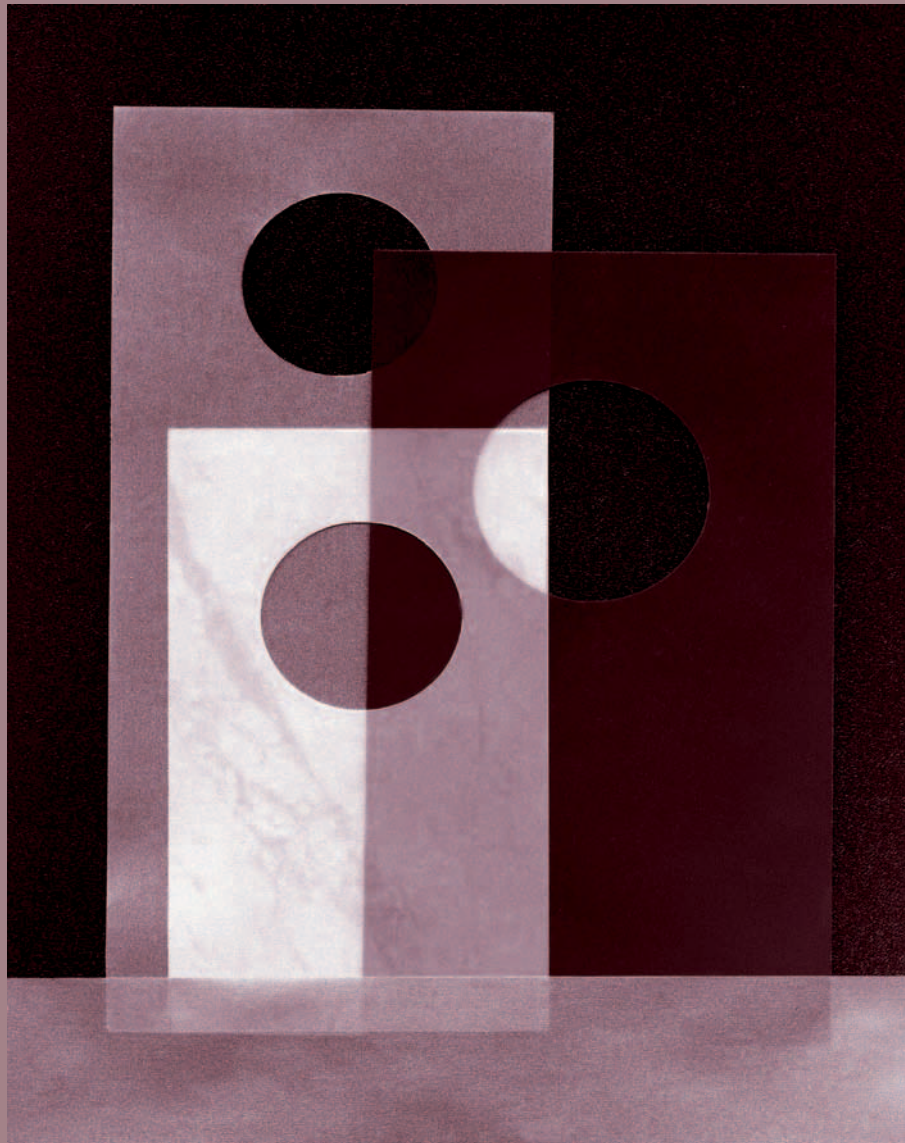


## Contemporary Group Journal



# Editorial

“It’s great that there is room for different opinions, otherwise it would be boring.”

The above quote is a remark made in an email from Dutch member, Pascal van Heesch. I had asked his opinion of our Journal to which he responded by telling me what he liked and didn’t like. But, as noted above, it’s all the better for having diverse articles. I think that this Journal issue includes such varied photography, which again is characteristic of the Contemporary Group. Whether diversity in approach or diversity in perspective, Group members make images that reflect their own world viewpoint and personal response to it.

I’m wondering - are you like Anna Fox who says that she keeps an open mind when starting a project? Perhaps like her, you are open to new ways of seeing by sometimes changing processes? Or perhaps working ideas out while “on the way”?

This year’s RPS Centenary Medal recipient, Joel Meyerowitz, gave a talk in London which coincided with the Award ceremony in September. Brian Steptoe attended the talk and told me that Meyerowitz’s ethos came across loud and clear - to keep advancing. Whenever he thought that his work was ‘plateauing’ he started working in a new way. Indeed, when hibernating in a studio in Tuscany because it was too hot outside, he began to make still life images of souvenir-type objects he bought for a few euros. Working in his tabletop theatre, he became fascinated with the seemingly endless juxtapositions that he could arrange, which in turn gave various interpretations to the different ways the objects were placed. <sup>(1)</sup> This is an astonishing departure from the type of photography that we usually associate with Meyerowitz.

So, members, I’d be pleased if you sent me articles to show us the projects and ideas that you are working on, considering, or perhaps even stuck on. Then, our Journal will continue to benefit from the range of genres that Group members engage in, whether documentary or fine art, and to express and share our diverse purposes and concepts.

Best wishes, Patricia

1. Land, David “*Unsettled vision*”. Interview with Joel Meyerowitz HonFRPS. The Royal Photographic Society Journal, 152.7, (2012): 396-401.

# What you see is what you get

## Five 'realists' from the Netherlands

*Pascal van Heesch ARPS & Willem Melching*

Dutch visual arts have a long-standing tradition of realism. The masters from the seventeenth century like Rembrandt and Vermeer are well-known examples. This tradition is very much alive in the contemporary visual arts and Dutch photography is no exception. Twentieth century masters such as Eddy Posthuma de Boer, Ed van der Elsken, Cas Oorthuys and Rieneke Dijkstra are deeply rooted in this tradition of realism and social engagement.

This tradition is also present in the work of the Dutch photographers represented here. Each represents a very personal interpretation of the realistic tradition, which varies from outright contemporary work to 'classical' social documentary.

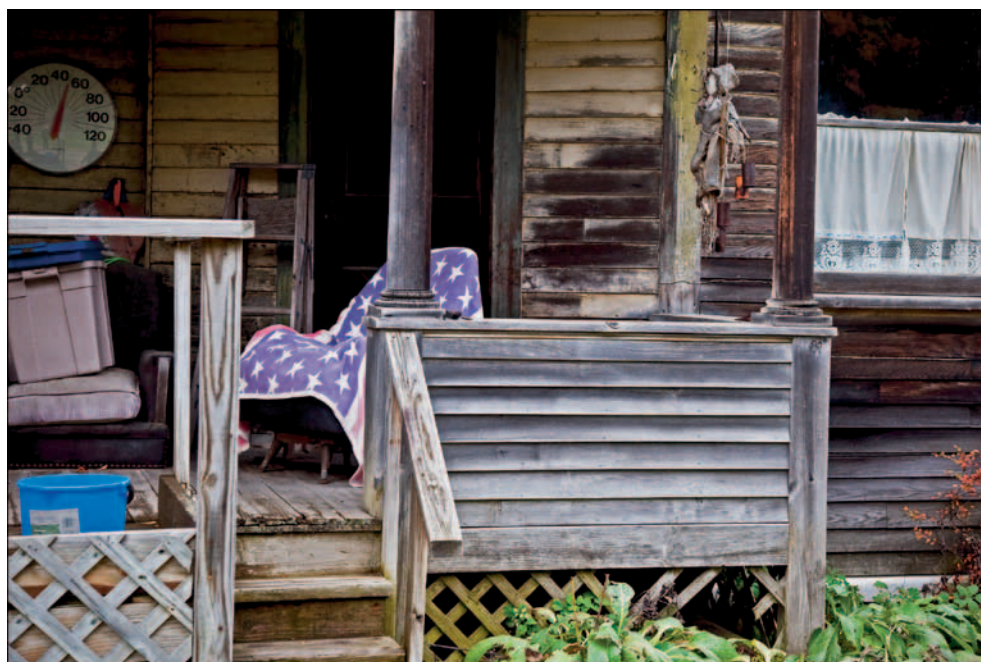
Of course pure 'realism' is a naive illusion. Vermeer's *Music Lesson* is more than a registration of reality; it is full of symbols, hidden clues and passion. The same goes for the photographers in this contribution from the Netherlands. Their work is only 'realistic' on the outside. They prefer to leave the interpretation of a deeper meaning to the individual viewer.

The five photographers have attended RPS Advisory Days in Brussels and the Netherlands, and have enjoyed the help, critique and feedback from experts like Sam Ang ARPS, Simon Roberts FRPS, Roy Robertson HonFRPS President and Ray Spence FRPS. At the moment Willem Melching is preparing an ARPS panel for the Contemporary Group. Cobi Neeft recently acquired an ARPS, and now hopes to benefit more from the RPS and its various activities. Ton Mijs submitted his series of jazz photography in 2010 which was awarded an ARPS distinction. Armando Jongejan FRPS and Pascal van Heesch ARPS are members of the Contemporary Group and its third Postal Portfolio.

All five agree that it is a great experience to explore and share the richness of the language of photography with an international community of enthusiastic photographers. Participating in the RPS is a great way to achieve this goal.

### Ton Mijs ARPS - Americana

In the autumn of 2010, Ton Mijs travelled through rural New England, in Northeastern USA, in search of the 'ordinary' America. Ton was already well aware of the importance of the American flag in the culture of the 'promised land'. Nevertheless, he was struck by the fact that he saw the national flag literally everywhere. In the present series, Ton shows his amazement as well as his ambivalence towards this omnipresent patriotism. At the same time, the images are a tribute to American photographers like Stephen Shore and William Eggleston, the pioneers who were the first to picture the beauty of the banal and the commonplace in full colour. Ton has a Fellowship distinction from the Dutch Amateur Photographic Society. website [www.tonmijns.nl/](http://www.tonmijns.nl/)





### **Willem Melching - Figments of Reality**

Willem Melching characterises his work as 'nihilistic humanism'. As these pictures testify, people do their utmost to embellish our world, but the results are often depressing, if not devastating. By observing and isolating these aspects of reality he wants to emphasize the surrealism and alienation in the modern world. People are not visible in the pictures, but they are not absent either. They are about to enter the stage they have created. Although some pictures might be considered as 'brutal', it is not cynicism but compassion that is Willem's aim.

With this theme and approach, Willem has found a personal style in which to work. As a photographer he is indebted to giants like William Eggleston and Martin Parr.

Website [www.wmelchin.home.xs4all.nl/](http://www.wmelchin.home.xs4all.nl/)







**Pascal van Heesch ARPS - Down and Out in Medellín**

The metropolis of Medellín, Colombia was known for years for the militias and drug cartels that resided there. It was the home of the infamous drug lord, Pablo Escobar. Without preconceived opinions and judgements, Pascal observed life and death in Medellín and its surrounding villages and towns.

Completeness and objectivity were not his aim. This shows the influence of Walker Evans and Robert Frank. Pascal's photos are about personal encounters with people in the street and they remap reality. Pascal wants to disclose the invisible: the role that money, drugs, power and faith play in a community such as Medellín. He is critical, inspired by love for and commitment to the 'ordinary people'. Pascal therefore sees the creation and distribution of these photos as a moral necessity. The Medellín series was awarded a Fellowship by the Dutch Amateur Photographic Society. The complete Medellín project is available as a print on demand book: <http://nl.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/1246696>  
Personal website: [www.pascalvanheesch.com](http://www.pascalvanheesch.com)





### **Cobi Neeft ARPS - Krommeniedijk and its Inhabitants**

Cobi Neeft has concentrated over a prolonged period on the inhabitants of Krommeniedijk. This is a community along a dike in the province of North-Holland, north of Amsterdam. She followed people in this community in their own residential spaces and observed their daily routines. Krommeniedijk is a small, old street, and Cobi captured its specific atmosphere, its characteristic feeling and the harmony of this typical Dutch countryside. In her work she is influenced by Martien Coppens and Ed van der Elsken.

Website [www.fotocobi.nl](http://www.fotocobi.nl)



### **Armando Jongejan FRPS - A Fair in Istanbul**

The fair Feshane Çocuk Eğlence Parkı is bordered by the west bank of the Golden Horn, Yavedut street and the Haliç bridge in the Eyüp district, Istanbul, Turkey. This used to be a fair for the whole family. But here it is Saturday five p.m., and outside the fun fair the traffic is rushing by, but inside it is completely deserted and quiet. No children are playing, no music can be heard, nothing moves. A complete and eerie silence. This inspired Armando to dedicate a series to this special environment. It's colourful, but there is no one there to enjoy this strange but very attractive setting. In his work Armando is inspired by photographers such as Ed van der Elksen and John Davies. Armando has a Fellowship distinction from the Dutch Amateur Photographic Society.

The complete series of the Istanbul fair is available at Blurb: [www.blurb.com/books/1731147](http://www.blurb.com/books/1731147).

Portfolio: [www.rps.org/region/Benelux/portfolio/3402-Armando-Jongejan%20FRPS/](http://www.rps.org/region/Benelux/portfolio/3402-Armando-Jongejan%20FRPS/)

Personal website: [www.contrastfotografie.nl/](http://www.contrastfotografie.nl/)