

YES, THEY HAVE MORE MONEY

by Angus Cook

Excerpts from a conversation between Angus Cook and Jessica Craig-Martin.

“This is a hand that was born bored. Its sense of entitlement is complete. It knows that the best guardian against failed optimism is to have none. This is a hand that has never heard ‘NO’.” (About ‘Ice Age’ Rita Hayworth Alzheimer’s Benefit, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, 1999 - cover photograph).



“It all started at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York City. I was on my first assignment for American Vogue; photographing *A TRIBUTE TO GOLDIE HAWN*. Can you imagine anything more important? In front of my lens, the *Vogue* prey. Perfect girls, in perfect fashion, getting it so right. But when I looked to my right and left, I saw amazing creatures, Carol Channing, Joan Rivers, Gina Lollobrigida. All of them getting in wonderfully wrong. This is when it gets interesting. Who cares about getting it right? The gap between aspiration and reality is where the photographs happen. By the end of the shoot, I had two separate piles of pictures.”

“There is always a glimmer of vulnerability from my subjects. I sense it just before I shoot them. This vulnerability is important for me, more important than identity or beauty or celebrity, which are all devalued currencies in our culture.”

“By framing the image to focus on the trappings of luxury, the viewers attention is turned to what I call ‘the gaudy veneer of philanthropy.’ 99% of eye contact is about reassurance. Remove the eyes from an image, and it ceases to reassure. We are pushed to look for other clues. Baffling sartorial flourishes, forced gaiety, sweating sushi, diamond draped décolletage, obsolete formalities, lurid lipstick smears, the smell of boredom.”

“Some are driven to document where the gold comes from. I want to see where it goes.”



“Why should anyone be required to put on rubber gloves to serve a glass of champagne? But waiters were required to, that season in the Hamptons. Then there was the fashion for proletariat food - but only in miniature. Some rich person must have had a brainwave - ‘How amusing to serve poor people’s food at the party, no? So chic. So fabulous. Mini hamburgers - cute! Cocktail wieners - divine!’”

“Tobias Meyer told me I am much crueller to woman than to men. I had to think about that. The answer is simple. This is because women are so much crueller to themselves.”

“I don’t make any significant adjustments to the photographs in post-production, because that isn’t the point. In fact, it’s the opposite of the point. What is the point? The point is that everything is unfixable.”

“Jewels next to flesh are such a good idea. They steel one against mortality. But however many trust funds, implants or fur that one throws at oneself, too much will still never be enough. It can never be enough because, finally, jewels next to flesh only make the liver spots lo that much larger. Ultimately flesh fails us all; youth and beauty are merely loans with heavy interest.”

“For an art to work, there has to be ambivalence and conflict. And what could be more conflicted

and ambivalent than forced gaiety or a false smile? There's something very real about false smiles. I recognize my own optimism in them."



"The optimism I refer to is something I feel is a sometimes overlooked aspect of my work. Perhaps this is because it's a form of optimism which implicates. The viewer is presented with a choice either to identify with this particular manifestation of hope -- and all that entails. Or the viewer is free to dismiss this particular emotion as a form of delusion or denial."

"The possibility that the viewer may determine the outcome of the dilemma as they so choose is an option that pleases me, as much as it pleased me to make the pictures and the dilemma."

"There is for me something moving in the disparity between the aspiration and the actuality that is on display, again and again and again. I myself embrace that disparity, but do not require the viewer to, any more than I would expect the viewer to don rubber gloves to serve me a glass of champagne."

Angus Cook was born in Glasgow in 1961. He has published interviews and essays on a wide range of artists, including Gary Hume, Rob Pruitt, Sarah Lucas, Adam McEwen, Elizabeth Peyton, Angus Fairhurst, Matthew Barney and Lucian Freud. He works as a journalist in New York, but also makes art. He is currently working on a concrete poem, *Sickness and Diarrhea*, which he hopes to finish before he dies.