

## Book Review: Pretty Much Everything by Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin

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Taschen's lavish three-volume set *Inez van Lamsweerde Vinoodh Matadin: Pretty Much Everything* is not a complete collection of the fashion photographers' vast work, but it does give the reader a sense of their creative breadth: slick, sexy, even avant-garde. In an accompanying essay on portraiture throughout the ages, [William Blake](#) is quoted and the ancient marble faces of the Cyclades are name checked, but don't let that make you think this is a purely intellectual exercise. Van Lamsweerde and Matadin are smart but also visceral, so much so that they can get away with celebrity portraiture - say, of a smoke-enrapt [Clint Eastwood](#) - that often obscures the famous visages they are hired to capture. They take this even further with a series of graphic collages based on their photographs of Eastwood, [Bill Murray](#), [Scarlett](#)

[Johansson](#), and other A-listers. It is a testament to their demand as artists that they can pull this off. But wait, aren't they supposed to be fashion photographers?

Yes and no. In an interview Matadin explains that when they first arrived on the scene, their early work was often taken as a send-up of fashion photography, and their work frequently takes on a subversive element. A series of photos of young children glammed up and giggling through the makeup puts the spotlight on child pageantry years before *Toddlers and Tiaras*. What makes *Pretty Much Everything* work as a photography book is that photos from the couple's many diverse projects are mixed and juxtaposed for maximum resonance. This is not a chronology of their growth as artists but a summation of themes. Thus improbable celebrity juxtapositions are offered - who would have bet on similar facial expressions coming from [Sean Penn](#) and M.I.A.?

The pair's reputation as provocateurs can be reflected in their celebrity portraits: [Tom Cruise](#) may think that posing with a streaming garden hose he holds at his waist suggests manliness, but it could as easily be taken as a satire of superstar arrogance. Their work glams and deglams: awkward nude portraits of [Eva Herzigova](#) suggest the lurid paintings of [John Currin](#). Out of focus headshots of [Rachel Weisz](#) and [Emily Watson](#) may obscure but enough remains of the allure of beauty. And with beauty comes the surreal besat: "Lucy Fur" (2011) offers a three-headed monster atop a female nude.

It behooves me to point out that this set is a collectors' edition that costs \$700. I'm basing my review on PDFs, but I have seen the set and, as is the case from their budget line through their most expensive catalog items, Taschen does not skimp on production values. I was not familiar with Van Lamsweerde and Matadin's work before, and I can't in good faith suggest you run out and drop half your rent money on a photo book, even if it is a Taschen. But if you're in one of the better bookstores that carry the Taschen line, stop and give this striking collection a look.