

June 2020

The Newsletter of the Royal Photographic Society Contemporary Group



Editorial

The changes wrought on human society by Covid-19 will be marked by great art that will be produced in the months and years ahead, of that we can be sure. Our modes of life will change permanently in ways we are only beginning to understand. There will be films and plays, graphic art of all kinds and of course still photography, depicting the experience of the infection, as well as our attempts to control it, and protect ourselves from it.

We've already seen how photojournalists across the globe are responding with unforgettable images showing the impact on ordinary lives. In time there'll be a much bigger story to tell, one that looks back and assesses how our leaders and governments and health care systems coped - or didn't. The photographs that photographers are taking right now - of the impact on our lives and how they're being changed for better or worse - will become a vivid and poignant channel for those memories.

The photos that come to define this era will range from both the spectacular and iconic to the intimate. And neither one will have a monopoly on our attention. One of the most powerful images of recent years was one taken in 2015 by the Turkish photographer Nilüfer Demir of the smartly clothed body of a small boy lying prone in the surf lapping a Turkish beach. The toddler was Aylan Kurdi who had been trying to get across the Aegean Sea to Greece with his family. They were all wiped out except for the father, trying to make their way to start a new life in Canada. That picture caught the attention of the world and threw into sharp review relief the terrible human cost of the refugee crisis. It also became an issue in the Canadian federal election of that year.

Cornell Capa, younger brother of the renowned war photographer Robert, had a name for this. He talked about 'the concerned photographer'. It was the title of his first book and described photographers who produced 'images in which genuine human feeling predominates over commercial cynicism or disinterested formalism.'

The International Center of Photography in New York city, which he founded and which is one of the most influential institutions of its kind in the world, is calling for photographers to submit their images of the pandemic. Already the response has been overwhelming. It will be these pictures among others that will come to define our era in the times ahead.

Romney Tansley ARPS
Editor

Cover Photograph of Richard Sadler
© Michael Hallett FRPS



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About Concept



View from the Chair

We continue our interesting navigation of our times in the pandemic. I trust that you have avoided infection and haven't been put off your photography.

Living in north Blackpool as I do gives me access to images that most will not have been able to capture. It's been perfectly acceptable for me to exercise locally and I've able to take pictures of the deserted promenade and beach at Easter and contrast it with the last bank holiday when many people came to the seaside; visiting a town with one of the highest infection rates in the county. It seems that good weather is just too much of a temptation to keep people away even though our MPs and Visit Blackpool have said 'stay at home'. We're not helped by people close to the centre of power who believe that the rules they set don't apply to them.

At the same time I've followed nature as it sails serenely on. I think I'm going to create a book of this with human images at the front and nature to the rear.

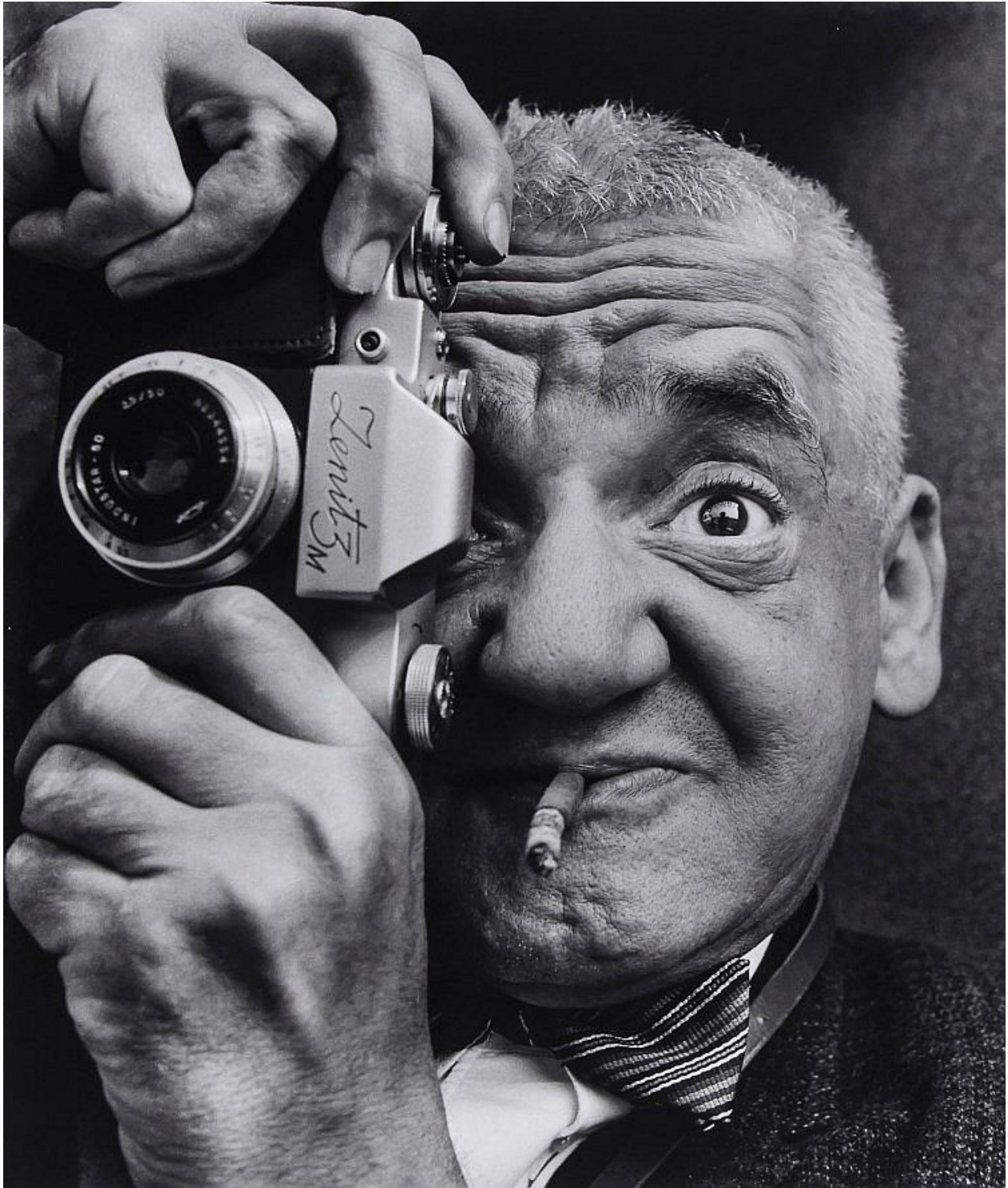
Contemporary NW met in early May courtesy of Webex and we will continue to meet that way as has at least one other group, Contemporary North. Well done for keeping going. I have managed to keep my local club going too and members have stepped up to contribute in a remarkable way.

One note of sadness is the death in mid May of Richard Sadler FRPS, a former inspirational Chair of our group. He was 92 and died after a short illness. I have written in this issue in more detail and we would like any memories of him that you have so that we can create an appreciation of Richard and his work in the next issue of Contemporary Photography.

I hope you're managing to remain inspired by life however mad it may seem. Take care wherever you are.

Alan Cameron LRPS
Chair





Photograph of Weegee
by Richard Sadler FRPS



The man who shot Weegee

Richard Sadler FRPS

Richard Sadler FRPS a long standing chair of our group died at home in Wales on 16th May aged 92. I am indebted to Mike Hallett ASICI FRPS for much of what follows. Mike's full piece is available in the RPS book, Portfolio 2.

Born 1927 in Coventry, Richard Sadler trained in photography at the studios of Edward Eaves in Leamington Spa. During his career, he worked for many of the big local companies, including Jaguar, Wimpey, the University of Derby, Courtaulds, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Belgrade Theatre.

In the late 1960s Sadler became involved with photographic education, first at the Coventry College of Art, Design & Technology and then at Derby College of Art & Design staying until his retirement in 1994. In 2005, he received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Derby.

Sadler's involvement with The Society includes having been a member of the Distinctions Advisory Board and of the Contemporary Distinctions Panel. In 2005 he received the Fenton Medal. He was an inspirational chair of the Contemporary Group following on from Paul Hill who says in an appreciation that he, "seemed to be the ideal person" to take over.

Over the decades Richard Sadler has touched the lives of many. He captured the life of Coventry in the post war era and showed up both the boom and the underlying poverty still present. Mike Hallett described Richard as a mercurial, quixotic individual with a hint of pathos with the laughter. It is all part of life, his life and his way of sharing through people and pictures.

Many of Richard's photographs are held in national and international collections and he will be best remembered by the general public for his image of Arthur Fellig, also known as Weegee, who visited Coventry in 1963. Sadler's image uses Weegee's own technique of getting close to the action and isolating it.

Richard is survived by his long term partner Sue and by his daughters and family to whom we send sincere condolences.

A longer appreciation of Richard will appear in the next Contemporary Journal. I have already received contributions from Paul Hill and Rod Fry, and you are welcome to send your memories of this major figure in the contemporary movement to me at contemporary@rps.org. In the meantime you may be interested in reading the obituaries and links below.

Alan Cameron LRPS

Chair RPS Contemporary Group

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-coventry-warwickshire-52758152>

<https://britishphotohistory.ning.com/profiles/blogs/obituary-richard-sadler-1927-2020>

<https://photomining.org/projects/sadler-at-the-belgrade>

<http://m.vam.ac.uk/collections/item/O212252/weegee-the-famous-photograph-sadler-richard-ma/>



Zooming in on the North

Contemporary Group North



We had all assumed that as a consequence of lockdown our May meeting wouldn't be taking place. Then a week before Jim Souper kindly offered to host a virtual meeting using Zoom. After a few hiccups we all responded to Jim's invitation and joined the meeting which was held on 16 May,

Opening the meeting Patricia Ruddle reminded us that the next one is scheduled for Saturday 18 July at Clements Hall in York. Hopefully, by then we may be able to meet in person (subject, of course to social distancing rules).

Morris Gregory has suggested we consider a collaborative project entitled "20:20 Vision" exploring how each of us sees this year. Each contribution would consist of a combination of words and images with a view to producing a book. Options around either a physical book or a virtual publication (say, using Issuu) could be considered. Morris offered to coordinate the project and put the book together and he will write to Patricia with an outline.

Using the shared screen facility, Adrian James showed a series of images made during lockdown. Most of these were closeups of flowers using focus stacking technology. Included were a significant number of shots of tulips and it was suggested that we might explore John Blakemore's monochrome studies of tulips as an aid to developing the series.

Shortly before lockdown, Lyn Newton had visited Morocco and she showed us a series of images made in Fez and the "blue city", Chefchaouen. She had been attracted by the beautiful colours on display in these locations and included several semi abstract images using "in-camera" multiple exposures, small detail shots that help create a sense of place as well as street/architectural images often dominated by the colour blue.



Celine Brown has been busy during lockdown creating a collection of images of flowers from her home and garden mainly using a light box for illumination. She also showed three other short series of images. Two involve in camera movement of fences and woodland respectively. A third set are of studies of shadows and textures from Haworth churchyard in West Yorkshire.

Mary Crowther provided a brief update on her involvement with the RPS Education Committee. She referred to projects with the homeless in the North of England being developed collaboratively with outside partners but indicated these were unlikely to resume before June. She also mentioned the success of the RPS on-line talks and workshops during lockdown and thought that this resource may be developed further following lockdown to provide increased access to a wider number of members across the U.K. and beyond.

Andrew Hobbs has been exploring "blipfoto" during the lockdown. He explained that the concept of the site is to create a personal photo journal, posting an image each day. Using the shared screen, he demonstrated the site and showed his own images. He commented that as a result he is taking more images and using the camera in his phone more.

Graham Low has been enjoying the half-hour quarantine conversations between Magnum Photographers. At the start of the pandemic, Magnum paired a number of their members at random and asked them to record their conversation. The content is mixed, apparently but some are fascinating. <https://www.magnumphotos.com/theme/quarantine-conversations/>

Over the last few weeks, Peter Bartlett has been exploring the work of Stephen Shore, William Egglestone and others with a view to taking a new creative direction. Some weeks ago, he was invited by one of his Instagram contacts to take part in an online international exhibition, "Space Between Us", organised by Artlink Hull. The exhibition runs until 3 July 2020 and proceeds of image sales are shared equally between the artists and the Coronavirus Relief Fund. The exhibition can be viewed here: <https://www.at87.co.uk> Earlier in the discussions we discussed the merits of online publishing using Issuu. Wendy North showed a book she had published via Issuu. The book has been carefully edited to create a flow of different colours across the images. Wendy designed the book using the Book Module in Adobe Lightroom from which she created a PDF file which was used as the basis of the Issuu publication. Wendy's book can be viewed here: https://issuu.com/wendynorth/docs/colours_blurb_140520_book

Jim Souper is working collaboratively with a number of other photographers to produce a book of landscape images based on trip to the Lake Maggiore area of Lombardy that included time spent in Switzerland. Jim showed us a PDF version of the book which he expects will be published online in addition to a small print run to produce a couple of copies for each participating photographer.

This brought our virtual meeting, which we all agreed had been very successful, to a conclusion with everyone thanking Jim for facilitating it.

Peter Bartlett





Jim Souper: La Crocetta



Morris Gregory: Tulip



Peter Bartlett





Lyn Newton: Morocco





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Next issue: due for publication mid-August 2020

Articles and features:

please send to Romney Tansley by 1st August

romney@tansley.co.uk

text in Word format,

images in jpg format max 2Mb

(no watermarks please)

A higher resolution version of this newsletter can be found at:

