

HAMPTONS

Picture Perfect

One of the up-and-coming stars of the art and photography world, Raphael Mazzucco is coming to Southampton. by Jason Chen

AFTER TWO SOLD-OUT (and celebrity-studded) exhibitions in New York and Los Angeles, Valmorbida Inc.—headed by Australian billionaire-turned-art dealer Andy Valmorbida—will host an invitation-only showing and exhibition of the work of fashion photographer and contemporary artist Raphael Mazzucco. Commercially recognized for his work in the Guess Jeans campaign and the 2006 *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue, Mazzucco also strives to take his photography to new levels. Using paint, resin, and sand to transform his photographs into vividly textural art, Mazzucco transports the viewer into a phantasmagorical version of reality. In advance of his August 25 showing at Valmorbida's Southampton compound, we talked with the artist about his approach to photography and art.

HAMPTONS: How did you get started in photography?

RAPHAEL MAZZUCCO: I started photographing musicians, like Sarah McLachlan. I'm from Vancouver, so I started shooting for [McLachlan's label] Nettwerk Records. After that I moved to Milan and lived there for five years—that's where I studied fashion photography.

H: Was there anybody whose work really influenced you?

RM: So many—[Richard] Avedon, Irving Penn, Joel-Peter Witkin. Witkin's technique, as far as what he does with the negatives, is really cool. And painters really inspire me. I love Rauschenberg. I think my strength is that I have a passion for color, and I just love the use of raw paint. So that's what I'm pretty much doing with the art pieces I'm working on. They're minimalistic, but at the same time we try to work with color and lots of resin. We've been pouring that over the photographs, and from there what we do is build layers. We'll pour

maybe a quarter of an inch and then add different materials—mostly raw materials from nature.

H: Who was your favorite person you ever photographed?

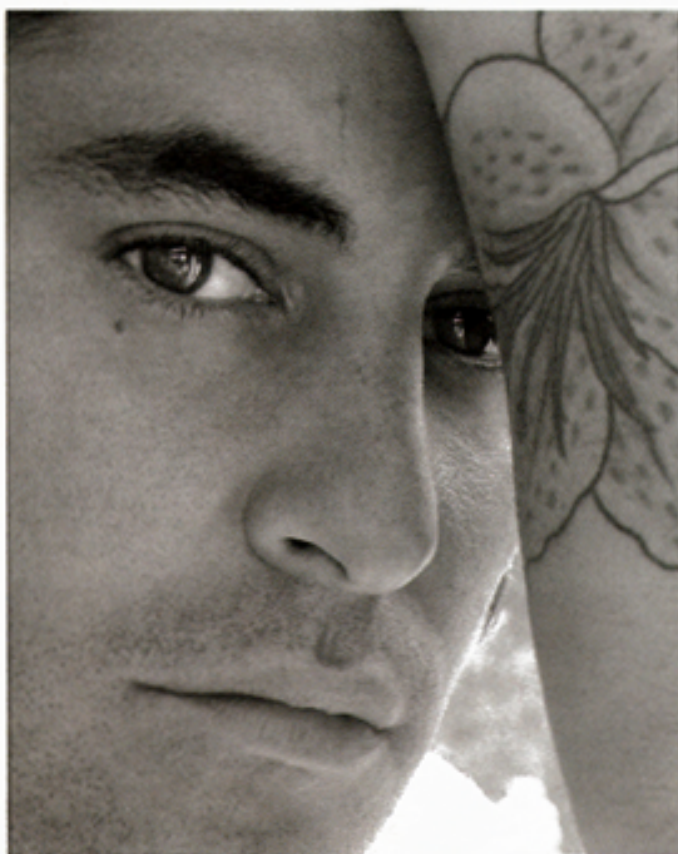
RM: That's a tough one. I just shot Iman last week and that was really cool. If I'm shooting Gisele, it's completely different, but just as much fun. It's hard to say one person. I did a beautiful portrait of Paul Morrissey for Italian *Vogue*, which I really loved. All the stories behind his whole life—that's what's so interesting.

H: What do you think of the trend toward fashion editorials featuring celebrities instead of models?

RM: I think it's a really nice progression. With actors and actresses, they're so salable that it makes it so much easier. And as for the whole model situation, I think it's just forever changing. Do you think they're going to have the models back? It's hard to say.

H: How does photographing a celebrity differ from photographing a model?

RM: I think that celebrities are very intuitive in the way they like to be projected, because of what they're doing then and there. If there's a role, say, where the girl's playing a mother, everything is so publicized toward that. It's pretty crazy how they can be so thespian, and how they can change. But with models, you can just change them with clothes and makeup.



"Chemistry's everything.
You can feel it, see it, and know it."

H: What do you think is the difference between a beautiful person and beauty in a photograph? Is there a difference?

RM: There is absolutely a difference. Chemistry's everything. You can feel it, see it, and know it. **H**