



Editorial

About ten years ago, my photography underwent a conscious change. Although a keen photographer since childhood, I had been largely reactive, responding to what was presented to me by work and travel, family and friends. I chose to be more active in seeking subject matter, and more deliberate in how I photographed it. And I wanted to photograph people, to show their personalities, interests – what made them who they are.

Of course, I was only taking the same path that countless other painters and photographers have taken before. They had left some signposts, mainly of the type represented by books, teaching workshops or retouching/editing software. It is difficult to show someone how to reveal personality in an image. All one can do is look at the work of those who have done it well.

I was thus pleased to come across three photographers who have tried in quite different ways to show the inner person as well as the outer. Elizabeth Cowle, in her powerful panel for a FRPS distinction, has attempted to remove the ‘mask’ that people use to hide their real selves in all their fragility. It is not surprising that it took her three years, even with people she knew already as colleagues.

Sam Gregg also invested a year in getting to know the Naples community from which he has drawn his cast of characters. I used the word ‘cast’ for its theatrical connotations, and I cannot look at his subjects without seeing them as if on stage. But even with the outer theatre, Sam has shown something of the inner personality – pride and courage are common factors.

Moussa Kalapo has chosen just one person, a person distinguished by deciding not to be a migrant but to stay at home. Moussa looks at him indirectly, almost out of the corner of his eye, seeking to understand him through his possessions, where he sleeps, and allusions to conversations.

A more light-hearted approach is taken by John Evans-Jones with his half-heard conversations between strangers near his house. Too brief to say anything about individuals, they say more about human nature in general.

Many of you know that Richard Sadler, a former chair of this group, sadly died recently. Most of the obituaries showed his famous ‘Weegee’ picture; we are delighted to include here a wider range of work from his long professional life.

Paul Ashley, Editor

Cover: © *The Age of Dearth*, by Elizabeth Cowle, from FRPS panel
Back cover: © *Untitled 10*, by Sam Gregg, from *See Naples and Die* series
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Contemporary Photography

Number 80 Summer 2020

2	Editorial Paul Ashley LRPS	32	Trail Talk John Evans-Jones ARPS
4	Richard Sadler FRPS (1927- 2020) Paul Hill	36	Farewell Photography by Daido Moriyama Book Review by Brian Steptoe FRPS
10	Other Worlds Moussa Kalapo	38	View from the Secretary Romney Tansley ARPS
16	Behind Every Mask Elizabeth Cowle FRPS	39	Group and related Society Events
26	See Naples and Die Sam Gregg	39	Listing of Group Officers, Committee members and rôles

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Deadline for the Autumn 2020 issue is 1 September 2020.

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

Richard Sadler FRPS (1927-2020)

Paul Hill



When I thought it was a good idea to relinquish my role as chairman of the RPS Contemporary Group, I suggested to members of the committee that they should seriously consider Richard to be my successor. At that time in the 1990s he seemed to me the ideal person. His energy and commitment to the development of the group and the Contemporary Distinctions Panel over the following years proved I was almost certainly right!

I should not have worried, because we went back a long way. All the way to Derby Lonsdale College where we taught together on their much-praised photography course. I was a part-time lecturer and Richard was an important member of the teaching staff. What

really cemented our friendship was a trip to Photokina in Cologne in 1972 with a group of Derby students.

You learn a lot about your companion when you share a bedroom in the local YMCA. We didn't lose any students and enjoyed our time going around this famous and monumental expo. As I recall neither of us drank, which must have bemused our young and lively students!

Later the Derby course was merged with the one at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham and in 1976 I was asked, much to my surprise, to become course leader of the new joint Diploma in Creative Photography. As a consequence, we saw a quite a bit of each other, and our team that included John Blakemore, Thomas Cooper and Raymond Moore, amongst many talents, attracted some outstanding students.

Richard and John were members of the Midland Group Gallery in Nottingham, and they asked me to join them in their quest to establish a strong photography presence. We started the trail-blazing Midland Open, with selectors like John Szarkowski and RJ Kitaj.

We also exhibited in group shows together several times and he was a great supporter of The Photographers Place workshop at my home in the Peak District. He also helped the late Pete James, curator of photographs at the Library of Birmingham, with a delightful exhibition and publication of Bill Brandt's work on Bourneville, Birmingham in the 1940s.

He has been a constant presence in British photographic circles since the 1960s and his legacy will not only be his imaginative photography, particularly his portraiture and photo sculptures, but the hundreds of students he taught over the years in Derby.

He possessed a great warmth and sense of humour, and when I last saw him at the RPS Awards in London in 2016 he was still lively, and as always had that twinkle in his eye.



Bill Brandt, Brassai, Ansel Adams, © photo by Richard Sadler



Ken Dodd, 1960s
© photo by Richard Sadler



Goons party at the Umbrella Club after their first and last live performance, at Coventry Hippodrome, 1959
© photo by Richard Sadler



Coronation party, 1953
© photo by Richard Sadler



Des Patalong Earlsdon
Morris Man and
his wife, 1986
© photo by Richard Sadler

Other Worlds

Moussa Kalapo

To enter into the life of a young man who, despite all temptations, resists the call of the Mediterranean to taste the supposed delights of Eldorado, and struggles every day against himself and the social burden of gaining, painfully, his daily bread; to live a part of that life by visiting all its areas of discomfort, and its encounters with uncertainties and anguish - it is an act of courage the young Moussa Kalapo did not hesitate to undertake.

His work on the life of another young man like him who, without complaint, opened to him his door and his heart, is a beautiful commitment in a bold photographic essay which, beyond a simple narration, is a philosophical tale not only about the resilience of a man, but also and especially about 'being there'. Because Saba is there! Omnipresent. Even if sometimes invisible. He is in every photograph that represents a paragraph of his story, a part of his life, pious, and almost ascetic or wrinkled and torn like that old identity card that Kalapo shows us.

Often we hear about African migrants who have succeeded in 'other worlds', particularly Europe. That glory is short lived in our memories, displaced by other happenings. When we read these images, we find that Saba also carries those self-imposed expectations. In the portraits, his visions are beyond the seas. Kalapo does not prescribe to us, the readers, what we should read and how we should read. The subtlety becomes more apparent when Saba does not physically exist in the images. The documents are of a place. Saba's thoughts, wishes or anxieties become one with the space he lives in and frequents. The idea of moving from his familiar space, to 'other worlds', become mute and irrelevant. The living is now and here.

Moussa Kalapo uses not only the light of his camera to produce these beautiful images that reveal the painful journey of this young man, who is one of those we can call the 'survivors': that is to say, those young people on whom life has refused to smile but who, nevertheless, smile at life thanks to their faith - a faith often supported by a minor sin that can be called drugs - but for whom the essential thing is to be there, always up and ready, like warriors. Kalapo also uses the light of his empathic intelligence to write this bittersweet tale about a rebellious but sympathetic spirit for whom the best is not necessarily elsewhere; and who shows that by the will one can transform one's hell into paradise, like the last pictures of this story showing Saba, almost at the summit, seeming to say: *"In spite of everything, I'm here!"*

Thus, the work of Kalapo is a metaphorical celebration of the courage to stay in one's country whatever the adversities, and especially to stay upright to grow oneself.

See: www.moussakalapo.com







Behind Every Mask

Elizabeth Cowle FRPS

“Behind every mask there is a face, and behind that a story” – Marty Rubin

Based on Goodman’s Iceberg Model¹, an extension of Sigmund Freud’s conscious and unconscious theory, people may expose only a small part of their true selves (the visible tip of the iceberg) but what characterises us is hidden below the surface (the submerged part of the iceberg).

Through my FRPS panel, I wanted to depict the different façade of our true self with the metaphorical staging of ‘masks’. Do we embrace our uniqueness, insecurities, personal and intimate orientations, addictions, mental status, vices and physical traits, or do we hide (or pretend to hide) them to protect our authentic self, so we can be socially accepted or fit into conventionalism.

As willing models, I reached out to my fellow work colleagues, past and present, who I know well in their professional lives. These included medical practitioners, healthcare and administrative staff, and others who have now changed their profession over the years. Through pictorial documentation I have attempted to explore, reach and uncover their inner complexities, trying to remove their barriers and pretences and expose their true selves. Their stories and revelations were genuine; some were understated and subtle, some extreme, dark and complex, others affected by accidental circumstances, but not all could entirely expose or banish their entrapment(s). Amongst my panel is a self-portrait, as I felt it was important to also remove my ‘mask’ to gain my colleagues’ confidence and support.

This project took over three years to compile, which includes spending time with each model to unearth their compelling stories or fears they have carried/hidden for an inordinate period of their lives. Many threads intertwined, issues not uncommon throughout today’s populace, perchance hidden or suppressed nevertheless. Revelations such as the pressures of retaining beauty as one ages (*Masochistic Beauty*, *The Age of Dearth*); where circumstances have no boundaries (*Pink Ribbon*, *Childless Peril*, *Silent Lullaby*, *Black Widow*); the joy and excitement of futures together shattered as partnerships change and marriages collapse (*The True Story*, *Shattered Dreams*); the struggle of gender or sexual orientations (*Scratch ‘n See*, *Coming Out*, *Amour Tendre*, *Clandestine*); the struggles and toll of addictions (*Brightened Daze*, *Tormented Ecstasy*, *B.C A.D*, *Burning Malignity*); the depths of demons interchange to a future bright and enlightening (*Transitioning Solipsism*) or trapped within localities or careers that no longer bring joy (*Interior Design*, *Dr Chagrin*, *Rural Hostage*).



from left to right,
top row: *The Age of Dearth*, *Interior Design*, *Scratch ‘n See*, *Black Widow*, *Brightened Daze*
centre row: *Coming Out*, *Amour Tendre*, *Clandestine*, *Pink Ribbon*, *Burning Malignity*, *Shattered Dreams*, *Pivotal Changes*
bottom row: *Childless Peril*, *B.C. A.D.*, *Dr Chagrin*, *Masochistic Beauty*, *Transitioning Solipsism*, *Tormented Ecstasy*, *Rural Hostage*, *Silent Lullaby*, *The True Story*

One of the most compelling stagings, so relevant throughout the world today is *Pivotal Changes*, exposing the continual conflict in which the rights of blacks should not be ensnared. An issue centuries old that keeps resurfacing, the struggle for equality determinedly fought, which those in power deem irrelevant to their humanity.

See: www.lizfstop.com

1. *The Iceberg Model* by M. Goodman, 2002. Innovation Associates Organizational Learning.



Amour Tendre



Silent Lullaby



Rural Hostage



Pivotal Changes



Coming Out



Scratch 'n See



Shattered Dreams



Childless Peril

See Naples and Die

Sam Gregg

"See Naples and die" - Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, Italian Journey, 1786.

During the golden age of Spanish Bourbon rule Naples was considered one of the most opulent and enchanting cities in the world. So much so that many found it impossible to leave, only doing so upon dying.

In a modern context the phrase may be read as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the over-documented gang violence of the city. Whilst outsiders may associate the phrase with the presence of the Camorra and glamorise the idea of violence and organised crime, understanding it solely through the lens of TV and film, to me *See Naples and die* bares a much more complex reading.

My project focused on four of central Naples' historically rich yet contemporarily volatile areas – Forcella, Quartieri Spagnoli, Rione Sanità and Santa Lucia. Over a year I was guided by the locals into the heart of this multi-layered city where eccentricity thrives, flamboyant clothing is paired with machismo and gender politics is the opposite of the expected. Here, where others seek easily identifiable caricatures such as 'the brute boss', I saw people filled with contradiction and the troubles and joys of everyday life.

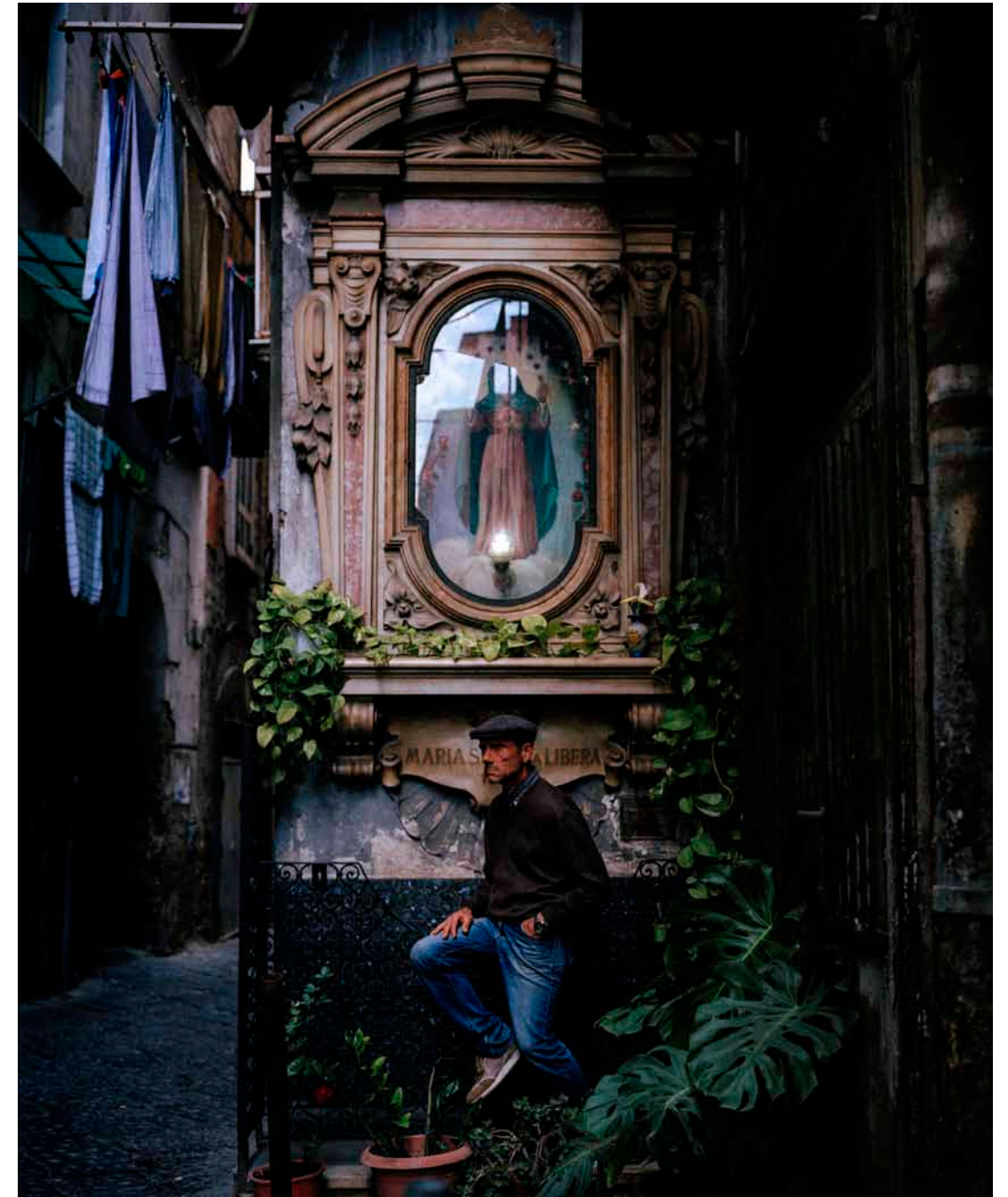
I met and captured Luigi the playboy who struts in pin-stripe suits; the nonna who scrubbed her floors to perfection each morning; Rita, the eyes of the quarter who gave me coffee and shared new gossip; the mother who scorned her child in public under the watch of Jesus; the pastry chef with murderous eyes and a sugary heart; Mary the femminiello, the flamboyant birdkeeper who became a caring friend; Salvatore a pockmarked self-proclaimed ladies man with whom I often swam; the boys at Lido Mappatella, the speck of sand that somehow declares itself a beach and attracts hoards of sun-worshippers; the mother and adopted daughter whose love allowed them to claim their city is free of prejudice; sisters hanging out in doorways; boys smoking cigarettes and talking about girls; Gianni and his pit bull dreaming of life as a superstar DJ, and many, many others.

Over time I was invited to share a glimpse into the private lives of so many of Naples' residents, slowly coming to understand that to 'See Naples' entirely would take a life-time, perhaps giving new meaning to the phrase *See Naples and Die*. This project scratched the surface of my experiences and in many ways is the beginning of an on-going investigation into one of the world's most vibrant and mysterious cities.

See: www.sam-gregg.com







Trail Talk

John Evans-Jones ARPS

I live in Wadebridge, within sight of the start of the Camel Trail to Padstow. Because of pandemic regulations, the trail has of late been hardly used and eerily quiet.

But this was not the case when I made these images. Normally, many visitors and locals cycle or walk, and of course I do as well. One day it occurred to me that conversations that I overheard were rarely about the beautiful view or the wildlife to be seen but were as if they were at home or in the pub.

If I heard someone speaking as they passed me, I photographed them moving away and then noted what they had said. The beginning and the end of the conversation was invariably missed, so I was often left wondering what they were actually talking about.

See: www.jej.jalbum.net





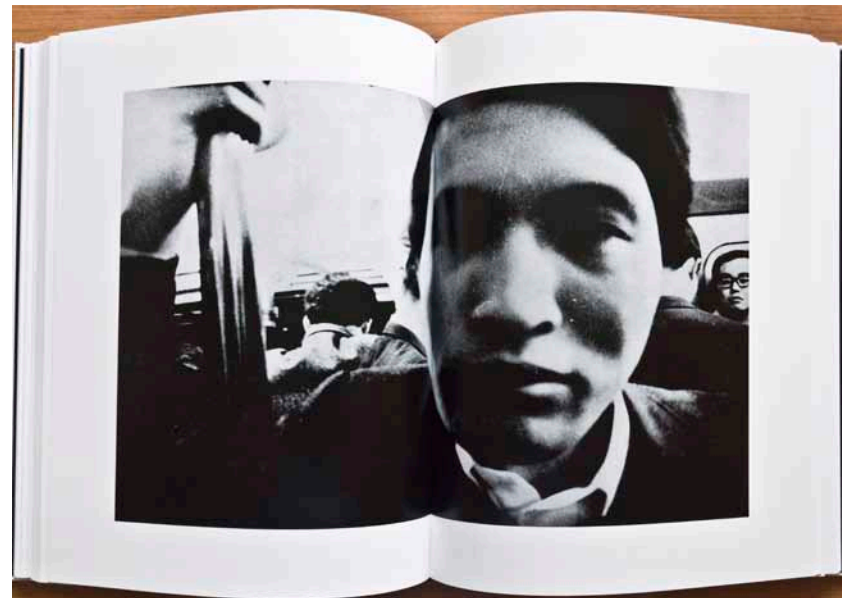
Farewell Photography, by Daido Moriyama

Book review by Brian Steptoe FRPS

Farewell Photography, by Daido Moriyama, was first published in 1972. It features the grainy, blurry style of its author, whose work was exhibited at Tate Modern, London in October 2012 to January 2013. The book pushes images to an extreme; in this quote from *The Photobook: A History vol1* "... Moriyama pushes both the form of the photographic sequence and the photograph itself to the limits of legibility, with a brilliant barrage of stream-of-consciousness imagery culled from his own pictures, found photographs and images taken from the television set." This book was fifth in a list of twenty of the "Greatest Photobooks of all time", in a comprehensive survey published in the Winter 2016 edition of *Source* magazine. A new edition of 1000 signed numbered copies has been published in 2019 by Getsuyosha Ltd.



30 x 22 cm,
276 pages,
145 images,
b&w.

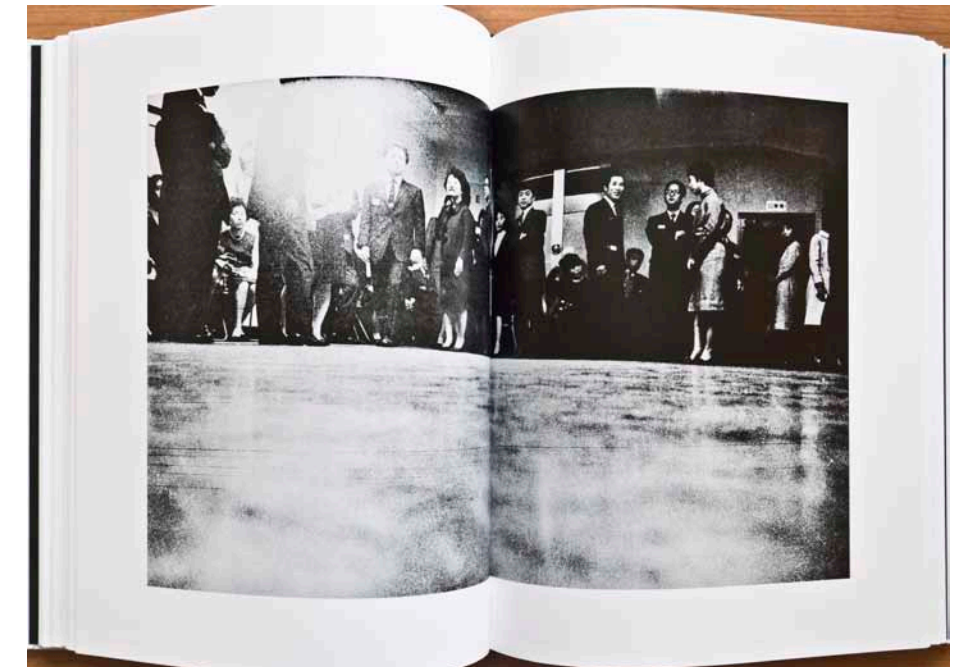


Tokyo, 1969

Osaka City, 1969



Tokyo, 1967



View from the Secretary

Romney Tansley ARPS

At the start of the pandemic as we all went into lockdown, I used my government approved ration of daily exercise to roam with my camera. I could take iconic lockdown photographs, I thought. Predictably of course, the result was a great many banal images, and all of them a long way from iconic. A disappointment of course, but not really a surprise. To rise to that level of ambition is hard and few achieve it. One who I think did, was Tony Ray-Jones. It is hard to believe that he's been dead for nearly half a century, yet in his short life he created a body of work that defines him as one of the most influential photographers since the Second World War. He was a pioneer of British street photography. While a student at The London College of Communication (as it's now called), and on a scholarship at Yale, he spent a year in New York where he mixed with the likes of Garry Winogrand and Joel Meyerowitz and was mentored by Richard Avedon. He returned to these shores with a clear personal mission to capture aspects of the British way of life in ways that had never quite been done before.

His quirky images, of crowd scenes on seaside promenades and picnic locations, of beauty pageants and day trips, sharply evoke that mid-century period, and have a freshness that still communicates today. Often brutally cropped and flouting formal compositional rules, his images capture decisive social moments with powerful accuracy. What I particularly admire is that the sense of purpose that drove him was informed by a conscious effort of self-improvement. He always followed his photographic instincts but was continuously subjecting these to critical thought. We know this from the notebooks he carried with him in which he meticulously recorded stratagems such as, "Get more involved (talk to people)", and, "Stay with the subject matter (be patient). See if everything in the background relates to the subject matter. NO MIDDLE DISTANCE."

How can we, at a new point in history, learn from such masters from the past? How, like them, can we produce photography that reveals truths about the time in which we live, while not giving way to the blandly formulaic or seeking refuge in the safe haven of shallow formalism. These ever-present temptations are only avoided by a gradual refining of our personal vision and by the development of an educated self-awareness. It is for reasons like these that I'm reminded of the continuing need for the Contemporary Group, and of why it's work and influence must continue to give it an important role within the RPS.

GROUP AND RELATED SOCIETY EVENTS

Social distancing is likely to be part of our lives for some time to come, so the Contemporary Group committee is exploring the options for holding online events. We will announce these in Concept, and on Facebook. The Society is already offering a wider range of events and courses than we can list here. Creativity is also helping some of our regional groups with distanced meetings. Here is a quick round-up.

Contemporary East. Virtual meetings are held roughly monthly. Contact Tom Owens (tom@tjowens.com) for more information.

Contemporary North. A meeting is scheduled for 19 September, which is likely to be online. Contact Patricia Ruddle (patriciaruddle@btinternet.com) for more information.

Contemporary Northwest. 'Sharing our experiences of Lockdown', an online meeting on 8 August. Contact Alan Cameron (contemporary@rps.org) for details.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Show your work in Concept

The Contemporary special interest group has two main publications: this Contemporary Photography, our quarterly publication of the best in contemporary photography, and Concept, a members' electronic newsletter distributed by email every two months. Romney Tansley, editor of Concept, is always looking for members work to publish. Contact him at romney@tansley.co.uk. Archives

The archives for the group publications are available on the RPS website:

<https://rps.org/groups/contemporary/e-news-archive/>

<https://rps.org/groups/contemporary/journal-archive/>

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