

Sketching his Hollywood "find," artist Jean Tabaud (left) finds he works best barefooted. Jossee, (right) Tabaud's dream model was discovered by him while shopping for food.



FRENCH ARTIST DISCOVERS AN AMERICAN BEAUTY

Jean Tabaud, world traveler and adventurer, came to Hollywood to paint stars' portraits, found dream girl in supermart between corn flakes and preserves.

By PETER GOWLAND

I LISTENED politely and then bit my lip to keep from laughing.

When the most worldly and suave cosmopolitan you know confides he has just found the "girl of his dreams," it is not to be taken lightly. I had been ready for anything—a chic beauty on the moonlit French Riviera, an Arabian enchantress dancing in the sands of Nisapur. Anything, that is, but . . . "Ah Peter, eet was een a Hollywood supermarkeet. She appeared like a beauteeful veesion enthroned between rows of corn flakes and cans of speeneech."

Could this be my friend, Jean Tabaud? Frenchman of adventure and romance? Glamour-logged painter of beautiful women? Sophisticated young dignitary of the arts? The presence of this man in a food store seemed definitely out of character. And going ga ga over a girl grocery shopper—this seemed impossible. Tabaud is simply too well acquainted with the theory of femininity.

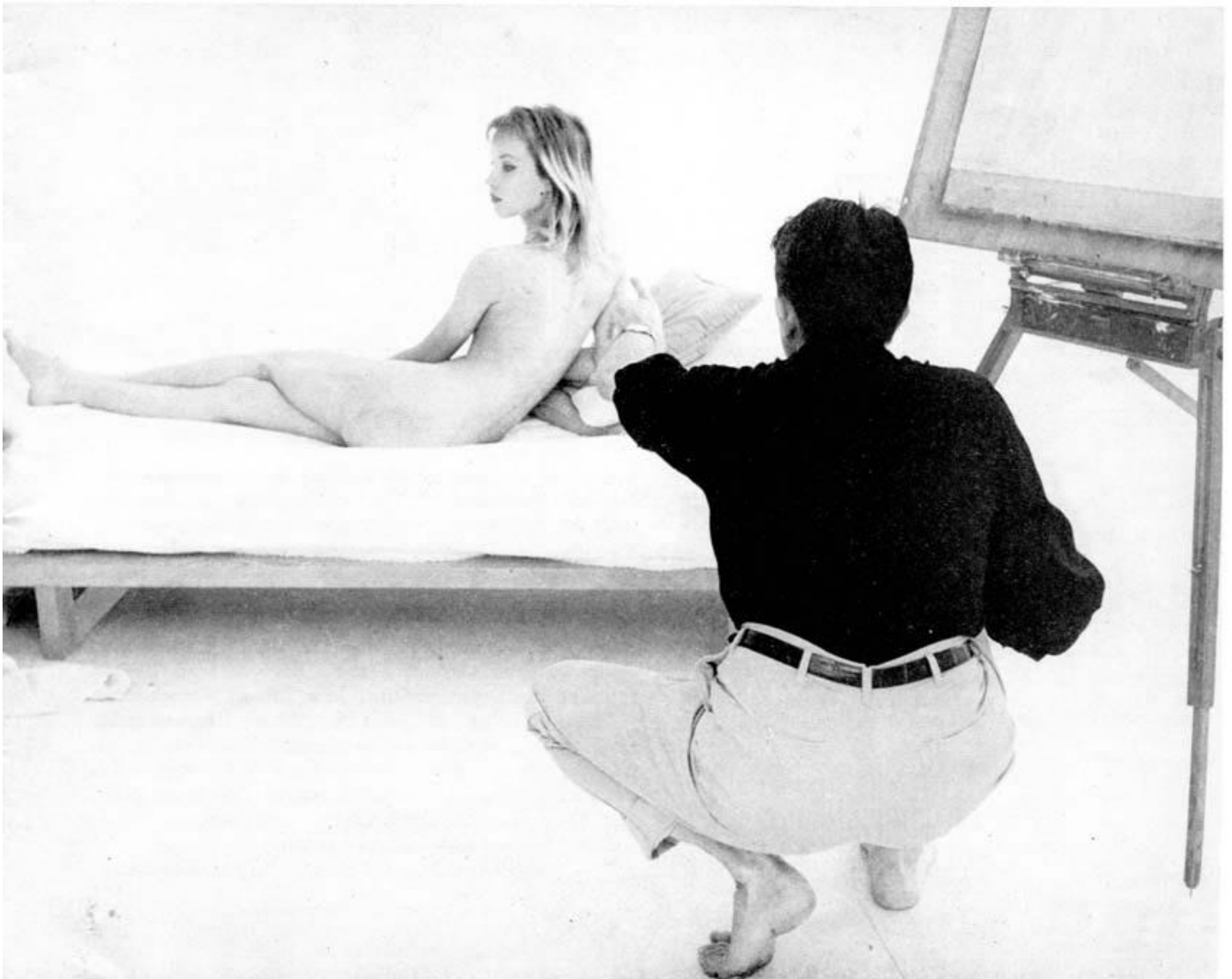
He babbled on breathlessly. "She looks like the . . . her name in Jossee . . . the Vikings who came in small boats



Typifying girlish delight in its most piquant form, Chicago-born Lithuanian-American model Jossee has most expressive expression.

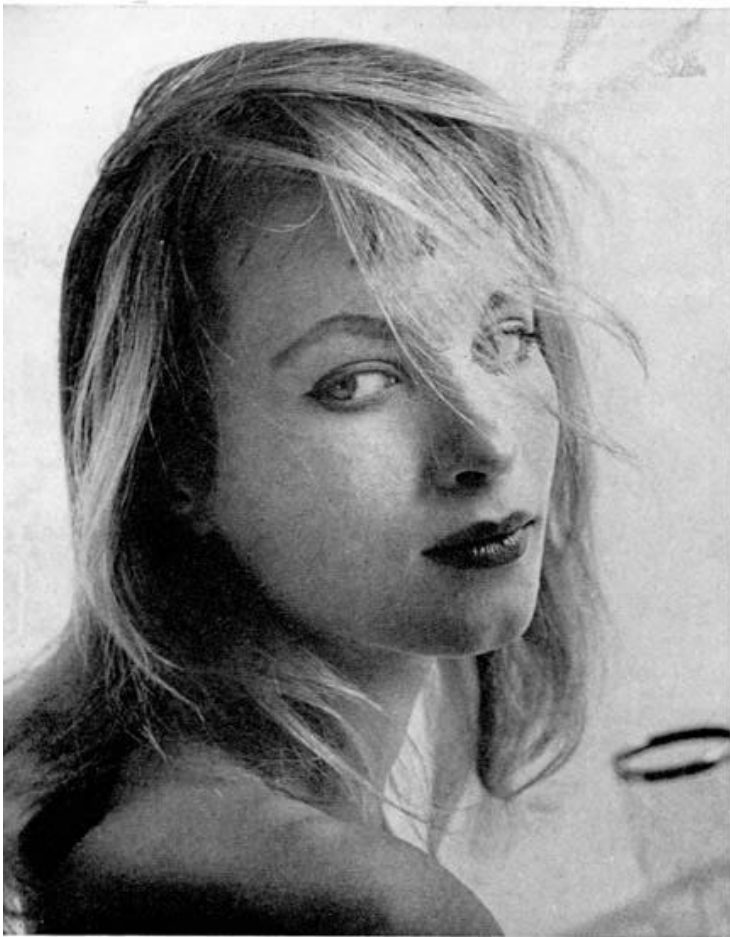


In line drawing with dry brush feeling, Tabaud captures Jossee's graceful form (above). He tells her to turn her head back slightly for better composition (below) during one of innumerable sittings he has had with her since big discovery. Besides her beauty, Jossee is one of most responsive models Tabaud has known.





Depicting simple pensive beauty is Tabaud portrait of model Jossee.



Youthful, windblown freshness speaks out from Peter Gowland camera portrait taken of Jossee during session in Santa Monica studio of Gowland.

many centuries ago to kill my great-grandfathers. Her eyes are m-mm-mmm. Her smile is the shadow of heaven. She has a puzzling face that lingers somewhere between the violence of an African mask and the reverberating sweetness of a turquoise-blue sky. Her golden tresses. . ."

I switched my ears to remote control. As he continued



Letting her hair down after long posing session, Jossee sits on edge of couch and relaxes prettily.

to describe his Chicago-born, American-Lithuanian dream-girl, I fumbled through the T's in my memory chest and came up with more than enough evidence to justify my astonishment. In Hollywood, where I first met him over two years ago, he is recognized as an outstanding portrait artist, and has painted many famous and glamorous screen personalities including Deborah Kerr, Charles Boyer, Pier Angeli, Marise Pavan and Taina Elg. But he is not only an artist; he is an uncommon man. His past reads like an extended newspaper headline: Jean Tabaud, French street peddler of brushes and vanilla husk, becomes famous artist. Ballet dancer, Jean Tabaud, performs with Ballets Russes. Tabaud, prisoner of war, escapes from Nazi concentration camp. Tabaud, African safarist, returns after seven years. Jean Tabaud, Saudi Arabian rioter, flees Morocco.

I switched my ears back to manual.

". . . paint her eight hours straight a day without stop-

ping for lunch, contented with a piece of cheese while working, and lucky if my excitement does not make me bite into my brush. Other girls may have the exact measurements required by beauty contests but Jossee has the ones concealed by flowers, birds, cats—things that do not speak but only perfume, sing and mew. She would make an angel blush as she . . .”



Tabaud tells his talented model to relax more (above) and then does two line drawings at right which graphically illustrate Jossee's range of facial emotions.

There was no need to pay close attention to Monsieur Tabaud's endless monologue. We were in my studio, awaiting the arrival of dream-girl Josee, and I had already told him, "Nous verrons ce que nous verrons"—we shall see what we shall see.

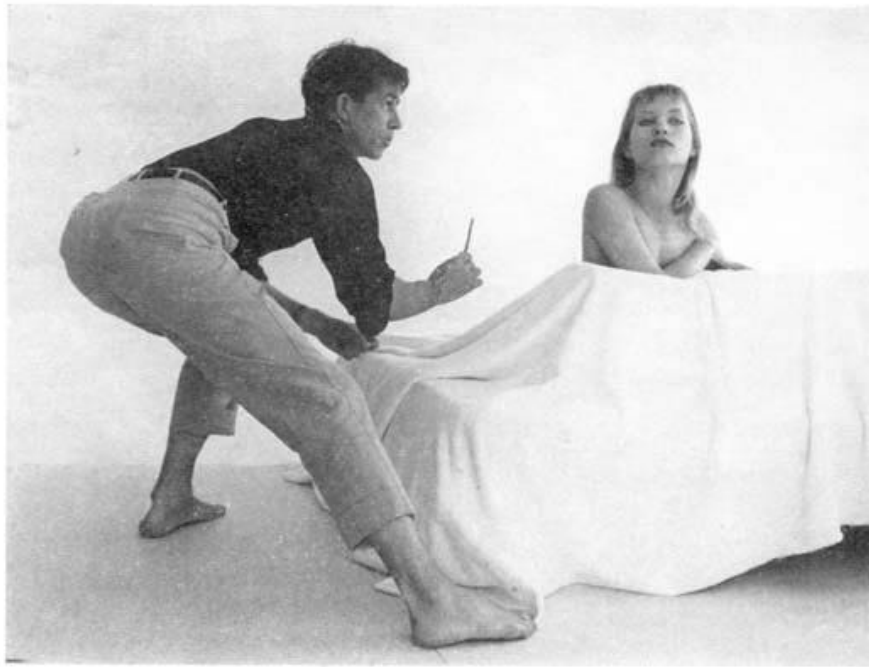
She was already a half-hour late and I was about to grumble something in my high school French about the evils of feminine tardiness when she arrived.

As I recall, my first reaction was to make a mental note reminding me never again to doubt the veracity of a certain French artist. She was truly beautiful. I knew instantly that Josee could be described far better by camera than by words so I avoided the usual preliminary chit-chat and set about my happy task.

While I photographed Josee, Tabaud remained surprisingly silent, but he watched intently as I went about my work. I photographed the girl in numerous poses and against a variety of settings but concentrated primarily on close-ups, both figure and facial. The entire session lasted about five hours.

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TABAUD FINDS MODEL IN SUPERMART

(Continued from page 13)

Although art has always been his first love, Tabaud's medium of expression has not always been through his hands.

Until 1939, he was a ballet dancer, what he might have been today, had a back injury not ended his promising career. During these early days he performed with the Opera of Buenos Aires, the renowned Serge Lifar in Paris and with the prestige-drenched Ballet Russes.

Came the war, and in 1940 my life-loving friend found himself prisoner of the Germans. He seldom speaks of this episode in his life. He hates it, ignores it, claims it a mistake of fate. There is, however, an incident that occurred a few months following the French armistice that he often jokes about. The Germans were sometimes obliged to release prisoners whose professional activities were needed in various branches of civil life. So, Tabaud went to see the Hauptman of the camp and told him he was a ballet dancer. "Interesting," said the officer. "Can you prove it with some certificate?"

"Unfortunately not for the present," replied Tabaud. "But with your permission to take off my shoes, I can show you a clean *entrechat 6*."

The Hauptman was either too bureaucratic or too fond of autographs and declared that a "visualized *entrechat 6* cannot be filed in a dossier." He asked for a letter from Serge Lifar or some other representative ballet authority. Tabaud could not comply and remained a guest of the Gestapo. But a short time later he took advantage of an opportunity involving a good deal more courage and far less red-tape—he escaped the day before his camp was to be transferred to Berlin.

War time makes Tabaud shudder. He likes this sentence of Lao-Tse: "To govern an empire should be as simple as cooking a little fish." He is a staunch believer in human relationship and heart warmth.

Among the various lives he has led, it is interesting to note how Tabaud happened to become an artist. It seems that shortly after his escape from the prison camp, he was walking along a country road with no personal belongings, save an impressive portfolio and some drawing material he had purchased to effect a casual look. He reached a little village and entered the local cafe to have a drink. A Feldweibel came into the place, went straight toward this man who did not resemble country folk, and knocked upon the portfolio: "What are you carrying there?" he demanded with a dark frown.

"I am an artist," said Tabaud. "These are the tools of my profession."

"An artist," repeated the Feldweibel. "Then you will paint my portrait."

Five minutes later, after having fixed a fair price, Tabaud was doing the portrait of the Feldweibel. To the surprise of both officer, and 3-hour-old artist, the painting showed a very flattering if not exact likeness. The sitter was so pleased he invited Tabaud to remain in the village for several days. He sent nearly every man in his company to have his portrait done—it was almost compulsory. Tabaud has been painting portraits ever since.

Tabaud came to America after a long stay in Morocco, painting and studying Oriental life. Three days of hell, in the heart of an Arab quarter during a deadly Moroccan riot, was the chief impetus behind his immigration. Once here, he worked his way slowly westward until he hit Hollywood and there he has remained for the past three years.

America is still new and exciting to Tabaud. While waiting for Josee in my studio I had asked him what he thought of our modern, young nation. At the window, gazing out at the city's hustle and bustle, he answered:

"Your country, Peter, is one of traffic lights, careful schedules and overwhelming power,

but also it is a land where birds peck at the ground close to your feet, where most of the homes are enshrined in a lovely frame of grass, and telephone operators launch your mornings into enchantment with spring-like voices. Your landscapes, your proud towns are inscribed into relaxed horizontals and surging verticals. And the vertical purity of your sky-scrapers is found in the erected dignity of your girls as well—so straight, so vegetal.

"I believe that the petticoat should be the banner of the United States. Nowhere in the world can a woman wear such charming ornament with so much youth and provocative decency. It is in fact a true crown royal, which they very casually and democratically carry around their long, full legs."

When Tabaud revisited my studio a few days after the session to appraise the results of my work, the sound barrier broke and he was once again a man of many words:

"For a painter, my friend, to see suddenly his model in a studio of photography, even as marvelous as the one of Peter Gowland (I thanked him), is like watching his child crossing a street for the first time in his life. In my atelier, between my charcoal and her form, there is only a long stretch of silence, her skin, her spirit, and my feeling. Under the spotlights, cameras, ladders, she seems cruelly exposed to mechanics, clicks, seconds, trajectories—she is a bee looked at by entomologists, ending up like many bees, pinned up alive upon corks.

"It is also a rape. This ability to catch in a matter of hours hundreds of lovely moods, witty angles should not be placed in the hands of a mere man. A lens is a keyhole. Disconcerting, enchanting, an undressed body under the camera, not on the photo, can look as nude as a dental plate on a table, but in an atelier, never more than a peach does.

"But I surrender my admiration. To see the negative proof-sheets of Peter Gowland is truly fascinating. (I thanked him again.)

"Josee would like to change her name for her career. What do you think, Peter, about Arnarak?"

I didn't answer. Instead, I settled myself in a comfortable easy chair and waited for the forthcoming dissertation on a dream-girl named Josee.

This time I would pay attention! ○