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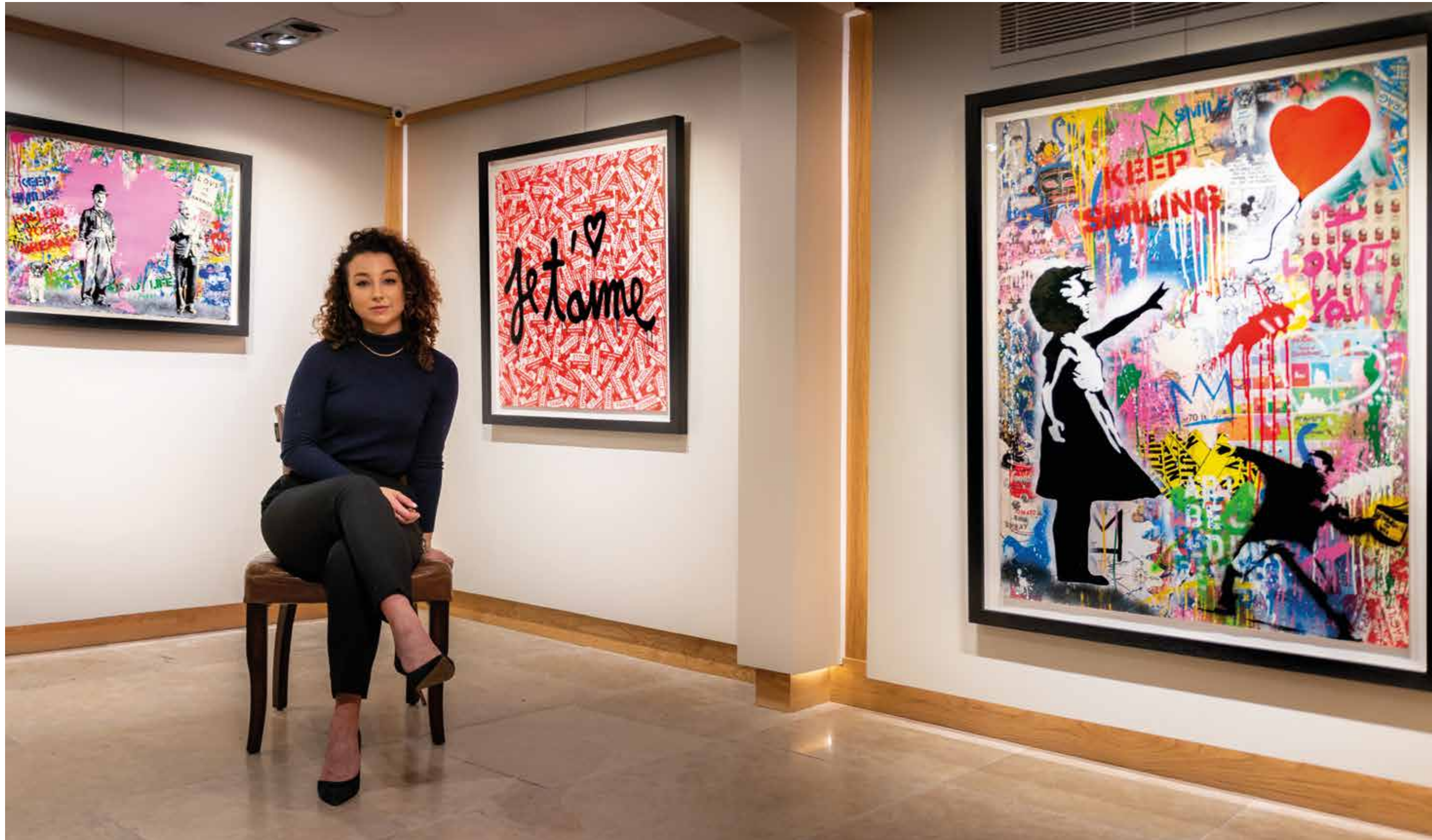
KEITH HARING

Art has featured since our very first issue, this time, in issue #18 we have a great selection, our expert in residence Chelsea Rouse of Clarendon Fine Art looks at Street Art, whilst one of our photographers Lara Platman gives us a sneak peak of her book 'Through the Night', we have work from Stephen 'Hilly' Hill and a fabulous collection of photographs from the legendary Terry O'Neill.

URBAN LEGEND

CHELSEA ROUSE EXAMINES THE WORLD OF STREET ART

WORD CHELSEA ROUSE IMAGE ALBI KURTI



A potential new artwork by England-based street artist Banksy has been discovered on the side of the former Reading Prison in Berkshire, none other than my hometown! It has not yet been confirmed by Banksy himself, but the piece depicts a man climbing down the jail's brick wall via tied bedsheets that form the paper in a typewriter. Many people believe that the piece could be Banksy shining a light on the historic value of the derelict prison and showing support for the campaign to transform the site, which has been sitting empty since 2014, into an arts complex. Something, for the record, I am also in great support of.

'Street Art' is inherently hard to define and difficult to categorize. To look at street art visually, sometimes it features graffiti, other times more image-based work, and often the former features alongside the latter. Some unifying elements include the use of stencils, stickers and/or allusions to and questioning of everyday visuals, iconography, and slogans. It may borrow heavily from branding, advertising, and pop culture aesthetics. However, there is the view that to authentically describe something as 'street art' it would require that the works be illegally done on the street or in public. And thus, artwork created in a studio can be described as 'street-art inspired' or 'graffiti style', but essentially fine art works. In this view, the 'street' in street art connotes more than just a lineage of graffiti, stencils, iconography, and image-making, but an anti-authority, anti-establishment ethos.

Conceptually anti-commercial, and yet it has evolved into an entity that can command formidable sums of money. In 2017, we saw Jean-Michel Basquiat – a near anonymous graffiti artist in the Eighties – posthumously command \$110.5m for a painting called Untitled. In 2018, at an auction in London, Banksy pulled one of the most audacious stunts in art history and shredded his own artwork Girl with Balloon as the hammer went down at £1.04m. In 2019 at Sotheby's in Hong Kong, we saw an auction record of \$14.7m set for the contemporary street artist KAWS, soaring past its estimate of \$760,000-\$1m. Later, that year, Banksy was expected to fetch between £1.5m and £2m for Devolved Parliament, and in a 13-minute bidding battle the hammer went down at £9.9m.



The increasing palatability for street art could in part be down to the saturation of media focus, like those incredible worldwide sales, or like a work of art appearing on an old prison overnight. The cloak of mystery and enigma of street art is in part uncovered by Banksy's 2010 documentary Exit Through the Gift Shop. In this film, we are given the opportunity to observe the intricacies and risks of what it is to be a street artist, and to follow the practice of Invader and Shepard Fairey. But the film's climax documents the birth of another notorious contemporary street artist: Mr Brainwash.

Mr Brainwash understands the intense marketing power of spectacle, and right off the bat created a sensation with his debut show Life is Beautiful in 2008. Although at the time he was a complete unknown, before the week was out his sales had reached almost \$1m, he was on the cover of LA Weekly and the original five-day exhibition had been extended to run for three months.

Clarendon Fine Art started working with Mr Brainwash only 3 months ago, and what a busy time it has been... The demand is astounding and consistent... we have been overloaded with enquiries pouring in through all channels of communication. The impact of big Mr Brainwash canvas' and neon works in our gallery windows throughout the time we have been unable to be open have continued to prove that nothing quite makes an instant and lasting impression like an iconic Mr Brainwash artwork.

The viewer is hit immediately with visual gratification and nostalgia. Mr Brainwash uses a myriad of pop culture imagery, graffiti, stencils, and stands on the shoulders of giants by appropriating art history from Warhol's soup can to Haring's dancing figures. Our collective memory comes alive when we stand in front of a Mr Brainwash, and upon absorption of these familiar icons, the resounding message comes through: 'Life is Beautiful' and 'Love is the Answer'. Simple, yes, but a worthwhile reminder. The direct experience of dealing with Mr Brainwash's artwork and his collectors has been nothing but uplifting.

The increased demand for street art combined with an upcoming feature-length documentary about Mr Brainwash is a clear indicator that he will continue his upward trajectory. So, with the market behind him and the message being one of positivity and joy in such a challenging time for many, why wouldn't we relish the opportunity for this artwork to highlight to us the beauty of life?

