

WALL TO WALL

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Bob Carlos Clarke
1950 - 2006

I only met Bob Carlos Clarke twice, but he made a deep impression. The first time he was taking photographs in a club, but it was daytime and he seemed uneasy, a shark out of water. The second time he was in his great studio in Battersea, and he was the king – commanding the girls, cajoling his assistants, dominating his darkroom, regimenting the louche lunchtime stories. Wrapped in this cocoon, you could believe there was no other photographer in the world who cared as much about his craft, or held such mastery over it.

The next time I saw him he was in a newspaper, the victim of his own terrible circumstance. Bob was trouble personified, and I think he was always that way - from mischievous early holiday mayhem on an Irish beach, through his schooldays at Wellington where he masked his misery with blaring Stones and pranks, to his rampaging days in Worthing and London where he first scored with a camera. Women found him dangerous, and Bob always loved danger. You can't miss it in his work: that serrated line between art and offence, always pushing it. He found the female awesome, both in form and psyche; he knew all efforts at containment to be fruitless.

But Bob had another side, also evident in this powerful and provocative retrospective, the first since his death three years ago. He longed for approval and acclaim, a child-like yearning. Beneath the prickly was the tender – the knife and the latex, the desperation and the kissing, the brutish and the domestic. Always at the centre of his world, nothing happened beyond his creative manipulation; with his wife Lindsey he battled continually for control over his personal and professional freedoms.

It was not by chance that Bob was most at home in the darkroom. A connoisseur of alchemy, he also understood the power of timing. It's all here on the walls: the succulent depths, the studied composure, the brave experiments. The elegant contrivances in his work were both hard-won and instinctive, and stricken through with tough humour. From the beginning to his end, his was a leap in the dark, and we are grateful that his singularity and devotion has yielded such diverse and arresting images. His subjects, friends and family tend to claim him as the most alive and devastating person they ever met, and his photographs reflect his character like a mirror.

Simon Garfield

Exposure - The Unusual Life and Violent
Death of Bob Carlos Clarke (Ebury, 2009)

Bob Carlos Clarke

Bob Carlos Clarke was born in Cork, Ireland in 1950, and came to England in 1964 to study art and design at The West Sussex College of Art where he developed an interest in photography. He then went on to The London College of Printing, before completing his degree at the Royal College of Art in 1975.

He worked in almost every sphere of photography, winning numerous awards for his high-profile advertising campaigns, recognition for his photojournalism and portraits of celebrities, and international acclaim from collectors of fine prints.

Bob Carlos Clarke produced many books, limited edition catalogues and DVDs including: The Illustrated Delta of Venus (1979), Obsession (1981), The Dark Summer (1985), Styx (1990), White Heat (1990), Shooting Sex (2003), Love Dolls (2004), and Too Many Nights (2006).

The Bob Carlos Clarke Foundation

The Bob Carlos Clarke Foundation was set up following Bob's death in 2006 by his wife Lindsey, daughter Scarlett, and agent Ghislain Pascal. It's primary objective is to promote the work and memory of Bob Carlos Clarke.

One of its other aims is to support young photographers by holding an annual photographic competition in association with The Little Black Gallery.

All profits from this catalogue will be donated to The Bob Carlos Clarke Foundation.

www.bobcarlosclarke.com





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THE LITTLE BLACK GALLERY

The Little Black Gallery was opened in November 2008 by Lindsey Carlos Clarke, Ghislain Pascal and Tamara Beckwith and has had several critically acclaimed exhibitions. These shows have exhibited a diverse range of photographers including both well known and up and coming photographers.

The gallery also has a 'Bob Carlos Clarke' room holding a rotating exhibition of the legend's work.

The Little Black Gallery

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