

THE NEW LOOK: ART AND FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY



Mark Borthwick, *Days Off*, 1993, Cibachrome, dimensions variable

240 ARTFORUM



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FROM THE CLUB KID to the rich kid, athleisure to the luxury watch, fashion photography has always had a voracious eye. It's this rapaciousness that might describe *all* photographic images today—that sea of indiscriminate data, of branding-as-content. But the art world has never quite known what to do with fashion photography. Even though the age-old categories of “art” and “commercial” image production may seem obsolete, the distinctions are still surprisingly rigid. Photography may be post-Pictures and post-Internet, but it can't seem to get over its neurotic relationship to advertising, with surprisingly few artists traversing those domains—and those who do often keeping the bodies of work distinctly separate, or even secret.

And yet it's fashion photography that has served as a testing ground for the visual itself—for new means of postproduction, for the massive dissemination of imagery, for the picture as social media. Fashion photography might represent the most radical surrender of conventional authorial control to endless teams of people, to a vast multiplicity of pages, screens, streams of content. Here, *Artforum* highlights the work of those who have gone furthest to investigate and inhabit this world of extremity. “Photography is bound to time in precisely the same way as fashion,” Siegfried Kracauer once wrote; today, that peculiar speed and scale show us the future of the image.

JOSEPHINE PRYDE



IT IS AS A PRACTITIONER first that I think about photography, and I do not learn anything new without talking to other people who use cameras or who work with the results of what the camera sees. Sometimes the information arrives secondhand.

A friend picks me up at the railway station, and on our drive home through the country, he tells me that his daughter is teaching primary school in a village a little farther south. He mentions in passing that she wears a camera at school, and points to his shoulder, as if she wears it there, on her body: a mechanical eye on her shoulder. Photographs of the children are posted on the school's website, and the parents can see what their offspring are up to. It seems a very long way from the open countryside through which we are driving, spread out in the dark beyond us. It also seems like an age-old vein of thinking running right through it and the neighboring hills, with their traces of Iron Age forts.

Cameras are all over the place and inside so many objects. They are increasingly concealed within the reality they were invented to depict. As I write that sentence, I notice I choose the verb *to depict* rather than *to record*. *To record* suggests a more documentary approach, whereas *to depict* could be the brief for a photographer from the art or commercial sphere. How might the term *documentary* be introduced to reinvigorate a potentially exhausted debate between "art" and "commercial"? If perpetual recording becomes part of the very fiber of our lived universe, and the smartness of technical devices frees the human eye and mind to operate in new registers, then these three historical categories of photography are thrown, at least temporarily, into more exaggerated relief, and not dissolved. □

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Josephine Pryde, *Alibek*, 2014. C-print, 14 1/4 x 10 3/4". From the series "Isocetes at Alibek", 2014.