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THE INFLUENTIAL IMAGERY OF DAIDO MORIYAMA REASSESSED

By Jessica Stewart, March 2, 2018



A new exhibition at the Michael Hoppen Gallery in London offers a fine retrospective of one of the leading lights of post-war Japanese photography...

A pioneering figure in modern photography, Daido Moriyama was born in Osaka, Japan in 1938, meaning his work first came to prominence during a time of huge social upheaval in his country. Reflecting the contradictions and juxtapositions of the rapidly developing modern society of post-war Japan, Moriyama's body of work documents the breakdown of

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traditional values while embracing the art, literature and filmmaking of the West – including the revolutionary work of Andy Warhol, Jack Kerouac and William Klein.

Having first trained in graphic design, Moriyama brought a bold, modern approach to his image-making, embracing social and street photography and adopting techniques that seemed crude by the standards of the time, with photographs that often appear blurred and unfocused. ‘We perceive countless images all day long and do not always focus on them,’ he explained. ‘Sometimes they are blurry, or fleeting, or just glimpsed out of the corner of the eye. The crushing force of time is before my eyes, and I try to keep pressing the shutter release of the camera.’

His understanding of graphic design and layout is best showcased in Record magazine, the self-published title he launched in 1972. He is also heavily associated with the magazine Provoke, founded in 1968 by the photographers Yutaka Takanashi and Takuma Nakahira, together with writer Takahiko Okada and critic Koji Taki. (Typically, the publication’s brief life – it ran to just three issues – is in inverse proportion to its enduring influence.)

Still a hugely significant figure, this new showcase of Moriyama’s career – which runs at the Michael Hoppen gallery until March 29 – feels as vital and relevant as ever.