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Female Gaze

How do women photograph women differently to men? It’s one of the questions we asked Charlotte Jansen, a London-based writer and curator who is the author of the recently published *Girl on Girl: Art and Photography in the Age of the Female Gaze*.

She argues that as more female photographers get behind the camera and find their audience directly through social media, it will have an effect on the way we see women. Put another way, as women gain more control of how they are represented, they change how women are perceived. “Photography is an expression of power,” writes Jansen in our cover story. “The photographic act is often viewed as an assertion of masculine dominance; a predatory point-and-shoot action.” What is more contentious is the extent to which women bring a ‘female gaze’ to the subject.

The phrase was first used in opposition to the ‘male gaze’, a term coined by feminist film critic Laura Mulvey in the 1970s to define the dominant masculine point of view, in which women are presented as objects of male pleasure. However, many didn’t like the idea of a female gaze defined by its male counterpart, or argued that women couldn’t simply disengage from the influences of society and were as likely to objectify female bodies as men.

Jansen says the current generation of women photographing men are different to the second-wave feminists of the 1970s. “It’s harder for women photographers working now to move against the patriarchal system because wherever you put your pictures, you are invariably consumed by that system,” she writes. But despite the fact that women are expected to conform with or counter the male gaze, she says, “they see the world differently – in just as much colour and nuance. We are beginning to see that world, everywhere we look”.

Simon Bainbridge, Editor
I’ll be your mirror
Charlotte Jansen explores the work of the new generation of women artists and photographers who are thriving in the image-saturated world of social media, and asks whether this will be a catalyst for a new era of the female gaze.

Am I what you’re looking for?
Endia Beal taps into the unwritten codes of the corporate ‘look’ in a work that combines testimonies and portraits to expose prejudices and judgements women of colour experience in an office workplace.

Lost boys
In breaking away from her usual work in commercial fashion, Zuza Krajewska spent a year uncovering the sensitive and, at times, tragic backstory of 32 teenage boys growing up in a youth detention centre near Warsaw.

Secret history
Approaching provocative issues to expose challenges faced by vulnerable women around the world, Laia Abril gives an insight into her new project on misogyny, starting with On Abortion.
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Zuzka Krajewska

One of the standout fashion and commercial photographers in Eastern Europe, the Gdańsk Academy of Fine Arts graduate has produced work that has appeared in Elle, Harper’s Bazaar and Art&Style, to name but a few. However, her featured project, ‘Image, set in a Polish youth detention centre, belongs to the other side of her more personal documentary practice. “I did it for the people living in Poland, also for the kids, so they could learn that life can be cruel,” she says. The project is a step in a new direction for Krajewska, whose previous work has addressed stereotypes of gender, marginalised groups and the nude.

Charlotte Jansen

A British Sri Lankan journalist and editor-at-large of Elephant magazine, Jansen writes about contemporary art and culture for The Guardian, Vice, Wallpaper* and Contemporary Art Review LA, among others, and also runs the art agency No Way. She is the author of Girl On Girl: a new photography book made under the female gaze, which she deconstructs in this month’s issue. “I’ve learnt that photography is very important as a transformative social tool, and that this moment is particularly important for women, for both the bad and good,” she says. “I also understood selfies aren’t always vapid, and that there really is such a thing as sisterhood.”

Donatella Montrone

Montrone tells the story of the remarkable uncovering of Irving Penn’s early work. She explains: “Many years ago, I worked for a publisher in Manhattan and shared a cubicle with Peter Homans – copy editor by day, composer by night. Peter is Katie Cangelosi’s husband and Katie is the daughter of Nonny Hunstein, Irving Penn’s brother, the filmmaker Arthur Penn.” She adds: “This may well be my biggest story ever, and I content myself in the knowledge that my longest friends in New York entrusted it to me.”
Agenda

Photo London co-founder Michael Benson reflects on the hard work behind establishing the fair as a key date in the photography calendar

Photo London
Words by Tom Seymour

Spring is in the air in London and for the first time this year the sun is shining on the courtyard of Somerset House. Michael Benson, one of the two founding directors of Photo London, sits in its centre, drinking a morning coffee and soaking up the rays. He could be forgiven for feeling a little smug but today he seems merely quietly content that later this month the art fair will be back for its third edition, its biggest yet.

“We kept hearing from people that ‘there’s no market for photography in London, there’s no interest,’” says Benson. “These were people in the industry and they should have known better.” In fact, the fair established itself as a key fixture on the international photography calendar and soon this grand old courtyard and the labyrinthine rooms of Somerset House will be filled with gallerists, collectors, artists, curators and exhibitors once again.

Last year’s edition featured 84 galleries from 19 countries, welcoming more than 35,000 visitors over its five-day run, with collectors and VIP photography professionals visibly active. Most of London’s commercial photography dealers will be represented among the 100 or so galleries booked so far for this year’s edition (from 18 to 21 May); many public institutions are either directly involved or programming in response to the fair, following the lead of Tate Modern, which has staged Offprint London in its Turbine Hall since the fair’s inception in 2015. “The industry has a habit of almost talking itself to a standstill,” says Benson. “We had to deal with a lot of scepticism. But I think we’ve had a rather good start.”

That scepticism was not without merit – after all, Photo London had been tried before. A photography fair with the same name, initiated by UK-based dealer Daniel Newburg, ran at the Royal Academy’s Burlington galleries annually for three years between 2004 and 2006 before it was bought by Paris Photo owners, Reed Exhibitions, who closed it after just one failed edition. But Reed had relocated it to Old Billingsgate on a Bank Holiday weekend – it’s fair to say the events organiser misjudged the date and location – while the mood of confidence from the first edition had been dimmed by the absence of North American galleries, some of which complained they had been burnt by import and export duties. However, the wider consensus at the time was that London simply couldn’t sustain a photography fair without the backing of local institutions or the kind of grass-roots enthusiasm the medium enjoys in France or Germany.

Benson and his partner Fariba Farshad (who together co-founded Candlestar, the producer of Photo London and the Prix Pictet) have since gone a long way to confound those assumptions, bringing to bear years of expertise gained working as curators, cultural producers and entrepreneurs to create commercial partnerships with sponsors. “When we started off trying to persuade people to come, they had some bad memories of being in London from the previous fair,” Benson admits today. “It was a very tough sell. A lot of people had come to London from abroad and discovered that nothing much was happening. I had to act as an evangelist for something that didn’t then exist. But I also had to convince them that, this time, their faith would be repaid.”
Maja Hoffmann, a Swiss philanthropist with formidable funds into a London art fair that photography. She agreed to funnel some of her interests spanning the worlds of art, film and sustainability. Both institutions are to create “a global award in photography major media partner in the project the Prix Pictet, which nine years ago brought together a Swiss bank and a sponsorship, and its flagship photographers of her generation. recognised as one of the most important hard acts to follow. So we decided to turn instead to Taryn Simon, an artist who is widely known for her Masters exhibition. The work pushes the boundaries of what photography can be – and is, therefore, in tune with our thinking about this year’s edition. The work investigates cultural differences and similarities by indexing top image results for given search terms across local engines throughout the world. It is a great example of Taryn’s ground-breaking artistic practice and confirms her as an outstanding, pioneering artist.”

And while a lot of the paying galleries seemed to be playing it safe during the first two editions, Photo London has encouraged younger dealers in. This year it has introduced a new Discovery section, led by Tristan Lund. “The expansion of the Discovery section is very much in line with our determination to establish Photo London as the global destination for anyone with an interest in the future of photography,” Farshad says. “We want visitors to learn about the latest developments in the market and, in doing so, discover new galleries and artists from around the world. We hope seasoned collectors will find something new, and the Discovery section is a great place to start.”

Photo London continues to court a younger crowd of fledgling collectors. “Music and dancing events,” in Benson’s words, will take place in the vaults of Somerset House during the fair in an attempt to reach a more garrulous, less monied crowd. “Young people are fascinated by photography,” he says. “They have a very different relationship to it than people of my age and generation. There’s an enormous swell of excitement about it and a thirst to understand the history of the medium among younger people. For a long time this has gone unnoticed, or even been dismissed, by certain sections of the photography community. But attracting that demographic is an extremely important part of what we want to do.”

Elsewhere, William Klein will develop a new 18-metre-wide mural in Somerset House, while Juergen Teller will present a special exhibition in the Great Arch Hall and, “using the latest virtual reality technology”, Mat Collishaw will re-stage British scientist William Henry Fox Talbot’s first public exhibition, when he showed his photographic prints to the people of Birmingham at the city’s King Edward’s School in 1839.

Magnum Photos will be celebrating its 70th anniversary, with Martin Parr and David Hurn curating a selection of works that the latter has compiled over six decades through a series of swaps with fellow photographers. Hurn’s own images will be juxtaposed with prints from photographers including Bill Brandt, Bruce Davidson, Sergio Larrain and Diana Markosian.

It augurs well for another year of growth and a further entrenchment of the fair into the cultural fabric of London. For now, it seems, the sun will continue to shine.
In the past decade Peckham has blossomed with the help of a community of artists, making for a singularly vibrant cultural scene. The area’s 24-hour-long photography festival, set during Photo London, celebrates their creativity.

Peckham 24
Words by Tom Seymour

In 1999, when she first arrived in Peckham as a recent graduate in modern history from the University of Glasgow, Vivienne Gamble found that taxi drivers would refuse to take her to the south London neighbourhood, such was its reputation for crime. “It was much rougher than what I was used to,” she says. “But it’s changed so dramatically.” The area, which gained particular notoriety following the killing of 10-year-old Damilola Taylor in 2000, and then again during the 2011 London riots, has always endured a spurious reputation as one of the capital’s ‘no-go’ areas. Yet it has long been an artistic centre and, over the past two decades, has undergone a process of gentrification to become one of London’s hippest neighbourhoods. During that time, a disparate community of artists and creators used the cheap warehouse spaces Peckham afforded, while developers updated the area’s grand but crumbling Victorian housing stock; the area has become, according to a recent survey by The Sunday Times, the most desirable place to live in the capital, not least for its burgeoning cultural and party scene.

This is encapsulated in Peckham 24, a round-the-clock celebration of the neighbourhood’s contemporary photography scene, which takes place during the weekend of Photo London and Offprint. The two-day event, which is this year supported by British Journal of Photography as its official media partner, will be centred around the Bussey Building in Copeland Park – the redbrick former cricket bat factory and warehouse complex that has been at the heart of Peckham’s creative metamorphosis.

In contrast to the grandeur of Photo London, the festival will make use of some rather unconventional gallery spaces, such as DXUJK Saloon, where clients can get haircuts in front of artworks, and the Safehouses, a pair of derelict properties on Copeland Road now taken over for art exhibitions and music-video shoots. The Nines bar, a teasing local drinking hole, will host a six-hour continuous screening of video art through to midnight on the Friday before the programme continues into Saturday with artists’ talks, workshops and exhibition tours. The venue is also due to host the Peckham 24 closing party.

Peckham 24 is the creation of Vivienne Gamble, founder of Seen Fifteen, one of a new exhibition by Egyptian-born photographer Laura El-Tantawy, who grew up in Saudi Arabia and studied in the US before moving to London. She was nominated for the Deutsche Börse prize in 2016 for In the Shadow of the Pyramids, her photographic meditation on the Arab Spring in Egypt.

“The series started as a personal journey into her own identity as an Egyptian woman,” Gamble says. “And then it changed when she witnessed, very closely, the events in Tahrir Square. Now she has circled back to what she was originally exploring. I’m very excited about showing this new work for the first time.”

One of the most anticipated exhibitions is curated by Tom Lovelace, a photography artist who is a long-term member of the Peckham creative community. For Peckham 24, he has devised a show displaying various artists’ work, titled At Home She’s a Tourist, and available to view in the Copeland Gallery of the Bussey Building. “The show is a mix of established artists, like Clare Strand, Eva Stenram and Tanzer, with lesser-known but exciting names like Emma Bäcklund and Dominic Till.”
Dubbed “the global award in photography and sustainability,” the seventh cycle of the Prix Pictet opens at the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) in London this month, showcasing the work of a dozen artists and documentarists under the common theme of Space. Founded nine years ago by Swiss private bank the Pictet Group and Candlestar – the company behind Photo London, which opens a fortnight later – the prize draws attention to environmental issues but also reflects the strategies and approaches used by photographers to tackle socio-political concerns.

The first edition, in 2008, was themed Water and was awarded to Canadian photographer Benoit Aquin for his photo essay The Chinese Dust Bowl, while Munem Wasif was commissioned to shoot a story on water shortages in his homeland, Bangladesh. Among the shortlisted names was Edward Burtynsky, a photographer whose commitment to documenting environmental issues through the prism of stunning landscape photography seemed to encapsulate the Prix Pictet’s ideals. Indeed, he was nominated for the first three cycles of the award but never won. Over subsequent years more conceptual approaches have been shortlisted in response to changing themes, which have included Power, Consumption and Disorder, won by Lucas Delahaye, Michael Schmidt and Valérie Belin respectively.

“The intention was never to just feature photojournalism, much as we all love it,” says Michael Benson of Candlestar. “It was about opening up to all genres of photography.”

This year’s Prix Pictet comes through on that promise, straddling the breadth of photographic discourse.

Among this year’s shortlist is classic reportage in the form of Sergey Ponomarev’s series Europe Migration Crisis, created in association with The Sunday Times and on show at the Imperial War Museum from 27 April to 03 September. For the Russian photographer, the migrants’ journeys across Europe represented a transgression of space – the crossing of literal borders as well as something much more personal, moving from home to a place both unknown and idealised. “Their pasts were no more than a memory immortalised in the bright family photographs they’d saved on their smartphones,” he says. “Their whole lives were encapsulated in the few possessions they’d managed to bring along in their rucksacks. These fragments of a broken, far-off land that each migrant carried with them are now scattered across Europe … The refugees continued forward, entering into a strange, unknown but sheltered space. Sometimes they didn’t really know where they were or where exactly they were headed.”

Others have taken on the idea of space to explore transgression of both territory and of the relationship between photographer and subject. Munem Wasif (nominated for a second time since the Water commission in 2008) photographs the unmarked edges of the blurred boundary between Bangladesh and India. In Land of Undefined Territory this “mundane land” simultaneously hides and represents the ongoing struggle between dominance and subjugation, and ideals of liberty and independence.

Richard Mosse is shortlisted for Incoming, showing at the Barbican’s Curve Gallery in London until 23 April. The Irishman also photographed migrants’ journeys through Europe using a military-grade thermal camera, capturing them from miles away, oblivious to his presence. The heat signatures of the camera deprive Mosse’s subjects of facial expressions and cultural demarcations – even of gender, race, age or sex. By inverting the sense of space between photographer and subject, the prize draws attention to environmental issues but also reflects the strategies and approaches used by photographers to tackle socio-political concerns.

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subject – who so much of documentary photography is defined by closeness and intimacy – the idea is that he elevates the people at the heart of the migration crisis to symbolic, parabolic stature. “We captured people asleep, people embracing each other, people at prayer,” says Mosse. “There’s a stolen intimacy to it. There’s no awareness, there’s no self-consciousness. They are, instead, authentic gestures.”

Michael Wolf and Benny Lam provide a more direct interpretation of space – or the intense lack of it. Wolf’s series Tokyo Compression was photographed largely on commuter trains at Shinjuku railway station, capturing rush hour at a rail hub that averages 3.6 million passengers a day, making it the most crowded in the world. His images, he says, depict “complete vulnerability in the most extreme of cities.” Lam, meanwhile, focuses on the private spaces of a city. Commissioned by the Society for Community Organisation (SCOO), he created a series of overhead images of poor families, singletons and elderly people living in Hong Kong’s cramped outer slums. “Hong Kong is regarded as one of the world’s richest cities but lurking beneath the prosperity is also extreme poverty,” says Ho Hoi Woh, director of SCO0, referring to the thousands who live in cupped homes and wood-partitioned cubicles, as well as the constant flow of new arrivals from mainland China.

Outer limits

From the space between photographer and subject to how a photographer understands the space around him: Sihe Nishino is nominated for his ‘diorama maps’ of cities, each painstakingly created from thousands of images taken on solo urban wanderings. Once back home in Tokyo, Nishino edits down handprints in his darkroom and pieces the images together in a mosaic. The photographs are detailed studies of buildings, streets, people and everything else that goes with city life. A composite map emerges from each but such studies share little with geometric partitioned cubicles, as well as the constant fluctuation of new arrivals from mainland China.

Space has also been used in highly conceptual ways by photographers selected for the Prix Pictet shortlist, not least by Mandy Barker. Her images are architectural studies of the borders that exist in a highly built-up environment, inspired by a line from Georges Perec’s book Species of Spaces: “To live is to pass from one space to another while doing your very best not to bump yourself.” “The built environment is the greedy counterpart of the natural realm,” Gutowska says. “A space is defined only by differentiation and its transformation into an emblematic, disordered space during territorial disputes.”

Finally, Prix Pictet has shortlisted Japanese photographer Rinko Kawauchi, based in Tokyo, for a somewhat existential project. Her series focuses on a Japanese farming practice called habikito, in which fields are burned before planting. Yahiko, Kawauchi says, has been practiced for 1300 years and still takes place every year in March. The inspiration came from a dream in which she stood in front of burning fields, prompting her to travel to the southern Japanese town of Aoe to take these pictures. “Standing by myself in that vast land, the feeling that I was living on this planet called Earth suddenly welled up inside me,” she says. “Since I never paid attention to such thoughts in my everyday life, it was an odd sensation: the awareness that my legs were, at that very moment, being pulled by gravity toward the Earth.”

The work of the finalists goes on show at the V&A on 24 May, when the winner will be announced by Prix Pictet Honorary President Kai Astrup. The exhibition runs until 28 May, before a global tour throughout 2017.
My earliest memory is of sitting alone in my grandmother’s cherry tree in her pink underwear. I was four years old. Nobody could see me behind the leaves but I could see the whole garden beneath, with apple trees and a cat running over the street far away. It was my paradise.

I was brought up in a privileged and bourgeois family. We lived in the countryside surrounded by forest and I spent a lot of time there. I must have been a disappointment for them.

The first photograph to make an impression on me was a picture of a cemetery with footsteps in the snow, surrounded by graves. The photographer must have been there very early in the morning to capture that dead people met each other during the night...

For me, this was fantastic. It was both a symbolic and a literary way to use photography. I didn’t know the photographer’s name. Many years later I found out it was Christer Strömholm.

I first met Strömholm when I was illegally using the photography lab at his school. I had been using it for many months, making many mistakes printing and developing. One night at 3am he stood at the door and found me.

I looked around and saw only a mess. But he asked to see my pictures. He told me to visit him the next day, when I thought I would surely end up in prison. But instead he asked if I wanted to join the school. He became not only a teacher but a close friend. I miss him a lot.

When I was a young man photographing Café Lehmitz, I learned that photography is not about photography. And being strong is not going to help you much. But being weak – just enough – opens up a presence. Then you begin to understand that we belong to a big family.

Since the 1970s, I’ve dreamt about a ‘Lehmitz Family Album’. When I was shooting in the bar I felt like it was a big and warm family. I finally hope this can be realised with a revised version of Café Lehmitz. It’s a desire to give back something to those I photographed.

I have a profound fear of intolerance. But also a profound excitement at the diversity of people and different cultures. I profoundly miss a world built on equality and justice.

Failure must be a part of everything. If you are lucky enough to survive a failure or a loss, you will be stronger. And your new self-confidence makes the impossible suddenly more possible.

I am a father. My son is called Jens and I love him. He brought responsibility into my life.

I was married recently and it feels fine. To experience love is a favour, a present everyday. Though my wife does keep me awake at night.

I like being Swedish. Emotionally and for many other reasons, such as the stillness of nature. It doesn’t mean that I’m for everything that happens politically or culturally here. But compared with other countries, Sweden is privileged. We haven’t been in a war for more than 200 years.

I am interested to see what is hidden; what you cannot see. That is a decent explanation of why I spent so many years photographing behind closed institutions, such as a prison, a psychiatric hospital and a home for old people.

I had four walls and my time. I could focus on the people and get to know their personalities, their dreams and secrets and vulnerabilities, their innermost longings.

To know I exist, I need to be at touching distance. Not only when I’m shooting. It’s often a question of approaching a reality I’m aware of but don’t want to know. This behaviour has many names; one of them could be curiosity.

In life there is a constant movement between feeling up or down. Between presence and absence, love and hate, defying the natural meaninglessness, as I got to know it. If you are unprotected and curious you easily suffer, you are a target.

When you are older, people expect you to know how things are. But the truth is you don’t know at all. The more you know the less you know. When I was younger, I knew everything.

My advice to younger photographers is not to be a photographer but to be a human. It is about you: your emotions, experiences and knowledge. The camera is just a tool. So find a language with your own distinct smell. It is important to be weak enough to feel and innocent enough to enter the confusion.
Lena Mucha befriens female army cadets in Nagorno-Karabakh while Mexican photographer Tania Franco Klein explores the notion of isolation in our evermore connected world. And Jennifer Niederhauser Schup probes how we construct knowledge and historical facts.

Interviews by Izabela Radwanska Zhang

“It’s what I miss in the media. Some people don’t even know where Karabakh is.” The Berlin-based photographer Lena Mucha says this in reference to her newest project, Women to the Frontline, which began when she flew to Yerevan in Armenia last September with journalist Naomi Conrad. She was there on the back of a Reporters in the Field scholarship from the Robert Bosch Stiftung foundation in Germany. The duo drove for six hours across the border to Stepanakert in Nagorno-Karabakh, a self-declared independent state wedged between Armenia and Azerbaijan, defined for more than 20 years by its frozen war.

Mucha graduated with an MA in social anthropology and political sciences from the University of Cologne in 2011. She has since been mentored by Max Pinckers, Cristina de Middel and David Alan Harvey, among others, and had her images published in Geo and Der Spiegel. Her work draws attention to stories that go unreported by mainstream media and, more and more, investigations into gender roles – which led her to the female cadets in Karabakh.

Their motivations to join the army vary; some years for the frontline and some to be peacekeepers. They are all, however, deeply patriotic. “They grew up in the context of war,” says Mucha. “Many of their family members died or they had parents or grandfathers fighting in the army.”

Female training was introduced less than two years ago, so the majority of their facilities and accommodation is off-site. In Karabakh, they live a 50-minute bus ride away, “but they are happy to be there,” says Mucha. “I think maybe they see it as an honour because they’re the first.” But some opposition and scrutiny remains, particularly among the older male officers who rationalise their inclusion by saying that “with the presence of women, the men should be better behaved – they’re there to help the men be better,” explains Mucha.

“It’s a story about conflict and society, without showing the country as a conflict zone. More, it talks about the girls and their challenges. When they put away their uniforms they are just ordinary girls. I became very close to them and hope that the people who will see the photos can connect and identify with them. That’s what I’m looking for with my work – to connect.”

lenamucha.com
We are living in a world where we are more connected than ever and yet we can still be left feeling completely alone. In his book, *The Burnout Society*, the philosopher Byung-Chul Han explores this, and the idea that the overload of modern technology and the “culture of convenience” are catalysts for depression and various personality disorders. Drawing inspiration from his theories, Mexican photographer Tania Franco Klein places this contradiction at the centre of her ongoing autobiographical project, *Our Life in the Shadows*, which also explores the pursuit of the American Dream and facets of perfection. “We have these compulsions to perform and we live in a society of achievement and positivity that has led to a constant fatigue,” she says.

The need to escape from media overstimulation is seen through the eyes of fictional female characters placed in vulnerable, hunched positions, shot in different rooms of a 1970s-style house. They smoke cigarettes, stare at the television and lie on the floor. Some were cast from the street, with Franco Klein particularly looking for individuals “trying to be invisible and avoid any attention from the crowd”, but most are self-modelled. Her clever use of bold, dramatic colour blocking, which engulfs each image in a separate tone, serves as a contrast to their introverted behaviour.

“Emotions are the most important for my work. If you can connect through emotions and the experience of the visual, sometimes it opens up the door to imagine smells and sounds and a whole 4D experience.” She adds: “It’s funny because I’m talking about isolation, but at the same time I realise that doing self-portraits isolated me more.”

The photographer pays meticulous attention to the spaces used as backdrops for the sensitivity she seeks to communicate. She finds specific rooms and locations by knocking on neighbours’ doors, and constructs her own sets and props – often entirely from scratch. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that she came to photography through architecture, which she studied in Mexico before moving to London to do an MA in fashion photography at the University of the Arts London in 2014.

Crucially, although relatable, her narrative carries an ambiguity, which encourages the viewer to apply their own story and interpretation, and hopefully think about our modern-day dual identities. “We are always trying to create identities with social media to express the good part of ourselves, as if there is some kind of shame in knowing what we are on the other side... because we feel that we have failed in what we are supposed to be.”

All images © Tania Franco Klein.
It’s nearly a half-century since man first set foot on the moon, yet many remain sceptical it ever happened. Countless conspiracy theories speculate about inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the footage of that “one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind”, ultimately arguing that the Apollo missions were a highly elaborate hoax.

For Swiss photographer Jennifer Niederhauser Schlup, it’s a fascinating example of our innate dependence on film and photography to authenticate – or debunk – perceptions of historical fact. It’s also the basis of her latest work, Do you really believe they put a man on the moon?, for which she amalgamates archival and digitally manipulated imagery with straight photographs to challenge our assumptions of reality.

The series evolved following an invitation to teach a semester at Alfred University in upstate New York last year. Niederhauser was thrilled to discover that not only does the small village of Alfred have one of the oldest observatories in the country, but that it is also just a few miles from the birthplace of Glenn Hammond Curtiss, the aviation pioneer and founder of the American aircraft industry. It is also the site of the first public demonstration of a powered aircraft flight in the US. "From this decisive historical fact I drew up a fictional character, telling an abstract story that combines strange experiments and discoveries," writes Niederhauser in her project statement, entered into BJP’s International Photography Award last year. "It is a utopian tale of seemingly unattainable dreams, which alludes to a place of hope and togetherness in a common effort to transcend natural frontiers, to the moon and back.

"Examining visual and written archives; building useless tools and an escape vehicle bound to crash as a metaphor for happy failure; mixing replicas and artefacts with scientific records to confound their veracity while embodying the wildest of ideas, Do you really believe they put a man on the moon? questions the construction of knowledge and the interpretation of history seen through a specific prism. Borrowing devices that enhance our perception of the world, it aims to open our eyes to the possibility of utopia and dreams."

As well as raising questions of complexity, Niederhauser is playful in the techniques and devices she employs to enhance her narrative, which treads the line between fact and fiction. For example, there is one image of two circular frames of mountains viewed through a stereoscope, a device that presents a pair of photographs of the same subject taken from subtly different angles, creating an optical illusion of a 3D image when viewed together. “It’s a very old process and another device to enhance your vision, and,” she says, “it’s actually just a pile of flour – everything is constructed.”

Although Niederhauser is far from finished with this project, she hopes to eventually publish it. A selected edit of her investigations will be shown at Les Boutographies festival in Montpellier this May. The question remains, does she believe that man walked on the moon? “Now that I know how I am able to make things up, I shouldn’t trust it. But I do believe it, because I want to.”

jennifer-niederhauser-schlup.com
Charlotte Jansen considers a new generation of female photographers who make women their subject. Zuza Krajewska goes inside a young men’s correctional institute. Endia Beal addresses themes of race, gender and corporate culture. And Laia Abril uncovers secret histories in her wide-ranging examination of misogyny.
Charlotte Jansen looks at how a new generation of female photographers are choosing to represent women in their work.
Three years ago, I got into a Twitter fight about selfies. A fiery debate had ensued about an article I had written, suggesting that photographs — especially sexy ones — that women took of themselves and shared online couldn’t be feminist. Several feminist selfe artists, including a former Australian TV star turned feminist magazine editor, disagreed. I saw this as an opportunity to try to understand the female gaze and how it was being used. For the next three years, I began to look at the photographs women take of women — either of themselves or of other women — more closely. It’s not hard to find them. They are everywhere. But how many of those images are created by fellow women, and do they photograph women differently and do they photograph women differently?

I don’t know if a woman took the picture of Azalea but most of the photographs of women we see daily are made to appeal to the heteronormative male gaze. We’re supposed to see Iggy Azalea’s bum, compare ours to it, panic and then buy things to prevent a “disaster”. The message such photographs of women give us is still very narrow. Photography undoubtedly has an effect on the way we understand people so, as more women create photographs of women, will it change how we understand them?

In the patriarchy in which we live, photography is an expression of power. The photographic act is often viewed as an assertion of masculine dominance; a predatory point-and-shoot action. This control over a subject — what to show and how to frame it — has made photography a duplicitous partner of colonialism, the sex industry and the veiled agendas of advertising and the mass media. Photography was introduced before women could vote but it gave women power from early on to represent themselves. It was a tool of crucial importance in the Suffragette movement (Christina Broom, dubbed ‘Britain’s first female photojournalist’) and some of the movement’s landmark events) but it was perhaps not until the 1970s, during the so-called second wave of feminism, that women’s photography became a force for change in its own right. Experimental artists such as Renate Bertlmann, Valerie Export, Lynda Benglis and Birgit Jürgenssen — all included in the Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s (2016) exhibition at The Photographers’ Gallery — used photography in their practice to reclaim their bodies and reveal the artificial construction of gender roles in mainstream media to limit their positions in both the art world and society as a whole.

The photographs created by women in the 1970s were mostly staged — posed against patriarchy — and they were still constructed, unreal. And they were still manipulative, unrealistic and unreal. And they were still presented as objects of male desire. Finally the first female art photographers photographing women broke through in a big way: Cindy Sherman, Carrie Mae Weems, Annie Leibovitz, Nan Goldin, Shirin Neshat, Sally Mann, Rineke Dijkstra. Their work paved the way for understanding women differently through photographic imagery, making a significant impact on everyday media. Suddenly it was possible to be a woman and photograph yourself or the women around you as you wanted.

A new generation

In 2017, the age of social media, our context is totally different. On the internet, photographs are seen together, juxtaposed, with their only frame created by the device used to view them. It’s almost as if we have to start again. Online, photographs women take of themselves and of other women still have the same connotations: that they are narcissistic, flimsy, vain or rapid. It’s much harder for women photographers working now to move against the patriarchal system because wherever you put your pictures, you are invariably consumed by that system. Petra Collins [above] is an obvious example of this. When in 2013 she made a T-shirt with a drawing of a menstruating vagina for American Apparel, the resulting media
Bodies are bodies that go through many shifts and changes, from infancy to old age, and through the lens of the male-dominated images. Creating the photographs we see in magazines, and on social media, is an act of appropriation and control. Some photographers use this control to their advantage, while others seek to challenge it. For example, Christiane Sähnisch, a female photographer, creates a space for women to express themselves freely, without fear of being judged or reduced to a certain image.

Female perspective

Many of the photographers I spoke to also told me that when their work had been written about, there was often interest in how they looked in front of the camera, rather than what they were doing behind it. There is a commercial undertow to photographs of women, that it seems the chance to reveal the issues affecting young girls, such as shame, periods, acne, body image, sex, sexuality and mental illness in a relatable way. But when she walks the catwalk for Gucci, I wonder how it vies with the fashion world that she has supported through her photography work.

Online platforms have also been hugely beneficial. Revisiting some of the confrontational and confessional strategies of the body- and sex-positive feminists of the 1970s, Molly Soda [page 38] makes art out of the issues affecting young girls, such as shame, periods, acne, body image, sex, sexuality and mental illness in a relatable way. But when she walks the catwalk for Gucci, I wonder how it vies with the fashion world that she has supported through her photography work.

Photographers such as Collins, Sosa and Marzella (or Maya Fuhr and Mazine Cousins, who also feature in the book, and many others who don’t have, for the first time, taken feminism into the mainstream. They are creating the photographs we see in magazines, on billboards and in ad campaigns, and they give us a different message to the previously male-dominated images. Their photographs suggest friendship, hardship, happiness. Bodies are bodies that go through many experiences and not only sexual pleasure. However, there is a problem with that. These young female photographers have made their name independently thanks to the internet. But their impact has been so significant that, conversely, it means other women photographers who also photograph women have found their work described in the same terms: feminist, self-art, Instagram art and so on. The thing is, photographers women take of women do not all have something to say about feminism or femininity. They are not all a comment on the body and sexuality. That interpretation proves that the way we see women is still limited.

Female gaze

The power of a photograph is not only in what is depicted but who is profiting from the image. Schrager raised important questions of ownership and copyright with her #paythenipple campaign: a former model, she makes sure she is the one that profits from the image. Women have been made to feel ashamed for exploiting their own sexy image but if the woman herself is not profiting from it then who should?

It was for that reason that I agonised over what would be on the cover of the book. The final image, the back cover, by Isabelle Wenzel, dovetails these issues beautifully: it’s a compelling image that feels feminine and fun but is a gender ambiguous and doesn’t judge the form at its centre as anything other than a surprising and joyful shape. The female-led shift that’s happening in photography is so interesting because we are much more aware of how we engage with photographs. What seems to matter the most to women photographers working now is the community they build and the exuberant dialogues they are able to have with their audience. Photography isn’t about finding a position for women in the art world or in the field of photojournalism or fashion – it’s about creating a space in the world.

In 2015, I visited an exhibition of Zanele Muholi’s work [left] at the Brooklyn Museum featuring her ongoing Faces and Phases project: portraits of black lesbian and trans women that began with her own community in South Africa. I saw a young boy, no more than five years old, taking in the pictures, mesmerised by all the women, and sex. I realised in that moment how important photographs are in shaping the future of how we see gender and sexuality. Muholi photographs with tenderness and simplicity, usually one subject at a time, shot in black-and-white. She has given a face to a community whose stories – many of them awful, violent, some ending in murder – have been invisible in the media. Her strategy as a visual activist is straightforward: show the real faces of these people without decoration or judgement. Her photographs are the simple proof that they exist. Muholi didn’t wait for the system to change to accommodate these women, she showed the world herself.

To be in a photograph today means you are seen. A photograph is presence. Pınar Yolcuğan is aware of the problem in that, which is to create a singular idea about your subject through a photograph. The way rural and tribal women have been portrayed until now has usually been through a Western male lens. As a Middle Eastern, Muslim woman, Yolcuğan creates a different picture. She has spent years with her subjects, which include female farmers in Turkey, BBW (Big Beautiful Women) models in Los Angeles and Candomblé women in Bahia, Brazil. She doesn’t shoot them in their ‘natural’ setting, but makes their lives more ambiguous so that we look at them as individuals. Having studied fashion at Central Saint Martins, she creates each ‘costume’ for her subject by hand, with each woman in mind. They are not exoticised or emasculated for a colonial gaze but shown as powerful, fleshly and feminine.

There still exists a generalisation that women photographing women is one of two things: a continuation and conformity to the standardised structures of the clichéd perception of the female, or to counter and provide an antidote to the male gaze. Can selfies be feminist? Yes. As Instagram a validation for the female gaze. We are beginning to see that world everywhere we look up.

Girl on Girl: Art and Photography in the Age of the Female Gaze is published by Laurence King Publishing
Bo-Drene, 2004 © Yvonne Todd.

Mad About U, 2015 © Molly Soda.

Untitled #23 from the series Selfie, 2013-2016 © Petra Collins.

Xana Nyilenda, Los Angeles, 2013 © Zanele Muholi.

Rotation 2, 2014 © Isabella Wenzel.

Untitled from the series Like a Stone, 2016 © lux lux.

12 Reasons You’re Tired All The Time, 2011 © Assa Dargis.


Untitled from the series Experimental Anthropology, 2017-2018 © Tay Liao.

Peonie, Bum from the series Grass, 2015 © Maisie Cousins.

From the series Experimental Anthropology, 2017-2018 © Tay Liao.
LOST BOYS

Zuza Krajewska finds good in the bad as she exposes the vulnerability of child criminals in Poland.
Words by Izabela Radwanska Zhang
The drive takes you 30 miles along the motorway southwest of Warsaw towards Studzieniec before you make the turn. The road eventually falls away to a dirt track, unnoticed by anyone who has no reason to know where it leads. At this point, you will lose phone signal, but keep driving. Just as you think you’ve completely lost your way, through the trees you will come across a large, wooded cross towering next to a placard that seems to do more than just observe her. It was the day of the twins’ 14th birthday. The canaries are used to a warm climate, so the room is heated high and he is topless, revealing a fake Armani belt around his waist. Obivious to the camera, he reclines on a chair, gently cupping one of the tiny, yellow birds in his leathered hands. He also breeds rabbits and “cares about them immensely”, Krajewska recalls. “Each cage is beautifully kept and clean. But on the other hand, he is brutal.” When he showed her the rabbits, he was rough and cruel, picking them up like objects. A few years ago his little sister was bitten by an Ahitah, so he killed the dog by hanging it.

The division between what is good and what is bad is warped here; the line that separates right and wrong is barely defined. The engrained duality in the boys’ character makes their behaviour unpredictable and erratic. Day after day, Krajewska observed internal feuds that came with gang culture and their hierarchies and pecking orders, the dangers of drinking. They are schooled up and wearing silly outfits. Ex-alcoholics attend bonfire nights to tell them about the dangers of drinking. They are schooled in carpentry, catering and gardening, so they might have a chance at an already over-saturated law-abiding life. That is, if they can find an employer in any of the already over-saturated villages willing to hire an ex-offender with no other qualifications.

Mateusz is another whose face features prominently throughout the series. His mother is an abusive alcoholic and his six other siblings are all born of different, unknown fathers. One image shows the 17-year-old sat in a room surrounded by wooden cages he built in his carpentry lessons to house the canaries he is breeding. The canaries are used to a warm climate, so the room is heated high and he is topless, revealing a fake Armani belt around his waist. Obivious to the camera, he reclines on a chair, gently cupping one of the tiny, yellow birds in his leathered hands. He also breeds rabbits and “cares about them immensely”, Krajewska recalls. “Each cage is beautifully kept and clean. But on the other hand, he is brutal.” When he showed her the rabbits, he was rough and cruel, picking them up like objects. A few years ago his little sister was bitten by an Ahitah, so he killed the dog by hanging it. The division between what is good and what is bad is warped here; the line that separates right and wrong is barely defined. The engrained duality in the boys’ character makes their behaviour unpredictable and erratic. Day after day, Krajewska observed internal feuds that came with gang culture and their hierarchies and pecking orders, the dangers of drinking. They are schooled up and wearing silly outfits. Ex-alcoholics attend bonfire nights to tell them about the dangers of drinking. They are schooled in carpentry, catering and gardening, so they might have a chance at an already over-saturated law-abiding life. That is, if they can find an employer in any of the already over-saturated villages willing to hire an ex-offender with no other qualifications.

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understand is that this isn’t a prison,” says Krajewska. “They’re just children. They can manipulate you emotionally but at the same time they are desperate for attention. You can’t dwell on the bad things that they have done. I’d say to them that just because in here someone might be the smallest, doesn’t mean that it will be the same on the outside. He might be the one that makes it.”

Despite coming from a life of hardship and neglect, women have a special place for these children. Their mothers may be elusive, offering little by way of maternal support, even forgetting their names, but the boys still love them dearly and, in a certain way, respect them too. As a woman and a mother herself, Krajewska recognised this in the boys’ behaviour towards her. “Maybe because they saw that in me, and saw someone, let’s say, a little weaker, they weren’t playing games. They treated me a little differently.” She adds: “It’s not that only a woman could have taken these photographs – both a man and a woman could view it under the same gaze if they let themselves. But it was easier for the boys to open themselves up emotionally in front of a woman than in front of a man, who, there at least, they always view as a rival!”

In assuming this role, Krajewska was sensitive, but firm. Her attentive approach was unfamiliar, even “an element of surprise”, and helped to develop a relationship that allowed her to be bolder in moving to capture rare giveaways of vulnerability and quiet – an intake of breath with eyes closed, a uncontrollable shriek of laughter, a flash of a tattoo that reads “I’m sorry for...” She, in turn, would offer compassion, and try to satisfy their curiosities of the world she came from. One of these moments came during a roll call, a daily event when each block gathers outside for registration. To settle the boys, who were pushing each other around, Krajewska asked them to stand and close their eyes. By cancelling out just one sense for a split second, the troubled teens look almost angelic and at peace. “I managed to get seven frames,” says Krajewska. Usually she would only manage two or three before the distraction of a shove or a yelp cut off the flow. Things moved on quickly. “Everything you give them that is good, they take like a drug,” she says. “At the beginning, they just chuck facts at you to get a reaction, or they don’t want to tell you anything. Then they open up more and more. With some I had a flow from the beginning. With others I didn’t know if they liked me or not, or if they just had a psychotic character, or if I was just irritating them. But it’s also a defensive mechanism. There’s always a side to them that you can trust and a side that is aggressive.” Only after six months of spending time with them did one of the teenagers sit beside her and give her a friendly nudge on the shoulder to say, “You’re alright.”

Even so, there were moments when the spell was nearly broken. Krajewska recalls how for the first few months she would always arrive in her old Nissan, a car that the boys would come to recognise as hers. When one day she borrowed her boyfriend’s BMW, they turned. “They thought that I had sold the photographs and made money on them, that I was using them and going to ‘do them over’.” She explains that as long as she was there, they never stopped trying to trip her up. “It’s just how they check people, how they size people up.” Even now, as Krajewska continues to visit, she will only drink coffee that she sees being made. “If they bring it from the kitchen and I didn’t see them make it, I won’t touch it.”

In March last year, Krajewska held an exhibition and auction of the Imago work at the Griffin Art Space, the former Dom Słowa Polskiego (The House of the Polish Word) in Warsaw, curated by Michal Suchora. She invited friends and family, and her contacts from the Polish popular media, commercial and fashion worlds. Twelve of the better-behaved boys, who were allowed to leave the centre for the day, also came. “It was like two worlds colliding,” she says. “They were hanging out, smoking cigarettes together. It was incredibly moving. For the boys it was showing there could be something different out there for them, it’s not all darkness, vodka and crime. It can be different.”

The dozens of portraits were displayed alongside objects taken from the boys’ bedroom shelves: cheap deodorants, tees, photos of girlfriends. And letters – messages written from the boys to their loved ones and to each other, but also letters to the director from old boys who weren't able to break out of the vicious cycle and write of regret from the inside of prison cells. Krajewska explained that she wanted to show beauty in their loss and help people understand that these were just children that needed to be looked after. “People began to cry when they read those letters,” she says. “Andrzej began to cry too and ran out when he saw the photograph of his brother, so we had to take it down.”

The event touched and spoke to many, and Krajewska donated all the proceeds from the auction to the boys’ personal funds and the detention centre. The series began to attract more interest and was featured in magazines in Poland and abroad. But it was not appreciated by all. After the success of the auction and exhibition, Krajewska was invited to speak about the series on national radio, but her interview was unexpectedly cancelled.
“TO THE GOVERNMENT, PLACES LIKE THIS DON’T EXIST: POOR KIDS IN DETENTION CENTRES WHO ARE NOT WANTED”
female gaze: zuza krajewska

malbork, ostryk, who now lives in england, saw the series on the internet and sent her a facebook message saying: "those kids look like us!" the monograph will soon be published by kahl editions in paris, but then it will be time to "close the book" on imago. "i can't look after them and hold them by the hand, but they promised me that they'll use the money to get their driving licence and refurbish the blocks."

the boys, some as young as 11, stay at the centre until they become a legal adult at 18. when they are released, some hope to move to the bigger cities or abroad, wherever they can find work. but more than half will quickly return to crime and end up behind bars. a short video to promote the past exhibition shows one of the boys climbing up a tree in full blossom. with sunlight flickering in and out, the camera follows him up as he narrates some details of his life and lists his crimes. "time for regret is when i'm up there," he says. "now i gotta live."
AM I WHAT YOU’RE LOOKING FOR?

Endia Beal’s photographs highlight the judgements and prejudices facing young women of colour in the corporate job market. Words by Laurence Butet-Roch
“At Yale University, I found myself in a place of double consciousness,” recalls Endia Beal, citing WEB Du Bois, the only black person in the 2013 cohort for the fine arts MA in photography, as well as in her workplace: the IT department. “I grew up in one culture and now inhabited another, becoming a mediator between these two worlds,” she adds. Upon learning that her hair, a red Afro, fascinated her colleagues, she turned the tables on them, allowing them to feel it but recording their impressions. “It felt like I was doing something I wasn’t supposed to be doing but wanted to do,” admits one of them, while others speak of the moment being “uncomfortable,” “voyeuristic” or “awkward,” highlighting the inappropriateness of the question, “Can I touch your hair?”

Beal’s work since has continued to question and provoke, often challenging the uniformity of corporate culture. In an amusing but no less incisive series, she styled seven white women in their forties with “black” hairdos, then took head shots of them in corporate garb and pose. Their coifs stand out not merely because they look incongruous to the sitters, but because they contrast with the otherwise indistinguishable dress of white shirt and dark jacket. Evidently there’s little room for expressions of individuality within the corporate sphere. So much so that as soon as someone is different, it is immediately noticeable and therefore must be tamed. “These women had their own stories about being stuck in situations where they were made to feel uncomfortable for who they were. For instance, one of them is called Ann but her real name is Desiree. When she started working, she was asked to change it because Desiree is too exotic for the office,” says the photographer. “It’s not just a minority thing. It’s a woman thing,” she told The Huffington Post. “All women can relate to that experience in some way. So I really learnt something through this project as well.”

Now an associate professor of art at Winston-Salem State University, an historically black institution in North Carolina, Beal still hears about her students working in the corporate sphere. So much so that as soon as someone is different, it is immediately noticeable and therefore must be tamed. “People would make comments that hint at how they grew up and remind us of their childhood home in front of a backdrop depicting the Yale office space she once worked in. By juxtaposing the two, private and public personality meet. ‘The edges of the frame show family pictures, trophies, musical instruments, heirlooms and other decorations that hint at how they grew up and remind us that there’s more than meets the eye.’

While the subjects play the part of candidates, presenting themselves in a deliberate way in a bid to make a good impression, the viewers become the interviewers, judging the efforts of the person in front of them. In doing so, we are confronted with our own biases and presumptions. What is our conclusion and how is it based on? Do we focus on what the applicant is wearing or the environment they are wearing patterned shoes and a bold dress or the one with a demure outfit and gentle haircut? What do our decisions say about us?

“No matter what I did – straighten my hair, put on less make-up, wear blue, black or grey, don pearls and earrings – I was still ‘othered’. People would make comments that made me feel uncomfortable and I didn’t belong. And the more I tried, the more I was losing myself,” remembers Beal, ultimately asking herself, “Why should I have to alter myself to fit in a space that was never designed for me?” But rather than throw in the towel, she is trying to transform corporate culture.

In the hope of initiating a conversation around hiring practices, her photographs serve as the basis for talks on diversity and inclusion. She’s spoken to career councillors across the United States as well as company managers. She’s also creating a book destined to be a teaching tool that combines her images with first-person testimonies. “My job as an artist is to add to the existing narratives,” she says. “Although there are movies such as Working Girl and 9 To 5 that speak of women’s experiences in corporate spaces, there aren’t any about women of colour. It’s the same thing in fine arts. So I thought, ‘I’m a woman, I’m black and I’m going to do this right now.’”
SECRET HISTORY

Every year, some 47,000 women die from backstreet abortions because of a lack of legal or free access. Those who survive are alienated and stigmatised. To launch her new work on misogyny, Laia Abril visualises the space in between, from repercussion to recovery. Words by Izabela Radwanska Zhang
Laia Abril is no stranger to themes of distress. Bulimia, coping with the death of a child, the asexual community, virtual sex-performer couples – these are all topics that the Barcelona-based photographer has explored and attempted to demystify with her multi-layered, story-based practice. The subjects she tackles are complex and provocative, but ones she is able to connect with by way of female empathy, “where I can be involved emotionally,” she says.

Her most extensive work to date explores the struggle of eating disorders and is divided into chapters, starting with a short film titled A Bad Day. Next came Thongovision, a self-published fanzine exploring and critiquing the selfie culture used by the pro-anorexia community; and finally The Epilogue, which follows an American family in the aftermath of losing their daughter to bulimia. Separating the work into sections allowed her to approach different aspects through different platforms, not only in the multiplicity of perspectives but also in a constantly evolving visual stimulation. Her new work, A History of Misogyny, also adopts the use of a layered representation.

“The history’ part is important,” she says. “Every time I tried to talk about female issues or any kind of situation that I saw was not right, I was confronted with people telling me that it was in the past and it doesn’t apply to the situation we are in now. But just because something is now the law, that doesn’t mean it’s fine. There’s always a risk.” For Abril, looking back is necessary to “highlight the long, continuous erosion of women’s reproductive rights”.

She begins with A History of Misogyny, Chapter One: On Abortion, the first episode of a project that will attempt to “visualise the comparison between the present and the past, so we understand that we have always to be conscious that things are not as certain as we think.” In the UK it has been legal to terminate a pregnancy of up to 24 weeks since 1967, yet it was only in March this year that MPs voted to decriminalise it entirely, regardless of circumstance or time constraints. Western society is considered to have liberal views on cases of abortion but in the Republic of Ireland and in Poland it is illegal, with the exception of cases posing a risk to the health of the woman or in the event of a pregnancy arising from rape or incest. In Malta, it remains forbidden altogether.

The project is not about the experience of abortion itself but about the repercussions of women not having legal, safe or free access to the procedure, often forcing them to use dangerous alternatives and causing physical and mental harm. “A woman was using a coat hanger to perform a DIY abortion in Uganda and I hear the same story in Tennessee: [The problem] is everywhere, with pretty much the same consequences.”

Rather than focusing on one story in one location, as has been the tendency, she casts her net wide, “trying to create a conceptual map to connect the repercussions so that we can emphasise more with these women.” There is a series of black-and-white portraits of women who have had to turn to illegal means, “trying to adapt the project for the opportunity to go to places where I can’t have an exhibition because it’s too uncomfortable. At least we can talk about it.”

As she prepares to manifest this first chapter in a book, to be published by Dewi Lewis this summer, she starts work on the second episode with the working title On Hysteria. She plans to focus on the historical tendency to accuse women of being crazy or possessed as a form of dismissal, together with analysis of menstruation myths and other constructed ‘mental’ and ‘female’ illnesses used as a justification for control.

“I’m not an activist,” she says. “I’m not trying to change anyone’s mind or fix the situation because I don’t have the power to do that. But maybe I do have the power to shed some light on the stories that we don’t think about or that don’t get the same audience that I’m reaching.” She describes her method of working as being “like a strategy”, not wanting to “shout” but instead materialise what is invisible and give prominence to overlooked.

“I’m trying to visualise the history of misogyny so we don’t forget what’s in the past and don’t get too comfortable in the present; so we take a look at things that sometimes we don’t want to – in a visual way that doesn’t make you just turn the page but makes you engage somehow and think a little bit.”

Laia Abril

79
Intelligence: Report

We preview a little-known body of work from one of history’s most influential photographers, while our Creative Brief is Shaz Madani, co-founder and art director of innovative women’s magazine Riposte.

The early years of Irving Penn

As a major retrospective at The Met celebrates a century since his birth, the recent discovery of a black-covered photo album reveals the formative years of one of the 20th century’s true photographic legends – and his first marriage, to British-born Nonny Gardner. Words by Donatella Montrone

Not long before Katie Cangelosi’s father died in 1999, she visited him in the nursing home where he would eventually see out the rest of his life. As he rambled about his wife, Nonny Gardner, who had died the year before, he kept muttering the word “Penn”. She took it for the confusion of weakened health, but later, after his death, she and her siblings started to clear out their childhood home and discovered a trunk full of negatives and photos that belonged to their mother – boxes of memories of a life shared with another man. They knew she had been married once before, but the details remained secret until after their father’s death, when a search at the local marriage bureau revealed that their mother’s previous husband – as named on the certificate recorded by the Office of the City Clerk in the City of New York on 2 October 1940 – was Irving Penn.

The discovery of their mother’s previous marriage to one of the most feted photographers of the 20th century led to an extraordinary and emotional journey that begins in a cupboard in the attic of their childhood home in East Northport, Long Island, and ends at the photography department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where freelance curator Maria Hambourg has been preparing a blockbuster exhibition of Penn’s work, a century after his birth, along with an accompanying catalogue that contains three images “relating to Gardner”, including two from the revealing collection that Katie and her siblings found while sifting through their mother’s keepsakes, and one from the Penn archives.

Her mother attended Dartington Hall in Devon, a progressive school that focused on the arts, from 1928 to 1932, and was then awarded a scholarship to study at the

Intelligence: New Media

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Next issue
June 2017

Ones To Watch, BJP’s annual talent issue, returns with our pick of emerging photographers drawn from across five continents. Selected from the hundreds of nominations we received in March after a call out to photography experts worldwide, these are the names we believe you’re going to become better acquainted with over the coming months and years, and our Ones To Watch initiative is designed to help them on their way. Now in its sixth edition, it is the most far-reaching and comprehensive survey of its kind, committed to discovering talent beyond established photography centres in Europe and North America to include new voices and perspectives in the developing world. Photographers previously selected include Sohrab Hura (2011), Namsa Leuba (2013), Jack Davison (2014), Diana Markosian (2015) and Diego Moreno (2016).

On sale 03 May
1. Czeslaw Bialobok, 1948, a platinum-palladium print of which, awarded in 1949 as the ‘first place’ at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, now sits in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Photographed from a 1987-88 photograph by Irving Penn, printed to Parker in Chicago in 1978, and now housed in the Department of Photographs, have organised the Met’s Albert and Shirley Small Paley Collection. The exhibition opens on 24 April and runs until 30 July, comprising more than 200 images, the core of which are taken from work gifted to the museum by the Irving Penn Foundation in 2015. The show will travel to the Grand Palais in London, and then to the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, and then to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2016.

2. A page from an album of photographs belonging to the artist’s son, John, shows images of his parents taken by Irving Penn, who, Penn says, had long wished to make a book about his first wife Nonny Gardner, who features prominently in the album. The couple met in Philadelphia in 1937 and then again as a student in the University of Chicago in 1938. They married in 1940, and soon after left for Mexico, where Penn burned all of the paintings he’d made while there, says Cangelosi. He initially intended to become a painter but in his mid-20s took a job designing covers for Vogue, where he soon established himself as a formidable fashion photographer. In 1950, he married model Lisa Fonssagrives, who was the subject of much of his work. He also became an influential portraitist, doing shoots of celebrities, and experimented extensively with platinum prints of everything from female nudes to cigarette butts and detritus. He played with tonal range and texture, giving his work a Surrealist quality, and he’d use the fluidity of the medium to create an almost three-dimensional space, as a studio in which he would do shoots of indigenous people outside of their surroundings. One such example is Cuzco Children (1948), which was taken in an antiquated studio he borrowed during a trip to Peru, featuring a boy and girl, both barefoot, hands clasped together, posing against a table in what appears to be Western dress. Undoubtedly, though, he is most famed for elevating fashion photography to an art form.

The Black Album contains numerous photographs Penn took of my mother and other people modelling costumes that she had created for the Surrealist Ball, explains Katie. It was 1937, a time when Surrealism was engaging the imagination of students across the nation, and the then-17-year-old Gardner found a job as a docent at the Museum of Modern Art. They married in 1940 and soon after left for Mexico, where Penn had intended to paint. “They travelled by train to Washington DC, and then to New Orleans,” says Katie. Penn chronicled their journey along the way, and many of those images are contained in the Black Album. There are photos depicting Mexico and local people and markets, but there are also still-life shots with plants and animals. “My mom appears in many, sometimes as the subject and sometimes camouflaged among dense vegetation in the garden. In one shot she is holding two baby chicks on her head.”

Gardner and Penn returned to the US as the threat of war in Europe grew, and they divorced not long after. “We found out that before leaving Mexico, Penn burned all the paintings he’d made while there,” says Cangelosi. He initially intended to become a painter but in his mid-20s took a job designing covers for Vogue, where he soon established himself as a formidable fashion photographer. In 1950, he married model Lisa Fonssagrives, who was the subject of much of his work. He also became an influential portraitist, doing shoots of celebrities, and experimented extensively with platinum prints of everything from female nudes to cigarette butts and detritus. He played with tonal range and texture, giving his work a Surrealist quality, and he’d use the fluidity of the medium to create an almost three-dimensional space, as a studio in which he would do shoots of indigenous people outside of their surroundings. One such example is Cuzco Children (1948), which was taken in an antiquated studio he borrowed during a trip to Peru, featuring a boy and girl, both barefoot, hands clasped together, posing against a table in what appears to be Western dress. Undoubtedly, though, he is most famed for elevating fashion photography to an art form.

“We tried to piece together our mother’s life with Irving Penn – before she married my father and dedicated her life to raising a family. It all seemed so bohemian and artistic and full of adventure, so I took off on my search for the story behind those photographs. This led me to Vivis Volos, Zanazic, associate director of the Irving Penn Foundation, who confirmed the identity of the man behind the lens,” says Cangelosi.

“Surprisingly, little is known of Irving Penn and Nonny Gardner’s time together, and apparently the pair did not remain in touch upon parting,” writes Zatse in his appraisal of the Black Album in 2013. “Although it is known that Penn photographed in Mexico, the Foundation was not aware of the photo album, and it came as a surprise. The Foundation has both acknowledged the authorship and relevance of the album.”

Penn died in 2009, but in 1996 he donated his archive to the Art Institute of Chicago, which also now holds the Black Album. “We decided to donate it to the AIC because they already hold an archive of Penn’s work and we felt they were best-placed to preserve it. The Black Album was exhibited by the AIC in 2014, at the anniversary of the opening of the new photography gallery at the Institute,” explains Katie.

Hambourg, founder of the Met’s photography department, and Jeff Rosenheim, curator in charge of the Met’s Department of Photographs, have organised the Irving Penn Centennial Exhibition, a major retrospective of Penn’s work, to mark the centennial of his birth. It opens on 24 April and runs until 30 July, comprising more than 200 images, the core of which are taken from work gifted to the museum by the Irving Penn Foundation in 2015. The show will travel to the Grand Palais later in the year (21 September to 23 January). “When Katie Cangelosi brought her family album to our attention, Penn’s last years in art school and his somewhat later trip to Mexico became more vivid, more alive with detail,” says Hambourg. “We had not known about the images relating to the Surrealist Ball at the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art, for example, and they filled in that moment with the gaiety and spontaneous creativity that so often characterise the interactions of art students at play.

“In the accompanying catalogue we have included three images by, or of, Gardner because they illustrate early moments in Penn’s life, about which we had only the barest shadowing of facts. One is a portrait of Penn in Mexico, which was made by Gardner. Two more depict Gardner. One is a colourised image of a nude woman we assume is Nonny Gardner. It is from the Philadelphia Museum School years, and we think it was made by Penn to illustrate a poster for the Surrealist Ball. The third is a picture of Gardner in the garden in Mexico, taken presumably by Penn, from it would seem, a second storey window or the roof.”

“My mother always had lots of stories to tell,” says Cangelosi, “though none of them included the fact that she had once been married to Irving Penn.” While the discovery of this phenomenal trove of images cannot be underestimated from a photographic standpoint, for Cangelosi and her siblings, it raises as many questions as it has answered.
Arriving in London from Tehran, aged 10, and not having English as a first language, Shaz Madani remembers finding “great comfort in the universal language of images and pictures”. That refuge in the visual was probably the genesis of her career, as more than a decade later she graduated from the London College of Communication with a degree in design for advertising. Three years on, she set up her own studio, and soon after, a mutual friend put her in touch with Danielle Pender. Together they founded Riposte, a biannual “smart magazine for women”. Now in its seventh issue, the award-winning title, edited by Pender and art directed by Madani, is lauded for its intelligent voice and smart aesthetic.

The Iranian-born designer continues with project work, including commissions from MoMA, Wellcome Trust, Elephant magazine, and two books for photographer Giles Duley.

Why doesn’t Riposte have a front cover image?

Riposte came about as a response to the barrage of image-saturated magazines we were seeing on the shelves, which too often focused on unrealistic or negative visions of female beauty; either highly unattainable, heavily retouched women in expensive clothes or celebrity gossip mags berating women for not being perfect enough.

We wanted to create a platform that celebrated talented women, with a space where they could have open and honest discussions about their failures and successes and the issues that matter to them. With the cover concept, it seemed like the perfect way to wipe the slate clean and shift the focus back to these women, and champion them for who they are and their achievements rather than their faces or bodies.

Do you prefer to use female photographers?

We love working with talented female photographers but would never disregard a male – it’s not about excluding genders. We work with whoever is most suitable for the job. It’s really important both in our visual and editorial commissioning to include male viewpoints and collaborators.

What are your main considerations when commissioning?

It’s a massive contradiction but the first thing I always ask is, “Does this feel like Riposte?”, but at the same time we’re looking for work that challenges our ideas about what we should feature. Honesty has been a constant criteria. I’m interested in photographers who have a nuanced approach; an eye for detail and the ability to break down the wall between the subject and viewer. We try to use natural lighting where possible and avoid over-styling or heavy post-production.

How do you collaborate with photographers?

It’s about understanding them and how they work best as much as it is about knowing what you want from the project. It’s a fine balance. Sometimes too much direction or involvement can stifle or confuse people. We usually give as much freedom to photographers as possible so they are able to express their own creativity. If we do the first part of our job right, which is to pair the right person to the right brief, the rest should work organically.

Is it important to be active on social media?

Definitely. I’ve only recently (and reluctantly) taken to platforms such as Instagram for research and for sourcing commissions. It’s a great place to see more casual work or look at personal projects, and to get some extra insight into the sort of photographer someone might be.

How much value do you place on experience?

It’s not always about being really experienced. It’s more about a photographer’s eye and natural ability. There may be situations where, due to time constraints or the nature of the shoot or the subject, you definitely want someone who is well skilled, will know what they are doing and is able to conduct themselves professionally. Other times, when there is more freedom to be playful, a young or less experienced photographer can bring unexpected and raw interpretations to a brief.
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We focus on lenses this month, with news of things to come from Yokohama, along with reviews of a debut product from Iris and a fast 105mm from Nikon

Technology

News
Irix 15mm f/2.4 Blackstone

Designed in Switzerland with Polish input and South Korean manufacture, Irix is a new name in manual focus SLR lenses in Canon EF, Nikon G and Pentax KAF FA-J electronic aperture-coupled mounts. The product design and the packaging point to high ambition. The first lens is a 15mm f/2.4 full-frame rectilinear wide-angle in two versions: the lightweight consumer Firefly at a little over £400 and the magnesium-alloy, weather-sealed Blackstone at just over £600.

The Blackstone looks like it’s worth twice the price, with its well-designed box, inner metal tin and press-formed zip lens case. The Zeiss 15mm f/2.8 Milvus is almost four times the price, yet Irix can be considered a viable alternative. There’s no OLED focus display and the manual focus travel is 145 degrees instead of 270 degrees, making the useful depth-of-field and hyperfocal markings tightly spaced.

This lens has adjustable focus scale calibration to overcome poor tolerances on bodies and adaptors. The focus goes past infinity (soft clickstop) to benefit from live view focus without recalibration. Live view magnification reveals how wrong your focus can be even if the Nikon D810 (used for this test) manual focus signal is positive. The Nikon EXIF data gives aperture figures in third or half stops (Canon reports f/2.5 for f/2.4). Focus distance is transmitted, giving correct flash control. There is no aperture ring on the lens itself and it must be set on the body. Although the front element is small by Distagon standards, it does not buckle out – the filter rim is 95mm and the bayonet lens hood, with its matt silicon inner face, has a hatch to access polariser rotation.


text continues...
David Kilpatrick puts Nikon’s lightweight prime to the test

When lens tests concentrate on a design’s MTF performance at full aperture, there’s a temptation for the maker to look for the best readings and forget that lenses have other qualities. Not so Nikon. In making the first over 105mm f/1.4 (sounds unlikely, but true), it has given the lens many qualities – from handling to rendering – with the aim of pleasing photographers, not lab technicians.

From the start, the 985g weight and 106mm length of this lens – compared with what’s coming out of the workshops of Zeiss, Sigma and other rivals – is immediately appealing. It uses a reasonable 82mm filter thread, hugging the flimsy-protected front element closely. The light, super-proportional area of the 95mm-diameter focus barrel, which occupies the front half of the main parallel section of the lens body, works because it is hand-sized yet finger-friendly. If you want to focus manually, just place your thumb to support the mount and rotate it with your forefinger touching the underside. It’s effortless.

With the current Nano Crystal coating and a conventional Nikkor design and construction, this Chinese-made lens is well sealed against dust and moisture. Inside, there are three extra-low dispersion elements but there are no aspherical elements, which means there is no moulded glass and a very clean bokeh.

At a little over £1500, it’s a fairly priced lens for its specification. The SWM motor is almost silent, although most will prefer to use manual focus. Thanks to the internal focus, it does not have to shift 14 elements, while clever design has enabled Nikon to avoid serious focus breathing and achieve a 0.13x image scale at the one-metre close focus limit. The autofocus is surprisingly fast and, over a range of subjects that included night shots, it needed no AF micro correction on the Nikon D810 body used. Close and far AF never failed to be spot on.

Examining the images, those at f/1.4 have just the slightest glow to them – a softening of micro contrast that gives skin tones a flattering texture. It’s still true to some degree at f/1.8 and f/2.8, disappearing by f/4. Even so, there’s a distinct dominance of higher contrast detail, such as eyelashes and hair, in portraits over the lower contrast of skin pores. This quality is combined with a warm, clear colour rendering.

The lens shows no distortion worth correcting, though the Adobe profile makes an adjustment you can hardly detect. It’s not all that effective but the lens resists flare from sources outside or inside the frame. The nine iris blades create a nearly perfect circular aperture between f/1.6 and f/2.8, gradually acquiring a polygonal look. They are positioned far back in the optical design, resulting in a slightly avoided look to backgrounds far out of focus, but nothing like the effect of a classic Sonnar. Nor is it like a symmetrical Planar. Although many photographers will want to work wide open, the bokeh at f/2 shows less longitudinal chromatic shift and a better circular rendering of blur discs. If you are used to the effect of an 85mm f/1.4 used wide open, the 105mm achieves about the same visual result at f/2.

The Nikkor is supplied with a fairly deep circular lens hood, not a wide-angle glass without any ribbing. It’s not all that effective but the lens resists flare from sources outside or inside the frame. The nine iris blades create a nearly perfect circular aperture between f/1.6 and f/2.8, gradually acquiring a polygonal look. They are positioned far back in the optical design, resulting in a slightly avoided look to backgrounds far out of focus, but nothing like the effect of a classic Sonnar. Nor is it like a symmetrical Planar. Although many photographers will want to work wide open, the bokeh at f/2 shows less longitudinal chromatic shift and a better circular rendering of blur discs. If you are used to the effect of an 85mm f/1.4 used wide open, the 105mm achieves about the same visual result at f/2.

The difference between 85mm and 105mm might seem small but once you enter a crowd or a room with people, it has real impact. The distance you must step back to frame a portrait, two people together or a full-length shot is critical. Many rooms allow us no more than 6ft to 8ft of clear space. The 105mm will need a 10ft working distance, whereas an 85mm needs 8ft. There are more situations where you can’t frame your subject, whereas an 85mm f/1.4 used wide open, the 105mm achieves about the same visual result at f/2.8.

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Over 70 years on, stories of those who took part in D-Day continue to inspire. Stuart Wood FMPA was determined to play his part in honouring this heroic but now dwindling band of survivors.

Stuart’s regular lab is One Vision, and they were only too happy to get involved from the outset, agreeing to produce the necessary exhibition prints, which will all be output on Fujifilm’s iconic Crystal Archive DP II professional paper.

“We use this media for virtually everything we print,” confirms One Vision’s product and marketing manager Adam Scorry. “As a pro lab it’s crucial we offer top quality and consistent results, and that’s what Fujifilm paper gives us: beautiful colours and deep contrast.”

“Exhibition printing is nothing new for us and we’re regularly involved in some really big shows, such as the Comedy Wildlife Awards and the Pink Lady Food Photograpy competition.

“We can’t wait to see Stuart’s amazing imagery printed and framed when the venue’s been finalised.”

Looking for leads

It wasn’t the easiest of projects to get moving because Stuart had no personal connections with veterans and was struggling to find his first subject. Eventually, however, through his local branch of the Armed Forces charity SSAFA, he came across Charlie, an old soldier who lived near him in Devon. A meeting was set up and then Stuart had to explain his idea and persuade Charlie to be part of it. “I just told him that I wanted to do him justice in his picture and that was enough,” says Stuart.

With the project finally underway Stuart trawled the internet for leads and got in touch with regiments to see if they could help in his search. What finally opened things up for him was a meeting with George Baro, the chairman of the Normandy Veterans Association, who was not only the subject of a portrait but a man with a treasure trove of contacts.

“I had to win him over and convince him that I was genuine,” recalls Stuart, “but once I did he simply asked me to give him a shopping list of the people I was looking for and he put me in touch with them. Things really started moving after this.”

From the outset Stuart’s plan was to photograph everyone as an individual and to arrive for his sitting with a deliberately blank canvas, so that he could react in real-time to what he found. “In my job I often have to work like that,” he says, “and it’s just a case of being able to think on your feet.”

“We have Fujifilm to thank for opening our eyes to what online printing can do,” says Stuart. “It was not only the subject of the project who benefited, but many of the veterans who they are and to talk while I listen.

Looking for leads

In this another night, another show, one upon another, some of the smaller, more intimate shows that had become a norm in the local area were a surprise to see. “I’ve seen the quality of the work of a selection of photographers increase dramatically over the years,” says Stuart. “Everyone has access to the latest technology and the best materials. But I was really happy with them because of their cost.”

“We always push the message of professionals within the photographic community,” says Stuart. “We are Fujifilm’s clients, and we want to help others become Fujifilm clients.”

Stuart’s work allowed him to continue his own personal project, which has now turned into a book that would raise funds for the National Memorial Arboretum. Stuart doesn’t want to make money out of this project, but he’s hoping that it will help the veterans to proceed once they’ve graduated. “I’ve always been interested in photography,” says Stuart, “and with the digital revolution unfolding I wanted to do something to make a difference.”

As a result of this most of the work that Stuart has created so much impact, but it got him thinking about what he could do to help other veterans. “I realised some time ago that I was in a very privileged position, and I wanted to do something to help others,” says Stuart.

With the project finally underway Stuart trawled the internet for leads and got in touch with regiments to see if they could help in his search. What finally opened things up for him was a meeting with George Baro, the chairman of the Normandy Veterans Association, who was not only the subject of a portrait but a man with a treasure trove of contacts.

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‘Prepper’ tutorials and how-to drawings are the source materials for a Dutch photographer’s failed attempt to create order out of chaos

I am fascinated by order and chaos,” says Amsterdam-based photographer Lise Straatsma. “The two go hand in hand, where you try to create order, more chaos seems to emerge.” It is one of the central themes of her latest work, The Alpha Strategy – An Index Of The Unpredictable, which also became something of a personal battle as she struggled with the sheer volume of research she collected online.

The 26-year-old, a recent graduate of the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, describes the project as an investigation into “the quest for self-reliance”, focusing on the modern phenomenon of online tutorials and ‘preppers’ for living back in the wild. And while she describes it as an “ongoing research and ‘preppers’ for living back in the wild. And while she describes it as an “ongoing research and tools developed by survivalists to tell this story about people preparing for disaster scenarios. “There is something romantic about the idea of not having modern technology, of being just you and nature,” says the photographer. “The urge to survive is also this very primal need, and then there is this modern phenomenon of online tutorials and how-to drawings. This juxtaposition is interesting. Survival tutorials might be the most useful ones out there, since we are all so dependent on modern technology that there are not that many people left that carry water filter in the wild or bush-craft a shelter. And when I was done, staring at my walls, the ridiculousness of the end of the world as we know it was just so apparent. It said so much about me, as a person and as a photographer, that I wanted to incorporate this in the project.”

For her graduation show she combined her research, including a split-screen projection of 16 clean-water tutorials, with her own photographs and portraits of preppers alongside survival tools she created from the guides, all presented together in a kind of organised chaos that echoed her wall layouts. “When I started working on the project it was much more traditional, in the sense that I was only using my own photography to tell this story about people preparing themselves for major disasters. It fast became boring and impersonal and it didn’t feel like I was telling the truth, even though I was documenting reality.”

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