

The Journal of

LONDON

independent

Summer

2002

£2.50

Photography



Contents

Remembering Jim Barron Tony Mayne	4
LIP Annual Exhibition: Call for Prints Avril R. Harris	4
About the LIP Website	4
Photographer's Gallery Bookshop Choice Sarah Fordham and Laura Knight	5
Review of Thomas Joshua Cooper's Exhibition <i>Settlement</i> Virginia Khuri	6
A Different Way of Seeing Michael Colley	8
Edward Weston - A Carmel Legacy Quentin Ball	9
Q Tip Quentin Ball	9
Who Cares...? Photo Essay Tina Stallard	10
LIP Profile: Len Salem Virginia Khuri	14
<i>Amazon and Concerning Animals:</i> review of exhibitions by John Blakemore Catherine Fehily and Paul Hill Virginia Khuri	19
Mary Dunkin: Photoessay	20
Photo Events	22
Workshops	24

Co-editors:

Jennifer Hurstfield
Tel: 020 7359 0713
jennih@waitrose.com
Articles and news items

Avril Harris
Tel: 020 8366 4068
avril_r_harris@lineone.net
Advertising and Exhibitions

Virginia Khuri
Tel: 020 7370 7501
vkhuri@aol.com
Articles and news items

Tony Wallis
Tel: 020 8960 1549
twallis@waitrose.com
Layout, Design and listings

Jeanine Billington
Tel: 020 8995 0455
Distribution

Cover Photo: Len Salem

Copy date: Please send copy and photos for inclusion in the next edition to Jennifer or Virginia BEFORE 20 August,, 2002



Thomas Joshua Cooper



Tina Stallard

The future is a real worry. I don't see Britain ever leading an independent life. It's made big with everything. There's a huge shortage of residential care. If you couldn't carry that suitcase for 100, both day without and all for the future again.

© Len Salem's author



Len Salem



Mary Dunkin

Editorial

Once again we offer you what we think is an exciting and thought provoking mix of words and images. We hope it will be an inspiration for your summer's photography!

This July marks the fifteenth anniversary of the forming of LIP and looking back we have, as they say, 'come a long way' thanks to the hard work and commitment of our many members to photography as a means of individual expression, this Journal being one example and the annual exhibition another.

Since this Journal exists for the expression of our sometimes widely varying points of view, it was good to read Peter Jennings' thoughtful review of the *Canyonlands* exhibition in the spring issue. It takes courage to introduce one's personal work into the public arena: it also takes courage to present a personal reaction to that work and Peter's review raised many important points of helpful criticism so necessary to those of us trying to communicate something personal through our photography. That some of his remarks have raised a thoughtful and impassioned response from exhibitor Michael Colley evidences a debate which we exist to encourage.

In his 'profile', Len Salem remarks that it was the impact of the first LIP exhibition which 'bowed him over' and led him to join LIP. That first exhibition selected by the V&A's Mark Haworth-Booth and Peter Turner, Editor of *Creative Camera*, set the standard for all future exhibitions, which we hope this year's exhibition will continue, hopefully inspiring other new members. We look forward to seeing new work by 'old' members; we look forward even more to seeing work by new members. And just as a tip, the more work submitted for the selectors to choose from, the better, and groups of photographs which work together are best. So take courage and let the world see what you are doing! (Submission details are on page 4.)

LIP has truly entered the 21st century with its new website designed by Gary Alexander. We hope you all will log on! (www.londonphotography.org.uk. See page 4 for further information). And finally, we look forward to seeing you at the LIP AGM on Saturday 12 October. Gary Alexander will be there to explain the intricacies of the LIP website and give some pointers on putting work on the web.

Virginia Khuri
Jennifer Hurstfield

Stop Press

*A too good to be missed event to celebrate
INSCAPE's Tenth Anniversary...*

Alistair Crawford's BRIEF EXPOSURE

**A two act illustrated reading derived
from the life of a travelling artist and
photographer**

**Hilarious, moving, tragic and comic
- a surreal examination of the
meaning of a life**

**Highly acclaimed after performances in
Machynlleth, Aberystwyth, Lampeter,
& Jersey.**

*I wanted it to go on and on and on...
greatly inspiring, humbling,
a rare event*

**Saturday 26 October at 3pm
The Steiner Theatre
35 Park Road, London NW1 6XT
(near Baker Street tube)**

**Tickets £8 all seats.
Send cheques, made payable to
Alistair Crawford
Brynawel, Comins Coch,
Near Aberystwyth
SY23 3BD.
or email alc@aber.ac.uk for more
information and a programme**

Is this magazine your first introduction to London Independent Photography? Do you want to show your work to other photographers? Are you interested in looking at and discussing photography? Are you searching for new directions in your photography?

To join LIP

Complete this form and send with a cheque for £16 (£10 for students/OAPs/UB40) to cover a year's subscription to:
Janet Hall, 27 Hawkfield Court, Woodlands Grove, Isleworth, TW7 6NU (Tel: 020 8847 5989)

NAME:

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I wish to join LIP and enclose a cheque for £..... payable to London Independent Photography

Signed.....date.....

Exhibitions Update CALLING FOR PRINTS!

For the LIP Annual Exhibition - UNTITLED 2002

PLEASE make an effort to submit to *Untitled 2002* so that our first tour of the LIP Annual Exhibition out of London will be a success, and one we can be proud of. We have a superb venue for the London show, the Cotton Atrium in Tooley Street (near London Bridge). It has plenty of space so more photographs can be hung than ever before!

The Exhibitions:

The Cotton Atrium,

2 - 17 November 2002

Smethwick Photographic Society,

13 - 27 January 2003

Old Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal

16 May - 29 June 2003

The Selectors:

Martin Barnes, in charge of Prints and Drawings at the V&A, and Paul Trevor, an internationally exhibited photographer, author of *Survival Programmes*, *Constant Exposure*, *Fotomo Blues* and *In Your Face*, and *Year of the Artist*

photographer-in-residence at the London Eye.

Submission:

Prints, mounted to framed size, should be delivered to Virginia Khuri on either 5 September from 5 to 7pm or 6 September from 11am to 2pm. If you have a problem please telephone Avril on 0108 366 4068 or email Virginia at: vkhuri@aol.com.

Selection date: 10 September.

Collection: 11 September from 11am to 2pm or 5 to 7pm and 13 September from 12 to 2pm.

Further instructions will be given at this time.

Fee: There is a £5 submission fee for up to 10 prints, and a further £5 hanging fee for each print selected up to £15 total.

Avril Harris

Exhibition Organizer

Jim Barron

The much loved and brilliant photographer Jim Barron has recently died.

His good friend Tony Mayne writes..

On his retirement from a career as a professional photographer and film cameraman, Jim Barron did not, as most of us do, slow down. On the contrary, he threw himself into photography with more enthusiasm than ever - initially with the Framework group, subsequently joining LIP when it was formed.

The work for which he will be best remembered by LIP members is his street photography - especially his contributions to the Millennium Project. He would spend three or four days each week roaming around the Capital, looking for the perfect juxtaposition of architecture, news vendors, billboards, advertisements, graffiti, dogs, and people, especially characters. It was rare to visit central London on a weekday and not bump into him with his Leica, whatever the weather.

He has work in several of the major collections and was especially pleased when one of his photographs was selected by Lord Asa Briggs for the *Faces of the Century* exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. He exhibited frequently with both LIP and other (mostly documentary) groups, and had several solo exhibitions, most recently Richmond Bridge (a location close to his home) at Richmond Town Hall.

He hosted the west London LIP satellite group, where the participants could marvel at the expanding number of his 20 x16 rushes of street life, and his extensive collection of vintage British cameras.

The deterioration in his health did not stop him continuing his work, visiting galleries and openings (frequently containing his own work), interviewing practitioners such as Humphrey Spender, writing articles and reviews (e.g. last year's Brassai exhibition) for publications such as the *British Journal of Photography*, *Inscape* and this publication.

He was profiled recently by this magazine, and both that article and his contributions to the Millennium Project can be accessed on the Internet *

He was admired for his courage, kindness and wit, and he will be sorely missed by everyone who knew him. We send our condolences to his wife and daughter, Helen and Liz.

Tony Mayne

*Jim's profile was published in the LIP Journal of November 2000 (then known as LIPService) which can be downloaded as a PDF document from the Journal pages of the LIP Website londonphotography.org.uk.

BRAND NEW LIP WEBSITE www.londonphotography.org.uk

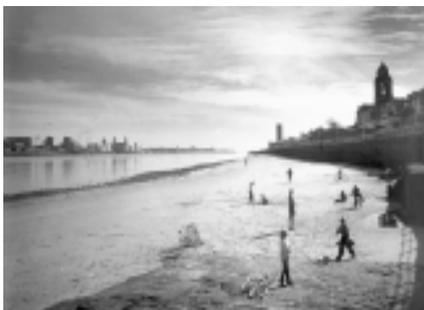
NOW ON LINE

Please spare a few minutes to visit our completely new website. Thanks to the hard work by our new webmaster, Gary Alexander, and others, we now have a site that should be of great interest to LIP members and those considering joining.

You will need a password for the Members Only section, which is **lip1**. In this section are instructions on how to participate in a LIP email forum called **lip topica**. Please use this forum to post your comments and criticisms of the website. You can also use the forum to ask any questions relating to LIP or photography in general. It's especially useful if you want to seek help on something (another member may have the answer) or to let others know about anything you feel may be of general interest.

The Photographers' Gallery Bookshop Choice

Laura Noble and Sarah Fordham present the pick of recently published books. LIP members receive a 10% discount on these. You need to show your LIP membership card when purchasing.



Ken Grant

THE CLOSE SEASON - Ken Grant

Dewi Lewis Publishing. £25 (LIP members £22.50)

For fifteen years Ken Grant has photographed the Merseyside community into which he was born. This work is a strikingly honest glimpse into life in Liverpool as its rivertrades slip away and the resulting hardship that comes with it.

The book opens with a chapter from a labourers' notebook, who poignantly describes his exhausting working life and warm homelife with forthright immediacy. This is a raw document about people he has spent time with and as Martin Parr says on the back cover of the book, "No hidden agendas, no exploitation, just a shortcut to knowing what it was like to be there." (LN)

I'LL BE YOUR MIRROR - Nan Goldin

Scalo. £37.50 (LIP Members £33.75)

Although this is not a recent publication "I'll Be Your Mirror" has been out of print for quite a while it is as the definitive publication of her work I feel I have to recommend it.

Presenting us with the first twenty five years of her work through the lives of her friends and lovers. Goldin's empathy is astute, with a no-holds-barred approach with the camera. No subject is taboo for Goldin: drug abuse, sex, domestic violence, AIDS and death. She balances this by presenting the joy as well as the sorrow in their lives, from flamboyant drag queens to calm quiet moments of reflection.

This is truly a work of significance and worthy of anyones bookcase. (LN)



Nan Goldin



SOME TRAINS IN AMERICA - Andrew Cross

Prestel. £30 (LIP Members £27)

This is a book by an avid rail enthusiast. From 1961 Andrew Cross has been trainspotting, initially on the Oxford to Reading line when he was only ten years old. Travelling between 1994 and 2001 he made ten journeys across America's freight routes, photographing the trains. These charming images would take you right back in time if they were in black and white. Having no people to speak of in the pictures, except the occasional train driver, creates the illusion of time standing still.

Industry and nature mingle beautifully as the trains and their tracks contour with the curves of the landscape. The combination of natural beauty and old industry guarantee you'll never look at trainspotting in the same way again. (LN)

These book reviews are written by freelance writers Sarah Fordham and Laura Noble, who are also staff at The Photographers' Gallery bookshop in central London. Many more reviews can be found on the Photographers' Gallery website, www.photonet.org.uk

Thomas Joshua Cooper's exhibition *Settlement*

*A review by
Virginia Khuri*

There are two things I would suggest to any aspiring photographic artist: one, attending a Thomas Cooper workshop or failing that, pondering his exhibited images. For the first it is necessary to travel to Scotland to the Inversnaid Photographic Workshops or to Quairraing Lodge on the Isle of Skye; for the second, spend time at Blains Fine Art Gallery at 23 Bruton Street, London, between 12 June and 3 August 2002.

Thomas Joshua Cooper, when not teaching at the Glasgow School of Art (where twenty years ago he introduced the UK's first fine art photography course) can be found travelling the world, making pictures with his 100 year old plate camera. This he has been doing for over thirty years. He is now acclaimed as one of the finest landscape photographers of our time.

I first saw his work on the wall of the Hayward Gallery in 1979 at the seminal exhibition, *Three Perspectives on British Photography*. So strong was the impression made by his dark but luminous contact prints that every time I climb the steps of the Hayward I can still see where one called *Ceremonial Veil* was hanging. He now makes larger prints, more complicated in their execution, and has had many more exhibitions, the latest one last year at Tate St. Ives, Cornwall, called *At the Very Edge of the Sea*.

But whether the work is of the land with its trees and rocks, or of the sea, as it often is now, whether it is presented as contact print size or very large, it holds the same meditative intensity which first attracted me. These works, finely

detailed and complex descriptions of a particular place at a particular time, are not simple documents of those places. Rather, they record a journey into the mind's interior in an exploration of our human consciousness. Thus the work becomes a description of a mythical landscape/seascape located in no place and in every place, and timeless. The darkness in the images might then be seen as the darkness of elemental energy, representing a collective unconscious, out of which the light of consciousness, or creative energy, emerges. The dark first exists to allow the light to speak.

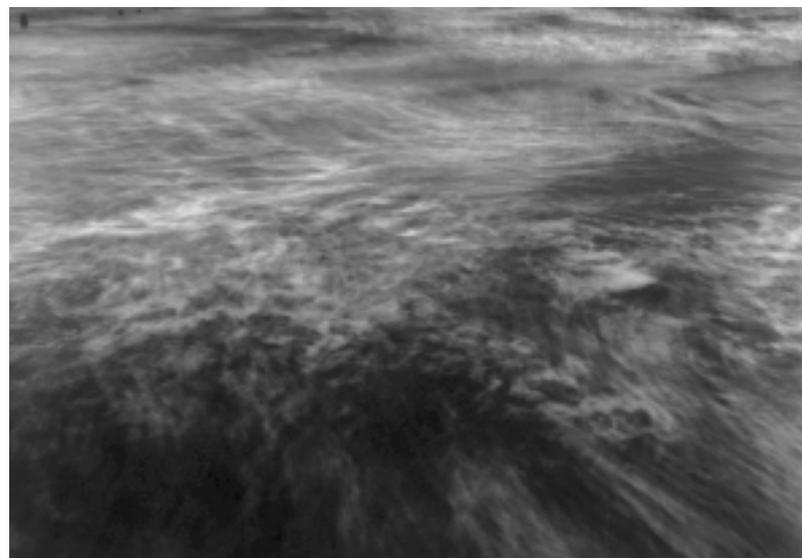
This journey in which the images involve us, functions, as in traditional mythology, to 'waken a sense of awe, humility and respect before the ultimate mystery, transcending names and forms'. But unlike traditional mythology, the effect in this case is felt not on a society, but on the individual human heart. It is here that I find the real importance of his work for our new Millennium.

In the Western World we have come so far from the 'primitive' understanding and knowledge implicit in Thomas's work that we now need to develop a new consciousness to govern our relationship with our earth, a consciousness which is rational, but which does not exclude awe and wonder, or gratitude, or humility; one which engenders a 'reverence for life', all life, in which the human being is only a part of a

much greater whole. I find Thomas Cooper's landscapes awaken the heart to just such wonder, awe and reverence, and the mind to a longing to penetrate life's mystery. Furthermore, I wonder if Cooper's work could be seen as a bridge spanning the abyss between a modernist such as Edward Weston in his quest for quintessential meaning, and the morass of bleak post-modern meaninglessness, leading perhaps to a search for meaning on an entirely new level.

I could not begin to know what might be the wellsprings of Cooper's creativity. Perhaps it has something to do with ancient stories told to him by his Native American father, or the spare intensity of the Chinese poetry read to him by his mother. Whatever the case, he has been graced with the ability and the desire to delve more deeply into the shared memory of human kind than most of us care or dare to do, and then to share with us the findings of his journey in images of great depth and beauty.

Now, if I have made Thomas Joshua Cooper sound austere or mystical or in any way inaccessible, let me assure you that he is nothing of the sort. He is open and engaging, an articulate, perceptive and caring teacher; and, if you are really serious about your work and wish to explore further your own particular vision, I can think of nothing better than for you to join one of his workshops. At least go see this new exhibition.



Thomas Joshua Cooper



Thomas Joshua Cooper



Thomas Joshua Cooper

A Different Way of Seeing

Mike Colley replies to Peter Jennings' review of the 'Canyonlands' exhibition, which showed work by Quentin Ball, Mike Colley, Jennifer Hurstfield and Tony Wallis at Lauderdale House in December 2001. The review appeared in the Spring 2002 edition of 'London Independent Photography'.

An apocryphal story about Admiral Lord Nelson relates that, just prior to the battle of Trafalgar, Nelson raised his telescope to his blind eye and proclaimed: 'I see no ships!' I was reminded of this story when I read Peter Jennings' review of the *Canyonlands* exhibition.

The reviewers' opening rationale is that 'the excitement of going to an exhibition is not so much to discover more about the world but more about the artists and their personas'. He goes on to criticise the exhibition on two main counts. Firstly, he implies the work consists of lightweight holiday pictures, citing in particular the lack of documentary photographs of human subjects. Secondly, he argues that the landscape genres used are merely derivative of former 'giants' of photography. I believe that his critique raises profound questions about the nature of art which form an important arena of debate.

I believe the initial rationale of his review starts from an unfortunate dualism: it separates the world and the artist in a way that is barely credible today. I take a very different view of the relationship between photography, photographers, and the world in which they exist, and fundamentally reject simplistic notions of representation. We have long gone beyond the idea that photographs act as a mirror

image of the world-out-there, which disembods both seer and seen from their social, cultural and political context. Photographers are artists-in-the-world, and the photograph presents the world-through-the-artist.

As a photographer, I use the lens to explore, to look, to compose, to express my understanding of the landscape, of the world. Therefore, I know how and why I photograph. It is not my intention just to 'reproduce' the landscape, but to move towards changing our awareness of it, for a photograph allows us to see what might otherwise evade us. I construct both the image and the idea it expresses. Photographs are not 'captured' in a passive sense, images are not 'found', nor do they 'emerge' from the camera. They do not neutrally reflect some 'external reality', but a specific point of view, be it political, ideological, or aesthetic. When a photographer makes an image, s/he comes with a past, with a way of thinking and, consequently, seeing. We photograph with the mind as well as the eye.

This interpretive approach applies equally to the experience of the viewer. For me, landscape photography is a way of creating images in which people can immerse themselves to see and find what they choose. Whenever we look outwards, what we find also leads us inwards. What is seen and what is felt at any moment is evoked by the consciousness of the viewer, shaped by their own past and present. There is no view from nowhere: each person brings their own associations, experiences, rememberings to an image, to form a unique perspective.

Peter Jennings complains that the inhabitants of the canyonlands are disappointingly missing from the exhibition. He has looked for literal portrayals of people in the landscape as the only way of feeling their presence and knowing their story. However, for me, the landscape is often without human figures, yet inscribed in it are profoundly human tales. I do not wish to tell romanticised tales of native people conquering the landscape – which Jennings brings

to his perception – but to pose the question of the Navajo Nation's invisibility, and of their shanty town existence amid the grand sublime of the canyonlands. I see it as important that my photographs can evoke the question 'where are the people?', and create for the viewer such a visceral, embodied sense of human absence.

As photographers we are forever studying all types of photographs, past and present. Consciously or sub-consciously, we are inspired and influenced by them. That does not mean we set out to imitate or reproduce their images. Why would we when they are not our view of the world? The fact that Jennings is unable to see this exhibition except through his prism of past 'giants', that for him 'point of view' is reducible to the tripod marks of others, says more about *his* perspective than about ours. By nailing his critique to the mast of past artists, he has denied himself the chance to discover and understand anything about the work of the photographers in the exhibition.

Which brings me back to the story of Admiral Nelson. It illustrates the fact that we each see what we choose to see, and engineer our own blindness when it suits us. The review took a narrow, representational and therefore reductive view of the *Canyonlands* exhibition. That is inappropriate for a show which deliberately presented the work of four photographers with very different perspectives and narratives – that very juxtaposition creating its own dynamic – and even less appropriate when applied to photographs presented through an explicitly interpretive approach.

I have tried to explore and probe the world to reveal that it is gently poetic and alive with drama and conflict, to reveal a different view, and to confront both myself and the viewer with what we thought we knew. *That* is an ideal, and yes, 'ideals are damned hard things to live with' – but surely that is why we pursue our own photographic point of view, and feel no need to imitate the work of others.

Edward Weston, A Carmel Legacy *Quentin Ball*

What a treat, starting the American Southwest Tour I discovered that the Harrison Memorial Library in Carmel (California) was showing for the first time and for five days only, 60 of its collection of 140 prints that had been donated.

Edward Weston was born in Illinois in 1886. His father gave him his first camera when he was 16, and one of his photographs was displayed in a New York exhibit the next year. Weston moved to the West Coast in 1906; he travelled to Mexico and all over California taking photographs. He always came back to Carmel, where he died in 1958.

The photographs of Edward Weston have drawn a multitude of admirers for several decades and continue to influence and impact viewers around the world. His images, selected primarily from nature, are enduring reminders of the world's magnificent richness. Whether his photos depict a mass of kelp on Carmel beach or a cabbage leaf from the local market, it was his honest approach and attention to the subject's form and essence that is enduring and



Edward Weston, 1942 - Cole Weston

captivating. The photos presented encompassed a span of twenty-eight years of his artistic journey. Of Point Lobos, a coastal extremity just south of Carmel which was one of his favourite places to take photographs, he wrote in his journal in May 1930, *How many times the last year or so have I written this line! I never tire of that wonder spot, nor could I ever forget it no matter where I go from here.*

Original Weston prints were outnumbered 3:1 by those that had been reprinted, of which I could see no difference, but seeing the original Edward Weston prints somehow had a quality that brought tears to my eyes, for example *Death Valley, Zabriskie Point, 1938*. Wonderful.

Q Tip

Drying the Negative

The emulsion side of the film is a most delicate beast, and must be treated with the utmost care so that nothing can come into contact with it and create all kinds of problems with printing. When the film is wet and fresh from processing, it is even more delicate, so make sure you do not touch it.

After fixing and washing your film, wash thoroughly in Kodak Photo Flo, or equivalent, and hang up with a clothes peg at the base for a weight to keep it straight. On the shiny (non-emulsion side) only, run down it twice with a fresh folded kitchen paper towel - there is no reason to touch the emulsion side with anything - it will dry clean and clear.

Who Cares...?

Photographs by Tina Stallard

These photographs were born out of my friendship with one of the families in the series: Henrietta and Michael Spink. I have known their children, Henry and Freddie, since they were babies and have seen Henrietta and Michael struggle with the challenge of bringing up two children with severe disabilities. Like all the families I photographed, they work hard to put on a brave face in public, but behind the façade there is often despair and a great sense of isolation. Somehow they have found the strength to help other families in a similar situation, through their charity, the Henry Spink Foundation.

In the pictures, I wanted to give a glimpse of day-to-day life for four families with disabled children. I chose families where the children were aged between 11 and 14 — the stage when most children become more independent. Caring for a child with severe physical and mental disabilities is exhausting. It requires physical and emotional strength and unlimited love. In most cases, the mother carries the main responsibility. There is some support from the state, but not enough. To get assistance, the families have either to fight complex bureaucratic organisations or, more often, they give up the battle and go without.

I spent a lot of time with the families and got to know them well during the project. I wanted to give them a voice in the pictures and so the captions are all the words of family members and not my words. I mounted the captions directly below the prints on the same board to give the words equal importance.

I chose to use black-and-white because of the low light situations I was working in much of the time. I used both Kodak Tmax 3200 and Kodak Tri-X, using available light and often working at full aperture. I used a wide-angle lens for many of the situations because the action was unpredictable and the spaces were small.

The response to the images has been very strong. I have seen people in tears as they view the photographs and read the captions. People have wanted to know more about the families and about the charity. As far as the families are concerned, one of the mothers photographed told me she now sees her child in a more positive light. Another told me she had never imagined that anyone else could understand her situation.

I won the Jack Jackson award to carry out the project. This award is given annually to students to



Tina Stallard

"The council refused to give us a stairlift because they said Henry couldn't operate it on his own. I used to carry him up and down. We finally got the lift as a gift from someone who didn't need it."

Henrietta, Henry's mother

support projects "where photography will make a difference". The award is backed by the Picture Imaging Council (PIC), formerly the British Photographic and Imaging Association, and the HEAD Trust. Kodak gave me film, Ilford gave me paper, and Nikon gave my cameras their first ever service. As a result of the award, I exhibited the images at Focus on Imaging in Birmingham in February and the photographs were published in the BJP and in the RPS Journal. I have also been given enormous support by PIC members, in particular from Canon. One of the images has just won an award in the World Health Organization photography competition on disability and health.

The work forms part of the MA by Project I am doing at London Guildhall University, where I am concentrating on documentary photography under the guidance of Mick Williamson (who I originally met through LIP). Mick has been enormously supportive throughout my course, and his help with editing the images was invaluable. The work will be shown again from 16 to 20 September at the MA show at London Guildhall University, opposite the Whitechapel Art Gallery, and later in the autumn at the Truman Brewery Gallery.

For more information contact : Tina Stallard, tel: 020 8853 3263 or email: tinastallard@yahoo.co.uk



Tina Stallard

"Meals can take two hours. Henry is really difficult about food, and I find it hard to be patient. Sometimes this feels like a life sentence."

Henrietta, Henry's mother



Tina Stallard

"The future is a real worry. I can't see Hamish ever leading an independent life. He needs help with everything. There's a huge shortage of residential care. If the council can't find a place for him, he'll stay with us until we're too frail to cope."

Celia, Hamish's mother



Tina Stallard

"Bethan looks normal, but sometimes I think it would be easier if she was in a wheelchair. Then people wouldn't expect her to behave normally."

Isobel, Bethan's mother



Tina Stallard

"Bethan is 11. She has severe learning difficulties and behavioural problems. We've been working on teaching her to dress herself for about five years. I put her clothes the right way round before she starts."

Isobel, Bethan's mother



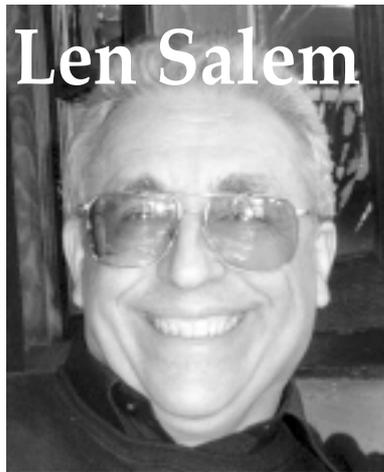
Tina Stallard

"Hamish can get really excitable when we're out and will suddenly rush into the road. He needs to be guided, but when he pulls away from me now I'm not strong enough to restrain him."

Celia, Hamish's mother

LIP Profile.. Len Salem

Len has been the LIP Treasurer since 1990. In this interview with Virginia Khuri, he outlines the history of his development as a photographer and his personal philosophy.



Joy Salem

I was given a camera when I was 13 years old. As I was interested in scientific instruments, it was a fascinating toy, and because it is my nature to study what interests me, I learned a bit about photography. When I was 17 I read about darkroom work because the school I went to had a small darkroom I could use. Then towards the end of a four-year course at Keele University I began to take photographs for the college magazine and to use the camera more creatively. That was the beginning of my interest in photography, in images rather than the gadget. Although my main

subjects were maths and physics we also did a year each of English Literature and Psychology which kindled an appreciation of artistic standards and attitudes that made me more interested in the image side of photography.

After I got my degree and went to work, the camera again became something I took on holiday, occasionally producing a pleasing photograph, just as 99% of people do. Then seventeen or eighteen years ago we rented a little house in France, in the middle of nowhere but good for children. I bought several rolls of black and

white film thinking 'when I'm not doing anything I'll walk around and take some photographs'. I enjoyed this very much and returning from the holiday made what seems like a trivial decision, but was really significant. Instead of taking the film to the local chemist for processing, I sent it to someone advertised in Amateur Photographer who did 10x8 prints for a reasonable sum. The prints came back bigger than you'd normally expect and they were properly processed. However good or badly exposed my negatives were, he made a reasonable job of them, making them much more exciting. I thought, "I really like this!" So I took a few more photographs.

I sometimes think you only ever really take one photograph but you keep on taking it in different situations. These were photographs of the environment in which I found myself, a small manor house, part of a big chateau with lots of things like broken down farm trucks having strong visual appeal. Here it was really the concurrence of subject matter, my interest, and the processing which produced something worthwhile. The next time I went on holiday I



Len Salem



Len Salem

took colour slides. On a coach excursion I happened to sit next to someone who had a proper 35mm camera and was obviously a 'photographer'. We got talking about cameras and he said 'I am a member of the Royal Photographic Society, why don't you join?' I had obviously heard of the Royal Photographic Society but it never occurred to me that it was something that was open to anybody to join, just as you wouldn't think of joining the Royal College of Surgeons! He explained about RPS' distinctions' and I liked the idea of having an incentive. When I got home I found out the address of my nearest camera club, Ealing Photographic Society; I located evening classes in photography; I joined the Royal Photographic Society; and I got hold of every single book I could on photography. Even before then I had occasionally bought the odd monograph because I liked the photographs. I'm a great book buyer and reader. I buy as many books on photography as I can afford.

Two of my favorite books were

bought in a state of ignorance because I didn't know the pedigree of the authors; one, a 'remaindered' first edition of Walker Evans *American Photographs*; the other, a first edition of Weegee's *New York*. I had never heard of Walker Evans or Weegee. I didn't even know they were first editions, but they contained visually interesting photographs. By constantly looking at photographs by people who have made the grade, even if you don't quite understand why, your sensitivity to what they've tried to do improves; you become more interested in way they work. American photography from 1930 to the present day, especially topographical colour, has influenced me more than any other sort of photography. I've learnt a lot from the images and the type of concerns expressed, which obviously I've tried to emulate. I hope I've put in something of myself as well.

One day I happened to see an advertisement for an exhibition at the Mermaid Theatre put on by London Independent Photography.

It bowled me over. It was a very good exhibition because particularly the early members of LIP were already pretty high standard photographers, and it was clearly done by, if not people like me, then people I could become like, people who did other things apart from photography to earn a living, still managing to take photographs which by then I knew had a little extra something. They weren't just club type photographs which were aesthetically praiseworthy but didn't go beyond that. They were exciting to look at and very imaginative. I remember as you came in on the right there was a whole string of unframed photographs of what it must be like to be blind. That something like that could be exhibited was wonderful. There were so many photographs to which I responded, 'Oh, yes, this is really good'. So I joined LIP and belonging to LIP led me to a greater involvement with the Royal Photographic Society and the Contemporary Group, and gave me the opportunity to do exhibitions. I heard names of photographers I didn't know. I



Len Salem

went to workshops such as a Paul Hill workshop where I met new people, saw other books. It was a sort of growing. All helped me as one person doing a boring job selling retail furniture, like other people trying to learn something very creative, needing both incentive and guidance, needing something to bounce ideas off, people to talk to. That has really been the basis of my photographic development.

At this stage I was starting to look for things that go together, and because the free time that I had to take photographs was very often in the evening when it was getting dark or sometimes indoors, a lot of the photographs were taken in poor lighting conditions and quite blurred. They formed my Associateship panel for the RPS and there isn't a sharp image among them. I love the idea that an ordinary environment conceals something extraordinary, that in any suburb there is mystery, and if you really look, strange things happen in ordinary streets. Next I wondered what would happen if I put my spectacles in front of the lens. . .

Photography is a way of transferring the three dimensional world that we perceive into a two dimensional artifact. In terms of a

mathematical model, there is a mapping process, a transformation function between the three dimensional world out there and the two dimensional artifact you end up with. That mapping process is partially the instrument which you use, the way in which a camera takes a three dimensional thing and converts it within certain boundaries, influenced by the lens, by the sensitivity of the film, whether its black and white or colour. There are means and there are rules. But it is also influenced by what goes on between my ears both during the process of selection, choosing the photographic controls of the camera, and afterwards whether it's in the darkroom or digitally. What is in-between is the creative bit; it's in all those choices you are making.

Photography is always connected to reality. A picture can be painted from memory; you cannot make a photograph from memory. It is different from other art forms but it's a form that appeals to somebody who doesn't have the technical skills to draw. I imagine that going through life-drawing classes would teach you to really see as opposed to just look. When I went to a Thomas Joshua Cooper workshop a few years ago

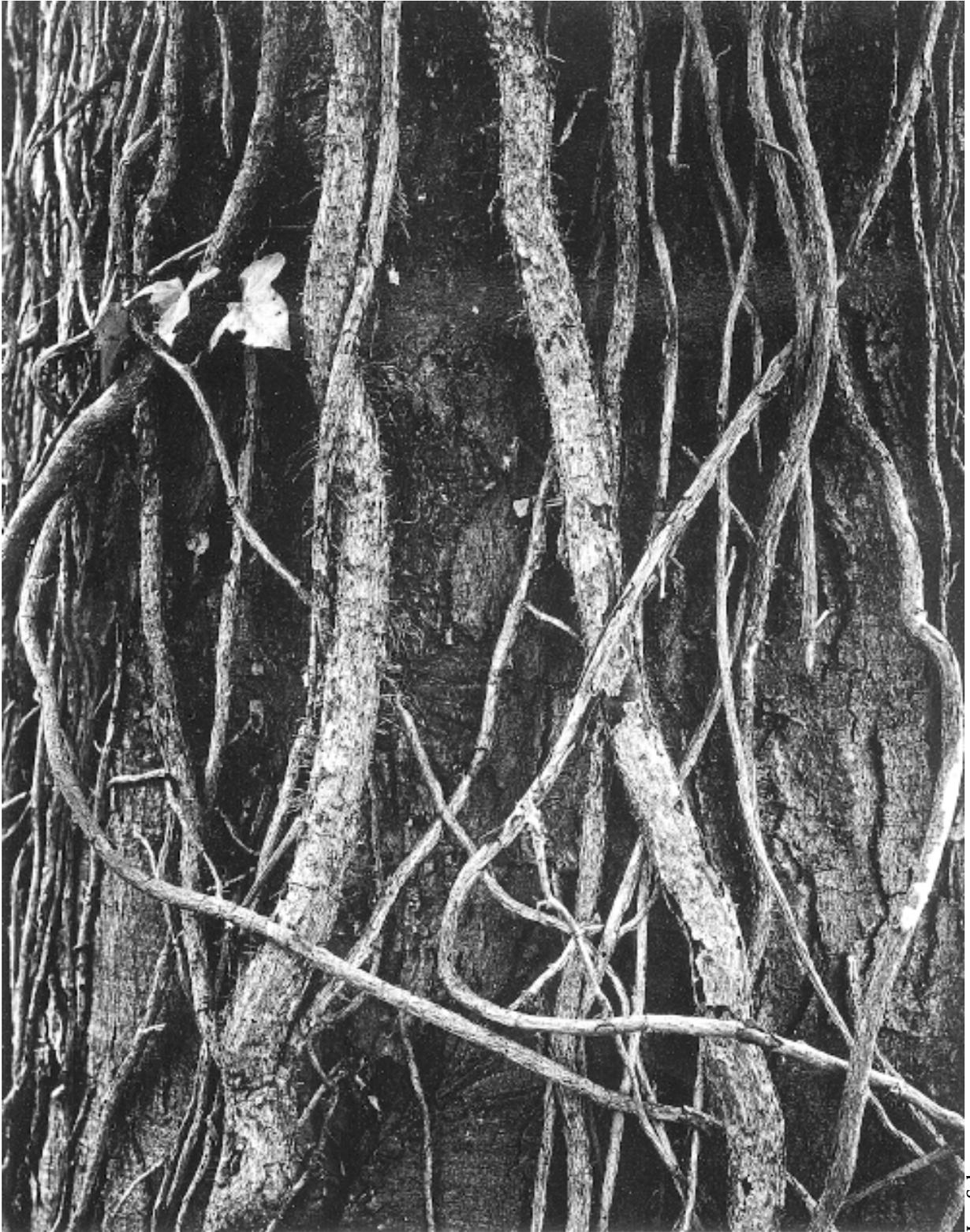
he talked about the difference between looking and gazing, a difference that you must be aware of and cultivate. There's looking at something noticed in passing; it's what we do to get from A to B without getting killed. Then there's standing in front of something and literally trying to absorb it. My first real 'project' was my Fellowship panel, a series of colour images of where I worked, a very old building with lots of old rooms frequently wired and rewired. I made semi-abstract colour photographs of the wires. People say you need a series of photographs rather than one, but I wouldn't say that there isn't such a thing as one very good photograph. It is a different approach to take a number of different photographs, not talking about the aesthetic qualities of any particular image but the combined effect of lots of different looks at one particular subject. I photograph *about* something, how I feel about it. I try to express an idea rather than the actual subject, which is secondary, although still important.

The next photographs with a special quality for me are very abstract. They are about light and the absence of light and how things become existent only if there is light. I wasn't thinking in the obvious sense that we can't see anything if there is no light. I was thinking metaphysically

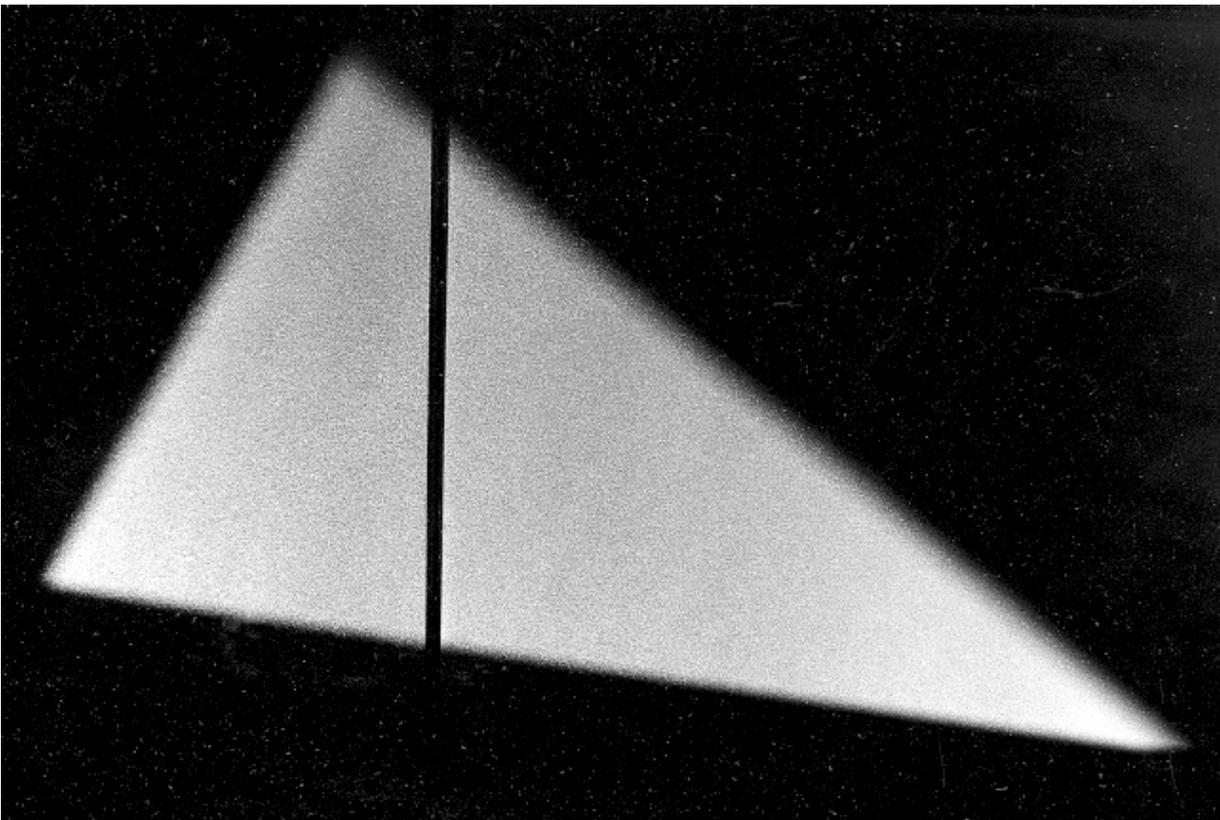
about how light has a certain quality. I was thinking for example of travelling through space where if there is no light there is nothing to see. So I produced some photographs which have scarcely visible subjects. I didn't know I was going to make these photographs. I

felt the urge to photograph but I didn't quite know what until I took my children to the Kew Bridge Historic Steam Museum where there are enormous steam pumping engines which are very exciting. One in particular was black and chromium and had some light

coming through it. Under the enlarger as I was playing around part of it blurred, giving no idea what it was. I did a print emphasizing the range of tones, from the very dark to the very light. After a few prints, I realized I was trying to do an abstract study



Len Salem



Len Salem



Len Salem

of light and dark that had absolutely nothing to do with a steam engine. I began looking for bits of this machinery in the sun with this very wide tonal range to produce this effect. After four very dark abstract images, I then made some in reverse.

In our white kitchen the sun shone through a skylight, projecting even lighter images onto white surfaces. By controlling the tones I created these spooky little ghost like shapes cutting across the geometrical outlines of the cabinets, making very light abstract images. I got a bit frightened thinking, "these photographs are so abstract, they aren't photography!" I had eliminated any sort of figurative depiction. Today it would not worry me. I will take a photograph with a pinhole camera, or digital if the result pleases me. I'm still interested in the technology, excited by beautifully made scientific equipment, but now looking for things to photograph, I am only interested in the end result. I use a camera because that is what I do, but I won't be concerned with whether a print is black and white, or colour, or

digital. I have reached a stage where potentially I am prepared to go wherever I am led.

Where do we get our ideas? We don't just wake up one morning with inspiration. It comes from stimuli. I like the work of David Hockney. It is visually very pleasing and I love his use of colour. He has a strong interest in photography and has done lots of different things with it. He thinks about it, and talks about it. What interests me when artists talk about their work is the thought process, the frustration and how they deal with it, what they are worried about, what they are trying to do, the false starts and so on. I've been taking photographs 'seriously' for

fifteen years now. The ones that I still like today probably fit in three boxes. The ones that have some sort of enduring quality for me are pitifully few.

When we recently decided to move to a smaller place, I realized I would not have a darkroom. At that time consumer digital photography was starting so I began to teach myself to use a computer to print my photographs. As always, the processing is a very important part of the creative process which I want to do myself. There is as much or even more possibility in creating a digital image as there ever was in the darkroom. I use an Epsom printer, which is better terms of the colour

qualities and the degree of control that I have than any of the colour negative printing I used to do. Digital printing has reached the stage where, using the right techniques, the artifact you produce will certainly last longer than the traditional colour negative print or colour slide and in many cases as long as a silver print. I still use an ordinary camera. I take photographs in the ordinary way and then scan the negatives. One day I may get a digital camera. Who knows? Although I still have a long way to go in my learning to produce digital prints, I am confident now that I can produce something which will express pretty much what I want and that I can do it on a desk in the corner of my little room.

Exhibition Reviews

Amergen by John Blakemore and Catherine Fehily and *Concerning Animals* by Paul Hill

Simultaneously on show in Derby this past February was the work of John Blakemore and Paul Hill, two respected photographers, well-known for their consummate black and white work, coincidentally showing colour work for the first time. John's show, *Amergen*, was at the Derby Museum and Art Gallery and was in fact a joint exhibition with Catherine Fehily. Paul's work, *Concerning Animals*, hung in the Q Gallery. Both were photographic explorations: one of a place, the other of a concept.

Amergen is a garden in Ireland familiar to both Catherine and John who have photographed it over a number of years, Catherine primarily from inside the house and John from without. Both worked in colour and Catherine's sequences of small (8x10) joined prints were woven around John's

much larger ones to produce a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Those familiar with the expressiveness of John's black and white work, with his love of light and form and the whole process of making a fine print, might wonder what more he could possibly say in large colour prints. Well, perhaps he doesn't say more, just says it differently. These works are a joyful exploration of light and colour as found in this particular garden during all seasons. They are not documents; they are impressions and as such are painterly in the same way as impressionist paintings that explored the interactions of light, colour and space or place. It is fitting that the name *Amergen* belongs to Ireland's first poet because this two part work is a deeply poetic evocation of the spirit of place.

By contrast with John and Catherine's work, Paul's *Concerning Animals* was an exploration of a concept, that of man's relationship with animals as pets and I think also by implication with 'the wild'. This was a multi-part exhibition: one part composed of large panels of dog-chews in the shapes of fried egg, chicken leg, or baby rattle and given the subtitle 'Pets Don't Buy Things'; a second part consisting of

family snapshots of Spadger the family dog; a third of large colour prints of dead animals and wild looking pets including a Bollywood invocation of Spadger against a lurid purple sky and a controversial cat with KILLER written across it; and finally a set of polaroid prints questioning the representation of domesticated animals. The whole was imbued with a sense of irony and lit by Paul's wry sense of humor.

The type of photographs displayed, indeed the ways of seeing, were extremely diverse and it was fortunate that each group had its own hanging space. Within that space quite different questions were pondered concerning animals and our relationship with and representations of them. It may be that some of these quite disparate concerns with animals will be extended into larger bodies of work as Paul's explorations continue.

I learned from these two exhibitions that perhaps it is a kind of exploration that lies at the heart of all contemporary work distinguishing it from other kinds, and that the umbrella incorporating it must be very large indeed.

Virginia Khuri

Mary Dunkin



Helen Cornwall - born 1898

These photographs form part of a series of ten colour portraits of 100 year old women, six of which appeared in *The Independent Magazine* together with my interviews about their lives. They were all photographed in a similar way, head and shoulders, then their hands holding a significant photograph, and lastly their feet. The two women portrayed here did not feature in the magazine article.

Mary Dunkin enjoys working in series and her work has appeared in The Independent Review, The Independent on Saturday, The Sunday Times Magazine and The Telegraph Magazine.



Mabel Bunyard - born 1898



All images by Mary Dunkin