

Press Release
12th May 2008



The Sixties: Photographs By Robert Altman

At Idea Generation Gallery
16th July – 15th August 2008



Paul Kanter of Jefferson Airplane famously said: *“If you can remember anything about the sixties, you weren’t really there.”*

Clearly, Paul Kanter didn’t have a camera.

This summer, Idea Generation Gallery invites you to take a trip...

...down Memory Lane, through Haight-Ashbury and across Golden Gate Park to turn on, tune in, drop out at the naked love-ins; anti-war sit-ins; the psychedelic be-ins and the politicised happenings and meditate upon the spirit, body and soul of **The Sixties** - the first UK exhibition from Robert Altman, chief staff photographer of *Rolling Stone*, at Idea Generation Gallery (16th July to 15th August.)

The exhibition brings together 60 of the most powerful images from Altman’s extensive portfolio. As one of the lead *Rolling Stone* photographers in the heyday of the late 60’s and 70’s, Altman’s exquisitely candid shots capture the luminaries of every sphere of influence – from politics and music through to the everyday revolutionaries and children of free love - and creates an extraordinary photographic journey through the historic moments of political; social and cultural revolution that have come to define ‘The Sixties’.

Altman’s images provide the ultimate visual narrative to the era; when the contradictory forces & emotions of nascent hippy idealism and free love ran parallel to revolution, radicalism and civil unrest; all of it underscored by unerring optimism, and a belief - born out of frustration at the status quo; the government; The Man - that change was both necessary and within their grasp.

Altman takes us on a journey through *his* Sixties - from the very epicentre of the scene as a *Rolling Stone* photographer - introducing us to the players on the way. Whether getting us a front row seat at some of the best performances and gigs (including many iconic *Rolling Stone* front covers); or rallying us to march alongside the protesters; or letting it all hang out with the flower children and indulge in some free-love to boot, Altman’s Sixties is the one we all wish we had lived through.



Dance! Hippie Hill, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, CA, 1967



Free the Presidio 27 Demonstration, San Francisco, CA, March 1969



FREE LOVE

Flowers in their hair; wandering free in the Elysian fields of California – the ‘free love’ ideal of the 60’s is one of the most resonant and revered legacies of the period. In a world often consumed with violence and anger, Flower Children – or hippies – put love and sex at the core of everything natural and harmonious.

Altman’s own portraits are a testament to the age of innocence, beauty and joy that hippies have come to represent.



Anti-War Moratorium, 1969

THE POLITICS

If there was one thing the Sixties taught its children, it was that they had the power to change the world. And change it they did.

The spirit of revolution manifested itself in a very specific way in America. With their men fighting an unwanted war in Vietnam; and their own racial segregation; the young of the U.S. picked up on the spirit of revolution sweeping through the students and streets of Europe and ran with it in their own unique way; as millions of people rose up in protest to fight for what they believed was right.

From **Jane Fonda** at an anti-war rally; to the mass throngs staging be-ins, Altman captures the spirit of revolution as it surged through the country, showing these moments of anarchy and rebellion as they were – passionate; dedicated; thunderous; and in so many cases, effective.



Jann Wenner, founder and publisher, Rolling Stone, 1967

THE PEOPLE

The infamous ‘counter-culture’ that has come to define the Sixties in America wouldn’t have existed without the people that were making it happen.

Jann Wenner, the founder and publisher of *Rolling Stone* pioneered journalism that tackled what was happening in the world head on; throwing aside diplomacy and reverence and giving voice to every concern, agitation and protest that its readers felt.

Dennis Hopper’s performance in *Easy Rider* immortalised the drug culture that was taking place in film, whilst **Ken Kesey** was living it. **Bobby Seale** and **Kathleen Cleaver** fought for rights for African-American’s, while Cesar Chavez led the way for farm workers in the US. Altman’s images are a catalogue of the influencers, opinion formers and icons of the Sixties, capturing them as they did their bit to shape the increasingly extraordinary world they were living in.

“I knew what I was capturing was historically important. Even though we were not part of the ‘Establishment’ we knew that our generation was ‘rocking’ the world. We were aware that our full tilt boogie was making a definite difference.” Robert Altman



THE MUSIC

If the Sixties were about revolution and rebirth, there was no greater evidence of this than on the music scene.

The British invaded America; psychedelia reigned on the West Coast; Beat poets and avant-garde artists took to the stage at Andy Warhol's Factory and The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan changed the face of popular music for good.

The Sixties contains landmark images – many of which made the front cover of *Rolling Stone* - of some of music's biggest stars, including **Mick Jagger; Joni Mitchell, Roger Daltrey, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Eric Clapton, Tina Turner; Elton John** and numerous others in performance; in conversation.

As artists realised their music could influence people's hearts and minds, festivals such as Woodstock brought millions of people together in harmony while the chords of popular song responded to the discord in society. Music was the universal medium that transcended generation, class and creed – and as future generations would realise, time. Altman's selection of images capture the musical revolution in all its glory.

Santana, Altamont Speedway, 1969

"For me, The Sixties is the time of Sgt Pepper, Woodstock, the Summer of Love, be-ins, anti-war protests, and everything else in between," comments Altman. "Part of the magic of The Sixties was that we knew there were thousands and thousands, perhaps millions, of us spread beyond the United States and all across the world," observes Altman. "I absolutely knew that this was something different and something very special. Those days were unlike any our generation had even heard of before, much less experience. You might say we lit the fuse to the Roaring Twentieth Century."

"Having grown up in a what was by contrast a very grey, cold and damp Britain during the 70's & 80's, the idea of late sixties California has always held an almost mythical, dreamy quality – driven, no doubt by Hollywood's depictions on an impressionable mind,' comments **Hector Proud**, managing director of Idea Generation Gallery.

"Robert's images, though, are very much a first person narrative. Of course, he's a sympathetic observer – he's clearly one of them – but this is nevertheless a true portrayal of his age. The passion for what he was shooting is wonderfully clear, but there's more to it than that. It's almost as if he's distilled the essence of the era - you get a real sense of the drama, excitement, hope, anger, idealism of the time. It makes for some iconic images.

"It's said that The Sixties, and much of what it stood for, began to unravel at the Altamont gig in '69 - and that's probably not far from the truth. However, when you look at Robert's images, you realise that the spirit of the sixties will always be alive in these images. He's captured so many aspects of the era so cleanly, that you practically feel you are there. And I think that's the greatest compliment that you can pay to him; he's ensured that the sixties and what it represented to him & his contemporaries, will endure for as long as we look at pictures."

Dates:	16 th July – 15 th August	Private View:	15 th July: 6.30pm – 8.30pm
Address:	Idea Generation Gallery 11 Chance Street London E2 7JB	Tube:	Liverpool Street or Old Street
Opening Hours:	Monday to Friday Noon - 6pm Sundays Noon – 4pm	Prices:	Free
		First Thursdays:	Open to 8pm

Contacts

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- Online Press Office
- Company contact details

Editor's Notes

Robert Altman

Robert Altman's photographs have appeared on the covers and in issues of such publications as *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *The New York Times*, *People Magazine*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *SF Weekly*. He studied photography under Ansel Adams and was soon after hired as a photojournalist for *Rolling Stone*, later becoming their staff photographer. Cameron Crowe used many of Altman's photographs in his film *Almost Famous*. Besides the U.S., Altman has exhibited globally in cities such as London and Paris. His work is part of the permanent collection of the Smithsonian, the San Francisco Public Library and the Library of Congress.

Idea Generation

Idea Generation was founded in 2001 around a simple proposition: find something you enjoy doing – and then try to do it better than anyone else.

Seven years on, Idea Generation now stands as one of the UK's leading arts, entertainment and cultural PR agencies - having worked with, for, and in support of some of the most exciting projects, people, institutions, fairs, festivals, tours, exhibitions, books, magazines, films, gigs, auctions, launches, parties and premieres across the UK and the world.

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