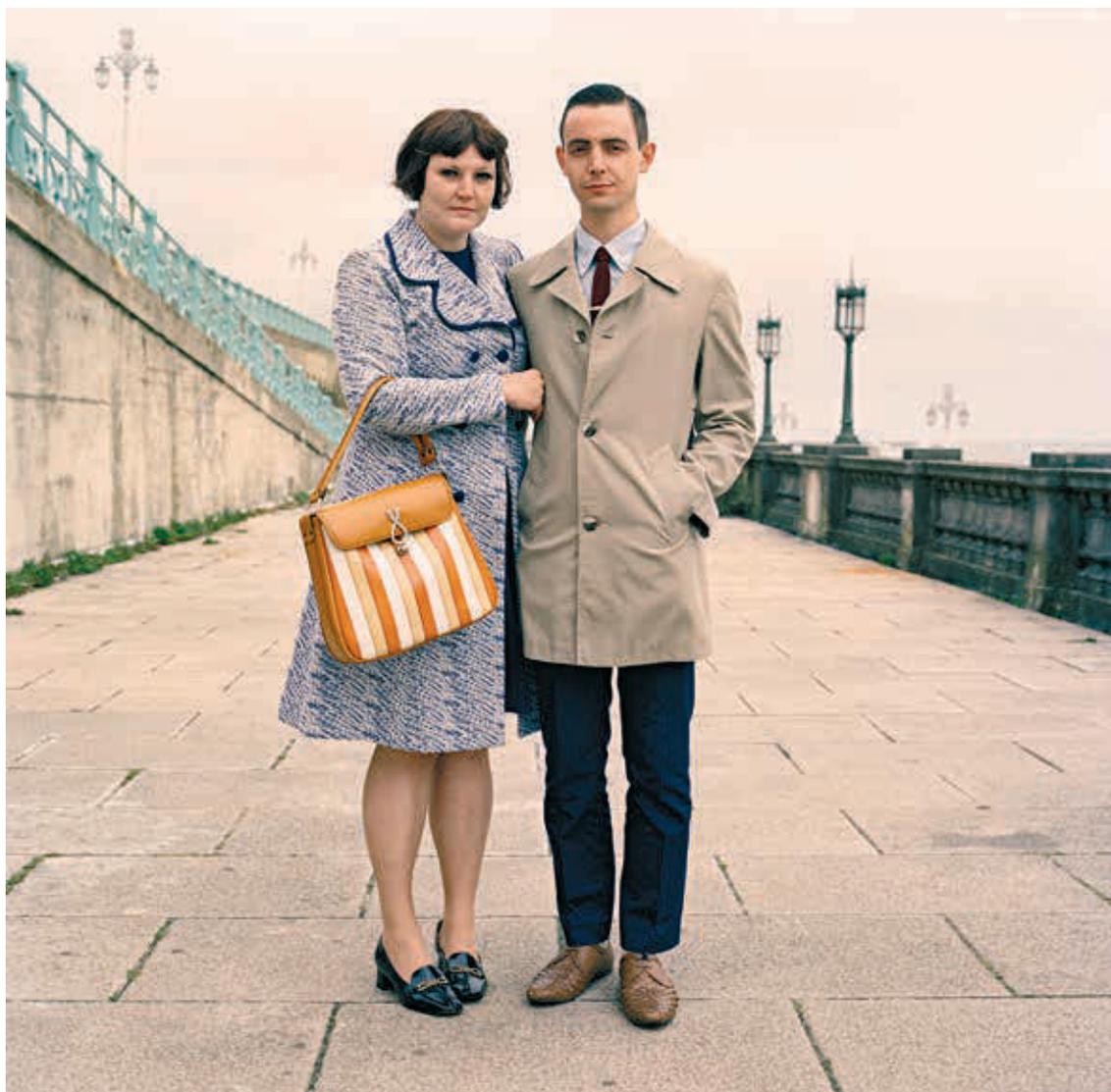


TAKE PRIDE

Right Olly and Jade.
Far right Matt and
 Fay. Both from the
 series *Mod Couples*.



Two prints by member Carlotta Cardana were included in The Society's 156 International Print Exhibition. Here, the London-based Italian portrait and documentary photographer tells David Land about her latest projects, and the reasons she is passionate about shooting on film

“**B**ecause you can't afford to shoot many pictures, the process of shooting on film puts you in a different state of mind”, says RPS member Carlotta Cardana. “You have to make sure that each and every one is worth taking.

“You have to be aware of everything, from how the elements are arranged in the frame, to how the light is falling on the subject. You can't afford mistakes, so there's a lot of pre-visualisation. Pulling out a camera that most subjects think belongs in a

museum is a great ice-breaker, too!”

Carlotta, who shoots her projects on 120 film, first began experimenting with medium format when she acquired an inexpensive 1930s Rolleiflex. “I loved the square format and looking through the viewfinder”, she says. “Then, while I was on a trip in Mexico, the camera fell and broke. A friend had a Bronica SQ-A that he wasn't using that much, so he gave it to me. I fell in love with it straight away, and quickly started falling out with digital photography.”

Originally from Italy and having studied photography in Milan, Carlotta has spent much of her working life based in other countries. She is currently living in London, and undertaking an MA in Documentary Photography at Newport, for which she travels to Wales once a week. In addition to the MA, she is enrolled on a course in New Creative Markets, at Photofusion, Brixton.

Images from Carlotta's most recent personal project, *Mod Couples* – two prints from which were featured in IPE156 – have been included in publications from



The Guardian to *Rolling Stone*.

"I started attending mod weekenders, all-nighters, and ride-outs, in August 2012", she says. "I felt that the mods not only looked amazing, but had something about them that was quintessentially British. I wanted the locations to be part of the story, so I had the couples choose where they wanted to be photographed, and what to wear."

"The project isn't so much about style as it is about identity: the subculture and all of its elements only provide the framework. I am trying to get a glimpse of the identity beyond the 'mask'."

I decided to focus on couples because I am fascinated by the way their identities blend, to produce something larger than the sum of its parts. I am also interested in the relationship between a person and their environment, in

seeing how they complement one another."

It was in the mid-1990s that Carlotta began to show a real interest in photography. Italian newspapers started carrying weekend supplements in full colour, and she would tear out the pictures she liked to paste on her bedroom wall. "I loved reading magazines like *La Repubblica's D*", she says. "Through them, I discovered photography."

Thereafter, Carlotta moved to Turin, where she did a BA in History and Theory of the Visual Arts, Theatre, Cinema and Music, specialising in Theatre and Performing Arts.

"I was also working in a circus school at the time, and I would stay late to take pictures of the shows", she says. "After three years, I finally realised that I enjoyed taking pictures of the shows more than I enjoyed producing them."

In 2005, there weren't any photography degrees on offer in Italian universities, so, while still writing her final thesis, Carlotta enrolled at the Italian Institute of Photography, in Milan. "It was really hands-on, very broad in its scope, and centred on giving you all the groundings to become a commercial photographer", she says.

Carlotta found her course practical but lacking in theory. "I had all the technical skills and knowledge needed to take a pretty picture, but I lacked critical thinking", she says.

While still in school, Carlotta assisted fashion photographers in Milan during the week, returning to her hometown at weekends to assist wedding photographers, and spent her evenings photographing shows and concerts at her local theatre.

"Once I finished school, I didn't know



Above Marta, 27, intern in a publishing house. **Right** Gabriele, 33, designer. Both from *The Fourth Freedom*. **Facing page** Sheena in her bedroom, from the project *Ahoicpe*.



what to do”, she says. “My brother was at university in Buenos Aires at the time, writing his thesis on how the 2001 economic crisis had changed the society. He would tell me amazing stories of the people he was meeting and the places he was seeing, so I decided to join him.”

Carlotta developed two projects on the subjects that her brother was working on for his thesis: the experiences of workers in occupied factories, and the lives of a family

of garbage scavengers.

“I had no idea how to develop a project or tell a story through images”, she says. “I didn’t know anything about Argentina, and I couldn’t speak Spanish. I just went there and started shooting.”

From there, Carlotta moved to Mexico City, where she put her personal projects on hold and began to seek out commissions from magazines. She found work quickly, and started shooting portraits of

celebrities, politicians and business leaders.

“I also worked as a camera assistant on TV commercials”, she recalls, then moved on to co-direct a music video.”

After more than two years in Mexico, Carlotta moved back to Europe, this time choosing London. “The fact that I spoke English, and London’s vibrant photography scene, made it the obvious choice”, she says.

Shortly after arriving in London in 2011, the Greek debt crisis occurred. Carlotta’s thoughts on her own experiences led to the idea for her next project. “I travelled to some of the main cities in Europe, to talk to Italians who had recently left Italy”, she says.

“I wanted to understand what went wrong, and how they were coping with their recently adopted societies.” Called *The Fourth Freedom* (from the four cornerstones of the European market: the freedom of movement of goods, capitals, services and people), the resulting work is a collection of portraits of some of these people, presented alongside a quote from the conversation that Carlotta had with them.

In terms of marketing, Carlotta prefers a mix of traditional portfolios and modern social media strategies. “I have a black leather portfolio, with my name embossed on it, which I mostly show to commercial clients”, she says. “However, in the past few months I have started using a simple black box with prints inside. Since the print is such an important part of my process, it is more suited to my work.”

“I also have an app for my iPad, with all of my work organised in folders. I find it useful to show work in progress, and to have everything in one place. I recently started sending out a newsletter too, which people can subscribe to through to my website.”

“I keep my website up to date, complete with a news section, where I post features and updates on my work. I use Twitter to find out what’s happening within the photographic industry.”

Carlotta received much recognition for her work in 2013, including selection for *The Society’s International Print Exhibition*.

“When I moved to the UK, I didn’t know anything about the industry in this country, and I found that joining the RPS was invaluable”, she says. “The RPS offers a variety of benefits to its members, and useful workshops to develop your practice.”

“I thought the IPE would be a great opportunity to showcase my work, so I submitted. It’s given fantastic exposure to my work.”

Images from *Mod Couples* also won Carlotta prizes in both the People and Fine Art categories of the International Photography Awards (Lucies). However, her personal highlight was being named *Discovery of the Year*.

“That was very exciting”, she says. “I didn’t expect to win among such a talented group, but made my way to New York anyway, and couldn’t believe my ears when my name was called out at the ceremony! Being part of the Lucies was amazing. They have a wealth of events and



lectures through the weekend, as well as a number of networking opportunities at a party and brunch.

"I also received a bursary from Photo-fusion to continue *Mod Couples*, which it exhibited in May, and I was chosen as one of the winners of the Lens Culture Student Photography Award, The New York Photo Awards and the AOP Open Awards."

"I recently met a publisher who is interested in making a book of *Mod Couples*", she says, "so I am concentrating on finishing the series. The book is due to come out in spring 2015, which means that most of the work has to be done by August this year, so I've had to put my MA on hold."

Carlotta is also working on a project about the Standing Rock Reservation, a Lakota, Yanktonai and Dakota Indian reservation

in North Dakota and South Dakota, USA, which has the working title *Ahoicpe*, the Lakota word for pride.

"I spent a year in high school in the USA, and became close to a young woman whose father came from the Sioux tribe", says Carlotta. "Then last year, she proposed that we visit her relatives at the Standing Rock reservation together."

"I spent 10 days in September at the Standing Rock Reservation, where we attended several traditional ceremonies. Besides shooting portraits, I made landscapes as well, which is something new for me. I intend to return on longer trips, with the aim of gathering enough material for a book, combining my friend's writing and my pictures."

David Land

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info

INTERNATIONAL PRINT EXHIBITION

- IPE 156 showing at the Museum of Somerset until 8 March. Tues-Sat, 10.00-17.00. Free. www.somerset.gov.uk/museums
- The exhibition will then tour around the UK
- The exhibition catalogue is available from The Society's online shop for £12 including p&p. <http://tinyurl.com/pbrdjq>
- IPE 157 is open for entries until 18 March. To enter, go to: www.rps-international.org