

PRIMATE TIME
Making a monkey out of
Helena Bonham Carter





erosity of spirit and the strength of character you might expect of a Gorbals publican, Clancey established a welcoming atmosphere amid well-understood ground rules.

"The Queens pub seemed to keep the same clientele for years," recalls Agnes, former head barmaid, sifting through a series of large photographs. "It was the kind of place you could go into alone. People were at ease in the shop, and they never over-stepped the mark."

The Queens was many folks' home away from home. Even after the high rise flats were demolished and their residents relocated, you'd see taxis arriving every weekend from as far afield as Castlemilk. It was the old crowd, returning for a pint and a blether, or just to spend a warm afternoon sipping a beer and reading the paper.

Agnes is visibly moved by these images, part of a series entitled 'A Valediction for Queen Elizabeth Square' taken by Dan Dubowitz of the Heisenberg group. She senses that the success of the new Gorbals depends upon maintaining a tangible link with everything positive about the old Gorbals. The only way to achieve that, she knows, is by involving the community itself, a notion urban planners overlooked in the Sixties.

"There's very mixed emotions," Agnes says of

After the high rise flats were demolished, you'd see taxis arriving every weekend from as far afield as Castlemilk

the current regeneration. "If they're going to build more houses, obviously it's going to be good for people in the area. But they've got to build pubs and things to accommodate them as well." Folk are hopeful that this time the Gorbals may get the community resources it needs, she says. But if the past is anything to go by, locals can be forgiven if they're a tad cynical.

The story of the pub is just one of many reflecting the Gorbals spirit, a sensibility that can't be quantified by council statistics, or factored into an architectural blueprint. It is that spirit of camaraderie which Dubowitz and his Heisenberg company wanted to put at the centre of their public art projects for the new Gorbals.

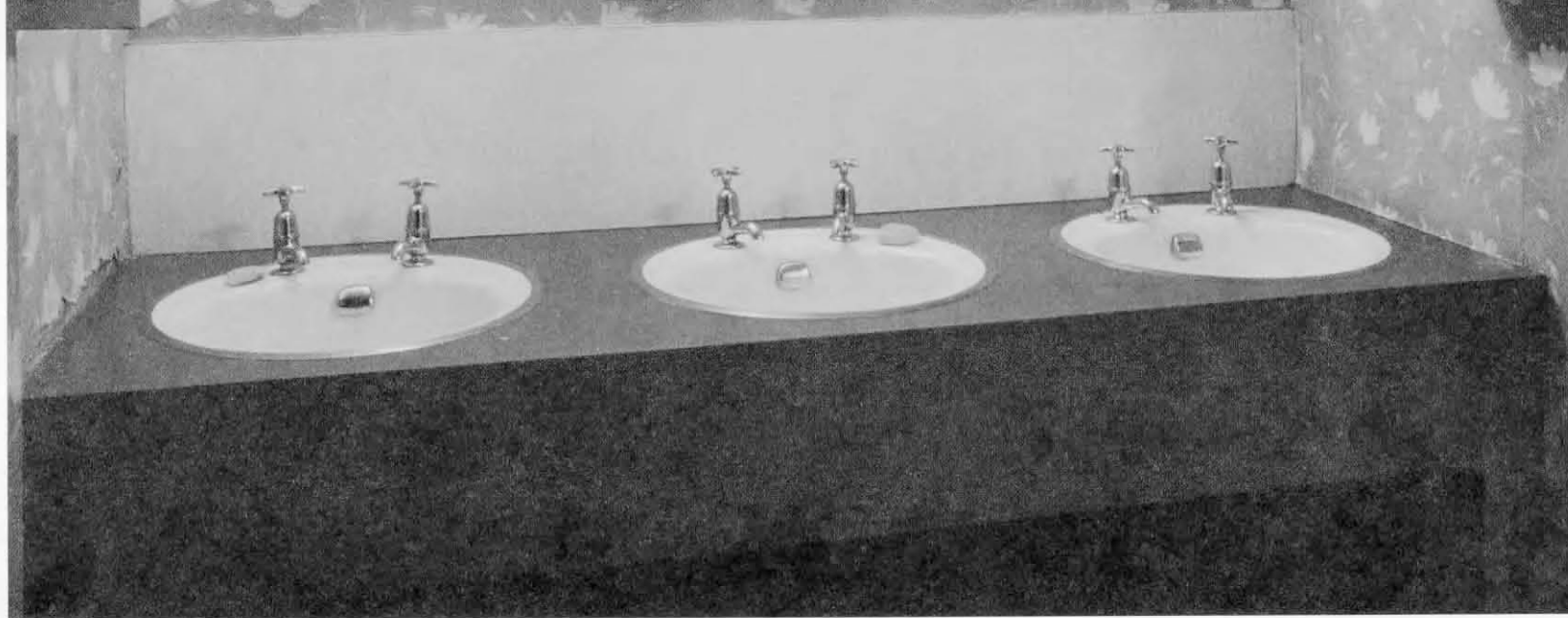
Frustrated by the restrictive and spiritless outlook of standard approaches to public art, architecture and planning, he is fascinated by the idea of creating public art works via an organic involvement with the space and those inhabiting it. "Take planning permission," he says, with notable distaste. "You have to tell them what you're going to do down to the very

last detail. What we do is the antithesis of that." The strong sense of a 'Gorbals' identity – one that holds fast, even among those who have long since left the area – has enormous resonance for Dubowitz, who calls himself a citizen of the world. Identity grounded in a geographical location exactly mirrors Dubowitz's cultural background. The son of a Hungarian Jewish mother who survived the Holocaust in circumstances remarkably similar to Anne Frank, hidden in a house opposite the Budapest headquarters of the Gestapo, he feels he has no geographical home. With forebears who fled Baltic pogroms more than a century ago, he considers himself stateless, a genuine world citizen.

His extraordinary family history seems to have bred in Dubowitz an exceptional ability to empathise with the socially marginalised. This attitude reaches its apotheosis in a beautiful little film he made with his Heisenberg partner, Matt Baker. The pair put a park bench in the space where the recently demolished Queen Elizabeth Square community centre once stood, then invited locals

Picture this: (above) the so-called 'library' in the Queens; (opposite) the ladies' room, with its pink soaps and flowery paper peeling off the walls





to sit there, recounting their memories of the building. The results are hilarious and touching.

People's memories of things they had done, people they had met there, evoke a great sense of loss for a centre which planners simply assumed was disrepaired, poorly built and crying out for demolition. "People are gutted that they took their community centre away," Dubowitz says. "It looked like s**t, it was a crap building, it needed investment. So the great and the good said: 'Oh, we'll develop the church for you.'"

Dubowitz showed the film to Tom Macartney, who heads the regeneration project. Although the whole art project would have been a non-starter

'I had no idea people cared about it. I saw it, thought it looked like s**t, I was trying to clean up the area, so I wiped it out'

without Macartney's support, he watched the film with some surprise and unexpected emotion. The project director had not got the measure of public affection for the centre. "Macartney said: 'I had no idea people cared about it. I saw it, thought it looked like s**t, I was trying to clean up the area, so I wiped it out.'" Matt Baker says: "I think he was actually quite moved by it."

For some, Dubowitz's photographs provoke difficult emotions. Critics insist that the Gorbals

needs to turn its back on the images of poverty, dereliction and drug addiction which are so movingly reflected in his photographs. They've accused him of celebrating nostalgia for the old Gorbals.

"There's a lot of healing going on," Dubowitz insists. "Really important emotions are being expressed. Celebrating is only one interpretation. I'm just giving it a voice." ■

Stirring the City is at The Lighthouse, Glasgow, from Friday until August 29

The Wicker Chair

- specialists in conservatory furniture -

From conservatory suites and dining suites to bedroom furniture, our new showroom at the Torwood Centre in Larbert offers you an unrivalled selection of the best cane furniture in Scotland at the most competitive prices!

Torwood Centre, Torwood, Larbert Tel: 01324 552126



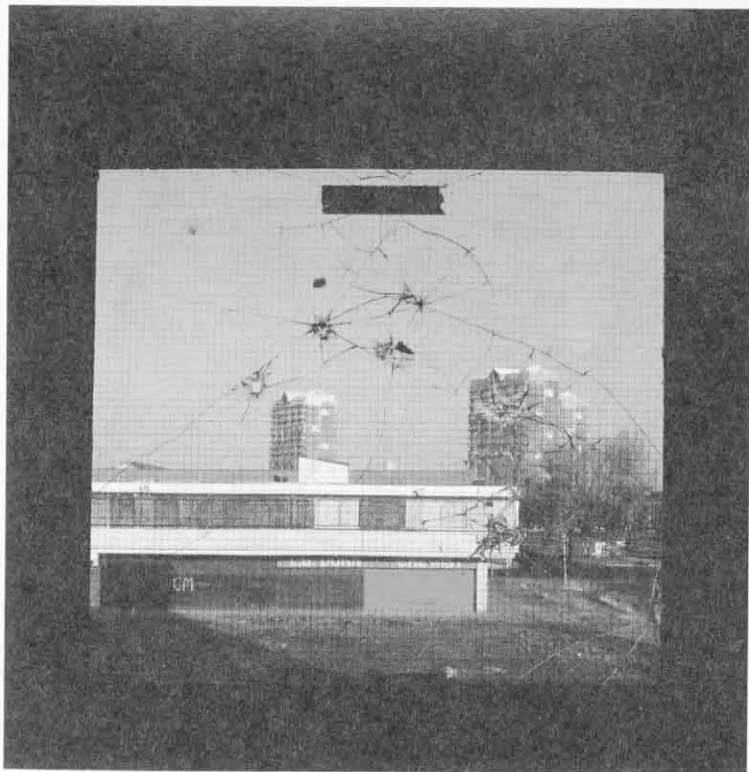
Monday to Saturday 10am - 5pm
Sunday 11am - 5pm

Open
7 days a week

LAST ORDERS AT

To some the Gorbals was a notorious slum. To others it was an experiment in urban renewal. But most of all, to thousands, it was home. As part of a major public art project, Dan Dubowitz photographed its social heart, the Queens pub. By Mark Brown

THE QUEENS



THE photographs show the wall pock-marked from three decades of darts playing. A map of the local bus routes hangs by two thumbtacks. A pile of still-folded newspapers sits on a discarded tray, with forgotten Christmas cards jammed down behind. Pink soaps sit on the basin rim in the ladies' room, where flowery paper gently puckers off the wall. It's closing time at the Queens Bar in Queen Elizabeth Square. The patrons have just left. Not for the night, but forever. Last orders have been called for the final time and the bar, like so much of the Gorbals, is slated for the architectural dustbin.

It has happened before. When the sandstone tenements were ripped down in the Sixties, releasing a flood of rats, the city council replaced them with the famous – some say infamous – tower blocks designed by Sir Basil Spence. Greeted as a brave new world for the city's most impoverished residents, this high rise utopia was recently demolished, giving way to another vision of urban renewal.

Under landlord Jim Clancey, who ran the pub for 21 of its 30-odd years, the Queens Bar became something of a legend. Renowned for his gen- ▶





Last orders:
images of the
demolished Queens
Bar, in the Gorbals,
from Dan Dubowitz's
Stirring the City
exhibition: (main)
the lounge bar; (far
left) view of Queen
Elizabeth Square
from the pub





spectrum

MAGAZINE

PHOTO ESSAY

LAST ORDERS AT

To some the Gorbals was a notorious slum. To others it was an experiment in urban renewal. But most of all, to thousands, it was home. As part of a major public art project, Dan Dubowitz photographed its social heart, the Queens pub. By Mark Brown

