

CIVILIZATION

THE WAY WE LIVE NOW

ARTWORK LABELS

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Intro

We hurtle together into the future at ever-increasing speed, or so it seems to the collective psyche. We build our towers higher; we move ourselves faster and further while our bodies are rebuilt and resurfaced. We manipulate our genes, determined to banish illness and old age. Our robots and cyborgs begin to walk, talk and think. Every day and every hour human civilisation expands, evolves, mutates.

Still, the ingenious tools we devise also backfire. The financial storms, the weapons of mass destruction, the nature experiments gone wrong, the systems that explode or implode, climate degradation – all threaten to tear the thin fabric of civilisation. And concern is mounting for our highly technoscientific society's more risky ventures: nanotechnology, genetic interventions, artificial intelligence and virtual reality – not to mention the nuclear demon, out of the bottle and still restless. Futurist James Martin warns, 'This is the first century in which *Homo sapiens* could be terminated. Even if *Homo sapiens* survives, civilization may not'.

Many civilisations populate the earth today and many have in the past, but it is clear that a single, planetary civilisation is slowly evolving. We chat with friends and total strangers on other continents and eagerly share pictures – billions of them. We worship individual achievements in any area, but what we tend to forget is just how collective our greatest achievements are: antibiotics, the smartphone, the internet, the Human Genome Project, the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, the Hubble telescope, the World Health Organization and the Voyager spacecraft – planetary civilisation is first and foremost a collective effort.

And what of photography? All over the world photographers are busy documenting and interpreting our multifaceted civilisation – its strong points and its weak, its achievements and its failures. No past civilisation can boast of such a vivid, detailed pictorial record. And if no one exhibition can hope to incorporate more than a fraction of this labour, at best it can provide a glimpse. *Civilization: The Way We Live Now* is a homage to the human endeavour of the billions of beings who have created our world, and to the skilful photographers who have so vividly pictured it.

WILLIAM A. EWING AND HOLLY ROUSSELL, EXHIBITION CURATORS

Olivier Christinat

Switzerland born 1963

Figurations II

2016

digital prints

Courtesy of the artist

In 2008, humanity passed a milestone, with more of us living in urban centres than in the countryside. We live together yet experience much of our lives alone. Christinat believes he is privileged to have been born in what he considers 'a golden age' of civilisation, having access to education, culture, comfort, security, and freedom of movement and thought. He has photographed many crowds in many cities, like these people descending an escalator, and he searches out private, unguarded moments: the prayer-like gesture of hands, the furrowing of a brow, a smile directed to a friend. The artist describes such actions as 'ephemeral signs ... punctuations from which imagination can wander'.

Steven Rhall

Taungurong born 1974

Boundary (Border Country, Footscray)

Untitled (Border Country, Port Phillip Bay)

Remnants (Wathaurung, Moolap)

Hue (Boonwurrung, Phillip Island)

X (Wathaurung, Belmont)

Presland's intersection 1b (Woiwurrung, Boonwurrung, Wathaurung)

Bunjil Park (Dja Dja Wurrung, Summerfield)

**No junkie, no cops (Woiwurrung,
Footscray)**

Bunjil (Woiwurrung, Wurundjeri Way)

**First time visited, long time lived
(Taungurong, Bonnie Doon)**

from the *Kulin project* 2012–13

2012

inkjet print

Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.48

Rhall's Kulin project was made throughout the lands and waterways of the Kulin Nation that envelops Melbourne, a confederacy of five independent peoples: Wathaurong, Woiwurrung, Boonwurrung, Taungurong and Dja Dja Wurrung. By identifying the traditional owners of places inexorably altered through colonisation, Rhall penetrates and finds within bitumen, brick and industrial constructions, fences and graffiti, hidden Indigenous and non-Indigenous narratives and histories. Rhall's images enable him to honour, reclaim and reconnect with sites and boundaries of the five resilient Kulin peoples. He draws our attention to the fact that Indigenous people have always lived, and continue to live, on these lands.

Candida Höfer

Germany born 1944

Augustiner Chorherrenstift Sankt Florian III

2014

lightjet print

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne

Höfer's library of the Abbey Augustiner Chorherrenstift at St Florian, Austria, dating from the year 819, may seem like a strange choice for an exhibition on twenty-first-century civilisation. But this library reminds us that our current civilisation often values, incorporates and conserves the wisdom of the past. Each of the 150,000 volumes in this library, maintained for three centuries, can be considered a building block of our evolving planetary civilisation. In them are the historical keys to the sciences and technologies, the arts and philosophies that have guided collective human effort since human history has been recorded.

Thomas Struth

Germany born 1954

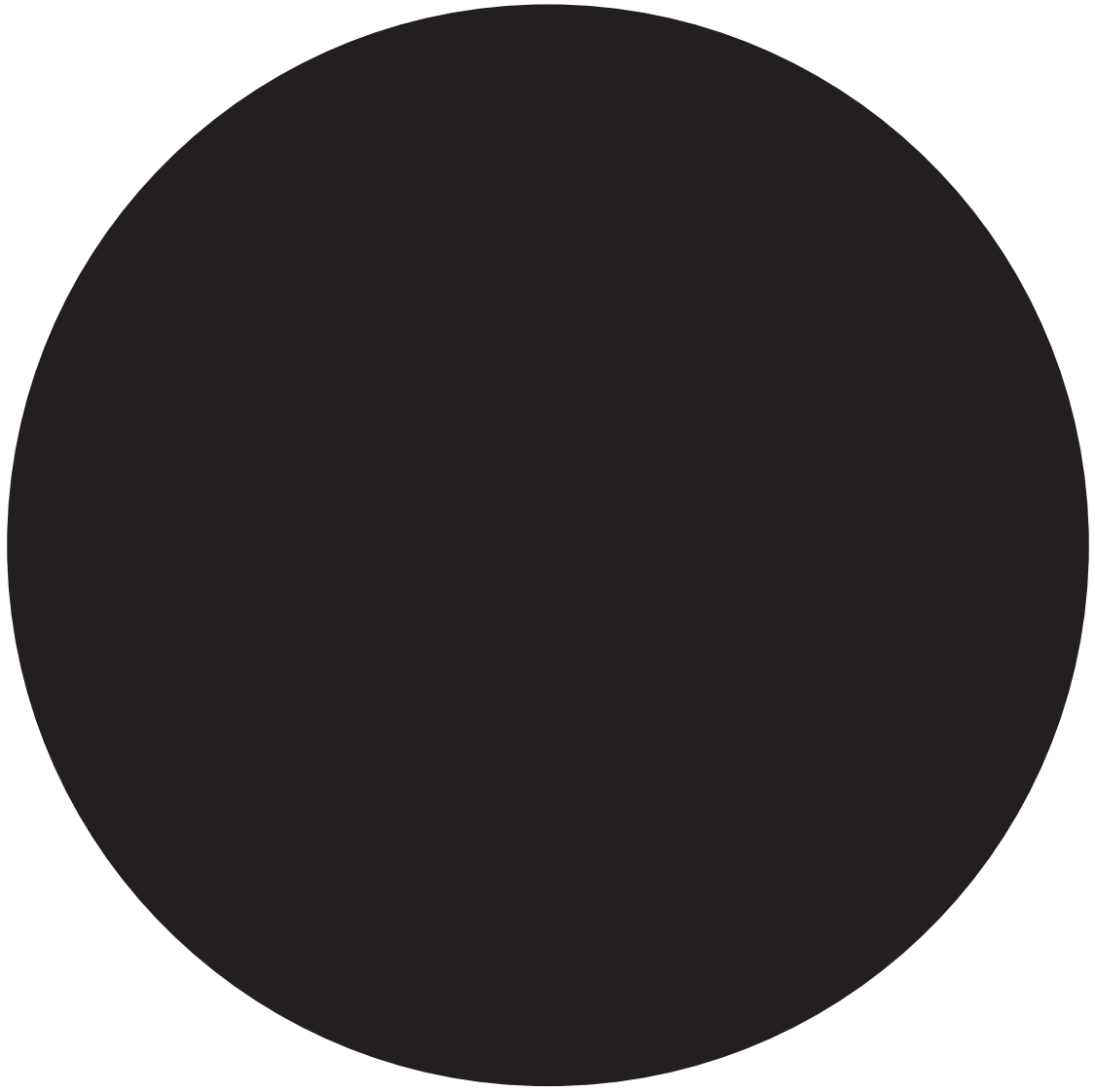
Pergamon Museum 1, Berlin

2001

type C photograph

Courtesy of Atelier Thomas Struth

Struth shows us one civilisation looking back at another, or looking back at its own deep roots. The Pergamon Altar is a monumental construction built during the reign of king Eumenes II, in the first half of the second century BCE, on one of the terraces of the acropolis of the ancient Greek city of Pergamon in Asia Minor. What is seen on display today is a reconstruction. Although clearly a homage to past human achievements, it might also be seen as a form of modern hubris: our civilisation's own need for monumentality dwarfing the ambition of our ancestors.



Hive

The novelist Tom Wolfe used the expression 'the hive' to refer to the frenetic social life of New York City, but the metaphor of the beehive works equally well for any great human agglomeration. The twenty-first century has seen the long history of rural dominance come definitively to an end – for the first time in 200,000 years of *Homo sapiens*' existence, more people live in urban centres than outside them. The ever-larger urban organisms we develop are not only passive hives of day-to-day living but active hives of learning, producing and thinking. Photographers, too, are urbanites, delighting in the pictorial possibilities offered by the unceasing ebb and flow of crowds.

David Stephenson

United States born 1955, arrived Australia 1982

Melbourne, looking east from Rialto Tower

Melbourne, looking east from Rialto Tower

Melbourne, looking east from Rialto Tower

from the *Light Cities* series 2008–11

2009

pigment inkjet prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural
Gifts Program 2016
Courtesy of the artist

MGA 2016.110.1-3

David Stephenson has long been fascinated by the pictorial relationship between the sky, the earth and light. In his *Light Cities* series, Stephenson used long exposure times to capture the vivid glow of cities around the world at night, illuminated by lights, including this extraordinary view of Melbourne from upon high. There is a tension in these scenes: the beauty and spectacle of the sight of such 'glowing' cities – as a pulsating mass of energy – becomes a perfect metaphor for the aspirations of the current industrialised culture, all the while underpinned by the terrifying prospect of potential environmental collapse.

For kids

These photographs are of this city, Melbourne, but not as we normally see it – perhaps it is closer to the view of a bird flying in the sky! The artist has taken the photographs from very high up, at the top of the Rialto building. When that building was built in 1986 it was the tallest office building in Australia. The artist has also taken the photographs at night-time, and the city lights create a sparkling effect.

How does photographing from up high allow you to see differently from when you are walking around the city on the ground? What can you see in the images that you were not expecting?

Cyril Porchet

Switzerland born 1984

Untitled

from the *Crowd* series

2014

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Porchet has chosen not to title his astonishing crowd scene (one of a series of huge crowds, none of which bear titles), where brightly garbed human beings swarm like insects. 'Look and marvel', the artist seems to be saying. The vibrant colours suggest we are witnessing a celebration, possibly a religious rite, while the swirling currents are evidence of shared excitement. Not visible is the infrastructure of such an event: the permits, the police monitors, the public health workers, and the near-at-hand provision of adequate food and water. These ordering forces of civilisation permit such mass expression and contained spontaneity.

Michael Wolf

Germany born 1954, died Hong Kong 2019

Architecture of Density #91

from the *Architecture of Density* series

2006

type C photograph

Courtesy of M97 Shanghai

The late Michael Wolf was known for his photography of great Asian cities like Hong Kong, with their massive housing projects and dense social interaction hinting at societal strain, if not crisis. Wolf suggests a vision of the future for all as we climb towards almost ten billion humans in 2050. Although ruthless logic, order and rationality predominate in our urban plans, Wolf finds beauty in the cliff-like facades we construct. A closer look at his imagery even hints at a sense of pleasure deriving from the aesthetics we humans cannot help but bring to even the most mundane structures.

Roger Eberhard

Switzerland born 1984

Athens

Cairo

Cape Town

London

Mexico City

Moscow

Nairobi

New York

Panama City

Paris

São Paulo

Seoul

Shanghai

...continued overleaf

Tel Aviv

Tokyo

Venice

from the *Standard* series

2015–16

inkjet prints

Courtesy Robert Morat Galerie

Eberhard travelled to thirty-two countries and every continent, booking each time a standard room in a Hilton hotel, photographing both the view and the room itself. He wonders, 'Why do we travel to foreign countries and cultures and yet stay at a place that always looks the same?' Indeed, why bother to travel at all in an age of Google Maps (and Street View)? With each passing year, the world becomes ever more homogeneous, bland and anonymous; increasingly we act alike, dress alike and think alike.

Robert Polidori

Canada born 1951

Amrut Nagar #3, Mumbai, India

from the *Dendritic Cities* series

2011

UV print on canvas

Courtesy of Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York

Polidori believes that civilisation is experiencing the end of industrialism, and he depicts this in an overlapping composite image that encourages us to pay attention to the detail – the same buildings but seen in subtly different contexts in each panel. Polidori notes that ‘The promise of industrialism was that more and more people could live longer and longer; get richer and richer. Now you can only have one of the three. You can have fewer people who live longer and longer, richer and richer, or you can have more people who live less long, poorer.’ Civilisation faces stark choices.

Philippe Chancel

France born 1959

Construction of the Burj Khalifa Tower, Dubai

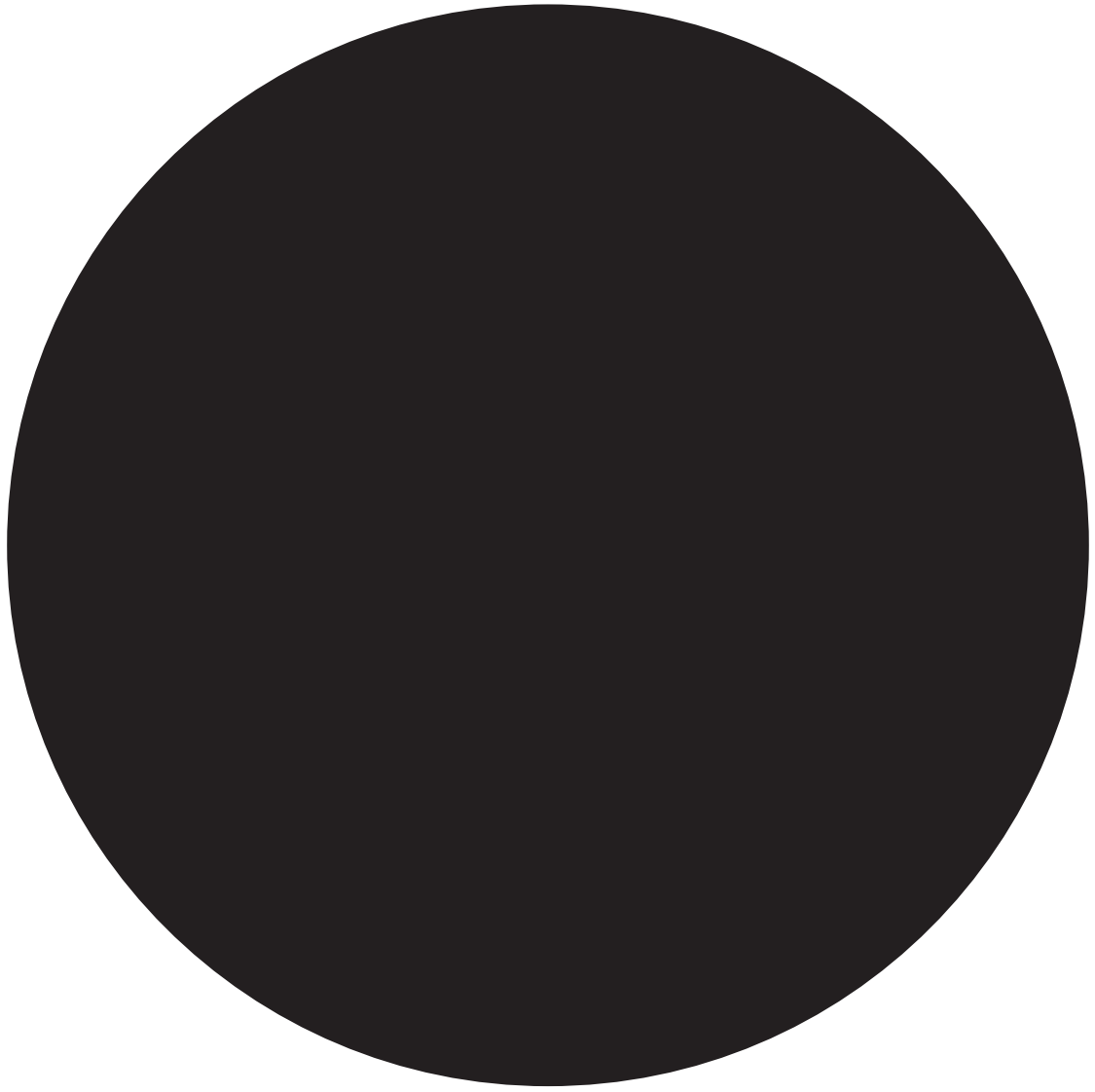
from the *Datazone* series

2008

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist and Melanie Rio Fluency

Chancel's depiction of the construction of what is (perhaps only briefly) the tallest building in the world, Dubai's Burj Khalifa, cannot help but remind us of the work of industrious ants. Certain species of ants construct towers that, relatively speaking, would be comparable in size to some of the world's tallest buildings! Like ants, humans can only erect such structures through huge collective efforts – by harvesting human intelligence. Humans never cease playing the 'tallest building' game, with cities competing for the skills of a coterie of star architects, hoping to gain prestige – and its corresponding financial rewards.



Alonetogether

The poet John Donne famously said, 'No man is an island'. We are genetically social animals, seeking friends, mates and partners of all types to share interests. But not all is smooth in our social lives. Misunderstandings, conflicts of interest, the pressure to conform versus the desire to stand out from the crowd; we crave to be in fashion but recoil when we are told we are sheep blindly following popular crazes. Yet the essential human condition is to be alone – as we were when we came into the world and will be when we go out of it. But while we live, we live collectively. Photographs both show our interdependence and reinforce it.

Cherine Fahd

Australia born 1974

The chosen, Africa

from *The Chosen* series 2003–04

2003, printed 2004

type C photograph

Purchased with funds arranged by Loti Smorgon for
Contemporary Australian Photography, 2004

2004.605

Cherine Fahd

Australia born 1974

The chosen, yellow lady

from *The Chosen* series 2003–04

2003, printed 2004

type C photograph

Purchased with funds arranged by Loti Smorgon for
Contemporary Australian Photography, 2004

2004.604

Taken in Paris during the summer of 2003, during an infamous heatwave that claimed thousands of lives, these photographs depict people at the 'Paris Plage'. Part of Mayor Bertrand Delanoë's plan to humanise Paris, this constructed inner city 'beach' became a site of refuge from the extraordinary heat. The people photographed are caught 'in the moment' and unconsciously assume the look of religious devotees or the ecstatic demeanour of religious art: their arms raised in the air, their eyes closed, or mouths open. They seem to surrender to the moment at a point of climax or intensity.

Katy Grannan

United States born 1969

Anonymous, Fresno, CA

from *The 99* series

2012

pigment print

Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Katy Grannan

United States born 1969

Anonymous, San Francisco

from the *Boulevard* series

2008

pigment print

Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Katy Grannan

United States born 1969

Anonymous, Los Angeles

from the *Boulevard* series

2008

pigment print

Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Grannan's subjects are caught in the harsh glare of the California sun, restless and seemingly on their way somewhere – but she does not say where, and perhaps even they do not know. All have agreed to be photographed. Grannan has therefore relinquished the power of the candid shot in favour of collusion. The story of shared human experience is more important than the myriad cases of individual struggle – hence the 'anonymous' of the title. The photographer searches for the traces of small victories and defeats etched on faces and bodies.

Katy Grannan

United States born 1969

Anonymous, Modesto, CA

from *The 99* series

2012

pigment print

Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Pieter Hugo

South Africa born 1976

Matthew Hindley (1)

from the *THERE'S A PLACE IN HELL FOR ME AND MY FRIENDS* series

2012

pigment print

Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg; Yossi Milo, New York; and Priska Pasquer, Cologne

Pieter Hugo

South Africa born 1976

Themba Tshabalala

from the *THERE'S A PLACE IN HELL FOR ME AND MY FRIENDS* series

2011

pigment print

Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg; Yossi Milo, New York; and Priska Pasquer, Cologne

Pieter Hugo

South Africa born 1976

Manuela Kacinari

from the *THERE'S A PLACE IN HELL FOR ME AND MY FRIENDS* series

2012

pigment print

Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg; Yossi Milo, New York; and Priska Pasquer, Cologne

Pieter Hugo

South Africa born 1976

Pieter Hugo

from the *THERE'S A PLACE IN HELL FOR ME AND MY FRIENDS* series

2011

pigment print

Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg; Yossi Milo, New York; and Priska Pasquer, Cologne

'My homeland is Africa, but I'm white', Hugo writes. 'I feel African, whatever that means, but if you ask anyone in South Africa if I'm African, they will almost certainly say no. I don't fit into the social topography of my country ...' Hugo addresses race both head on and obliquely in this series of portraits of himself and his friends, first shooting digitally in colour and then, by a complex process of colour channel manipulation, transforming the imagery into 'colourless' portraits, highlighting the melanin in his subjects' skin and thus confounding our simplistic notions of 'black' and 'white'.

Pieter Hugo

South Africa born 1976

Ashleigh McLean

from the *THERE'S A PLACE IN HELL FOR ME AND MY FRIENDS* series

2011

pigment print

Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg; Yossi Milo, New York; and Priska Pasquer, Cologne

Pieter Hugo

South Africa born 1976

Lebo Tlali (2)

from the *THERE'S A PLACE IN HELL FOR ME AND MY FRIENDS* series

2012

pigment print

Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg; Yossi Milo, New York; and Priska Pasquer, Cologne

Pieter Hugo

South Africa born 1976

Hayden Phipps

from the *THERE'S A PLACE IN HELL FOR ME AND MY FRIENDS* series

2011

pigment print

Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg; Yossi Milo, New York; and Priska Pasquer, Cologne

Pieter Hugo

South Africa born 1976

Nandipha Mntambo (4)

from the *THERE'S A PLACE IN HELL FOR ME AND MY FRIENDS* series

2012

pigment print

Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg; Yossi Milo, New York; and Priska Pasquer, Cologne

Adam Ferguson

Australia born 1978

Skyping Soldier 2

Skyping Soldier 3

Skyping Soldier 4

from the *Skyping Soldiers* series

2011

type C photographs

Courtesy of the artist

When we think of photographs of soldiers, what usually comes to mind are formal portraits of men presenting themselves as paragons of discipline and bravery. Ferguson has instead chosen quiet moments to remind us of their humanity; he shows his subjects off-duty, absorbed in communications with their loved ones many thousands of miles away. And yet, is there not a strange disconnect? Despite the supposed 'wonders' of modern communications, his silent subjects seem very aware that they are not in the same 'space' as their loved ones – literally and figuratively. Is there a lesson here for the rest of us?

Walter Niedermayr

Italy born 1952

Yazd, Iran 23 2005

from the *Iran* series

2005

pigment prints

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nordenhake Berlin/Stockholm and Galerie Johann Widauer Innsbruck

Niedermayr's work involves extensive travel, bringing to his audience a quiet reflection on social groupings and behaviours that are often different from his own Western European context. He tells us, 'I like to imagine the creation of an image in which the observer is able to define their own point of view; that is to say, diversity in regard to content, diversity in regard to form and diversity in regard to further concern about the image'.

Ahmad Zamroni

Indonesia born 1975

Muslims pray at a mosque during the Friday noon prayer in Jakarta, 14 September 2007, as devotees observe their holy fasting month of Ramadan. Practicing Muslims desist eating, drinking, smoking and any sexual activities from dawn to dusk during Ramadan. More than 90 percent of Indonesia's some 220 million people follow Islam, making it the world's biggest Muslim nation.

2007

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Zamroni is both a photojournalist and a photo editor, and so thinks a great deal about the communicative power of an image. A central focus of his work is Islam and its rich history, while being cognisant of the many tensions that exist within the religion and with the other major faiths. This work demonstrates the depth of faith felt by devout Muslims, along with the focus, order and discipline required for the spiritual odyssey that is at the core of the religion.

HONG Hao

洪浩

China born 1965

Book keeping of 2007 B

from the *My Things* series

2008

type C photograph

Courtesy Pace Gallery

The *My Things* photography series is the result of daily observations of Hong Hao's own life, being a record of the accumulation of things over time – 'like a laundry list'. Begun in 2001, the series was made by scanning, one by one, the items he consumed or used each day, then saving the images as digital files in computer folders, and then waiting until the next year to create a link of highlights. Hong describes this as 'the daily repetitive work of an accountant', work which gave him 'an anchor in a fast-changing material world'.

For kids

To create this photograph, the artist took individual images of things he uses in his daily life – from a hat to medicine and food. He then placed all of the images together in the form of a digital collage, or combination of images, to make this very patterned and detailed scene. He called the series *My Things*, as it is a record of almost all of the things he uses.

Imagine if you were to create a record of all of the things you use at home each day. What would it include? You could try making one for yourself at home by taking photos or drawing.

Graham Miller

Hong Kong born 1966, arrived Australia 1977

Alice

from the *Suburban Splendour* series 2005–07

2005

inkjet print

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for
Living Australian Artists, 2008

2008.13

In this series, Miller cast friends, family members and people from his local community to act in 'compressed cinematic frames' that capture scenes of melancholy in otherwise ordinary situations. A key influence was the writing of American author Raymond Carver. As Miller says, 'Carver's vision depicts ordinary blue collar people living lives of quiet desperation ... it seems to me that his writing taps into a sense of contemporary isolation that reflects the anomie, uncertainties and vulnerabilities of existing in a world changed after 9/11, and on a planet which contemplates an undecided environmental future'.

Simon Terrill

Australia born 1969

Huddle

2007

type C photograph

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for
Living Australian Artists, 2008

2008.360

People moving through social spaces and their emotional and psychological reactions within crowds are central concerns of Terrill's practice. He says, 'these pictures look toward both the darkness implied by the presence of crowds and the utopian ideal of liberation when the barriers between people dissolve in the mass. Through long exposures, multiple exposures, positioning the camera on cherry pickers, lighting towers and stage scaffolds I was able to witness the madness and pleasure of these ecstatic festivals, rites of passage, and swarming matter ... Within the patterns, blurs and moments of abandon, perhaps a crowd is the ultimate social space.'

Anne Zahalka

Australia born 1957

Sunday, 11:08am, 1995

from the *Open House* series

1995

duratran, lightbox

Courtesy of the artist

Anne Zahalka

Australia born 1957

Sunday, 2:09pm, 1995

from the *Open House* series

1995, printed 2019

duratran, lightbox

Courtesy of the artist

Zahalka photographed the minutiae and small rituals of her own social milieu in their rented accommodation in the mid 1990s: 'They draw on the language of documentary photography, genre painting, TV sitcoms, and parody these to construct everyday narratives of the urban dweller. Within each interior, figures engage in subtle plays of social interaction, or appear caught in their own internal dialogues to enclose and disclose the contingencies of contemporary life ... The camera, although an introduced observer to these scenes, nevertheless exposes the intimacies and behaviour of this generation at a particular time in history.'

Dona Schwartz

United States born 1955

Desiree and Karen, 68 days

from the *Expecting Parents* series

2006

type C photograph

Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto

Schwartz's two series, *Expecting Parents* and *Empty Nesters*, are interlocking parts of a whole. Schwartz takes as her subject parents and children – though the latter are notably invisible and the work is all the more powerful for it. The first series deals with couples anxiously (or serenely) awaiting the arrival of a new human being; the latter shows them struggling to come to terms with the moment when their adult child flees the nest. The expectant parents are posed in the rooms of their progeny, and the environments they have created speak eloquently as to their hopes and aspirations.

Dona Schwartz

United States born 1955

Bobby and Kevin, waiting to adopt

from the *Expecting Parents* series

2012

type C photograph

Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto

Dona Schwartz

United States born 1955

Liz and Deedrick, 14 days

from the *Expecting Parents* series

2007

type C photograph

Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto

Dona Schwartz

United States born 1955

Kathy and Lyonel, 18 months

from the *Empty Nesters* series

2010

type C photograph

Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto

Dona Schwartz

United States born 1955

Jean, 2 years

from the *Empty Nesters* series

2011

type C photograph

Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto

Dona Schwartz

United States born 1955

Pam and Bill, 2 months

from the *Empty Nesters* series

2010

type C photograph

Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto

Trent Parke

Australia born 1971

Untitled

Untitled

Untitled

Untitled

Untitled

from *The Christmas Tree Bucket* series

2006

type C photographs

Courtesy of Magnum Photos

In this series, Parke shows the beauty and boredom of everyday suburbia through the documentation of a family Christmas gathering in Adelaide. The photographer himself became ill with food poisoning during the course of the festivities – eventually vomiting into the red bucket that had previously held the Christmas tree, hence inspiring the title for the series. As Parke explains, ‘It was there – while staring into that bright red bucket, vomiting every hour on the hour for fifteen hours straight – that I started to think how strange families, suburbia, life, vomit and, in particular, Christmas really was ...’

Hoda Afshar

Iran born 1983, arrived Australia 2007

Untitled

from the *In the Exodus, I Love You More* series
2014

Courtesy of the artist, Melbourne

In this series of photographs, Afshar, now based in Melbourne, records 'my changing vision of, and relationship to, my homeland, Iran: a relationship that has been shaped by my having been away, by that distance that increases the nearness of all the things to which memory clings, and which renders the familiar ... strange, and veiled. It is an attempt to embrace that distance and to turn it into a way of seeing ... to explore the interplay of presence and absence in a place where the surface and depth often exchange looks, and to discover the truth that lies there, in-between.'

Lauren Greenfield

United States born 1966

High school seniors (from left) Lili, 17, Nicole, 18, Lauren, 18, Luna, 18, and Sam, 17, put on their makeup in front of a two-way mirror for Lauren Greenfield's Beauty CULTure documentary, Los Angeles, 2011.

from the *Generation Wealth* series

2011

pigment print

Courtesy of the artist

Greenfield's *Generation Wealth* is an ambitious attempt via photography and documentary film to come to grips with the phenomenon of excessive wealth in America – a popular shorthand for which is 'the one per cent' – in all its glamorous, even calculated vulgarity. But beyond her immediate subjects, Greenfield's study is a critique of contemporary American culture, where youth, celebrity, technology, politics, new forms of social communication and cascades of new money make for a heady cocktail that transfixes the entire world, itself not immune to the siren chants of consumerism.

Raimond Wouda

The Netherlands born 1964

Damstede Amsterdam

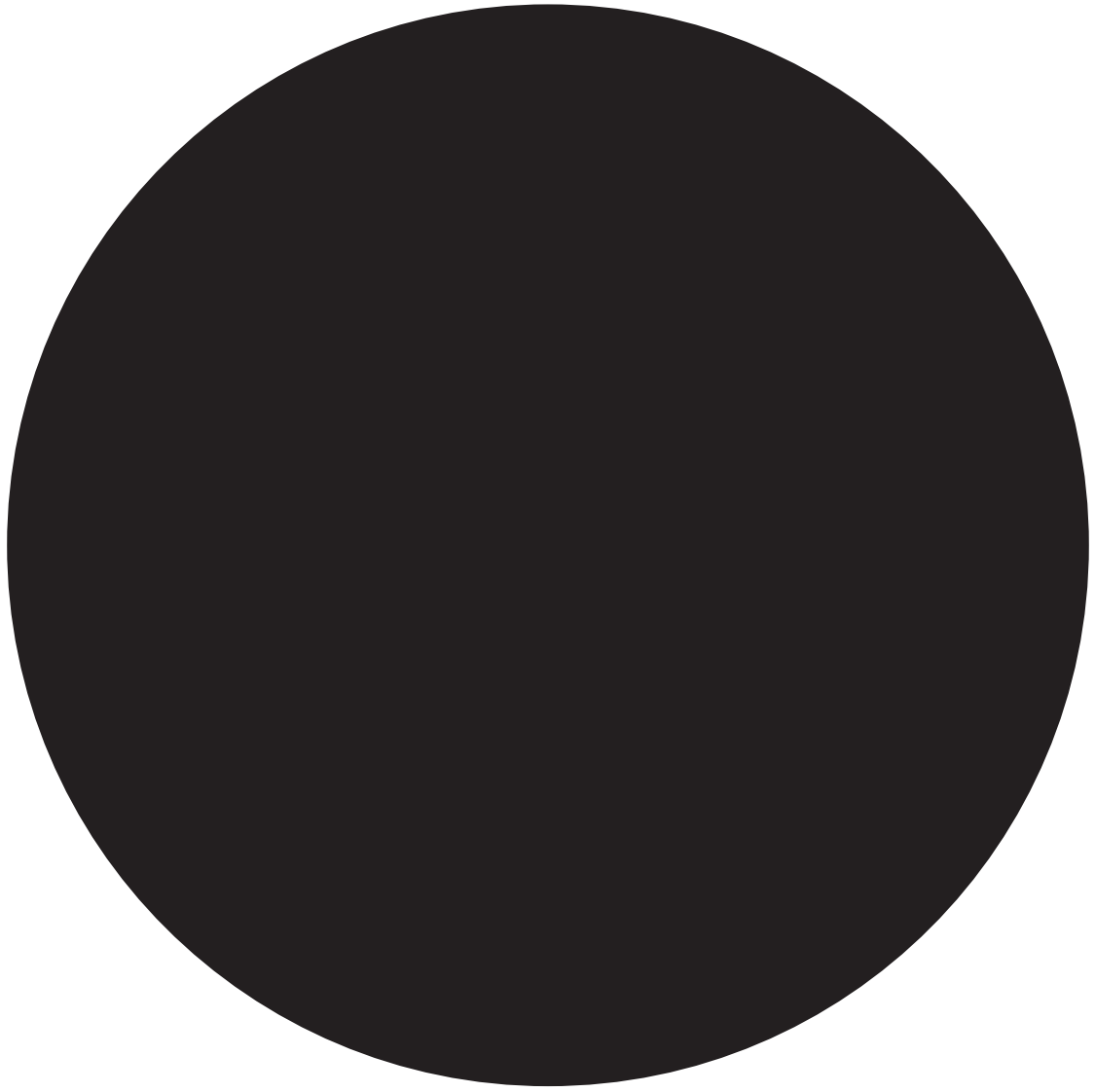
from the *School* series

2003

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Wouda has made an extensive study of teenage life at school, both inside and outside his native Holland. Working with a large-format camera, set on a tripod, he patiently waits for the students to tire of its novelty and his adult presence, and at this moment of his own 'invisibility' he begins his serious picture-taking. The camera and the precise timing of his shots ensure the capture of a wealth of information, as the teenagers interact – preening, jostling, flirting, competing, observing and generally doing their best to learn and conform to the unspoken codes of youth culture.



Flow

Whether on the ground, across the sea or through the air, twenty-first-century civilisation moves itself – its people, its material goods, its raw resources, its ideas and even its symbols – at speeds unimaginable to humans just one hundred years ago. A chief lubricant, money, now flows through ‘pipelines’ at the speed of light, as does that other one – oil. Automobiles have multiplied human mobility fifty-fold. Planes pick us up on one continent and put us down on another the same day. Photographers revel in the possibilities, working in every conceivable industry to unveil the complexities of our planetary civilisation’s intricate moving parts.

Olivo Barbieri

Italy born 1954

site specific_MEXICO CITY 11

from the *site specific_ 03 13* series

2011

inkjet prints

Courtesy Yancey Richardson Gallery New York

Barbieri's twin pictures seem unreal, like brightly coloured drawings submitted as a proposal for an imposing public monument. This sense is heightened by the purposeful suppression of detail on the busy streets below, as the flow of traffic works itself around the imposing obstacle, and by the fact that the towers seem to point in different directions in the two photographs. But the Torres de Satélite are real, and the up/down illusion is purely due to the photographer's clever aerial positioning to the north and south. Barbieri has made an extensive series of such iconic urban structures around the world.

Alex MacLean

United States born 1947

Shipping containers, Portsmouth, VA

2011

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

MacLean is a pilot, never tiring of the wonders of human civilisation that are revealed from the air. His view of massed containers – shot on the diagonal to convey a sense of movement – obviously speaks of the transport of goods but also represents the coming together of a host of technologies. For millennia, transport was unstandardised. The standardised container – stackable, easy to load and unload, secure, deliverable by sea, truck and rail – has had nothing less than a revolutionary effect on society, with many claiming that containers have been the single largest driver in globalisation over the last sixty years.

Jeffrey Milstein

United States born 1944

Newark 8 Terminal B, Newark, NJ

from the *Airports* series

2016

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Pilot-turned-photographer Milstein's work is heavily influenced by a lifelong passion for aviation and an attentive eye for architecture and civilisational structures, as seen from above. In his remarkable imagery, control is akin to the human micromanagement of the natural environment: on one hand, our ability to radically alter physical topography and, on the other, an ability to overcome natural forces – notably gravity. Here at busy Newark, the thousands of humans that occupy the terminal are nowhere to be seen. Encased in concrete, metal, plastic and glass, they are efficiently processed prior to being flown to far-flung destinations.

Christoph Gielen

Germany born 1967

CONVERSIONS, Suburban California

2008

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

The great autoroutes and freeways of today, as mammoth engineering works, have been compared with the cathedrals of the Middle Ages, or even the pyramids of Egypt. They have accelerated our world in every sense, shrinking time and space. It is difficult to get a sense of their complexity – indeed their beauty – from the ground, and Gielen has taken to the air to photograph the sinuous forms of a Southern Californian system. The next revolution(s) in transport may alter these landscapes dramatically. In a hundred years, will they prove as adaptable as medieval cathedrals or become mere ruins in the landscape?

Mintio

Singapore born 1986

Concrete Euphoria, Bangkok from the Baiyoke

from the *Concrete Euphoria* series

2008

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Mintio's *Concrete Euphoria* explores the spirit, or the *feeling*, of the ever-changing megacities of Asia. Creating entirely within the camera (no digital imaging was involved), Mintio works exposures of four and eight pictures within a single frame, each exposure varying in length from seconds to months. Mintio thinks of the kaleidoscope-like final print as a kind of 'map' – equal parts wonder/dream (the euphoria) and fact/reality (the concrete). The city, she reminds us, as did author Italo Calvino in his book *Invisible Cities*, is first and foremost a *real* thing, but that reality first had to spring from someone's imagination.

Lee Friedlander

United States born 1934

Las Vegas 2002

Montana 2008

Fort Davis 2006

from the *America by Car* series
gelatin silver prints

Courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery

For millennia, mankind moved at a human pace, on average 800 metres per hour. On horseback, we managed to increase our speed, a revolutionary step in societal evolution. Today, the family car typically boasts 170 horsepower – which we take for granted, as we do the phenomenal freedom of auto-motion. And yet, once we're inside these machines, looking out, they become largely invisible to us. Friedlander redresses the balance. Travelling across the United States, he records the sights that capture his imagination within the artificial frame of the car window. Is this not how many people today encounter much of the world?

Florian Böhm

Germany born 1969

48th Street / 5th Avenue

from the *Wait for Walk* series

2005

pigment print

Courtesy of the artist

Böhm is striving towards what he considers a novel visual urban vocabulary, working as an anthropologist with a sharp eye for the transient. What better strategy to 'freeze' a moment than a crowd waiting at a red light, with the passing traffic acting as the shutter? Here the busiest New Yorker must come to a standstill – resigned or agitated. Böhm imagines the street corner to be a momentary stage, the motley group of actors unaware of being in a colourful urban pageant. Does that central figure realise how closely she conforms to the model on the poster in the distance?

Izabela Pluta

Poland born 1979, arrived Australia 1987

Untitled (container)

2009

chromogenic print

Courtesy of the artist, Melbourne

'In 2008 I embarked on a four-week road journey through the Pilbara, connecting Perth to Darwin. I travelled through places such as Tom Price, Newman, Karratha, Port Hedland, and the abandoned township of Wittenoom – one of the most contaminated sites in the Southern Hemisphere, where up until 1966 the town serviced the nearby blue asbestos mine ... The photographs I made observed the instability of the landscape amidst the resource industry in Western Australia. It drew on the semi-permanent, fly-in, fly-out occupation of regions such as the Pilbara, exploring the state of impermanence and transience of Western Australian mining towns.'

Izabela Pluta

Poland born 1979, arrived Australia 1987

Untitled (estate)

2009

chromogenic print

Courtesy of the artist, Melbourne

Pluta outlines her interest in transient culture: 'I saw the Western Australian mining boom as a critical site for this psyche and wanted to explore the pilgrimage west, in the social and economic climate which, in 2007, began to experience unprecedented rates of growth due to increases in the export of iron ore, natural gas and other minerals. Since the time these images were made, much needed debate has taken place relating to traditional owners of Aboriginal land and the mining that affects the land in whose territories these developments continue to occur.'

Victoria Sambunaris

United States born 1964

Untitled (pipes), Monahans, Texas

2012

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson, New York

Sambunaris applies the term ‘social geography’ to her own work, isolating images of the natural world with its superimposition of the relentless grid of human intervention. The myth of America and particularly its western landscape largely underwrote the ideas of freedom and frontier independence found in much national political rhetoric – the basis of much popular cultural imagery. Sambunaris believes that today these same landscapes are deeply inscribed with interventions contradicting those mythologies, and, in their place, she presents a clear-eyed vision, sometimes sublime and sometimes negative. She proposes a critical mindset, appreciative of both aesthetic and political dimensions.

Henrik Spohler

Germany born 1965

**The Third Day, cultivation and
measurement of corn plants, German
research institute**

from the *The Third Day* series

n.d.

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Henrik Spohler

Germany born 1965

In Between, 28 approaching the container terminal, Yangshan Island, China

from the *In Between* series

n.d.

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

For Spohler, humans adapt growth and proliferation to their needs, transforming them industrially. We irrigate deserts, grow fruit and vegetables under kilometres of plastic and, increasingly with the help of genetic engineering, we tinker with creation itself. Vegetables line up in rank and file in huge monocultures; even the division of day from night has long since been suspended – such that a ‘Paradise of plenty’ can be found in our local markets.

Henrik Spohler

Germany born 1965

**The Third Day, tomato plantation
in Middenmeer, the Netherlands**

from the *The Third Day* series

n.d.

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Neil Pardington

New Zealand (Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Mamoe, Ngāti Kahungunu, Pākēha) born 1962

Abattoir #7

from *The Abattoir* series

2010

pigment print

Courtesy Jonathan Smart Gallery

‘One of the things that photography does very well is take people to places they wouldn’t normally be able to access’, notes Pardington. This abattoir is a structure that might be defined as a giant machine designed to efficiently (but humanely) kill and process animals. The rooms are spread over multiple floors and buildings and are interlinked by pipes, conveyors and overhead machinery that transport the animals and their constituent parts through the various stages. Pardington works slowly and methodically, one hour per shot, understanding that he is also making a partial portrait of the New Zealand economy.

Edward Burtynsky

Canada born 1955

Manufacturing #17, Deda Chicken Processing Plant, Dehui City, Jilin Province, China

from the *China* series

2005

type C photograph

Courtesy of Flowers Gallery

Burtynsky's vast chicken processing plant in China speaks of the extraordinary collective nature of modern food production in a rapidly developing nation of over one billion people. The photographer has centred the image with receding rows of identically clothed workers to the point where they vanish in the distance, suggestive of an infinite collective task. Each worker appears as a cog in a well-oiled machine. The picture can be viewed as documentary evidence of a complex industrial system and/or as a sign of the tremendous challenges facing China as it positions itself for a leading role in twenty-first-century planetary civilisation.

Vincent Fournier

Burkina Faso born 1970

Tokyo Storm Sewer System #1, [Saitama], Japan

from the *Tour Operator* series

2009

type C photograph

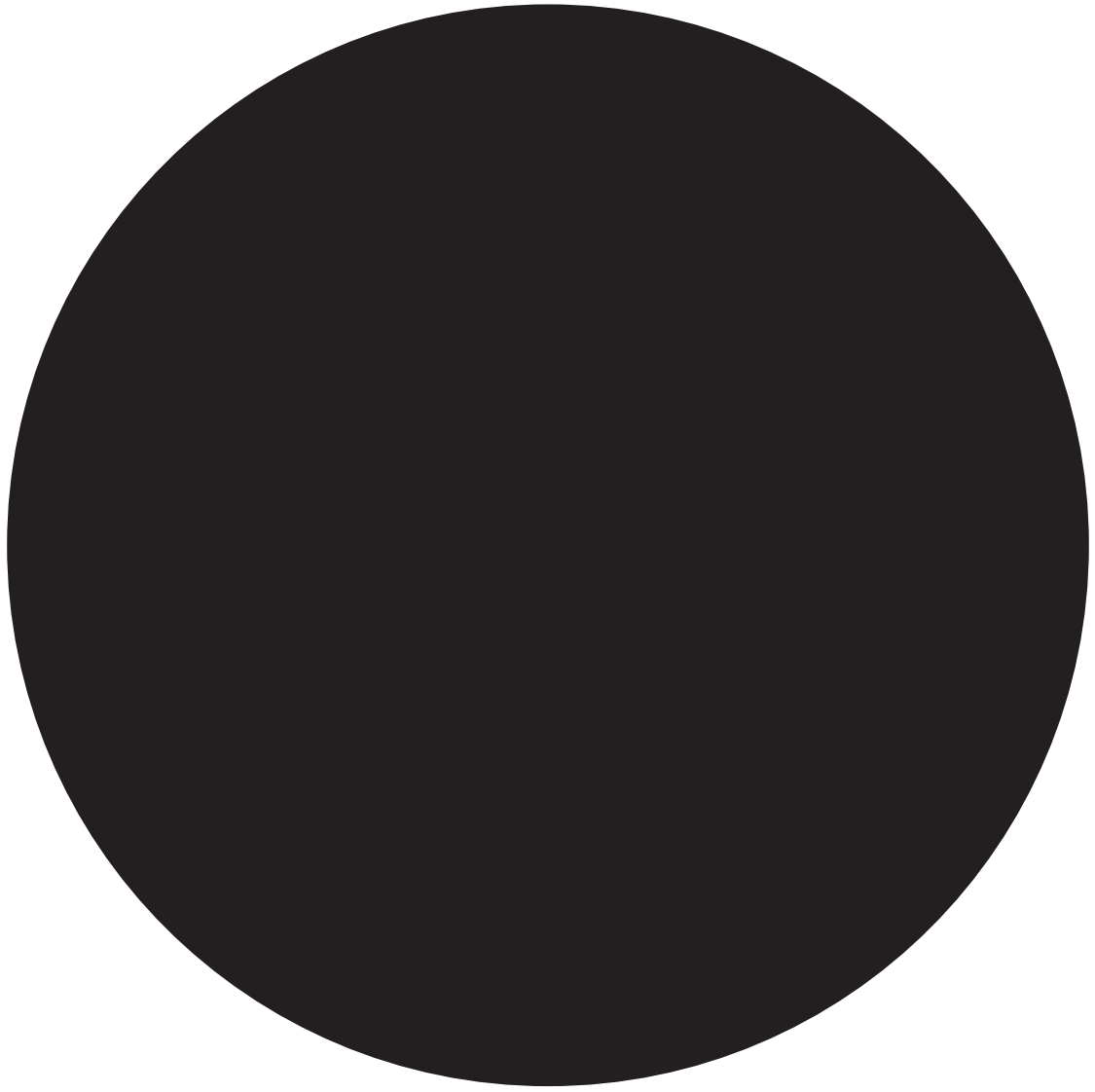
Courtesy of the artist

Like many other photographers in *Civilization*, Fournier is a versatile and wide-ranging artist. It takes a curious mind to descend below street level – in this case into the cathedral-like caverns of one great city's extraordinary sewer system. He demonstrates the intricate complexity by showing us two forking routes, but how does he convey scale? With an old trick that photographers have been using since the earliest days of photography, when they would have someone (often the photographers' assistants) pose in the picture.

For kids

While most of the photographs in this exhibition were shot from street level, or even up high in the air, this image was actually taken underground. The photographer has taken his camera deep down into this sewer system in Japan. A storm sewer system is a large space built to allow heavy rain that collects on the city streets to flow and drain underground. This helps stop the streets above from flooding. When there is heavy rain above, the space would be full of rushing water.

Many big cities have lots of things built underground, which we don't usually get to see but which help us to get around and are important for the city to work well. Can you think of other things that might be built underneath a city?



Persuasion

Getting things done often means convincing others of a course of action. We educate and we train; we explain and we argue; we encourage and we threaten. Persuasion can be subtle or heavy-handed. Sometimes it means getting people to do things that are not necessarily in their interest, but are presented to them in such a way that they appear to be. Advertising and propaganda, marketing and promotion ... these are commercial arts that have risen to exceptional levels of sophistication in modern societies, often to the extent that large populations do not realise they are being directed. Photographers lift the lid on these manipulations, allowing us to glimpse the subtle strategies others use to have us do their bidding.

Nick Hannes

Belgium born 1974

The Persian Court at the Ibn Battuta Mall, Dubai, 2016

from the *Dubai. Bread and Circuses* series

2016

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Bread and Circuses is a three-year documentary project on leisure, consumerism and market-driven urbanisation in Dubai. It showcases the city as the ultimate playground of globalisation and capitalism, while raising questions about authenticity and sustainability – a Persian Court cum Starbucks? Dubai's rapid transformation from a dusty fishing town in the 1960s to the ultra-modern metropolis of today fascinates supporters and critics. With its prestigious shopping malls, artificial islands and iconic skyscrapers (not to mention hordes of migrant workers), the little emirate on the Persian Gulf may prove to be a future model city or a short-lived playground for the fortunate.

Robert Walker

Canada born 1945

Times Square, New York

2010

Times Square, New York

2004

Times Square, New York

2009

type C photographs

Courtesy of the artist

Marketeers, promoters, politicians ... Almost everyone is bombarded daily with messages encouraging people to buy this or that product, adhere to this or that ideology. For many years, Walker has focused his camera on that epicentre of incessant, strident messaging – New York City's ever-pulsating Times Square. He keenly observes the interplay between monumentally scaled flashing signs and their moving targets – the tiny human figures of the tourists constantly streaming through this glittering playground, spellbound. Do they not recognise that, for a brief moment, they are part of the spectacular tableau? Walker suggests that people are complicit in the theatre of persuasion.

Andreia Alves de Oliveira

Portugal born 1979

Accountant's desk, Law firm

**Breakout space, Transportation
finance bank**

**Hot-desking workspace. Audit, tax and
advisory services firm**

Lobby, Advertising agency

Lookout room, Brand consulting firm

Open plan, Hedge fund

from *The Politics of the Office* series

2014

inkjet prints

Courtesy of the artist

Andreia Alves de Oliveira is interested in the modern arts of persuasion but prefers to go behind the scenes to see where the strategies are conceived, executed, refined and evaluated. In her series *The Politics of the Office*, shot over three years, she accesses the workspaces of advertising agencies, financial institutions like specialised banks and hedge funds, law firms and brand consultants, appropriating the catchy terms they have devised for their trendy spaces – a ‘lookout room’, a ‘breakout space’, ‘hot-desking’ and the like. Individuals are immaterial – they will come and go. The ‘persuasion industry’ will remain.

Natan Dvir

Israel born 1972

Desigual

from the *Coming Soon* series

2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Dvir's urban spectacles, where gigantic advertising billboards dwarf the people below, offer a stinging critique of unbridled consumerism. However, the photographs are not without irony and, indeed, humour. The passers-by unwittingly feature in the tableaux, mimicking poses and postures, or act as counterpoints, drawing attention to the absurdity of the advertisers' claims – 'Happy Ideas All the Time' or 'Better & Better'. Dvir's pictures suggest that modern urbanites take this messaging in their stride, ignoring the chirpy slogans, paying attention instead to their mundane, immediate needs.

Eric Thayer

United States born 1974

A test card pattern on a Jumbotron above the Quicken Loans Arena as preparations were underway for the Republican National Convention in Cleveland.

2016

type C photograph

Courtesy of The New York Times and Redux

Thayer's reportage at the last Republican National Convention was extensive – made for the moment, as is all good photojournalism. But this image transcends its immediate time frame. It stands for the current media-saturated civilisation and could just as easily be the product of a Chinese, Arab, European or South American propaganda machine. In the oft-quoted words of media theorist Marshall McLuhan, 'the medium is the message'. Here the all-important video imagery technology is being fine-tuned, its vibrant colours and rapidly morphing shapes soon to seduce and cajole not only the participants in the great hall but also the millions tuning in.

Shigeru TAKATO

高東 滋

Japan born 1972

Cologne V

from the *Television Studios* series

2004

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Over twenty years, Takato has photographed more than two hundred television studios. Television portrays the world through reporting and storytelling, influencing people's perceptions of the world. Television studios are places where an enormous amount of energy converges from many different corners of our planetary civilisation. This is why they often have a circular structure, implying that they are at the centre of the world. In Takato's work, these studios remain silent, although they are primed to tell their stories. A muted studio is deprived of its basic function – ironically, this allows us to see it more clearly.

For kids

Can you tell what this is a photograph of?

This photographer travels around the world taking photographs of television studios. This one is in Germany. We are looking at an empty studio – a big desk with empty chairs, waiting for newsreaders or television presenters to sit in them and begin a show. The lights hanging from the ceiling are a giveaway – they are directed down on the desk, lighting the scene.

What are the things that you can't see in this image? What other things would you need to do a television broadcast?

Amalia Ulman

Argentina born 1989

Excellences & Perfections

2014

installation with tablets

Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

This Instagram performance exposes vehicles of persuasion on the internet. In 2014, Argentinian artist Ulman used the popular social media platform to construct a fictitious online self. Her meticulous research on the online presences of global super bloggers and Korean pop icons identified brands and lifestyle choices as the markers of social class and character by which young women define themselves on the internet. The performance is divided into four parts: the changing colour of her hair, the food she eats, the way she treats / allows others to treat her body, and the way she spends her leisure time.

Amalia Ulman

Argentina born 1989

Excellences & Perfections

2014

installation with tablets

Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

This theatricalisation brilliantly addresses how consumerism influences and constructs gender and identity – how we choose our self-actualised personas to share with the world through the internet. Photography is once again caught between its role capturing images from the ‘real world’ and its tremendous potential for fiction. While live, the Instagram transformation of Amalia Ulman – from an art student, to a plastic surgery-enhanced callgirl, to a reformed yoga and organic food lover – was perceived by many as the real life of the artist, only further attesting to the potential for untruths and expectations surrounding images in this extremely mediated online society.

Andrew Esiebo

Nigeria born 1978

God is Alive. During the monthly Prayer service called 'Holy Ghost Night' of Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries, pastors knelt down to seek forgiveness and prayers from their leader after they controversially left the church.

2011

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

In Esiebo's eyes, God is at the heart of life in Nigeria. Religious spaces are found in every nook and cranny of the country. The current wave of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements arose in the 1970s from the literate environment of Nigerian colleges and universities. These movements expanded their reach to form linkages with similar movements in the United States. They have since grown into mega churches, boasting a hundred thousand members or more. The late 1980s also saw the adoption of media technologies to propagate their evangelical messages, enlist new members and advertise themselves to the public.

Andy Freeberg

United States born 1958

Sean Kelly

from the *Art Fare* series

2010

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Freeberg prowls the galleries of New York, along with contemporary art fairs in Basel, Miami and New York, in search of unguarded moments that reveal that the surface glitter of the art world hides a more mundane reality: the high-stakes game of the six- to eight-figure hard sell. Freeberg has described the way in which borders seems to melt away in the contemporary art world – as he notes, ‘This gallery was founded in Switzerland, its owner is English, its director is French and the artist, Kehinde Wiley, is of Nigerian and African-American descent – and has a studio in Beijing where Chinese painters assist him’.

Mark Power

United Kingdom born 1959

Live broadcast of the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Warsaw, Poland. April 2005

from *The Sound of Two Songs* series

2005

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and Magnum Photos

At first glance, this image seems perplexing – why is this crowd *facing* a wall of electronics? Power illuminates two distinct parts of a contemporary event: a funeral crowd, squeezed into a narrow band at the base of the picture; and, taking up eighty-five per cent of the space, a wall of gigantic video monitors. It takes a moment to work out that the crowd is actually in the background, not the foreground. Power's subject isn't really the Pope's funeral. By amplifying the importance of the monitors, he highlights the power of media in our lives – dominating, controlling, overpowering.

SATO Shintaro

佐藤 信太郎

Japan born 1969

**Dotonbori, Chuo Ward, Osaka /
Omori-Kita, Ota Ward, Tokyo**

from the *Night Lights* series

1997–99

inkjet print

Courtesy of PGI, Tokyo

Entertainment districts in Japan are full of places that cater to human desires for food, sex and amusement. The myriad billboards create intriguing rhythms of colour, light and shape. When shooting, Sato eliminates human figures in order to accent the physical texture of the city. At a certain moment, he opens his lens, then, when people arrive, he quickly covers it with a sheet of black paper. By repeating this procedure several times, he accumulates the necessary exposure time of between thirty seconds and one minute. Gaudy billboards remind Sato of 'flowers that bloom while breathing the air of obscenity'.

SATO Shintaro

佐藤 信太郎

Japan born 1969

**Kabukicho, Shinjuku Ward, Tokyo /
Kabukicho, Shinjuku Ward, Tokyo**

from the *Night Lights* series

1997–99

inkjet print

Courtesy of PGI, Tokyo

Priscilla Briggs

United States born 1966

Happy (Golden Resources Mall, Beijing)

from the *Fortune* series

2008

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Briggs imagines civilisation as a teeming organism in which cultures overlap and intermix, constantly evolving into new forms. Global economies of manufacturing and trade shape the fate of people around the world, not to mention the future of the environment. Her photographs of the retail and manufacturing landscapes of China reveal a specific historic moment of rapid economic growth when 'mega' shopping malls became symbols of economic progress. Here, within the burnished marble halls of Prada, Louis Vuitton and Gucci, the influence of Western culture and its preoccupation with wealth and luxury find fertile ground in a rapidly modernising China.

Dougie Wallace

United Kingdom born 1974

Harrodsburg

from the *Harrodsburg* series

2016

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

In his series *Harrodsburg*, Wallace looks at the excessive wealth and consumerism that can be found around the Knightsbridge area close to the world-famous department store Harrods. From the mid 1970s onwards, Gulf millionaires began coming to the area, later joined by the Oligarchs and the Hedgies. Wallace intends the work as a stark exposé of the emergence of this ultra-affluent elite who are changing the face of the city and, in Wallace's view, 'pricing out not just ordinary people but even the upper middle class natives of Central London, and marginalising old wealth from their time-honoured habitats'.

Alec Soth

United States born 1969

Grand Palais

from the *Paris / Minnesota* series

2007

type C photograph

Courtesy of Magnum Photos

Soth's *Grand Palais* conveys subtle messages on several levels. It is, of course, 'about' the theatre of Parisian fashion, which still manages to maintain its gold-standard position in the global fashion world. It is also a portrait of someone for whom the word 'icon' is – for once – appropriate: the late Karl Lagerfeld, who understood Soth's game and played his part in it. But, by pulling back and including another photographer, peeking in from the side, Soth is willing to puncture our assumption of exclusivity, showing that he is not alone, merely another pawn in the construction and maintenance of celebrity.

Lauren Greenfield

United States born 1966

Selena Gomez, 17, at an album cover photo shoot, West Hollywood, 2010. After landing the lead role in the 2007 Disney Channel hit *Wizards of Waverly Place*, Disney groomed her to be a multiplatform star with a huge social-media following.

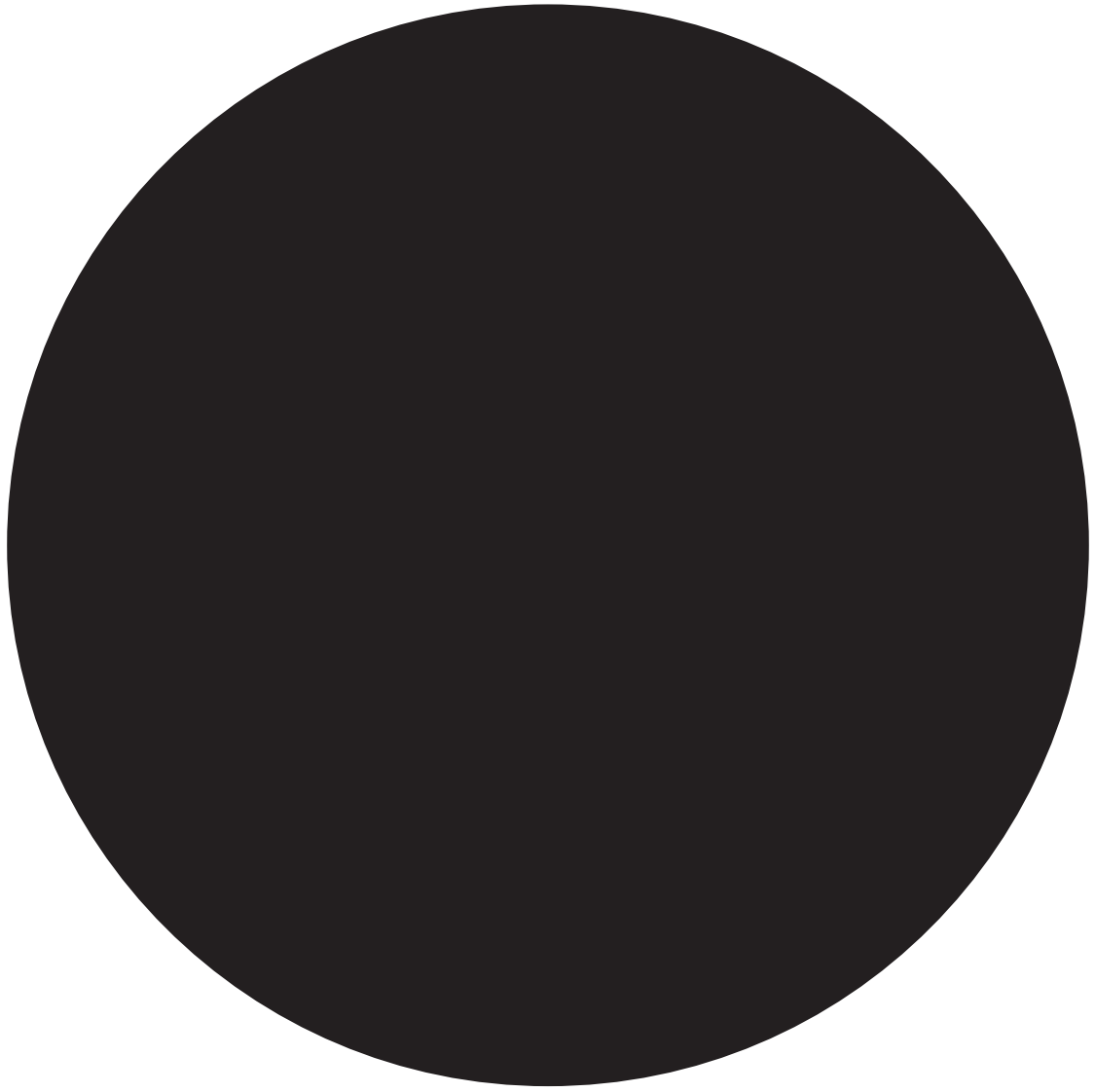
from the *Generation Wealth* series

2010

pigment print

Courtesy of the artist

Greenfield's terrain, as we have seen earlier, is the surplus of American wealth, glamour and fame that seems to enthrall the entire world. Here, she notes, is a singer who has been carefully groomed for global success. Greenfield shows one small part of the less-than-glamorous process in a kitschy tableau structured like a religious painting – an apt treatment for the almost-religious cult known as Celebrity.



Control

At a basic level of abstraction, a civilisation can be likened to a complex machine: parts are constantly repaired or replaced; it is protective of itself both from outsiders and internal existential threats. Control, often subtly disguised under the banner of safety or innovation, has grown to be inevitable in our modern globalised existence. It is expressed on a grand scale in the form of governing bodies and armies who wield war and diplomacy, or in the form of the law, corporations and educational institutions. It is expressed more concretely in the places where authority is executed in daily life, such as police stations, prisons, courts, schools, boardrooms, power stations and laboratories. Photographers have found varied and ingenious ways to frame these complex realities, which are often hidden from public view.

Che Onejoon

최원준

Korea born 1979

National Heroes Acre / Built by North Korea in 1981, Harare, Zimbabwe, 2013

from the *Mansudae Master Class* series

2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Che Onejoon combines his background in photography with an interest in sensitive political issues to produce photographs, films and installations. He is mainly interested in places and objects that represent the diplomatic ties between the various postcolonial states in Africa and their communist ally North Korea, particularly during the 1970s. This coalition implied international solidarity and reciprocal support, as much as an exchange of knowledge, weapons and raw materials. Moreover, this anti-imperialist southern hemisphere connection created a collective visual language of military symbolism and representations of power, while also having serious repercussions for both geopolitics and the lives of individuals.

South HO Siu Nam

何兆南

Hong Kong born 1984

Open Door III

from the *Open Door* series

2014

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist and Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong

Open Door is a series inspired by the Occupy Movement surrounding the Hong Kong government headquarters. The building is famous for its design, joining the two wings at the upper level, creating the visual metaphor of an open door in the space below. In the image, the open door becomes a blackout. The effect is achieved by the artist cutting out the opening directly on the negative film. It is a stark comment on China–Hong Kong relations, currently more tense than ever.

Mitch Epstein

United States born 1952

BP Carson Refinery, California 2007

from the *American Power* series

2007

type C photograph

Courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne

Like many of his colleagues, Epstein prefers to work on projects of his own devising. The title of the project from which these two images are drawn, 'American Power', is meant to be taken literally and figuratively. How is power conceived, generated, circumscribed, maintained and projected? Where are its sources situated, its controls, its vulnerabilities? On the one hand, what are the macro-politics around the subject and, on the other, how are ordinary people affected? Epstein's work is careful, thoughtful, attentive and balanced, accepting all the complexities of a civilisation dependent on massive infrastructures, which it often takes for granted.

Mitch Epstein

United States born 1952

Century Wind Project, Blairsburg, Iowa

from the *American Power* series

2008

type C photograph

Courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne

Noh Suntag

노순택

born Korea 1971

Red House I #13

from the *Red House* series

2005

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Celebrated South Korean photographer Noh Suntag fills the frame with dancers clothed in identical yellow gowns and presenting a highly coordinated performance. From the series *Red House*, this image is one of a larger group of photographs taken during an official press trip through North Korea. This scene from an official act of state at the Pyongyang stadium shows the breathtaking tableaux vivants, a subtle show of force and order from the North.

Ashley Gilbertson

born Australia 1978

1,215 American soldiers, airmen, Marines and sailors pray before a pledge of enlistment on July 4, 2008, at a massive re-enlistment ceremony at one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces in Baghdad, Iraq on July 4, 2008.

from the *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* series

2008

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Gilbertson is an internationally recognised photojournalist who found himself in the cauldron of the Iraq War (2003–2011) at a critical moment, with no end in sight. Wanting to vividly illustrate the impressive scale of the American effort, he has chosen here to show massed ranks of soldiers in a spectacle designed to boost morale – a kind of military Super Bowl. For those looking at the seemingly infinite mass (cleverly cropped to enhance the feeling), the image might recall German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl's famous hymn to brute military strength, *Triumph of the Will* (1935) – an association that would surely not please American military strategists.

Edgar Martins

Portugal born 1977

Picote power station: chart for scheduling the periodic maintenance of the generating sets

from *The Time Machine: An Incomplete & Semi-Objective Survey of Hydropower Stations* series

2011

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Martins's series subtitle describes this work poetically and provocatively. The image shown here can be taken at face value – as a chart for maintenance purposes – or can be seen in more abstract or metaphorical terms – his 'time machine'. In this light, it suggests all kinds of switching functions, like a freight railway yard, or the 'Critical Path' planning that enabled NASA to land men on the moon, or some internal workings of an early computer. Whatever its specific function, it is human intelligence writ large: rationality, logic, complexity, control – the essence of a technocratic civilisation.

Gerco de Ruijter

The Netherlands born 1961

Tag #1

from the *Almost Nature* series

2014

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Gerco de Ruijter

The Netherlands born 1961

Lot #2

from the *Almost Nature* series

2012

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Planes, helicopters and drones are part of the toolkit of a growing number of contemporary photographers, but de Ruijter's aerial technology dates back thousands of years: he uses the simple kite ideal in his search for 'a kind of abstraction, or a hesitation between the real and an abstraction'. The writer Peter Delpout encapsulates this ambiguity when he wonders if he is looking at 'pastures, salt marshes, canals, tree tops, or rather an abstract painting with Mondrianesque or Art Brut qualities'. De Ruijter poses the question: landscape or abstraction? Or both?

For kids

Can you work out what this is a photograph of? Can you tell if this is something natural or artificial, or both?

While it looks like a series of patterns – almost like a textured piece of fabric or material, or a carpet – it is actually an overhead photograph of a field with plants growing in neat rows. The photographer attached his camera to a kite to take the image from up high.

Edward Burtynsky

Canada born 1955

Pivot Irrigation / Suburb, South of Yuma, Arizona, USA

from the *Water* series

2011

type C photograph

Courtesy of Flowers Gallery, London

Among Burtynsky's many ambitious projects is a global look at the increasingly urgent question of the responsible management of water resources. His basic approach is to create high-resolution, large-scale, masterfully printed images that draw the viewer into an examination and contemplation of landscapes that we, as a global civilisation, have altered or are in the process of altering. The images do indeed document reality. But, in another equally important way, Burtynsky hopes that they also transcend the immediate verité of any given scene to provide a sublime aesthetic experience, striking a delicate balance between form and content.

Andreas Gefeller

Germany born 1970

Poles 31

from the Japan series

2010

inkjet print

Courtesy Thomas Rehbein Galerie

KDK
김도균

Korea born 1973

sf.D-2

from the *sf (Space Faction)* series

2005

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

As an artist, KDK tells us, he is neither a passive witness nor an active agent of change. His *sf* (space faction or science fiction) series is all about imagining future space but searching for its forms in the present. The spaces are real; the perspectives he takes are original and purposely ambiguous. A space station or an elevator shaft? What is certain is a total absence of nature, leaving us in clinical, frightening, claustrophobic and hopeless spaces. These are sites worthy of Stanley Kubrick's dystopian visions, the inevitable consequences of a twenty-first or twenty-second-century civilisation ruled by heartless logic.

Thomas Weinberger

Germany born 1964

Nr. 7

from the *Synthesen* series

2007

type C photograph

Courtesy of T.HE COLLECTION, Zürich

The key to comprehending Weinberger's *Synthesen* series lies in the reflection on time and light in photography. He sees light as the photographer's language, as colour is for the painter. By fusing several exposures of the same subject at different times, he hopes to evoke a dreamlike state: 'In view of the irrational exuberance in our world, a surreal visual conception represents my attitude to contemporary civilisation more than a documentary one. In my *Synthesen* series I show civilisation in the light of its fragility, but at the same time my works also celebrate the creative power of man.'

Luca Zanier

born Switzerland 1966

FIFA I Executive Committee Zurich

from the *Corridors of Power* series

2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

The FIFA executive committee meets on the third of five underground floors at the Home of FIFA in Zürich, in a bunker-like room worthy of Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove*. Swiss architect Tilla Theus calls the headquarters she designed for the International Federation of Football Association in Zürich's exclusive Zürichberg neighbourhood 'a private residence for the family'. The football family's decision-makers gather in the subterranean conference room lit by a crystal chandelier in the shape of a football stadium. Ex-FIFA president Joseph (Sepp) Blatter thought that the light 'should come from the people themselves who are assembled there'.

Giles Price

United Kingdom born 1973

Opening ceremony, London Olympic Stadium. E20 12 Under Construction

2012

digital print

Courtesy of the artist

Viewers may be excused for thinking that they are staring at the inside of some devilishly intricate scientific machine, like the Large Hadron Particle Collider. In fact, we *are* looking at a complex machine, possibly the biggest, most effective social machine in the world – the Olympic Games, with its central site, the Olympic Stadium. This machine's fast-moving parts come from virtually every nation in the world; the 'Olympic ideal' reaches down into every village on earth, drawing up the most physically gifted to place on the world stage. Price's direct overhead view dramatically illustrates the essence of planetary civilisation.

Carlo Valsecchi

Italy born 1965

0767 Cesena, Forlì, IT. 2012

from the *industry, Technogym project* series

2012

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Over many years, Carlo Valsecchi has photographed industrial environments in depth, developing a unique pictorial style that softens the hard edges of our machines and allows us to see them anew as the marvels they truly are. It takes a moment to realise that we are looking here at an exercise room (and not a room where materials are tested for endurance) in which human beings desirous of living longer, attracting good-looking mates and generally upping their chances of success in an increasingly competitive material world stretch their physical attributes to the limits – and sometimes beyond.

Lynne Cohen

United States born 1944, died Canada 2014

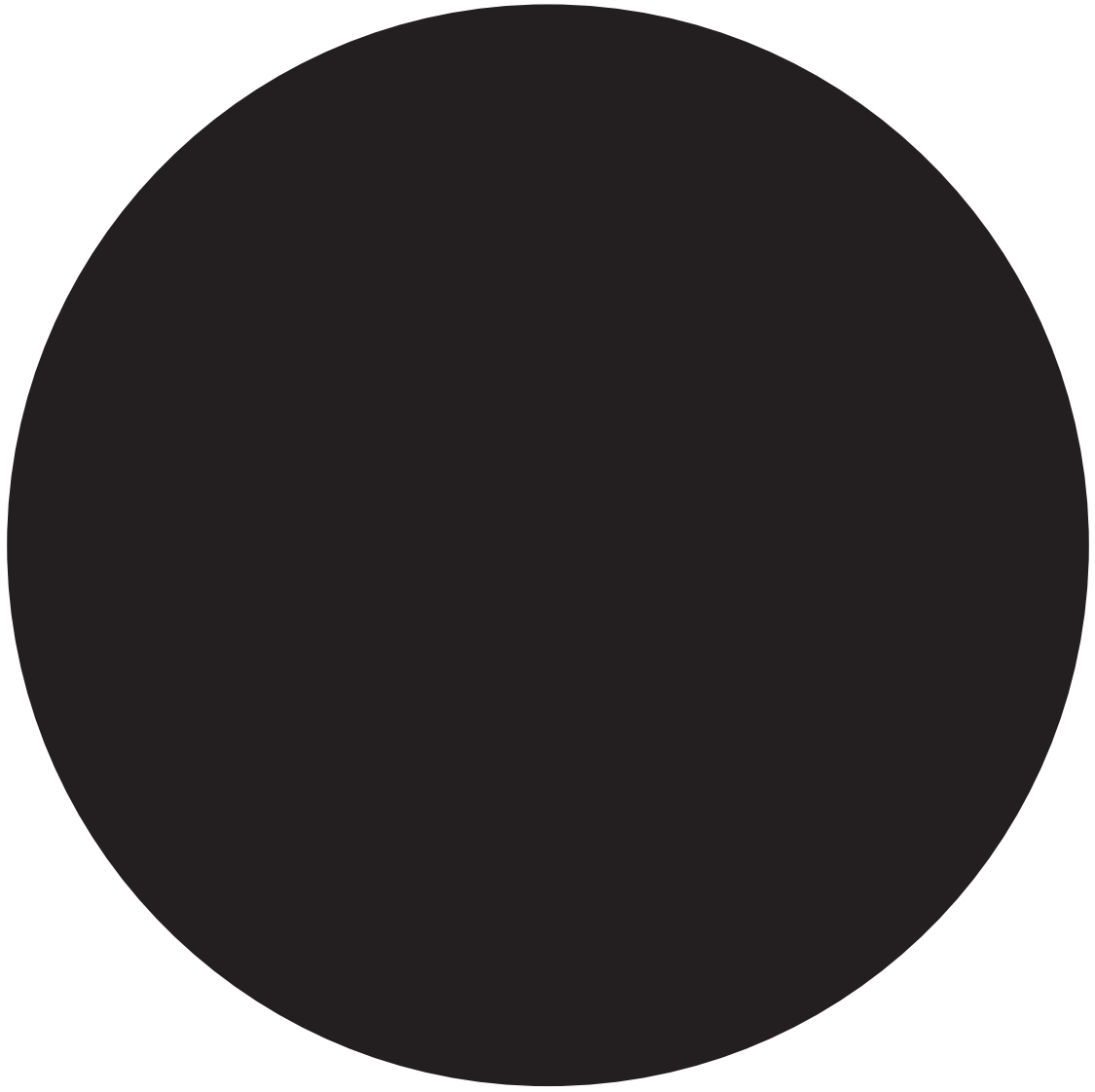
Untitled [Police School Classroom, Aylmer]

2003

type C photograph

Courtesy Galerie In Situ - fabienne leclerc, Paris

For almost half a century, the late Lynne Cohen documented examples of just about every kind of living and working space human beings inhabit – offices, classrooms, lobbies, hospitals, spas, hotels and so forth. She preferred to show them devoid of their residents and treated them almost as exhibits in an ethnographic museum. When ‘humans’ do occasionally appear, as in this image, they are in the guise of models, employed to act as human surrogates. With her frontal, deadpan approach, Cohen showed repeatedly that we have no need of fictive photography. To use the cliché, truth is stranger than fiction.



Michael Wolf

Germany born 1954, died Hong Kong 2019

Tokyo Compression #05

Tokyo Compression #109

Tokyo Compression #35

Tokyo Compression #39

Tokyo Compression #75

Tokyo Compression #80

from the *Tokyo Compression* series

2010

pigment prints

Courtesy of M97, Shanghai

...continued overleaf

Earlier we saw one of Wolf's signature soaring Hong Kong tower blocks. Here, in a selection from another extensive series, we see the stresses and strains of an equally great Asian city, Tokyo, from underground. Big-city commuters all over the world will recognise this nightmare: a crush of bodies so intense it presses them against the doors and the windows, which steam with the heat and humidity. Eyes close, trying to keep the horror at bay or to escape inwardly, as the hapless passengers count the seconds to the next stop and momentary release.

For kids

Can you tell what these people are doing? And why they are all squeezed up against the glass? Do you think they are awake or sleeping?

These are photographs of people who are travelling on very packed trains in the Japanese city of Tokyo. With so many people on board the city trains, everyone is forced to stand closely together and squeeze up against the windows. The photographer must have been standing on the platforms and taken the images as the trains pulled in to a stop.

XING Danwen

邢丹文

China born 1967

disCONNEXION, A6

disCONNEXION, B12

2002–03

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and Boers-Li Gallery

In her sinuous compositions from *disCONNEXION*, Xing has chosen to tackle one of the collective marks humankind leaves on the natural landscape. On average, she notes, our mobile phones are obsolete in two years – where do they go? Along the coast of southern China in the early 2000s, hundreds of thousands of workers earned their living by dismantling and burning piles of computer and electronic components in order to extract bits of copper, brass, aluminium and zinc for resale, operating in rough environmental and social conditions. The large scale of the works symbolises the immensity of our global e-wastelands.

Ashley Gilbertson

Australia born 1978

Army Cpl. Brandon M. Craig, 25, was killed by a roadside bomb on July 19, 2007 in Husayniyah, Iraq. He was from Earleville, Maryland. His bedroom was photographed in February 2010.

from the *Bedrooms of the Fallen* series

2010

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

For decades, the United States has been involved in military engagement so far from the public eye as to risk being forgotten. With *Bedrooms of the Fallen*, Gilbertson reminds us that conflicts occurring in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq have far-reaching consequences on both sides, far from the noise of battle. Travelling throughout the US, he has documented homes of family and friends who remain and bear their grief out of view. Left intact by families of the deceased, the bedrooms are a poignant reminder of American lives cut short.

Ashley Gilbertson

Australia born 1978

Marine Cpl. Christopher G. Scherer, 21, was killed by a sniper on July 21, 2007, in Karmah, Iraq. He was from East Northport, New York. His bedroom was photographed in February 2009.

from the *Bedrooms of the Fallen* series

2009

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Mandy Barker

United Kingdom born 1964

SOUP: Nurdles Ingredients; nurdles – the industrial raw material of plastic collected from six different beaches.

from the *SOUP* series

2011

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Soup is the description given to plastic debris suspended in the sea, with particular reference to the mass accumulation of rubbish that exists in an area of the North Pacific Ocean evocatively known as the Garbage Patch. Barker's work aims to stimulate an emotional response in the viewer, combining an initial aesthetic attraction (a stellar constellation, perhaps?) with a dawning awareness of the reality facing the world today – a veritable tsunami of pollution. The plastics photographed have been salvaged by Barker from beaches around the world and represent a global collection that has existed for varying amounts of time in the earth's oceans. As she says, 'My aim is to raise awareness through visual engagement about the issue of plastic pollution in world oceans, while highlighting the harmful effect on marine life and ultimately ourselves'.

Rupture

Collective troubles, breaks in the natural order, obstructions of justice, violations of human rights, displacement of people, armed conflict, the slow or abrupt death of industries – photographers have been diligently telling tales of rupture throughout the turbulent early years of our twenty-first century. Their provocative works, sometimes taken at great personal risk or staged meticulously to bring attention to emerging crises, address a variety of subjects, including environmental degradation, border conflict and management, war and violence, mass migration, and the failures of political and ideological systems. They force us to confront our civilisation's blind spots and its failures, with images varying from the dispassionately abstract to the emotionally engaging.

Taloi Havini

Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea,
born 1981

Stuart Miller photographer

Australia born 1983

Sami and the Panguna mine

from the *Blood Generation* series 2009–11

2009–10, printed 2014

type C photograph

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for
Living Australian Artists, 2014

2014.656

This series is dedicated to the ‘blood generation’ of young people born during the bitter and prolonged war between Papua New Guinea and the people of Bougainville (1988–98). This war, triggered by external interests in mining and sustained by local acts of political self-determination, resulted in some 20,000 deaths and forced many Bougainvilleans to leave. Havini and Miller explore the repercussions of copper mining and armed conflict on the young people of the region and address the destruction of the natural environment that, for matrilineal societies of Bougainville and Buka, is foundational to their political and social organisation.

Taloi Havini

Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea,
born 1981

Stuart Miller

 photographer

Australia born 1983

Sami and the Panguna mine 2

from the *Blood Generation* series 2009–11

2009, printed 2015

colour inkjet print

Gift of the artist through the Australian Government's
Cultural Gifts Program, 2015

2015.254

Taloi Havini

Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea,
born 1981

Stuart Miller

 photographer

Australia born 1983

Sami and the Panguna mine 1

from the *Blood Generation* series 2009–11

2009, printed 2015

colour inkjet print

Gift of the artist through the Australian Government's
Cultural Gifts Program, 2015

2015.255

Richard Mosse

Ireland born 1980

Idomeni

from the *Heat Maps* series

2016

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and carlier | gebauer, Berlin

Mosse has adapted a military-grade thermal detection camera to take pictures from kilometres away, so, strictly speaking, the images (stitched together from hundreds of individual shots) are not photographs. No matter. In 2016, the photographer visited routes commonly travelled by refugees – from the Persian Gulf to Berlin, and from northern Niger to the now-cleared Jungle camp in Calais – and used this device extensively. Mosse acknowledges that the work raises issues of privacy but believes it might just enlighten a public for whom ‘surveillance’ is usually an abstraction that does not affect their lives. He asks us to think again.

Francesco Zizola

Italy born 1962

In the same boat

2015

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and Noor images

Zizola informs us that an overcrowded rubber dinghy that has sailed from Libya is being approached by the MSF *Bourbon Argos*, a search and rescue ship, on 26 August 2015. We are not told how long these people have been at sea, nor what specific fate awaits them. Most likely, the photographer doesn't know. But this poignant photograph captures a shared moment and a shared mood, of fear, doubt, concern, resignation and, if not hope, perhaps a cautious optimism – and all borne collectively.

Damon Winter

United States born 1974

US Navy Petty Officer 1st Class John Kremer is shielded from the wash of a medevac helicopter by US Army soldiers from the First Battalion, 87th Infantry after sustaining severe injuries to both legs when he stepped on a mine on Qurghan Tepa Hill in Kunduz, Afghanistan Thursday September 17, 2010.

2010

type C photograph

Courtesy of The New York Times

The swirling dust and debris of Winter's dramatic image result from the proximity of the evacuation helicopter, but the picture might stand equally, without its caption, for the tumult and violence of modern warfare. The image borders on the abstract but pulls back to offer precise and telling detail: while bodies in the background seem to dissolve formlessly, in the foreground heads are bowed for protection, veiling faces, and all but two hands are visible.

Sean Hemmerle

United States born 1966

Brooks Brothers, WTC, New York, 12

Sep 2001

2001

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Of the taking of this picture, photojournalist Hemmerle notes, 'To be powerless in the face of adversity is an unsettling and humbling experience'. The photographer's framing of the image underlines the strangeness of his experience: he finds himself alone in the still confines of a clothing shop, most of the shirts still neatly stacked on their shelves, a chair and table in perfect condition. Outside, framed by the blown-out window, we encounter a scene of unimaginable chaos and ruin. The ironic phrase of a passing vehicle, *BASIC LIFE SUPPORT*, completes the surreal picture.

Lyndell Brown

Australia born 1961

Charles Green

Australia born 1953

**Afghan National Army perimeter post
with chair, Tarin Kowt Base, Uruzgan
Province, Afghanistan**

from *The Approaching Storm* series 2007–09

2007, printed 2009

inkjet print

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for
Living Australian Artists, 2009

2009.188

In 2007, Lyndell Brown and Charles Green were appointed official war artists by the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. For six weeks, they were embedded with troops in military camps, where they photographed the daily activities of personnel at the large bases and outlying posts. In this photograph taken at the Tarin Kowt Base, Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, the 'landscape of war', as shown by Brown and Green, juxtaposes the extraordinary beauty of the desert against the measured activities of the armed forces personnel. It has a stillness and an air of anticipation that lyrically describe the inherent tension at this site of surveillance.

Taryn Simon

United States born 1975

The Contraband series

2010

inkjet prints

Courtesy Gagosian

The following selection from 1075 photographs for *Contraband*, 2010, was taken at both the US Customs and Border Protection Federal Inspection Site and the US Postal Service International Mail Facility at John F. Kennedy International Airport, New York. From 16 November through 20 November 2009, Taryn Simon remained on site at JFK and continuously photographed items detained or seized from passengers and express mail entering the United States from abroad.

Alejandro Cartagena

Dominican Republic born 1977

Daughter at the USA – Mexico border wall

from the *Without Walls* series

2017

pigment print

Courtesy of the artist and Kopeikin Gallery

Alejandro Cartagena

Dominican Republic born 1977

Mother at the Mexico – USA border wall

from the *Without Walls* series

2017

pigment print

Courtesy of the artist and Kopeikin Gallery

Heartache often seems to accompany the topic of migration, whatever its local roots and stark realities, and no more vividly than in this meeting of a mother and daughter at the Mexico–US border wall. Cartagena has photographed such places and encounters for more than a decade. ‘There is a line’, he notes, ‘a physical yet invisible line. Families are divided by it, but are determined to find a way to reunite ... [My photographic series] present an opportunity to rethink what this wall is and why it will never divide the life that surrounds it.’

Rosemary Laing

Australia born 1959

welcome to Australia

2004 Woomera, South Australia

type C photograph

Purchased with funds from the Victorian Foundation
for Living Australian Artists, 2005

2005.499

This photograph depicts the former Woomera Immigration Reception and Processing Centre in South Australia. In December 2004, Laing obtained permission to photograph the site, which had become controversial for the treatment of detainees. The year before, as a result of intense public pressure, the Australian government had closed the centre – it remained, however, a notorious place in the Australian consciousness. Laing states that the image represents ‘a wedge through the landscape – a blockage, an eyesore, an echo of controversy and a closing off in terms of both a view and a sense of possibilities of Australian identity’.

Left to right, top to bottom

Lisa Bellear

Minjungbul / Goernpil / Noonuccal / Kanak born 1961, died Melbourne 2006

Protesters with the Aboriginal flag, Parliament House steps, Melbourne

2000, printed 2016

Going to the NAIDOC March, Nicholson Street, Fitzroy

2000, printed 2016

Children with Journey of Healing flag outside Parliament House

2004, printed 2016

NAIDOC March, with a police officer in the foreground, Swanston Street, Melbourne

2000, printed 2016

Black GST protestors including Wayne Thorpe and Robbie Corowa, Captain Cook's Cottage, Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne

2006, printed 2016

Black GST Protest, Camp Sovereignty

2006, printed 2016

inkjet prints

Courtesy of the Koorie Heritage Trust Collection

These scenes of protest are by the late Indigenous activist, broadcaster, poet, academic, feminist and prolific photographer Lisa Bellear, who extensively documented Indigenous community life. Bellear wrote on ideas of social exchange and created the 'Proposed code of ethics – photographing Indigenous Australians', which began with the statement that 'Photographers need to be aware, conscious and conscientious about their relationship when photographing Indigenous Australians'. She noted that it is important to 'Recognise that your knowledge on Indigenous Australians and their diverse histories, cultures and lores/laws may be limited. Therefore you must decide on whether you are willing to learn and grow.'

Sergey Ponomarev

Russia born 1980

Migrants walk past the temple as they are escorted by Slovenian riot police to the registration camp outside Dobova, Slovenia, Thursday October, 22, 2015.

from the *Europe's Refugee Crisis* series

2015

type C photograph

Courtesy of The New York Times

Sergey Ponomarev has tackled the painful subject of mass migration poignantly. A well-ordered line of refugees clutching babies and children – we are not told who they are or from where they came – files by silently, directed to a place we cannot see. This is most likely far from being the new world they had dreamt of when they first set out on their perilous journeys. Ponomarev shows an ordered, modern Europe but it is hardly welcoming: a lone church from another era, and pylons marching across the landscape at the horizon.

Gjorgji Lichovski

Macedonia born 1964

Macedonian police clash with refugees at blocked border

2015

type C photograph

Courtesy of epa european pressphoto agency

Mass migration is all too often a question of soulless statistics, but a single picture can pierce their armour. Here, Lichovski captures the agony of migrant children on one particular summer day in 2015, as desperate people waiting on the Greek side of the border break through a cordon of Macedonian special police forces, trying to cross into Macedonia near the southern city of Gevgelija. Photographs such as this present hard truths and ask people outside of the situation represented to both see and reflect on the realities depicted.

For kids

The children in this photograph are refugees. 'Refugee' is a word that refers to someone who is forced to leave their home or their country to escape a terrible situation, such as war or a natural disaster. Refugees often have to travel to other countries to try to seek out help and, hopefully, a new home to live in. It can be a very difficult and dangerous journey. The photographer said that he cried when he took the photograph, as he felt terrible for the children without a home and the uncertain situation that they were in. But he felt that it was important to take the photograph to let people around the world know about the children's difficult journey and try to change things for the better.

Mauricio Lima

Brazil born 1975

Refugees watch a huge plume of smoke as dozens of fires burn huts and makeshift shops at the camp called the 'Jungle', in Calais, northern France. October 26, 2016.

2016

type C photograph

Courtesy of The New York Times

The events at the 'Jungle' refugee camp in Calais remain a long-term festering wound in European life. The camp was started in 2015 during the climax of the recent European migrant crisis; it was eventually shut down by the French government in October 2016, after several unsuccessful attempts earlier that year. Seen here by photojournalist Lima in a nightmarish, Goya-esque light – if light is the right word – young men with backpacks containing all their worldly goods watch helplessly as the camp they had helped build goes up in flames.

Pablo López Luz

Mexico born 1979

San Diego – Tijuana XI, Frontera USA–Mexico

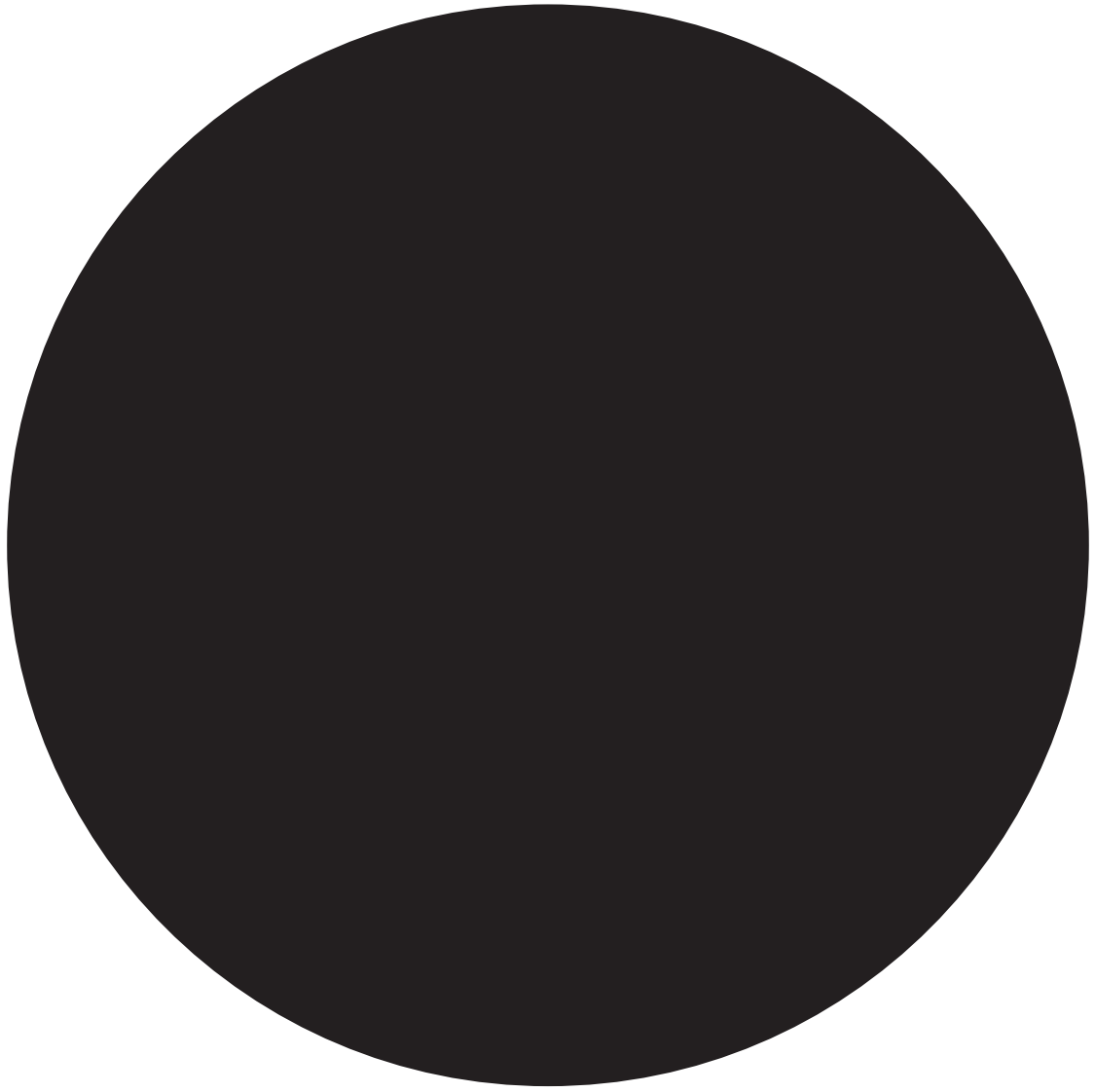
from the *Frontera* series

2015

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Luz's two-year *Frontera* project sought to spark a conversation by approaching the contentious subject of the USA–Mexico border from a fresh perspective. Entering the *political* space by exploring the original imposition of the *territorial* boundary, Luz used the height afforded by a helicopter to take this photograph, which suggests that we need vivid imagery to tackle abstract notions. The border, therefore, appears as a visual as well as symbolic scar in the topography and social construct of the region. This barrier, inscribed in nature, has permeated the collective imagination of border societies.



Escape

Escape is sometimes used as a term to describe breaking free from some form of physical or emotional confinement, or generally fleeing any dire or merely disagreeable situation. For people fleeing war and conflict, escape has literal meaning. For the privileged inhabitants of the world, the term has a positive connotation: 'getting away from it all'. We search for diversion, relaxation and rest, or novelty, adventure and excitement. A pleasure business has blossomed, offering a spectacular array of 'products' to its avid consumers around the globe while providing rich inspiration for photographers as they pull back the curtain on this costly industry.

Olaf Otto Becker

Germany born 1959

Point 660, 2, 08/2008 67°09'04''N, 50°01'58''W, Altitude 360M

from the *Above Zero, Greenland* series

2008

pigment print

Courtesy of the artist

Becker issued this wake-up call on the unfolding environmental disaster in the Arctic more than a decade ago, and since then the problems have only accelerated. The images of this area that have been lodged in the collective imagination for centuries – of unbroken vistas of pristine snow, prowling polar bears and basking seals – are now a thing of the past. The reality today includes submarines and icebreakers looking for profitable routes for exploitation, and tourists on brief forays onto the ice from well-heated cruise ships, hunting for photographs to show off back home.

ZHANG Xiao

張曉

China born 1981

Coastline No. 2

from the *Coastline* series

2009

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist and Blindspot Gallery

China has 18,000 kilometres of coastline, and Zhang has made a project of photographing life along it and, at holiday times, within it, as millions of citizens escape briefly from dense city living. When he was a child, Zhang was drawn to the sea and its mysteries, which he felt were eternal: 'I still feel the same. I come here to seek those strong emotions and rich imagery, and perhaps there are also disappointments. The sea is the beginning of lives and dreams; at the same time, I am looking for the homeland in my heart.'

Reiner Riedler

Austria born 1968

Wild River, Florida

from the *Fake Holidays* series

2005

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

True wilderness is hard to come by in an era when planetary civilisation's colonising powers reign supreme. Perhaps people instinctively, if somewhat dimly, recall our species' thousands of years of struggle with the forces of nature, when we had only our pantheistic deities to protect us, and still crave a touch of the real thing. The 'Wild Rivers' of our most elaborate amusement parks are places where people negotiate turbulent currents overlooked by towering mountain crags and primeval forests. The rides give the illusion of controlling nature, yet actually move on pre-determined tracks.

Simon Roberts

United Kingdom born 1974

Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, Shoreham Air Show, West Sussex, UK

from the *Merrie Albion – Landscape Studies of a Small Island* series

2007

type C photograph

Courtesy Flowers Gallery, London & New York

In all Roberts's photographs, he makes use of the grand overview, recording people as formal patterns within the landscape. Each photograph situates an event in a pictorial vista from an elevated viewpoint, a strategy familiar from landscape painting. In fact, the pictures are often taken from the roof of Roberts's motorhome. As a result, the viewer is often placed at a discreet distance and elevation from the subject, separating them from the action as detached, critical viewers. In essence, the photographer attempts to map patterns that are not possible to see from a position within the crowd.

An-My Lê

South Vietnam born 1960

**Film Set ('Free State of Jones'),
Battle of Corinth, Bush, Louisiana**

from *The Silent General* series

2015

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris

An-My Lê's photograph is taken on the set of an American Civil War–era film, *Free State of Jones* (2016), which tells the story of a Confederate Army deserter. This image, like so many of Lê's works, oscillates through time and space. The imagined past and workaday present sit side by side, prompting the question: when does history end and the present begin? The popularity of war stories in popular culture would in some ways suggest that the raw materials of – race, class, labour and capital – of America's bloodiest war are still deeply enmeshed in the physical landscape and the fabric of American society today.

Sarah Pannell

Australia born 1988

The newly built Al Sahaba Mosque dominates the old market area of Sharm El Sheikh, one of the main cultural attractions for tourists holidaying in the Red Sea town

from the *I Feel Like I Know You* series 2018

2018, printed 2019

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist, Melbourne

In March 2018, Sarah Pannell travelled to Egypt to explore the shifting state of the country's tourism industry in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings that took place at the start of the decade. Having encountered images of this mosque in her preparatory research, she was drawn to photograph it as an example of the industry in transition: 'Inspired by traditional Ottoman style architecture, Al Sahaba represents the new era of Islamic design ... The Al Sahaba Mosque offers an additional appeal for tourists looking for a modern cultural, architectural and religious landmark ... We have this perception of Egyptian culture, which is predominantly shaped by popular culture. But, actually going to modern-day Egypt, you are treated with a completely different image.'

Sheng-Wen LO

羅晟文

Taiwan born 1987

Diergaarde Blijdorp Rotterdam, The Netherlands (2016)

from the *White Bear* series

2016

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

As the artist says, this series 'depicts polar bears on display in their artificial habitats around the world; I attempt to engage with dilemmas concerning captive animal programmes ... As natural habitats are being destroyed, it may be reasonable to keep certain species in controlled environments; however, I think it is questionable whether some results are a true reflection of the original motive. The existence of captive white bears embodies this ambiguity. Promoted as exotic tourist-magnets (mega fauna), the bears stand at the point where the institutions' mission of conservation, research and education is challenged by their interest in entertainment.'

Richard Misrach

United States born 1949

Untitled (November 9, 2013, 9:49am)

from the *On the Beach* series

2013

pigment print

Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Alone-ness (as opposed to loneliness) is a state of being that's increasingly hard to come by in a civilisation constantly on the move, resource-rich but time-poor, and always encouraging groupthink, sharing and 'community'. 'Like', don't think. Misrach reminds us of the value of such moments of solitude, as far from the madding crowd as it is possible to be yet embraced and buoyed up by nature.

Jeffrey Milstein

United States born 1944

Caribbean Princess

from the *Cruise Ships* series

2014

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Pilot and photographer Jeffrey Milstein is a master of the directly-above vantage point, which here transforms mammoth objects – often referred to as ‘floating leisure palaces’, with correspondingly ennobling names of ‘Princess’, ‘Majesty’ and ‘Royal’ – into what appear to be intricate toys. These vessels, some of modern civilisation’s most intricate and cleverly designed artefacts, contrast sharply with the often makeshift rafts launched by refugees.

Jeffrey Milstein

United States born 1944

Carnival Sensation

from the *Cruise Ships* series

2013

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

For kids

This is another photograph that has been taken from above, from the sky looking down. The photographer is a pilot who takes photographs while flying small planes or helicopters. This photograph was taken while he was flying above the ocean. The image shows the top of a cruise ship, which is a huge passenger ship that takes people on holidays all around the world. There can be a big environmental impact from ships like this, as they can contribute large amounts of pollution to the air and sea.

What can you see in the details of this photograph? What can you recognise on board the ship?

Massimo Vitali

Italy born 1944

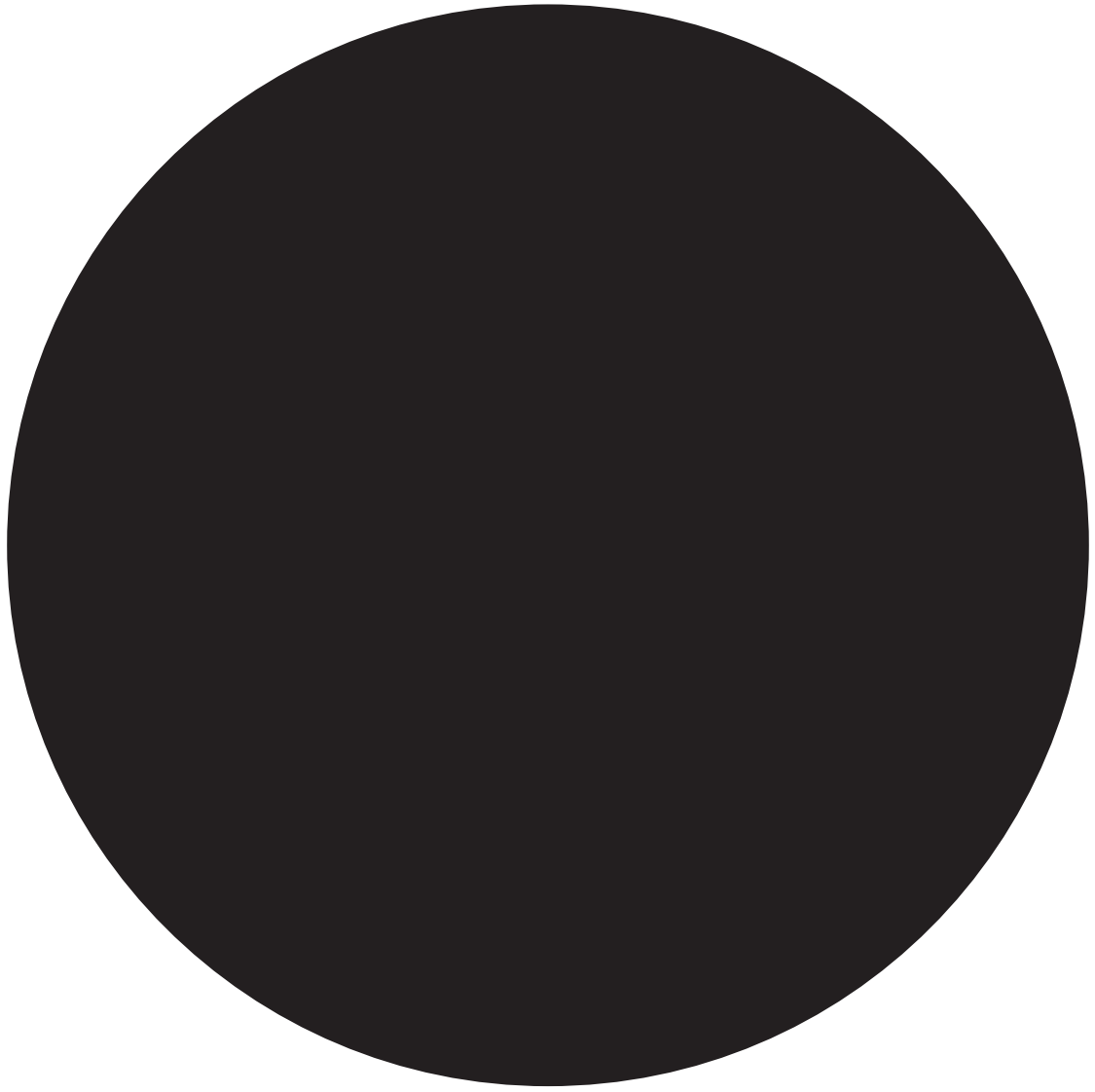
Piscinao de Ramos

2012

lightjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Vitali's photograph of a blinding white sand beach and bathers speaks of a global collective rite. The photographer's primary focus is, of course, the colourful crowd, and he brings his horizon line nearly to the top edge of the composition to accommodate it, thus reversing the usual perspective of a vast ocean stretching to the horizon. Each year, millions still take pleasure in this simple escape from daily routines, sharing the desire to 'get away from it all', but actually, often, craving the companionship of others.



Next

'What's next?' We ask ourselves this daily. Driverless cars are here and planes are on the near horizon, while robots already mow our lawns and operate on our bodies – often doing a more reliable job than our fellow humans. Once the stuff of sci-fi fantasy, new technologies now move in short order from laboratories to consumer shelves. We expect innovation and change in every area of our lives. But who dares to predict what our world, its cities and machines, will look like in 2100? And what will we look like? What is clear is that this brave new world is increasingly a collective endeavour. Photographers look for signs of this not-so-distant world; they locate the seeds being sown and the plant forms sprouting everywhere.

Olaf Otto Becker

German born 1959

**Supertree Grove, Gardens by the Bay,
Singapore 10/2012**

from the *Reading the Landscape* series

2012

pigment print

Courtesy of the artist

Olaf Otto Becker

Germany born 1959

Nature Trail, Gardens by the Bay, Singapore, 10/2013

from the *Reading the Landscape* series

2013

pigment print

Courtesy of the artist

Given the realities of global warming, there is a serious need to deal with nature in highly innovative ways in order to survive as a species. The vast Gobi desert, for example, is the fastest moving desert on earth, swallowing up over 2000 square kilometres of land annually and destroying many villages in its path. While poorer nations may face devastation, wealthier nations may be content to move indoors, developing efficient technologies to create highly artificial 'natural' environments, like Singapore's Gardens by the Bay, or the Eden Project in the United Kingdom.

Richard Wallbank

United Kingdom born 1982

Heliconius sara mutant (ventral) 1_5

Heliconius sara mutant (ventral) 3_15

Heliconius sara mutant (dorsal) 1_19

Heliconius sara mutant (dorsal) 3_15

2016

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

New CRISPR (specialised stretches of DNA) technology has enabled these *Heliconius sara* butterflies from the tropics of Panama to be genetically edited for the first time, altering their black wing patterning and revealing the function and importance of specific underlying genes. Genetic engineering, genetic manipulation ... What could go wrong? The ethical implications of genetic engineering and genetic manipulation are certainly profound, and raise many complex questions for humanity.

Simon Norfolk

Nigeria born 1963

An anechoic chamber at EADS Astrium, Toulouse. Used for simulating the deadness of outer space during a satellite's pre-launch testing.

2006

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Norfolk has a profound interest in technology, though he is sceptical of the uses to which it is put, particularly when embraced by the military. Once asked if his approach was 'documentary' or 'poetic', he replied, quoting the philosopher Francis Bacon, 'Documentary is poetry. The contemplation of things as they are without substitution or imposture, without error or confusion is in itself a nobler thing than a whole harvest of invention.'

Simon Norfolk

Nigeria born 1963

**The Compact Muon Solenoid cavern
part of the Large Hadron Collider at
CERN in Geneva.**

2010

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

What are the great questions of contemporary physics? What is the Higgs Boson and what does it tell us about the origins of the universe? The role of CERN is to get to such fundamentals. The Large Hadron Collider is the biggest machine man has ever built to date. It was built to study the tiniest of things – subatomic particles. This particle accelerator is twenty-seven kilometres in circumference and is buried 175 metres under the ground near Geneva. More than 3000 scientists apply themselves to furthering our knowledge of the structure of the universe.

Michael Najjar

Germany born 1966

f.a.s.t.

from the *outer space* series

2017

hybrid photography, pigment print

Courtesy of the artist

What could be more futuristic than looking for other-worldly civilisations? The work of photographer and astronaut-in-training Najjar depicts the largest astronomical radio telescope on earth. In 2016, China built this staggeringly large instrument, called the 'Five-hundred-metre Aperture Spherical Telescope', in the remote and barely accessible southern mountainous region of the country. It can be tilted by computer to change the focus on different parts of the universe. Radio telescopes use a large parabolic dish to collect radio waves from distant sources. However, one of the main objectives of the instrument is to detect interstellar communication signals – signals from alien civilisations.

Michael Najjar

Germany born 1966

orbital ascent

On 17 November 2016 at 10.06 local time an Ariane 5 rocket was launched into orbit from Guiana Space Centre.

from the *outer space* series

2016

hybrid photography, pigment print

Courtesy of the artist

In this photograph, Najjar describes the ways in which he is concerned with 'the latest developments in space exploration and the way they will shape our future life on Earth, in Earth's near orbit and on other planets. Today the human species is facing growing threats on planet Earth, including overpopulation, climate change, diminishing resources, and shortages in the energy, food and water supply.' He feels that the survival of the human species might rely on terraforming, and that we 'need to extend our existential framework of reference from one that is purely Earth-bound to one which includes Earth's orbit and outer space in general'.

Vincent Fournier

Burkina Faso born 1970

Ergol #1, S1B clean room, Arianespace, Guiana Space Center [CGS], Kourou, French Guiana

from the *Space Project* series

2011

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Vincent Fournier has long nurtured a fascination with space travel. He has photographed many of its sites, including the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Russia, the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, and the Spaceport in French Guiana. However, his interest is not documentary. Although the images are certainly rooted in reality, it is instead the dream aspect that drives him – a collective dream he believes much of humanity shares. The astronauts he has photographed, dwarfed by their high-tech environments, are ready for their leap off the earth but nonetheless tethered to it.

Reiner Riedler

Austria born 1968

Humanoid robot 'Rollin' Justin', DLR German Aerospace Center, Institute of Robotics and Mechatronics, Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany.

from the *WILL* series

2016

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Riedler has long been fascinated with robots and here shares a vision of the near future when many of us will quite happily embrace the technology, once we comprehend its advantages – and if the price is right. Sweeping a floor will be one age-old human activity quite readily placed on the shoulders of such humanoid relatives. Researchers at the Future of Humanity Institute at Oxford have been pondering humanity's deep future and its existential risks, including the analysis of superintelligence, human enhancement, transhumanism and anthropics – raising questions around whether innovation will outpace caution as we move forward.

For kids

This robot's nickname is 'Rollin' Justin' because of the way it moves on wheels, not robotic legs. It was built in Germany in 2009 to be used in space. It helps repair satellites and helps astronauts aboard the International Space Station. As you can see in this photograph, though, 'Rollin' Justin' can also help with daily chores, such as sweeping the floor!

If you had a robot to help you at home, what things could you ask it to do? Do you think we will be living with robots by the time you are an adult?

David Maisel

United States born 1961

Interior, Referee Module 2, whole system live agent test chamber (5370_04), Dugway Proving Ground, Utah

from the *Proving Ground* series

2014

inkjet print

Courtesy the artist and Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York / Haines Gallery, San Francisco / Ivorypress Gallery, Madrid

‘Proving Ground’ seems to have a double meaning: the evident reading of a test site, and the more metaphorical reading in which one might ask, with all these weapons we so fervently strive to develop, what are humans trying to prove? That we are capable of self-annihilation?

Murray Ballard

United Kingdom born 1983

Patient Care Bay (Bigfoot dewar being filled with liquid nitrogen), Alcor Life Extension Foundation, Scottsdale, Arizona. October 2006

from *The Prospect of Immortality* series

2006

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Ballard gives us a less-than-hi-tech vision of what seems to be almost science fiction. Cryonics is the practice or technique of deep-freezing the bodies of people who have just died in the hope that scientific advances may allow them to be revived in the future. The Alcor Life Extension Foundation claims to be the world leader in cryonics, cryonics research and cryonics technology. Alcor is a non-profit organisation located in Scottsdale, Arizona, founded in 1972. The 'Bigfoot dewar' is a container that can store four whole-body cryonics patients.

Valérie Belin

France born 1964

Untitled (Models II)

from the *Models II* series

2006

pigment prints

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

The *Models II* series from 2006 comprises twelve photographs of young models – six boys and six girls – chosen from catalogues proposed by various modelling agencies. A selection of four is shown here. In contrast to the ‘anthropometric’ method Belin chose for her earlier series of portraits, on this occasion she worked from a preconceived idea of the subject in order to create a stereotype. What emerges from this series is a particular aesthetic, which brings to mind the avatars used to represent humans in virtual worlds. One could also say that this is a series of portraits of chimerical beings.

Richard de Tscharner

Switzerland born 1947

Coexistence dans l'indifférence

from the *Sudan* series

2010

pigment print

Courtesy of Fondation Carène

Landscape photographer de Tscharner has long been fascinated by the traces left by previous civilisations on the land. Today's civilisation runs past these great pyramids – indifferent to them, as the photographer suggests in his title – as we rush from Point A to Point B. Will the accomplishments of our own civilisation still be visible thousands of years hence? The paltry asphalt road and flimsy telephone poles suggest that this is unlikely.

Irene Kung

Switzerland born 1958

Grande Arche Paris

from *The Invisible City* series

2007

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Irene Kung

Switzerland born 1958

Gherkin London

from *The Invisible City* series

2008

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Irene Kung

Switzerland born 1958

IAC Gehry NY

from *The Invisible City* series

2010

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Irene Kung

Switzerland born 1958

Torre Velasca

from *The Invisible City* series

2010

inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist

Kung's series' title is inspired by the highly imaginative book by author Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*. This is fitting as, like Calvino, Kung cleverly tempers reality with a fertile imagination. The buildings are real – and iconic – but the treatment is dreamlike, as if the structures exist on a planet far, far away, or have yet to be realised. Possibly, the cities to come will copy these forms – to some extent, at least. But it is more than likely that new materials and technologies will throw up as yet undreamt forms.

Toshio SHIBATA

柴田 敏雄

Japan born 1949

Hino Town, Tottori Prefecture, 2009

2009

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist

Shibata is interested in people, but he likes indirect representation, an approach 'that feels as if someone were there'. Shibata chooses infrastructure as the main subject for his photography. Usually, by its nature, infrastructure is considered as *serviceable* – the opposite of art. But it represents the time and space of an era, and grasps something of daily life. To Shibata, infrastructure incorporates many elements of landscape, such as environment, economic conditions and technology. His perspectives are truly unusual and disorienting. He forces *us* to decipher his images.

Andreas Gefeller

Germany born 1970

FR 23

from the *Blank* series

2014

inkjet print

Courtesy Thomas Rehbein Galerie

Located in Seoul, South Korea, the remarkable office tower GT Tower East was designed by the Dutch architectural firm ArchitectenConsort, based in Rotterdam. With its elegantly undulating glass facade, the new high-rise brings a clear challenge to the angular architecture of the Korean capital. We are likely to see many new forms of architecture in the twenty-first century. Built space expresses a society's material and political priorities. By documenting structures of prosperity in a technically highly developed society, Gefeller aims to offer a telling glimpse of the present impasse in finding habitation for everyone worldwide while also preserving the planet.

Robert Zhao Renhui

Singapore born 1983

Unbreakable egg

A company in Japan has developed a technique to create eggs that are so strong that they cannot be broken. The only way to access its contents is to puncture a hole in its shell with a pointed tool. The egg was created by adding the plant protein of a banyan tree to a chicken, thus creating an egg with a bark-like texture.

from the A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World series
2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghArt Gallery

Robert Zhao Renhui

Singapore born 1983

Painted molly, Rainbow Star Warrior variant

There are several methods to create artificial colours in fish and certain methods remain well-kept industrial secrets. A recent method is the use of dye lasers to tattoo aquarium fish with patterns, colours and text. It is similar to a method dating back to 1975 used by scientists to monitor movements of fish in the wild by marking them. The Rainbow Star Warrior variety created in Singapore in 2002 uses a sophisticated version of the dye laser to create colourful mollies with as many as 256 colours.

from the *A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World* series
2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghArt Gallery

Robert Zhao Renhui

Singapore born 1983

Cauliflower

The cauliflower is arguably the most modified plant in the world. Its exact origins cannot be determined, though it has been classified in the mustard family. Common types of food deriving from this family include broccoli, cabbage and brussels sprouts.

from the *A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World* series
2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghArt Gallery

Renhui has dedicated his career to exploring questions of humanity's relationship to nature. A selection of works from his project *A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World* alerts us to the futuristic, genetically modified species that are already among us. Renhui's complete project comprises fifty-five real species of plants and animals, often ignored by traditional scientific discourse, which have been affected by aesthetic, genetic, evolutionary or ecologic influences. By choosing to not show these common plants and animals in a naturalistic environment, the artist emphasises the artificial origins of these species, designed for study, commerce or entertainment.

Robert Zhao Renhui

Singapore born 1983

Square apple

Sold in a department store in South Korea, these square apples were created as gifts for students taking the College Scholastic Ability Test, with some inscribed with the words 'pass' or 'success'. A similar square watermelon was developed in Japan in the 1980s. The cubic fruits are created by stunting their growth in glass cubes.

from the A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World series
2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghArt Gallery

Robert Zhao Renhui

Singapore born 1983

Moon dust (ash belonging to 103 species of insects collected from a lamp cover)

Less than 4% of Singapore exists in total darkness after 10pm. Insects are attracted to artificial light sources, though no one knows exactly why. The insects are usually killed by exhaustion or through contact with the heat from lamps. After being incinerated, their bodies become a heap of ash, collected in the covers of street lamps. The ash, also referred to as 'moon dust', is used by scientists to study the ecological impact of light pollution on insects.

from the *A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World* series
2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghArt Gallery

Robert Zhao Renhui

Singapore born 1983

Fluorescent zebrafish

A zebrafish encoded with a green fluorescent protein originally extracted from a jellyfish was developed by a team of scientists in Singapore in 1999. The goal was to develop a fish that could detect pollution by fluorescing in the presence of environmental toxins. They are the first commercially available genetically modified fish and are widely sold as novelty pets in the United States today.

from the *A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World* series
2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghArt Gallery

Robert Zhao Renhui

Singapore born 1983

Painted Indian glassy fish, Mekong Deep Blue variant

Certain species of ornamental aquarium fish have been artificially coloured to appeal to consumers. Different colours can be applied through 'juicing' the fish, in which the creature is injected with a hypodermic syringe containing a colour dye. In aquascaping competitions around Asia, the 'Mekong Deep Blue' variety is patented and highly sought after by aquascaping enthusiasts.

from the *A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World* series
2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghArt Gallery

Robert Zhao Renhui

Singapore born 1983

Man-made grapes

Artificial grapes made from gelatin, grape flavouring and artificial colouring have been passed off as real grapes in roadside markets in China.

from the *A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World* series
2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghArt Gallery

Robert Zhao Renhui

Singapore born 1983

Fake beef

It has recently been found in China that pork has been made to aesthetically look like beef. 'Beef colouring' and 'beef extracts' were added to pork to make it look and taste like beef.

from the *A Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the World* series
2013

type C photograph

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghArt Gallery