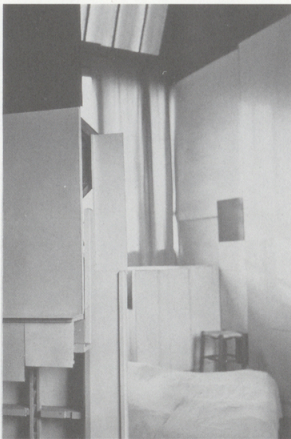


\$30,000–\$50,000). Two prints attributed to Tina Modotti or possibly Edward Weston, unrecorded and undocumented—*Rafael-Azotea-Lucerna 12-México D.F.*, ca. 1924, and *Portrait of Tina Modotti with Downcast Eyes*, 1920s—were purchased by New York dealer Spencer Throckmorton for \$18,000 each (each estimated \$20,000–\$30,000). Throckmorton says, “I think they’re both by Tina. The writing on the back of one is hers, and these are her printing technique.” First time on the auction block, Martin Munkacsí’s vintage *Negerknaben in der Brandung des Tahganyikasees*, ca. 1930, made a new record for the artist when it sold to New York dealer Howard Greenberg for \$56,000 (estimate \$20,000–\$30,000); Munkacsí’s innovative outdoor fashion shot, *Silver White Satin Beach Costume*, 1933–34, sold to Greenberg for \$31,000 (estimate \$8,000–\$12,000). Bethel concludes, “Overall I was extremely pleased with our sale. We sold most of it, and we made our low estimate.” Sale total for Sotheby’s was \$1,766,150 for 351 lots out of 508 offered.

~Photographs in London. It’s the story every auction house dreams of: A cohesive group of 220 vintage photographs tucked away in an attic for some 50 years, discovered by the collector’s heir and handed over to be sold. Such seems to be the case for **Sotheby’s** London, but this was only the beginning. **Important Avant-Garde Photographs of the 1920s & 1930s: The Helene Anderson Collection** sold on May 2 to a standing-room-only gathering of some of the most important players in the world of photography from Europe and America. When it was over, 210 out of 220 lots sold for £1,307,470, a new record for a single-owner sale in photography, with at least a dozen new records for photographers, among them Blossfeldt, Florence Henri, Moholy-Nagy, Renger-Patzsch, Umbo, and America’s own, Edward Weston. Sotheby’s expert Philippe Garner describes the collection as a “photographic time capsule,” discovered in a box by the son of a German photographer named Helene Anderson, more than 20 years after her death. Anderson, born in 1891 and a student of photography in Berlin in the mid-20s, amassed a group of avant-garde photographs by then-contemporary photographers, many of whom exhibited in the



André Kertész, *Mondrian's Studio, Paris*, gelatin silver print on *carte postale* (4-1/4x2-5/8 in.), 1926. Sold at Christie's, New York, April 17, 1997.

seminal *Film und Foto* exhibition which toured Germany in 1929. At the outbreak of war in 1939, she sent the collection to her parents' home in Silesia, later moving them to her own home in Frankfurt, where they remained at the time of her death in 1970.

As New York/Paris dealer Harry Lunn observes about the sale, “The Germans were the heaviest buyers, and that’s very, very important—so much of the collection went back home.” Successful bidders included Berlin dealer Hendrick Berinson, private collector Manfred Heiting, dealers Gerd Sander (grandson of August Sander) and Simon Lowinsky, and keeper of the Renger-Patzsch archive, Jürgen Wilde. The photographer Umbo’s intriguing *Katz [Cat]*, 1927, the cover lot of the catalogue, elicited much activity, selling for £62,000 to Andrew Cowan of Hamiltons in London, once again reportedly for Elton John (as one dealer pointed out, he seems to prefer cover lots), beating out a roster of bidders including Thea Westreich, Pierre Apraxine, and Dale Stulz. Cologne dealer Rudolf Kicken, who owns most of the Umbo (Otto Umbehr) estate, says, “I knew the competition would be stiff, and didn’t even try. Umbo is very important in Germany, yet we lost most of his material because of the war.”

Kicken purchased his *Spielhof* [Playground], 1923, for £19,000 (estimate £1,200–£1,800), outbidding Edwynn Houk.

Americans in attendance were not merely passive observers. Houk was successful with Umbo’s *Mädchenkopf* [Woman’s Head], ca. 1923, for £5,200 (estimate £2,000–£3,000), as well as Blossfeldt’s *Anemone pulsatilla*, 1920s, for £13,000, and Man Ray’s *Original Photogram*, 1920s, selling within estimate for £42,000. Florence Henri’s *Self Portrait*, 1923, was purchased by Jeffrey Fraenkel for £36,000, “for a future book project,” Fraenkel says, adding, “This was probably the most exciting sale most of us have ever attended.” Jane Corkin bought Blossfeldt’s tantalizingly bulbous *Blumenbachia hieronymi*, 1920s, for £34,000, a new record for the artist. From a strong group of 25 works by Renger-Patzsch, Lee Marks acquired *Blutbuche* [Beech], 1925, within estimate for £7,500. She describes the Renger-Patzsch group as “an exceptional collection, on warm, mildly textured paper.” Renger-Patzsch’s *Winter vor der Stadt* [Winter on the Town], ca. 1930, went to Pierre Apraxine and the Gilman Paper Company for £16,000 (estimate £5,000–£8,000) (Apraxine also acquired *Gasometer*, ca. 1930, by Ernst Scheel, for £19,000). Kicken acknowledges the Renger-Patzsches “were a wonderful and good mixture of his work. This is the first time a major group of his has been up for sale. Renger prices have deserved a higher level, and they are now right where they belong, as with Umbo.” New York collector Thomas Walther, whose collection includes a number of the photographers in the Anderson collection, acquired some 20 lots, including Renger-Patzsch; Moholy-Nagy’s *Eifersucht* [Jealousy] for £42,000 (estimate £3,000–£12,000) (a new Moholy record); El Lissitzky’s composite silver print *Bauen [To Build]* for £58,000; Umbo’s *Simultan Porträt* [Simultaneous Portrait], for £20,000 (estimate £3,000–£5,000); and an interesting group of large exhibition prints by Aenne Biermann, Arwid Gutschow, and R. Petschow.

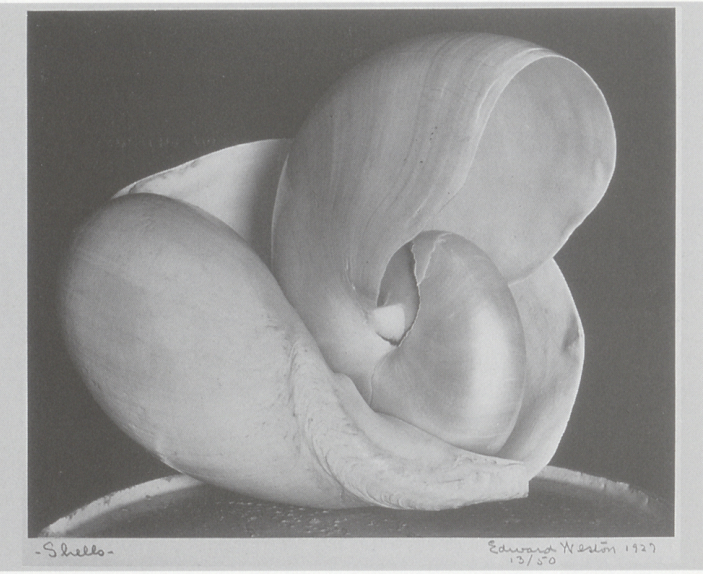
The top lot of the sale made a new record for an American photographer, when Edward Weston’s *Shells*, 1927, the horizontal nautilus, sold to San Francisco dealer Michael Shapiro for £100,000

(estimate £20,000–£30,000), tying Weston’s *Fragment*, a close-up of a pair of knees, selling to Andrew Cowan of Hamiltons (again, reportedly for Elton John), also for £100,000. An elated Shapiro says, “I wanted to bring home American modernism, and this is the most important Weston to ever come up publicly or privately. I was prepared to be far more aggressive—I was very lucky. It’s printed on a 1920s paper, which is far different from what Weston used in the 30s—it’s a softer paper. And it combines the best of pictorialism with the modernist sensibility.” Shapiro also bought Imogen Cunningham’s *Nude Study, Shins*, ca. 1930, for £4,500. Weston and Cunningham were the only Americans in the Anderson collection, and both active in the group known as f-64, “the first identified group of important Northern California modernist photographers,” notes Shapiro.

All in all, Kicken acknowledges that the collection “was extremely important. I was surprised that no one tried to buy it as a group—it was perfect to save as part of our German heritage in photography. People don’t realize the importance of photography and still don’t consider it a major part of our history.” No one appeared to be bidding on behalf of a German museum; in fact, only two museums seem to have been represented: the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou.

Kicken notes, “For me, it’s interesting how suddenly there is American interest in German photography, after it has been neglected for so long in your country, where you have been able to buy a Moholy or a Renger-Patzsch for half or one third the price of a Strand or Stieglitz. This sale will serve to reevaluate that.”

In the end, as Houk remarks, “One wants to know more about Helene Anderson.” Kicken expresses similar sentiments—something akin to a full-scale investigation may be underway. As Philippe Garner sums it up, “There is clearly more to this story—and it’s a remarkable one—more than meets the eye. My instinct is that Helene Anderson was somehow involved in the avant-garde scene of photographers, involved in some sort of project with others in pulling together these photographs. But regardless, she took the initiative, and in 1939, with the outbreak of war, she had



Edward Weston, *Shells*, gelatin silver print mounted on card (7-1/2x9-3/8 in.), 1927. Sold at Sotheby’s, London, May 2, 1997.

the vision and the foresight to realize the quality and long-term historical worth of the collection. Without this, this material may never have seen the light of day. For this reason, she deserves to have her name attached to the material—she saved it.”

~New York Prints. New York’s round of **spring print sales** opened at **Christie’s** on May 13 with its sale of **prints by Rembrandt from the Collection of Walter J. Johnson**. Of the 39 etchings from the collection of the late New York publisher, only two failed to sell, for a total of \$2,305,300. Top lots included *Sir’s Bridge* and *Thomas Haaringh*, each selling for \$130,000. Reactions to both the collection and the sale were mixed. New York dealer David Tunick observes, “I thought this was an unfortunate collection, because Johnson had the means and was collecting in a time when it was very possible to put together a collection of the finest Rembrandt prints—and that was not what he did.” Carlo Bella, director of old master prints at Pace Prints, says, “There was mixed quality—and prices. Some of the low- to medium-quality works sold for more than the really great prints. But, among