



[Like you've never been away](#)

Photographs by Paul Trevor

at The [Walker Art Gallery](#), Liverpool

Reviewed by [Jane Turner](#) ☐ August 2011

My earliest memory of being photographed resulted in this picture on the right. Having one's photo taken when I was a child was a big event, usually involving a borrowed camera or a professional photographer, getting dressed up in your best or at least half-decent clothing and forming some sort of organised pose while smiling rigidly at the camera to the sound of Cheeeeeesssse!

In this photo, my four sisters and I (that's me on the left) had been seated in a row on the polished teak seventies-sideboard for what seemed like hours, whilst my youngest sister Moira bawled her eyes out uncertain of the camera until the wily cameraman pulled out his secret weapon – a loud and squeaky toy - which resulted in the biggest and longest smile of the day from her, but by then I'd lost the will to live and could just about manage a vaguely pleasant facial contortion.

Today, cameras are everywhere, cheap as chips and on almost every mobile device. Rioters and looters take photos of each other smashing through shop windows, rebels in Libya and protestors in Syria in the midst of conflict take time out to photograph the gunfire, bombings and bloodied bodies. Young people take photos of themselves and their friends all of the time, in the

middle of the street for no apparent reason with no occasion necessary, just pulling faces, dressed up, hanging out and looking like they are having a good time, whilst some even photograph their own attempts at suicide. On Facebook people post photos of what they are about to eat for dinner, what they are wearing on their feet, their street signs and garden plants and share thousands of photos of various holidays that were once the reserve of the holiday bore. Cameras are part of the uniform, at the bottom of everyone's extremely large handbag, in a pocket, on a belt, ready to be whipped out at the earliest photo-opportunity – if the population had exploded at the same rate as photographs Malthus might be taken more seriously even by his most ardent opposers.



Photographs can provide us with a record of the most important and most commonplace events, the everyday trials and tribulations of an ordinary life, and although some may not seem that interesting at the time, they can often become a point of reference about a particular time and place in history and/or become a work of art in the process. The photos by Paul Trevor taken on the streets of Liverpool in 1975, at first glance look pretty ordinary, everyday street scenes, the sort that possibly you or I could take on any type of camera and leave on a memory card, or in his case in the back of a drawer for 35 years. But these photos are a revelation as well as artistic, they say so much about the time, the place and the people in them, and are a great source of information as well as pleasure.

I enjoyed this exhibition immensely. I've always liked old black and white photographs, particularly those that look like they have been taken on the spur-of-the-moment in ordinary neighbourhoods and of life on the streets - increasingly difficult to do nowadays in our paranoid times. Without colour, somehow the photographs seem more absorbing, and you find yourself focusing properly on the content. I tend to spend longer looking, really looking, at every part of the photograph when captured in black and white, and these photos are a rich source of detail that says so much about Liverpool in the seventies.

This exhibition takes place at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, which is a graceful old building sitting right at the heart of Liverpool city centre in the shadow of the enormous St. Georges Hall and is stuffed full of Art and Culture, which you need no more than a day to do justice to, as it is a rather small and old-fashioned gallery. Known as the national gallery of the North, it houses Liverpool's most outstanding Art collection and has done so for over 130 years, long before The Liverpool Tate pushed its way in. Andrew Barclay-Walker, a brewer and alderman, presented the gallery to the city to commemorate his term as mayor, contributing generously to get the gallery open and spending money and collecting donations for many acclaimed and important works of Art. It regularly hosts special exhibitions and the display from Paul Trevor is a temporary showing which has already attracted thousands of visitors keen to take a trip down a well worn memory lane.

Paul Trevor captures childhood and family life in vibrant images set against the backdrop of high unemployment and inner city deprivation in the Everton and Granby (a part of Toxteth that was razed to the ground in the 1980's riots and is still dotted with burnt-out buildings) areas of the city. At the time, the city was still full of post-war dereliction, rows of bombed out houses and ruined landscapes. Grubby faced children feature prominently and are captured happy and smiling playing in burnt-out buildings, collecting rubbish for a bonfire, setting fire to it, hanging around on doorsteps and corridors, swinging on lamp-posts, dangling from makeshift swings of rope, leaning on walls, balancing precariously but free-and-easily over the sides of the balconies of high rise flats and running up and down the corridors of tenement blocks long since bulldozed, whilst wearing borrowed and oversized platform shoes - it all being part of simple but poverty-stricken fun.



Photographs by Paul Trevor at The [Walker Art Gallery](#), Liverpool until 25 September