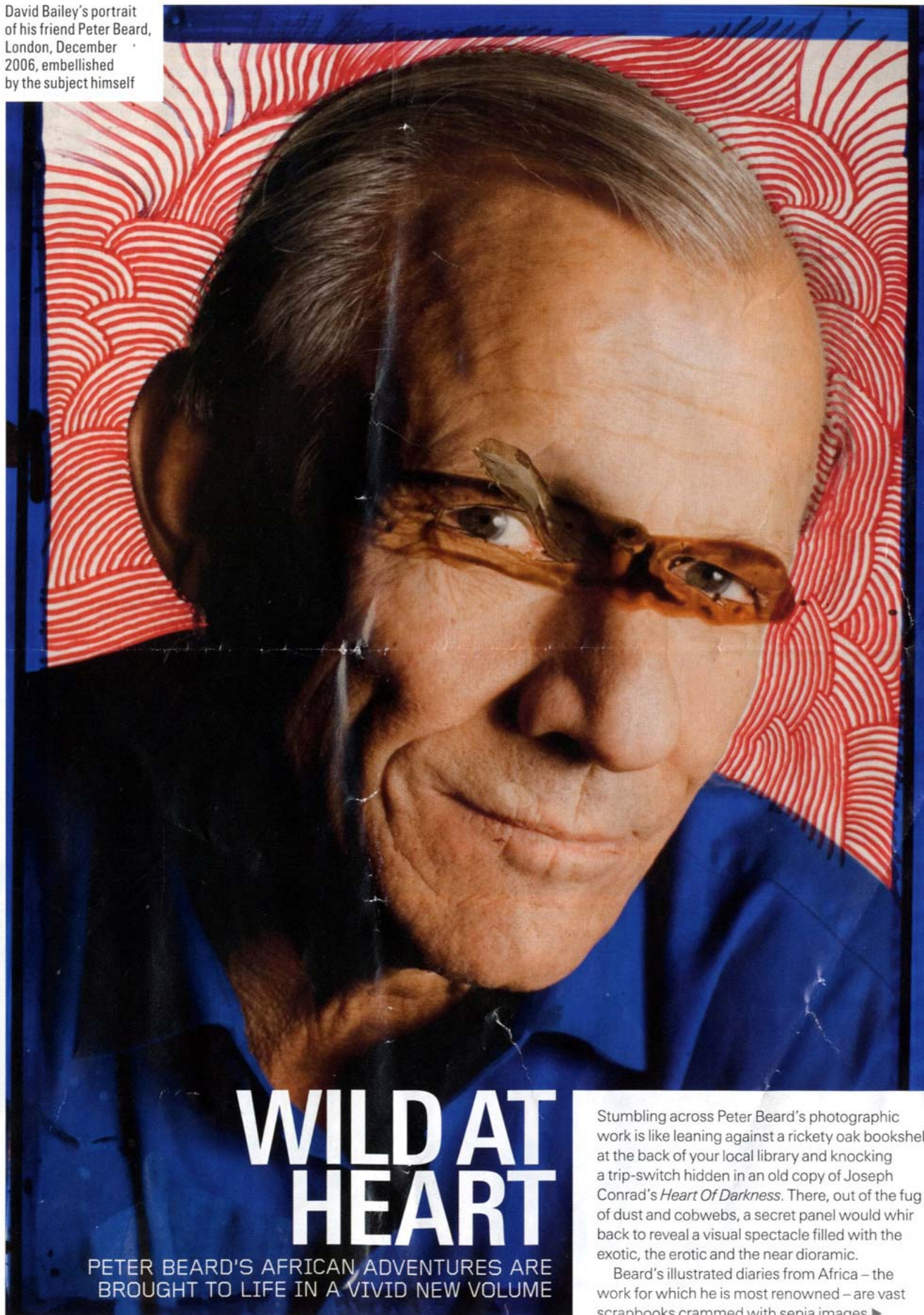


David Bailey's portrait
of his friend Peter Beard,
London, December
2006, embellished
by the subject himself



WILD AT HEART

PETER BEARD'S AFRICAN ADVENTURES ARE
BROUGHT TO LIFE IN A VIVID NEW VOLUME

Stumbling across Peter Beard's photographic work is like leaning against a rickety oak bookshelf at the back of your local library and knocking a trip-switch hidden in an old copy of Joseph Conrad's *Heart Of Darkness*. There, out of the flog of dust and cobwebs, a secret panel would whirl back to reveal a visual spectacle filled with the exotic, the erotic and the near dioramic.

Beard's illustrated diaries from Africa – the work for which he is most renowned – are vast scrapbooks crammed with sepia images ▶

DETAILS ART



Artist and photographer Peter Beard in David Bailey's London studio, December 2006

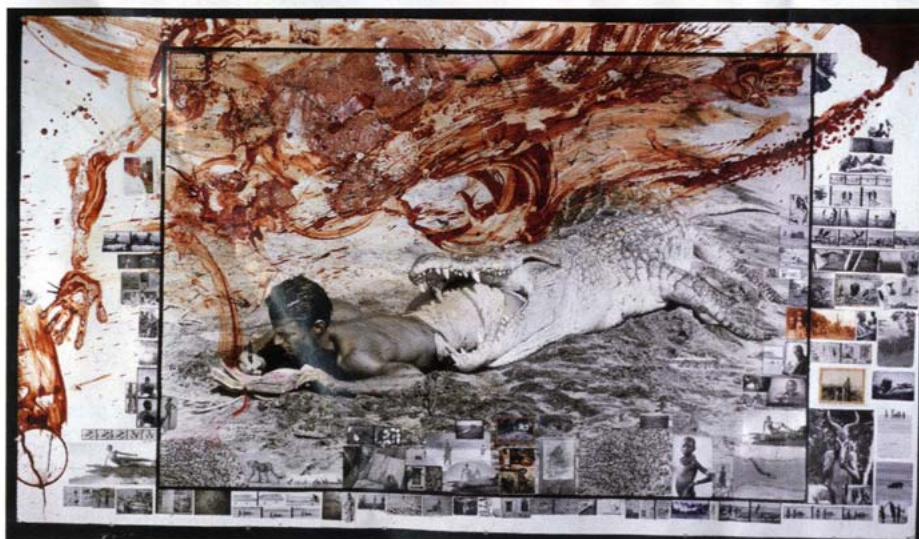
► of beaded Namibian princesses, yacht-long alligators and roaming caravans of elephants, drawn and adorned with paint, feathers, blood and ink scrawls. It sounds a little theatrical – a whiff of *Five Go Off To Camp* – but this is exactly how Beard's life and work read: part Enid Blyton plot, part Hugh Hefner script.

Of course, Beard came from old money – his great-grandfather founded the Great Northern Railroad – the backbone of American colonisation. Brought up within the protected, plush yet prickly hug of the moneyed New York Wasp scene, Beard was just another cash-rich glamour magnet hanging out with film stars and sipping whisky soaks with the young Truman Capote. That was until his moment of creative enlightenment, which was when he read Isak Dinesen's *Out Of Africa* in the Fifties. The book spurred him on to accompany his mother on her safaris to the dusty continent and it wasn't long before he was taking pictures, producing work and going back more and more.

"I became paranoid that he was trying to have me killed," recalls David Bailey, who was lucky enough to visit Beard in Africa on more than one occasion in the late Seventies. Bailey has taken these portraits of Beard to celebrate the launch of the 69-year-old artist's latest book, *Peter Beard, Limited Art Edition, No.251-2500*.

"First he took me up in a plane that ran out of fuel and we had to crash-land in the bush," says Bailey. "The second time he chucked a rock at a rhino. It hit the thing on the head and it charged our old Land Rover. The horn crashed straight into the door and missed me by an inch. He also kept sending me letters with scorpions hidden inside... Fucking great photographer though." JH

SNAPSHOTS OF AN ARTIST'S ALL-CONSUMING PASSION



COLLAGE DAYS

Peter Beard began his diaries aged 12, and his "day books" – volumes of collages such as "I'll Write Whenever I Can, Koobi Fora, Kenya 1965" (left), composing photos, text and animal

blood, inspired later works such as "Diary Pages, Kamiti Prison, 26 August And 4 September 1978" (above). *Peter Beard, Limited Art Edition, No.251-2500 (Taschen, £1,500) is out now.*