

THE ASSOCIATION FOR HISTORICAL AND FINE ART
PHOTOGRAPHY



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JOURNAL

Number 14
December 2001



JOURNAL

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From the Chairman

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Photographic Manager

Formed in 1985

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Journal sponsors
Max Communications

Printed by
PRINTSURE
Unit 15,
New Lydenburg Street,
London,
SE7 8NF
020 8293 4486

ISSN 1355-0233

MANY NEW WEBSITES which show the content of museums to an ever wider audience have been launched recently. Those with the capacity to search for objects on their site rely heavily on the use of images to provide this. Compass at the British Museum and the Tate site are examples. As these collections become available over the Web the rôle of the image-maker and manager becomes ever more important to cultural institutions. Who then is the interpreter of the collection, the curator or the image-maker? Of course it is both, one cannot exist without the other, but the traditional curatorial view of being the only interpreter of the object is now in question. It may soon be the case that more people see museum collections in a virtual way than ever see the real object. If this becomes common then what becomes the primary source for most viewers in many cases will be the image.

However, a search of museum websites shows that the images present on them are usually characteristic of standard exhibition catalogues. The images are competent, indeed excellent, but there is little evidence of photographic creativity. Compass, for example, has, it seems, a deliberate policy of cropping all its images to remove individuality. Where are the websites which show the best of creative museum photography? The only site I have been able to find which attempts to speak solely for the museum photographer is at the pages of the Offices of Imaging, Printing and Photographic Services at the Smithsonian Institute. The director of the department obviously believes that his staff should have a voice independent of the institution and has provided a space where their work can be seen away from the context of the collections. See <http://photo2.si.edu>.

One of the few UK examples where the image-maker has become the leader of a virtual exhibition can be seen on the SCAN website—www.scan.org.northbywestmicro/index.html. This exhibition by Members Lynne Patrick and Chris Hogg, of the National Railway

Museum at York, was compiled and financed entirely by their own efforts. It shows work which they have made over the last few years on Scottish Railways.

Such a dearth of opportunities for cultural heritage photographers to show their work on its own merits explains why our association must have its own website. If our parent institutions are only interested in object content it is incumbent on us to stress image content.

James Stevenson **AFA**

SCREEN SAVER

ONCE AGAIN we are indebted to David Cordery and Terry Friend at Max Communications for underwriting our colour printing and their patience with the editor.

This issue differs from the last two in that we have been able to include a generous selection of a member's work, work which may not be typical of his daily routine but which, in the opinion of the editorial board, merits a wider audience. It may be familiar to some of you, having been on view both at the York conference and at the Victoria & Albert Museum in October. Our association does, if nothing else, provide a showcase for work of which we are justly proud and, at our conferences, a forum for the exchange of ideas and the proliferation of our business.

We normally have exhibition space available at our conferences which is open to members and, if the offer is not taken up, to non-members and anyone who is keen to show their work. This year, for example, we have space at our conference at the National Maritime Museum. Anyone interested should contact a member of the committee. There will also be opportunities to exhibit on a more regular and global basis on our website which, it is intended, will have a permanent section devoted to a turnover of portfolio work.

Public space of a different sort is what interests Louis Sheldon-Williams, who addressed our last conference on Hand-Painted Advertising in the Streets, and asks members to keep an eye open and contact him on any sightings at 122 Mortlake Road, Surrey TW9 4AR, 020 8286 9873.

Colin Maitland

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On the cover: The front cover shows an uninterpolated detail of Fruit and Flowers in a Terracotta Vase by Jan van Os (1744-1808), captured using the MARC (Methodology for Art Reproduction in Colour) digital imaging system at the National Gallery. For more information on the MARC system email colin.white@ng-london.co.uk or write to Colin White, The Photographic Department, The National Gallery, London WC2N 5DN

Imaging at the RAF Museum

Andy Renwick, of the RAF Museum at Hendon, brings us up to date

THE IMAGING PROJECT of the RAF Museum has had three distinct phases, a planning stage to work out what we wanted to achieve; a Pilot Project to see if our plans worked and the Main Project where imaging is undertaken for collections where a need has been identified.

This presentation outlines the work undertaken to meet the aims of the project and the way it is being done.

Planning

In the early 1990s it was decided that the multitude of manual indexing systems needed to be replaced. A computerised collections management system (or CMS) would achieve this. In addition it was decided to include images of all relevant objects right from the start. These include objects on display or in store and two-dimensional items such as the photograph and art collections, and some parts of the Archives collections.

While the procurement of the CMS was taking place the imaging project was established. It was expected that digital imaging would start before a database was selected and thus a library of images would build up to populate it. I joined the project in 1996 and faced an interesting conundrum—we did not know which system would be using the images and how it would cope.

Curators were initially consulted to identify which collections should be imaged and in what form. Some curators thought image-files only 100 pixels high would be sufficient. Others wanted to be able to see brushstrokes in paintings. Most, however, wanted a digital image of sufficient quality that it would not be necessary to use the original objects—be they documents, photographs, sculpture, etc.

The aircraft department wanted a plan view of the aircraft. This is impossible at Hendon without taking the roof off the museum and so we tried to ignore that request.

At the same time imaging trials were carried out. We used a variety of images to identify a suitable

standard for the image-files which would be platform-independent.

With the information from curators and the results of the trials we were able to start formulating our plans.

Aims of the Project

The aims of the Imaging Project were easy to identify: 1, that each object record in the database should, where practical, have a digital image, 2, that the digital image should make it possible to recognise the object and, 3, the digital image-files should meet the appointed specification.

These aims meant that we would not be cherry-picking the best objects or producing high-end imagery suitable for publication. The images would be tailored for the CMS only and geared to rapid transmission around our intranet. Another limiting factor was that there would be little money available for additional staff—most of the work would be undertaken by curators.

Pilot project

It was decided to use the Fine Art Collection as a pilot project. This is a collection of about 6,000 paintings and prints, posters and sculptures and other 3-dimensional objects, even a gravestone. We were fortunate to obtain assistance from the Ministry of Defence for this.

The MoD had photographed many works in 1980 onto medium-format film. The policy of expanding this image library was adopted. Improvements in film stock, however, meant that they were able to photograph the works on 35mm Provia.

The number of objects and range of sizes restricted us—we could not ship the whole collection down to central London. As a result all the photography had to be done at Hendon. The lack of a proper studio meant we often had to improvise and the policy adopted—a slide of every object—meant we could not use a scanner for smaller objects.

The transparencies, both existing and newly

produced, were scanned by the MoD as 5Mb files, compressed and supplied to us on CD-ROM as 1Mb JPEG files. This was not ideal but reduced the stock of CDs while still producing acceptable results.

Digital photography would have been difficult at this time. Cameras were either cheap and unsuitable for the task or too expensive and would require trained operators and a studio environment. The limited funding available and the lack of a studio prevented us from pursuing digital photography at this stage but we kept our eyes open to see what developments were being made.

It was realised that there would come a point when more important tasks prevented the MoD from finishing the work on time. Photographic and computer equipment was purchased to enable Museum staff to continue the project to the same standard. In the event we were proved correct and finished the project in-house. Since then practically all the imaging project has been undertaken in-house.

The bulk of the imaging of the Fine Art Collection had been completed by the time *Collection* was acquired from Vernon Systems to be the Collections Management System.

The large JPEGs were reduced to a height of 400 pixels with the width in proportion. This assumed a user screen of 480x640 pixels and millions of colours. It turned out that 600x800 displays were the norm and so the specification changed. It is difficult, however, to spot the smaller images. The imaging was to some extent the easy part—what really took the time was capturing the text from manual records and linking it to the images.

Imaging other collections

As work on the Fine Art Collection drew to a close attention was turned to other collections. One where imaging was considered necessary was the objects on display. The air diagram collection is similar to the Art Collection. It is a series of educational and technical posters produced by the Air Ministry. For a long time the inventory and digital imaging of the photograph collection tended to be at the far end of the Gantt Chart with a question mark against it. This chart was used for planning the project, identifying tasks against time.

Both the Aircraft & Exhibits and Air Diagram collections had been partially photographed already—as had been the case with the Art Collection. Examination of the images, however, proved them to be inadequate; composition was poor and in many cases there was a noticeable colour cast, due either to poor control of lighting at the time of taking or poor storage. We felt it would be a waste of time picking through to find usable prints, slides or negatives and decided to re-photograph the lot onto slide film. Changes in 1999, however, brought the Photograph Collection to the fore and gave us a cheaper way to image other collections.

The Photograph Collection is a varied one of about 250,000 images and one which the Museum wanted to promote to a wider audience. Photo sales generate income for the Museum.

The majority of it is monochrome 20th-century imagery. There are some 19th-century prints such as those of the Royal Engineers from the 1890s. Only occasionally do we have colour images, such as an Autochrome of RFC NCOs in 1917 and, of course, in the Charles Brown Collection which I showed at the conference in 1997.

Monochrome photographs enable us to use 8-bit greyscale instead of 24-bit colour. This allows us 3 times as many pixels for an image-file of the same size—useful when identifying very similar images. Many of the objects are on large-format negatives and so a suitable scanner was acquired which would allow us to scan up to A4 without the need and expense of having to print them.

With a collection of an estimated 250,000 images the decision was taken not to save high resolution scans. Even the first stage, the earliest accessioned photographs, would need 40,000 images—200Gb of 5Mb image files. Again we have to keep the aims in mind—an image of everything so that we can recognise the object—nothing more, nothing less. We also work on the KISS* principle—in most cases we are using curators—they may be literate but not necessarily visually literate. We try to avoid letting them do too much manipulation of digital image-files.

Acquisition by photography

A big change in 1999 was the acquisition of a digital

*'Keep It Simple, Stupid', acronym spelled out requested by Editor

camera. Megapixel chips started appearing in low-priced digital cameras—cameras which would also work with studio flash lighting. This gave us the flexibility required for 90% of tasks, maintain the standard of CMS images and all at a cost less than that of the slide film for the same task.

Summary

I just have a few things to say in summary. The imaging project and the large number of objects involved has taught us a number of lessons:

- 1, complete your planning before you start so that there should be no surprises;
- 2, don't change course part way through—you can never go back and bring things to a common standard;
- 3, make sure equipment is suitable for the task;
- 4, learn from others—don't re-invent the wheel. If others have already started imaging projects find out what they do and what they have learnt which is relevant to you. And,
- 5, assume it will take twice as long as you plan.

Since the beginning of the project we have created over 28,000 images. In January we started imaging the photograph collection and have scanned 7,429 photographs. Over half have had the information linked to them from the registers. It is expected that the first part of the scanning will be completed by 2003. Even when that is finished, however, there is still a long way to go.

The way forward

Much is still to be done. We have to complete the photograph collection, continue the digital imaging of new acquisitions—a never-ending task—begin the scanning of objects identified in the Archive collections as being suitable—those which are valuable, or at risk from handling and begin the 3-D objects in store at RAF Stafford.

Future developments

These are aimed at increasing access to the collections and include high-resolution imagery on demand for commercial users, on-line access to the collections, both of which are scheduled for spring of next year. This should lead to on-line sales of images from the collections.

I now wish to leave you with some apt words from one of the Museum's posters: 'We shall not flag or fail, we shall go on to the end.' **AHFA**

Air Diagram and Gallery Imaging Projects

Lee Hibberd, *Imaging Officer*

Paper co-presented with Andrew Renwick to the AHFA conference at the V&A Museum, September 2000. Lee Hibberd is the Imaging Assistant on the Tate Insight Project based at Tate Britain. See <http://www.tate.org.uk/collections/insight.htm> for more information.

As the Imaging Officer in the Department of Collections Management I am responsible for imaging the museum's collections as part of a coherent digitisation project, with the images primarily intended for the Collections Management System, *Collection*. For my part of the presentation I am going to review the imaging of two specific collections or sub-projects: The Air Diagrams Project, and The Gallery Imaging Project concentrating on the practical aspects of each, the resources available to the museum, and some of the problems we encountered and solutions devised.

Criteria for images

There are currently over 30,000 images accessible through the Collections database, and all of these adhere to strict criteria defined at the start of the museum's digitisation project. Each image has to enable identification of the subject, be representative of that piece, have a file size of less than 180kb to minimise network storage and access time, and be 600 pixels high if coloured or 1800 pixels if monochrome. All the collections we have captured adhere to these criteria and, although they are intended for the *Collection* CMS, some of these images have been utilised in Powerpoint presentations (and all the

images used in this presentation meet the criteria), printed leaflets, fanzines and, in the future, these will be made available on the Web.

Resources

What resources can we utilise to help complete the imaging of these two collections, bearing in mind our goals, criteria and our smaller budget, compared with other nationals? The RAF Museum has a Kodak DC265 & DC290 which use the Compact Flash storage medium, a Bowens 500 Esprit lighting kit

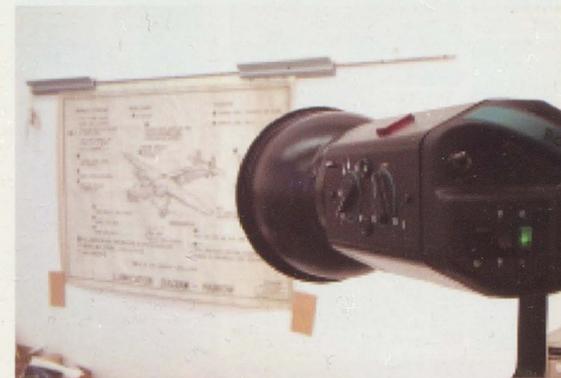


Fig 1 A Bowens 500 Esprit flash-head trained on an Air Diagram. © RAF Museum

and, in the absence of a permanent facility, we have a mobile studio consisting of rolls of backdrop, collapsible tables and reels of electrical extensions. Most importantly, we have an imaging team formed from a pool of two other photographers, DCM staff and curators, with their invaluable knowledge of the collections, and me. As well as this balance of expertise, every one of the imaging team is trained to use Adobe Photoshop 5.5 to process all the images to the strict standards I have already mentioned.

The Air Diagrams Project

We have over 10,000 air diagrams in the collection which are essentially instructional and educational posters for RAF personnel. Topics include: How to survive in the jungle should your plane go down; how to strap a lifeboat onto your plane; wiring diagrams; and wiring diagrams, and yes...more wiring diagrams. In fact 50% of the collection consists of wiring diagrams. All require imaging. As a whole the collection comes in a variety of sizes, and as you can see, colours. From a practical stand-

point they are easy to image. They are 2-dimensional, made of sturdy paper, lightweight, easy to handle, and have minimal glare and reflectivity. The only real problem we encountered was the lack of detail and contrast on many of the air diagrams which defeated the autofocus on the Kodak cameras. With no manual focusing rings we worked around the problem by using the cameras' fixed focus facility. So, over all, this project was straightforward, required just a single photographer and someone to process the images and a strong will to battle through the numbers.

The Gallery Imaging Project

Far more challenging was the Gallery Imaging Project which we have just completed. There are almost 5,000 items on display at Hendon, but these form just the tip of the iceberg, since there are around 40,000 items in the collection museum-wide, mostly at our Reserve Collection in Stafford, and some at our sister museum in Cosford. One of my greatest surprises while working at the RAF Museum is the sheer variety of objects in our collections. We have old biplanes, modern passenger planes and highly reflective silver trophies cast as planes. We have uniforms from the RAF and the Luftwaffe which are behind glass, small and large instruments in inaccessible interiors of aircraft, very small medals and badges, old cameras, and yes, we even have air diagrams. This wide variety of objects in very diverse environments (all of which remained open to the public) required a flexible and mobile approach. Furthermore, for the security of the collection and to reduce handling risks we worked as close to the displays as possible, and in many cases we had no option but to photograph items *in situ*. Not surprisingly, we faced many difficulties but, equally, found many satisfactory solutions.

Difficulties and solutions Shooting extreme sizes

The collection has extremes of size and we have just one digital camera with a single zoom lens. With large items such as the museum's Thor missile we had to draw upon the ambient lighting, and shoot it from an angle that would minimise hotspots while providing that representative view of the subject.

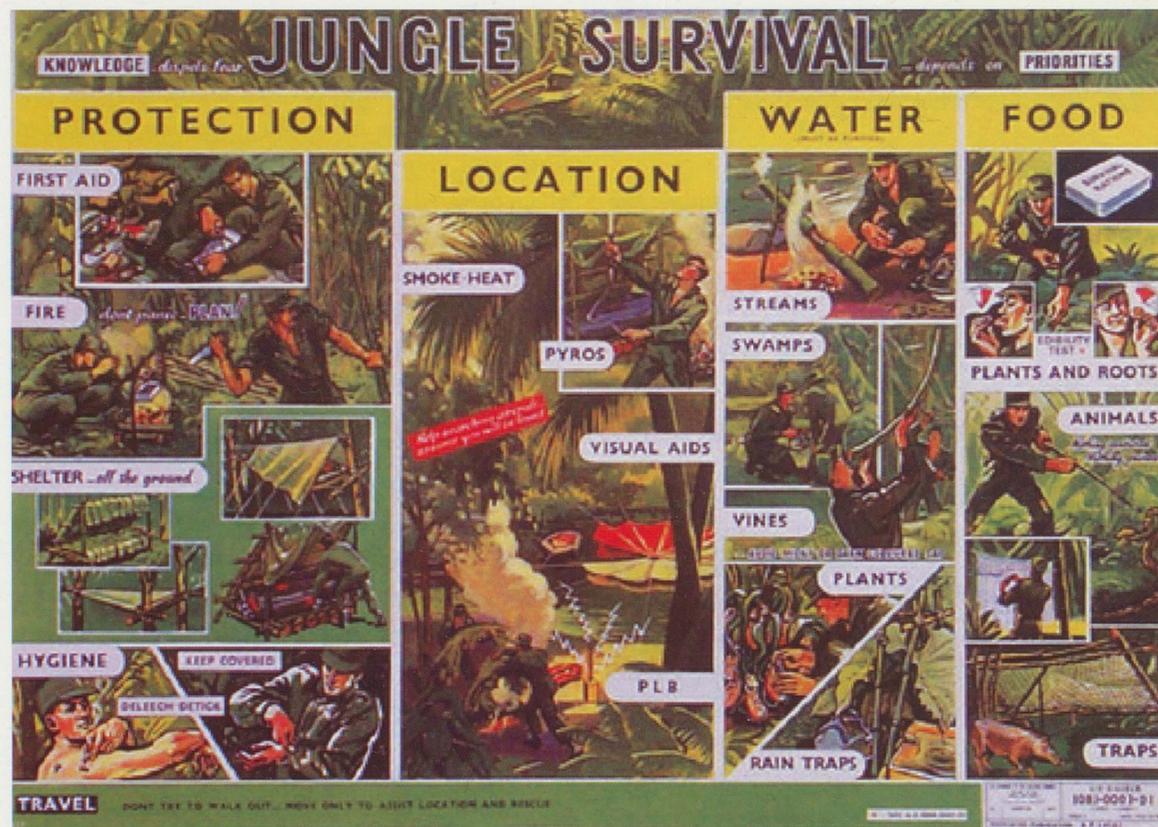


Fig 2 One of the more colourful Air Diagrams in the collection.
© RAF Museum

Fortunately the Kodak camera has a good selection of white-balance options to match the tungsten, fluorescent, and natural lighting that prevailed. For the very small items, we used the camera's Ultra Resolution setting which outputs an image of 1,500 pixels high, and came in as close as the focus would allow. We could then crop away most of the image to concentrate on the subject without dropping below the all-important 600 pixel-high optimum.

Shooting objects behind glass

Many of the items on display had to remain *in situ* behind glass and were sometimes obscured by overpowering reflections from the lighting elsewhere in the museum. To overcome this problem I stitched pieces of black cloth to form a 3x4m sheet. With the help of a couple of extras this was held up and used as an interceptor between the glass and the reflected sources of light. With the flash-heads either side, the camera took an image through a peephole in the cloth with vastly improved results.

Shooting reflective objects

Some objects had highly reflective surfaces, and these were placed within a translucent white 'tent' allowing the flashlight through, but reflecting only the white of the surrounding material. Again the camera took the shots through a peephole with fantastic results.

Limited access

Other items in the galleries were hidden in the nooks and crannies of aircraft where a set of lights could not go. In these instances we took full advantage of the portability of the Kodak DC290 and used battery power and the onboard flash to capture some of these instruments.

Controversial manipulation

Many people see digital 'manipulation' and 'beautification' of images of items in a collection as something to avoid. In many instances I would agree, but I would also like to provide three examples

where digital manipulation has been extremely beneficial during the project.

Sometimes your eyes can capture an image which cannot be replicated by a camera in a single shot. An excellent example of this can be illustrated by the following bombsight. With flash photography you can see how it is mounted into the interior floor of the plane, but you cannot clearly see any markings in the glass. On a long exposure you can see the transparent nature of the glass and the etched crosshairs. By combining these two shots in Photoshop I was able to produce a composite image which tells you more about the bombsight than either of the other images on their own.

Secondly, I used the same compositing technique to image a propeller partly obscured by a caption board which couldn't be completely removed from its display case. One image was taken with the caption board moved to one side of the display case, and a second with the caption board on the other side. The unobscured halves of the propeller in each image were then glued together in Photoshop. By using this technique we saved time and money by avoiding dismantling the display case or reproducing the caption board.

Finally, spots of light reflected in glass display cases can sometimes seem like part of the item they house. This is because you do not have the freedom to alter your perspective when staring at a 2-dimensional image on a computer screen, as you do when looking at the item in person. On these occasions misleading spots of light were cloned out of the image.

The debrief

I have learned a great deal while working on these projects, and not just about photographic techniques, but about the collections themselves through first-hand intimate experience and through the knowledge of the curatorial staff on the imaging team. As a cross-departmental project it has given everyone an insight into each other's roles at the museum and has been a definite success. It has also been a real joy.

Just after this presentation the RAF Museum acquired a super-wide-angled, and close-up lens kit which Kodak supplies for use with the Kodak DC-290 and 265. It must be stressed that these are not high-end lenses but can satisfactorily overcome some of the limitations of the camera's zoom lens.

AFP

Tate Gallery



Fig 3 A composite image (main) is created using a shot taken with flash (top right) and a long exposure (bottom right).
© RAF Museum



Gaseous Pillars · M16 **HST · WFPC2**
 PRC95-44a · ST ScI OPO · November 2, 1995
 J. Hester and P. Scowen (AZ State Univ.), NASA

Fig 1

'Magical' Realism: Collecting Digital Photography at the V&A

This essay by Martin Barnes, Curator of Photographs at the Victoria & Albert Museum, is based on a talk given at the AHFAP conference held there in October 2000

Digital media, and the ability to manipulate images through digital programmes, is one of the most recent, exciting and challenging fields of creative possibility for photography. Since the V&A holds

the National Collection of the Art of Photography in the UK we are keen to respond to new technical developments and the creative potential they offer to artists. From the beginnings of the Museum's

photographic collecting in 1856, prints were acquired for many different departments to document works of fine and decorative art in the collections, to record artefacts and architecture from around the world and as creative expressions in their own right. In 1977 the Department of Prints and Drawings added photographic prints to its collecting policy. It drew on the historic holdings of the V&A National Art Library as the core of its collection and has been building with a firm commitment to the contemporary ever since.

output states. This was the first time that such an in-depth study had been carried out while keeping the image constant and thus facilitating direct comparison. It includes output processes such as bubble jet, laser copy, Cibachrome, ink-jet, screenprint and many others. The majority of recent acquisitions have been made for exhibition in the Canon Photography Gallery at the V&A which opened in 1998. Here, the main criteria for selection are the quality of the image, the meaning it conveys and the innovation in the artistic and individual



Fig 2

Part of the remit in collecting photographs in this context as fine prints has been to represent a range of processes and techniques. These can be examined and compared in the prints study room by students and practitioners. *Digital Prints*, a comprehensive portfolio compiled by Adam Lowe, does this job nicely. It was recently acquired for the collection and offers examples of all manner of prints generated from the same information stored on computer showing the same image in different print

statement as much as the technique of execution. We are concerned primarily with the 'what' rather than the 'how'. The ideal is to see an artistic message expressed through an appropriate medium and gaining power through a sensitive choice of technique.

If we think of digital photography as a means of allowing the artist to alter the photographic illusion then this concept is as old as photography itself. Photographers of the 1850s worked on their



Fig 3

negatives in ink and pencil to attempt to reproduce images that were closer to how the eye, rather than the camera, sees nature. The difference in exposure required to achieve the correct tonal balance for the landscape and the sky led the French photographer Camille Silvy to make a print using separate negatives in his celebrated *River Scene, France* (Fig 2). Despite its naturalistic appearance it is an image that relies on subtle deception. The Picturesque imagery of early landscape masters such as Silvy—often derived from the aesthetic of the watercolour painters of the day—still shows its influence in the



Fig 4

present. John Pfahl's photographs from the series *Permutations on the Picturesque* looks at the 18th-century British Picturesque movement not only for inspiration, but for precise instruction on the subject, appearance and point of view. The locations of Pfahl's photographs are drawn from guidebooks of the period. Each of his photographic images was scanned into a computer to undergo a series of alterations to emulate the appearance of a Picturesque-period watercolour (Fig 4). Within these images, he has deliberately inserted a row of enlarged pixels that span their length, drawing attention to their computer-assisted construction, and forming a kind of contemporary watermark. Iris print technology allows the image to be printed on a fine watercolour paper—a stable medium suitable to be deposited at a museum in perpetuity and an appropriate reference to the watercolour sources from which the image is derived.

Although digital technology has often been used to manipulate images to make them appear more 'natural' it has also been used to falsify deliberately or to suggest the unnatural or supernatural. Since the early 1980s Pedro Meyer, once a traditional photo-journalist, has been increasingly involved in new technologies. He was one of the first to use digital photography for creative ends. He lives and works in Mexico and much of his work is about the connections and tensions between North and South America. Witness the face of Che on a US five-dollar bill (Fig 3). The deft replacement of Abraham Lincoln with the image of Che Guevara (an icon of photographic portraiture in its own right) wittily

transforms an act of almost illegal copy photography into a political statement about the influence of the USA on global economy. The work is also about paper, what happens when we print onto it, and about the value that different sized pieces of paper are ascribed, whether works of art or bank notes.

osite.stsci.edu/pubinfo/pictures.html. For the V&A exhibition, *Breathless! Photography and Time*, the photographic studio printed out some of the images onto photographic paper. Number one on the site's greatest hits is *A Star is Born* (*Towers of Sculpted Gas in the Eagle Nebula*), 1995 (Fig 1). As the caption there explains:



Fig 5

In *Temptation of an Angel* (Fig 5), Meyer took the picture of the girl dressed with a halo and wings and then added the image of the diminutive old woman—an apparition brandishing a flaming torch used to prepare the *temascal*, a traditional steam bath. The picture is a work of Magic Realism, a term used to describe a traditional yet surrealist take on the world that in Mexico is a part of everyday life. This notion is best expressed in the novels of Gabriel García Márquez, such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), in which a family think nothing of ghosts from past generations casually sitting in the parlour to watch someone cook or practise the piano. Digital programmes allowed Meyer to conjure up this kind of scene before our very eyes. In these images he merges traditional and vanguard values with a direct impact, a political or poetic message and a delightful sense of humour.

While Meyer's use of digital alteration brings the supernatural within sight, other digital media have brought some of the most awe-inspiring extra-terrestrial images, from as far away as any lens can see, within reach of anyone connected to the Internet. The Hubble Space Telescope images are freely available on the NASA website: [Undersea coral? Enchanted castles? Space serpents? These eerie, dark pillar-like structures are actually columns of cool interstellar hydrogen gas and dust that are also incubators for new stars. The pillars protrude from the interior wall of a dark molecular cloud like stalagmites from the floor of a cavern. They are part of the Eagle Nebula...a nearby star-forming region 7,000 light-years away in the constellation, Serpens... The picture was taken on April 1, 1995 with the Hubble Space Telescope Wide Field and Planetary Camera 2. The color image is constructed from three separate images taken in the light of emission from different types of atoms. Red shows emission from singly-ionized sulfur atoms. Green shows emission from hydrogen. Blue shows light emitted by doubly-ionized oxygen atoms.](http://op-</p>
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Although digital imaging has made a huge and successful impact on scientific and commercial photographic practice—and many of these images have been appreciated for their beauty—its use within fine art has yet to be explored fully and without

falling into the trap of using technique for technique's sake. Some of the more successful photographic artists have used digital imaging over the last few years to enable them to make powerful, shocking or humorous points on appropriate subjects that deal with contemporary issues. Artists have tended to use the possibilities of working digitally on the images themselves broadly in two ways: either tweaking a realistic scene to add unsettling or poetic elements, such as in the work of Jeff Wall or Andreas Gursky (represented in the Tate collections), or in creating an alternative fantasy world, as in the work of Mariko Mori. Artists such as Inez Van Lamsweerde and Alexa Wright have used its possibilities to build alternative bodily forms and address subjects such as plastic surgery, human cloning, and the body-image promoted by the fashion industry.



Fig 6

Some artists like Chris Meigh-Andrews (see his website, www.meigh-andrews.com) have abandoned the print altogether, preferring to make installations like the one recently shown in the Canon Photography Gallery, *A Photographic Truth*, 2001. The work is derived from a remarkable photograph by Benjamin Brecknell Turner made in 1852 showing Hawkhurst Church, Kent, perfectly reflected in the village pond. Meigh-Andrews returned to the location making footage of the scene over two days by fixing a digital video camera in the same spot in which Turner made his paper negative. The slowly changing image records the passing of time as the light fades, wind ripples the pond and Turner's image morphs with the modern scene. The installation used a DVD player and an LCD projector to shine

the image onto a sheet of suspended paper which appeared to hover luminously in mid air.

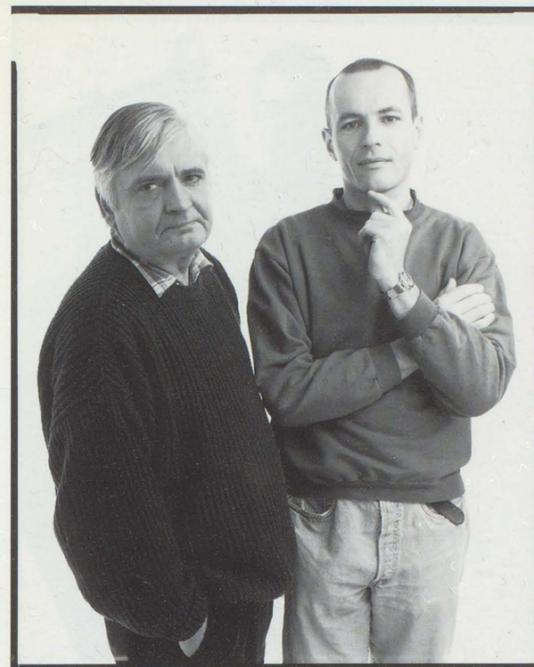
With the increasing use of digital media, traditional forms of photography have been freed from their working roles, much as painting was in the 19th century with the advent of photography. Meanwhile, the craft of making negatives or transparencies and producing fine prints on light-sensitive paper has, for many artists, not lost the alchemical appeal it had at its inception. Mark Klett makes a 'straight' photograph of a contemporary enough scene (Fig 6). It shows astronomy being used in the age of the laptop computer. A silhouette of a man in a landscape is discernible as he tracks the position of the heavenly bodies dimly visible in the night sky. This hauntingly beautiful image is recorded with the aid of both ancient and modern light sources: the moonlight and the glow of the laptop screen.

AFP

Portfolio section

Graham Brandon, of the V&A, has undertaken a massive task, a Millennium Portrait Project, and so revives a neglected tradition at his museum

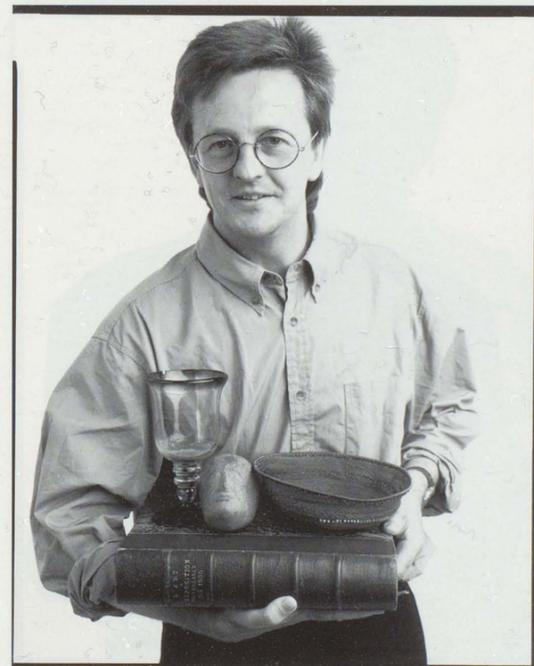
Graham Brandon has been a photographer at the V&A for over twenty years. Knowing the image collection well he noticed that one thing missing from the archives was pictures of museum staff. There were a few from the earliest days of the museum in the mid-nineteenth century but almost nothing for 130 years. It was with this in mind that he undertook a project to photograph people in the museum as we look today. The turn of the millennium was the spur to do this. Over two hundred members of staff were photographed, from all branches of the organisation and they were encouraged to be photographed with the tools of their trade. All the pictures were made on 10x8 Ilford FP4 film, with a Sinar P camera. Graham was assisted in this project by Sara Hodges. AFP



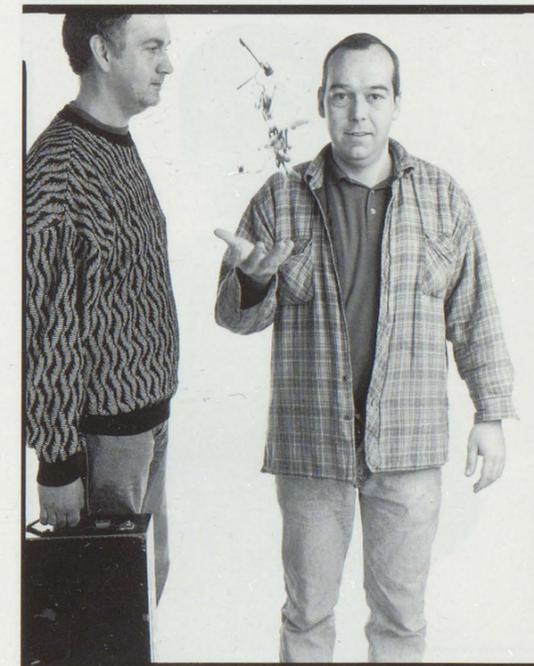
*Rodney Fennimore & Michael Wickham, Object Cleaners
February 1999*



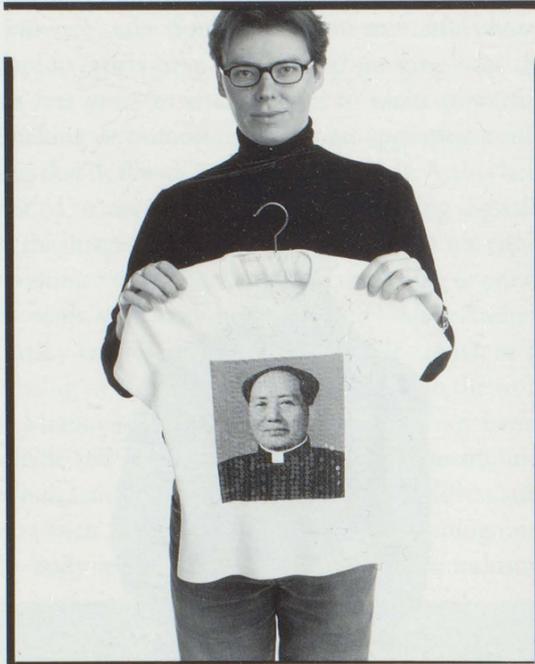
*Sorrel Hershberg, Assistant Curator, Furniture & Woodwork
Department, February 1999*



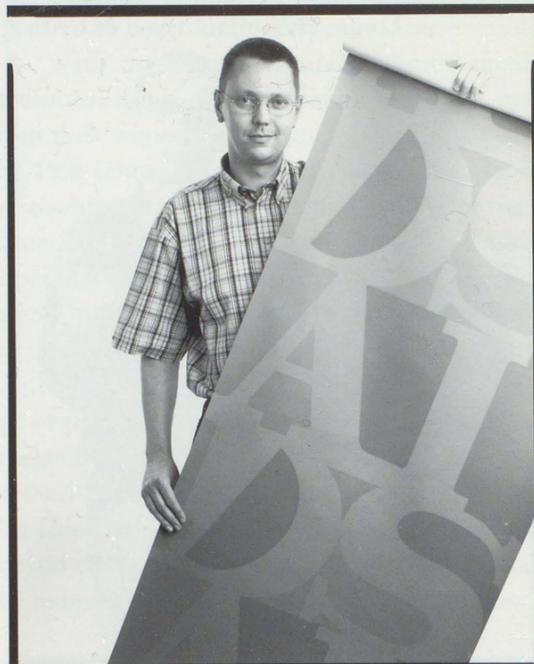
*Paul Greenhalgh, Head of Research Department
December 1998*



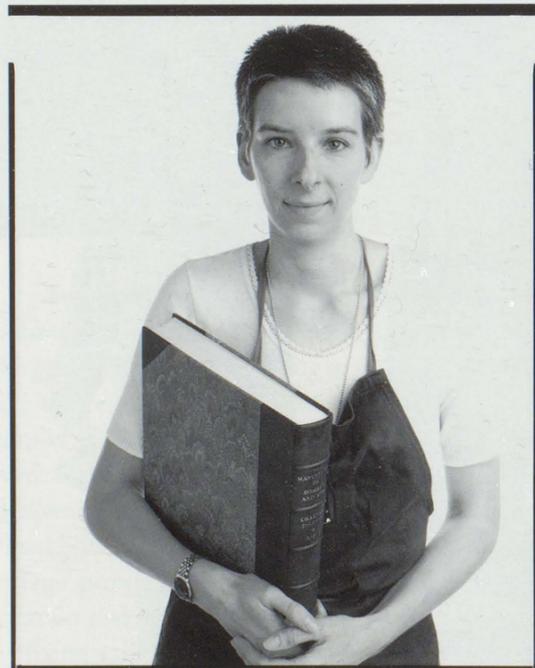
*Trevor Grainger & Paul Scrutton, Locksmiths
December 1998*



*Andrew Bolton, Far Eastern Department
December 1998*



*Shaun Cole, Curator, Prints & Drawings Department
December 1998*



*Bridget Mitchell, Book Conservation
December 1998*



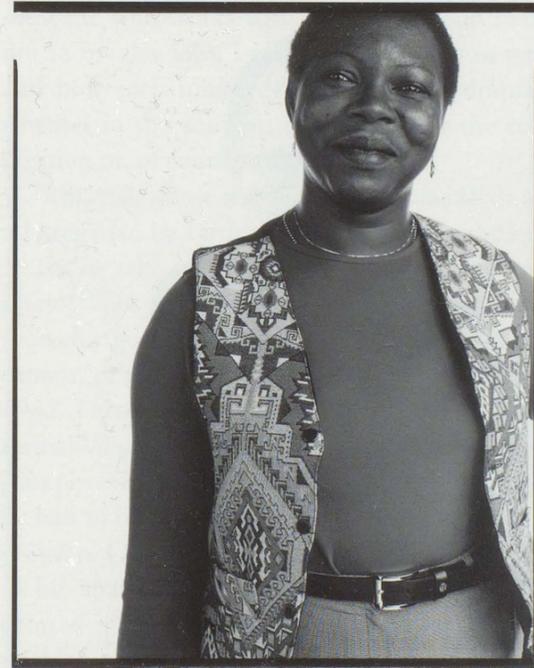
*Reino Liefkes, Ceramics & Glass Department
December 1998*



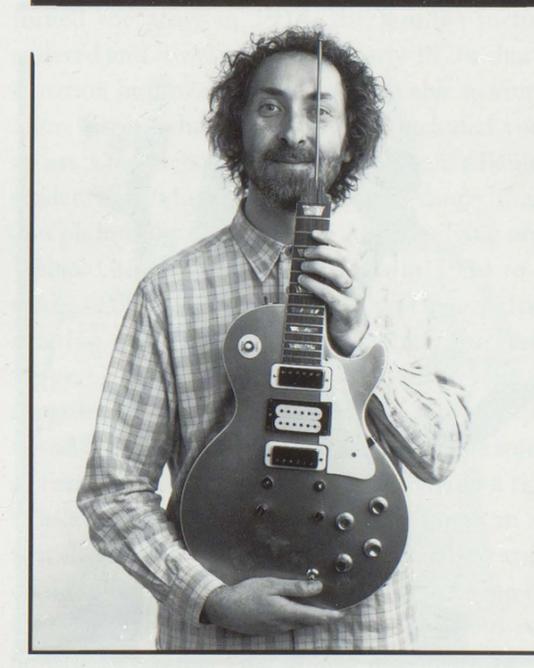
*Christopher White, Cleaner, V&A Museum
December 1998*



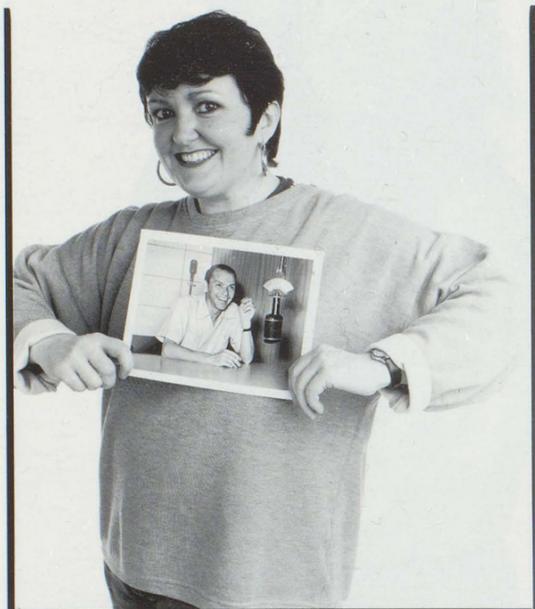
*Barbara Jotham, Finance & Central Services
December 1998*



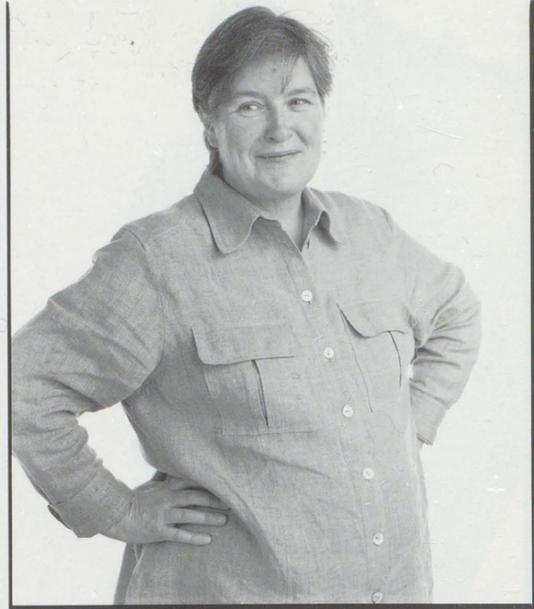
*Patricia McCann, Visitor Services
December 1998*



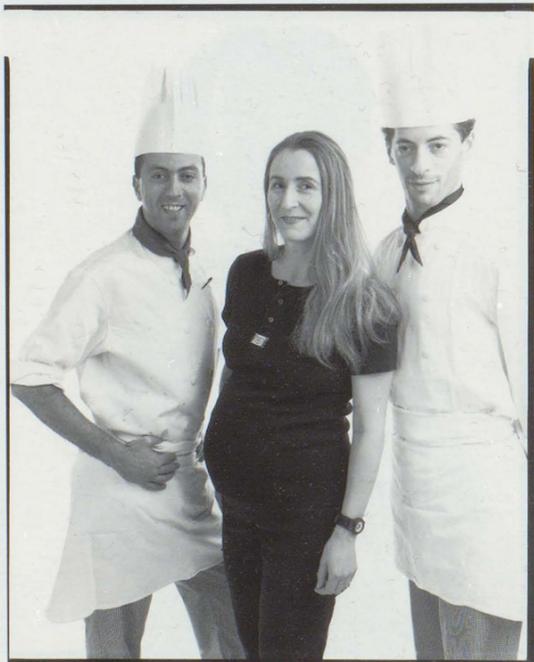
*Andrew Kirk, Curatorial Assistant, Theatre Museum
December 1998*



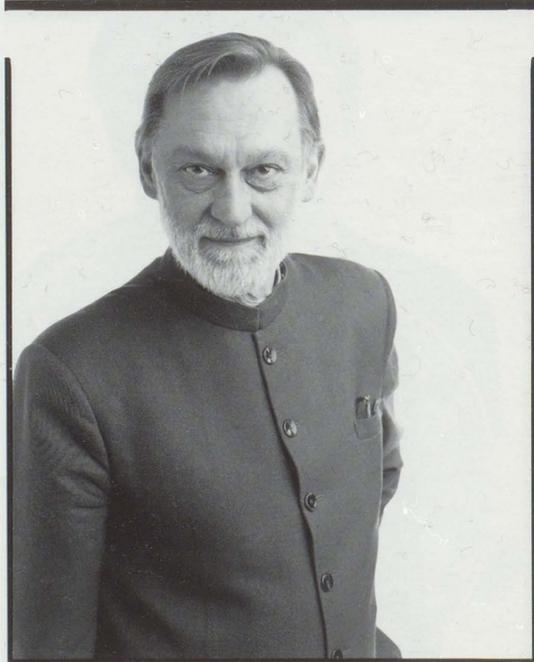
Jo Wallace, Picture Library
December 1998



Janet Skidmore, Prints & Drawings Department
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Redouane Belaouane, Jacqueline Townsend & Bou Baker,
Milburns Restaurant Staff, February 1999



Jan van der Wateren, Chief Curator, National Art Library
February 1999

Brassaï Vintage Prints Horst: 60 Years of Style

It was my good fortune to visit two exhibitions recently and to step back in time to an earlier period of my photographic education. The first was at the Hayward Gallery and concerned vintage prints of Brassai's work, made by himself dating from the 1930s, (shown jointly with an exhibition of drawings selected from Goya's sketchbooks) and the *Horst Portraits: 60 Years of Style* exhibition at the National Portrait gallery.

Entitled *The Soul of Paris*, the exhibition includes some of his atmospheric day and night-time photographs of the life of the underbelly of the city—the café society, dancehalls, the gangs, obscure alleyways and the 'business of the night'. The exhibition was organised in such a way that you felt that you were peering over his shoulder as he toured Paris using his camera as a sketchbook, capturing the mood and character of the misty streets, the bridges, classic monuments and the opportunist *liaisons dangereuses*. Personally, as someone who works with a drama group (when not in my day job), I appreciated his *mis en scene*, and how each image depicts a certain drama—whether in the content, the lighting or the composition or, of course, all three.

Brassaï, whose real name was Gyula Halasz and a Hungarian by birth, arrived in Paris in the early 1920s to take up work as a journalist and took photographs simply to accompany his articles. This soon changed and he started taking photographs in earnest, producing his first book, *Paris de Nuit*, in 1932. These photographs were all made on a large-format Voigtlander camera which, coupled with the glass plates he had to carry around on his own, meant he had to be highly selective in his choice of composition. Once exposed the plates were taken back to his apartment or hotel room, developed and printed in a makeshift darkroom—since he felt unable to entrust this work to anyone else.

Accompanying these photographs is a selection of his small sculptures, drawings and etchings. The etchings, 'transmutations' were inspired by his close friend, Picasso, involving drawing on an exposed negative with a stylus and printing out the

resulting image. Finally there is a room in the exhibition devoted to his photographs of graffiti which he had been taking for over thirty years. Creatively mounted, this part of the exhibition shows the working and reworking of these visual statements as he returned to some of them over the passage of time to see how the graffiti had altered.

The second exhibition I visited was at the National Portrait Gallery. I first came across the work of Horst P Horst at a seminal conference at Bradford in 1989 *Makers of Photographic History*, celebrating the first 150 years of photography. Horst was invited to do a workshop—a fashion shoot on the spot, giving a running commentary and answering questions—with Catherine (Mrs David) Bailey as the model. That was quite an inspirational baptism for me, not having seen any of his work before, and I was pleased to see a picture from that session included in the NPG's exhibition, *Horst: 60 Years of Style*.

Horst Paul Albert Bohrman was born in 1906 into a middle-class East German family. After his mother suffered a breakdown in 1913 and his father joined the army in 1914, the family's fortunes suffered and it wasn't until the early 1920s that the situation improved. Horst was then able to visit his aunt, Grete, whose many friends included young artists. One such artist, Eva Weidemann, a Bauhaus student, introduced him to the art, dance, theatre and philosophy of the period. After studying under Walter Gropius he came to Paris in 1930 to the studio of the architect, Le Corbusier. There, a chance meeting with the Chief Photographer for French *Vogue*, George Hoyningen-Huene, led to work as a model, a photographic assistant and a lifelong friendship. From there he landed work at the studios of French *Vogue* as a photographer in his own right. While working for Condé Nast at American and British *Vogue* he found that there was a new aristocratic subject for photography that was taking over from the vanishing 'glamour' of the various royal families of Europe. That subject was the Movie Star and so the cult of celebrity was born. This was also to encompass the world of theatre, high society, fashion and art.

His work took on a theatrical, almost architectural flavour with the type of lighting he used to

define his models. This gave them an elegant, alluring, almost iconic look (while still retaining a sense of fun) representing a style that people would forever try to imitate.

The exhibition contained work from every decade of Horst's working life which were 'subtitled' with captions relating to the subject above the photograph. These captions proved to be (to me at least) as entertaining as the photograph itself. I particularly enjoyed the one under the portrait of a young Herbert Von Karajan sitting at the wheel of a sports car in Kitzbühel in 1958. It contained the words:

In Salzburg Von Karajan once got into a cab and, on being asked, 'Where to?' by the driver, replied—'It doesn't matter. I have things to do everywhere!' *Greg Smith AFP*

Brassaï *The Secret Paris of the 30's* [sic]

Translated by Richard Miller
Thames and Hudson 2001

As Greg Smith points out in his review Brassaï was



Opium chic by Brassaï, Paris in the 30s

a journalist before taking up photography. This book gathers together some of his writings admirably juxtaposed with his justly famous photographs of Paris at night. Indeed it was Paris by night that inspired him to take up photography, a medium he claims to have disliked, even despised, hitherto.

His native Hungarian charm seems to have got him into places impenetrable to others and out of scrapes which others would inevitably have become mired in. It must have been his enthusiasm and his obvious love of the city at night which allowed people to humour him and let him record its strange nocturnal life. We must be grateful because he makes beautiful and memorable images of the unconsidered, the night-workers, the vagabonds, the fairground huxters, hustlers, barkers, the prostitutes and the revellers, the dancers professional and amateur, the opium dreamers, all who need, for reasons of propriety or poverty, the discretion of the night. When all those have gone to bed our indefatigable recorder climbs the ancient steps of Notre Dame, Paris's first landmark, to photograph its surrounding fog-swathed architecture.

It is always a pleasure to look at Brassaï's work and the photographs are well produced in this book but the endeavour is let down by poor editing, an inexplicable lack of pagination and only the sketchiest notes to the plates. *CM AFP*

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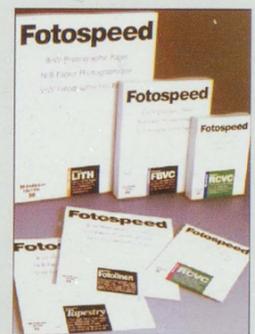


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