

# SIMON ROBERTS

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Published: Sept, 2013 (Dewi Lewis)

“Roberts’ *Pierdom* pictures may encompass some of the seaside things we know best through such photographers as Tom Wood or Martin Parr, but they put those scenes in a broad context where people live in a landscape and a country, not just a car park. They also derive something from that quite different tradition, of the wild skies and unquenchable nature that we find in Turner. These are cool careful pictures, alluding to a large number of variables and seeing what balances can be struck between them. At the same time, they’re the warm record of a large number of trips to that many-sided and unfathomable place, the British seaside.”

*Francis Hodgson, Financial Times, 2013*

*Pierdom*, is a comprehensive photographic survey of Britain’s Pleasure Piers. The pier has become a cultural landmark, tracing history, national identity and economic fortunes from Victorian industrialism to the post-war boom, and to the recent economic downturn. Roberts’ large format photographs are taken with great technical precision, often from elevated positions incorporating peripheral details and the elements, thus enriching the viewing experience of each print. Through formal devices associated with the picturesque; perspective, asymmetry and juxtaposition, the photographs engage us with contemporary issues about Britain’s fragile relationship to both nature and urban environments. An architectural and anthropological study of the coastline as a microcosm of British society.

## SELECTED REVIEWS

“Like his previous book, *We English*, *Pierdom* is a kind of topography of England and Englishness. There is a similar sense of stillness in many of the large-format landscapes, as well as a sense of the abiding otherness of the English seaside town...A very beautiful book from a master of stillness, light and landscape.”

*Sean O’Hagan, The Observer, 2013*

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“Simon Roberts really connects with his fellow British and understands the underlying psych of Great Briton. This photobook is an excellent follow on to *We English* and is another in his series that utilizes a large format vision to investigate the British culture.”

***Doug Stockdale, The Photo Book, 2014***

“*Pierdom* is a terrific example of a photographic project that functions best when seen together as a group, either in book form or as a gallery show. While each of Roberts’ well crafted images of English seaside piers can of course stand alone, the ideas that form the foundation of the project come through more clearly when the images can resonate with each other....My first reaction to Roberts’ effort to document each of the remaining 58 “pleasure piers” in England was that it had more than a passing conceptual kinship with the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher, even through their visual styles aren’t remotely alike. Both have applied a patient, methodical approach to capturing vanishing forms of vernacular architecture, with the goal of preserving their details before they disappear completely...All in, this is a deftly self-contained project, with a deceptively rich and sophisticated set of underlying constructs.”

***Loring Knoblauch, Collector Daily, 2013***

“A love letter to the British coast, capturing the landscape at its most romantic (sunset) and its most realistic (rain) with equal affection....The subject matter of the book - the piers and the seascapes - combine with the careful exactitude of the book itself to capture a time, place, and cultural sensibility.”

***Alexander Strecker, Lens Culture, 2013***

“[Roberts] pulls back (and often up) to create his signature expansive landscapes, classical enough in their formal tropes to render his human players almost anachronistic...his cool tone and certain remove belie a level of respect for the perseverance and potential of these places that distinguishes his work from the overcharged intimacy and showboating of "ruin porn" photography for example. His detached treatment of his human subjects, along with a lack of narrative elements, also sets his work apart from the call to action traditions of social documentary practice.”

***Karen Jenkins, PhotoEye, 2013***

“The pictures are precise and topographical, with each pier thoroughly indexed with information on construction materials, changes in length, restoration dates and incidences of fire damage at the back of the book. By framing these unique feats of construction within their wider geographical context, plonked between steely greys and blues of the British sand and sky, Roberts provokes consideration of our changing relationship with our domestic natural landscape.”

***Hotshoe, 2013***

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“A very painterly photography which documents, charms, and even manages to engage us with contemporary issues about our uneasy and fragile relationship to both nature, and our urban environments.”

*Slow Wear Journal, 2013*

“How the images are shot is as crucial as the subjects themselves. Some are shot from a distance so we can appreciate their full architectural splendour within the context of the landscape. Others are shot from up close: beams and woodwork crisscross like an industrial spider’s web, sometimes intact, sometimes in ruin. Yet sometimes we see nothing but empty sky and the expanse of ocean. These are photographs of what once was and is no more.... The colours of Roberts’ images are, more often than not, muted and the lighting flat, a result of the kind of typical British weather we are accustomed to. Despite the presence of people the photographs seem somehow silent and empty. When we do see people they are small, distant, and, with a small number of exceptions, faceless. They are dwarfed by the architecture, the grey skies and the endless water. It’s a visual trope that emphasises the detached topographical nature of *Pierdom*.”

*Oliver Atwell, Photomonitor, 2013*

“Using his established landscape style, Roberts documents the remaining piers with a similar tone and aesthetic of *We English*, beautifully mundane and timeless.”

*Sofia Giostrelli, GUP Magazine, 2013*

“Roberts records the symbolic constructs with great technical precision. His images capture peripheral details, which include the surrounding landscape and have the effect of enriching the observation of each work. Utilising formal devices associated with the picturesque, the pieces align audiences with contemporary issues, acknowledging the precarious connection between society, nature and urban environments. Through deciding to survey a small part of British history and Landscape, he is able to undertake an architectural and anthropological study of the country.”

*Aesthetica, 2013*