

VIEWfinders

English-Speaking Photography Club of Brussels
Newsletter no. 176, June 2011

25.07.2011

Newsletter Deadline

21.09.2011
Next Meeting

Lazy Summer Afternoons



Constanze Veeh

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We look forward to seeing you all, old and new, at the British School of Brussels, Leuvensesteenweg 19, 3080 Tervuren. Doors open at 7.00 pm. For directions, feel free to contact Caroline Hendry at 067 876 469 or visit our homepage.



2

May Meeting Review June Meeting Preview

June Meeting Preview

Welcome, one and all, to the preview of what our June meeting has in store. As it is the last meeting of the season, we'll begin with the Annual General Meeting. The AGM is where you have a chance to see what your favourite photography club committee has been up to during the past season, and learn

about some of the behind-the-scenes things that have been prepared to help keep our club thriving in the next. We also have to elect the committee for next season (candidates please make yourself known to me any time prior to the meeting). The main act of the evening is the members' portfolio presentation: Jorg Tagger, Olivia de Vos, Ewa Iwicka, Pat Temmerman (Leuven Day) and yours truly will show some of our favourite images from our respective collections, for feedback and discussion.

Next to this – also very importantly – there's the traditional end-of-season Eating, Drinking and Merrymaking (for tomorrow we're Dieting – sorry Bill). The free bar will help with the Drinking bit, but please bring along some easy-to-eat

finger food to help with the Eating – the Merrymaking doesn't usually require much preparation (!). Looking forward to seeing you there!

Alun

The club is currently looking for

- a **Programme Coordinator** (looking for and inviting guest speakers, planning the club meetings' programme)
- a **Newsletter Producer** (Newsletter layout and logistics)

If you are interested in one (or both) of these positions, please contact Alun Foster!

May Meeting Review

Aside from the usual announcements, the May club meeting was completely dedicated to the work of Stephen Sack, our guest presenter for the evening. Stephen is an American art-photographer who has been living (and working) in Brussels for the past 30 years. Where most of our guest speakers show their work through a formal presentation (usually digitally projected via the beamer), Stephen took a completely different approach. He pushed some tables together, laid out his work (multiple catalogues of prints), and invited us to gather around and grab some prints to have a look, while he explained in detail the ideas behind his work.

The multitude of photographic series he has made over the years all have a very different look, yet a lot of them share a similar basic concept. For his series "The Metal Mirror" he made macro photographs of old, deteriorated coins, for which he worked very closely with the British Museum in London and the Cabinet des Médailles in Brussels, where he could use their numismatic collections as the basis of his work. By taking macro images of them, Stephen was able to transform these relics of the past into something new and exciting: revealing strange creatures and ghosts, living in a shadowy world. As with many of his series, the initial inspiration came to him in a dream, after which he starts looking in the real world for objects and items that he can use to realise his vision. This search for the right

"ingredients" can take a very long time, and usually it takes many years until a series is finished.

Some of his earlier work he showed us was "Chromosomic Memory," which actually consists of a number of different series. Again, the concept of time and deterioration transforming items to something new is quite important here. He showed us images of porcelain faces, found on tombstones ("postcards from the dead") for which he travelled to cemeteries all across Europe in the early 80's.



© David Van den Bunder

Also in the "Chromosomic Memory" were images of gargoyles, found on gothic architecture, and which Stephen photographed underneath a microscope;

images of bird droppings that could take on strange and vaguely familiar shapes; and finally images of stereographs from the 19th century, where he stitched both the left and right image together, forming a strange semi-symmetrical panoramic landscape. For this last one he actually looked at thousands of stereographs to select only a few that he found suitable for his work. Stephen applies this rigid selection process to all his series, which is also a reason why they take a long time to complete.

Time almost up, Stephen then had to rush a bit when showing his more recent "Flora Magica" series: flowers submerged in various liquids and pigments, after which he put them in a hot press. This resulting image is something new but still reminiscent of their original form. He then finished off the evening with a sneak preview of his most recent (yet to be exhibited) work.

More (much more!) of Stephen's work can be seen on his website: www.stephensack.com. Please have a look, as the crude, incomplete descriptions I provide in this hastily scribbled writeup won't do it justice.

We will watch out for any of Stephen's future exhibitions, and certainly plan a visit if there is one nearby. At exhibitions he usually makes much bigger prints (1-2m) then he was able to show at the meeting, and those large format prints really should be the preferred way of taking in his work.

David

6 Questions For Pat Temmerman

Pat has been involved with the European photography business since the early 80's and has witnessed first hand the rapid rise of digital imaging. He's been a member of Viewfinders for about 14 years and is a past club president and newsletter editor.



1) *Let's begin at the beginning - how did you get started with photography?*

I first came to Europe as a member of the US Air Force while fulfilling my national service requirements and was fortunate to be stationed just outside Frankfurt Germany. One of my supervisors was an avid photographer and seeing some of his travel photos inspired me to spend some of my hard-earned cash on a very basic SLR. The initial results were really pretty disappointing so I immersed myself in photo how-to books and magazines in order to figure out what I was doing wrong. It turned out it was just about everything. I may have improved since then, although some would dispute this claim. .

2) *Which of your pictures is your personal favourite? Can you tell us why?*



I've always enjoyed shooting more abstract images, those that make the viewer stop and think "what the...". The image I've chosen I call 'Blue Horizon' and was pretty much a grab shot with an auto-everything compact camera while passing through an English airport (Birmingham, Manchester?) several years ago. I noticed how the

light reflected between the two moving sidewalks, stuck the camera down, clicked and kept on walking. Just one of those things.

3) *What genre of photography interests you most?*

This question made me realize that the images that I most enjoy seeing have little to do with what I actually shoot. I'm most drawn to classic B&W portraits and street scenes. For classic portraits I look to George Hurrell, Alfred Steiglitz and Ansel Adams. For street scene photography I'm a big fan of Weegee, Ruth Orkin and a contemporary photographer Juan Buhler. I've recently found Ralf Radermacher, a German photographer who specializes in industrial landscapes in Belgium. His images are outstanding and show HDR photography at its very best. Following

last month's meeting, I've now added Steven Sack to my list.

I make an effort to look at images every day. The sites I visit most frequently are the Magnum photographers photo essays at <http://todayspictures.slate.com>, Ralf Radermacher's industrial images at www.photosight.ru/users/104981/ and Juan Buhler's blog at

3

6 Questions For...

<http://photoblog.jbuhler.com/index.php>

4) *If you had to pick just one camera to shoot with, what would it be?*

Having worked in the photo industry for a number of years, I've managed to acquire a wide range of equipment. I've been through Minolta and Canon and was a Nikon user for several years. I've also been fortunate to dabble with a couple of Leicas, a Speed Graphic 4x5, various Mamiya medium formats and a medium format Pentax 67. Having worked for Pentax Europe for a number of years, I'm pretty much committed to a camera that supports the lenses that I've acquired. I'm currently using the Pentax K7 and waiting for the lottery winnings so I can acquire the K5.

5) *Why do you enjoy Viewfinders? Tell us about the most interesting experience you had with the club.*

Guest speakers: we've been fortunate to have some truly outstanding photographer share their work with us over the years; the incredible landscape workshop in Damme several years ago with Charlie Waite; great club meetings and some very, very talented club members.

6) *Any (photographic) advice you'd like to share with your fellow viewfinders?*

Save your Euros and buy the best lenses that you can find. It's the glass on the front of the camera that determines image quality not the body. Use a tripod whenever you can. After using film for so long, I'm still coming to terms with the fact that it's now all digital, so shoot a lot and delete a lot. Having said that, it's still best to take your time and get the shot right the first time.

Pat chose Constanze Veeh to be the next interviewee.

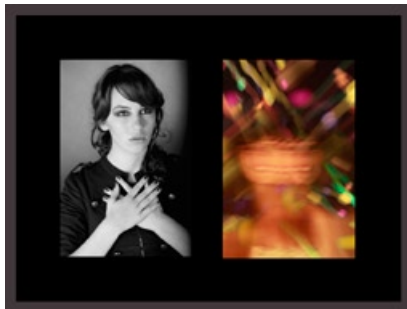
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Club Trips

Cartoon Capers

Trips: Uccle Cultural Centre

On Saturday May 21st, five Viewfinders went to see the Yves Ullens exhibition. Yves (who uses the pen name "Traqueur de lumière" is an 'old' friend of the club: he was judge for a challenge, came to give his story of how he turned professional photographic artist (with a lot of good advice), and gave us a guided tour of his studio in Tervuren. Yves' main artistic works comprises images made by using long exposures and moving lights. His studio is filled with some real high-tech laser and fibre-optic sources, which he captures with great care to yield a variety of completely abstract "lightsapes". The very purposeful composition, tinted with the random influences of nature, induces a range of emotions from the serene to the slightly edgy, made all the more impressive by the large size and immaculate quality of print and frame used to display them.



© Yves Ullens

He now has expanded into portraiture, with a series of very commendable studio portraits of various clients (you can book a day session for 1000 Euro to get a large set of high quality images of yourself, if you want). We had hoped to meet Yves there – it was announced "in the presence of the artist" – but sadly he was not available. Still, we had a very enjoyable visit to the exhibition.

Alun Foster

Trips: International Photo Festival Knokke

Only three of us went to see this annual collection of a huge range of photographic styles, displayed in a number of halls and galleries scattered around the coastal town of Knokke. The main events are an international photography contest (always interesting), solo exhibitions by some photographers of international renown and the Press Photography award winners of 2010.

The latter I always find to be a little depressing: 2010 was a year, more than most, tainted by a large number of natural and man-made disasters which yielded more than ever the awful spectacle of man's inhumanity to man. Because of this, no one image stood out as being truly memorable for me, though the general message was clear: while no amount of democracy and proper education will cure all mankind's ills, it would at least be a start...



© Valerie Belin "Black Eyed Susan"

The international photo competition offered a very large number of images to look at and enjoy, though 'international' seemed to be mostly Belgium, Vietnam, Iran and Russia. Still, it is interesting to see the variety of approaches to various subject, 'standard' and not so standard. Visitors are invited to vote for their favourite: mine was a very standard B/W portrait of a young Asian girl combing an elderly lady's hair (her grandmother?). What made this otherwise very standard image special for me was the care with which this intimate moment had been captured: rich shadows and not overly crisp highlights from natural light giving it a softness that echoed the lovingness of the scene, while the exotic (for us) subject reminds us that, fundamentally, mankind is not so bad after all. One (amateur) image as a perfect antidote to the inhuman horrors portrayed by the world's best press photographers...

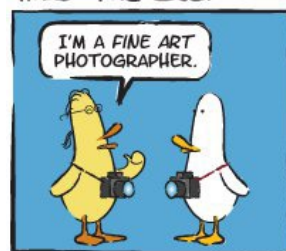
The main theme for the rest of the festival was "future portraits". We visited some interesting presentations of photography and video work by Robert Wilson. Well, video... Large screens projecting video images in a strongly photographic portrait style; models being well-known actors who demonstrated superb skill and patience by moving only very slowly. A rather controversial "love it or hate it" approach and – on reflection – I actually think I rather liked it... Two other things I learned when viewing the images at this festival. Fashion would seem to dictate that – to be among the 'in' crowd' – you need to make your images look like Edward Hopper and/or use photoshop to make them look like brush-painted pictures. The latter was demonstrated with a range of skill, from the blatantly over-the-top 'look what I can do with photoshop' style to the beautifully subtle 'avatars' of Valerie Belin.

An interesting and educational day out!

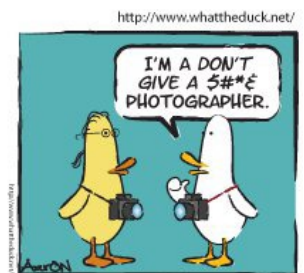
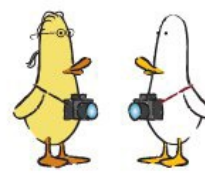
Alun Foster

Cartoon Capers

What The Duck



© 2011 Aaron Johnson, www.whattheduck.net



© 2011 Aaron Johnson, www.whattheduck.net

Photos from the Ostend/De Haan Trip by Caroline Hendry



Jeff Wall "The Crooked Path" @ BOZAR

BOZAR's recently opened Jeff Wall exhibition isn't a retrospective of the oeuvre of one of the most influential artists of the last 40 years – it is closer to a group show, or even more like walking through the artist's notebook. Wall himself co-curated this exhibition, and shows works of art that have influenced him, are connected to his work or put it in context. It's not as obvious as it sounds: the mind is a curious thing moving along the eponymous crooked path - nothing is so straightforward. While you can sometimes see the allusions to other artists' work quite easily, other things may leave you at a loss. To quote Wall: "Complete understanding in art is neither interesting nor very desirable." – and though I would agree with this, I'd still recommend going with one of the guided tours!

The exhibition is on all summer until Sept 11, and is definitely a must-see! For guided visits check the dates on the Bozar website

Constanze Veeh



© Jeff Wall: Insomnia, 1994

5

ClubTrips UsefulTips Exhibition

UsefulTips

I would like to share two tips on how to get legal versions of photosoftware / products with a discount.

Option 1: Attend some online webinars.

This is sometimes quite informative and you get to know what the software or the product can do, and in many cases you get a discount on the product at the end of the session.

One link for Nik software trainings is: www.niksoftware.com/trainings

Option 2: Buy a student license of the software.

This can give you even bigger savings, for example for a legal student version of photoshop you save hundreds of Euros. Here in Belgium there are a lot of schools or academies where you get a student card. I have used the student card for my language course which is a school in the Nederlandstalige Onderwijs, or the student card of my photo academy. Both are evening schools and it was no problems to get this recognized for the student discount. So if you don't have a student card, maybe you have a family member or friend which could order the product for you. One disadvantage is that in many cases you cannot upgrade your software with the cheaper upgrade licence.

Martin Schmid

6

Workshop News Upcoming Events Committee Contacts

Workshop News

Regular meeting attendees will remember Gina van Hoof's wonderful presentation of some of her personal travel photography projects, and the short but interesting demonstration of some of her hand-made photo books. Gina has decided to set up a workshop on the subject of making your own books. The workshop costs 180€ for 3 sessions, to take place in the 2nd half July / August at a date agreed with attendees. If you are interested, contact Gina at gvanhoof@gmail.com

Alun Foster (your club president this season) also offers "tutorials": short, 2 hour hands-on sessions aimed to help the occasional or beginning photographer get the best out of their camera, be it an SLR or even simple compact. Focused mainly on composition and some very basic technical background, "Taking Prettier Pictures" gives some hints and tips to help avoid the usual problems encountered when taking family and holiday photos, and helping to lower the threshold for those wishing to follow more extensive workshops. These tutorials have usually been given "on demand" to private organizations, but Alun is opening them up to Viewfinders members this summer. They cost 25€ per person (VF membership rate) and will take place in August, subject to demand, on a date(s) to be agreed with those interested. If you are interested, see <http://www.dafos.be/Tutorials.html> for more details or contact Alun on alun@dafos.be.

And of course check <http://www.trevorwaldron.com> or <http://www.aspect2i.co.uk> for Trevor's upcoming workshops and <http://www.creatifimage.be/> for workshops from Michael Chia.

End-of-season nibbles

The June meeting is a traditional time for some extra-curricular festive activity, in the form of some food and drink in accompaniment to polite and engaging conversation with fellow Viewfinders members. The drink is provided by the club, free of charge for this special occasion, but please bring along something to eat and share with your fellow members. Nothing complicated! Anything that can be eaten with the fingers will do.

Caroline

Upcoming Events

15 June 2011	Club Meeting	AGM and Member's Portfolio Evening
18 June 2011	Club Dinner	Annual Club Dinner (details tbc)
19 June 2011	Club Trip	Charleroi Photography Museum (details tbc)
02 July 2011	Club Trip	Mons, Guided Tour and BBQ. Check email for further details.
30 – 31 July	Club Weekend Trip	Wine tasting & walking trip in the German Ahtal

You can see the complete Club calendar on the web: <http://www.viewfinders.be/calendar>

Viewfinders – Committee 2010/2011



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Any items from members for publication are welcome. Images are particularly welcome, please send them in as jpgs, with no less than 1400 px on the long side, and minimal compression. Please be aware that, in accordance with the layout, some cropping may occur. Please send submissions to the newsletter to newsletter@viewfinders.be