



Painting:
Close Up
(JMR) James Rizzi
Enamel on Canvas
48" x 36"



Painting:
And You Say New York
City
(JMR) James Rizzi
Enamel on Canvas
48" x 36"

When it comes to celebrity news, verifiable information is often as indistinguishable from hype as history is from myth in the bible. Facebook, Twitter, and websites run amok with press releases, sound bites, speculations and fabrications. While each messiah is surrounded by ardent disciples and a core team of apostles – fan base and publicist, respectively – they also bear the cross of having an equally determined horde of detractors, rumor mongers and skeptics. Caught between those who would hail them as saviors and those who wish them crucified, our ephemeral heroes await judgment from the masses; this while the masses wait to be informed by unbiased opinion. The contemporary name for a revelation capable of shifting public opinion is ‘a scoop.’ As for the sacred cabal who make such revelations, they are gossip columnists – investigative reporters whose reputations rely on their ability to research events, dig up facts, corroborate stories, verify sources, and beyond that, to deliver news in an eloquent and entertaining manner.

Although televised celebrity news has been overrun with presenters who do no more than aggregate and announce, in May of 2013, VH1’s executive producer Shane Farley reinvented the genre – his nuance, ironically, being an ‘old school’ formula: having the show’s researchers and writers double as hosts. The result: *The Gossip Table* – a hit show newsworthy enough to defend its daily morning timeslot. With witty banter to accompany genuine exposés, the show is no blurbathon. Instead, it presents celebrity insights and socio-political observations in the unassuming guise of – to borrow a refrain from the Man of La Mancha – “A little gossip, a little chat, a little idle talk of this and that.”

Upon learning that a rendezvous had finally been scheduled with four of the five GT cast members, I muse: Why not turn the table on my guests by having them respond to a few startling discoveries about their own lives. How hard could it be to unearth the odd indiscretion? Though far from my own area of expertise, the George Plimpton ‘get-in-the-ring-with-them school of journalism’ feels like a worthwhile endeavor.

Since Chloe Melas – Senior Entertainment Reporter at HollywoodLife.com – was the one member that would not be present, I could forget about confronting her with dredged up secrets. That left: Marianne Garvey, *Confidential* columnist for the *Daily News*; Noah Levy, Senior News Editor at *In Touch Weekly*; Delaina Dixon, Cofounder and Editor-in-Chief of *Divyakdaily.com*; and the British born linchpin, Rob Shuter – an entertainment columnist extraordinaire who was not only the former executive editor of *OK Magazine* – taking it from a floundering rag to major contender – but someone who has been a power publicist representing Alicia Keys, Bon Jovi, Jennifer Lopez, Jessica Simpson, Naomi Campbell, P. Diddy, Estee Lauder and *Esquire Magazine*.

Realizing that Garvey and Shuter are regular *Huffington Post* contributors, I decide to call a Huffington blogger I know. Dead end. No insights gleaned. Suddenly, it dawns on me: an ex-colleague from my time in theatre had been slated for a part in *Harmony* – the stirring new