

FABULOUS AT EVERY AGE

D'S OLYMPIA SCARRY

The artist and style star on fashion, family, and staying one step ahead
By Priya Rao

About face. Blouse,
Dior. Earrings (worn
throughout), Scarry's own.
FASHION EDITOR:
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lympia Scarry recently turned 32, an age that brings her a feeling of relief. “I feel that I’m in a much more peaceful place now,” she says. “When you come into your 30s, you’re more conscious of time somehow—in a good way.”

In a way, Scarry’s consciousness has been instrumental to her success both as a visual artist and as a fashion muse to designers such as Raf Simons at Dior and Riccardo Tisci at Givenchy (she wore a custom black lace burka designed by Tisci as part of a performance piece at Art Basel Miami Beach in 2010). Her own work is just as boundary-breaking, whether it’s her Rodin-esque wax, *Black Hand; Licks*, stacked rock-salt towers meant to attract local wildlife; or the skeletal house-like installation she constructed last year out of metal poles on a lake in her native Switzerland. “It was a house that was never going to get built,” Scarry says of the latter piece, which was included in “Elevation 1049: Between Heaven and Hell,” an exhibition in Gstaad that she curated with her former partner, the writer and curator Neville Wakefield. (The all-Swiss roster

also featured Christian Marclay and Urs Fischer.) “When the lake melts, the whole structure collapses. Nature rebelling against mankind is something that I keep coming back to. In a subconscious form, that’s what I was thinking about.”

When I meet Scarry at Milk Studios in New York, she is wearing a white floral-appliquéd Dior sweatshirt with black Helmut Lang corduroys, slip-on sneakers, and a diamond-and-gold cross necklace given to her by her mother, Marlis. “I’m usually wearing jeans and a T-shirt and sneakers because I’m going to the studio,” she says. “I dress mainly in black or white, and it’s clean and minimal.” Fashion does run in her family, though. Her mother was a model for Gucci in the ’70s, and her sister, Fiona, who previously worked at Alexander McQueen, designs costumes for films and the TV series *Marco Polo*. “Both are elegant women,” she says.

Born in Geneva, Scarry pinged around as a child, spending time in the French countryside, New York, and Venice because her father, the painter Huck Scarry, liked to travel around in search of inspiration (her grandfather Richard Scarry was the celebrated children’s book author). Scarry herself has just moved into a townhouse on Manhattan’s Upper East Side after stints in Harlem and the West Village. “I’ve been in both extremities of the island, and now I’ve found a happy medium,” she says of her new neighborhood. “It’s an uncool place to be, which I like.”

Though physically settled, Scarry remains intellectually mobile. She initially moved back to New York in 2013 to study studio art at New York University and to intern in sculpture with the artist Matthew Barney. “It was really hard work,” she recalls. “It was very physical.” Scarry and Barney worked together again last year, when she and others from the studio were asked to take part in his film *River of Fundament*, a take on the Norman Mailer novel *Ancient Evenings*. “I thought it could be liberating to be directed,” she explains. “Being on set felt like an altered reality.” The experience made her want to explore it further. “It would be interesting to work with Werner Herzog, Roman Polanski, or David Lynch,” says Scarry. “Steve McQueen and Sam Taylor-Johnson are pushing boundaries within these worlds.”

Before that, Scarry has to prepare for a solo show in Los Angeles next month, which is based on “*télesurveillance* camera footage.” The multimedia exhibition centers around “intense, abstract voids in nature” through security camera, documentary, and TV footage, as well as cell-phone photos. It will feature large-scale cinematic prints of landscapes, postcards with images of bombings in Iraq, and other sculptural and video components. “We’re living in such mad times, such weird times,” she says. “A lot of my work has to do with capturing moments. We live in a day where video cameras are everywhere; there is such a record of our existence, so I’m looking at footage where there is nothing going on. It’s like *Waiting for Godot*, for someone who never comes, this idea of boredom, which is a recording of nothingness.”

But Scarry and her work are something. That said, she is also feeling more introspective now about her personal life. Though she has no immediate plans, starting a family is on her mind. “The 30s are an important time for women in that it’s when a woman creates a family,” she says, smiling. “It’s about doing what one is here to do.” ■

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Standing tall. Shirt, Giorgio Armani. Jeans, Burberry Brit. Boots, Louis Vuitton. Belt, stylist’s own. See Where to Buy for shopping details. Hair: Peter Gray for Wella Professionals; makeup: Linda Gradin for Giorgio Armani Beauty; manicure: Tracylee for Dior Vernis; prop styling: Todd Wiggins.

