

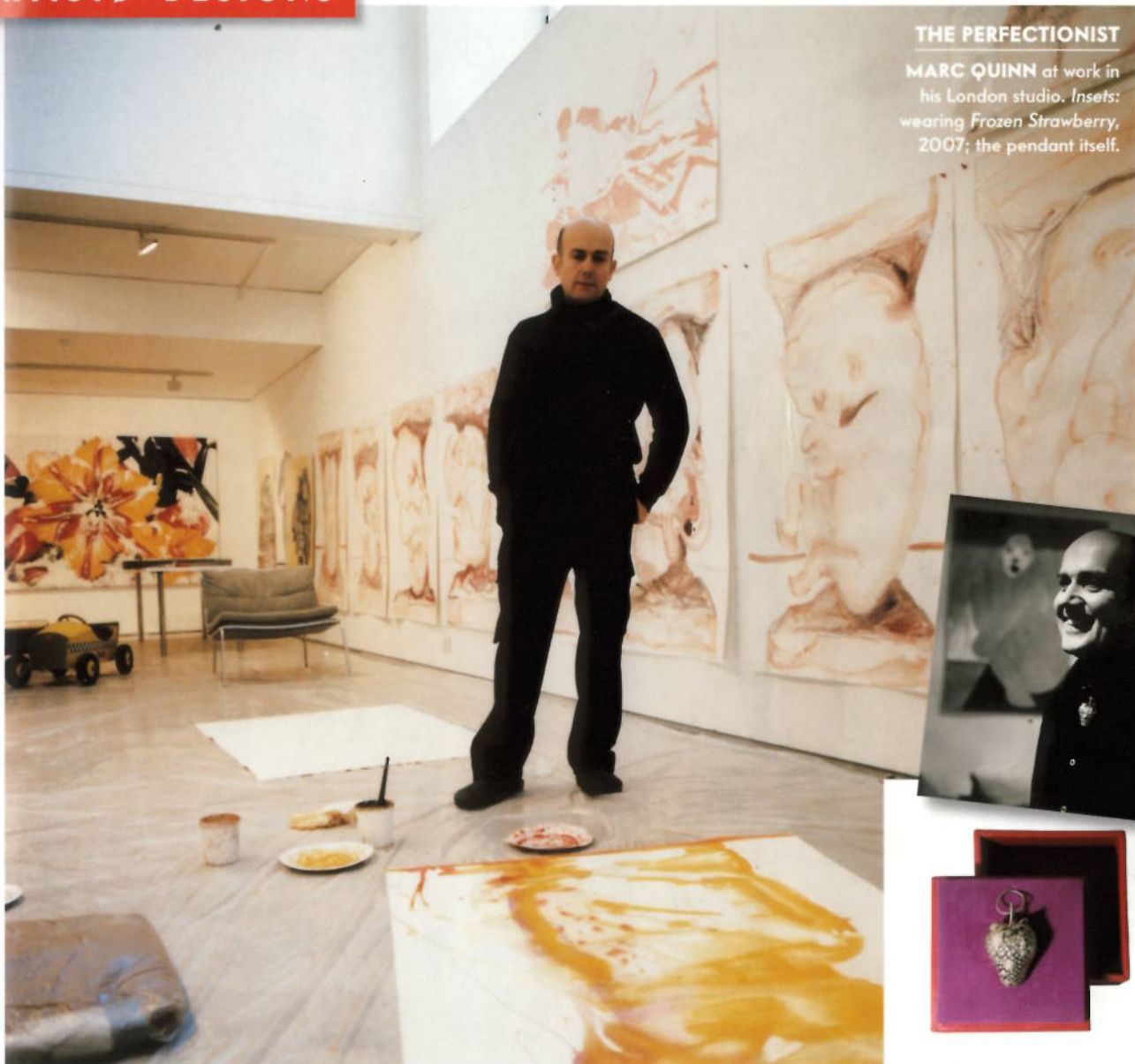
VANITY FAIR

JULY 2007

PLUS JEWELLERY



FIRE AND ICE
AND 72 PAGES OF RAVISHING ROCKS,
GINORMOUS GEMS AND FANCY FRIPPERIES



THE PERFECTIONIST

MARC QUINN at work in his London studio. Insets: wearing *Frozen Strawberry*, 2007; the pendant itself.

LITTLE MASTERPIECES

Artists have often dabbled in jewellery design. Five of Britain's finest living painters and sculptors are currently doing particularly interesting things with baubles, says DAISY PRINCE

Many artists have created jewellery as a way to supplement their income. Jean Arp, Georges Braque, Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí and Pablo Picasso all miniaturised their work, transforming it into earrings, necklaces and tie pins. Now a new generation of British artists is creating pieces that are once again blurring the boundary between jewellery and fine art.

Much of the resurgence of jewellery as art is due to dealer and impresario Louisa Guinness. Her method is straightforward: "We approach the artists we like and ask if they've ever worked on any jewellery before. Some of them have, but they don't have the time to work on the pieces themselves, so I might put them together with a goldsmith who

is able to implement their design. As art gets more and more expensive, this is one way of being able to buy some of the biggest names in the art world without the price tag."

MARC QUINN

Marc Quinn's work deals with the concept that perfection is only attainable by something that is not living. To illustrate his point, Quinn recently created a two-carat diamond out of his own hair and called it *At Last, I'm Perfect*. The hair was burnt and the extracted carbon was then transformed into synthetic diamonds. "Human beings and

THE PROVOCATEURS

Real Life Is Rubbish, 2002, a sculpture made from discarded objects, which casts a shadow in the shape of the artists, **TIM NOBLE** and **SUE WEBSTER**.

Inset: Fucking Beautiful necklace, 2004.



diamonds are both made of carbon," he says. "But whereas a human will keep evolving no matter what, a diamond is permanently frozen perfection."

While Quinn didn't use self-made diamonds for his very first piece of jewellery, *Frozen Strawberry* (2007), he still wanted to work with diamonds' frozen perfection. For further inspiration, he looked back to earlier works: *Garden* (2000) and a series of flower paintings. "In *Garden* I froze a garden of exotic flowers in silicone. They looked alive but their matter was dead, and the temperature of the garden had to stay at minus-20 degrees Centigrade or the flowers would turn black. I wanted to take a strawberry out of the garden and make it eternal."

Quinn's strawberry pendant is made of 18-carat white gold with diamond seeds. In addition to the diamond seeds there are clusters of pavé diamonds set in patches around the strawberry, making it look as though it has been dipped in sugar. This is a technically challenging piece, as each of the 270 diamonds had to be individually set. "To me, the strawberry

is just another kind of refreezing. Although this fruit isn't literally frozen, like my previous sculpture, it is metaphorically frozen, because diamonds and gold don't evolve like the person wearing it does. The reason I chose the materials was purely aesthetic. Gold doesn't tarnish and this works with the idea that jewellery is eternal and doesn't need to be polished. I really made this for my wife to wear. I do believe that jewellery only comes alive when it's being worn by someone else."

TIM NOBLE AND SUE WEBSTER

Partners in art and in life, this duo have been creating sculptures together for over 10 years. Noble and Webster met as students at the Nottingham Polytechnic Institute. Their first collection of jewellery, an assortment of cufflinks and earrings in skull-and-crossbones shapes, was inspired by Noble's first romantic gesture towards Webster. She recalls the



THE TRANSFORMER

GAVIN TURK at ease in his London studio. *Insets:* his sculpture *Dump*, 2004, and *Cufflinks*, 2004.

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH AND "DUMP" STILL-LIFE BY RICHARD LEGGE

story: "When I first met Tim at art school he had a gold skull ring, which I thought was really cool. His mum is a jeweller and he asked her to make me one, so she cast me a ring in the same yellow gold. Later on, Tim's mum gave us the diamonds from her engagement ring for the eyes. Those are the only two skull rings she's ever made and they provided the idea for the earrings and cufflinks."

The second piece of jewellery that Noble and Webster made was a miniature version of a larger, celebrated sculpture of a five-foot tall flashing-neon heart that says "Fucking Beautiful". The necklace, in white and yellow gold, circles the neck quite tightly. "They are just small works of art. I make jewellery that I would want to wear myself," says Webster. "The person who wears the *Fucking Beautiful* necklace is brave, because it's a strong statement, and it's actually kind of painful to wear. It's spiky and sticky and it looks dangerous and provocative. It also gives men an excuse to the look at the contours of a lady's neck unreservedly. It's like wearing a golden crown of thorns."

GAVIN TURK

One of the original members of the Y.B.A. movement, Gavin Turk is known for twisting the viewer's perception to the limit. As Guinness says: "Gavin is an artist who wants to celebrate both the finer things in life and the ordinary things in life. He thinks that everything has an intrinsic value, whether it's rubbish bags or diamonds."

Turk's first collection of jewellery is a cheeky series of pendants, earrings, tie pins and cufflinks in which the jewels are moulds of masticated chewing gum. The collection is fun and easier to wear than some of the other artists' jewellery. Turk says: "The main thing for me was to create a sculpture, only smaller. My dad is a jeweller and I tried to make these earrings in platinum for my wife, but they were too heavy and she couldn't wear them. Instead we took an acrylic, synthetic material that could be made to look like gum and could be fixed to the backs of earrings, tie pins and so on. I chewed the



THE ILLUSIONIST

ANISH KAPOOR at work in his London studio. *Insets: Water Ring, 2003; sketches for a ring design, 2003.*

gum, made a mould of it, and then poured the resin into it and finally it worked. To me, the gum was a semi-precious material and I thought of it more like a rough-cut diamond."

Guinness says: "They weigh almost nothing and people are constantly coming up to me at parties and asking if they are pearls." Turk wants the wearer to be noticed wearing his jewels. "Jewellery has the possibility to be infused with art. I like the process of asking the audience to question their perception of someone wearing small bits of chewing gum. When someone is wearing my jewellery their body becomes my plinth."

ANISH KAPOOR

As an artist, Anish Kapoor is fascinated with the idea of optical illusion, and as a jeweller he is no different. His series *Water Rings* was inspired by some of his earlier works. He has admitted in the past that "I am interested in the 'non-object' and the 'non-material' and I like to make things

that are not what they first seem to be."

It should come as no surprise that, when he decided to do jewellery, he chose to create rings without gems. The rings are 22-carat gold hollows, lined with enamel. Seen from a distance, they fool the viewer into thinking that they are filled with precious jewels. They are the ultimate cocktail rings. "I have always been interested in trying to buy good jewellery for my wife and I have an unusual collection of early Indian pieces," he says. "I think that the jewellery one wears says something about you. I thought of a small series of rings around the idea of space. I had done a long mirror series about 10 or 15 years ago, and in a way these rings relate to that. I wanted to make an illusory space in the ring and create a jewel without a jewel in it. Truly beautiful things always allude to something else. These rings are quite playful."

