

Gallerist Kas is now the one under the spotlight

An exhibition of over 100 previously unseen photographs taken by the renegade gallerist John Kasmin is showing at Lyndsey Ingram until August 16.

Known as 'Kas' to friends and art world aficionados, he is best known for representing David Hockney, who was one of his first artists when he opened his inaugural gallery in 1963.

The Kasmin Gallery at 118 New Bond Street was London's first specifically designed commercial building, created to show large paintings and sculpture in a single, blank space. Arguably, Kas created the 'white cube' concept.

His way and impact on the British contemporary art scene is such that in 2016, Tate Britain had



an exhibition of works given by or acquired via Kas.

Hockney purchase

Kasmin went to the Royal Society of British Artists' annual *Young Contemporaries* show in 1961. Auspiciously, he bought *Doll Boy* for £40, one of Hockney's first major paintings. Hockney then became a

key component of Kasmin's game-changing gallery. Other artists who were bigged up by Kas or enjoyed their first show at this space include Howard Hodgkin, Anthony Caro, Gillian Ayres, Barnett Newman, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella, Helen Frankenthaler and Kenneth Noland. A number of American abstract expressionists got their UK debut thanks to the keen eye of Kas.

That first gallery was a roaring success with both the art world and the gawping public. Jimi Hendrix lived round the corner and would pop in for a smoke and a jam. Kas would throw post-show parties at his house, defined by "dancing, dancing, dancing". There was a fair amount of casual sex too: "It was my only sport. I assumed all girls liked doing it, and why not?"

Unsurprisingly, he got a reputation in some quarters as a provocateur and a rogue.

While showcasing these artists at his gallery, the boundaries between business, banter and holidaying together were highly blurry. It was the 1960s, after all, but perhaps more importantly, everyone involved in this emerging circle was in some way giving the establishment a poke in the eye.

The tribulations of money, status, addictions and tragedy had



Above: Helen Frankenthaler and Anthony Caro posing at the ancient throne, Torcello, Venice, 1966, by John Kasmin.

Left: David Hockney in the Kasmin Gallery during the Kenneth Noland exhibition in 1965.

yet to descend on these bohemian chancers. They were young, familiar to some, but not famous and on the cusp of success. The fascination with the photos now is undeniably fuelled by their current status as dead, legendary or in the case of Hockney, perhaps the UK's greatest living artist.

The photographs in the exhibition at Lyndsey Ingram Gallery in Bourdon Street, London, which is titled *Kasmin's Camera*, also include images of friends, such as textile designer Celia Birtwell, her husband Ossie Clark and the explorer and writer Bruce Chatwin, with whom Kasmin travelled widely.

Debut for most

The show marks Kasmin's 90th birthday year and it is the first time most of these images have ever been seen.

Some were available through Camera Press for use in academic publications, but none have ever been printed or exhibited and all come directly from Kasmin's archive.

The images are printed from Kasmin's original negatives and are signed, numbered and available in small editions. All photos are offered at £950 plus VAT.

Stewart Cumiskey

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Right: Gillian Ayres with Bardsley Island in the distance, Llyn Peninsula, North Wales, c.1985.

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This extraordinary table, likely made by Gillows of Oxford Street, is distinguished by its brass inlay and deeply carved moulding, akin to a c.1820-1830 library table documented by Dr. Susan Stuart. Gillows' London branch, known for its innovative designs, contrasted with their traditional Lancaster

workshop. The table's brass work,

reminiscent of 17th-century designs by Jean Berain, and its modern rosewood

carving, exemplify a blend of old and new styles. Though it's unclear if Gillows

crafted the brass inlay, it's speculated that it came from specialists like George Bullock or Louis Constantin

LeGaigneur. The table's exceptional craftsmanship and unique fusion of styles make it a remarkable piece. 30" high,

57.5" diameter. £65,000. For sale by Wick Antiques.



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