



Eastern Promises

Nick Haeffner

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East End street photography by Nick Haeffner. First shown at Venetia's Coffee shop, Chatsworth Road, E5.

Thanks to Nicolai Hart-Hansen, Venetia Strangways-Booth, Paul Brand, Michael Upton, David George and Spencer Rowell.

Introduction

The job of the photographer, in my view, is not to catalogue indisputable fact but to try to be coherent about intuition and hope. This is not to say that he is unconcerned with the truth. Robert Adams

Eastern Promises is a book of East End Photography by Nick Haeffner. The work focuses on his neighbourhood, Hackney and on the wider 'E' postcodes with the odd foray into the City's 'EC'. London's Eastern fringe with its diverse cultural and economic heritage here yields a trove of people, places, creative artefacts and detritus framed through incongruous, sometimes humorous juxtapositions and games with scale. There is melancholy, too, in the Edward Hopper-ish images of commercial premises and ephemeral art. But something more menacing permeates much of the collection.

The book shares its title with the David Cronenberg film which presents the 'business' of Russian gangsters in Hackney. The villains hinted at by Nick are closer to home and - technically at least - more legitimate. These '*Eastern Promises*' speak of Western disappointments, delusions and lies. In the sideways glances of street photography like Nick's we are able to peek beyond the capitalist framing device and begin to articulate our growing sense of the grand plan gone awry.

There is the mendacity of rampant property acquisition, as another site is 'acquired by wankers', the false hope of consumerism, where Tesco supplants a pot of gold at the end of a Morning Lane rainbow; our crises of faith in financial institutions, as a bank is wrapped Christo-like in a death shroud, while an on-looking cherub falls out of love; a dig at cosmetic surgery in 'Beyond Botox'. In 'Corporate Shark', a plush toy shark sleeps alone in the doorway of a former bank; we are at once curious about the absence of its homeless owner, while contemplating the metaphorical great whites who triggered the crisis.

The pedestrians often seem blissfully unaware of the camera and of the context in which it is framing them. Oscar the Grouch leaps from a bin, slightly too big for comfort. Faces on walls, and hanging from stalls appear to be watching. Tom Selleck peers over the rooftops and satellite dishes, at once pop-art and Orwellian.

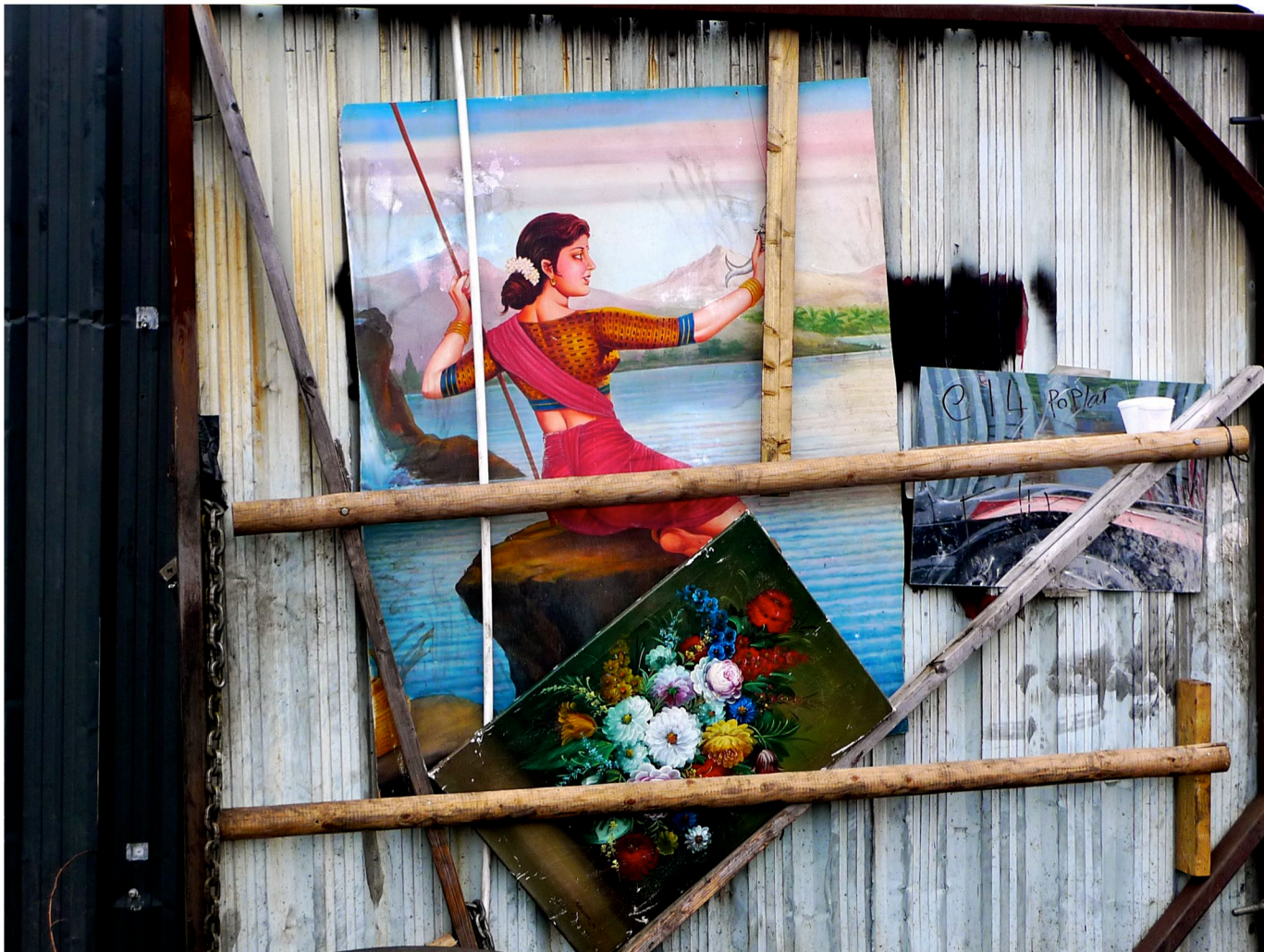
The ambience is no unhappy accident. While preparing the photographs for this exhibition, Hackney experienced several nights of riots and Nick himself was mugged. But *Eastern Promises* isn't relentlessly dark. Rather the vibrancy and good humour of the work offer a visual rebuttal to the repetitive tropes of the media coverage; sodium street lamp flares, massing hoodies and flaming cars in the Pembury Estate. The more abstract collages presented here remind us there is simple old fashioned - and unfashionable - beauty to be savoured in the urban peripheries.

Michael Upton

Academic Leader at Sir John Cass Faculty of Art, Media, Design and Architecture,
London Metropolitan University



Collage 1, The Counter Cafe, Roach Road E3



Collage 2, Used Car Dealer, E14



Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green, E2



Collage 3, off Brick Lane, EI



Eleven and a Half, Fournier Street, Er



Oscar the Grouch, off Brick Lane, Er



QR Code, Brick Lane, Er



II

Watching Masks, Columbia Road market, E2



Free Shop, Lower Clapton Road, E5





Corporate Shark, doorway of a disused bank, Er.



No Guts, No Glory, Bethnal Green Road, E2



Another Site, London Fields, E8





Live Eels, Broadway Market, E8





Big Green Telephone, Urswick Road, E9



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Magnum E3, Roach Road, E3



Out of Love, Bank, EC3



Table at Lock 7, E2



Painted by Scum, E5



Sunken Bike, Regent's Canal E9



Unweave a Rainbow, Morning Lane, E9

Nick Haeffner biography: edited highlights

- 1979: Release of single with Clive Pig and the Hopeful Chinamen 'Happy Birthday Sweet 16' on Waldo's Records. Song is banned by the BBC.
- 1980: Joins The Tea Set. Records John Peel session. Releases single 'Keep on Running' with The Tea Set, Hugh Cornwell of The Stranglers produces. The Tea Set support The Stranglers and The Skids on tour.
- 1986: Guest guitarist on Psychic TV 12" single 'Eve of Destruction'.
- 1987: Release of neo-psychedelic solo album 'The Great Indoors' on Bam Caruso label, described by The Guardian as better than Sgt Pepper's.
- 1993: Part time lecturer in Film Studies at University of Westminster.
- 1995: Lecturer in Communications at London Guildhall University.
- 1998: Completes PhD at Sussex University in Media and Cultural Studies.
- 2003: Co-founds journal Subject Matters.
- 2005: Publishes book on Alfred Hitchcock.
- 2006: Co-curates interactive new media exhibition 'Re-possessed' based on Hitchcock's film 'Vertigo'.
- 2006: Invited to Talinn, Estonia to present paper on Lynne Ramsey's film 'Morvern Callar' at Black Nights Film Festival.

2007: Invited to present paper on 'Hitchcock and Fear' at 'Scarecrow' exhibition in Metsovo, Greece.

2008: Invited to Hillsdale College, Michigan, USA to present talk on Alfred Hitchcock.

2008: Invited to Chelsea College of Art and Design to present paper on theory and practice.

2008: Invited to join the editorial board of Vertigo magazine.

2009: Exhibition of photos taken at Woolworths, Leytonstone shown in group show as part of Leytonstone Arts Trail and at Pages of Hackney. Selected for London Independent Photographer's exhibition.

2009: The Tea Set album 'After Dinner Music' album is made available for the first time on Amazon and iTunes.

2009: Travels to Bucharest with Prof. Jane Goodall to take photographs on the theme of the 20th anniversary of Ceaucescu's downfall. Photographs published in The Australian.

2009: Track featured on compilation Kat's Karavan: The History of John Peel on the Radio ('Don't Be Late'). Album 'The Great Indoors' becomes available on iTunes, Spotify and Amazon.

2009: Joins teaching team on MA Curating Contemporary Art at The Whitechapel Gallery/ London Metropolitan University.

2010: Essay on 'Hitchcock and Crime' published in 'The Blackwell Companion to Crime Fiction'.

2010: Invited to introduce screening of Hitchcock's 'Murder' at National Film Theatre.

2011: Curator of photography exhibition and symposium 'Shadows of a Doubt: Hitchcock's East Childhood' at London Metropolitan University.

2011: Photography exhibition 'East End Promises' at Venetia's Coffee Shop, Hackney.

All photos are currently available as signed, limited edition prints. For price list send an email to: nickhaeffner@hotmail.com.

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Contact:

nickhaeffner@hotmail.com

nickhaeffner.co.uk



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