



Half Moon Gallery entrance, Alie Street, London. © Nick Hedges 1978

Photography on the Move: The Half Moon Touring Shows 1976 - 1984

This November, discover how trailblazing photography exhibitions toured 1970s Britain with the help of a humble laminating machine. Four Corners' latest exhibition tells the remarkable story of the Half Moon touring shows, revealing a little-known moment in British photographic history.

In 1976, photographers at East London's Half Moon Gallery developed an innovative approach to exhibiting. With little money, a leaky roof and a DIY attitude, they arranged their work on card panels and ran them through a laminator, creating unpretentious exhibitions-in-a-box that travelled the country via British Rail.

Documenting working lives and rural traditions, shedding light on international conflicts and injustices closer to home, the Half Moon touring shows introduced powerful imagery by an emerging generation of socially engaged photographers including Daniel Meadows, Susan Meiselas and Chris Steele-Perkins, alongside the work of activists and artist-educators. Their visually striking sequences of images and text offer a compelling picture of 1970s political concerns and social conditions that still resonates today.

Bypassing elitist arts institutions, the exhibitions toured to alternative venues including community centres, left-wing bookshops, student unions, churches, a prison and even a laundrette. By 1984, over fifty shows had reached people across the UK, playing a pivotal role in how documentary photography was seen and used.

Photography on the Move offers a unique opportunity to see some of the surviving original panels, alongside archival material that tells the story of their production. With the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Four Corners has digitised many of the touring shows, a selection of which visitors can view in their entirety. They include the group shows *Bringing it All Back Home* (1980), which investigates media reporting on the conflict in Northern Ireland, the feminist project *Gaining Momentum* (1981), the anti-nuclear protest series *No Nuclear Weapons* (1980), and the all-too-pertinent documentary *Beirut: photos from the Israeli invasion of Lebanon* (1983).

The Half Moon touring shows offer a fascinating insight into a radical moment in British photographic culture and alternative art practice that continues to inspire today.

-Ends -

Notes to editors

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Exhibition private view: Thursday 23rd November by invitation

24 November 2023 - 27 January 2024

Free admission. Opening hours 11am-6pm Weds - Sat, until 8pm Thurs.

Four Corners 121 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 0QN. `

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Background Information

In 1972, the Half Moon Gallery opened in the foyer of a fringe theatre in East London. One of a handful of exhibition spaces in the UK dedicated to photography, it attracted a new generation of politicised photographers exploring their medium as a tool for activism and social change. Together, they formed a collective, the Half Moon Photography Workshop. Alongside the touring shows, the collective is best-known for its influential photography magazine *Camerawork*.

Four Corners Archive comprises the early work of Four Corners, the Half Moon Photography Workshop and *Camerawork* magazine from 1972-1987. Emerging out of the 1970s community arts movement, these neighbouring organisations championed socially-engaged, experimental approaches to filmmaking and photography. www.fourcornersarchive.org

Acknowledgements

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Talks and events

The exhibition is accompanied by a programme of talks, further information will be shared on our [website](#).

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future. www.heritagefund.org.uk. Follow @HeritageFundUK on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund

Paul Mellon Centre

The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art is an educational charity and research institute that champions new ways of understanding British art history and culture. <https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk/>

Four Corners

We are a cultural centre for film and photography, based in East London for fifty years. Our exhibitions explore unknown social histories that might not otherwise be told.

