

TOMMY COOPER

Photographs by John Claridge

A collection of rarely seen photographs

Venue: The Cooper Room – The Museum of Comedy
The Undercroft, St George's Church, Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2SR

Private View: Thursday, 9th October 2014

Time: 5.30pm to 7.00pm

As part of its season celebrating the life and work of Tommy Cooper, the Museum of Comedy is proud to present an exhibition of photographs of the iconic Comedian by English photographer John Claridge.

"In 1967 I spent the most enjoyable afternoon with Tommy Cooper shooting portraits of the great man.

We introduced ourselves and I explained that I wanted to do some serious pictures of him. He didn't say a word; he just gave me that 'Tommy Cooper Look'. I said to him, "I am serious about this, do not make me laugh!"

The session went very well with these sad and very serious photographs. He then said to me "This is very serious ... ah-ha." From that moment the session changed its complexion entirely. For the next hour or so I couldn't stop laughing, as you can see by some of the portraits.

It was not just a memorable afternoon, but one spent with someone who was gracious and charming and, of course it goes without saying, one of the funniest men ever." John Claridge Feb. 2014

John Claridge is an English photographer perhaps better known for his professional work in advertising.

John was born in London's East End in 1944. He began to take photographs at the age of eight with a plastic camera won at a local funfair.

After leaving school at fifteen and working as David Montgomery's assistant for two years, he opened a studio near St. Paul's Cathedral. John pursued a very successful career in advertising until recently, producing work for large corporations.

John's work is held in museums and private collections worldwide, notably the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, and the Museum of Modern Art.

He has published six books and in 1967 wrote, produced and shot a controversial short film, *Five Soldiers*, about the American Civil War, with implicit reference to the Vietnam War.

2014 marks the 30th Anniversary of the death of Tommy Cooper. This stunning exhibition of images is part of a season curated by The Museum of Comedy to celebrate his life and work this Autumn with a season that will include an exhibition of his handmade props, archive footage of his performances and a brand new show *Just Like That! The Tommy Cooper Show* which is written by and stars John Hower and comes to the Museum's Cooper room direct from a sell-out season at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

www.museumofcomedy.com – Learn, Laugh and Discover

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