

PHOTO LONDON

Nick Knight
Master of Photography 2022

Somerset House
12 - 15 May 2022
Preview: 11 May 2022



Blade of Light for Alexander McQueen, 2004

This year's Photo London Master of Photography Nick Knight presents an exhibition of key works that spans the length and the breadth of his extraordinary career presenting works from the 1980s through to new pieces made this year. Encompassing fashion, portraiture, still life, landscape and the nude — across images manifested as photography, film, painting, porcelain, sculpture and installation — the exhibition is an invitation to consider new ways of looking at the world.

For more than four decades Knight has been at the forefront of creativity in photography, constantly pushing at the medium's limits to explore its expressive potential. Renowned as one of the world's most visionary and influential photographers, Knight has always challenged conventional ideals of beauty through images that are both transgressive and poetic. His collaborations with designers, choreographers, editors, models and musicians inscribe a universe that is both dreamlike and revelatory, while his landscapes and still lives of the past decade experiment fundamentally through

technology and materials to rewrite the processes of photography. It's an oeuvre that is in dialogue with art history while being driven by the newest in technological possibilities and a sensitivity that celebrates the now and the future.

'My quest has always been to use photography to show me things I could not see,' says Knight. 'Photography has been my passport into life, giving me access to people from all backgrounds and walks of life. The same skill set has allowed me to create films, sculptures, and now even virtual versions of our world and ourselves. From politics to AI, I have been able to use the voice that photography gave me to present a vision of our future and find new ways of seeing the world. I would like to use this occasion to demonstrate my enthusiasm for the future of image-making, and how incredibly important it is to realise it's our purpose to show the world not just who we are but also who we want to be.'

Among the works on view are iconic fashion photographs from the '80s, '90s and 2000s for designers such as Yohji Yamamoto, John Galliano and Christian Lacroix, including the iconic multi-figure image *Blade of Light for Alexander McQueen* (2004); Knight's *Rose Photo Paintings* and a motion image work made in the past decade; and two new pieces occupying central positions in the exhibition: a mountain landscape that recalls Caspar David Friedrich's Romanticism in evoking man's relationship with the sublime; and a vast sculpture featuring female figures created by fusing photography and 3D printing that resembles the intricate figuration of Old Masters, their intertwined fleshy bodies summoning a Rubinesque sensibility that subverts the current fashions.

Props such as clothes, smoke, animals (in the works *British Birds* from 2008 and *Snakes for Alexander McQueen*, 2009) and pigment — for instance in *Pink Powder, Lily Donaldson wearing John Galliano* (2008) — merge real and fantasy in Knight's work; while his pioneering adoption of digital image-making and material investigations of the photographic image have dissolved the boundaries between mediums. For his *Roses from my Garden* images, for example, he first photographed cut flowers in natural daylight using just his iPhone then processed these through a groundbreaking AI technology which adds in data using a software trained with millions of sample images, performing around two million operations per pixel to give results with as much detail and sharpness as is possible. Knight then meticulously brushes the original, softer version in with this sharper image to create breathtaking prints that appear part photograph, part painting. Flowers picked from the artist's garden thus acquire the delicate luminosity of C17th and C18th Dutch still lives, encapsulating a melancholic vision of beauty in decay.

His *Rose Photo Paintings* meanwhile employ an accidental discovery in their making — the use of a non-absorbent paper and a carefully controlled environment that allows the ink to flow naturally during printing, followed by Knight's manipulation and overpainting of these compositions to literally blur the lines between painting and photography. In contrast, in the moving image work *The Sound of Light's Own Destruction II* (2017) which shows fireworks exploding within the confines of a sphere, Knight's manipulations are conceptually orchestrated, commenting on how destructive it can be to contain and suppress beauty.

Together the works convey an energy that reaches back to the past and through to the future. ‘My fascination with sculpture comes from what traditionally sculpture represents for society — who is made into a sculpture and what that says about our values,’ Knight explains about his new work. ‘Fashion is almost by definition transient whereas sculpture is permanent and I love the idea of mixing these two dynamics together. The women in this sculpture are representations of beauty and of desire and reflect a new feeling of inclusiveness and broadening of what the fashion world thinks of as “acceptable beauty“ that is becoming much more present in fashion. It is something I have repeatedly championed, so I am thrilled to make this shift into something that feels permanent. A statement not just a trend.’



Nick Knight, *Saturday 8th August, 2015*

For further information about Photo London 2022 and to book tickets, please visit:
<https://photolondon.org/>

Press Contacts:

Pickles PR, Gair Burton, PR representative

E: gair@picklespr.com | T: +44 (0) 740 278 4470

Relations Media, Catherine Philippot, PR representative for France

E: cathphilippot@relations-media.com | T: +33 (0) 1 40 47 63 42

NOTES TO EDITORS

Nick Knight

Nick Knight (b. London, 1958) is well known for his groundbreaking creative collaborations with leading designers including Yohji Yamamoto, John Galliano and Alexander McQueen. Advertising campaigns for clients such as Christian Dior, Tom Ford, Lancôme, Swarovski, Levi Strauss, Calvin Klein and Yves Saint Laurent, as well as award-winning editorials for publications including W, British Vogue, Dazed & Confused, AnOther, and i-D. Nick's work has graced no fewer than 36 covers of Vogue.

Knight's work has also featured on record covers for David Bowie, Paul Weller, George Michael and Massive Attack. More recently he has produced videos for Björk (Pagean Poetry), Lady Gaga (Born This Way) and Kanye West (Bound 2, BLKKK SKKKN HEAD and New Slaves). His work has been widely exhibited at institutions such as the Victoria & Albert Museum, Saatchi Gallery, the Photographers Gallery, the Hayward Gallery, Tate Modern, Gagosian, Albion Barn and the Natural History Museum in London.

Photo London

Founded in 2015, Photo London quickly established itself as a world-class photography Fair and a catalyst for London's dynamic photography community. Photo London is a place to encounter the most innovative emerging artists, new work by established masters and rare vintage pieces, and as such is guided by a Curatorial Committee comprised of some of the field's most esteemed curators, critics and museum directors. For the latest updates on Photo London subscribe to our newsletter visit photolondon.org

Somerset House

Somerset House is London's working arts centre and home to the UK's largest creative community. Built on historic foundations, we are situated in the very heart of the capital. Dedicated to backing progress, championing openness, nurturing creativity and empowering ideas, our cultural programme is ambitious in scope. We insist on relevance, but aren't afraid of irreverence, and are as keen on entertainment as enrichment. We embrace the biggest issues of our times and are committed to oxygenating new work by emerging artists. Where else can you spend an hour ice-skating while listening to a specially commissioned sound piece by a cutting-edge artist? It is this creative tension – the way we harness our heritage, put the too-often overlooked on our central stage and use our neo-classical backdrop to showcase ground-breaking contemporary culture – that inspires our programme. Old and new, history and disruption, art and entertainment, high-tech and homemade, combined with the fact that we are home to a constantly shape-shifting working creative community: this is our point of difference. It is what we are proud of. And it is what makes the experience of visiting or working in Somerset House inspiring and energising, urgent and exciting. www.somersethouse.org.uk