



MORE than Words

DEBORAH ISKANDAR EXPLORES
PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTING

Photography has been around since the 1820s. The first permanent photo etching was an image produced in 1822 by a French inventor, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. Sadly, it got accidentally destroyed in an attempt to make prints out of it and the earliest

surviving photograph is called “View from the Window at Le Gras”, dating from 1826.

Photographers can be considered as editors of reality. Real life can be chaotic and photographers are making sense of it by cutting away

the superfluity from the frame and creating curated, two-dimensional images. The results are a distilled version of a scene, person or feeling, and when skillfully captured, it becomes art. The first evidence of portraying photography as art can be traced back to the Victorian era in the UK. However, it was not until the 1970s, that photography became widely considered as fine art. Household names such as Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange and Minor White were amongst some of the established photographers who succeeded in changing the public’s opinion about seeing photography as an art form.

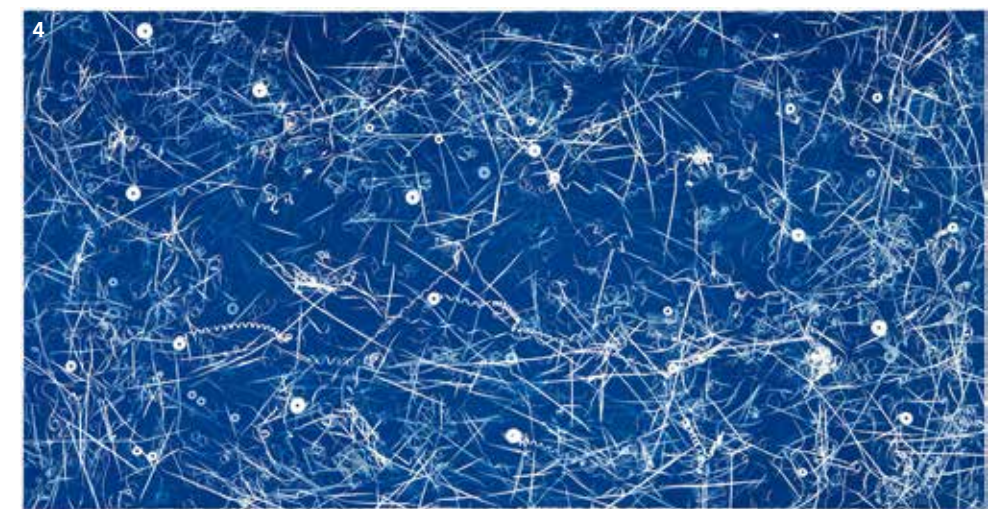
Since then, modern and contemporary photography have become increasingly popular, especially among art collectors. While the thought of paying a fortune for a photo may sound daunting to someone who has just started an art collection, there are actually many reasons to get excited about collecting photography. Experts advise to trust your instinct when choosing a piece. Start with images you like and try to stick to a theme, which can be a certain style, time period or a particular artist. Don’t be afraid to be adventurous and think outside the box. The important thing is to not think of a collection as static; your tastes will change and develop the more you learn. The chosen medium also says a lot about the quality of the works; the materials used for developing a photograph, for instance C-print or silver gelatin print, provide different outcomes, and besides paper, metal or canvas can also be printed on.

Many buyers frequently have doubts about the exclusivity of a photograph. That is why understanding editions is essential when collecting photography. Generally, the lower the number of prints in an edition, the more expensive they will be. Today, editions of 25 prints are already seen as relatively large, while editions of around three to five are seen as small. To rarify and add further value to their artworks, some artists are even opting to offer editions of just one single print, giving their work the same unique quality as a fine art painting. Other artists such as Adam Fuss and Christian Marclay use photographic processes like cyanotype and daguerreotype, creating inherently one of a kind pieces, which are not reproducible.

Although photography may have originated and developed in the Western world, Asia is catching up fast. Indonesian photography is on the rise with prominent artists such as Agan Harahap and Angki Purbandono grabbing the public’s attention. Harahap rewrites history by skillfully photoshopping Western celebrities in trouble with the Indonesian au-

thorities or local politicians in questionable settings. Through his work, he is criticising our obsession with celebrity culture and the unattainable aim for a perfect life, which has led to the proliferation of image editing apps and software used for fabricating variations of reality. Purbandono is one of Indonesia’s most celebrated contemporary artists. Originally from Yogyakarta, he is known for his scanography, which are photos created by scanning objects using a flat-bed image scanner. The results differ greatly from traditional images, as with a flat-bed scanner the depth of field is reduced and the distance smaller, making images vivid and detailed. His approach is unique and often carries a social or ethical message.

Alexander Thian represents an emerging generation of photographers who reach new audiences through various social media channels. Thian, an Instagram sensation known for his stunning photos and quirky sense of humour,



make his photos unique, giving the images deeper meaning. Thian is a storygrapher and a voice of his generation. He is also working with Erza S. T. on The Jux Duo, an artist collaboration, whose concept can be described as ‘the hedonistic traveller seen through the lens of a nomad photographer’. The duo travels around the world to shoot luxurious batik fabrics by Iwan Tirta in historical locations.

Apart from simple art appreciation, from a financial point of view, collecting photography has also proven to be a great investment. One perfect example is Andreas Gursky’s “Rhein II”, which sold at \$4.3 million dollars in 2011.

1. *The Deceitful Planes*, Alexander Thian 2018
2. *Postcard for Jokowi - JK*, Agan Harahap
3. *The Plastic Monument*, Angki Purbandono
4. *Allover (The Oakbridge Boys, Rollin Band, Styx, and Others)*, Christian Marclay

recently held a major solo show “#Let Me Tell You A Story” at Art Jakarta 2018 in August. Curated by ISA Art Advisory with the support of Indonesian Luxury, the exhibition was received at the fair with astounding success. Presented on lightboxes, the works showcase his adventures in exciting urban destinations and the most beautiful, untouched parts of the planet. His pictures are honest, with a little personal story behind each shot. These stories

Deborah Iskandar is Principal of ISA Advisory, which advises clients on buying and selling art, and building collections. An expert on Indonesian and international art, she has more than 20 years of experience in Southeast Asia, heading both Sotheby’s and Christie’s Indonesia during her career before establishing ISA Art Advisory in 2013. She is also the Founder of Indonesian Luxury, the definitive online resource for Indonesians looking to acquire, build and style their luxury homes.

ISA Art Advisory
Jl. Wijaya Timur Raya No.12
Jakarta 12170 Indonesia
tel: +6221 723 3905 e-mail: enquiries@isaartadvisory.com