

# **Photography exhibition – Edinburgh A Lost World**

***Ron O'Donnell – Edinburgh: A Lost World*** is a one floor exhibition at the City Art Centre featuring black & white and colour photographs of unseen and forgotten Edinburgh interiors by contemporary Scottish artist Ron O'Donnell.

Known today for working in the medium of constructed photography and large-scale installations, O'Donnell began his artistic career as a photographer. He was born in Stirling in 1952 and studied photography at Napier Polytechnic in Edinburgh. He later went on to work as a trainee photographer at Stirling University, taught in prison education and eventually returned to Napier University as a lecturer in photography.

O'Donnell has always had a curious and insatiable desire to document the city. Looking for unusual interiors, he would cycle around with his camera – a tool he used to access hidden spots that many people never saw. He was drawn to old fashioned, cluttered, and run-down interiors. On display for the first time are around 40 photographs from O'Donnell's impressive archive of these little-known and lost places in Edinburgh.



Ron O'Donnell, 'Gramophone Emporium, St Stephen Street', 2010.  
© the artist

The images depict prison cells, public toilets and laundrettes, as well as local shops such as greengrocers and fishmongers. They were taken during the 1970s, 1980s and three decades later. Some of the early works date from when O'Donnell was a student and many of these places are no longer in existence.

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Curator Maeve Toal said: "The artworks on display reveal the social changes that have taken place in Edinburgh, some illustrate how our behaviour as consumers has shifted dramatically over the years from local communities to global online markets. The exhibition highlights how many of these once busy and flourishing shops have now disappeared from the

city's landscape."



Ron O'Donnell, 'Laundrette, South Clerk Street', 1978. (C) the artist

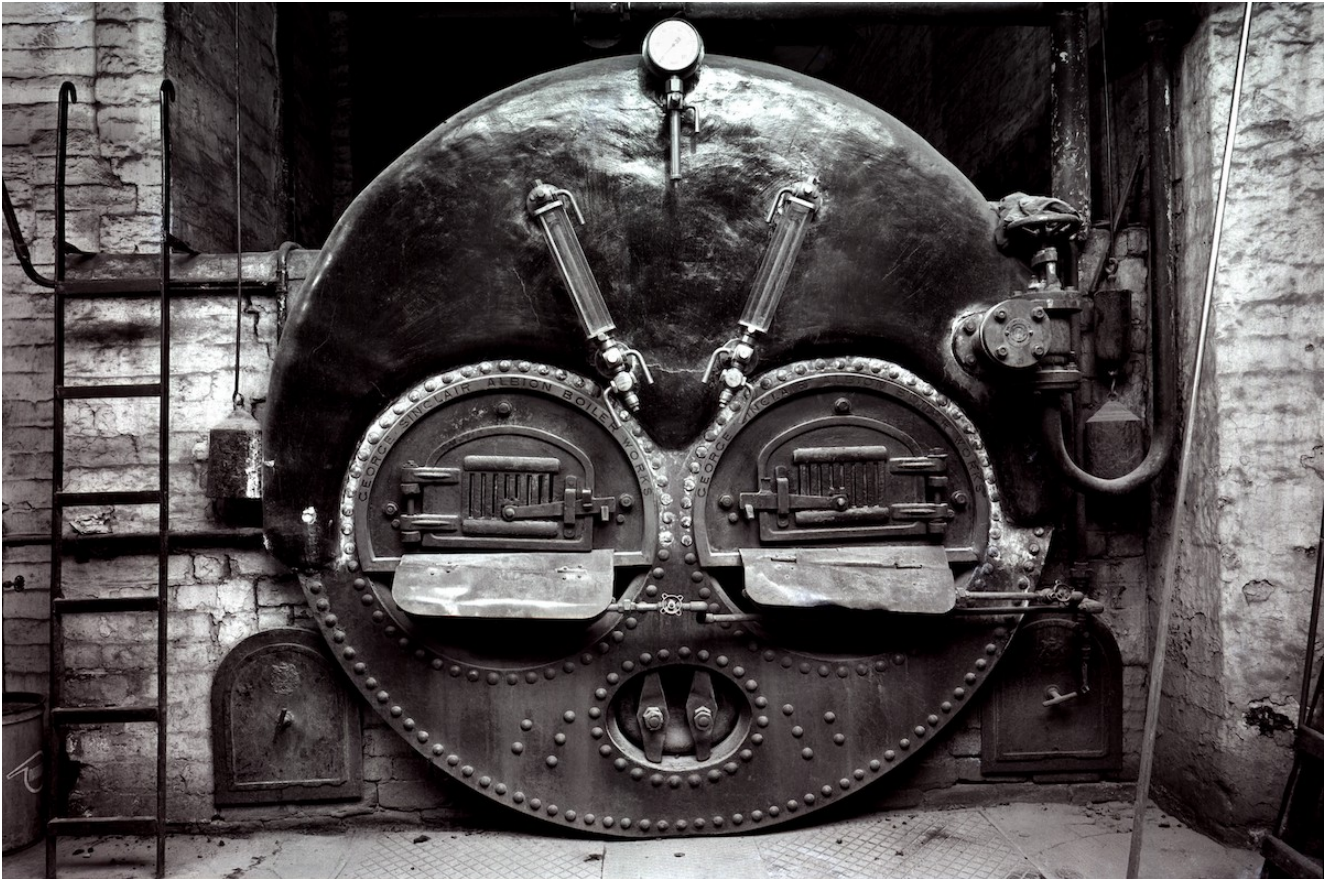
Ron O'Donnell commented: "I started taking some of these photographs of interiors as a student. Shooting them, became a compulsion, a desire to record on film a vanishing city. In retrospect, I was privileged to have been allowed to document these places, given access to behind-the-scenes areas, through the generosity of the various owners. I hope that the images I have captured will become a fascinating document of this great city."

The exhibition is part of a photographic season at the City Art Centre. Opening on Saturday 19 November, the show runs until 5 March 2023. It is free to enter and is accompanied by an exciting in person and digital events programme.

[edinburghmuseums.org.uk](http://edinburghmuseums.org.uk)

The exhibition will be accompanied by a modest exhibition

catalogue.



Ron O'Donnell, 'Boiler, Caledonian Brewery, Slateford Road', 1983. © the artist

A series of events will follow the exhibition beginning on Thursday 8 December at 7pm

### **Establishments & Emporiums of Edinburgh Past (Digital Lecture)**

Arriving in style in Edinburgh, this talk will allow us to recall local household names and revisit the much-loved department stores of Princes Street. For the well-heeled, time will be set aside to browse in Jenner's and other such establishments. Meanwhile we'll use the archives to wander the aisles elsewhere and revisit all sorts of institutions around the city which may no longer feature on our streets. By peeking behind the scenes of The Scotsman newspaper building in its heyday, we'll even return to the source of many of these evocative photographs. *With Jackie Sangster, Learning Manager at Historic Environment Scotland, who works with archival records including Scran.ac.uk.*

Saturday 10 December, 2pm.

**In Conversation with Ron O'Donnell, Daryl Green and Malcolm Dickson (Gallery Talk)**

Join exhibiting artist Ron O'Donnell and his guests for a nostalgic look back at a lost Edinburgh. A humorous, poignant and nostalgic discussion about Edinburgh seen through O'Donnell's photographs in the exhibition. With Daryl Green FSA, FSAScot, Head of Special Collections and Co-Director of the Centre for Research Collections at The University of Edinburgh, and Malcolm Dickson, a curator, writer and organiser. Dickson is also the Director of Street Level Photoworks, a leading photography arts organisation in Glasgow, that provides artists and the public with a range of opportunities to make and engage with photography

Friday 16 December, 2pm

**Capital Brewing (Gallery Lecture)**

The history of brewing in Edinburgh can be traced back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and over the years the city became known as the brewing capital in the world with over 40 breweries at one time. This talk, by John Martin, will explore how brewing evolved in Edinburgh from its early beginnings to the present day with some parts of its history that may surprise you. The talk will complement Ron O'Donnell's archive of images relating to the Caledonian Brewery (not on display in the exhibition). John Martin was born in Edinburgh and worked for Scottish & Newcastle (S&N) for 40 years, within the Management Accounting function at its Head Office and at all the S&N breweries throughout the country. S&N grew to become the largest brewing company in the UK. After leaving S&N, John was asked to provide a finance consultancy service by the Magner's Cider Group. He is currently the Chair of the Scottish Brewing Archive Association, with its main aim of promoting the history of brewing in Scotland, by researching and writing

articles, giving talks and walking tours visiting the sites of some of the old breweries in Edinburgh.

Thursday 12 January, 7pm

### **Edinburgh Street Style – Fashion in the Archives (Digital Lecture)**

An opportunity to get your glad rags on! During this talk we'll be looking back at what the people of Edinburgh and the Lothians, have chosen to wear over the decades; following fads & fashions from the past and how we dressed to impress in the city. We'll look at where people shopped for their clothing, whether buying traditional tartan, a Victorian corset on Princes Street, teen garb in Leith or flared denim on 1970s Cockburn Street. With Jackie Sangster, Learning Manager at Historic Environment Scotland, who works with archival records including Scran.ac.uk.

Saturday 14 January, 2pm

### **Travelling Through Time: A Lost Edinburgh (Gallery Lecture)**

Is time travel possible? In this exhibition overview, photographer and artist Ron O'Donnell will tell his tales as a time traveller capturing a lost Edinburgh. Using a camera as a time machine. A nostalgic journey through a lost or disappearing Edinburgh.

Thursday 19 January, 2pm

### **A Time Travelling Journey (Artist's Gallery Tour)**

Join Ron O'Donnell for a special tour in the gallery. A humorous, poignant and nostalgic tour of a lost Edinburgh through his photographs in the exhibition.

Sunday 22 January, 7pm

### **Ghosts of Shops Past (Digital Tour and Workshop via Facebook)**

In this pair of videos, we will explore the fascinating record of Edinburgh's past in the works of Ron O'Donnell's exhibition 'Edinburgh: A Lost World'. These remarkable images of still, unpeopled interiors of shops and other spaces offer a glimpse of long-gone shopping experiences, or interiors we all recall vividly. The first video will concentrate on shops, old and new, and explore how changing tastes are revealed through these intriguing photographs. In the second video we will explore the idea of 'ghost signs' – old painted lettering revealed during shop refurbishment, which reveal the fascinating story of a building's past through surviving hand painted lettering. Artist Tessa Asquith-Lamb will show you how to make a decorative 'weathered' painted letter or number with shadowing and gilding.

Thursday 26 January 6 – 7.30pm

### **The Art of Ron O'Donnell (Gallery Lecture for Camera Clubs)**

O'Donnell uses a large format 10 x 8 plate camera but also more recently has started working with a digital camera. Known today for making large scale installations and his dazzling colour constructed and narrative photographs, his images are often vibrant, daring, and humorous. In this talk, he will convey the changes in working methods from film to digital images, discussing the shortcomings and benefits of analogue and digital tools.

Saturday 28 January, 2pm

### **From Analogue to Digital (Gallery Lecture)**

Exhibiting artist Ron O'Donnell's current work is very different to the photographs in his show 'Edinburgh: A Lost World'. The crossover or revolution between analogue and digital has been far-reaching in the arts and photography. O'Donnell will present a personal view of that change in his work. Through a series of analogue and digital images he will convey the changes in working methods comparing film to

digital images and discussing the shortcomings and benefits of analogue and digital tools.

Saturday 28 January, 7pm

**Descriptive Tour for the visually impaired of 'Ron O'Donnell – Edinburgh: A Lost World' (Digital Tour via Facebook)**

Join artist Tessa Asquith-Lamb for a tour specifically designed for visually impaired visitors. Explore key images from photographer Ron O'Donnell's fascinating exhibition revealing shops, public spaces without the people who normally bring them to life. These images date from the 1970s and 80s, with later images showing more recent spaces. They provide a vivid record of changing businesses and reveal hidden or lost spaces from Edinburgh's past.

Sunday 29 January, 7pm

**Corners of Edinburgh Past (Digital Tour and Workshop via Facebook)**

In this pair of video streams, join artist Tessa Asquith-Lamb to explore intriguing images of quiet spaces from corners of Edinburgh past from the exhibition, 'Ron O'Donnell – Edinburgh: A Lost World'. What do these images say about how times have changed? What traces of the past still survive? What stories or mysteries do these photographs of quiet spaces create in our imaginations? In the second video join artist Tessa Asquith-Lamb to explore photographing quiet spaces without the bustle of everyday people, just using your camera phone. Looking especially at spaces that give clues as to their owner's personality. See how simply changing lighting and tone can affect mood in a photograph.

Friday 3 February, 7pm

**The Endurance of Leith (Digital Lecture)**

"The fascination and timelessness of Leith, the transformation



and strength of character draws me like a magnet." *Ron O'Donnell*

Ron O'Donnell has an amazing archive exploring one of Edinburgh's most enduring and much-loved areas. Join us for a walk around Leith looking at some familiar landmarks and remembering some long-forgotten places.

Thursday 9 February, 2pm

### **Edinburgh: Unique and Unusual Areas of the City (Gallery Lecture)**

Ron O'Donnell expands on his photographic archive and discusses images not included in the exhibition by looking at unusual corners of the city captured many years ago, remembering some fascinating Edinburgh institutions such as the breweries, Powderhall Dog Racing and Hoffman's Circus to name but a few.

Saturday 18 February, 2pm

### **A Lost Edinburgh (Gallery Lecture)**

Ron O'Donnell expands on his photographic archive and discusses images not included in the exhibition by looking at unusual corners of the city captured many years ago. Get nostalgic about football and rugby and re-live your memories. He will also explore some key areas of the city, now changed beyond recognition and some largely unchanged.

Thursday 23 February, 2pm

### **Establishments & Emporiums of Edinburgh Past (Gallery Lecture)**

Arriving in style in Edinburgh, this talk will allow us to recall local household names and revisit the much-loved department stores of Princes Street. For the well-heeled, time will be set aside to browse in Jenner's and other such establishments. Meanwhile we'll use the archives to wander the

aisles elsewhere and revisit all sorts of institutions around the city which may no longer feature on our streets. By peeking behind the scenes of The Scotsman newspaper building in its heyday, we'll even return to the source of many of these evocative photographs. *With Jackie Sangster, Learning Manager at Historic Environment Scotland, who works with archival records including Scran.ac.uk.*

All events are free. For further information please visit [edinburghmuseums.org.uk](http://edinburghmuseums.org.uk) or contact the City Art Centre on 0131 529 3993.

**Venue Details:**

Address: City Art Centre, 2 Market Street, Edinburgh EH1 1DE

Telephone: 0131 529 3993

Opening hours: Daily 10am – 5pm

Website: [edinburghmuseums.org.uk](http://edinburghmuseums.org.uk)