

# Borderland: Stories from Donbas

Christopher Nunn



Touring Information

# Borderland: Stories from Donbas

Made over a period of six years, *Borderland: Stories from Donbas* offers a rare glimpse of everyday life in the Donbas region. Situated at the far eastern edge of Ukraine, close to the border of Russia, it is the site of the only active war zone in Europe. This is the premier and first major solo show of award winning photographer Christopher Nunn.

Nunn ended up in this war zone unexpectedly. In 2013 he travelled to Kalush, Ukraine, in an attempt to learn more about his grandmother who had arrived in the North of England as a displaced person just after World War II. A year later, Nunn was still in Ukraine when the Euromaidan protests started in Kyiv. In the subsequent five years, he has been present during the revolution, the early political chaos and ongoing war.

Nunn cares about people's stories and how Donbas is represented. He was drawn to the small mining settlements where families relax by overgrown riversides, cramped apartment block kitchens, village bars and fading towns now on the doorstep of war at the very edge of Europe. The exhibition presents themes including the dynamics of families; masculinity of young men and fathers; freedom and togetherness, and seemingly inescapable ties with history.

Nunn's images capture the quiet moments and the overlooked details that are mostly away from the flashpoints of fighting and the spotlight of international news. With a constant focus on people's everyday lives, their personal narratives and subjective struggles, his photographs tell small stories that are part of a bigger picture.

**Christopher Nunn** says, "Everybody had a story to tell. I heard hundreds of stories, from the tragic to hilarious. The Donbas is, to me, beautiful and brutal; a place of comedy and pain. The conflict existed and the people I photographed existed too. Many times, I heard the tired line "we do not live here, we just exist". Most of my photographs are about simply existing".

**Anne McNeill, Director of Impressions Gallery** and curator of the show says "Nunn's photographs are the antidote to traditional photojournalism, and the Western media's usual representation of the conflict. What began as a personal project on memory and belonging has grown into an extensive body of work about the way people think and act with regards to their country, their collective identity, and their history in a time of flux."

**An Impressions Gallery touring exhibition curated by Anne McNeill.**

The exhibition will be available to hire from January 2020 for a hire fee of £3,000+VAT.

For further details, contact Anne McNeill, Curator, on 01274 737843 or at [annemcneill@impressions-gallery.com](mailto:annemcneill@impressions-gallery.com)

*A stunning display of humanity even whilst facing such hardships, shedding light on a region our media rarely covers. Beautiful, raw.*

Exhibition Visitor



## Exhibition installation at Impressions Gallery



*Mesmerizing work. Attention to detail and your sensitivity to the subjects in a very brutal situation.*

Exhibition Visitor

## Selected artwork

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Near Bilyts'ke, Donetsk region,  
January 2015

Participants in Epiphany rituals submerge themselves three times in the freezing water to honour the Holy Trinity, symbolically washing away their sins from the past year, and to experience a sense of spiritual rebirth.



Last day of School, Druzhkivka  
May 2017

During end of school celebrations, students perform song and dance routines, and often bring flowers for their teachers.





Slag heap on the fringes of Toretsk  
January 2016



Druzhkivka, May 2015

Ukrainian soldiers from the 81st Airmobile Brigade relax by the Kazennyi Torets River. The brigade fought in the Battle of Donetsk Airport and was stationed in a former children's summer camp in Druzhkivka.

## Selected artwork

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Miners, Toretsk, 2016-2017

"When soldiers first came here from different parts of Ukraine they thought we were all wearing makeup. They had never met miners before, they didn't understand that we work hundreds of kilometres underground digging coal."



Vitrine display  
Found identity photographs, Toretsk



## Selected artwork

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Sophia on her 8th birthday, Svitlodars'k, August 2016

Svitlodars'k is near the frontline and its population has shrunk to just a few thousand.



Sieverodonetsk, Luhansk Region  
January 2017



Lena, nurse, Vodyans'ke  
October 2014

# What the papers say...



Intimate portraits and photos that reveal another aspect of life in a country thrown into conflict.

YORKSHIRE POST

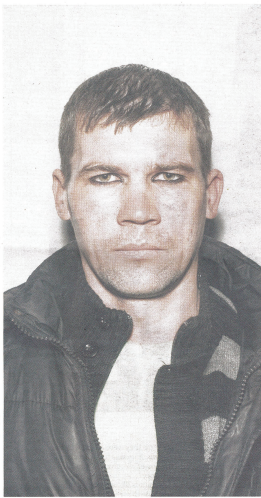
YORKSHIRE POST FRIDAY OCTOBER 11 2019

6/art

## War and peace

Christopher Nunn's striking images of ordinary Ukrainians living in Europe's only active war zone are on display in Bradford. **Yvette Huddleston** reports.

Six years ago Christopher Nunn started out on a journey that would have a profound effect on his life and work. Travelling to Kalush, Ukraine in 2013 to try and find out more about his family history – his grandmother had arrived in the UK as a displaced person just after the Second World War, settling in West Yorkshire – the Huddersfield-based photographer was still in the country when the anti-government Euromaidan protests began in Kiev. Over the next five years Nunn made frequent visits to Ukraine, witnessing the 2014 revolution, the ensuing political chaos and the ongoing fighting in Europe's forgotten war, taking photographs throughout. The striking images he made during that period have just gone on display at Bradford's Impressions Gallery in his first major solo show – *Borderland: Stories from Donbas*. After the revolution I kind of hung around and that's what I have been doing," he says. "I carried on trying to understand some of the things that were going on in Ukraine from my point of view which was perhaps a little bit different from the media perspective. I wasn't there on any assignment, it was much more personal." In western Ukraine he tracked down some relatives on his grandmother's side and discovered that she had brothers who had ended up in Siberia. "The family connection was just a starting point really," he says. "I wasn't making an in-depth investigation, I just wanted to see the country and observe. He continued to visit, travelling back and forth from the UK, spending a couple of months at a time in Ukraine and returning home to fulfil commissions. His process, and intent, was different to that of other Western



PORTRAIT: From the series *Miners*, Toretek, 2016-17. ALL PICTURES: CHRISTOPHER NUNN

observers. "A lot of photographers and journalists covered those stories which is great, but they would arrive and then leave," he says. "Because I was living there with the Ukrainians, I wasn't travelling from hotspot to hotspot, there was some stuff I could get a lot closer to. It's all about trust and you have to respect where you are, you are a guest. It is about giving control to the person you are photographing, you don't want them to feel threatened." The resulting photographs, focussing on the Donbas region on the far eastern edge of Ukraine and the site of Europe's only active war zone, are incredibly powerful and moving. The 54 images on display in the gallery, selected from over 3,000, capture moments of peace, connection, relaxation, depicting family gatherings, picnics, village bars, fishing trips, cramped apartments, the minutiae of everyday life. The pictures emphasise the humanity that persists even in areas of violent conflict and highlight the 'ordinariness' of living through a war, although the caption to one image of two women in a kitchen starkly informs the viewer: "Later that day Elena was killed by shelling in this kitchen." "I think more than anything else I wanted to show something that people could identify with in some way," says Nunn. "A lot of it is very normal. I could have visited military sites but nobody really understands that. It's really difficult to understand anything about war. With pictures that are more domestic and quiet maybe people will think more about this story. It's bringing attention to that in a way that I feel I could do."

■ At Impressions Gallery, to January 4. Christopher Nunn will be giving a talk on October 26. [impressions-gallery.com](http://impressions-gallery.com)



WORKS: L to R: Danylevskoho Street, Donetsk, May 2014; Lena, nurse, Vodyans'ke, October 2014; Dasha and Alexandra, students, Druzhivka, October 2014.

The pictures emphasise the humanity that persists, even in areas of violent conflict, and highlight the 'ordinariness' of living through a war....powerful and moving.

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My best shot  
Photography

Interview by Diane Smyth  
Thu 14 Nov 2019 06:00 GMT

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### Christopher Nunn's best photograph: a picnic in the shadow of war



## British Journal of Photography

Away from the epicentre of the active war zone, Nunn gives an insight into the countryside mining villages and forgotten village pastimes of generations old and new.

БАЛКАНИСТ  
БАЛКАНИСТ

Nunn is not a conflict photographer or a photojournalist, and his photos are striking because they look very different from other images coming out of Ukraine.



# Exhibition Content

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## Artworks

- 54 colour photographs presented as drymounted prints, unglazed, in bespoke white frames in two sizes:  
36 x prints at 24 x 18"  
18 x prints at 30 x 22.5"

## Additional visual material

Optional display of artefacts and ephemera from Chris Nunn's Archive to be shown in vitrine(s). Items include a map of the Donbas region with map pins illustrating the places Nunn visited, travel tickets, found photographs, a small bust of Lenin, newspapers and other items.

## Interpretation

- Artwork for captions for each image
- Artwork for introduction panel and information sheet (venue to produce in their preferred format to suit their space)
- Artwork for exhibition guide featuring extended captions
- Artist information folder, artist questionnaire, and links to further resources
- A selection of contextual and recommended books
- Gallery trail for 5-12 year-olds (venue to adapt to their own context)

## Education

- Advice from Impressions' Education team for school engagement workshops, including visual literacy and creative writing sessions.
- Chris Nunn can deliver artist talks and workshops (by direct negotiation with venue)



## Publication

A full colour 16 page newspaper publication is available to stock in your bookshop. RRP £3.

The newspaper is co-published by Essarter Editions (France) and Impressions Gallery and produced to coincide with the exhibition opening at Impressions Gallery. Text by Christopher Nunn reproduced in three languages, English, French and Russian.

## Marketing and Press

- Text for venue to produce press release
- Six hi-res press images

## Space required

Approximately 60 - 80 linear metres. We can help advise on adapting the show to suit your space.



*Impressions Gallery really helped me define this work and translate it into a powerful exhibition.*

Christopher Nunn

## About Christopher Nunn

**Christopher Nunn** is a photographer based in the north of England, who works on personal projects and commissions throughout the UK and internationally. His work has been shown at Saatchi Gallery, London; Klaipeda Exhibition Hall, Lithuania; Neue Galerie im Höhmannhaus, Germany; Vyner Street Gallery, London; and Tokyo Institute of Photography, Japan.

He was nominated for the Prix Pictet award (2015), selected as one of PDN's 30 New and Emerging Photographers (2016), and the winner of a Magenta Foundation Flash Forward (2017). Most recently he was the recipient of the second Bob & Diane Fund grant for his work on Alzheimer's, and shortlisted for the Tim Hetherington Visionary Award 2019.

His work has been published internationally including *i-D*, *De Correspondent*, *The Asahi Shimbun Globe*, *The Financial Times Weekend Magazine*, *Le Monde*, *Morgenbladet*, *The New Yorker*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. [www.christophernunn.co.uk](http://www.christophernunn.co.uk)

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## What the hire fee covers

The hire fee of £3,000+VAT includes the following:

- Loan of exhibition and all artworks for up to 12 weeks at your venue, plus additional time for installation and take-down, up to 14 weeks in total. Please see inventory for full list of works.
- Artist exhibition fee to Christopher Nunn.
- Digital copies of exhibition interpretation to use and reproduce, including information sheets, exhibition guides, and family activities.
- Media pack with high resolution rights-cleared digital images and press release for your own press campaign.
- Support from the curator and Impressions' team, with advice on curatorial and technical matters to help you plan the exhibition.
- Support from Impressions' Learning Manager to advise on creative workshop ideas.

Touring venues to cover the following:

- Two-way transport of the exhibition and insurance in transit and in situ.
- Exhibition installation.
- Travel and accommodation for the curator to oversee installation, if required.
- Fabrication of interpretation, such as wall vinyls and info sheets.
- Exhibition launch (if applicable) and costs for the artist and curator to attend from within the UK.
- Your education and learning programme, and any engagement activities involving the artist and/or curator (if applicable).
- Press and marketing for your own venue.

*It has been wonderful working with Impressions Gallery... the exhibition is so expertly researched, curated and put together.*

Naomi Miller, Development Director, Bristol Cathedral, on No Man's Land (2018)

## About Impressions Gallery

Impressions Gallery is a charity that helps people understand the world through photography.

Based in Bradford, Impressions Gallery works internationally to bring the best of contemporary photography to wide and culturally diverse audiences. Since opening in 1972, as one of the first photography galleries in Europe, we have been at the forefront of photographic practice, making us an influential UK venue for photography.

We support ground-breaking, new and mid-career artists to resource and develop artistic talent through world class, confident exhibitions that explore timely and relevant issues in society, identity, and politics.

Impressions Gallery is funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation and supported by Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

### Contact

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