

FREE Information sheet. Please take one.

Personal Best

Paul Floyd Blake

24 June to 9 September 2011

Made over a period of five years, *Personal Best* explores the stories of young athletes in the build up to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The exhibition documents a unique time in British history, and captures the development of a generation of sportspeople as they grow from childhood to adulthood within the intense world of elite sport. This is the UK premiere and first major solo show of award-winning photographer Paul Floyd Blake.

Beginning in 2007, Blake regularly photographed sixteen young athletes across the UK to create an ongoing series of portraits. The young people ranged in age from 13 to 22 years old, and were training to compete in a range of sports from fencing to tae kwondo, kayaking to marathon running. Some sporting careers flourished, such as that of table tennis competitor Ashley Facey Thompson, who has been selected for Team GB for the London 2012 Paralympics Games. However, others faced intense social and financial pressures that forced them to leave the world of competitive sport. Blake continued to photograph all the young people, irrespective of their path.

Blake's restrained and subtle portraits offer an alternative to conventional sports photography, with its emphasis on dramatic moments of action. Instead, his images pay tribute to the long slog towards glory that is not usually seen or celebrated. Excerpts from the athletes' own writings offer inspiring and moving insights into their personal hopes and fears. Blake's approach emphasises the individual's own story and motivations beyond the values and structures of competitive sport, as the title *Personal Best* suggests.

To find out more watch the film by New Focus, browse our reading table, or come along to our free Artist Talk on Thursday 16 August 2012 at 6.30pm. Booking is recommended.

