



Traders reel from outbreak of crime along High Road

By Janet Maitland

A burglar shattered the windows of Creightons Brasserie and Genzo in the High Road, N2, at 3am on Saturday 14 October then helped himself to items inside as slowly as if he were in a supermarket. At around the same time last month Domino's, the betting shop next door to it and the North London Hospice charity shop had their windows smashed or broken overnight, although nothing was stolen.

Aki Toumazos, owner of Creightons and Genzo, said he had been burgled five times in the last 16 years but had never known a raider so interested in food. Apart from the windows, there was no other damage to his premises.

the disruption to trade. They also feel a sense of despair at how hard it is to keep the show on the road in these straitened times when money is so tight, without the fear of random violence on top.

"It is just horrible for us, and



Above and below: Some of the works from Art Against Knives artists at the Offshoot Gallery in the High Road. Photos Mike Coles

New home for life-changing project in art gallery

By Dan Crute

Meeting Rickardo Stewart, from Art Against Knives (AAK), at their new flagship space in the Offshoot Gallery on the High Road, N2, you can't help but be struck by his energy and drive for the charity's work with disadvantaged and troubled youth.

A serious youth violence specialist with past experience of the problems facing the young people he now works with, Rickardo's been with AAK for the past decade, counselling and mentoring by developing trusted relationships, opening pathways to employment and creating opportunities for young people to develop their own art, music



and business projects.

The objective is to steer them away from danger and towards positive life outcomes, giving space, time and focus to those who often receive it the least.

Call to action

Rickardo told me: "We want to put out a call to action to the good people of East Finchley. We want to invite you all to pop in, say hello and see what we're about. We'd like to show you what we do here and also some of the ways you can get involved. Ultimately, we want to get the word out that we're here and looking to engage with the community."

AAK was born in very real and distressing circumstances. In 2008, the unprovoked stabbing of Oliver Hemsley, a 21-year-old art student at Central St Martins College, near Kings Cross, left him in a wheelchair. A year on from that attack, Oliver's friends organised an exhibition to raise awareness of the issue and money for his care, supported by the College and some of the biggest names in art and fashion.

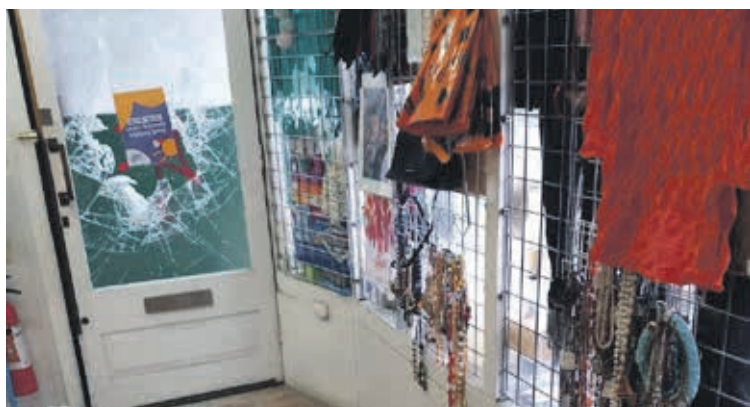
Work was donated by Tracey

Emin, Wolfgang Tillmans, Anthony Gormley, Banksy, and Rankin, among others. To channel this support into action, the group registered as a charity and began running creative community projects all over London. Since then, AAK have engaged, listened to, and supported over 2,000 at-risk young people.

Listening and support

This approach of "addressing the root causes of knife crime by listening to young people and putting them in the lead" is central to AAK's work. The young people find their own ways to succeed, and Rickardo and the rest of the highly qualified team offer guidance and assistance where necessary. A hand up rather than a handout.

Check out their work at the Offshoot Gallery in the High Road, or via www.artagainstknaves.com and on Instagram @Artagainstknaves.



Mindless damage: The broken window at the North London Hospice shop

"He stole about 10 bottles of vodka, a sack of lamb shoulders, and a display platter of salmon. Then he stacked it all in a blue wheelie bin with number nine painted on its side and walked away," said Aki. "This will happen again, I know it. The police can't deal with it, the prisons are full and criminals know they can get away with it. They have evidence that they can, all the time."

Mindless damage

The mindless damage to the windows of Domino's and William Hill was caused by a group of young men. CCTV footage shows them weaving up the High Road taking running kicks at the glass, with one even running back to kick Domino's window a second time.

"How the windows look now is so very bad for business," said the manager of Domino's. "It gives us such a bad image, and the area too." It is not known if the North London Hospice shop fell victim to the same gang of vandals.

Fortunately in these cases, no one was burgled, but the three shops must face the cost of replacing their windows and

for what?" said the manager of the charity shop, adding that more donations would be especially welcome now. "We need more protection, like police patrols after dark," said Shabbir Kadar, manager of William Hill.



Christmas market

East Finchley's Christmas gift market returns bigger and better to the forecourt of Hexagon Classics, near East Finchley Station, on Sunday 26 November.

The Courtyard Market, organised by N2-based social enterprise, Dirthouse, will be filled with local designer-makers selling art and prints, ceramics, homewares, clothing, jewellery, accessories, and small batch cosmetics.

There'll be tasty street food, deli goods and plenty of seasonal treats, plus wine tasting courtesy Bottles'n'Jars.

Entertainment will be provided by Regent Community Brass Band and local singer-guitarist Ben Eaton.

The Courtyard Market runs from 12pm - 5pm on Sunday 26 November outside Hexagon Classics, 82-92 Great North Road, N2 0NL. Entry is free. For more info visit dirthouse.co.uk/courtyard-market or @DirthouseLDN on socials.



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