



Bigger, Bolder, Bassa

Self-taught contemporary artist, **Bassa Aspinall's** larger-than-life take on pop art demands attention, and by all accounts is getting it in spades!

As the son of avid conservationist, the late John Aspinall, Bassa grew up with wildlife. No stranger is he to gorillas, tigers, bears, wolves, leopards or even rhino, all of which were protected in the family wildlife sanctuaries in Kent, England. The Aspinall name is also synonymous with the Aspinall Mayfair Casino, and here the young Bassa saw the rich and famous come and go. Today the subject matter of his work reflects these profound childhood influences; there is the luminous green and black prowling leopard and the wildly psychedelic portrait of a tiger; the acid chartreuse and black rendition of an invincible Muhammed Ali, a dark gold and titanium white celebration of an inimitable grinning Madiba, and an electric azure and white rendition of a brooding James

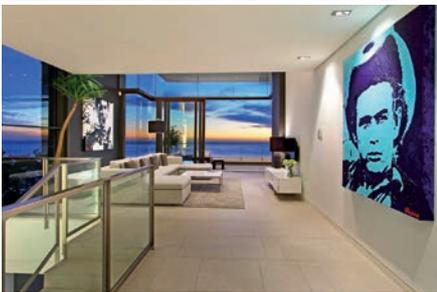
Dean, to name a few.

While neither the subject matter nor the genre is new, Bassa's treatment of the canvases is, arguably, singular. His signature technique combines bold colour-blocking and sensuous texture that captures a distinct flow and movement within each piece. By building layer upon layer of the finest Maimeri paints, imported from Italy, he creates an almost 3D perspective, giving each oeuvre a unique topography, and this, combined with the huge canvases he favours as well as the magnetism of the chosen subjects, cannot fail to engage the viewer - in fact, on the opening night of his debut exhibition in October this year, Bassa sold 13 paintings and received six commissions, two of which will, according to Bassa, be "gigantic." Given that his Kate Moss



VIEW HIS WORK AT **BASSA GALLERY**, 71 SHORTMARKET STREET.

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portrait (which fetched R100 000) is a towering three metres high, the imminent works will be nothing short of colossal.

Due to the growing demand for his work, Bassa, a venture capitalist with numerous business interests, is currently spending most of his time painting. "Painting was always a hobby, but the enthusiasm and ongoing encouragement from friends led me to believe that I'd be mad to do anything else, and then, six months ago, when a client of mine in Clifton sold 13 of my paintings, I took it as a signal that I should be continuing on this incredible journey," says Bassa.

Since he spends at least six weeks working on a single canvas, it would appear that the erstwhile hobby is indeed destined to become a full-time occupation. ■

