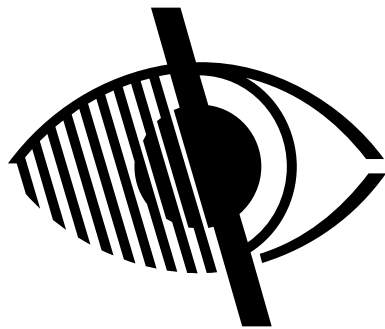


# ***ONLY HUMAN***

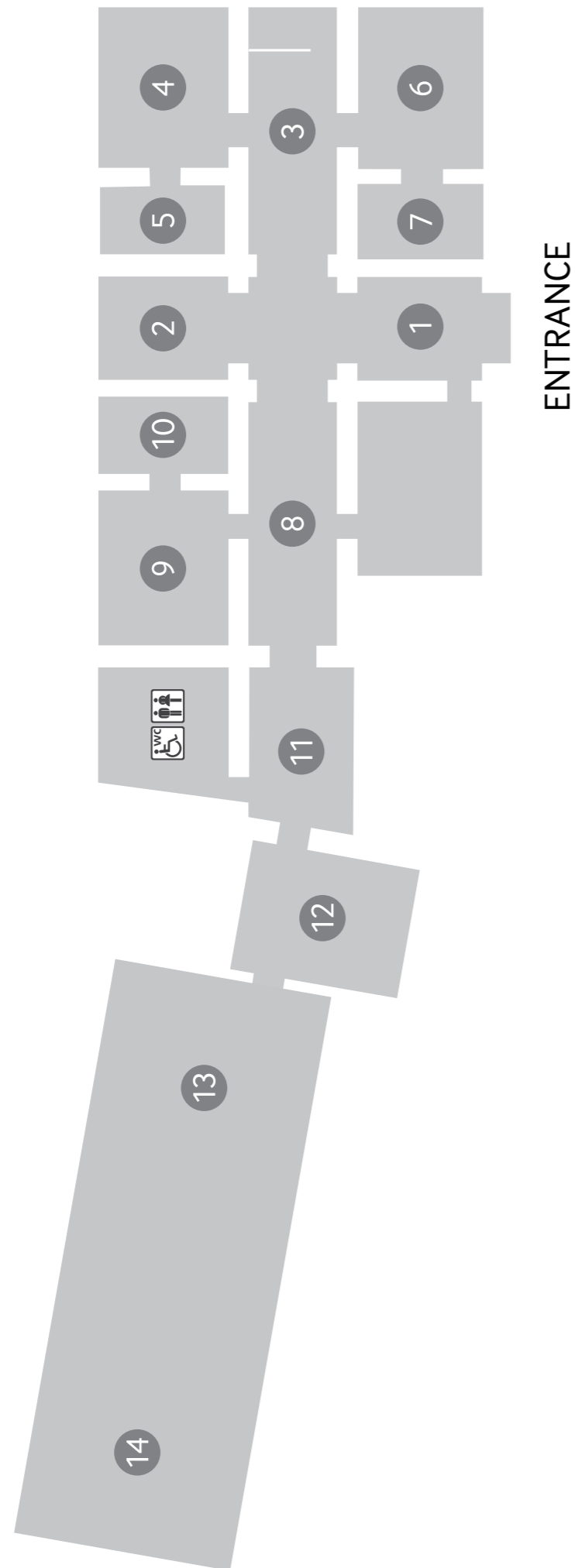
**MARTIN PARR**



## Access Guide

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# Ondaatje Wing Main Hall

Kentucky Derby, Louisville, USA, 2015 by Martin Parr  
© Martin Parr / Magnum Photos / Rocket Gallery

## Introduction

Martin Parr is one of the most celebrated and influential photographers of our time. Over four decades, he has transformed and revitalised social documentary photography, revealing the eccentricities of modern life with affection and insight. His images of British society – and beyond – have changed the way we look at ourselves, and the way we consider our relationship to the wider world.

Born in Surrey in 1952, Parr studied photography at Manchester Polytechnic and rose to prominence in 1986 with the landmark publication, *The Last Resort*, a provocative exploration of the Merseyside beach community of New Brighton. Since then, he has published more than one hundred books and exhibited internationally. Parr was President of the highly respected Magnum photo agency from 2013–17, and most recently, established the Martin Parr Foundation in Bristol, dedicated to collecting and exhibiting work by British and Irish photographers.

This exhibition of new work, made in the UK and around the world, is a collection of individual portraits and Parr's picture of our times. It is about Britishness and Brexit, belonging and self, globalism and consumption, and raises complex questions around both national and self-identity. It is a blend of social document, artistic commentary and performance. In other words, it is very Martin Parr.

All photographs archival pigment prints.

Courtesy of Martin Parr, Magnum Photos and Rocket Gallery.

## Parraphernalia

As Parr's fame has grown, interest in the commercialisation of his images, name and likeness has grown exponentially. Parr approaches these opportunities with the same creativity he applies to his photography. Early in his career, Parr experimented with alternative methods for presenting his photographs, such as transferring pictures onto ceramic plates and other everyday objects.

In this gallery, a selection of unconventional Parr-branded products is shown. Like the *Autoportraits* and *fotoescultura* displayed in the adjacent gallery, they reveal many different ways in which the artist presents his work, and in turn, how he expresses his own identity. Objects like these challenge usual ideas about the art marketplace. 'I am a firm believer in high and low culture and photography working together,' Parr explains.

House of Holland seaside tracksuit and hat, 2015

The New Art Gallery Walsall mugs, 2014

Kamel Mennour mug, 2014

Photo Clothing T-shirt, 2010

Martin Parr puzzle, 2018

*Toiletpaper* scarf, 2015

House of Holland scarf, 2015

Anya Hindmarch bag, 2006

Magnum Photos breakfast tray, 2017

*Lady's Bridge* by Richard Hawley, vinyl, 2007

*Toiletpaper* tote bag, 2017

Paul Smith swimming shorts, 2017

*Lula x And A* leather jacket, 2014

Third Drawer Down x Rose Gallery ceramic plate, 2010

*Songs from Sun Street* by The Saw Doctors, vinyl, 1998

House of Holland gingham tracksuit, 2015

*Lula x And A* tote bag, 2014

Magnum Photos make-up bag, 2017

*Lula x And A* washbag, 2014

Aperture towel, 2014

'Lovestruck' by Madness, CD, 1999

*Five Cuts* by Madness, CD, 1999

'Johnny the Horse' by Madness, CD, 1999

'Lovestruck' by Madness, CD, 1999

'There's Something About Mary' by The Hit Parade, vinyl, 2011

Rose Gallery beer mats, paperweights, postcards and stickers from *All Things Parr* exhibition, 2010

Martin Parr M&Ms, 2010

Martin Parr disposable camera, 2008

Royal Mail postcard, 2007

Third Drawer Down x Rose Gallery tea towel, 2010

Rose Gallery stickers from *All Things Parr* exhibition, 2010

The Art of Dining beer mats, 2013

Kamel Mennour snow globe, 2014

*Autoportrait*, Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2015

Rose Gallery tattoos from *All Things Parr* exhibition, 2010

House of Holland watch, 2015

House of Holland phone case, 2015

Colouring pencils, Aperture, 2017

*The Martin Parr Colouring Book!*, Aperture, 2017

Mother x Rocket Gallery cigars, 2010

Miniclick Photo Talks beer mats, 2016

# Fotoesculturas

In 2009, Mexican photographer Graciela Iturbide introduced Parr to Bruno Eslava, an eighty-four year old Mexican folk artist, who was one of the last remaining practitioners of the art of *fotoescultura* (photo sculpture). Hand-carved in wood, and incorporating a photograph transferred onto shaped tin, *fotoesculturas* are traditionally used to showcase prized portrait photographs in the home, frequently, but not always, of deceased loved ones. Parr commissioned Eslava to produce a series of these playful and affectionate objects to draw attention to the disappearing art of *fotoescultura* in Mexico.

The portraits used were drawn from Parr's *Autoportraits* series, also on view in this gallery. By transforming these pictures into shrine-like objects, Parr pokes fun at his own identity. At the same time, he raises questions about the nature of photography, identity and memory.

Fotoescultura, hand-painted photograph on metal, with wood carving  
by Bruno Eslava, 2009

# Autoportraits

For the last four decades, Parr has posed in photo booths and commercial photographic studios around the world, as part of an on-going project he calls *Autoportraits*. With relentless curiosity, he has sat for hundreds of pictures, usually with the same ironic expression. Using old fashioned 'head through the hole' boards, photo backdrops, costumes and props, and more recently digital manipulation, the practitioners of these studios pose their sitters in various improbable, and frequently impossible, situations.

Parr's *Autoportraits* reflect his long-standing interest in travel and tourism, and highlight a rarely acknowledged niche in professional photography. As Parr moves from one absurd situation to the next, his pictures echo the ideals and aesthetics of the countries through which he moves, while inviting questions. If all photographs are illusions, can any portrait convey a sense of true identity?

Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2012

Fortaleza, Brazil, 2008

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 1999

Hanoi Studio, Havana, Cuba, 2001

Photo Brockshus, Bremen, Germany, 1999

Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1996

1 Strasbourg, France, 1996

2 Guadalajara, Mexico, 2003

3 Donalds Studio, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2003

4 The Art of Dining, London, England, 2014

5 Shanghai, China, 2003

6 Tbilisi, Georgia, 2002

7 Studio de la Tour Eiffel, Paris, France, 1999

8 Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1996

9 Geeta Studio, New Delhi, India, 2010

10 Rome, Italy, 1991

11 To Sang Fotostudio, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2000

12 Honey Rose Studio, Mexico City, Mexico, 2008

13 Funchal, Madeira, Portugal, 1998

14 Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 2007

15 Musee de L'Elysée, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2013

16 Chinese wedding album, Beijing, China, 2009

17 To Sang Fotostudio, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1999

- 
- 18 Beijing, China, 2009
  - 19 World of Coca-Cola, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 2010
  - 20 Oktoberfest, Munich, Germany, 1997
  - 21 Sajees Digital Studio, Singapore, 2010
  - 22 Chinese wedding album, Beijing, China, 2009
  - 23 Fashion shoot for Details magazine, Odessa, Ukraine, 2000
  - 24 Benidorm, Spain, 1997
  - 25 Delhi, India, 2009
  - 26 Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 1999
  - 27 New York, USA, 1999
  - 28 Chennai, India, 2005
  - 29 Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 2009
  - 30 Pyongyang, North Korea, 1997
  - 31 Wolverhampton, England, 2012
  - 32 Receiving an honorary degree from Manchester Metropolitan University, England, 2008
  - 33 Nairobi, Kenya, 2010
  - 34 Nev's Studio, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, 1997
  - 35 Yalta, Russia, 2008
  - 36 Chicago, USA, 2003
  - 37 Beidaihe, China, 2010
  - 38 Fashion shoot for Details magazine, Foto Beleza, Porto, Portugal, 1999
  - 39 Wisconsin, USA, 2013

- 
- 40 Hey Saturday online dating profile photo agency, London, England, 2016
  - 41 With Lionel Messi, Barcelona, Spain, 2012
  - 42 Scarborough, England, 1999
  - 43 Foto Alfredo Di Vangelisti Guido, Rimini, Italy, 1999
  - 44 New Ming Chun Photo Studio, Singapore, 2007
  - 45 Matterhorn, Switzerland, 2012
  - 46 Fashion shoot for Details magazine, Photo Simonis, Vienna, Austria, 2000
  - 47 Tac Digital Photo Studio, London, England, 2008
  - 48 Lima, Peru, 2015
  - 49 Tbilisi, Georgia, 2002
  - 50 With Arnold Schwarzenegger, Madame Tussauds, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1999
  - 51 Graceland, Memphis, Tennessee, USA, 2006
  - 52 Benidorm, Spain, 1999
  - 53 Lisbon, Portugal, 2007
  - 54 Causeway Photo Studio, Mumbai, India, 2010
  - 55 Darjeeling, India, 2005
  - 56 Edward Reeves Studio, Lewes, England, 2013
  - 57 Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka, 2004



# Oneness

In 2016, BBC Creative commissioned Parr to create a series of idents for BBC One – short films between programmes that identify the broadcaster – on the subject of British ‘oneness’. He subsequently travelled throughout England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales photographing volunteer organisations and sport and hobby clubs, which he felt exemplified this quality. Parr’s evolving portrait of modern Britain shows people united by shared interests and passions, and reflects the diversity of communities living in the UK today.

For each subject, both a 30-second film and a still photograph were made. The films were all produced in the same format: participants start by being engaged in their activity seemingly unaware of the camera, pause briefly to face the camera, then return to the activity as if nothing ever happened.

Commissioned by BBC One

## Oneness

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Central Beacons Mountain Rescue Team, Brecon Beacons, Wales, 2016

Dog walkers, Newcastle upon Tyne, England, 2018

Junior football team, Barnet, London, England, 2018

Bhangra dancers, Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh, Scotland, 2017

Bog snorkellers, Llanwrtyd Wells, Wales, 2017

Rollerskaters, The Coronet, Elephant and Castle, London, England, 2017

### Films

Sea Swimmers, Clevedon

Exercise Class, Avonmouth

Mountain Rescue Volunteers, Brecon Beacons

Wheelchair Rugby Team, Llantrisant

Birdwatchers, Rainham Marshes

Skaters, Southwark

Bhangra Dancers, Edinburgh New Town

Cavers, Wemyss

Tandem Cyclists, Belfast

Night Kayakers, Killyleagh

Banger Racers, St Brides

Bog Snorkellers, Llanwrtyd Wells

Boxers, Digbeth

Allotment Holders, Smethwick

Wild Campers, Glencoe

Ten Pin Bowlers, Hockley

Drone Racers, Nottingham

Fell Runners, Mourne Mountains

Llama Trekkers, Armagh

Under 7 Footballers, Barnet

Sausage Dog Walkers, Newcastle upon Tyne

Swing Dancers, County Durham

Cheerleaders, Manchester

Taekwondo Club, Trafford

Steel Pan Band, Plymouth

Volunteer Lifeguards Exmouth

Duration approximately 14 minutes

Birdwatchers, Rainham Marshes, London, England, 2017

Night kayakers, Killyleagh, Northern Ireland, 2017

Allotment holders, Bearwood, the Black Country, England, 2017

Ospreys wheelchair rugby team, Llantrisant Leisure Centre, Wales, 2016

Clevedon Swimming Club, Somerset, England, 2016

## Celebrity

Parr is both a social documentary and a commercial photographer, exhibiting and selling prints through galleries while at the same time accepting commissions for editorial, fashion and, less frequently, advertising work. When the commission involves celebrity portraiture, he approaches each sitting with the same distinct visual language he brings to the rest of his work, posing sitters in surreal and sometimes incongruous settings, often with a hint of mischief and humour.

These portraits of the great, the good and the notorious have rarely been exhibited before. Parr portrays celebrities much as he photographs everyone else – in the end, they are only human.

Ai Weiwei, artist, curator and architectural designer, Kassel, Germany, 2007

Bruce Reynolds, mastermind of the 1963 Great Train Robbery, at the time the biggest robbery in British history, London, England, 1998

Paul Stephenson, activist and civil rights campaigner, Bristol, England, 2008

David Walliams and Matt Lucas posing as *Little Britain* characters Lou and Andy, London, England, 2006

David Sproxton, Peter Lloyd and Nick Park, founders of Aardman Animations, Bristol, England, 2008

Cara Delevingne, model, Weston-super-Mare, England, 2012

Henry Holland, designer, London, England, 2014

Osman Yousefzada, designer, London, England, 2014

Patrick Grant, designer, London, England, 2014

Ryan Lo, designer, London, England, 2014

Zandra Rhodes, designer, London, England, 2011

Zadie Smith, author, London, England, 2010

Madness, British ska band, London, England, 1999

Tracey Emin, artist, London, England, 2002

Alain de Botton, author and philosopher, London, England, 2011

Paul Smith, designer, London, England, 2016

Mike Leigh, writer and director, London, England, 1997

Graham Fellows as John Shuttleworth, Sheffield, England, 1997

Hugh Collins, who served a prison sentence in HMP Barlinnie, Glasgow, for murder. He now lives and works in an artists' community in Edinburgh, Scotland, 1998

Anna Wintour, journalist and fashion editor, Fashion Week, Milan, Italy, 2017

Vivienne Westwood, designer, London, England, 2012

Pelé, Brazilian footballer, London, England, 2003

Gordon Banks, English goalkeeper who played in the 1966 World Cup victory against West Germany, England, 2003

The Perry Family – daughter Florence, Philippa and Grayson, Rocket Gallery, London, England, 2012

♿ Floor surface changes here

## Grand Slam

Parr shows that our identities are revealed in part by how we spend our leisure time – the sports we watch, the players or teams we support, the way we celebrate victories or commiserate defeat. Commissioned by Italian coffee manufacturer Lavazza, Parr has photographed all four international Grand Slam tennis tournaments – which include the Australian, French and US opens. The Championships at Wimbledon combine stereotypes and quaint traditions of Britishness, such as strawberries and cream, bad weather and polite queues, which have become as ubiquitous as the tennis itself.

As a tidal wave of well-wishing fans grapple for tennis player Rafael Nadal's attention, the enthusiasm for the sport is clear. Spectators wait patiently under umbrellas when rain stops play, or when the temperature in Australia exceeds 40°C, a woman throws herself at cooling fans, yelping with delight. Who cares if anyone is watching?

As viewers, we admire supporters as focused and passionate as these.

Australian Open, Melbourne, Australia, 2018

French Open, Paris, France, 2016

Australian Open, Melbourne, Australia, 2018

US Open, New York, USA, 2017

Australian Open, Melbourne, Australia, 2018

The Championships, Wimbledon, England, 2015

US Open, New York, USA, 2017

US Open, New York, USA, 2016

French Open, Paris, France, 2016

The Championships, Wimbledon, England, 2015

Rafael Nadal, US Open, New York, USA, 2017

French Open, Paris, France, 2016

 Floor surface changes here

## **Everybody Dance Now**

Parr frequently photographs in series, some of which are long and open-ended, as with his photographs of people dancing from around the world.

Dance is a great leveller for Parr. Whether it is pensioners at the Margate Lido, men throwing each other round a sweaty mosh pit at the Whitby Goth Weekend, a Sikh family at a wedding in Cardiff's City Hall, or several generations celebrating the Pride festival together on a hot summer's day, dancing is an opportunity for people to cast aside inhibitions and live in the moment. These utterly joyous photographs show that regardless of age or background, when our favourite songs are played, we all get up to dance.

These photographs have their origins in work Parr made as a student in the early 1970s, where he photographed dancing in Manchester's pubs and halls, as well as ballroom dancers in Blackpool.

Magdalene Ball, Cambridge, England, 2015  
Sexy Sunday, Whitby Goth Weekend, Spa Pavilion, Whitby, Yorkshire, England, 2014  
Grecians' Ball, Christ's Hospital School, West Sussex, England, 2011  
Sikh wedding, City Hall, Cardiff, Wales, 2008  
Bar Mitzvah, New York, USA, 2017  
Manchester Pride, Manchester, England, 2018  
New Model Army, Whitby Goth Weekend, Spa Pavilion, Whitby, Yorkshire, England, 2014  
Pride, Ryde, Isle of Wight, England, 2018  
The M.video Christmas party, Moscow, Russia, 2011  
Silver Swans, the Royal Academy of Dance, London, 2017  
Hen party, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 2008  
Scottish Country Dance Club, Dufftown, Scotland, 2017  
Notting Hill Carnival, London, England, 2017  
21st birthday party, Royal Nawaab, Levenshulme, Manchester, England, 2018  
Dinner dance, The Savoy, London, England, 2016  
Margate, Kent, England, 1986

♿ 3-dimensional objects in this room

## **Beside the Seaside**

In many ways, a day at the beach is similar the world over, but each country has its own cast of characters and traditions. Beaches are places where private and public intersect, where people let down their guard in close proximity to others. Parr has photographed this subject for more than three decades, across five continents

Parr has recently used a telephoto lens to approach this subject in a new way. From a high vantage point, he photographs unobserved from long distances, zooming into crowds and isolating small details that the unassisted eye would miss. At the same time, he provides an overview of these densely packed spaces, showing the scale and variety of people sometimes literally 'rubbing shoulders' on the sand.

Tenby, Wales, 2018

Sorrento, Italy, 2014

Grandé Beach, Mar Del Plata, Argentina, 2014

Martin Parr deck chairs, 2015

St Ives, Cornwall, England, 2017

Baga Beach, Goa, India, 2018

## Ordinary Portraits

Parr describes himself as a social documentary photographer, associating with a tradition of picture-making historically identified with movements for political and socioeconomic change. He is not usually thought of as a traditional portraitist, although a number of photographs in this exhibition approach a more conventional definition of portraiture. In these images, Parr asked people to stop and pose; ordinarily, he photographs more discreetly.

These pictures might be called 'environmental portraits', images in which the identities of person and place intertwine. Do the clothes we wear, the groups we join, the careers we choose, or the hobbies we enthusiastically pursue, express our personality? Or is the converse true – does our participation in such things shape and define us?

Whether photographing a stranger, a friend or public figures, Parr approaches each subject in much the same way. Through Parr's lens we are all ordinary people, and we are all heroic.

Wolverhampton Races, the Black Country, England, 2012  
James Shaw, Associate MCC Member at Lord's Cricket Ground, London, England, 2018  
Yang Yi and Xi Chuang, shopping centre, Canton Road, Hong Kong, 2013  
Shelly, George and Ales Seaman, Whitby Goth Weekend, Whitby, Yorkshire, England, 2014  
Evelyn Marie Seidel, Lady Di Club, Hamelin, Germany, 2013  
Missionaries Matthew Tanner and Preston Toone, Mr Mac, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, 2015  
Monroe Avenue, Rochester, New York, USA, 2012  
Tim Montondo, Ward's Natural Science, Rochester, New York, USA, 2012  
Mary Lynn Myrkel, Atlanta Pride, Georgia, USA, 2010  
The Republican National Convention, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, 2016  
Kristen Coston, the Republican National Convention, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, 2016  
The Republican National Convention, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, 2016  
Val Yaggy, the Republican National Convention, Cleveland, Ohio, USA, 2016  
Harbhajan Singh, Willenhall Market, Walsall, the Black Country, England, 2011  
Orangemen, the Twelfth, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 2016  
Crisp 'N' Fry, Spring Bank, Hull, England, 2017  
Nice, France, 2015  
Nice, France, 2015

Martin Bramley, the Rhubarb Triangle, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England, 2015  
Norman Soper, winner of Best Pot Leek at the Sandwell Show, West Bromwich, the Black Country, England, 2010  
Mark Evans with No. 21 at the Tipton Pigeon Racing Club, the Black Country, England, 2010



# British Abroad

As Parr's fame grew in the late 1980s and 1990s, he began increasingly to travel on assignment. His international travel enabled him to examine the phenomenon of 'Britishness' in other countries, especially former colonies. He has collected these in a series he calls 'British Abroad', examining vestiges of British expatriate communities and customs.

Parr shows post-colonial societies in which white privilege persists, despite political and economic reforms. At the same time, he reveals communities out of step with contemporary British life, clinging to habits and fashions long since outgrown back home. These communities maintain a fantasy version of Britain that probably never existed in the UK itself, but which is now preserved in small pockets around the world.

Singing 'Jerusalem' with Billy the Trumpet, England vs Sri Lanka Test Match, Galle, Sri Lanka, 2018

Borrowdale Racecourse, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1995

The Karen Country Club, Nairobi, Kenya, 2010

Borrowdale Racecourse, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1995

Britfest, Schloss Neuhaus, Paderborn, Germany, 2013

The Kenya Derby, Nairobi, Kenya, 2010

Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka, 2005

Vivian Smith, Fairlawn Hotel, Kolkata, India, 2005

The Karen Country Club, Nairobi, Kenya, 2010

Sam Levy's Village, Borrowdale, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1995

Bad Fallingbostel army base, Heidekreis, Lower Saxony, Germany, 2013

Kovalam, Kerala, India, 2016

The Royal Harare Golf Club, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1995

 Floor surface changes here

## A Day at the Races

The British have a remarkable ability to attend sporting fixtures while not actually watching the action. Nowhere is this more evident than at the races, a subject that has long fascinated Parr. He has travelled across Britain and around the world to photograph international horse races and the spectators who attend them. He reveals racegoers as they never intended to be seen, their actions unrehearsed and unpolished.

The way we play, celebrate and enjoy our leisure time can reveal a lot about our identities.

Questions of social status often sneak into the frame. Whether a glorious opportunity to put on your top hat and tails, or simply an excuse to have a flutter on the horses, this 'sport of kings' brings together people from many different walks of life.

Durban July Races, Durban, South Africa, 2005

Kentucky Derby, Louisville, USA, 2015

Royal Ascot, Berkshire, England, 2013

Royal Ascot, Berkshire, England, 1999

The Cheltenham Gold Cup, Gloucestershire, England, 2006

The Derby, Epsom, Surrey, England, 2004

The Derby, Epsom, Surrey, England, 2004

The Derby, Epsom, Surrey, England, 2004

The Grand National, Aintree, Merseyside, England, 2018

The Grand National, Aintree, Merseyside, England, 2018

Ladies Day, The Grand National, Aintree, Merseyside, England, 2016

Ladies Day, The Grand National, Aintree, Merseyside, England, 2016

The Grand National, Aintree, Merseyside, England, 2018

Martin, Martin  
When will you be starting  
A serious career in photography?  
Passports, weddings, baskets full of kittens  
Martin, your attitude baffles and it sickens!

Once I asked Martin to take some pics of me  
Relaxing at home with my loving family  
With hands like 'so', but Martin said 'No'  
And proceeded to snap a plate of mashed potato!

Well, I told Martin how to take a photograph  
You say 'Watch the birdie!' and try to make them  
laugh  
Or at least smile... Martin meanwhile  
Was focusing his lens on a nearby rubbish pile!

And when will this silliness stop?  
Photos of light switches, lampshades, the lot  
Pleasing to the eye it is not!  
And when for goodness' sake will he open a shop?

Martin, Martin  
When will you be starting  
A serious career in photography?  
Passports, weddings, baskets full of kittens  
Martin, your attitude baffles and it sickens!

John Shuttleworth

# Interview

Martin Parr on *Only Human*

Duration approximately 8 minutes

Photographs © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos / Rocket Gallery

# Café

Weston-super-Mare, England, 1998

Garden tea party, Chew Stoke, Somerset, England, 1992

A cream tea, Chew Stoke, Somerset, England, 1992

Sand Bay, Somerset, England, 1997

Mayor of Todmorden's inaugural banquet, Todmorden,  
West Yorkshire, England, 1977

Street party for Her Majesty the Queen's Silver Jubilee, Todmorden,  
West Yorkshire, England, 1977

Benidorm, Spain, 2014

West Bay, Dorset, England, 1996

Surrey, England, 1970

Cricket lunch, Chew Stoke, Somerset, England, 1992

Morelli's Cappuccino Bar, Broadstairs, Kent, England, 1986

Bolton, England, 1978

A Christmas cocktail, London, England, 1995

Pet Shop Boys – London, Directed by Martin Parr, Parlophone  
Records, 2003, Courtesy of Warner Music Group Licensing

## Britain in the time of Brexit

The 2016 referendum vote to leave the European Union is not only one of the biggest socio-political events of our time, it is also a curious manifestation of British identity. Politicians on both sides of the debate used the referendum to debate immigration and its impact on British society and culture.

At times, this degenerated into a nationalistic argument for resisting change, rejecting the European way of doing things and returning to a more purely 'British' culture, however that might be defined.

For this project, Parr often travelled to areas with high concentrations of 'Leave' voters, photographing subjects enthusiastically expressing their patriotism, while at the same time revealing an increasingly diverse and multicultural nation. He also photographed industries, such as Grimsby smoked fish, that enjoyed protected domain status under European rules, but may lose those protections after Brexit.

Parr's take on contemporary Britain provides little evidence of simmering tensions.

These photographs suggest that politics is an abstract affair to most citizens. The people in Parr's photographs are simply getting on with things as they have always done – queueing, shopping, meeting up for a drink. The red warning flag on a Cornish beach is the only hint of possible trouble to come.

Lincolnshire Show, Lincolnshire, England, 2018  
Stone Cross Parade, St George's Day, West Bromwich, the Black Country, England, 2017  
Notting Hill Carnival, London, England, 2017  
Car boot sale, Bristol, England, 2016  
Hen party, Hollywood Cars, Aberdeen, Scotland, 2017  
Party for the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, Didsbury, Manchester, England, 2018  
St Paul's Carnival, Bristol, England, 2018  
Lincolnshire Show, Lincolnshire, England, 2018  
Lord's Cricket Ground, London, England, 2018  
Methodist Church summer fête, Mousehole, Cornwall, England, 2017  
Stone Cross Parade, St George's Day, West Bromwich, the Black Country, England, 2017  
  
Porthcurno, Cornwall, England, 2017  
  
Preparing lobster pots, Newlyn Harbour, Cornwall, England, 2018  
Brian and Ross Cartwright, Griffin-Woodhouse Ltd. chain makers, Cradley Heath, Sandwell, the Black Country, England, 2010  
Traditional smoked haddock, Alfred Enderby Ltd., Grimsby, England, 2016  
Sainsbury's, Chanterlands Avenue, Hull, England, 2017  
Stack It High, Hessle Road, Hull, England, 2017

Stone Cross Parade, St George's Day, West Bromwich, the Black Country, England, 2017  
  
Henley Royal Regatta, Henley-on-Thames, England, 2016  
Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, England, 2017  
RHS Chelsea Flower Show, London, England, 2018  
Saturday sell-off, RHS Chelsea Flower Show, London, England, 2018  
  
British citizenship ceremony, Bristol Registry Office, Bristol, England, 2017  
Street party for the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, Stockport, England, 2018  
Stone Cross Parade, St George's Day, West Bromwich, the Black Country, England, 2017  
Model of HMT *Empire Windrush*, St Paul's Carnival, Bristol, England, 2018  
The Twelfth, Ulster Protestant celebration, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 2018  
North Somerset Young Farmers' Barn Dance, Langford, Somerset, England, 2017  
Iftar festival marking the end of Ramadan, St Mark's Road, Bristol, England, 2018  
Lord's Cricket Ground, London, England, 2018  
South Wold Hunt, Louth, Lincolnshire, England, 2015  
The Duke of Beaufort's Boxing Day Hunt, Cirencester Park, Gloucestershire, England, 2016

Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells, Wales, 2018

Susan's Hairdressers, West Bromwich, Sandwell, the Black Country, England, 2011

The Bon Accord Shopping Centre, Aberdeen, Scotland, 2017

Henleaze Lake, Bristol, England, 2018

Henleaze Lake, Bristol, England, 2018

Stone Cross Parade, St George's Day, West Bromwich, the Black Country, England, 2017

## The Establishment

In 2009, Parr was commissioned to photograph behind the scenes at King's College, Cambridge, for what would become *A Book of King's* (2012). It was the first in a series that Parr would come to think of as 'The Establishment', in which he gained access to people and places to which the public are not freely admitted. Although not overtly critical, these photographs are among his most political. 'Elite groups still run the country', Parr has explained. In the City of London, for example, 'It's still white and middle class: you rarely see women or anyone of colour in a livery company.'

The members of Parr's 'Establishment' are bound together through a series of arcane rituals, the purposes of which have often long since been forgotten. These include counting the Queen's cygnets during the annual Swan Upping on the Thames; a page boy hired to hold the ceremonial robes of Chris Patten, Chancellor of the University of Oxford; or the continued prosperity and influence of trade guilds, founded in the Middle Ages. While Parr's photographs show that Britain's communities and ways of life are shifting,

this series demonstrates that certain bastions of the British establishment have changed little for centuries.

Ed Hills, Head of Moreton House, Harrow School, England, 2011

Ed Hills, Head of Moreton House, having won the football match against Druries House 2–0, Harrow School, England, 2011

'Trashing' after final exams, with students foam-spraying, drinking and exploding bottles of champagne, University of Oxford, England, 2016

Encaenia Garden Party, Merton College, University of Oxford, England, 2016

Toasting Her Majesty the Queen, Swan Upping at the Thames near Eton, England, 2015

Her Majesty the Queen visiting Drapers' Hall for the 650th anniversary of the Worshipful Company of Drapers, City of London, England, 2014

Christ's Hospital School, West Sussex, England, 2010

Burns Night, St Hugh's College, University of Oxford, England, 2016

Brasenose College Ball, University of Oxford, England, 2015

The *Grecians' Ball* with *Alice in Wonderland* theme, Christ's Hospital School, West Sussex, England, 2010

25th Anniversary Ball, Kellogg College, University of Oxford, England, 2015

Harrow School, London, England, 2011

Christ's Hospital School, West Sussex, England, 2010

The Mercers' Company at Trinity Hospital in Greenwich, London, England, 2015

The Silent Ceremony to swear in the new Lord Mayor, Fiona Woolf, Guildhall, City of London, England, 2013



The Bedels, officiators at University of Oxford events, Oxford, England, 2015

Hall Assistant Paul Whately, Christ Church, University of Oxford, England, 2016

Summer Eights regatta, University of Oxford, England, 2015

Christ's Hospital School, West Sussex, England, 2010

Pancake Race, City of London, England 2014

Old Bailey, London, England, 2014

Former Prime Minister David Cameron attending the Lord Mayor's Banquet, London, England, 2013

Lord Patten of Barnes, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, with his page, the Chancellor's Court, Oxford, England, 2014