

# Tyler Shields: Dreaming Awake

DARING PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE PRO-SKATER TURNED HOLLYWOOD CONTEMPORARY ARTIST  
TO BE OFFERED FOR SALE VIA SOTHEBY'S

INCLUDING NEW WORKS CREATED DURING THE PANDEMIC

AVAILABLE ONLINE UNTIL 12 MARCH



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*"All my photographs tell a story – they are a freeze frame of just a split second yet they provide a window onto a world of fantasy, eroticism, violence, romance, you name it. For me, good art makes you think, great art makes you feel, and I hope that when anyone views my work, they're aroused by some sort of emotion – whether that be shock, joy, love or even anger.*

*I'm super excited to present this collection of photographs at Sotheby's, which tap into many of the themes – from cinematography to eroticism – that I've explored over the past twenty years. The latest works date to 2020-21 which I took during lockdown - a period that has weirdly focussed me. The pandemic has made us all think differently, and these are photographs I may not ever have made, had it not been for this time. I may not have ever started my Silhouette series, and I'd never ever have come across the iconic Chateau Marmont utterly deserted! I always try to turn something negative into something more beautiful. This past year has forced me to think in a whole different way, and that I love."*

**Tyler Shields**

*"From the very first time I saw Tyler's work, I have been captivated by his magical and whimsical view of the world, and now more than ever we need this dreamy escapism to lift our spirits, so I am thrilled that Tyler is collaborating with Sotheby's Photographs on this fabulous exhibition. Tyler's deep rooted knowledge and appreciation for the great masters of the medium, in particular Richard Avedon, is visible in his style and approach which, combined with his trademark playful lens, creates a body of work that is distinctly fresh with a singularity of vision that is his alone."*

**Brandei Estes, Head of Sotheby's Photographs Department**

**26 February 2021, London:** A curated selection of 25 prints by Californian Fine Art photographer and filmmaker, Tyler Shields [[@thetylershields](https://www.instagram.com/thetylershields)], are being offered for sale via [sothebys.com](https://www.sothebys.com) until 12 March. Hailed “Hollywood’s favourite photographer” by the *Daily Mail* and one of the “100 Best Things in the World” by GQ, Shields’ has photographed all manner of celebrity from Bruce Willis to Elon Musk. His earliest works chronicling the young L.A. glitterati – among them a shoot with Lindsay Lohan wielding a gun and drenched in blood, and Emma Roberts falling from a window – caused a global social sensation. Advised at first that these campaigns would be an “impossible” shoot, Shields’ rose to the challenge. In his own words: *‘The fun is in the chaos and how each shoot requires a new set of skills and challenges.’*

Though recognised for working with pop-culture figures, Shields’ work isn’t simply about the concept of celebrity. Instead, the artist’s surrealist portfolio experiments with notions of the gaze, power structures, hyper realism and cinematography, while tapping into themes of eroticism, violence, decadence, fantasy and consumerism. Inspired by artist’s who have pushed the boundaries – from Irving Penn to Helmut Newton, PT Anderson and Hitchcock – Shields’ oeuvre aims to re-evaluate the modern concepts of what constitutes portrait photography today. His vision hopes to show a new type of Americana, pushing the limits of what can be captured in a fraction of a second. The actress Allie Marie Evans once said: *‘[Tyler] He makes you feel like the impossible is always possible. Perhaps that’s why his best work is nothing short of magic.’*

‘Tyler Shields: Dreaming Awake’ shows the entire breadth of the provocateur photographer’s portfolio, beginning with the works shot in 2012 ([Glitter Mouth](#), [Birkin Tug of War](#), [Gator Birkin](#) and [Mouth Drip](#)) to his most recent, captured during the global pandemic. In between, there is the unforgettable [Rolls Royce on Fire](#) (2014), which “literally shows the progression of the explosion happening”, [Prada Popcorn](#) (2014), [The Swans](#) (2015) and [Under the Rain](#) (2018), an image which Shields’ himself admitted looked better on film than it did in real life.

While in quarantine, Shields’ recovered his old cameras, including a 35mm that was gifted to him from Clint Eastwood, to create new works: from [Chanel Silhouette](#) (2021), his first exploration into shooting silhouettes given the need to make his only model anonymous for the series, to [Chateau Marmont](#) (2020), a depiction of the iconic yet never-before-desolate Hollywood Hotel. Please find further highlights below.

Born in Jacksonville, Florida, Shields started his career as a professional in-line skater, competing in the X-Games and winning the world championship. In his twenties, he began directing music videos before his photography career inadvertently took off after photographing his ex-girlfriend’s empty closet. The shot was uploaded to MySpace and the image went viral.



*Rolls Royce on Fire*, 2014. Edition no. 1/3.



*Coffee and Cigarettes*, 2018.  
Edition no. 3/3. Shot on Hasselblad Film Camera



*Prada Popcorn*, 2014. C-Type on Kodak Endura Matte printed on OCE light jet 500xl. Edition no. AP. Shot on Hasselblad Film Camera

HIGHLIGHTS



Chateau Marmont, 2020, Silver Gelatin Fiber Paper. Edition 2/3.

*"This image would have never happened if we weren't in a lockdown. The Chateau Marmont is one of the most iconic hotels in the world, and in my almost 20 years of living in Los Angeles, I've never seen the front or the driveway of the Chateau empty. Because of the pandemic, the hotel was shutdown, no one was there, there were no cars driving up and down.*

*During lockdown, I was using an old 35mm camera that I hadn't used in a long time, and I had just a couple of frames left to use. On the way to get these developed at the lab, I figured I'd take the final shots. We drove past the Chateau on the way over and it was completely empty – I was dumbfounded. We took the shot, and afterwards I noticed we were standing just 15 feet from exactly where Helmut Newton died. Without realising, this was a perfect homage to him. We shot three pictures, but I knew within the first shot I had something magical. I never ever do vertical photographs, I think there's just two or three in my entire catalogue, but for whatever reason I did this shot vertical. There must have been an energy that made everything work perfectly for us. It was one of those moments when if you're never willing to go out and take a photograph without having an idea, you might never be surprised, and this image was a beautiful surprise."*



After the Rain, 2018, C-Type on Kodak Endura Matte printed on Light jet. Edition no. AP. Shot on Hasselblad Film Camera

*"To me, this photograph looks better on film than it did in real life, which rarely happens. It came out with such a unique feeling. When I posted this photograph for the first time, people went crazy for it, making up their own stories: 'this reminds me of the first girl I fell in love with', or 'this reminds me of my first kiss', or 'this reminds me of being stuck in a snowstorm, or rainstorm, or windstorm'. Everyone just had all these unique stories and that's what makes the photograph really special. You can look at it and see yourself in it. It's not often that you can do that with a photograph, but when you can really imagine a moment in your life, in a photograph that you weren't there for, there's definitely an emotional connection. Whenever I see someone look at it, I always want to know what their story is, and why it connected with them."*



Beach Party, 2014, C-Type on Kodak Endura Matte printed on OCE light jet 500xl. Edition no. 2/3.

*"This is a photograph where I wanted to throw a 1950s inspired beach party. I always loved these beach-and-throwback scenes in classic fifties movies, and so we set up this big shot at the beach – picnics, vintage coke bottles, vintage bathing suits. At one point, somebody just turned on some 50s music. We were in between loading the film and all of sudden everyone just started dancing. I had my Pentax 6-7, and I walked over while people were dancing around, and I just snapped a photo. The woman at the very front of the frame realised I was shooting, and she did this classic 50s dance move. I snapped the picture and it was one of those moments where if I hadn't been loading the film, if I hadn't been in between shots, and if I hadn't had my Pentax loaded than the photograph would have never happened. The beauty of the photo was how unplanned and spontaneous it was. It was a happy accident and I love the shot."*



*Glitter Mouth*, 2012, C-Type on Kodak Endura Matte printed on OCE light jet 500xl. Edition no. AP.

*"Originally this photograph was going to be glitter pouring out of her mouth with diamonds. I had a bunch of tiny diamonds, and my model had the glitter already in her mouth. So, she stuck out her tongue just ever so slightly and we stuck the diamonds down gently. She then closed her mouth as I got ready to take the shot, but she started choking before quickly catching her breath, and then we both fell about laughing. It was at this moment when the work went from diamond mouth to glitter mouth, because she swallowed all the diamonds. I'm sure there aren't many people who can say that!"*



*The Swans*, 2015, C-Type on Kodak Endura Matte printed on OCE light jet 500xl. Edition no. 2/3.

*"When I was a kid, I went to New York City for a skate contest. While I was there, I walked past Julliard and saw 20 ballerinas on the street, all smoking cigarettes. I wasn't a photographer at the time, I was a skater, but I stored this image in my mind. Fast forward some years, I was doing a ballet shoot when this memory came flooding back to me. We were in the middle of downtown L.A. with no one around us, except one construction worker across the street. I remember I took the photo, the ballerinas relaxed out of their positions and this man, up on a gigantic ladder, started applauding and shouted, 'that was amazing.' I have such an affinity for ballerinas, and this was a photograph that I guess I first saw when I was 12 years old - when I wasn't even a photographer - but it took 22 years to come to life."*



*Chanel Silhouette*, 2021. Edition no. 2/3; *The Cat*, 2018. Edition no. 2/3; *Contemplation*, 2014. Edition no. 3/3.  
All: C-Type on Kodak Endura Matte printed on OCE light jet 500xl. Shot on Hasselblad Film Camera.

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HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES [HERE](#)

Tyler Shields

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#### ABOUT IMITATE MODERN

With its roots in contemporary and street art, Imitate Modern prides itself in being the pioneers of the London art scene. Based in central London, Imitate Modern cultivates talent and discovers artists and trends, creating an atmosphere to produce innovative, impeccable and sometimes controversial works of art. The gallery exhibits a line-up of artists at various stages of their practice and careers. Through rich art experiences, Imitate represents experimental and exciting exhibition programs that aim to stimulate, provoke and captivate globally.

Exhibitions range from internationally acclaimed solo shows to debuts of young artists but the gallery's intentions remain the same—to help its clients build interested and enriching collections, and most of all enjoy art in the most engaging way possible.

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#### ABOUT SOTHEBY'S

Sotheby's has been uniting collectors with world-class works of art since 1744. Sotheby's became the first international auction house when it expanded from London to New York (1955), the first to conduct sales in Hong Kong (1973), India (1992) and France (2001), and the first international fine art auction house in China (2012). Today, Sotheby's has a global network of 80 offices in 40 countries and presents auctions in 10 different salesrooms, including New York, London, Hong Kong and Paris. Sotheby's offers collectors the resources of Sotheby's Financial Services, the world's only full-service art financing company, as well as Advisory services for collectors, museums, corporations, artists, estates and foundations. Sotheby's presents private sale opportunities in more than 70 categories, including three retail businesses: Sotheby's Wine, Sotheby's Diamonds, and Sotheby's Home, the online marketplace for interior design.

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