

**MAGAZINE MEMOIRS: CREATIVE CAMERA AND ALBUM, 1968-1972**

*Written for the conference, "What Happened Here?: Photography in Britain since 1968", at the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford, England, 14 October 2004.*

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The conference organizers have given me a specific brief, which I will do my best to fulfill: "We would like you to map important developments in photography from 1968 within the magazine and publishing world...and most specifically your role within *Creative Camera*."

The latter half of this charge necessitates that this essay will be in the nature of a memoir.

But, as any historian will assert, the least useful sources for objective information are the participants in an event. So I am hesitant to assert that this will constitute The Truth about the early years of *Creative Camera* and what it was like to edit the magazine at the beginning of its life. Facts become warped by the passage of time; objectivity becomes swamped with subjective emotions; like images in a family album, memory is selective and emphasizes the positive.

I hope this will not be seen as an exercise in nostalgia because along with the heady excitements and occasional satisfactions came a sobering dollop of embarrassments, strategic errors, and awkward failures. I was young, inexperienced and naive and passionate about photography. It was like being a teenager, head over heels in love with a girl whom everyone else considered a klutz. I was quick to rush to the defense of every, even imagined, slight to her honor. And who has not made a fool of himself in such circumstances? Photography was my first love. I could not understand why everyone else did not share my passion, let alone ignore her or, worse still, disparage her virtues.

It is difficult to impart a sense of this mixture of heady excitement and embarrassing righteousness without saying a few words about the state of the photography world in Britain during the mid-1960s, for those who have come to photographic maturity in a

totally different environment, where photography is now a rich, diverse, respected and supported medium. 'Twas not always so...

To set the scene, back in the mid-1960s there was not a single gallery in the whole of Britain regularly showing serious, noncommercial photography, not one; if you wanted to see original prints by contemporary photographers, the only way to do so was to knock on the door of the photographer, and ask; there was not a single museum in the whole of Britain which collected photographs as photographs, other than as documents of fashion, architecture, or whatever; no museum purchased personal prints (as art, if you like) by contemporary photographers; The Institute of Contemporary Arts had not exhibited a single show of photography, as far as I am aware; there was not a single agency, organization, council or company which provided grants to photographers for the pursuit of excellence in picture making; the Arts Council of Great Britain would not even consider applications from photographers for several years; there was not a single photographic magazine in Britain which emphasized noncommercial, non-how-to-do-it, portfolios of images by committed photographers; photography as "art" elicited snickers of embarrassment if not downright incredulity; schools of photography which included any aspect of the personal approach to picture-making as a part of its regular curriculum were rare (Guildford School of Art was an exception, especially when under the iconoclastic leadership of Ifor Thomas, an educator *way* ahead of his time); there were no workshops where young photographers could learn from accepted fine photographers; there were precious few lectures by famous photographers – I cannot remember a single one during the first year of *Creative Camera's* production; there was no market at all for the sale of original prints to collectors; the notion of paying even £20 for a photograph, even by a well-known photographer, was considered a ludicrous idea.

That's the bad news: the institutional foundations of photography in Britain were inert, inept and apathetic.

*Creative Camera* attempted to change all that and light a fire under their collective rear-ends. I am being deliberately offensive here, because that was how we felt: offended. And if this remark is also reminiscent of 60s antiestablishment rebellion, that too is appropriate. That's also a part of the zeitgeist; that's who and what we were. In retrospect, and from the perspective of a more mellow, inclusive age it also sounds a bit pompous. And there was a tinge, say it ever so softly, of such conceit. We wanted to change the world, or at least that part of it which we most cared about - photography.

A very important, and usually neglected, aspect of this revolutionary zeal was that it did not spring out of nothing. There was a small but cohesive group of professional photographers, based in London, who were alert to and engaged in the very best of international image-making. (Yes, they were nearly all professionals and, yes, they were mainly based in London). They may not have enjoyed any institutional support but they were not without their own networks. In fact the lack of official respect and sanction made these networks even stronger and more vital.

The interchange of issues, ideas and images among these photographers was facilitated in several ways. And the most important of these occurred “within the magazine and publishing world” on which I have been asked to comment.

Books, for example, were major sources of knowledge and inspiration. Since the publication of the *Family of Man* catalogue (1955) - to take an arbitrary starting point - there was a small but steady stream of fine photography flowing into Britain which the whole photographic community could share as talismans of merit. By this time, most British photographers of any seriousness already owned important books of images by Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, Paul Strand, William Klein, Walker Evans, Robert Doisneau, and many others. Even on a meager income, it was possible to acquire every worthwhile picture-book on serious photography. To name just a few, published in the decade leading up to *Creative Camera*:

*Observations*, Richard Avedon; *The Americans*, Robert Frank; *Aaron Siskind Photographs (all 1959)*; *Moments Preserved*, Irving Penn (1960); *Perspective of Nudes*, Bill Brandt (1961); *Killed by Roses*, Eikoh Hosoe (1963); *The Painter and the Photograph*, Van Deren Coke (1964); *A Way of Seeing*, Helen Levitt (1965); *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, Ed Ruscha (1966); *House of Bondage*, Ernest Cole (1967); *The Bikeriders*, Danny Lyon (1968). And there was always the “bookends” of the photographer’s shelf: *The Decisive Moment*, Henri Cartier-Bresson (1952), and *Shadow of Light*, Bill Brandt (1966).

What is remarkable, when you actually look at the evidence, is the amazing diversity of images, issues and ideas represented in these books, in contrast to the assumption that photographers subscribed to a single monolithic notion of what constituted acceptable imagery. Expanding this diversity to an even greater degree was an influential and British-published little paperback, *Creative Photography*, by Aaron Scharf (1966) which provided a manifesto for the art of photography both past and present.

Like books, exhibition catalogues (usually imported from the USA) provided British photographers with another access to what was going on internationally. We were very aware of every major exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and of the issues raised by its curators, John Szarkowski and Peter Bunnell, through the catalogues’ articles, several of which were published in *Creative Camera*.

Equally influential, perhaps, was Nathan Lyons at The George Eastman House. As curator, he had put together no less than 19 exhibitions by 1965, which traveled continuously around colleges and universities in the USA. The exhibition catalogues reached an even wider and international audience, as in Britain. For example, his *Toward a Social Landscape* (1966), was a seminal publication which spotlighted Danny Lyon, then only 24 years old, Duane Michals and Garry Winogrand, the old man of the group at 38.

In addition, the early color supplements of *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer*, and *The Daily Telegraph* were also publishing regular features with work by Ian Berry, Don McCullin, Terence Donovan, Robert Freeman and even Lee Friedlander. In the same way, fine international photographers were regularly seen in *Life*, which stopped weekly publication in 1972; *Look*, which folded in 1971; *Queen*, which regularly assigned major features to Marc Riboud, Bruce Davidson, Brian Brake among similar photographers; *Paris Match* and many other international picture magazines which were eagerly scanned by involved photographers.

And do not forget the Yearbooks published by periodicals such as *Photography* and the *The British Journal of Photography*.

During the late 1950s Norman Hall, the editor of the former, was a true prophet of photography, a lone voice and a harbinger of things to come. He regularly published the work of then-unknown but later-acknowledged great photographers. That was even more true in his remarkable annuals, *The Photography Year Books*. Let me give you just one example, from the annual of 1959, a merely subjective selection because it was the year that I began my own career in photographic journalism.

In that year's book, Hall featured portfolios by Wynn Bullock, Jean-Philippe Charbonnier, Albert Renger-Patzsch among others and an essay, *The Seine*, by Henri Cartier-Bresson. It also included images by Bill Brandt, Larry Burrows, Philip Jones Griffiths, Inge Morath, George Rodger, Edouard Boubat, Robert Doisneau, Ed Van Der Elsken, Mario Giacomelli, Robert Frank, Van Deren Coke, Constantine Manos, Arthur Rothstein, Ernst Haas and a veritable who-was-who in international photography, with representations from France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland as well as from Britain and the USA. Let me repeat for emphasis: *this was in 1959!* So who now dares say that British photographers were unaware?

The BJP also produced picture annuals during the 60s but, lacking a Norman Hall, the picture selections were of uneven merit although each edition did include occasional fine images by major international names, especially when picture-edited by Bryn Campbell.

In Europe we looked to the fine Swiss magazine, *Camera*, edited by an American, Alan Porter, which showcased the best of ink reproduction available at that time and also published portfolios of fine photography of the past and present.

I should also mention *photokina*, held every two years in Cologne, Germany. Although primarily a trade show, it always included a Cultural Section of exhibitions, often by some of the best European photographers, organized for 20-plus years by Fritz Gruber, and accompanied by a handsome catalogue for those who could not attend in person.

Before leaving the topic of photographic periodicals I must mention the most important one of all - and its title might come as something of a surprise: *Popular Photography*. True, this magazine carried a surfeit of advertisements, then as now, and its main readers were techno-amateurs, but consistently throughout the 1950s and 60s it published the most in-depth and comprehensive features on the greatest photographers. They remain some of the most important essays ever written about the major figures in the medium (and should be collated into an anthology).

And it should be noted that its staff writers were some of the most knowledgeable people in the field at the time. They knew everyone. They might have been (mere) photographic journalists working for an amateur periodical but they were an elite corps of experts for which there is no contemporary equivalent. They included Ed Meyer, who studied under Ralph Hattersley (a pioneer in photographic education) alongside Bruce Davidson, Jerry Uelsmann and Pete Turner; Ken Poli; Charles Reynolds and Bob Schwalberg. During the next few years they would all become friends, and strong supporters of what was happening in Britain. They provided one-step access to who-was-who in contemporary photography, especially in the USA.

I could continue listing our sources of information *ad nauseum* but the conclusion is:

**The core of British professionals were not isolated or ignorant or uninformed.**

Through publications of all kinds they participated in a thriving international fraternity of photographic excellence.

Publications are (more or less) permanent, existing as documents of record. But the most active and energizing activity by which photographers shared images and ideas was personal contact. As this aspect of the 60s scene in England does not have a record, it might be overlooked by historians. It is therefore of even greater importance to touch upon this essential element.

On a personal note, I can only say that some of the most memorable, significant and edifying moments in my own photographic education occurred when I had knocked on a photographer's door, whether home or hotel, and asked to look at some prints. This was how I met photographers like E.O. Hoppe, Bill Brandt, John Loengard, David Montgomery, John Cowan and many others. Not a single photographer was anything less than welcoming and enthusiastic in their advice and support.

In fact, that is how I met David Hurn. I had heard that he was a prominent photographer, a member of the prestigious Magnum Photos collaborative, and I knocked on his door and asked to talk about photography. We have been friends ever since that day in 1967.

And this encounter was particularly propitious for me because David's flat in Bayswater was already a legendary "doss-house" for itinerant photographers with international reputations. This is where they congregated as they passed through London, fresh from an overseas assignment perhaps, with a batch of fresh prints they were eager to share with like minds. For the next few years, the conversations, over endless cups of tea, at these informal meetings were my master-classes in the best of international photography.

Over the next few years, *Creative Camera* and *Album* became stopping-off points for traveling photographers and we learned a great deal from Lee Friedlander, Robert Frank, Eikoh Hosoe, Paul Strand, Beaumont Newhall, Jean-Philippe Charbonnier, Van Deren Coke, Bernard Plossu, plus many of those already mentioned and a host of others from all over Europe, including Czechoslovakia and Poland.

And let me be clear in my intentions for dropping names. These photographers brought with them, in addition to their own work, rich and diverse backgrounds which added a wealth of information about the state of the medium at the time.

Even beyond this "educational" advantage, however, personal contacts performed an even wider, deeper function. The photographers talked about the other photographers they had met on their travels. They talked about who was doing good work, who was worth watching, who was beginning to make major contributions to the medium, and gradually with enough photographers talking about them over a period of time, new reputations emerged. A personal example of how this grapevine worked is that I would never have heard of Roger Mayne without other photographers bringing him to my attention. Roger eschewed professional assignments and remained virtually unknown to the wider community.

In the absence of status-awarding institutions, therefore, the photographers themselves created reputations among the next generation. They were rarely wrong. Contrast that with the scene today where it is nearly always non-photographers who are the creators of "Names." But that is another story...

The crucial point, which cannot be overemphasized, is that the best of British photographers were active participants in an international free-flow of images and information, either through publications or personal contact.

Which brings me to the beginnings of *Creative Camera*, the second part of my assignment.

Since 1959 I had been writing regularly for practically all the photographic journals as well as any other interested periodicals. One of the photo-magazines to which I occasionally contributed was called *Camera Owner*.

It was edited by Jurgen Schadeberg, a fine photojournalist who had worked with Tom Hopkinson in the great days of *Drum* in South Africa.

But *Camera Owner* was nothing like *Drum*. It was sold through subscription leaflets enclosed with the packet of prints which snap shooters picked up from the local chemist. It offered tips on how to photograph your pet or child; it was aimed at such a photographic novice that writers were told they could not mention f numbers for fear of confusing the readers. I wrote the occasional article for Jurgen – and even got paid now and again, if I remember rightly. One day Jurgen told me he was fed up with the chore of producing a monthly magazine and that he was quitting. So I stepped into the job, more or less by default. It was not long before the publisher, Sylvester Stein, said the magazine was folding. Intrigued, I told him I had always wanted to edit my own magazine if he wanted to give it to me. I had no money and even less chance of acquiring any. While I was still pleading with Stein, a fairy godmother walked into my life, in the unlikely form of Colin Osman.

Colin already published a successful journal for racing pigeon fanciers. We walked back to his offices on Doughty Street and there, to the cacophony of cooing pigeons, began a partnership which led to *Creative Camera*. Colin was publisher; I was editor.

The immediate problem was how to radically change the editorial content of the magazine without instantly disenfranchising the snapshot subscribers. We decided the change had to be gradual. Over a period of months the magazine moved away from snapshot appeal towards serious photography, and the name changed from *Camera Owner* to *Creative Camera Owner*, to *Creative Camera*. By January 1968, the editorial contents were on track.

Only one other problem remained: our intended supporters – serious photographers – were too few in number to keep the magazine afloat. I earned a living by lectures to camera clubs (at £7 an evening), part-time teaching (at Harrow, Croydon and the London College of Printing), and even, for a while, held classes in a rent-a-nude basement studio on Saturdays. Colin and I tried to generate some extra income by teaching two-day workshops at an Essex retreat for which we charged 4 guineas including instruction, accommodation and all meals. This scheme, which attracted mainly retirees, was only partially successful, perhaps due to the fact that Colin insisted on lecturing the old dears about his obsession with nudes (one of his specialties). In the end I was forced to take full-time jobs, as European Manager of Globe Photos, an international picture agency, and as Picture Editor of the *Daily Telegraph Magazine*. Both jobs were short-lived; *Creative Camera* was my top priority.

Without the constant injections of aid from Colin Osman, *Creative Camera* would have folded within months. That it survived for more than 25 years is due largely to his early generosity and enthusiasm.

These were frustrating, exhilarating, frantic times. There's nothing like fighting for a cause to get the juices flowing. We tilted at windmills and felt vindicated when they, in indifference, did not fight back. We provoked and attacked photographic schools, the Royal Photographic Society, other publications, The Arts Council, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, et al. Our constant hammering did seem to dent their armor on occasion and in a few cases breached their defenses altogether. Such successes vindicated our goals, but led to an unforeseen problem: how could we practice what we preached without stretching our meager resources to breaking point. But it was not only the establishment which provoked our ire. It was also individuals who could not see photography through our eyes. They were more prone to fight back – and their personal attacks were more hurtful. A typical anecdote...

In one issue of *Creative Camera*, I published photographs by Lee Friedlander and, with typical hyperbole, called him “probably the most significant photographer of his generation.” I had a lunch date with a photographer friend (a well known photojournalist, who shall remain nameless). He was looking at these images when I entered his office. When he saw who had appeared, he screamed: “Stop there! Are you out of your bleeding mind? Or are you part of this f—king con job? Anyone who calls this Friedlander shit, ‘Significant photography’ needs his head examined – and I don’t associate with lunatics.” With that, he threw the magazine at me and told me to get out. It is difficult to understand, in our more mellow age of pluralism, how photographs could so infuriate even intelligent photographers, as they did in the 1960s.

The images in *Creative Camera* were always raising hackles. It is difficult today to believe that our use of Jerry Uelsmann images prompted a barrage of abusive letters and verbal attacks. What was particularly galling about this was that I did not personally like Uelsmann’s images – but I did believe they were important enough to publish. Inadvertently, we were causing conflict with every issue. We were even charged with obscenity - the offending photograph was of two nautilus shells by Edward Weston!

In fact, almost any photograph provoked fierce reactions and passionate outbursts, usually negative, especially if it originated in the USA. This outrage was not new or limited to British reactions to *Creative Camera*. A seminal exhibition, “New Documents,” featuring the work of Lee Friedlander, Diane Arbus and Garry Winogrand, had recently opened (1967) at the Museum of Modern Art. At the end of each day an assistant was required to wipe off the spit on the Arbus prints.

It was so frustrating that those readers whom we considered our closest allies were turning out to be our harshest critics. In a mood of despondency I wrote in one editorial: “I find it utterly depressing that so few people (including photographers) seem to comprehend what photography is and can be although I take heart in that photographs are strong stuff – not to be taken by those of weak disposition.”

Sometimes, today, I regret our loss of passion because of our gained sophistication and tolerance.

However, I should balance these remarks by noting that some of these most vocal critics ended up our staunchest allies.

I was under pressure to get off the next issue of the magazine, and struggling with layout sheets over my desk, when a stranger barged in. He was bedraggled with unruly reddish hair and a Fu Manchu mustache. He carried a 8 x 10-inch yellow box under his arm. His first words were: "Your magazine's shit! But I can see you're trying, so I've come along to help."

Offended, I replied: "Then you had better put your pictures where your mouth is, because I don't know you or care to. Show me what you have to offer." He gave me the box, full of magic prints. I said: "O.K., I'm convinced. You do have something to teach me. Who are you?" "Tony Ray-Jones," he said.

From that day on, he was an irritating, exasperating monkey on my back, calling at any hour of the day or night, quizzing me on whom I had seen, what I had done, berating me for wasting time with "that phoney-baloney," a photographer whom he did not respect. Tony was my self-appointed conscience – and I respected and resented him for it.

Tony had recently returned to England from the USA where he had worked with Alexey Brodovitch and had made contacts with many photographers. He suggested we go to New York together, where he would visit publishers with his book dummy, and I would meet with photographers for possible magazine features. In September 1968 we took off for New York for my first visit to the USA and met many of the photographers personally, including Weegee, Garry Winogrand, Robert Frank, John Szarkowski, Joel Meyerowitz, Diane Arbus, W. Eugene Smith, Nathan Lyons, Andre Kertesz among many others.

I have often heard it said that this trip was the beginning of the magazine's "discovery" of American photography. That's nonsense. As I have already pointed out, we were all very well aware of what was going on in the USA from books, catalogues and visiting American photographers. Also, even a casual glance at the contents of *Creative Camera* issues put to press prior to the trip will show that we had already published work by Ray K. Metzker, Arthur Tress, Bruce Davidson, Burk Uzzle, David Attie, Burt Glinn, Aaron Siskind, Harry Callahan, Elliott Erwitt, Charles Harbutt, Duane Michals, John Loengard, Joel Meyerowitz and others. For most of these photographers at the outset of their careers this was their first exposure in a European photo-magazine. And yes, I am proud that we introduced to British photography the work of these names and that our initial judgments about their merit "hold up" after 30 plus years

Which brings up another, paradoxical, criticism which we often heard in *Creative Camera's* early years: its "emphasis" on American photographers. Now that I look back on those issues I do not see an undue emphasis on American work. What strikes me is that we were publishing the best of photography, as we saw it, without any regard for nationality. Indeed, in the first two years we published the work of photographers from France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, S. Africa, Italy, Spain and Poland as well as from Britain and America.

Certainly, we were hearing reports of a photographic revolution (photography-as-fine-art) occurring across the Atlantic, and we hoped the same spirit would spread through Britain. (It never did, at least not in the same manner and, in retrospect, perhaps that is a good thing). So let me dwell on the USA for a few words because that country's influence seems to generate quite a few myths about this period in British photography.

America was certainly experiencing the beginnings of a photographic upheaval in the early 1960s but its magnitude has been greatly exaggerated – as has its influence on *Creative Camera* in 1967-68. The truth is that the current emphasis on fine-art photography in the USA was just beginning.

Let's take the year 1963, for example. Fine-arts programs in photography at universities were virtually nonexistent. Only one university offered a Master of Fine Arts degree in photography. But the growth was rapid. By 1967, there were 13 MFA programs; by 1972, 59 MFA programs. (Today, there are over 300).

The first conference of the Society for Photographic Education (a very important organization in its first decade) took place in 1963. Two years later it still had only 30 members. In 1967 it had 165 members. Today, it has more than 5,000 members.

Also in 1963, Norbert Klebert opened the Underground Gallery in the basement of his home in New York City. When Tony and I arrived in 1968, it was still the only gallery (outside the Museum of Modern Art) devoted to serious photography – and even then it was only open at weekends and at night because Norbert was working full-time at a camera shop.

America was not so far advanced in its patronage of photographers. The National Endowments of the Arts fellowships began in 1967, just as *Creative Camera* was getting started.

More of the same would be tedious, but I wanted to emphasize that 1) yes, institutional photography was a little more active in the USA than in Britain in 1968 but 2) no, it was not as active as you might have been led to think. And, yes, we were well aware of what was going on.

But the charge that *Creative Camera* was favoring American work, paled in comparison with the attack on “wasted space” whenever I published images and articles on historical photography, or art, or essays of criticism. As far as I was concerned this expansion of what was deemed mainstream photography was an essential component of *Creative Camera*’s editorial policy, as I defined it. I believed then, and I still do, that photographers should know the history of their medium, examine its interaction with the other visual arts, and read and think. So I made no apologies for publishing historical images by John Thomson, Eugene Atget, Frank Sutcliffe, P.H. Emerson, John Heartfield, Erich Salomon among others, and the historical columns by Van Deren Coke and Aaron Scharf, or the art of Jack Yates and Peter Cundall, Andy Warhol, Juan Genoves, Herbert Bayer, Max Ernst, Paul Klee, Rene Magritte and others, or the essays of Roland Barthes, Graham Leman, Raymond Durgnat, Thomas Barrow or even Krishnamurti.

Inhaling the zeitgeist of the energetic 60s, photographers, like all other aspects of society and culture, were beginning to question established values and traditions. Individuality and self-expression were the rallying cries. Nothing was sacred or could be taken for granted. Radicalism was not a political slogan but a state of mind. In spite of the recent inevitable backlash and the not always healthy fallout of those attitudes, there was an excitement in the air which was invigorating. In that sense *Creative Camera* was challenging, even attacking, the photographers of the era who were locked into a narrow notion of what constituted “photography.”

Its role in photography was to promote change, attack the establishment, ask “why not?,” and pull the medium in Britain, kicking and screaming, into an unknown future. I was merely attempting to publish a modest magazine which reflected my own vision of what photography could and should be. At last, the magazine was starting to make a difference.

And then I was fired.

In the Autumn of 1969, over a pint of bitter at the local pub, Colin Osman informed me that I would no longer be the editor of his magazine, *Creative Camera*. By this time the magazine had become “his” in reality. Although I initially had 51% of the company I was obliged to sell Colin my shares in exchange for a small monthly allowance until I had nothing left. Our relationship had grown increasingly testy over the preceding year and, in retrospect, I can see why my goals for the magazine, and the way I was incorporating them, were causing friction. Colin first wanted, then demanded, greater editorial control. I did not respect his image judgments and refused. In the end, I prepared each issue and sent it for publication before he could see it and fight about its contents. This caused tensions, not surprisingly. At the time, however, I was too young, brash, and committed to notice or care. Still, the parting was traumatic.

There was nothing I wanted to do more than edit a magazine in which I believed, heart and mind. So I wanted another magazine, badly, although I had no prospects or reasonable hope of ever getting one. But I dreamed of it...

My assignment for this conference only mentions *Creative Camera* by name, but there is a postscript, a journal called *Album*, and I will not have completed the story without saying something about its origins and activities in as much as they relate to British photography in the post-1968 years.

Following my ouster from *Creative Camera* the cosmic kaleidoscope had been shaken and the fragments were realigning themselves into a new pattern.

The most important new element was Tristram Powell. He was a BBC television director and producer, son of the novelist Anthony Powell (*A Dance to the Music of Time*). I did not know any of that at the time; I presumed that when he telephoned he wanted me to see his photographs or publicize his latest movie. Over lunch he made a remarkable offer: he had £4,000 to "lose" and wanted to sink it in a fine photographic journal, was I interested? Was I interested? I was ecstatic. Over many meetings I came to respect Tristram for his intellect, generosity and cultivated demeanor. He advised, never controlled, and he was the perfect socially-privileged gentleman of the arts to my working-class aggression. He has never received due acknowledgment for all his quiet, behind-the-scenes activism during this volatile period in British photography.

We were joined by Aidan Ellis, a young accountant at Colin Osman's publishing company, whose job would be to keep track of the money, an aspect of publishing with which I had little interest and even less acumen. Incidentally, I recently scanned the Articles of Association, which formed *Album* (incorporated on 21 January 1970), and noticed to my surprise that the only shareholders were Tristram and Aidan. I was not included, although for all these years I had presumed I was an equal partner. Which just indicates how much attention I paid to the business side of things. By now I was fully engrossed in preparing the first issue.

At this point I received a remarkable offer from another backer who promised a far more financially secure future for me and for *Album*. I declined. I had already committed myself to Tristram and Aidan. Do I have regrets, even now? Yes. I felt I was doing the honorable thing by keeping a promise made. But in my heart of hearts I wonder what could have been...

We moved *Album* into a cheap damp basement, featuring flaky plaster and exposed pipes, at 70 Princedale Road, London W 11. It was furnished with old benches, stools, a typewriter and, most important of all, a stuffed couch and a five-gallon jug of rough cider, more frequently used by the local tramps than our "guests." (Actually, one filthy old regular became a pretty astute judge of photographs and we often included him in our editorial meetings.) Mix in a constant flow of young photographers, volunteers,

visiting European and American photographers, local street people, and the basement bustled with hippie life. Upstairs, also just beginning, were *Oz* and *Time Out* and other “underground” activities; down the road was John Cowan’s studio in which Antonioni filmed much of “Blow up”; around the corner was Holland Park in which we picnicked among pot-smoking guitarists and girls dancing in flowing robes. We were at home.

There never seemed to be a shortage of willing young photographers (usually female) to act as “volunteers.” Chief among them were the Hargreaves twins. Sally Hargreaves was a particular stalwart who delighted in showing visiting photographers her report card from a photographic college in which she was awarded a zero in Creative Photography.

The first major decision we made about *Album* was, in retrospect, the major eventual cause of its demise. We decided to spend more than one half of our total assets (Tristram’s £4,000) into mailing actual first issues to more than a thousand individuals across the world. The idea, more optimistic than realistic, was that if these people saw the first issue, most of them would subscribe, meaning that we would break even immediately. Such faith! Such naivety!

Anyway, I spent an inordinate amount of time on the first issue in order to provide a sense of what we considered important. It included my editorial lambasting the state of British photography at the time but ending with a tone of optimism (“... all the signs are that the scene is moving into another great era in British photography . . . The pressure is building up. The next years should witness the explosion of photography in Britain”).

The cover featured a major portfolio of images by the ever-gracious and supportive Bill Brandt, who selected and sequenced his own favorite photographs especially for *Album*. It also included text and images on Sir Benjamin Stone, a late Victorian photographer then completely unknown; an interview with Jeffrey Blankfort, photographer to the Black Panthers; and contributions by Eikoh Hosoe, Paul Strand, Philip Jones Griffiths, Roger Merten, Lee Friedlander, Jim Dine, George Rodger and others.

We were also fortunate in that one of the best letter press printers in the country, Balding and Mansell, agreed to print the magazine, even though it had reservations about our financial viability. In the end we agreed that it could handle all incoming subscriptions directly, and apply them to our printing bills. In exchange each month they sent me a first class rail ticket to the company’s plant in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, so that I could check printing quality as the plates were being run. But, in the end, this concession also contributed to *Album*’s demise.

Nothing, however, could shake our excitement, as we packaged the spanking new first issues in their envelopes and mailed them to names and addresses “borrowed” from lists supplied by the George Eastman House, Museum of Modern Art and elsewhere.

How eagerly we picked up the mail, expecting to be flooded with subscriptions; how disappointed when they trickled in, in dribs and drabs.

The letters of support and encouragement were heartening. Some samples:

*Album is magnificent – absolutely first class. All of us send congratulations!* Peter Bunnell, Curator of the Museum of Modern Art, New York

*I am glad your Album monthly meets with the success it deserves. The presentation and choice of pictures is excellent and its cultural level makes it just the type of publication Britain has needed so badly for a long time.* Helmut Gernsheim

*Album is superb. More than that even.* John Loengard, *Life* magazine

*Many thanks for sending me... Album. Absolutely first-rate job of printing which gives extraordinary quality to the photos... I'll be sending my subscription along soon.* A. Whitney Ellsworth, *The New York Review of Books*

*You have certainly succeeded in being "different" and it is just about time that something different appeared. I like the presentation and find it impressive.* George Rodger, founder member of Magnum Photos

*Congratulations, it's beautiful! Album, that is – and I'm circulating it among the photographers here.* Charles B. Bloch, President of Globe Photos, Inc.

*Album is a very distinguished addition to photo publication – shape, layout and content – Sir Benjamin Stone is a great new discovery – at least for me. That makes me want to sit down and look at the 25,000 legacy he has left us.* Paul Strand

*Thank you very much for your good letter as published in Album 1. You have certainly delineated the thoughts I tried to express when writing my piece on Bill Brandt from which you quote. Congratulations. You have achieved a brilliant summation on the subject of creative photography in England. Congratulations, too, on the publication of Album. It is exciting, informative, and badly needed. The piece on Sir Benjamin Stone is incredibly valuable, and reveals him as a major artist who deserves a full-scale monograph on his life and work. Please accept my best wishes for the continued success of your publication.* Robert M. Doty, Curator of Whitney Museum of American Art

*I would like to express my satisfaction with the ideas, style and presentation of Album . . . Moreover I completely agree with your editorial on page 1. May I offer you my congratulations on the courage expressed in this opinion. Unfortunately, the major photographic firms are just business enterprises, which little realize how much they actually are dependent on what I call "the cultural side of photography." Nevertheless I*

*must personally be more grateful for the support I have always received from the organizers of "photokina" when I tried to present this noncommercial side of photography, an effort I have now been making for twenty years. Well, once more, my best wishes for the success of your magazine.* Fritz Gruber, Head of Cultural Section of photokina

With letters like this arriving daily we may be forgiven for having expected an avalanche of subscriptions to follow. It did not happen...

Most of these individuals did subscribe, but there were hundreds more who told us the equivalent of "the check is in the mail." Basically, we had crippled ourselves financially right from the start. But we limped on, each month eating into our remaining capital and relying increasingly on new subscriptions. The hope was that the subscriber's money would reach break-even point before we ran out of "top-up" cash. It was going to be close, very close.

On the editorial side, I was in seventh-heaven, collaborating with photographers such as W. Eugene Smith, Tony Ray-Jones, Thurston Hopkins, Cas Oorthuys, Les Krimms, Imogen Cunningham, Emmet Gowin, John Claridge, Andrew Lanyon, George Rodger, David Hockney, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Patrick Ward, Edouard Boubat, John Claridge, Elliott Erwitt, Don McCullin, Naomi Savage and the list goes on. I was producing a magazine which I would want to buy, the only editorial policy I ever had. And there were the endless visits by young photographers, such as Chris Killip, Andrew Lanyon and Homer Sykes, showing prints, discussing photography with passion, volunteering to type a letter or stuff envelopes, engaging in the magazine's life with enthusiasm. Support was unstinting from a wide range of individuals - poets (Peter Cundall), painters (Jim Dine and Ron Kitaj), as well as filmmakers and writers. And I must make a special mention of David Hockney who as both painter and photographer regularly attended and was an active participant in so many of our meetings and lectures. All this creative interchange and enthusiasm was most encouraging.

Much of the talk, and action, was how to force photography through the closed ranks of the art-establishment, breaking through into the sanctums of the Royal Photographic Society, The Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Arts Council of Great Britain. The spearhead was a loose group of young photographers calling ourselves C.R.A.P., Committee for Radical Action in Photography.

They were heady days, and nights. Even the frequent frustrations had no apparent effect on our unquenchable fire of enthusiasm. When I look back on these events, the particulars blur into a haze of exhilaration, an unalloyed sensation of doing exactly what I wanted to do, of being who I wanted to be. Gradually, specific moments swirl and coalesce into vivid images. I remember. . . .

. . . impertinently banging on the door of Lord Goodman, then Minister of the Arts, being graciously received, and bending his ear about the appalling fact that photography, the most vital of the contemporary arts, was not welcome at the Institute of Contemporary Arts. I was appointed Director of Photography on the spot.

. . . being invited to serve on a Royal Commission to investigate why the Royal Photographic Society was losing so many members. The conclusion: the aging membership was dying off at a faster rate than young members were joining. I offered to organize a series of lectures for young photographers at the RPS headquarters. They were too successful. Not only was the meeting hall packed to bursting for each lecture but also young photographers were standing outside leaning in through the open windows. This was too much. Kenneth Warr, the RPS Secretary, told me that members had complained about “long-haired yobs cluttering up the Society’s building,” so I was ejected and the lectures were canceled.

. . . working long hours with a team of volunteers to convert storage rooms at ICA into a Photographic Study Center. We invited 60 people to the opening; 300 showed up, including Peter Sellers who brought his silent “Running, Jumping, Standing Still” film – and narrated all the parts.

. . . meeting Lindy Dufferin (the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, no less) who instantly became a warm, spirited benefactor of contemporary photography.

. . . accompanying Margot Hapgood (Time-Life Books) to look at some old postcards in Reigate, Surrey, and stumbling into Francis Frith’s archives, containing 250,000 prints and 60,000 negatives.

. . . receiving a heavy package of prints from W. Eugene Smith, to be used as an “epitaph” because “by the time you receive these, I will be dead.” In letters he poured out his anguish; he was ugly, unloved, unappreciated and incapable of further work. He reiterated his intention to commit suicide. Many of the images were highly personal, including a self-portrait of Gene in the act of sex. A few months later, Gene wrote again: he had found a new woman and he was happy – please send back the prints.

. . . staying with Beaumont and Nancy Newhall at their home in Rochester, New York, while preparing a special issue on the George Eastman House Collection. I can see Beaumont in the kitchen where, after a full day as Director of the House, he would prepare a meal for the three of us, washing up and rehangng copper-bottomed pans as soon as they were used. It is not often appreciated that Beaumont was a gourmet chef, who had written scores of articles on the art of cooking.

. . . helping a lady named Clody to organize the first photographic gallery in England, called “Do Not Bend,” which opened just up the road from *Album’s* office.

. . . opening the mail one day to find an air ticket to Paris, sent by Marc Riboud so that I could attend the annual meeting of Magnum Photos, Inc. and meet the photographers.

. . . hiring a pub, complete with barmaid, and filling it with photographers to see slides of contemporary American photography, “60s Continuum,” projected by Van Deren Coke, then Director of the George Eastman House. From the first image, of a finger stuck in food (Paul Diamond), the audience burst out laughing in derision and became increasing raucous as the slides progressed. Britain was not ready for the American “artists”! The barmaid became so loud and boisterous I had to ask her to leave; Van Deren Coke took it all in magnanimous stride.

. . . receiving regular letters from Tony Ray-Jones who had left England to teach at the San Francisco Art Institute. Typical sample: “Dear Bill, How are you, you auld sod? I have heard of your efforts across 6,000 miles of land and water. How is the workshop going? – mine isn’t. There are about 200 photo students in this school and most of them think of themselves as artists. Favorite subjects are naked women and pubic hair, cocks, grainy landscapes, trees, rocks, the sea, shadows – you’ve heard it all before. It’s a bit of a drag. I don’t like teaching and will try to avoid [it] in the future. It saps my vital energies, don’t even feel like making love. The kids are precocious, they’ve got all the answers and they’re [sic] work is fucking dull...”

Now that the floodgates of memory have been opened, events cascade into my consciousness with ever increasing speed and force. Now, a glance through the pages of *Album* releases memories of so many people and their generousities that it would need a book to give them full credit. But what is evident is that there was so much to do and a finite amount of time and money that my resources were stretched way past breaking point.

By the tenth issue of *Album* it was very evident that we were sinking financially. If we were going to have any hope of breaking even, then drastic steps would have to be taken. The time between issues was increased (even though *Album* was a monthly) in order to allow more new subscriptions to cover our printing bills; Aidan Ellis was asked to leave at this time, which saved us money but there were growing rifts between us leading up to this decision - like Colin Osman, Aidan wanted more editorial input, and I refused to give it to him; and we had to abandon our basement in order to save rent and utilities. *Album* was homeless.

As the old saying goes: When the student is ready, the master will appear. The “master,” in this case, was David Hurn, who had been a quiet, unassuming force of encouragement to me for several years, as I have already mentioned. Thereafter he was my chief mentor, my most sincere critic and the biggest single influence in my photographic life.

His spacious flat at 4 Porchester Court, Porchester Gardens, London W2, was already a mecca for itinerant photographers of international stature. Learning that *Album* was homeless, he said, in his nonchalant way, “why don’t you move in?” So I did. Even though my presence – not to mention the constant ringing of the door bell by potential contributors, the endless cups of tea, the tying up of the telephone, the piles of prints and packing, the space commandeered for layouts, and the general hubbub – must have caused immense inconveniences in someone’s home, David, never once, gave me the feeling that I was other than wholly welcome. And I will never forget the conversations and print-sharing among David, Patrick Ward, Don McCullin, Ian Berry, Elliott Erwitt, Charles Harbutt, Leonard Freed or whoever happened to be there. They are cherished moments in my life.

Financially, they were the worst of times. I went bankrupt twice and never gave it more than casual thought. I only mention it because of one memory. The bailiff walked into my home to tag the furniture when he glanced at the wall and said, “That’s by Bill Brandt.” He was a fan of *Album*! I had fainting attacks and excruciating headaches from lack of food (but either David or Patrick Ward often came to the rescue with a great dinner at the Bistingo restaurant around the corner). My marriage was a shambles. Ah, but if I could do it all over again, I would. And David Hurn is still my closest friend.

Two other individuals entered my life through the doors of Porchester Court, both of whom play meaningful roles in my life. Josef Koudelka had just escaped from Czechoslovakia with the KGB hot on his heels. He needed a “sanctuary” while his visa was being approved. It seemed inevitable and appropriate that he would end up in David’s flat, sleeping on the floor (by choice) and that a morning ritual in an *Album* day was stepping over Josef, and negotiating a minefield of dog poop from David’s Weimeraner puppy, in order to reach the desk. Josef and I still keep in touch and now and again he visits for a few days of camaraderie.

I had met William Jenkins while preparing the special issue of *Album* at the George Eastman House, where he was curator of 20th century photography. He is best known for curating one of the most influential photographic exhibitions of all time, “New Topographics” (1975). A few years earlier he took a year’s leave of absence to join me at *Album*, although he arrived in the last desperate months. Strangely, we ended up as colleagues at the same university in Arizona where we taught together for 20-plus years.

Paradoxically, *Album* was gaining an increasing reputation as our finances were collapsing. We received a call from a Professor of Journalism at a major American university; he was taking his class on a summer tour of “Great European Magazines.” *Album* was to be included. Fine, we said, come on over. The class looked a bit nonplussed when we pointed to the end of David’s office. “That’s *Album*,” we said. “Where’s the layout department?,” they asked. “Well,” we said, “we place this sheet of plywood over the pocket billiard table.” When they asked who was the Editor, Picture

Editor, Art Editor, typographer, publications manager, writers... David kept pointing at me with increasing speed, and increasing hilarity. I do not think the class was very impressed with our operation, but we got a big kick out of their visit.

David and I have told this story, to each other and to others, many times over the intervening 20 years. But as I relive it in my mind, in the context of this article, one aspect of it has suddenly occurred to me. Our story has never presumed that *Album* was a “great” magazine and I never thought of it in those terms; our story, if it had a point at all, was those Americans’ presumption that nothing could be attained without vast resources and loads of money and impressive locations.

It was the same sense of unreality when *The New York Times* (20 September 1970) published a piece about *Album* calling me a “revolutionary,” and when others termed our efforts a “crusade” which I was waging with “missionary zeal.” These comments and epithets were amusing at the time but they were not taken seriously. It is difficult to explain what I mean. I can honestly say that at the time I did not feel what we were doing was so important. I was doing it all because that is what I wanted to do ...it was what I believed in. The praise and validations of others were merely irrelevant.

The significance of this *New York Times* puff-piece, however, is that a lot had changed in a few years. The interest in and support for photography in Britain was being noticed, even in America. The tide was turning.

By the twelfth issue of *Album* we had cut our expenses to the bone, and new subscriptions were picking up. It began to look as if we might survive, just. We had hope again.

Then the ax fell. In the Spring of 1971, Britain was in an economic slump. Belts were being tightened everywhere – including at our printers. Balding and Mansell were not only handling all our income but had given us a three-month grace period in our bills. In essence we owed them for the printing costs on three issues. During the financial squeeze they had no choice but to take full payment. It wiped us out.

I kept busy with organizing lectures and exhibitions at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (although I was soon thrown out for dominating the place with photography); arranging for the saving of the Frith archives; part-time teaching at several colleges, and being thrown out of one for being a “subversive” influence; and selling 19th century prints to American collections to make ends meet. But with *Album* gone, the hotspot around which my life revolved was also missing. And there was no sense of achievement as compensation. “The explosion of photography in Britain,” which I had predicted in the first issue, would come soon, through the efforts of people like Sue Davies (at The Photographer’s Gallery), Paul Hill (and his workshops at The Photographers’ Place), Barry Lane (at the Arts Council of Great Britain and later at the RPS), David Hurn (at the School of Documentary Photography in Newport), and Martin Parr (in his championing

of a new generation of British photographers) – but without *Album* or me. Perhaps we had encouraged, cajoled, and enthused a key group of individuals who would take up the cause, but, at the time, these seeds had not germinated and, therefore, were not evident.

In this despondent mood, I was visited by Van Deren Coke on one of his regular trips to England. He and Beaumont Newhall were already strong role models for me and, as fate would have it, were now teaching together at the University of New Mexico, which almost instantly became the most prestigious academic institution in the world for the study of the history and practice of photography. In the garden of Uncle Tom's Cabin, a pub in Cookham where I was living, Van casually suggested that I "Come to New Mexico. Sit in on our lectures, find out what's happening in the USA. Recharge your batteries, and then you can come back here and begin again." "Fine," I said, "you get me in and I'll come," then promptly forgot about it.

Months later I received a telegram from Van telling me that I had been accepted (it was not until much later that I realized just how much political clout he had exerted on my behalf) and that I had to come immediately in order to enroll in the coming semester. Is that what I wanted? I had no idea, so in the spirit of the 60s I cast an *I Ching*. I forget the actual hexagram but it said something like: you have reached a crossroad in your life; it does not matter which path you take as long as the other path is cut off completely. Well, if it doesn't matter, I thought, then I might as well go. Within a month, in August 1972, I was in Albuquerque, New Mexico, about to begin one of the most liberating, satisfying periods of my life. It would be only for two years at the most, I thought.

While Beaumont disciplined me in the medium's history, Van directed not only my studies but also my attitudes to art, professionalism and life; he became my father-figure in photography. He still is, after more than 30 years.\*

No sooner had I arrived on campus than Beaumont Newhall took me aside and said: "Come with me. There's something I want to show you." He led me through the Art Library into the Rare Book Room where only precious, non-circulating books and periodicals were stored. "There," he pointed. To my astonishment a full set of *Album* was on the shelf. "I knew it was important, and was not likely to last, as soon as I saw it," said Beaumont, "so I wanted to make sure that we always had a full set of pristine copies." He wrote that it was the finest photographic journal of the past 50 years. I was astonished that someone of Newhall's eminence would so value something that I had put together. It was my first inkling that maybe *Album* did have a value to the medium. And then Beaumont, with characteristic empathy and insight, offered an even more consoling thought: "I know you are upset at its folding, but magazines, like living entities, have allotted life spans – a species might live a day or a week or 100 years but it dies when its lifework is complete. *Album* had a short life but maybe it had accomplished what it was meant to do and its death was natural and perhaps inevitable. You cannot

judge a magazine's success by its duration." Thank you, Beaumont, oh how I needed to hear those words at that moment.

And I think of them at odd moments, such as when I browse through a book shop or gallery and discover an old single copy of *Album* with a price sticker of \$100-plus. And to think that we could not sell enough subscriptions - 12 issues for \$20 – to keep it alive. And whatever happened to those piles of unsold, unwanted copies stacked under the billiard table. . . ?

Sometime in 1971, when it was becoming increasingly evident that *Album* was in dire financial straits, I decided to lash out a few guineas for a consultation with a Management Counselor, someone who specialized in refloating shipwrecked companies. It could not hurt. Or so I thought. In fact, the experience has troubled me ever since.

He browsed through a few copies of the magazine. "So what's the point of all...this?", he said, as he pushed the copies back at me.

I began to talk about the state of photography in England, how I was fighting to gain respect for an abused medium, why I cared about young photographers and the need to nurture their talent, what I perceived as an opportunity, through the pages of the magazine, to present ideas, inspiration, historical context, social relevancy, image integrity...

He listened with growing impatience. "Bullshit!" he said. "Let's start again. You are in this thing for one of three reasons: fame, money or power, just like everyone else. Now you tell me which one you want, and I will tell you how to get it. But don't kid yourself with ideological/ethical crap. And don't waste my time. Come back when you have decided what you want."

I never did go back. I still would not know what to tell him. I still believe in my original motives, even though I would express myself in different words. At the root of my professional life has been my continued delight in photography's ability to nourish all aspects of existence. I am sure I would still exasperate the poor man if he asked me the same question today.

And I have often daydreamed of the "alternate existence" that would have been my life if *Album* had survived and I had stayed in Britain to witness, and hopefully take part in, the "explosion of photography" which I had predicted a few years earlier but was not to experience...

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*This memoir was based on two previously published articles: "Back to the Future" written for the 20th anniversary issue of Creative Camera in 1986, and a cover feature, "Bill Jay's Little Magazine" published*

*in The History of Photography journal in the Spring of 1993. These articles have been combined, amended and considerably edited for this conference.*

*My contributions to this conference are dedicated to the memory of Van Deren Coke. He died on 11 July 2004 during my writing of this essay.*