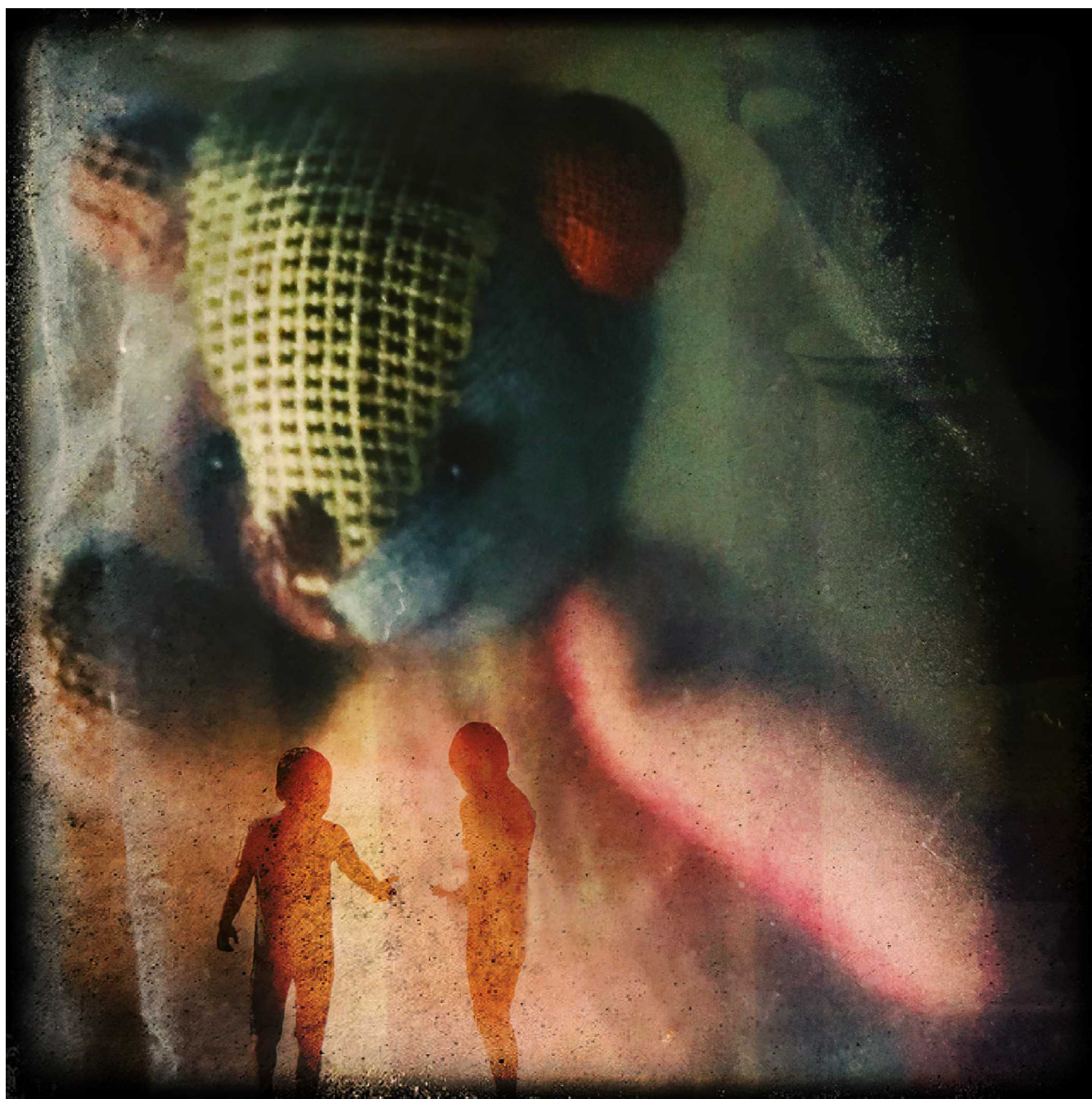


October 2020

*The Newsletter of the Royal Photographic Society Contemporary Group*



## In this issue

Editorial      Romney Tansley ARPS

View from the Chair      Alan Cameron LRPS

A Change of Direction      Peter Bartlett ARPS

Containers      Keith Launchbury FRPS

Anthropomorphs      Stefan Shillington

North Report      Lyn Newton

Made in China      Armando Jongejan FRPS  
review: Ken Holland ARPS

About Concept

Useful Links

Editor, Romney Tansley ARPS  
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Next issue: due for publication mid-December 2020

*The editor welcomes the submission of articles and features.  
Please send to Romney Tansley by 22nd November at [romney@tansley.co.uk](mailto:romney@tansley.co.uk)  
Text in Word format, Images in jpg format max 2Mb (no watermarks please)*

Front Cover Image: Teddy's Story by Wendy North, awarded the Selector's Ribbon in the Digital Imaging Group's *Altered Reality* section of their 2020 annual exhibition.



## Editorial

As lockdown continues across the country, with yet tighter restrictions In prospect, all the photographers in this issue react in some way to this unprecedented situation. How to make sense of what we're all going through? How to represent this experience in our pictures? It's questions like these we now ask ourselves.

But first our one regional report. Patricia Ruddle's Contemporary North group of mainly Yorkshire-based photographers, continues its regular Zoom meetings, defying all the difficulties of the present moment. In this issue we include edited highlights from their recent meeting held in York with a selection of the many pictures shared.

Featured photographer, Peter Bartlett ARPS tells a story that will chime with the experience of others, certainly so for me. Inspired by the urban colour work of photographers like William Eggleston and Stephen Shore he found himself transitioning away from the norms and expectations of the camera club world into a new directions. His unemotive framing of everyday scenes and situations, mostly devoid of people, makes them into objects of contemplation. He invites us to invest the everyday with the meanings we bring.

Stefan Shillington, inspired by his evolving commitment to modernist photography, takes a different route. Looking back through his own archives he has produced bodies of work that together 'represent my ideas through metaphor', as he puts it. He turns his attention to the small scale and normally overlooked, his camera delighting in the strange arrangements and symmetries to be found there.

In Containers, Keith Launchbury FRPS explores a new and surprising addition to his home landscape. These ubiquitous artefacts, a potent symbol of modern global trade, have it seems an afterlife on the Cumbrian coast. Keith's pictures document how they have taken root and seemingly made themselves at home there. His deadpan framing of these hulking objects seems to endow them with the look of sculptures in a sculpture park.

Finally in his review of Armando Jongejan's book Made in China, featured in our last issue Ken Holland ARPS provides an illuminating discussion of that photographer's work.

Read on and enjoy!

Romney Tansley ARPS



## View from the Chair

Our year continues on its strange way with no end in sight to the turmoil created by the pandemic. I know that many of you live outside the UK, but whichever country you're in, the world has become an unfamiliar place.

But there is another side to the story. The enforced isolation means that we have resorted to video communications to enable us to continue with sharing our fascination for photography. Something, with which few of us were familiar has become mainstream.

We have now had two on-line talks with Chris Steele-Perkins HonFRPS and Paul Hill MBE and both attracted over 125 attendees on the day. I would like to give a big thank you to both our speakers. The reaction to the talks was very positive. I think we gained fascinating insights to their thought processes and ways of working. Thanks to Sean Goodhart, our webmaster, assisted by our Vice-Chair Avijit Datta, for their help with these on the day.

We have talks lined up until next March with, I hope an interesting variety of topics. Next up is Ken Holland ARPS followed by Rehab Eldalil in November. Please go to our RPS Contemporary web pages (See Links) to find out more and see what else is coming up at national and local levels.

Last time I ask for volunteers to assist with local groups and I'm very pleased to welcome Steff Hutchinson ARPS who has started a new group in Central region where we have joined forces with the Documentary Group to try to create a critical mass of interested photographers. The first virtual meeting is 7th October and those of you who are in Central Region will have had a broadcast message telling you already. Mark Phillips (documentary Chair) and I will be there and I'm looking forward to it.

Contemporary North goes from strength to strength with so much to report that they can support their own insertions in Issuu. Well done to you all and to those other regional groups who have continued to meet.

On 5th August existing Group Members received a broadcast message from Prof. David Grimshaw ARPS inviting entries for our online exhibition. For details please turn to the advert in this issue.

The closing date for entries is 31st October. Please do enter. It will be a great way to showcase what we're about. I look forward to enthusing over the content.

Until next time, I hope your photography gives you the outlet you need in these strange times.

Alan Cameron LRPS

Chair







In Lockdown Alan Cameron LRPS



After Lockdown Alan Cameron LRPS



## A Change of Direction

### Peter Bartlett ARPS

I have a long history as a photographer since the early 1970s when I first joined a camera club. And until about ten years ago, I focussed on creating one-off 'masterpieces' that might do well in club competitions, open salons or exhibitions.

Looking back, I struggled to appreciate the work of William Eggleston, Stephen Shore, Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz and others. They failed to conform to the expectations of photographic judges and were, frankly, alien to most club photographers, myself included.

At regular intervals I have stepped back from my own photography to take stock and explore new ideas. In 2010 I realised that my most successful images included people. Having been brought up, lived and worked in an urban environment all my life I was naturally drawn to street photography.

This led to a gradual switch to street photography. Initially each image was made in isolation, but over time I moved gradually towards the development of geographically connected projects and my successful ARPS panel in 2018 consisted of street images made in a small area of central Manchester.

In parallel I found myself making occasional images of urban details and landscapes. The subjects were usually mundane or banal scenes or objects that caught my attention or imagination that most people would pass by without a second glance. I accumulated such images without much thought about what to do with them, although a number of typological series have evolved, more by chance than design.

This passing interest led me to buy copies of Stephen Shore's *Uncommon Places* and William Eggleston's *Guide*. Studying these raised my awareness of how careful framing of the mundane and banal could make interesting images. I explored the work of other photographers, Martin Parr, Harry Gruyeart and Fred Herzog along with Walker Evans' *American Photographs* and Robert Frank's *The Americans*. It became clear that images of this kind and optionally including people, whether posed or unposed, helped to create a sense of place.

At the start of 2020 I embarked on two major street photography projects one of which I hoped to complete by the end of the year and the other by the end of 2021. Then, in March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic struck and I realised that things were unlikely to be the same again in the foreseeable future. I recognised that day-to-day activities, the lifeblood of my street photography projects has changed beyond recognition and the potential for maintaining continuity between pre- and post-Covid images was limited. Furthermore, now over seventy years old, and no longer desiring to get out and about in the post-Covid streets using a 28mm or 35mm (equivalent) lens, my preferred focal lengths for street photography, I concluded that my existing street projects were no longer viable and regrettably drew a line under them.

So, during lockdown, I revisited the Shore and Eggleston books and invested in two more recently republished Stephen Shore books, *American Surfaces* and *Transparencies: Small Camera Works 1971 - 1979*. I enjoyed especially Shore's images in *Transparencies* and was





attracted by the idea of moving away from street photography towards urban landscapes and 'found' still life images. The final confirmation of my change of direction came with the arrival on the doormat of Peter Mitchell's excellent *Early Sunday Morning* which helped me more clearly understand how I might approach the urban geography of West Yorkshire where I live.

Reading these books during lockdown has helped clarify my thoughts on my future creative direction, providing me with a reference point as I develop my approach to photographing the social geography of the area in which I live. Even so I suspect that I'll not be able to resist the inclusion of people in some scenes!

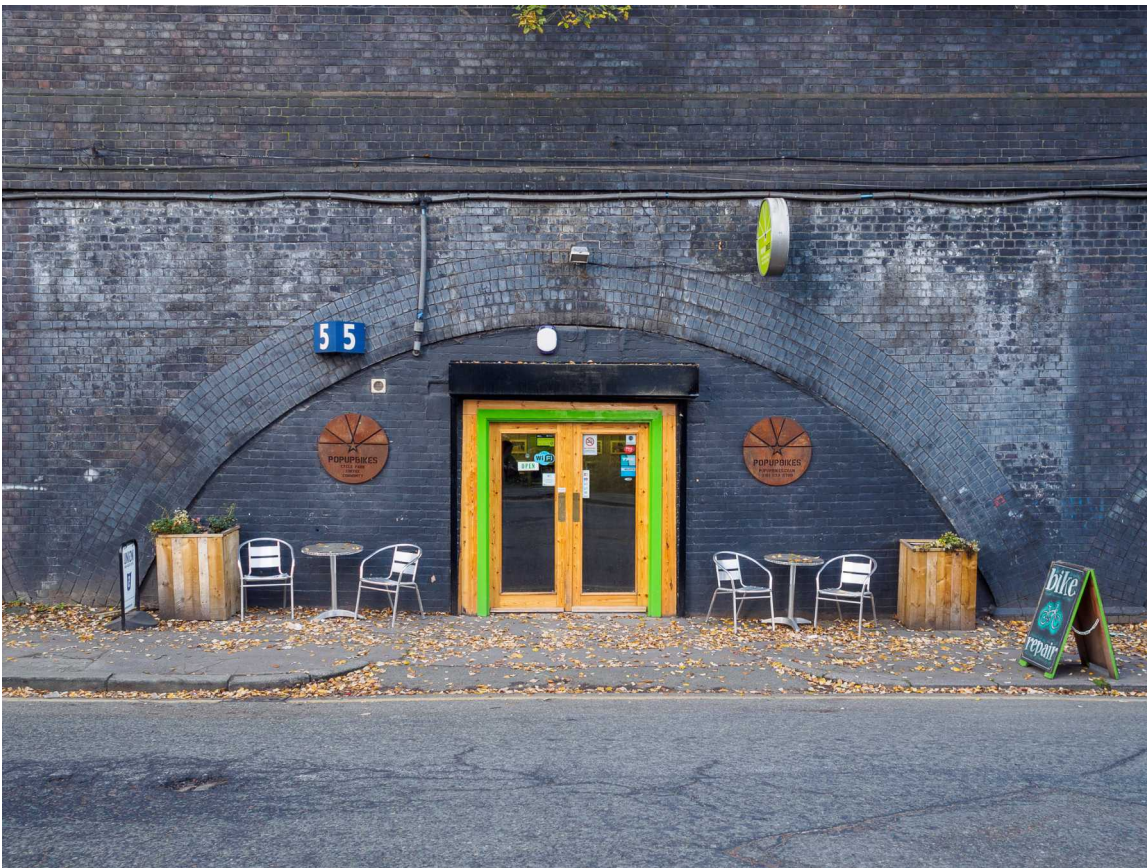
For Peter's recent book:

<https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/a-day-at-the-races/>



Margate 2018





Manchester 2014



Hebden Bridge 2016







Verona 2015



Viareggio 2016



Wakefield 2019



## Containers

### Keith Launchbury FRPS

I do very little 'Contemporary' photography but slip most often into forms of the pictorial or the documentary, beguiled perhaps into chasing the light within a landscape. I also feel this may be easier than that more intellectual, contemplative pursuit, the self-questioning reflective approach demanding such committed, investment of one's inner consciousness. In my darkroom years (then using back-and-white film exclusively) I was a devotee of content and printing as presented by Fay Godwin in her many books. Fay described her own work as 'documentary realism' and I thought at the time her practice fitted well within the RPS definition of 'Contemporary'. To quote Virginia Khuri FRPS in her editorial introduction to the Autumn/Winter 1997 issue of the Contemporary Photography Newsletter: 'I would suggest that a definition (if there can be one) lies in the process by which we give photographs meaning – the process by which a photographer takes his subject matter and enlarges or transforms its meaning through his seeing, and then offers the viewer a similar experience. This photograph is no longer simply a document of a person, place or thing; rather it becomes the record of an individual's experience of it'.



When thinking about the contemporary genre, as referred to here by Virginia, there are two aspects of my own character I wish to convey, namely my sense of humour and my desire to ask questions of what I'm looking at with camera in hand. These are the two vital investments of myself I wish to make in creating a series. If I can show these two aspects,





then it satisfies me that I'm pursuing the contemporary track. All the projects I then undertake, can offer the potential for that rather rare journey where I strive toward what the RPS today call 'Contemporary & Conceptual Photography'.



As an example, just before Covid-19 'lockdown' came In March, I had begun to look into the undertaking of a new project and I gave it the working title, 'Containers'. The inspiration for this came from way back in my childhood and that TV game show presented by Michael Miles: 'Take Your Pick'. The show first aired in the year I was born, 1955, and ran until 1968 (to be revived in 1970 with Des O'Connor as host). Carried along on waves of audience enthusiasm I shouted at the telly, 'open the box', as Michael teased the contestant with ready cash in return for that key to one of the numbered boxes taking centre stage. That irresistible question of what's in the box? Well, boxes don't come much bigger than shipping containers and there are a few of those around me as I sit here typing this note. However, to get a longer series going, I needed to range further afield than my bedroom window. But then abruptly, 'lockdown' came!

So, the accompanying images drawn from, as yet, only a dozen small work-prints is as far as I've taken things to-date. I now need to set myself some rules or parameters to enable the project to be taken forward with added rigour. I should define for my own purposes here what a 'container' is – how wide I may determine what is and what isn't a 'container', or whether indeed this is helpful at all.











I may then be denied the excitement which comes from discovering the 'new' which wouldn't have fitted, but now strangely does. Each of the containers has its own history of use and re-use, but what's inside them now? That Michael Miles tease! Will they still be in the same place ten years from now? In Westnewton, the village which is now my home, there are three identical blue 'GIFF' containers. Did these arrive as a job lot, each looking for its forever home? For me, the Cumbrian Coast has been a discrete geographical location going back at least 25 years to when I first sought out what I took to be evidence of its quirkiness. Was this entirely my own invention or had it some reality, one recognisable to others through the photographs I had taken there and which comprised my submission for FRPS. I've come to feel that 'Containers' is a theme central to my 'Cumbrian Coast Revisited' images. Containers, a work in progress, and something to come back to once lockdown is behind me. Can I convince others to share, even experience, my own curiosity?





## Anthropomorphs

### Stefan Shillington

"We say they're inanimate and call them 'things', and their disguise is very good. But just occasionally you may see, out of the corner of your eye, the mask slip..."

From the start sixty odd years ago my photography has been 'Modernist'. I didn't know this at the time, but later realised that all the photographers who inspired me were modernists. When post-modernism arrived on the scene I realised that this was the direction I had been trending. So these days I think of my work as modernist but inclined towards post-modernism. But that says nothing about what interests me.

I like to work on projects. Mostly these projects I find challenging to complete - I look to represent my ideas through metaphor, and I find this very difficult. However I persevere and gradually sets of images come together. While this is going on however I continue to take pictures of anything that catches my eye. Without any real direction, from time to time I find I have a set of images which are telling me they belong together. And it is their post-modernism which holds this group together.

At the start of lockdown I did what many will have done, I set to reviewing my stock of unused images, in my case from the last fifteen years. These were images which I liked but which I hadn't yet used. By the time I had finished I had a set that called out for attention. 'Anthropomorphs' is not a serious project, but it makes me smile, and for me that's enough.

'...and if you're very quiet you too may see them.'





I'm Sorry



Mother Baby





Gossip



Old Friends



Don't Cry







Treebeard with Light Sabre





The Dreamer



## North Report

### Lyn Newton

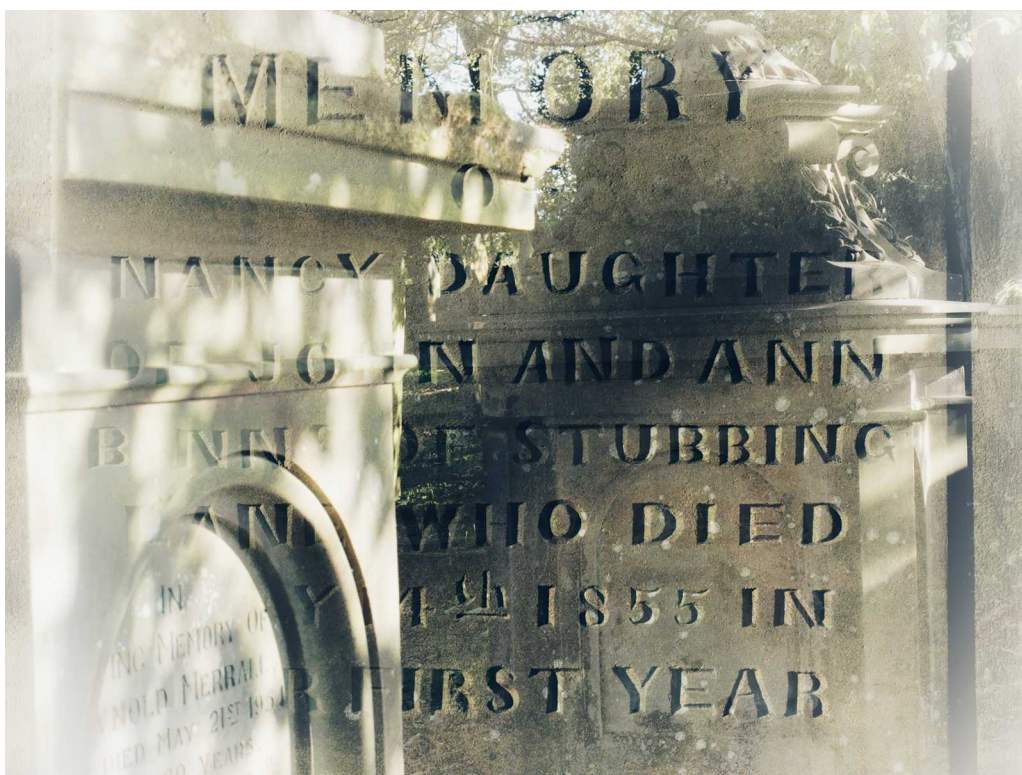
Contemporary North group held their Zoom meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> September. Here we publish edited excerpts from Lyn Newton's commentary, hopefully conveying the enthusiasm and creativity of those present.

Morris Gregory introduced his *One Acre of Photographs* to the group. After buying an acre of land behind his house he set himself the challenge of photographing it over seasons and at different times of the day.

He stressed the experimental nature of the work, adopting intentional camera movement, multiple exposures as well as straight shots to capture the grasses, flowers, trees and wildlife that he found in his acre of land. Some of the images have a pointillist feel to them and others are quite abstract in style.

He told us that he hasn't yet settled on a specific direction, but would probably make a book when the project was finished because he prefers to work on projects rather than individual images.

Wendy North shared with us her enigmatic work *Dream Time*. The project started pre-lockdown when Wendy began experimenting with an iPad app allowing her to blend images together. The images she felt were slightly nightmarish and dreamlike and out of this came "the misty, tangled up in



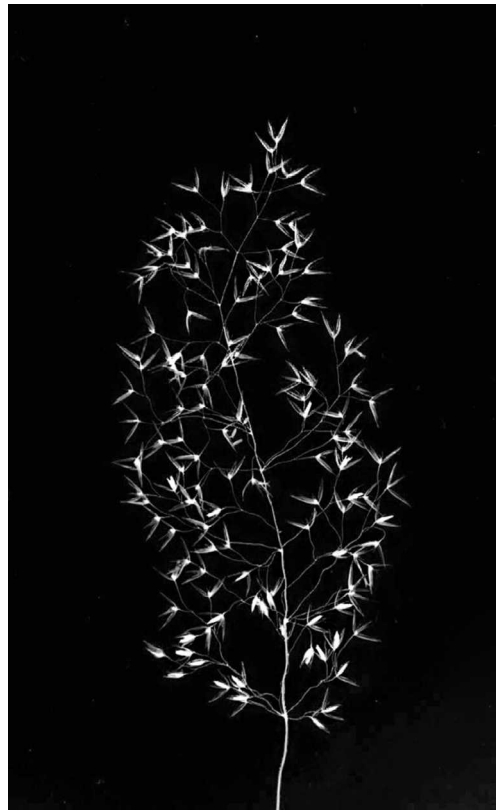
the duvet, hazy memories of people and places". Lockdown gave her the time to experiment with a selection of images to position in panels so that they made connections and suggested stories. Several included a much loved teddy bear photographed through a plastic bag which adds to the ethereal quality of the images. The resulting book, in two separate parts, has been carefully curated to take into account colour tones, flow and subject matter. Wendy has now put that on ISSUU.



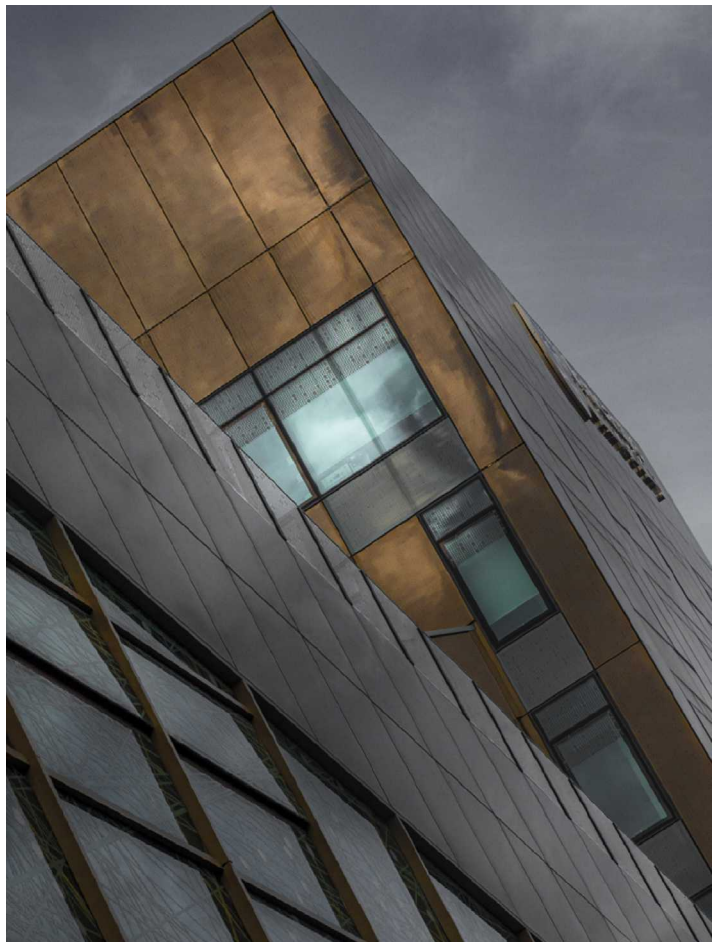


Celine Alexander Brown talked to the group about her passion for seeking out and photographing beauty wherever she is. During lockdown she had spent a lot of time in her garden taking photos of flowers experimenting with techniques she had learned in RPS lockdown workshops, focus stacking, intentional camera movement, conversion to black and white, and revealing underlying hidden textures. She had also produced a panel of images, in striking colours, of gladioli in her garden.

In the discussion Celine was questioned about whether her work was actually contemporary. Members felt that it was, Nigel Tooby saying that the subject was not important; what was important was the purpose behind the images. We all agreed that her studied, investigative approach embodied the idea of photos 'about' and not 'of'.



Lyn Newton showed images from a project she was pursuing in Newcastle. She explained that she was walking around the city looking for the unexpected and never noticed. Her images included patterns and reflections where buildings interact with each other and unusual views of iconic structures. Like Celine, Lyn experimented with a combination of multiple exposures and some intentional camera movement to create the effect she wanted. She also changed the kelvin temperature between multiple exposures. The project is far from complete and she is hoping, ultimately to put the images into a book.



Richard Hall as part of his university degree course was asked to identify and pay homage to a photographer working before 2000. Richard chose Todd Hido, particularly liking the way Hido leaves gaps in the narrative of his work, making it ambiguous so that the viewer can engage with and interpret the story. Hido takes banal images such as suburban houses but points his camera into the sun, or through rain or dirt-covered windscreens to create a



filter between the viewer and the object. Richard's own images convey an air of mystery and suspense, many taken in low light.

In the week following our meeting, Richard received word that his Associate application had been awarded for his book *A Photobook Project in 80 Days*. You will know his book from the blogs on our webpage. His was the first one in response to lockdown. Richard's story is an amazing one. He bought his first camera in 2017, then went on to achieve both Licentiate and Associate distinctions within two months. After our last North meeting in July, Richard joined the Contemporary Group. What an inspiration!

Avijit Datta talked about a project by Carolyn Mendelsohn which she will discuss in a Contemporary Group talk in January. But before then in another blog Avijit will interview Carolyn about her teaching project with young people -see below.

Carolyn is well known for her project *Being Inbetween* which is a series of images of girls aged between 10 and 12, exploring the transition between childhood and adulthood. The images have been made into a book and have been widely exhibited across the country.

In her new project, Carolyn applied for funding from Bradford Council to work with a broad range of young people in Bradford, including many from refugee families and some with disabilities. Working on Zoom, she taught the young people photographic skills and asked them to record, on their phones, their feelings and emotions during the lockdown period. The aim was to ask them to record photographically what they might find difficult to say in words. The findings were very positive, creating social cohesion and a sophistication of imagery that would have been hard to anticipate. Some of the images have now been made into posters and are displayed around Bradford.





The final presenter was Gary Morgan who shared a selection of images from Vietnam, Stuttgart, and the UK. He was particularly influenced, he said, by tones and curves. Many of his images were in black and white. He particularly liked the work of Karl Blossfeldt and had used a similar technique in a couple of his own images. The group particularly liked the 'spring onions' with their papery leaves and textures, from his series "What I Found in the Compost Bin."



### Links

Dream Time by Wendy North:

[https://issuu.com/wendynorth/docs/dreamtime\\_wendynorth\\_200720](https://issuu.com/wendynorth/docs/dreamtime_wendynorth_200720)

A Day at the Races by Peter Bartlett published by ADM Publishing, on Amazon or via the publisher at [www.artdecomagpie.com](http://www.artdecomagpie.com) at £12.50 or £20 for the signed Collector's Edition, including a 5 x 7 inch print. There is a 10% discount at the moment if you quote the code REDRUM.

A Photobook Project in 80 Days by Richard Hall

<https://rps.org/news/groups/contemporary/2020/july/caythorpe-frieston/>

The Self Isolation project by Carolyn Mendelsohn

[https://www.instagram.com/through\\_our\\_lens\\_covid19\\_proj/](https://www.instagram.com/through_our_lens_covid19_proj/)

### Look out for

Avijit Datta's upcoming blog on our webpage, in which he interviews Carolyn Mendelsohn about teaching young people to express their feelings and themselves via photography, using an easily deliverable series of lessons and debriefing sessions on the Internet. ...and the proposed group book *Vision 20:00*. Wendy North and Lyn Newton will set up a Dropbox link from the end of October for members to put their images in. Each person taking part will have up to 6 pages of an A4 landscape book to fill as they wish. Wendy and Lyn will send around dimensions and information and also put this as a file in Dropbox. All images must be taken by 31 December 2020 to fulfil the title and must be



sent to Dropbox by, at the latest, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021. It is hoped people will send in their work earlier if it is ready.



Avijit Datta







Peter Bartlett: A Day at the Races





## MADE IN CHINA Armando Jongejan FRPS

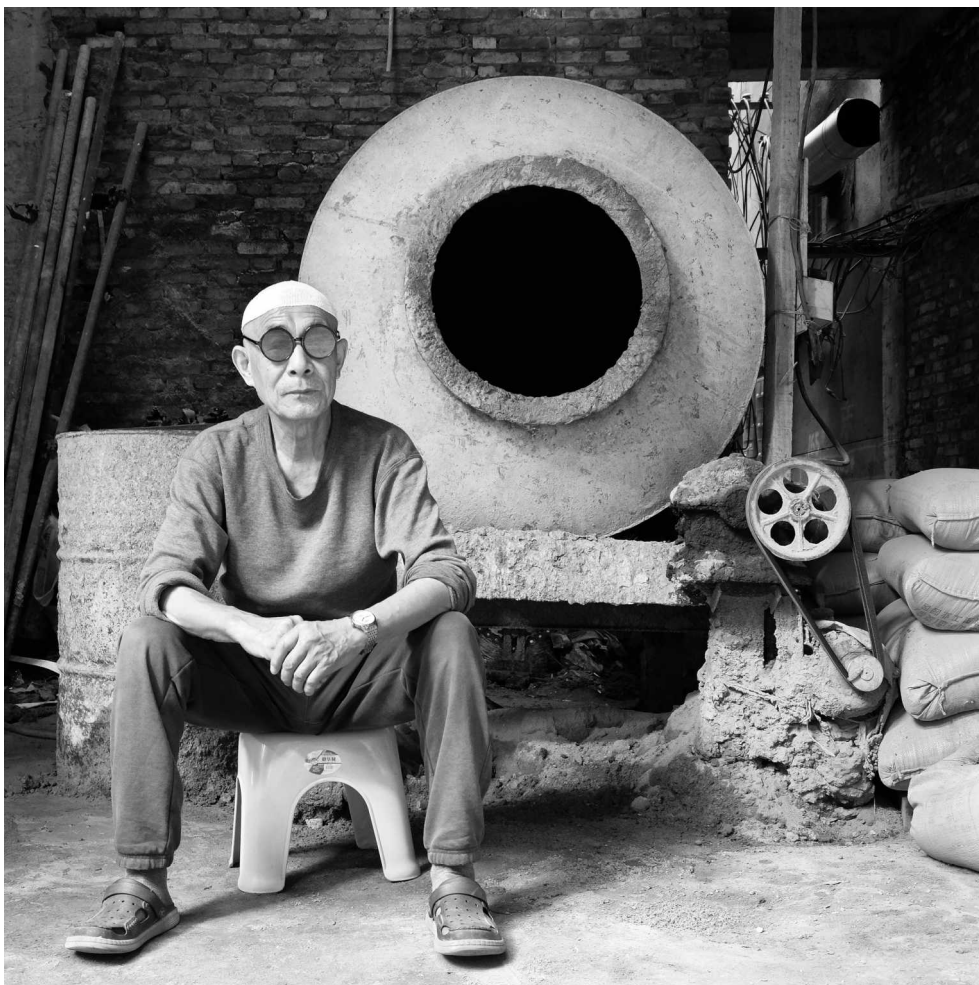
review: Ken Holland ARPS

When I read, in the August 2020 edition of Concept, Romney Tansley's engaging interview with Armando Jongejan, about his new photobook MADE IN CHINA, I rushed to purchase my copy.

"Made in China" is something we see on consumer goods almost every day but Armando's book is the very antithesis of consumerism. It is exquisitely crafted in all respects. The selection of images was obviously made with great care and the design and layout matches the images perfectly. The reproduction of the monochrome images printed large on each page has been perfectly executed on very high quality paper.

Armando Jongejan studied photography at the University of Applied Photography in Apeldoorn and now works as a freelance photographer. As a documentary photographer he seeks to make contact with people in their own environment, driven by curiosity about how they live, what they do. You can almost hear the conversations he must have had with many of the characters who appear in this book.

Visiting China as a tourist, Armando used small camera bodies in a non-threatening way to capture the moments of everyday life that he encountered on his journeys. He did not originally have a book in mind, but the very positive reaction to his images on Facebook made him think otherwise, and fortunately for all of us, the book began to take shape, and we now have the opportunity to see his work in print.



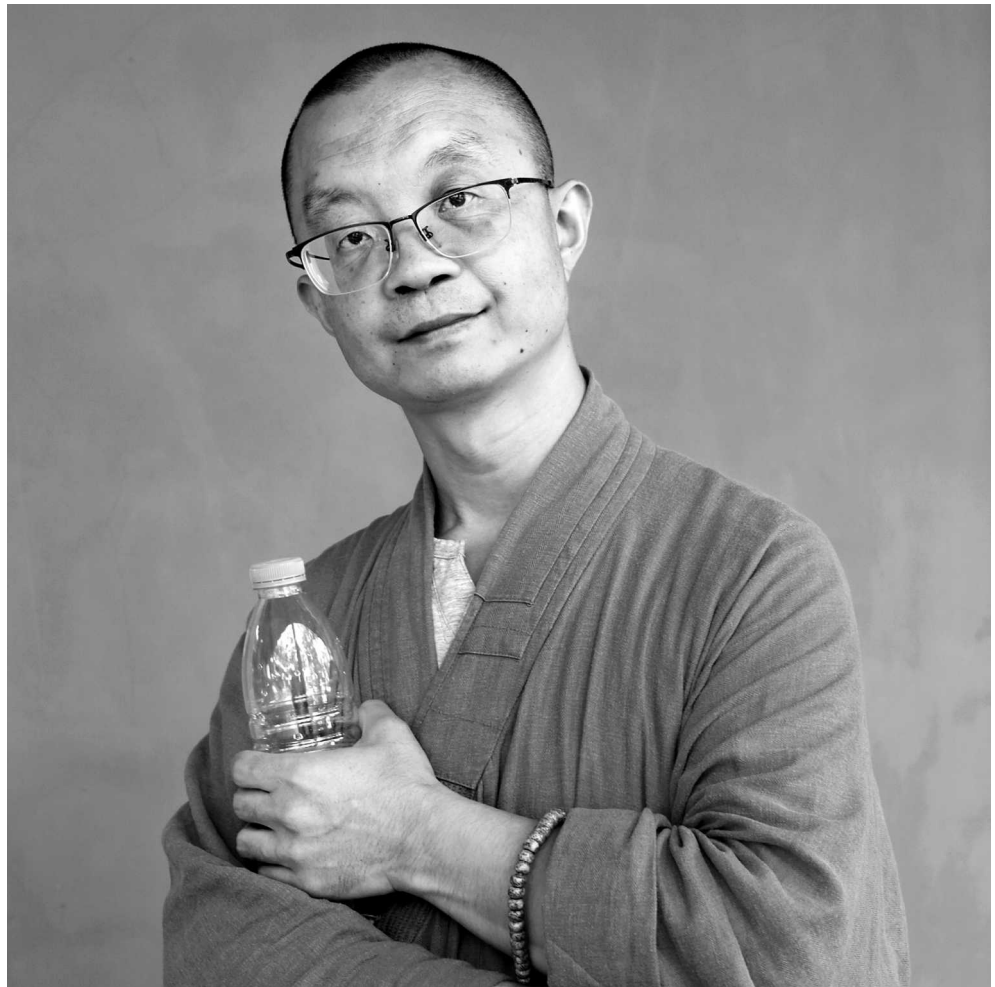
The images themselves are quite diverse, ranging from beautifully intimate individual portraits, to people at work and play, large crowds, children, weddings and the military. Beautifully observed, these fleeting glimpses of everyday life in China, in cities and villages, are handled with great warmth and sensitivity. The images are superbly reproduced, the detail in them





almost jumping off the page.

There's a frontal scene of an artisan-craftsman sitting in his place of work. He seems very relaxed and at ease on his home ground. He exudes a sense of pride in his workplace, and obviously enjoys sitting on his stool. What, for me, makes this image so compelling is the use of circles to enhance the sense of unity - between the man, his equipment and his surroundings.

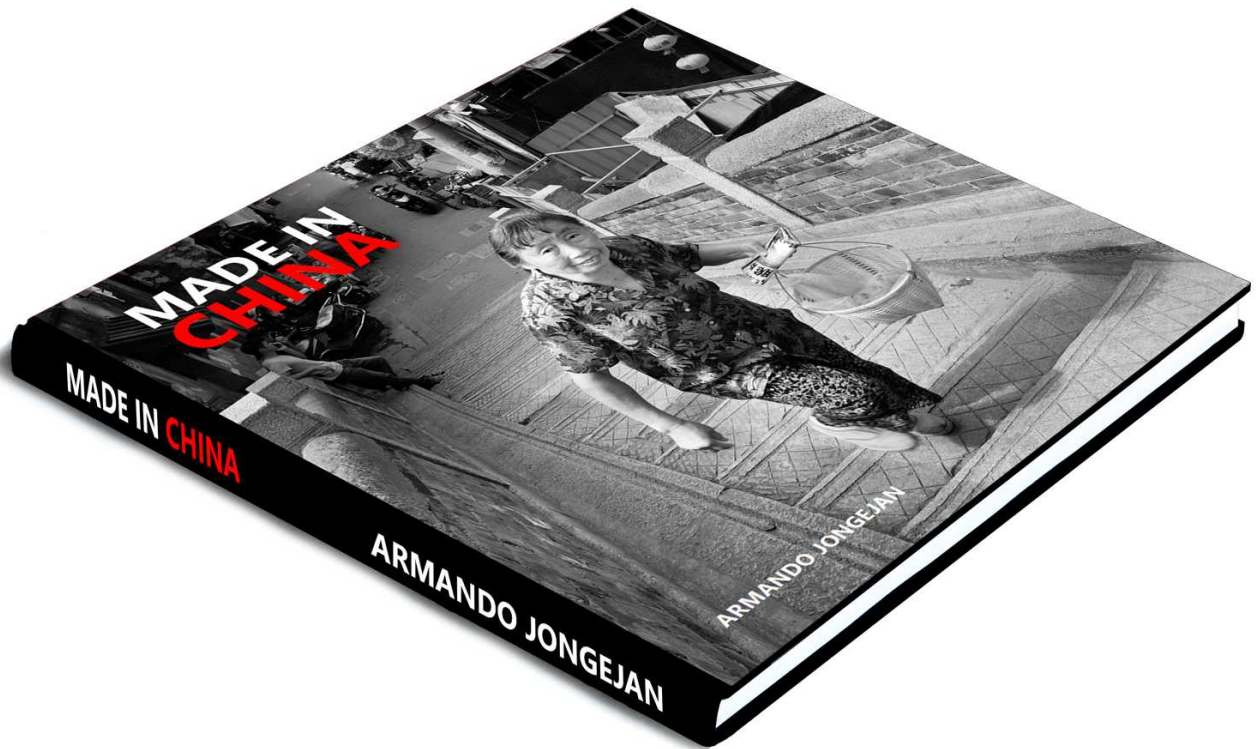


There's another of a man who could well be a monk. This image is starkly simple, an almost formal portrait with no hint of background distraction. We see his shaved head, robe and beads to give us an idea of his faith. He has a relaxed attitude with a hint of a smile and a slight tilt of the head. The bottle of water hints perhaps at the purity in his life.

What unites these images is the feeling of empathy with the subjects. Both are gentle observations of men who are confident, happy to be photographed, and obviously comfortable in the presence of the photographer. With both we are offered an insight into their (very different) ways of life. Both photographs are taken from a low angle, evoking a feeling of unity with the craftsman and implying perhaps a deference to the monk's calling.

The images are left to speak for themselves. Very brief items of text in Dutch at start and finish do not interfere with the viewer's need to interpret them for him or herself. I almost feel as though I share Armando's journey with him, and meet the very people he chooses to photograph. This is much more than a travelogue: it is an insight into culture, personality and vision, and is now a treasured item in my book collection.





*MADE IN CHINA Armando Jongejan*

30cm x 30cm 134 pages 160gsm Biotop paper

There may still be copies available:

[armandojongejan@hotmail.com](mailto:armandojongejan@hotmail.com) for more details





## Online Contemporary Exhibition

### Call for Entries

#### Context

With many exhibition venues closed during the Covid-19 pandemic the Contemporary Group would like to offer an online venue for your work. This call is open to all members of the Contemporary Group of the RPS (yes, all 349 of you). Our intention is that we use this opportunity to showcase current work and involve all members.

#### Themes

Given the nature of contemporary work we do not wish to be too prescriptive on theme or subject yet would like to address some themes that are of interest and relevance at the current time. There will be three themes:

1. **Open:** any work that is both recent, and previously not exhibited.
2. **Life in Lockdown:** any work that shows aspects of how life *feels* to have changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Images should have been made since 22 March 2020 up to the closing date for the call.
3. **Climate change:** any work that shows *positive mitigation* rather than more usual images of environmental degradation. We want to showcase what can and is being done to encourage more positive initiatives.

#### Submissions

By email to: [contemporaryexhibition@rps.org](mailto:contemporaryexhibition@rps.org)

Images: a series of 5 single images; maximum size of 2000 pixels on the longest side, in jpeg format.

Please name the file as: membershipnumber\_theme\_title.jpeg

e.g. 83595\_open Greenspace.jpg

State: your name, RPS distinction, and a brief statement of intent (max 50 words).

#### Closing Date

Midnight GMT on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020

Dr David J. Grimshaw MA, ARPS

**RPS Contemporary Group Treasurer**



**RPS HOUSE**, 337 Paintworks, Arncliffe, Leeds LS4 3AR +44 (0)117 316 4450 [rps.org/contact](http://rps.org/contact) [frontofhouse@rps.org](mailto:frontofhouse@rps.org)

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[facebook.com/royalphotographicsociety](https://www.facebook.com/royalphotographicsociety)





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For the Archive of Contemporary Photography

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RPS Contemporary Face Book group

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Contemporary NW Facebook

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