

HOLGA

Michael Kenna

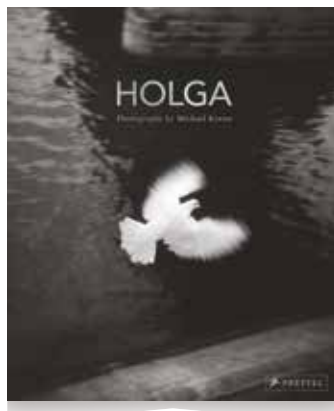
▣ Prestel
 ▣ Hardback, £40

What happens when a photographer who has reached the peak of his abilities in both technique and artistry, and whose control over the process is precise and exacting, picks up a plastic camera over which he has little control and the resulting images are unpredictable and erratic? Well, the answer is that if you are as skilled a photographer as Kenna is, you can produce the most beautiful images with as much sensitivity and delicacy as the rest of your work.

Looking through the book I found myself finding it difficult to believe that these unmistakable Kenna pictures were produced with such a low-tech camera. His unique stamp is on every one, distinctively beautiful.

Drawn from his vast archive of images (he apparently has long carried a Holga with him wherever he goes) the pictures take us round the world from Japan and China to Italy and the USA, proving the point that it is the photographer, not the camera, that achieves greatness.

Elizabeth Roberts



ON THE SHELF



NOWHERE FAR

Nicholas Hughes

▣ Ghost
 ▣ Hardback, £30

With a foreword by Brett Rogers of the Photographers' Gallery, and essays by Martin Barnes from the V&A and Jay Griffiths, this is an impressive book. My only sense of disappointment is that the reproduction of the images doesn't quite do justice to Hughes' work – but that's the nature of printing.

Elizabeth Roberts

'Ethereal, sometimes wholly abstract, Nicholas Hughes' images are exquisitely beautiful.'

In the 10 years running up to the Brexit referendum, Simon Roberts photographed Britain and the people who would, in time, take part in this life-changing vote. What he, and perhaps we as viewers, discovered is that the Brits are not quite what we think we are.

Using a large-format camera, Roberts turned his lens to the communal experience, from leisure activities to social and political events. The inconsequential is, to Roberts, as significant as the consequential – 'Mel and Charlie's Roundhouse, Talley', a homemade house in the depths of the countryside is given equal status to 'London 2012 Opening Ceremony, Olympic Stadium, London'.

Thus a multi-layered picture is drawn of Britain and its people.

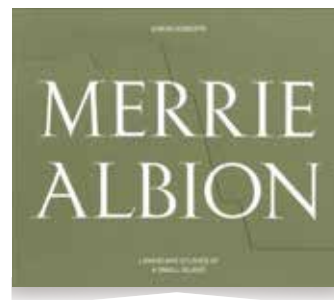
The book is beautifully produced with a simplicity of design that allows the images to speak for themselves.

Elizabeth Roberts

Ethereal, sometimes wholly abstract, Nicholas Hughes' images are exquisitely beautiful.

They are born out of his engagement with the landscape, both in terms of the environment and man's relationship to it, along with his clear love of nature.

Working within a self-imposed limitation of making pictures only within walking distance of his home, be it London, Cornwall or north Wales, Hughes produces these strangely spiritual works that feel almost like paintings. Here we find fleeting moments in time when the light became perfect and the landmarks in the landscape blurred to just a shape within the composition. The pictures almost feel like a state of mind.

MERRIE ALBION:
LANDSCAPE
STUDIES OF A
SMALL ISLAND

Simon Roberts

▣ Dewi Lewis
 ▣ Hardback, £45

INSTANT STORIES

Wim Wenders

▣ Thames & Hudson
 ▣ Hardback, £40

The Oscar-nominated filmmaker Wim Wenders reckons he took around 12,000 Polaroid images between 1973 and 1983, 200 of which were shown earlier this year at the Photographers' Gallery and just over 400 are featured here in this marvellous book. The Polaroid operated as a visual notebook for Wenders. Here his pictures are grouped in 36 sections with titles such as Jukeboxes and Typewriters, Mean Streets and Looking for America. Each chapter includes diary-like text from Wenders; some writing is personal, others pensive, some passages show Wenders contemplating how technology and photography have changed, making the book almost an elegy for Polaroid. Take for example these poetic few sentences: 'What a unique thing Polaroids were! Once almost science fiction, now definitely from the past, they occupy a very special place in our relationship to imagery and to photography, certainly in mine.' He used the medium to test out frames and ideas for his films, giving us insight into his creative thinking. More of a storybook than just a photo book, engaging with this book is a real pleasure.

Anna Bonita Evans

