

David George

Investigates the broken heart of British Industry.

Digby Washer

A relationship with how we see. Adopting a series of glances.

Mick Williamson

Encountering the memorials of time, without pre-conceived ideas.

Spencer Rowell

Struggling to reconcile and integrate ambivalent personal relationships.

Michelle Clement-Delbos

A forgotten subterranean world. A correction to our means of escape.

Roy Mehta

The beauty of chaos in nature's wild and mysterious garden.

Victoria Kovalenko

Reflections of a generation lost. Mourning grief when deprived of someone.

UNCERTAIN STATES / 05



Roy Mehta Title: Gladiolus (detail) - Year: 2010

MICK WILLIAMSON

Some Memorials: The Photo Diaries of Mick Williamson
Coracle Press Tipperary, Ireland 1999
 A stone bottle, half defined by light from an unseen source on a single bench in a darkened room, lending a long shadow across a wooden floor. An otherwise empty room.

A table laid for eating outdoors, the shadows of leaves creating patterns on the tablecloth in the morning sun.

A child draws a heart into the sand, her body half-visible. We see endless, unlimited space. A young person making her mark which will soon be washed away.

These descriptions of typical shots in this forty four page collection of photographs by Mick Williamson reveal more about his approach than about the subjects he encounters. Having shot thousands of black and white images over nearly thirty years,

often 'held at arms length or at the hip' he seeks to capture what is incidental and unexpected rather than reproduce the formally composed shot. Rather like the haiku-like poems preceding the work, the images act as partial, gentle fragments which invite an attentiveness towards the everyday, the non-glamorous. They are gentle, non-insistent images which provide a welcome antidote to the demanding, spectacular environment in which we are distracted by demands to achieve or be entertained. Instead, Mick's images offer a mode of viewing which is closer to the act of contemplation. They are like secular prayers, subtly implying that we can escape from work, routine and worry. Rather than 'finding' oneself, such an ephemeral vision implies that we can 'lose' what is instrumental, conflictual and monotonous. These moments fix what is transitory whilst retaining the arbitrariness of the initial moment. They belie the effort needed to produce a vast personal

archive that consistently avoids the heaviness of the usual documentary shot or the posed family portrait. These are 'snaps' in the best sense of the word, capturing what is fleeting about childhood; rare moments of pleasure and wonder that are unusually innocent. Considering the abundance of writing about the simulacra and the loss of authenticity, these images might be seen as deliberately refusing such scepticism about locating traces of spontaneity and delight. However, a seriousness is present in such Edenic scenes in the form of an indirect hint of mortality. This is revealed in the image on the front cover which gives the book its title. 'Some Memorials' suggests the ponderous weight of tradition and this is only undermined by the fact that the image of a blank gravestone in a stonecutter's window emphasises the fleeting effect of light on semi-transparent curtains behind. The majority of images seem to refuse to accept the inevitability of 'death' but paradoxically in doing so

they remind us of our mortality; how these intimate or casual moments with friends and family are infinitely precious. We cannot fix what is 'living' and inherently mutable but what makes these images compelling is their ability to suggest that immortality exists alongside the possibility of death.

Having been shot without the photographer actually looking through the lens, they also suggest the possibility of unmediated representation. However, such an effect is illusory as no image can avoid a process of selection, of discrimination. However, the fantasy that our lives can be recorded without preconceived ideas interfering with the unfettered flow of events, is a powerful one. Such forms of escape from what is predictable or monotonous are enticing. However, these images suggest that we possibly have to structure such moments ourselves, rather than rely on the mass media to do this for us. The taking of such

unintrusive shots implies that we can be hopeful about our capacity to see things as if unencumbered and that potentially we retain a sense of awe. To retain the capacity to be childlike and non-censorious whilst being a competent adult is both elusive and yet often longed for. Mick Williamson's recent work reminds us that our ability to achieve this may be possible, even if the pursuit of such freedom may be difficult when faced with many burdens and responsibilities.

www.MickWilliamson.com

IAN ROBERTSON

UNCERTAIN STATES AND ANXIOUS OBJECTS

Marx's often quoted lines from the Communist Manifesto 'all that is solid melts into air' presents a leitmotiv for our age. Our subjective experience of time and space and our depictions of time and space have undergone profound change. With the ubiquitous advent of the internet we now have available to us the joys and sorrows of a global community in real time, intimacy at a distance.

Photography's transition from the analogue to digital contributes to an increased uncertainty as to the veracity of the photographic image and in the hyperbolic language of Baudrillard contributes to the disappearance of the 'real'. What the photograph does is conditioned by what it is, by its function and its final destination and reception. The production of photographic work within the ambit of the visual arts is often conducted between two sites, the singular subjectivity of the producer and the "other", for better or worse. This trajectory is a movement outwards towards an existing world already structured and inwards towards a world that is still inchoate, on the way to being structured.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE NOW FINDS ITSELF SURROUNDED BY A PLETHORA OF SIGNS AND AN EXISTING SET OF RULES AND BEHAVIOURS

The photographic image now finds itself surrounded by a plethora of signs and an existing set of rules and behaviours. The work that it potentially performs arises from within this space. It arrives amid conditions and structures of thinking and feeling, of economies that are already in place, that allow for its appearance and for its operational effects. It is located in relation to existing practices, visualities and emergent possibilities. It's existence is unstable, its epistemologies problematic, and its ethics anxious. It is not alone in its anxiety, it shares in the critique of representation, in which knowledge conceived as a mirrored representation of external reality is disavowed and with it the anthropological logo-centred discourse of the Enlightenment. Pluralism in the arts and a pluralistic neutralised epistemology follow.

Kant, the European philosopher of the enlightenment, believed that experience is already

organized "in accordance with the ideas of space, time, substance and causality. Hence there is no knowledge of experience that does not point towards a world of nature".

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY (CHRONOPHOTOGRAPHY) DEVELOPED A NEW VISUAL TECHNOLOGY FOR CAPTURING THE BODY IN MOTION AND CONSTRUCTING A SCIENTIFIC AND QUANTITATIVE KNOWLEDGE OF MOVEMENT IN SPACE

Early photography (chronophotography) developed a new visual technology for capturing the body in motion and constructing a scientific and quantitative knowledge of movement in space. This is commensurate with the spirit of the age and its desire to develop technologies for the systematic observation and classification of 'nature' in the pursuit of objective 'truth'. The application of these techniques of observation and classification and the discursive formations that they circulated within are described by Foucault in the Archaeology of Knowledge and in his analysis of panopticism with its accompanying modes of regulation and control.

An example of the application of these technologies can also be found in the chronometric charts and 'scientific management' techniques introduced by Taylor, which broke down the labour process into a series of discrete repetitive tasks applied to the assembly line units at Ford in order to maximize human performance and output. Jules Amar the French kinesiologist had also embarked on a similar endeavour with his time and motion study of factory work using chrono and still photography with a view to humanising the labour process and providing an alternative to Taylorism with its instrumentalizing and homogenizing of time and labour. His book *The Human Motor* was first published in 1914. Problematic as his methods may have been - he had his Kabyle Arab subjects strapped to ergographic instruments and respirators while he photographed them - he saw in chronophotography an alternative to the empirical

observations of Fordism and the view of the worker as a machine. The philosopher Henry Bergson provides a philosophical alternative to the scientific quantitative representations of time with his image of immutability, felt time and duration, which finds an echo in the visual arts and literature of the period, most noticeably in Proust.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty indicates that we have; 'already met time on our way to subjectivity' we are not just thrown into the stream of time, we make time 'It is of the essence of time to be in the process of self-production, and not to be completely constituted.' The age of the machine and history however gives way to the digital age and the speed of forgetting, in fact, to the ahistorical. The fluidity of time and the dialectical nature of perception are expressed by Merleau-Ponty when in relation to Cezanne he suggests that perception is like a dance, where the world is not so much constructed as composed. 'Vision happens in the world as one of its facts, we do not simply see the world it also shows itself to us. We are in these terms, the place through which the world comes to visibility and our seeing of it is not simply our own'.

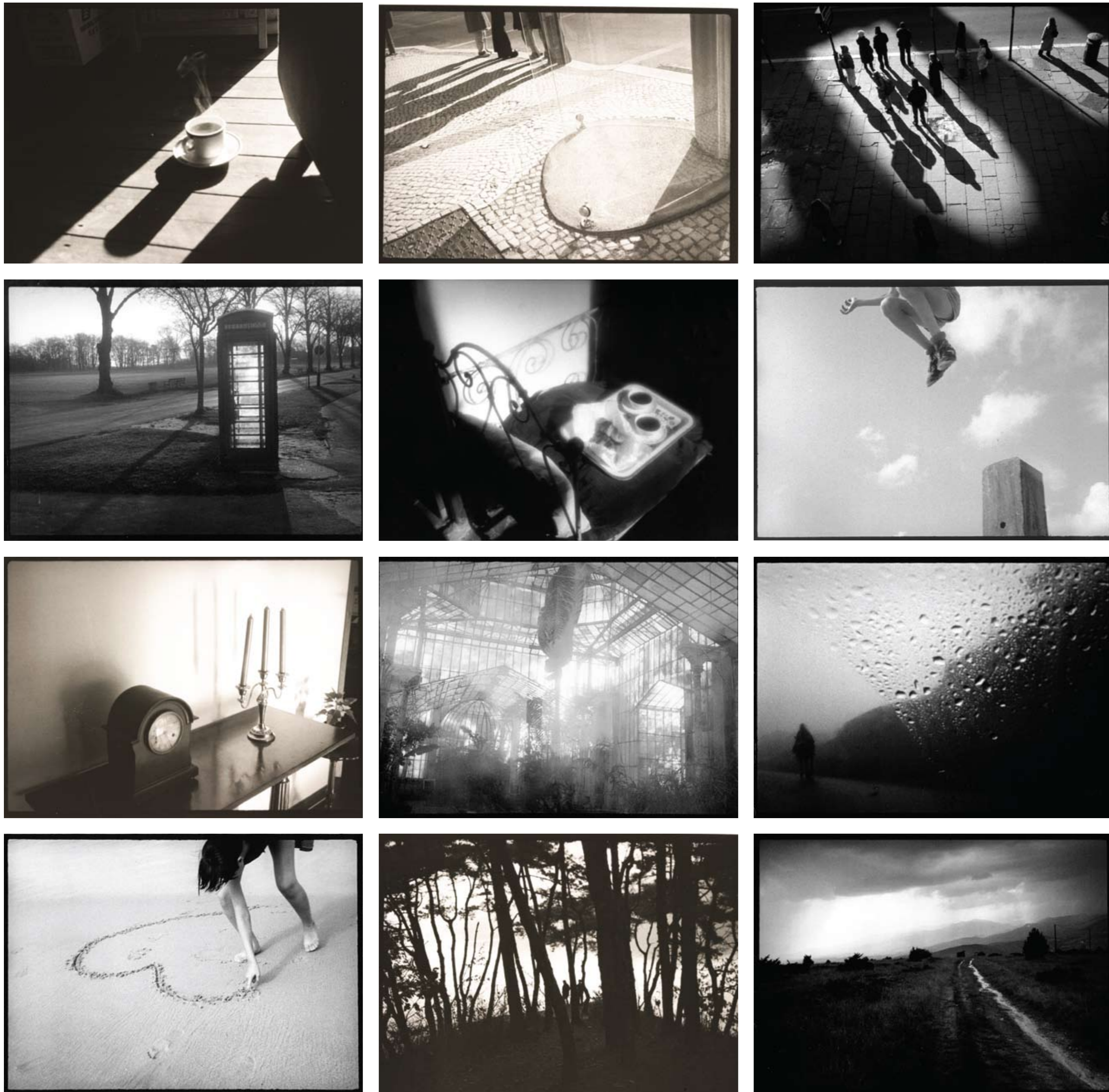
WITH THE UBIQUITOUS ADVENT OF THE INTERNET WE NOW HAVE AVAILABLE TO US THE JOYS AND SORROWS OF A GLOBAL COMMUNITY IN REAL TIME, INTIMACY AT A DISTANCE.

Places shape social organisation and behaviour, creating hierarchies and topographies of class, profession, gender and race. They are saturated with histories and competing narratives. They are also psychological spaces of the imagination where the border between the real and the virtual becomes thin and permeable. It is at this point on the cusp of the real and the virtual that photography generates its effects/affects. The photoart of this current period plays with and prepares the conditions for the possibility of meaning and a potential deconstruction and construction of the system of signs. This journey to signification is a journey using a particular method, whose characteristics are a specificity of medium and legibility.

We are drawn into an arena increasingly occupied by contemporary practice, that of interactivity and the physiology and psychology of perception as they relate to consciousness and intentionality. The new media technologies bring together telematics, video, ludology and digital photography into a new synthesis, in which the complex relationships between perception, interpretation and agency are played out.

Final contemporary photoart "may well have affinities with sociology, to the extent that it attempts -like Duchamp in his early experiments with the ready-mades to introduce something quite different than the object created by the artist, namely the relations that formed around it, the institutions that bring it into operation, the narratives that give rise to, the whole range of ties whereby it exists in the world".

Article by Ian Robertson
 Head of Fine Art, The Cass School of Art, Media and Design, London



SPENCER ROWELL

Chapter Four Peter's Dreams
"I am here" "I need to tell you something"
Photography not only records an event but also acts as a significant tool in the creation of memory and in the expression of the sub-conscious. From the first picture of our birth, through adolescence, and with the continued recording of significant events in our lives, we continue to use photography as a recording device. As we reproduce these events and reconcile the memories with the images, alternative realities emerge. The rendering of the disparity between memory and image can sometimes create conflict and often leads to a questioning of truth and reality.

This project presents a series of captioned photographs based on a story of 'Peter' as he negotiates a particular stage of his own childhood development. A small boy in the 'Latent Phase', he struggles to reconcile and integrate ambivalent personal relationships with his own emotions. He fears the life around him.

The story is an illustrated narrative of a life told from the perspective of a child through the voice of an adult. It is a subjective account and relies on memory. Importantly, the memories are often informed by feelings that come from a place of pre-communication.

The final piece is a seventy-two page bound book; a book similar to one that Peter might have been given at birth by his favourite Uncle. Each page is a representation of Peter's life, a page per year. Page numbers ten to twenty-two are those relevant to this particular stage of Peter's life: represented as 'Chapter Four' in the book. The text also references colour plates, which illustrate the story, placed within the book.

We are intruding upon private experiences, a story of both mortality and abandonment, the exposing of vulnerability. Although a long time ago, we are witnessing this experience today and this highlights unresolved conflicts. Through the text and captioning, the artist is calling out to be heard, his internal voice speaking of his abandonment, loss and loneliness.

The images and the text together convey his story, describe another way, of a child, with his difficulties to understand or communicate the predicament he finds himself in within the outside world. "I am here. I need to tell you something"

Towards the end of the 19th century Freud wrote about dream interpretation and its theoretical relationship with childhood fears and behaviour (1905d). It is upon this psychodynamic approach that many analytical process that have followed, are based. Freud believed that very little adults did in their later years could not be explained by some form of adaptation to circumstances, repressed urges and desires experienced as a child; all of these released while asleep. The conscious mind protected any conflicts, while during sleep the unconscious mind could express hidden desires. Aspects of the personality could therefore be understood through the interpretation of dreams.

Coined by Freud in his book Hysteria (1888,p208), the Latent Stage is a developmental period that occurs between the Phallic and Genital stages. It is a period often overlooked but characterised as a period of calm before the storm of the Genital Stage and the maelstrom of the Oedipus Complex.

The developmental transitions that occur in this phase, as others before and after, impact on the rest of your life. These transitions must be facilitated and allowed to take place as one moves from a secure base into the unreliable outside world. It is this part of his journey that is represented through the series of images.

www.spencerrowell.co.uk



PLATE 1 "Good-bye, Peter, good-bye".



PLATE 6 "What lovely children" "You do have such wonderfully well behaved children".

(IMAGE OPPOSITE & ON COVER)

ROY MEHTA

I have been working with photography for over 20 years. My work has covered many projects, several of which look at issues around cultural identity.

During this time I have developed from working within a traditional documentary black and white idiom towards a more personal method of expressing ideas, specifically through the use of colour to produce images that are as much about experience as they are documentary.

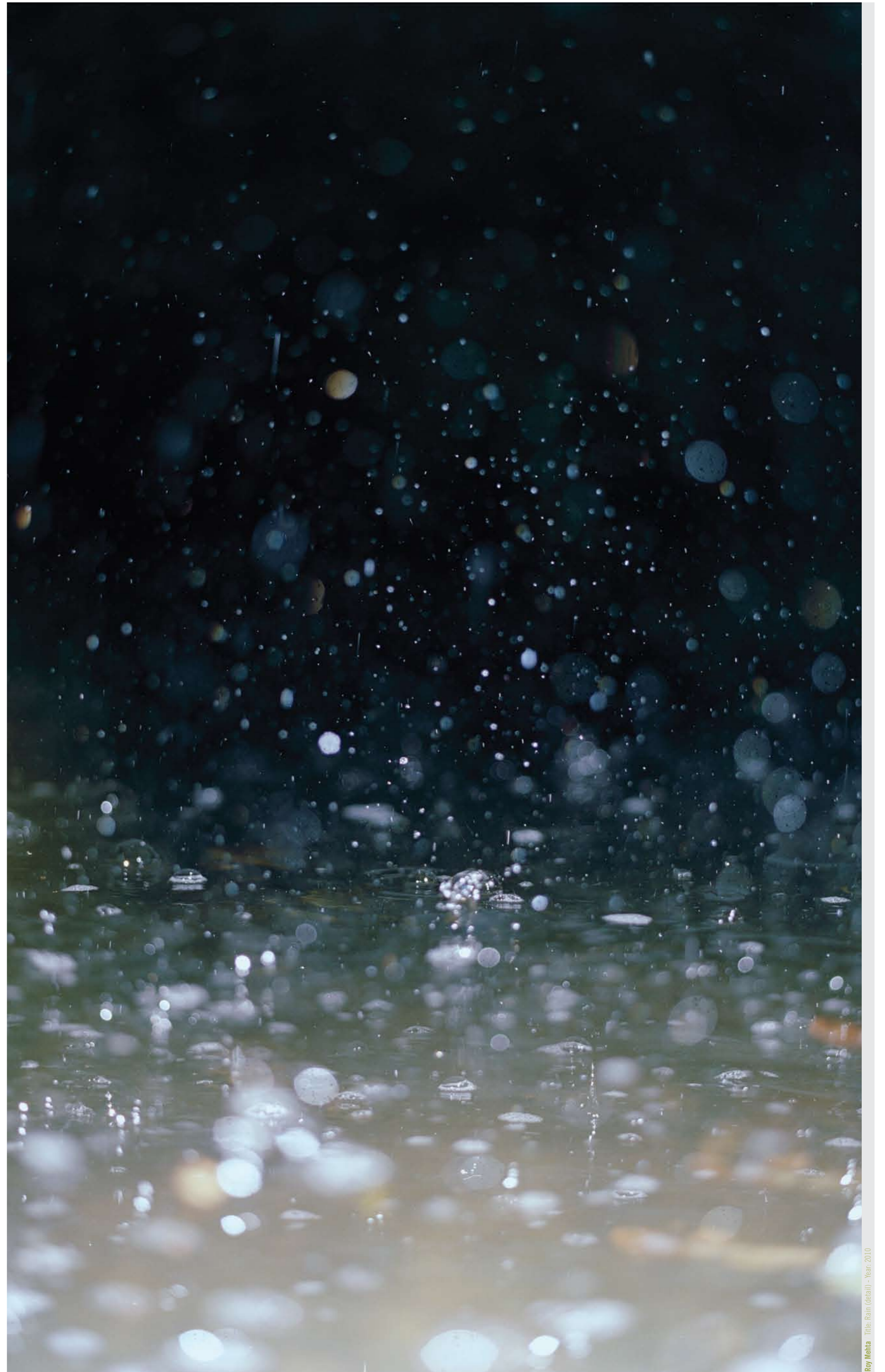
The body of work presented here was produced in collaboration with the European Garden Heritage Network who wanted to re-interpret the idea of a public garden. My response was to continue experimenting with ideas around the landscape and apply them to these public spaces.

Instinctively I wanted to produce work that challenged the idea of these spaces as being ordered and see them as places that are potentially wild, mysterious and full of possibilities.

More recently my work has explored ideas surrounding the methodology of the constructed landscape. This is a project that I have been collaborating on with Greer Crawley (a landscape architect and academic at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, UK).

This new work (not yet shown) is a representation and metaphor for surgical techniques within the manipulation of the landscape.

www.roymehta.com



Roy Mehta Title: Rain (detail) - Year: 2010



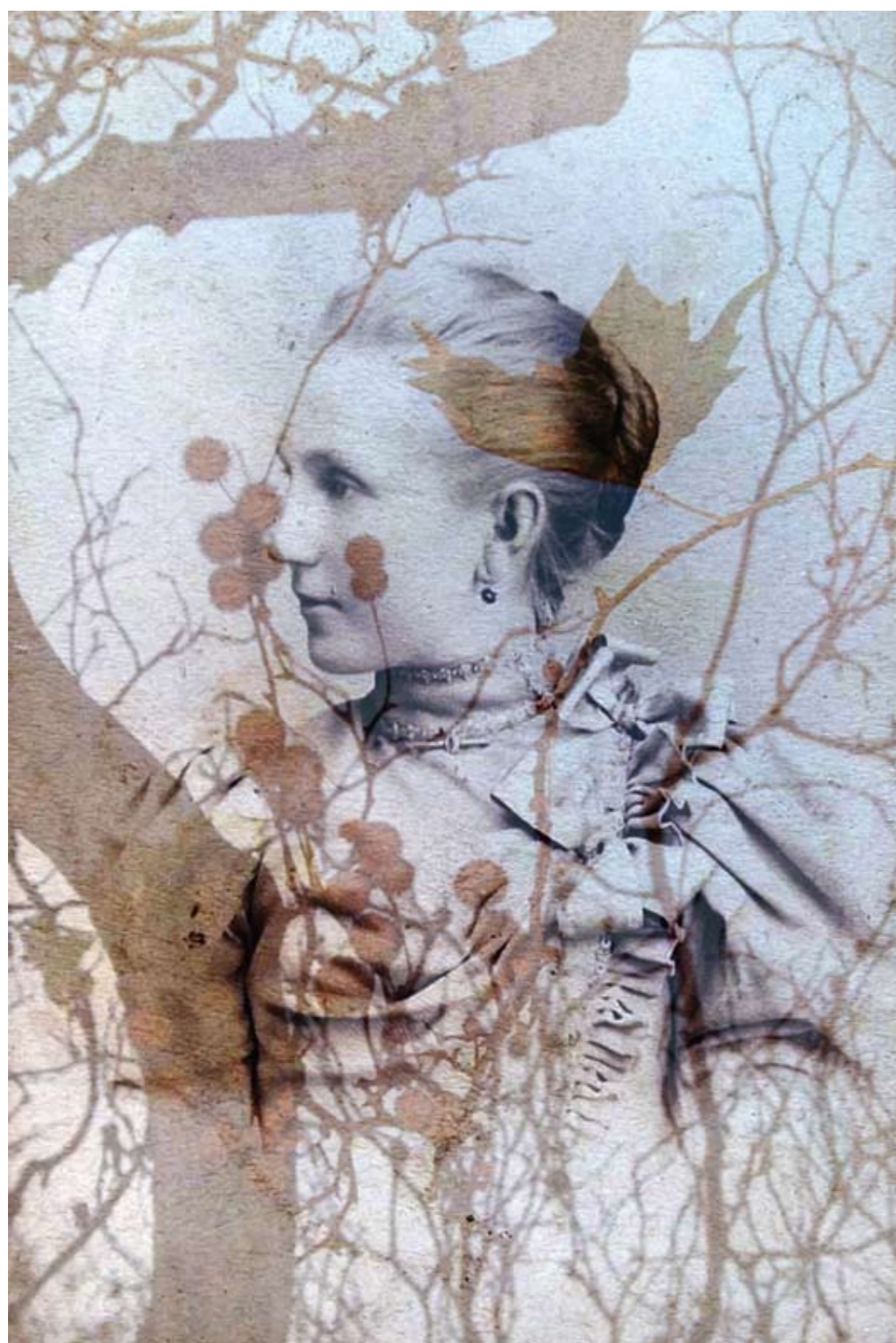
DAVID GEORGE

Entropy Series

These pictures were taken at the old ICI headquarters in Central House Billingham UK, in June of 2010. Although now derelict and stripped of all of its fixtures and fittings it was once the heart of a company that operated in the Tees valley area from 1917 until the mid 1990's and at its peak, employed over 30'000 people. Aldous Huxley visited ICI Billingham in 1934 when it was a world leader in the discovery and development of plastics such as Perspex and synthetic fabrics such as Terylene, crimplene, and polyethylene. The visit inspired Huxley, in part, to write Brave New World, his lament about the failings of an industrial world that has lost its spirituality and social cohesion.

I briefly worked in Central House in 1976 when it was not only a busy industrial headquarters but a place of great architectural beauty, but after a 're-positioning' of ICI in the global markets in the mid 1990's the building was abandoned, the industry sold off and most of the jobs lost. Central House has been empty now for 15 years and there were plans for this iconic building to be brought back to life, but the recent discovery of asbestos in the building has negated any such ideas forever. Once an optimistic symbol for industry and the future, it is now just a faint architectural shadow reminding us of what has been lost.

www.davidgeorge.eu



VICTORIA KOVALENKO

When I found this Victorian image of my great, great, grandmother my curiosity about my family lineage was ignited. The woman in this image, captured in 1899, was a stranger to me and yet she is still strangely familiar. I know only thing about her – the moment that kept her still for probably 15 min, to imprint her likeness forever. Through the image I see the genetic features we share and I am touched by her beauty and her wise look. Daily I study her, as though she holds some clue to these intangible bonds of family that I wish to understand.

These deep rooted connections of the family are like a tree that changes every summer- same leaves only existing in a different period of time.

My interest in these family bonds and their power to transcend time were brought sharply into focus when by grandmother died. I suddenly felt the shift of positioning, to never again be a grand daughter. All my family have moved one step higher, making free space for someone who is going to come, space for another leaf.

www.victoriakovalenko.com





DIGBY WASHER

The following 'Joiner Portraits' represent a culmination of several projects I have worked on during the last year or so. Based on 'meeting the world's' the present of an impromptu meeting with myself, their paradoxically reflect portraiture and abstraction simultaneously. Each documents a person's visage and cue to an emotional self and my representation of them, but they are also accumulative images depicting an extension beyond a transitory moment that has parallels with moving film, and an invasive expansion of spatial depth.

David Hockney, has been a significant influence for this work. He coined the phrase 'joiners' to describe of a series of photographs taken from different or alternating selected viewpoints and assembled to form a single piece. This process of selection enabled Hockney to manipulate his subjects, and input the elements of layered time and space in a manner that a single photograph cannot recreate; he related the idea that a single photograph is the equivalent of a simple dot in a drawing, joining photographs together was to make a line. This technique is grounded in a painterly approach – essentially they are Cubist images, operating on the central Cubist themes.

Like Hockney, my portraits are based on human eyesight, a series of glances makes up the total perception of being somewhere or meeting someone. It is this principle that I have developed; I am stretching the spaces on people's faces to allow a multitude of moments, reflected environments, and characteristics to show through in multiple exposures. The aim of the project was to capture an essence of my subjects – not to depict their faces in the normal photographic sense by making a single shot portrait, but splitting the image into

a series of glimpses of facial details. This essence I speak of is directly related to the way I am presenting my portraits as made up from several sittings of the environment, emotion and reflection of the environment.

I aim to continue to add more photos to these portrait images so that they become enormous – almost breathing – records of these people. My Joiner portraits are living and continuing. The project is paradoxical, and documentary records of details of people's faces become sketches in an abstraction.

Every single photograph taken of the subject is added to my image as a documentary record, those that don't fit become leftover pieces of a puzzle. When the pieces become too numerous a new set of rules will be applied.

I am not pre-arranging portraits but simply encouraging them in the course of social meetings. In some instances I took portraits without asking – even against their will. Under the current notions of portraiture and documentation and therefore the imposed leasing limitations, what happens when the stolen 'portrait' is not immediately recognizable as of oneself? I nevertheless counterbalanced invasiveness by inviting subjects to similarly take my portrait and to arrange during the exhibition. By fragmenting my face into 238 magnetic pieces each person can recreate my face in a new set of principles so that I am constantly morphing in size, shape and form, time and space, colour, texture, and theory. In fact, I could be interpreted in many genres of portraiture without being specifically resigned to any; I am now more than a hundred different faces and yet one at the same time.

www.flickr.com/photos/digbywasher

(IMAGE OPPOSITE PAGE)

MICHELLE CLEMENT-DELBOS

Spaces, now abandoned and often overlooked, are hinted at but not revealed. Hidden from view and mostly redundant, these cavernous interiors rely solely on the beam of a torch or the eerie green and amber tones cast from a bare overhead bulb to illuminate, momentarily, their former existence.

How were they inhabited - if at all? What was their purpose? What went on within these spaces where so many secrets lie hidden and to which we will never hear the answers? Senses stiffen, become alert; the mind's doors are opened, left ajar, and a rush of emotions inhabit the spaces; trepidation, fear, oppression, curiosity, awe and exhilaration; a slow enveloping awareness of how infinitesimally inconsequential and vulnerable we are become. In these domed, vaulted, cathedral-like dwellings were now bats and rats alone gain sanctuary.

Relics from another life, they beckon, tantalisingly, even as they indicate a way out of and to something beyond; of further journeys into other mysterious worlds...

Michelle.cdf@virgin.net





Julie Cockburn Title: Wolfwoman - Year: 2010

photomonth
east london photography festival

Photmonth Exhibition UncertainStates 2010

A celebration of a year in print. *UncertainStates*, a photographic collective with work steeped in nostalgia, memory and obsolescence, commemorates its first major milestone with an exhibition of new works as well as the best of the past year.

Curated by William Cooper

Gallery East
214 Brick Lane
London
E1 6SA

ALDGATE EAST, OLD ST. OR SHOREDITCH HIGH STREET TUBE

11th - 19th November
7 Days 11am-7pm

Private view Thursday 11th 7pm - 10pm

Uncertain States is a lens-based artist co-operative who are passionate to create and promote visual imagery. In this volatile global climate the work reflects some of our current concerns and challenges how perception is formed in our society on issues as diverse as politics, religion, and personal identity. For your on-line copy, visit www.uncertainstates.com or e-mail info@uncertainstates.com for a hard copy.

We welcome submissions from lens-based artists for further publication. For all enquiries please contact info@uncertainstates.com

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