

Rankin and Harland Miller at Photo Vogue Festival

At the second edition of the **Photo Vogue Festival** a question on the political and social importance of art has been tackled with the British artists **Rankin** and **Harland Miller**. Both the artists have a prolific career in different fields so they were the perfect choice to help reflect on the role and the social responsibility of artists in a time of media revolution and newly spread populisms.



Retrospective / Archive / Farmyard Montage ©Rankin

Is art for art's sake the purest form of expression or, as author Toni Morrison puts it, all good art is political?

Rankin has made his name in the publishing field, being the founder of the **monthly magazine Dazed & Confused** with

Jefferson Hack, active since 1992. They provided a platform for **emerging stylists, designers, photographers and writers**. The magazine went on to create a distinctive mark in the arts and publishing spheres, and they developed a cult status forming trends. The magazine is responsible for bringing some of the biggest names in fashion under the spotlight. Today, **Dazed Media** is a leading online fashion and cultural brand. Rankin has always pursued projects that push his limits and he stood out in the past – and even now – for his creative fearlessness. His work examines and questions social norms and ideas of beauty. His images have become part of contemporary iconography, evidence of his frankness and zeal for all aspects of modern culture.



Golden Jubilee / Retrospective / Portraits ©Rankin

His affiliation with charities made him travel around the world, creating powerful campaigns both as a photographer and a director. With **Oxfam**, he visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Kenya, and hosted an **Oxglam** exhibition, featuring work from some of the world's most

talented emerging young photographers. Having worked with **Comic Relief** in 2015, he returned in 2017 to create the t-shirts and merchandise for a record-breaking **Red Nose Day**. His 2017 campaign with **Macmillan Cancer Support** went viral as people were encouraged to **Brave the Shave**.



© Rankin

In 2009, Rankin launched the biggest project of his career, **Rankin Live**, an enormous interactive exhibition. He has always

been interested in the **democratisation of imagery**, so he proved that everyone can look like a magazine cover star. He photographed people from the streets for seven weeks, retouching and printing the image half an hour after he shot the picture. Rankin Live rolled out around the world for events, campaigns, exhibitions and openings. In 2001 and then 2005 **AnOther Magazine** and **AnOther Man** were created to focus on fashion and menswear, joining the Dazed Media Group. After a break from the magazine world, Rankin returned with **Hunger** in 2011. A biannual fashion, culture and lifestyle magazine, Hunger and its associated TV website – a video-based digital platform featuring indepth interviews, fashion films, blogs, and previews – embraced a future that is both printed and digital.



Retrospective / Fashion © Rankin

Harland Miller is an English writer and artist, who lived and exhibited in New York, Berlin and New Orleans during the 80s and 90s. He achieved critical acclaim with his debut novel, '*Slow down Arthur, Stick to Thirty*' – the story of a kid who travels around northern England with a David Bowie

impersonator. He then published a small novel, ***First I was Afraid, I was Petrified***, based on the true story of a relative with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, which has been discovered when Miller came across a box full of Polaroid images she had taken of the knobs of a cooker.

In 2001 Miller produced a series of paintings based on the dust jackets of the **Penguin books**. By combining the motif inherent in the book, Miller found a way to put together aspects of **Pop Art**, abstraction and figurative painting at once, with his love for text. The ensuing images are humorous, sardonic and nostalgic at the same time. Miller continues to create work in this vein, expanding the book covers to include his own phrases, some hilarious and absurd, others with a lush melancholy.

In 2008 Miller curated a group exhibition, ***'You dig the tunnel, I'll hide the soil'*** in homage to Edgar Allen Poe, to mark the bicentenary of his birth. Staged across White Cube Hoxton and Shoreditch Town Hall, Miller exhibited several new works including an installation in Hoxton Square that deceived many visitors. ***'I Was Always Good at Finding Things I'*** comprises of seven forensic figures in a cordoned off area, examining it for what appears to be evidence, whether it's a murder or something even more inexplicable. The word police is replaced by **'THE TELL-TALE HEART'**, a classic short story by Poe.

He still continues to take facts from reality and everyday life, transforming them in art and exhibitions, such as the police campaign against the 'Yorkshire Ripper' in 1978 that had been misconstrued by the hoax letters and tapes sent by John Samuel Humble a.k.a Wearside Jack from the North East. He took the campaign and brought it into ***'The Consequence of a Failed Illusion (West Yorkshire Police Public Information Campaign)'*** which, over time had been ripped to reveal adverts catch-phrases and imagery amongst samples of Wearside Jack's writing or emergency number to call and listen to his

voice.

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