



LINDA EVANGELISTA
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
NORI TAKAHASHI
STYLING: MARIANNE BOESKY

MIUCCIA PRADA
ON THE EVE OF HER FIRST
MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE

LINDSAY LOHAN
SMOKING HOT IN LA BENT
OVER A STOVE

AZEALIA BANKS
THE FOUL-MOUTHED
FALLEN ANGEL
STORMING 2012



AFTER TASTE

CELEBRATING THE END OF ELEGANCE WITH
LINDA EVANGELISTA



Photo: *©* 2011
by DOUG
THE
LIT



RACHEL FEINSTEIN

THE SCULPTOR, MOTHER AND RELUCTANT
SOCIALITE ON FAIRYTALES, THE FUTURE
AND THE ART OF BEING A WOMAN

—TEXT—
ISAAC LOCKE

First when people talk about Rachel Feinstein they like to say that she's a renaissance woman, on account of the way that she looks exactly like an animate version of Botticelli's Venus (curves of red hair, flawless pale skin, sunnily-drooped eyes, the whole works) and also on account of the way she very publicly manages to occupy so



'Good Times', 2005



Installation view from 'Rachel Feinstein: The Snow Queens' at the Levez House, New York, January 27 - April 11, 2011. Photograph by Jose David Harris

'Every part of life becomes this funny toss up. You sell a little piece of your soul to get a little piece back in return'



many roles at the same time: eminent sculptor; wife and sometime muse to one of the most well-known painters of a generation, John Currin; mother to three children; carer to an ancient and crumbling affenpinscher dog, Chewy. She is, on the surface of it, the woman with it all. 'Things as they are now, I don't have time to do anything properly,' is the first thing she says to me, however, when we start our interview. 'I'm doing everything that I wanted to see myself doing years ago, when I was in my twenties, but it's all so much more complicated than you realise it's going to be when you're young.'

As if to physically illustrate her words, by the way, she is saying them as she and I sit in the back of a cab on its way to a Midtown animal hospital, several blocks from up her studio on the borders of Manhattan's Chinatown, where we will collect Chewy, who is recovering from the latest in a long line of canine illnesses. When I arrive at her studio earlier that day (massive, spare, blank apart from some piles of books and photographs and some imprints of parapets on the walls left over from when she sprayed the component pieces of a room set for her 2011 show *The Snow Queen* up against them), I find her in the middle of it with her assistant, Cara, working on a clay maquette of a sculpture

of a saint. Rachel tells me the story behind it and chooses some pictures of other saints to show me from one of her piles. Saint Sebastian, who she likes because his gorgeous muscular body is pockmarked with arrows, and some female saints who are notable for their gruesome fates: Saint Barbara, whose eyes were cut out, and Saint Agatha, whose breasts were butchered. After that, she explains that Cara is going to wrap up the maquette to stop the clay from setting and go and get the dog. Cara is elbow-deep in it, though, and unconvincing in her claims that it is a fine time for her to break. Rachel is equally unconvincing when she says it wouldn't make her day hugely easier if we just went to the vets, so I tell her that I think she'd make for a better interview if her mind wasn't wandering to half-finished maquettes and dogs waiting for collection, and we go.

'When you're in your twenties, you have all of this energy and you have a lot more time,' she continues, keen to make the reasons why we are in transit absolutely clear. 'You want to do all these things and you don't have the resources to do them. Now I have the resources to do them, I know all the right people and I can get all the right things, but I don't have the time. Every part of life becomes this funny toss-up. You sell a little piece of your soul to get a little piece back in return.' She stops to tell the driver that we should probably take a different route. We stay with the one we're on.

'I always want to have five hours in my studio each day to just focus on my work, but it's not possible. Even if I'm left alone I'm still thinking, OK, I have to go and buy the kids new sneakers after this or something like that. There are people that are full-time

FASHION EDITOR BEAT BOLLIGER
HAIR ASHLEY JAVIER MAKE-UP OSVALDO SALVATIERRA MANICURE BERNADETTE THOMPSON DIGITAL TECHNICIAN DENIS VLASOV AT 19 STILL + MOTION PRODUCER JEFFREY DELICH AT PRODN PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE WESLEY TORRANCE, LELANIE FOSTER AND KAILASMICHAEL SET DESIGN MEGHAN CZERWINSKI PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSISTANCE MYRO WULFF, JOHN RUIZ AND LORENZ SCHMIDL FASHION ASSISTANCE LINDSEY HORNYAK HAIR ASSISTANCE ESTER ROJAS RETOUCHING DIGITAL LIGHT LTD



'Army of God', 2008



'Gorgona', 2011

'Picasso chose his art over his kids, but he was never made to feel terrible about it.
His offspring are all pretty psyched to have been Picasso's offspring'



moms, people that are full-time artists, and people that are full-time socialites. I feel like I'm always trying to juggle all three. For me to have three kids is kind of suicidal in this business. Then on top of that, to be married to one of the most important, well-paid artists is another totally suicidal thing. It's complicated because you can't work three or four days a week for only five or six hours a day in this game. It's an extremely competitive business and you might as well throw in the towel if that's all you can give it.'

She stops again to ask a question of the driver about rush-hour traffic, and I tell her that I'm surprised to hear what she's saying. Based on entirely superficial assessments she was the picture of perfect balance. A 2011 *New York Times* story I read, for example, paints a portrait of her on the opening night of *The Snow Queen* as a magnetic tour de force, calm, charming, and completely in control of both the room and her happy, gurgling flock. 'Well, I wouldn't change any of what I have, obviously. I always wanted to have a great family and I knew I was going to get married to my husband when I first saw him. I would never be without them, but at the time that I was getting married and having kids I didn't realise that it's not possible to do everything. I talked to Richard Serra about this at a party the other day. He never had children and he hasn't really had a big love in his life. His whole thing is that you pay the price, you know? You have to choose what you want to do. Do you want to become a famous artist or do you want to have a great life?'

We arrive at the vet's and she asks the driver if he'll wait for us. One observation that the *New York Times* made that cannot be argued with is that Rachel has a unique kind of guile and

magnetism; the driver can't say no. Inside, she says that she's a bit concerned that all of what she's saying 'might sound a little bit indulgent'. It does, in way. In another, the problems she has, high quality as they may be, seem serious and political in that, thanks to her gender and her maternal urges, they seem unavoidable. Whether she wants them to be or not, the day-to-day issues of her life are impossible to disentangle from her work and the way it is received. Earlier, when we were in the studio, she showed me a painting on mirror that she had been working on. It was of herself holding one of her children. She said she had been resistant to include them in her work for a long time because she didn't want it 'to be all about being a mother and woman'. *The Snow Queen* was not a show that contained any references to family life that couldn't be traced back to her first show in 1994, long before she had even conceived of conceiving children with her husband. One review I read of it, though, a complimentary one, by someone who probably numbers among Rachel's friends, takes in the intricately observed rococo detailing of the her room sets, the unsettling effect of her grey cityscapes painted on mirror, the jarring kitsch of her giant fairytale cut-out figures and then suggests that her work would be great for 'private commissions for nurseries or children's rooms'. I've never read a review of her husband's paintings, even the cute ones, that makes any such suggestion.

'Motherhood, being a woman, is a totally consuming experience,' she says on the subject. 'And in the art world, if you find a way for it not to be, then you're totally killed for it. Alice Neel was a painter, and she was very good. She had kids and there's

'I've always thought that I'd rather say yes to everything than say no and to wonder what it would have been like'



this documentary about how she chose her painting over them, and how fucked up they are because of it. But her art was amazing. Picasso chose his art over his kids too, but he was never made to feel terrible about it. His offspring never talk about what a terrible person he was. They're all pretty psyched to be Picasso's offspring, you know.'

Chewy emerges, the physical opposite of her owner: tiny, frantic, black going grey, gremlin-faced with fur that's stiff with saliva and food. 'She's getting old,' Rachel warns. 'Her breath is lethal.' On the way back down town we talk more about the issue of how artists are perceived. Rachel and her husband have both, at various times, vocally asserted their right to have a certain lifestyle, despite the preconceptions of how an artist should live that, somehow, still exist. The two of them are featured often on the party pages of the kinds of magazines that have party pages; Rachel has been an inspiration to Marc Jacobs and a star of his advertising campaigns. None of these things, Rachel thinks, sit well with certain art-world fraternities.

'It's hard, because I want to do things like the Marc campaign, and sometimes be in magazines, if only for longevity's sake, so I have something nice to look at when I'm an old lady. But it makes people assume that I'm this crazy fashion obsessive, which I'm not. I mean, I do love fashion, I'll go to the Marc Jacobs show and sit there thinking. This is an art form, because it's so incredibly condensed in terms of what the vision is and because there is no bullshit. It's a perfect condensed version of adrenalin and art and beauty. In the real world though I'm not a shopper, for example.' She points out her jeans, which she got a lifetime ago from K-Mart. 'I've always thought that I'd rather say yes to everything than say no and wonder what it would have been like. What happens, though, is that when I say yes to things it gets me in trouble in terms of my legitimacy as a female artist. Men don't have that issue. When I first met John, he did a *GQ* shoot and he looked ridiculous: he was 32, all buffed out and they had him wearing like a tight, tight white T-shirt. You know, he was so silly-looking, it was so not about his art, but he doesn't even get in trouble for that kind of thing.'

Maybe it's naive, but I suggest that actually, it probably doesn't matter what people think. That first solo show back in 1994 sold out, as have most of hers since. Why not just forget about what the rest of the world has to say?

'Well, that's a question I often ask myself. There has been a change over the years, with the art world blending more with the mainstream, but it comes and goes a lot. When I first came onto the scene in the Nineties, there was no interest in the art world at all. You'd never read *Vanity Fair* or *Vogue* or *W* and see an article about an artist. Maybe that will happen again, maybe art will go back out of fashion. I don't know. The bottom line is that I am a social person. I do love to go to a party and I do like to dress up. I do like to talk to people; you learn things, you have experiences that are important. But ultimately it doesn't help me in selling my work. There are some people who love the idea that Tracey Emin is a phenomenon in England, for example, but the really major art collectors are not in it for that at all. They're in it to buy something that means something personal, or perhaps

something with historical value. Being in magazines isn't good for that reason: it makes things pop, and those collectors don't want pop. I think what I'm trying to figure out is what I'm doing for them and what I'm doing for me. Maybe I'll work it out in another 25 years and then I'll be really, really happy. I feel like saying yes to too many things is coming to haunt me now, affecting my relationship to my art.'

We're almost back at the studio and I'm worried about time, so somewhat frantically I ask her what that means, in real terms.

'I've always been interested in the relationship I have to my art, how it seems to be very fantasy-based. What I've been interested in since I was in college is fairytales and religion, and how, for example, a sleeping beauty story could have a correlation to a biblical story, which could have a correlation to Greek myth. I'm interested in how these things can be morality lessons that have been with people since early, early civilisation. Narcissus, Hansel and Gretel, Lot and his daughters. I'm interested in how all of these things from my work translate into my life, because they really don't, in a way.'

We go back into the studio. Chewy snuffles off into a corner; Cara's still working on the maquette. Rachel offers me a beer. 'It's the only thing I have here now that's cold and fresh. Because we just did a party here, not because I drink beer all the time. So what I was saying in the cab is that maybe the morality lessons in my work don't follow through into my life. I've been very interested in rococo, for example, in extremely ornate images and porcelain figurines, because they're so much about the fleeting opulence of the time. I think the people who made them must have been so aware of how fleeting it was to do it. Think about that Dutch still-life painting by Heda with the lobster and the skull. It's saying, "Enjoy your life right now, while you can, because you too will end up as just a skull, like I will. Don't let life rush by, in a blur."'

So in fact, when Rachel talks about juggling the kids and parties and the clothes with the work, she's talking about a pretty ancient problem that just happens to be manifesting itself in an affluent American life: the decision between living life in the moment, or sacrificing it to try sculpt it into something that will last longer. As hysterical as it may sound, she's talking about immortality, and the difficulty female artists still face in achieving it the way men can.

'I'm interested in making things that are handmade and beautiful,' she says, 'because beautiful things always last forever. A world war can happen, but the most beautiful things will be stored away safe, because that's what people care about, you know. When John turned 40, I bought him a drawing by Ludovico Carraeci from 500 years ago. It was quite cheap, amazingly, because people don't really buy old stuff, they want to buy new stuff. It's like, on a little tiny paper roll or something. It's very sketchy, very primitive, but it's really beautiful. And this little thing has obviously – it's from 1580 – lasted all of this time, through different families, different wars, and then I buy it in some little place in New York City, in some office, you know. Are people going to do that for the Duchamp urinal? I think probably not. So that's why I'm so concerned about my time. All I want is a few hours each day to try and make things that feel, in some way, beautiful.' ◊