

PRESS RELEASE

Tom Hunter

Life and Death in Hackney

The Grey Gallery

4 Helmsley Place, London Fields, E8 3SB

Saturday 13th April – Sunday 5th May 2024

Open 12 noon to 5pm on the following weekends: 13 + 14, 20 + 21, 27 + 28 April, 4 + 5 May 2024 or by appointment info@thegreygallery.com / 07910359087

It's been nearly a quarter of a century since Tom Hunter made his landmark series *Life and Death in Hackney 1991 - 2001*. The work depicts a world completely built over by the London Olympics and the ongoing gentrification of Hackney and adjacent areas.

To mark this passing of time and place, and in context of the group exhibition *At Home in Hackney, A Community Photographed 1970-today* at the Hackney Museum featuring his Holly Street Tower Block model until the 15th of June, Tom Hunter will show 7 large images at the Grey Galley.



Tom Hunter, *The Vale of Rest*, Cibachrome print on aluminium, 4' x 5'

Life and Death in Hackney paints a landscape, creating a melancholic beauty out of the post-industrial decay where wild buddleia and sub-cultural inhabitants took root and bloomed. This maligned and somewhat abandoned area became the epicentre of the new warehouse rave scene of the early 90s. During this time the old print factories, warehouses and workshops became the playground of a disenchanting generation, taking the DIY culture from the free festival scene and adapting it to the urban wastelands. This Venice of the East End, with its canals, rivers and waterways, made a labyrinth of pleasure gardens and pavilions in which thousands of explorers travelled through a heady mixture of music and drug-induced trances.

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All the images draw upon these influences, combining beauty and degradation with everyday tales of abandonment and loss, music and hedonism. The reworking of John Millais's *Ophelia* shows a young girl whose journey home from one such rave was curtailed by falling into the canal and losing herself to the dark slippery, industrial motorway of a bygone era.

By taking on some of the attributes associated with the Pre-Raphaelite artists, such as social engagement, which has been largely erased from the cultural understanding of this group, and the obvious intertwining of beauty and nature, Hunter has reinvestigated this much maligned inner city landscape and society to create an unusual chronicle of contemporary urban Britain.

Notes to Editors

Tom Hunter is an internationally acclaimed and award-winning artist working in photography and film. He is Honorary Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and has an Honorary Doctorate from the University of East London.

Tom lives and works in Hackney, East London, where he has worked on numerous community engagement projects including The Holly Street Public Arts Trust, Help the Aged, Hackney Council and the Museum of London.

Tom has earned several awards including the Photographic Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery, London, and is the only artist to have had a solo photography show at the National Gallery, London with his series *Living in Hell and Other Stories*. His work has been exhibited internationally including *Life and Death in Hackney*, National Gallery Washington DC, USA and has been commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company, U.K. Dorky Park Dance company, Germany and The Serpentine Gallery, London. He has produced 8 photographic monographs including *The Way Home*, *Le Crowbar* and *Where Have all the Flowers Gone*. His work is in many museum collections around the world including The Tate, London, The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, The National Gallery, Washington DC, and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

Social Media

<https://www.instagram.com/tomhunterphotography/>

<https://twitter.com/TomHunterArt>

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<https://www.instagram.com/thegreygallerylondon/>

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