

PRESS RELEASE

Searching for Ghosts

11 February 2017 – 21 January 2018

Haunting and intimate domestic scenes go on display at the V&A Museum of Childhood in a series of photographic works, a community visual arts project and a large-scale sculptural model of a tower block by photographer Tom Hunter, artist James Mackinnon and photographer Mike Seabourne. *Searching For Ghosts* presents a glimpse into social housing in east London. From the demolished tower block on the Holly Street Estate and regeneration of Woodberry Down Estate in Hackney, to the imposing red brick of the first municipal housing estate; Boundary Estate in Tower Hamlets built in 1898.

Working with local residents and the Museum, Hunter has undertaken an exploration of home in East London. The *Searching for Ghosts* project has brought together children who live on the Boundary estate today with local residents who have lived in the area for up to 95 years in an intergenerational project to share stories.

In partnership with St Hilda's East Community Centre and Virginia Primary School, Bethnal Green, Hunter explores the Boundary Estate, an extraordinary example of housing that has endured the test of time. The emotional residue of successive generations of residents and different communities that have passed through, is etched into the very brickwork. Hunter's photographs depict older residents and remembered landscapes in scenes recreated with the children. Drawing upon archival material from St Hilda's East Community Centre situated on the estate, provides a rich contextual history of the Estate's 125 years of existence.

Upon entering the space, a soundscape of recorded recollections provides an ethereal backdrop of voices, a living memory of the past. The stories voiced by the older generation are visually brought to life through large scale tableaux staged by the children, offering a glimpse into the lived experience of several generations of east Londoners.

A further installation 'Ghost House' considering domestic memory in *Searching For Ghosts*, is a dolls' house installation exploring an imaginary past through a co-created visual arts project with year 5 pupils from Virginia Primary School. A deaccessioned dolls house from the V&A's Collection is reworked to display layers of history.

The house has been populated by the children's imagined ghostly residents from the Victorian era to present day, representing the successive generations of inhabitants.

Tower Hamlets and Hackney are areas of enormous social change with extremes of wealth and poverty. Housing need and the shortage of affordable rented properties is both a historic and contemporary issue. Different eras have produced different solutions from the Victorian slum clearance of the 1880's to the tower blocks built to address a post WW2 housing crisis. The exhibition also comprises Tom Hunter's *Holly Street Portraits* and a large scale sculptural tower block model by Hunter, artist James Mackinnon and photographer Mike Seabourne.

Co-curator Teresa Hare Duke of the V&A Museum of Childhood said

"Homes reveal much about the people who inhabit them offering an intimate portrait of our domestic lives and bearing the traces of the people who lived in them in the past. The fabric of the buildings document the layered changes of occupancy, taste and the passage of time. Searching For Ghosts has been an intergenerational journey of discovery, exploring the past and photographically bringing it to life."

Director of the V&A Museum of Childhood, Rhian Harris commented on the importance of the exhibition and community projects the Museum undertakes, saying

"Since 2002 and the launch of the community programme, the Museum has endeavoured to reflect the diversity of the area with an extensive programme of outreach projects. The plot of land on which the Museum now stands, was originally entrusted by the Tudor gentry as Common Land for the people of Bethnal Green, Searching for Ghosts encapsulates this historic intention by working with the community to produce work by and for local residents."

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Notes to Editors

V&A Museum of Childhood

The V&A Museum of Childhood is the UK's National Museum of Childhood. It is the largest institution of its kind in the world. Its mission is to hold in trust the nation's childhood collections and to be an international leader in engaging audiences in the material culture and experiences of childhood.

The Museum explores childhood in breadth and depth, animating the richness and diversity of children's lives and placing the child's voice and agency at its core.

Collections include dolls' houses, dolls, games and toys; social and oral histories; design for children, including clothing and furniture; fine art and photography. Themes include family and home; art and design for children; education; play and toys. Meanwhile, layering of interpretation, research collaborations - in particular the Centre for Childhood Cultures with Queen Mary University - and programming add depth.

V&A Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9PA.

Nearest tube: Bethnal Green. Open daily: 10.00 – 17.45, last admission 17.30.

Switchboard: 020 8983 5200

Searching for Ghosts is a FREE exhibition

@museumchildhood #MoCGhosts

vam.ac.uk/moc/ghosts

Tom Hunter

Tom Hunter is an artist and film-maker living and working in East London. He is Professor of Photography Research at the London College of Communications, University of the Arts, London, Honorary Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and of the University College, Falmouth and has an Honorary Doctorate from the University of East London.

His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally; including the National Gallery and the Serpentine Gallery in London, the Modernamuseet, Stockholm, National Gallery, Poland and Prado, Madrid. His work is in collections which include MOMA in New York; the V&A and National Galleries, London; the Modernamuseet, Stockholm; the Smithsonian, Washington and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. His graduation work, *The Ghetto*, is on permanent display at the Museum of London. He has published six monographs about his work: *Le Crowbar*, 2014; *The Way Home*, 2012; *Tom Hunter – Living in Hell and Other Stories*, 2005; *Tom Hunter*, 2004 and 2003; *Factory Built Homes*, 1998.

Tom Hunter's website: tomhunter.org/

For further PRESS information please contact mocpress@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

A selection of press images are available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

Family Events surrounding the Exhibition

Easter Holidays 2017

My Miniature Room Workshop

Monday 3 – Friday 7 April

11.00, 12.00, 14.00 & 15.30 (60 minutes), £5 per child, Age 4+

Make a miniature model home; add imaginary furniture, toys, characters from the past, amongst things you own today. A fun, creative family workshop with artist Amy Brown.

Recreating Memories: Photography Workshop

Wednesday 5 – Friday 7, Wednesday 12 – Friday 14 April

11.00 & 13.30 (90 minutes), £7 per child, Ages 5+

Join artist photographer Marysa Dowling to create a beautiful family portrait that tells your own story. Using craft and photography, create small objects, compose a scene, and take a photograph to take home.

Good Luck Spirit Workshop

Monday 10 – Friday 14 April

11.00, 12.00, 14.00, 15.30 (60 minutes)

Do you have an imaginary friend that always protects you? Or do you and your family share a story about borrowers who live in your home? Design and create good luck charm to hang at home inspired by your own family's stories, with the help of artist Amy Brown.