

OPEN EYE GALLERY

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*'As and When', community photography exhibition at The Brindley Theatre,
Halton*

*Opening Day: 1st July
Exhibition: 1st July - 2nd September*

NEW PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION CHARTS HOW HALTON BUILDS A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

As and When, an exhibition of original photography, is launching this summer in The Brindley Theatre in Halton. The show reflects on the ideas and identities of two distinct groups of Halton residents, looking at how we build a sense of community and what we mean by health and wellbeing.

The photographs on show are an honest look at the daily lives of two community groups, the Women of Windmill Hill and Widnes Vikings Golden Generation group. *As and When*, launching 1st July, shows how two communities living either side of the iconic Runcorn Bridge are brought together through shared perspectives on social mobility, local visibility, health and well-being.

The Women of Windmill Hill, a group based in the Runcorn estate, began their project by actively reconnecting with their area and its history. Along the way, they decided to base the style of their work on a 1970s promotional article about moving to the area, at a time when families were often dispersed to the “suburbs” and away from the Liverpool slums. They are exhibiting a body of work that compares promised perceptions of Windmill Hill in the 1970s’ with the reality of today.

To explore the lives of Widnes Vikings Golden Generation Group, a social group for fans of the Super League club aged over 55, the community were each given a disposable camera and asked to document what they do on match day before arriving at the stadium. Through this process, the group collectively captured over 450 photographs. These images reveal the true extent of their social mobility and daily interactions, further highlighting their common aim of breaking down stereotypes that being older means being in-active.

The show has been developed by Liverpool’s Open Eye Gallery and Halton Clinical Commissioning Group, with venue partner The Brindley Theatre. Open Eye Gallery invited photographers Gary Bratchford and Robert Parkinson to meet and work with the communities. The work was produced collaboratively, with all artistic decisions made by both the photographers and members of the groups.

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Some of the ideas behind *As and When* are based on the World Health Organisation's 1948 definition of 'health' as 'a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. The exhibition looks at how a sense of belonging is a crucial foundation to healthy, happy people. It is the first exhibition in a series of similar shows around the region, as part of a wider project called *Culture Shifts*.

Dave Sweeney, Chief Officer of NHS Halton Clinical Commissioning Group, and Dr Cliff Richards M.B.E, Social Prescribing Lead for Cheshire and Merseyside, wrote a collaborative statement:

"More recently there has been a focus on how to deal with less than complete health. Ultimately it is the resilience of individuals and communities that create health. Culture Shifts aims to throw light on this genesis."

Over the next six months, a series of *Culture Shifts* shows will take place across Merseyside and Cheshire. The projects connect photographers with various communities, encouraging people to explore the stories of their surroundings, deepen their understanding of their home and create a sense of positive community cohesion.

Shows will take place in Toxteth, Kirby, Sefton, Wirral, and St. Helens. The exhibitions will culminate in a long-running show at Liverpool's Open Eye Gallery in October, collecting together highlights from each of the exhibitions.

As and When at The Brindley Theatre is part of Open Eye Gallery's '[Culture Shifts](#)' series. It will launch on Saturday 1st of July at 10am, with events and activities taking place throughout the day until 3pm. It is free to attend and open to everyone.

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For press enquiries, interviews, or further visuals, contact Jacob Bolton at Jacob@openeye.org.uk / 0151 242 1131.

To find out more about the *Culture Shifts* programme, contact Liz Wewiora at Liz@openeye.org.uk.

To find out more about Open Eye Gallery, head to www.openeye.org.uk.

EDITOR'S NOTES

Open Eye Gallery, founded in 1977, is an independent, not-for-profit photography gallery based in Liverpool. One of the UK's leading photography spaces, it is the only gallery dedicated to photography and related media in the North West of England.

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The exhibition is part of Open Eye Gallery's *Culture Shifts* programme, a socially engaged project dedicated to making photography meaningful to various local, national and international communities.

More about the projects:

The Women of Windmill Hill were specifically interested to explore their residential area; its unique urban planning, its access to the rest of Halton and its relationship to health and wellbeing. Working with Bratchford and Parkinson, the women went on a journey of self-led and collaborative photography walks, acting as social documenters of Windmill Hill. Picking up on repetitive colour palettes of the area, and physical and metaphorical symbols representing access, barriers and natural surroundings, the group were able to create a body of work which touches upon promised perceptions of Windmill Hill in the 1970s' with the reality of today. The group were particularly interested to respond to a 1970's promotional article about moving to the area, at a time when families were often dispersed to the "suburbs" and away from the Liverpool slums. One of the women still had the newspaper article from her original move to the area, entitled, "*A home that is right for you*". Using a number of multi-sensory methods, the women sought to question this very statement weaving in poetry and creative writing to add further context to the images created and referencing the original newspaper format.

The Widnes Vikings Golden Generation group come together for their passion of Rugby League, and determination to stay healthy, active and social citizens. Working with Bratchford, the group were offered the opportunity to look beyond the immediate function of the group and their collective and specific identity as an affiliated Widnes Vikings Supporters Group, to investigate their own subjective identity. Foregrounding photography as a means of communication, the group members were issued with disposable cameras to document what they do on 'match day' before they arrive in the stadium. In doing so, the group were able to document and reflect on their daily lives and through this single activity over 450 photographs were captured. These images revealed the true extent of their social mobility, daily interactions and alternative passions, further highlighting their common aim of breaking down stereotypes that being older means being in-active. In the spirit of the group's committee structure, a sub-group carried on with the project to direct both photographers with the editing and curation of final work, feeding back to the wider group for a democratic sign off.

All involved found photography as a tool for expression, about what makes and can make a community a healthy community, and what it means to be a community situated within the Halton Borough. *As and When* aims to reflect this and invites the public to join in on the discussion through a series of community led tours of the exhibition, hosted once a month whilst open.

The public launch will take place on Saturday 1st July, 10-3pm at The Brindley Theatre. Attendance is free. For more information please contact liz@openeye.org.uk

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