





The big picture: Liverpool's mothers go to market

Tom Wood's 13 years taking photos of shoppers at Great Homer Street Market earned him the nickname Photie Man

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Between 1978 and 1991, Tom Wood would take the ferry from his home in New Brighton and spend his Saturday mornings photographing the people toing and froing in Liverpool's Great Homer Street market. After spending a few hours there, which earned him the local nickname Photie Man, he would head over to watch the football, surrounded by men.

But at the market the crowds were mostly made up of women. Wood became fascinated with the family relationships of those around him; the features shared across different faces; the interactions between the women and girls, now celebrated in his latest show, *Mothers, Daughters, Sisters*, opening tomorrow at the Arles photography festival.

"Liverpool is a really matriarchal city in many ways," he says. "When all the riots were going on, and unemployment was high, it was women who held everything together." Wood's Irish background helped him get to know the market-goers. "Everyone in Liverpool has some kind of Irish relative. A lot of women, I'd look them in the eye and it was like looking at my mother. It's like a shared understanding."

The market was an ongoing source of inspiration for Wood. "When you see women in town, around Marks & Spencer and those shops, people have a kind of a mask on - the face they present is not themselves. But because this was out of town and everybody kind of knew each other, the women were just really natural and open, not dressed up particularly."

Wood now lives in north Wales, but visited the market again a few weeks ago. "It's smaller, it doesn't sprawl along the road as it used to. But it was just as exciting and interesting. I don't think I would have made the pictures I've made anywhere else in the UK. There's an energy in the place and the people are really generous and open. It was a pleasure going there every week - the pictures are made out of absolute affection."

Tom Wood's exhibition Mothers, Daughters, Sisters will appear at Les Rencontres d'Arles, France, from 1 July to 25 August. A book version, Mères, Filles, Sœurs is available from Textuel Editions (€49)

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