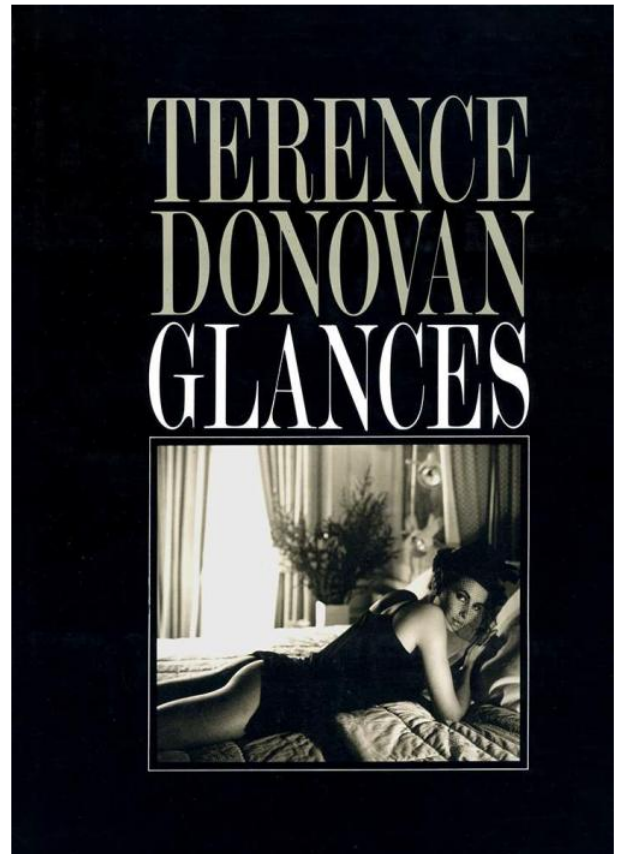


Australian photographer John Pollard FRPS died in 2018, leaving behind not just a grieving family and a substantial legacy of photographic work in public and private collections, but also an eclectic collection of books representing his varied interests over his life. In this on-going column I hope to stimulate interest and reflection on various aspects of photography based on perusal of John's collection of books. In the process I also aim to periodically shine a light on John's career and his practice.

Glances – Terence Donovan

When he was in London in the early sixties John Pollard had an apartment in the same building as Donovan and through him met many of the photographers that are now household names: although it is hard to understand what Donovan and Pollard had in common other than a love for photography. Pollard was absolutely the consummate artist whilst Donovan had no time for the notion of photography as Art *'Photography, for me, isn't art – that's why I don't have exhibitions.'* In 1983 Donovan published the Book *'Glances'*, a copy of which is part of the Pollard Collection. Donovan said of the work *'Every photographer is constantly bombarded by evasive images: these are evident briefly, then skitter away, untrapped. I have tried to reconstruct moments that escaped my camera but not my memory – here are my glances from a life.'*



'Glances' by Terence Donovan, Michael Joseph, London, 1983



'The Black Trinity' – Terence Donovan (top right), David Bailey (top left) and Brian Duffy (front) photographed by Arnold Newman in 1978

Terence Donovan was born into a poor working-class family, in East London in 1936. Fascinated by photographs and photographic processing, he started working aged 11 at the London School of Photo-Engraving, leaving at 15 to become a photographer's assistant. After a year at the John French studio he opened his first photographic studio in 1959 aged just 22. Together with David Bailey and Brian Duffy, these three photographers (nicknamed the 'Black Trinity' by Norman Parkinson) revolutionised the world of magazine and newspaper photography. Donovan was affectionately known as *'The Guv'nor.'*



'Swinging London' – Photograph of 'The most influential people in Britain in the 1960s' by Lord Litchfield (Donovan is back row, top-right)

Shooting mostly with black-and-white film, Donovan's iconoclastic, sometimes irreverent photography brought to magazines and advertising a new visual language rooted in the world he knew best – the streets of London's East End. Taking models to bomb-ravaged waste-grounds or balancing them off steelworks and iron bridges, his gritty style was more like reportage than fashion photography – unlike anything that had gone before.

The Royal Family, particularly Princess Diana, formed part of the many commissions he undertook during his four-decade career. Donovan was prodigious: he photographed for all the top magazines, worked in over 70 countries and directed over three thousand television commercials. When he died in 1996, he left tidy packages of almost a million prints. He was fiercely proud to be appointed Visiting Professor at Central St Martins School of Art – although highly critical of the 'lazy' students.



'When she drove past in a taxi, she looked like somebody I had once met.'

Donovan became a celebrity in his own right. A self-made millionaire, he was on the 'A-List' for every high profile occasion: he was featured in a photograph by Lord Litchfield of Britain's most influential people entitled 'Swinging London' along with Prince Romanoff, David Hockney, Lady Antonia Fraser, Nubar Gulbenkian, Roman Polanski and Susannah York.



In an interview with Martin Moore for *Practical Photography* magazine, just weeks before his death, Donovan spoke about many aspects of his working life:

'When I first started, I thought that if I took enough frames, I'd get a good picture. Gradually I learnt that photographs are taken with the brain – the camera records it – but it's a meta-physical process, because what happens in an image is beyond what you see. It's the head that makes pictures and the cameras record the thought.'

'After this picture was taken, the girl had tea on the lawn accompanied by scones covered in Cornish cream and thick red shiny jam, somewhere near Edgebaston.'

'What you've got to understand about Bailey and me is, we were fantastically hard working. Bailey and I never wanted to be successful photographers. That wasn't the plot. We weren't ambitious, ever. We just wanted to make photographs. I used to get up at seven o'clock, work in the studio from eight until seven at night, sometimes doing four commissions a day, go out and have a bite, come back at nine, develop all the negatives of the day, contact them and go home at 1.30 in the morning. That's how you learn how to do the job.'

'You've got to try hard not to develop the notion that you might be of some consequence. 'Cos if you manage that, you're free from the tyranny of it.'

'Opaque thought from a woman whose beauty seared and sparkled like a beam from a deadly laser scalpel. Don't look too carefully at her, you might damage your sight.'





'Alaska district of Tokyo, a professional dancer. Her father is a senior officer in the Glasgow murder squad.'

Throughout his life, and contrary to his demonstrable success, Donovan apparently suffered from self-doubt: tragically he committed suicide in November 1996, at the age of 60. The Guardian Leader wrote *'The morning after his death was announced, with the chilling undertow of its self-infliction, five men counting themselves as members of his most intimate circle telephoned each other in utter consternation. Anyone else, they said one to another, anyone else but Donovan. Not Donovan, not in a thousand years. He was too controlled, too balanced, too centred in his own skin, too philosophical, the very obverse of a suicide. The more*

astute of them concluded that, perhaps, he was simply unknowable, that the sweet, equable, funny, generous, diligent, hardworking, well-mannered, Terry they knew merely chose consciously to guard his private self from all-comers.'

At the inquest, it emerged that he had been taking steroid drugs to treat a skin condition, which had caused severe depression. Since his death there have been many retrospective exhibitions and books, but during his lifetime he was never interested in publishing collections of his work, but he said of "Glances" *'this is the only book I've ever wanted to create.'* It's a curious but beautiful work in which startling, erotic and unpredictable photographs of women are accompanied by captions written by Donovan that evoke the memory of making images that *'escaped my camera but not my memory.'* He dedicated the book to 'DiDi' (his second wife and widow).

Just before his death Donovan said *'I don't defend my work. I hope you like it, I've tried hard. I've tried my best all my life but if you don't like it... We're not going to be around for ever and I don't know who will take over from us. I'm sure, as we speak, there is some bloke enrolling at some college in the north-east of England who's going to. Because we'll all go, we'll all be on the great stage in the sky at some point.'*



'Shoe adjusting in Sussex. Always easier to do sitting down. That's why I gave her the chair. She seemed very pleased about the chair.'