

Project “Frontiers” - project description and brief

The North Wales Region of the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) and the North Wales Photographic Association (NWPA) launch a joint project. We want to support photographers of all levels to work on a photography project, and to engage with fellow photographers.

The project is called “Frontiers” because it should serve to explore often overlooked subjects, to look at geographical boundaries and also help overcome personal boundaries.

WHAT:

The topic is the photographic exploration of peri-urban areas, often also called “edgelands” or “fringelands”. These are the transition zones between urban areas and the natural environment. For further information on the theme, please see below.

Contributions to the project can employ a variety of photography genres and approaches.

Each participant’s contribution consists of an artist’s statement and five images, edited and arranged as a sequence. Each photographer can provide further, additional information on the subject and the chosen photographic approach if she or he wishes to do so.

WHY:

Edgelands are vital to settlements and their communities, but often overlooked or not appreciated. We want to explore the use, function and aesthetics of edgelands, and to further the photographic skills of the participants.

WHERE:

In each photographer’s geographical vicinity. This allows repeat visits to the chosen location, it should encourage the photographers to look at their immediate environment in new ways, and to cut the need to travel to the bare minimum.

WHEN:

21st June to 19th September 2021.

WHO:

Everybody can participate, no matter on what photographic skill level you are. You don’t need to be, or become, a member of any photographic organisation. But an absolute requirement is intrinsic motivation, the commitment and dedication to put the required work and thought into the project, and the participation in (online) meetings.

HOW:

While the participants generally work on their own, we encourage the formation of (online) peer group(s) to discuss the work and to inspire each other. The participants receive advice and support throughout the project.

OUTPUTS:

At the end of the project we will self-publish curated photo book(s), put an exhibition together (print and/or digital), and further disseminate the work through appropriate outlets (print and e-journals, website, e-newsletters, online talks etc).

HOW TO PARTICIPATE:

- 1) Please carefully read this brief and the accompanying 'Questions and Answers' document.
- 2) We encourage you to send a short text (max. 100 words) as a preliminary draft of your artist's statement to northwales@rps.org before the 30th June 2021. This text should give some information on your chosen subject, why you chose it, and any additional info you want to include. You can change and adapt the text anytime before 19th September 2021.
- 3) Register your participation on this website <https://rps.org/north-wales/frontiers> before the 21st June 2021.

COSTS:

Participation is free of charge.

At the end of the project, the photobook(s) can be purchased. The price per copy depends on the pagination and the number of copies printed. Once available for sale, the price will be advertised. Of course, there's no obligation to purchase the photo book(s).

THE THEME:

Interpretation of the term 'landscape' and the meaning of "edgelands":

We often associate the word and concept of 'landscape' with the picturesque, the pastoral or even the sublime. However, if we understand 'landscape' in a broader sense, then it can include much more, even the built environment. The built up land is basically land which has been landscaped in a particular way. In some cases beautiful cathedrals, surrounded by cobbled streets, have been built on this land; in other cases it's residential areas and housing estates; and sometimes it's storage facilities, business parks, waste water treatment plants, or scrapyards.

These landscapes are often located at the periphery of more densely populated areas, wedged between the urban development and the countryside. They are frontier land, an interface, and form transition zones and boundaries alike. They are sometimes termed "fringelands", "rurban" areas or "edgelands", and display unique characteristics^{1,2}. Different planning permission rules apply, land prices differ markedly to the price levels in the town/city centres, and the erected buildings are more often than not purely functional and either lack or display their own unique aesthetics. Nevertheless, these frontier- and edgelands, and the way we use them, are vital for the settlements they are attached to. While they may or may not have historical value, some edgelands surprisingly provide ecological value.

These places are a mirror for our society, and so rather than close our eyes to them, we should explore and try to understand them, not least through a photographic approach.

We should encourage ourselves to photographically approach landscapes we are usually inclined to regard as not worthy to be photographed. To say it with the words by J.A.P. Alexander: "It is not necessarily the *land* that makes the landscape, but how the photographer approaches, works with, and presents the finished photograph wherein the artistry lies"³.

¹ Jennifer Jenkins (Ed.): Remaking the landscape - The changing face of Britain. Profile Books Ltd., London (2002).

² Farley, Paul; Roberts Michael Symmons: Edgelands - Journeys into England's True Wilderness. Jonathan Cape, London (2011).

³ Alexander, J.A.P: Perspectives on Place: Theory and Practice in Landscape Photography. Fairchild Books, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. (2015).

And to quote J.A.P. Alexander once more: “The possibilities for landscape subject matter are not limited to how far you can travel geographically, but rather by how much of yourself you are willing to invest in your photographs.”³