

e-newsletter

We have seen some excellent Conceptual and Contemporary Distinction panels over past issues. This month, Andy Moore, Distinctions Manager and Tessa Mills FRPS discuss getting advice on-line for those who cannot get to an Advisory Day.

It's good to see that television has recently given attention to photography with the series *Focus Britain in Photography* and *Photographers at the BBC*, showing a very young Martin Parr (both BBC). In addition the series *What do Artists do all Day?* featured Dougie Wallace (CH 4). All are still available on catch-up.

Thank you to Alan Cameron, organiser of the NW group, for the image of the Dazzle Ferry, Liverpool - rather matches the RPS colour bar!

As I am stepping down now I am signing off with one of my own images from my polaroid series on Scarborough South Beach. Thank you to all the contributors during my time as editor, I have enjoyed getting to know so many members.

Christine Pinnington LRPS
Editor



The Old Beach Hut, Scarborough South Beach © Christine Pinnington LRPS



The Dazzle Ferry
© Alan Cameron LRPS, Organiser of the NW Group

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Distinctions On-line Advice

Many members reside in areas where getting to advisory days can be very difficult, but members still have a lot of help available to them in the form of on-line advice. Andy Moore, Distinctions Manager and Tessa Mills FRPS explain how this works.

Andy writes. Working for the Society over the last 12 years, I have seen a huge change in the way the Society offers advice. When I first started back in 2004 getting advice on your images was limited to attending an Advisory Day. Moving forward to 2017, we offer more ways to get advice with the introduction of one-to-ones, specialist advisory days, video feedback and the very popular on-line advice. We also have Celebrations and Introductions to Distinction days, where we show successful portfolios from all 3 levels. These are part of helping potential applicants to understand the standard the RPS is looking for.

We introduced online advice via our website around 18 months ago, and with over 200 members using this facility it's been a huge success. It is ideal for members who want initial advice before attending or who cannot travel to an Advisory Day.

We have always said the best way to gain advice is face to face at an Advisory Day but some members, before they decide to attend, opt for the on-line advice. The advantage of this is that you can make corrections before you attend and pay for an Advisory Day - the on-line advice is free. The only disadvantage with on-line advice is we cannot offer advice on the technical aspect of your images, as each panel member's computer could have a slightly different set up and the advice is given on the basis of thumbnail images.

The on-line system is very easy to use and can be done in minutes, provided you have prepared your images, statement and hanging plan in advance, ready to upload!

The main advantage for online advice, especially for the Contemporary and Conceptual category which can include up to 300 words for the statement, is that the panel members have a lot more time to study the statement and images compared to an Advisory Day. I have said many times I admire the panel members who volunteer for Advisory days. I think it can be hard to ensure they give advice which is helpful but also honest without the applicant feeling embarrassed or put off in front of an audience. It's a lot easier to be more open using on-line as the only person who sees the feedback is the applicant.

I asked Tessa Mills FRPS, Deputy Chair of the Contemporary and Conceptual panel to explain what she feels about giving on-line advice compared to Advisory Days.

How does the process work ?

From the advisor's point of view the process starts with an email from the RPS Distinctions Department asking me to look at some images that are for the Conceptual & Contemporary Assessment Panel.

I access the images on-line and write my thoughts and suggestions about the statement, panel lay-out and each individual image. This includes the 15 or 20 images plus 5 extras. I do not have the photographer's name or details. I then send my responses back to the RPS Distinctions Office, who create a link that goes directly back to the author to view. During actual Distinction Assessment if I recognise a panel that I have advised upon, I quietly inform the Chairman of this fact. It makes no difference to my participating in the discussion of the work, or of my voting rights.

Why do I enjoy RPS Advising on line ?

I respect the RPS Distinctions as a process, and I am privileged to be asked to be a part of this whole.

I think RPS Distinctions are an excellent foundation and scaffolding to aid individual photographers to grow in their skills, confidence and creativity.

There are certain expectations from the RPS because, no matter how creative the seeing and processing, the Distinctions are about photographic standards. These have to be visible, and measured across a wide spectrum of possible subjects taken by RPS members.

It is a delight to see these fresh images and to assist photographers in their understanding of RPS requirements in relation to their own work.

It is fascinating to witness a photographer's growth in technical understanding and personal creative confidence through the progression necessary to obtain an RPS Distinction. Photographers are not expected to attain their distinctions in a lonely bubble. Receiving advice on the skills of self-editing is a part of the empowerment.

I believe that providing advice and guidance is helpful to the applicant, and as someone who has been through the same, it is also a rewarding process for me.

Difference between On-line and Advisory days from my point of view.

On-line advantages:

I do spend far more time looking and thinking about the work, therefore the advice is much more considered for both the Statement and the images.

The Statement does get more in-depth reactions, as it's easier to suggest edits on the written word than on a read aloud hearing.

All the individual images receive a written response, not just the ones that have problems to be addressed.

There is no distraction - just one-to-one communication.

The applicant does not have a 'public' discussion of his/her work. It is private. For this reason on-line is a good place for early advice.

Advisory day advantages :

There is instant feedback discussion with the author, so there is the possibility of more understanding on both sides.

There is an opportunity for open discussion between 2 advisors and the author, so the advice is more general - to balance my own personal thoughts and reactions.

It's far better for us to see a printed panel for discussing lay-outs.

There is advice on the technical quality of printing and presentation.

There is much to be learned for the applicant whilst seeing and listening to advisory comments for other applicants.

Overall there is a place and a need for both aspects of advice, and an ideal would be to take advantage of BOTH types of advice offered by the RPS.

Tessa Mills FRPS

For general distinctions questions - distinctions@rps.org or 01225 325733 (option 2) between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

<http://www.rps.org/Distinctions/Advice>

See **What's On** for details of the next Conceptual and Contemporary category assessments

Framed
© Mike Mills ARPS

Mike received online advice which he described as "excellent". See the November 2016 issue of Concept



South West Contemporary Group Meeting

Rod Fry ARPS
Reports

12th March 2017

at Carnon Downs Hall, Truro Cornwall

Introduction

Seven members of the SWCG were able to meet to discuss current events and “goings on” in the world of contemporary photography. The meeting opened with a short update of the Advisory Board meeting, which took place in Bath on the previous day. After the formal session finished the rest of the day was spent in enjoying a rich and varied selection of members work that was brought in to discuss.

Carol Ballenger had some exciting news concerning her new book *ROUTE 66*. A virtual journey along this iconic highway, working with images from Google Earth and poems by John Powls. This way of working is new to Carol but it has allowed her to use her conventional photographic skills in a new and exciting way. Carol outlined a series of events where the book would be shown - [See end of article for full details](#).

Graham Hodgson, taking a leaf out of Carol's book, also abandoned the camera in favour of Google Earth, but this time he produced two A3 prints of squares made into Chess Boards one from the Iowa in the States and one from a Map of Cornwall. He also managed to find a series of images based on circles. His wry sense of humour was much to the fore in this section of his presentation. Later on in the day he showed a more artistic side to his Google Earth observations, where patterns and natural views created works of abstract art without the need to use digital manipulation.

Marcia Fry brought her book **Hello Dolly**. This was a well-observed photographic essay on dolls, that were for sale in antique shops, charity shops and the like. The images conveyed the environment in which they are now found displayed on cluttered shelves with other household items. There is a sense of melancholy and abandonment. Others in the group felt the loss of childhood was conveyed in these well-observed images.

Muriel Somerfield brought in one of her books on Cats. Over the years she has not only photographed cats she has owned but also friends' cats. Cats on shelves, climbing feeding, jumping, aristocratic cats, cute cats all were covered in this delightful book, a must for all cat lovers.

Vivien Howse showed the group three sets of work:-

- She had been experimenting with pinhole cameras left abandoned in her garden and the resultant images produced some very interesting abstract images.

- Secondly, after seeing Marcia's Associate Panel at a recent regional event Vivien was inspired to print some of her Venice photographs using the Cyanotype method. The delicate results really suited the subject matter giving it a timeless quality.

- Thirdly inspired by a small presentation box given to her husband Martin. Vivien had used it for a set of photographs she had taken at the Ochre Beds found in Kootnay National Park, British Columbia, Canada. These beds once provided the ochre pigment used by artists and had been used for centuries before by native Canadian Indians. This was a great insight into a small corner of this vast country.

Martin Howse also brought in a variety of work for us to see. Martin is the consummate black and white worker of the group. Firstly he showed a set



Images © Marcia Fry ARPS
from her book *Hello Dolly*

of traditional Canadian Rockies landscapes for us to enjoy. Then moved onto a group of photographs taken in small villages and townships in Canada. The group could see in his work the influence of Walker Evans, Sternfield and Paul Strand. There was a timeless quality in the photographs he made of garden railings, cottages, old cars, coffee shops and the like. His final inspiration came from quietly photographing an old abandoned pottery shed owned by Muriel. The images evoked feelings of a place forgotten by time and slowly being taken over by nature once more.

Rod Fry. I was able to show some more images from my Geology project, which has changed into a series of images that show rocks from different Geological Periods, which are present in Devon. The images are divided into coastal and inland exposures but all are linked because man's influence on the landscape can be evidenced to a greater or lesser extent.

All agreed it was an excellent day looking at a rich a varied selection of work.

If you are a member of the Society and want to join us our next meeting is on the 4th June at Dartington, please email me in the first instance for venue and contact details on rod@rod Fry.eclipse.co.uk.



Images © Rod Fry ARPS

Rod Fry ARPS

Route 66 Where to see and hear Carol Ballenger

Arts Live 20

A performance celebrating 20 years of Arts Live projects, including Route 66 featuring Carol Ballenger - images and violin, John Powls – poetry, Kathy Downton – vocals and Andrew Downton – Keyboard.

Friday 28th April 2017

Dartington Hall Trust's Party in the Town, Bogan House, Totnes Devon 6.00 - 6.30pm admission FREE

Friday 19th May 2017

St Ives Arts Club
Westcott's Quay, St Ives, Cornwall 7.30 -10.00 pm admission £6.00

RPS London Region

22nd June 2017

Route 66, a talk by John Powls and Carol Ballenger in conjunction with the RPS London Region The Photographers Gallery, 16 -18 Ramillies Street, London 6.00pm. Admission FREE.

New Concept Editor

As you all are probably aware our Contemporary Group is run by volunteers who give up some of their valuable time to provide our members with a variety of support. This includes our internationally acclaimed 'Contemporary Photography Journal', regular seminars with renowned speakers, assistance for local sub-groups and, of course, our monthly newsletter 'Concept'.

Our current Concept Editor, Christine Pinnington, is taking a well earned break from the position to work on her own photographic projects. She has done a sterling job keeping us all up to date with group news and provided an excellent new layout design when Concept was re-launched.

We now need another volunteer to carry on Christine's good work. The new incumbent will receive the full support of the Committee, the new Journal Editor and our Webmaster. Templates are available for the layout and distribution is handled by RPS staff at Bath. A full job description will be supplied to those interested.

We are looking for someone with the enthusiasm and ability to carry this forward with a keen interest in Contemporary Photography that is all "About" something and certainly 'outside the box'.

If we have piqued your interest please send a short resume of your photographic and any editorial/writing experience to me at wordsnpicsltd@gmail.com

Peter Ellis LRPS, Deputy Chair
RPS Contemporary Group

What's On

Impressions Gallery Centenary Square, Bradford BD1 1SD

Views from China, a special six month programme of exhibitions and events at Impressions, taking a fresh look at Chinese culture and the long standing links between the UK and China.

16th Dec 2016 - 18th Mar 2017

Kurt Tong

The Queen, The Chairman and I

An exhibition marking the twenty-year anniversary of Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty from British rule, a fascinating journey into the entwined histories of China and the UK, traced through the family history of photographer Kurt Tong.

31st March and 24th June 2017

Yan Wang Preston

Mother River

Mother River is a photographic odyssey taking the viewer on a journey along the entire length of the Yangtze, often known as China's Mother River. This new exhibition, commissioned in partnership with Gallery of Photography Ireland, offers fresh perspectives on China, where traditional landscape clashes with present-day development.

The Contemporary Special Interest Group's April 2017 Conference

**Saturday 8 April 2017,
Cophthorne Hotel, Paradise Circus, Birmingham B3 3HG**

10.00 (for 10.30 start) to 17.00. £50, including teas/coffees and buffet lunch. RPS members and non-members welcome.

The conference will feature presentations on the River Yangtze by Yan Wang Preston and the River Lea by Polly Braden. Attendees may also bring prints for review.

- 10.00 - 10.30 Meeting and greeting, tea/coffee
- 10.30 - 12.30 Presentation by Yan Wang Preston
- 12.30 - 13.30 Lunch
- 13.30 - 15.15 Presentation by Polly Braden
- 15.15 - 15.45 Tea/coffee break
- 15.30 - 17.00 Discussion and review of attendee prints (up to ten max. per person)

Yan Wang Preston is a British-Chinese photographic artist whose landscape work is about challenging myths and revealing hidden complexities behind the surface of the landscape.

The Yangtze is China's Long River. Yan Preston will talk about her project *Mother River*, photographing locations from the river source to the sea at exactly 100km intervals, regardless of the difficulty; 63 locations in total.



Y25 2,400km from the river source. From 'Mother River' series (2010-2014). ©Yan Wang Preston

www.yanpreston.com
www.motherriver.info

Polly Braden is a documentary photographer who works on self-initiated projects as well as undertaking commissions for international publications.

Polly Braden and David Company have been photographing the River Lea in East London since 2004 and this work has recently been published as a photobook entitled *Adventures in the Lea Valley*. Polly Braden will present this project in the afternoon.



Inflatable Santa, New Year's Day, 2005, Upper Lea Valley © Polly Braden and David Company

www.pollybraden.com/work/adventures-in-the-lea-valley

To book see

<http://www.rps.org/events/2017/april/08/tales-of-two-rivers>

When booking, please also inform the event organiser.

Contact: Avril Harris, avrilrharris@blueyonder.co.uk, tel 07990 976390.

Dunfermline Weekend May 20th-21st 2017

This is one of the best ways to meet other photographers, relax and enjoy excellent talks from a wide range of speakers.

We are lucky to have **Dan Hartman, Laura Pannock, Tom Stoddart HonFRPS, Roger Reynolds HonFRPS** and **Walter Benzies HonFRPS** on Saturday 20th May. **Dougie Wallace, Alexandra Fazzina, Faye Yerbury FRPS, Trevor Yerbury FRPS** and **Dan Hartman** are on Sunday 21st May.

Dan Hartman has obtained many special images of elusive wildlife. Through years of patience and careful, quiet and respectful observation, they have proved rare wildlife can be photographed in their natural habitat, without the use of game farms. The Hartmans, which also includes his wife, Cindy and two daughters Kelly and Cassie, have operated their Silver Gate Gallery for the past eighteen years and have sold thousands of prints and posters. Dan and Cindy have also been widely published including National Wildlife and National Geographic.

Laura Pannock is a London based Photographer. Her work has been extensively exhibited and published both in the UK and internationally, including at The National Portrait Gallery, The Houses of Parliament, Somerset House, and the Royal Festival Hall in London. In 2010 Laura received First prize in the Portrait Singles category of the World Press Photo awards. She has also won and been shortlisted for several other awards including The Sony World Photography Awards, The Magenta foundation and Lucies IPA. She was recently awarded the Vic Odden by The Royal Photographic Society.

Tom Stoddart HonFRPS has a long and varied career in which he witnessed such international events as the war in Lebanon, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the election of President Nelson Mandela, the bloody siege of Sarajevo and the wars against Saddam Hussein in Iraq. In 1997 Tony Blair gave Stoddart exclusive behind the scenes access to his election campaign. More recently he documented Prime Minister David Cameron's daily life at 10 Downing Street. His work on the HIV/AIDS pandemic blighting sub-Saharan Africa won the POY World Understanding Award in 2003. In the same year his pictures of British Royal Marines in combat, during hostilities in Iraq, was awarded the Larry Burrows Award for Exceptional War Photography. A year later his book iWITNESS was honoured as the best photography book published in the USA.

Roger Reynolds HonFRPS was the Society's President from 2003-2005. He has been involved with the Society's distinction process for more than 20 years. He was the first chair of the Travel Panel in 2000 and also the chair of the Natural History Panel. He has been a member of the Royal Photographic Society Fellowship Board for more than ten years and the Distinctions Advisory Board since 2007. As chair of the RPS Distinctions Advisory Board, he will be presenting the recent Fellowship panels from the past year.

Dougie Wallace grew up in Glasgow hence his moniker, Glasweegee. Internationally recognised for his long-term social documentary projects and a distinct direct style of expressive street photography. His books include Stags, Hens and Bunnies, A Blackpool Story and Shoreditch Wild Life, Road Wallah, and his latest series Harrodsburg is due to be published in January 2017. Road Wallah was short-listed for the 2015 European Book Publisher's Award. 'Harrodsburg' won the inaugural 'Magnum Photography Award 2016'

Alixandra Fazzina worked as a photojournalist throughout Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Her reportages have been published in the British and international press and her photographs exhibited worldwide. Her book "A Million Shillings: Escape from Somalia" was shortlisted for the Pictures of the Year International Best Photography Book of the Year Award. A selection of the works has been shortlisted for the Prix Pictet global award in photography and sustainability. In 2008 she was the recipient of the Vic Odden Award from the British Royal Photographic Society. In 2010 Alixandra was recognised as the winner of the highly prestigious UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award.

Trevor Yerbury FRPS and Faye Yerbury FRPS. Trevor came back into social and wedding photography in the mid 90s and earned him the title of "Kodak UK Wedding Photographer of the Year" in 1997 & 1999. Their work in photographing the female nude has been recognised internationally. Trevor holds a total of 14 Kodak European Gold Awards. Faye joined Trevor full time in 1996 and on 3 occasions she has won the title of "Kodak UK Child Photographer of the Year". She also holds a Kodak Gold Award and, like Trevor, is a Fellow of the Society of Wedding and Portrait Photographers. Her recent SWPP awards are for UK Architectural Photographer 2006.

Walter Benzie HonFRPS is the RPS President for 2015-2017. He is the Society's sixtythird President since it was formed in 1853. He describes his photographic interests as 'eclectic' ranging from digital photography to photographic history. He a judge on the Southern Photographic Association circuit and sits on the Society's own Licentiate distinctions panel.

There is a meal on the Saturday, which is a great opportunity for members to chat with each other and the speakers.

We are staying at the Carnegie Conference Centre in Dunfermline as this is convenient for as many members as is possible and has good on-site facilities. They have always been supportive of the weekend. There is accommodation at the onsite Holiday Inn Express, and to allow flexibility, I am asking members to contact the Hotel directly (01383 74822) to make bookings.

Beyond Words are again providing a book stall as well as the RPS stall.

Members' Print Exhibition

Please bring up to 2 mounted prints for an exhibition that will rotate during the weekend.

Booking - <http://www.rps.org/events/2017/may/20/dunfermline-spring-weekend-2017>



**The Associate panel of Contemporary Group member Neil Wittman ARPS
can be seen at the RPS Creative Group Annual Exhibition :**

**This is being held at Wingfield Barns, Church Road, Wingfield, Suffolk IP21 5RA
Saturday 8th April to Monday 17th April 2017.**

<http://www.wittmann.me.uk/PHOTO/index.html>

19 April 2017

10:30 - 16:30

**ARPS Conceptual & Contemporary Photography
- Print & Images for Screen Submissions Assessment**

The RPS, HQ
The Royal Photographic Society
Fenton House
122 Wells Road
Bath
United Kingdom
BA2 3AH

Tel:01225 325733

See more at: <http://www.rps.org/events/2017/april/19/arps-conceptual--contemporary-assessment--print--images-for-screen-submissions#sthash.VHCNgMXO.dpuf>

19 April 2017

10:30 - 16:30

FRPS Conceptual & Contemporary Photography Assessment

The RPS, HQ
The Royal Photographic Society
Fenton House
122 Wells Road
Bath
United Kingdom
BA2 3AH

Tel:01225 325733

See more at: <http://www.rps.org/events/2017/april/19/frps-conceptual--contemporary-assessment#sthash.tvPcIU6d.dpuf>

20 May 2017

14:00 - 17:00

Contemporary Group North East Meeting

Third Floor, Suite 4
13 Bull Ring
Central Buildings
Wakefield WF1 1HB

There are limited places for this meeting, if you wish to attend please contact the organiser

Contact: Patricia A. Ruddle ARPS
Email: patriciaruddle@btinternet.com
Tel: 07572 124290

See more at: <http://www.rps.org/events/2017/january/28/contemporary-group-north-east--january-meet#sthash.59Z0ZHdJ.dpuf>

4th June 2017

Contemporary Group South West Meeting

Dartington, Devon

for details

Contact: Rod Fry ARPS
Email: rod@rod.fry.eclipse.co.uk

Deadline for contributions for inclusion in the April Issue is 20th April 2017.

News, reports, reviews, publicity, profiles, images, in fact anything of interest in the contemporary world. If you have any contributions you would like to have included, please email to:

wordsnpicsltd@gmail.com

*The Editor, concept
The e-newsletter of the RPS Contemporary Group*

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