

Object of the week

Alison Jackson's photograph *Diana + Family* comes under the hammer this week. Colin Gleadell reports



Alison Jackson's *Diana + Family*

All artists dread the moment when their work appears at auction for the first time. Such a moment arrives on Thursday evening for the British artist Alison Jackson when her photograph *Diana + Family* comes under the hammer of auctioneer Cornette de Saint Cyr at the Drouot Montaigne sale room in Paris.

Jackson uses celebrity lookalikes to create imaginary events the paparazzi could only dream about – David Beckham wearing his wife's thong, the Blairs frolicking with Carole Caplin by a pool. The formula has turned Jackson herself into a media darling. This Wednesday, for instance, she will be signing copies of her latest book, *Private*, at Selfridges in Oxford Street as her Beckham lookalikes perform in the shop window. Over Christmas, [the BBC will broadcast one of her films](#).

But her name will always be linked to the first series of lookalike shots made while still an art student in 1999. [These showed a fictitious Princess Diana with Dodi Fayed and a dark-skinned child](#). Resembling a Snowdon family portrait with the dramatic lighting of a Caravaggio, they were savaged when first exhibited. "Tasteless and provocative exploitation," roared the *Evening Standard*. "Just a gimmick," sneered Michael Winner.

Jackson defended her position as an artist. "When Diana died, everyone was projecting all kinds of fantasies on her, asking voyeuristic questions - was she engaged, was she pregnant? My work is just one step further along the line. I'm interested in exploring where the truth ends and the lies begin."

Roughly 20in square, images of this size that originally cost £300 now sell for £2,000, through Jackson's dealer, Richard Salmon in Kensington. But the *Diana* and *Dodi* series has long since sold out, and would probably make much more at auction. However, unlike the images that were selected for exhibition and sold as limited edition prints, this example, estimated at 2,000- 2,500 euros, is unique. Jackson agreed to print the negative as a one-off for a French collector. The question is whether this one-off is considered as good as the works selected by the artist for exhibition.