

## A Package Deal

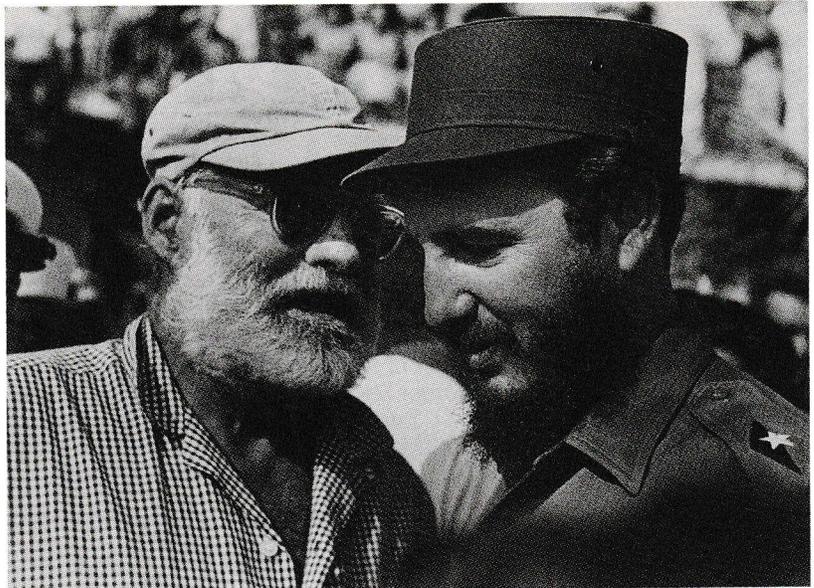
**LOS ANGELES**—Whoever called Aperture the only game in town? Much as the New York publisher is trying its hand at the exhibition business, curating shows to accompany books such as *State of the Blues*, L.A.'s Fahey-Klein is learning first-hand the benefits of publishing trade books.

David Fahey, cofounder of the gallery, has 20 titles to his credit so far, with eight more scheduled for release in 1999. With partner Randee Klein-Devlin, Fahey opened a space on La Brea Avenue in 1986. Three years later, working with independent Twelve Trees Press, now a subdivision of Twin Palms Press, he published the book of Herb Ritts's portraits, nudes and fashion shots called *Pictures*. No scholarly catalogue, this high-end trade title was headed for prime display space in bookstores.

The production cost of *Pictures* ran to nearly \$300,000, but the book, priced at \$65, paid for itself in several ways. Not only did it go to four editions of 6,000 each, ringing up nearly \$2 million in total sales, but as Fahey says, "the book made a huge difference in Herb Ritts's career. We've done five Ritts books since, and we are working on another. His show at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts was the eleventh most heavily attended museum show of 1998—visited by 253,649 people. That's what's happened."

Fahey's other titles include a meditative journey through Tibet by actor-photographer Richard Gere, a spread of informal snaps and captions by late Beat poet Allen Ginsberg and *Fidel's Cuba: A Revolution in Pictures*, a new book of pictures by the father and son team of Osvaldo and Roberto Salas. Like the other books, this title gets its own design treatment and its publication is timed to coincide with the exhibition's start date, January 14.

"It's simple," says Fahey, who not only oversees the exhibitions as well as publications, but also sends the whole package traveling to museums and galleries, including Staley-Wise in New York, Hamiltons in London and Parco in Tokyo. "The books make the exhibitions much more appealing to other galleries. If you've got the artist, the book and the show, you've got three things happening at once and your chances of getting attention from the press go up about 1,000 percent. For everybody who walks out of the gallery with a book," he ventures, "another 20 people will see each copy. The potential for sales of that artist's work is that much greater."



Osvaldo Salas's *Ernest Hemingway and Fidel Castro, 1960*, appears in the book *Fidel's Cuba* and in the current exhibition at Fahey-Klein.

Another L.A. gallerist-packager, Craig Krull, agrees: "A book is definitely a good marketing tool. It demonstrates to someone that there is a popular appeal to the image and it reinforces that person's own taste." Krull recently joined forces with Santa Monica's Smart Art Press, the city's leading avant-garde publisher, to put together a monograph to accompany his current show of photographer Charles Britten.

Smart Art Press managing editor Susan Martin adds, "For an artist to have a book of any kind enhances his or her credibility. And this should translate over time to enhanced value for the work. However," she points out, "photography is different from fine art," suggesting that many artists are not half as fashionable—or profitable—as Ritts.

Fahey, who placed number 20 in *American Photo's* 1998 list of the 100 most important people, insists, however, that the trade-book treatment can work for a diverse group of photographers. "The collecting base for photography now is immense and broad-based. A collector who came in to buy a copy of the Ginsberg book also bought a Cartier-Bresson photograph," he says. "There is an audience for all the different niches of photography."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP

## Dealers See Growth in African-American Market

**NEW YORK**—If you haven't heard the names of such artists as Henry Ossawa Tanner, Archibald J. Motley, Jr. and Norman Lewis, it is in large part because of America's legacy of racism. The good news is that the neglect long suffered by African-American artists is gradually changing.

On December 2, an undated painting by Tanner (1859–1937) sold at Christie's New York for \$101,500 against an estimate of \$20,000 to \$30,000, even though some observers had raised questions about the work's condition. Two years ago, the White House Endowment Fund purchased

Tanner's *Sand Dunes at Sunset, Atlantic City* for \$100,000, making it the first work by an African-American to enter the presidential collection.

"The market for works by African-American artists is growing steadily as collectors become more educated," says New York dealer Michael Rosenfeld, whose annual exhibitions of 19th- and 20th-century African-American artists have done much to stimulate collector interest in the field.

Also serving the purpose of education is a number of recent museum shows.

"Rhapsodies in Black," which traveled to San Francisco, Houston and Washington, D.C., in 1998, made the case that visual artists were major players in the Harlem Renaissance. And the Whitney Museum of American Art this fall introduced color-drenched figurative works by Bob Thompson, dating to the '50s and '60s, to a larger public.

On the trade front, the National Black Fine Art Show takes place at the Puck Building in SoHo from January 29 through 31, bringing together such dealers as Birmingham, Michigan's ▶