



fourcorners

Press release: for immediate release

### Radical 50s Soho coffee house rediscovered



© Roger Mayne Archive / Mary Evans Picture Library

Four Corners is delighted to announce the *Partisan Coffee House* exhibition, which launches on 5th May 2017 at Four Corners Gallery, Bethnal Green.

The exhibition tells the fascinating, but little-known story of the Partisan Coffee House, founded by radical historian Raphael Samuel, cultural theorist Stuart Hall and others. It includes a compelling series of previously unseen photographs by renowned documentary photographer Roger Mayne, alongside printed materials, film clips, oral histories, and an accompanying public talks programme.

Founded in Carlisle Street Soho in 1958, the Partisan was the spiritual home of the British New Left. With a menu that included Borscht, Viennese coffee and 'Whitechapel cheesecake', it aimed to recreate the culture of a *mitteleuropa* bohemian cafe in the centre of trendy Soho, and was known as 'London's first anti-espresso bar'. Closely linked with the radical journal *Universities and Left Review* (later *New Left Review*), the Partisan embraced the burning political and cultural issues of the day, from the Aldermaston anti-nuclear marches to the politics of the novel. In its short existence it staged debates, film screenings, art exhibitions, skiffle and folk music nights which drew in leading writers, artists and intellectuals including Doris Lessing, Raymond Williams, John Berger, Eric Hobsbawm, Karel Reisz and Lindsey Anderson.

Historian Mike Berlin based at Birkbeck, University of London and who has curated the exhibition, said: "*this largely forgotten moment in British cultural history deserves to be celebrated. The Partisan embodied a radical tradition that had a profound influence on the political counter cultures of the 1960s and 70s.*"

## Notes for editors

The *Partisan Coffee House* exhibition runs 5 May to 27 May 2017

Private View 4 May 6.30pm, RSVP essential

### Further information contact:

Mike Berlin - [m.berlin@history.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:m.berlin@history.bbk.ac.uk)

Carla Mitchell – [carla@fourcornersfilm.co.uk](mailto:carla@fourcornersfilm.co.uk)

<https://www.facebook.com/partisancoffeehouse/>

[https://twitter.com/Partisan\\_58](https://twitter.com/Partisan_58)

The exhibition is made possible with support from the Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust - <http://www.amielandmelburn.org.uk> It is delivered in partnership with Birkbeck, Bishopsgate Institute and the Raphael Samuel History Centre, with generous assistance from Laurie McDowell, Sally Jeffries, Mary Evans Picture Library, ICN and the British Film Institute.

Mike Berlin teaches history at Birkbeck, University of London. His work on the Partisan has featured in a Radio 4 documentary and at the Bergen Assembly, the Norwegian arts biennale.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00fq6nm>

The exhibition coincides with a major retrospective exhibition of photographer Roger Mayne (1929-2014) at the Photographers Gallery. <http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk/roger-mayne-4>

**Four Corners** is a learning, production and exhibition centre for film and photography, which supports practitioners at all levels alongside a cultural programme of exhibition, talks and events. <http://www.fourcornersfilm.co.uk>

**Birkbeck** is part of the world-renowned University of London, Birkbeck is a world-class research and teaching institution, based in central London. Birkbeck is London's only specialist provider of evening university study, offering part-time and full-time courses by evening study at all levels. <http://www.bbk.ac.uk>

**Bishopsgate Institute** is a cultural centre for learning. Through our library, historic collections, courses and cultural events, we enrich, entertain, and stimulate independent thought in a vibrant city environment. The Library and Archive include world-renowned collections on London history, labour and socialist history, freethought and humanism, co-operation, and protest and campaigning. <http://www.bishopsgate.org.uk>

The **Raphael Samuel History Centre** is a London-based research centre devoted to encouraging the widest possible participation in historical study and debate. We run a large programme of activities designed to foster new approaches to history and we are committed to taking history into the wider community through our educational and outreach initiatives. <http://www.raphael-samuel.org.uk>

