



THE MYSTERY of Diana, Princess of Wales is deepened by the exhibition at Kensington Palace of 20 photographs by Mario Testino that we have not seen before. Taken three months before she died these are unused images from a famous shoot in which she looks supremely happy. But was she?

Diana laughs, runs, smoulders, pouts and lavishes radiant smiles into the camera. She smooths her sleeked-down, art deco, short-cut hairstyle, she blushes, she has the shys, she flops *à la* Pompadour over the edge of the sofa. She practises every artifice in the photographer's pose book. So she raises the question: are these photographs honest? Are they Testino or are they Diana? Every great artist transforms his subject. You did not pay Van Dyck or John Singer Sargent for an honest resemblance. These artists were in the flattery business. The patrons employed them to create the swan necks, figures, facial beauty or heroic stature they did not have.

So, I asked Testino, you are an artist and these pictures are untruthful, aren't they? "No," he replied. "They are 100 per cent her, zero per cent me. I captured a moment. Maybe I was the lucky person. The Princess made it happen. She arranged everything as she wanted it – dresses, poses, she



Above and left Diana, Princess of Wales

chose them. We were together the whole day. You can't fake somebody over eight hours of shooting."

No? Sir Thomas Lawrence took eight weeks to fake his best portraits. This was not a serene passage of Diana's life. Has not Testino shot a supreme piece of acting? Hasn't he in fact *made* Diana happy, when the large facts in her life dictated otherwise?

To this charge that his camera *is* capable of lying, Testino replies: "I believe she was happy. I didn't make her. I was there at a time she was elated. She was at the beginning of something new in her life. I didn't change a thing – no touching her features, no airbrushing, no anything. She had a certain peace to her." And yet – there is a plangency to some of these new photographs, a sense that here are eyes that have recently been crying, a sense of heaviness as if these eyes were weighed by hidden pools of tears. The sorrow mixed with joy makes for the most memorable images of all.

This exhibition runs until June 2007 and is included in the price of general admission to the palace. Also shown is a lighted photobox on the wall of 150 thumbnail images that were taken but never published. A slim and perfectly formed new book from Taschen serves as the catalogue. ■