

## Pondering Pollard (3)

Robin Williams ASIS FRPS

*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.*

### The Great British Adventure

John Pollard was a professional photographer, photo-engraver and printmaker who trained in Melbourne. But post-war Australia often seemed isolated culturally, so in 1956 he headed off to Europe to immerse himself in the vibrant post-war arts scene there. As a fully qualified colour-etcher he worked in a photo-engraving house in Zürich for a year, then moved on to London where he lived and worked for a further five years. A number of books in the Pollard Collection stem from these days in Britain including *The British Journal of Photography Annuals*, 'The Silver Lining' by Robin Cross and 'The Good Life' by V C Buckley.

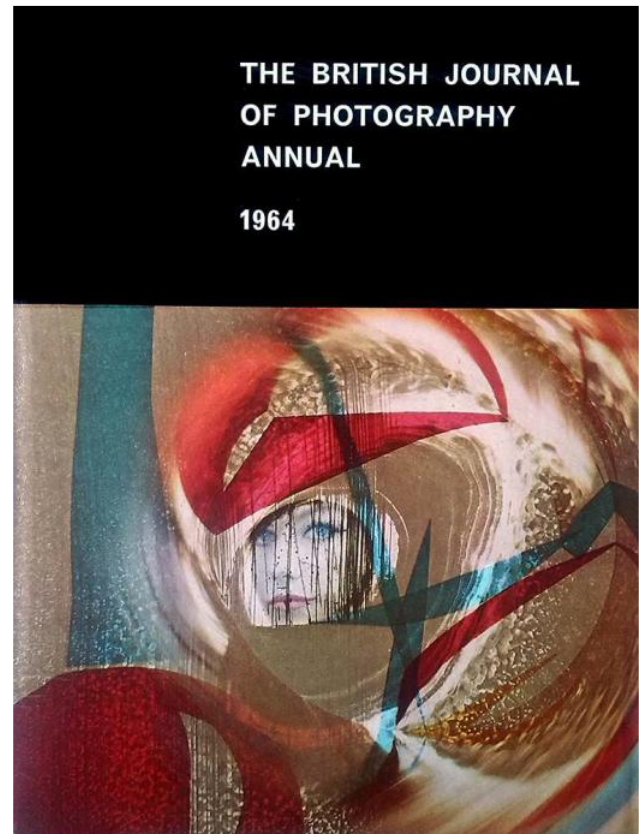


Image by David Bailey

This was a period of seismic change in Britain and in British culture. The 1960s was a period of energy and optimism. After the difficult recovery from the Second World War, life in Britain was improving. Social norms were challenged by people looking for freedom and individuality. The art and photography of the period both reflected, and participated in, the social revolution that became mythologised as the 'Swinging Sixties.' It's often said that "if you can remember the sixties, you weren't really there!" I have to say that I was there but I don't remember the sex, drugs and rock-and-roll; I absolutely remember my Rollei and the smell of the darkroom.

If the Fifties were in black and white, then the Sixties were in Technicolor. The 'Swinging Sixties'

remain the defining decade for Britain. In just ten short years, London had transformed from the bleak, conservative city, only just beginning to forget the troubles of the Second World War, into the creative capital of the world, full of freedom, hope and promise. It was the centre of all excitement; the city where anything and everything was possible. David Bailey's grungy monochrome work featuring the hangover rituals of pre-war Britain were in stark contrast to the bold colourful adverts by Kodak showing how ordinary citizens could now create a beautiful technicolour world with their Instamatic cameras.



Kodak ad. Image 1964

The British class system was founded in work, and in the freedom from work available to the aristocratic land-owning class. By the 1960s traditional class and labour roles were changing beyond recognition. Photographers could still capture places that had remained relatively unchanged for decades, such as Philip Jones Griffiths' Welsh schoolboys, but many forms of class-based ritual and regalia were beginning to seem anachronistic or absurd. In his *Only in England* series of the 1960s, Tony Ray-Jones took on the role of social anthropologist to highlight particular foibles of the British – a role now relished by Martin Parr.

In the 1960s London designers, magazine editors and photographers set out to unseat Paris as capital of international fashion. New looks were accompanied by new ideas. By the mid-1960s, British *Vogue*, which had sold to an elite audience since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, began to project a more edgy, youthful image. By the 1960s media attention had shifted away from the activities of the aristocracy and onto the new heroes of the era of leisure: sportsmen, actors, musicians and models. The High Society portraiture of Cecil Beaton gave way to the scandalously brash images created by the "Black Trinity" – Bailey, Duffy and Donovan – a sort of 1960s photographic "Rat-Pack." This was the era of Fame and for the first time ever the photographers themselves became as famous as the photographed. The 'Black Trinity' were welcomed at clubs, parties and fashion launches as celebrities in their own right – they became powerful and rich.

John Pollard had the good fortune to find himself living in the same apartment building as Terry Donovan and through this connection was enveloped in the crazy, creative world that was London in the 1960s. When he returned to Australia he brought back with him the heady lessons learned and in the following years his career really took off.

He went from colour etching to advertising/illustrative photography; from portrait photography to graphic design, film, animation and multi-media.

For me personally, looking back at the British Journal of Photography (BJP) Annuals was a more nostalgic experience. The BJP was always full of adverts especially equipment. The image reproduced here of Gnome enlargers and projectors brought a smile to my face – as I owned both!

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