

Eyes of the streets

Vendors at Street Roots sister paper in Scotland embark to document their lives

BY RICHARD FLYNN
STREET NEWS SERVICE

An unlikely exhibit by photographers from Glasgow, Scotland's streets is on display for fans of urban imagery and gritty reality from a group of photographers who live with both. Street Roots was there for the show's unveiling as part of the 16th Annual Conference of the International Network of Street Papers, which is headquartered in Glasgow.

The exhibition is the result of a week-long photography workshop, which saw four homeless vendors of Scotland's Big Issue street paper, a sister paper to Street Roots, being coached on photography by world-renowned photojournalist David Burnett and his Photographers For Hope team.

Photographers For Hope is a group committed to using their medium to inspire positive social change, and collaborate with groups who work to improve the lives of poor and disenfranchised communities around the world.

The vendors, who had no prior experience using cameras, were encouraged to capture their lives through photography.

Pictures displayed in the exhibition include shots of homeless dwellings where they had previously spent the night, as well as self-portraits and photographs of their friends. Despite being new to photography, the vendors' work was challenging and evocative, and even in the stark representation of homelessness in Glasgow, the resounding message of the vendors' photography was one of hope.

When describing his visits to snap photos of troubled places from his past, vendor Daniel said: "It was just rewarding to go there and say, 'That's not part of my life anymore. ... It's an amazing feeling, it was amazing working with them, and it's just been one of the best experiences of my life. Coming here tonight has been really memorable, meeting so many people from so many places and countries. It's been great.'"

Perhaps more so than the pictures themselves, one of the most powerful aspects of the evening was the very clear friendships that have formed between the vendors and their Photographer For Hope coaches. Vendor Malky, who described the overwhelming feeling of seeing his photography on display as he entered the exhibition, spoke fondly of his time working with David Burnett and admitted he was "a wee bit sad that the team are leaving."

Anna Wang, one of the photographers who was involved in the project, said her time with the vendors was "a great opportunity and a great privilege."

See the entire collection at photographersforhope.org



PHOTO BY JOAN

Above, a self-portrait by Joan, who was left nearly entirely blinded by a car accident four years ago. Below, Joan on a shoot.



PHOTO BY DAVID BURNETT



PHOTO BY DANIEL

Daniel shot under bridges, above, showing the telltale signs of where people were living.

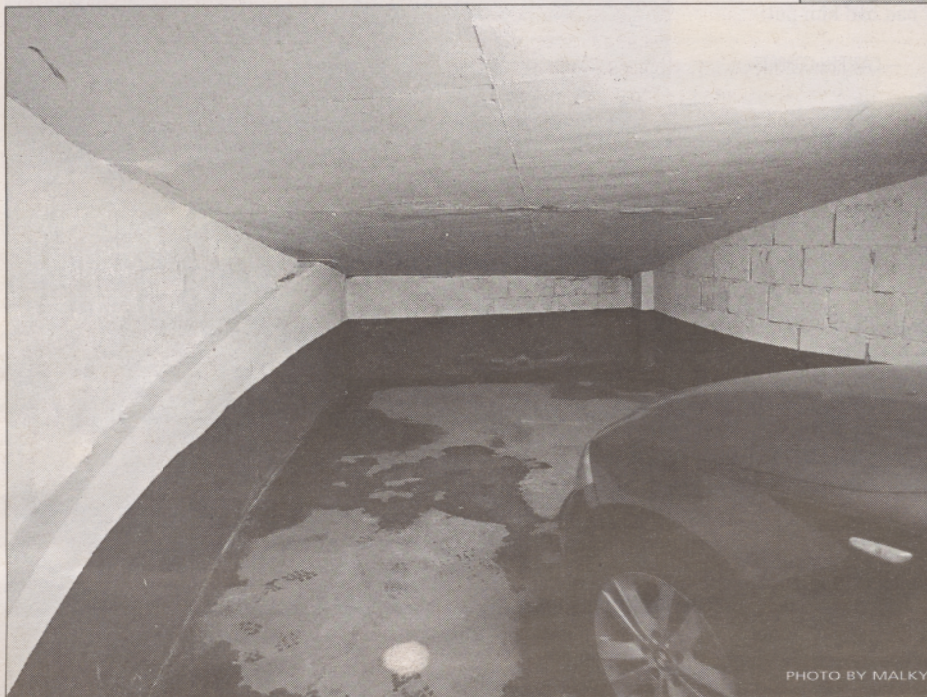


PHOTO BY MALKY

Left, Malky chronicled the places he has slept, including this wet corner of a garage. At right, Malky on a shoot.



PHOTO BY SABASTIAN STANGE