

More is More TONY DUQUETTE

BY HUTTON WILKINSON
FOREWORD BY JOHN GALLIANO



More is More TONY DUQUETTE

By Hutton Wilkinson

ABRAMS, New York

For my darling Ruth . . . because

ENDPAPERS "Asia Minor," a woven fabric designed
by Tony Duquette for Jim Thompson Thai Silk.

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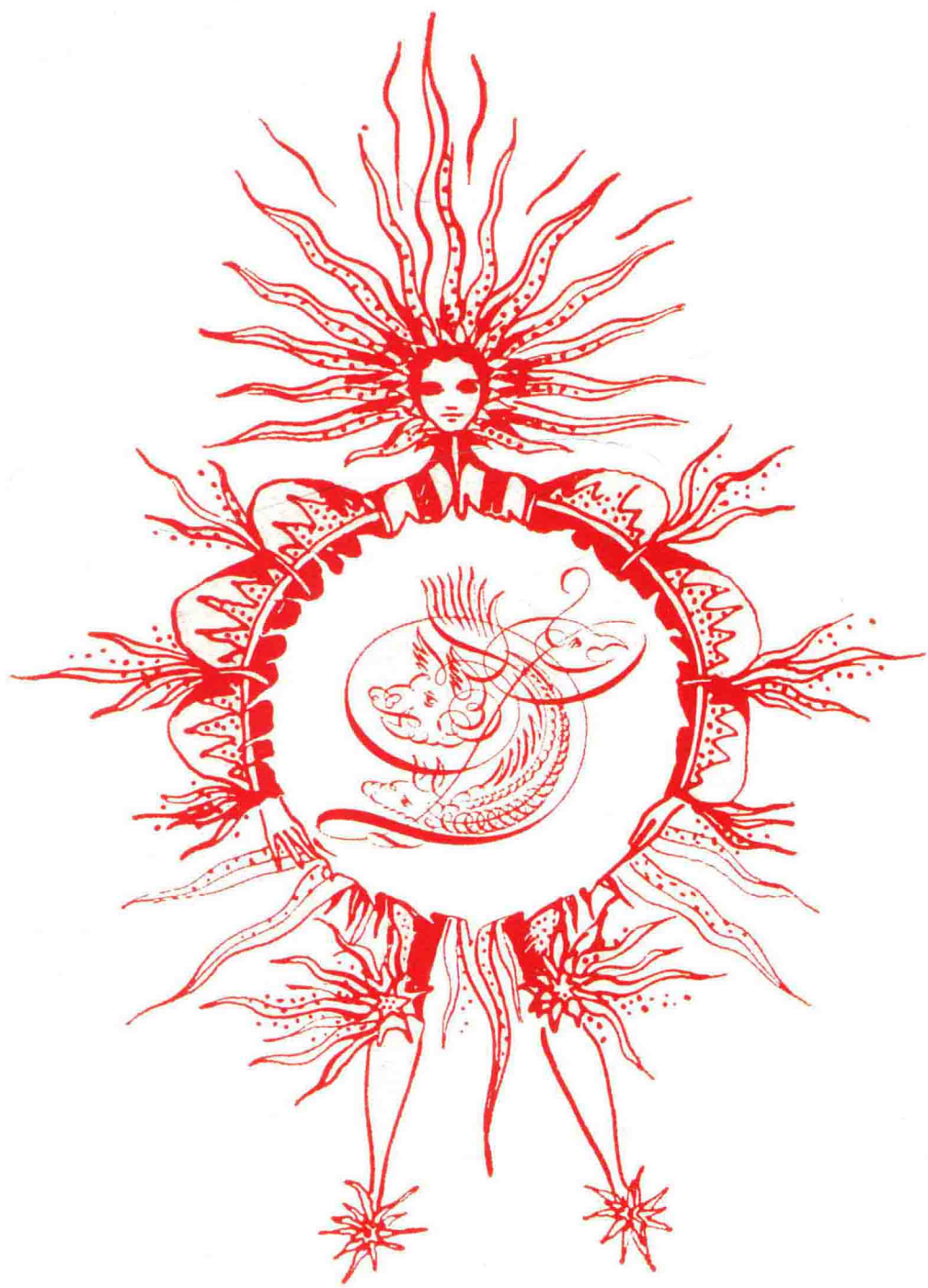
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FOREWORD

MORE IS MORE—what a way to live! Be as decadent as Duquette! Dress with excess, as much as to impress, and let Dawnridge be your Utopia!

If I could swap places with anyone for a day, it would be as the dashing Tony Duquette. We shared a mutual love of beauty and creating dreams. Tony Duquette had the eye, lived the dream, created the ultimate setting, and his legacy lives on. He mixed glamour with the glittering social scene like others would hang decorations on a Christmas tree. He applied these baubles of beauty to real life in his designs, and later his jewelry line, and made everything beautiful. If there was one invite I wouldn't turn down, it would have been to one of Mr. Duquette's legendary parties. Fantasy parties with fantastical guests—Marilyn Monroe, Marlon Brando, Cary Grant, Gary Copper, the who's who of the silver screen mingling within the sultan's pleasure palace—it sounds like Hollywood, Narnia, and Oz combined—bewitching, intoxicating, and utterly ahead of its time.

My dear friend Dodie Rosekrans arranged for us to visit his estate, Dawnridge, and I remember the experience well. We dined, explored every corner, and stayed up all night talking about him and his home, which was out of this world. Words and images don't do justice to the elements and inspiration of Duquetterry. If you ever get the chance, I urge you to make the trip to Dawnridge—I was enchanted. It was truly another world, and just the way I like to live!

Tony Duquette was the original Renaissance man—proof that you can have it and do it all. His life was a dream and everything in it was beautiful. He had the Midas touch—he was set designer, interior decorator, artist, jewelry designer, and costume designer. Thank goodness he didn't take on fashion design and left that for me to explore! Tony achieved so much in his lifetime that his name reverberates with as much

frisson and freshness today as it did when he was alive. It's hard to imagine he is not still here, still in Dawnridge. Whether you know him by his early work; his parties; his jewellery; or his collaborations with MGM, Garbo, or Arthur Freed, one flick through this book and you will be hooked. He and his wife, Beegle, were the real-life golden couple, the happily married version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* dream—it cannot fail to excite.

Tony Duquette was a man—and today a name—that will never cease to inspire. I am honored to be asked to write for this new book, as his work and legacy never cease to encourage me to take risks, to clash colors, to be brash and bold, and above all glamorous and beautiful. Diana Vreeland once said something that could be the perfect mantra for Mr. Duquette—or indeed for us to remember when thinking of him today:

“Never fear being vulgar, just boring.”

What she is saying, what Tony would do, was break the rules, mix things up, add spice and adventure and the unexpected, and dare to create something new. For me it means don't dress shrouded in black, don't live in a home without personality, character, or Technicolor.

Come on—let the spirit of Tony Duquette inspire you to live by “more is more!”

From my work at Galliano and Dior, I dream of my designs dining at Dawnridge with Gloria Swanson, Fred Astaire, and Mr. and Mrs. Duquette. I hope that you enjoy this book and the countless treasures between its pages.

Yours truly,
John Galliano





PREFACE

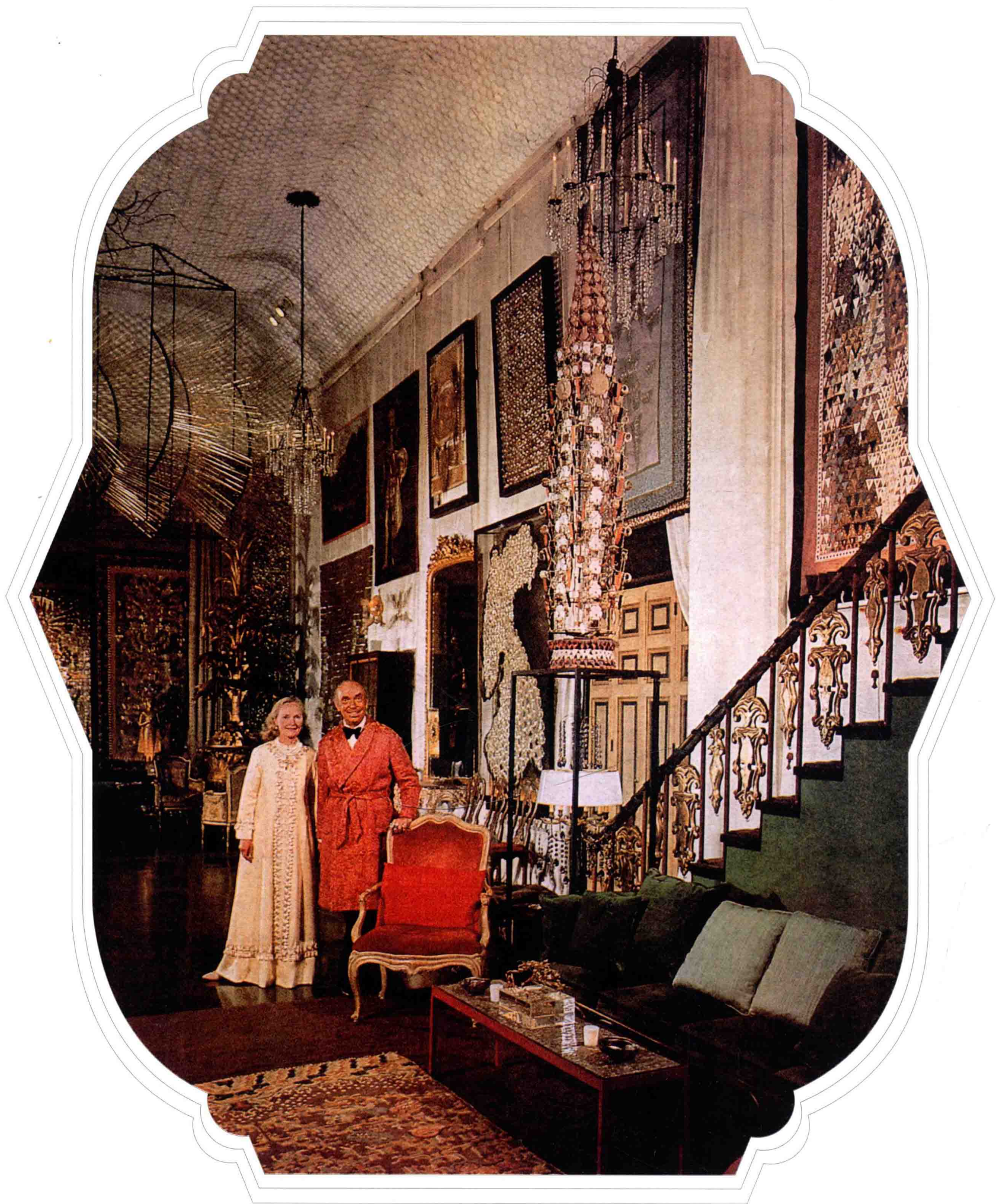
I STARTED WORKING WITH TONY DUQUETTE in 1971, when I was eighteen years old, as a volunteer assistant on his *Personal Culture* exhibition, which was to debut at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdall Art Park that November. Along with about 150 other volunteers, we glued and sewed and painted a myriad of one-of-a-kind objects, tapestries, framed assemblages, and other creations that Tony conjured up on a daily basis from his fertile imagination. Each day would bring a new surprise, and often the challenges seemed insurmountable, but somehow we pulled it all together just in time.

The exhibition opened to much acclaim, attracting several thousand people a day, all marveling at the glittering, glistening spectacle. The excitement caused by this remarkable exhibition both by word of mouth and in the press was so great that the University of California, Los Angeles, asked Tony to present his personal manifesto in three lectures, held on three consecutive nights in one of the theaters on the campus in Westwood, California. For those three nights at UCLA, Tony spoke to standing-room-only audiences, who hung on his every word, marveling at the images of his extraordinary works and inspirations that filled a giant screen behind him.

In this book, the sequel to *Tony Duquette*, which I coauthored with Wendy Goodman, I will explore Tony's writings, his works, and his inspirations, and I will give you my firsthand account of what it was like to work, play, and collaborate with this great American artist and his captivating wife, Elizabeth "Beegle" Duquette, over a twenty-eight-year period—from 1971 to his death, at the age of eighty-five, in 1999.

So now, with the anticipation of lighting candles before a festival, I invite you to step into Tony's imagination, that you may know and feel the excitement of entering another world.

Hutton Wilkinson
Los Angeles, California, 2008



The Enchanted Vision: Casting the Spell

From a three-day lecture series given by Tony Duquette at UCLA in the early 1970s

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THE ENCHANTED VISION—WHAT IS IT? Is it limited to a few, or is it everyone's birthright? Most human beings possess it, but not all to the same degree. Is there a set of rules to capture it? Is there a choreography that will give you steps into its secrets? How difficult is it to find the hidden key to its promise, to learn how to remain open and live to each tide of change and not be drowned in a frenzied clutching to known rules and beliefs?

In the early forties I was introduced to Salvador Dalí by my great friend, the California decorator Frances Elkins. My excitement was tremendous, and I offered to drive him around Los Angeles. I showed Dalí all my favorite places in the city, including the Watts Towers, Angels Flight, and the old Bradbury Building. I took him to lunch at the Good Fellows Grotto restaurant on Main Street, with its white-tiled walls and little curtained booths. There was a tragic dimension to our meeting, due to my lack of French and Dalí's quick, high-pitched, tap-dancing voice. With rapid movements of his hands, which would fly up and fall flat on the table, he was telling me about a decoration he was creating. Finally, through some words I grasped and the translations of Mrs. Elkins, I realized the idea: He was describing a room in which the carpet would be a field of wheat that would bend down as one walked through it, as real wheat does when blown by a gentle wind. The furniture on this wheat rug would be like groups of sleeping sheep, so you would sit at the enfolding feet and the head of a lovely, furry beast. In my childlike security and a belief in my total knowledge of the practical and impractical, the sane and the insane, I bit the lining of my mouth to stop the hysteria I was feeling from bursting forth.

Many, many years later, in New York in the 1960s, when I was working on a penthouse for Doris Duke, we went to a gallery showing the collection

RIGHT Tony wanted to possess this Argus bird, “the bird of a million eyes,” but was forced by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County to purchase all of their dead birds in order to obtain it. This gave him the opportunity to dress dozens of stuffed birds and give them away as gifts. In this piece, Tony liked to point out that the large “jeweled” bird was the male and that the small insignificant bird at the bottom of the vitrine was the female.

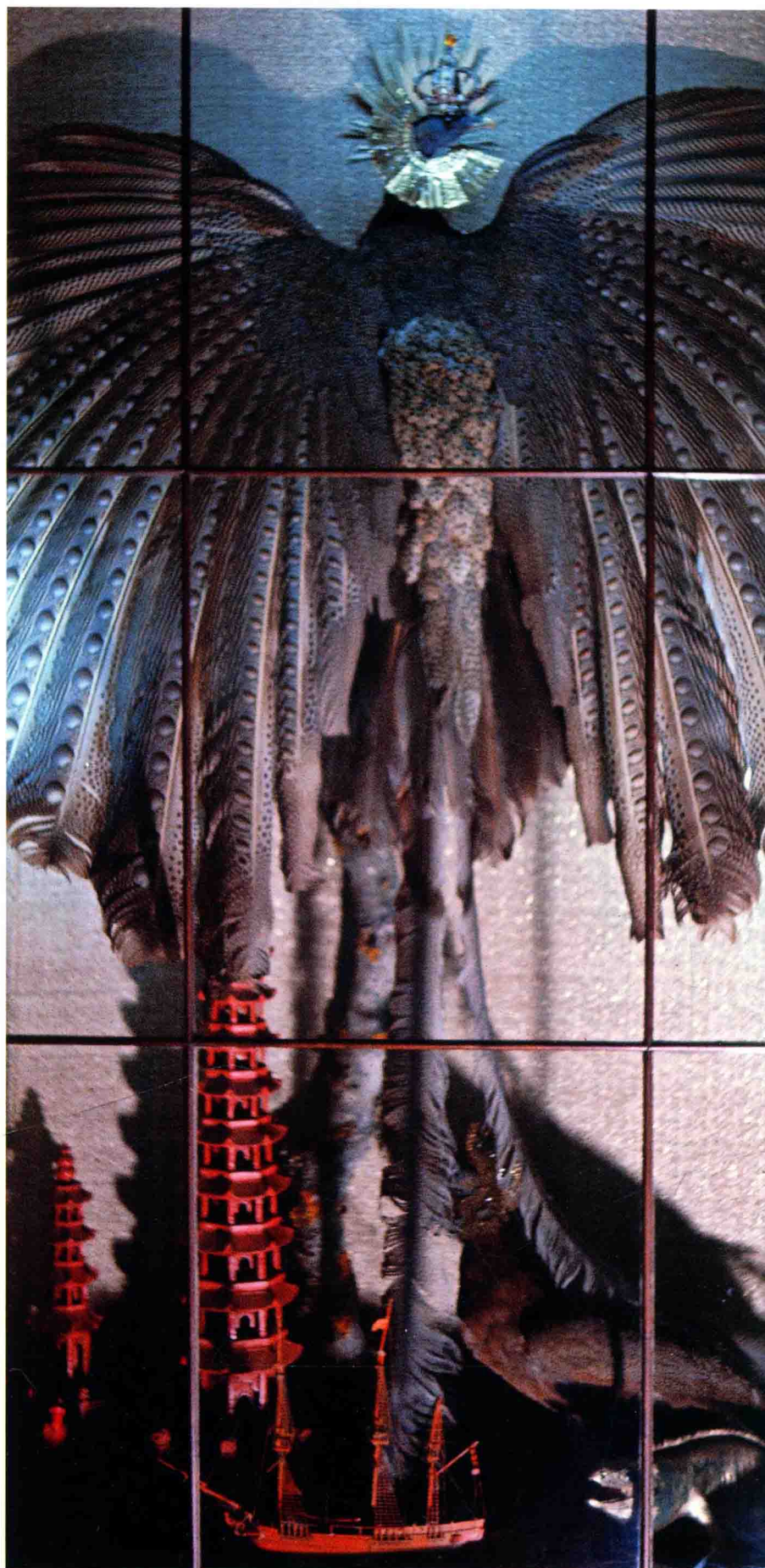
of the French husband-and-wife artist team François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne, better known as Les Lalannes. One of their most enchanting presentations was a flock of sheep to sit on. Going one better than Dalí, there was also a coiled snake that made a soft, enveloping bed. The exhibition also included a brass rhinoceros bar, an ostrich console table, and, best of all, a bidet in the form of a large bluebottle fly.

Illustrating the importance of casting the spell and the enchanted vision, there is the blue bowerbird, which I found in Robert Ardrey’s *The Territorial Imperative*—a bird that goes out and looks for anything it can find in the color blue and takes it back to its nest. This proves the importance of our primitive nature toward collecting and vision beyond the search for worms. I find that this bird is very recognizable to us all and easily translates into the limited collector, mad for Lowestoft and Lowestoft only, or Sandwich glass and Sandwich glass only. Although this counts as a beginning of vision and is beyond the vacuum cleaner and Mixmaster, it still is only a beginning.

I often think of birds as symbols for people, my favorite two being the gentle partridge and the rising phoenix. The partridge is a bird with an honest eye. One loves and respects the partridge. He is the person who likes natural wood, the smell of home-baked bread, Shaker simplicity, a field of green flax with little blue flowers winking out, or a Japanese house—pure, empty, open to the air—or a Bauhaus structure with a few classic Barcelona chairs, all white and sun-drenched. If this is your “bag,” if this is your vision, that is wonderful. Be a good, honest partridge, but try to be one of the ones in front, leading, so you aren’t limited and caught in the mindless flocks flying in thoughtless swirls.

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What is good and bad taste changes as the tide washes in and out. The critic and the curator may only be trained to play one piece, and though its moment may be lovely, it can lead you right over the cliff and into the sea with the poor lemmings that still can’t realize a continent they believed in has disappeared and it is now time to run the other way.



OPPOSITE A court of dressed birds by Tony Duquette, which he displayed in a mirrored cabinet made of abalone shell, pearls, and coral branches and placed in the dining room of the penthouse apartment he decorated at the Hilton Lagoon Apartments in Honolulu, Hawaii.