

Looking Back

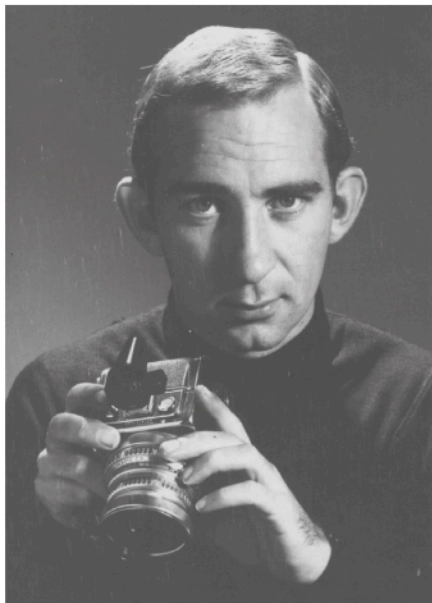
A teacher, photographer and internationally published photographic historian, FBIPP Michael Hallett's career has contributed to the collective written and visual history of photography, art and design.

An early fascination with cameras came at age 13; it progressed into studying at Bournemouth Municipal College of Art in 1956 and then as an assistant in a fashion studio by age 19. He tells the Photographer, "I think like everyone of that age who went to art college, and there were not very many, we all wanted to go up to London and become famous. You could argue nothing has changed. I got paid £8 a week; I was an assistant, so I learned how to sweep floors and not raise dust."

Head hunted to lecture at Leicester College of Art & Design at age 21 - placing him not much older than his pupils - set a precedent for life ahead. In his early days as a lecturer, he gained a Kodak Colour Scholarship in Rochester, New York, which put Michael ahead of the curve during an important shift in the industry. He explains, "Six young photographers went to America for three months and were taught colour photography and the new colour negative process."

Michael was invited to return to New York in the 1969-1970 academic year as a visiting professor in Photographic Illustration at the Rochester Institute of Technology. At the time, Rochester was the epicentre of photography, with headquarters for EKCo, Polaroid, Xerox, Bauche & Lomb, and the George Eastman House (the world's oldest museum dedicated to photography). "For that year, the photographic world was my oyster and within walking distance of my apartment," says Michael.

"It was an amazing opportunity. I was teaching Photo Illustration while also working with the photo scientists - those were the people that particularly interested



me - they were all the top photo scientists such as Bill Shoemaker, Dick Zaskia and Hollis Todd who were involved in the photography for the moon landing."

"The collection at George Eastman House was absolutely amazing; I got to know people there, such as Beaumont Newhall and Nathan Lyons as well as handling the archival material of photographers such as Ansel Adams, Ben Shahn and Minor White."

While in the USA, Michael and his illustrator colleague Tony Clayden worked on a body of work called 'America', documenting their experience while visiting the land of the free. On their return to the UK, they exhibited illustrations and colour photographs at the Tib Lane Gallery, Manchester, which received national press coverage and acclaim.

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Image: April 1960. 'Ban the Bomb' march, London



Image: 1964. Kodak Colour Scholarship. (from 10 by 8 inch colour negative)



Image: 1977. Portland Quarry at twilight. (from 10 x 8 inch original / contact print)

RETROSPECTIVE

MICHAEL HALLETT

There, a collection of interviews with world-leading photojournalists accompanied by their portrait. He says, "after I'd interviewed them, I always needed a picture of them. Watching them, you can pick up their attitudes and quirks get a meaningful photograph in a few seconds."

In 2007, he was awarded a PhD by Published Work. This allowed him to use some 50 or so examples of previously published material as his research. This allowed him to argue through his thesis new elements to add to knowledge. Moving with the times, Michael entered the digital era with a signature photo style that stitched multiple photographs of one scene together to

create one image, "each part of the image was exposed for that little bit of the picture. They got much more complex; at the most extreme, with up to 100 images being stitched together having been individually exposed." The technique, referred to as photo constructions, would first begin on a project recording the development of Birmingham's retail quarter, the Bullring. The results were originally exhibited at Focus on Imaging at the NEC and later sponsored by Casio cameras. Later, they were exhibited at St Martin's Church located in the Bullring itself. This project was published as *Bullring: the heart of Birmingham*. The photo construction trademark would continue into various other projects over the next decade.

Image: July 2001. Bullring (edit). (photoconstruction used in 'a great city' exhibition)



RETROSPECTIVE

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His latest project, *A Great City*, documents Birmingham over 20 years, beginning in 2000, launched this September. Alternatively the project can be seen as a website at www.brumpics.co.uk. The exhibition draws influence from Michael's past encounters, "In this exhibition, each of the eighteen landscape exhibition frames recall a photo story based on Stefan Lorant's creation of *Weekly Illustrated* and *Picture Post*. Each frame has a main/key photograph, along with supplementary photographs plus a detailed caption all bringing the story together. As the viewer engages through the sequence of these frames, this twenty-year record of a great city unfolds."

The exhibit is in the Library of Birmingham until end February 2022. And now, at 81-years-old this is testament to Dr. Hallett's unmovable passion. But now he is negotiating his next project either in words or pictures to be seen on a variety of publishing platforms.

Image Above: German-born American photographer and photojournalist Alfred Eisenstaedt taken by Michael for his book *Being There*. Alfred most notable photograph is *V-J Day in Times Square*, which captures an American sailor grabbing and kissing a stranger during the V-J Day celebrations in 1945

Image Right: A letter to Michael from Alfred Eisenstaedt thanking him for the work he published.

