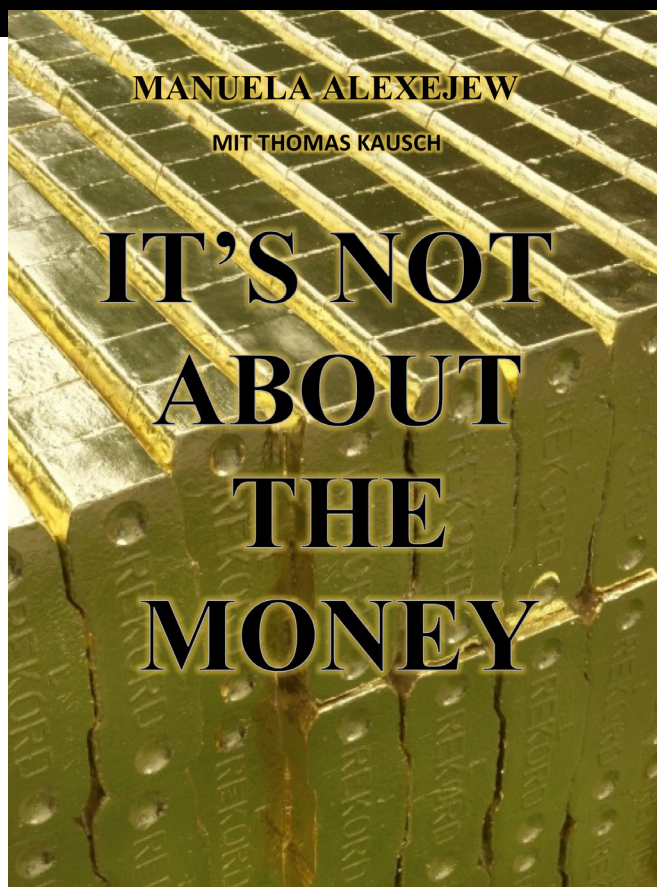


IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY



— The Berlin art collector **MANUELA ALEXEJEV** talks about her eventful life and offers a rare insight into the inner sanctuary of the international art world - a publication by Steidl Verlag

**TODAY,
MANUELA ALEXEJEV
AND CARLOS BRANDL
LIVE IN THE MIDST OF
THEIR ART**

MANUELA ALEXEJEV could have become a model had her photographers not consistently died on her. Instead, she became a PAN AM stewardess, which in the glamorous days of civil aviation was the next best thing to being a princess. She flew around the world and when she landed, she partied with Sophia Loren at Studio 54 in New York or took a breather with Oscar de la Renta in Santo Domingo. Then PAN AM went bust. Manuela returned to her roots, the arts in which she had graduated, and set about assembling a prodigious art collection in collaboration with her husband Carlos.

which includes works by artists as diverse as Otto Dix, Ernst Wilhelm Nay, Pablo Picasso, Henri Moore, Gerhard Richter, William Copley, George Condo, Allen Jones, Otto Piene, Günter Förg, Yayoi Kusama and Alicja Kwade. Their Berlin apartment is a heady mix of styles and media from antique furniture, carpets and wallpapers to cutting-edge works of painting and sculpture - as unconstrained and vibrant as its inhabitants.

Manuela's fascinating story provides a rare and personal insight into the esoteric world of international art collectors. Written with wry humour and an irrepressible sense of fun, the book describes how the art world changed from a finite community of art devotees into a global market place where works are increasingly traded beyond the reach of traditional art punters. Readers are taken on a journey tracing the story of a young woman as her dreams of the big wide world steer her to becoming an experienced and respected art collector frequented by international museum directors and curators. In Carlos, with his passion for old masters, commercial instincts and curiosity of all things unknown, Manuela finds her alter ego. They embark on a lifelong adventure buoyed by their common qualities of spontaneity, individuality and the hunger to discover something new.

Following countless one-on-one interviews, tv journalist and writer Thomas Kausch has captured the stories that connect Manuela with her acquisitions. The result is unexpected and refreshing: the biography of a collector as seen

through the prism of her collection. Thomas Kausch:

„I am not an art expert” says Thomas Kausch, „but a news journalist. As such, I have always been suspicious of reports of the increasingly outlandish prices paid for art works that, more often than not, end up in a depot. My intense engagement with the story of Manuela Alexejew, who lives with her art, has stirred in me a fresh fascination for today's art world. Our many conversations turned into an adventurous odyssey energised by a constant flow of new discoveries. And so, a book has taken shape that speaks to established and aspiring art collectors alike.“

Passion remains the incentive that drives Manuela's search for new acquisitions. Crucial also remains the joy of being exposed to her art on a daily basis and the way in which the art works communicate with each

other. At the heart of the act of collecting lies the search for moments when a new work commands in the collector a fusion of connoisseurship, love of adventure and butterflies in the belly. Manuela does not believe in random coincidences. In her life as in her collection, things have always come together in the right way. She is convinced that “you don't find the works; they find you.“

The alluring surface of *COAL* drives home the inescapable message that money is the dominating force propelling today's art market. The relationship of the sculpture's title with that of the book, *IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY*, is obvious yet ambivalent. When Manuela mentions money, she often does so because Manuela and Carlos have to tighten their belts because an art work has found them and is exacting its price. She describes the happiness that such a work will bring her for years to come, a happiness you cannot put a price on.



Photo: Thomas Kausch

AN EYE-CATCHER OF THE COLLECTION, FEATURED ON THE COVER OF THE BOOK, IS ALICJA KWADE'S COAL, A BRONZE SCULPTURE COVERED IN GOLD LEAF.

When the acquisition of an art work turns out to be a profitable investment, Manuela sees the vindication that that brings as a welcome bonus. Rarely does she sell a work and when she does, it is only to buy another one. Manuela Alexejew's story reveals how the value of a work of art cannot be measured by its price but by the sensual and intellectual enrichment that it brings to its owner's life.



Photo: Trevor Good

Manuela Alexejew pays special tribute to the commitment of particular galleries and their dealers, who build the careers of their artists in today's highly complex and fiercely competitive global machinery. She stands firm in her belief that the direct and physical encounter with art, be it in museums, galleries or at auction, will win the day.

„When the Corona pandemic broke out, we, like everyone else, were forced to sit in front of our laptops for anything from virtual museum visits to online auction sales. Is there something such as virtual collecting? For us that would be a definite No. I just can't be struck by lightning when I see a work on screen. How am I supposed to sense its spatial effect, its energy, its power?“

„Manuela and Carlos are passionate art collectors. Their apartment is one of the most beautiful in Europe. They embody all I love about Berlin and it was entirely due to their eye that my career remained buoyant.“

Lord Mark Poltimore, Sotheby's

Lightning has struck Manuela Alexejew on numerous occasions in the past and will undoubtedly find her again. *IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY* radiates with infectious passion for art and pours scorn on anyone who downgrades it to a mere investment.

Richly illustrated with recent photographs taken by Andrea Ferrari, as well as quarried from Manuela Alexejew's personal albums, a surprising, humorous and thoughtful book is about to be released.

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY

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