

Lightboxes and Lettering: new exhibition marks importance **of east London's print industry**

- Unseen archive material and photographs from print's heyday
- New oral histories from east London print workers
- Project supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund



Image: © Rob Harris, courtesy Nunnery Gallery

Lightboxes and Lettering 17 January – 29 March 2020, Nunnery Gallery, London E3

A new exhibition at the Nunnery Gallery in Bow, east London, celebrates the fascinating and important history of **London's** print industry.

Lightboxes and Lettering by Rendezvous Projects is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the show tells the story of the ever-changing face of the print industry throughout the 20th century. The exhibition focuses on printers and print shops in the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Waltham Forest, giving the public a chance to view historic photographs and printed items, many of which have never been seen before. The accompanying event programme gives visitors a chance to learn more about specific historic presses and to try printing themselves, using original printing presses which will be installed in the gallery as part of the exhibition.

The exhibition collects images of iconic east London print shop fronts, factory floors and machinery alongside print workers' memories, which are told through a new collection of oral histories. These were collected by the Rendezvous Projects team alongside a number of enthusiastic local volunteers, who also received free training in interviewing techniques and oral history collecting.

Lightboxes and Lettering utilises archive material and newly discovered items from print companies, co-ops and radical presses across east London. The absorbing exhibition documents changes in the print industry throughout the 20th century, exploring the important role east London played and the influences of new and digital technologies.

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Forgotten, often intricate techniques are celebrated, with beautiful examples of print on display. These include booklets, catalogues, packaging and colourful posters that advertise anything from political events to music nights across east London. There is also a selection of prints and publications made by participants in workshops that Rendezvous Projects ran to demonstrate the techniques and equipment of the past.

"The print trade is such a rich part of east London's industrial history," says Lucy Harrison, Project Leader. "The technology of print, design aspects and the finished products all provide a fascinating insight into the evolution of the print industry in the area, from closed-shop union print-works to radical presses and commercial, artists' or community print shops."

Presented in the heart of the East End, **the show will run at Bow Arts' Nunnery Gallery**, opposite Bow Church from 17 January to 29 March 2020. The organisers hope that this will attract many former-print workers and art lovers to view the work and reflect on this slice of our capital's history. The exhibition is aimed at anyone with an enthusiasm for print, design or local history, although it should also attract those with interest in photography, trades union history or the changing face of east London.

"It is important that the history of the print industry in east London is recognised and recorded," says Peter Wynn, a former-owner of the Malvern Press, which operated in Dalston from 1953 to 2003. "The advent of the printed word in England in the 15th century saw London become a major centre of print. Due to its proximity to The City, its commercial heart, East London provided a base for printers to supply products and services that supported its rapid growth and, to some extent, still does."

Events | for more info on events and full listings visit bowarts.org/whats-on

Drop-in printing for all ages, Sun 2 Feb, 11am-1pm
Print your own bookmark or postcard on an Adana press using letterpress type. Family friendly.

Letterpress Printing Workshop, Thurs 6 Feb, 6.30-8.30pm
Join Jessica Jane Charleston, founder of Make Mud Press, to make a 5-stitch pamphlet book, learning to print the cover in original letterpress type on the Adana press.

Behind the Scenes at Aldgate Press, Wed 12 Feb, 2.30-4pm
Exclusive guided walk to Aldgate Press, established in 1981 as the printers for anarchist publishers Freedom Press, this working press is still a workers' co-operative.

Tour of Counter Press, Sat 22 Feb, 2.30-3.30pm
Tour of Counter Press, a typographic design studio and letterpress workshop based in local Bow Arts studios, **5 minutes' walk from the gallery and exhibition.**

Power of Print Talk, Thurs 5 March, 7-9pm
Jess Baines will explore the variety of east London's alternative printing initiatives from the 1970-90s, putting these often radical and social movements into a wider cultural and political context.

Letterpress Printing Workshop, Tues 10 March, 6.30-8.30
Join Russell Frost - founder of east London-based Hooksmith Press - for a drop-in printing workshop, using iconic printed symbols from Russell's collection.

61 Years of Malvern Press, Sat 14 March, 2.30-4pm
Les Wynn founded Malvern Press in Hackney in 1953, and will share his memories of the history of the business along with his son Peter, showing celebrated printed samples alongside.

Lino Printing Workshop, Sat 21 March, 2-5pm
Learn to create relief prints inspired by the historic studios, workshops and spaces of east London in this lino printing workshop led by Jamie Temple.

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Notes to editors

Exhibition: Lightboxes & Lettering

Dates: 17 January – 29 March 2020

Venue: Nunnery Gallery, Bow Arts, 183 Bow Road, London E3 2SJ. Tues-Sun, 10am to 5pm, free entry

About Rendezvous Projects

Rendezvous Projects is a Community Interest Company based in Waltham Forest, developing creative ways of exploring social history and providing opportunities for communities to take part in the work. The organisation is run by Iain Aitch, Rosa Ainley, Katherine Green, Lucy Harrison and Michael Needham.

Lightboxes and Lettering has been made possible with a £58,200 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project focuses on the pre-digital era of printing in Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest and the experiences of people involved in the industry.

<http://www.lightboxeslettering.com/>
www.rendezvousprojects.org.uk

About Bow Arts

Bow Arts is an arts education charity that provides affordable creative workspaces for over 500 emerging artists. Alongside this, Bow Arts manages one of the country's most exciting education programmes, which takes world-class artists into 90 schools to improve the lives and learning of children and young people. Bow Arts runs the Nunnery Gallery, a public gallery that supports a diverse range of high quality exhibitions and events as well as the delivery of a public arts programme. Established in 1995, **Bow Arts holds an important place in east London which is fast becoming known as London's Artist Quarter.**

www.bowarts.org | [www.twitter.com/BowArts](https://twitter.com/BowArts) | www.facebook.com/bowarts

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