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creative camera

Murray Riss
Kelly Wise
Minnette Lehmann



photograph by Murray Hiss

creative camera

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The Samuel Palmer affair really began in the serious pages of the London *Times* a few months ago. An art sale-room critic was given considerable space, even part of the front page, to putting forward a theory about a number of paintings by Samuel Palmer which had passed through the sale rooms were fakes, eventually naming the person responsible as Tom Keating. Mr. Keating added to the entertainment by writing to *The Times* admitting that he had made imitation Samuel Palmer paintings and I hope I summarise fairly by saying that he regarded it as his revenge on an art world which had ignored him. He also stressed that he had never sold or attempted to sell any of his paintings. They were however sold by his then girlfriend with a story of their discovery in a relative's effects in Ceylon. This information is necessary for the background and I hope I have summarised it fairly.

Two things worthy of comment do emerge from this and one is the statement by the British Antique Dealers' Association, to which most of the galleries who bought, sold and advertised these paintings belong, that its members of the Association agree that if a painting is proved to be a fake the gallery ought to purchase it back for the actual sum for which it was sold.

This does not seem to me satisfactory in that first of all the difficulty of being able to prove a fake could be costly and grave suspicion might not be turned into proof. Secondly if a painting was purchased five years ago the value of money has fallen through inflation so that in order for the unwitting purchaser of the painting not to lose money he ought to be able to recover his inflationary loss.

Even more serious in my view is the clear implication in the correspondence that has gone on in *The Times* that collectors who have sold fakes are put under pressure not to have money back but to accept other paintings in exchange. I may be misreading the statements but if this is so, then of course it cannot be defended under any circumstances. Most serious of all is the case of one prominent purchaser of fake Samuel Palmers. He did not get his money back but did get alternative paintings and announced he was satisfied. But he agreed to the gallery's request to make no public statements on the transaction. This is totally unacceptable. The public and the art world do have a need, do have a right to know and a conspiracy of silence cannot be tolerated.

In the photographic world there has not been faking to our knowledge but a little study of our 1976 Yearbook and a faker makes himself a 'new' Daguerreotype which is then inserted in an old case. They could either copy an old photograph or even take a new picture. There is a ready sale, for example for nude artistic studies, at between \$500 and \$2,000. Under the present state of the market such a picture could easily be bought and sold with no other information whatsoever. It would require very little actual faking to make it look sufficiently antique and even if the case was not appropriate for the picture very few would know the difference. A convincing explanation which was not actually fraudulent could be given because few photographs come with a provenance, a history of the photograph.

The Samuel Palmer paintings were supplied with a provenance which convinced the art dealers that they had remained unknown to the art world because they were in someone's distant attic in far Ceylon. In selling a fake painting this otherwise lack of an origin is a very real problem, because there are only a finite number of paintings. The possibility of finding a Rembrandt in the attic is really unlikely as the Fleet Street sensation it creates shows. Considering the astronomical prices which some photos now reach the possibility of faking must be accepted as a reality. Wise collectors will be insisting on a provenance or at least some indication more than many offer today.

Much of the correspondence latterly in *The Times* has, of course, raised the embarrassing situation of whether the prices paid for the Samuel Palmer should be altered when it is discovered to be a fake. If it is to be priced according to aesthetic criteria then should it make any difference whether it is a fake or not? The fact that it does make a difference shows that we do not value paintings, or come to that photographs, according to their aesthetic merit but some of us knowingly and willingly, and some of us unwillingly, are assisting in turning art and apparently photography, into just another capitalist exercise. The reason the Rembrandt in the attic remained undiscovered for so many years was because nobody actually liked the painting enough to get it out of the attic. The fact that it can be proved to be a Rembrandt does not actually make it a better painting.

Of course, the buying and selling of prints must go on but in photography more than in any other art the confrontation between beautiful photograph and commercial art object is nowhere more strongly seen. Photography must come to terms with this problem.

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Arthur Grimm
Keiichi Tahara
Gabriele and Helmut Nothhelfer



photograph by Arthur Grimm, 1936

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This is a Communications Document!

The editors of *Creative Camera* are continually disturbed by the fact that although we keep asking questions in our columns hoping that we will get a response from our readers, much of the response that we get comes only from our own personal friends. Some years ago we did a readership survey which only served to show how big the gap was between ourselves and our readers. We are doing another readership survey soon, which we hope will show that the gap has narrowed. The intention of this rather grandly titled piece is simply to try and obtain from you your own particular view on one topic which at this particular moment is of considerable importance to us. It is the question of the amount of written material there should be in the magazine. We do not mean material written by the editors but contributed articles of what we hope is a continuously high standard dealing with some philosophical and aesthetic matters as well as examining the work of certain photographers in greater detail.

We are fully aware of the dangers of this because some magazines are already becoming overwhelmed by pseudo-philosophical verbiage; on the other hand if we can get some good articles would they be welcomed? It would certainly mean missing out two or perhaps even four pages of pictures. There is no chance at the moment of the magazine becoming larger and this is why we want your views. If you'd like to write to us we would be overjoyed to hear from you, but please do include your name and address and telephone number in case we want to pursue some of the points that you raise. Please help—write this very moment, don't postpone it and then forget about it! We need your views.

We need your pictures, too. We are always in need of good or better pictures. Send them to us but do not forget the return postage. We will be happy to comment on them even if we cannot use them. The comment will be necessarily and regrettably brief but we hope it will be helpful. Please do note the remarks about return postage, we are at present having a clear-out of material in hand, but not now likely to be used. If we have the postage it is being returned but if not it all goes into a large box, where it will wait forlornly for a year before taking the final journey. A sad end to somebody's hopes and dreams but alas, the only one.

Another reminder, this time to students. Many courses require the preparation of a research thesis on a photographer. Sometimes the copyright of such a thesis is held by the college of the student but this does not prevent the author from giving a copy manuscript to us for our library if he wishes. We do wish it for it seems wrong that such research should get buried in some college store room when a copy with us might be useful to other students. Please, therefore, if you have a spare copy of your manuscript send it for our library; we will take care not to infringe the copyright and yet make it available to other students.

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"Film Ends"
Jared Seth Fast
Lawrence Migdale
Felix Bonfils
Reed Estabrook



photograph by Reed Estabrook.

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MINDING OUR OWN BUSINESS

Creative Camera is not a political magazine. By this we mean that we do not support any political party in this or any other country through our columns. It is not to say that we do not have a national and international conscience or that we will not express views on matters which are ostensibly political.

The occasion for repeating these comments is the fact that over the weekend we received a telephone call from Sue Davies of 'The Photographer's Gallery' asking if we would add our name to a letter of protest at the dismissal of Dr Anna Farova from her position as director of photography at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague. Her crime, her mistake, her error or perhaps her honour was that she had signed the document known as Charter 77. This document even according to the British Communist daily paper *Morning Star* was within the confines of Czech law and also according to them could not be construed as anti-State or anti-Socialist. Many of the people who signed Charter 77 have been the subject of political attacks, some have been arrested. At the time of writing we have no news of Anna Farova being imprisoned but that is not to say it will not happen.

Dr Farova will be known to our readers from the fine article she wrote in the 1976 Year Book, a significant contribution towards the understanding of photography. She is known to us for the fact that although having a very busy schedule she could often find time to provide biographical details and lend us copy photographs of famous and not so famous Czechoslovakian photographers. I personally treasure the memory of riding on a tram with her up to Prague Castle and then walking down to the house of Sudek where she acted as interpreter and friend. These kindnesses shown to a western journalist were shown as liberally to journalists from Socialist countries, and her writings appeared in many other Eastern Europe magazines. She was and is a good friend not only to Czechoslovak photography but to Czechoslovakia.

No doubt the politicians in Prague will argue that her fate is none of our business and that it is an internal matter. If she had offended against any law then this might be true. If she had shown disloyalty to the State this might be true. She has done neither. Charter 77 is not against the law, indeed it called for the restoration of civil rights in Czechoslovakia in keeping with the Helsinki Agreement voluntarily entered into by the Czechoslovak Communist State. We have many good friends in Czechoslovakia including those of very orthodox views. We hope that fear will not paralyse them from opposing her dismissal and that any particular fear of their own dismissal will not make cowards of them. There are few enough good photographic historians for us to run the risk of losing the services of any.

It will be noted that we have said nothing about that peculiarly Western concept of freedom to speak one's mind and the freedom to put forward ideas at variance with official Party political views. This is a Western concept that has largely been abandoned in Socialist countries and as such this is their business. Our criticism of the action is that it violates both the spirit and the letter of Czech law and is therefore doubly intolerable. Our reason for writing this article and for asking our readers to take some action is that only in this way can we demonstrate that we are anxious for her safety and concerned for her welfare as well as concerned at the bad influence this will have for students of the history of photography and for the future of contemporary Czech photography.

Our readers should write to their nearest Czechoslovak Embassy protesting at her dismissal. Her job may have already gone to some Party hack but it is possible that she may be reinstated and at least it will show that such outrages cannot be committed without protest.

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Grant Mudford
Berenice Abbott
Lewis Ambler



photograph by Grant Mudford

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DO PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS EVER GET BETTER?

Recently I was asked if I would help judge a competition of Press photographs. I don't quite know why I was asked because 'Creative Camera' does not really print much in the way of Press photographs. It could well be that they had asked every other editor of the photographic magazines so I was the only one left! I accepted. After all I've spent a lifetime in journalism and have worked on photographic magazines and been a photographer of one sort or another for more years than I care to remember. That should be qualifications enough but I just wondered what was the criterion to judge a competition such as this.

I've looked at competitions similar to this over the years and the one thing which has surprised me is how little the winning pictures have changed over the years. There is always the spectacular shot of the footballer kicking the ball in mid-air or the goalkeeper sprawled horizontally, either with or without dejection. If there is not a photograph of the Hindenburg going up in flames then it's a racing car or a jet aircraft, etc. This is not to criticise the pictures; they are good pictures of their sort; they are spectacular and catch the attention and catch a slice of life at its most extreme which otherwise we, the ordinary, mundane people, might have missed. My comment is only to say that the pictures do not appear to have changed in the last 50 years. In one sense the old time Press photographer had the right idea when he had his 4 x 5 plate camera because he only needed one picture and that one had to be the right one. Now when every Press photographer goes out with a huge length of film I think perhaps the idea of getting the one picture that must be right is being slowly but surely lost. I hope this is not so because the Press photographer is after all one of the great examples of the decisive moment and while a motorised Nikon with a huge magazine can 'hose-pipe' an event in the hope that something will happen it can never replace the skill of a Press photographer who knows how to anticipate just the right moment.

One sure way of upsetting a photojournalist is to call him a Press photographer! Of course he is, but then again he is not; because by some peculiar exercise in semantics a Press photographer is not taken to mean a photographer working on a newspaper irrespective of the number of shots he has in his camera but his title implies that he is only looking for that one picture that his newspaper will use. The photojournalist, who I regret to say usually looks down on his colleague the Press photographer, may have identical equipment but he will spend hours, days, weeks possibly even months or years in producing not just one picture but a series, a sequence, a collection which tells a much longer story. The photojournalist would have us believe that his is a more complex, a more sensitive, indeed a more concerned story and in some cases he is right, but far more often it is an excuse for avoiding decision making.

This does demonstrate, of course, the differences between the two. The news photographer has much less to worry about; only too often he is persuaded by his Editor or Proprietor that what he is working on is important. To look at a pack of news photographers fighting for the best position to photograph the current Miss World makes one feel that much of the criticism levelled against them and their superiors is rightly justified. But over and over again one can see the extraordinary shots which show the better side of their work. One of their troubles is that they are always working to a deadline; they have to get a picture back for the next edition and consequently they must many times submit pictures which they know are not their best. This is the way of the world with all photographers; it's just less obvious in many cases. The worse trouble with Press photographers is that, I fear, they have been encouraged to relax standards because of an increasing shortage of good picture editors. I don't know why this should be so, the job is after all quite well paid; it may simply be that their numbers are comparatively few and the retirement rate depressingly low.

The fact remains that in an age which is becoming increasingly visually orientated picture editors of national and local papers quite frequently lag behind those working on weekly and monthly magazines. This is why a competition of press pictures is worth while for it will stimulate not only the photographers to maintain their standards but will stimulate the picture editors to maintain and even raise theirs. That can't be bad.

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Chris Killip
Photographs
1975-1976
in the North East



photograph by Chris Killip

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The Other Peter Turner

The Peter Turner who appears as the colleague of Colin Osman on these pages is not the well-known colour photographer in America. Our Peter Turner is younger, concentrates on black and white, exhibits his own photographs occasionally, sits on a number of committees including the Arts Council Photography Committee but in general does not indulge in commercial photography. This is by way of introduction because there are whole areas of photography in our magazine which we do not tackle and the other Peter Turner is in such an area together with such names as Hans Feuer, Erwin Feiger and many others of the 'Twen' school.

Another area of colour that we do not attempt, overlaps this and consists of the glamorous world of David Hamilton, John Thornton, Sam Haskins and the like.

There are no hard and fast rules and the policy is pragmatic rather than theoretical. It would still be true to say that we would be more interested in the early work of Ernst Hass than his later pictures and that while Avedon might creep in with his portraits David Bailey might not with his fashion pictures.

This is simply a statement of fact. It is not to be taken as any sign of arrogance on our part and should certainly not be considered as indicating that we think ourselves better than they are or even that any of our photographers are better than them, it arises from a combination of reasons. First and foremost is that most of these photographers are working in colour and we simply cannot afford to print colour so that even if we wanted to publish them we could not. Secondly, it cannot have escaped anyone's attention that some of the most popular names in contemporary photography are amongst those we have mentioned and indeed many other photographic magazines would fall over themselves to get good portfolios from them. We do not wish to compete with the more popular magazines and while the hair shirt may not exactly fit we do feel that we have a responsibility to photography separate from other publications. While this colour work is comparatively readily available elsewhere we feel we should reserve our pages for photographers less likely to attract the eye of the colour-conscious publications.

Again, let us emphasise that neither of these reasons actually relate to the photographic qualities of the pictures. They are essentially non-photographic reasons. There is, however, a reason that we would regard as photographic and that is that we have yet to come to terms with the aesthetic of colour. For reasons that we only dimly comprehend we do realise that it is something completely separate from black and white and that it concerns the nature of photographic reality. A dead soldier in Vietnam actually looks far deader in black and white than he does in colour. Perhaps there is a suspicion that theoretically the increasing naturalism of colour is compensated negatively in our own mind. We must admit to not knowing the answers. There is also the feeling that the supersaturated colour such as the other Peter Turner uses so frequently does not create a new dimension to compensate for the dimension of black and white that has been lost.

Perhaps there are also psychological as well as aesthetic reservations because we try and remain resistant to 'hype'. The letters we got in response to our previous query about the verbal content of the magazine show that the readers who took the trouble to answer our request were equally resistant to some of the verbal flack that is put up in academic and the pseudo-academic circles about photography. We try to be resistant to that but equally to the chi-chi pretension that surrounds much of studio colour photography. By the cold light of day the pretentiousness of the statements overcomes any possible truth that there might be in the thought behind them.

These are reservations that we feel. Again we must emphasise that this is not said out of any feeling of superiority. It is firstly to explain to our readers about our Mr. Turner to save him further embarrassment and also to try and explain, a little why certain popular photographers need not be expected in our columns.

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creative camera

Special Issue: Photojournalism Part I—The Early Years

Robert Capa

Karoly Escher

George Gidal



photograph by George Gidal

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THE JAPANESE INCIDENT

In 1975 and 1976 we sent copies of the 'Creative Camera Yearbook' to Japan and although the number sold were to be counted in hundreds rather than thousands we considered the sales satisfactory in view of language problems and the comparative cheapness and size of Japanese publications. In 1977 unfortunately we were not permitted to send out Yearbooks as they had been banned by the Ministry of Finance of the Japanese Government as 'injurious to public morals.'

Naturally we were greatly affronted by this and the suggestion that certain pictures which showed public hair should be sand-papered, that is the exact proposal that was planned, affronted us nearly as much. We did point out that we could not authorise this to be done to any of the photographs even if we wished it since it would so seriously misrepresent the artist's work as to make as perhaps liable in England for an action for defamation. In any case as we pointed out the whole idea of this sort of self censorship as was proposed was unacceptable to us.

We have not yet been specifically informed that the whole question is on the fact that public hair is visible on three of the pictures. The context in which they appear is apparently unimportant, in their desire to protect the morals of Japanese people public hair cannot be shown under any circumstances. Creative Camera rearooooR'nas also been censored in South Africa but this is for political reasons and even if just as unacceptable does at least have a slight element of self-serving logic behind it.

Unfortunately, we did not hear about the censorship attempt until some time after the book had been submitted by our distributors and it is they, in theory, who are supposed to make an appeal against such a decision. If they make an appeal then there is an impartial council of 15 members 'appointed among persons of learning and experience' who decide whether or not the book should be admitted to Japan.

At the present time, that is six months after the first submission, we are still waiting to hear from the Japanese Government. We do not propose to let the matter rest there and we are sending them information at all times to show good reason why this should not be treated as 'porn'. We have written to a number of friends asking them to send us a letter of support and we would ask any of our readers who hold official positions in art colleges, universities, museums or galleries to do the same. We would like them to write a letter to us on official paper saying, if they feel it is appropriate, that 'Creative Camera International Yearbook' is a book worthy of serious consideration in artistic circles and worthy of study in Japan. If they feel so inclined they can go further than this and add a few praiseworthy words about us but is actually more important to say that we are a serious book than that we are a good book. We do ask everyone who can write on a suitably imposing letterhead to do so with the understanding that the letters may be sent to support our claim to the Japanese Ministry of Finance.

At the present time the battle is still being waged and the kid gloves are still on, but we are not going to allow the matter to rest there. It is a matter of principle and we are preparing a letterhead for Phase 2, which includes a page taken from a quite acceptable apparently Japanese comic book available at all bookstalls and railway stations, a scene of crucifixion rape. We hope we do not have to use these letterheads, if so no doubt like our other letterheads they may become collectors items! We are determined to fight this. Our Japanese readers can of course order copies direct from us by post and The Ministry of Finance is apparently unable to stop these, but we would also ask our Japanese readers if they would write in support of our claim to The Ministry of Finance or to their appropriate national government representative.

In the meantime we wait, hoping that common sense will win the day, but fearing that it will not.

We must offer our apologies to readers of the May issue devoted to the work of Chris Killip. Due to an unfortunate combination of errors certain of the photographs, the front cover in particular, were not printed to our normal standard of fidelity to the original. Our printers are as concerned as we are to maintain a high level of reproduction and we join with them in trusting that this will be a unique occurrence.

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creative camera

Special Issue: Photojournalism

part 2—recent developments

Abigail Heyman

Claude Raymond-Dityvon

Brian Griffin



photograph by Brian Griffin

creative camera

19 Doughty Street, London, WC1N 2PT

July 1977

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Editor and Publisher **Colin Osman**

Co-Editor **Peter Turner**

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JUST A FEW WORDS

In the course of a conversation with Colin Ford about his Royal Jubilee exhibition (Happy and Glorious) at the National Portrait Gallery the question of the quality of reviews came up. We restated our own point of view, that it would provide us with a space problem to begin running these and that our readers on the whole had shown a preference for us to print pictures rather than words. On the other hand we agreed with Colin Ford that there was a great shortage of criticism even if on our side we were inclined to absolve ourselves.

In Britain the ideal medium for this criticism should be the 'British Journal of Photography' but unfortunately there was rather too little appearing at the present time in that publication. An alternative would be 'Camerawork' and indeed this was doing excellent work in its field but it's degree of commitment to a specific type of photography meant that while this could provide a useful alternative voice it could not act as the only voice. With this in mind an unreasonable fear came creeping on us that perhaps we should start criticising shows.

The question was then whether the criticisms should be of all shows even if only thumb-nail length like 'Books Received' or whether they should go into greater depth and therefore greater space. The thumb-nail review has, we think, to be rejected because while it will work for 'Books Received' in that the columns function is mainly to inform about the whole of the publishing scene comparatively uncritically, it can be supplemented by more extended book reviews.

As regards criticism, Colin Ford made the point that his new exhibition had been widely acclaimed in the popular press as a suitable thing for Her Majesty's Jubilee but that he felt that the exhibition did have a second purpose talking in more general terms about the changing face of photography but much as he liked praise this aspect appeared to have been missed. Indeed it was the need for informed feedback that he as an exhibition organiser felt most in need of.

We can very much sympathise with him because we would dearly like this same sort of attention to be given to each issue of our magazine, especially as it can perhaps be regarded as a portable exhibition. What we are thinking of therefore is producing reviews of some of the major exhibitions which are likely to be long running or long touring. They will be produced either in house or from a small group of people who we feel are sufficiently sympathetic and knowledgeable about 'Creative Camera' to act as in-house critics. Of course we will welcome readers' letters on these criticisms but we are hesitant about accepting random contributions of criticisms of shows. As in the past we have found that these tend to be written from a narrow point of view and do not provide the exhibition organisers or the public who wants to be informed with the right sort of constructive criticism.

In the hesitant way that the above has been written we hope it is clear that we are not unaware of the serious dangers of what we are doing. We do not wish to become the sole arbiters of photographic taste in Britain much less the world. We do not necessarily think we would be the best critics. We hope we are not arrogant in our editorial policies and we consciously try and show humility and respect for serious photographs even if they do not meet with our personal taste. We would not want to be the only voice in these matters. On the other hand in our twelve years of existence a sort of philosophy has evolved, a philosophy which many of our readers understand even if they do not agree with and it is for this reason we are suggesting that it helps make the magazine a coherent whole if the reviews are also written from that standpoint.

We are open to argument, we are open to persuasion but the more we think of it the more we feel that this could be a major step forward for photography in this country and perhaps in other countries even if it only offers a thoughtful alternative to the blandness of so much that appears from the popular art critics. As always the views of you the reader are welcomed.

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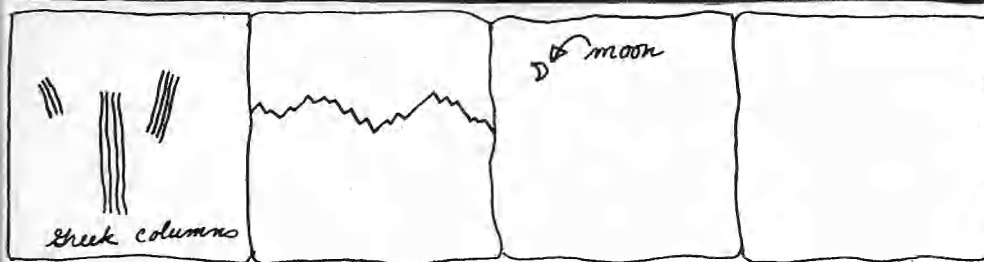
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creative camera

The Photographer and the Drawing'

Robert Cumming

Steve Fitch Richard Misrach



photograph and drawings by Richard Misrach

creative camera

19 Doughty Street, London, WC1N 2PT

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OPINION

It's an old blues number that says 'It takes a worried man to sing a worried song' and this is one editor who's very worried that the Royal Photographic Society is not fit to be in charge of the Royal Photographic Society Collection: This has been a matter of concern for a long while and there have been consultations between myself (as an ordinary member of the R.P.S.) and various officials who have given me much time in trying to resolve the difficulties that have arisen. It was never really intended to make these matters the subject of an editorial but it was a round of applause that decided the matter.

A brief history of these dangerous times is as follows: The Royal Photographic Society has a magnificent collection of old photographs, the greater part of them were not purchased but given as donations by people who regarded the R.P.S., as I and many others think of them, in terms which were once used by a very orthodox R.P.S. official, 'the custodians for posterity'. The R.P.S. recently had a financial crisis and so thought of the idea of selling off part of The Collection. Indeed three prints were actually sold before the members were informed! It then fell upon the Executive Committee to decide that more prints should be sold, even though the Executive Committee was by definition not a policy making body. As their action was subsequently endorsed by the full Council it is just possible there was nothing technically out of order.

There is a very good argument in favour of selling some of the surplus duplicate material in The Collection, but it was proposed that the money raised should go into the general finances of the company and not be specifically earmarked to The Collection, which in times of financial pressure is one of the first departments to be starved of money. I and a number of R.P.S. members thought that this was not right and even went to far as to draft a proposition for a special A.G.M. supported by many of the most reputable names of the R.P.S. It never actually got to the voting because the circumstances changed and it was clear that there were no further sales in the offing: one of the reasons being that the Arts Council had been asked for and was probably giving a grant towards The Collection. There the matter rested for a while.

There is no direct communication in the R.P.S. between the membership and the ruling Council. Rather in the way of voters trying to influence Parliament you have to find a Councillor willing to listen to you and to put forward the matter on your behalf. Among the many recent improvements of the Society has been the inclusion in Council of regional and group representatives who do make this process much more practicable, but even so there is no *right* to be heard by any member who wants to bring something before Council and, in fact, a proposition at an extraordinary A.G.M. is virtually the only way.

Each year's A.G.M. is largely a formality as a result of the postal voting and the main business nowadays to secure some sort of attendance is a presentation of the competence certificates. After the official business the President normally invites those present to raise any subject for discussion they would like. At the last AGM I raised the question of the Council's plans for The Collection, with special reference to the proposed move of The Library and The Collection to Bath. Apparently a National Photographic Centre is to be established in Bath which will be run by the R.P.S. with separate financing; some public grant is hoped for and some sort of connection with Bath University. The premises in this splendid, if neglected, historic city are said to be excellent for the purpose. On these grounds the future for The Collection looks very bright indeed but, and there is a very big but, the defence of the R.P.S. Council to a charge of putting money raised from The Collection into general funds is that the Society spends thousands of pounds each year on The Collection! I hope our readers will not collapse open-mouthed on the floor in astonishment because it is no secret at the moment that there

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Walker Evans



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OPINION

Filling the gaps

The two great pioneer historians of photography are Helmut Gernsheim and Beaumont Newhall. Every scholar must start his work from what they have done and it shows the value of their work that one returns constantly to them for confirmation. But the majority of their research was done some time ago and inevitably left gaps. Usually these gaps are minor, occasionally they are more important. In 'Creative Camera' we have seen it as one of our functions to fill in these gaps in the history of photography as well as to carry out our numerous other functions.

Historians divide sharply between what they call primary sources and secondary sources and however good these histories, they are secondary sources. The photographers who are alive, even in their old age, are the primary sources. Amongst the things we have been doing is searching for those and where possible recording their autobiographies and reproducing their pictures. Many of these people are old and the need for recording their memories is urgent. Others have recently died and although as a primary source are therefore no longer available, their widows or their children can be regarded almost as a primary source, far more so than their subsequent biographers.

We feel this work is important because so much of photographic history has never been recorded. So we should capture the period which is within grasp, even if other periods are no longer there. We give this as one explanation of our interest in the photography of the thirties. The many who are still active are now approaching their three score years and ten. Unfortunately there are more photographers than we have time to interview especially considering the pressure of commerce which delays us too long from visiting people we would want to see. This is why we would ask our readers to play their part and help in capturing some of these instants of photographic history.

Wherever you live in the world make an effort to go out and interview the oldest photographer in the area. He may not be of international significance but your recording, however modest, will help fill one of these small gaps of history. It also will have the effect which we should not ignore of probably pleasing an old man who may by now be feeling that the world has passed him by, so even in terms of being a part-time social worker it will be time well spent. The tape should be clearly identified as to time and place but other than that it should be mostly biographical information about his life and times which he or she, of course, should be able to answer easily. Less hopefully one can ask about those things which triggered his interest. We would suggest that any photographer should be interviewed, not necessarily the artistic ones with a capital A but commercial photographers, even local wedding photographers providing they have an interesting story to tell.

We have been doing this for some time now and are building up a useful collection of tapes on cassette which are already being used by specialised historians. Collecting tapes is no good unless they are not only accessible but are known to be accessible and for this reason we would ask anyone who makes recordings of these primary sources to make a copy of the tape and to let us put it in our library. Having a copy in existence, of course, is always a safeguard against accidental loss of the original but having it in a central position means greater accessibility for those who would like to study. For our part we will, as soon as we can, get round to cataloguing and publishing the list to provide information that others need.

One of the new inventions of the last decade or so has been that of the researcher and the picture researcher often turns out to be a young lady with a university degree who works hard and conscientiously and hopefully gets a lot of pleasure and satisfaction from her job. Unfortunately the success in her profession depends on being one jump ahead of the competition and therefore researchers are by nature inhibited from making public the

(continued p. 315)

Cover picture: Highway Corner, Reedsville, W. Virginia, June 1935

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William DeLappa

Portraits of Violet and Al

a photographic fiction



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OPINION

Visitors to London during the summer months can be seen pouring on to the Underground Railway. Even elderly couples from the Middle West soon realise that if it is not so grand as the Moscow underground it is considerably safer than New York.

The escalator advertisements have always formed a major diversion for both Londoners and tourists and it is a sure sign that spring is on its way when the bikinis begin to fill the advert spaces. Another of these advertisements proclaimed the passing of time with the announcement that 'Oh Calcutta' was now in its eighth year and the thought arose that if 'Oh Calcutta' was that old how old must 'Hair' be! This is not idle curiosity but because in that curious middle-class rock musical there appeared one song that had the ring of truth about it and emphasised one of the growing post-teen problems of conscience.

The song in effect said that it seemed so strange that although young people were so anxious to do social work among the elderly and the deprived they showed remarkably little equivalent concern about or willingness to understand their own parents. The point is overstated and arguable but it does draw attention in a new way to what is not just a generation gap but a parental gap by putting the emphasis in the unfashionable direction.

The reason why this seemed of particular importance on a sunny Tuesday morning was that in the current issue of 'Arts Review' their regular reviewer, Armando Acosta, in reviewing an exhibition of Mike Abrahams, entitled 'Growing Old' spoke of it as a subject too often overlooked. This remark we found quite astonishing because our experience is that the subject has been so over-worked that it becomes one of the new clichés and there are many, many photographers working on documentary reports about old age. A related cliché concerns mental institutions and there is a fair amount of overlap as age changes to senility.

Intending contributors please note if you are thinking of sending a portfolio on these it has got to be very good indeed because the competition is keen. Unfortunately, the results are almost uniformly disappointing.

It is mostly the younger contributors of 'Hair' age who produce these portfolios on the elderly and what we find so depressing is the unreality of them. Armando Acosta refers to 'the chilly quality' of Mike Abraham's photographs. Of the portfolios we receive almost all of them have this chilly quality, this lack of understanding of the realities. They become pictorial protest marches going nowhere.

Every Christmas, like most firms, there is a small office party here. One of those who regularly turns up is a now middle-aged ex-secretary who left to go into social work with the aged. Her scathing comments on the young graduates, is that many are unable to cope with the simple realities of incontinence, just one example of the gap between the theory and practice of looking after the aged.

In the recent issues showing the old photojournalism and the new, the division was, of course, quite arbitrary but what one would have hoped to find in all new journalism and new documentary was not only greater human understanding but a greater ability to suggest plausible solutions or improvements. The danger is that these new attempts will become even more grotesque because, with artistic lighting and composition they will try to produce great photographs. The new academies of photography are laying more and more stress on formal qualities. This is a valid avenue of development but when they become a primary concern in reportage or documentary they become a real danger. The liberation of the arts will have achieved nothing if it closes our hearts.

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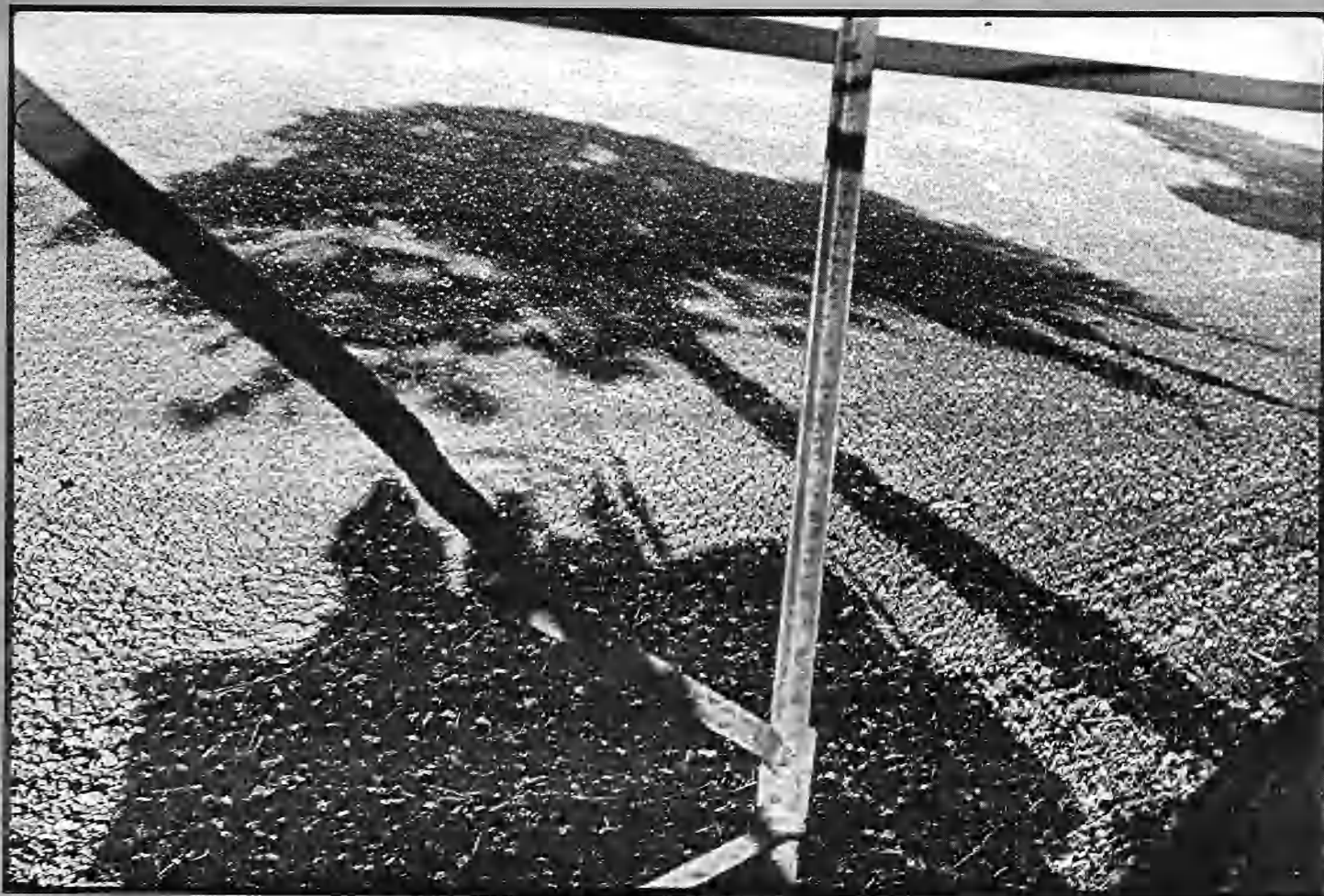
Francis Reiss

Brian Alterio

John H. Dodds

Brian Hope

Nik White



Nettiebed 1975, photograph by Brian Hope

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OPINION

This issue was nearly called—Britain The Grand Tradition but we lacked the courage at the last moment to do it. However it has been purposefully chosen to illustrate what has made British photography classic throughout the world. One should always be careful about how one talks about British photography; like American photography much of it was produced by immigrant photographers particularly, again as in America, from Germany and Hungary, as well as from many other countries. Some of them were only first generation British, others were native born.

It seems to us that in many of these cases even those not born here found their ideal home here, the nursery in which their talents could flourish. Perhaps I am influenced by my knowledge of a photographer like Kurt Hutton who produced very few good pictures in Germany and even from his early days was an Anglophile, indeed studying at an English university nearly 20 years before he took up photography.

This is perhaps the most contentious part of the argument; the fact remains that in the reporting field Britain led the world; the documentary film tradition of the thirties was slowly reflected into still photography and became the dominant factor in wartime photography when by comparison much of the effort put into American photography did not show a proportionate return for that effort.

The fifties saw the rise in America of a new photojournalism in which there was a much greater emphasis on formal qualities and a lesser emphasis on content. This process has continued, with happily a number of honourable exceptions, to the present day and it is particularly from America that the demand for formal photography has come. It has run its course through the colleges and is even now spreading through the British colleges.

It is possible now to watch some aspects of American photography drifting into a very real danger of sterility so it seems to us an opportune moment to go back to one of the great roots of photography which is particularly British and have a look at some of those young and old who, even if they did not know it and would not accept it, are really working in the grand tradition.

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In the 'Creative Camera Year Book' 1977 we reproduced Walter Benjamin's essay 'A Short History of Photography' (Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie). Subsequent to its publication we learnt that the copyright of this material is held by Suhrkamp Verlag, to whom we offer our apologies for not obtaining prior approval. To all those now referring to this article we must point out that it is © Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1963. All rights reserved.

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THREE SWISS PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jakob Tuggener

Gotthard Schuh

Rene Burri



Orphans in Perugia, Italy, 1929, photograph by Gotthard Schuh

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OPINION

Fifty Years of the Kodak Museum

The Kodak Museum was founded in 1927 by John H. Pledge, who looked after it until 1945. He was followed by Dr. Schultze from 1953 to 1968 when the present Curator, Brian Coe, was seconded from the Lecture Service. Under Brian there has been a considerable expansion and the best news announced at the 50th Anniversary celebrations is they are going to be moved from the very top floor at the Harrow factory to the floor below where they will have more space to expand. The museum has many interesting displays on exhibition, mostly equipment and obviously a fairly big proportion of Kodak but also a number of images and any expansion of space must be to great benefit.

In congratulating Kodak on maintaining the museum for 50 years we would not be running true to form if we didn't comment on the fact that the expenditure at the museum, particularly bearing in mind that it also acts as a visitors' centre, is really piffling for the size of the company. A handful of small rooms and a handful of staff are really not befitting the prestige of a company which made thousands of millions of pounds and dollars profit to the shareholders in the last financial year. While we are grateful that they are doing something they could be doing so much more.

Euro-chauvinism

The Europhot organisation is one we have never really come to terms with, either in understanding what it is trying to do or how successful it has been. It is an organisation for all professional photographers in Europe but from the membership lists we have seen it does not seem to include more than a handful of photographers from the U.K. and if we say that most of these we have never heard of that is intended as a statement of fact and not to suggest that they may not be very good commercial photographers. They are regularly in evidence at Photokina although the British contribution can hardly be called impressive.

Again we must confess our ignorance about knowing why the organisation is not more successful in this country; in France and Germany it seems to be much more strongly supported and to have secured some public recognition. It seemed a few years ago that a big step forward was being taken when Chalon-sur-Saone in France, the birthplace of Niepce, became the European headquarters with regular offices but perhaps this has had not necessarily a good effect for the French are not noticeably good Europeans and it seems the spirit of Charles de Gaulle lives on in Chalon-sur-Saone.

Europhot held their 5th International Congress in Belgrade and the programme looked quite interesting and had obviously received generous support from the Yugoslav National Congress. To commemorate the occasion a street was to be renamed in honour of the inventor of photography and in the year when we are celebrating the centenary of Henry Fox Talbot, Europhot are having the street renamed after Niepce!

We do not believe that the French meant to be deliberately insulting but this is chauvinism of the worst sort. How can Europhot expect to unite Europeans when they show themselves as either so ignorant or so insensitive? How can the British members who sit on the Executive Committee hope to get greater support from the U.K. when they seem manifestly unable to look after British interests?

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