

THE LITTLE BLACK GALLERY



The Little Black Gallery is proud to announce a new book and exhibition

THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY by BOB CARLOS CLARKE

"Bob Carlos Clarke was best known for his impossibly glamorous, unapologetically sexy nudes. But, as these images from 'notoriously orgiastic' public school balls attest, he was also a consummate photojournalist." **British Journal of Photography**

Bob Carlos Clarke was a provocateur. His visual interests – women and rubber, in particular - sealed his reputation as a photographer of erotic images. However, Carlos Clarke was far from one-dimensional.

Serious about his work, he studied at the London College of Printing, where he fell in love with the sensual space of the dark room, and then as a postgraduate at the Royal College of Art. His work would span the genres of fine art, celebrity portraiture, photojournalism and advertising photography; his signature style a dark, brooding vulnerability.

He had described his native Cork, which he left as a young man, as 'no place for a libidinous adolescent.' A quarter of a century later, he found the perfect location to observe teenage lust: Public School Balls. Such events feature the holy trinity of 'getting off with' the object of one's desire: alcohol, music and easily removable clothes. Carlos Clarke, who was sent to board at Wellington College, saw this orgiastic spectacle as 'a peculiar side effect of a British public school education', in which access to the other sex is limited to the point of obsession, if not actual sexual persuasion. Yet in a club, the Hammersmith Palais, this explosion of unleashed sexuality mirrors the same scene in youth clubs, living rooms and public parks across the country. Lips lock, tongues dart, fingers probe, hands grasp flesh, in this rite of passage from innocence to experience. Carlos Clarke captures its crescendo in a joyous tempest of foam, pumped out across the dance floor. Everyone tries to catch it, to rub it in to their skin and that of their friends, wanting it - and the moment - to last forever.

Years later, Carlos Clarke said it was amusing to observe people's reactions to recognising themselves in these pictures ... the wider question is, which of us doesn't?

Text by Max Houghton, from *The Agony and The Ecstasy* by Bob Carlos Clarke, published by Jane & Jeremy (RRP £90)

A series of six limited edition prints from the book are available (priced £350 + VAT each), which will be exhibited at **The Little Black Gallery** on **Saturday 12** and **Saturday 26 May** from **11am-4pm**.

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13A Park Walk, Chelsea, London SW10 0AJ

020 7349 9332

www.thelittleblackgallery.com