

Human Interaction and Mass Energy

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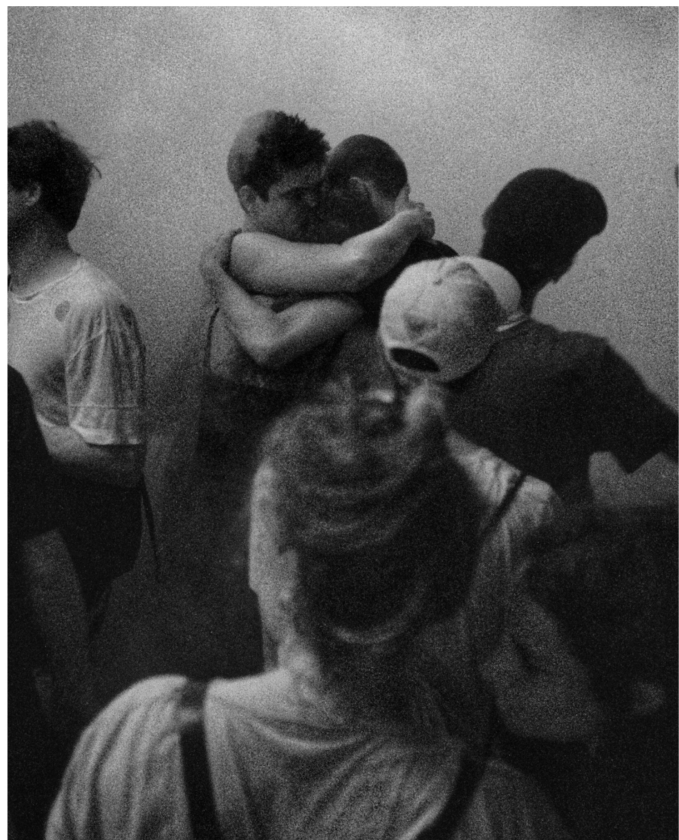


Mass Energy, an exhibition curated by Tommy Sussex launches this week. A carefully curated open call and exhibition that responds to the brief of crowds and mass gatherings.

With a year of our lives defined by social distancing, a new relationship between humans has been the result of the pandemic and Mass energy exhibition has been curated in response to this. Documentation in the form of photography and videography has been at the forefront of the pandemic and we've seen humans respond in a way that has been included in a worldwide media storm. We speak to Tommy Sussex about the importance of crowds and how society has changed during the pandemic.

JT: What was your approach to deciding on a theme that includes crowds and mass gatherings?

TS: The last year of our lives has been defined by social distancing and a new relationship to physical proximity as a result of the Coronavirus Global Pandemic. The social fabric of society has been dramatically altered and this is an unprecedented transformation in the modern era. I didn't feel like enough was being done to look at the impact of this new enforced social disconnection on our lives and minds. I set about creating a brief that asked international image-makers to explore group activities, crowd behaviour and mass gatherings through the prism of the Pandemic. By collaborating through the project a newly established community of image-makers will be able to examine this theme and build a unique knowledge base which results in the form of the Mass Energy exhibition collection and photo zine/publication.



JT: What did human interaction in this sense mean to you before the pandemic and has that changed now, if so how?

TS: The National lockdown and the resulting social climate have taken their toll on communities and individuals. I personally miss the sensation of being a part of a crowd and the overwhelming energy I take from that. The phenomenon of crowds has been a huge and important part of human life for a long time. There's something primal in gathering en masse for leisure, work or to protest events and decisions. I value the power we have when we act together. This was my opportunity to explore and celebrate that.

JT: With human interaction mostly being digitalised since the start of the pandemic? Do you think this will change perspective and have a lasting effect on how people view music and art?

TS: We've seen the Pandemic drive digital technology, business strategy and communication tools forward, which of course is a positive thing. However, it is my opinion that there is no substitute for seeing something in the flesh, regardless of how advanced technology becomes. It is also important to note that sizable protests, illegal free parties, boxing matches and other pursuits did not stop completely during the lockdowns in this country during the Pandemic. Photographers have continued to make new work and document various ongoing events. For example, Mass Energy will show work from a photographer named John Bolloten who has been documenting illegal boxing and bare-knuckle fighting throughout the Pandemic.

Over one hundred photographers submitted work for Mass Energy, the collection has become a mixture of documentary work and other more artistic/metaphoric imagery that orbits the show's theme. This exhibition, which aims to examine group behaviour and large collective activities is launching at a unique time for Britain during its Pandemic experience. The night of the exhibition on May 21st is the first Friday that people will be able to gather inside together in a long time. This was an important date in the UK's diary and seemed like the most appropriate night to open and celebrate the Mass Energy exhibition.



Matt Kelly

JT: What is the purpose of this exhibition?

TS: I created this project because it felt like it was something that I had to do. I wanted to put the idea out there and see how it was met by my existing photographic network as well as a new and untapped one via the internet. The response was overwhelming and people immediately got the motivation and understood the energy behind the initiative.

I am happy that many cultural formats have digitised and I've seen many quality online photography exhibitions, but they're not the same as a printed physical exhibition. The person to person interactions and printed aspects of photography is what truly drives my practice. I believe that cultural projects like Mass Energy give people access to a means of self-expression. I wanted to give fellow photographers the opportunity to be a part of a show that's theme was important to me and potentially others as a historical artefact.

JT: The work that has been sent over as a result of the open call is really visually strong and thought-provoking.

TS: Photography is helpful in creating a new understanding of recent events as we can use these visual exchanges to create and articulate values and allow internal meanings to be externalised and communicated with others. I see Mass Energy as a collaborative artistic process that hopes to create a knowledge base between groups of people who normally do not have contact with one another. If you've been a featured artist in an exhibition before, you know how uplifting the journey is and how special the social experience can be. Whilst the Mass Energy exhibition is a collective examination of the project's theme, I also wanted to offer the positive experience of being part of a printed pop-up exhibition and as well as being part of the publication, to over 100 photographers. Many of the photographers involved are established but there is also a number of young non-professional photographers who have been included in the show too. It's such a good buzz for me and the contributing photographers! By working with Bibliotheca Kyiv to create this popup, there has been a freedom to dictate my terms for the project and the exhibition. I hope it can help re-humanise and de-alienate the contributors and audiences.

This approach has worked really well so far and I'm really grateful to everyone who has purchased pre-print zine orders. I also understand that the life of today's youth has been totally changed and all profits from this project will be donated to the UK's leading mental health for young people Young Minds UK.

The exhibition will take place at Bibliotheca Kyiv's Space, Unit 6 Bellenden Road Business Park, Peckham, London, SE154RF at 6.30PM on 21st May 2021. Alternatively you can see the exhibition on 22nd May at 6.30PM

To find out more about the exhibition head over to the [Website](#).

You can purchase of the both publication and printed t-shirt [Here](#).



Louis Mack

Being a Documentary Photographer – Roger Hutchings

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Being a Documentary Photographer – Roger Hutchings

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