

New wine books solve problems for gift givers

As the "season to be jolly" descends on us again, it is time to think of the gift-giving problems we face.

Fortunately, there have been four soft-cover books and one hard-cover issued recently, any of which would be welcome stocking-stuffers for the wine aficionado at your house. (Three of the books would actually fit in a sock.)

Dominick Abels' "Guide to the Wines of the United States," Cornerstone Library, New York, 1979, is a sound general introduction to the topic. Well-written, the book has an advantage over the Signet wine book covering the same topic — it was published more recently. At \$2.95 it is a good value and can be found in several major book outlets in the area.

More recent and focused only on the California scene is another excellent book edited by Harold I. Silverman, "Pride of the Wineries." Considerable space is given to regional preferences and comparisons. The book even lists restaurants and wine stores by state.

But the most worthwhile section of the book is an extremely intelligent description of the major grape varieties, one of the best I have ever read. The book is available in a few wine stores or can be purchased for \$5.95 from the publisher: California Living Books at the San Francisco Examiner, Suite 223, Third and Market Streets, San Francisco, CA 94103.

VINTAGE IMAGE PRESS is in the process of updating its regional wine guides and last summer issued its most recent version of "Central Coast."

It covers the wineries south of San Francisco along the coast in a book considerably smaller than its 1977

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Kertesz: Definitely one of the best

By JACK ZUCKER

If a fan of art photography relies on the popular magazines, he may be in for jolts and shocks.

Take the case of Andre Kertesz, the Hungarian-born photographer whose work is displayed at the Halsted Gallery through Jan. 10.

In issue after issue of photography magazines articles feature Kertesz's most recent work, much of which tended to be dry, formal and experimental. There were Kertesz's mirror-distortion nudes and his snowscapes shot from his New York City window. Some of these had merit. But one could not understand why Kertesz was compared with world-class photographers.

But the Halsted Gallery exhibit removes the mystery. One can now see "Washington Square" (1954), perhaps Kertesz's most famous image, alongside the best of his European interiors, such as "Chez Mondrian" (Paris, 1926).

"Chez Mondrian" has none of the dry formality of "Washington Square." It is the master expression of a man working in a medium he has perfected.

At a reception early this month, Kertesz emphasized that he cared mainly about effect, not technique. He signed books graciously and spoke several minutes with anyone interested in his field. He told anecdotes of a past that included acquaintances with Paris luminaries and the great continental photographers.

If one looks closely at the finest Kertesz photographs, such as "Chez Mondrian" with its pitcher of flowers, delicately composed shadows and receding spiral banister, one is reminded of a cosmopolitan European tradition. No American could have created that photograph, though many have traveled to Paris with a camera, because we do not see the European way. Americans are both harder and more innocent, as Henry James kept reminding us in 1890. The work of Kertesz tells the same story differently.


In Kertesz 1930 portrait of Colette, the great French novelist, we have another example of his mastery of feeling.

The writer is pictured reclining on a bed and also leaning against a side table, which contains a vase with large flowers. We do not see the kind of "international" tone that portrays the rich and svelte in their most fashionable moments, but the everyday life of actual people who happen to write novels or create paintings.

ANOTHER SIMILAR image is the family portrait of the great Jewish painter, Marc Chagall. Chagall is in the right foreground, his hands on the table, close to a plate of fruit, his wife next to him, his daughter toward the left.

Kertesz's good work did not stop in 1936 when he emigrated to the United States. One of his most masterful photographs of the show is "In the Cellar" (Williamsburg, 1948). Though American in origin, it was at one in spirit and style with the great interiors Kertesz had done in Europe. It shows an old chaise in a dark, Virginia cellar, its lines at sharp angles to the lines of a tiled floor. The almost-darkness, the sense of ease and light melancholy is typical of Kertesz's best work.

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