

## Contemporary Photography



# View from the Chair

By the time you receive this, the RPS International Photobook Exhibition will have been exhibited at the Espacio Gallery, London, along with a members’ print exhibition. The South West sub group organised its following exhibition at the Barbican, Plymouth, where visitors could have their own books reviewed in one-to-one surgeries. The last venue is soon on 12 November at the Impressions Gallery, Bradford. For more information: <http://www.rps.org/events/2016/november/12/international-photobook-exhibition>. I hope that you can visit the exhibition to handle first-hand the books that the winning photographers have created.

The selection of the final 25 books took all day; we received 155 entries from 23 countries. The selectors, David Company, Lucy Kumara Moore and Dewi Lewis, were very thorough, looking through all the books several times and sharing their opinions. For those of us on the team, Brian Steptoe FRPS (Leader) Rod Fry ARPS, Tom Owens ARPS, Kate Wentworth LRPS and I, it has been quite a journey and an experience. I have enjoyed looking at all the books and the wide variety of interests expressed there. Some of the hand-made books were quite beautiful and a credit to their authors.

A catalogue of the exhibition is available online at [bit.ly/RPSphotobookexhibition2016catalogue](http://bit.ly/RPSphotobookexhibition2016catalogue).

Best wishes,  
Avril

Cover: © Madeleine Phiri, *Onions, from the series Summertime and the Living is [not] easy in Александровка*  
Journal fonts: general, Avenir Lt Std: Russian characters in Axial Narrow, author name, Letter Gothic Std

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ISSN 0959-6704

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DEADLINE for the Winter 2017 issue 30 December 2016

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Number 65 Autumn 2016

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

# Editorial

"I do believe in an everyday sort of magic -- the inexplicable connectedness we sometimes experience with places, people, works of art and the like; the eerie appropriateness of moments of synchronicity; the whispered voice, the hidden presence, when we think we're alone." <sup>(1)</sup>

Alaska changed my life. As a result of a chance meeting during a trip there, I moved to England where it's been my home for over 30 years.

I was intrigued when I first saw Tama Baldwin's photograph *Lonely Planet, Radar Station. Chukchi Seacoast* in the RPS International Print Exhibition 158. There was something about that image, something of a feeling of "inexplicable connectedness". It wasn't until later when I learned more about her project *Almost an Island – Qikiqtagruk* that I discovered the village's other, 'colonial' name of Kotzebue. I contacted her about the possibility of submitting an article to *Contemporary Photography*.

Kotzebue is unreachable by roads of any kind. You have to fly there or sail almost a thousand miles up the coast through the Bering Sea and onto the Chukchi Sea which is frozen from October to May. I flew there in September 1979 with my sister – a time Tama tells me when it was "quite a wild town". This was my first trip to somewhere different, and I didn't know what to make of it. Probably I assumed that its location in the Arctic Circle would provide an opportunity for exotic, stunning photographs. But the village seemed to be so poor and derelict. Lots of litter everywhere – old snow mobiles, dilapidated boats and motors, tattered furniture, ugly houses built on sticks. Eventually I began to realise that this was because of the nature of its environment. The diary I kept has information about the way of life there, the isolation caused by the Sound being frozen most of the year. I photographed what appeared to be what those of us from the 'lower 48' would consider piles of junk but was in fact an arctic reality. I was reminded by what Susan Sontag wrote in *On Photography* - photographs themselves cannot explain anything, rather they are invitations to deduction and speculation. <sup>(2)</sup>

So it's all about synchronicity and the uncanny role that chance plays in the important events in our lives – a fortuitous encounter in Alaska that led to my relocating over 4,400 miles to the place where I now call home. And what were the odds of discovering another person who's been to one of the most remote places on earth? – a photographer who's been willing to share *Almost an Island – Qikiqtagruk* with us, a village according to Tama Baldwin that is still so hard to reach and hard to stay in that it remains an incredibly story-rich place.

Patricia Ann Ruddle, Editor

1. Charles de Lint. [www.charlesdelint.com/](http://www.charlesdelint.com/)

2. Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, First edition 1977. ISBN 0-374-22626-1

# Summertime and the Living is [not] easy in Александровка (Alexandrovka)

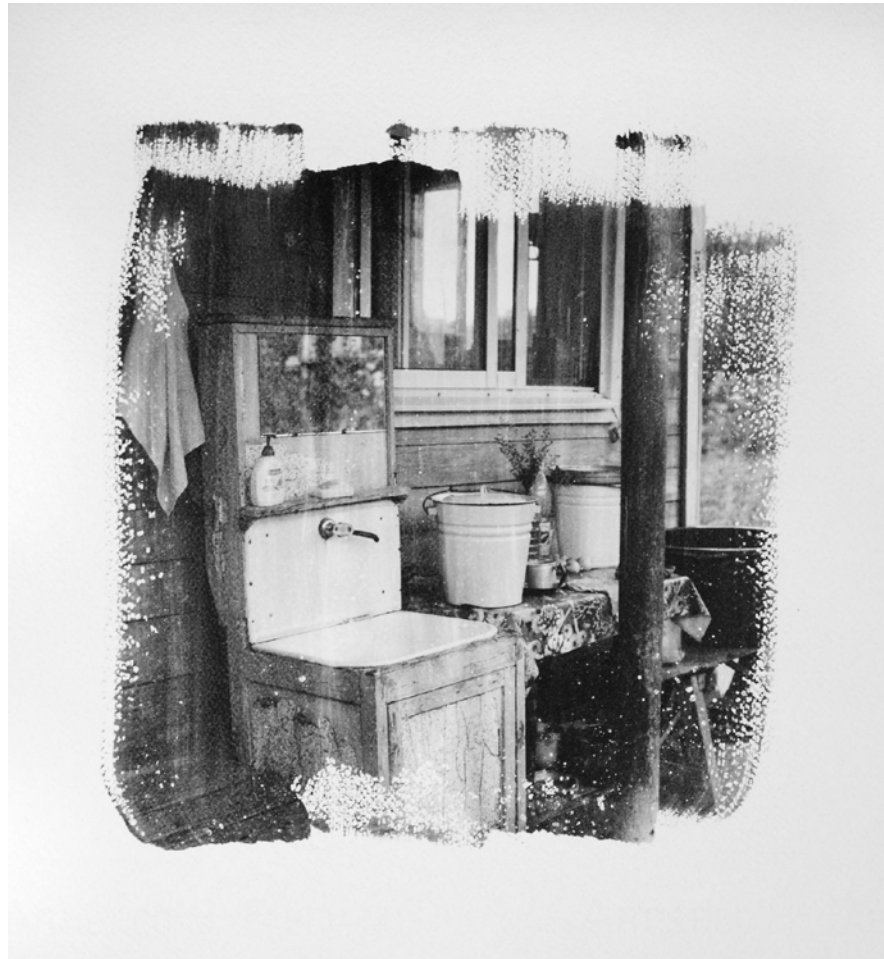
*Madeleine Phiri*

In the West, a self-sustainable life style is almost unimaginable, but this is reality for many who live in a rural Russian village, just like the Холодова (Holodova) family. Even today, the only items available in the village shop are bread, meat, sweets and Vodka. A wide variety of vegetables are home grown. The harvest is for immediate consumption and any excess is pickled to survive the harsh winters. A hole in the ground with a sturdy flap acts as a natural fridge in the summer and a sheltered place in the winter. An outdoor kitchen with dining area, the outdoor toilet, the two sleeping houses and land are a common layout. The Холодова family also have chickens; the eggs are swapped for milk from the neighbour's cow.

The project is based on trips taken to Russia 2014-2016. The photographs were captured on black & white film which were developed and printed using liquid emulsion on textured paper. The historical cyanotype process was used to print the vegetables, sometimes toned in their own juices. Another part of the story about rural living is told through the old photographs of family and friends taken from my Grandmother's photo album.



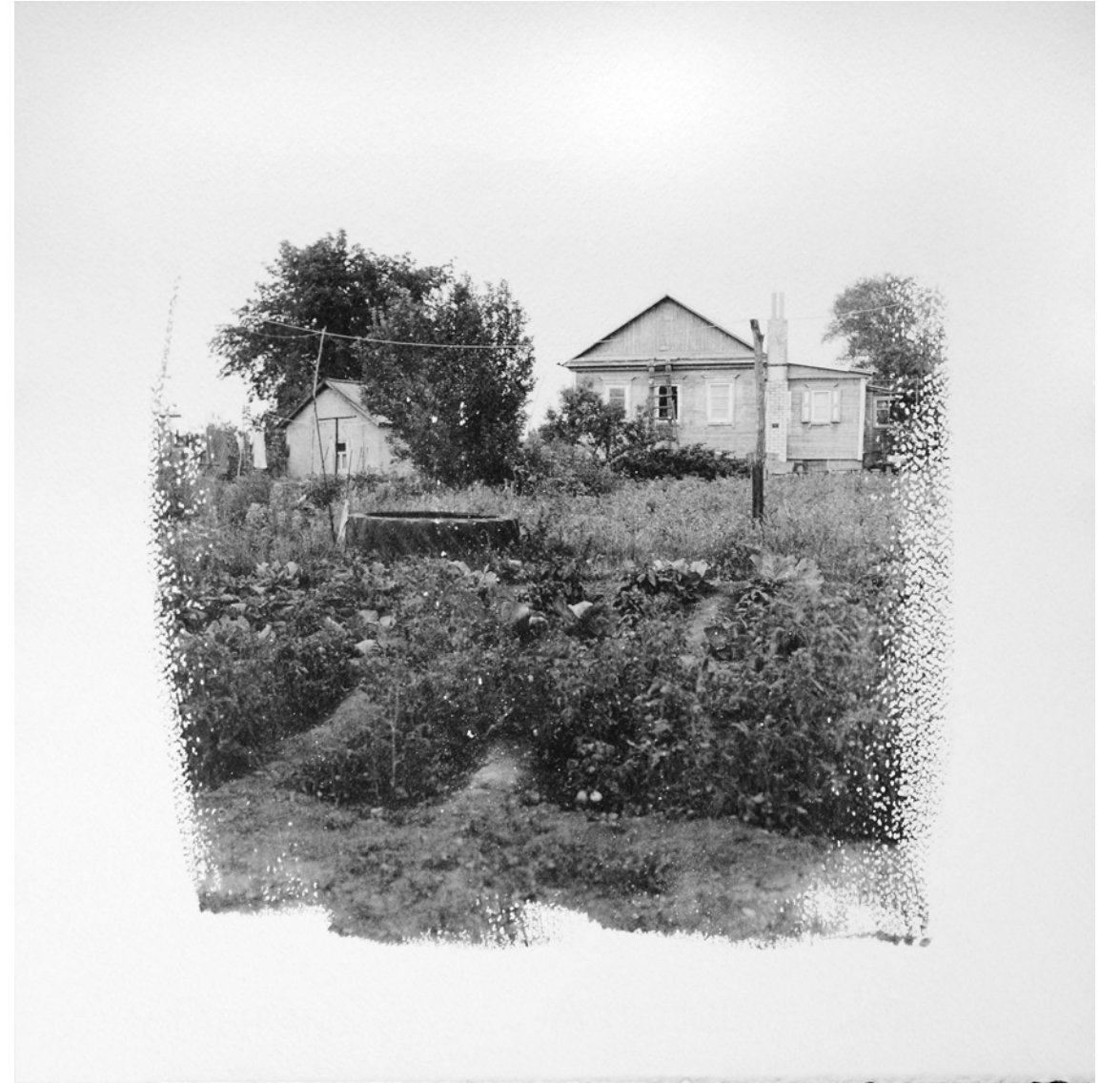




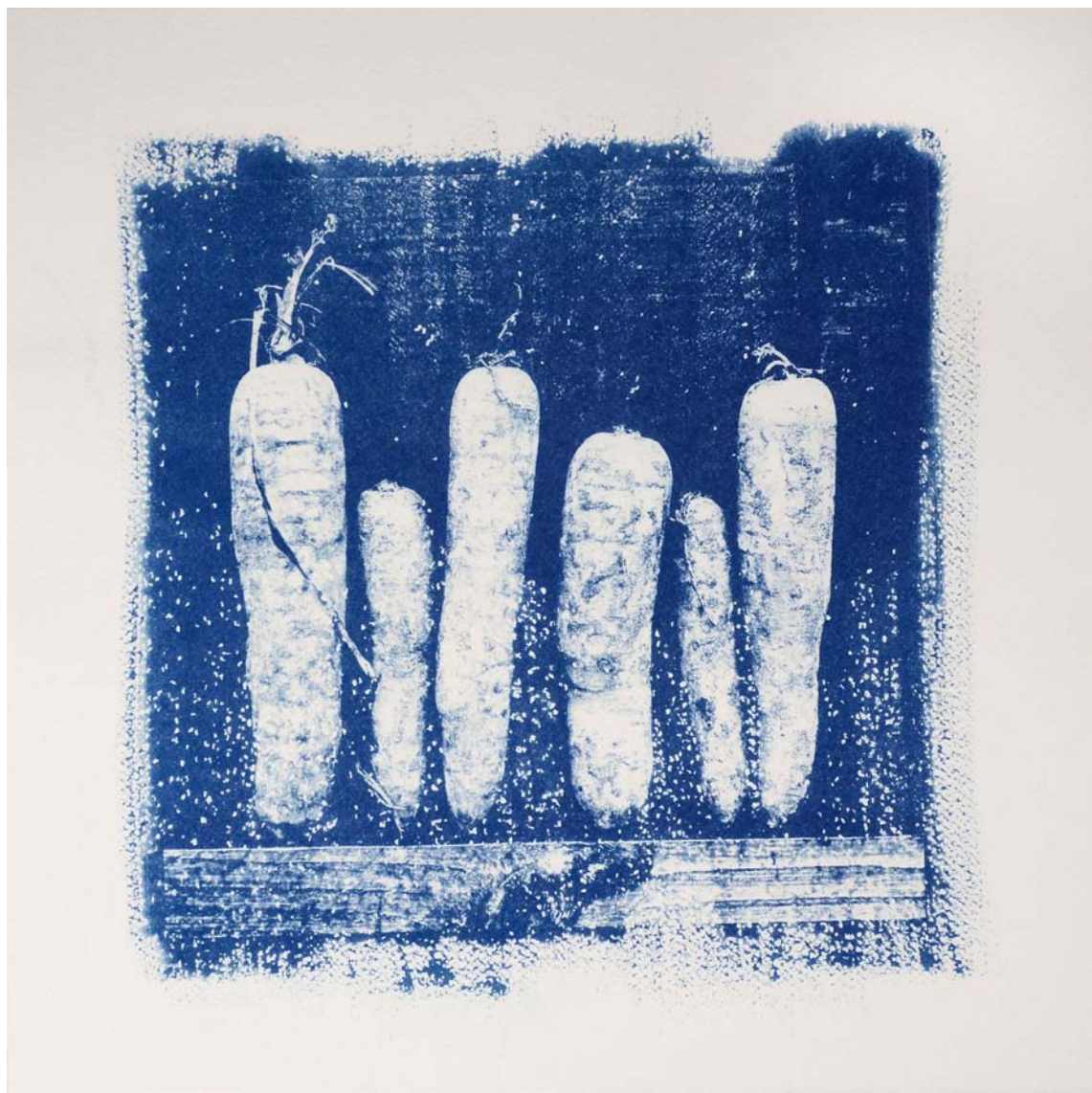
Борщ (Borshch) is a traditional Russian stew and a family recipe. Beetroot is the main ingredient of this much-loved red dish. The broth is typically prepared by boiling meat on the bone for up to six hours. The meat is then removed and the bones discarded; the meat is added back during the last 10-15 minutes of cooking. Cabbage, carrots, potatoes, onions and beetroots are boiled in the broth till tender. Борщ is eaten hot or cold, tastes sweet and sour and a dollop of soured cream makes it just right.











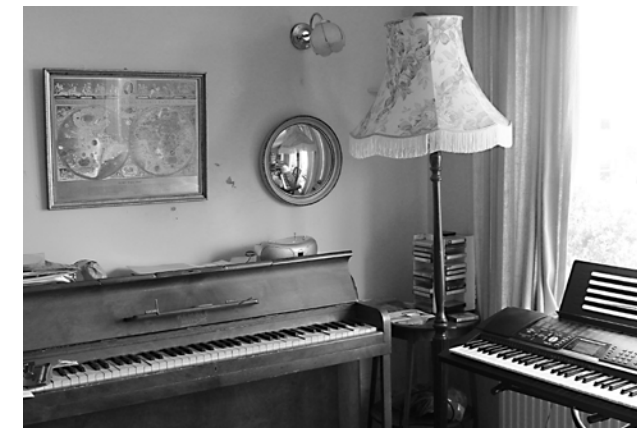


# The State of Isolation

*Bernard James Francis ARPS*

Living in isolation can have certain advantages. Living alone, unencumbered by all of the pervasive, exterior visual influences that surround us, these photographs witness, perhaps for the first time, some of the objects that surround me in my home. It is the state of isolation that enables me to see everyday objects that are at once so familiar, yet simultaneously invisible. "Photography is a tool for dealing with things everybody knows about but isn't attending to. My photographs are intended to represent something that you don't see."<sup>(1)</sup>

1. Emmet Gowin, *On Photography*. Susan Sontag. New York: Anchor Books, Reprint Edition July 1, 1990. p. 200









# THE LINE ON THE MAP

*Ignacio Evangelista*

In this work several áreas of the border between Mexico and the United States are shown with the walls that prevent people passing from one side to another. They generate disturbing and contradictory images: in some places they form the backyard of many homes; those in the natural landscape suggests a strange panoptic mixture of the Great Wall of China and Land Art. Paradoxically, showing a wall without people around it emphasises the border's coercive character and the huge imbalance between the power of the US and its relationship with individuals.



San Diego, California, United States

When we look at a map, we can see the boundary lines marking the borders between different countries. Obviously, these lines are mental constructs that are not physically registered in the territory. However, in the case of the Northwestern border between Mexico and the United States, that imaginary line map becomes tangible in the form of a border wall. The fence I've been photographing in this project IS the line on the map.

Ed. Note: There's an interview with Ignacio on the CNN TV International Channel: <http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/07/23/us-border-fence-evangelista.cnn/video/playlists/trending-video/>

For more information about *The Line on the Map* and his other projects see his website [www.ignacioevangelista.com](http://www.ignacioevangelista.com).

His current project is the acclaimed *After Schengen: European Borders* in which he photographs many of the abandoned border crossings between different EU countries, allowing us to see into the past from the present, especially relevant in today's political climate.



Nogales, Sonora, Mexico





San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora, Mexico

following pages - Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico



Douglas, Arizona, United States









Tecate, Baja California, Mexico



Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico



# Ulysses

Brendan Grimes ARPS



*The superior, the very reverend John Conmee S.J., reset his smooth watch in his interior pocket as he came down the presbytery steps. Five to three.*

In episode ten of *Ulysses* James Joyce depicts the journeys that nineteen of his characters take through the streets of Dublin on 16 June 1904. The episode opens with Father Conmee's journey from the presbytery of the Jesuit church of Saint Francis Xavier, Upper Gardiner Street to Artane in the northside of the city. The purpose of his journey is to meet a Christian Brother to arrange for a boy to be accepted into an orphanage. On the journey he meets respectable people and well-behaved boys, one of whom posts a letter for him. The walk involves much doffing of hats and the exchange of pleasantries. We are made privy to Father Conmee's thoughts and musings, and Joyce mentions the important buildings that he passes.

It occurred to me that with the help of photography I could experience part of this journey and imagine some of Father Conmee's thoughts and encounters. After considering some possibilities I decided to walk Father Conmee's route as far as Newcomen Bridge where he takes the tram towards Howth. I set out one afternoon in October 2010 and the walk took me 43 minutes. I photographed the buildings as I found them - no return visits for better lighting or viewpoints. Aldborough House is semi-derelict and locked up. Access to Newcomen Bridge was denied by barbed wire and railings but I did the best I could by trespassing into the lock keeper's garden. I'm sure I passed respectable people as I walked but there was no doffing of hats or exchange of pleasantries. Like Father Conmee, I did meet a group of boys, one of whom shouted at me 'ye ole cunt ye' - hardly a boy I would trust to post a letter for me.

<http://www.brendangrimes.org/>

*Father Conmee crossed to Mountjoy Square. He thought, but not for long, of soldiers and sailors, whose legs had been shot off by cannonballs, ending their days in some pauper ward [...]*

*A onelegged sailor, swinging himself onward by lazy jerks of his crutches, growled some notes. He jerked short before the Convent of the Sisters of Charity and held out a peaked cap for alms towards the very reverend John Conmee S.J.*







*Near Aldborough House  
Father Connmee thought of that  
spendthrift nobleman. And now  
it was an office or something*



*Father Connmee smelled incense  
on his right hand as he walked.  
Saint Joseph's Church, Portland  
Row. For aged and virtuous  
females. Father Connmee raised  
his hat to the Bless Sacrament.  
Virtuous: but occasionally they  
were also bad tempered.*



*Father Connmee walked down  
Great Charles Street and glanced  
at the shut up free church on his left.*



*On Newcomen Bridge, the very  
reverend John Connmee S.J. of  
Saint Francis Xavier's Church,  
Upper Gardiner Street, stepped  
onto an outward bound tram.*



# Almost an Island - *Qikiqtagruk*

*Tama Baldwin*

Qikiqtagruk, or Kotzebue as it is more commonly known, is on the northwestern coastline of the Alaskan arctic, about 600 air miles north of Anchorage, a thousand miles by sea. I first travelled there in the summer of 2013 to participate in an art and science collaboration between the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute and the Western Arctic National Parklands and the Colorado Art Ranch. The village was our base as we flew back and forth into the vast and remote expanse of the parklands to study a lattice of archeological artifacts dating back 14,000 years. Kotzebue stands in the heart of this ancient story on a long, narrow spit of sand jutting into the tidewaters where three major arctic rivers drain into the Chukchi Sea. The Inupiaq word for the village translates roughly as “almost an island,” which it is both literally and culturally as the entire region and its people, small bands of subsistence hunter gatherers, remained outside of the reach of the Industrial Revolution right through the end of the last Ice Age and on through almost the whole of the Holocene.

It’s hard for people from the middle latitudes to imagine that there are still places left on the earth not reachable by road, but this is still true of most of the arctic worldwide, including Kotzebue, where winter lasts from October to June and the sea is frozen for the duration. Even though the native corporations of the far north have fully entered the global economy by way of large-scale industrial projects in drilling and mining, there is no

manufacturing of any kind. All consumer goods must be shipped in by barge or by cargo plane, the price rising exponentially over the miles, and once they arrive in port, there is little infrastructure to support distribution or storage. Things accumulate in plain view, but they are also endlessly re-purposed. Only a handful of the village’s streets are paved, which is fine given that the land beneath the top 18 inches is frozen permanently and has been for at least the last forty thousand years. Permafrost refuses almost every structure imposed upon it from foundations to roads to crosses in the cemetery. Within a few short years of freezing and thawing and freezing again, all human structures buckle and peel away.

Two centuries have passed since that fateful day when Otto Von Kotzebue made land near today’s village on behalf of the Russian Navy. Despite the devastation that was to follow those many agents of Industrial Materialism - the whalers, the trappers, traders, missionaries, soldiers, miners, and standard bearers of the state - the older values of a subsistence way of life are still visible. Take a stroll through the village, which is about five miles long and a couple of soccer fields across, and you’ll see how life in the far north is still oriented very strongly around the land itself, the drama of the seasons, and the plants and migratory animals of the tundra that serve as both sustenance and effigy. Just about everyone still fishes and hunts and takes time in the summer to gather berries. And no one - and I mean no one - ever complains about

the weather no matter how terrible it may seem. The summer, though brief, is a spectacle of supersaturated light in which the vegetation roars through its reproductive cycles seemingly on fast forward, catapulting itself back into the depths of winter and the full blown radiance of the polar night.

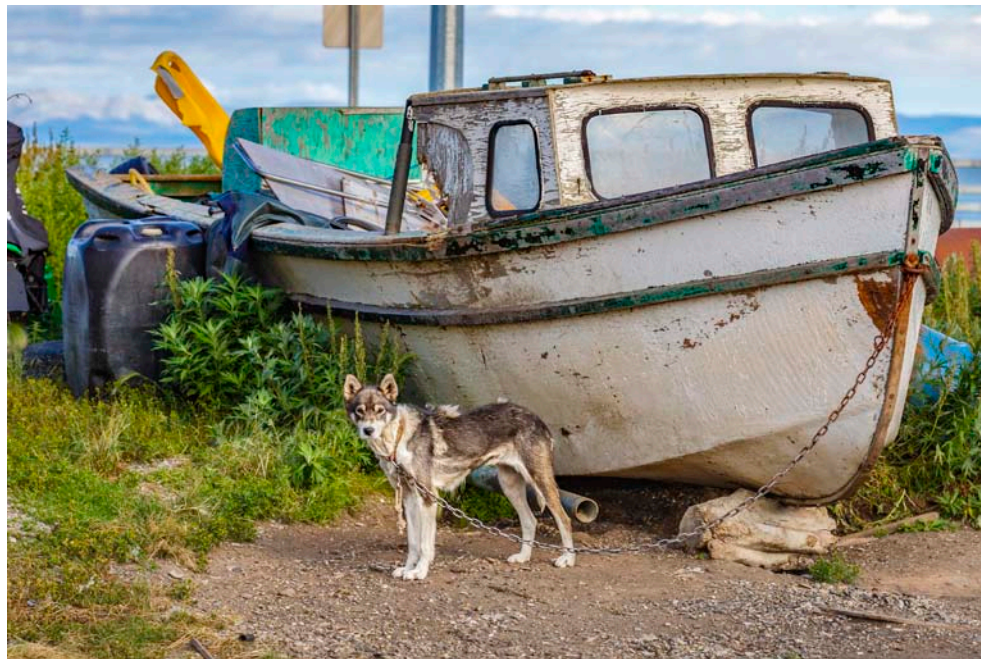
Ed. Note: Tama Baldwin is a writer and a photographer whose primary interest is in the inscriptions humans make upon wild nature as it otherwise might exist without our presence on the planet. Much of her current work centers on the polar latitudes, including *Almost an Island*. This autumn she is circumnavigating the Svalbard Archipelago with other artists and scientists on board a tall ship close to what remains of the permanent polar ice, within a few hundred miles of the geographical North Pole. For more photographs from the series and her other projects and publications see <http://www.tamabaldwin.com>



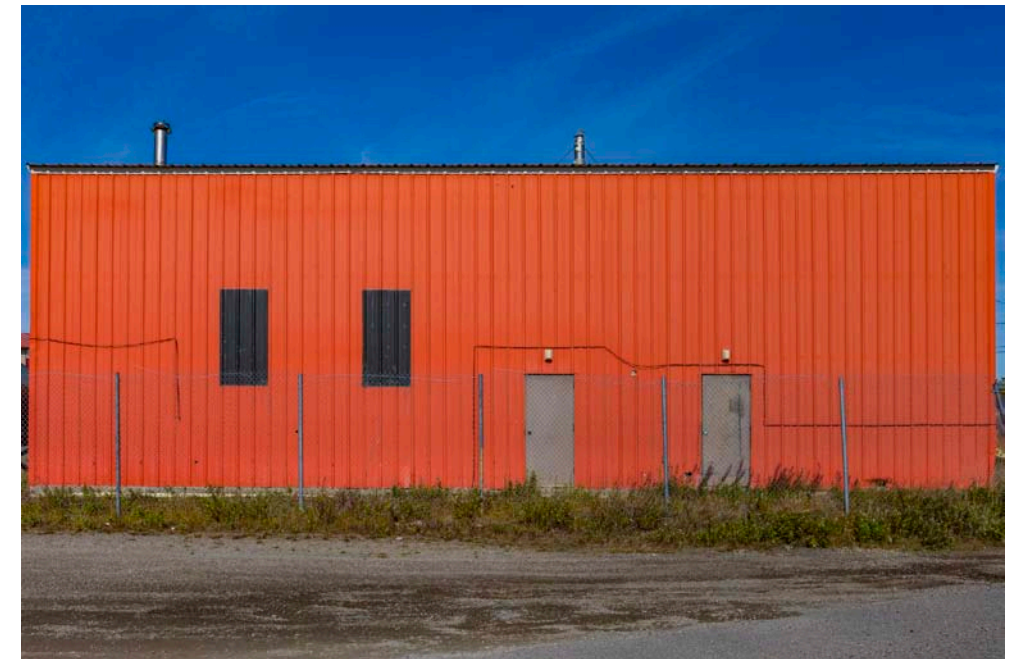
Every material object visible had to be shipped thousands of kilometres by cargo plane or barge during the summer when the sea is ice free. Not even the timber used for the house is local because the village is at the northern tree line and is essentially treeless. Only the collection of skulls on the roof, the emblem of a successful hunter, is indigenous. Yet all the imported objects here are nonetheless vital to a contemporary hunting and gathering existence.







Warehouses are a rare sight and represent the slow accretion of objects from the 'outside', which is the term still used by arctic dwellers to describe the world below the Arctic Circle. When objects outlast their workable utility, they are often kept on the off chance that they may be useful some day. The high cost of shipping objects out when no longer useful also results in a kind of time capsule of manufactured things dating back at least half a century.







Flying is a vital part of life. The radar station and beacon towers are critical for the pilots who work in extremely challenging weather conditions, without regional air traffic control, especially with the sky awash with the colours of solar wind storms.







There are Inuit stories suggesting that the spirits of the dead reside in the aurora borealis. I was told many times that I should whistle when I see the northern lights, and if I did so, they would come rushing toward me. That is what happened on this night when I was out shooting in the tundra outside the



village. When my companions and I offered up a tentative whistle, the aurora appeared to zoom across the tundra to where we stood and lowered over us like a space ship, a whirling, pulsing cloud so bright that we could see our shadows cast in its light



# International Essay Award

*Jeff Hutchinson*

*Wow! Look at this handwriting, it's superb.*

*Yes, I must agree, it's quite remarkable.*

*This is our winner, no doubt in my mind.*

*Yes, but should we not actually read the essay?*

*No need for that, the handwriting is so good.*

*You are right, we have our outright winner.*

*I'll advise the committee of our decision.*

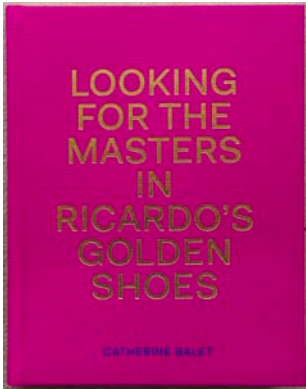




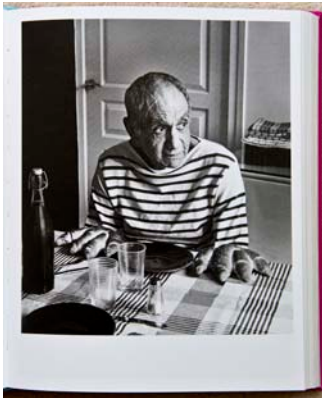
# Looking for the Masters in Ricardo's Golden Shoes

Catherine Balet

Book Review by Brian Steptoe FRPS



21.5x16.5cm, 258 pages, 120 photographs of Ricardo Paz posed to reproduce 120 well-known photographs (shown small with their original titles and photographers on back pages) Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2016



Photographer Catherine Balet and her friend Ricardo Paz were at the festival in Arles when he arrived for breakfast with croissants, wearing a striped t-shirt.

Catherine had previously remarked on his resemblance to Picasso and the idea that sparked this book was born. Over the next few years, Ricardo, with help of many friends as supporting models, resulted in this body of photographs; a homage of the 'masters' from 1839 to today, whose images they recreate.

The icon associated with book designer Ricardo Paz is his penchant for golden shoes. These figure as end stops to the pages and feature in many of the photos, alluding also to the alchemy of pre-digital photography.

Clockwise from top left: Ricardo recreating photos by Robert Doisneau, Cindy Sherman, Robert Capa and Chris Killip.

The book was short-listed at Rencontres d'Arles in 2016 and selected by Sean O'Hagan as *The Observer* Photography Book Of The Month, August 2016.



## GROUP AND RELATED SOCIETY EVENTS

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 12 November     | RPS International Photobook Exhibition. Impressions Gallery, Centenary Square, Bradford BD1 1SD. 10.30am-4.30pm.<br>Also see <a href="http://www.rps.org/events/2016/november/12/international-photobook-exhibition">http://www.rps.org/events/2016/november/12/international-photobook-exhibition</a> . |
| 19 November     | Contemporary North East meeting at Central Buildings 2-5pm, 13 Bull Ring, Third Floor, Suite 4, Wakefield, WF1 1HB. Contact Patricia A Ruddle ARPS <a href="mailto:paticiaruddle@btinternet.com">paticiaruddle@btinternet.com</a> tel. 01904 783850.   |
| 3 December      | Contemporary Midlands. Time and venue TBA. Contact: David Edge <a href="mailto:davidjedge@me.cm">davidjedge@me.cm</a> tel. 07947 849643.   |
| 5 December      | Contemporary North West meeting at Days Inn, Charnock Richard Services on the M6 between Junctions 27 and 28, 7-10 pm. Contact Alan Cameron LRPS <a href="mailto:alan.cameron@me.com">alan.cameron@me.com</a> tel. 07825 271344.   |
| To be arranged  | Contemporary Scotland. Contact David Fells <a href="mailto:davidfells111@gmail.com">davidfells111@gmail.com</a> .  |
| Dates not fixed | Contemporary East Anglia meetings. These will be in the Ipswich and Cambridge areas when arranged. The project underway is the The Ipswich Waterfront Development. Contact Peter Ellis <a href="mailto:wordsnpicsltd@gmail.com">wordsnpicsltd@gmail.com</a>  |

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Greek/Macedonian border, from the series *ANON* by Paul Hill and Maria Falconer.  
<http://www.mariafalconer.co.uk/prints.html>