

THE ARTFUL HACKER

DATA SCULPTOR HIJACKING THE GREY AREAS OF CYBERSPACE

Paolo Cirio is an Italian tactical media artist with a particular interest in bridging socio-political activity with aesthetics. Living, working and hacking between London, Berlin and New York, his impervious artworks target empires such as Google, Amazon and Facebook. Almost sued by the latter due to his project *Face to Facebook* – where he stole one million profiles and redistributed them on a mock dating website – Cirio's extended list of chaos-inflicted projects includes the issuing of counterfeited credit cards, and the installation of CCTV cameras to track public officers for the democratisation of surveillance.

DAZED & CONFUSED: You're a "data sculptor". What does this mean?

PAOLO CIRIO: I work with media, researching about power and the impact of information in the era of networks. Data for me is raw, malleable material that can be shaped for structuring unexpected forms. Most of my artwork entails manipulation of the flowing of information.

Why media?

It's partly a political choice, partly aesthetic. The media are instrumental in the ordering of the world; they can oppress people, but they can also contribute to the evolution of human language and knowledge. As a contemporary artist, I feel that moulding this material is a historical duty. When I attempted my first pirate radio transmitter at the age of 16, it

was because I could broadcast my own messages against the Italian media, not because I was interested in transistors!

A large part of your work is based on hacking. How do you approach the act artistically?

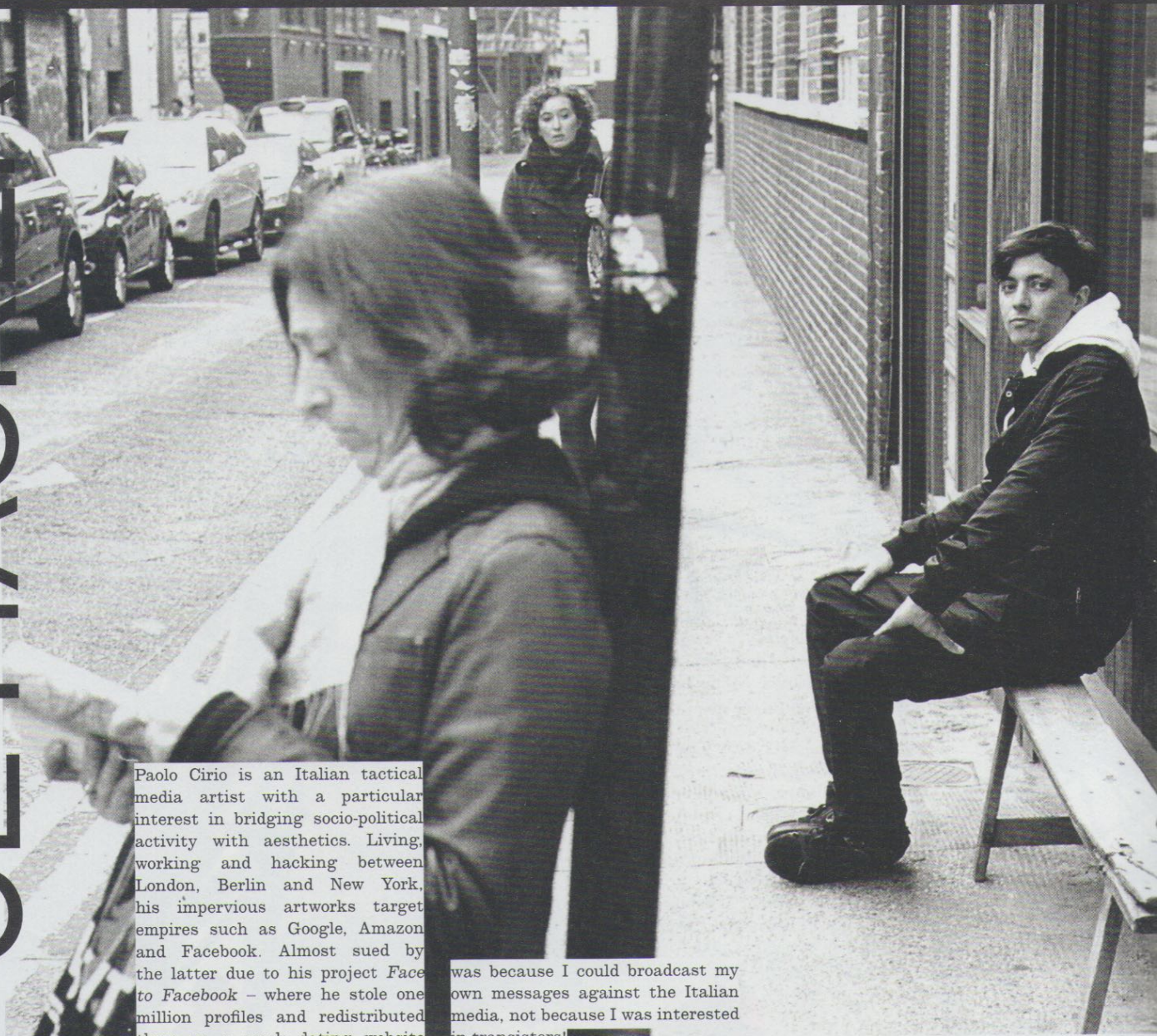
Hacking is just a methodology that allows me to push the boundaries and invent a new language. If it becomes illegal, it's because you are researching areas that have not yet been explored. I tend to push the boundaries within grey areas, where rules are obscure.

So far you've been getting away with it...

True. Artists – like politicians – often benefit from legal immunity, because contemporary democracies need to keep their contradictions quiet. In any case, what I do is art, not criminal activity for personal economic advantage. What fascinates me is that an artist like me can be a threat to powerful organisations and influence a wide audience just through a laptop, from any part of the world.

**Text EFTIHIA STEFANIDI
Photography
FINN ANDRES**

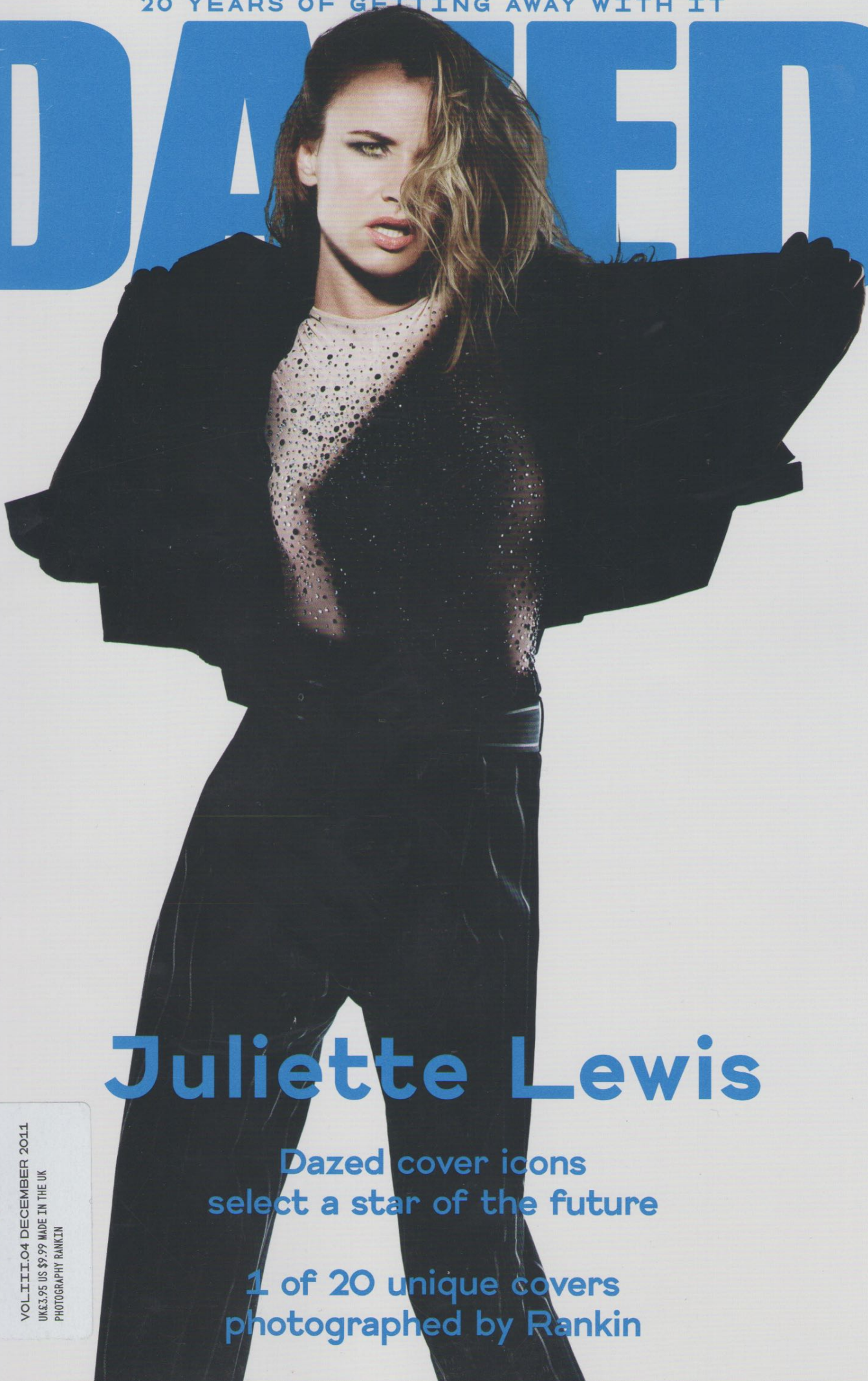
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