

## On the buses

Former redcoat in line for Futures prize



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Arts correspondent

A former Butlin's redcoat and car factory worker has been shortlisted for Britain's richest art prize.

Tom Wood, a 50-year-old Irish-born photographer, has made his name with witty and joyful snaps of the passengers on Liverpool's buses. He is the oldest person ever to be in the running for the £65,000 Becks Futures Prize, which until now has been the preserve of the hip-art bratpack.

Although Wood has been taking pictures for 25 years, it was only after the publication of his book *Bus Odyssey*

— hailed for being funny without sneering at its subjects — that Wood was recognised in the art world.

Wood, who was prompted to start taking pictures when a woman who worked with him on the Copley car production line in Oxford admired his drawings, said: "It's more exciting for me — having been around for so long — to be shortlisted than for a 22-year-old.

"Having worked away for such a long time, using 700 rolls of film a year, I'm amazed I've been chosen."

After doing a fine art degree at Leicester University, Wood's introduction to the artistic life could not

have been more down-to-earth, starting shortly afterwards as a redcoat photographer at a Butlin's camp near Ayr in Scotland.

The film-maker Nick Relph, 22, who with his partner Oliver Payne is the youngest person ever shortlisted, has not had it easy either. He says he currently earns a crust from "folding T-shirts".

Both men were expelled from the fine art course at Kingston University near London, although it does not seem to have done them much harm.

This year's judges, who include the singer Marianne Faithfull and the

**Transport of delight: Tom Wood's Vauxhall Circular, 1989 — one of the pictures which established him on the British art scene**

painter Julian Opie, seem to have purposely chosen an anti-conceptual-art list.

Philip Dodd, director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, where the show will begin in March, said: "The show will shock all those Jeremiads who tell us that British art is all over."

The other shortlisted artists are David Cotterrell, Toby Paterson, Kirsten Glass, Dan Perfect, Paul Hosking, Neil Rummung, Rachel Lowe and Hideyuki Sawayanagi.