

## Press Release

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Executive Committee Meetings Hall  
Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia  
FNPR, Moscow, Russia

# Union Noel Bowler

4 July to 22 September 2018

Made over a 5-year period, Noel Bowler's *Union* reveals the boardrooms and private offices of trade union buildings across the globe. The exhibition offers a rare glimpse into places where decisions and policies that affect so many are made.

Bowler's photographs show how the institutions of organised labour, designed to protect workers from exploitation in the nineteenth century, are responding to today's economic uncertainty.

Incorporating images from Russia, the USA, Poland and the UK, *Union* offers unprecedented access to rarely seen spaces, combining photographs of momentarily silent interiors of trade union offices alongside portraits of union leaders.

Bowler invites us to walk the well-trodden carpets and parquet floors, and to gaze at the utilitarian desks beneath strip lights and false ceilings. Each space offers clues to its inhabitants; flags,

emblems and political posters allow the viewer's imagination to populate each dormant scene. There is a dry humour to Bowler's work, the sparse setting of the Union of Polish Teachers in Warsaw is fittingly dominated by a large blackboard, whilst a cluttered desk at the Maritime Trades Department at the AFL-CIO in Washington DC demonstrates its inhabitant's political leanings and sporting preferences. The ordinariness of many of these workspaces is undercut by the knowledge that these are sites where important contemporary battles around workers' rights are taking place.

Bowler offers a unique insight into the pressures and challenges facing unions in this era of political and economic uncertainty, radical changes in traditional work practices and increased worker insecurity. This timely exhibition continues Bowler's ongoing consideration of the political forces that shape our world, reflected through the organisation of social space.

Noel Bowler says, "Union is a journey through an anxious world where the apparent certainty of the past faces an unknown future."

The exhibition is accompanied by a 128-page book made across 14 countries, published by Kehrer Verlag and features an essay by photographer Ken Grant. Grant says, "It's heartening to spend time with Bowler's quietly anchored work, to recognise the value and richness of all these sustained labours and understand that there are still sharp minds and strong hands ready to navigate difficult waters"

Anne McNeill, Director of Impressions Gallery says, "We are delighted to bring Noel Bowler's work to Impressions Gallery. The exhibition has strong regional significance to Yorkshire, and in particular Bradford - the founding place of the Independent Labour Party, precursor to the modern-day Labour party. The city and wider region is well known for its industrial past and strong-willed action for worker's rights over the centuries. 2018 also marks 150 years since the establishment of the TUC (Trades Union Congress) making this exhibition a timely exploration of the role of today's Trade Unions."

*Union* by Noel Bowler is supported using public funding by Arts Council England and Culture Ireland.



Trade Unions Forum  
FZZ, Warsaw, Poland



Union of Polish Teachers  
Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego  
ZNP, Warsaw, Poland



General Secretary, Len McClusky  
Unite the Union  
Unite, London, UK



Maritime Trades Department  
AFL-CIO Building  
AFL-CIO, Washington, D.C., USA

## Notes to editors

**For further information and images** contact Angela Sheard, Programme Co-ordinator at [angelasheard@impressions-gallery.com](mailto:angelasheard@impressions-gallery.com) or phone 01274 737843.

### **Credits**

*Union* by Noel Bowler is supported using public funding by Arts Council England and Culture Ireland.

### **Interviews**

Noel Bowler is available for interviews. Contact Angela Sheard, Programme Co-ordinator at [angelasheard@impressions-gallery.com](mailto:angelasheard@impressions-gallery.com) or phone 01274 737843.

### **Events with Noel Bowler**

In Conversation: Noel Bowler and Ken Grant Saturday 28 July, 2.00pm to 3.00pm, booking advised via [impressions-gallery.com](http://impressions-gallery.com)

Artist Reception, book signing and summer party with Noel Bowler Saturday 28 July, 3.00pm to 4.30pm, all welcome

**Publication** An accompanying publication with introductory essay by photographer Ken Grant is available, published by the Kehrer Verlag, 2015.

### **Exhibition venue and opening hours:**

Impressions Gallery, Centenary Square, Bradford, BD1 1SD

Tuesday to Thursday 10am to 6pm

Friday and Saturday 10am to 5pm

Closed Sundays and Mondays

Admission Free

**Noel Bowler** (b.1978, Ireland) is a photographer and educator. He holds an MFA in photography from University of Ulster, Belfast and a BA (Hons) degree in Documentary Photography from the University of Wales, Newport. His work has been exhibited worldwide including New York Photofestival and Les Rencontres d'Arles, with solo exhibitions in Gallery of Photography, Ireland, and Impressions Gallery, England. Bowler has nominated for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize in 2011 and for the Prix Pictet Photography Prize in both 2012 and 2015. He is currently a Lecturer in Photography at the University of Suffolk.

Noelbowler.com

**Impressions Gallery** is a charity that helps people understand the world through photography. The Gallery collaborates with photographers and organisations nationally and internationally to commission, exhibit and publish photography. Our work with new emerging photographers and often-overlooked artists cements and builds their careers. Established in 1972 as one of the first specialist photographic galleries in Europe, Impressions has grown to become one of the UK's leading independent venues for contemporary photography. We are located in the heart of Bradford, UNESCO City of Film. We work with local communities and young people to make photography accessible to all through our formal and informal education. Impressions is funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation and supported by Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

www.impressions-gallery.com

**Arts Council England** champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. They support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. They believe great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2015 and 2018, they plan to invest £1.1 billion of public money from the government and an estimated £700 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country.

www.artscouncil.org.uk

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