

THIRD ISSUE

BERKELEY *bespoke*

LUXURY TRAVEL AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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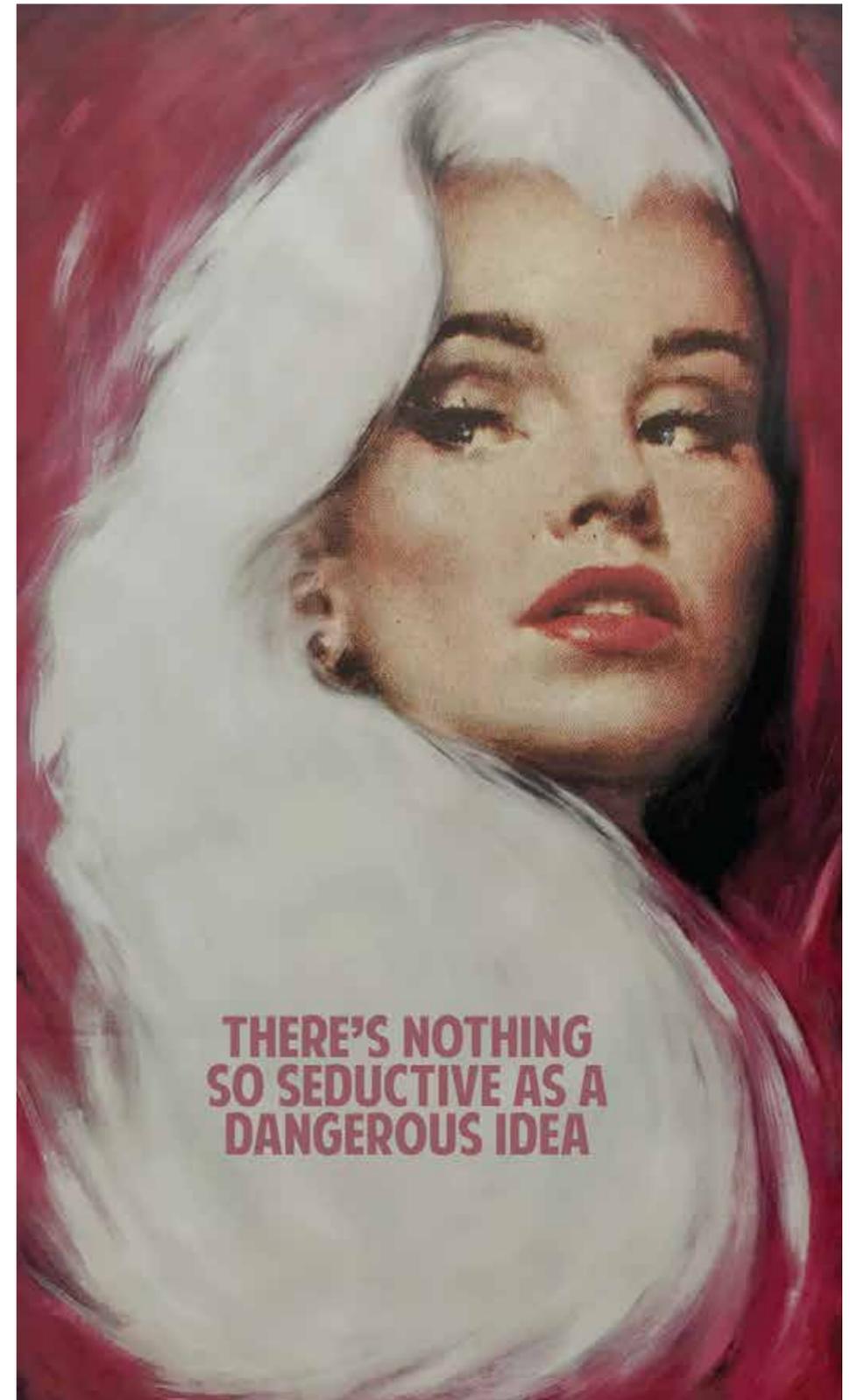
S E E ?

The Connor Brothers

TRYING *to* MAKE SENSE
of the WORLD

A fantasy World of intrigue, danger, passion and romance. This is the iconic Art by an artistic duo known as The Connor Brothers. Composed of Mike Snelle and James Golding, the artistic collaboration became internationally famous for their satirical reinterpretations of the contemporary World.

Interview by Arina Sprynz



The Art of the Connor Brothers strongly engages the audience, is it the representation of the feelings that you deeply care about?

MS: I suppose, that all the wide scope of human emotions, from the worst to the best - is what our work is all about. It is trying to connect the people and trying to understand their emotions. The feeling of being connected - is very important, we create for people to be connected to it, that would make them understand something about themselves.

Becoming The Connor Brothers - a fascinating fiction story, who came up with this idea?

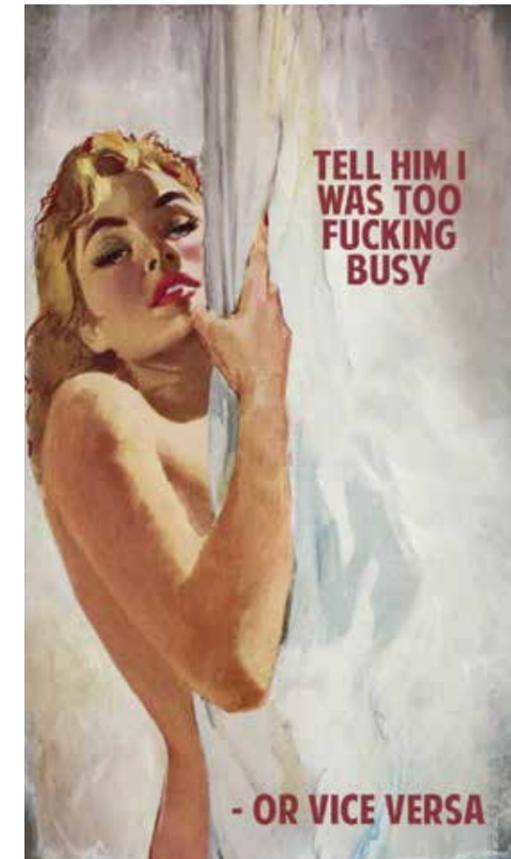
JG: Mike wrote a story in 20 minutes on the train.

MS: The train doesn't seem that relevant (laughing). We have been making Art just for fun and never intended to show it. And James suddenly really wanted to show it to the World, which I was very against! And eventually I said, that I would only share it if we could come up with a fictional story.

JG: We created a lot of fictional stories around that time and that was one of them. And from having conversations about those stories it became evident that loads of aspects of the real World around us was appearing inside those stories, even that, we didn't realise at that time.

Your joint interaction developed into making art together, a process that you describe as "trying to make sense of the World". Does it make more sense now?

JG: When we were talking about making sense of the World - it was about negative mental health experiences in both of our lives. Either that was an addiction or mental health experience. A shared experience was - psychosis. And when you experience that - you have a delusional sense of the World. There are a lot of parallels of the stories of the Connor Brothers and that time we were exploring and trying to make more sense of the World. As the result of doing this for the last 7 or so years - do I have more understanding of the World? I am not sure that I do. I don't think that the World makes sense to me, I believe that it is just as crazy... but I have now more sense of my place in this World.



Who is the Hero figure in each of your lives?

JG: MIKE!

MS: (Laughing happily).

JG: We were talking about this today and it is an awkward question. There are loads of people who we respect in the Art World. We like the Art of James Turrell, he is really incredible. We first saw his work in LACMA and were amazed how he architects the space and light to create the artwork that exists temporarily and only in your mind.

MS: Yes, he is amazing, he blows our minds.

JG: And at that time we were still using the fictional story of The Connor Brothers and hadn't come out, we'd also kind of fallen out from the art World and his inspirational work really brought us back. He is an art Hero.

You showcased your work with the Maddox Gallery during Art Miami. How is participating at Art Basel Miami for The Connor Brothers?

MS: It was really great, as you feel like with Maddox is a true collaboration. They do care, they care how you are represented as an artist and how you are shown. It was our best experience showing at the Art fair.

JG: Maddox has a very good collectors base and they have introduced us to some fascinating people. It was really an amazing fair and great support from Maddox Gallery.

Does travelling play a big role in inspiring your creativity?

MS: Mostly on a bus!... (haha)

JG: That is not very Berkeley Bespoke (laughing), what is a bus?!

I will tell you how travelling really inspires our work. Aside from the crazy art work that we put on our walls and selling it - Mike and I had a long standing activism and several years ago we decided to visit a refugee camp in Calais, and as a result of an experience of travelling there - we were exposed to the horrific conditions that the refugees were living in and we decided to team up with the activist group 'Pussy Riot'. We did a lot of fundraising to build shelters for people living there, and that encouraged us to further work on a good cause and one particular campaign - Refuchic. Where we subverted magazines, such as Conde Nast Traveller and Vogue to raise further awareness of the refugee crisis.

MS: Travelling is being free from your normal situation, that allows you to think differently, and a lot of fun ideas that we ever had - was when we were free from our regular routine.

JG: And also, it might sound ridiculous, but in all seriousness, most of the art works that we create - happened when we were in taxis, airplanes, isolated places, not really in the studios. The ideas come and then they are manifested into something special.



From a creative point of view, what comes first, the quote or the image?

MS: The words first... and the image after. It is very word related, rather than image related.

JS: We create studies, which inform the paintings. It is a dialog between both of us, but really, it all starts with words.

What is 1 thing you always travel with and why?

MS: Medication is what I travel with, antipsychotic medication. Because off medication I am really fun but dangerous. I can't forget those if I fly, because that is going to be wild.

JS: I take a back up of antipsychotic medication, because if it gets him - it is a nightmare! (haha)

What does Bespoke mean to you?

JS: I guess in this context I think about the dialog that we are engaging with clients of ours and fortunate to be commissioned by some very interesting people.