



*Working Class Creatives presents*

# Many Hands

A Photography Exhibition in collaboration with Sunnybank Mills

Nudrat Afza, Czesław Siegieda, Kirsty Mackay, Kelly O'Brien (*in collaboration with Devon Osborne*), Ian Beesley, Amber Brown, Joanne Coates, Victor Wedderburn Jr, Sean O'Connell (*in collaboration with Flornicate*)

12th July - 5th October 2025

Sunnybank Mills, 83-85 Town St, Farsley, Pudsey LS28 5UJ



# MANY HANDS

A PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION IN COLLABORATION WITH WORKING CLASS CREATIVES  
EXPLORING CLASS, COMMUNITY AND THE CHANGING FACE OF INDUSTRY.  
12TH JULY - 5TH OCTOBER







We were invited to curate an exhibition with Sunny Bank Mills in Farsely. Many Hands is Sunny Bank Mills Gallery's first major group photography exhibition. The show explores the role that industry plays in shaping community, identity and tradition. The exhibition weaves together stories of working class people from the 70s to present, through the lens of a selection of UK based artists.

This exhibition emerges from a landscape marked by industry, its remnants, and its impacts. It is rooted in a space and in bodies that still bear the weight and solidarities of working class life - where industries, factories, mines, and steelworks have been replaced by "regeneration," often without recognition of what came before. As such, it was important for us to look at photographers across an array of generations, backgrounds, workforces, and involve the local community. Whilst curating, we were keen to activate the space, to avoid it becoming a nostalgic archive, or a romanticised snapshot of "coal and misery," instead creating an inspiring space to critically reflect on the lived realities and resistances of working class communities during and after deindustrialisation.

**Victor Wedderburn Jr's photograph in  
*Many Hands***





Czesław Siegieda





## Czesław Siegieda

Czesław Siegieda, born in a displaced persons' camp in Burton on the Wolds, grew up steeped in his parents' Polish traditions and only began learning English at age five in a Catholic school run by nuns. A passionate photographer from a young age, he studied at Trent Polytechnic School of Creative Photography in Nottingham and began documenting the lives of his family and the wider Polish community in the East Midlands. From the 1970s to the 1980s, he captured daily life, religious festivals, Polish Saturday schools, and moments of remembrance, portraying a community displaced by war and unable to return home. His black-and-white photographs, sensitive and respectful, form a poignant record of a world that has largely disappeared. In doing so, Siegieda highlights the enduring contribution of Poles who, after the war, chose to remain in Britain, working to rebuild the nation and preserve their cultural identity.





WOMAN 100

Ian Beesley



## Ian Beesley

Ian Beesley, born in Bradford in 1954, began his working life in the mills, foundries, and sewage works of the North, following in the footsteps of four generations of his family. It was while working at Esholt sewage works in 1973 that he bought his first camera and started photographing his workmates. Encouraged by them, he enrolled in the Foundation Course at Bradford Art College in 1974, later continuing his studies at Bournemouth and Poole College of Art, where he graduated with distinction in documentary and editorial photography. Beesley was struck by the gap between published images of industry and the reality he experienced as a worker, inspiring him to document working-class life from the inside. In 1978, he received a Kodak Scholarship for Social Documentation, launching his long-term project to record the decline of industrial society and its impact on local communities.



Overlooking the Bradford Works, Bradford, 1974. (Bradford Art Collection)



The first three photographs, the Bradford Works, taken in 1974, show the decline of the textile industry in Bradford.



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Nudrat Afza





## **Nudrat Afza**

Nudrat Afza, born in Rawalpindi, Pakistan in 1955, moved to Bradford in 1964 and is a self-taught photographer dedicated to documenting the everyday lives of the diverse communities around her. Since the late 1980s, she has focused on capturing strong, positive imagery, building trust with her subjects and photographing them with sensitivity and respect. One of her most celebrated works, *Girl Skipping*, was taken in the streets of Glodwick, Oldham, during a small commission to create social documentary photographs. Afza recalls the young girl persistently following her, wanting her picture taken, and later seeking permission to exhibit the photograph after realising its power. The image, with its graceful composition and spiritual quality, reflects Afza's commitment to celebrating community life in the North of England while defying stereotypes and highlighting moments of beauty and resilience.



## Victor Wedderburn Jr

Victor Wedderburn Jr arrived in the UK from Jamaica in 1971 at the age of 16, joining his Windrush Generation parents in Bradford. After being made redundant from his job at Crofts Engineers in the early 1980s, he used his redundancy pay to buy a second-hand camera and film developing kit, turning to photography to document life in the city. His photographs capture the thriving Afro-Caribbean, Asian, and English community in Manningham during the mid-1980s, particularly around the Perseverance Hotel and Young Lion café on Lumb Lane. These images show a vibrant social scene where people gathered from across the country to connect, celebrate, and share time together. Today, with the demographic of Manningham dramatically changed, Wedderburn's photographs serve as an important record of a community and way of life that has largely disappeared.







Janine Wiedel





## Janine Wiedel

Janine Wiedel is a London-based documentary photographer and visual anthropologist who has been documenting issues of social concern since the late 1960s, beginning with photographs of the Black Panther Party and student riots in California. Her work focuses on groups resisting the pressures of mainstream society, resulting in major studies, books, and exhibitions. The photographs featured in *Many Hands* are from *Vulcan's Forge*, her two-year project (1977–79) documenting industries in the West Midlands at a time of steep industrial decline. Travelling in her VW campervan, Wiedel captured workers in their environments as the region's potteries, jewellers, coal mines, and metalworks faced an uncertain future. First exhibited at The Photographers' Gallery in 1979, the work was republished as a hardback book by Bluecoat Press in 2024. Her latest book, *Life at The Fence*, on the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp (1983–84), is also published by Bluecoat Press.







## Amber Brown

Amber Brown is a Northumbrian photographer and printmaker based in the North East of England whose work explores place, home, and belonging through cultural, political, and personal narratives. Rooted in slow, ritualistic processes such as printmaking and large-format photography, her practice investigates the post-industrial landscape, ideas of Northernness, and the ways archives can speak to the present. Her project *It must be somewhere here* is a year-long survey of the Northern deep coal mining landscape, blending geographical study with a personal inquiry into ancestry as the granddaughter of two miners. Using labour-intensive techniques like photopolymer gravure, Brown documents memorials, colliery remains, and chemically altered sites, creating timeless works that reflect on labour, materiality, and ritual. Another project, *The Coming Soon Land*, examines stalled development and overgrown landscapes in an unnamed town, addressing the national housing crisis and the unsettling effects of postponed progress. Alongside her artistic practice, Amber works across arts and culture projects, programming events and fostering community engagement.











## Sean O'Connell in collaboration with Flornicate

Sean O'Connell is a Barnsley-based artist whose practice spans photography, sculpture, and collage, with a focus on traditional process-based black-and-white film photography. Drawing inspiration from local communities and landscapes, his work explores youth culture and identity with honesty, sensitivity, and a deep connection to lived experience.

He collaborates with Scarlett Armitage, founder of Flornicate, a contemporary floral design studio that combines Ikebana; the Japanese art of flower arranging with unconventional materials to challenge and redefine floral traditions.

Together, they created *The Measure of My Dreams*, an installation using found objects and materials from their shared landscape. The work pays homage to generational resilience, celebrating the beauty and character rooted in their communities, with flowers presented not as decoration but as offerings made against the odds.





As we know  
they don't  
care









## Kirsty Mackay

Kirsty Mackay is a Scottish documentary photographer, activist and filmmaker. Kirsty's research-led documentary practice highlights social issues surrounding gender, class and discrimination.

Working alongside and teaching photography to children and young people across the UK, The Magic Money Tree attaches individual's experiences with the structural, political and economic. It shows us what poverty looks like in the world's 6th richest economy.

As a working class artist, Kirsty's own experiences allow her empathy, connection and insight into the stories of the people she photographs, whilst connecting these experiences to the political and economic power structures of the British class system.





Joanne Coates



## Joanne Coates

Joanne Coates is a visual artist from the North of England whose work explores rural working-class identity, ecological change, and class politics through photography, installation, and community collaboration. Her project *The Lie of the Land* investigates the social history of the land in the North East, telling stories of gender and class that have been forgotten or overlooked. Collaborating with twelve working-class women living and working in rural and agricultural settings,

Joanne created expanded portraits through conversations, walks, photography, and writing, presenting images that reject the romanticised view of the countryside. The installation combines large-format landscapes, still lifes, portraits, sound, and video, including close-ups of women's hands at work and a full-size grouse butt, subtly pointing to rural class politics. Rooted in personal and collective narratives, Joanne's work seeks to uncover hidden histories and create space for rural working-class voices in contemporary art.







Joanne Coates



## **Kelly O'Brien in collaboration with Devon Osborne**

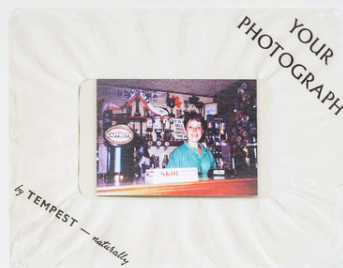
Kelly O'Brien is an artist, facilitator, researcher, and educator from Derby, raised in a working-class Irish immigrant community. Her multidisciplinary practice reconfigures documentary and photographic methods through a visual auto-ethnographic lens, exploring absence and invisibility as spaces for reimagining representation. She focuses on collaboration, co-creation, and restorative storytelling, weaving narratives of class, labour, gender, and family into multisensory experiences that challenge dominant cultural narratives. Kelly is currently undertaking a practice-based PhD at UWE Bristol, exploring working-class women's histories, particularly cleaning work, through feminist and care-driven methodologies.

Her project "Magic" Memories draws from her family archive to examine the lives of working-class women across generations. Using photographs of her mother, grandmother, and herself, Kelly reframes the family album as a record of labour rather than leisure, revealing the hidden exhaustion behind posed smiles and highlighting intergenerational cycles of work. These themes continue in works such as *Three Generations of Women's Work*, *Shape Shift*, *Work Shift*, and *Lucky*, a collaboration with artist Devon Osborne.

*Lucky* merges traditional craft with contemporary reflection, using a vintage pub mirror gilded with 23ct gold leaf and inscribed with a resonant phrase from Kelly's work, anchored in the birth year of her grandmother. The piece reflects on labour, resilience, and gratitude in service roles, while Devon's craftsmanship celebrates the value of everyday objects as vessels for memory and meaning.







Kelly O'Brien





Kelly O'Brien





## Zine Library

As part of the exhibition we had an open call to fill our Zine library with publications that complimented the show. The following artists took part in the Zine Library:

[Adele Reed](#) / [Andrew Towse](#) / [Andy Davy](#) / [Gemma Tucker](#) / [Gracie Healey](#)/ [Hayley Jane Dawson](#)/ [Jake Barradell-Smith](#)/ [Hannah Platt](#)/ [Jack Alexander King](#)/ [Jill Brown](#)/ [Lucia Scarselletta](#) / [Lynn Stinson](#) / [Marc Leighton](#) / [Mark Adams](#) / [Noah Birtle](#) / [Ralph Wallis](#) / [Ria Lake](#) / [Robert Cox](#) / [Robin Stones](#) / [Sam Batley](#) / [Spencer Hughes](#) / [Stephen Ward](#) / [Stevie Ronnie](#) / [Tessa Bunney](#) / [The Chica Coop Collective](#) / [The Elegists Collective](#) / [Victoria P Gill](#)

During the course of the exhibition we had a Drop in Zine making workshop where members of the public could use copies of some of the Mills archival images and print their own images to create a mini photo zines.







## Events

Alongside the Exhibition Sunnybank Mills hosted **engagement events** with the local community including workshops inspired by the artworks in the show.

Our **Opening Event** featured poetry by Bradford based artist, **Kirsty Taylor**, founder of Front Room Poetry and DJ set by Leeds legend and vinyl **DJ edmartin**

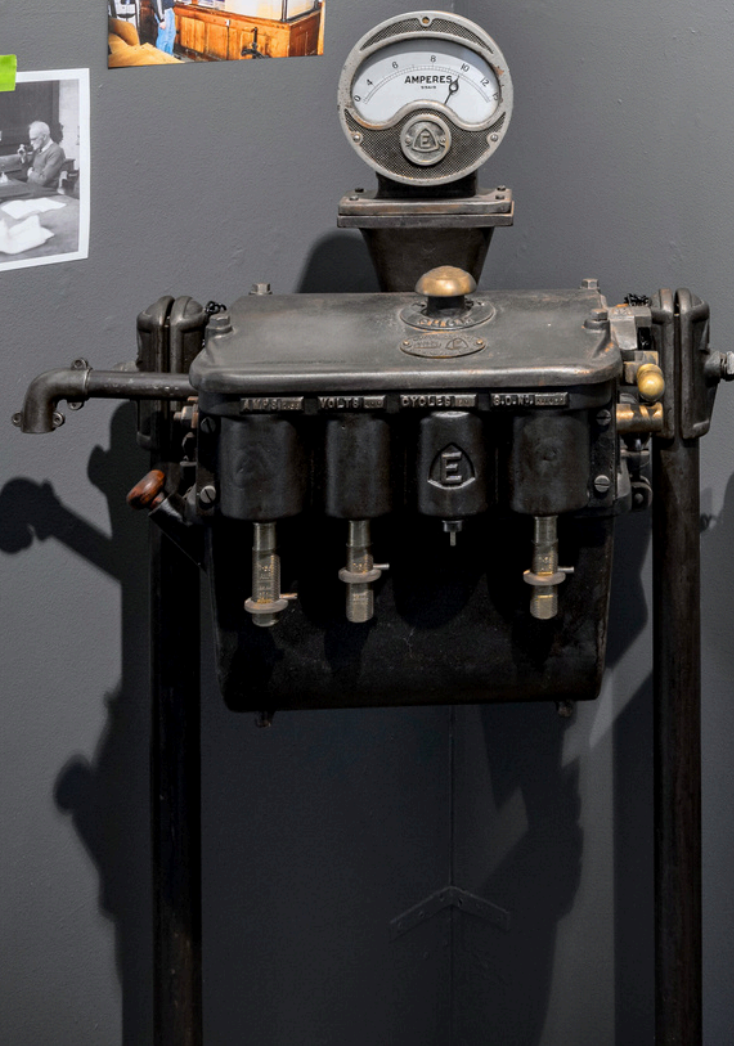
### The Last Press

Throughout the exhibition we screened a film of the Mills' final cloth pressing in 2008. Old Workers of the Mill were invited to bring in images to put in the screening room and form part of a living archive. Sunnybank Mills also hosted a **Workers Reunion Party** bringing past workers of the mill together.

### WCCD Meet up

We hosted a Working Class Creatives Database meet up featuring a performance by **Jennifer Reid** followed by a group discussion with prompts given live by author **Paul O'Kane**, based on his book *Classanoia*.

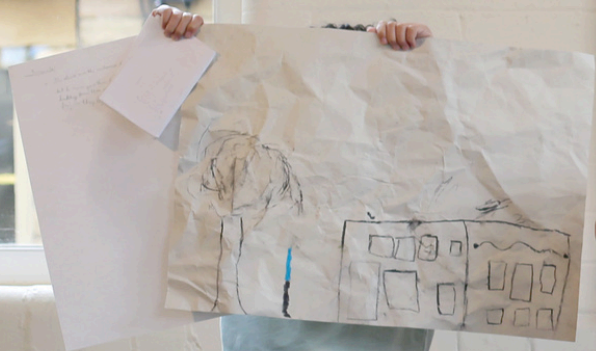
















Kirsty Taylor



Paul O'Kane







Jennifer Reid





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[Workingclasscreativesdatabase@gmail.com](mailto:Workingclasscreativesdatabase@gmail.com)