

concept

abstraction image conceptualisation notion thought
impression theory view conception idea hypothesis

THE **RPS**
ROYAL
PHOTOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY

CONTEMPORARY
GROUP

e-newsletter

Hi folks,

I am very pleased to be presenting my first edition of Concept and it is particularly good to be working with our former editor, Christine, who will continue to manage the layout of the newsletter.

I am a very keen amateur photographer and a member of the RPS North-east Contemporary Group, the Travel Group, and the North-east Documentary Group. As you can see, my interests are wide ranging and I love a challenge, which is probably as well given the new role I have taken on!

I am still working my way into the role and I look forward in the next few months to getting to know people within the larger group. The one thing I believe passionately is that our e newsletter is a brilliant vehicle for keeping all the Contemporary Group members in touch wherever we come from.

The newsletter can only ever be as good as the content we receive from you, the members, so please do send me any news, future events, reports, exhibitions in your area, images, or interesting projects you are working on. I am planning to produce Concept every two months and in our next edition I am introducing a Gallery Page which I do hope everybody will feel able to contribute to. The one thing we all share is a love of making and looking at images. I look forward to hearing from you in the next few months.

Please feel free to contact me at lynconcept@btinternet.com. The deadline for our August edition is 15th August.

Lyn Newton
LRPS
Editor

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Placing my late father in the landscape
© Rod Fry ARPS

NE Contemporary Group Meeting

Saturday 18 March 2017

REPORT BY GRAHAM LOW

The NE Contemporary group met on Saturday 18 March 2017 at 2.00 – 5.00 pm at Nigel Tooby's studio in Wakefield. Nine people took part (there were 10 apologies). The session was chaired by Patricia Ruddle.

The meeting began by looking at prints and photobooks. The first set was a series of a dozen composite prints by Neil Wittmann. The range of themes and especially colours was very broad, from the blues in 'Blue Nightmare' to the greens and browns in my personal favourite, 'The Sentinel'. The set included a beautiful tripod shot of the canalside arches in Leeds ('Dark Arches, Leeds') and 'Drawing down the Moon' which was in the 2016 'What is the Point?' exhibition, at the Strand Gallery, London, last October. Neil showed 3 versions of the latter: two drafts and the print he finally selected. There was considerable discussion about the levels of interpretation in his pictures, as well as the technical aspects, especially Neil's use of vertical and horizontal flipping combined with varying blend modes.

After the prints, we looked at two photobooks by Wendy North: "Penniston Show" created in 2015, with pictures of the show in both monochrome and colour, and "Trough House" created in 2016 with Ann Hamblen. While both books were of high quality, the "Trough House" one was particularly exciting. It was in effect a photo and poetry essay of an isolated hunting and shooting bothy on the N. Yorkshire Moors. The content involved in-camera multiple exposures, in a concertina fold-out format. A second edition is on the way, and discussion involved considering visual changes to the front and back covers.



Image and poetry © Wendy North and Ann Hamblen

Nigel Tooby then showed his "We" book, comprising text pages and monochrome family photos, some printed on heavy tracing paper to mesh with the sometimes fragmented texts, others on 'normal' paper, with quite beautiful tonal ranges. The family members were both living and dead; pictures of the latter were at times printed to show ghostly images. Nigel explained to the group how themes of family relationships and metaphoric details fitted together; while the finished product was visually stunning, full appreciation needed an in-depth understanding of why the pictures were sequenced and formatted as they were. There was some discussion by the group as to whether a future meeting could focus on the question of sequencing items in photobooks.



© Nigel Tooby FRPS

The focus then moved to projected digital images. First off were three pictures from the Gambia by Dave Burgess, one of which – and one the group universally liked – 'The Tailor and his Daughter' (right).



© Dave Burgess ARPS

Dave then showed some street photography taken on the London Underground. The first set involved square crops (a format well suited to this sort of work).

However, there was a lively discussion on how best to crop two down-lit pictures taken in Baker Street underground station: do you include contextual details at the edges to provide visual endstops or meaningful thematic information, or are 'street photos' better with a clear focus and extraneous detail cropped out? Opinion varied, perhaps inevitably. Dave ended his presentation with some pictorial seaside shots, ending with a wonderful shot of Cromer pier.

Janet Cook then talked us through five extended sets of pictures from her trip to India. The focus of the Goa pictures was on Indians as tourists enjoying themselves in ways that are similar in many ways to the British on the beach, but differed in the seas of brilliant colour shown in the clothes, the amount of rubbish on the beach that people relaxed on (and in), and women bathing fully clothed. The remaining sets involved inland scenes in Rajasthan and Rajpur and tourist attractions, with a range of different types of Indian tourist (from the wealthy to the much less well off), the most memorable being the Jaipur 'Punch & Judy' show for children, to which it was the parents who were responding.

Graham Low ended the projected presentations with 15 images of a trip to Hull to see the huge wind turbine blade in the centre (which will have been removed when this report is published), and to amble round the Heritage Walk in the old dock/port area. The themes of the images were (1) to reflect the way the sheer size of the blade dominated everyday life in the centre, (2) the bizarre mixture of things that were worth seeing and the seemingly endless way these were obstructed by roadworks and barriers (in brilliant orange) and (3) impressions of mud and remembered deaths from the modern/cleaned up dock areas. Two of the images are below:



© Graham Low LRPS



© Graham Low LRPS

The final presentation, of military graves in York cemetery by Graham Evans, had to be aborted, as the TV being used would not read the files.

The focus then shifted to a discussion of recent competitions and future exhibitions. Nigel Tooby took the group through several draft images, plus the pair he finally submitted, for the Aesthetica prize, which was shortlisted for the second round. He explained the logic behind each image and behind the way the two pictures interacted. One is reproduced below:

After a short discussion on the problems of curating modern art competitions, Patricia Ruddle encouraged the group to submit images (or more images) for the RPS Yorkshire Region & 'Welcome to Yorkshire' 2017 'Showcase Yorkshire' Exhibition (closing date 31 March).

When Paul Graham moved to the US he said that one of the differences he found from the UK was that there was no longer a need to explain who various photographers and related events were; everyone already knew. When at Format this year I was talking with Liz Hingley and a companion, who asked "was I going to hear Bruce Davidson talk at Photo London." Davidson is 84 and a full Magnum member since 1958 and this might be a last opportunity to hear him. So I booked a ticket and duly turned up at Somerset House in the morning of 19 May 2017. There was a lengthy queue for the talk and right at the end was Martin Parr. I joined the queue and then along came David Hurn. David has been a full Magnum member since 1967.

David Hurn was one of the very early speakers in the late 1980s to the newly-formed RPS Contemporary Group. I remember that, among other things, he spoke about the importance as a documentary photographer of having a good sturdy pair of boots. Martin Parr was quick to join in and say that David was still making this point today. Anyway, one of the featured set of exhibits at Photo London was a display of David Hurn's SWAPs; made up of pairs of Hurn's prints exchanged with one of a Magnum member's prints. These pairs of prints were brought together in the exhibition.

That afternoon David was being interviewed by the BBC and he and Martin spoke to a group of visitors, including students. He talked about his method of working; taking many photos around a promising scene, aiming to more deeply "observe" rather than just "seeing". Martin also spoke about the way in which Magnum voted in deciding on nominee and then full members.

Brian Steptoe FRPS



Top left: David Hurn talking about his SWAPS programme

Top right: Magnum member David Hurn

Left: Martin Parr talking about Magnum

Images: Brian Steptoe FRPS

South West Contemporary Group Meeting Sunday 4th June

There were 12 members present for our June meeting, which was held at Carol and Graham's house in Dartington. The regulars welcomed Adrian Joyner a first time visitor who travelled down from Portishead to be with us. There was a short business meeting to catch up with the goings on of the Society and more particularly the Contemporary Group.

The meeting was informed that the SIG's Group Chairs and Representatives would be having a meeting on the 1st July in Birmingham in conjunction with the RO's. The meeting was called to discuss the governance report recommendations, discuss shared experiences, spending excess reserve funds for the benefit of members, and explore setting up a volunteer only area on the RPS website.

As Mick and I would both be attending suggestions for issues to take to the meeting were called for. The low success rate for Fellows (some report as low as 8.5%) was of major concern; a full review with perhaps a mentor programme was suggested. The current appraisal system was just not working as well as it should, perhaps more out of area panel members who were not familiar with SW RPS members work would help. Courtesy and consistency in feedback was another voiced concern.

One suggestion was to call for the disbanding of the Fellowship Board, or at least some of the long serving members to be retired from office.

A lot of the CG advertising is inward to other Society members, the group thought that the CG should be seen at outside photographic events and have an official visible presence, and the SIG's should be represented at Birmingham. The last CG survey on conferences was discussed, some people preferred the two day event especially if travelling a long distance.

Review of Work

After the short formal business meeting the interesting part of the day began.

Marcia and I passed round a book of an exhibition we had visited at the Temple Church in the City of London. Called "Of things not seen", A year in the life of a London Priest, by the Photographer Jim Grover. I also passed round another book of Cardiff's homeless called "Under the Bridge" with Photography by Andrew McNeil. His book conveys the emotional expressions and vulnerability in a series of compelling portraits, which were much admired by the group.

On to our own work and Ken Holland got the ball rolling in passing round the Photographic Society of South Africa Journal in which he had an article showing his work.

John Evan Jones then set the group a challenge to find the deliberate mistake in his self published Blurb book on Rome. Everyone looked at all the delightful images, which gives a colourful and quirky feel to this romantic capital. The mistake? Well it was spotted by Carol but you will have to ask John for the answer.

Anna Goodchild then showed the group a series of deeply personal images on her degree final project about prisons. She is only a few months into a two-year project and is already challenging herself through her photography on her own personal prejudices about jails and their inmates. The photographs ranged from images from Bodmin Jail, to a hotel atrium in Cyprus, and intimate images of Polaroid photographs of walls that had been defaced in processing to produce some intriguing abstract

images. She left the audience interested but struggling to make the connection between the various strands of her work. Along side this she has a blog site and video of a letter from a prisoner in Dartmoor Prison set against various Google earth grabs of various prisons here in the South West. The group suggested that she needed to shoot more images, and show them as a series of small end prints, which might help to show her the way forward and to make more sense to the viewer.

Adrian Joyner brought along a selection of his hand made books which had been made to a very high standard, they covered diverse subjects but his black and white photographs of a local wood where he walked his dog was especially well received along side a book on monks at a religious retreat. Using a "lensbaby" with minimal depth of field, Adrian produced a spooky ethereal feel to the work. The use of white space and sequencing was first class. Another book mixed text-using lyrics from Nick Cave.

Adrian Hough then showed a series of observations using Paignton Pier as a backdrop. He placed his camera on a tripod and using long exposures had people and some cars moving through his images. The overcast conditions added to mood of the photographs. Many responded to the blurred movement of the people, and all felt the images without the cars were more satisfying.

Long Exposure at Paignton Pier
©Adrian Hough LRPS



Mick Medley showed two sets of images. He has been watching the changes to a fire-damaged pub in Bovey Tracey for some time. His latest photographs of the site show that the site has now been cleared and building work is to start, in the mean time on the opposite side of the site the toilet block was hit by a car and has had to be demolished. This has had an effect on the site and altered the dynamic. Mick is following these trends to see how his project develops. In the mean time he has also started looking at street entertainers, but more importantly he is examining one aspect, namely how the general public interact with them. This is quite a departure from Mick's normal oeuvre and the group were keen to see more work from this project.



3 piece with old man
© Mike Medley LRPS

Marcia brought along the start of a new body of work examining objects seen and reflected in shop windows. These carefully observed images centred on mannequins with sunglasses, or hats. This quirky look at our retail shop displays perhaps says more about consumer shopping habits than we care to admit.

I showed a set of topographical images where I can remember being there with my late father, they span sixty years and are largely based around Cardiff, Yate, and Bristol. They will culminate a book of personal memories of my Dad who died in 1976.

Anna Goodchild then showed her video blog where she read out a letter from a prisoner sent to her. Some thought it might be better if a man read out the letter and she could read her reply.

Ken Holland's contribution was to show some new work from his Little Poland Project. This magnum opus, which began in 1995, and after the buildings were demolished Ken thought the project had reached a natural conclusion. But no, the foundations of the former camp buildings have been removed and the site levelled for the storage of caravans and mobile homes. Ken has continued to document these changes and remarkably still been able to reference these changes to fragments of the original landmarks that were recorded in his original body of work. Only time will tell to see what happens to this site.



Selected from Rome Forum
© John Evans-Jones ARPS

John Evans Jones continued to entertain the group with some more images based on his take on Art whether it is someone else's art work, constructed art, value added art forms, art for sale, or his own found art. His well observed photographs and gentle wry sense of humour were much appreciated by everyone.

Graham Hodgson continued in a similar vein with some engaging poetry that he has written linked to his minimalistic photographs. His mild humour combined with simple but enigmatic imagery enthralled the audience.

Finally Carol Ballenger showed a 10 minute video installation taken at the Tate Modern Turbine hall showing gallery visitors taking in a massive mobile installation the resulting interplay of light and shadows on the gallery viewers and their own movements combined to make this a really intriguing art work. The sound was from the gallery installation overlaid with the sound of people coming and going. Carol's artwork was an enthralling end to a wonderful day of photography, full of ideas and possibilities for people to take away.

Rod Fry ARPS

East Anglia Contemporary Group



Tom Owens co-ordinates East Anglia Contemporary Group and writes - we are based primarily in and around Ipswich.

There is one formal long term project that this group is involved in and that is 'Docklands of the Orwell'. This time last year we had our first exhibition of evolving work that was timed to coincide with Photo East, an international photography festival centred on the Wet Dock in Ipswich (the base of our long-term project).

We are not exhibiting this year but have an exhibition planned for July 2018 that is free format. There is no theme other than the work submitted must relate to a series about something.



Personally, says Tom, I plough my own furrow and am currently extending my Edgelands series, sponsored by Kodak Alaris, by making images of Agridustrial buildings in our East Anglian landscape. I am making these images on medium and large format film, Kodak of course. Updates on my work can be seen at www.tjowens.com , especially on my blog posts.

Both images
© Tom Owens ARPS

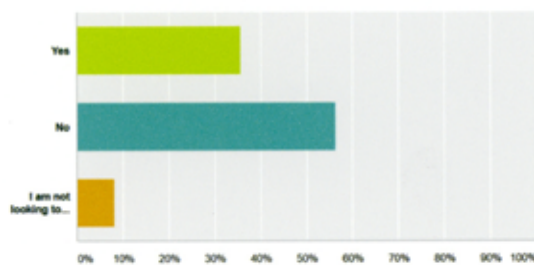
Tom Owens ARPS
Ipswich

<https://rpseacg.wordpress.com>

We thank all those who replied to our recent Group questionnaire. 89 replies were received. From these it is clear that the majority prefer one-day conferences, held on a weekend day. Your replies have given your committee very useful guidance for future events.

Have you attended a Group conference in the past?

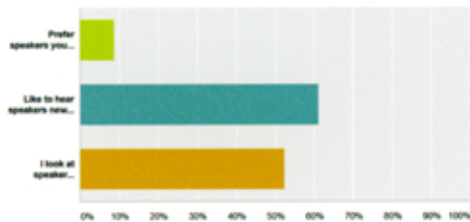
Answered: 87 Skipped: 0



Many replies were from those who had not attended previous conferences, giving a guide applicable to attracting larger attendance numbers in future.

In order to meet our Group ethos, speakers and the work they present will normally differ from the range of speakers typical of camera clubs. There is a list of some previous speakers at the end of this short questionnaire. Your views on speakers.

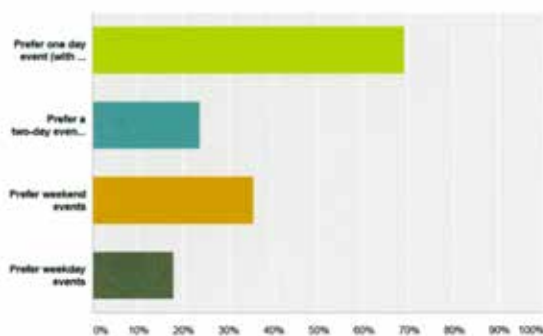
Answered: 50 Skipped: 7



There is a clear preference to hear new name speakers. Prospective attenders would look at speaker websites to help decide about attending.

Length and time of conferences

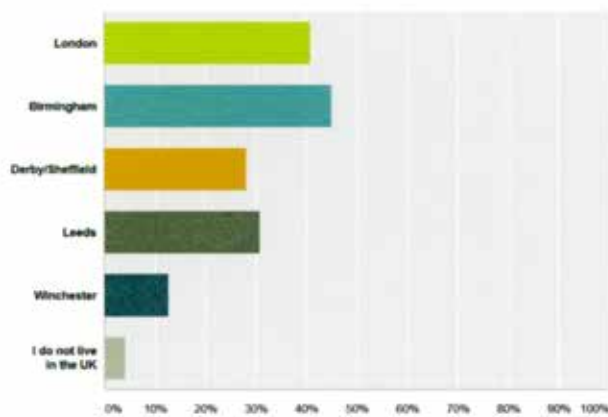
Answered: 54 Skipped: 3



Respondees supported one-day events, with 2 or 3 speakers, over two-day conferences.

Our UK Group membership is spread across the country, so that travel is needed to attend. What would be your preferences for location of conferences?

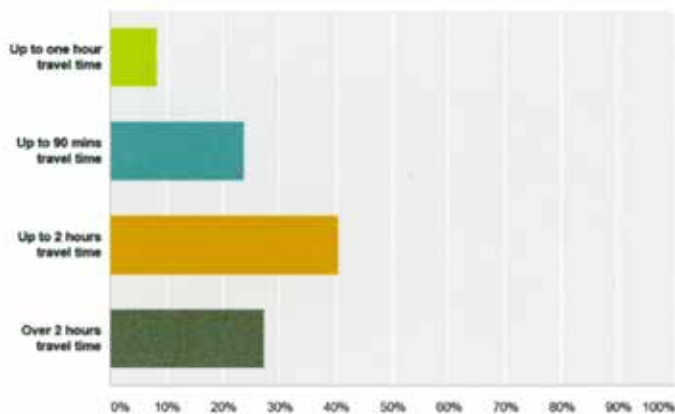
Answered: 71 Skipped: 16



There was no clear preference for conference locations. Several comments were made in favour of Manchester. Rotation of locations was favoured.

How long a journey would you be willing to make to travel to a conference?

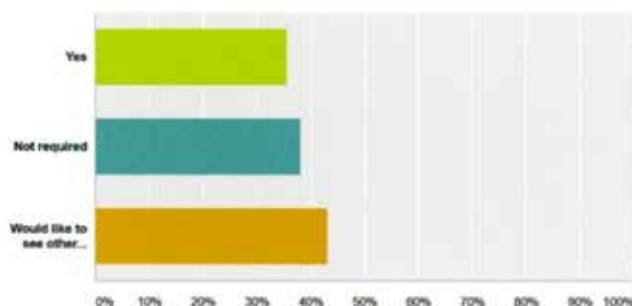
Answered: 84 Skipped: 3



Most would be prepared to travel for 2 hours or more to attend.

Do you want the opportunity to show your own work at a conference for comments?

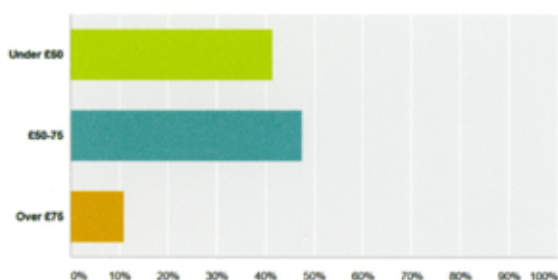
Answered: 81 Skipped: 6



Replies here indicate that conferences should include opportunities for attendees to show their work.

How much would you be willing to pay to attend a one day conference ? (excluding travel and any accomodation when required)

Answered: 82 Skipped: 5



For many, a conference price of £50-75 would be acceptable, although others would ask for a lower price, perhaps achievable if lunches were not included.

All of the written comments sent in by questionnaire respondees have been passed on to members of the Group committee involved in arranging Group events.

Neil Wittman ARPS will be exhibiting as part of the Kunsthuis Summer Exhibition

16 - 20th August 2017

Kunsthuis Gallery
Crayke
North Yorkshire
Wed - Sun 10am - 5pm

Free entrance

kunsthuisgallery.com

KUNSTHUIS
THE CONTEMPORARY ABSTRACT ART GALLERY OF THE NORTH

Standing by Rosamund Comrie

Kunsthuis Gallery are proud to welcome 100 artists living and working in the UK, The Netherlands, Iran, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Italy, Belgium and the USA. The exhibition celebrates artists who demonstrate a fresh approach to painting, sculpture, jewellery, printmaking, ceramics, drawing, photography and textiles with a dynamic use of concepts, techniques and imagery.

Our Royal Academy inspired Summer Exhibition will represent what is happening in the art world right now with the artists submitting one art work each. One hundred pieces will show a deep insight into the various expressions within the art world, spanning semi-abstract to conceptual work.

Summer Exhibition 2017

PREVIEW *free entrance*
Friday 16th June, 7-10pm
please register on our website

16 June - 20 August
kunsthuisgallery.com
@KunsthuisArt #KHSummer
location **CRAYKE** North Yorkshire
Wed - Sun 10-5
free entrance

100 ARTISTS
FROM 11 COUNTRIES

North East Contemporary Group Meeting

20th May 2017

The North-East group met at Nigel And Elaine's studio in Wakefield on Saturday 20th May, 2017. It was a lively and interesting session as 12 of the 15 members present showed a wide variety of work.

First up was new member Paul Anderson who showed us a compelling and evocative study of work he had named Journey through Depression. Paul explained that he had tried to capture his feelings of insignificance, darkness, and aloneness through his images. A barbed wire fence or cracks in the ground conveyed isolation and the despair he felt. In other work he made constructs to portray his feelings. The series finished with images of coming into the light as Paul's journey neared its end. The group found the images very moving and beautifully put together.

Peter Bartlett told us of a fun project he was working on called Blocked. All taken with his mobile phone Peter had made an analogy between life's ups and downs and the need to negotiate one's way through with the blocked pathways caused by building work etc. which forced people physically to negotiate a new path through. Still a work in progress, Peter is hoping to produce a small book as he refines his image choices.

Lyn Newton brought along a sequence of photos showing the effect of a thunder storm on the very busy St. Mark's Square. Her images showed the reaction of the massed crowds who cleared the teeming square in seconds. Then, as the storm passed the images showed the gradual emergence of first the brave souls under umbrellas and then the steady stream of tourists to recolonise the square. She also showed three photos of a study she was just beginning to work on. These images were all of multiple reflections in shop windows. The group discussed how she could develop the work further, suggesting perhaps focusing on one part of the display rather than a whole window.

Christine Carr shared her project on shop displays, particularly those of little independent shops. She showed a wide variety of different business such as market stalls, a barber's shop and some composites placing people to add interest. Christine was particularly interested in looking at how shops tried to draw customers in by the way they presented their shop fronts. The group discussed the project and felt it might benefit from a narrowing down of the types of establishments chosen.

Neil Wittmann told the group about the Summer Exhibition 2017 to be held at the Kunsthuis Gallery in Crayke from 16th June to 20th August. The exhibition features 100 artists from 11 countries and



Images © Paul Anderson



© Lyn Newton LRPS



© Christine Carr LRPS

includes photographers. Neil has had two images – Macroscope and Drawing Down the Moon – accepted for the exhibition. The group congratulated Neil on his success.

Nigel Tooby enlightened the group about the latest fad of having 'po-portraits' taken against patterned wallpaper. This is a throwback to the early days of photography when people had to stand still (often with a headbrace) for up to 5 minutes and developed a set facial expression. The group discussed the fact that most people grin when having their photo taken. Nigel then decided to print off a full size photo of himself taken in front of a piece of particularly floral wallpaper. Aided by partner Elaine, he then took it to a variety of prestigious places such as the Hepworth and the Baltic and photographed the image in front of the buildings producing very interesting tongue in cheek images.

Avijit Datta showed the group his book of images entitled The Jewelled Samadhi. He told the group he had been inspired by the Buddhist concept of finding the person within us and had set off on a personal journey using his images to portray his search. Interspersed in his personal journey was the impact of world situations on people's lives. Avijit's journey made him consider such thoughts as 'You can change the world around you by changing your perception' and 'You don't need to travel anywhere, just focus your mind to happiness all around.

Jane Batty brought along a 9 second sequence of 235 frames taken at 10 second intervals. Jane had been experimenting with time lapse photography on the beach at Saltwick Bay. When she reviewed her images, she was shocked to see that the cockles on the beach were actually moving all the time. Members too, were astonished to see just how much movement, invisible under normal viewing circumstances, the cockles achieved.

Wendy North showed the group her screen printing work. She described the technique she had learned and experimented with at printing workshops. She also brought the book, Trough House, she had produced with her partner who wrote the words to accompany the images. Wendy's images included multiple exposures all taken around Trough House in North Yorkshire. Wendy also brought to the attention of the group a book by Olivia Parker called 'Weighing the planets' which includes still life images formed from different artefacts such as paper, broken toys, journals and flowers, all lit by natural light. She told the group she particularly like the juxtaposition of objects and the photographer's desire to go beyond the physical to make spiritual meaning.



© Celine Alexander-Brown LRPS

Celine Alexander-Brown showed the group her black and white images of people living in a close community in Kolkata. She had particularly set out to capture the emotions of the people. Celine had a wide range of photos, some of which members likened to the work of Don McCullin. As she was trying to select a panel of photos, members of the group had a detailed discussion on how to choose photos for impact. Nigel Tooby advised printing contact sheets of all photos and using this to identify those images to work on further thus reducing the risk of discarding images which could be important. Members discussed discarding photos that didn't hold the attention, looking for those which gave context, and also physically moving photos around to see which worked together.

Christine Pinnington showed members her latest project, a booklet she had designed and made of images of Saltwick. She also brought along her concertina book on Blackpool which illustrated alongside each other a positive image and a negative image. Christine is undertaking a degree with the Open College of Arts and is currently studying Book Design.

Lyn Newton

What's On

Exhibitions:

RPS 2017 Members' Biennial Exhibition

at Warrington Museum and Art Gallery from Saturday 24th June to Saturday 5th August. The exhibition moves to Washington Arts Centre from 18th August to 21st September.

RPS International Print Exhibition 159

at Titanic Museum, Belfast from Saturday 10th June to Sunday 21st July then on to Blue Drill Hall, Edinburgh from Monday 10th to Friday 21st July

RPS Showcasing Yorkshire Print Exhibition

at the Creative and Cultural Art Space, Main Deck, Princes Quay, Hull, HU1 2PQ from Friday 28th July to Saturday 26th August.

Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize 2016 Exhibition Tour

The Beaney, Canterbury from 8th July to 29th October 2017

canterburymuseums.co.uk/beaney

Portraying a Nation: Germany 1919-1944

Tate Liverpool – June 23-October 15

The summer show looks at the face of Germany between the two world wars told through the eyes of painter Otto Dix and photographer August Sander, bringing together two artists whose works document the radical extremes of the country in this period. The show includes photographs from Sander's series People of the Twentieth Century.

Advisory and Assessment Dates:

13th July LRPS Assessment Day – RPS HQ, Bath

13th July London Region Advisory Day - LRPS and ARPS (all five categories) The Nikon Centre of Excellence, London.

23rd July LRPS Western Region Advisory Day - LRPS and ARPS – RPS HQ, Bath

Regions:

Contemporary Group North East Meeting

Saturday July 15th 2017 14.00 – 17.00

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

Sky Master of Photography – Each Thursday evening on Sky Arts (8 episodes showing how a group of photographers cope with a different task every week with the added pressure of a weekly elimination).

Advance Notice
Contemporary Group AGM – 30th September 2017.

Deadline for contributions for inclusion in the next Issue is **15th August 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:

lynconcept@btinternet.com

Editor, concept

The e-newsletter of the RPS Contemporary Group

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