

Kasmin's Camera

26 June – 16 August, 2024

Lyndsey Ingram is proud to present *Kasmin's Camera*: an exhibition of over 100 photographs taken by the pioneering gallerist John Kasmin during the 1960s and '70s. The photographs chronicle the launch of the Kasmin Gallery and the early careers of artists including Gillian Ayres, Anthony Caro, Helen Frankenthaler, David Hockney, Howard Hodgkin, Jules Olitski, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, Frank Stella and others. Kasmin gave many of these artists, including David Hockney, their first show and was an early champion of their work. In the case of the American Abstract Expressionists, he introduced their work to the UK. These photographs also include images of friends, such as Celia Birtwell, Ossie Clark and the explorer and writer Bruce Chatwin, with whom Kasmin travelled widely. This show – to mark Kasmin's 90th birthday year – is the first time most of these images have ever been seen. Some have been available through Camera Press for use in scholarly publications but none has ever been printed and exhibited and all come directly from Kasmin's archive. These images are printed from Kasmin's original negatives and are signed, numbered and available in small editions.



David Hockney, Sheridan Dufferin and Kasmin, Minneapolis to Chicago, 1965

C-type colour print

Signed verso and numbered from the edition of 25

20.3 x 30.5 cm (8 x 12 in)

Lyndsey Ingram comments: 'This is a real passion project for me. Kasmin is an important mentor and someone from whom I've learned so much. We also work with many of the artists in the photographs, including Hockney, whose graphic work is a defining part of our gallery.'

Kasmin comments: 'It's thrilling when you're nearly 90 to suddenly be having a show of photographs you've taken 50 or 60 years ago, and for them to be appreciated, admired and exhibited. It's wonderful and unexpected to be on the other side of the desk at the art gallery!'



Barnett Newman in his studio in New York City, 1965

Black & White fibre print

Signed verso and numbered from the edition of 25

30.5 x 20.3 cm (12 x 8 in)

The gallery was given unrestricted access to Kasmin's photo albums and archive of negatives and has chosen a selection of images primarily from the 1960s and '70s that build an intimate picture of the art world at that time. These images reveal close relationships with the people in them. Many of the pictures were taken abroad with David Hockney, Howard Hodgkin and Bruce Chatwin. They capture key moments – including Hockney's early time in Los Angeles – and the friendships of Kasmin's circle, how they travelled, interacted and lived.

In addition to having an exceptional eye, Kasmin at his first job in London worked closely as the assistant to the distinguished portrait photographer Ida Kar, famous in her time for portraits of artists (her archive is now part of the National Portrait Gallery). Ingram comments: 'What distinguishes Kasmin's photos is that they capture a real sense of friendship and understanding between the photographer and his subject. There's an intimacy. Unlike party or documentary pictures, you can sense a kinship between the subjects and the person photographing them. They are spontaneous but also visually composed, compelling images. The artistic sensibility both of the photographer and sitter is apparent.'

David Hockney was one of Kasmin Gallery's first artists and Kasmin gave him his first show in the autumn of 1963. He bought Hockney's early painting 'Doll Boy' from the Young Contemporaries show when the artist was still a student at the Royal College of Art. Kasmin tried to convince the Marlborough Gallery to sell the young Hockney's drawings but they refused. So Kasmin sold Hockney drawings from his flat before opening his own space in 1963 with the backing of Sheridan Dufferin. His gallery was the first 'white cube' space in London and closed in 1971-2.



Bruce Chatwin above the Chusib Gorge, Namibia, 1984
 Black & White fibre print
 Signed verso and numbered from the edition of 25
 20.3 x 30.5 cm (8 x 12 in)

The exhibition and Kasmin's accompanying book focus on the period of the 1960s-70s because these particular images tell a rich story of a fertile time when Kasmin was working with many diverse creative figures. Seen together, they bear witness to an exciting moment with young, dynamic artists and creatives finding a new language. The sense of playfulness, extraordinary creativity and affection can be seen in Kasmin's photographs of Hockney with his parents in Yorkshire and learning to drive in LA. Ingram comments, 'He's spending time with his art dealer in California and taking him to see his parents because they are friends – they are only three years apart in age. The clearly care about each other and they remain friends today. With the images of Bruce Chatwin, another close friend, we see two explorers on the road together.'

Also important was Kasmin's close relationship to influential New York art critic Clement Greenberg. He believed in what he called 'Clem's crew', American Abstract Expressionist artists championed by Greenberg – Helen Frankenthaler, Jules Olitski, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, Frank Stella and the American minimalists. Indeed the Kasmin Gallery launched with an exhibition of Kenneth Noland and also showed the British Abstract Expressionist, Gillian Ayres. It was seen as exceptional and brave at the time to be showing large, abstract paintings in London. Hockney was the only figurative artist Kasmin showed – and Hockney's first exhibition was called *Pictures With People In* to reflect the fact that it was figurative art.



Helen Frankenthaler and Anthony Caro, Torcello, 1966
Black & White fibre print
Signed verso and numbered from the edition of 25
30.5 x 20.3 cm (12 x 8 in)

This exhibition celebrates Kasmin's extraordinary way of looking at the world. Ingram says: 'Kasmin has been an important friend and colleague – more than anybody else, he has taught me how to look at things. Not just pictures, but also sculptures, textiles, cinema, the beauty in objects. One day his son Aaron, who is also an artist, said I should look at his photo archive, which resulted in this show. He's turning 90 this year, and it felt like the right time.'

Kasmin's eye is special, says Ingram: 'He's interested in things that tell us about people. One lesson I've learned from him is to judge an object by its quality rather than its material or its maker – to really look rather than assume. He appreciates the formal qualities in even the most modest, utilitarian objects and pays them the same close attention he would a work of fine art. He also has a wonderful sense of humour, which comes through in the photographs.'

Kasmin's Camera shows him as both a witness to art and a maker. His photographs help us understand the history of art, says Ingram: 'This was an extraordinary time – there is a beautiful shot of Peter Schlesinger at the villa Le Nid du Duc in the South of France at time when Hockney painted the famous picture of him there. Kasmin's photos show us that place and time and help us understand the mood of the people and light of the day. The friendships captured in these photos are so close, the essence of so many images that become fundamental to how we see the world, these images are so fresh, or as Kas says, "in their juice".'

A coinciding publication, *Kasmin's Camera* will be published by Lyndsey Ingram and A/B Publications. The book will feature essays by American curator and writer Judith Goldman and Chris Stephens, Director of the Holburne Museum in Bath and curator of Tate Britain's exhibition of David Hockney in 2017.