

SATURATED WORLDS

“I see my images as film stills from a movie that doesn’t exist” – Miles Aldridge on depicting the hyper-surreal

By [Rosie Lowit](#) | 7 April 2025

In a career spanning thirty years, British fashion photographer Miles Aldridge has established a world that exaggerates and distorts our own, his highly stylised images veering towards a dreamy, saturated surrealism. Lurking beneath his staged scenes of domestic bliss are suggestions of something more sinister; from a meticulously constructed set, Aldridge’s models gaze blankly beyond the lens.

Now, Miles Aldridge’s photographs are the subject of the third special edition of *TOILETPAPER* – named *TOILETMILES PAPERALDRIDGE* – which is being celebrated with titular exhibitions at London’s Lyndsey Ingram Gallery and Sotheby’s. The magazine edition sees Aldridge’s works in dialogue with those of co-founders Maurizio Cattelan and Pierpaolo Ferrari, through a mutual love of heightened realities, irony and absurd glamour. The publication’s release is being marked by Polaroid portrait sessions at Sotheby’s next week, where visitors will be offered the chance to have their photographs taken by Aldridge himself.

Marking the occasion, we spoke to Miles Aldridge about his signature editorial style, collaborating with *TOILETPAPER*, and his enduring inspirations.

Rosie Lowit: You’ve collaborated with Maurizio Cattelan – co-founder of *TOILETPAPER* – on a number of projects. What does it mean to have your works in dialogue with Cattelan’s again in this magazine?

Miles Aldridge: Maurizio and I both deal in heightened realities, using irony and exaggeration to expose something deeper about contemporary life. His work, like mine, operates in that space between the absurd and the unsettling – where the artificial becomes so exaggerated that it starts to reveal a hidden truth. To have my photographs in conversation with his again is like continuing a game of visual ping-pong, where we’re both playing with themes of consumerism, beauty, and the surreal.

RL: The photographs in the magazine and at Lyndsey Ingram span 22 years of your career. How did you decide which of your images to include, and what is the effect of compiling works from several years – and a number of different photographic series – into one display?

MA: I approached the selection much like an editor assembling a film montage or a short story collection – looking for a rhythm, a continuity of mood. Even though these images were created over decades, they share a common DNA: the use of saturated color, a fascination with the domestic as a stage, and a sense of narrative ambiguity. I think of someone like Raymond Carver, his stories are individual pieces, but when read together, they create a world, a sensibility. That’s what I wanted to achieve here: a body of work that, when seen as a whole, forms a kind of dreamlike cinematic universe.

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RL: Your signature editorial style underpins themes of the domestic with the sinister, in a very cinematic manner. Do you tend to have a narrative in mind when taking photographs?

MA: Always. I see my images as film stills from a movie that doesn't exist – moments suspended in time. David Lynch is a huge influence in that regard. His films created an eerie tension by presenting something seemingly normal and then letting unease seep through the cracks. I try to achieve that same effect in my work. *The Rooms #2*, for example, presents a woman sprawled over a decorative carpet. The setting is pristine yet uncanny, with carefully arranged objects hinting at an unseen tension. Every detail, from the stark colour palette to the precisely positioned objects, contributes to a feeling of staged perfection. One that masks an underlying unease, suggesting a world where beauty and control are meticulously maintained, yet something beneath the surface feels off, inviting the viewer to speculate on the hidden narrative.

RL: I read that you often base the subjects in your photographs on your mother. How have your lived experiences informed your images?

MA: My mother was a housewife, and I grew up observing the rituals and aesthetics of domestic life – how the home could be both a place of comfort and quiet tension. There's a certain performative aspect to domesticity, a sense of maintaining appearances, which I find deeply compelling. That idea has shaped so much of my work. My images often feature women in staged, hyperreal environments, caught between perfection and unease. It's my way of exploring the contradictions I saw in the everyday: beauty and boredom, glamour and routine, control and chaos.

RL: In addition to a familial influence, your photos tap into a vast range of cultural references. Could you tell me about how broader themes like art history or film noir influence your work?

MA: Art history and cinema are huge touchpoints for me. Vermeer's use of light, the hyperreal colors of the Pre-Raphaelites, the stark compositions of film noir, all of these influence how I construct an image. And then there's Lynch again – his worlds are rich with cinematic references, but he reconfigures them into something uniquely his own. I try to do the same, pulling from Hitchcock's suspense, Antonioni's sense of alienation, or Avedon's psychological depth, but filtering it all through a hyper-stylised, contemporary lens.

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RL: I'm really interested in *A Drop of Red – Study V* (2001), *A Drop of Red #2* (2001), and *Red Marks #1* (2003), which are close-ups. How does your approach to image-making change when you're focusing on an object as opposed to a model?

MA: When I shoot objects, I treat them with the same narrative weight as a character. A close-up, to me, is like a Raymond Carver sentence – pared down, precise, but loaded with meaning. A single drop of red can feel forensic, like a piece of evidence in an unseen crime, or it can be sensual, depending on the context. With close-ups, it's about distilling the image down to its purest, most evocative form. I want the viewer to lean in, to feel like they're catching something just before or just after an important moment.

TOILETMILES PAPERALDRIDGE is on at Lyndsey Ingram and Sotheby's until 17th April.

TOILETMILES PAPERALDRIDGE: POLAROID PORTRAITS is taking place at Sotheby's from 8th – 11th April.

