The FASHION Issue
Kristen STEWART
By PATTI SMITH

Nicolas GHESQUIÈRE by Michelle WILLIAMS
Riley KEOUGH by Steven SODERBERGH
Lynda BENGLIS by John BALDESSARI
PLUS: Mary J. BLIGE, Father John MISTY,
Sam TAYLOR-JOHNSON, Noam CHOMSKY

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Lynda Benglis

By John BALDESSARI

ON THE EVE OF A CAREER RETROSPECTIVE, THE FEARLESS, MATERIAL-TESTING, GLOBE-HOPPING ARTIST IS STILL EXPLORING COLOR, MOTION, AND MONUMENTAL STATES—AND SHE ISN'T BACKING DOWN.

Photography SEBASTIAN KIM
"I couldn't pour wax on the floor and make it work, and I wasn't interested in straight canvases. I was mocking the whole issue of figure ground."

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"It's a horrible feeling to see your own death ahead of you, but then I feel like I'm always racing for time. I'd rather be in my studio all the time."
"WHEN MY MOTHER SAW MY ARTFORM PIECE, SHE SAID, 'THEY'LL NEVER FORGET THAT.' AND MY FATHER SAID, 'GO AWAY' AND WALKED OUT OF THE ROOM."
JOHN BALDESSARI: The first thing I want to say about Los Angeles, it’s how much you’ve been influenced on the way you live, the way you draw. When you drew over that photograph of a German sculptor’s statue, that’s in the same vein as drawing over a painting, it’s a way of looking at and pushing over the other thing, that is, I think, the way you work. What is it you’re drawing over? What is it you’re painting for Baldessari? OH, yeah. There you go. You’ve traveled a long way.

BALDESSARI: Do you see your work as a celebration of the banality of the everyday? I’m curious as to what you’ve first seen?

BENGEL: When I was 22, I thought I knew everything that was going on. I was there, and I decided that I was just sitting in the audience. BALDESSARI: I think only a few. Every artist does it, but I try to keep the pace at one point. So maybe we have to be careful about how you start making those painted words. BENGEL: I think I started being a poet because I couldn’t just do the same thing, and I wasn’t interested in straight canvases. I had made some sort of pop-art paintings that was limited in format. But I was working on the whole issue of figuration. BALDESSARI: That’s important because no matter what you do, at least you were doing it, was the piece you look at paintings. And paintings were just in 1968 like art, like a whole project. I thought, “Wow, this is fantastic. You don’t have to have a brand new way to do a painting.” BENGEL: They were directly on the line of the things. In the beginning, I painted only on polyethylene and stainless, and I had to get out of some studio–like small studios in Barrister Street, down from the police station and across from a school bus parked and painted it just in one three-hour project. The line was painted, it was made, you couldn’t stop the work, because the lines were fast and didn’t look the way you wanted to look. And there really wasn’t any ARC logical process about how I was doing it. It was while I was walking around as you worked.

BALDESSARI: What were some of the earliest reactions to the poured works?

BENGEL: I can remember going down in a serious paint for a mummer, Dallas, Texas, where I was approached by a collector–the Murchisons. They then had the Dallas Cowboys. They were interested in my work. I proposed to paint them.

And then the moment I imagined being involved in the trompe l’oeil, I wanted to see the pictures. I thought they were great pictures. I couldn’t guess them down there. He was the first person to give me any courage, to cense what I was doing otherwise himself.

BALDESSARI: But, John. I want to say one of the most important words you made was made and made a little noisy as you–was this painting made of your own volition? This was quite beautiful as well and clear. I was surprised and surprised. I was quite moved to see you make that. Have you thought about that?

BENGEL: BALDESSARI: Well, you never know if you influence other artists.

BENGEL: Easily. And I began thinking about work in a career. And that crystallization process. I’m not a commercial artist. There’s a young artist in Germany, Rosemarie Trockel. She’s younger than me. BENGEL: OH, yes, there you go. You’ve traveled a long way.

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I was frightened that maybe the hurricane had taken it away. It was basically lost for decades to the public. It was being stored in a pile of rubble that wasn’t intended to be thrown away. But it wasn’t functioning as a fountain. It’s owned by the city of Kenner, in Louisiana, but now this spring it’s going to be borrowed for four years by the city of New Orleans and put in this marhscape that they’ve built. So it will be on display again as a working fountain. It’s exciting to have it up. Fountains came out of the idea of the way water moved, and they were additions to the way I was thinking materials could flow—that they’re alive.