

NOWNNESS

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Five Star Frisson

Erwin Olaf Checks in With "Hotel"

Erwin Olaf is always on the move—exhaustingly so. The Dutch photographer has racked up so many miles on his airline loyalty card that it's gone from zero to platinum within a year, as he is quick to mention. But globehopping for commercial clients including BMW, Levi's, Martini, The New York Times and Elle, as well as to promote frequent exhibitions and books (the latest was 2008's *Grief*) is not as glamorous as it seems. "Your family and friends say, 'Oh you have such an exciting life, because you travel so much,'" he gripes, "but most of the time, it's you in your hotel room waiting around." The loneliness of the jet-set lifestyle is the inspiration behind his latest project, *Hotel*, which takes place in a series of fictitious interiors based upon Olaf's Polaroid snapshots of the rented rooms of his pan-European adventures. Olaf's team built the elaborate sets from scratch in the studio (each one took three days to realize), meticulously recreating details, from the prints on the walls to the light switches and flashing answering machines. Taking center-stage in these faux environments are sultry, scantily dressed models who, Olaf says, are all too familiar with the solitary experience of time spent in foreign locations. Their longing gazes, discarded shoes and half-empty drink glasses create a sense of unfinished narrative that is typical of Olaf's recent work, including the similarly suggestive series *Dusk and Dawn* (set in fantastical, Victoriana-tinged rooms). "I don't like the real world," he says of his penchant for artificiality. "I steal from fashion and documentary, and I make my own mixture." Olaf's latest show, *Recent Work*, opens at London's Hamiltons Gallery on April 29.