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PARKINSON PHOTOGRAPHS THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

NORMAN PARKINSON
VINTAGE PHOTOGRAPHS
ANGELA WILLIAMS ARCHIVE

Julia Margaret Cameron Museum
Dimbola Lodge Isle of Wight
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Introduction by Fay Weldon

"In Julia's day, Dimbola and its gardens resounded to the sound of children. If most of her own six were out in the world before the Camerons came to Freshwater, her five adoptees were still at home.

They were outnumbered by the children she inveigled, bribed and bullied to be photographed: 'Once we were in her clutches, we were helpless', wrote one. 'They would have found the outwardly genial Parkinson just as ruthless a portraitist. But also just as romantic'.

Colin Ford

Vice-President of The Julia Margaret Cameron Trust

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THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

Looking at these Parkinson's prints, shot between 1950 and 65, we realise just how times have changed, just how innocent the years were. The hardship of the war was in the past (though sweet-rationing wasn't to end until 1953.) A certain sumptuousness was returning to everyday life, a richness of fabric, a surfeit of flowers, but it was taking its time. Privacy was important: girls wanted to look lady-like not sexy: models wanted to marry Lords rather than be 'celebrities'. A formality still ruled. No-one, quite, expected their photo to be taken. Faces and settings had to be composed for the occasion. It shows, and I think it for this reason these intimate Parkinsonian glimpses of a time past carry such a whiff of nostalgia and charm.

It's not just that the technology of the camera has changed, and the image it takes can be altered on whim so nothing quite is to be trusted, but that faces and bodies themselves have changed. Once they were innocent, and unprepared; not now.

Today cameras are everywhere. The baby in its buggy, pushed through the shopping mall, will have turned up on a dozen CCTV cameras in the space of half an hour. It was probably scanned a dozen times before it was even born. Friends and family will have cameras and mobiles out daily in admiration. It's probably already been seen gurgling on Skype in Australia a dozen times. Before today's child can so much as walk it will be conscious of its appearance: he or she will be experiencing life from the outside in, not the inside out as life unfolds, as object, not subject. By six the girl child will be worrying if she isn't too fat. Parkinson's children scarcely knew or cared what they looked like. They were beautiful but didn't know it.

But Cameron's children don't have the same cheerful freedom that we see in Parkinson's images. Perhaps because their clothes restrict them, bundle them up, allow no limbs to go free. Or perhaps also that childhood was largely a late Victorian invention – Cameron is a mid-Victorian – and worked at a time when children were well aware of what went on between the sexually mature. Only with prosperity came privacy.

Her 1860s children seem worldly-wise little things, who've seen it all in real life. By the 1950s it was rare child who had ever seen a human body unclad, other than in a medical book, so the transition from innocence to knowledge was plain to see. With the sixties had come the pill, and sexual freedom without fear of pregnancy for women; with the sudden popularity of therapy, talk of the once-taboo became general. Now it's a rare child who hadn't watched computer porn in its bedroom. The knowing look is back, the contemporary photographer, searching for unawareness in the child, can only be thwarted.

Something else happened too. The sudden onrush of permissiveness produced an odd backlash. As innocence fled from the child, the child became tarred by the brush of its own knowledge. Sex and childhood became thoroughly associated in the public mind. See a naked child and assume a lurking paedophile. Hands are flung up in horror. Parkinson, like the father who snaps his daughter in the bath, the mother her son in the school pantomime, would have been in danger of arrest today, had he shown bare childish buttocks in a fashion shot, male or female, as seemed perfectly ordinary at the time.

About the Archive

This exhibition brings together a unique collection of Parkinson's photographs of children, reflecting his own cherished memories of growing up in an era when fairy stories were still read aloud. Parkinson's young subjects have an almost ethereal air of innocence, and the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite photographer Julia Margaret Cameron is evident in many of the prints on display, making Dimbola Lodge the perfect location to showcase this extraordinary and rare collection.

Parkinson was enchanted by the energy and spirit of children before they were burdened by maturity, and in Louis Baring's book, 'A Very British Glamour', he described hiding by a twisted mulberry tree at the end of his grandfather's garden as a 12 year-old boy, when he would peer through the criss-cross wooden fence into the garden next door, captivated by the vision of frolicking girls: "girls with loose dresses and a minimum of underclothes running fawn like everywhere" or 'lying around the lawn with languorous ease'. It was these memories, alongside his passionate enthusiasm for Julia Cameron's images of children portraying a romantic innocence, that inspired his own work in this genre. Parkinson recalled: "When I picked up my camera years later, I photographed the memories of those well observed weekend girls I had seen through the fence"

His compositions appear simple, artless, almost effortless. But Parkinson was the supreme perfectionist, while also inviting "the gremlins which lurk inside the camera" to take over and allow the unexpected to happen. Consequently, so many of his images are tinged with a magic aura of wizardry, and manage to capture his own 'decisive moments' time and time again. Parkinson's enduring passion for everything bright and beautiful shimmers through these photographs, confirming his intention: "I do not want to photograph anything that nature has not shined upon."

Researching the Archive

Archive research seeks to provide an historical timeline for the fleeting world of these images of fashion, advertising and editorial photography. Fashion Editors have departed, Magazines have merged, Models, if still alive are reticent to be photographed and are found running guest houses, restaurants and cats homes. The premier male models having smoked themselves to death on the cigarettes they were advertising. The women and children are particularly hard to trace as their names change.

Before the advent of E-Bay and certainly during the years of shortage of paper in the 1940s most magazines were trashed unless there was a picture of one of the Royal Family on the cover. And today many of the locations once chosen for their beauty are now cluttered and despoiled with a plethora of nanny-state signs.

Although Parkinson's work was always published in some form or other, his advertising work was so much harder to find, divided as it was between the JWT (J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency) and "P" numbers which accounted for just about all the remains of his output. One image I recall, proved exceptionally elusive to track down – a young woman jumping with twin girls – till one cold Sunday morning I circumnavigated the burgeoning boxed up isles of yet another car boot sale – when wearily my eyes alighted on a single copy of Woman's Own 1958 and my patience paid off – there the three phantoms were in half page format illustrating the efficacy of Nimble's new lighter than air bread (how could we live without it?).

In our early sleuthing days we trawled our way through North London Magazine repositories to Paris where we unearthed, off the Rue de Rivoli hidden in underground catacombs, the "holy-grail" feature "Brash New Breed in Life" stacked high with timber-dry "Le Figaro's" awaiting a proud new owner celebrating the day of their birth. We noticed with

I don't think there is any way we can return to our innocence: once the perverse association of childhood with sex – once so far-fetched – is in the media consciousness it's there for good. We have to live with it. But we can at least treat ourselves for an hour or two, going round this exhibition, to an agreeable nostalgia for the way we once lived. I met Norman Parkinson once or twice in the advertising agency I worked in at the end of the fifties. He was charming and ineffably civilised. I was a very junior copywriter, and he was considered very grand – heads turned with the news that he was 'in' – but he showed himself pleasant and helpful, more concerned with the work we were engaged in than his own prestige. We were setting up a very pre-Raphaelite style shoot, as I remember, all folds of lush velvet fabrics, a beautiful girl, a large brimmed hat covered with roses and a pure glass of milk, which someone spilt. Not me, thank God. No-one shouted. We just cleared it up and reset. I can't remember what it was we were selling but I daresay it was for *Drinka Pinta Milka Day*.

With many another photographer it might well have gone very differently. Tears, not just milk, would have been spilt. Tensions were running high, egos exploding all over the place as eroticism in fashion photography began to take over from the kind of disembodied glamour that typified the forties and fifties. Parkinson was king of that chaste glamour, if soon to be deposed, but what an honour to have known him.

Fay Weldon

some trepidation a burnt out cigarette butt – left (with reckless panache) to burn itself out – leaving a crest fallen column of smouldered-up, Gaulois ash.

On a never ending search for rare Vogue or Queen magazines looking for unexpected surprises in a misfiled Punch or unexpectedly in the pages of an old Country Life – the researcher's eye has to become the Parkinson Eye intuitively recognising his visual vocabulary, arresting a way of seeing from a viewpoint that is higher than the norm (he – standing six foot five inches) edgy and cheeky, the cockiness of the new Edwardian, now Teddy boy with a West End girl on his arm. His advertising work pushed the cultural boundaries.

Michael Hewett, archivist

About the prints

'Parkinson Photographs the Age of Innocence' is the first themed exhibition researched and curated by the Angela Williams Archive (AWA), and represents not only the first exhibition of Parkinson's images of childhood, but also creates a unique opportunity to acquire a rare and original vintage print by a legendary British photographer.

The prints exhibited from the AWA are all vintage, which means they were printed under the critical eye of Parkinson at his darkrooms in Twickenham within one month of the photograph being taken, during the 1950s and 1960s. The portraits of Stella McCartney as a child and Lady Helen Windsor were printed for Parkinson at the time of publication of his book *Sisters under the Skin* in 1978. The C Type print in colour of twins in Jamaica was printed for his exhibition at The National Portrait Gallery in 1981. The colour advertising images from original 10 x 8 inch transparencies are also available – the prints displayed during this exhibition are digital images produced from these transparencies to facilitate viewing the work.

Parkinson's photographs

"One of Parkinson's particular skills is to portray children in a natural and spontaneous way – Stella McCartney jumping joyously on a Jamaican beach, or the Duke of Devonshire's children in sailor-suits posing in front of Chatsworth. He was one of the first photographers to introduce children successfully into fashion pictures. With pictures such as these, Parkinson brought fashion into the rough and tumble of family life".

Terence Pepper

"Norman Parkinson The National Portrait Gallery" 1981

"It is intriguing that some of Parkinson's pictures of children are among the most affectionate and tender of his work".

Martin Harrison

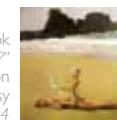
"Norman Parkinson 1935-1990"

"Philippe Garner wrote in 1998, 'The rediscovery of this fascinating group of photographs by Norman Parkinson from the late Fifties and early Sixties turns a spotlight on an important period in his career. The photographs are alive with an extraordinary sense of movement, a vitality and flair which were unique to Parkinson at that moment in British Photography. Park's, as he was known, was never better than in the years represented by this Archive' "

Philippe Garner

International Head of 20th Century
Decorative Art & Design Christies

The last picture in Parkinson's book "Would you let your Daughter?" seems to sum up Parkinson's vision of childhood – his ultimate fantasy
Anna Anderson with Jake Parkinson 1984



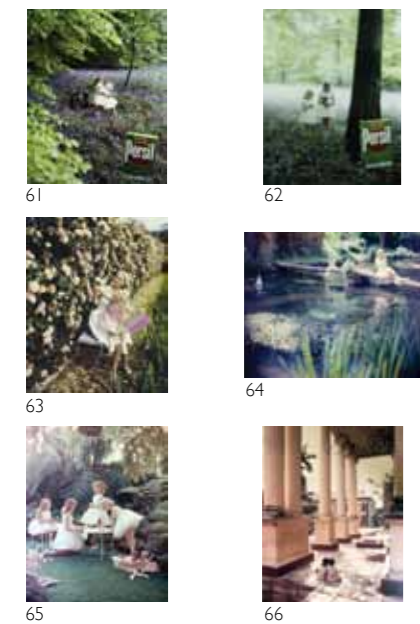
To celebrate this pioneering Parkinson exhibition, the AWA will be producing a limited edition catalogue bringing together images of all the prints represented in this collection, alongside fascinating interviews with some of the models and children featured in the photographs and sparkling commentary from relevant contributors, including historians and Parkinson enthusiasts.

For further information about the vintage Parkinson prints and the opportunity to acquire one of these unique vintage prints from the exhibition, please contact the Angela Williams Archive on t: +44(0) 1373 812290 or e: angelawilliamsbathuk@btinternet.com

"Parkinson referred to Cameron as one of his great inspirations" Siriol Hugh-Jones 1960 Preface Jaegar House Catalogue

Julia Margaret Cameron Carte-de-visite Albumen on original printed mount Image Date: 1864 Print Date: 1870c Dimensions: 2 3/16 x 2 1/4 inches





Looking at the exhibition

Transitions

Moments of transition, as the child moves from innocence to awareness, was a source of fascination to Parkinson. Look out for Nena, where he demonstrates three aspects of the one girl. The gawky, unaware girl, the same girl knowing and speculative, then the girl willingly objectified, aware of her power. Or see Stella McCartney as a child, growing before our eyes. The small child, tummy protruding, tense with alarm at an unknown world, suddenly all beauty, conscious of self, bestowing grace. Same sun, same sand, same child but the two selves still existing in the one body.

The art of living well

The photographer of the modern world, unlike Julia Cameron or Lartigue, well provided for by wealthy families – has to make a living. The Baileys, Donovans and Parkinsons made theirs by fashion photography and in advertising. Parkinson's life took him into high places, to royal palaces, tropical beaches, to friendships with the notable, and the company of some of the most beautiful women in the world. But always the children, the 'real' people, by virtue of their simplicity, caught his attention.

So look out for here, amongst many others, names like Attenborough, Windsor, Phillips, Devonshire – see the scions of the great and famous, cheek

by jowl, often enough, with an Andrex roll, Dove Soap or Persil packet – 'don't be too serious', is the message. We'll have no pretension here, as the mundane is rendered special – just what it was like to be alive and joyous, in that particular time and space. Parkinson would often deny that what he did was art – that doesn't mean it wasn't.

Movement and fun

Extraordinary moments, captured as they fly, never to return. The pictures are often carefully posed, as if the attempt was to delay time itself. The gremlins in the camera return, order is upset, the knickers show, the ball escapes the child – but it's fun.

Look for 'The cheerful crowd goes out in dirty weather.' Unlike Penn, unlike Cameron herself, the feeling is that Parkinson wants us to enjoy ourselves, be moved by the wholly bearable nature of being, not bowed down by deep seriousness. But art is none the less art for that, no matter how it attempts to subvert itself. Look out for the sheer joy of the impromptu in 'In the Bahamas with Carmen Dell'Orifice' – the beach ball's got in the way of Carmen's lovely face but what do the children care? Life goes on.

Fay Weldon

- 1 Vogue Beauty Book 1954
- 2 Brother and sister 1960s
- 3 Stella McCartney Trinidad 1975
- 4 Stella McCartney Trinidad 1975
- 5 Nena von Schlebrugge Advertising for Dove 1958
- 6 Advertising Persil 1958
- 7 Advertising Persil 1958
- 8 Advertising Persil 1958
- 9 Silvy Thynne Vogue 1961
- 10 Silvy Thynne Vogue and Woolich 1961
- 11 Advertising Persil 1950s
- 12 Advertising Persil 1950s
- 13 Carmen Dell'Orifice and Boy Vogue 1959
- 14 Advertising Charnos Nylon 1950s
- 15 Parkinson personal "Blond in Boots" 1963
- 16 Parkinson personal "Blond in Boots" contact sheet 1963
- 17 From Sisters Under the Skin large contact sheet
- 18 Nena von Schlebrugge First test shots Sweden 1957
- 19 Nena von Schlebrugge First test shots 1957
- 20 Nena von Schlebrugge First test shots 1957
- 21 Nena von Schlebrugge Print chosen from contact sheet 1957
- 22 Nena von Schlebrugge Print chosen from contact sheet 1957
- 23 Nena von Schlebrugge Print chosen from contact sheet 1957
- 24 Nena Italy "Pied Piper" Vogue 1958

- 25 Advertising Rolls Royce Jack Barclays 1954
- 26 Summer Brides Vogue 1958
- 27 Summer bride with page boy 1958
- 28 Lady Helen Windsor Sisters Under the Skin Vogue July 1959
- 29 Enid 'Scuttly' Boulting and family 1955
- 30 'The Wild Bunch' Vogue 1955
- 31 Deborah Duchess of Devonshire and her children 1952
- 32 Lord Hartington and Lady Emma Cavendish Vogue 1952
- 33 Pond's Advertising Duchess and daughter 1954
- 34 Earl of Uxbridge and Lady Henrietta Paget 1954
- 35 Miranda and Sabrina Guinness Vogue 1959
- 36 Rupert and Bruno Wolheim Vogue 1959
- 37 Col Harry Llewellyn Foxhunter and his wife and son Roddy
- 38 'A Kid for two Farthings' Vogue 1955
- 39 Richard Attenborough and Jane Mary 1956
- 40 Enid Munick Vogue 1958
- 41 Nina de Voe Oslo Vogue 1955
- 42 Lady Rendlesham's daughter Vogue 1959
- 43 Aquascutum Advertising 1957
- 44 Infant School Teacher Vogue 1955
- 45 London East End children Vogue 1955

- 46 Ann Gunning Jaguar TYT 100 Vogue 1957
- 47 Enid Boulting children and Ford Zodiac Vogue 1957
- 48 Carmen ball and children on beach Vogue July 1959
- 49 Clothes with No Age Tag Vogue 1958
- 50 Carmen and girl Nassau Vogue 1959
- 51 Advertising Armstrong Siddley 1955
- 52 Celia and Nun Queen Magazine 1963
- 53 Boy Sawing Log 1951
- 54 Advertising Nimble bread 1959
- 55 Advertising Rolex 1954
- 56 Mother and baby Advertising Lux 1950s
- 57 Advertising Roses Lime Juice 1955
- 58 Advertising Milk Marketing Board 1958
- 59 Aquascutum Advertising 1957 Vicar and Caroline Owen
- 60 Aquascutum Advertising 1957 Model and Simon Parkinson
- 61 Advertising Persil 1959
- 62 Advertising Persil 1959
- 63 Advertising Andrex 1962
- 64 Advertising Andrex 1962
- 65 Advertising Hunts Tomato Catsup 1955
- 66 Twins in Jamaica 1959