

HUXLEY-PARLOUR

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Danny Lyon

25 October - 26 November 2016

“The use of the camera has always been for me a tool of investigation, a reason to travel, to not mind my own business, and often to get into trouble.” - Danny Lyon



SNCC Staff Sit-in, Atlanta, Georgia, 1963

An exhibition of photographs by the renowned American documentary photographer, Danny Lyon (b. 1942), will go on show at Beetles + Huxley. Utilising a style that would become known as New Journalism, Lyon immersed himself in the lives of his subjects. The exhibition will include photographs from several of Lyon's seminal projects, including his photographs taken during the Civil Rights Movement, and his explorations of American biker culture and the Texas prison system.

The exhibition will open with a selection of Lyon's work taken during the Civil Rights Movement in the early 1960s. During the summer break after his junior year at the University of Chicago, Lyon hitchhiked to Cairo, Illinois, and joined the marches and protests organised by Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). After arriving in Cairo he photographed a protest at a segregated swimming pool and developed a deep affinity with the SNCC's cause. A self-taught photographer, he spent the next two years travelling around the South taking photographs for the group including almost all the major events during the Civil Rights Movement. One photograph, featured in the exhibition, shows Lyon's fellow SNCC photographer, Clifford Vaughns, being lifted off the ground as he is arrested by a large group of police. Lyon intended his photographs to change people's minds about the Civil Rights Movement whilst the sale of the images simultaneously contributed towards group's fundraising efforts.

Lyon went on to explore biker culture in the American Midwest, immersing himself in the Chicago Outlaws Motorcycle club between 1963 and 1967. At a time when bikers were marginalised by the public and vilified by the press, Lyon described his photographs as “an attempt to record and glorify the life of the American bike rider”. His photographs show the club members, who later became his friends, racing, working on their machines and riding with their wives and girlfriends. Photographs like *Cal, Elkhorn, Wisconsin* (1967) use dynamic compositions to capture the free spirit of biker culture and the series became hugely popular in the 1960s and 70s.

The exhibition will also include a project Lyon undertook in Texas prisons in 1967-8, published in the landmark book *Conversations with the Dead* (1969). Following a chance encounter with some prison inmates whilst at a rodeo in Huntsville, Texas, Lyon was given the idea of photographing the running of prisons. With the cooperation of the Texas Department of Corrections Lyon was grant-

ed unchecked access to all aspects of the prisoners' lives. At a time the Texas prison system was still based on a format created during the era of slavery, the inmates were segregated and the officers and guards took on the role of gods. A pertinent photograph in the exhibition shows a building "shakedown" in which naked prisoners form a line next to a row of uniformed prison guards. With his typically impassioned outlook, Lyon's took deeply empathetic photographs of the inmates - "I tried with whatever power I had to make a picture of imprisonment as distressing as I know it to be in reality."

Born in Brooklyn in 1942, Danny Lyon received a BA in history in 1963 from the University of Chicago. Since 1967 he has worked as an independent photographer and an associate at Magnum Photos. He has received Guggenheim Fellowships in photography and filmmaking, a Rockefeller Fellowship, Missouri Honor Medal for Distinguished Service in Journalism and a Lucie Award. His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago, Whitney Museum of American Art, the Menil Collection, the M.H de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco and the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona.

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