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ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH

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ART & ALI

\$3,000 BOOK, TO BE LAUNCHED SATURDAY, IS THE ULTIMATE TRIBUTE TO 'GREATEST OF ALL TIME'

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You wouldn't call it just a book any more than you would call Muhammad Ali just a boxer. A larger-than-life subject requires a larger-than-life biography. And so, introducing, in this corner, weighing 75 pounds, filling 800 pages and costing \$3,000, the heavy-weight of tomes, *GOAT* (Greatest of All Time).

The brainchild of German publisher Benedikt Taschen, *GOAT* will make its U.S. debut at Art Basel on Saturday night when the champ himself and members of his famous entourage will be in attendance at a private gathering inside the Miami Beach Convention Center. Taschen is planning to recreate a semblance of the scene when Cassius Clay took the title from Sonny Liston on Feb. 25, 1964, complete with a boxing ring and a master of ceremonies — in this case, actor Will Smith, who portrayed Ali in a feature film.

Guests can get a look at the 20-inch-by-20-inch collector's item and order it — if they can afford it. Only 10,000 copies, all signed by Ali and American artist Jeff Koons, are being printed. The first 1,000, which include a sculpture by Koons and four photographs by How-

MUHAMMAD ALI | FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Collector's book to be launched at Art Basel

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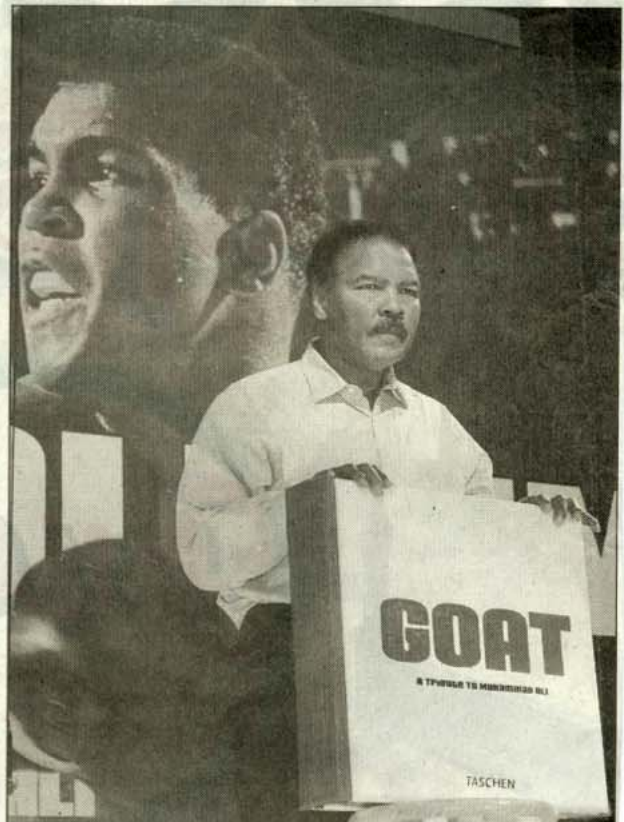
ard Bingham, cost \$7,500. Each. The remaining 9,000 cost \$3,000.

The book is bound by the official bindery for the Vatican in pink leather, the color of Ali's first Cadillac. Each copy comes in a silk-covered box illustrated with Neil Leifer's classic photo, "Ali vs. Williams," from Ali's 1966 third-round knockout of Cleveland Williams.

The idea behind the project was to create the ultimate tribute to Ali, even after countless words, pictures, broadcasts and films have been produced on the man whose name and image resonate throughout the world.

"He is the most recognizable living icon on the planet," said Ali's manager, Bernie Yuman. "In 250 years, this book will be the reference to who he was and what he meant to our civilization. It will be passed down through generations. Obviously you're not going to carry it around, but you can ask people over to your home and they can turn the pages and be in awe."

What does Ali think of it? "When we first showed him the finished product, and he closed the back cover, he said, 'Man, I never knew I was so great,'" Yuman said.



FRANK AUGSTEIN/AP

BIGGER THAN LIFE: Muhammad Ali displays the volume on his life at the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany.