

August 2021

The Newsletter of the Royal Photographic Society Contemporary Group



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Concept:

Editor, Romney Tansley ARPS

Design & Layout, Ken Holland ARPS

[Guidance for Contributors to Concept](#)

Front cover: Romney Tansley ARPS



Editorial

Romney Tansley ARPS

The end of an era! Does that sound a little grandiose? Well yes, but it does feel a little like that. I've been editing Concept for almost 2 years now. Ken has been doing the layout for the last 3 years. And this very sadly is our last issue. Ken long planned to do the job for no more than 3 years, but in my case my departure is due to a much more recent decision.

I know I speak for Ken when I say we've both enjoyed producing this publication. The two-monthly chore has brought me much pleasure. Editing and layout and design are all part of one continuous process. Ken and I have worked closely together to produce the finished product, of which we've felt mostly quite proud.

Perhaps fittingly, we're both presenting sets of pictures to you our readers, as we bow out. Two projects both very different. But both, I'd say, recognisable as Contemporary photography. We hope you enjoy them.

As always we include our regional reports once again. With the help of Zoom it's good to see that the activities of these groups have not been too much curtailed by lockdown. By avoiding the need to travel, holding meetings online, has even brought positive advantages.

I'd like to express my thanks to the regional organisers for their illuminating write-ups over the months and to the many photographers who have presented their work and written about it, in these pages.

Finally thanks to you our readers for your continuing interest and support. May I wish you well in your own photographic pursuits, and hope that you continue to find interest and inspiration in this publication.



View from the Chair

Alan Cameron LRPS

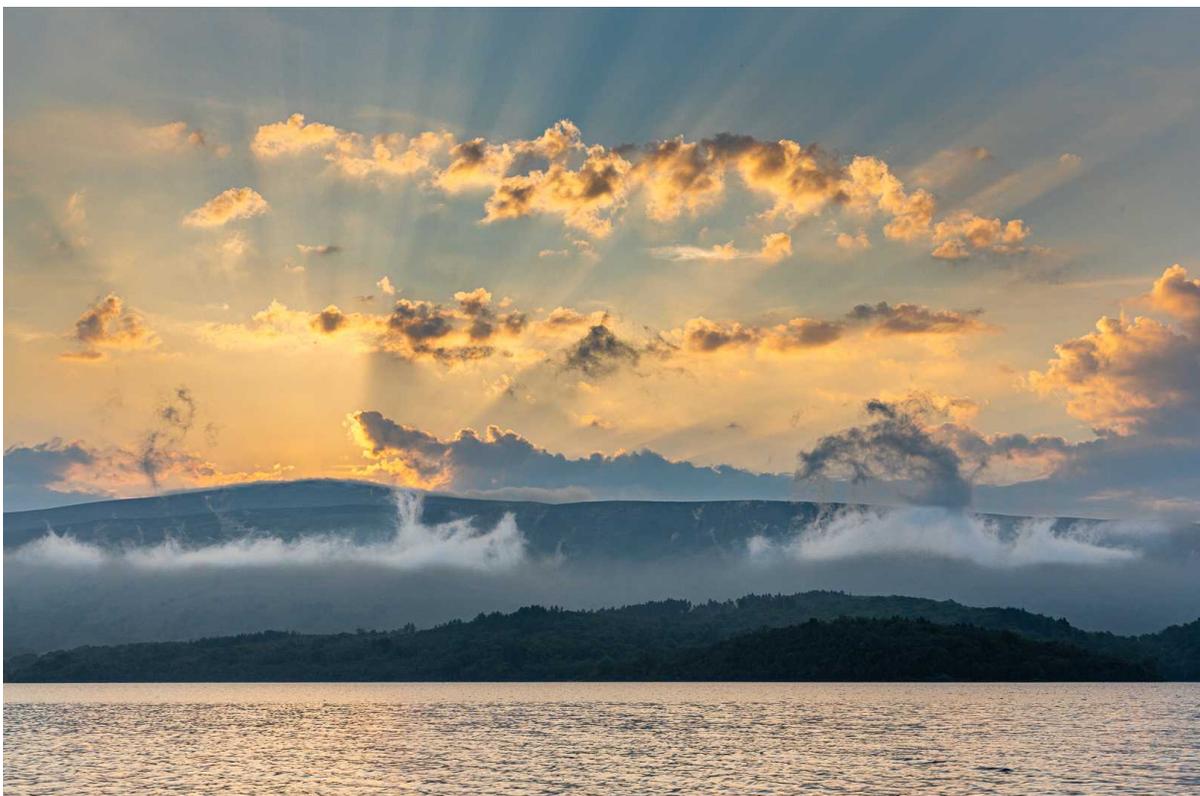
Like many of us I combine my love of photography with other pursuits. In my case, I enjoy the beauty of nature and when I walk I find I can clear my mind and revel in the moment.

An image of sunrise across Loch Lomond conveys the joy of the cool air and the changing light that filled me with a sense of peace and release from the woes of pandemic. Then I saw a dry stone wall creating a (reversed) question mark in my mind emphasising the permanence of the earth and my insignificance.

It is with some regret that I have accepted the resignation of Romney Tansley ARPS our Concept Editor. He has been carrying out the role since early in the pandemic when I sprang the idea on him. Thank you Romney for doing an excellent job.

I also want to say a thank you to another of our volunteers. Ken Holland ARPS is stepping down from one of his volunteering roles having been laying out Concept for some years now. Each edition takes a significant amount of time and, as Ken is also on the Licentiate assessment panel, he has been particularly busy with online mentoring for candidates. Thank you so much Ken.

With both Romney and Ken stepping down I want to refresh the ideas around Concept to make it a rolling service if you like with more frequent updates possible from regions and members who have something newsworthy to tell us. Watch this space.





Along with Tom Owens, I have engaged with Evan Dawson on the RPS Strategic Plan. We had a very constructive meeting learning how the plan is developing. I have offered to continue my involvement as the plan is delivered.

Our monthly talks are still going well and Richard Brayshaw's talk on Contemporary qualifications attracted more people on the night than we've had for many months. I recorded Richard's talk and it will soon be appearing on the RPS YouTube channel.

I recently uploaded Carolyn Mendelsohn's talk from January this year. You can see it [here](#). At Carolyn's request, I waited until her wonderful exhibition at Impressions Gallery had finished. I am sure that, if like me, you managed to get to Bradford, you were blown away by the beautiful life size prints of the young women featured in the Being Inbetween exhibition.

Next month we see the work of Abbie Trayler-Smith a mix of a long project on obesity and some recent work with Greenpeace, followed in September by Stewart Wall ARPS talking about the new Photobook Genre for qualifications. The latest booking I have is our own SW Organiser Adrian Hough talking about his Arctic series he used to gain his ARPS.

Richard Brayshaw's talk from last month is also available [here](#).

I hope your photographic endeavours are progressing well. Things seem to be going the right direction with coping with the virus and vaccination appears to be the key factor in our success in living with Covid-19 and that should free us up to do more of what we love.

Good snapping.



East Anglia Group Report

Tom Owens ARPS

We met on 1st July via Zoom as is our wont these days and I fed back to the group about the meeting I had with Evan Dawson and Alan Cameron the day before regarding the Strategic Plan. The group had been very active in raising questions about the plan for me to put to our committee meeting and they were happy with the openness and graciousness of the CEO in his answers to the questions of Alan and I.

We welcomed Barry Badcock to the group, did our individual updates and then went on to discuss a proposal of mine regarding a self-directed project entitled 'Self'.

At this point it was about getting agreement in principle to undertake a self-directed brief and assignment to produce a body of work that reflected each member's interpretation. The thorny issue of exhibiting the final bodies of work was discussed and we generally accept that it will be an on-line presentation. Just how we go about that we do not know but Paul Ashley sent links through about the platform used at Format so we have had dialogue with Sean Goodheart our webmaster as to how this might be leveraged for the wider membership of the Contemporary group.

Our next meeting is 12th August 1400hrs via invitation to a Zoom event. Any East Anglian Contemporary members who are interested should [contact](#) me.

self.

character, ego, I, identity, intellect, mind, oneself, person, persona, personality, psyche, soul, spirit,

What this is

This is a self-directed photographic assignment based on the posit that each photographer has something of themselves in the work they make.

You will produce a body of work using whatever photographic medium you choose but which must be capable of being shown, shared, and displayed on-line.

The synonyms above are just a smattering of the breadth of the term 'self' and indeed, each of them can be expanded so you are encouraged to stretch the envelope and think outside of the box but without being overly contrived or indeed over-thought. Do what comes naturally.

Whatever you conjure up, there must be a visual narrative.

As your work evolves there will be process of group critique conducted on-line at our monthly meetings.

When, How, and Where

The resultant collection will be an exhibition presented on-line. The date and format are yet to be defined.

Who this is for

Participants of the EACG - East Anglian Contemporary Group of the RPS. New participants, who are resident in East Anglia, may join the group by contacting the group co-ordinator - link below.

Emerging work

Interim progress should be shown on our group blog <https://rpseacg.wordpress.com/>

Members should contact the co-ordinator for access to post updates.

Organised by the East Anglia Contemporary Special Interest Group of the RPS - EACG



For more information please contact the group co-ordinator at contemporaryea@rps.org

A View of Lockdown

Ken Holland ARPS

I have always enjoyed working on photography projects, but I also look forward to days out with my camera which are totally unplanned. I react to what I see, and my images are the results of my immediate encounter with the scene in front of me.

For many photographers, the Covid 19 lockdown severely restricted that freedom of spontaneity, and halted the excitement of not knowing what we might see or photograph.

I am very fortunate to live with an inspiring vista from the rear of my house. I have a small part of the English Channel in view, as well as roads, houses, trees, big skies and wildlife. Without even having to leave home, I decided to employ a telephoto lens, and photograph details of that view. Over the course of 15 months I recorded small glimpses of the life that continued to take place in front of me. Photographing during all seasons, in many different lighting conditions, and at different times of the day, I began to build a record of my time in lockdown, but looking outwards at a small part of a World that was restricted and troubled.

I became fascinated by close-ups of natural phenomena, like rainbows and the supermoon, details of the redundant cruise ships that were anchored offshore, patterns formed by neighbouring houses, plant and animal life in my own garden: both when I photographed them, and later when I viewed them again on my computer screen. I was even lucky enough, with camera at the ready, to witness the Air Ambulance make an emergency landing on the football pitch below my house.

From my enforced isolation, I often wondered what it would be like to cruise on one of those ships (and felt great sympathy for the crew members still isolated on board); I marvelled at the sheer beauty of a rainbow; I rejoiced in the arrival of new life (in the form of a young blackbird) in my garden; I was in awe of the changing patterns of light and weather conditions during the passing days; I watched rain drops form jewels on a rose bud; I tried to imagine what it was like to move house during lockdown (my son and daughter-in-law actually did that!); I gave thanks for the Air Ambulance and its crew; and I was intrigued by the busy work of a bumble bee on the chives growing by my back door...

During the lifting of lockdown restrictions I came to realise that this beautiful view, and my camera, had been my window on the world. They were my unplanned camera outings and had helped to release me from my Covid19 confinement. Photography can, indeed, be a form of therapy.











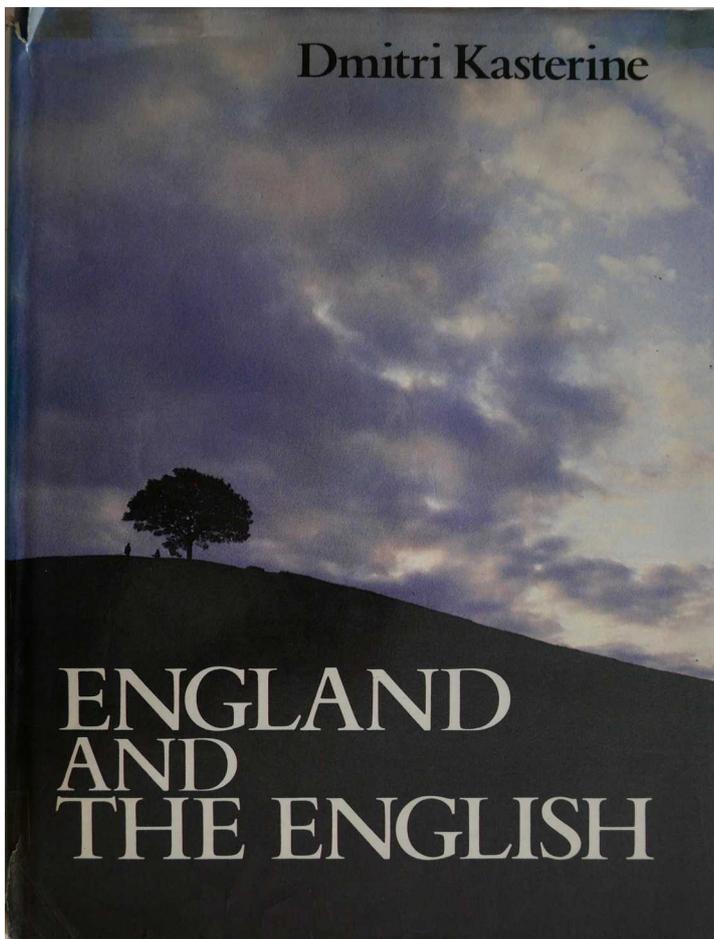
South West Contemporary Group

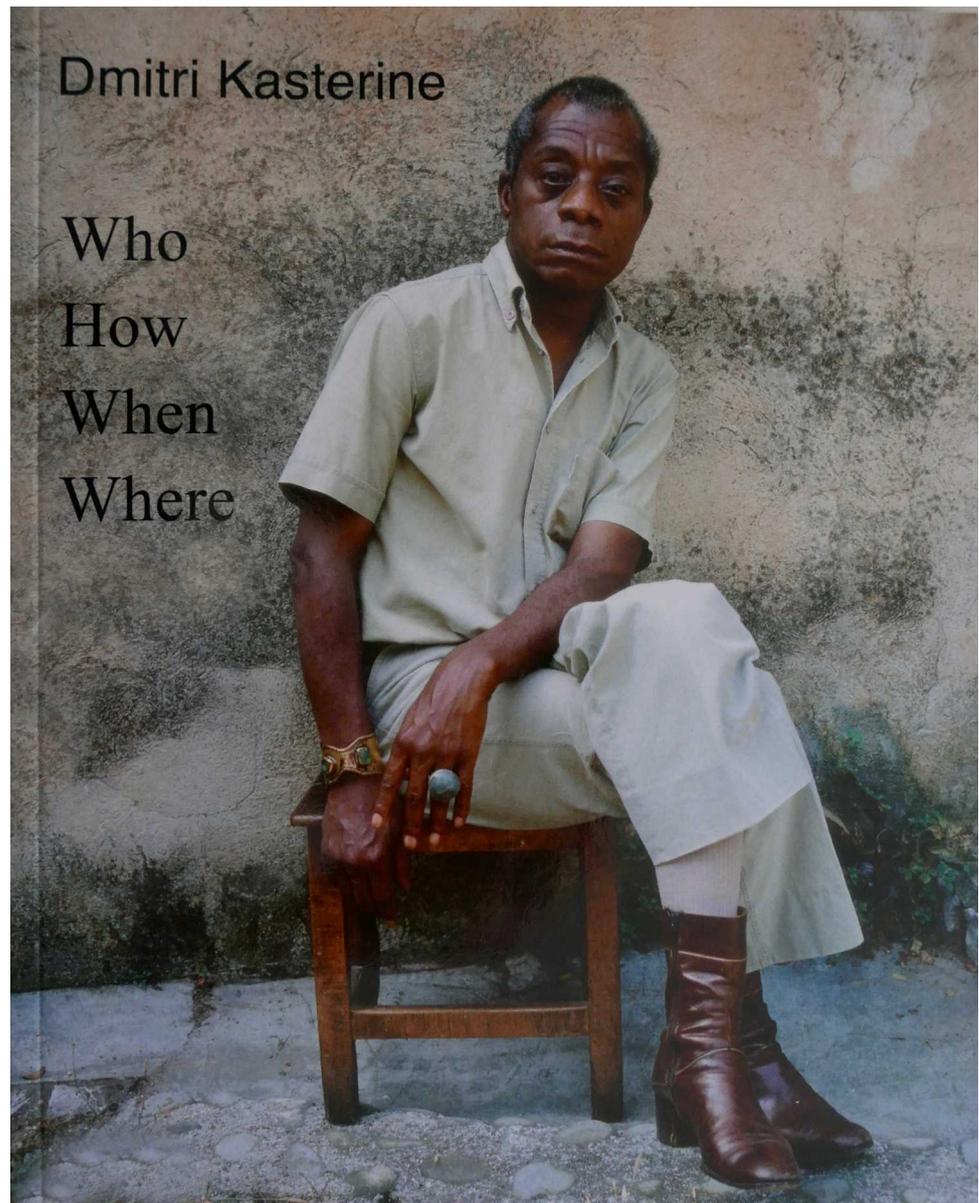
Rod Fry ARPS

There were nine of us present at our Zoom meeting on Sunday 4th July and we began by congratulating Adrian Hough on achieving his ARPS in Contemporary photography.

Most of the meeting was taken up with the presentation of members work. We began with A view of Lockdown, recent pictures from Ken Holland, ARPS, featured on Page 7 in this edition of Concept.

Adrian Hough was the star of the afternoon as he took us through his his successful 'A' panel, entitled The Incongruity of Existence, based on his experiences in Greenland. As with many panels this one could straddle different genres, but the statement of intent placed it in the Contemporary category. Adrian informed us that Greenland has some of the world's oldest rocks. Crystalline rocks, of the Pre-Cambrian shield, dominate the island. They are composed of igneous and sedimentary rocks that have metamorphosed and are 3.9 billion years old. The island though large has a very sparse population living in the southern coastal belt. As a consequence the buildings are temporary in nature often very colourful, in stark contrast to the grey rugged landscape. His panel eloquently showed the transience of human habitation on this ancient land.





Next was John Evans-Jones with *Seeing Through Photographs*, in which he presented the New York Museum of Modern Art online Photographic course. He enrolled on this during lockdown. This course is comprised of 6 modules and student are allowed access to the extensive MOMA archive to select examples to illustrate each module. The Modules covered are: Who we are, What we see, What we do, Where we go, What we want, What we remember.

John advised that students have to add examples of their own work. The course is open-ended and can be extended so the student can work at their own pace. Finally having researched the collection you are encouraged to see if any of your work is good enough to go into the MOMA collection.





Rod Fry





Gerhardt Richter



The Olympic Park



John Evans-Jones

The MOMA collection has a distinctly art-based bias and contains work from the likes of Stieglitz, Steichen, Paul Strand, Walker Evans, Ansel Adams, Dorothy Lange, Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander and Garry Winogrand. John explained that the course is free unless after successfully completing it, you desire a certificate. He showed us a great set of pictures relating to each module and included examples of his own work. He wondered if this was worthy of consideration and could be added to the MOMA collection. Having examined the art based creative work that is likely to be accepted, John very modestly thought not. But he surmised that Carol Ballenger and Graham Hodgson's work could!

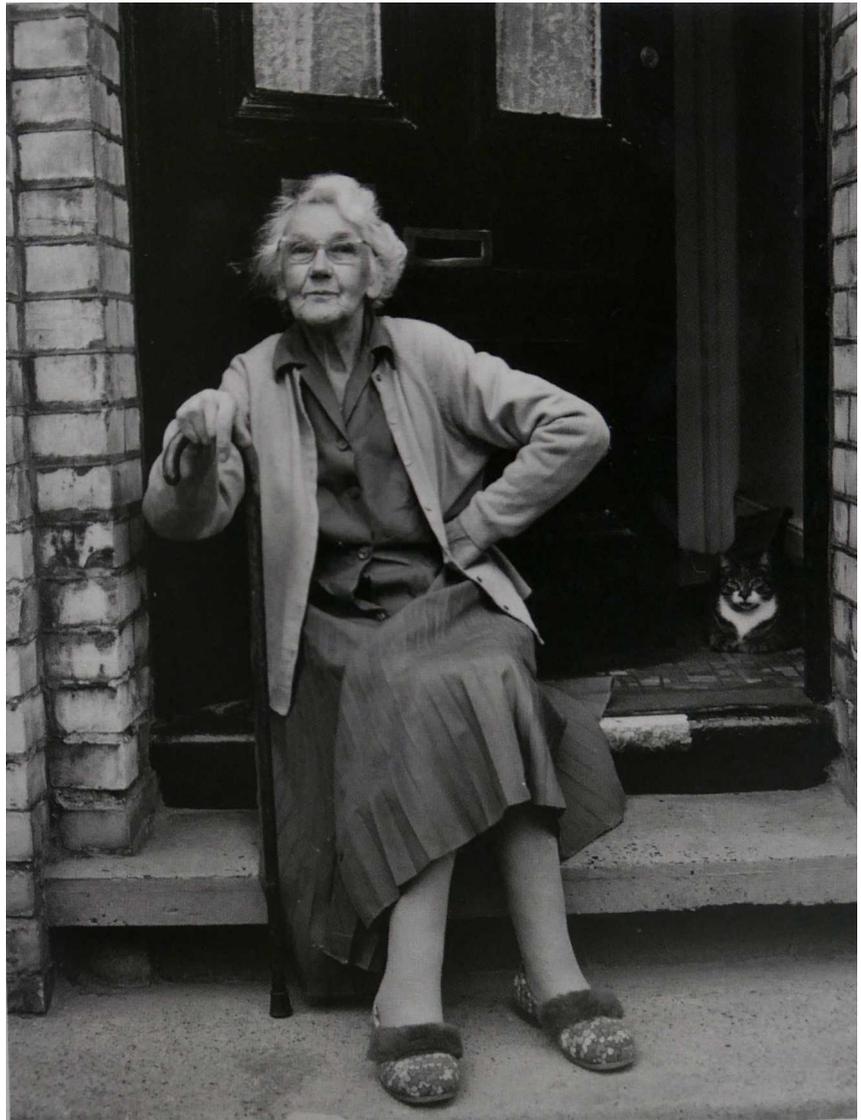
One example from John's course work was the picture Vik Muniz took of the marble floor in MOMA because it looked like Stieglitz's pictures of clouds. Muniz said the exhibition put him in the mood of 'seeing things in things'. So John wondered if he had taken pictures of one subject from different perspectives. And he said he had - the subject of 'art' - pictures of galleries, paintings, artists etc. But had he 'seen things in things' like Vik Muniz. Yes, was the answer. Hence a painting by Gerhard Richter (to be auctioned at Sotheby's) and some reflections in the Olympic Park manipulated in Photoshop to look like that painting.

And an out of service urinal in the Tate Gallery also brought to mind both Duchamp's 'Fountain' and the 'Wrapped Reichstag' by Christo and Jeanne Claude.

Finally my own presentation, Get Trollied. During lockdown I have been looking at people who use shopping trolleys and rollators (also known as walkers). In Stephen Gill's book, A Book Field Studies he included a section called trolley portraits. These were a set of permissive photographs. In my project I extended the work to include topographical and candid images. These photographs that are linked by common thread, have taught me to admire the stoical fortitude of people who have to use these aids and just want to get on with life.



Secondly I attempted to portray the story of a single photograph that I have known 38 years, and failed miserably. I decided to do it justice and show it here. In 1983 I bought a book called *England and the English* by Dmitri Kasterine. In his book there was a photograph called the "Lady with the cat." This photograph fascinated me and in 2012 I wrote an article on this picture, which went into the Summer Edition of our *Contemporary Photography*. I wrote to Dmitri who had moved to the States in the 1980's. He gave me permission to use his photograph and I sent him some copies of the magazine, by way of a thank you. Since then we have kept in touch. Quite out of the blue a couple of weeks ago a book arrived from the States. It was



Dmitri's latest book titled *Who, How, When and Where*. To my surprise on page 86 there was a photograph of the Lady with the Cat and a piece on the Royal Photographic Society Article. The image has taken on a life of its own and has been known to me for 38 years criss-crossing the Atlantic several times.

Finally by way of an encore Adrian showed us examples of photographs made with some of his old cameras including a Houghton Butcher Folding Camera, an Ensign Camera, and Zeiss Ikon. Looking at these B&W photographs was nostalgic and a really pleasant way to end the day.

The meeting finished at 4.30 pm it was good to catch up online but all agreed it will be better in person. The date of the next meeting will be sometime around the end of October or early November. Adrian said he would confirm the details nearer the time.



North West Meeting Report

Alan Cameron LRPS

Since my last report we have held several meetings with 7 or 8 people in attendance.

Highlights have included discussion of Keith Launchbury's books on the Cumbrian Coast and Lewis. At our latest meeting he showed us the project, "Allonby Backs," a record of the old narrow main street in Allonby, with wider areas likened to rooms. Working with a local artist and some local photographers he intends to explore the visions and approach of the two groups capturing the same place.

Alan asked members of Poulton Photographic Society who attended Zoom meetings to capture their setups for the meetings and to write a few sentences about what these meetings meant to them. He travelled round and took their photographs at their front doors to symbolise the restrictions of lock down and it is a record of our times for the club.

In June, John Corbett shared some images of his travels to Japan in his inimitable style catching moments demonstrating shared experiences. I was particularly taken by the man looking at the bonsai and chrysanthemums at a flower show - how like British village shows.





In May and June Ken shared with us panels of multiple images of local scenes in town and countryside around Rochdale for the local hospices. the images are talking points for patients, visitors and staff, enabling people to recall happier times in the area even when lifespan is limited.

In July Mike Kitson shared some infrared images of the architecture of Lancaster University, taken on an authorised group visit. The fine weather gave high contrast resulting in typically deep blacks and white foliage, which complemented the striking architecture of the campus.

Tim Hancock showed us images from a project created while walking his dog in the limestone country near his home. He uses a standard sepia tone setting on his Fuji XT/4 camera, shooting 12 jpeg images at 1:1 aspect ratio per walk with a view to creating a panel of three images - left, right and centre for each day with minimal post processing.

Immediately afterwards Ken showed us a set of images and panel from Stockport taken in square format on his Fuji XT/2 in mono using Acros film simulation with a red filter. This single project was of 12 jpeg images with minimal processing. The coincidence with Tim's work is striking and he's going to continue with the approach.

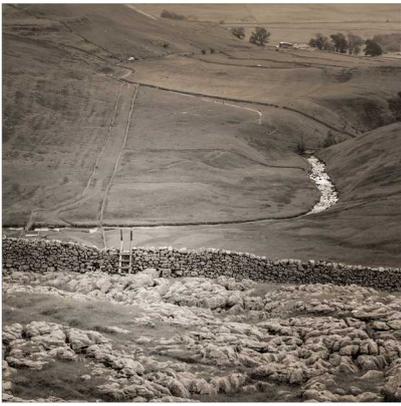
Next meeting is in Manchester on 14th August at 11.00 where we intend to meet and walk around the Castlefield area guided by Romney and Alan Edwards. Please book if you wish to come, details are on the RPS website [here](#).





Ken Rowlatt





Tim Hancock



Mike Kitson



It's a Sin

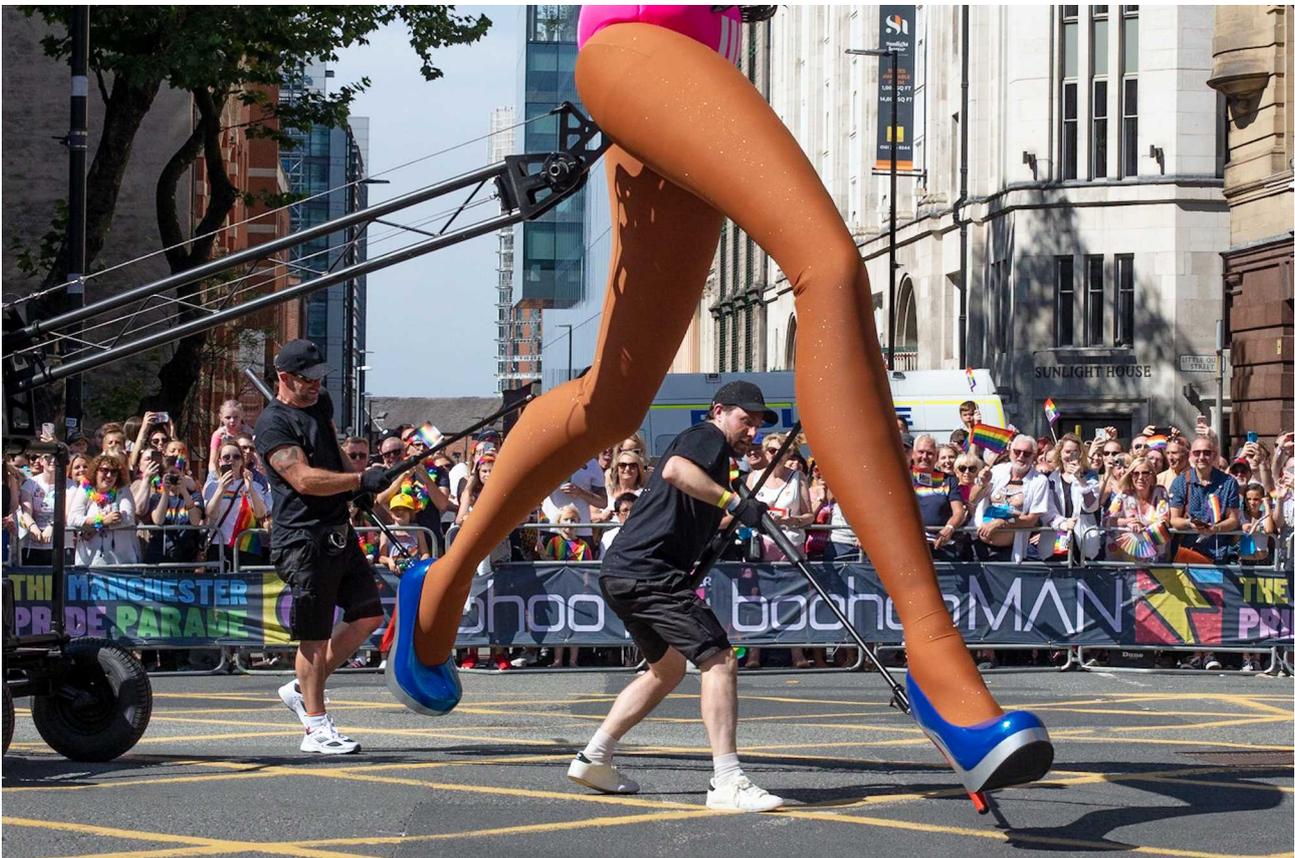
Romney Tansley ARPS

Two years ago I attended the Gay Pride festivities in Manchester city centre. This was shortly after my arrival back in the city to live, and I wasn't sure what to expect. It was also the last such event here, its successors having been cancelled due to lockdown. So the pictures that I took on that day evoke in me feelings of both sadness and optimism.

For several hours that day the city centre was alive to a cacophony of competing styles of music, as a long and colourful procession wove its way through the crowded streets. There was a sense of magic in the air. It wasn't just the performers who had dressed up for it. Members of the crowd too had donned face paint and even costumes. And I felt compelled to try and capture this with my camera.

I was of course aware of the long history of the fight for gay rights in this country. It's less than 20 years ago that our Parliament struck down a law from the Thatcher era that outlawed 'the promotion of homosexuality' - Clause 28 so-called. Russell T Davies' recent TV series 'It's a Sin', tells the darker story of young people in the 1980s who were finally finding a voice to challenge ingrained prejudice and hostility. But their new found optimism was met by the horrors of the Aids epidemic, brought on by an earlier deadly virus that was initially untreatable. The song from 1987 by the Pet Shop Boys, which gave Davies his title, summed up one prevalent personal reaction. 'When I look back upon my life / It's always with a sense of shame'.





It felt very different on this sunny day in Manchester. But how could I capture this with my camera? It was the spirit of the event that I was after, the shared experiences of both participants and spectators. There was a palpable sense of joy and I wanted to picture it. My bulky full-frame camera allowed me to look 'professional' enough to gain access to the street space so that I could weave through the performers to get my pictures - pictures of both them and the onlookers.

This event is about much more than the costumes, the street theatre, the performance, I kept telling myself. But how to depict that? Everywhere there was a sense of liberation. Sexual diversity was being celebrated. And this was an experience being shared by both performers and the crowd, or so it seemed. It encompassed both young and old, men and women, black and white, and members of differing religious and cultural traditions.

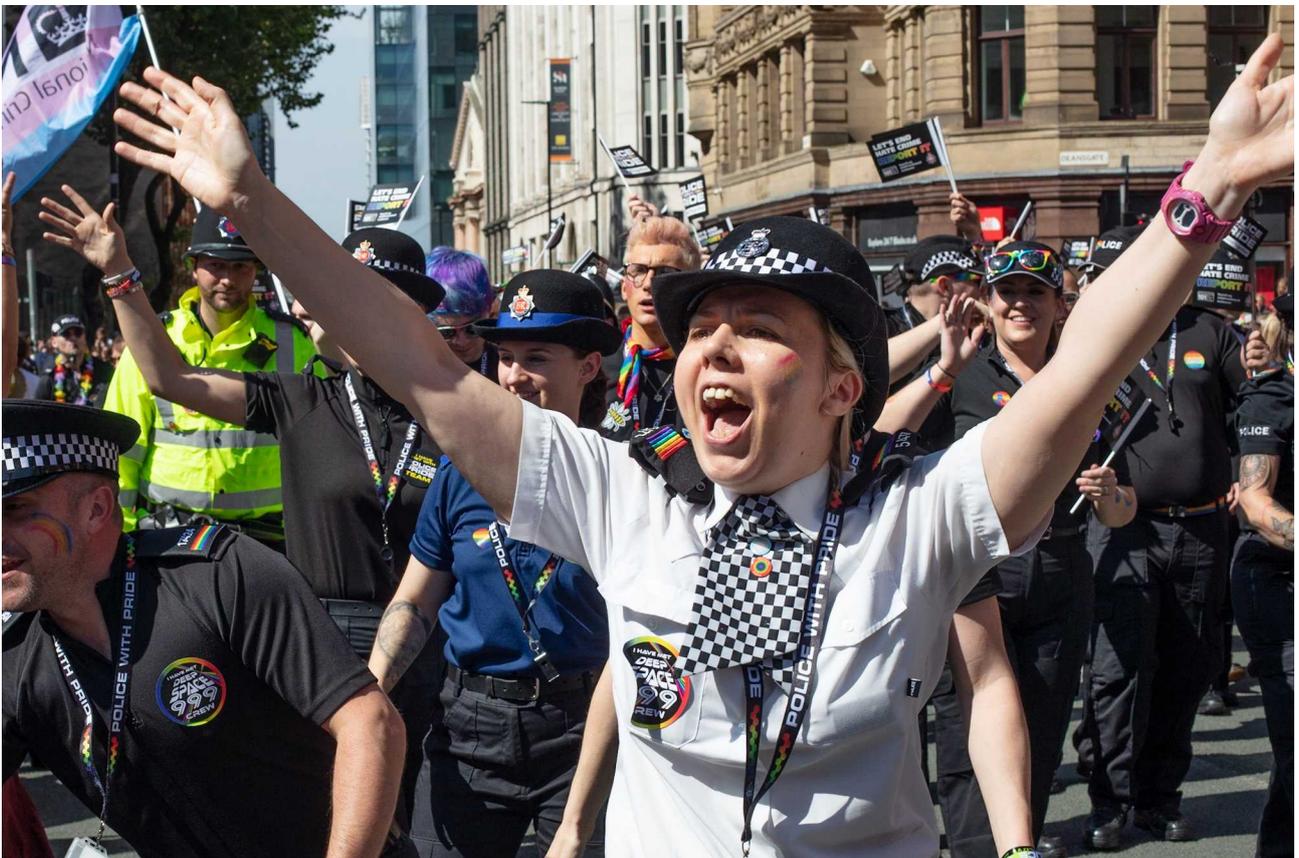




Witnessed this sense of happy inclusivity I was aware that the battles of the past may not yet be over. Attacks on gay individuals and couples are said to be on the rise in some places. Only recently portraits celebrating gay icons were defaced in Manchester close to where this event was taking place. But on this particular day the sense of freedom and confidence was clear to all. Perhaps this was a sign that things have changed for the better.

With such events there's always a tension between the personal and the manufactured, between the freely expressed and the products of politically correct policy making. Placards everywhere carried messages of belief and commitment. Many were home grown, others betrayed their corporate associations. A glum child clutches flags from the Co-op bank. The corporate branding of a prominent fashion brand was everywhere. But the biggest surprise of all was how different the police presence looked, as individual officers decked out in the rainbow colours mingled with the marchers. Perhaps no better assurance was needed of how our society has changed.

What impressed me most however was the evident commitment on the faces of so many on the street and in the crowds. I hope my pictures convey some of that.







Upcoming Contemporary Group On-line Talks

The next three talks in our ongoing series can be booked now:

Monday 16th August 7.00pm

In Conversation with Abbie Trayler-Smith

[Book here](#)

Abbie will talk about her UK based long-term personal project called "The Big O" on childhood obesity. It was from this work that her portrait of Chelsea won 4th prize in The National Portrait Gallery's Taylor Wessing Prize, London. As a contrast she will discuss her assignment work to Antarctica with Greenpeace.

Monday 27th September 7.00pm

Why is the new Photo book Distinction Genre different?

[Book here](#)

Stewart Wall ARPS will be discussing what the criteria differences are for the applicant when submitting a photo book for assessment in the new RPS Photo book Genre to when submitting a book in all the other genres. He will also outline the differences between the assessment approach from the assessors point of view.

Monday 18th October 7.00pm

Photographing Greenland: Through Travel and Landscape Photography to a Contemporary ARPS

[Book here](#)

In this presentation Adrian Hough ARPS will take us through his journey, looking at images and issues in the various genres, before making a more detailed examination of his successful Contemporary Panel, including the selection and cropping of the images and the lessons which we may be able to learn.



concept

abstraction image conceptualisation notion thought
impression theory view conception idea hypothesis

Click on these links for more information...

[RPS Contemporary Group web page](#)

[Concept archive](#)

[Contemporary Photography archive](#)

[RPS Contemporary Face Book group](#)

[Contemporary NW Facebook group](#)

[RPS Contemporary Instagram page](#)

[Contemporary Group Exhibition 2020](#)

Concept August 2021

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