

# concept

abstraction image conceptualisation notion thought  
impression theory view conception idea hypothesis

THE **RPS**  
ROYAL  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
SOCIETY

CONTEMPORARY  
GROUP



One of the images from  
the successful panel of  
Des Sheridan ARPS

## Welcome

Welcome to **concept**, the e-newsletter of the Contemporary Group. As I take over as the new editor (not without a slight bit of trepidation!) it seems an appropriate time to give the publication a facelift. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Brian Steptoe not only for holding fort as acting editor but also for the unexpected additional time when I broke my arm. I would also like to thank all the contributors to this month's issue. I hope the newsletter will continue to have the input and quality of content from our group members and look forward to receiving any news, reviews, reports, in fact anything of interest in the contemporary world.

Christine Pinnington LRPS  
Editor.

## Congratulations to ARPS Successes

Congratulations go to Mr Suman Bhattacharyya ARPS and Mr Des Sheridan ARPS

Both gained a pass at the recent Contemporary and Conceptual Assessments at RPS Headquarters in Bath which took place on the 14th September. Suman's panel will feature in the next edition of the RPS Journal and his profile and more about his work will feature in the next issue of **concept**. More about Des Sheridan's panel overleaf.

## In this issue

Welcome from the new editor

The latest ARPS Contemporary  
& Conceptual successes

Des Sheridan - ARPS success

The NE Sub-Group Meeting

Nigel Tooby FRPS at HIPPS

Alec Soth Talk and Exhibition

RPS at HIVE

Diana Markosian at Harrogate

## Des Sheridan ARPS

Photography can reveal a new vision of the world we encounter daily, but for a host of reasons we may have overlooked and not truly seen. In this way photographs inform and delight us. I am drawn to photography because of the pleasure I get from viewing images of how others have seen the world and because photography obliges us to view our surroundings more consciously and with greater intensity in the hope of seeing it in a new way.

I have been an amateur furniture maker for many years and know the extraordinary satisfaction which making physical objects brings. This kind of endeavour seems under rated in the modern world as we place greater emphasis on abstract values. We strive to build a “knowledge economy” based on such things as information property, financial services, patents and invisible exports. And yet the intelligent use of hands has always been at the centre of human development. Indeed even our most simple actions such as lifting a pint or tying our shoelaces are governed by neurobiology of staggering complexity.

My A panel arose out of a sense homage and tribute to this aspect of human agency. I wanted to illustrate hands as flexible and versatile extensions of the mind implementing its varied thoughts and ideas. For this I used images of hands realising a variety of different intentions of the mind;

- Making objects of utility and aesthetic beauty directly and by means of tools and machines;
- Hands expressing thoughts and ideas in sign language and using touch to "see" when sight is very limited.
- A hand using paint to create an image of what the mind has visualized and anticipating a pastel to fulfill it;
- Hands enacting contrasting impulses of the mind as in a spiritual response and projecting power through a gun.
- Hands working safely with extreme temperatures and taking nourishment when the job is done.

These examples illustrate the extraordinary power of hands acting in consort with the mind and why we should cherish and value it.

As for the future, my camera lens continues its exploration of my surroundings, with an eye to locating a new seam to examine in greater depth. Seeing the work of other photographers at my camera club [Plymouth], RPS venues and other exhibitions is always stimulating.



## RPS North East Region Contemporary Group Meeting

The North East Group met on Saturday 19th September at the Royal Oak in York. Members brought along some great images. It was a lively meeting with some interesting discussion on what contemporary means and is it right for us? Discussion also included if and how contemporary work

could crossover into other genres, such as travel and documentary and even included Henri Cartier-Bresson's famous quote "sharpness is a bourgeois concept".

Patricia Ruddle, also editor of the Contemporary Journal, opened the meeting. Patricia is currently writing a biography of a Spanish photographer and has recently been awarded a travel bursary by the Historical Group (of which she is also a member) to travel to Spain to conduct her research.

Nigel Tooby, described his thinking behind giving photography a 4th dimension, using communication in the presentation of the work, and put the question to the group as to whether this is still photography or moves towards sculpture or installation. Nigel attended with his wife Elaine Gosal-Tooby, who works as his Artistic Director. The group was shown an example of his work depicting a homeless man who had turned his life around. This was represented with the image mounted on glass which had been broken and then repaired with gold using the Japanese technique of Kintsugi.

Peter Bartlett is currently working on a project about Manchester's Northern Quarter, but on the day showed his panel about mobile phones, depicting the growth of mobiles, how they have become part of our modern life and how these are detracting from other forms of communication.



Synchronised texting © Peter Bartlett

James Gibson enjoys street photography and brought along a panel of his current project on fast food. He explained that he often finds other things in his images such as how isolated people become when they are eating. He is also inspired with ideas of food on the move and food waste and may consider these for the future.

Susan Gibson told the group that she started late in photography but gained her Licentiate this year. She likes observing things around her and is now aiming towards her Associateship.

Regina Wilkinson, President of Harrogate Photographic Society, brought along her project which explores the concept of loneliness and being alone. Regina explained that she has put the project on hold as she had found this very emotional (this was certainly reflected in the images) and explained about the courage needed to approach her subjects.

Iain Stuart's current project concentrates on skills and craftsmanship but he has found it difficult to proceed due to a lack of willing participants, so this is currently on hold. Ian showed us a selection of his photobooks; one called Nature's Faces showing 'faces' seen in the natural environment such as tree trunks. Ian then gave a demonstration of how he makes his books using a jig he had made himself, laying out the pages and cover, preparing the surface and gluing using pva glue. This was greeted with great enthusiasm and left everyone keen to have a go themselves.





David Edge works mainly in B&W and introduced us to a new expression of 'Urbex' – urban exploration. David showed us his series of images about abandoned Bulgarian psychiatric hospitals, depicting their isolation. David later explained that they were taken in Great Malvern and this explored the viewers preconceptions of what we were looking at and held the view that contemporary photography was *about* something, not *of* something.



© David Edge

Christine Carr tries to tell a story in her contemporary work. Her current work is on graffiti but with a very different take. Christine is looking at what is behind the graffiti. She takes a small piece in the work and puts her own interpretation on what the artist was seeing and adds this to the photograph in the form of a montage.

Ken Phillips was not sure his work fits the contemporary category but enjoys attending the meetings for communication on different genres and gains inspiration from ideas and the work he sees and hears about.

Christine Pinnington showed her current project on the contents of people's garages. Christine enjoys mixing art and graphics with her photography. Although this project started out looking at modern day storage problems, this has developed to also become about voyeurism into people's lives. The work was presented in mounts that looked like houses where the viewer could open the garage door to peer inside.

Next Meeting 14th November 2015, 14:00 - 17:00 Royal Oak Pub York, 18 Goodramgate, York, YO1 7LG. Contact: [patriciaruddle@btinternet.com](mailto:patriciaruddle@btinternet.com)



## Nigel Tooby FRPS at the Hull International Photography Festival

The Hull International Photography Festival is an annual event in Hull which celebrates photography as a medium of diverse expression. The Royal Photographic Society is one of the sponsors of the Festival which takes place 2nd to 30th October 2015. Fine Art photographer Nigel Tooby was invited to give a talk on Sunday 4th October entitled "Extra Dimensions in Fine-Art Photography?" This explored additional creative dimensions to traditional photographic work with examples drawn from his recent private work including the series "Eye Spy".

Nigel was featured on BBC's Radio Humberside, where he visited Goole with one of the reporters in search of the perfect photograph. During the interview he explained that he likes to take series of pictures that tell stories and communicate. He was also featured in the Wakefield Express newspaper. To read the full article

<http://www.wakefieldexpress.co.uk/news/local-news/wakefield-artist-to-speak-at-hull-photography-festival-1-7492059>

Nigel is a resident artist at the Creative Arthouse in Wakefield and artist in residence for the West Yorkshire homeless charity Simon on the Streets. His work "Eye Spy" was produced in association with the charity.

# Alec Soth at the Media Space

London, 6 October 2015



Alec Soth

Alec Soth gave a talk about himself and his photographic projects to a sold-out audience, starting with 'Sleeping by the Mississippi', made between 1999 and 2002. His approach was as a wanderer close by the river. He said his style ranges across the spectrum from documentary to art photography. He spoke on each of the sets of work which are shown as photobooks and a selection of prints he chose as highlights, which make up his Media Space exhibition 'Gathered Leaves'. See more at

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/oct/06/alec-soth-gathered-leaves-photographer-uk-retrospective>

Alec then spoke on a more personal level; about having to work hard when he started out, forcing himself to approach strangers to take their photos. He showed images from the Magnum group on two of their 'Postcards from America', <http://store.magnumphotos.com/collections/postcards-from-america> using a Winnebago RV he had obtained for the group to travel in. Most recently this will be featuring in crowdfunded projects as Winnebago Workshops, with groups of teenagers he will be helping and inspiring in photography.

*Brian Steptoe FRPS*



Songbook Vitrine



Niagra

## Harrogate International Visual Arts Expo

Harrogate International Visual Arts Expo invited RPS Yorkshire Members to take part in this year's exhibition, held at the Harrogate International Conference Centre. Invited selectors for the entries included Patricia Ruddle and Peter Bartlett from the NE Contemporary Sub-group.

A selection of RPS Yorkshire Members' prints will be on show at the Harrogate International Visual Art Exhibition. **The expo takes place Friday 20th – 22nd November 2015 at the Harrogate International Conference Centre: Harrogate. North Yorkshire.** More information can be found on [www.harrogateartexpo.com](http://www.harrogateartexpo.com); <http://www.rps.org/regions-and-chapters/regions/yorkshire>

# DIÀNA MARKOSIAN – ‘DOCUMENTING THE PERSONAL’

Diana Markosian



The Harrogate Photographic Society held this special event on Monday 19 October 2015 at St Aidan's Church of England High School, Harrogate. This was open to members of other camera clubs, members of The Royal Photographic Society and students at Yorkshire's Art Colleges. Attendance was in excess of 180 and £950 was raised by the sale of Markosian's signed limited edition prints; all proceeds will go to the survivors she has profiled and she also donated half of her own fee for the evening. This prestigious event gave an insight into Diàna Markosian's life and photography.

Born in Moscow of Armenian parentage, her mostly 'absentee' father played little part in her childhood and so her mother 'upped sticks' and emigrated from Russia to California when Diàna was only 7 years old. In her teens Diàna bravely travelled back to Russia and Armenia to seek out the father whose face she didn't know; turning her efforts into a project called 'Inventing my Father', she showed family portraits where her father's face had been removed (literally 'cut out'!).

Having gone through many emotional 'ups and downs', she would not give up. When she finally found him she spent time getting to know and understand him, immersing herself in her Armenian roots, heritage and history. She stayed with her father in Armenia for 2 years. This has led, just this Centenary year, to a profound project to raise awareness of the Armenian Genocide when 1.5 million Armenians were raped, murdered and driven out of their homes in 1915 and following years. Their borders were radically changed losing much of their land to modern-day Turkey.

Markosian described how she was also approached by victims' family descendants leading to a few remaining survivors themselves. A 105-year-old survivor, named Mosves, recalled landmarks now situated in Turkey which could only loosely be described but after a long and difficult search she miraculously found and photographed them. She produced prints of amazingly 'mammoth' size and displayed them in the landscape for Mosves and his fellow victims and their descendants to look at and touch. This was the nearest they would ever now get to feeling close to and paying homage to their homeland. Her images of them, dwarfed when standing in front of the gigantic screens, moved us immensely.

Another project took her to Chechnya where the people there were witness to two decades of warfare. Her photographs showed big differences between our free western society and their more controlled social lives. She came upon story 'scoops' of brides being kidnapped, arranged marriages and 'honour killings' and through her brother in California she sent a pitch to 'Time Magazine'. We were also shown footage of a photo-essay 'Mary,' Mary Magdalene, commissioned by The National Geographic magazine. She could not understand why National Geographic chose her when much better photographers were available. When pushed they said simply "Diàna, you take pictures nobody else sees"

This gentle, caring and self-effacing young lady, who claims she fell into photography by accident has with her many campaigning causes done far more for the 'poor refugee', the 'discriminated-against', the 'displaced' and the 'deported' than she realises. What riches then have we been heir to through Diàna Markosian's eyes and at Diàna Markosian's hand?





Visitors selecting signed prints

Mary Crowther, Yorkshire's Regional Organiser, concluded the evening by giving a vote of thanks to Diàna for a very personal and honest account and to the Harrogate Photographic Society for securing Diàna and hosting this memorable event.

Many thanks to Kay Aldcroft LRPS for this insight into a fascinating talk and to Brian Crossland for the images.

For more information

[www.dianamarkosian.com](http://www.dianamarkosian.com)

[www.harrogatephotographicsociety.co.uk](http://www.harrogatephotographicsociety.co.uk)

## London Independent Photography

FEATURED EVENT

### ALIXANDRA FAZZINA *Visualising Migration*

2015 Janet Hall Memorial Lecture

**DATE: WEDNESDAY 25th NOVEMBER 2015**

**TIME: 19.00-20.30 - LECTURE AT 7pm prompt**  
Registration and drinks from 6.30pm

At Sir John Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture & Design  
Central House, London Metropolitan University  
59-63 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7PF

**TICKETS:** £12 Advance (Online); £15 at door  
Book online: [www.londonphotography.org.uk](http://www.londonphotography.org.uk)

Alixandra will speak about her book *A Million Shillings; Escape from Somalia* and her ongoing project *The Flowers of Afghanistan*, both covering the subject of human smuggling and trafficking. She will discuss the challenges faced not only on the ground but in creating fresh perspectives in the field of visualising migration. Alixandra is currently shortlisted for this year's prestigious Prix Pictet award for her work on the theme of 'Disorder'.



[www.londonphotography.org.uk](http://www.londonphotography.org.uk)

News, reports, reviews, publicity, profiles, images, in fact anything of interest in the contemporary world. If you have any contributions you would like to have included\* please email to

[photopinni@btinternet.com](mailto:photopinni@btinternet.com)

Christine Pinnington LRPS  
Editor, **concept**  
the e-newsletter of the RPS Contemporary Group

Note: The copyright of photographs and text in this issue belongs to the author of the article of which they form part unless otherwise indicated.

\* (For inclusion in November Issue by 20th November 2014)