

ARTWORK

CARLOS CLARKE

WORDS Eugene Costello

A show devoted to Bob Carlos Clarke showcases his raw, savage talent and love of the female form...

Aptly named *City Girl* (2000), Bob Carlos Clarke shot this portrait outside the exit to Canary Wharf Tube station. A far more pleasing sight to our eyes than the usual crowd of City boys that swell the pavements outside the All Bar One that now stands in the background.

That it was taken in 2000 attests to Clarke's hatred of modern digital photography: this could easily be an image from a retro-1960s exhibition – think Emma Peel in *The Avengers*. This is photography as art – not as cheap, disposable, ephemeral flotsam that fills lesser magazines, papers and hoardings.

Arguably, Bob Carlos Clarke was to photograph what fellow countryman Peter O'Toole was to acting. That is, like O'Toole, he had an astonishing, God-given talent that was both enhanced and undermined by flaws and addictions. Not alcohol or cocaine, or anything so pedestrian – Clarke's drug of choice was women, compounded by lifelong clinical depression caused by a deeply unhappy childhood.

Sadly, in 2006, Clarke walked out of The Priory in south-west London, walked to Barnes station and threw himself under the express train to Waterloo.

That such an important oeuvre of work has been preserved is a tribute to his wife Lindsey, and his agent Ghislain Pascal. Catch it while you can; such photography is a dying art form. ■
Edition of 25, from £350; until 14 May; thelittleblackgallery.com

