



**GUY
BOURDIN:
IMAGE
MAKER**

27 Nov 2014 – 15 Mar 2015

Embankment Galleries South Wing

The UK's largest ever exhibition of the influential and enigmatic fashion photographer Guy Bourdin, featuring over 100 works and previously unseen material from the photographer's estate, from 1955 to 1987.

This major show charted Bourdin's distinguished 40-year career from Man Ray's protégé to photography revolutionary in his own right and explored his pursuit of perfection. The exhibited works exemplified the craftsmanship behind his images, from production to publication, and their enduring quality as a consequence.

Guy Bourdin's editorial and advertising imagery represent a highpoint in late twentieth century fashion photography. His work took the basic function of the fashion photograph -to sell clothing, beauty and accessories- and made it into something rich and strange. Bourdin did this without resorting to exoticism; instead, he established the idea that the product is secondary to the image. From his professional debut for Paris Vogue in the 1950s, Bourdin developed a distinctive style of visual storytelling which continues to serve as a source of inspiration to contemporary fashion photographers from Tim Walker to Nick Knight.

Curated by Alistair O'Neill with Shelly Verthime, the exhibition included over 100 colour exhibition prints of Bourdin's most significant works, as well as early and late works in black and white that serve to challenge Bourdin's reputation as a colour photographer. This was complimented by a range of other photographic materials: unique Polaroid test shots, double-page spread layouts, contact sheets and transparencies marked for composition that explored Bourdin's craftsmanship as an image maker and the processes involved in producing startling and provocative imagery in a pre-digital age. It also highlighted Bourdin as a pioneer of fashion film, showcasing a range of Super-8 films he made at the same time as his on-location photo shoots.

The exhibition also featured a selection of paintings, working drawings, sketches and notebooks, not seen in the UK before, which informed his approach as an compositional image-maker and meticulous draughtsman. A highlight was the 'Walking Legs' series - a campaign commissioned by Charles Jourdan in 1979 exhibited in its entirety for the first time with a previously unseen accompanying fashion film.