

# David Chow

## No Compromise

### The Platinum Print

A platinum print is exceptionally beautiful with a great range of subtle tonal variations. Correctly processed and framed to conservation museum standards a platinum print will last hundreds of years, greatly surpassing that of silver gelatin and current inkjet technology.

Patented in 1873 by William Willis, the platinum printing process became popular with some of the finest photographers of the time including Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Edward Steichen, and Frederick H. Evans. By 1892 Willis began manufacturing a pre-coated platinum paper and this became the standard for the rest of the decade. The skyrocketing demands for platinum paper resulted in the Eastman Kodak Company develop its own line of paper in 1901; but they could not duplicate the quality of Willis' product. A dramatic rise in the price of platinum after the 1914-18 war led to the decline in the use of the process. In 1916 Kodak ceased manufacture of all platinum paper. Small amounts were produced in England by the Platinotype Company until the late 1930s.

During the 1970s there was a resurgence in the platinum printing process; led by Irving Penn who started to reprint many of his iconic images as well as create new images specifically in platinum and palladium. With no manufactured platinum printing paper available, he had to learn the process from scratch making numerous visits to the New York Library and scouring old journals for recipes and techniques on the platinum process published many decades earlier. After much experimentation he became a master of the process and created some of the most exquisite, complex, valuable and sort after platinum prints of his generation.

All platinum prints are created by hand, one at a time. The printing process involves a contact negative the same size as the final print. The creation of a high quality contact negative is crucial to the success of the final print. Recent advances in digital negative creation techniques have made it possible to achieve exceptional results from both analogue and digitally captured images, allowing a degree of control that simply is not possible using traditional methods. Print sizes of up to 30x40 inches can be crafted. David has discovered a perfect marriage, partnering 21st century technology with a 19th century printing process to achieve prints that are individually unique. Due to the fact Platinum and Palladium prints tend to be hand crafted and are of exceptional quality, they are few in number and sell for many thousands of pounds to collectors.

### David's printing process

David commences a platinum printing project with a detailed and in-depth conversation with the client about the aesthetic qualities of a platinum print and how it differs from other printing mediums such as silver gelatin and inkjet prints, and how to best take advantage of these qualities with the client's chosen image. If at all possible, David encourages clients to view platinum prints in person at his studio. The collaborative process between himself and the photographer is essential in the interpretation of an image.

The files used are 16bit which enables him to work with the highest possible resolutions, and gives greater scope for enlargement. Adjustment curves are applied in Photoshop before it is converted into a negative and the result printed onto transparency film. Once a digital negative is created a series of proof prints in platinum/palladium can be crafted. Initially a high quality watercolour paper such as Arches Platine or Fabriano Artistico is selected and coated with a light sensitive solution of ferric oxalate and a mixture of platinum and palladium salts. Once dry the

sensitised sheet is placed in contact with the negative in a vacuum frame and exposed to ultraviolet light for a set period of time. The exposed print is then developed in a solution of potassium oxalate. This dissolves out the iron salts and reduces the chloroplatinate and Chloropalladite to pure platinum and palladium in the areas where the exposed iron salts were, i.e. an image in platinum metal, replaces one in iron. The print is then placed in a series of clearing baths and then washed in clean water and air dried.

Depending upon the complexity of the image this proofing phase can take anywhere between 1 to 6 weeks. The proofs are just a starting point in the creation of an edition of platinum prints. The first proofs provided to the artist for each image are known as working proofs or printer's proofs until a print is finally approved, commonly known as a BAT (French for "bon à tirer" which is "good to print.") The artist signs the back of the print and labels it BAT, this print then becomes the standard against which the entire edition for an individual image is matched. Due to the nature of hand-made prints slight variations may occur.

### Multi-Layer Platinum Printing

David is the only printing atelier in the U.K to offer multi-layered platinum/palladium printing service to clients. The technique of Multi-layered platinum was used with great success by the late Irving Penn who created some of the finest, and sort after platinum prints ever made. Detailed research carried out by DC Editions over the last two years has shown that multi-layering of platinum & palladium increases the maximum density and tonal depth of a platinum print compared to a single coated platinum print.

The Tree in Islington © Hag  
Platinum Palladium Print







The technique is complex and initially requires the printing paper to be bonded to aluminium so that the paper remains dimensionally stable. A number of negatives are created and printed in succession with several exposure cycles (up to 3 times.)

#### David's progress from Silver gelatin to Cyanotype to Platinum

In 2004 David was at Photo London and viewed first hand platinum prints by Sally Mann which featured her early figure and drapery studies and formed part of a book that contained 10 platinum prints which also included poetry in a fine art publication. The subtle yet powerful quality of the prints radiated gentle warmth with delicate high tones and rich details in the shadows. It was a visual revelation that he had not experienced before and has been the driving force behind his passion. In 2011 he was fortunate enough to be able to acquire the book which included the print that inspired and motivated him! His banking career was replaced as a fine art photographer. In December 2005 he self published a hand-made photographic book in silver gelatine prints, limited to 30 copies, titled 'Love'. His next essay was a collection of cyanotypes titled, 'Expressive Flower', reproduced as an article in Silvershotz Volume 4, Edition 2.

Mastering the platinum/palladium technique has taken a considerable amount of time, patience and dedication. Crafting the perfect platinum print is an on-going challenge, the whole process needs to be practised and refined until it becomes intuitive, making it much more of an art than a science. Over the years he has been fortunate enough to work with a broad range of photographic practitioners, fine art artists and professional/commercial photographers in Europe.



Left: De Monocerote, 2011© Stefan Milev, Platinum Palladium  
Right: Dune, 2011© Stefan Milev, Platinum Palladium





©Wendy Bevan Nos 1  
Platinum Palladium Print

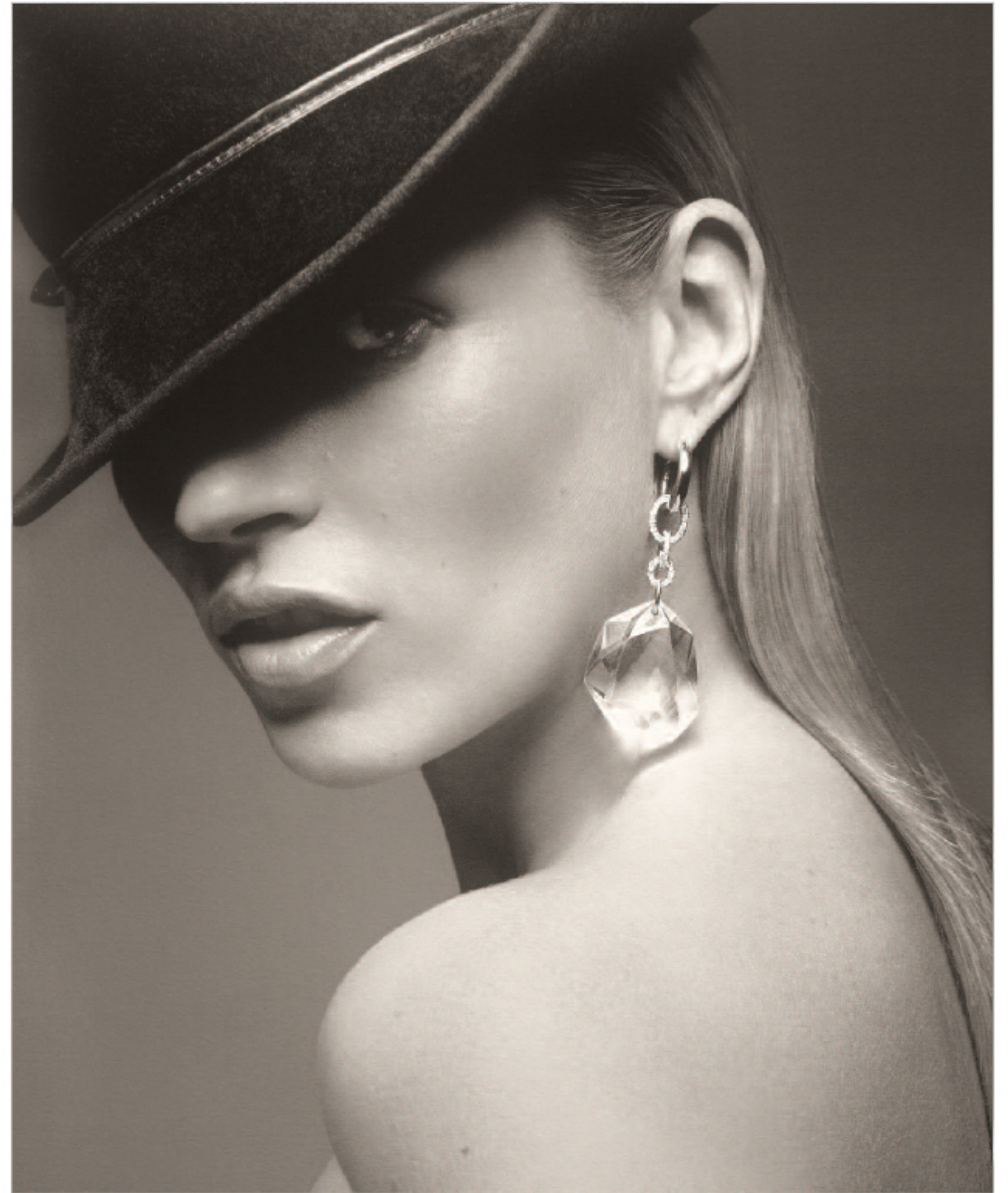


©Wendy Bevan nos 2  
Platinum Palladium Print





Left: Earthquake survivors in Northern Pakistan © Mark Pearson  
 Right: Surfa Rosa 2 © Simon Larbalestier, Platinum Palladium Print  
 Far right: Hat Kate © Rankin, Platinum Palladium Print, 2005







Left: Learning the Koran in war torn Somalia 2006 © Mark Pearson  
 Right: ©John Phalen Platinum Palladium Print  
 Far right: Lions Stare © Paul Coghlin, Platinum Palladium 2010







Top above: Single coated (Image © Claire Pepper, Printed by DC Editions)  
 Bottom above: Multi layer Platinum Palladium Print  
 Far right: © Rankin-Damien Hirst The Painted Skulls 2, Platinum Palladium Print

### His client list

One of his most recent high profile commissions has been with the well known photographer Rankin who in 2011 collaborated with Damien Hirst on the joint exhibition entitled 'Myths, Monsters and Legends'. David completed the platinum prints for this particular show and continues to work with Rankin translating some of his most iconic imagery into platinum.

Other commissions include working with Simon Larbalestier; a series of images of decayed textures and unusual juxtapositions. Emerging contemporary fine art photographers include Wendy Bevan whose work has featured in Vogue, Marie Claire, Harper's Bazaar and ID. Her images are shot on Polaroid and then a scanned into a digital format before creating a series of digital negatives. Her surreal and tender portrayal of the feminine form is a refreshing alternative to the glossy, digitally manipulated fashion imagery that proliferates today.

David's print sizes range from 10x8 inches upwards to 30x40 inches. His alternative process printing includes Platinum/Palladium, Gum over Platinum, Cyanotype, Kallitype and Vandyke. David is one of a handful of people in the world with the experience to print for other photographers. His work can be viewed at: [www.dceditions.com](http://www.dceditions.com)







Top :Regard © PaulCoghlin,  
Platinum Palladium Print,2010  
Bottom above: Seahorses  
© Simon Larbalestier  
Platinum Palladium Print,1992



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