



Editorial

The last couple of years have yielded their own stock of feelgood stories, of heroism in the face of sickness and death, quiet (and noisy) fundraising, and courageous recovery from chronic illness. We know of similar stories from other times of adversity: the spirit of the Blitz, the participants in the Invictus Games. We like to read these stories. They make us feel that we maintain our integrity as a community or an individual, whatever life throws at us.

But what happens when it all goes wrong? When courage is not enough? When

*"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned"*

WB Yeats

The photographers in this issue of the journal address this question, each in their own way. They are, inevitably, stories told by survivors, the observers of the end of things.

Celine Croze's work on violence in South America takes its title from the last words spoken to her by a young man, murdered soon afterwards; they struck a positive note at the time - but we know how it ended. Her photographs belie the spirit of the words: chaotic and helplessly uncontrolled. Carol Olerud's statement on the peaceful death of her father, "It was awful", does nothing to hide the stark fact that she was watching the end of someone she loved; she cannot help him, though the photos have helped her deal with the grief.

Andreas Scholtz had the good fortune to encounter only the aftermath of the destruction of war. He has recorded dispassionately the impact of weapons of unimaginable power on the fabric of normal life. They share some of the chaos of Croze's work, but at a considerable remove: we can imagine the destruction, but we are not caught up in it. Alexandra Prescott reflects on the failure of environmental conservation; despite our understanding of how the environment 'works', and how valuable it is to us, we still fail to protect it. We need her pictures – without them we see only the surviving creatures, not those we have destroyed.

Ada Zielińska offers a different approach to understanding destruction. She uses the destruction of cars (and destroys them herself) as her photographic vocabulary for exploring material disintegration in the rest of the world. Even her documentation of wildfires is seen through a car windscreen.

The work of these photographers is challenging but it deals with matters that, in one form or another, we must all face at some time.

Cover: photo by Alexandra Prescott FRPS from *Topographies of Fragility*

Back Cover: photo by Ada Zielińska, *Automotive stills 1*

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Contemporary Photography

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We welcome names for photographers to be included in the Journal. Please send suggestions, or text and images to : Paul Ashley ARPS (Editor), paultheashley@gmail.com
59 Gilbert Road, Cambridge CB4 3NZ

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Deadline for the Spring 2022 issue is 1 March 2022.

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

SQEVNV : “Siempre que estemos vivos nos veremos”

Celine Croze

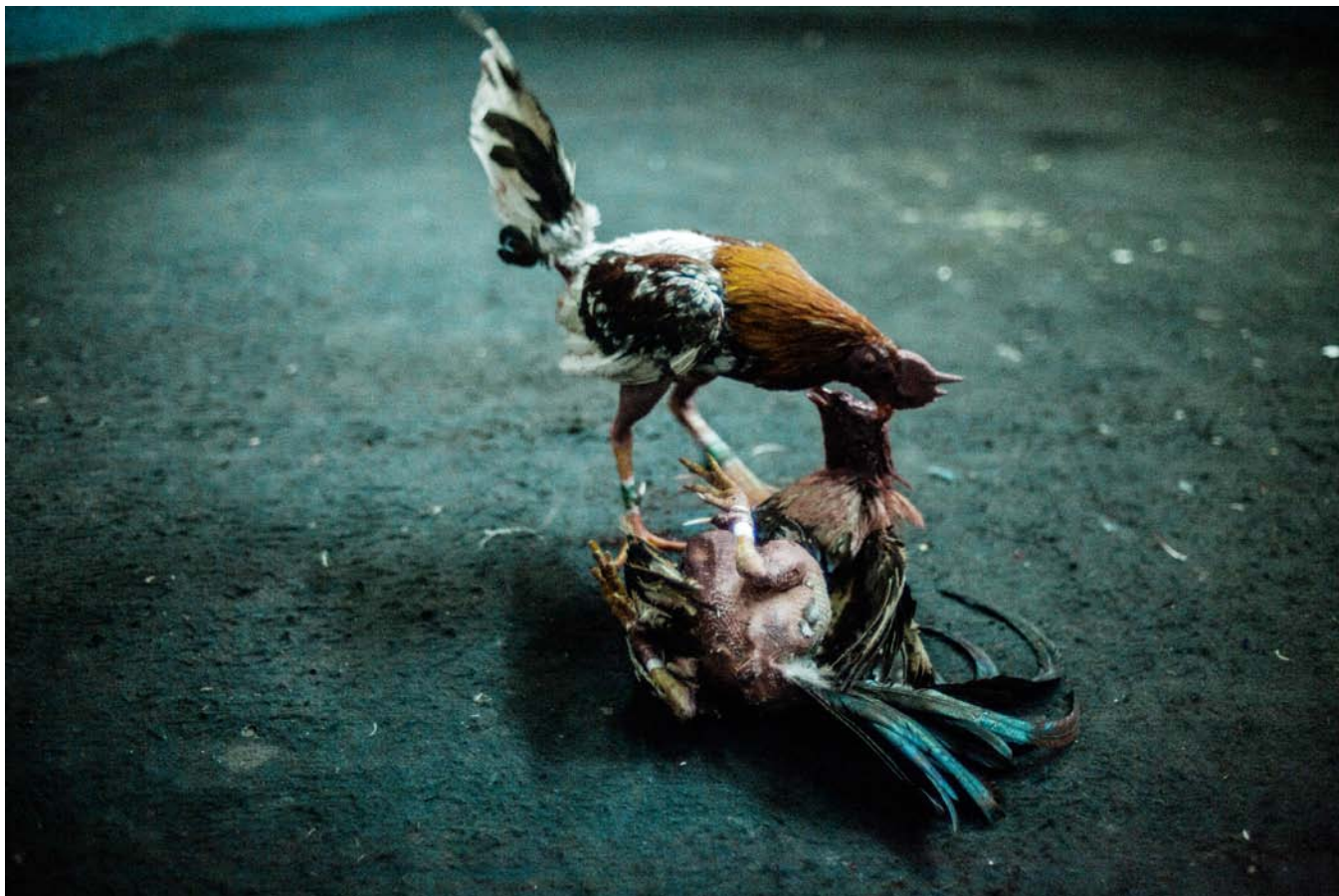
“Siempre que estemos vivos nos veremos” (“As long as we are alive we will meet again”) is the last sentence Yair told me. We were on the rooftop of the block 11, the mist enveloped Caracas, the crazy whisper of the city sounded like a funeral lament. The consciousness of its own endings was at the same time terrible and sublime. Everything was said: emergency of life, fascination for death, downfall of the country. The extreme violence and the absurdity of the situation gave the impression that life was only a game.

I remembered two days earlier at the gallina. The smell of blood mixed with rum and sweat, the shouts of rage, the excitement of each man. An intangible trance intoxicated the arena. As if we were all crazy. As if blood, death and power made people more alive. The chaotic energy of the city resonated in each fight like an unfolded, sustainable and helplessly crying dance.

A month later, Yair was shot. He was 27 years old.

My wanderings in Latin America were crossed by other striking encounters. Like these fighting roosters, I saw human beings dancing and clinging to disorder. Each time I found this same insolent sensuality, like a furious provocation, like the scream of a teenager amused by danger, condemned and free at the same time.

See: celinecroze.com



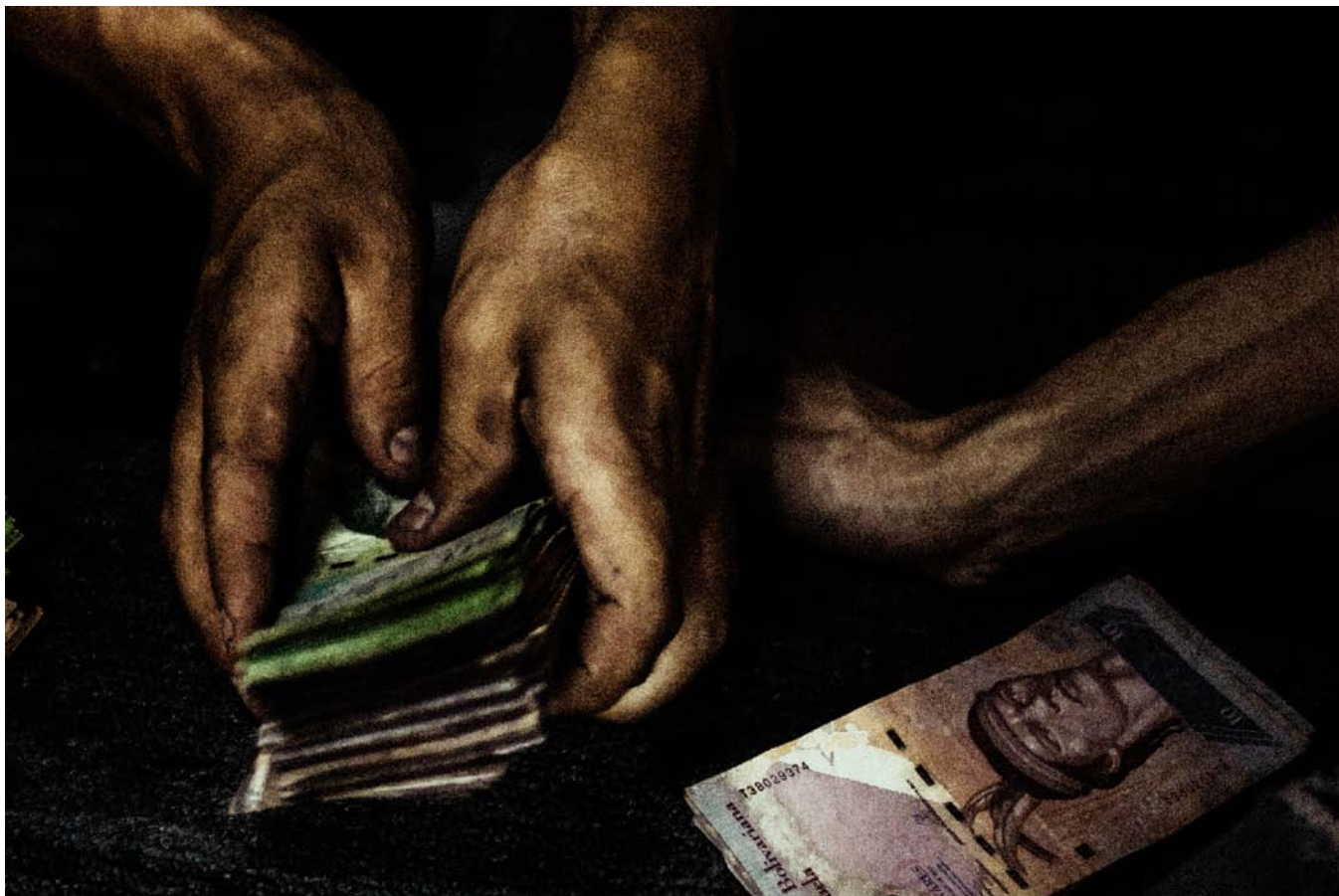












Universal Truths

Alexandra Prescott FRPS

The universal truths of pollution, disrespect, greed and cruelty affect the creatures with whom we share the planet. This has been the inspiration for this collection of images which adds my voice to those who work for and support change.

My objective is to provoke and inform discussion to elicit change. I have seen species suffer and their habitats deteriorate as the human population overload consumes resources because they can, because culture demands it or because there is no immediate alternative way for some communities to exist. I have created these images as a set of stylised representations of the scenarios and outcomes that I have witnessed in my work as a wildlife conservation volunteer both in the UK and overseas. The images do not portray all creatures and scenarios but a sample of those that I have experienced.

Art, for centuries, has been a tool for protest, for social change and I have chosen this tool to represent my voice. The aesthetics of the images are the lure to invite the viewer's attention. Pleasing aesthetics elicit an emotional response and encourage the mind to make a connection. This combined with the composition style, is an approach constructed to encourage people to see, not just to look. The symbolically informative artefacts have been placed to trigger curiosity leading to greater understanding, stimulate compassion and increase empathy. The whole concept encouraging behavioural change.

If you don't know or understand the consequence of humankind's behaviour then you have no reason to care or make changes. These images are a tool to encourage the journey to understanding. Balance is easily broken: one indiscriminate action has the potential by degrees, to harm a species, disrupt a habitat and/or ultimately hasten extinction – for us all.

See: fergalsimages.com











18 Days – a time of great sadness

Carol Olerud FRPS

Talking about death is still very much a taboo.

It's emotional and, if you haven't been touched by the loss of someone close to you, it's quite possibly frightening. This panel (submitted for my successful RPS Fellowship distinction) surrounds the 18 days my father fought for his life in the intensive care unit at hospital; my intention is to try and break open a conversation. To remove the fear and get the idea out there that death is a part of life, the great circle of life.

Watching someone very dear to you struggle to live, get all the medical assistance available to him and then realise he is losing the battle is extremely difficult.

I brought my camera in at every visit. We were limited to the amount of family members that were permitted to go in at a time, so we took it in turns. My sisters and I got very good at reading the instruments measuring his vital signs. There were many tubes with medicine and food being pushed into his body to help him.

It was awful. Having these photos helps me deal with my grief and puts some perspective on it. It is now many years ago; gradually I have accepted that he is no longer with us. It has taken me some time to get this far, so that I can share this body of work. I really feel it is important, especially in the times we have been in. Many families could not visit their loved ones and could not say their farewells. I can't imagine how hard that was!

Maybe I can help others by sharing my own pain and sadness and get that conversation going. Death is peaceful in the end. A part of life. The end of life.

See: carololerud.com











Pompeii II

Aindreas Scholtz

The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma.

Judith Lewis Herman

Haunted as a child by the media coverage of the Gulf Wars (1990-1991), I continue to be enthralled by images of trauma. Drawn to and at the same time abhorred by these and other representations of horror, at a young age I also discovered the pull and the power of photography to make moments that are about to slip into oblivion ever-present, to fix or freeze them both physically as a 2D artefact and virtually in the mind of the spectator.

Since 2017, and under military restrictions, I have been visiting the island of Failaka located 20 km off the coast of Kuwait in the Persian Gulf. Once a strategic Greek trading post within the empire of Alexander the Great, the ruins of Ikaros, an Ancient Greek settlement on the island, continue to be unearthed today. Like the mythological hero Ikaros who fell to his own death, four thousand years later, Failaka fell victim to the Iraqi invasion.

Now a depopulated island, like the modern-day Pompeii rained upon by volcanic ash in its glory days, Failaka lies bullet-ridden and abandoned. Ransacked, dust-laden and in ruins, I have documented its twentieth century affluence in the relics of ornately tiled bathrooms and stuccoed ceilings, strips of plush wallpaper peeling like dead skin from crumbling walls. In part, *Pompeii II* is a response to Sophie Ristelhueber's *Fait* (1992)¹, but looking at personal, social and cultural costs of political conflict.

Meandering with my mechanical eye through a labyrinth of endless corridors, rooms and doors, I have captured what survived of these intimate, domestic dwelling spaces, physical relics that echo the devastating psychological aftermath of their destruction.

In *Pompeii II* I seek to convey my own sense of paralysis in response to a traumatic human event, but to contribute to the palimpsest of photographic images that make up our more recent history.

See: www.aindreasscholz.com/

1. Sophie Ristelhueber, 1992. *Fait*, available at www.sophie-ristelhueber.fr











Cars and Destruction

Ada Zielińska

In my works I am exploring the idea of destruction, and documenting the catastrophe that surrounds me, confronting myself with material disintegration. This artistic practice serves me as a specific self-therapy, an attempt to control what is inevitably going to an end.

My fascination with destruction constantly evolves. It manifests itself in the series *Automotive Stills* (staging car crashes on the purpose of photography); *Cold Juxtaposition* (a comparison study of defects on cars and humans); or *Pyromaniac's Manual*, a book in which I arrange car fires to catch the furious moment of disintegration. My ongoing project is *Post-tourism*, in which I travel affected by natural disasters world's sites. As part of this project, I've visited California during the 2018/19 wildfires, Paris shortly after the Notre Dame Cathedral fire, Venice during the 2019 flood and Australia during the 2020 bushfires. Most recently I did two projects with controlled destructions with cars- *A la Carte* and *Frutti di Mare* - these projects contain photography documentation and installations.

During my practice, I've also documented meaningful moments in modern Polish history — the Czarny Protest in 2016; in 2018 my photograph 'Independence Day' was widely acclaimed. It was announced as the Picture Of The Year by the portal Culture.pl in 2018 and in the same year it was included in the Harvard Library's collection.

See: adazielinska.lol



Lincoln towncar, stretched Limo



Automotive stills 3



Sweet Hooligans 2018



Kopia Kopia



Speedboat tilt

A Wounded Landscape - Marc Wilson

Reviewed by Tom Owens ARPS

This book took six years to assemble and contains suitably grim images to accompany interviews with holocaust survivors, some of whom have died since being interviewed and the book being published. The general tone of the images in this book is of darkness and at times seemingly mundane and vernacular in content but they mirror the darkness of the text as narrated by the interviewees who are either survivors or close relatives of survivors.

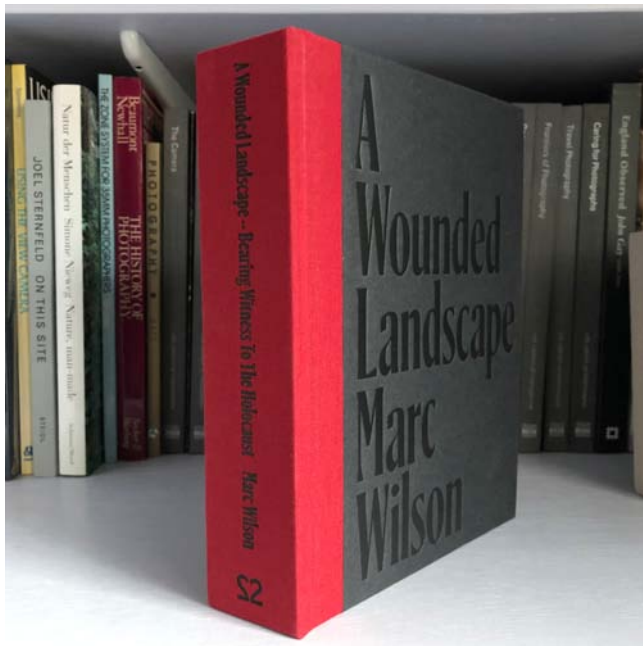
Some of the images repeat several times throughout the book but this reinforces the atrocious nature and indeed repetitive nature of the systemic eradication of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and others deemed not fit for an Aryan dominated Europe.

Reading both the images and text in this book brought back to me the rather graphic nature of the content of *The Scourge of the Swastika* by Lord Russell of Liverpool, a tome that my father (Liverpool Irish Catholic) made me, and my siblings, read from about the age of 10 to learn about what mankind can do to each other. It is a long time since I read that book and was horrified (and still am) at the images made by troops entering the likes of Belsen. I half expected some reference to these horrific images, but time and nature have overwhelmed many of the sites that Wilson has made images of. It is the sheer innocuousness of some of these images that renders the historic atrocities even more sinister. Wilson does annotate the numbers of people killed at various sites, or on routes to these sites.

I have visited Dachau and recognised some of Wilson's positions from which he made those images, but I struggled to get a camera out whilst I was there and only made a record of the memorial. It must have been quite an emotional struggle to make many of these images and bear witness to the retelling of events by survivors.

This is no lightweight book. It weighs in at 1.968 kg with 738 pages, bound in a Third Reich colour scheme of red, dark grey with black debossing.

See: www.marcwilson.co.uk



View from the Secretary

Tim Hancock ARPS

I am retired, a northerner, and camera owner since my dad bought me a box Brownie – his dad was a member of what is now Manchester Amateur Photographic Society. I have been a member of RPS since 2009.

I first encountered contemporary photography by going along to the North West group in 2013 at the Holiday Inn at Charnock Richard services. Shortly afterwards it burnt down to be replaced by the Ramada. Why didn't I take some photos? If I had adhered to the mantra of Thorsten Overgaard, "always wear a camera," I would have that small piece of history in my collection.

I was in total ignorance of what 'contemporary photography' was. I knew what contemporary meant - in the present - but how did that relate to photography? I asked the question at my first meeting to be met with groans and raised eyebrows. "Not that old chestnut again". However, what I experienced was interesting. No camera club stereotypes, no tick box judging of individual images, but bodies of work which made me think, and woke me up photographically. It's not the 'of' but the 'about' I was told. I had been searching for something: was this it?

I now understand that contemporary photography is more of a concept, as seen by the photographer. I prefer this conceptual angle and terminology as it is easier to categorise versus other genres. The photographer has a concept and wishes to display it through imagery, which should represent the narrative. But to what extent?

My personal preference is for photography based on realism rather than the computer generated or excessively cerebral. I like a body of work to have an embedded narrative that is clear to the viewer. If the photographer has to explain the narrative through the written word, then is that not a bit self-indulgent? A title for the work can point the viewer in the direction envisaged by the author, but how much more should be necessary? If the narrative that the majority of viewers 'see' coincides with the vision of the photographer, is that not the ultimate accolade of success?

My own photography lies around the borders of the 'contemporary' and 'documentary'. Documenting for posterity the events and imagery of our lifetime has great value to me, and should be done with no significant manipulation adding or removing objects. In 'contemporary' though, anything goes.

Editors note: Tim Hancock has recently joined the Contemporary Group committee as secretary.

GROUP AND RELATED SOCIETY EVENTS

Group online meetings

The Contemporary Group will hold its AGM as an online meeting at 10 a.m. on 2 April 2022. The SAGM will be only open to Group members. It will be followed by a keynote speaker and discussion on 'Rewilding Scotland'.

Other online meetings

21 February 2022, 7pm. Ken Holland FRPS; 21 March 2022, 7pm. Alexandra Prescott FRPS;
25 April 2022 7pm Carol Olerud FRPS

See the RPS website for for more details of these meetings and to book your place.

Regional meetings

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

Contemporary North. 19 February 2022, live at Clements Hall, York. 19 March 2022 online. Contact Patricia Ruddle for more information or see the RPS website.

Contemporary South West. 13 February 2022, 14.00-17.00. Online meeting to share members' work. Contact Adrian Hough for details of regional meetings.

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

Contemporary Central. Meetings are held jointly with the Documentary Group on the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm, online: 9 February 2022, 9 March 2022. Contact Steff Hutchinson for more information.

COMMITTEE

Alan Cameron LRPS	Chair, event organiser and North West group organiser	contemporary@rps.org
Tim Hancock ARPS	Secretary	hancock.tim@sky.com
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 FRPS	Committee member	aprescott 3@yahoo.co.uk
Tessa Mills FRPS	Distinctions Panel chair	tessamills@hotmail.co.uk

