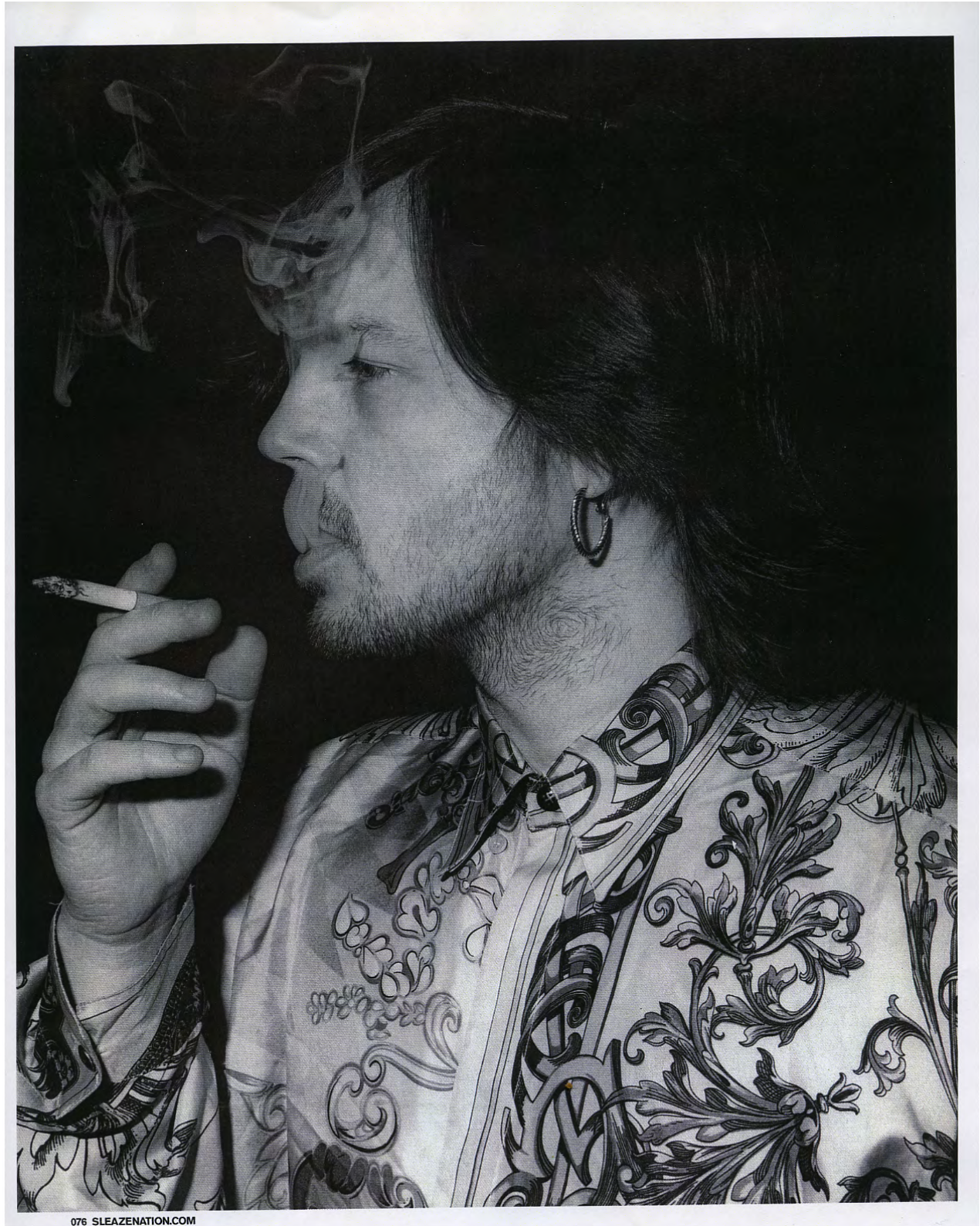


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Francis Summers, "Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore," *Sleazenation*, May, 2001

sleazenation





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FIORUCCI MADE ME HARDCORE

Combining big fuck-off soundsystems, the history of the Casuals and a bit of street flava, the art of Mark Leckey ain't trying to be clever, it just wants you to have a bit of a laugh and mess about whilst looking good.

Out of the smouldering rubble that is London's post-YBA contemporary artworld, there is rising a new generation of artists who care less about the Saatchi'n'Jopling industry politics that defined the previous generation, and more about the real cultural concerns – the way we dress, what we listen to, how we define ourselves – of our everyday lives. This new wave includes Mark Leckey who, a few years back, returned to the UK with his film *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore* – a hallucinatory epic made from found footage of MDMA-charged nutters that makes you wanna scream Aciiiiiiiiieeed.

Having come of age as an art student at the same time as Damien Hirst and the Cool Britannia gang (he was even in the same exhibition as Hirst back in the day, poor guy), Leckey decided to jack that scene in, and went to America on a self-styled voyage of discovery. Hanging around San Francisco, going to the Burning Man festival, digging New York's vibe and

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→ checking out America's marginal extremes, the seeds for *Fiorucci* were slowly sewn. As he describes it: "At the time I was working at an artists-run filmmaker's co-op in San Francisco and I was collecting a lot of music films, and I got the idea of doing a film night where I'd show all these archival music clips. I told someone about it, and it developed into *Fiorucci*. I wasn't thinking about it in terms of 'Art'."

More than simply collecting together music clips for the merry sake of it, the basis of the *Fiorucci* idea was to take a look at the lost history of the Casuals, that fashion phenomena where working class kids would "dress like a middle-class Milanese Italian, or a New York preppie. It's very similar to garage kids now with their Moschino, Versace and the rest of it. I remember coming down to London to get Aquascutum and Burberry and stuff like that. You'd be walking around being 17 or 18, head-to-toe in Burberry, walking past posh London middle-aged folk or Japanese tourists, and you'd be dressed just the same as



them. The Casuals were like situationists, detouring all those signs of fashion, aspiration, wealth and class." The idea of reclaiming popular movements, like the mobbed up Casuals and their colonisation of fashion, is something that sits at the core of Leckey's whole project. As he says, "What I'm trying to do with *Fiorucci* and other stuff, is to say that mass popular phenomena aren't necessarily something that's just a herd mentality – I'm interested in the politics of it. All I'm trying to say is that these things are deliberate and they are intelligent. It's a strategy but it gets seen as this threatening gang thing. But this threat is part of the politics – that's power isn't it, a way of gaining power, and it doesn't necessarily have to become violent."

Nowadays though, Leckey is trying to get a bit more to grips with the tools that he's using rather than just sitting back and using found footage as his raw material. Preferring to make his own stuff from now on, he's setting up Notting Hill-style sound systems in galleries around the world, from Galerie Buchholz in Cologne to Cabinet in London, with the immediate manifestation being this month at Gavin Brown's Enterprise in New York. As well as being a gallery and providing an art space, Gavin Brown's Enterprise has a bar that is attempting to recreate that pre-yuppie downtown feel. Something Mark Leckey will be helping out with quite happily, as he says, "this event is some-

thing to do to not let them in. No Prada comes through this fucking threshold – that kind of thing." By day he'll be playing his recording of the Soho streets through the system, but by night it will play host to a month-long series of events, ranging from a night of 'brown sound' ("we'll see if we can get people to shit themselves with sonic bass frequencies") to a fashion contest ("\$500 cash reward for the most stylish person in New York. They've got to come in and parade around the sound system, and then they get the cash.").

Continuing his interest in the dissolving of strict barriers between art forms, another project that Leckey is sticking his fingers into is the band Donatella, which used to comprise of just him and singer Ed Liq – "or Ed La-Liq as he's calling himself nowadays." Early band performances combined a spirit of dada cabaret with the bootleg vibe that's become hip of late. The band's initial idea was "to do as little as possible, we just re-did people's songs and stuck them on different songs. We thought we



were being really hardcore, cutting-edge." What makes Donatella stand apart from the likes of Richard X or Kid 606, however, is their mental appearance and lo-fi

attitude – "I'd just go on and play a mini-disc of the backing tracks and Ed would sing, wearing a pair of batty-riders and fishnets and just look really fuck-you." Planning to expand the band to Parliament size proportions ("where they had 15 people on stage hardly doing anything – just getting someone to hit a cowbell or something"), Leckey wants to start making his own music in earnest, getting away from the bootleg thing. As he enthusiastically spouts "I want to make the next step, which is music that's directly in your head, like nano-music. 21st century, this is it – all the other stuff is gone. It's dead." Big words, but then Mark Leckey has his eyes focussed firmly on the future. Enthusiasm seeps of him like an unstoppable wave, and when he says "these are exciting times to be living in, we've got it all now, and we can do what the fuck we want with it," you can't help but believe him ★

Mark Leckey's *Fiorucci made Me Hardcore* is at *Remix: Contemporary Art and Pop* at Tate Liverpool, from May 25th – August 26th. Info: 0151 702 7400, www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/ *Soundsystem* is at Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 West 15th Street, New York. April 6th – May 4th. Info: +212 627 5258