

Number 75 Spring 2019

THE **RPS**
ROYAL
PHOTOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY

Contemporary Photography



Editorial

A photograph is simple, really – a record of a particular scene at a particular time. What else is there to say? Except that the contributors to this issue do have something more to say about it.

Photographs carry meaning for the viewer, and the meaning – what we see in them - is different for each of us, depending on how much of our knowledge and experience overlaps with what they show. I couldn’t have picked a better example than Caroline Furneaux’s *The Mothers I Might Have Had*. What these images meant for the photographer and his girlfriends is totally different from their meaning to his daughter Caroline, finding them again years later among her father’s possessions. And that is quite different to what they mean to us, seeing these vintage leisure snaps of strangers, selected by another stranger.

Kate Bellis and her poet, songwriter, sculptor and quarrying friends have watched and lived in a single piece of land and its inhabitants. On the face of it, it is a simple documentary. But they have used it to say something to another community (in Peckham) about walls. We, who here see only the photographs, recognise something different, perhaps more ‘timeless’.

The Office of Revised Futures collective brought together by Rodrigo Orrantia uses scissors and glue unambiguously to fragment time and space, and reassemble them, sometimes to show an imaginary place, but sometimes just creating an abstract from the specific. Lydia Goldblatt declares that “any creative (and indeed photographic) act harnesses both the real and the imagination”, and her *Instar* series inhabits no particular place, no particular time. The more we look, though, the more her images appear as symbols or metaphors for something real that is flowing and evolving: part of the same continuum that cannot directly be shown as a whole. The work of Stephanie Rushton and the sculptor Mally Mallinson is entirely from the surreal; yes, they are photographs of objects and still lifes, but they are the creative response of the mind attempting to detach itself from real and conventional meanings.

The photographers (and other artists) contributing to this issue were exhibiting at the recent Format Photo Festival in Derby. I saw them all at venues in the city, in one day – one can’t get more grounded in time and space than that! Yet it was just this proximity that let me see them together as illustrations of photography’s ability to express universal and abstract meanings. Perhaps FORMAT19’s theme ‘Forever//Now’ did mean something after all!

Paul Ashley, Editor

Cover: © Stephanie Rushton from The Archaea
Back cover: © Benjamin Rice, installation of Kate Bellis’s Hill project in the Copeland Gallery, Peckham
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Contemporary
Photography

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

The Office Of Revised Futures

Rodrigo Orrantia, Lewis Bush, Melinda Gibson, Hannah Hughes,
Fernando Martin Godoy, Mark Murphy

In 1857, Gustave Le Gray used a combination of separate negatives to print his celebrated series of seascapes. He was highly praised for his creativity, but even then, to think a constructed image can supersede a direct photographic representation of the world has been the thorn in the side of the medium. It is perhaps this premise that lies at the heart of the *Office*.

For Format Photo Festival 2019 curator Rodrigo Orrantia brought together five artists whose practices explore ideas around constructed photographic images, mainly through analogue collage. The idea behind *The Office of Revised Futures* was both an exhibition of existing work and a residence, where the artists worked together to create a new collaborative piece; splicing, pasting and creating new revised futures.

The artists' practices cover a wide range of approaches to the constructed image, from appropriation through to performance and digital animation. For four days, the office was in residence at the Smallprint Co. in Derby, during the opening weekend of Format19.

The connecting thread between the artists is how constructed images can disrupt photography's temporality by creating alternative narratives for the past, present and future. Each of the images in the show is presented as a reality which is 'complete' and simultaneously fragmented. In this sense, the photographic collage belongs to an imagined dimension (rather than any identifiable time) and has no object to refer to (it becomes a new object in itself).

One of the main features of this show was to allow the audience to meet and interact with the artists working in the office during the opening days of the festival. The

'office' had a communal table around which all artists and guests could discuss their thoughts and produce new work. Additionally, Rodrigo presented a selection of existing works evidencing the multiple references and associations between the different artists. The premise of the curation was to work with artists who question and challenge the machinations of photography, but here are not photographers in the strict definition of the term, as they didn't shoot their own images.

Lewis Bush's *War Primer 3* is a reworking of Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin's *War Primer 2*, itself a reworking of Bertolt Brecht's *Kriegsfibel*. Hannah Hughes' *Flatland* takes its title from Edwin A. Abbott's Victorian novella set in a two-dimensional realm, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. The collages reconfigure fragments of found printed source material, to create speculative new forms, situated somewhere between reproduced images and the physical world. Fernando Martin Godoy's *Construction Time Again* is a series about human intervention on the landscape with a mythical nuance, where we find some timeless constructions of unknown origin and use. Melinda Gibson worked with Brad Feuerhelm's archive in *Miss Titus Becomes a Regular Army MAC* and finally, Mark Murphy's *Remains* focuses on the basics of analogue collage, exploring how things are found and discarded, parts are removed and elements remain.

The aim of the 'office' was not only to create dialogues between works, but also enable artists to work together. For the collaborative piece, the five artists reworked a series of books by Cafe Royal Books. Working over the opening days of the Festival, the artists deconstructed

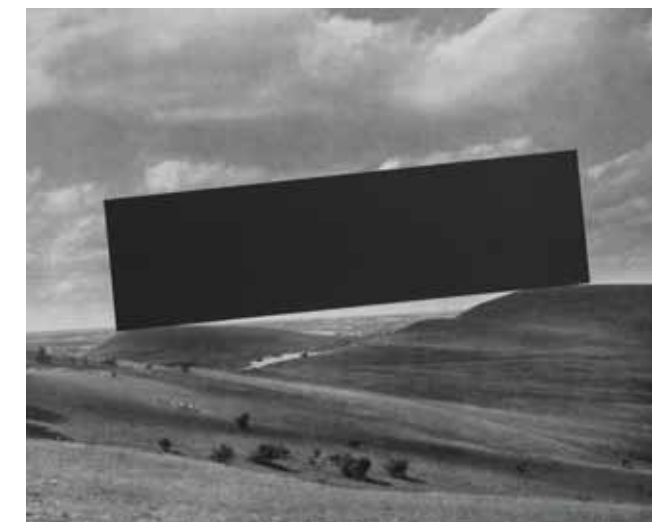
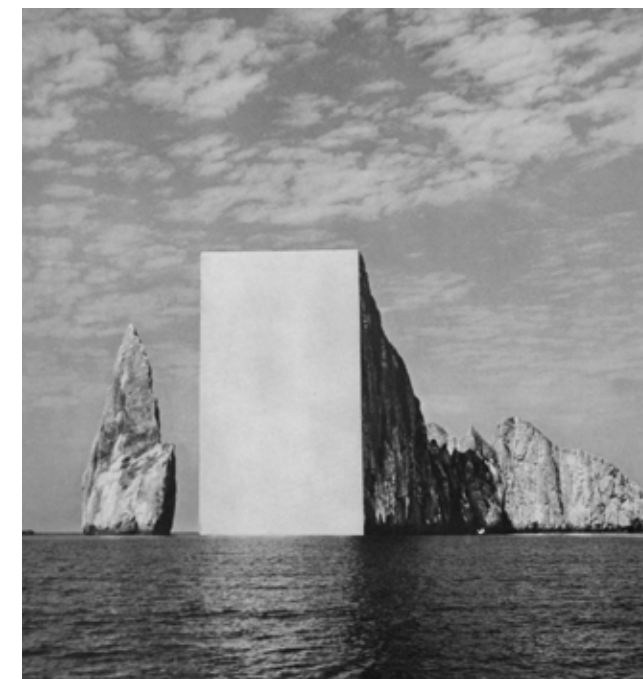
and reconfigured images using fragments of work by some of the UK's best-known photographers.

After three days of intense work, the office produced a 'revised' zine, incorporating fragments from the work of each of the artists in the show. This publication evidences the interests of each of the artists around the idea of photography as a tool to visualise places and objects existing out of time.

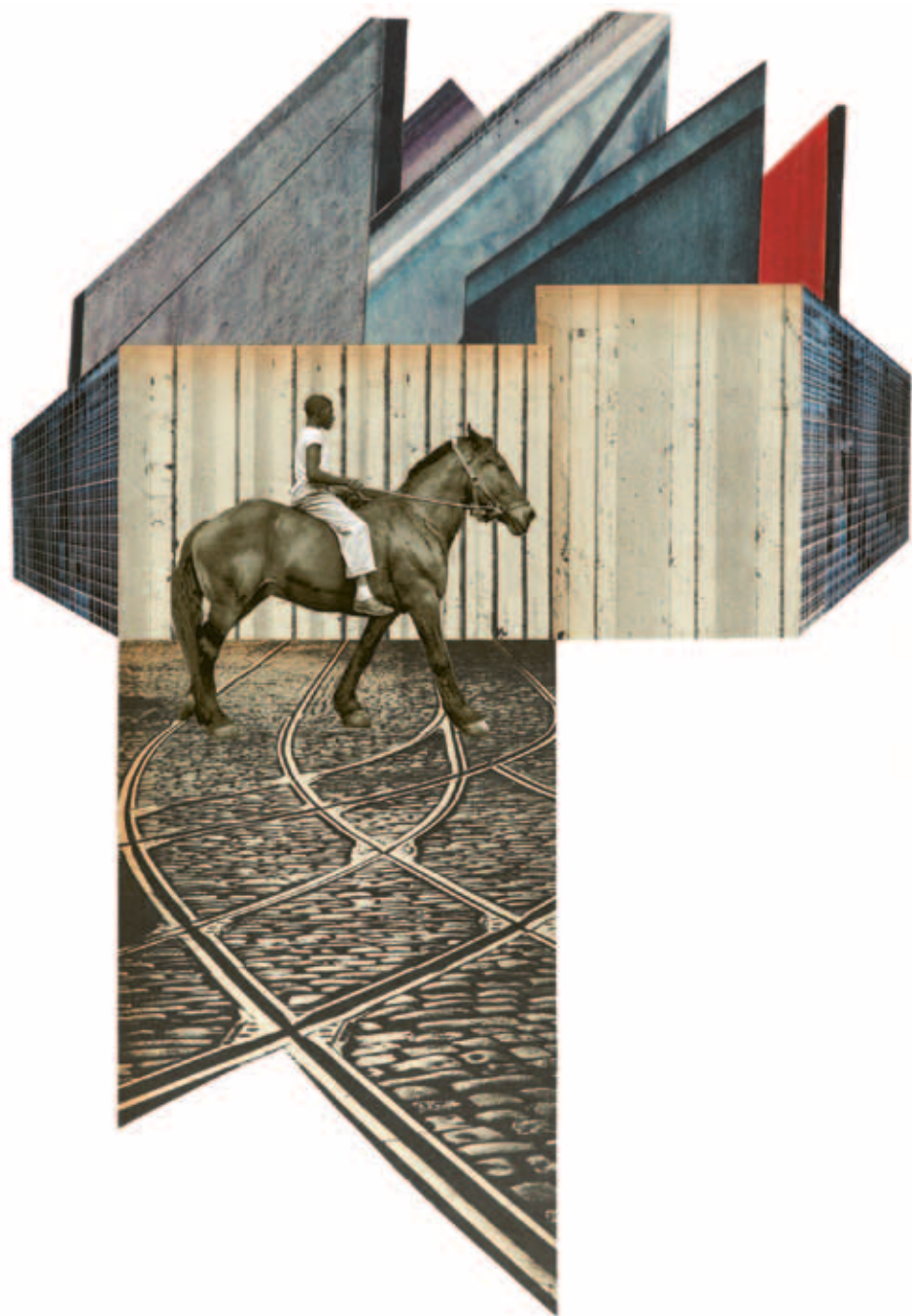
Text by Rodrigo Orrantia
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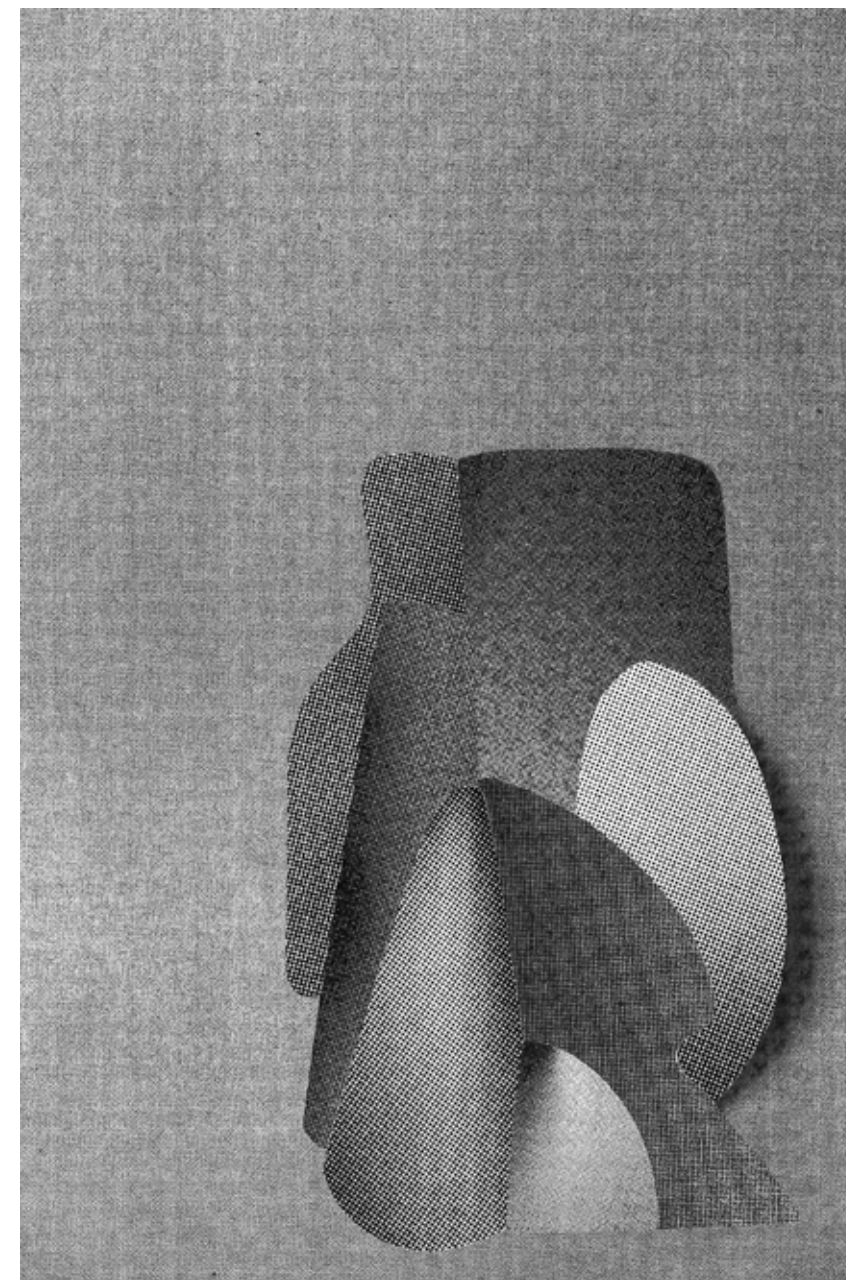
Lewis Bush Spread from War Primer 3 2013 – 2015, Photobook



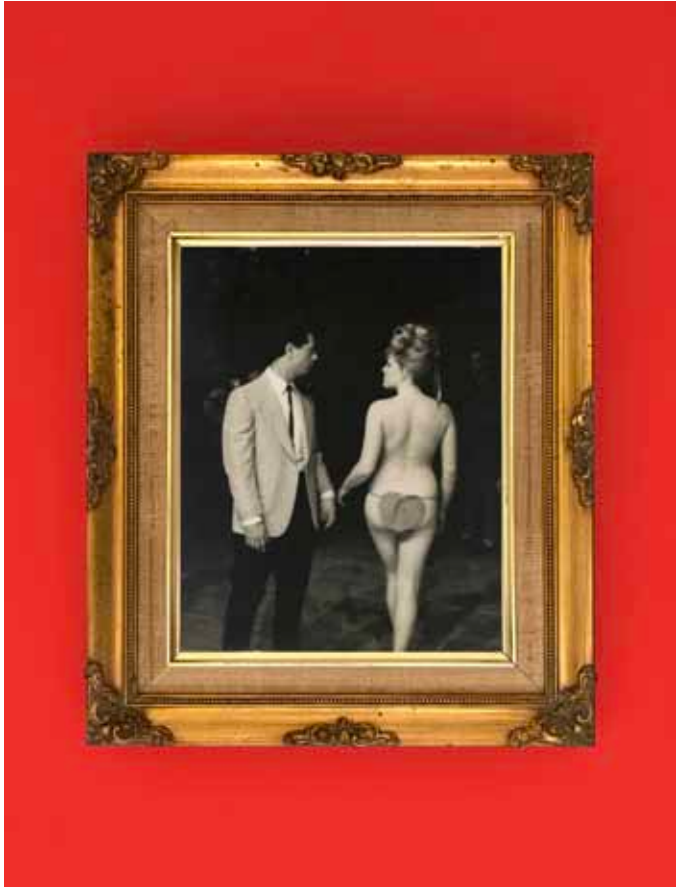
Fernando Martin Godoy
left: Construction Time Again: Island Block, 2017
Analogue collage / Paper
above: Construction Time Again: Border Block, 2017
Analogue collage / Paper



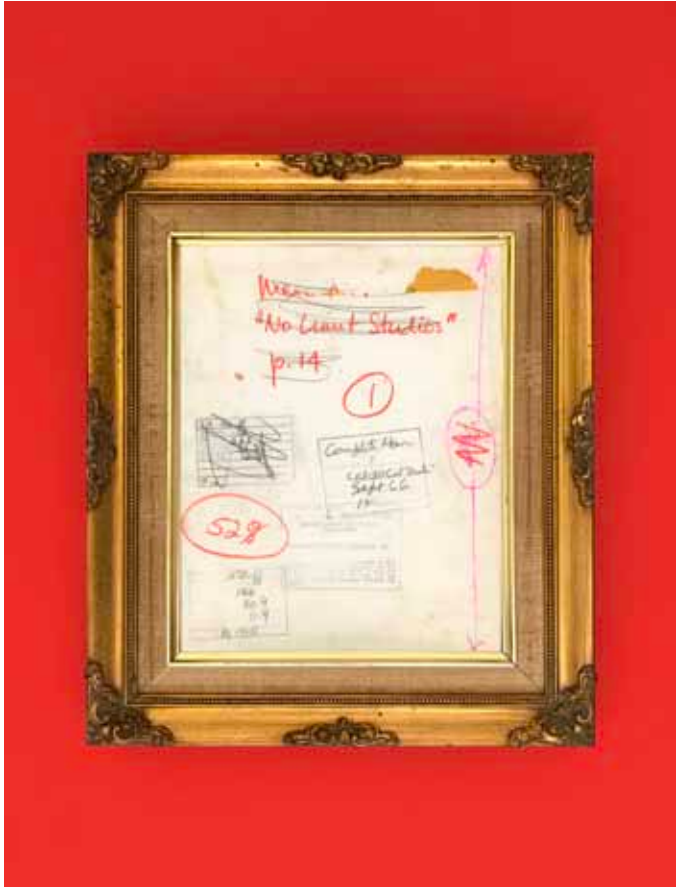
Mark Murphy
Parts of the city, 2018 -
Analogue collage / Paper



Hannah Hughes
The Office of Revised Futures - 'Revised' Zine



Melinda Gibson
No Limits Studio, (front),
Miss Titus Becomes A
Regular Army MAC,
(Source Material from
the Archive of Brad
Feuerhelm), 2013



Melinda Gibson
No Limits Studio, (back),
Miss Titus Becomes A
Regular Army MAC
(Source Material from
the Archive of Brad
Feuerhelm), 2013



Hill

Kate Bellis

HILL is the story of one Derbyshire hill, told in photography, sculpture, poetry, film and song. The story is in four parts.

ON the Hill tells of the farming families who earn their living rearing sheep and cattle on the Hill, a working life that is set by the seasonal changes to the landscape around them.

UNDER the Hill focusses on the Hill's network of disused mines, and on its quarries - still an important part of the local economy.

SHELTER of the Hill tells of the various communities around the Hill and the events and ordinary moments that aren't really ordinary at all.

ABOVE the Hill explores the marks and features of the hill from above ground, and tells of the importance of the Hill to the people who live there.

I have to thank my good fella's neglect of car maintenance for the spark that grew into a Hill! His car engine had blown up, he stole my car, and for a week I was walking and cycling everywhere across that Hill. As my muscles burned and ached up these gradients, I thought: 'How about the story of one Hill?' The Hill as the main character of the piece and all the lives that are weaving across it and dependent on it for their income and their families.

So I gathered some great fellow artists to help tell the story: Sally Matthews from Wales, a hugely talented sculptor, Lucy Peacock a burning emerging poet who lives on the Hill, Gavin Repton, a creative young film maker who's grown up on the Hill, songwriters Carol Fieldhouse and Brian Boothby, and Debi Hedderwick who would bring amazing things together for *HILL Live*!

HILL began as a project in March 2016 and over the following two years, we helped with lambing and shearing sheep, explored mines, visited quarries and descended into the guts of the Hill down a 300m shaft on a bit of rope to explore Golconda Mine, chanted at the winter solstice and measured cows. None of this could have happened if the community of the Hill hadn't taken the project on with amazing openness and energy, helping us in a hundred different ways; they gave the project the strong bones it has.

We launched at Buxton in the 'Beast from the East' in March 2018; I was unloading my 80 framed fine prints in a full on white out - luckily Sally's life size cow sculpture got there before the blizzard started! But we had almost 9,000 visitors in the three month run at Buxton, breaking records. Because of this we had chance of a fantastic venue in London, the Copeland Gallery in Peckham. With Longcliffe Quarries supplying

the raw material, we set off once more this February towards London with ten tons of limestone to build a Derbyshire drystone wall right down the middle of the Gallery space, uniting a very strong rural community with a very strong urban one.

We had around 2,000 visitors in our ten day run at The Copeland. At its heart *HILL* is a very human story about community; the good people of Peckham and London that came to share this story with us seemed to really understand that. They enjoyed getting hands on with our wall and the children loved patting Sally's cow and creating their own Hill works of art with earth pigments (mud!) That's something I'm passionate art should do: it should reach out and talk to the widest audience from all ages and backgrounds and help us understand one another a little better.

See www.katebellis.com and www.hillproject.uk/shop



Dorothy on Remembrance Sunday



Margaret and her garden



LIGHT, May 2017. Well here it is, I'm being laughed at again, which I deserve. There's amusement because I never quite make dawn which is at 5.30 am at this time of year. My old car usually finds its way to Griffie Walk around 6 am. There's a good reason for my timing, the light that hits this grey block shed at around 6.30 am, in the cold early morning, is a gift. Ian's been up every night for two weeks and John Bowler, who helps with the milking, has been here since the shrinking blackness of predawn. It's hard for them to get excited about what I'm seeing, but I almost hold my breath, just in case it drifts into black again like the dust that's tumbled in that light now. They go to let the cows out and check the other lambing shed, I'm left to keep an eye in here. There's a ewe lambing and she's chosen her spot, pawing the ground, right in this biblical slant of light. She is doing her job so well, she doesn't need me to interfere. The first lamb slithers into existence, out of its mother and twists of steam climb from its warm, new body. She is up then talking to her lamb, licking the mucus from its nose, the first communication is something special. Again she gets down and on with the job of creation and her next lamb. The light stays with us all the time, pulling the steam upwards in coils as the second lamb is born easily in front of me. I help clear the mucus from this one's nose as its mother is busy licking and talking to her first. Then, with fingers sticky with afterbirth, I photograph, quietly stealing those images out of the light.

top: Phil and his dogs
centre: Resting after shearing
bottom: Mary



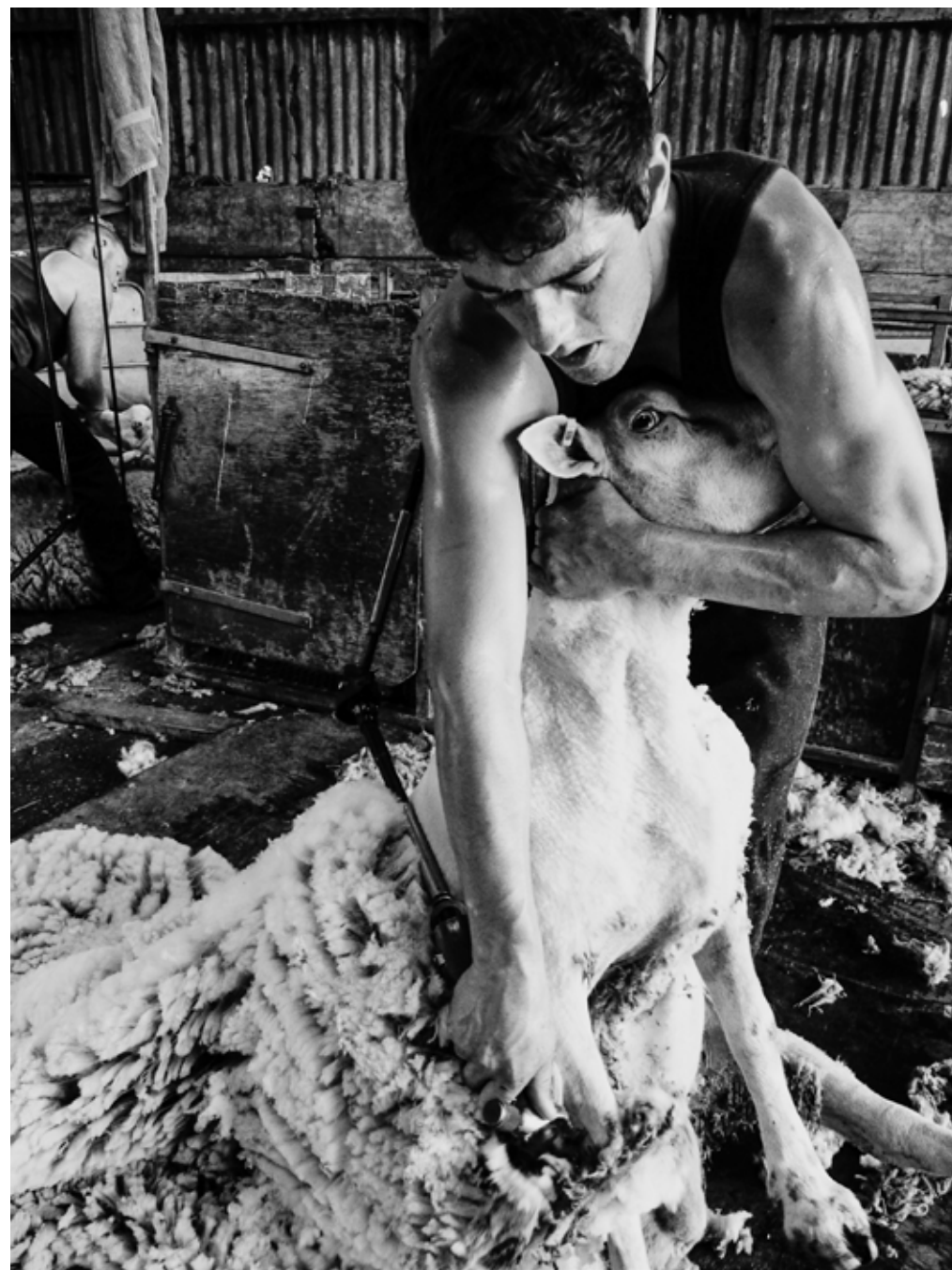
Ian delivering a lamb



Ian swinging a lamb



Lambing and the light



above and left: Michael shearing

Instar

Lydia Goldblatt

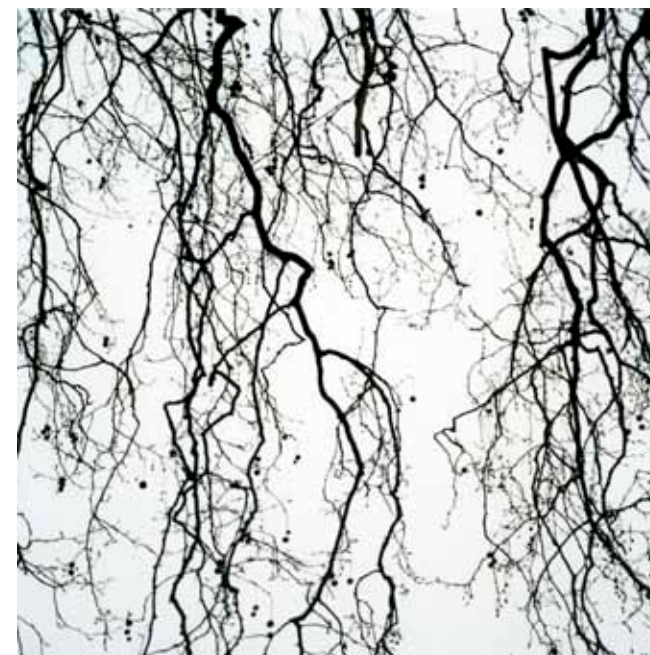
Lydia Goldblatt's current series is entitled *Instar*, a scientific term that describes biological states of change, a metamorphosis between shedding and growing. Referencing primal, revelatory changes of love and loss, her work explores these experiences as speaking to the nature of being human, and as fundamentally creative states – about evolution, awareness, the creation and letting go of embodied form. It suggests their often intangible, almost abstract nature, charting an invisible psychological and emotional terrain; as much about the unknown as about the known.

Drawing on such experiences of change, her work connects creativity, decay and regeneration. She makes fluid and sensuous links between the cosmic and the everyday, the body and nature. Taking the idea that any creative (and indeed photographic) act or transformation harnesses both the real and the imagination, she uses observation, construction and abstraction to establish a visual terrain between the cognitive and objective world.

Carbon, the basic building block of all life, appears in various forms, connecting the natural and the man-made. It functions as a metaphor for the natural cycles of creation and, through the use of carbon graphite (the artist's pencil), a metaphor for the creative process itself. A play between object and image emerges as subjects spill out of the photographs into physical space as sculptures.

Scale and three-dimensionality reference the flux and corporeality of her subject matter. The series thrives through the visual and symbolic connections it makes, with subjects from the natural world, the human body and the history of photography linked together in combinations that deeply enhance the meaning of each.

See: www.lydiagoldblatt.com







The Mothers I Might Have Had

Caroline Furneaux



Francoise



I pick a slide at random and put it into the Solar Colour Viewer. Out bursts a beautiful, vital young woman. She's kneeling in a field of long grass, picking a bunch of wild flowers. There's a strip of deep blue sea behind her with a ship in the distance, and a huge pale blue sky.

A pretty woman in a red hat and matching shift dress, petting a puppy. Another with perfect hair wearing a mask and snorkel. Venus perched on a rock adjusting her bikini. Who are all these amazing women? They look like off-duty movie stars from another era, perfectly preserved in 35mm amber.



Eva



Scandinavian Trip Summer 1961, Teneriffa Nov '68, Våren 1969. In a mixture of English and Swedish, a few of the boxes are labelled in the same angular hand - my dad's.

I begin to imagine the lives that he lived before I was born, before he even met my mother. The myriad decisions that could have created a different story.

These are the mothers I might have had.

See: www.carolinefurneaux.com



Charlotte



Pia



Archaea and Rejoicing the Sun

Stephanie Rushton

My recent work emanates from an enquiry that began during a Master in Film & Photography study entitled *The Archaea*, which focused broadly on ecology, 'intelligence in nature', and the psychological subfield of eco-psychology.

The research question, 'how does one create a photographic body of work about Deep Ecology; the philosophy that considers humans to be equal to and no more important than any other species, advocating a radical re-adjustment of the relationship between humans and nature' resulted in the *Archaea* project. The work was born out of a desire to bring awareness to the growing body of contemporary post-human, anthropological research, challenging the viewpoint that plants are unintelligent (and alongside many other life forms, inferior to humans).

This manifested in a series of photographic images of constructed photographic tableaux of entangled, botanical phantasmagoria, referring to the landscape, with a suggestion of figuration. Inspired by the 'Jungle paintings' of Max Ernst, alluding to Ballardian themes of nature's retribution.

Initially searching for a visual methodology to express the multi-layered strands of theoretical underpinning led to a re-reading of J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World*, which in turn led, via themes of nature's retribution, to Max Ernst and his psychologically disturbing 1930s Jungle paintings. With influences drawn from non-western culture, alchemy and the occult, Ernst was working with surrealist methods of psychic automatism as a method of disrupting the senses, attempting to reconnect to shamanic and primeval ways of seeing and representing

the world, to regain a spiritual harmony with nature that he felt had been lost by rationalism and technological advancement.

Max Ernst was among many artists from the late nineteenth century onwards to practice shamanic techniques of seeing; artists which include Van Gogh, Cezanne, Rimbaud and Kahlo. These artists experimented with methods of shifting perception, of altering the normal state of being to enter realms of non-ordinary reality to disrupt habitual ways of seeing.

While investigating these ideas, my digitally created photographic work began to play with surrealistic juxtapositions, which allowed for absurd, nonsensical narratives to be created from found objects of botanical flotsam and phantasmagoria alongside experiments with pareidolia, the ability of the brain to distinguish faces or patterns in random data. Leonardo da Vinci, in one of his many notebooks wrote about pareidolia as an artistic device. "If you look at any wall spotted with various stains or with a mixture of different kinds of stones, if you are about to invent some scene you will be able to see in it a resemblance to various different landscapes adorned with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys, and various groups of hills."

Max Ernst was known to be a devotee of a similar methodology that formed the basis of his frottage and grattage painting, techniques that he originated, specifically to rupture the identity of objective reality.

A digital photographic stacking technique with a subsequent sequence of bespoke post-production effects became the ideal process, allowing for an original methodology following Max Ernst's surrealist methods.

The low-key still life studio imagery evolved into a site-specific sculptural installation, co-created with my partner, contemporary artist and sculptor Mally Mallinson.

Early in 2019, we began a collaboration on a new and ongoing body of work which attempts to fuse Mally's ideological, political and satirical sculpture with my psychological, photographic landscapes. This work, entitled *Rejoicing the Sun*, explores the human position within the cyclical nature of earth's evolution; the eternal loop of our self-destruction on planet earth.

'*Skip of Fools*' refers to book VI of Plato's *Republic* about a ship with a dysfunctional crew. The smaller skeletal figure pushes the skip/ship up a mountain of refuse, an allegory to the Greek myth of Sisyphus, punished for eternity by the gods for his self-aggrandisement and forced to roll a giant boulder uphill only for it to perpetually roll down again.

The second piece, Epstein's *Tanks* (*The Dove that goes Boom*), reimagines Doves, the Epstein sculpture, as a weapon. The paradoxically loaded symbology of the dove, from ancient Greece to its fairly modern reincarnation as a symbol of peace and pacifism, is transformed into a cardboard war machine being reclaimed by the act of nature's retribution.

The third image *The Petrified City* (*Rejoicing the Sun*) is based on the form of an excavated military bunker, suggestive of a crashed spacecraft. This reimagines the remains of the valley forge from the sci-fi film *Silent Running*, whose well-lit forest greenhouse dome, drifts into deep space carrying the last remnants of the earth's ecology. These three large scale photographic images were shown at Format 2019 at the University of Derby.

See: www.stephanierushton.co.uk



above and p34-36, from *The Archaea*
p30-33 from *Rejoicing the Sun*



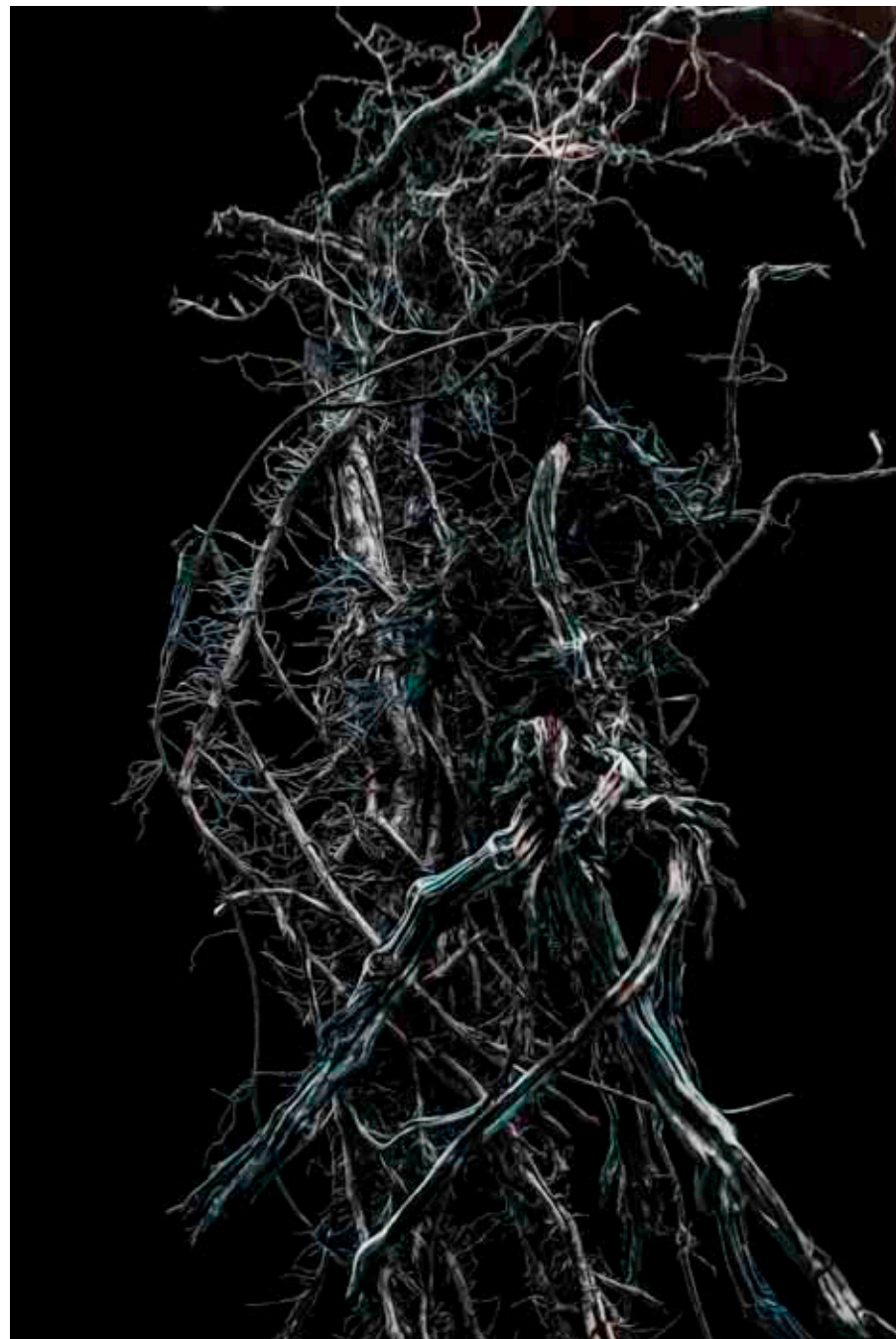


Tanks



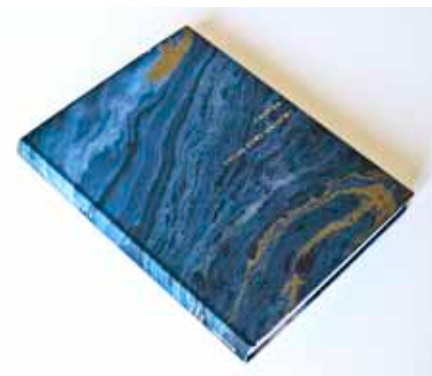
The Petrified City





Caspian, by Chloe Dewe Mathews

Book Review by Brian Steptoe fRPS



Published by
Aperture, in
conjunction
with Peabody
Museum Press.
26 x18.5 cm,
215 pages

Photography around the Caspian Sea has been an ongoing passion of Chloe Dewe Mathews since 2010. This inland sea is bordered by Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Russia, with all claiming it as their own. The waters of the River Volga from Russia flow into the Caspian, but there is no corresponding outflow, with water only leaving by evaporation.

The book is divided into sections: Oil, Gas & Fire, Rock, Salt & Uranium and Water. There are photos of people bathing in the dark oily waters in Baku, believed to have healing properties, fires beneath the earth, in the winter, Russians fishing through holes in the ice and people practising the Zoroastrian religion.

photos on right -

top: Offshore oils rigs near Baku, Azerbaijan

centre: 70 metre wide crater burning since 1971, near Darvaza, Turkmenistan

bottom; A Zoroastrian bride at Tehran Fire Temple, Tehran, Iran.



View from the East Midlands

Howard Fisher LRPS

Quite a few years ago I initiated an East Midlands Contemporary sub-group. It ran successfully for two or three years, meeting mainly in an artist’s studio complex in an old mill in Long Eaton, Derbyshire. I had to give up the co-ordinator role due to illness and some time afterwards the group closed. A later attempt to reform the group also failed to establish a long-term viability.

My photography had to take a back seat for a while though my interest in contemporary and documentary images never waned, it was just the practice which was not feasible for a time.

Towards the end of 2017 I made a proposal to the Documentary group to form an East Midlands sub-group which received a green light. The first meeting of this group took place in Keyworth early in 2018 with a good attendance; further meetings continued. The Documentary group’s policy is to support the formation of new sub-groups by meeting the costs involved for the first year after which the sub-group has to be self-supporting.

In Autumn 2018 I found myself volunteering to fill the vacant post of secretary of the Contemporary group and having taken on this role it seemed logical to seek an East Midlands Contemporary sub-group, and further sensible to explore the possibility of combining it with the Documentary sub-group. I discussed this with Janey Devine and Mo Connolly at a Documentary group workshop and they were encouraging so I asked both group committees for permission to go ahead which was agreed.

Planning went ahead and the first meeting of the combined group took place in January 2019 when Mark Phillips, chair of the Documentary group, gave an excellent presentation after which we discussed attendees images.

We have meetings planned for the rest of 2019 and hope that a long-term, viable, combined sub-group will continue for the foreseeable future.

GROUP AND RELATED SOCIETY EVENTS

4 May	Contemporary North meeting at Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Road, York. YO23 18W. 1.30-5pm. Contact Patricia Ruddle ARPS, patriciaruddle@btinternet.com tel 01904 783850
11 May	Contemporary North West meeting at Samlesbury War Memorial Hall, Cuerdle Lane, Preston. PR5 0UY. 1-4pm. Contact Alan Cameron, alan.cameron@me.com tel 07825 271344
25 May	East Midland Contemporary Group meeting, 2-5 pm. Keyworth Methodist Church Hall, Selby Lane, Keyworth NG12 5AH. Contact Howard Fisher: email handjaf@virginmedia.com; tel. 0115 9372898.
20 July	Contemporary North meeting at Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Road, York. YO23 18W. 1.30-5pm. Contact Patricia Ruddle ARPS, patriciaruddle@btinternet.com tel 01904 783850
18 September	Associate and Fellowship assessments, Conceptual and Contemporary. Royal Photographic Society, 337-340 Paintworks, Arnos Vale, Bristol BS4 3AR
12 October	Contemporary Group AGM, followed by guest speaker: Chris Steele-Perkins talk ‘The New Londoners and other Stories’. and review of members work. RPS House, 337-340 Paintworks, Arnos Vale, Bristol BS4 3AR

Chair - Avril Harris ARPS avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk Deputy chair - position vacant Secretary - Howard Fisher handjaf@virginmedia.com Treasurer - David J. Grimshaw ARPS contemporarytreasurer@rps.org Postal portfolio - Duncan Unsworth duncan.unsworth100@gmail.com Event organiser - Avril Harris ARPS avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk	Journal editor Paul Ashley LRPS, 59 Gilbert Road, Cambridge CB4 3NZ paultheashley@gmail.com Journal Editorial committee - Paul Ashley, editor Brian Steptoe, design Webmaster, Sean Goodhart ARPS sean.goodhart.contemporary@outlook.com e-Newsletter (Concept) editor, position vacant Concept designer, Ken Holland, kenholland@lowenna.co.uk	Committee members - Brian Steptoe FRPS bsteptoe@compuserve.com Rod Fry ARPS rod@rodfr.eclipse.co.uk Patricia Ruddle ARPS patriciaruddle@btinternet.com Tom Owens ARPS tom@tjowens.com Paul Ashley LRPS paultheashley@gmail.com Alan Cameron LRPS alan.cameron@me.com Tessa Mills FRPS (co-opted) tessamills@hotmail.co.uk
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