



University of Brighton

FERGUS HERON

LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

Understanding the relationship between
photographer, camera and landscape

RESEARCH OUTPUT



Albion Street
Installation photograph of Heron's 'Albion Street' at the *Present Tense* group exhibition, Phoenix Gallery, Brighton, May-June 2017

Landscape Photography is a body of hand-printed, framed photographs, exhibited in Nottingham, Brighton and Sheffield between 2015-2019.

The work interrogates the process and theory of landscape photography and informs contemporary photographic practice. The output was disseminated in three group exhibitions, complemented and further shared with written material including an essay and gallery texts.

Photographic works were produced and exhibited under the following titles:

- A View of London (2014) [one photograph]
- Albion Street (2017) [two photographs]
- Cawdor (2018) [eight photographs]

Heron drew on the research for his article, 'Built worlds: photography landscape and different natures' (Heron, 2018).

Landscape Photography



A View of London
C type print, 434 x 541 mm

Landscape Photography



Albion Street (View from Studio)
Brighton, 2017
C type print 539 x 433 mm

Landscape Photography



Albion Street (View toward Studio)
Brighton, 2017
C type print 539 x 433 mm

Landscape Photography



Cawdor 2, April, 2018
C type print, 305 x 243 mm

Landscape Photography



Cawdor 3, April, 2018
C type print, 305 x 243 mm

Landscape Photography



Cawdor 4, August, 2019
C type print, 305 x 243 mm

Landscape Photography



Cawdor 5, August, 2018
C type print, 305 x 243 mm

Landscape Photography



Cawdor 8, August, 2019
C type print, 305 x 243 mm

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



Fergus Heron working with large format camera

Fergus Heron's work in landscape photography tests, as an open question, a consideration he makes specific in the complementary text to his output photographs: 'Landscape is something culturally produced and not absolute... Natures are multiple and situated within a spectrum of changing ideas of place in which landscape photographs play a vital role.' (Heron, 2018)

Through his in-depth study of landscape photography's history and theory, Heron also recognises that landscape is actively productive of photographic imagery. The questions asked through practice evolve from a dialogue between location, photographer and the traditions of photography, experimenting with photography as an object of desire, active in defining different natures and ideas of place.

In Landscape Photography, Heron addresses three specific questions:

1. What is the function of photographic strategies of landscape representation in influencing attitudes and beliefs, particularly when exceeding topographic recording of natural scenery that is remote from art and artifice, and when drawing on known works of art?
2. Can photographs as aesthetic artefacts give visible form to feelings of belonging and estrangement in immediately encountered landscape views?
3. How might contemporary photographic techniques be used to concentrate the process of looking and renew interpretations of place?

RESEARCH CONTEXT



**Louis Daguerre, View of
Boulevard du Temple, 1839**
(detail)



**David Spero, Truth of God Church,
Bermondsey 2004**
from *Churches*

The projects produced in this output, 'Albion Street', 'A View from London' and 'Cawdor', were the most recent in a long-term set of investigations by Fergus Heron into how photography pictures strange and familiar places, including 'Charles Church Houses' (1996-2007 and 2009-14) and 'Shopping Centre Interiors' (2003-2013).

As such they were the latest evolution of research that contributes to contemporary photographic practice and a deeper understanding of both the representation of landscape and the function of the photographer in that process.

The output works were rooted in Fergus Heron's critical understanding of the history and tradition of photographic image-making. That history was detailed in the exhibition texts for the outputs, making explicit use of the historic framework. As well as this explicit description, the works visually reference photography by Nicéphore Niépce (1826), Louis Daguerre (1839) and Eugène Atget (c.1920s), photographs by Victor Burgin from the series UK76 (1976) and landscapes by John Davies (c.1980 - Present). Also, the 'Cawdor' series draws on the historic place of a well-known, single landscape photograph by August Sander, titled 'Footpath in the Siebengebirge' (1934).

Contemporary peers that contributed to the visual historical dialogue include David Spero, James Smith, and Thom and Beth Atkinson, who have made work concentrated upon the social and historical significance of photographed urban architecture, and Jem Southam's series, *The Painters Pool* (Southam, 2007). An important theoretical context came from Surrealist theories of photographed deserted streets as evidence for historical occurrences and unconscious places of hidden political significance underpin the work (Benjamin, 1931; Keiller, 2013; Walker, 2007) with theories of photographed urban topography (Deriu et al., 2014) and theories of picturing (Mitchell, 1994; Friday, 2001).

RESEARCH PROCESS



Fergus Heron uses a rigorous, careful and iterative photographic practice which draws on the history and theory of photography, technical and cultural understanding of photograph production and display, and a practising-artist's awareness of photographic intervention in landscape.

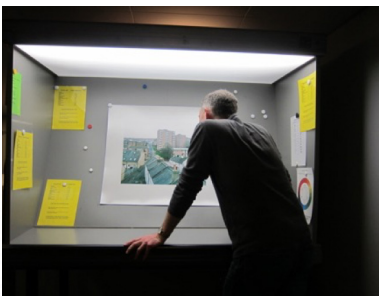
The selection of landscape is determined according to critical and formal criteria, planning for use of optimum and specific available light and suitable 'commonplace' features. The mechanics of the view camera used are equally specific to each photograph, making use of, as appropriate, tripod, blackout, flagging and hooding materials. Camera elevation involved precisely measured verticals to anticipate the wall as a potential space to view the finished picture. Timing is also crucial in the process to eliminate any natural or human movement.



The working process in 'Cawdor' involved repeated visits to the location in the Scottish Highlands. Visits were made across different seasons to observe continuities and changes in the appearance of views. A large format field camera was used with available light to create effects of ordinary seeing and intensified stillness. 'Albion Street' made use of the consciousness of studio and gallery spaces for a photographer, and required careful selection of a reverse viewpoint to bring the experiment to fruition.



Processed negatives for all the output works were contact printed and selected images enlarged as tests for final prints. Final prints were made by hand directly from negative using darkroom processes to produce detailed descriptive pictures to a set of dimensions and border width that, through experimentation, were found to hold the viewers' look.



'Albion Street' had its initial production and final exhibition in the same building (studio and gallery) giving equal significance to each. It also extended and developed a strategy used in earlier series ['Motorways' (2000-2004), 'Shopping Centre Interiors' (2003-2013)] of pairing pictures with opposite points of view, situated side by side, to invite comparative analytical viewing and to emphasise photographic point of view as historically constructed.

Fergus Heron working on Albion Street project

RESEARCH INSIGHTS



Fergus Heron working with large format camera

The insights gained through photographic practice were enhanced through exhibition feedback and responses to presentations.

Through the exhibited images, presentations and his evolving practice, Fergus Heron refined the understanding of culture and technique in landscape photography in several ways:

- recognising the interplay between distinctive topography and the evocation of different senses of nature, perceptions that emerge from environmental processes where humans are not central to relations between living things
- revealing the complexity of relationships between conscious intention and unconscious discovery in the selection of commonplace landscape within its context of photographic history
- ascertaining ways of seeing images of the natural world at a point of tension between distance and proximity
- offering reflection upon how photographs picture place and how people in turn construct ideas of place as pictures
- forming improved understanding of the interrelation between landscape photography's technologies, materials and subjects, and between the subject, photographer, audience and photographic history and tradition
- understanding the physical relationship of the camera to the selected subject and the photographic interest in those subjects, for example the understanding of the camera being derived from architecture and the photosynthetic nature of plants, trees and woodlands corresponding to photographic film and paper
- evaluating the importance of slow, deliberate processes and analogue technologies to concentrate and decelerate looking; considering how far these invite reflection upon the past and offer an imaginative space for the projection of possible futures.

DISSEMINATION

Exhibitions

In Place of Architecture, Group Exhibition, Bonington Gallery, Nottingham, England, 6 November - 11 December 2015. <http://www.boningtongallery.co.uk/exhibitions/inplaceofarchitecture>

Present Tense, Group Exhibition, Phoenix Brighton, curated by Lucy Day. 6 May - 4 June 2017. http://lucyday.co.uk/uploads/7/5/9/7/75975419/present_tense_phoenix_pr_updated.pdf

Northern Light, Yorkshire Art Space, Sheffield, 3 - 21 July 2018. <http://www.northernlight.photos/>

Sussex Open 2018, Group Exhibition, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, selected by Brian Cass, Tom Hammick and Jenny Lund. 21 July - 30 September 2018. <https://www.townereastbourne.org.uk/exhibition/sussex-open-2018/>

Space in Transition, Phoenix Art Space, Brighton, 2019. Curated by Konstantinos Giannopoulos and Kalliopi Skoularioti. <https://www.evensi.uk/special-wednesday-event-space-transition-private-view-phoenix-brighton/308119200>

Text and publication

Deriu, D., Kamvasinou, K. and Shinkle, E. eds. (2014) *Emerging Landscapes: Between Production and Representation*. London: Routledge.

Heron, F. (2018) 'Built worlds: photography landscape and different natures.' Viewpoint Photography and Landscape. The Photographers' Gallery website. <https://thephotographersgallery.org.uk/content/built-worlds-photography-landscape-and-different-natures> (Accessed January 2021)

Discussions and presentations

Present Tense exhibition. Curator and artist discussion, Phoenix Gallery, Brighton, 18 May 2017. Display and discussion, Phoenix Brighton Open Studios, 18-20 May 2018.

Visualising The Home conference. Institute of the Arts, University of Cumbria. 13-14 July 2017. <https://en-gb.facebook.com/pg/Visualising-the-Home-Conference-832162626921621/posts/>

Brighton Photo Fringe during *Brighton Photo Biennial 'A New Europe'* 2018, public artist talk at Phoenix Art Space, Brighton, 22 October 2018.

Heron, F. (2019) 'Pictures with words, words within pictures', *Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCSSA) Annual Symposium, Shaping Knowledge: Encounters Between Word and Image*. University of Kent, 14 June. <https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/shaping-knowledge/programme/>

Landscape Photography

PHOENIX brighton
WE GROW ARTISTS

EXHIBITION IN PHOENIX BRIGHTON NORTH GALLERY

Present Tense

6 May - 4 June 2017 - Free admission
Open: Wednesday - Sunday 11am - 5pm
Late opening: Thursday 18 May to 9 pm (Museums at Night)
Preview: Friday 5 May 6 - 8 pm

An exhibition of works that explore disrupted space: cultural, political, emotional and physical, selected from Phoenix Brighton studio artists.

Curated by Lucy Day

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Jon Carritt & Dan Palmer | Bernard Mills |
| Rachel Cohen | Paul Morley |
| Emma Critchley | Patrick O'Connell |
| Jane Fox | Wendy Pye |
| Caitlin Heffernan | Ruth Rix |
| Oliver Heim | Kiki Steidl |
| Fergus Heron | |

EXHIBITION TOUR
An opportunity to explore the ideas and inspiration behind the exhibition with curator and artists. Stay around afterwards for refreshments and informal conversation.
Thursday 18 May, 6:30 pm in the gallery, free admission.

Don't miss these other events at Phoenix in May:
Artists at Phoenix: Portraits by Manel Ortega - 6 May to 4 June 2017
Open Studios - Sat 13 to Sun 14 May 2017
See website for details

PHOENIX brighton WE GROW ARTISTS phoenixbrighton.org MUSEUMS AT NIGHT

Photo: Fergus Heron. Above: Robert Rouse. Below: Richard Brightman. 2017. Street. Original copyright.

VISUALISING THE HOME

Conference // 13th - 14th July 2017
University of Cumbria
Institute of the Arts

University of Cumbria | Institute of the Arts

Publicity cards

Present Tense
Phoenix Gallery, Brighton,
6 May - 4 June, 2017

Visualising The Home
Institute of the Arts, University of Cumbria,
13-14 July, 2017

REFERENCES

Publications

Atkinson, B., Atkinson T. and Chandler, D. (2015) *Missing Buildings*. Hwæt Books, London.

Benjamin, W. (2009 [1931]) 'A Short History of Photography'. Reprinted in *One Way Street and Other Writings*. (2009) London: Penguin.

Deriu, D., Kamvasinou, K. and Shinkle, E. eds. (2014) *Emerging Landscapes: Between Production and Representation*. London: Routledge.

Friday, J. (2001) 'Photography and the Representation of Vision.' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 59(4), pp 351-362.

Heron, F. (2018) 'Built worlds: photography landscape and different natures.' Viewpoint Photography and Landscape. The Photographers' Gallery website. <https://thephotographersgallery.org.uk/content/built-worlds-photography-landscape-and-different-natures> (Accessed January 2021)

Keiller, P. (2013) 'The Poetic Experience of Townscape and Landscape'. *The View from the Train*. London : Verso.

Mitchell, W.J.T. (1994) *Picture Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Smith, J. (2017) *Memorability as an Image*. Porto: Scopio.

Southam, J. (2007) *The Painter's Pool*. Paso Robles, California: Nazraeli Press.

Spero, D. (2007) *Churches*. Göttingen, Steidl | Mack.

Walker, I. (2007) *So Exotic, So Homemade: Surrealism, Englishness and Documentary Photography*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Williams, V. and Bright, S. (eds.) (2007) *How We Are: Photographing Britain*. London: Tate Publishing.

Exhibitions

Burgin, V. (1986) 'UK76'. *Between*. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts/Blackwell.

(overleaf)
Cawdor 3, April, 2018 (detail)
C type print, 305 x 243 mm

Landscape Photography

