# Tate Britain to showcase pivotal 1980s photography exhibition



This autumn, Tate Britain will host The 80s: Photographing Britain, a significant exhibition examining the 1980s as a pivotal era for the art of photography. The showcase will feature nearly 350 images along with archival materials, providing a comprehensive look at how photographers captured the profound social, political, and economic changes of the time. Attendees will gain insights into how photography became a medium for social documentation, cultural celebration, and artistic exploration during this highly innovative period.

This exhibition is set to be the most extensive survey of 1980s photography in the UK to date. It will highlight the work of over 70 lens-based artists and collectives, ranging from renowned figures to emerging voices, including Maud Sulter, Mumtaz Karimjee, and Mitra Tabrizian. The selected images span various locales across the UK, from John Davies’ images of post-industrial Wales to Tish Murtha’s portraits of youth unemployment in Newcastle. The exhibition will delve into important shifts, such as advancements in colour photography and the influence of cultural theorists like Stuart Hall and Victor Burgin. Also highlighted will be significant publications like Ten.8 and Camerawork, which fostered new discussions about photography.

A significant portion of the exhibition will focus on Thatcher’s Britain through documentary photography that captures pivotal political moments of the 1980s. Powerful images by John Harris and Brenda Prince will provide a visual chronicle of the miners’ strikes, while Syd Shelton and Paul Trevor’s works will depict anti-racism demonstrations. The exhibition will also feature Format Photographers’ images of Greenham Common and projects by Willie Doherty and Paul Seawright responding to the Northern Ireland conflict. Additionally, it will offer a snapshot of a changing Britain, presenting Anna Fox’s depictions of corporate excess, Paul Graham’s reflections on social security offices, and Martin Parr’s absurdist take on Middle England. Further, Markéta Luskačová and Don McCullin’s portraits of London’s East End and Chris Killip’s images of Northumberland’s ‘sea-coalers’ will be showcased.

In a reflection of the era's social issues, the exhibition will address the impact of Section 28 and the AIDS epidemic on the LGBTQ+ community. Tessa Boffin’s reimagined literary characters and Sunil Gupta’s ‘Pretended’ Family Relationships 1988 will highlight queer visibility against a backdrop of legislative adversity. Ajamu X, Lyle Ashton Harris, and Rotimi Fani-Kayode will be featured for their work that centres Black queer experiences, offering an assertive counter-narrative through their intimate portraits and nude studies. The exhibition will also include Grace Lau’s documentation of underground queer communities, capturing a resilient spirit during trying times.

The showcase will conclude with a focus on countercultural movements of the 1980s, highlighted through the energetic documentation of underground performances and club culture by photographers like Ingrid Pollard and Franklyn Rodgers. The rise of i-D magazine and its influence on a new generation of photographers, including Wolfgang Tillmans and Jason Evans, will also be explored. Alongside stylist Simon Foxton, they pioneered a bold new style of fashion photography reflective of the dynamic youth culture that defined the period.

The 80s: Photographing Britain  
21 November 2024 – 5 May 2025  
Tate Britain, Millbank, London SW1P 4RG  
Open daily 10.00–18.00  
Tickets available at [tate.org.uk](https://www.tate.org.uk) and +44(0)20 7887 8888  
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