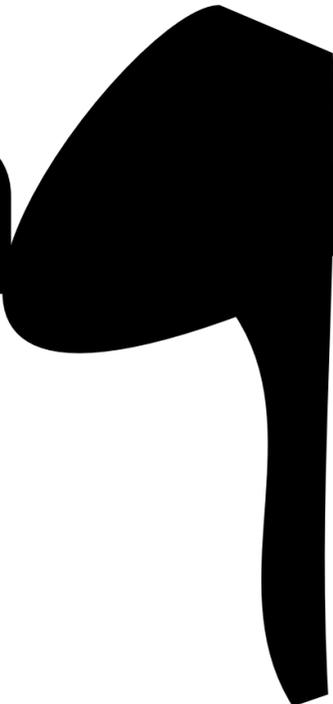


# Hello Stranger

*What happens when creative people tread on unknown terrain? What occurs when a pop star paints artworks or an architect designs jewelry? The answers lie exclusively in Hekmag.*

<b>HOLLY</b>	<b>JOHNSON,</b>	<b>Painter</b>
<b>FRANK</b>	<b>GEHRY,</b>	<b>Jeweler</b>
<b>RANKIN,</b>		<b>Model</b>



# HOLLY JOHNSON PAINTS

*Life is a trigger*

RELAX – don't do it. A slight man dances through an inferno that could come from a Pasolini film. It was the rebirth of pop. Frankie Goes to Hollywood was gayer than the Village People, wilder than Duran Duran in "Wild Boys" and more danceable than Donna Summer. A band like a shooting star: it ascended in 1984; only three years later, it was over. Holly Johnson, the group's mastermind, made a platinum album before he disappeared from the public eye for a completely different reason: In 1991, he tested positive for HIV. He was one of the first celebrities, if not the first, who had the courage to make his HIV status public. The test results did something to the singer, musician and artist. He began to paint.

*Hekmag: In 1991, being HIV positive was almost equivalent to a death sentence. Now 15 years later, how much has this changed your life?*

Holly Johnson: Back then it changed my focus. I know that I have no time to lose; that I have to express myself in the most direct and most personal way possible. No compromises, no filters from others and no outside objections can stop me. If I want to make music, I make music. If I want to paint, I paint. If I want to write, I write. For me, it's all the same. The HIV virus is a filter, yet infiltrates everything; it's always there and is the subtext of everything I do and perceive. My readiness to openly communicate about it was a huge thing in the early 1990s. Masses of film teams – especially from Germany – came to London and I was under the impression that the journalists were nearly obsessed with the topic. But it's neither the beginning nor the end of my story.

*A simple question: What inspires you?*

Everything I hear and see. All of life is a trigger and a source of inspiration. And it can be everything. Art, TV, pop music. Everything that has a touch of poetry. But I never worked constantly. Art is inspiration and not mechanics.

*Today you're more an artist than ever. Beuys says that everyone is an artist. What do you think?*

Everyone has the abilities. Few have the courage or the irresistible drive.

*How biographical are your paintings?*

I have a rather emotional-intellectual relationship with my work, even sometimes a sexual one. I'm absolutely not interested in clinical observation.

*Your paintings are figurative, the subjects often from mythology; at times they have a touch of Cocteau. The unicorn and a soldier you show us are quasi-prototypical. Where does your propensity to the magical come from?*

*Diana, the Unicorn*, began her life as a digital photo I took at a nearby fair. She was actually a horse, but thanks to modern photo manipulation... There once was a princess in our land,



Photo Neil Wilder

she brought a new sense of empathy to the royal family. She visited a gay HIV-infected man in the hospital when everyone else cut a wide swath around such people. Then a miracle happened. The people saw that nothing happened; that one could touch the outcasts. Like in the story of Jesus and the lepers. Nearly a fairy tale, with the unicorn, but it really happened. Myths, stories and legends fascinate me. They are completely primordial human forms of expression, like cave drawings. It's a transmission of knowledge, the dialogue between artist and viewer. Communication, feelings and ideas – that's what it's about. But I actually don't like to talk about my work, it takes away the myth and the possibility of individual interpretation.

*Okay, another topic then. What music does a pop star in early retirement listen to?*

Old things by Judy Garland and Marlene Dietrich. Velvet Underground and Bowie from the 1970s and new things like "Another Day on Earth" by Brian Eno. Antony and the Johnsons is the best new stuff I've heard in a long time.

*Will you do a new album?*

I have so much to do and I hope I have enough time on this earth to do it all.



# FRANK GEHRY DESIGNS JEWELRY

*Deconstructing*

*Beauty*

He redefined architecture; his style was classified as “Deconstructivism”. Yet Frank Gehry – Canadian, Jew, American, Atheist – builds contradictions upon which labels like “deconstructivist” cannot stick. “They can call me what they want, I don’t care,” he says about the pigeon-

holes into which he doesn’t fit. *Before Gehry, buildings were four walls and an interior; after Gehry, everything is possible.* The man who has never called himself an artist credits his fame especially to art. Bilbao, a nice Spanish

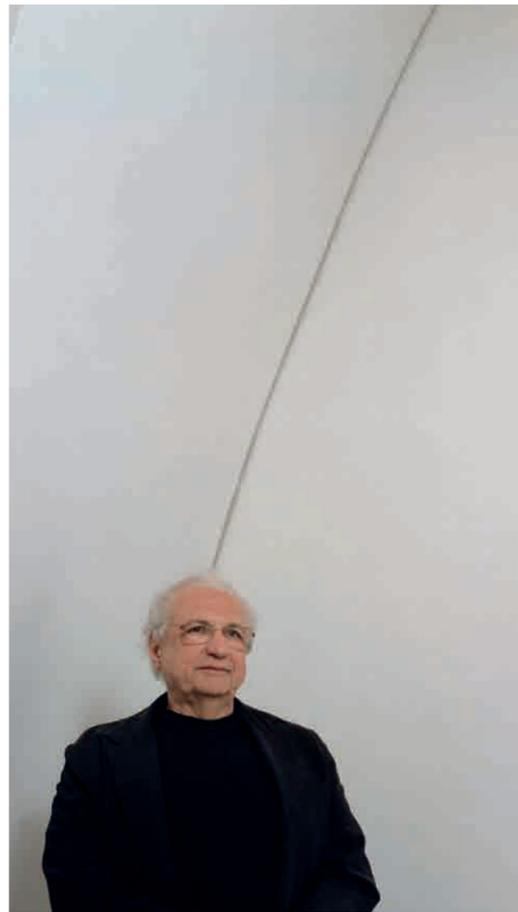


Photo Martin Mai

city before Gehry’s building, has experienced a seemingly endless boom through his Guggenheim Museum. The sculptural structure attracts a million tourists every year. Gehry has achieved pretty much everything that’s possible in the architectural field, including the Pritzker Prize, which is the branch’s Nobel. His structures have become global pilgrimage destinations for fans and experts.

But despite all this, the big, old man of architecture is still good for surprises, whether in the architecture-like interior design field, as seen in his cardboard furniture for Vitra; or, as of extremely recently, as a jeweler. Gehry’s pieces were presented to the public at the end of March; Hekmag is the first magazine to publish the photos.



Photos (jewelry) Richard Pierce

The real Gehry can be read in the precious pieces. As in a house or piece of furniture, so in jewelry: organic forms and soft corners. A contradiction? Not with Gehry. So, if one stays true to style, what has happened in his design process since he began designing in 1969? “I think I’ve become a little more secure. Does that sound strange?” he asks, laughs a bit and continues. “The technology was more or less the same, but we weren’t sure about interrelations, so we needed many more attempts to arrive at results that we wanted. We also didn’t know when to stop. You need a certain aplomb to be able to say, ‘that’s enough, let’s start with the next point.’” A not uncritical look back. He’s strict with himself as well as with his colleagues. About Zaha Hadid, who is indisputably among the branch’s best, he said to me three years ago, “very interesting, but let’s see how she develops.” He is hard on the political situation in the USA and is a professed Bush opponent, yet still manages to schmooze conservative corporate America, as proven by his concert building in Los Angeles, financed by the Disney clan. Its realization will, however, take a decade. The collaboration with Tiffany’s, for which Gehry is now designing his architecture in miniature, occurred more quickly. He implied something about this a year ago: “I’m so crazy that I now design jewelry... I’ve been working with a jeweler for the past half year. I won’t tell you the name, but if it works, we’re done in a year.”

He’s happy with the results. *“While I take my work very seriously, I don’t take myself seriously.* Does that make sense? It’s not like I have to tell the world that I’m ‘the best’ or how ‘great’ my work is. As a child you play. Which is, metaphorically, really work. Later it’s of course exciting and thrilling to work intensively on things that mean something to you – that would be, in reverse meaning, a game again. But with more difficulties. If the total experience weren’t fun, I wouldn’t do it.” In any case, his jewelry will impart its wearers with an experience they can relish.



## RANKIN STEPS OUT FROM BEHIND THE LENS

Very

british

The man's a pig. A disrespectful commentary? Not really, since although Rankin belongs to the global front guard of photographers, he really doesn't care about a) glamour and b) his image. And he's decided to make himself a pig. A question of style, isn't it? His is mutable. He photographed the Queen on the golden anniversary of her coronation – the image was exhibited in Windsor Castle – as well as English Prime Minister Tony Blair for the *Financial Times*. He also does fashion shoots with the who's who of the fashion scene. But Moss, Elle McPherson and the others don't give him goosebumps at all anymore. He photographs his "objects" popularly, without being populist. The best example is his campaign for Dove's body care line. There they are, totally normal women in a row; sexy as all get out. It was something with which the British photographer made men and women happy – the first time in beauty-product history in which a campaign received universally unbelievably positive feedback. "It seems as if you'd seen completely normal people and are now completely surprised that they can be beautiful. Before the shoot, the expectation was 'that won't work, it'll look shabby,'" enthuses Rankin.

Blessed with the insignia of middle-age, a mid-30s belly, Rankin looks normal; so normal that you could see him more easily in a regional bank than at a Nike fashion shoot. That he shows himself in a skintight Superman suit is an expression of his strength against the beautiful illusion. And the belly? "I don't care," he says. He rejects all athletic activity,



which is not difficult to see in photos. But this is exactly what is impressive about Rankin as a photographer and exhibitionist. He doesn't dabble in areas in which he'd fail, and through this he wins. He's a good guy with humor. "British humor," he stresses. Whether it's British or not, laughing at himself is one of the photographer's most lovable characteristics.



Photos Rankin

And he wants you to laugh with him. "I did my Superman series for my son, so he can laugh about his heroes." His nine-year-old progeny – the first in the family to wear a blue dress with a red cape – was the model for the project.

Rankin's general impulse to switch sides and put himself in front of the camera came to him in the last hour when he looked at the material: "I noticed that I'm never in the pictures, but I ask a lot of the models without knowing what it's like for them. I put myself in front of the lens to gain this experience," he explains. It was an emphatic moment in his work. And for him, empathy is normal component of his work in that he doesn't romanticize things, as do so many of his colleagues. For this reason he also takes the liberty to be "styleless." "I always take different kinds of photographs because I listen to my clients and think about how I can do the job well, and not how I can profile myself as a photographer," he says. One of his mottoes is therefore logical. "I don't want to impose my impression on a person." Hence he subjects himself to one of the most difficult demands that one could ask in his profession: not to mold and construct, but to shoot without prejudice.

If he's such a good person, why does he represent himself as a pig? "A pig is always an object, and it doesn't matter how much one tries to place it into the role of a model – it remains an object. Now it's just the question of who the bigger pig is: model or photographer," he says. A very British thought indeed.

Text

Andreas

Tölke

