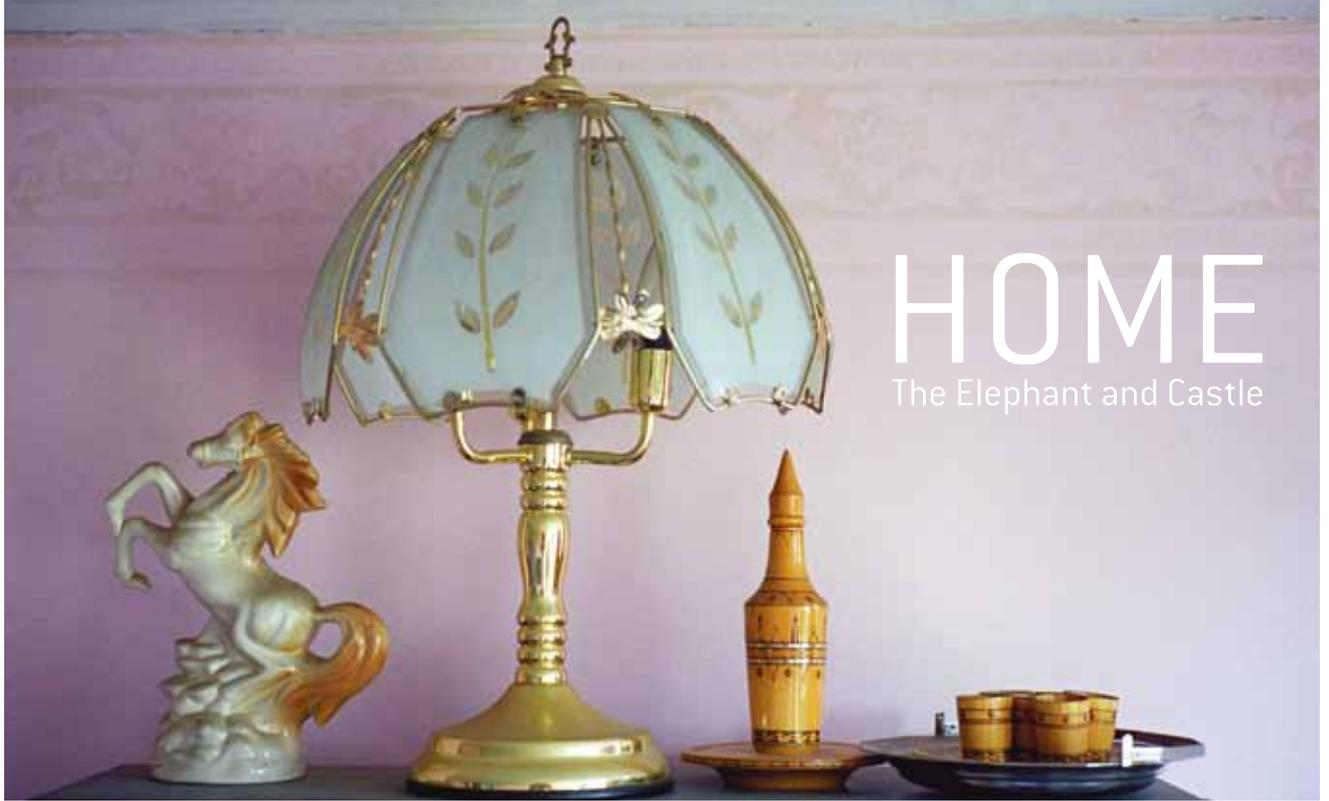




HOME

The Elephant and Castle



HOME

The Elephant and Castle

For Robert Anthony Khan

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Introduction

Home

The Elephant and Castle in South London is undergoing one of the largest regeneration schemes in Europe. An area that planners and estate agents describe as “The Lost Quarter” of London will be utterly transformed over the next decade. Local communities will change radically as council estates are demolished and replaced by new visions of urban living.

From a contemporary perspective it is easy to forget that the shopping centre and nearby high-rise estates were once bold and radical emblems of modernist thinking, part of architect Ernö Goldfinger’s grand plan of reconstruction after the wartime devastation of Luftwaffe bombing. Now they epitomise those misguided utopian experiments in sixties urban living. They have come to seem inextricably associated with dereliction, blight and localised pockets of crime, but the Elephant is also home to thousands of ordinary people, many of whom are attached to its particular

and multicultural qualities. This area of London has a long and complicated history of transformation that dates back to Roman times. The regeneration will dramatically signal the end of another era and usher in a fundamental change of identity.

The LCC is undertaking a long-term project to record and respond to the regeneration. Each year for the next decade the MA Photojournalism and Documentary Photography students will be asked to document an aspect of the Elephant. We encourage them to embrace a variety of approaches to the concept of “the documentary” and to challenge and stretch the boundaries of their own practice. The theme for the 2006 project was “Home”. Students presented their initial ideas, developed and focussed their research and articulated their visual strategies under the critical scrutiny of visiting tutors Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin.

Documentary photographic practice has moved well beyond the simple mechanistic process of descriptive recording. For the current generation of LCC students the medium conflates the ability to record information with the potential for personal expression. What distinguishes the best documentary work is often a sense of intimacy, expressed through the depth of involvement the photographers have with their subject matter. Photography is a very personal process of exploration: a way of experiencing and engaging with the world by immersing oneself in it, as much as a method of neutral description. For several of the practitioners in this book, the Elephant project has led them to establish lasting relationships, to discover new ways of thinking about the potential of photographic images and to develop their own narrative and visual strategies. For some it has launched their careers.

Photographs offer an approachable and fertile source of information about social history. They are especially revealing about change and the passing of time. The revelatory potential of the medium is amplified as we view photographs of the past. Even the most mundane old photograph contains a rich reservoir of detail that can trigger profound realisations, thoughts and memories. The apparent democracy and ease of reading of photographs makes them an ideal medium for a project conceived as a communal record.

This long-term project will add significantly to the visual and social history of Southwark. It will document the existing physical and social landscapes, including the architecture, housing, communities and cultures of the present Elephant and Castle: the long process of emptying buildings, moving people and demolishing existing structures; through to the emergence

of new buildings, facilities, populations and communities. The resulting work is being archived in the college and will eventually be made available online.

The project has benefitted immensely from the enthusiastic support of Southwark Council who quickly recognised the importance and historical value of recording this period of transformation. They are funding a series of photographic commissions that runs in parallel to this student project. The production of the accompanying exhibition was generously funded by a grant from Getty Images.

This project would not have been possible without the support of the local people of the Elephant and Castle who gave access, permission and in many cases encouragement to the students working on this project.

Patrick Sutherland
Director of the Elephant Project
London College of Communication (LCC)
University of the Arts London
January 2008

Qué chévere, seen?!

Latino cool on the streets of Elephant and Castle

Nicola Dracoulis

08 Angela Viveros, from Colombia.

Angela lives in Stockwell. She comes to Elephant and Castle often to eat and drink at Los Arrieros restaurant.

09 Ximena and Angie Giraldo, from Colombia.

Ximena moved to London with her family six years ago. Angie was born here. They live in Clapham and often come to Elephant and Castle with their family to eat and hang out.

10 Vanessa Montes, from Colombia.

Vanessa lives in London but is generally found hanging out with the others after Salsa rehearsals. She is seen here after rehearsing for a performance at Carnaval del Pueblo, the largest Latin American Festival in the UK, held in Burgess Park in August.

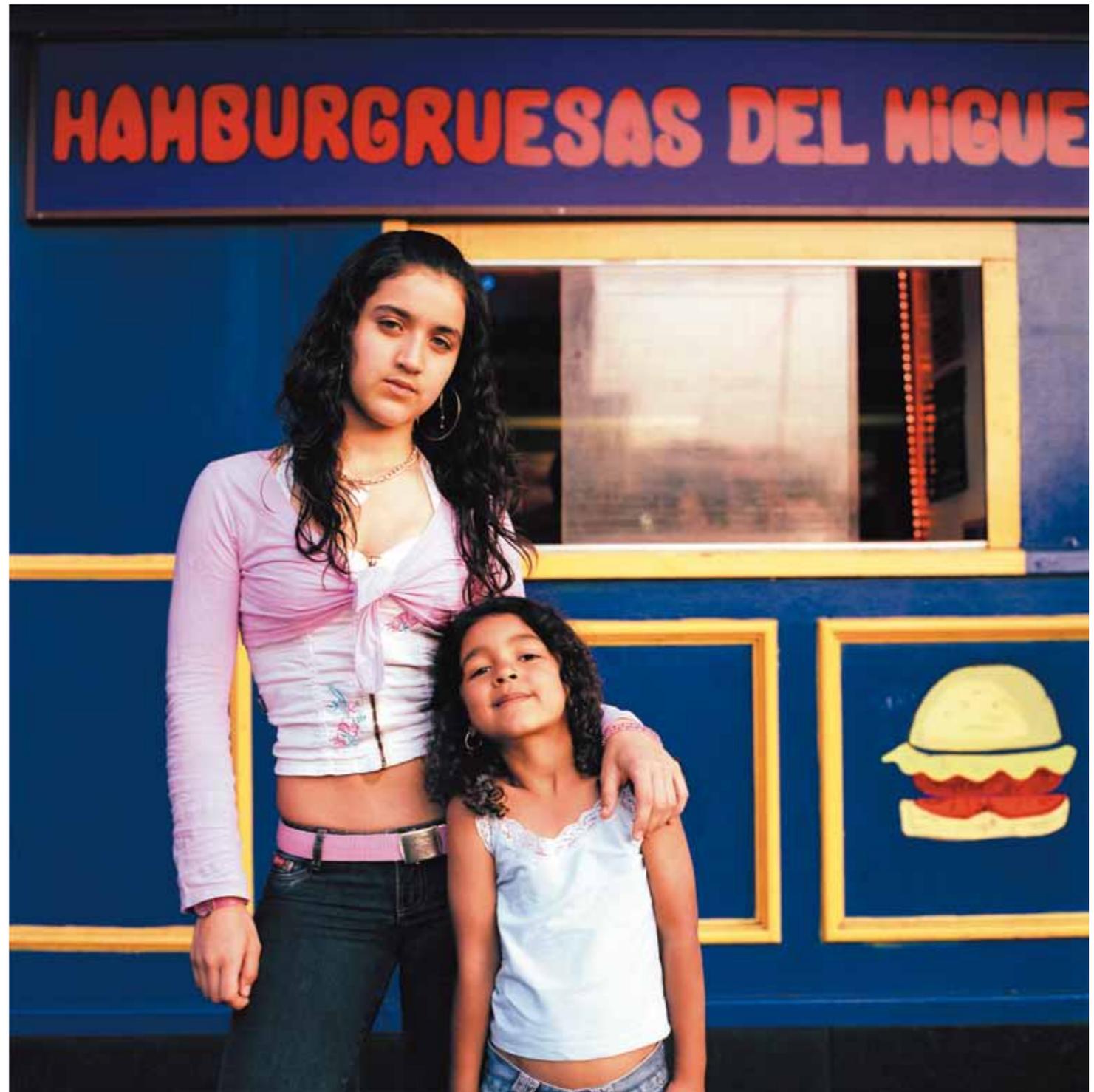
11 Andrea Osorio, David Yepes, and Divanna Gomez, all from Colombia.

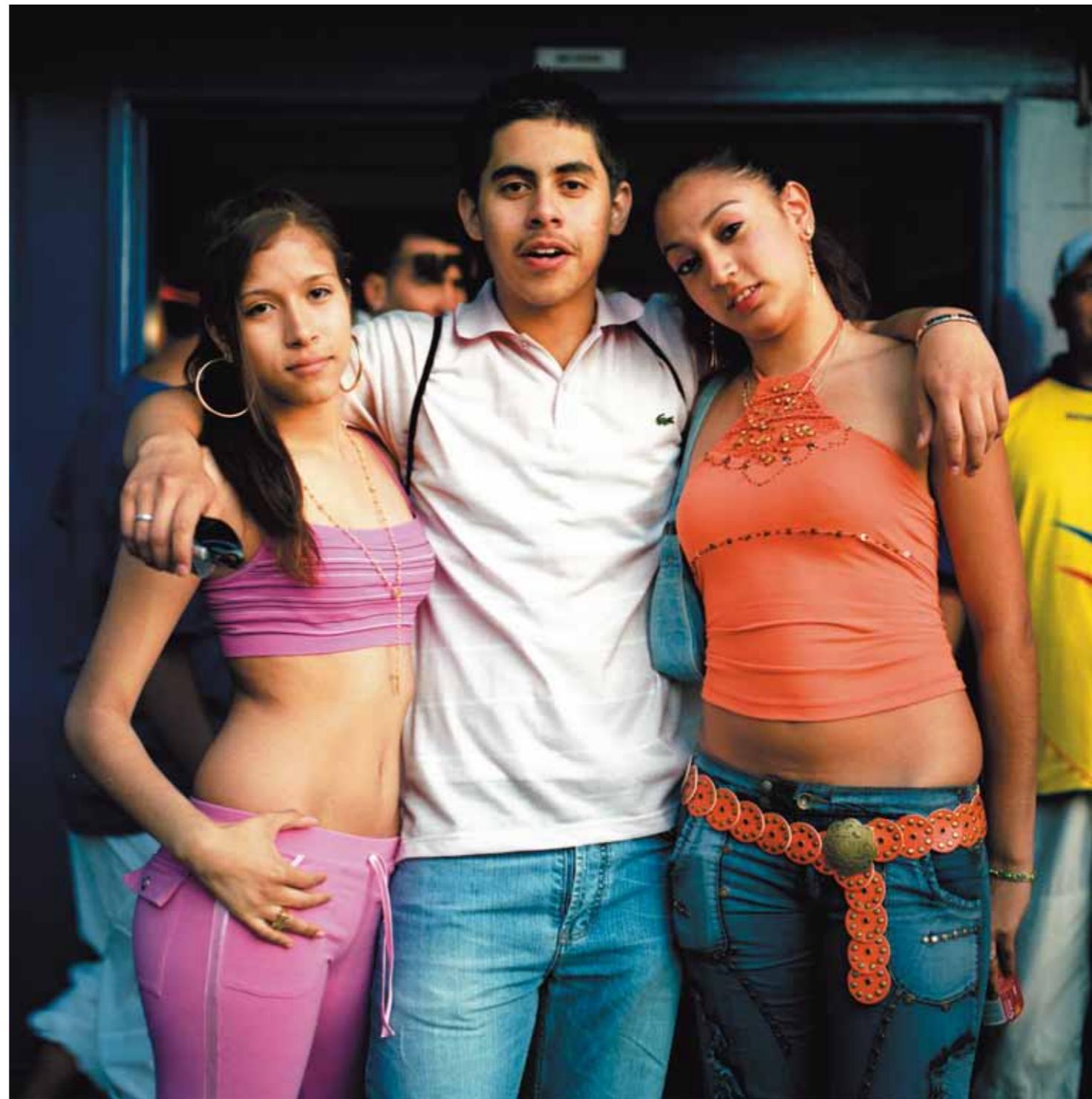
They have all lived here for over seven years. Andrea lives in East London, Divanna in Peckham, David lives just down the road. Every weekend, they can all be found hanging out in Elephant and Castle.

Elephant and Castle is a popular hub for the Latin American community living in London. People from many Latin American countries live in the area, but the majority are from Colombia or Ecuador. This is reflected in the wide selection of Colombian and Ecuadorian shops, bars and restaurants in the immediate vicinity of the Elephant and Castle shopping centre.

Being from different countries, they have their own distinct national identities, especially when it comes to football. But there is also a strong sense of connection as a Latin American community. This is particularly true of the youth, a new generation who also see themselves as Londoners.

During warm summer evenings, young Latin American Londoners regularly pass through Walworth Road. Many grab food from the takeaway Hamburguesas del Migue, a takeaway joint attached to the Los Arrieros restaurant (The Ministry of Salsa), and sit on benches on the corner. These portraits try to capture the vibe of a few such evenings in June 2006.





Charlotte

Lihee Avidan

“Then, I loved who I was. I was a rogue, you might as well call it.

Over ten years, my life has changed hugely, and for the better. My first child is eight, her name is Amy. My second child is four, April. My third is two, her name is Abbey, and another one on the way.

When I was fourteen I was naughty. I used to go out and set fire to the bins. Just to see the firemen. Used to run to the top of the stairs, see all the smoke. Oh it was excellent, having that little feeling, an energy boost of doing something naughty. But then I did start knuckling down a bit, and when I done my SATs exams I passed five, but they wouldn't enter me into my normal exams 'cause I fell pregnant. I met Amy's Dad when I was fifteen, when I used to hang about in the Aylesbury, we call it the square, it's not much, but it was our little place, all of us.

And the next thing you know I was pregnant.

My mum, she was really shocked and disappointed. She would say to me “It'll hurt Char, I'm not going to lie to you” Seventeen and a half hours in labour, and in the end, I had some big lady come running in, swing my legs over my head, push down on my belly, someone doing something else... you can't even describe the pain – I'd rather have a toothache.

It didn't seem real when she was born, it was just like – I was young, so I didn't really ever think “oh, she's mine.” I didn't plan to have a baby, so I didn't plan to have loads of love when it was born, you know.

But then, when I got home, all she done was cried, so all I done was cried. So I think the bonding grew over a couple of weeks, I don't think it was straight away.

Because I just couldn't cope with her at all, that's why I'm glad my mum was there. Then I met April's Dad, I've now been with him six years, and I have two children with him - never got rid of him.

Where we've all grown up together, all my friends started having their kids, so we all help each other out. Everyone's an Aunt, all our kids call 'em Auntie. So we've got an Auntie Wendy, an Auntie Justna, an Auntie Charlotte, an Auntie Alison. My mum used to always have a go at me for being out late, and that, and I always wouldn't care, but now I wouldn't let my kids out. They're everything to me, they're my world.

The only thing I would change, would've been to stay in school and finish my education. I never thought I'd stay round here, have so many kids, I always thought ‘OK I've got one child I can still go to college, do what I've gotta do,’ you know. But it's – it's just life.”









Landmarks

Dana Popa

- 24 Advertising board
Cigarette shop
- 25 Dip in the pavement
Gate of the park
- 26 Imperial War Museum Park
Door in the Subway
- 27 Football pitch
Subway exit

Alf Kebbell has been living in Elephant and Castle since 1982. He is blind, or “registered blind”, as he prefers to say because he has some sight out of his right eye.

Most blind people do not live in complete darkness. Alf can distinguish extremely strong lights like neon tubes. He can sense and see a shape if something is moving towards him at a very close distance. On a bright sunny day though, his sight would not be much help at all, everything in sunlight would appear too washed out to recognise shapes and the shadows would become black confusing patches. His greatest difficulty is walking when it has rained and the sun shines on the pavement. It blinds him completely.

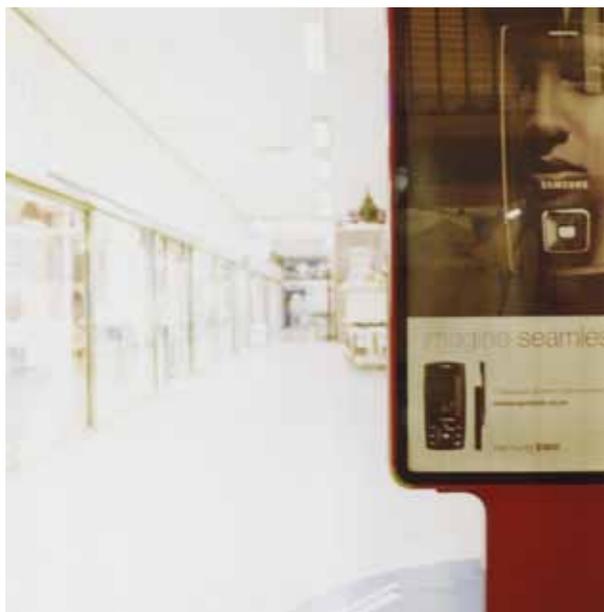
Alf uses a cane. But in Elephant and Castle he does not need one to find his way around, he uses it so that people do not bump into him. But they still do.

He takes the same routes, stepping on the same pavements, passing by the same shops and street poles. He has gained the most precise notion of where everything lies in Elephant and Castle. Alf navigates precisely relying on his landmarks.

The subway was hardest to learn as all the sounds are the same inside. If you are blind there are no clues where you are, except for the light at the end, giving extreme contrast to the darkness around. A door in the wall is one of those landmarks Alf needs to find his way around. Touched by the cane, the door sounds completely different to the wall. He has to turn first to the right to reach the shopping centre. A neon bulb, reflecting extremely strong light announces the cigarette shop. From the tall advertising board, he has to walk only five paces at forty-five degrees in a diagonal line to get to the mailbox. He has used this mailbox for

nineteen years. A dip in the pavement, where a tree once stood, tells him exactly where he is. Alf feels this dip in the pavement every day. The telephone booths are essential landmarks towards the same bus stop, every morning. An old wall he has passes for nineteen years marks the end of the park. From the gate of the park, Alf knows that there are approximately one hundred and twenty meters along the fence to the last set of traffic lights closest to his home. And the football pitch that leads Alf home, lies next to his house, on Newington Estates.

This is an emotional journey experienced in a repetitive way by the real performer. I have tried to recreate the space Alf navigates through each day, portraying his landmarks at the moment of his passing by. Without them, Alf would be completely lost.



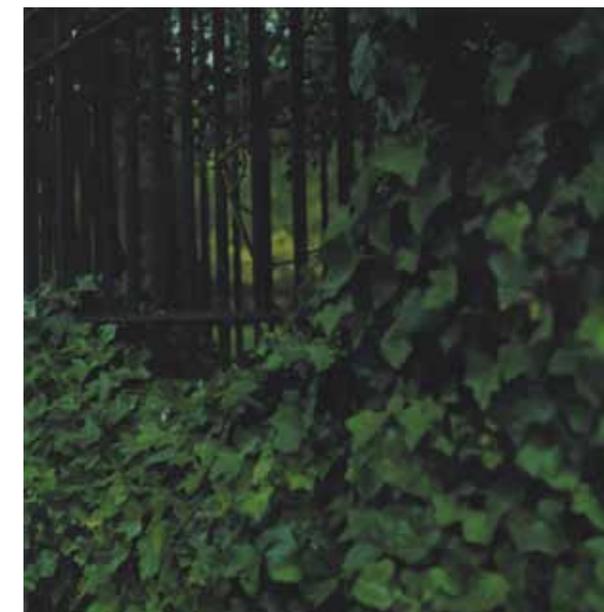
Five more steps in a forty-five degree diagonal line to the mail box.



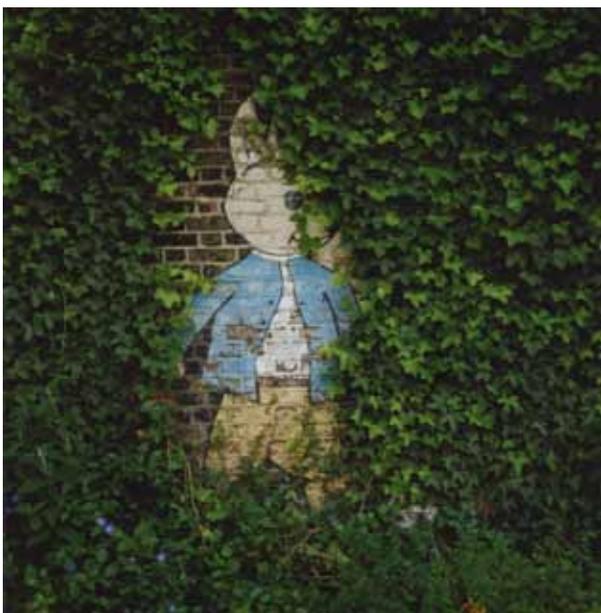
From the strong neon light Alf knows that he has arrived at the cigarette shop.



*There used to be a tree here.
Alf feels the dip in the pavement and knows exactly where he is.*



Walk along the fence of the park to the last set of traffic lights.



Turn around. The end of the park.



First left and take a right to the shopping centre.



Just a few paces away from Alf's house.



Walk to the small patch of strong light to get out of the subway.

Kagyu Samye Dzong

Lydia Polzer

30 Jan – “I love looking at the stars through a telescope. You can see Saturn’s rings”

Jan Holy thinks of himself as meditating all the time.

He is from the Czech Republic, but now lives at Kagyu Samye Dzong Buddhist Centre in Southwark.

31 Amy – “Meditation is a bit like the Western idea of romantic love. It makes you forget the past and the future and allows you to just be there in the present moment”

Amy Mordan meditates 30 minutes a day. She used to have a house and a mortgage,

but left all that behind when she moved in to Kagyu Samye Dzong in 2006.

32 David – “I think Simon started reading books on Buddhism and I was more into books on psychology and then we swapped them”

David Elcock meditates one hour a day. He is temporarily staying with his twin brother

Simon at Kagyu Samye Dzong to help out with the building work at Manor Baths.

33 Simon – “I don’t know who got into Buddhism first, me or my twin brother”

Simon Elcock meditates an hour and a half each day. He moved in to Kagyu Samye Dzong in early 2006.

He had become ill and living at the Buddhist Centre allowed him to have a break from work.

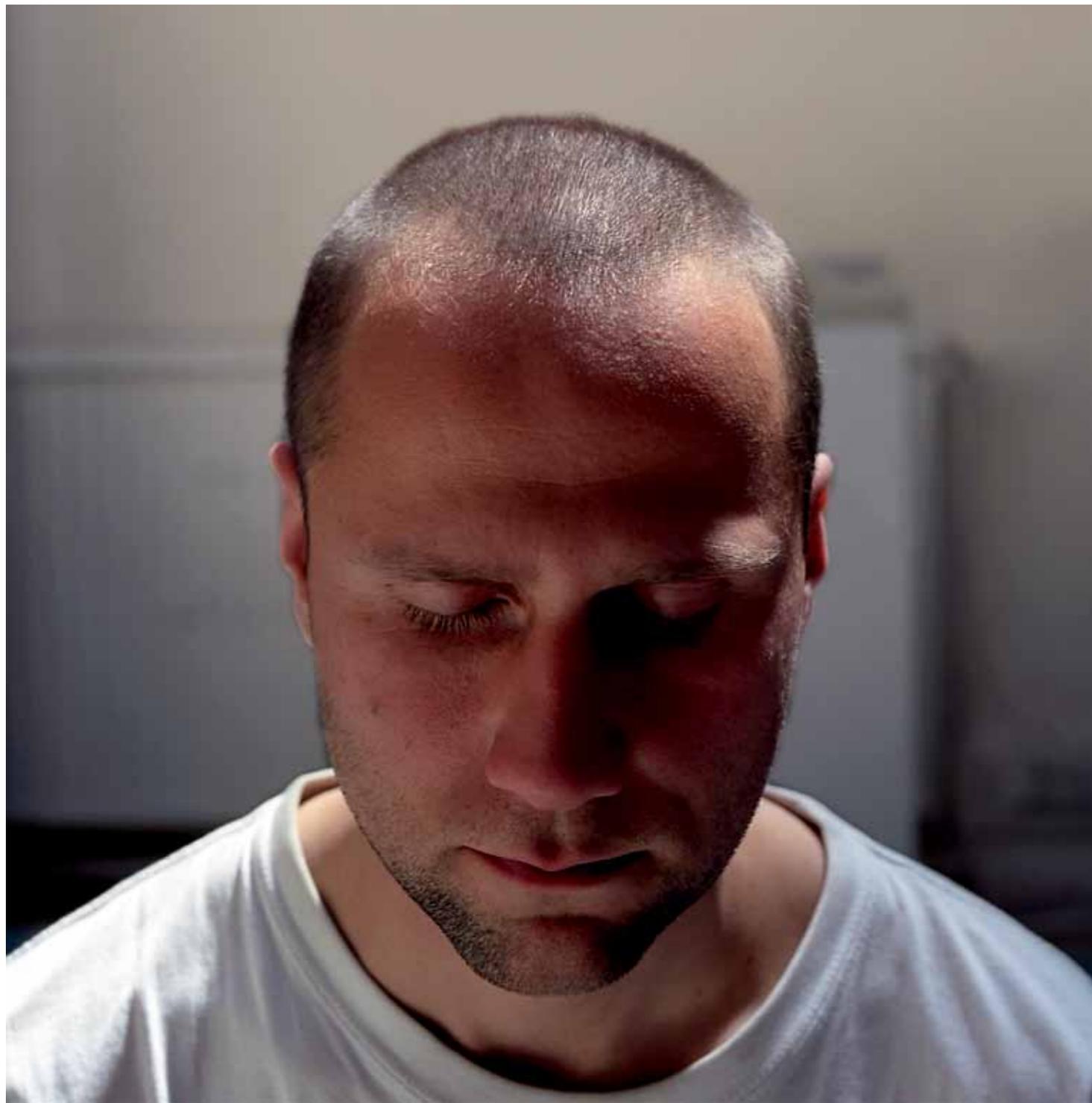
While Southwark Council pursues its massive urban regeneration scheme at the Elephant and Castle, a small group of people in the area carries on with a regeneration scheme all of its own.

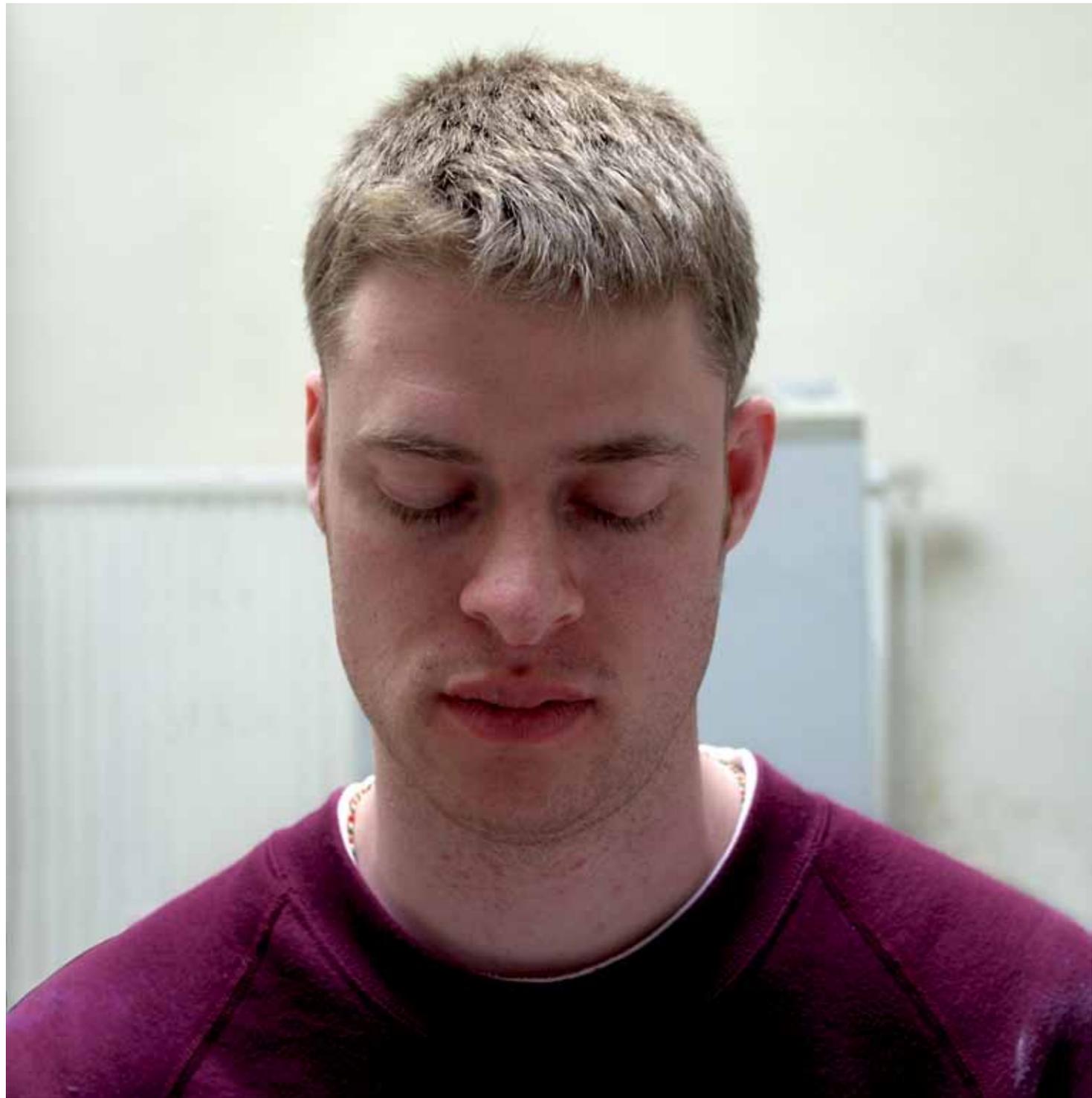
In April 1998 the Kagyu Samye Dzong Tibetan Buddhist centre in Carlisle Lane, near Waterloo Station, was established as a tranquil oasis in the middle of a traffic-ridden, busy part of London. It had all a Buddhist centre needs: a richly adorned, colourful shrine room, communal bathroom and kitchens, dormitories for guests, a small library, a tea room, a very lovingly looked after, lush garden and cottage-like outbuildings for the residents.

When St Thomas’ Hospital purchased the site for redevelopment in July 2003 the centre’s future suddenly seemed uncertain. Kagyu Samye Dzong secured a five-year lease from Southwark Council for Manor Place Baths off Walworth Road. They pay minimal rent in return for renovating the run-down building. Manor Baths has a colourful past, firstly as a classic Victorian municipal bath and laundry complex and later as a post-war boxing venue. According to derelictlondon.com there are tales of locals seeing the losers or winners of a fight staggering into the Walworth Road with closed eyes and cut faces.

The building was last used for council offices and the back of the site is a recycling centre. The Buddhists set straight to work restoring Manor Baths, turning it into living space for the residents and a welcoming place for visitors. The Kagyu Karma Cowboy Builders came into being. All work is done on a voluntary basis and what can it be other than good karma that they found skilled workers of every trade (plumbers, surveyors, carpenters) happy to donate their knowledge and time.

And at the centre of all this restoration activity is the one thing that brought them all together in the first place, meditation.





Where They Sleep

Douglas Abuelo

36 SE1 9DA
37 SE17 2UN
38 SE1 6TJ
39 SE17 2EB

Although Elephant and Castle will be radically changed over the next ten years, it will remain a home to many people. What I found interesting and wanted to explore were the mutability of place and societal expectations of what a home should be.

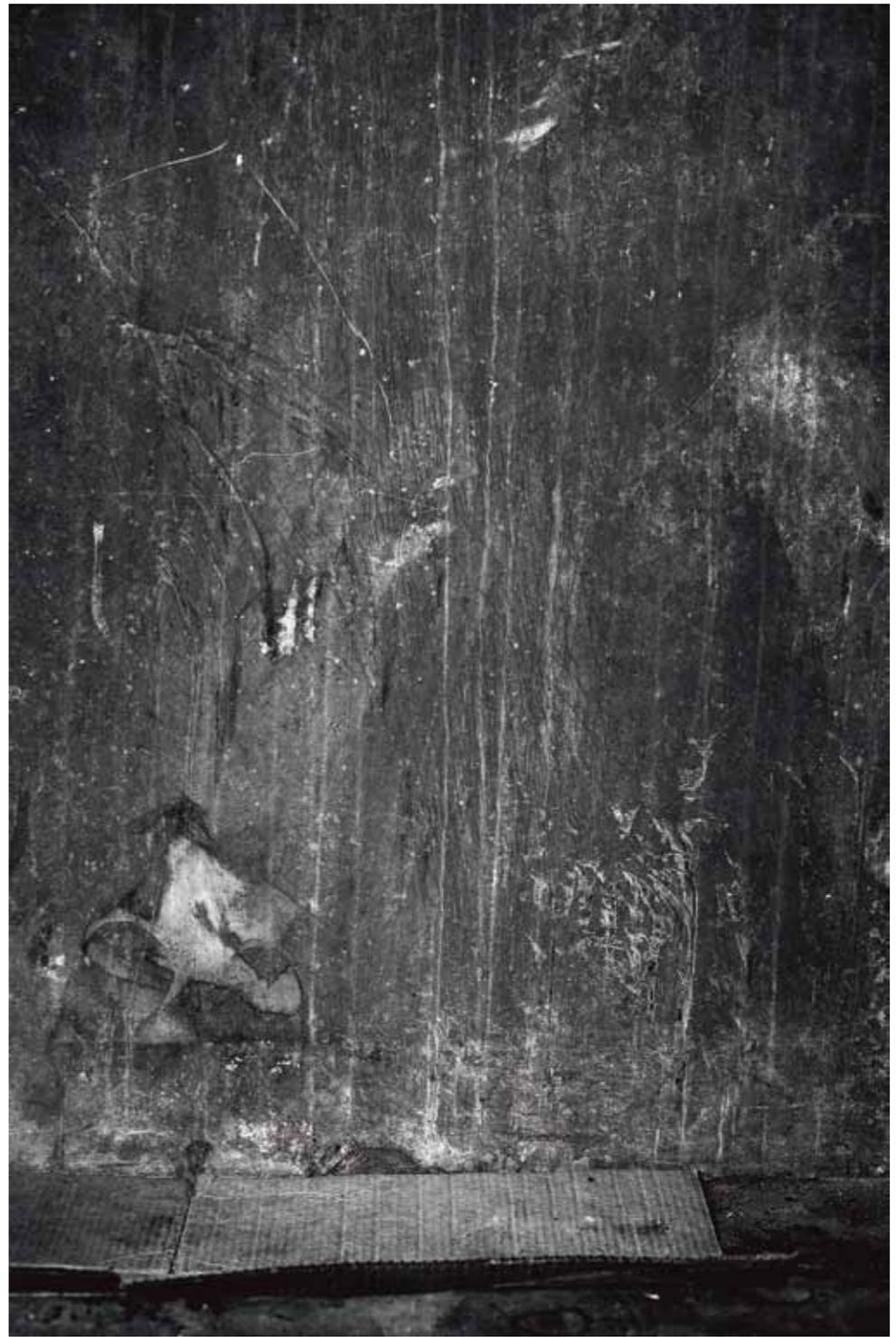
With the homeless, ideas of home take on very different perspectives. The homeless are, by the nature of their predicament, somewhat transitory. But most often they have their particular haunts and carve out something resembling a home, in the most arbitrary sense of the word. What I then wanted to show are the pieces of the places that homeless people make into their 'homes'.

The places often lie directly on busy pathways or are concealed behind a fence, wall or storage room door, mere inches from passersby. And although they are places which scores of people walk past every day, they are not recognized as 'homes'. Indeed as places they are hardly noticed at all.

And, while these pieces of places could appear similar to places anywhere in the world, they are also specific to Elephant and Castle, and the people that have thought of them as home, no matter how fleetingly, have left their specific marks.

By identifying them with postcodes they are further made into personal places which were at times inhabited by someone.





No. 1-242 Ashenden

Ben Speck

The Ashenden building holds 242 flats and is one of the four largest blocks on the Heygate estate.

The Heygate was built in 1974 and its modernist architecture has been described as a failed attempt to translate social structures into building structures. It is situated south-east of the main roundabout and comprises over 1200 households, which will all be relocated over the next couple of years.

Over weeks of knocking on doors, posting letters and putting up posters, I tried to convince all of the residents of 242 flats to pose for a communal portrait standing by the south-facing window of their flat. In producing one large image simultaneously showing the massive facade and the people living behind, I wanted to bring across the strange relationship between human beings and the fabric of the modern metropolis. Simultaneously I wanted to

give an impression of the number of people who will be relocated as a result of the massive redevelopment.

While households are being progressively vacated, new temporary tenants are being allocated flats on the estate. At the time of making this image, the vast majority of residents I spoke to did not know where they would move, most did not know when the demolition was scheduled for, and a number had not even heard about it.

Amongst the residents, opinion about the planned destruction of the building ranges from contentment through indifference to sadness and despair.

There is seemingly little interaction between people on the estate. People rush hurriedly through the self-contained communal walkways and spaces, which were originally designed to enhance social interaction. A high level of crime

in the area has made tenants careful about spending time in the open on the estate. The recent increase in the turnover of tenants and the number of unknown faces has amplified a feeling of insecurity.

In order to capture enough detail to show individual faces of the people who live in the building, the photograph was taken with five large format cameras from five different rooftops opposite its south wall. The different sections were shot over the course of two days, March the 31st and April the 1st, 2007.

42-45 A portrait of some of the residents of the Ashenden building on the Heygate Estate, London, seen from the south, March 31/April 01, 2007





Aylesbury

The First and Last Residents of the Aylesbury Estate

Shehani Fernando

- 48 May Wood
- 49 Catherine Smith
- 50 F C Weston
- 51 Gladys Johnston
- 52 Christopher Brown
- 53 May Jones

The Aylesbury Estate is a maze of concrete tower blocks and low-rise housing constructed over 28.7 hectares between the Elephant & Castle and Peckham. Built between 1967 and 1977, the estate replaced the back-to-back terraces of South London with a futuristic development of 2700 flats, housing 10,000 people. Its primary aim was to reduce London's housing list as swiftly as possible. The Le Corbusier inspired plans by Derek Winch were built on the premise that one could walk from one end of the estate to the other on the vast network of raised walkways without ever setting foot on a public road. An antidote to the crowded tenements of the past, the development was inspired by ocean-liner living and envisaged a floating self contained community.

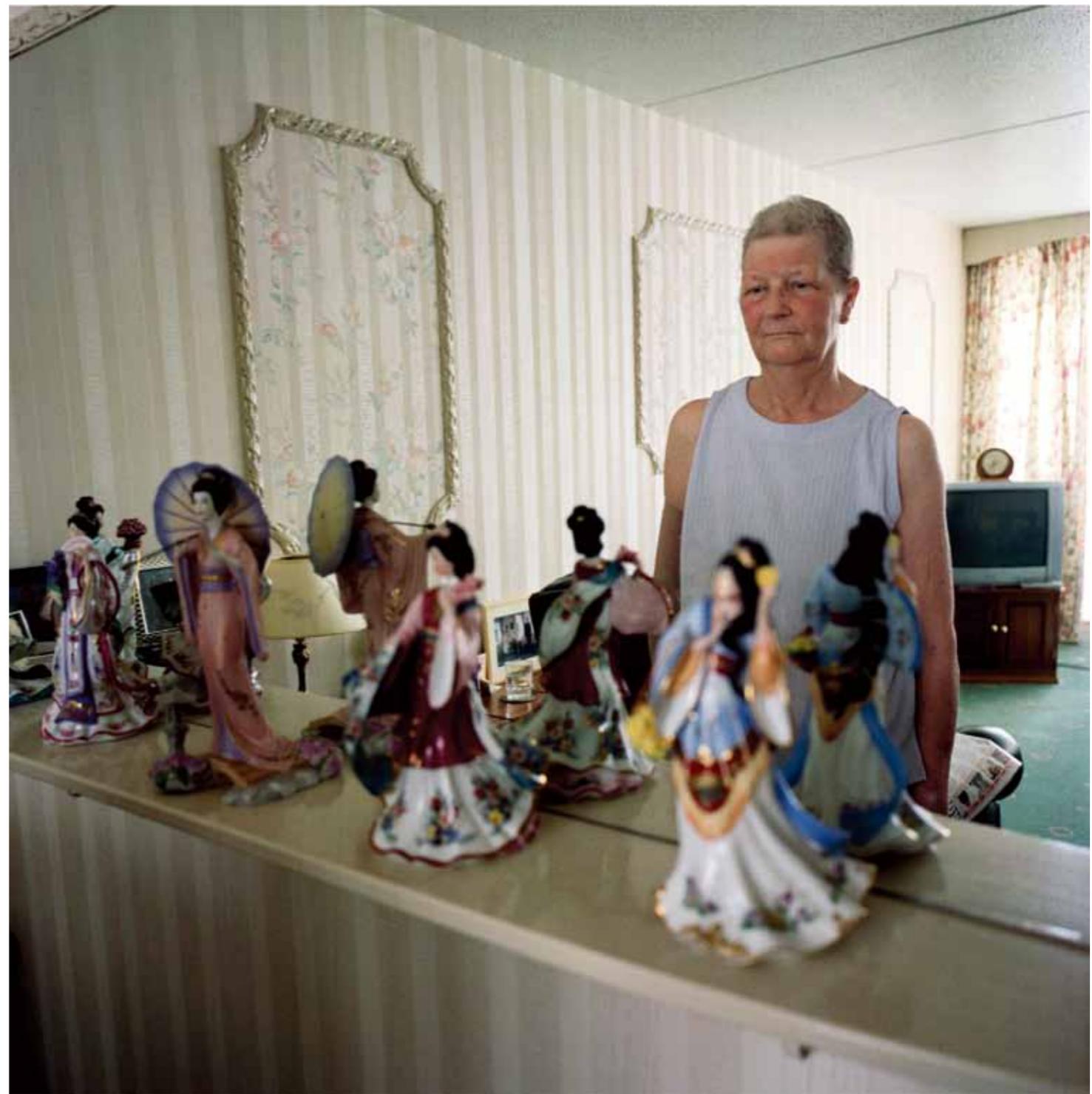
It was once the biggest estate in Europe, but with its immense size came huge social problems. Before it was even completed, Southwark council faced

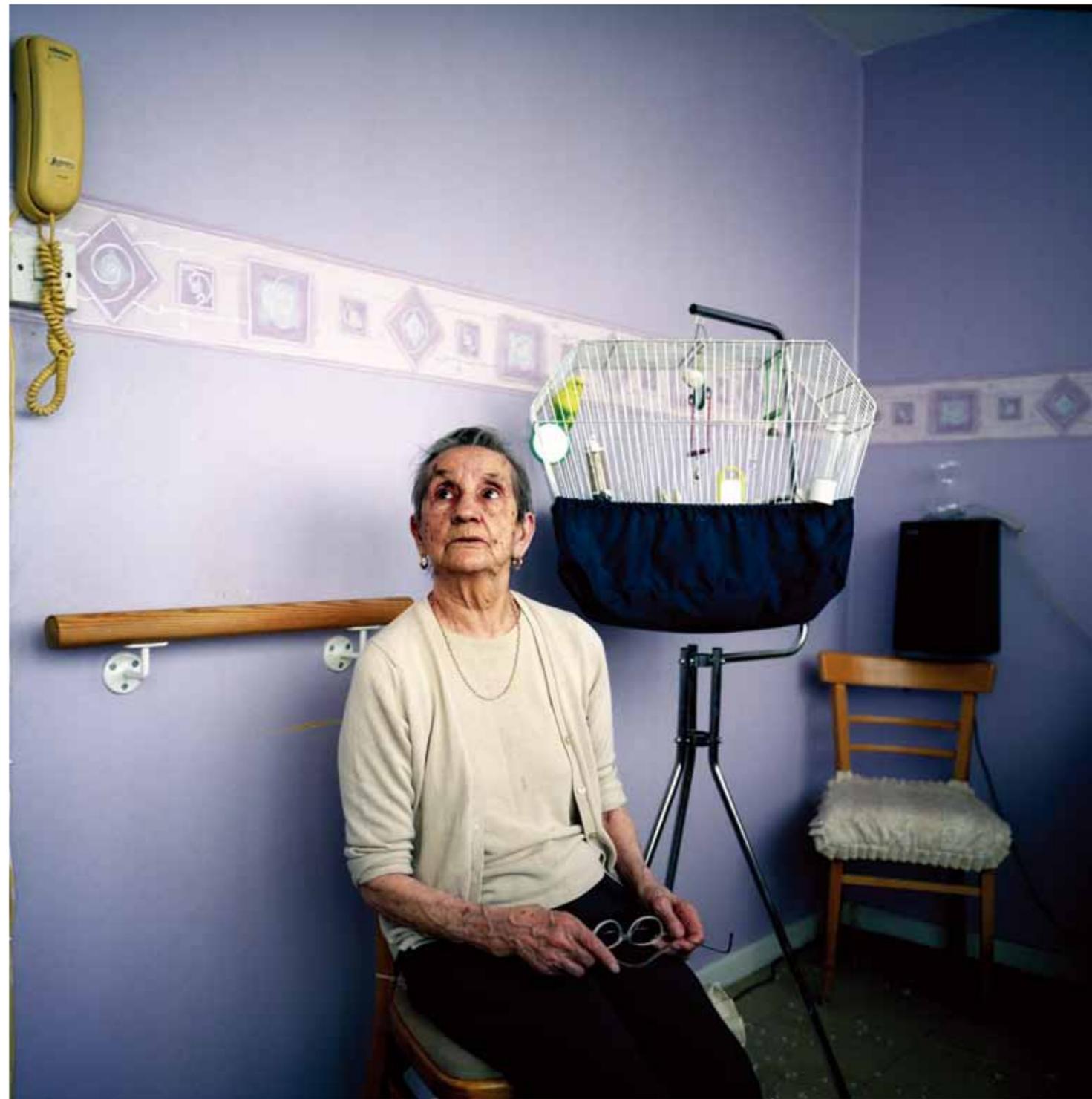
a bill of £2.2 million for general repairs as a consequence of crime, muggings, joyriding and vandalism.

Much has been made of the levels of deprivation on the estate. The futuristic walkways provided the perfect haven for criminal activity and many were subsequently torn down by the council. Tony Blair famously chose the estate as the location for his first speech after coming into power in 1997. His rallying cry was that "There will be no forgotten people in the Britain I want to build". Yet despite being allocated £56.2 million through the New Deal for Communities scheme, little has really changed for residents. They will now be moved out of the estate when it is demolished piece by piece.

These portraits are of people who moved into the Aylesbury Estate when it was brand new and have lived in the same flat ever since. The flats are surprisingly

spacious, bright and have been lovingly lived-in and maintained. For many of them, the homes they moved into in the Seventies represented the height of modern living. Bathrooms were a novelty for families used to using the local public baths. For thirty years they have witnessed the changing social fabric of the area and the decline of the estate's fortunes. The majority of their lives have been spent in this area – working in traditional industries, bringing up children and burying partners. While friends and neighbours moved out, they have remained and for the most part talk fondly of a bygone era. For these people, the demolition represents upheaval and an unwelcome intrusion during the later stages of their lives. Some claim that there is nothing wrong with the current accommodation on the estate, while others are more resigned to the fact that they might have to start again somewhere new.







Mainliners

Mauro Bottaro

The Heygate Estate can operate like a small and detached world. The high levels of crime and drug-related activities, which have historically characterized the area around the estate, make it compulsory, for those who live there, to develop a defensive sense of belonging. To an outsider they might seem like impenetrable, alienating and even threatening spaces, but to those living there, they are intimately familiar. To be able to understand a closed environment like the Heygate Estate, one has to be able to perceive what it means to look from the inside towards the outside world, what it means to look out of the inhabitants' windows onto the street, onto the other housing blocks, towards the centre of town and other people.

Steve, Tracey, Del and Darren have probably never seen each other, although they all live in the same neighbourhood. The world they occupy is very similar, because they are all heroin and crack

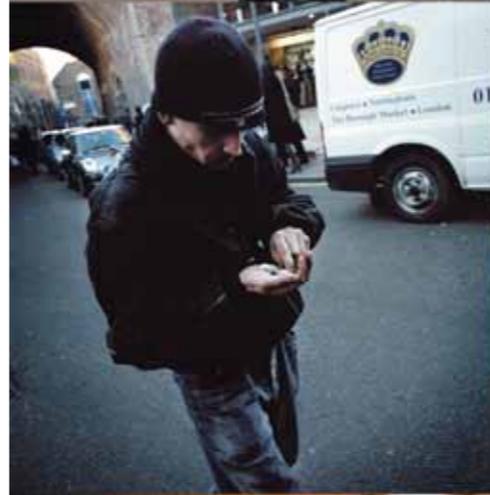
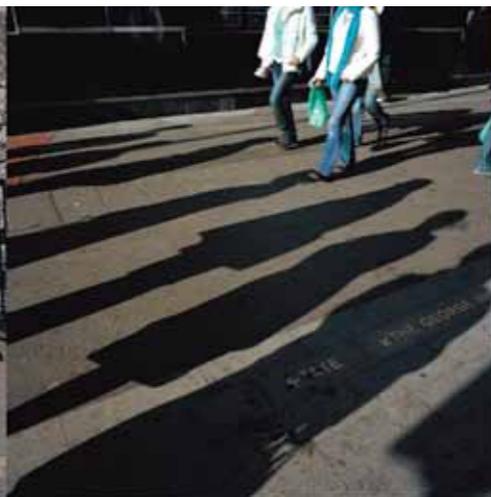
users and their lives are driven by this habit. This addiction has destroyed their relationships with the society around them, as well as their personal lives. Their daily routine revolves entirely around drugs and they seem powerless to prevent the damage these substances do to them emotionally, physically and financially.

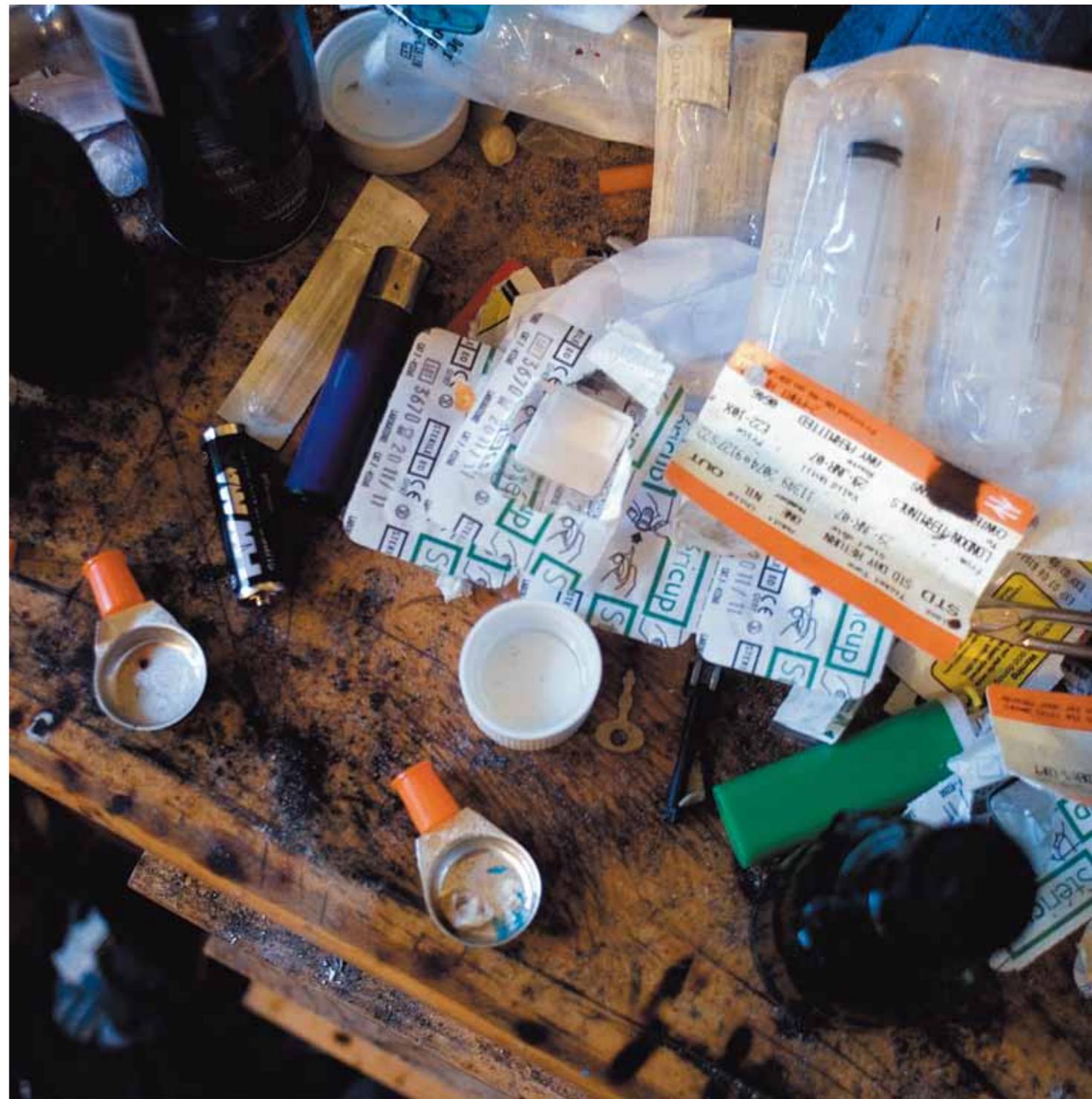
The Elephant and Castle is far from the outskirts of London, but their living spaces are so degraded and they are so stigmatised that their whole existence can be described as peripheral. Staying with them day after day, I realized how they live a life parallel to but excluded from the environments through which they move, unnoticed and anonymous, almost as if invisible.

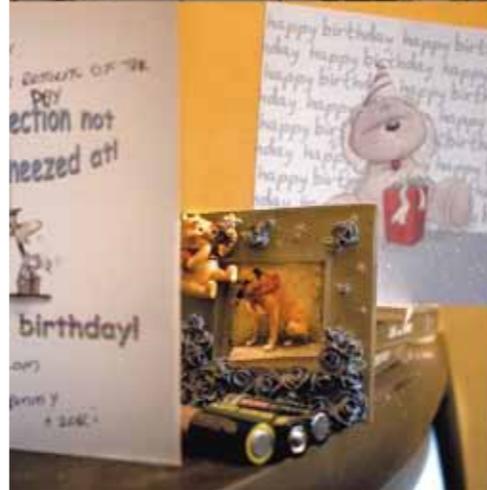
The Heygate and Walworth area of the Elephant and Castle has been classed as a highly deprived area by government and council agencies. In terms of crime,

home office statistics place it in the top 0.5% in the country. In the Southwark area unemployment levels are higher than the London average (4.36%) with the Heygate having the highest level at 7.84%. According to the Crack House Protocol 2004/2005, compiled by the Home Office and Southwark Council, the Heygate and the wider Walworth road area have the highest number of reported crack hou-ses in the borough and are still considered to be heroin hotspots.

The outreach agencies talk of their clients as having a user's career of 15 to 20 years. This means that no matter how hard they try to support their clients with rehabilitation programmes, they will most probably go back to drugs. This is why they concentrate on reaching out to drug users and providing them with information to help them avoid blood borne viruses, unsafe injecting practices or overdose.







151-189

Harper Road Flats

Thomas Brandi

66 185
*George leaves Harper Road early in the morning to visit his wife at her nursing home.
(She has since passed away)*

68 159
Fred watches the news before going out to buy newspapers for the people he cares for each day.

70 181
Irene packs her possessions before moving to her new home.

72 153
Rob takes his last bath the day before leaving Harper Road.

74 189
Bill organizes the contents of his crowded flat outside the front door prior to relocation.

151-189 Harper Road is a special place. The block of flats were built at the end of the 1950s and became home to a varied community of people. My project explores the lives of these people. Each of them has an interesting story to tell. Living close to one another, the tenants have come to know each other well and as in any community have developed friendships as well as animosities.

The building is now considered unsafe and will soon be demolished. In these photographs, taken prior to their departure, Bill, Rob, George, Fred and Irene are concerned about their future relocation. A consultation about the whereabouts of their new flats was taking place, leaving them in a limbo of indecision.

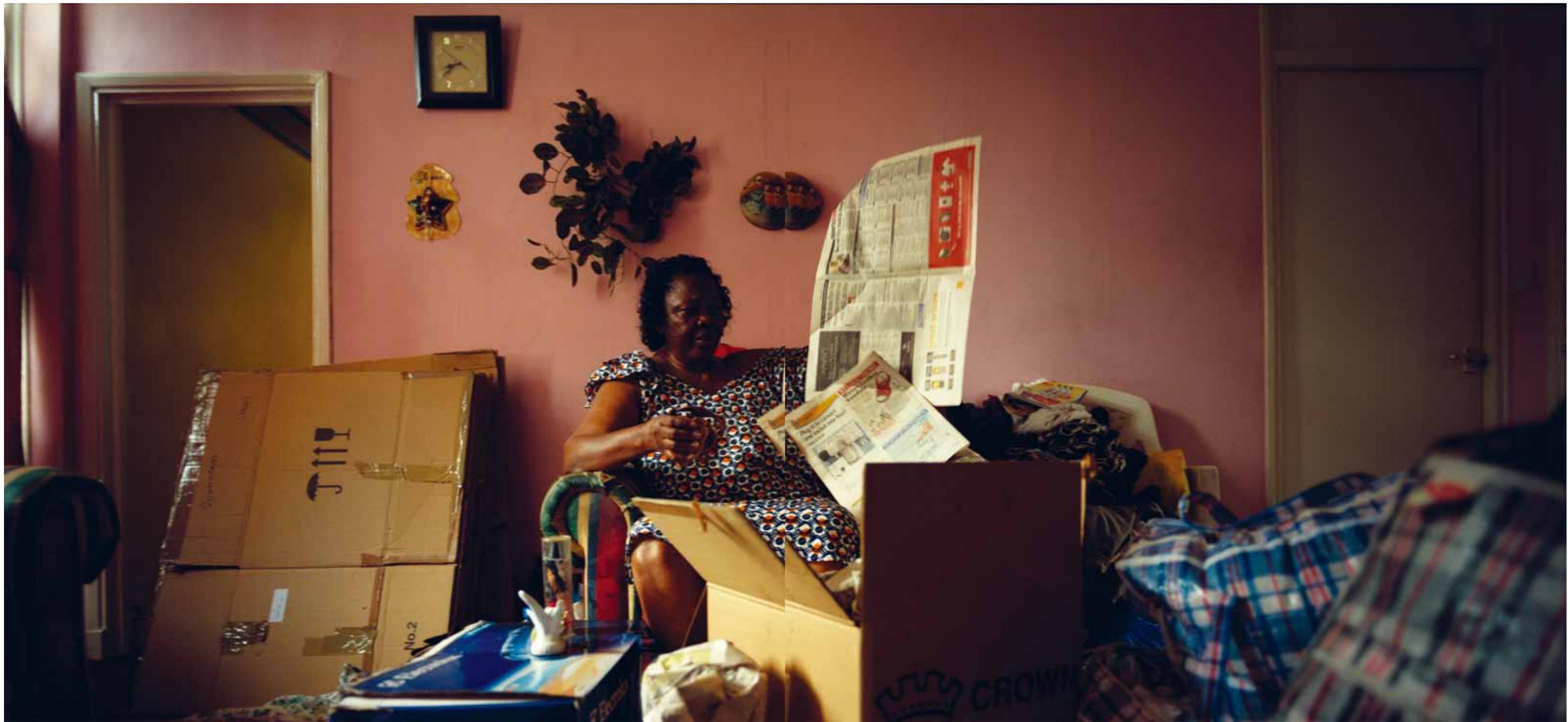
These are the people whose story I want to tell. I want to preserve the memories of this place as I experienced it.

The images do not present an objective truth. They are a conscious choice of events, moments and places filtered through my personal viewpoint and ultimately the lenses of my camera. The aim of my larger project is to see the community in all lights, moods and weathers. I am not aiming to judge but rather allowing these people to let me come close and feel the intimacy of their homes and ultimately of their lives.





2009 February 2009						
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25	26	27	28			





Biographies

Nicola Dracoulis

Nicola Dracoulis was born in Australia in 1975. She studied Cinema and Languages at La Trobe University and went on to work in Australia's new media industry. She came to the UK in 1999. After freelancing for 2 years as a designer/developer, she joined Atticmedia, a top 25 new media agency in London, as project manager. She is currently based in Hackney working as a freelance documentary photographer.
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Lihee Avidan

Lihee Avidan was born in Israel in 1976. She studied History and Politics at the Open University and Photography at Westminster University. Her final project at LCC won the 2007 PX3 photojournalism award, and her work on the Aylesbury Estate led to a commission for Channel 4. She is currently working as a freelance

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Dana Popa

Dana Popa was born in Romania in 1977. She studied Advertising and Mass Communication at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication Studies in Bucharest. She is based in London, a freelance photographer specialising in contemporary social issues with a particular emphasis on human rights. In 2007 her project on sex trafficking won the Jury Prize in Days Japan International Photojournalism Awards as well as the Jerwood Photography Award.
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Lydia Polzer

Lydia Polzer was born in 1978 in the former GDR. She moved to the UK ten years ago to study and pursue a career in journalism. After completing a BA at City University in London she worked as production editor at Dancing Times. She currently works as print media designer, photographer and journalist and is a guest lecturer in magazine design and production at City and Brunel Universities.
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Douglas Abuelo

Douglas Abuelo studied American History and German at Leipzig University. His photographs have been published in Der Spiegel, Time, Le Monde and The New York Times, amongst others, and exhibited in various group and solo shows including 'How We Are: Photographing Britain' at the Tate Gallery. He lives in Berlin and is represented by Polaris Images.
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Ben Speck

Ben Speck was born in Germany in 1981, but lived and went to school in Lisbon from 1990 to 1999. He has a BA in Photography from the Kent Institute of Art and Design and works as freelance photographer in London. His work was exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery, shortlisted for the Photographic Portrait Prize 2003. His recent work has been published in the Guardian Weekend Magazine, Architects Journal, Vanity Fair Italy, Marie-Claire France and Vrij Nederland among others.
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Shehani Fernando

Shehani Fernando was born in Sri Lanka in 1978. She studied History at Cambridge University and worked for a number of independent documentary companies before joining BBC London for three years. She currently works for Guardian Unlimited as a video producer.
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Mauro Bottaro

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HOME features the work of students from the MA in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography (2006) at the London College of Communication (LCC).

This postgraduate programme has been running in various forms for over two decades. It has established a remarkable international reputation and track record of achievement. Students have gone on to win World Press Photo awards (seven times), the Jerwood Photography Prize (five times), the Sunday Times Ian Parry Award (twice), Winston Churchill Scholarships (four times), the Visa D'Or at the Perpignan Festival of Photojournalism (twice), Arts Council awards (three times), the Eugene Smith Award, the European Book Publishers Award and the Inge Morath Award amongst many others. Alumni have been selected for the World Press Masterclass on many occasions, produced over twenty books of documentary photographs, innumerable spreads in major international magazines, made films for UK television and exhibited at venues ranging from Tate Britain and the Courtauld Institute in London to the Metropolitan Museum of Photography in Tokyo.

www.lcc.arts.ac.uk

HOME

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