

# Chicago Antisocial

antisocial@chicagoreader.com



Left: Jonathan Adler's perky "Georgia" vase, Adler himself, and partygoers at his new Chicago boutique. Right: a CK Subject model.

tic belt but then told me in a just-kidding-not-really manner that I'm too old to wear my hair like that. And furthermore, by now I should be past all the running around and boozing it up that my job entails.

At first I was slightly stunned. Then I realized something: the bitter truth is exciting when a famous person says it. Instead of getting angry about the insult, I was honored that Adler took the time to direct some of his famous inappropriateness in my direction. Next to imitation, insult is the highest form of flattery.

Later he said that he hadn't really meant it. "I actually wholeheartedly endorse age-inappropriate style," he said. "However, though I believe in boldness and inappropriateness, I also have a bit of a yenta streak. I want to see all cute girls married off and happy and movin' on up. . . . I'm half bohemian and half bourgeois. I hope that isn't too weird—it's the truth."

**A**leggy young woman in wide-open fishnets, see-through panties, and not much else peered down at her feet and asked me which looked better, the brown faux python platforms or the bronze faux croc pumps decorated with a sleazy little bow. I liked the python. She went with the croc.

She and about a dozen other hot little things were getting ready at the Ukrainian Village T-shirt showroom CK Subject Incorporated for the store's party fashion show, held at Le Passage last Thursday night. They slathered on Queen Helene cocoa butter, fretting over non-existent cellulite, changing in and out of sheer lace panties, pouting at themselves in the mirror. I tried to ask reporterly questions so I wouldn't seem creepy watching them. "So, you go to UIC?" I'd start, and then somehow the conversation would always turn to how hot they all looked.

I was having a great time watching them, but there was one problem: there was no "fashion" in sight. The girls were in tops only, and even those were shrunken and cropped. And everything was derived from something that already existed: T-shirts bore cheeky takes on well-established logos (a Rolling Stones tongue pierced with a diamond stud or the Levi's tag with the word Elvis instead, for example) and distressed jackets by the line Artine directly ripped off the easy-to-mimic luxe originals that Libertine's been making for a while now.

No one hates looking at sexy models, but don't call it a fashion show. With barely any clothes and even fewer original ideas, this was just an excuse for people to ogle girls in fancy undies. **B**

## The Immoderates

Housewares magnate Jonathan Adler gives our heroine a taste of her own medicine. Plus: it stops being fashion when we can see your cootch.

By Liz Armstrong

**U**ntil about seven months ago I hadn't been all that domestic. I've moved a zillion times in this city and never really got in the habit of unpacking all those cardboard boxes. Each of the few times I tried to paint it turned out hideously garish, and all the furniture I owned came from my parents or Ikea.

But that all changed last spring with the arrival of *Domino*, an interior style mag from publishing gluttons Conde Nast. Like *Lucky*, another CN publication, *Domino* doesn't pretend to be better than you and your measly salary; it just wants to sell you stuff—stuff you can actually find and purchase, not the rarefied matter in fancy fashion and interior design magazines, which I also love. It's nasty capitalist fodder, sure, but after I'd scoured one issue and recklessly spent a couple paychecks, my friends and family, for the first time ever, were telling me I had a beautiful home. So when I heard *Domino* was hosting a party last Tuesday for the new Jonathan Adler store at Rush and Erie, I had to go.

Adler started his career as a campy gay potter and later branched out into squishier things like linens and rugs. His love of pop and op art, psychedelic Victoriana, Palm Beach, Hollywood, and country-club chic is obvious. "Minimalism is a bummer: be immoderate and be happy," he writes in his new lime green book, *My Prescription for Anti-Depressive Living*. He's not cautious with patterns and contrast and he puts stuff, stuff, stuff everywhere. Though I admire his grandiosity, looking at the book too fast made me so dizzy I almost threw up.

A page titled "Be Inappropriate" has a photo of one of his newer pieces: a porcelain vase adorned with rows of pert titties. "Modesty is overrated," he writes. "Let the world know just how naughty you are—what do you have to lose?"

Exactly, I thought as I entered the store. I brought my younger sister, Maggie, another *Domino* enthusiast, along. Right away she noticed fancy-pants LA store owner and interior decorator Ruthie Sommers decked out in a

red diamond-print blouse that matched the sofa she posed in front of on the magazine's very first cover. Only we *Domino* devotees would delight in such a tragically nerdy touch.

I shuffled my way through a small group to check out some cute ceramic boxes. One was decorated with a tiny crest and two sperms. I could barely contain my excitement. "Look!" I called to Maggie. "It's for your condoms!" Noticing I'd attracted the attention of those around me, I held my hand to the side of my mouth and addressed the group: "But who uses condoms anymore, right?"

A gaggle of women crowded around a tall, elderly man in a dashing red sweater, offering him trays of drinks and gesturing toward plates of cookies and fruits like Vanna White. I later learned he was retired Starcom advertising mogul Bill Harmon.

"Let's do shots of tequila!" I screeched, jumping into their circle. Harmon looked me up and down, eyes a-twinkle, and boomed, "Are you Austrian?" "No," I said. "Why do you ask?"

"Because of your hair." It was styled in two pigtail braids.

"You should try one of these," I suggested, reaching for a butter cookie sprinkled with powdered sugar in the shape of a J (for Jonathan, of course). "They're delicious," I mumbled with my mouth full, sugar dusting my black top. Then I walked away.

The Exit is a crucial maneuver at a party like this. You mingle—you don't tangle—so as to appear vivacious and well liked, not at all as uncomfortable and socially awkward as you might actually feel at a private function where you don't know anyone but your little sister. Getting out of a conversation gracefully takes years to perfect. I'm pretty good at it, but the fabulous and adorable Adler and his fabulous and adorable boyfriend, Simon Doonan, are experts: they dropped me twice before I even realized it, leaving me to cheerfully toast them with my plastic cup of tequila and shout my good-bye to half-listening ears.

Before they lost me, Adler complimented me on my gigan-

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