

AMBER/ L. PARKER STEPHENSON PHOTOGRAPHS



PORTRAITS OF A COMMUNITY

In 1969, Finnish photographer **Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen** moved to Newcastle upon Tyne in northeast England and began documenting the working-class area of Byker. The neighbourhood was structurally run down, but Konttinen was inspired by the spiritedness of its inhabitants, from the kids playing outdoors to the musicians jamming in local pubs. After Byker was demolished to make way for new developments in the mid-1970s, Konttinen's work became a fundamental part of the region's historical record.

"I knew nothing about Byker before I moved there, and loved the feel of the place. It was full of characters and had a strong working-class culture," says Konttinen, who relocated to the area with fellow students from a film school in London. The group founded Amber, a collective whose mission is to bring attention to working-class and marginalised communities in northern England through film and photography. Amber's work has been recognised by UNESCO for its cultural significance.

This spring the Byker photos are exhibited at the L. Parker Stephenson Photographs gallery in New York. Konttinen says that she has been touched by how strongly her photos from four decades ago still resonate, even thousands of miles away from Byker.

"One man had a book of my photos that he said he carried around like a teddy bear; he grew up close to Byker and said it reminded him of his roots and kept him grounded," she says.

Konttinen has also connected with today's Byker; in the mid-2000s she was invited back to the area to photograph its current residents. The experience was different – most community routines now take place behind closed doors, and a photographer has to gain access to private homes – but so was Byker itself.

"It's now a hugely diverse place with lots of little communities, including asylum seekers," Konttinen says, adding that she worked carefully to establish a relationship of trust with her subjects. "This wasn't glamour photography; I wanted to offer a true reflection of who they are."

Gallery owner **Parker Stephenson**, too, was drawn to Konttinen's images because of their intimacy.

"Her images and stories don't feel foreign to us. Her neighbours remind us of our neighbours, our grandparents, or even ourselves," Stephenson says.

Until May 11
764 Madison Avenue, New York
LPARKERSTEPHENSON.COM/EXHIBITIONS



CLAIRE AHO

LADY BEHIND THE LENS

THE WORKS OF CLAIRE AHO, one of Finland's most legendary advertising and editorial photographers, are shown at the Photographers' Gallery in London starting in mid-April. The retrospective marks the first time that Aho's photos are showcased on their own outside of Finland.

Born in 1925, Aho launched her career in the 1950s and became known for her creative use of early colour photography. Among her clients have been several Finnish magazines, design company Marimekko and sweets manufacturer Fazer. She continues to take photos to this day.

April 19–July 21
16 – 18 Ramillies Street, London
TPG.ORG.UK, CLAIREAHO.COM



CLAIRE AHO