

Photographer Alison Jackson gives up hope of finding Gordon Brown look-alike

Alison Jackson has used look-alike actors to lampoon everybody from the Queen and Tony Blair to George Bush and Sven Goran Sven-Goran Eriksson.



Photographer Alison Jackson has a new exhibition at the Ivy Club, featuring theatrical notables including Hollywood star Orlando Bloom | CREDIT: Photo: ALISON JACKSON

But her attempts to do the same to Gordon Brown have run into an apparently insurmountable obstacle – she can't find anyone who wants to pretend to be the Prime Minister.

Jackson, who has created award-winning spoof documentaries, including *Doubletake* for BBC 2 and *Sven: The Cash, The Coach & his Lovers* for Channel 4, said a nationwide search to find someone who can look and act like the Prime Minister has so far ended in failure.

The 48-year-old Bafta winning film maker said: "People are constantly asking me to make films about Gordon Brown and I am extremely disappointed that I have been unable to do that.

"It does annoy me that he has been in office and I have been unable to make a single film about him.

"I have been looking for six years now and I still haven't found anyone who looks like him and can give the impression of being so uncomfortable about themselves.

"It is not because he is unattractive, because he is not. It is the fact that no one wants to come forward and admit they look like him.

"He is not a celebrity and you have to have that celebritiesque thing about you. Gordon Brown is as far removed from celebrity as it's possible to be."

Jackson says she has come to realise that The Prime Minister has a very eastern European look about him and that perhaps she should concentrate her search there.

"In fact I am told there is an odd job man at a ski resort somewhere in Bulgaria, so we are going to fly out and see because people have said there is a resemblance."

The hunt for a Gordon Brown look alike has been postponed while Jackson has undertaken a project to photograph more than 60 real celebrities for a major study of Britain's theatrical community.

Over the last month she has shot Sir Michael Gambon, Gillian Anderson, John Hurt, Ralph Fiennes, Rhys Ifans, Felicity Kendal, Rosamund Pike, Eddie Izzard, Orlando Bloom, Vanessa Redgrave and Kelly Reilly.

The photographs will be unveiled at a special exhibition at the new Ivy private members club in London on Wednesday, before going on display at a new sushi bar at J Sheekeys restaurant in the capital.

"Shooting the actual celebrities has been pretty surreal at times," she said.

"I was shooting Benedict Cumberbatch the star of *Atonement* at the bar in the Ivy Club. We had this idea that he should pose naked on a bar stool with just a copy of the *Financial Times* He didn't think twice about doing it. He just stripped everything off in the club. There were other people around but no one gave him a second glance."

Jackson was catapulted into the public eye in 1999 with the opening of her degree show at the Royal College of Art.

Her portrait of the late Princess of Wales, Dodi al-Fyad and their imagined mix-race child caused an international sensation. She had actually completed the work in 1997, shortly after the couple's death but the college refused to let her put it on display until the very last day of the course.

In the ensuing controversy her tutor was nearly fired and Prince Philip, who was due to open the show, boycotted the event.

"At the time of her death I was studying the importance of image and how much more seductive it can be than the real thing.

"It occurred to me than that people only knew Diana from a selection of images. Here we had this extraordinary situation where the country was mourning someone that hardly anyone had met. All they knew was a bunch of stories created by the media."

Jackson believes that the obsession with celebrity is now all-embracing even though the general public effectively knows it's being lied to.

"What interests me most now is how we live our lives through imagery and the cult of celebrity and how celebrity seems to fill all of our lives without us paying too much attention to it consciously. It is a funny thing and it works in a big cog.

"Posh Spice, aka Victoria Beckham, is busy creating an image for us to enjoy. She doesn't eat very much or at all in order that can put on fabulous clothes, in order get photographed in them in order to get on the front cover of magazines. She is very good at constructing images.

"It's not that images speak a thousand words anymore they now speak a million million words. But the more you have in terms of technology and screens the further removed you are from the truth.

"People don't care that they are not being told the truth. They don't care they are being lied to and that is an extraordinary situation. It is a generational thing. 11-year-olds now know they are being lied to."

Jackson is currently making a film about the way in which the public react to a lookalike of pop star Amy Winehouse.

"When I am out on the street people become aware it is a look-a-like but they don't care. They still want her autograph. They still want to pour their problems out to her and get her to ring their son in prison. But then something else will happen. People will get over the fact that there is a celebrity lookalike and then they want my camera.

"It is suddenly all about them and they start to perform in front of the camera. I have a niece who is three years old. I only have to point a camera at her and she starts to perform."