

Friday night fears

Director Gerry Fox made his name profiling contemporary artists – and now, **Rose Rouse** discovers, he's joined their ranks

TAKE a converted Methodist church in a down-at-heel bit of Camden, add the heavyweight input of Bafta-winning documentary-maker Gerry Fox and you get an exciting collision of art, film and London life.

The 44-year-old is celebrated for making films about contemporary artists – his two-parter about Gilbert and George won a Bafta in 1998 and he has profiled Marc Quinn, Tracey Emin and Chris Ofili. But now he is taking his subjects on at their own game, presenting his first exhibition of film as art.

Living London is a multi-screen installation at 176, a recently converted gallery in a former Victorian chapel.

"We'll give visitors torches and lead them from room to room," says Fox. "It will take place in darkened spaces and be a totally immersive experience."

Fox has been walking the streets of London, at night, always on Fridays, for the past two years, capturing what he encounters. Soho is one of his



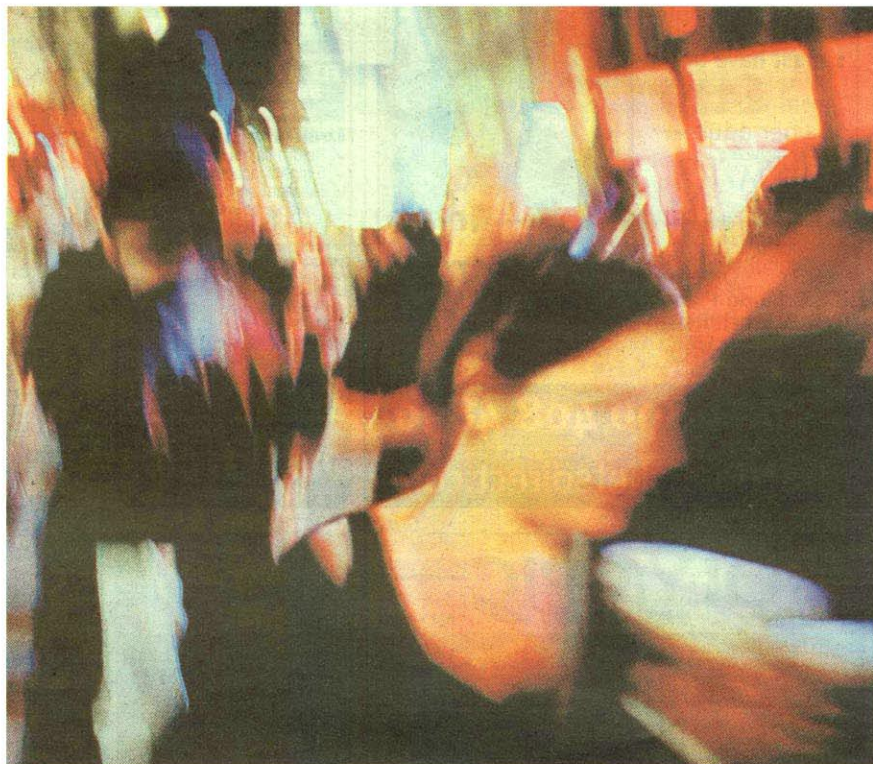
AWARDS | Gerry Fox

favourite habitats. He uses techniques which make the imagery look like a crazy painting: "I want this experience to envelop the viewer. I'm giving a sense of madness to the city."

His personal life also collides with the work. His wife gave birth while he was in the midst of this project: "When I knew it was going to be an emergency caesarean it fitted in perfectly. I had to find a camera at the last minute."

His daughter being pulled out of his wife's womb features beside a screen showing women dancing wildly at Notting Hill Carnival. "It's almost like a fertility rite. There's birth next to this celebration of life. It's a powerful combination."

Fox was almost arrested in Soho when the police mistook his camera for a bomb. He was punched in Ridley Road, Hackney, because one man



SOHO AT NIGHT | A Friday-evening scene portraying 'the madness to the city'

took exception to having a camera in his face. "At times, it was dangerous, but that's the point. There's an underlying fear in this city," he claims.

There's also archive footage, such as the Sydney Street siege of 1911. "I wanted to show how the city changes because that street was flattened during the war."

Finally, Fox goes to Nunhead cemetery, where his sister is buried. "I wanted to make the filming here into a magical world. To give it a floaty quality, I filmed in slow motion but ran with the camera."

Living London, 176, 176 Prince of Wales Road, NW5, 31 Jan-20 April, 020 7428 8940

STORY OF 176

176 is a former Methodist chapel built in 1867. From the 1960s it was home to the North London Drama Centre but, in 2005, the building was bought by the private Zabłudowicz Collection and



transformed into a 'project space' – retaining many original features – by the architects who converted Shoreditch's Tea Building. It opened last autumn with the ambition of hosting three public shows a year.

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