



Bryan LeBoeuf (b. 1975)

Trois Bateaux

2004, Oil on linen, 66 x 96 in.



Christopher Forbes



Astrid Forbes

CHRISTOPHER AND ASTRID FORBES are based in New Jersey, where he (known all his life as “Kip”) is vice chairman of Forbes Media. Kip confirms that “collecting is a disease, an affliction I inherited from my father.” He says, “The symptoms are different for everyone, but the common denominator is that you can’t help it. Some say it’s unaffordable, but if you’re a real collector, you’ll find a way, whatever your means. Of all the vices one could have — gambling, drinking, mistresses — it’s a vice with residual values.”

This lighthearted take on collecting makes perfect sense in the context of Forbes’s remarkable family. His father was the renowned publisher Malcolm Forbes, and after excelling in art history at Princeton University, Kip was ideally suited not only to join the family business, but also to work closely with “Pop” to enhance their art collections and restore their properties in Normandy (the Chateau de Balleroy) and London (Old Battersea House). Now almost entirely dispersed, the Forbes Magazine Collection once encompassed a stunning group of Fabergé eggs and *objets de vertu*; fine and decorative arts, as well as memorabilia, related to military history; and diverse items celebrating the golden age of steamships. Kip Forbes made key contributions by acquiring British 19th-century paintings and sculpture when no one else wanted them (so successfully that his first exhibition of that material was mounted at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1975), as well as artworks illustrating the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and the French imperial couple, Napoléon III and Eugénie.

These various accomplishments underscore that Kip Forbes once preferred his artists, as he says with a wink, “safely dead.” Although Malcolm Forbes had long collected and commissioned living realists like Claudio Bravo, Kip credits Stephen M. Doherty (currently editor-in-chief of this magazine’s sister title, *PleinAir*) with first suggesting that Kip invite a group of gifted artists to paint at the family’s Trinchera ranch in Colorado. An initial success led to several more such stays, and also to comparable experiences at Balleroy and Old Battersea House. Forbes also credits Gregory

Hedberg (now at New York City’s Hirschl & Adler Galleries) for introducing him to the contemporary realism being made by students at the New York Academy of Art, Jacob Collins’s Water Street Atelier, and elsewhere. He is particularly proud to have offered Graydon Parrish one of his first commissions (illustrating a Fabergé book), and he went on to collect yet more talents recommended by Hedberg, including Alexander Creswell and Patricia Watwood.

Under Kip Forbes’s leadership, important temporary exhibitions were presented, free to the public, in the Forbes Magazine Galleries on Fifth Avenue from the 1980s right through this past year. Organized by curatorial staff members like Margaret Kelly Trombly and Bonnie Kirschstein, these shows examined a range of mid-20th-century realists collected by the Forbes family, including Paul Cadmus, John Koch, Edward Melcarth, and Walter Stuempfig. Many contemporary artists enjoyed showings there, too, among them Antonio Ciccone, Antonio Masi, Jan Martin McGuire, Ed Mell, Zvonimir Mihanović, John Moyers, Terri Kelly Moyers, Reeve Schley, and Curt Walters.

The familial aspect of the Forbes collection remains strong. Astrid Forbes particularly enjoys their Western landscape paintings by such masters as Mell and Walters, and the 80-something artist Nancy Craig, who first depicted Kip when he was 21, continues to paint portraits of the family today.

When he is not busy chairing the American Friends of the Louvre, which raises enormous sums for France’s greatest museum each year, Kip Forbes enjoys introducing his favorite contemporary artists to others who might collect or otherwise support them. In July, he will judge awards at the popular *Plein Air Easton* competition in Maryland, and this season he has loaned the painting by Bryan LeBoeuf illustrated here (he also owns two sketches for it) to the exhibition *Get Real: New American Painting* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Jacksonville, Florida (on view through January 4). This loan is particularly appropriate because LeBoeuf was part of a group who drew and painted at the Chateau de Balleroy a decade ago. And so the circle grows.