

Contemporary Photography



Photography is such a subjective activity. At its simplest there is one person behind a camera pointing it at something. Along the wilder pathways of conceptual imaging you still find one person (or perhaps a small number) creating the concept and deciding how it is to be developed and presented. In the journal we acknowledge this primacy by citing names at the head of each contribution.

The photographer’s eye - in the gallery, the photobook or online – thus becomes our viewer’s eye, and we are placed in the subjective position of the photographer. So how do you detach the subjective eye from the photograph? How do you present images to the viewer so they see them from the perspective of someone or something else? Our contributors to this issue take different approaches to the challenge.

At the risk of prejudging the readership of the journal I would guess that most are not Muslim women. I suspect the photographic perspective of Jodie Bateman, that of a convert to Islam, is also uncommon. But she gives what might otherwise have been a conventional documentary project an added twist by placing us in the position of viewers of historical paintings.

Ingrid Weyland also gives our viewpoint an added, unexpected shake. We see her beautiful landscapes first, but then we see the deliberate damage that looks like a deformity, a cancer, a disfigurement. The resultant images are also beautiful in their own way; they might be a non-anthropocentric, or a posthuman view of how humans damaged the planet they once inhabited.

Miriam Levi explicitly places us in the role of another posthuman observer, as part of a futurist scifi narrative about an attempt to recreate humans. Kira Krász plays with time to leave us uncertain of our actual viewpoint: somewhere in the period between her school days and the now, things she once knew and understood are forgotten and overlai by new experiences. From exactly where in this interval is she (and we) looking on?

Jacob Black is an observer of a landscape that he has experienced twice, once in adolescence, and once as a returnee. And yet he hardly appears to be an observer at all in an active sense. His images are just impressions on his mind, received as if in a trance, with the lack of rationality and intent that that implies. He suggests that our urbanisation makes it difficult to experience nature as he would like; nevertheless he has shown one way to approach the problem.

A number of these contributors are recent photography degree graduates. It is good to see such innovative concepts combined with the creative talent to develop a project and the craft and technique to produce such finished work.

Paul Ashley ARPS, Editor

Cover: photo by Ingrid Weyland from *Topographies of Fragility*
Back Cover: photo by Jodie Bateman from *My Hijab Has A Voice: Revisited*
Journal fonts: general, Avenit Lt Std: author name, Letter Gothic Std

2	Editorial Paul Ashley ARPS	30	Topographies of Fragility Ingrid Weyland
4	Forget Me Not Jacob Black	37	Thames Log, by Chloe Dewi Mathews Book Review by Brian Steptoe FRPS
10	My Hijab Has A Voice: Revisited Jodie Bateman	38	View From A Detached Observer Avijit Datta FRPS ASIS
18	Indigo Dust Miriam Levi	39	Group and related Society Events
24	Thought After Taught Kira Krász	39	Listing of Group Officers, Committee members and rôles

© The copyright of photographs and text in this issue belongs to the author of the article of which they form part, unless otherwise indicated.

If you wish to submit articles for the Journal, please send all copy and images to: Paul Ashley ARPS (Editor), paultheashley@gmail.com
59 Gilbert Road, Cambridge CB4 3NZ

Text should be in Microsoft Word. Images are should be in TIFF or high quality JPEG format. Images should be at least 2500 pixels on the longest edge. For other formats or to discuss reproduction, please contact the Editor. Large image files may be supplied on disk or memory stick, or by use of on-line file transfer services, such as WeTransfer or Dropbox. Unless requested, disks and memory sticks will not be returned.
Deadline for the Winter 2021/22 issue is 1 December 2021.

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

Forget Me Not

Jacob Black

Lockdown and the global pandemic forced many homes to isolate in aid of our personal and collective health. This period enabled reflection; our environments became our companions, our world.

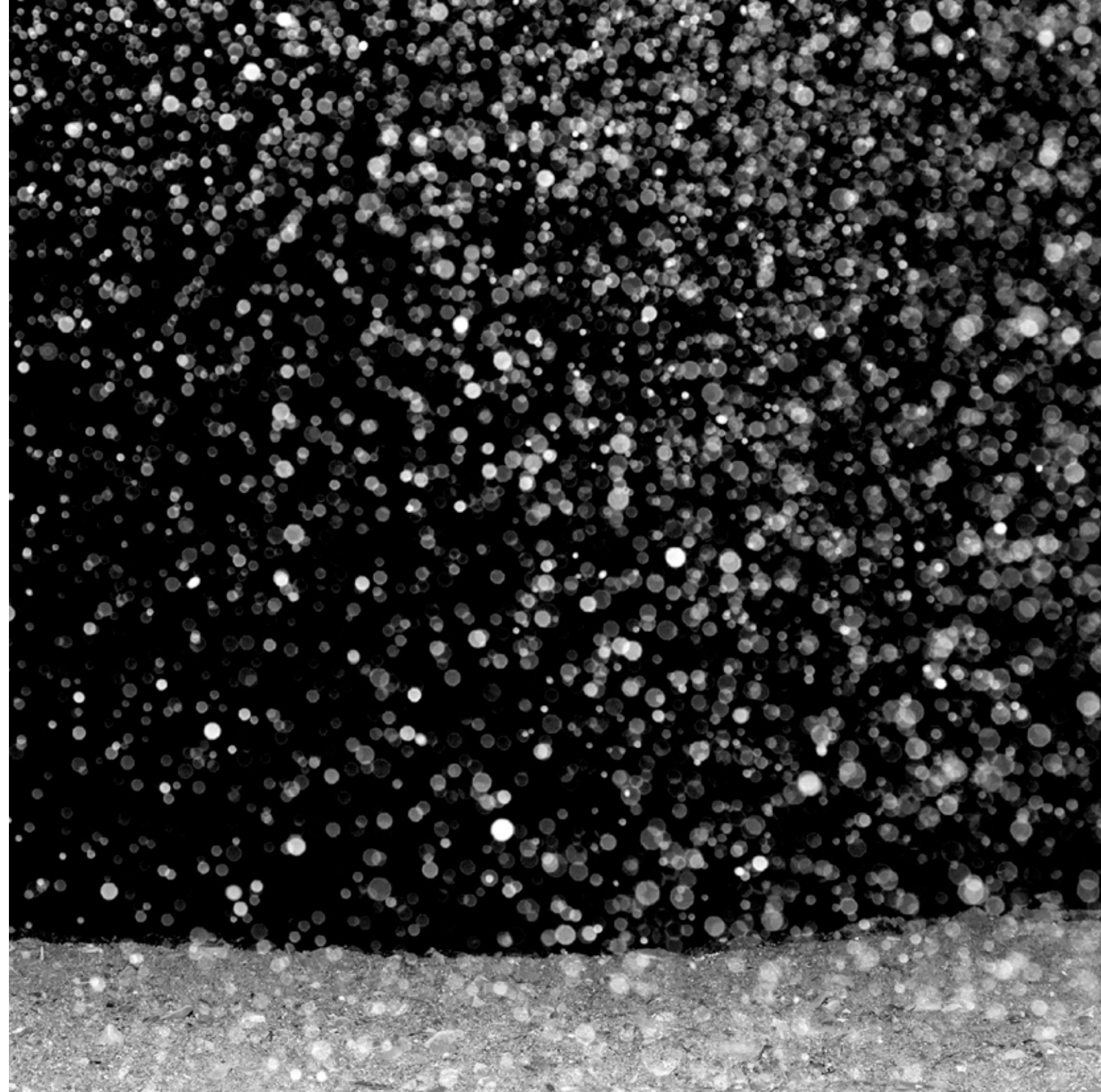
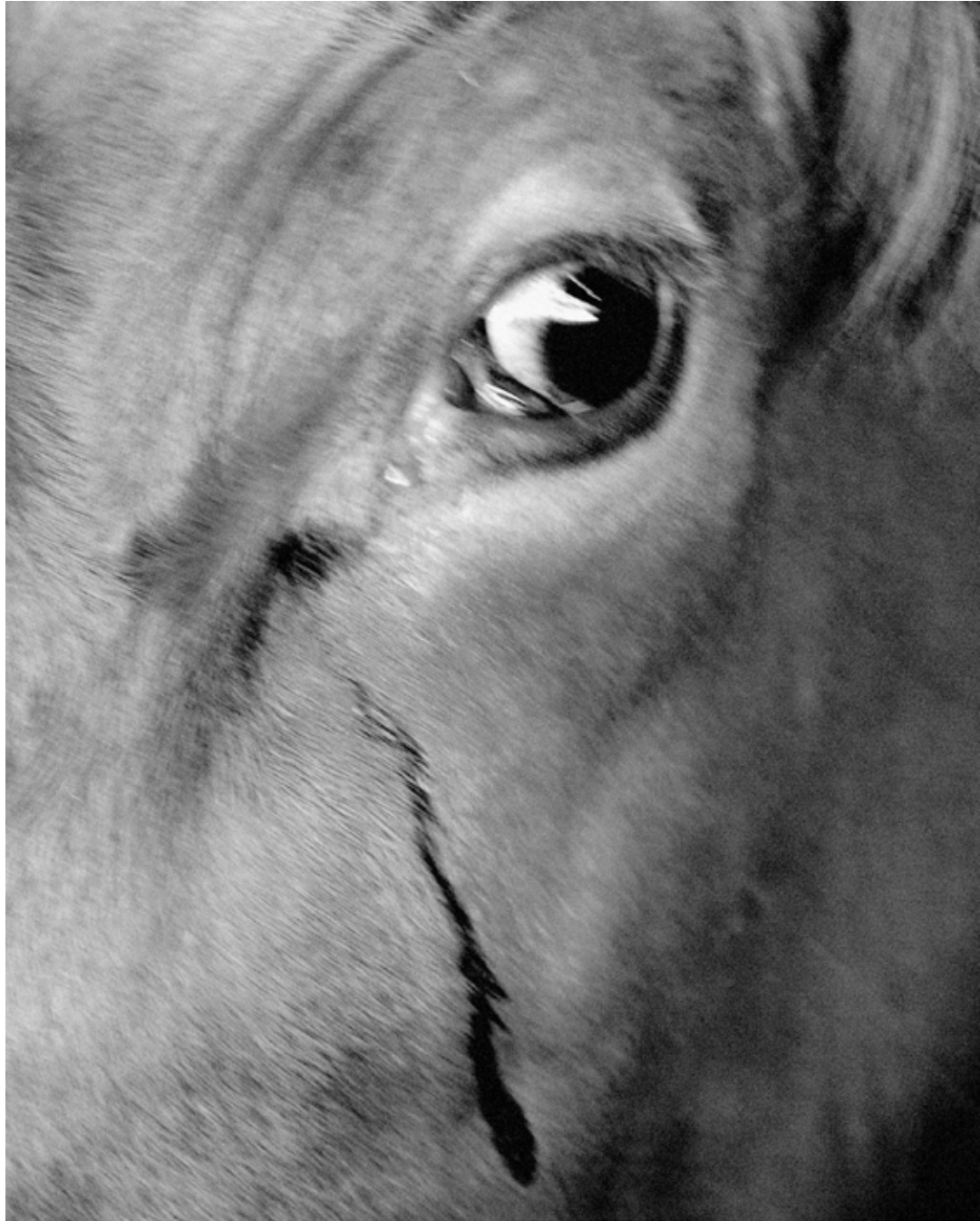
Moving from the bustling streets of Peckham, London, to the rural sanctity of South Devon, the place of my adolescence, I became immersed in the environment that cradled and defined much of my existence. Enticed by its beauty and mysteries, I began noticing the water reflection on the fallen trees, the flight, and the songs of the birds. These scenes were magnificent, but amid the beauty, natural peculiarities began to plague my consciousness. Dark figures, flashes of light permeating the blackness. I became unable to decipher fiction from reality; I started to question my psyche, why I was unable rationally to experience the natural wild world as I had remembered it.

Forget Me Not explores the death and destruction of the wild world within the physical and metaphysical - how we struggle to process seemingly ordinary natural events as our lives and spirits become urbanised. The work is a theatrical and mystical journey into the forgotten, exploring mythology and hallucinations within the confines of a still image while conceiving something unique from physical landscapes. *Forget Me Not* thus attempts to create an experimental visual language into the understanding, education, and experiences of the British wilderness.

See: jacobblack.format.com







My Hijab Has A Voice: Revisited

Jodie Bateman

My Hijab Has A Voice: Revisited is a series of bold self-portraits with the occasional portrait. This project is an urgent yet necessary investigation into the experience of Muslim women from an autobiographical perspective. It is vital to listen to Muslim women's voices, as often they are silenced and spoken for by men. The freedom to express a woman's perspective from their own point of view is crucial: due to the lack of authentic voices being heard, negative stigmas and stereotyping are perpetuated in the media. Often Muslim women are only seen to wear black and are portrayed as 'old fashioned' or 'backward' due to their choice to cover their bodies. Western society continuously feeds the stereotype of oppression. This is typically followed by acts of banning the niqab, burkini and even going to the lengths of banning the hijab in professional places in some countries.

This series challenges society to see Muslim women differently by being invited into a Muslim woman's private space with the intention to 'humanize'. The artist takes inspiration from historical paintings that are famous for their objectification of women. She poses herself and her models to mimic the mannerisms and gestures of the paintings but challenges these conventions by having the subjects fully clothed and looking directly back at the viewer confronting the audience and outdated stereotypes.

See: www.jodiembateman.com









Indigo Dust

Miriam Levi

Indigo Dust is a photographic book that deals with notions of modernity, femininity and futurity through metaphors of science fiction. The story recollects the hypothetical events that led to the discovery of a forgotten archive and the consequent birth of the first human, afar from gendered dynamics.

Departing from Donna Haraway's 1991 manifesto¹, the book is itself a cyborg, for both the text is the product of a collaboration with an AI writing bot, and the images are generated through the chaotic mixture of cameraless and digital processes. *Indigo Dust* combines medical imagery appropriated from online digital archives, experimentally printed and corrupted through the use of a flatbed scanner, with digitally edited chemigrams and lumens, made through a collaboration with the natural world.

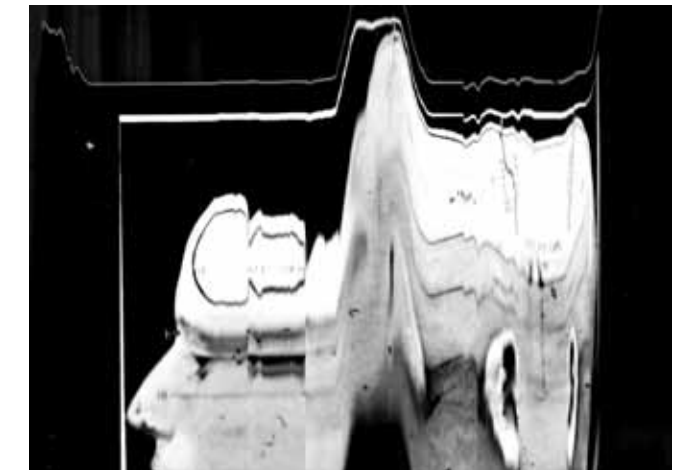
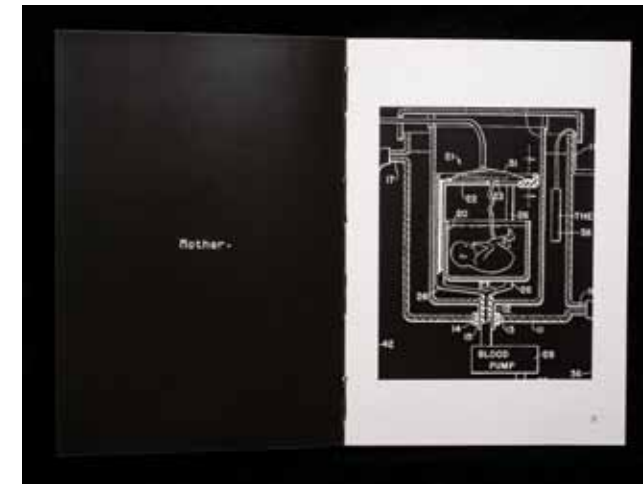
Relying on common science fiction tropes, *Indigo Dust* comments on the anxieties of our times; the gradual impact of modern technologies on the perception of identity and gender, as well as the fast-approaching threat of climate change. Influenced by Jean Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality², the project finds beauty in the collapse of traditional dichotomies and in the consequent confusion of our times. Reflecting on the future to understand the present, *Indigo Dust* explores changes in the perception of truth in the modern era, due to our acceptance of multiplicity and artificiality. Openly accepting enigmas and confusion, the project acts as a surreal recreation of the past, in order to provide a glimpse into an impossible future born out of the corrupted crumbs of the present.

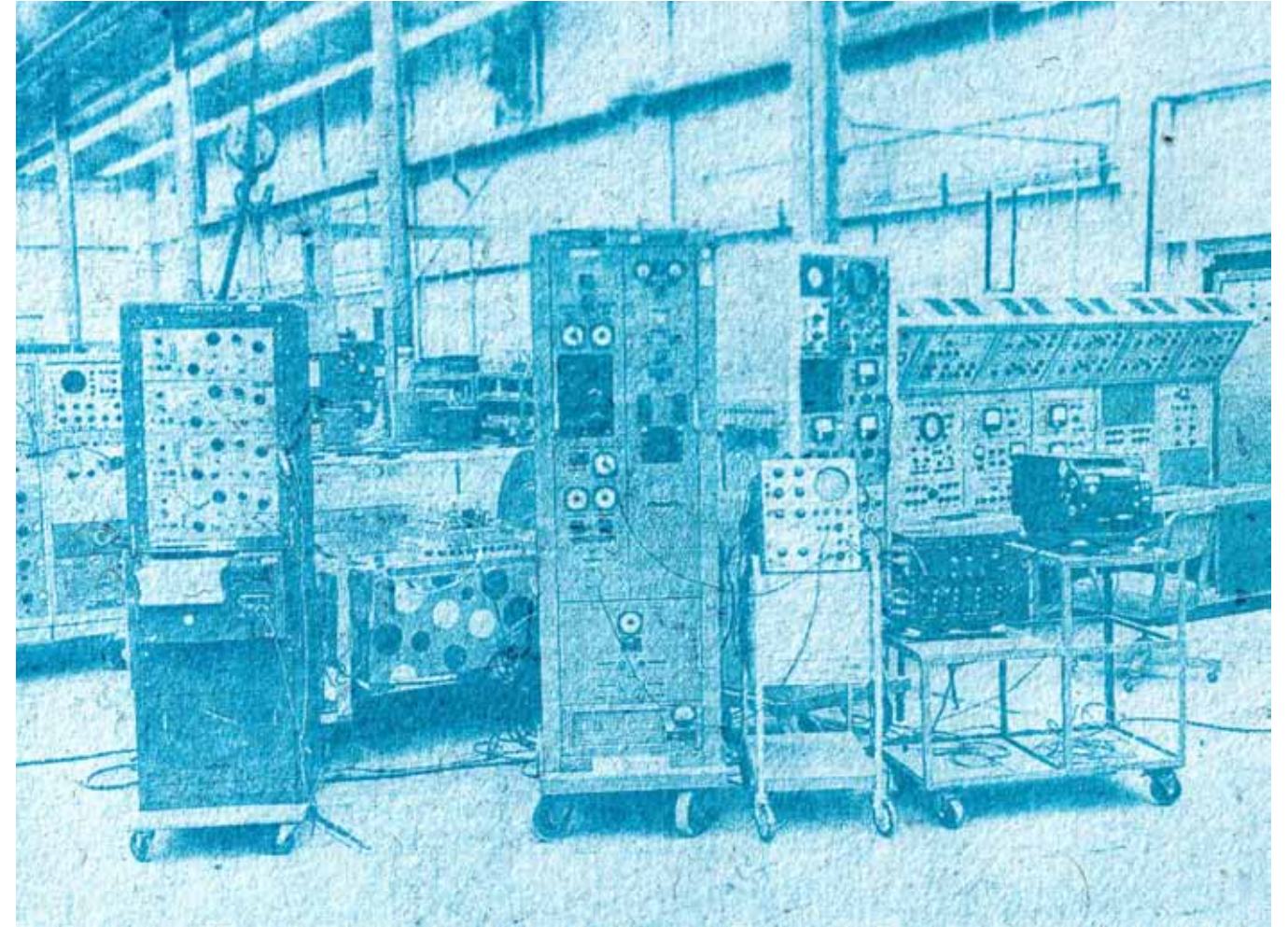
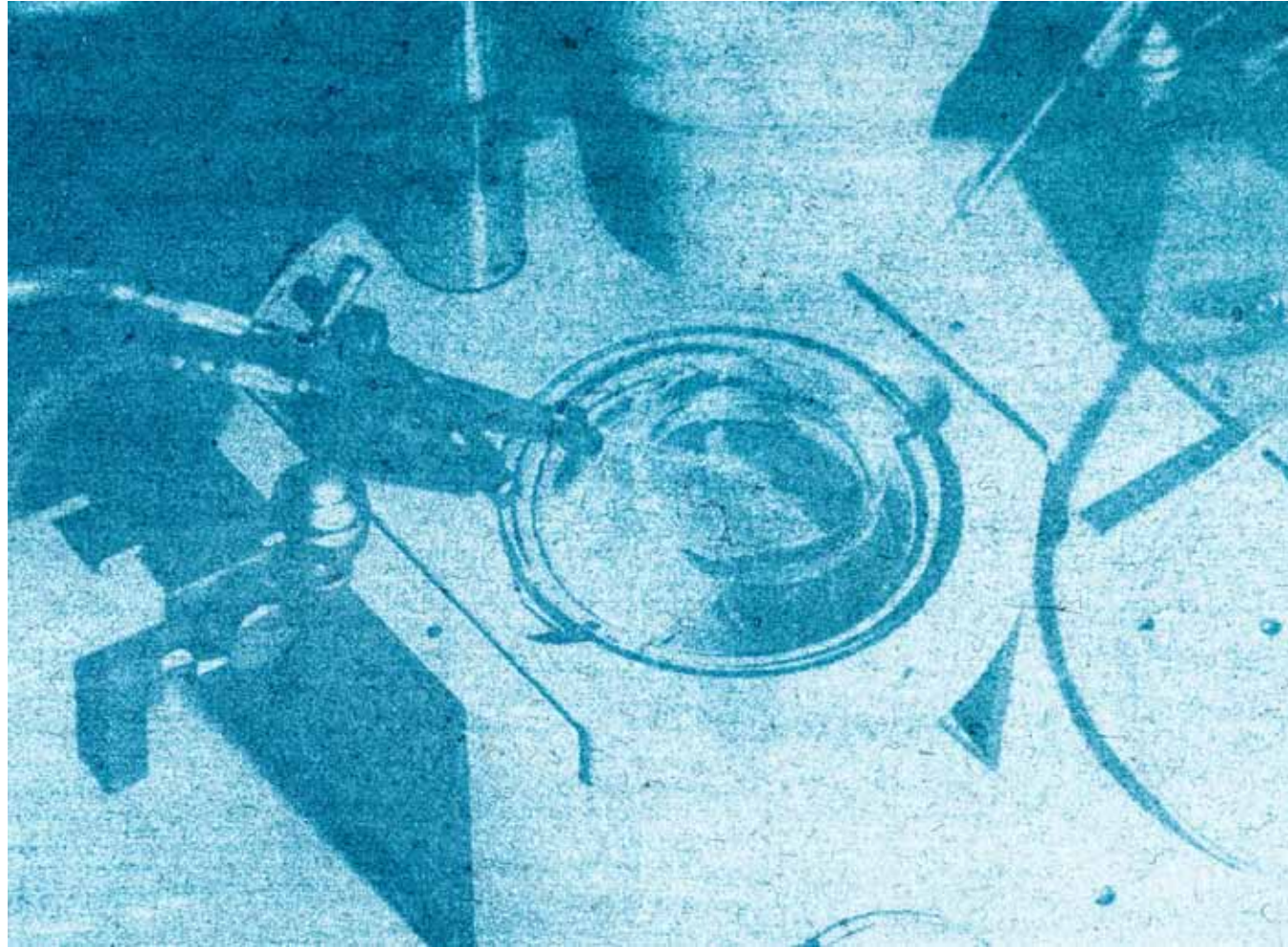
Indigo Dust is a book for the post-futuristic era, for a new reality beyond boundaries between human and machine, artificial and natural. It is a story that doesn't try to escape from the saturation of narratives, but that dives right in, bathing in ambiguity; the real child of our technological culture.

See: www.miriamlevi.com

1. Haraway, Donna, 1991, *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge.

2. Baudrillard, Jean (1994). *Simulacra & Simulation*, University of Michigan Press.







Thought After Taught

Kira Krász

In search of the origins of personal understanding and by engaging with the forms of the once learned and since forgotten, I encourage my mind to wander and to question everything that surrounds us: plants, stones, forces or people interacting with each other. Those moments when the mind consciously renders rays of light reflected by skin or other surfaces. My camera is the observer, the only tool which comes up with real numbers indicating the amount of light hitting the lens, my only way to intrinsically preserve these states of being. I am thinking through the part I play in making images by offering a path, people can walk with me.

This source of inspiration - the images from my everyday life is accompanied by dreams, paintings, readings from philosophers, or by the sound of music. Paul Klee's sense of play with shapes and colours, a meeting with a stranger and him becoming the man I know the most, the depth of Susan Sonntag's sentences, the silence in John Cage's music - all this becomes unified in the form of my photographs when printed onto the materials that served a good function at primary school, later high school.

I use those yellow sheets of exercise books, those textbooks, a geography atlas and various other educational material to show where the base of my experience lies, where the origins of the visual codes might be found. In *Thought after Taught* age is guaranteed, the material that forms my beginning is already bathed within its own history. Nostalgia, curiosity and a need to preserve become an essential part of this process. I try to give a new purpose to the forgotten, I would like people to see old things in a new light.

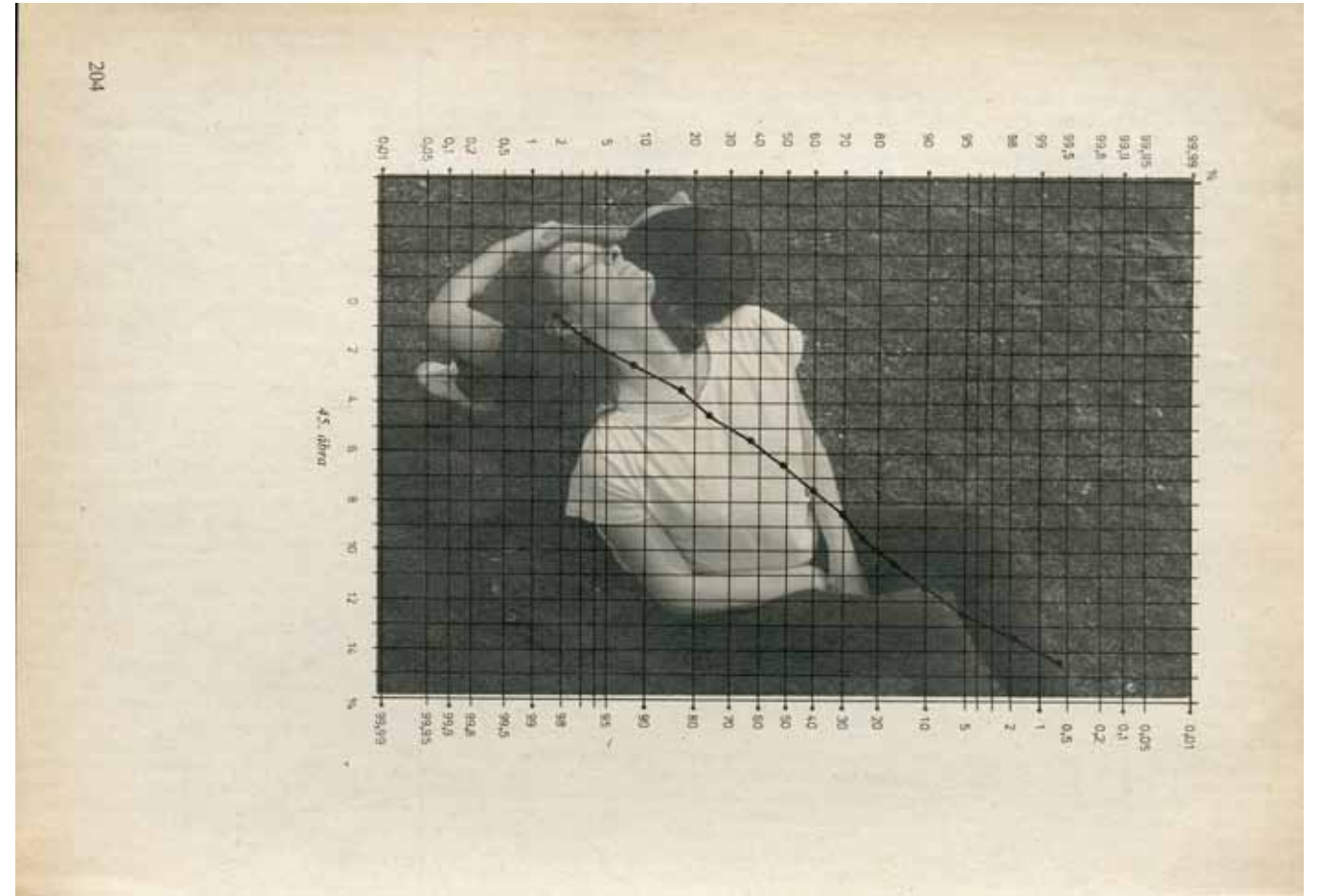
Like water upon rocks, the knowledge that we all learn is in a process of continual erasure, paling, due to the selective process of our memory.

Through dismembering books of theory, I am also remembering the principles of algebra, geometry, biology and other fields of science, understanding them from the perspective of intuitive human experience. I am analysing, testing and searching for new meanings created by the pieces being put in a new context.

With passing years, and with re-evaluating and revising this knowledge, I manage to layer and combine my experience with the previously learned. By arrangements of simple lines and circles and the harmony of shape and content, I position the images upon their chosen canvas. Through the invention of flawed measurements, I muse on the abstract pleasures of our rational minds.

See: www.kirakrasz.com







Topographies Of Fragility

Ingrid Weyland

In my travels around the world, from southern Argentina to the ice sheet of Greenland, I have always been drawn to solitary and silent sceneries. They are to me places of shelter and protection, private sanctuaries. These feelings inspired me to devise a way in which I could try to reciprocate Nature's offering. My work is therefore a tribute to these emotional refuges, to places that have suffered terrible environmental ravages. It may also be a farewell to them.

Through the materiality of the printed image, I intend to highlight the violent damage inflicted upon the sceneries I photograph, by manipulating and distorting my own landscapes. These landscapes that at first glance would seem pristine and immaculate, upon a closer look reveal deterioration and disintegration.

I see my work as a wake-up call - a way of challenging our relationship to the natural world.

It is said that a piece of paper, once creased, can never recover its original shape. The traces endure. Similarly, when Nature is contemptuously violated, it is forever scarred, and many times unrecoverable.

See: ingridweyland.com.ar









Thames Log, by Chloe Dewe Mathews

Book review by Brian Steptoe FRPS



29x24 cm, 114 pages, 100 photographs, pages mainly
fandold in style, with introduction by Marina Warner.

Published by Loose Joints Publishing and Martin Parr
Foundation

Closer to home than her earlier book *Caspian*, Dewe
Mathews shows readers many of the regular, usually
annual, events that take place on the River Thames from
the source near Letchlade to the estuary at Shoeburyness.

View From A Detached Observer¹

Avijit Datta FRPS ASIS

J Dudley Johnston (1868-1955) was a respected pictorialist, using gum bichromate and platinum printing. He was elected to ‘The Linked Ring’, the UK counterpart to the American Photo-Secession movement founded by Alfred Stieglitz, a trained engineer, photographer and gallerist.

Johnston was also a two-term RPS President (1923-5, 1929-31) and ‘honorary curator’ of the RPS permanent collection of artefacts from the outset of photography, which he was instrumental in building. The collection only had 100 photographs in 1924. By 1930, Johnston acquired works by Henry Peach Robinson, Frederick Evans, Julia Margaret Cameron & Alvin Langdon Coburn. The RPS collection currently has over 250,000 images: daguerreotypes, calotypes, salted-paper prints, albumen prints, ambrotypes, glass negatives and examples of experimental colour processes. It also holds over 6,000 items of photographic equipment, 13,000 books and many periodicals. Twenty years ago, however, the RPS was almost bankrupt; it sold the RPS permanent collection, now stored in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Many may consider the decline is continuing: less than 2% of the RPS membership attended the recent AGM, despite online participation being available. In the last eight months five Trustees including the Hon. Treasurer have resigned from RPS Council. The financial picture is also challenging: in each of the last five years there has been an annual deficit, the annual reduction in income is 16.1%; member income is dropping by 12.8% annually. The Contemporary group bucks this decline – membership has grown recently. The 2020 deficit was £334k, while our total reserves are £2.49m. In other words, unchecked, there are less than eight years to turn the society’s finances around. This may be extended somewhat by a sale of RPS House, whose annual costs are £231k.

Annual deficits, declining membership and trustee turnover together form a shaky foundation for the RPS. A redeeming feature is the ambitious five year, 21 programme strategy, *Photography for Everyone* (find it on the RPS website) published five months ago, and developed in large measure by Heather Field, a departed trustee. Members look forward to the RPS translating the 21 programmes into action and publishing a roadmap for this in the remaining four and a half years.

In the meantime, Contemporary Group members will be pleased to know that the RPS Johnston Award is for major achievement in the field of photographic criticism or history of photography. Former awardees include Gerry Badger (Author of inter alia *The Pleasures of Good Photographs, Photographer as Printmaker: 140 Years of Photographic Printmaking*), Gerhard Steidl (The Göttingen born designer and printer who launched a photobook programme in 1994 including contemporary photographers Ed Ruscha, Bruce Davidson and Dayanita Singh) and Professor Emerita Elizabeth Edwards who worked extensively in Oxford and De Montfort Universities on the relationships between photography, anthropology and history, on the social practices of photography, on the materiality of photographs and on photography and historical imagination.

Contemporary Photography remains at the heart of the RPS.

Note 1. Avijit Datta is a former Vice Chair of the Contemporary Group

GROUP AND RELATED SOCIETY EVENTS

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

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

Group online meetings

In conversation with: Simon Hill HonFRPS, 15 November 2021, 19.00-20.00.

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

Regional online meetings

Contemporary East. Meetings are held monthly in the afternoons, online. Contact Tom Owens for more information.

Contemporary North. 20 November online, 13.30–16.00; 18 December live at Clements Hall, 13.30-16.00. Contact Patricia Ruddle for more information.

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

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

Contemporary Central. Joint meetings with the Documentary Group will be held online at 7pm on 10 November, 8 December and 12 January. All are welcome to attend . Contact Steff Hutchinson for more information.

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

