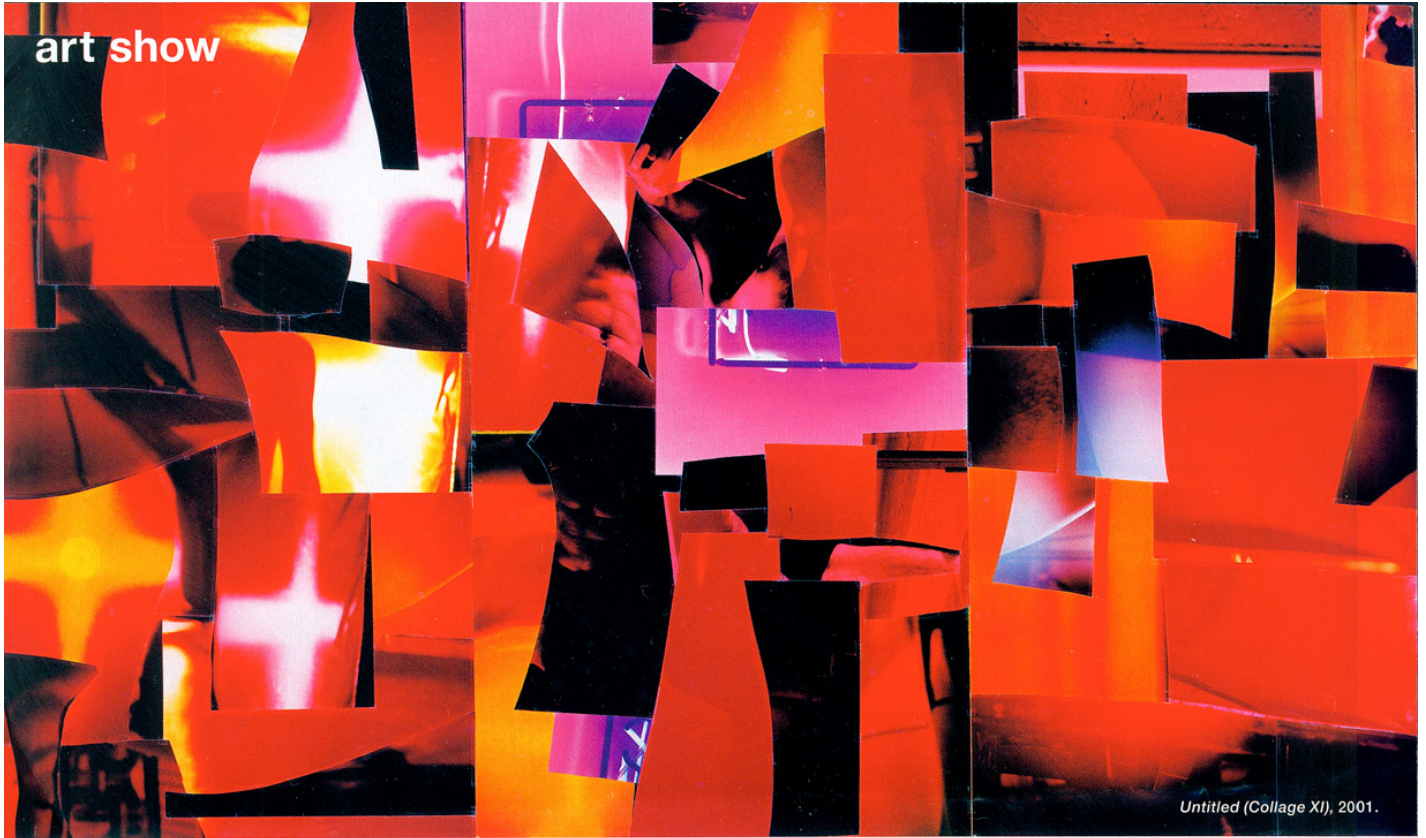


# CHEIM & READ

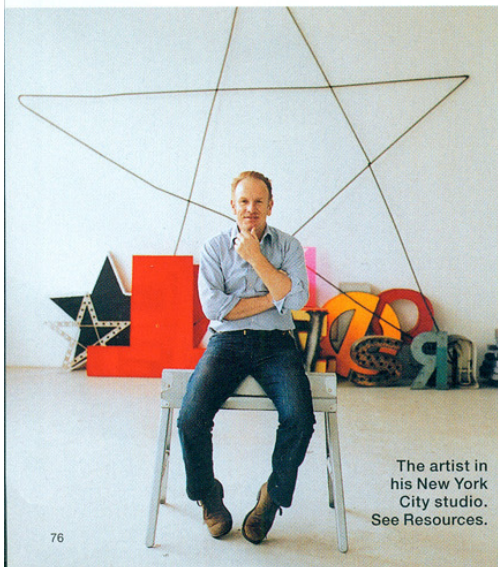
art show



## Jack Pierson

From striking photographs to poignant letter sculptures, this versatile artist is one of today's most sought-after stars

By Vicky Lowry



The artist in his New York City studio. See Resources.

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For the record, Jack Pierson looks nothing like his "self-portraits." Typically depicting buff and sultry men, this ongoing series of photographs made a splash at the Whitney Biennial in 2004, confronting issues of identity as many modern artists—from Andy Warhol to Cindy Sherman to Richard Prince—have done before him. "Jack gives us pictures of what he might like to be," says John Cheim of the New York City gallery Cheim & Read, which represents Pierson. "Like it or not, we inevitably look at beautiful people and think of ourselves in relation to them. How do we compare and why are we not like them?"

Pierson's first calling, however, was performance art, which he studied at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. "It's the one area where life itself, even at its most

way-out, was art," he explains. He later segued into photography, and, in the predigital age of the late 1980s, he began blowing up some of his snapshots into poster-size prints. "They were out of focus," he recalls, "but you couldn't complain: They only cost me \$10 each. But I could tell they were good." Maxing out his credit card with the 20-by-30-inch images, he was able to garner his first solo show at New York's Simon Watson gallery.

The itinerant Pierson moves easily among various states—he splits the year between New York; Provincetown, Massachusetts; and the California desert—as well as art mediums, an admittedly disjointed way to work he describes as "pure torture." Besides his photography, which includes celebrity portraits and editorial work for fashion magazines like *Vogue Hommes International* and *Purple*, he does drawings, paintings, and collages, plus installations that recall offbeat movie sets. The latter are vignettes filled with personal items from Pierson's former apartments and inspired by belongings he's seen laid out for sale on blankets along the sidewalks of New York. "On the street I'd see an ashtray from Capri, great Polaroids, porno magazines," he says. "You could read them like a book." This transparency appealed to >

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