**Press Release**

October 2018

**MARTIN PARR *Return to Manchester***

**16 November 2018 – 22 April 2019**

Martin Parr is one of Britain’s most renowned and publicly known photographers. He is endlessly curious about how we all live our lives. He has developed an international reputation for his colourful photographs which capture our times – whether it is the food we eat, the fashions we wear, what we buy or our leisure activities. His innovative imagery presents the familiar in a new and wry way, demonstrating his oblique approach to social documentary.

Parr has had a huge influence on photographic culture within the UK and internationally. He started his career in Manchester and studied at Manchester Polytechnic (now Manchester Metropolitan University) from 1970-73. He has revisited the city many times over the last 40 years to document the lives of Mancunians.

For his new exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery, Parr will bring together a selection of his Manchester photographs. Ranging from images of Prestwich Mental Hospital (1972) and Yates Wine Lodges (1982-3) to people shopping in Salford (1986) and the Guardian Cities project (2008), his work shows how the lives of Mancunians have changed but also how there is continuity in how we live our lives. We also see Parr’s move from black and white into colour photography for which he is now best known and also his transfer into digital. Parr is also making a new body of work for Manchester Art Gallery: a portrait of the city and its people in 2018.

For his new Manchester commission, Parr has encountered people shopping, in hairdressers, in Mosques, in cafes, at markets, in factories, at parties, playing sport and in the gay village. He has captured scientists doing ground-breaking research at Manchester University, fans of the city’s world famous football teams and the state of the art facilities at the BBC in Mediacity. The images reveal the diversity and inclusive nature of our city and the breadth of activity which takes place. They uncover people’s passions, skills, relationships, quirks - celebrating the humanity of the everyday. A selection of these prints will enter the gallery’s collection.

Starting his career in Manchester, the city had a profound effect on him as it was so different from his childhood home. He recollected: *“I remember so well arriving into Manchester in 1970, having travelled from the safety of suburban Surrey.  It was exciting and felt very real.”* This city sparked his curiosity about people’s lives, what it is to live in a Northern, largely working class and diverse city and he embraced his new context with enthusiasm. After his first year at Manchester Polytechnic, Parr began making cohesive documentary projects which explored a particular subject.

Some of the series included in this exhibition:

**Prestwich Mental Hospital 1972** was Parr’s first documentary project. The images demonstrate how he was able to build a rapport with the patients so they felt comfortable having their photographs taken, a few even playing up to the camera. What could have been quite bleak, institutional images in fact reveal the humanity which Parr captured even in the very early stages of his career.

**June Street with Daniel Meadows 1972** capture a community on the verge of disappearing. Parr and Meadows asked the residents if they could photograph them in their front rooms. The series has become a document of family life in Salford in the early 1970s, with family groups gathered around fireplaces or TVs, with ornaments, pictures, patterned wallpaper and carpets. This was where Parr’s interest in kitsch and decoration developed and started his lifelong fascination with the ordinariness of everyday life.

In 1972, Parr created a board game, **Love Cubes**, which mixed his interest photography with conceptual art. He photographed nine heterosexual couples on a rainy afternoon in Manchester city centre, firstly individually and then together; the object of the game was to match up each couple, with no other information to help with the pairing process except for the details of each person’s hair, height and clothes.

There are seven Manchester pictures in the **Bad Weather** series from **1981,** set across Britain and Ireland. Weather is our national obsession, our favourite topic of conversation for small talk. Here people battle against poor visibility and driving rain, umbrellas being blown inside out. Many of the images were captured with an underwater camera and flashgun, so that Parr could shoot in any weather condition. The use of flash allows him to capture the falling rain which would otherwise be almost invisible and means that the weather comes to the fore within image.

In 2008 Parr was commissioned by *The Guardian* to document 10 British cities including Manchester. He roamed Greater Manchester, taking pictures in places including Eccles, Stockport, Failsworth, Manchester Ship Canal, The Trafford Centre, Salford Quays, Denton, Moss Side and the Northern Quarter. He remarked on the changes to Manchester since his last visit, the dominance of the supermarket over neighbourhood shops and the regeneration after the 1996 IRA bomb which began Manchester’s journey to become an important economic and cultural centre. This series is his first Manchester work using a digital camera, which he started using in 2006.

A new publication to accompany the exhibition will be published in October.

**For further press information and to request images please contact: Catharine Braithwaite on +44 (0)7947 644 110 or** [**cat@we-r-lethal.com**](mailto:cat@we-r-lethal.com)

**Notes to editors**

**Martin Parr** was born in Epsom, Surrey, UK, in 1952. When he was a boy, his budding interest in the medium of photography was encouraged by his grandfather George Parr, himself a keen amateur photographer. Martin Parr studied photography at Manchester Polytechnic, from 1970 to 1973. Parr developed an interest in filmmaking and has started to use his photography within different genres, such as fashion and advertising.

In 2002 the Barbican Art Gallery and the National Media Museum initiated a large retrospective of Martin Parr’s work which then toured Europe for the next 5 years. Parr was Guest Artistic Director for Rencontres D'Arles in 2004. In 2008 Parr was guest curator at New York Photo Festival, curating the New Typologies exhibition. Parrworld opened at Haus de Kunst, Munich, in 2008. The show exhibited Parr’s own collection of objects, postcards, photography prints by both British and International photographers, photo books and a new project from Parr entitled Luxury. The exhibition toured Europe for the following 2 years. He curated the Brighton Photo Biennial in October 2010. In March 2016 *Strange and Familiar*, curated by Parr, opened at the Barbican, London, which also toured to Manchester Art Gallery. The show examines how international photographers from 1930s onwards have photographed in the UK. He has completed a four year project about Oxford University which has just been published as a book. Parr has published over 100 books of his own work and edited another 30. In 2017, BBC One commissioned Martin Parr to create idents from a series of portraits that represent the rich diversity of communities living in the UK today.

In 2006 Parr was awarded the Erich Salomon Prize and the resulting Assorted Cocktail show opened at Photokina. At PhotoEspana, 2008, he won the Baume et Mercier award in recognition of his professional career and contributions to contemporary photography. He was awarded the Sony World Photography Award for Outstanding Contribution to Photography in April 2017.

Martin Parr was Professor of Photography at The University of Wales Newport campus from 2004 to 2012. In 2013, he was appointed visiting Professor of Photography at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland. In 1994 Martin Parr became a full member of Magnum Photographic Cooperative. Between 2013 - 2017 he was president of Magnum Photos. In Autumn 2017 the Martin Parr Foundation opened in Bristol.

**Manchester Art Gallery** is the original useful museum, initiated in 1823 by artists, as an educational institution to ensure that the city and all its people grow with creativity, imagination, health and productivity. The gallery is free and open to all people as a place of civic thinking and public imagination. It promotes art as a means to achieve social change with its origins from the Royal Manchester Institution for the Promotion of Literature, Science and the Arts.  It has been at the centre of city life for nearly 200 years, and has been proudly part of Manchester City Council since 1882. The gallery is for and of the people of Manchester. Through its collections, displays and public programmes it works with all our constituents to ensure creativity, care and consideration infect all aspects of the way we live. This is an art school for everybody and for life. [manchesterartgallery.org](http://manchesterartgallery.org/)

**Visitor Information**

Manchester Art Gallery, Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3JL   
Tel: 0161 235 8888 Text phone: 0161 235 8893   
Open daily, 10am - 5pm and Thursdays 10am- 9pm   
Free entry [www.manchesterartgallery.org](http://www.manchesterartgallery.org/)

**This exhibition is supported by Farrow & Ball - official paint sponsor**