

Editorial

The elephant in the *Contemporary Photography* editor's room for the last year has been the coronavirus pandemic. It has been the cause, opportunity, excuse and stimulant for many photographic ventures. Exercise, loneliness, stress, distancing, reunion, survival, dedication, heroism and loss – they all call for a response for the age, and photographers have responded. I avoided including pandemic- and lockdown-focused work in the journal in the first few months. I was unsure about the durability of some of it: how it would stand up to critical scrutiny in the long term. Although the execution was often excellent, there were a lot of common ideas: shots of people in their front windows, formerly busy places now empty, stressed workers. And I must admit that I mistrusted my own judgement, and how well my selections would stand up to future scrutiny.

An elephant in the room cannot be ignored for too long; rather than go all out for a pandemic journal though, I have taken advantage of a number of contributors working on parallel concepts of separation, remoteness, isolation and loneliness – some arising from the pandemic and some not.

Samuel Fordham has investigated and illuminated the lives of families separated by the cruelties of immigration policy, drawing on the experience of himself and his wife. It is not just the absence of the 'other' that is distressing, but how they are, as he writes "reduced to a two-dimensional image" on a video call.

Richard Hall and Daan Olivier use their photography in differing ways to express the emotions of loneliness, regret and uncertainty: Daan through carefully composited images of the cut-off life of boat-dwellers, and Richard by scenes staged in response to a poem by Laura Turner.

Bruno Alencastro has directly addressed the lockdown; the work he has assembled shows both the locked-down interior and, projected into it, the alien landscape of the exterior. Rather than take the photographs himself though, he has 'franchised' his idea to other photographers in Brazil who have responded in their own distinctive ways.

Elizabeth Bourne's Arctic Svalbard is the essence of distancing and remoteness. Her tiny figures are set in an enormous landscape, but one that is clearly also industrial, or post-industrial. The distancing between people is not because they have sought it or been forced into it to avoid infection, but because that is the nature of normal life in Longyearbyen!

I am delighted to welcome Simon Hill, President of the RPS, who has written this issue's View from..... He takes the theme of the new RPS strategic plan, *Photography for Everyone*, and makes it the ambitious theme of his own term as President.

Paul Ashley, Editor

Cover: © photo by Beatriz Grieco from Bruno Alencastro's *obs-cu-ra*

Back cover: © photo titled Joanna Hiking by Elizabeth Bourne

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Contemporary Photography

Number 84 Summer 2021

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paultheashley@gmail.com
59 Gilbert Road, Cambridge CB4 3NZ

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Deadline for the Summer 2021 issue is 1 June 2021.

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

obs-cu-ra

Bruno Alencastro

Ancestral to the photographic camera, the oldest reference to the principle of the camera obscura is attributed to the Chinese philosopher Mozi, in the 5th century BC. But it is in the Renaissance that it starts to be used as an optical device: a completely dark box or room with a small entrance from which light projects, on the inside, an inverted image of the external scene.

Since then, the technique has been used for the most varied purposes: the visualization of solar eclipses without jeopardizing the vision; helping painters in search of a more faithful and two-dimensional representation of the world; and serving as inspiration for obtaining the first photograph in history, *View from the window at Le Gras*, produced over an eight-hour exposure from the window of French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, in 1826, in Saint-Loup -de-Varennes, France.

Not by chance, the window as a point of view is a recurring motif throughout art history, from *Woman at a Window* (1822), by the German, Caspar David Friedrich, to *Rear Window* (1954), by Alfred Hitchcock. From waiting to voyeurism there are many references, including by Dalí, Picasso, Matisse, Magritte, to the most recent inspiration in the work of Cuban photographer Abelardo Morell, who transforms ordinary environments into surreal settings in his series *Camera Obscura*.

It is a place that starts to be re-signified by different contemporary artists around the world in Covid-19 times. Nowadays, the window starts to represent the border and the abyss between the outside and the inside world. Freedom and confinement.

Obs-cu-ra is the sum of it all, a series designed by photographer Bruno Alencastro from the 4th floor window of the apartment where he lives. From there, he went to the homes of 80 more photographers who agreed to turn their houses into large-format obscure cameras and capture life in times of pandemic. Each with its uniqueness. Achievements and losses. Wishes and privileges. Fears and hopes.

The result is a photo essay characterized by a dark and enigmatic atmosphere, such as the indecipherable future that no one knows for sure. Until then, contact with the outside world continues to happen through this limited frame of reality, the representation of a changing life. A present that makes us think about the past in search of answers for when all this is over.

See: brunoalencastro.com.br



Eveline Medeiros



Eduardo Seidl



Guilherme Santos



Bruno Alencastro



Pedro Rocha

Nowhere to go...

Daan Olivier FRPS

Having done some photographic assignments on the British Waterways for a volunteer organisation, I thought living permanently on a canal boat would be so idyllic. But then the Covid-19 virus slipped through our defences and spread everywhere on the planet. We went into lockdown and hibernated while the economies went down. As the 2020 spring winds blew through empty schools on deserted streets, we found ourselves on a mental roller coaster, down and up, up and down, ad infinitum.

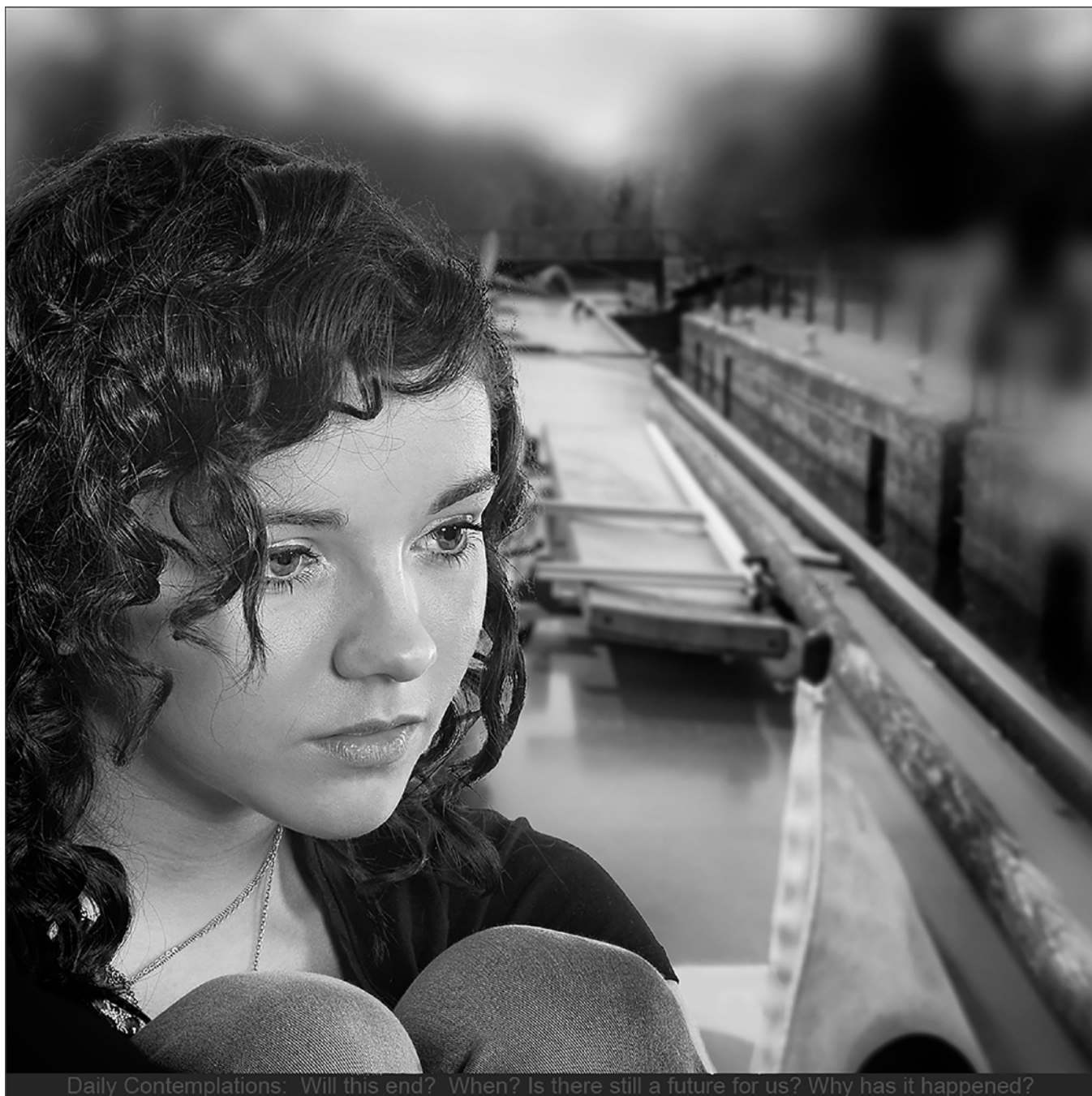
While isolating at home, a thought crossed my mind; I wonder how the 'boat people' permanently living on canal boats, are coping with lockdown? Over the following months of the first lockdown, I kept thinking of the boat people. Contemplating their situation, I wrote poetry to express my feelings and thoughts, then made composite images to support the poems. In June 2020 I published this body of work as an illustrated anthology entitled *Nowhere to go....* In it I offer a visual and prose narrative, with empathy and intimacy, on the psychological and physical impact of Covid-19 lockdown on the boat people.

The images are stylistically similar to the conceptual and contemporary images which I have done for the past number of years, mostly composite images infused with extracts from my poetry (as a ticker text at the bottom of the image that ensures the message in my work is delivered without confusion). The sombre mood of lockdown is represented by the darker monotonality used in the images. The visual transitions in the images, from clarity in the centre to a blurred obscurity on the edges, indicate how the boater's mind drifts from the visible reality of 'now', to an unknown future in a new-normal world. These thoughts, all mental aerobics, lows and highs, happened repeatedly and with increasing intensity as the months in lockdown seem neverending.

See: www.daanolivier.co.uk



Congested Moorings: Many boats squeezed in on our mooring, going nowhere, just waiting...



Daily Contemplations: Will this end? When? Is there still a future for us? Why has it happened?



Vulnerable Elderly Isolated on Boats: Stay home, wash your hands, wait for what we cannot see.



Feeling the Presence of Deceased Partners: You are always here, watching and guarding over me.



Gambling with the Virus: The Virus tortures me in my sleep, always playing a better hand, a new trick.

Nine Things About Svalbard

Elizabeth Bourne

1. Distance is the line between points. The line between 'my once was there' to now I am here is 3,656 miles. The distance between here and Oslo is 1,261 miles. The distance to the North Pole is 650 miles. I live on the archipelago of Svalbard, in the world's northernmost town, Longyearbyen. Sometimes it seems I live on a different planet.
2. These things are often said about Svalbard. They are false. There are more polar bears than people. You can't die here. You can't be born here. You cannot grow old here.
3. These things are sometimes said about Svalbard. They are true. You need a gun (and proficiency with it) to travel outside town. You don't need a visa to live on Svalbard. People from 54 countries live here. Svalbard is controlled by the Spitsbergen Treaty, a two page document 100 years old. My apartment lease is longer than that.
4. This is true. I moved here to document climate change and the cultural changes in the town of Longyearbyen as it deals with increased avalanche risk, flood risk, a rising tide of tourism (100,000 people in 2019), and increased non-Norwegian inhabitants drawn by tourism money. I was told this place would break my heart. That's also true, but not in the ways I expected.
5. I first photographed Svalbard in 2017. I knew from that moment I had to live here. Every day, I photograph Longyearbyen. In summer, I walk the streets, the rocky beach, and along the river that splits town. Some days I sling on my rifle (Bergara .308 suitable for big game), and hike out into the tundra. When I can, I travel by boat up the coast, or to one of the two Russian settlements. During polar night I take photos of northern lights and moonlight on snow. When the sun returns, I drive my snowmobile to take photos in the wild. I have seen extraordinary things. I have seen devastating things.
6. True. In 2020 a global pandemic struck.
7. Also true. In March, 2020 Norway closed its borders and banned travel to Svalbard. What had been a thriving town of 2,500 people became an economic disaster. Businesses collapsed. People were forced to leave their homes. The estimated population is now 2,000 people. I have not seen my family for 16 months. Svalbard has had zero incidents of Covid 19. These photographs come from this global pause.
8. This is false. Svalbard is pristine, empty – just ice and polar bears and northern lights and midnight sun.
9. This is true. Svalbard is full of abandoned mining settlements, trapping huts, and left behind industrial equipment. Plastic lines the beaches and the guts of fish. Glaciers are surging. Plankton is threatened by acidification. Reindeer are eating seaweed to survive. Polar bears are eating reindeer because they can't get to the seals. Foxes eat everything. But it is still beautiful. Still extraordinary. Still worth saving. Because if we save the arctic, we save ourselves.

See: www.philotera.com



The Road to Nowhere



Into the Blue



Bicycle on Snow



Tourist



Mirror Lake

C-R92/BY

Samuel Fordham

Due to some of the most divisive family immigration policies in the world, thousands of British families are forcibly separated by the Home Office. As a result, they must communicate with each other via 'modern means of communication', leading to the rise of what are now being referred to as 'Skype families'.

C-R92/BY seeks to investigate how one shares a relationship with a family member who has been physically and geographically removed from one's life and is reduced to a two-dimensional image; what does it mean to take the irrefutably unique and transfer it into the infinitely replicable?

Throughout the making of this work my own wife faced deportation, and a personal reflection of my own experience is weaved together with those of other families, using images, documents, testimonies and more to explore the hardships of detention, and the fight for family life.

C-R92/BY gives voice to the suffering of families who find themselves in such circumstances, including potentially their own, who are the unwilling players in a painful game of politics.

Furthermore, with Britain's exit from the EU, this work serves as a warning to the new beginnings of many international families - and even, perhaps, to us all - as recent global events transition us ever further into a world in which we are defined by our online presence, and build relationships via images that are shared on our screens.

See: samuelwjfordham.com

Note. Samuel Fordham is a course leader for the RPS-supported BA (Hons) degree course in Documentary Photography & Print, which will begin in September 2021 at RPS Bristol.



JUDGMENT OF 17. 1992 — CASE C-370/90

On those grounds,

THE COURT,

in answer to the question referred to it by the High Court of Justice (Queen's Bench Division) by order of 19 October 1990, hereby rules:

Article 52 [redacted] on the abolition of restrictions on movement and residence within [redacted] (Member States) require a Member State to grant leave to enter and reside in its territory to the spouse, of whatever nationality, of a national of that State who has gone, with that spouse, to another Member State in order to work there as an employed person [redacted] and returns to establish himself or herself [redacted] in the State of which he or she is a national. A spouse must enjoy at least the same rights as would be granted to him or her under Community law if his or her spouse entered and resided in another Member State.

[redacted]

Delivered in open court in Luxembourg on 7 July 1992.

Registrar [redacted] President [redacted]

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JUDGMENT OF 17. 1992 — CASE C-370/90

JUDGMENT OF THE COURT
7 July 1992

In Case C-370/90,

REFERENCE to the Court under Article 177 of the EEC Treaty by the High Court of Justice (Queen's Bench Division) for a preliminary ruling in the proceedings pending before that court between

The Queen

and

Immigration Appeal Tribunal and Surinder Singh

Ex parte: Secretary of State for the Home Department,

on the interpretation of Article 52 of the EEC Treaty and of Council Directive 73/148/EEC of 21 May 1973 on the abolition of restrictions on movement and residence within the Community for nationals of Member States with regard to establishment and the provision of services (OJ 1973 L 172, p. 14),

THE COURT,

composed of: [redacted]
(Presidents of Chambers), [redacted]
[redacted]

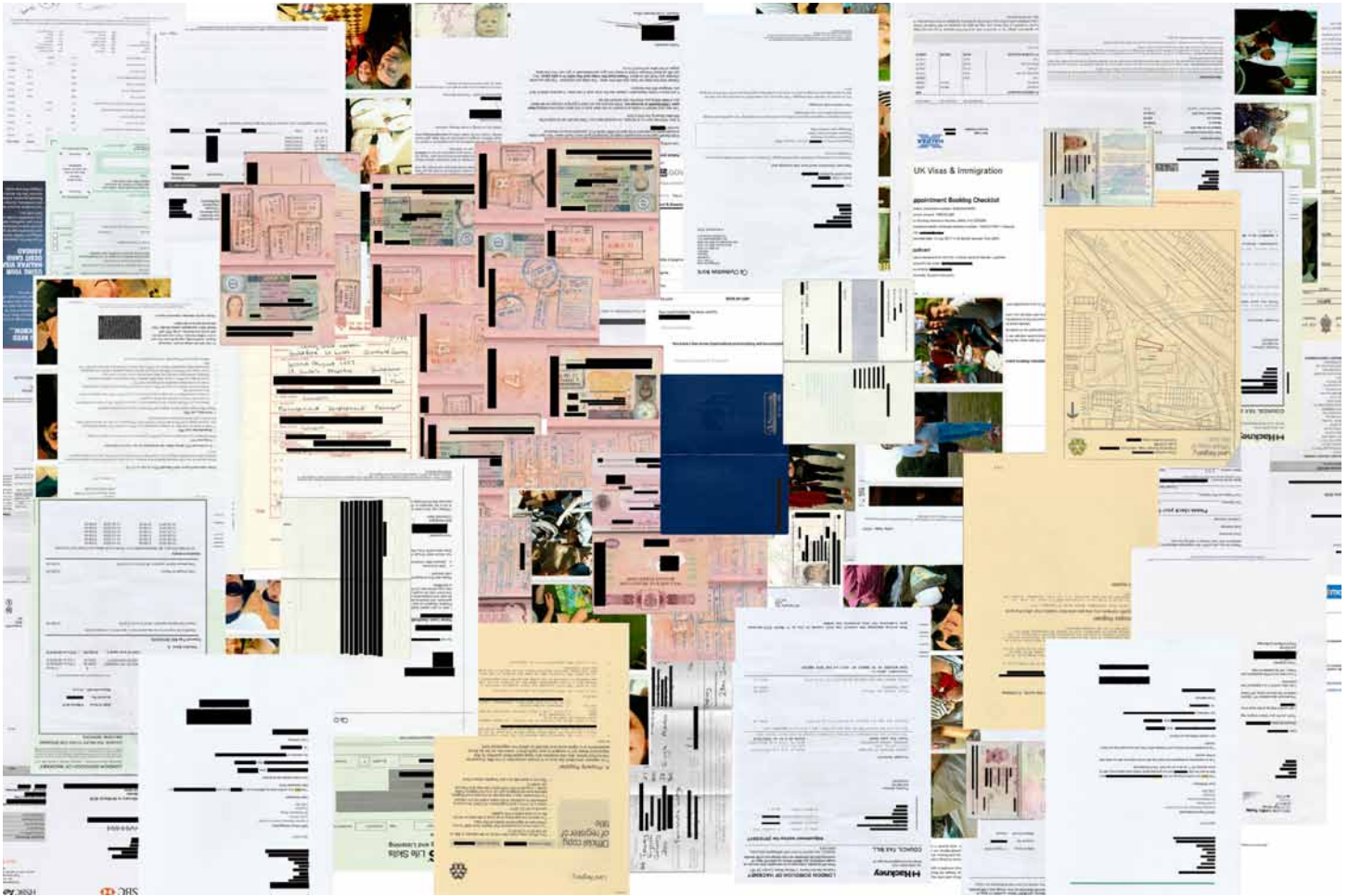
Advocate General: [redacted]
Registrar: [redacted]

* Language of the case: English.

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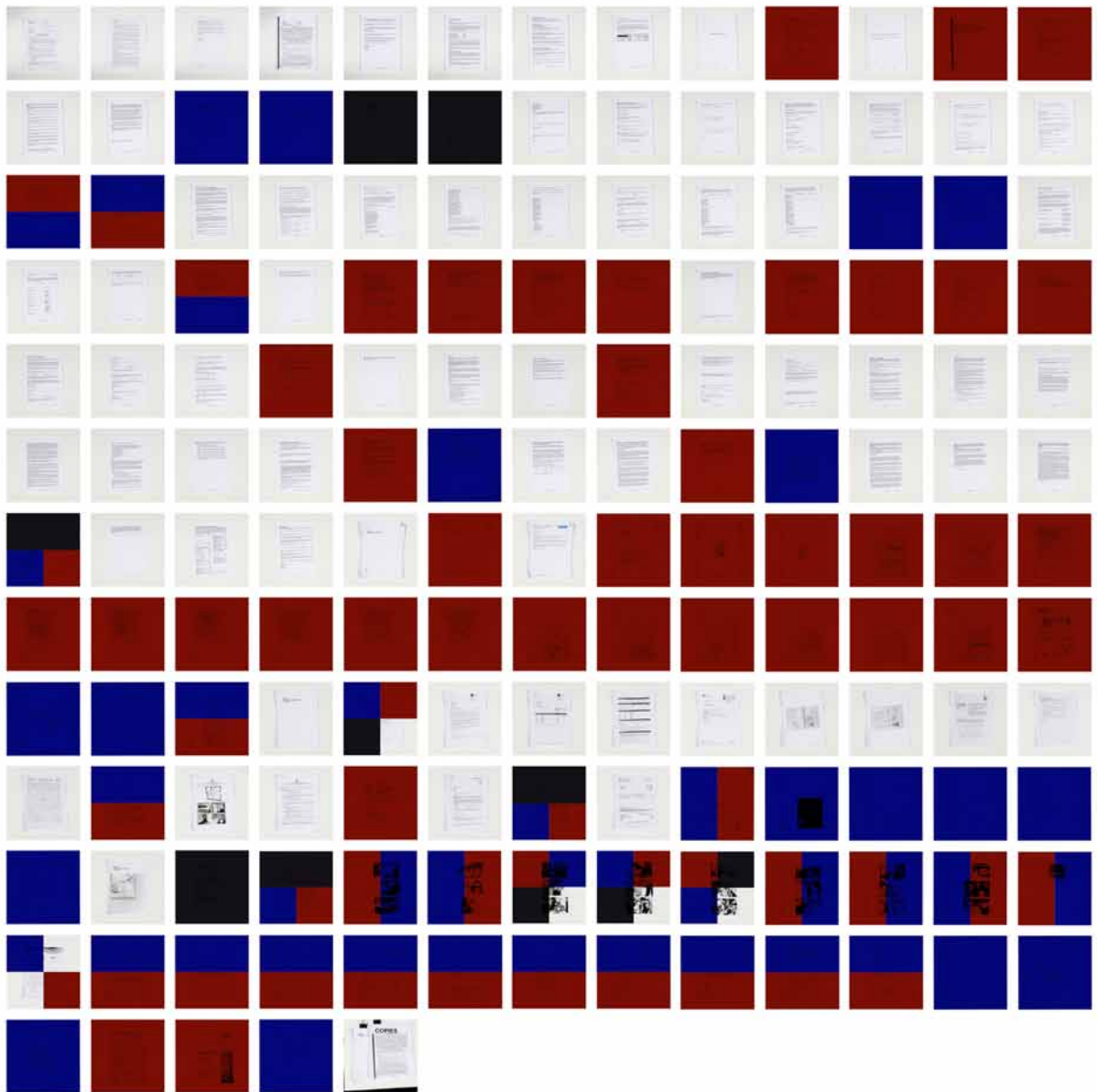
The Surinder Singh Route, 2019

The Surinder Singh route is a potential means for British citizens to rely on family-friendly EU free movement laws — rather than the harsh UK immigration rules — to be reunited with their family members. Singh was an Indian citizen. He had married a British citizen and the two had resided for a time in Germany before returning to live in the UK. After they returned to the UK the couple divorced, leading to the UK government removing his leave to remain. He stayed and eventually the UK government began procedures to deport him. Singh then took the case to the European Court of Justice citing EU free movement rules. Under EU law, a Union citizen has the right to move to a Member State other than that of their nationality, and has the right to bring certain family members, including their non-EU national spouse, with them when they do so.



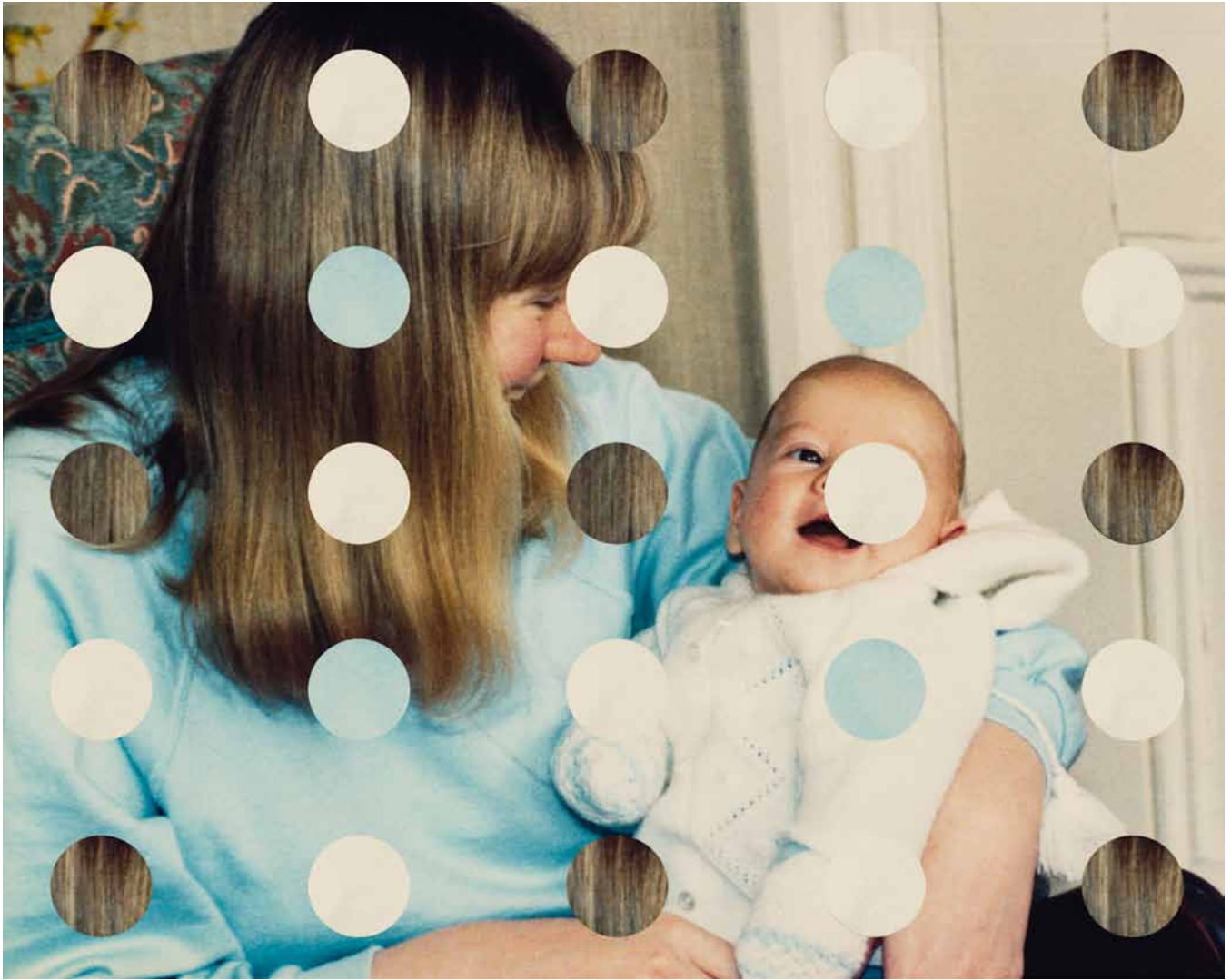
The Immigration Rules Introduced in July 2012 Actively Drive Families Apart, 2018

For some of the millions who travel overseas, their time in another country takes on a wholly different meaning – they fall in love with the person they choose to share their life with.



If Their Own Extravagance Does Not Ruin the State, That of Their Subjects Never Will, 2018

This image displays every page of the Further Leave to Remain-Marriage application (FLR-M). Evidential requirements are highly demanding - applicants and sponsors must produce a vast amount of evidence to an exacting standard. Applications are also expensive. Researchers calculated that the cost for a single applicant to move from application to settlement is likely to exceed £6,000



I Thought I Would Sit Here and Look Out Over the Fjord for the Last Time, 2018
"We are not a family. Our only child does not have his father
and his father never got to see his son being born."



Section 3 - Your sponsor's details

"Sponsor" in this section means your sponsor, not partner, commercial partner, sponsor, agent, principal or general manager. If you are a sole trader, you must enter your own details in the sponsor of this contract (even if you intend to be the sole contractor under it) or enter the details of the person or company that you intend to appoint to be your sponsor. It is mandatory to complete this section of the proposal. **False data this authorities will be treated as an act of fraud.**

Photography: You shall provide one photograph of your sponsor. Your sponsor's full name and last name of the photographer who takes the portrait photograph is required by your customer.

3.1 Your sponsor's full name: [REDACTED]

3.2 Name of your photographer and your company (if any) and its full name in the same format: [REDACTED]

3.3 Nationality, present address of your sponsor (last name only if you have had one last name change) and your company (if any): [REDACTED]

3.4 Please provide details of any other relevant information or identification you sponsor holds, in this same format: [REDACTED]

3.5 If your sponsor is a relative or beneficiary of humanitarian protection you may have been issued leave to enter or remain in the UK already details of when they were granted this date: [REDACTED]

3.6 Date of birth: [REDACTED]

3.7 Gender: [REDACTED] male [REDACTED] female

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He Gets Knots in His Tummy and Worries, Yeah. We Had Him at The Doctor a Few Times, 2018

"[My son] went from a bubbly little boy to very reserved in the first few months of the separation, he was angry at us both but couldn't understand why Dad won't want to live with him. He would go from angry kicking out to long periods of cry and thought Dad didn't love him. They are still working at rebuilding their relationship and trust."

I am alone with the beating of my heart

Richard Hall FRPS

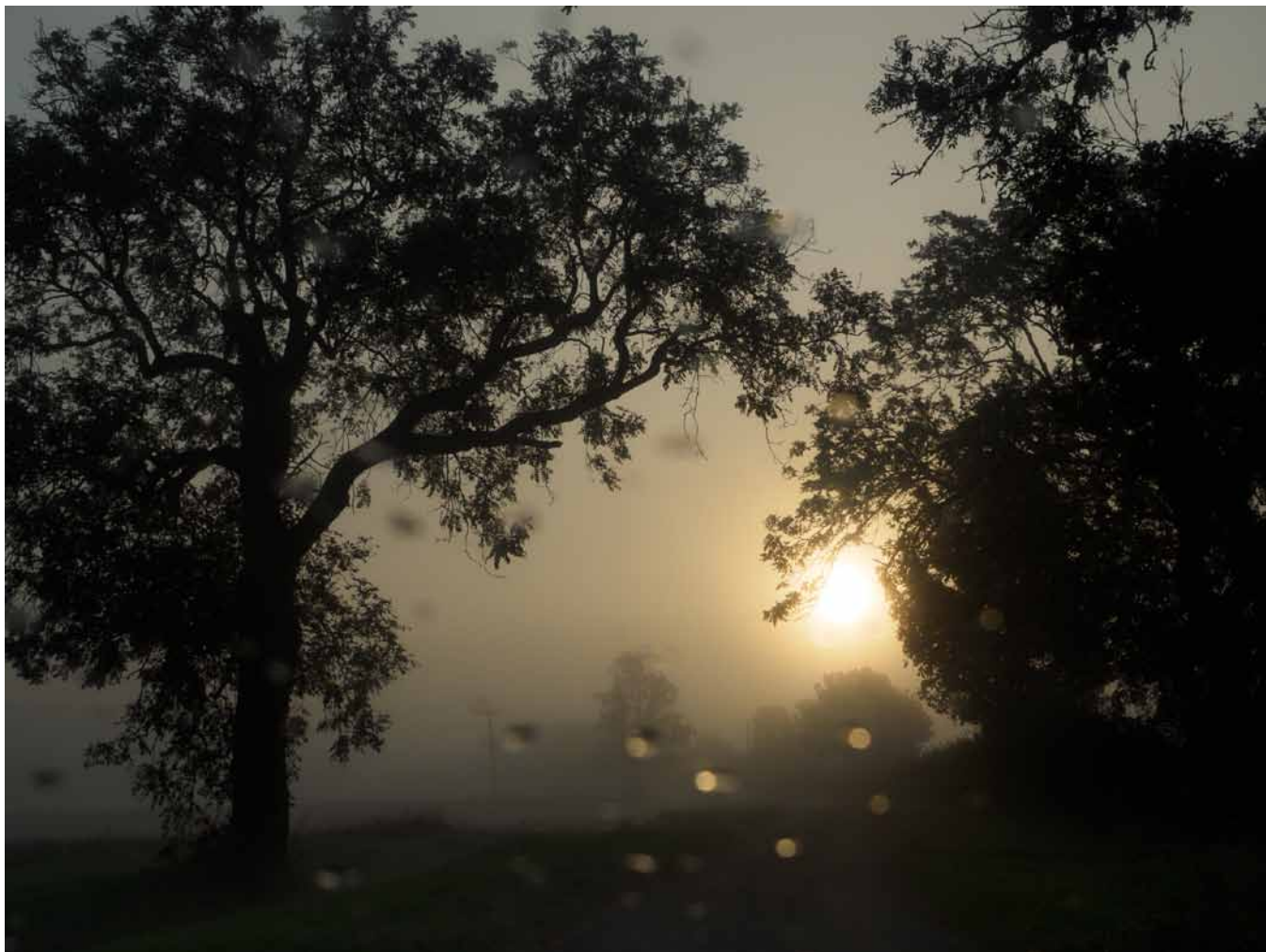
Vanishing

It stretches out, this thing we call a life;
we feel it reach around us, tendrils
pushing into that open, vast unknown.
the strange uncertainty of not knowing
what might lie ahead: a place we haven't
seen before that feels a thousand miles
apart, yet calls to us. It sparks sensation,
brittle deep inside of us: echoes and half
whispers from another life. And in that
instant, softly, silently, you are entirely
alone, confronted by the shapes of other
lives you wish you'd lived. But now, too
late, you're left with aching trenches of
unfinished thoughts: memories buried in
moments washed mute with rain, white
with sun. Dreams and hopes that thrive
inside the flood of night but vanish, silent,
unremembered, and die in cold dawn light.

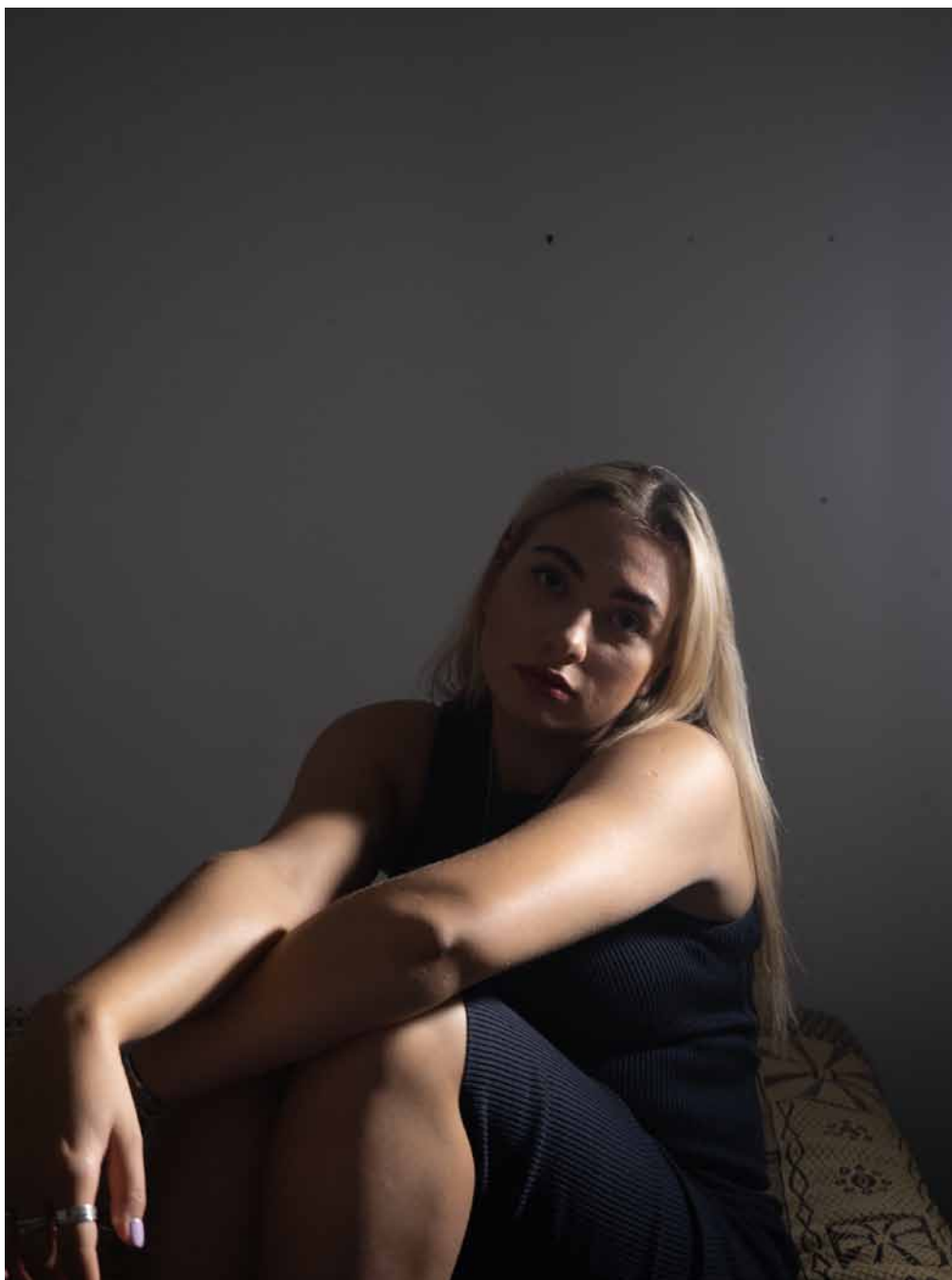
poem by Laura Turner

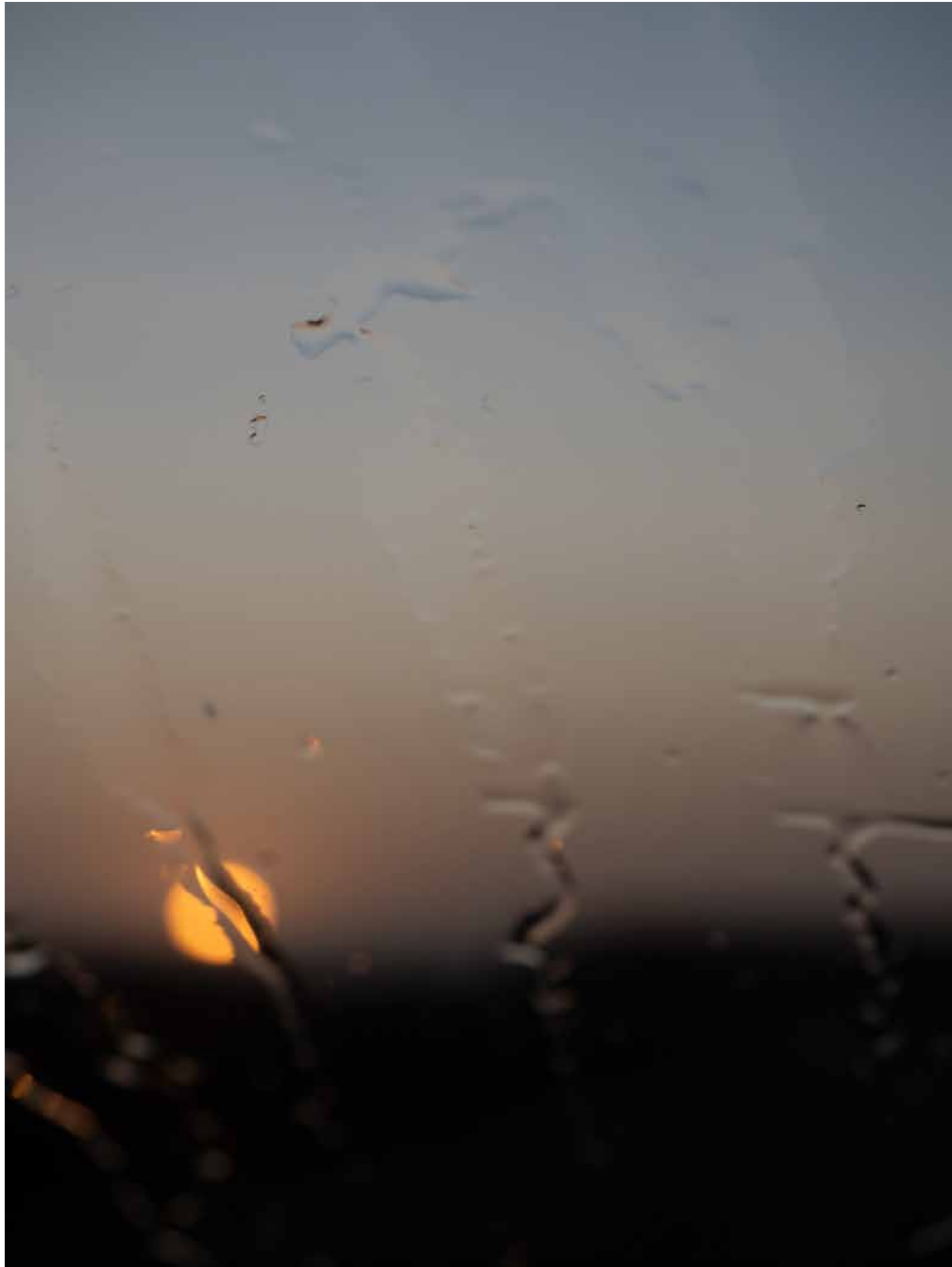














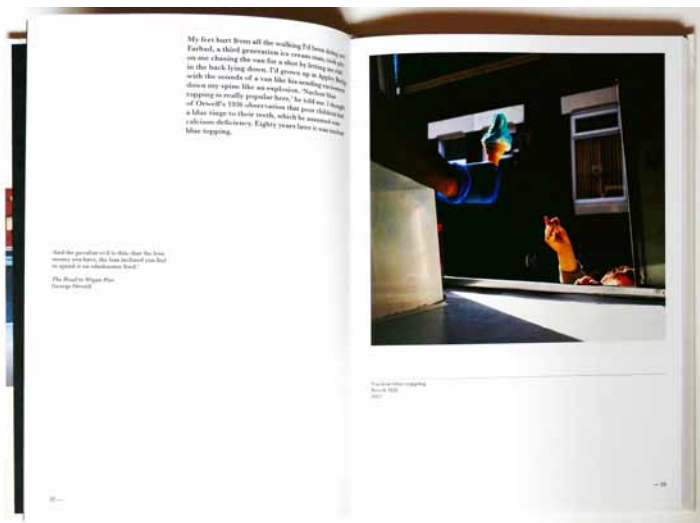
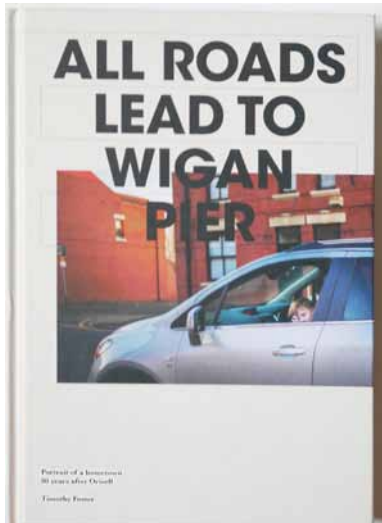


Photography can be a solitary affair, but I enjoy working collaboratively. I asked Laura Turner, an internationally published writer, playwright, poet, actress and producer, if she would work with me. Her own theatre company, Fury Theatre, specialises in telling females' stories with fire. I sent her two sample images and asked for something I could give to my models as a script. Laura wrote a poem, *Vanishing*, specifically for the project. The key themes of the poem are an uncertain future, loneliness, regret, memory, hopes, dreams and desperation.

I then asked two friends, Natalia and Lucy, if they would model for the work. We worked together on making a Pinterest board for the shoots in concert with the poem. The images were made over two months. I wanted to portray the landscapes that needed poor weather and moody skies. Most of the landscapes were made through the windscreen of my car. I went on foot for many of the night pictures. I only had one photo shoot with each of the models. On the days we made the images, the light was often flat, so I replicated sunlight using strobes, gels and gobos. Natalia and Lucy chose their clothing for the work, and we worked together to bring Laura's poem to life in the posing and framing of the images.

All Roads Lead To Wigan Pier, by Timothy Foster

Book review by Brian Steptoe FRPS



Timothy Foster walked the same streets in the North West of England as George Orwell did 80 years earlier, taking photographs, just as did his predecessor, which were published in *The Road To Wigan Pier*. George Orwell's son writes a foreword, saying that many parts of the town are still recognisable, although the slums have now gone.

Foster took photos over 18 months,; nearly 50,000 in all. Those which are used in the book are sometimes funny, sometimes poignant; a snapshot of ordinary people going about their ordinary lives. Photos are accompanied with short texts, captions and quotes from the Orwell book.

25x17cm, 116 pages, 52 color photos. Printing costs covered by a Kickstarter funding scheme.

View from the President

Simon Hill HonFRPS

Soon after becoming RPS President, in January of this year, the Board of Trustees asked me to write the foreword to the new RPS Strategy, *Photography for Everyone*. I was keen to accept this invitation on two counts. Firstly, it marked the end of a year-long process of strategic review that culminated in the creation of a completely new strategic direction for the RPS. Secondly, it gave me cause to think about what photography means to me, what it means to wider society, and why I consider myself to be so very fortunate to spend my life as a professional editorial photographer.

In the foreword, I talk about how the immediacy of photography offers unlimited potential for creativity and personal expression. To be effective as photographers, we must become fluent in the language of photography, learn different ways of seeing, and - perhaps most importantly - understand how others will read the photographs we create. All of this is captured in the new strategic plan and I have no doubt that we will all benefit from the exciting programmes that forge a new direction for the RPS.

Earlier this year I was invited to write another foreword, this time to the *Vision 2020* photobook published by RPS Contemporary Group North. In that foreword, I explained that whether or not overtly present in our conscious mind, connections drive our photographic work. Sometimes in an obvious or literal way, other times in more subtle ways, but connections nonetheless. We see and connect with the world in our own unique way; nobody else sees exactly 'what' we see and nobody else sees exactly 'how' we see.

Despite this being a *photographic* society, it never ceases to amaze me just how much writing I need to do; I would much rather be taking photographs! As President, I publish a blog on the RPS website and decided to use this to illustrate the numerous and diverse connections that have brought us - as photographers - to where we are today. The more I research and the more I write, the more I am convinced that - as photographers - we are undoubtedly among the most fortunate of individuals, with the power to communicate so effectively and so instantly with millions of people across the world. As members of such a wonderfully supportive society - we can explore our own photography, the photography of our contemporaries, and grow as ever more accomplished communicators using this truly amazing medium.

If I have one ambition as President, it is to encourage more people to explore the medium of photography and to take pleasure in 'seeing' the world through the lens of a camera.

You can read the President's blog here: <https://rps.org/about/president-news/>

GROUP AND RELATED SOCIETY EVENTS

Social distancing is likely to be part of our lives for some time to come, so the Contemporary Group is developing a programme of online events. The Society also offers a wider range of events and courses than we can list here. Creativity is also helping some of our regional groups with distanced meetings.

See the RPS website for more details of these meetings and to book your place. Keep an eye on the RPS website, *Concept* and the group Facebook page for details of future talks.

Group online meetings

The Contemporary Group has a programme of meetings on the third Monday evening of the month. See the RPS website for details of each meeting and to book your place. The RPS website, *Concept* and the group Facebook page will show details of future talks.

Regional online meetings

Contemporary East. Meetings are held at 2pm on the first Thursday of the month. Contact Tom Owens for more information.

Contemporary North. The next meetings will be 18 September (Zoom), 16 October (in-person), 20 November (Zoom) and 18 December (in person). Contact Patricia Ruddle for more information.

Contemporary South West. Contact Adrian Hough for details of regional meetings.

Contemporary Northwest. Contact Alan Cameron for details of regional meetings.

Contemporary Central. Meetings are held jointly with the Documentary Group on the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm. The next meetings will be on 8 September and 13 October. Contact Steff Hutchinson for more information.

COMMITTEE

Alan Cameron LRPS	Chair, event organiser and North West group organiser	contemporary@rps.org
Romney Tansley ARPS	Secretary and <i>Concept</i> editor	contemporarysecretary@rps.org
David J. Grimshaw ARPS	Treasurer	contemporarytreasurer@rps.org
Duncan Unsworth	Postal portfolio	duncan.unsworth@gmail.com
Paul Ashley ARPS	Journal editor	paultheashley@gmail.com
Sean Goodhart ARPS	Webmaster	contemporaryweb@rps.org
Brian Steptoe FRPS	Journal design	bsteptoe@compuserve.com
Patricia Ruddle ARPS	North group organiser	patriciaruddle@btinternet.com
Tom Owens ARPS	Eastern group organiser	contemporaryea@rps.org
Steff Hutchinson ARPS	Central group organiser	info@steffhutchinson.co.uk
Adrian Hough ARPS	South West group organiser	contemporarysw@rps.org
Alexandra Prescott ARPS	Committee member	aprescott 3@yahoo.co.uk
Tessa Mills FRPS	Distinctions Panel chair	tessamills@hotmail.co.uk

