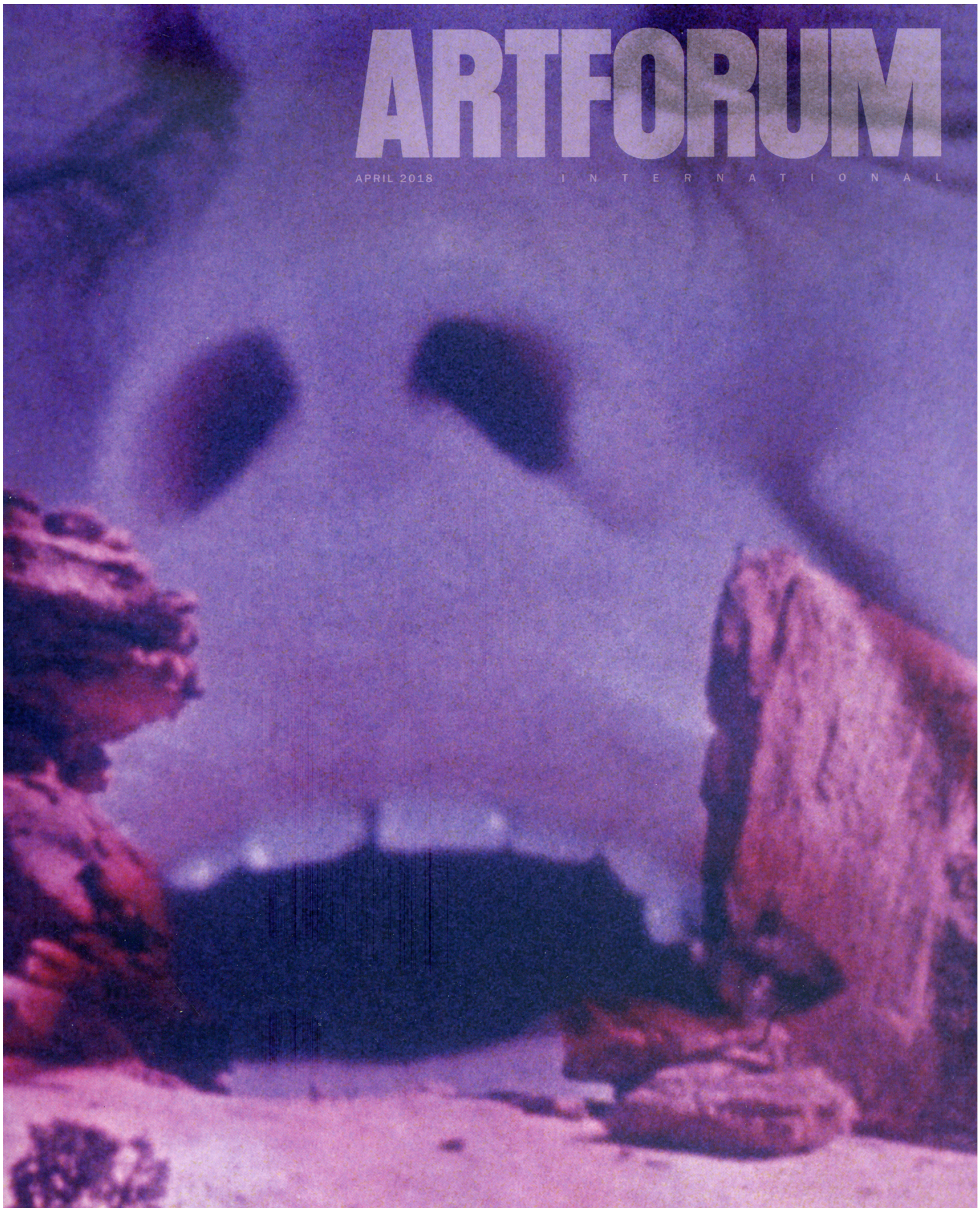


ARTFORUM

APRIL 2018

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



language to another, it also implies a contested legibility. The idea of legibility is notably at stake in *Indian Act*, 2000–2002, in which pages of the 1876 Indian Act, which gave the Canadian government exclusive legislative authority over indigenous land and rights, are obscured with red-and-white beadwork. Of the twenty pages that hang framed in a grid, half are encrypted completely. This is not a question of simple adornment, but a negation of a negation. It is no less affective for being the most didactic piece in the show.

Myre is at her best, however, when her work is more indeterminate. In *Orison/Oraison, (Net)*, 2014–17, the strongest and most mysterious work in the show, a delicate red fishing net rises slowly into a tent shape and just as gently falls to the floor, where it is held in place by a circle of rocks. Animated by a discreet pulley, it nonetheless seems to move with the rhythm of breathing. I am still wondering what this strange prayer means, and why it haunted me so.

—Ara Osterweil

LONDON

Simon Roberts

FLOWERS

In 2007, Simon Roberts began his series “We English” by training his four-by-five camera on the English landscape and its inhabitants for the first time. Roberts spent several months in a mobile home, traveling across the country to investigate the relationship between the scenery, leisure activities, and English identity. He saw all three as complementary. As he revealed in a talk at Photofusion Photography Centre in London in 2014, his experience of England was informed by his own family trips and holiday activities in the open air, and by the long tradition of British portraiture set in pastoral landscapes.

Just over a decade later, Roberts presented “Merrie Albion—Landscape Studies of a Small Island,” an exhibition and accompanying book demonstrating his long-term devotion to Britain as a subject. It showcased images featuring in some of his most famous series, such as “The Election Project,” 2010, along with other photographs he had never exhibited before. An example of the latter was the poignant *Grenfell Tower, North Kensington, London, 19 June 2017*, depicting, in the distance, the blackened shell of the titular apartment block. Last year, a fire broke out in the structure, spreading through the building with terrifying speed due to the use of cheap, flammable aluminum cladding, and leading to the deaths of at least seventy-one people.



Simon Roberts,
*Grenfell Tower, North
Kensington, London,
19 June 2017*,
C-print, 48 x 60".

Roberts has remained faithful to the style he mastered in 2007, characterized by a complex multiplane composition, elevated perspective (he often photographs from the top of his motor home), and the tableau format, to use art historian and curator Jean-François Chevrier's term for a form of photography that, like painting, relates to the wall rather than to the page, and in which characters are otherwise absorbed and seem unaware of the existence of the viewer. In this show, the majority of the exhibited photographs (C-prints) were sixty by seventy-two inches and displayed one or two per wall at eye level. Some works depicted British meadows and rivers as a background for historical reenactments and traditional rituals. A sense of anxiety underpins these scenes. Although the activities aim to reinforce a sense of identity and belonging, all they provide is a momentary distraction from the political and economic unrest of the past decade. Similar escapism fed the recent Brexit campaign: The idea of a serene British landscape became a starting point for a fantasy about an imagined, glorious past in which England was a greater, more independent, more prosperous nation. The show's title was clearly a reference to this fantasy, with its archaic spelling of *merry* and its use of the earliest known name for the island of Britain. But scenes like that of the burnt-out Grenfell Tower were a reminder that contemporary Britain has little to do with the pastoral daydream. The building's charred skeleton looms in the distance while, in the foreground, young people gather in a leafy square, seemingly unbothered by the view—a vista that, through Roberts's camera, looks like a metaphor for the discrepancy between political fantasies and the country's real needs.

—Sylvia Serafinowicz

Leo Fitzmaurice

THE SUNDAY PAINTER

Manchester United's 1995–96 away-game shirt is regularly cited as among the worst-ever Premier League designs. Not only was the mottled gray top hideous, but players complained they could not spot teammates on the field. Down 3–0 at Southampton, the struggling Man U team quickly changed their uniforms at halftime, and their game improved (but they lost anyway). The mud-colored top was never seen again.

Vibrant solids are generally chosen for team jerseys, and these are embellished in standard, uncomplicated patterns. The sponsor's name is writ large at the shirt's center. The team badge is usually stitched above the player's heart, and symmetrically to the left is the sportswear manufacturer's logo—a leaping puma or wordless swoosh. Curious symbols and digits might grace the sleeves, and a trim collar finishes off each shirt.

Weirdly, this basic arrangement corresponds in miniature to the design of cigarette packaging, and this uncanny resemblance is the conceit behind “Post Match,” 1996–2017, Leo Fitzmaurice's series of assisted readymades. Fitzmaurice made the connection in the mid-1990s, when he noticed in the street a discarded cigarette packet that looked like a miniature fallen athlete. For twenty-odd years the artist has flattened Marlboro or Camel Light boxes to craft 540 tiny paper sport shirts, and the resulting collection—arranged in a grid-like pattern on a two-story-high wall—is a sheer delight.

From a distance, the installation at The Sunday Painter recalled the neutral patterns of Daniel Buren or Niele Toroni. Up close, we discovered each patch to be intensely detailed, a perfect shirt-simulacrum down to the neatly folded itty-bitty collar sliced from the packet top. The color palette corresponds precisely: Sky cigarettes share the same bright blue with Chelsea; Chesterfield's dramatic white-and-blue patterning recalls Italy's Azzurri. Both sportswear and cig-packet