

US \$1.99 october 2007

LA Direct



AKON,
PETRO
ZILIA,
DOLCE
GROUP,
JAMES
PERSE,
JULIA
GERARD



LOOKS
THAT
WORK

RACHAEL
LEIGH
COOK

**ON HER
MAN,
THAT
MOVIE &
HOW SHE'S
GROWN UP**

HOME
&
LIVING
ISSUE

HOLLYWOOD'S MOST WANTED

artist captures America's celebrity-gone-wrong obsession

by Jessamyn Cuneo

Artist Rachel Schmeidler knows our nation has an undeniable fixation with famous foul-ups, and she has capitalized on this craze with her ever-growing series of mug shot art. Her prints are brilliant, epic train wrecks; you can't help but stare, knowing that it's horrible to be entranced by something so ill-fated. "I have a theory about people's fascination with these arrests," the 31-year-old native of Israel says. "The Greeks idolized gods as we idolize celebrities, and misfortune humanizes them." Schmeidler's mug shot art can be viewed as a commentary on celebrities, the media, or even perhaps both. An eyewitness recently told Schmeidler about Nicole Richie coming face-to-face with her own piece during the time when the collection was showing at ArcLight Cinemas in Hollywood. Schmeidler recalls, "One of the employees [of ArcLight] told me that Nicole Richie walked up to her image and chirped, 'Mine's the best.'" The art isn't created for celebrity attention or

glamour. It's motivated by a deeper interest in people's fixation with the media and celebrity tragedy. Schmeidler was originally inspired by the combination of Mel Gibson's shocking arrest, and her experience at the Michael Jackson trial press camp, where the mania surrounding the event left a deep impression. "I'd been working for a printer for quite some time," she says. "I saw so much bad abstract art in three years that I couldn't continue with it anymore. Then, the Mel Gibson thing happened, and it just clicked." The process behind the printing is a new technology that combines silk screening over digital prints. Prices range from \$650 to \$1200 per mug shot. The most popular sellers have been Sid Vicious, Jane Fonda, and Nicole Richie. Schmeidler's heading in the direction of Hollywood mobsters and historical figures next. In the meantime, keep an eye out for her work on the set of next season's *Real World — Los Angeles*. The collection will also be showing at the Venice Grind Gallery starting October 5th.

