

VIVA
BRIGHTON NOV '15



berner designs

Rich Cutler

Dead-insect photographer

*This month's issue of Viva focusses on creatures, a common subject for photographers all over the world. Instead of featuring the work of any number of talented wildlife photographers, for their regular feature this month Miniclick talk to Rich Cutler about his work *Insecta*, a beautifully crafted photobook that looks at the decaying natural history collections of the past.*



Collections of flora and fauna have a long and rich history.

What do you think draws us to this? Nearly all of us collect something – I think it stems from a need to arrange the world around us into patterns, to create order from chaos. The motivations of collectors are numerous, but the root of collecting is to gain control over our lives. For some collectors, it can border on obsession: the Victorian naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace wrote, on capturing a rare insect, ‘My heart began to beat violently, the blood rushed to my head, and I felt much more like fainting than I have done when in apprehension of immediate death.’

***Insecta* includes lots of archive material.**

Where was this sourced from and do you think you got the same excitement in hunting that material as the collectors did in hunting the creatures? The project came about from my interest in natural history – in particular, its collections. These – often displayed publicly for our edification in museums – are seen as permanent and enduring, but in reality they are fleeting and fragile: as time passes, they disintegrate or are broken up, and their stored knowledge dissipates, their context lost. These faded corpses, with the

spectre of the collector hovering over them – whispering of loss and memory – began to fascinate me, and I started to photograph remnants of insect collections and associated material such as collecting equipment and diaries. Brighton’s Booth Museum of Natural History gave me permission to photograph their store-rooms, and I also began my own collection... of failing collections.

I spent several months scour-

ing eBay, flea markets and boot fairs for ruined collections and forgotten collecting ephemera. I wouldn’t say I felt the same obsession as Alfred Russell Wallace whenever I encountered a new item, but hunting for objects was very satisfying!

What made you choose the book as the medium to present the work? *Insecta* is a large body of work comprising nearly 100 photographs. My intent from its outset was to create a photobook.

The first reason for a photobook was prosaic: with such a large project, it would be difficult to show the entire project as framed pictures. Secondly, I think the project works better as a book, engaging the viewer more fully than prints on a wall. Rather than a straightforward ‘catalogue’ of photographs, the images are juxtaposed and contrasted against each other through the use of fold-out pages, with some printed on transparent paper. So, for example, you can ‘open’ the lid of a box or the covers of a notebook to see its contents, and look through glass microscope slides.

Interview by Jim Stephenson, miniclick.co.uk

richcutler.co.uk

.....



PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTOGRAPHY

.....



PHOTOGRAPHY

.....

