

MEDIA INFORMATION

FINAL

Friday Jul 17, 2020 at 09:05 AM

'Our Street Gallery' launched with powerful photographs captured by Bradford teens during lockdown

A powerful photography project depicting the experiences of Bradford teenagers during lockdown has launched 'Our Street Gallery'; a new 12-month district-wide cultural project which is transforming the city's streets into a canvas of images capturing moments and feelings of the people of the Bradford district.

More than 50 stunning photographs taken by 13 – 18-year olds in isolation for the 'Through Our Lens' project – led by award-winning photographer Carolyn Mendelsohn – will illustrate billboards, sides of houses, pavements, lamp posts, windows and school railings across Bradford, Ilkley, Keighley and Shipley,

'Through Our Lens' is the first 'episode' of the street gallery project, with further episodes curated by the street gallery steering group over the next year. The street gallery will bring to life the incredible work created thanks to Bradford Council's 'RESPONSE' grants, which launched in April to help the arts sector survive and thrive in the face of national Covid-19 lockdown measures and beyond.

Shipley-based photographer Carolyn came up with idea for the original 'Through Our Lens' project at the beginning of lockdown, when nearly all her upcoming work was abruptly cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic, including an exhibition at Bradford's Impressions Gallery. Having secured RESPONSE funding, and following an initial call out on social media and collaboration with Bradford College, Carolyn has now mentored more than 40 young people across the Bradford district in photography using a video platform and running online workshop sessions every week, with the resulting images posted on the project's Instagram page (@through_our_lens_covid19_proj/).

The teenagers represent a whole spectrum of socio-economic groups, including a number of refugees who moved to the district just six months ago only to be plunged straight into isolation as the pandemic took hold. The documentary style images offer a glimpse into teenage life in lockdown; some have focused on expressive self-portraits while others have photographed their families, bedrooms and outdoor surroundings when taking their daily exercise. The work is set to become part of The Photographic Archive of Bradford Museums and Galleries so that the photographs are available in years to come for those who want to see what life was like during the Coronavirus pandemic, and it will also be exhibited next summer at Impressions Gallery.

Accompanied by a caption from the young photographers, the street gallery billboard campaign features 2msq x 2msq images as a nod to the 2-metre social distancing rule.

Carolyn Mendelsohn, photographer and leader of the Through Our Lens project comments: "I have three teenagers of my own and as soon as we went into lockdown it became apparent to me that with cancelled exams, a sudden lack of interaction with peers and a huge change in life structure,

teenagers were facing a huge upheaval at a crucial time in their lives. With almost all of my own work on hold, I wanted to use the time to give these young people a voice and help them to tell their own important story. The project started life as a collection of images on social media, and it's brilliant that we can now showcase these incredible photographs outside across the district as lockdown eases."

Councillor Sarah Ferriby, Bradford Council's Executive Member for Healthy People and Places, said: "We're delighted to be supporting the Our Street Gallery project. We have some amazingly creative people in our district.

"The 'Through Our Lens' project was funded through one of our REPONSE grants which have supported both those in the creative and arts sector, as well as the mental and emotional wellbeing of residents from across the district. I'm incredibly proud of the work produced by these young people during this incredibly difficult time for them and I hope they are proud that their work has been chosen to form the first chapter of the 'Our Street Gallery' project.

"The work that they have created is a true testament to the sheer talent we have here and this project makes sure that people get the chance to see that talent displayed big and proud on billboards, sides of houses and in many other places across the district."

'Our Street Gallery' launches with 'Through Our Lens' on Thursday 16th July and can be followed and tagged on all social media channels with the hashtag #OurStreetGallery. 'Our Street Gallery' is supported by Bradford Council; Impressions Gallery; Bradford 2025 and Bradford-based design studios and artists Lee Goater, Split Design and Aimee Grundell.