

A Happy New Year to all our readers.

This is my first issue as your new editor. First my thanks to Howard Fisher, my forerunner in the role, and to Ken Holland, our designer, for so helpfully inducting me into the job. And then to express my pleasure at being involved in this way with Concept, a publication almost entirely the product of its members' creative efforts.

I joined the Contemporary Group around two years ago. I still thought of myself as primarily a visual art photographer. I have been for some years a member of the Visual Art group. But I always yearned for my pictures to be about more than mere surface beauty. I wanted them to make some deeper point about their subject matter, to carry some meaning beyond the purely visual.

Then I discovered the work of modern masters like Chloe Dew Matthews, Wolfgang Tillmans and Alec Soth, among others. These three are at the height of their creativity in very different fields. I was seduced by how their pictures depict their world in all its gritty realism, but all this with a poetic and aesthetic sensibility. This I felt was my kind of photography. And I'd say, it's what most of us in the Contemporary Group aspire to.

In this issue we hear from Christine Pinnington on the recent meeting of Contemporary North. We also present the work of two photographers exploring very different territories. Paul Ashley's deadpan images show the emergence of communal art in a North Wales village. Patrick Foster's pictures tell of surreal beauty amidst environmental degradation.

Please enjoy and hopefully be inspired to submit a short article of your own along with your pictures for a future issue.

Romney Tansley, ARPS
Concept Editor

e-newsletter

February 2020

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*Format for submissions to Concept:
Images as jpegs (approx 1Mb)
Text as Word files*

*Please send to Romney Tansley:
romney@tansley.co.uk*

*Closing date for the April issue is 1st April
(not an April Fool joke!)*



RPS Contemporary Group
Annual General Meeting

This takes place on Saturday 14th March at RPS House, 337-340 Paintworks, Arnos Vale, Bristol, BS4 3AR at 10.30 and is an opportunity for members to put forward their ideas and thoughts on how we can improve the Group. It is your group and you should feel able to contribute towards it and support your committee. I would be delighted to see members who have attended events in the past and meet new members before I finally stand down.

New committee members need to be voted in: Alan Cameron as your new Chair, Avijit Datta as deputy Chair and Romney Tansley as Secretary. These three have already taken on many of their responsibilities and for that I am very grateful.

Committee members who have stood down over the year are Peter Ellis, Anne Crabbe, Rod Fry and Howard Fisher, some have served on the committee for many years, some only in recent times. To them all my thanks for their time and dedication and to Peter and Rod my hopes for improved health in the coming year.

I have enjoyed my time on the committee and as Chair. I am very pleased that Alan has agreed to take on the role and I am quite sure he will be an excellent Chair.

Following the AGM we have, at present, one speaker, Theresa Eng who has just published her book 'China Dreams'. Sarah Lee who was scheduled to speak has had to cancel due to work commitments. At present we are trying to find a replacement and will notify you if this is possible.

Teresa Eng teresa-eng.com works on long term projects that deal with transition and change and will talk to us about her recent projects. Growing up in Vancouver, she was only able to construct her vision of China from the cultural norms and traditions with which she was familiar. Travelling to China in 2013 she was confronted with something very different. Drawing on her own cultural preconceptions she began photographically exploring the country. The resulting series, China Dream, evokes the cycles of reconstruction and reinterpretation of the past presently underway in China.

Elephant and Castle is now undergoing rapid change, with 21 projects (costing over £4bn) either underway or in the pipeline, making it one of Europe's largest regeneration projects ever. Living there has presented Eng with an opportunity to document this transformation and the effect on the population. The result is Elephant, a ten-year-long project.

Teresa Eng's work has been featured in publications such as Vogue Italia, British Journal of Photography, Dazed & Confused, Raw View, Invisible Photographer Asia, Photoworks, and L'Oeil de la Photographie. In 2018, Eng was a finalist for the Photographie Grand Prix at Hyères 33e festival of fashion and photography. In 2019 she was runner up in the Aperture Portfolio Prize for China Dream and was awarded the Burtynsky Grant.

Avril Harris, Chair



Contemporary Group North

December 16th 2019
Clement's Hall, York

The meeting started with Patricia Ruddle welcoming everyone and apologies received. There were a few notices. The deadline for Concept had passed so our December and January meetings would be in the February issue. Concept was now published on issue https://issuu.com/royalphotographicsociety/docs/concept_2019

The recent Digital Group's meeting had been successful and thanks to Wendy North for the organisation. Another is scheduled for 7th December with Janet Haines. One of our members Nigel Tooby has moved to Cumbria. Our January meeting will include a talk by Wendy North, Celine Alexander-Brown and Lyn Newton about a recent workshop they had been on. Patricia appealed to members to write articles for Concept. Most importantly Janet Cook had brought Mince Pies!!

Christine Pinnington started by showing 2 collages, one was 'Unravelling the Rubic's Cube' which included a Rubic's Cube made up a tiny images. The other was made using colours taken from landscapes from a booklet she had made. This was to demonstate just how much colour there is, in what seems to be dull or flat conditions.

Christine Carr brought information on the Side Gallery in Newcastle. This was highly recommended by members who had visited the gallery. <https://www.amber-online.com/side-gallery>

Wendy North showed a collection of print collages. These were aimed at telling a story in the eyes of the viewer, some suggesting nightmares or dreams. Wendy suggested showing them to a writing group to see how they could be interpreted. Some of the collages had been inspired by a cabinet of curiosities at a local museum.

Robert Harris showed some prints and projected images taken using Intentional Camera Movement (ICM). Reference was made to the work of Andy Gray. There were several landscapes which members thought had a 'Turneresque' quality. Robert explained the techniques he had used. <https://andrewsgray.photography>

Peter Barlett showed images from a current project 'A Day at the Races'. This was started some time ago using images taken on a Ricoh compact camera at various racecourses. Peter's aim is to capture the atmosphere with a specific interest in people and their reactions. More were to be taken and Peter expected this to take 3 years to complete and produce a book.



Janet Cook discussed the potential of several projects. She felt that many ideas hadn't really worked but on a recent visit to Budapest she had noticed all the Costa Coffee shops had books to read whilst drinking coffee, also at Sedburgh, books were everywhere. Janet felt that in this age of technology books were still very important. The group agreed and thought this was an excellent project and suggested finding a focus for this.

Gary Morgan showed a variety of images. The first being an almost abstract fairground image which fascinated everyone. Another image of interest was a hand lit by led light giving a very eerie abstract. Other images were mono, a car park and a series of staircases. David had captured a very dark eerie atmosphere in the car park and comments were made that it was suggestive of Stasi.



Adrian James showed a series of images showing patterns, colours and textures found in nature. There were close-ups of wood and bare trees. There were also complimentary themes of leaves, grasses and stones. Adrian also combined some of his images to produce creative images with an organic feel and show a relationship between the subjects.



Morris Gregory brought along two of his books, "River Foss a Journey" (a collection of images taken along the length of the River Foss) and "We're off to the Games" (images about the London Olympics in 2012). He then showed a series of images of trees taken at Castle Howard. These captured a painterly feel and showed the beauty of Autumnal colours. Morris expressed an interest in a project doing this through the four seasons.



David Richardson brought along a selection of images and invited comments as to whether they fitted contemporary. David had started with portrait photography but had moved onto street photography around Europe and the UK. There were themes and links identified within the images, such as graffiti in the street environment and a discussion about contemporary/documentary followed. It was agreed it was *about* something and not *of* something and a statement of intent.



Harry Silcock, a committed street photographer brought a series of images taken in markets, railway stations and racecourses. He explained his technique of getting in close with a wide angle lens. Most of his subjects were unaware of being photographed. Harry's aim is to show interesting character and reactions and this was shown in the images we saw.



The meeting closed at 5pm, Patricia thanking everyone for coming and especially Janet for the mince pies!

Our next meeting is on Saturday 15th January 2020

Christine Pinnington
November 2019



Fly Tipping

Patrick Foster ARPS

Because fly-tipping has become so lucrative, farmers are being forced to fortify their land with anti-terror-style concrete blocks and other ingenious ways to combat organised crime gangs fly-tipping on an industrial scale.



The National Farmers' Union said Britain's countryside risked being turned into a "Mad Max" landscape as farmers had to deploy barbed wire on gates and fences, floodlights, CCTV and concrete-reinforced gates to combat criminals leaving lorry loads of waste.

Defra figures reveal fly-tipping incidents where multiple loads of waste were dumped rose by 43 per cent in a year to more than 14,000. Two of the worst saw 100 tons of commercial waste dumped on a Shropshire farm and 18 lorry loads deposited in the dead of night on another in Essex which cost the farmers £38,000 to clear.



The Environment Agency says waste is the new "narcotics" because of the profit's crime gangs make from undercutting legitimate operators through illegal dumping and evading landfill taxes of up to £90 a ton.

Four types of fly-tippers have been identified: the casual litter lout throwing rubbish from cars, lazy householders leaving domestic waste often neatly sorted for recycling, dumper trucks with waste from gardens or new driveways and criminals with 25-ton lorries of commercial waste.



In one recent incident gangsters caught in the act of dumping waste emerged from their lorries in balaclavas and with baseball bats. In another case, they had been caught cloning milk float number plates to try to outwit police if the numbers were spotted and reported during early morning raids.



Records have shown that fly-tipping costs at least £1bn a year in lost revenue and clean-up costs. It attracts organised gangs because of the “big returns and low risk of being caught. And it’s very relatively easy to enter the waste sector without going through too many regulatory hoops. You can become a licensed waste carrier for £150 with the Environment Agency’s logo to give legitimacy.



The Painted Houses of Borth

Paul Ashley LRPS

A few months ago I posted on the Facebook page of the RPS Contemporary Group a photograph of some brightly painted houses in Borth (just north of Aberystwyth on the Mid Wales Coast) with a sarcastic comment about the B&Q end-of-line paint shelf. More recently I spent a half a day here and found that the village is obsessed with painting its houses.



I had a number of summer holidays in Borth as a child, in the massive caravan site on the hillside rising to the south. Much of the village is a linear strip development behind the long beach, dating, I guess, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. In summer it is crowded, and the holiday activity, carried by the coastal railway, extends north to the sand dunes, golf course and beach at Ynyslas opposite Aberdovey. In winter, Borth's grey hair and wrinkles are fully exposed by the absence of tourist shop stands on the pavement, the lack of people, and the grey skies and rain.



It is not a tale of dereliction and faded decor though. A massive sea defence scheme has replaced the breakwaters I remember with rocky islands just offshore and steep shingle banks behind the houses, relieving the village of the threat of inundation by storms. And the villagers have responded by painting their houses.

It is more than a couple of people with cheap paint, but a genuine wish to express themselves as a lively community.

My stroll along the main street at times showed almost every other house painted in strong colours - whoever started it, it just caught on. It says something about the people who have settled there, earning a living from the summer tourists, making crafts, running small businesses, and hunkering down in the winter.





I was a bit unkind in my post a couple of months ago, but I don't intend to be this time. I was genuinely happy to see that in Borth, which is otherwise visually unattractive at this time of year, the people have taken their own steps to show that it has real life. What they have done works.



If you hadn't already tried it, take a look at our **Facebook Group**

RPS Contemporary Group

This is for members to share and discuss their own pictures and the work of others, in a non competitive atmosphere. We also invite members to submit panels of pictures on chosen themes. There are links to exhibitions, photobooks and articles that have engendered interest. And we encourage open and honest debate on all matters connected with our photography.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/RPSContemporary/>



... and while you're in Bristol

DON'T MISS



The International Print Exhibition at Paintworks

<https://rps.org/events/bristol/2020/february/international-photography-exhibition-162/>



Street Fusion, Bristol in 2019

by Hans Eijkelboom ending on 14.03.20
at the Main Parr Foundation
(opposite RPS HQ)

<https://www.martinparrfoundation.org/exhibitions/street-fusion/>

