chopard diamonds, looked so stunning that she caused me to forget the view. But it was only when I saw Feiping in the garden, resplendent in the glorious pale-green tulle gown she had spotted on the Giambattista Valli runway, that I began to understand what couture was truly all about.

The generations of women who have worn couture—whether they’re from America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, or Asia—have all experienced a universal connection when they put on a piece of couture and are enveloped in its artistry. The dress transforms them, imbues them with an indescribable power, and becomes an all-consuming love affair. As I caught Feiping’s eye during the photo shoot, she declared, “I never want to take this dress off.” Her Messika earrings glimmered in the sunlight, and as she posed—running, leaping, falling—on the crisp green lawn in an allée of perfectly manicured trees, I knew exactly why. All of a sudden she was a butterfly, she was a sea anemone, she was a peony in full bloom, she was like nothing on earth. She was pure joy. ■

Kevin Kwan is a best-selling author. Crazy Rich Asians, the film based on his first novel, hits theaters August 15.