

London street
photography
exhibition
photography essay



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This exhibition shows images of London streets taken between 1960 and 2010, some of them come from the museum archives and was not exhibited before at such a scale. Exhibition takes place in a couple of rooms in the lower level. The main exhibition space takes two rooms to the side showing films about street photography. The images are displayed in chronological order around the room, as we go feather faded sepia images stands out to our eyes as we go along they loosing they grainy quality, the moving objects becoming less blurry and they change to black and white photographs. As we progress to the end of exhibition photographs transform into colour images. An introduction show us a short film which include a interview with Paul Trevor who took photographs of the East End between 1970s and 1980s that were a high points of the exhibition.

Over 60 photographers shown their work starting with Valentine Blanchard's who were born in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire in 1831. His photograph taken in 1860 of Covent Garden Market where man in a hat is caught looking at vegetables while behind him world continues in its busy way. Looking at this image is giving you a feeling of turning back in time, stopping for a while and think about yourself and all those years that passed. Really calming effect I would say.

There were images of Terry Spencer who shot skinheads frowning at hippies in Piccadilly Circus. Another image of couple walking down the street in anticipation, it is beautiful proof that out there somewhere it always be a moment to be caught . For example when child looks up and smiles or a person sitting alone on the bench in the park. " This British capital," wrote

Henry James, " is the particular spot in the world which communicates the greatest sense of life; there is nothing one can't study at first hand."

Roger Mayne sought to record a way of life in North Kensington before it was redeveloped in 1960s. His images often looked at the use of the streets as social space. The photograph that caught my eye is the image of two men walking down the Latimer Road caring shopping and just drifted away with their minds completely not aware of the photographer. I like that the image is in greyscale which makes it stand out more because you get that feeling of time and how the viewer perceiving the conveying message. The framing and the location show us that Roger Mayne dedicated himself to describe life on London working class people and streets. Other photograph of Tom taken in Trafalgar Square in 1970 involved simplification of black and white and freezing the moment in time. Other of his picture included in exhibition is picture of children playing cricket in Notting Hill. As Roger Mayne said himself " I went to South London and I saw, in the distance, a bombed building with a lot of children playing in it, so I thought that might be an interesting subject. So I walked towards this building and when the children saw somebody with a camera they immediately stopped this fascinating thing, whatever they were doing which intrigued me, so they all came out and wanted their photograph. You used to get this cry, ' please take my photo Mister'." As you move around the place you witness capital developing and changing across a century. Some of the locations appears a couple of times and as you follow you can see that they are becoming more and more as they are today. Different elements pops up, the number of non white faces increase, style of clothes becoming more similar to what we are

wearing today and we notice that British culture is influenced more and more by brands and trends from United States.

Really interesting for me were the images of racial tensions in 1970s but the photograph of white woman kissing a black man, photograph by Charlie Phillips, seems to improve the relations between immigrants and Londoners. I noticed that photography drastically changed across the exhibition. Since the innovations in technology cameras were getting smaller and exposure faster we could notice how the photographers approach changed relating to the subject. Furthermore the subject matter also changed specially in the war period as artists changed their focus from capturing streets to highlighting the London inequalities. After that noticeably compositions approached changed due to emigrating people from Europe who brought new modernist style with them. That style moved back and forward since 1960s and which quickly were displaced. What amazed me the most were the techniques used to produce the image. The street photographer often needs to get his shoots quickly and secretly that push him to compromise in technique. We can find photographers that do this, by intentionally heighten contrast and grain, emphasizing the grittiness of that street which in my opinion did not look amusing at all. However in whole exhibition you could find beautiful pieces in deed. For example George Reid's photographs shot with plate glass camera showing an amazing control of depth of field and exposure with carefully planned and examined shoot of the scene.

Moving into colour which is delayed and does not become obvious after us past 1980s because people belief that greyscale images are more successful for documentary storytelling as a medium. The image taken by Bob Tapper <https://assignbuster.com/london-street-photography-exhibition-photography-essay/>

called ' Two children looking out of a window in Fieldgate Mansions ; 1986 ' draw my attention straight away because of that children they looked like they are prisoners of their own house. For a while I felt sad but then I realised that they are actually happy. I do like framing in this image and how photographer emphasizes his point of view standing up and taking picture from that level. Also the writing on the wall matches the subject matter as we do not know if they having a mum or they are orphans. The fact that window is just on the footpath level makes it more abstract how the kids " looking out of a window".

Further I found interesting photograph of Stephen McLaren called Dog, Big Ben taken in April 2007 . It is a shoot of a dog jumping in the air and captured next to Big Ben on beautiful cloudless sky . What makes the dog look really big almost the size of the Big Ben is the way how it was captured pushed me to think how much you could do when you actually looking around. Also how important is approaching your subject in a way how you want to display your work to the viewer. The last photograph that I will talk about that grabbed my attention was the image by Marco Fiori Metro London Street Photography winner, 2011. The image shows interesting contrast of red and black and it captured the spontaneity of a perfect moment. Overall the exhibition show how London changed around its residents to become a city as we see it today. The down side of the whole experience was queuing for an hour and allot of people shuffling around the small room briefly looking at a succession of the prints which were A4 size or smaller. Also a short description was hanged almost at the ankle level what was real struggle to read. To summarise the exhibition provides the facts that street

photography is no longer alive but its shows that is still relevant in today's world.