

# L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

## Music Photo Gallery : Mick Rock : Unseen Vintage Prints from His Personal Archive, Early 1970s

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For more than half a century, boxes of vintage prints by **Mick Rock** — “the man who shot the seventies” — remained sealed and unseen.

Today, they resurface for the first time, offering an intimate view of the photographer who shaped the visual identity of rock music.

First presented by **The Music Photo Gallery** at Photo London in 2022, the year following Rock’s passing, this unique body of work reframes music photography within the canon of contemporary art. The collection also resonates with recent market milestones, such as Sotheby’s record-breaking sale *Freddie Mercury: A World of His Own*, where many of the images originated in Rock’s archive.

## Organizing an unseen archive

During the last two years of his life, Mick Rock worked closely with Sebastián Alderete, director of The Music Photo Gallery, to bring order to his personal archive for the very first time. This collaboration built on years of trust: since 2015, the gallery had organized large- scale multimedia exhibitions such as *David Bowie: The Rise of Ziggy Stardust* and *Queen: The Bohemian Rhapsody Years*, staged in Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, São Paulo, and London. Each show combined more than 150 works with original films, music, installations, and immersive experiences — often featuring Rock himself, captivating audiences with stories only he could tell.

That bond of friendship reached a milestone when Rock entrusted the gallery with all his negatives for the Queen exhibition in Mexico, enabling monumental prints never before seen. Shortly after, he began revisiting his vintage photographs, untouched for more than fifty years.

## Treasures rediscovered

Among the works brought to light are unseen portraits of Syd Barrett, a rare gold-toned gelatin silver print of David Bowie, Queen photographs scribbled on by Freddie Mercury, Lou Reed's contact sheet later used for an album cover, and unique polaroid-sized c- prints handcrafted by Rock at the moment of creation.

These vintage prints stand apart from all other Mick Rock works on the market — not only posthumous editions and reproductions. Their significance lies in the historical fact of their making: in that time, in that context, with the unique imprint of Rock's hand. Born of chemistry, light, and the instant, they are unrepeatable objects that reflect Rock as both an artist and a witness of his era.

## Positioning music photography in fine art

The rediscovery of Rock's archive contributes to a larger mission pursued by The Music Photo Gallery: positioning music photography at the highest level of fine art. In dialogue with Daniel Kramer's vintage prints of Bob Dylan and the archives of Bob Gruen, Roberta Bayley, Ebet Roberts, and Marcia Resnick — also represented by the gallery — Rock's work takes its place as an essential chapter in twentieth-century cultural history.

Today, stewardship of his archive of vintage and limited-edition works remains with his wife, Pati Rock, with whom the gallery continues to collaborate closely.

## A rare gesture

Beyond the historical archive, Rock also entrusted the gallery with a personal selection of fifty contemporary works, each uniquely signed and inscribed on the front — something he had never done before. This exceptional gesture adds a rare dimension to his career, complementing the historical vintage prints.

## The Music Photo Gallery

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