The Victorian East London of Charles Booth revisited

Friday 18 September, 2015

125 years after Charles Booth published *Life and Labour of the People*, his survey of poverty in London, Open College of the Arts' graduate Keith Greenough has created 21st century images of the places Booth visited. Lifting the Curtain, an exhibition of his photographs opening at Town House in Spitalfields on 15 October, reveals the modern face of the East End of the Victorian social reformer. The photographs are presented alongside texts drawn from Booth's survey describing what he witnessed.

In the late 1800s the scale of poverty in the UK's major cities was seen as a threat to society. Concerns were frequently and sensationally reported in the popular press, provoking fear amongst the general public. Booth doubted that the situation was as serious as was reported. His view was that 'East London lay hidden from view behind a curtain on which were painted terrible pictures', the mythology of the place overwhelming the reality. His survey lifted the curtain and revealed the truth.

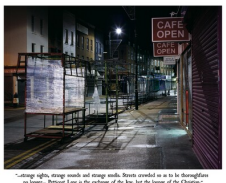
In the spirit of Charles Booth, Keith is donating the proceeds from the sale of prints, the exhibition catalogue and the *Lifting the Curtain* book to nearby East London charity Toynbee Hall. The charity's vision is 'To eradicate all forms of poverty'. Booth and his team used Toynbee Hall as the base for their survey work in the late 1800s. The centenary of Booth's death will be marked next year.

Keith Greenough commented: 'As you would expect, much has changed in East London since Victorian times but many of the social issues Booth observed back then are still with us and clearly visible today.'

The exhibition runs from 15 - 25 October at Town House, 5 Fournier Street London E1 6QE and is part of Photomonth, East London Photography Festival 2015.

Preview the exhibition at **http://www.liftingthecurtain.net**

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