

# HAMILTONS

## Celebrating Silver

7<sup>th</sup> Feb – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Hamiltons Gallery is delighted to present *Celebrating Silver*. This exhibition brings together a curated selection of the very finest prints by some of photography's most influential artists. Through photographers such as Richard Avedon, Irving Penn, Don McCullin, Hiro, Robert Mapplethorpe and others, the technical mastery of print making is explored.

Prior to the advent of digital photography, silver had a central role in all photographic printing techniques. Due to its less complex and quicker developmental process, gelatin silver prints gained popularity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with commercial and fine art photographers and continue to be revered today for their tonal range and clarity.

Throughout its history, Hamiltons has championed the artistic possibilities of print making. *Celebrating Silver* gathers pioneers from 20<sup>th</sup> century photography, modern masters and contemporary artists, in an exhibition that celebrates the beauty and impact achieved through the gelatin silver medium.

### HIGHLIGHTS



Harlequin Dress, New York, 1950 © The Irving Penn Foundation

**Irving Penn** (1917-2009) is regarded as one of the most important modern masters of photography, not only for the celebrated images he created but for his utilization of different printing techniques to compliment his subject matter. *Harlequin Dress, New York, 1950* was originally conceived as the lead image for the article 'The Black and White Idea' published in the April 1950 issue of American Vogue. The accompanying article states: "there is no color more brilliant than black and white", which is epitomized in Penn's bold photograph. Through Penn's artistic composition the daring geometric patterns of the dress are intensified by the sharp monochromatic contrasts of this gelatin silver print.



Early Morning, West Hartlepool Steel Foundry, 1963 © Don McCullin

**Sir Don McCullin** is arguably Great Britain's greatest photojournalist having documented many major conflicts of the latter 20th and 21st Century. His lifetime contribution to photojournalism continues today and lives on in the collection of many museums. Paramount to the effectiveness of McCullin's black and white images is the photographer's

ability to control the elements of light and darkness in his prints.

"We don't live in a black and white world, but once you see a black and white photograph, it haunts you." – Sir Don McCullin

McCullin, who develops and prints many of his own works in his Somerset dark room, believes that black and white impacts viewers in a way that colour cannot match. Of his printing McCullin notes: "It has been said that I print my photographs too dark. How can such experiences be conveyed with a feeling of lightness?" The iconic *Early Morning, West Hartlepool Steel Foundry, 1963* exemplifies McCullin's skill creating shadow and contrast that amplify the solemnness of England's industrial north in the post-war era.

**Hiro** (1930- 2021) was a Japanese-American photographer renowned for his fashion and still-life photography. As an apprentice to Richard Avedon, Hiro quickly developed his own style which was celebrated in publications such as *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue* and *Rolling Stone*. Hiro's images were praised for his minimalist, yet creative and technically precise approach.

*Balenciaga, Four-Sided Dress, 1967* is indicative of Hiro's experimental compositions by featuring unique angles and masterful use of light. Ever the perfectionist, Hiro would spend hours in his dark room adjusting the exposure resulting in the unparalleled clarity of this print. "A Hiro image wasn't just about precision – he wanted *exactitude*,"

Donna Mitchell, a frequent collaborator with Hiro, recalled. "Not a spot of light, not an angle or a color value, nothing was an accident. Each strobe was timed within a nanosecond."



Balenciaga, 'Four-Sided Dress, 1967 © Hiro

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