



Centre for British Photography focuses on communities for autumn exhibitions

4 October – 17 December 2023

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FREE entry

The 50th anniversary of Daniel Meadows' Free Photographic Omnibus and Charlie Phillips's 50-year work on Afro Caribbean funerals in London will be the two lead exhibitions considering communities opening at the Centre for British Photography on Thursday 5 October. Community-focused work of three other photographers will also be on show: Grace Lau's Chinese portrait studio; Dorothy Bohm's photographs of London street markets; and Arpita Shah's portraits of young British Asian women.

James Hyman, Founding Director of the Centre for British Photography, said: "Building a community around photography in Britain is central to our aims and I am delighted that our autumn exhibitions present a range of voices, across generations, to celebrate different communities. Our mission is to provide a platform for all types of photography and to champion the ways in which our lives are enriched through learning about the perspectives, cultures and heritages of others. So it is really special to present five shows that complement one another so well and give such powerful expression to the vibrancy of these different communities. I am also pleased that as well as curating our own shows, we are again providing a London venue for exhibitions and bodies of work that that would not otherwise reach this audience."

Charlie Phillips - *How Great Thou Art*, 50 Years of African Caribbean Funerals in London Main gallery



Charlie Phillips' *How Great Thou Art - 50 Years of African Caribbean Funerals in London* is a sensitive photographic documentary of the social and emotional traditions that surround death in London's

African Caribbean community. This will be the first time that the Centre for British Photography's main space will present a solo exhibition.

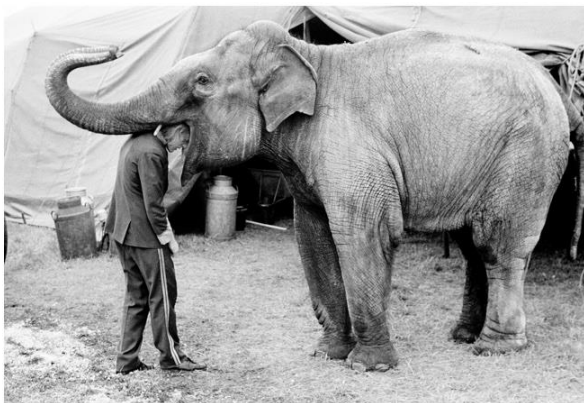
The title for the exhibition is borrowed from the popular hymn sung at funerals that praises the life of an individual, and this project is a declaration of love and celebration for the traditions and cultures of the African diaspora in London. An immersive exhibition, it will include photographs, video and music.

Paul Goodwin, curator, lecturer and urban theorist has observed: "*How Great Thou Art* is a new landmark in black British photography. The question of death and the cultural responses to death through funerals in the Caribbean community has featured sporadically in various photographic oeuvres before but no one has explored this subject in such depth and in such a participatory and embedded manner as Charlie Phillips in *How Great Thou Art*."

Charlie Phillips was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1944 and arrived in Britain in 1955, where he settled in London's Notting Hill. His photographs provide an intimate insight into the Black British experience. He was awarded an OBE in 2022.

This exhibition is a re-presentation of an exhibition originally curated by Eddie Otchere and Lizzy King for Photofusion in 2014, with support from Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts Fund.

Daniel Meadows - Free Photographic Omnibus, 50th Anniversary Lower ground floor gallery



On 22 September 1973, Daniel Meadows set off on a long-planned adventure in a rickety 1948 double-decker bus that he had repurposed as his home, gallery and darkroom. He was intent on making a portrait of England. He was 21 years old.

Over the next 14 months, travelling alone, Meadows crisscrossed the country covering 10,000 miles. He photographed 958 people, in 22 towns and cities. From circus performers to day trippers. He developed and printed the photographs as he went along, giving them away for free to those who posed for him.

This exhibition will feature dozens of photographs, including loans from The Hyman Collection, as well as previously unseen works of documentary reportage that Meadows made during his travels.

The project was heralded as highly original, a project guided by its subjects as much as the photographer, and an experiment in countercultural values, socialist principals and collaboration, and 50 years later it is just as remarkable.

Daniel Meadows is a documentarist. He has spent a lifetime recording British society, challenging the status quo by working in a collaborative way to capture extraordinary aspects of ordinary life through photography, audio recordings and short movies. His work has been exhibited in the UK and overseas, and he has taught photojournalism across the world. Meadows was awarded a PhD in 2005 and his archive is held in the Bodleian Libraries at the University of Oxford.

Dorothy Bohm - London Street Markets Mezzanine gallery



London's street markets and especially the people who worked there were an important aspect of Bohm's engagement with London. Having run a successful portrait studio in Manchester in the late 1940s and 1950s, it was only in the 60s and 70s, after she settled in London, that Bohm turned her lens on the city that remained her home until her death earlier this year. The markets she depicted include the old Covent Garden fruit and vegetable market, Smithfield, Billingsgate, Petticoat Lane, Portobello Road, Farringdon Road book market, as well as stalls in Camden Town and Hampstead.

The exhibition will be made up of familiar and unfamiliar works. As Bohm's daughter, the art historian Monica Bohm-Duchen, writes: "Familiar or otherwise, collectively they present a vivid picture of a bygone world, sometimes entertaining and extrovert, as often melancholy and introspective, but always humane, empathetic and engaging - a world of horse carts and cloth caps, hard work and meagre monetary rewards but also of unexpected grace, good-humoured camaraderie and other rewards less possible to quantify."

The comfortable central European world in which Dorothy Bohm (née Israelit) grew up was a very different one to that of the London street markets she was to be so fascinated by over three decades later. Born in Königsberg, East Prussia, in 1924, her Jewish family left Germany and moved to Memel in Lithuania in 1932; in June 1939, just a few months before the outbreak of the Second World War, her parents made the wise but difficult decision to send her to the safety of England. By Dorothy's own admission, and fully understandable given her early experience of profound displacement, photography's unique ability to stop time in its tracks and preserve a moment for ever lies at the very heart of its appeal for her.

Grace Lau – Portraits In a Chinese Studio Mezzanine Gallery



Grace Lau's Chinese portrait studio is not just an entertaining pop-up studio but also addresses issues around Imperialism by inverting Western notions of the Chinese as an exotic 'other'. The studio will be set up in the Mezzanine Gallery at the Centre for British Photography and visitors will be able to book a spot to pose for the camera at times throughout the exhibition's run. Portraits from two previous incarnations of the studio will surround the studio.

The first photographic portrait studios in China were set up in the mid-19th century by Western travellers, and focused on 'exotic' subjects such as beggars, opium smokers, coolies and courtesans. Many of these images were reproduced as postcards to send back to amuse a European audience. In 2005, Lau created her own version of an old Chinese portrait studio in which she would document the residents and tourists to Hastings as 'exotic' subjects. Open to anyone passing by, the project made an oblique comment on Imperialist visions of the Chinese; and by reversing roles, Lau became the Imperialist photographer making portraits of the diverse people of a British seaside town.

The props including mock Chinese furniture and a faux panda rug, and the vibrant 'Oriental' backdrop was painted by muralist, Robina Barson. The discrepancy between the historic studio context and the contemporary appearance of the subjects is highlighted by the overly formal presentation.

In 2023, Lau's Portrait Studio reopened in a Southampton shopping mall during the Chinese New Year as part of John Hansard Gallery's Co-Creating Public Space programme and resulted in over 600 portraits representing a Southern English port. The resulting portraits would inform several layers of cultural interpretation, conflating 150 years of history in a raucous theatre of photography, but leaving an unrepeatable archive of '21st Century Types'.

Grace Lau was born in London of Chinese parentage. She has written that her intent is to raise awareness of stereotyping and prejudices, to encourage questions and debate, and to respond as an artist to social issues. She is also driven by curiosity about the performative aspect of portraiture photography and how her subjects enact out roles and interact with the photographer. From her earlier work on the underground fetish scene of the 1980s to this series, all her portraits are based on photography providing the stage for performance.

Portraits In a Chinese Studio is presented in partnership with John Hansard Gallery, part of the University of Southampton, supported by Arts Council England.

Arpita Shah – Modern Muse
Mezzanine gallery



Drawing from and subverting the conventions of Mughal and Indian miniature paintings from ancient to pre-colonial times, Arpita Shah's *Modern Muse* visually and conceptually explores the ever-shifting identities and representations of South Asian women in contemporary Britain. The portraits give an insight into the perspectives of what it means to be a young British and Asian woman. Shah examines the intersections of culture and identity, drawing on the women's lived experiences and her own journey and life. Commissioned by GRAIN projects, this body of work has not been shown in London before.

Arpita Shah was born in Ahmedabad in India and spent an earlier part of her life living between India, Ireland and the Middle East before settling in the UK. This migratory experience is reflected in her practice, which often focuses on the notion of home, belonging and shifting cultural identities. In *Modern Muse* she does this in collaboration with women who are also artists, creatives and educators based in Birmingham and the West Midlands. The portraits were collaborative in nature and during their participation the women spoke of their own experiences.

Shah's work often draws from Asian and Eastern mythology, using it both visually and conceptually to explore issues of cultural displacement in the South Asian diaspora. She states: "As a South Asian artist it was important to challenge representations of South Asian women in Mughal and Indian miniatures, but also comment on the visibility of women of colour as 'Muses' in Western art history. I made *Modern Muse* for South Asian girls and women, for them to feel represented."

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Private view Tuesday 3 October, 6 – 8pm
Exhibition: 4 October to 17 December 2023

The Centre for British Photography

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Opening Hours

Wednesday to Friday: 11am – 6pm

Saturday and Sunday: 11am – 4pm

FREE ENTRY

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www.britishphotography.org

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Notes to editors

The **Centre for British Photography** opened to great acclaim in January 2023. Three floors of exhibitions present the diverse landscape of British photography today, as well as providing an historical overview. The 8000 sq. ft. Centre is FREE to visit year-round and offers exhibitions, events and talks, an archive and library and a photography sales gallery. The Centre features photographs from 1900 to the present, champions work by photographers living and working in the UK today, and celebrates images taken by those who immigrated to the UK. It presents self-generated exhibitions as well as those led by independent curators and organisations. The Centre stages numerous exhibitions throughout the year and also brings together the photographic community – professional and amateur - through its talks and events programme. Regional museums, universities and photography collectives are also invited to use the Centre's London space to present exhibitions and collaborate on talks and events.