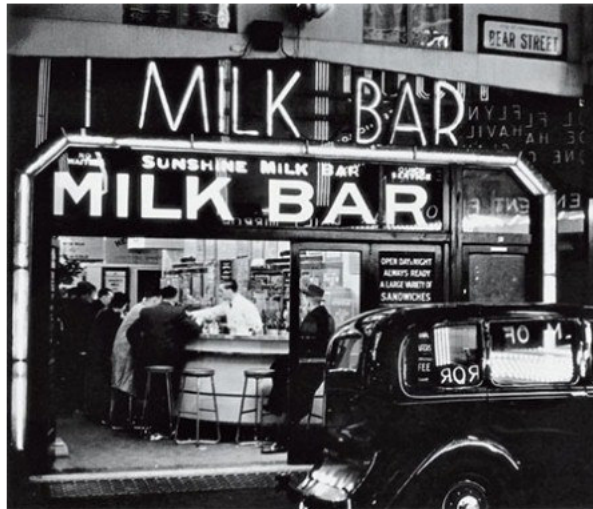


## Book Review: *London: Portrait of a City* by Reuel Golden

All of the world's great capitals deserve a coffee table book as lavish and vibrant as Taschen's *London: Portrait of a City*, ready to adorn coffee tables around the world for perusal during rare Olympic lulls. The \$69.99 list price may seem steep, but its heft and production values, to Taschen's high standards, make it a solid investment as well as an eminently page-turnable tome for the discriminating coffee table.



Reuel Golden's essays, printed in English, French, and German, divide the book into four neat sections from the city's photographic history. These sections efficiently portray the history of the city in politics, art and literature, and trumps up the commercial ingenuity and fashion sense of London in all its eras, from Victorian to punk.

But it's the photography that makes the book weigh in at 552 oversized pages, and the Taschen editors have expertly condensed a few centuries of London imagery to make a handsome volume that's representative without giving short shrift to the city's hard times. As such the the book serve as a brief history of British photography. Reproductions of beautifully atmospheric prints by Willaim Henry Fox Talbot and Roger Fenton mark the first section, while further sections introduce photographs by names familiar and unfamiliar to the photography student.

German-born photojournalist Bill Brandt moved to London in the early 1930s, and his classic street photography covers the London scene up until Swinging London, covered by fashion photographers and anonymous names as well as Magnum photographer Inge Morath. What better way to capture the strangeness of a metropolis than through the eyes of outsiders? So for every ur-British photographer like Martin Parr you have the work of established young photographers from elsewhere on the continent, like Wolfgang Tillmans and Juergen Teller.

Even if those names mean nothing to you, you should know at a glance if you want to open up *London: Portrait of a City*, and you will: an iconic image of a swinging London bird poses in front of a slightly blurry double-decker bus, the red headdress and scarf matching the double dekcer bus in the iconic red of The St. George's Cross.