



**** SAVE THE DATES ****



**PRESS
RELEASE**

WEST COAST PHOTO FESTIVAL 2021 RELAUNCH

Exciting Debut International Photography Festival explores and celebrates the Cumbrian West Coast

With our first ever Festival having to be postponed in March 2020, just days before the first Coronavirus lockdown, we are proud to now announce a two-part relaunch, with even more world-class commissions, artists, events & exhibitions.

CHAPTER ONE: Summer showcase launches **Thursday 3 JUNE 2021**
with exhibitions online & in public spaces, plus an open call competition.

- » Announcing new commissioned work by award-winning digital artist **Mishka Henner** in collaboration with **Vaseem Bhatti**.
- » West Coast on Film with Cumbrian artists **RL Wilson, Julia Parks** and **Rachel Capovila**.
- » New work by emerging Cumbrian artists Rhiannon Hunter, Danielle Chapelle Aspinwall & Zoe Forster
- » *Labouring the Landscape*: Participatory photography project led by **Robert Parkinson**
- » *The Fells with Iron Ribbons* - an experimental sound-based work from Cumbrian young people led by artist and DJ, **Ashley Holmes**.
- » Public outdoor installation in Barrow of famous photograph Boy with Pigeon by photographer **Chris Killip**.
- » FREE Open Call competition - selected photos to be a part of our autumn Festival
- » Workshops, talks and the new *West Coast Photo Publication* bringing the Festival into your own home.

CHAPTER TWO: Autumn offering opens Thursday 7 OCTOBER 2021
with gallery exhibitions & public talks at Cooke's Studios, Barrow-in-Furness

- » An extraordinary exhibition bringing together for the first time the work of two acclaimed British social documentary photographers, **Vanessa Winship & Phoebe Kiely**
- » **The Caravan Gallery** will create their Barrow Pride of Place project at Barrow Market
- » Cumbrian Focus: exhibition of new work from local & emerging photographers featuring **Marie Smith, Katrin Joost, John Darwell, Mario Popham, Henry Iddon and Philip Green**

We're delighted to be able to relaunch the first major festival of international photography and digital art in this part of the UK, a stretch of 100 miles of industrial and coastal towns lining the edge of Cumbria - England's second largest county. Its wealthier and more 'picturesque' neighbour might be The Lake District, however the West Coast boasts starkly beautiful natural and striking man-made landscapes surrounding industrial coastal towns. Remnants of coal mines and the alien tombs of Sellafield Nuclear Power Plant contrast with Scafell Pike, only miles away. This exciting new festival reveals and celebrates the unique identity of this 'hidden' area and the character of its people through the work of leading international and regional artists using photography and digital art to articulate local, national and international identities. This county-wide Festival provides a rare opportunity in one of the UK's most deprived areas to see world class exhibitions and exciting new commissions, at a time when the pandemic has fuelled further isolation of this often-overlooked area of Cumbria.

Much has changed over the last year. We were due to launch just before the UK was plunged into a national lockdown and Barrow hit the headlines for its high coronavirus rates. As we relaunch, we're reflecting on the ways we now engage with contemporary photography and how we can use digital art to connect to each other. As a result, half of the Festival is moving completely online in June and many of the original artists have changed work to reflect their experiences during this past tumultuous year. We've also included new artists who are responding to issues such as the ongoing mental health pandemic worsened by continual lockdowns and isolation, and the climate crisis and how it affects the Cumbrian landscape.

We're excited to be showcasing a new portrait of this area and to continue to develop new talent and work with diverse audiences and communities. Please save the date, and we'll be in touch with more detailed information about our June showcase shortly.

Loren Slater, Director, West Coast Photo Festival
Charlie Booth, Programme Director, West Coast Photo Festival

Signal Film & Media is an arts charity based in Barrow-in-Furness, one of the most deprived areas of the UK. Our artist led company, has delivered innovative film and digital media projects since 2001. We provide access to opportunities & inspiration through film & digital media to disadvantaged & isolated communities, create award-winning works for exhibition & support the development of a vibrant film and arts culture in the area.

On returning to the area after university, former school friends Loren Slater and Kerry Kolbe returned to their hometown in nearby Ulverston to pursue their dream of making their own films and providing access and opportunities for likeminded people. Back in 2001, they set up the first version of what later became Signal Film and Media in Barrow, to offer activities for people who would otherwise be excluded from the creative and digital sector. As Co-Directors, Kerry Kolbe and Loren Slater raised £700,000 to kick-start a £2m capital project, partnering with Barrow Borough Council, to transform a listed building in the town centre into a flagship media & arts centre. 'Cooke's Studios' now provides a focus for arts participation and significantly enhances the opportunities we can offer locally.

Signal Film & Media now works with local/national funders, education/community organisations and leading artists to provide opportunities that are otherwise unavailable. Our provision includes training, networking, events, exhibitions and access to facilities. We partner with leaders in our field and work with arts providers across Cumbria. In the past year we have worked with 10,000s of people of all ages and backgrounds. Our digital arts programmes open up a world of digital art to new audiences, engaging with local people and gaining excellent feedback locally and nationally. Commissions go on to be exhibited nationally and Felicity Hammond's piece won The Lumen Prize's Rapoport Award for Women in Digital Art. We run a BFI Film Academy and Children in Need programme and have an excellent track record with funders including local Councils, Arts Council, BFI, Big Lottery, Heritage Lottery Fund (with recent HLF films winning many awards at festivals.) <https://signalfilmandmedia.com/>

www.signalfilmandmedia.com



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For further information, to register your interest or for any other queries please contact **Helen Bartosinski** at helen@signalfilmandmedia.co.uk / 07732 194 028



© John Darwell
from the series: *One Discarded Dog Poo Bag, Nine Cumbria Dog Walkers and a Decommissioned Nuclear Reprocessing Plant* (2019-20)
Image courtesy of the artist



© Chris Killip
Boy with Pigeon (1982)
Image courtesy of the artist & Lee Devereaux



© Mishka Henner & Vaseem Bhatti (2021)
Image courtesy of the artist



© The Caravan Gallery
Flying Baguette (2019-20)
Image courtesy of the artist



© Marie Smith (2021)
Image courtesy of the artist



© Vanessa Winship (2019)
Image courtesy of the artist



© Phoebe Kiely (2019)
Image courtesy of the artist