Quintessence

Archisle is five

David Goldblatt / Elsie Wright & Frances Griffiths / Finn Larsen
Jem Southam / John Gibbons / Mark Le Ruez / Martin Parr
Martin Toft / Michelle Sank / Peter Finnemore / Tom Pope
Tony Ray-Jones / Yury Toroptsov
Quintessence: Exhibitors

Martin Parr

LON151595 - Pigment Print
© Martin Parr/ Magnum Photos

LON151568 - Pigment Print
© Martin Parr/ Magnum Photos

*Robes of the Jurats of the Royal Court of Jersey, Liberation Day.* 2013.
LON151604 - Pigment Print
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LON151634 - Pigment Print
© Martin Parr/Magnum Photos

Tony Ray-Jones

© National Media Museum

*Beachy Head Boat Trip.* 1967.
© National Media Museum
Yury Toroptsov

*Vic Tanner Davy, St. Helier, Jersey.* 2014

*Jess, St. Helier, Jersey.* 2014.

*Untitled from ‘Fairyland’.* 2014

*Ice Age Jersey Exhibition, La Hougue Bie, Jersey.* 2014.

*German Occupation Registration Card of Ivy Joan Vibert (b. 1929).* 1943.

Courtesy of Jersey Archive.

*Ivy Joan Vibert, Fairy Queen, Jersey Battle of Flowers.* 1937.

Digital print from gelatin silver print (postcard)

Elsie Wright & Frances Griffiths

*'Fairy Offering Flowers To Iris.’* August 1920.

© National Media Museum
She said to him, ‘You be the driver and I’ll be the Madam’, then they picked up the fender and posed. Hillbrow, Johannesburg. 1975.

At the Summit Club Pool, Hillbrow. 1975.

Lulu Gebashe and Solomon Mlutshana, who both worked in a record shop in the city, Mofolo Park, Soweto. 17th September 1972.

Couple from Blikkiesdorp, Hillbrow. 1975.
Martin Toft

Bryan Le Brocq, retired Herdsman, Middlewood Farm, St Peter, Jersey. 7th May 2014.

Sandy Hook Bay, New Jersey, United States. 30th July 2014

Tamika Tolliver, Beach, Asbury Park, New Jersey, United States. 1st August 2014.

Osmund Simon in his dining room at Westways, Le Mont Rossignol, St Ouen, Jersey. 5th April 2014.

Sir Robert Le Masurier, Bailiff of Jersey (in robe); Robert D Hughes, Governor of New Jersey; Denis Ryan, Constable of St Helier (wearing chain of office); Phillip Alampi, Commissioner of Agriculture (second from right) and two unidentified men with Precious Galinthia the Jersey Calf that was exported to New Jersey for the tercentenary of the naming of the State in 1964 and later presented to young farmer Linda Lee Harrison at the New Jersey Pavilion and the New York World’s Fair of 1964-65.

Finn Larsen

Mark Le Ruez

*Untitled (La Lande du Ouest).* 2011.

*Rügen #1 & Rügen #2.* 2015.

John Gibbons

*And the Earth Changes Shape.* 2004 – 05

Peter Finnemore

*Koan Exercises.* 2004

*Garden Shoes.* 2004

Jem Southam

What is Archisle?

Archisle: The Jersey Contemporary Photography Programme was launched by the Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive in 2011. The stated aims of the Archisle Programme are to promote contemporary photography through an ongoing programme of exhibitions, education and commissions. As Archisle's portmanteau title implies, the project seeks to connect photographic archives, contemporary practice and experiences of island cultures through the development of a forum for creative discourse between Jersey and international practitioners. From inception Archisle has been perceived as a concept that can travel and it may readily be applied to islands the world over. A chief source of inspiration has been the burgeoning multi-disciplinary field of Island Studies, as exemplified by the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative and its related journal, Shima.\(^1\) With Shima and Island Studies Journal both nearing their tenth birthdays - the average age at which the Oxford English Dictionary considers words for inclusion - it seems possible that ‘islandness’, the word coined by these communities to describe the qualities of being an island, will soon have its day. In the meantime Elizabeth Stratford’s definition of islandness as ‘a complex expression of identity that attaches to places smaller than continents and surrounded entirely by water’ seems apposite.\(^2\)

The Channel Island\(^3\) of Jersey, the geographic base of the Archisle Programme has acted as a magnet to humans for over half a million years.\(^4\) The island as we know it, bounded by the sea, has been so since about 4000 B.C. following the end of the last ice age.\(^5\) Throughout their history, the successive communities inhabiting this small island, following on from the first settlers, have also required the ability to repel invaders or to endure incursion. It seems obvious to state that Jersey's distinctive physical geography and the political and cultural development of the island are intertwined. But understanding – from our position in the twenty-first century - the push and pull of island experiences and the distinctive senses of place and identity that they provoke as a creative resource for visual art are motivations for the Archisle project.

In 2011 when Archisle #1 Open Photography Exhibition, our first event, was launched it seemed natural to take Islandness as our theme. I do, however, recall the quizzical expression on the face of an ITV Television Newsreader...
when she was prompted to announce the project and its theme to viewers via the autocue. Her co-presenter was equally perplexed by what seemed an entirely alien term. Whether the concept would be understood suddenly seemed uncertain, though ultimately the international photographic community successfully grasped the term and a healthy submission resulted in Archisle’s first group exhibition by eleven Jersey and nine international photographers. Five years later, in 2015, Jersey hosted the Island Games and alongside 3000 sporting competitors artists from twenty-four participating islands were invited to an ‘inter-island artists’ lock in’ at Elizabeth Castle. It was encouraging to note that the Jersey Arts Trust who produced this event identified islandness as their theme thus bringing the term further into common parlance.

It must be acknowledged, however, that islandness confronts artists with challenges of isolation and remoteness from artistic movements and trends breaking in mainland urban centres. The ‘Islands of the World V International Meeting’ in Mauritius on 4 July 1998 recommended, ‘that islanders speak and others hear the unique and positive cultural experiences of island living through literature and other forms of creative expression.’ Taking up this assertion and analysing the challenges and opportunities for island art Peter Hay has observed that:

In a stressed world, islands are under particular stress. At the same time - as the global economy becomes more and more tightly controlled from the centre - it may be that it is only at the fringes that the necessary “critical distance” will be found that enables the envisioning and generation of real and radical alternatives to taken for granted existence. Despite the inflexibility to which islandness has conducted in the past, then, it may be that in the future islands will be crucial sites of inquiry, even of resistance. Island arts engage with the land and the sea (of course!) and the community. They address the large questions of existence, but they do it within a context of shore-bounded particularity. They are, in reality, not “minor” arts at all, and island artists are, in reality, not workers at the margins. So should it be recognised.

The Archisle Programme has picked up Peter Hay’s mantle and over five years from 2011-2015 we have given form to these ideas through the development an International Open Photography Exhibition series and an International Photographer in Residence Programme, in addition to producing occasional exhibitions, commissions and events.

Archisle’s origins in fact stretch much further back than 2011. The Channel Islands have seen their fair share of photography since its arrival at these provincial shores in 1840. Under conditions of sharp mid-nineteenth century growth in population and economy, photographs of island landscapes found their way into the early exhibitions of the newly founded British photographic societies in the 1850s and circulated through the nascent field of photographically illustrated books in Britain and France. In their images of coastline and portraits of the island’s inhabitants photographers forged representations of the peculiar cultural identity possessed by these British-Norman micro-cultures. Twists of history have brought experimenters with the lens to the islands. The photographs created around the figure of Victor Hugo, romantic poet in exile, have been described as ‘the most intensive photographic record of any nineteenth century writer’.

Henry Mullins, a photographer in the circle of the first photography studio in Europe, opened at the Royal Polytechnic Institute in London in 1840, made his career as a studio photographer in the Royal Square, Jersey from 1848-1873. Mullins’s studio albums, preserved in the Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive, contain over 9,000 portraits of islanders placed and identified in grid configurations based upon social, political, professional and familial status. As a first generation photographic archive evincing the function of the medium as a register for identity formation it is both unique in its insular context and of international significance as a cultural collection. On the other side of St Helier in the 1840s and 1850s Scottish Photographer William Collie experimented with proto-documentary methods to create some of the earliest portrait photographs of working class people in existence. In the twenty-first century Collie’s
images have entered into the photographic canon through their inclusion in the first room of a 2007 exhibition of European photography at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York alongside photographs by British inventor of photography William Henry Fox Talbot and his inner circle.

The twentieth century found its chief protagonist with the camera in Claude Cahun, whose work was rediscovered in the 1980s. Cahun’s surrealist portraits and constructions assimilated island features, while her anti-nazi political activism responded to the status of the Island of Jersey as occupied territory, 1940-1945. The German Occupation of Jersey had multiple effects on photographic archives. Under the terms of the Registration and Identification of Persons (Jersey) Order, 1940 issued by the German authorities, every islander over fourteen years of age was required to register and be photographed. The war time archive of 31,000 photographic ID cards is inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. This oppressive archive is juxtaposed with the peace time portrait archive commenced by Henry Mullins a century earlier. The conditions of the German ban on photography imposed on the civilian population of Jersey in October 1940 led to the use of cameras and photographic archives as subversive methods of visual resistance. The prosecution, protest and imprisonment of Emile F Guiton Honorary Photographic Archivist of the Société Jersiaise for photographing outdoors has recently been re-examined in the context forms of resistance and defiance. ¹⁰

These nineteenth and early twentieth century case studies are indicative that insular conditions have acted as both quantitative and qualitative drivers for photographic production and archival development. As archives they offer distinctive artistic, biographical, topographic and anthropological records. Post war Jersey photographic archives are however, in marked contrast, lacking in artistic, biographical or thematic context. The current exhibition at Jersey Museum, Your Story, Our History 125 Years Through a Jersey Evening Post Lens reflects this position. The exhibition surveys the largest twentieth century Jersey photographic archive, that of the Jersey Evening Post on the occasion of its imminent deposit at Jersey Archive. Although some images are organised into small thematic groups no attribution to a photographer is given. As a Photographic Archivist I remain hopeful that an undiscovered post war body of work will materialise to disprove these claims. But it seems that in the 1970s, while Manx photographer Chris Killip was documenting the people of his native Isle of Man, an island community whose post-war economic trajectory exhibits many parallels with Jersey, the people of the latter island were not represented through any equivalent photographic vision. In his essay in Killip’s 1980 book, Isle of Man, A Book About the Manx, John Berger states:

There are two Isles of Man. The first is an island of fisherman and small farmers. The second is a ‘tax haven’ for companies and individual shareholders to shelter from British income tax. The second was created after the war to attract money to the first islands declining economy. Gradually the money came in, but it did not of course come to the fishermen and small farmers. Chris Killip is concerned exclusively with the first island which is also the historic island. Soon it will disappear effaced by the second, wiped off the board because it is not viable in a system where profits have to be large enough for tax evasion to be worth the arranging.¹¹

While Berger’s binary is an over-simplified and inadequate description of twenty-first century society on either island, Killip’s photographs remain as a powerful documentary of the native people of the Isle of Man and their homesteads in the 1970s. I continually return to this body of work as a source of inspiration. If it is too late to photograph any equivalent of what Berger thought of as the ‘first island’ in Jersey, it ought to be possible to investigate what we might think of as a ‘third island’: the diverse multi-cultural community that inhabits the island today. And this is, in part, Archisle’s project.

To form a (photographic) visual impression of the Jersey people in the twenty-first century researchers must turn to digital images on websites outside of public archives and institutions, notwithstanding the growing Archisle
Contemporary Photography Collection. One of the most extensive of these is the Jersey VIP website which contains 91,580 photographs in nine events categories: Charity, Clubbing, Corporate, Dinners and Balls, Island Events, Live Concerts, Parties, Sports and Weddings. No identities of subjects are given on Jersey VIP and the contact information for the website is listed as: Photographer, St Helier, Jersey. The website, Jersey Events, follows a similar format though the quantity of images is unknown.

Jersey’s only daily newspaper the Jersey Evening Post (JEP) has approximately 160,000 photographs online in eleven categories: Jersey from the Sky, News, Events, Temps Passé (past times), Schools, Sports, Scenic Jersey, JEP 125th anniversary exhibition images, Swimarathon 2015, Calendar and Starting School. Some of these categories are sub-divided into years dating back to 2011. Some images have descriptions online but most do not and instead have image numbers associated with them to allow readers of the newspaper to purchase copies. Photographers are sometimes identified in the Jersey Evening Post, presumably when they are proud of an image; online they are not. Visit Jersey, the independent company founded by the States of Jersey in 2015 to develop the tourism sector, operates an image library for use by businesses for the purpose of ‘promoting the island of Jersey as a tourist destination.’ This image library contains photographs in categories: Activities, Attractions, Sport and Lifestyle, Beaches and Bays, Coastal, Couples, Events, Flowers and Gardens, Food and Drink, St Helier, Towers and Walking.

Based upon this survey conducted in May 2015, we learn that photographic archives of Jersey in the twenty-first century are composed of ‘lifestyle’ categories, and that identities of both subjects and photographers, are absent. It is within this photographic milieu that the Archisle Programme has been conceived. Set against the dominant categories identified in the survey and the paucity of photographic enquiry that seeks to understand the processes of meaning making inherent in the act of taking photographs, Archisle was established to begin to populate the void. Archisle seeks to engage photographers with the culture of Jersey to create a diverse and incisive visual archive of our times; to be active in the present in order to communicate in future.

**Quintessence**

Quintessence (quinta essentia) presents work by fourteen artists. Works by six of them are drawn from the Archisle Contemporary Photography collection which has been formed at the Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive between 2011 and 2015: Mark Le Ruez, Martin Parr, Martin Toft, Michelle Sank, Yury Toroptsov and Tom Pope. Solo exhibitions by each of these artists have been presented at multiple venues in Jersey during the concurrent period. Sank, Toroptsov and Pope were Archisle International Photographers in Residence (IPRs) in 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively. The residency programme invites international applications for the post of IPR which brings photographers to Jersey to live, work and teach for a term of six months. Based in the Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive the IPR’s remit is to produce a new body of work about Jersey for exhibition and addition to the archive. Alongside their professional practice IPR teach one day a week. The Archisle educational programme has delivered over one hundred workshops to participants from age two to adult since 2011. The IPR programme is designed to give the Jersey community access to educational, professional development and audience experiences led by internationally successful artists while simultaneously building a contemporary collection of photography about Jersey.

Sank, Toroptsov and Pope have all engaged creatively with the Photographic Archive at some level. Sank used the social order of Henry Mullins’s mid-nineteenth studio portrait albums as starting points for engaging the twenty-first century portrait subjects featured in her exhibition titled *Insula*. Yury Toroptsov identified a character from ‘Fairyland’ a Jersey Battle of Flowers Carnival exhibit in a 1937 British Pathé film and uncovered a mythic narrative through images and literature presented in an exhibition of that name. For *I Am Not Tom Pope You Are All Tom Pope*, Pope activated
the archive through mask making, subversive messaging and game play. Texts about these exhibitions and each of the artists’ oeuvres are available here and more of their work can be viewed online.\textsuperscript{12}

Mark Le Ruez is a Jersey born artist based in Berlin. His 2014/2015 solo exhibitions \textit{In Sunset We Fall Into Furious Attitudes} at Kurt Kurt, Berlin and \textit{Since Childhood I Have Not Been} at Jersey Arts Centre were created in collaboration with and curated by Archisle respectively. The photographs by Martin Toft are taken from \textit{Atlantus}. \textit{Atlantus} is a transoceanic photography project between Martin Toft and Archisle. Prompted in part by the 350th anniversary in 2014 of Sir George Carteret naming of the State of New Jersey, USA after Jersey his island home in 1664, the project asks how two places that share a name on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean perceive each other within archives and cultural memory? In five stories that respond through image and text to the people, politics, landscapes, industries and identities of these places the \textit{Atlantus} Project connects memories, archives and imagined lands on opposite sides of the Atlantic world through contemporary visual discourse. \textit{Atlantus} is a transoceanic narrative in which estranged lands of incomparable scale come together in poetic gestures that ask: what's in a name? Copies of \textit{Atlantus}, our multi-functional newspaper and DIY exhibition are available to view here.

In 2013 Archisle commissioned Martin Parr to photograph Liberation Day in Jersey. Acknowledging the fact that Parr, as one of the most important British artists working today, had not produced work in the Channel Islands there could be no more fitting subject than Liberation Day, the annual public holiday that marks Jersey's freedom from five years of Nazi Occupation. Martin Parr: Liberation was presented in collaboration with Guernsey Photography Festival and later presented at Sprengel Museum, Hannover.

\textit{Quintessence} marks the first five years of the Archisle Programme by exhibiting, as a group, works from the contemporary photography archive which has been established through the programme for future public enjoyment. Their contrasting methodologies, brought together on these gallery walls, reflect the dynamism of this photographic archive as a visual ecosystem of social and anthropological thought and artistic practice. These projects by artists who are variously native, long or short-term residents, highlight the importance of shifting cultural perception and representation between the insular and external or micro and macro. They engage creatively with the idea that it is only through alterity that we come to know ourselves.

The process of researching, recruiting, promoting and delivering the multiple projects and events that Archisle has pursued since 2011 has resulted in a large, diverse and far reaching local and international network of creative partners, colleagues and friends. To reflect the creative force of this network for \textit{Quintessence I}, as Curator, and each participating Archisle artist, have nominated another artist whose work has influenced, inspired or thematically engaged our visual language. We do not travel alone; we take with us the histories, knowledge, influences and ideas of others; others we have met and other places we have known.

When I contacted Jem Southam to ask him to contribute to the \textit{Quintessence} exhibition he readily agreed. Subsequently, he proposed four \textit{Red Mudstone} photographs and asked whether I knew about them. I replied that, not only do I recall the images as the frontispiece for his book \textit{Rockfalls, Rivermouths and Ponds}, further I remember them as ‘test prints’ pinned to the wall of his office at University of Plymouth in 1997. These images which I like to think of as ‘arrested cataclysms’ had accompanied our tutorials and formed the backdrop to formation of my vocabulary about photography. They are fitting inclusions in \textit{Quintessence} for this reason, but more so, as some of the early visual researches that led to the brilliant rockfall photographs that Southam has continued to create since that time. Southam’s photographs are formal visual analyses of geological trauma. As David Chandler explains in his
illuminating essay in the above book, they show sites ‘where the vertical movement down and out of the fallen rocks (precipitated by water moving through the cliff’s strata) is in contrast to the incoming motion of the tides and winds that cause erosion.’ These formal properties - albeit located on that somewhat larger island of Great Britain - return us to the push and pull of tidal interfaces that are both geographically and psychologically definitive in island life. Speaking about his work Southam says: ‘emotionally…I am a mild melancholic. I think there is something about the English landscape which comes out of a melancholic sensibility. But I think melancholia is positive sensibility because for me it’s an expression, first of all…that life is so exquisite and remarkable but cut through with the fact that it’s so damn short. So when I go, out I want to make quite sombre pictures…with colour values that allow me to explore that kind of equation.’

Every nominated artist in Quintessence occupies a significant place in the histories of their colleague. Martin Parr strongly illustrated his connection to Tony Ray-Jones in the major 2013 exhibition Only in England at Media Space, London. Parr worked with hitherto unknown negatives by Ray-Jones’s, selecting images for exhibition for the first time. Quintessence features one such selected image: May Day Celebrations, c. 1967. This photograph (and those of David Goldblatt and Michelle Sank) reveals formal connections with the nominees. Martin Toft cites fellow Danish photographer Finn Larsen as a major influence as do Mark Le Ruez in reference to John Gibbons and Tom Pope with Peter Finnemore.

When I visited Peter Finnemore in Pontyates, Carmarthenshire, he took me, in pelting rain, on a tour of the garden at his family home of five generations where for years much of his work has been made. When we returned inside I asked him to talk a little about Koan Exercises and Garden Shoes: the works we have included in Quintessence. He spoke in the most lucid of terms about the conflicted history of Wales, ‘cultural camouflage’ and how ‘blending in’ as a Welsh artist is a subversive tactic. As Cynthia Greig tells us in her essay ‘Flying Under the Radar,’ about Finnemore’s Zen Gardener, the body of work from which the images are taken:

Dangling from the roof in the photograph Koan Exercises…he simultaneously raises the subject of war and pokes fun at the hero worship it generally inspires. As an unarmed and impotent defender he playfully mimics the display and commando-style tactics of the free Wales Army who rebelled against English political, territorial and cultural encroachment of Wales in the 60s. At the same time he raises compelling questions about how territorial disputes throughout the world divide neighbours and reinforce feelings of being a stranger in your own land.

Peter described the process of growing the vegetated blanket for camouflaging the view from above of the roof of his garden shed. In closing he drew out this viewpoint further commenting that ‘the image could be about the earth being an island in the universe.’ I held this observation about an earth island in mind as I left Wales, heading towards John Gibbon’s London studio to collect his sculpture: And the Earth Changes Shape. When I invited John to speak about this work he exprested it in terms of giving form to the emotional experience of moving to live in, or occupy, a different place or space; a response to resultant changes to personal geography.

Finn Larsen’s set of four images collectively titled Al Gore Was Here show a view from a bench at Ilulissat Icefjord in West Greenland. Larsen explains that this bench has ‘become a pilgrimage site for countless politicians and opinion makers, coming from all over the world to see the glacier of illulissat.’ Here it is claimed, political and business leaders are photographed by the media to prove their environmental conscience and awareness of climate change. These images are motivated out of an awareness of actual shape change to the earth and one of the greatest challenges facing humanity: global temperature rise. But Larsen’s photographs are, equally, defined not by the view that is presented in the frame, but rather by the
vast scrap heap that is obscured behind the glacier. *Quintessence* marks five years of *Archisle: The Jersey Contemporary Photography Programme* with a celebration of images from our own archive and outside. Larsen's images are perhaps a fitting metaphor for our own view of the future and the importance of promoting and questioning the act of making photographs by thinking both in and outside of the frame.

**Notes**


3. The Channel Islands archipelago, located in the Bay of Normandy some twenty miles from the French Coast, is made up of seven permanently inhabited islands and numerous offshore reefs. Separated into two bailiwicks, that of Jersey, alone as the largest of the islands, and Guernsey, also incorporating the islands of Alderney, Sark, Herm, Jethou, Brecqhou. Jersey and Guernsey are British Crown Dependencies operating independent insular parlaments known as the States of Jersey and of Guernsey, presided over by a crown appointed Bailiff and composed of an assembly of elected political representatives. The Bailiffs of Jersey and Guernsey are also President and Chief Judge of the islands’ judicatures; laws are adopted by royal assent to the British Monarch in Council. The islands’ governments have the legislative ability to pass ordinances without royal assent.


8. The British-Norman culture of the Channel Islands stems from the fact that the islands were part of the Duchy of Normandy when King John lost Normandy to the French in 1204. In return for their continued loyalty, the English crown granted the Channel Islands constitutional autonomy that respected the Norman customs extant in these territories and thus conceived the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey. See note 1. Judith Everard and James Clarke Holt, *Jersey 1204: the forging of an island community* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004).


14. These comments are extracted from a record of the On Landscape Conference at Rheged Centre, Cumbria, UK 21-23rd November 2014. See: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBrRN-isDPY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBrRN-isDPY).


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