

TRANSGRESSION

A Series Of Arresting Portraiture by Vincent Paul Yong
7th January to 31st January 2010
Level Two, Kinokuniya KLCC

The role of fashion photography in the digital age is often perceived as a vanity project undertaken by those in search of perfection, enjoyed for a split-second by a select niche of admirers and then archived in a hard-disk drive. **Transgression** is the culmination of photographer Vincent Paul Yong's work in both fashion photography and portraiture.

“When you are young, you're bound to make mistakes in life – the images of people laughing, crying and the like – portray the range of human behaviour that we go through. These emotions are the outcome of the transgressions, or the violation or deviation from society's expectations and norms.”

Ten models were cast for the series of twenty three black and white portraits. “Behind the lens, I was seeking emotion in its purest form, untainted by jaded experience or age; an almost naïvetè quality.” He adds, “I chose to shoot the portraits in monochrome for that very same reason – to that end the stylists, that I worked with to achieve the images – Yee Teng, Allien Gan, Kenneth Vernon, David Shaw and Sheng Saw – brought their own interpretation to the images of what transgression means to them.”

“Ultimately, every photographer's ambition is to have a solo show – it took myself five years to achieve a technique of black-and-white photography that I was satisfied with. Fashion photography is not just about showing the clothes; in it's most successful form, the collaborative effort between model, photographer and the creative team tells a story, but more importantly, it captures the *zeitgeist*, or the spirit of the times.

With the advent of the Photoshop age, there is a tendency for everything to be too perfect – **Transgression** is not about achieving the winning shot – the fractious quality of the portraits aim to address the fact that there can be beauty in imperfection too.

Transgression is made possible with the kind sponsorship of Canon, ImagePro, Icon Model Management, Faces Model Management and Kinokuniya Books KLCC.

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About Vincent Paul Yong

A personal account by Robert Chan, editor, CLIVE

I first met Vincent four years ago, when I was telling him how unhappy I was about something or the other. He duly asked me to join him on a road-trip. Where we reached was insignificant; I ended up enjoying the journey more than the destination anyway. Therein marks the ability of an able photographer: the capability (and willingness) to connect with his subjects on an emotional level whilst retaining that thirst for the new. New backdrops, new techniques, new poses. I've worked with Vincent on both a professional and personal level, and while his account of call times on shoots may be elastic at a stretch, all is forgiven when he images feed through the Fire Wire on to the viewing station. After all, don't we all make compromises for the ones we admire? Eccentric, quirky and a creative *tour de force* to be reckoned with in his Raf Simons for Dr. Martens patent leather shoe boots, I have only one question for him: When's our next shoot?

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Questions & Answers With Vincent Paul Yong

1. How much of a personal struggle is it for you to make the choice between digital and film mediums in your work?

It depends on whether digital can achieve the quality that film requires, in certain instances. Most of the time now, Photoshop can achieve pretty much anything. Film is extremely time-consuming: the outcome is uncertain and it's not cost-effective. It's a question of time and budget but shooting on film can give a strong sense of personal satisfaction. For agency work, it's clear-cut: everything needs to be precise, pitch-perfect. Film is more temperamental: there's depth of field, saturation and a limited focal length. The possibility for manipulation in the digital medium is infinite.

2. How have the works of Irving Penn, Peter Lindbergh, Juergen Teller, Nick Knight and Terry Richardson informed and molded your style of fashion photography?

I've always been intrigued by their work and an end result that is different from the rest, not just for difference's sake. They are constantly pushing the boundaries of what fashion photography can be. And this has encouraged me to experiment on things away from the mainstream; to find the balance in my work between what is judged to be pretty by society. Some photographs may be deemed childish at first glance but the creative process behind it can be mind staggering.

3. With the ease of digital photography these days, there's an assumption that anyone, and indeed, everyone, can be a photographer. But we know that being a photographer is not only about 'point, click and shoot.' Let's talk about the emotional aspects of your fashion photography/ portraiture work.

Any photographer will try to maintain a 'signature' style in their photography: from the make-up used on the model to the clothes that they choose to shoot and being really selective of what they shoot. What the audience should understand is that the creative process behind fashion photography is not simply about pushing a Photoshop filter button or achieving a blurred effect. The photograph is the culmination of the photographer's entire core being, his belief system and his convictions, his very essence of being. Fashion photography is a collaboration and it is not a one man job.

4. What projects are you working on for 2010?

I'm working on a coffee table book of mainly portraitures that should be out in the middle of the year, together with another exhibition.

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God bless and mercibeaucoup.