

PRESS RELEASE

TOM WOOD

Looking for Love

November 7 – December 21, 2002

Tom Wood's second solo show with the gallery features a previously unexhibited body of photographs "Looking for Love" taken from 1982 until 1985 in the Chelsea Reach Nightclub, New Brighton, North England's first disco pub (opened in 1968).

The 31 predominantly color photographs offer an anthropological glimpse into a world of youthful hopes and desires. In the dark of the dance floor, women glitter, showing off their latest fashions: luxurious hair stylishly tussled, 'dangly' earrings, 'plassie' jewelry, and cosmetics suggesting sexual excitement. Dressed in regular jeans and shirts, men eye up the girls and fuel on beer to find the courage to engage in the courtship rituals of disco dancing. Appearing at the evenings' onset almost like members of different species, the two sexes just discover themselves, the boys out for a 'good time', the girls for love and 'meaningful relationships', perhaps.

The photographs exude a raw vitality undercut by the artist's approach to his subjects which is as respectful as it is voyeuristic, as committed as it is 'cold blooded'. Strangely silenced by the camera, every movement and every gesture becomes stark and uncomfortable in the pictures' shallow flashlight space - a fascinating crush of booze drenched bodies, hands groping bums, flickering tongues, bleary eyes, 'fag' smoke and sweat.

After moving to Merseyside in 1978, Wood started photographing the run down seaside resort of New Brighton: the locals, people who came on days out, families and the kids who would go to the amusements. Over the years, he noticed that the moody children hanging around the arcades would disappear for a couple of years - too old to play the video games, they were now old enough to go to The Chelsea instead. Returning one or two nights a week, sometimes with prints from previous visits, Wood inserted himself in the club's life. Unlike Nan Goldin who documents in her ongoing autobiographical project her own socio-economic group, Wood remained an attentive observer. Similar to Brassai who unveils in his b/w photographs renegade Parisian nightlife in the 30's, Wood's work offers neither social comment nor judgment. His thought provoking glimpses however invite us to think of ourselves rather than speculate about the details of other's lives.

Tom Wood was born in West Ireland in 1951. His photographs, which he has taken almost exclusively in Merseyside and Liverpool over the past 25 years, have become very prominent over the past few years.

Solo exhibitions include: **Kunstverein Kassel** (2002) and **Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum** Aachen (2001), both in Germany; **Museum of Modern Art** Oxford, UK (1998); **Galerie du Jour** Paris (1996), and **International Center of Photography** New York (1996).

Works have been included in shows at important venues such as **Institute of Contemporary Art** London, where he was shortlisted for the "Becks Futures Award" (2002); **Art Institute of Chicago** (2001); **Centre National de la Photographie** Paris (2000); and **Victoria & Albert Museum** London (1995).

His works are in the following collections (selection): **Museum of Modern Art** New York; **Art Institute of Chicago**; **International Center of Photography** New York; **Victoria & Albert Museum** and **British Council** both in London.

There are 4 publications of his work: "Bus Odyssey" 2001; "People" 1999; "All Zones Off Peak" 1998 and "Looking for Love" 1989. "Over Here, Photieman" a comprehensive volume edited by Manfred Heiting will be published in 2003.

Most recently, in spring of 2002, Tom Wood received the "Prix Dialogue de l' Humanité" (Outreach Award) at the **Rencontres d'Arles**.

For more information and visuals, please visit us at **www.thomaserben.com** or contact the gallery at 212-645.8701

Gallery hours: 10 - 6, Tuesday - Saturday