

THE ENTERTAINER

At the beginning of Alessandra Galletta's *Ossessione Vezzoli*, a documentary chronicling the practice of Italian artist Francesco Vezzoli, MOCA director Philippe Vergne compares the artist to a sixth-century Chinese terra-cotta figurine titled *Entertainer (Tomb Figure)*. "The artists, throughout art history, in one way or another, they were entertainers," says Vergne. In his youth, Vezzoli displayed the idiosyncrasies of one destined to become a larger-than-life character, appearing on a television trivia game show and taking up odd hobbies such as needlepoint. He would later gain international attention for projects that involved intricate embroideries of cinematic icons, video works that blended high and low culture, and collaborations with celebrities like Natalie Portman, Michelle Williams, and Lady Gaga. In a series of unacknowledged meta-moments, the film periodically cuts to scenes of a mysterious young man in front of his computer, splicing together additional documentary footage as the viewer watches over his shoulder. The effect stipulates a detached outlook on Vezzoli's artistic persona that at once questions and affirms his spectacular legacy. —RACHEL SMALL

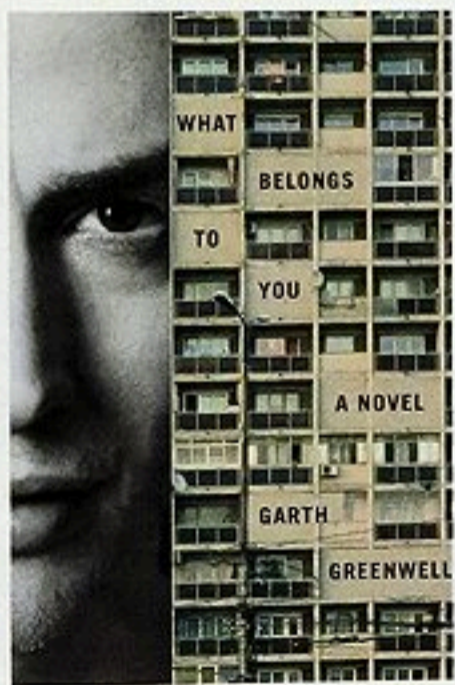


Art Wares

Together, art and fashion form a potent combination. This month's unions: Topman and Curtis Kulig, Max Mara and Maya Hayuk, Yigal Azrouel and Nir Hod, and Boss and Maripol deliver the most covetable consumables of the season.

DESIRE and CONSEQUENCES

I was beginning to think the literary world had given up on sincerity. Too often these days, love, desire, lust, and obsession are treated with the winks and eye-rolls of cynicism or comedy. The fallen stock in genuine emotion makes Garth Greenwell's debut novel, *What Belongs to You* (FSG), that much more of a triumph. Greenwell strips his narrator naked and opens the window onto that awkward, lonesome continent where urges to connect battle with impulses and longings to touch, possess, or just get off with another being. In this way, the novel takes its place on a rare shelf of fiction that includes James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and André Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name*. The story follows the tense relationship between an American teacher in Sofia, Bulgaria, and a needy, handsome hustler named Mitko. Greenwell's gorgeous, roaming prose untangles questions of transaction, identity, cruelty, and just how much of knowing a stranger is willful invention. Along the way, certain observations—"Words in a foreign language never wound us like words in the language to which we're born"—strike so deep, they bleed. —CHRISTOPHER BOLLEN



Personal Effects

Photographer Catherine Opie is known for her seemingly disparate interests; some of her most famous series have been of S&M enthusiasts and high school football players. But Opie's work is united by a desire to chip away society's one-dimensional imagining of her subjects. So she seized the opportunity when Elizabeth Taylor, shortly before her death, invited Opie to photograph her Bel Air mansion at 700 Nimes Road. "I started to think about portraiture that didn't necessarily show the person, but that was utterly about the person in a more in-depth way," Opie says. "With someone as iconic as Elizabeth Taylor, what does it mean to slowly reveal her through her home?" In January, a show of 52 photographs will open at MOCA Pacific Design Center, including images of Taylor's densely packed closet and her jewels. Meanwhile, Opie herself has a busy calendar, with openings the same month at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and Lehmann Maupin in New York. —R.S.

