



Terry O'Neill
(British, 1938 - 2019)

Biography

Terry O'Neill was born and raised in London and began his career working in a photographic unit for British Airways in the late 1950s. He photographed a sleeping figure at Heathrow Airport who happened to be Britain's Home Secretary, spurring his subsequent employment at a tabloid in 1959. His first job was photographing Sir Laurence Olivier and he was soon a successful freelancer chronicling the emerging faces of film, fashion, and music that would go on to define the Swinging Sixties. By 1965 he was being commissioned by the biggest magazines and newspapers in the world.

His work has appeared on the covers and in *Life*, *Rolling Stone*, *Vogue*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *Vanity Fair* and he has created iconic movie posters, album covers, and fashion images for designers. His photograph of Faye Dunaway the morning after she won her Best Actress Oscar in 1977 is considered one of the most iconic Hollywood images of all time, while his image of Brigitte Bardot smoking is perhaps the best known image of her. O'Neill is the recipient of numerous awards, and in 2011 he was awarded the Royal Photographic Society's Centenary Medal.

Artwork and technique

Terry O'Neill's exquisite and candid portraits of the celebrities and culture of the 1960s and 1970s helped to define the era and preserve it for the future. His photographs display his knack for capturing his subjects candidly or in unconventional settings stemming from his ability to fade into the background and exercise discretion.

His incisive photojournalism of creative and political luminaries, oftentimes in their most unguarded and early moments, has included Brigitte Bardot, The Beatles, Audrey Hepburn, David Bowie, the Rolling Stones, Nelson Mandela, and many others. Helping to define backstage reportage, O'Neill worked closely with Frank Sinatra for over 30 years being granted privileged access to the legend, was with the Beatles and Rolling Stones in 1963, and covered The Who, Chuck Berry, and Eric Clapton early in their music careers. His other subjects include political figures such as Winston Churchill and Nelson Mandela, contemporary icons such as Amy Winehouse and Nicole Kidman, many members of the British royal family, as well as every James Bond from Sean Connery to Daniel Craig.

Message

Over his six decade career, O'Neill has formed close bonds with many of his subjects, evidenced by the intimate, snapshot-style nature of his iconic photographs. As he advises, "You must like the people, that's the key to any job. It comes through in the pictures: that's the difference between a good picture and a bad picture." With such an illustrious careers, O'Neill says, "I look back on my life and I can't believe I did all those things."

Terry O'Neill passed away in November 2019, but his legacy lives on.

NOS Article Terry O'Neill

Honours and Awards

2019

Appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2019 Birthday Honours for services to photography

2011

Royal Photographic Society's Centenary Medal

2004

Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society

Collections

National Portrait Gallery, London, United Kingdom



Selected Exhibitions

2023

Famous by Terry O'Neill, curated by Feiko Koster,
Fotomuseum aan het Vrijthof, Maastricht, The Netherlands

2022

Terry O'Neill: Stars, Fotografiska, Stockholm, Sweden

2017

Modern Masters, SmithDavidson Gallery, Miami, USA

2014

Terry O'Neill's Rock & Roll Opus, San Francisco Art Exchange,
San Francisco, CA, USA

2009

*Chairman of the Board, Knight of the Realm:
Photographs of Frank Sinatra and Sir Elton John*,
San Francisco Art Exchange, San Francisco, USA
A Retrospective, Getty Image Gallery, the Village,
Westfield London, London, United Kingdom

2007

Kings and Queens: Photographs by Terry O'Neill,
San Francisco Art Exchange, San Francisco, USA

2005

Photographs by Terry O'Neill, San Francisco Art Exchange,
San Francisco, USA

2003/4

Terry O'Neill: Celebrity, National Portrait Gallery, London,
United Kingdom

Selected Art Fairs

Palm Beach Jewelry Art and Antique Show, West Palm Beach, USA
PAN Amsterdam, Amsterdam, NL

Books

2019

Bowie by O'Neill: The definitive collection with unseen images
*Elton John by Terry O'Neill: The definitive portrait,
with unseen images*
Always Audrey: Six Iconic Photographers. One Legendary Star

2018

Led Zeppelin Live : 1975–1977
Terry O'Neill: Rare & Unseen

2017

When Ziggy Played The Marquee

2016

Breaking Stones 1963–1965: A Band on the Brink of Superstardom
Terry O'Neill: Every Picture Tells a Story

2015

*Two Days That Rocked the World: Elton John Live at
Dodger Stadium*

2014

Terry O'Neill's Rock 'n' Roll Album

2013

Terry O'Neill

2012

All About Bond

2008

Eltonography: Sir Elton John a Life in Pictures

2007

*Sinatra: Frank and Friendly- A Unique Photographic Memoir of a
Legend*

2003

Celebrity

1985

Legends