



October 2024 Newsletter

I'm a West Coaster originally, but I've been living on the Dark Side (East Coast) for longer now than I lived on the West, and one of the things you notice over here is the Autumnal Tattie mornings...and already this year there has been a few of them. I was driving to Aberdeen early one morning, and the road up towards the dual carriageway sits a bit higher than the surrounding fields...low sun, low lying fog. Very Tattie Morning.

Turning leaves on the trees too...the more the sugar in the leaves the more vivid the colour seemingly. You live and learn.

So that means shorter days, but longer in bed to see a dawn, and not so late to wait up to see the night skies. There has already been few Northern Lights nights.

There's always a plus side.

The other plus side is the Autumn / Winter zoom talks and other RPS activities that spring up (play on words intended)... so there are SIG talks both Nationally and here in Scotland, the TWT series of events, RPS workshops / Photoforums and more. The first place to look is the What's On page of this Newsletter, and Scotland is the second busiest Region so there is always quite a lot to choose from. Join in and move that personal development needle.

Go get 'em.

Littoral Concretion
- Mairi MacAulay ARPS

RPS Scotland



24 Exhibition



Monthly Competition

Travel was this month...where did we get to?



The answer is...
nowhere.

Delayed, By Roger
Hinton LRPS.

Well done, and
continues a good
sequence for Roger.

October's topic is
Waterfalls...cool, so
get your flowing water
pics ready..

[https://rps.org/
regions/scotland/
scotland-monthly-
competition/](https://rps.org/regions/scotland/scotland-monthly-competition/)

Send entries to Ken,
sized at 1000px wide,
by as many pixels as
you want tall, via
scotlandweb@rps.org

RPS Scotland

The RPS AGM was the other weekend, and it's a challenging time for the RPS overall. Member numbers were falling, cash reserves were low, and ongoing expenses were increasing. Tough decisions were made, new strategies were formulated and so far numbers going are up, numbers leaving are down, and costs are more under control. Plans are also afoot to sell the HQ building, and move to a smaller, rented location. There are a whole heap of rules and regulations that apply to the day to day running of the RPS, as it is a registered charity. It would be fair to say that most of the questions / moans were made from a position of ignorance, but it's also fair to say that most of the questions / moans came from a position of passion and care. People are invested, and whilst they might not always understand or agree with certain decisions they still care enough to volunteer and get involved.

The other thing that happens at the AGM is that the recipients of the Fenton Medals are announced, and these are the pinnacle award for those members who volunteer and care and give back, and who have given back over many years. In the past RPS Scotland has been well represented, and this year we are again...Hazel Frost FRPS (twice). Hazel is Chair of the Licentiateship Panel, and also Chair of the A / F Travel Panel, and has been a huge presence in RPS Scotland for many a year too. There are many volunteers that give a lot for a few years, but very few who give so much for so long. Congratulations, and our collective thanks.

Plans for 2025 are moving along, and we've got our two Photoforums in Dumfries and Nairn, but we've also now added one in Glasgow, and hoping to have another in Edinburgh too. Keep your eyes on the What's On pages.

The Grampian Squad have been out and about on a photo day, under the watchful and organised eye of Nigel Corby FRPS, and here is their latest e-zine: https://issuu.com/royalphotographicsociety/docs/aberdeen_doors_open_ezine_sept_2024_copy

If you want to join in with Nigel, or any of the other local volunteers the get in touch with us on: scotlandsecretary@rps.org

The next few pages are submitted by a Southern based RPS member, Mark Stodhart MA ARPS who has been up in the far North a few times this year as part of his ongoing photographic studies and practice, and he has written a piece for us.

Between Isolation and Connection - Mark Stodhart MA ARPS

As I passed through the Highlands of Scotland, reflecting on a visit to Cape Wrath, the most northerly point of the British mainland, one is confronted with a landscape where the raw elements of nature intersect with the austere imprints of human activity.

This place, known as the world's edge, is not merely a geographic boundary but a liminal space, a junction where the personal and the universal coalesce, where the past and present converse in the dialect of stone, sea, and sky. Here, the earth's contours meet the abstract planes of human ambition, most notably represented by the military firing range that occupies this remote expanse. It is in this environment, harsh yet sublime, that one is prompted to contemplate the broader implications of observation, memory, and the framing of reality - a dialogue that recalls John Szarkowski's seminal conceptual framework of Mirrors and Windows.

Szarkowski, a towering figure in the history of photography, posited that photographs can be seen as either mirrors or windows. A mirror reflects the inner self, capturing a personal, subjective vision of the world. A window, conversely, opens onto the exterior, offering a more objective view, a transparent medium through which one gazes at the world outside. This duality oscillates between the internal and the external, the personal and the collective - resonates deeply in the context of Cape Wrath, a place where the natural and the constructed, the wild and the disciplined, confront each other in stark relief.

The firing range at Cape Wrath is not merely a backdrop; it is a symbol of the pervasive reach of human influence into even the most desolate corners of the earth. The occasional thunder of artillery fire echoes across the moorlands, a reminder that even here, at the end of the land, the spectre of conflict and control is never far away. The landscape becomes a stage where the military's assertion of power plays out against the immutable backdrop of the natural world. Yet, in this juxtaposition, there is a profound irony: the range, designed for destruction, is nestled within a landscape that is indifferent to the violence it hosts. The cliffs and the sea, enduring and ancient, bear witness to the fleeting nature of human endeavours. It is a place that challenges the observer to reconcile the fragility of human constructs with the enduring power of nature - a theme that echoes in the work of the American photographer Richard Misrach.

Misrach, renowned for his haunting images of the American desert, particularly in his Bravo 20 series, offers a visual commentary on the relationship between humanity and the land.

His work in the Nevada desert, a site similarly marked by military activity, explores the scars left on the earth by human intervention. The desert, like Cape Wrath, becomes a canvas for the traces of conflict, a place where the natural and the unnatural cohabit in a tense, uneasy balance. Misrach's photographs, often expansive and desolate, capture the stark beauty of these landscapes while simultaneously evoking a sense of unease, a recognition of the underlying violence that has shaped them. In Bravo 20, Misrach photographed a former military bombing range in the Nevada desert, a site littered with the remnants of war craters, twisted metal, and the lingering shadows of explosions.

The images are at once beautiful and disturbing, revealing a landscape that has been profoundly altered by human activity yet retains an eerie, otherworldly tranquillity. This duality is central to Misrach's work: his photographs function as both mirrors and windows. They reflect his grappling with the implications of what he sees – the environmental and ethical questions posed by such landscapes – while also providing viewers with a window into a world that is both familiar and alien, a place where the boundaries between natural beauty and human destruction blur.

The parallels between Misrach's work and the experience of Cape Wrath are striking. Both places are defined by their isolation and their distance from the centers of human civilization. Yet both are also indelibly marked by human presence, by the imprint of power and control exerted over the land. In contemplating Cape Wrath through the lens of Szarkowski's *Mirrors and Windows* and Misrach's desert photography, one is reminded of the complex interplay between the observer and the observed, between the personal and the universal. The landscape at Cape Wrath, like the Nevada desert, becomes a site of reflection, a place where the photographer- or the visitor- is compelled to confront the tensions inherent in the act of looking. To visit Cape Wrath is to step into a liminal space, a threshold between worlds. It is a place where the land meets the sea, where the known world gives way to the unknown, where the traces of human activity are both starkly visible and yet rendered insignificant by the vastness of the natural environment. The firing range, with its suggestion of violence and control, serves as a reminder of the ever-present tension between the desire to dominate and the reality of nature's indifference. Yet it is also a place of profound beauty, where the harshness of the landscape is tempered by the subtle play of light on water, the soft hues of heather and gorse, and the distant, almost imperceptible line where the earth meets the sky. In this space, the concepts of mirrors and windows take on a deeper significance. The landscape at Cape Wrath reflects the inner turmoil of those who come to it, seeking solace, or understanding, and it offers a window onto a world that is at once timeless and transient. The visitor, like the photographer, becomes both observer and participant, drawn into the dialogue between the self and the world, between what is seen and what is felt.

Richard Misrach's desert photographs remind us that the landscapes we encounter are not merely backdrops to human experience; they are active participants in the stories we tell, shaping and being shaped by the narratives we construct. At Cape Wrath, as in the Nevada desert, the land holds the memory of all that has transpired upon it, from the ancient movements of the earth itself to the fleeting imprints of human presence. In contemplating these places, we are reminded of our impermanence, of the fragility of our attempts to impose order on the chaos of the natural world. Yet there is also a sense of continuity, of a shared experience that transcends time and place. The landscapes of Cape Wrath and Bravo 20, though separated by oceans and continents, are linked by their role as witnesses to the human condition.

They are places where the personal and the universal intersect, where the mirror reflects not only the self but also the collective memory of all who have passed through. And through the window, we glimpse a world that is at once familiar and strange, a world that challenges us to reconsider our place within it.

In the end, the journey to Cape Wrath, like the journey through Misrach's photographs, is one of reflection and revelation. It is a journey that forces us to confront the dualities of the tension between beauty and destruction, between isolation and connection, and between the self and the world. And in doing so, it offers us a deeper understanding of the landscapes we inhabit, both within and without.



What's On in October?

29th March onwards: Photo Cities - how images shape the Urban World, V&A Dundee. <https://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee/whatson/exhibitions/photo-city>

29th March - 27th October Diorama Map, Dundee, Sohei Nishino V&A Dundee

2nd August to 2nd November Coupar's Camera Lamb Gallery Dundee

<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/events/coupar-camera>

RPS Scotland Exhibition at the Hub, Eskdalemuir, with an Open Night on 1st October 18.30, including 4 small talks on "What the RPS does for me"

October 16th A Chat with Janie Meikle Bland - contemporarisco@rps.org

October 27th Northern Photoforum Nairn Community Centre

roberts.trish@btinternet.com

<https://events.rps.org/en/4LrdQ66/rps-scotland-northern-photoforum-2024-5a2NN25N6rR/overview>

A month of TWT events around the country, including Scotland.

<https://talkwalktalk.org/walk-and-talk-map/219>

Further ahead:

November: RPS Scotland Exhibition at the Hub, Eskdalemuir, with an Open Night on 2nd November 18.30, including 4 different small talks on "What the RPS does for me"

November 14th RPS Scotland Zoom presentation from Margaret Mitchell

<https://rps.org/events/regions/scotland/2024/november-2024/margaret-mitchell/>

November 16th South West PhotoForum Shambellie House

Contact for all SW events: Jean Robson - digmem@rps.org

<https://events.rps.org/en/4LrdQ66/rps-sw-scotland-photoforum-and-exhibition-5a2NN23WWj2/overview>

November 21st Labhairt Beag; 1-Day - contemporarisco@rps.org

January 15th 2025 A Chat with Simon Hill Hon FRPS - contemporarisco@rps.org

February 8th Photoforum Pollokshields Burgh Hall Glasgow

March 7-9th 2025 Landscape SIG DoubleTree North Queensferry

<https://billetto.co.uk/e/landscape-group-conference-2025-full-price-tickets-tickets-902441?rr=aHR0cHM6Ly9ycHMub3JnLw==>

April 5th 2025 Advisory Day / Annual Exhibition Selection Bridge of Allan

<https://rps.org/events/regions/scotland/2025/april-2025/distinctions-advisory-day/>

TWT 25...gardens and blooms, after Easter, details to follow.

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