



## Capital City

*The Invisible City* (19 October - 1 December) is the second exhibition in The Photographers' Gallery's ongoing London Project. In contrast to the first exhibition in 1988, which faced the visible signs of dramatic change in the capital, *The Invisible City* deals with qualities that are not so easily seen or defined.

The aim of this exhibition is to piece together, through the commissioned work of six young artists, a series of fragments towards a representation of the 'human condition' of London in 1990. People are reasserted as the focus of the city, but not in the familiar pattern of urban documentary surveys.

None of the artists in the exhibition is constrained by notions of documentary realism. In their work the real and the imaginary flow together, their city is one built around the physical and psychological terrains mapped out by its inhabitants.

The above picture is part of a series by Simon Crump. Crump's images register a familiar ambivalence to the city, one which has cut through all representations of the metropolis since the first stirrings of modernism. On one hand, the city is perceived as life-giving, energising body and soul, creating possibilities, expanding and extending experience. On the other, the city is a predator

that either denies or corrupts all levels of personal contact.

The image of London formed in this exhibition is often dark and oppressive, a city of indistinct locations, and few, if any, recognisable landmarks. There is a sense of confinement here at odds with what, in recent years, has come to signify 'the new London' - the soaring atriums, the shopping malls and arcades - places where history has been reconstituted and commodified.

The pace and colour of public life, so much in evidence in recent independent photography, is ignored here in favour of more hidden territories, dense and layered spaces where history is not sold but hangs heavily, creating a sense of unease. •

David Chandler