

L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

Recap & Reload with Anne Clergue : Interview by Nadine Dinter

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Nadine Dinter

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The acclaimed Rencontres d'Arles festival is a magnet for photography lovers, founded by Lucien Clergue and two partners. The allure of his work naturally extends to the beautiful gallery of his daughter, Anne Clergue, located in the heart of Arles. When I first started traveling to Arles, I knew visiting her gallery was a must, and it quickly became a highlight. At Anne's opening this summer, I experienced her skillful way of connecting guests with the photography of Jacques Léonard, including a spirited Flamenco dance. At the occasion of the show *Tokyo is Yours* she curated for CHAUSSEE 36 PHOTO FOUNDATION, we decided the time was ripe for an interview. Merci, Anne, for sharing so many lovely insights!

Nadine Dinter: When and how did you start your career in the arts/photography business?

Anne Clergue: I started my career at Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1988, where I stayed for two years. I discovered the pop artists and New York art scene during this time. Then I worked at the Vincent Van Gogh Foundation in Arles, where I helped create a collection that pays tribute to Van Gogh, focusing on contemporary photographers and painters. I was in charge of the photographic collection.

What was your primary motivation to open a gallery? Do you have any particular role models or idols?

AC: My passion for art fueled my desire to start my own gallery; I had always maintained close connections with artists and photographers. Leo Castelli is my role model because of his great relationships with artists, his vision for art, and his willingness to take risks. He had a very good eye for art and was incredibly elegant.

Who was the first artist you signed on?

AC: I started with the French photographer Joséphine Douet, who had her first exhibition at my gallery in 2014.

After how many years in the business did you get the affirmation you needed? What drives you to continue working as a gallerist in your space?

AC: It took three years for me to reach a point where I could make a living through the gallery, and that was the affirmation I needed. In 2019, I moved to a larger gallery space, which had a profound impact on the scale and scope of my work. Now I can do larger exhibitions and have group shows.

What's your business philosophy?

AC: Artists and collectors first!

How many artists do you represent now?

AC: I don't function as a traditional artist representative; instead, it's more of a collaborative journey where we work together to build a partnership. Some of them stay with the gallery for a long time.

Was there ever a big turning point, overhaul of the gallery line-up, or major move (of whatever kind) since first opening your gallery?

AC: One significant turning point was when Maja Hoffmann purchased a series by German photographer Johanna-Maria Fritz for her hotel L'Arlatan in Arles. That was when I was still in my small gallery. A second pivotal moment was in 2019, when I relocated to a new space, coinciding with the opening of LUMA Arles.

Any highlights or challenging moments?

AC: I had the privilege of showcasing the work of English photographer John Stewart at my gallery. He was the oldest artist in the lineup but the youngest at heart. Another remarkable artist I had the pleasure of working with was French photographer Christine Spengler. Not only is she an incredible photographer, but also a wonderful individual, and I learned a lot from her.

In 2020, the Rencontres in Arles was canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During that challenging time, I never stopped working and also sold books. I also had an opportunity to explore the work of Jacques Léonard on the culture of the Roma, which I decided to exhibit that summer. It met with tremendous success and marked a great discovery for the public. In 2023, Musée Réattu held a retrospective of his work, drawing over 50,000 visitors.

Are there any particular anecdotes you could share with our readers?

AC: When I was in my small gallery space, a man on horseback appeared one day in front of the gallery. I opened the doors to welcome him inside. Both the horse and the man seemed quite content inside despite the limited space. This man went on to attend every opening with his horse. One day, he arrived with a camel instead! The man's name was Karlo, and I liked him a lot.

What's new & what's in store for 2023?

AC: A new partnership with CHAUSSEE 36 PHOTO FOUNDATION in Berlin with the exhibition *Tokyo is Yours* by Meg Hewitt, whom I exhibited in 2019.

What's your advice for photography collectors?

AC: Choose and buy a photograph with your heart first. Then, if you really want to build a collection, be more selective with prints, technique, vintage, silver gelatin prints, editions, and, of course, names. Buy a photograph that makes you happy or brings something special to your life.

What are your no-go's & to-do's in the photography business?

AC: Make sure to assess the quality of the print and confirm it with the artist.

What photographers are on your watchlist?

AC: Graciela Iturbide, Ann Ray, Maciej Markowicz, Michael Ackerman.

Current show at & cooperation with CHAUSSEE 36 PHOTO FOUNDATION:

“Tokyo is Yours” by Meg Hewitt
through 27 January 2024
Chausseestrasse 36, 10115 Berlin, Germany

Upcoming show at Anne Clergue Galerie in Arles:

“Un salon en Provence” by Cyril Duret
9 December 2023 – 13 January 2024
4 Plan de la Cour, 13200 Arles, France

**Check out the gallery website: <https://www.anneclergue.com/>
and IG account: @anneclerguegalerie**