

COLLECTING RACING PHOTOGRAPHY

If you would like to collect racing automobilia and you want something that takes little room and you don't need to dust, photographs are the answer. The categories that are available to collect are as varied as the collectors themselves. You could for instance collect photos of your favorite driver or race car or team or even racing event such as Le Mans or the Miglia Mille. You can collect photos of various racing eras such as the 30s or specific categories such as board track racing or land speed record or Formula One. Or you can collect racing photography in general, all eras, all types, just photos that you find interesting or unusual.

Great racing photography can be hard to find on a retail level in the United States. While the internet has provided many new opportunities to purchase racing photography you should proceed with caution as there are some real junk peddlers out there too. It is also possible to contact many photographers directly through the internet but you need to have an idea of the photograph you are looking for as most photographers do not have a catalog to choose from. In the U. S. magazines tend to keep a large library of photos and rarely put them on the market. However in Europe the magazines do sell their photographs at times so that it is possible find them in swap meets there.

As in the photographic Art market itself, many collectors collect only vintage photographs meaning photos that were printed at or near the time that they were taken. Sometimes the age of a photograph is hard to prove so you need to familiarize yourself with the various types of photographic papers to be sure you are looking at a truly old photo. It also helps to know the original source of the photograph, tracing its ancestry if possible to confirm its age. This can be as easy as turning the photo over to read what is printed or stamped on the back. Most photographers stamp their name on all their photographs which would tell you that it is not a copy but from the original negative. Many magazines stamp both their name and the date they used the photograph which can also be a guide. Most vintage racing photographs range from 5 X 7 inches to 8 X 10 inches as those sizes were used by magazines, finding larger vintage photographs is very rare as they were expensive to make and could only be used for display purposes.

In this era of everything being sold in "limited editions" photographs are the ultimate limited edition as most photographers print only a very few of each image. The reason being that if they were to submit the same photograph to more than one magazine and the magazines found out about it their work would not be welcomed again. In other words, if you are looking at a real vintage photograph then it is completely possible that it is the only one in the world. At the very least you will rarely see it on someone else's wall.

Digital photography has come of age but many collectors shun it because of its poor reputation for both longevity and quality. The latest printing techniques are much better than they were just a very few years ago however you should always ask how any photo was printed just so you fully understand what you are buying.

While many great racing photographs can be purchased for far less than \$100 there are some photographs by name photographers that sell in the thousands of dollars so ultimately you are the judge of what you should pay. It all depends on your budget and your desires.

Many photography collectors keep their collection in binders or file folder but to really appreciate your collection you need to display them on a wall so that you can see them daily. Have you run out of wall space? Then rotate your photographs so that your display wall is always fresh and new. Metal frames are both cheap and easy to put together and they are better for the health of your photographs too as wooden frames put out a harmful gas as the wood deteriorates. When choosing a frame use a black or colored frame for color photographs only, if you use black frames on a black and white photograph the frame will detract from the black of the photograph. Instead for black and white photographs use a gun metal or pewter or silver frame for the best visual results. Sepia photographs are enhanced by using a walnut color or gold frame. If you want to rotate your photographs then those plastic box frames are both cheap and fast to change photographs in.

Finally, go slow, choose carefully, ask questions, deal with people that you can trust and buy what your heart tells you.

From "VINTAGE RACECAR MAGAZINE"
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