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1846 – 2016

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grainy, romantic cityscapes of 1950s Leeds and portraits of people time forgot feature in Leeds College of Art photography exhibition

Ralph Wallis: *Is this seat taken?* 25 March - 20 April 2016
Exhibition preview & book launch 24 March 5pm-7pm

In celebration of its 170th anniversary Leeds College of Art announces its next exhibition of work: photographer Ralph Wallis, entitled *Is this seat taken?...* opening at a special preview evening on 24 March, 5pm-7pm at the College's Vernon Street building.

Is this seat taken? captures images of Leeds City Centre in the 1950s. The Headrow, the Queens Hotel and Leeds City Varieties are amongst the works as well as alumni of the College, including a life sized image of the late, legendary Leeds Jazz musician, Ed O'Donnell.

Guest-curator and Leeds College of Art alumna, Bianca Wallis-Salmon, has researched the life and work of her great-uncle, Ralph Wallis and has used his work to produce an autobiographical photobook which will be launched at the preview event 24 March 5pm-7pm. Visitors at the preview can also take a tour of the College's black-and-white photography darkrooms, all are welcome to this free event and no booking is required.

Ralph Wallis, he is a lesser-known but prolific photographer, who took up the camera in the 1950s. Ralph began his career working as a press photographer for the Yorkshire Evening Post, alongside childhood friend Peter O'Toole. Ralph worked as a technician then Lecturer in Charge of Photography at Leeds College of Art in the early 60s, and set up darkrooms to provide photographic facilities for students. Leeds-born Ralph aged 83 years of age now resides in Canada.

Ralph Wallis comments:-

"Similar to Edna Lumb I found Leeds, with all its soot covered buildings and incredible street children of all shapes and sizes, just screaming out to be photographed. As in those dark days, which I loved as a young photographer, Leeds was made for us."

Bianca Wallis-Salmon said:-

"Ralph has a certain style, his charm and charisma shining through with every click of the shutter. His images have a way of transporting your imagination; I sometimes feel I could be looking at a still from Brief Encounter. I became enchanted by the bold emotion of the photographs, and felt they needed to be seen. So I embarked on producing this publication, a visual autobiography that

showcases his iconic images and also tells the story of his life. I feel very proud to have finally brought Ralph's work into the open and hope people will be equally enamoured with our story. Leeds College of Art has been a hugely significant part of my families past, present and future. And I hope that in turn we have played our part in contributing to the legacy of creativity that thrives within its walls."

Editor's Notes

For more information, images or to arrange interviews contact: Emma Morris, PR & Communications Officer, 0113 202 8044 or emma.morris@leeds-art.ac.uk

Media are invited to interview the Curator Bianca Wallis-Salmon who will be installing the exhibition from Monday 21 March to Thursday 24 March.

Image: Ralph Wallis, *Headrow*, Leeds, 1950s, 35mm film. Courtesy of Ralph Wallis and Bianca Wallis-Salmon.

The Ralph Wallis exhibition will run from 25 March - 20 April 2016 at Vernon Street Gallery, Leeds College of Art, Vernon Street, Leeds, LS2 8PH.

Visit our website to see more information about our 170 events [HERE](#)

www.leeds-art.ac.uk

Leeds College of Art

Founded in 1846, Leeds College of Art is an innovative institution that has changed the way art qualifications are taught and structured in Britain today.

We combine academic and vocational excellence in all our undergraduate programmes. Our focus is to put student's talents to practical use, so their creativity is channelled towards a successful career or postgraduate study.

Our students and staff create a unique community of vibrant, ambitious and deeply creative artists and designers. We are based in Leeds, an internationally acclaimed centre for teaching and learning in addition to being a leading hub for creative and digital industries.