

ANDREA BLANCH

intrepid

STEVE MILLER: *How did Enigma come about?*

ANDREA BLANCH: Actually talking with you.

STEVE: *What guided you in choosing artists for the enigma issue?*

ANDREA: A lot of shoe leather. Trolling the net, active discovery, museums, art fairs, galleries, and speaking to friends. The first artist that was chosen was Sally Gall. I went to her exhibition *Aerial*, and thought it was fantastic-- I didn't know what I was looking at, which immediately made me think that she should be in the issue. The second artist was Richard Mosse, after seeing his work in Jack Shainman's gallery months before his exhibit, I knew it would be a perfect fit for *Enigma*. Once it was decided to include fashion photography, since fashion imagery is inherently enigmatic, my first thought was Guy Bourdin. When I saw Annette Lemieux's article in *New York Magazine* regarding her work at the Whitney Biennial, it intrigued me and I knew I had to have her in the issue.

STEVE: *Let's talk about your photographs. My first response when I looked at those images was "What the hell am I looking at?" I actually didn't know, couldn't figure it out, I had a sense of New York and the street but not much more than that ...was that intentional from the start or a byproduct of circumstance?*

ANDREA: I was taking a walk and unbeknownst to me, at the time, I ran into the Deutsche Bank fire. I was using a digital camera. After my first shot, I noticed the reflective tape on the firemen's uniforms glowed, it was visually and aesthetically captivating. I was transfixed, so I just kept shooting. When I got home and saw the images on the computer, the glow of the reflective stripes made me want to push it further and create something more abstract. However I could enhance the glow, that was my intention.

STEVE: *So what I'm hearing is that you're really gutted, rooted in intuition, and being in the moment, as opposed to having premeditated thoughts like, 'this is so deconstructive and I'm breaking down the image and there could be a conceptual practice behind this'. Knowing your larger practice you probably gave me these images from the direction of visual mystery and the aesthetics of the street. Any thoughts about this?*

ANDREA: The *Glow* series began with intuition, and evolved with intention.

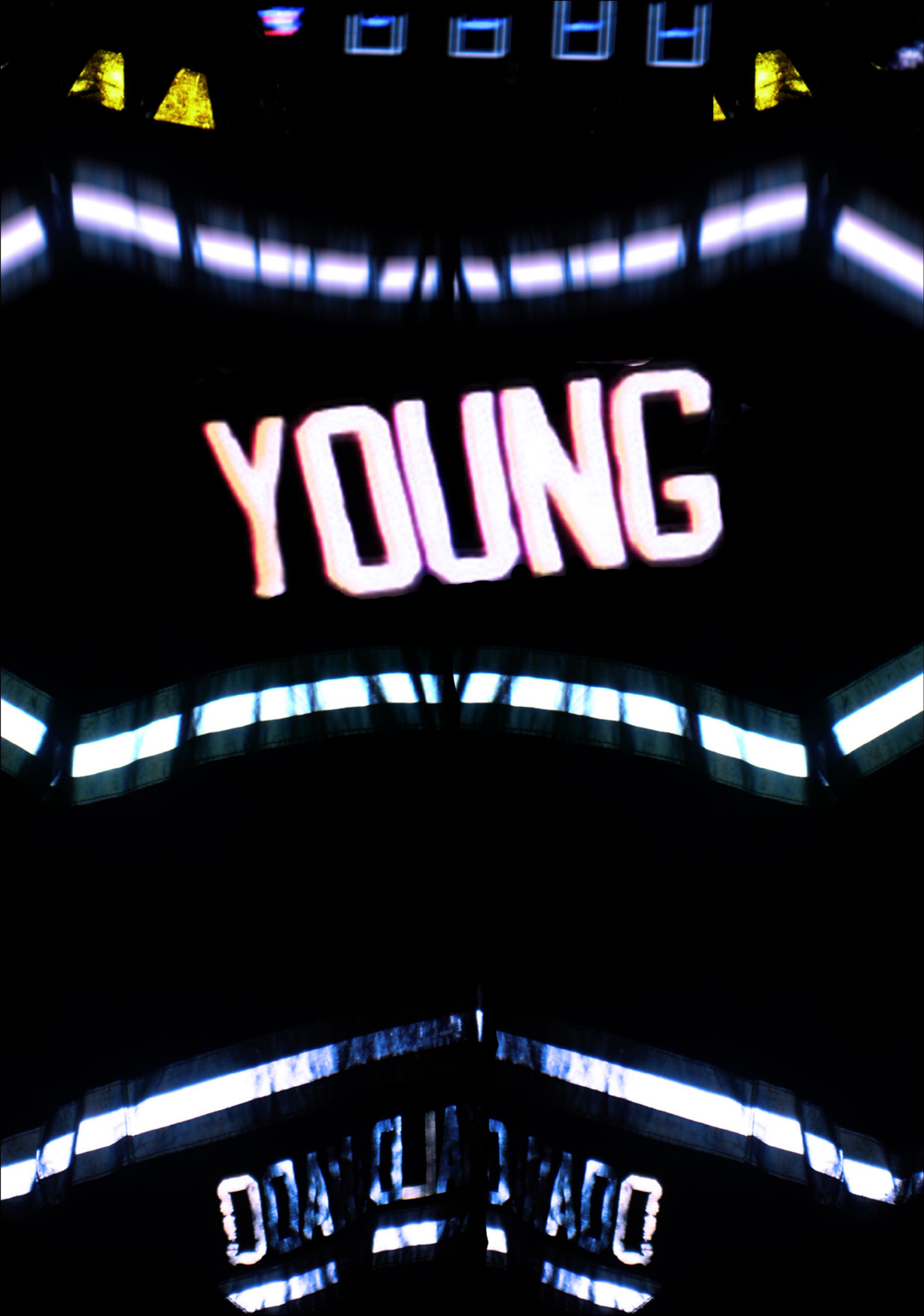
STEVE: *Have you used this specific kind of manipulation before?*

ANDREA: Yes, in another project I did for breast cancer called *Unexpected Company*. In my commercial work, all the time.

Portrait by Marsin. Following spread: Andrea Blanch, *Glow* 7, 2009.







When I started in fashion photography and working with *Vogue*, we didn't use retouching. Once digital photography came about, retouching became more pervasive in the fashion and commercial sector of the business.

STEVE: *You're a fine art person that went into fashion and now you're coming out of fashion and through the magazine getting back into fine art. I think that's an appropriate trajectory of what's going on, and the magazine has become a vehicle to explore some of the issues in contemporary photography.*

ANDREA: I never thought about becoming a fashion photographer, until the moment I saw Richard Avedon at work. When I became a part of his studio as a "trainee", I started taking fashion photographs. I think fine art gives me more room to explore and expand, as Paul Cavaco once told me, "you must find fashion very confining."

STEVE: *For you, there's lots of precedence. I think you're definitely more in the realm of someone like Wolfgang Tillman that can do commercial, advertising, fashion, documentary, ambient world, and abstraction. But for example on Artspace, you sell mostly your fashion pieces.*

ANDREA: Its fashion! That's what they want and they say it sells, so I'm giving it to them. Thank you for including me in the same realm as Wolfgang Tillman, that's a big compliment.

STEVE: *It seems like you want to ride the line of fine art and fashion more and more going forward.*

ANDREA: I do. I'd like to do more things like the Deutsche Bank fire photographs because I'm excited by the results.

STEVE: *With the ubiquity of the camera phone, now everyone's a photographer. How do you locate your practice in this fluid image world....or how does anybody?*

ANDREA: I don't think it matters. For instance, it has taken me a while to get accustomed to the iPhone camera. The framing is awkward for me, but the more I use it the better I get. As long as you get a good image, it doesn't matter how you get there.

STEVE: *You've organized the magazine around themes like enigma which addresses this issue of categories. Which seems useful in this age of endless aesthetic boundaries because there has to be some kind of container in which to have a discussion and you're container is constantly shifting. How do you contain photography for a useful discussion and do you personally have boundaries and categories for your own practice? You obviously do because you just told me that you're giving artspace fashion. So fashion is one of your containers. Are there many categories?*

Andrea Blanch. Opposite: *Glow* 2, 2009; Following spread: *Glow* 5, 2009.



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ANDREA: Regarding the magazine, I chose to have issues with themes for pragmatic reasons. I felt it would help with the layout of the magazine and it would also give emerging photographers more parameters to work with. The results have been extremely stimulating for me. I like what the magazine has achieved and where it is headed. We have received a lot of positive feedback. As far as categories for my work, it would be fine arts, portraits and fashion.

STEVE: *The reflective stripe on the fireman's jacket looks more like Times Square at night or the neon of Hong Kong, then it has the grounding individual reality of a newsworthy event such as a New York City fire at night. Nonetheless I see the interest, your interest in lighting and how that can have an emotional effect. So I'm going through your website looking at everything that you're doing and I was trying to look at Glow and see how it was different or similar to your other works. I understood how much care you take in lighting, so do you want to talk about the importance of lighting in your work?*

ANDREA: Photography is all about light, either in a series like *Glow* or photographing a beautiful face for fashion or commercial photography. It's about using the light to fully realize your vision.

STEVE: *The enigma on the surface of the image of the fireman allows the work to reference these really diverse worlds that are outside the image, from neon lights to flying saucers and ghosts. The first visual impact of the image stands out as distinctive and open ended in both interpretation and the movement towards abstraction.*

ANDREA: With *Glow*, I began with documenting an event, then taking it further by enhancing the glow. At the time I didn't realize how serious the fire was, but by making the images more abstract, it made the subject more palatable. I've always been attracted to light that appears otherworldly, like a poltergeist. When I look at light like this, I feel like it's taking me on a journey, I'm being pulled towards it.

STEVE: *Do you have your camera with you at all times?*

ANDREA: Yes... My iPhone is with me at all times.

STEVE: *So going forward, I have a feeling you're gonna go into something more experimental and different.*

ANDREA: From looking at so many artists for the magazine, I've been introduced to many different processes and new techniques which somehow I'd like to incorporate in my own work. It is a new and challenging frontier, something exciting. An enigma, a puzzle to be solved.

Andrea Blanch. Opposite: *Glow 1*, 2009; Following spread: *Glow 3*, 2009.

