



Zoulfa Bossoura

Liz Clough

Suzy De Freitas

Tina Geasley

Kamlesh Kaur

Maxine Krey

Tripti Maheshwari

Jacqueline McCullough

Jenny Morrison-Alleyne

Judith Richards

Sarah M Salem



PhotoSpeak

Connecting Communities

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105 Barking Road
Canning Town, London E16 4HQ
www.community-links.org

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Acknowledgements

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A special and final thanks to all of the women involved who changed this from a photography project into a wonderful journey of sharing, respect and solidarity.

Trina Geasley, Chandos East Hub Centre Manager

Foreword

Jude Simmons, Head of Early Action,
Community Links

I am flattered and privileged to be asked to write the foreword for this book produced by the women of the PhotoSpeak project.

Why flattered and privileged? Why not 'I am absolutely the right woman to be writing this foreword, because of my experience as a woman, because of my fight for 40 years to get the unheard heard, because I have something to say?'

It is because it takes a long time for us, as women, to believe in ourselves and to believe we have something to say and to believe someone would want to listen.

Of course in reality I am absolutely flattered and privileged.

This simple yet impactful project has brought those that took part – all local women from across the Olympic boroughs – on an amazing journey. Not only have they acquired new skills – photography, IT, group work – they have also supported each other, listened to each other and guided the project, allowing confidence to grow and aspirations to be born not only for themselves but for the next generation of women.

Through the powerful media of photography they have involved other women, adding to the strength of the project and graphically illustrating the solidarity of women.

As Head of Early Action at Community Links I am committed to building stronger and more resilient communities in some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Newham. Through community education, community engagement, network building and empowerment we are slowly making an impact in some of the most isolated communities.

This project fits perfectly with our vision. Women are particularly disadvantaged when times are as hard as these as it is they that have to stand firm, support and encourage their families and withstand the frustrations laid at their feet by others.

I would like to thank Trina for her creativity, her energy and her total belief in everybody and to Jacqui for agreeing to support the group and of course to all the women themselves who have created this book as a legacy for future generations.

My wish for the next generation of women?

Know your power, know your strength, believe in it and share it widely.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jude Simmons". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Jude" and last name "Simmons" clearly legible.

Jude Simmons

Project Sponsors

The London Legacy Development Corporation, together with leading housebuilder **Taylor Wimpey** and **London & Quadrant**, one of London's largest residential developers, are honoured and proud to be sponsoring PhotoSpeak.

The funding of this innovative project is part of a programme of community commitments devised after Taylor Wimpey and L&Q were selected by the Legacy Corporation to construct Chobham Manor, the first of five neighbourhoods to be developed as part of the regeneration of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford.

The sponsorship enabled east London charity Community Links to offer the PhotoSpeak course to women in the area completely free of charge – while securing the services of the brilliant young photographer Jacqueline McCullough to lead and inspire those taking part.

The backing of this community project has strengthened the close relationship Community Links already enjoys with the Legacy Corporation, Taylor Wimpey and L&Q.

The charity's Chandos East Community Hub in Stratford, where the PhotoSpeak project has been based, was chosen as the venue for two major Chobham Manor public consultation events in 2013.

Within a short time of working with the staff and volunteers at Chandos East, the Chobham Manor project team gained an insight into how this truly special venue makes such a difference to a community within one of the country's most deprived areas.

PhotoSpeak is the perfect example of how Community Links' work can have such a positive effect on local people in the most innovative of ways. While the photographs reproduced within this publication are the most obvious evidence of the project's positive outcomes, the women behind the lens have benefited in many other ways.

PhotoSpeak has equipped them with new skills, honed their existing abilities and provided them with a new-found confidence.

Just a few weeks ago, it's unlikely any of these women would have dreamt that they would be learning how to use professional photographic equipment before exhibiting their work to the public.

But thanks to the work of Community Links, they've discovered that anything is possible.

The London Legacy Development Corporation is delighted to support women in east London through this photography project.

Photography is a great way to encourage people to get out and explore an area and as Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park opens between July 2013 and spring 2014 we look forward to welcoming people into the Park to explore new developments and routes through the Park.

This project started to make those connections by linking existing communities with the first new housing development on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park – Chobham Manor.

Once fully open, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park will be a great new visitor destination and a thriving place which embodies the communities of east London.

About the Project

Trina Geasley, Centre Manager, Chandos East Hub

PhotoSpeak is a community education digital photography project hosted by Community Links, at the Chandos East Hub, Stratford.

A group of women from the communities surrounding the Olympic Park took portrait images of other local women and recorded their 'wish for the next generation of women'. I designed the project and was supported by highly acclaimed photographer, Jacqueline McCullough.

PhotoSpeak was funded by the Chobham Manor development through Taylor Wimpey, London & Quadrant and the London Legacy Development Corporation. The project was launched in January 2013 as part of a Chobham Manor consultation. The project aimed to connect communities and make links with the new development and existing neighbourhoods. Participants were recruited from communities surrounding the Olympic Park. The women involved were from neighbourhoods of Homerton, Hackney, Waltham Forest, Leyton, Forest Gate and Stratford. The project ran over a period of ten weeks at no cost to participants; a total of eight women completed the project.

PhotoSpeak was developed following qualitative research and observations in the areas surrounding the Chandos East Hub. It became evident that women as a distinct group had an exceptional need for support. Emerging themes included violence against women, low self-esteem, loss of identity, isolation and limited social support networks. PhotoSpeak aimed to combat these issues by applying a community education method to facilitate a photography project

Community education is education and learning which is rooted in a process of empowerment, social justice, change, challenge, respect and collective consciousness. It is within the community and of the community, reflecting the developing needs of individuals and their locale.¹

The process of facilitation and group-work were vital to the success of the project. These methods are respectful and inclusive and foster a safe space for learning and reflection; both for participants and facilitators. Photography was chosen as the medium to tackle these issues in a collective empowering way. Photography is participatory – facilitating those involved to represent their understanding of their community in their own way. Moreover, it is an accessible medium allowing everyone to participate on some level regardless of language or literacy barriers. Text was also used in the form of wishes collected from all the women involved – including those photographed – the concept of the ‘text’ was to create a living legacy through facilitating a voice of solidarity for women in the community.

The project aimed to develop new skills among the group members, to facilitate enhanced connections between women in the group as well as their wider communities. It also aimed to enhance participants’ resourcefulness in terms of sharing knowledge about setting up their own photography and networking groups. It was designed from the outset to encompass more than basic digital photography skills, so practical sessions ran alongside more exploratory workshops which focused on critical reflection of women’s roles in society, personal development, communication skills and community development. The group explored creating community activities for positive social change. The women were open and honest in their involvement and this contributed greatly to the reciprocal learning and knowledge sharing in the group. There were eleven workshop sessions, with the group meeting every Friday and some Saturdays for ten weeks. The project applied a qualitative approach to evaluation and the findings highlight a willingness of participants to take part in further community activity as well as enhanced social networks and increased confidence among participants.

Following the success of the PhotoSpeak project some of the women involved have begun establishing a community-led photography group and a women’s networking forum. They meet at Chandos East Hub regularly and will continue to take pictures, share stories and create a living legacy. They are committed to sharing the knowledge and skills they have learned, facilitating a space for other women to tell their stories and be heard.

1. AONTAS, 2000, Pg 18. AONTAS.CommunityEducation2004.[online]
Available from www.aontas.com

Participants



Zoulfa Bossoura



Suzy De Freitas



Kamlesh Kaur



Maxine Krey



Tripti Maheshwari



Jenny Morrison-Alleyne



Judith Richards



Sarah M Salem



“ My wish is for raised aspirations – for east end women to be and do whatever they aspire to do. You can be the best. Believe it! ”



Zoulfa Bossoura

Stratford

“ I wish for future generations of women to be strong and positive. ”

About me:

My name is Zoulfa, I am 51 years old and I have one lovely boy named Adam. I work at my local community centre and I do some voluntary jobs to learn more skills. I am a trusting and unafraid person whatever problems there are.

For me photography would be a great job and the opportunity to bring stories and send messages to the world.

My image:

This picture was taken at Chandos Community Centre where the course has been running. When I took the photo I felt like I was in a professional studio.

When I looked at the pictures I liked the composition of the poses and from her eyes it looks like there is a story behind them.

Before I attended this course I didn't know the techniques of photography; I have found it very artistic and a learning journey. Also I was very impressed to see all these professional photographers giving us advice and telling us the experiences they had. Honestly, I feel a very lucky woman.

I chose this picture in particular because I took it at the studio where the décor, lighting and my awesome model were all agreeable. Also the equipment and the support I had from our professional photographer.

I loved the team I worked with, I feel proud of myself having attended this beautiful course which inspired me, I feel it is a part of myself.



“ I wish that we won’t be judged and assumptions are not made by how we look and what we wear. ”



Suzy De Freitas

Newham

“ The next generation of women should never give up on the desire to succeed. ”

About me:

My name is Suzy De Freitas, I was born in east London, and I have two daughters Ezrea and Savannah.

I am not comfortable having my picture taken but attending this course has made me appreciate, value and be inspired by how a photograph can tell a story, creating an image today for a generation to come.

Capturing a true image is not about looking perfect.

My image:

This is a picture of my teenage daughter mucking about with face paints during a sleep-over with her mates.

I love this picture because she didn't know I was going to take it but I managed to capture her looking straight at the camera.

I think it's a striking image. Her big eyes and youthfulness makes this picture very special to me.

I enjoy looking at this picture because I know I have caught her off-guard.



“ My wish for the next generation of women is that they impart positivity into their children, teaching them right from wrong and being their primary educator in all things. ”



Kamlesh Kaur

Newham

“ My wish for the next generation of women is simply to see an end to domestic violence. ”

About me:

Me! I'm Kam, living in the heart of the east end. I'm a homemaker and mother of two adorable boys; they are my pride and joy.

I was empowered to be a part of this photography course as I felt it was a great opportunity to learn a new skill.

I believe photography creates memories, great joy and confidence within ourselves.

The power of photography tells a story.

My image:

This photo was taken on 3rd May 2013 at Maryland Children's Centre within Maryland Primary School during the 45th Birthday Celebration of Maryland School.

This portrait tells a story of a woman of authority and power. I feel mesmerised by it. I love the black and white effect, her gorgeous smile and most of all her striking gaze.

I feel very inspired, overwhelmed with joy and a feeling of satisfaction for me. This portrait brings out a feeling of inner peace, contentment and positive energy.

I selected this portrait as it gives me a feeling of success and great achievement.



“ I wish for a safe neighbourhood
where I can play outside. ”



Maxine Krey

Stratford

“ My wish would be to provide better childcare and to make it affordable for mums to return to work. ”

About me:

My name is Maxine and I am from Yorkshire now living in London. I am a housewife and mother to two sons. I joined this course to learn about photography, I enjoy taking pictures, so when the leaflet was dropped through my door I thought, 'why not?'. I thought the opportunity to learn how to take good pictures for my son's wedding would be really nice for me. The course also taught me to think more of what I want to take a picture of and the power of photography means I have something to look at for the memories of the day.

My image:

I first met her when her Mum came to the centre for me to photograph her. She was also very keen for me to take her picture. When photographing her she seemed so excited and the atmosphere was brilliant.

She has a beautiful face which lit up when she was able to be photographed. Her face has got a lot of character and she is such a bubbly and happy child. I liked the picture the way she was smiling; I think her happiness showed in it. She did everything I asked of her and that's what made this picture very striking. I think this picture shows her excitement.

I felt very proud when I saw the picture, that I have been able to take a photo like a professional.

I chose this picture because it was of a child who will be part of the next generation and she looked so happy, which made it special for me.



“ I wish for Independent, strong women who can take care of themselves as well as others. ”



Tripti Maheshwari

Stratford

“ Women are the bearer of the future and should be given a position in society equal to men, with a voice to be heard and respected. ”

About me:

I am Tripti, a mother, a wife and a daughter-in-law. Fulfilling all my duties to my best. My desires are typical for a young woman I love dressing-up, romance and being pampered. A love of taking pictures made me take the photography course which opened up a new opportunity that I have enjoyed. Now I see life in a new way, via the lens. I use photography to convey emotion and the significance of the moment which makes me cherish my whole life. Photography changes the way you see things and suddenly you start to notice light, shapes, texture, colours, buildings, trees, flowers etc. Once you start noticing the details you start to see how much beauty there is all around.

Capturing events and memories and re visiting them in the future is the power of photography. I wish I could “click” and “click” my whole life, taking beautiful, well composed, dramatic photographs.

My image:

This is a picture of a young woman enjoying coffee with her friend. She is about 22 years old with short hair and big dark eyes. She has a love for fashion and was bubbly and looked a bit curious when I clicked her.

The human body is the best work of art. The central focus of this picture is her eyes which reflect her curiosity, eagerness and passion for life. This is a picture of a youth who is happy; she has the capacity to see beauty and anyone who has the ability to see beauty never grows old.



“ I wish for a good equal balance: work,
family, love and health ”



Jenny Morrison-Alleyne

Walthamstow

“ I wish for the next generation of women to love, nurture and empower each other, and learn from their personal journeys. ”

About me:

My name is Jenny and I am from east London. I live with my husband Justin and my son Teijiri. I have always been interested in photography and really wanted to participate in this project. To be given the opportunity to learn and discuss photography is a gift.

Photographs create memories and thoughts that provoke so many different emotions within us. For me this is the power of photography. I hope that my photographs show beauty, confidence and strength. Qualities that I believe are within all women.

My image:

This portrait was taken at the Chandos Community Centre, Stratford on 18th May 2013.

The model was asked to sit while being asked various questions. Photos were taken to capture the expressions from her responses. I love that the portrait has a classic, timeless feel to it. The background and the print of her blouse encapsulate her regality.

I like that the model is not looking at the camera but off into the distance. She seems thoughtful yet present at the same time. This image fills me with so many different emotions. I feel happy, joyful and I feel a great sense of pride because I have captured a stunningly beautiful woman.

This image shows power, confidence, beauty but also someone who can be quite vulnerable and shy. When I look at this portrait I feel drawn to ask her about her life and her journey so far. For now I would like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to my sister for agreeing to pose for me.



“ Women of the future must take the lead in the national global peace movement. ”



Judith Richards

Homerton

“ I wish that the next generation of women will be more involved in the community, that they will have more respect for what they do. That they will be more fulfilled in all they do. That they will be happy. ”

About me:

I was born in Liverpool but spent most of my childhood in West Drayton, Middlesex. I am retired but was a finance officer at a school in Tower Hamlets. I am married with two daughters and seven grandchildren.

I decided to do this course to meet people and learn a new skill; I spend most of my time at hospital appointments and wanted to do something quite different. I am disabled and have many health issues and thought this would be good for me. I used to enjoy photography when I was younger. I think that photography makes you look at people and the environment in a different way.

My image:

This picture is of a Nigerian member of the Baptist church I attend. I chose the yellow background hoping that it would highlight her face more. It was taken on the 12th May 2013 after our morning service.

I chose this picture as I feel she has a very striking face, she is very kind and works in the community.

It reminds me of all she does and the kindness she has always shown to me and the help she has given me.

To me this photo shows her honesty and openness; it's pure, simple and clear. There is warmth in her face which shows her love and contentment of life.



“ Dream Big and make it happen! ”



Sarah M Salem

Hackney

“ I wish the next generation of women freedom from personal, marital, cultural and workplace oppression. To be encouraged to have a go, to make choices and to be supported to overcome failures. ”

About me:

Disabled at 18 months of age and not expected to succeed in life; I proved myself and others wrong.

Pulled umpteen fences down, overcame prejudices. Volunteered most of my life alongside my professional career of Nursing and Social Work. Volunteered as a trailblazer games maker and tour guide for the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park prior to and after the Olympic Games.

I would love to capture the inner thoughts of those I photograph and hope to continue to develop my knowledge of photography and to appreciate its power as time goes on.

My image:

I took this photo whilst standing by 'Robert the Train Engine' outside Stratford International Station. I noticed this lady asking my colleagues to take her friend's photograph.

We started a conversation and then I told her that I would love to take her photo against the background of the station, the multi-storey and sky. Her scarf and blue eyes seemed to blend perfectly with the silvery setting.

I also love this photo because of the horizontal, diagonal and vertical lines. This is the first time that I have knowingly attempted to put in practice what I was taught in class.



Liz Clough

Newham

My wish for the next generation of women is

“ To use the power of communication, to be less afraid of sharing their stories, to break the rules, to believe that the power of knowledge as a group will help each and every one to strive for what they REALLY want, regardless of oppression or prejudice. ”

I am a visual Artist and Musician. For the first part of my life my home was the Yorkshire Dales and the second, Newham, East London.

Family, equality, people around me, and the joy, struggle and ordinariness of daily life are at the heart of my work. Self employed from the age of 18, I have worked on a huge variety of personal and community projects; the latest, a unique outreach project at Community Links. In partnership with another artist and working with the most vulnerable children, we are the only practitioners within the charity using the creative process and purely arts and performance based techniques. We aim to develop confidence and break down barriers preventing children and young people achieving their potential academically, socially and emotionally. We have had outstanding results.

Community Links led me to Trina and she involved me with PhotoSpeak. It's right up my street. Coming together as a new group we have conversed, shared stories, grown close, grown in confidence, learned, laughed and even cried! The outcome is a collection of beautiful photographs of beautiful women, and the road bringing us to these images has been colourful, moving, a little treacherous and very fun!

I am excited for the future of PhotoSpeak. I have a feeling that the publication of this book and the launch of the exhibition is only the beginning.



Trina Geasley

Greenwich

My wish for the next generation of women is

“ That there will always be an audience for your voice and no matter what has happened that you have the courage and the strength to speak out and be heard. ”

My name is Trina Geasley, I am from Galway in Ireland and I have been living in London for two years, working at Community Links as the centre manager for Chandos East Hub in Stratford.

I am a Community Development worker and I have a passion for social action for positive change. I have worked in many places including Ireland, Australia, Africa and the UK, working with a number of unique and different communities to build successful, sustainable, creative community projects.

I designed PhotoSpeak to help build a network of local women ensuring more connected resourceful communities – one of the strategic aims of Community Links. In my role as centre manager, I see women every day with vast potential; connecting them with others can accomplish great things, overcoming struggles and achieving together.

Photography has the power to tell stories. The PhotoSpeak project was planned to create an environment where women learning together could become more connected with other communities and perhaps create a living legacy of local people telling their own stories using text and images. By facilitating local women to capture the essence of others we can share their grassroots perspective. We create a living legacy; by collecting the hopes and wishes of this generation of women for the next, and fostering an environment of knowledge sharing and solidarity.



Jacqueline McCullough

Brighton, East Sussex

My wish for the next generation of women is

“ To understand that if you stand together and you stand tall, anything is possible. ”

I grew up in the North East of England, I live in Brighton, commute to London, with a dream of one day living in Paris. I am a socially engaged photographer, workshop facilitator, dreamer and list-maker.

Photography gives me a voice that I don't have with words. It allows me to tell stories. As an artist I photograph and explore topics around identity, love, loss and displacement. Drawn to tales of chronic adversity and the under represented, I am inspired by our capacity for emotional survival and resilience.

I strongly believe that every person is creative, has huge potential and is capable of anything given the right environment to flourish. Facilitating for me, is often about encouraging something that is buried, that is deep within that person, to come alive. Frequently I find that they already have that insight, that creativity, that power, that strength – it's really just about reconnecting them with themselves.

I predominantly work with children and young people. This is my first experience of working with a female adult group. Trina has taught me the real meaning of community and how important it is to help build a strong, sustainable community. The women of PhotoSpeak have taught me about togetherness, respect, compassion, vulnerability, joy and understanding.

I have never felt more alive, more me, more inspired than standing side by side with these women.

A Wish for the Next Generation of Women

The following wishes represent the voices of women in the local community, expressing their wish for the next generation of women. Each wish represents a woman who was photographed during the PhotoSpeak project.

What is your wish for the next generation of women? Leave a comment at the PhotoSpeak website: www.photospeakblog.wordpress.com

My wish for the next generation of women is for...



Better education.

Better healthcare with more compassion when treating women.

More consideration for women, to be paid the same as men.

Better childcare and also I wish we could take longer maternity leave – more than a year.

Better education and opportunities for the workplace.

To make life easier. No struggles with relationships and kids.

To have money for themselves.
We can do anything we want.
Independence.

Education for women. If you are educated you can go further.

For them to have a good family and a good job and health.

Fair wages. Treat women better.

Make education, housing and work prospects for single, young mums.

Not be so media obsessed and more confident in their ability to accept yourself as you are and do not fall into stereotypes.

For women to take over the world.

Better public images of women, less unrealistic/sexualised/skinny/stupid ...

Self confidence.

To have a good education for better jobs – to show men how we ‘do things’.

A nice future, career and a nice environment.

To get a good education and good jobs for a good future.

I wish they could cure breast cancer.

Everyone's good health and good life.

Work hard all your life as I did. Get yourself respected
(94 year old born in Trevizo)

More hopes for themselves and freedom to really choose.

To learn more about God and to be honest with each other; persevere with opportunities given.

Good life, better life. To achieve goals and wishes.

I wish for peace on earth. Stop all fighting.

Dream big and make it happen!

More independent and be yourself.

Good equal balance between work and family. Love and health.

Stop females being seen as a sex object – stop rape of both minors and adult females.

For women to be loved and not lusted after. Women young and old, big or small, able, disabled to be loved for who they are inside and out. When a woman is lusted after she becomes an object and not a person, she has to conform and not be herself. Let's change that ladies!

To be strong and positive.

Have more respect for what they do.

To see an end to divorce – unity amongst one another.

Raised aspirations – for east end women to be and do whatever they aspire to do. You can be the best, believe it.

Happiness.

Women of the future must take the lead in national and global peace movement.

That women have strong female leaders, both in the community and in society as a whole, who will inspire all women to be strong, independent, vocal, happy and successful. So they can see for themselves how special they are and how they deserve all the opportunities in life that are usually afforded to men. I want my daughters to be confident enough to educate men in how they should treat women and have enough self-esteem to not settle for anything less than they deserve!

To be leaders.

Having more children. We need more children for the country.

That they are not put above men as seems to be happening, that we have true equality. To not be portrayed as doing something wrong to society if you choose to stay at home to bring up your children. To not be made to feel guilty that you have more than two children. For women to be allowed to have a shape of a women, not be made to feel they have to look like a little girl.



About Community Links

Community Links is an innovative east London charity working with more than 16,000 people every year. Early action – building a fence at the top of the cliff rather than running an ambulance at the bottom – has been at the heart of our strategy for 35 years.

Our practical projects and services delivered locally offer support to all age groups across a wide range of issues. Through a network of community projects and social enterprises, we help disadvantaged children, teenagers, adults and older people, empowering them to fulfil their potential and build a brighter future together.

Our national research and policy work is rooted in the knowledge gained through our practical work in local neighbourhoods.

Our Early Action Team supports children, young people, adults and families. Alongside our open access services we also run specialist education and employment support projects by referral – including our Ofsted Registered School Education Links and our Employment Links project delivering the government's Work Programme. Our national work shares lessons with government and community groups across the country, through evidence based policy contributions, training programmes and consultancy, to achieve social change.

Local Hubs

Much of our local service delivery takes place through our network of Community Hubs around Newham, which are for everyone who lives nearby – children, families, young people, older people. We run everything from play schemes to walking clubs, sports sessions to bingo ... or just a chat over a cup of tea. Increasingly activities in our hubs are initiated and run by local people.

Deep Value

We strive to provide services that follow our deep value approach. Strong one-to-one relationships release potential in us all, tackle need, build networks and social capital, and erode inequality. 'It is not only possible for one human being to make a real and lasting difference to another, it is often all that ever does'.

Community Links

105 Barking Road, London E16 4HQ
www.community-links.org

PhotoSpeak

Connecting Communities



PhotoSpeak is a community education project, based on digital photography, hosted by Community Links, at the Chandos East Hub, Stratford.

A group of women from the communities surrounding Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park took portrait images of other local women and recorded their *'wish for the next generation of women'*.

PhotoSpeak was funded by the Chobam Manor development through Taylor Wimpey, London & Quadrant and the London Legacy Development Corporation, the body responsible for Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The project aimed to connect communities and make links between the new development and existing neighbourhoods.

The project resulted in an exhibition, this publication and an online blog recording the process. www.photospeakblog.wordpress.com

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