



● Scottish
● Photographers

NOTES Summer 2012

Scottish Photographers

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WELCOME TO THE SUMMER ISSUE OF NOTES IN WHAT WE THINK MAY be the tenth year of publication. In that time we have endeavoured to champion fellow photographers whose work might not otherwise have seen the light of day; photographers we label as 'independent', a term coined many years ago, possibly by the late lamented *Creative Camera*, but on which we have placed our own interpretation. Our take on the term independent has always been that it is photography made without thought of salon selectors, club judges, bestowers of distinctions, awarders of degrees or commercial clients. Many photographers, although they may deny it, would be uncomfortable at the thought of making pictures which do not have the approval of their peers or, as some think, their betters. There are many outlets for such photographers and our aim has always been to provide a platform for others whose work is more personal in character. This issue is a typical one with a wide range of photographic practice – we hope it will be both interesting and thought provoking.

A Landmark?

The web site has recently seen a few changes and had a number of new contributions to its Gallery. Our thanks are due to **Jamie McAteer** who had been in charge and to **Carl Radford and Alex Boyd**, the new web masters. The use of the web and social networking sites is now so well established that the use of paper material is now questioned and even belittled in some quarters. On the other hand Blurb and other internet bookmakers go from strength to strength and commercial publishers still manage to charge up to a hundred pounds for fine editions. We hope that NOTES



Phil Rogers: Saturday 11th February

will continue to be published for some time while always being aware that it is modest in the extreme – it has even been referred to as a *pamphlet*! Any increase in size will now mean a threefold increase in postage. Nevertheless we would like to put out a special edition next time to mark our landmark decade so if you would like to sponsor all or part of the £200.00 postage then please get in touch. Gazing at a VDU is all very well but people do like to get paper copies through their letter boxes. If you have ever been to a Blakemore workshop then you will be aware of John's feelings about a (paper) book. Hold it in your hands, examine the cover, open it, turn the pages, feel the quality, be surprised. Even read it! We hope that the contributors to this issue also make prints and books. The family album will never be replaced

by the mobile phone or laptop and we hope that exhibitions will never be replaced by the social media.

Shopping, Acting, Clearing, Dogging, Questioning . . .

A Sugimoto catalogue was the starting point for **Michael Thomson's** light hearted look at a New York museum; **Donald Stewart** sent us a series of thoughtfully made traditional work, part documentary, part travel, part landscape; **Douglas McBride**, surely Scotland's finest theatre photographer, is in the Spotlight; his fine eye, clever sense of design and humour all shine through in his pictures and witty commentary about Natt. **Colin Gray** is a name familiar to many through his project of more than thirty years with his parents, and most recently his exhibition and book *In Sickness and in Health*. A winner of a Euro Art Directors gold medal and Design and Art Direction awards, Colin has been making new work with his children and 'Nina goes shopping' shows his lighter side. There are over seventy thousand properties lying empty across Scotland, not all in the urban wasteland. **James Dyas Davidson** has begun an investigation of latter day clearances in Aberdeenshire and hints at what may be a large project ahead. **Marc de Ridder** came to our notice through the Facebook page. Marc combines his love of dogs and photography with a fine sense of design. **Colin MacLeod** studied at Edinburgh College of Art and taught creative and critical film practice both there, at Napier and Duncan of Jordanstone. He is now retired. His images 'are constructed with motion in mind and as a homage to the

Russian film maker Sukurov In the spirit of Weltschmerz'. 'How would it be if I became creator of my own world rather than a participant of the real one?' asks **Phil Rogers**. He answers his own question with very individualistic images.

It is to be hoped that, although space in NOTES is always at a premium and there have been cruel cuts, there will be sufficient clues as to how photography develops in independent hands. And since the 'I' word has cropped up we might say that there is not a hint from the world of *Scottish Photographers* of the approaching referendum on independence. In fact the contents of this issue of NOTES might well have been put together in Monmouth or Middlesex or even Madras rather than Motherwell. This is no implied criticism for the same applies for example to, for example, recent degree shows that we have seen. Should photographers reflect contemporary events? Will two years pass without a photographic study of affairs of state whose consequences could lead to an unravelling of the United Kingdom? We leave the answers to these questions to our subscribers and future contributors – for NOTES has never had any mission statement or agenda and each edition has been as much a surprise to the editor as to the subscribers. Still, dear reader, it might be interesting to receive something topical from your neck of the woods: Kingdom? Northern Britain? Scotland?

May your photography keep you warm during the summer . . .

Sandy Sharp





On a visit to New York I took the opportunity to visit the Natural History museum. The reason I wanted to visit the museum was the dioramas that I first came across in Hiroshi Sugimoto's exhibition catalogue. I was taken by how there appeared to be a reality to the scenes that seemed to be accentuated by them being in black and white.

I couldn't resist making some images of my own and found that including other visitors going about their business made the images slightly unreal."

Michael Thomson michael.john.thomson@btinternet.com

Northern Chile is the part less visited. It does not have the cachet or infrastructure of Patagonia or the hedonistic pleasures of the Wine Country. It was and is the economic heart of the country. However the region is so vast that one can easily miss all the mineral mining – copper accounts for about 50% of Chile's exports and Chile used to be the world's major supplier of nitrates. The landscape is harsh but majestic – the constant variations of the Atacama Desert, the high and gloriously variegated mountains, many of which are volcanoes and the shimmering altiplano lakes and salt flats – all of these and more clamour for one's attention. For a Scot this is a landscape on a vast and almost incomprehensible scale. And there is history there too. A horde of Incan and pre-Incan structures dot the hillsides and fertile valleys including geoglyphs (hill drawings), huge in scale and covering hillside after hillside. The small mountain villages with their white churches and bell towers, all different in design, do not appear to have changed greatly since the days of the Conquistadors. In a darker perspective the North, due to its relative isolation, was where the Pinochet regime chose to site many of its concentration camps. Most of all it is a land of wonder where herds of vicuna and alpaca add magic to an unbelievable and somewhat surreal high altitude landscape and flocks of 3 types of flamingos and giant coots crowd the brine lakes and glacier fed rivers.

At the drop of a hat I would happily be on the next plane heading there.

Donald Stewart
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Spotlight: Douglas McBride

Taken in a Hyndland kitchen, jam in the actor's hair to make it stand . . . Paul Blair has played since some great characters and is very talented. Who remembers his performance as Natt.

The play was a comedy. 'MacBeth', two men and a chest of drawers . . . Paul was Lady MacBeth, Graham McLaren was MacBeth and the chest of drawers was all the other parts, including the castle.

On the spur of the moment I thought, stick a piece of bread in his pocket, fill the void that is the black . . . I try not to over think things when going to a location, see what transpires (I enjoy my snapping). The polaroid was better than the trannie and remains one of my favourite images.

Douglas McBride

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Douglas McBride: Natt - from Wilde and Natt 1992

Colin Gray: Nina goes shopping

This project started on a shopping trip with my daughter Nina about eight years ago, initially to relieve my boredom of shopping. As the project progressed we have collaborated and worked as a team, to avoid being caught by the security guards. It is a bit like shoplifting; you have to be as discreet as possible. We have been caught a few times and have been thrown out of stores. I shoot 'from the hip' without looking through the camera, a spirit level helps me frame the image through my 24mm lens.

Colin Gray
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James Dyas Davidson







James Dyas Davidson: Photographing abandoned Aberdeenshire

When my wife and I moved into our old (1851) farm cottage and steading in rural Aberdeenshire near Tarland over 20 years ago, I became interested in the local history of the area and joined the Cromar History Group. With this wonderful and active group, I discovered abandoned communities and glens which today appear empty but once had schools, churches, markets, tradesmen and many 'reekin' lums. Religion, agricultural and technical advances, population increases, famine and the attractions of cities and the 'new world' saw a steady decline in these remote glens. I was left quite emotional by the experience. To stand at the kitchen window of an abandoned cottage and consider the joys, the hardships, the sadness and the life of the folk who once lived there motivated me to try to find out more and keep their memories alive.

I read books by Marjory Harper, Tom Devine, John Prebble and TC Smout on 'clearances' and migration. But it was local books such as *Hills of Home* by Amy Stewart Fraser, *In the Shadow of Lochnagar* by Ian Murray and *Land of the Lost* by Robert Smith that got me pulling out my Ordinance Survey Maps, hillwalking boots, rucksack and camera. I wanted to visit as many abandoned places as I could. Photographing them wasn't initially the main purpose. Digital photography was in its infancy at this time and I had neglected my photography for many years previous to this time due to studying, career changes and generally dealing with day to day stuff. Photography came back into my life when my wife and I were in Barcelona and, through chance really, we walked into a major exhibition by Diane Arbus. Her images stopped me dead in my tracks and there and then I decided that I wasn't going to neglect my photography any longer. If you were to look through my Flickr photostream (www.flickr.com/photos/slackeratslack), which I kind of use as a 'sketch pad', you'll see that I was taking photos of what everyone else took photos of. I suppose I was trying to interest others initially as well as just getting back into photography. The 'abandoned communities' images were really the images that interested me and gave me the most satisfaction. To my amazement they have become the images that have gained most praise from fellow photographers and the public. I had no idea at the time that there is groups all around the world who do similar urban and rural explorations!

I find it hard to articulate any deep meaningful purpose or message to my images. My empathy is strongly felt when I take the photographs. I experience the isolation, the remoteness, the silence and the sense of abandonment and decay. The photographers I admire tend to be portrait photographers such as Arbus and August Sander but in a way they too captured people living on the margins of civilisation, on the cusp of change that would sweep away a way of life. Photographer James Ravillious beautifully captured rural life in Devon just as it was about to disappear. Ravillious could still capture the people of rural Devon working the land but I am recording the next stage of rural decay and abandonment where now, all the people have gone. Their history can still be seen in the buildings, the dry stone walls, their midden, the messages written on walls of barns, the flowering of the gean tree they planted and the daffodils that still pop up in spring in the same rectangular formation the bulbs were planted in. It's the silence I can't capture in my images.

James Dyas Davidson
www.jamesdyasdavidson.com





My love for sighthounds started with our first dog Suki, a rescue whippet cross saluki. With my longstanding interest in photography, this soon fuelled into a passion to photograph her grace and beauty, as well as capturing her perseverance and dedication at sheer speed.

Over the years, it has never stops to amaze me how many wonderful and regal poses they can make, and there are always new ones. This set of six portraits of our whippet Lola is actually the result of my first ever attempt at using bounce flash. It is great having such a beautiful and willing model at hand, who strikes a wonderful pose without even being asked.

Shooting sighthounds at speed (obviously with a camera!) is a real challenge and widely recognized as amongst the most difficult in action photography with many forums dedicated to what camera, lens and settings to use. Although the camera and lens can play a role in getting a great shot, the defining factor, without a question of a doubt, is technique and

practice, practice and even more practice.

I have always loved a challenge. After many years of, often very frustrating practice, trying to get that spectacular shot of Suki and some of her greyhound friends, I thought I was starting to get the hang of it. But, after Suki passed away and we got Lola, a rescue whippet, I was back to square one. Whippets are even more difficult than greyhounds and alike, as they add a whole new dimension to speed: agility.

So to me, whippet photography is the new black, and it typifies my passion for photography, as I immensely enjoy capturing the beauty of nature and the challenge elusive animals and birds in flight pose.

Marc de Ridder

www.marcderidder.com www.circleinlight.co.uk

It is a seemingly simple thing to make a photograph, to take a small slice of the world and let light and time and chemistry work their magic. A subject interests you, and you make a photograph of it. It is as simple as that isn't it?

One day I asked myself 'How would it be if I became creator of my own world rather than a participant of the real one?'

When I started thinking about making photographs in this manner, by juxtaposing very differing elements within the simple four sides of the camera's viewfinder, the way I saw things changed dramatically. Anomalies arranged themselves out of nowhere. Things seemed to say something, even though on the surface they appeared to say nothing at all. A language of symbolism and strangeness was all around and I felt I had uncovered something that was both secret and arcane, yet commonplace.

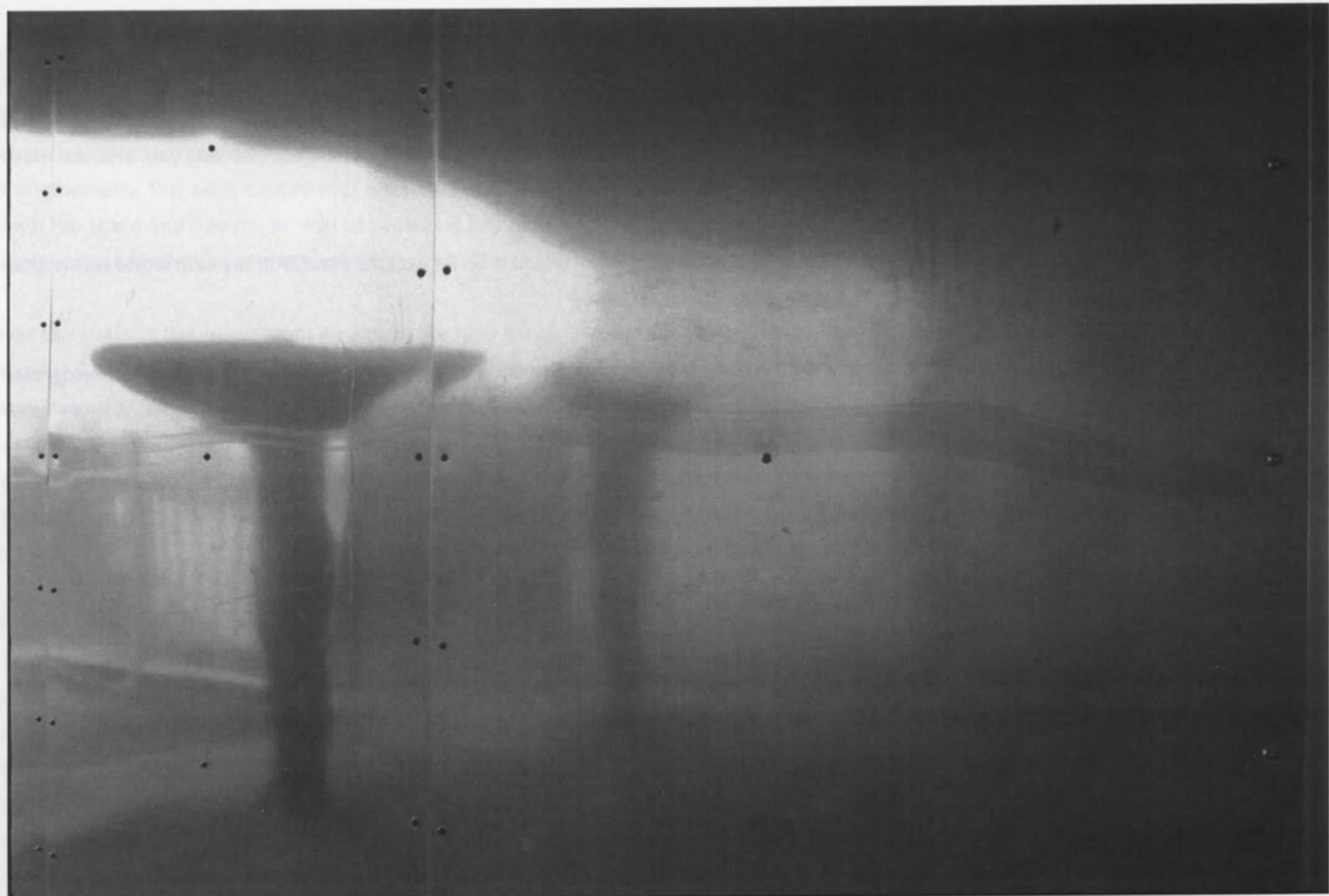
To me, the world became a weirder and more interesting place. These are all full frame, 35mm film photographs. The subjects are as they were. Nothing has been added or taken away.

Phil Rogers

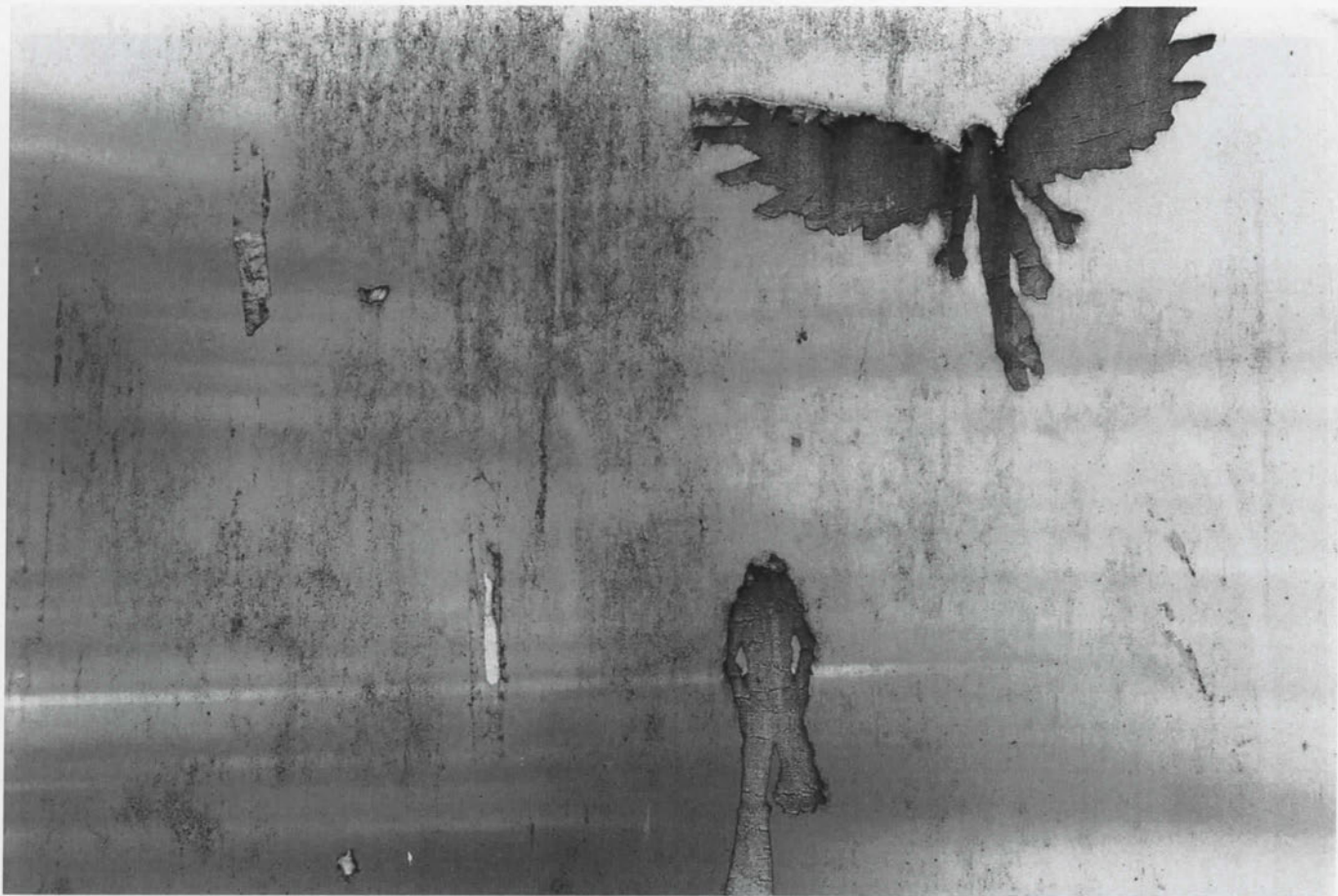
lostlandsuk@gmail.com

<http://fogblog-hermansheephouse.blogspot.co.uk>

If you would like to, please feel free to contact me.



Tuesday 27th July



Tuesday 27th July

Phil Rogers





Saturday 21st April



I am trying to find a way of letting my photography develop without too much theoretical interference. By this I mean getting closer to something approaching an automatic method of allowing the medium to evolve and take me wherever my instincts lead. This not to say that I am uninterested in the rather it is an over-familiarity with critical practice which has convinced me it is time to isolate textual tyrannies from my creative process. It follows, therefore, that I should not explain my work: translate my philosophical actions into words. So much for good intentions.

The photograph is not formed in words, it is a picture which can communicate directly with the viewer - if it is not compromised by explanation. I try to avoid reading exhibition captions and catalogues which tell me what it is I am looking at. Catalogues, which reproduce the picture, tell me its dimensions and say when and where it was made are fine, I think. When I look at other peoples' photographs I communicate with the work not its maker: alas, looking at my own I find it impossible to separate the work from my motivation. Any personal manifesto as to how I should make my pictures and regard resultant images as a particular photographic act should receive the reception it deserves.

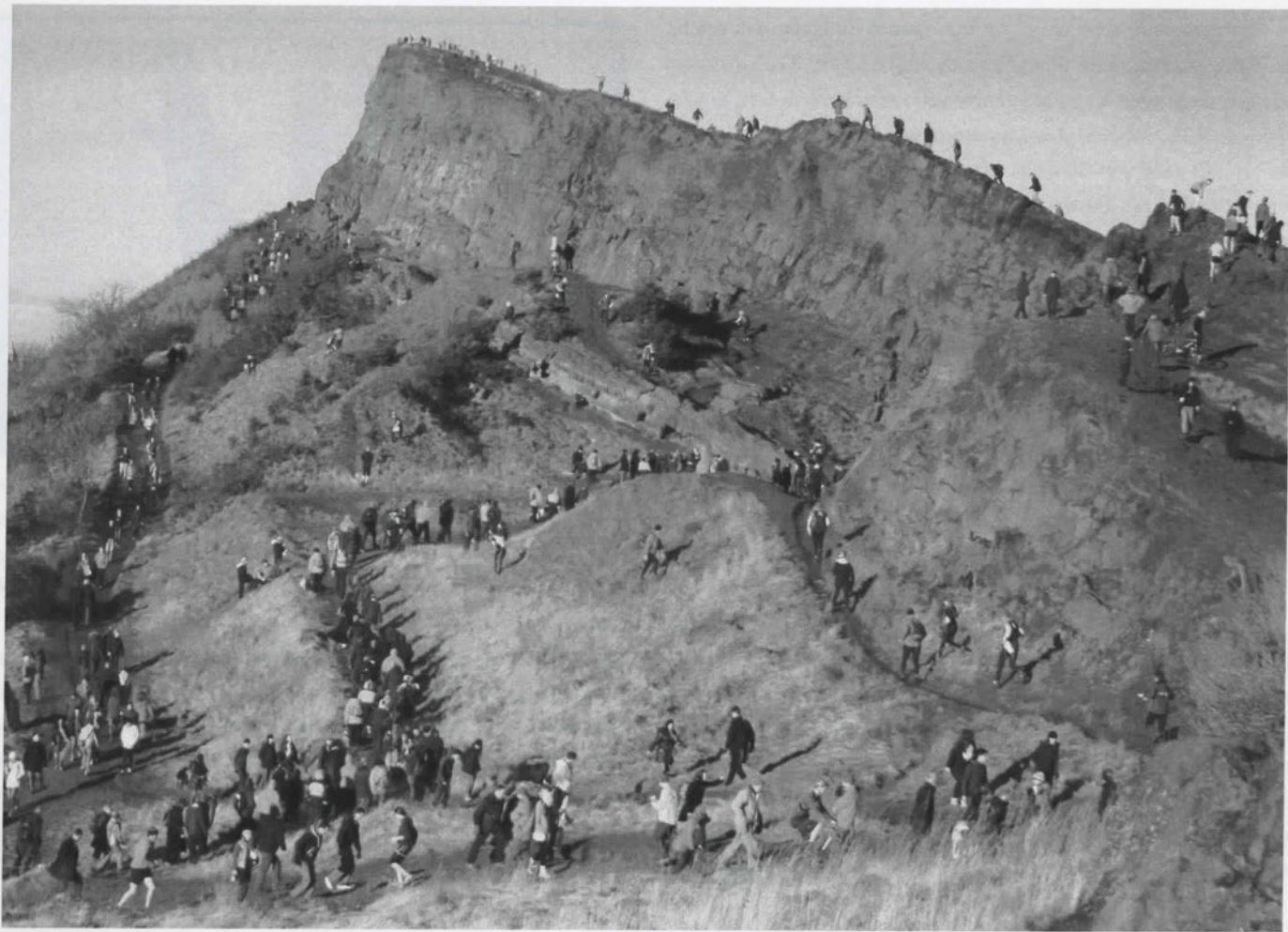


There are two things I am fairly sure about: the photograph is a different language system which loses its intrinsic effect when mediated; if we sublimate the energies of the photographic act we surrender to an idea that the process is incomplete without a theoretical health check.

I want to defamiliarize myself with things. The literary device 'otstranenie' best describes this, and in his essay of 1917 'Art as Technique' Viktor Shklovsky puts it better than I ever could: "The purpose of art is to transmit the sense of a thing as seeing not as recognizing; the device of art is that of 'making things strange' and of making form difficult, increasing the difficulty and time taken to perceive since the process of perception in art is an aim in itself and must be prolonged: art is a way of experiencing the making of a thing and what has already been made is of no importance."

Colin MacLeod hannahandmacleod@btinternet.com





Scottish Photographers continue to be busy. **Jenni Gudgeon** will exhibit Falkland Estate landscapes in the new space at The Stable Block, Falkland Estate, Fife from 8th April. Limited opening times so contact Falkland Estate office on 01337 858838. **Ray MacKenzie** was the speaker at a recent event in the RGI gallery in Glasgow. May we remind you of Ray's books: *Sculpture in Glasgow: an Illustrated Handbook* (1999) and *Public Sculpture in Glasgow*, which was joint winner of the Saltire Society Research Book of the Year Award in 2002. Last September **Simon Robinson's** 'From The Ground Up' exploring our relationship with the rural and urban environment through photography is at Castle Douglas Art Gallery, 2 - 5 June. **Tina Vanderwerf** was awarded the SSA Website Award for her photograph 'Baliscate, 06.22 am'; **Alina Kisina's** *City of Home* was at Eastwood Park Giffnock. Congratulations to **Alex Boyd** who has been awarded a prestigious Churchill Fellowship. Alex recently spent a wet collodion day at Stirling Castle with John Sargeant of the BBC for the series about Francis Frith. Congratulations also to **David Eustace**, awarded an honorary degree by his alma mater, Napier University. The theatre photography of **Douglas McBride** is at the enterprising *Big Shed* at Tombreck near Killin till 2 June. **Colin MacLeod** (page 34) will be showing work from the 27th August to 2nd September in Thomson's Tower within Dr Neil's Garden at Old Church Lane Duddingston Village in Edinburgh. Over 300 of **Alan Dimmick's** photographs from the last 15 years of Contemporary Art in Scotland, are at Glasgow's Gallery Of Modern Art. Far away from the financial adventures of Rangers, **Iain Maclean** ploughs a lonely furrow at Albion Rovers. *What a Stramash!* is an exhibition of life in lower-league Scottish football, was



Alan Dimmick from his exhibition in Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art

at Summerlee Museum and in Easterhouse. Two of **Alicia Bruce's** photographs from 'Menie: a portrait of a North East community in conflict' have been acquired by The National Galleries of Scotland. **Colin Gray** (page 10) has been nominated for a London Photography Award for his exhibition and book - *In Sickness and in Health*. There are always surprises in store **Robert Mapplethorpe** is at the Burgh Hall Dunoon till July 8 then Perth Museum and Gallery November 10 - April 27 2013 and the **August Sander** exhibition can be seen at Duff House Banff until 31 August. Why are these exhibitions such well kept secrets?

Visit Scotland, The Herald & Photographers rights.

In February the *Scottish Photographers* Facebook page was buzzing with reactions to a competition organised by Visit Scotland. Competitions looking for keen photographers to submit images have seen a huge rise in recent years. One such competition is being run by Visit Scotland, the national tourism organisation for Scotland, and the Herald newspaper, who are offering entrants the chance to win cash prizes and the chance to have their work judged by 'industry professionals'. The competition has already attracted several thousand entries. On the surface the competition seemed fairly innocuous, however a closer examination of the Terms and Conditions revealed why the competition was recently blacklisted by the Artist's Bill of Rights, an organisation set up to highlight those who are infringing copyright as well as the moral rights of entrants. Those all important terms & conditions . . . each entrant to the *Amazing Photographs of Scotland!* competition allowed Visit Scotland:

- non-exclusive, perpetual, irrevocable, worldwide, transferable licence
- to use each entry royalty free
- the right to use each entry "in connection with the promotion of Scotland"
- to give no guarantee of image credit.
- to allow any third party to use the images.
- to contact any entrant to the competition and ask for a higher resolution version of the entry.

After lengthy correspondence with leading Scottish photographers, MSPs and the management of Visit Scotland, revised terms and conditions have been applied and the most recent statement on the Visit Scotland website states that there:

"... is no commercial intention to profiteer from the photos - we will not sell your photos or allow third-party usage. Not now. Not ever."

The above is an edited version of an item by **Alex Boyd**. from the Blog page of our web site. Read the full text the website Blog for 4 March 2012.

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
Colin Gray: c.gray@strath.ac.uk

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

FIFE: Vacancy. Meanwhile contact Peter Goldsmith
p.a.goldsmith@lineone.net

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

Colin Gray: From Nina goes shopping

