

Contemporary Photography

Number 67 Spring 2017

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Contemporary Group ethos - Photography that conveys ideas, stimulates thought and encourages interpretation; photographs 'about' rather than 'of'.

Editorial

“What is that feeling when you’re driving away from people and they recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing? - it’s the too-huge world vaulting us, and it’s good-bye. But we lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies.”

Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*

This Special Edition commemorates my six years as Journal Editor. So it’s goodbye from me, my last one. It’s been not only a fulfilling job for me, but a rewarding journey as well, presenting the many genres of contemporary photography, while having the opportunity to meet and work with over a hundred photographers in the process of bringing the Journal to you. Of course, the job would’ve been impossible without the team, Brian Steptoe and Anne Crabbe. And, years ago I was assisted by Chris Morris who did the layout for a couple of issues.

When browsing through the twenty-three issues that I’ve prepared, I notice my recurring preoccupation with process. It’s curious, for example, that in my first Journal (Spring No. 43), I reported on a conversation that I had with Joy Gregory. She used the cyanotype process and made salt prints from calotype negatives in her photographic projects, believing that “different periods of time can be relevant to contemporary photography.”

I was also concerned with process in an Editorial (Spring No. 55) when inspired by a talk that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick gave on her photography. She proclaimed that “The act of making art is like a mantra.” She explained that her thoughts were mostly about process and when she began a project she often didn’t know what the outcome would be, sometimes allowing the materials to do what they wanted to do.

Now this my last Journal (yet again Spring – a time of renewal) finishes with a conversation I had with Hania Farrell. Contemporary photography has no boundaries, no rules. It’s the result that counts as she demonstrates with her use of the many different processes and media needed to say what she wants to say. History appears in her work as well. The use of photographic animation harks back to the early days of motion pictures.

What comes before the making of an image? Now that I will have time to devote to my own photographic practice, I plan to explore what was contemporary in the past in order to create my own twenty first-century view of the world. I subscribe to a pick’n mix approach to making pictures. Perhaps I can call it ‘historical contemporary’ as I take from history and modify its historical processes to develop my vision. We have almost two centuries of ideas, theories, processes to borrow from/mix up/adapt to say something new for the now. I like the idea of mixing technologies from different centuries. For example, the computer has made digital negatives much easier to produce, and with them there is a multitude of processes that can be tried. Original capture can be from anything, whether a pinhole camera or mobile phone, and everything in between. Experimenting can lead to new practices, new ways of seeing.

Making art has many different moments which I relate to when I consider that the finished image for me isn’t the important end result. There’s joy in the making, as I [...] “lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies.”

Patricia Ann Ruddle MA ARPS
Editor

Home Work

Tessa Bunney

Between September 2006 and May 2008 I spent two six-month periods in Vietnam, exploring the suburbs and villages in and around the capital Hanoi. Around 75% of Vietnamese people currently live in the countryside, but as Vietnam moves increasingly towards urbanisation, its agricultural workforce faces the prospect of losing its land and its way of life. The country’s growing population has also led to less land being available for farmers to work. Unable to sustain themselves from agriculture, rural families have turned to the creation of various products in ‘craft’ villages, which have become the meeting place between rural and urban, agriculture and industry.

Specialising in a single product, and originally relying on locally available resources, some craft villages date back hundreds of years. Others have been established more recently as a way for farmers to earn much needed extra income. Often, it isn’t difficult to work out the speciality of each village: as I wandered around the back streets of Van Phuc, the whirr of silk weaving machines could be heard from every house; in Tan Hoa sheets of noodles dried in the rice fields; in other villages, whole communities could be found sitting in their doorways making various forms of the ubiquitous palm hat.

The flat landscape of the Red River Delta area isn’t particularly beautiful; the villages are functional rather than attractive. The traditional village house is typically single storey and consists of three rooms. The large central room is a multi-purpose living and sleeping area, as well as a place to work, and it is in this room where many of my photographs were taken. The mix of work and everyday objects fascinated me. Interspersed with images from daily life on the rice field and in the villages, they depict ‘working from home’ in an unromanticised sense. Their subjects, mostly women, balance childcare with the routine work necessary for survival. Often they are in isolation, making separate elements



The Xuân Lai craft village makes kites, bamboo pictures and furniture



The People’s Committee in every village paints instructions for planting and growing rice on a village wall each year

of a product, which are then passed on to another family for completion.

During the last decade, small-scale industrial development has seen many craft villages increase production up to five fold. This is in line with Vietnam's rapid economic development. However, the consequence is increased waste and environmental pollution with the resources of the landscape becoming overused.

On my return from Vietnam I discovered a handbag for sale in my local hardware store. With its mother of pearl body, water buffalo horn handles and its "Made in Vietnam" label, I knew which village it came from as soon as I saw it. Once again I was reminded of our intimate connection with these women workers in this increasingly globalised world.



Bamboo Weaving (originally woven products were made for domestic use but now they are mainly for export; many Vietnamese prefer plastic – it's cheaper and lasts longer.)

Ed. Note: *Home Work: Domestic Labour in the Suburbs and Villages in and around Hanoi, Vietnam*. Published by Dewi Lewis, 1st edition August 2010. It explores the lives of female home workers in the face of increasing urbanisation. The book also contains essays, references and quotes, maps, translations and extracts from Tessa's blog. Tessa has also photographed other countries in South East Asia, especially Laos (the most-bombed

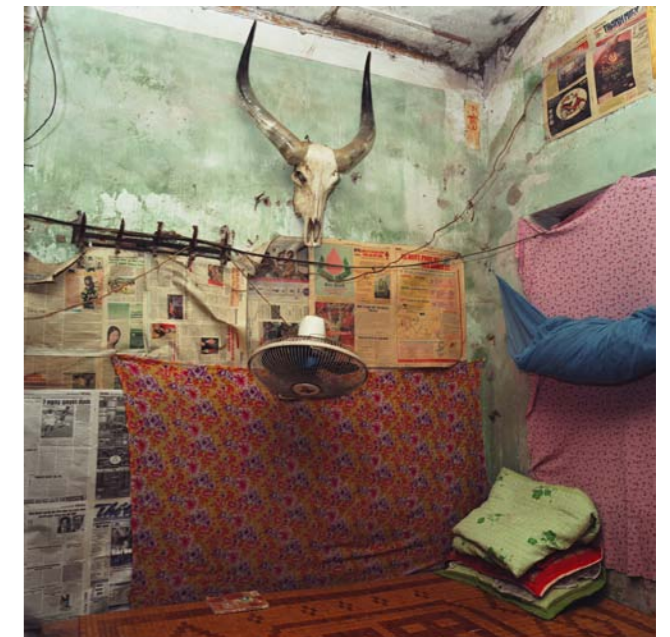
country in the world) which you can see on her website: <http://www.tessabunney.co.uk>. More recently she is back in the UK working in collaboration with members of the non-profit organisation *Flowers from the Farm*. Tessa will be participating in North Yorkshire Open Studios, 3-4 and 10-11 June 2017. <http://www.nyos.org.uk/tessa-bunney/>



Brick Kilns



Rice Harvesting



Water Buffalo Horn Products

Crispy Rice and Sesame Cake



Bamboo Boats and Baskets



The primary reason for catching rats is for food, but the rat catchers also provide a service to farmers to control the rats which eat the rice in the fields.



Silk Thread



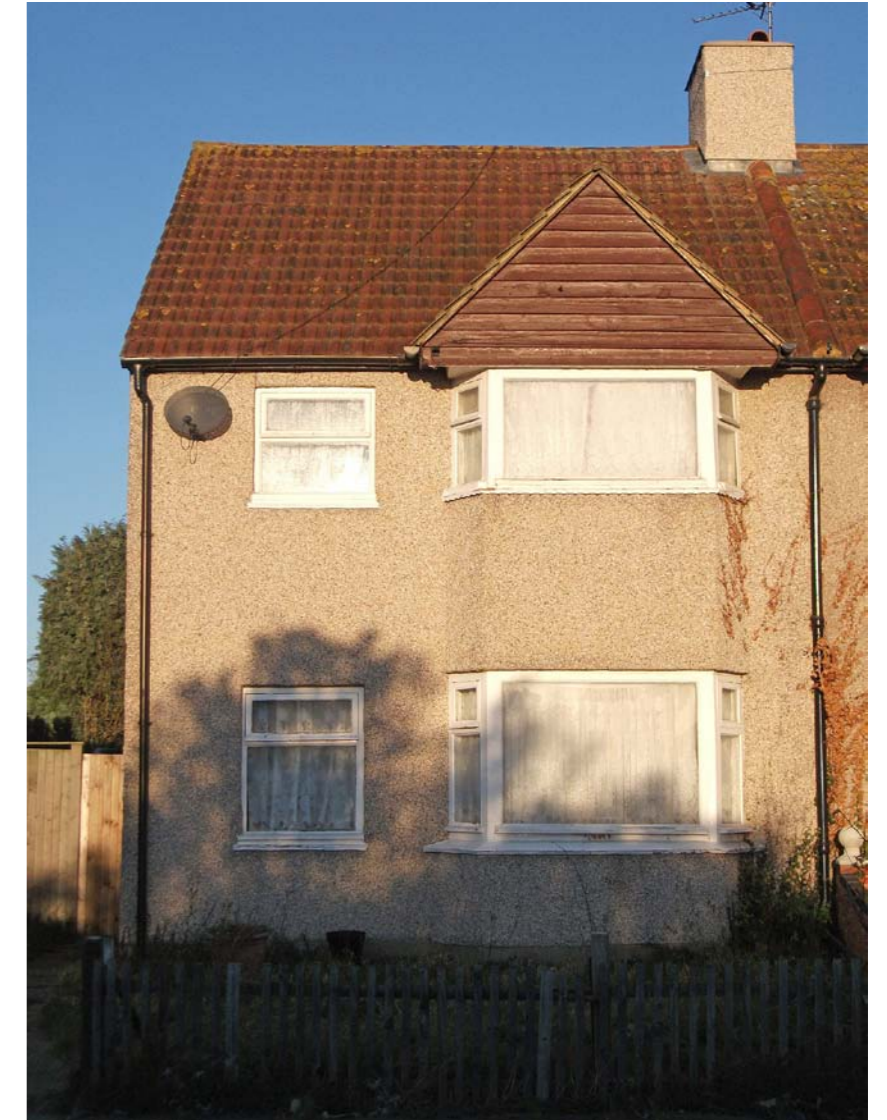
Silkworm Rearing

Pebbledash

John Perrin ARPS

Many houses built between 1930 and 1960 in suburban Britain had their external walls finished in pebbledash. It was seen as a modern finish to seal and cover the brickwork. These photographs were taken one January morning in two streets in south east London.

Perhaps some may think that taking photographs of these houses is drawing attention to something that doesn't need or warrant attention. For me it's about appreciating what has been there for years, but has become almost invisible due to its functional purpose. With these photographs, I'm interested in the plain, urban, authentic appearance of these pebbledashed houses.



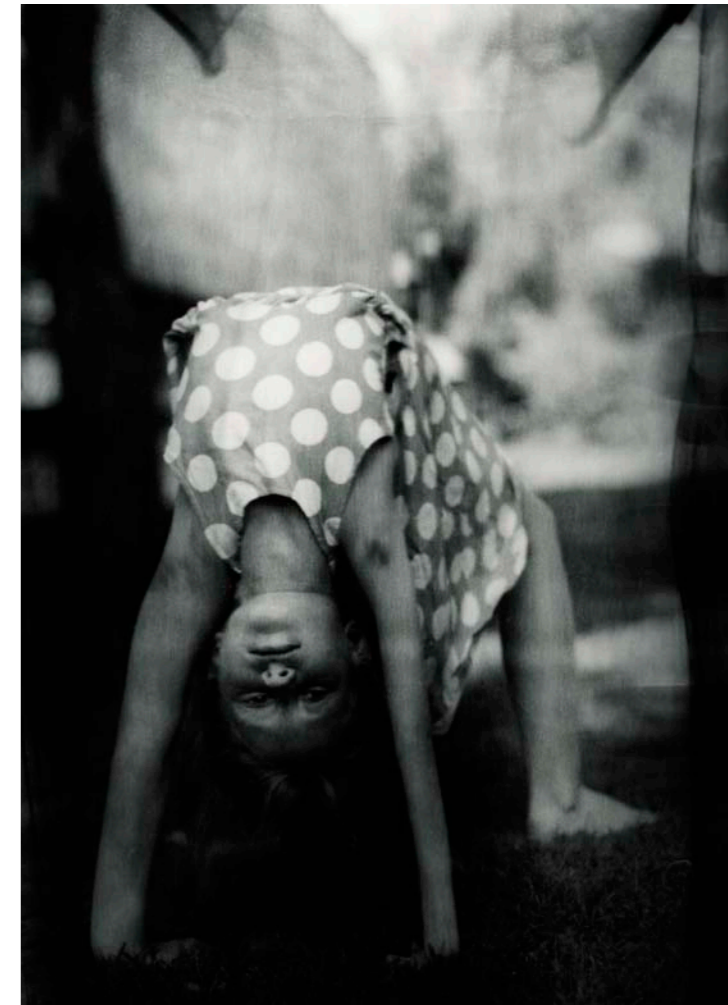


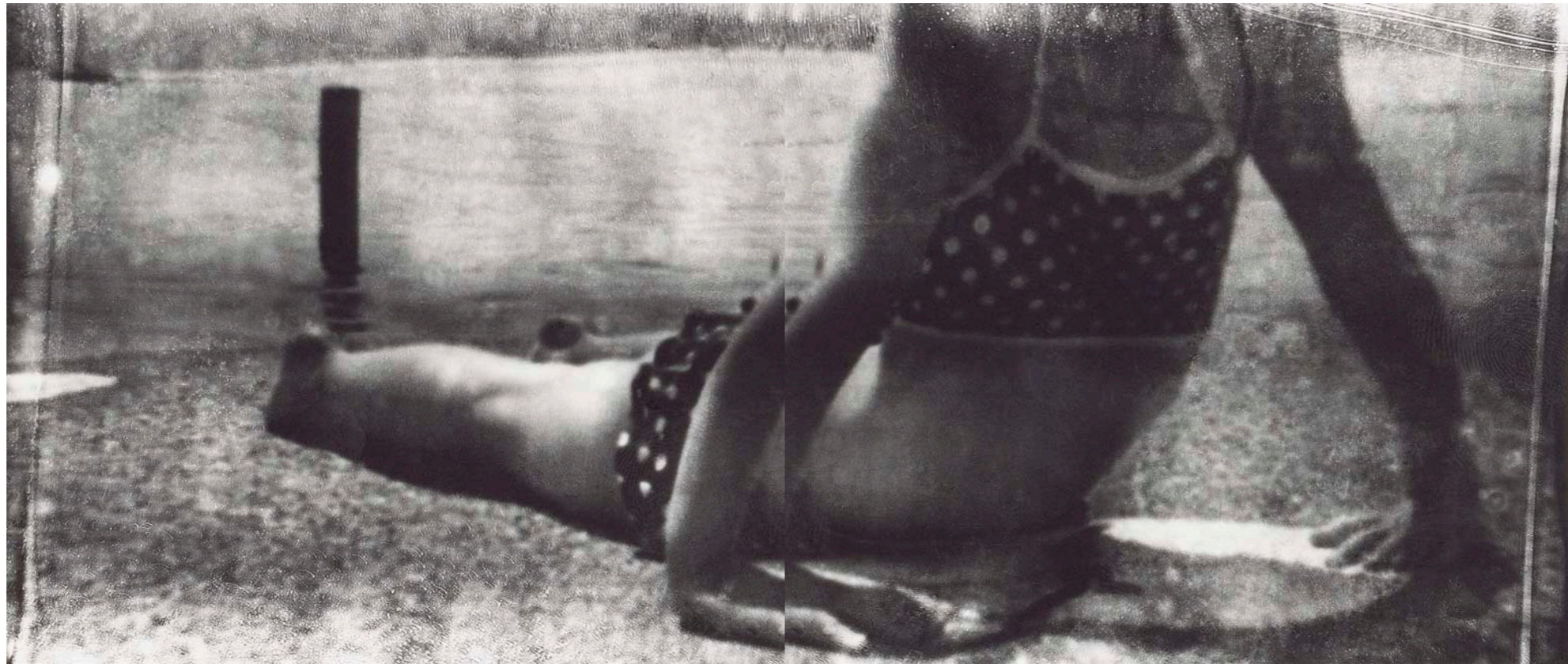
Goodbye Uma

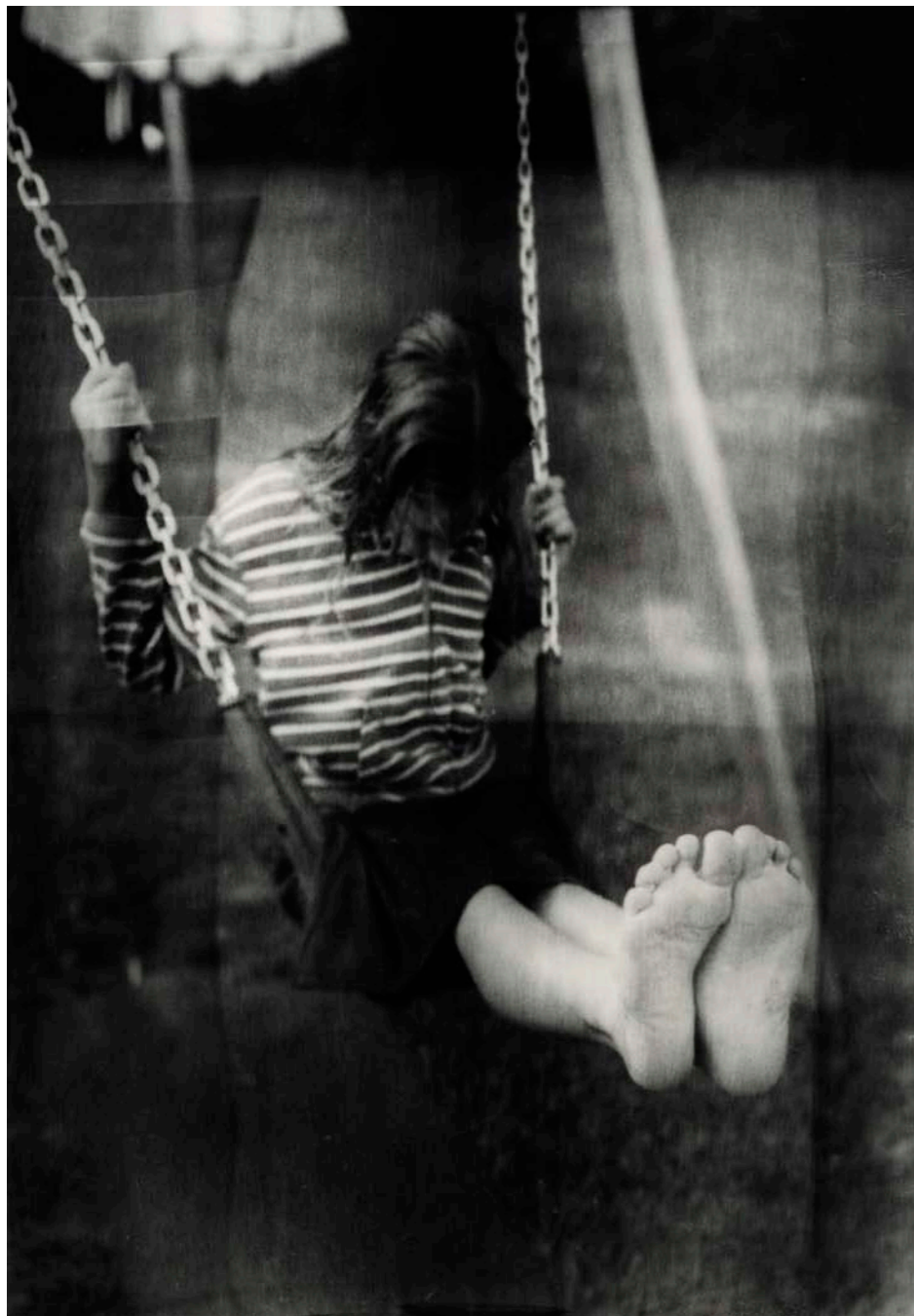
Ellen O'Connell

When my daughter boldly declared that she was done playing with dolls, my heart skipped a beat. She was ready to say goodbye to Uma, her first and most beloved baby doll. Together we embarked on a small photographic journey to bid farewell to Uma. Only after some time did I realise that all of my artistic work with my children up to that point had been about saying goodbye. Goodbye to Uma, goodbye to innocence, goodbye to the person we are, as we search for the one we will become.

Ed. Note: Ellen is an American photographer who recently moved back to Zürich. For more photos from *Goodbye Uma* and Ellen's other projects see her website <http://www.ellenoconnell.com/>. She continues to use film and traditional darkroom methods, and is quoted as saying, "When traditional photographic tools are no longer available, I may learn to paint." <http://lenscratch.com/2015/06/ellen-oconnell/>







Wiped

Hakim Boulouiz

What is a wiped head? What is a 'non portrait'? What is a street that erases your face? What is a city that hides you? Is it to protect you or swallow you? A strange breach, a pure well, a blank canvas filled with our own physiognomic lines. Thus evolves the faceless man in a generic waltz which refers to all other faces, in a one-way relationship, without an image and without return, or rather the return could only be imagined. In short, an intrigue, where by looking for somebody, one ends up finding himself.

Ed. Note: Hakim is an award-winning street photographer living in Switzerland. For more information and projects see his website: <http://www.hakimboulouiz.com>. There are also photos in the RPS Contemporary Group webpages. Several projects are also featured in *Lens Culture* <https://www.lensculture.com/hakim-boulouiz>. He is currently working on *Sabong*, a book that documents cock fighting in Manila.







Kinbaku-bi: The beauty of tight binding

Francesca Cervasi
ARPS

"I wish to untie my knots and finally be free to choose to tie myself down in a relationship."

Ed. Note: Francesca completed a three-year post-graduate course at the Rome School of Photography. She is a member of the RPS Italian Chapter CIRPS.

<http://www.francescacervasi.com/>





Cabinets

Ronaldo Aguiar

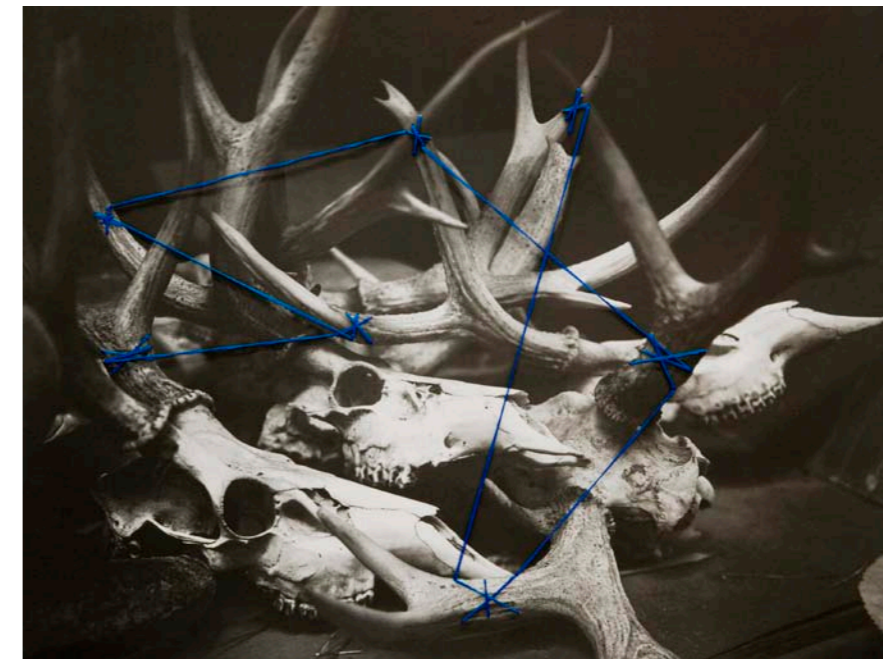
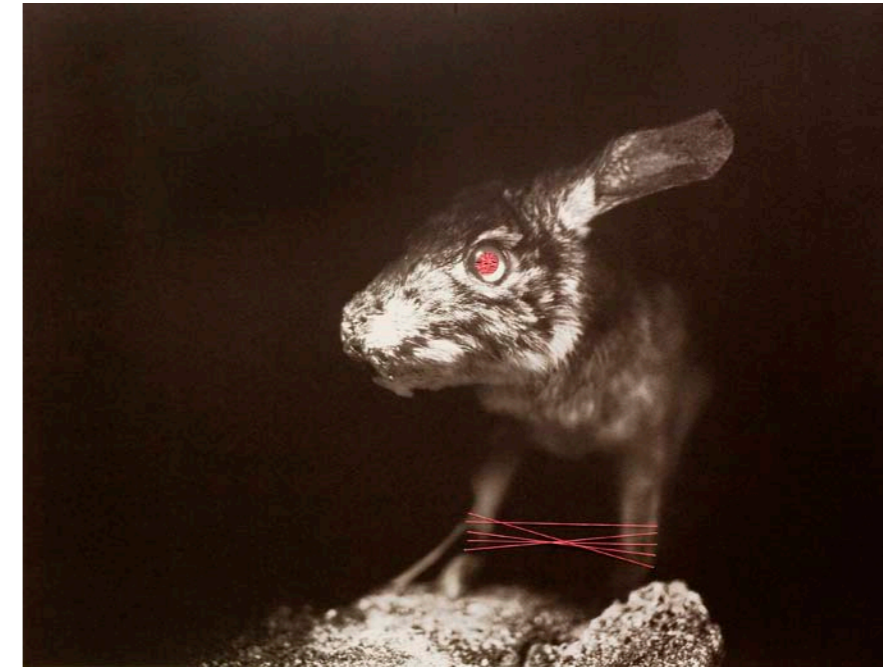
I've had a fascination for cabinets of curiosities and natural history museums since I was a child. I remember entering rooms full of taxidermy animals, collections of bones, insects, shells and maps, with a mix of wonder, fear and mystery. It felt like I was an adventurer, exploring unknown parts of the world. As a grown up, those experiences became an essential part of my background as a person and photographer. The details have been impregnated in my memory – their smells, shapes, and textures.

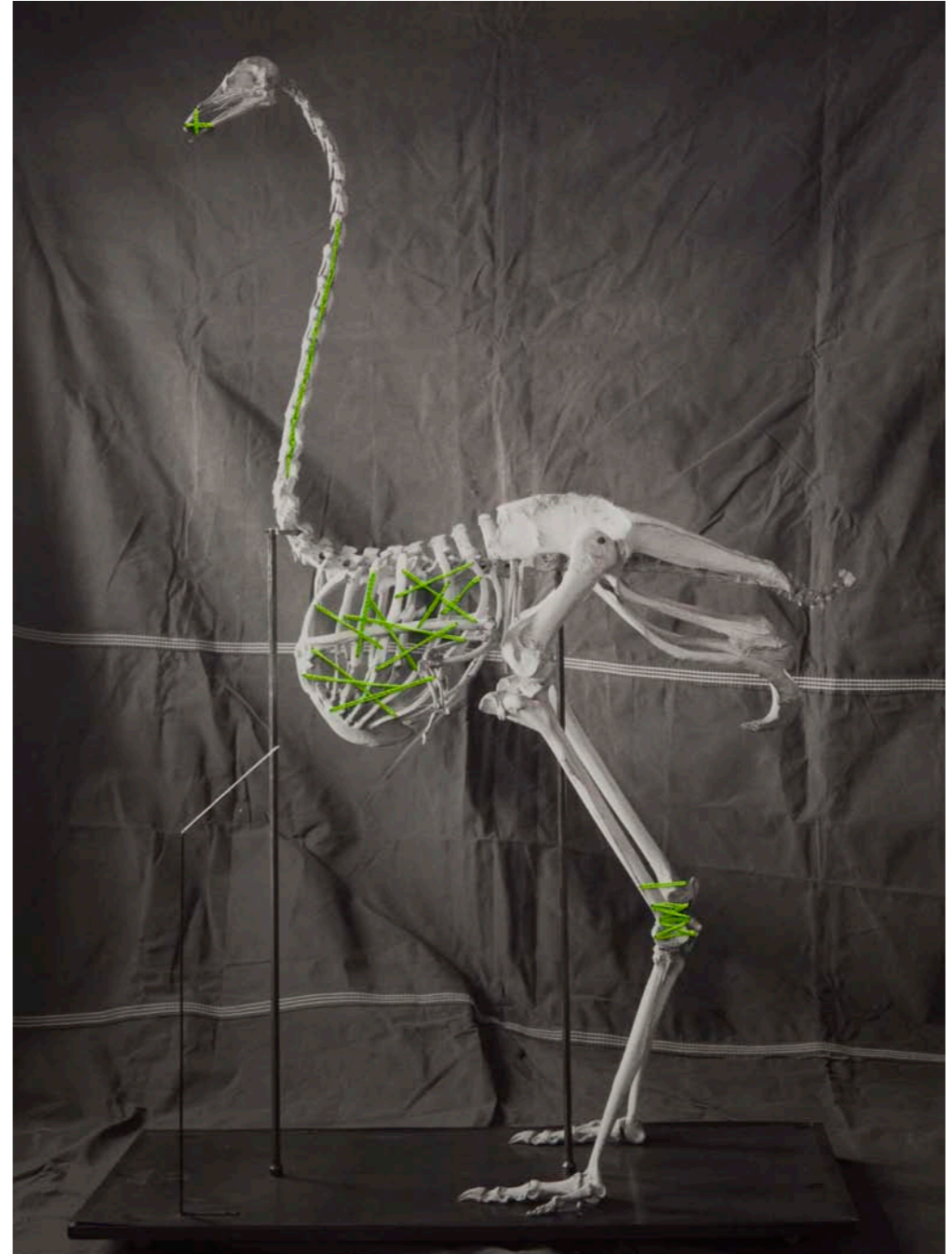
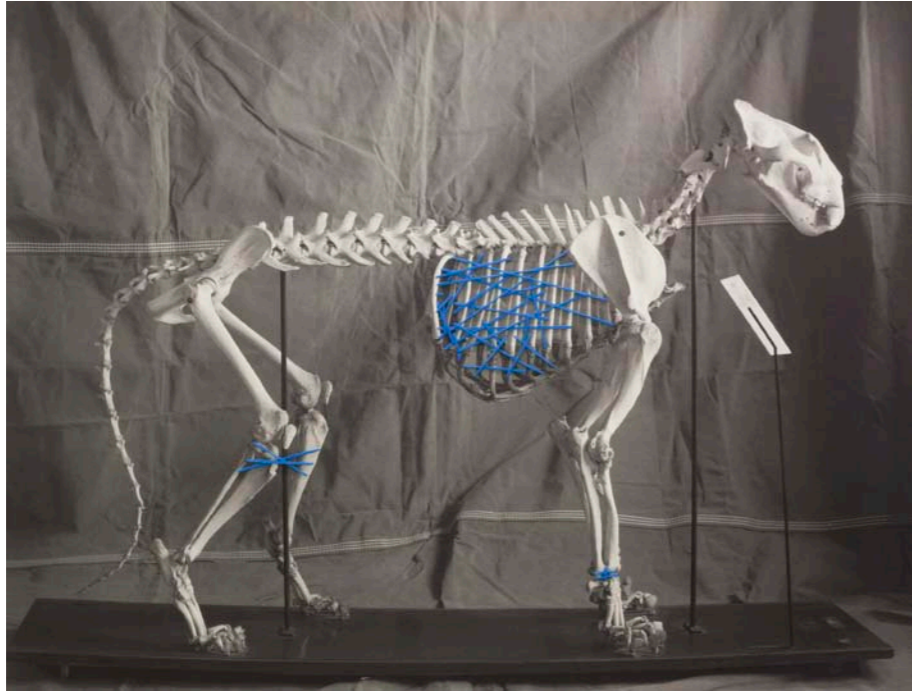
The series *Cabinets* was born after an extended photographic exploration of the São Paulo University Zoology Museum and the São Paulo University Veterinary Museum, both in Brazil; also other natural history museums and collections around the world. When I started gathering the images, I knew that I had to do something else with that material, more than just displaying them in a traditional photographic way. So I began to research and draw the early routes of the voyagers from the Old World to the then New World. I've also researched the animal migration routes from one hemisphere to another. Looking at those lines I've drawn, I decided that I'd stitch them on the photographs. The stitches would add to the main concept and also give a certain dimension to the photographs, as well as the aesthetics I was looking for.

On a more subtle level, some of the stitches also represent the manipulation of Nature by us. To me, *Cabinets* is about exploration in a broad meaning of the word. It's about our romantic and practical relationship with Nature.

Ed. Note: Ronaldo is a Brazilian photographer who works in São Paulo and New York. He's a member of the RPS Contemporary Group.

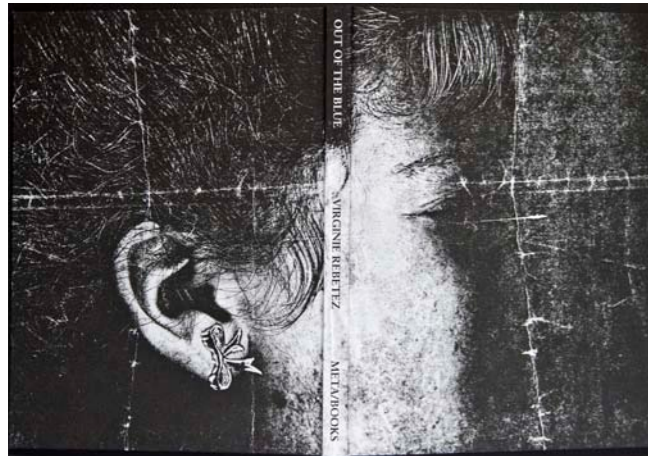
See: <http://www.ronaldoaguiar.com>.





Out Of The Blue by Virginie Rebetez

Book Review by Brian Steptoe FRPS



Front and back cover of book

28x21cm, 98 photo pages, 55 photographs, drawings and copies of writings, 48 pages of typed transcripts, interviews and maps. One folded portrait 53x41cm, one insert of accompanying articles plus photo captions. Published by Meta/Books, 2016.

On 2 March 1998, 19 year-old Suzanne Lyall left her work at Crossgates Mall, Guilderland, New York State and caught a bus to the State University at Albany. She left the bus at 9.45 pm. She was never seen again.



Suzanne Lyall's bedroom, 2014



Reprinted photos from Lyall family archive and scan of notes, 2016

In 2014, Virginie Rebetez, a photographer based in Lausanne, Switzerland won an award to be based as an artist in residence in New York for six months. She had been researching unsolved mysteries. *Out of the Blue* was one of these. Her photographs of a mix of portraits, notes and Suzanne's belongings are assembled much as they might be on a police pinboard. Suzanne's face is deliberately never fully shown in the book images. These convey the sense of tragic loss and unsolved disappearance, which is enhanced by the printing colour palette. This more resembles watercolour than photography, especially in the landscapes included from the area of New York State involved. This sense of loss is repeated in the book cover image, which shows a creased xerox portrait of Suzanne.

Suzanne's parents have never given up their search for what happened to their daughter. There are printed records of pronouncements by a number of psychics they have contacted and follow-ups by police in the second part of the book. A loose sheet portrait is also included, showing how Suzanne might appear at the age of 37.



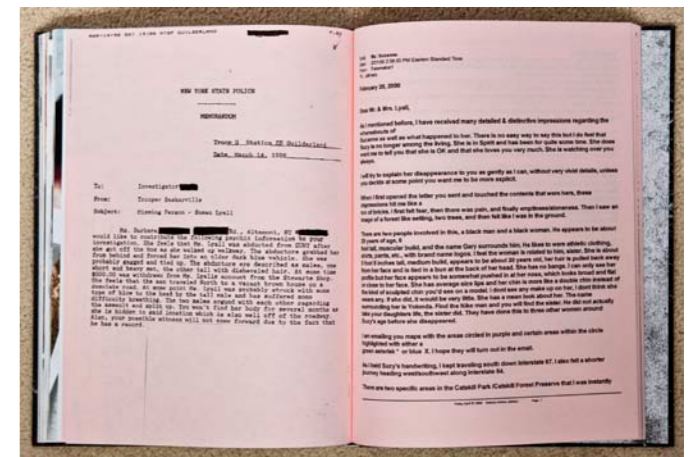
Mary Lyall, Suzanne's mother, 2014



Reprints from family archive and scan of Suzy's letter, 2016



Reprints from family archive, one including Suzy's hand, 2016



Page from one of the many psychic reports and police response

Cutting edge portraiture and where to find it

Nigel Tooby FRPS

From head clamps to 125th of a second:
we've come a long way in 170 years.





In Memoriam

Julia García Hernández

In March 2013, a bundle of printed matter was available for sale at an Oxfam bookshop in a busy city centre in England's northwest. Priced at £200, the material, which included an altered book, was kept together in a small clear plastic bag. The shop was not permitted to disclose the identity of the donor.

"Inventory Entry: Book - *Une Petite Maison* by Le Corbusier, language French, published August 1954 by Editions Girsberger, Zürich. Additions to the book: sticky back plastic protective covering; an inscription, including three signatures, a date and a location, on the first blank leaf (front-facing); attached to the last blank leaf (front-facing) a colour photograph (9 cm squared) of a young boy and elderly gentleman standing on grass at the corner of a building, beneath which is a description and date written in pencil."

In 1923, Swiss-born architect Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, later known as Le Corbusier, designed a house for his parents on the edge of Lake Geneva, in Corseaux, Switzerland close to Vevey. The Villa Le Lac is the subject of *Une Petite Maison*, Le Corbusier's 'research notebook' of text, sketches and photographs.⁽¹⁾ The house was home to Le Corbusier's mother, Marie Jeanneret-Perret, from 1924 until her death in 1960. A sketch of her aged 91, made by Le Corbusier, appears in the pages of the book. In 1960, musician and composer Albert Jeanneret, Le Corbusier's elder brother, took up residency at Le Lac until his death in 1973.

In the Oxfam volume of *Une Petite Maison*, the dedication "For Mademoiselle Collie" is written in black ink. The two signatures that follow, Marie Jeanneret-Perret and Albert Jeanneret, are written in blue. "Vevey July 1955" is written in the same blue pen. The name of Le Corbusier is written in different ink at the bottom of the page and is underscored. Under Marie's name, a cross and a line drawn freehand in pencil suggest that a position for the first signatory has been marked. Marie is aged 95 when she signs the book. Albert is aged 69. *Une Petite Maison* had just been published.

In the bundle, the name of Margaret Collie first appears on a postcard dated "Vevey 1.10.53", and then again on a postcard that has been stamped twice, with "VEVEY 31 XII 1954" and "Les Avants 1. Jan. 1955". The hand-written message of

wishes for the New Year is signed Albert Jeanneret and is echoed in the picture of the singing starling which heralds the arrival of spring. The address of "Châtelard School, Les Avants", written in the blue pen of the message, has been crossed out and replaced with "Crosby, Liverpool", the address on the earlier postcard. Margaret would have been in her mid-twenties when she taught at Châtelard, the Swiss school for girls. By 1960, she was addressed by Albert as Mrs Margaret Caven. A postcard picturing three birds (redstarts), subtitled *Female – Young out of the nest*, is poignant. Dated February 1960, the message, which begins by thanking Margaret for a letter, was written in the weeks following the death of Albert's mother.

Beneath the colour snapshot that is fixed to the last leaf of this particular edition of *Une Petite Maison*, the words written in pencil identify people, place and time, securing for posterity the relevance of a photograph that might have easily been lost. In the photograph Albert Jeanneret is 83 years old. He is resting his hands on the shoulders of a boy. The boy is Robin, aged 8. Albert and Robin stand in front of the outdoor steps that lead to Le Lac's roof terrace and look to the photographer and to Lake Geneva. Margaret (aged 39 or 40) can be assumed the author of this photograph of her son and her friend. The photograph of Albert and Robin has become part of the fabric of the book. With Margaret as the photograph's assumed author she too, like the three signatories, is represented by the volume other than by name.

In February 2017, an obituary appeared in the local press announcing the death of Margaret Caven, née Collie, aged 88. She had been a teacher and the first headmistress of the college that she founded. Another piece of paper can now be added to the bundle of printed matter that has a story to tell.

1. The photographs in *Une Petite Maison* are credited to Professor of Photography at Vevey.

Villa Le Lac has been in the ownership of Fondation Le Corbusier since 1971. It became a museum in 2010 and is also a UNESCO listed world heritage site.

With thanks to Gillian, a long-serving and astute volunteer at Oxfam's charity bookshop (now retired).

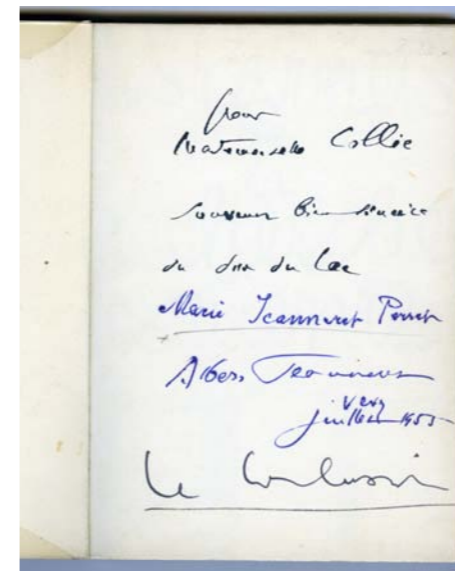
This article is dedicated to my father. In Memoriam: Urcino García Hernández (9 November 1930 - 1 April 2017).



Une Petite Maison published 1954. Le Corbusier's 'research notebook' of his Villa Le Lac, built 1923



Postmarked Vevey 18 IX 65. It contains thanks for sympathy sent during the mourning following Le Corbusier's death, 27 August 1965



Dated Vevey, July 1955 for Mademoiselle Collie and signed by Albert Jeanneret, Le Corbusier and their mother Marie Jeanneret-Perret



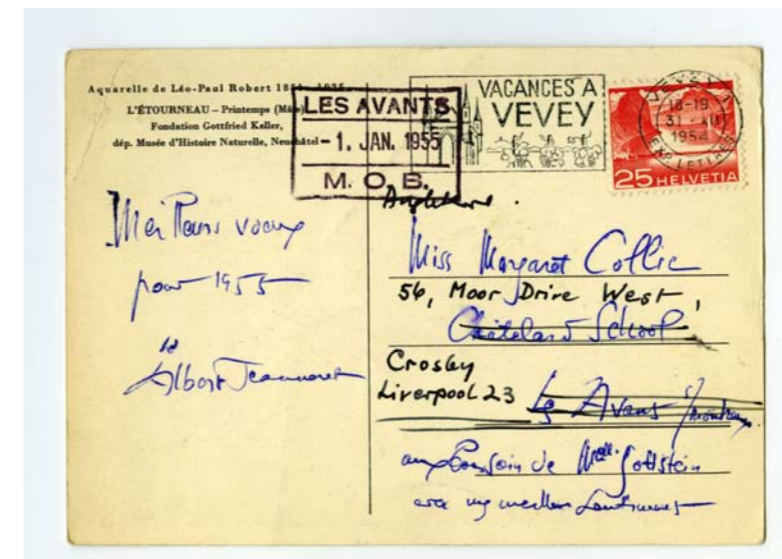
Albert Jeanneret (aged 83) and Robin Caven (aged 8) in front of Villa Le Lac, facing Lake Geneva in August 1969



L'Étourneau – Printemps (Mâle), The Starling – Spring (Male)



Le Rouge-Queue Femelle – Jeunes au sortir du nid, The Redstart Female – Young out of the nest. Sent shortly after the death of Marie Jeanneret-Perret



Postmarked Vevey 31 XII 1954. From Albert Jeanneret to Margaret Collie

The Waters of Lebanon

Hania Farrell in conversation with Patricia Ann Ruddle

Some of you will have seen Hania's photograph in the latest *Taylor Wessing Portrait Photographic Portrait Prize, Helix* from the *Helix* series, an ongoing research project on workplaces within British heavy industries. But it was her several water projects that intrigued me. Hania has produced a vast range of work portraying the many different aspects of water in several environments in Lebanon. When I asked how the projects began she told me that she had been working on the *Boys Will Be Boys* series when she had the opportunity to exhibit in a dilapidated Edwardian mansion in Chelsea, London before it was renovated. Two months later the extensive solo exhibition *Teal* was launched. Since then most of the artworks that were included in *Teal* have been shown in other venues. Especially the installations were adapted to the specifics of the space each time, not only in terms of the space available, but the surroundings as well.



Boys Will Be Boys II (from the series: *Boys Will Be Boys*), 2011
C-type print, 120 cm x 79.88 cm



Free Will (from the series: *Boys Will Be Boys*), 2011/13
C-type print, 144 cm x 338 cm

This approach explains her two rather different variations of *Suspension of Reality (Swimming Pool)*. In the Edwardian house "the pool, white and pristine, was integrated with the space's own features and in keeping with the emotional rhythm of the exhibition." The second version was created as part of her exhibition for the Beirut Art Fair. "[...] for a very different mood and architecture." Hania described how she had to construct a temporary structure to contain the installation. "I opted for rusted metal panels. Such choice allowed me to add a further layer of meaning to the piece that was specific to current affairs in Beirut." She went on to say that the sanitised pool environment could be seen as a respite from the world outside, while the rust tarnishing served as a comment on the ongoing rubbish crisis in the city. "It was also technically functional in terms of isolating and controlling lighting and sound, overall conveying the experience I wanted the public to take away from their visit."

We discussed why she used still photography, multimedia and mixed media. "I see myself as a visual artist mainly working within photography, yet I find sometimes that the medium has its own limitations, so I explore ways to stretch it. Even the mounting and the framing of some of my works are studied to expand and conceptually complete my photographs. With certain projects, I find it essential to go beyond the traditional boundaries of the bi-dimensional image, and introduce other elements. Sound, light, smell, moving image – either in the forms of photographic animation or non-narrative film – sculpture, and so forth. I also keep in mind how visitors might interact with the pieces, relate to them and navigate the space."

According to Hania, she uses photography "as a visual diary, a way of framing, understanding and recollecting the world around me. As if it was a sketchbook. I then cyclically go back and forth within my photographic archives, pulling out images that are relevant to what I am thinking about and researching at that moment in time, and mixing them up with new materials and ideas."

Hania continued that she can work through single images or series, of various sizes and scope, large or small projects.

"The process", she elaborated, "can either start as a response to a commission, the brief of an open call, or an exhibition opportunity. Or it can be a more 'internal' mode, following a strong desire to research a particular concept or theme. The final choice of media often comes as a second step. First I would work on still images, and if I feel a limitation of some sort, or that the piece is not effectively resolved in terms of concept and effect on the viewer, I would expand the imagery to create a photographic animation, or a projection, and then slowly bring in other elements as necessary, perhaps having in mind a real or hypothetical exhibition space."

To illustrate some of her process choices in *Teal*, Hania told me that the photograph *Free Will* from the series *Boys Will Be Boys* is a C-print that she displayed at the bottom of the staircase as wallpaper while *Tree of Life* (see her *Suspension of Reality* (*Swimming Pool*, 2013-14) was a lightbox created for the existing circular



Suspension of Reality III (from the series: *Suspension of Reality*), 2013
C-Print on Diasec, 150 cm x 100 cm



Playful Reflection, 2013-2014
Mixed Media Installation (1 Channel HD Projection, vegetation, rocks, plexiglas, lighting)
(installation view, Singapore Art Fair 2014)

skylight at the top of the staircase. The mixed media installation *N33° 54' - E35°* immerses the viewer in the winter waters of the Corniche in Beirut. Her use of projections and mirrors creates a mesmerising experience, enhanced by the soundscape of the waves. Note also the placement of pipes and taps - another example of how Hania creates and curates her work, clearly influenced by her background in interior design.

Whether we see boys displaying their carefree and natural instincts, the lushness of waterfalls, swimmers bubbling in a swimming pool or the "cogs" of the Lebanese water industry, in Hania's photography, water becomes a symbol, "the refuge from the chaos of everyday life in a country in unrest."

Ed. Note: For more information about Hania, a member of the Contemporary Group, her water photographs and installations, along with other award-winning projects, her website is <http://www.haniafarrell.com/>

N33° 54' - E35° 28', 2013

Mixed Media Installation (soundscape, 2-channel HD video projection - 14'45", mirrors, pipes, taps)
(installation view, *Teal*, London, 2013)



Suspension of Reality (Swimming Pool, 2013)
Mixed Media Installation (Lightbox,
fluorescent lights, wooden poles, sailing
rope, diving board)
414.3 cm x 292.8 cm
(installation view, *Teal*, London, 2013)



Suspension of Reality (Swimming Pool, 2013-2014)
Mixed Media Installation (lightbox, LED
lights, glass, oxidised metal panels)
414.3 cm x 292.8 cm
(installation view, *Beirut Art Fair*, 2014)

