View from the Chair

At the time of writing it is Welcome to 2016. I hope you all have a very productive year.

We have now arranged for the RPS Open International Photobook Exhibition 2016 to display the winner and the short-listed books at the Espacio Gallery, Bethnal Green Road, E2, and at Impressions Gallery, Bradford; we hope to have a third venue in the south. Books are already being received, so if you think you have a book that you would like to enter please check the website at www.rps.org/photobook, or contact Rod Fry ARPS rod@rodfry.eclipse.co.uk

I attended a London Independent Photography (LIP) lecture in November. Alickandra Fazzina gave a splendid talk in which she told a different part of her story to that covered in her talk in the RPS Visual Literacy event earlier this year. If you missed this, try to hear her elsewhere. She will be the touring Regional RPS speaker for 2016. I believe she will be one of those speakers who will not repeat herself as she has so much to impart.

In November I also went to the National Media Museum, Bradford, for the second event in the RPS Visual Literacy series Women in Photography. The talks included one by Thomas Gall, Curator of Photographs in the Musée d’Orsay, on French women photographers. It was interesting to learn that the French did not acknowledge women photographers, much as the Royal Academy in London did not initially acknowledge woman painters, and that the RPS was the first official organisation to accept women photographers from its beginning. Other talks covered Lee Miller, Julia Margaret Cameron and Vivien Maier; the first two currently having retrospective exhibitions in London, at the Imperial War Museum and at both the Science Museum and the V & A. As it is said, once you press the button it is history and is just as relevant to the Contemporary Group. We can learn a great deal from the work that has gone before us.

I am hoping to organise a visit to the V & A for the forthcoming exhibition of Paul Strand. If any of you wish to join me please let me know.

Best wishes,
Avril

Cover: From the series Laboratory Obsession: from science to dream, © Massimiliano Camellini ARPS

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If you wish to submit articles for the Journal, please send all copy and images on disc to: Patricia Ann Ruddle, 28 Malvern Avenue, York, YO26 5SG. patriciaruddle@btinternet.com

Text should be in Microsoft Word and images are preferred in TIFF format, 300 dpi, file size guideline 10-20Mb. Images are also acceptable as high quality JPEGs, file size guideline 3-6 Mb. For other formats, please contact the Editor. Large image files may be supplied on disc or by use of on-line large file transfer facilities. Unless requested, discs will not be returned.

DEADLINE for the Spring 2016 issue 31 March 2016

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

Who’s using who?

Last December my Christmas gift came early. A couple of weeks beforehand, there was a feast of photography programmes on television. A week-long series The World’s Most Photographed demonstrated the use of photography by several people who have become household names. From Queen Victoria to James Dean, these savvy people quickly grasped the power of photography and exploited it to their own agendas. When still in its infancy, Queen Victoria used the photograph to define her reign. Gandhi, despite humble appearances, used a series of carefully planned photographic opportunities to wage a campaign against British rule. Staged and carefully constructed photographs certainly helped to elect John F Kennedy President. But who were the photographers? With the exception of a few, such as Roger Fenton, Margaret Bourke White and possibly Dennis Stock, we know the subjects but not those who created their images. (But perhaps only those who know photographic history know these faces on the other side of the camera.)

A BBC Artsnight programme with Juergen Teller contrasted greatly with The World’s Most Photographed. I reflected upon his use of photography. From the beginning, when he exploded onto the scene with “anti-fashion” and “anti-celebrity” photographs, images that often seemed impolite, indeed brutal, I understood how this new, vigorous approach rocked the art world. I also understood and appreciated his methodology – photographs used as a vehicle to portray his view of the world, which can be both “absurd” and “romantic”.

However, although I found his use of the personal snaps of his family and surroundings, in conjunction with fashion/celebrity shots effective; but the inclusion of himself – naked? Although he explained his predilection for nudity as quite normal, stemming from his childhood, I didn’t understand his need to thrust himself, unrestrained and usually naked, into the photographs of various scenarios, for example, his sensational series of pictures with the actress Charlotte Rampling.

He did redeem himself in my eyes with his recent book The Clinic. This I understood. Teller was given several handmade books for his 50th birthday by a cousin interested in photography. The books consisted of faded, vintage Kodachrome family snaps, taken mostly by Teller’s father, who later committed suicide. Initially stymied by the books, and how to use them, Teller re-used many of the images together with contemporary shots of himself taken in a rehabilitation clinic. Beginning with a photograph of himself as a baby in nappies on the cover, the book is an uncompromising gaze into his own life and its addictions. The Clinic developed into a powerful narrative about family and memory. A good use of photography.

Patricia Ann Ruddle, MA ARPS
Editor

Laboratory Obsession: from science to dream

Massimiliano Camellini ARPS

Hands and heads, limbs, feet, sometimes painful, sometimes upsetting, often enigmatic – are scattered to take part in showing the several ways in which special effects artists have created the human form from inanimate materials. The artists’ reproduction of body parts plays a part in the human obsession to create life from lifeless raw materials, materials used to transform these anatomical artefacts into dramatic expression, whether in films or literature, such as Dr Frankenstein and his Monster.

Here are some of the images, the results of my photographic journey through the special effects laboratories of the film industry. They have gone beyond the representation of body parts created for cinema, which is realised in the essays that accompany my book (1). Several authors have
contributed and responded in their different ways to my photographic project.

In one of the essays, *Fragments of Humanity*, the renowned Italian anthropologist, Massimo Centini, writes that “Effectively, Camellini’s photographs have the power to leave the viewer with the possibility of going beyond the conventional meaning given by their appearance. Anatomical parts made of artificial materials that, in the alchemical transmutation of the photographic process, become ‘perhaps real’, set themselves problematically within the cognitive process that underlies every aesthetic project. His images seek a physicality that makes them subjects of other narratives.”

Photographer, lecturer and curator, in a two-part article *The Body Rediscovered*, Mara Granotto considers that the photographs provide “a deep exploration, an analysis” of those “tiny differences that make an individual unique”. She continues by looking at possible meanings behind this new life created by the studio artists: “[…] these creators dwell upon themes inherent in the domain of fear, which is heightened in Camellini’s photographs by sharp framing and skilful lighting […]. They kindle a sense of unease linked to the atavic fear of the realm of darkness. Fear of physical suffering, mutilation, emptiness, duality, the unknown.”
Georges Vercheval, photographic historian and teacher, and founder of the Museum of Photography/Contemporary Art Centre, Charleroi, Belgium writes lyrically about the items that are discovered in the workshops of the cinematic specialists. In his *A Bitter-Sweet Enchantment*, Vercheval calls attention to the nature of the photographs – their allusions to cinematic aesthetics, the skill in his use of lights, sometimes harsh; bold and clear-cut framing. “They also have a documentary value” although […] “we are aware that photographs are not objective, nor are photographers.” He continues “that perhaps at the beginning of a project their purpose has been to document, but […] that is no longer the case.”

Jonny Costantino, film critic and cinematographer, in his poetic and philosophical musings in *Morgue*, sees the photographs as still life scenarios in the “workplace that is the cinema” - “the remains on a table laid with mammalian crudités.” Costantino further considers that the photographs sustain an ambiguity
between what we perceive as real and what is a contrivance.

As well as the special effect artists, the ‘creators’, who attempt to make their characters appear real, it has been my intention that the subjects in these photographic narratives emerge from the negatives, to remain in memory, even if closed inside drawers, hung on the wall or covered in cobwebs…


Ed. Note: In his book he gives a special thank you to Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, who at 19 “wrote a masterpiece that continues to make humanity think”.

Camellini’s photographs have been exhibited throughout Europe and Asia. He’s a member of the Italian Chapter of the Royal Photographic Society (CRPS).

http://www.massimilianocamellini.org/
Manuel de Falla
Douglas May FRPS

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946) lived in the Carmen de Ave María, a Granada villa in the Calle Antequeruela Alta, overlooking the Vega and the Sierra Nevada, from 1921 until he left for Argentina in 1939.

In August 1936 he attempted to intercede with the Falange to save his friend the poet Federico García Lorca from execution. It has been suggested that he left Spain because of fear of the same fate as Lorca. He could not be tempted back with the offer of a substantial state pension.

His furniture and possessions remain in the Granada house. These show that he lived a spartan and austere life. They also show an almost fanatical Catholicism on the part of his sister and himself. He was a hypochondriac; one of the objects shown is his porcelain inhaler. His sister was a would-be nun. In her bedroom there is an elaborate crucifixion scene in a glass case. One of Falla's friends was the distinguished painter Ignacio Zuloaga. Two of his works grace the walls with inscriptions showing affection and admiration for Falla.

This lifestyle seems at odds with the music he composed, such as The Three-Cornered Hat, which is witty and joyful; and El Amor Brujo, which is sensual and sexy. A good modern recording of The Three-Cornered Hat and El Amor Brujo can be found on the Deutsche Grammophon label by the Spanish National Orchestra, conducted by Josep Pons.
Utrecht, present day
A beautiful sunny afternoon found us parking outside our ‘guest house’ in the suburbs of Utrecht.
We were welcomed by a young man about to be picked up by a friend to travel overnight to France for a teaching exam the following day. We hastily exchanged greetings and wound our way to the first floor where he showed us our accommodation. We paid him and wished him luck. He ran back downstairs; jumped on his bike and pedalled off, leaving us standing in a student bedsit reminiscent of the 1960s in a shared house - without a towel!

It was all there:
- Politics – posters, books, graffiti
- Makeshift shelving – skateboard
- Storage – a sheet to disguise it, with bicycle on top
- Personalising – photos of friends, self, family, one of them almost devotional as in a shrine (photo of a young woman with a baby next to a candle)
- Re-furbished table – with wine bottle
- Essentials – guitar, old bendy standard lamp, bottle opener, keys
- Souvenirs – Jan Pieterszoon Coenstraat sign
- And the downside of sharing kitchen facilities – abandoned dirty dishes in a grubby stained sink
- Half-hearted attempts to freshen the place up – discarded paint tins, carelessly splashed floors and chairs
- And no towels in any condition to be seen anywhere!

Newcastle, the late sixties.
We lived in bedsits in shared terrace houses: young, free, naïve, passionate, idealistic, socialist. We were going to change the World!

... plus c’est la même chose
Growing up in a tropical country, where there was never a possibility of a snowy day, made me a bit obsessed by the subject. Snow was a mystery to me. I could only imagine how the touch of it would feel. It was a distant reality that I came to know when I was in my twenties. I went to the United States in the winter of 1996. Since then, I grab every opportunity I have to be surrounded by snow.

The Blank Book idea developed during a period when I was researching new papers on which to print my photographs. It has been an ongoing project in which I print snowy landscapes onto large tracing paper. In the book, however, I decided to print the photographs on
onion skin paper. In this way I have the texture and the transparency that I observe in a snowy nature. The idea was to explore the layers and shapes formed by the snow. I also wanted to give a certain melancholic, delicate and ‘memory like’ feeling to it, by capturing the presence of humans in that environment, and also incorporating the printing flaws.

The result is a handmade book where the photographs interact with each other forming new landscapes, images and meanings. The title suggests both the whiteness of the snow and the state of mind that it can bring. In an edition of one hundred numbered and signed copies, the book has 72 photographs of landscapes and people, inkjet printed, page-by-page.

http://www.ronaldoaguiar.com/
Michelle Sank was born in South Africa and after leaving Cape Town lived overseas before coming to in England in 1987. She settled in Exeter working as a conservator of ceramics at its Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery (RAMM). Before deciding to pick up the threads of her photographic practice, she embarked on a part-time MA degree in Photography at De Montfort University in 2001.

Under the guidance of Paul Hill she was challenged in the way that she had worked in South Africa and was encouraged to move from black and white to colour. Michelle’s work can best be described as social documentary, many of her early commissions looked at marginalised youth culture in various communities around the country and overseas. Bye Bye Baby dealt with the sexualisation of teenagers, Endgame looked at youth offenders while other commissions around this time were Teenagers Belfast, Celestial Echoes and Young Carers.

She tackled these sensitive subjects with a deftness and light touch, working in a collaborative way with her subjects. Michelle always portrayed them with a sense of dignity and a degree of respect. Looking at her work you can feel her sensitivity and compassion. Her work is imbued with light and space echoing quality of light in her native South Africa.

Not wishing to be type cast as the ‘go-to-photographer’ for teenage-related projects, Michelle branched out and in 2007, she accepted a commission from the Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool. The Water’s Edge deals with women who work or worked in and around the city waterfront and whose contribution is often neglected while I am photographing.

Wondrous explores femininity in older women. In 2013 Michelle was invited to take up a residency in the Channel Islands. The work contained in Insula dealt with updating the island’s photographic archive.

Her latest commission is called Touch-Line which deals with rugby culture and rituals surrounding the modern game. It was commissioned to coincide with the 2015 Rugby World Cup and exhibited at the Exeter Museum and will form an important archive for the city of Exeter.

I asked Michelle a series of questions to find out more about her photography.

RF. When did you first get interested in photography as an art form?
MS. I was during the last year of my BA Fine Art degree at university in Cape Town when they introduced a new course in photography and I found a voice for my personal expression.

RF. When you came to England from South Africa in 1987 how did photography differ between the two countries?
MS. I think at that time photography in South Africa was very driven by socio-political issues emanating from the Apartheid era.

RF. What made you decide to go to De Montfort over Newport for your MA?
MS. Due to the gap in my photographic career at that stage I felt De Montfort offered me the opportunity to explore different genres.

RF. When undertaking a new commission, how much research do you do beforehand?
MS. I do a lot of research beforehand and then given the time span of the commission this will develop and change while I am photographing.

RF. Do you pre-visualise the final image or do you work in an intuitive way?
MS. I work predominantly in an intuitive way.

RF. Do you work well under pressure or do you prefer to work at your own pace?
MS. I prefer to work at my own pace.

RF. Much of your early work was based on marginalised youth culture often tackling very serious topics. You clearly achieved this in your photographs but still left your sitters with an air of dignity and a sense of humanity, treating them with respect. Is this something you deliberately set out to do?
MS. I hope so. I feel the relationship I have with the people I work with is very meaningful one and that it works both ways for me.

RF. Are there any topics that would be off limits when looking at possible commissions?
MS. No; unless it was to push an idea that I did not agree with.

RF. Do you find that your students at Falmouth can teach you and keep your photography fresh?
MS. Definitely and the students have widened my outlook through the diversity of work they produce.

RF. If you could go back to the young Michelle in Cape Town what advice would you give her?
MS. To always stay true to herself.

RF. Do you see your work moving from the gallery to the photobook to reach your audience?
MS. I think there is a place for disseminating the work in both these outputs for different projects.

RF. How do you see the place photography in the UK today and say in 10 year’s time?
MS. I think there are many paths open for photography now and I think this will continue to evolve in the future. The digital opportunities have empowered photographers with new forms of creativity and expression that I envisage developing further.

Michelle may have had her work found in youth culture but she is moving on and always looking for new challenges. Her work can be explored further at https://www.michellesank.com.

Moving On: An Essay on Michelle Sank
Rod Fry ARPS

Wondrous

Rod Fry ARPS
‘Somewhere between the novel and film’ ... Lewis Baltz

From the series Insula
From the series Touch-Line
It’s all about winning

Kate Wentworth LRPS

Cliff Atkinson has been growing things all his life. As an apprentice in a Lake District nursery he did well and got to know the Latin names of plants better than the boss. After retirement, he devoted himself to his own garden: growing flowers and vegetables for competition in the local agricultural and horticultural shows, vegetables for the table and other plants just to add to the beauty of his garden. Cliff’s wife Margaret is an equally keen gardener and with her help – not least in preparing produce for the shows – he wins lots of prizes, often more prizes than any other competitor. His silver cups shine down from the shelves in the spare room where he keeps his seeds, catalogues and show handbooks.

I’ve known Cliff and Margaret almost all my life. Margaret was my nanny until I went to the village school near the house where they’ve lived for almost 60 years. I visited them on a beautiful August day in 2008, and for the first time understood their commitment to growing for shows. By then I was retired and getting serious about photography. After gaining a Royal Photographic Society (RPS) Licentiate distinction, I was looking for another project. Cliff’s gardening year! I asked tentatively, and Margaret answered unhesitatingly, “You can do him, but not me!”

During the next year I photographed Cliff and the garden in February, April, June, July and August, and I also covered the Ambleside Flower Show and the Hawkshead Agricultural Show. At Ambleside I overheard a conversation between Cliff and a rival (and friend). Friend – “They say you should go in for the show just for the pleasure of gardening and getting your produce shown.” Cliff – “That’s rubbish!” Both laughed - “It’s all about winning!”

How familiar that attitude was. I had taken part in discussions at my local photographic club such as: “We enter competitions to learn from comments and improve our photography.” But winning is sweet; low marks are bitter. Cups are awarded at the end of the year to those with the best marks. It’s good collecting them, but they are not the motivation. It’s all about winning! However, there are many groups where work and information is shared without competition. Cliff and his friend’s good humoured rivalry were delightful. Maybe this is what it really is (or should be) all about – the fun, camaraderie and sociability which grow with the best competitions.

Taking the photographs was the easiest part of the project. But I had doubts. There was no chance of an exhibition, and the pictures were not suitable for another RPS distinction or the photography club. For a photo book, I felt that an account of a year’s
gardening was nothing more than a personal labour of love for Cliff and Margaret. Then I looked at Andrew Buurman’s *Allotments*: marvellous pictures of allotment gardeners, celebrating their diversity; presented chronologically by the seasons. I realised that in documenting Cliff’s work, I was celebrating his dedication to winning, which may resonate with others as it had for me.

My approach was first to make a small square Blurb book to show Cliff and Margaret. Encouragingly they liked it, and I noted Cliff’s remarks which I put into the next Blurb edition as endnotes. My final objective was to make a large format version with Aperture Books, which meant reworking every page. The cost was covered by the generous voucher I had won (!) as runner up in the Royal Photographic Society 2014 Photobook Competition. My reward was Cliff and Margaret’s delight when I gave the book to them.

Charth Vader, or Charlie, has a condition known as Ocular Albinism which means that his vision, even with glasses, is limited.

As Charth himself says "It’s hard to see things that are small, like mice and germs."

The youngest of three children, Charth is obsessed with Darth Vader and with the help of a mask has assumed the alter-ego of ‘Charth Vader’ to help him deal with life and his restricted vision.

His mother, Ashly, has created a series of images that track the life of her son pictured in everyday situations. The images of Charth hold no clues to his own view of the world and seemingly portray an ordinary child although fixated with the villain of Star Wars.

There are images of Charth playing with his siblings and friends, walking the dog, shopping, trick or treating. These are interspersed with more thoughtful portraits which emphasise the isolation Charth must feel at times, in an empty swimming pool, an empty tennis court, protected from the sun by a blanket, peering through barely open doors and on the fringes of a family gathering.

Ashly’s skills shine through in these images which, in different circumstances, could be seen as just family snapshots taken by a talented parent. Her compositions are born of a natural concern for her child and show Charth as both vulnerable and yet able to take on the world on his own terms.

This is Ashly Stohl’s first book and is published in conjunction with David Carol, her partner, in a new publishing venture Peanut Press. David persuaded Ashly that her first book should be more about the subject than her photography and so Charth became her ideal muse.

For more information:
http://www.charthvader.com/thebook
OPEN INTERNATIONAL PHOTOBOOK EXHIBITION 2016

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Closing Date 31 July 2016

Short-listed books and winners will be exhibited at the Espacio Gallery, 159 Bethnal Green Road, London E2 7DG from 18-23 October 2016 and at the Impressions Gallery, Centenary Square, Bradford, BD1 1SD on 12 November 2016

Entry requirements
- Self-published, photobook dummies, artist’s and handmade photobooks.
- Produced by on-line digital print services, by offset printing or any other processes.
- No commercial book trade publications.
- Only one book per entrant. The book must be the author’s own work, (however books containing found images may be used, provided their source is stated).
- Books must have been created between 1 January 2014 and the closing date for entries of 31 July 2016.

Entry Fee – per person is £25.00, £10 for 25 years old or under entrants. Books are returnable where return postage is supplied.

Selectors: - David Campany, Lucy Kumara Moore and Dewi Lewis

Awards: - Winner award £1000 and RPS medal - per person is £25.00, £10 for 25 years old or under entrants. Books are returnable where return postage is supplied. Winner award £1000 and RPS medal - Second - RPS medal and Bob Books token value £150 Third - RPS medal and Bob Books token value £100

Call for entries to the RPS International Photobook Exhibition 2016. This is OPEN TO MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS OF THE RPS. Contact Rod Fry ARPS rod@rodfry.eclipse.co.uk or see www.rps.org/photobook

Closing Date 31 July 2016

until 26 February

Eye Spy exhibition by Nigel Tooby FRPS at RPS Headquarters, Fenton House, 122 Wells Road, Bath BA2 3AH tel. 01225 325733

until 31 March

Edgeland exhibition by Tom Owens ARPS. At the Museum of East Anglian Life. 8Ifie Life, Stowmarket IP14 1DL tel 01449 612229

7 February

Contemporary South West. Meeting at Dartington, Devon. For address details contact Rod Fry rod@rodfry.eclipse.co.uk tel. 01803 844721

3 March

Contemporary Scotland meeting at Edinburgh Photographic Society 1-4pm. Bring prints along to discuss. Contact David Fells david@1117@gmail.com tel: 07563761337

19 March

Contemporary North East meeting, 2-5pm. Venue to be announced. Contact Patricia A Ruddles ARPS, patnicaru@btinternet.com tel. 01954 783850

28 March

Contemporary North West meeting at Days Inn, Charnock Richard Services on the M6, between junctions 27 and 28, starting at 7.30pm. Contact Ian Maxwell malixmaxwell.co.uk tel. 01524 770278

5-28 April

Contemporary North West - Group exhibition at lytham Heritage Centre, 2, Henry Street Lytham. FY3 5LE www.thecentre@lythamheritage.co.uk

20 April

Conceptual and Contemporary Distinction Assessments for ARPS and FRPS. Fenton House, Bath. Applicants and observers may attend the Associateship assessments. ARPS enquiries arps@rps.org

10-12 June

Photobook Bristol Festival, Southbank Club, Bristol BS3 1BD. Early bird tickets £68.00 until end of January. From 1 February tickets will be £85.00. To book contact http://www.photobookbristol.com/index.php/tickets

12 June

Contemporary South West meeting at Canon Downs Parish Hall, Turo, Cornwall. Start time 10.30am finish time 15.30pm. Contact Rod Fry rod@rodfry.eclipse.co.uk tel. 01803 844721

18-23 October

RPS International Photobook Exhibition and associated print exhibition. Espacio Gallery, 159 Bethnal Green Road, London E2 7DG. Opening times 1-7pm daily, 1-5pm Sunday.

12 November

RPS International Photobook Exhibition. Impressions Gallery, Centenary Square, Bradford BD1 1SD. 10.30am-4.30pm.

Dates not fixed

Contemporary East Anglia meetings. These will be in the Ipswich and Cambridge areas when arranged. The project underway is the The Ipswich Waterfront Development. Contact Peter Ellis wordsnpicsltd@gmail.com

Group and related Society Events

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Contemporary Photography
© Joanna Piotrowska, *Untitled*, originally commissioned through Jerwood/Photoworks Awards 2015. (From the Impressions Gallery exhibition: Jerwood/Photoworks Awards, with Matthew Finn, Tereza Zelenkova and Joanna Piotrowska: 5 January - 19 March 2016)