

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 - EDGES. 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.

AT THE EDGE

Photography is ever-present at pivotal moments in our life, from a child's initial steps to a first day at school; from wedding days to long-time reunions with old friends. In our travels and adventures, the arrival at an edge often evokes the use of a camera. Holiday photographs of cliff-edges, coastlines and summits are testament to this. Entrances - to cathedrals and theme parks, for example - also provide popular frames for expectant visitors. Whenever we arrive at a significant juncture, photography is often called upon.

What does it feel like to be on the edge of something? How does this affect the way we see things, and how might photography help us to document or reflect upon this?

When I confront issues that make me feel vulnerable I know I'm doing something right.

-- **Donovan Wylie**



Create a set of photographs that attempt to capture the feeling of being on the edge of something. This work might relate to a looming experience, a hope or fear, a pending decision or a significant change. Alternatively, your responses might stem from adventurous explorations - views from the familiar to the strange, the permitted to the forbidden, from the outside looking in (or vice versa).

How might you use photography to draw attention to 'everyday' edges - the seemingly mundane corners, borders and boundaries that tend to pass unnoticed? For example, consider table-tops, sinks, steps, gutters, doorways, fences, road-markings etc. How might you use your camera to collect, categorise and order, or alternatively, to abstract, flatten and distort?

You might be interested in:

- Dafna Talmor, *Obstructed Views*, 2018
- Mark Power, *26 Different Endings*, 2003-2006

Some useful words: Boundary, threshold, periphery, verge; anticipation, apprehension, tension; contrast, juxtaposition, conflicting

IN OR OUT?

Camera viewfinders and screens have edges. They help us decide what visual information we want to include and exclude; what is within and beyond the frame. When we photograph objects they become flattened, appearing to have sharply defined edges when, in reality, they don't. The edges of photographs remind us that they are not simply copies of reality, but abstractions shaped by technology. Deliberately disrupting our view of a subject can help us think about the relationship between photographs and what we see.

Photography is about finding out what can happen in the frame. When you put four edges around some facts, you change those facts.

-- **Garry Winogrand**



Create a simple viewfinder - a hole in a piece of card, for example. Photograph through this viewfinder but include its edge(s). Carefully consider what will be in and out of focus. What is the relationship between the edges of your camera, your home made viewfinder and the edges of the things you photograph?

Experiment with various types of home made viewfinders - cut various shaped holes in postcards or printed photographs, puncture a magazine advertisement, place a cardboard tube over your camera lens.

How else might you imaginatively disrupt your view of the world?

You might be interested in:

- John Baldessari, Harry Shunk, Janos Kender, *Hands Framing New York Harbour*, 1971
- Ray Metzker, *Pictus Interruptus*, 1976-1981

Some useful words: Compose, include, exclude, contain; disrupt, obscure, conceal, reveal; aperture, puncture, perforate; abstract, distort, mislead

EDGELAND

We think of edges as sharp, definite, sudden, clearly defined. Humans (like animals) can be intensely territorial. Our environments and our histories - global and local - are testament to a continual mapping and re-mapping. Borders, oceans, fences, lines, laws and signs are just some of the ways we attempt to clearly define and distinguish our spaces. By contrast, an Edgeland could be an in-between, liminal space, ill-defined, vague and amorphous.

If you know those places where overspill housing estates break into scrubland; wasteland. If you know this underdeveloped, unwatched territory, you know that they have 'edge'.

-- **Paul Farley** and **Michael Symmons Roberts**



Create a series of photographs exploring your own edgeland. Locate an edge space - a wasteland, a neglected plot, a roadside gutter, a beach separating land and sea, a shopping centre car park, the outskirts of the place where you live etc.

Consider photographing very close-up and also further away. Return over a period of days. Notice the way the light changes. What happens to your pictures as you become more familiar with this space?

How might you exhibit the work you produce within the same location? This might simply be small prints strategically scattered, a projected slideshow on a worn surface, or a poster-print left to weather and recorded over time. Consider how friends or family might experience the work, or how passers-by might accidentally encounter it.

How might you playfully make a claim for ownership of an edgeland? For example, the planting of a flag or sign (which might be minuscule or large), the drawing of a map, or a performative act as a declaration of ownership. How might you document these actions through photography?

You might be interested in:

- Luigi Ghirri, *Scandiano*, 1971
 - Stephen Gill, *Billboards*, 2002
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Some useful words: Territory, defined, enclave; liminal, amorphous, indeterminate; install, interrogate, reinstate

KEY THEME: **EDGES**

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Edges can be like borders. They can help you to feel safe, like you belong, or they can exclude and alienate. Warning signs often indicate the presence of an edge. Signs and notices often refer to rules or contain instructions. They are designed to identify who belongs in a particular place and who is excluded. We tend to assume that the signs we encounter have been installed by those with some form of authority over the area.

I think the thing is there's a work for every space, you always have to respond to a context, whether it be a physical context, or a political one, or a cultural one, whatever.

-- **David Shrigley**



Design one or more of your own signs with a message for someone. This could be a simple greeting, an instruction (possibly humorous), or you may wish to express a more serious viewpoint about society, politics or an issue you care about. Make sure that your sign(s) are not intended to deliberately offend anyone. Display your sign(s) in a public place and photograph what happens over a period of time. How do people respond? Will you watch from a distance or stay near to your sign? How does your sign affect the place where you choose to display it?

You might be interested in:

- David Shrigley, *River for Sale*
 - Soeren Behncke, *Sorry No Image Available*, Bag Man in New York, 2001
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Some useful words: assertion, instructional, authoritative; mischievous, contentious, intervention; declare, express, protest

FEATURED ARTIST: Donovan Wylie

Lighthouse (2018) by Donovan Wylie is presented at BPB2018 within an exhibition space on Brighton seafront. The positioning of the work - facing the opposing French coast - is particularly significant.

Following the EU referendum, Belfast-based artist Donovan Wylie began exploring ideas of family dynamics and broken relationships. Photographing lighthouses from opposing coastlines of Britain and Europe, Wylie draws attention to distance, closeness and the physical barriers created by the sea.



Donovan Wylie, *Lighthouse*, 2018



Photograph something of personal significance from afar. This might be an object, a poignant location, or a close friend. Carefully consider the edges, boundaries, spaces and forms that enter the frame. How does your viewpoint become enhanced, diluted, distorted or obscured over distance? Do photographs become more impersonal the further you step back?

Donovan Wylie cites Virginia Woolf's novel 'To the Lighthouse' (1927) as a key influence. Woolf's writing places an intense focus on the small details of various family relationships. It also raises questions about the nature of art and perception.

Photographs - like relationships - have the capacity to combine a sense of near and far. In Donovan Wylie's images, coastlines appear distant yet exist on a flat surface before us. In comparison, Virginia Woolf's novel presents us with friends and family that live together yet remain emotionally distant from one another.



How might you use photography to scrutinise the relationships that are most important to you? Develop a series of studies that reflect on feelings of distance and closeness. How might the act of photography enable you to discuss, share or collaborate with another person in new, more meaningful ways?