

Iconic Images

HARRY BENSON'S RETROSPECTIVE HONOR

egendary photographer **Harry Benson** was but a lad of 15 living in Glasgow when he got his first camera, a gift from his dad—which he promptly pawned to buy a “Robert Mitchum jacket,” in reddish-brown herringbone. Eventually, he learned to put a camera to better use, the spectacular results of which are on view at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, beginning August 4, in his first major retrospective, “Being There: Harry Benson’s Fifty Years of Photojournalism.” The title of the show, which travels to the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in June of 2007, refers to Benson’s knack for turning up whenever and wherever history is happening—from the Beatles’ first trip to America (he snapped that famous pillow fight after they found out they were to ap-



THE ORIGINAL 007

Benson's photograph of author and James Bond creator Ian Fleming at Goldeneye, his home in Jamaica, 1964.

pear on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and later accompanied them on the plane) to Robert Kennedy’s assassination to the destruction of the Twin Towers. But, truth be told, proximity isn’t the half of it. What makes Benson’s images so enduring isn’t so much the iconic status of his subjects as his almost spooky feel for the precise emotional pitch of a given situation, and his boundless humanity. “I’m

not out to debunk,” he says, “but I get in as close as I can, and if they start to soften up, I don’t back off. I go closer still.” No doubt Benson’s keen sense of style played a role as well. “Photographers have a habit of looking like shit,” he notes. “I always dressed the best I could.” —AARON GELL

FOR A HARRY BENSON SLIDE SHOW, VISIT VF.COM.

FRAGRANT DESIGN

For 18 years, **Mark Badgley** and **James Mischka** have made it their mission to help women look glamorous with just one zip. Now they’re adding a spritz to their sequins. This month, the duo will release an eponymous sophisticated fragrance. “It’s classic, but not boring classic,” says Mischka—“modern classic.” That means a spicy floral with a “countercultural note of patchouli to give the floral an edge,” adds Badgley. Each element is personal, from the white peony (they keep the flower around their home) to the jasmine (a scent evocative of India, a love of theirs). The whiskey-colored elixir comes in an elegant cut-glass bottle, with an engraved silver nameplate, that was inspired by a decanter from the duo’s collection of vintage silver and crystal. Up next: their bridal and men’s fragrances.

—CHRISTINE MUHLKE

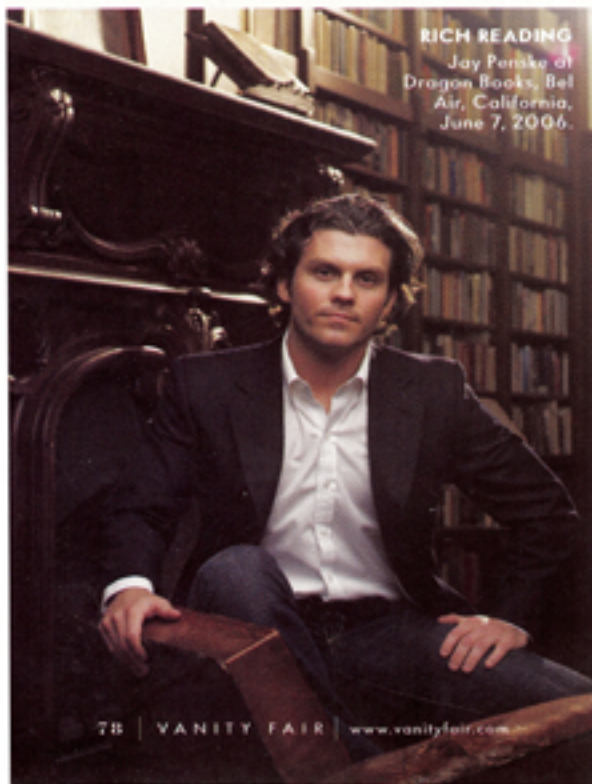
DAPPER DUO

James Mischka, left, and Mark Badgley in N.Y.C., May 25, 2006; inset, their perfume.



RICH READING

Jay Penske of Dragon Books, Bel Air, California, June 7, 2006.



A Novel Collection

JAY PENSKE'S DRAGON PASSION

After decades of going without, the citizens of Bel Air just got their first neighborhood bookstore—**Dragon Books**. Stocked with used and antiquarian volumes, the shop at the crest of Beverly Glen feels more like a private library, what with its 18th-century French mantelpiece, leather club chairs, Doric columns supporting an upstairs readers’ gallery, and books rising halfway to the 26-foot-high ceiling.

Dragon Books is the brainchild of **Jay Penske**. (Yes, he’s one of the automotive Penskes, though he’s ventured out on his own, armed with a Wharton diploma and a wealth of ideas.) A founder of VSI, a thriving interactive-media-and-technology company, and Firefly Mobile, developers of an ingenious cellular phone for children, Penske says Dragon Books fulfills a dream that’s been recurring since childhood, when he read **John Gardner’s** “Dragon, Dragon.” While a serial prep-school expellee, he became a serious reader of 19th-century novels. Soon he began collecting, starting with works by Kierkegaard and Mencken. When moving to Los Angeles in 2002, he discovered he had 28,000 volumes, half of which he’s now selling to sustain his passion for new acquisitions. He shelved each book himself, and he often mans the cash register.

Two hundred patrons flocked to Dragon Books opening day, and gratifying moments for the owner continue—especially when parents come in with their children. “They start in the juvenile section but find themselves drawn to the rare books,” Penske observes, “and I can see it in a kid’s eyes—that sense of wonder, the awakening of a new book-lover.”

—A. SCOTT BERG