

Portrait of an Artist

By Jillian Lobato

PREPARE TO BRACE YOURSELF FOR ROBERT CURRAN'S PHOTOGRAPHIC EVOLUTION AS HE BRINGS ONE OF HIS MOST EYE-OPENING EXHIBITIONS YET TO ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH 2009.

Robert Curran's photography show, ANTHOLOGY is one of the must-sees for Art Basel this year. As an artist whose photographs explore ancient cultures that have left behind a rich architectural and cultural legacy, he is taking the world of fine art photography to the deepest corners of the blue planet.

Curran has traveled through more than 90 countries to shoot his work, photographing the world's most recognized celebrities and dignitaries juxtaposed next to pieces portraying indigenous villagers in the globe's remotest of islands. His anthology for Art Basel reflects on his decades of travels with a particular emphasis on recent journeys in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, as well as older works documenting his excursions through Eastern Europe in the early 90s, just after Mikhail Gorbachev initiated his new policy of perestroika. "I have met and photographed kings, paupers, and sages and tried to learn from all of them.

Frequently focusing on images that honor incredible monuments in areas such as the Middle East, Asia, and South America, Curran has spent a career capturing civilizations on film. "My grandfather was an archeologist and in charge of Machu Picchu and that inspired an early interest in ancient civilizations. I was fortunate to see many archeological wonders through my travels, and have studied the cultures that created these architecturally complex buildings with little but stone, ingenuity, and immense amounts of human labor. These travels have given me the richest experiences of my life, which I endeavor to express through my photography," he says.

His artistic perspective has not only caught the eye of Haute Living; he has a legion of fans and collectors that read like a who's who of high society. His photographs currently appear in the private collections of His Majesty Abdullah Hussein, King of Jordan, Miguel Forbes, The Kennedy family, and Alex Sapir. He sold out shows in Manhattan at The Forbes Gallery in 2002 and 2005, and followed that up with a one-man show at the Mission Gallery in Miami, which showcased his photography during Art Basel in 2006 and 2007.

Considered one of the most politically relevant projects of his career was the sojourn that he embarked upon with John F. Kennedy, Jr. in 1998 to Vietnam. After photographing the late First Son with wife Carolyn Bessette, Kennedy selected Curran as the photographer of choice to document a meeting with General Vo Nguyen Giap, the general who fought against the U.S. during the Vietnam War in the 1970s. "I traveled to Vietnam with JFK Jr. because of an article that George Magazine was putting together. John had a fascination with interviewing his father's former enemies, such as Fidel Castro and General Giap—people that were part of the history of his father's legacy," he explains. "The General was considered a national hero in Vietnam, known outside as the only general that won a military victory over America. General Giap hadn't been photographed in 20 years, so seeing them together, and being present for the interview, was a remarkable experience."

ROBERT AT EASTER ISLAND IN 2006



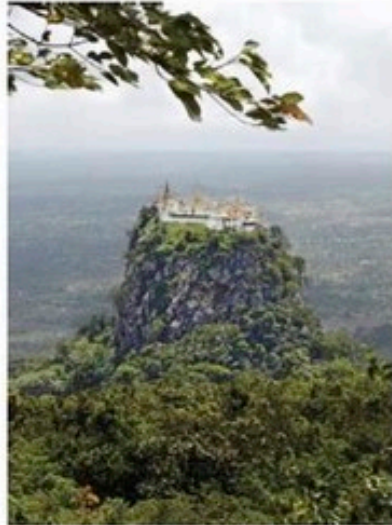
CUSCO, PERU FOR PRESS CONFERENCE WITH PETRA NEMOCOVA, 2008



FA NEPOLEON BALI, 2008



PILGRIM IN INDIA, 2009



MOUNTAIN TEMPLE MYANMAR, 2009



FIVE GENTLEMEN MYANMAR, 2009



PETRA MONASTARY JORDAN, 2005



ROBERT FLYING
HIGH ABOVE
CAMBODIA IN
2009

Aside from the aforementioned feats, Curran tells of other curious ventures including a fashion shoot on an iceberg in Iceland, and tracking down one of his former subjects in Cambodia. "In 1998, I photographed a poor young girl, which became one of my most iconic photographs, Little Buddha. This photograph brought my collectors and myself a source of inner peace and I often wondered what happened to this child. I wanted to pay her back for the good luck she had brought us. This past summer, I went back to Cambodia and after a long search through temples and questioning many monks, I finally found her," he says. "She's a young woman now and didn't remember taking the picture. At that time, people were just surviving after the war, so she had never seen a photographic image of herself at that age. It's cultures like hers that I aim to examine in my work and ask myself what can we learn from them." Curran has funded a college scholarship for her to attend the university of her choice.

As a part-time Miami resident, Curran naturally possesses a hometown admiration for what has become one of the most important art fairs throughout the world. "Art Basel has catapulted our city to a higher level in terms of cultural prominence," he explains. "This year I think that attendees will be looking at established artists who produce work that reflects reality, art that shows the beauty of our world and human heritage—rich or poor. Showing that life can be beautiful even in the most forgotten of places." He explains that people are tired of Photoshop, animation, and financial portfolios that don't really exist.

In addition to his Art Basel exhibition, which Curran will follow up with a show in St. Barths at the Valentine de Badereau gallery from December 27 to January 15, he has also been hard at work from his New York studio collaborating on a commission for the new Trump SoHo Hotel Condominium New York. He was asked to join the project and incorporate his work into the interior design plans created by the Rockwell Group.

"Developer Alex Sapir is a collector of mine and wanted to fuse his development with the art he loved, so he asked me to come up with photographs that would fit with the project's international and eclectic clientele, bringing iconic ancient architecture to the modern building," he says. "I used images from India, Easter Island, Petra, and Myanmar to infuse the rooms with color and add an international dimension to this incredible hotel." There will be more than 500 photographs on permanent exhibition at the hotel. "Clients at the hotel can look at these images and relax after the stress that New York often brings."

His photographs will be available in limited editions for sale through the Trump SoHo Concierge along with his coffee table book entitled *Asian Dreams*, which will also be available for purchase. Half of the proceeds of the sales support supermodel Petra Nemcova's Happy Hearts Fund, where he proudly serves as an ambassador for the foundation. During 2007 and 2008, he and Nemcova joined forces and helped coordinate the reconstruction of approximately 30 schools in Bali and Java, and are now working on building six schools in the south of Peru—both areas were ravaged by recent earthquakes. ☪

ROBERT CURRAN'S GALLERY EXHIBITION IS LOCATED AT 248 WASHINGTON AVE.



LITTLE BUDDHA
CAMBODIA, 1998



GENERAL GIAP AND JOHN F. KENNEDY, JR.
HANOI, VIETNAM, 1998