

Meet the new Duke behind the camera

As well as founding Goodwood's Festival of Speed and turning the family pile into a booming empire, Charles March is a globally respected photographer. **Katie Law** takes a tour of his latest show

CHARLES March describes himself as a constant worrier. Whether it was getting the right angle for one of his seascape photographs or turning the 12,000-acre family estate at Goodwood into a successful business, "the worry is always there", he tells me earnestly. Otherwise known as the 11th Duke of Richmond – at 62 he has just inherited the title from his father, who died on September 1 – March begins by saying that he's worried about how we are going to weave these two entirely disparate strands of his life into a cohesive interview. "I don't want to appear to be a sort of tuff amateur photographer."

You can see where his concern might come from. We are sitting in a small dining room somewhere deep inside Alfred's, a private members' club in Mayfair, where he has been holding business meetings all afternoon and is

pouring Earl Grey tea from a white china teapot through a silver strainer into his teacup. Dressed in an impeccably cut navy suit, with his swept-back hair and retro-style oval glasses, he looks a bit like Hugh Grant.

But in fact, far from being an amateur he has been taking photographs for more than 50 years, worked for Stanley Kubrick on the 1975 film *Barry Lyndon*, done reportage for *Harpers and The Sunday Times* and had a successful 15-year career in advertising. His prints have sold well and collectors include the State Russian Museum. "So I must know something by now, and people I trust

'People say my pictures are very calm. I am not – and if I don't get a good result, I'm even less so'

and respect are positive about them too, so that's good," he smiles. "Well, positive-ish," he adds, tentatively.

March is from a family of high-achievers. His cousin Anthony Gordon Lennox, who died this week aged 48, was the communications expert who gave the Duchess of Cambridge voice coaching before her wedding. "We are deeply saddened by Ant's death," he says over the phone after we meet. "He was very dear to me and all the family and we will miss him hugely. He had a unique gift for connecting with people."

March's latest solo exhibition, which has just finished at Hamiltons Gallery in Mayfair, featured nine of his photographic seascapes (£5,000-£25,000 each) taken over four years on the Atlantic coast, off the island of Eleuthera in the Bahamas, where his wife, Janet (née Astor) owns a house.

He made himself get up at 5am when the light was better, printed all the

Snap happy: the Duke of Richmond pictured with one of his seascapes at London's Hamilton Gallery



DANIEL HAMBURY

pictures himself – some are huge – and would lose himself for hours at a time. "I must have taken 40,000 pictures originally. Completely mad! The trouble is I do this thing of moving the camera and shaking around. My children think I'm having a stroke." He looks amused when asked for a demonstration, then raises his arms in the air and moves his hands in parallel from left to right. "Because I try to keep the horizon sharp and straight. But then I might do this," he continues, making sudden rapid staccato jolts with his hands, "and then very interesting things can happen, because you never know what you're going to get."

Dreamy and beautifully serene, the results are more arty than photography, more abstract than representational, evocative and extremely easy on the eye. "People say they're very calm," he adds, raising an eyebrow. "But I'm not very calm, by the way. And if I don't get a good result, I'm even less calm. But if kept under control, anxiety can be a really good driver."

It's the same perfectionism that has driven him for the past 25 years to build Goodwood into the glamorous, internationally recognised brand that it has become today – Glorious Goodwood and The Festival of Speed are highlights of the social calendar – while scrupulously retaining its quintessentially English pedigree. "The challenge is always to create a sustainable business that feels relevant in the modern world but is also authentic to the place."

In addition to the racing horses and cars, there is golf, flying, shooting and cricket, corporate hospitality, a hotel, a restaurant and an organic farm and

shop. The business has an annual turnover of more than £90million, 700 employees and more than 800,000 visitors a year – a far cry from the days of dry rot and dust sheets when his parents moved into the 18th-century house in the late Sixties. "There was no money then. All these places were falling down, but they decided to take it on and my father did a lot with the horse racing," says March. "He worked incredibly hard, 18 hours a day and it became the focus of his life."

THEN, in 1994, as is the custom with the male heirs, March took over the estate management, and shortly before his 40th birthday moved with his family from London into the main house. "The incredible thing is that my father was happy just to walk away from it, and when I had all these ideas for mad car stuff, he was so supportive. He never said, 'Why are we spending money on it?', it was always, 'Let's give it a go'. That's such a good example of how to hand the whole thing on, and I only hope I can be as good."

When the time comes – his eldest son and heir, Charlie, is still only 22 – March pipes up that he'd like to go and live in a modern house. "I'd love to build one on the estate." What, like something John Pawson might design? "Yup, exactly. I'd

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love to. A triple-glazed glass siver. If I can make enough loot!"

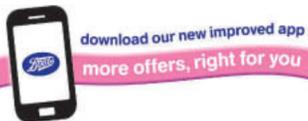
Thankfully, he and Janet, who is a therapist and painter, have fully recovered from the traumatic burglary in January 2016, when she was tied up and he was knocked unconscious. The thief made off with £700,000-worth of jewellery, including a ring that Charles II gave to his mistress, Louise de Kérouaille – whose son, Charles Lennox, became the 1st Duke of Richmond. None of the jewellery "not even a sniff" has been found. Still, he says, "it hasn't changed our view about inviting people in, although we've had to invest a lot in new security".

He's still out and about most days, meeting Chinese tourists, art lovers, enthused petrolheads or his sponsors, who include Cartier and the Qatari royal family. He's concerned about Brexit. "It's absolutely dreadful and going to affect us all. We've got sponsors, global partners and the car industry, all of which need to feel stable. And we need people at Goodwood to come and spend money. Why we keep having a go at the bankers, I don't know. They've brought a massive amount to this country. Without the City, London would be nothing."

In the meantime he needs time to prepare for a new exhibition, "a kind of retrospective" next May at the Borghese Palace in Rome. "That sounds very grand but they're a mix of pictures I've done before and some new ones taken in Jura, of things that may be quite ordinary, not necessarily grand or glorious. Some might even be of a twig."

Charles March's seascape photographs are available at Hamiltons Gallery (hamiltonsgallery.com)

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