

ART & AUCTIONS

Capturing the Image

[Collecting]

BY MARGARET STUDER



At coming photography auctions and November's Paris Photo, collectors will have a rich selection of iconic images—from unforgettable fashion and celebrity portraits to African wildlife and architecture.

On Oct. 31, Christie's South Kensington holds its "Photography from A to Z" London auction. From Nov. 15-18, Paris Photo, the world's biggest photography fair, runs at the Grand Palais. During the fair, major auctions will be held by Sotheby's Paris (Nov. 16) including 65 works from photographers of legendary Magnum Photos; and Christie's Paris with rare pieces from artists such as Man Ray, Atget and Brassai (Nov. 16-17).

A highlight of the Christie's South Kensington sale will be Irving Penn's glamorous "Black and White Vogue cover" (1950), featuring supermodel Jean Patchett looking suspiciously sideways from under a wide-brimmed hat (estimate: £80,000-£120,000). "This is one of the greatest fashion images with incredible tonality in its dramatic black and white," says Christie's specialist Alexander Montague-Sparey.

Another top lot will be Michael Cooper's color print for the album cover of the Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" (1967), depicting them in satin suits surrounded by their heroes including boxer Sonny Liston, writer Edgar Allan Poe and Marilyn Monroe (£40,000-£60,000). "This is a very rare opportunity to acquire a piece of cultural history," Mr. Montague-Sparey says.

One of the greatest events in space history is visualized in three photos shot by Apollo 11 commander Neil Armstrong of lunar module pilot Buzz Aldrin walking

on the moon after the 1969 landing (£4,000-£6,000 each).

Nick Brandt's "Lion Couple" (2010), a wonderful image of a male lion and his mate looking alertly over their domain, is expected to fetch £10,000-£15,000. An image I love is Peter Beard's comically weird photo for Playboy magazine's report "Beauty & the Beasts" (1986) of supermodel Iman in a zebra-striped bikini prancing before a surprised, but indifferent, pair of live African zebras (£4,000-£6,000).

As well, there is growing demand for architectural photography, Mr. Montague-Sparey says. An example in his sale will be Trine Sondergaard's "Interior No. 5" (2008) in which an open door stands between empty rooms, creating a Surrealist atmosphere of emptiness (£4,000-£6,000).

Paris Photo will host some 128 galleries and 23 photo book publishers. The fair will present a huge variety of photo art and many one- and two-man shows that allow collectors to look at a coherent body of work. There will be special shows such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art presenting its latest photographic acquisitions and Switzerland's Fotomuseum Winterthur, which has created "Cut & Paste," a special exhibition for Paris Photo that shows how artists appropriate past photographic footage. Fashion leader Giorgio Armani will present an exhibition of photos based on water's vital energy.

A major strength of Paris Photo is its promotion of photo books; and there is "tremendous" interest in them, says director Julien Frydman, pointing out that books are an integral part of a photographer's work and it is a way for new collectors to enter the market at a reasonable price.

Mr. Frydman notes there has been more global interest from VIP collectors: "Today, it is not only collectors of photographs; but art collectors generally."

Castello di Ama's Amorous Allure

Artists Visiting the Tuscan Vineyard Leave Their Mark

BY CATHRYN DRAKE

The lush, curvaceous road that took us deeper into the Tuscan hills from Florence toward Gaiole in Chianti is as intoxicating as it is stomach churning. Arriving safely at the estate of vineyard Castello di Ama, we found a quaint medieval borgo where an obscure prince might live. The fairytale effect was heightened by a glowing red oculus of indeterminate depth in the floor of a small chapel, evoking a pathway to hell created by an evil sorcerer. Its creator, artist Anish Kapoor, is certainly a visual alchemist, and the story of how the mystical hole came to be in this anachronistic place in 2004 is one of passion and serendipity.

Lorenza Sebasti and Marco Pallanti, the married owners of the venerable Tuscan winery, have been commissioning art installations—nearly one every year and now numbering 12—from world-class contemporary artists, beginning in 2000 with Italian Arte Povera star Michelangelo Pistoletto, whose "Speculum" is a giant tree trunk split open to reveal mirrors inhabiting its interior. The winemakers' goal has been to cultivate site-specific art installations that spring from the surrounding landscape of vineyards, woods and olive groves as naturally as the native grapevines do.

The cluster of stone buildings and 18th-century villas has been infiltrated with wonderful surprises inside and out. "Nobody has built anything new for centuries in this fantastic place, so we wanted to add a trace of today," Ms. Sebasti explains. "Marco calls it a fertilization; now everything is stronger and more pure at the same time."

Each artist creates the work in situ as a dialogue with some element of the environment, from the wine cellar to the gardens. Just as Mr. Pistoletto's monolithic tree seeks to connect the underworld, mankind and heaven like an axis mundi, these works of art invite visitors to ponder the particular spirit of Castello di Ama. "In wine making, we call terroir the unique character a place gives to the wines," Mr. Pallanti says. "In the same way, its genius loci inspires the artist to create art specific to this place and nowhere else."

Not all of the artists invited to the vineyard have responded to its muse. "Maybe they need to be older and experienced: Louise Bourgeois was the maximum in this sense," Mr. Pallanti says. The legendary French artist made "Topiary" (2009), a delicate kneeling nymph in rose marble with a flower head, the year before she died. "It is in a cistern under the wine cellar, like a secret sanctuary where you listen to the sound of water," Ms. Sebasti says. "I get a primordial feeling when I am there, as if I am at the heart of life."

As you wander the property, you feel that this is the way art should be seen, within the context of history and nature, the senses awakened by the infusion of unexpected visual stimulation—call it culture shock. A mirrored wall in the garden by Daniel Buren, from 2001, creates a disorienting painterly puzzle that merges views of the landscape through cutout windows with reflections of the villa and garden into a mesmerizing dreamlike composition. "The landscape has always been in front of your eyes, but the fantastic viewpoint from that window makes you enjoy and appreci-



Above, Kendell Geers's art installation 'Revolution/Love' (2003); below, Marco Pallanti and Lorenza Sebasti walking in the vineyards of Castello di Ama.



ate it more as a special place," Mr. Pallanti says. "A bottle of wine, like a work of art, requires consumer participation to complete it; and both require the passing of time to judge their greatness."

Since his arrival at Castello di Ama in 1982, Mr. Pallanti has coaxed tasteful elixirs from its particular terroir in a way that mirrors the creation of art. Ms. Sebasti's father and three other Roman families bought the long-fallow vineyard in the 1970s. "They fell in love with the place, which was famous in the past but abandoned," Mr. Pallanti says, "buying one of the villas and then the other before building the cellar." By the time he took the helm at the vineyard, the region had lost respectability for the falling quality of its Chianti Classico DOCG wine, which was being replaced in the market by the outlier Super Tuscan. Mr. Pallanti started by replanting the entire vineyard and rebuilding the former terrace system to yield more consistency in grape ripening and quality. He also converted about 25 hectares to the French Lyre trellis system to optimize sunlight and promote leaf growth.

Castello di Ama's Vigneto Bellavista, introduced in 1978, was the first single-vineyard Chianti Classico; the 1990 vintage was awarded an exceptional 98 points, and the 2007 was rated 97, by influential American wine critic Robert Parker.

"Castello di Ama has no equal as a producer of Chianti Classico," says Jean K. Reilly, a Master of Wine and consulting wine buyer in New York. "This estate has thrown itself into the concept of expressing the terroir of a small, exceptional vineyard and come out not just at the head of the class but in a class of its own."

When South African artist Kendall Geers visited Castello di Ama, he found kinship in the rotational nature of wine making, the seasonal cycle as well as the passion writ on the carefully tended vineyard terrain. The result was the neon piece "Revolution/Love" (2003), in which red letters spell out the word revolution backward, a reversal embedded with the word "love," across the far wall of the wine cellar behind a battalion of barrels. "Ama" in the name of the village and winery is a form of the Italian verb "to love."

This connection isn't so surprising given this story in the enchanted Tuscan countryside started, more or less, with romance. "I came here from Rome when I was 15 and fell in love with the place," Ms. Sebasti says. "Then after I started working here in 1988, Marco and I fell in love." Inspired by the local Dionysian genie, Cameroonian artist Pascale Marthine Tayou created this year's "The Way to Happiness," a stone walkway painted with exuberant colors that seem to dance past the chapel.



Irving Penn's 'Black and White Vogue cover' (1950) features model Jean Patchett.