



PISS ELEGANCE



NEST A QUARTERLY OF INTERIORS

FALL 2002 \$12.50
DISPLAY UNTIL NOV. 15





IF YOU HAVE NOTHING ESPECIALLY PRESSING, LOG ON TO LA-KEVIN (WWW.LA-KEVIN.COM/LIVE), WATCH KEVIN PAD ABOUT THE HOUSE. OR FAILING KEVIN, STARE AT HIS EMPTY ROOMS FOR AS LONG AS YOU WANT. IT'S FUN.

SEVEN CAMERAS AND NOTHING ON

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If you log on to LA-Kevin's live webcam, chances are he's naked, whether he's watching TV, cooking pasta, taking a dump, installing his new VCR, or fucking. The only time I see him in clothes is when he's getting ready to go out or cleaning his screened-in porch. His boyfriend, Rufus, is usually snuggled beneath the covers, his closely cropped head and perhaps a tattooed bicep showing, while Kevin sleeps fully exposed beside him. The purplish bedspread is a riot of stylized leafy fragments, like an art deco jungle. Kevin looks so feral stretched out on top of it, a long albino panther, his cock in a gentle arc falling to the left. In the three years that it's been up, LA-Kevin's site has received a million and a half visits. Through email and chat rooms, fans approach him nervously as if he were a star. "I don't get that," says LA-Kevin. "I'm just a normal guy in an apartment in West Hollywood."

"Normal" in West Hollywood is a different bag of marbles than in most places. Originally a Prohibition boomtown, West Hollywood was incorporated as a city in 1984 and remains proudly outside the grip of the LAPD. LA-Kevin lives in an eighteen-unit building on the east side. His apartment is always online, 24/7, always available to me for free, like nature or the ideal lover. I come home after a stressful day, open a beer, and log on. Inured by confessional talk shows and reality TV, I've grown used to strangers glad to be intimate with me. And on the web you don't have to wait for Geraldo to invite you. Cameras are cheap. Anybody with the tiniest amount of expendable income can erupt from the passivity of audience and leap inside the picture tube. I sip my beer and Kevin jacks off. I watch him complacently, as I would tropical fish.

Kevin, who works as a computer technologist, is disdainful of the "consumer-grade" cameras used on most sites. At their worst, the resolution is so poor that people lurch through a blur of lurid magentas and purples, like a bad acid flashback. Over the past three years, Kevin has rigged up a network of seven professional security cameras (and has plans for more). All the cameras can be made portable. In the bedroom there's one in the ceiling for a "bird's-eye view." Another is set up next to the bed. The third one's usually in front of Kevin when he sits at his computer, but he also moves it around the bedroom or takes it to other parts of the apartment. There are two more in the bathroom and another in the kitchen. His boyfriend can't sleep with the lights on, so Kevin bought an infrared camera, which can broadcast in the dark when Rufus sleeps over. The infrared images appear in black and white, but it's worth it to keep Rufus happy. Kevin's thoughtful like that. If a guest objects to being filmed, he'll either move with them to another room or switch the feed to another camera. "Hey, the rule is this is life, and life is about people. That's what's important. So if the people

in my life are made uncomfortable by the presence of the camera then I need to cater to the comfort of my friends."

Though every room has been online at one time or another, I've never seen the living room or dining area. "Do you plan to go into the living room sometime soon?" I hint. "Yes," says LA-Kevin. "We'd really be interested in seeing those rooms." "I get what you're getting at, but, no, I don't plan to be in there in time for your article." Unlike some camera operators, LA-Kevin doesn't take requests. "In chat rooms we get hammered with requests from people who demand that we perform, almost like circus animals." For Kevin, living his life "on cam" means dropping self-consciousness, forgetting about the camera's presence. He can always switch cameras if he needs to retreat, but he doesn't need to very often. "Most people are amazed I don't feel invaded. But most people have only experienced cameras under a situation of being monitored." (He read an article that said your face is photographed an average of six times an hour when you're out doing your daily duties.) "I'm not being monitored. I'm totally in control of what's being shown and what's being seen." Kevin's adamant that he's not an exhibitionist. "The camera is simply present when I'm living life here at home, so sex is not outside of that." He's been a nudist all his life. As a teen, when his parents went out for the evening he'd take off his clothes and do his chores, watch TV, play the piano. Anything done without clothes excited him. He didn't know there was a community out there until seven years ago, when he joined a Los Angeles nudist club. The gay male club mostly holds movie nights and cocktails in members' homes. Occasionally they'll rent out a restaurant, or attend a play with onstage nudity or visit a Palm Springs resort.

As Kevin hunches over his boyfriend's chest and kisses him, suddenly the video slows down to a halt. Briefly the picture disappears altogether. Other viewers have caught on that they're having sex and the network is overloaded. Our hunger for images jams the system. In this space, sex is inevitable. That's what keeps us watching. Like crime scene photos, even when unpopulated the rooms feel charged. Webcam never gives the illusion of fluid, "natural" movement. It's more like a series of stills that jerk into the next still. Kevin's empty bedroom twitches as the camera refreshes, so it appears to be alive, to be breathing. The kite-shaped leaves on the bedspread rustle. When Kevin enters the space, his body feels like a prop within the bedroom's languorous aloneness. Events break down into a series of mini-events, and the jumps between images evade the narrative pressure of our central nervous system. We sit in our office chairs exalting in their mystery. A hand strobes along a cock. Blink. White stuff spews out of it, caught in midair like a Muybridge horse. We're never sure what we're missing. Light through the venetian blinds stripes both the bed and Kevin. He looks half mummy, half tiger.

Watching this stuff is as banal and tedious as hanging out at the mall. It's quickly addictive. Warhol would have loved the webcam. Kevin's apartment sprawls out before us, labyrinthine genitalia that keep unfolding. We zoom in on the details with the tenderness of a stalker—the remote and cell phone beside him on the bed, his white crew socks, the giant RCA dog, Nipper, he dusts on the porch. What I would give to read the clippings on Kevin's refrigerator door. If you watch regularly, it's exciting to see new rooms, new angles appear. Fans are always asking Kevin about the objects in his bedroom, and he's generous with his answers. Those two photos hanging on the wall beside the dresser, right above the wastepaper basket, are pages from an early 1980s Soloflex home gym brochure. Kevin ripped them out and framed them. "It was the guy that I thought had the most perfect









body. When I'm in bed I can look over and see them there at the right height. It's something that was done exclusively for myself." The picture above the TV has a "sparkly black background with golden sparkly things behind it. There are holes cut out in the blackness to make out one of the bridges in San Francisco." The lava lamp beneath it used to be green, but sitting in the sun it turned gold, so Kevin moved it to pick up the gold in the bridge. That weird futuristic painting above the bed is a print embossed on wood. He purchased it in a furniture store because he liked the colors. It's the kind of picture, he confides, where they tell you it's the last one, but then you come back the following week and there's another one hanging in the exact same place.

Kevin's decor is functional, masculine, its colors bold yet subdued. It could be the home of any gay man with a credit card. He's unapologetic about his Ikea furniture. "I'm very much a mainstream shopper." "Is that a Noguchi lamp by the bed?" "I can assure you it is not." The mass-market look of the bedroom furniture, the cheap boxy modernity of the particleboard cabinets in the kitchen further fuel our fantasies. Kevin's nakedness is hot, not just because he's got a big cock, but because it removes specificity. As the weekend progresses, clothes are strewn across the floor and bed, an open dresser drawer spills its contents, the nightstand is cluttered with bottles and tubes. We don't know what's in the bottles, we can't make out the drawer's contents, and the clothes are unassuming pants and shirts. The more disheveled the interiors, the sexier they become. Clearer details would be an intrusion. This is the messiness of ordinary life, the terrain of the Polaroid snapshot. There's an illusion of the unmediated in the way we experience this naked body moving from room to room. In a space this minimal, anything goes. Whenever he's home the bedroom TV is on, its fuzzy picture jerking in time to the room's breathing. We're engaged in an endless cycle of ingestion and expulsion. In the bathroom the naked body trims its balls, in the kitchen it lingers beside an electric stove, the glowing coils and boiling water disturbingly close to vulnerable flesh.

The environment gives so little it lures us back again and again. We cling to it through the narratives we create. Kevin is in bed with another man. The man is lying on his stomach on the side of the bed farthest away from the camera. Kevin rolls and twitches, the full length of his naked body exposed. The other guy is so still he may be dead. Does he know about the camera? They wake late and have sex for hours. Elliot and I watch them in San Francisco. Elliot says they must be party boys. What drugs could create such potency? Kevin sets his sneakers on the bed after sex, and Elliot exclaims, "The guys are going to the gym!" Rufus, with his shaved head, packs a suitcase, and Jack in Canada writes in Kevin's guest book that Rufus must be in the military. Kevin thinks it's natural for people to create stories for him. "It's like watching a silent movie that you know has an audio track and wasn't meant to be a silent movie. It's like half of it's missing. Your mind is going to want to fill in the holes." Mostly his viewers imagine true love. In Kevin's guest book Jackson from Kentucky writes, "I only wish I could find someone like these two guys, always touching when together in bed. I'd move about anywhere for that kind of love." Barry from Canada adds, "There is a God and Kevin gets the love he needs and deserves." Not surprisingly, Kevin feels warmth for the people who watch him. "I feel comforted having the camera around. I'm never alone. When I come home there's always somebody here. Whenever I want to interface with the people who watch, it's a pleasant experience. They're the perfect roommate. They're not messing up the place, and I have companionship that I'm not troubled by."









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