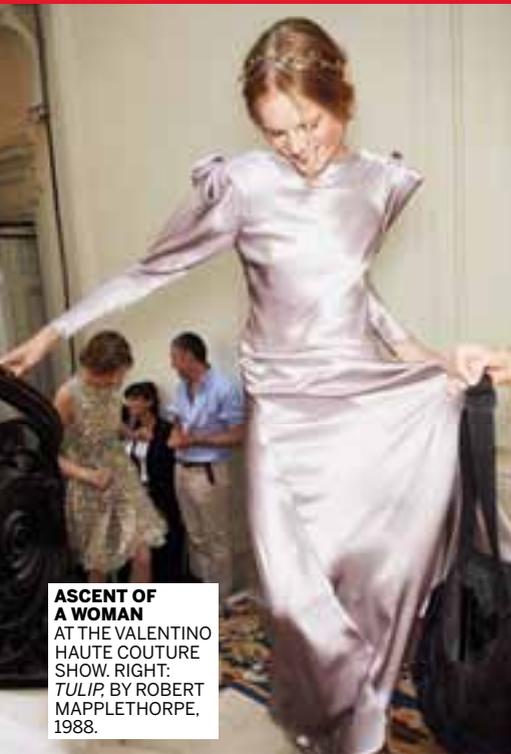


LIFE WITH **ANDRÉ**



ASCENT OF A WOMAN
AT THE VALENTINO HAUTE COUTURE SHOW. RIGHT: TULIP, BY ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE, 1988.

Scotsman **Charles Cameron**, who built Pavlovsk Palace for her son **Grand Duke Paul**), served as patron to great thinkers like **Denis Diderot** (his five-month visit to Catherine's court piqued the envy of **Voltaire**), and amassed works of art across Europe for the Hermitage. While she liked strong black coffee, her English greyhounds, French or Russian plays, and charades, she disliked cold formality—she forbade people to rise when she stood up. In a letter to a friend, she wrote, “You must be gay, only thus can life be endured. I have only been able to endure it because I have always laughed whenever I had the chance.”

The holiday wasn't all spent curled up with good books. I browsed beautifully

embroidered Tyrolean bolero jackets in deerskin at Jahn-Markl (est. 1408), the best shop for traditional Austrian and Bavarian dirndls and lederhosen, before viewing **Anselm Kiefer's** new exhibition, “Alkahest,” at **Thaddaeus Ropac's** Halle gallery. That week, the art dealer hosted dinners for up to 100 guests, served on plates with **Robert Mapplethorpe's** tulips from Ligne Blanche (ligneblancheparis.com), at his seventeenth-century **Fischer von Erlach**-designed villa, where rooms for houseguests **Vivienne Westwood** and **Andreas Kronthaler** and **Bianca Jagger** featured candles with the same tulips from the Paris-based porcelain shop.—**ANDRÉ LEON TALLEY**



marry the heir to the Russian throne, **Peter Ulrich**, the bride wore sumptuous silver brocade carpeted in brooches for her wedding. The seventeen-year-old groom was dressed in a suit of the same ornate cloth, covered in diamonds. The couple must have appeared like otherworldly beings with an aura of glittering light!

In fashion, she made her own rules. For one masked ball, Catherine wore a bodice and skirt of rough white cloth (instead of the expected stately brocades and ornately embroidered bodices), a white gauze ruff, an apron, and cuffs with an easy ponytail tied with a white ribbon, a rose tucked in. Her elegant simplicity was a sartorial victory. Catherine made a significant impact on Russian culture and style. She commissioned foreign architects (favorites included the Italian **Giacomo Quarenghi** and the

CACHET AND CARRY



ROYAL FLAP
HS DESIGN
SOPHIE
HABSBURG
CLUTCH.

AT A DINNER recently I was seated next to **Princess Sophie Windisch-Graetz**, who was born Archduchess Sophie von Habsburg of Austria, with an elegant water-snake envelope clutch of her own design. The Rome-based designer is no stranger to fashion—she modeled for Valentino Haute Couture at 20, and wore a dress from the house for her 1990 wedding to **Mariano Hugo**, a *gentiluomo* of the pope. The spring 2012 collection, including a woven-straw clutch with a lacelike hand-cut leather flap and a wonderful beige tote with black appliqués and water-snake straps, was inspired by “my beautiful riding boots from Seville and the art of cutting leather in southern Spain.”—**A.L.T.**