Big Issue in the North photographs make the move south

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A series of photographs that have featured in the magazine *The Big Issue in the North* over the last three years are making the move south to Norfolk. The images, by Open College of the Arts (OCA) photography student John Walker, are to be the focus of a public exhibition opening on 15 February in Lowestoft's Coconut Loft Art Gallery .

When John began studying for a photography degree in 2013, The OCA was impressed by his photographs and asked his permission to send examples to the editor of *The Big Issue in the North,* who accepted them for publication. The magazine is sold on the streets of towns and cities in the north of England by people working their way out of homelessness. Each week, it features a photograph by an OCA student.

Strangers on the street and familiar landscapes

The photographs being exhibited are varied in subject and mood. Powerful personalities are presented in a selection of portraits from the series 100 Strangers, a project John saw was popular on photo-sharing site Flickr. In public places, he approached people and took very quick but high-quality portraits of them. Pete, the 55th in the series, is a well known character on Norwich market, where he sits and keeps his son company on his food stall. The picture has attracted more than 22,000 views on site Flickr since August 2014.

Some photographs depict the landscapes and traditions of East Anglia: an abstract composition created from an image of the door of a fisherman's hut on the coastal path at Orford in Suffolk, the rotting skeleton of a boat on the edge of the River Alde. Others experiment with technique – a collage created from horse chestnuts gathered after a storm and photographed on a flat-bed scanner, which captures digitalised images of objects for the purpose of creating printable art.

> OCA Principal Gareth Dent said: 'Our degrees help people to develop their own practice and bring their work to a wider audience. John has a distinctive creative voice and we are really pleased to see him build on OCA's partnership with The Big Issue in the North by exhibiting his work publicly.'

Photography degree in retirement

John Walker has been taking photographs since he was in his early teens. He began studying for a photography degree when he retired in 2013. Originally from Yorkshire, he spent most of his working life supporting people with mental health problems and addictions and struggling with homelessness.

The exhibition Issues in the Frame *is at the* Coconut Loft Art Gallery*, 8 Waterloo Road, Lowestoft, Norfolk, from 15 to 27 February. Any money raised from the sale of prints and visitor donations will be used to support homelessness charities.*

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