

PRESS RELEASE

31 October 2018

# Gallery seeks Luton women for photographic portrait project

**The Changing Room:  
Portraits of Contemporary British Women by Catrine Val**  
*Exhibition 10 January – 9 March 2019*

Leading up to and celebrating International Women's Day on Friday 8 March, Departure Lounge and Luton Culture have invited acclaimed German artist Catrine Val to create insightful new photographic and video portraits of women living in the Luton area.

The portraits, which will be displayed at the Storefront gallery in the Spring, will focus on the important part that clothing plays in personal and cultural identity and how working environments can limit women's everyday fashion choices and the ability to express their personality, cultural heritage or religious beliefs.

The gallery is seeking women who live or work in the Luton area to participate in the project, specifically women who have a noticeably different image at work to the one they have at home, and whose wardrobe may have a split personality. This could be because uniform or regulations at work make it difficult to wear the clothes important to a particular culture or religion, or because certain "alternative" looks may not feel or be acceptable in the workplace (eg punk, goth). Some women may only wear clothes specific to their culture or religion on special occasions and dress differently the rest of the time.

To highlight this "dual identity" Catrine will invite women from all walks of life to pose for two formal portraits. In each case her subject will be photographed wearing her professional or day-to-day clothing and then, in the second portrait, in the clothes that define her cultural or national identity, or which identify her as a member of a particular fashion "tribe". Importantly, participants will also be invited to share stories and experiences creating an acutely observed highly personalised collective portrait of what it is to be a woman in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain.



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

Luton  
Investment  
Programme

**DEPARTURE LOUNGE**

**Luton  
Culture**

**Luton**



For *The Changing Room*, Departure Lounge's Storefront gallery will be converted into a fashion photography studio and changing room (of course!). Women will be invited to be photographed in their own clothes, in some cases sharing the rich histories associated with particular garments. Inspired by Luton's rich heritage of hat-making, sitters will also have the option of experimenting with a variety of head-wear.

Bringing the acute vision of the "outsider" to Luton, Catrine hopes to make the personal narratives of the town's women visible, offering an opportunity to share stories which, because of the pressure of work, social convention or the class structure are often hidden.

**The photographs will be exhibited at The Storefront, Luton, from 10 January to 9 March 2019 with a closing event coinciding with International Women's Day on Friday 8 March.**

Organised by Luton Culture and Departure Lounge, **The Changing Room** is the latest project presented as part of, *As You Change, So Do I*, a three-year programme of public art events funded by Arts Council England's Luton Investment Programme. *As You Change, So Do I* provides artists with a platform to make new public works in response to Luton's unique industrial and cultural history.

**Caroline Wallace, As You Change, So Do I Project Co-ordinator at Luton Culture said:**

'We are excited to be working with this highly skilled international artist. We know from similar *As you Change* projects, such as 'Mother and Child,' that both the artist and the community working on the project benefit hugely from this type of collaboration.'

**Matthew Shaul, Director of Departure Lounge, said:** "Catrine Val is much more than a photographer. Producing a range of portraits and self-portraits which give highly individual expression to questions about how women conform to and rebel against social and cultural convention, Catrine's project is a unique opportunity to be part of a spectacular collective portrait of women in urban, industrial Britain."

**Artist Catrine Val said:** "I believe the human figure and how we present ourselves - the clothes and adornments we choose - is a window on the soul. Working with a diverse spectrum of women, my project in Luton will illuminate women's love, beauty and wisdom, which is often obscured by the daily struggles to negotiate society, and the world of work. As an artist I straddle straight documentary photography and staged portraiture, seeking women's essence – authenticity, the ability to think for themselves, be themselves and negotiate the multiple overlapping and simultaneous identities modern life asks us to assume."



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

Luton  
Investment  
Programme

**DEPARTURE LOUNGE**

**Luton  
Culture**

**Luton**



# AS YOU CHANGE SO DO I

Those who are interested in participating in The Changing Room should email [asyouchange@lutonculture.com](mailto:asyouchange@lutonculture.com) to request an information pack or visit <https://asyouchange.co.uk>

*The Changing Room is funded by the Luton Arts Fund and Arts Council England organised by Departure Lounge in collaboration with Luton Culture. It is part of 'As You Change, So Do I' a three-year programme of public art events funded by Arts Council England's Luton Investment Programme*

## Follow As You Change on social media:

Instagram: [@asyouchange](https://www.instagram.com/asyouchange)

[www.facebook.com/AsYouChange/](http://www.facebook.com/AsYouChange/)

Twitter: [@AsYouChange](https://twitter.com/AsYouChange)

#AsYouChange #loungeluton #thechangingroom

## Visitor information

The Storefront, 64 Bute Street, Luton LU1 2EY

Open Thursday – Saturday 1pm– 6pm Admission free

Telephone 01582 878100

---

## PRESS ENQUIRIES:

For further information and images please contact Hazel Foxon

[hazel@foxon.org](mailto:hazel@foxon.org) or call 07801 234930 (not for publication)

---

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**Catrine Val** Based in Kassel, Germany, Catrine Val has participated in exhibitions, projects and residencies all over the world producing a signature series of portraits and self-portraits, which examine and question the multiple different and overlapping roles society assigns to women. One of her self-portraits was the signature image for the Manic Street Preachers 2014 album – Futureology. [www.catrineval.com](http://www.catrineval.com)

**As You Change, So Do I** is a three-year contemporary public realm arts programme commissioned by Luton Culture. It includes new works for the public realm, including artist residencies, temporary public artworks and outdoor projections to animate Luton's streets and empty buildings. Initially focusing on the Cultural Quarter within Luton, the programme will grow to impact on a wider geography. Luton Culture is working with artist Mark Titchner and curators Matthew Shaul (Departure Lounge) and Andrew Hunt to involve local people and artists in the development of a long-term approach to public realm arts commissioning and audience engagement. *As You Change, So Do I* includes a series of educational activities by a range of artists, curators and writers, and aims to establish ongoing



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

Luton  
Investment  
Programme

**DEPARTURE LOUNGE**

**Luton  
Culture**

**Luton**



# AS YOU CHANGE SO DO I

collaborations with international arts institutions, and engage with a wide range of local community groups, schools, local businesses and residents. More information can be found at <https://asyouchange.co.uk/>

**Luton Culture** is an arts and cultural charity providing exceptional and meaningful engagement with museums, arts centres, libraries and public art for the people of Luton and beyond. Luton Culture aims to deliver exemplary public engagement with arts and culture through its locally relevant and nationally important arts and cultural programmes, whilst actively nurturing creativity and artistic talent. <http://www.lutonculture.com/>

**Departure Lounge**, a contemporary art gallery established in Luton in 2010, is collaborating with Luton Culture to provide programming for The Storefront as part of *As You Change, So Do I*.

**Arts Council England** champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural England, through the National Lottery, as part of the Luton Investment Programme. The Luton Investment Programme aims to enhance the arts and cultural infrastructure of Luton, ensuring the town has a cultural offer with something for everyone. <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>

**The Luton Arts Fund** is made up of contributions from Arts Council England, Luton Council, Luton Culture, The University of Bedfordshire, and Capital and Regional and is designed to support ‘Harnessing Momentum’ Luton council’s ten-year strategy to make Luton a flagship, inclusive place for culture. [https://www.luton.gov.uk/Leisure\\_and\\_culture/Arts\\_and\\_culture/Pages/luton-arts-fund.aspx](https://www.luton.gov.uk/Leisure_and_culture/Arts_and_culture/Pages/luton-arts-fund.aspx)



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

Luton  
Investment  
Programme

**DEPARTURE LOUNGE**

**Luton  
Culture**

**Luton**

