ARTIST’S PHILOSOPHY

What is photography, then you may as well ask what is an image, what is a painting or drawing or a design? It is an expression, it is an idea, an emotion, a moment frozen in time, sometimes well done, sometimes even superbe and often only mediocre if that. It is an extension of the person taking the photograph, yes it is mechanical, and yes it is very technical, but it is a noble craft, which takes years to fully understand and master if ever, and should be respected as is the painter and sculptor. But how can we respect something taken with a camera? We all have cameras today, as we all have cars and stoves. But do we not appreciate the great driver, and do we not honor the great chefs of the world. Then why not do so with photographers, the serious ones who dedicate their lives to the art form and discipline?

Try and understand the difficulty in capturing in that small 35mm frame, that miniscule rectangle so much information, the same kind of information that a painter sometimes takes weeks and months to formulate. It is not just getting the image in focus, nor making an impeccable composition, nor achieving a deeper tone with proper lighting, nor transforming the subject into something more, so that we remember and feel something, take something away with us, after seeing the photograph. How many photos do you see every day that do that to you?? Not many if any I think, aside from the shock value of seeing death in the daily papers or some gratuitous sexual innuendos in some advertising campaign to grab your attention. But how many photographs do you see that you would like to live with, hang up on your wall and look at every day? And how many photographs do you see that make you change your point of view, that infect your spirit, that forever change the way you saw something. And how many of you know how to not only look but see?? And that is the real test and the metre of how to measure a great photograph. And I am not talking posters of your favorite movie idol or music star either......

It is about emotion, it is about thought, it is about preserving something special, or ordinary so that you can see it differently and for the first time perhaps....it is about capturing the perfect moment that records history or a look of love or hatred or depression, that fleeting instant and then it is gone forever...it is a bit of luck and lots of hard work and hours and hours of patience and repetition till the day or the moment when everything converges and is perfect......
NUDE SESSIONS

In 1979, I was teaching nude photography at Parsons school in New York. I needed models for the course – and one day a 20-year-old called Madonna Ciccone showed up. She was just another citizen, a girl trying to make ends meet. She was quiet, taciturn. I'm not sure it was something she enjoyed. She did it for the money, in this case $30. She was relaxed, composed, did as asked. Some people are stiff, some are there to do a job, some give a little more. She was in the middle: she did what she was told but nothing extra.

I was into the body as a sculptural form in those days. I'd bend or twist models to see what I could create. It was experimental. She was very comfortable with her body, and with being shot by 15 students. When you're doing nudes, you have to have everything planned. The model has to be comfortable or you won't get a lot out of her. It was February and I had two heaters on to keep her warm.

In January 1985, I saw her on the cover of Interview magazine and thought: "Wow, I know her." Five months later, she was on the cover of Time magazine – as Madonna. I called the art director at Penthouse. One thing led to another and, eventually, Playboy published a series of photographs, in September 1985.

Shooting nudes is tricky. What are you trying to do? When is it a nude; when is it erotica? There is nothing erotic about these pictures. Erotica suggests sex; these pictures don't suggest sex. They are studies of the body – it's sculpture with a camera. Currently, I'm doing a series of nudes of women over 50. I want to show that their bodies are beautiful.

If I had my time again, I would have done more with her, changed the lighting, with maybe a bit more on her face, or tried a longer lens. I'd love to shoot her again in exactly the same positions – to see how she has evolved.
Madonna No. 9
PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs presented in this catalogue are 500 x 600mm or 800 x 1200mm. For more information, contact the gallery at sales@odetoart.com