Moat
Radiate
Spreading outwards from a common centre.

Contemporary Photography
Number 69  Autumn 2017
I am delighted to report that the AGM and Photobook Craft and Publishing event in Manchester was a great success. Dewi Lewis was not able to attend; he sent his apologies as he had to go to Italy at short notice to oversee the printing of books. Zelda Cheatle stepped in, and I am most grateful to her. Many more attended than were expected and we had quite a few books and prints to look at. The enthusiasm of the members made the organization of this event very well worthwhile. Derek Trillo spoke for an hour before lunch about his practice. After lunch Zelda Cheatle talked about her experiences in publishing and with the photographers who had been shown in her gallery. Zeld and Derek went through the work that had been brought, and I felt their criticism was both fair and constructive. I hope those who brought work felt that it was advantageous: I think we may see more of this work in the future. A more detailed report of the AGM and the meeting will be available in Concept, our online newsletter.

The Photobook Design event, headed by Brian Steptoe and organized by the London region on 16 September, was fully booked. It was limited to eight attendees, all of whom were required to bring 50-80 small prints for hands-on sequencing. Five attendees were Contemporary Group members. Very positive feedback was received after the event from many of those attending.

Having broken my leg at the end of July I would like to thank Peter Ellis for his help and support over the past three months. He has proved himself a very able deputy.

Best wishes

Avril

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

Cover: © Convallaria Maialis by Yves Salmon from the MA project Moat
Back cover: © Horizon VI by Barbara Levine and Martin Venezky, from the series We Have Been Where Are You Going
Journal fonts: general, Avenir Lt Std; author name, Letter Gothic Std
I trained as a geologist, and I have spent much of my life becoming familiar with landscapes, the rocks beneath them, and how they ‘work’ - the flow of water, the patterns of erosion, the vegetation, and how settlements develop. Travelling across country I note the relationships between where I am, the landscape and the traditional patterns of buildings: the mellow stone buildings from Bath to Stamford, for example, reflecting the swathe of Jurassic limestone hills across England. I learned this ‘sense of place’ practically, as an adult. Others gain it from memories of childhood, or from particularly intense emotional experiences.

Among the photographers in this issue, Robert Blombäck’s work expresses a sense of place most strongly. The family bonds, the northern Swedish location, the light and the natural environment are so closely interwoven that the notion of describing them separately is unthinkable. Chrystál Ding seeks to understand a place she barely remembers, but which is vitally important to her sense of her own self and of her family. Mark Reeves is exploring a locality new to him, but with its own new, distinctive and uncomfortable features - what he calls a bitter-sweet melanchie. Monica Alcazar-Duarte has taken a different approach, exploiting a pure coincidence of name to link one utterly alien and, so far, imaginary place to an utterly familiar American small town called Mars.

Barbara Levine and Martin Venezky borrow the snaps of others, each one of them of a place that was, presumably, familiar and important to the original photographer. They have extracted just one element from each image, the horizon, and recombined them to create unreal landscapes: unfamiliar - and yet we understand the components.

I have seen few photographers address the implications of the BREXIT vote in such a memorable, imaginative and, yes, beautiful way as Yves Salmon has done. No angry faces and no triumphalism, but a simple set of portraits and first person testimony, subtly linked by drawings of plants and botanical terminology. It shouldn’t work, but it does. It has been a challenge to convey it in a few small pages in this journal, and I urge you to take the chances that that may come your way to see the work in full, and read for yourself the accounts of those now losing a sense of their own place in our society.

Paul Ashley, Editor
Requiem from the North (time, place and belonging)

Robert Blombäck

I have been taking photos of my family in the sea by our summer house during a period of 20 years.

This is a story of my family in Norrbotten. An attempt, with the sauna ritual in focus, to tell the tale of the people and the landscape in northern Sweden.

Here in the barren archipelago almost everything has been stripped off, and only the simple and essential remains. In the sauna bodies sweat out the toils of the day, and slowly they soften, are cleansed, and eventually find their way back to their own rhythm. This need almost every summer night to step into the hot room is reminiscent of a religious ritual.

Generations who carefully pass on their family’s history and philosophy of life to the next generation. A borderland where totem poles become maypoles on the night when the sun does not set. The half-tame raven is friends with the dog, and the old who are long gone are still ever present. We live our lives. Children are born and grow up. We age in joy and sorrow.

By working with a slow, analogue technique I try to find an imagery that is equally chiselled, stripped off and austere as the barren nature itself. The project has grown with a few new pictures every summer. The pictures have been allowed to mature.

The pictures in the water are photographed against the background of two tongues of land as reference points. As on a stage passing our life in my tranquil images. The children have grown up and life has left its mark. Only nature is seemingly unmoved.

Location: Kalix archipelago, Norrbotten, Sweden
See: www.blomback.com
Moat

Yves Salmon MA

moat n. a wide ditch, typically filled with water, surrounding a fortified place such as a castle and intended as a defence against attack.

On 23 June 2016, the EU Referendum took place. The United Kingdom went to the polls to decide whether Britain should remain or leave the European Union. The result, by a small majority, was that after 43 years of membership the UK is now preparing for its departure. Any outcome of this vote was advisory with the expectation that the government would do their due diligence, and in due course, make an informed decision in the best interests of the nation. However on 24 June the Prime Minister, David Cameron, having himself campaigned to remain, announced his resignation which was considered to be a tacit acceptance of the result.

The levels of politics and policies of the EU are complex and those that campaigned to leave kept their message simple: reclamation: borders, sovereignty, laws; a suggestion of returning things to the way they were. Much of this nostalgic rhetoric rests on a notion of Empire, a concept (albeit moribund) that is for some within living memory and was an idea built on procuring and maintaining power through the acquisition of land and people.

As the British Empire expanded, one of its many growing national collections that needed to be documented and classified was that of plants (initially for medicinal purposes). Due to the fragility of many of the species, illustrations were often made in their local habitats - some by British travellers but some also by indigenous artists. These works now reside at The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, London; the flowers entwined with the sitters in these images are the national flowers of the remaining 27 countries in the European Union (although not country-specific to each person).

The visual springboard for this project came from the following paragraph in an essay Alien or Native by naturalist Dr James Fenton.

Perhaps dislike of alien species is indeed similar to racial discrimination - wanting to preserve the culture and genetic integrity of one's own stock (a natural human failing). Alien species are welcome in strictly defined areas (gardens) or where economically useful (crops) but must not be allowed to pollute the native culture (the wider countryside).

My projects revolve primarily around portraiture, but words – testimony - are integral to how I work. For Moat I conducted interviews in the form of a questionnaire from which I produced two small volumes. These, along with the portraits, formed the submission for the main body of work required for the final project of my masters degree.

The graduation show was to be a distillation of my work; the challenge was to find a way to include the text in the installation. This was where the creation of a newspaper came into being.

Some sections of the British media were in celebratory mode, with headlines that leaned towards jingoism, whilst the international press reflected the surprise and shock of the result. I used the rich colour of the anthotypes as a way of including those messages alongside the testimonies and the vocabulary from a botanical glossary, the latter of which is also used in the vernacular.

There are approximately three million EU nationals living in the United Kingdom. Since the invocation of Article 50 the government has offered no guarantees of their status after March 2019. The combination of these visual elements and testimonies looks at the emotional impact of the vote on London residents and workers, and explores how it has impacted on their daily lives. How welcome do they still feel?

See: www.yvessalmon.co.uk

p20 Acantheceae
p21 Edelweis
p22 Rosa
p23 Rosa Canina

Papaver Rhoas
I am a very positive person. I believe in rupture and change. I believe in humanitarian goals. I believe in union. I believe that we need to get our politics back. I believe in citizen participation. I believe that this referendum caused. Mentality wise, perhaps a little detached from the continent (driving me mad that they were not included in Schengen), UK is not really a ‘full EU member’. (Thatcher) negotiated then (not member of single currencies, no Schengen, no EEA, no customs union, etc.).

My parents in law were borderline leave voters. They were well educated people at the time but they didn’t vote for a decade. People perceived voting leave. On the day of the referendum, I was sitting at my desk with my phone and I thought, ‘I can’t believe what they had voted today’. That was the moment that I have come to see that the leave vote is not just about rights but about possibility. That phone call was a gift. At the end of the day, I was so happy. I had a left politician come up to me and say, ‘You have done a fantastic job’.

I knew that once the process starts it will damage the cultural, social and economic links to Europe and it would impact the logistics of my ties to my home country and continental Europe in general. I was quite concerned for a variety of reasons. The decision seemed to be heavily manipulated nationalism, xenophobia, and as a revenge of the disenfranchised segment of society. The decision seemed to be heavily manipulated nationalism, xenophobia, and as a revenge of the disenfranchised segment of society. The decision seemed to be heavily manipulated nationalism, xenophobia, and as a revenge of the disenfranchised segment of society. I was very surprised, I did think at that moment and still believe that is as irrational nationalism propelled by opportunistic manipulators having experienced that all reasonable people and economists argued that it would be a disaster for the home country and continental Europe in general. I was also concerned for the economic outlook of this country, since it economic links to Europe and it would impact the logistics of my ties to my home country and continental Europe in general. I knew that once the process starts it will damage the cultural, social and economic links to Europe and it would impact the logistics of my ties to my home country and continental Europe in general. I was quite concerned for a variety of reasons. The decision seemed to be heavily manipulated nationalism, xenophobia, and as a revenge of the disenfranchised segment of society. I was very surprised, I did think at that moment and still believe that is as irrational nationalism propelled by opportunistic manipulators having experienced that all reasonable people and economists argued that it would be a disaster for the home country and continental Europe in general.

I was concerned but didn’t expect that shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it. Shock, sadness, sense of unsure future, disbelief and anger at people’s shortsightedness. I was very surprised, I couldn’t believe it.
For me the referendum meant to uncover many facts of the present in this country with uncommitted politicians; uncertainties and uncertainties, rather than propaganda, political bullying and lies. I guess responsibility can be a heavy burden and it one of the worst things I have ever experienced. A loss a stomach. I remember feeling rejected and vulnerable. I remember feeling like someone had kicked me repeatedly in the stomach. I went to bed feeling nauseous with worry. Absolute despair and despair. A feeling of the notion of my country needs to learn a lot of you. My country needs to learn a lot of the style.Absolute despair and despair. A feeling of the notion of my country needs to learn a lot of the style.

Not completely surprised, I saw the results coming during the campaigns. At all of this, I am trying to remain balanced and hopeful, and I am left with a overwhelming sadness for British people, who are left alone, empty and hollow. On the other hand, my future has been based on actual experiences of being treated badly, and it’s one of the worst things I have ever experienced. Absolute despair and despair. A feeling of the notion of my country needs to learn a lot of the style.
Shandong Fish Life
Chrystal Ding MA

In 2010, China accounted for 60% of global aquaculture production by volume and had around 14 million people engaged as fishers and fish-farmers. Fish is central to Chinese cuisine, especially in parts of eastern China where my family has its ‘old home’. In May 2016, I visited two fishing communities in Shandong province in an attempt to reconcile my own inexplicable adoration of fish – both as animal and food – with the land in which I spent the earliest three years of life.

The photographs were taken at a fish market at Ma Tou (‘port head’) in Weihai – a British-leased territory previously known as Port Edward – and Ya Tou Zhen (‘end of the cliff town’) in Rongcheng. Both cities are in Shandong province, which is known for its fish culture and friendliness. In Shandong, gift-giving of crates of fish and shellfish for personal and professional relationships is common practice.

Every morning there is a fish market at Ma Tou. The fishermen go out on their boats in the middle of the night around 3am, and come back in time for the market at breakfast time. Amongst the fish that can be spotted for sale is the infamous fugu (河豚 in Chinese) otherwise known as pufferfish. Fugu is known for being incredibly poisonous and in Japan requires a licence to be prepared and served.

Over the past three decades, the number of people who work in China’s fishing industry has increased by more than 10 million. Based on official statistics, net annual income of the fishermen increased 140 times from 1978 to 2013, resulting in fishing becoming a significantly more lucrative trade than farming. This income difference is one of the reasons that workers from China’s inland provinces are attracted to the fishing industry.

In Ya Tou Zhen, we visit a private oyster farm. In one method of cultivating oysters, a substrate is required to which the oyster attaches as a ‘spat’ and grows. In Ya Tou Zhen, the substrate is old clam shells. Local women work in a makeshift pavilion where they thread the shells onto pieces of rope. Around 400,000 people are estimated to work in China’s fish-processing sector. Fishing itself is generally considered man’s work as it is thought to be too dangerous for women. The rope is gripped by two pieces of wood that keep it in firmly in place. Each of the clam shells has many holes through which the rope can be threaded. The oyster farms themselves are tended by fishermen about 500m away from the dock.

We visit Li Jia Cun (literally ‘Li family village’) where a restaurant is opened for us that is typically reserved for distinguished guests, family, and friends. The occasion? My grandfather’s first visit to an old friend in 20 years. An occasion worthy of fugu and rice wine for breakfast.

See: www.chrystalding.com
We Have Been Where You Are Going

Barbara Levine MA and Martin Venezky MFA

“We have been where you are going” is a phrase that captures the blurriness between past and present and is a reminder that whatever we wish for has been sought out by others before us.

The most recent works inspired by this sentiment are our photo collages exploring the horizon line. Martin Venezky and I, Barbara, both collect vernacular photography but the way we respond to our pictures is different and the dialogue between us grounds our work. I recognize the sublime hiding in plain sight and see how pictures of apparent limited value often overflow with tension and beauty. Martin, on the other hand, is partial to the unremarkable. The lack of aesthetics reminds him how quickly the images we cherish can empty themselves of value.

For the photographs we make together, we construct a fresh encounter with the past, and with photography itself, by reorganizing the horizon line to confound time.

We slice apart anonymous photos placing them side by side, combining and recombining to create unexpected juxtapositions. When we discover connections and form relationships, the overwhelming anonymity of any one snapshot gives way to mystery. An inadvertent detail can demand our full attention. As the composition builds we add segments of Martin’s abstract color photographs to connect realism and abstraction to create a challenging immediacy.

The photographic relationship between the pictorial and the abstract is one of the most fundamental understandings of place and time. ‘Place’ is something we carry with us - a summation of our inner memories mapped onto the present landscape as we traverse it. The continuity of the land, though, has its own unbroken time frame and it is much longer and steadier than the interrupted, distracted time we can spend with it.

While we look for the universal, we are always tripped up by our own presence.

We don’t know the people who populate our photographs but we can embody their boredom, their anxiety, and the desert sun on the backs of their necks. They chose to capture their moments for unknowable reasons. Martin and I have chosen to yoke them together to conjure future places and infinite possibilities. They have been where we are going.

Contact: blevine@projectb.com
Horizon IV, 2015. Archival pigment print, 24 x 24"

Horizon X, 2017. Archival pigment print, 20 x 24"
Horizon XI, 2017. Archival pigment print, 20 x 24”

Horizon V, 2016. Archival pigment print, 20 x 24”
Birkenhead Docks, staring across the River Mersey at Liverpool, and linked by the famous ferry, were once a thriving component of Merseyside’s docking and shipping industries. Although the docks are still home to some famous names, including Cammell Laird and, more recently, Boaty McBoatface, most actual dock-related industry has gone from the area, leaving it either derelict or as a home to endless builders’ yards, car breakers, tyre merchants, car washes, vehicle parks and greasy-spoon cafés.

Principally an outdoor photographer, I am always attracted to interesting views (as opposed to pretty scenes) and, on first discovering the docks following a recent house move, I was thrilled by their potential for photography.

The most striking characteristic of the whole area is the near-universal presence of two metre high steel security railings, roller-shutters and razor-wire, keeping residents and visitors alike firmly away from the docks and the dock-side businesses.

So ubiquitous is the steelwork that it creates the impression of being on the outside of a prison camp. One may be able to see through some of the fences to the activity or emptiness beyond, but the endless ‘keep out’, ‘private’ and ‘no admittance’ signs are clearly intended to deter anyone from attempting to enjoy what could be a great public amenity.

And yet this unrelentingly harsh environment is home to many of the inhabitants of Birkenhead, some of whom live right on the front line where dereliction and ugliness abound and the only green stuff is weeds. Poverty is amongst the highest in Britain and the nearest thing to luxury is the local ‘diner’ which, apart from resembling a British Army post in 1980s Belfast, with its razor wire and surveillance cameras, has its outdoor tables and chairs built into the concrete to ensure that they are still there in the morning.

In my photographs I have tried to capture not just the harshness of this land of steel and concrete but also the beauty amongst the decay and the quirky amongst the barren. There is the resident who has created a home that looks like it must be on the last frontier, and the scrapped cars making a bid for freedom from their high prison walls. But, to me, there is also beauty to be found. It lurks in the luminance of evening sun passing through empty liquid containers in a factory yard and in the storage silos looming over a residential street, like Vesuvius over Pompeii. A bitter-sweet melange.
Liquid storage, Sovereign Way

Oaksey’s Diner, Cleveland Street

Terraced house, Ilchester Road
Philippe Ebeling came to London from Germany in the 1990s and was overwhelmed by its scale. He travelled all around the city taking photos, one of which was of a freak snowstorm in Whitechapel. This inspired him to embark on a 250km walk over ten days, visiting and photographing places less well-known all around London. His descriptions of the journey are written in the book as single lines of text at the bottom of the blank pages.

Published by Fishbar Gallery, an enterprise in Dalston on premises previously occupied by a fish shop. This is run by Philipp together with his partner, Magnum member Olivia Arthur. Published 2016, shortly after the UK Brexit referendum.

From top:
- Retail Park, Havering (l), Street scene, Romford (r)
- River Rodin and Thames, Dagenham
- Summer Fest, Kingston-upon-Thames (l & r)
- Whitechapel Market, Tower Hamlets

28x24cm. 54 photos, 96 pages, folded 60x80cm folded poster over cover of images featured in the book

London Ends, Philipp Ebeling
Book Review by Brian Steptoe FRPS

11 November
Contemporary North West meeting at Samlesbury War Memorial Hall, Cuerdale Lane, Samlesbury, Preston, PR5 0UY 2-5 pm. Contact Alan Cameron LRPS alan.cameron@me.com tel 07825 271344

18 November
Contemporary North East meeting at Central Buildings 2, 13 Bullring, 3rd Floor, Suite 4, Wakefield WF1 1HB 2-5 pm. Contact Patricia A Ruddle ARPS patriciaruddle@btinternet.com tel 01904 783850

20 January 2018
Contemporary North East meeting at Central Buildings 2, 13 Bullring, 3rd Floor, Suite 4, Wakefield WF1 1HB 2-5 pm. Contact Patricia A Ruddle ARPS patriciaruddle@btinternet.com tel 01904 783850

11 February 2018
Contemporary South West meeting at Dartington, Devon (to be confirmed). Contact Rod Fry rod@rodfry.eclipse.co.uk tel 01803 844721

18 April 2018
Conceptual & Contemporary Photography Distinction Assessments. 10:30 - 16:30, Fenton House, 122 Wells Road, Bath, BA2 3AH. Applicants and observers may attend the Associateship assessments.

Dates not fixed
Contemporary East Anglia meetings. These will be in the Ipswich and Cambridge areas when arranged. The project underway is The Ipswich Waterfront Development. Contact Peter Ellis wordsnpicsltd@gmail.com.
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