



New Houses. A slum clearance operation in Poplar, East London, 19th April 1951.  
© Monty Meth/Topical Press Agency/Getty Images/Hulton Archive.

## **Exhibition reveals East End's history of poor housing and homelessness**

Opening at Four Corners Gallery this month, *Conditions of Living: Home and Homelessness in London's East End* takes a visual journey from workhouses to slums, damp tower blocks to homeless shelters, exploring how photographers have represented these conditions for over a century. It sheds light on little-known histories: the tenants' rent strikes of the 1930s, post-war squatting, and 'bonfire corner', a meeting place for homeless people at Spitalfields Market for more than twenty years.

This timely exhibition draws shocking comparisons with today's housing precarity, high rents and homelessness. From Victorian slums and the first model estates, to the mass post-war council house construction and the subsequent demolition of many tower blocks, it ends with post-Thatcherite gentrification and its impact on affordable housing.

The exhibition features new work by the artist Anthony Luvera, which addresses the rise of economic segregation in recent housing developments across Tower Hamlets, a phenomenon commonly known as 'poor doors'. Also titled *Conditions of Living*, this socially

engaged artwork by Luvera is built upon extensive research into the social, political, and economic contexts behind the rise of market-driven 'affordable' housing provision and the state of social housing today, and is created in collaboration with a community forum of local residents who live in the buildings themselves. This new work builds upon Luvera's twenty-year career dedicated to working collaboratively with people who have experienced homelessness, and addressing issues of housing precarity and housing justice.

Anthony Luvera says: 'London is one of the world's last major cities still to ban the practice of allowing property developers to build 'poor doors', despite proclamations by successive governments and mayors about stopping the appalling practice. My work with people experiencing homelessness began twenty years ago in Spitalfields. To be back in Tower Hamlets creating this new work about economic segregation in housing developments and the broken social housing system feels urgent, especially at a time when the costs of living crisis has sunk its claws into the lives of ordinary working people.'

Carla Mitchell, Artistic Director at Four Corners says: 'this is a highly relevant exhibition, given the extortionate London rents which create forms of social cleansing for long-established local communities. We were inspired by Four Corners' own building, which was a Salvation Army working men's hostel.'

**- Ends-**

### **Notes to editors**

*Conditions of Living: Home and Homelessness in London's East End*

**Exhibition private view:** Thursday 29 June 2023, 6.30-8.30pm

30 June – 2 September 2023

Free admission. Opening hours 11am-6pm Tues - Sat, until 8pm Thurs.

Four Corners

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[Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)

## **The Photographers**

The exhibition features work by Katalin Arkell, Peter Arkell, Cyril Arapoff, Chris Bethell, A.R. Coster, Firmin, John Galt, David Granick, Bert Hardy, Brian Harris, Hawkins, Nick Hedges, David Hoffman, Tom Learmonth, Steve Lewis, Jack London, Marketa Luskacova, Anthony Luvera, MacGregor, Monty Meth, Douglas Miller, Moyra Peralta, Ray Rising, Reg Sayers, Andrew Scott, Alex Slotzkin, Norah Smyth, Humphrey Spender, Andrew Testa, Paul Trevor, Edith Tudor-Hart and other unknown photographers.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Events**

A series of talks and screenings will discuss the work in the context of campaigns for housing justice and political change. See further information [here](#).

**Anthony Luvera** is an Australian artist, writer, and educator. His work has been exhibited widely including at Tate Liverpool, The Gallery at Foyles, the British Museum, Art on the Underground, National Portrait Gallery, Belfast Exposed Photography, Australian Centre for Photography, PhotoIreland, Malmö Fotobiennial, Goa International Photography Festival, and Les Rencontres D'Arles Photographie. He has written for Photography and Culture, Visual Studies, Photoworks, Source, and Photographies. Anthony is Associate Professor of Photography in the Centre for Arts, Memory and Communities at Coventry University, and is the editor of *Photography For Whom?*, a periodical about socially engaged photography.

## **Four Corners**

We are a cultural centre for film and photography, based in East London for fifty years. Our exhibitions explore unknown social histories that might not otherwise be told.

## **Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives**

THLHLA holds outstanding resources for the study of the history of London's East End. Run by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, collections cover the areas of Bethnal Green, Poplar and Stepney. Explore the changing landscape and lived experiences of individuals and communities in Tower Hamlets through original documents, images and reference books.

## **About Arts Council England**

Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives.

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