



ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Contemporary North

A Subgroup of the RPS Contemporary
Group

May 2022

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Report of the Zoom meeting

Saturday 21st May 2022 1:30 to 4:00
pm

Zoom hosted by: Morris Gregory

Text: Mike Rooke

Layout and design: Wendy North

Co-ordination and editing: Patricia
Ruddle



Introduction and Announcements:

Alexandra Prescott is our new Chair of the RPS Contemporary Group. We wish her well in this demanding role and look forward to her future valuable contributions to our group.

A walking tour round Newcastle has been organised for 16th July. Participants should meet at the station in Newcastle at 10.30 am. Please let **Alexandra Prescott** know by email if you are coming and advise her of your mobile phone number. This isn't an official RPS event, but a Summer event where we can get together for a day out.



The Zoom meeting of the Contemporary North group will take place on 17th September and the next Face to Face Meeting will be on 1st October . A full meeting of the RPS Contemporary Group will take place on the 15th October in Clements Hall, York.

Our North Newsletter for the 7th May meeting at Clements Hall in York is now available:

<https://rps.org/media/ndhp1zs5/cn-may-2022-v3.pdf>

Suzi Darsa joined our Zoom group as our new editor of *Concept*. We are very grateful to have her as the new editor after several months with no publications. Her first issue, along with **Christine Pinnington** as designer, has just been published and features a photo by **David Leighton** on the cover. The next issue will be published the beginning of July. Suzi asked us to please think about submitting articles and information for future Newsletters.

Suzi is a professional photographer under the banner *The Highgate Dog*. Her philosophy is "Photography is an art of observation. It has little to do with the things you see, and everything about the way you see them".

Presentations:

It was significant that all the contributors to the day's presentations began with a request for feedback from members of the Zoom group present, to comment on the early stages of their latest projects and to advise on the validity and viability their images as a work of contemporary photography.

This should not come as a surprise. The beginning of any creative endeavour is always fraught with doubt and uncertainty for those who strive to produce 'art'. It is well understood that the engagement with ones' peers is a key part of any curriculum or training programme directed towards "creating"; allowing self-doubt, encouraging second thoughts and revisions as a natural and productive part of the process.

The main danger always to avoid is the tendency to discard projects before they achieve their potential. Confidence breeds creativity, but first we all must overcome the fear of not knowing enough or not being original enough.

Two contributors presented ambitious projects for comments and advice but preferred not to go public with them in our *North Newsletter* at this time. Both presentations were extremely interesting, and the group was able to respond with very useful feedback and suggestions for both, which should perhaps be a regular feature of our Zoom meetings and more of us should see our forum as a 'sounding board' for our ideas, not just a platform to present panels of completed projects.



Peter Bartlett

Peter Bartlett - *Hedgeland*s

Peter showed a short Powerpoint presentation entitled *Hedgeland*s that included his draft artist's statement and selection of around 15 images. This shortlist was just a sample of the hedges that he had observed on his local travels, but he was unsure whether the project was worth continuing.

The background to the images was that, during the 1930s, when land on the outskirts of towns and cities was being built on, planners positively encouraged the creation of suburbia, a hinterland beyond the urban centre but still quite distinct from the countryside.

The favoured way of enclosing and separating your land from that of your neighbour was the hedge. Sometimes a barrier to preserve privacy, sometimes a friendly boundary to gossip over. It served many purposes. Keeping pets and children in and windblown rubbish out.

The response from members was very positive. The images shown inspired comments such as "what's behind the high and impenetrable hedge?", "imagine the pride of the owners who had carefully cultivated and shaped their creations. Some were intrigued by the presence of a ladder against a wall with seemingly no purpose.

Photographers are good at imagining what cannot be seen!



Michel Claverie - *Close-up
London streets snapshots with
rhyming titles*

Michel shared five great social documentary shots, Great camera angles, vivid colours - capturing moments of real people interacting on the streets. He told us that he discovered the London Walworth area during a RPS London Group walkabout. Without prior knowledge of street layouts or the activities, he reacted to the people passing by, and grabbed first impressions and references for likely future visits. The rhyming titles are first a joke, started with the obvious title for the *Geezers* photo, and continued with the other images as a parallel to the East London rhyming slang. There is a massive potential to expand and develop a compelling panel of images from the examples shown.



Michel Claverie



André Bergmans - *A Project in my home town*

My village Heiloo in the Netherlands hosts quite a big institute for mental healthcare, the Saint Willibrord Institute. A very closed community in the past: fenced and with all facilities inside the gates: hospital, kitchen, workshops, shoemaker, barber, church and even cemetery. This has changed. The gates were opened and some clients of the Institute live in the village and alternatively, businesses, clubs, restaurants, shops and families have moved onto the premises of the Institute. The intentions are two-way integration and understanding.

The foundation *De Buitenkans* (The Godsend/Opportunity) started in 2010 to influence the impression and opinion that we have of mental diseases and mental healthcare. A program was developed with clients of the Institute, volunteers, professionals, artists, musicians, sponsors, ambassadors and visitors. One element of the program was a multiple, day festival called: *Willibrordus Draait Door* (*Willibrord Goes Crazy*). Every year the foundation organises an image and story-telling writing project. Some of the young clients were coached by

me and another amateur photographer, **Cor Oorthuijsen**. Other clients have delivered images without any coaching. The project will continue as it has become part of the overall Summer program for young clients; those who go through a difficult phase in their lives and need all the support we can deliver.







Andre' Bergmans

Andre's Bergmans: *In Paris*

André also introduced us to *Project in Paris*, a long term initiative that he has began:. He showed us work by some of famous photographers of Paris. He suggested that Paris is very often photographed in a romantic and humanistic way even by modern contemporary photographers. I plans to visit the city several times to find out whether this is the full story of Paris and whether he has the same or a different view.

I like the city of Paris quite a lot. The city has been photographed since the early days of photography by photographers that loved the city.





Photo: André Bergmans

Mick Yates - *the PhotoFrome Festival*

Mick, well known to us in Contemporary North and a regular contributor to our presentations, is also the co-founder and curator of an ambitious festival taking place in Frome (rhymes with 'room') with the theme of *The Independent Eye*. This celebrates photography as an art-form that stands alone from others.

The festival takes place from 21st June till 15th July 2022.

Full details can be found by clicking on the link below, and you can download the full 2022 programme from the web page.

<https://photofrome.org/whats-on/>

It looks ambitious, amazing and adventurous.

We wish Mick well with this wonderful event.

Alexandra Prescott - *The Contemporary Sandpit*

Alexandra announced a new Contemporary Group initiative that is open to all-comers.

The Sandpit

A Sandpit is an event which has the broad objective of stimulating progress for individuals. The taking part is the progress facilitator and it is a safe environment for experimentation whatever your degree of expertise. The idea is to take six Contemporary images on the appropriate theme, write up to a 150-word paragraph about your images and then come and join us. You then show your images, read your story and discuss your collection with other photographers.

The first event will be held on Zoom on 23rd July. Images on the theme Mobile Phone Moments must be submitted by 30th June 2022.

All images for this Sandpit event must be taken using a smartphone camera.

Submit images to: contemporarytreasurer@rps.org

Future events will be held in October in York, and in December, on Zoom

Full details and event registration can be found by following the link below:

<https://rps.org/events/groups/contemporary/2022/july/mobile-phone-moments/>