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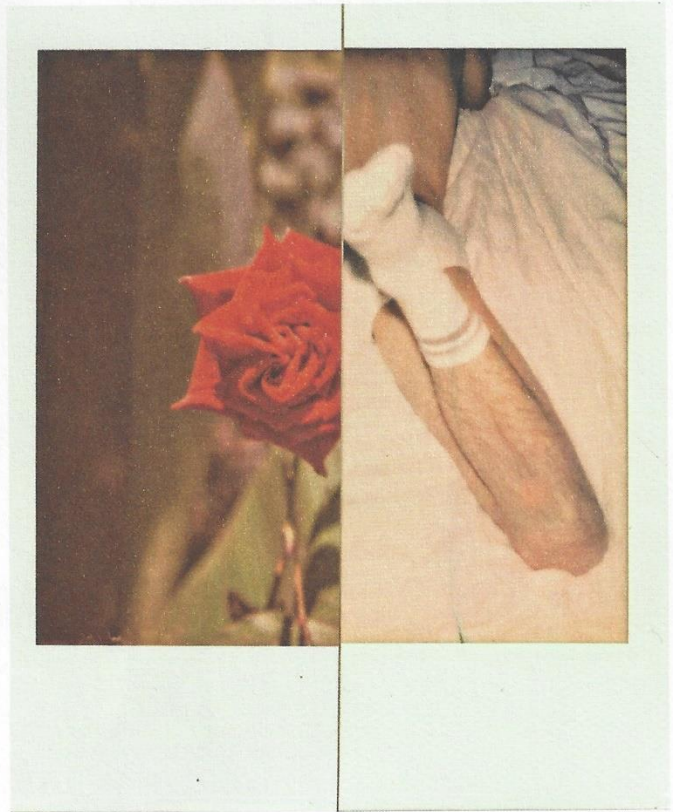


HOUSE OF STUART

Stuart Sandford's photographs aren't meant to be sensual, but with references ranging from Greek gods to Nan Goldin it sometimes happens.

BY **MAXWELL WILLIAMS**
PRODUCED BY **MICHAEL REYNOLDS**





Previous page: *Sebastian*, 2017, in Carrara marble. Above, from left: *Polaroid Collage (iii)* and *Polaroid Collage (iv)*, both 2018. Opposite: *Sebastian (relic) no.1*, 2016–18, in cast bronze, photo by Alex la Cruz.

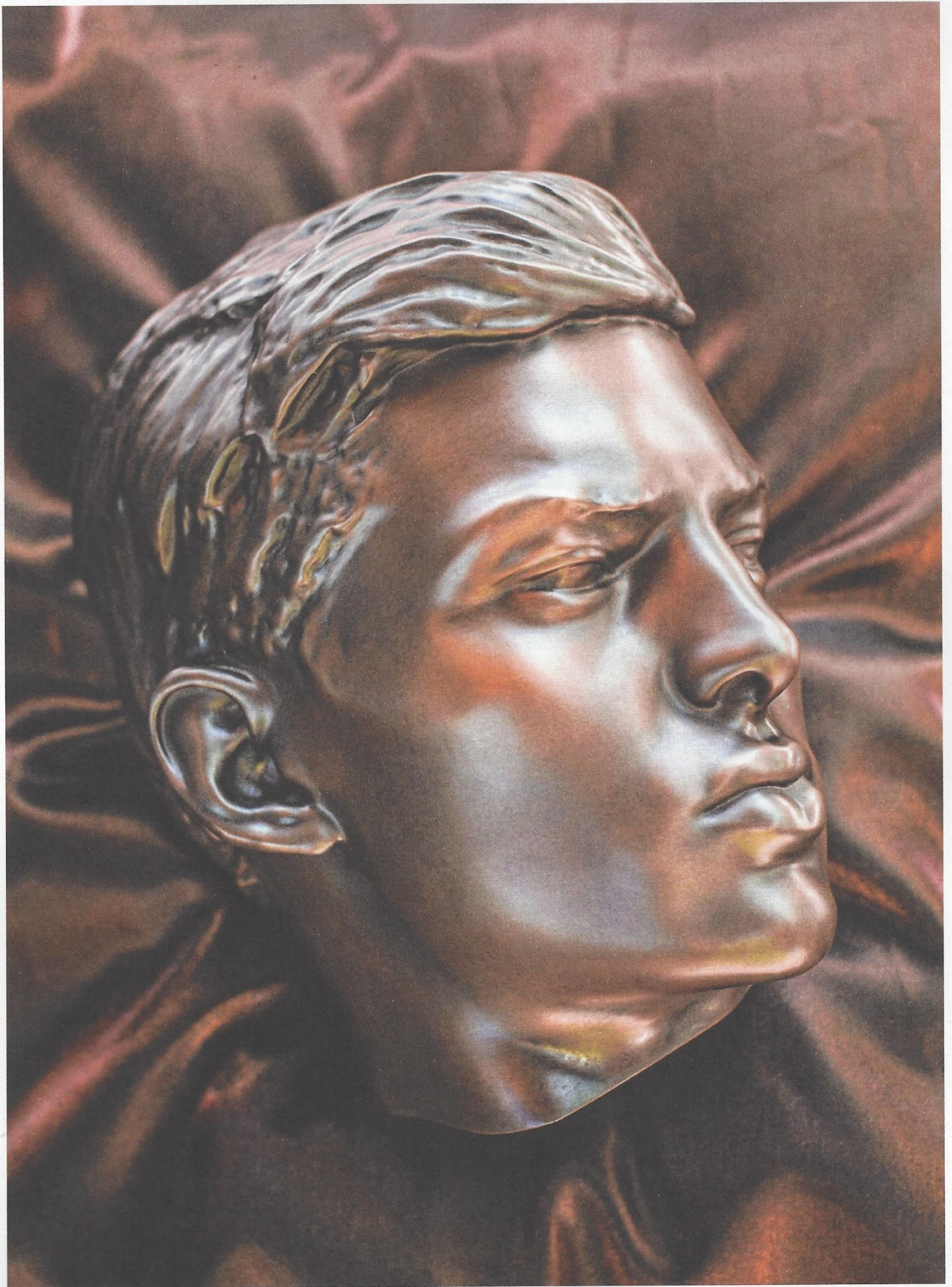
STUART SANDFORD STANDS IN THE kitchen of the Tom of Finland Foundation house in Echo Park, a tall bespectacled ginger wearing an LA Dodgers tank top, the vision of a perfect Angeleno. And like many Angelenos, the artist is a transplant, via Berlin and New York from the U.K., where he was born. He has been living in the over-century-old Craftsman style former home of the erotic art icon for nearly three years now. Initially as an artist-in-residence and now as a resident artist “I work with a couple of fabrication studios, and there’s a foundry I work with in San Fernando; he did the bronze head,” Sanford says. “Depending on what I’m doing, I’ll find myself on the third floor here if I’m just working on my laptop, or if I’m painting, I’ll be outside in the garden.”

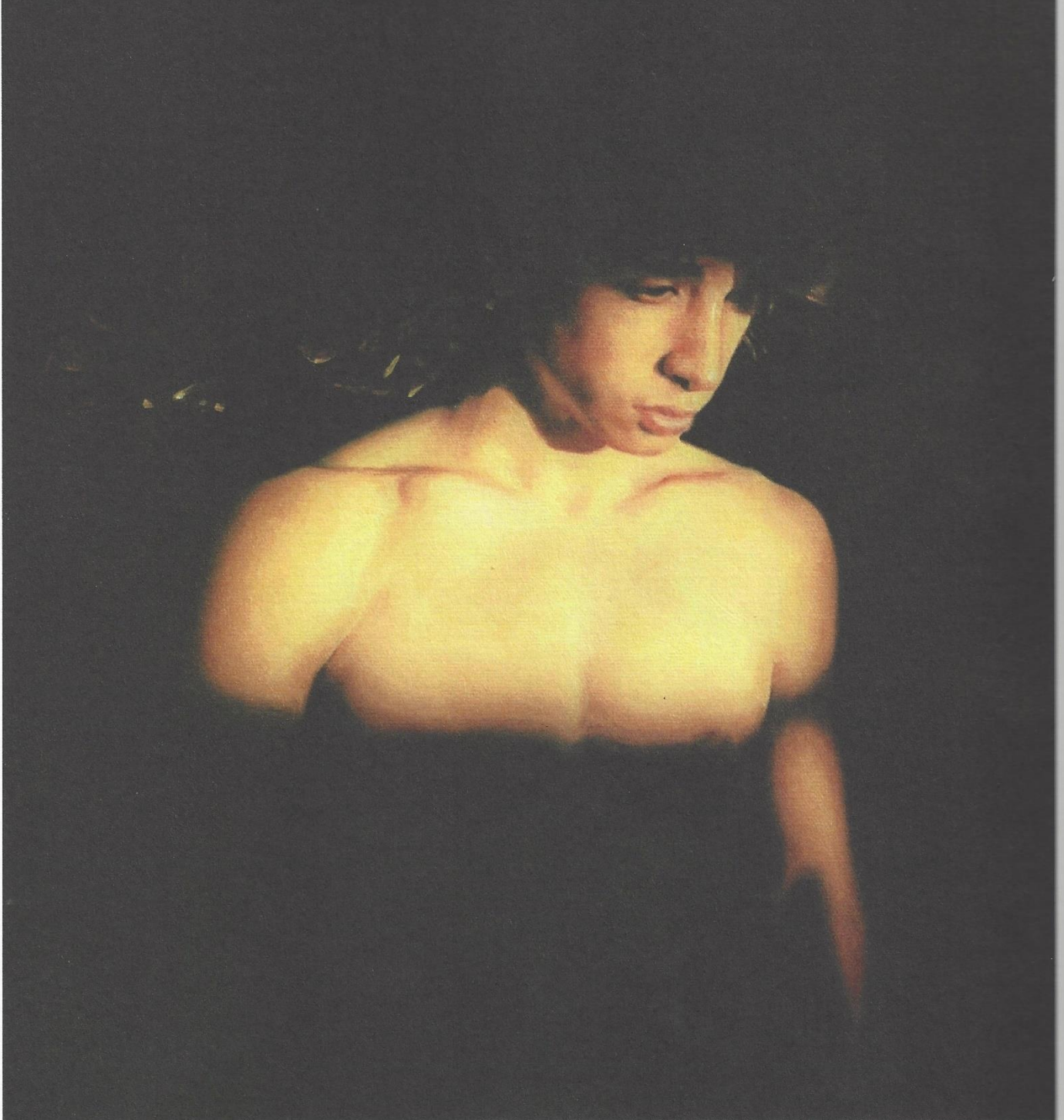
The bronze head, which lays diagonally on a plinth in a sitting room in the house, is, to Sanford, much more a photograph than the classical sculpture it resembles. “If you think of analog photography as photography 1.0, and then digital photography as 2.0, 3-D scanning would be 3.0, but instead of having a two-dimensional image you can blow up to any size, you have a three-dimensional image you can print and blow up to any size,” he says. “That’s what I do. I make a 3-D print, and then cast from the 3-D print. It is part of the photographic

process.” This particular series comes from his sculpture *Sebastian*—based on a 3-D scan of German-American model Sebastian Sauvé in his underwear, holding a camera to take a selfie. From this full-body statue, he isolates several body pieces, which are then subtitled (*relic*). The head in question is the first of the series, *Sebastian (relic) no.1*.

Sanford explains that the classical form is a reference to Antinous, Emperor Hadrian’s young lover from the early part of the 2nd century, whom Hadrian deified after his death. “More sculptures and likenesses were commissioned of him than any other figure in Greco-Roman history,” says Sanford. “And a religion grew up around him that lasted for 400 years before Christianity came through and swept everything away. There’s actually a bust of Antinous where he’s looking downwards, and his left shoulder is slightly elevated as though he’s holding something, so that was one of the references for this sculpture, where he’s actually looking down at a camera and taking a selfie. I wanted to play with these ideas: ‘How does one create an idol? How does one create a contemporary—not worship-able form, but some kind of icon?’”

References to classical imagery, eroticism and the selfie are a few of the dominant leitmotifs in Sanford’s work. An early





This page: *Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet (Eric)*, 2018, oil on canvas. Opposite: *Alejandro in the garden*, 2018, color photograph.

series, Cumfaces, where he asked friends and acquaintances to photograph themselves at the point of climax, remains an important notch in his career. These selfies reveal the most important theme in Sandford's work: intimacy.

His artist residency projects at the Tom of Finland Foundation consist of publications that contain Polaroid photographs of friends, acquaintances, lovers and others in his orbit. Many of those photographs are in Sandford's most recent exhibition, "Pictures," on view at Queer/Bar in Seattle through October 31st. They are beautiful gauzy photographs and not quite documentary. Sandford sets up the shoots beforehand yet the intimacy bubbles through, like a kind of Robert Mapplethorpe-meets-Nan Goldin sensuality.

"I already have an intimate relationship with most of my subjects," says Sandford. "I'm either dating them, or they're a friend of mine. I'm trying to depict intimacy between myself and the subject. Yes, there are moments of eroticism, but my goal isn't to arouse you, per se. If that happens, that's fine, but that's not necessarily my goal."

Odd, considering the final piece Sandford shows me is a small 3-D printed sculpture of a young man giving himself autofellatio. He laughs when he shows it to me because it's without question an extremely erotic image. Then he explains that the sculpture is called Ouroboros after the symbol of the snake eating its own tail, popular in Greek mythology. It all comes full circle.

