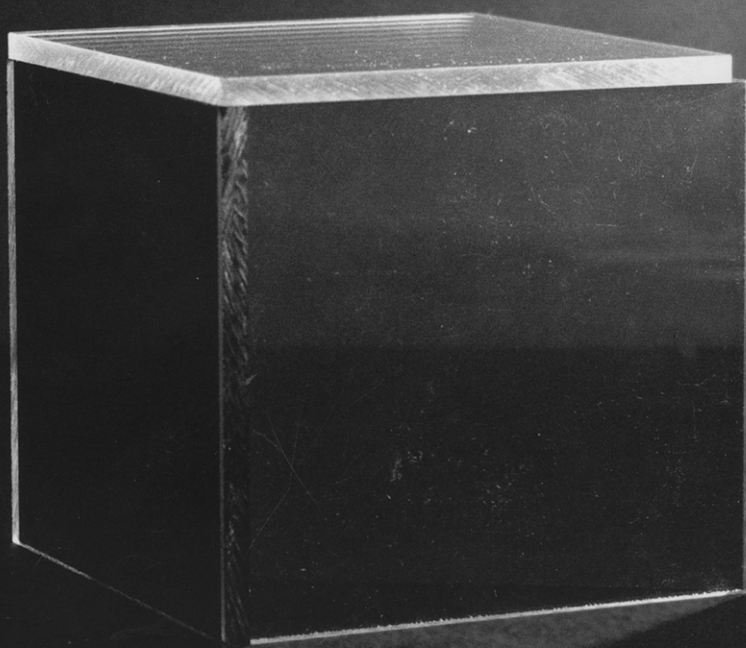


# SOURCE

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The Photograph Recoded



that demonstrated the occupation of the human figure in the foreground. Contact prints show something of his efficient working process. Mondrian looks like Mondrian because of the way he is pictured within geometric shapes like his paintings. His most politicised portrait was probably the creepy portrait of Alfried Krupp inside his own factory in 1963, a picture that responded to Walter Benjamin's famous 1936 remark that the picture of a factory façade (e.g. Krupps) tells us nothing about the social relations within it.

Arnold Newman virtually invented social portraiture. His pictures dominated *Life* magazine and other covers for years. Perhaps unusually for a studio photographer, his best pictures are of men. His record cover sleeve photograph of Billy Holiday is a rare exception. You will not find any critical writing in this book, but instead it does offer a lovely insight in the workings of one of the great editorial photographers. Newman raised the standard for the entire field, bold compositions, thoughtful settings and critical juxtapositions, honed through extensive practice. While some of his pictures may look dated now, there is much to be learnt from his work in this book.

David Bate

### A Grey Day Out

Pierdom, Simon Roberts

Simon Roberts makes carefully crafted colour photographs with a 5 X 4 large format camera. In *Pierdom*, he documents sixty-four British pleasure piers, mainly to be found at seaside resorts in Southern England. The book opens with a lively essay on piers and their significance by Francis Hodgson, Professor of the Culture of Photography at the University of Brighton. It concludes with thumbnail photographs of the piers in alphabetical order with some basic information about each one.

Bournemouth Pier is typical, I learn. It was originally a wooden structure that opened to the public in 1856. At later dates, it was



reinforced with cast iron, then wrought iron, and finally concrete. In 1940 it was more or less demolished by British soldiers in anticipation of a German invasion, and from 1946 to date, it has been continuously restored. Less typically, it was the target of an IRA bombing campaign in 1993.

Roberts' photograph of Bournemouth Pier from 2011 was made in July – the high season for tourism. Unlike the town's official publicity, his image is overwhelmingly grey, and the carefree crowds are noticeably absent. A few figures can be identified on the pier if one looks closely, but the main signs of human activity are the silhouettes of a few intrepid surfers in the water, trying to anticipate the next good wave.

What a difference between Roberts' sombre image and the John Hinde postcard from 1960 called *Bournemouth Pier from the West Cliff* that is reproduced in the opening essay! The crowds

are out and about; sea and sky are an impossible Mediterranean blue; and the retoucher has had a field-day, dabbing red and yellow to people and buildings to attract the viewer. Hinde's seaside postcards are inevitably excessive, gay, utopian even. Roberts' vision is more sober.

David Evans

### Anecdotal and Descriptive

Ping Pong Conversations, Alec Soth, Francesco Zanol

Alec Soth is a photographer interested in encounters, books and, apparently, table tennis. Given this, there is every reason that *Ping Pong Conversations* might have found the right format for assessing Soth's work. The book features the edited transcript of a conversation

Clevedon Pier (2011),  
Simon Roberts