

MICHAEL
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GALLERY

The Photography Show Presented by AIPAD
SPOTLIGHT: A Story in Pictures

KRASS CLEMENT
(b.1946)



© Krass Clement, *Drum 49*, 1991. Courtesy Michael Hoppen Gallery

"I discovered an extraordinary book many years ago by the contemporary Danish photographer Krass Clement. The book is called *Drum* and takes its name from the eponymous Irish village where all the photographs were shot in a small bar over the course of one evening in 1991.

Clement had been invited to do a project in Ireland, and arrived in Dublin by boat from Denmark, with no clear direction but a yearning to find good photographic opportunities to take his mind off the recent death of his mother. He found himself in the village of Drum which sits near the border with Northern Ireland. He entered a bar on the edge of the town: the modest room was lit with one solitary lightbulb; it had a scrubbed wooden bar and floor; a few benches and bare walls.

As Clement settled quietly into a corner with a beer, men started to filter through the door. He had a camera and just 2 1/2 rolls of film in his pocket. He started to photograph the characters that now populated the bar; and was drawn to the incredible face of one elderly man in particular. The images are darkly atmospheric, almost melancholic, as Clement's assiduous eye captures the man's pensive expressions and the deep lines of his face.

In the sparse text that accompanies the photographs in the book, the reader is informed that the bar was the meeting place for local Protestants in what is - still today - an otherwise predominantly Catholic region.

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Each frame moves from one small moment to another – but always centring on this one solitary figure, lost in his own thoughts. The photographer is almost invisible as no one seems to be aware of his presence, as he is documenting the scene. At the end of the evening, Clement had shot 90 frames and it is these that make up this wonderful series of magnificently raw photographs.

The extraordinary group of photographs made in this pub, became a Holy Grail for me, and I eventually was able to meet with the photographer to discuss representing this work for him, and trying to find collectors and museums who up until now, had been unaware of his exceptional talent.

Clement always made all his own prints, each one is magnificent. But he has produced very few, and unusually, no later prints nor editions exist. We are extremely lucky to be able to represent this work at our gallery. The pictures have been beautifully printed, and the only comparison that I can find is in the spiritual, compelling work of Christopher Killip, known for the critical sharpness and exceptional print quality of his social documentary photography.

Krass Clements's work equals Killip's in many ways and shows an acute humanity not often seen in photographs of this period. Each frame, and therefore each page as one pulses through the book, cement Drum's reputation as one of the most outstanding series I have seen. Clement's photographs are mesmerising, and I can barely take my eyes from the pictures every time I look at them. This will be the first time they have ever been seen in the USA, and we are delighted and honoured to be able to bring them to a wider audience."



© Krass Clement, *Drum 74*, 199. Courtesy Michael Hoppen Gallery

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HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON
(1908-2004)



© Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Rue Mouffetard, Paris, 1954*. Courtesy Michael Hoppen Gallery

"I met Slim Aarons in 2001 when I worked with him to create his first London show. It was at this time that we also placed his whole collection with Getty Images, which now owns the complete archive of his work.

During the two years I spent working with Slim Aarons, I had the opportunity to acquire some of the photographs that he had swapped with other photographers he knew. Amongst these there were many of the greats – W. Eugene Smith, Chim Seymour, George Silk, Andreas Feininger, Alfred Eisenstaedt - and many other eminent photographers that Aarons had worked with, including the legendary Henri Cartier-Bresson who remained a great friend of his for many years and who was one of the co-founders of the great MAGNUM press agency. Cartier-Bresson always told me in subsequent years that Aarons had introduced him to his tailor and that all his suits were Slim's fault!



One of the pictures we found in Aarons' house in Katonah and which he subsequently gifted to me, was one of the most famous photographs of the 20th century. Everyone is familiar with Cartier-Bresson's iconic image from 1954, of the young boy carrying two bottles of wine down the street in Paris, titled Rue Mouffetard.

Today it is arguably one of the top five most recognisable photographs of the 20th century. Strangely though, Cartier-Bresson made very few prints of this work at the time.

The story goes, that when Cartier-Bresson was mapping out his book, 'Les Européens', he met with Slim Aarons in London where they shared an apartment on Clarges Street, in Mayfair. Aarons advised Cartier-Bresson that any good book of photographs should start with a wonderful 'opener', have lots of 'goodies' in the middle, and a fantastic 'closer'. Slim chose as the picture that would close the book, this irresistible image of the young boy, clutching two bottles of wine, as he skips along the Rue Mouffetard in Paris. Sure enough, if you open 'Les Européens', the last page of the book is indeed that photograph. So, this little piece of history was decided on a sofa in Clarges St, London!

Photographers often swapped pictures between themselves, it was their way of paying homage to each other by choosing what they thought represented them well. I am delighted to still have this rare print of Rue Mouffetard, with its unusual and exceptional provenance, in my collection.

Having researched this work with the assistance of the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation in Paris, we can confirm that surprisingly the Foundation does not have a vintage print of this seminal image in its collection – a fact that establishes quite how rare this print is. The only other vintage work that we have been able to trace of this picture is in the Sir Elton John collection.

The print has wonderful legends and stamps to its verso. It has the Complimentary Magnum stamp which is one of the rarest of the Magnum stamps. It also signed 'Hank Carter' by Cartier-Bresson, which was the pseudonym he used when travelling. He always signed his hotel register with this 'nom de plume' – a name given to him by Slim!

The print is dedicated to Madame Slim Aarons and also includes the line - 'Pierre Gassman did the rest' on the verso. Gassman was Cartier-Bresson's printer at the Picto laboratory in Paris. It is an extraordinary print on double weight paper; and is now being presented at AIPAD to the collectors' market for sale for the very first time in its 71 year history.

The wonderful back story is a bonus to what could be called one of the greatest trophy pictures of the 20th century."

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ERWIN BLUMENFELD
(1897-1969)



© Erwin Blumenfeld, *Zandvoort (Holland)*, 1925

"I was at Sotheby's in Amsterdam, many years ago, and came across a small group of wonderful photographs that had been taken by Paul Citroen, the German-born Dutch artist, art educator and co-founder of the New Art Academy in Amsterdam. Amongst the group of pictures being offered were three small jewel-like photographs of Paul Citroen leaping in the air, taken by his young friend, Erwin Blumenfeld. Blumenfeld and Citroen were great school chums, and some years later Blumenfeld also married Citroen's cousin, Lena Citroen. There were, in the group at the auction house, three small prints of Citroen in various poses, almost seeming to float in the air— they were absolutely beautiful and I could not resist them.

After the sale, one of the representatives of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam approached me and asked if I was willing to sell them some of the works I had bought, if they were able to find the budget to purchase them. I, of course, said yes, but added that I would want to keep one for myself, which I did.

This small, beautiful jewel-like photograph from this sale, is the one that I kept. I was looking at it again recently, and decided it was time for it to be seen again. It is an unusual picture as it freezes motion, and in 1925, freezing motion was not only very difficult because of the speed of the camera shutter, but also because it was not something that an amateur was able to do, and one also needed the best equipment to do so - hardly affordable items for young budding artists.

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Martin Munkácsi and Jacques-Henri Lartigue were both great practitioners of movement photography, whereas Blumenfeld was better known for his surreal, crafted studio work. So, this is a very unusual piece of his work by one of the 20th century greats. What is also interesting is the copious amount of writing on the back of the print which lists the time and the place, and the date the photograph was taken (1925). It's also unusual that it is signed and annotated by Blumenfeld. This is something Blumenfeld rarely did.

Both artists went on to make their mark on photography and illustration and both became famous for their output. This joyous single image is the beginning of two careers that would fill the pages of books and magazines for many years to come. Blumenfeld emigrated to New York in 1941, whilst Paul Citroen attended the Bauhaus and returned to Amsterdam where he lived for most of his life. They remained great friends throughout their lives."