

# MERCURIAL MOSS

*James Danziger, the photo editor turned photography dealer, captures the ultimate subject—Kate Moss—in a new, limited-edition portfolio. Carol Kino gets a closer look.*

**I**t was a bleak winter day in Manhattan's Chelsea gallery district, but the photography dealer James Danziger seemed to be in a sunny mood. He had recently returned from the Pulse art fair in Miami, where his gallery, Danziger Projects, had caused quite a stir with a portfolio of photographs of the über-model Kate Moss. Because of where his booth was positioned, Danziger said, "people would come around the corner and see her immediately. It was not only the center of attention at our booth but the center of attention at the fair."

Designed by the renowned magazine art director Ruth Ansel, the silver-boxed portfolio holds 11 photographs of Moss, one of which is truly iconic: the 1993 nude portrait shot by Mario Sorrenti for Calvin Klein's "Obsession" campaign, which transformed the waif-like model into a household name. Although the other images are less known, they dramatically highlight Moss's versatility as a subject. A 1997 color photograph by Terry Richardson shows her sleeping with a teddy bear outside the gates of Graceland, like a love-struck teenybopper. In a 2008 nude, shot by Mert and Marcus for *Interview*, she metamorphoses into a curvaceous Debbie Harry look-alike, while a 1994 Glen Luchford shot depicts her as a skinny punk frolicking in a seedy Times Square.

Although Moss helped choose the images, it was Danziger who conceived of the project. He had collaborated with Moss in 1995, when he mounted an exhibition of photographs from *Kate: The Kate Moss Book*, and was eager to do so again.

"I've always felt Kate was an unusual photographic subject," he explained. "She has a unique combination of naturalism and exoticism and beauty, and a muse-like way of engaging with photographers and artists." And besides, he added, "as a dealer I was aware of the fact that pictures of her tend to do very well." Indeed, the first 10 sets of the 30-edition portfolio sold out at Pulse, each to the tune of \$75,000. (The price now stands at \$100,000 and will jump to \$125,000 once another 10 have been sold.)

Despite this commercial savvy, Danziger didn't set out to be an art dealer. Instead he spent his early career working as a photo editor at newspapers and magazines. (He remains deeply involved with that world today via his wife, Lucy Danziger, the editor-in-chief of *Self*.)







Annie Leibovitz, Paris, 1999



Born and raised in London, and educated at Yale, Danziger was working at a nonprofit photography gallery in London when the legendary British editor Harold Evans suddenly tapped him for a position on the photo desk of *The Sunday Times*. The next year, at the tender age of 25, he was named picture editor of *The Sunday Times Magazine*.

"It was the ideal creative training ground," Danziger said. "We took pride in the excellence of our visuals, but without the commercial pressure of having to sell on the newsstand. We were really free to do anything that we thought was original and interesting."

He carried that same attitude to New York in 1983, when Tina Brown (Evans's wife) invited him to work at *Vanity Fair*. Danziger helped conceive many of the projects that put the then-struggling magazine on the map, including the annual "Hall of Fame" issue. He also produced the famous January 1985 cover that pictures Ronald and Nancy Reagan dancing together at the White House in black tie. "It's considered the pivotal issue in the business history of the modern *Vanity Fair*," said Danziger. "Before then, we had been losing money. But when we got the Reagans on the cover, it totally turned things around."

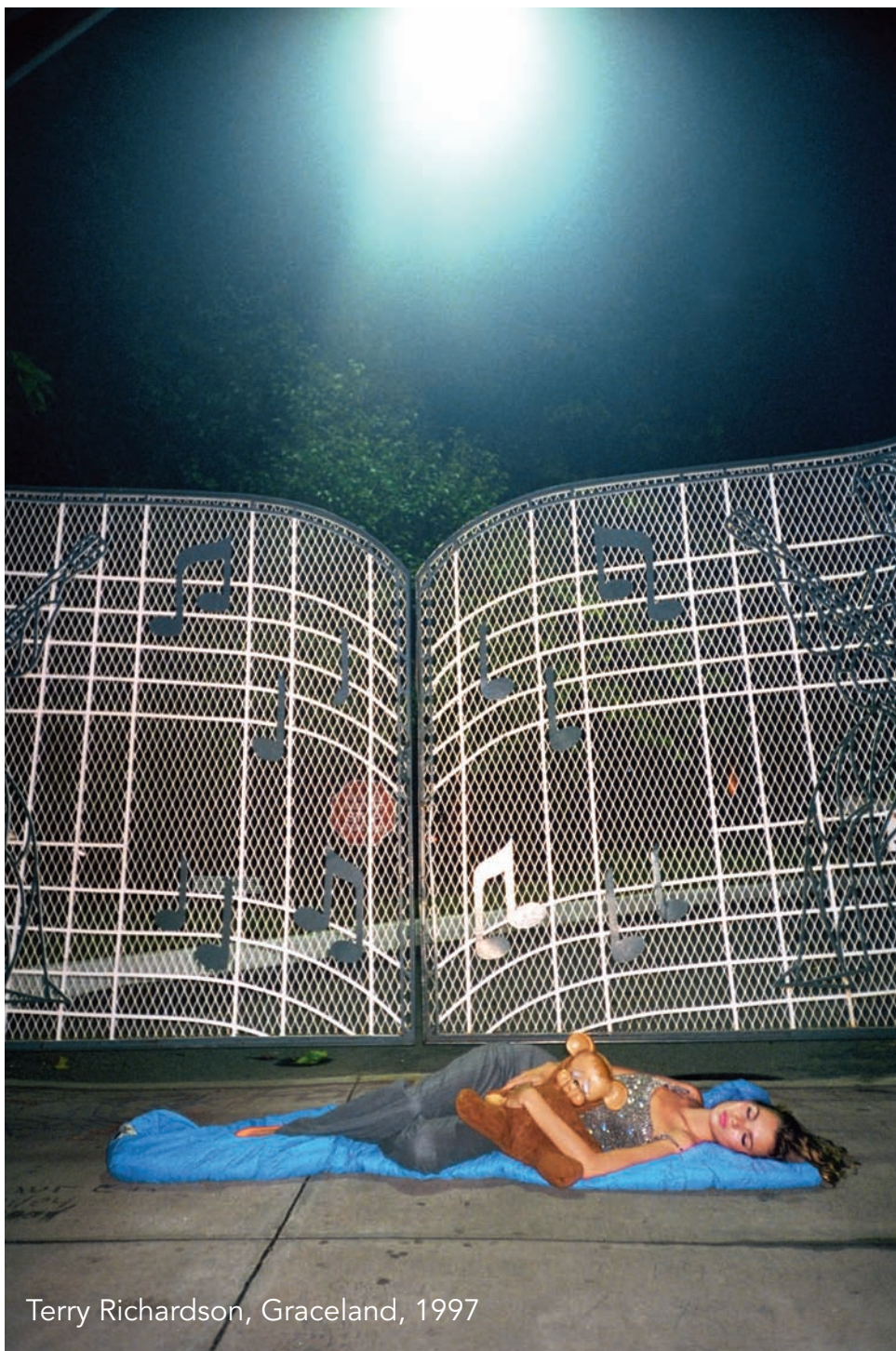
In 1990, after helping Evans launch *Conde Nast Traveler*, he opened Danziger Gallery in SoHo. Because of his many magazine connections, Danziger started out with a glittering stable of talent, including Annie Leibovitz, Henri Cartier-Bresson, the nature photographer Eliot Porter and the Cecil Beaton estate. But though he had the right artists, "I didn't have a client list," Danziger admitted ruefully. "I spent the first few months trying to figure out how galleries worked."

By 1999, however, the gallery had become so large and profitable that Danziger, feeling creatively stymied, decided to call it quits. "We had a huge staff and a huge overhead," he said. "It had become the carrot leading the horse." On his own again, he launched artland.com, a fine-art print website. When that foundered during the tech bust, he became director of the photo agency Magnum New York—an experience that convinced him it was time to run his own gallery again.

When he finally reopened it in late 2004, he organized it as a project space, rather than a full-fledged gallery—one that would allow him to mount shows with many different artists without having to represent them, while also working on collaborations like the Moss portfolio.

Curiously, many of Danziger's favorite collaborations seem to function almost like extended magazine spreads. "There's definitely a magazine-y aspect to a lot of what I do," he said. Soon after reopening, he persuaded the Magnum photojournalist Paul Fusco to print a definitive set of his little-known 1968 "RFK Funeral Train" pictures—which resulted in an Aperture monograph and a show at his gallery in late 2008. He also convinced the Andy Warhol estate to let him show and sell the Polaroids the artist used to make his portraits. His first exhibition of this work, "Greatness: Andy Warhol Polaroids of Sports Champions," opened in late 2009. The second installment, "Big Shots: Andy Warhol's Portraits of Celebrities" (such as Marisa Berenson, Giorgio Armani and Yoko Ono), is up through February 26.

"It's about trying to put together the best and most interesting program that fits in with a certain aesthetic," said Danziger. "I'm interested in pictures that are beautiful, but which also have some kind of art historical validity."



Terry Richardson, *Graceland*, 1997





Bruce Weber, Golden Beach, Florida, 1997



David Sims, London, 2006





Mario Testino, London, 2008