

***A Brief Revolution:
photography, architecture and social space in the Manplan project***

Introduction

Manplan was an ambitious and highly critical survey of architecture and town planning in late 1960s Britain, featuring photographic work by leading photojournalists and street photographers published in *Architectural Review* magazine. From September 1969 to September 1970, the magazine had eight special issues with themes including 'Religion', 'Health and Welfare', 'Frustration' and 'Education'. This exhibition presents photographs and magazine layouts from the *Manplan* series. It is a collaboration between The Photographers' Gallery and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and has been curated by Valeria Carullo, curator at The Robert Elwall Photographs Collection, RIBA British Architectural Library.

Each issue's guest editor worked with a photographer from outside of the world of architectural photography. They included Ian Berry, Patrick Ward, Tim Street-Porter and Tony Ray-Jones. In addition, written contributions were commissioned from architectural critics such as Nikolaus Pevsner and Hugh Casson. The photographs frequently included people inhabiting and using public spaces, shifting the focus from the architecture itself to human experience within the built environment.

Imbued with the spirit of photo-reportage, the black and white images were shot on 35mm cameras. They were reproduced – often across two pages – using a special matt-black ink, which increased their dramatic effect.

Manplan was conceived as an analysis of the state of architecture and urban planning in Britain at the end of the decade. It embodied both the idealism of the 1960s and the disillusionment felt at the end of that decade. Many of the issues addressed – such as social inequalities, the lack of affordable housing and the importance of community participation – remain relevant today.

As you come out of the lift on Level 3, there is a grid of 15 framed black and white prints on the left wall. They are all in landscape format, 193 mm high by 300 mm wide. On the facing wall, just a few paces away, there are examples of *Architectural Review* magazine, displayed in a glass case with reproductions of the covers and spreads on the wall. They are in strong primary colours with photos in matt black. Some of the cover illustrations are adapted from anatomical drawings, one features a phrenological head showing the zones of the brain, while yet another features a carved stone head with the title MANPLAN collaged into its open mouth. The wall at the far end of the space is covered by a blown-up print of a photograph of Thamesmead under construction – a group of adults have gathered by a lake edged with reeds. Children are paddling in the water, and three adults are sitting on a bench while others stand close to the water, looking across to the opposite side where seven blocks of flats are going up, with four tall cranes beside them.