

TPG NEW TALENT – TNT'21 FROM 1 OCTOBER 2021

TPG New Talent (TNT) is a dedicated exhibition and mentoring programme identifying and supporting the most exciting and relevant UK-based emerging artists working within the photographic medium.

This year's selected artists are **Heather Agyepong**, **Jessica Bernard**, **Ollie Gapper**, **Mariam Sholaja**, **RAKE Collective** and **Wing Ka Ho Jimmi**.

They were chosen from an open call by the Brazilian artist, **Rosângela Rennó** along with TPG Senior Curator, **Karen McQuaid** who were looking for approaches and work that they felt demonstrated a clear declaration of intent and were visually strong and coherent across concept, form and realisation. While all of the six projects selected for TNT 21 are highly individual, they collectively share a sense of enquiry, social responsibility and sensitivity towards their subject matter that feels particularly resonant in 2021.

For TNT 21, TPG have created a [dedicated online exhibition platform](#) as a dynamic way of showcasing the breadth and scale of each artists' work. As well, a selection of works from each artist will be displayed in TPG's new open-air public space, Soho Photography Quarter as a precursor to its official opening in Spring 2022

In addition to the public exhibition opportunity, each of the artists is awarded a £1,500 bursary and paired with a creative mentor to support the development of their practice over a twelve-month period.

TNT 21 Artists:

Heather Agyepong (b. UK) is a multi-disciplinary artist and actor. Her practice links with themes of mental health, wellbeing, invisibility, the diaspora and the archive. She adopts a technique of re-imagination to engage with communities of interest and through performance creates a cathartic experience for herself and the viewer.

Wish You Were Here (2020) focuses on a celebrated African American vaudeville performer Aida Overton Walker – known as Queen of the Cake Walk. The Cake Walk was a dance craze that swept America in the early 1900s, performed originally by enslaved people who mocked and mimicked their slave owners and high society. Postcards of Cake Walk performers were distributed around Europe, where so called 'negrophilia' was becoming popular. The representations in these postcards were often grotesque and offensive. Overton Walker was able to counter these problematic narratives of Black performers by reinterpreting the dance, becoming lauded in the process, even being invited to travel to Europe and perform for royalty. By turning the camera on herself while embodying Overton Walker, Agyepong uses satirical commentary to re-depict these charged images as radical declarations of self-worth.

Jessica Bernard (b. 1987, UK) is a photographic artist based in London. Her work treads a line between fine art and documentary.

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Team Building (2013 - 2020) 'My father was bullied in his office job, when I was a child. He developed schizophrenia and never went back to work.' Bernard began photographing team-building activities in the corporate spaces in 2013. Her work taps into incongruous moments, when suited professionals are asked to engage in surreal and playful activities under the watchful gaze of their employers. 'Over time I have drawn a link between these photographs and my father's experiences. In these photographs, I see a physical manifestation of his disorientation. People are stretched, changed and forced to encounter multiple versions of themselves.' The photographs urge us to confront the roles her subjects play, at the behest of others. 'The workplace thrusts them into an absurd, artificial new world. They suddenly leave a state of greyness and conformity, of rules and procedures, in which they are presentable ambassadors of their organisations. They have to be a different person altogether.'

Ollie Gapper (b. 1992, UK) has a keen interest in the contemporary photobook and its intimate connection with readership. His work explores the relationship of photography and writing with failure, fracturing, fragmentation and repetition.

Ever Forward, Back (2021) explores the gradual decline of Gapper's father to neurological diseases. His father has multiple health conditions which have advanced to create dementia-like symptoms. His mobility has been hampered for all of Gapper's lifetime, but it is only in the past five years that his mental faculties have been markedly affected. Through the use of repetition and fragmentation, Gapper's practice aims to disrupt the viewer's experience and force a heightened connection with the work. Quiet observations of daily life are recorded through his writing and the photographs. Written passages and photographs reverberate off each other and neither take prominence in the presentation of the work. The artist shifts between the roles of son, carer and creator. This work is about a journey to coping, accepting the inevitable mortality of a loved one, and the fading of their persona.

Mariam Sholaja (b. 1998, USA) creates photographic stories with subjects that are reflective of herself and the communities she is connected to. She often gathers inspiration from her Nigerian heritage and imbues her images with colourful, natural elements. Sholaja works across portraiture, fashion and editorial photography.

UP (2018) is a shoot inspired by the concept of height and altitude. Altitude is measured by air pressure, and Sholaja posits that the strength of human beings will always soar and prevail against the pressures of society and societal beliefs. Her concept for the shoot was also influenced by the 1998 movie entitled 'The Truman Show'. It tells the story of Truman Burbank who discovers that his life is much less 'real' than he had understood, as he is actually the star of a reality tv show – and his friends and family are actors. Once he uncovers the truth, he decides to escape and explore beyond all he's ever known. The lone figure in Sholaja's shoot moves playfully through unpeopled architectural space, interacting with barriers, portholes, perhaps indicating the outer edge of known and familiar worlds.

RAKE Collective (founded 2019, UK), consisting of Nancy Hurman, Flora Thomas, Vera Zurbrügg and Nuno Guerreiro de Sousa, is a visual research collective using open source data to investigate a variety of unseen elements in society, business and politics. The themes explored in their collaborative work include human rights violations, government censorship, surveillance and bureaucratic violence.

Police State (2021 - ongoing) interrogates the systems of control put in place by the UK government in the name of order and security. Catalysed by increasing police powers and ongoing bureaucratic violence, the work examines surveillance and technology to visualise the ways in which the state polices its people.

The global number of CCTV cameras is set to reach one billion by the end of 2021, while facial recognition and biometric systems are being integrated into everyday life and deployed as tools of state control. Initially focusing on London, the third most surveilled city in the world, the ongoing project explores how the ubiquitous and ever-growing network of surveillance is implemented, and the multiple points at which this technology intersects with - and influences - humanity.

The work invites the viewer to return the glare of the state, looking past the camera to challenge the systems of power which govern our everyday lives.

Wing Ka Ho Jimmi (b. 1993, Hong Kong) utilises the classical genres of portrait and landscape to investigate geopolitics and the social environment between Hong Kong and the UK. His work concentrates on various identity crises and particularities associated with the socio-political situation in Hong Kong.

So Far Away (2019-ongoing) is a two-chapter project made up of a series of conversations about the history and future of Hong Kong. Through daily life portrayals and metaphors, the first chapter focuses on the border politics leftover from intertwined Sino-British history. Shown as part of TNT 21 is the second chapter 'So far away', which investigates Hong Kong society based on its changes through the course of history. The chapter explores memories of Hong Kong with new immigrants in the UK, and conveying the emotions of Hong Kongers who are trying to find their way to a new home. Drawn from the artists' circle of friends and fellow artists, the sitters tell of the immigration histories in China, Hong Kong and the UK. Landscapes, interiors and portraits are intermingled, inviting the viewer to consider the ways in which our landscape and city infrastructure yield power over our communities.

Rosângela Rennó, whose own work reflects on shared and hidden histories as explored through archives and other photographic repositories, commented on her experience of reviewing and selecting the work:

"The last two years seem to have been crucial in consolidating certain individual, collective and global convictions. With so much polarisation and contrast in various spheres and levels, and so many new channels of communication and dialogue, it does not surprise me that many voices and eyes are raised to point out what can no longer be silenced or stay hidden. This impulse was threaded throughout the submissions for TNT '21 and especially evident in the work of the six artists' we finally selected. Their work collectively and individually shares many points in common with what I have been following in Brazil: A desire to show societies and individuals, searching for a sense of justice and tolerance of differences while crossing the most diverse borders: political, geographical, ideological. The 21st century may have previously seemed not to have begun, but judging by the work of these talented individuals, in 2021 it certainly has."

TNT 21 is generously supported by Leica Camera.



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Press Contacts

For further press information and image requests please contact:
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Notes for Editors

TPG New Talent

TPG New Talent (TNT) was launched in 2019 as an open call to identify and champion under-recognised or emerging UK-based artists and photographers. The programme is part of

an ongoing commitment by the Gallery to ensuring new photographic practices are given public platform and attention. Every effort has been made to remove barriers to entry – with no entrance fee, age limit or educational requirements within the criteria for entry. TPG define ‘emerging’ as not having had a significant solo exhibition or a book published by a third-party publisher

TNT 21 Selection Panel

Rosângela Rennó Gomes (Belo Horizonte, MG, 1962) is a Brazilian artist who lives and works in Rio de Janeiro. Her work consists of photographic images from public and private archives that question the nature of an image and its symbolic value. With the use of photographs, installations and objects, she appropriates and sheds new light on an anonymous body of photographs and negatives found mostly in flea markets, family albums, newspapers and archives. Rennó’s interest in discarded images and habit of collecting were decisive in establishing her work strategies.

Karen McQuaid is Senior Curator at The Photographers’ Gallery. She regularly contributes to international workshops, writes for photography publications, edits artists books, and guest lectures across the UK and Ireland. At The Photographers’ Gallery she has curated exhibitions including Jim Goldberg, *Open See* (2009); Fiona Tan, *Vox Populi, London* (2012); *Andy Warhol, Photographs: 1976 – 1987* (2014); Lorenzo Vitturi, *Dalston Anatomy* (2014) and Rosângela Rennó, *Río-Montevideo* (2016). She has co-curated Geraldo De Barros, *What Remains* (2013) with Isobel Whitelegg, *Made You Look, Dandyism and Black Masculinity* (2016) with Ekow Eshun and *Shot in Soho* (2019) with Julian Rodriguez. Karen also facilitates *TPG New Talent*, a programme and exhibition for UK based emerging practitioners and has curated exhibitions at The Moscow House of Photography and The National Gallery of Kosovo.

The Photographers’ Gallery: 50 Years

2021 marks the 50th anniversary of The Photographers’ Gallery. Founded in 1971 by Sue Davies, OBE, as the UK’s first public gallery dedicated to the photographic medium, TPG has over the last five decades played a pivotal role in championing photography’s position as a leading artistic and cultural form as well as providing an invaluable centre for the exhibition and support of photographers and photography from across the globe.

Over the course of 2021, the Gallery is staging a special series of exhibitions and events to mark this significant anniversary; reflecting on its legacy and impact over the last five decades and looking towards the future of photography in a rapidly changing world.

The Photographers’ Gallery

The Photographers’ Gallery opened in 1971 in Great Newport Street, London, as the UK’s first independent gallery devoted to photography. It was the first public gallery in the UK to exhibit many key names in international photography, including Juergen Teller, Robert Capa, Sebastiano Salgado and Andreas Gursky. The Gallery has also been instrumental in establishing contemporary British photographers, including Martin Parr and Corinne Day. In 2009, the Gallery moved to 16 – 18 Ramillies Street in Soho, the first stage in its plan to create a 21st century home for photography. Following an eighteen months long redevelopment project, the Gallery reopened to the public in 2012. The success of The Photographers’ Gallery over the past four decades has helped to establish photography as a recognised art form, introducing new audiences to photography and championing its place at the heart of visual culture. www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk

Visitor Information

(As of 2 September, please check website for latest opening information)

Monday (& Bank Holidays): Closed

Tuesday – Wednesday: 10.00 – 18.00

Thursday – Friday (Lates): 10.00 – 20.00

Saturday: 10.00 – 18.00

Sunday: 11.00 – 18.00

Social media

Instagram: @thephotographersgallery

Twitter: @TPGallery

Facebook: @ThePhotographersGalleryLDN



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