

# Contemporary Photography

A collection of the best of new Contemporary  
Photography from the UK and around the world



Issue 93  
January 2024

**THE RPS**  
ROYAL  
PHOTOGRAPHIC  
SOCIETY



*Front cover  
Boy with a Pink Hat  
© David Cantor*

*This page  
A Place Like All Others  
© David Flood*

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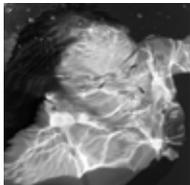
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# Contemporary Photography

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

This publication is produced by the Contemporary Group of the Royal Photographic Society.

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Deadline for the May 2024 issue  
is 1 April 2024.

# Editorial

Our 'identity' as individual humans is an amalgam of our genetic inheritance, our family and friends, our education and our life experience as a whole. Places are a part of our identity: we feel an emotional connection with the places of our childhood and where important things happened to us. Whether we are patriotic or not, we feel drawn to the visual environment of our own country – it is familiar to us and it is what we are used to. It is more than just a 'sense of place', a phrase used to explain that our visual surroundings are this location and not that location. It is an acknowledgement that certain places have formed us, how we look and how we behave.

David Flood's images of the corporate landscape are influenced by the philosophy of Max Weber, who referred to the 'Cage', an analogy for our (capitalist) society that governs its members. Flood's images depict spaces and the individuals they are intended for, and whose identity is in turn formed by those spaces.

Andriana Nativio's spaces are empty apart from the two sisters who explore them. They are remote in time as well: the link to her identity is the reminder of her own girlhood. Such a place formed her then, and she is drawn to this landscape she photographs not just because of how it looks, but because the sisters have the same relationship with it as she did with her own landscape.

The thread that connects place and identity is stretched almost to breaking point in Adra Pallón's images from Galicia. An aging population has the strongest links to its own landscape, and yet, without renewal, the continuity in identity that landscape represents will die with the inhabitants. Florence Iff approaches the same concept from a more distant, detached perspective. Her photographic collages and composites act as a record of what we are losing in our world, the life that nevertheless is what gave rise to us, supported us and is familiar to us.

One only has to look at David Cantor's wonderful portraits to guess that they came from somewhere near Brick Lane in east London (or possibly Brixton, or Brighton, or....). The evidence is hardly in the graffiti but rather in the look (the 'performance') of the individuals themselves. Each one has an identity formed in part by the place where Cantor encountered them, and that place in turn is created by them. A clearer relationship between identity and place could not be imagined!

Paul Ashley ARPS, Editor

# Conversations

## David Cantor

He stood waiting at a bus stop, and it was obvious that I should take a photograph of this striking man with his trolley and placard, but, weakly, I walked by. Ten seconds later, after berating myself for being so feeble, I returned to ask permission. "Why do you want to do that?" Back then, I fumbled some kind of lame response. Instead of making a photograph, we had a conversation and David 'Royal Star' King told me about the event that changed his life.

As a young man David had been an up-and-coming boxer, until one fateful evening an assailant emptied a shotgun at his head. The wounds were horrific, and it took a full year for him to learn to walk and speak again. When strong enough, he campaigned vigorously against the carrying of handguns by those he disarmingly described as 'young stars'. His undeniable logic was that he was uniquely qualified to appeal directly and successfully to gun-toting young men. Opposition to David's approach came from the office of the then Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, resulting in David being barred from entering County Hall.

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Undeterred, David continued his crusade, all the time insisting that he is a survivor not a victim. After sharing his story, he said "OK, you can take a picture". I took about five, his bus arrived and he was gone. That day would prove pivotal to my future photographic direction; that chance meeting convinced me that a meaningful connection with my subject is as important as pressing the shutter.

A second and very important ingredient of my photography is having a sense of place and connection with a location's geography and history. The locality that draws me most intensely is Spitalfields and the surrounding area of East London, a place with significant family roots. In the early 1900s, my grandparents arrived from Ukraine. My grandfather, a sign writer with alleged 'differences' with the Tsar, married my grandmother in Whitechapel; it's where my father was born. I'd like to suggest therefore, that with a strong understanding of place, knowing from where and from whom you came, unforeseen photo opportunities can arise — if you set out expecting the unexpected, the chances are something wonderful will happen. Expressing these ideas far more eloquently than I ever could, Oxford scholar Theodore Zeldin provides us with these words of wisdom:

*"Conversation is a meeting of minds with different memories and habits. When minds meet, they don't just exchange facts, they transform them. Conversation doesn't just reshuffle the cards: it creates new cards and it involves being willing to emerge a slightly different person".*

Come and let me introduce you to some of the remarkable people I've met over the years.

See: [davidcantor.weebly.com](http://davidcantor.weebly.com)



David Star Royal King



*Dillan the Singer Man*

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*Japanese  
Street Artist*



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*James being James*



Jess



Jo Malone



Love



Model



*Wrapped up Warm*



*Femi*



*Nate Bate H Rapper*



*Samy Chabani*



*Anna on the Strand*



*Mick Taylor  
Life on a Bucket*

# A Place Like all Others

David Flood

The series of images examines the relationship between the photograph, body, and urban space in the context of globalised production and neoliberal governance. The work reflects on the symbolism and imagery used to influence the place-making process and rewrite our understanding of the contemporary city. The presence of the body within the photographs acts as an allegory, demonstrating our relationship with modern urban space as being determined by the forces that build them. These forces are frequently in the form of global investment corporations, who use space as a commodity for profit and investment. Therefore, the ideological forces that build them often dictate the relationships we have with our urban spaces.

Photographs have innumerable effects on how we perceive our landscapes. Images are everywhere now; we pass by them on the street, and they pass us by on our screens. We are so saturated with them that it is often difficult to measure the impact they have on us. Yet they do have an impact on how we see, dwell in, and shape the world. In that sense the project also aims to deconstruct the nature of photography as a medium which so often plays at being vernacular. It often removes the 'hand' of the image-maker, leading the viewer to believe they have an unmediated access to the worlds depicted within. However, the nature of photography is that it is always constructed, and in the creation of an image a new layer is formed for how we should understand our reality.

Within many of the images I use a fictional character called 'The Cage's Keeper' or 'The Keeper' for brevity. These images involve a performative process that gestures towards the relationship between space and the body in societies governed by global capitalism. It is necessary to point out that the cage, an analogy for society created by the German philosopher Max Weber, is not locked but open, and one may leave at any time. Therefore, the role of 'The Keeper' is to furnish the cage with the ideology necessary to keep the inhabitants inside it. 'The Keeper' is an allegory of the prevailing ideology of capitalism which has infiltrated and rules over much of our modern existence. I use him in my images to address the presence of capitalism in the spaces of the everyday. The character is also an echo from my own past as a former corporate employee, while the briefcase, belonging to my father, is another icon of the corporation.

See: [www.davidmflood.com](http://www.davidmflood.com)







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# Days of Future Passed

Florence Iff

We have created technologies to see and change the smallest molecules; we get images of galaxies from 40 million light years away; every day we discover objects in the depths of the sea, the earth and the universe that were previously unknown; at the same time we destroy both our own and most other organisms' basis of life. Like a last gasp just before collapse, we catch a brief glimpse into the miracle of existence and witness it in shock.

We are not only the perpetrators of the sixth mass extinction, we document the decay, archiving in drawers the legacy we have destroyed for bacteria and fungi that will outlive us. We look for survival possibilities in the universe and penetrate persistently with toxins into the deepest layers of the earth

Freely after Hegel we can say: since cycles of life and death close and renew themselves, since nothing exists of duration except the constant change, we must reconcile ourselves to the certainty of the self-destruction of mankind.

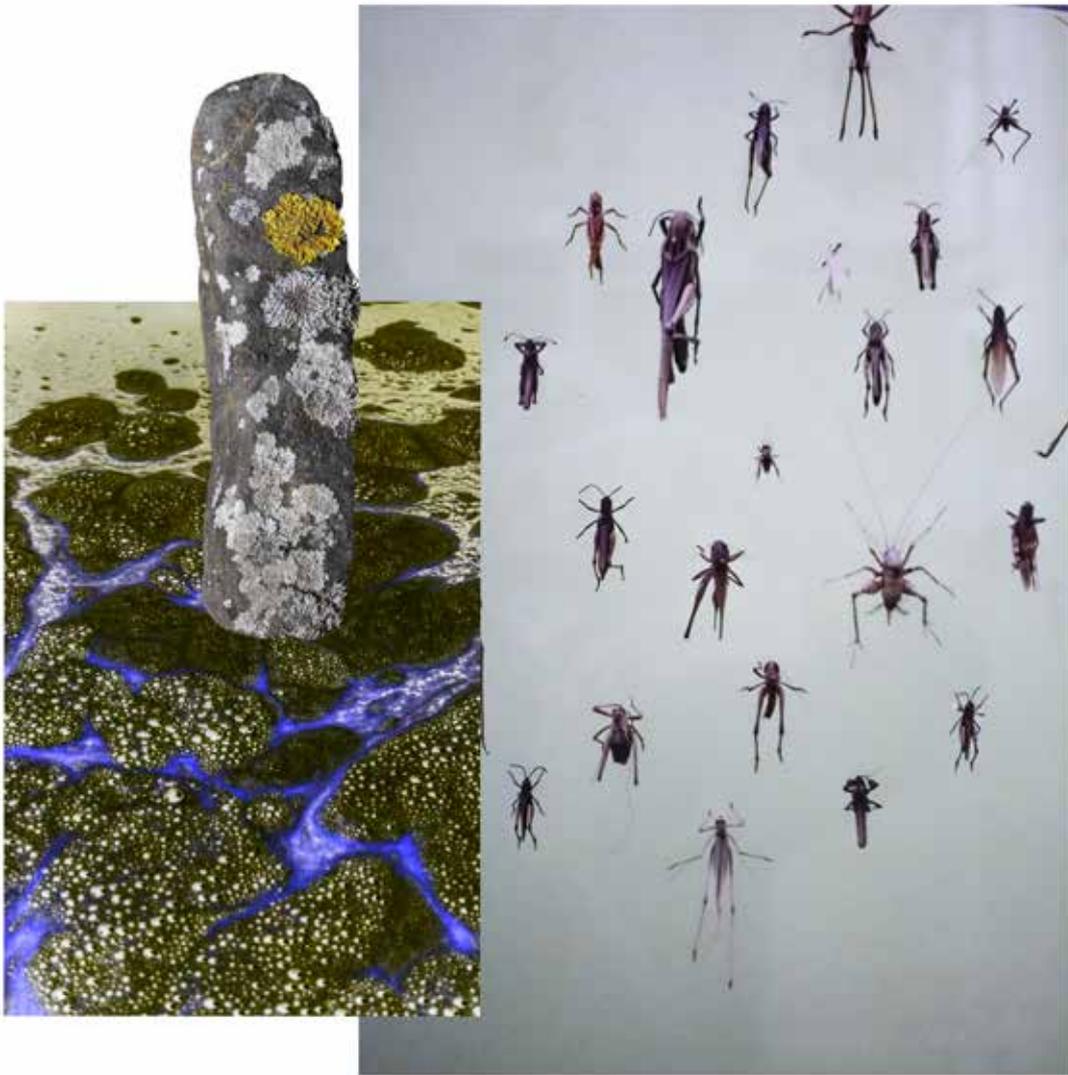
The primordial soup, however, continues to make new life possible: intermolecular forces evolve things still unknown to us, fungal spores fly to distant planets, and jellyfish unfold in their most perfect beauty. Time and space intertwine.

In my wanderings I find signs, clues, the unexpected, the depressing and the hopeful. For years I have photographed and collected material of disappearance and destruction, whether natural in origin or man-made, transforming my studio simultaneously into an archive and a laboratory.

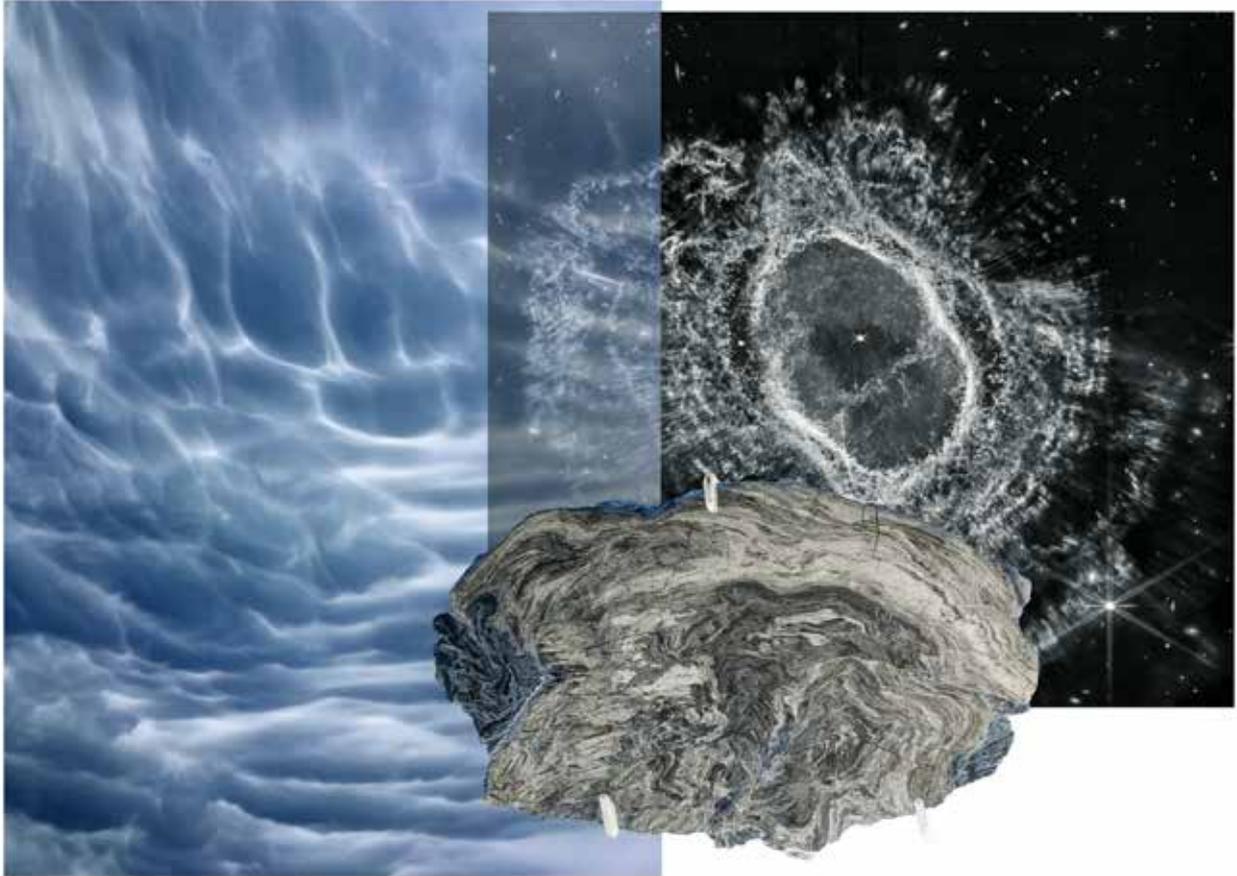
These photographs serve as a record of what once was, how and why it was destroyed and archived, what remains under the circumstances, forming symbiotic relationships, adapting, surviving, and possibly healing.

See: [Florence-iff.ch](http://Florence-iff.ch)

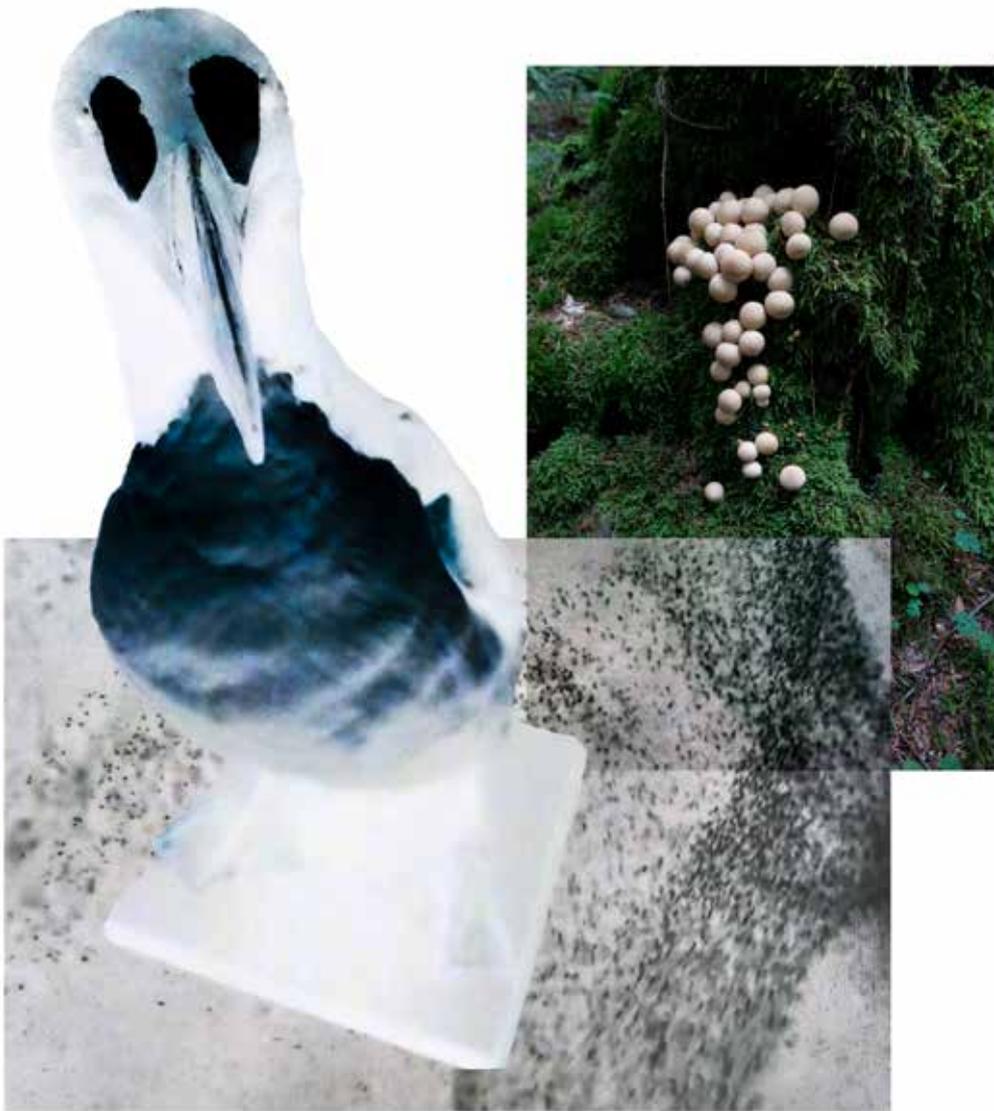
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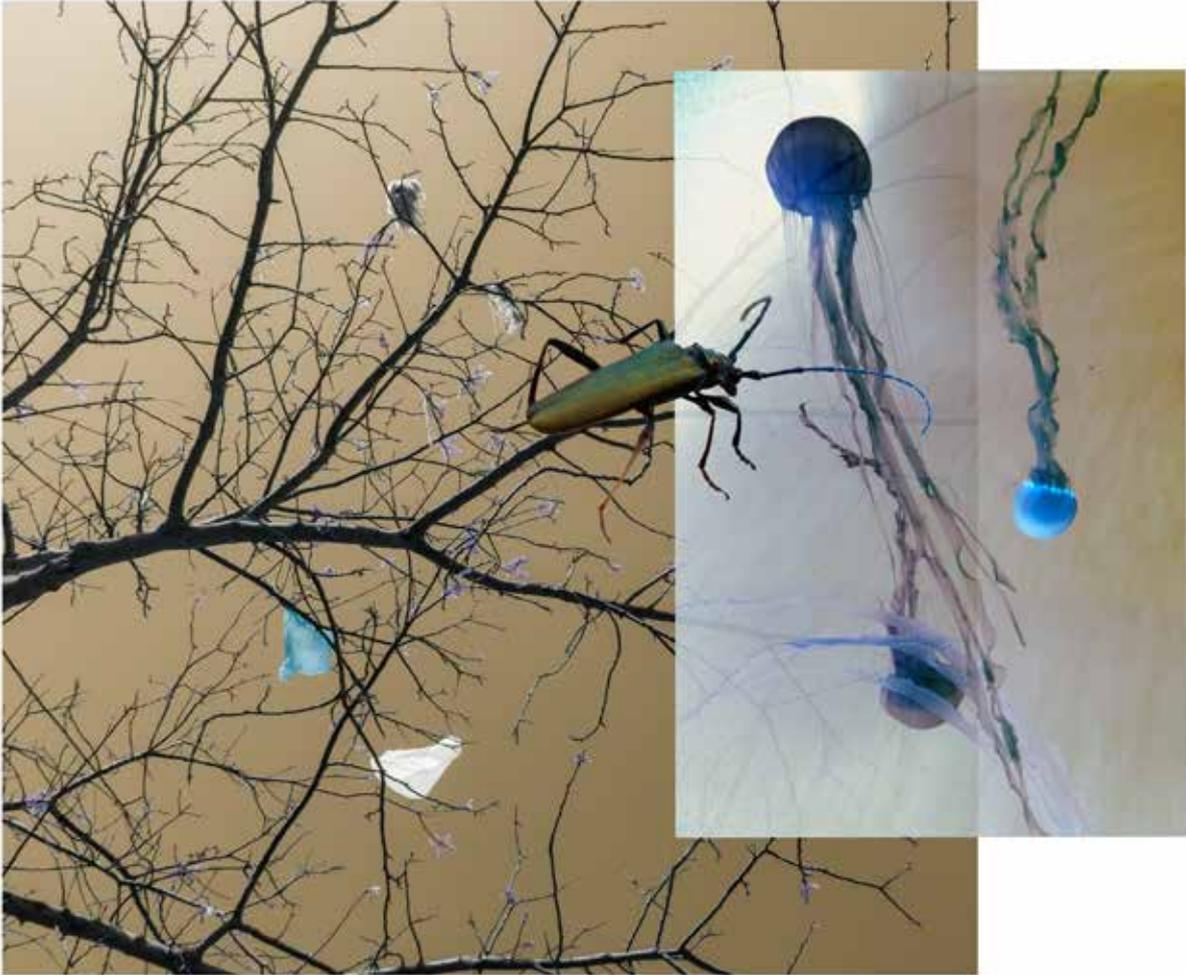
*Algae, lichen, insects*



*Precambrian rock sample, exceptional cloud formation,  
James-Webb picture of the universe*



*Extinct bird, moss-spores, mushrooms*



*Plastic bags in tree, insect, jelly fish*



*Microplastic, fish-petrification, mussels on plastic barrel*



*Plastic waste, mold, Pterosaur*



*Earth/moss/mold, disposed refrigerators, glass models of marine invertebrates*

# As We Rest in the Shadows

Andriana Nativio

While passing through a small town in Tennessee in 2019, I met two sisters who invited me to the start of an adventure into their world. The landscapes they roamed became spaces for them to bond, rebel, tell secrets, and rest without observation. This reminded me of my own girlhood and the summers I spent wandering through the lakes, woods, brush and rivers with my girl cousins, while we transformed the landscape into one that was just girl and just us. Fairy tales, urban legends, and our parents alike told us the only thing girls would meet in nature was harm or a harsh lesson to be learned. While we were warned not to stray from the path, our curiosity and desire always rose above our fear. The light wove itself through the trees and pulled us into the depths; there, we were free to disappear into the lush woods and dark waters where we were closest to ourselves. We felt we were the first to discover these spaces – maybe even the first people on Earth – or perhaps it felt like we were the last.

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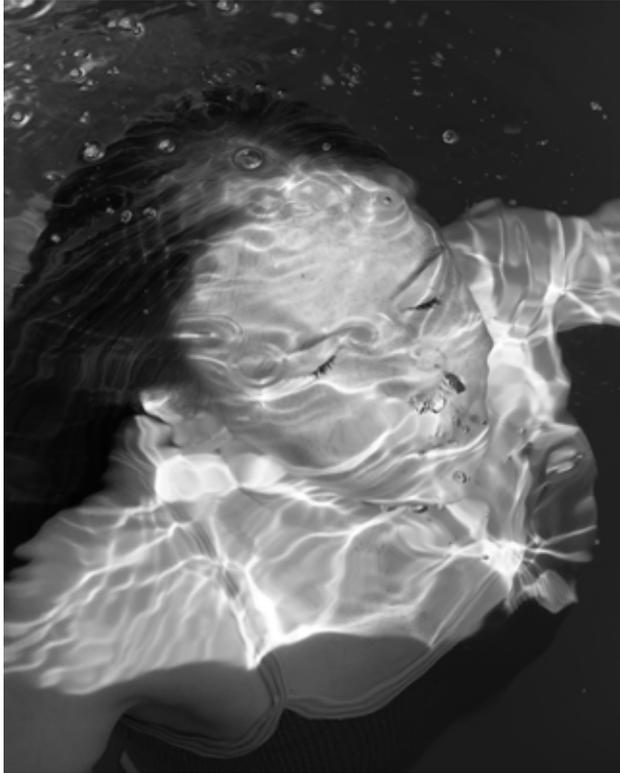
From Genesis' creation story to the cautionary tale of 'Little Red Riding Hood', to the historical stigmatization of witches and healers, and to modern cultural references such as Twin Peaks and True Crime, these stories have cast a shadow of fear over women throughout history, creating distance between the natural and feminine. Within this body of work and through the use of black and white photography, I aim to break away from fear-inducing repetitive narratives, and seek to reconstruct both literary and photographic genres historically illustrated by men of their connection to nature, or attempts to dominate it. Within this narrative of reconstruction, my work also provokes a reevaluation: while young boys' behavior is commonly regarded as more weighty, young girls' actions are dismissed as light-hearted– my work asks why the play of girls is considered less significant.

My photographs meld the sisters' journey and my memories together in an attempt to return to my girlhood. Nostalgia reveals itself to be an immensely potent emotion when making this work: a relentless and uncontrollable yearning to revisit the past while fully aware of its inaccessibility. I have found that our deepest fear was not rooted in the stories passed down to us, but rather an unspoken understanding existed among us, knowing we'd eventually have to leave this place. The light that drew us in shifted to shadows that loomed over us - a reminder of time itself.

See: [www.andriananativio.com](http://www.andriananativio.com)



*Beside the Lake*



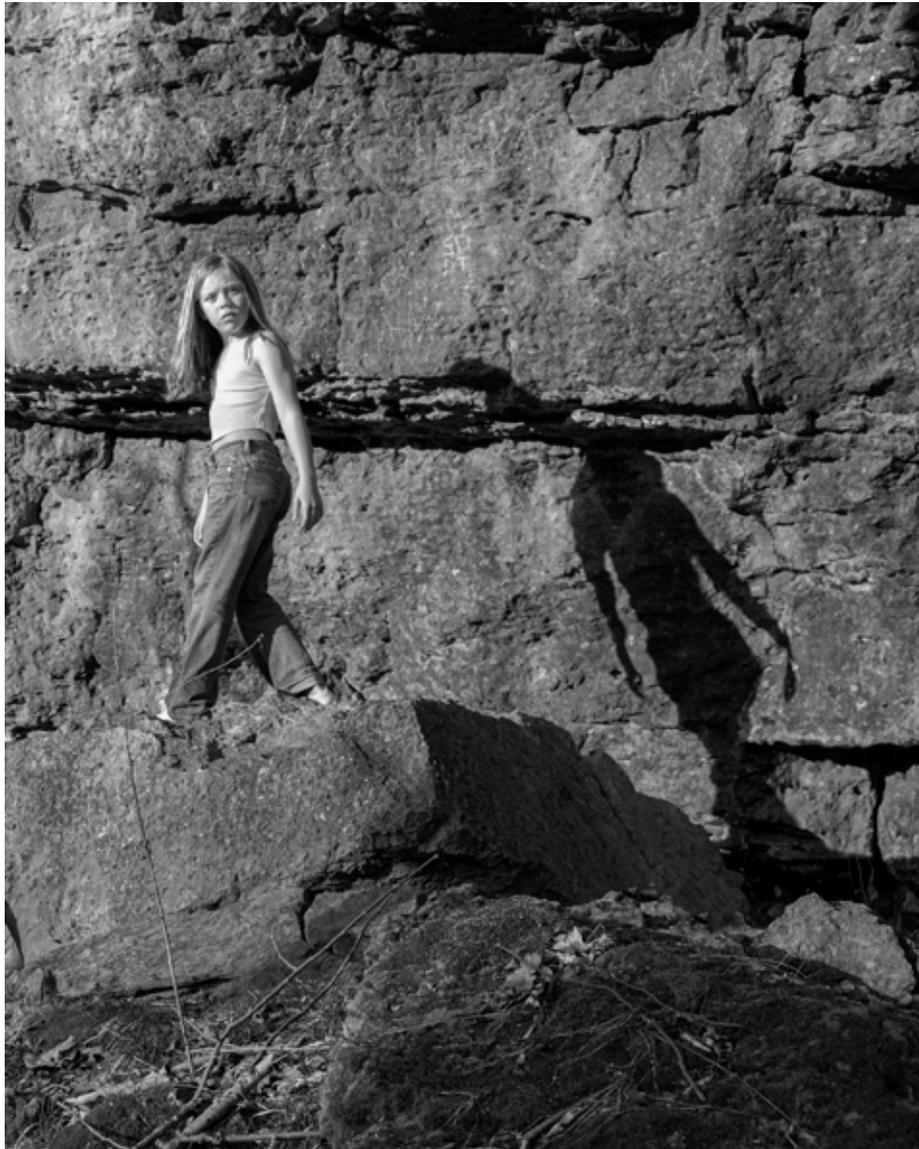
*Hold Your Breath*



*Lily Pads*

*In the River*





*Jae's Shadow*



*Jeni Looking Up to Jae*



*Through the Brush*



*The Return*



*Jae*



*Jeni*

# Demothanasia

Adra Pallón

Demothanasia is the process by which political actions or omissions lead to the disappearance of a territory's population. Death by depopulation is slow and silent. It is merciless with the territory, nature and heritage. The situation is no less dramatic for the people who live or, rather, exist in rural areas. Those who live in the most absolute solitude in a silent, silenced and misnamed empty Spain. In reality, it is not yet empty.

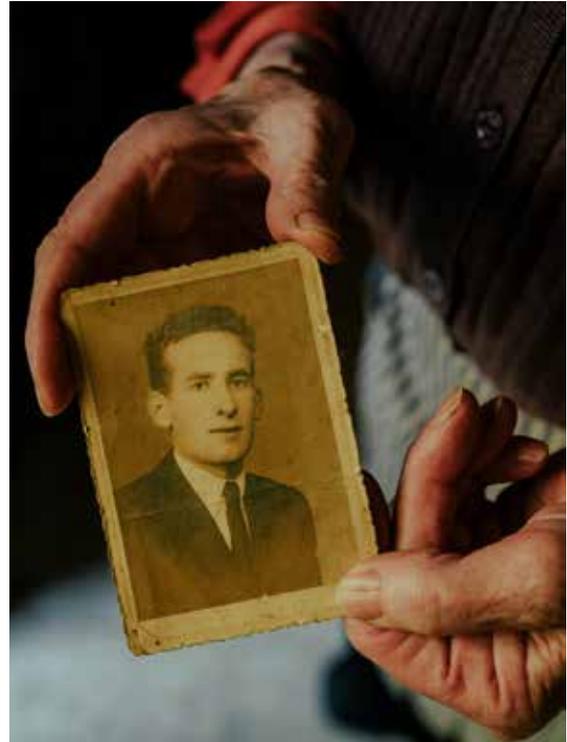
Europe is the most ageing continent in the world. One of the regions most affected by ageing according to Eurostat is Galicia. There is a high percentage of elderly people with a lack of residential autonomy or with a certain degree of dependency who are reluctant to leave the land where they have lived all their lives. They live alone where care and assistance are conspicuous by their absence. Extremely worrying social contexts in the face of insufficient resources on the part of the administration and the passivity, full of implicit violence, of the political actors involved. A large part of the ageing population is abandoned in these areas with a lack of care and very limited social and health care coverage.

These are traditionally smallholding territories due to the sinuous orography that makes intensive production impossible. The current voracious market of macro-production and over-production, the lack of quality telecommunications and connections means that the demographic pyramid in most of the territories is inverted. There are population centres where the pyramid does not even have a base due to the low birth rate and the massive rural exodus.

The depopulation of rural areas is one of the causes of numerous environmental problems such as the increase in the voracity of forest fires or the increase in soil erosion.

If there are no radical changes in this respect, the death of the last rural inhabitants will bring with it the death of a social model and then it will be an empty Spain.

[www.adrapallon.com](http://www.adrapallon.com)









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# Metropolis, by Alan Schaller

## Book Review by Tim Hancock

This somewhat weighty (2.2kg) and substantial (34cm x 28cm, 240 pp) 'coffee table' book is Schaller's first publication since transitioning from a music career to street photography some ten years ago. The book has no foreword by another photographer, but does have a three page foreword explaining his career migration. This is in itself an interesting story especially in that he attributes his fatigue with the music industry to not developing a personal style, something he clearly set out to rectify in photography.

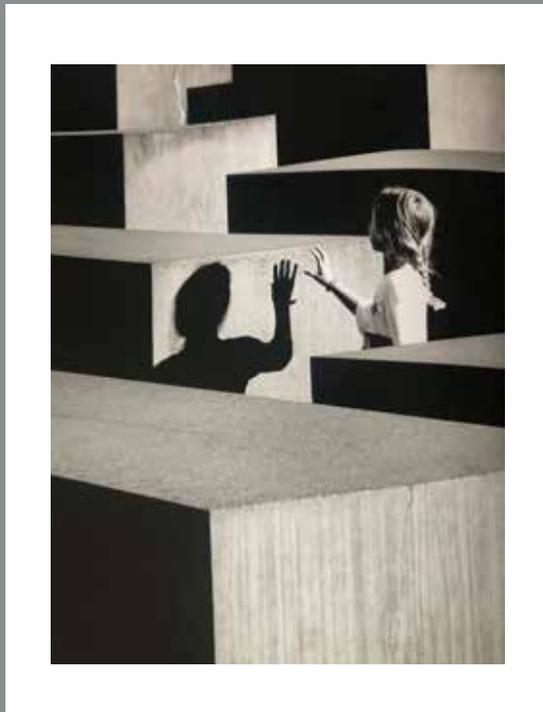
Every photograph is beautifully printed; quite a challenge with the large amounts of dense blacks in many of the images, which result from his regular use of large areas of space (I hesitate to use the "negative" , although he does). Schaller's use of shafts of light highlighting individuals will not be a new photo technique to most, although he does take this to extremes with significant underexposure. Whilst this technique is by no means unique to Schaller, and is in danger of becoming a cliché in street photography, he does use it very well, and such images do not feature on every page. Indeed, towards the back of the book, Schaller has several high key images, again with large amounts of space to focus attention on the subject matter. Geometry and abstraction are also in frequent use throughout the book along with his candid portraiture.

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Many of the photographs are pleasing in that they still rely on the "decisive moment" as people pass under lights or frame themselves amongst the urban landscapes of London, USA, Japan, Europe, Australia and Latin America. This is certainly a well-travelled collection, and as a UK resident myself I found the photographs from outside the UK to be the most interesting. Decisive moments were especially critical to several photographs that include pigeons and crows in the composition, which add to the sense of occasion, as well as highlighting Schaller's excellent compositional skills with his wide-angle lens. What is absent however are any dog photographs, which on his YouTube channel he says he is particularly fond of! Perhaps dog lovers will be catered for with his next production?

The many photographs presented vary in size from half page to full double page spreads. Each is a fine example of candid street photography, and of working a location to the full. Each image tells a story of course, but the author makes no attempt to impose his own interpretation of the narrative, leaving this to the reader. The book in its entirety is not attempting to pass a message though, but is a true collection of the very best of contemporary street photography. I recommend it. The price is around £50, which is good value, given the size and quality of printing.

Published by teNeues Publishing UK Ltd.



# View from Scotland

Steven Whittaker ARPS

2023 saw the emergence of a new regional sub-group of the Contemporary special interest group, up in the vast north that is Scotland. There isn't a huge number of Contemporary members in Scotland, and I guess the question is that age old chicken and egg one...is that lack of numbers because there isn't a Scottish sub-group, or is the lack of a Scottish sub-group because there is a lack of members in Scotland? Like all good philosophical debates, the answer is immaterial to 90% of us. However, I'm a social sort of cove, and an innate organiser, so we started a Scottish Contemporary sub-group, which quickly became the Scottish Contemporary and Documentary sub-group.

A broadcast request went out to all relevant members, and we currently have 9 (out of a potential 51) members who are on the mailing list, who have become actively attached. The actual to potential participant ratio within the RPS is 10-15%, so I feel the numbers are a good start. Moreover, the quality of the Scottish participants is high, so it feels bigger and better than the bare numbers suggest: two Fs, four As, two Ls, two DPA short listers, and two SPA short listers. An impressive, yet friendly and helpful bunch.

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Looking back at '23, we had a face-to-face outing in Edinburgh at the Fringe, in conjunction with Landscape/Creative Eye, which saw 20 folks turn up; we've had three members' night sessions; one external speaker, and we have good plans for 2024: more of the same, plus some different things too. Our plan is to be progressive, challenging, and supportive.

Our night meetings on zoom were attended by Contemporary and Documentary members from all round the UK, and that's encouraging too, as we don't want to be hemmed in by boundaries of any sort. Those nights are still available to view via the Contemporary/Documentary web pages.

RPS Scotland has a weekend event planned in early April (PhotoFest 24) which is open to everyone. We will have a few face-to-face advisory sessions (including Contemporary), as well as a fabulous speaker programme. One-to-ones are obviously becoming more popular, but we feel that sharing prints and chat face-to-face is still the best way to prepare for distinctions. Accessing face-to-faces is difficult for potential distinction applicants, and the logistics of hosting one is equally challenging for organisers, so a weekend like PhotoFest 24 that delivers for a few genres is perhaps the way ahead.

See: [rps.org/events/regions/scotland/2024/april-2024/photofest-24](https://rps.org/events/regions/scotland/2024/april-2024/photofest-24)

# Committee and Contacts

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## Group meetings

The Contemporary Group continues to hold meetings online and, where possible in person. Keep an eye on the RPS website, Concept and the group Facebook page for forthcoming events.

## Regional meetings

**Contemporary East.** Meetings are held online on the first Thursday of each month in the afternoons. The regional online exhibition 'Waldo' is now live: go to [www.artsteps.com](http://www.artsteps.com) and search for 'Waldo'. Contact Tom Owens for more information.

**Contemporary North.** Meetings are held monthly live at Clements Hall, York, and online, on Saturdays. Contact Patricia Ruddle for more information or see the RPS website.

**Contemporary South West.** Meetings are held regularly, online and in person. Contact Adrian Hough for details.

**Contemporary Northwest.** Meetings are held both in person and online. Contact Alan Cameron for details.

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

RPS Contemporary Group  
[rps.org/groups/contemporary](http://rps.org/groups/contemporary)

Contemporary Group Events  
[rps.org/events-listing/](http://rps.org/events-listing/)



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