

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

Martin Schoeller's Never-Before-Collected Photographs

Michael Gossett, November 12, 2014



Cate Blanchett; Universal City, CA, 2006

Martin Schoeller's highly detailed celebrity close-up is as distinct a signature as any in contemporary photography. The German-born, New York-based photographer, and former assistant to Annie Leibovitz, is best known for his splashy editorials in magazines such as GQ, Time, and Vogue, and for the characteristic head shot he's perfected while a staff photographer at The New Yorker. With the success he's had, one could understand if his new book, *Portraits* (TeNeues, \$125), was simply more of the same. The volume's cover, however, suggests that perhaps this title is a bit tongue in cheek, as George Clooney's always-handsome façade, instead of being laid bare for us to lust over, is papered over with a torn-out scrap from a second photo of him—one the actor wears like a bandit's mask—in a kind of composite that is just as much satirical collage as it is feature portrait.

Schoeller's *Portraits* and his accompanying show at Hasted Kraeutler in New York highlight the staggering range of composition and tone in the photographer's oeuvre, from his most recognizable images to his previously unseen magazine work. And though the portraits are frequently uniform in lighting and size, the subtle shifts in angles and the prop work (Zach Galifianakis wears Fruit Loops in his beard) draw out the small but defining expressions of each subject in a way that would feel like we were catching them in a rare moment of unguarded honesty if it didn't feel more like, yes, they look just like this all the time.

There's something profoundly funny about much of Schoeller's work here, a fascinating complement to the strictly fine-art approach of his 2012 monograph *Identical*, which featured face-on portraits of twins. In this way, Schoeller, the man behind the camera, resembles in part the people he puts in front of it, straddling the line between Hollywood and ha-ha the way Steve Carell does in one of the book's best shots: one half of his photogenic mug gazing deep into the back of the camera, the other half sagging and distorting under the bind of a dangling roll of Scotch tape.

Through January 3, 2015, at Hasted Kraeutler, New York; hastedkraeutler.com