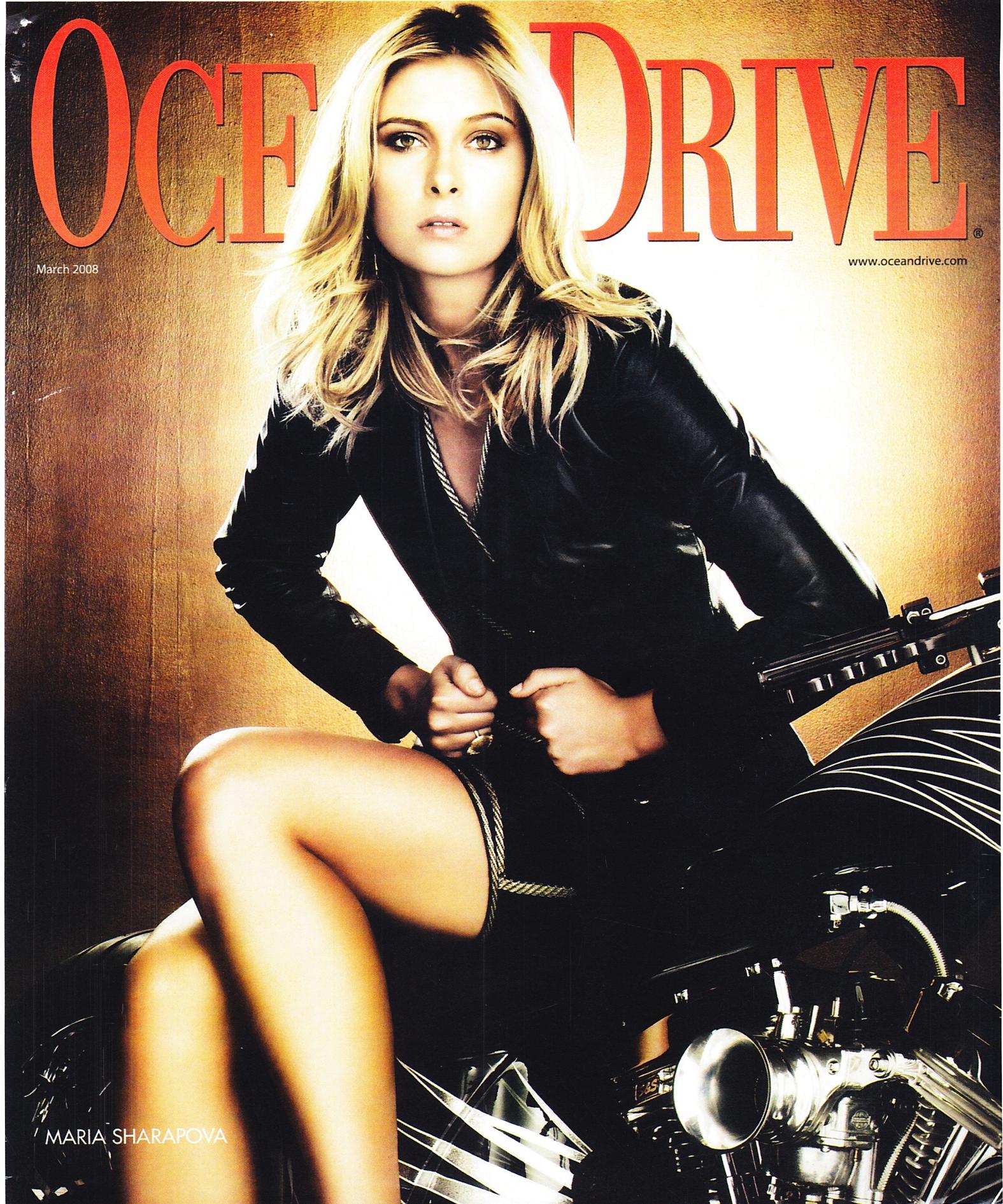


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MARIA SHARAPOVA



BEACH PATROL

MONIQUE BRENDEL

A Luminary of Design

It was Monique Brendel's love of fashion that eventually brought her to furniture design. The marketing coordinator for the highly regarded Luminaire group of furniture showrooms in Miami and Chicago, Brendel says design of all types stimulates her. "Great design, whether it's a beautiful faucet or the construction of a dress, the way it fits, how it makes you feel, inspires and motivates me," she says. But it is currently furniture and home-décor design that is turning Brendel on. Since joining Luminaire in March 2007, Brendel has ramped up the profile of the 34-year-old design powerhouse, with events such as the Luminaire X pop-up store situated just a few blocks from its location at 39th Street and Northeast Second Avenue in the Design District.

Created to showcase discontinued and one-of-a-kind furniture and accessories, the temporary store, which is open through April 30th, is an "experimental neighborhood space for various vendors," Brendel says, offering an intimate venue for visitors to learn about the inventory. "The Design District is not only ready for this, but it also needs something like this to help educate and bring the community together and provide more than just a once-a-year buzz like Design Miami."

Brendel, 26, has always loved fashion. After traveling along the coast of Spain for two months after graduating with a marketing degree from the University of Miami, she went to work for swimwear designer and creative director of Bottega Veneta Tomas Maier. "If I hadn't found the job with Tomas I might have returned to New Jersey, where I grew up, and worked in New York," she says. But Brendel now says she's happy she stayed in Miami because it has given her the opportunity to grow.

At Luminaire, Brendel works with manufacturers and designers who are stars and stalwarts of the furniture industry, including Marc Newson, Marcel Wanders, the Campana brothers, Zaha Hadid and Established & Sons. "The philosophy of Luminaire has always been to educate people about good design," she says. "On a monthly basis, we invite designers here to teach clients about their products [like the current Brix installation in the Design District store]. We are design-driven, not design-oriented. This is how Luminaire is different from the rest."

—Andrea Thompson

JUST THE FACTS

Favorite furniture designer: "Naoto Fukasawa."

If you could design one type of furnishing what would it be?: "Lighting. It's amazing how much good lighting can transform a room."

Gadget you can't live without: "Unfortunately, my BlackBerry."

Your favorite thing about Miami: "The most spectacular sunsets."

What is playing on your iPod? "*Confessions on a Dance Floor.*"



PHOTOGRAPH BY GARY JAMES