

ARTS & ANTIQUES

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etc.

VINCENT PRICE

Actor • Collector

A TRIP TO FABULOUS OLD
MYSTIC SEAPORT



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VincentPriceExhibit



**VINCENT
PRICE**

ACTOR & COLLECTOR

Vincent Price, the man on the cover, is undoubtedly one of America's triple threat men. A three "A" man, actor—author—art collector. As an actor, he is of course, world famous; mainly for his comedy roles. Although I firmly believe that Mr. Price would shine as a tragedian, for who would make a better Hamlet?—he does his comedy with zest and finesse; as indeed he excels in any and all of his roles.

Recently his second book appeared—"A Treasury of Great Recipes" published by Ampersand Press. This is a book of great artistry, co-authored by Vincent Price and his equally charming and talented wife, Mary. The key to Vincent Price's success in his three chosen fields is revealed in a statement Mr. Price made on the publication of his book.

"My wife Mary and myself are collectors of everything; all the arts, folk art, decorative art, fine art, and also the art of enjoying and preparing good food."

Despite his British good looks and accent, Vincent Price is as American as apple pie. Born in St. Louis and graduated from Yale, Price went to London to study art, but there he landed a role as Prince Albert in the play, "Victoria Regina." He returned to America where he starred in the same role opposite Helen Hayes on Broadway. Since then his life has been one success after another; on the stage, in the movies, on radio and television, and more to our liking, in the arts.

In 1956, a quiz show program on the arts brought him to the attention of the public as a knowledgeable connoisseur of the arts. He previously had been known to a smaller museum going group as a collector of fine paintings and drawings. Indeed, his collection had been exhibited at a large California museum, where his taste and knowledge in the arts had been eagerly sought for. On this program he also introduced two other well known people as art collectors; Edward G. Robinson, the actor, and Billy Pearson, the jockey.

Mr. Price has a personal art collection of over five hundred items, many of which are kept out on loan with his friends. His knowledge of art and art history is extensive, but he is in no awe of names and reputations, and buys nothing that he does not genuinely like. The bulk of his collection is in three areas: modern American and European, pre-Columbian, and African "primitive."

He enjoys helping unknown artists, which he does not by "patronizing" them, but by buying their works. He was one of the first to buy from Jackson Pollock, and from Raymond Han, a Korean-American-Hawaiian artist who was working as a guard at the Metro-

politan Museum when Mr. Price met him. With the exhibitions at the gallery that he ran for a time with George Macready in Beverly Hills he helped the careers of Morris Graves, Paul Brulin, John Whorf and Howard Warshaw. His collection includes a drawing, "Baby Skull," by Warshaw, a pen-and-ink landscape by William Brice, the artist son of actress Fanny Brice, and a non-objective painting by Richard Diebenkorn. He used to be very enthusiastic about abstract and non-objective painting, but has now concluded that "it has gone too, too far."

In 1962 Mr. Price was commissioned by Sears, Roebuck and Co., to travel around the world and buy art for resale. This was the idea of George Struthers, vice president for merchandising, and he gave Mr. Price carte blanche to buy at least 2000 items, which he did gladly, from dealers' estates, individual collectors and the artists themselves. The idea was to sell these works of art, by catalog and in the various Sears stores in the smaller cities that did not have art galleries and thus might be supposed to be starved for art. Paintings, oils, water-colors, collages, etchings, drawings and sculptures were included, and nothing but originals. Most items were to retail under \$100, and each was to have a special note attached, by Mr. Price, giving brief information and evaluation. The project started in Denver in October, 1962, with prices ranging from \$10 to \$2000 or more, and was attended with success beyond all expectation. In three days more than 1200 pieces were sold in eleven stores, and 27 Rembrandt etchings were snapped up before they could be advertised. Mr. Price, who had long championed American art and the possibilities of art in America, was understandably pleased, and the artists themselves were probably even more pleased, as nothing was bought from them on consignment, and a new audience was being created; also Sears was pleased, inasmuch as it gave them profits, prestige, and new customers all at once. The project was continued, offering time payments and money-back guarantees, and in three years the Sears, Roebuck "Vincent Price Collection" had grown to almost 40,000 works, of which over 20,000 had been sold.

He was one of the first to collect pre-Columbian art, and his collection in this area is considered one of the best of its kind. Because of his knowledge of American Indian art he was made the head of the Indian cultural program of the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1963. His collection includes a 5½-foot stone Huastecan sun-god, an Olmec fragment of an infant showing high skill in delicate modelling, a





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Totonac cross-legged seated figure in clay, and a squatting figure from Costa Rica, in volcanic stone, representing a flute-player, or perhaps a "thinker"; he

also has several antique pots from Peru, in human form. He has also been interested in the later art of Mexico, and one of his acquisitions is a carving of

Vincent Price stands proudly overlooking his collection of a lifetime. In the background an 18th Century California cross can be seen as well as a table full of Pre-Colombian heads.

God the Father, with orb and scepter in either hand and a triangle on his head representing the Trinity, all in a nimbus of flaming light reminiscent of

the ring around Shiva Nataraja. Also Mr. Price's collection includes items of the modern folk art of Mexico and the Southwest.

He has a high respect for the sculptors and carvers of Africa, and one of his prized possessions is a Benin bronze, a chieftain, 20 inches high. He is especially drawn to Yoruba sculpture, in which he finds a compelling mixture of savage force and delicate sensitivity, always conservative and always new, revealing and extending a great tradition with an inexhaustible creativity. Another of his favorite possessions is a gigantic Yoruba mask, weighing forty pounds, a triumph of well-organized intricate detail, made only with adze and pocket-knife. It was made about fifty years ago by Bamboya, one of the last Yoruba carvers, and is one of the few African pieces whose makers are known. He also has and treasures, a small Bambembe mother and child, the child on the mother's shoulders—a fine mixture of the miniature and the monumental.

Mr. Price's collection is not alto-

gether contained in these three areas of his main interest, and some of his finest pieces fall outside of them. These include a drawing by Federigo Barocci (a study for a painting of his in Perugia), and a vigorous and trenchant drawing of Prometheus by Henry Fuseli; also a piece of Greek sculpture from Myrina, four inches high and representing an Angel of the Dead, and a stucco lady with braids holding a pomegranate, of the 4th century A.D., from Hadda, Afghanistan. He has a miniature in oil on ivory of an unknown man, by Goya, and a watercolor picador by Constantin Guys. He enjoys the work of the American sculptor Gaston LaChaise, finding it full of rich humor, and has a bronze of his, representing two generously endowed female figures, aerially floating. Modigliani is a great favorite of his, and two of his most prized items are a drawing of Adam and a small painting of a woman's head by this modern master.



Vincent Price studies latest acquisitions in his print collection. At the rear of his living room is part of his vast collection of Indian pottery from all the Americas.



 VincentPriceExhibit

A corner of the Price Library shows more of his masterpieces, including his lovely wife and young daughter.

Mr. Price gives this advice to would-be collectors, advice which is tempered by a lifetime in art, and which he takes himself.

ONE. A good painting is one that pleases you. You be the judge.

TWO. Don't buy with an eye to its potential value tomorrow.

THREE. Work your way up. Start with drawings, then water-colors, gouache, and finally, oils.

FOUR. Do not plunge, at first, into the obscure Oriental or Egyptian arts. There has been much too much faking in

these areas.

FIVE. Make up your mind as to what you like—don't vacillate—but leave room for growth.

SIX. Love what you buy—but passionately.

SEVEN. Don't be overly influenced by other people's opinions.

EIGHT. Don't buy a second rate picture—not even by a famous artist.

NINE. Be courageous—never mind what other people say.

TEN. After you've bought the picture—look at it—often.



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Vincent Price admires his world-famous mask by the Nigerian sculptor Bamboya. Carved about fifty years ago, the mask weighs forty pounds and has over fifty figures on it. African art is one of Mr. Price's favorite art forms.

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