

INVESTIGATIONS

GINA GLOVER

1
SOCIAL ACTION



INVESTIGATIONS

Investigations is a series of three books comprising a selection of clippings, tear sheets and other memorabilia from an archive I started at my first beginnings as a photographer in the 1970s. Together, these short books present an autobiographical approach to photography; an opportunity for me to glance back at events and people through a retrospective prism. Book one is subtitled *Social Action*; book two, *Self as Self Subject*; and book three, *Embodying Health*.

Across the three books the mode of photography perceptively shifts from a social documentary to a more art or play-based approach. I regard neither as superior but they do substantially differ. A documentary photograph offers a lens upon the world. This not just a metaphor. Documentary photographs are anchored to real events and by being so, they are, to use a word from the earliest days of photographic image analysis, 'indexical'. This may not be true of every documentary photograph, for example some photography - and this applies also to some of my own work - is constructed; and certainly other photography, while giving the appearance of documented reality, is deceptive. No matter how much anyone claims that a photograph 'mirrors the world', all photographs, since they require interpretation, can be understood in myriad ways. Every image also contains symbolic properties which produce varying meanings or perceptual judgements.

Documentary photographs from the past may offer a form of remembrance, much like a family snapshot. Their interpretation can be difficult because we in the present may misinterpret the embedded tacit understandings drawn from the time. As the writer LP Hartley once observed, "*The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.*" That said, the past also throws a long shadow and is continuous with the present. But if the past is past, why should we bother with it? The philosopher George Santayana once offered an answer. Progress, he remarked, far from consisting in change, depends instead upon 'retentiveness.' By this he meant about ability to learn from events and allowing us to feed this knowledge back into our current situation.

The social causes championed some decades ago, presented here in stark tones of black and white (and with variable printing quality), helps us appreciate not only the past but how the past bears upon the present. The images here were constructed for many different purposes, but what brings them together is their common attempt to promote social progress. Much of we value today about society was often achieved through the actions of small groups of people challenging the boundaries of the normal and accepted.

These books contain only a few of the thousands of images made since the founding of Wandsworth Photo Co-op almost four

decades ago. The account is biographical and therefore implying that these short books are essentially individual works. All documentary or art photography is the product of the eye of one photographer, but what often also gets missed is that even the most seemingly personal work emerges from a certain time and a place and from relationships with others. Photography, like language, is a social medium and it is the social, indeed the group nature of photography that emerges here, especially in Book One. What perhaps makes what is presented here of interest to rising generations of photographers is the belief that one of the shared purpose of photography, alongside its many other purpose or possibilities, is its wider social purposes and the promotion of the social good. That, to me, is a critical lesson from the past.

Gina Glover, May 2017

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”

Soren Kierkegaard

The Danish philosopher was right. We live our lives with our eyes fixed forward although it is the accumulation of experience which determines who we are and how we encounter the world. Photography has given me the opportunity to appreciate the relationship between experience and life circumstances. It combines my interest in image making with being given permission by the people photographed to investigate their lives and the meaning they give to them; and that includes my own.

This is the first of the three books under the overall title 'Investigations'.

Book One largely focuses on people, and specifically people living in south London where I lived from the early 1970s and where I raised three children. It deals with my involvement in the founding of Wandsworth Photo Co-op, later Photo Co-op (and later again, Photofusion), and how these organisations became established as vehicles for cause-related photography activism: how people came together due to their love of the medium and to develop and promote the social role of photography. In presenting a brief record of the times I have attempted to assemble images and short text in some rough time order, although in some places thematic consistency has greater priority.

WANDSWORTH PHOTO CO-OP

“Wandsworth Photography Co-op thinks that photography can serve wider, more socially useful purposes than those that it is usually put to (such as advertising). We like to think of it as an artistic process accessible to the mass of the people rather than the few, and that it can also function as a mode of artistic expression that serves humanitarian aims in a society where art is increasingly being used to sell commodities.”

Excerpt from *Views on Wandsworth* calendar, 1981

In the early seventies I moved to Wandsworth with my then husband and my first child, Max. I worked as a part-time adult education tutor setting up family workshops. I was introduced by my husband to people who worked for the Wandsworth left-wing community newspaper, Pavement, established around 1971. I gradually started working for the paper – everyone involved was unpaid - taking pictures around the issues that the newspaper championed. With the strapline “A fighting paper for Wandsworth’s working people” topics related to health, housing, action against welfare cuts or unemployment and more. Wandsworth, and particularly the Battersea area, possessed a radical past, one going back to at least to opposition to the Boer War more than a century ago. Pavement was a continuation of this tradition.

It began as a voluntary activity drawing photo-graphers into community activism.

Through my involvement with Pavement, I encountered architect Martin Lipson, and we jointly came up with the idea of forming a photographers’ co-operative, what became Wandsworth Photo Co-op. It began as a voluntary activity drawing photographers into community activism. Our first publishing activity was a calendar and after that a stream of exhibitions, some representing our own topic interests, others were for institutions like the local Community Health Council, established in the mid-1970s to represent the consumer voice in the NHS (It no longer exists). Meetings of members were held in my or Martin’s living room.



1980 issue of Pavement with my photograph on the cover.



My then husband, Julian Lousada selling Pavement on the streets of Wandsworth, 1978. Photo by Martin Lipson



Wandsworth Photo Co-op leaflet [date?]

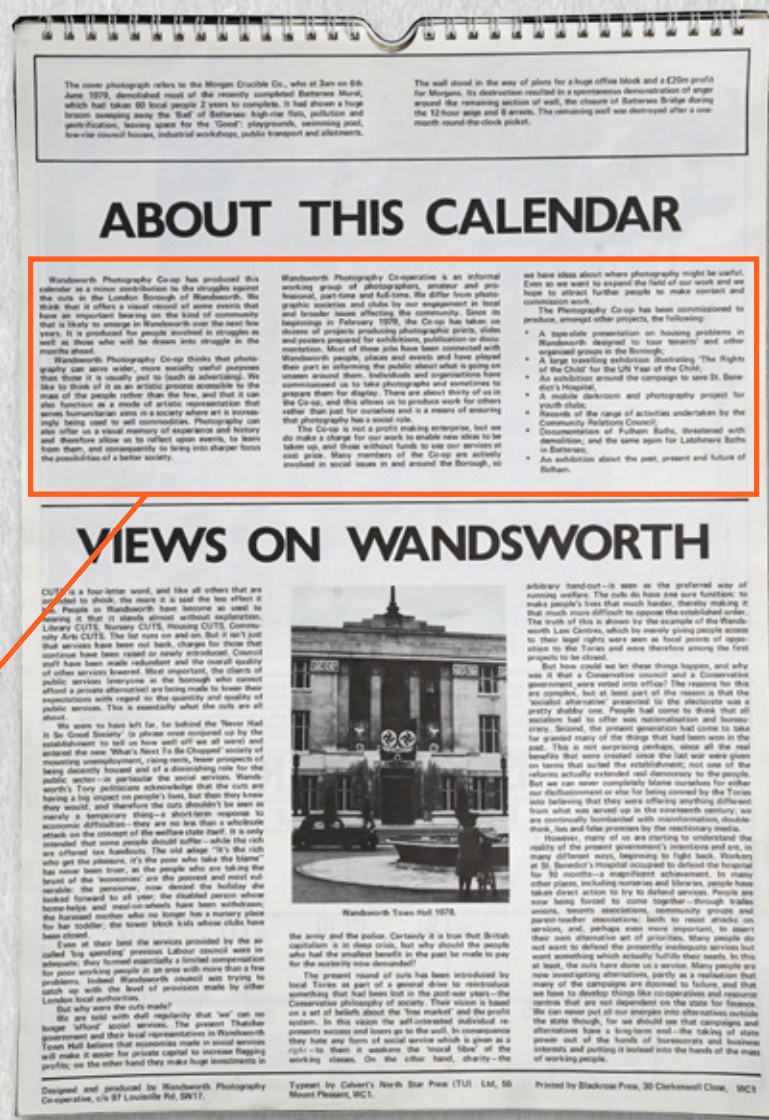
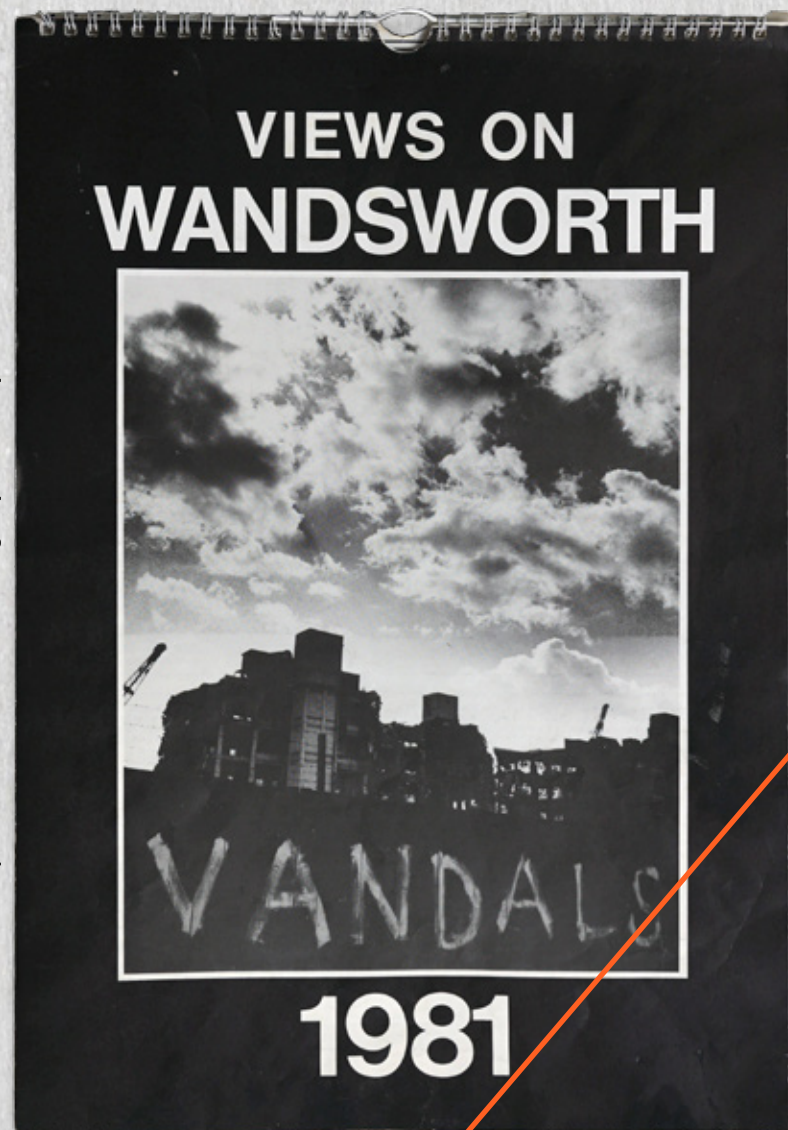
The Wandsworth Photography Co-op has been commissioned to produce, amongst other projects, the following:

- A tape-slide presentation on housing problems in Wandsworth designed to tour tenants’ and other organised groups in the borough;
- A large travelling exhibition illustrating ‘The Rights of the Child’ for the UN Year of the Child;
- An exhibition around the campaign to save St. Benedicts Hospital;
- A mobile darkroom and photography project for youth clubs;
- Records of the range of activities undertaken by the Community Relations Council;
- Documentation of Fulham Baths, threatened with demolition; and the same again for Latchmere Baths in Battersea;
- An exhibition about the past, present and future of Balham.

CALENDARS

“Photography can also offer us a visual memory to learn from them, and consequently to bring

Wandsworth Photo Co-op Calendar, 1981. Cover image by Sarah Wyld.



[text about calendars]

Published by Wandsworth Photography Co-operative
c/o 9 Dalebury Road
London SW17
Telephone 01-672 3728 or 673 8188

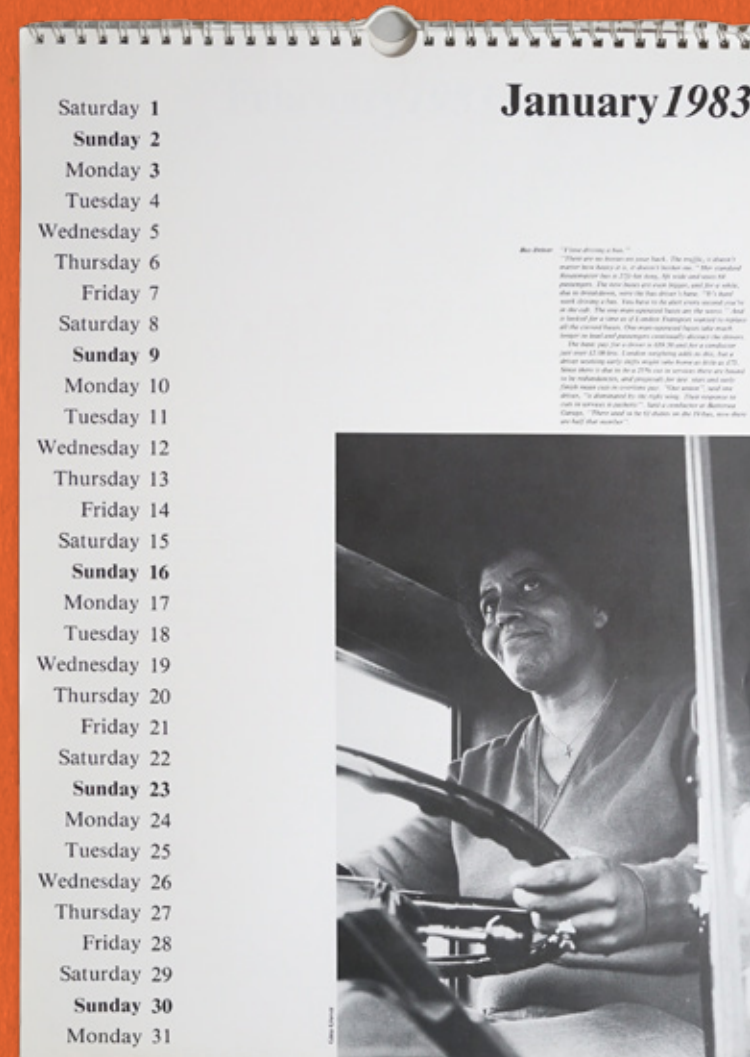
Designed by Usha Agarwal
Text by Geoff Rayner
Photos & Production by: Crispin Hughes
Gina Glover
Becca Leathlean
Martin Lipson
Sarah Saunders
Bridget Brishop
Brenda Hillary
Simon Farnhill

of experience and history and therefore allow us to reflect upon events, into sharper focus the possibilities of a better society.”



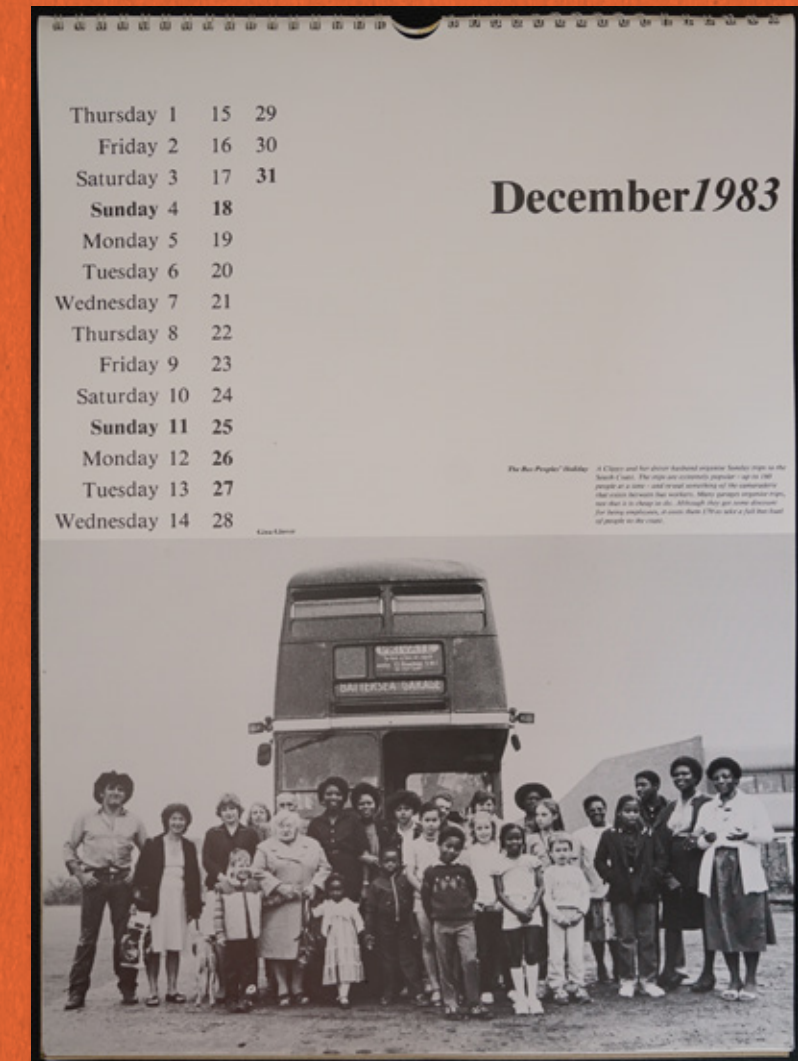
“Wandsworth Photography Co-operative was formed in February 1979 as a non-profit making enterprise aimed at engaging photography and social issues. Although much of the early work produced centres on Wandsworth people and campaigns, the Co-op has more recently been broadening its scope to take on issues that affect London as a whole, and some that affect everyone.

The work has taken the form of exhibitions, tape / slide shows,



handbooks, a youth photography project, calendars, and a growing picture library.

This calendar is not however a public relation job for bus travel. Given the fact that the service is declining, it could hardly be. What we have tried to do is to make an honest appraisal of bus transport from the point of view of those who use it and work within it.”



Excerpt from the Big Red Bus Calendar.
Written by Geof Rayner, 1983

THE PHOTO CO-OP

Soon renamed simply Photo Co-op, the group began to develop its own life, moving on from solely Wandsworth-based issues to a London-wide perspective; at the same time the group moved from an amateur to a more professional direction. Together with Bridget Bishop – already an experienced commercial photographer - and Sarah Saunders, we submitted what was to be a successful funding application to the Greater London Council's Arts and Recreation Committee in 1983. That funding provided the means for the group to move from volunteering to receiving some small remuneration, especially important given the cost of equipment, film and chemicals.

The agreed objective of Photo Co-op was to bring about social change through photography - raising awareness of social and feminist issues such as motherhood, hospital closures, disability, as well as unemployment, education and racism and sexual discrimination. In 1984/5 more funding was secured to allow the group to move out from its lodgings in my front room and into small premises in Webb's Road, Battersea, and to acquire staff. The first people appointed were Chris Boot as administrator and Luis Bustamante as education worker. We also attracted other freelance photographers, including Janis Austin, Crispin Hughes, Julia Martin and Vicky White.

Moving into small premises in Battersea gave the group the opportunity to create a small darkroom, expand what was already an embryonic picture library, and provide a venue for educational workshops. Here we organised occasional exhibitions featuring the work from the Photo Co-op membership.

Meetings were held every two weeks on Monday evenings, chaired by the administrator, Chris Boot, at which ongoing work was planned or reviewed. These meetings were often lively because, being a co-operative, no one person was in charge. Such were the passions and enthusiasms that sleepless nights followed.



Front cover of the Photo Co-op Annual Report 1985/86



GLC publication promoting the formation of Co-ops featuring the Photo Co-op team [date?]



Leaflet promoting the Co-op, date unknown

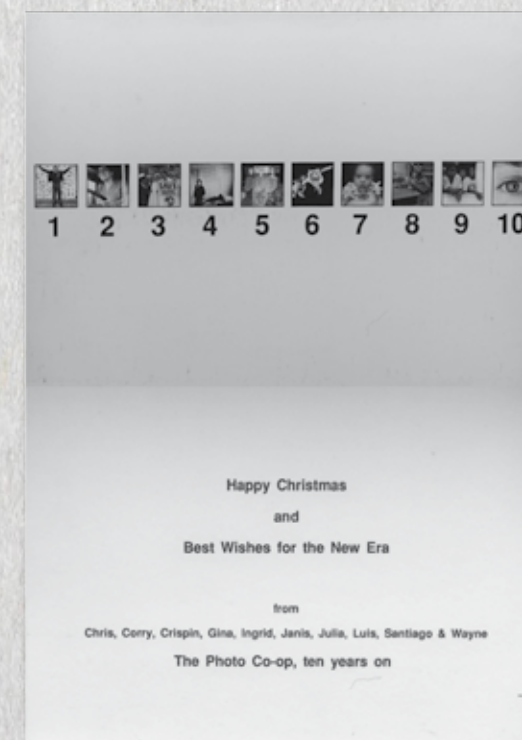


Photo Co-op Christmas card, circa 1993

photo co-op

Members

-  **Janis Austin** IIP Photography Diploma, 1 year as studio photographer, 3 years practising photographer and workshop tutor.
-  **Corry Bevington** Practising photographer for 30 years including studio, still life, book jacket, documentary and architectural work
-  **Chris Boot (Administrator)** Degree in English, 2 years in film video & tape/slide production
-  **Gina Glover** Degree in Art and Design, 12 years ILEA teacher in special schools and family workshops, 1 year picture researcher, 6 years practising documentary and still life photographer
-  **Crispin Hughes** Degree in English, practising photographer and workshop tutor for 4 years including documentary work in India and the Sahara
-  **Lesley Mitchell** Degree in Photographic Arts, 2 years as a community photographer, darkroom technician and teacher
-  **Geoff Rayner (Writer and Researcher)** Research Fellow University of London, author of books and articles on health, welfare, housing and economic issues, Health Liaison Officer to Lambeth Council
-  **Sarah Saunders** Degree in Physics, Daytec/IIP Photography Diploma, 1 year darkroom printer (Downtown), 4 years practising photographer including 3 years theatre photography
-  **Vicky White** Trained in architectural drafting and community work (New Zealand), 6 years practising photographer including documentary work in Nepal, India and Sri Lanka.

In addition, Photo Co-op has a network of writers, researchers, designers, graphic artists and other photographers available to assist in all aspects of production work.

Photo Co-op
61 Webb's Road London SW11 6RX
Telephone: 01-228 8949 (24 hours)

“What made the Photo Co-op a great outfit was the sum of its members. At the time we were all learning on the job and it was difficult to single out individual leaders. We could say that there was strength in numbers. Being in an outfit that was driven by a liberating vision was fulfilling. However, Chris Boot had his finger on the pulse of the sector and was able to point at trends and developments which were relevant to us as a group.”

Luis Bustamante interviewed for the Photo Co-op website

The Photo Co-op team, circa 1989. Clockwise from top left: Ingrid Hesling, Chris Boot, Wayne [...], Santiago [...], Corry Bevington, Janis Austin, Luis Bustamante, Crispin Hughes, Gina Glover, Julia Martin.

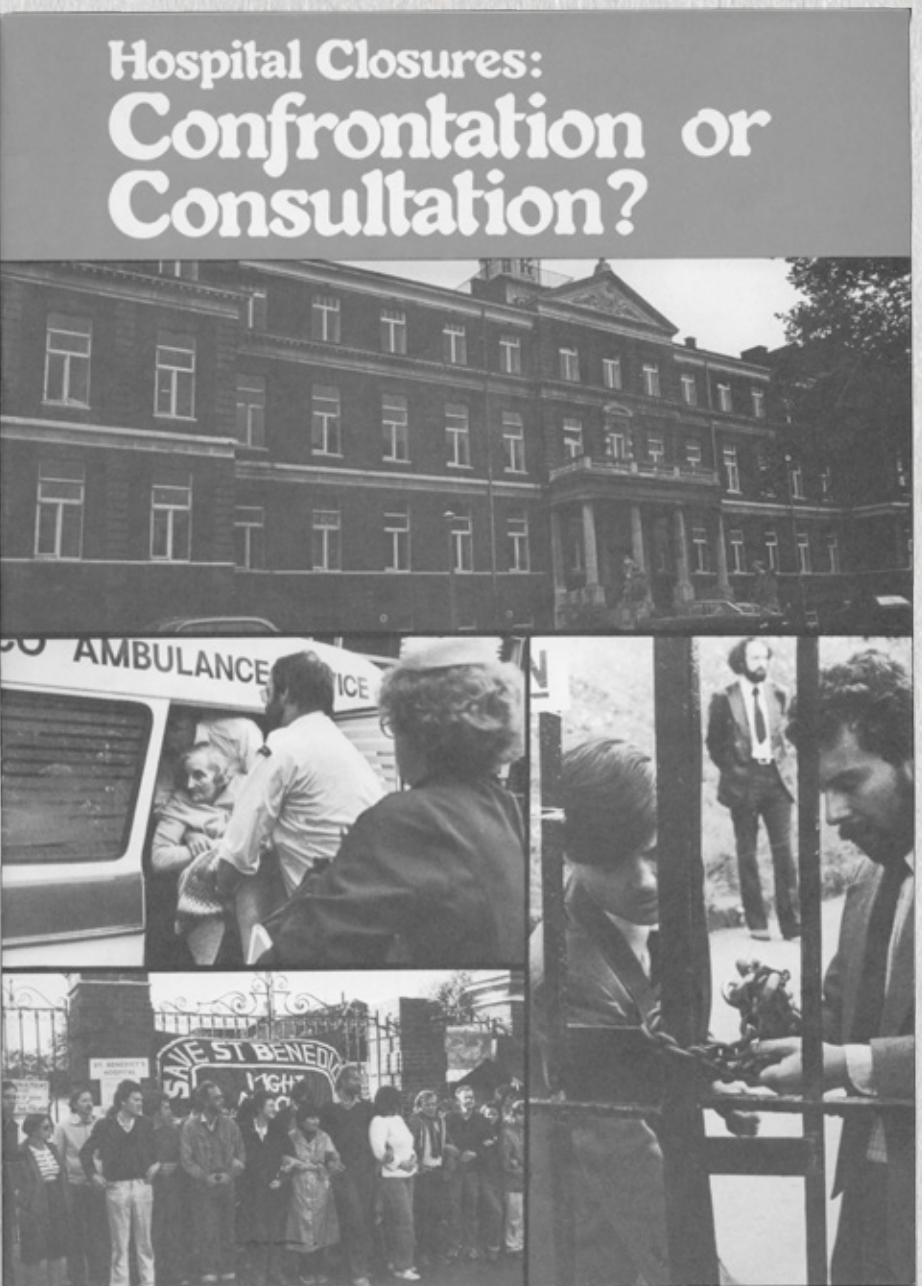
SAVE SOUTH LONDON HOSPITAL



South London Hospital for Women, still in operation.



Taken on Women's Day as part of the campaign to save South London Hospital for Women [DATE]



Report produced by Caroline Langridge from the Wandsworth CommunityHealth Council, who was responsible for commissioning Photo Co-Op exhibitions, commissions and photography use. Her involvement with the Photo Co-Op was key in the early stages of the organisation.

SAVE SOUTH LONDON HOSPITAL




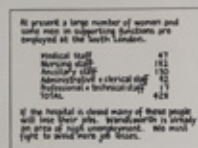



The South London Hospital is the only general hospital in Britain run by women for women. The hospital offers:

- day access for local women and a friendly personal atmosphere
- emphasis on prevention of ill-health - not just cure
- special services including home visits, 24-hour care and day care, and early cancer treatment by laser
- speedy treatment

photo co-op




SAVE a woman's right to work


At present a large number of women and men in supporting functions are employed at the South London.

Medical staff	47
Nursing staff	182
Administrative & clerical staff	42
Technical & laboratory staff	424


If the hospital is closed many of these people will lose their jobs. Unemployment is already an area of high unemployment. We must fight to avoid more job losses.

The South London Hospital for Women is OPEN Help us to keep it open



"I owe my 93 years of life to this hospital and I am going to see that it is not closed"
BEATRIX QUICK



INSIDE—what this Hospital offers women. How you can help it stay

Photo Co-op

SAVE SOUTH LONDON HOSPITAL comprehensive health care



The South London Hospital is concerned with all aspects of women's health. New facilities have been developed for prevention, early diagnosis and early treatment of illness. An anti-smoking clinic has been set up, and the staff plan to institute a well-woman clinic, a pre-menstrual clinic, and a modern walk-in breast-screening unit.

The new laser will provide early and effective treatment for cervical cancer on a day basis. The South London has the only day-care Abortion unit in the district. Women are seen quickly at present, but if the facility is moved, waiting lists will be longer, and there is no guarantee that the present level of service will be maintained.




At the time, the NHS in south London was experiencing an epidemic of hospitals closures, specifically of smaller or specialist hospitals no longer judged either financially viable or safe from the perspective of modern medical provision. Of particular importance was the campaign to save the South London Hospital for Women, one of the few hospitals in the country established at a time when women were excluded from other hospital programmes for medical training. The project included documenting how staff operated the hospital despite threats of closure or the potential loss of staff employment. The resultant images formed the basis of an exhibition orchestrated by Bridget Bishop, Sarah Saunders and myself, including the photography of Sarah Wyld and Julia Martin. The campaign failed to save the hospital. Today it is a Tesco's supermarket and block of flats with the old frontage retained.

Photo Co-op members produced most of its exhibitions cheaply by today's standards, usually by sticking darkroom prints onto A1-size boards accompanied by handwritten or typed text, with the entire thing laminated. These display boards could be used in a variety of locations: picket line, hospital railings, hospital interiors or campaign and trades union meetings. The robustness of these panels meant that even coffee could even be spilled on them without damage - and they were lightweight to carry.



Eviction of protestors following the occupation of South London Hospital for Women [date]

THE GLC

As Photo Co-op was supported financially by the GLC, a great many of the photographs we took were used in their own publications, brochures and leaflets, including the publication Jobs for a Change, produced by the GLC Women's Committee, support material for other Co-ops funded by the GLC, and campaign material to save the GLC itself from the time (1983) when the Conservative party announced intention to undertake its abolition to its eventual closure in 1986. As well as providing the Co-op members with a small income and a foothold in professional photography, reproduction fees provided an income for the Photo Co-op as an organisation.





As part of my work for the Co-op I photographed many of the demos that took place around this time of political and social upheaval.

THE PHOTO CO-OP LIBRARY

The pictures produced from campaign contributed to a growing archive that grew into the Photo Co-op Picture Library, later Photofusion Picture Library and for many was the financial mainstay of the organisation.

Around this time, the group began to develop a more commercial orientation, catering to a broader span of publications wanting photographs, including trades unions, organisational producing annual reports, health and housing journals, or (now defunct) publications like City Limits, a more left-wing listings alternative to Time Out. The group successfully held to its values-based perspective.

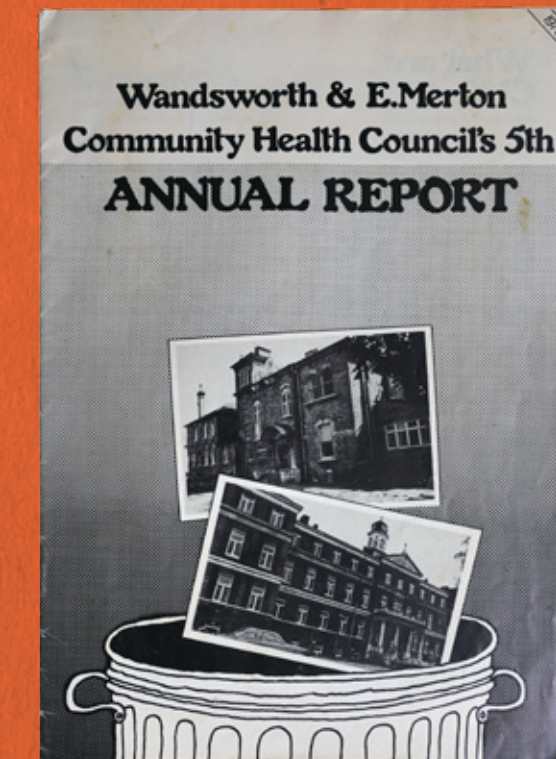
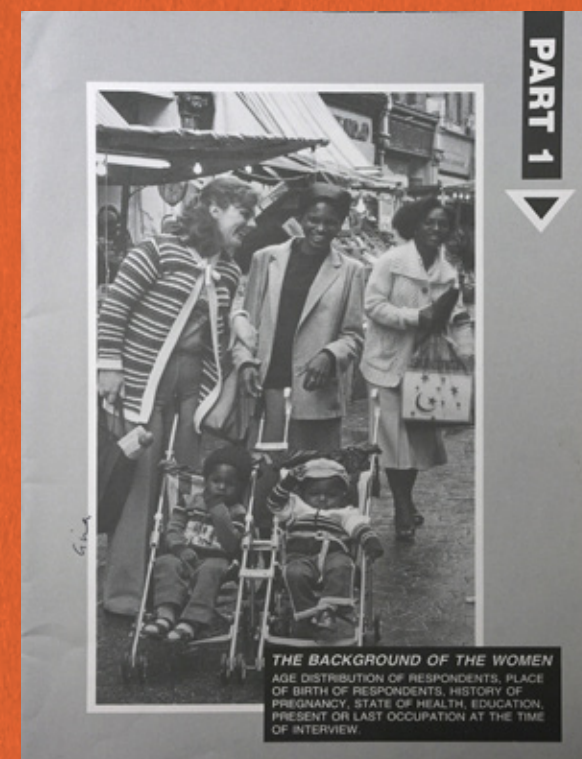
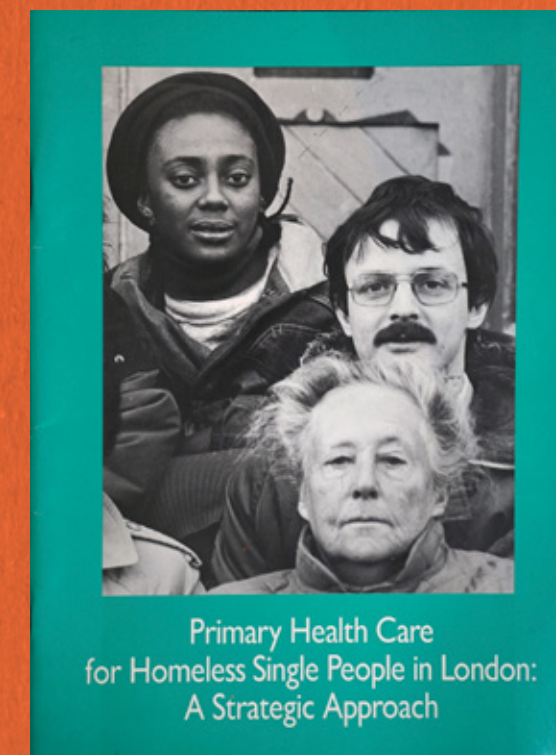
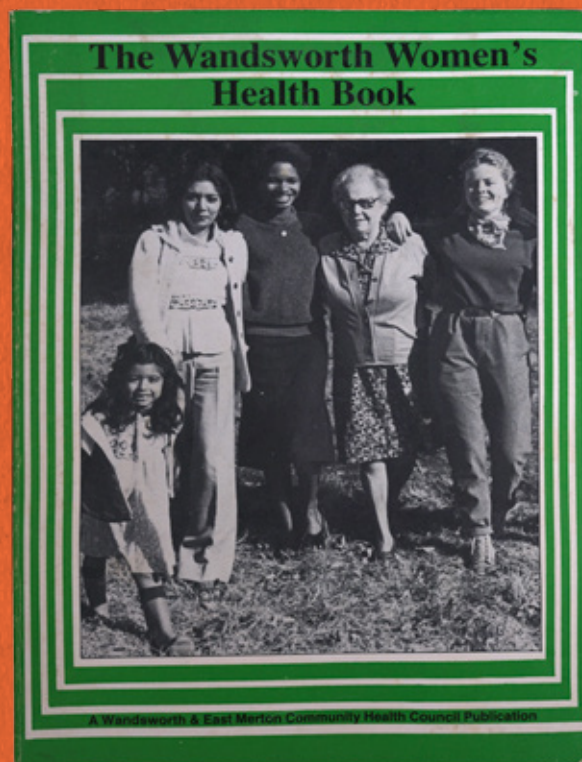
“Behind the collection was the aim that the images should be anti racist, anti sexist and challenging the status quo. Our guidance required a trust in library users to comply with the spirit of the pictures’ intended use”.

Chris Boot, Co-op Administrator

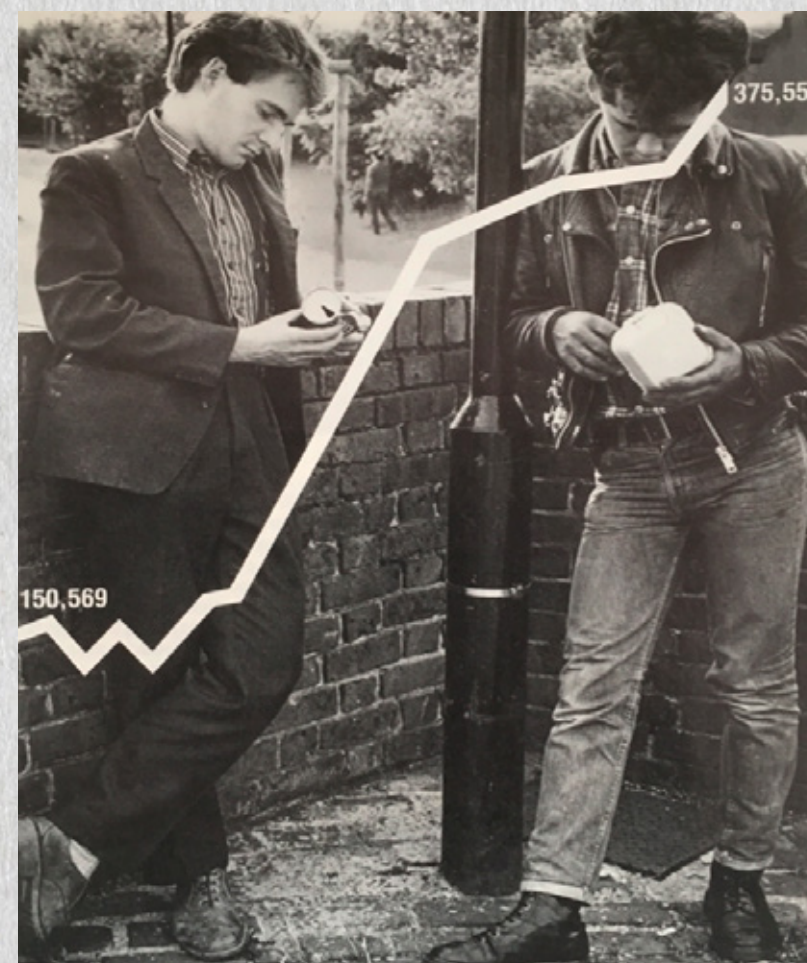
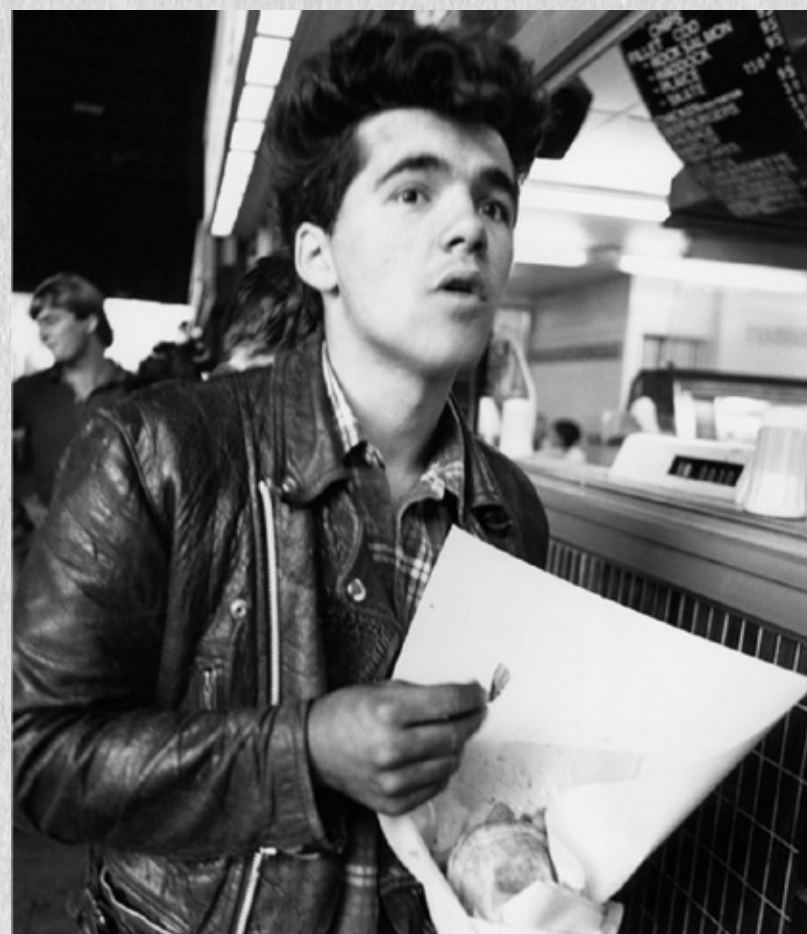
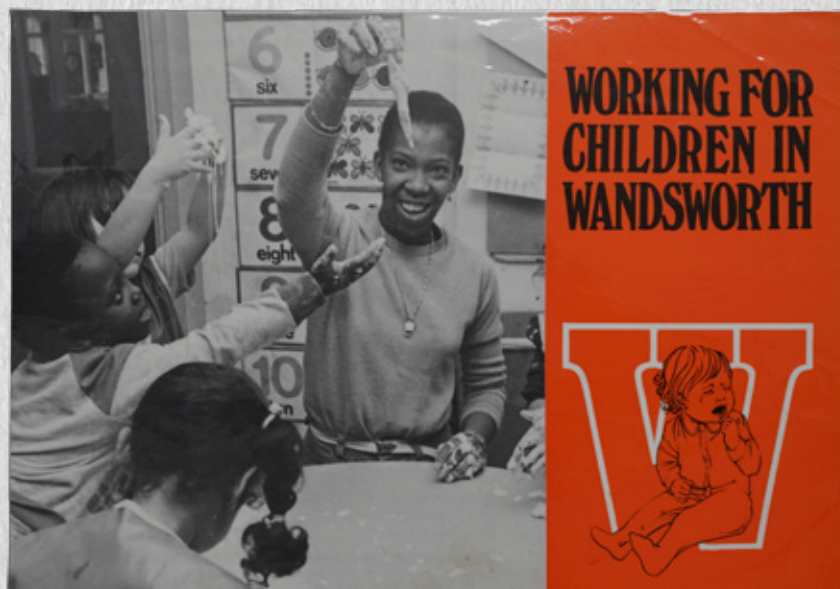
The driving stimulus behind the organisation was Chris Boot, who not only researched funding and business opportunities, he was the also the person who pushed for the expansion and relocation of Photo Co-op and provide a wider set of photographic services. Chris left before the formation what was to be a new organisation, Photofusion, to take up a management post at Magnum Photographers.



We used labels such as this on the back of each print that went into the library.



[CAPTIONS]



2: Becoming a mother

Most women expect to be mothers. Parents say to their daughters, 'We're looking forward to becoming grandparents. And school can reinforce the expectation that girls will, inevitably, become mothers.'

I went to an all girls school, so that didn't help, because it was mainly geared to the fact that you were going to have children, so you didn't worry about anything else... They didn't really push you to do anything else.



'You don't have a minute to yourself'

Steve Givens Photo Group

TACKLING HOMELESSNESS (1)

For Scottish projects, housing vulnerable homeless people has always been about more than simply providing a roof over their heads. Most accommodation is temporary, so much of staff time is spent helping residents prepare for moving to permanent housing. The features in this section illustrate the innovative work undertaken by staff and committees around the country. For people looking to reassemble after a period of homelessness, concerns within the community are vital, one project describes how they use a range of housing options to provide positive alternatives for individuals and routes to permanent accommodation. Self-build projects are looking to develop schemes that will meet the specific needs of young people who are leaving local authority care or who are already homeless. Then there are the unexpected results - a drop-in centre, originally set up to support people who had moved on, now also helping others to avoid homelessness.

Leaving care in Durham

Until this year the Durham project for young people leaving care consisted of two shared houses. A further two have now been developed and currently two project workers offer support to the 12 residents.

The aim of the scheme is to help prepare youngsters leaving care for independent living, and certainly find self-sufficient accommodation. This is often a problem as many local authority housing departments will not consider under-18s for their waiting lists. However, two of the local authorities in which the properties are situated have now indicated that they will consider referrals from Scotland for under-18s, particularly as they will continue to receive some support from project workers.

Most of the referrals come from Durham Social Services Department.



who also provide 'topping up' money. Their social workers maintain contact after residents have moved into Scottish houses.

It has recently been acknowledged that some of the youngsters would benefit from greater preparation for moving into their shared houses in Scotland. It is being encouraged to social services to provide 'topping up' money, where youngsters could spend some time prior to moving in. The extension is to provide 24-hour cover and so offer a much greater level of support than in the recently independent setting of a third house. A bid has been made to the Housing Corporation for capital funding.

Self-Build - one solution to homelessness. Project 404, Middlesbrough, provides accommodation for 16 ex-convicts, all of whom move on to good quality independent accommodation within six months of a year. This is the first time residents have considered the possibility of Self-Build.



TACKLING HOMELESSNESS (2)

Networking in Plymouth and the South West

Amey Close is one of four Scottish projects in Plymouth and has been open since January 1989. It offers housing for 24 single homeless men and women in one and two-bed flats.

The project is built on the site of a church which had fallen into disrepair. The parish priest, Father Sam Phipps, who has initiated many community projects in the area, was able to press for its demolition and development as housing for vulnerable people. The project is named after another remarkable man, Father Amey, who worked in a similar way in the parish.

Below project leader Phyllis Castle outlines the networking that staff and residents have been engaged in and emphasises the importance of this in the provision of quality support and assistance for residents.

Thinking from Scotland's young people's project in Slough to Amey Close last November, I was struck by the wide variety in age and background of our residents. It seemed a good idea to spend the first few months getting acquainted with what was an offer locally that would enable the project to help

them make their way into the community in my penitentiary I found:

- a local school whose teachers were prepared to assist people with literacy and numeracy problems, including visiting the project for those lacking the self-confidence to go to the school;
- a community centre whose computer project our residents could join;
- a pub which would welcome teams of our residents and other community groups for darts or pool matches;
- a sports centre which our residents could use free of charge during off-peak hours;
- a residents' association which was happy to have our residents as members, one going on to become treasurer.

I was also keen to establish networks with other groups in the area. We have now arranged a series of meetings and social events with the three other Scottish projects in Plymouth and with voluntary projects, both and probation houses, etc., in Devon and Cornwall. This year for the first time we held a two-day festival.

competition for the 'Amey Challenge Trophy'. Eight teams from local projects comprised the home side came out as winners. We hope this will become an annual event. We have also arranged a series of better lunchtimes to which we have invited guest speakers on current issues such as homelessness, benefits, substance abuse, etc. These are not just for our own residents and staff, but for people from other Scottish projects, statutory services and other local housing associations. The catering for these functions has been done by one of our residents. The main advantage of these initiatives has been meeting up with other workers and residents in situations similar to our own with the consequent sharing of ideas. Problems that can seem insurmountable in isolation are shared and solved - even solved. We are creating a network of support and friendship, and this is something that we see as crucial to the future development of the project as a whole, and extremely beneficial to all our colleagues in the South West."

Residents of Amey Close, Plymouth, moving on to independent accommodation



COMMUNITY ACTION
No 67 £1.00
Special issue!

THE CLEANERS' STORY

HARROW COUNCIL FOR RACIAL EQUALITY
64 Pinner Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 4HZ Telephone: (01) 427 6504



ANNUAL REPORT 1989/90

CONTRACT CLEANERS THE LOWEST PAID

nucps
The National Union of Civil and Public Services

STONHAM HOUSING ASSOCIATION
Octavia House, 54 Ayres Street, London SE1 1EU
Telephone: 071-403 1144



FRIENDS & FAMILY

Working as a freelance documentary photographer I was also a single mother with now two small children. As a result I was frequently restricted in how far I could travel on assignment. In addition, some types of photography were becoming organisationally difficult. Obtaining model release forms, for example, essential for legal protection over the use of an image, became problematic as sometimes permission was subsequently withdrawn. As a result, I began to enlist my children and friends to help illustrate sensitive subjects, such as motherhood, family, parental exhaustion, personal stress or anxiety or child or teenage problems of health or addiction risk.

When my daughter Jessica was studying for her psychology A level some years later, she once discovered a photograph of herself in a school text book showing a young child (herself) having seasonable affective disorder (SAD). Thankfully my children have since found such exposure amusing.



PSYCHIATRY

IN PRACTICE Summer 1998 Vol 17 No 2



Behavioural problems in children

Despite advances in molecular genetics, EEG is still useful in diagnosing neurological disorders such as epilepsy

Sexual dysfunction and depression

Most depressed people complain of an inability to gain pleasure, which inevitably leads to sexual difficulties

When shyness becomes a disability

For social phobics, forming friendships may be impossible

Hysteria – still alive and kicking

Removing the heat from the hysteria label is proving difficult

Please circulate

Name

Name

Name

Practice Nurse

FOOD
ADULTERATION
- AND HOW TO
BEAT IT. SPECIAL
8 PAGE
SUPPLEMENT.

OFF THE SHELF
- WE
INVESTIGATE
ICE CREAM

LYNN FAULDS
WOOD'S DIARY

RECIPES FOR
SUMMER SALADS

ON THE JOB -
WE TALK TO
PUBLIC
ANALYST, CAROL
VALLIS

SPECIAL REPORT
- HOMELESS
AND HUNGRY

ARE WE BEING
SERVED? OUR
LOOK AT
SUPERMARKETS.

THE FOOD MAGAZINE

Incorporating London Food News ♦ Issue 2 Volume 1 Summer 1988/£2.50



THE HIDDEN HAZARDS OF HEALTHY FOOD

FOOD QUALITY
SUPPLEMENT

YOUR
PROBLEMS
ANSWERED

CHERNOBYL -
WORLD TRADE
IN
CONTAMINATED
FOOD

A FATE WORSE
THAN DEBT - WE
INTERVIEW
SUSAN GEORGE
ABOUT HER NEW
BOOK

EUROPEAN AND
WORLD NEWS

FOOD
HANDOUTS TO
THE POOR -
WILL THE UK
FOLLOW THE
USA?

BOOK REVIEWS

LETTERS



Hyperactivity in children: shown to respond to food-exclusion diets.

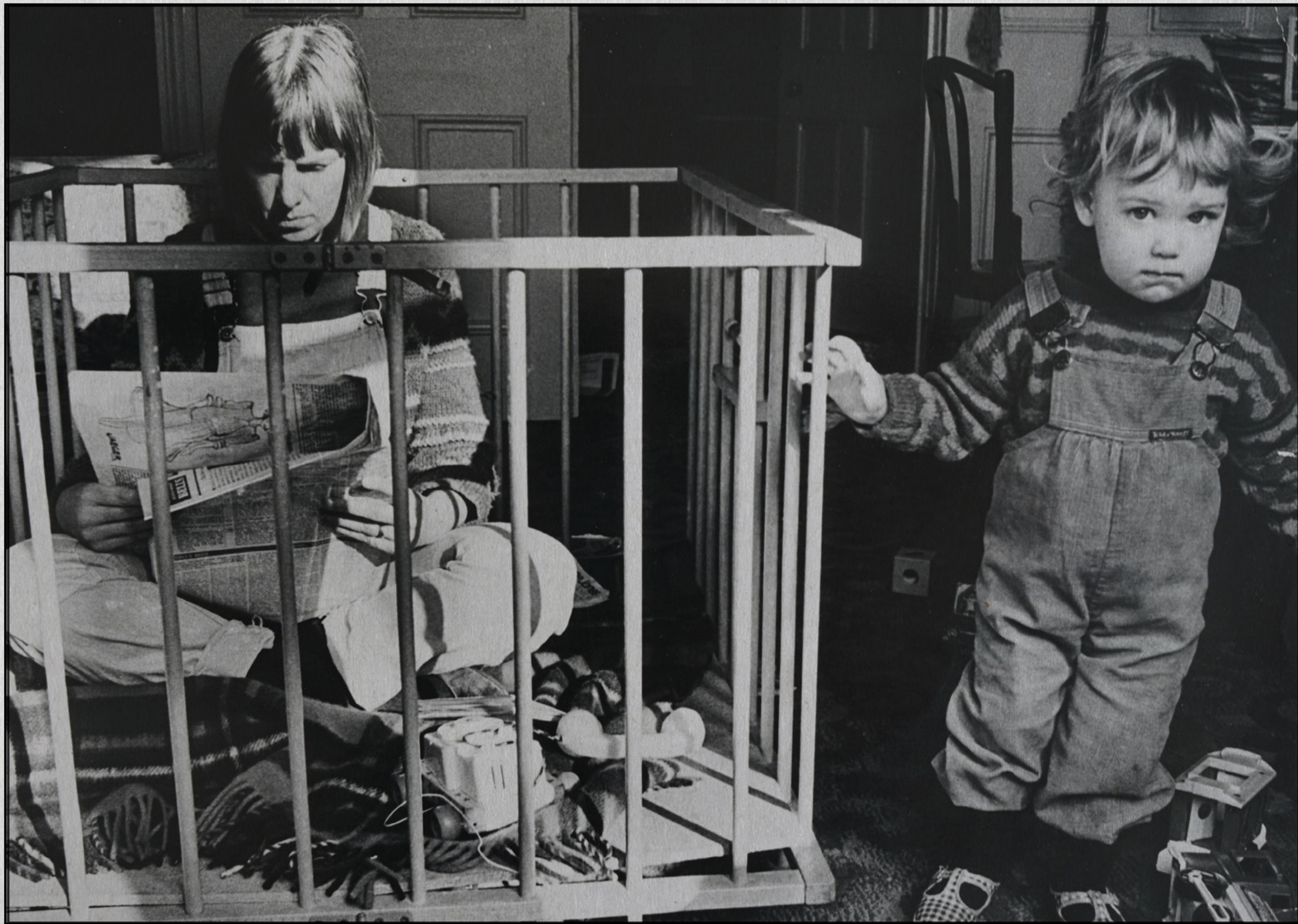
g.p. Briefing map.



FREEDOMS



a review of 1988
the civil liberties trust report
a look forward to 1989



HIV / AIDS

From around 1986, from the outset of what came to be termed the 'AIDS Crisis', a time of acute public panic, several members of the Photo Co-op felt very strongly that the group needed to act. The Photo Co-op collectively decided to take steps towards becoming a campaigning organisation, in this case by designing and producing leaflets and posters advising people about HIV risks and giving information and reassurance. One notable project involving Crispin Hughes and myself and commissioned by Mainliners, a voluntary safe drugs organisation, had the task of producing a series of posters on HIV and drug use along with the design group Big Active. Working with designers vastly improved the impact of the work.

Being embedded in Lambeth and linked to the council and voluntary agencies we took part in the launch of the local HIV-AIDS centre by an organisation jointly founded by Photo Co-op member, and later Photofusion chair, Geof Rayner. One picture shows our daughter, Jessica Rayner, presenting flowers to Princess Diana at the opening of the centre.

"What was special and different about the Photo Co-op was the way that we were balancing thinking through issues around the politics or representation, while working in a practical way in a community context."

Chris Boot interview
Photo Co-op website.

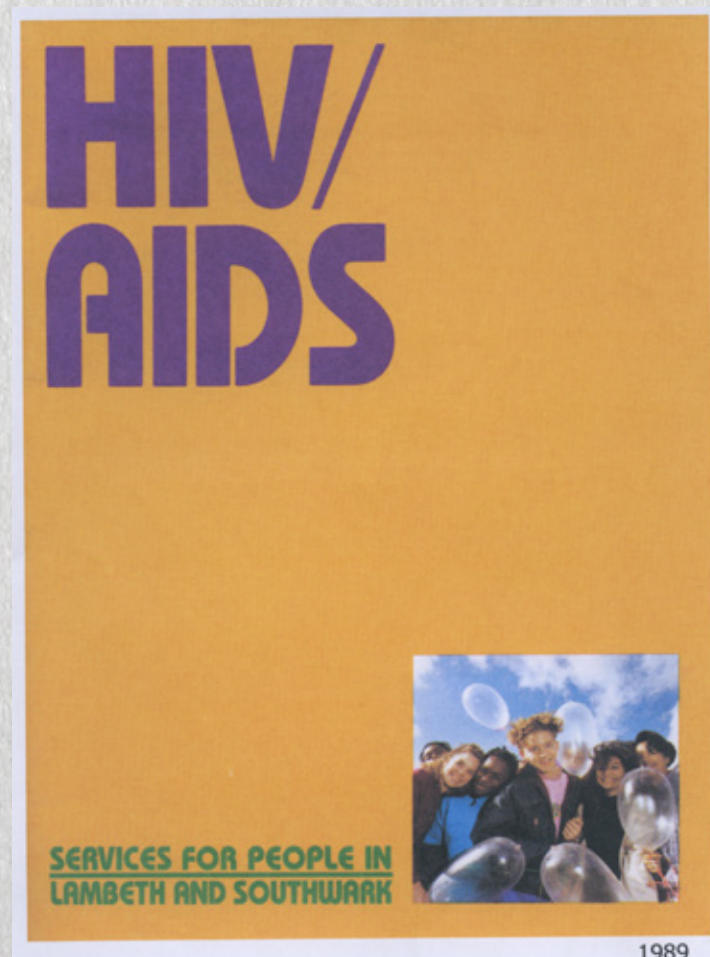




Photo Co-op education leaflet



Leaflet promoting the Photo Co-op activities. Produced by Luis Bustamante, 1987

One of my more successful contributions was the launching of a magazine called Photo, using only the publicity budget. With this we killed two birds with one stone. The mag provided a platform for members and users to contribute to the debate on photography while publicising the activities. It ran between 1989 and 1991. I still regret that we didn't manage to continue with it as there was a space for publications that would enable aspiring artists / theorists to put ideas into the public domain at a time when debates around representation were a a much more meaningful level than today"

Luis Busamante interviewed for the Photo Co-op website



Leaflet promoting the Photo Co-op activities. Produced by Luis Bustamante, 1986



As we wanted to broaden our discussion of photography, we started publishing a regular magazine inviting contributions from inside and outside the Co-op.

PROJECT EXHIBITIONS

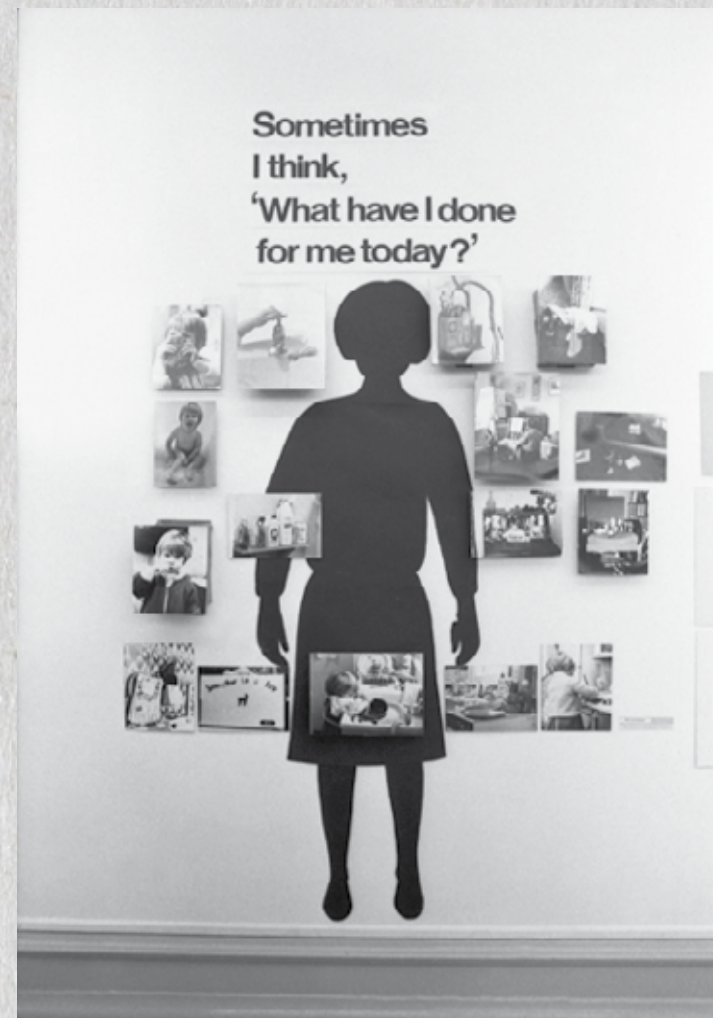
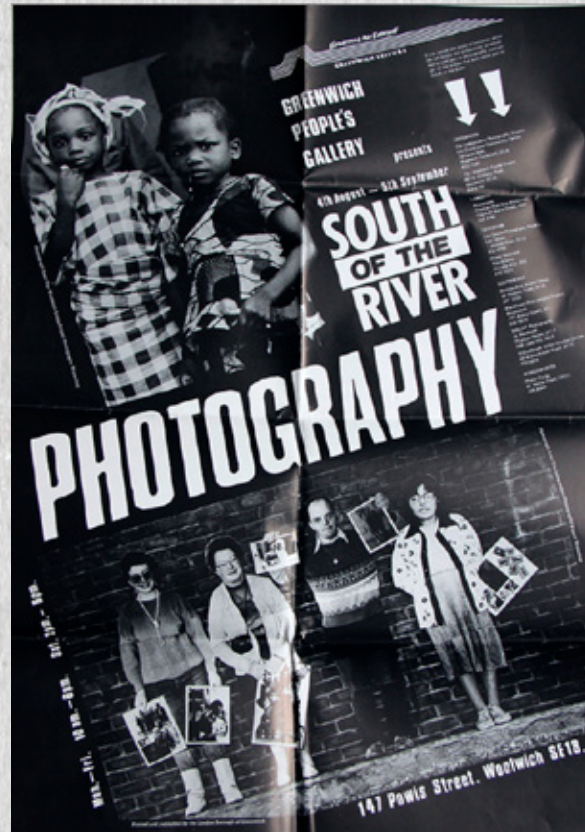
As part of the cycle of new work at the Photo Co-op, the group organised travelling or mobile exhibitions as the face of our campaigning. The issues we addressed – from health to housing – were often produced on behalf of voluntary agencies, local authorities or trades unions.

Part of Photo Co-op's emerging remit was the provision of photography workshops for community groups; some photographs forming the basis of subsequent community exhibitions. South of the River was one such exhibition, bringing Photo Co-op together with photography-based community groups led by Blackfriars Photography Project at the South London Art Gallery, run by Viv Rees and Neil Martinson.

Not everything project or collaboration ran smoothly. One memorable occasion was a Women's Photography Day at Battersea Arts Centre in 1985. At the event claims were made by some people in the audience that they had been excluded from being part of the sector. Whereas some women photographers considered class the important social distinction, Black women present felt that they were underrepresented. Looking back, it now occurs to me that this – and many other similar occasions – was beginnings of 'identity politics', although in fact almost every image or mode of image production speaks to personal identity in at least some respect.



Photo by Corry Bevington



South of the River brings together groups working in and around what is called community photography in South London. [...] It is as well to start by clarifying to a certain extent the term community photography. For many community photography projects in the early '70s, the community was the neighbourhood in which they were based, which was, usually, in declining white working class inner city areas. Neighbourhoods where memories of close-knit communities could so easily become blurred into the myths of the 'good old days'. This idea of 'community', though, is double edged as witnessed by a political climate that has seen the wholesale appropriation of the concept by the Conservative Party through community policing, community care, council house sales and privatisation which, in their words, 'return power to the community'. Community can only exist when there is no material or cultural division within society. It may be possible in a future, more equitable society, to reclaim the idea.

Extract from South of the River publication by Neil Martinson



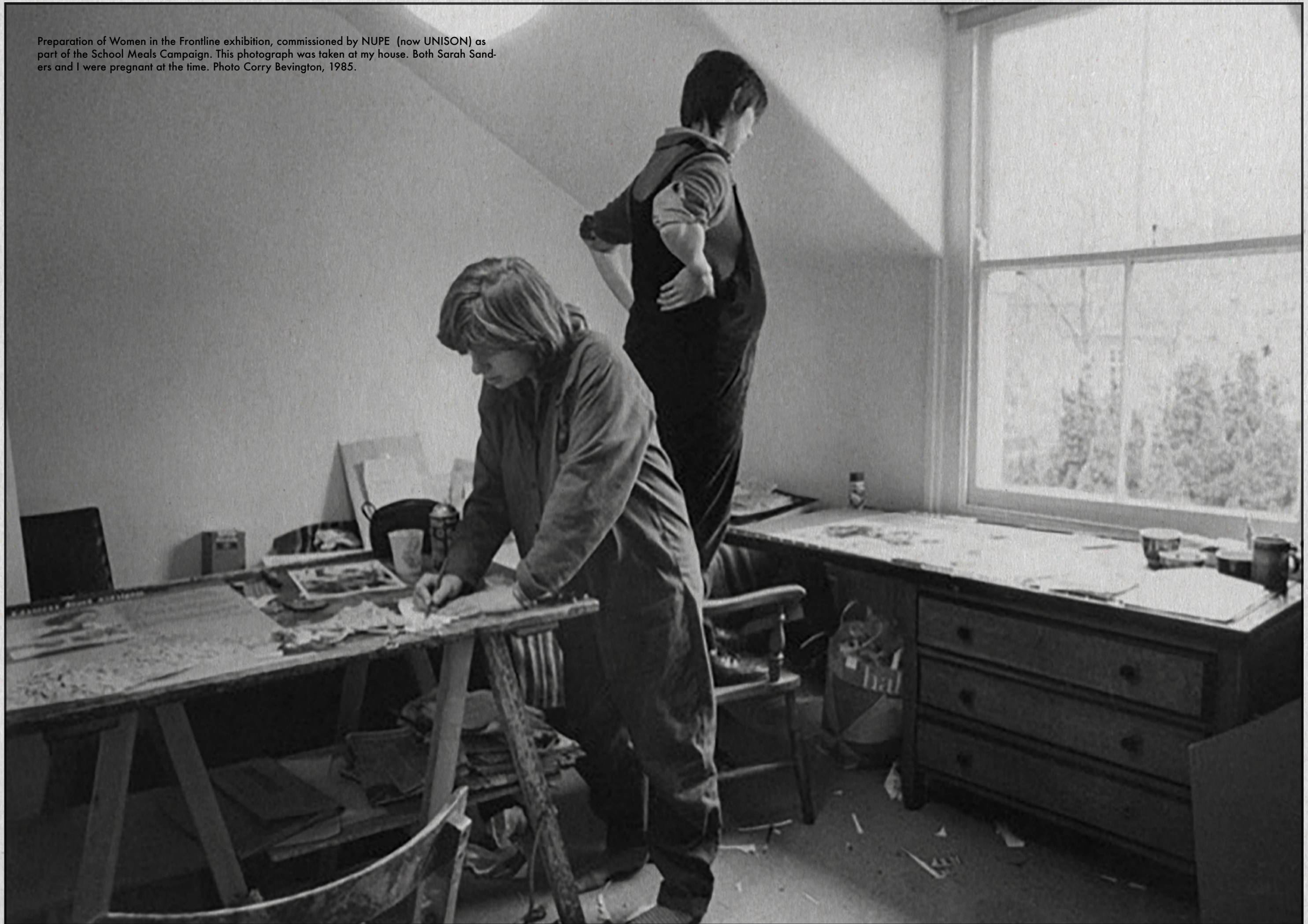
Bert Hardy opening the 'South of the River' exhibition by taking this photograph.

As part of the work at the Photo Co-op, the group organised a number of public or travelling exhibitions, seen as the face of our campaigning. The issues we addressed – as noted, from health to housing - were usually produced on behalf of voluntary agencies, local authorities or trades unions. Most of the work produced ended up in the hands of the organisation for or with whom it was produced. The following organisations and / or venues are those to exhibitions were distributed in the 1985 / 86:

Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ex National Union of Public Employees) / Battersea Arts Centre / Battersea Teachers' Centre / Brixton Recreation Centre / Camden Law Centre / Clapham & Battersea AEI / Department of Trade & Industry / Elizabeth Garratt Anderson School / FHE Curriculum Development Project / GLC Jobs' Roadshow / GLC Women's Committee / GLC Jobs for a Change, Battersea Park / Greenwich Council / Harringey Libraries / Holland Park School / Home Economics Teacher's Centre / Hounslow Community Association / Hounslow Asian Women's Centre / Industry and Education Year / Isledon Teacher's Centre / Juntion Resouce Centre / Lambeth Council / Lewisham Divisional School Co-ordination Unit / Mansfield Women's Health Fair / Merton Resouce Centre / NACRO / new Gneration / National Childbirth Trust / North London College / North Lewisham Law Centre / NUPE Head Office / NUPE West Midlands / NUPE Kent / Pensioners' Link / Pimlico Family Centre / Potsdam University, East Germany / Putney Art School / South Thames College / South West London Public Services Project / South of the River / South London Gallery / Southwark College / Transnational Information Centre / Wandsworth Disablement Association / Wandsworth Business Resource Service / Wandsworth Tenants' Federation / Wandsworth Industry Schools Project / Westminster College.

Extract from the Photo Co-op Annual report, 1985/6.

Preparation of Women in the Frontline exhibition, commissioned by NUPE (now UNISON) as part of the School Meals Campaign. This photograph was taken at my house. Both Sarah Sanders and I were pregnant at the time. Photo Corry Bevington, 1985.



Dissolution of the GLC

Following the dissolution of the GLC in 1986, the funding of many arts and community photography organisations became the responsibility of the local authority or other public body. Photo Co-op was fortunate to have our funding shifted to Greater London Arts (later the London Arts Board, which was subsequently incorporated in the Arts Council (ACE). Consequently, an reflecting the remit of the GLA, projects became more 'art focused'. And the exhibitions themselves subsequently reflected this shift.

It could have been a very different result. Photo Co-op was fortunate in securing the support of Greater London Arts staff, Michael-Anne Mullen and the late Alan Haydon. It was they who supported the increase in the organisation's grant aid so that the group was able to reform into a new organisational entity – after some debate the title Photofusion emerged- and its move to its new Brixton premises. In so doing it shifted from a co-operative to a non-profit company.

Through this time, and alongside three other Photo Co-op photographers, I studied for a part-time degree in photography at the Polytechnic of Central London (later to become the University of Westminster), which I completed in 1986. This course was art focused and my photography, still set within a social documentary approach, acquired a more personal and art-led focus. The course provided me with an understanding of photography from an historical and a critical perspective and afforded me the confidence to create a more personal style of work that could be exhibited in an art context.

More information on the history of the Photo Co-op:
www.photo-co-op.com

This book is dedicated to my grandchildren, Chloe, Millie, Ben, Myla and Axel.
All images © Gina Glover, unless captioned otherwise.

ginaglover.com

Foxhall Ventures 2017
Edited by Geof Rayner
Designed by Andrew West
andrewwest.co.uk

With special thanks to Corry Bevington, Marcia Mihotich and Clara Cowan