



Art & Photography / In Pictures

Tender Scenes by Little-Known Photographer Kate Barry

– July 3, 2017 –

Four years after her premature death, Arles presents a series of melancholic photographs by the image-maker and daughter of John Barry and Jane Birkin

Kate Barry was known for photographing subjects with great visibility, like Catherine Deneuve and Isabelle Huppert. But Barry also examined, and valued, the other end of the spectrum: the prosaic, and the overlooked. This alternative facet of her work will be shown in a new exhibition, *The Habit of Being*, at the Rencontres d'Arles photography festival in the south of France as of this week. The showcase reveals prints, découpage contact sheets, writings and excerpts from an unfinished film Barry made capturing her 2007 pilgrimage to Savannah, Georgia in homage to Flannery O'Connor.

Born in London in 1967 to composer John Barry and iconic singer and actress Jane Birkin, Kate struggled with addiction in adolescence before making her way to Paris's Ecole de la Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture for fashion design. Thereafter, she started a prêt-à-porter company, and founded a charity and free facility for treating addiction in France in 1994. She switched her métier from fashion to photography in 1996, bridging the two sectors by taking fashion photographs. She shot faces of stardom like Monica Bellucci, Laetitia Casta, Tilda Swinton and Helena Bonham Carter; created ad campaigns for Pierre Cardin and Dior perfumes, and contributed to magazines like *Elle*, *Paris Match*, and *Vogue*. She snapped Carla Bruni for her 2003 music debut, *Quelqu'un M'a Dit*, and her mother in recline for the cover of the 2004 duets album *Rendez-Vous*. She wasn't exclusively interested in celebrity or luxury, however, as evidenced by her documentary portraits of workers from the wholesale French food market Rungis, in a series timed with its 40th anniversary.

By comparison, her little-known personal output is a contemplative, tender-hearted depiction of forlorn landscapes, all muddy paths and weedy clusters, evoking silence and solitude. The tragic end to Barry's life – an apparent suicide from the window of her fourth-floor Parisian apartment in December 2013 – seems somehow resonant within the barren, melancholic landscapes peppered with dilapidated buildings, fissures in the pavement, dirt roads, brick walls, plants fighting up through concrete: all in a palette of murky greens, muted beiges and sullen grays. The exhibition title is a phrase pulled from her collected letters, and implicitly beckons the viewer to look beyond conventional subjects, to be mindful of forsaken details.

