



Editorial

Photography has power, if we care to use it. Power to evoke emotions. Power to record that which must not be forgotten (I write this shortly after seeing the photograph of the drowned father and daughter on the American border). Power to tell stories. And power to make an argument, to challenge, and to do it with passion.

The contributors to this issue of *Contemporary Photography* exploit the power of photography in their own, very different ways. The work of the charity Positive View can be read at two levels: Andrew Page has used photography to change the lives of people from difficult backgrounds by giving them both the means and encouragement. The young photographers themselves have each taken the opportunity literally in both hands to open for us a window into their lives, and show the important influences on them: their family, chaotic living or social anxiety.

Two contributors use photography to recall historical events. They remind us of opposition to past injustice (David Denil and Ukraine) and horrors that can never be erased (Mick Yates and Cambodia). They use two different approaches: Denil has allowed participants from the time to re-enact what they did and how they felt. Yates lets individuals’ barely believable words speak for the events, and contrasts them with the flat, neutral – and peaceful - scenes where the events occurred.

Emma Roake takes a simple conceptual approach to advocate for veganism and respect for other creatures. She confronts us, in low key but powerful still lifes, with the equivalence of eggs, milk and meat taken from human and animals, while leaving it to us (challenging us) to decide how we will respond. Isobel Percy extends the unreal colour saturation that is often adopted for food photography to the whole ‘stage’ of preparation for a dinner party, including the immaculately turned-out ‘hostess’. In so doing she shows how unreal the social dinner party can be, especially when the food comes packaged in ready-to-eat form from a supermarket.

It is noticeable that none of these contributors has used a simple documentary approach to conveying their arguments or messages. It’s not that I have anything against documentary photography, but rather we can see how photography can be used in more complex, subtle, and, yes, powerful, ways.

Paul Ashley, Editor

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Contemporary Photography

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If you wish to submit articles for the Journal, please send all copy and images to: Paul Ashley (Editor), paultheashley@gmail.com

Text should be in Microsoft Word. Images are preferred in TIFF format, although high quality JPEGs are also acceptable. Images should be at least 2500 pixels on the longest edge. For other formats or to discuss reproduction, please contact the Editor. Large image files may be supplied on disk or memory stick, or by use of on-line file transfer services, such as WeTransfer or Dropbox. Unless requested, disks and memory sticks will not be returned. Deadline for the Autumn 2019 issue is 1 September 2019.

Contemporary Group ethos - Photography that conveys ideas, stimulates thought and encourages interpretation; photographs ‘about’ rather than ‘of’.

Taking a 'Positive View'

Andrew Page

"I live on a large estate in London's Westminster which really is a rough place. Growing up I have seen all types of things happen from gang wars to police harassment and different types of conflict between people.

I even got shot four years ago, I was leaving my grandmother's house with my friends and then on the way to the shop we saw some gang members, who started chasing us and we started running back to my grandmother's house.

As I got outside my grandmother's house they started shooting, he was aiming at my face but I used my hand to cover my face as that was my natural reaction when he fired, so the shot got my hand instead of my face. When I got shot, I realized that I needed to change and do something else than being on the road.

That's when I discovered the Positive View Foundation's amazing 10-week photography project – and since then I now have a life and a future."

Today, just three months after AJ's photography course ended his dream has come to fruition and he now works as a runner for a leading London video and music production company.

Founded by Andrew Page in 2012, Positive View is now delivering its Youth Empowerment Programme on three of London's most challenging estates in Westminster, Lambeth and Southwark, with projects being launched in Tower Hamlets and Southwark over the next couple of years.

But why photography? Photography is the international language of all – a highly flexible tool that crosses cultural and linguistic barriers and can be adapted to all abilities. Its power lies in its dual role as both an art form and a way to record facts – thus through photography our young clients gain confidence in their voices and are enabled to speak out about their challenges, concerns, hopes and fears – whilst acquiring the motivation, self-confidence and skill they need to change their lives

Photography's relatively low cost and ease of dissemination provides the potential to generate dialogue and discussion. It also nurtures the ability to critically assess another person's work – skills that are essential as people move towards further education and employment

Positive View has evidenced the therapeutic and transforming life benefits for young people experiencing education, and social and economic disadvantage. The aim of this highly innovative programme, which was created and developed by the young people themselves, is not to use photography to create potential professional photographers. Rather it is to nurture the motivation, hidden creativity, and self-belief that can lead to previously unimagined life changes. A realization that "...if I can do this, then I can do many other things too."

This photography project, with cameras donated by Olympus, is simply a proven, highly motivating tool through which to deliver real positive change and personal development – which, as we have shown, moves project members away from early school exclusion, criminal activities, and the estate drug culture – into further education, apprenticeships, further training and employment.

Each ten-week project (one day each week) is designed for ten 16-25 year olds and takes place on and off their estate. Uniquely, courses are delivered pro-bono by our Photography Ambassadors who are some of our most highly regarded professional photographers, many being members of the Royal Photographic Society - including Susan Derges, Alice Gur-Arie, Alison Jackson, Nadav Kander, Simon Roberts, and Tessa Traeger. We welcome other RPS professional photography members to become Positive View Ambassadors and to take pleasure from a philanthropic partnership with us.

Weekly courses are agreed with the young people so that the photographic themes fully engage with them and deliver the personal skills they need to move positively forward with their dreams.

Themes include: documentary photography of their own estate; self-portraits in a studio setting when they explore their self-identity; their first visit out of London to a country estate, recently Waddesdon Manor; landscape photography at Kew Gardens; evening photography on the River Thames; curatorial workshops at our great London galleries; documentary photography at a recording studio with famous artists; street photography and studio fashion photography.

The final day includes a curatorial workshop of their work. With the final highlight being the annual curated public exhibition of their work, the next taking place in London this August.

Such a powerful photography project is attracting the attention of other UK communities, including in Bristol, where young deprived citizens can enjoy a life-change that will move them successfully into further education, apprenticeships or employment.

(All names withheld for safeguarding/protection reasons.)

Positive View's work will be on show at *"Forever Young: 150 Years of Youth Clubs"* at 3 Carnaby Street, Soho, London W1F 9PB, 9-22 August 2019.

See: www.positiveview.org.uk or contact Andrew Page, Founder and CEO, Positive View Foundation at andrew@positiveview.org.uk

I considered that I had a very normal and happy childhood as far as I remember. And that changed, when I became a teenager, realising the corruption and chaos of living. I had become an alcoholic, a drug user, been arrested once, and was nearly homeless. Positive View has made me feel what I haven't felt in a long time, freedom and passion in the pursuit of my interests. They gave me the drive and desire to always to go straight ahead and never stop. These images express the personal and private issues I have been dealing with for many years, especially at a time when I found myself unable to look people in the face.



© NMM (18). Positive View Foundation

Before this course I was suffering from social anxiety and found it difficult to be around new people and environments. Throughout my time with Positive View, I've found ways that photography has enabled me to expand my comfort zone and interact with new people, as well as increase my confidence with my skills and capability as an artist. With this image I was able to digitally create a series of portraits using elements from over a thousand images taken each day, that have resulted in a number of portraits inspired by things around me.



© RC (24). Positive View Foundation



This self-portrait taken during a Positive View project entitled 'Me. Myself. And I' became an important moment in my life when my younger sister and I (seated right) were photographed together for the very first time in our lives. After years of separation, the camera literally brought us together. The day was spent exploring our inner feelings and how we might expose our inner-most personalities. For some participants tears were shed. For others, and through their cameras, previously unexposed feelings were discovered. Positive lives were created that day.

© GB (24). Positive View Foundation



Using a camera has enabled me to explore and document my inner self, and the issues I have been confronted with for many years. By using abstract photography, I have found a way of creating new arts opportunities for myself, gaining inspiration, and going to places I have never visited. These abstract portraits evolved during a Positive View photography project deep underground in the darkened crypts at Somerset House during Photo London week.

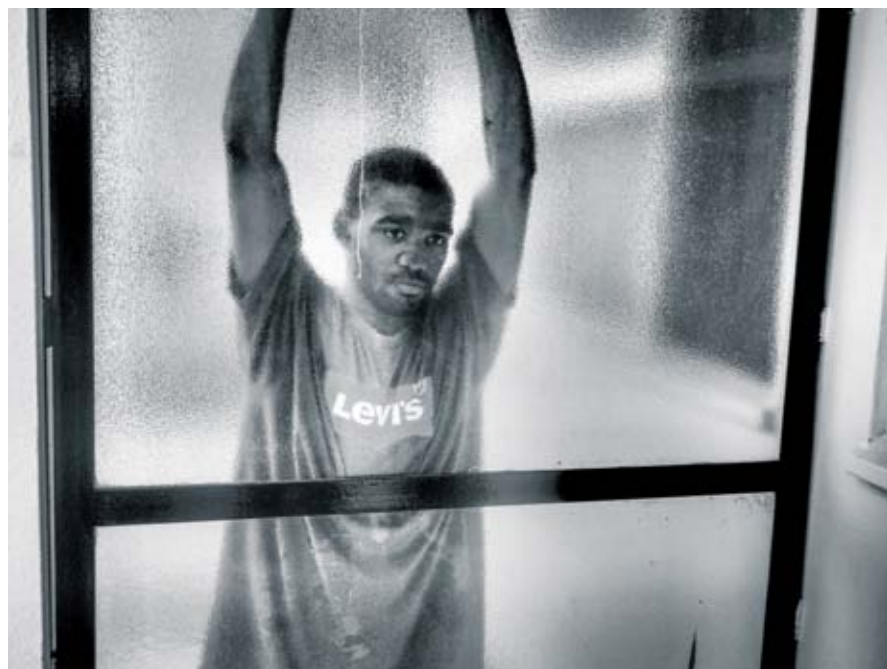
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False Natures

Emma Roake

With reference to the concept of the Anthropocene, *False Natures* interrogates our perception of nature within our predominantly synthetic world. Positioned behind a vegan lens, this series aims to question our entitlement and exploitation of the natural world as well as criticise how our lack of respect and compassion is leading to lost futures.

Romanticising over-consumption was a key feature within the Dutch Golden Age and its still life paintings. Romanticism was considered as a praise for natural phenomena. In relation to this work's idea of 'false natures', the romanticising of exploitation and consumption of animal products to the detriment of our health, our planet, and fellow living beings is the reason for such work to be created.

The majority of media coverage of animal products is through advertising and false health recommendations - because animal product industries can afford to fund brainwashing the masses. It was looking deeper at how the meat, dairy and egg industry misinform consumers and place their products on a pedestal that drove this work to completion. To set the funding and power of such industries against a low-budget, independent series of images makes this work more poignant. It is the choice of consumers to stand up against the bigger corporations that will change our consumerist society, and so the background and the making of this work also aligns with its content.

The final portfolio of images for *False Natures* avoids the overdramatization and staging sometimes used by imagery that aims to combat similar issues. The careful reflection taken to create this project gives the work an accessibility that is not there with stronger advertising campaigns. It is all too common for uncomfortable subject areas such as veganism and environmentalism to be pushed aside and ignored for the preferred ignorance-is-bliss way of life. However, this work cleverly diverts audiences from immediate dismissal by inviting viewers in with a familiar scene.

It is a major task to create compelling work that can make an impact on those who would otherwise choose to ignore the solution to many of the world's current problems. The work's abstraction of the issues gives a more intriguing narrative, one that avoids the immediate confrontation of advertising and instead allows viewers to confront themselves with the messaging of the imagery.

In appealing to wider, potentially dismissive audiences, unlike advertising, this work can make the suggestion of veganism and plant tension in its audience's minds. It could create a vital nagging within its viewers that could lead to further education and make a direct impact on the way they view and act upon their consumption of animal products.

See: www.emmaroake.com









Let Us Not Fall Asleep While Walking

David Denil

Ukraine gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and declared itself a neutral state. In 2013, protests broke out in downtown Kiev after President Yanukovych's government decided to suspend the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement and at the same time strengthen the economic ties with Russia. Months of demonstrations and protests known as The Euromaidan, escalated into the 2014 revolution, which ultimately resulted in the overthrowing of Yanukovych and the establishment of a new government. These events preceded both the annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 and the still ongoing war in Donbass.

In collaboration with the citizens of Kiev, *Let Us Not Fall Asleep While Walking* shapes their experience into metaphorical depictions where time seems frozen but dreams of hope still linger. The series, which consists of 144 photos to match the death toll of the Euromaidan riots, is an attempt to capture the repercussions of this period for Ukrainian citizens.

The general idea for the work came from a short visit to Ukraine where I witnessed the daily news broadcasts which focussed on direct news related items as a brief moment in time. I wanted to extend this topic by bringing forward an alternative view where the people could guide me, as media, to their own ideologies and experience. Let's say that the attempt was to make a B-side track on how Ukraine was broadcasted throughout the world.

The work erupts from research on subject matter where the psychological experience is central. While encountering the people in Kiev I first had a conversation on their experiences and thoughts regarding their views

on Ukraine today. I then translated this into images that metaphorically build upon these conversations.

I intended to create a visual narrative that reflected the social realism movement during the Soviet era. The photographic presence is prominent, which provides the viewer with a present witness of a reality guided by mutual agreement. I have always been in conflict with the approach of using photography as unannounced event. Had I taken the images without this mutually agreed approach, I would never have felt acceptance within the frame. It was essential that the people had their say towards both the project and their individual depiction.

The title presented itself on the first day I started the project. I was meeting with a friend/journalist. She brought me a book as present. It was the translated work of the Ukrainian writer and poet Taras Shevchenko. "If you want to understand Ukraine, this is a good start", she said. Once home I took the book and started to read his last poem: "Days are passing, nights are passing". Within it he used the line "Let me not fall asleep while walking". The sentence grabbed my attention. After reading the poem once more it was clear that this sentence had a certain strength that resonated with the texts I read on Ukraine. To broaden the work to the idea that it was brought forward by the people themselves, I decided to change the 'me' into 'us'. At that moment I used it as a working title but quickly it became clear it was becoming the final one.

My concern was how the people of Ukraine would react to the work. It would shape a 'portrait' view not only towards one person but towards a whole nation, its



people and how it presents the reality they live in on a daily basis. I was very hesitant at first once the work was finished and when it was presented at Voloshyn Gallery in Kiev. I had no idea how the people I did not know would react. But people were enthusiast about it and many of

them confirmed that my view was clearly an extension of their own; someone even came to tell me that the images showed a Western Europe but with a Ukrainian mind.

See: daviddenil.com





Unfinished Stories from Cambodia – A Prayer From Hell

Mick Yates

These are the personal yet untold stories of people that we have known for twenty years, and who suffered terribly during the Khmer Rouge genocide.

The genocide started in 1975 and killed 1.7-2.2 million people. It was stopped by the Vietnamese in 1979. However, parts of the country remained under Khmer Rouge control until Pol Pot died in 1998. There are Killing Fields all over the country, usually unmarked. Almost every Cambodian family was touched, yet the personal suffering and social atrocity are often still hidden from view today.

We first visited Cambodia in 1994, when there were hardly any tourists. On a sunny day at Angkor Wat, we heard the distant rumble of shellfire. We were close to an ongoing war zone. The guns prompted our desire to better understand Cambodia and started our love for its people.

Pol Pot's death allowed the process of national reconciliation to begin. In 1999 my wife Ingrid and I founded a primary school project, including teacher training and libraries. The program, in collaboration with Save the Children and the Cambodian Ministry of Education, included working with former Khmer Rouge. It gained traction as an educational model and received significant support from the World Bank.

Keo Sarath, a survivor of the Genocide, was responsible for managing the school program. He, his family and his co-workers became our friends. The Khmer Rouge had executed Sarath's father, and as a teenager he was forced to work in a camp, separated from his mother, Arn Yon. After weeks of deliberation, he ran away overnight, through the jungle, to see if she was still alive. Scared, evading mines, wolves and soldiers, he eventually met her.

This series combines my aftermath photography with powerful quotes from Sarath about his journey. The work is somewhat paradoxical, with metaphorical images that only give up the horror upon study and reflection. Whilst each image and quote stand alone, together they narrate Sarath's story.

Youk Chhang, the Founder of the Documentary Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), called the work 'A Prayer From Hell'. It will be published in a book in Cambodia later in 2019 and simultaneously exhibited.

See: www.mickyatesphotography.com



If the Khmer Rouge could see the photos of our family, we would have been killed by them



I decided not to tell Akeo that his Mother had passed away. I was afraid he would report me to the Khmer Rouge



Ten families lived near my Mother. Everyone died.



The Village Chief was sorry for the young children; he said they were all probably going to die



People were forced to move dead bodies from the village, to be buried in the fields nearby

Domestic Performance

Isobel Percy

These dinner party scenes touch on themes of status anxiety and the pressures of social anxieties and the pressures of societal ideals of success. The concept of status anxiety is that we have an underlying anxiety of the opinion people have of us. We feel we are in danger of failing to conform to the ideals of success laid down by our society.

Domestic Performance explores domesticity, femininity and societal pressures on women. These extravagant food displays show the extent to which women may have gone to impress their families. They also show some of the bizarre food women have made (or advertised as made) with newly-found convenience foods and alien appliances. In this project, the kitchen scenes are signifiers of social aspiration; the display, the technology and the 'host' express a desire to be 'better'. However, the scene also provides glimpses into the drudgery, hard work and ephemeral futility of meeting this expectation.

See: www.isobelpercy.com





Another Way of Looking at Love, by Janelle Lynch

Book review by Christopher Morris ARPS

Thanks to Facebook, where it was recommended by Charlotte Cotton, I have just discovered a delightful new photobook. This book by the North American photographer, Janelle Lynch, (Radius Books, 2018) was launched at Paris Photo last year. Lynch is one of those photographers who, like Rinko Kawauchi, can find beauty in the quotidian. Her unassuming colour pictures are a song to nature; they do not shout at you to be noticed, they just are, with all the charm of nature's imperfections. Using large format (10"x8") analogue materials, her work is both thoughtful and subtle. These pictures are a salve to the soul, like a walk in the country on cold sunny day in spring. The book has been printed on heavyweight paper and bound in concertina style which gives it something of the feel of a handmade book. Of course it isn't handmade, but the impression this binding creates helps engender the idea of something special. It is a book that has been made with love. There is a loose insert with some

text by Darius Himes (Christie's International Head of Photographs) which I find overly analytical and irritatingly cloying. Ignore this and don't let it spoil your pleasure in some lovely, gentle photographs.



A View from a Photobook Obsessive

Brian Steptoe FRPS

My interest began in earnest in the early 2000s, although it was certainly nascent earlier, when I bought the catalogue of the *Street Photographs of Roger Mayne*, when his work was exhibited at the V&A in 1986, followed by a copy of Martin Parr’s *The Last Resort* around the same time. I recall attending a talk at Tate Modern in November 2012, with Simon Baker interviewing Bruno Ceschel, Anouk Kruithof and Aron Mörel. Ceschel supports self-publishers with his SPBH (Self Publish, Be Happy) facility. Kruithof self-publishes artist photobooks and Mörel has a small photobook publishing business.

The ‘photobook’ was firmly established as a distinct category when Martin Parr and Gerry Badger published their ‘books on photobooks’ in 2004 and 2006, followed by a third volume in 2014. Over 2000 photobooks are now published each year, with print runs from hundreds of copies upwards. In addition, print-on-demand companies and book artists are producing many thousands of single or low numbers of individual photobooks yearly.

Photobook competitions, exhibitions and sales festivals are now held annually or biennially around the world. ‘Best of ...’ lists appear in magazines and on-line at the end of every year. I aim to purchase at least a few of the winning or short-listed photobooks from some of these competitions, in order to keep aware of those considered among the best. The regular reviews of photobooks published on-line by photobook teacher Jörg Colberg in his *Conscientious* blog is another source.

Specific definitions of ‘what makes a photobook’ have become established. It differs from an exhibition catalogue or a monograph on a particular photographer’s work. It is required to be telling some form of narrative or overall theme; it is required to be ‘about’ something. This makes the photobook a close fit with the ethos of the RPS Contemporary Group. A reader of a photobook is called upon to think on the narrative set by the flow of images seen as pages are turned. It is about what the reader is encouraged to feel; not about whether individual photos are ‘liked’ or not; about how the set of photos as a whole support the overall narrative of the photobook.

See:

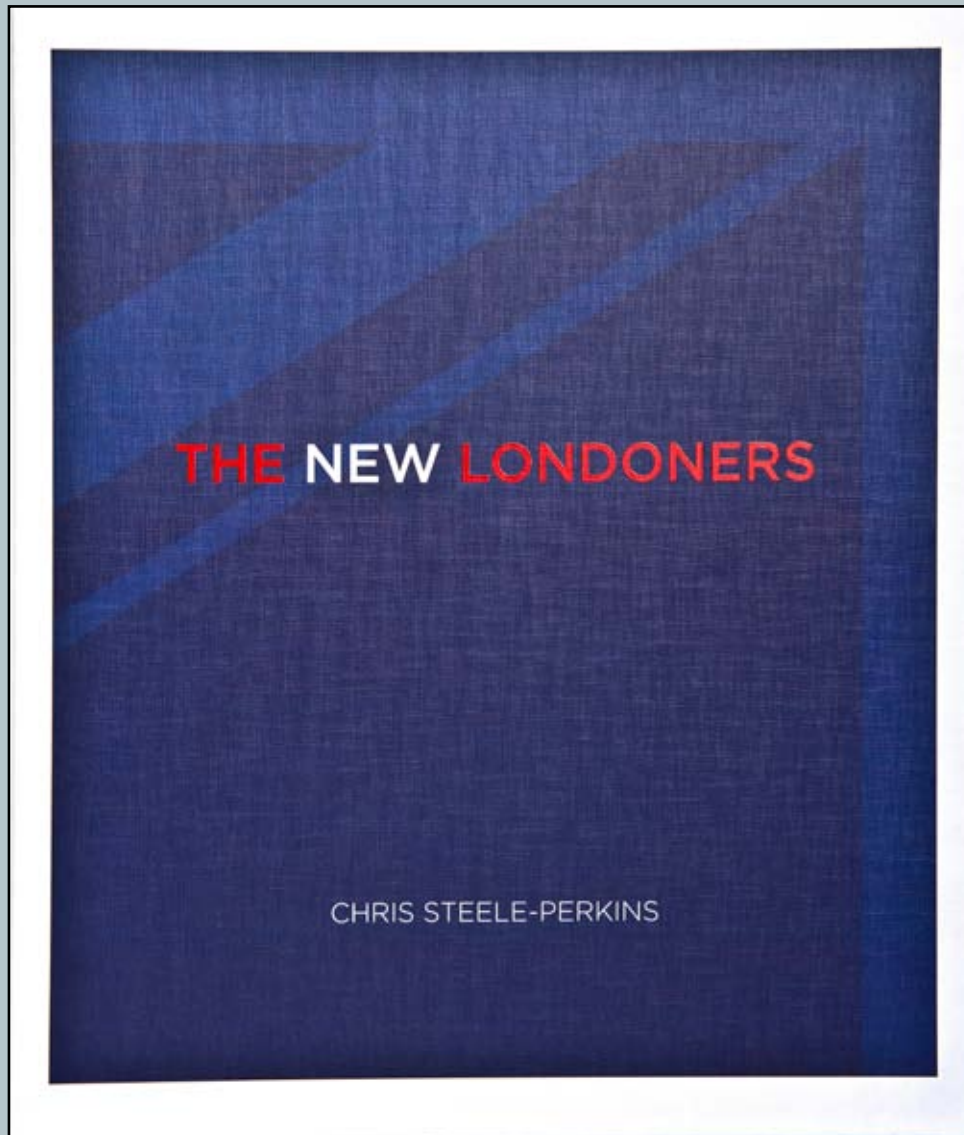
www.dewilewis.com
www.mackbooks.com
www.cphmag.com
www.photobookstore.co.uk
www.photoeye.com

GROUP AND RELATED SOCIETY EVENTS

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|--------------|--|
| 14 September | Contemporary North meeting at Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Road, York YO23 1BW. 1.30-5pm. Contact Patricia Ruddle ARPS: email patriciaruddle@btinternet.com; tel. 01904 783850. |
| 18 September | Associate and Fellowship assessments, Conceptual and Contemporary. Royal Photographic Society, 337-340 Paintworks, Amos Vale, Bristol BS4 3AR |
| 28 September | Contemporary East Midlands at Keyworth Methodist Church Hall, Selby lane, Keyworth, Notts., NG12 5AH. Car parking (free) at Keyworth Village Hall, Elm Avenue, off Selby Lane, Keyworth. Bring images (print or digital), books or anything else relevant to view and discuss. Contact Howard Fisher, handjaf@virginmedia.com. |
| 29 September | SE Documentary Group (including Contemporary Group). 10.30-13.00, Tangmere Village Hall, Malcolm Road, Tangmere PO20 2HS. Contact Jeff Owen, docse@rps.org, for more information. |
| 12 October | Contemporary Group AGM: RPS House, Paintworks, Bristol. The AGM will be at 10.30 am. There will be light refreshments available from 10.00 am. At 1.30pm there will be a talk, followed by Q&A, by Christopher Steele-Perkins (Magnum photographer, ‘The New Londoners and other stories’). Book separately for attending the agm at www.rps.org/events/2019/october/12/contemporary-sig-agm-2019 and for the talk at www.rps.org/events/2019/october/12/the-new-londoners-and-other-stories |
| 16 November | Contemporary North meeting. Venue and contact details as 14 September. |

AGM Notice and call for nominations
The Contemporary Group AGM will be held at RPS Paintworks on 12 October 2019 at 10.30am. Nominations are invited for the committee members and officer posts. They should be made to the secretary Howard Fisher, handjaf@virginmedia.com in writing at least 21 days before the AGM i.e. by 21 September 2019. Nominations must be signed by at least two members, and carry the written consent of the nominee.

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| Chair (until October AGM) - Avril Harris ARPS. avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk Chair elect - Alan Cameron LRPS alan.cameron@me.com Deputy chair elect- Avijit Datta akd21@hotmail.com Secretary - Howard Fisher handjaf@virginmedia.com Treasurer - David J. Grimshaw ARPS contemporarytreasurer@rps.org Postal portfolio - Duncan Unsworth duncan.unsworth100@gmail.com | Event organiser - Avril Harris ARPS avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk Journal editor Paul Ashley LRPS, 59 Gilbert Road, Cambridge CB4 3NZ paultheashley@gmail.com Journal Editorial committee - Paul Ashley, editor Brian Steptoe, design Webmaster, Sean Goodhart ARPS sean.goodhart.contemporary@outlook.com e-Newsletter (Concept) editor, position vacant Concept designer, Ken Holland, kenholland@lowenna.co.uk | Committee members - Brian Steptoe FRPS bsteptoe@compuserve.com Rod Fry ARPS rod@rod Fry.eclipse.co.uk Patricia Ruddle ARPS patriciaruddle@btinternet.com Tom Owens ARPS tom@tjowens.com Paul Ashley LRPS paultheashley@gmail.com Alan Cameron LRPS alan.cameron@me.com Tessa Mills FRPS (co-opted) tessamills@hotmail.co.uk |
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Chris Steele-Perkins will be talking at RPS House, Bristol at 1.30pm on 12 October 2019. The title of his talk is 'The New Londoners and Other Stories'. The New Londoners book is published by Dewi Lewis. This talk follows our Group AGM , which is in the morning. See page 39 for details and booking.

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