

# BLAST!



## **PRESS RELEASE issued 28 March 2019**

**Blast! – a festival of photography, talks and walks for the six towns of Sandwell / Friday 24 May to Saturday 29 June, 2019**

**EXHIBITION – Sandwell Pride of Place Project  
ARTIST – The Caravan Gallery**

The Caravan Gallery is thrilled to be working on a major commission from Sandwell-based arts organisation [Multistory](#) for the [Blast! Festival of Photography, Talks and Walks](#). The festival will take place across Sandwell from 24 May – 29 June 2019.

Since late 2017, The Caravan Gallery have been making regular visits to Sandwell's six towns – Oldbury, Rowley Regis, Smethwick, Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich. Using photography as a starting point they are working with local people to create a portrait of each town and its residents. Their findings will result in a series of publications, and a large **Sandwell Pride of Place Project exhibition** for Blast! Festival, which will see the former Poundland shop, next to West Bromwich bus station, turned into a temporary gallery-cum-alternative visitor centre celebrating the multifaceted character and creativity of the area.

The opening display will include photographs of Sandwell by The Caravan Gallery, a selection of [photo competition](#) entries (**closing date 26 April**) and a large hand-drawn 'Map of Sandwell' where visitors can add their own observations, thoughts and confessions to create a colourful and entertaining artwork. The shop opens to the public at 11 am on Friday 24 May, and the exhibition will grow and evolve throughout the festival as visitors add their own Sandwell-related contributions in any medium – stories, poetry, fascinating facts, memorabilia, drawings, paintings, photographs, sculpture, etc; all of which people can loan or donate to the project.

Having carried out numerous [Pride of Place Projects](#) The Caravan Gallery never fail to be impressed by people's generosity and enthusiasm to talk about where they live, and the sheer quantity of material added between the opening parties and closing celebrations is quite staggering!

Please check The Caravan Gallery and Multistory websites and social media regularly for updates. We've also set up a dedicated **Sandwell Pride of Place**

**Project** [Facebook](#) group where you can keep up to date with activities and share your own impressions of Sandwell.

The exhibition is at the former Poundland shop, Unit 3, Kings Square Shopping Centre, High Street, West Bromwich, B70 7NW from 24 May to 29 June 2019. Opening times: 11am – 6pm, Wednesday to Saturday.

The Sandwell Pride of Place Project **opening party** is at 6pm to 9pm on Friday 24 May and the **closing party** is at 6pm to 9pm on Saturday 29 June, at the former Poundland shop (address above). All welcome!

### **The Caravan Gallery**

The Caravan Gallery is a collaboration between artists and photographers, Jan Williams and Chris Teasdale, who use photography to document the reality and surreality of everyday life, and to explore sense of place. It is also a mobile exhibition space and social club on wheels that engages with people and places 'normal' galleries might not easily reach. Since setting up in 2000, Jan and Chris have travelled thousands of miles and exhibited in hundreds of locations, nationally and internationally, from an Asda car park in Liverpool to the Paul Smith Space, Tokyo, showing work inside their caravan and on the walls of major galleries.

<http://www.thecaravangallery.photography>

[www.blastphotofestival.com/artists/thecaravangallery](http://www.blastphotofestival.com/artists/thecaravangallery)

### **Blast Off!!**

Blast! is like no other festival because it has been produced with, and for, local people who have collaborated with 40 outstanding photographers and artists to present stories about everyday life. With exhibitions, film screenings, events, talks and walks across Sandwell, Blast! will be presented on the streets, the Metro line, in shops and libraries, on historic buildings and in the community halls and venues of Sandwell. The festival will focus on each of Sandwell's six distinct towns: West Bromwich, Tipton, Rowley Regis, Oldbury, Smethwick and Wednesbury; it is open to everyone and is free.

Blast! takes place from 24 May to 29 June 2019, and you can find more information on the website; festival brochures will be available across the six towns.

[www.blastphotofestival.com](http://www.blastphotofestival.com)

**Peter Knott, Area Director, Arts Council England**, said: "Culture plays a vital role in making the places we live vibrant and exciting and we're delighted to be investing in Multistory's Blast! Festival, celebrating the Black Country's art, culture, history and people. We're pleased that funding from the National Lottery through our Ambition for Excellence programme is going to enable more people to access and be inspired by extraordinary arts and culture, as Sandwell comes alive with photographic exhibitions, talks, walks, workshops and screenings this summer."

**Emma Chetcuti, Director of Multistory**, said: “Blast! is a festival like no other, made with and for local people who have collaborated with outstanding photographers and artists. It is accessible and designed for maximum engagement of local people. Blast! is a celebration of community, stories and hope. We hope you’ll join us for the launch weekend in West Bromwich on 24 May and 25 May, and visit all of the six towns during the festival period.”

**Blast!** is funded through Arts Council of England's Ambition for Excellence Programme and is supported by Sandwell Council.

**Multistory** is an ambitious community arts charity based in West Bromwich in the borough of Sandwell that documents life in Sandwell and the Black Country as part of an ongoing body of photographic work and digital archive. Multistory commissions acclaimed photographers and writers to work with local people to tell their stories of every day life; recent commissions have included projects by Martin Parr, Polly Braden, Susan Meiselas, Corinne Noordenbos and Jon Tonks.

### **Media**

If you are interested in any of the following, please contact Amy McLauchlan [amymclauchlan@multistory.org.uk](mailto:amymclauchlan@multistory.org.uk)

- A selection of free to use high-res press images (on request).
- To attend specific exhibitions or events over the six week period.
- An interview with Multistory and / or The Caravan Gallery.

**ENDS**