



THE NEWSLETTER OF LONDON INDEPENDENT PHOTOGRAPHY

.....THE NEW EDITOR

Perhaps I should start by telling you something about myself. I am no spring chicken and I have been in and around photography for many years. I have never had the courage or commitment to practice photography full time. Instead, I have earned my daily crust as a dentist - not entirely an arts based occupation. The opportunity for early retirement from a conservatively challenged Health Service has given me the chance to come out and do what I have always wanted to do, namely to be a truly independent photographer free of any kind of Mafia. I will not bore you further with my less than lurid past, but would like to discuss the situation of photography as I see it. LIP is now becoming an influence to be reckoned with in these times of change and it is important for members to have some idea of the views of the Editor of the group newsletter.

EDWARD BOWMAN.

Inside This Issue

URGENT PLEASE LOOK AT THE NOTICE BOARD ON THE BACK PAGE

. I believe in the medium of photography.

Its capacity to convey meaning through the vision of the photographer. Photography has now become accepted by this country's art establishment mainly as an image or sign bank for conceptual artists who have little interest in the medium itself. The fact is, that in this country, the avant garde have be-

come the establishment, mainly because of low pay. Think about that one. Fashion is the important issue. Museums and gallery curators tend to accept the conceptual approach as the main arena for photographic progress as a medium for the production of art work. Unfortunately these fashionable people do not seem to have understanding of or sensitivity to the medium itself.

I have read many of the major essays on photography and it is interesting to note that few of these writers have any practical understanding of the medium and have never themselves produced imagery using photography, yet their influence is all pervasive.

The schools of photography now include in the curriculum an increasing emphasis on theory. Although this is to be applauded in

Editorial :

Review: The photo Diaries of Mick Williamson.

by Virginia Khuri

Comment's Column:

Review: Sam Tanner,s Work

by Peter Marshall

by William Bishop

EXHIBITION

FIRST GROUP EXHIBITION OF INDEPENDENT PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE SOUTH EAST

3RD - 30TH APRIL 1994

HORSHAM ARTS CENTRE, NORTH STREET HORSHAM (A few minutes walk from Horsham Station)

Monday to Saturday. 10.00 to 8.00. Sunday 5.00 to 8.00..Contact: Jill Staples on 0444-881891.

principle, much of this theory does not deal directly with the medium and I would think that a greater emphasis on the history of art and the history of photography in this century would prove to be more rewarding than the theoretical positions of French philosophers and Victor Burgin. I suppose I sound like a reactionary. I don't care. My own personal love for photography does make me hostile to those who use the medium as material and little else.

To air my prejudices even further, I confess that political photography, however worthy, sends me into a deep coma whenever I see it. Two years with rampant feminism and body politics now bring on attacks of uncontrolled sneezing which my wife, the good Doctor, tells me is symptomatic of a deep seated allergy which even steroids in any of its forms cannot cure.

There are other issues at the moment. The serious under funding of photography and the political correctness of the Arts Council has meant that many of the readers of this Newsletter who are serious and extremely able photographers find it almost impossible to earn their living entirely through photographic prac-

tice. Even established and admired photographers find it difficult to sell their work or to get commissions. The Arts Council headquarters has a good cafeteria, nothing else I can write about this quango would be helpful in any way.

The computer looms on our horizon. I have written before on abilities it has to produce sphincter tingling unlimited semiosis for dedicated photographic artists.

I think that whatever happens in this field there will always be those who will practice and appreciate the particular wondrous qualities of the fine photographic print.

Most keen amateurs are capable of producing much better work if given guidance

What of the commercial photographic galleries? My experience is that apart from the print room of the Photographers' Gallery, which may be indirectly state aided, most of the others are probably under funded.

Owning a gallery is an extremely hazardous business at the best of times and even major galleries in Cork Street have had to shut up shop in these recessionary times.

In the recent past, all of my writing on photography has to some extent been modified by editors terrified that my opinions openly stated would upset their members, the elected officers, Mrs. Whitehouse or even the cat. In my present position I hope I may write what I truly feel is legal.

Having written about my dislikes in professional practice it is time I aimed a double barreled shotgun at amateur institutions. So much work produced in this area of practice is, quite frankly, re workings of well tried and thoroughly exhausted cliché. Most keen amateurs are capable of producing much better work if given guidance. I suspect that those who control the institutions of amateur practice are basically either too visually illiterate or sometimes too cynical to do anything about what I believe is a tragic situation.

I hope you all disagree with what I have written and that you will send me your letters which will all be published - if not outrageously libelous. An active correspondence column with at least one rip roaring 'difference of opinion' in it should be the hall mark of a lively journal. *Schadenfreude* and gossip are definitely ingredients of good photographic practice. E.B.



THE PHOTO DIARIES

OF

MICK WILLIAMSON

Snapshots - of birthdays, of holidays, reminders of places and people - collected in a family album, they are the photographic equivalent of written diaries. And like some written diaries, some collections of snapshots rise above the purely personal to touch the universal and in so doing may touch the unacquainted viewer as well.

For the past seventeen years Mick Williamson, Senior Lecturer in Photography at the London Guildhall University (the Sir John Cass Faculty School of Art), has been keeping just such a diary. His daily snapshots, taken with a half frame camera and usually not even using the viewfinder, have now accumulated to a total of half a million negatives. Some thirty or so of the resulting black and white images were shown last spring at the London Guildhall University Gallery in what was only a tantalizing taste of the work, the very tip of the iceberg. (see issue No. 6 of Contemporary Photography). This autumn a larger part of the work appeared as an installation at the Historic Docks in Chatham as part of the Medway Festival of Photogra-

phy. In the transfer from the first small exhibition to this one, there was the danger that the additional images might be "just more of the same" and thus boring, or a "whole different bag" (or rather bags) and thus meaningless. In fact, the work maintained its initial coherence and became an even more powerful statement, richer, more complex and very exciting.

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The installation was mounted in an enormous blacked out room onto the walls of which were projected about a dozen black and white slides, and in the middle of which screens were arranged at angles to each other (and to the walls) on which were simultaneously flashed at varying intervals of six to thirty seconds, five different carousels full of slides. the effect on entering was at once mesmerizing and overwhelming- one seemed to be confronted with the complex chaos of life, swallowed up by it. Grad-

ually it became evident that it was not chaos, but the richness of life which surrounded one in that darkened room. To wander through it was to experience a life, to participate for a moment in the artist's life.

The experience was not a voyeuristic one however, because the external trappings of life which interest the voyeur were not so evident here; the vague and unspecified images of people and places were hard to read in that way. Instead the images seemed to reflect an internal life; an attitude shared, one of reverence, warmth, gentle humour, a celebration of the complexity, mystery and randomness of life. there was no polemic here: no "this shouldn't be" or "this should"; simply "this is", "this was seen". There was also little indication of gender, race or social class; just another human being's awareness of being alive.

As I wandered from one screen to the next, I found myself thinking of music, specifically the improvisations of jazz. Fragments of themes kept repeating in new form, circling around themselves, becoming ever richer and more complex with no real beginning and no end. I could enter at any point in

WEST TEXAS TAPESTRY

An exhibition of black and white photographs

by **Quentin Bell ARPS**

21st - 25th February

Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queens Square, Bloomsbury WC1

10am-9pm

Mon -Fri

10am-5pm

Sat.

any of the cycles and find references to previously seen images. It was as if in my remembering them, Mick's memories had also become my memories, and the darkened room became his mind which I was invited to explore. One of the dominant themes was that of 'gesture' - images of hands; pointing, holding things, offering food and water; legs and feet; standing, walking, running, jumping; children: playing, exploring, dreaming; things: fence lines and roads in sinuous curvings; trees, alone or in groups, with telling shapes; tables and chairs often indicative of absence; food as the staff of life; coffee cups, empty or full; arrows, pointing directions within the image, or beyond the frame.

Light and shadow was another pervasive theme, not a romantic sentimental light and shadow, but one both common place and full of mystery, one which emphasized the two aspects of life, the light and the dark. Death as part of life was a related theme evident in the recurring image of cemeteries. And images of churches, places where one normally expects to find the 'sacred' seemed also to refer to the fact that the 'sacred' is also found in other, light soaked,

areas of life.

At various time I was reminded of the work of Robert Frank, Gary Winogrand, Ralph Gibson and Duane Michaels. The story aspect had shades of Michaels, but Mick's was more spontaneous, was revealed in fragments, and was not many stories, but one story.

Mick shared with Gibson a love of mystery, of photographing light and shadow, but Gibson's images are more staged, very much less spontaneous even than Michaels. Like Frank and Winogrand, Mick is an observer. But he is also a participant in the life observed and does not seem to share either the pessimism or the alienation of Frank and Winogrand. And, dare I say it in this cynical century, his images seem permeated with love, a feeling reinforced by the tapes playing a mixture of birdsong and noise from a children's playground. I left the exhibition delighted, refreshed, renewed by his extraordinary vision. V.K.

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' PLACE

Britain's first independent photography workshop - The Photographers' Place - enters its 19th season with another varied programme which this year includes Edward Weston's son, Cole and the two Fox Talbot prizewinners, Mari Mahr and John Blakemore.

Run by Paul and Angela Hill and based in the beautiful Peak National Park, Derbyshire, the workshop will cover topics from landscape to book publishing, and large format cameras to poetry.

Teachers include some of the top names in photography today.

April 22 - 24th: A Weekend with Thomas Cooper and Paul Hill

May 20 - 22: Poetry and Photography with Peter Goldfield

June 3 - 6: The Shock of the New with Fay Godwin and Paul Hill

June 18 - 19: Publishing Photography with Dewi Lewis (Cornerhouse Pubs.)

July 8 - 10 : Moving to Large Format with John Nesbitt

August 8 -13: What's Next? With Paul Hill and Greg Lucas

August 20-21: The Weston legacy with Cole Weston

September 2-4: Personal Histories with Mari Mahr

September 12- 17: Photographic Expression with John Blakemore

September 27-October 11: A photographic tour of California with Paul Hill

Fees start at £100 (inclusive of food and accommodation.)

Details from : The Photographers' Place, Bradbourne, Ashbourne, Derbyshire DE6 1PB Tel: 033-525-392.



PETER MARSHALL'S COLUMN

SLIPPERY SLIDES

One or two events recently have got me thinking again about colour films. Until recently, the choice for photographers was clear, if you worked in publication you shot on reversal, if you wanted prints for shows you used negative. Of course the genuine amateur, the kind who shows you prints from their winter skiing trip and then has to say oh no, those two are us in Spain in the summer and that's last Christmas, has always used print film, while club photographers bore us traditionally on slide.

Times are changing. No longer need we all worship at the great altar of Kodachrome. (It remains one of the small satisfactions of photographic history - or at least a legend - that a couple of violinists working in their spare time should have produced a film that it took full-time photographic researchers more than 50 years to equal.) There is little to choose between the best modern films of E6 or C41 persuasion; not only do they match or surpass the former champion, but can be processed almost anywhere in minutes. And now that colour reproduction has stopped being a mystery re-

served for printers and we all work with scanners and computers and image editing programmes and so on we know that you can reproduce perfectly well from prints.

Does it matter which type you use? The greatest change in my own work happened on changing from slide to neg. It was liberating in various ways, the first technical. Negative film can handle a much greater contrast range, so that you can photograph almost anything you see, while with slides there are so many subjects where you have to choose between highlights or shadows, although in practice few work unless you choose highlights. Perhaps the second follows

Looking for a good time dearie'


from this, I became less concerned with colour as a subject and more concerned with using colour in my work.

This change of life also made things easier in the dark, and RA4 has improved things still more - test strips faster than black and white. People (espe-

cially those who've never done it themselves) tell me you can print from slides. I've tried it most ways and occasionally the results weren't bad (particularly Cibas, although they could never be accused of being subtle) but short of coming unexpectedly into a fortune and affording to send them off for dye transfer, my conclusion remains that if you want prints, it makes sense to start off with a negative. Another solution might be digital; Cactus prints only need a \$215,000 printer and around another \$30,000 on hardware and software, and seems to be quite interesting!

THE VILLAGE - ANNA FOX.

One recent event was the opening of Anna Fox's "The Village" at the Edge Gallery which drew me, together with a photographically illustrious audience, to a somewhat poorly lit basement in the vicinity of King's Cross. The Edge is an Art Gallery, and one I had not penetrated previously, although I did once photograph a ritual burning of Poll-Tax demands more or less outside, and have several times received a solicitous inquiry as to whether I was 'looking for a good time dearie' in the vicinity. On this occasion I was, but once down below ground cursed the meanness of a pay bar - surely South East Arts could have afforded to buy me a beer after all I've done for them - and looked at some blocked groups of black and whites of empty



gardens through hedges and fences. Well OK I thought, but more John Gossage than Anna Fox I have known since Donut City days (not a lot of people know this, but once she used to come and amaze us at that currently defunct group Terry

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King and I used to organise - framework) and having finished the one bottle of yuppie lager which thirst had overcome my meanness to purchase I was on the point of leaving when I realized that what I had taken to be the loo was actually a small cupboard in which it was all happening. Once enthroned inside this single seater auditorium (shared somewhat indecently with several members of the opposite sex) I was able to see parts of several of her pictures simultaneously projected in different orders and at different rates but of course in different directions. To the front, three quarters of one frame was visible on a white wall (had I been the only person present all might have been re-

vealed). A second image merged almost imperceptibly with the carpet at my feet, while a third keyholed mysteriously on the wall to my right, broken up by three white painted planks leaning against it. A tale loop whispered fragment of a conversation over the rattle of the Carousels and the heavy breathing of my companions (it was a good week for chest colds), words I think spoken by the artist, some hardly audible "...lost our childhood..." "...shouldn't have to feel too guilty..." "...if you listen carefully you can hear the voice of God..." "...housework for women..." "...We are sending toys to Romania..." (the already indistinct details further blurred in my notes taken in semi-dark and always in terrible handwriting). What frustrated me (or at least one thing) was that a lot of the pictures did look as if they might be worth seeing, but disappeared just as I was getting in to them. Lots of people celebrating - food and wine, hands, children, flowers, all frightfully naive and comfortable middle-class looking. An odd Betjeman overtone once or twice, even a Joan Hunter (but not -Dunn). More pate than epater, but occasionally some of those striking angles that jolt a new meaning into your consciousness. I stayed uncomfortably through a revolution of a projector maga-

zine and emerged unfulfilled. Am I getting too old for this sort of thing I asked myself? There was a nice spread of work in one of the weekend magazines, and they just printed the whole pictures the right way up - nothing fancy. I await the book with interest, but didn't feel like going back into the peep show! Projection is a cheap way to get lots of large images, and some shows have used it creatively; most time I think simple is best. Perhaps photography is always at its best when it don't try to be arty?

PAPER

Excuse me while I commit a heresy. Many of my best black and white prints have been produced on resin coated paper. For my second trick I'll state the obvious which will shock some of the more gullible: if you can't make a decent print from a negative on RC you won't improve matters by printing on fibre.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
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 ☆ not permit publication of pictures,
 ☆ but the
 ☆ Editor warmly welcomes articles,
 ☆ reviews, and comments on shows
 ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

NOTICE BOARD

LIP MONTHLY MEETINGS

PLEASE NOTE CHANGES OF MEETINGS WHICH WILL BE HELD IN FUTURE ON TUESDAYS.

**THE MONTHLY LIP MEETINGS HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO:
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 15TH**

**(TUESDAY 16TH MARCH NO MEETING, BUT A BLU TACK WILL
BE HELD AT THE BARBICAN LIBRARY 6.30-8.30PM)**

TUESDAY 12TH APRIL.

TUESDAY 24TH MAY

TUESDAY 14TH JUNE.

**THOSE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THESE EVENTS, PLEASE
CONTACT ;JANET HALL. 081-847-5989 FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION.**

THERE WILL BE AN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**AT THE DRILL HALL, 16 CHENIES STREET (off Tottenham Court Road) on
THURSDAY 7TH APRIL 6.30pm- 9.00pm. Please come along and contribute
suggestions.**

Members who are interested in exhibiting work either as part of a group show or individually at the FERRY POOL CENTRE, OXFORD (where the 1993 LIP exhibition was shown) SHOULD CONTACT: TREVOR ASHBY ON 0865 721904 (evenings). THESE EVENTS ARE ORGANISED BY OXFORD PHOTOGRAPHY

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE DATE OF THE PRIVATE VIEWING OF
' INDEPENDENT IMAGE '94' HAS BEEN ALTERED TO
MONDAY MARCH 7TH 6.30 - 8.00 PM**

YOUR INVITATION IS ENCLOSED,- PLEASE BRING IT WITH YOU.

SATURDAY 5TH MARCH
JANE REESE WILL BE REPEATING HER WORKSHOP,
'MAKING A DUMMY (PROTOTYPE) FOR YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC BOOK'.
PLEASE CONTACT HER ON 081-968-7302