

Concept

The Newsletter of the Contemporary Group
of the Royal Photographic Society



© Bill Brooks ARPS

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Welcome to the Spring Edition of Concept Magazine.

Firstly, I would like to thank all those who have taken the time and effort to send their images and articles. It is much appreciated, and as ever, there is a range of excellent work for you to look at and read about. I am especially pleased to see submissions from members outside the UK.

I have visited a couple of exhibitions over the last couple of weeks, and watching how people look at images was almost as interesting as the work on show! We are so used to consuming images a bit like we do fast food, they hardly touch the sides. We don't get a chance to really stop and appreciate what we are consuming/seeing. Looking at work in a gallery setting as opposed to online is like having a gourmet meal I suppose!

The exhibition at the RBSA in Birmingham had quite a lot of information about the work and the photographers' intentions mounted next to the images. It was interesting to watch people look at the photograph, read the text, and then often go back and have another look at the image as if seeing it in a new light. There is no doubt that a well-written text can change how we understand an image. On the flip side, there is also a risk of giving too much away so that the viewer doesn't really bother to really look at the image. It's a fine balancing act.

When I receive the submissions for Concept, I often look at the images first without reading any accompanying words and then look at them again after reading it. Sometimes it confirms what I was thinking, and sometimes it's a totally different story. I would be interested to hear what you think. Should there be more information or less?

It also gave me an idea that we might feature some work without titles or context. If you have a purely visual project of maybe 3 or 4 images that you think would be of interest, please send them, and I will consider running them in the next issue.

This issue also features two appreciations of RPS members who have recently passed away. Both have made valuable contributions to the Contemporary group and will be missed by all who knew them.

Please do get in touch with any feedback, ideas, or thoughts on what you would like to see in future issues of Concept.

Best Wishes,

Nick Linnett
Concept Editor

View from the Chair

'Changes' sums up what has occupied my time since our last issue of concept.

Change is our only constant and sadly we lost two prominent members earlier this year in both Keith Launchbury FRPS and Douglas May FRPS. Both had given so much time and energy to our group over the years. Obituaries for both appear in this issue.

The other big changes are that both the Honorary Treasurer and the CEO resigned within days of each other. Whilst the Honorary Treasurer role has been advertised, I've yet to see a public announcement about the CEO (other than job adverts on LinkedIn) although I'm pretty sure the news is well and truly out 'in the wild'. All Chairs and Regional organisers were subject to a news embargo on this from early February.

The other big change is one that preferably requires all members to vote on and that is to extend the tenure of the President for another two years.

I have no axe to grind here other than to urge you to use your vote. Sadly, only 120 out of 11,000 members attended the 'Town Hall' meeting to discuss this proposal, and such a small turnout could disproportionately skew a result if that ratio is reproduced at election time.

Yet another change that does affect all of you visiting the RPS website is that of the Events top level page. You will see that 'Contemporary',

along with quite a few other SIG titles do not appear in the list of interests. This is entirely by design, but by design by the centre without input from SIGs.

I have spent well over 60 hours since the end of November working up a list of Events & Ticketing functional requirements with a small team of other Chairs and loads of help from Sean Goodhart, our webmaster. We had to wait nearly three months to get a response to our listing and in the meantime that change to Event listing was imposed. You can easily find all Contemporary events by using the search tool on that page or better still use this link and use the search button Sean has created for you <https://rps.org/groups/contemporary/>

Please sign up to as many of our events as you can. Our regional Activity Organisers put a great deal of effort into hosting regular events for members.

Tom Owens ARPS
Contemporary Group Chair

Contemporary Postal Portfolio

I recently took on the role of coordinator for the Contemporary Postal Portfolio. The Portfolio provides opportunities for members of the Contemporary SIG to view and comment on prints and books made by other members and to receive feedback on their own work.

There are two circuits of boxes at present with five boxes going round each circuit. The original circuit has been in existence for over 20 years. Members find it a stimulating and encouraging means of sharing their photography with others and enjoy seeing and handling work in the form of prints. This has certainly been my own experience since I joined. When a box arrives through the post you add a piece of your own work, be it a single print or a series of prints or even perhaps a book. You can also view the work of other members, read the comments which have been made and add your own comments. The suggested turnaround time for boxes is two to three weeks. Once you have finished with a box, you send it to the next person on the circuit. When the box has completed a circuit and has returned to you, you can see the comments which have been made on your own work.



In addition to the circuits, we have monthly meetings over Zoom to show and discuss work and other topics members want to raise. Every three months a meeting is given over to discussion of a published photography book chosen by a member.

The Postal Portfolio would welcome new members. If you are interested in joining us or want further information, please contact me at contemporarypostal@rps.org

Nigel Corby
Coordinator, Contemporary Postal Portfolio

Obituary

Douglas James May FRPS KC



Douglas James May FRPS Douglas passed away relatively suddenly, and peacefully, on January 26th after a long illness that restricted his physical movements over the past few years but had no effect on his undoubted mental capacity. In his real life he was an eminent member of the Law Society in Scotland, a KC, retired as a Judge in 2021, but maintained a keen interest in Law, Scottish politics, and the Scottish Government.

He was a keen member of Luffness Golf Club, albeit not the most proficient golfer, and we shared some mutual golfing friends as well as photography. He had been an RPS member for more years than he cared to remember, was a member of the Contemporary Advisory Panel for 12 years, and Chair of that for 8 of them. He obtained his Fellowship in 2008, for a

monochrome series of images titled *Exploration of the Interior*, and it was a typically clean, beautiful, and challenging piece of work. Because of his legal background he chaired the Governance Review of the RPS in 2016, and his team oversaw many changes. He was a keen Contemporary photographer, and had a huge library of books and monographs, and his beloved Leicas.

He was still adding to them, and despite his ill health he recently travelled to London to see the Sugimoto exhibition, and that trip inspired him to make a presentation of his works at the last Scottish Book Club night, which was scheduled for February 8th. In typical Douglas fashion he sent me his images from the Sugimoto catalogue, focussing on his *Theatres* work, in plenty of time but in a totally unorganised fashion...he didn't do technology.

I delivered his presentation, in his memory. He was a regular and incisive commentator at our Contemporary / Documentary nights in Scotland, and in the Contemporary print circle. His delivery was always gentle, his comments were always right on the button, his humour was dry, and his humility was... humbling. He will be sorely missed by those who knew him within the RPS, and even more keenly by his family.

Stephen Whittaker ARPS
RPS Contemporary Scotland



The Rescue © Douglas May

Taken from *High Force, Low Force* by Douglas May, featured in the forthcoming book *Water*.

Water is a collection of photography from Contemporary North and will be available in May.

JAPA: The Search for Greener Pastures

By Emmanuel Nwachukwu

Migration is more than a journey, it's an unravelling, a reconstruction, and sometimes, a quiet erosion of self. *JAPA: The Search for Greener Pastures* began as a way to document my own displacement and evolved into a broader exploration of how migrants, particularly from the African diaspora, navigate identity, isolation, and survival in unfamiliar spaces.

The Visual Language of Migration

Photographically, my work sits between documentary realism and constructed narratives. I draw influence from artists like *Pieter Hugo*, whose stark portraiture captures the weight of postcolonial African identities, and *Samuel Fosso*, who uses performance and self-portraiture to critique history, power, and representation. These approaches deeply inform JAPA, where I blend staged and candid moments to reflect the fragmented reality of migration, how one is constantly shifting between past and present, memory and adaptation, and home and foreignness.

In *Alone with the Familiar*, I use deep shadows and soft, diffused lighting to highlight the tension between nostalgia and displacement. The subject is draped in traditional African fabric, a symbolic tether to home, yet they sit in a dimly lit room, isolated from the world outside. The composition reflects the emotional paradox of migration, feelings connected to one's origins while being physically removed from them. The textures and folds of the fabric act as a visual metaphor for memory, carrying warmth yet weighed down by absence.

In *Survival & The Cost of Belonging*, work uniforms and steel-toe boots serve as relics of endurance, capturing the silent sacrifices that migrants make. The harsh directional lighting mimics the exhaustion of long hours spent trying to build a new life. This piece speaks to the economic realities of migration, where hard labour often replaces time that could be spent with loved ones. Similarly, *Culture Shock* contrasts two everyday rituals tea and Garri highlighting the subtle negotiations of identity through food. These images are designed to prompt reflection on the invisible notes and quest for belonging.

Personal Encounters, Collective Realities

Though this project is rooted in personal experience, it is equally shaped by the

stories of others. I have spent time speaking with migrants, some new, some decades into their relocation documenting their recollections of home and the realities of their new environment. There is a shared sentiment that migration is not just about moving to a place but learning how to exist in it. The hardest part isn't always the journey itself, but the small losses that accumulate: the cultural codes you forget, the names that no longer sound like yours, the moments where you catch yourself adapting in ways you never expected.

A Nigerian woman I photographed described how she switched accents depending on whom she spoke to. Another migrant recounted how his food choices changed not out of preference, but survival. These nuances are central to JAPA, the psychological negotiations that accompany physical migration.

Expanding the Project

As JAPA has grown, I have started integrating moving images and immersive installations to extend its impact. The upcoming short film *Prove Your Worth* is a looping sequence of an IELTS interview, where the test taker, instead of answering conventionally, repeatedly states: "But you colonized me." This work critiques the absurdity of former colonial subjects proving proficiency in a language imposed upon them.

Another expansion is *Passport to Nowhere*, an installation that replicates a visa application office, immersing audiences in the frustrating bureaucracy of migration endless paperwork, rejection letters, and waiting rooms designed to keep people in limbo. These additions are my attempt to move beyond static images, turning JAPA into a space where viewers experience, rather than simply observe, the barriers and contradictions of global migration systems.

A Work in Progress

I see this project as unfinished, not because of a lack of images, but because migration itself is ongoing. The policies, barriers, and realities of movement are shifting every day, and JAPA will continue to evolve alongside them. I am less interested in providing conclusions and more focused on asking questions: What does it mean to leave, and what does it mean to stay? Who controls the narratives of migration? Can photography ever truly capture the weight of belonging and loss?

My goal with JAPA is not to define the migrant experience but to open a dialogue. It is to give a visual language to the stories that don't make it into

headlines, the quiet sacrifices, the moments of hesitation, the ways in which people shape and reshape themselves in pursuit of a better future. In the end, JAPA is as much about survival as it is about hope. And that, I believe, is something worth documenting.

About the Artist Emmanuel Nwachukwu is a London-based photographer and visual storyteller exploring migration, identity, and cultural transition. His work has been exhibited at The Holy Art Gallery and featured in various artistic and cultural initiatives, including the 34 Gallery's *SDG 3.4 Initiative for Mental Health Awareness*. He is a member of The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) and The British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP).



Bikini

A collaborative portrait by Cheryl Brenda Green and Simon Peter Green.

August 2024

Set against the beaches of Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, and Euskadi, this portrait captures a woman embracing her body, reflecting strength and a beauty often overlooked in the world of fashion.

Each frame captures her presence in harmony with the sea, sand, and sky, presenting a powerful contrast to the forces of judgment.

This series explores resilience, identity, and defiance against societal expectations.

It invites you to celebrate confidence beyond conventional norms and to redefine beauty through the acceptance of one's true self.

<https://simonpetergreen.com/bikini/>

<https://simonpetergreen.com/biography/>





Keith Launchbury FRPS - An appreciation

Keith Launchbury FRPS (16th January 1955 - 8th January 2025) will be missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him. This is a tribute to an excellent photographer who was also an exceptionally nice person.

I first met Keith 10 or so years at a meeting of Contemporary North West chaired by the late Ian Maxwell. Meetings were held at the Days Inn in Charnock Richard services on the M6 and Keith was a key player in our discussions. In addition to helping Ian set up Contemporary NW Keith was a key contributor and founding member of Lancashire Monochrome.

Keith was an undemonstrative man who clearly took life seriously, particularly his photography. After finishing University he began his career in local Government, first in Birmingham and later as a Senior Economic Development Officer for Preston City Council. Here Keith was responsible for regeneration, helping small businesses and tourism in the town. In this role he met the Prince of Wales (now HM the King) and was presented with a medal for 25 years service shortly before he retired.

Keith's abiding love and passion was for photography. In 1981 he visited Base Camp at Everest on a photography expedition with the renowned explorer and photographer Alfred Gregory. He also planned a trip to Mach Pichu but decided he would get married to Jane instead.

Keith's skills with the camera lens were largely self taught. Beginning with a box brownie and graduating to specialist Leica camera equipment. He meticulously

researched dark room techniques and developed a portfolio on the Ancient Standing Stones to present to the Society. He soon qualified as a Fellow and was highly regarded by his peers in his field using monochrome film, producing hundreds of stunning black and white images in his purpose built dark room.

Keith was an enthusiastic and active member of Preston Photographic Society and chaired numerous meetings as their president. He also founded a new forum in 1996 called Lancashire Monochrome and was its valued president for many years.

He achieved his second FRPS in Contemporary Photography with a study of the Cumbrian Coast, concentrating on the non-touristy side of the county and particularly the Solway Coast. It was a theme that he was to revisit many times over, especially after he and his wife Jane moved to Allonby on the north Cumbrian coast.

Keith had an amazing eye for an image and he thought deeply about the "Why" of capturing that precise moment. When Keith saw an image that piqued his interest his camera was put to good use, capturing the mundane and, often, the absurd. He never left home without a camera, even when going shopping.

Some projects

He had multiple projects on the go at any time. These could be completed quickly or could extend over many years, and he used both colour and monochrome whichever he felt best fitted the subject matter.

"Containers" started as a project when he saw a plaster copy of "David" atop an old shipping

container. He had been driving along and spotting this caused him to stop and it started him thinking. He wrote *"I had begun to look into the undertaking of a new project and I gave it the working title: 'Containers'. The inspiration for this came from way back in my childhood and that TV game show presented by Michael Miles: 'Take Your Pick'. The show was first aired in the year I was born, 1955, and ran until 1968 (to be revived in 1970 with Des O'Connor as host). I was carried along on waves of audience enthusiasm to shout at the telly: 'open the box', as Michael teased the contestant with ready cash in return for that key to one of the numbered boxes taking centre stage. That irresistible question of what's in the box? Well, boxes don't come much bigger than shipping containers and there are a few of those around me sat here typing this note. However, to get a*



longer series going, I needed to range further afield than my bedroom window and then, as we know, 'lockdown' came!"

Of course containers come in many guises and the short project included caravans, a VW Combi camper, and the cabin of a little fishing boat.

Clearly, inspiration came from all sides and many of Keith's projects can be found on Blurb, where there are multiple versions of his "Cumbrian Coast Revisited" books as well as those of his abiding passion for Harris and Lewis which he visited annually from the 1990s until Covid lockdown prevented him. His images of life on the islands in mono and colour certainly prompted a visit from me, and I really must return.

His Harris and Lewis images came from a long love affair with the islands which he would visit for several weeks each year. This gave him the opportunity to get to know people there and to get beyond the temptation to record the isolated landscape. For example for one of his books he listed the marvellous Callanish I standing stones, and, rather than trying to get the wider view of the stones against the landscape, instead Keith concentrated on the behaviour of the tour groups which visit the site on a regular basis. When I visited I even found myself seeking out some of his images including one of an amazing post box made of scrap iron and representing a palm tree.

Keith's gaze was often humorous and invariably kind to his subjects, including a sympathetic view of my local town called, "I love Blackpool," which captures the town, its signs and buildings as well as the visitors who filled the place either as holidays or for the infamous Stag and Hen dos.

Keith was a talented Landscaper too and one of the last series he shared with the local group showed images of Wastwater in its glory, but putting a contemporary twist on things by including an image of an illuminated sign which gave him the series title, "Please Park Responsibly."



Lockdown curtailed his roving, but his daily exercise certainly enabled him to continue with his quest to capture the life of the villages, particularly Allonby. One series called "Allonby Blues" has already been featured in Concept. Another project involved panoramas showing his almost deserted village during that awful time when the world seemed dead.



"One hundred steps" was a series of images taken that distance apart as he walked along the village green.

As restrictions were lifted Keith continued to use his enquiring mind, acting as mentor to me for my A panel and more widely he contributed to the mentoring group run by Holly Stranks FRPS and Carol Olerud FRPS concentrating on his beloved question, "Why are you taking these images." He was firmly of the opinion that creating a effective Statement of Intent should be an early part of the project process and I know that he helped many people with this as they strived for Associateship and Fellowship.

It was with great sadness that I learnt of Keith's sudden death in January, and our condolences and memories of a fine photographer and gentle, thoughtful person go to Jane and all who knew him.

Alan Cameron ARPS
Contemporary NW Organiser
March 2025

Allonby Blues

Keith Launchbury FRPS DPAGB

In September 2011 I bought my first digital camera, a second-hand Fuji X100 (a camera I still use every day even now). For 20+ years up until then I had dedicated my photography to black-and-white, establishing the discussion forum 'Lancashire Monochrome' in 1996. B+W had served me well in exploring a notion that the Cumbrian Coast was 'quirky' and a panel of 22 prints was awarded a Contemporary Fellowship in 2001. That Fuji camera however, with its retro styling, won me over to it almost immediately and I looked towards colour for the first time in decades. Raymond Moore had a fondness for Allonby and in my Blurb book 'Cumbrian Coast Revisited' there are many images of my own from that place. When working solely with B+W film if I had noticed colour at all in Allonby it was merely shades of dullish brown. With that little Fuji X100 in my hands though I began to see blues, in fact so many blues that I formed the notion that Allonby had its own rather unique love affair with the colour blue.

The 'Allonby Blues' project began with the gathering of evidence that blues were a clear preference and when I encountered something coloured blue I would take its photograph whenever the question came into my head 'Why choose blue for this?'. In this sense it became that rather rare exploration for me into the contemporary genre of photography, one I had come to appreciate through the RPS and was still then pursuing in 'Cumbrian Coast Revisited'. Contemporary photography, as practised by me at least, is a medium for the arbitration of question against evidence and whether a notion about a place is sustainable. For ten years now, using that Fuji X100, I've been gathering evidence of my contention that such a love affair for blue is a conscious attribute in Allonby. But it was only quite recently that I was gifted some sort of satisfying answer as to why I had become so firmly convinced this apparent love affair for the colour could be shown to be a defining characteristic of this particular place on the Cumbrian Coast. That gift was a resident who offered up the term 'Seaside Blue' during a conversation she and I were having about the project I was pursuing (she had just finished repainting her house in a powder blue).

'Seaside blue', well, what blue is that I asked myself? Everyone, resident or visitor to Allonby, would make their own selection of blue if given enough variants to choose from. So, the residents of Allonby have not decided on one 'Allonby Blue', rather they have each expressed an individual opinion on what their choice for an Allonby blue is and there you have it as you walk, cycle, or drive through that place which, with B+W film in my Leica M6, I had previously thought merely as quirky as anywhere else on the Cumbrian Coast – just a dull brown if anything else was to be said about how I may have described it before the purchase of that diminutive Fuji X100. Allonby, that 'Great Little Place' (so its visitor slogan goes) and where many residents, affectionately, describe it as being a place where nothing is 'quite right'.

12th June 2020





Life Spans: Growing the Project

Paul J. Kirby

Guiding Principle No.1

This project launched itself at me with the core idea—almost a slogan in my head—‘*Bridges don’t just Connect Places they are Places*’. Once that thought had inserted itself, it needed to be tested, and Bristol’s varied bridges offered a nearby and convenient laboratory.

Like any project that seeks to capture an idea or elaborate a plan, the detailed intentions of the project, its aiming points, only became clear through starting to work on it. In this way my initial forays and attempts at solutions, forced me to ask myself ‘exactly what am I seeing? What am I trying to convey?’ And on frustrating days, ‘what really is the point of all this?’ It’s a truism of all planning and design that beginning to work reveals what the work should be.

Guiding Principle No.2

And so, as I made these first moves, a second guiding principle emerged, which was that through their beams, arches, and suspension cables, bridges display their engineering logic and the application of physical laws, but that this formal rigour is juxtaposed against the organic shapes and unruly impulses of the living world. A second slogan came to mind—for someone who rails against facile sloganeering, I seem to be very fond of coining them—*A Bridge is a Meeting Place of Life and Geometry*.

Guiding Principle No.3

The third principle driving the project was my clear preference for presenting the photographs as a photobook, chiefly because I had never made one before. That decided, I then had the challenge of choosing between a), arranging the photographs in a sequence that formed a cohesive, curated presentation—pairing colour photographs for example or matching images, with complimentary compositional elements—or b), arranging them strictly in the order the bridges are encountered along the course of the river. Ultimately, I decided that since I was trying to convey each bridge’s unique atmosphere, each image should be isolated from its neighbours with no thought of creating a sequence other than the natural sequence determined

by their locations. The photo book therefore became logically coherent in one sense, while being apparently chaotic in terms of colour (or monochrome), format, narrative intent or composition.

The images reflect a personal, viewpoint and are offered with the intention of conveying a sense of what the bridges feel like, mostly as meeting places between geometries and lives but, on occasion, offering an intimidating blandness. This, though, is the challenge of a project, whose constraint’s demand a focused intention from the photographer. Why is this bridge different from the last? What is specific about its nature or setting. What can I, as a photographer, say about it? All these questions, and more, arose, and were inescapable, because the decision to record the bridges in their natural sequence along the river meant that the next bridge had to be recorded. It couldn’t be skipped because the photographer couldn’t think of anything to say. In a sharply defined project, the photographer needs to buckle down and think harder.

And so:

Not all of the photographs have strident geometries, not all have vibrant signs of life, but I hope I have captured something of the specific atmosphere of each bridge, even if some of them are barely differentiated from the rest of the road network, but that, in a sense, was their specific character and it was that that needed to be captured.

Here is a selection of the images, the numbers refer to their position in the sequence within the photobook:



1 Hanham



2 St Annes



3 Feeder Road

9 Brock's



10 Bath Road

13 Gaol Ferry



17 Clifton



12 Bedminster.jpg



15 Ashton Avenue

18 Avonmouth



Veiled

Bill Brooks ARPS

This short series of six photographs was made in Arundel Cathedral during the latter part of Lent, in 2024. The photographs depict the practice of veiling statues and sacred ornaments, a tradition in the Roman Catholic faith where the visible is hidden to invite deeper contemplation and reflection. The act of covering statues during this time of penance and prayer shrouds the sacred in an aura of mystery, compelling us to look beyond the surface and engage with what lies beneath.

Whilst rooted in religious ritual, these images can be seen as transcending the confines of their theological origins. The draped enigmatic forms invite us to meditate on the broader interplay between presence and absence, to consider the questions: Who decides what we are permitted to see? and why?

These broader implications of concealment have echoes beyond the space of the cathedral. In a world shaped by systems of power and control, the practice of veiling becomes a metaphor for the ways in which visibility and access are regulated. Whether in the realm of politics, culture, or media, the dynamics of what is shown and what is obscured influence how we understand truth, authority, and agency. We are reminded that the act of concealment is not just about absence, but about the tension and power inherent in what remains unseen. What is hidden may be as revealing as what is visible, prompting us to question the nature of truth.



Lectures

by Beat Suter

This series was created over four years from 19.1.2008 to 20.1.2012 in analogue medium format on film and was mostly processed digitally in 2013.

It is a reference to Hiroshi Sugimoto's 'Theatres'. Accordingly, it has the title 'Lectures'. The series plays with the creation of a contrast to Sugimoto: instead of the view of the screen, the view of the audience is shown, instead of black and white colour and instead of a passive spectator, the photographer is also an active lecturer. The long exposure time and the special atmosphere of the room remain.

How the pictures are created: From time to time Beat Suter gave a scientific lecture at home or abroad. First and foremost, he must be a technically competent speaker. Taking the perfect photo at the same time was a very special challenge! The exposure time for each of the 25 photos in the series was determined by the duration of the lecture, which lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.

Based in Switzerland Beat Suter has been working part-time as a freelance photographer since 2004 and is a member of the Swiss professional organisations "SIYU - professionelle fotografie schweiz" and "Schweizer Pressefotografen und Videojournalisten (SPV)". He tends to be interested in static motifs from architecture and landscape as well as structures. He likes to work on long-term projects and in series, some of which are realised in large formats. He uses professional medium format and 35mm cameras, both digital and analogue

More information can be found here
<<https://www.beatsuter.ch/10933722/lectures>>



One camera, One Prime Lens, for One Year

Roger Styles

Whichever “national deprivation index” is chosen, (number of GPs per inhabitant, adult life expectancy, drug overdoses or whatever), Fleetwood and neighbouring Blackpool often seem to be contestants for the top spot. The previous government’s “Levelling Up” programme that was intended to improve deprived towns didn’t seem to reach this corner of North West England! Be that as it may, Fleetwood, like many of these now faded seaside resorts, provides plenty of interesting photo opportunities.

I had read that using one camera and one prime lens for a year would significantly improve one’s photography skills. So I decided to give that a go, although not for a year, but for an afternoon on Fleetwood seafront. I used my Fuji XT2 and a Fuji 35mm f2 lens, equivalent to 50mm in full frame terms. The results and my thoughts on the experience form the basis of this article.

Most notably, the afternoon was one of the most enjoyable periods that I have ever spent taking photographs. In fact, it led me to purchase more prime lenses and recently to sell two of my zoom lenses. Far from finding it restrictive, I actually found the experience liberating and, I think, it helped me make more considered images. The discussion of prime versus zoom lenses is almost as old as photography itself, but the reality is, of course, that both have their place and it’s largely a question of personal choice.

Something to consider when using a prime lens is the phrase “zoom with your feet”. This is slightly misleading because walking closer to a subject when using a prime lens will change the perspective of the whole scene, whereas zooming in with a zoom lens is effectively cropping part of the scene without a change of perspective.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy these few images and that you may also be tempted to try the one camera, one prime lens idea for a while.



The North Euston Hotel opened in 1841 to serve guests making the railway journey from Euston Station in London to Scotland. As there was no direct rail route to Scotland along the west coast, travellers would stay overnight then take the sea ferry to Ardrossan, then go by rail to Glasgow.



As a holiday destination, Fleetwood suffered when a branch line was opened to Blackpool, but the traditional beach huts remain popular in the season.



Seafront shops always make a good subject, especially in soft evening light with an obliging seagull to add context.



The level seafront promenade provides an easy 10 mile stroll all the way to Blackpool.



Fleetwood became the third largest fishing port in the country, but the fishing industry declined during the long “Cod Wars” with Iceland from 1958 to 1976 and later when larger deep-sea trawlers were unable to dock. A poignant ‘Welcome Home’ statue stands as a memorial to lost fishermen.



The boating lake is home to the Model Yacht Club whose members take operating their model motor launches and sailing boats very seriously.



The nearby unique Rossall Point Tower houses The National Coastwatch Institute and appears to be looking down on the holidaymakers.



Since 1865 the town has been the home to the family-owned and hugely successful Fisherman's Friend business that has received the Queen's Award for Export Achievement. This unique throat lozenge was invented by a pharmacist for local fishermen and is now a globally recognised brand, producing more than 5 billion lozenges per year.

Head Loading in Kumbh Mela: A Testament to Human Resilience.

Sudipta Maulik

The Kumbh Mela, one of the world's largest congregations of people, presents a unique logistical challenge. With limited transportation options, devotees, vendors, and travellers alike must rely on pedestrian power to navigate the mela grounds. Amidst this sea of humanity, a striking phenomenon emerges: the widespread reliance on head-loading. For many, this is a necessity, a practical solution to carrying their belongings. In stark contrast, sadhus and other spiritual practitioners proudly adorn themselves with elaborate headgear, a testament to their faith and devotion. This juxtaposition of necessity and choice adds a fascinating layer to the Kumbh Mela experience.

During the 'Maha Kumbh Mela 2025' at confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India, I had the opportunity to capture the diverse ways in which people employed head-loading. From devotees and travellers to workers and vendors, each individual had their own unique approach.

One worker, in particular, caught my attention - using his woollen shawl as a makeshift turban while working, as it was no longer needed for warmth and he had no other place to keep it; Sadhus also wear traditional turban with interesting design or simply coil their long hair known as jota with some decorations with flower which symbolizes their spiritual connection and devotion.

What struck me most; however, was the nonchalance with which people moved about with their head loads. It was as if this burdensome task had become second nature, a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the human spirit.





About the photographer

I am based in Kolkata, India. I discovered my passion for photography while studying Electrical Engineering at Jadavpur University, where I was a member of the University's Photography Club. My work focuses on capturing people and their relationships with their surroundings, although I enjoy exploring various genres of photography.

Sudipta Maulik

Interview:

Terence Lane FRPS

with Patricia Ruddle ARPS

I first became aware of Terence's work in the Contemporary Group Journal, No. 89, Autumn 2022. We were then fortunate to have him attend several of our North meetings in York.

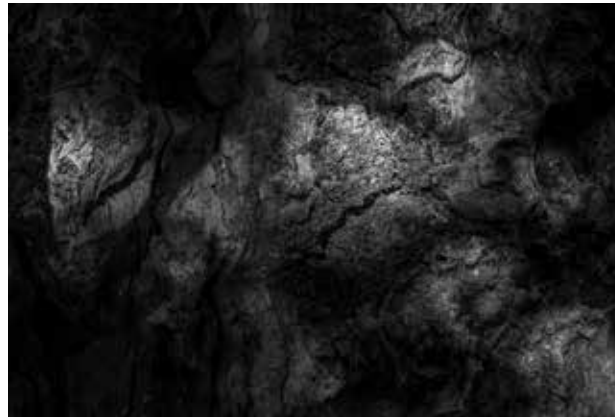
Terence, how did you discover photography?

I was about eight years old when my teacher, Mr Bond, taught us how to make pinhole cameras out of cardboard tubes. When I looked to see my first image, it was there but upside down, so I turned the tube like a kaleidoscope, but the image didn't move! Viewing those first images was incredible, the journey had begun. Next came the Bakelite Kodak Brownie. I found my subjects, did exactly what my teacher said and for good measure always kept the sun behind me, as my father said! And the pictures all turned out ok.

What were some of your early projects?

I succeeded with City and Guilds and then A Level Photography (which led to the LRPS). This guided me to consider and plan more carefully what I was doing. My overriding interest is the forest, '*Sciryuda*' (Sherwood), where my ancestors had worked the land, above and below.

Your successful Associateship panel was called *Sciryuda*, which you called "an ethereal wilderness" in your Statement of Intent.



Sciryuda was the first documented name for Sherwood Forest, given by the Vikings during the Danelaw over 1000 years ago. I have concentrated on the most ancient part, close to home but have gradually taken in other areas, including Byron's ancestral home, Newstead. The work and resulting images are not documentary, they are personal, my experiences connecting the here and now with the past and future. The images show the way that I see things, are not formulaic and more often than not they are meditations, acknowledging *Sciryuda's* past, its fragility and strength, its journey, my journey and the presence of my ancestors. The images tend to be timeless, with no evidence of human intervention.

Commodified, *Sciryuda's* obvious and fragile future has led to a parallel project called *OutForest*.

Can you tell us more about *OutForest*, your successful Fellowship panel?

Whilst *Sciryuda* is the past and present, *OutForest* is more about the present and future. More documentary, I have made images from bare fields and meadow through clearance, development and now community. I prefer to reveal rather than accuse. There's far too much of the latter although more established smaller communities are now resisting. We need more housing and of course it's easier to latch on to utilities and services that are already established, but that in turn limits possible locations. For *OutForest*, developing urbanisation is pushing towards and pressurising *Sciryuda's* boundary. Ironically, the access roads are called "*First Oak Drive*", "*Grasshopper Green*" or "*Harvest Mouse Hollow*". What irony!



You have mentioned the River Trent. Is this your current project?

I hope to return to this work soon. Although I have been to its sources, I have concentrated mainly on the tidal stretch. Twice daily the tide arrives and the river changes direction. Of particular interest too are the coal-fired power stations which have now closed, being replaced by natural gas or biomass fuelled generation. The cathedral-like cooling towers are fantastic structures, soon to be demolished. Meanwhile, I am making an extensive study of them. Their positioning, observable for miles around, was apparently designed to enhance the flat surrounding countryside - I'm trying to work that one out! The Trent breathes, it has been a vein in the life of communities and associated history for hundreds of years, but cosmic forces mean that it can only be partly tamed and controlled.

What are your working methods, Terence?

Preparation, planning. Hours poring over old maps and ephemeris, weather conditions. Patience.

About 95% tripod-mounted digital capture, post processing followed by digital inkjet, printed on archival textured paper. I standardise my workflow as much as possible.

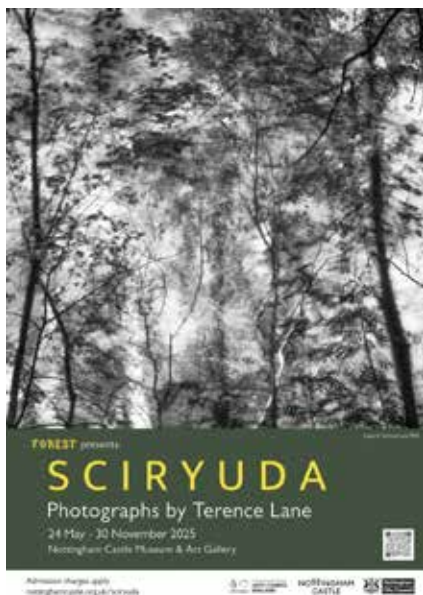
What is your experience with the RPS?

I only re-joined a few years ago and it has been very positive. Whilst a member of the Contemporary Group, there is cross-over

with other genres, I remain flexible and it's wonderful to look at and consider the work of others. Supporting us are a significant number of volunteers, seeking no reward for the coordination of events, supporting, inspiring and encouraging us in our pursuits. I was an RPS volunteer for a short time and at some stage I would like to return to give something back.

Future plans?

The *Sciryuda* work has been published and exhibited, being well-received and prompting much discussion. The recent exhibition at Bassetlaw Museum and Art Gallery was successful and I have been invited to exhibit this work along with new images at Nottingham Castle starting in May 2025. Seems fitting, *Sciryuda* was once ruled from that very location.



Sciryuda links:

<https://rps.org/qualifications/associate/example-associate-submissions/terence-lane-arps/>

Sciryuda (my Associate) was in the main RPS Journal (print version) Jul / Aug 2021 Vol 161 No 4.

OutForest links:

<https://rps.org/news/journal/2022/august/artist-explores-tension-at-the-edges-of-urban-development/>

<https://rps.org/qualifications/associate/example-associate-submissions/terence-lane-arps/>

<https://rps.org/media/ojugbx55/089-2022-autumn-journal-for-web.pdf>

https://issuu.com/royalphotographicsociety/docs/january_23_members_showcase

Website: <https://terencelane.com/>

Instagram: @terence.lane.nottinghamshire

Regional Group Reports

Contemporary Southwest July 2024

December 2024

The Southwest Activity Group met on Sunday 8th December at Dartington in Devon.

As usual we began with a small amount of business before moving on to discuss the images that members had brought along to share. Along the way we also enjoyed Carol's hospitality in the form of an excellent lunch.

Martin Howse started proceedings with a set of large monochrome prints made from 35mm negatives (HP5) which he had taken in London the previous weekend. The prints had been made on Ilford Multigrade Resin-Coated Pearl Finish paper and comprised a highly varied range of images of people, places and things. None were what could be remotely termed Tourist Shots and they included some cloud effects which attracted a great deal of discussion. The scanned copies of Martin's prints which are included in this edition of Concept cannot do justice to the printing quality and impact of the originals.



Architectural Design © Martin Howse ARPS



Contrast Human vs Nature © Martin Howse ARPS

Vivien Howse presented a range of photomontage work and in every case had also re-photographed the montage image so as to be able to print the combined result. The differences between the montages and the combined prints were quite striking. In one case what were obviously circles of pattern stuck onto a larger image were transformed into what appeared to be the result of careful photoshopping when they were photographed and printed. Similarly, a montage of old photographs of Gweek in Cornwall, which had been stuck together to produce a large single image, looked like a single photograph

when reprinted. Vivien also explored varieties of coffee, a generative AI montage of storms and a photograph of a young couple with their faces replaced by road-signs. There was much discussion as to the meaning of this final work with divergent opinions.



Storm Darragh (created using AI)
© Vivien Howse ARPS

Graham Hodgson had once again printed A2 images. Several of these were again tessellations from Google Earth, one of a pool in Penzance with Trafalgar Square and another of patterns of shipping containers which created a carpet pattern. There were also repeated caravans to give a textured appearance and blocks of houses from Tokyo. Intriguingly, Graham had also opened photographs in Notepad and printed sections of the resulting ANSI character patterns which this produced. Finally, he presented something much more 'traditional' in the form of an 8 by 6 array of photographs of 'bootlace' seaweed (Chorda Filum?) on a beach, in which the seaweed shapes allegedly resembled various physical objects.

Adrian Hough had recently returned from Australia and shared six A3 prints taken in the village of Nimbin. Following a decline in the dairy industry in the early 1970s Nimbin hosted the 'Aquarius Festival', famous for being the first event in Australia where permission was sought from traditional custodians of the land before the event was held. Many of those who came to the festival never left and Nimbin became a place that embraced an alternative lifestyle, something that continues to the present day with a reputation for the use of soft drugs such as Hemp. Most people seen around the village who are not tourists have the appearance of middle-aged and elderly 'hippies'.



Nimbin 1 © Adrian Hough ARPS



Nimbin 2 © Adrian Hough ARPS



Nimbin 3 © Adrian Hough ARPS

Ken Holland shared two books in which he had collected his photographs of India. One book covered his son's wedding and the other street scenes in areas of Kolkata where tourists would not normally venture (Ken and his family, including



Winnowing rice, Assam © Ken Holland FRPS

his Indian daughter-in-law, hired a local guide). Carol Ballinger drew our attention to a current exhibition being staged in Exeter and the accompanying book which explores aspects of Dartmoor. She also posed the question as to whether the intention of the photographer is important in deciding whether or not a

photograph can be classed as art. Carol then shared projected images of London that she had taken during the previous few days. These were all semi-abstract and taken in low light. These were followed by photographs illustrating ideas to use as part of her forthcoming exhibition showing the presence of plastic in the environment.

Marija Lees projected two different sets of images. The first were the set from which she had chosen the images of Naples that were published in the December 2024 edition of Concept. These were all taken in low lighting conditions and illustrated, among other things, the obsession with football in general and Diego Maradona in particular together with the widespread use of motor-scooters and mopeds.

In her second set Marija explored the prevalence of addictive highly processed food in Exeter and the advertising which is used to promote it. One particular street contains nothing apart from Fast Food Shops and Gents' Barbers. It was also notable that almost every stall at the Christmas Market was selling fast food with very little craft produce.

The final projected images were from Ken Holland who shared more photographs of the back streets of Kolkata, all in monochrome and many showing people living on the streets and washing both themselves and their pots and pans under communal taps.

Finally, we are all, as ever, grateful to Carol and Graham for hosting these meetings.

Adrian Hough ARPS



Sleeping on the Streets © Ken Holland FRPS



A walk up Primrose Hill © Martin Howse ARPS



© Vivien Howse ARPS

Contemporary / Documentary Scotland

The Winter months are filled with zoom events, which are an ideal way to keep in touch but still stay cosy and safe.

So, we've had:

20th November 2024 - Labhairt Beag, a small chat night, with 6 members presenting a series of slides and talking to them, in a specific time frame. It's a good way to get discussion going, but to keep to time, and to reign in too much sideways discussion.

Focussed, and for photographers that seems pretty apt.

4th December 2024 - a winter Day Out to Glasgow, specifically starting off at Street Level Gallery to see the Jill Furmanovsky Exhibition, and then a chance to practice some street photography in the Mean Streets of that part of Glasgow.

15th January 2025 - Chat night with Simon Hill Hon FRPS...a busy night with about 40 members zooming in from all over the UK, to hear Simon talk about his life within and outwith the RPS. Apart from being an insightful evening regarding Simon's photographic development and work life, it was also a fascinating look at Coal Faces... the book and the film, and ahead to some works Simon has planned for The North.

6th February 2025 - Book Club, where 7 members of our group presented a small talk

on a book they've either recently bought, or re-found. As usual the diversity and quality of the books discussed was pretty amazing, and as a night the Book Club events certainly open your eyes to what's out there, and what you are missing out on.

14th March 2025 - a Spring Day Out to Edinburgh, heading for the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, where the Exhibition of Scotland's Photographic Collection is celebrating it's 40 years of being held at the SNPG. The Exhibition closes on the 16th, so we've timed it to be in amongst the last lot of traipsers, and we'll hit the slightly posher streets of Edinburgh after that. We have the whole day ahead of us, so there will be no rush, and several other galleries and places to visit too.

The Scotland based events are generally small, but very high quality, and we've got a solid little community building up, with contacts within and perhaps more importantly outwith the RPS. Anyone is welcome to join in any of our zoom nights or days out, so just keep an eye on the website for anything that comes up. We usually have a Fringe Day out in Edinburgh in August, soaking up the wild and wacky that flourishes in Edinburgh then, but we also hope to have other days in Glasgow, Dundee, Stirling, Inverness and Aberdeen too.

Contemporary North

Contemporary North meets monthly, except for a summer break, alternatively on Zoom and face-to-face in York. Since the new year began we have met 3 times and are currently planning an outing in April.

We continue to publish our Showcase newsletter, produced by Lyn Newton, which provides a platform for members to display the work shown at meetings, a true collaborative group venture. Showcase is available on the Contemporary Group webpage. There have been many photos and projects shown since the year began. For example, in January nine of our members showed their different projects. In February on Zoom six members contributed their work. As the moment, the March *Showcase* is being prepared. Eleven members showed photos either completed or in-progress.

As you can see, there would be too many photos and too much text to include here. However, I would like to highlight a few of the photos/projects that were shown and discussed at our February meeting. I chose these three because they amply demonstrate the variety of work that is presented at our meetings.

Jim Souper LRPS, who I interviewed for *Concept* in February 2024, talked about the *Halifax Grid Project 2023 – In Search of Urban Happiness* in which he took part during 2023. It was a collaborative project involving 63 community contributors who between them produced some 2,471 photographs and 41 pieces of writing. A unique view of Halifax in 2023. There

were five elements of the city such as paths, districts, landmarks, edges and nodes to photograph. The results have been exhibited and the website is

<https://www.thegridproject.org.uk>



In contrast, André Bergmans talked about his current project based on Saint Nicolas and his personal assistants the Black Peters who originally came from Spain to the Netherlands. As patron saint of children, his feast is celebrated on December 5th with his many Moorish assistants helping to distribute the gifts.

André told us that he began to take photos without a plan. With the help of our North group discussion, he now has decided on the direction of the project. He wants to photograph his own childhood memories of the feast of Saint Nicolas using selective focus techniques. His inspiration will be the text of the old Saint Nicholas song. Watch this space!



Again with a different approach to a photographic project, Philip Pearce gave us an insight into a current two-year, in-progress exhibition, IndustrieART-EN, a word created from industry, art and EN as an abbreviation for the Ennepe-Ruhr district, where he lives.

The subjects are both small and large industrial companies. He hopes to give us a view of these industries, not as representations, but with his reflections as a photographer, ones not usually associated with documentary photography. He hopes that the images demonstrate regional pride with a positive view of their processes and skills. The exhibition will be shown in three local museums from October 2025 to 2026. Again, watch this space!



You can see both meetings on the following PDF pages on the Contemporary Group webpage and ISSUU.

<https://rps.org/media/hnbck2bf/cn-showcase-january-2025.pdf>

<https://rps.org/media/zpfj1q3d/cn-showcase-feb-2025.pdf>

Forthcoming meetings

17 May Clements Hall, York
 21 June on Zoom
 20 Sept Clements Hall, York
 (a special meeting devoted to books)
 18 Oct on Zoom
 15 Nov Clements Hall, York

We're having an outing on 12 April to Bradford as part of our participation in the Bradford UK Year of Culture. Information on our website.

Patricia A Ruddle ARPS

Everyone is welcome at our meetings. Please contact Patricia Ruddle for more information.

Contemporary East Anglia

March 2025

We are just about to close our current theme based on a quote by Thoreau 'A sky without clouds is like a meadow without flowers, a sea without sails'.

This will be published as a zine and made available via the website.

All EACG meetings are now on the Events platform, and we welcome allcomers to take part.

Some of us post our work here <https://rpseacg.wordpress.com/>

Tom Owens ARPS

Regional Group Contacts

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South West group organiser	Adrian Hough ARPS contemporarysw@rps.org
Scotland group organiser	Steven Whittaker ARPS contemporarysco@rps.org

The next issue of Concept will be available September 2025

If you have any contributions you would like to have including, news, reports, reviews, publicity, profiles, images, please email your ideas to Nick via email concepteditor@rps.org

*Features and reports should be between 300 and 800 words please. Pictures as **separate** jpeg files of 1 to 2 megabytes, containing no watermarks please.*



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