

Around eighty photographers capture over a century of the British seaside in all its raucous, joyful and sometimes seedy glory

Seaside: Photographed

Val Williams and Karen Shepherdson

200 Illustrations

25.0 x 19.5cm

224pp

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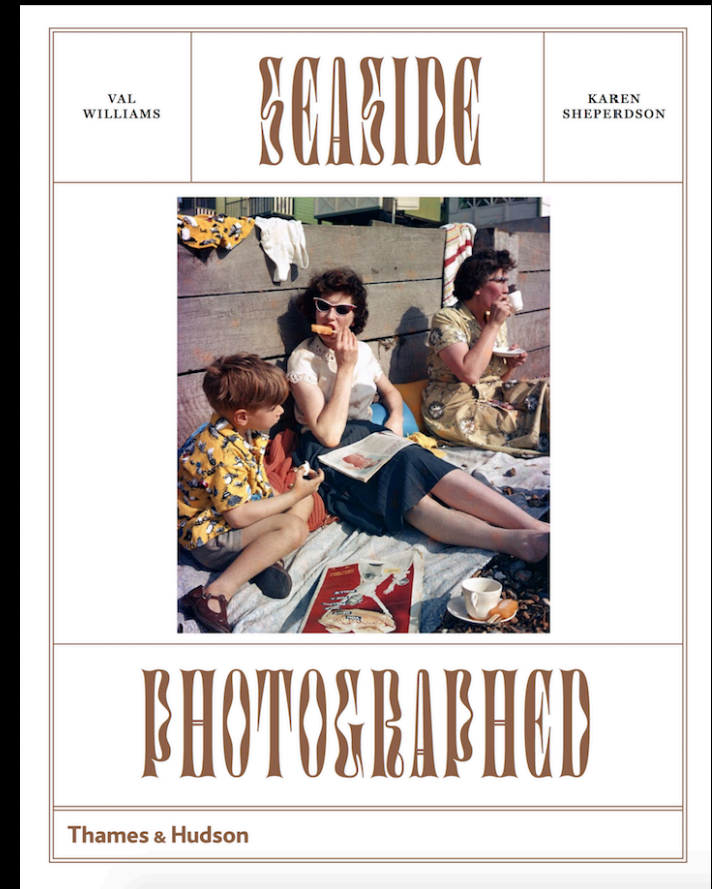
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A4

Book

Provisional



Key Sales Points

- Accompanies a major exhibition at Turner Contemporary, Margate, opening on 24th May
- Showcases the work of around eighty photographers, from the nineteenth century to the present, from the heyday of the classic seaside resort, via the reportage of the 1960s to the critical documentary photos of the '80s and '90s
- Brilliantly portrays the ways photographers have used the British seaside to reflect on the state of the nation through cycles of expansion, decline and regeneration
- Each chapter has an introductory essay with about seven integrated illustrations, followed by a portfolio of images showcasing the work of one particular artist

ROARING WAVES

REPORTAGE

*CRITICAL
DOCUMENTARY*

MEMORIES

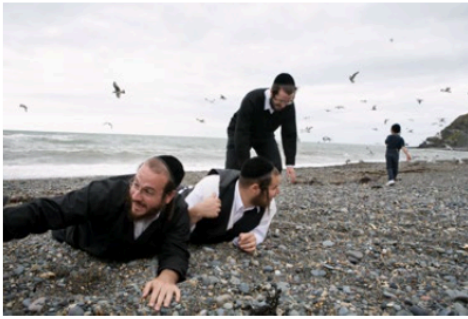
JOURNEYS

*DECLINE AND
REGENERATION*

UTOPIAN VISIONS

ELEGANT
PLAYGROUNDS

DO
YOU
WISH
YOU
WERE
HERE?



CHLOE DEWE MATHEWS
*Hasidic Holiday:
the Annual Trip to
Aberystwyth
2008*

documented, while Eric Patterson's slides, discovered by Jess Kohl in a vacated London flat in Canonbury, gaze at young men photographed at a distance. Patterson's images infused with clandestine longing as bodies are revealed and performed in the open air. Kohl has remarked that:

'These beautiful images range from holiday photos, to family photos, to hardcore gay erotica. One thing that is clear from the slides is that Eric was a promiscuous man in an age where being queer was totally unaccepted. His appreciation for the male form runs throughout his photos. His archive is meticulously organised, some slides include dates and names of people.'

Photo reporters and groups of critical documentarists have also been attracted to the seaside because of this public parade with a myriad of photo opportunities, all set against a background of seafront shabbiness which shows up so well in photographs. Yet within a framework of critical documentary Chloe Dewe-Matthews' finely crafted photographs not only bring us information, but convey the energies and joys of community gatherings. In her photographs of Orthodox Jews holidaying in Aberystwyth, we see the seaside as a canvas choreographed with action and annual rituals played out.

In the past, the photographic seaside postcard was a way of signaling that we were really there. The Caravan Gallery as mischievous cartographers map Britain through picture postcards, exposing the grime and glee of the British seaside as it refuses to conform. Out of season, the seaside is gaunt and a little sad, at peak time it is crowded and raucous, providing a system of opposites no longer really available in the city.

For photographers, dereliction and decline have always been attractive. A boarded-up shop, as can be seen in Hannah Blackmore's series on Ramsgate, is more interesting in surface and texture than a thriving one, and such photographs provoke memories and stir our



THE CARAVAN GALLERY
*Lesbian Sex Scandal,
Skegness
2002*

imagination as we conjure up the bustling trade of the past. Likewise, Julia Horbaschk's wind battered palms on the Worthing seafront say much about the civicness of the seaside, as planting battles against the onslaught of salt-laden winds. Photographers' visions are necessarily partial ones – photographers follow their noses, sniff out the strange and the unusual, the comic and the melancholy. They do not necessarily picture things the way that they are.



JULIA HORBASCHK
*Worthing Palms
July 2017
(from the series:
Time for Trees 2017/18)
July 2017*



ANON, Cased Ferrottype with photographer's assistant holding diffuser, circa 1900



ANON, Part-Cased Ambrotype showing photographer's assistant with diffuser, circa 1880-1890



introduction to John Piper's Camera:

The painter photographer is distinct from the photographer (as is the painter-graver from the printmaker), and a way of looking is demanded at his completed work that is far more critical in terms of content but may not be as perfect in technique. Many of Piper's photographs were taken for the original series of the Shell Country Guides to Britain. One of Piper's, for example, in the series was Edwin Smith, whose work can be contrasted with his as almost the opposite in intention. The kind of subject that they chose was naturally much the same, except that Piper in his volumes was additionally the author (and was responsible for the general attitude of the Guides, for which, from 1960 he was also editor). The similarity draws out the difference. Edwin Smith's are more professional; crisp throughout, unmarked, show the major interest in the place, and no doubt are afterwards archivally stored and identified. The effect of Piper's depends more than do Smith's on their printing, and go beyond the record or the interesting contrast, to become one

EDWIN SMITH
AND OLIVE COOK
The Saturday Book
1952

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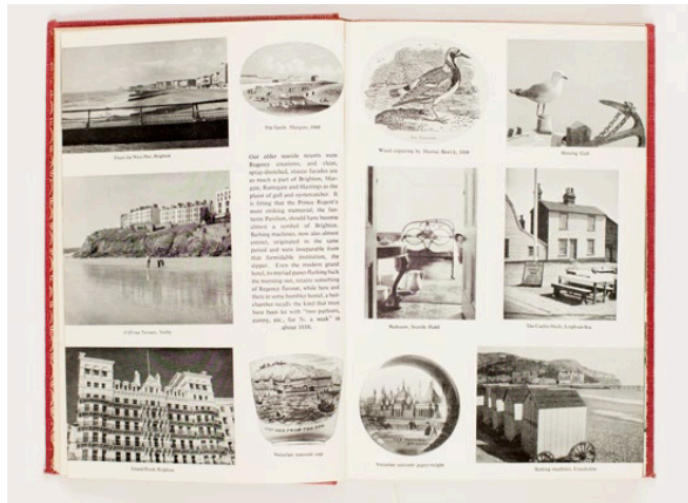
EDWIN SMITH
AND OLIVE COOK
The Saturday Book
1952



*item in the range of a landscape painter with an original point of view.*²³

The Shell guides, under the editorships of Betjeman and Piper, were always more than tourist guidebooks. They discussed both the built architecture and the natural environment of the counties they covered, many of which included the coastline. They were inspired and opinionated editors – quite often Shell would step in and ask them to moderate their criticisms of specific buildings. They were inventive in their use of contributors– documentary photographer Roger Mayne and playwright Anne Jellicoe were commissioned to illustrate and write the 1975 edition of *Devon*, for which Mayne provided all the photographs.

Their attitude to the seaside was ambivalent – Piper certainly preferred to photograph in deep countryside and the guides certainly concealed much of the 'real' seaside of the 1960s and 1970s. But theirs was a view, for better or worse, which has remained central to the British imagination, a romantic sense of being an island, of remoteness, of secret places. When we look at *Dorset* or *Cornwall* or *Devon*, perhaps we are seeing something which was never really there, a collection of components for a very English Shangri-La.





KEITH VAUGHAN · Dick's Book of Photographs · 1939



KEITH VAUGHAN · Dick's Book of Photographs · 1939





PAT GWYNNE
Photographs from the
Archive of Pat Gwynne
1967-71

to family, friends and fellow members of Camera Clubs. While the seaside was not the only location for family photographs, it was certainly the most intense. Amateur photography attracted (or was available to) more men than women, and camera clubs, were dominated by men and arranged around competitions, complex rules and glamour sessions. Many of the photographers who photographed their families in the 1950s and 60s were amateurs only in the sense that photography was not their main occupation. Pat Gwynne was a printer and for a time part of the exclusive Eric Gill community in Sussex, Reginald Slader was a civil servant with a passion for photography, Raymond Lawson, in his capacity as 'parish photographer' was semi-professional. The largely undiscovered history of British amateurs, which has been obscured both by the low status of the 'snapshot' and by attempts to vernacularize, or to make non-professional photography quirky, or ironic, fitting a contemporary agenda. The

story is more complex. Slader, Gwynne and Lawson, in their documentation of family holidays used photography not only to memorialize moments, but also to see what photography could do when presented with the complex notion of the family holiday. Most of the work in these archives is about the beach, about the peculiar English weather, which has families either in swimming costumes or macs. It is about those fantastical scenes that photographs throw up all the time - four bodies framed by the oblongs of towels, as four women absorb the sun with bodies not long released from the chafe of stockings in Gwynne's 'Ruth and Co' from 1967, formalwear on the beach in Reginald's Slader's Isle of Wight, 1965 and the symphony of winged sunglasses in Lawson's Tankerton series. These family archives have been preserved by the photographers' children and grandchildren, nephews and nieces, or, in Lucy Bentham's case, by an artist/curator, in the knowledge that they have importance



PAT GWYNNE
Photographs from the
Archive of Pat Gwynne
1967-71

beyond the social, and a shared conviction that rather than accidental or casual, these are concentrated, and informed, artistic practice.

Archives are slippery, and context is all. Photographer Natasha Caruana found a photograph album that documented her husband's stag party in the English seaside resort of Brighton (from a previous marriage).

'I saved the album from being thrown away in 2015. As I literally picked this out of a black sack I see the item as a found object - which is part of a larger archive I now own.' Caruana gave the album a title: *Ritual Humiliation*. This object, its finding, titling and remodelling as a part of artist's practice throws up many questions. It is an intimate object, slightly battered and fading, and originally consigned to the rubbish dump, an unwanted part of the past as the marriage ended. Brighton, seen for so long as a magnet for the illicit, the alternative, the fun seeking, the criminal has, since the interwar

years, been a magnet for photographers' artists, writers and poets. John Piper was fascinated by it and took many photographs there, as did almost every documentary photographers of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Photographer Lee Miller took artist friends on day trips and Bill Brandt produced a story for *Lilliput* magazine. Paul Theroux wrote about it disapprovingly in *The Kingdom by the Sea*, 'I saw only bums and day trippers'.¹³ And for author Graham Greene in his novel *Brighton Rock* there was only sadness, cruelty and despair. For many LGBTQ men women in the 1950s and 60s, Brighton was, however, a safer place than many. The South Coast Branch of the Minorities Research Group, founded in London in 1963, was in Brighton, and many men and women were drawn to a town where prejudice and persecution was much less severe.¹⁴

In *Ritual Humiliation* Brighton as the destination for a group of young men celebrating Simon Sweetman's impending



ROB BALL
Gari, Jamaica Day
August 2017

their visit to the seaside. Rob Ball decided to revisit itinerant beach photography in 2012:

The Contemporary Itinerant was a reworking of the Victorian beach photographer and will saw the creation of photographic beach portraits using the antique and unique tintype and Polaroid process. Small mobile darkrooms were built in situ, creating a spectacle and allowing viewers to see their portrait shortly after its creation. The work was then displayed in two exhibitions.¹¹

By repositioning itinerant photography as art practice, and setting up his touring studio in locations in Margate and elsewhere, Rob Ball explored the way in which photographer and subject collaborate to create portraits. Shorn of the opportunism and gimmickry

studio and, with broadcaster Clare Mitchell, travelled around the outback in a Buick with a caravan in tow. In the 1970s, Daniel Meadows, Daffyd Jones and Martin Parr all became Butlins holiday camp 'walkies' making and selling portraits to holidaymakers. In the 1990s, both Jason Wilde and photographer Richard Primrose were employed as travelling photographers and salesmen, canvassing for work on London's outer council estates.

Early beach photographers were low in the hierarchy of studio portraiture and right up until their eventual demise, in the 1980s, 'walkies' were seen as just another ploy to separate punter from money. To the proprietors of the land-based studios in nineteenth-century resorts, they must have seemed little better than hawkers. To their customers, they provided a unique service, a way, through the magical, metallic object of the tintype, to create their own memory of



ROB BALL
Savannah, Jamaica Day
August 2017

that entrepreneurial itinerants had to demonstrate as they canvassed among the great seaside crowds of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Rob Ball offered a partnership, a contemporary way of making this collaborative portraiture.

...I began to realise the potential of process for generating ideas/conversations and experiences. Especially, as (at the time more so than now) sitters were speechless when seeing their images appear in the fix. Some of the younger sitters hadn't even seen a film camera, let alone a large format one in a studio setup. I carried this one a reproduced at Turner with a yurt as a darkroom and at Dreamland. People were surprised, engaged, flattered and always willing to take part. The large camera creates a kind of formality to the interaction

(hence the often serious poses) and feels more like a collaboration as the sitter has the opportunity to pose/sit as they wish. Of course, when the image appears, reversed, they are often surprised and looking at the selves in a way they haven't seen before. Collodion is primarily sensitive to UV, so freckles/sun damage is more prominent. The added element of the mobile darkroom was used at Walpole Bay / Jamaica Day – this was me riffing off The Victorian portrait photographer and created more of a happening as we had a base, were more obviously in the landscape and perhaps even more unexpected. The Jamaica shoot was perhaps the most interesting as the audience/sitters seemed most surprised to see us there. The plate camera provided a sense of spectacle and the kids enjoyed looking

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