

A BARCODE SOMEWHERE ON BATTERSEA

You see them in their ones and twos, the wideboys, shuffling across the Battersea Bridge of a winter's midnight, donkey jacket collars turned up against the smoggy London cold, bristly shaven heads glinting orange sodium lamplight off razor-cut peroxide blonde, Power Station relic-ing in the background.

The cigarette breath floats frozen from each mouth dilute with air hoarse sucked in and out, in and out. The wideboys have wrapped their confabulations in the Latchmere, and they're on their way to some dubious rendezvous on the river's north side, maybe a council estate nestled amongst the bleating Henrys of Chelsea.

The Power Station looms, and snaps in and out of time, pluming smoke from its four chimneys resembling the upturned legs of a Victorian billiard table.

Now it's back to the thirties, populated by cloth-capped scurriers tending those furnaces that keep the south side churning, now to the early nineties eight-ninths derelict and publicly despised. Coulda been a contender for rejuvenated monument of the decade, but the Battersea Power Station suffers the guilt of too-lowly birth amongst the English.

Pity. A Steichen would have worshipped it as he did the Flatiron building in New York with carbon print or hand-made photogravure 'round the turn of the century.

Pictorialism! Ahh. Jonathan Anderson and Edwin Low are revivalists in their own way, using precious platinum and lith-processed Seagull, as if they were the photo

equivalents of charcoal stick on rough-pressed watercolour paper, to render the glow of frozen light through murky darkness on a cold, cold night.

Blackest black makes the paper white even more luminous. Fog-glowing. Smearred. Bright.

Anderson and Low love their cities, amongst which they count London and New York, and there's also Nara and Tokyo and Chicago and Rome. Buildings and bodies, twin passions—maybe there's something in their backgrounds? No matter. It counts that they love these structures and their surroundings in a way that suggest obsessiveness to the n-th degree. Is all they do hang around darkening streets with roll film camera on tripod ready to whip off the lens cap for a long exposure through the small hours?

They are, to my mind, constructing a city beyond time in the same way that Ridley Scott and Luc Besson made future dystopias for us now through *Blade Runner* and *The Fifth Element*. Dreamscapes for the troubled soul of modern man who yearns for a simpler paradise he'll never have.

I ask Anderson and Low what their other favourites are. "Anything by Frank Lloyd Wright. The Chrysler Building. The house in *The House on the Hill*.... Louis Sullivan's very first skyscraper in Chicago," they say.

What else? "Entering New York. To see that skyline, every time, it's electrifying, whether by night or day," they sigh, inner eyes fixed on a treasure you have to see to believe.