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# The Best &



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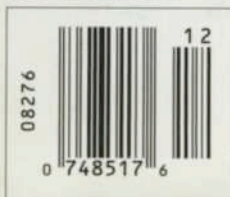
THE ARTIFICIAL HEART

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When further pressed about the existence of a Donald Kaufman, Charlie Kaufman wrote, via instant message: "The party line is there is a lot of truth and some nontruth in this movie, and the fun of it is for the audience to wonder about it. I don't mean to be difficult. But if we go on record with a checklist, it spoils it."

## The Kaufman Sampler

Here, four memorable snip-pets from America's weirdest screenwriter.

### BEING JOHN MALKOVICH

**WAITER MALKOVICH:** Malkovich Malkovich Malkovich?

**GIRL MALKOVICH:** Malkovich Malkovich Malkovich Malkovich.

**WAITER MALKOVICH:** Malkovich Malkovich. (He turns to Malkovich.) Malkovich?

*Malkovich looks down at the menu. Every item is "Malkovich."*

**MALKOVICH:** Malkovich!

### HUMAN NATURE

**LILA** (looking at a painting, in voice-over): Mary Magdalene, perhaps the only sexualized female in all of Christian mythology, and here she was covered with hair. I guess that's where I got the idea maybe the Catholic church might applaud excessive hair growth in its women.

### ADAPTATION

**CHARLIE KAUFMAN** (the screen is black; we hear a voice-over): I'm a walking cliché. . . . All I do is sit on my fat ass. If my ass wasn't fat, I'd be happier. I wouldn't have to wear these shirts with the tails out all the time. Like that's fooling anyone. Fat ass. I should start jogging again. Five miles a day. Really do it this time. Maybe rock climbing. . . . I need to read more. Improve myself. What if I learned Russian or something. . . . I could speak Chinese. I'd be the screenwriter who speaks Chinese. . . . That would be cool. I should get my hair cut short. Stop trying to fool myself and everyone else into thinking that I have a full head of hair.

### CONFESSIONS OF A DANGEROUS MIND

**BARRIS:** Well, you might want to wait till I get to a can, Mr. Oliver, because your precious microfilm is up my ass.

**OLIVER:** I see. Are you certain?

**BARRIS:** If you had a fucking vial of microfilm up your ass, wouldn't you be certain?

I was. I was adapting my ideas, and I was adapting this other person's work, and I was changing. I liked the way it all seemed very risky. I like to kind of explode the structure and put something in that people will feel like, What? Wait a minute! What is this guy doing in the movie that he's [continued on page 190]

The second film, *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, the biopic of *Gong Show* host and self-professed CIA hit man Chuck Barris, is a much ballyhooed film directed by George Clooney. "One of these days, the term *Kaufmanesque* will be just as familiar in Hollywood as *Mametspeak*," Clooney has said. Said Kaufman: "I don't know what to say."

Okay. . . Fine. I saw *Adaptation*. It's an odd film but it works, it's very good. Different. Entertaining. I liked what it was trying to do, the spirit of it, the execution. I'm okay with the fact v. fiction issues. Personally, I like not knowing whether Donald really exists. I can handle not knowing, you know? It's entertainment. It's all about suspending disbelief, right?

But still, I have to ask one question: Why does a person so, well, ticklish about the spotlight, so exceedingly shy, so anxious and insecure. . . why does this person choose to write himself into a movie?

"I had no choice," Kaufman said. He pulled up his ankle and crossed it over his thigh. He rocked back and forth a bit. He wrung his hands. "I loved the book, but I was really struggling for months to write the screenplay. I was getting nothing done. I was going out of my mind. And then I came up with this idea to include myself in the story, because it seemed that my energy was in the paralysis of not being able to write. But I didn't want to tell anybody my idea because I thought they would say no. And I didn't have any other ideas. None. Zip. So I went with it and I started to see connections. The book is about natural selection and adaptation with orchids, and here

## [ THE PHOTOGRAPHERS ]

A handful of talented young women are producing the most compelling art photography in years. Witness the provocative staged portraiture of **Malerie Marder, Jenny Gage, and Anna Gaskell.**

IF YOU WANT TO VERIFY the existence of this movement, ask any aspiring art photographer why he or she isn't showing work in galleries. You'll get a glare like you're about to get a tripod thrown at your head, followed by: "It's because of these Yale women."

These Yale women are a group of M.F.A. grads from the university who, in the past three years, have held sway over the art-photography world. While the aesthetics of these half dozen or so women are disparate, certain threads bind them—the most important being a tendency to stage their subjects, setting up cinematic, fantastical scenes. We talked to three of them about their work.

—DANIEL TORDAY



**MALERIE MARDER** "I never consciously said, 'Okay, now I'm staging a picture.' My more successful ones somehow overcome that and are less artificial," says Malerie Marder, thirty. The subjects

of her posed nudes are generally herself, her friends, and her family, shot in cheap hotel rooms or suburban homes. They have a stilted, dreamlike quality, at once sexually charged and devoid of eroticism.

Here, Marder explains her photo:

"I think that clothing often gives too much information. I'm interested in my work having an economy of ideas. Nudity brings a more intense relationship to the subject, for myself and the viewer. It makes someone uneasy, which is a good dynamic. You're made privy to this unique moment because you don't see people walking around naked, and you don't want to.

"I conceived this photo before it happened. I wasn't thinking about a steam room—I wanted to take a photo where you had just a glimpse of something, an allusion, a symbol.

"It was shot at a hotel in L. A., and I was able to work the steam in a way that I could take the picture without fogging up my lens. I like the idea of seeing less and yet having a sense of something—more of a sensory experience. A lot of times, photographs illustrate something directly, and I think my pictures are much more complicated and also ambiguous when they're pointing to something but it's more open-ended."



**JENNY GAGE** "I grew up on the beach, and women I shoot always end up in some sort of pool of water," says Gage, thirty-three. "Water symbolizes a lot of things to me—home, beauty, the continuous cycle. And the idea of reflection, reinvention—looking into a pool of water and seeing yourself and somebody else."

"This is a woman that I've been obsessed with for a long time, following and documenting. When I photograph women, I'm always looking at them, but I'm also examining myself at the same time. It's an artistic, narcissistic approach to making work." Gage also collaborates with her husband, Tom Betterton.



**ANNA GASKELL** "If anything, I'm more influenced by film and painting than photography. My works are elliptical narratives," says Gaskell, thirty-three. For this photo—part of a series called *resemblance* that is loosely based on *Frankenstein* and E. T. A. Hoffmann's tale "The Sandman"—Gaskell shot a group of six-year-old girls whose heads were practically small enough to disappear beneath their long hair. The image represents a laboratory visited by a group of young friends—or, as Gaskell calls them, "technicians"—trying to create a mother. They're building the perfect mother, Gaskell says, "so maybe they themselves would turn out a little closer to perfection."

