

A NEW EUROPE

THEMES AND RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS



The following resources and activities are particularly aimed at teachers and students working at Secondary and Further Education level. Four separate resource packs are available, of which this is one - HOME. That said, regardless of age or photographic experience, we invite everyone to delve in and experiment.

Brighton Photo Biennial 2018 draws on one of the most important geopolitical events of our time. In doing so 'A New Europe' offers a powerful (if initially daunting) provocation for teachers and students. Our four key themes set out to unlock meaningful reflection, discussions and action, not just on the current state of national uncertainty, but also on the nature of photography itself.

Importantly, these resources are devised to also benefit those unable to attend Brighton Photo Biennial 2018. **Visit photoworks.org.uk and Photopedagogy.com/BPB2018 for further information.**

BRIGHTON PHOTO BIENNIAL 2018: THEMES FOR TEACHERS

EDGES

Geographical edges, borders and boundaries can define identity. The United Kingdom is currently negotiating its exit from the European Union. Brexit has prompted questions about national identity and belonging. Fierce debates rage about future relationships between the countries of the UK and Europe. We are approaching a point of no return, standing on the edge of a political precipice.

HOME

Home is such a simple word and yet it conjures up a complex range of feelings. A home can be a building or a place. Forced displacement through war, conflict and violence has resulted in a desperate quest by many for new homes, often in unlikely locations. Homes can be static or mobile, safe or treacherous, like nests or prisons.

MOVEMENT

The movement of people and goods is at the heart of the Brexit debate. Movement brings change, a vital energy, new rhythms, new words. Movement can also threaten, destabilise and challenge. Everything moves, not always by choice, and sometimes so slowly as to be imperceptible.

CONNECTIONS

An ability to connect lies at the heart of all understanding, whether forging relationships or connecting knowledge and experiences for creative means. But making meaningful connections isn't always easy. Trust evolves through empathy, honesty and sensitive communication; new possibilities arise by remaining alert to the unexpected and being comfortable with uncertainty.

KEY THEME: HOME

WHERE THE HEART IS

Where do you feel most at home? This could be a particular room in your own flat or house. But it might also be somewhere else, where you have a greatest sense of belonging - at a friend's place, at school, on the football pitch, on stage etc.

What defines a sense of home for you? Given an empty space, what would you need to add before feeling most at home?

Home is where I want to be and feel safe, among the things that I have created, gathered and tied myself to, [...] it is a place where I can find refuge: the door separates the outside from the inside.

-- Hrair Sarkissian



Take one or more pictures of the place where you feel most at home, most comfortable, most like yourself. Carefully consider your framing and composition - how you might best emphasise this significant space. What is important - is it the architecture, the lighting, the people, the objects, or something else? What of the atmosphere, the feeling of home, or even the sounds and smells - how might your photographs suggest what can't be easily seen?

What part do photographs play in your family home? Which, if any, are prominently displayed, and why? - Who chooses which images take pride of place? Do these photographs tend to be snapshots or more formal? What would happen if you were to change these images, either discretely or through discussion?

You might be interested in:

- Hrair Sarkissian, *Homesick*, 2014
 - Simryn Gill, *Dalam*, 2001
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Some useful words: Sense of place, sanctuary, refuge; subjective, objective; formal, vernacular, snapshot

KEY THEME: HOME

THESE FOUR WALLS

Wherever you call home, it's often difficult to see it with unfamiliar eyes. We become accustomed to our surroundings and tend to take them for granted. Photography can be a way to reconsider the familiar - to reinterpret what we see and make the ordinary seem strange, unfamiliar, more poetic. A photograph is a new fact. The process of looking intently at something through a lens can cause us to reassess and appreciate it.

Sometimes I see old photographs, and what's interesting to me are the things on the edges that are not meant to be there, the soap packet, the bit of litter, the things we relate to and hold that everydayness.

-- **Nigel Shafran**



Look intently at your surroundings. Notice the various surfaces and objects that surround you. Watch the way the light changes, disguising and revealing what seems so familiar. Try to create a set of pictures that might not be instantly recognised by anyone else who knows the location.

Consider how poetry or song lyrics can sometimes be hard to unravel at first reading (or hearing). But then, with time and attention, a more meaningful connection might be made. With this in mind, how, through sequencing a set of your photographs - in a book or slideshow, for example - might you create a more open-ended poetic response?

If you were to present this work to others, what sounds could you record or select to play simultaneously that best emphasise your home? For example, recorded conversations or background noises such as a tv, siblings playing, the preparation of food, the distant bustle of a city, or the a hum of a lawnmower, even.

You might be interested in:

- Keith Arnatt, *Notes from Jo*, 1991-1995
 - Nigel Shafran, *Dark Rooms*, 2016
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Some useful words: mundane, commonplace, banal, prosaic; understated, subtle, refined; sequencing, narrative, rhythm, flow, cadence

HOME AND AWAY

Often journeys begin at home. They take us away from a place of familiarity and out into the world. Later, hopefully, we can return home to rest, relax and reflect on our adventures. However, with new experiences, our feelings and perceptions of home are subject to change, even if surface appearances - and even the presence of others - initially appear unaltered.

Often, walking becomes an exercise in looking; looking at your surroundings, looking at yourself and looking inside your own mind.

-- **Ameena Rojee**



Document a journey with photographs beginning and ending in a place you call home. Think carefully about the types of pictures you might want to make. Will you concentrate on important moments during your journey (“decisive moments” as Henri Cartier-Bresson might have called them) or will you try to capture the in-between bits - the queueing, the waiting, the hanging around? You might give yourself some rules to follow. For example, you could try to make a photograph every ten minutes, setting an alarm to remind you. You might decide to flip a coin each time you reach a junction - heads is right, tails is left. You might decide to photograph particular things along the way - bus shelters, red front doors, yellow cars etc.

What happens when you arrange or view your pictures in the order that you took them. What do they reveal about your journey? How might even the shortest of journeys result in a subtle change in your perspective - for example, increased confidence in taking photographs of others, or noticing a familiar environment in a new way?

You might be interested in:

- Ameena Rojee, *El Camino*, 2016
 - Tom Wood, *Linzyluvspointy*, Whitechapel, 1994
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Some useful words: *dérive*, expedition, wanderlust; *flâneur*; investigation, typology; chance and order

FAMILY SNAPS

We associate the idea of home with the family. Like homes, families come in all shapes and sizes. The family snap is a particular kind of photograph - a group portrait, shot straight on from about 10 feet away, everyone in focus and smiling. Sometimes photographers experiment with this genre in order to reveal the complexities and pressures faced by the modern family, but also the humour and joy to be found in family life.

I was making a fake family album [...] initially I had all the members of my family playing themselves as younger. It just became very very complicated. Then a mentor suggested that I play all the parts with just one other sibling. It was like a breakthrough moment because I realised that I could do exactly what I wanted.

-- **Trish Morrissey**



Experiment with the form of the family photograph. You could begin by making some classic group portraits, typical of the genre, before continuing to experiment with increasingly unconventional views. How might you subvert, disrupt or simply play with the expectations of a family portrait? Who would be essential to your family portrait? How might missing family members be represented? What happens when your participating members exaggerate gestures or exchange characteristics and poses (or clothes, even!)? What is the most unconventional place you might take or display (and re-photograph) a family portrait?

You might be interested in:

- Trish Morrissey, *Front*, 2006
 - Janine Antoni, *Mom and Dad*, 1994
 - John Clang, *Being Together*, 2010
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Some useful words: clan, alliance, kindred; staged, posture, facade; construct, (mis)represent, amplify


FEATURED ARTIST: Harley Weir

Harley Weir's *Homes* (2016) is on show at Fabrica, a 200-year-old former Regency church in the heart of Brighton's busy Lanes. The images were taken over a period of ten days in Calais' refugee camps prior to - and during - their emptying and eventual destruction. The camps, informally known as 'The Jungle', were at one point home to over 8,000 men, women and children hoping to cross the Channel in search of a better life. Living conditions in the camps were widely described as dangerous and inhumane, with an overwhelming sense of displacement and grief.

Harley Weir has a background in fashion photography and was initially hesitant to tackle such a prominent issue. However, she felt compelled to raise awareness through her photography and to do so in a humane and sensitive way.




© Harley Weir, *Homes*, 2016

-  Using photography, how might you raise awareness of an important issue? How might your creative work and positive actions be channeled to positive effect? Is there a local organisation or charity that you may be able to collaborate with? Consider how your photographs might contribute, for example, via fundraising, information sharing, or simply celebrating the good work of others.

I felt there was something lacking in the reportage images. [...] I wanted to see things with my own eyes. [...] I saw personality in their homes.

I'm glad to have recorded these temporary spaces, so these homes and these people aren't so easily erased.

-- **Harley Weir**

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-  How might you use photography to record something destined to disappear? Consider your local environment, the changes you can recall and those you might predict. What, via your photography, should be preserved?