

Portrait of a City: A Look at London



Anonymous

1910. A wet night in Trafalgar Square. A woman poses for a moody night-time shot. Despite the rain, a row of taxis wait on the west side of the square.

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In the new photo book *London: Portrait of a City*, editor Reuel Golden says he wanted to use images to “convey the history of the city and tell it in a compelling way that will sort of surprise people as well.” That’s no easy feat when the city in question is one of the world’s oldest. But Golden says he found London’s photographic history was most compelling in three main eras: the Victorian period, the post-World War II era and the swinging ’60s. Images from those particular time periods, according to Golden, best displayed “the character of the city, the soul of the city and the personality of the city.”

That’s not to say the process was simple. To kick the project off, a few thousand photos were compiled, many of which were found buried in dusty drawers from places like the London Metropolitan Archive, which catalogs records of the city. Then came the task— carried out by Golden, famed publisher Benedikt Taschen and art director Josh Baker—of whittling down the thousands of images into a manageable collection of photos that exemplified London. Though the book is the latest in a series of city-themed collections (past books have featured New York and Berlin), when it came to picking images of London, the team was especially critical in what they included. They were looking for photos that exuded “fashion, a certain kind of cool,” says Golden. “And also you want to show ready identifiable icons.”

Throughout the pages—which also feature essays on the city—there are images of London life from the East end to the West end, all of which are invariably both familiar and fresh. Each image symbolizes a recognizable piece of London’s architecture, history, culture and of course, its iconic style, but often in a way that’s never been seen before.

The end result is a 552-page behemoth of a book with hundreds of images from anonymous and amateur photographers, as well as the big names of the business like Bill Brandt and David Bailey. “It’s important to get a good mix of big, important photographers, but also people who just documented London in a totally, totally different way,” says Golden. “Part of our mission behind these books is to sort of discover lesser known photographers and bring them out to the light of the world.”

London: Portrait of a City was recently released by **TASCHEN**.