



SHOW TIME

Left, checking out Erick Swenson's deer sculpture at the Whitney biennial opening. Right with her husband, Leo Vilazco, at a February exhibit of his work. Below, a sculpture by Keith Edmier of Farrah Fawcett, 2000.

with artists I really love and admire. It's hard to ask for money—at times you pretty much have to beg—but not when you really believe in something and you have conviction that it needs to happen."

Force takes an equally maximal approach to her appearance. "I pretty much love very over-the-top clothes," she confesses. "I like things that are tight and form-fitting, and then I like to bring in another element, like an oversize collar and very high heels. I'm not a big jewelry person. I tend to do my accessorizing with shoes and handbags and eye shadow and lipstick." (Today the lids are black and the lips are baby-pink.) As Todd Eberle, a photographer for whom Force is an enduring inspiration, says, "For Yvonne, 'Too much is never enough,' to quote Morris Lapidus, and it's always good." But Force's tastes are precise: She favors a color palette of beige, gold, pink, purple, and black, and her practiced eye can shop by picking out a handful of outfits from look books each season. Summer's about Gucci flesh-tone, satin-stripe sweat pants with heels and poufy skirts in silver (Prada) and pink (Comme des Garçons); fall will be full-on Gucci from her beloved Ford's farewell collection, which she describes as "his greatest hits, refined."

Those who know her point out that Force's self-presentation has less to do with ego than with an artistic sensibility. "No one loves the camera like Yvonne, and she knows what dresses photograph well. But it's done with a great sense of humor and an irreverence I really appreciate," says Los Angeles gallery owner Shaun Caley Regen, who remembers Force turning up to an art

event in the desert at Joshua Tree seven months pregnant in a unitard. "She has this instant sex appeal," adds art dealer and saloniste Jeanne Greenberg Robatyn, "that makes it look like her clothes can be pulled right off her. There's a side to her that really loves to be in the public eye, and that's an aspect that she's been able to market. She's very conscious of it. It's not the self-consciousness of the Hilton sisters; it's a different kind of consciousness that's rooted in understanding artists and performance."

Force's style and personality have won her a slew of artist-admirers over the years, to whom she has willingly played muse. "She's the lady; she's the queen," says

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Beccroft, who specifically likens her to Elizabeth I for her rigorous maintenance in the hair-straightening and coloring and makeup departments. Alex Katz has painted a series of portraits of Force, and also picked out the colors for the walls of her loft—beige-tupes and lilac-grays—to flatter her skin tone. Yuskasage was inspired by her pregnant form to paint a number of nudes of her, some with her own head superimposed. "Like many beauties, she's very easy to cartoon," she says of Force. "She has that very long, thin neck, thin arms, and an upturned nose. When Yvonne became more fertile-looking, she was like something I had already made up." Artist

and photographer Jessica Craig-Martin has used Force extensively as a subject and model. "I think I've photographed every part of her body," she says, "and each is equally expressive."

Perhaps most obsessive of all, Eberle has been documenting Force's life for the past four or five years "to record the way someone's body and looks change, sometimes willfully and sometimes by nature. As a photographic subject she is, in my mind, the closest thing to a real-life Cindy Sherman piece. She's a chameleon in the most delicious way, and whenever I'm with her there seems to be a reason to make a picture." Eberle plans to turn the project into an exhibition and book, part social history of the art world and part celebration of Force's vitality and optimism.

Force, Craig-Martin tells me, was once thinking up potential titles for her autobiography. "She wanted to call it *From Rags to Riches and Other Chicks as Lived by Yvonne Force*," says Craig-Martin. "I suggested *From Barbarella to Rockefeller*." She was raised on a naval base in Florida, in a small Pennsylvania town (where she captained the cheerleading team), and later in Staten Island, where, at sixteen, she was first runner-up in a Miss Teenage New York contest. "My father and stepmother kept telling me the reason I didn't win was because the moment they stepped out of the dressing room, I put on a ton of makeup," she says. "I was into the whole Italian New Yorker aesthetic at the time."

Force came to her position as behind-the-scenes enabler from beginnings as an