
Ed Gold: *Other Worlds*



Information

17 June 2017 – 17 September 2017

Opening event: Friday, 16 June, 6 – 9pm

The work of Essex-based documentary photographer Ed Gold will be celebrated in a major exhibition at Firstsite, Colchester, opening 17th June 2017.

Entitled *Ed Gold: Other Worlds*, the presentation is made up of 100 photographs taken over a period spanning almost thirty years. These have been selected from Gold's personal archive, and the various bodies of work chosen represent his ongoing interest in isolated communities (both geographic and social): *Patagonia, Country Folk* (Essex, Wales & Scotland), *Afghanistan Bed Spaces, Positive Futures* and *Nowitna*.

In the spirit of Walker Evans and James Agee's ground-breaking text and photo work, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 1941, Gold embeds himself in the communities he records, living with them for up to three years, sharing their experiences and forming close relationships with those he portrays.

For example, between 2010 and 2011 Gold lived amongst the soldiers of the Second Battalion Parachute Regiment (2 Para), both at their base in Colchester and on operational duty in Afghanistan. During this time, Gold wore a uniform and integrated fully with the troops, carrying his camera instead of a weapon while accompanying the soldiers on daily patrols, and capturing images that would later form the series *Afghanistan Bed Spaces* (2011).

The *Nowitna* series records Gold's ongoing experiences living in Alaska's Arctic region, where he has resided intermittently for more than eight years from 2009. Earlier this year he spent three weeks with the Atchley family, who live in one of the remotest parts of the state. Gold has since described the difficulties he experienced, and to help him cope with those he wrote 90,000 words documenting his daily life. A selection of these photographs and accompanying diary entries will be displayed at Firstsite.

The written word is an integral component of Gold's photographic practice. He notes conversations he has in the community, occasionally using a recording device to capture the words more fully. He also keeps a diary of his own daily reflections. At the end of a project, this writing is condensed and appears alongside each of the photographs, offering a further narrative and a deeper, more intimate engagement with the subjects than the images alone can provide.

The exhibition's first work, a single photograph from the *Patagonia* series taken in 2008, is illustrative. A vast print stretching the height of the gallery's six-metre wall, it depicts a man standing in a derelict but lived-in dwelling, in front of an open fireplace. In the mid-1800s, Welsh nationalists began to migrate to the province of Chubut, in Patagonia, Argentina, in order to protect their native Welsh culture and language. The man depicted is a current resident of this Welsh enclave in South America, with the portrait which rests upon the mantelpiece providing a link to this settlement's committed ancestors. Exhibited beside this work is an audio soundtrack of the interviews Gold conducted with members of the Welsh Patagonian community, in both Welsh and Castellano. Similarly, there is a soundtrack accompanying the Atchley family images. A copy of the book on the *Patagonia* series published by the internationally-renowned book designer and typographer, David Jury, is also on display.

Country Folk (Essex, Wales & Scotland) is an amalgamation of three bodies of work, and includes some of Gold's earliest photographs – the Essex images that date from 1988. Many of these depict men and women who work on the land – as Gold did himself while taking these photos – capturing a way of life little changed in 100 years. Meanwhile, the *Positive Futures* series reveal people and communities that are 'off-grid', celebrating those who have eschewed conventional society.

Says Firstsite Director, Sally Shaw: '*Ultimately, Ed is exploring human nature at a time when digital technology and media – particularly photography – are bringing the world closer, yet are also creating new forms of isolation, and at times, unrest. Ed's particular skill is in creating a window through which we can glimpse moments of intimacy in the lives of the communities he has worked with. In simply saying 'This is what life is like here...' he allows us to ask some fundamental questions such as what is 'usual' and 'unusual', what is 'everyday' and 'extraordinary'. The answers, of course, depend entirely on your own particular viewpoint.*

**For more information, please contact
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Notes to Editors:

About Ed Gold (b.1969, London):

A self-taught photographer, Ed Gold began documenting people and communities whilst working as a farm labourer in Essex in the 1980s. He holds a B/TEC National Diploma in Graphic Design from the Colchester Institute, a BA Hons in Design from the Colchester Institute, and an MA in Interactive Multimedia from Central Saint Martins. In 2001, Gold began taking photographs full-time, and has since been 'homeless,' choosing to forego a home base and instead live amongst some of the most unique and isolated societies on the planet. Communities that Gold has documented include Welsh Patagonians, the Inuit and Athabaskan peoples, a family that lives in the middle of the Alaskan wilderness, and the British and American military. His work has often featured on the BBC.

Solo exhibitions include: *Essex Country Folk*, Colchester Institute, Colchester, 1997; *Best of Wales*, The Gallery, London, 2004; *Wales Steaming Ahead*, Bangor Museum, North Wales, 2004; *Gente del Valle*, Concejo Deliberante, Gaiman, Chubut, Argentina, 2006; *Antiguos Hogares*, Museo Municipal de Artes Visuales, Trelew, Argentina, 2008; and *People: Pashtuns & Paras*, Essex Records Office, Chelmsford, 2011. Gold was also part of the *Welsh Patagonia Exhibition* at the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival in Washington D.C., USA, in 2009.

Selected publications include: *Patagonia: Byd Arall / Otro Mundo / Another World* (2012); *Wales: Portrait of an Alaska Village* (2014); *Welsh Patagonia* (2016).

About Firstsite:

Firstsite is a public contemporary art gallery in Colchester, Essex. Over the last fifteen years it has gained a strong reputation, presenting ambitious work to new audiences in the East of England and beyond. Situated in Colchester's 'cultural quarter,' the present building was designed by Uruguayan architect Rafael Viñoly, and opened in 2011. Firstsite is a partner of Plus Tate, which uses Tate's resources to contribute to a network of arts organisations across the country, and to increase public access to the national collection of British and international modern and contemporary art.

Firstsite opening hours:
Monday – Sunday, 10am – 5pm

Please visit the Firstsite website for more
information: www.firstsite.uk

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