

## **Angie Dutton on Photomathon**

12 hours, 12 topics, 12 photo: its a simple formula and a big ask, but 400 of us were up for it on a sunny May Saturday, gathering at the Wales Millennium Centre to see what challenges the day would throw at us.

And what it threw at us was a day of fun, frustration, inspiration and exploration driven by a brilliant selection of topics. From fairly abstract themes such as 'Poetry' and 'Elegant' to more descriptive ones such as 'Out and About' and 'Behind the Scenes', you are driven to dig deep into your imagination, test your creativity, and to open your eyes a little wider to the world around you.

This is the joy of the day. Most of us don't often get the chance to indulge in a whole day of creative activity and Photomathon gives you the opportunity both to revel in this, and in my case, realise how rusty you get at thinking in this way.

The diversity of the results is as wide as can be - some participants are professionals offering polished images that cleverly interpret the themes. Others offer wit and imagination rather than technical perfection - but this is just, if not more entertaining to see. Some who follow a theme - bikes, lego people, pets, food, and more food - are brilliant at weaving the images and topics together to tell a story. Others go for a totally random set of pictures, fuelled as much by chance or fatigue as they work against the clock, but all reflecting the joy of simply taking part in a truly fun challenge.

As I see it, Photomathon isn't so much a competition - although it's great to see the winning pics - it is a celebration of joint endeavour, a day of diving into shops to buy odd props or around corners you've not been to before hoping to find something new. It's 12 hours of talking to people you've never met - asking them to pose for a photo or find out how their Photomathon is going as you identify them by their bright orange wrist bands. More than anything, Photomathon is a love letter to Cardiff. Image upon image of the city appear in the photos, from its familiar sights to its hidden treasures. Beautiful photos of Roath Park and its bird life, the stalls at Central Market, ice cream eating in the Bay, a hardware shop's display of brooms in Grangetown, the green calm of Cathays Cemetery or women up for a big night out as the evening begins in St Mary Street. Centre stage or glimpsed in the background, the city shapes the day and the images that are produced, showing it off as the exciting, complex, timeless and infinitely varied place where we live.

The Photomathon exhibition of all 4800 images will run this year at The Cardiff Story in The Hayes, Cardiff, from Saturday 22 June until Sunday 7 July. [www.photomathon.co.uk](http://www.photomathon.co.uk)

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