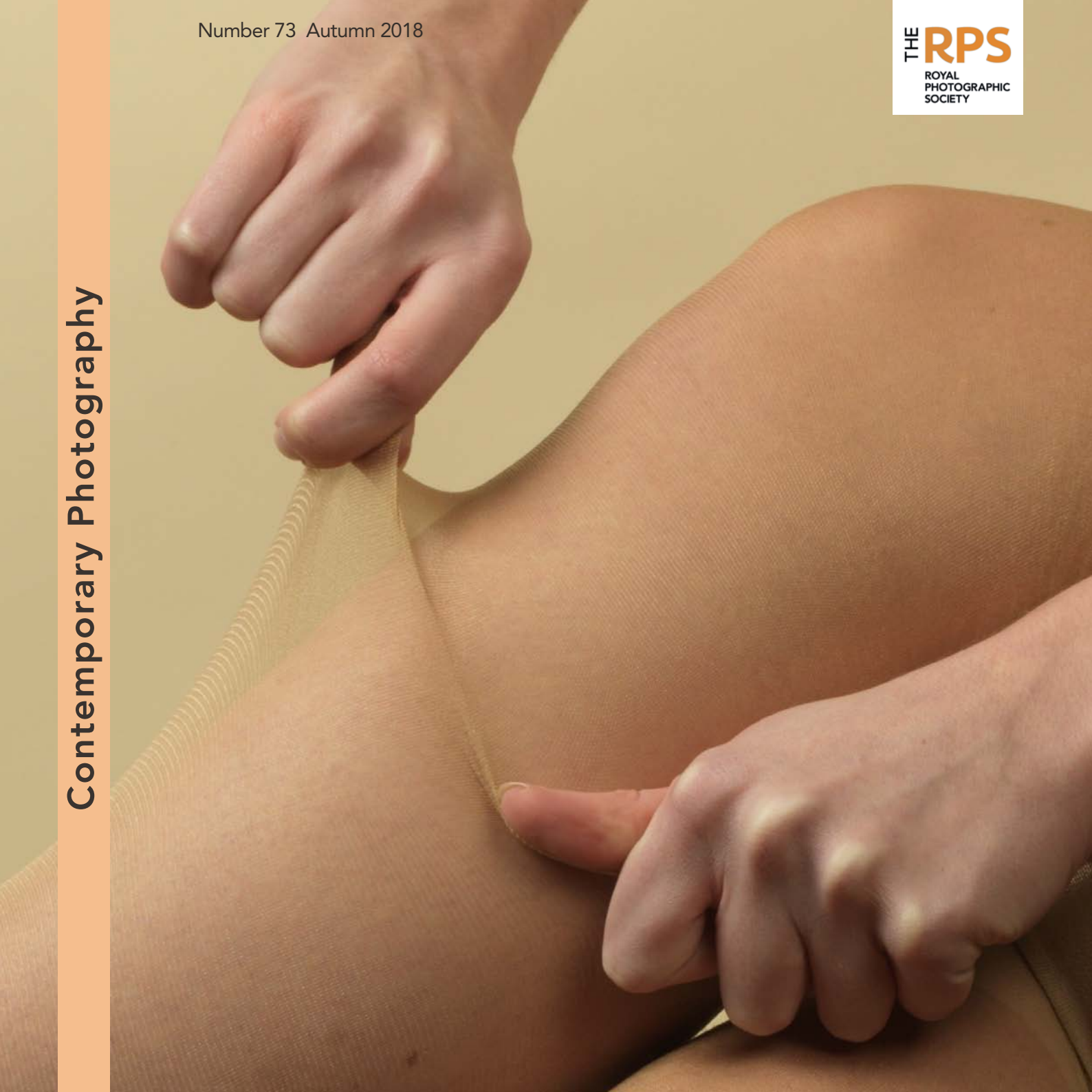


Contemporary Photography



Editorial

Early this summer I visited Madrid to see the paintings of Velázquez in the Prado Museum – a long-standing aspiration. When considering any work of art I try to clear my mind of preconceptions and to be open to whatever it says to me, but my photographer's eye sadly clicks into place when presented with portraits and groups. I *know* that a painting takes days or weeks to complete, not a 1/500 sec exposure, and I *know* that much of it was painted in the absence of the subjects. But Velázquez's portraits and groups really are records of just a moment in time. You can tell: the subjects have just noticed our presence (*Las Meninas*), are meditating a reply to something we have just said (*Pope Innocent X*), or are checking our reaction to something they are showing us (*Christ in the House of Mary and Martha*).

I admit I am attracted to photography where the photographer does not get out of the way, where the relationship between photographer and photographed is obvious, is relevant to the context, and sends a message. In this issue Greg Turner's portraits taken on Brighton beach early on Sunday mornings typify his approach (which I have followed over a number of years) of talking to his subjects and allowing them in return to express how they feel at that peculiar time, day and place. Jess Nash takes this relationship to its limit as both photographer and subject, looking at her own skin and her relationship with it. In exploring touch and sensitivity she makes us question our own relationship with our own bodies: I find myself pinching and brushing my skin as she does!

Philip Morris's photographs of food are as deadpan as can be, until considered alongside Jo's handwritten notes on her illness. Taken together, we don't doubt that the photographer is directly affected by Jo's condition, and that the results are a joint and personal production. The work of Peter Fraser on the other hand appears to be dispassionately observed, even though he has asked some of his subjects to express their response to a hypothetical scenario. He has stepped back from the photographer-subject relationship, but challenges us to create a new one, between us the viewers and his (Pythagorean!) world. Adam Wiseman is a pure and simple photographic observer, but an observer of the works of individuals that shout "look at me"! Here, the communication is one-way, from the subject alone.

Communication between the subject, the photographer and viewer is the essence of contemporary photography – without it we are taking picture postcards.

Paul Ashley, Editor

Cover: © photo by Jessica Nash from the series *Call Me, Francis*.

Back cover: © photo by Adam Wisemen from the series *Free Architecture*, San Mateo, Mexico.

Journal fonts: general, Avenir Lt Std: author name, Letter Gothic Std



ISSN 0959-6704

Contemporary Photography

Number 73 Autumn 2018

2	Editorial Paul Ashley LRPS	36	Ian Maxwell obituary Alan Cameron LRPS
4	Brighton Beach, Sunrise Sunday Greg Turner	37	Gold and Silver/Or et Argent, Luce Lebart Book Review by Brian Steptoe FRPS
12	Mathematics Peter Fraser HonFRPS	38	View from the North Patricia Ruddle MA ARPS
20	Infectum Pellis Jessica Nash BA	39	Group and related Society Events
26	Jo-Ana Philip Morris BA	39	Listing of Group Officers, Committee members and rôles
32	Free Architecture Adam Wiseman		

© 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 to: Paul Ashley (Editor), paultheashley@gmail.com

Text should be in Microsoft Word. Images are preferred in TIFF format, although high quality JPEGs are also acceptable. Images should be at least 2500 pixels on the longest edge. For other formats or to discuss reproduction, please contact the Editor. Large image files may be supplied on disk or memory stick, or by use of on-line file transfer services, such as WeTransfer or Dropbox. Unless requested, disks and memory sticks will not be returned.

Deadline for the Winter 2019 issue is 1 December 2018.

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

Brighton Beach, Sunrise Sunday

Greg Turner

Like many people, the excitement of the seaside is a formative part of my childhood. Growing up near Manchester, as a family we used to take regular trips to Blackpool or Southport during the summer months. The spike of adrenaline I used to feel when the sea finally came into view after a long drive is palpable even today.

The seaside has long been associated with a sense of excitement. It represents the opportunity to throw off our inhibitions and explore notions of carnival and burlesque behaviour. The invigorating qualities of sea air, what the Victorians would (incorrectly) refer to as 'taking the ozone', might well be the reason why the coast is more likely than any other destination to result in such candid and disinhibited behaviour.

Brighton Beach, Sunrise Sunday seeks to explore that notion of carnival and disinhibition through a combination of formal and candid portraiture shot specifically at sunrise on a Sunday morning. This time is significant, partly because it offers the best light, but mostly because, in the spring and summer months especially, the clubs that line the beach front close around the time the sun rises. The clubbers, unwilling to let the revelry end, congregate on the beach front and the party continues.

It is, truly, a wonderful place to be. There is a sense of collectivism and love (and sometimes conflict) and it's hard to know if the groups of people sitting on the beach are formed on the basis of long held friendships or simply the result of the shared experience of being there as the sun rises. There is always at least one person, more often more than one, who feels compelled to get into the water. On at least one occasion, that individual felt no need to retain any of his attire. I found him strolling

proudly up the beach with just a carefully placed hand cupping his modesty. Remarkably, that individual was also quite happy to be photographed (keeping his hand where it was naturally).

But not everyone there has arrived from a night out. The Brighton Swimming Club also meets at 7am every day for a bracing morning swim. They are a hardy bunch and quite willing to be photographed although I always have to be quick before the cold catches up with them.

As an observer of these groups, I am always unsure if I am regarded as an outsider invading someone else's space, but on approaching them I will very often be invited to sit down and join them. I spend time first just sitting and chatting, explaining why I am there for Sunday morning and not Saturday night, why I am on my own and, perhaps most relevantly, sober. Almost without exception I am made to feel welcome and people are very willing to engage with me and be photographed. This disinhibition might be chemically induced or simply the result of being in the moment; the sun rising over the South Downs creates a magical light on the beach and it has a powerful and positive effect. Despite this, it does often take a few minutes before the subjects relax and I get what I am looking for.

My interest is in the humanity of the person in front of me; I want to engage with their expressed identity and vulnerability and see if in a short moment I can't capture something that informs us as to who we are. Standing for a formal portrait, even one made in a short moment with a complete stranger (which ironically is I think a less risky and complicated experience than being photographed by someone you know), is not something

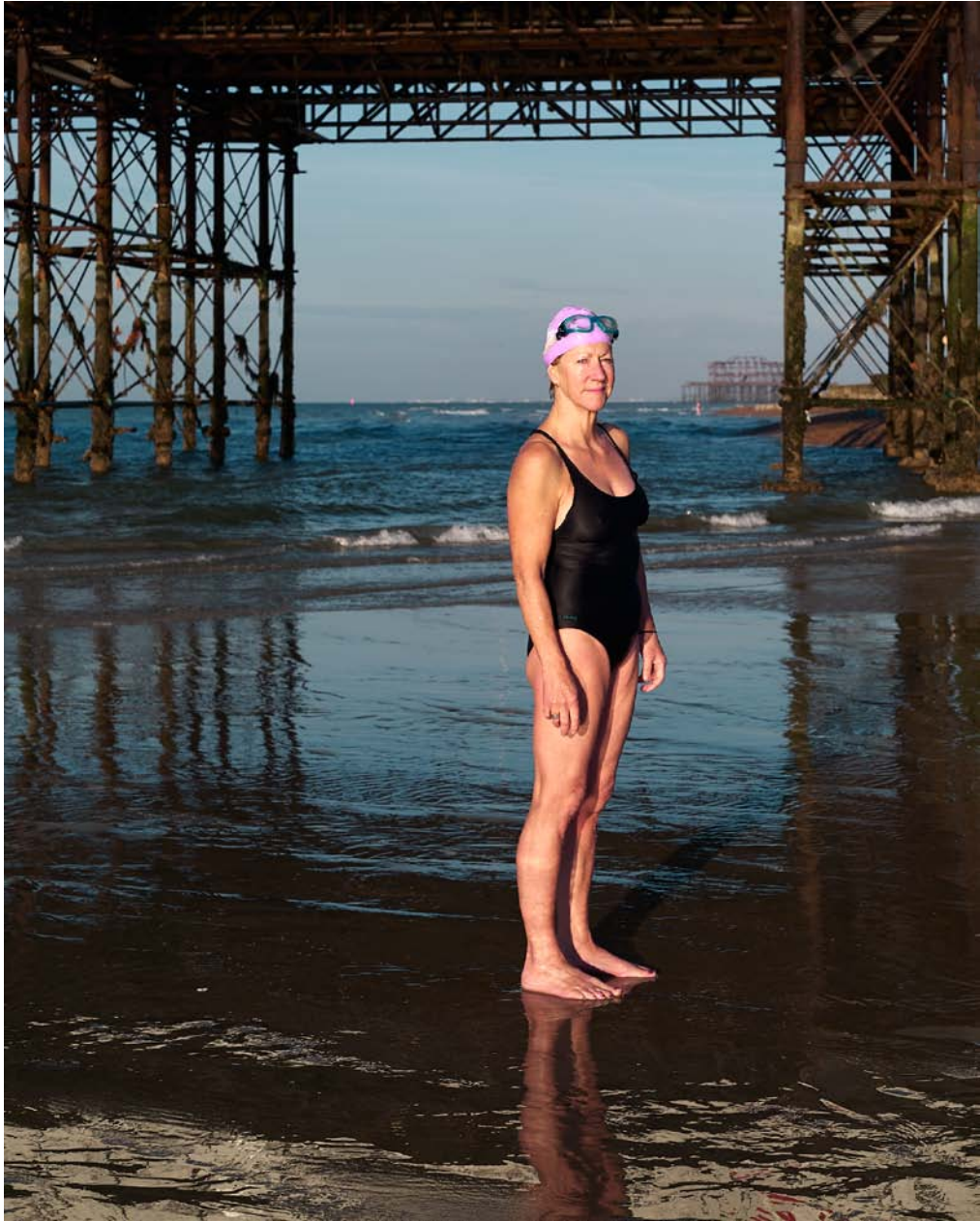


one does regularly and there is often a slight tension associated with it. My aim though, is not to let that tension evaporate completely; the tension is another way of portraying vulnerability and we are no more honest in our presentation to the world than when we are just a little bit vulnerable.

And this is my most significant insight. I have learned about my own vulnerabilities, my own sense of collectivism and my judgements, both good and bad. If approaching people in this way has taught me anything it's the ability to take people as I find them and not be so quick to judge.

See: <http://www.tearsinrain.co.uk/>













Mathematics

Peter Fraser HonFRPS

In the 4th century BC Aristotle credited Pythagoras with the view that the principles of mathematics are the principles of all things; Aristotle's own philosophic, spiritual and mathematical thinking led him to propose that at the deepest level reality is mathematical in nature. For Galileo, writing nineteen centuries later, nature is "a grand book" that is "written in the language of mathematics".

More recently, Max Tegmark, Professor of Physics at MIT has proposed that at the most fundamental level "not only does maths describe the world we live in, it is the world we live in. If you grant that both space and everything in space is mathematical, then it begins to sound less insane that everything is mathematical".

I find this idea of a mathematical structure behind everything absolutely compelling, and may well draw energy from the fact that as a schoolboy I loved mathematics, chemistry and physics, and even then understood mathematics to be 'beautiful'.

The atomic structure of materials, and the influence of DNA on the appearance of people and other living organisms rely on the language of mathematics for their



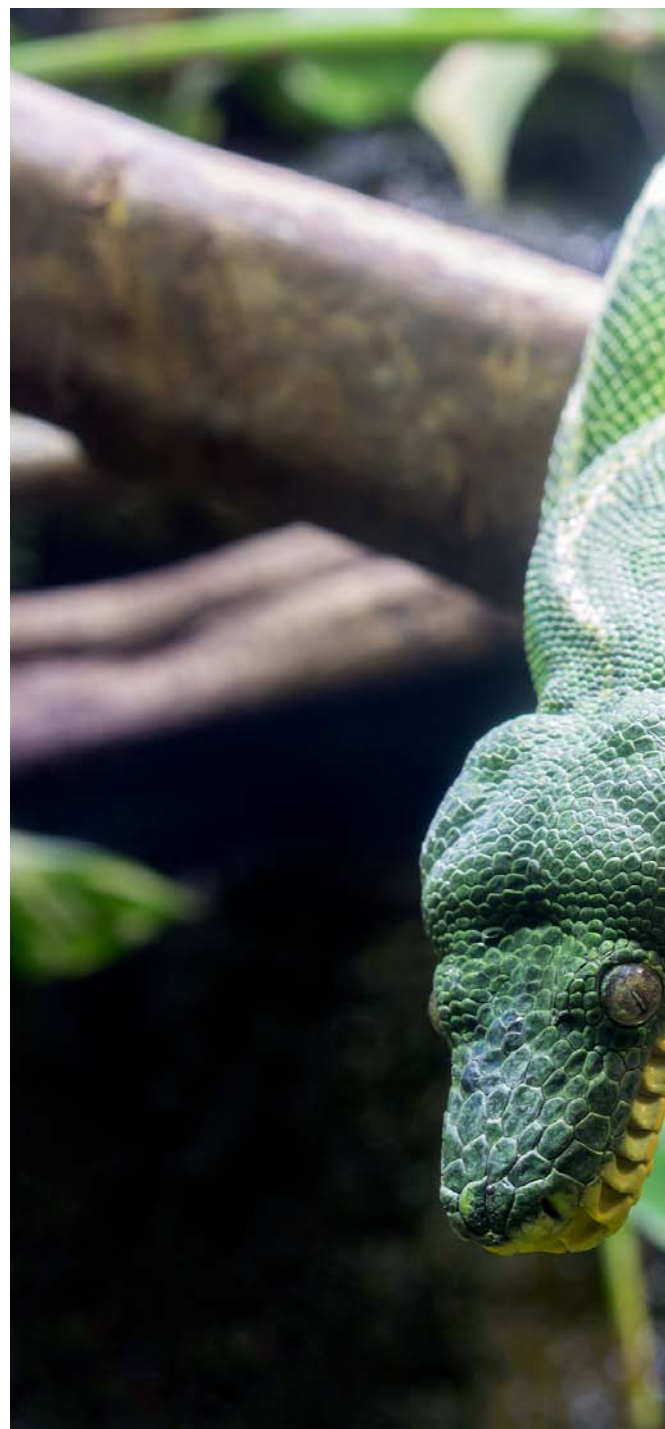


expression. Behavioural and thought patterns of living things can be 'brain mapped' generating expression through mathematics.

Forces at work which lead to the shaping of materials and their outward appearance, and the effects of light on the perception of our surroundings, are all day to day ways in which reality can be articulated through mathematics.

I have approached the making of these new photographs very much with these ideas in mind - that mathematics can explain the world, or at least describe it in a way that approaches an explanation. Furthermore, with an understanding that our fascination with and use of mathematics is by no means morally neutral, I asked a number of the people portrayed in this series to imagine that they had just discovered that something they had always believed to be true had just been found to be a lie. I invite the viewer to do likewise and, in considering these new images, to imagine how complex mathematics might give form to everything we see in them.

See <https://www.skinnerboox.com/books/mathematics-peter-fraser>













Infectum Pellis

Jessica Nash BA

As a photographer, my focus on skin stems from my twin brother's diagnosis of melanoma, a skin cancer, which has been a recurring battle for him throughout my professional practice.

Infectum Pellis is an ongoing project in which, as an artist, I examine my personal relationship with skin and touch. Comprising portraits of myself and my family, the series explores the idea of skin as tense and restrictive, reflecting the way haphephobia, the fear of being touched, causes the artist to feel.

To consider the skin as a physical barrier between the world and oneself creates a hyperawareness of whatever or whoever might come into contact with the body. This has affected the artist's relationship with others; as well as myself, my physicality and sexuality. I aim to produce images that are a literal representation of this uneasiness. An earlier project *Call me, Francis* explored the relationship between skin and garment; by laying flush to the skin, clothing offers an extra barrier between body and world, making haphephobia more manageable.

Infectum Pellis translates from Latin as 'moist skin'. Modern English relates the word 'infectum' to infection or disease, whilst 'moist' is a word many are uncomfortable with, provoking thoughts of bodily fluids, and promoting discomfort. The artist in me uses this tension to encourage viewer interpretation. 'Moist skin' can be linked with sweat, disease, humidity, sex and wetness, all of which are themes present in the artist's work.

During the production of *Infectum Pellis*, my father was also diagnosed with melanoma. Although my personal life has heavily influenced my subject matter, the project has proved therapeutic, helping me understand and communicate the ways in which I experience my own skin.

See: www.jessicanash.co.uk



from *Call Me, Francis*



above and right: from *Infectum Pellis*





from *Old
Wives Tales*



from *Old
Wives Tales*

Jo-Ana

Philip Morris BA

Jo-Ana visually describes diary entries made by Jo, a 30 something recovered anorexic, throughout her period of illness. Key events before, during and after her illness are recorded. Presented as a series of still life compositions, they offer the viewer insight into Jo's struggle with anorexia.

Items of food consumed by Jo are portrayed, the nutritional value corresponding to her transition from health, to illness, and on to recovery. Her thoughts are displayed alongside text she found inspirational. Everyday objects offer a glimpse of her interests and her personality. Examining an alternative relationship with food and played out on a very small stage, it is the story of what happens when food stops being a friend. No single cause for *anorexia nervosa* has been identified; instead it can usually be attributed to a number of causes including genetics and family circumstances. Societal pressures are also commonly cited by anorexics as being causative factors.

A strong subculture is associated with both anorexia and bulimia – society and technology contriving to enable an online community via which individuals who engage in dysfunctional eating can derive mutual support or 'thinspiration'. The project title derives from the vernacular term used by anorexics when referring to the illness - Ana.

The project was undertaken for personal reasons, having witnessed someone suffering from anorexia first-hand. I have also witnessed first-hand the ignorance that surrounds anorexia and eating disorders in general. Whilst society may apply at least some of the pressure that can trigger anorexia, its view is largely that to succumb to an eating disorder is something shameful. Anorexia is

something that happens to other people. Anorexia is a guilty secret.

I believe that as photographers we have a duty to highlight social issues, to raise awareness.

A primary aim for *Jo-Ana*, then, is to raise awareness in two key areas: amongst the family, friends and colleagues of anorexics – helping them to recognise the signs and symptoms of the illness; and amongst anorexics – where removing the stigma is essential, helping bring the discussion out into the open, enabling dialogue with interventionist channels, and demonstrating that recovery is possible. In the early stages of *Jo-Ana*, the participant stated that on many occasions her treatment had become about the illness rather than the person, and that this is a view commonly held by anorexics.

Jo-Ana is not an exercise in documenting diary pages. It is about a person and a personality, and how such are shaped (or not) as a result of the individual's anorexia and its treatment. Co-joining images of food and text, ensuring that the participant's voice was heard through the photography, was a critical factor for the project, an issue of primary concern.

We document war, poverty and famine. Why, then, is it frowned upon to document the causes and effects of eating disorders? How can people be aware of and understand social issues if they only see a sanitised view? People need to see the reality of eating disorders, and the reality is shocking.

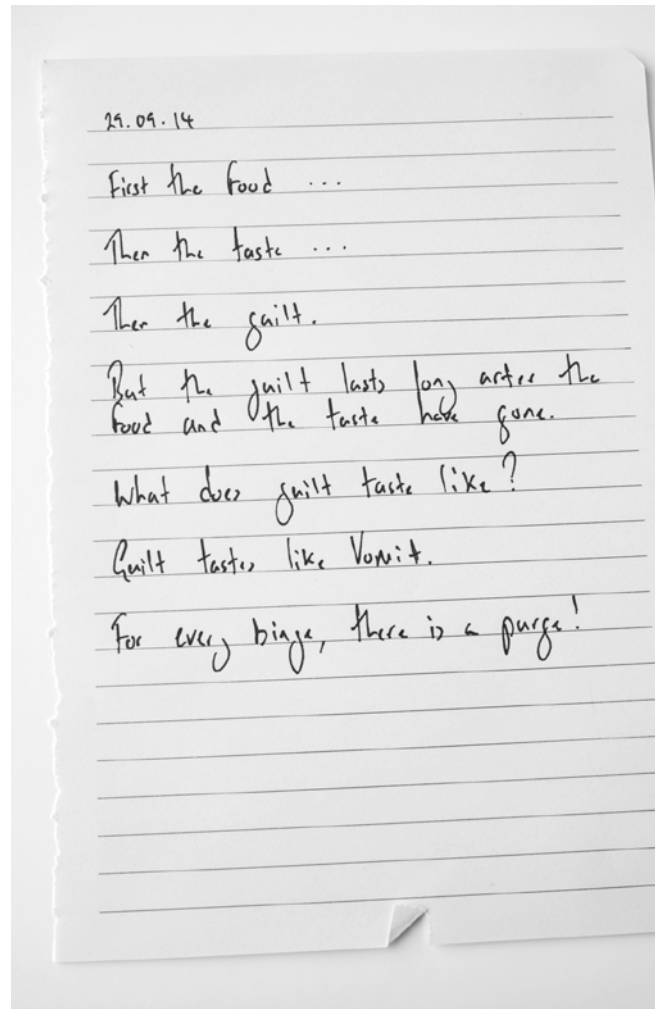
As a project, *Jo-Ana* fulfils its purpose - raising awareness, by inviting the viewer to ask questions about the subject's situation. Some of these questions are quite obvious; for example, the viewer might ask what is happening in the subject's life to cause the illness? Could

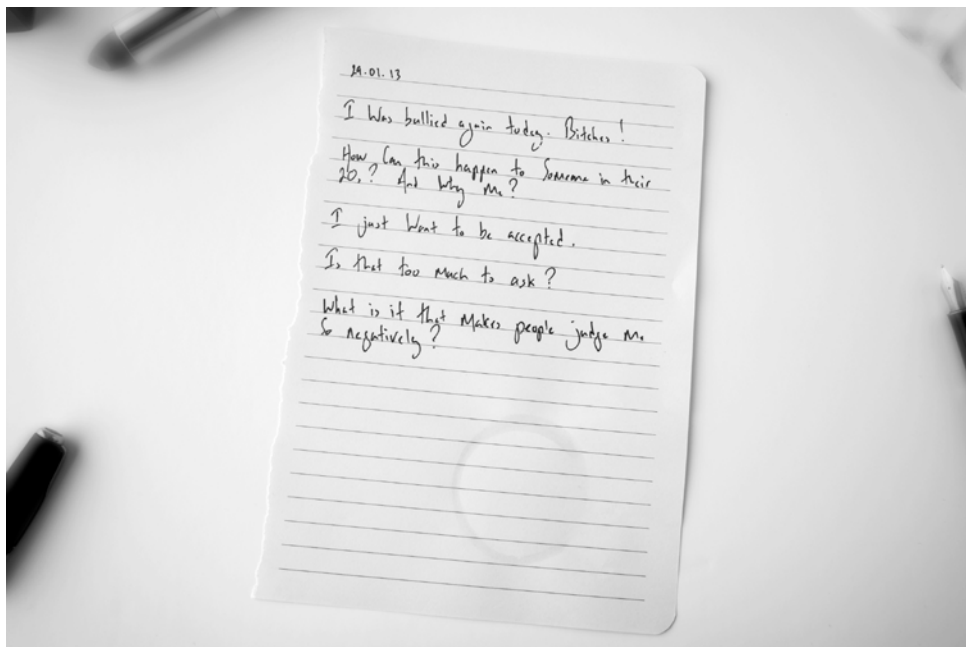
we be much more soul-searching, and ask ourselves, as a society, what is happening in our own lives which means that we so often miss, or disregard, the plight of others? Is it that we don't see? Or is it that we don't want to see?

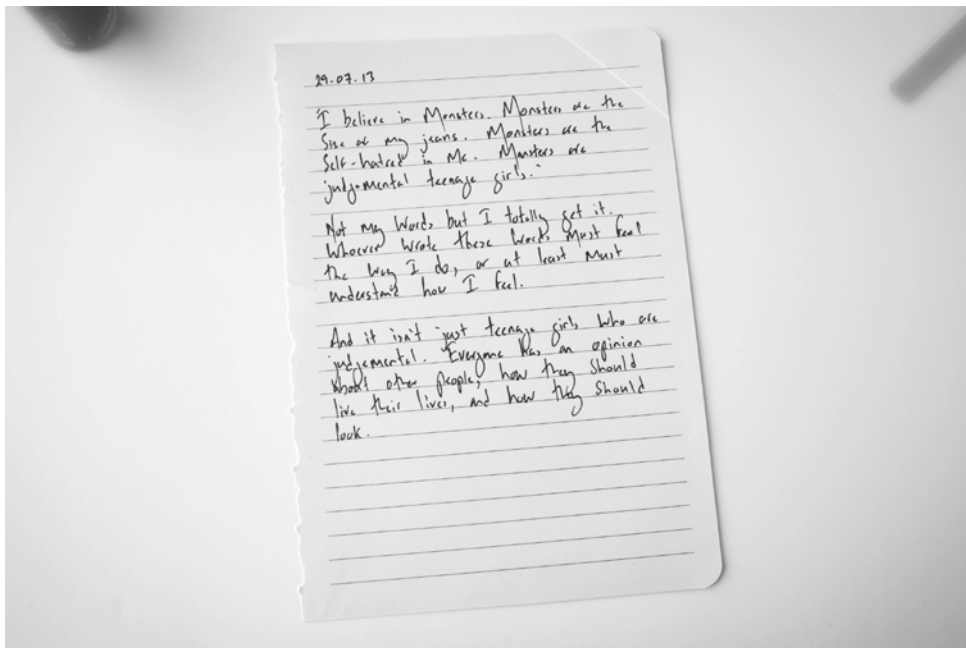
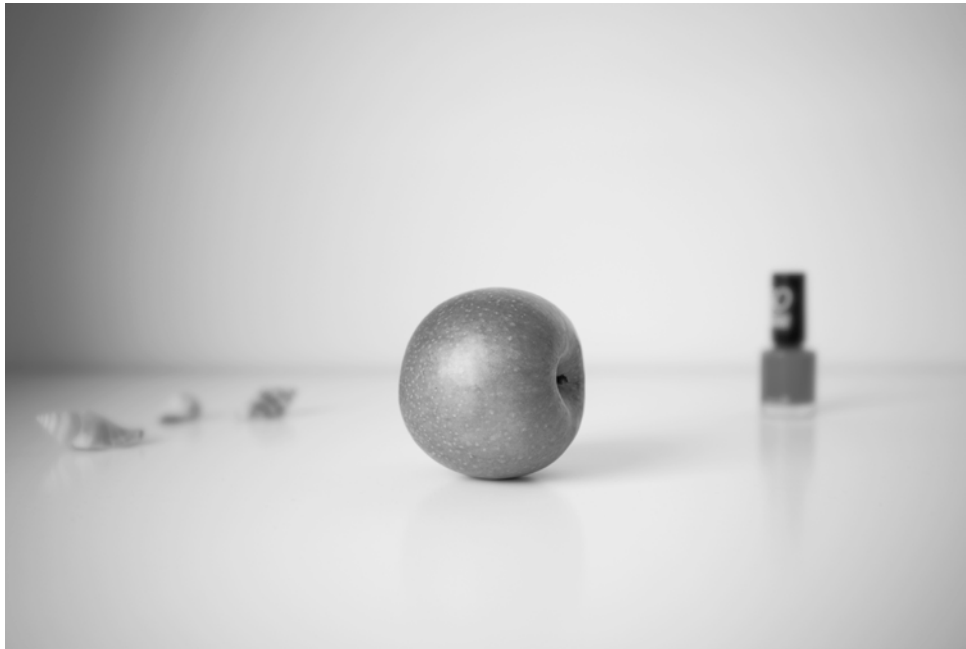
After all, for Jo-Ana as in life, the signs are there - if we care to look.

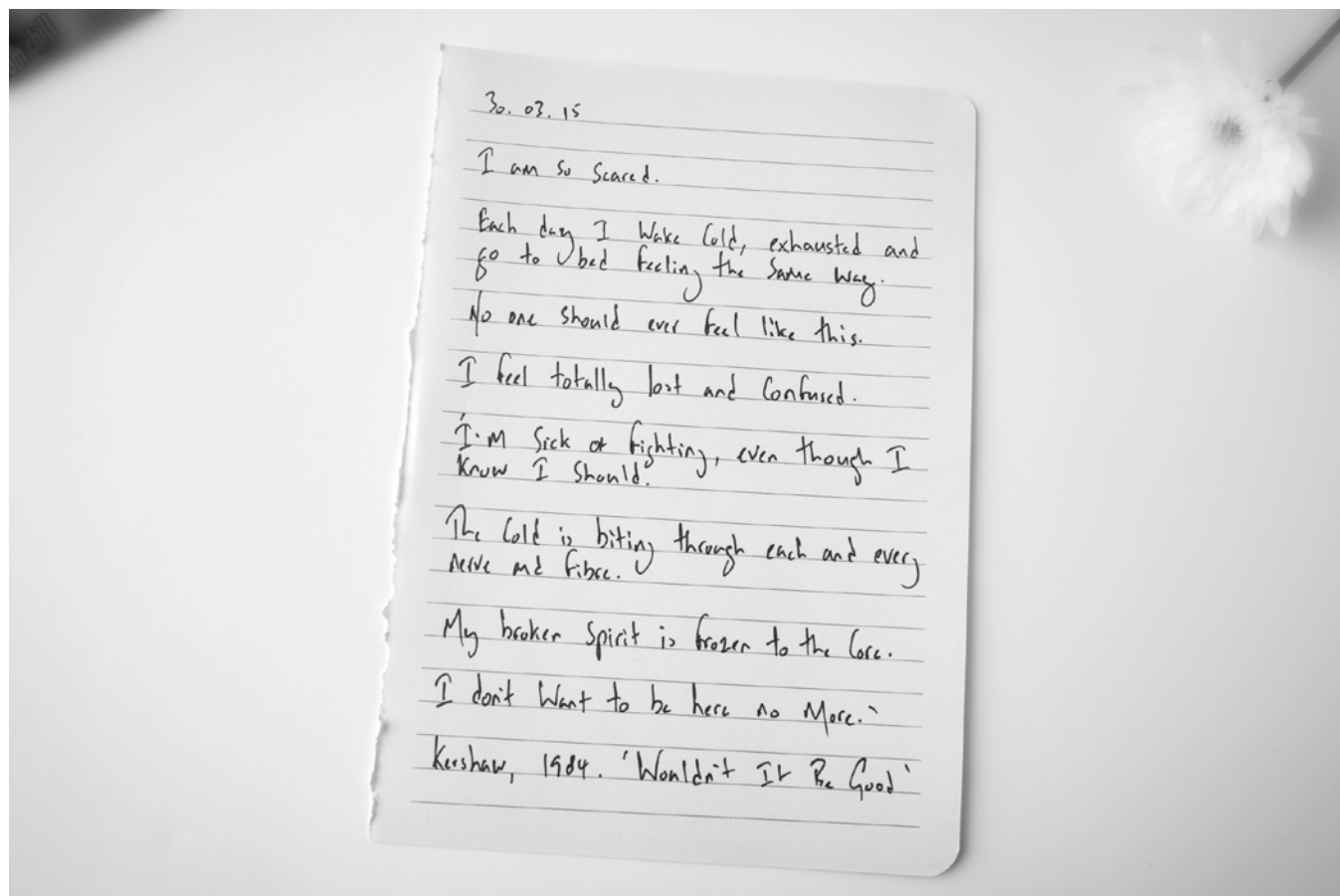
See: <https://jo-ana.co.uk> and <https://philipmorrisphotography.com>

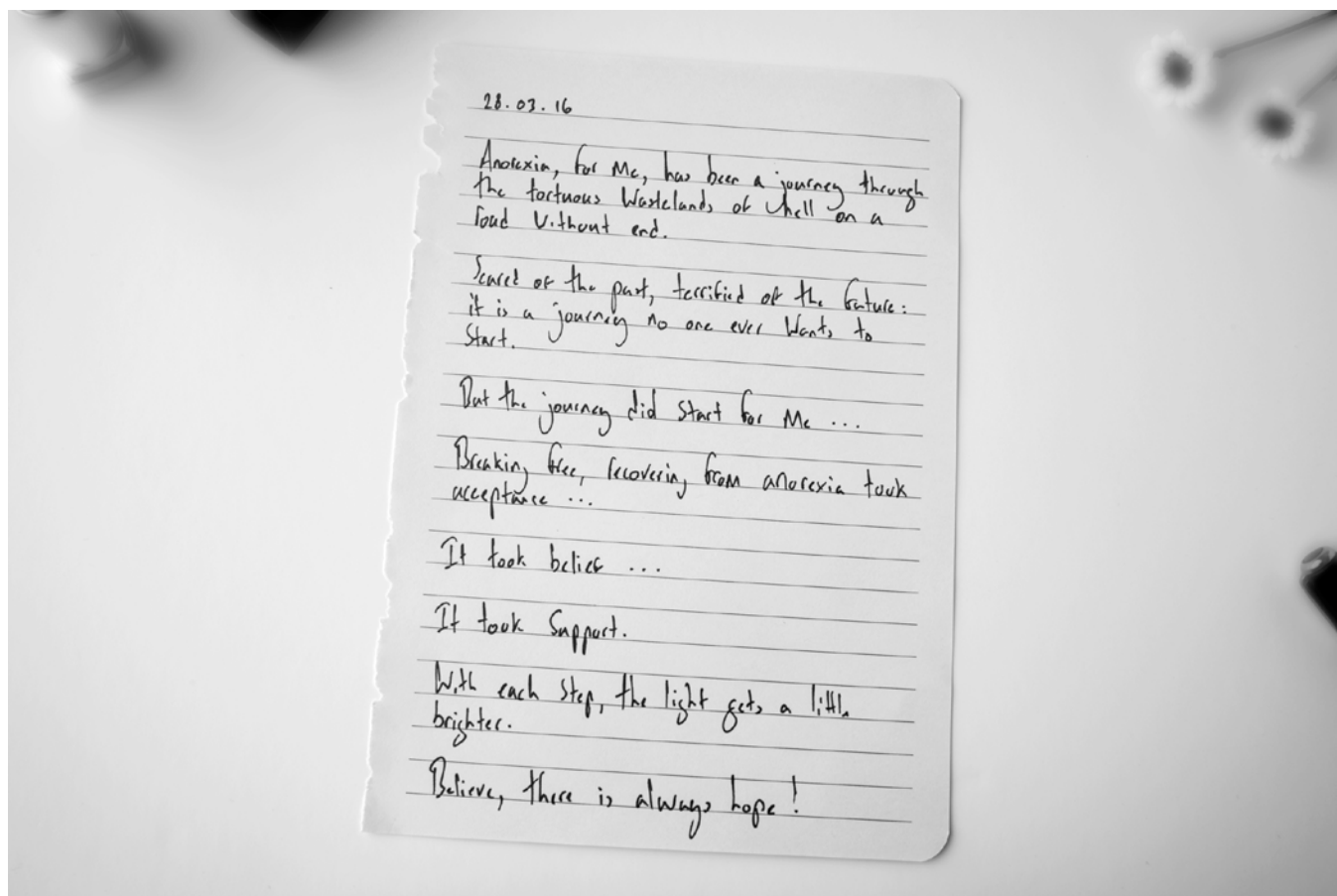
Philip Morris is a member of the Contemporary Group.











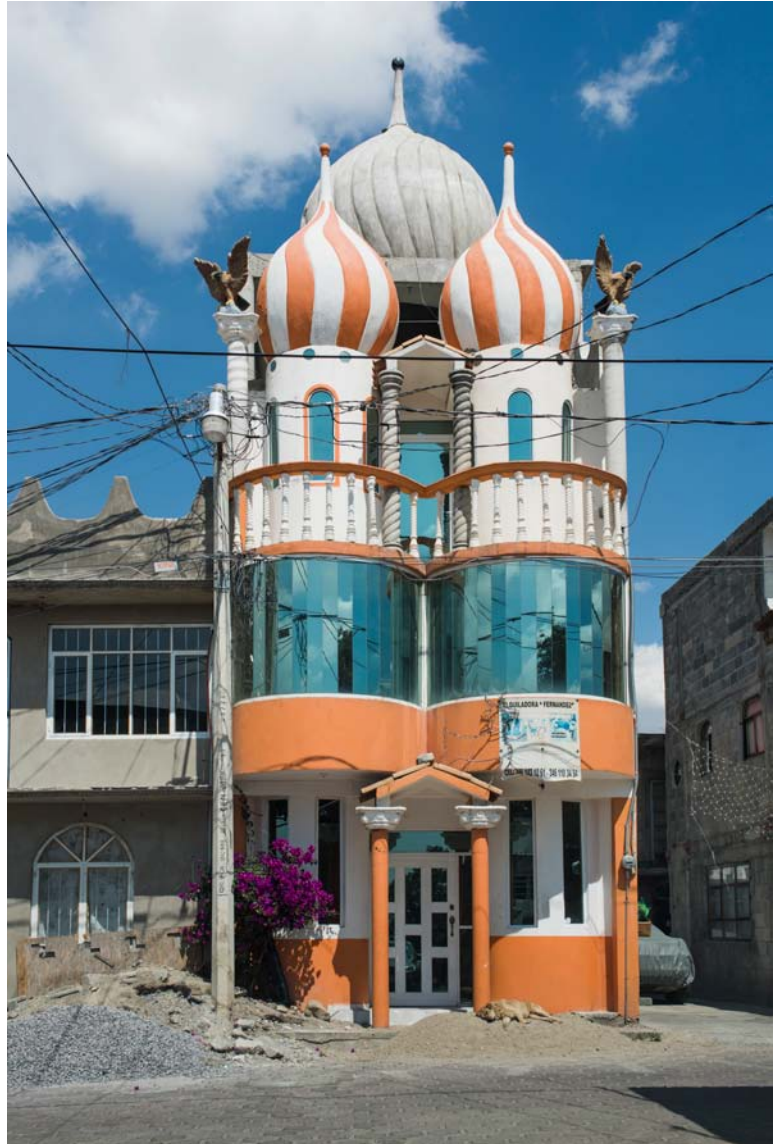
Free Architecture

Adam Wiseman

Cultural identity is increasingly difficult to photograph. As popular trends in lifestyles become global, people not only begin to look alike but also live similar experiences. Globalization has made it so that we all dress alike, our malls, airports and factories look alike, and often our life experiences are similar. Cultural identifiers are fast disappearing. One need only go to a tourist destination and look at the waves of Europeans, Asians, and Latin Americans, all dressed the same, all snapping the same pictures with their iPhones, to realize that it is becoming very hard to distinguish one culture from another.

One of the more uniquely Mexican expressions of contemporary socio-cultural identity (aside from its food) is its architecture. Architecture speaks of community and shared experience but also the individual and the family. It speaks of institutional aspirations, of corruption and violence, of rebellion and repression and of anarchic self-expression.

Many of Mexico's rural houses are self-built structures with little or no regulation; architecture built by non-architects. Peppering the rural landscape and urban working-class neighbourhoods, these buildings reflect the aspirations of their builders. They are financed over time by emigrants living and working in the USA, and are inspired by their new surroundings. Rarely do two structures look alike; they incorporate different styles in one building, copying

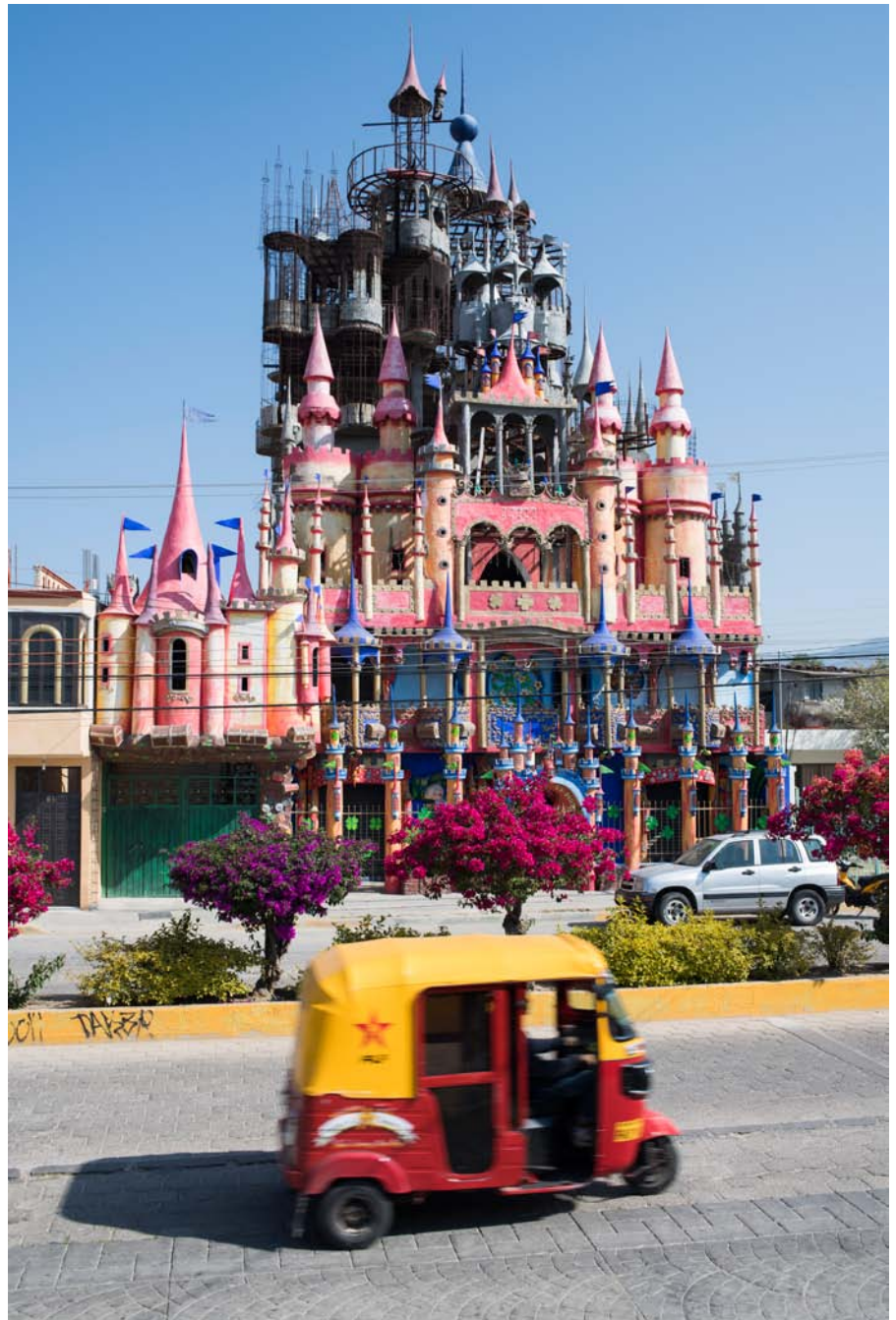


what each family likes from a cross-section of cultures and historical periods. They may be inspired by American suburbia, Hollywood movies or Disney fantasies. They include castles with minimalist Japanese interiors, or Swiss chalets with neo-classical accents.

Often, these houses are left empty or remain in a permanent state of construction. More like trophies than homes, they function as substitutes for their owners, who have left to seek economic opportunity across the northern border. In the spirit of Robert Venturi's *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972) and Robert Smithson's *Hotel Palenque* (1969-72), 'free architecture' lends importance to a feature of the built environment that might otherwise be dismissed as an eyesore.

This architectural landscape in Mexico shines a spotlight on a country that is not part of the cultural clichés of yesteryear. It is a culture in constant flux defined by the pressures of globalization while maintaining a connection to its tradition. It is torn between its past and its future.

See: www.adamphotogallery.com







Ian Maxwell

Ian Maxwell, who died on Saturday 5th October, was a founder of Contemporary North West (CNW) and was the driving force behind it until only a couple of years ago. I have created this memoir of him based on e-mails I have received. I'd like to thank particularly Derek Trillo ARPS and Keith Launchbury FRPS and the other members of CNW who shared their thoughts with me.

In 2008 Keith met Ian to review some prints to enable a discussion about how these came into being and where Ian would like to take image-making within the context of the RPS Contemporary genre. Keith was enthusiastic about Ian's work - a sequence of prints captured along a three mile walk near his home while walking his dog - and following that meeting, in April 2009 Keith and Ian met Andy Biggs, another sympathetic ear. They enjoyed the session and agreed to meet again, and in the meantime Ian contacted the RPS to see if more NW members would be willing to meet.

Derek first met Ian at the Cheltenham weekend in 2009. "Ian was keen to organise the first meeting of a NW group and from that first discussion I could see a twinkle in his eye of the possibility of getting something done. It indicated his spark of enthusiasm that I saw many times over the years." The first meeting was on 19th October, 2009, and as NW organiser, Ian spent a number of years on the CG Committee.

In autumn 2010 Ian had a considerable coup by organising an RPS Day of Contemporary Photography at St Martin's College in Lancaster. Star attraction was Martin Parr HonFRPS ably supported by John Darwell. This was my introduction to Contemporary Photography and it sowed the seeds for my later involvement.

I have received comments from other members of CNW including Nigel Richards ARPS, John Corbett ARPS and Arnie Whittle. Their memories include how Ian set up and facilitated the group as well as being an excellent photographer who was always welcoming and inspiring to others.

When I first joined the group I too was taken by the warmth and enthusiasm of Ian's welcome and I appreciated how he would lead really interesting discussions on the psychology and philosophy of Contemporary Photography. Debate was as important as looking at images.

Ian finally withdrew from organising the group so that he could spend more time in Spain where he had a house. About a year ago he informed me that he had been diagnosed with an incurable form of lung cancer and though remaining interested in our activities he could no longer attend meetings.

Ian's most tangible legacy is the continued group, the spirit that he brought to his photography and his unfailing encouragement of all of us interested in Contemporary Photography. We shall miss that twinkle in his eye.

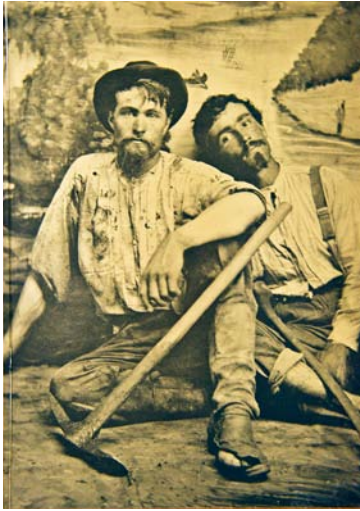
Our condolences go to Ian's wife Elaine and his extended family.

Alan Cameron LRPS

Organiser Contemporary NW. 11th October 2018

Gold and Silver/Or et Argent, Luce Lebart

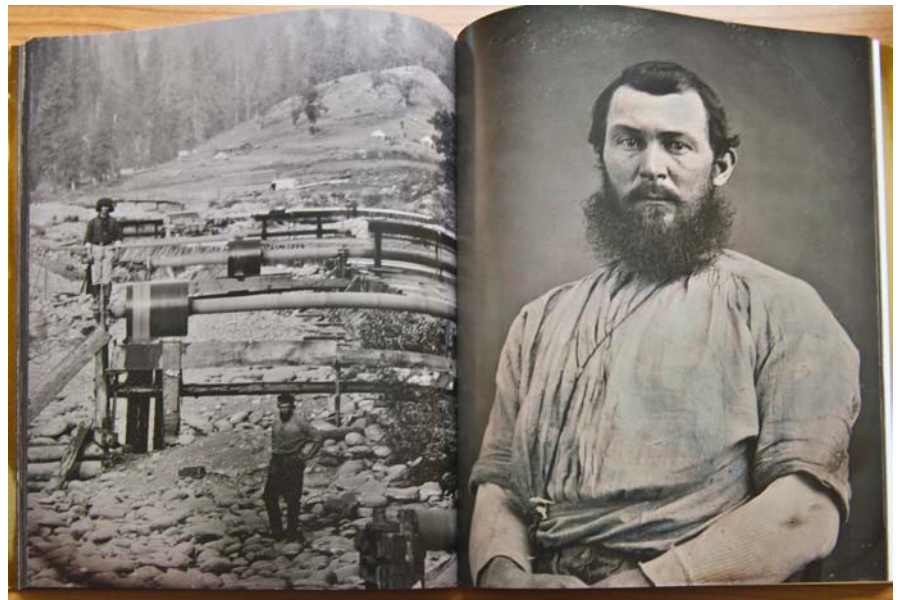
Book Review by Brian Steptoe FRPS



310x230mm, 67 full page daguerreotypes, 5 ambrotypes, 1 tintype and 12 further daguerrotype images and photos of protective cases. The book includes an extensive text section in English and in French, which describes the daguerreotype process and the Californian gold rush in detail

Published by RVB.

Daguerreotypes, ambrotypes and tintypes from the Californian Gold Rush, which began in 1848. These are digital reproductions from the collection donated by the London Archive of Modern Conflict to the Canadian Photography Institute in 2016



View from the North

Patricia Ann Ruddie MA ARPS

"This group is so good and we go away inspired with new ideas."

For several years I've been the organiser of the Contemporary North subgroup, a group of friendly, talented photographers who travel vast areas of the northeast, from Middlesbrough to Huddersfield, from Bridlington to Selby, and the several towns and cities in between.

We meet bi-monthly in York, averaging 12 members per meeting. Projects are shown in various formats – prints and images on USB sticks, and, these days, everyone seems to be making photo books. We've met twice at our new location, Clements Hall, and it's proving successful. Having met for several years at Nigel Tooby's art studio in Wakefield, with its superb facilities and lovely atmosphere, I was worried that we'd never find another venue that's remotely suitable.

You'll know from reading our reports in *Concept* that we're a diverse bunch of photographers with a broad range of photographic interests. This exemplifies the meaning of what it means to be a contemporary photographer - it's not a genre but one that embraces all types and subjects.

At our last meeting I asked members what they liked about our subgroup meetings. Here's my opportunity to share with you some of their comments. Beginning with the quote above, members went on to say that our 3 ½ hours provide the forum to show work in a "trusting and safe place" in which they aren't "afraid to talk about their photographs". They welcome the "positive and constructive" feedback provided. Members enjoy "bouncing ideas off each other" and seeing projects unlike their own, opening up new ways of seeing and thinking about photography.

It's not only new ideas that are inspired, and friendships formed. One member wrote to me after our previous meeting: "I went home with a smile on my face". It's very gratifying to know that members think our time together worthwhile. I'm privileged to be part of this remarkable subgroup.

GROUP AND RELATED SOCIETY EVENTS

3 November	Contemporary North West meeting at Samlesbury War Memorial Hall, Cuerdle Lane, Preston. PRS OUY. 1-4pm. Theme for meeting is 'Three mages that inspire you and your responses to them'. Contact Alan Cameron, alan.cameron@me.com tel 01253 829114 mob 07825 271344
4-17 November	Exhibition <i>Explorations on John Betjeman</i> at the Cow Byre Art Gallery, Bury Street, Ruislip HA4 7SU. Eight photographers including CG members Duncan Unsworth, Tony Hale, Robert Davies and Anne Crabbe. Contact Robert Davies 07770 988348
17 November	Contemporary North East meeting at new venue, Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Road, York. YO23 18W. 1.30-5pm. Contact Patricia Ruddle ARPS patriciaruddle@btinternet.com tel 01904 783850
19 January	Contemporary North East Meeting, Details as above
16 March	Contemporary North East Meeting, Details as above
March 2019	Contemporary South West meeting in Cornwall. For details contact Rod Fry rod@rod Fry.eclipse.co.uk tel 01803 844721
17 April	Associate and Fellowship assessments, Conceptual and Contemporary. Royal Photographic Society, Paintworks (new build end), Bristol BS4 3EH

Chair - Avril Harris ARPS
 avrilharris@blueyonder.co.uk
 Deputy chair - Peter Ellis LRPS
 wordsnpicsltd@gmail.com
 Secretary - position vacant
 Treasurer - David Grimshaw
 david@davidgrimshaw.com
 Postal portfolio - Duncan Unsworth
 duncan.unsworth100@gmail.com
 Event organiser - Avril Harris ARPS
 avrilharris@blueyonder.co.uk
 Journal editor

Paul Ashley LRPS, 59 Gilbert
 Road, Cambridge CB4 3NZ
 paultheashley@gmail.com
 Journal Editorial committee -
 Paul Ashley, editor
 Anne Crabbe
 Brian Steptoe, design
 Webmaster, Sean Goodhart ARPS
 seangoodhart@hotmail.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@rod Fry.eclipse.co.uk
 Patricia Ruddle ARPS
 patriciaruddle@btinternet.com
 Anne Crabbe FRPS info@annecrabbe.co.uk
 Tom Owens ARPS tom@tjowens.com
 Paul Ashley LRPS paultheashley@gmail.com
 Alan Cameron LRPS (co-opted)
 alan.cameron@me.com
 Tessa Mills FRPS (co-opted)
 tessamills@hotmail.co.uk

