

# PORTRAITS BY AN ARTIST

The photography of Ronny Jaques finally gets the attention it deserves in a new book called *Stolen Moments*.

BY PAMELA FIORI

IN THE PANTHEON of famous magazine photographers of the midcentury, Ronny Jaques may not be the first who leaps to mind. More likely, Richard Avedon, Lillian Bassman, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, Philippe Halsman and Horst would be the ones readers of that era remember best—especially for their fashion stories and celebrity images. But to overlook Jaques would be a mistake, because he photographed not only fashion; his repertoire also included travel, serious portraiture and coverage of high-society figures. He was a man for all seasons and situations, a solo act who didn't need a team to assist him. Of course, he took the pictures, changed the film and switched the lenses, but he very often suggested his subjects. If he was shooting a fashion story, he selected the clothes. No help needed or wanted. It was a *modus operandi* that suited him as well as it did the magazines for which he did his best work: *Harper's Bazaar*, *Town & Country* and *Holiday*.

Ronny Jaques was born in England in 1910. He immigrated to Canada and was lured to the United States in the mid-1940s by Carmel Snow, the legendary editor of *Harper's Bazaar*. A woman with an eye for talent, Mrs. Snow (as she was always called) was impressed by the photos Jaques had taken of people in the performing arts for Canadian magazines. Guaranteeing Jaques four pages a month at \$150 a page, Mrs. Snow—smart cookie that she was—got much more than she paid for. As for Jaques, he was thrilled to be in a city that allowed him to work with “the big boys,” as he referred to his fellow photographers.

One of the reasons Jaques may be less known than his contemporaries is that so little is left of his portfolio. His black-and-

white negatives were lost by a printing house; his color work mysteriously disappeared. That left a small collection of prints and whatever tear sheets existed from the magazines to which he had contributed. Until recently, that parcel was stored on a bookshelf in the master bedroom of the Copenhagen house where Jaques lives with his Danish wife, Lise.

Jaques agreed to part with some of his black-and-white prints for his first book, *Stolen Moments*, which will be published in September. Taken from the name of a jazz standard written by the saxophonist Oliver Nelson, the title seems appropriate in that so many of Jaques's subjects look as if they were unaware that their picture was being taken. The photographer, however, was in full concentration. He had a job to do, and he did it exceedingly well.

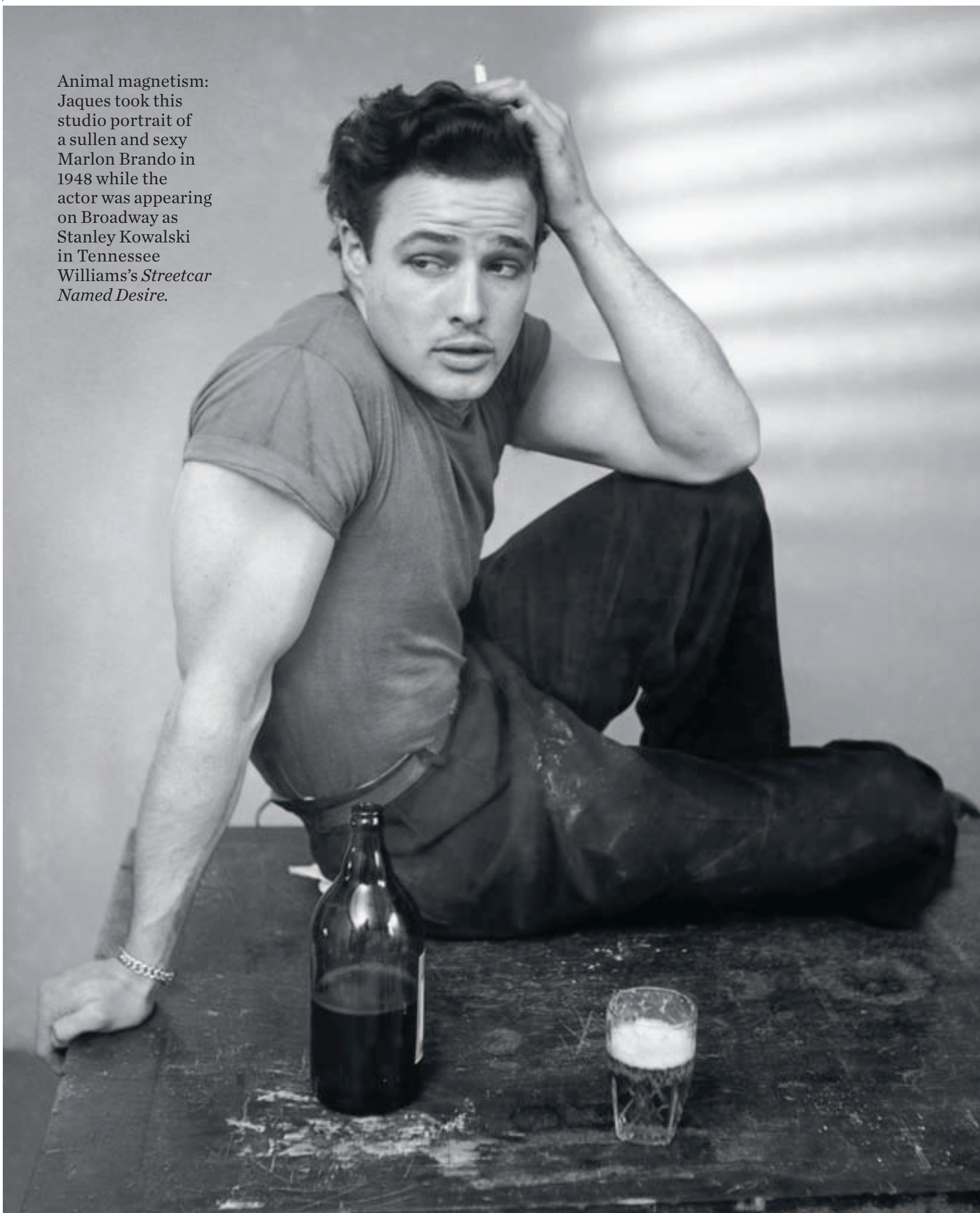
Modest man that he is, Ronny Jaques probably never would have pursued publishing a book about himself. That he allowed me (along with Mary Shanahan, *Town & Country's* creative director) to produce one on his behalf demonstrates not only his friendship—we've known each other for twenty-six years—but his trust. Even though Jaques contributed to *T&C* for many years, he did so decades ago and before my time as editor. One of my greatest regrets was that we never had a chance to work together. This book gave me the opportunity, and for that I shall be forever grateful.

At this writing, Ronny Jaques is ninety-eight years old, and his eyesight isn't nearly as sharp as it used to be. With a little luck and some prayers from his friends and loved ones, he'll get to see *Stolen Moments* for himself. I'd like to think he will be pleased. ❖

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*From Stolen Moments: The Photographs of Ronny Jaques, by Pamela Fiori. Photographs © 2008 by Ronny Jaques. Published by Glitterati.*

Animal magnetism:  
Jaques took this  
studio portrait of  
a sullen and sexy  
Marlon Brando in  
1948 while the  
actor was appearing  
on Broadway as  
Stanley Kowalski  
in Tennessee  
Williams's *Streetcar  
Named Desire*.





Different stripes:  
A bathing beauty  
leaves her footprints  
in the sand on a  
Long Island beach  
in the 1950s.

*OPPOSITE:* Heiress  
Christina Onassis,  
daughter of Greek  
shipping magnate  
Aristotle Onassis,  
seems lost in thought  
in this portrait,  
taken in Paris in 1969.





Refined and rugged:  
Jean Patchett,  
a famous 1950s  
model, shows off a  
fur-trimmed coat  
for a fall fashion  
story in *Harper's  
Bazaar*. *OPPOSITE*:  
Actor Robert  
Mitchum strikes his  
typical tough-guy  
pose in 1947.





Wistful thinking:  
Billie Holiday  
at Manhattan's  
Downbeat Club in  
1943. *OPPOSITE:*  
Isabel Goldsmith,  
daughter of  
British tycoon Sir  
James Goldsmith,  
New York, 1970s.

