

It's stunning estate of the art

REVIEW

UNDEREXPOSED NOVAS GALLERY

TIM Brown and Matthew Small are both award-winning artists, but they approach art in two very different ways.

Brown is a photographer renowned for landscapes and cityscapes, while Small is a painter, whose name has become synonymous with painting bold and striking portraits on to bits of metal.

These unlikely collaborators prove that creative differences can be a driving force, as they produce a series of images depicting what

it's like to live on the other side of privilege in the urban environment.

As Brown explains: "I went to see an exhibition of Matthew's about a year ago, and loved it.

"I called him up and we started experimenting, putting our images together digitally.

"Once we started to see how the two styles could fit together, we came up with the idea for this show".

What makes this exhibition all the more appealing is that both artists have been inspired by Arlington House, a community centre for the homeless and immigrant communities living in and around Camden.

Currently undergoing major redevelopment, Brown and Small make use of concrete slabs, old cupboards, bricks and other materials that have come loose from the building, and we get a real sense of both the building and its inhabitants.

In Abbey Road Estate, Small paints on to an old cupboard, in thick, layered brushstrokes. Similarly, in Brown's Nokia World, what looks like chipboard taken from the building-site provides the background for a haunting collage of mobile phones, screen-sized images of people's heads, and pictures of hooded youths.

Ever since Small graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2000, he has pursued an almost exclusively urban agenda.

The very first painting you see on entering the gallery, *Venus and Ipod*, is Brown's blown-up image of a flanked by images of a housing estate.

The effect is almost mesmerising – and is a prime example of how the two mediums of painting and photography can work together.

Brown and Small have included members of the community as far as possible.

The graffiti backdrops behind many of the paintings and photographs on display

were created during workshops with local youth groups.

Elsewhere, in the upper gallery, a box room is dedicated to a series of pencil portraits Small has drawn of all his subjects, which they will be given at the end of the exhibition.

This is a triumph of an exhibition, showing how great art can be used in a socially inclusive way, celebrating the often unseen, always 'Underexposed' view of life on the margins of society.

David Maxwell
■ *Underexposed*
Novas Gallery, 73
Parkway, NW1.
020 7267 5641.
May 4-June 1
Wed-Sun, 11am- 5pm.