

PRESS RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2020

'Covid Tales From Tom's Bench'

A photo-story exhibition by Jim Grover

30th September – 31st December, 2020



Sunday 2nd August

Dave owns 'Dave's Paws', a professional dog walking, cat feeding, and pet sitting business. He has been coming to Honest Tom's for 6 years as it's on his daily dog-walking route. Today he is walking only Luna.

"Our business has taken a massive hit. We lost a few dogs where clients lost their businesses...although we're still walking their dogs for free. All our cat business went out of the window because, obviously, no one is going away and leaving their cats."

Each day in August 2020, award-winning social documentary photographer Jim Grover photographed someone or some group sitting on the same park bench, erected in memory of 'Honest Tom', on Clapham Common, South London and asked them how Covid had affected their lives.

The process was deliberately random; whoever sat down became Jim's subject for the day. Sometimes he waited for up to 3 hours for someone to sit on the same bench...and on one day, despite going twice, no-one sat on it, so the empty bench became Jim's mute subject for the day.

The diverse range of 'sitters' were from all walks of life: 'brickies', a company director, students, motor-bikers, a dog-walker, an NHS speech therapist, an ex-army anti-tank gunner, government workers, a black cabbie, an analyst programmer, and a 'great-grannie', amongst many others. And their stories and experiences are similarly varied.

The result is a unique and powerful photo-story that makes very real and human the wide range of stories and experiences that we read and hear about every day. The imagery also portrays the passage of time through the weekly fresh flowers on the back of Tom's bench that wilt and die in the August heat.

Jim Grover said: "Everyone who sat on Tom's bench has been through what we've all encountered over the past few months. But the impact on individual lives has been so varied, from surprisingly rewarding to absolutely harrowing, and everything in between. Yvonne's moving story, on the last day of my month-long project, August 31st, put all the others into context; hers was life-changing."

The *Covid Tales From Tom's Bench* exhibition, with the accompanying stories, will be on display for three months at the Omnibus Theatre Café/Bar on Clapham Common, South London. Viewing will be subject to safe social distancing guidelines. It will also be available to view online from 30th September, when the exhibition opens, by visiting Jim's website at <http://www.jimgroverphotography.com>

The final photo-story comprises 28 sequential photographs, with accompanying captions and stories.

Jim Grover teaches Documentary Photography at the Leica Akademie UK. He is currently working on various photo-stories in south London, and his next major exhibition will be unveiled in 2021. For more about his award-winning and critically acclaimed work please see the notes for editors below.

About Tom's Bench

A 24 hour/365 days a year 'snack wagon' ('Honest Tom's'), is situated on Clapham Common, South London, and has been there for 30 years. Regarded as something of an institution by its regulars, it was owned and operated by Tom, who sadly passed away last year. In his memory a bench was erected by it, with an inscription plaque and a vase (which Nadine, who has worked in Honest Tom's for 27 years, fills with fresh flowers each week).

Exhibition Listings Information

Title: 'Covid Tales From Tom's Bench'
Dates: Friday 30th September – Thursday 31st December 31st
Times: Every Thurs to Sunday.
Thurs: 9am – 8pm
Fri: 9am– Midnight
Sat: 9am – Midnight
Sun: 10am – 16.30pm

Admission: Free
Venue: Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common Northside, , SW4 0QW
View online: From 30th September at:
<http://www.jimgroverphotography.com>

For more information, please contact: Diana Whitehead; Fourth Wall PR at
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Notes for editors

About Jim Grover, Photographer

Jim Grover is a social-documentary photographer based in Clapham, South London. His particular passion is using images to tell stories...especially to celebrate daily life, local communities and traditions...and to make the unseen seen.

Jim's images have appeared in many publications and online including *The Times*; *The Sunday Times*; *The Observer*; the *BBC* (TV, on-line, radio); *The Guardian*; *The Guardian Magazine*; *The Daily Telegraph*; *Time Out*; *The British Journal of Photography*; *Black + White Photography*; *Leica Forum*; *Amateur Photographer*, and many others.

His images have been recognized in various competitions including The Sony World Photography Awards, and the Landscape Photographer of the Year Awards. In 2015 he won the 'Faith Through a Lens' competition; the judging panel was chaired by the internationally renowned photographer Sir Don McCullin CBE.

His work has appeared in both solo and joint exhibitions. In May 2018 his solo exhibition in the Oxo Gallery on London's South Bank, '[Windrush: Portrait of a Generation](#)', received extensive media coverage ('*One of 2018's must see shows...*') and attracted 13,000 visitors. The exhibition has been re-exhibited four times and been enjoyed by well over 20,000 visitors. This followed his 2016 solo exhibition, '[Of Things Not Seen](#)', also exhibited in the Oxo Gallery and at the 2017 Edinburgh Festival, and his 2017 solo exhibition, '[48 Hours On Clapham High Street](#)'.

His most recent photo-essay, '[Here Am I](#)', was exhibited in May-June 2019 in the Oxo Gallery on London's South Bank.. 8 months in the making, it celebrated the 25th anniversary, in 2019, of the ordination of women in the Church of England. The exhibition was re-staged in the newly-refurbished Fairfield Halls in Croydon, from January to March 2020.

Jim teaches 'Documentary Photography' at Leica Akademie UK; the next workshop begins in November 2020. In 2016 he was a member of the judging panel at the MIA Photo Fair in Milan.