

# Contemporary Photography



# View from the Chair

Sadly Jenny Leathes ARPS died before the last Journal was posted out. The Contemporary Group will miss her enthusiasm and support enormously. Her death is a great loss both to her family, friends and to our group; our sympathies go out to all.

A date for your diary: *Concerning Photography* will be held on the 16th and 17th May 2015 at Sheffield Hallam University. This will be the 6th Weekend Event we have held and to date we have showcased 33 speakers of quality. Our speakers next year will be, on Saturday, Melanie Manchot (who is interviewed in this issue), Paul Reas, Melinda Gibson and Chris Coekin, and on Sunday, Zelda Cheatle and Peter Mitchell. A book stall will be set up on the Saturday by Dewi Lewis Publishing. Viewing of attendees work will take place on Saturday and we hope this will be as successful as it was at our Reading event. We could arrange a dinner at the University banqueting suite on the Saturday evening if sufficient attendees would like this. An advance information notice on the event gives further details and speaker information.

The University is a two-minute walk from the rail station and approximately three minutes to our suggested hotel, where the University has discount arrangements. A £25 deposit will secure a place for this event and booking forms are on our Group website. Quite a few have already booked without the knowledge of the speakers; so I hope they will not be disappointed.

The Society Photobook Exhibition 2014 progresses well and Brian Steptoe's YouTube video on this has been read by some 300, adding to the 200 who attended his talks. If you have not already entered and are thinking of submitting your book please apply. All the details are on the RPS website under Exhibitions and Competitions.

Best wishes, Avril

**Cover:** © From Benedict Phillip's *The DIV 2005-2006*. ("Dyslexic Intelligence Vision") DIV is slang for an idiot or stupid person; it also represents a character developed and performed by Phillips in several projects in which he explores the notion of a dyslexic as a 3D thinker in a 2D world. <http://benedictphillips.co.uk>

© The copyright of photographs and text in this issue belongs to the author of the article of which they form part, unless otherwise indicated.

If you wish to submit articles for the Journal, please send all copy and images on disc to:  
Patricia Ann Ruddie, 28 Malvern Avenue, York, YO26 5SG.  
[patriciaruddie@btinternet.com](mailto:patriciaruddie@btinternet.com)

Text should be in Microsoft Word and images are preferred in TIFF format, 300 dpi, file size guideline 10-20Mb. Images are also acceptable as high quality JPEGs, file size guideline 3-6 Mb. For other formats, please contact the Editor. Large image files may be supplied on disc.  
Unless requested, discs will not be returned.  
DEADLINE for the Autumn 2014 edition is 30 Sept 2014.



ISSN 0959-6704

# Contemporary Photography

Number 56 Summer 2014

View from the Chair	Avril Harris ARPS	2
Editorial	Patricia Ann Ruddie ARPS	4
Saturday Girl	Casey Orr	5
Apartheid & After	Chris W Morris ARPS	11
The Studio as Art	Geoff Hughes ARPS	14
Thirty Instruments Loaned by Ladies	Jeni McConnell and Niki Carlin	18
With Photography, not just an autobiography	Sally Hedges Greenwood ARPS, in conversation with Patricia Ann Ruddie ARPS	24
Seven Ravens - Wings of Desire	Stephanie Reichelt	27
A Meeting in Hackney	Anne Crabbe FRPS interviews Melanie Manchot	32
Your Photographs Could Be Used By Drug Dealers, by Monica Alcazar-Duarte	Book review by Brian Steptoe FRPS	38
Group Events		39
Committee		39
Blackfaced sheep with wind turbines at Patricia's farm, Lauder, The Scottish Borders.	Sophie Gerrard	40

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

# Editorial

## “But this isn’t photography”

An overheard remark when I was visiting the exhibition, *Jo Spence: Matters of Concern. Collaborative Images 1982-1992*, at the Impressions Gallery in 1995. It was a major exhibition of Spence’s life work, along with work by her collaborators. The photographs weren’t easy to look at, for example in one memorable image we saw a full-length, nude self-portrait in which she displayed the scars of a recent mastectomy. Spence has become one of the most influential photographers in contemporary photography. She developed ground-breaking ways of making and using the medium as a powerful means of self-expression, especially with regard to dealing with questions concerning her sexuality and her anger in having breast cancer. Perhaps this is why some gallery-goers thought that the images weren’t ‘photography.’ Because they didn’t relate to their expectations of what photography should be. Spence died from breast cancer in 1992.

Not long after this exhibition, another challenging one came to York in 1998, as part of *Photo ’98*, the Year of Photography that took place in Yorkshire. Five women artists were commissioned to participate in the exhibition *Light Sensitive*, held at the City Art Gallery. Melanie Manchot was one of those five artists with her *Look at You Loving Me*, the more-than-life sized portraits of her mother. Yet more older-women-naked-flesh illuminating gallery walls. Manchot’s technique was innovative in her portrayal of an ageing figure. Although originally shot on film, there was a departure in the printmaking. She used linen canvas primed with sand and pigmentation, finally brushstroked with silver gelatin emulsion. The resulting texture lent itself to metaphorically conveying even more elegantly the folds and creases of her mother’s body.

As with Jo Spence’s photographs that displayed real women undergoing real-life changes, with real-life concerns, the images of Manchot’s mother sometimes caused dismay. Often women were embarrassed; often men sniggered.

Perhaps Manchot’s photographs weren’t considered ‘photography’ like Spence’s, but not because of their non-traditional technical approach. (Although this too would have caused some viewers to dismiss the work as not real photography.) It has to do with the subject matter. Neither photographer took pictures of ‘proper’ nudes, sanitised and airbrushed images that some viewers prefer to see of women, preferably young and without wrinkles. Or, was that back then? Have we left those derisive and offensive opinions behind us now that we live in a new century? Most likely, contemporary photographers have moved on; what about their audiences?

Patricia

# Saturday Girl

Casey Orr

How lucky we are to be playful, to transform ourselves, over and over if we wish. Girls do this so well. We invent and reinvent, continuously and creatively. And hair, this human string, is available for us to sculpt and shape, the perfect medium, ever-changing and moving with growth (‘Oh whatever, it’ll grow back.’ I’ve said these words many times). These experimentations, playful expressions of self, are signs of the most basic, pure human vitality.

*Saturday Girl* was conceived after seeing so many young women in Leeds with ‘big hair’; teased and back-combed, resolute rat’s nests, extensions, hairpieces and wigs. I wondered what it meant, what it said about the undercurrents in culture, the unspoken signs that tell of our values and tribe identities and how these things burst forth (whether we intend them to or not) in self-expression.

Leeds is shockingly flamboyant. On Saturdays, Leeds teems with people. On Saturdays, Leeds goes out in style. And on Saturday afternoon the city brims with young women, out with girlfriends, shopping, hanging around, looking and being looked at.





All of these pictures were taken on Saturdays in Leeds, in a pop-up portrait studio in the Corn Exchange. Somewhere in between coffee and meeting friends — buying this and that, parents waiting, boys waiting — the *Saturday Girl* team and I would go hunting (yes, photographers hunt, sometimes fish - but that's another story) for the best hair in town; and found it. It was fun! We met so many funny, warm, interesting people who told us about themselves and their hair, and showed us what went on under the mane.

We have always dyed and cut, woven and braided, sprayed and shaved; as a way of both stating our individuality and belonging to a tribe. Hair transforms, informs.

Guess what? So does photography.

These photographs have more than one subject. Besides all these women, and all this photographed hair, *Saturday Girl* is about photography itself. Photography has a direct relationship to how we see ourselves, to how we present ourselves and remember ourselves. We study our younger faces, our happy faces smiling out from the past. Our memories surface and resurface through photographs as we weave and write our narratives into a life story.

Photography — ever-present and ever-public — Facebooks and Tweets, our faces at staggering rates of speed and in staggering numbers.



Photography staggers through our birthday/trip/meal, every mile, every monument, every moment. Through a constant companionship with this ubiquitous friend, we construct who we are; our presentation, our image. That powerful relationship between photography and self is always present (in our pockets and purses) ready to join the party.

What are we doing when we have our picture taken? Our collective camera-face preens and poses, mirroring a version of us that photography itself has created. And yet whatever we try to conceal, to invent for the camera, a photograph holds more information than the subject intends. Coded, and revealing of other truths; other clues to self. Photographs expose other stuff.

The *Saturday Girl* portraits try to capture these two aspects: powerful and playful in their public faces, creative and transformative in the world, but also vulnerable, funny and youthful. And hopefully these photographs, unlike so many images we see of young women, refuse to become the clichéd portraits of advertising or the porn-mimicking aesthetic we've been handed, endlessly on offer, too often used to sell stuff.

The final subject in all these photographs is me. I am in these pictures. I am the author/collaborator and always bring my questions, wonderings and experiences along





with me. I took these pictures because I want to know what it means to be a woman, to explore what hair means and how this powerfully creative form of expression has passed from generations before, through me and down into my daughter's world (and beyond). I wanted to look at how photography is implicit in how we define who we are, through how we look and present ourselves.







I am eternally grateful to the people who let me take their picture, for giving me the opportunity to continue living a life where I can explore the world through photography.

Dr Orr is a Senior Lecturer in Photography at Leeds Metropolitan University.

<http://www.caseyorr.com>

# Apartheid & After

*Chris W Morris*

This book is based on the exhibition at Huis Marseille, Amsterdam earlier this year and presents work by both white and black photographers, covering the time of apartheid in South Africa and since. The acclaimed photographer David Goldblatt helped instigate this exhibition of contemporary photography. His series, *Particulars*, studies of hands, feet and thighs, is not his most well-known work, but characteristically the stories are subtly told. We see black hands and feet scarred by manual labour, black bodies that rest on the ground while whites sit on benches; and thighs that are really not much different whatever their colour. While the clothing indicates degrees of poverty, the body language tells of acceptance, of fear, of confidence and the lack of it.

Work by Jo Ractliffe and Paul Weinberg looks at the dispossessed San, indigenous South Africans expelled from their homelands. Both photographers show us aspects of a people whose traditional way of life has been effectively destroyed and survives only in a parody of itself. Pieter Hugo is best known in Europe for his striking portfolio *The Hyena and Other Men*. The work here is much more personal, exploring his homeland through portraits and still life photography. By hanging the large prints around and within in a small room, Huis Marseille gave the work an extra sense of claustrophobia, adding to its already faintly unsettling nature. The oldest work is that of Hugh Exton, a commercial photographer based in Pietersburg (Polokwane). Between 1892 and 1945 he made portraits of clients of every colour. At a time when segregation was commonplace, Exton clearly used the same studio for all comers. His legacy of thousands of glass-plate negatives provide an unusual insight into provincial town life in South Africa in a period when the state was building up to institutionalising apartheid. Santu Mofokeng has documented the lives of the people of the township of Bloemhof, an area still dominated by white land owners. We see farm labourers whose life seems little changed by the social upheavals of the last fifteen years. It is, in Mofokeng's own words, "[...] a system which is feudal in many important ways but name." Sabelo Mlangeni is another photographer working in the documentary style. Dark shadows and bright sunlight make these photographs of Johannesburg difficult to read, but his message seems to be about the ordinariness of life in an unforgivingly harsh urban environment. Mofokeng says, "I try to find beauty in a place where there is no beauty [...]." He has a kind eye, and that is rare.

Among the new generation of South African photographers, Mikhael Subotzky documents a continuing violent society. The small number of pictures from his project

about the Beaufort West community, and his more conceptual work *Retinal Shift*, about the process of looking, seeing and making photographs, gives a limited and somewhat confusing view of these projects.

After the end of apartheid, enfranchisement required some proof of identity. For South Africans living in remote rural communities this was in danger of denying them the right to vote. Charmaine Alberts set up a registration office in the township of Majwemasweu. With her husband Paul to make the ID photographs, she created a successful model for locally based registration services that were soon rolled out to other regions. Paul Alberts' *Democratic Portraits* stand as a reminder of these times, showing us the faces of people who, for the first time in their lives, were being given formal recognition as citizens. The simple photographic portrait standing as a metaphor for existence.

After so much unrelenting b&w social documentary photography, it comes as a surprise to see Guy Tillims' beautifully subtle colour prints of *Petros Village*. The photographer does not avoid showing us the hardships of life, but his portraits are powerful images of men and women whose inner strength is unmistakable.

Before and after is more explicitly addressed in Graeme Williams' *Previously Significant Places*, pairing photographs of the process of apartheid's fall with the same locations some twenty years later. Williams' work is only superficially about the places; at its heart it is about the people who lived and died in a time of violence. It gets in close to the personal nature of history and the survival of society. Zanele Muholi focuses on a different aspect of intolerance. She is a prominent activist, using photojournalism to highlight the frequently violent oppression of homosexuality in Africa. Her work is powerful and uncompromising, showing that there are significant aspects of civil rights and human liberty that still remain to be satisfactorily resolved.

Finally there is Daniel Naudé's series of large animal portraits, ostensibly about indigenous domesticated species. Although unstated, there is a depth and complexity to this concept and the relationship between human, animal and the landscape. It is an intricate allegory that may be unconscious on the part of the photographer, but gave me pause for thought. In my view it provided the perfect closing piece for a rich and varied exhibition. The people of South Africa have suffered much and achieved a lot, but there is still so much more to do. I was privileged to see this important exhibition in Amsterdam and to meet the organisers. It deserves a wider showing, and the publication of this book should facilitate that.

Barents, Els and O'Toole, Sean. *Apartheid & After*. Amsterdam, Huis Marseille, 2014.



© Daniel Naudé, From his book *Animal Farm*



# The Studio as Art

*Geoff Hughes ARPS*

The title is taken from a quote by David Campy who said, "Photography allowed audiences to enter the studio metaphorically, not so much to artworks being made but to see studio activity as art."

Each image was taken in the studio environment of the artist. It was staged to represent what would have happened normally and claims to be a plausible account of, or report on, what the events depicted are like, or were like, when they passed without being photographed. What Jeff Wall called "near documentary". Every effort was made to ensure that the artist appeared both unaware of the construct of the picture and the necessary presence of the viewer. This was partly achieved by connecting the camera to the laptop and operating it remotely. This removed the effect of the photographer being seen directly in front of the subject.

The show brings together work that was undertaken during the experimental phase of the MA course that included the study of typology, the series and the deadpan or minimalist style of documentation. It also built on lessons learned in the use of manipulation software to create such images.



Each image was enlarged to near-life size, designed for the wall that provides a confrontational experience by restoring the distance to object image. The images also provide a severing device that gives the viewer the feeling of remaining wholly outside the events depicted by the picture. They show images of quiet contemplation where each artist is absorbed in revealing something of his or her art.





They also attempt to follow Walter Benjamin's "optical unconscious of Photography" by showing great detail which may be experienced as the pleasure of information.

#### References.

Campany, David. *Art and Photography* (London: Phaidon, 2003, p.23)

Interview with David Shapiro reproduced in *Jeff Wall: Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2007)

Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) (London: Penguin, 2008)

Ed. Note: From his MA degree in Fine Art: Contemporary Practice (2012), University College Falmouth





# Thirty Instruments Loaned by Ladies

*Jeni McConnell and Niki Carlin*

When the Harris Museum & Art Gallery opened in Preston in 1893 it was reported that one of the most interesting and popular displays was in rooms set aside for a show of microscopic and other apparatus, which included thirty instruments loaned by gentlemen. I was hooked, triggered by a desire to redress the balance; I would find thirty 'instruments' which could be loaned by ladies.

The *Harris Flights*, a temporary installation of grand stairs connecting the market square to the first floor podium of the Harris Museum provided the inspiration for this creative project, which had four key elements; to reflect on and draw out the history of the Harris Museum & Art Gallery, to be playful with museum methods of loan and display, to engage with the *Harris Flights* and the sense of grandeur that they provoke, and to engage the public in the process.

Thirty objects owned by ladies were chosen, tightly bound with personal stories, reactivated memories and personal reflections; each a social object, an 'instrument' for engaging in conversation.

During the Announcing performance each object was individually carried slowly across the market square to ascend the grand stairs, carried on a red cushion, where possible by the ladies who owned them. Each object publicly announced, as if a guest arriving at a formal dinner, with its description and shared memories. At the top of the stairs a gloved museum attendant received each object, and in turn placed it into a display case, positioned alongside a museum label showing the unique reference number with hints of the connected personal story.

Producing a publication was a critical component of this project. The content significantly pivoted on the balance of the evocative wet plate photographs with the professional voices of some of the people involved: Museum Programme Manager, Clinical Psychologist and Object Owner, Photographer and Artist. These additional layers present a wider contemplation of the dilemmas encountered with objects as they connect and cross the boundaries of the personal, professional, institutional and public realm.

The following photographs show a selection from the original thirty objects and begin to explain part of the rich and complex object relationships that we all have: remembering special birthdays, gifts on first meetings, relatives and friends that have passed away. It is a privilege to hear these told.

As a socially engaged artist I seek to work directly with people to research and explore the inextricable links between objects, collections, archives, people and place. Engaging with people in public places and in public buildings does provide challenges - the push and pull of risk, process and normal practice can feel restrictive. My way of exploring these boundaries and pushing against them, I hope, provides something unique and different, something that engages with new audiences, building a stronger connection between those outside and what is inside.

**Jeni McConnell**

[www.jenimccconnell.com](http://www.jenimccconnell.com)

The complete project booklet can be seen at: [http://issuu.com/jenimccconnell/docs/thirty\\_instruments\\_final](http://issuu.com/jenimccconnell/docs/thirty_instruments_final)

1893/19

*Small Repaired Doll*

When the owner found this doll it must have looked very different to how it is today; then a painted clown face, a multi-coloured shiny outfit and fur hair, which have all been removed. New fabric was added to hide damage parts and a new red hood was crocheted. The owner likes to find abandoned objects and restore them, often with a twist.





Photographs made with the wet plate collodion process tend to be evocative, they have a nostalgic ambience. They are also unique. The hand-crafted nature and variability of the process transforms the mirror image of the subject into a solid, tactile object, a reflection of one moment in time held captive on the glass. The unrepeatable photograph becomes an object in its own right. It seemed only fitting that this process should complete the transformation of these personal possessions into artefacts fit for a museum.

A small leather suitcase was delivered to me; the kind you might find in your grandparent’s attic, a rich golden brown and worn at the edges but still shiny, owned by somebody concerned with the longevity of its functional life. After negotiating the inevitably tricky latches the lid was open, revealing a mass of small white packages inside. Each item had been carefully wrapped in white tissue paper and like a child on Christmas morning I was giddy about the task that lay before me, which one..... which one do I open first!

It didn’t take me long to release them all from their crisp white jackets and I found myself confronted with a wide variety of miscellaneous ephemera. Some items were sentimental keepsakes, some were obviously family heirlooms or tools of a trade, others were seemingly banal, everyday things.

But these objects are not just ‘things’- each one connects me to these women’s lives; offers me a window to their memories and experiences, their pasts, presents and futures. Reading the snippets of stories that accompanied these treasures I realised that it is objects like these that keep us grounded, offering a sense of belonging in the present and a connection to the past. They remind me of the importance of our little daily rituals and that the comfort offered by such possessions is what keeps us sane, the gravity that keeps our feet on the ground.

**Niki Carlin**  
Black Glass Studios - [www.blackglassstudios.com](http://www.blackglassstudios.com)



1893/26  
*Pottery Cow Jug*

As a big Jaws fan, when this lady won airline tickets in the 1990s, she flew to New York and Cape Cod. "I met Ron and his wife Cathy when I got off the Greyhound bus, they heard my English accent and we started talking. Then they took us for lunch to meet the Mayor! Before I returned home Cathy & Ron, a Chief of Police, insisted I stay for the few days I had left. Ron’s friend gave me this as a reminder of my visit."



1893/29  
*Knitting Row Counter*

Designed to help you keep track of your ‘Knitting and Crochet’, the information label on the back says it will help when you are called away ‘suddenly’ from your work.

The owner was left it by a friend who knitted all her life, until she passed away 2 years ago, aged 86. The friend had worked as Secretary to the Preston Town Clerk before her retirement.



1893/08  
*Four-Leaf Clover*

The owner describes this collection of four four-leaf clovers as being priceless. The leaves are all attached by clear tape which is now slightly yellowed. Perhaps this isn’t surprising when we hear that the owner has had these for 33 years after finding them on Ashton Park. She still picks clover regularly and often manages to find a lucky four-leaf clover one. She once found one with five leaves.



1893/04  
*Wilhelmina Mint*

This commemorative mint was first created in 1898, showing the head of Queen Wilhelmina, who reigned the Netherlands for fifty years.  
This particular one was given in a new packet to the owner as her flight was delayed as Schiphol airport, a treat to appease a weary traveller.  
The owner has kept the half empty packet in her bag for three months now, although she is unsure why.



1893/03  
*Textile Pick Counter*

Used in Brierfield Mill, this pick counter was given by a mill manager to the owner.  
Although the owner is not from the textile industry, she likes it for its connection with the past and the curiosity which it creates.  
A pick is a weft thread, the one that weaves in and out of the long warp threads. The magnifying glass helps the user to count the threads per unit of measure.



1893/24  
*German Playing Cards*

"These belonged to my Dad, who worked at Thos W. Ward shipbreakers on Preston Dock, from about 1950.  
They came across all sorts of items from many ships. I can only think that they came off one of the German ships that came in for breakage, as my Dad was never in the Forces.  
He had so many stories of the ships and the docks. He used to tell us these when we were young."



1893/02  
*Trolley Coin*

Used by the owner to show her support for RAFA, the Royal Air Force Association.  
Bought from a RAFA member two years ago, who sadly has since died. This object is used instead of a £1 coin when getting a supermarket trolley.  
The owner was a local service WRAF, stationed at Air Traffic Control Centre at Barton Hall, where she worked for 3 years and recalls, "Happy Days".



# With Photography, not just an autobiography

*Sally Hedges Greenwood ARPS, in conversation with Patricia Ann Ruddie ARPS*

The concept is unusual. Using her own photographs and those by outside contributors when her story demands it, the book is an expansive exploration of the medium led by photographs that illustrate the different and varied uses of photography, from the Victorian era until now.

Given a camera by her grandfather when five years old because she had excitedly spotted an actual *camera obscura* image projected onto a wall in her house, Sally became the fourth generation of photographers in her family, the first being her great-grandfather long before the Kodak revolution brought photography to the masses.

From the many threads of more general interest that Sally explores in *With Photography*, one is concerned with using photography as therapy. When very young, on occasions when childhood illnesses confined Sally to her sickbed, family photographs became a solace and method of communication between her and her mother, which was strangely often lacking otherwise. In this way, Sally was given a sense of belonging and a

grounding that would serve her well throughout challenging times ahead. The process was reversed 40 years later when Sally's mother took to her final sickbed in 1997.

Sally writes, "I wanted to help my mother through this time. For her part, she wanted to tell the stories that she knew, to make sure that she could leave behind her an understanding of our family's past. Together we taped the conversations that covered this information. I listen to our conversations now and again and relive what was a difficult but also special time for us both. With photographs picked randomly from boxes acting as aides-mémoires, we conversed in an intimate but strangely impersonal way, I was pleased to be able to keep my mother's mind off her illness. But most of all, while I knew I couldn't make her better, I wanted to make her feel better, perhaps as she did me during my childhood illnesses.

Obviously there was no intent for therapy in our sessions, and there were no trained counsellors present, but my mother and I became able to communicate in ways that were different from how we normally



"We were told when we were children that Great-Aunt Nell was the first English woman to fly across the Swiss Alps." (From the Sally Hedges Greenwood archives)

spoke. We spoke of people, places, events and their associated stories that we rarely discussed otherwise. While we each harboured our own thoughts, fears and distress, we could and did get through that difficult time together. As it was a cathartic experience for me, I cannot

Having *With Photography* to lean on throughout, I was able to explore, observe and study my environment, others and myself. I was able to be ready and open to what I was seeing and hearing. I can see the distinct changes in both my work and myself as the twists and turns led to revelations around each corner.



imagine how I would have coped otherwise. Our process of coming together, even as my mother died, was facilitated with photography."

For Sally, her actual taking of photographs was intuitive: the process – unconsciously undertaken at first – eventually led to the planning of seemingly non-complex images to connect with underlying emotions that were, at times, overwhelming; the comprehension and analysis only

shared decades later. Formalising her love of the medium by studying, facilitated the eventual verbalisation – revealing layers of meaning within photographs that Sally has taken over five decades. She writes that, "Having learned to read photographs, I can look back and read my own photographs as I might my own private diary, a diary that is written in code, where only I have the key." Not obvious to anyone, her private

thoughts are encoded within the images, different layers of meaning revealing themselves at different times. "Had I only my diary entries to rely on, my recovery from a post-traumatic stress disorder following prolonged abuse from a non-family member in my childhood, might not have been achieved and this book would never have been attempted. I believe I would, at best, be stuck



For the first time, I began to look forward. The tracks finally came together and became one.



in denial and, at worst, well, I really don't know."

The camera has made Sally feel completely free, but it took her half a lifetime to realise that there were different ways in which she was using photography. Attention to detail and a heightened sense of perception were natural, becoming more so by being faced, and dealing, with a prolonged and dangerous situation at a young age. Both are also attributable by-products of a life

with photography. This combination opened her eyes and mind to both her internal and external worlds, giving her something to rely on - the will to survive and the strength to heal.

Also Sally added, "Looking back, I can see how lucky I am that photography has fitted in with most of my working life because now I have a visual diary of thousands of images, representing – and, importantly, offering proof – of the years, days and hours spent doing something I

enjoyed which has gone a long way to negate the effects of the darker memories."

*With Photography* is honest and raw, an engaging book on many levels, and one that affirms the importance of photography in our lives. Throughout the book, Sally pinpoints and unpicks the medium, discouraging today's tendency to take photography for granted.

See [www.withphotography.co.uk](http://www.withphotography.co.uk) for book enquiries

## seven ravens - wings of desire

*Stefanie Reichelt*

"I am your sister; tell me if I can set you free." "Yes," said they, "thou canst still set us free, but it is very difficult." She said she was ready, and would gladly do anything, no matter what it was. Then the ravens said, "For seven long years thou must not say one word on pain of death, and during that time must sew for each of us a shirt and a handkerchief, and knit us a pair of stockings, which must not be ready either sooner or later than the last day of the seven years."











From: *The Seven Ravens* by the Brothers Grimm  
website: [stefaniereichelt-photographyandprints.com](http://stefaniereichelt-photographyandprints.com).



# A Meeting in Hackney

*Anne Crabbe interviews Melanie Manchot*

Vulnerability is a theme running through much of the work of photographer/video artist, Melanie Manchot and we talked about this recently in her studio in Hackney. Melanie's first major work after she graduated from the Royal College of Art in 1992 was a series of nude portraits of her mother, *Look At You Loving Me*. Some were printed on large canvases using silver gelatin emulsion embellished with paint, sand and charcoal, others were displayed in colour and as posters and billboards. They made not only a beautiful and compelling work of an ageing woman's body to contemporary eyes, primed to approve of only the young and unscarred, but a record of the loving trust between mother and daughter.

*Look At You Loving Me*, still being exhibited globally, caused controversy when it was first shown. Melanie said, "There was a lot of public debate about whether it was decent for a woman of that age to be seen without clothes; the lowest common denominator way of considering the work. And while I could rationalise these responses within the wider debate of the work, I felt responsible for exposing my

mother's vulnerability. However, in the long term, the work developed and it affected her sense of herself. She began to understand the work as having an impact beyond our immediate collaboration: to be relevant for other ageing women – as if she could stand up not just for herself but for others too. She came back to me and said "Let's carry on!" As an artist, what matters to me is for the work to become part of a dialogue, and if someone finds the work difficult, that's fine. No response is a much more problematic situation to cope with."

I asked how Melanie moved from one project to another and she said, "After working so intensely over five years with my mother, I wondered how it would feel working with total strangers. Could one suggest a moment of intimacy with a complete stranger? I remembered a picture by the surrealist painter, Paul Delvaux, of a couple kissing, and I started the project by asking strangers on the street for a kiss, initially not recording at all but just writing down what happened. Then I sound recorded the encounters. Not seeing the kiss was important and at the end of the slow process of defining the work, I



Mrs Manchot  
Stepping  
Forward,  
from *Look  
At You  
Loving Me*



had a home-made contraption with a tiny spy camera in my jacket and a recorder in my back pack." The result is a video, *A Moment Between Strangers*, shot on the streets of London, New York, Berlin and Los Angeles. One hears the gentle voice of Melanie asking passers-by for a kiss, "because I collect kisses" - we see and hear the varied reactions. Watching the video, I was fascinated, amused, touched by what happened but increasingly nervous for the photographer. Melanie said, "Yes, I was uncomfortable at times about the process; I'm really performing more than in any other piece. It felt like going into persona."

In 2001, Melanie returned to Moscow for a commission after visiting ten years previously. The city then had been in chaos after opening up to the West. She photographed young women she met on the street and in the conversations that followed, heard their own stories of violence, loss and death in those troubled years. "They had taken so much effort into creating a look; copying a Western-style media image of what it means to be a woman. Yet often underneath that surface perfection were stories of traumatic experiences from the early years of Russian capitalism. They were eager to tell their stories, to be heard, yet one of the attractions was that I did not understand Russian. It gave them a sense of freedom in the moment of telling." *Moscow*

*Girls*, colour portraits of these fragile women is shown together with the translated, but anonymous, sound recordings of their stories.

In another project, Melanie discovered a booklet of archive photographs in the Geffrye Museum, of London's East End street celebrations. She said, "I became increasingly interested in how the group photograph is orchestrated - how these images display both a sense of collectivity and social hierarchies, and how we decide to place ourselves within these. The group photograph is an event in itself, an incredible condensation of the moment." From this came *Celebration (Cyprus Street)*, a 35-mm film made in collaboration with people living today in the East End, planning and re-enacting a street celebration. It was commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella, funded by the Arts Council and Film London and shown in 2010 at The Whitechapel Gallery, together with portraits of people from Cyprus Street.

Melanie has written that her practice now incorporates photography and the moving image. Sound is taking an increasingly important role in her installation works. In some of her projects, still photographs are displayed alongside videos, but never replicate the imagery. She explains that the different media fulfil specific functions within her thinking and making as



*Celebration (Cyprus Street)*



well as within the choreography of her work. *Leap, after The Great Ecstasy*, a study of the preparation of the ski jump area at night and close-ups of the skiers just before they leap from the platform, uses this new way of working – still photography, sound and film.

Two other projects from Melanie's website fascinated me. One is *Four Moors (Sardinia) 2008*, a commission by the Sardinian Ministry of Culture. This is a video with four people in profile set in quarter squares, each still until, in turn, they sing an unaccompanied Sardinian song – a nursery rhyme, a love song, a call to arms, a political song. The quartered square format relates to the Sardinian flag with its mysterious four Moors. I can't explain the pull of this piece – is it the simple beauty of the image, the dignity of the amateur singers, the haunting tunes?

The other project is one where, again, vulnerability is a theme: *Security, 2005*. Melanie writes "The work focuses on bouncers working at nightclubs and investigates themes of desire, body image and masculinity. The video was made in Ibiza, the clubbing capital of the world, which frames the piece both conceptually and visually. The bouncers are young men, proud of their bodies, oil them, shave them, do body building. I asked them to take off their clothes, to strip off the uniform that defines their job – in front of the clubs, in daytime. In



Olga, from *Moscow Girls*

each case the bouncers performed for the camera only; I set it up and walked away."

I watched this video on Melanie's website; just one episode is shown. It forced me to think again about the many ways we, as photographers, expose our subjects. That nervousness which is so often the



Andy, the Sage, from *Tracer*

response to our requests to stand in front of the camera, is highlighted in these images of men taking off their clothes, their armour and defence, but felt by many people in more comfortable situations.

For the past eighteen months, Melanie has been working with a group of adults in recent recovery from long-term drug and alcohol addiction. She wants to capture the most transformative moments in their lives, not only the hope and the darkness. She says that the project

signifies a shift in her practice. It will be both more narrative and more cinematic, but made through direct collaboration and co-authorship. I was struck when she said, "It's important that not only my ideas are represented – my ideas get changed as well."

There will soon be opportunities to see Melanie's work countrywide. In September 2014, she will be working with people in Devon and Cornwall on a commission for the Tamar Film Festival. *Leap, after The*

*Great Ecstasy* is touring the country in 2015; and in 2015/16 she has a solo touring exhibition in the UK with the new work made with recovering addicts. *Tracer*, a video commission from Great North Run Culture, is being shown this May/June on Wattan TV in Palestine. However, one of the pleasures of video art, unlike still photography, is that it can be fully enjoyed at home from a website – do look at Melanie Manchot's.

[www.melaniemanchot.net](http://www.melaniemanchot.net)

# Your Photographs Could Be Used By Drug Dealers, Monica Alkazar-Duarte

*Book Review by Brian Steptoe FRPS*



22x31cm, 55 interleaved pages, 95 photographs. Perspex cover and back in canvas case

Monica Alkazar-Duarte's May 2014 MA show at the London College of Communication consisted of an installation of photos hanging as a large mobile. Her book of this work was equally three-dimensional, as a perspex backed book with cover and pages unfolding on all four edges. Reading was an immersive experience requiring a seat at a table; no way could this be read on the lap, no way could it be flicked through from the back. Her physical construct alone met the need for artworks to be studied rather than run through in a few seconds or minutes. Her text states that "the presentation of my photography is as important as the content." Unfolding differing pages



allows readers to construct differing page combinations.

The project documents life in two towns on the west coast of Mexico. The title comes from a fragment of a conversation she had with a soldier in Mexico while asking for his permission to take his photograph. The plan was to "test the charged image of the country offered by the media and popular culture". During the months she spent in the production of the photographs, the process evolved into an attempt to photograph the way the place felt. A

few pages with text, such as 'a twenty per cent chance' carry a message of risk. When exploring the back of the book, we discover these are only extracts from weather forecasts. Preconditioning makes them much more sinister. Risks are occasionally seen, with upturned cars, security guns and tape. The general message is one of life being experienced, from the very serious to the innocent.

Monica Alkazar-Duarte has been awarded the University of the Arts Mead Fellowship for her work.

## GROUP EVENTS

16 August Contemporary North East meeting. Strensall Village Hall, near York, 1.30-4.30 pm. Bookmaking workshop with artist Ian Cameron. Cost £25 to include all materials and refreshments. You will make at least two hand-sewn books. Contact Nigel Tooby FRPS, nigel@mogulimage.co.uk, tel 01924 274100

**Now until 1 September (closing date)** Enter your photobook for the 2014 RPS Photobook exhibition, open to all members of the RPS, with a closing date of 1 September 2014. Details available on RPS website, see [www.rps.org/exhibitions-and-competitions/photobooks](http://www.rps.org/exhibitions-and-competitions/photobooks). Contact [rod@rodry.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:rod@rodry.eclipse.co.uk) if any problems. Pay your entry fee on-line at the RPS shop [www.rps.org/shop/entry-fees-and-tickets/photobook-competition-entry](http://www.rps.org/shop/entry-fees-and-tickets/photobook-competition-entry). Post your book with a second completed entry form (to cover payment of return postage), to Fenton House, Bath

15 September Contemporary North West meeting. Days Inn Hotel, Charnock Richard Services, northbound M6. between J 27 and 28. Contact Ian Maxwell, [mail@ihmaxwell.com](mailto:mail@ihmaxwell.com), tel 01524 770278

17 September Contemporary Distinction Assessments for ARPS and FRPS. Fenton House, Bath. Applicants and observers may attend the Associateship Assessments. Contact Andy Moore, tel 01225 325760

28 September Contemporary Scotland meeting. Howden Park Centre, Howden, Livingston, West Lothian EH54 6AE. 20 places only so please contact John Elliott in advance [joma.elliott@btinternet.com](mailto:joma.elliott@btinternet.com) 01475 674087

5 October Contemporary South West meeting, Devon. Venue to be confirmed. Contact Rod Fry, [rod@rodry.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:rod@rodry.eclipse.co.uk), tel 01803 844721

12 October Thames Valley Region Annual Print exhibition and joint meeting with Contemporary Group. Drake Hall Community Centre, Chiltern Avenue, Amersham HA6 5AH. Our speakers in the afternoon are Peter Ellis LRPS and Derek Dewey-Leader LRPS.

19 October Contemporary Scotland meeting. Howden Park Centre, Howden, Livingston, West Lothian EH54 6AE. 40 places only so please contact John Elliott in advance [joma.elliott@btinternet.com](mailto:joma.elliott@btinternet.com) 01475 674087 Photobook Masterclass, talk and workshop with Brian Steptoe FRPS

8 November Contemporary North West meeting. One day workshop with Dave West - see [davewestphotography.weebly.com](http://davewestphotography.weebly.com) See September above for meeting place and contact.

**16-17 May 2015 Concerning Photography weekend. Sheffield Hallam University, See RPS website for details and bookings. Contact Avril Harris [avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk)**

Chair - Avril Harris ARPS  
[avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk)

Deputy chair - Rod Fry ARPS  
[rod@rodry.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:rod@rodry.eclipse.co.uk)

Secretary - Peter Ellis LRPS  
[wordsandpicsltd@gmail.com](mailto:wordsandpicsltd@gmail.com)

Treasurer - Greg Holba [greg@holba.net](mailto:greg@holba.net)

Postal portfolio - Anne Crabbe FRPS  
[info@annecrabbe.co.uk](mailto:info@annecrabbe.co.uk)

Event organiser - Avril Harris ARPS  
[avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk)

Journal editor - Patricia Ruddle ARPS  
28 Malvern Avenue, York. YO26 5SG  
[patriciaruddle@btinternet.com](mailto:patriciaruddle@btinternet.com)

Journal Editorial committee -  
Patricia Ruddle, editor  
Anne Crabbe  
Brian Steptoe, design

Webmaster, e-newsletter editor, Stewart Wall,  
[artonastudios@gmail.com](mailto:artonastudios@gmail.com)

Committee members -  
Brian Steptoe FRPS [bsteptoe@compuserve.com](mailto:bsteptoe@compuserve.com)  
Nigel Tooby FRPS  
[nigel@mogulimage.co.uk](mailto:nigel@mogulimage.co.uk)  
Douglas May FRPS (co-opted)  
[douglasjmay1@btinternet.com](mailto:douglasjmay1@btinternet.com)  
Ian Maxwell (co-opted) [mail@ihmaxwell.com](mailto:mail@ihmaxwell.com)





© Sophie Gerrard. *Blackfaced sheep with wind turbines at Patricia's farm, Lauder, The Scottish Borders*. Courtesy Impressions Gallery. The exhibition *Beyond the Border: New Contemporary Photography from Scotland* runs until 27 September 2014 at the Impressions Gallery, Bradford.

**Journal price where sold, £5**