

Hi folks

Welcome to the October 2019 edition of Concept.

I am not proposing to write an editorial piece for every issue of Concept. For a start it would be too taxing, and secondly I would struggle hard to find something interesting to say and therefore it would likely be very boring for you readers. The last thing that is wanted is a boring start to an issue – it would probably put people off from reading further.

In this issue we have an article by the second of the photographers to recently gain a Fellowship in the Conceptual and Contemporary genre. Brian McCarthy adopted a very personal way to present his submission which he describes in his piece.

I note from the October issue of the Journal that a third person gained a Fellowship in our category and I hope that she will agree to allow us to reproduce her comments and a selection of her images.

The group is in a time of change in committee personnel and this issue carries appreciations of the work done for the Group by our retiring Chair, Avril, and also for Peter Ellis who, as you will read, has had a very full commitment to the success of our group. We hope not to lose touch with them in the future. Fortunately, we have volunteers to fulfil their roles.

The Contemporary Group Facebook page is very active and if you do not presently follow it, I do urge you to have a look. I'm quite sure you will be quickly hooked and find interesting discussions and pointers to articles and events.

Adopting my other hat as Group Secretary, every month I receive notification from RPS HQ of our current membership, leaving members and new members. All departing members are contacted by email to seek reasons for them leaving, I have to say not everyone replies but the comments of those that do are shared with the group committee to consider if there is anything that can be learned therefrom. Sadly, some depart due to death or illness, others leave because of changing Special Interest Group (SIG), and some because they leave the RPS altogether.

On the other hand, every new member is sent a welcome letter outlining what the Group does and what is available. With that letter is a copy of the latest Journal and of course they receive issues of Concept from when we are notified of their address. It is interesting to see just how far spread our membership is with recent members joining from Hong Kong, USA and other places worldwide.

We extend a warm welcome to all new members regardless of their home place.

I guess the following is something that all editors write from time to time, but please seriously consider offering items to Concept. It doesn't matter how short or what the subject is providing it is relevant to Contemporary photography. Submissions should be in Word document format and accompanying images as JPEGs. If possible images should come separately but the associated text should show where each image should be placed.

It has been said that we photographers should take all opportunities to share our work, so Concept is an outlet, please use it. Apart from anything else it saves your editor having to chase items.

The deadline for issues is usually the last day of the month before publication. However, the **deadline for the December issue** has to be **15th November** for technical reasons.

Howard Fisher Concept Editor



CONTEMPORARY GROUP

e-newsletter

October 2019

In this issue ...

Contemporary North meeting

Meet the Committee Vice-Chair Elect Avijit Myoshin Datta

Brian McCarthy FRPS

Our Chair

Peter Ellis

Degree Shows

AGM

News

Issuu

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Find us on Facebook

RPS Contemporary Group

RPS Photobooks

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

Please send to Howard Fisher: handiaf@virginmedia.com

Report of RPS Contemporary North Meeting, Clements Hall, York .14th Sept 2019 Avijit Datta FRSA FLS FPhys

12 people attended the RPS Contemporary North meeting, convened by Patricia Ruddle ARPS.







Six apologies were received. Three new members were welcomed. Members were informed of the postponement of the contemporary group AGM in Bristol to the 14th March 2020. Members gave a unanimous vote signalling their desire to help produce a future national contemporary group meeting in York.



11 members presented work, of which eight were by digital projection. Ken Phillips, a returnee visitor to the group, had spent time in China teaching and more recently in Valencia, Spain and the Algarve, Portugal. Ken presented a variety of images on different subjects. He is currently a member of Ilkley camera club. One abstract image shown was of a butterfly; it was accompanied by a poem that he submitted later.



What is this harness of death that beautifies my being
It glows like emeralds in sweet love's flickering light,
Is not my life of three days worth all the sea and the land and the sky
As sunsets calm the troubled day and birds sleep through such wistful nights.
Do these wings tremble the morning dew as silver beads pit woodland glades
And does this curve of the glass take the wind past my body, so naked at dusk,
That I might flit to my true love, sweet pheromone, for a night of bliss.

The 11th century, Song dynasty calligrapher, gastronome, painter, pharmacologist, poet, politician, and writer Su Shi is widely regarded as one of the most accomplished figures in classical Chinese literature, having produced 2700 well-known poems, together with lyrics, prose, and essays. Many were accompanied by paintings; Sus hi called poems imageless pictures. In some respects, Ken is following in this tradition; we wish him well in his artistic journey.

Peter Bartlett ARPS showed photographs, taken over five years, of people viewing art in museums and galleries. He wanted to portray figures among geometry. Peter's (monochrome) images are reminiscent of those of the Austrian photographer Stefan Draschen who has compiled similar (colour) images taken in Paris, Berlin and Vienna in a recent book called "Coincidences at Museums." (Hatje Cantz), or the older work by Magnum photographer, Elliot Erwitt whose monochrome images taken over six decades are in his book "Museum Watching". Erwitt observed in the book regarding taking pictures of people in a museum: "For a photographer, rather than fly casting, it's like shooting fish in a barrel."





Graham Low LRPS showed some photographs taken of visitors to RHS Tatton Park. His images, not shown at his request, raised issues in his mind of permission which were discussed in my report in the previous issue of Concept.

Jim Souper ARPS, web editor of the RPS Landscape group, showed images taken on a workshop held by Tony Worobiec in North Dakota and Montana. Tony and Eva Worobiec's book "GHOSTS IN THE WILDERNESS: Abandoned America" is a compilation of large format analogue photographs of those venues taken over six years.





Celine Alexander Brown LRPS and Lynn Newton LRPS showed photographs taken on a recent trip to Prague. A perennial discussion ensued regarding judging criteria in camera clubs as some of Celine's photographs did not have vertical verticals. The late Swiss American photographer Robert Frank also showed photographs where these rules were broken, including in his iconic magnum opus "The Americans". Magnum Photographer Jim Goldberg said of Frank's work "What led me to appreciate his work the most was his kinship with imperfection. Something could be out-of-focus, but it had the ability to make you feel closer to the subject, the situation"



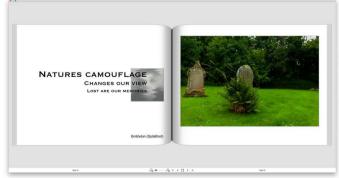


Jane Batty showed photographs of an underground Ministry of Defence cold war establishment at RSPB Bempton cliffs. Usually known for gannets and puffins, Jane described the early warning centre.



Robert Harris showed a book of photographs and text from his Open College of the Arts degree in Photography. Assignment five – identity and place. The audience discussed Robert's use of captions, their (decreasing) font size and positioning.





Christine Pinnington LRPS, former editor of Concept, showed three collages of images taken with expired Polaroid film. Audience members related this to current green issues. The Ohio photographer Levi Bettweiser started the Rescued Film Project – developing 5500 old 35 mm images and showing "poetic mundanity" of other people's lives. Christine's colour film produced turquoise images and black and white film produced brown images. The three collages represented landscapes, the demise of the fishing industry and agriculture. Her intention is to show how all three were at risk and in decline. Christine's technique was reminiscent of the German Photomontage Dadaist artists Hannah Höch (" cut with the Dada kitchen knife") and Kurt Scwitters. Höch explored the themes of androgyny, political discourse, and shifting gender roles during the Weimar Republic. Schwitters developed Merz, psychological collage of found objects to make observations of current events.



Patricia Ruddle ARPS demonstrated a hybrid technique utilising pinhole photography and use of light-sensitised photopolymer steel plates, a relatively new and safe approach to etching that doesn't use grounds or acids. Called "solarplate" an image can be exposed to the plate using a UV light source and then developed in ordinary tap water. After post-production hardening, the plate is ready to ink as an intaglio print.





Finally, I showed a series of prints from a long-term project covering a diaspora and their celebration of festivals.

The next meeting of RPS Contemporary North is on 16th November at the same venue. Related Forthcoming Meetings/ Exhibitions – please check websites for ticket details etc Digital Imaging Group, Yorkshire and NE Centre, Tony and Eva Worobiec speaking on "Photographing Landscape whatever the weather" 26th October 10.30 – 16.00 St Clements Hall, York YO23 1BW

Meet the Committee: Vice-Chair Elect Avijit Myoshin Datta

"It is an illusion that photos are made with the camera... they are made with the eye, heart and head." - Henri Cartier-Bresson

"When words become unclear, I shall focus with photographs. When images become inadequate, I shall be content with silence." - Ansel Adams

I won my first photographic prize, aged 10; the picture was taken with my father's Praktika camera using a 50 mm Zeiss Tessar lens. I developed it in a Paterson tank and printed it on Agfa Gevaert paper at home. Prize money was used to buy Kodachrome film and books on portrait photography. Artistic heroes included Henri Cartier-Bresson who read Art at Cambridge, was mindful of composition, light and shade, made iconic images and founded Magnum Photos. The Chinese would write poetry for thousands of years with a painting; Shu shi called poems imageless pictures. Zen practice has helped me to develop my contemplative photography; the Roshi (Abbot) of Zen Mountain monastery, John Daido Loori, was an exhibited photographer, author of 20 books and had a darkroom in his monastery. Novitiates would be tasked to take pictures of suchness etc. You can read about the interconnection of Zen, Art and philosophy in a series of illustrated articles in my web blog pages and on my Instagram (links below).

My tutor at university taught me optics; he made his own lenses to look at muscles, won the Nobel prize and the Order of Merit.

Later, I was fortunate in being able to spend a lot of time with Bill Brandt - he taught me what motivates his art and his techniques. I have since benefited by association with the Royal Academy, the RPS, and Fellowships of the Royal Society of Arts, the Linnean Society and the Physiological Society.

I have been heavily involved in International Public outreach, youth engagement, fund raising, promotion of green issues and forging links between schools, colleges and universities with learned societies, including development of "smart" websites, social media and mass tree planting. As a committee member of the Contemporary Group of the RPS, I would apply this to the society. More than anything, I would like us to have fun doing it!

www.aumphotos.com www.instagram.com/aumnamahshiva

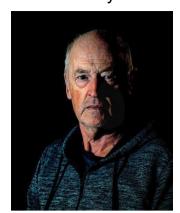


Durdak, The dance of death performed by the Tashi Lhunpo monks of Shigatse, Tibet



A dancer from Berlin demonstrates dance postures first performed in South Indian temples 3000 years ago

Brian McCarthy FRPS



Brian is the second of the two people to gain a Fellowship in the Conceptual and Contemporary genre this year.

Brian has very kindly provided us with a description of how he worked towards the distinction.

Panel Overview

My panel is titled "Skilled Hands: Images from a Small Shed" From my Statement of Intent:

I am constantly amazed at how our hands enable our skills to manifest and to be shared by others.

My images portray a small part of the variety and dexterity of which the human hand is capable.

I have included extra elements using my own life experiences and imagination to explore my interpretation of each particular skill what I like to call "A Touch of Brian" The images for the panel were constructed from an ever-growing list of skills and crafts that came to mind as I progressed along.

Each image was created as you would for a still life. The elements and references used in each image were taken from notes, sketches and props found from trawling around car boot sales. Finally constructed, lit and photographed in my garden shed, sorry I meant studio.

The nature and subject matter of my proposed "F" panel, I knew it would be more of a marathon than a sprint, so not to waste my time and efforts on a project that might not be suitable, I booked in for an early advisory day. I only had 5 images started and one of them was not even mounted, but they were happy to look at them. The advice reflected the fact that there was not enough for a full assessment but they were positive and with a few technical things to watch out for there was potential in the concept.

One item in the advisory notes which gave me some concern was: "with such original images would you consider an original presentation...", OH My Gosh what does that mean! At first I put this to the back of my mind and got on with creating the images, but I kept coming back to it. What did they mean? I've only ever seen prints mounted, perhaps I could print them on huge aluminium sheets or display them on wide HD TV screens and dangle them from the ceiling spinning around. Too bizarre and too expensive, but I did come up with an idea of displaying them in fan fold, pop out book idea, 3 different ways of displaying the images. I ran this pass the distinction team, they were most helpful, "Brian you can do what you like...", can you hear the BUT coming.." Which way would be the best way for the panel to assess them, remember it is a photographic distinction and it's the photographs which are the most important.

So, that was binned and I again got on with producing the images....Then it came to me as I mentioned earlier all the images were produced in my SHED, so, the images are sent for assessment in a portfolio box, so I made a box that mirrored my Shed, inside the box was the

assessment in a portfolio box, so I made a box that mirrored my Shed, inside the box was the images in standard mounts as per normal, along with a tray that sat on top of the images that contained a range of small props, all my original sketches and a full photo record in the form of a small scrap book of how I created each image. Thus the project title "Skilled Hands: Images from a Small Shed"

I mention the display presentation in my Full statement of intent as to why my shed was an important part of the whole portfolio, so, if you are planning to do something that might seem different make sure it is in your statement of intent, this is very important. I don't know if the box helped in the assessment as there is no feedback for a successful "F".

I have to admit that I only did 20 images, so no spares were ever produced, and I did not attend another advisory session.

On my ever growing list of real and imaginary skills and crafts I had conceived some which were more bizarre than others, but they were not produced.

Like the specialised gloves you can buy from your local DIY superstore that once you put them on you became an expert in that skill...Want to be a "Rock Drummer" no problem, just buy the right "Handy Hands" from the Music section and off you go. So, this image was not created but was started, so I did a bit more to it, for this article, I deemed it did not have enough photography in it.

A Breakdown of image 19 "The Carpenter".

The Carpenter with his skill is able to fashion his own hand from a lump of wood and a few basic tools. The references implied in this image are to Richard Thomson, furniture maker (the mouse carving) Escher the artist (his hand drawing his own hand), Walt Disney for his portrayal of the wooden toy that came to life (Pinocchio) and finally the blood is a health and safety warning to be very careful with sharp tools.

1/60 @ F11 ISO 250 Canon 1DX (52mm) using an EF24-70mm F2.8L USM 2 LED Variable Studio Lights

Tips.

My tips for creating a successful submission would be to start with a clear plan and stick to your statement of intent, take your time, and have fun. If you are not sure which genre your images would suit best, then ask the distinction team too help.

It took about two weeks for each image. Finding the props, doing the lighting test etc. One thing that did set me back a bit was whilst I was working on image 14 "The Baker" the pizza twirling one.

I wanted a flour cloud, so I set to and created a flour cannon from some plumbing pipes and an air compressor, as the pizza was twirling I blew flour and coloured glitter through the pipes. Oh my gosh, flour and glitter everywhere including covering my camera. 3 or 4 days of lost production cleaning it all up.

The final shot was taken outside in the garden at night, so, there's a lesson learnt, and if you must shoot with clouds of flour, keep a careful eye out for the wind direction.



The Graphic Artist



The Gardener



The Magician



The Puppeteer



The Carpenter



The Tattooist



Hanging Plan

Our Chair

It was the intention of our Chair, Avril, to stand down at our AGM when it was to be held in October. Now the AGM is being held in March 2020 as mentioned elsewhere in this issue, Avril still wishes to stand aside although she is still masterminding the speakers for the AGM. Dr Alan Cameron, LRPS will be Acting Chair until the AGM when his position will be formalised. Avril will be advising Alan in the background.

Avijit Datta will also be taking over as Acting Deputy Chair until the AGM when his position will be formalised.

During her period of office Avril has worked very hard for our Group and we all owe her a great vote of thanks for her knowledge, time and guidance which the Group has benefitted from. An appreciation of Avril's work has been written by Brian Steptoe.

Avril Harris

In 2007 Gerry Badger published 'The Genius of Photography' which was the inspiration for the first Contemporary Group weekend conference, 'The Brilliance of Photography', held in May 2009 at Cheltenham. Avril was a main organiser for the conference which had over 100 attendees, Gerry Badger being one of the eight speakers. Avril went on to organise the Group's future annual conferences, with suggestions for speakers coming from her hearing talks at IPSE (Independent Photographers in the South East) meetings, suggestions from other committee members and from myself.

Avril was elected chair of the Group in November 2010. The regular annual Group conferences must be seen as one of her major achievements. Some of the speaker names will indicate the quality achieved by these events: Daniel Meadows, Paul Hill, Simon Roberts, Brian Griffin, Tom Hunter, Helen Sear, Liz Hingley, Susannah Brown, Zed Nelson, Homer Sykes, Natasha Caruana, Jem Southam, Francis Hodgson, Melinda Gibson and Paul Reas. They were organised to always have equal numbers of male and female speakers. The talk by Francis Hodgson was on the difference between photos 'of' and photos 'about' and inspired the adoption of our current Group ethos. Sadly attendee numbers coming to these conferences fell after the Financial Crisis and recently have been held as more modest one day events. Recent speakers of note include Yan Wang Preston, Zelda Cheatle, Bill Jackson and Chloe Dewe Mathews.

The other activity undertaken by Avril, with help by Rod Fry and other Group members, must be seen as the RPS International Photobook Exhibition, held in autumn 2016. 155 books from 23 countries were submitted, with Avril taking them at her house. The books plus their packing occupied two rooms in her home. A shortlist of 25 books were selected after the closing date for entries and these were first shown at the Espacio Gallery in East London as part of the annual East London Photomonth that year. The selection was carried out at Avril's home. Avril then herself undertook the transport of this selection for a second showing at Impressions Gallery, Bradford.

Avril has been steering the Group throughout these last nine years, dealing with frequent correspondence and inter-Group meetings called for by the Society.

Avril's personal photography remains decidedly analogue, black & white and with film exposures using a tripod.

Brian Steptoe FRPS



Photobook Exhibition 2016. Derek Birch and Avril Harris Photo: Brian Steptoe



Photobook Exhibition 2016. Award Presentations. Photo Tom Owens

Peter Ellis

I've been asked to pen some words about Peter following his resignation from the society and our group.

I first had contact with Peter when I joined the society towards the end of my degree course. I don't have the email he sent me, but I do recall it was friendly and invited me to partake of an alcoholic beverage should I care to meet him in his local.

I never took up the beverage offer but as soon as I graduated, I got involved with his efforts to get a local group off the ground. Very soon after that I found he had coerced (that was the Welshman in him) me into joining the committee. There were several reasons for that;

- I lowered the average age a tad and,
- He was overworked with being both Secretary and distributer of the Journal plus,
- Moderating the group Facebook page

The fact that he had so many jobs at the time cut into his own photography time as he was always putting so much effort into the promotion and aspirations of the society. I was happy to share the load and also become a friend.

Becoming one of Peter's friends is a very nice thing. He will always go the extra furlong or two to help out others and just recently he even offered to collect me from London after some public transport system failure.

Thinking, is one of his attributes. He is always thinking of what projects to get started on and with what camera and medium so now, having thrown himself free of the volunteer shackles, he ought to be able to get out and about and make new work.

When Peter first introduced some of his work to me it was of allotment gardens, shot in B&W and I know he is hankering after getting back into analogue ways even if as with most of us he finds digital quicker and more resilient in certain circumstances.

We have worked together on collaborative projects and he has taken part in the International PhotoEast festivals as part of our local open group.

I'm looking forward to seeing Peter's work develop(sic) now he has more time on his hands. He will still be a member of our local open group so I'll be able to keep up with him.

I'm sure that many members have little or no idea how time consuming 'volunteering' is, and I have no doubt it will take Peter a while to settle down to managing his own time without a care in the world.

I'd like to thank Peter on behalf of the group for all he has done behind the scenes for the Contemporary Group and wish him every success and good health for the future.

Tom Owens ARPS East Anglia Organiser

Degree Shows

Brian Steptoe FRPS

Readers of the Group's Facebook pages may have seen my item of 15 September on the 2019 Photography Arts MA graduates from Westminster University. I was amused to see a Twitter entry by the course leader Lucy Soutter the same day which included a photo of me talking to one of the graduates when I visited their show on 13 September.

For many years I have visited degree shows by photography students at both BA and MA level, by going to Free Range shows in Brick Lane in the summer and MA shows at Westminster University and London College of Communication at the Elephant & Castle. This has been my way to keep aware of current trends in contemporary photography. These visits were the basis of my report to the RPS back in 2004 which led to the distinctions scope for the Contemporary category being extended to include 'installations' and visits to see work set up in locations that set the context for the submission. I recall visits made to assess submissions at the Lowry in Salford Quays, to Beaulieu House and to the new Evalina Children's Hospital in London. Installations including artefacts with the photos were popular for student projects at the time, whereas the photobook form has taken their place in recent years.

I see a definition for the RPS contemporary distinction category simply as being contemporary with the type of photography practiced as photographic art at these college courses.

Note. The telephone box side panel was a full size replica, complete with red paint of the correct specification.



Associateship Andrea Farrell



Associateship Sarah Mckenna



Associateship Janet Cooke

Contemporary Group AGM

All group members have been advised of the postponement of our AGM due to circumstances beyond the control of the Group.

The AGM will now take place on Saturday, March 14th 2020 starting at 10.30 am. The venue is the RPS HQ at Paintworks, Bristol.

We have two speakers booked:

Teresa Eng:

for further information www.teresa-eng.com/

Sarah Lee

for further information

http://www.sarahmlee.com/

https://unbound.com/books/west-of-west/

https://lfi-online.de/ceemes/en/blog/sarah-m-leebackstage-at-the-baftas-1805.html

Teresa Eng is raising funds to get her third photobook

"China Dream", printed. Her book is a poetic exploration of the fractured identity of second generation diaspora as they're straddled between their motherland and birth country. To learn more about Teresa's project, check out her Kickstarter here

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/chinadream/

china-dream-a-photobook-by-teresa-eng

After the AGM, Teresa will talk at 12pm: and at 2.30 pm, following lunch, Sarah will talk.

There will be the opportunity after Sarah's talk to look at items brought by members and the day will close at 4.30 p.m.

Members attending the AGM will have free entry to the talks. RPS members pay £10.00 and all others £15.00.

Booking is to be via the RPS website.

News

In September 2019 Taschen republished Sebastiao Salgado's classic reportage from the Sierra Pelada gold mine. GOLD at £50.00.

Non RPS Exhibitions

UK

TATE MODERN 20th November to 15th March 2020 DORA MAAR FIRST UK RETROSPECTIVE

SIDE GALLERY, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE To 15th December END OF THE CALIPHATE and SEEKING SHELTER - Ivor Prickett

THE CURVE, BARBICAN, LONDON APPLE to ANOMALY – Trevor Paglen To 16th February 2020

Germany

HELMUT NEWTON FOUNDATION June 7 to November 10 THREE BOYS FROM PASADENA

Mark Arbeit, George Holz and Just Loomis pay homage to the great photographer Helmut Newton.

helmut-newton.com

NRW FORUM July 19 to November 10 **MARTIN PARR**

A comprehensive retrospective of Magnum photographer Martin Parr. nrw-forum.de

SCHAUWERK SINDELFINGEN

To January 6, 2020

LIGHT SENSITIVE 2

Group show of photographers great innovators, both past and present. Includes works by Nobuyoshi Araki, Andreas Gursky, Wim Wenders and Wolfgang Tilmans. schauwerk-sindelfingen.de

Switzerland

MUSEUM IN BELLPARK KRIENS

August 25 to November 4

WERNER BISCHOF: STANDPUNKT

A major retrospective of the famous photographer including lesser-known works. bellpark.ch

USA

SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ARTS

July 20 to December 1

DON'T! PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE ART OF MISTAKES

Explores how photographic techniques such as double exposure, lens flare and motion blur deemed errors by one generation of photographers became interesting aesthetic intentions by the next.

sfmoma.org

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

To December 8

GARRY WINOGRAND: COLOR

The first exhibition dedicated to the nearly forgotten color photographs of Garry Winogrand, one of the recently unsung heroes of twentieth-century photography. brooklynmuseum.org

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS, Washington SC To 20 January 2020 LIVE DANGEROUSLY An exhibition challenging male gendered views of women's' bodies

Netherlands

FOAM, AMSTERDAM

BRASSAI Retrospective To 4th December 2019

IMPURE MATTER – Lorenzo Vitturi retrospective To 19th January 2020

This October 2019 copy of Concept is available to view and download in higher resolution from:

Issuu