



● Scottish
● Photographers

NOTES Summer 2011

Chris Adie North Berwick Alan Aitchison Lochwinnoch John Alexander Broughty Ferry Allan Allison Glasgow Denis Alyshev Glasgow Paul Anderson Lenzie Marion Archibald Burntisland Roland Ashcroft Norfolk Tom Astbury Dunblane Colin Benson Edinburgh Anthea Bickmore Gilston Andy Biggs Elswick Jeanine Billington London Richard Bingham Bonnyrigg William Bishop London Val Bissland Bearsden Alan Borthwick Perth Sheila Borthwick Perth Alan Bovill Lenzie Alex Boyd Irvine Keith Brame Edinburgh David Bromwich Dunblane Alicia Bruce Edinburgh David Bruce Helensburgh David Buchanan Edinburgh William Buchanan Stirling Robert Burns Glasgow Gordon Cairns Glasgow Gordon Cameron Edinburgh Lee-Ann Cardle Forres James Carrick Milngavie Ian Castle Orford Colin Cavers Lauder Derek Christie Edinburgh Therese Christie Edinburgh Al Clark Abernethy Ali Cleary Edinburgh Julie Close Scotlandwell Alastair Cochrane Avoch Joel Conn Glasgow Scott Cook Dunfermline Robin Coutts Waterlooville Mike Cowling Glasgow Anne Crabbe 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Cover: **David Gillanders:** The Cullins from Elgol on the Isle of Skye, 2010.

Scottish Photographers is a network of independent photographers in Scotland.

Scottish Photographers www.scottish-photographers.com
info@scottish-photographers.com

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Organiser:

Carl Radford 15 Pittenweem Path High Blantyre G72 0GZ
01698 826414 carl@carls.gallery.co.uk

Editor:

Sandy Sharp 33 Avon Street Motherwell ML1 3AA
01698 262 313 sandesharp@scottishnet.co.uk

Accountant:

Stewart Shaw 13 Mount Stuart Street Glasgow G41 3YL
0141 632 8926 stewart.shaw@mypostoffice.co.uk

Webmaster:

Jamie McAteer 88/4 Craighouse Gardens Edinburgh EH10 5LW
0797 13792424 info@jamiemcateer.co.uk

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Tim West: Flower Show

THE PREPARATION OF the last issue of NOTES was hindered by the great snowstorm. This time the temperature is soaring and distracting the editor; a garden chair beckons. Will there ever be a perfect time to write the few words required to introduce our contributors? The increase in subscription seems not to have put people off and that, combined with welcome donations, has enabled the number of colour pages to be increased. The world, after all, is colourful. At a time when there is still controversy over digital aspects of photography, it may be hard for younger readers to believe that the same kind of debate was carried out within living memory regarding *colour* photography. We might as well quote a from letter by Edward Weston, that giant of fine monochrome printing:

Those of us who began photographing in monochrome spent years trying to avoid subject matter exciting because of its color; in this new medium, we must now seek subject matter which is exciting because of its color. We must see color as form, avoiding subjects which are only "colored" black and white.

(Edward Weston to Bruce Downes, ca 1950. Edward Weston papers.)

Colour is now an integral part of the medium and it is hard to understand the emotions that were unsettling Weston when Kodak made him a present of two dozen sheets of 8 x 10 Kodachrome to photograph Point Lobos. "I have such a love of Point Lobos that I would hate to see it murdered in color by an 'outsider . . .'" was his wry response. Thankfully our contributors have no such reservations and we hope that colour, even color, will play an increasing part in future NOTES. Ironically the first folio we received was from **David Gillanders** — in monochrome. Not quite. Many monochrome workers make pictures that are anything but monochrome. Selenium and gold toners make the most beautiful (is that word permissible in 2011?) images which lose

all of their beauty when reproduced from 'desaturated' files. David has started on a long journey to portray contemporary Scotland using the wet collodion process and we are pleased to be able to give readers a first taste of this. On the road he sleeps in his converted wet-collodion-darkroom-van amidst essential bottles of potassium cyanide, ether and guncotton. We pray that he leaves the windows open at night.

The winter NOTES featured aerial photography by **Patricia and Angus Macdonald**. This time it is the work of **Simon Nicholas White** which may also be said to be aerial photography, albeit made from an altitude of inches rather than miles. Working with film, Simon is typical of many *Scottish Photographers* we meet, a man with determined ideas about the materials he needs in order to make the kind of work he wants. These are ambiguous and seductive images and bring to mind Minor White's observation: "Abstraction in photography is to reach towards the non-objective without ever breaking [the] camera's strongest point - the magic of its tether to visual reality."

The phenomenon that is **Alina Kisina** struck first in an Edinburgh portfolio session in Stills. Since then she has moved on to London, Derby, Munich, Kiev, even to Glasgow. Alina presents glimpses of shadowy archetypal cities rather than specific communities. A few words are all that might ever give clues but Cyrillic lettering being a closed book to many of us these texts are equally indefinite. We await with interest to see where Alina's next set of images will take her. **Donald Stewart** has made a substantial body of work about the remains of the shore defences that remain from the last major world conflict, known to us, when we were boys, as The War. This is photography which provides a visual antidote to the imperfections of memory.

The emergence of Blurb, and other internet publishing companies, has been seized upon by photographers as a distinctive and creative

extension of their medium although we pray that the day of hand made books, beloved offspring of the Blessed John, are not over. One of the most ambitious and successful books to come our way is that of **Virginia Khuri** whose *Seven Generations* traces the history of seven generations of her American family. Both the writing (Virginia's own) and the images are, it must be said, of a much higher order than that of most internet books. The book can be seen on www.blurb.com. If you have not already made a book then it is time that you did; think of your grandchildren . . .

Finally there is a tantalising sight of that enchanting Scottish moorland garden somewhere between Parnassus and Paradise that is Little Sparta. **Robin Gillanders** has spent many happy days making pictures there and his image of its dour presiding genius Ian Hamilton Finlay is the Spotlight.

It is good to read that Fife Foto is making progress. Based in the Rothes Centre in Glenrothes it might be seen as a son, or grandson of the late lamented Corridor Gallery although the members of the committee have their own 2011 ideas about how it should operate. Fife Foto has asked *Scottish Photographers* to provide the inaugural exhibition for which **Carl Radford** and **Donald Stewart** will receive submissions. Information can be found in the Events page

Of all the portfolio meetings that are held. The 'Northern Cell' is quite the most unusual, all due to **Eileen Fitzpatrick** and **Matt Sil-lars** who keep it going. It can't just be the quality of the soup that is the attraction. Eileen's couthy report rounds off this issue.

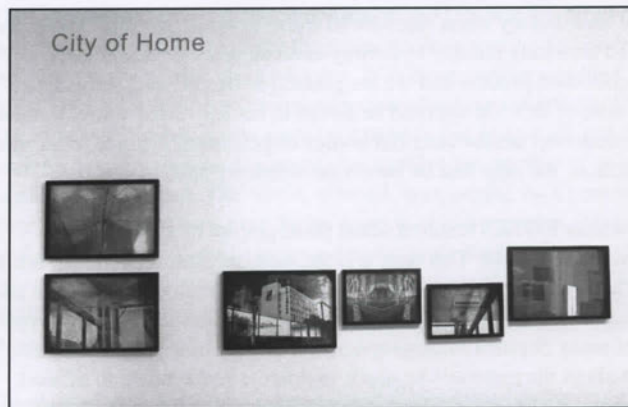
Be careful. Stay calm and don't panic.

Sandy Sharp

Alina Kisina

I was born in Ukraine yet I always had a clear sense that I belonged somewhere else. Seven years ago I found what I was looking for in the UK and it has been my chosen home ever since. Going abroad meant adventure, excitement and the priceless opportunity to find my identity. I want happiness in my life and in order to find it I knew I had to answer the big question: who am I? The words "journey" and "path" are incredibly popular but what do they really mean? Then I accidentally discovered photography, or rather was discovered by it — it felt like being born. Despite my new identity, a certain connection or even bond with Kiev, the city of my birth still remains. Perhaps it's a reflection of a deep understanding of its inner life, something I will probably never achieve in the UK as I missed out on a huge number of cultural layers while growing up in Kiev. Equally the past seven years brought dramatic political and social changes to Ukraine and it's becoming less and less of the country I left. However, I feel I am still in a very privileged position that allows me to look from a distance at something I know so well from within, a position of a stranger in the familiar. As a place I know and sense Kiev helped me create a consumerism and cultural cliché-free photographic space where the location and period are not getting in the way of seeing beyond the surface.

When I initially revisited Kiev in 2006 through the very first photographs of what is now the *City of Home* I was not looking for a clear definition of the place and the people but turned inwards, establishing the poetics as my reaction against the shallowness of its new community culture, while equally looking to express a sense of belonging and care. Gradually this process made me realise that the series is as much about Kiev as it is about a city — about man-made structure and its beauty and greatness which I contemplated with respect. I was looking at it and it



was looking back at me with its layers of meaning, yet clarity and pulse.

The work became a search for something more universal, a deeper meaning, a way of grasping, experiencing and expressing a wider intuitive perception or concept; simply put that the world as we know it cannot possibly be it. Through my photographs I am questioning the limitations of what we know about it and ourselves and am looking for visual exit points to other possibilities, another dimension, another way of thinking. After all, our beliefs and understandings are shaped by the time we are living in, which to me by definition implies that we will never have the "full picture", whatever that is. Nonetheless, searching for it feels like discovering a secret inside a secret — frankly it feels ecstatic yet perfectly natural.

Alina Kisina

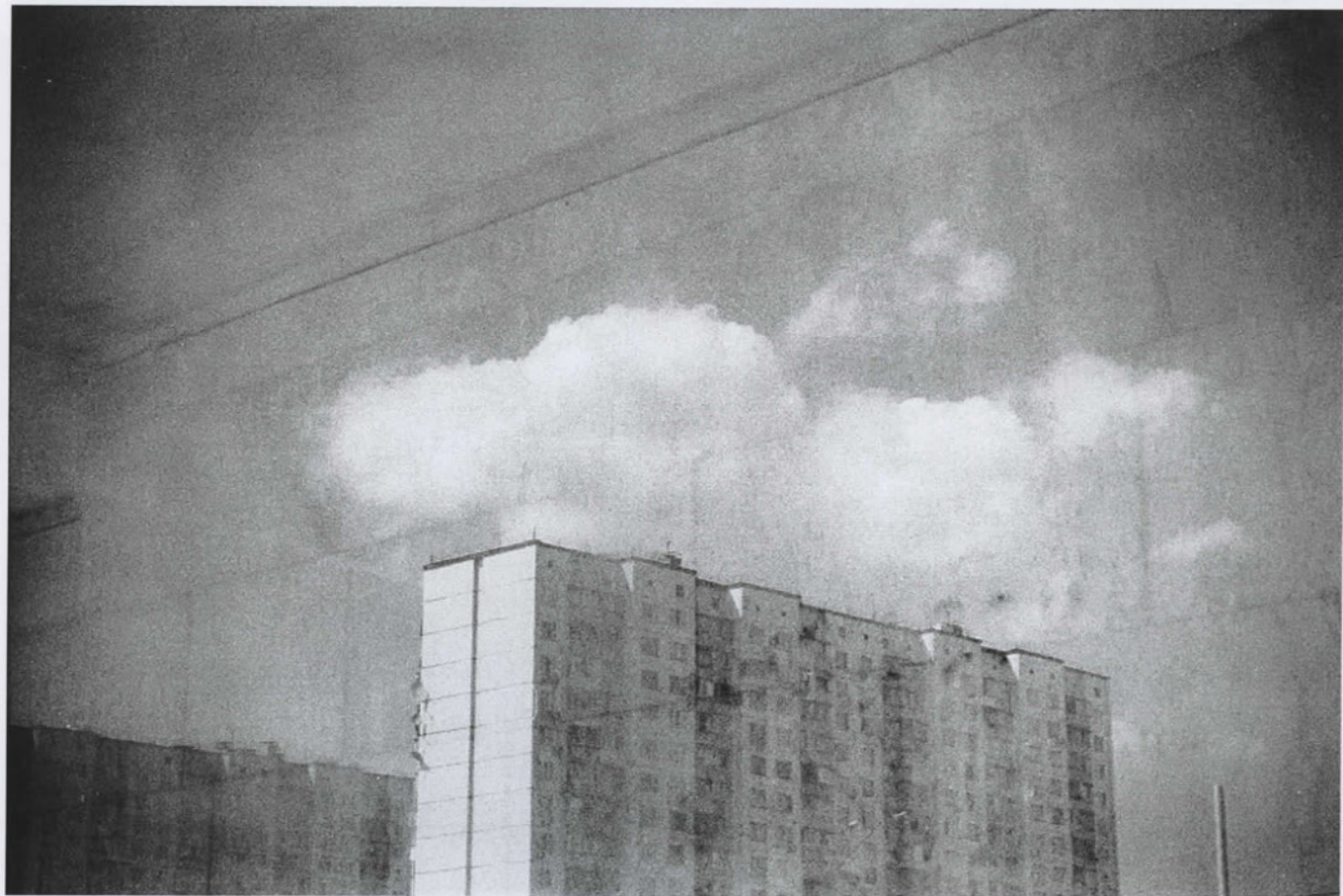
www.alinakisina.co.uk alina@alinakisina.co.uk















Spotlight: Robin Gillanders

In 1995 I began a long association with the acclaimed artist and poet Ian Hamilton Finlay, culminating in my book, 'Little Sparta' published in 1999. The major manifestation of his work is his garden 'Little Sparta' situated on a remote hillside 30 miles south of Edinburgh. It is a modern conception of a neo-classical garden and consists of some 300 works involving words, phrases or sentences set in a variety of materials and placed in the landscape of the garden.

When I originally agreed to do some work with Ian, my ulterior motive was to make a portrait of him. In the event it took me over a year to summon the courage to ask him – he is well known for not enjoying being photographed. He once growled to a friend of mine who was cajoling him into position with the promise of a good portrait, "the only good photograph is one that's been taken".

So even although Ian and I were developing a friendship, it was with some trepidation that I asked him if I could do this portrait. I had the luxury of thinking about it for over a year and decided that he needed to be in his little rowing boat on one of the ponds in the garden. So this wasn't to be a quick picture at the door of his cottage, rather it required some time and commitment for him to climb the hill, on a cold March morning, and clamber into his boat to position it carefully in the middle of the pond to my shouted instructions.

The idea at conception was that there should be a reference to the sea and boats, since this is one of his major themes. Also that the boat should be his smallest, as a reference to his 'small boy' hobby of making model boats. The background was to be a relatively wild part of the garden, so drawing a relationship between nature and culture, which is another of his underlying themes. In retrospect the portrait suggests other metaphors. Ian occupies a small space in the frame, implying isolation and solitariness – as an internationally exhibited artist largely unknown in his own country at that time, and historically at odds with the art establishment, and as someone who in 25 years had never left the immediate environment of his garden.

A few months before he died, Ian confided to me that he really hated doing this picture. I am so grateful that he agreed to it without demur. I only ever made two portraits of Ian (the second in 2004), and while I've considered doing more, this picture encapsulates so much that I don't think I could have improved on it.

Robin Gillanders



Ian Hamilton Finlay, Little Sparta 1996

David Gillanders: A Wet Plate Portrait of Scotland

Since falling head over heels in love with the Wet Plate Collodion process I wanted to produce a series of portraits and landscapes of my homeland. It's been a slightly crazy love affair which has seen me exchange my wee car for a great big ex Glasgow City Council works van. I've fitted out the van with bunk beds and a darkroom and am now travelling the country, as and when I can, to make these images onto large sheets of black aluminium.

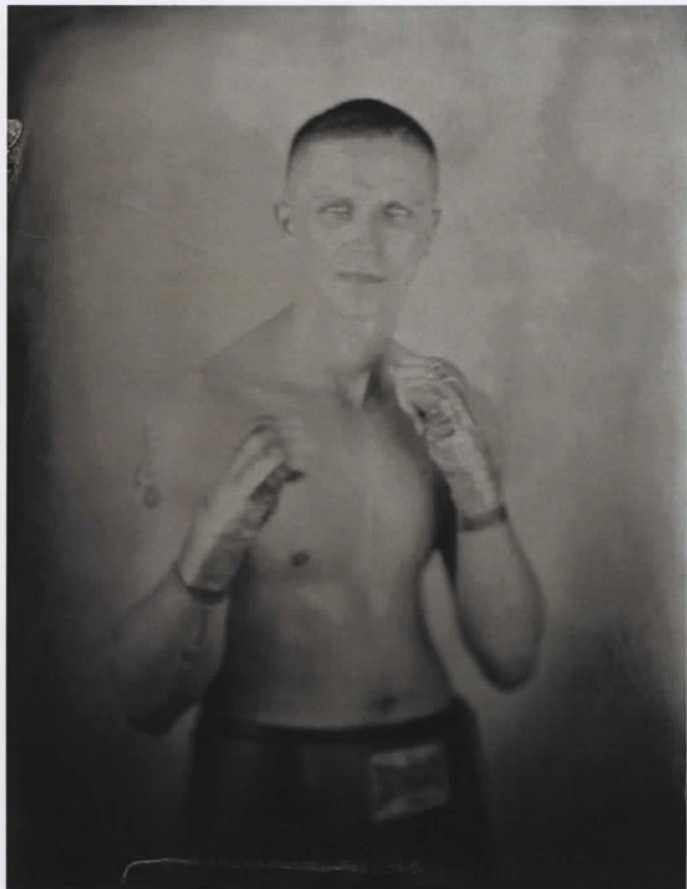
All images © David Gillanders 2010
www.davidgillanders.com



Cameron Jack Gillanders (CJ), Glasgow, 2009



Davey Savage Junior, Glasgow, 2009



Michael, boxer Glasgow, 2010



Wee Tony, ARGO boxing club Glasgow, 2010



Alasdair, ARGO boxing club Glasgow, 2010

Simon Nicholas White: Hidden Microcosms

Simon Nicholas White was born in Leeds in northern England the year Yuri Gagarin entered space, and moved to Scotland in 1989. He has lived in the capital city Edinburgh ever since. His parents gave him a Canon SLR camera on his 18th birthday which he taught himself to use and continues to use to this day. From the outset he had a particular interest for photographing people, dilapidated buildings and panoramic landscapes using predominantly black and white film. However, in 1996 he had an epiphany whilst strolling along a beach on the Scottish Hebridean island of South Harris. It was there he witnessed an array of complex sand patterns fashioned by the ebb and flow of the Atlantic Ocean.

"I excitedly climbed a small rock face nearby to get a better view. Looking down I experienced the natural world in a brand new way... click".

Since then Simon has spent a great deal of time exploring Scotland's seemingly endless coast, photographing its extraterrestrial rocky shorelines and beaches, endeavouring to reveal the enigma and inimitable beauty of the hidden microcosms within nature that are so often overlooked.

As a very young child Simon remembers repeatedly playing an LP of 'The Planets Suite' by Gustav Holst, inspired by the music he tried to imagine how these planetary landscapes would look. The miniature landscapes he photographs today are to some degree an expression of this. Indeed, he jocularly refers to himself as a terrestrial cosmonaut, although his cosmos is somewhat nearer to home and accessible to those who allow themselves to be drawn into these magical other worlds.



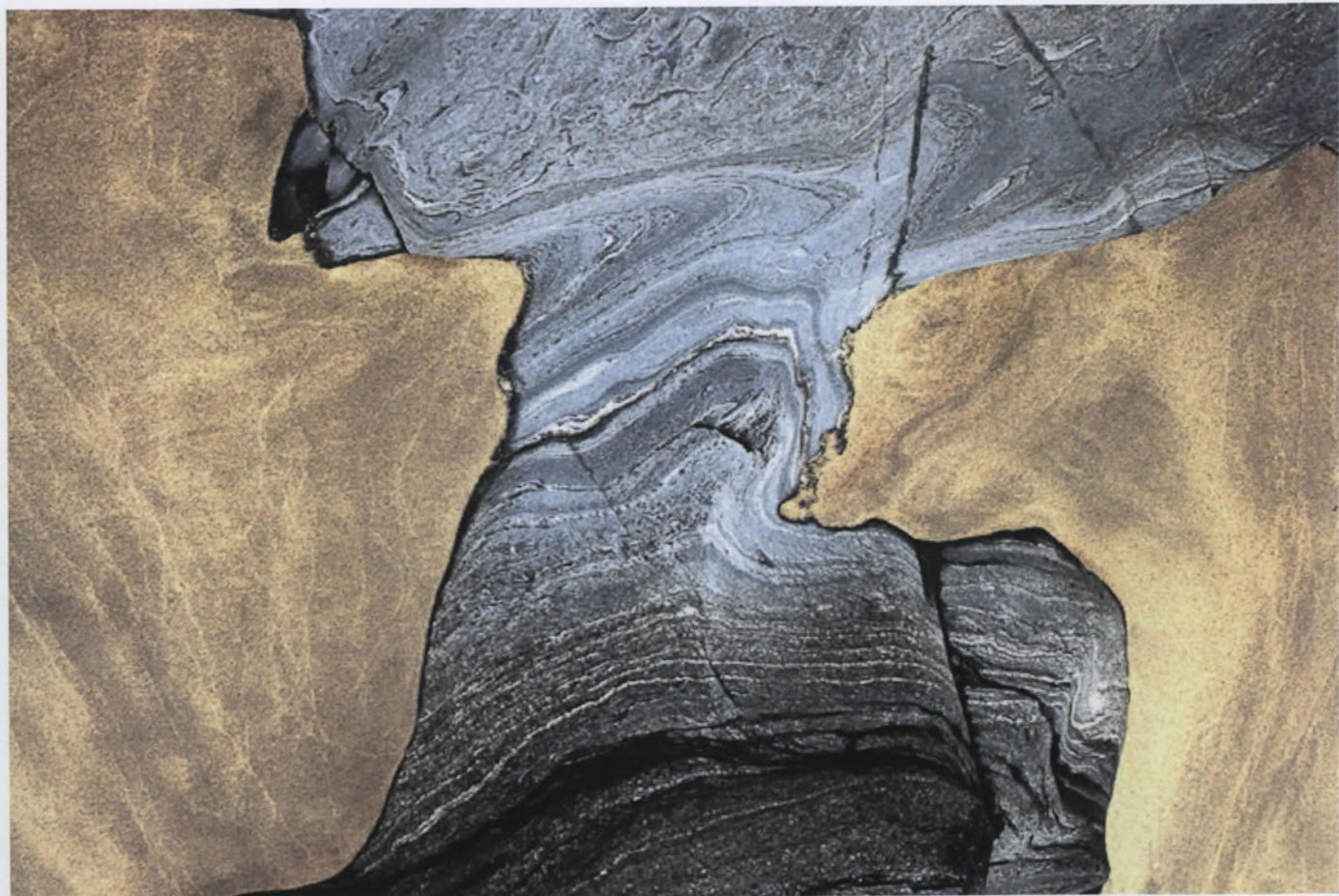
Dysart, Fife

Simon Nicholas White

info@simonnicholaswhite.com

www.simonnicholaswhite.com





Colonsay



Small Isles: Isle of Eigg





Earlsferry

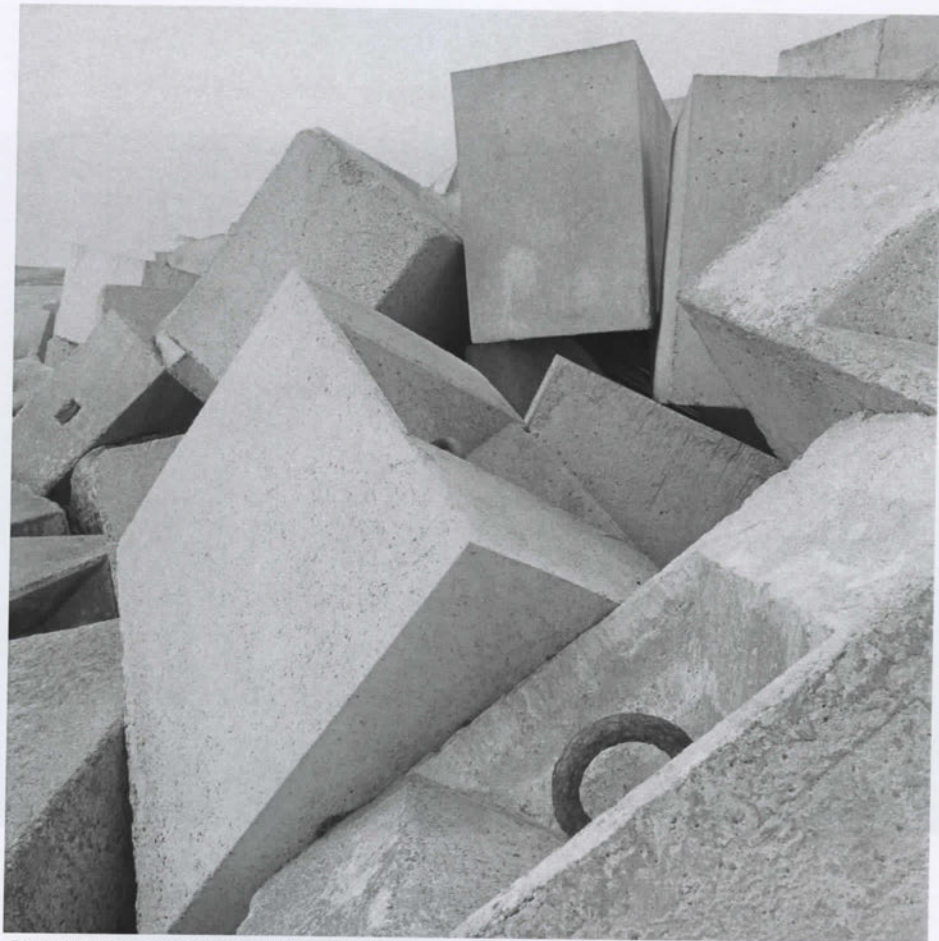
Donald Stewart: Coastal Defence Structures

My theme is memory and the passage of time as witnessed in the gradual disintegration of Scotland's coastal defence structures. Though symbolic of the greatest challenge our small islands ever faced and overcame, these structures also have a personal resonance for me. From my childhood I can recall the days of the Clydeside Blitz and its after-effects and the wild celebrations of VE and VJ days. More than 60 years later the defences still remain, a silent and strangely peaceful record of those turbulent times. Although slowly nature and the landscape are reclaiming and transforming them, they constitute a powerful monument to the fact that there have always been and always will be some things to which the answer has to be "No" whatever the consequences.

As time passes, those with first hand knowledge of the war grow old and pass away just as the structures change and diminish year on year, until in the end the landscape reclaims them completely. As this personal experience is lost and the physical evidence disappears, so our collective memory of these times becomes more imperfect. This uncertainty and imperfection of memory and the mutability and ambiguity of the disintegrating physical structures intrigues me.

Donald Stewart

donaldstewart42@aol.com



Blocks, The Churchill Barriers, Glims Holm, Orkney.



False Airfield, Leuchars, Fife.



In the Mist, Braehead, Dalgety Bay, Fife



Skerry Battery, Hoy, Orkney.



Defensive Boom Support, Cramond Island, Firth of Forth.

Causeway to Cramond Island, Firth of Forth.



Eroded Blocks, Cramond Island, Firth of Forth.



Historical time is recorded in these family photographs, portraits not of the rich and famous, but of my ancestors, ordinary men, women and children, whose lives weave strands of Time and Place into the rich tapestry of history; and whose individual characteristics, handed down from generation to generation, can sometimes be glimpsed in their descendants as fragments from a broken mirror.

Mythic time is represented by the enigmatic, timeless quality of the Victorian artist's manikin, the archetypal storyteller who leads a journey of discovery through the shadowed lands of magic and mystery, of legend and dream where fate is the ruler of all.

Personal time is defined by a spiritual journey toward awareness and acceptance of the transience of life. A haunting reminder of the tenuous threads of our own existence on fronts us in each time-encapsulating photographic portrait.

In the sequence of photographs none of these concepts of time form a linear progression but all are interconnected.

Virginia Moffat Khuri
vkhuri@aol.com

Seven Generations is at www.blurp.com

Frances Olive, plantation mistress,
inheritor and bequeather of southern gentility
mother of three, two beaux and a belle
Civilized serenity governs at the click of the shutter.

But do you sense in the shadows the trouble to come?
A Civil War looms and you will bury the family silver
in the boxwood near the kitchen.
When Yankee troops depart, six teaspoons remain.

And you bury your eldest son, age twenty one,
dead of pneumonia, not war. His brother begins
the study of medicine and his sister will marry
into a family from the neighbouring county.

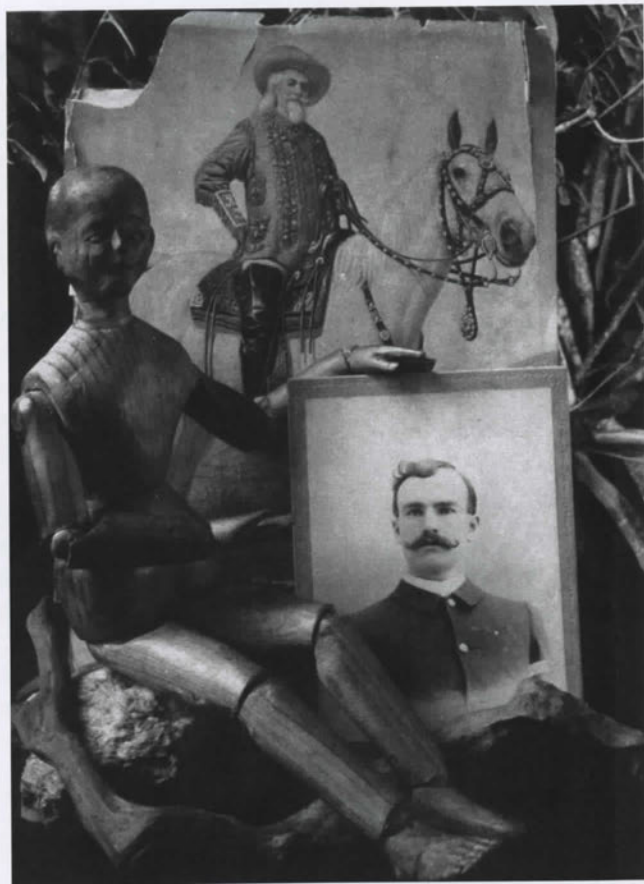


Ned, son of William and Frances
favourite brother of Clara,
a true son of the Wild West.

In his youth he brought his sisters
tales of Europe and a china doll
from travels with Buffalo Bill

Later he brought to his brothers
tales of combat from Santiago
where he was honoured for his bravery.

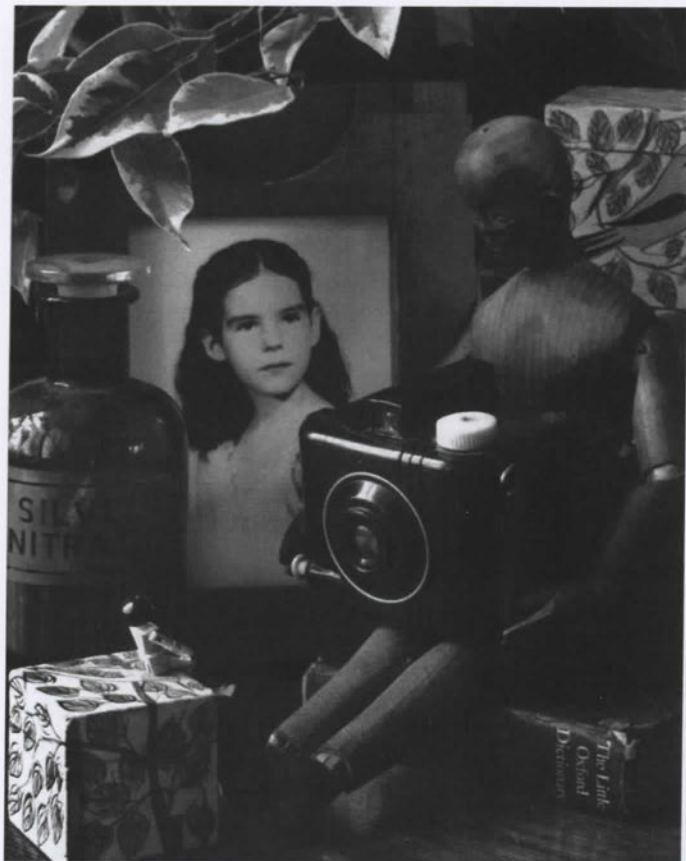
And like his father, when the military
no longer had need of him, he returned
to his corner of the Matthews family ranch.



Virginia Clare determined at age seven
Not to play this photographer's silly game,
Later to become herself a picture maker:
her camera a means of discovery.

Born a Connecticut Yankee, but a daughter of both
the Old South and the Wild West, she is a wanderer.
Across the length and breadth of America,
to Japan, to Lebanon, to England,

She is at home in the World.



Scottish Photographers Northern 'Cell' Meeting Saturday 19th March 2011

Anne Thomson, Alastair Cochrane, Peter Fenton, Keith Price, Eileen Fitzpatrick and of course Matt Sillars met at Matt's house in Dingwall for a Portfolio meeting.

These meetings are greatly valued, I think, maybe because they provide a sort of 'oasis' where like-minded, though not necessarily similar in output, photographers and painters can gather. We've been doing this, twice a year or so, for nearly ten years, so something must be working. They have a richness of conversation, fellow feeling and simply a sort of trust built up over time. Here is a brief outline of what happened:

Matt showed us three black and white photographs of a boardwalk and bridge over a river, and two detailed images of a filled pothole and a curbstone at the side of a rural road. These images of blurred boundaries, as opposed to clinical edges, were not natural boundaries but were linear, graphic and man-made, 'interventions in the landscape' as Keith described them. Whilst the full frame, powerful, photographs themselves were digitally made, their framing was likened by Matt to a filed down negative carrier, with the subject matter contained within these further boundaries. Further black and white images were shown next.



Peter had made a book of sensitively taken and well observed records of an emotional journey made in his father's house immediately following his death. His chair, bed linen, crockery and the everyday and

special things belonging to his father were carefully recorded, and the views over water from the windows his father knew well. Out of one particular window, Peter had made a series of, perhaps symbolic, images of an empty rowing boat, (used by the local Sea Cadets) seen from above, on a calm sea without a horizon. We have seen Peter's beautiful flower and garden photographs in the past, and perhaps continuing this theme, he showed us soft, monochrome, hand printed pictures of ice-capped reeds in winter. Peter sometimes collaborates with poets, combining image and text in further meaningful ways. He has just acquired some darkroom equipment and film cameras including a Tomiyama Art Panorama 170 which delighted and amazed us. Peter prefers wet darkrooms to digital darkrooms.



Alastair's books always provide us with a sense of wonder not only at his technical ability, and sheer stamina, but also his own sense of curiosity both at the world around him and contained in images he makes further afield. He showed us several 'Blurb' publications in colour he has produced, one of which, 10 x 30 is the extent of a piece of the harbour near his home in Avoch on the Black Isle which he concentrated upon. The book contained details of indentations and mysterious marks made on the ground taken in the same place over a period of time. Like Matt, Alastair had seen and recorded something literally at his feet,

Scottish Photographers Northern 'Cell'

apparently solid but which is ephemeral. A love of the sea and the wish to return often to the same place and record its changes can also been in the work **Anne** showed us. Taking her beloved Hasselblad to Findhorn, on the Moray Firth, and making pictures both of the changing sea and sky, and partial images of her daughter and sons are major themes of her work, both in painting and photography. Water in all its guises seems to fascinate her, and we were also shown photographs taken of stopped water drops as they fell from a water feature in Cawdor Castle. There is a strong feeling for the elements in these pictures, and, as in a number of the images we saw at the meeting, for me at least, a sense of time passing.

Keith makes use of an image gleaned from various sources including Victorian family photographs, as a reference point for going more deeply into painting and drawing. These one-off, handmade, glued down, scraped off, muted, layered, double exposure pieces successfully combine the personal with the universal. Keith, also a graphic artist, uses text in his work, as in a black and white digital photograph of a rural bridge over which was printed 'Not There Yet' in pale green. All of the layers in his work are carefully chosen for their meaning, but he also loves what he calls 'serendipity' and allows the results of this to remain part of the image when appropriate. Keith also is a craftsman and builds his own cameras and he showed us a photograph of a 'Holgablاد' he had made.



Eileen is a part time tour guide at Brodie Castle, and is able to happily combine her love of history, art and photography there, and in 'haunting' local museums. Her slide show of images made in Fochabers Folk Museum was an illustration of this. The museum is housed in an old church, and the beams of light from the stained-glass windows reflecting off the glassed-in displays, was part of many of the images made there. This aspect of her work, light reflecting off glass giving a multi-layered effect, had been helpfully commented upon at previous meetings, and is a continuing theme. Serendipity, for Eileen, also plays its part in the discovery and making images of found objects and the light which illuminates them. Again, as in much of the work shown by the others, there was a strong sense of time passing, and the need to make a record of something which might otherwise be lost. (As I took pictures of the meeting, I don't have any of people responding to them, so have just included three of the images from my slide show.)

Many thanks to Matt for being our host, to Keith for making the soup, to Alastair's wife Linda for making the Victoria sponge cake and for the delicious contributions to the shared lunch made by the rest of us. We look forward to meeting again later in the year, possibly in the summer.

Eileen Fitzpatrick

Contact the Inverness Group: matt.sillars@gmail.com.

Scottish Photographers Exhibition at FotoSpace Images - Scottish Photographers

Fife Foto has agreed on the opening exhibition for its new gallery being an exhibition of the work of *Scottish Photographers*. Fife Foto hopes that this will be seen as an opportunity to showcase the excellent work being produced by the members of *Scottish Photographers*.

(1) Entry is open to all members of *Scottish Photographers* whose membership is current at the closing date.

(2) Members may enter a maximum of 4 pieces of work. All entries must be the work of the sole entrant. The name and address of the photographer along with title of print must appear on the reverse of each piece. Each entry should be accompanied by a short statement of intent from the photographer.

(3) Work should not have previously been exhibited in Scotland.

(4) Entries should be mounted and preferably matted to 500 mm by 400 mm. Selected work will be framed and hung by Fife Foto. Non-standard entries will be accepted however if selected it will be the entrant's responsibility to provide framing acceptable to the organisers.

(5) There will be an entry fee of £10. Cheques should be made payable to Fife Foto Group.

(6) It is hoped to produce an exhibition catalogue and all entrants will be sent a copy. To assist with this and other publicity entrants are asked to include with their submissions a good quality Tiff scan.

(7) Please either send your entries to Donald Stewart or deliver them to him – address below. Alternatively entries may be handed to Carl Radford. Entries may be collected from the above after the exhibition closes. If you wish your entry to be returned by post the cost of postage

must be included with your entry.

(8) Please indicate if your entries are for sale with price. It is likely that ATTFife or the Rothes Halls will take a commission on all sales.

(9) The closing date for receipt of entries is 31st July 2011.

(10) A panel of three selectors chaired by Mary Ann Kennedy of Napier University with Malcolm Dickson of Street Level and Gillian Parsons of ATTFife will select the exhibition. The selectors' decisions will be final.

(11) All entrants will receive an invitation to the formal opening of the exhibition.

Donald Stewart
42Gamekeepers Road
Kinnesswood
Email: donaldstewart42@aol.com
Kinross KY13 9JR.
Tel: 01592840277

Carl Radford: See Page 3

Street Level: Exhibition Tour of 'Playgrounds of War' with Gina Glover. 11th June, 3pm.

Portfolio Reviews (bookings only). Saturday 16th July, 10-12.15pm. An opportunity to meet the artist and get comments on your work – sessions will last 20 minutes each and are only bookable in advance. This will be open for bookings from Saturday 11th June. T: 0141 552 2151

Artists Talk. Saturday 16th July, 3pm. Gina's talk will be based on her own photographic practice and her experience as a Director of Photo-fusion Photography Centre which she co-founded in the early 1980's. She will address these topics: submitting photographs to picture

libraries, working with aid agencies, producing a portfolio for different audiences, exhibiting in galleries, making digital books and applying for grant funding. She will also talk about her different art residences in hospitals and also her love of pinhole photography.

There is further good news of **Alex Boyd** who is the UK finalist in a new award which celebrates the links between Italy and Great Britain.

Alex faces competition from Stefano Morelli who presented a photographic essay on the Roma people in a camp near Tirana, Albania, and from Matteo Sandrini who photographed the multi-ethnic community of the Italian city of Brescia. The work of the three finalists will be unveiled in a group exhibition in the presence of cultural representatives from the UK and Italy.

Congratulations to **Alicia Bruce** who has been awarded a Ffotogallery Residency from over 170 applicants. Alicia will be working with Blaenavon World Heritage Site and Cynon Valley Museum and Art Gallery in Aberdare, Rhondda Cynon Taff. **Douglas McBride's** Fire and Ice from the Perthshire Visual Artists Forum is at Perth Theatre from 6th March to 16th June 2011 — two images from his series, Procreation Sonnet. "Lichtblicke", photographs by **Aglaya Polomarchuk**, our Berlin member, were shown in Club Dialog e.V. in Berlin at the end of 2010.

Simon Nicholas White's stunning abstractions at the Cameo Cinema, Edinburgh. 5 April - 3 May 2011. See page 20. Edinburgh City Art Collection last year acquired fifteen of **John Kemplay's** street photographs for the permanent collection of the Art Centre. The photographs were taken during a number of Edinburgh Festivals in the 1990s. **Alina Kisina** showed her City of Home at Street Level in March. There was a Photography and multimedia exhibition by **Chris Leslie** in Eastwood Theatre. The work can be seen on www.chrisleslie.com.

The World Wide Web and SPEM

Information about Scottish and other photographic events is carried on the web site and on SPEM, Scottish Photographers E Mail. Each e-mailing results in messages being returned 'mail delivery failed'. Let us know if your e-mail is missing, there may be a simple answer. It is always good to see a 'refreshment' on the web site but it depends on material being received by Jamie. Send proposals for the *Gallery* and ask for your name and web sites to be added to the *Photographers* page. If you are on Face Book then consider adding yourself as a friend.

Portfolio Sessions

Bring along work, at any stage and in any form, to show to others.
Discussion, advice and nonsense in equal measure.

GLASGOW: Meetings in Street Level from 6.45pm.
Carl Radford carl@carls-gallery.co.uk.

INVERNESS: Matt Sillars: matt.sillars@gmail.com.

FIFE: Jenni Gudgeon: jenni@redcabinstudio.co.uk
Dunshalt Village Hall, near Auchtermuchty

EDINBURGH: Meetings in Stills, Cockburn Street 7pm
David Buchanan davidbphoto@yahoo.co.uk

Simon Nicholas White North Uist

