PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

Unseen
London, Paris, New York, 1930s-60s:
Photographs by Wolfgang Suschitzky, Dorothy Bohm and Neil Libbert

20 May – 27 August 2016

Ben Uri is delighted to announce its first exhibition to bring together three major twentieth-century photographers - Wolfgang Suschitzky, Dorothy Bohm and Neil Libbert - presenting their artistic responses to three great world cities across three crucial decades.

Today, London, Paris and New York are so familiar that it is hard for a modern viewer to imagine them afresh without the visual expectations fostered by art, film and advertising in the digital age. Yet when each of these photographers arrived at their respective destinations, they found cities that were strange and new to them and responded by photographing them without prejudice or expectation.

The photographs reveal that all three cities were not only places of social division and political tension, but also of beauty and magic. The exhibition includes many works never previously exhibited in the UK, and each series presents an opportunity to view an aspect of the work of a renowned photographer in real depth.

Wolfgang Suschitzky was born in Vienna in 1912 and arrived in London via Amsterdam in 1935, fleeing Nazi persecution. Suschitzky had trained as a photographer in his native Vienna and was already adept at both studio portraiture and street photography. The London he encountered was one of increasing unemployment and social upheaval and he was able to record the destitution and wealth that existed side by side. Suschitzky remained in London throughout the war, working as an assistant cameraman for the noted documentary maker Paul Rotha, while living first with his sister, photographer Edith Tudor-Hart, in Brixton before finally settling with his new wife and family in The Hampstead Garden Suburb in 1941. His photographs of the 1930s and ‘40s are imbued with tenderness and an interest in the individual. His status as a recent immigrant is evident in his fascination with the particularities of London, whilst his Socialist upbringing is reflected in his focus on the poor working people of the city. Works include Suschitzky’s best-known images of the Charing Cross Road and rarely-seen photographs, such as the disturbing War in Wax (1945).
Dorothy Bohm was born in 1924 in Königsberg, East Prussia (now Kaliningrad) and was sent by her parents to England in June 1939. After finishing her schooling in Sussex, she trained as a photographer in wartime Manchester, and eventually settled in London. She first visited Paris in 1947 and was immediately struck by the city and its inhabitants. She returned to live there for a year in 1954, creating a memorable body of work, which focuses on both the beauty of the city and its post-war poverty. Bohm’s Paris is a place of magic and sadness that references both pre-war photography and Surrealism. Her images range from abstracted architectural studies of light and form along the banks of the Seine, to an intimate portrait of a young brother and sister caught hurrying home with the shopping. Bohm suggests that, as a young photographer, she had the opportunity to photograph at close quarters – access that would have been denied her male counterparts. Very few of Bohm’s early Paris works have been previously exhibited in the UK, so this exhibition provides a rare opportunity to see this important body of work.

Neil Libbert was born in Salford in 1938. His career as a photo-journalist that brought him to London by 1961, where he worked for The Observer, The Sunday Times and New York Times. The selected images focus on his first visits to New York in the early 1960s, where he photographed across all social divides - from the affluent Upper East Side to the Harlem streets, capturing the 1964 race riots at close quarters. Libbert’s work reflects the contrasts and tensions that he encountered, and his images of Harlem provide the viewer with a rare, unbiased view of this troubled area. Libbert’s work has been little exhibited and his New York images are some of his strongest. Unseen will provide an exciting opportunity to introduce his work to a wider public.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue. This will include interviews with each of the artists by Prof Michael Berkowitz (Professor of Jewish Studies, University College, London); Zelda Cheatle (photography lecturer, curator and writer) and Dr Jessica Feather (Allen Fellow, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art).

NOTES TO EDITORS

Ben Uri Ben Uri Gallery and Museum began life as an Art Society founded by émigré Jews in Whitechapel’s ghetto in July 1915. It is the only art museum in Europe whose raison d’etre is to address universal issues of identity and migration through the visual arts. Its collection of more than 1,300 works by 390 artists from 35 countries continues to grow and principally but by no means exclusively reflects the work, lives and contribution of British and European artists of Jewish descent, interpreted within the context of 20th and 21st century art history, politics and society.

For curatorial: please contact curator Katy Barron at barron@dircon.co.uk
For hi res images: please contact Alix at admin@benuri.org
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Exhibition running 20 May – 27 August 2016

Ben Uri Gallery & Museum
108a Boundary Road, off Abbey Road
London, NW8 0RH

Opening hours:
Monday – Friday 10 - 5.30
Sat – Sun 11– 5
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Image 1
Neil Libbert
New York Subway Girl
New York, 1960
©The Artist

Image 2
Dorothy Bohm
Rue Tholoze a Montmatre
Paris, 1954
©The Artist

Image 3
Neil Libbert
Boy with Plastic Gun
New York, 1964
©The Artist

Image 4
Wolfgang Suschitzky
War in Wax, Oxford Street
London, 1945
©The Artist
Image 5
Wolfgang Suschitzky
Charing Cross Road
London, 1936
©The Artist

Image 6
Dorothy Bohm
Paris
Paris, 1947
©The Artist

Image 7
Dorothy Bohm
Twins, Villa des Tulipes
Paris, 1953
©The Artist

Image 8
Neil Libbert
Grand Central Station
New York, 1960
©The Artist

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For further information
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