



View from the Chair

First, congratulations are due to Nigel Tooby on an excellent Fellowship in the form of a book. I mentioned the details of his book in our first Contemporary Group online newsletter which was launched in June.

The E-News is a way of informing you of things which may not find their way into the Contemporary Journal, either through lack of space or because the timing is wrong. It will also be possible to promote members exhibitions, gallery exhibitions, books of interest or Regional events. Please let me know if you have anything of interest that you would like others to know about, or if you have any suggestions which may improve it. It will be sent out mid-way between the Journals and the next one should appear during the second week in September.

There are proposals for a Yorkshire/North-East Group; there was considerable interest shown for this at the Contemporary Group meeting in April in Bradford. Nigel Tooby has volunteered to organise it, and the meetings will also be open to non-RPS members. If you are interested please email me and I will forward contact details to Nigel.

Tickets are still available for **Contrasting Contemporary** in Plymouth, 10-11 November. This event is in conjunction with the SouthWest Region and, as with our events, it is open to all RPS members, as well as those who are not, but who are interested in photography.

The speakers confirmed are Homer Sykes, Sian Bonnell Hon FRPS, Daniel Meadows HonFRPS and Sophy Rickett. Members attending are encouraged to bring work with a view to it being included in the Contemporary Journal. On Friday, 9 November there will be an informal walk around Plymouth for early arrivals, guided by either Jenny Leathes ARPS or another member of the SouthWest Group. Further information can be found on the RPS website.

Tom Hunter, who spoke at our *Spirit of the Age* in 2010 has an exhibition at the Museum of Childhood, London E2 9PA entitled *Happy Birthday, Mr Punch*, from 14 July to 9 December 2012. Check the V&A at www.museumofchildhood.org.uk

We are still looking for someone to take over the role of treasurer. The work involved should not take more than an hour a month and Brian Steptoe, our current treasurer, will be more than happy to guide anyone who volunteers through the necessary processes. We meet two or three times a year usually including the AGM. Please contact Brian Steptoe at bsteptoe@compuserve.com if you feel you could spare the time to help.

Best wishes, Avril.

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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

Cover: *Berlin Wall*, by Robert J. Gates ARPS

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. Colour space in Adobe RGB is preferred rather than sRGB. For other formats, please contact the Editor. Large image files may be supplied on disc or by use of online large file transfer facilities.

Unless requested, discs will not be returned.

DEADLINE for the Autumn 2012 edition is 30 September 2012.

Contemporary Group Journal

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Photography that explores the photographer's personal view of contemporary society, environment, art or culture, usually through a themed body of work.

Editorial

“Don’t mention the War.” ⁽¹⁾

If you visit the Cham ruins in Vietnam’s Central Highlands to take photographs, what is their truthful representation? Is it the “colourful group of dancers...”? Or, is it the deforestation of the landscape caused by the American use of Agent Orange?

In his musings on the nature of personal photography, sent on his iPad from southeast Asia, Mike Shanahan wonders whether we should accede to ‘the enchanted view’ that the media bombards us with every day. He suggests that acceptance might lead to losing our individual imagination.

Can photography tell us the truth? With street photography we can move about quickly, on the prowl, eagerly looking to snatch images. David Lewis in his article on street photography sums up by taking the decision that street photography itself is an illusion, although the photographer wants to say “this is how I saw it when standing in the moment.”

Even though their two articles address different photographic concerns, they have reminded me of one of my own – is the debate about whether photography tells the truth, or whether it is something else again?

So the Vietnamese decided to show tourists colourful dancers instead of the countryside damaged and defoliated by the Agent Orange pesticide sprayed during what they call the American War. Indeed, they didn’t tell the visitors about the hardships faced by the many different Asian minorities living there. Nor did the tour guides engage audiences with the history of these ancient ruins.

Selection – to me it’s all about selection. Let’s say that I go to take photographs in an attractive beauty spot. I have to decide what it is I want to say about the place; what is my personal response to the scene. The view is lovely but there is an unsightly, overflowing rubbish bin in the foreground. Do I include the bin to demonstrate the environmental damage caused by too many sightseers? Or, do I choose to leave the bin out of the frame or erase it later in Photoshop to document the unspoiled nature of our green and pleasant land? The truth is relative – I photograph what I see or choose not to see. What is the truth of my photograph?

I suggest that it’s all about the photographer and not the photograph.

(1) Basil Fawlty, from *Fawlty Towers*, Season 1 Episode 6, 24 October 1975.

Best regards,
Patricia

The Fine Art of Learning:

‘Discussion, advice and nonsense in equal measure’

by Sandy Sharp FRPS

Futureproof is an annual presentation of work selected from degree shows and exhibited at Street Level Photoworks in Glasgow, which enables a wider audience to experience the art school photography phenomenon and to hear what graduates, both the shy and the articulate, have to say for themselves. Their presentations are thought-provoking, and thankfully devoid of references to cherished traditions and long held opinions from the world of photography which are all too familiar. In common with the Contemporary Group ethos, a great emphasis is placed on statements of intent, because student photographers must become WOBs – that is, “word-oriented bastards”, a term coined by Professor Paul Hill. That is if they are to be awarded degrees because splendid photographs on their own are not enough to achieve degrees in photography. One student did not own a camera – he borrowed one from his art school as required. Another did not take her own photographs, instead scanned snaps from family albums and added her own fictitious bylines. A man with no legs featured his prosthetic limbs; and a multi-studded Greek lady had her say about her Greek Orthodox schooling.

Much time spent learning photography at an art school has little to do with the processes of making photographs. Matter is more important than material and few students appear to learn any processing or dark room skills. A father, paying out hundreds of pounds to an Edinburgh lab to print

his daughter’s degree show, was heard to mutter “I thought that having studied photography for four years she would at least be able to print!”

Photography in 2012 is taught in Scottish art schools as a fine art, alongside painting, drawing and sculpture. Graduates are sent out into the world with all the other ‘artists’ to earn a living as creative individuals. Apart from the question as to whether the country can support many thousands more creative artists every year, we wonder what has been taught about the creative process as opposed to the technique of its making. Wasn’t it Matisse who said: “First learn technique. This will not preclude you from becoming a genius later”. But the finer points of photographic practice are not at the forefront of photography teaching in art schools.

Who taught you? This is a question often asked photographers. After ‘self-taught’, then ‘my dad’ is one of the commonest answers, although Cecil Beaton confessed that his nanny taught him all he knew. Ironically, none of the leaders of the photography departments in the Scottish art schools actually trained as a photographer – they include a graduate of literature, an historian and a musician. Clearly they now believe that there is much more to photography than mere competence in making photographs! This something else, which has been called the ‘wellspring of creative energy’, may be acquired by an engagement with the world of fine art, together with what is cheerfully referred

to as 'life'. It is this engagement which art schools seek to cultivate if their clients (forthcoming creative artists) are to do more than become competent photographers of food products and underwear, wedding parties and tiny tots. And the awarding of degrees-in-creativity is the unenviable task of those who train and assess with complete disregard to Man Ray's sweeping statement that "You are either an artist or you are not".

Contact with students and graduates of photography has been a stimulating and rewarding experience for Scottish Photographers, our network of independent photographers, and it could be for the satellites of the Contemporary Group – because care needs to be taken that the convictions of the Contemporary Group don't become just as much of a tyranny as those of the late (un)lamented pictorialism.

There is much common ground in the ambitions of the Contemporary Group and art schools, although Group's members probably make better prints and own better cameras. Much can be learned from other worlds of photography even if it is only down to lateral thinking. If you organise gatherings of un stupid photographers in your area, then do give consideration to inviting students or graduates of an art school, and also be sure to visit their degree shows. It should be said that the benefits are two way. Yes, even graduates in photography from art schools still have something to learn . . .



© Rowan Lear

from the series *this is what creates every adventure*

this is what creates every adventure is an exploration of the relationship between photographs and memory. Digging through my own family albums and boxes of photographs, the images from my childhood appear unfamiliar. With growing frustration I noted that my mother barely appeared in any of them and large periods of time were unaccounted for. Photographs behave, as Roland Barthes once put it, as "counter-memories". They elicit acts of recollection which construct childhood memories of falsity and fallacy.

Rowan Lear is a graduate of Napier University



© Zoe Gibson

from the series *Show Homes*

Show Homes is a series of constructed images that question the functionality of modern interiors. By constructing miniature sets that resemble the style of rooms shown in lifestyle magazines, I aim to suggest that while these designs are aesthetically pleasing, it would be challenging to any person to inhabit this space and maintain its calming serenity. By adding any personal items, decorative or essential, it interrupts the balance of the design. However, I feel that it is these objects, collected throughout our lives and experiences that give a house a personality and an element of individuality.

Zoe Gibson is a graduate of Edinburgh College of Art

from the series *Home*

Home is a body of work focused on a group of re-housed individuals from the Craigmillar community, south-east Edinburgh. The Craigmillar housing scheme was created through the Scottish Housing Act of 1924, where lands were bought to create housing for "the working class" and to ease the over-crowding and poor housing of central Edinburgh.

Craigmillar is currently going through great change in its social and urban infrastructure. Many people have been re-housed, but minimal progress has been made. The homes from which they have been moved have been demolished, yet the majority of land still lies empty.

Yearly developments have seen the sparse construction of new "stylish apartments" set on the ground of old Niddrie, a now almost desolate area of Craigmillar. Due to almost the entire population being moved for this construction and, through a quirk of decanting procedures, given no hope of returning, it seems that generations have been lost in a place that was once bound together by an exceptional sense of community life. Home serves to highlight the lack of political vision in decimating a once close and established community.

Martin Scott Powell is a graduate of Napier University now working in New York

Irene Greenhorn, Flat 2, 9 Wauchope Terrace
© Martin Scott Powell





© Rosalind Dallas

from the series *Return*

Return is a series that has taken me back to locations of my childhood, from the Solway Coast to Rannoch Moor, all embedded deep in nature. Influenced by my ethereal surroundings, I have tried in each image to capture the memories and feelings of the moments spent there, both in the past and in the present, to produce intimate mementos of my time within the locations. By photographing myself in a selection of the images I placed myself within the memories, recalling the laughs and tears of each location.

Rosalind Dallas is a student at Glasgow School of Art

from the series *Abject Hagiographies*

For years now these saintly figures - concoctions of Orthodox Christian imagery - have infused my imagination and dreams, becoming visual obsessions and invisible companions. They are as constant as the abjection caused by their Orthodox counterparts. They embody fear, pain and the need to belong, all themes of Christian iconography and driving forces behind the existence of the Christian religion. These saints, although full of divine oppression, stand ambiguous, a trait more widely evident in humankind.

Ariadne Xenou is a graduate of Napier University



© Ariadne Xenou



© Arpita Shah

Mr. and Mrs. Parkash as Vishnu and Lakshmi

Lakshmi is the consort of Vishnu, the preserver of the world. If one worships Lakshmi sincerely, and not in greed, one will be blessed with fortune and prosperity. It is said she resides only in places of hard work, virtue and pure devotion - values prized highly by Hindus. In my initial meeting with the Parkash family, I was overwhelmed by the grandness of their home, which features a large temple. In getting to know them, I learned about their migration to Scotland from India in the 1970s, and how their hard work to improve their circumstances led to a greater sense of gratitude and being blessed.

Arpita Shah is a graduate of Napier University.



©Caroline Douglas

from the series *Photobooth*

The project is an assembled collection of self-portraits taken at the Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Arts 2005-07. It required the active participation of the sitters, who themselves 'made' the pictures. Couples were invited into a personally constructed Photobooth and asked to take two pictures of themselves in the enclosed space - the first, looking at the camera, the second, kissing. I remained outside the booth for the duration of this process. By providing the subjects with their own private space in the self-enclosed booth, the couples were given an essential degree of autonomy. Free from the potentially intimidating presence of the photographer, a platform is provided for the subjects to bring their unique individualism to the images. Please note: Photobooth is ideally exhibited in its entirety as a slide projection.

Caroline Douglas is a graduate of Edinburgh College of Art and Glasgow School of Art

London's Seasides

Aspects of regeneration

by Len Salem FRPS

London's Seasides is a Blurb book resulting from my visits to six seaside towns close to London - Brighton, Worthing, Bognor, Hastings, Margate and Southend. Traditionally they have been favoured destinations for Londoners who wanted to escape from their city for a day, a weekend, a week or the rest of their lives.

Once visited only by wealthy citizens with free time and their own means of transport, these resorts became popular in the last century with the more general population, particularly Londoners, following the advent of holidays enshrined in Acts of Parliament and affordable rail and coach links.

Then along came cheap foreign air travel with guaranteed sunshine, endless sandy beaches, better food and more comfortable cheap hotels. This threatened the economic wellbeing of London's seaside towns. They became somewhere your parents used to visit.

Many resorts reacted by opting to change their original core appeal. They decided to re-invent themselves in an attempt to create an offering that would be an attractive alternative to foreign destinations, frequently (but not always) trying at the same time to appeal to a more affluent, more cultured visitor than before. And even if they couldn't compete directly with 'going abroad', London's seaside towns were nearer and could be visited without the hassle of flight booking, airport security and unfamiliar currencies. They were convenient for

a short stay. Better to be an addition to the annual foreign holiday than to be totally ignored.

These efforts to restore a failing tourist trade were often closely associated with a desire to re-invigorate the more general local economy which in many cases had declined in tandem with the fall in tourism as well as with a more widespread economic slowdown. The umbrella term for these efforts is regeneration and its engine of deliverance is town planning.

Each of the five sections of my book has a short introduction which makes a particular point about the place visited, rather than giving a more general assessment. Different aspects of the ways particular seaside towns are reacting to their perceived need for regeneration are considered, based on how these have manifested themselves visually. Although inferences are drawn from specific locations, each section attempts to make observations on the processes of regeneration which might be applicable elsewhere. The main focus is on the area immediately beside the sea rather than the town as a whole, for it is the seafront which distinguishes these places from towns in general.

This is a photographer's book, not an academic treatise. The statements are subjective, the images selective. Conclusions are reached primarily from visual clues rather than written or spoken evidence.

The images in this article are a selection of some of my favourites rather than a linked sequence. If you are interested in seeing more and would like to see how I wrote about and photographed various aspects of regeneration relating to the individual seaside, you are welcome to look up my book *London's Seasides – Aspects of Regeneration* on www.blurb.com where the whole book can be viewed online.



Margate



Margate

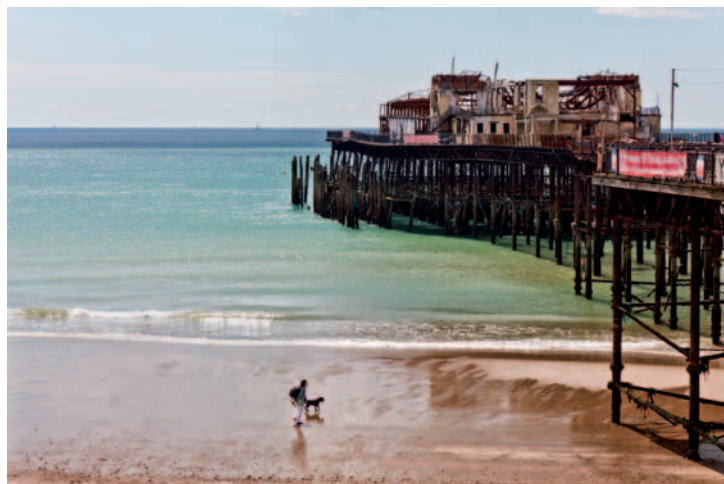
Margate

Hastings

Brighton



Southend



Hastings

Bognor

Worthing

Brighton



Margate

Wimbledon

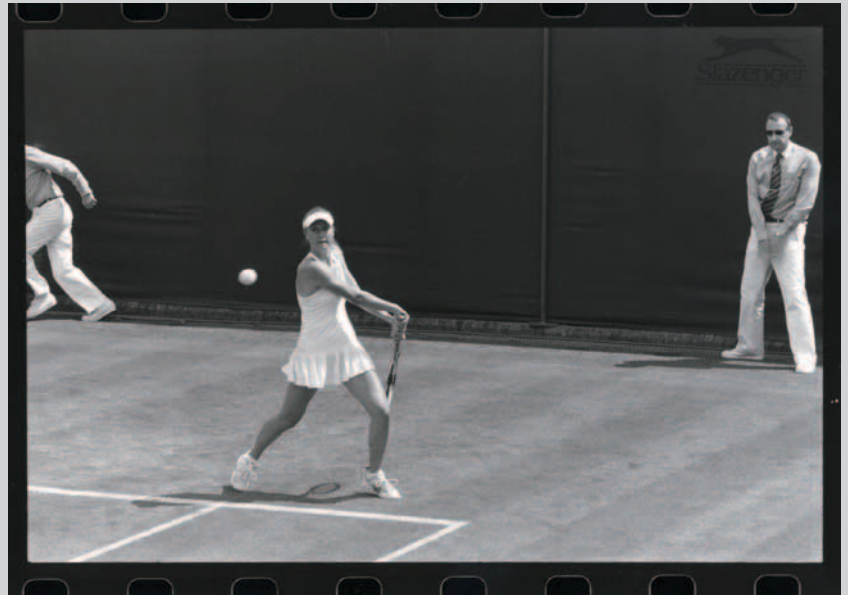


This work is of tennis players and officials but not about tennis. The actual sport doesn't interest me, except as an opportunity to photograph an activity that produces random and unexpected results within my photographic frame of reference. I dislike going anywhere with strict images in mind. Like most of us photographers, I have all sorts of reasons for taking photographs which I don't understand, nor can articulate. But hopefully, some of the picture dynamics takes the viewer outside the 'frame' and into the 'blind field', i.e., the space-time-area outside the photograph. I don't want to constrain viewers from their own interpretation. The danger of using words is that (sometimes) critics pick up on an inconsistency between the words and images (which may be just the photographer being inarticulate) rather than just looking at the image, because words are often easier to understand than images. Although I

by Jeff Hutchinson

did take some digital images, the black and white film ones gave me the more interesting results.

I went to Wimbledon after a gap of 20 years, managed to put up with the five-hour long wait to gain access, and to my horror I was informed that they only took cash - I had £19.50 on me in cash and entrance was £20. All was not lost. A security guard escorted me to a cash machine. A 79 year-old lady, obsessed by tennis, who had queued next to me for five hours had her fork confiscated at Security as a dangerous weapon. She asked the guy how she was going to eat her salad. His response - "not my problem." So, it was very different circumstances that found me at Wimbledon than in the early 80s. It was exceptionally hot, crowded and the grass had a certain smell. All the work was produced using an Olympus OM1 with a 135mm lens on Ilford HP5 Plus film developed in ID11.



Contemporary Group members exhibit at the RAC

For the past six years, the RPS has been invited to exhibit at the Royal Automobile Club, Pall Mall, in their Hanging Room gallery space. Work was selected this year by the President, Roy Robertson and Exhibitions Chairman, John Simpson from members of the RPS Council, the Advisory Board, The Distinction Advisory Board and the Distinction Panels.

Six Contemporary Group members who sit on these Boards and Panels were among those who had work chosen for the Spring 2012 Exhibition.



© Ann Miles FRPS, *Mind the Gap*



© James Frost ARPS, *Nubian Boy*



© Anne Crabbe FRPS, *Boy with Nest*



© Caroline Hyman FRPS, *George with Lambs*



© Donald Stewart FRPS, *Desert Sculpture and Shadows, Atacama Desert, Northern Chile*



© Jenny Leathes ARPS, *Curved Sand Patterns*

Street-Wise: an introduction to street photography

by David J Lewis ARPS

“Inside movement there is a moment at which the elements of motion are in balance. Photography must seize upon this moment and hold immobile the equilibrium of it.” (*The Decisive Moment*, Henri Cartier-Bresson)

“Is photography a kind of lie?” asked Greek photographer Thanasis Zacharopoulos. Arguably, in its depiction of a flat, still, silent and two-dimensional world, it never quite tells the truth. In its depiction of life as we normally experience it, however, street photography perhaps comes closer to truth than most other forms of photography.

‘Street’ has become more popular in recent years. Almost everyone with a camera seems to be doing it (albeit with mixed success). Exhibitions such as the Museum of London’s recent *London Street Photography* have inspired people to venture into the streets, camera in hand.

However, it can be difficult to explain exactly what ‘street’ is or does. Google it and you’ll find many attempts to define it, none of which is entirely satisfactory and some which conflict with others. The reason is that essentially it’s a style of photography rather than a subject. You know it when you see it, but it’s difficult to explain.

It may help to say some of the things which it isn’t. It isn’t traditional landscape or architectural photography, which tends to produce pictorially pleasing and technically competent but static imagery. Nor is it photography in a planned and

controlled environment, such as posed images in a studio. The line between street and photojournalism is a fine one and they can merge, but the purpose is rather different: street photography in its pure form is concerned with capturing effectively a particular moment, a fragment of time in a changing universe, rather than documenting a linear story of social or political interest.

‘Street’ tends to have a more random, non-linear, spontaneous and fast-paced feel to it than other forms of photography. There is a close link between modern urban landscape and street photography but the former tends, like more traditional landscape, to take a more static approach to image making. Go back to an urban landscape in an hour and it may look the same. Turn back in a second to the subject of a street photograph and it may have changed beyond recognition.

‘Street’ is and isn’t ‘contemporary’. This is perhaps the most difficult one to explain. ‘Contemporary’ is concerned with development of a new concept or personal idea, often expressed through a project-based series of closely related images. In this sense, street photographs may form the basis of a contemporary body of work but, as ‘standalone’ images, they are not necessarily contemporary in approach.

The difficulty in defining ‘Street’, ironically, helps to explain what it is. Some of the best street photographers are masters of the ambiguous. Their photographs ask questions rather than provide



© David Lewis

answers. They invite us to think, to ask “what’s going on here?” Many good street photographs are meant to be read in more than one way. All are meant to communicate, not just to record.

Street photography at its best involves intense observation, spontaneity and speed. It has been described as the art of the stolen moment. It captures significant fragments of time that no one else has seen, often of ordinary people in ordinary environments, and it captures them with well-composed images, with perception, humour and compassion. The photographer wants to say, “this is how I saw it” when standing in the moment. Part of the fascination with this type of photography is in its apparent capacity to stop time, to hold fast this ephemeral moment. Ultimately this is, of course, an illusion.

So I return to the Zacharopoulos question with which I started this article. Even street photography is, arguably, no more than a kind of lie.





m&m's
world

cultur
like nowhere

m&m's

A reflection on the nature of personal photography

by Mike Shanahan FRPS

While recently walking around some ruined buildings abandoned by the Cham people of the Vietnamese Central Highlands, I heard a young lady express her boredom at being forced to march around some “old bricks and grass”. She apparently would have preferred to be visiting the adventure theme park mooted for construction by the American Jackson family in the vicinity of the Mekong Delta. A few weeks later I overheard another young lady being asked to throw a pose in the fashion of a fantasy character named Sapphire as we strolled around the ruins of Angkor Wat.

In neither case were these individuals apparently alone in their wish to overlay something with which they were comfortable onto something with which they had no immediate sympathy or imaginative engagement. Indeed, why should they be?

These observations led me to a gentle reflection on the nature of personal photography, and whether it might be the case that to exist comfortably in a contemporary society it is best to accept without any question or concern, a continuous stream of pre-digested concepts and imagery.

In the case of the Cham ruins no mention had been made of the reasons why the buildings had been erected for the glorification of various religions. Neither was reference made to the quite recent deforestation of the surrounding area by the American use of Agent Orange, the inherited genetic damage inflicted by that chemical or the

injuries caused by lingering unexploded ordnance. Instead, we were presented with a colourful group of dancers dressed in a generic fashion of ethnic Asian courtiers. Then we were left to our own devices while wandering about the ruins.

Similarly, at Angkor Wat very few were enthused by the extensive bass relief carvings depicting battles between humans and monkeys according to ancient legends. Neither did there seem to be any interest in the massive architectural efforts required to construct the enormous complex of moats and temples. Nor indeed was there any apparent curiosity about the reasons for their abandonment. But there were many who did enjoy the aerobically approved climb to the King’s apartments and the photo opportunities to stand in front of the ruins that they had conquered.

It has been said that we live in a world of surfaces, and the trick of doing so successfully is learning how to skate upon them. And in the main that is fine by me. But, I do have some concerns if such a habit leads to the abandonment of imaginative personal investigation. To accept and superimpose ‘the enchanted view’ incessantly delivered by our amazingly advanced streams of media surely displaces the potentially deeper delights of personalised imagination, investigation and discovery. Indeed, one has to question whether the act of taking a photograph has any contemporarily valid meaning in the context of

the incessant flood of professionally polished imagery flowing from the cornucopia gushing into our web-fed world view. Unless, that is, we are just seeking to prove that we are in some way capable of using the most recent form of Canon, Nikon,

iPad, or whatever, to replicate the plethora of glossy images that satiate our everyday expectations to which we may have become willingly, or unknowingly, addicted.



© Mike Shanahan FRPS, *Cham Lingam*

The Last Resort

at the Third Floor Gallery-Tom Wood and Martin Parr
by Julia García Hernández

It is rare that exhibitions are restaged. Bodies of work get re-exhibited and re-contextualized, but it is not yet common practice for museums and galleries to reconfigure temporary events. The Third Floor Gallery in Cardiff, one of a new generation of spaces dedicated to photography, has recently engaged with this little-explored activity of choosing a project that was first shown elsewhere, originally at Liverpool's Open Eye

Gallery in the mid-1980s, and which has become synonymous with Martin Parr.

The Last Resort was an exhibition by two photographers: Tom Wood and Martin Parr. Although no visual record has been discovered in Open Eye's archive of the original collaboration, it is known that Wood and Parr each took a distinct approach to the display of their work. In recreating the original display style, the Third Floor Gallery



Installation shot of The Last Resort © Bartosz Nowicki. Courtesy of Third Floor Gallery



Pregnant Women, 1984 (from The Last Resort) © Tom Wood., Courtesy of Open Eye Gallery.

allowed the viewer to assess more accurately the relationship between two bodies of work that reveal a different approach to picturing the people of New Brighton and Merseyside.

Martin Parr's fourteen unframed colour digital prints were standard-size, landscape format. Completed over a three year period his work, on exhibition, remains a concise observation of day-trippers at a seaside resort. It is so strikingly familiar and so loaded with the criticism following

its London showing and publication in 1986 (Promenade Press), that it is curious how it has the capacity to gain from, and lend to, Tom Wood's much broader picturing of people and place.

Tom Wood exhibited a selection of thirty-five vintage prints sourced from his own archive. Of varying sizes, in colour and black & white, these were working documents, annotated and pinned in an organic arrangement as if in an artist's workspace. In contrast to Parr, Wood's is not a

profile of a holiday resort but a mapping of a people over a longer period of time with whom he is familiar.

It is unclear how many of these images by Wood appeared in the original exhibition because the archive at Open Eye Gallery holds a different collection of his colour photographs dating from that period. Included at Third Floor were pictures taken in the Chelsea Reach nightclub, published first by Cornerhouse in *Looking for Love* (1989) and then by Steidl in *Photie Man* (2005), as well as those from the 'bus project' published and exhibited as *All Zones off Peak* (1998). For the viewer, Wood's half of *The Last Resort* could be read both as one body of work spanning a twenty-five year period or as a pulling together of several parallel projects.

In 2005 the photographer Ken Grant questioned the appropriateness of editing into a "concise chapter" the nightclub photographs from Tom Wood's extended project¹. Grant is observant without being critical when he describes *Looking for Love* as "singular and abrupt". Wood lived on Merseyside between 1978 and 2003 and was known locally as the 'Photie Man'. *Looking for Love* could not contain the "wider lives" of the people he photographed nor indicate the extent of the project on which he worked.

By contrast *Photie Man*, a collaborative exhibition and publication between Wood and artist Pdraig Timoney, was considered by Grant the "vehicle with which to liberate and realign both the familiar and the lesser-seen photographs Wood has been making since the early 1970s". At the Third Floor Gallery the selection and arrangement of Wood's pictures recalled the

content of *Photie Man* and the description of its exhibition at Manchester's Castlefield Gallery in 2003. For *The Last Resort* it is likely that Tom Wood did not repeat image for image his contribution to the original show of 1985/86, but has recaptured a display style that avoids presenting a completed project fixed at a particular period in time.

Third Floor Gallery's *The Last Resort* is perhaps not so much a 'restaging' of an exhibition as a 'realignment' of the work of Tom Wood and Martin Parr, allowing for a reappraisal of both bodies of work within the broader context in which they were originally shown. In addition, it sits at the start of a series of long-awaited UK exhibitions for Tom Wood.

Third Floor Gallery's revisit to this project has been an enlightened decision, unearthing a hidden history of British photography. While the major arts institutions are trying to fill the gaps in their photographic collections it may prove valuable research to re-examine the exhibition programmes of the galleries dedicated to photography that grew up in the 1970s. Launched in 2010 and born into a challenging political and economic landscape, Cardiff's Third Floor Gallery is in its early stages of development. As a fledgling space it has been able to lend *The Last Resort* a sense of its original setting.

1. All quotes taken from the review *Photie Man* by Ken Grant published in foto8 2005 now on line at www.foto8.com/reviews/V4N2/photieman.html (accessed 6 July 2012)

The Last Resort was first shown at the Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool 4 December 1985 to 18 January 1986

The Last Resort was shown at the Third Floor Gallery, Cardiff 5 May to 17 June 2012

Open Eye Gallery blog on the restaging of *The Last Resort* www.openeye.org.uk/blog/ (accessed 6 July 2012)

Third Floor Gallery, www.thirdfloorgallery.com (accessed 6 July 2012)



*Rachael age 17, 1985 (from *The Last Resort*) © Tom Wood. Courtesy of Open Eye Gallery.*

Dmitri Kasterine and The Lady with Cat

by Rod Fry ARPS

She sits impassively with an air of dignity, a face of serenity, and yet while having experienced a great deal of life, she is still facing the future square on. Her cat beside her gives tacit approval for the photographer to make the picture.

This was my first impression when I encountered this photograph some 25 years ago. It's unusual because you don't find many people sitting on a doorstep, certainly not in England, in 1978, and not a lady of her age.

The photographer Dmitri Kasterine has sensitively made an image, which clearly shows a rapport with the sitter. Kasterine has allowed the lady to reveal something about herself. There is no political agenda, no strong urge to document, only the desire to make a picture of a scene that the photographer was intuitively drawn to. There is innocence, with a mutually complicit agreement between the lady and the photographer in the making of this picture. I asked Dmitri about this image and he said, "I was walking down Upper Richmond Road, and there she sat with her cat, both content: she sitting so graphically, the cat classically how a cat sits."

I saw this photograph in Dmitri's book *England and the English*, which is described by the photographer, "As a book of photographs of people and places: subjects that I simply liked the look of. There is no political or social theme, neither is there a thread that joins or style that unites the pictures. I chose the subjects and places arbitrarily and randomly just wandering until something struck me. I looked close at home in Putney and returned to places where I had worked or enjoyed myself."

The book is an eclectic mix of portraiture and landscape, in colour and black & white pictures, made in the 1970s and 1980s. The photographer is being too modest because while his approach is undoubtedly intuitive, I feel that there is an underlying narrative to all the pictures. There is a gentle feel to the work- England seen with an affectionate eye. The book moves from place to place in a seemingly rambling fashion, which suits this country. The book gives us an insight into the everyday life in England some 30 years ago. It celebrates the common man and the everyday landscape that forms the backdrop to our lives. It may lack the harder-edged documentary



approach of the photographers of the late 1980s but I certainly don't think that is a bad thing. Is it nostalgic? Looking at England through rose tinted glasses? I don't think so; for me it clearly resonates with my memories of the England that I grew up in.

Unlike Tony Ray-Jones work, all the major outdoor portraits are documented in the text, and you get to know the subjects before they consented to having their picture taken by the photographer. There is a connection between the subject and Kasterine, which clearly comes through in the narrative; he is not a voyeur looking at the scene to take a picture. Dmitri is involved. He has established a link to make a photograph.

Dmitri Kasterine was born in 1932, the son of a White Russian Army officer and a British mother. After attending school at Radley College in Oxford, he tried a number of jobs before embarking on a professional career in photography in 1961. He worked on several publications, and enjoyed a long association with Stanley Kubrick taking the stills for *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*; *2001: A Space Odyssey*; and *A Clockwork Orange*.

He was one of the most significant portrait photographers from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s with images of Sir Tom Stoppard,

Samuel Beckett, David Hockney, Beryl Bainbridge, Roald Dahl, Francis Bacon and Her Majesty the Queen, to name but a few. It was while he was travelling round the country on various assignments that the idea for this personal set of pictures was born. Sadly, *England and The English* has long since been out of print, but it remains one of my favourite photographic books of all time. The National Portrait Gallery, who have acquired some of his work, held an exhibition of his portraits in September 2010 to April 2011.

Dmitri moved to the U.S. in 1986, and has been working on another book project for 14 years. Despite all his fame he is very modest about his achievements. If you are interested in finding out more about him, his website is <http://www.kasterine.com>. He is still producing work, which he sends out as a monthly blog.

In my correspondence with Dmitri, he clearly comes across as a very modest and sincere man, ready to share his ideas. Whether he will ever produce this second book, or if the publishers ever reprint *England and the English*, who knows, but for me his private work still beguiles and draws me into the England he observed and photographed all those years ago.

GROUP EVENTS

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| September 19 | Distinctions Assessments. Contemporary ARPS and FRPS. Fenton House, Bath. Applicants and observers may attend the Associateship Assessments. Contact Andy Moore at Fenton House tel 01225 325760. |
| October 21 | Distinctions Advisory Day for Contemporary A and F. Tangmere, West Sussex. Contact Brian Steptoe FRPS, bsteptoe@compuserve.com, tel 0118 973 4131 |
| November 3 | Contemporary North West meeting. Days Inn, Charnock Richard services M6 between J27 and 28. A day with Colin Thomas. Attendees please bring their portfolios. Contact Ian Maxwell mail@ihmaxwell.com tel 01524 770278 |
| November 4 | Contemporary East Midlands event. Details tba |
| November 10-11 | Weekend event at Plymouth University. Joint meeting with the SW Region. Speakers include Daniel Meadows HonFRPS, Sian Bonnell HonFRPS, Homer Sykes and Sophy Rickett. Pre-weekend walking tour 2pm Friday November 9.
Contact Avril Harris ARPS, avrilharris@blueyonder.co.uk, tel 020 8360 7996 |
| March 22-24, 2013 | Weekend for members of Postal Portfolios One and Two to look at and discuss ongoing work. Missenden Abbey, Great Missenden, Bucks. Contact Anne Crabbe, info@annecrabbe.co.uk |

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© Homer Sykes, *English Sunrise Café, Southend-on-Sea, June 2006*

Homer Sykes is one of the speakers at the **Contrasting Contemporary** weekend in Plymouth on 10-11 November 2012, a Contemporary Group joint event with the South West Region. This photo was also exhibited at St Pancras station concourse as part of the London Festival of Photography, June 2012.