



Contemporary North Members' Showcase

March 2023

Issue 4

Contemporary North

(Part of the RPS Contemporary Group)

Members' Showcase

provides a platform for contributors to our monthly meetings to display the work they have shared.

Contributors have curated their own images and provided the accompanying text making this a collaborative group venture.

18th March 2023 —Meeting in person at Clements Hall, York

Chaired by Patricia Ruddle

Contributors:

- 1) Andrew Hersom
- 2) Avijit Datta
- 3) Harry Silcock
- 4) Sean Goodhart
- 5) Barbara Pollard
- 6) Martyn Pearson
- 7) Patricia Ruddle



Sean demonstrates the drone and manages to capture us all looking in the same direction

Andrew Hersom

These are a few pictures from a project which has been going for quite a few years – manikins in shop windows (and elsewhere). This can be challenging with poor light, coloured lights and reflections (although these can make the image more interesting). Some of the subjects look almost human, others are clearly not human at all.



Boredom



Bridal Party



Friends



Half heads



Sisters



Trumpeter



What is that?



Yellow Jacket

Colour Photography of Diversity

Avijit started with a follow up on his talk on feminist photography. The recent devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria have decimated the areas where Avijit had photographed women striving for equality in Mesopotamia. Avijit then went on to describe the RPS journal article on Hannah Starkey HonFRPS whose photography also highlights feminism. Four members of Contemporary North visited the Hepworth Gallery in Wakefield where there was a large exhibition of Hannah Starkey's work. They enjoyed a talk by her and were kindly shown round the exhibition personally by Hannah Starkey. Patricia Ruddle arranged for copies of the RPS journal article on her work to be sent to her.



Avijit set these images in the context of improved diversity at the 95th Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences ceremony ('Oscars') where best actress Michelle Yeoh said that she accepted her award "for every little girl that looks like me". Avijit also described how diversity and inclusion were funded initiatives of three UK government departments, including Culture and Education. Notable active institutions driving social engineering included The Arts Council, University of Cambridge and Queen Mary's, University of London.



Avijit then described his 12-year project on diaspora in Hull, an area in the lowest 20% of UK deprivation, and where 27.4% of the children live in low income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average.

Avijit showed photographs of people from all backgrounds and ages taken in a studio setting following the Hindu festival of Holi. Individuals danced together and applied coloured powders on each other. The end result was that they all looked similar and had fun together, irrespective of background.





Harry Silcock

Each of these photographs consisted of two exposures, some taken in camera through a homemade diffusing filter which was made from an anti newton glass taken from a medium format film slide holder. I prefer this effect to that achievable using the equivalent 'Cokin' diffuser filter.





These images were taken using a PhotoSplit App on an iPhone, which allows the photographer to take multiple images, then move the photographs independently one on top of the other, before then altering the blending mode to create unique images.



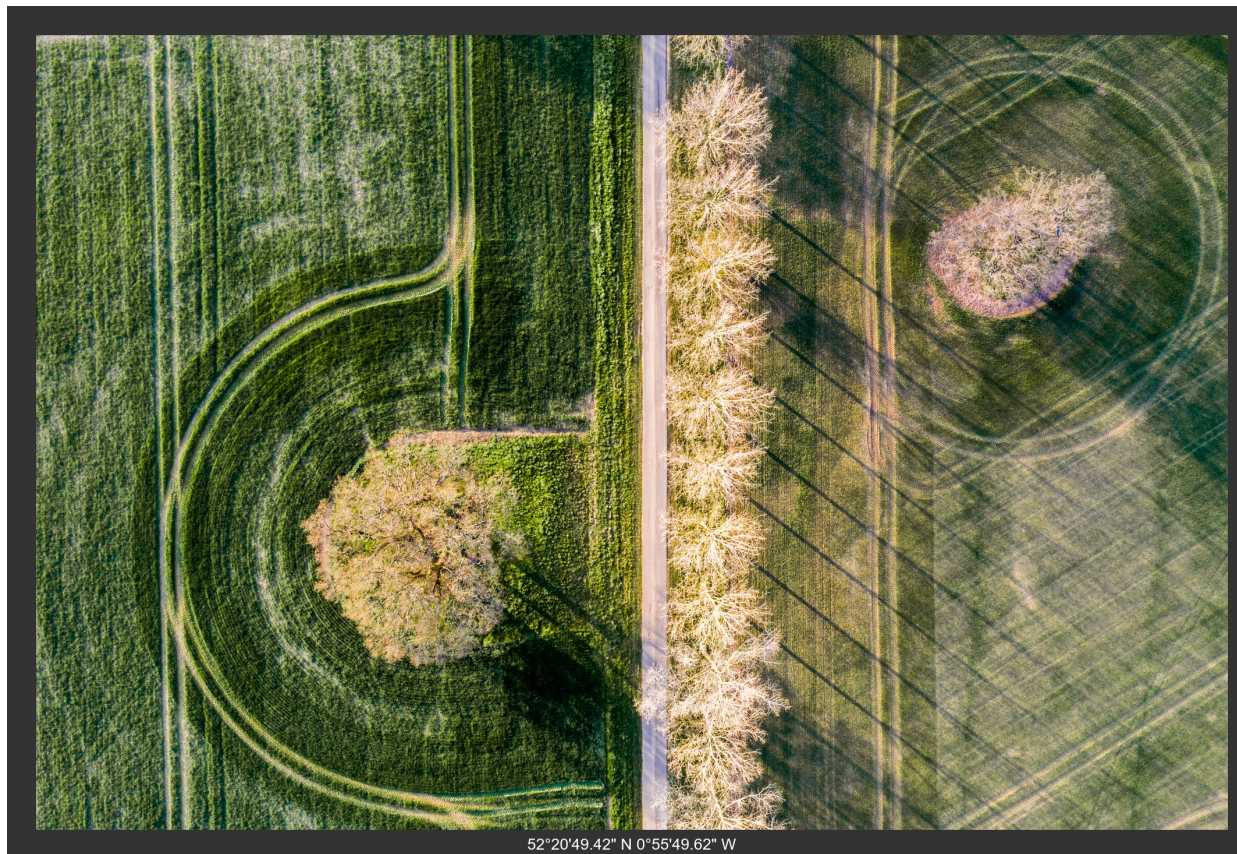
The only limitation is the photographer's imagination!



Sean Goodhart ARPS - Droning On - How aerial photography changed my view of the world

Sean started by talking about and showing us his drones, the largest and oldest being his DJI Mavic 2 Pro (December 2018 to present) and the newest being a DJI Mini 3 Pro (January 2023 to present). Many of his shots were also taken with a DJI Mini 2 (June 2021 to December 2022 [which he sold on]). The smaller drone is used when operating in areas closer to uninvolved people, following the law change in January 2021.

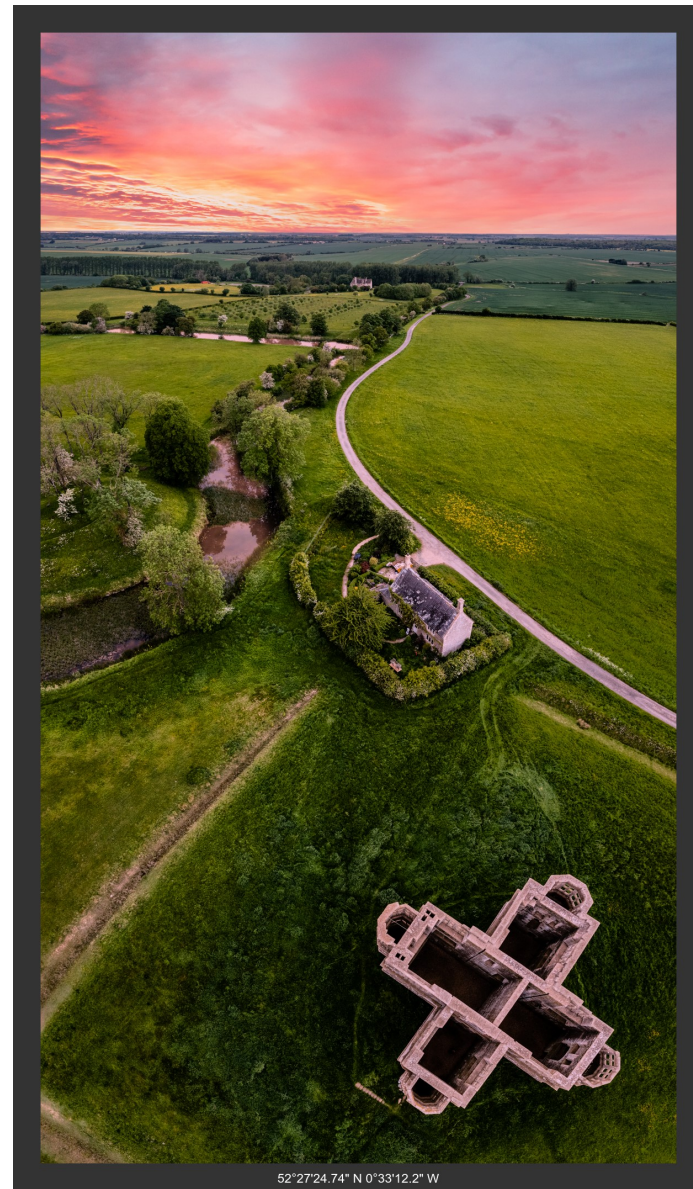
Sean started his drone project capturing local landscapes, capturing the scenery being a good place to start learning to fly - much safer out in the fields rather than close to people. That developed into a long-term project looking at human influence in the landscape.



The project's bird's eye view gives a new viewpoint of familiar places, a refreshing look at existing landscapes and architecture.

The "Top-Down" view possible with the drone also provides a rarely photographed angle looking down from the top which can be quite abstract. (See also the cover image).





An extreme version of the panoramic images Sean produces creates “an impossible view”, with a field of vision beyond that of the human eye.

Sean talked about how he maximises the quality of the images coming from cameras with very small sensors by using high dynamic range (HDR, multiple shots at different exposure settings which are blended) and panoramic stitching.

The approach is described in a recent article Sean prepared for the RPS Digital group,
<https://rps.org/media/ynsnuseb/digit-95-for-distribution.pdf>

Some of his large panoramic images have been presented in the RPS Landscape group's Close to Home project, documenting the weather around his village through 2022 and can be seen at
<https://rps.org/news/groups/landscape/close-to-home/sean-goodhart-100-metres-above-my-back-garden/>

More of Sean's work:

Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/seangoodhart/>

Web gallery, <https://seangoodhart.myportfolio.com/>

Video collaborations, <https://www.youtube.com/@brixworthscenes>

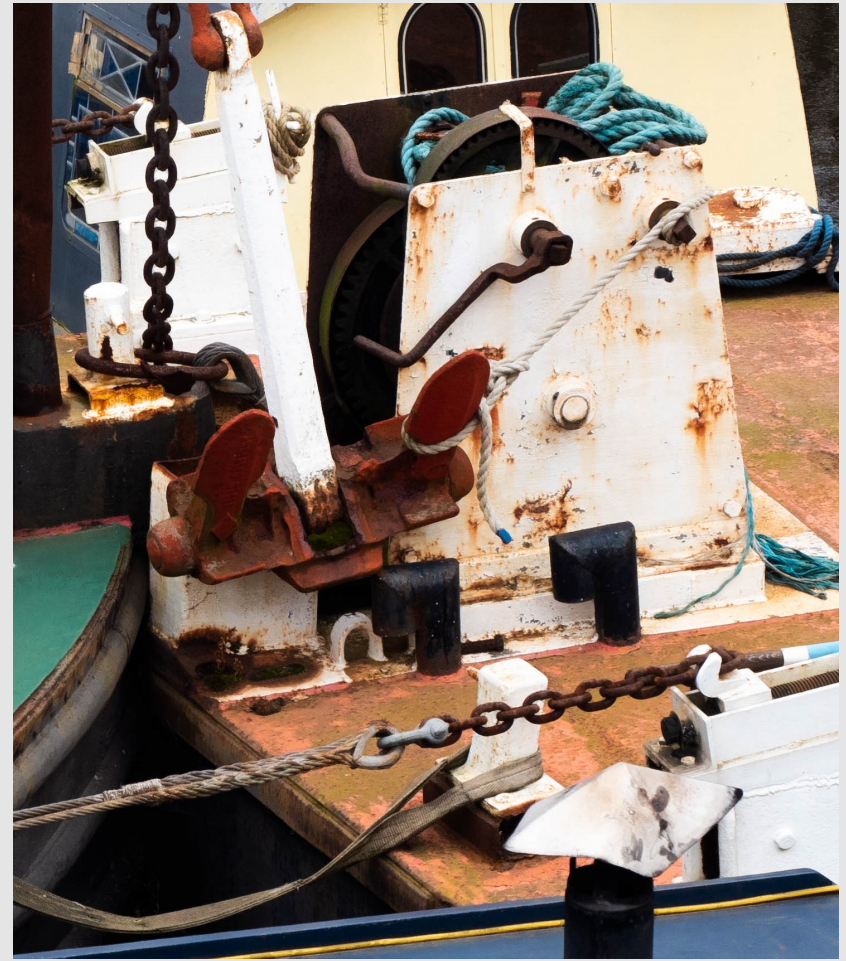
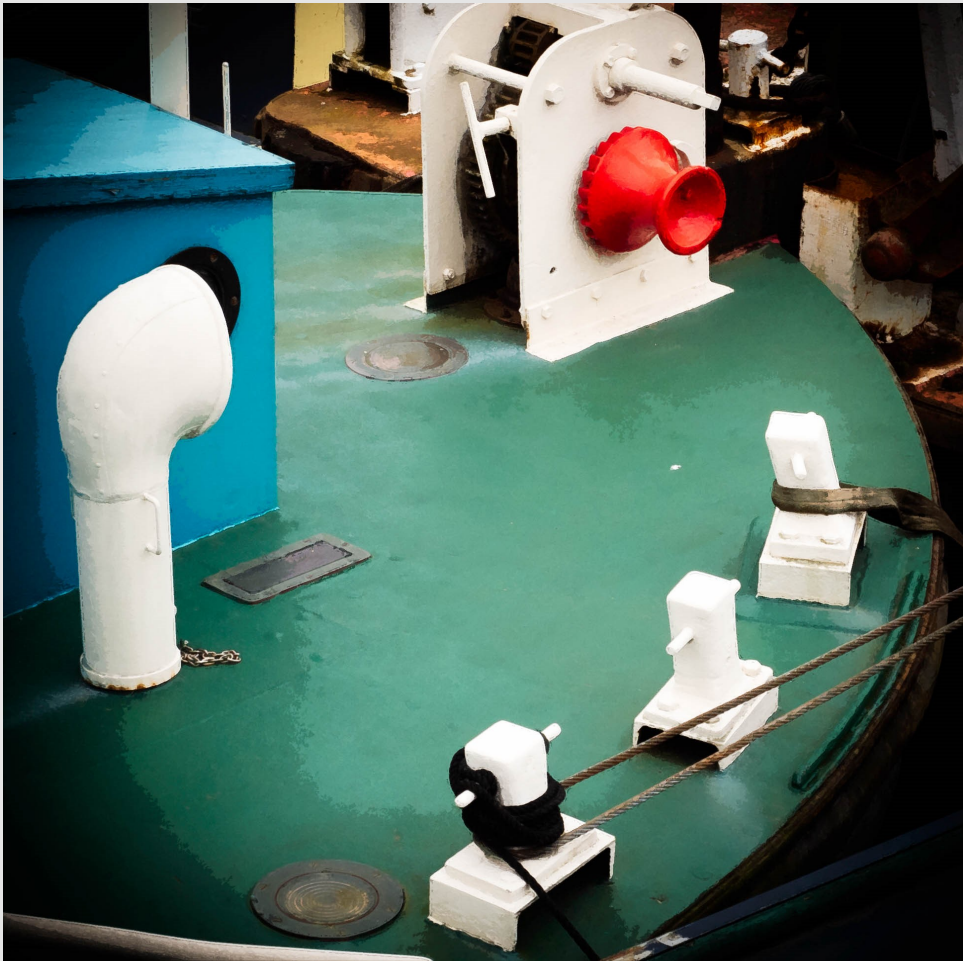
Barbara Pollard - A visit to the Hepworth Gallery, Wakefield

On 4th March, a small group of RPS Contemporary North members visited the Hepworth gallery in Wakefield to see a talk by the photographer Hannah Starkey on her project 'In Real Life'. In conversation with curator Dr Abi Shapiro, Hannah spoke about her work photographing women in everyday situations and talked about the way women are portrayed in society.



Following the presentation, she then gave an intriguing and insightful tour of the gallery where she spoke about each of her photographs in detail. Hannah Starkey 'In Real Life' will be at the Hepworth Gallery until the end of April and is well worth a visit.

Before going into the building, I had been attempting to take some photographs of the canal boats on the river Calder, which runs past the gallery. The scene was totally chaotic with lines, shapes and colours all colliding with one another on the boats and the surrounding area.



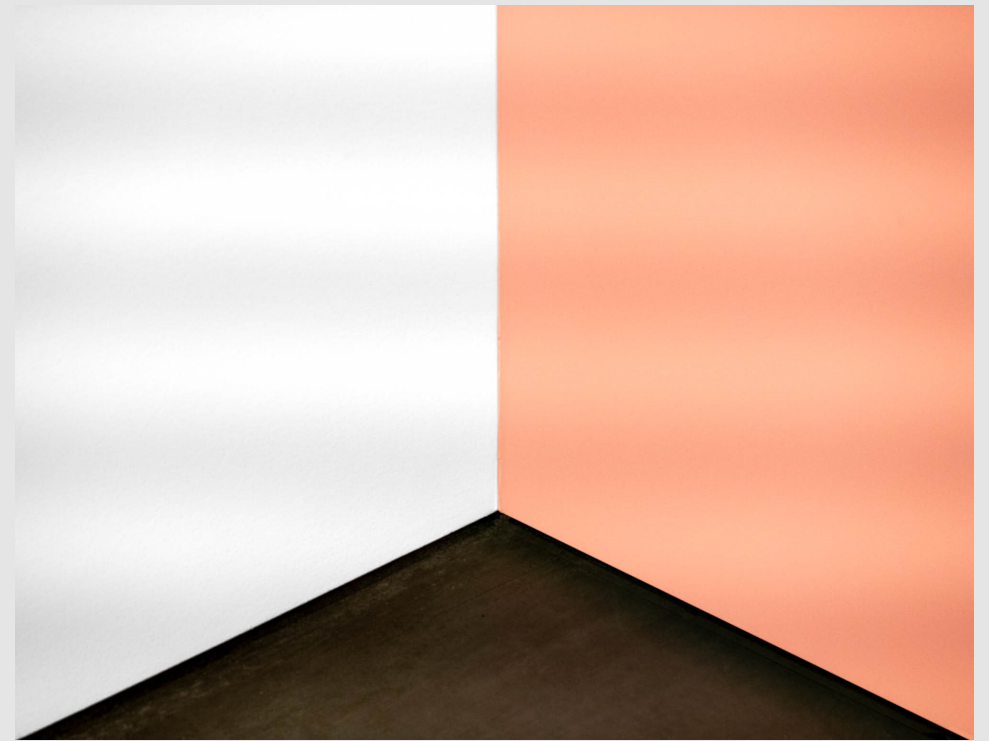
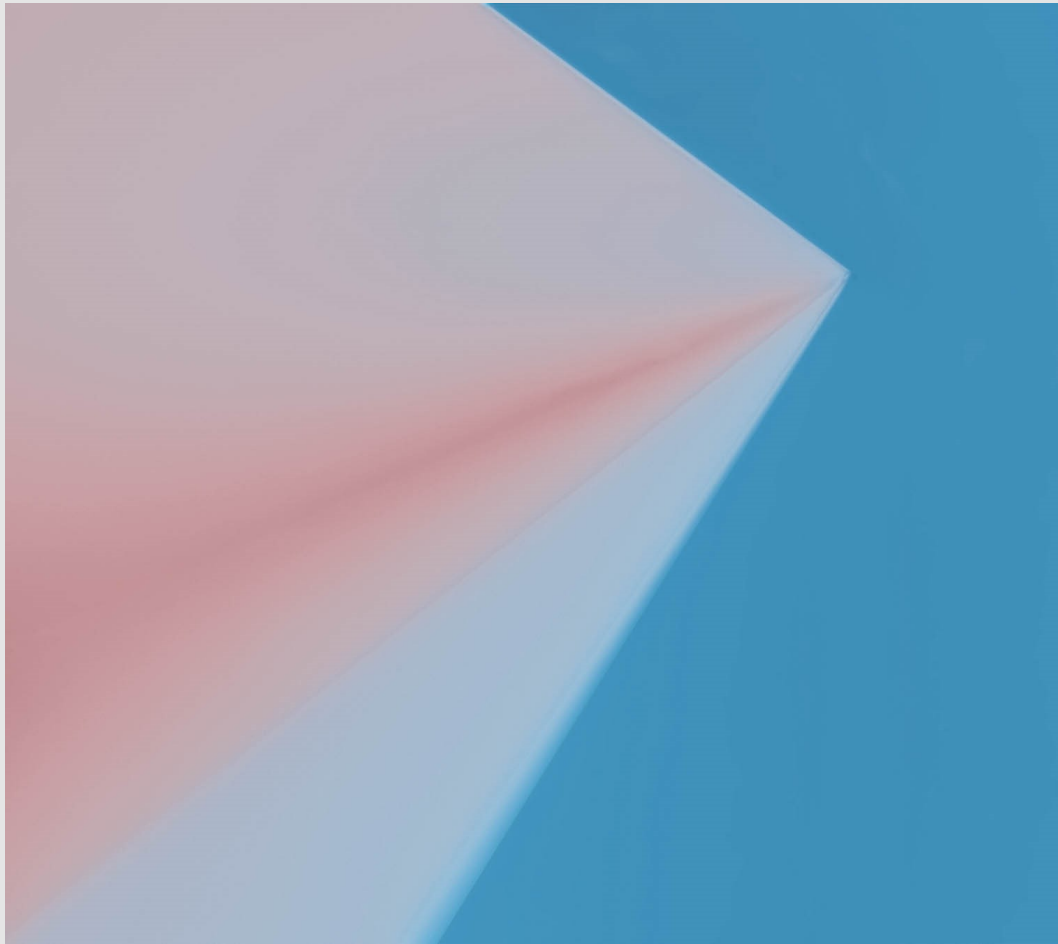
When we entered the gallery, I was immediately struck by the contrast between the chaos of the outside scenes and the simple geometric lines and shapes of the internal architecture. I became even more interested in the way the juxtaposition of some of those lines and shapes can create an ambiguous perspective which is difficult to override even when you know what is really there.











The red and grey striped wall, on the photograph with Patricia sitting on the bench, appears, at first, to be a single plane but is in fact two walls (one red and one grey) at right angles to each other. Even then, it is difficult to work out whether this is an inner corner or an outer corner. I'll leave you to decide.



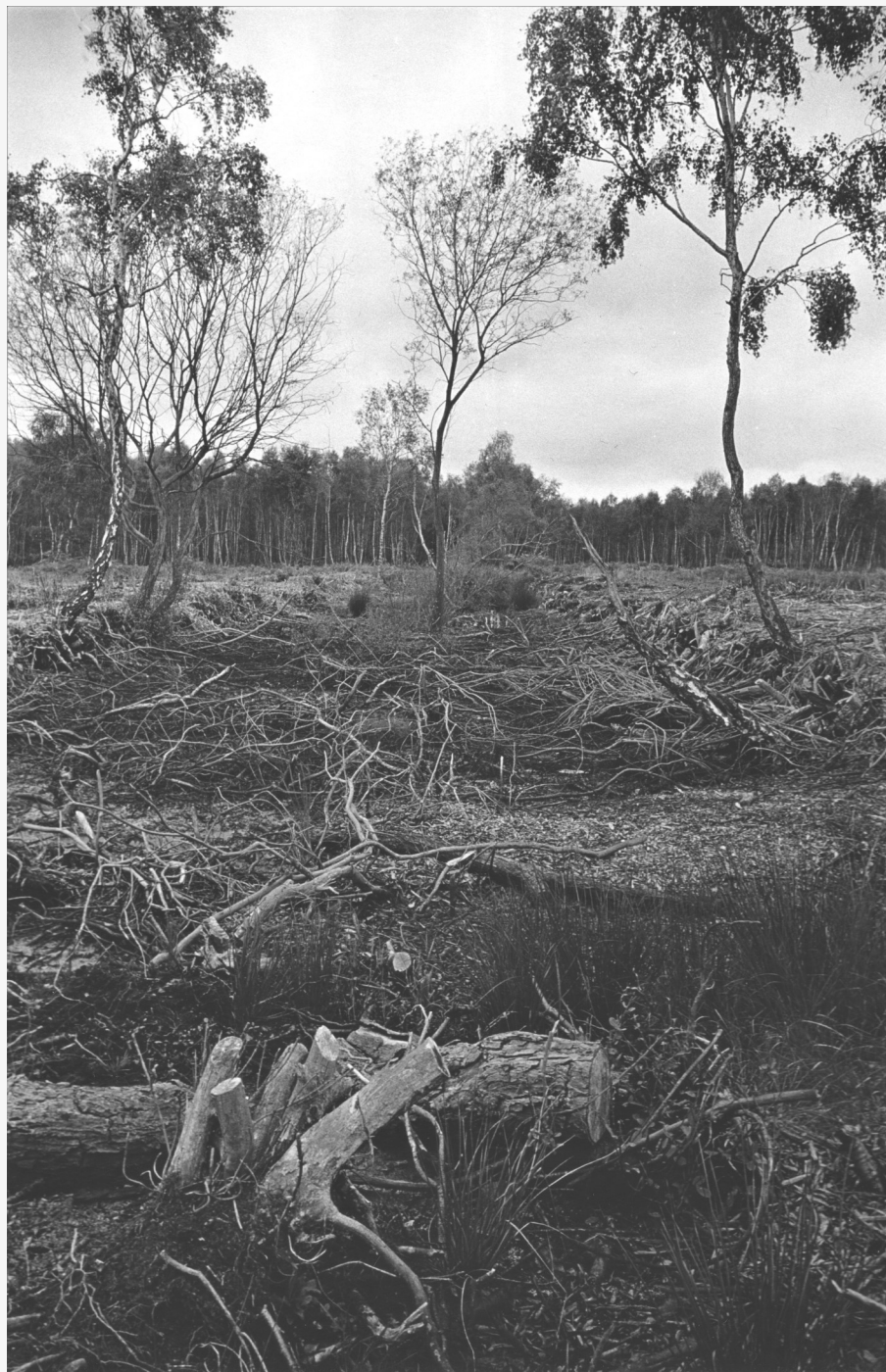
Martyn Pearson - Tairsgear

In 2011, I heard a BBC Radio 4 broadcast on 'Costing the Earth.' This episode was about peat and its ability to act as a carbon store. During the programme I learned of other environmental benefits peatlands bestow, such as the ability to slow the flow of water from higher ground, reducing flood risk.

Peat consists of partially decomposed organic material such as Sphagnum Moss. Decomposition of this material such as Sphagnum Moss is retarded by acidic waterlogging. Our planet's peatlands store more Carbon Dioxide than the World's forests. Disturbing these delicate watery infrastructures releases large amounts of CO₂, Methane and Nitrous Oxide into the atmosphere. These gases greatly accelerate climate change. Many argue that peat is a renewable resource, but as peat lays down 1mm per year, most contemporary bogs are 12,000 years old, and it would take many hundreds of years to return pre-exploited depths.

In 2012, I took a trip to the Isle of Lewis as I'd learned there were many domestic peat workings there. Since then, I have travelled throughout Britain and the Republic of Ireland documenting peat bogs. This body of work is titled '*Tairsgear*' as this is Gaelic for the iron peat cutting tool. The peat etymology and cultural habits and can also be seen in the custom of *smoor*ing. To smoor the fire at night, coals were spread in the hearth in a three part circle with ashes used to slow burning. Peat turfs are then introduced and the *Smoor*ing Prayer is recited.

*The sacred Three,
to save,
to shield,
to surround the hearth,
the house,
the household,
this eve,
this night,
Oh! This eve,
This night,
And every night,
Each single night.
Amen.*



When in the Republic of Ireland photographing The Bog of Allen. I witnessed vast areas of peat being industrially excavated to provide fuel for the electricity stations run by the Bord Na Móna (The Irish Electricity Board). Recent news suggests that the Bord Na Móna is reducing their need for peat due to environmental concerns. However, the research scientist and peatland expert Florence Renou-Wilson states "It's a bit of a smokescreen. It's all revenue driven." Renou-Wilson also stated: "Bord na Móna was closing bogs that were exhausted and no longer profitable. They're all done and dusted." (Irish Central 2019.)



At Lindow Moss, Cheshire, land has a high monetary value, so this bog has been drained for property development. The need for food during wartime led to the draining of ancient boglands on the Somerset Flats. Acid rain over the Kinder Scout peat plateau in the Peak District has caused much erosion and further damage caused by recreational walkers creating desire lines.

Similarly, the East Lancashire upland of Todmorden Moor lost most of its peat, initially through 19th Century clay mining, required for brickmaking and to create sewer pipes for nearby working communities and more recently through acid precipitation. The plateau of Todmorden moor is now home to a large wind farm exacerbating the situation further.

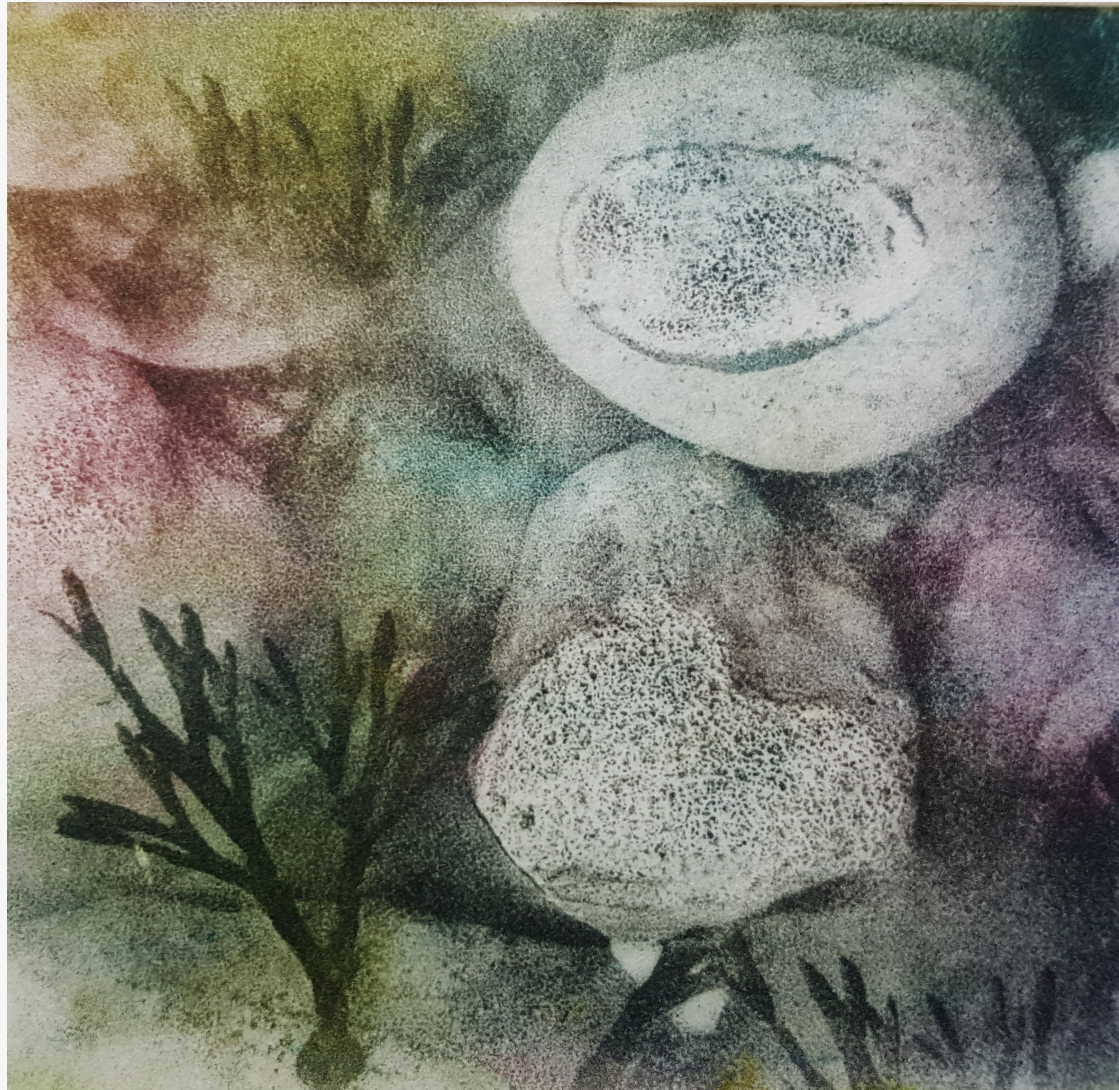
Hopefully, aesthetically, the pictures from *'Tairsgear'* reflect the dark, sucking, softness of a bog; echoing *"The ground itself is kind, black butter, Melting and opening underfoot, Missing its last definition."* (Heaney 1969 *'Bogland.'*) The resulting, diminutive print size is important because, the work is confidently quiet, echoing the fragility of the subject.

For me, the bigger the picture, the more colourful the picture, the more demanding of attention it is, the more 'shouty' it becomes. Often, with popular media such as music or, dare I say, photography, the instantly appealing can very quickly become irritatingly tiresome. However, upon encountering things that appear less interesting, that may be challenging, these are the things that, once appreciated, can retain some sort of longevity.

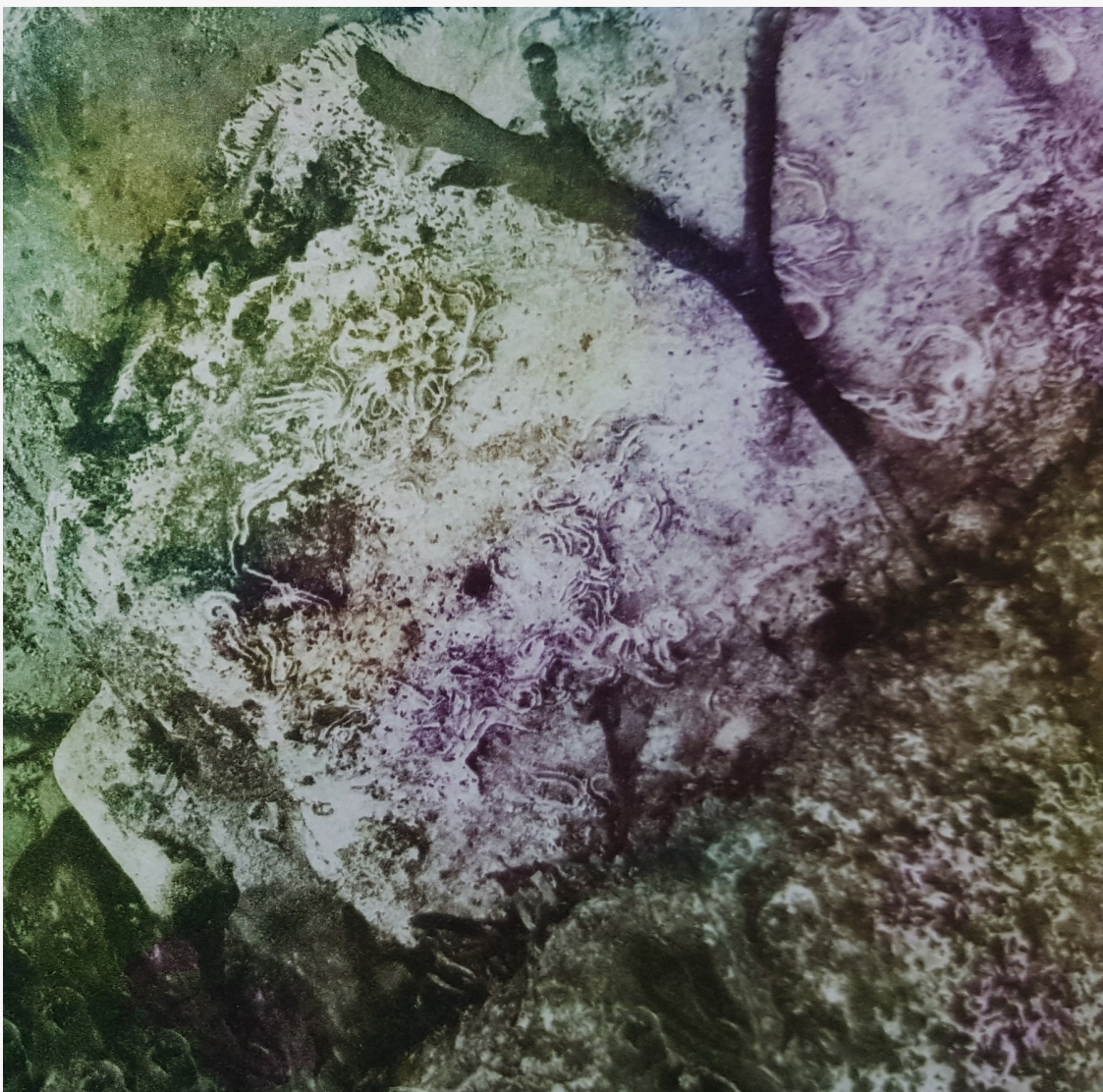


Patricia Ruddell

Patricia said a few words and showed several photo etchings that she'll have in the upcoming York Open Studios in April. The event is the largest annual event in York with approximately 150 artists showing all types of artwork. It's a juried show, and Patricia is pleased to have been selected.









Links:

<https://yorkopenstudios.co.uk>

<https://yorkopenstudios.co.uk/artist/patricia-ann-ruddle>

Andrew Hersom—Images from the meeting

