



## Reflections on Bath

Bath is a much photographed city and for good reason. A new series of images around the architecture of Bath by photographer Paul J Gooch finds new angles, reinvents some of the classic shots and animates them for the present day.

When I moved to the city of Bath in 2012, I found that wandering through the streets of Georgian buildings, with clear symmetry, proportion and balance, inspired me to take photographs. With a developing passion for photography, I became interested in the concept of carrying out a photography project to explore and better understand the architectural heritage of my newly adopted home town. In parallel, I also became interested in the concept of creating a photobook as an ideal way to publish the resulting body of work.

The traditional genre of architectural photography does not usually include people. The main exception being to include a small number of human figures in the periphery of the frame to provide sense of scale (much like an architect's drawing). While including a number of pure architectural shots in my photobook, I was very keen to develop my approach and to photograph both the architecture and the people who live, work and socialise in the city of Bath.

When researching the concept for the photobook, I began to experiment with long exposure and (in particular) multiple exposure photography. These techniques allowed me to show Bath's historical architecture with clarity and also to blend people into the frame. This approach depicts people as ethereal, transient forms against the backdrop of these enduring structures. By presenting people in a transient state, we underscore the idea that people are simply fleeting guardians of the splendid buildings of Bath.

When contemplating the above, I considered the question: what purpose does architecture serve without people? So why not include people in architectural photography? I was particularly pleased, when discussing some initial examples of my transient style photography with a friend, who commented that the "transient figures breathe a sense of life into the architecture".

Within the photobook, I have included a section of photographs using reflections as a fascinating way to observe and capture the fleeting

nature of people passing through the city of Bath. I found that this approach complemented the multi-exposure approach described above and also created a surreal, multi-layered, painterly perspective. Reflections were captured using a variety of surfaces that included glass, paintwork and water. The resulting semi-abstract images foster a sense of mystery that is designed to stimulate the imagination of the viewer and to also invite the viewer to look at the familiar with fresh eyes.

Photographs record a slice of time and serve to document tomorrow's history. To further contemplate the passage of time and humanity's transient condition, I have included a chapter of 'then and now' photographs taken around the city. While the architectural structures endure, it is interesting to observe the vintage photographs within this chapter and to see how the modes of transportation, dress styles, human behaviour and population density etc. have dramatically evolved over the last 150 years or so.

My photobook is intended to celebrate Bath's well-preserved classical architecture. However, just like all cities across the UK, Bath has its issues and challenges. I felt the need to create a photobook with some thought-provoking content to offer a balanced perspective.

This photobook has been generated in the hope of demonstrating to future generations, that the incumbent guardians of Bath's architectural heritage (those living in the present day), have successfully balanced ongoing urban development pressures with a sensible and appropriate approach to conservation and sustainability.

The above picture is a montage of eight separate exposures taken over a 10-minute period. The resulting image captures a sense of energy and the hustle and bustle of people wandering along Stall Street. The inclusion of smart phone photography, puffer jackets and ear buds imbue a modern feel as we contemplate the transience of human life.

The image below was taken in Bridge Street. The face is from a painting hanging in a side window of the Victoria Art Gallery. I placed the face carefully in the window frame, as if trapped in time, looking at the passers-by in the current day.





Left, top: The Holburne Museum originally opened as Sydney Hotel and construction was completed in 1799. The photobook displays this picture opposite an illustration of Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio's Villa La Rotonda to show the strong sense of Palladian architectural influence. The building has embraced change with the completion of a contemporary extension in 2011. More recently it featured in the *Bridgerton* drama on Netflix as Lady Danbury's house.



Above: Strolling down Green Street in the rain, I noticed the reflection of St Michael's Church in a puddle on the ground. The shape of the puddle perfectly framed the reflection of the tall spire and the reflection had a painterly feel. Pedestrians around me seemed perplexed as I waited for five minutes or so, with camera poised above the puddle, waiting for the hooded subject to wander casually into the composition.



Left, centre: Photographed in the Circus and organised by Extinction Rebellion, a theatrical funeral procession took place where 400 Red Rebels marched to a sombre drumbeat, mourning for the natural world destroyed by climate change.

Left, bottom: The homeless in the city punctuate Bath's architectural landscape alongside its historic structures. Photograph taken in Kingston Parade (next to the Abbey).



The photobook *The City of Bath - Enduring Structures and Transient Lives* by Paul J Gooch is available from [pauljgooch.com](http://pauljgooch.com) at a price of £36. It is also available from Topping & Company Booksellers in York Street and le fou de bassan in Green Street.