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Explores the deterioration of the Southeast Asian landscape

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Heracleitan River Reflections portray extended moments in time through a series of panoramic views

**Kim  
Shaw**

Surveys the chaos next door

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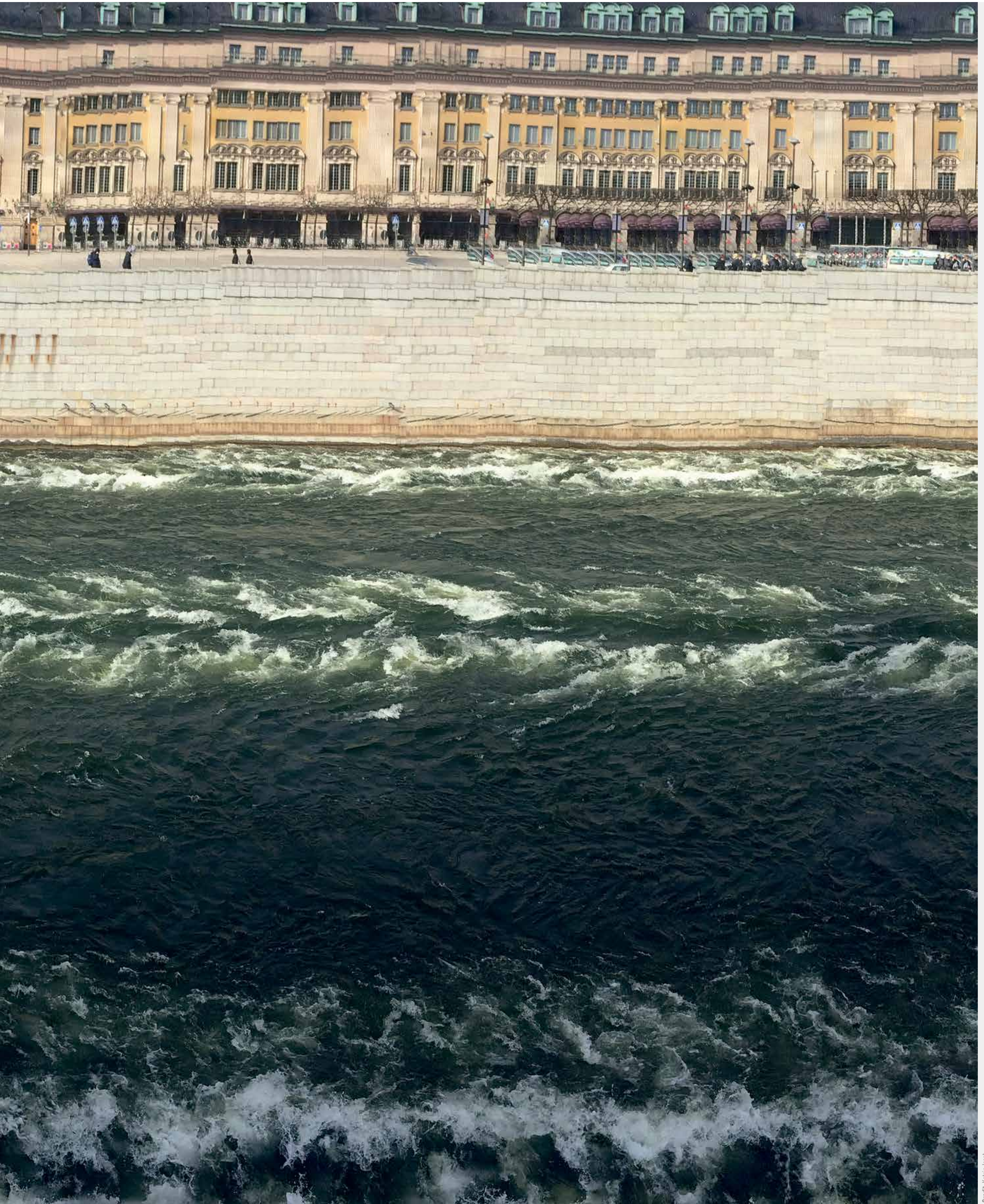
**Sid White-  
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Explores the subconscious through Pareidolia and the abstract

**Simon  
Dent**

A diary of (mis)taken paths

# UNCERTAIN STATES / 31



## SID WHITE- JONES

### **Not all Fish get caught in the Ice**

The subconscious has a tendency to perceive specific forms within random visual formations, pulling out shapes that it recognises from within darkness. This trait is known as Pareidolia.

The varying forms of abstract transmutation within this series act as dreams fixed upon paper, re-forming and re-shaping in front of every viewer. Not all Fish get caught in the Ice invites the use of observational characteristics to discuss how the human mind processes and interprets information whilst contemplating what the photographic form can present to an individual.

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# SHOOTING PAINS

## KEN COUSINS

Well, here I am on page three. Anyone who's familiar with printed UK news media will know that 'page three' has connotations with daring, risqué and questionable subject matter. It's a place that has a dedicated army of followers, mostly male, and most of whom justify their scant acknowledgement of its 'incidental' existence by singing the praises of its experts discoursing on matters ostensibly 'for men'.

But hold on - this is hardly a red-topped tabloid; this is a serious, specialist, broadsheet publication created, presumably, to extol the virtues of photography in all its forms, and far be it from me to reduce the creative merit of the still or moving photographic image to the unfashionable status of 'cheesecake'. Mind you, it does perhaps have its place; any publication competing for readership in a vast array of frantically composed competing essays and images needs a hook. And so it is for anyone whose objective is to be first, noticed, and then read or studied.

And that competitive edge is, I think, what I'm uncertain about; what I love, and equally resent, about the creative arts. I'm passionate about the pen and the brush and the lens and what they do, what they give me. I'm fascinated and moved by what the photographer and artist is happy to share with me, a wholly personal vision, a glimpse into the psyche, an admission of doubt and fear and wonder. But it doesn't half frustrate me sometimes, the way we go about it. To start with, I'm no expert. I can paint and I can draw but I am definitely not a photographer. I can hold a camera. I can point a camera. But I can't get inside a camera, not like Cartier-Bresson or Mapplethorpe or Godard. I can, though, get into their souls when they show me where they are, how they see, what they think. Demulder's work insists I take a leaf out of her book. Leibowitz shows me flaws I haven't seen before. They all contribute hugely to how I see the world.

But I am culturally challenged. I often find that I lack abstract sensitivity. No matter how patient and sympathetic and kindly, how articulate and eloquent and persuasive the explanation of a work is, I am unable to fully understand the rationale behind, for example, much of the work of Joseph Beuys, revered by many academics and intellectuals as a cultural prophet but to me a charlatan. I'm pained when I'm told I should admire deceit. Call me dense but it's lost on me. And because it's lost on me I'm looked down upon - unless, that is, I play along and pretend to understand.

The visual arts, though, are imperative. They record, they educate, and they enlighten; they instruct and deny, they frighten and amuse. They incite love and they provoke hatred. They are the lingua franca of the common man. Visual art can be, and often is, an immensely powerful and potent instrument of change. This power and potency is demonstrated in photography by the tension of Jeff Widener's 'Tank Man' or the brutality of Eddie Adam's 'Saigon Execution' and in painting by the honesty of Pablo Picasso's 'Guernica' and the demands of Diego Rivera's 'History of Mexico'. Can we expect these exponents of their arts to be held responsible for what we see, what we look at, what conclusions we come to? Should their practice be bound by a sense of accountability? Surely not; surely we have no desire to rein in their informed and intuitive skills. But how can we be sure that they're always being honest?

Whether it's a contrived and staged abstract image or a spontaneously documented factual event, it's the prerogative of the photographer and/or artist to select a criterion and compose a narrative and it's here where any objective can take on a dual purpose, become confusing and, as a result, be lost.

As an art form photography is unique. It excites and irritates in equal measure. Visual capture is fleeting, ephemeral; it can be momentous and it can be irrelevant. But it holds on to that moment. That moment will never be again but it will be. It is. Simply by being, it shifts - it transports and in so doing, it transforms. That moment is moved to another place by the image and that other place is changed, transformed by its presence. It becomes part of what is. And herein lies the absolute potential of photography.

Since inception it has recorded and shared and given. From Camera Obscura through to and beyond the first printed image; the introduction of colour; the age of the Polaroid; the onset of digitization and the ubiquitous 'mobile'; all scattering truth and lies around the world. For all its changes, the function of the photographically recorded image, and hence the camera, remains constant.

Photography as an art form can also, like other creative practices, succumb to unwelcome, extraneous influences. Status, value, exclusivity, commercial potential, notoriety, shock - all facets of the photographer's armoury that can be used to enhance the work's appeal and value. The commercialisation and commodification of the image are uneasy bed-fellows in both documentary and

art works unless, of course, the sole objective of the practitioner is to embark on a purely commercial, money-making exploit. And why not? Just look at the work and worth of Cindy Sherman or Andreas Gursky - series of exceptional work that deserve the plaudits of any creative audience.

However, it is rare that a student of photography will embark on a sustained course of instruction as a potential source of untold riches. As a means to an end, maybe, but that as a secondary motivation, the first either to contribute to the public debate or articulate an expression of abstract ideas. Both honourable practices which can be judged by a level of proficiency based on a broad spectrum of expertise, originality, compositional awareness, variety, courage, and serendipity and more. And the last - serendipity, luck - can figure very much in a successful career. The right place, the right time, the right gallery, the right curator and the right critique.

And anyone who pursues a career in the visual arts soon discovers it's a fragile and vulnerable occupation, relying to a very large degree on the subjective judgement of peers, professionals and the public. Sadly a small but significant number of those professionals - the critics, dealers, curators, agents and academics - feel they have a duty to safeguard their cultural, intellectual and financial influence in 'the arts', however they see fit. And what an exclusive influence it can be. Inevitably style changes, becomes passé, dull and uninteresting; who then sets the criteria for the next trend-setting specialist destined for the heady heights of creative celebrity?

To suggest that all of those professionals have a corrupting influence on photography and art could not, of course, be further from the truth, but that significant minority can dismantle the honourable aspirations of sincere, well-meaning exponents at the drop of a hat and deprive us all of the opportunity to make sound judgements based on our own honest criteria.

The art establishment is seen by some as an exclusively privileged and parochial coterie; the danger of creating such a powerfully elite body is that it can alienate some who could become valuable contributors. One could be forgiven for thinking that some members of that establishment conspire to exclude those practitioners of whom they disapprove by adopting an almost private language, with words such as 'retardataire', 'mimeticism',

'individuation' and 'historicity' - just a few used in recent art reviews written for mass consumption but targeted, presumably, at a very narrow audience. This contention is firmly underpinned by the assertion that "You'd have had to have been asleep for a hundred years not to recognise an Andy Warhol screen print for what it is..." - a naïve statement voiced by a leading intellectual during a broadcast conversation on 'The Value of Art', suggesting that everybody should share their sophisticated intellect, the implication being that if they don't, they're stupid. The words are legitimate and meaningful but hardly in common use and one is tempted to think that this language is used as a weapon to bludgeon the 'uninitiated' into submission and not trouble the elite with their unintelligent involvement.

Sadly, the supposed 'uninitiated' rarely have the courage or guile to confess their 'ignorance' for fear of being openly 'identified' and, as a result, increase the likelihood of being 'disqualified' from becoming part of that art establishment to which they desperately want to belong, henceforth perpetuating the myth that 'real' art is only for the 'culturati'. Hans Christian Anderson summed it up best with his depiction of the admirers of the naked Emperor, many of whom can be found at the heart of the establishment, influencing those whose honest survival is threatened by their reluctance to question and their inability to embrace the honesty of their profession.

So, should practice be bound by a sense of accountability? Undoubtedly reportage and propaganda can be unwieldy beasts and, like all precarious pursuits, can be devastating in the 'wrong' hands and impossible to control. Where any message perceived as vitally important to the creator of the work is intended, it is certainly deserving of absolute clarity. Hence, any accountability in photography is due to whoever is behind the lens. In this day and age of easy manipulation it's essential that that accountability is partnered by the practitioner's integrity. Playing to a gallery of professionals erodes that integrity in very quick time and, more importantly, will fail to deliver a sense of any moral ownership. Thought-provoking as ambiguity is, it is also the enemy of total honesty. Ambiguity in art is fine; art for art's sake is fine; bullshit for art's sake is painful and dangerous and should be discouraged.

Fall-Lift n. 4



Spring-Sea n. 3



## ALESSANDRA RINAUDO

### Seasons

The images submitted are part of a larger project called 'Seasons', that is a personal journey and response to an illness that affected my emotional life and identity. Being affected by Alopecia, I saw my hair disappearing and falling from my body. The work is in fact based on a parallelism between my intimate events, reflected on my physical aspect, and the natural cycle of the seasons. The body changes and assumes different shapes as nature periodically goes from the plain affirmation to a negation of itself. In all the pictures, undressed from the characteristics that make me identifiable, I confront with myself building alienating scenes of places, poses and objects.

The whole project is divided in four sections, each corresponding to a season. It starts from the Autumn, when usually hair and leaves fall. In the series "Fall – Lift" I play with my own reflected images and the mirrors become an instrument of obsessive multiplication that returns in the postproduction work at the base of the photomontages. All these pictures are revised as a memory amplifying the feeling of fragmentation and confusion.

The photos composing the winter called "Corridor" are the result of one photographic session in succeeded shots that records my movement in a claustrophobic and aseptic place. Here I confront myself with an unfamiliar environment.

In the Spring images: "Sea", going out of the feeling of unease, I am starting to "spring up again" and in the last season named as "Olive tree grove" the mirror returns, but showing now my own confident reflected image.

The performative act is the main feature of this work: the photographic medium becomes an instrument to verify my physical and ontological condition. It documents how my inner state and body felt and transformed during this process of recovery from Alopecia.

<https://cargocollective.com/alessandrarinaudo>  
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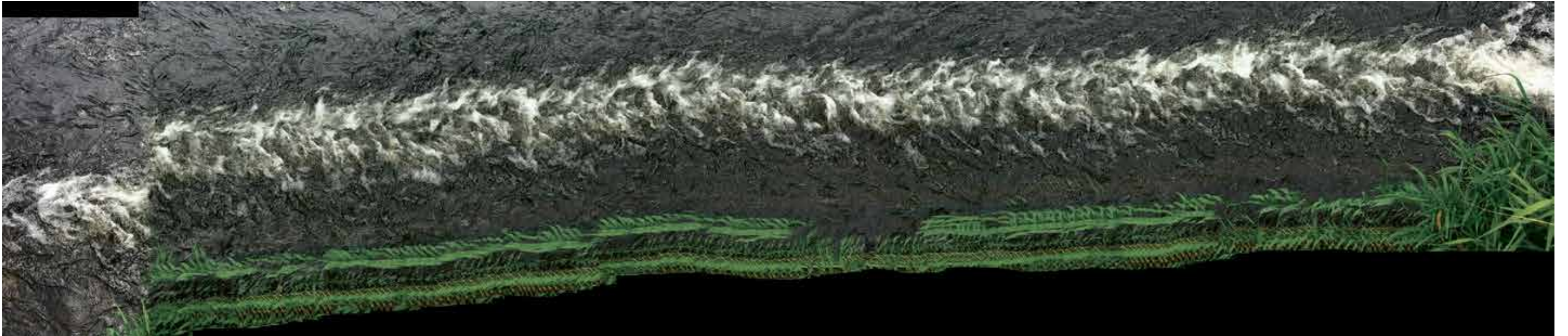
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Untitled#7



Untitled#20



Untitled#22



# KATRIN JOOST

## Heraclitean Meditations – River Reflections

*No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.*  
Heraclitus

To regard a landscape, often, is to appreciate the tranquillity and perspective of a view. The gaze lingers, slowly taking in the landscape. Rivers, as counterpoints to the surrounding stillness invite reflections on the transience of the world around us as well as ourselves within it.

These photographs take time to emerge – from a few seconds to over ten minutes – depending on the subjects' speed of motion. Thereby they reflect my particular time spent gazing at a river. My distance to different aspects of the landscapes, my minimal movements holding the phone camera, the often changing light, all shape the images. Sometimes the images drift and rip off the frame, rendering incomplete views, implicating myself even more in the work.

Each image portrays an unrepeatable, indeterminate, Merleau-Pontian 'thick moment.' Essentially photographic and indexical, though not immediately recognisable, the work is exactly therefore deeply personal.

The work has been generously supported by the University of Cumbria.

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Nothing Lasts Forever

## CARA MACNALLY

### Orang-Utan

A marked change in nature and territory has been recognised in the village of Sembuluh in Indonesia, a transformation to the Southeast Asian landscape that has had a detrimental effect on the land and the local community. The demand for palm oil within Indonesia has seen a dramatic change to its natural environment, the low-cost vegetable oil that has been displaced from its origin; Africa for over 100 years has replaced Indonesia's luminous green forests and wildlife to acres of lifeless palm oil plantations. Large palm oil industries have continually taken over the land once owned by the local communities, stripping them from their livelihoods.

'Orang-Utan' is the first in a series of documentary-based stories exploring both the large and small-scale deteriorations within Indonesia. 'Orang-Utan' or 'Person of the Forest', is a title that locals within Indonesia often bestow upon themselves with pride. Within this series, it is highlighted that not only is wildlife suffering from these industrial threats to the environment, but also the local communities.

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1/2 Sheet of Llama Stickers



3 Keychains



## KIM SHAWIBUS

### The Chaos Next Door

One of my favourite pieces of film, ever, was the opening sequence Danny Boyle created for the 2012 London Olympics which began in the parish of Kemble in Gloucester, the source of the River Thames. For the next 3 ½ minutes, we took flight and understood, maybe for the first time, how everything grows from nothing. I think as humans, we are hardwired to seek "the source," the beginning of the things we want to understand more fully.

THE CHAOS NEXT DOOR came from an interest in the source of female identity. In Greek mythology, chaos is the time or gap before the beginning, a void state. So what, in contemporary society, fills the void that eventually spits out a person who identifies as female? Biology surely throws a bit into the void, society chucks a few things at it as well. But as one of three sisters and mother of two daughters, I can attest to the fact that, at some point, the void starts to draw things into itself. The stuff of dreams in "The Second Sex," Simone de Beauvoir describes how female identity takes hold:

"The little girl's sense of secrecy that developed at pre-puberty only grows in importance. She closes herself up in fierce solitude...She is also convinced that she is misunderstood: her relationship with herself becomes even more passionate: she becomes more intoxicated with her isolation, feels different, superior, exceptional: she promises that the future will take revenge on the mediocrity of her present life. From this narrow existence, she escapes by dreams." And so, amongst the stuff of dreams, the unformed mass that is "Chaos" begins to order itself into "The Feminine."

In the bedroom next door to mine, a twelve year old girl is in full chaos mode. This work is a cyanotype survey of the things she has drawn to herself, her stuff of dreams. The first drip, drip, drips of the things to come. The cyanotypes have been digitally layered against a backdrop of my dreamlike landscapes, created with film cameras, including countless Holgas and a 4x5 pinhole camera.

[kimshawphotography.com](http://kimshawphotography.com)  
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1 Pegasus





# JOHN GOTO

## 'A Brexit Fantasia'

Not all transformations are for the best. Following the result of the 2016 European Union membership referendum, my unease regarding the process turned to consternation as the right wing of the Conservative party increasingly dictated the terms of withdrawal from the EU. Furthermore, the Labour party's position of 'constructive ambiguity' offered little hope of a coherent or strident opposition.

Prime Minister Theresa May called a snap general election in June 2017, which resulted in the Conservatives losing their majority and striking a deal with the Democratic Unionist Party in order to stay in power. Following the invocation of Article 50 the PM conducted negotiations with the EU on a withdrawal agreement and draft political declaration, which was finally endorsed by the EU27 leaders in November 2018. The deal was then put to the House of Commons and rejected on three occasions. An impasse was created by rival factions in the main political parties, whilst the Brexit deadline of 29 March 2019 drew ever closer. In this increasingly chaotic political climate, I started to wonder how I could make an artwork about these developments. I kept a notebook containing quotations from politicians and commentators and began to make a few tentative sketches of maps. Long ago I had bought a pre-war Collins' New Popular Atlas in which much of the world was coloured pink, denoting the British Empire, and this now seemed to chime with the nostalgic ambitions of some Brextremists. Working with topographical imagery was not entirely new to me as in 2007 I had made a satirical series entitled 'Lie of the Land' using Google Earth.

It was a phrase by the newly ennobled Brexiteer Sir John Redwood, however, that finally prompted me into action. In stating that he could not support Theresa May's withdrawal deal, he suggested that there were "huge agendas of opportunity" after the UK left the EU. It was the nature of these unspoken agendas that I determined to speculate upon in 'A Brexit Fantasia'.

Brexit was ostensibly an English decision. Whilst the much smaller populations of Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain, and Wales only by a margin of 82,000 to leave, the vast majority of leave votes were cast in England. The unicorn is used in this series to symbolise the fantasy of English exceptionalism.

Before offering my thoughts on individual images, I should say something about my general approach to making satirical artworks. Campaign

slogans, propaganda and advertising all attempt to deliver direct, unambiguous messages, but art has a different function. By courting multiple interpretations through layers of imagery, ideas and associations, art can engage the viewer in a manner which offers them a role in the making of meaning. A simple slogan such as 'Brexit is Bonkers' functions well enough on a demonstration placard but has little afterlife, whereas a good artwork can be returned to time and again, offering different nuances of meaning on each occasion.

**Old England:** Post-referendum analysis showed that older voters were most likely to support leaving the EU (60% of those over 65 years of age voted Leave). The title also refers to William Hogarth's 'The Roast Beef of Old England'.

**No Deal:** Shortly after triggering Article 50, Theresa May said that whilst she aimed to secure a withdrawal agreement with the EU, "No deal is better than a bad deal". As the Brexit deadline of 29 March 2019 drew closer, the prospect of no deal became increasingly likely due to the parliamentary deadlock.

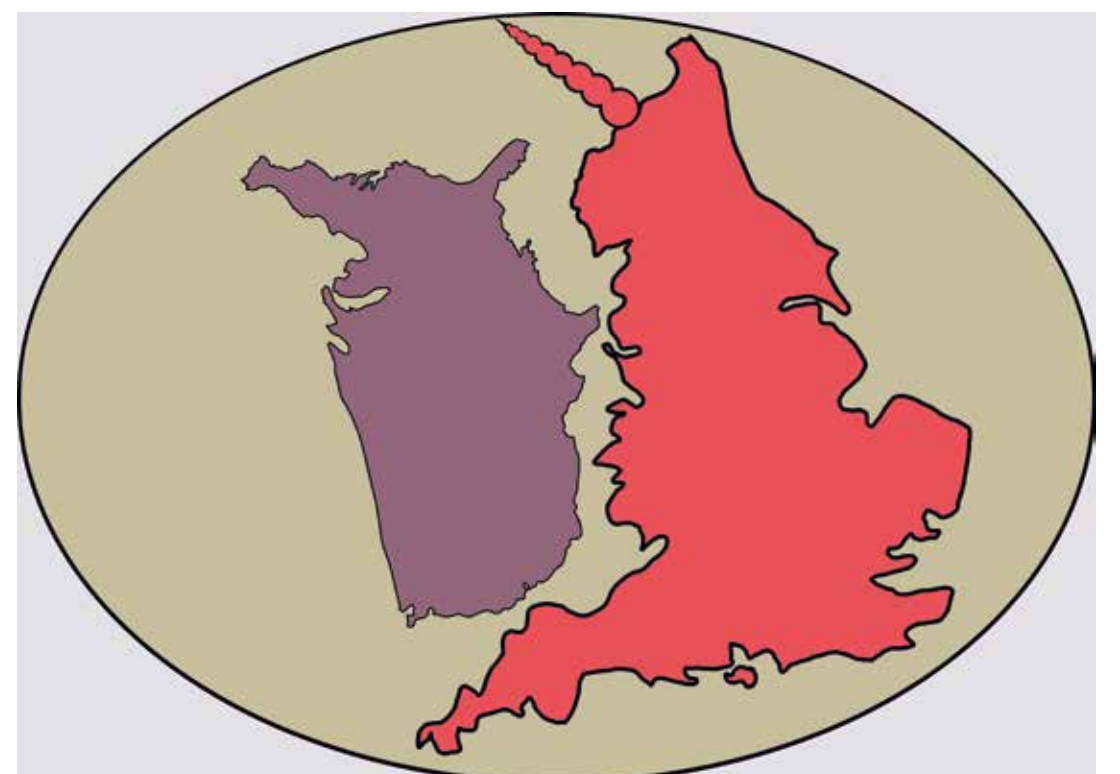
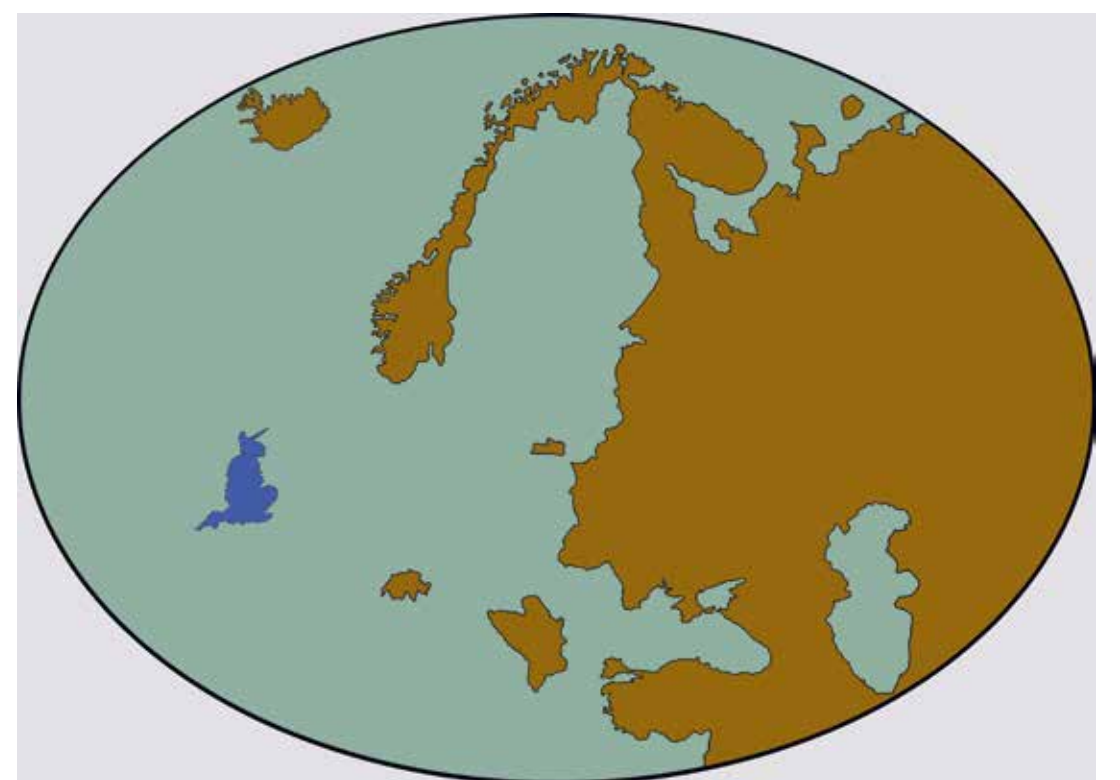
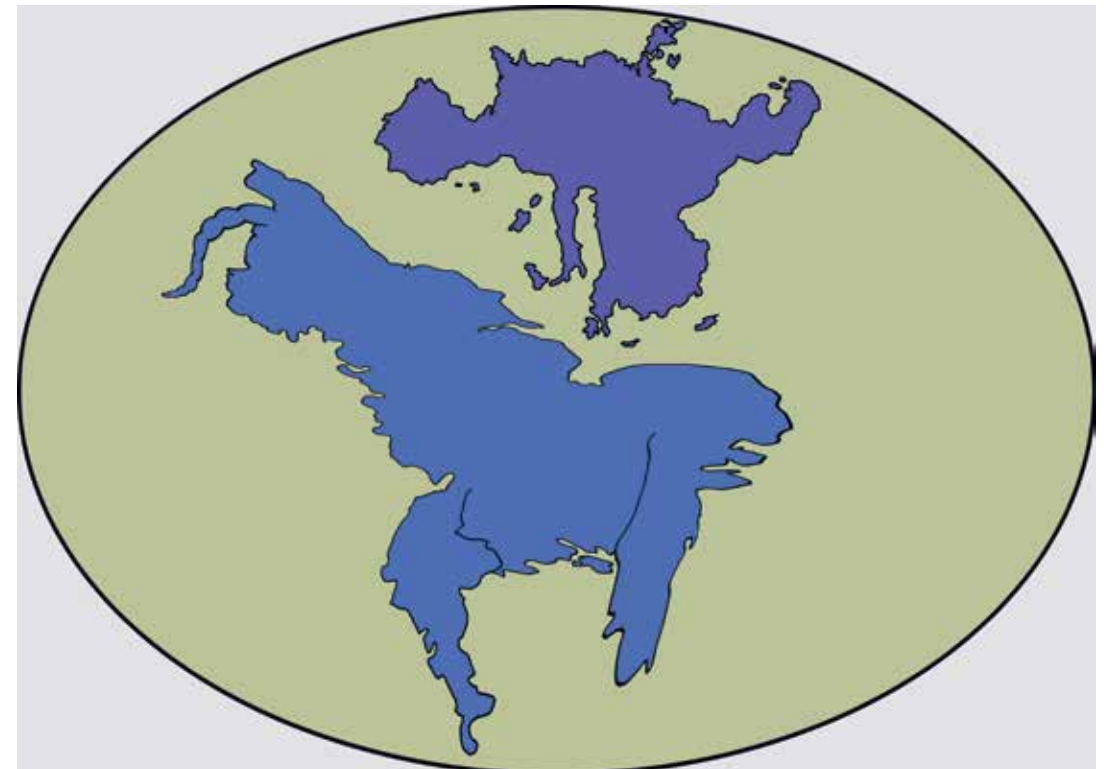
**US Trade Agreement:** Throughout the series discrepancies of scale and location are used to make satirical comment. Here we see an oversized England in negotiations with a diminished USA. In reality the Trump administration has made clear its expectation that US mass produced agricultural products, including chlorine-washed chickens, must form part of any trade deal. Beyond this UK service industries will have to be further deregulated and privatised in order to open them up to US companies.

**Fortress Britannia:** The promise of controlling our borders and stopping freedom of movement into the country by EU nationals, played a crucial role in the success of the Leave campaign, and became the most important of Theresa May's red lines. Identity politics, once the preserve of the Left, gained new adherents identifying with the notion of Englishness. Fear of globalisation, nostalgic nationalism and xenophobia have contributed to the rise of populism in many Western countries, including England.

9 April 2019

'Brexit Fantasia' was recently acquired by Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

[www.johngoto.org.uk/Brexit/](http://www.johngoto.org.uk/Brexit/)



Flotterstone 2018



Kew 2015



## SIMON DENT

These images are triggered by that feeling of unease when space, forms and signs suggest other stories.



## PAUL S. SMITH

### Grow-Decay

Since 2010, a group of protesters have made their home at a transformed derelict plot of greenbelt land in Sipson, West London. Their aim was to create a new community in an attempt to prevent a third runway being built at Heathrow Airport and support the campaign against climate change. The residents created 'Grow Heathrow', and with it a new lifestyle of self-built homes, supportive workshops in bicycle maintenance and presentations on how best to defend their land and forage for food. Alongside this, using solar energy produced from the site, the residents use the internet to communicate ways to support their on-going operation.

With over fifteen full-time activists, and thousands of supporters, the residents cleared the site of thirty tonnes of rubbish in order to begin building their self-sufficient community. Caring for their land, the occupants build homes from trees (known as benders), meeting rooms, toilets and kitchens; all helping to present the site at Sipson as a sustainable environment that resolutely opposes the anticipation of a third runway at Heathrow airport. Having documented the homes, lifestyle and residents of the site since 2014 - and the longest serving artistic project of their community - the work Grow-Decay looks at the transformation of the site and the people who wish to make a new life for themselves. Taken on Kodak film, to help emphasise the light of their cause, the project presents photographs that reflect the inevitability of the residents being moved off site and the lifestyle that accompanies such a constant state of flux.

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Uncertain States is a lens-based artist collective who are passionate in creating, discussing and promoting photography. 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.

Formed by Fiona Yaron-Field, David George and Spencer Rowel / Edited by Juneko Haga at Norwich University of the Arts Human Interfaces Creative Lab and Sid White-Jones / Designed by James Young / Printed by Sharman & Co Ltd. Peterborough.

We welcome submissions from lens-based artists and writers for further publication. We also welcome comments or feedback you have about UCS /31. Please send these to [ucstates@gmail.com](mailto:ucstates@gmail.com) If you are happy for us to share your views with others, we may publish them either online or in future issues of UCS.

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