CARDIFF INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF PHOTOGRAPHY **2017**

GWYL O FFOTOGRAFFIAETH RHYNGWLADOL CAERDYDD **2017**

REVOLUTION

–Diffusion EXTRA

IN SEARCH OF SPACE

Malcolm Dickson

John Hopkins (1937 – 2015) was a central figure in the English counter culture of the 60s and a key protagonist in what was to become the video culture of the 70s and 80s. He made iconic images of the known and the unknown. The Beatles and The Stones, the British jazz scene and New York avant-garde, including jazz giants like Roland Kirk, Archie Shepp and John Coltrane; beat poets at the seminal poetry convention at the Albert Halls in 1965 – Ginsberg, Burroughs, Corso, Trocchi, Adrian Mitchell; as well as the political figures and events that characterized those times of awakening and expansion – Bertrand Russell, Aldermaston Peace March, Anti-Racist demonstrations, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

From his early days selling his images in Fleet Street, and his work for Peace News and CND, Hopkins engaged with the much larger zeitgeist of the time, its counterculture. Joe Boyd refers to this 'as a sub-culture of drugs, radical politics and music built around the International Times, Indica Bookshop, Oz magazine, UFO, the London Free School, Release and the Arts Lab'[1].

John Hopkins, or 'Hoppy' as he came to be known was originally a reactor physicist, and in the early sixties became a photojournalist, joined CND and Centre 42; early organiser of Pink Floyd and Soft Machine concerts, founder member of International Times and the UFO club – Hoppy was later to take that activism into video with the aim of giving a voice to the disenfranchised through access to media, education and learning. In 1966 Hoppy put down the camera as a tool for recording to participate more fully as a cultural activist:

"I put my camera down because there was a lot of other stuff going on. I had to make a choice and that was accelerated by the fact that I got thoroughly fed up working for the press barons, where I realised I was

a small cog in a big capitalist machine. I didn't have any choice in the agenda of what I was doing when I was working for them. It was much more exciting to do cultural stuff in the underground so in order to get on with the promotions and that sort of thing; I didn't have any time to take photos. Unfortunately, soon after that I got busted and I landed up in jail for a few months and when I came out of jail the situation was quite different and I didn't feel inclined to take any photographs. I got married, I went abroad, I did some other stuff and I had to sort of shake off the prison dust."[2]

Predating the British manifestations of the Free University, Hoppy was involved in the London Free School which focused on the Notting Hill area of the city with its diverse cultural and class communities, having a high concentration of West Indian, Irish and Polish immigrants. LFS offered free classes in photography, French and politics and also gave free advice to members of the community around housing issues, how to claim unpaid benefits, and also in ways to empower people to challenge the criminal justice system.

Through a series of benefit gigs, Hoppy also helped launch the career of Pink Floyd, one of the first English psychedelic pop-groups. In early 1967 he opened the UFO club with Joe Boyd. 'A number of inventive artists staged happenings at UFO. The Exploding Galaxy, a particularly Goonish dance-troupe run by David Medalla ... and The People Show, a theatre group who combine techniques from music hall, happening, straight drama, cabaret, funhouse and children's party, were amongst those who performed at UFO. All this juxtaposed with underground movies, old silent comedies and Mark Boyle's perpetually changing lights created an atmosphere in which young people could relax quietly or create frenetically.'[3]

In 1967, Jim Haynes, an American, set up The Arts Lab in London, an experimental cultural centre combining cinema, gallery, tea room, information resource, music, books, and a theatre. The London Free School and the Arts Lab are early structural models for learning and creativity. The former was about empowering those without a voice, and the latter was about the synthesis of different art forms that later become known and funded as 'Arts Centres'.

Following several months in prison for cannabis possession in which the judge branded him a 'pest to society', Hoppy set up BIT information service then Fantasy Factory as part of a larger initiative TVX. With these endeavours, Hoppy and his associates were key to the early growth of the social uses of video through community action and development.[4] 'It was the idea of controlling the means of production and being able to do something to amplify one's own community of interests' said Sue Hall, Hoppy's long-time collaborator, in their Rewind interview[5]. In his editorial for the Studio International issue on video in 1976, Richard Cork quoted Hall and Hopkins' assertion

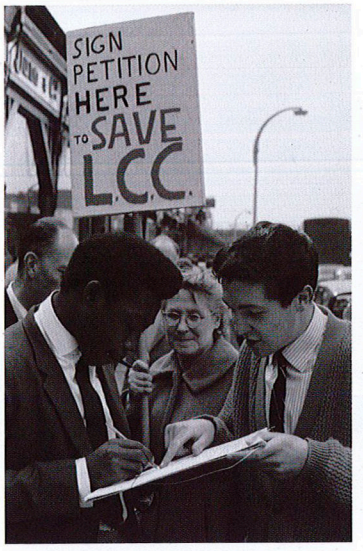
that 'we see video primarily as a communications medium which has an "aesthetic" or "expressive" component (or subset); and they ask the video artist to consider the questions "shouldn't the democratization of culture, and in our case the liberation of communications technology for public access, be an integral part of our actual art activity?"'[6].

The critical blend of medium awareness and social democratisation was to characterise a philosophical tenet of the video workshop movement that blossomed in the UK in the late 70s and 80s. The continuity throughout Hoppy's activity and which serves to guide us is the deeply held allegiance to humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought. This takes us full circle back to the unique photographic record that Hoppy made. Joe Boyd comments:

'The colourful ferment of the 'underground' years grew out of a comparatively un-chronicled period where music, politics and a racial and class revolution combined to provide the soil in which Hoppy's revolution flourished. Without setting out purposefully to document the 1960-65 era, Hoppy the photographer has nonetheless provided us with images that tell stories of that time and of particular places he knows so well and that proved to be the cradle of what came later.' [7]

Whilst some of his images have become iconic, there have been very few public exhibitions of his work – in 2000 at The Photographers Gallery organised by Addie Vassie, who had been introduced to his work by a friend of Hoppy's and therefore brought this work to public awareness; two larger exhibitions at Idea Generation ('Against Tyranny', London, 2009) and Street Level Photoworks ('Taking Liberties', Glasgow, 2009), and a smaller representation at Brighton Photography Biennial ('Freedom is a Career', 2012). The title of that Glasgow 'retrospective' 'Taking Liberties' in 2009 has been retained as a way of paying tribute to a project which Hoppy worked very closely on with myself. A further outing of a selection of the work from that show took place at Dunoon Burgh Halls in Argyll and Bute in 2014, by the Holy Loch, a place familiar to Hoppy from his CND days. For various practical reasons and failing health, Hoppy was unable to make it to that show.

Finding an appropriate platform to bring his work to a wider public again gained greater importance since his passing in 2015. Since then, the Estate of the photographer has been attentively archiving his work all over again, a process involving the rescanning of thousands of negatives. The exhibition at Diffusion is newly curated and includes a great many works which have not been seen before in a public setting, all printed from new scans from those original negatives. This is part of a journey which will ensure that this period of time is chronicled to a greater degree than had been previously and that opportunities for Hoppy's work to function as an active resource 'in perpetuity' is amplified.



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Roedd John Hopkins (1937 - 2015) yn ffigwr canolog yng ngwrth-ddiwylliant Saesnig y 60au ac yn brif gymeriad yn beth oedd i ddod yn ddiwylliant fidio y 70au a'r 80au. Fe grëodd ddelweddau eiconig o'r gwybyddus a'r anhysbys. Y Beatles, a'r Stones, y byd jazz Prydeinig a'r rhagflaenwyr yn Efrog Newydd, yn cynnwys y cewri jazz megis Roland Kirk, Archie Shepp a John Coltrane; fe guron nhw feirdd yng nghynhadledd arloesol barddoniaeth yn Neuadd Albert yn 1965 - Ginsberg, Burroughs, Corso, Trocchi, Adrian Mitchell; yn ogystal â ffigyrau gwleidyddol a digwyddiadau a oedd wedi cymeriadu y cyfnodau hynny o ddeffro ac ehangu - Bertrand Russell, Ymdaith Heddwch Aldermaston, ardystiadau Gwrth-Hiliol, Martin Luther King a Malcolm X.

O'i ddyddiau cynnar yn gwerthu ei ddelweddau ar Stryd Fleet, a'i waith i Newyddion Heddwch a CND, ymgysylltodd Hopkins gydag ysbryd ehangach yr oes, ei wrth-ddiwylliant. Cyfeiriodd Joe Boyd at hyn fel 'ei is-ddiwylliant o gyffuriau, gwleidyddiaeth radical a cherddoriaeth wedi'i adeiladu o gwmpas y Times Rhyngwladol, Siop Lyfrau Indica, cylchgrawn Oz, UFO, Ysgol Rhydd Llundain, Release a'r Lab Celf'.

Ffisegydd adweithiol oedd John Hopkins yn wreiddiol, neu 'Hoppy' fel y daeth i gael ei adnabod, ac yn y chwedegau cynnar daeth yn ffotonewyddiadurwr, gan ymuno â CND a Chanolfan 42; yn drefnydd cynnar i gyngherddau `Pink Floyd a Soft Machine, aelod gwreiddiol o'r Times Rhyngwladol a chlwb yr UFO - cymerodd Hoppy y gweithredu hyn i mewn i fidio gyda'r bwriad o roi llais i'r difreintiedig drwy iddynt gael ffordd i mewn i'r cyfryngau, addysg a dysgu. yn 1966 rhoddodd Hoppy ei gamera i lawr fel teclyn recordio a chyfranogi'n gyflawn fel gweithredwr diwylliannol.

"Rhoddais fy nghamera i lawr oherwydd 'roedd 'na lot o stwff yn mynd ymlaen. 'Roedd rhaid imi wneud dewis ac 'roedd hynny yn cael ei gyflymu gan y ffaith mod i wedi diflasu yn hollol yn gweithio i farwniaid y wasg, pan y sylweddolais fy mod yn gog bach mewn peiriant cyfalafol mawr. 'Doedd gen i ddim dewis o gwbl yn agenda beth o'n i'n ei wneud pan ron i'n gweithio iddyn nhw. 'Roedd hi llawer mwy cyffrous i wneud stwff diwylliannol tanddaearol er mwyn bwrw 'mlaen gyda hyrwyddo a phethau felly; 'doedd gen i ddim amser o gwbl i gymryd lluniau. Yn anffodus, yn fuan ar ôl hynny fe ges fy nal a chefais fy hun yn y carchar am 'chydig o fisoedd a phan y dois allan o'r carchar 'roedd y sefyllfa yn dra gwahanol a 'don i ddim yn teimlo fel tynnu lluniau. Fe briodais, fe es dramor, fe wnes peth stwff arall ac 'roedd rhaid imi ysgwyd i ffwrdd fel pe tai llwch y carchar."

Cyn yr amlygiadau Prydeinig o'r Brifysgol Rhydd, 'roedd Hoppy yn rhan o'r 'London Free School' a oedd yn ffocysu ar ardal Notting Hill o'r ddinas gyda'i ddiwylliant a chymunedau dosbarthiol amrywiol, a'r crynodiad uchel o bobl Indianaidd Gorllewinol, Gwyddelod a mewnfudwyr o Wlad Pwyl. 'Roedd LFS yn cynnig dosbarthiadau am ddim mewn ffotograffiaeth, Ffrangeg a gwleidyddiaeth ac yn rhoi cyngor am ddim i aelodau o'r gymuned ynglyn â materion cartrefu, sut oedd hawlio budd-daliadau tai heb eu talu, ac hefyd ffyrdd i rymuso pobl i herio y system cyfiawnder troseddol.

Drwy gyfres o gigs lles, bu Hoppy yn gymorth i lansio gyrfa Pink Floyd, un o'r grwpiau-pop seicadelig Saesnig cyntaf.

Yn gynnar yn 1967 agorodd y clwb UFO gyda Joe Boyd. 'Llwyfannodd nifer o artistiaid dyfeisgar ddigwyddiadau yn UFO. Yr Exploding Galaxy, trŵp-dawns arbennig o glowniog yn cael ei redeg gan David Medella....a'r The People Show, grŵp theatrig sy'n cyfuno technegau neuaddau cerddorol, digwyddiad, drama syth, cabarê, tŷ doniol a pharti plant, ymysg y rhai oedd yn perfformio yn UFO. 'Roedd hyn i gyd yn cael ei gyfosod gyda ffilmiau tanddaearol, hen gomedïau mud Roedd John Hopkins (1937 - 2015) yn ffigwr canolog yng ngwrth-ddiwylliant Saesnig y 60au ac yn brif gymeriad yn beth oedd i ddod yn ddiwylliant fidio y 70au a'r 80au. Fe grëodd ddelweddau eiconig o'r gwybyddus a'r anhysbys. Y Beatles, a'r Stones, y byd jazz Prydeinig a'r rhagflaenwyr yn Efrog Newydd, yn cynnwys y cewri jazz megis Roland Kirk, Archie Shepp a John Coltrane; fe guron nhw feirdd yng nghynhadledd arloesol barddoniaeth yn Neuadd Albert yn 1965 - Ginsberg, Burroughs, Corso, Trocchi, Adrian Mitchell; yn ogystal â ffigyrau gwleidyddol a digwyddiadau a oedd wedi cymeriadu y cyfnodau hynny o ddeffro ac ehangu - Bertrand Russell, Ymdaith Heddwch Aldermaston, ardystiadau Gwrth-Hiliol, Martin Luther King a Malcolm X.

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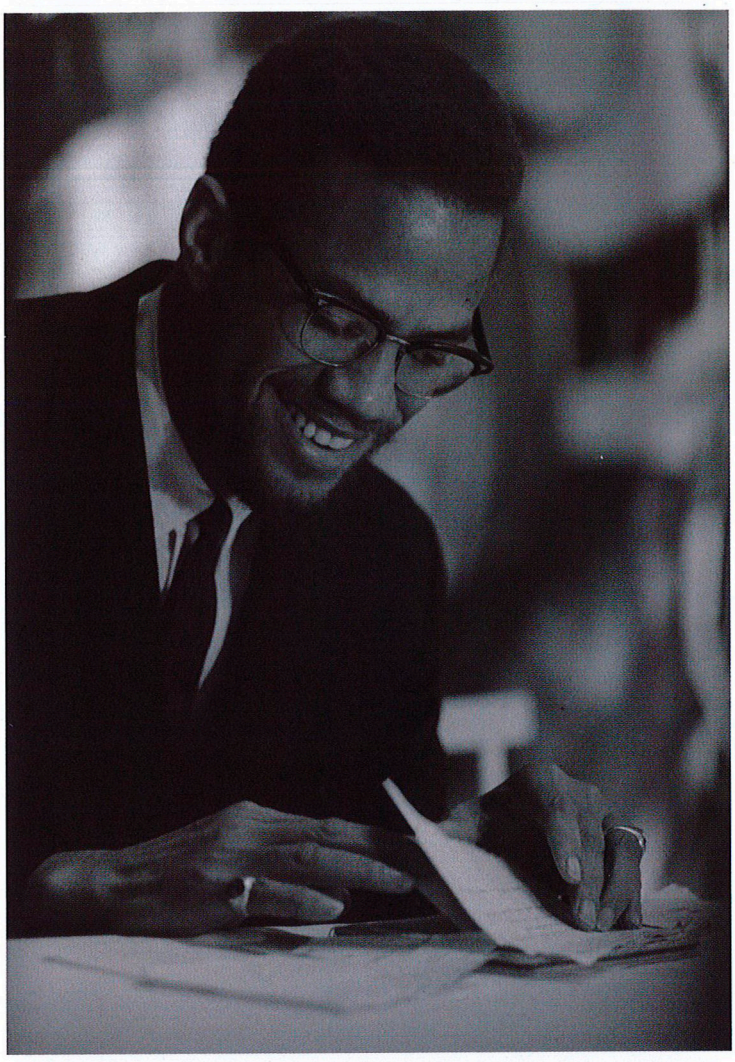

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Daeth y chwilio am blatfform addas i ddod a'i waith i ymwybyddiaeth gyhoeddus ehangach yn bwysicach o lawer ers ei ymadawiad yn 2015. Ers hynny, mae Ystád y ffotograffwr wedi bod yn ddiwyd yn eu harchifo o'i waith unwaith yn rhagor, proses sy'n cynnwys ail-sganio miloedd o negatifau. Mae'r arddangosfa yn Diffusion wedi'i guradu o'r newydd ac yn cynnwys nifer o weithiau nad ydynt wedi'u gweld o'r blaen mewn man cyhoeddus, i gyd wedi'u printio o sgans newydd o'r negatifau gwreiddiol. Mae'n rhan o daith sy'n sicrhau bod y cyfnod o amser wedi'i groniclo i raddau helaethach nag a fu o'r blaen a bod y cyfleon i waith Hoppy i fodoli fel adnodd gweithiol 'bythol' wedi'u hymchwyddo.

1 Joe Boyd 'White Bicycles', Serpent's Tail, 2006.
2 John 'Hoppy' Hopkins interview by Malcolm Dickson, July 2009.
3 Jeff Nuttall 'Bomb Culture', p200, Paladin, 1968.
4 Hopkins co-edited Video in Community Development in 1973, published by Ovum Limited, which helped articulate the role of video in community action and social change, which was based upon a number of works they had made at Fantasy Factorys experiences.'
5 Rewind: Artists Video in the 70's and 80's, interview with Sue Hall and John Hopkins, by Dr Jackie Hatfield, 17th November 2004.
6 Studio International, May/June 1976, p.286.
7 Joe Boyd, from the book 'From the Hip', 2008.

Images /Lluniau:

"Committee of 100" by John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, © 1963 ESTATE OF J V L HOPKINS

"Country Band" by John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, © 1960 ESTATE OF J V L HOPKINS

"LCC Petition" by John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, © 1962 ESTATE OF J V L HOPKINS

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"Malcolm X" by John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, © 1964 ESTATE OF J V L HOPKINS