



Water Tower, Quarndon
© Rachel Perry

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From the Editor

Welcome to the July issue of Concept, it's packed with words and images from members of the Contemporary Group so thanks to everyone who took the time to send in their work, I know it's not always easy to write about your personal projects, but I think the variety of work and standard of images are excellent – I am sure you will agree!

Since the last issue I have been to a couple of excellent exhibitions, Saul Leiter: An Unfinished World at the MK Gallery was particularly inspiring – there was a phrase he used that is I think very relevant to the photography of this group 'It is not where it is or what it is that matters but how you see it'

Seeing an artist's work on a gallery wall is something you can't replicate. There are other exhibitions outside of London I hope to see including After the End of History: British Working Class Photography 1989-2024, which is at Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea, 3 July-14 September and Bonington Gallery, Nottingham, 27 September-15 December. If there any exhibitions you have visited and would like to write a short review about please drop me a line for the next issue.

In the last newsletter, I talked about our Postal Portfolio - a method for Contemporary SIG members to view prints and books made by other members and get feedback on their images. The long-standing method has been the circulating of boxes containing members' work. Although this continues to be the main function of the Postal Portfolio members are now also regularly meeting online to show and discuss images. Our current organiser is stepping down and we would love to continue the activities but will need a new organiser – if you think you could help or would like more info please get in touch – you can email me, and I will put you in touch with the group.

Don't forget you can also stay up to date with everything that's happening by visiting the Contemporary Group website pages on the main RPS site - <https://rps.org/groups/contemporary/> where you can see all events as well as news articles and videos

I hope you enjoy reading this issue, if you have any feedback or ideas please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Best Wishes

Nick Linnett
Concept Editor

Update from our Chair

Changes.

About the only constant we live with is that of change.

The Society is going through monumental changes as it tries to stop the haemorrhaging of funds and members and seeks to control running costs. The biggest change here is the sale of RPS House.

I never visited RPS House but I had the misfortune to visit the previous anodyne premises in Bath in 2014. I was singularly unimpressed by that visit and it left a lasting impression on me that I was in effect an 'intruder' having to be minded whilst I viewed the small exhibition on the ground floor.

Rented premises like that were not new to me having operated out of such places in my working life but there was nothing special about it at all. It would seem that the Bristol site was a galaxy away in terms of difference but also in terms of access so I'm not surprised by the recent decision to recoup some losses by selling it.

The other big change is that the Board of Trustees ratified a new Terms of Reference document for all SIGs, Regions and Professional members on 22nd March 2024 after some

6 months negotiation and debate at several MemCom meetings and very many hours in between!

Committee

The big take-aways for us are that the committee now conforms to the new governance structure of 7 voting members with several non-voting activity organisers managing jobs that need to be done such as Regional Organisers. The committee structure is available to view on the website <https://rps.org/groups/contemporary/committee/>

All serving committee members whether voting or non-voting will be invited to committee meetings.

Administration Levy

The other big issue is the imposition of central charges for services to SIGs. Hitherto, Bristol have responded to requests for service and functionality by all SIGs to deliver stuff that cannot be done by volunteers owing to poor or unusable IT platforms and/or business practices. SIG demands on central staff time would appear to be quite significant and with effect from June 2024, we will be charged approximately £100 per month for these services.

The imposition of charges was not known before February 2024 and all SIGs were not prepared for the impact upon group finances.

We are lucky in one respect in that our AGM came after the debates about charging so we have re-worked our budget and absorbed the cost for this year by cutting our cloth as close as we can. We do forecast a small loss this financial year as a result of an estimated levy of £600.

The effective result is that we have to increase our SIG membership fee from 1st January 2025 to £25 per annum. This takes into account increased production and postage costs of our quality Contemporary Photography and the forecast annual levy of £1200. The increase in subscription was voted through at the AGM.

Member only inclusion & promotion

Another restriction of the new ToR is that we can only serve our members of the RPS and in particular the SIG. Historically, I ran an open group in East Anglia. That has now changed under the new ToR and all non-members have now been excluded. They can of course re-join by paying a membership fee. Regional organisers must ensure that their groups only serve paid up members of the Society and the SIG. In cases where a group is say, Contemporary & Documentary, then membership of either is satisfactory.

Why is this important? The new levy being charged by the centre is for services made to members of the SIG. Broadcast emails and website entries all form part of the charges and therefore cannot contain or promote work or activities of non-members. This means that Concept articles can only relate to member content going forward.

Bursary

Our one and only bursary offering was awarded to a primary school in Devon last year. The whole competition was managed by Adrian Hough and Sean Goodhart. It is documented in this edition, but another casualty of the new Terms of Reference is that we are no longer permitted to offer one. What we have done though is contribute to the Eamonn McCabe bursary. Eamonn was a founding member of this group so at least we have helped maintain his legacy. Eamonn's wife and Michael Pritchard have both expressed their thanks for our generous donation.

Many thanks to Adrian and Sean for all their hard work in making our bursary work.

Tom Owens ARPS
Contemporary Chair

Sacred Objects; a Caribbean bounty

Marlon Rouse

I grew up in a household in Trinidad and Tobago where apples and grapes showed up on the table only at Christmas time. There were perhaps other homes where these admired and imported fruits were to be found at any time of the year but for me, their presence signified something special.

To this day I cannot eat either without thinking of Christmas.

Our local fruits were more or less ubiquitous and that created a feeling of the ordinary, which led to them being taken for granted. There was no celebratory nature to a Julie mango and no exceptional occasion to be associated with it, but for some outdated childhood freedoms: fence-climbing, pelting stones and sticks, or scampering through a neighbour's back yard being chased by an unfriendly pothound. Today, on sidewalks in almost every community, seasonal local fruit enjoy some of the spotlight. Positioned adjacent to their imported neighbours they can be seen in supermarkets and vegetable stalls as there has been an appreciation in commercial value. However, the representation and reflection of this aspect of our identity seems slower to evolve.

These photographs are of edible fruit found in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean

and while the project's intention is multi-layered, through this style of imagery, and inspired by W. H. Auden's reflection on things and the encounter of, I've sought to explore a novel redefining of traditional and clichéd assumptions reflecting a Caribbean identity and aesthetic.

Like the people, the fruit found today were brought by the ruling empires that sought to bolster their economies through enslavement and land seizures. Initially brought to the region from the South Pacific by the infamous British Captain William Bligh in the late 18th century as a hope of cheap food stock for the slaves, the breadfruit, a high-yielding fruit tree, has become a staple of rural homes (and wider communities) over time. The Spaniards brought bananas, and Pineapple and Paw Paw (Papaya) made their way from South America. Along with a particular variety of banana called the Gros Michel, mangoes were brought by the French initially, then the British brought along other varieties. Other specimens of fruit came from West Africa, India and as far as Australia.

In a celebration of that and of those assumed to be pedestrian, I've sought to establish a modern vision of the region and its people, revealing characteristics perhaps unobserved

and a point of view never before taken. I have also tried to underscore an inherent beauty, possibly bringing a new regard that may surpass a cursory observation—a new eye. To the diasporic, I am hoping to trigger a memory and perhaps instigate discussions of unrealized potential with the wider communities.

www.rouseworks.com



Breadfruit

Caraili



Five Finger Ripe



Paw Paw



Chenet



Mango Starch



Tamarind



Cocoa



Orange Peel



Pomerac

All images © Marlon Rouse

Jacopo Locarno

My name is Jacopo Locarno, and I am a photography student at the European Institute of Design in Milan.

Photography has always represented an open window to the world for me, a way to explore different realities and tell stories. Growing up, I fell in love with the legends of great English and American photographers, who with their shots managed to capture the essence of places and people in a masterful way. However, two years ago, when I had to take an exam at the European Institute of Design in Milan, I felt stuck. I couldn't find the motivation and the right story for my project. The area surrounding Milan, although rich in history and charm, did not represent my idea of photography at that time.

So, I decided to take my Mamiya RZ67 and embark on a journey to Bristol, a city that had always fascinated me for its vibrant artistic and cultural scene. I booked an Airbnb in the area between Old Market and Easton, and it was there that I decided to focus my photographic research.

At first, I photographed everything that caught my eye: architecture, and everyday life scenes. Each shot was a piece of a puzzle that I still couldn't see in its entirety. Back in Italy, looking at the negatives, I noticed a common thread that linked many of my images: a keen interest in the youth issues of the neighbourhood. It was evident that I had found the heart of my project. Determined to explore this theme further, I returned to Bristol a second time, this time with the precise goal of telling the life stories of the young people in the neighbourhood.

The project is still in progress. I feel that there is still much to be done to complete it. I have realized that to truly tell their story, I need to establish a closer and more confidential relationship with these young people, to enter their world with respect and authenticity. I want my photos to be not just images, but open windows into their lives, capable of conveying their emotions and their everyday reality.

What you will see now is a part of the project, a selection of images that represent the first steps of this journey, a piece of a mosaic that is slowly coming together.





All images © Jacopo Locarno

The Wasteland

Samantha Ruth

There is an area of land on the edge of the village where I live which has fascinated me for many years. I call it The Wasteland, a post-industrial and suburban landscape, once part of Derby canal, it now lies abandoned, mainly invisible and derelict. Applying a personal and contemporary vision to document the spatial appropriation of this post-industrial landscape, my images seek to depict an environment changed by humankind.

It is in this unseen, unkempt quiet wilderness, where I find solitude and reflect. The aim of the work is to capture the relationship and my engagement with this concealed landscape and explore the narrative within it: presence and absence, the visible and invisible. It is the harmony between the banal and the beautiful which appeals and resonates with me.

Numerous skips containing discarded items lie abandoned on the edge of this piece of land. Remnants of plastic, shards of metals discarded – what does this say about the world we live in today? How different would it have been from the past? I find these discarded objects fascinating – they leave a trace. In a similar vein, the camera produces a trace of a photographed object. As the land itself continues to regenerate, nature will devour these objects as part of its process. My images convey the remnants of human existence in this suburban landscape, denoting a tension between the artificial and the natural.

Using a light grey background to synonymously highlight and document the debris, the work reveals found objects in the wasteland, akin to specimens of modern-day archaeology. Using the colour grey has been a conscious choice; grey simultaneously captures both old and new. It is a neutral hue between black and white, a “grey area” denoting the “in-between”.

Deploying a combination of both digital and film, The Wasteland is a visual exploration of the past and present. Soft muted tones alongside monochromatic images convey a nostalgic vision and a sense of place scarred by time, with glimpses of a bygone era.

In creating the work, I have been inspired by the poem of T S Eliot, ‘The Waste Land’ (1922), a meditation on the journey of life, in which spiritual, philosophical and personal themes emerge. It is our experiences which shape us; the deepest philosophical discoveries are within ourselves, not in faraway places.

Our experience of place, the concept of land and our connections to it are all unique as indeed we all are.





A NATURALIST'S JOURNAL

Bill Brooks ARPS

The Rev. Gilbert White (1720-1793) was a “gentleman naturalist” who is now widely regarded as one of the founding fathers of modern ecology. He saw plants and animals not as something put on Earth for man’s exploitation, but as an integral part of a wider natural world. His acute observation and relentless attention to detail allowed him to identify several hitherto undescribed species, including the harvest mouse and the noctule bat. He was the first to suggest that the “willow wren” was not one, but three species of bird – those that we now know as the chiffchaff, willow warbler and wood warbler. His meticulous observations of the arrival and departure dates of Selborne’s birds paved the way for the modern understanding of migration.

Since its original publication in 1789, his book *The Natural History of Selborne* has never been out of print. With over four hundred editions, it is the fourth most published text in the English language. Gilbert White’s influence has been acknowledged by generations of leading naturalists, from Charles Darwin to Chris Packham and Sir David Attenborough.

This series of photographs, paired with short extracts from White’s letters and journals, reflects on the times, places and species he described.

Sadly, two hundred years on, many of those species are now extremely rare (nightjar, stone curlew, nightingale and turtle dove) or completely extinct (corncrake) in the woods, farms and commons that Gilbert White so loved.



Selborne

The parish of Selborne, by taking in so much of the forest, is a vast district. Those who tread the bounds are employed part of three days in the business, and are of opinion that the outline, in all its curves and indentings, does not comprise less than thirty miles.

Letter to Thomas Pennant, ca. 1788



Smithson/Princeton University

There are few towns or large villages but what abound with house martins; few churches, towers, or steeples, but what are haunted by some Suffolk; scarce a hamlet or single cottage chimney that has not its swallow.

Letter to the Hon. Duane Barrington, 26th February, 1774



Gilbert's Pond

Brisk winds, & showers for several days. The apples are pretty much wind blown down in some places, & the hops received some injury.

The Garden Calendar, entry of 5th September 1765



Adler (Viper) [unclear]

Providence has been so indulgent to us as to allow of but one venomous reptile of the serpent kind in these kingdoms, and that is the viper

Letter to Thomas Pymant, 18th June 1768



Tortoise

It is a matter of wonder to find that Providence should bestow such a profusion of days, such a seeming waste of longevity, on a reptile that appears to relish it so little as to squander more than two-thirds of its existence in a perous stupor, and be lost to all sensation for months together in the profoundest of slumbers.

Letter to the Hon. Daines Barrington, 21st April, 1780



White-throat (Luscinia luscinia)

The note of the white-throat, which is constantly repeated, and often attended with odd gesticulations on the wing, is harsh and displeasing.

Letter to Thomas Pennant, 2nd September, 1774



Path through forest

These rugged gloomy scenes affright the ladies when they peep down into them from the paths above, and make timid horsemen shudder.

Letter to Thomas Pennant, ca. 1788

All images © Bill Brooks ARPS

Flat by André Bergmans (Netherlands)

The Dutch landscapes and seascapes are mostly flat. This does not imply that the Dutch landscapes are boring or monotonous. The weather and the light are shaping and changing the mood of what we observe. Air, water and earth, as nature, are battling for attention being equal partners in shaping the overall result. But in the densely populated and strongly man-made Netherlands, a touch of human presence or intervention is never far away.

The project is actually not a project in the sense that there is a clear end to it; it is a perpetual effort where the overall collection of results will grow and grow forever. Geographical maps and the weatherman are the photographers' best friends in this project.

My aim is to make an extensive set of different images so I can make a panel or a book.



Panel I Concept



Unlike many of us, Rachel began photography after several years as a lawyer, a career she set aside to study Fine Art at the University of St Johns in York. I knew Rachel as a member of York Printmakers, but we soon realised that we had photography in common and she joined the RPS and our Contemporary North Activity group.

What did you study at University?

As part of the degree we also studied philosophy and how its ideas can impact art. I found that I liked the ideas of German phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger.

Heidegger stated that art operates through its material composition and circumstances to reveal a truth, enabling its audience to see or understand something afresh or anew. Heidegger also mentions that often ordinary everyday objects are obscured by an “average everydayness”, what is often most familiar is not known at all, and its meaning is constantly overlooked.

Is this what influenced your water towers project?

Yes, they often are not noticed because they are part of the everyday landscape. I hope that my photographs highlight the character of these

strangely varied and iconic buildings, and that the interesting architecture and usefulness of these buildings might be considered worthy of preservation.

However, I was interested in water towers and architecture from an early age. My family had a water tower in our Burundi garden, central Africa, which helped conserve water during dry seasons. We lived there for the first six years of my life.

Did you specialise in photography at University?

Although the degree course didn't offer photography as a degree subject until my last year, it became the medium I used most. It enabled me to snatch a momentary image, and whilst the subject matter varied from landscape to still life, my work is mostly about quiet and an absence of people. At the time I had a chaotic growing family, and I loved the small moments of peace. As Heidegger would say we query “our being and wonder about the meaning of being a being.” Perhaps we need some occasional space just to be and be aware and contemplate this.

At University, I came across the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher and their collection of industrial buildings. They had a consistent,

uniformly expert method of photographing buildings including water towers.

It seems like you have been destined to photograph water towers

Yes! Fortuitously where I live there is a view of the Severus Water Tower. This was the beginning of a degree project. I found the finding of the water towers, researching online to find more obscure water towers hidden away, the planning of the journey integral to the project.

When I began to collect water towers, I noticed how varied they could be in design. Some water towers hold water, others assist water pressure in low lying areas. I prefer the more modern concrete water towers which often have a science fiction quality about them, quite a few of these were built as late as the 1960s and 1970s. Whether situated in the countryside or in towns they are sentinels standing at odds with their surroundings. I also wondered about the changing climate and whether we should be keeping these structures. Severus water tower is said to have had one of largest water tanks in the UK, and the year after it was decommissioned there was a drought and water shortages. Local people were not happy.

Have you had any interesting encounters with locals?

On a trip locating water towers near Norwich, workmen invited me to look round. One of the neighbours approached me and wanted to know if there were plans to knock the water tower down. He was hopeful it could be eliminated from the vista in front of his house. I did not tell him that I would much prefer the water tower to be preserved.

Were there any other influences?

Susan Hiller's work "Rough Seas" (2010) has been a source of inspiration. Hiller tinted with unnatural colour, she scanned the original Rough Sea postcards and presented them as large images in a grid format of nine. The similarity of the images emphasizes the wildness and rhythm of the seas. My collection is similarly tinted to emphasise the unnatural. However, together their difference of character is really quite remarkable. Who knew that a utilitarian building could be so varied in character and design?

Can you tell us what you're working on now?

While still collecting water towers images, I'm taking photos in Dalby Forest to produce large-scale images using CMYK, processed as silk screen pictures. I hope that they will give the viewer feelings of actually being in the forest.

Thank you, Rachel, perhaps you'll tell us about the project in a future Concept.

Patricia A Ruddle ARPS

All images © Rachel Perry



Conisbrough



Riccall



Thorney



Salt and Pepper



Askhambryan



Accworth



Tockwith



Lovehill



Cantley



Acomb



Heming



Cantley

The Contemporary Group Bursary

In 2022 the Contemporary Photography Group of the Royal Photographic Society created a bursary to fund 'A photographic project that conveys the experience of being a school student in a rural environment' as part of the RPS Photography for All initiative. We had a lot of advice from the RPS Education Manager and input from Lillian Spibey of the Sharp Shots Photo Club, see <https://rps.org/youngphotographers/>, before we publicly launched our initiative in January 2023.

The competition to win the bursary prize of £1500 was available to all primary and secondary schools in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and The Isle of Man which are in a settlement with a population of less than ten thousand (or which has been designated as Rural by the relevant Government Legislation). The Contemporary Group judging committee unanimously voted Broadhembury Church of England Primary School as winner, the story is covered in a previous article <https://rps.org/news/groups/contemporary/2023/july/rps-cg-photographic-bursary-2023-winner/> and was mentioned in the RPS Newsletter in July 2023.

Broadhembury is a tiny village in a parish with a population of around 600 people and lies about seven miles from Junction 28 (Cullompton) on the M5, and one mile to the north-east of the A373 which runs from Junction 28 to Honiton.

The school has about thirty pupils and is part of a Federation with several other small schools but the project has involved only Broadhembury as far as we are aware. It's an interesting event for the school as it's an excellent opportunity for them to show themselves off but with only two teaching staff it's quite a stretch (the Leadership Team is shared between all the schools in the Federation). The teacher who originally made the application for the bursary was headhunted and moved elsewhere.

The project was led by the school with support from Adrian Hough, the Contemporary Group's South West regional organiser. Adrian has a wealth of experience working with schools and helped the school spend some of the bursary on appropriate equipment as well as coaching the children. The previously loved camera equipment was procured from MPB (see <https://rps.org/about/partners/>) with the help of the RPS Education Manager who negotiated a discount for the school.

Adrian said, "Working with the pupils aged 7-11 it was clear that they quickly grasped what Contemporary Photography is about far better than most adults and the images that I have seen (and printed for them as a demonstration) were very good – some are superb and say things about small rural schools far beyond what the pupils realise."



Main image with the netball hoop: The children thought this showed how things were not cared for properly on the school building, which we would realise is due to a lack of funding. One week later the gutter fell off!

The second image with the shoes is simply entitled 'Friendship', but there is quite a lot going on in the image when we stop and think about it.

Credit: Broadhembury Church of England Primary School

The bursary has also been used by the school to rent space for the exhibition of the work. The exhibition will take place on Friday 12th July, opening at 14:00 and then running for the rest of the afternoon. The venue will be Broadhembury Memorial Hall, Broadhembury, Honiton EX14 3NG.



Seasons



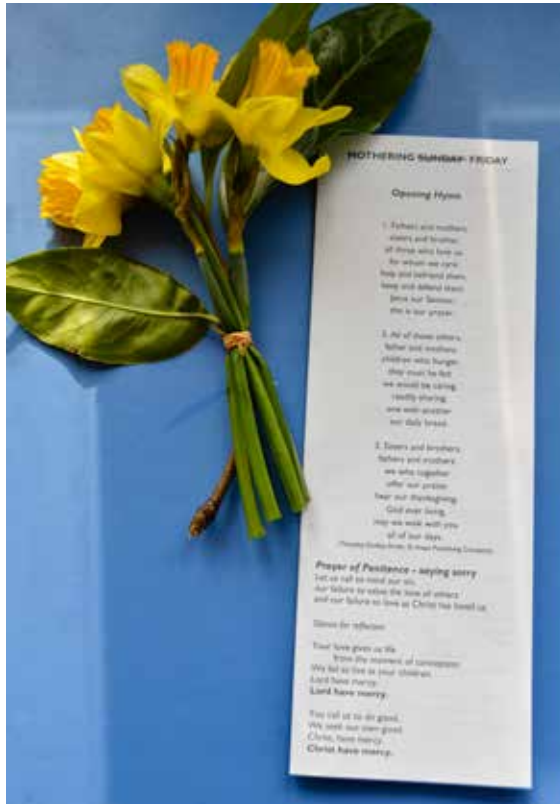
Christian Values



Community



Our School



Festivals and Celebrations



Our Village

Contacts

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Forest of the Future

Christine Pinnington LRPS

“Shinrin-yoku, also known as forest bathing, is a practice or process of therapeutic relaxation where one spends time in a forest or natural atmosphere, focusing on sensory engagement to connect with nature”
(Wikipedia)

After a wonderful day spent in an autumnal forest among those enticing colours and scents I returned home. On the news that evening were 3 items all of forest fires happening around the world. I began to wonder if at some point in the future, will our forests still exist?

Most of my work consists of large scale collages looking at changes to our climate (not always intentionally) so I decided to produce two about my thoughts on the forests. These were shown at the Arena Seminar, in March this year.

The first one consists of three views of forests and are images I have taken randomly over the past few years. These represent the past, present and a future imagined. When I took these photographs, I had no idea that later they could all connect.

The second collage consists of images taken at a workshop and represent our disappearing forestry through both nature and manmade.

We need to be able to have these surroundings in which we can relax and enjoy. Perhaps through photography, we can record and display the beauty and necessity of our natural surroundings. The future is in our hands.

<https://arenaphotographers.com>

<https://www.paulmitchellphotography.co.uk/workshops>



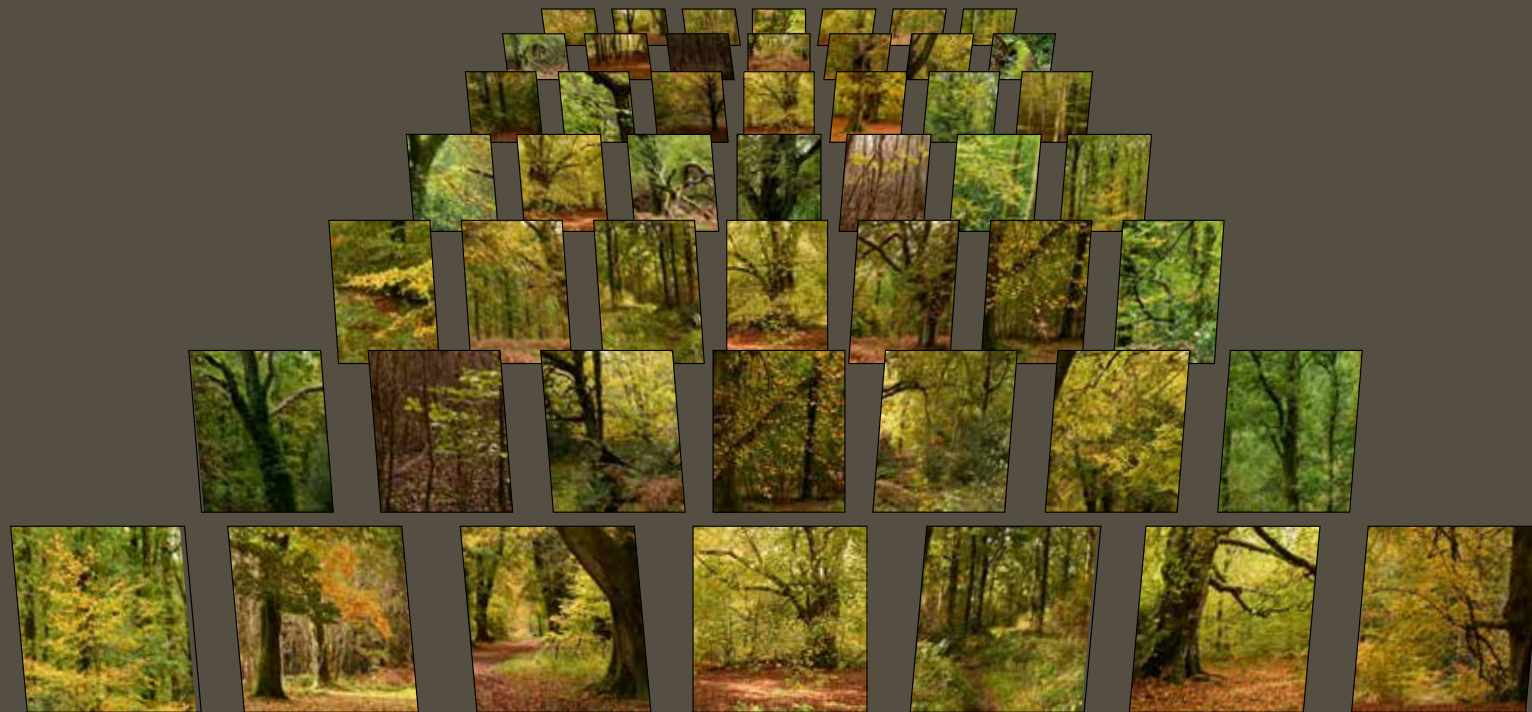
Past present and future?

Top: Savernake Forest, near Marlborough

Centre: Forest fire, Jersey, CI

Bottom: Forest destroyed by Volcanic eruption, Nr Akureyri, Iceland.

Collage produced in Adobe Illustrator.



The Disappearing Forest

Disappearing Forest

All images: Savernake Forest, near Marlborough
Collage produced in Adobe InDesign

All images © Christine Pinnington

Water for Life

Phil Dunbar

Only one in seven people in the world have access to clean water. This is the message that the organisation Water for Life is publicising through a series of international art exhibitions, now in its 8th edition, organised by director Antoine Gaber. Water for Life is partnered by UNESCO Florence, INAH Mexico, Museo Maya de Cancún and the Universidad del Caribe.

We first got involved with Water for Life a few years ago. My wife Ann, who is a professional artist, was contacted by the organisation's cultural promoter Angelina Herrera whom we had met when Ann was exhibiting at the Florence Biennale. This contact resulted in exhibitions in Niagara, Canada and Palenque, Mexico. It was at the Palenque exhibition that I got talking to the artistic director Antoine Gaber, himself a photographer, and showed him some of my work. This resulted in an invitation to take part in the 8th Edition Water for Life International Art Exhibition at the Maya Museum in Cancún, Mexico, in April 2024.

I decided that I would show some of my more abstract work on the sea using ICM. I felt that these were appropriate to the exhibition as they reflect my feelings about the subject, rather than a representation of it. I selected one of the images I had already shown to the exhibition director and proceeded to go out to make images on the same theme.

Having gone through the long process of selecting the four images I wanted to show, I had them printed professionally on Hahnemühle hemp paper on a PVC substrate. The choice of mount was driven by the need to take the photos on the plane to Mexico with us. Although we have rarely had problems with sending work abroad, we know several artists whose work has been delayed in customs resulting in their missing the exhibition.

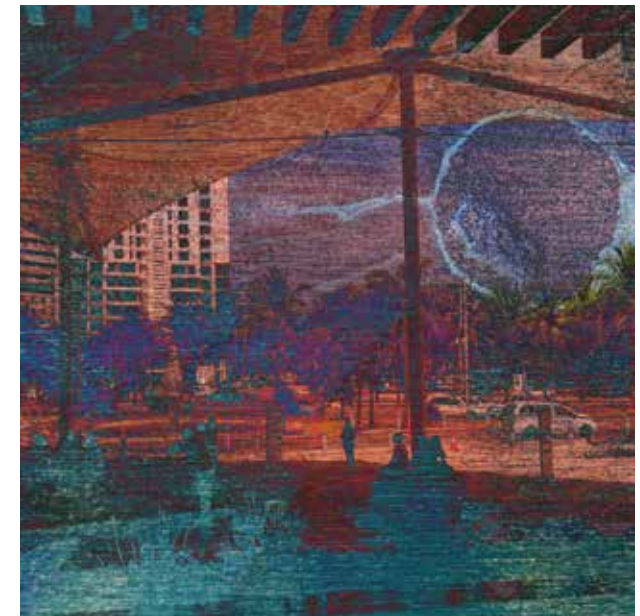
On our arrival at the Museo Maya in Cancún we were welcomed by the museum director Carlos Esperon and the Water for Life artistic director. The exhibition was to be hung by the museum curator, who showed us around the empty exhibition space where the bare white curved hanging walls gave me an opportunity to make some interesting monochrome minimalist images of the geometric shapes.

At the vernissage of the exhibition, the artists were invited to talk to the audience about their work. My explanation of my work prompted a lot of questions about the technique and process which I was happy to explain.

The exhibition was sponsored by the Universidad del Caribe, who hosted a conference and concert for Water for Life. The concert included dances highlighting dance styles and traditional costumes from the different parts of Mexico. This presented me with the opportunity to make ICM and long exposure images of the colourful dancers. The conference highlighted the changes due to climate warming that are occurring in the area: the Sargasso Sea is warming and the amount of sargassum weed is growing causing a problem when it is washed up on the beaches. The weed harbours toxins and bacteria that are harmful to human health and must be cleared from the beaches almost daily: a big problem for an area that is so dependent on tourism.

<https://www.antoinegaber.com/exhibition/water-for-life-international-art-exhibition-eight-edition-museum-maya-cancun-quintana-roo-mexico/>

<https://artcomexpo.no/phil-dunbar-france>



All images © Phil Dunbar

Claymills Victorian Pumping Station

Dave Couldwell

Claymills is located in a small village called Stretton outside Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire. It is Britain's most complete example of a Victorian sewage pumping station in operation from 1885 until it became derelict. In 1971 a charitable Trust began restoration. Today you can see four large beam engines with volunteers operating the machines.

Throughout the year Claymills has steaming days. However, even when not in steam, the engines are still spectacular to see. They also have working machinery shops, that run on steam, and make all of the spare parts for the station. The station is very photographer-friendly, even allowing tripods. For more information, their website is: <https://www.claymills.org.uk/>

I'm thinking about using some of the images for an ARPS Distinction – which way to go, whether colour or black and white in a print submission.

<https://www.deceei.uk/index>



All images © Dave Couldwell

Vivien Oldfield's Digital Photomontage Selected For Photopia Summer Exhibition

Vivien Oldfield's digital photomontage 'Still Life with Lemons' has been selected for a new Photographic Summer Exhibition organised by Photopia in collaboration with Hastings Arts Forum. The show will feature an eclectic mix of work from members and non-members and includes a wide variety of styles and subjects. It runs from 23rd July – 4th August 2024 at Hastings Arts Forum in St Leonard on Sea.

Applicants were invited to submit up to four images centred around the theme of 'Living Light' from which one or two would be chosen. Their challenge was to create images that convey how everything we capture is illuminated by light and expand this wonder.

The images Vivien submitted are part of an ongoing series of semi abstract still-life photomontages that demonstrate the importance of light to add interest and atmosphere. The way it falls across a subject emphasising highlights, casting shadows and creating reflections. How light enhances colour and tone to bring the composition alive. The committee thought 'Still Life with Lemons' met the brief.

Vivien's new work is inspired in part by the New Vision photographers of the 1920s and 30s who adopted the principles of the Bauhaus. This Avant-garde movement considered photography to be an autonomous artistic practice with its own laws of composition and lighting. A way of seeing based on the use of unexpected framing, simple geometric shapes, photomontages and search for contrast in form and light.

Her new prints feature plants, pots and fruit reworked in semi-abstract compositions and colour combinations to give a

contemporary feel. Each comprise two or more still-life photographs taken in natural light. After post-processing the RAW files in Photoshop, she experiments with the software's tools and blending techniques to develop the image in new and exciting ways.

Vivien finds new ways of working opens up endless opportunities for artistic expression. By incorporating the progressive ideas of the New Vision photographers she was able to convey her own interpretation of Living Light.

www.vivienoldfieldart.com

www.photopia.org.uk



Image © Vivien Oldfield

Regional Reports

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North Contemporary Group

Since the last Concept publication, Contemporary North has been busy with five monthly meetings whether face-to-face in York or on Zoom. We continue to publish our Showcase newsletter, produced by Lyn Newton, which provides a platform for members to display the work shown at meetings, a true collaborative group venture.

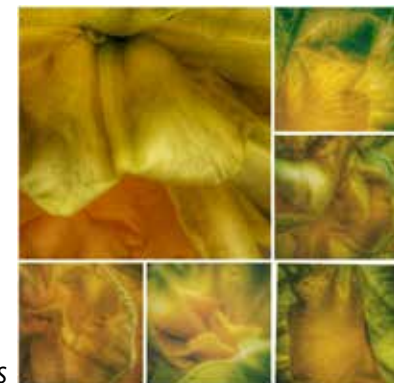
Showcase is available on the Contemporary Group webpage. There have been many photos and projects shown since January. However, I would like to highlight a group venture that has developed into a rewarding game plan – the use of the grid as a useful tool. The idea has been spearheaded by Wendy North and André Bergmans. Not all photographs work best as single images; some may benefit from combining to create a relationship in the grid panel, providing impact, or indeed provide the opportunity to develop ideas for a more considered long term project. A day out or holiday can generate a mind-blowing amount of photos, but choosing several for a grid can solve the need to organise. A fun approach is to take one photograph and divide it up into several photographs.



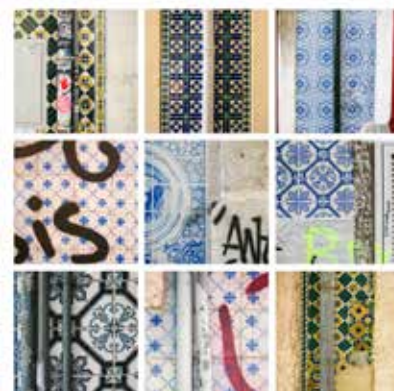
© Carol Olerud FRPS



© Colin Howard FRPS



© Patricia A Ruddle ARPS



© André Bergmans

© Adrian James LRPS



© Lyn Newton



© Michel Claverie

© Janet Cook ARPS



© Wendy North ARPS

Outside of the meeting room six of us participated in the Yorkshire Region Members' Day and AGM. Much interest was generated in the Contemporary Group. Conversely, it gave our North members the opportunity to display and talk about our photography.

Our group also participated in National Volunteer Week, which the RPS initiated to celebrate the work of region and SIG activities.



<https://rps.org/opportunities/volunteer/national-volunteer-week-2024/>

After our Summer break we will be back on

21st September at Clements Hall, York, 1pm – 5pm.

19th October on Zoom, 1.30pm – 4pm

23rd November at Clements Hall, 1pm – 5pm.

Please contact me if you would like to join us – with or without photos!

Patricia A Ruddle ARPS

Central Contemporary Group

The Central Contemporary/Documentary Group organised a photowalk in Birmingham in June. Available first to Central group members and then opened up to RPS members generally, this was a very popular event, with tickets selling out well before the event itself. The walk was led by Kevin Thomas, a Birmingham-based photographer and the founder of www.birmingham-walking-tours.co.uk

Kevin took us first to the Birmingham catacombs, and then through Jewellery Quarter, explaining the history of the area, some of its more notable characters and its architecture. The area has a mix of Italianate and Art Deco buildings, now sitting cheek by jowl with modern apartment buildings. Much of the industrial past is gradually crumbling away, but Kevin pointed out the traces in every direction.

The 23 photographers in attendance had plenty of time to create the shots they wanted, and were each rewarded with a silver totem of their time in this historic area.

The Central group continue to meet on Zoom, currently on the third Wednesday of each month. The next meeting is due to take place on Wednesday 17th July at 7pm. Newcomers are always welcome. Please contact Steff Hutchinson (contemporarycentral@rps.org) for details.



All images © of the photographers



East Anglia Group

“We are here because you were there”

We work slowly through a list of themes over here in the vast openness of East Anglia. The group came up with a list of themes a few years ago and we are trying to get one or two worked up each year.

All our themes are open to interpretation and to date, we have had a very broad response with hopefully no obvious clichés.

We present our exhibitions on the Artsteps platform but we have also begun producing a PDF version containing high quality images as the virtual exhibition software really only works on phones.

The PDF version is available from <https://rps.org/groups/contemporary/cea-projects/we-are-here/>

This theme is taken from the title of a book by Ian Sanjay Patel “We’re here because you were there: Immigration and the end of Empire”.

This theme proved to be challenging and provided diverse responses from the artists..

Tom Owens ARPS
East Anglia Group Co-ordinator



Douaumont Ossuary
© Keith Locke ARPS

‘The Douaumont Ossuary is a large memorial building containing the unidentified remains of both French and German soldiers who died on the Verdun battlefield. This image shows French graves with the Ossuary containing French and German remains in the distance.’



Bacteria
© Jonathan Williams



But Who is Colonising Who Now
© Mark Farrington LRPS

Southwest Group

March 2024

The Southwest Contemporary Group met on Sunday 17th December at Dartington in Devon.

The meeting began with a small amount of routine business after which the majority of the time available was spent discussing the images that members who were present had brought along to share. As usual, lunch was taken at 13.00.

The only contribution which consisted solely of a book or magazine was also, strictly speaking, not Contemporary photography as such and consisted of Adrian Hough's article about Norway's Route 17 (or the Kystriksveien) which had been published in Travelog, the Journal of the RPS Travel Group.

Rod Fry had followed his passion for Street Photography and presented images of people that he had captured both locally and in Bristol and Bath, some being candid and others permissive. He also shared a book of similar images. Rod's second set of work was again Street Photography, this time of potential passengers waiting for a bus outside Babbacombe Sailing Club in Torquay. There was a great deal of discussion about why various people may have behaved in the way that they did.

Graham Hodgson shared four AI prints three of which were prepared using multiple images taken from Google Earth and the fourth using an alternative image from the internet. The first composite was of the Steel Works at Port Talbot whilst the second used a rear-view of a container ship to prepare an AI sized grid of

very small cargo containers. The third sheet comprised twelve separate satellite photographs all showing edges and the fourth comprised a further twelve satellite images all showing deserts which had the appearance of paintings and which, in a different context, would have been classed as Visual Art. Graham's final contribution was a 3 by 7, A4 grid of football pitches (all the same pitch) which had proved troublesome due to the need to eradicate shadows and advertising material which would have upset the grid.

Following from Graham's marvels of what can be achieved without leaving the home (provided that you possess a large format printer) John Evans-Jones took us on an intellectual journey exploring 'Places', 'Spaces' and 'Non-Places' as defined by the Anthropologist Mark Auger. In essence, a Place functions in a relational and/or historical sense whereas a Non-Place is non-relational/historical. As an example, railway stations used to be relational and therefore Places. However, today, if you buy a ticket on-line and simply catch a train without visiting a ticket office or buying refreshments they have become Non-Places. However, for those who work there they are still Places as they have personal interactions with other people. John also noted that Non-Places often have many instruction signs, usually with prohibitions. As an aside, it occurs to me that Railway Stations

now seen to be referred to as train stations (capitalisation and non-capitalisation deliberate), so, perhaps Railway Stations are Places and train stations are non-places.....?

Martin Howse then changed the mood and theme completely by presenting superb mounted monochrome darkroom prints (from 6cm by 4.5cm negatives) of firstly, Scottish Landscapes, and secondly the Forest of Dean. There was much close examination and comment on the mood of what Martin had captured as well as the type and quality of the paper used to make the prints.

After lunch, Adrian Hough shared images taken in the spring of 2023 under the theme 'We can probably work out what this is a picture of, but what is it a picture about?' Most people immediately realised that the word spring meant October and that the images were taken in New Zealand (plus two in Australia) as well as recognising a close up of the roof of Sydney Opera House. In New Zealand the themes including emergent islands from volcanic activity, the colonisation of bare lava by plants, global warming as illustrated by glaciers in retreat and the contrast and similarities of colonisation and globalisation.

Carol Ballinger presented a continuation of her work on the littoral seashore with an ecological theme. The intention is to present photographs that strike the viewer as beautiful but which, when taken together, also have an ecological message. As Carol will be exhibiting in 2025 she was interested in feedback from the group. The first set of images were square and apparently abstract

but with a circular centre that had been rotated and had the appearance of a planet. The second set were again abstract in appearance but had colour inversions and colour shifts. The third set were similar to the second but what appeared at first sight to be something of beauty was, on closer examination, some form of pollution or a dead seagull or sea-creature.

At this point the meeting moved on to consider projected images. This began with Vivian Howse presenting a walk from Penzance to Newlyn and return on the one sunny day during the preceding weeks. This was a combination of Street Photography, the aftermath of Covid and members wondering why they had not spotted the subject matter when they had been in the area.

Marija Lees had returned to her home country of Croatia and visited the port of Rijeka. She described Rijeka as being not pretty but under development. She showed us images of vast lengths of warehouses connected by railway tracks but now unused due to the demise of transshipment and its replacement by container traffic. Within this area also stood the museum of Contemporary and Modern Art. Back in England, Marija had been exploring the roof of a multi-storey carpark in Exeter after it had emptied in the late afternoon. Here, tyre-marks, footprints and signs carrying prohibitions provided clues to the activities that usually occurred in what we realised (to use the language of the morning) was much more of Place (rather than a Non-Place) than we might have thought.

Paul Kirby is still working on his 'Bridges of Bristol' project which he had shared at an earlier meeting. On this occasion he presented six monochrome images from a new project on 'landlines'. These illustrated features such as a footpath across a field, a pipeline, a hedge-line, a fence, crop-lines and posts on a beach, perpendicular to the sea.

John Evans-Jones had been back to Thamesmead and shared images that he had prepared for a club theme of 'Scapes' and a similar evening entitled 'my photography'. In doing so he had borrowed the title of a well-known film and produced something entitled 'The Taking of Thamesmead 123'. He also noted, for the benefit of those unfamiliar with geography, that Thamesmead was a 'new town' built on the south bank of the Thames Estuary in the 1960s but with no rail-links, whether National Rail or London Transport. The nearest station is Abbey Wood, on its southern edge, which is both a through National Rail station and now, also the terminus of the Elizabeth Line, the latter of which could have had an additional couple of miles into the centre of the town.

The day ended with a sequence of photographs old and new presented by Carol and Graham and comprising images taken off/in/through windows with reflections.

Adrian Hough ARPS



Colonialism v Globalisation



Elizabeth Line © John Evans-Jones



Car Park © Marija Lees



Roof of Sydney Opera House
Adrian Hough



Retreating Glacier



Storm Overflow © Carol Ballenger



Thamesmead © John Evans-Jones

Tata Steel Works, Port Table
Graham Hodgson



Scotland Group

Contemporary Scotland - June / July / August 2024

Over the Summer months we have a programme of outside/group events to keep our Scottish members busy. A couple have already happened...a day trip to Dundee where we visited the V&A / Dundee Verdant Museum to see:

1. 29th March onwards: Photo Cities - how images shape the Urban World, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee/whatson/exhibitions/photo-city>

2. Diorama Map, Dundee, Sohei Nishino

3. 5th April - 28th August: International Garden Photographer of the Year, [https:// www.dundeeheritagetrust.co.uk/event/exhibition-international-garden-photographer-of-the-year-exhibition-17/](https://www.dundeeheritagetrust.co.uk/event/exhibition-international-garden-photographer-of-the-year-exhibition-17/)

These exhibitions are big projects, and showcase a very contemporary approach to photography, which was enjoyed by all present, and judging by the numbers of general public going around also enjoyed by a much wider audience than RPS Scotland Contemporary / Documentary members.

On Saturday 1st June, Eden Court in Inverness hosted an official opening of the Documentary Photography Awards, and that was attended by about 12 local RPS members, who enjoyed both the images and the coffee and chat that was in

plentiful supply. The DPA exhibition moves to The Smith in Stirling at the end of June, and there will be an opening night there on the 2nd of July, where as well as the local RPS members and general photography enthusiasts we hope to have the travelling circus family who are featured in one of the winning projects taken by Brian Morgan...No Safety Net. That should add an interesting slant to the night.

July 16th is a day out to Glasgow, based in the West End, around Glasgow University and that will be a morning of street-based photography then we will be met by Karen Gordon in the afternoon at the Kelvingrove Museum., Karen was a keynote speaker at the recent RPS Scotland PhotoFest 24, and she has an exhibition of her social based work on at the Kelvingrove, and her works on the Glasgow immigrant population has been bought by the Kelvingrove for inclusion in their permanent catalogue. Karen will walk us through her exhibition, and chat about the pope, the challenges, and her works in general.

August 7th is a day out in Edinburgh, starting off at Edinburgh Photographic Society where there are three photographic exhibitions... The 2024 Edinburgh International Salon, RPS Scotland 24 Travelling Exhibition, and EPS members wildlife exhibition. This venue is a part of the Edinburgh Fringe, and after

some time spent there, we will be heading to Edinburgh Old Town to capture the spirit and fun of the Fringe performers and visitors. Booking for any or all the above is either by emailing me at contemporarysco@rps.org or through the RPS Contemporary website / Blackthorn.



Members looking at the DPA Exhibition at Eden Court Inverness

The next issue of Concept will be available November 2024

If you have any contributions you would like to have including, news, reports, reviews, publicity, profiles, images, please email your ideas to Nick via email concepteditor@rps.org

*Features and reports should be between 300 and 800 words please. Pictures as **separate** jpeg files of 1 to 2 megabytes, containing no watermarks please.*



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