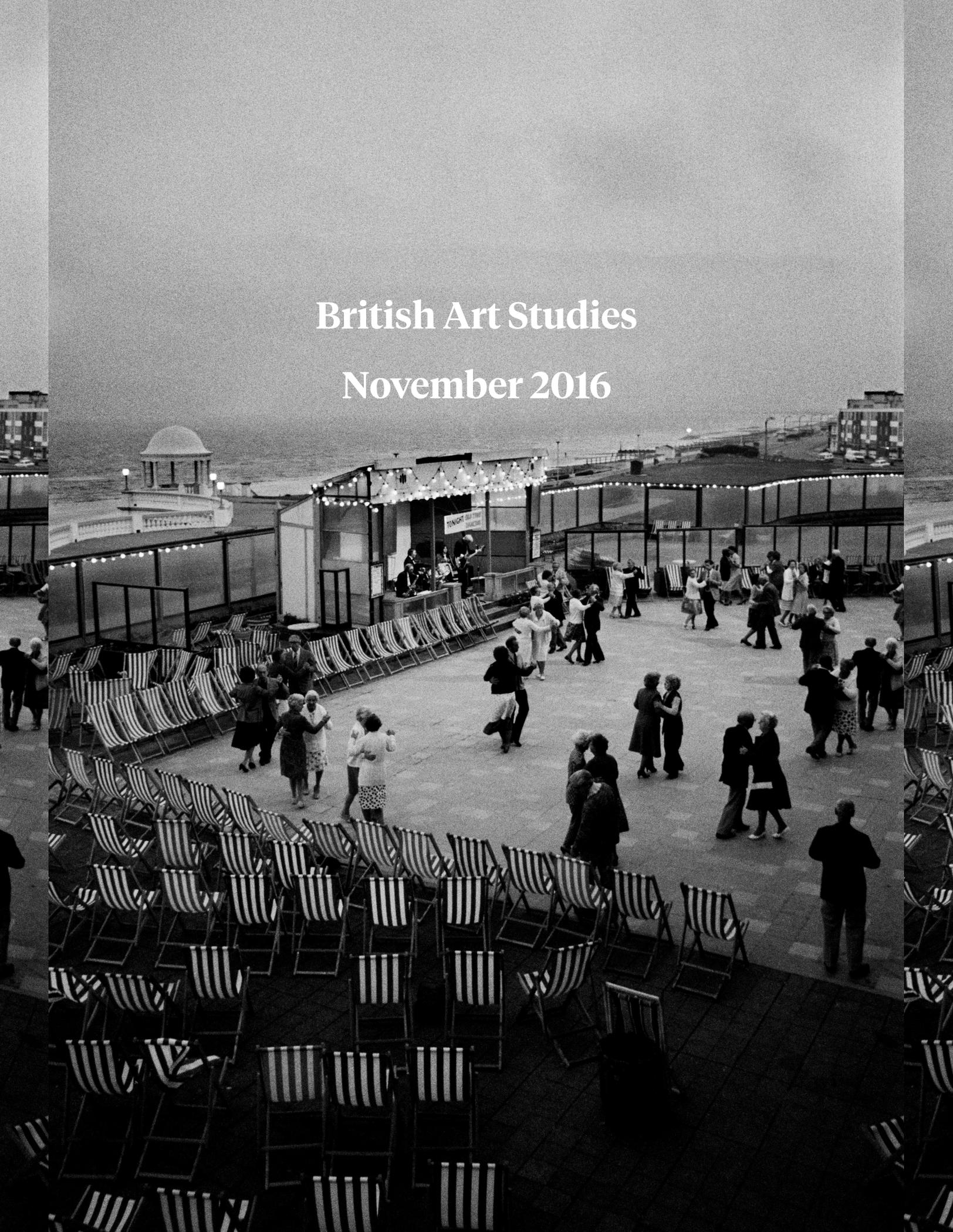


British Art Studies

November 2016



British Art Studies

Issue 4, published 28 November 2016

Cover image: Martin Parr, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex, England, UK, 1978. Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON28062)

PDF generated on 15 February 2024

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Published by:

Paul Mellon Centre
16 Bedford Square
London, WC1B 3JA
<https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk>

In partnership with:

Yale Center for British Art
1080 Chapel Street
New Haven, Connecticut
<https://britishart.yale.edu>

ISSN: 2058-5462

DOI: 10.17658/issn.2058-5462

URL: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk>

Editorial team: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/editorial-team>

Advisory board: <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/advisory-board>

Produced in the United Kingdom.

A joint publication by



YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

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Cite as

Martin Parr, "Martin Parr", *British Art Studies*, Issue 4, <https://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-04/parr>

Introduction by

Martina Droth, Deputy Director and Chief Curator

This cover collaboration was developed in tandem with the conference *Photography and Britishness*, held at the Yale Center for British Art on 4–5 November 2016, at which Martin Parr was the keynote speaker. A central aim of the conference (the proceedings of which are presented in this [issue](#)) was to examine the two-way relationship between photography and Britishness—to ask how each acts upon, defines, and challenges the other. We used Parr’s photographs of British places and people as a reference point for this question: his work is often characterized as capturing an “essence” of Britishness, but it is as true to say that his images have come to define particular notions of what Britishness looks like. This interrelationship is threaded through the huge archive of photographs that Parr has created over his career, which presents the familiar and the strange, the customary and the incidental, age-old traditions and fleeting trends.

Parr describes himself as a documentary photographer, and during his talk he emphasized his commitment to this genre. As he put it, he sees it as his role and responsibility to photographically document the world. His talk presented a chronology spanning forty years, from his earliest black-and-white photographs made in the 1970s, to his forays into colour film in the 1980s, and through to the present day of digital photography. The selection of images presented here is extracted from that chronology and presents samplings of Parr’s work across the decades.

Response by

Martin Parr, Photographer

I was brought up in Surrey, which is one of the home counties, the area surrounding London, where many people commute into the City. These areas, by nature, are rather dull and suburban, and here on a misty winter day stands another commuter on his way to work. The blandness of this backdrop gave me the added advantage that when I went anywhere else in the UK, it became overwhelmingly interesting.



Figure 1.

Martin Parr, Surrey, Epsom, England, UK, 1973 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON29514)

Once a week at the spectacular De La Warr Pavilion (one of the best modernist buildings in the UK) in Bexhill-on-Sea the evening dance takes place, or at least it did in the 1970s, when I made a pilgrimage down from Yorkshire to photograph this event. For me, it was one of those wonderful moments, as the vestiges of our fading country and empire danced slowly into the sunset.



Figure 2.

Martin Parr, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex, England, UK, 1978 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON28062)

Documenting the run-down seaside resort of New Brighton, near Liverpool, was my first venture into colour photography in the early 1980s. I was able to show the shabbiness of the resort mixed with the determination of families to come here and enjoy themselves. This was in the ice cream bar of the now demolished lido. Most of the time when a person is watching the camera and the photographer in a candid shot, it just does not work. But the magic of photography is that all rules are there to be broken and this is a case where the subject's quizzical look helps to bring the photo alive.



Figure 3.

Martin Parr, New Brighton, England, UK, from '*The Last Resort*', 1983-85
Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos
(LON6977)

Badminton horse trials is an equestrian event held annually in the Cotswolds, a gorgeous rural area within easy driving distance of London. The event is always held on the first weekend of May and there are three days of horses navigating a difficult cross-country circuit. It attracts the young and wealthy from London, especially the horsey types. Back in the 80s when long hair was a done thing, a constant flick back of hair was one of the defining attributes of being a Sloane. This was the phrase that defined the young aspirational upper classes.



Figure 4.

Martin Parr, Badminton Horse Trials, Badminton House, Gloucestershire, England, UK, from '*The Cost of Living*', 1988 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON28930)

This is Chew Stoke cricket club searching for a lost ball. In 1992, I spent a year documenting this commuting village that is about seven miles from Bristol. Every aspect of village life was recorded and then mounted as an exhibition in the village hall at the end of the year. Cricket is a deliciously slow game and the pavilion, the teas, and the waiting, are an essential part of this strange and peculiar British game. Even losing a ball is one of the rituals of a sleepy day watching a cricket match.



Figure 5.

Martin Parr, Cricket Players Looking for Cricket Ball, Chew Stoke, England, UK, 1992 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON55595)

Weymouth in Dorset is one of the most beautiful seaside resorts in the UK. It has a brilliant beach and seems to attract the older crowd. Everything is reassuringly British. Sunglasses always look good in photographs, their stark shape and contrast standing out, and often giving images a strong lynchpin. Here I was experimenting with how people and objects can appear out of focus, but with a kiss of flash this is one of those rare moments when it all came together and worked.



Figure 6.

Martin Parr, Weymouth., England, UK, from '*Think of England*', 2000
Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos
(LON19547)

On an August bank holiday weekend in Scotland I came across this stunning outdoor lido in Gourock, a town situated on the Clyde about fifteen miles from Glasgow. The dark brooding sky contrasting perfectly with the bright blue of the water helped to amplify the rather surreal nature of this pool. After publication, the lone swimmer came forward and I was able to send him a print.



Figure 7.

Martin Parr, Gourock Lido, Scotland, UK, 2004 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON65518)

This is Fiona Woolf about to be elected Lord Mayor of London at the Guildhall, bang in the heart of the City of London. This ceremony, which always takes place on the second Friday of November, is called the Silent Ceremony as the whole thing has no words uttered whatsoever. Like many traditions in the City, this has been going on for centuries, and the day after is always the Lord Mayor's parade. London, despite being at the cutting edge of world finance and banking is also very feudal, as this tradition demonstrates very well.



Figure 8.

Martin Parr, Installation of New Lord Mayor, Fiona Woolf, Silent Ceremony, Guildhall, City of London, England, UK, 2013 Digital image courtesy of Martin Parr / © Martin Parr / Magnum Photos (LON156681)

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