

SIRKKA-LIISA KONTTINEN

BYKER

February 15 – May 11, 2013



W.H. Douglas-Gents Hairdresser, 1974



Girl on "Spacehopper", 1971



Ragman's Horse and Cart, 1970

L. Parker Stephenson Photographs is pleased to present an exhibition of **Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen's *Byker*** photographs and invites you to attend an opening reception with the artist on **Thursday, February 14th, 6-8pm**. The prior evening, she will be speaking at **ICP** as part of its **Photographers Lecture series**.

Born in Finland in 1948, Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen has lived and worked in the North East of England since the late 1960s. In 2011, **UNESCO** recognized Konttinen's photographs and her collective, **Amber's**, films as being of "outstanding national value and importance to the United Kingdom" and inscribed them in the UK Memory of the World Register. The present exhibition marks the first time her work has been shown in a commercial gallery.

The *Byker* project focuses on a terraced district in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne that gives its name to the series and where Konttinen lived from 1969 to 1976. Her documentation sensitively and poignantly captures the social fabric of a working class community prior to its disintegration at the hands of urban redevelopment (in this case in the form of Ralph Erskine's Byker Wall Estate). *Byker* was not only the subject of Konttinen's first major project but also a place she returned to some thirty years later to focus on its new population using color photography.

Konttinen co-founded the Amber Collective in 1969 with fellow students from London's Regent Street Polytechnic where she studied film. The aim of the Collective, based in Newcastle, was to document and give voice to the working class and marginalized communities in the region through film and photography. Forty-four years later, with its **Side Gallery** dedicated to exhibiting social documentary work, an archive of photographic commissions, and some fifty films to its name, Amber continues to pursue its original mission.

Solo exhibitions of Konttinen's photographs have been presented throughout the United Kingdom as well as in Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Slovakia, Hungary, and Mexico. In 1980, an exhibition of the *Byker* series toured China. London's Serpentine Gallery, Tate Liverpool and the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna in Turin have included her work in group exhibitions. In the United States, MIT's List Visual Arts Center and The Light Factory included her in a 1982 exhibition titled *Ten British Photographers*. In 2012, films based on her photographs were screened at San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Goethe Institute in Washington, DC as well as at several venues in Europe including Le Bal in Paris. Most recently, her photographs were highlighted in the *Photo50* exhibition at last month's London Art Fair.

Five books have been published on her photographs: *Byker* (1983), *Step by Step* (1989), *Writing in the Sand* (2000), *The Coal Coast* (2003), and *Byker Revisited* (2009). In addition, Amber has produced five films based on her photography: *Byker*, *Keeping Time*, *The Writing in the Sand*, *Letters to Katja* and *Today I'm With You*.

For additional information or to request images, please contact the gallery at +1 212 517-8700 or by email at info@lparkerstephenson.com.

L. Parker Stephenson Photographs, located at 764 Madison Avenue between 65th and 66th streets, is open Wednesday – Sunday from 11am-6pm.