

Photography exhibition 'Paul Duke: No Ruined Stone' opens at City Art Centre

A new exhibition of street photography by the artist Paul Duke (b.1965) this November, depicting contemporary life in the Muirhouse area of Edinburgh, opens at the capital's City Art Centre.

'Paul Duke: No Ruined Stone' features 38 large-scale black and white photographs documenting the built environment and residents of Muirhouse. It is accompanied by a short film by Julian Ward, in which Paul Duke talks about his work and the experience of creating the series. This is the first time 'No Ruined Stone' has been displayed as a full-scale exhibition, bringing the photographs back to the artist's home city.



Paul Duke grew up in Muirhouse, in the north of Edinburgh,

between the mid-1960s and early 1980s. He attended the local Craigroyston High School, where his teachers inspired him to consider art as a possible future career. Drawn to photography, he enrolled at Napier College (now Edinburgh Napier University), before gaining a place to study at the Royal College of Art in London. From here, he established himself as a lens-based artist.

In 2015 Duke returned to Muirhouse to develop 'No Ruined Stone'. This series was conceived as the second part of a photographic trilogy by Duke which examines the social climate in modern-day Scotland. It takes its name from the poetry of the Scots writer Hugh MacDiarmid. For 'No Ruined Stone', the artist spent time meeting local people and talking with them; reconnecting with his roots and exploring how the Muirhouse community had changed since his own upbringing there.



© JL Preece



The exhibition at the City Art Centre presents a selection of 38 photographs from 'No Ruined Stone'. It features views of homes and other architectural structures, surrounded by elements of the natural world. Portraits of local residents punctuate the otherwise unpopulated setting, giving a sense of the community's identity – something that is too often misrepresented in popular culture and elsewhere.

Duke's understated yet powerful images depict Muirhouse at a time of significant urban regeneration and social flux. While raising issues around social inequality and poverty, 'No Ruined Stone' is underpinned by a message of human resilience, strength of character, and ultimately, hope.

Artist Paul Duke said: "When I started work on 'No Ruined Stone' in 2015, my greatest wish was to create a narrative that gave voice to the residents of Muirhouse – to challenge misrepresentation by portraying the community and local environment with honesty, fairness and dignity.

"I wanted to offer personal insight and in doing so, address pressing questions around social injustice. With millions of

people up and down the land dealing with the cost of living crisis, I believe that these photographs have taken on new meaning and are now more relevant than ever”.





Curator Dr Helen Scott said: “It’s been a real privilege to work with Paul Duke on bringing this exhibition to the City Art Centre. ‘No Ruined Stone’ is an important body of work that is both hard-hitting and reflective, socially-engaged and highly personal. There is heart and truth in these photographs, and the images linger with you long after you’ve seen them”.

Councillor Val Walker, Convener of Culture and Communities, said: “We are delighted to present Edinburgh’s own ‘Paul Duke: No Ruined Stone’ at the City Art Centre. His wonderful photographs will be on display for the first time as a full-scale exhibition and I’m sure visitors will be captivated by the series on contemporary life in the Muirhouse area of the Capital and the changes in the community”.

“The aim of our City Art Centre is to champion historic and contemporary Scottish visual and applied arts, so I’m delighted that we can display Paul’s work in his home city”.

We must be humble. We are so easily baffled by appearances
And do not realise that these stones are one with the stars.
It makes no difference to them whether they are high or low,
Mountain peak or ocean floor, palace, or pigsty.
There are plenty of ruined buildings in the world but no ruined stones.

Poem excerpt from Hugh MacDiarmid, 'On a Raised Beach', in *Complete Poems: Vol 1*,
ed. Michael Grieve and William Russell Aitken
(Manchester, 2000). Carcanet Press Limited

© J.L. Preece

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication ‘Paul Duke: No Ruined Stone’ (Hartmann Books, 2018).

‘Paul Duke: No Ruined Stone’ opens on Saturday 26 November 2022, and runs until 19 February 2023. Admission is free.