

WHERE
WE
LIVE



WHERE WE LIVE

The social landscape of
England explored in paintings

Where We Live is an artist-initiated national touring exhibition exploring the multiple perspectives of places in the UK as they change and develop over time.

Artists Trevor Burgess, Jonathan Hooper, Mandy Payne, Narbi Price and Judith Tucker each painted a specific location over a long period of time. Each artist, in different ways, focused on notions of home, exposing unconsidered and overlooked aspects of the urban landscape we live in.

Trevor Burgess' paintings depict housing in London featured in estate agent adverts in newspapers. Jonathan Hooper's work focuses on the suburban and urban environment of Leeds.

Mandy Payne's work portrays Park Hill, the Grade II* listed Sheffield council estate.

Narbi Price's paintings are of Ashington in Northumberland, which was once the world's largest mining village.

Judith Tucker's work explores the seaside chalets on the Humberston Fitties in Lincolnshire.

With poems by Helen Angell and Harriet Tarlo and an introductory essay by poet, writer and radio presenter Ian McMillan.



Calling me home

Each morning I get up at 0500 and go for my early stroll around Darfield near Barnsley, the village I've always lived in. I call it home and, if I listen carefully enough, I can hear it calling me home. It's always the same stroll around the familiar streets I've known since I was this high. Or maybe this high. My self-imposed task, like the self-imposed (or sky-imposed, or street-imposed, or light-imposed) task of the artists in this exhibition, is to see things differently every day. To make the familiar unfamiliar. I know that's not the only function of art or poetry but it's one of them. For me on my stroll it's to see the bloke in the white trainers waiting at the bus stop for his brightly-lit lift anew every morning; to make different connections between shadows and shadows, and to see something startling in the shuttered window of the bakery. The things I see nudge me each day; they tell me where I live.

Then, when I get home and while the things I encountered are still marinading somewhere in that part of my brain where language assumes unfamiliar shapes and sonorities, I tweet about what I saw, sending the tweet out into the world for the world to read it and stroll with me. Once I saw a man in a camouflage jacket walked past a man in a hi-vis jacket and they cancelled each other out; it was like watching a Do-It-Yourself eclipse and that is what I feel that this exhibition does, in its hi-vis or camouflage clothing. It hands us miracles, quotidian miracles. We just have to look. It turns camouflage to hi-vis.

The exhibition is called Where We Live and it’s worth examining those words and having them in mind as you take your time around the show. Imagine the three words as three lines of a tiny poem: Where/We/Live.

Where
We
Live.

Inject some punctuation into them so that we can play with their workings, look into their humming engine:

Where.
We?
Live.

Where
We?
Live!

That word where asks us to look around, to centre ourselves, to glance at real or imagined horizons. That word we is a collective, a group, a rubbing together of people on a street, or a family looking around the place they’ve lived in, seemingly for ever, as they prepare to leave it for the last time, maybe; or entering it for the first time like my new neighbours have just done, cracking open a bottle of champagne. Live is one of the most powerful words in the language; its opposite is scary and silent and chills us to the bone. To live is to be here, now, in this space, in this painting, framed, pushing at the edge of the frame because we’re almost too big for the frame to contain us. Pushing at the edge of Where We Live until we realise that pushing against it makes no difference, not in a painting, anyway.

Each of the painters in this exhibition asks us to think about those words, to think about where we live, to think about ‘where’ ‘we’ ‘live’. Wander around and take your time; each frame is a sacred space, each object is a household god, each finished piece is a poem waiting to happen. And indeed poems have happened and are happening already alongside and underneath and above the work. And, as ever, I hope that once you’ve experienced these paintings you’ll want to have a creative response: a poem, a story, a song, a painting, a sculpture, a joke, a video game.



Judith Tucker. *Night Fitties: Do not walk on the grass verge*. Oil on linen. 60 x 80cm.



Narbi Price. *Untitled Phone Box Painting (Comrades)*. Acrylic on board, 50 x 70cm.

Judith Tucker takes me to a place I know well: the Fitties chalets in Humberston near Cleethorpes. I’ve wandered through this Shangri-la for decades because my mother-in-law has a caravan nearby. Judith’s pictures happen at night, in a kind of Humber-light that asks us to imagine the dusk lives these chalets are leading and the sorts of people who might be living in there, or who might be driving through the evening to get to the chalet for the weekend, a box full of food and drink in the boot of the car, an unread magazine on the back seat waiting to be read. Read in that special kind of way you read things in the dark.

Narbi Price illuminates Ashington in Northumberland, a place that resonates artistically because of its association with artists who became known, through Lee Hall’s splendid play, as The Pitman Painters, that group of artists who painted Ashington and the wider coalfield onto the map from the 1930’s to the 1980’s when boom turned to bust. The Ashington Group gave us a particular view of the town, and Narbi has given us details that they missed because, simply, they weren’t there at the time. Here are edgelands, stamp-sized areas of cultural possibility, utilitarian observations that, for me, add up to albums of the soul of a place. If towns like these are unregarded then we must regard them, as Narbi has. Everything is here; we just have to take notice of it.



Jonathan Hooper, Cardigan Road, Hyde Park III.
Oil on board. 46 x 61cm

Jonathan Hooper's Leeds is a Leeds of windows and doors and walls. It's the kind of Leeds I walk through from the railway station to Headingley to watch the cricket. There's a red brick terrace on Cardigan Road that is, on one level, anonymous. Or should I say it is anonymous in a way that Buckingham Palace isn't anonymous. It's part of a street. It's a tranche of a suburb. It's a bit of a city. And yet the early stroller in me can't help but use them as settings for drama, for laughter and tears, for shouting and a kind of bespoke joy that fits the walls perfectly. These paintings make me want to go up to the door and knock on it and walk into the house, to slice into the lives of the people who live there. Here are promises that won't be broken; here are streets that stand and deliver.



Mandy Payne, Every Day is like Sunday. Spray paint and oil on concrete, 24 x 24cm.

Mandy Payne makes Park Hill Flats at the back of Sheffield Station available for myth; here is a utopia that still holds on to the possibilities of communal living and the idea that we can be better people if we just watch out for each other amongst the concrete. I remember years and years ago going to the junior school in Park Hill Flats to read poems and get the children to write poems and to my shame I thought they'd want to write brutalist and sharp-edged (don't cut yourself on my stanzas!) poems but of course they wrote poems about anything and everything. Like all the artists in this show, Mandy gives these 'ordinary' places an extraordinary shimmer, but she also underlines the fact that lives are lived here, that this isn't as much an architectural experiment as a map of how to live, and, given the shadows and the valleys and the sunlit peaks that the flats are built of, how to live a life performatively. In a good way, of course.



Trevor Burgess. A place to live 36.
Oil on plywood, 39 x 39cm.

Trevor Burgess is a kind of guerrilla house renovator; he plays with those reproductions of estate agent's property photographs that flap through the letterbox in free newspapers. Somehow those images are redacted, pre-loved, shadows of themselves, even though the estate agent would like them to be as perfect as jewels. Not every life is as perfect as we might want it to be, and Trevor's work reflects that. There's a bungalow in my village that has always been noticeable for the fact that it's got a vast electricity pylon in the back garden; the owners have cheerfully ignored this and have built around it; it went up for sale recently and the estate agents made a film about it which ignored the pylon and concentrated on the swimming pool. Trevor would have made a film about the pylon, or its image, and quite right too.

This exhibition teaches us how to look and how to think; it puts us on the map and asks us to find our way around. It shows us where we live and gives us time to weigh those three words and test them out. It celebrates the uncelebrated, and that's a cause for celebration. Maybe one day, if there's any kind of justice in the world, all the places here will become UNESCO World Heritage Sites and these five artists will be asked to cut the ribbon at the opening.

Until then, enjoy these places. And then celebrate your own.

Ian McMillan

SHEFFIELD

Park Hill



Vortex. Spray paint on concrete in white wooden frame, 22 x 22cm.

Mandy Payne

Streets in the Sky

In another coin-tossed life,
I walk barefoot across raw concrete
to watch sunrises copper
rooftop fragments
or gauge the weather by the grey
honeycomb cells on Talbot Street.

This petrified worm snakes
around the hillside
like a jointed toy. Its bridges link
the souls of stones, two angels
straining to kiss.

Thirteen become four, one too few
to reach the crow-fresh air or escape
the whine of appliances that hum
through concrete.

Streets in the sky, milk-float wide,
echo

Shady wells replace giddy play
whose fretted music is frozen, static
against a portrait of cloud.

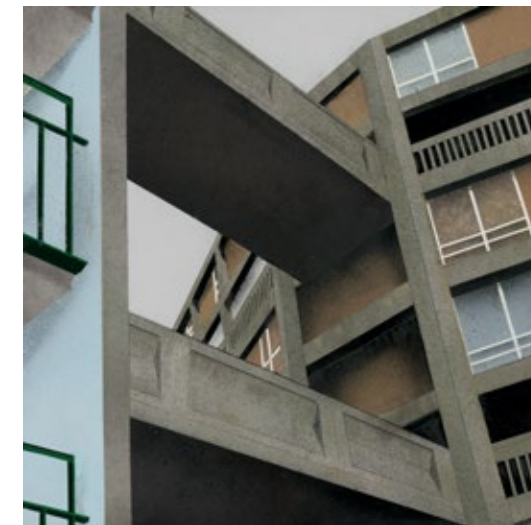
Helen Angell



Park Hill Ladies. Spray paint and oil on concrete, 20 x 20cm.



Broken Brutalism. Spray paint and oil on concrete in white wooden frame, 33 x 33cm.



Both A Lament And A Eulogy. Spray paint and oil on concrete in white wooden frame, 30 x 30cm.



Park Hill Gentlemen. Spray paint and oil on concrete, 20 x 20cm.

SHEFFIELD



Palimpsest

Just when I think I have you
tweezered to the page, you sink
indigo slick through skin,
a fading tattoo.

History seeps in hummingbird traces
and the persistence of paper. I adjust
my cuffs before the many-eyed,
scrape the page clean. Watch the digger

score the playground's surface, loosening
knots in the earth and releasing children
who run and scream and yell, dragging
their sticks across the red fencing.

Helen Angell

*Hovering Between Past and Present. Spray paint and oil
on concrete, 28.5 x 19cm.*

SHEFFIELD

New Dawn

There is perfection here, there has to be
— life's impeccable timing
replacing one soon-to-be-history moment
with another.

I squeeze down the path between too much past
and too much future.
Age allowing me access, I now arouse curiosity
not suspicion.

So many realities clamour in the early dusk.
Under the patina of modernity,
we master carrying a laptop or coffee in one hand,
an entry swipe card in the other. Hopes

as plastic as the colours on the window fronts
and the Dick Whittington hoardings
pointing 'To the City', give us free notice
that change is coming.

Helen Angell

*New Dawn Fades. Spray paint and oil
on concrete, 28.5 x 19cm.*



SHEFFIELD

LONDON

A Place to Live



A Place to Live is a series of paintings of different types of homes in London, viewed from the street. The images of the buildings are from estate agents' adverts in newspapers presenting houses for sale.

The series currently consists of over 60 paintings. The works are painted in thin oil glazes on plywood and the grained surface of the wood absorbs the paint.



A place to live L6. Oil on plywood, 67 x 122cm.



A place to live L2. Oil on plywood, 88 x 88cm.



A place to live L5. Oil on plywood, 67 x 122cm.



A place to live L3. Oil on plywood, 88 x 88cm.

Trevor Burgess

LONDON



*A place to live 42.
Oil on plywood, 39 x 39cm.*



*A place to live 56.
Oil on plywood, 39 x 39cm.*



*A place to live 31.
Oil on plywood, 33 x 38cm.*



A place to live 8. Oil on plywood, 34 x 46cm.



A place to live 49. Oil on plywood, 35 x 50cm.



*A place to live 63.
Oil on plywood, 39 x 39cm.*



*A place to live 22.
Oil on plywood, 36 x 44cm.*



*A place to live 46.
Oil on plywood, 33 x 42cm.*



A place to live 41. Oil on plywood, 37 x 61cm.



A place to live 19. Oil on plywood, 35 x 50cm.



A place to live 32. Oil on plywood, 37 x 61cm.

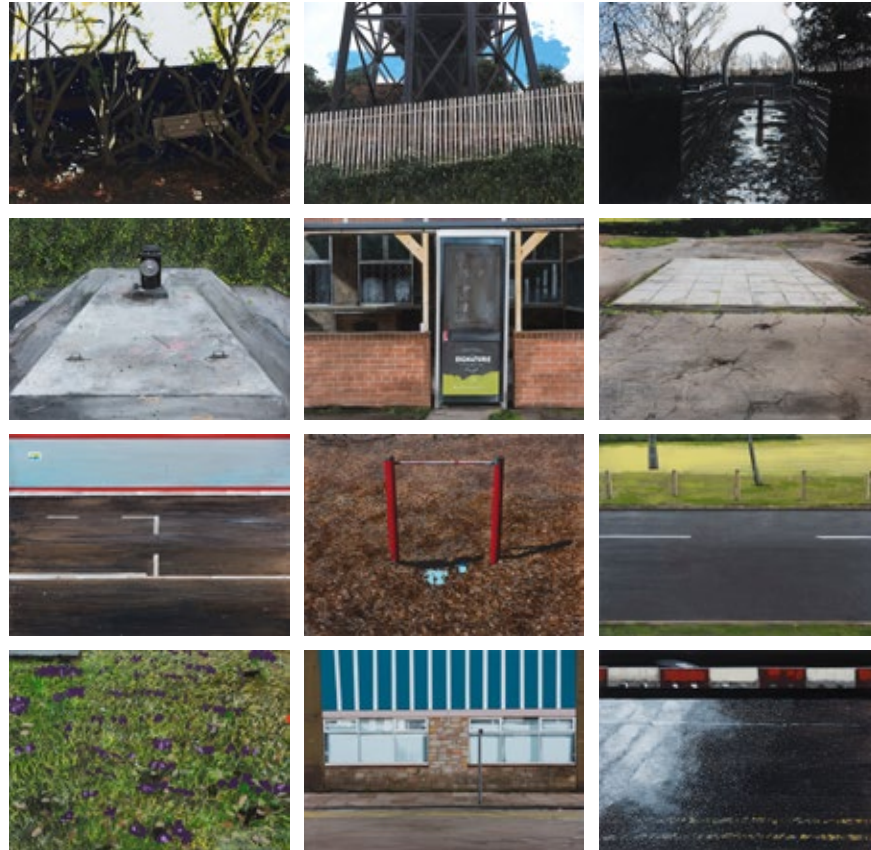


A place to live 11. Oil on plywood, 35 x 50cm.

LONDON

LONDON

ASHINGTON Northumberland



Ashington in Northumberland used to be the biggest mining village in the world. No longer. The last pit closed thirty years ago. No longer any mining, no longer a village. There's literally a hole in the centre of the town. It was also the centre of a painting tradition, The Ashington Group, also known as the Pitmen Painters.

Narbi Price started walking Ashington in 2015 before the biggest political shifts in this country since the pits were closed. This series of paintings arose through his study of The Ashington Group. They are as much, if not more, about the ghosts of Ashington as they are about the town today.

Narbi Price

*Untitled Bridge Painting (The Blacka).
Acrylic on board, 50x70cm.*



*Untitled Flowers Painting (Colliery).
Acrylic on board, 50x70cm.*



ASHINGTON



Untitled Arch Painting (QEII).
Acrylic on board, 50x70cm.

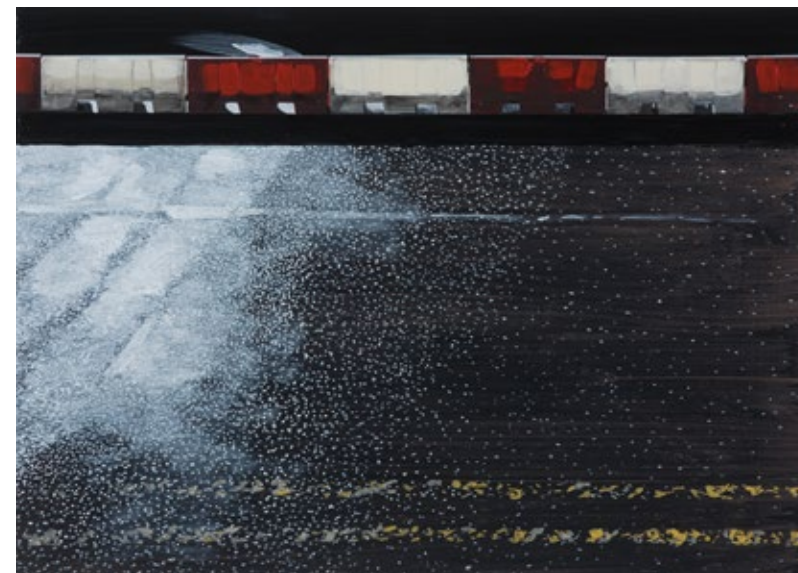


Untitled Slabs Painting (Hirst).
Acrylic on board, 50x70cm.

ASHINGTON



Untitled Allotments Painting (North Seaton).
Acrylic on board, 50x70cm.



Untitled Road Painting (Portland Park).
Acrylic on board, 50x70cm.

ASHINGTON

LEEDS

Suburban Housing



Jonathan Hooper has focused on painting his local neighbourhood in Leeds for the past twelve years. He works from photographs, memory, written notes and drawings of the subject. His experience of walking the city and revisiting places many times feeds into and forms the basis for his paintings.



Three Horseshoes, Headingley III (diptych). Oil on canvas, each 51 x 61cm.



Three Horseshoes, Headingley I & II (diptych). Oil on canvas, each 61 x 76cm.

Jonathan Hooper

LEEDS



Red-brick terrace on Cardigan Road I. Oil on canvas, 75 x 90cm.

LEEDS



Red-brick terrace on Cardigan Road V. Oil on canvas, 61 x 51cm.



Red-brick terrace on Cardigan Road IV, oil on canvas, 61 x 51cm.

LEEDS

THE HUMBERSTON FITTIES

North East Lincs.



We're all very close around here. We walk around in our dressing gowns, help with building, always a cuppa. We hut dwellers look after each other. We took that insult & used it back. Why destroy a thing of beauty?

Harriet Tarlo

Judith Tucker



Night Fitties: It's been so silent, no traffic, how it would have been, the sky bluer. Oil on linen, 120 x 160 cm.

THE HUMBERSTON FITTIES

We came for the whole Summer from Immingham. Everyone had a bridge across the dyke. We'd 8 tin buckets, we'd to traipse up and down 3 times a day to fill 'em up at the pump. We'd go cockling, picking samphire from the beds, watercress from the dyke, free-flowing then. Uncle Tom auctioned fish at Grimsby Docks - he'd 4 languages or thereabout. There he is, doing the roof repairs as usual.

Harriet Tarlo



Night Fitties: They'd have a party and everyone could go, Oil on linen, 60 x 80cm.



Night Fitties: Why destroy a thing of beauty? Oil on linen, 60 x 80cm.

THE HUMBERSTON FITTIES



Night Fitties: everyone's walking past, Oil on linen, 30 x 40cm, 2021



Night Fitties: We're too far apart to really connect, Oil on linen, 30 x 40cm, 2021

Worked for British Steel, my grandad and my dad, blood & young blood they called 'em, hardest but gentlest of men, took 13 pints on a Sunday, but loved their kids. Off to Fitties on Stop Fortnight in Robin Reliant, a massive deal for us, all the industries shut, folk dad knew from all over Yorkshire came year in year out. When we found a cockle bed, you'd have thought we struck gold. *Go on, get the emergency buckets!* No holiday for mum boiling cockles all day. Dad vacated to the Foreshore, a tear in his eye the year Elvis died. One time Nan got stuck in the sand. *Carry on, we'll get her on the way back!*

Harriet Tarlo

THE HUMBERSTON FITTIES

Exhibition National Tour

Alan Baxter Gallery, London. 5 October to 12 November 2021

The Millennium Gallery, Sheffield Museums. 15 January to 6 June 2022

Yare Gallery, Great Yarmouth. 14 October to 12 November 2022

Newcastle Contemporary Art, High Bridge Works, Newcastle upon Tyne

Angear Gallery, Lakeside Arts, Nottingham.

‘Where We Live’ is a collaborative project initiated by Trevor Burgess

Artists websites:

www.mandypayneart.co.uk

www.trevorburgess.co.uk

www.narbiprice.co.uk

<https://sites.google.com/site/jonathanmurrayhooper>

www.judithtuckerartist.com

Poems by Helen Angell are from her work inspired by brutalist and post-war landscapes. ‘Streets in the Sky’ was previously published in *Route 57: Traces Issue 16* (2020). ‘Palimpsest’ and ‘New Dawn’ are part of her work with regular concrete collaborator, Mandy Payne.

Poems by Harriet Tarlo are from her longstanding collaboration with Judith Tucker. Two were previously published in *Neverends* (Wild Pansy Press, 2018) and *Gathering Grounds* (Shearsman, 2019) alongside many other poems from this project. The third is from new archival work conducted for the ACE funded Hideaway project, 2022.

Photographic credits

Exhibition installed at the Millennium Gallery, Sheffield Museums © Chris Saunders.

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