

Lord Lexden

Conservative peer and historian

This enchanting collection of the surviving black-and-white photography of Patrick O'Higgins is powerfully evocative

Monsieur

Patrick O'Higgins – The Lost Photographer

Edited by **Jane Marguerite Tippet** with contributions from **Nicky Haslam and Marianne Hinton**
 Publisher **Zuleika**

Is there any more powerful way of evoking bygone years than through a set of superb black-and-white photographs? Without colour, the camera probes the characters of its subjects deeply and searchingly.

Patrick O'Higgins, the lost photographer who has now been rediscovered, was a

master of this particular craft. Sadly he practised it for no more than a few years after the Second World War, in which he had fought with bravery, breaking his back and both legs in 1945. Seven operations restored him to full health, his handsome appearance unimpaired.

For the rest of his life, this charming, talented individual with French family roots, who had been educated at Downside, was fêted by women and men on both

sides of the Atlantic, though sexual relationships involved only the latter. "I remained celibate," he said, "without being unduly chaste."

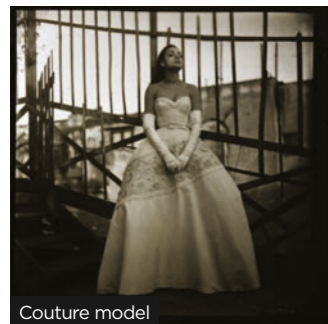
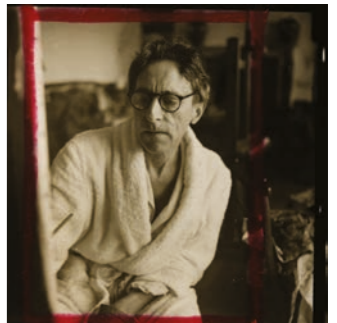
He died in 1980 at the age of 58. The packed congregation at his memorial service was reminded that "Patrick knew everybody from Winston Churchill to Gypsy Rose Lee [a well-known stripper] and was equally at home in White's or the Boeuf sur le Toit", the Parisian club popular with gay men.

He settled in the United States where he made his name as a journalist and biographer. His old life as a

photographer ceased to interest him. He destroyed most of his work from that period. Much of what survives fills this enchanting book, assembled by Jane Marguerite Tippet, an impressive American scholar who has forged strong ties with Britain.

She clearly enjoys tracking down lost treasures. Last year she published an hitherto unknown memoir by Edward VIII in which that unfortunate king recalled his life and abdication. (I reviewed the book last December.) A person now widely regarded as a lover of Nazi Germany emerges from this memoir

Jean Cocteau



Couture model



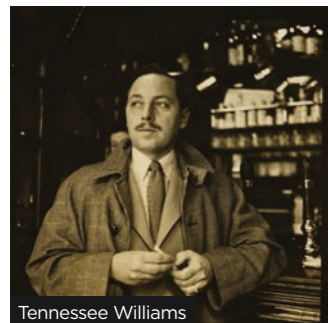
Mary Soames with son Nicholas



Svetlana Beriosova



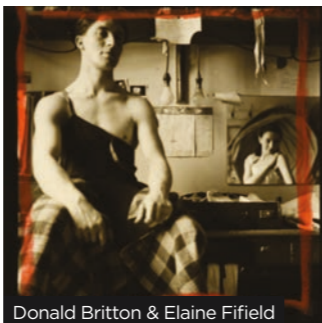
Woman in Capri



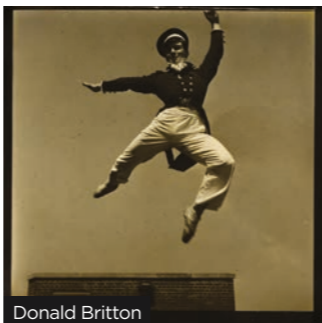
Tennessee Williams



Jean Marais



Donald Britton & Elaine Fifiel



Donald Britton

as a man who wanted to modernise the monarchy and foster closer Anglo-American ties. Regrettably, there is no photograph of him by Patrick O'Higgins in this second book by Tippet.

She writes: "Patrick clearly believed that unlocking

the individual was key to understanding society overall." Those he unlocked included Jean Cocteau, whom he captured in a stunning series of photographs painting in his studio wearing only a bathrobe.

By contrast, W Somerset Maugham was nattily attired for his photographic session looking "intermittently

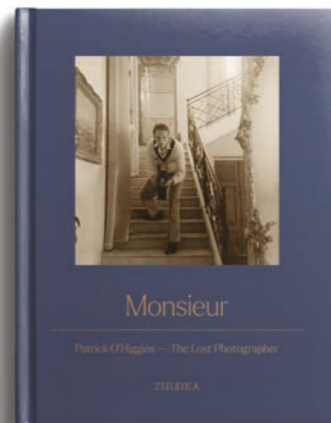
stern, pensive and playful". Mary Soames, Churchill's daughter, had her picture taken at the seaside playing happily with her first two boys, Nicholas (now Lord) Soames, looking cherubic, and his younger brother.

The rich and famous take their places in this remarkable collection alongside the unknown who caught the photographer's eye during his travels in Europe. An Italian woman in Capri with an unforgettable face carries a large basket on her head filled with her lunch; a wine bottle pokes out of the basket. Four attractive youths looking for mischief stand in the shadows

in a backstreet of Nice. A bespectacled scholar sits pensively in a cloister of Christ Church, Oxford. Everywhere O'Higgins combined light and shadow magnificently.

One thing unites the many diverse photographs in this memorable collection: the

"Beauty," he said, "fades, but style lasts for ever"



unique style of the photographer. "Beauty," he said, "fades, but style lasts for ever."

Tippet concludes: "The strength of his surviving work makes the unquestionable argument that Patrick was, above all things, one of the 20th century's finest forgotten photographers." Thanks to her, he will no longer be forgotten.