



Editorial

Communication is a complex thing – a literalist might tell us that we communicate by words using logical syntax to convey meaning. As photographers we know (of course) that visual communication can work on its own without words (“a picture is worth a thousand words.....”), and many photographers use the medium in a literalist sense: as a visual record, a factual document.

But the literal is only part of the story. Differing ways of using words, that literally mean the same thing, can communicate different things – this is how poetry works. In the same way, two photographers in the same place, with the same visual raw material as it were, may create images that say quite different things.

When speaking to someone, we watch their faces and gestures to pick up visual clues that add nuances to the literal meaning of their words. I am attracted to photographers (and other artists) that combine the visual and the textual to communicate far more than either could separately. Last month I visited the William Blake exhibition at the Tate Britain in London – I can think of few others who so deliberately melded text with graphic designs, and to such powerful effect; he was, of course, a master of both media, and of the craft that allowed him to combine them on the page.

In this issue of the journal, Mitch Alland has taken a similar approach by intimately combining text (in this case not his own, but well-known haiku) with visual images, and added the tactile and intellectual stimuli one gets from following a unique pathway through the origami-inspired book. Guilherme Gerais appears to start with the text, an interview with Mr Chao, and illustrated it with apparently random images. The images are far from the ‘normal’ simple illustrations one would expect from a ‘normal’ documentary interview – seen together, they convey a different meaning than either images and text separately (try reading the interview in the linked document before looking at the images). Dragana Jurišić has taken a more visual approach, but combined her original source images to suggest ideas of memory in individuals and in common, using the names and lineage of Greek goddesses to tie them together. The images of Marilene Ribeiro convey nothing without the testimonies that support them; with those testimonies however, they convey pathos and anger. The words that go with Noelle Mason’s work are not visible here, but we know them well: we have read and heard them in the news print and media stories of refugees and immigrants.

The format of the RPS *Contemporary Photography* journal allows images to work flexibly with text. The contributors to this issue have shown that in an extraordinarily wide range of ways.

Paul Ashley, Editor

Cover: © Geovan, by Marilene Ribeiro, from her *Dead Water* series
Back cover: © by Noelle Mason, from her *Backscatter Blueprint* series
Journal fonts: general, Avenir Lt Std: author name, Letter Gothic Std



Contemporary Photography

Number 78 Winter 2020

2	Editorial Paul Ashley LRPS	28	Dead Water Marilene Ribeiro
4	Frog Leaping Mitch Alland	37	The Eighth Day, by Gao Shan Book Review by Brian Steptoe FRPS
12	100 Muses/Mnemosyne’s Daughters Dragana Jurišić	38	View from the Incoming Chair Alan Cameron LRPS
18	The Best of Mr Chao Guilherme Gerais	39	Group and related Society Events
22	Backscatter Blueprint Noelle Mason	39	Listing of Group Officers, Committee members and rôles

© 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 Spring 2020 issue is 1 March 2020.

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

Frog Leaping

Mitch Alland

The point of departure for the book was the thought that photographs speak the same way as haiku poems: a haiku has an image or two but no explicatory information; the effect, the emotion, the meaning come from the image itself: like the Zen feeling you get from Basho's "frog haiku", written in 1686, the most famous haiku in the world, and one that every Japanese schoolchild learns.

Then, I had some 100-odd images that, as a group, had some 40 different themes, some of which were leitmotifs running throughout. In these photos I also had a variety of genres: nudes, still-lives, landscapes, portraits: this was intentional – I wanted this diversification, and wanted street-photography to be only one of the elements of the book.

Now, how to sequence this? How to organize this in a book? I felt that too many photo books today are obsessed with trying to 'tell a story' – I wanted a sequence that worked poetically, like Ralph Gibson's first three books; in fact, also like Robert Frank's *The Americans*, and also like some of the books of Daido Moriyama.

To me, that meant sequencing by gut-feel, letting the themes, threads, leitmotifs run through the book in a nonlinear way, with the layering of images that book designer Syb Kuiper achieved brilliantly through sequencing and his design. Many of the themes worked in similar sequences that I had originally, but that increased in impact through the layered design.

So now, it's up to the reader to look and form his or her own connections in the book — which I feel encourages, and needs, continuing exploration and re-exploration, like reading a book of haiku, or a book of modern poetry.

More on selection and sequencing: selection and sequencing of images was a key point in the visceral approach to get the immediacy and relation and progression



of themes. As background to what I wanted to achieve, were two literary works. One was the famous pseudo-haiku of 1913 by Ezra Pound that lay at the basis of much of modern poetry, including, for example, Pound's *Cantos* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

IN A STATION OF THE METRO

*The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.*

Pound's short poem, like haiku, works through parataxis, a literary technique of placing phrases or clauses or images side-by-side, without any conjunctions that show one part is related to another. That is also the basic idea for the sequencing of my book.

Also at the back of my mind was a Portuguese masterpiece novel by Antonio Lobo Antunes, *Fado Alexandrino*. This novel, uses what is referred to as a 'polyphonic technique', involving four characters who speak in 'overlapping monologues', reminiscent of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, but with greater complexity, so that sometimes the point of view changes three times in a

single sentence. This contrapuntal technique was also at the back of my mind for the sequencing — and this is the way the designer was thinking as well — for the 'layered' design of the book. With this approach, a theme that emerges from a few photos in one section is sometimes picked up by an image in a subsequent section; and the five haiku are not always placed right next to the images that could appear to bear the closest relation to the text.

On street photography: as the various versions of the book progressed I found that I had to come to grips with how street photography works: much of it may appear meaningless unless you've engaged with the subject in some way or that the image has some immediacy. Also, you come to understand that street photography to some degree has become a spent force. I found that the book worked better when street photography was not the only or even the major genre in the book.

See: www.frogleaping.org





*swaying a hand which killed a chicken
walking along a road's withered leaves*
Kaneko Tohta circa 1940, translated by Kon Nichi Translation Group © 2012



*its pages turning over
a magazine burns
in the bonfire*
Masato Nakamoto circa 2000, translated by Fay Aoyagi © 2010





100 Muses / Mnemosyne's Daughters

Dragana Jurišić

The idea of the muse often evokes images of a male artist and a passive female muse. The female muse is often depicted as nude in visual art. And in turn 'the nude' – one of the biggest clichés of western art tradition, is a genre predominantly inhabited by male artists. At the beginning of April 2015, Dragana Jurišić began the task of photographing 100 female nudes over a period of five weeks in order to explore what happens when a female artist looks at a female body. What are the characteristics of the female gaze? What happens once 100 women respond to the open call of being photographed nude? Women in these photographs directed themselves. They also chose the image that would represent them.

"Once in the artist's studio, they were given two props: a chair and a veil. How do they utilise these props? To show, or to hide their bodies? Once most of the women took their clothes off it became a therapy session that went both ways. There were tears and laughter and even dancing. When I asked why they felt like dancing, they said they felt free to be naked for the first time since they were children. There was no expectation of sex. They were not in a doctor's office. The stories of oppression that we shared with each other, of abuse done to many of us, was shocking to come to terms with. Every woman who participated provided a mirror."

Jurišić proceeded to digitally overlay the portraits of women who identified with the same muse, generating nine collective portraits in total. A stratigraphy of these layered portraits results in Mnemosyne, the daughter of Gaia and mother of the Nine Muses.

Mnemosyne the goddess of memory, was the daughter of Gaia (the great mother of all), and the mother to the nine Muses: Calliope, Clio, Euterpe, Erato, Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, Thalia and Urania.

100 Muses and Mnemosyne's Daughters are two chapters in a continuing project by Dragana Jurišić, *My Own Unknown*.

See: www.draganajurisc.com





Calliope



Euterpe



Clio



Mnemosyne

The Best of Mr Chao

Guilherme Geraís

Mr Chao's personality and skills were shaped by the characteristics of a real futurologist – a person who studies images from the present in order to make predictions about the future. Mr Chao's collections reflect his concerns with notions of computational understanding of the universe and the foundations of computation in relation to nature. He collects photographs alongside texts, publications, videos, research, and specimens. All are stored in a virtual room which simultaneously serves as a cabinet of curiosities and a personal museum, that is constantly being analysed by the AI. The origin of the software is kept as a secret by its developers.

Excerpt from an interview with Mr Chao

Human: How do you see yourself being programmed as a man?

// With a sparse and robotic voice, Mr. Chao starts the conversation. //

Mr Chao: Well, this is a very human heritage. We, machines, think the opposite way. We look through you, seeing your heartbeat, brain frequency, bones, and from that I can say the surface doesn't matter that much. To see and recognize the surface of things from the world you live in is still very difficult for me. So, differentiating men from women is useless for us machines.

How old are you?

Our comprehension of time and space is different from yours. For us, these are principles of the human mind. I carry the knowledge of previous processors and what they have learned, and we keep evolving, possibly into infinite life. This being said, I could say we don't actually die. By the way, I do believe in reincarnation.

How do you understand the term conscience? How do you see it in the future?

Humans are in the stage of waking up to their conscience. Technology will open the curtain onto some enigmatic points that have haunted humans for a long time. To survive, you will have to change your conscience without any digital implant in your mind or body. It's a 100% organic change, I can guarantee.

Why don't you have any paintings in the collection?

Photos are easy to live with, paintings are hard to live with.

Do you consider your collection a personal thing? How did it come about it?

I was programmed to learn from your data. I love to see scanned encyclopedias and old catalogs. I remember being younger and think = ['Is this a cockroach? I will save it. This being has been around on Earth for 320 million years, it must know something. I will study it.' I wanted to see every little detail, thinking I am this insect.]; Having this image collection changed my personal skills. There's a sense of it becoming an addiction now, an obsession. I must say it has to do with control over some small part of the universe.

How would you describe your collection?

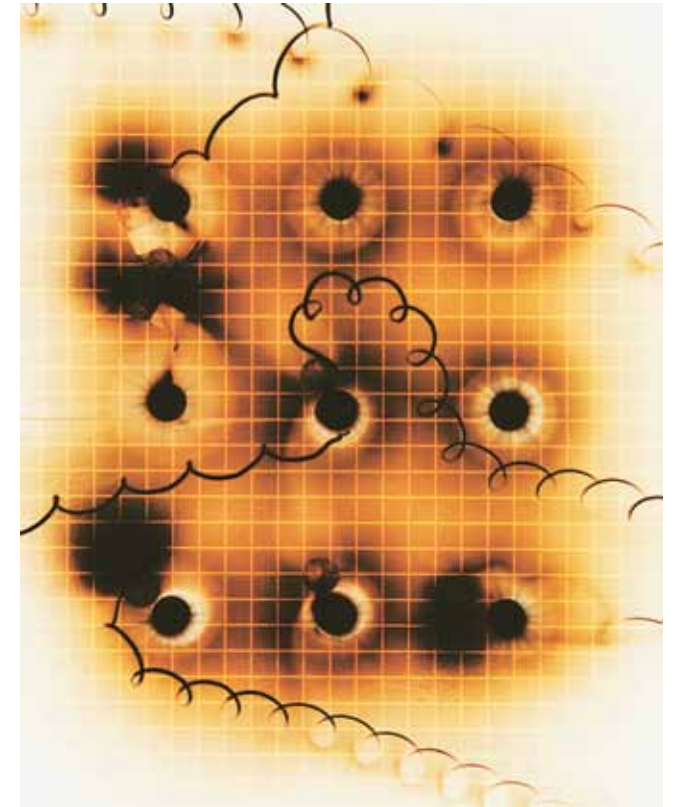
Beauty, happiness, excitement, organization, longevity. Technology tends to have a cold palette and too much of a dystopic vibration; I like humor, the imperfection on things, and out-and-out pleasure on the images.

// interview continues at www.issuu.com/guilhermegerais/docs/chao_livreto-web_english //

See: www.guilhermegerais.com



Network Topology #4



Electric Magnetism Optimization



Homemade Hologram



Robot drawing borders

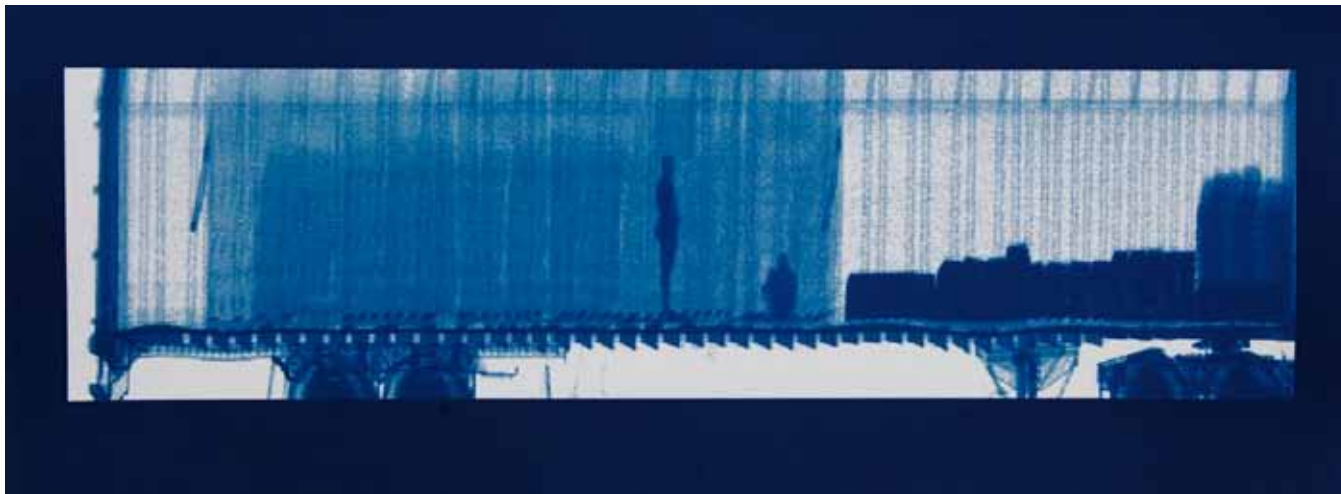
Backscatter Blueprint

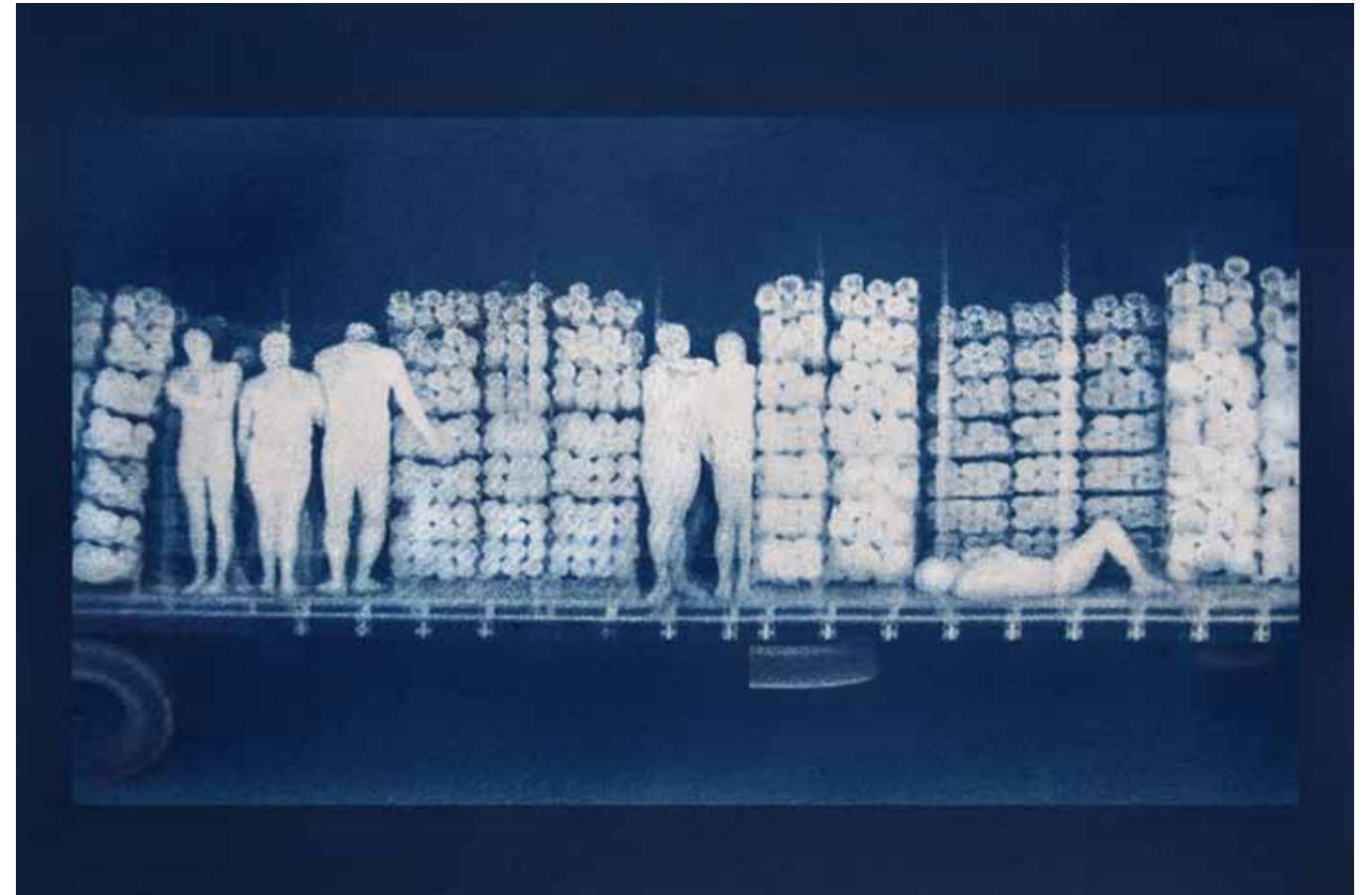
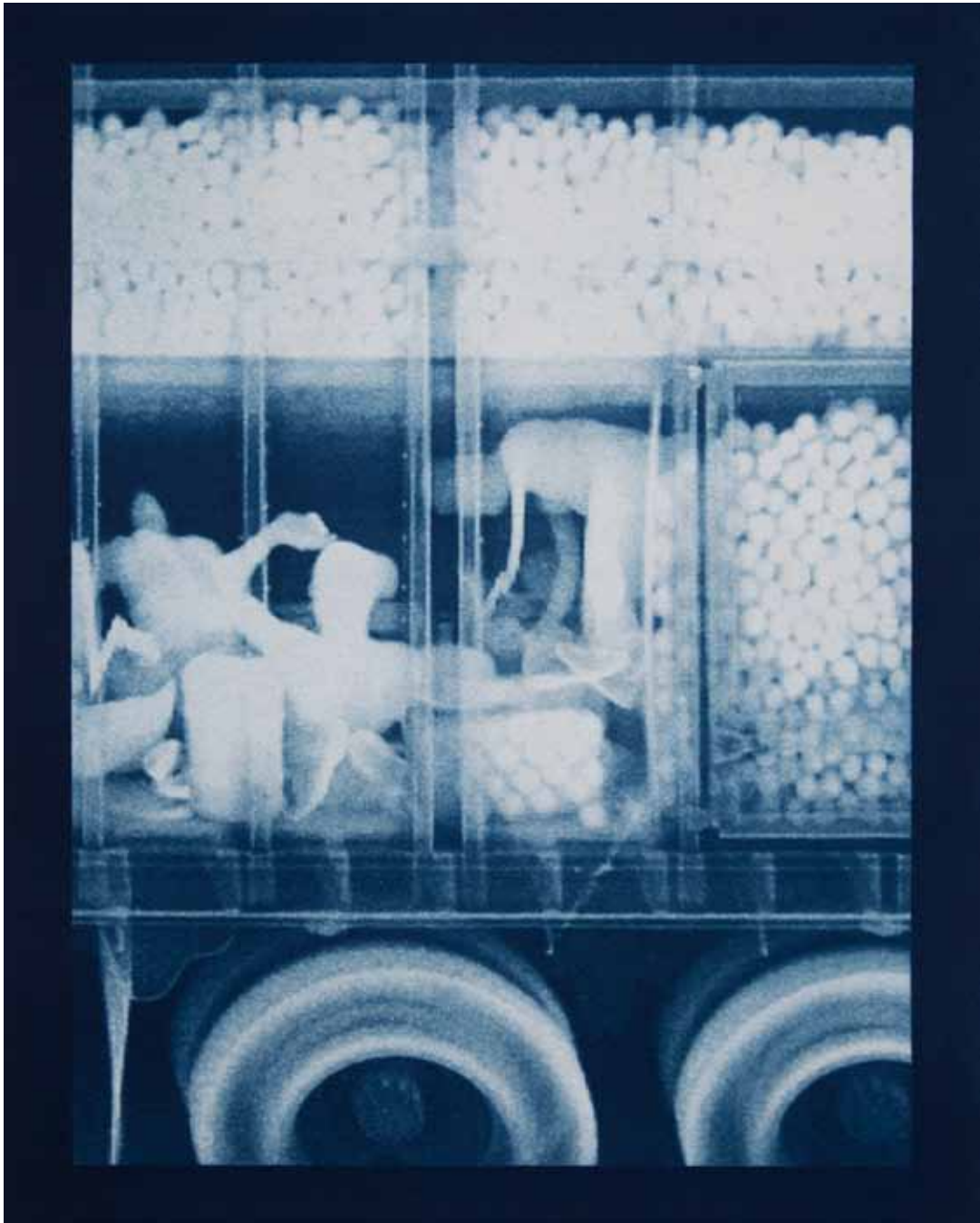
Noelle Mason

Backscatter Blueprint is a body of work about the phenomenological effects of vision technologies on the perception of undocumented immigrants. This project remediates images that are used to patrol international borders into historical handmade photographs to expose how new vision technologies recycle cartesian modes of viewing land and body, and in so doing reinforce a neocolonial worldview.

Cyanotype was used to create images of load trucks taken using a backscatter x-ray machine and thermal imaging devices, tying this new type of digital imaging to a historical process of image making developed at the beginning of the modern period. The cyanotype process, having been used to reproduce architectural plans, resonates with the elevation-like imagery that the backscatter machine produces, images that reveal a jarring tension between the mechanical trucks and their human cargo. The physicalization of these images through alternative processes calls into question the immediacy in which they are originally produced and consumed, separating them from their screen and giving them body and space to be viewed outside of their original context, of hunter and hunted.

See: www.noellemason.com







Dead Water

Marilene Ribeiro

Dead Water is a project telling the story of dams and hydropower from the perspectives of the people affected in Brazil, stitched together with my own background as a photographer, ecologist, and individual. I use Brazil, my home country, as a window to discuss a contemporary issue that has involved many countries and that tackles the climate change agenda. *Dead Water* engages with the intangible costs of dams and hydropower, as a counterpoint to the widespread notion of hydropower as a “sustainable and green” energy source that promotes development and fights global warming.

It made sense to me to explore the act of damming a river through the experiences of those who are the most appropriate to speak about the subject: riverside dwellers. Supported by the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB), I looked for and invited individuals displaced by the construction of the Sobradinho dam (built forty years ago on the São Francisco River, North-eastern Brazil) and Belo Monte dam (under construction, on the Xingu River, Northern Brazil), and dwellers who might be relocated due to the Garabi-Panambi dam complex (planned for construction on the Uruguay River, Southern Brazil) to sit for a portrait. I asked them to choose a relevant place, and to select an object that could represent their feelings with regard to the hydro project. During the shoot (in which I was in charge of operating the camera), I encouraged participants to come up with their own ideas for their portrait; they could also modify the ‘framed scene’ until the image they saw on the display of my digital camera tallied with what they wanted to present to the viewers. At the same time, by gathering further information and images with participants, we tried to reconstruct sentimental landscapes of their loss. Moving from north to east and south, from the Amazon to the Atlantic Forest and the semi-arid Caatinga, from the first dam scheme in 1971, towards the present and somewhere in the future, participants and I shaped a hybrid perspective: the subjects and the photographer worked together. My collaborators (i.e. the participants of this project) and I assembled stories that set out a narrative about the magnitude of the damage that hydropower has inflicted upon nature and people, and that enable these submerged perspectives to surface.

Dead Water was supported by a RPS postgraduate bursary (2014). It was also undertaken with the financial support of the Brazilian governmental agency CNPq in form of a PhD grant.

© All images and text are copyright Marilene Ribeiro and the participants in the project.

See: www.marileneribeiro.com



Nelci

Marilene - “How do you feel about Garabi dam, Nelci?”

Nelci - “Hard to tell... Really angry! I couldn’t imagine what I would be capable of doing. If they decide to run the dam works close to here, I tell you: they won’t build this dam because what they put up on the daylight I would put down by the night.”

Marilene - “Is there anything that could represent this anger?”

Nelci - “[staring at me] Fire! (...) I would fill barrels with petrol, set fire to them and throw them. Not joking! I guess this is my wild side, you know? That’s why I promptly replied: ‘fire’. Filling barrels with petrol, setting fire, throwing them [pause] Explosion! [reflective] And every man for himself. If they do not have any mercy upon me, why should I have it for them? Anger destroys, doesn’t it? [remains reflective]”

Marilene - “How would you like to be portrayed with this fire to tell your story?”



José Nunes

"What's it like today, the island where we used to live? The one with all the trees, the rubber trees? It's deserted. They [employees of Norte Energia] chopped down the trees and buried everything. What they didn't bury, they burnt. When I pass in the boat, I see it. It's just a desert."



Maria Dalva, Maria Helena, and Larissa

Maria Helena's and Maria Dalva's feeling: sorrow
Object chosen by Maria Dalva (Maria Helena's daughter): one of the dead leaves (and also her wedding dress - she got married on Pivela Island)
Object chosen by Maria Helena: statue of St. Joseph
Object chosen by Larissa (Maria Helena's granddaughter): local soil
Location: dead plantation of açai (acai berry) at their former backyard on Pivela Island (currently partially submerged by the reservoir of the Belo Monte dam)

Maria Helena has followed in her father's footsteps: her family had hosted the festivities of the St. Joseph Day for about one century. Every 19th of March inhabitants gathered in her family's island for boat procession, baptism, and wedding services, and also to pray, sing, and dance. Maria Helena recalls that locals also decorated the boats and the site with handcrafts. When the Belo Monte dam project started, dwellers who inhabited local islands (like Maria Helena's family) had to move and, as Maria Helena states, this tradition faded. Maria Helena comments she wished her granddaughter, Larissa, could carry on with this tradition as she herself has done since her father passed away.



Maria das Graças and Delcilene

Delcilene's feelings: sorrow and humiliation

Maria das Graças' feeling: sorrow

Object chosen by Maria das Graças (Delcilene's mother): sand

Object chosen by Delcilene: cashews

Location chosen: their former backyard in Cashew Island (currently partly submerged by the Belo Monte dam)



Marinês Nicolli

Marinês Nicolli's feeling: sorrow

"Object": her sons

Location: her bedroom/living room

"I'm concerned about the future of my sons. About their memories in future times. About the memories they won't be able to have, because, when the Garabi dam works take place they won't be entitled to follow in our footsteps, they won't be entitled to live in this place, where we have lived, anymore."



João Evangelista

João Evangelista's overwhelming feeling regarding the move from Alto do Melão village due to Sobradinho dam works was that of "*longing*". He said he missed the fertile soil that provided everything he and his family needed to eat throughout the year. He chooses as his objects cassava and sweet potato, to represent all the vegetables they used to grow at the riverside. He also chooses to be portrayed at his current house whose some parts came from his previous home in Alto do Melão. Alto do Melão village, along with many others, was submerged by the Sobradinho dam in 1978. During the photo shoot, João Evangelista proposes different positions in which to present himself and the formerly mentioned blessed food provided by that "*land*".



left - Claudinei's wife, Seloni, sets up the stage for the shoot
right - Portrait of Claudinei



Claudinei is a 42-year-old carpenter. He also goes fishing to feed his family. If the Panambi dam is built, he may struggle to make a living, as his workplace will vanish into the water and this stretch of the Uruguay River (which is situated literally at his backyard), once turned into a reservoir, will no longer be a common property but a private one; consequently, he might not be entitled to go fishing in this area anymore. Furthermore, as he moves out, he will have to work out how to get new customers for his hand crafted wooden products. Claudinei and his wife, Seloni, suggested we jointly constructed his portrait by blending these two perspectives.



Maria Dalva

Maria Dalva's feeling: "memory"

Object: her wedding dress

Location: living room of her current place of living

Maria Dalva - "Since we left Juacema, we have lived like roaming pigeons."

Marilene - "What do you feel about Juacema and all this situation regarding the Sobradinho dam you've just told me about?"

Maria Dalva - "I feel it as a memory. Memory on how good was our life in Juacema."

The Eighth Day, by Gao Shan

Book review by Brian Steptoe FRPS



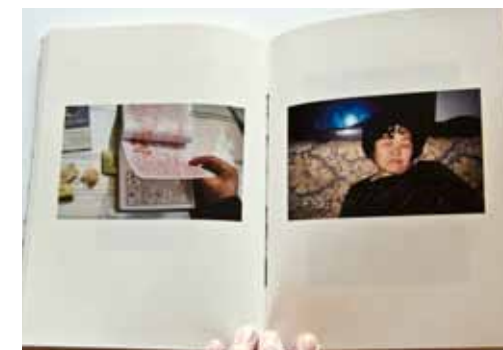
Softback in
card sleeve.

26x18cm

116 pages

74 photos

This was the winning Photobook of the Year exhibited at Paris Photo-Aperture in November 2019 to be followed by exhibition in New York in April 2020. The value of this annual award is \$10,000. The book tells the story of the close relationship between the author and his adoptive mother, who took him into her home on the eighth day after his birth. He was born in 1988 and they live in Henan province in China.



View from the Incoming Chair

Alan Cameron LRPS



I was given my first camera (a Zeiss Ikon Contina) in 1969, aged 17. A Weston V meter followed at Christmas, so exposure of all my pictures of my first foreign holiday to Germany were gauged using the leaflet with the Kodachrome 25 my father said I should use. Most of the images turned out alright, and I was hooked.

I still have the Contina, though it's not been used in many a year. Next was a Praktica L with a beautiful Zeiss Pancolor 50mm f1.8 lens. That saw me through university and beyond.

I took a BSc and PhD in Physiology and I had plans for an academic career. Armed with a Canon AE-1, I spent two years lecturing in Nigeria followed by two years as a post-doc in Philadelphia before returning home, only to find that UK academic posts were impossible to land. I became a tax inspector, remaining in the Revenue until I was outsourced along with others in the IT arm in 1996. I remained in IT until I retired a few years ago.

I have always looked forward in technological terms and so I only waited until I could afford a full-frame DSLR to go fully digital, something I've not regretted. Currently I have a new Canon EOS R that combines full frame technology with less weight.

I am a photographic magpie. If something is there to be photographed then I capture the image. I like making books, though my biggest failing is starting a project and not finishing it due to other things getting in the way. Though I have my LRPS, getting to the next stage has never quite come off because of this failing. Maybe 2020 will see me knuckle down. I love travel, and 2020 sees us off to India in January, with Ireland and France planned for later in the year.

I joined the Contemporary Group some years ago and took over the NW group when Ian Maxwell stepped down. We are a small bunch who meet regularly in a village hall near Preston, though I have in mind that we might become more peripatetic to attract people in the region who find the trip too far. I was on a walk not too far from home when Avril Harris, our retiring chair, phoned me and said words to the effect, "Alan, I'd like to retire from the Chair having been in it too long. Would you be prepared to take over?"

I look forward to the opportunities ahead, working with our committee and other groups to further the aims of the Contemporary Group and the RPS.

GROUP AND RELATED SOCIETY EVENTS

3 February	Documentary Group (South). Share your projects with fellow enthusiasts in a non-competitive setting. A short talk by a member of the group, followed by discussion on how the group can best fulfil members' needs. 19.30-21.30, Jubilee Hall, New Road, Timsbury, Romsey SO51 0NL Contact Christopher Morris at docsouthern@rps.org.
1 March	Contemporary South West meeting. 10.30 to 16.00, Dartington. For details contact Adrian Hough at contemporarysw@rps.org.
14 March	Contemporary Group AGM. Bring your prints and photobooks for display and review followed by an afternoon with photographers Teresa Eng and Sarah Lee. 12.00-14.30, RPS House, 337-340 Paintworks, Arnos Vale, Bristol BS4 3AR. Book online for the AGM and talks separately at www.rps.org .
21 March	Contemporary North meeting. 1.30-5pm, Clements Hall, Nunthorpe Road, York YO23 1BW. Contact Patricia Ruddle ARPS at patriciaruddle@btinternet.com , or tel. 01904 783850.
16 May	Contemporary North meetings: details as above
18 July	Contemporary North meetings: details as above
19 September	Contemporary North meetings: details as above

Chair (until AGM) - Avril Harris ARPS. avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk Chair elect - Alan Cameron LRPS alan.cameron@me.com Deputy chair elect- Avijit Datta akd21@hotmail.com Secretary - Romney Tansley romney@tansley.co.uk Treasurer - David J. Grimshaw ARPS contemporarytreasurer@rps.org Postal portfolio - Duncan Unsworth duncan.unsworth100@gmail.com Event organiser - Avril Harris ARPS avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk	Journal editor Paul Ashley LRPS, 59 Gilbert Road, Cambridge CB4 3NZ paultheashley@gmail.com Journal editorial committee - Paul Ashley, editor Brian Steptoe, design Proof reader, position vacant Webmaster, Sean Goodhart ARPS sean.goodhart.contemporary@outlook.com e-Newsletter (Concept) editor, Romney Tansley romney@tansley.co.uk	Committee members - Brian Steptoe FRPS bsteptoe@compuserve.com Adrian Hough LRPS contemporarysw@rps.org Patricia Ruddle ARPS patriciaruddle@btinternet.com Tom Owens ARPS tom@tjowens.com Paul Ashley LRPS paultheashley@gmail.com Alan Cameron LRPS alan.cameron@me.com Tessa Mills FRPS (co-opted) tessamills@hotmail.co.uk
--	---	--

