

Charlie Phillips: The Urban Eye **Hidden stories in the rise of modern multicultural London**

Street life, interracial relationships, fashion, Carnival and images of bohemia are captured in Charlie Phillips' latest exhibition *Charlie Phillips: The Urban Eye*. The striking 'captured moments' in his photographic collection not only form part of a constructed and contested mythology of Notting Hill neighbourhoods in West London during the late 1950s and 1960s but also trace the evolution and transformation of the migrant urban experience into the cosmopolitan cities we inhabit today.

A key aim of the exhibition – which is Phillips first solo exhibition outside London in the UK – is, according to curator Paul Goodwin, to present Phillips as not just a 'community photographer' who has taken a random selection of iconic images but rather to consider his work as a significant contribution to the canon of street based urban photography in Britain.

"His work is as significant as great chroniclers of everyday street life such as Markéta Luskačová, Shirley Baker and Tom Wood. Each photograph tells 'other' stories, often hidden and submerged, not only about life in that fabled part of London, but also stories about the rise of modern multicultural London and the migrant experience in the city," he said.

The area of London captured in *Charlie Phillips: The Urban Eye* has in recent times become synonymous with high income gentrification and fashionable shops exemplified in the Hollywood movie, *Notting Hill*. This exhibition goes beneath this highly constructed image to reveal an alternative history of the area.

Phillips states that his photographic method is akin to a hunter stalking his prey and capturing fleeting moments within the frame of his photographic compositions. *Charlie Phillips: The Urban Eye* for example captures the determined yet optimistic gaze of a mixed race couple which directly appeals to the spectator to accept the reality of their experience; a smartly dressed urban dandy in zoot suit and spats crossing nonchalantly past a nondescript urban brick wall; and an elderly white woman making her way through urban ruins carrying a heavy load of shopping with a couple of young black children in tow.

Coming to Notting Hill from Kingston in 1956, Phillips grew up against a background of hostility and prejudice in a part of London where racism, Rachmanism, rioting and sus laws, affected many people. When he was eleven he was given a Kodak Brownie by a black American serviceman and started snapping his friends and neighbours, particularly from the Caribbean Community. He developed the pictures in the bath at home, late at night when his parents had gone to bed. They were only too glad that he was not out on the streets at night and in any danger.

***Charlie Phillips: The Urban Eye* opens at New Art Exchange, Nottingham on Saturday 20 April and runs until Saturday 6 July.**

Event Details:

What: Launch of *Charlie Phillips: The Urban Eye*

Where: New Art Exchange, 39-41 Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham NG7 6BE

When: Saturday 20 April, 12pm – 2pm

What: Photographer Charlie Phillips and curator Paul Goodwin will lead a walk and talk and do a presentation in the gallery.

For further press information, images or enquiries please contact: Emma O'Neill, Marketing and Communications Manager on e: emma@nae.org.uk p: 0115 924 8630

- Editors notes -

For a full selection of images to be exhibited as part of Charlie Phillips: The Urban Eye please go to: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3dlk2mwrzczfg5x/puZVIOXZOY>

About New Art Exchange

New Art Exchange is a contemporary art gallery committed to stimulating new perspectives on the value of diversity within art and society. A stunning, RIBA award winning building, New Art Exchange is the largest space in the UK outside of London dedicated to culturally diverse contemporary visual arts, and is rooted in the community with a strong history of working with minority communities.

NAE presents major international exhibitions, launching the British Art Show in 2010, and every season presents work from the highest quality, world-renowned artists. NAE partners locally, nationally and internationally, connecting audiences and artists from all over the world with new and innovative collaborations and opportunities.

NAE's mission is to raise the impact, profile and development of culturally diverse contemporary visual arts and artists in a global context by:

- Nurturing and promoting creative talent locally and world-wide
- Creating thriving creative businesses
- Engaging minority ethnic communities as audiences and patrons of art

About Artist Charlie Phillips

Ronald "Charlie" Phillips (born 1944) is a Jamaican-born restaurateur, photographer, and documenter of black London. He is now best known for his photographs of Notting Hill during the period of West Indian migration to London; however, his subject matter has also included film stars and student protests, with his photographs having appeared in *Stern*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Life* and *Vogue* and in Italian and Swiss journals. He came with his family to Notting Hill, London in 1956 and as a young man he travelled all over Europe. In 1968/9 he took photographs of the student riots in Paris and Rome. He had his first exhibition in Milan in 1972 where he showed photographs portraying the frustrations and difficulties of urban migrant workers. Returning to London after several years, he lived "a bohemian life of squats and pop festivals. During the 1980s, he took photographs documenting West Indian funerals at Kensal Green Cemetery and other cemeteries in London. In 1989 he moved to south London to run a restaurant in Wandsworth, Smokey Joe's Diner, during which time he did not pursue his career as a photographer.

A revival of interest in his work came with it being featured in an exhibition in the Tabernacle in Notting Hill in 1991, coinciding with the launch of his book of photographs, *Notting Hill In the Sixties*, introduced by the writer Mike Phillips. In recent years his work has been seen and lauded in numerous high profile exhibitions at prestigious venues such as the Museum of London (*Through London's Eyes 2003*; *Roots to Reckoning 2006*) and Tate Britain (*How We Are: Photographing Britain 2007*).

About Curator Paul Goodwin

Paul Goodwin is an independent curator, lecturer and urban theorist based in London. As a curator at Tate Britain from 2008-2012 he directed Tate Britain's pioneering Cross Cultural Programme a multi-disciplinary platform exploring the impact of globalisation on contemporary art in Britain. He has curated and co-curated a number of internationally

significant exhibitions including: *Migrations: Journeys Into British Art*, Tate Britain 2012; *Thin Black Line(s)*, Tate Britain, 2011; *Go Tell It On The Mountain: Towards A New Monumentalism*, 2011 and *Ways of Seeing*, 2012, 3-D Foundation Sculpture Park in Verbier, Switzerland; *Coming Ashore*, 2011, Berardo Collection Museum in Lisbon, Portugal, *Afro Modern: Journeys Through the Black Atlantic*, Tate Liverpool, 2010; *Underconstruction*, Hospital Julius De Matos, Lisbon, Portugal, 2009.

He is an Associate Lecturer, MA Curating, Chelsea College of Art and Design; a Research Fellow in urbanism at the Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths, University of London, a Trustee of Third Text journal (2011-2-13) and an elected Honorary Member of the Franco-British Inter-governmental Council. He was on the Board of Yinka Shonibare MBE Guest Projects in 2010-2011. Goodwin is currently Curatorial Director of the 3-D Foundation Sculpture Park and International Residency Programme in Verbier, Switzerland. He has been invited to give keynote lectures and chair conferences at universities and museums around the world including: *University of Sydney and Australia Council, Australia; Museum of Modern Art, Rio, Brazil; the Sorbonne in Paris; Danish Centre for Art and Interculture, Copenhagen, Federal Agency for Civic Education, Berlin; Stedelijk Museum Bureau in Amsterdam, Tate Modern in London.*