



With a handful of friends we formed the Apollo Sports Club and together we chose the name from a list of Greek Gods, Apollo symbolising a young man of perfect physique' Eddie White (1928)

Final Major Project

Chris (Buzz)
Matthews

MA Photography

Falmouth University



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Additional Links

- Photobook Video <https://cm238066.wixsite.com/mysite/copy-of-final-major-project>
- High Quality Photobook PDF <https://cm238066.wixsite.com/mysite/copy-of-final-major-project-1>
- High Quality Version of Entire PDF submitted
<https://cm238066.wixsite.com/mysite/copy-2-of-final-major-project>
- Video of gallery visualization <https://cm238066.wixsite.com/mysite/copy-of-final-major-project-2>

Project Descriptor

At the age of 18, I first walked through the heavy metal door of the Apollo Amateur Boxing Club in Barton, Torquay. Like many others there I was missing something in my life and desperately needed some stability. The building was basic, there was no heating and when it rained the roof leaked, still it had a charm and safety that warms me to this day.

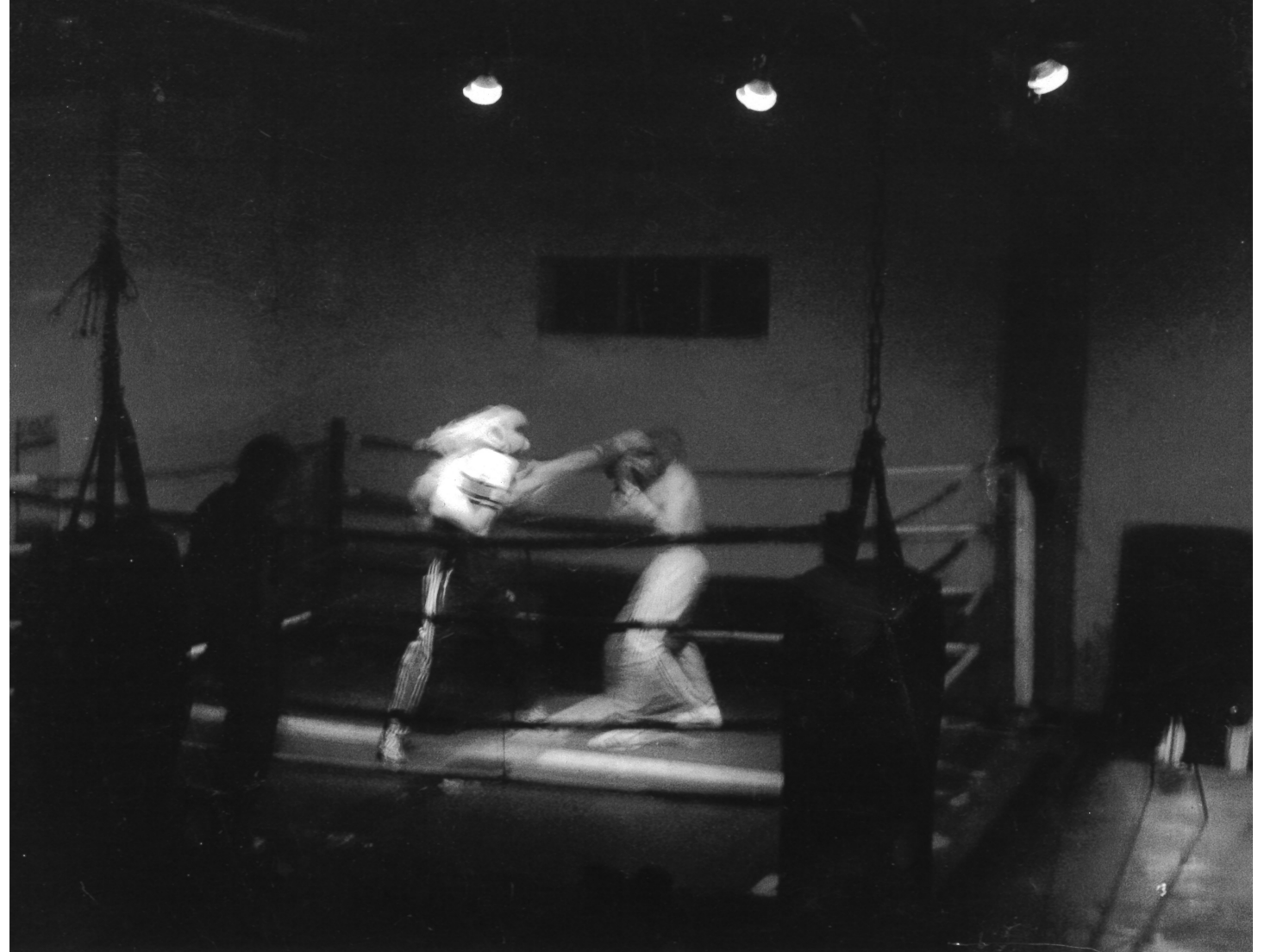
Like many young people who take up the sport, I had big dreams. I idolised Muhammed Ali and had the lofty goal of becoming the heavyweight champion of the world, the supreme symbol of the ultimate masculine ideal. I was fascinated by the history of boxing, the noble art as it's known. It transcended the sport, for example, the fight between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling in 1938 symbolised the battle between democracy and the fascism of the Nazis and the impact Ali had on the civil rights movement was immeasurable.

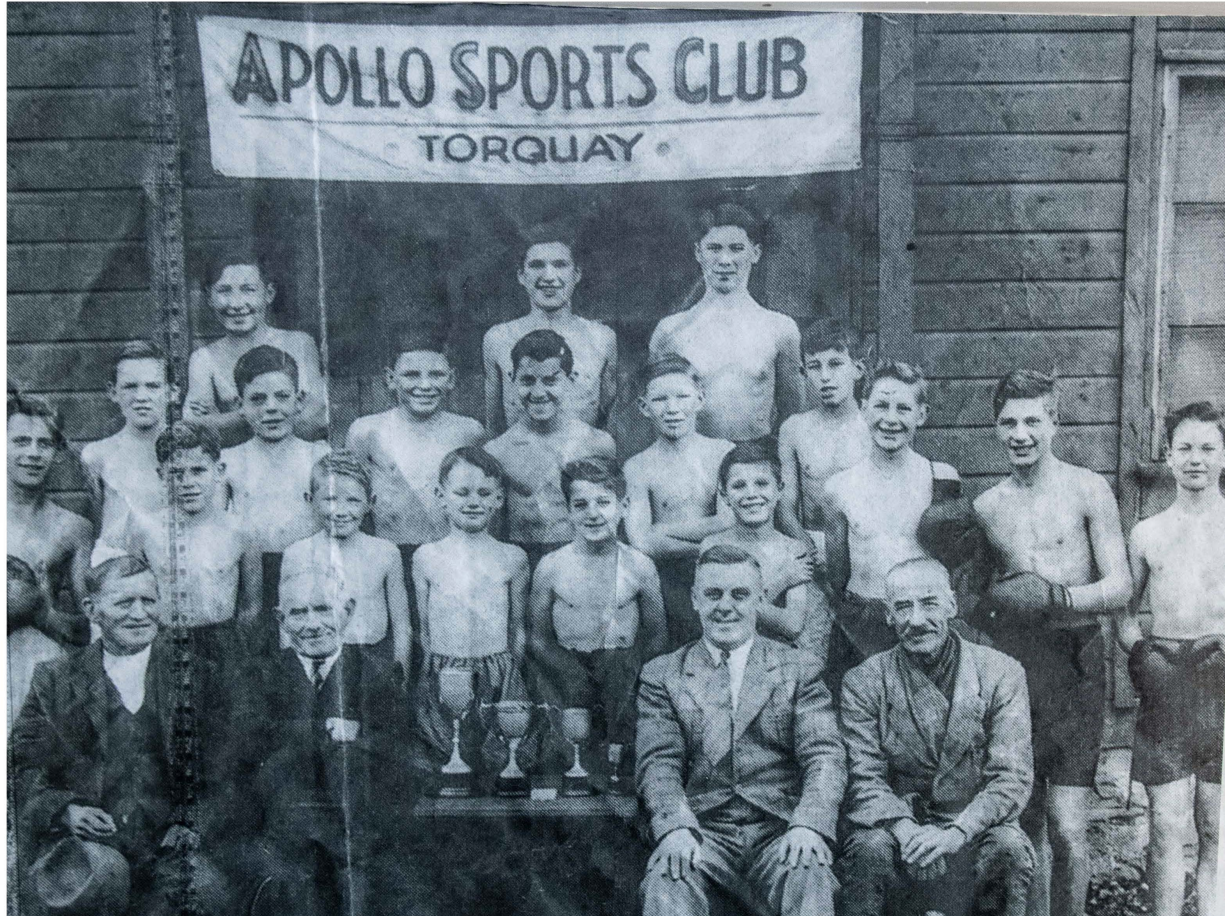
Several mentors at the club positively influenced my life and have been a considerable support to countless others who trained there. I have maintained a connection to the club and the sport for 25 years both as a competitor, but also through the lens of a camera. Being a combatant allowed me the close access of an insider. The purpose of this project is to preserve a legacy and is a testament to the influence that the boxing club has had on the lives of those involved.

Over the past year, I have been reconnecting with those associated with the club by capturing a set of environmental portraits. This is our story, it may seem brash and bloody in places, yet scratch the surface and there exists a community and fraternity that has extended far beyond the confines of a boxing ring.

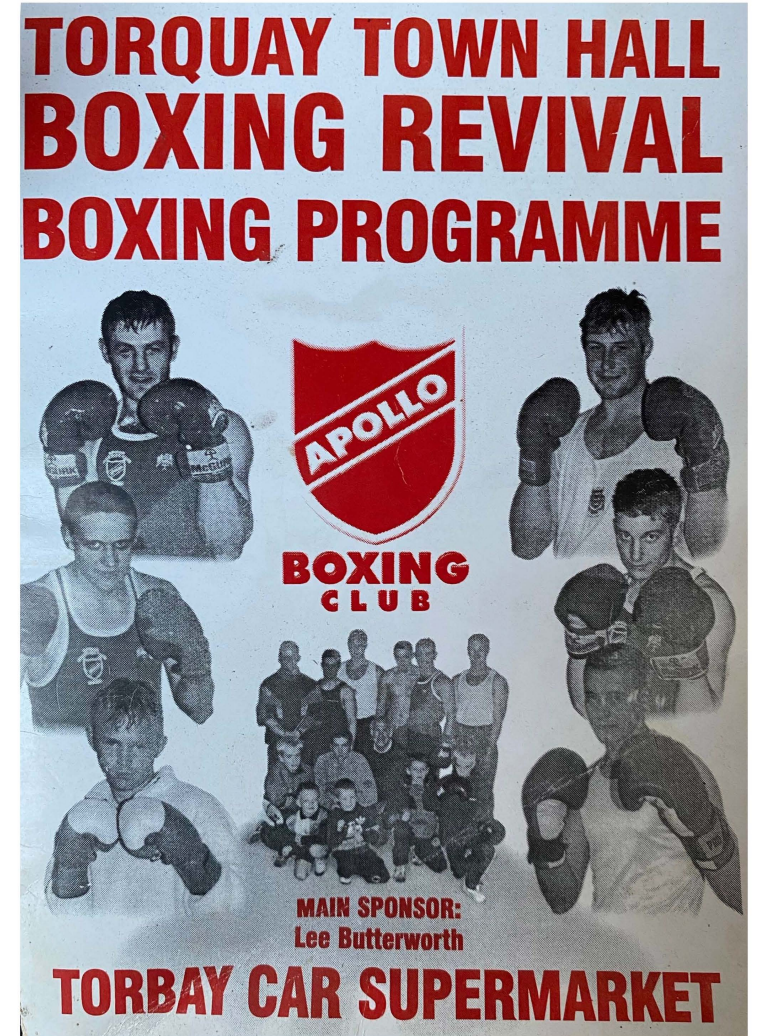
Images Gallery

In memory of Derek Thompson, Trevelyan Conyon and Alan Brightman





Apollo Boxers in 1943



Apollo Boxers in 1997











F.A.O TONY CONYON APOLLO ABC

Hello, I'm try to get in contact with Tony Conyon as lost contact with him a few years ago. He trained me as an amateur boxer and contacted my family via phone but didn't leave a contact number.

My name is Chris (Buzz) Matthews and my contact number is 07590832640, im on facebook to under

Buzz Matthews

I know he lived in Stoke Gabriel but its been so long I can't remember his address.

Would love to hear from him

Thank you ;



22nd November 2001

















Figures

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- Fig 25 Harry Armstrong (2021) Digital Photograph, Matthews C

Appendix

- Formats, Style, Production Notes :Environmental Portraits
- Early on in the production of the portraits, I tried various approaches. I shot digitally with two speedlight flash gun as the use of camera flash gave the images a quality in the sense that the subject stood out isolated from the background. In addition to this I used a Hasselblad 500cm medium format 6 x6 with Kodak Portra 160 but after a few shoots it became clear that this square format was just not working so I continued to just shoot with the digital camera. I take also used a rangefinder Leica M typ262 with 28mm Elmarit 2.8 as well to work with natural light and did use the image of Jamie Cree. All other images were taken on the Nikon D850 with 24-120mm F4. The aperture setting was generally around F8 on most images as I was looking relatively sharp focus on the backdrop as well as the subjects. I developed a style to move forward with and could continue to refine.
- I chose Landscapes not portraits formats as I wanted the set to have a relatively consistent approach. Full body was the intention for most images though would continue to experiment with framing during initial shoots. I worked with full colour, which retains a realism that I feel isn't present in my more dramatic monochrome work.
- I used Relatively wide angles from 24 to 50mm in range at the very most
- 5.6-8 to give the backdrops greater context but still set the subjects apart from the background. I avoided an overreliance on fighter poses as this too distracting except in a small number of relevant cases.
- In terms of direction I asked them to avoid smiling, just looking for a more natural pose, though not overly constructed.

Appendix - Feedback

Abbie Woodbridge – Documentary Filmmaker and Photographer

Your photo book gives the viewer great insight into your personal journey alongside the club itself and the important mentors in your life. What struck me above all was the deep connection and community bonds the sport generates. It's so huge for personal development! It's soulful and spiritual. The photo book reiterates the importance of having these connections with people, and to aspire to be like others.

The photography, particularly the action shots as you stated are insightful and fully immersive for the viewer. We become you on viewing them and feel what you did. The portraiture captured the characters masterfully. Compositionally speaking you have placed your subjects in such a way to include the background environment - a personal and telling setting. The subjects are authentic, exposing and raw.

It's a souls journey.

Karyn Easton: Photographer and Artist

The Apollo book about boxing by Christopher 'Buzz' Matthews gives a unique snapshot into the time of the Apollo boxing club. The book begins with a variety of old photographs, some with quirky little flaws that are often inherent with the use of old analogue cameras.

These images have beautifully captured some very raw and gritty memories of a bygone boxing age. The black and white images are incredibly atmospheric and the grain afforded by the high speed film used to create them only adds to this effect.

As the book progresses we move into a more modern era with some portraits of the more recent members of the club. However the style throughout the book is consistent. The faces staring back at the viewer are shot in a similar style to the preceding black and white images. They serve to tell a story. These images again are both raw and strangely compelling. It is almost as though each image has a great tale to tell. The stance of the subjects makes them appear bold, strong and confident yet comfortable in their surroundings. What I like most about this book is it's consistency of style. It has a simplistic yet powerful style that invites the reader into a whole new world.

The final image of Harry Armstrong is particularly interesting as it is one of the few portraits to break free from the style of the others. The subject fills more of the frame and uses a shallower depth of field. It too has a story to tell. This image for me leaves the viewer with a sense that even though the Apollo club has been repurposed there's still something special about the old boxing club that continues to live on.

Aron Hosie - Photographer

This is such a personal project to you and its a story of you and the club.

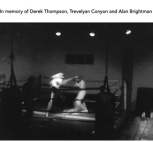
I think the words are really important as they give the depth and understanding to the images.

So I guess in an exhibition setting I would be thinking about the flow of walking through the images and how much time someone would take to read and study the images

The long exposure black and white in the ring is a fantastic image. That would be my large format one if I were to choose one.

Appendix

Photobook Layout in order



1989 a handful of friends set formed the Apollo Sports Club and together we chase the same vision a lot of Great Sports, Apollo sponsoring a young man of football program
Katie White (2020)



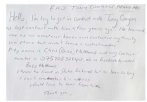
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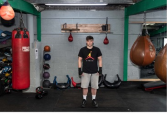
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Critical Review of Practice by Chris 'Buzz' Matthews

Summary

This document is a critical review of my Final Major Project, Apollo, and its public outcomes, in the form of a photobook and upcoming exhibition.

Through all modules, I have explored aspects of masculinity and in the final stage of this study, I returned to boxing. This was, after all, the catalyst that started my investigation. It had been my intention with this final work to preserve a legacy, through the arrangement of a body of work that not only tells a story of the past, but also of who we are now.

In this final stage of a broader investigation, I moved away from photographing boxing shows and tried to permeate other aspects of the members' lives. I weaved a selection of the work from 25 years of photographing Apollo into a narrative form that progressed on to revisit the participants now.

Historical and contemporary research into practice

Grayson Perry's writings in the *Descent of Man* were useful in posing some of the questions surrounding masculinity. As Perry states, even in the 21st century, men have continued to maintain some level of control over the world. This inequality comes with many complexities, of which I've no doubt I will continue to grapple with as I document boxing. This level of control is progressively being challenged and can lead to men's role in society evolving, hopefully for the better.

Of all the men I interviewed for All Man (tv series), the most relaxed around his masculinity was cage fighter 'Colin Freakshow Fletcher. Powerfully built, and successful in the professional mixed martial art (the preferred term for cage fighting), Colin talked openly and humorously about his manhood in a way that felt like he had nothing to prove. His fight persona of a horror show clown and his ridiculous tattoos seemed to mock the regulation machismo often pumped out by fellow fighters. He appeared to be a walking (punching/kicking/strangling) advert for the mental health benefits of sport.

Perry (2016:92)

Perry was taken aback at the contented nature of one of the cage fighters he interviewed, to the point where he started to question his understanding of these environments and found some common ground. He felt this was a rare occurrence but given my experiences, I would argue this was rather more common. The analogy he provided was his competitive nature to put on an art exhibition and would anyone turn up.

Michelle Sank

Michelle Sank's work has been a most useful influence. From reviewing images from a range of her work, I've realised that a solid backdrop wouldn't have given me the outcomes appropriate for the set. Her environmental portraits resonated with my intentions. The environment itself was so key to the story I wanted to tell. Some of the images were taken in boxing clubs, the members homes or just in the local area. Commonly in her work she focused on the people of Exeter, particularly Burnt House Lane, which has often been labelled a poverty stricken ¹part of the city. Much like her, I wanted to shine a light on a community that is often judged unfairly in my humble opinion.



Fig 1 Michelle Sank (2020)

¹ Welcome to the Lane <https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/welcome-lane-look-behind-bad-1788540>



Fig 2 Michelle Sank (2013)

With a handful of friends we formed the Apollo Sports Club and together we chose the name from a list of Greek Gods, Apollo symbolising a young man of perfect physique'
Eddie White (1928)

The quotation provided by the boxing club was a very fortunate find and something I discovered when researching. The club is very proud of its history and retains artefacts dating back nearly a century. At its heart, the club has always been about friendship. It's most revealing in terms of how it talks about the perfect male physique, given my discussion of masculinity.

Images

The archival images were key elements in the project and were important artefacts to use in the telling of the story. I considered how I would be placed within this and chose a portrait of myself taken by a friend to accompany the descriptor in the Photobook. Bleeding from a cut, injuries like this are worn as a badge of honour.



Fig 3 Chris 'Buzz' Matthews

The image of Tim and his son was probably the closest image to my original sketches. The placement of the father's hands and Benjamin's fighters pose captured that continuation of the legacy that I was looking for.



Fig 4 Tim Moran and Ben

Brett White casts a long shadow at the club, as he is one of the longest serving members. He boxed as a schoolboy and continued to box into his 30's. He viewed trainer Derek Thompson as a father figure and was devastated when he died of Leukaemia at the age of 63. Brett took on responsibility for the club following Derek's death and wanted to keep the club running as an amateur boxing club. Over the years however, various factors got in the way and ultimately the club's licence lapsed. I still have hope that one day Brett will start up the Amateur club again, as I would be first in line to help.



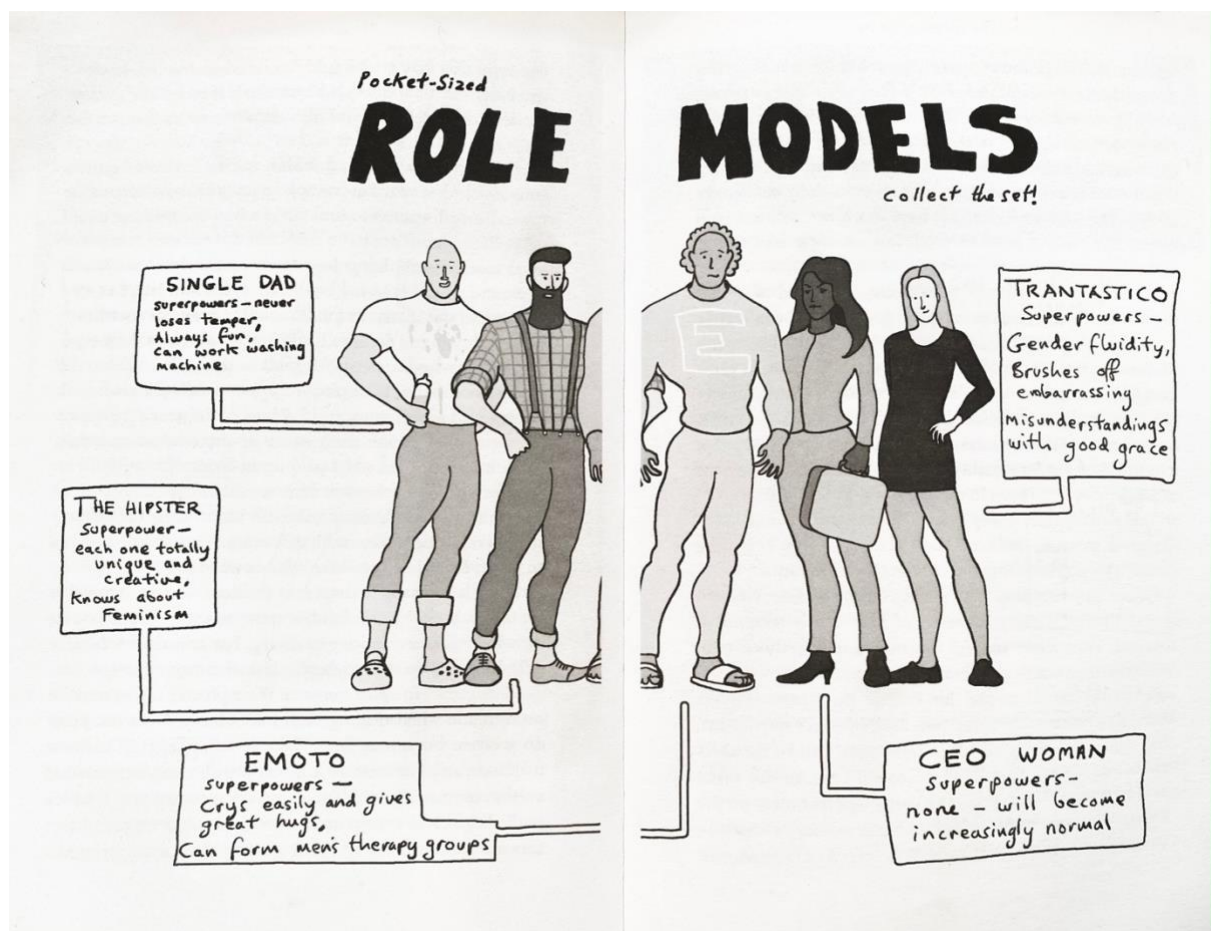
Fig 5 Brett White

Jamie Speight became the club's most successful professional after his amateur career, with over 60 professional fights winning various titles. He never stops moving or talking. He had an audience of onlookers to entertain and was in his element. He is most at home in the boxing ring, so that's where I placed him.



Fig 6 Jamie Speight

I'm not entirely convinced by the power of celebrity male role models. They are exotic, distant beasts. For the role modelling to work, I think boys need the reliable, constant drip-drip of day-to-day contact and attention from a good man, probably his father. A boy needs to have his mentor's sensibility rub off on him and reinforced frequently and casually, not just read about him on some gossip website or see him on chat show.
Perry (2016:104)



Perry (2016:96)

Fig 7

Jamie Cree served in the RAF Police. Serving in the armed forces was a common trait. Nearly all trainers I have encountered had been in the forces in some capacity and as such, this image has a regimental feel to it. I used educational backdrops with him being a headteacher at a high school. We shared a common bond in that we had

both had the late trainer Alan Brightman as a mentor. Both of us are progressing in our careers and something of that strength from Alan seemed an important connection when you consider how Perry cites the positive influence of reliable role models. This was one of the few images from the rangefinder that seemed stronger, the differences were minor, but the perspective from the lens was just more striking. In terms of lighting, there was a significant amount of natural light, especially from above, as it's a glass building.



Fig 8 Jamie Cree

Daniel Marcheggiani is a proud man and this portrait projects this pride in a humble, understated way. He has a great fighting spirit and has overcome much adversity in his life. He emigrated from Venezuela when he was 18 with his wife and worked in Torquay. His house burned down a few years ago and the boxing community rallied around him to help. A health scare recently led to a stay in hospital with kidney stones after collapsing at work. Once recovered, he has ambitions of becoming a bare-knuckle fighter.

The image shows him sitting on the sofa like a throne, almost 'king like', with a photograph of his three sons in the background. He had turned his lounge area into a

gymnasium with a running machine, exercise bike and weights as he was aiming to get fit again to return to boxing. He was keen to show that he was getting fit and that he had a project, but the image of him sitting on his sofa was the most revealing.



Fig 9 Daniel Marcheggiani

The image of Harry Armstrong was approached very differently to the other portraits. The framing was much closer and with a fighters pose as he is still an active fighter. This seemed appropriate, as the image signifies the hopes and dreams of all associated with the legacy of the club. One day Harry might become the Heavyweight Champion of the World. In terms of sequencing, this image was placed at the end. As Perry noted, fighters often have a fight persona and at its most basic, this is the pose with hands raised and eyes staring back. This is the disguise the fighter must wear.



Fig 10 Harry Armstrong

As this project developed, it became clear that I needed to establish my own place within this community. A self-portrait became a necessity. When I think of the many things the boxing club has given me, it seemed logical to capture the portrait in front of my home. Boxing gave me direction and discipline. The successes I had in life stem from the confidence the sport, and those who supported me, instilled in me. I'm proud of the person I have become because of the club, so I wanted to capture a sense of that pride in this image. I had reservations about how much involvement I should have in the final outcome of the project as although I am proud of my achievements, I am far from the most successful boxer. I had a mixed record of wins and losses. In all aspects of my life it helps me, so I wanted to convey this. Wearing the club colours red and black.



Fig 11 Chris 'Buzz' Matthews

Public Outcomes

The exhibition space and photobook

As set out in my proposal, my intention was to produce a photobook and stage an exhibition of my work. The book focuses solely on the Apollo amateur boxing club and this will also be the main focus of the exhibition, with some additional work from my boxing archives covering the local area. The audience for the exhibition will be a mix of the boxing fraternity and those interested in art, which I always felt would be an interesting contrast. The photobook is sequenced into a narrative form and I want it to be personal, much like *Sophie Calle's Take Care of Yourself*, which used written notes and a range of media.

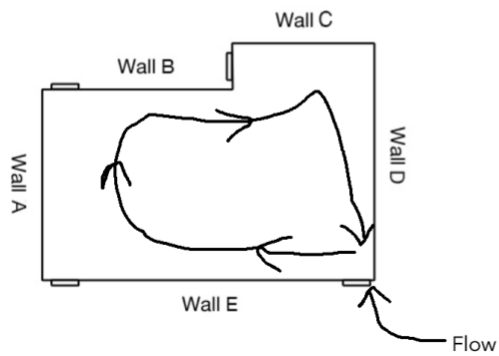


Fig 12

I wanted it to be more than just a sequence of images. As a practitioner, I have always worked between the mediums of photography and moving image. With my film background comes a strong sense of narrative storytelling and this photobook continues in this style.

The exhibition will take place this August at the Artizan Gallery, Torquay, where the club is based. In the proposal I was still exploring the possibility of using the Apollo club as the exhibition venue, but when it became apparent this was not possible, the Artizan Gallery and its proximity to the club was a good option. Below are 3D visualisations of the environmental portraits in place; this will be the main focal point of the exhibition after attendees have viewed some archival work to establish a chronology.

FLOORPLAN



Gallery Specifications

WALL A	w x h 4m x 3.3m	13' 1/8" x 10' 13/16"
WALL B	w x h 4m x 3.3m	13' 1/8" x 10' 13/16"
WALL C	w x h 3m x 3.3m	9' 13/16" x 10' 13/16"
WALL D	w x h 5m x 3.3m	16' 3/8" x 10' 13/16"
WALL E	w x h 7m x 3.3m	22' 15/16" x 10' 13/16"

Gallery Size
 Metric: Width: 5m, Length: 7m, Height: 3.3m
 Imperial: Width: 16' 6", Length: 23', Height: 11'

Fig 13

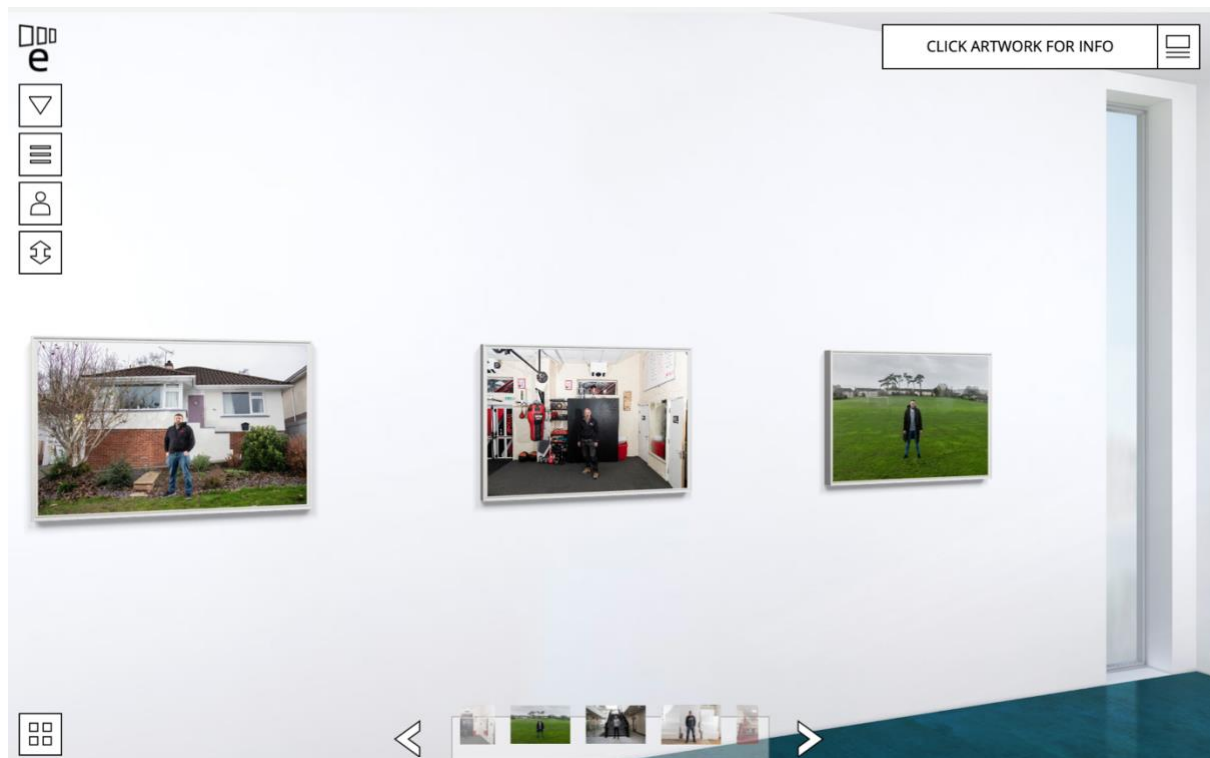


Fig 14

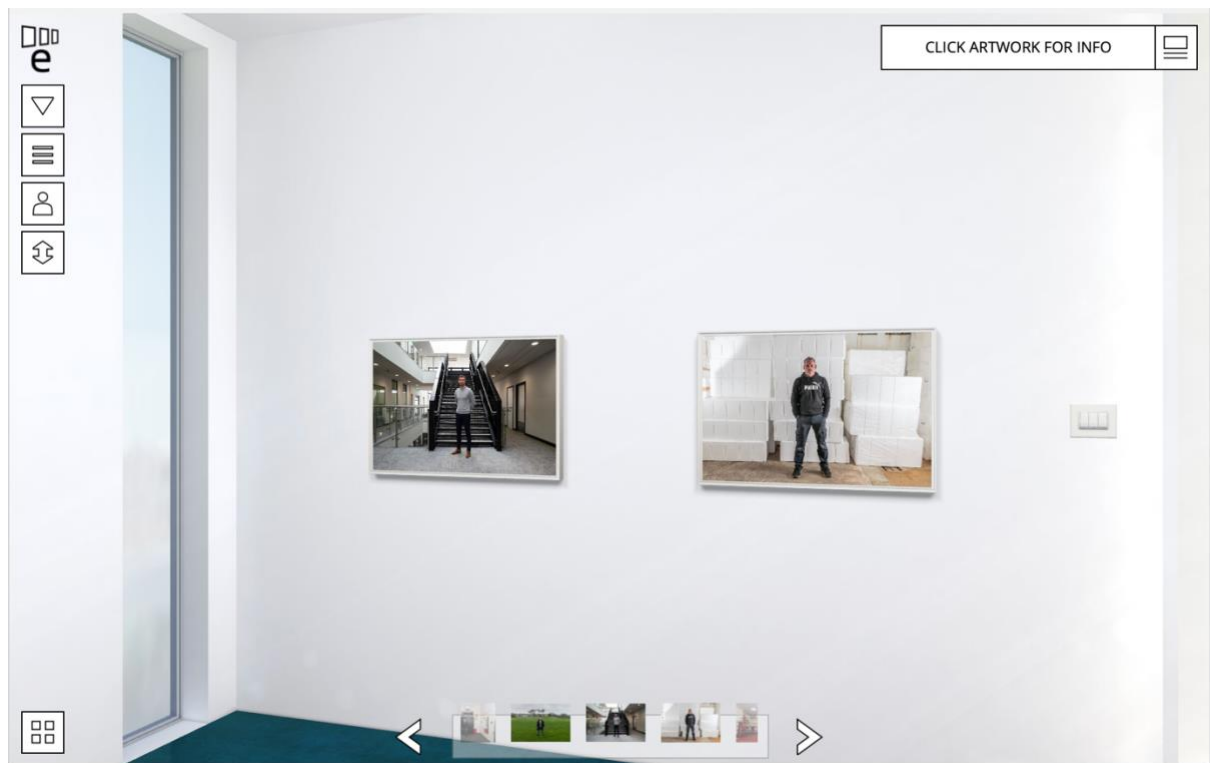


Fig 15

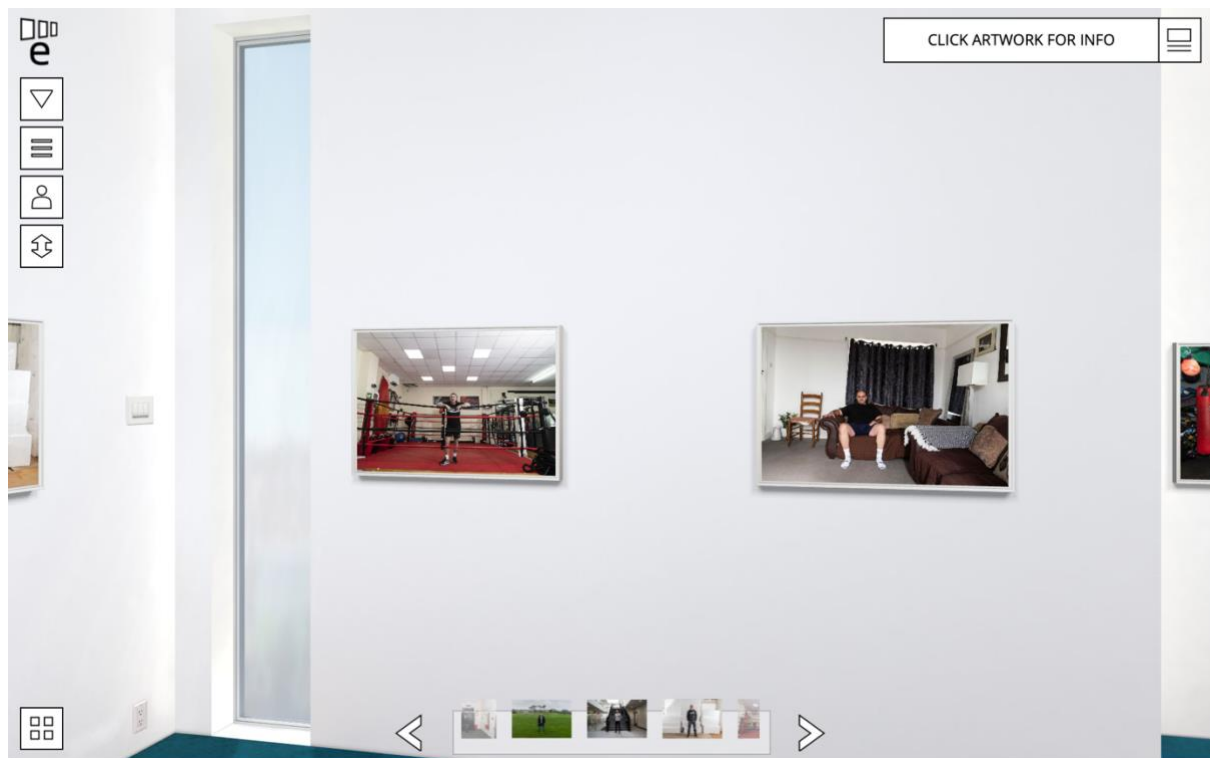


Fig 16

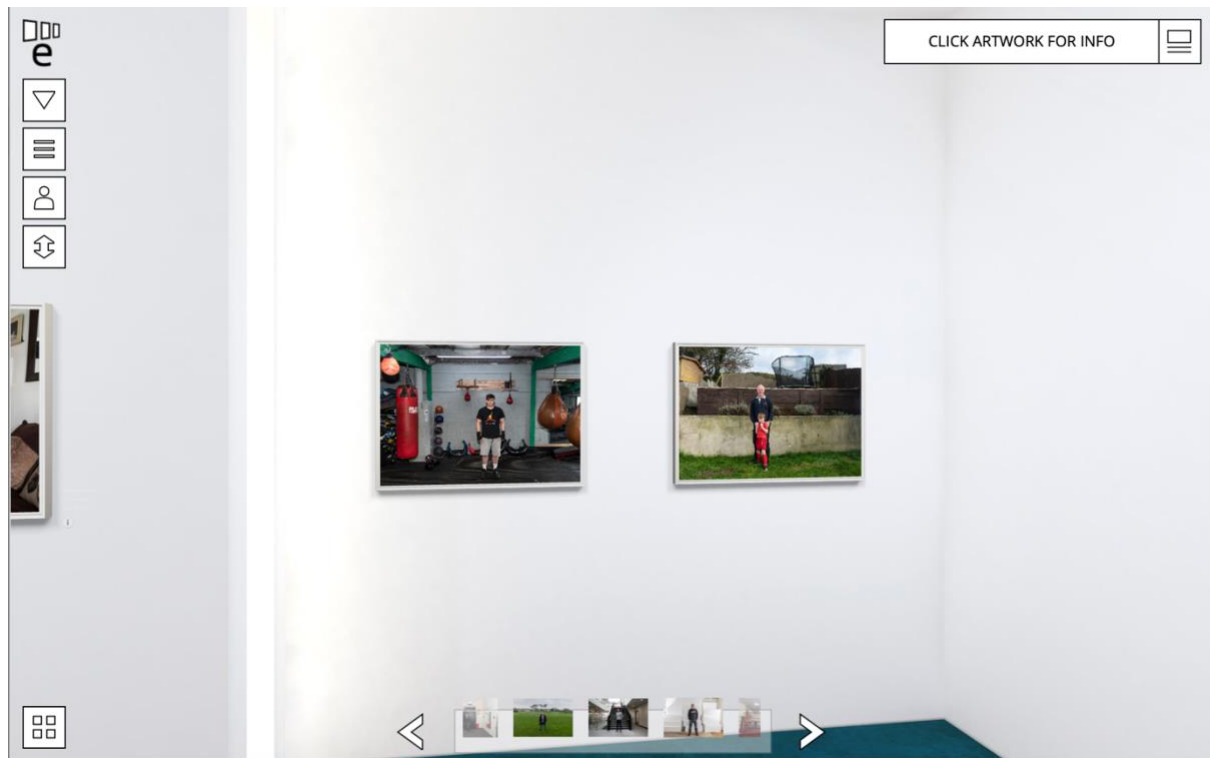


Fig 17

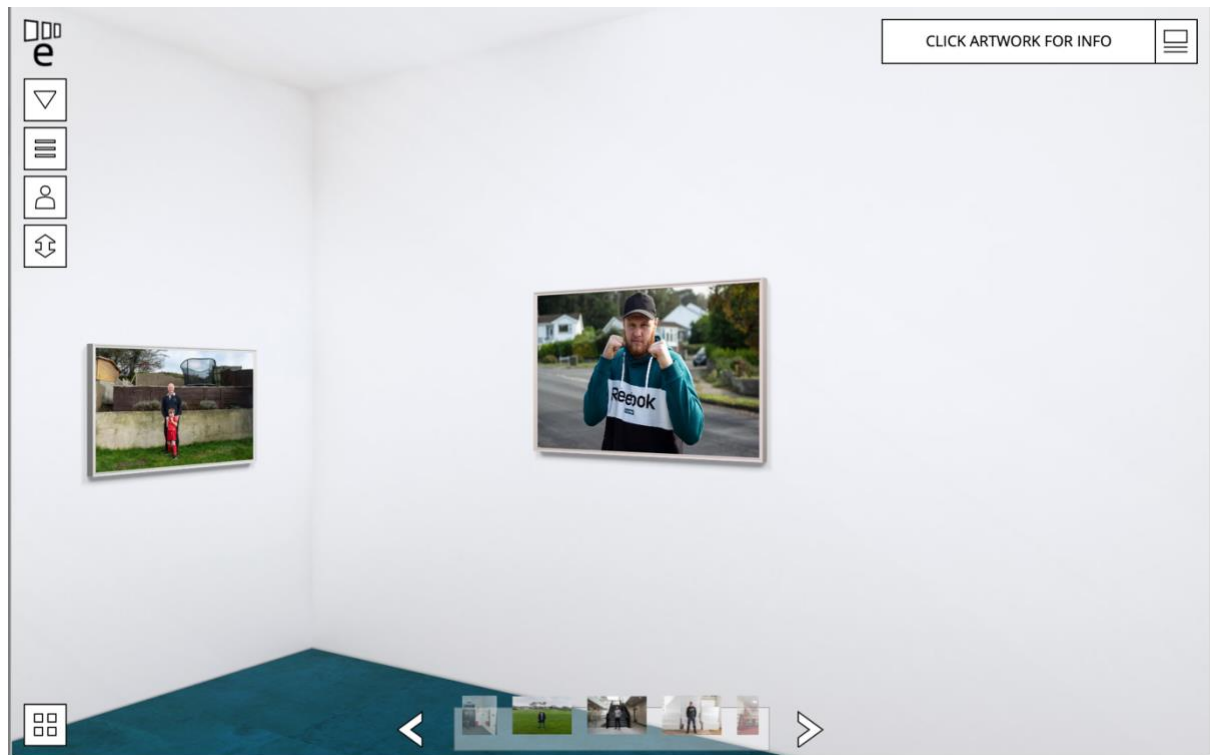


Fig 18

There will be two large format prints in the window of the gallery that will guide visitors into the show. This will be the black and white image below and the image of Tim Moran and his son.

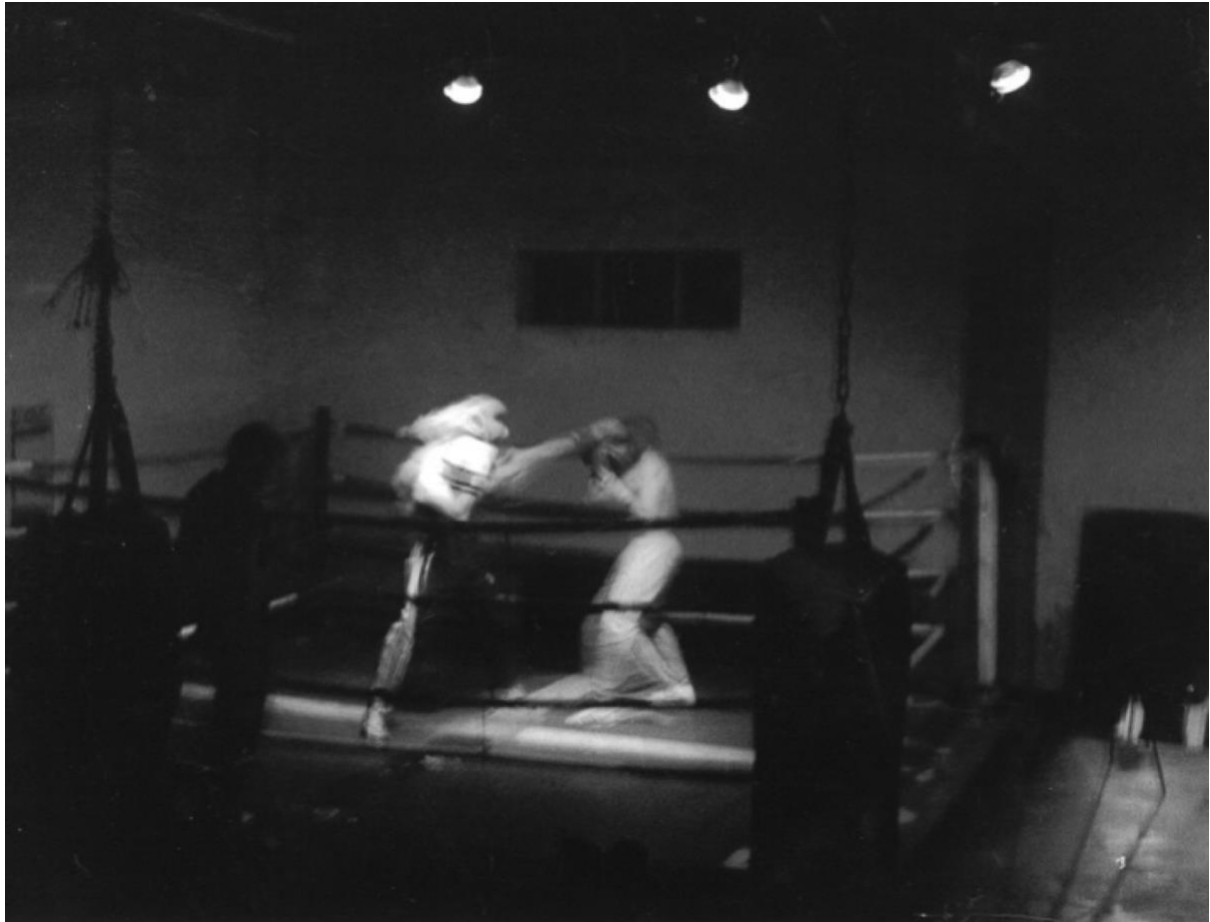


Fig 19

There will be a selection from my archive in the first room, as well as some of the memorabilia images. Text will accompany images as in the Photobook, though in some cases this will be unabridged as the book text was kept to a minimum.

The smaller frames will display 10in by 8in prints and the larger frames with the portraits will be closer to A1. From experimentation with print finishes, I selected the C Type metallic prints as they have an almost 3-dimensional feel, which is especially effective with the environmental portraits.



Matthews (2022)

Fig 20

Publication and audience

Press publication in the Herald Express.



Fig 21

Below are screengrabs from the Artizan Gallery webpage advertising the exhibition.



Fig 22

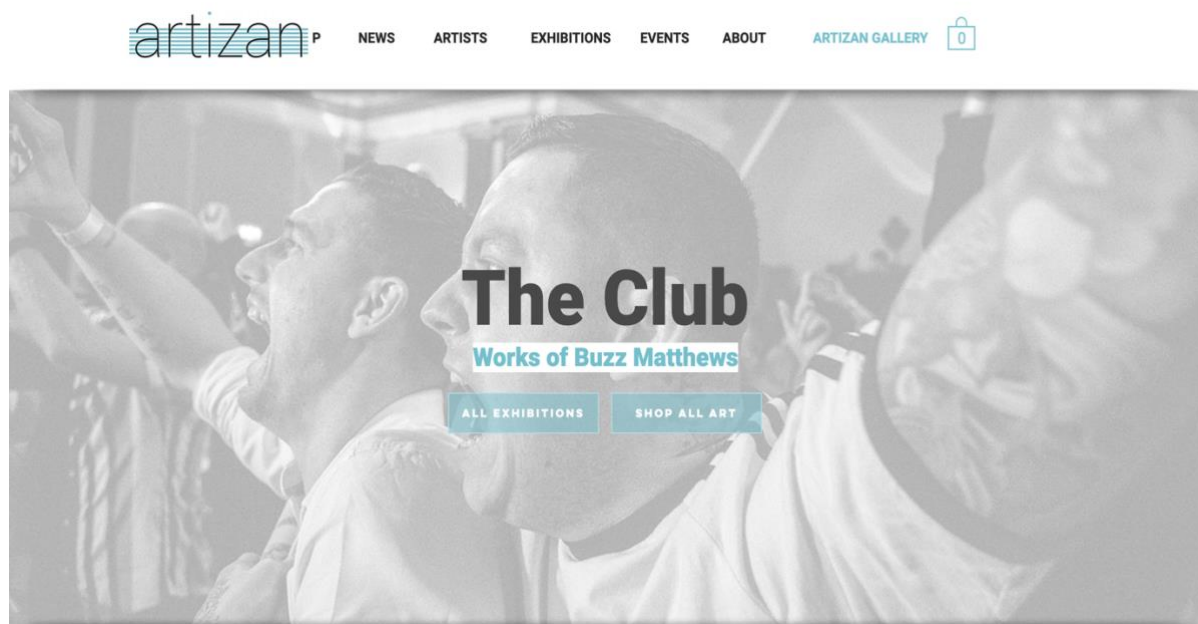


Fig 23



Community and Fraternity

This short exhibition is a culmination of 3 years work exploring aspects of masculinity and its place in modern society, with specific reference to Amateur boxing in Torbay, which Chris has been documenting since 1997 amassing a huge archive of photographs and video.

'At the age of 18 I first walked through the heavy metal door of the Apollo Amateur Boxing Club in Barton, Torquay, like many others there I was missing something in my life and desperately needed some stability. The building was basic, there was no heating and when it rained the roof leaked, but it had a charm and a safety that warms me to this day.

I have maintained a connection to the club and the sport both as a competitor and through the lens of a camera as a photographer. Being a combatant allowed me the close access of an insider.'

'The Club' features selected works from an archive from the last 25 years as a photographer of the Boxing club and Boxing in the local area. During the past year Buzz has reconnected with those associated with the Apollo club by capturing a set of environmental portraits that will be featured at the show. One former fighter remarked to him after a shoot 'Thank you for remembering me'. Often that need to be remembered is a powerful force and Buzz's intention with the exhibition has been to help to preserve a legacy.

'This is our story, it may seem brash and bloody in places, but scratch the surface and there exists a community and a fraternity that has extended far beyond the confines of a boxing ring.'

Buzz Matthews is a lecturer in Filmmaking and Photography at UCSD University Centre South Devon (South Devon College) and has just completed a Photography MA in Photography at Falmouth University.

Fig 24

The audience for the work is likely to be predominantly male, as traditionally the sport has very much a male environment in both participation and spectatorship. However, this has begun to shift in recent years with increased participation from women² so this does give me hope that a broader audience will be reached. The contrast of boxing and art is an unusual mix. I'm hopeful those interested in documentary photography will be interested in engaging with an unfamiliar world. I can understand a boxing show might seem somewhat intimidating to the uninitiated, an exhibition of the work will be far more accessible.

Further dissemination of the work will come in the form of seminars at the upcoming research showcase at UCSD and competitions, for example the Lens Culture Critics Choices Awards among others.

² Sport England survey 2018 https://www.englandboxing.org/news_articles/popularity-of-womens-boxing-growing-shows-sport-england-survey/

Feedback

One of the subjects I photographed, Daniel Marcheggiani, said of the work ‘*Thank you for remembering me*’. Often that need to be remembered is a powerful force and one I can identify with. Boxing in particular measures itself on boxers achievements and they like to reminisce about their battles when given the chance. The purpose of this investigation was to preserve that legacy, so it was heartening to hear Danny’s feelings on the subject.

Aron Hosie : Photographer

‘This is such a personal project to you and it’s a story of you and the club. I think the words are really important as they give depth and understanding to the images. So I guess in an exhibition setting I would be thinking about the flow of walking through the images and how much time someone would take to read and study the images. The long exposure black and white in the ring is a fantastic image. That would be my large format one if I were to choose one.’

I sought feedback from photographer Aron Hosie, who had recently exhibited work for the Down Syndrome Association ³to commemorate 50 years of supporting those affected.

³<https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/about-dsa/our-history/memories-stories-exhibition/>



From the feedback, it was clear to see the personal nature of this project shone through and in particular it was good to see that my placement within the story of the club was understood. I spent considerable time considering how much text, if any, to include, so it was reassuring to see that it added depth to the understanding. I was concerned about adding superfluous commentary, so kept this to a minimum. The long exposure mentioned is a striking image and this feedback was useful, I do think as they say it could be enlarged. It's a 35mm shot but might just enlarge up to A1 with a high-quality scan. This validates my feeling it would be an image that could be placed at the entry to the show. I have already used it as the main image to advertise the show on the Artizan Gallery website.

Karyn Easton, Artist and Photographer, was named in 20 women photographers you should pay attention to in 2021, by The Photoblographer. described the work as having a '*raw and gritty with great atmosphere.*' I feel that rawness was important as I wanted to peel back the layers to not only myself, but the other subjects.

The final image of Harry Armstrong is particularly interesting as it is one of the few portraits to break free from the style of the others. The subject fills more of the frame and uses a shallower depth of field. It too has a story to tell. This image for me leaves the viewer with a sense that even though the Apollo club has been repurposed there's still something special about the old boxing club that continues to live on.

Karyn Easton (2022)

She understood the decision to close the set with an image that broke from the established style.

Conclusion

From this investigation, I have enhanced my understanding of the importance of legacy. It goes hand in hand with boxing. Often when 'old-timers' go to boxing shows they see their friends and reminisce over the past. There is respect there and they care for one another. For younger boxers, it starts as bragging rights and bravado. As they age and leave the competitive domain, it becomes more about the comfort from having shared those experiences together. A common sight at the end of a boxing match is to see the fighters embrace one another.

This is an ongoing project, so vast is this community that there are still many others I have not been able to reach, so I will continue this journey to tell this story. I have hope that one day the Apollo will rise again as a competitive boxing club and whilst I will no doubt have a camera in hand, I hope to be involved in the training of boxers and give back to young people the help that the club provided to me for many years.

I am not suggesting that we should say goodbye to everything that old-school men stood for. Gentle men do possess a quality of tenderness that is very masculine. A gentle man is a powerful person who has the strength to crush something, physically or emotionally, yet chooses not to, chooses love and tenderness. Masculine compassion is a calm, dependable arm round the shoulder. Good men are 'rocks', invested with introverted qualities that are not celebrated enough. These qualities are often side-lined by the melodramatic bluster of cartoon masculinity.

Perry G (2016 :138)

Circling back to my investigation into masculinity. I was always curious to see if men could be better as Grayson Perry had argued. When I looked closely at this community, I suspected that many of the men that had been involved were generally the best examples. Often generous, caring, gentle and honourable. Most are seemingly good fathers and husbands. Of course, my opinion is likely to be 'rose-tinted' somewhat because of the bond I have with them. It would be false to suggest I have not seen repugnant things that have made me question my fascination, but over the many years I have encountered them, I have seen many actions that were the best of men. This is perhaps the Apollo's greatest legacy of all, as in many significant ways it has produced and nurtured these men. Despite many flaws, perhaps, there is hope for men yet.

Word Count 2500

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Figures

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Date accessed 20th April (2022) <https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/about-dsa/our-history/memories-stories-exhibition/>