

HAMILTONS

Nick Waplington: Living Room

14th March – 25th May 2024



Nick Waplington, *Untitled (LR86.170)*, from the series 'Living Room', 1985-1997 © Nick Waplington

"I am seeking and searching constantly. People ask me what I find interesting, and the answer is everything." – Nick Waplington

Hamiltons is thrilled to debut the gallery's first exhibition with Nick Waplington, marking the release of previously unseen image variants and new works from his iconic series *Living Room*, 1991.

Nick Waplington's first book, *Living Room*, was published in 1991, and was an instant sensation within the photography world and beyond. The 59 photographs in the original edition documented the lives of friends, families, and neighbours on the Broxtowe housing estate in Nottingham, England, where Waplington spent many years making thousands of images. This extensive archive of unseen photographs forms the basis of this new conceptual remake of the 1991 monograph, one that revisits and refashions Waplington's iconic work from a contemporary vantage point. This new work follows the same sequencing of landscape and portrait images as the original edition - replacing each of the 59 photographs with an as-yet-unseen work from the *Living Room* archive, often from the same roll of film as the original image. The result is both familiar and uncanny, a vivid journey back to Thatcher's Britain and a testament to the decades of art and life that have elapsed between then and now.

Whilst Waplington's early work was intrinsically rooted in 'documentary' practice, it also challenged the conventional documentary gaze. Simon Baker, director of Maison Européenne de la Photographie, importantly notes that Waplington employs a deeply humanistic approach which

is resistant to voyeuristic or intrusive documentation. Indeed, Baker states: "Waplington is broadly curious and deeply committed in his work, and as serious about family life as politics or art, or music and the social cultures around it, but always as both witness and participant", a method which achieves his simultaneous intimacy and invisibility.

"When I thought something was going to happen, I'd pick up the camera and take some pictures very quickly and then put the camera down. And then not take any again for a while. You don't want to be taking pictures all the time in a documentary-esque situation, because otherwise it becomes about you and the camera and not the situation. It's about having an instinct for when something is going to happen." – Nick Waplington.

Waplington's choice of a 6x9 camera, commended by John Berger in an essay in both the 1991 and 2024 publications of *'Living Room'*, produces a landscape crop where "the forms photographed have the space to expand, to become landscapes, or even firmaments". The artist's purposeful use of colour emanates American street landscape characteristics, mixed with a quintessentially British documentary style. Waplington reacts to what he describes as the common "grainy, downtrodden, black and white interpretation of working-class life"; instead, Waplington's lens does not estrange the subjects from the viewers but turns the domestic into public in a way where tears, screams, jokes, solace, tiredness and pleasure have equal room.

ARTIST BIO:

UK and US-based artist Nick Waplington works with photography as a medium to submerge in communities, resulting in personal involvement and visual work. He caught the attention of John Berger and Richard Avedon, along with the rest of the world, in the 1990s with *Living Room* and has since then created recognisable, frank representations of people and their socio-political backgrounds. Beginning in his teenage years, his subjects have ranged from post Punk youth culture against the backdrop of Thatcherism, to the heyday of House and rave culture in 1990s NYC. In 2008/9 Waplington documented the production of the last collection of Alexander McQueen at his London studio. He continues to work in London and New York on a series of overlapping photographic and art projects.

Waplington has had solo shows as an independent artist across the UK and the USA, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art (*The 'Living Room' and 'Circles of Civilization' Series*, 1992), The Photographers' Gallery London (*'Living Room'* 1990-1991) and more recently Tate Britain (*'Working Process'* 2015). His works have also featured in group shows at the Venice Biennale (*'Learn How To Die the Easy Way'*, 2001), Brooklyn Museum in New York City (*'This Place'*, 2016) and White Chapel Gallery (June-September 2017).

His works are part of the permanent collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, Victoria and Albert Museum and Government Art Collection in London and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Alongside being honoured with the *Infinity Award: Young Photographer* in 1993 by the International Center of Photography in New York City. Waplington practice making books and zines continues with publications like *Comprehensive* with Phaidon and self-published via Jesus Blue such as *Anaglypta*.

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