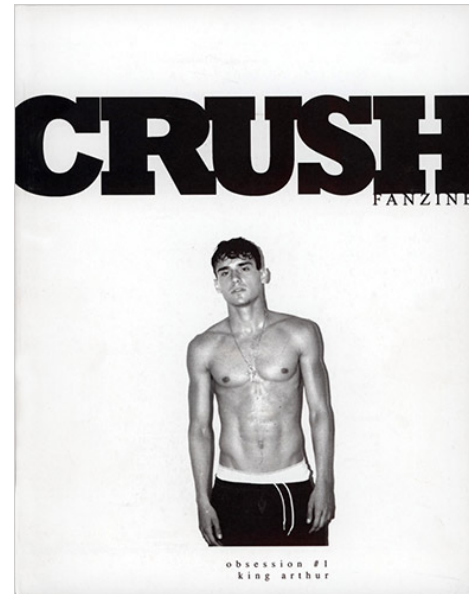


Jan Wandrag



The cover of the first issue on the Russian model Arthur Kulkov.

The Objects of Their Obsessions

By GUY TREBAY

SMALL screens, microblogging, a tighter focus — in many ways, the online world is Tiny Town. In the glow of each solitary iPhone, the world can feel pretty narrow, and compulsion can seem less a vice than an accepted mode of behavior. That is why the appearance of a magazine like Crushfanzine, appearing at a time when print dinosaurs are crashing to their doom, makes an appealing, goofy kind of sense.

A quirky quarterly with the production values of a glossy (it is perfect-bound), the aesthetic skew of an art zine and a burgeoning cult readership, Crushfanzine is a single-subject periodical. “It is based on a specific obsession, a person, a city, a director, even a body part,” said Nicolas Wagner, a French fashion photographer who edits the magazine with the art director Khary Simon.

First came an issue devoted to the Russian model Arthur Kulkov: dark-eyed, handsome, and in some physical ways also perfect-bound.

“Arthur was not the most successful male model, but that’s not the point,” said Mr. Wagner, whose pictures have appeared in *Interview* and *Flaunt*. “I felt like he had something else to offer, some other quality.”

At the editors’ request, Mr. Kulkov (who is in fact successful enough to rate a spot among the top 50 male models on *Models.com*) agreed to create a journal in words and pictures. They then invited a handful of writers and photographers to contribute essays on King Arthur.

The resulting monograph on a handsome unknown — with contributions on Mr. Kulkov by Miguel Villalobos, Gordon West, Arnaldo Anaya-Lucca and others — was printed in an edition of 1,000 copies, distributed to stores like *Opening Ceremony* in New York and *Colette* in Paris, and swiftly sold out at \$10 a copy. The second issue, coyly titled *Foot Soldiers*, was dedicated — and that is undoubtedly the word — to an obsession with feet and shoes.

“Our intention,” said Mr. Wagner, “is to do magazines about something you can’t stop thinking about.”

The editors, Mr. Simon explained, “had obsessions we wanted to work out.” In *Foot Soldiers*, those issues were explored rather fully, not merely in the editorial content but also in advertisements like one from Diesel jeans that depicted an older man slaving over a young man’s shoes.

“We thought it would be fun to do a fanzine about topics we really enjoy,” Mr. Simon said.

Issue 3, which comes out in late October, should be notable less for its dark fetishism than for replicating in print that sweetest of adolescent emotions, the swoon. Focusing on a group of young French actors, most of North African immigrant ancestry, *Crushfanzine 3* is an affectionate scrapbook of the new faces that are altering the complexion of contemporary French film.

“It’s not just the beauty of the boys,” Mr. Simon said, “but of the art they produce.”

The beauty of the boys, however, was doubtless what drew writers and artists like Catherine Breillat, Gordon West and Lorenzo Martone (best known as Marc Jacobs’s fiancé) to contribute to the little indie magazine. It is not hard to look at pictures of actors like Adrien Jolivet, Andy Gillet, Salim Kechiouche, Raphaël Personnaz and Medhi Deb and see why they would inspire a crush.

But couldn’t the obsession be exercised online, the editors were asked, where it sometimes seems that everyone is crushing on someone all of the time? “When my computer crashed last year I realized how beautiful an object a magazine is,” Mr. Wagner said.

“You’re not clicking from one thing to another without ever focusing. I love that a magazine is something you can look at and consult over and over, something you can keep under your bed.”