

GAZELLI ART HOUSE

THE UNTOUCHED WALTER & ZONIEL

18-22 MAY, 2016

Gazelli Art House is delighted to announce *The Untouched*, the latest series by artist duo **Walter & Zoniel** in collaboration with Photo London and the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Walter & Zoniel will be creating a series of 'Iconic Britons' comprising of 25 portraits of individuals who are both loved and exalted by the nation for their accomplishments. Each subject is full-length and lifesize, shot directly onto a metal sheet using a traditional photographic technique first used in the 1850s, making the portraits the largest Tintypes in the world.

Turning the depths of Somerset House, known as the 'Deadhouse' into a giant camera, Walter & Zoniel will capture the first part of the series on site in the days leading up to Photo London this May, the portraits will then be presented as part of the fair from the 18th-22nd May.

The artist duo, have combined modern and ancient technology, hand-building a colossal camera to create an immersive experience for both subject and artists, with exposure times reaching 30 seconds. Resulting in a completely unique instantaneous image, more resilient than many other processes, predicted to last one thousand years.

The title of the series *The Untouched* references the fact that there is no ability or need to retouch or alter the images, as the means of their creation is ethereal. The title is also a nod to the exalted status of the subjects within the eyes of the public.

Notes To Editors

- The second part of the series will take place at the Victoria & Albert Museum in July 2016, where the duo will transform the historic Prince Consort Gallery, in the centre of the Museum, into a colossal camera.
- Photo London was created to give London an international photography event befitting the city's status as a global cultural capital. Founded in 2015, it has already established itself as a world-class photography Fair and as a catalyst for London's dynamic photography community.

Gallery Information:

Contemporary art gallery Gazelli Art House supports and presents a wide range of international artists, presenting a broad and critically acclaimed program of exhibitions to a diverse audience through international exhibition spaces in London and Baku. Gazelli Art House was founded in 2003 in Baku, Azerbaijan where it held exhibitions with Azeri artists. From 2010, having hosted conceptually interlinked off-site exhibitions across London, founder and Director of Gazelli Art House, Mila Askarova, opened a permanent space on Dover Street, London in March 2012. That same year, Window Project launched utilising the frontage of the gallery as additional display platform. In 2015, the initiative was remodelled to solely accommodate art school graduates through open call competitions three times a year. As part of Gazelli Art House's on-going commitment to art education, the gallery hosts a series of events and talks to run alongside each exhibition.

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Say cheese — and hold very, very still

Two artists have built the world's largest tintype camera at a photography fair to capture enduring images of British icons — and **Nancy Durrant**

It's like magic, really. In this image-saturated world, any mug with a smartphone can snap, crop, filter and instantly share pictures of anything from their lunch to their backside. And yet the miracle of developing a photograph, of watching it appear from the darkness in a bath of reeking chemicals, has lost none of its enchantment. Even so, listening back to the tape of me watching my own face swim into view, first black, then a surprising navy blue, and then suddenly me, in pin-sharp black and brownish-grey, is a bit cringey. "It's so cool!" I squeal.

Walter Hugo, of the London-based artist duo (and married couple) Walter and Zoniel, who are shooting me for a project they are exhibiting at the Photo London photography fair, assures me that this is normal.

"We did a portrait series in Bethnal Green [in east London] — we got this aspiring drug dealer who came along with his just-out-of-prison murderer friend, a drug dealer. They looked scary and tough, but there's this one moment when you put the plate in the chemical, everyone becomes like an eight-year-old. The façade drops. It's my favourite thing."

Much as I might fancy my half-length portrait going on display in some national museum, in fact my picture — a tintype, one of the earliest forms of photography developed directly on to a sheet of metal and thus a one-off — is really just a test. For Photo London, which opens to the public tomorrow, Walter and Zoniel, both 35, have taken it upon themselves to build the world's biggest tintype camera.

In this test, it takes the form of a blacked-out basement room — the



walls are the camera box — at the Gazelli Art House gallery in Mayfair. It contains a number of chemical baths, and the only aperture for light, with heavy curtains taped around it, is a huge lens. "It took us three years to find," says Walter.

Walter and Zoniel's tintype portrait of Nancy Durrant and, right, an ambrotype of the actor Eddie Redmayne

The aim is to create the first full-length, life-size tintype photographs. Their subjects, whom they will shoot in a similar but rather tidier set-up at the fair's base in Somerset House (you won't have to crawl into the dark room on your hands and knees or stand motionless for 30 seconds in a basement corridor to have your picture taken, as I did), will be "icons of Britain" such as the fashion designer Paul Smith and the model and artist Daphne Guinness.

"We're trying to do people who are important at this moment, so that it's like those 17th-century portraits you see at the [National] Portrait Gallery. Like, who the hell was this?" The key appeal of the tintype, explains Walter, is that unlike a conventional printed photograph, "500 years from now, these pieces of metal will still be there", unchanged and unfaded — more durable even than those now rather puzzling paintings.

The series is the culmination of a group of works that began with 50 ambrotypes (positive prints on glass made with a variation of the wet plate collodion process) made in 2012-13 of their up-and-coming pals (Eddie Redmayne, for example), while they've made hand-coloured and gilded prints of celebrities such as Lindsay Lohan, as well as those aforementioned Bethnal Green bad boys.

Walter, a London native, and Zoniel, who grew up mostly in Wales, aren't photographers as such. They are probably best known for their installation at the Liverpool Biennial in 2014, for which they stealthily filled the windows of a derelict shop in Toxteth with tanks of illuminated jellyfish, then set the metal shutters to open at a certain time every night. Yet it's not particularly surprising that

nightfall by excited Toxteth parents, keen to share with them this magical and, crucially, local event — to a recent project at Tate Britain, *Salt Print Selfie*. In this they got members of the public to create self-portraits. Each had control of the shutter, but couldn't see the images (which were projected above their heads) and had to rely on strangers to help them choose one. Then another stranger had to steam each subject's face to extract the salt, which was then used in the chemical process to make the print — a true self-portrait, made with your own, well, sweat.

"With public art you can have a much stronger relationship with a much greater number of people," says Zoniel. "For us it's about that element of engaging people and public art has that ability. We had a discussion here with a lady from the Arts Council — people from institutions see [public art] as a stepping stone to being inside the institution..."

"We basically had an argument about where funding goes," interjects Walter. "Why isn't there more funding for poor neighbourhoods like Toxteth? Why isn't art placed in those places? Why is it always near a bank, or inside a bank?"

The duo will be returning to Liverpool this year with a catapult, allowing members of the public to hurl

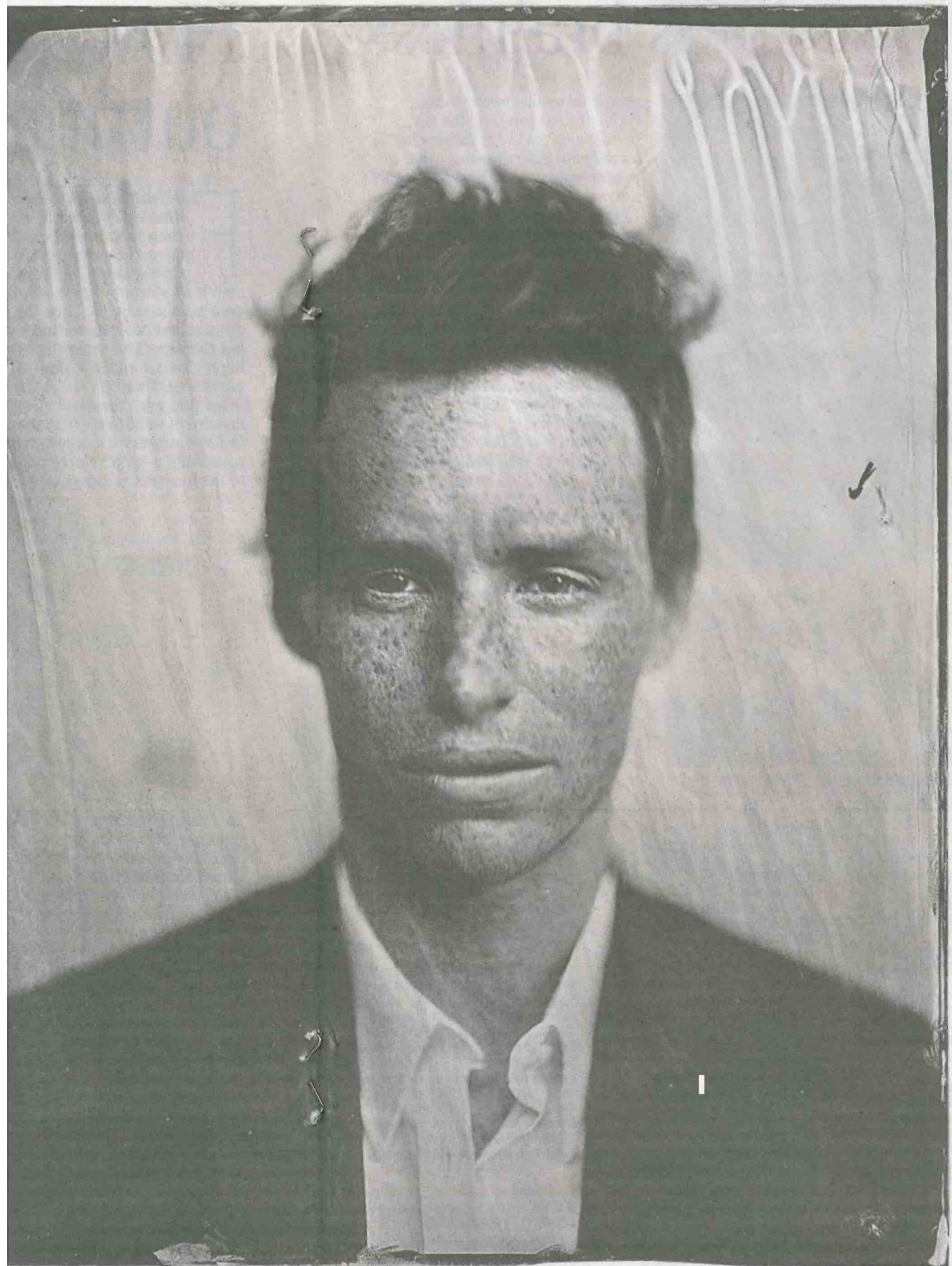
“500 years from now, these pieces of metal will still be there

biodegradable paint at the outside of the city's Open Eye Gallery. The idea is to demystify and familiarise what can be an intimidating space, in the hope that it will encourage otherwise reluctant locals to come inside.

"Again, it's about engaging that sense of mischief, which relates to creativity," says Zoniel. "If you do anything that's creative you have to step outside the boundaries of what you'd normally be [doing]. And that's in everybody. We did a kind of prelude to that [paint] project at the Silicon Valley art fair and there was one guy who came along on opening night, a really serious guy working in the fair, and he'd brought his two little daughters along. And he was like, 'They can have a go, I'm not having a go', and I said, 'Are you sure? I mean you're standing here.' And I persuaded him to have a go while he was there with his daughters, and he came back seven times without them."

I regard my picture, which, I learn with some regret, will not go on display. The Photo London images will be the end of this particular project, Walter tells me; they're moving on to other things. Zoniel points out that, with my gold earrings glowing in the warm brownish tinge of the tintype, I look as though I'm "from another era, ancient Egypt maybe".

It is like peering into some sort of time-travel mirror. I feel momentarily monumental, and slightly awed that this picture could indeed last for ever. "Who the hell is that?" indeed. Photo London is at Somerset House, London WC2 (photolondon.org), May 19-22. The Liverpool Biennial (biennial.com) runs from July 9 to October 16



Lindsay Lohan by Walter and Zoniel

they return to the medium often in their multimedia artworks.

Walter started out as a scientist, while as a teenager Zoniel, as she puts it, "ran away to a monastery and became a nun", studying with a Tibetan master in Scotland for a time. That the properties of light and the chemical universe should appeal to them both makes perfect sense, albeit from wildly differing angles.

The public nature of this project is also part of the appeal for the artists. They will create an installation at the fair that will allow people to see how the prints are made (although the works will have been created before the public is allowed in, health and safety not allowing for the sloshing about of hazardous chemicals).

Public art is a strong theme in Walter and Zoniel's work, from the jellyfish — to which small children were brought in their pyjamas at