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PRESS RELEASE

An Influential Vision: The Collection of Ruth Ansel

**Private Collection of esteemed Art Director to be
Included in the New York Photographs Day Sale on 6 October**



Ruth Ansel posing with three Maasai warriors on a shoot for *House and Garden* at Peter Beard's Hog Ranch in Kenya. Photo: Alexandre Baillache, 1990

NEW YORK - 12 SEPTEMBER 2016 - On 6 October, *An Influential Vision: The Collection of Ruth Ansel* will highlight Phillips' Day Sale of Photographs in New York. Over the course of a vibrant and long-standing career, Ruth Ansel has come to define visual culture. Starting at *Harper's Bazaar* in 1962, she collaborated with industry greats such as Richard Avedon, Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, and Bill Brandt, amongst others, to create leading content and design. Following her departure in 1971, she has continued to work with illustrious publications such as *The New York Times Magazine* and *Vanity Fair*, where she reshaped the magazine's visual identity. Comprised of thirty-five lots, many of these images are fresh to the market, including those that were produced under her art direction.

Of Ruth Ansel, photographer Bruce Weber is quoted as saying, "Whether you're photographing Sam Shepard and Jessica Lange in New Mexico, or photographing at Karl Lagerfeld's chateau in Brittany, she always makes you see what was never there."

Vanessa Hallett, Phillips' Worldwide Head of Photographs, said, "It is truly an honor to have been entrusted with the collection of Ruth Ansel. Her collection underscores the dedication she has for trailblazing photographers, collaborative vision, and photography's distinct voice projected through the pages of a magazine."

Ruth Ansel.

A native New Yorker, Ruth Ansel discovered her love of the arts while spending the summer in the Hamptons with her friend Nina Castelli, daughter of the famed art dealer Leo Castelli. It was here where she became acquainted with artists like Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock, developing a lifelong passion for visual arts. She went on to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and, following a brief period in Europe after her graduation, took a job in graphic design, though she was concerned about her prospects in entering such a male-dominated field.

Ansel's break into the field came in 1961, when she joined the art department at *Harper's Bazaar*, working under Marvin Israel, whose expertise and guidance she credits as a career-defining. "It was the greatest stroke of luck in my life," says Ansel of her first job with Israel. "I didn't have a graphic design portfolio but he liked the idea that I didn't have to unlearn graphic design clichés. My first few months were a disaster. My layouts were terrible, but Marvin refused to let me quit. His standards for design excellence were non-negotiable. It was the beginning of an important relationship that shaped my deep respect for photography."

Following Israel's departure from *Harper's Bazaar*, Ansel and her colleague Bea Feitler - both in their twenties - became the youngest co-art directors in the magazine's history. Ansel later went on to become the first female art director at *The New York Times Magazine* in 1974 and is credited with revamping the visual identities of both *House & Garden* and *Vanity Fair* in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Some of the most iconic images since the 1960s can be traced back to her direction, including Richard Avedon's impactful image of Jean Shrimpton, which graced the cover of *Harper's Bazaar* in April 1965, and Annie Leibovitz's photograph of a dancing David Bowie, which served as the January 1986 *Vanity Fair* cover.

Ansel is quoted as saying, "Magazines and photos are a part of history. Everything is known through them. A photograph is evidence of the passing of time. The moment it is taken it is the past... Photography is a metaphor for all our experiences, and in the hands of passionate individuals, it can heighten them. The photograph is history."

Highlights from *An Influential Vision: The Collection of Ruth Ansel*



Diane Arbus 1923-1971

Mrs. T. Charlton Henry on a floral easy chair, Philadelphia, Pa.
Estimate: \$30,000-50,000

Among the top lots of *An Influential Vision: The Collection of Ruth Ansel* is strong selection of photographs by Diane Arbus, including *Mrs. T. Charlton Henry on a floral easy chair, Philadelphia, Pa.*, 1965, estimated at \$30,000-50,000 (illustrated left), from *Harper's Bazaar's* recurring editorial, broadly titled *The Fashion Independent*, which often featured the everyday sophisticated style of women who seamlessly translated high fashion into effortless chic every day wear. Two additional lots on offer were images included in this editorial, including the "The Young Heiresses" *Maria Christina Drew, N.Y.C.* and *Reed Buchanan, N.Y.C.* both from 1964 and expected to bring \$20,000- 30,000 each. Compelling, intense, and glamorous, Arbus' *Fashion Independents* convey her genius in the glossiest of pages.



Diane Arbus 1923-1971
Toddler being held in garden, N.J., 1968
 Estimate: \$25,000-35,000

Additional works by Arbus include the exceptionally rare *Toddler being held in garden, N.J.*, 1968 at \$25,000- 35,000 (*illustrated left*), and a selection of baby portraits that provide a unique glimpse into a distinct moment of Arbus' oeuvre, whereby she consistently explored and celebrated the complex beauty and often atypical dynamics of the American family. *A Promotion Flyer for 'A Box of Ten Photographs'*, 1970-1971 which was presented to Ansel from Arbus as a selling tool for her now iconic portfolio at \$10,000- 15,000 is also included in the single-owner selection.

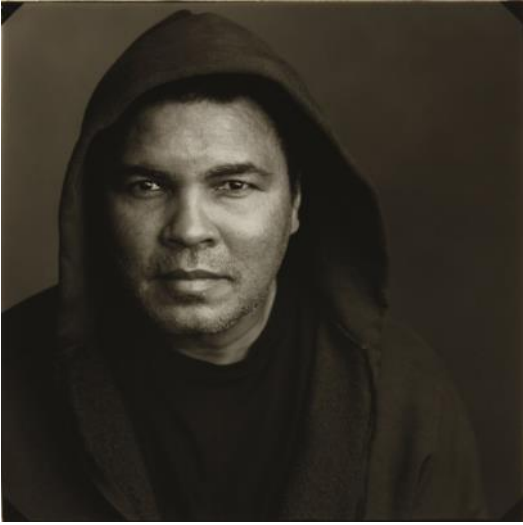
Other prints that are representative of Ansel's time at *Harper's Bazaar* include Lee Friedlander's *Untitled (Lincoln)* and *Untitled (Chevy Imperial)* from 1963, estimated at \$8,000- 12,000 each (*illustrated below*), from a commissioned project to photograph the 1964 new American car models. According to Ansel, "The tradition handed down by Marvin [Israel], was to outsmart the editor by commissioning unusual and unexpected talent. We were working in a time-honored

tradition between innovative artists and art directors... commissioning new artists like Warhol and Friedlander, and letting them loose before they became recognized by the public, was how we intended to give these assignments distinction." Given total freedom, Friedlander departed from the commercial aesthetic that otherwise would have been expected, and instead, photographed the cars the same way he photographed his shadow, camouflaged within the frame, making what should be the primary subject, only one part of the final composition. "I just put the cars out in the world, instead of on a pedestal," Friedlander later explained. While the photographs are quintessential Friedlander, they were never published, making early prints from this body of work exceptionally rare to the market.

In addition to Arbus and Friedlander, Ansel was a frequent collaborator with Richard Avedon, commenting: "When you work with Dick, you have the feeling you are working on something that had never happened before. He turns photography into social history. He documents the strangeness of our times." In *Andy Warhol and members of The Factory, New York City, October 30*, 1969, estimated at \$30,000-50,000, the panoramic portrait appears straightforward—a careful examination, however, yields a different view. The most notable feature is the lack of any hierarchical order. Indeed, the most pivotal member of the group, Warhol, is relegated to the very far right edge, partially cropped out of the overall frame. Instead, the centrality of the image is occupied by three male nudes, a risqué subject in 1960s. Additionally, the nude subjects are all surrounded by their clothes, which subtly removes them from the romanticized realm of classical nudes and anchors them back to contemporary culture. Other works by Avedon include portraits of *Willem de Kooning, painter, Springs, Long Island, August 18*, 1969 and *The Mission Council, Saigon, April 27*, 1971 on offer for \$8,000- 12,000 and \$15,000- 25,000, respectively.



Lee Friedlander b. 1934
Untitled (Lincoln), 1963
 Estimate: \$8,000-12,000



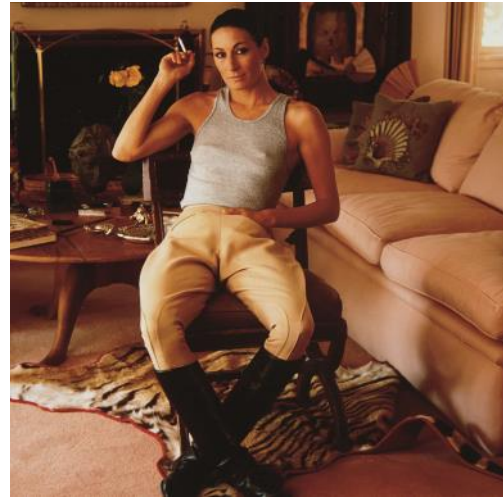
Annie Leibovitz b. 1949
Muhammad Ali, New York, 1996
Estimate: \$12,000-18,000

Also included in the single-owner section are photographs from Ansel's time at *Vanity Fair* such as Bruce Weber's 1984 portrait of Sam Shepard and Jessica Lange (*illustrated page 4, top left*) and a group of selected portraits by Annie Leibovitz that includes the commanding picture of Anjelica Huston from 1985 (*illustrated page 4, top right*), both estimated at \$3,000- 5,000. A later work, Leibovitz's portrait of Muhammad Ali from 1996, will also be included at \$12,000- 18,000 (*illustrated left*), taken the same year Ali memorably lit the Olympic Cauldron to open the Atlanta Games.

Compelling and diverse, *An Influential Vision: The Collection of Ruth Ansel* reflects significant moments in Ansel's vibrant career and how under her art direction, the commercial and artistic lives of the photographers on offer became intricately intertwined.



Bruce Weber b. 1946
Sam Shepard and Jessica Lange, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1984
Estimate: \$3,000-5,000



Annie Leibovitz b. 1949
Selected portraits from Vanity Fair, 1985
(lot of 3 prints) 'Cool Angel' (Anjelica Huston) illustrated
Estimate: \$3,000-5,000

Auction: Evening Sale: Wednesday, 5 October 2016 | Day Sale: Thursday, 6 October 2016

Auction viewing: 26 September - 5 October | Monday to Saturday 10am-6pm, Sunday 12pm-6pm

Location: 450 Park Avenue, New York

Link to more information: <https://phillips.com/auctions/auction/NY040216>

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