



Editorial

I was a professional geologist, before retirement. My perspective on the world goes back 3,000 million years to the oldest rocks I have looked at in the Scottish Highlands. Recognisable humans have been around for just a handful of those millions of years, and only in the last couple of centuries have we had a detectable impact on the geologic record. So while I know that the earth has been through massive environmental change since its formation, the pace of recent change has been scarily rapid. And it is that pace of change that makes it so difficult to forecast our future in an environment that we ourselves are changing.

Denise Ogan has noticed the change, and is recording it in her photographs of particular moments that characterise the feelings that have slowly grown on her: the barrenness, the different vegetation, and the sense of being in a different climate zone. The changes documented by Gaspar Abrilot in Chile are not caused by climate change, but still caused by human activity: industrial pollution and excessive water consumption that devastates the local communities and their own resources.

Elissa Jane Diver's perspective is from a different angle. Reflecting on the Tree family's rewilding of the Knepp estate, she allows it not just to infiltrate her own output, but also to draw out the wildness that she can find in herself

Melanie Hübner does not address future change directly. She envisages the consequences of our reliance on technology to remove the human element. But by photographing familiar places and objects without the expected human presence she confronts us with the possibility of our own disappearance.

I wish I could have joined Matjaž Tančič in his explorations of some of the more interesting seekers of a distant future – on Mars. It is perhaps too obvious to see the ambitions for a new life elsewhere as a wish to start again here and get it right this time!

From the next issue of the journal, we will be publishing on a different schedule: every four months rather than every three. For some years the print journal has cost more to produce and distribute than we have received in membership fees. Rather than reduce the quality of the journal, we will change the timing. The next issue will therefore be sent out around the end of May.

Paul Ashley ARPS, Editor

Cover Image: © Denise Ogan

Back Cover Image: © Matjaž Tančič

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Contemporary Photography

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Deadline for the May 2023 issue is 1 April 2022.

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

In the Shade of the Carob Trees

Gaspar Abrilot

Located in the heart of the Atacama Desert, one of the driest areas in the world, the longest river in Chile (and the second longest in Latin America at almost 440 km in length) is disappearing. Its strategic importance is vital, since it is the only source of water that reaches the sea in more than 800 km from north to south, thus generating a population center for Andean pre-Hispanic cultures, especially in the oases of Quillagua, Calama and Chiu Chiu.

Formed by twenty underground tributaries that emerge and join to form a clean and pristine flow, this river begins a pilgrimage through ravines and fords, through communities and ancestral towns, until it flows into the sea. The Loa basin has been inhabited since 1500 B.C. by the indigenous communities and, from the diversity of uses and forms of relationship with the river, a historical and intimate bond of life and brotherhood was born. But currently, from its source on the heights of the Miño volcano to its mouth in the Pacific Ocean, the Loa suffers a dramatic environmental crisis.

Although the water problem is associated with a period of 'natural' drought, the reality is that since 1870, with the installation of the first saltpeter offices in the area, the river has suffered various interventions, appropriations and contamination of its underground and surface tributaries, thus causing an ecological disaster that has created the agony of communities of native peoples, the migration of their inhabitants and the disappearance of customs and ways of life. In recent years the river has reduced its flow and on its banks only animal corpses are discovered. Miles and miles of pipes and clumps of dead trees complete the desolate landscape.

In the lower part of the basin, the condition of the Loa is even more worrying, since chemical products and other minerals have destroyed the land and affected the oasis of Quillagua, an Aymara town that is the last human settlement before the arrival of the river at the sea. Historical records speak of this town as prosperous. Its location made it the great indigenous oasis of the Atacama Desert and a meeting point for communities travelling between the highlands to the sea, generating a rich culture with a strong link with the river. In addition, shrimp farming, corn production, and forestry and agricultural products largely supplied the nitrate mines of the last century.

But that has ended. Quillagua is today the most arid town in the world. The saltpeter mines have closed, the train and the highway have stopped passing through the town and the river recently

suffered two of the greatest environmental contaminations in the history of Chile, from spills of xanthates and industrial detergents that annihilated its farmlands. The final blow is being dealt by the drought, privatization and the appropriation of water by the mining industry. Impoverished, with no running water and little electricity, its young population is migrating. Of the more than 600 inhabitants who lived in Quillagua, today only 70 people permanently reside.

The Aymara community of Quillagua knows that they are witnessing the end of their culture and of an ancestral relationship with the Loa River. But despite this serious condition, the town refuses to disappear and its inhabitants continue to maintain a lifestyle related to their ancestral traditions as a sense of identity. This identity has been created through historical social, territorial and water patterns in the driest desert on the planet.















Wilding

Elissa Jane Diver

'Rewilding' is an attempt to restore ecosystems to the point where they are self-sufficient. It often begins with the reintroduction of a missing species. When the Knepp rewilding project began over twenty years ago, Longhorn cattle, Tamworth pigs, Roe, Red, and Fallow deer were brought onto the land. The animals, through their grazing activities, keep a check on the emerging scrub, preventing the dominance of closed-canopy woodland. More diverse vegetation and new habitats emerge. The Knepp site is 3,500 acres in extent, surrounded by roads and towns; it is an island of biodiversity.

Wilding explores how the wild can exist within limitations, in contained or beleaguered spaces. The artist may work with similar constraints.

My practice involves the creation of a framework or space in which to make work, with the knowledge that there will be both planned and unplanned outcomes. I am always waiting for something to happen that is beyond my control. In this work, the studio can be seen as a metaphor for the rewilding site; an enclosed space that nurtures a wilding of the imagination. Experimentation is central. I think of experimentation as a fusion of play and research. The studio images and the printing of them as cyanotypes, toned with plant matter, emerged from this approach.

Living in a technologically advanced, 21st-century culture, I am sheltered in a home within a city; I make a phone call and meals appear at my door. I am removed from the natural environment and the survival of my body is not a daily preoccupation. My economic circumstances are the framework for my safety. Living in the wild, I must shelter myself from extremes of heat and cold; find water and food. I see my breath on the cold air, I am soaked to the skin, frozen stiff, the wind blows through me and the sun beats down on me. The elements persecute me and I risk expiration. I am close to a corpse. I need shelter, I need a plan and I need my own kind. I separate myself from the wild to protect myself from death. I need borders, physical and psychological, and so begins in culture, a separation from wilderness, but also from the body, as the primary locus of our own wildness.

'Wild' is an expression of freedom, it animates the natural world, it is high winds and high spirits, unpredictable and shape-shifting; we rise to meet it with fear, and definitions of the wild describe our lack of control over it. Wild is the un-discovered land, the un-cultivated plant, the un-tamed animal. So the wild becomes other, but I resist this being at odds with the wild. My own wildness is in the body and the imagination, it is close by; within, not without.

See: www.elissajanediver.com













Editor's note. Because of the nature of the original prints, what we have reproduced here are digital camera copies from Elissa Diver's original exhibition.



No Rain Today

Denise Ogan

It's the summer of 2019, it's hot and I'm walking through an industrial area in Germany. I have never been to this area before, and like any new place, this one conveys to me the specialness of the unknown.

But besides this particular unknown, I have another feeling. I have the impression of being in a different vegetation, a different climate zone. Everything looks so barren and dried out. I notice that our nature is changing and new landscapes are emerging, and suddenly I have the feeling of living in a completely different place. For me it was a magical moment of feeling nature and its changes. Climate change had reached me a few years before, but before that it was often abstract and far away. For the first time, I felt like I could grasp and experience what it could mean. More and more surreal images of a new world began to emerge in my mind and imagination.

It is a world where temperatures must be constantly monitored and watched for early warnings. One in which lakes and waters become places of mourning, landscapes exist only in pictures and posters, and more and more species of animals exist only stuffed. The staged images create a tension between the obviously perceptible and real and a newly created reality from which a new world emerges.

I personally believe that photography, or art in general, offers the possibility of creating spaces for reflection.

I believe that we will all be affected by climate change, no matter where we live. This is both a very beautiful and a sad, and also unifying element.

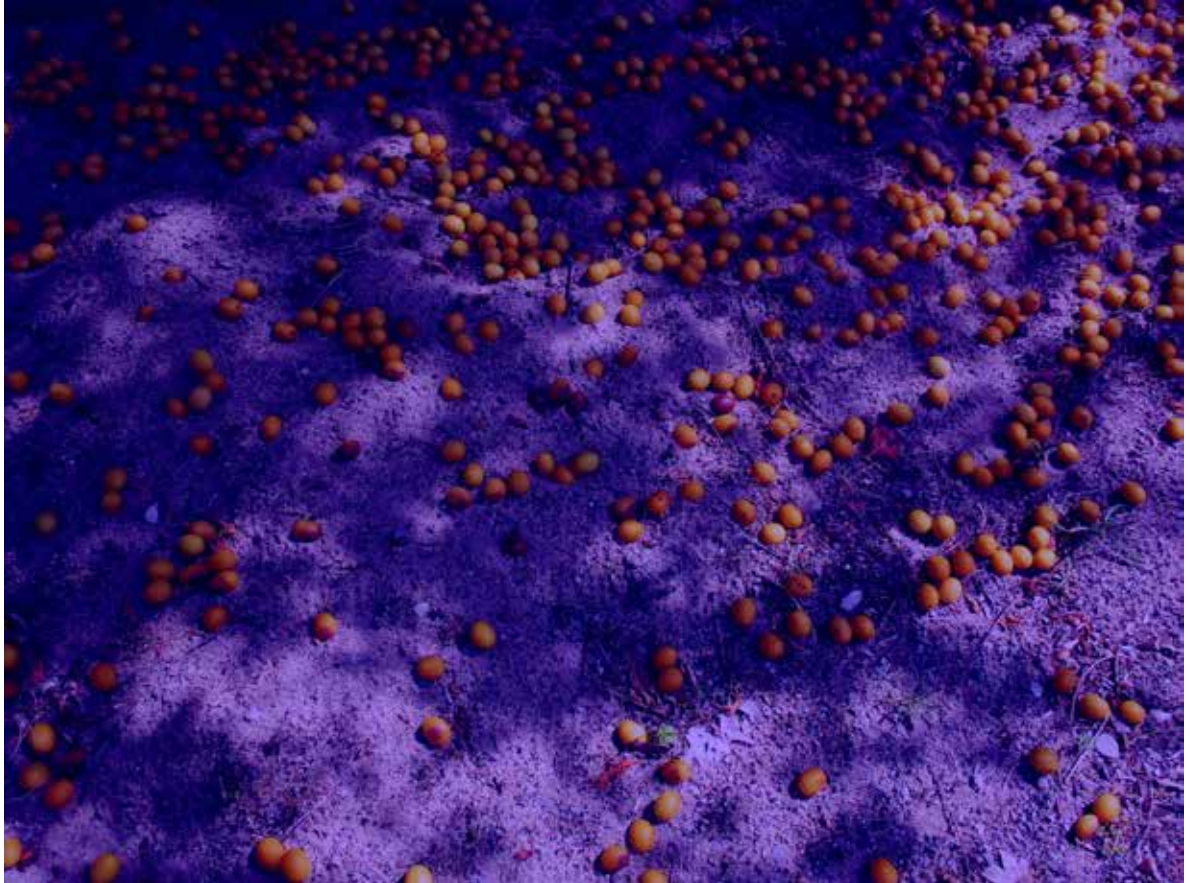
See: deniseogan.com















Mars on Earth

Matjaž Tančič

Mars has long been a favoured subject in science fiction, but with technological advances in space travel, the dream of setting foot on the planet now seems more likely than ever. In this project, the artist travels across the world to document a time when space science is supporting terrestrial fiction to imagine and develop possible ways for humanity to call the red planet home. Beyond the wealthy projects of governments and big companies, Tančič presents a lesser known, deeply motivated army of dreamers.

In 2019, China's space agency successfully landed the first spacecraft on the far side of the moon. NASA plans to again put humans on the Moon as part of a strategy to reach Mars by the 2030s. A flight to Mars will take up to 333 days, and will carry an international, mixed-gender crew of scientists on a spaceship built with an intricate array of public and private technology from numerous nations. It is a new space race, but the end result this time around will be collaborative.

There are the well-known billionaire game-changers in the private space business like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, but this project is interested in the lesser-known, but no less dedicated, players along the journey to Mars: the idiosyncratic visionaries, often cash-strapped and working in the grey areas of the law, that are developing technologies for space travel and exploration.

Around the world, interest in space is growing and for the past two years I have been closely following advancements in Mars colonisation research in Asia, United States and Europe, from Mars architects, doctors, farmers, and engineers to homemade rocket builders

See: matjztancic.com















Paradise Lost

Melanie Hübner

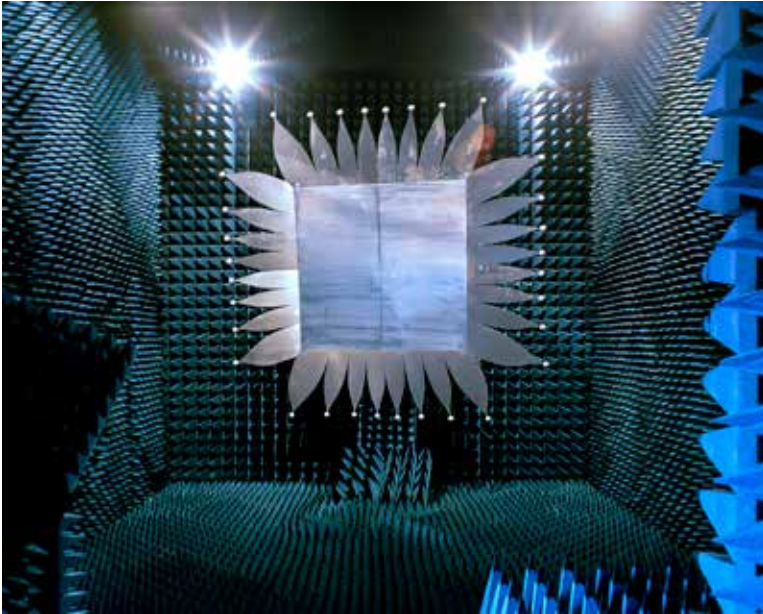
In my eponymous work after John Milton's poem, *Paradise Lost*, the human being as such is no longer visible. Only his traces remain. Human beings are not able to exercise control anymore, because they replace themselves with the technology they have created.

Not a single person will be depicted on the pictures. People build a tendency to not meet anymore, so the question left is: is it technology that is supposed to be the "one" to "restore us and regain the blissful seat"? With technology it is easier for us to make a living, it saves us time and resources. It also distracts us from what is really important: connecting with people face to face. In these days there is a distance between individuals (as part of a collective) that I seek to depict with the emptiness of spaces.

I captured all images with a Pentax 6x7, an analog medium format camera. It was essential to me to use the available light sources to have the most neutral results. Some spaces were nearly impossible to photograph without people, because I had to shoot there during regular work hours.

Therefore, I had to edit some of the pictures to keep their neutrality.

See: melaniehuebner.com



"And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like"
(I // 17-22)



"or the shattered side
Of thundring Ætna, whose combustible
And fuelled entrails thence conceiving Fire,
Sublim'd with Mineral fury, aid the Winds,
And leave a singed bottom all invol'd
With stench and smok"
(I // 232-237)

Incinerator, Rheinberg



"Which that thou mayst beleeve, and be confirmd
Ere thou from hence depart, know I am sent
To shew thee what shall come in future dayes
To thee and to thy offspring; good with bad
Expect to hear; supernal Grace contending
With sinfulness of Men; thereby to learn
True patience, and to temper joy with fear
And pious sorrow, equally enur'd
By moderation either state to beare,
Prosperous or adverse: so shalt thou lead
Safest thy life, and best prepar'd endure
Thy mortal passage when it comes. Ascend
This Hill"
[11 // 355-367]

BMW Group Factory, Berlin



"So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
Forth reaching to the Fruit, she pluck'd, she eat:
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her Works gave signs of woe,
That all was lost."
(9 // 780-784)



Botanical Garden, Berlin

"Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat"
(1 // 1-7)



"The Rib he formd and fashond with his hands;
Under his forming hands a Creature grew,
Manlike, but different sex, so lovly faire,
That what seemd fair in all the World, seemd now
Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her containd
And in her looks, which from that time infus'd
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
And into all things from her Aire inspir'd
The spirit of love and amorous delight."
(8 // 469-477)

Dairy, Luisenhof Velten



"what food

Will he convey up thither to sustain
Himself and his rash Armie, where thin Aire
Above the Clouds will pine his entrails gross,
And famish him of Breath, if not of Bread?"
(12 // 73-77)



Datacenter, Berlin

"The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less then he
Whom Thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure"
(1 // 254-261)



"A various mould, and from the boyling cells
By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook,
As in an Organ from one blast of wind
To many a row of Pipes the sound-board breaths.
Anon out of the earth a Fabrick huge
Rose like an Exhalation, with the sound
Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet,
Built like a Temple, where Pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With Golden Architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or Freeze, with bossy Sculptures grav'n,
The Roof was fretted Gold. Not Babilon,
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equal'd in all thir glories, to inshrine
Belus or Serapis thir Gods, or seat
Thir Kings"
[I // 706-721]

Amazon Packaging, Rheinberg



"Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
Or do him mightier service as his thralls
By right of Warr; what e're his business be
Here in the heart of Hell to work in Fire,
Or do his Errands in the gloomy Deep;
What can it then avail though yet we feel
Strength undiminisht, or eternal being
To undergo eternal punishment?"
[I // 147-721]



"O flours,
That never will in other Climate grow,
My early visitation, and my last
At Eev'n, which I bred up with tender hand
From the first op'ning bud, and gave ye Names,
Who now shall reare ye to the Sun, or ranke
Your Tribes, and water from th' ambrosial Fount?"
(11 // 273-279)



"Hell heard th' unsufferable noise, Hell saw
Heav'n ruining from Heav'n and would have fled
Affrighted; but strict Fate had cast too deep
Her dark foundations, and too fast had bound.
Nine dayes they fell; confounded Chaos roard,
And felt tenfold confusion in thir fall
Through his wilde Anarchie, so huge a rout
Incumberd him with ruin: Hell at last
Yawning receavd them whole, and on them clos'd,"
[6 // 867-875]

GSI Institut, Darmstast. Particle Accelerator

Chris Killip (ed. Ken Grant, Tracy Marshall-Grant)

Book review by Tim Hancock ARPS

I first came across the work of Chris Killip via his Youtube social documentary of the fishing community of Skinningrove on the Yorkshire coast. What struck me was not only the fantastic collection of images and the story they told, but also the superb and almost emotional commentary he added to the video. Knowing the examining village a bit myself I had to investigate his work further, and this latest collection is something not to be missed by anyone who appreciates the highest quality of social documentary work. Chris sadly died aged 74 in 2020 after a remarkable career which saw him migrate from leaving school at 16 without qualifications, to become Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University. This collection of his major works is outstanding, from his homelands of the Isle of Man to the many locations he photographed, principally in the north of England, depicting the hardships faced by so many communities. Chris was special in that he knew that he had to integrate into these communities in order to win their trust, whether this be the distant and suspicious people of the north east in Seacoal or the punk rockers of The Station. The book contains a good deal of text about his life and photography, written by those who knew him well.

The book is large, 12 x 10 inches, showing off Chris's images to the full, with over 250 pages. I feel it is an absolute bargain at only around £35 from multiple online sellers.



The (Long) View

Brian Steptoe FRPS

Eddie Bowman, a founder of the RPS Contemporary Photography Special Interest Group, remarked back in 1987 about the lack of a more modern approach in the range of artistic photography shown by the RPS. It set up both a push to correct this and a reaction against any such change. I would almost say that the response from some established well-known members of the Society at the time was that all was right with the RPS and no change at all was needed in the type of work shown!

An inaugural meeting in November 1989 with 66 attendees, however, showed strong support for a new RPS Group. A donation of £5000 was pledged and organisation of the Group was agreed: it would be led by Paul Hill as chairman, supported by Virginia Khuri, the late Edward Bowman and the late Janet Hall. A number of other established photographers were also involved, including Michael Langford, Eamonn McCabe, Jo Spence, Colin Osman and Peter Turner. The Group was strongly supported by the then RPS Secretary Amanda Neville.

From the start it was felt that a physical printed Group Journal should be published rather than a more ephemeral on-line version. It is now produced quarterly and posted to Group members. Until recently I set the journal layout; I set it as a square format, in order to give equal weight to both portrait and landscape layouts. Normally images are placed one-per-page. Going forward, Christine Pinnington now lays out the journal, and has my best wishes!

Editor's note. Brian Steptoe steps down this year from the Contemporary Group Committee. We are grateful for his many years of service, including his recent time as the layout editor of the Journal.

Group and Related Society Events

Group meetings

The Contemporary Group continues to hold meetings online and, where possible in person. Keep an eye on the RPS website, Concept and the group Facebook page for forthcoming events. Note in particular:

- Contemporary Group AGM: 10-12 a.m., 25 March 2023, online.
- Contemporary Group weekend meeting: 13-14 May 2023, Cambridge.
The theme of the weekend for speakers and excursions alike is the Cambridgeshire Fens, and the threats they face from climate change and human activity. See the RPS website for more details and to book your place.

Regional meetings

Contemporary East. Meetings are held online on the first Thursday or Friday of each month in the afternoons. Contact Tom Owens for more information.

Contemporary North. Meetings are held monthly live at Clements Hall, York, and online, on Saturdays. Contact Patricia Ruddle for more information or see the RPS website.

Contemporary South West. The next meeting will be on Sunday 12th March in Dartington, Devon. Contact Adrian Hough for details.

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, online.

Contact Steff Hutchinson for more information.

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