

Gene Nocon:

His name is not readily recognized, but his work has been seen by more people than any one single photographer. His career started in the early '70s when he traveled to Europe and found work at the STARS AND STRIPES newspaper in Germany. He worked as a photographic printer with the legendary photographer/editor Red Grandy: Gene Nocon was destined from the beginning to work with the legends of photography.

In 1975 Gene moved to England. Almost immediately his expertise in the photographic darkroom was recognized and he would eventually be working with the most famous names in the industry. Amongst them were Terence Donovan, Terry O'Neill, Linda McCartney, Cecil Beaton, Norman Parkinson, and through John Kobal (KOBAL HOLLYWOOD COLLECTION) printed for George Hurrell, CS Bull, and other Hollywood greats. With Terence Pepper of the National Portrait Gallery London he printed for Paul Tanqueray and Howard Coster. The prints made for these individuals, along with hundreds more photographers, would be used for magazines, books, exhibitions, and collections.

It was in 1980 that Gene entered a photograph in an annual contest that would make him ILFORD PRINTER OF THE YEAR. He was to use this accolade to showcase and highlight the role and importance of the photographer printer with an exhibition called THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT. Around this time Gene's name was brought to the attention of HRH the Prince Andrew who had an interest in photography. As photographic advisor to Prince Andrew the relationship was to prove a marketing godsend for the photographic industry. Sponsored by ILFORD and NIKON Gene created and produced another exhibition entitled PERSONAL POINTS OF VIEW - the subject of photography becoming the photographer. A taxicab driver (Malcolm Cleaves - representing London tourism), a model (Clare Park - VOGUE Model of the Year), children, paparazzi (Koo Stark), fashion (Zandra Rhodes - fashion designer), music/entertainment (Linda McCartney), and royalty (Prince Andrew) took their own pictures to show the reality of their world. Television, magazine and newspaper crews were stepping over each other to cover the exhibition event held at Hamiltons Gallery in London.

Working with Sarah, the Duchess of York, Gene helped organized the largest photographic event ever held in Great Britain. ONE DAY FOR LIFE was a year in the making culminating on August 13th, 1987, with thousands of men, women and children taking pictures to capture a moment in their lives on that day. Edited and made into a best selling book it raised money for cancer research. ILFORD's annual calendar was again Gene's project: working in the background - submitting Prince Andrew's photographs as an objective "test" of Prince Andrew's photographic talent.

Gene organized the photography for the Royal Wedding of Prince Andrew and Sarah. It was his portrait of Prince Andrew and Sarah, that became the Royal Wedding Commemorative Stamp. And it was Gene who organized the logistics for Prince Andrew to photograph the castles representing Great Britain (Windsor, Carrickfergus, Edinburgh, and Caernarfon) that are the images on the High Value Definitive Stamps in use today by the Royal Mail.

Honored as a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society (FRPS) for his contributions to photography he help founded the RPS Distinction Panel for Photographic Printers and served as it's first Chairman.

His popularity and zeal for photography led to having his own television series entitled NOCON ON PHOTOGRAPHY for Thames Television London.

His book PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTING, describing the "f/stop method" of printing, became the bible for the black and white printing industry. It went on to its 4th printing for VIRGIN Press. The "f/stop method" is basis for his invention and production of the NOCON Photographic Timer which was distributed and sold by CALUMET.

Gene is now straddling two camps: he is on the board of advisors for FREESTYLE PHOTOGRAPHICS for film printing and for DIGITAL ART SUPPLIES for digital. With the digital medium he is exploring new concepts and ideas of photographic art rendering photographs into FAUXTOGRAPHS - a technique that bears the hallmarks of a painting.

The Collection:

The prints in my private collection of photographs were done during my 15 years working in London, England. They were printed under the authority and approval of some of the most renowned names in the photographic industry, amongst them: Barry Lategan, Terence Donovan, Terry O'Neill, Cecil Beaton, Howard Coster, Paul Tanqueray, Linda McCartney, Prince Andrew, and John Kobal (archivist for George Hurrell, C.S. Bull) to mention the more notable.

These prints exist as a result of my clients requiring variations of their photographs. In each case the differences were so slight as to be imperceptible. The print variations were made for the photographer's benefit and were, in fact, a part of the printing process. It was really more a gut feeling that one print was chosen over the other. The variations were left with me and put in boxes and set aside to be used as reference for future printing. Over the 15 year period I worked in London I produced thousands of prints.

The historical significance of these prints is that I was the last printer to have worked with the photographer while they were alive. None of these photographers could print their own work. It was my responsibility to make their prints in their style - the recipe of how it was to be printed. Without this recipe a print made by anyone other than myself do not have the authenticity or hallmarks of the photographer's intent.

These prints have been in storage for a number of years. Its history is my personal legacy that my children will inherit along with the other historical material in which I was involved.

Educational Program:

With 40 years experience in photography, working at the highest level of activity, I can look back and see what has taken place in our industry.

The film (as opposed to digital) industry was a great learning process. Particularly for me: I was the hub of a photographic community in my capacity as a photographic printer. Every photographer (in London) needed my services. Because of that it became the focus of photographic manufacturers: ILFORD, KODAK, NIKON, HASSELBLAD, DEVERE, PATERSON, LEICA, and many others. It was the center, as well, for students of photography. And because of this I created a community darkroom facility where young photographers could print their own work in the same space where I worked and therefore could provide help and advice. Everyone met there: it was known as THE PHOTOGRAPHERS WORKSHOP. It was a great time and a great place to learn photography and share information with other photographers. . Those were fabulous days.

Digital has changed the community of photography. There is no "hub" - no center of activity. The photolab is no more. Digital photographers have no place to go. They pretty much work in isolation. There is no distribution of knowledge. There is no... I won't go on.

I love digital. It has renewed my interest in photography and has advanced my ideas about print making. But that's because I transferred my aesthetics and reformulated my techniques to work in the digital medium. I'm as comfortable working with PHOTOSHOP™ as I was working in the darkroom. And it is with those same aesthetics that I continue my work.

What digital has done is to make possible the activity that was once the responsibility of the photolab - the end product of the our industry: the print. Young photographers are lured by the idea that they can print their own photographs. I've seen some results and frankly I question the standard of the work. Perhaps they had never seen what an actual photographic print looks like. Even if that person had: I know one professional photographer whose once award winning pictures now look like cartoons, bad ones at that. He had no background in the darkroom, yet he attempts to print his own work. The point is that PHOTOSHOP™, to the uninitiated, is like trying to use a calculator without any fundamental understanding of math.

Perhaps this collection may provide some guidelines as to what photography was before digital. And with this historical material create an educational program to reestablish photography to its former glory. This is not a return to the womb, to the darkroom, but to foster interest in what was done and to now explore the process in digital. Perhaps this will bring back the community of photography.

NORMAN PARKINSON

Silver Bromide Prints
Norman Parkinson Stamp/Printer's signature
Paper Size various
Printed by Gene Nocon, circa 1980-1986



CECIL BEATON

Silver Bromide Print

Printer's signature

Paper Size 16x20 inch

Printed by Gene Nocon, circa 1980-1990



BRADLEY SMITH

Silver Bromide Print

Printer's signature

Paper Size 16x20 inch

Printed by Gene Nocon, circa 1990-1995



Gene Nocon

Digital Prints

Signed

Paper Size various

Printed by Gene Nocon, circa 2004-2009

