

Photoworks

From Little Acorns...

Photoworks Festival

November 2022

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Photoworks Festival returns in the format of the Festival in a Box, an experimental and decentralised festival model promoting accessibility, sustainability, and agency where the audience becomes the curator. The Festival (formerly Brighton Photo Biennial), now in its tenth edition, will launch on 25 November featuring ten international contemporary artists and photographers.

Photoworks Festival 2022 takes Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, a dystopian climate fiction novel, set in the not-so-distant future of the 2020s, as a starting point to think about how and who can shape the future. Each of the ten artists' practice engages with themes of community, the act of archiving, love, family, the environment, recycling and being resourceful, and imagining the future.

The festival's title *From Little Acorns...* references 'Acorn' the name of the new community built by Butler's protagonist and also the 14th-century English parable 'mighty oaks from little acorns grow'. Using the artists' work as a starting point the festival theme is also a call to action for audiences to imagine and re-imagine the future.

The work in the festival includes Anishika Varma's 'The Wall' combines a range of mediums to invite the audience to rethink their encounters with nature and how this forms who we become. Weaving together multiple narratives from mythology, rituals, historical events and anti-racist activism Josèfa Ntjam's proposes alternative futures while focusing on Black struggles. 'Hidden Gems' developed for the Photoworks Festival by Felicity Hammond focuses on mineral extraction and mining the earth's resources and 'Speak!' by Ebun Sodipo features lips of singing and speaking trans women spewing what looks like fire, which are, in fact, fragments of burning police stations taken from the internet. Collectively, the disparate work of all ten artists raises questions such as how can we create change and adapt? Who is responsible for the future? How can artists help visualise a better tomorrow?

In line with Butler's narrative exploring new models of community building the Photoworks Festival 2022 can be experienced as a Festival in a Box for participants to unpack and activate with their own community, in their own time, wherever they are in the world. Inviting the audience to become the curator allows for engagement beyond what is offered in traditional festival environments. Two new international curatorial partnerships, with Fotogarten (Thailand) and Yaounde Photo Network (Cameroon) have been developed as to expand and progress these aims. In addition, Photoworks will host a series of events over 10-months to activate the box, exploring accessibility and open-ended curatorial approaches with a multiplicity of readings. The events will culminate in October 2023 with a 'future of festivals' symposium exploring new models for photography biennials.

Notes for editors

Photoworks Festival in a Box is available via www.photoworks.org.uk/shop

Photoworks

Photoworks champions photography for everyone. We are an international platform, global in reach, and have provided opportunities for artists and audiences since 1995. We do not have a physical venue, but our online channels are always open. Our programme brings new experiences to audiences and opens up new ways to encounter photography.

Photoworks is a registered charity and the only organisation with a national remit for photography in England. Our work is supported by public funding through Arts Council England's National Portfolio.

Yaounde Photo Network

Created in Yaounde (Cameroon) in 2016, Yaounde Photo Network (YPN) is a platform promoting Cameroonian photography and video art through workshops, events, exhibitions, commissions, and partnerships. Developed and managed by art historian and curator Christine Eyene, YPN organises and produces photography exhibitions and video art events fostering a dialogue between Cameroonian and African artists both locally and internationally. Yaounde Photo Network is developed and funded by Eyonart, Christine Eyene's curatorial and exhibition production platform.

FotoGarten

FotoGarten is a Thailand-based collective that aims to champion Thai photography culture through workshops, shows and education sessions with the mission, 'Everyone can learn, play, think – with photographs.'

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