

# Portfolio: Karin Gottschalk: Editorial



Star athletes are not unlike gossip stars in how difficult it is to get them to consent to and then turn up for a photographic shoot. You can spend weeks in negotiation with their minders, their management, their sponsors, even their moms, only to have them suddenly disappear to Acapulco on a whim the day before the shoot.

More so than pop stars, sports stars are accustomed to seeing photographers at the small end of long telephoto lenses, on the sidelines and at a distance. The idea of coming face to face with one is not a natural one, and so the photographer who starts out to do more than make an extraordinary record of a moment of triumph is setting out for somewhere between a rock and a hard place.

That is something Andrew Douglas, formerly of real life sibling duo *The Douglas Brothers*, fully acknowledges. The London-based brothers created a photographic way of seeing in the early 1980s that stood out for its emotional range and a look that was almost anti-style—faces looming out of the deep of darkness, barely in focus, eyes fixed on some deep-hidden inner turmoil.

The Douglas photographs came as a shock to magazine editors in the United States where they first got their breaks, accustomed as they were to Annie Leibovitz's high style photographic group therapy sessions, but ensured them a legion of imitators and followers throughout that decade. Their some-toned monochrome became the standard manner of editorial portraiture for a while.

*Adidas* was the first to recognise the Brothers' talents in their home country, by way of creative hot shot advertising agency *The Leagues Delaney Partnership*. Still photograph commissions led to directing commercials "when the agency said, 'wouldn't it be great if some of your images were moved?'" Andrew relates.

However Douglas' efforts to get underneath athletes' skins as much as he had with other sitters were often hampered by the facts of their making. "In most cases they were still photographs shot on the back of TV commercials, and I just grabbed them," he admits ruefully. "I would really have liked to have had more time." The Brothers were always

being called in at short notice to jump on planes for some far off destination where an athlete happened to be training just before an event, logging on board case upon case of cameras and little more pre-shoot briefing than the names of the athlete, their sport, and a city.

They came in this way to photograph, and film, such stars as Jamaican-Caribbean sprinter Donovan Bailey, Cuban high jumper, Javier Sotomayor, and Cuban

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had made the chatty book jock on the m the focus sport is th Cuba, and

Cuban h of the gr and belie "There is a were shog about. Of in a balla sense beo similar be and stuff

enough, continue already p Prince ha a boxer h about the him. May

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## GUZMAN: Courtney GENTLEMAN of the OLD WORLD

A MAN STANDS on an iron-girdled bridge, leaning over past-cropped groy rattings to watch rally-balled tramp streamers ply their trade up and down the crystal-glittering back-lit waters of the East River of New York, their horns purring like the songs of a whale pod. He wears a hatted brown fedora, a right hand, peak and bill clasped I think, fore and index fingers the which are stained yellow meaning 8 years of dipping them in a Amind's developer.

A woman with peroxide blonde visionarily marcelled approaches, an entirely in pale fare clasped together throat by a glossy red-clawed anti-se below a fared smile. The man's hat, makes a slight, pry low, just regretfully turns on his heels to be the opposite direction, frayed dan jacket loosened underneath a flappi trenchcoat.

He is left in thoughts of a youth a succession of cities of the Old World: Prague, the Harbin, the actual ethnic heritage, Dessau, the Weimar Republik where he studied Laaso Maholy-Nagy at the Bauhaus the glided Paris of the '30s where's he befriended and was influenced by Elio Schiaparelli, the Surrealists a their other me temporary sojourns: in Paris, in the snow of cold

The name of the man is Guzman a complete fabrication. He is the 1 two young American fashion phot

"It all started just as fun," Hanson recalls.

## A BRIDGE SOMEWHERE IN BATTERSEA

You see them in their ones and twos, the wideboys, shuffling across the Battersea Bridge of a winter's midnight, donkey jacket collars turned up against the smoggy London cold, bristly shaven heads glinting orange sodium lamplight off razor-cut peroxide blonde, Power Station reeling in the background. The cigarette breath floats

equivalents of charcoal stick on rough-pressed watercolour paper, to render the glow of frozen light through murky darkness on a cold, cold night.

Blackest black makes the paper white even more luminous. Fog-glowing. Smearred. Bright.

Anderson and Low love their cities, amongst which they count London and New York

and there's also Nara and Tokyo and Rome. Buildings and passions—may be there's in their backgrounds? No points that they love these and their surroundings in suggest obsessiveness to the s. Is all they do hang around streets with roll film camera on y to whip off the lens cap for a are through the small hours? are, to my mind, constructing ad time in the same way that f and Luc Besson made future or us now through *Blade Runner* s Element. Dreamscapes for the ul of modern man who yearns for paradise he'll never have. Anderson and Low what their writes are. "Anything by Frank the Chrysler Building. The s Home on the Hill. ... Louis every first skyscraper in Chicago,"

else? "Entering New York. To Blue, every time, it's electrifying, night or day." they sigh, inner in a treasure you have to see to

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## A FEW DEGREES NORTH-WEST OF NORMAL

Geoff Kern lives in two worlds, that of the REAL, where gravity impales us onto the planetary pin-board and condemns us to the mundane roles of consumer and provider, parent and partner; and that of the unreal, where visions assume solid form, gravity loosens its grip and we float, free to fly in pursuit of dreams.

Kern himself walks the streets of the Dallas suburb that is his home while his mind soars through a world more real than those gritty pavements, his own world, a virtual world, the WORLD OF KERN.

Kern's WORLD came into being almost by accident, through quick of fate when Brooklyn-born Kern attended a California film school without facilities to actually make films. He recalls: "I just picked up a 35mm camera to test out ideas I had. This was the late '60s, and even then I had a particular way of seeing things—it's just the way I am."

In the way of the nine, Kern was drafted into the Navy, trained in photography and then dispatched to Vietnam. Inside that alien place, a few thousand miles distant but several light-years away, Kern's job was to document the disintegration of people and everyday things amid the ravages of war.

When he got back into the real world, Kern left film to further his photography, attending the Brooks Institute in Santa Barbara. From there he moved to Dallas, turning on its head the cliché of Texas-in-New-York to become a New-York-in-Texas. Kern explains: "I heard it was a good place for new photographers. I had a family and sick child."

"I didn't want to take them to New York, and I was looking for some kind of benign suburban society." At the time, Dallas' reputation as a centre for design excellence was growing, and eventually many of its magazine art directors and photographers would achieve national renown.

Kern commenced work on more mundane commercial assignments, corporate functions and hotel-site excavations among them, while pursuing the trail of more creative photography. He elaborates: "I started photographing in my style in '78, '79, and I worked for magazines that allowed more creative freedom in those days. My commercial rep kept saying I can't get any work; this is just too artistic."

"I was competing against people shooting annual reports and house books on black pleiglas, with no sense of history or photographic artistry. There was really no market for what I was doing until 1987 when this sort of photography became infused into the mainstream."

That year Kern broke into the national consciousness with a photograph for *Bloomberg's* of a mannequin with a bouquet of roses for a head, coinciding with a Fashion Institute of Technology show on fashion and surrealism. Since then clients from all over the world, from Mansada in Tokyo to Selridge's in London, from *SPY* magazine to the British Sunday Times colour supplement, have vied to have him recreate the WORLD OF KERN on their behalf.

Kern has subsequently become one of the most awarded photographers ever, but that hasn't affected the way he lives and works. He operates out of the same low-tech North Dallas studio with the same collection of elderly equipment and minimal staff, with his greatest assets his unfettered imagination and his refusal to repeat himself.

Each new assignment occasions Kern to stop and re-evaluate his imaginary world, and for all the accolades we encounter in his streets, the WORLD OF KERN still feels oddly familiar, uncannily right, situated as it is just a few degrees north-west of normal. ☛

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Writer and contributing editor for *Black+White* magazine and its spin-offs and special issues, and designer/typographer.