Contemporary Collectibles: Last-minute book ideas for the collector

by Linda_Rosenkrantz

"Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll Since 1967" by Dominic Molon and others (Yale University Press, $50).

Art and rock have been cross-pollinating since at least the time that Andy Warhol was promoting The Velvet Underground, and other artists began to create album covers and later videos. This book, issued in conjunction with an exhibition at MOCA Chicago, offers ample evidence of this synergistic relationship, in both a number of essays and works by artists from Richard Hamilton (the iconic newspaper image of Mick Jagger being busted) to Yoshitomo Nara.

"The Last Photographic Heroes: American Photographers of the Sixties and Seventies" by Gilles Mora (Abrams, $50). Covering roughly the same period as the Molon book, but cutting off at the end of the '70s, this is an idiosyncratic selection of "heroic" photographers, defined by the author as having "devoted body and soul to his cause." This encompasses dramatic images by such brilliant colorists as William Eggleston, William Christenberry and Joel Meyerowitz, the suburban scenes of Bill Owens, the experimental works of Robert Heinecken and the street photography of Garry Winogrand and Lee Friedlander, not to mention the extreme works of Nan Goldin and Larry Clark, all of it set against the context of the exploding interest in photography by museums, galleries and collectors at that point in time.

"Travel Italia: The Golden Age of Italian Travel Posters" by Lorenzo Ottaviani (Abrams, $35). Vibrantly colored examples from the golden age of poster graphics, which lured the traveler to visit the scenic wonders of Venezia, Roma, Ravenna, Capri, Parma and Pompeii - as well as less-trodden spots like Bellagio, Ascoli Piceno, Nervi and Salsomaggiore - through striking visual images alone. Produced from the 1920s to the 1960s, and originally commissioned by the Italian National Tourism Agency and the Italian State Railways, the more than 150 examples shown feature work by the top Italian commercial artists of their day (brief bios are included) and presents a dazzling time capsule of a more serene time.

Two books of interest for jewelry collectors: "Yard: The Life and Magnificent Jewelry of Raymond C. Yard" by Natasha Kuzmanovic (Vendome, $65) and "Calder Jewelry" (Yale University Press, $65). The first focuses on a master jeweler who, encouraged by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., established his company in 1922, one that is still catering to an elite clientele today. The book spotlights these society figures and film stars, from the Woolworths and DuPonts to Joan Crawford, as well as the pieces themselves - deco brooches encrusted with rubies and diamonds, bracelets embellished with Kashmir sapphires and Burmese rubies, and such oddities as brooches in the forms of rabbit golf caddies and waiters.

At the other end of the simplicity/splendiferous spectrum are the unembellished, linear forms of sculptor and mobile creator Alexander Calder, who began making jewelry in 1906 for his sister's dolls. Crafted primarily of gold, brass, silver, copper and steel wire, their presentation here emphasizes their sculptural form, many pieces exhibited full page against dark backgrounds.

DVDS AND CDS

These days gifts to collecting friends need not be limited to books, with more and more available in more advanced forms, including three put out by leading publishers in their fields. Comic Buyer's Guide has been around since 1971, reviewing more than 2,000 comics a year. Their DVD offers users instant access to more than two dozen issues of the print guide, including covers, articles and even ads. "Sports Collectors Digest's" DVD presents its standard catalog of baseball cards, with current pricing for every card made from 1981 to the present, plus thousands of photos.

"Goldmine Beatles" presents 10 years of Beatles coverage, including in-depth interviews with Paul, Ringo, Yoko, Sean Lennon and others, detailed discographies and collecting info, and a complete Beatles pricing guide.

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