



Müdd

magazine

THE ARTist ISSUE

Model: Marha
Photographer: Jean Pierre Domingue



Dear Readers,

I present the third issue of Müdd Magazine. In this issue, I am especially excited about our interview with artist Cosimo Cavallaro. His sculpture and installation pieces will shock and amaze you. Our profile of Orson Welles feels especially pertinent to our times. As always our Fashion and Beauty Editorials capture the dreams and imaginations of our audience.

These past few months has been a really transformative time for our magazine and we are excited to grow our brand and reach you. We are now published on Zinio.com so that you can download our magazine directly to your computer, iPad or iPhone. It is a truly unique experience and highlights our dedication to the environment. Paperless magazines is an ethical choice that we decided to make for our environment and our publication. Enjoy!

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CREATIVE DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
MÜDD MAGAZINE



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ON THE EDGE

Cosimo Cavallaro challenges social conventions through his art

by Julia Teeluck



CHEESE CHAIR



KETCHUP

Cosimo Cavallaro's unconventional approach to art has inspired, bewildered, angered, and intrigued his spectators. His primary medium is installation art.

Cavallaro's last installation entitled *I Was Here* was performed in 2009 at ORANGE – Il Nostro Gusto, a contemporary art event in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec. He completely covered a room in ketchup—the walls, the floors, a table and chair. Every inch of the room was splattered in the thick red substance. In a candid interview with Müdd, Cavallaro described his artistic process, why he gravitates towards art that “cannot be framed,” and his fondness for incorporating food into his work.

Indeed, the Montreal native has a penchant for covering spaces and objects with food. He incorporates food into many of his performances. This is sometimes met with uncertainty and disgust. Cavallaro believes this is the attitude of a society that has been conditioned to view food primarily as nutrition—using food in any other way is considered wasteful. Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of Cavallaro's art is that he uses food as a representation of life, a malleable form that engages the senses.

As part of the 1999 Downtown Arts Festival in New York City (where he is based), he covered fashion icon Twiggy in cheese. Twiggy stood on the rooftop patio of a restaurant, surrounded by media, with her arms outstretched while Cavallaro sprayed a can of cheese on her clothing. (A video of the event can be seen on the artist's official website.) Again, in 2001, he covered an abandoned house in Powell, Wyoming with cheese. This particular installation, however, triggered a slew of negative criticism (mostly from local residents who complained about the distraction and commotion caused by the press). Others were unable to wrap their minds around the concept of a cheese-covered house. The question that lingers is, “Is this art?”



CHEESE HOUSE

Installation art, in general, arouses this type of response. The question of what constitutes "real art" arises when an artist introduces elements that push beyond the familiar. A hierarchy exists in the art world with traditional art forms, such as painting, at the head. Installation art, really contemporary art as a whole, deconstructs our preconceived notions of what art is or what art is supposed to be. It strips us of preconceived ideas and forces us to consider other possibilities. "Naked is removing everything that has formed you," Cavallaro says. When our ideas about art are challenged, it tends to make us uncomfortable. "People panic," he explains. "You push a chord in them to say, 'Well, this is real,' and they're saying, 'No, no. This is terrible.'"

Cavallaro admitted he used to have a similar opinion on art: "I thought art was something you put on a canvas or a pedestal. [But] I think it should embody [the artist]." Cavallaro was drawn to installation art because he found the immediacy of it exciting and gratifying. Art that can be framed is unappealing because it is limiting. Many installation artists are drawn to the genre to avoid what they perceive as the pretentiousness of art museums and galleries.

Cavallaro's artistic creations often challenge social conventions of normalcy. His work in contemporary art has been described as cutting edge. However, depending on the spectator's viewpoint or experience, his artwork can be seen as bold and innovative or strange and terrible. Cavallaro's *My Sweet Lord* sculpture, for example, which was a nude life-size sculpture of Jesus created from dark chocolate, did not impress Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League in the United States. Donohue passionately spoke out against the showing of the sculpture, which he believed to be immoral and inappropriate. The sculpture was to be displayed during Holy Week at the Lab Gallery situated inside the Roger Smith Hotel in New York City. After the hotel received numerous complaints and threats, the showing was cancelled. Cosimo Cavallaro's work clearly invokes great emotion—both positive and negative—and reaffirms the statement that art is truly in the eye of the beholder.

Müdd: Your work is said to be important because you are on the cutting edge of what you believe art to be. What do you believe art is?

CC: Art is in the way you do it. What you're doing is irrelevant. You find what your passions are, and then it's in the way of how you do what you do. That's what is exciting about art.

Müdd: How would describe your style as an artist?

CC: My style is like I'm always at the edge of a cliff. I roam around and then find myself at the edge of a cliff, and have two choices. Both are to die. Either you jump or you don't. And if you don't [jump], then you're dead because you've already lived coming to the precipice, and to jump you're going to die because you're no longer going to live how you were living to get to the precipice. That's what I enjoy about my work. I find myself roaming around and then, 'Oh! Here I am again at this precipice.' So, you keep falling into your future. And it feels great because you don't know what the outcome is going to be, but you know that if you survive it, it's fantastic.

Müdd: Can you tell me about your creative process? How do you take a concept to creation?

CC: The first pieces I did, I started rolling myself into canvases and found myself caught into one. The paint was sticking to itself and I started to panic because there was only two ways out—either swim up or down. I started to swim up to wiggle myself out of this tube, this blanket. And it was great coming out because you don't see anything and you're completely caked with paint, and you feel cold and [hear every] sound around you. And you're exposed to that world you're trying to crawl to find out where you are.

This has been the process for me that I put into every work I do. What gets me there is the banality and the uncomfortable feeling of the nothing. It's like digging. You don't know what you're going to find but you keep digging. And then you find something and you keep trying to look for something else. Because there is no result to get to, there's no place to go. The process is to just keep digging. You start to have fun in doing that. The first time is very, very dangerous then you get used to it.



SWEET SAINTS



LEFT: TWIGGY
RIGHT: CHEESE HOUSE

And then when you get used to it, you up the ante and you keep going for something you don't know or have experienced. I don't want to do anything I know. So whatever I do, it's always to push myself to a place of unknown, and [to the point] where I think I'm losing my mind, or in fact many times that's what I feel like. But it's exciting at the same time. Life is that way every second if we're aware of it. Anything can happen at any second, and if you were to think of the possibilities that could be very frightening. That's what makes it exciting at the same time. Just keep it alive and not to have the mundaneness take over.

Müdd: I guess that's how it feels to be both the spectator and the doer in the art.

CC: Hopefully, the spectator feels the same charge. Many times I end up being a spectator in the work. The great part is when the work pushes you out and now you're seeing it as a spectator, and that's exciting too because for me I don't want to know before it happens.

When I was going to art school that was the process. I would be the spectator before I started the work. I was always on the outside. And now you're in it. And you don't know until someone shows you a picture of yourself. The work is that way. Another interesting question is why I do a certain thing. I don't know. I could reach into the subconscious and find some reason for everything. But the truth is that I don't care about the reason. I don't want to know why I get turned on. I just like getting turned on and that's good enough for me.

Expression doesn't come from out there. Expression comes from our insides. I'm inspired by the fear. That's what gets me going. I never ever look at something from the outside and say, 'Oh boy, would I love to do that.' I used to be that way. But that's nowhere near my realm of thinking anymore. If you've ever jumped off a cliff, then you know exactly where the centre of your body is. That's where, for me, inspiration is. That core. Centre. The seed of an apple. That's where inspiration lies. The beauty of





that is you don't know what's going to be on the other side.

Müdd: How has your artwork evolved over the years? Do you find you're inclined to work in one medium over another?

CC: I like work that you can't frame. I like that you can't separate it from reality. You can't just look at it and say, 'Oh, okay. I can take this'—or move it or contain it. It's like going to the zoo and removing all the bars. There is no separation. There is no separation between reality and fiction. In the act of doing that it becomes real. When art becomes reality is what is exciting to me. If art is supposed to imitate life then it's supposed to have that same charge.

Now, I think we've evolved from when man is making illusions of dimension and man being a magician to almost making things



look like they're real. Walking into a space and things are so—am I really here? If this is reality then where have I been? When you walk into a space and it's transformed. That's why I like to work with food. It's perishable. It's alive. It's decaying. It has smells and evokes your past in the same place. So to me then you ask the question, what is art? I thought art was something you put on a canvas or a pedestal. I think it should embody you.

I love the fact that walking down the corridors, you turn and then you're hit with something. And whatever you had in your mind is gone. That just gets blown away or erased, and you can't think of anything else than what is in front of you. It really captures all of you for that moment. It's magic. Like seeing a falling star. It constantly reminds you that you're here. Art is the reminder of where you're at, and here is a powerful place. I don't think that 'out there' is powerful, because out there is full of projections.

Müdd: Why do you think critics seem to be uncomfortable or opposed to your work with food?

CC: Because we're conditioned. Like when you're a child, the first thing you're going to play with is your food. Why is it exciting for a child to play with food? Because it's malleable. It's something you can touch and shape. Everything else you're touching other than mud is something you can't really shape. It has already been shaped for you. It's an incredible substance that you can touch and play with, and you can also put in your mouth. It nourishes you. What's outside of you is also giving you life within you. And there's a deep understanding of a common denominator. No matter who you are on the planet, animal or being, you know that food is a common denominator. For me, the relationship people have to food has been a taboo. We're supposed to eat it and not waste it. So you say to yourself, 'I'm not going to waste food.' A lot of people are



TWIGGY

bothered by it because they're conditioned to be bothered by it.

Naked is removing everything that has formed you. You feel like you're standing up out of a wheelchair because you don't have enough of it within you that has formed to hold you up. Everything has been propped up from outside of you. So people panic. You push a chord in them to say, 'Well, this is real,' and they're saying, 'No, no. This is terrible.' Nobody wants to know at morning they're going to die at noon. Who wants to hear that one?

Müdd: Do you consider your art to be controversial? Do you push people or push social bounds purposely?

CC: I don't push anybody. I push myself. I push myself in front of people. All you can hold on to is something in yourself, which is a bizarre feeling. I am really blank to what happens on the outside and to how people see what I'm doing.

Müdd: As an artist, it's important not to place too much importance on what people think of your work.

CC: You know when you're a teenager and you fall in love with someone, and for the period that you're in love nobody sees you. You disappear. You're somewhere else. You never saw yourself from the outside. And when you're not in that moment all you do is look at yourself from the outside. It's nice never to come across a mirror. And within yourself there is something that I call the real mirror. It's not the one that reflects the outside, it's the one that reflects the inside.

I discovered that when I did the ketchup room. There wasn't a square inch for me to escape from. This is where the mirror of madness came in and I talk about that precipice where, 'Jesus, what do you do now? There's no way out.' The only way out is to get deeper into it. And you don't know what out is. There's something that happens where the title 'I was here' was not a pretentious title in that I was here in spirit. Which came up very strong in me. Where you realize you get to a place and you don't realize that you've been motivated with your ego. And then all of a sudden you realize that you can continue with your ego, and you know you're going to go mad. And then you say, okay I'm going to have to abandon this paradigm and it's an incredible feeling to just say this is it. It's over. The ride stops here. I'm getting off. Now life passes through you, and the beauty of that is that you're willing to look at life with your eyes open and see everything that is coming through you, to you and outside of you. Whereas until that moment where you don't give caution to the wind, you've manipulated a life. And the ego does that well, and you do that to survive. The ego is full of survival, but it kills you because it doesn't allow you to live.

It's like training wheels on a bike. Eventually, you have to throw those training wheels out and accept that you're going to fall. Part of riding the bike is the fall, and you realize that you can have fun falling. All the sports that you do teach you that like skiing, skating, you name it. This is how much we want to live that we've invented sports that allow us to fall. The more you allow yourself to fall the better you get at the sport you're playing, because you're now one with the environment. Because you allow yourself to be there and participate in what is going on rather than you manipulate what is going on.

I don't see the separation of art and life. It is the way you live. It is in the way you do it. And getting there everybody feels comfortable. Everybody has the right to find out what is here, and to find out that they're here. [For example,] I like to listen to music only because I've been trained to listen to that kind of music.

Müdd: What kind of music do you like?

CC: I like all music. Any kind of sound. I love it all. I could listen to buses go by. If you listen, there's a melody in everything. It could come from a garbage truck picking up some stuff. It doesn't really matter how it's coming to you, but that you can lend your ears to finding it. The person creating a symphony is trying to do the same thing with a bunch of instruments, so [if you] exchange the strings for cutlery and there's music. So again, it's to open your mind and to allow yourself to experience this moment. That is everything. People like to come along and put a little label on something.

Müdd: Are you currently working on a project?

CC: I am. I'm currently working on a couple of pieces, but I don't want to say anything.

Müdd: Do you display your art permanently?

CC: I can't for the life of me get into that. I've tried it. Where I'm working is where the space is. That's it. I can't identify it better than that. Where I am at the moment is where the space is.

Müdd: What was it like working with Twiggy? How did you approach her and get her to agree to that idea?

CC: When it happens it happens. You can't force it. I took a bunch of my clothes and I started spraying cheese on them. Stuff that I had purchased. I had bought this jacket, it cost me like \$1,000, and I got some cheese and started spraying it on it. And I'm getting sick to my stomach and I realized that I was putting all this importance on dead things. I was not expressing myself because I was wearing these clothes thinking that it was telling something about me. Instead it was hiding a lot about me. By putting cheese on clothes I was starting to dig into that hole. I got a phone call to participate in the downtown arts festival and they said, 'What are you doing now?' And I said, 'Well, I'm putting cheese on my clothes.' And they said, 'Wow, great because our theme is fashion.'

So, I'm having dinner with my girlfriend and I'm telling her about this and she said, 'Well, the iconic figure of fashion is Twiggy.' And I said, 'Why don't we call her?' We called her and she's in town, and we tell her what we want to do and she said let's meet and we meet. And it was her birthday that day [that they did the installment]. Everything is like serendipity. I had no clue where I was going to do this. Zero. So, I'm walking down the street and I see this guy I hadn't seen in awhile and he said, 'I'm working at Cipriani's.' I asked him where that was and he told me that it's down in SoHo. So I said, 'Listen. I'm going to be covering Twiggy in cheese.' He said, 'Why don't you do it in our restaurant?' Everything worked. It was supposed to be a hurricane that day and it was a beautiful sunny day.

Müdd: What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?

CC: Be strong and courageous to confront the life that has been given to you.

