

**The Sheffield Project:
Photographs of a Changing City**

23 October 2020 – 3 May 2021



In the late 1980s and 90s Sheffield reached a pivotal moment in its history, one which saw it begin a journey of regeneration and transformation into the city we know today. The first steps on that journey were documented by a group of gifted photographers whose work reflected both the hope and hard realities of the time. Today, as major developments in the city see its landscape continuing to evolve, a new exhibition at Weston Park Museum re-presents those original photographs to chronicle a significant turning point for Sheffield and its people.

Opening on Friday 23 October, *The Sheffield Project: Photographs of a Changing City* will bring together images by acclaimed, socially-engaged photographers including John Davies, Anna Fox, John Kippin and more.

For many people in Sheffield the last decades of the 20th century were a time of great upheaval and hardship; the aftermath of the Miners' Strike was still being felt, the steel industry's workforce had been decimated, and mass unemployment and dereliction were widespread. But it was also a time in which the city began to imagine its future, one that would include the Meadowhall retail development, the transformation of the lower Don Valley, and the state-of-the-art facilities created to host the World Student Games.

Recognising the significance of the time, Sheffield's Untitled Gallery, now Site Gallery, engaged a series of emerging local and nationally-based photographers for *The Sheffield Project*, an ambitious visual survey which sought to document the changes happening across the city. The works that were created

were shown in a series of exhibitions at Untitled Gallery's original home in Walkley and at the new premises on Brown Street, where Site Gallery is still based today. This new exhibition at Weston Park Museum, curated by Matthew Conduit, director of Untitled Gallery 1985-88 and initiator of *The Sheffield Project*, revisits this remarkable collection of images to offer a window into a unique moment in the city's past.

The Sheffield Project: Photographs of a Changing City features work by Mike Black, Matthew Conduit, Berris Conolly, John Darwell, John Davies, Anna Fox, Graham Gaunt, John Kippin, Kate Mellor, Ken Phillip, Tim Smith, Bill Stephenson, Iain Stewart, Patrick Sutherland and Adrian Wynn.

The compelling photographs these artists and photographers created captured the often complex nature of change. Subjects depicted span the steelworks' furnaces firing for the final time, abandoned buildings soon to be demolished, and depictions of the changes to ways of life that the regeneration brought for the communities on its doorstep. The photographs also reflect the hope in this new vision for the future and the energy of the World Student Games and legacy it sought to leave behind.

Many of the photographers Untitled commissioned were early in their careers and have now gone on to earn reputations for creating arresting social documents of time and place. Their work in the 1980s was made at a critical point in the development of British photography, where new approaches to landscape and colour documentary styles emerged and became both established and influential.

A new publication, '*Regeneration – The Sheffield Project 1981-1991*' will be published by Untitled Print Studio to coincide with the exhibition, which features work of all photographers and artists involved, together with insightful statements about their images and experiences of working in the city at that time.

Matthew Conduit, curator of the exhibition, said:

"The 1980s was a turbulent but exciting time in Sheffield. Whilst the dire economic climate wrought havoc on the local traditional industries and people's livelihoods, the city was fighting hard to forge a new identity and future and was culturally vibrant. It was one of the first cities in the UK to champion the development of the Cultural Industries, of which Untitled Gallery was a part. More than thirty years later, by anybody's reckoning Sheffield is transformed. Revisiting these images has underlined that it was a city facing many severe threats, but those threats were punctuated by a surge in cultural output and sound-tracked by home-grown synth-pop which became synonymous with Sheffield, all of which brought with it an incredible energy and sense of momentum."

Alison Morton, Head of Exhibitions at Museums Sheffield said:

"The images created as part of The Sheffield Project offer a fascinating insight into what is in many ways the birth of the city we know now. The last six months have highlighted how quickly we begin to adjust to change in our lives, but when you look at these photographs it's not hard to imagine how radical the

change they depict must have felt to those most affected by it. It really brings a new perspective to how we think about the city we live in today.”

The Sheffield Project: Photographs of a Changing City opens on Friday 23 October 2020 and continues until 3 May 2021 – entry to the exhibition is free, but pre-booked visits to the museum are advised to avoid disappointment.

Full details on how to book a free visit and information on all the measures in place to keep everyone safe in the museum can be found at museums-sheffield.org.uk/visiting-weston-park.

The development of *The Sheffield Project: Photographs of a Changing City* has been generously supported by Arts Council England.

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Images (L-R):

- Berris Conolly, *Castle Square*, 1989 © the artist
- Anna Fox, *Don Valley Stadium*, 1988 © the artist
- Ken Phillip, *George Turton and Platt on night of closure*, circa 1984 © the artist

For more information and hi-res images please contact:

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Notes to Editors:

- Weston Park Museum, Western Bank, Sheffield, S10 2TP. Tel: 0114 278 2600
- Weston Park Museum is currently open Monday–Saturday 10am–4pm, Sunday 11am–4pm
- Free Entry
- To pre-book a free visit to Weston Park Museum visit museums-sheffield.org.uk/visiting-weston-park
- museums-sheffield.org.uk
- Twitter: @museumsheffield
- Facebook: @Museums.Sheffield
- Instagram: @museumssheffield
- Museums Sheffield is the charity that runs the Millennium Gallery, Graves Gallery & Weston Park Museum, and cares for the city's collections of art, human history & natural science

Artist biographies:

Mike Black

Born in Radcliffe, Manchester in 1956, Mike Black studied photography at Manchester Polytechnic in 1982-85. He has worked as a commercial photographer all his professional life, specialising in portraits and environmental architecture. Mike was commissioned by Untitled Gallery in 1989, and appeared in the second Sheffield Project exhibition in 1990.

www.mikeblackphotographer.co.uk

Matthew Conduit

Born in Nottingham in 1959, Matthew Conduit studied Fine Art at Sheffield Polytechnic from 1979, and never left the city. He became Director of Untitled Gallery in Walkley in 1985 and initiated The Sheffield Project, whilst helping to move the gallery to its present location in the city centre in 1988 (now Site Gallery). He then took a break from photography and helped develop the Workstation and Showroom complex in Sheffield until 2000, but resumed his photography thereafter. Matthew continues to produce new work from his studio in Heeley, Sheffield, where he also runs Untitled Print Studio.

www.matthewconduit.com / www.untitledprint.co.uk

Berris Conolly

Born in Dublin in 1948, Berris Conolly worked as a commercial photographer in London until the early 1980s, followed by a move into full-time documentary landscape photography. In 1988 he was one of the first Sheffield Project commissions and the work was shown in the first exhibition *Regeneration 1* at Untitled Gallery in 1989. Berris relocated to Sheffield at that time, where he continues to photograph the local landscape. His work has been exhibited and published widely, most recently by Dewi Lewis Publishing.

www.flickr.com/photos/bconolly

John Darwell

Born in Bolton in 1955, John Darwell studied photography at Manchester Polytechnic, and gained a PhD from the University of Sunderland. Commissioned by Untitled Gallery in 1988, he exhibited in *Regeneration 1* in 1989. Previous projects included a major survey of the Manchester Ship Canal (*The Big Ditch*) and the clothing industries of Stockport (*Working Lives*). John has since exhibited and published his work extensively with books on Chernobyl and the 2001 Foot and Mouth epidemic, and was until recently Reader in Photography at the University of Cumbria in Carlisle.

www.johndarwell.com

John Davies

Born in Sedgefield in 1949, John Davies studied Fine Art and Photography at Trent Polytechnic in Nottingham. Early in his career, he was appointed Fellow in Photography at Sheffield Polytechnic at Psalter Lane in 1980-81, where he produced two key bodies of work, *Irish Landscapes*, and *The Sheffield Series*, both exhibited at Untitled Gallery in Walkley in 1981 and 1982. The Sheffield images proved pivotal in the development of John's work, and he firmly established his own unique approach to photographing urban landscapes. John lives in Liverpool, and has exhibited and published his work across the world.

www.johndavies.uk.com

Anna Fox

Born in Hampshire in 1961, Anna Fox completed her degree in Audio Visual studies at The West Surrey Institute of Art & Design in 1986, and has since exhibited and published her work internationally. She was commissioned by Untitled Gallery in 1989 for the second Sheffield Project exhibition *Regeneration 2* in 1990. In 2010 Anna was shortlisted for the Deutsche Borse Photography Prize. She is currently Professor of Photography at University for the Creative Arts in Farnham, Surrey where she directs the award-winning research project *Fast Forward Women in Photography*.

www.annafox.co.uk

Graham Gaunt

Born in Sheffield in 1960, Graham Gaunt grew up in Chapeltown amongst a steel working family. He studied on the Art Foundation course at Sheffield Polytechnic, and went on to study BA Fine Art in Cardiff. In 1988 he was one of the first commissioned artists in The Sheffield Project, and was featured in the first exhibition *Regeneration 1* at Untitled Gallery, Brown Street, in 1989. Graham continues to work as a commercial and fine art photographer at his home in St. Ives, Cornwall.

www.grahamgaunt.co.uk

John Kippin

Born in London in 1950, John Kippin is an artist and photographer who works mainly within the broad context of landscape. He was commissioned by Untitled Gallery in 1989 and produced a body of work entitled *City of Ghosts*. John's work has been widely exhibited and published, and he is an Emeritus Professor in Photography at the

University of Sunderland. He is a current Leverhulme Emeritus Fellow working with Nicola Neate on a book publication entitled *In this Day and Age* in North Uist, Outer Hebrides. John Kippin appears courtesy of the LA Noble Gallery (London).

www.johnkippin.com / www.inthisdayandage.org

Kate Mellor

Born in Stourport-on-Severn in 1951, Kate Mellor studied photography at Manchester Polytechnic, University of Wales College, Newport, and completed a PhD at Ulster University. She has worked as a lecturer in photography for many UK universities and colleges and has exhibited in the UK and internationally. Kate was commissioned by Untitled Gallery in 1990, and exhibited in 1991. Kate continues to make work from her studio in Todmorden, West Yorkshire.

www.katemellor.com

Ken Phillip

Born in Orpington, Kent in 1939, Ken Phillip spent much of his early career working as a commercial photographer. In 1972 he became senior lecturer in photography at Sheffield School of Art (later Sheffield Polytechnic). The course grew to become one of the most influential schools of fine art photography in the country in the 1970-80s. His personal work largely focused on the Don Valley area, and he was an early British pioneer of the use of large format colour, at a time when black and white was prominent. Ken was a founder member of the Untitled Gallery in 1979, alongside 3rd year students from his course. He exhibited several times at Untitled, including *Power Transformed*, *Cold Steel* and *Six Aspects of Photography*, as well as The Sheffield Project. In the late 1980s Ken studied on the MA in Photographic Studies at Derby University and extended his Sheffield Project. Ken still lives in Sheffield in retirement with his wife Prue, and is still taking photographs.

Iain Stewart

Born in Sheffield in 1967, Iain Stewart is a landscape photographer based in Scotland. Exhibitions include The Photographers' Gallery, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and the International Centre for Photography in New York. Iain was commissioned by Untitled Gallery in 1990. The work was shown in the third Sheffield Project exhibition *Regeneration 3* at Untitled Gallery, Brown Street, in 1991.

www.isphotographs.co.uk

Tim Smith

Born in London in 1959, Tim Smith studied on the prestigious Documentary Photography course in Newport, South Wales. In 1985 he was commissioned by Untitled Gallery with Patrick Sutherland to photograph Sheffield Industry in celebration of *Industry Year 1986*. The exhibition and publication *In Production* was shown at Untitled Gallery in Walkley in 1986. Tim is a member of the multi-media agency Panos Pictures and now lives in Bradford, West Yorkshire, where he continues to work as an editorial photographer and on long term creative projects.

www.timsmithphotos.com

Bill Stephenson

Born in Birmingham in 1955, Bill Stephenson studied Fine Art at Sheffield City Polytechnic from 1979. In 1988 he worked with Untitled Gallery to document the last remaining residents of Hyde Park. *Streets in the Sky* was one of the first exhibitions at Untitled Gallery's new building on Brown Street. Bill has been awarded numerous photographic commissions including an Artist in Industry Fellowship, nomination for the Fox Talbot Award (for *Streets in the Sky*) and was Photographer in Residence at Sheffield Children's Hospital. He continues to work as both a commercial photographer and photojournalist from his home in Derbyshire.

www.billstephenson.co.uk

Patrick Sutherland

Born in Newcastle in 1952, Patrick Sutherland studied anthropology at Durham University and documentary photography in Newport, South Wales. In 1985 he was commissioned by Untitled Gallery (with Tim Smith) to photograph Sheffield industry in celebration of Industry Year 1986. Since 1993 he has been working among culturally-Tibetan communities in the Himalayas, primarily in Spiti in North India. This ongoing project has been widely published and exhibited, and archives of images and sound recordings are held in The British Library. Patrick is Emeritus Professor of Documentary Photography at University of the Arts London.

Adrian Wynn

Born in Oxford in 1949, Adrian Wynn worked mainly as a builder and roofer in Sheffield, but photographed prolifically from the 1980s onwards, until his untimely death in 2019. Adrian was a committed member of the Untitled Gallery and served as a Trustee from around 1986 to 1990. Adrian showed work in the first Sheffield Project exhibition *Regeneration 1* in 1989, and in the Untitled Gallery group exhibition *Six Aspects of Photography* at the Mappin Art Gallery in 1987. He was also a very keen writer, and contributed to many publications.

www.flickr.com/photos/adrianwynn

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