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Retrospective exhibition sponsored by Birmingham City University

Birmingham City University is the lead sponsor of a major exhibition opening in Birmingham tomorrow (Sept 30th).

Face-to-Face is a major retrospective of one of Britain's most illustrious photographers, Brian Griffin, in the city of his birth. Taking place in two adjacent locations in Birmingham's Colmore Business District Face-to-Face is a large-scale outdoor retrospective and will showcase Griffin's portraiture over the last 38 years, including many of his most prominent portraits of leading musicians, politicians and celebrities. Two accompanying indoor exhibitions will feature Griffin's award-winning series' Team and The Water People.

Brian Griffin said: "I am a boy from the Black Country born in Birmingham. For that reason the city has always been close to my heart and it is an honour to be given this retrospective".

Known for the extraordinary composition and lighting of his portraits, Griffin's distinctive style was developed during his early career as a staff photographer at Management Today. Joining the magazine in 1972, Griffin's unique approach, with his witty and surreal touches, changed the face of corporate portraiture, leading to a series of significant commissions for leading companies around the world. Griffin went on to become one of the most revered portrait photographers of his generation, capturing the likes of Kate Bush, Brian May, Ringo Starr, Iggy Pop, Helen Mirren and Vivienne Westwood.

Presenting a vast collection of portraits, from the iconic to the never-before-seen, the external exhibition will be located outside Snow Hill Station, marking a return for Griffin to a significant location from his youth: Griffin commuted to Snow Hill everyday for 3 years whilst working the factory job that was to trigger his departure to photography school in 1969.

Griffin's influences are wide-ranging and include Renaissance painting, Surrealism, German expressionist cinema and film noir, all evidenced in his unconventional approach to corporate portraiture. Face to Face presents two of Griffin's major corporate series: Team, a commission in

2006 that saw a sense of heroism in his depiction of the people that built Britain's first ever high speed railway, and The Water People, a commission for Reykjavik Energy documenting a mythic tale of an adventure across the Icelandic landscape. Originally exhibited at Les Rencontres d'Arles in 2009, Team and The Water People will be displayed at the new development One Snowhill.

The exhibition coincides with the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham in October, while the project itself is the result of innovative partnership between private and public sector, supported with a grant from Arts Council England - a clear statement of Birmingham's continuing cultural ambition. Several entities have come together to develop cultural activities and regeneration in the Colmore Business District, including Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham City University, and local business.

Following the exhibition, Griffin will be donating Team and The Water People to Birmingham Central Library on long-term deposit, augmenting the Library's existing collection of some 60 vintage prints, which include his images from the 1980s and his 2003 cultural portrait of Birmingham. They will be housed as part of the Library's Photography Collections in the new Library of Birmingham when it opens in 2013, giving the people of Birmingham the opportunity to enjoy what will be the largest public collection of Griffin's work in the world.

Professor Christopher O Neil, Executive Dean of Birmingham Institute of Art and Design at Birmingham City University commented: "What makes Brian more than an expert is his empathy and sensitivity. Brian likes people; he finds them interesting, engaging and rewarding. So when we look at his photographs of people, something more than a record of their appearance is recorded, his work is not instant and a consequence of circumstance. It is profound."

The exhibition will open tomorrow (30th September) until 21st November at Snowhill, Birmingham.

For more information on Brian Griffin: Face to Face, visit the website www.briangriffin-facetoface.co.uk

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