

GRAIN

GRAIN

Introduction

GRAIN was devised in 2012 and launched in early 2013 to create a new strategic hub and network for photography and photographers in collaboration with national and international partners.

Our aim was to research, develop and deliver new, ambitious high quality opportunities to strengthen photography in the region, provide an infrastructure to enable growth and promote the sector nationally and internationally.

GRAIN was built on a range of projects and exhibitions delivered by the Library of Birmingham Photography Team and linked to the Designated national and internationally significant photography archive.

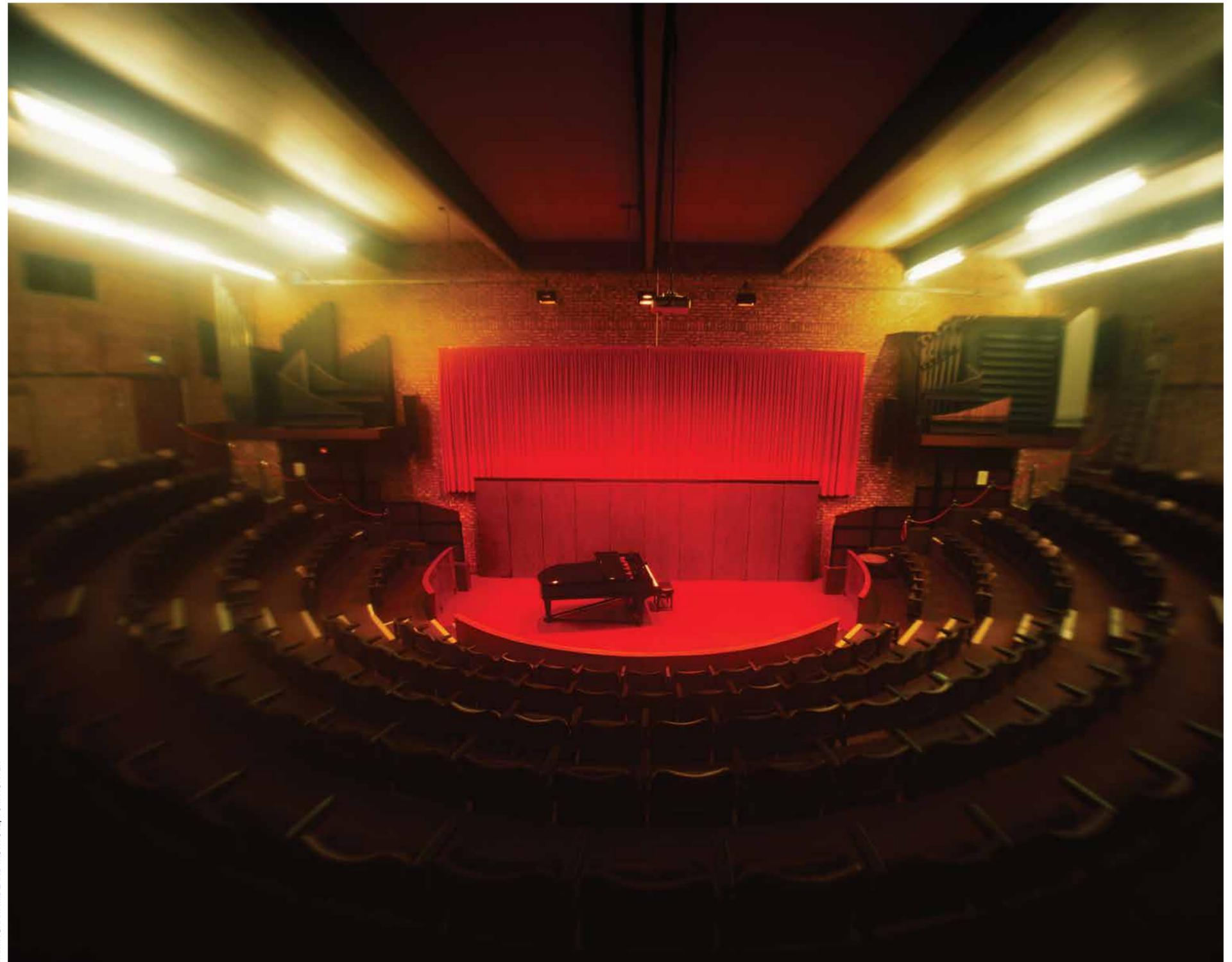
Over the last two years we have facilitated and enabled new opportunities for professional development, commissioning, exhibitions, national and international collaborations, publications, business development and market development activity. We have gone a significant way to achieving our goals and responding to the needs of photographers and the demand for a stronger and more resilient artform and photography infrastructure.

We will continue to work in new and ambitious ways, develop new audiences and provide high quality and engaging activities that will contribute to photography locally, regionally and nationally.

This GRAIN publication includes just a few of our activities over the last two years and a number of short essays generously provided by some of our partners and collaborators. Launched at 'The State of Photography' symposium, our event in January 2015, where artists, photographers and industry professionals talk about photography today, its many achievements and challenges.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the photographers and artists we have worked with and all those that have participated in our programme. We would also like to thank all our generous and supportive project partners and our funders.

GRAIN Team
www.grainphotographyhub.co.uk
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BIRMINGHAM MIDLAND INSTITUTE, TOM HUNTER

Findings Tom Hunter

In January 2013 the internationally acclaimed artist and photographer Tom Hunter was commissioned to make a new body of work in Birmingham finding, exploring and revealing places and spaces in Colmore Business District and the Jewellery Quarter. The resulting new work was exhibited in the public realm.

"For me this project is a journey back into the country's industrial heritage and at the same time a personal journey into my own history. Many of the buildings I have photographed are monuments to this industrial past, showing us the fingerprints of working lives and the products that these endeavours created and from them a way of life and culture. I have always been attracted to these shrines from a disappearing world, a world my grandfather was

meshed too, with his engineering company in Birmingham. A world I have explored through photography in Hackney Wick, where the industrial landscape became a playground for the dispossessed, and is now reincarnated as an Olympic wonderland.

"All these elements have aligned themselves in this photographic essay, connecting my history to my country's and Birmingham to Hackney. In the same way Alexander Parkes of Birmingham invented Parkesine, the base material of my film and took it to Hackney Wick to be mass-produced, I took my pinhole photography back in time to Birmingham, to illuminate and document this very special place." *Tom Hunter*

Album 31

Sophy Rickett and Bettina von Zwehl



PAGE 10 FROM ALBUM 31, SOPHY RICKETT AND BETTINA VON ZWEHL



MISCELLANEOUS, PAGE 20, SIR BENJAMIN STONE COLLECTION, LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM

Album 31 is a collaborative project by artists Sophy Rickett and Bettina von Zwehl commissioned by GRAIN and the Library of Birmingham.

The original starting point for the project was the Sir Benjamin Stone Collection, an extensive archive of albums and prints made by the Victorian photographer, and held by the Library of Birmingham. One of the albums, Album 31 labelled 'miscellaneous' contains the images Stone wanted to keep, but that didn't 'fit' into any of the other albums. The artists noted that 'Images were collated apparently at random, as if the 'rules' that applied to the rest of the collection were temporarily waived, so that subject matters, processes, time frames and approaches co-exist, creating a kind of chaotic spontaneity full of poetry, humour, and also some darkness.'

The two established and internationally renowned artists were invited to respond to the photography archive and worked together for the first time to make ten new album pages in 2014. These were produced following a period of research in Birmingham and an R&D visit to Norway, where Stone acquired some of the photographs in Album 31. They were exhibited at the Library of Birmingham. As a result of the first phase the commission has been extended and will include new work and a major gallery exhibition at the Library of Birmingham and at Fotogalleriet, Oslo during 2015.



Newfotoscapes

Jonathan Shaw

"Newfotoscapes is a timely and exciting collection of in-depth conversations with key theorists, practitioners and curators about photography's kinship with other media. Jonathan Shaw is a brilliant interviewer: both knowledgeable and passionate about the subject, he engages his stellar cast in a poly-vocal dialogue about the changing landscape of photography and the ensuing creative developments in art, commerce, education, publishing and everyday practice. Without falling prey to an unqualified techno-optimism, the collection constitutes a joyful narrative about photography and its complex powers. The book itself is an experiment in alternative publishing, with online and epub versions being available for free as part of the gift economy. This is a must read for anyone interested in understanding the pleasures, opportunities, as well as difficulties and responsibilities, that come with this unprecedented expansion of the medium – at a time when almost all of us are photographers today."

– Joanna Zylinska, Professor of New Media and Communications at Goldsmiths and curator of Photomediations Machine
Newfotoscapes presented a valuable opportunity for GRAIN and Coventry University to work together on a unique research partnership and publication, published by the Library of Birmingham.

www.newfotoscapes.org

Mining the Archive

Mining the Archive a new research partnership with the University of Birmingham and The Swarm was devised to explore the nature of archives in the 21st century.

Within the context of digital media, the nature of archives is changing. Whilst photographs continue to be curated and commissioned by cultural organisations, living collections are also being actively produced by other communities and archived online in a variety of ways. The culmination of these activities is arguably represented on the one hand by the intentional 'public archive' and, on the other, by the unintentional, 'people's photographic archive' online.

This first phase of the project resulted in the design and launch of the Mining the Archive Demonstrator that explores the relationships between professionally-curated and social media photo archives.

The Demonstrator explores the intentional and unintentional archives by focusing on two case studies drawn from the photography collections at the Library of Birmingham. In each case the intentional archives were compared to the unintentional archives posted online by individuals through social media platforms such as Flickr and Instagram.

Through the comparison of public and personal archives, the project explores shifting notions of intentionality, value and collecting in order to establish and investigate themes around what public collections represent in relation to the public(s) themselves. Research and outcomes from the project will contribute to ongoing debates on collection policies of cultural institutions and audience development strategies.

The partnership generated innovative thinking with the University of Birmingham exploring how public online archives can be used with the Swarm using data mining techniques to establish geographical, demographic and cultural trends and themes.



ANTHONY SHORT, LOGAN PHOTOGRAPHY



BIRMINGHAM POST

IMAGES FROM LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION



MAT COLLISHAW

Mat Collishaw Commission

Mat Collishaw has been commissioned by Grain and The New Art Gallery Walsall to research and make work in response to the photography archive at the Library of Birmingham. Following a period of research he will create a new work as an edition that can be purchased in early 2015. For more information visit www.grainphotographyhub.co.uk



FORMAT PORTFOLIO REVIEW, CHARLOTTE JOPLING

The first photography festivals emerged over 25 years ago in Portugal, USA and France, they have since been joined by hundreds all over the world. Over the last 10 years a rise in the number of the photo festivals can be tracked in parallel with the development of the internet and social media. Ever since we have been able to command our own space online through blogs, online magazines, websites and dialogues on social media, the voices and number of images that we can access and interact with has risen from thousands to billions.

Previously unseen photographers would have to build up a print portfolio, be published in one of the few photography magazines and rely on curators to promote their work internationally. Today photographers, artists, writers, publishers, galleries, magazines (on and off line) fairs and biennials and the whole photography related ecology has grown into a huge multifaceted network with activity on and off line throughout the year. The number of opportunities is higher than ever and nearly every country in the world has one or multiple photo festivals. With the global economy influencing all areas of practice from publishing to exhibition, many emerging and established photographers are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain and break into photography. Many people now look to photofestivals for the opportunities to access editors and gallerists, by taking part in workshops and becoming part of the international network.

Every year photographers, curators and photo editors travel to festivals to spot new talent and show work in the exhibitions, participate in portfolio reviews and develop contacts. If you like you could travel from one consecutive festival to the next without returning home. In the UK alone

there are now around 9 festivals, in France there are over 100. Festivals, different from exhibition programmes, are more flexible as platforms for taking risks and can act as pioneers of cultural activity. When programmed well they can be a positive force that contributes to the future of the medium. They facilitate international and local collaboration, become catalysts and motivators for practitioners while provoking international dialogue. For cities festival going is also an important socially engaged activity that enables cross sector partnerships.

There is no one model for organising a festival but a recurrent element is, different from a fair, festivals are on the whole non-profit and are focused on celebrating and exploring the medium, curated around a theme, exhibitions, portfolio reviews, events and photo book markets. Programmers respond to and develop the audience/sector demand alongside important variations in academic and city partners, fun and innovation is also very important to the sustainability and memorability of a festival. The most important factor is the vision/commitment and programming talent of the organisers and new initiatives often artist led that tap into and feed the zeitgeist. Physically festivals should be an interruption of the everyday, a laboratory of the future to create a sense of locality for people to explore a place as well as the medium, they become a collective experience in aggregated memory. Festivals are a place to explore the medium and its relations through a programme mix of production and experience. Sustaining activity for more than two editions relies on the articulation of the impact on the cultural scene, their vitality for practitioners and audiences, social impact, tourism and public realm strategies,

including the development of non-formal and satellite spaces within the City for installations and performances.

Although there are some variations, most festivals follow a similar formula offering exhibitions and portfolio reviews, which are an important feature, providing an essential meeting place that feeds the ecology and facilitates networks both for practitioners and professionals. Photo festivals are a great way to stay up to date with contemporary trends, they give you valuable opportunities to meet with hard to reach photography professionals and international photographers in an informal and engaging setting. The volume of activity and the event as a whole enables visitors to discuss and see a lot in a condensed period of time, and get a real invaluable sense of what is happening in the industry. By visiting a festival and spending a few days exploring the programme, aside from the work commitments, inevitably people make a lot of new connections through chance encounters, making for some stimulating dialogues, sharing ideas and opinions with people who are passionate about photography, therefore enabling a renewed enthusiasm for photography and its possibilities which often leads to new ideas and initiatives.

www.fotografiamagazine.com/2014-photography-festivals-list

www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/photography/7634593/International-Photography-Festival-Round-up.html

www.festivalofflight.net

www.formatfestival.com

The State of the Photography Festival

Louise Clements, Artistic Director QUAD & FORMAT International Photography Festival



'Re-enacting in the UK' Andreas Meischner

In March 2013 photographer Andreas Meischner was given the GRAIN and Library of Birmingham Photography Prize awarded to a photographer exhibiting in the 'Exposure' exhibition at FORMAT 2013. Meischner's winning series "TUV: To the acid test" documents the fascinating and little-known world of product testing. The photographer captured the employees of TUV (the German association for technical inspections) as they test and certify the safety, performance and quality of technical equipment and consumer goods in laboratory conditions. Meischner was selected for the prize by Louise Clements, Brian Griffin and Pete James from 70 exhibiting international photographers.

Following receipt of the commission prize Meischner undertook a period of research which led him to make work around the re-enacting community and the living history displays in the UK. The project is an expansion of his personal work which explores leisure time activities and their relationship to everyday life. In his work Meischner is interested in the notion of leisure time and the assumption it provides freedom to pursue whatever one wants to do. His interests lie in those people who seem to have a persistent need for order, structure, security and organisation.

'Participating in a Living History Display often means submitting to a particular organisational and power structure, characteristic of the respective time, clearly defining the scope of action for men, women and children. This power structure does not only limit freedom but also provides identity and the security of a clearly-defined frame of action, aspects that in today's society are consistently pressurized. The new work will explore this topic from another angle asking why re-enacting the past is so seductive as leisure time activity'. *Andreas Meischner*

'RE-ENACTMENT', ANDREAS MEISCHNER



BOM Karen Newman

BOM (Birmingham Open Media) is a new space for art, technology and science. BOM is based at 1 Dudley Street, Birmingham and offers creative co-working space, open studios, a gallery and wetlab, supporting creative practitioners through radical R&D.

This new space, opened in November 2014, works with a range of partners to deliver programmes, including artists, ethical hackers and critical thinkers. BOM are committed to art that has cultural and economic value by asking important questions about the role of future technologies. BOM's inaugural exhibition with the Chaos Computer Club (until 1 March 2015) includes new interactive artworks using imaging technologies to explore security issues with the use of biometric data.

www.bom.org.uk



West Midlands Photography Scene

Many say photography in all its forms has never been stronger in the city and region and practitioners and professionals have taken on a distinctly collaborative approach to survive and to thrive. Groups, organisations, curators, galleries, photographers, institutions and clubs of all shapes and sizes have contributed to photography being the most popular, relevant and democratic of artforms. They have worked to deliver an innovative, exciting and engaging approach to photography that has achieved excellence and national profile and reputation.

There are too many to mention but we would like to map, list and credit the amazing and unique work of our friends, colleagues and collaborators including:

Birmingham Loves Photographers
www.birminghamlovesphotographers.com

Birmingham Camera Obscura
www.bhamobscura.com

BOM
www.bom.org.uk

Frame Creatives
www.framecreatives.com

Fotofilia
www.fotofilia.co.uk

Hereford Photography Month
www.hca.ac.uk

Multistory
www.multistory.org.uk

Some Cities
www.some-cities.org.uk

Square
www.squaremag.org

Notes on the state of photography

Paul Herrmann, Director of Redeye

Not long into the new millennium, I asked a photographic academic about the state of photography. I can't remember my exact question, but I remember his answer - that photography had so many faces he hardly felt he could say anything coherent or singular about the subject. At that stage, photographers were starting to work more broadly, across different fields and genres, for creative stimulation as much for financial expediency. But many of the photographic institutions were still inward-looking, focussed on tight, restricted areas of practice, unwilling to find common ground.

So much seems to have changed since then. I find it helpful now to think of photography less as an art, craft, profession or hobby, more as a language - but a young one. Like English, it now has its quick, conversational aspect through camera phones and Apps; its slow, considered and well-crafted works displayed and studied in institutions, and everything in between. But more importantly, just as now very few people would argue for everyone speaking the same way, similarly we're getting to a place where fewer people think that only one kind of photographic

voice - artistic or commercial or photojournalism or academic or enthusiast - is valid or important.

The sense of commonality and coherence across photography does seem to have increased. Professional photographers and photographic artists use Instagram (alongside 12-year-olds) to try different things and have some fun, while some of those who've taken up photography as amateurs are keen to expand their visual literacy. Genres, technologies, crossovers, collaborations and experimentation are multiplying. People work more freely with found or historical work.

What appears from one angle as a revolution in photography is nearly complete. The photographed have become the photographers. Everyone has a camera, the means of cultural and visual production. Every day, half a billion photographs are added to, and disappear from, the Snapchat servers. "Soon, we'll all be amateur photographers," wrote Simon Norfolk five years ago. But the most forward-looking photographers have responded to the new economy with a wealth of new and inventive business models; different ways of connecting with audiences,

and new ways of being paid for their work; linking through networks and swapping job roles between photographer and producer; or simply re-emphasising the importance of quality and specialness of the best work.

So asking about the state of photography is a bit like talking about the state of the English language. Looked at as a whole, it's incredibly buoyant; it's huge. Photography, as the keystone visual technology, underpins our entire contemporary culture. To quote a recent book title, Photography Changes Everything.

Of course, there are bound to be challenges surfacing with this visual revolution. Markets have collapsed, and will continue to do so. Copyright, a vital protection for creators, needs to be better understood. Institutions, already under pressure from loss of funding, struggle to stay relevant as key players. We have to keep imagining new possibilities, new centres and new edges of photography. If we don't imagine them, they'll never come into being.

December 2014

Multistory

Multistory work with artists and local communities to tell the stories and celebrate the lives of the people who live and work in Sandwell and the Black Country. They produce films, collect oral histories and make photographs, creating a living archive and telling stories online and in print. Multistory also make books, organise exhibitions and host events.

Their projects reflect and celebrate everyday life and often take place over a long timeframe – sometimes they work with the same artist for several years. Multistory work in factories, pubs and clubs, cafes, restaurants, people's homes, parks, allotments, community centres, doctor's surgeries, religious buildings, libraries, museums, shopping centres and market places.

www.multistory.org.uk



'ROYAL WEDDING BREAKFAST SPECIAL AT GINGHAMS CAFÉ, BILSTON, 2011'. MARTIN PARR. PART OF THE BLACK COUNTRY STORIES ARCHIVE



'MAKING ROCK AT TEDDY GRAY'S SWEET FACTORY, DUDLEY 2010'. MARTIN PARR. PART OF THE BLACK COUNTRY STORIES ARCHIVE



'THE 100 SWIMMERS', ATTILIO FIUMARELLA

5plus5 International Exhibition Exchange with IED Madrid, curated by Moritz Neumuller

5plus5 showcased the work of ten emerging photographic artists. The artists were selected to invest in talent from the two cities and regions and to create a unique partnership. The exhibiting artists were; David Sheperd, Dean O'Brien, Lauren Spencer, Nicola Onions and Oscar Parasiego, and from Madrid; Angela Losa, Anna Fawcus, Eoin Moylan, Inge Trienekens, and Juan Pablo Fassi.

Curated by Moritz Neumuller the project shown in this exhibition orbit around themes such as memory, identity, space, the human condition and eternal subjects in the field of photographic creation. All the emerging practitioners selected to take part in the exhibition exchange use highly contemporary language and represent a new generation of globally connected artists that use the camera as one of many technological tools for image creation.

Following a successful exhibition at the IED Gallery in Madrid during 2014 the exhibition travels to be shown at the Library of Birmingham during 2015.



5 PLUS 5 EXHIBITION, ANNA FAWCUS



'EPHEMERAL', NICOLA ONIONS



ST. CHADS, SOME CITIES, DAN BURWOOD

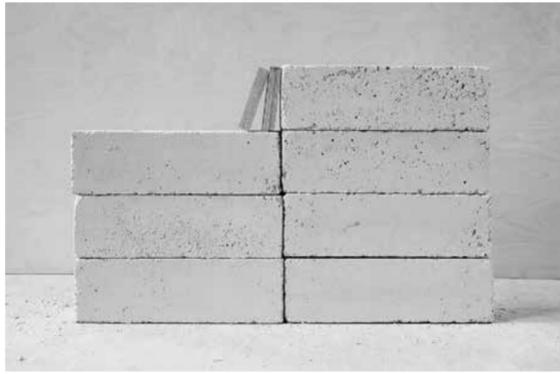
Some Cities

Some Cities CIC produces a programme of photographic commissions, talks, workshops and exhibitions and curates a public digital archive of life in the city. The project uses photography as a platform to develop skills and support social cohesion. They create opportunities for people to learn about technical and cultural aspects of photography, building audiences skills and markets.

Some Cities is based at Darkroom Birmingham, a digital and analogue photographic facility in Balsall Heath, where community groups, students and individuals can access affordable photography training and facilities. They work with a wide range of community and institutional partners to explore uses of photographic language in geographical and digital settings, to share knowledge and create opportunities for dialogue and understanding between local and international communities.

Some Cities is directed by Andrew Jackson and Dan Burwood.

www.some-cities.org.uk

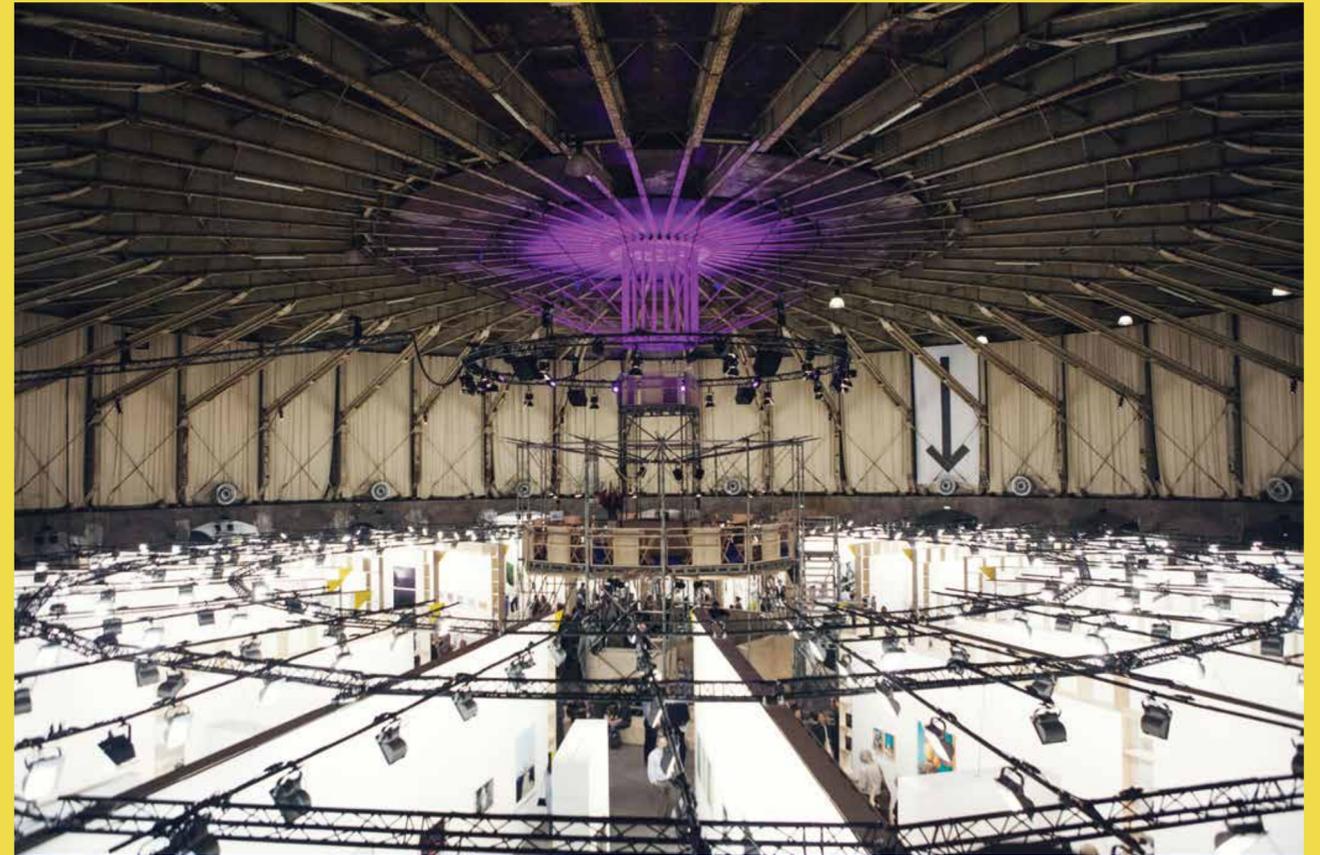


ANDREW LACON AND STUART WHIPPS

Guangzhou Library, China, Exchange and Exhibition, Andrew Lacon and Stuart Whipps

In 2013 the inaugural exhibition at the new Library of Birmingham was Reference Works, a commission that spanned over 3 years to enable four photographers to respond to the closing of Birmingham Central Library and the opening of the new Library of Birmingham. As an extension to this project the artists Andrew Lacon and Stuart Whipps were invited to develop a relationship with Guangzhou Library, the new library in Birmingham's twin city. The artists developed a new proposal that interrogated and explored the shared and divergent histories of the two cities and a series of complex relationships; the relationship between the materials of the former and current library buildings, the similarities and differences that exist between the material housed in the two libraries, and the relationships between the people of the respective cities and their former and present libraries and collections. Following a period of research and making formal studies in the studio in the UK they spent an intensive period in Guangzhou in November 2014 making and exhibiting new work throughout the duration of their stay.

The work was exhibited at Guangzhou Library and gifted to their collections as part of this international Artists Exchange. The exhibition was supported by British Council, Arts Council England and the two libraries.



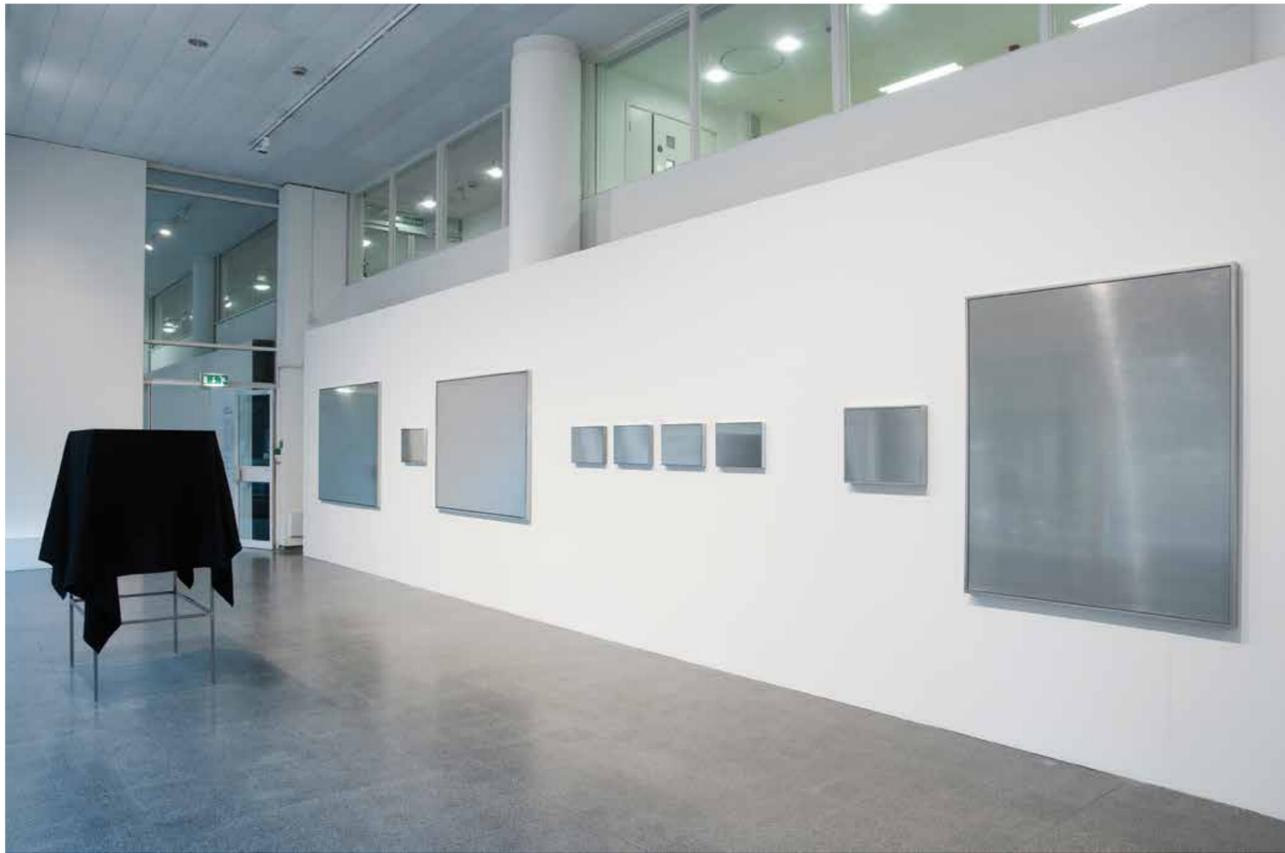
After the Image, Unseen 2014

'After the Image' was a collaboration with Division of Labour at UNSEEN 2014, the major international photography fair in Amsterdam. The exhibiting artists, who all share similar attributes in extending the parameters of what constitutes photography, presented work to ask the viewer, the collector, the public and the market to move beyond the image and envisage photography, the actual medium as something other.

Artists featured in the exhibition were Cornford & Cross, Andrew Lacon and Stuart Whipps.

UNSEEN is the international photography fair focused on new and emerging talent and unseen work by established photographers. UNSEEN took place in September at Amsterdam Westergasfabriek and featured over 50 artists, more than 150 international galleries and audiences of over 24,000.

After the Image was supported by Arts Council England, Birmingham City University, Turning Point West Midlands and the Art Market Development Group.



PLANE MATERIALS, BRIGHTON PHOTO BIENNIAL, NIGEL GREEN

Plane Materials, a co-commission by Photoworks, GRAIN and the Library of Birmingham for Brighton Photo Biennial, curated by Nathaniel Pitt

Plane Materials looked at the close and complex relationship between photography and sculpture. The commission and resulting exhibition brought artists Cornford & Cross and Andrew Lacon together for the first time as a response to the nationally designated and internationally significant photography archive at the Library of Birmingham.

Andrew Lacon's work drew directly on a nineteenth century album from the archive. Interested in how sculpture has been documented and how we experience sculpture through the distribution of the image, Lacon created an installation where the display is as important as the archive.

Cornford & Cross presented their 'Afterimage' series, works produced from the removal and destruction of their own photographs which were previously mounted onto aluminium substrates and exhibited in public. The 'Afterimage' series embodies the process of its own (un) making: the removal and destruction of the photograph transforms the work from image to object and alludes to the experience of a community asking the viewer to question their role in the exhibition.

The co-commission also includes a new publication entitled Plane Materials published by the Library of Birmingham.

... a quite brilliant portfolio review. It's something I wouldn't at all have considered, but now realise just how important they really are in the industry.

I have taken heed of your words and I am preparing an Artist Statement to hone in on what on my core values and concepts are as an artist.

I found the whole day incredibly useful and insightful.

It increased my awareness of the involvement of photography in the arts 'market'.

Really useful to take some time out to think about the direction of my practice. Most importantly, though, I learned lots from every session.

Thought provoking, eye opening & informative but also a bit overwhelming.

Encourages me to keep doing what I'm doing. Makes me realise there are other people in a similar situation.

It's inspired me to keep developing my career, and to believe in all the bits of projects that I'm involved in, that they will eventually lead somewhere.

I like the fact a renowned artist has taken the time out of their busy lives to explain their works.

Atmosphere wasn't like a normal talk there was a dialogue that the audience could engage with Fantastic images, I liked having the artist talk through his work so you got a first person account of his practice.

Great insight into great work- so good to have such a good artist talking in Birmingham- it doesn't happen enough at all- more like this please!

It was an honour to have an established artist speak at the venue with such passion about their work.

I think Grain and the Library of Birmingham are, and will continue to be, instrumental in the infrastructure and development of Photography in Birmingham, the West Midlands and England. The quality and depth of knowledge in the archive department is outstanding and the project management is well organised efficient, quality focused and productive. The profile of both the photography archive and the Library of Birmingham has been raised and continues to be recognised as Grain reaches out with exciting new exhibitions, curated archive shows, commissions and publications.

Professional Practice, Development and Investment in Talent

One of the key aims of Grain is to support and invest in the most talented individuals in the region and to support professional development through a broad range of activities that are bespoke and support people at different points in their career. These activities have included mentoring for emerging photographers, business mentoring, support and development, portfolio developments and reviews, open courses, symposia and events, residencies, new funding opportunities, national and international showcases, bursaries, internships and artists' and photographers' talks.

Working with Grain has been very rewarding, I have felt supported 100% and enriched. The experience to be very valuable to my career development.

Really useful to take some time out to think about the direction of my practice. Most importantly, though, I learned lots from every session.

The work has a clear remit of taking interesting and engaging photographic work to new Audiences. The focus has been animating spaces in engaging and creative ways.

GRAIN has given us invaluable advice and support over the last year, both with initially helping us to develop and as a platform for photography, but also with the eventual promotion and delivery of our program.

Impressed, delighted and totally happy with the results; Well done, great photography.

From the onset, GRAIN was fundamental in the strategic development of our work. I believe that the current rise of photography in Birmingham, and the outer regions, would not have evolved as successfully as they have without the platform that GRAIN has developed.

So far, GRAIN has helped me to develop my professional practice throughout the variety of events and projects it has been organising. I believe this organization has a valuable input into how photography industry is developing today in England by linking emerging photographers with already established professionals.

Engaging beautiful exquisite brilliant fantastic witty bonkers curious comical cool excellent playful inspirational superb amazing absorbing informative sensitive attractive accessible enjoyable.

Excellent exhibition. Depth of images unbelievable.

It's opportunities like these that confirm the strength and direction my artistic practice has to directed.

As GRAIN is so well connected and offers many collaborative projects, I have had the opportunity to meet a wealth of inspiring people, including photographers, curators and scholars. It has been a great insight to work with an organisation that is so forward-thinking and dedicated to making a real impact with photography in the region. It has made me realise what is possible despite limited resources and funding.

Brilliant to see a dedicated exhibition space. Fabulous- a wonderful place to visit, reflect, learn and enjoy.

Brilliant- great to see good quality photography gallery in Birmingham at last!



THE CITY OF SIX TOWNS, MARK POWER

The City of Six Towns Mark Power

The City of Six Towns by Mark Power was a co-commission by Appetite, GRAIN and the Library of Birmingham. In 2014 internationally renowned and critically acclaimed photographer Mark Power was invited to make a new body of work in Stoke-on-Trent. The resulting exhibition was presented in the new city centre square as a public realm event over a period of three months. Over 50 new works were made by Power, illustrating the city as he found it. These visual stories or postcards from the city, a narrative in pictures, tell the unique story

of life in Stoke-on-Trent today. In undertaking the commission Power remarked that in the city there are layers of history everywhere. Behind every new build is a sign of the past, while in front of every ruin, ancient or modern, there's evidence of potential change. 'Stoke, I could clearly see, isn't stagnating; it's constantly evolving, a place in constant flux, driven forward (sometimes against the odds) by the vitality of its people. Photography is good at revealing this... A picture made yesterday might be impossible to recreate today, as the world moves on.' *Mark Power*



THE CITY OF SIX TOWNS, MARK POWER



THE CITY OF SIX TOWNS, MARK POWER



THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' WALL

The Photographers' Wall is a new exhibition space developed to promote the work of contemporary photographers. It has presented a broad range of exhibitions from solo exhibitions that showcase new talent to community and group photography projects. We invite proposals from individuals and groups to promote photography in an accessible space to a broad range of audiences. The Photographers' Wall has enabled new collaborations and opportunities to show the outcomes of community and outreach projects.

Audience Development and Community Engagement research, survey and results Wafer Hadley

In 2013 GRAIN commissioned leading researchers and consultants Wafer Hadley to look at photography audiences in the West Midlands region, to question audiences on their participation, or lack of it, and to investigate the development and opportunities in the sector. The largest photography survey in the region was conducted and the results were presented to GRAIN and their stakeholders in a report. We have used the research, recommendations and report to shape our programme, to respond to need and demand, to develop new collaborations and to develop new audiences. The research has helped us to be ambitious and relevant in all our activities. Audience development and community engagement is at the heart of everything that we do.



'I SELL THE SHADOW TO SAVE THE SUBSTANCE', LUCY HUTCHINSON

Artist in Residence Lucy Hutchinson

Lucy Hutchinson, an emerging artist and recent Fine Art graduate from Coventry University, was awarded a residency with GRAIN at the Library of Birmingham through and supported by New Art West Midlands.

The residency resulted in a body of new work entitled *I Sell the Shadow to Save the Substance*, exhibited at the Library of Birmingham. The work is a response to the artist's study of Carte-de-Visite images from the library's photography collection. The Carte-de-Visite images document the Victorian middle class dressed up in their finery. Staged against opulent backdrops and scenery the images often contrasted the subjects' social status by using props as a representation of position and wealth. In response to these historical images, the artist has developed three female identities. The characters and sets she made are representations of women of British middle class heritage who have lived in Hong Kong. Using the conventions of classical portrait structure, the presentation of these characters explores how these subjects, who no longer relate to either culture, attempt to remain quintessentially British.

Through combining contemporary and historical status symbols directly associated with 'Britishness', ranging from influential designers to ideas of moral hierarchy which are present in the British middle class, the artist has explored how these characters present their status and questions the importance of authenticity in these images.

A collaboration with Turning Point West Midlands.

Grain Growth Lara Ratnaraja

GRAIN Growth was an intervention, led by consultant Lara Ratnaraja, to support regional photography interventions which helped contribute to the regions' photography infrastructure.

Resilience was the underpinning theme for such an intervention but we wanted to ensure this wasn't a business support project solely but one that invested in the infrastructure for photography in the West Midlands. So the focus was to develop those enablers and connectors who have impact and influence amongst the photography community in the region including Square Magazine, Birmingham Open Media, Some Cities and Birmingham Loves Photography.

Each organisation was different; a magazine, a venue, an artists led community engagement project and a photographers network, but each play a significant role in the infrastructure for photography. They were all either new or emergent projects but as they have developed and grown over the last year they have had significant impact on their communities of practice.

Each in their own way support artists, showcase work and develop audiences for photographers. This symbiotic relationship characterises an artist ecology and this thinking was at the forefront for developing GRAIN growth.

Most were not formally constituted at the start of the programme but where appropriate set up CICs to help their projects have an organisational structure from the outset. Three of the four were unfunded but were successful in receiving funding to R&D their models of delivery, programming and project delivery. Resilience was built into the mentoring from the start to help each participant articulate their ambition and vision for both their organisation and the wider impact on the art

form and artists. This enabled the support to be about more than just fund raising but to develop partnerships with external partners such as universities, venues and other stakeholders where there was a mutuality of benefit in collaborating.

With cuts to funding resilience means looking at how adaptable and flexible organisations can be whilst not compromising their artistic vision and creative premise. This means they can look at business models which may suit their objectives now but will flex to accommodate future plans. All four projects were supported in their entrepreneurialism to look at income generation, subscription models and possible commercialisation activity and diversification of income streams but this was always contextualised in terms of their own arts/photography practice and output, objectives and ambition as well as their audience and participation.

The final outcomes to the project will enable GRAIN to explore economic value across the photography community and understand future support needs both within an intrinsic and instrumental value framework.

We are reviewing the data and thematic capture for the programme to ensure that we can demonstrate and evidence what future support needs will look like if the photography infrastructure in the region is to grow. It has been important to select projects which may not have "successful" outcomes but which play an integral role in the ecology of photography and recognise that some will be time bound. This is not necessarily restricted to limitations on funding but on the desire and future aspirations of the participants.

One of the key outcomes for the evaluation is to recognise this fluidity which allows growth, new entrants and time bound activity.

Artist in Residence Faye Claridge



'A CHILD FOR SACRIFICE (CORN QUEEN)', FAYE CLARIDGE



'CHILDREN OF THE CHOOSING (LIVESTOCK)', FAYE CLARIDGE

Artist Faye Claridge was awarded a residency with the Library of Birmingham Photography Department, supported by Turning Point West Midlands in 2012. Her interest, relating to her own artistic concerns, was the Sir Benjamin Stone collection in particular his photographs of English customs and fetes.

'The Residency has been an enormously important catalyst for my work. Uncovering his photographs of children involved in English festivals and customs gave me a focus for research and a photographic style and has led to the creation of three significant new works, including my largest commission to date'. - *Faye Claridge*

Due to open in March 2015, Kern Baby is a 5-metre high version of a corn dolly photographed by Stone. It will be exhibited in the grounds at Compton Verney until the end of 2015, where it will be the centrepiece for a new series of photographs re-enacting ceremonies with local children, before travelling to the Library of Birmingham in 2016.

As a result of her Residency at the Library Faye secured funding from Arts Council England to continue making new work in Knutsford and Warwick and following that a residency with a small Warwickshire museum, the Marton Museum of Country Bygones.

GRAIN REWRITING THE BOOK THE LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM

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