

NewFotoScapes

Shaw, J.

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JONATHAN SHAW

#1

NEW
FOTO
SCAPES

Published by the Library of Birmingham

NEW FOTO SCAPES

by Jonathan Shaw

www.newfotoscapes.org

NEWFOTOSCAPES #1 Published 2014

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The Library of Birmingham
Centenary Square
Birmingham B1 2ND
United Kingdom

My heart felt gratitude to my wife Nikki and my children Josh and Lily for their love and creativity which provides daily inspiration, the heights to which I can only aspire.

JONATHAN SHAW

#1

NEW
FOTO
SCAPES

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INTRODUCTION

In September 2013 the new Library of Birmingham opened its doors to the public for the first time. Designed by the Dutch architects Mecanoo this dynamic and innovative building boldly declares a clear and positive future for the 21st century library as an inspirational space where new forms of knowledge can occur at the intersection of arts, culture, education and society. The Library is home to one of the UK's most significant collections of photography: a collection which spans the entire history of the medium.

GRAIN is a new strategic hub and network for photography and photographers in the West Midlands. Supported by the Arts Council of England and based at the Library of Birmingham, it works to facilitate and deliver ambitious, engaging and high quality photography projects, commissions, exhibitions, research and new writing on photography. GRAIN works in partnership with academics, researchers, artists and universities to expand horizons, support innovation and develop new audience access through digital means. It is therefore highly appropriate that GRAIN has supported *NEWFOTOSCAPES*, a multi-platform book by UK based award-winning photographer and educator Jonathan Shaw in partnership with Coventry University, a publication which looks to the futures of photography.

Photography has never been a more dominant and embedded part of contemporary culture than it is now. The pervasive eye of the world has arisen and new practices of visibility are emerging confronting the power of the establishment. The net has amplified our ability to connect and build communities across the globe and digital technology and the social media sharing and communication of images has facilitated an exponential growth in picture capture and seamless digital distribution.

NEWFOTOSCAPES seeks to navigate the evolving topography surrounding the image in the twenty-first century, offering a focused eye on the contemporary creative author-curator and image-maker and on the possibilities afforded by an increasingly complex professional landscape. Jonathan

advocates a new way of thinking about photographic production and education in a post-digital era.

NEWFOTOSCAPES is a collection of curated texts arising from a series of in-depth conversations with key stakeholders in, and influential commentators on, photography. Perspectives and views cover a wide range of topics such as; agencies, appropriation, archives, community, curation, governance, licensing, mobile, networked-image, open education, photobooks, power and value.

In the spirit of today's mobile and connected world NEWFOTOSCAPES is simultaneously available on the Web under a Creative Commons license and versioned in ePub and print formats.

NEWFOTOSCAPES presented a valuable opportunity for GRAIN and Coventry University to work together, pooling skills and resources to create this new research partnership and innovative publication. In particular we would like to thank Jonathan Shaw for his creativity, enthusiasm and vision, Nicky Connor for her invaluable research assistance, Ross Varney for his web expertise, Richard Pearce and Karen Newman whose skills at critical stages were crucial, Gary Hall and Shaun Hides for their flair and mastery with the written word and lastly Mark Murphy for this exquisitely designed book.

Above all, a sincere thank you to each contributor, for their support, energy, insights and time which they have given so generously, without which this book would never have been possible.

Pete James
Curator, Photography Collections and
Co-Director of GRAIN
Library of Birmingham

JONATHAN SHAW

Jonathan Shaw is Co-Director of the Disruptive Media Learning Lab and Associate Head of Media Department (Innovation, Profile & Research) at Coventry University. As a photographer he has been described as being part of an early generation of artists responsible for the emergence of a new school of photography which blurs the boundaries between the still and moving image. He has produced three publications, *Crash* (2009), *(re)collect* (2006) and *Time|Motion* (2003).

Jonathan led the team which pioneered free and open photography educational resources at Coventry University; the classes picbod.org & phonar.org have been accessed by thousands of people worldwide; the apps developed have been called groundbreaking; the Photographic Mediations collection he curated had in excess of a million listens. As an Adobe Education Leader, Jonathan forms part of their worldwide community championing creativity in education. He was awarded a Direct Fellowship of Royal Photographic Society (RPS) for his achievements in the field of photography, and a Fellowship of the RSA, in recognition for his work in Photography education practices.

HYBRIDITY AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS

The photography community, as with any other, rightfully encompasses many different opinions on what makes a good practitioner. However, I am sure there would be commonality in the following skills; the ability to pre-visualise the frame, the technical negotiation of the apparatus with the simultaneous control of light, and finally understanding (or predicting) the resulting effects onto a chemically enhanced material – plate, then film/paper and now semi-conductor. If the large scale photographic fairs are indicative, it may also be true to say that there is also a deep-rooted ‘geek’ strand built into our DNA, fetishizing photographic innovation and technology. This trait is part of what drives our technical innovation even if the boundary between ‘early adopter’ and obsessive is often hard to discern.

Two of the most exciting elements that have sustained my engagement and practice with photography are, first the fact that since its genesis as a media form it has burgeoned with innovation, and second that our community has always exhibited a thriving entrepreneurial spirit. Historically, the development of the photographic industry had fairly rapidly slipped through the hands of the specialist (gatekeepers) to the amateur (mass market). Even within the past 5-10 years we have seen the apparatus reunited with its long lost child, the moving image, after (arguably), having given birth to it many years ago. Most recently and significantly, a ‘lens’ that has become algorithmic, networked, location aware and socially connected, has disrupted the photographic evolutionary timeline. It is this fundamental paradigm shift and the pace with which it has occurred that both photographers and photography generally appear to be struggling to come to terms with, or keep abreast of, whilst simultaneously revelling in it.

My initial encounter with the ‘digital’ resulted from an interest with memory and virtual reality.

“From the messages our senses receive, the mind perceives that we live within a physical reality. Interestingly, some of the things we naturally recall, presume and assume as being reality, can only be understood as mediated representations

of that reality – e.g. our memories, which are physical/chemical, yet are not direct referents of events as such, but are representations of our perceptions of the event.”¹

Whilst being drawn towards the digital/virtual as an idea, I was equally frustrated on a practical level with the inflexibility of the physical mechanics for reproduction and distribution. ‘Reflections on time, motion and photomechanics’, described how the negatives I produced did not conform to ‘standardised’ dimensions of the film frame. My negatives were exposed using a personally cannibalised twin-lens reflex camera, re-constructed to create a single image (frame) the entire length of a roll of medium format film. To reproduce these negatives as printed physical objects, at a commercially viable scale, required further engineering engagement. Two months later, with the input and patience of a very kind mechanical engineer, I constructed an enlarger that would simultaneously expose and move the negative and paper proportionally to produce prints that were 50cm (20”) high and anything in the region of 10m (33’) long. In many ways I now see this work as pre-figuring the kind of ‘bending of the frame’ that characterises much digital work.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s (pre-social and fully-connected media) photographer’s artworks were often shared with potential clients or venues by mailing out a set of 35mm transparencies or slides. These had an approximate image size of 24mm x 35mm which meant once re-photographed the long panoramic format of my work when represented in this ‘slide’ format was a visually illegible two millimetre high representation.

In total it took four years to transform that two millimetre high product into a viable professional practice. The following four years (post-digital), the emergence of (high-end) scanning and reproduction, released the potential of that work, in the form of prints, album covers, immersive installations, interactive media and even the production of ‘massive’ whole building-scale hoardings. Most importantly, (and admittedly only something I realise with the benefit of hindsight) I believe it was that struggle and experimentation, which led to my hybrid solutions, marrying both the

analogue and digital technologies, that remains at the heart of my thinking today.

NEW BEGINNINGS AND MEDIATIONS

“...a process of turning experience into learning, that is, a way of exploring experience in order to learn new things from it.”²

The next chapter in my story was set in motion during the early part of 2007, with a desire to explicitly explore ideas on the 21st century photographer, and how might we learn as a small community of practitioners. To address this, we wrote and then the following year launched our new undergraduate photography programme, coincidentally the same year Facebook reached its first 100 million users.

At that time, and unfortunately still today, in some corners of the photographic education community we hear the unreconstructed murmurings – people being divided into; the analogue or the digital, the fine art or commercial, truth or enhancement, the theory or practical camps. These were not the interesting debates for us, nor truly the pertinent questions affecting or influencing lens based media. As a reaction to the sterility of those false polarities I organised, together with Gary Hall and Joanna Zylinska, a gathering entitled “Photographic Mediations”. This small and intimate symposium was our first, collective-collaborative attempt to locate ourselves within – and perhaps to understand how to navigate – this rapidly evolving landscape.

The recordings from the symposium were converted into a series of freely available podcasts, and it was in this space that we noticed something special occurring, the scale of their popularity indicated we were not alone in our mission. We continued on our quest, asking more questions, inviting more people to share their thoughts, each time openly sharing the content online for free. Within two years more than a million people had ‘tuned-in’ and listened to the Photographic Mediations collection.

As the team expanded and matured we were gradually introduced to and sought out others who, in their own

ways, were also exploring radical thinking and writing on photography. In particular, academics such as Fred Ritchin in New York, Daniel Rubinstein and Katrina Sluis in the UK, who amongst others were expressing ideas on the impact of photography in digital culture. Work which enabled those concerned for the future of photography to think more broadly about the visual's relationship to the Web as a networked image and what exactly post or hyper-photography might mean for the contemporary practitioner.

THE GENERATIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE

The stream of headlines perpetuating the buzz around the 'digital in photography' continue. Stories on the avalanche of images uploaded by the millisecond to the multitude of social media platforms on which they are shared, or the scares about the privacy and security breaches at government level affecting our individual freedom, whose ramifications continue to expand. What is fundamental for the sector to reflect on is the scale of this change and its impact upon the creative industries workforces. The economic disruption engendered by this 'digital' disruption can be exemplified by Facebook's purchase of Instagram in 2012 for an incredible \$1 billion. Instagram as the new style photography business had a mere 13 employees when it was sold; whereas the equivalent pre-digital (ironically digital camera inventors) and now recently demised Eastman Kodak had over 100,000 employees at its height.

As participants, creators and stakeholders it is important that we capitalize on, rather than fear, the shift in power enabled by this technologically driven change. It seems that we exist in a world where anyone with access to a smart camera-phone has the ability to make an image to a technically proficient standard and almost instantaneously distribute that same image across a free global network for either personal, or commercial gain. This is clearly one of the motivating factors behind Getty Images recent announcement, making 35 million of its images freely available for non-commercial use. Olivier Laurent claims this has "single-handedly redefined the entire photography market"³. Presented with this stark paradigm shift, we need to ask what it means and what are the implications for photographers practising now?

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A mind-set attuned to these contemporary challenges must seek out and absorb new approaches to photography; as a practice and profession, to the photograph as an object and to the exploration of its ability to communicate, beyond the conceptions and traditions outlined by figures such as John Szarkowski in his 1964 exhibition “The Photographer’s Eye”⁴. All those interested in photography’s future, need to re-explore the fundamental questions of photography beyond the ‘two-dimensional object’ – where the purpose and role of the ‘image’ has to be considered within its increasingly personalised, connected, transient and mediated technological contexts.

The purpose here is not to propose that such approaches are wholly, radically ‘new’. We should remind ourselves of the striking similarity between what George Eastman claimed for his new camera: that, “You push the button, we do the rest”; and then shift forward by 100 years and see essentially the same statement, (updated in the context of the ‘professionalisation’ of the mobile image) by Instagram co-founders Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger.

The importance here is that if, we accept, in principle, that the creative, critical, entrepreneurial and technical skills have been, and remain constant requirements of photography as a practice and that there has been a continuing trend in innovation and technological development present throughout the last century, then the variable left ripe for change is our approach and mind-set as practitioners, educators and professionals.

Photography and photography education need to cherish the contemporary moment (that of the multiplicity of the photographic) and perhaps consider the pluralities and inconsistencies embodied within its current forms, as well as in its emerging history. If our analogue ‘preference bubble’ has burst; this is a moment of uncertainty and it would be easy, but damaging, to revert to a position of resistance, forging a separate path towards conservation and isolation. To paraphrase Doug Aitken from his aptly entitled ‘Broken Screen’ book published in 2006, the practitioners who are going to help build and collectively shape this new generative landscape will be stepping into the turbulence of modern life rather than standing in the calm centre of the hurricane.

'OPEN' A REFRESHING AND REINVIGORATING WAY TO LEARN

Howard Rheingold commented, in 2011 Peter Norvig and Sebastian Thrun at Stanford University shook up educational institutions by opening their doors to their 'Introduction to Artificial Intelligence' class, offering it as an interactive MOOC (Massively Open Online Class). Two years earlier in the back of a converted cinema in the UK, Jonathan Shaw and photography educators Jonathan Worth and Matt Johnston sought to enhance student engagement with photography and connect them with their wider professional networks, had explored a similar idea from perhaps a more progressive standpoint, allowing the world to peer into their classroom⁵.

In 2009 the course at Coventry University piloted '#picbod' (an abbreviation for Picturing the Body), a ten-week open photography class, taught by Jonathan Worth with second year undergraduate students. Later that same year the photography team expanded, recruiting Matt Johnston, a social media consultant and photographer, to help develop its final year counterpart '#phonar' (Photography and Narrative). The open classes continue to be a core part of a wider set of disruptive initiatives that form the fabric of the department, the breadth of which has been cited by governance agencies and described as revealing the potential of higher education's future.

This approach is driven by the desire to reveal and facilitate the individual learner's practice and to explore the potential of visual storytelling using a medium in perpetual technological motion. In itself this is not that new, but the real game changer is the resulting collaboration in a live, mentored and open space with the class (lecturers and learners) in direct dialogue with its wider external community of interest. It is important both on a philosophical and practical level that the online elements of the classes live within the existing networked ecology of the Web, using free and open access tools and platforms. Living offshore from the university's closed virtual learning environment provides the agility for experimentation necessary for the dramatically evolving landscape.

The classes are best understood as a hybrid activity with content accessed via the class blogs. These spaces act as a ‘hub’ for both on-campus students who attend the face-to-face class and the wider community of external visitors and participants. Delivered across ten weeks through a range of practical and thematic tasks, material is shared across a range of social media platforms. The blog is curated and produced by a course team, designed as a rich resource and a motivational space for engagement and learning. The hub is a single port of call, providing ease of access, to read, watch and share all material before the classroom doors are open. The use of curation tools, such as Storify, enable the staff and students to co-create research material in the form of related hyperlinks, commentary, or potential questions, as well as annotated critique. The approach, of sharing before opening the door has firmly put to bed the fear that an open approach will engender poor attendance, it allows learning to take place at the speed determined by the learner and has positively encouraged participation to continue way beyond the scheduled in-class time.

Employing the language characteristics of the digital ecology, the implementation of the ‘#’ has enabled lecturers and learners to independently filter and draw out research and conversations from wider streams of networked consciousness, published by the on and off campus class community. These new connected and collective conversations hugely enrich, and add a crucial dimension to, the original content authored by the team. Viewed in the extreme, this methodology enables the syllabus to exist as a co-authored script, curated by the academic, but produced by the collective exchange and effort of the learning community. The shift to envisioning the class as a hub, which by its very definition forms the effective centre of activity, is a change in ethos. The lecturer-learner relationship becomes one associated with and connected by trust. The associated educational resources are freely available, openly licensed and produced in a range of formats. This offers flexibility for different learning styles and location mobility – learning may be taking place, on the train, in the studio or even up a mountain! As one student, Daisy Ware-Jarret put it,

“...by reaching further afield, the feedback you get is likely to be richer and more diverse, helping you to see new angles and make faster progress.”⁶

This way of working provides the opportunity for our immediate community of learners inside the university to connect with a much wider and distributed asynchronous network – which includes other students, academics of other universities, professional photographers and interested amateurs. Similarly with the adoption of this mind-set new relationships can be brokered across both the enthusiast and professional photographic communities, creating opportunities for dialogue in a shared and open environment. The emphasis here, to paraphrase another student, Sean Carroll, in an interview for a co-sponsored project with Sony Ericsson, is on the discipline/practice itself, rather than on controlling statements, or the enforcement of authority that would have traditionally existed between the lecturer-professional-student community. This diversity of connectivity and communication equally acts as a draw for new collaborators to engage with our on-campus students alongside the remote students and wider audience, this continually extends the professional networks and connections of the class as a whole.

A BRICOLAGE APPROACH TO EDUCATION

“You just can’t keep up? Of course not.”⁷

It is at least arguable that the biggest disruption facing educators is not caused by the global economic crisis itself, or even the failure of vision of any particular government, but the one housed by the behemoth server farms and the global content producers of the Internet. We are in the midst of an educational system in which knowledge is being liberated from scarcity; previously the scholar’s role was to offer authoritative elucidation on the (rare and inaccessible) book to the privileged few. Today in the new ecology of ‘knowledge’ abundance, we have the potential to educate the masses – our problem is keeping up with and deciding what content to educate them about.

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The danger in this scenario for the educator, results from the pressures felt by the increased expectations and requirement of the educational system. In 2012 the UK introduced £9k fees per year for Bachelor's degree study, although not on the same exorbitant scale experienced in elite colleges in the US, this has had a significant impact on the relationship with our students and their expectations of the desired/expanded roles we now perform.

The relevance of our roles as educators should be at the forefront of our minds, in today's distributed world, where knowledge can be unlocked both textually and visually with a simple gesture on your mobile device. The 2012/3 "Google Search App: Interview" commercial⁸ serves nicely as a demonstration of this in action. The scene opens with the nervous interviewee looking desperately around their interviewer's office perhaps looking for clues on the impending encounter. It is the moment he sees what we are led to believe is a 'treasured' picture on the rear wall that 'Google our hero' comes to the rescue. The lens of the camera, acting as the eyes of Google's visual recognition software provides the all-important details about the castle in the picture. As the interviewer enters the room the interviewee empowered by this new knowledge is able to seamlessly engage in conversation and build a relationship of 'trust' with what one would assume would become his future employer.

It is important to understand that I am not presenting this scenario to suggest the demise of the educators role – replaced by the algorithm, or software device, but more that this image should act as a positive motivator for us to consider what we teach and how we should teach to ensure that the learning we provide is fit for purpose in the 21st century. This shift is away from delivery (broadcast) of content towards creative collaboration, curation and re-appropriation.

The benefit of openly, collaboratively and collectively seeking to find new questions has not only been liberating but, without doubt improved our teaching practices; the Media department has moved up 52 places in the Guardian League tables in the last four years and created new and previously unobtainable international opportunities for Coventry

students; e.g. Marta Kochanek's exclusive internship with Annie Leibovitz.

The adoption of this new, or perhaps more accurately defined, alternative mind-set has certainly re-energised the breadth of our practices at Coventry. Working with an Open Media policy, authored by Dr. Shaun Hides in 2009, the Media Department has foregrounded five key traits that we seek to embody in our academic life, to be; Tactical, Sustainable, Engaged, Visible and Collaborative. This has under-pinned the renovation of our teaching spaces and the teaching experiments we have undertaken. Within the Centre for Disruptive Media we have been successful recipients of various external research grants that have enabled us to extend our reach across a range of digital media learning initiatives, including; the production of 'Living books about Life'⁹ a series of open access and editable online books by Professor Gary Hall and others, the development of a suite of open media classes and a number of bespoke mobile applications. We have also, advocated the 'Re-Imagined Art School', as part of a collaborative project with the University of the Arts.

My recent talks at the UK's Media Education Summit¹⁰ and at Adobe's International Education Summit¹¹ explored the idea of the '21st Century Art School', passionately, arguing that "the only limit when working creatively and commercially are the limits of our imaginations!" This call to action, suggested that it is now high time for educators within the creative industries to use the insights they gain through their contemporary practice to reinvigorate their pedagogies. I shared my current thinking and practices which embody more of a bricolage methodology. For instance what would happen if we consider our roles to be that of a curator of a (open) programme comprising a range of activities, produced with a specific audience in mind? How might this shift our desire for the traditional lecture and alter our engagement with, and the participation of, our students? What would happen if we made it easier for our students to search, locate and evaluate specific content within our resources? Would this reconfigured relationship, built around purpose, move us closer to an intrinsically motivated, sharing community, would sessions in this space be 'like-d', 'share-d' or even 'favourite-d'? Perhaps,

in this engaged and positively-charged learning environment, this would influence and change how we write and produce the encounters with our resources and materials? What would happen if we created ways to filter our information, producing a ‘course programme’ taxonomy that considers our learning and social habits, offering to filter content by theme or by media type? Might we see increased comprehension of this content and more dialogue amongst students within and between our disciplines? What would happen if we partnered with external agencies offering the classroom as a ‘live’ environment in which to meet? And how might such meetings be a catalyst for understanding the changes inside and outside of the university walls?

PUBLISHING AS A FLUID PROCESS

So far, I have already charted the journey from the origins of my practice, up the mountain that was the Photographic Mediations symposium and the short cut through the maze that is the open photography classes. It is a true privilege to have contributed to this spontaneous expedition, creating our own lines of desire which others have been able to follow and meander through. It would be difficult to pinpoint the exact moment when the seed for this particular venture was planted, but with the beauty of hindsight, the furrows were clearly being dug and the seeds planted during the process of re-visioning, some 6 years ago.

New lines of desire are continually being formed through the emerging landscapes; this one entitled NEWFOTOSCAPES was influenced by two pivotal moments. The first being the introduction of the ‘friends of #phonar book list’, at a time when frustration was resurgent amongst academics, based upon a perceived lack of student engagement with the carefully considered and constructed class reading lists. This book list at last count had received over 100,000 views and remains, to date, the most read entry for the open classes. The second was the ‘liquid book’ experiments of Professor Gary Hall and company - questioning and exploring the changing function of the book.

“Here, what we think of as ‘publication’ – whether it occurs

in ‘real time’ or after a long period of reflection and editorial review, ‘all’ at once or in fits and starts, in print-on-paper or electronic form – is no longer an end point. Publication is rather just a stage in an ongoing process of temporal unfolding.”¹²

The series of liquid, or living books are freely available online and on an open-access basis; they invite collaborative contributions and offer and enable editing rights on the part of their readership.

NEWFOTOSCAPES is similarly interested in seeing the publication as a ‘process’ as it is about content, alongside a desire to explore the potential for hybrid forms of publishing. It seeks to fuse the experiential qualities afforded by the tactility of the printed book, together with the mediated experiences enabled by screen-media in the form of the agile e-publication, or the fluid and connected, online construct.

It is an experiment attempting to navigate the potentiality of the photographic in the 21st century. Offering access to an interweaving series of curated dialogues, it seeks to offer simplicity rather than simplification of the increasingly complex professional landscape. It seeks to activate a new mind-set for the emerging audiences and to inspire new practices in the visualisation of our world.

NODE INTO THE NETWORK

NEWFOTOSCAPES constitutes a node in the network, situated knowingly within the contemporary context of a, “... global economy [which] does not function in a linear manner, but is rather web-like, scattered and poly-centered.”¹³

The Web version of NEWFOTOSCAPES employs three key terms, in an attempt to explore the potential for process-orientated thinking, beyond the confines of the linear experience found within the traditional sequential, paginated and bounded leaves of the ‘book’.

‘Catalyst’ identifies the impetus for the NEWFOTOSCAPES encounters. The questions that occupy the attention of each

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collaborator, and which have guided their current thinking, research, practice and catalyse their engagement in this field. ‘Catalyst’ can be used as a filtering theme, allowing the online community to navigate through and across each encounter, encouraging intersections of contextual relevance.

‘Encounter’, the knowledge container encapsulated in the form of the curated transcripts with each collaborator; a space/ spaces in which the reader can meet – encounter – new ideas, new dialogues and new formulations. The knowledge from these exchanges is located thematically and can therefore be simultaneously explored online alongside the associated material available under ‘Catalyst’ and ‘Antennae’.

‘Antennae’ is conceived, as the part of the book that can engender flow, enable adaptation, connect and response to the evolving discussions on photography which fixed ink on paper could not. Where traditionally the book is seen as the container of knowledge, condensed and bound by cloth, then Antennae can best be understood as the node into the network.

THE COMPASS ANALOGY

In this first iteration of *NEWFOTOSCAPES*, it was important that the selection of collaborations was informed by people that were already connected to and trusted by the team within the research partnership. It was important that this group brought together a range of ‘active’ perspectives from people who are dealing with these challenges on a daily basis. Each encounter seeks to be critical, ambitious, inventive and experimental, yet equally accessible to wider audiences, raising awareness of this exciting juncture in photographic history. This collective conversation aims to act as a compass, a means of navigation, which offers the reader (amateur, curator, photographer, teacher etc.) a different perspective upon which to motivate and empower their own personal journey of curiosity and exploration.

The encounters were orchestrated to wrap, connect and offer new insights upon the collaborators previous projects. The organically structured dialogue enables the reader to understand the motivations behind their work. The distinct

perspective of the stakeholder offers informed perceptions on the new paths currently being trodden by photography. Lastly touching upon ideas and terrain that perhaps have not yet fully formed but are nodes stimulating their mind and vision now.

For the purposes of this book the encounters that follow have been organised alphabetically with all of the conversations held within the last nine months. The majority of the original encounters were audio captured and transcribed from a range of physical and digital meetings, transcending the globe and neutralising both distance and time. The final textual encounter being co-produced and mutually agreed through a critical and reflective exchange.

PREFACE: NEWFOTOSCAPES ENCOUNTERS

ANDY **ADAMS**

The humility demonstrated by Andy Adams through his exemplary work, in developing and sustaining online communities and digital experiences, is truly remarkable. He offers a very personal account of his relationship with the photography scene, his background in cinema and his perspectives connecting photography, mass communication and social media. He talks about working independently and in partnership with galleries in developing projects and his aspirations for understanding the potential of the Web to be seen as the destination of work as much as a means to an end.

CHARLOTTE **COTTON**

The conversation with the prolific writer and curator Charlotte Cotton started with an open reflection on her motivations for a creative life and her concerns for those presently entering the industry at a time of economic decline, creative-conservatism and where traditional commercial business models have been undermined. This she does not see as a negative outcome, but in fact as more the first step towards a new form of creative and mental sustainability. The focus of the conversation then shifted towards particular projects from her defining book “The Photograph as Contemporary Art”, through to the more iterative explorations with communities in ‘Words Without Pictures’ when she was based in Los Angeles and more recently in the UK with ‘EitherAnd.org’. Charlotte did not disappoint with her strong commentary on the changing roles of the photographer, curator and the institution. In particular it was, the suggested invisibility of the new practitioner from the point of view of established authorities, the celebratory pleasure of photographic plurality and her belief in the power of photography for social change that really struck a cord.

DÓNALL **CURTIN** & NATHANIEL **PITT**

The next encounter with the collector or as he prefers consumer, Dónall Curtin and gallerist Nathaniel Pitt explored the potential commodification and monetisation of photography. It was the combination of their dual perspectives and the generosity of spirit that each offered within an open forum where the views of a panel and audience came together to create a hybrid NEWFOTOSCAPES voice. It was both surprising and reassuring to hear the commonality between the collector and gallerist, in particular when discussing the idea of the ‘contemporary custodian’ of a piece of work. There was more caution in the air when discussing the proliferation of the art fairs, the scale of the global- (not just western) art market and a call to action for longer-term vision and investment at a government level.

DAVID **CAMPBELL**

For those familiar with David Campbell’s work hopefully this encounter will not disappoint, he kindly revisited some of his earlier academic projects and writings which helped support and locate his contemporary position. There is clarity to his thinking and a rigour to his academic approach to critique that offers an invaluable sounding board for the photographic consumer and user alike. It is this ability to transcend and guide both the professional and the educational camps that makes his voice so important to NEWFOTOSCAPES. David quite rightly interrogates the existing strategies adopted by photo-journalism (largely relevant to photography as a whole) within existing media platforms and suggests that new media synergies are required to amplify communicative potentials of photography.

MISHKA **HENNER**

Mishka Henner could be seen as a true ‘post-photographer’, in the transformative sense where the role of the photographer has needed to change in order to remain useful and valid. This conversation instigated by Karen Newman (former curator at

Open Eye Gallery and now Director of Birmingham Open Media) arose from a master class she organised with Mishka on Image Hacking. The conversation weaves through his beliefs and his exploratory critiques of his own practices, authorship, institution, technology and the freedom it provides. He also outlined what was clearly a driven sense of purpose challenging the passified audience and aiming instead perhaps to engage a community of activists.

FRANCIS HODGSON

Francis Hodgson works as a professional reader of photographs. In *NEWFOTOSCAPES* he treads a 'slippery' path and offers a cautionary tale, through his self-defined "Digital Soup". He brings to the fore his incredible breadth of experience, crossing commercial and cultural sectors of photography, drawing some fascinating parallels in his engaging and delightful examples. Francis describes the aggregated images banks of Getty more in terms of cottage industries, rather than a monolithic brand; he thereby offers a clear relationship to the academic writings of Paul Frosh. He also discusses the potential of new models of message holding, importantly proposing new more accurate titles and responsibilities that together may relieve the anxieties of professionals and offer the necessary clarity for understanding and practicing in a new digitally mediated landscape.

DEWI LEWIS

Dewi Lewis has been at the heart of the UK photobook publishing scene for many years, working selflessly to engage and promote photography as presented in the bound book form. This conversation was twelve years in the making, and should perhaps have commenced when we worked together on my *Time|Motion* publication. It has therefore afforded me a rare opportunity to revisit perspectives that would have helped the then young and decidedly nervous photographer I was. Refreshingly, Dewi does not seek to defend the superior qualities of the paper-bound form, instead he reminds us, as both consumers and producers of photography, of the

commercial realities and pressures that he faces as a publisher. The underlying message of this encounter is of a reflective insight and guidance for the culturally and critically aware image-maker.

STEPHEN **MAYES**

The esteemed Stephen Mayes' voice brings with it a 'privileged perspective' (in the best sense) and 'fresh vision' to the NEWFOTOSCAPES conversation; his ability to carry ideas from one discipline and successfully apply them to another is perhaps what separates him from his peers. The encounter commences with his thoughts and consideration on the location of value in relation to the photograph and the photographer. He is a great believer in the power of the image to change behavior within society, his 'mobile phone as game changer' piece, is testament to that but also importantly in his advocacy for and power of the 'dedicated' image-maker.

KATRINA **SLUIS**

I first became aware of Katrina Sluis through her, article on the 'networked image', co-authored with Daniel Rubinstein and published in the Photographies journal. Katrina's multiple professional personalities allow her to explore the dynamic and challenging relationships that exist between the institutions, photography beyond the analogue experience and the new visual literacies presented by networked culture. It is her endeavours questioning the privileges of provenance that place her at the epicentre of new photographic practice.

Sharing my experiences and encounters over the past twenty years as both a photographer and educator is an attempt to act as a provocation (a catalyst) to open up and generate wider critically informed, accessible and progressive discussion on photography. To engender a collective communality if you like, in order that we can enjoy, navigate and contribute to achieving the potential of this burgeoning photographic landscape.



ANDY ADAMS

Andy Adams is an independent producer and publisher whose work blends aspects of digital communication, online audience engagement, and web-based creative collaboration to explore current ideas in photography and visual media.

He is the editor of FlakPhoto, a website that promotes the discovery of photographic image-makers from around the world. Recent projects include *The Future of Photobooks*, which considered the impact of internet culture on photographic production, exhibition and distribution and *100 Portraits – 100 Photographers*, an exhibition of contemporary portraiture shown at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Australian Centre for Photography and numerous festivals in the U.S. and beyond. In 2012, he was commissioned by the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design to produce *Looking at the Land – 21st Century American Views*, a web-based survey exploring the evolving landscape photographic tradition. Last year, Adams partnered with the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art to produce *Making Pictures of People*, a mobile publication/exhibition of recent photographic portraiture designed for touchscreen tablets and handheld devices.

In his spare time he hosts the FlakPhotoNetwork, an online community focused on conversations about photo/arts culture.

EVERYTHING IS AN EXPERIMENT

AA Everything I do with FlakPhoto¹ is an experiment – a way to understand new possibilities for how photography functions online. The whole thing started with wanting to learn how to blog and having an interest in photography. So I love the idea of treating NEWFOTOSCAPES as a work in progress that can evolve. That's very much the way that I think of everything I do – keeping things fluid. Hopefully that opens up some serendipity for something that you didn't expect to happen to happen.

NFS I think it is key and really exciting that your approach with initiatives such as FlakPhoto works with social media platforms in a way that provokes people to think, become interested, and ultimately engage.

AA The audience always comes first. One of the aspects of the way that I work is that I do it here, in this room by myself, and I'm very interested in reaching out to learn from my peers. It's a psychologically social experience, but it's a new kind of social interaction, because I'm alone, not saying anything out loud most of the time. My social media projects are about creating a dialogue – asking and answering questions about photography via the Internet.

NFS You've been doing this since 2006 with a particular kind of mind-set. You've offered things in such a way that very few people, especially early on, were actually thinking about or considering, never mind doing. How did that happen?

AA To begin with, I live in a place where there isn't much of a photography community happening offline. So my projects have always been rooted in a personal desire to connect with other people who love photography.

I come from a non-traditional photo background. I studied mass media communications with an emphasis on the aesthetics and history of cinema, broadcasting, television and radio. So I view everything I do and what the Internet provides us now as folding inside that broader picture. Movies are my first love. The Web reignited my passion for still photography.

In 2004 I discovered a web-based photoblog community that was very much focused on amateur photographers – people who published their digital camera photographs on personal blogs. It's significant to note that these photoblogs were different from traditional photography blogs (text-based blogs with writing focused on photography). They were a kind of proto-Instagram experience where people published single jpeg images produced on digital cameras to personal websites. This was of course before smartphone/iPhoneography image-making, where we publish directly from our mobile devices.

I launched FlakPhoto.com in 2006. I was using digital tools but to a lesser and certainly more primitive degree. For example, I didn't know the phrase 'social media' then. Like a lot of people at that time, I was fascinated with the Internet. It was becoming a new diversion for me and I was using it to feed my interests and my passions. I didn't consciously recognize that I was participating in a social experience on the Internet. That came later.

THE 21ST CENTURY DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY DISCUSSION

NFS It sounds like, as it's evolved, it's almost clarified the particular roots that you're interested in exploring.

AA Definitely. Once I recognized the social aspect of my own online activities, I decided to provide a gathering place for people that care about photography to come together on the Internet to share that passion. Social media, and Facebook in particular, was a huge discovery that completely changed the way I think about what I do and the way my projects manifest themselves in the world. In addition to producing FlakPhoto.com I host two discussion groups on Facebook – the FlakPhoto Network and FlakPhoto Books².

NFS You've been described as a leading figure in the 21st century digital photography discussion. TIME Magazine included you as one of the top 140 feeds in the world in terms of engaging with what you're doing. When people see you in that light, how do you manage the level of expectation? Surely, it's one thing being a community organiser, it's

another thing where people essentially beginning to see you as a leader?

AA I definitely do a lot of public thinking on social media. I love promoting photographers and their work and use my Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and Instagram to do that every day. If I have a reputation as a leader in the online photography community it may be because I share personal ideas consistently and publicly on this particular topic. I suspect that as more of us turn to indie websites and personally curated social media newsfeeds to look for news, connect with colleagues, and satisfy our curiosities the people and institutions that influence us will evolve.

NFS That's true. It seems only recently that photographers have begun to see themselves as publishers. It sounds like very early on, you didn't just see the blog as a diaristic tool. You understood it as an opportunity to publish, which continues to place you in quite a unique position.

AA In the beginning, when I was finding my way around the blog culture, my original aim was to publish a web-based magazine. As I began to understand Facebook and Twitter I realized that all of these expressions on social networking sites are themselves acts of publishing. I use my social networks in a very public, personal way and I connect with anyone who is interested in connecting with me. I use Facebook like a blog and email photo colleagues all the time. I ask a lot of questions and do my best to facilitate discussions. I love conversations.

CREATING ROBUST ONLINE PHOTO EXPERIENCES

NFS You talked earlier about promoting photography but I think you've just alluded to the idea that your approach has transitioned more towards curation. How do you go about selecting the work that you feature?

AA I'm always looking. My approach to discovering photography is deeply connected to the online media ecosystem that surrounds me. For example, one of the things that's extremely common now – and, in fact it's a requirement,

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I think – is that every photographer has a website. So every photographer essentially has a public outpost on the Internet where you can find them. And, increasingly, photographers and other creative people have multiple touchpoints. They're on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, YouTube, Vimeo; they publish a blog, they send email updates, they mail print postcards. They're expressing themselves and their ideas across various digital media all the time – they're mass communicators. I make it a point to connect to my colleagues as much as possible.

Another big part of this, to take it away from the photography conversation for a moment, is that before the Internet I watched a lot of TV and movies and I read a lot of magazines. Now I've shifted those habits completely over to the Web. Because I'm able to curate my newsfeeds to be meaningful to me, I've filled them full of independent videos, blogs, and photography. Since all of these people out there in the world are expressing themselves and publishing their material and showing their pictures and spreading their ideas in the newsfeed, I'm constantly aware of all the things that are happening out there. It's wonderful.

NFS Essentially, it's become your own self-selected channel. A personal information and communication stream offering shared experiences and a direct dialogue with your peers. And it's a two-way dialogue directly with your peers.

AA Exactly. It's a wonderful way to discover images because photography plays so well on the Web. I like helping photographers get their work seen. So, I see a picture that looks interesting on Facebook and I write to the photographer to say, "Can we show this? Here's who I am; here's what I do." I ask photographers to tag me @FlakPhoto in their Twitter updates and retweet the ones that catch my eye. I highlight FlakPhoto Network member projects in the Facebook group. I show photography on my Instagram. It's a lot of fun.

NFS You sometimes talk about the digital archive of contemporary photographs that you have created with FlakPhoto. Have you actually gone back and looked at the things that you've selected to see how your thoughts or the

work that you're looking at has changed?

AA Three years ago, we launched a FlakPhoto redesign. We built a new website and brought all of the earlier pictures into the new system. That was a fun exercise in seeing how my tastes have changed. In fact, we built a section into the website that randomly pulls pictures from the FlakPhoto Collection archive into the site. It's good to see the images you've forgotten about.

One of the criticisms of the social news feed phenomenon is that something's fresh for a day and then it disappears. That's a valid criticism but I don't think it's unique to the digital environment. The online 'drive by culture' complaint is an idea I'm personally interested in pushing back on. There's this idea that our inability to pay attention is an inherent flaw of the medium, and I don't agree. That's user error; that is inherently a flaw of the spectator. You choose to give something your full attention or you can choose to pay partial attention. Our job as photography publishers is to produce experiences that are entertaining and robust, designed to encourage thoughtful and extended reading by the spectator.

NOT ALL PHOTOGRAPHS ARE CREATED EQUAL

NFS You hosted a panel with Stephen Mayes and Miki Johnson exploring the 'Future of Photobooks'³ at the 'Flash Forward Festival' in Boston and Stephen put forward the idea that photographs are experiences in their own right.

AA I agree. "The Making Pictures of People"⁴ exhibition that we produced in collaboration with the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art was a photography experience that focused entirely on the image as opposed to the object. We set out to make something incredibly robust and entirely on the Web so it would be accessible to anyone. It's essentially a public art project, but entirely digital and full of stuff to look at and ideas to think about. You can't get through it in one sitting; you're expected to go back to it again and again. It's an experience to be approached and consumed like you would a photography book, which actually demands a lot of attention.

NFS Consideration for the experience is also true of photography in general and can be traced back to the early evolutions of photography. The idea of the picture show emerging with entrepreneurs and photographers like Eadweard Muybridge projecting images with a magic lantern to reanimate his infamous animal locomotion series.

With collaborations like *Making Pictures of People* you are clearly forging positive relationships between the analogue and the digital. In the NEWFOTOSCAPES conversation with Stephen Mayes, he suggested, “Archive? Who cares about archives?” In other words, if a stream of photographs is ephemeral and momentary then we should just be fine with that.

AA That makes sense. But one of the distinctions that I think we’ve got to make is that not all photographs are created equal. I’m not even sure we should be calling some of this photography anymore, since the great majority of it isn’t technically photography at all. Many of these pictures are photographic images. Sometimes images are merely expressions of the self. Photography has become a real-time way to say, “I did this,” or, “I’m here,” or, “Look at this,” or something else and the sharing is as important as the making. That’s a different kind of picture than one that’s designed to be experienced as a fine art print.

NFS There’s been so much anxiety about that dematerialisation of the analogue photograph, which seems to miss the potential of this new ecology. For instance you constructed multiple connections and layers for *Making Pictures of People*. As such this online platform amplifies the message of the show and acts as a mechanism which significantly increases the size and reach of its audience.

In essence you are fusing the experiences offered by both the physical and digital to explore new narratives.

AA To use Stephen Mayes’ example of the news feed, and my example of ‘The Making Pictures of People’ show – they’re both inherently digital. Neither is a physical photographic object. They convey specific ideas using pictures. Images are not inherently intended to be objects. They’re visuals that

reflect the people who made them. They depict something that (may have) existed in the world and an idea that a photographer aims to convey to a spectator. And context is crucial. There are some people that will tell you, "A picture should speak a thousand words. If I have to talk about a picture, it hasn't done its job." I disagree. Like any cultural text, an image is influenced by its maker. Why did they do this? Why are they compelled to go out in the world and make this happen? Understanding the maker is key to understanding the work.

SCREEN EXPERIENCES

NFS Yes, it enables the audience to see them as real people.


AA That's the thing; they are real people. It matters that we communicate some kind of human experience.

NFS You're keen on exploring the web browser as an exhibition space. How do you plan and create an experience through the screen?

AA I stumbled upon the idea of creating 'experiences' a number of years ago, when I started to struggle with how to describe the things that I make. I produce photographic experiences that blur the lines of traditional production, exhibition, and distribution. Most are manifest online via the Web and are inherently mediated through a screen. A new language is emerging.

The browser as an exhibition space... that concept pushes back on the notion that you can't find anything meaningful on the Internet or that a jpeg is somehow inferior to a print. Perhaps my background in cinema, where the entire experience has always been presented to the audience on a screen, frees me from these sorts of concerns. We witness a film on a screen. It's not a physical object.

NFS It was fascinating in conversation with Katrina Sluis, the curator of Digital at the Photographers' Gallery in the UK, to hear how this establishment, entrenched in the analogue is exploring ideas presented by digital native



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environments. She has also written a lot about the idea of the networked image; an individual relationship mediated through the screen, in perpetual ‘motion’. So when the gallery during their major refurbishment decided to ‘fix’ a screen, dominant in scale on an interior wall, it has been an almost impossible task to try and fuse together those concepts. When, in essence, this screen is almost replicating a typical photographic display.

ADAPTING TO THE TECHNOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS OF THE DAY

AA That’s a smart distinction about the spectator’s experience, because it’s a big part of my approach. With ‘Looking at the Land’⁵ and *Making Pictures of People* we designed and optimized these projects for touchscreen tablets. When we consume the Internet on handheld devices we behaviorally engage these digital experiences with a similar intimacy as we do a book. We hold them in our hands or on our lap; we’re comfortable, at home on the couch, in our own environment. Those conditions put the mind in a completely different situation for engaging with photography. It’s why we love books – we can take them with us. They’re portable and private. With mobile media and specifically mobile photography, we engage with the material through our sense of touch. That creates a uniquely personal connection. These experiences are distinctly different from viewing photography in a public museum or gallery space.

I call these projects digital exhibitions but they’re essentially media experiences like traditional books, films and record albums. We’re adapting the possibilities for photography to the technological constraints of the day. One of the reasons photography is more popular than ever is because people can share and view pictures like never before. But it’s also because the Web is more perfectly suited for photographic consumption than any other technology in the history of broadcast publishing media.

SHIFTING PHOTOGRAPHIES

NFS I think you are right, the screen as a digitally mediated

experience, has changed the function of the photograph. Not just in terms of its physical form, but its ability to generate new connections, experiences and interpretations that engage with its audience. In an attempt to navigate and understand this difference there seems to be a tendency to use the term 'image' rather than 'photograph'. Do you see a shift in the different types of work being produced that you receive or consume?

AA The constraints of the screen definitely influence the images I show. Pictures that work best on a computer monitor – those of a certain size, horizontal in shape, backlit, and illuminated—are always going to work better than those that don't. There are all kinds of photographs that will never function successfully on the Internet and that's just fine. In time, the history books will explain how these new screen environments impacted the style of images produced in the early 21st century. People are making pictures that are only ever expected to be seen on a screen. There's room for everything.

NFS In the context of today's distributed knowledge, the way that you operate, connecting people and ideas, matched with your background within the moving image; potentially you're as informed a curator within photography at this moment as those who have studied it in the academy.

AA I do my best to stay current. I make myself very available online and I constantly ask photographers and filmmakers to tell me what they're working on. If there's one shortcoming of FlakPhoto it's that I cannot keep up with the email correspondence. There are literally thousands of submissions that I haven't reviewed yet.

NFS But that's the point you seek to open up a dialogue, rather than seek to make a judgement.

AA I assume my objectives are very different than a curator of a traditional institution. I'm fascinated with photography and my projects are an extension of my personal interests. The interviews in my exhibition projects satisfy my own curiosity at the same time they add impact to the act of looking at these photographs. Perhaps, for the institutional curator, there is a detachment and distance from the

photographers they showcase. I want to surround myself with people that love photography as much as I do, because it's something I'm extremely passionate about. These projects are very personal for me.

CONNECTING WITH NOT TRANSMITTING TO...

NFS The social media reach of FlakPhoto today has an impact comparable to mainstream media. You seem to have an ability to connect with your audience, how has your approach evolved from those early experiments?

AA I ask a lot of questions and I'm genuinely interested in hearing and responding to the answers. Many of the people that follow FlakPhoto know I'm the guy behind the wheel. I assume that adds a personal dimension to my projects. I come from the blogger community so I usually write in the first person. Audience engagement figures into everything I do.

I'm interested in co-creating and collaborating with people online. As the early photography blog culture evolved, I recognised that the best ones had lots and lots of comments. But many times the author of the blog wasn't actively engaged in the comments. It was just the people that were out there in the world commenting with each other. One of the reasons I launched the FlakPhoto Network (FPN) was because I realised the comments are frequently the most interesting part of a blog. The FPN is focused on asking and answering questions about photography – the entire thing is predicated on comment conversations so the emphasis is always on listening to each other.

TRANSCENDING GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES

NFS So your role within the community is one focused on facilitating and producing collective, participatory, shared experiences and knowledge as opposed to being an authoritative figure.

AA I've never claimed to be an authority. I ask a lot of questions because I'm interested in learning. I'm also clarifying my own opinions. The Web creates this global, photographic

hive-mind and I do my best to tap into it. My social media projects engage photo people wherever they are in the world. We create these conversations together which helps the group to learn more about photography, this thing we all care so much about. That's very rewarding. In the best-case scenario, we transcend geographical boundaries with digital technologies to crowdsource knowledge and aggregate ideas.

The problem I'm running into is that I only speak English. So language barriers are still a significant constraint. There are all kinds of nationalities not represented in my projects, and they should be. There are still lots and lots of excluded voices, and that's a problem.

NFS Which is why initiatives such as World Press Photo's 'Multimedia Research Project' led by David Campbell should be seen as really important. Although, as he admits the input wasn't as vast and wide as desired it did at least set out to actively draw together a more globalised perspective.

AA What should probably happen is that one of the establishment institutions, or maybe a coalition of institutions, needs to champion that conversation and invest time and resources to strategically connect all corners of the photographic world from around the globe. Because for the most part, I think, America and Western Europe dominate the online photography scene. It will expand as digital literacy flourishes. There's a lot that needs doing still.

ADMIRING SCHOLARSHIP AND THE ACADEMY

NFS Which again raises the question of authority, today image production and distribution has escalated beyond our perception which has contributed to the "democratization of photography" meme but do you see this as a shift away from the photographer as the authority?

AA I guess the question really is who's the authority, for what purpose? I've always considered the true authorities to be the scholars, institutional curators and the academics – those with expert knowledge in the field. I have a great deal of respect and admiration for the academy and photographic scholarship.

**Connect with
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learn from each
other; to share
ideas and develop
new approaches
to pushing the
medium forward.
This is our time
and it's filled
with enormous
potential**

I continue to bring that into my projects. But I'm not sure if the great majority of the world that consumes photography through the Internet shares that view.

NFS Equally, the academy is facing huge disruptions. Is a walled and closed institution still appropriate for the digital world, at a time when knowledge is distributed, rather than performed from a single book? However, it is vital that we learn and acquire the skills for critical thinking and making. David Campbell positively cites his ability to locate and construct his perspectives because of the critical framework his academic life provided.

AA I agree. I'm keenly interested in understanding how media culture is evolving. The Photo 2.0 lectures I give take a somewhat scholarly approach to evaluating media culture. I talk about Marshall McLuhan and how media is an extension of the mind and how photography's role changes as the media framework it functions in changes. I don't spend so much time thinking about who the authority is. But I do spend an awful lot of time, and I am personally influenced by, people who are consistently interesting and insightful in their areas of interest. And, even more so, if they're actively engaged online.

One of the defining factors of the social media news feed, the social Web, and the current state of digital media publication is that anyone who has the tools can publically think and share ideas in the public sphere. At one point, someone like David Campbell would have been reliant on institution funding to get those ideas out into the world. Now, as an individual, he can make those ideas circulate in the world on his own. And because he's savvy he's become an influential thought leader. So I can subscribe to his blog feed, I can follow him on Twitter, I can engage with him on Facebook, which is exciting and fun. It adds a unique new dimension to my learning from him.

NFS This does perhaps mean we adopt an alternative mind-set, one which accepts open and accessible forms of communication. Which isn't advocating the simplification to the lowest common denominator, but a mind-set that does

consider audience offering transparency in the production of knowledge and simplicity for inclusion in the evolution of this.

AA I like the concept of open accessibility. That's a core ideology for me.

LEGACY AND PERPETUAL VISIBILITY

NFS With your projects being primarily being located in the online world, how do you plan and consider their duration and ultimately the aspirations for their legacy?

AA Good question. This is greater than online and photography, though, right? Everything has constraints. It's a problem. For example, the 'Words Without Pictures' project you discussed with Charlotte Cotton; putting a time constraint on those discussions made a lot of sense. But I was disappointed when the 'Words Without Pictures' website went offline. It's crucial that these projects leave footprints on the Internet – so future generations can find them. That project was very innovative. In my talks I always mention Jason Evans' 'Online Photographic Thinking'⁶ essay, because that made a huge impact on me when I first read it in 2007. Ideally that project would live online, even within its fixed constraints, because it's a great resource. Of course, it is available as a book, so the information is available for a fee.

When you impose limits, in part it's so you can move along to the next thing and try something new. It's great when you stumble upon a blog post from 2004, because it feels like ancient history. But it's good that it's still out there. Certainly that's one of the concerns about the Web, how nothing ever disappears. I don't feel like everything I make needs to last forever, but in the case of my digital exhibitions I definitely intend for those websites to stay online in perpetuity. I fully expect and hope that educators will reference them and share them with students. Teachers use FlakPhoto.com in the classroom – I'm always hearing from photographers who assign students to mine the website and write about photos they see there.

PARTNERSHIPS AND THE MUSEUM 2.0

NFS Did you find early on that you had to invent ways to motivate people to become engaged with and talk about the work?

AA Five years ago, I took a job with an arts organization whose primary role is to present arts/culture programming for the public. That gave me insights about how FlakPhoto could do similar things for the photography community. In time I realized that my projects aligned with the philosophies of the Museum 2.0 movement—engaging online audiences using social media to celebrate arts, ideas, and knowledge. I consider FlakPhoto a public photography project.

NFS Are institutions now approaching FlakPhoto to help them transition into a community led landscape? Are you looking to develop more partnerships with organisations?

AA Definitely. In the past five years I've produced digital collaborations at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the Center for Creative Photography. I coordinate live stream broadcasts and panel discussions for photography festivals. I support community photo organizations and photobook publishers with digital marketing. I love photography and I use my skills to champion the culture of photography on the Internet.

THE POTENTIAL FOR THE DIGITAL-NATIVE PRODUCER

NFS Which brings us to the other really important part of your project; photographers are acquiring new skills as these digital technologies become native to them.

AA Young photographers know how to blog. Many photographers use social media for promotional purposes. They can, to a certain extent, bypass traditional gatekeepers and directly champion the causes they believe in. I gave a lecture once and someone called FlakPhoto a “new gatekeeper” and insisted on the responsibility that comes with that. That

may be true, but it's just not the way I think about what I do. There will always be influencers but things have changed. Gatekeeping is an unfortunate outcome of the system.

NFS But equally, this new landscape does afford us the opportunity to challenge and question the old systems, rather than introduce new governance. In many ways, the openness and transparency that you operate with FlakPhoto will be key.

AA I really appreciate that point of view, because the new systems can easily fall into the routines of the old. Social media and the Internet in general are great tools for marketing things. But what I'm actually more interested in, and I would like more people to do, is to use social media not to market, promote and sell things but instead to connect with each other and learn from each other; to share ideas and develop new approaches to pushing the medium forward. This is our time and it's filled with enormous potential.



DAVID CAMPBELL

David Campbell is a writer, researcher, lecturer and producer who analyses visual storytelling and creates new visual stories. He holds a PhD in International Relations and for twenty years taught visual culture, geography and politics at universities in the US, Australia and the UK. The author of six books and more than 60 articles, he has produced three visual projects: 'Atrocity, Memory, Photography: Imaging the Concentration Camps of Bosnia', 'Imaging Famine', and 'The Visual Economy of HIV-AIDS'.

In 2010 Campbell went freelance, and is concerned with documentary photography and photojournalism, the disruption in the media economy, its impact on visual journalism, in addition to his long-term commitment to understanding international politics.

In 2012-13 Campbell directed the World Press Photo Multimedia Research Project, and wrote and presented its report 'Visual Storytelling in the Age of Post-Industrial Journalism'.

He is the current Secretary to the World Press Photo contest jury.

THE FASCINATING WORLD OF MULTIMEDIA

NFS I think it was around 2009, when I first came across your writings. Then, you published under three categories; photography, multimedia and politics. Where do you see those areas now? Because now you're using the term visual storytelling instead, so what's changed for you in that respect?

DC I was coming out of a full-time academic career in international politics and political geography where I researched things that were visual for a decade or more. Particularly photojournalism. So, those three signifiers of photography, multimedia and politics were kind of my locus points in the academic world.

They were the things that also made me engage with the world of practice. Because once I started thinking about photojournalism, I wanted to think about all the structures of production, circulation, distribution and consumption, and how this meant that an image got made, sent, published, consumed. That meant talking to individuals who did that, but it meant talking to editors, talking to media companies, talking to agencies and so on. In the process of doing that, two things happened. One was I encountered "Multimedia", which is not a term anyone really likes, and I don't like, but within photojournalism it had its moment from 2003 onwards.

I was fascinated by this idea of multimedia. Because the frustration in looking at photography and photojournalism was always, while the single image was powerful, it always lacked context.

A pivotal research project of mine was the one I did on atrocity, memory and photography about images from the Bosnian concentration camps in the early 1990s. That was published in 2002, I think. I spent two years working on research for that project, and I really wanted it up online for more people to access, because I thought it was a politically significant piece of research. That, for me, was kind of like my crossover point, when I encountered these later technologies. But of course I'd had to rely on other people. I didn't have all the skills to actually build Flash sites and do all the coding.

So when I discovered WordPress some time later and I was like, “Oh God, this is a website for dummies. I can do that.” But at that point I had absolutely no intention about blogging whatsoever.

NFS It seems that photography and photojournalism are always on catch-up.

DC Yes, and I think they’ve barely caught up. This is going to sound a bit pejorative – I don’t mean it. There’s kind of a lot of remedial work to be done, in the sense that there’s still a lot of stuff to say to people, “Look, this is what’s happening to the structures of information. This is what’s happening to the media economy. This is how you can fit it in. This is why you’re being challenged, and here are some possible responses to that.” People are still really grappling with those ideas.

A NEW CONCEPTUAL LANDSCAPE

NFS I remember our first conversation back in 2009 talking about the Web as a new ecosystem that breaks the link between the mode of information and the mode of distribution.

DC Yes, which I think remains the pivotal way of understanding what’s happening.

NFS But we’re four years on from that. Are you finding photographers who’ve been able to truly capitalise upon that kind of notion?

DC Again, I think there are some, for sure. But I still think that’s a minority.

NFS Is that just in photojournalism, or photography more generally?

DC I think it’s even more general than that. I think there are these enormous changes, and everything people think is coming in the future is probably present now. But what is also present now are established practices, entrenched institutions, habits. And enough legacies from the past that it is still

possible to function in a more traditional way, and kind of get by. So that if you're a photojournalist, and you're a good one, you can get just enough commissions from major magazines, newspapers to do some work – ads and commercial work – and get by. You can still hold onto the idea like, “Okay, I just make pictures and then I sell that as content to a media platform who commissions me.”

NFS Do you think that's a desire to stay in a comfort zone? Because as soon as you go outside of that, there aren't the rules that you have to abide by?

DC I think in large part it's a comfort thing, it's a habit thing, it's a necessity thing, because they perceive that you have to pay the bills and here's a way that you can still do it. Large media organisations that used to commission them are themselves in the same position; they're struggling with the notion of being what I like to call “the organisations formally known as newspapers.” Because paper is now a much smaller part of them. The papers still provide a lot of their advertising revenue and they're struggling with how to be digital first. What does that really mean for a completely different workflow? Then you realise that a print workflow really conditions the structure of information, about having a deadline, about getting something fixed by then, letting it go out, and then letting it go. Rather than putting it up, updating and having further iterations of it. That's a whole different mind-set.

Kath Viner, who's the Deputy Editor of the Guardian, who's now running the Guardian Australia operation, gave this great lecture in Melbourne a week or two ago which summarised the changes. She said, “Understand the digital not as a set of technological developments, but an entirely new conceptual landscape.”¹ That's the hard part. That's understandably the hard part for individuals or institutions.

NFS Your approach seems to mirror her critical yet positive vision, especially when I consider the well-regarded multimedia landscape posts you wrote?

DC Well, that whole thing is funny for me, coming out of

my academic background, because I was indebted to a lot of French poststructuralist philosophy – and I still am, actually. A couple of times on my website I’ve posted these key quotes from Michel Foucault’s essay on practicing criticism. Which to me really encapsulates just how you approach these things, about understanding that everything comes from somewhere. It comes with a set of assumptions. Why I say that’s funny is of course that in my own academic context, that sort of approach was always opposed to a traditional line of thought called realism. But for me, that critical ethos is realism. That’s the thing about being positive; it’s not just having some sort of Panglossian attitude that this is the best of all possible worlds or something. It’s about saying “this is the world now.”

So if you’re a photojournalist lamenting the fact that you’re no longer commissioned by Life magazine or Time magazine or whatever, and you can’t do the stories you want, then I’m sorry, you’re caught up in nostalgia. You need to know what the information economy is like now.

The point about nostalgia is it usually refers to a time or a condition that actually never existed. Rodger and Capa and those others at Magnum disliked Life magazine very quickly in the 1940s and the early 1950s. Why? They had no control over their assignments; they had no copyright on their images; they had no say in the stories; they didn’t know how their pictures were being used; they weren’t paid very well. They started off being paid okay for individual stories, but then it got worse.

They were asked to do a whole lot of social reporting that we would now regard as the equivalent of trivia on Facebook and BuzzFeed. Then you think, “Okay, so this golden age of photojournalism that everyone looks back to, actually had all the same sorts of logics and conditions that people are now complaining about.” Don’t get caught up in nostalgia for something that never existed. Think about what’s happening now.

NFS They become myths in themselves.

DC Totally.


NFS The photography education community is full of myths. I think the danger for photography at this moment, is that it becomes this insular subject that keeps churning and talking about itself, rather than looking outwards for inspiration.

DC But this occurs in lots of fields. Take the recent debate where Thom Yorke of Radiohead and David Byrne go after Spotify for not paying enough for musicians to live on. Byrne said, “The Internet is sucking all creativity out of the world.” I’m sorry, that’s just complete nonsense. That’s just factually not true, whatever the challenges are for musicians. Okay, you might want to have this rant against the Internet and creative practice, but I’m sorry, that is the structure of the information economy. You’ve got to work out how you’re going to make that work for you.

A JOINT PROPOSAL FOR UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

NFS You could say it encourages following, rather understanding which is perhaps where your academic background supports your ability to analyse and break ideas down into their component parts. Which leads us nicely onto your directorship of the ‘Multimedia Research Project’² for World Press Photo, how did that come about?

DC Well, I’ve had some contact with World Press Photo over the years. I did a workshop for them in 2004 and the ‘Sem Presser’³ lecture for them in 2005, which understandably got a mixed reception. Because when you do those lectures on the awards days, people are there to celebrate prize-winning images. They don’t really want to have a substantive talk. Which maybe fair enough. After Fred Ritchin and Vicki Goldberg and I gave them three years of substantive talks at World Press Photo’s invitation, World Press Photo decided that actually it was probably better just to have celebrity photographers talking. That fitted in, I think, much better with the day. But it was a good encounter for me, because it got me into that community, and I’ve retained contacts with them. Particularly through people like Stephen Mayes, who was Secretary to the Jury. I think he’s a very interesting thinker and very open, so we would correspond and talk regularly.



**Don't get caught
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I think it was the five blog posts⁴ that you referred to earlier on the revolutions in the media economy, which I updated with another series in 2011. Then I got this call about 18 months ago from World Press Photo saying, “the Dutch Photographers Federation are really interested in trying to work out some of these issues. They’re prepared to help fund a project and so on. Do you want to write the proposal for it and be involved?”

So I drafted the proposal on what we should look at, and that’s what got taken forward. That was interesting for me, because as I said originally, I had no intention of blogging when I set up my website. It was to be an archive and a public face of my work, really. But I understood that WordPress was blogging software and fortuitously I was on research leave for a semester. So instead of writing the book I was supposed to write, I decided to think about blogging. I was very influenced by two colleagues, Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites. They wrote this excellent book called ‘No Caption Needed’, about iconic photos. Robert came to the Institute of Advanced Study at Durham when I was there and he gave us a presentation on what it meant to blog. I was just really taken by that, because I thought, “Well, here we are. We’ve got the academic apparatus, but now we have the platform to actually not wait 12, 18 or 24 months for a journal article to come out, which, of course, is one of the intensely frustrating things in academia. Now I can post on my website and give you a link to a PDF. I could have that up in five minutes,” why am I waiting two years? I realised that my whole practice was changing. That I just wanted to write publicly. When I realised I could be my own publisher, I wanted to be my own publisher.

BEING PREPARED TO ENGAGE

NFS One of the impressive things about your website is the level of interaction that you get. It seems as though that each time you publish a post, you receive a good consistency of comments but more importantly perhaps you also respond?

DC I actually think that’s a responsibility of people who are publishing on the Web; you have to go with the ethos of the Web, too. You have to have comments. Therefore, when you’re writing on the Web, you must have links. The Web is all about

linking. I do think everyone should have comments and be prepared to engage.

NFS In light of the ease to publish online, how do you balance the public exposure and the responsibility this brings? In this terrain there is no one acting as your buffer or shelter?

DC Well, you are exposed; you are out there. You will be misinterpreted and misread. But I was kind of used to that, because even if you write in an academic context, you get misinterpreted and misread by other academics regularly (Laughter).

NFS But the audience becomes very different, though, doesn't it?

DC Oh, it's a very different audience, but you have to believe in the ethos of what you're doing. Which is, "Okay, I'm putting it out there; I'm making it as reasoned as I can; I'm giving it a link so you can see where it's coming from, you can see where I'm coming from." Yes, I end up with a clear position or an opinion or conclusion or whatever. But then I'm open to that being challenged. Some things can really irritate. But I just make that commitment to actually take a breath before responding.

EXPERIENCES AND RESPONSIBILITY

NFS The new landscape enables the photographer the freedom to control the whole process from conception to production, marketing and distribution. But photography has become such a loaded term, how do we unleash it from its baggage?

DC Yes, I agree. That was why at the beginning of the World Press Photo report I wrote about the relationship of the still and the moving image. Because I didn't want to talk about photography versus video, really. I want us to understand, first of all, that even when photography first emerged in the late 19th century, still images were presented in theatrical ways as performances in slide shows to audiences. It was a whole experience.

I'm not saying that what we're doing now is a complete descendent of that and exactly the same, but the relationship between the still and the moving was actually much more complex, even at photography's emergence in the 19th century, as to how people consumed images. Because before they could be printed on paper, which is around 1880 onwards, they were shown in theatres.

NFS So from day one we actually had moving image experiences.

DC Exactly. The flipside is how often does cinema actually slow things down and use slow imagery? So once we start appreciating this we realise these things are blurred. For professional reasons, these communities have diverged into photographic practitioners who work with the still camera, and cinematic practitioners similarly with video. But that's why we didn't want to define it. We want to say, "Let's bring some of these things back together again, or intersect together again, and see how they're contributing to each other."

NFS It is really exciting to see these two fields merge once more. We perhaps also see a historical convergence of intention between the Eastman Kodak quote, "you press the button and we do the rest," and the highly popular Instagram platform today. As you know Stephen Mayes advocates the cell phone as a game changer; unique because of its combined set of attributes. This in turn then enables us to think about power, responsibility, and that it is public, and how that influences and changes it.

DC This ties in with, say, Fred Ritchin's notion of meta-photographers in his book 'Bending the Frame', which I think is a very good way of putting it. We have to consider the role of those people who put these images together, locate them as stories, link them to other things and so on. I was always very struck with many of Ritchin's ideas. The first time I did a workshop for World Press Photo in 2004 Fred Ritchin gave his 'Sem Presser Lecture'. He was advocating photojournalists using the Internet and saying, "Look, why don't we think about a still image that's on the Web and you roll over the four corners and you've got embedded

information in the four corners?” I was always puzzled that so few seemed interested in the contextual and storytelling possibilities the Web made possible. Now of course there are these various new start-ups and platforms that can easily do what Ritchin proposed. So something like Stipple, Luminate, Thinglink, and others, give you the capacity to embed information in still images on the Web. But we’re yet to see consistently documentary storytellers take some of these things and use them. I really want someone to do a classic photo essay for the Web. Use something like Stipple and then start to embed information into the images, and present it differently on the Web to us.

NO DEFINITIONS HERE: A FOOTNOTE TO NIETZSCHE

NFS Was there an expectation that you would define a new genre for photojournalists within the report for World Press Photo?

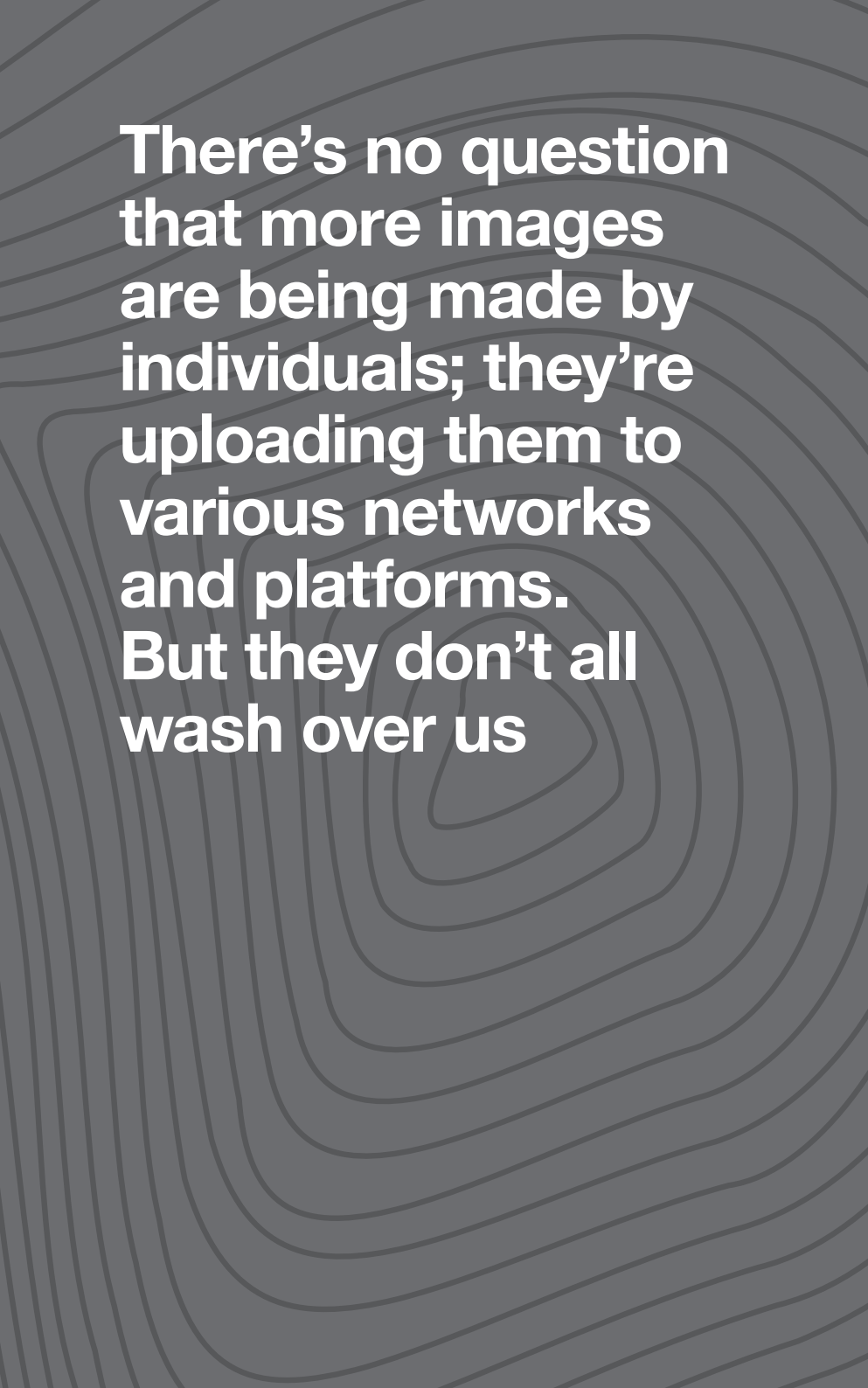
DC We made clear at the beginning that we were not defining multimedia; we use it in inverted commas. What’s happening, I think is the creation of a space where things are intersecting. So I think there’s photography, photojournalism, video journalism, cinema, documentary, integrated storytelling, web documentary. These things all have overlaps and intersections. I don’t want to define any of those things.

NFS Reading the final report it felt like you had applied your academic framework and contextual sensibility to the world of professional photojournalism?

DC Definitely. I think I even snuck in a footnote to Nietzsche at the beginning of the report⁵ on definitions.

NFS Yes, I remember.

DC Which is just a little nod to say... because I love that Nietzsche quote about how the attempt to define something gives it no history. It’s exactly history that I’m interested in, because I want to know where we’ve come from.



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NFS Absolutely. So were there things that you were hoping to find and things that surprised you?

DC I think the thing that probably surprised me most is how much of the work that we would consider to be multimedia is produced in-house by large media companies, by people they've taken on. Very little of it is produced by independents and freelancers producing their own things, and then being able to license or sell to media companies.

NFS You mean the power is still held by the institutions, did you manage to uncover the reasons for this?

DC It's a combination of things. We wrote a series of practical recommendations at the end of the report. One of the recommendations was to say that actually everyone needs to know how to use some video editing software. That doesn't mean everyone needs to be able to produce films. I always give the example that if I was someone whose practice was actually to make just limited edition books, I'd still want to know how to use video editing software. Because as part of my practice, I'd want to be making a short film about me making a book, and putting it up on YouTube. Because YouTube is becoming the world's second biggest search engine.

People are going to find you there, then follow your links back and hopefully buy your book.

AMBITIONS FOR THE FINDINGS

NFS World Press Photo and yourself must have had ambitions that would branch off from the report? Did you hope to influence policy or change ways of understanding on an international scale?

DC We hosted three international seminars, so we got good European perspectives, good North American perspectives and good Chinese perspectives. But even that's scratching the surface, because there are some fantastic things happening in South East Asia and South Asia. So I won't pretend it was global, but at least we made some moves in that direction. Influencing policy was definitely one of the premises. That was

the reason why the Dutch Photographers Federation wanted it to happen. They were the driving force to partner with World Press Photo and make it happen. They've a very good director, Lars Boering, who wanted his constituency to understand that they're challenged on a lot of fronts. But there are ways to think this through and approach new things.

There are a lot of interesting Dutch photographers. There's quite a sizeable minority who are doing creative and interesting things. I'm thinking of one in particular who does a lot of stories with public radio in Holland. This is when you realise the whole media space has changed completely. It's like, "Really? Public radio is becoming a publisher of photo stories? That's not radio." Lars wanted his constituency to see some of the examples and understand some of the trends that were going on.

We did the big public launch in Amsterdam in April 2013, and he'd read the report. He said one of the most striking things to him out of the report was to understand that good critical journalism had always been cross subsidised and no-one had ever paid for it directly. Because that released a lot of anxiety, actually.

Because of course there's so much debate about, "How do we get people to pay for stories?" It's like, yes, it would be lovely if everyone coughed up a dollar every time they wanted to read something and we all got rich on the back of it. But that's not how information works currently; that's not how people consume information.

Practically speaking, there are plans for follow-up workshops and so on, so that people can talk more about some of the implications. World Press Photo and the Dutch Photographers Federation have a definite desire to use this as a learning resource and build on it.

NFS I imagine producing the report for the multiple stakeholders must have been rather challenging?

DC The people who were involved in commissioning the report, and then the people we were able to invite to the

seminars and then interview and so on, were all very open and positive. But the biggest challenge in that whole exercise was trying to write about these macro changes in a way that could be accessible.

So many times you hear people say that language is too academic and that they just turn off. We can all cite particularly egregious examples of obtuse academic language. But when you've come from the academy, you appreciate that the vast majority of people are struggling with difficult ideas and want to communicate them in various ways.

If it comes across as a little difficult, it's because that's a struggle and the ideas are difficult. You're asking your reader and viewer and listener to go with you and do a little bit of work as well. Because you can't simplify everything into extremely basic language when you're talking about some hard concepts.

Of course knowing what the constituency was for that report, that was one of the biggest efforts. How to write this as clearly as possible whilst still being true to the depth of the information and the complexity of the issues was a challenge.

NFS The decision does demonstrate bravery and trust on behalf of World Press Photo and the Dutch Photographers Federation to join forces between the commercial and academic worlds in an attempt to explore and understand this challenging landscape.

DC Yes. I think that was a good move. But they wouldn't have asked me if I hadn't written those things on the blog, particularly that 2009 series on revolutions in the media economy. That did get picked up by a number of people in the photojournalism industry. If I'd just been in the university writing about these things, I'm sure they wouldn't have known or come asking.

ABUNDANCE V FRONT PAGE: ACCESSING BETTER QUALITY INFORMATION

NFS In Fred Ritchin's latest book, "Bending the Frame", there

is this crunch point where he seems to be lamenting the loss of the front page. How do you understand this perspective?

DC Yes. Well, I've written a review of Fred's book for Source, the Irish photography magazine, and published that on my blog⁶. I've talked about this quite a bit. I was part of those 'what matters' discussions that Fred curated at Aperture in 2011. I was part of Stephen Mayes' group for that, because of some similarity in thought, I think. The front page idea is the one that I am most critical of in that book. Because I do think it's a slightly conservative lament. I also don't think that the front page has disappeared in the way that Fred thinks it has. We can think of any number of issues domestically and internationally which come to dominate at certain points because media organisations put resources into the story. It's just that the front page is not a single printed page anymore. It is subject to flux and change across the networks on the Web. I think the benefits of today's more open ecosystem far outweigh any potential losses.

So, sure, we can say that Facebook's full of stuff that's not very important or BuzzFeed has a number of cat videos at any one time, etc. But there's so much more stuff out there circulating. As a researcher and a consumer, I have access to higher volumes of better quality information than ever before.

NFS Absolutely. I think the idea around the front page also returns to the debate about gatekeepers. It is noticeable through the NEWFOTOSCAPES conversations that often the word 'image' is used to replace 'photograph' when seeking to create a distance from analogue references. 'Image' can perhaps be perceived towards the now, the image as a continual experience, in motion, viral with its context unlocked via a simple gesture. Acceptance of this view seems to raise anxiety within the professional photographic world, how do you deal with the notion of abundance in this new landscape?

DC Yes, I thought this was probably the time to discuss that. Because the lament for a front page is something that always occurs within the context of an anxiety about abundance. I think this anxiety is way overstated. I think we confuse the numbers about the global production of imagery from the

current 2.5 billion smartphones with cameras with the numbers can do or do see. There's no question that more images are being made by individuals; they're uploading them to various networks and platforms. But they don't all wash over us.

What happens is these images fill up global reservoirs. These are the reservoirs comprised of Facebook accounts or Snapchat messages. Facebook now has – off the top of my head – some 200 billion images on their servers that people have uploaded. They're being uploaded at more than 300 million a day. But the point is, actually, most of those are hidden from me, because I'm not friends with all those individuals who've uploaded them. So they can't wash over me, so they can't be a flood, so I can't be a victim of this visual tsunami of 200 billion images on Facebook.

So I think there's just a fundamental error there. Facebook is a reservoir of images, but it's not something that floods over me. We can say that about a whole host of sites.

I don't see Instagram images unless I make a decision to have an Instagram account, have an app on my phone and then decide to follow a series of individuals. So if I feel flooded, it's because I've turned on the tap. We forget that series of conscious decisions.

This is why I think that front page debate is interesting. Because it suggests that we're completely out of control, overloaded, overrun by imagery and we what need is someone or something saying, "Please, plant the flag one more time and fix something in this total environment of fluidity." But if you don't think that actually things are that fluid, or as fluid as that picture paints out, then the desire for the front page is actually not quite so strong.

So for me, the landscape looks different to this anxiety about the flood and then the lament for the front page. It's more open; there's more information. But there's actually a lot more solidity to some of these networks than those analogies would suggest. Information is still aggregated for communities to see, hear and read.

NFS What that scale of numbers does offer, is actually more indicative of people's engagement with the visual and maybe visual language. It is very easy for professionals, or educators within photography, to offer the tsunami argument as a way of demeaning its value as a defense mechanism. But the reality of what's taking place has more to do with visual literacy which surely we should see as a great sign for photography.

DC Absolutely. This is one of those things where I think if you understand these 'scapes' and this landscape a bit differently, then as a professional practitioner you understand your position probably a little bit more positively. Because if you think that what's happening is we're all victims of this flood, then what you're saying is, "I can't get my important story above the waterline for people to see. Therefore this issue is lost." I don't think that's the case at all. If you think that what this demonstrates is that people love images, and the visual is really inherent in the social, so that being social now is about being visual. Then you've got a massive potential audience.

NFS But through these networks we have more opportunities to motivate and as an audience we can also become more active in our engagement.

DC Absolutely. So here the important thing is a distinction between potential and actuality. The potential is what's huge. Whether you realise that potential is up to a whole series of decisions and things, some of which you control, some of which you don't control. The actuality will always be smaller than the potential. But that doesn't mean that the potential is not enormous. That potential is something that you didn't have to that extent previously, before digital technologies and new platforms.

NFS Fred Ritchin also suggests that serious imagery tends to get lost in the ever-changing internet environment. Which would seem to be at odds with the achievements of photographers such as Tim Hetherington? In your post on his legacy, you referred to the following quote in Michael Kamber's article⁷, "If they have a desire to be professional in the sense of they make a living through what they do, you have to navigate through the business side of things. But if we

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audience**

see ourselves merely as photographers, we're failing our duty. It isn't good enough anymore just to be a witness."

DC Yes, definitely. There are so many tragedies associated with Hetherington's untimely death. But one of the big ones that I feel is that we lost a major practitioner voice who was amongst the most creative for thinking about these things differently. I'm not sure they're too many that have stepped up to take that place. So many people actually misunderstood that statement he made that we're now in a post-photographic world. They thought he was dismissing still photography. It missed the point entirely about the image, communication and storytelling. But that is why – we touched on this point earlier – in the World Press Photo report we moved to the idea of visual storytelling as kind of a rubric. We wanted to locate things into that much larger space and zone.

NEW COMMENTARIES AND CRITICAL THINKING

NFS In a recent twitter conversation, with Joerg Colberg, John Edwin Mason and myself, on the context of whether or not with smartphones we were now seeing a democratisation of the image you proposed that we are still in the 20th century. What did you mean by that?

DC I don't think there's much value in saying it's definitely the 20th century or definitely the 21st or the 19th or whatever. But it is much more interesting to think about those particular moments, like that Kodak moment, as doing it in a particular way. A book I want to go back and read is Bourdieu's book on photography as a "middle brow art." There's surprisingly little attention to that book, actually. Maybe when I read it again I'll discover why. But certainly in the context of what we're thinking about now in terms of smartphones, I'm surprised we haven't gone back to that one a little bit more. Because I think, as I understand it, it is talking about those vernacular practices and the more everyday prosaic use of photography.

So yes, I don't want to be invested in saying democratisation occurred at a particular time. But nonetheless, there are some moments that I think are significant in that. The Kodak

moment is definitely a significant one, and the smartphone one is another one.

But there are these lines, aren't there, that crop up in articles or conversations? It's like, "We're all flooded by images." Then that's always usually accompanied by, "We're all photographers now"? I like the Francis Hodgson line, which is actually, "No, we're all camera operators, but not everyone's a photographer."

I think that it is still important to understand that professional practice or people who are really skilled at creative practice have different skills to anyone who's just pushing a button on a smartphone. I love that line about "We're all photographers now," because I look at the pictures I take, which are absolute rubbish, and think, "Well, actually, you know what? It's not easy to take a good photograph, no matter how good a DSLR you've got."

NFS But it is also about its use within a particular critical framework. Anyone does have the ability to make a visually and aesthetically pleasing image. Which does takes us back to the importance of purpose.

DC Yes, I think you're right. People are very good at being camera operators. From time to time, they take absolutely brilliant images while being camera operators.

But to me, the photographer, and then the photojournalist in particular, is one who will do that over a sustained period of time, with a particular purpose, and has the capacity to construct those images into a narrative to tell a story. That, for me, is actually why a lot of professionals should see this as a moment of even greater potential than they do.

The interesting questions focus on, "What's the purpose and function of that image and what does it do?" Not "What ontological status or philosophical status does this two sided thing have?"

NFS I get the sense that you feel the commentary and criticism needs to change? Are you saying that a new text needs to be written?

DC I wouldn't say we need a singular text to be written. I'd be happy if lots of people wrote their own singular texts and we brought them into conversation.

NFS But do you agree, it would be important to make that conversation accessible?

DC Absolutely. As much as I said earlier sometimes that criticism of academic language is misplaced and we need to struggle with it, you do also have to get it to be as accessible as possible. Some of that stuff isn't as accessible as possible. You've seen a lot of the Twitter exchanges that Joerg Colberg and John Edwin Mason and I have had about Sontag, for example. We are all very tired of the seemingly requisite Sontag quote at the beginning of a photographic review or critique. We shouldn't regard 'On Photography' as this timeless text that's going to give us guidelines, particularly as a 1977 text, in the contemporary period.

So I've started asking people, has someone really written a sustained critique of Sontag on this? Not to bash Sontag, but to actually ask why was she interested in photography? Because she was a writer. Did that give her a particular view on photography that comes out in the book 'On Photography'? Which I suspect is the case. So I think the critical canon, as it were, does need to be revised. I think new texts need to be written. But I don't think anyone's going to write a singular new text that's going to give us the way forward by itself.

The Sontag one's a classic case in the way that it constantly gets cited by people who are probably writing about photography for the first time. I don't want to write Sontag out of the canon. I just don't want Sontag to be the canon.

OPEN SYSTEMS AND AUDIENCES

NFS The last question is thinking around this idea of loyalty and community. Because there has been a shift over the past few years, since we first met, – early on there was a sense of social media was the new solution for mass communication, global scalability and commercial success. More recently

people such as Richard Stacy suggest that this isn't really the case, rather social media is more about the personal.

DC Yes. I think social media's a bit of a combination of the two. This links back to the idea of the potential and the actuality. What you've got with social media is the potential to reach a large audience. The notion of the mass audience is something that I think probably even psychologically constrains practitioners too much. Because they think, "Unless I've got a YouTube video with 2 million views, I'm nobody."

Let's think back to how many people read newspapers. Then let's think back to the point that we didn't know when people read newspapers whether they actually read your particular story in the newspaper. We just assumed that, but that might not be a safe assumption. So what we're finding out through web analytics now is that there are small audiences for some things and big audiences for others within a site or "publication." But I suspect that was probably always the case; we just didn't have the capacity to measure it to the same extent. That's why I think it is so important to remember the audience for hard news, difficult documentary stories, has always been small, relative to a mass audience interested in other cultural phenomenon. That's always been the case. But we do have the potential to reach either that specific audience now or make that audience a little bit larger through these social media networks and technologies.

For me, this is where the dynamic of the Internet is so important and why it collapses a number of these positions, one of them being, for example, free versus paid. The Internet does remain a structurally open system, because the Internet – as opposed to the Web – is about connecting computers together. The Web is about a graphic interface that sits on that and organises certain parts of those networks and information in particular ways. So Facebook is a particular graphic way of organising a social community on top of a series of network connections. As long as those network connections remain possible and we have the ability to connect, you or I can go buy a bit of web space and become a publisher, a broadcaster and distributor.

No matter how big Google gets, no matter how big Facebook gets, no matter how much the NSA and everyone else starts surveilling us and so on. If we have that capacity to buy that web space and be a publisher and distributor then we are in the same starting position as Zuckerberg at the beginning of Facebook. I'm not saying everyone ends up with Facebook's 1 billion users, but that's one potential. The actuality is what you do to find the audience for the story that you're telling and you build that particular community around that story and practice. If you do it right and engage them right, you will expand that. But you can only do that if you have a structurally open system which has some capacity for reach.

So it's not a question of the mass audience versus the niche audience. The niche audience is something that is an aggregation of people in the mass audience. So again, we don't want to see those two things as opposites. One depends on the other. The potential for a mass audience is the precondition for you actually having a niche audience.



CHARLOTTE COTTON

Charlotte Cotton is a curator and writer. She is the author of *The Photograph as Contemporary Art* and founder of *Words Without Pictures* and Eitherand.org.

She has held positions including curator of photographs at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and head of the Wallis Annenberg Department of Photography at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Visiting Scholar at Parsons, The New School for Design, New York and CCA, San Francisco.

A CREATIVE LIFE

NFS We are here in the offices of Michael Mack in the heart of London talking to Charlotte Cotton. Welcome and many thanks for agreeing to take part in the conversation for NEWFOTOSCAPES. I think it would be fair to say that you describe yourself as a writer, curator and sometimes educator of photography?

CC Yes

NFS I was fascinated to hear earlier this year, at the Association of Photography in Higher Education conference in Wales, how photography became your destiny and I wondered if you could share this with our community here?

CC I was talking about the fact that at the moment I'm thinking a lot about an earlier point in my own life when I was seventeen or eighteen years of age, and what I remember needing to reinforce my aspirations to have a creative adult life. It didn't really take much contact with cultural spaces for me to feel as if it would be possible to have a creative adult life. I was 17 and studying for my A levels and I came up to London and went to the V&A and the Boilerhouse, which was hosting a programme of exhibitions, including photographers such as Irving Penn, that felt sophisticated and relevant and exactly what I would want to look at. I think I then ended up at The Photographers' Gallery off Leicester Square. I really wanted to see what I should wear, how I should interact and exchange and converse if I was going to have an adult creative life. And I am not even really that sure how I knew those two places existed, pre-internet age. But I did, and I think that antenna that you have when you are young is one of the most remarkable things! I really am concerned about what it would mean, what tangible evidence and support I would find if I was trying to navigate an entry into creative life if I was going through it in this era.

NFS Why is that?

CONSERVATISM AND CREATIVITY

CC For a number of reasons. One of them is, we are in a situation that is equally economically challenging for young creative people as the late 1980s. One thing that has happened within the creative industries in the twenty-first century has been an aging of creative industries and their workforces. For example, if you think about fashion photography, which through the post-war period was an area where somebody who was young, whether it was a photographer, a fashion editor, a designer, a model, could innovate, could inject real life and the currency of 'the new' into image-making culture.

That dynamic took place in Britain through the post-war period including when I was young in the late 1980s early 1990s with what got labelled 'grunge' photography and photographers such as: Corrine Day, Juergen Teller, Nigel Shafrab and David Sims and stylists including Melanie Ward, Venetia Scott, Edward Enninful, and iD magazine, The Face. It is within our active memory that there has been a period where it was possible for a group of very young creative people to literally visualise what was going on within culture.

Fashion photography post 9/11 became deeply conservative. We saw this impact across the commercial world: it was the time to get rid of the creatively opinionated, to say all bets are off, things are going to work in a different way, where creative vision was far from sacred and the risks in bringing in new and audacious talent would be made only sparingly.

NFS And you saw the photographers' day rates tumble...

CC Right, you saw the mere handful of fashion photographers who represent the pinnacle that many aspire to, taking cuts in their day rate, taking jobs they would have discounted five years before. And what got broken was that quid pro quo of commercial image-making, namely that as a young person wanting to begin a career in fashion photography, you work like hell, you subsidise the costs of your first editorial shoots, you practically subsidise the editorial pages of youth magazines.

NFS Yes, because it was about your portfolio of photographs.

CC You build a portfolio and you reach a point where somebody picks you out of obscurity, and you are in line for a lucrative advertising campaign which brings in enough money for you to go off and do your own photography and also make a name for yourself as a new talent. That system was severely damaged in the commercial fragility of the US (the commercial home of fashion image-making) in the aftermath of 9/11. And even today, over a decade later, you pretty much see the same list of top fashion photographers as in 2000.

REVOLUTIONS AND RADICAL CHANGE

NFS So broadening that out and thinking of the breadth of routes that the new ecology of photography offers, do you feel that it is still governed by the economics associated with photography then, in terms of the type of image-making that is produced or the type of work that is getting seen? Is it now more about free labour as opposed to really trying to push and enhance ideas?

CC Well, those two things are mutually exclusive, but I think when there is a client involved in the production of photography, you are visually problem solving for someone else. If you are ambitious and audacious and are given the space you might also produce something which is the visualisation of a moment in time, and all of this is magical and worth chasing after. I think this dynamic does move to other areas of photographic practice. You could say that there is a parallel or even a precedent with editorial photography and the economy of documentary photography. The idea of defining your practice as an editorial documentary photographer or photojournalist has been under debate for a number of decades now. What we saw in the 1990s and early 2000s was the movement of some documentary photography into the new axis points for the cultural appraisal of photography in the book form and into exhibitions for non-profit spaces, museums and art galleries. However, it is a misunderstanding to suggest that that has been a secure and vital place for documentary photography, or that there is full career as a documentarian who produces books and exhibitions.

NFS I think that sense of change and of considering the photographic object reminds me a little of your conversation with Aaron Schumann for FOAM's project, 'What's next?'¹. A particular quote that stood out for me was where you said you "do fetishize revolutions and moments of radical change, that you really enjoy them and that you are enjoying this moment."

CC Yes.

NFS That seems to suggest something very upbeat, because you could negatively interpret how we have approached our conversation up to now, the finances go down, and the demand is going down, a deep conservatism. But that quote very much suggest something different, a different way of looking at this kind of change?

CC They are actually connected and I think the first stage of emancipation is to abandon hope that the situation is any less challenging or in need of radical change than it really is. Across the world, creative people in the fields of photography, curation, activism, writing, filmmaking, know that the money is spent. That is the first step, to know that there isn't a reassuring paternalistic structure that you can literally buy your way into. It doesn't exist, and if anyone promises you that they are lying to you. They might also be lying to themselves as well. They might have too much of a vested interest in keeping that idea of pedagogy and creative industry alive to admit the possibility of any other reality.

But it is over, and owning that is the first step, and I don't see that as a negative. I actually think that's a really positive thing in life to know where you are because this is the key to all things – to your mental health, to the sustainability of your creativity – you can only start from where you are, not from where you hope or wish to. You can only start where you are. I think that's what the quote from the conversation with Aaron was really about.

NFS I think what's really interesting there is that often, and especially around academia, we talk about authority and institutions, and the canons of photography being the authorities, and I think there's something quite powerful

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about freeing ourselves from that ‘paternalistic’ notion, the idea of trying to please somebody. Maybe we should think about that time when we are young and creativity is the tool that we have to express ourselves – that actually maybe this is the space photography and broader creative fields can explore now and open up some really interesting possibilities?

QUESTIONING AUTHORITY AND EXPERTISE

CC Yeah, absolutely. I think the other thing to be said here is that authority and expertise are notions that are definitely under question with the dismantling of cultural structures that privilege such terms. Obviously, I am not thrilled at the idea that expertise is something which has become optional to the development of culture, but the reality is that no one is an expert on the future, especially in a time of change.

NFS Yeah, that’s true... But is there something in particular that you feel or believe has been a defining factor and that has seen such a shift in the landscape of the lens, a particular moment or any other elements that have shifted things. We’ve talked about finance, for example?

CC I think the shape of commercial image-making post 9/11, and also the decline of printed news media, are two of the biggest militating forces for the shape of what it means to be a photographer in the professional sense right now. But we should look at the other two important areas in relation to photography: what happened to independent artistic photography, and also the idea of the amateur or citizen photographer. Both of these facets have seeded profound shifts in the character of photography, even if they are not entirely evident to us yet in the behaviour of institutions. Shall I talk about those two things?

NFS Yes, what would be interesting to hear is how that really is informing and changing your interpretation of your response to this field of practice.

CC Contemporary art photography has become much more specialised and rarefied. In the early 2000s, we had a strong market for photographs that were printed large and laminated

behind Plexiglas; it felt like a bubble market for photography. We're at a period now where I think we are in a really good place, much leaner and more precise. Making photographic prints or using photographic language within artistic practice is something few people decide to do. At its best, it's not a lifestyle choice and it's not a career. It's actually a very old school idea of the artisan, somebody who crafts and renders something.

Personally, I work more with artists who don't necessarily come from a photographic training now, because I think the point we have reached within contemporary art is one where photography is a set of materials rather than a separate discipline. As you know from my writing I think one of the big things that we are grappling with is whether the structures to legitimise photography as an independent art form that began in the 1970s are going to work so well for what happens next in the story of photography. Those historic structures often relied on monographic narratives and separatist ideas of photography and its history, as devices to align photography with more established independent artistic disciplines. And all of those things actually are not very useful for interpreting contemporary photographic culture, I don't think.

To think about photography at large at this terrifically exciting moment is where the innovative potential for cultural institutions lies. If you spend a lot of time with contemporary art, as I do, visiting exhibitions and making studio visits, I'd guess that as much as half of what is under artistic discussion uses the materials of photography and video. And very, very little of this critical mass would fit within the tail end of a separatist history of photography as proclaimed by most photography institutions and museum departments. I really want cultural institutions to offer points of view on the real practices of photography and to support emergent talents to know that photography is one tool amongst many that you can use to express yourself. The artists who I think will define this moment, who do define this moment for other artists, are actually invisible to most cultural institutions.

NFS This quest for more from our cultural institutions seems to push the ideas you were writing about in 'The Photograph as Contemporary Art'² back in 2004. Interestingly, in

preparation for our meeting today, I came across an article where you were saying that, even at the time of writing the book, you were bored of that debate and really you felt it was kind of over before you put it out there.

CC The title wasn't my choice, I thought it could just be "Contemporary Art Photography" because I really felt that was a statement of fact by 2004. But I am actually really glad that the commissioning editor, Andrew Brown, persisted with the title, because it suggests an active election of photography as art, as opposed to all of the other facets of the medium's character. And of course what happened afterwards was the central idea of photography moving to the vital arena of amateur and citizen practices, and Andrew was right to give the book an equivocal title.

NVS What seems to be testament to that fact is that the projects you have been part of, and the ideas you are exploring, have consistently put you at the forefront of thinking around what photography is or where photography is going. As that example illustrates, that was the point where your book became a key title on a university reading list that students read, and are still reading, and one they continually refer back to. Is there an inherent danger that through the form and function of a fixed printed book that over time you lose the currency of its content? As such learners both inside and outside of the education system perhaps still focus on that debate. So really the question is what do you see as the key debates now? What would you hope that learners today would be looking at now? And how would you like them to read your writings from eight to nine years ago? Photography in that time has become a very different beast, so what do you see those key debates as being?

COMMUNITIES AND CONVERSATIONS

CC You're right photography has changed during that time, but just to say the book was still the best way for me to represent that moment, in as much as it was quite a definitive moment, and that's what books do – they are definitive rather than iterative. But in my own practices I have also been interested in creating structures for iterative processes, because

we are at a time that is not definitive in a conventional sense – it is in flux. I started thinking seriously about how you might develop ideas within a self-elected community in 2006 when I was living in New York, and I wasn't working for a museum, so it was the first time in a long while that conversation didn't just come to me in my place of work.

NFS You mean you had to seek it out?

CC I think it was a more normal experience of how ideas and opinions develop. Working as a curator in a national museum is a very specific thing – it's a vocation that I really believe in. For me it was the best way in which to engage with photography, within an environment where the stakes are very, very high. However, the reality of the way we discover and change our mind about culture, and especially in the 2000s when I think many of us were changing our minds about lots of things, well, I didn't feel that those definitive processes of printed books and institutional exhibitions at best reflected what was actually happening in terms of ideas around photography. The jury was (and maybe still is) out about who is going to make visual culture, how the creative industries will reform, what we will consider to be the pivotal issues for visual practice. Where does the energy of photography at large move at a time like this? I mean, we are all to a certain degree kind of blinded by the empirical mass of citizen and orphan photography, and only to a certain degree have we begun to analyse that. 'Words without Pictures'³ was the first iterative discussion project that I staged, and it was borne out of the fact that some of the most meaningful conversations I was having around photography were outside institutional frameworks. These were important conversations for me because of the quality of opinions and an openness, a discursiveness, that was just in the air, in the absence of anyone or any institution having the answer.

NFS Very much so, and this is totally at the heart of the NEWFOTOSCAPES project. A time to stop worrying that the landscapes are not formed. To stop trying to work out what is true, what is fact, what is finished, what is complete, and perhaps think more about how can we develop and evolve the tools. So, if we adopt the analogy of using a map and

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‘compass’, our focus is perhaps more on the decisions and the paths that we navigate ourselves around.

It would be true to say that our senses become heightened and we are far more aware when we travel somewhere alien, somewhere unknown. I think and wonder what might happen if we consider ourselves at this point of the journey to discovery? This seems to really chime with your earlier description of being young, and reminded me of one of your recent interviews, where you referred to the practitioner or process or thinkers that you seek out to act as your antenna. Who are they and why have you chosen those people?

CC I think you are referring to my introduction to the ‘Spring 2013 Aperture Photo Book Review’³⁴ which I guest edited. The well of the publication is a series of conversations I asked people that I talk to about photography and creative culture to ‘perform’ for the publication.

I had an email this morning from someone I met very briefly a couple of years ago, and they had been reading the review and they told me why they liked it. They said it was because I really had asked my friends to talk as they would talk to me. They appreciated that I hadn’t edited it in such a way that looked down on an audience, and I had just assumed that everyone is conversing in the same way. Actually I think that people really are, it’s human nature to have people whose opinions you seek out and to make the time to meet up and really talk it through. I think it’s a more useful way to form an understanding of this creative moment.

NFS What is really important and ultimately compelling about this approach and way of working is that honesty and desire to offer clarity to an audience. It starts with that openness and transparency, rather than the hierarchy and “by invitation only” philosophy. It acknowledges the strength of a community and then seeks to build engagement and invite a wider audience to participate. We can talk a little bit more about ‘Words Without Pictures’ shortly, but that would be a perfect example of how you consider the audience: not in a way to look down on them, as you say, but to seek to either engage them or look at methods of building networks or

communities. And I think what is great is that you also speak about the importance for photographers to look at building their own networks.

CC Yes, definitely.

NFS Which makes for really exciting times for photographers today, and moves us further away from seeking approval from the institution or the gatekeeper. This could equally be quite challenging. Is it possible to just open up a little bit more about how you consider the process of engagement?

CC I have been a curator for coming up to 20 years. I feel very happy with the role of curator, as somebody who does creative things for other people – there is always an audience with curating. I'm not an artist. Although I'm very self-aware person, I'm not directly exploring the internal questions that I have for myself as an artist does. I don't think a photographer needs to be a curator at heart, but I think a photographer does need to understand the curatorial mode of their practice for sure.

NFS You have talked about this idea that you are mostly curating experiences, whether its digital, whether its online, or whether it's a physical live event, which I think is a really important way to consider our roles as the field progresses.

It is a good reminder that we need to consider our purpose, not the apparatus. But we could perhaps suggest there have been experiential precedents. The camera obscura and the cinema: an immersive experience within a darkened environment, illuminated by a single project revealing and interpreting an 'outside or alternative' world. I also enjoy the similarities between today's digital tablet and the early drawings of a painter's canvas using a camera obscura. Similarly, we seem to have forgotten that the book is a piece of technology, so it really just reinforces the message that technology has and will always continually evolve and change.

I think interestingly your approach seems to seek to maximise the experience of a particular platform or mechanism, and in that way truly consider engagement and participation with an audience. Would you say that is that true?

CC There is a multitude of modes to most creative people's practices. The way that '#phonar'⁵ is structured consciously seems to address that given the emphasis placed on not only the 'photographer-as-artisan' training, but also, importantly, the 'photographer-as-editor' and 'photographer-as-curator', 'photographer-as-researcher'. That's the wonder of now – suddenly the true plurality of photographic practice isn't something that you are supposed to keep hidden.

NFS During the San Francisco Museum of Modern Arts "Is Photography Over?" debate that you were part of, George Baker, who I think you have worked with before, there is one particular thing he said that I thought was great, where he talks about the forgotten potentials of the medium. It seems that photography has almost become dominated by particular forms, by particular methods of commissioning etc. And that actually it was all there in the beginning, and that maybe we simply need to go back to remembering or look at those potentials and begin to re-explore them.

CC Geoffrey Batchen's writing about the earliest era of photography has been really instrumental in us thinking of photography as not an invention but a conception; that there was something in the cultural psyche that meant that photography happened when it did, and it was not just reliant on technological innovation. I think that the academic field of comparative media studies is an amazingly well developed area that is usefully applied to thinking about contemporary photography. I was speaking at a conference recently and really enjoyed the thoughts of art historian David Joselit, who talked about photography as 'the many' and related our contemporary sense of 'image overload' to the early 20th century, and the wholesale adoption of photomechanical reproduction methods. He talked very convincingly about how avant-garde and contemporary artists are negotiating parallel issues of what it means to create singular, artistic images in eras when photography embodied 'the many'.

GENUINELY OPEN

NFS Absolutely. This would seem to be an appropriate and good time to talk about a couple of your recent projects,

‘Words Without Pictures’ and ‘EitherAnd’⁶. You’ve mentioned earlier about ‘Words Without Pictures’, I wondered if you might summarise how and why did that project come about. You have previously mentioned a sense of frustration?

CC I think my sense of frustration is very quickly followed by, “You might as well do it yourself – what’s the worst thing that could happen?” The worst thing that can happen is that somebody else does it and not as well as you could if you’d put your mind to it! ‘Words Without Pictures’ was essentially driven by both my conversations with people I met in New York, as I mentioned earlier, and then finding the right context to develop the idea. I had just started as curator at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and I needed to rebuild a community around the photography department. I didn’t want to build a community based on explorations of the collection, which might have been the obvious place for a photography department in a museum! But I wanted to make an invitation to photographic practitioners living in Los Angeles to think of LACMA as a place where the crucial conversations about photography could happen. One of the areas I still feel very strongly that museums need to provide for, is in those years after college when you want to know where you can go for a really serious debate about the creative sphere you are passionate about.

NFS It’s about that sense of the institution being regarded as safe and trusted, so you know the information you are going to receive has been filtered through your peers, which I think is vital.

CC Yes, I mean think how radically we have shifted our view about peer reviewing and editing of photography. Even five years ago it was still something that institutions were very suspicious of endorsing. ‘Words Without Pictures’ was one of a small number of projects that arts institutions initiated, which were genuinely open and which released editorial control. The smart institutions really did that. They saw that there was nothing advantageous in censoring or institutionalising the language of this particular moment and, instead, that we just needed to be generous hosts to the thoughtfulness of creative people thinking aloud and together.

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NFS It was a shame really that in the UK generally, it didn't get the exposure it deserved.

CC Okay.

NFS I am intrigued how you planned and mapped out the legacy of 'Words Without Pictures' in the context of the Web as an open and free ecosystem? You knew you wanted to have clear parameters for its timeframe: so that project existed online for twelve months, with new stimuli on a monthly basis, mixed with live events, and then as the culminating physical resource. The book went from being print-on-demand, to its new association with Aperture, and in fact to being published by Aperture. Why isn't it online anymore? Why take it away, close the door in that sense?

CC Obviously I'm not working at LACMA anymore so I am not in control of the evolution of the project. I decided from the outset that the website would only exist for a year, as I felt a year was the maximum amount of time before the behaviour of the site would become institutionalised. The next phase of the life of the project happened in other places, off-line, mainly in classrooms where the essays began to be used as prompts to live discussions. The PDF versions of the essays rippled out in the world and appear on curriculum reading lists. We didn't work with a sort of modernist idea of the original 'Words Without Pictures', so all of these permutations, all of these iterations of the project, are part of it. Our success criteria for the project was that we wanted to create a framework for a discussion to be had, and I was happy that we only had 300 readers a day and a new response to the monthly essay came in very slowly, because we found the quality of the engagement was astounding.

NFS I think that's an interesting point, though, only 300 readers a day. If we equate that to a physical lecture theatre in the largest universities, that is often the size of one room. So the scale you cite, I think still makes a serious impact. But almost more importantly it demonstrates an active participation with the content that you wouldn't be guaranteed in a lecture theatre scenario. Having a desire for the project to achieve more, do you think that framework was

enabled through technology? Was it able to become more viral or more permeable?

CC It was beautifully planned and beautifully designed; it was very true all the way through. There was real thoughtfulness within the concept and throughout the design. David Reinfurt is an incredible designer. The amazing Alex Klein who is an artist and curator was the editor overseeing all aspects, every day. The most important thing is to use these platforms in a way which is really true to what it is you want to do, and all we wanted to do was to create a framework for the discussion to happen.

MIXED ECONOMIES

NFS I'd like to end with two final questions. We have talked about the obstacles and challenges facing photography, and how perhaps these have at times shaped your future. What is your next project that begins to address or look at those and question them?

CC I think I am going to continue to live in a mixed economy which sees me sometimes as the author with researched and definitive opinions, as a participant in things that I think are really interesting but I am not an expert in, and as a collaborator developing ideas with creative people who come from other areas of expertise. My next text book is under development. It's going to take me a while but the title is 'Photographic'. Contemporary photography is beautifully faceted – photography remains a prompt for social change. It is a vital vehicle for ideas. It is an astounding empirical mass. Photographic technology is an author of the ways we perceive the world. And photographic industries are challenged but reforming, and photography is of course a material form. I want to offer useful reading to people embarking on their creative, photographic lives that really embodies the current debates.

NFS I think that is really important. What would potential projects for you, thinking in 5 years time, look like, in light of this change and these exciting yet challenging developments? I think what you are suggesting is that they would have multiple

elements, but importantly that they should be a prompt for something more, something different. That's maybe the space we are entering into, where being able to be fluid and responsive is going to be key.

CC Yes, but within that is having your own internal critical framework for what it is you do.

NFS It has been a real pleasure to speak to you today, you have been very generous with your time and we really appreciate your openness and sharing of your thoughts.

CC It's been a pleasure and thank you for researching me, that was slightly unnerving but really nice (Laughs).

NFS Not at all, we look forward to your new book!

ANTENNAE

As a way of extending the initial conversation Charlotte has shared with the [NEWFOTOSCAPES](#) community the following list of writers whose ideas are inspiring her in the continuation of her practice:

Fred Ritchin, Professor of Photography and Imaging at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. He has written three critically acclaimed books on photography, 'In Our Own Image', 'After Photography' and most recently 'Bending the Frame'.

Katherine Hayles, Professor of Literature at Duke University. Her recent book 'How We Think' seeks to embrace the idea that we think through, with, and alongside media.

Julian Stallabrass is a writer, curator and photographer. He is Professor in Art History at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London. He is noted for his controversial views on the art world and for his observations on the major transformations and opportunities afforded to artists by technological developments in production and distribution.

Grant Kester is Professor of Art History in the Visual Arts department at the University of California. His 2011 book 'The One and the Many; provides an overview of the broader continuum of collaborative art practices.

David Joselit is the Carnegie Professor of Art History at Yale University. His latest book 'After Art' defines a shift in the status of art under the dual pressures of digital technology.

DÓNALL CURTIN & NATHANIEL PITT

Dónall Curtin is a Partner in the accountancy practice Byrne Curtin Kelly. He is also President of the Chambers Ireland, one of the country's largest business organizations, representing businesses throughout Ireland.

Dónall is a member of board of the Abbey Theatre which is Ireland's national theatre. He was also recently appointed a director of European Movement Ireland. He is a patron and a consumer of the Arts, having worked with several organizations to promote the role of the Arts within Ireland.

A keen collector of photography and along with his wife Anne, they sponsor the The Curtin O'Donoghue Photography Prize and the Curtin O'Donoghue Emerging Photography prize for the RHA annual exhibition in Ireland.

Nathaniel Pitt is both an artist and gallerist, he is the director of Division of Labour and PITT projects. Recent curatorial projects have included Dymaxion Playground; a public art project by Gavin Wade. Est 1690.; Newspaper/art commission with Robert Barry. ARTIST ROOMS: Joseph Beuys; a performance programme with Mikhail Karikis. Nathaniel was recently shortlisted and selected as a contributor on the inaugural De Appel Gallerist programme, he has developed an international profile for his gallery, with past presentations in Rotterdam, NY, Hong Kong and Switzerland and future presentations in Hungary, Austria, Dallas, Belgium and Lithuania. Nathaniel is currently working with the new Library of Birmingham as a Curators' Bursary recipient researching the relationship between sculpture and photography.

COLLECTING AND THE ECOSYSTEM OF FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

NFS It's great to be with Dónall Curtin, a renowned collector, and Nathaniel Pitt, an emerging gallerist, talking about the ecology of fine art photography.

The plan is to talk about what it means to be a collector, what it means to be a gallerist, and what that perhaps means for artists and photographers today.

NP Collectors, to an emerging gallerist like myself, are really important. More than just acquiring work, it is actually the dialogue that goes on about works of art that is important. So as obvious as this may be, to the question "why collect photography?" I suppose you could answer, "Why not?" But could you tell the NEWFOTOSCAPES community a little bit about how you started collecting photography?

DC It is like many things in life, it comes about in many different stages. When I was in school, I did some photography myself. I used to do my own black and white developing, and I was always fascinated by photography, so there was always, from a very young age, a connection.

My wife Anne and I both evolved into collecting art. It is like any journey. It started in the very traditional way, in the comfort zone, originally driven by us not wanting to live with bare walls. It was that simple idea that something can be put up on the wall, and it changes that living space, whether it's that of your kitchen, bedroom or living room. Then, more and more, we learnt, progressed and experimented, and we sometimes pushed our own boundaries. Photography was a natural extension of that.

I view it in a very simple way. Art is possibly around 40,000-years-old, if you go back to cave paintings. Photography was thought to be invented 1826 or something around then. This means photography has had a relatively short time span in which to experiment to the same extent as other visual art practices.

What we became very much aware of was that the world is a much smaller place now. We all appreciate and engage with both different countries and cultures, and people travel much more. Contemporary art, I would argue, is the one true international language. If you go to China, the contemporary art practice there, whether it is painting on canvas or photography, has its own way. The same applies, if you travel to Brazil or North America, in New York, London or Dublin.

NP Was that progression toward experimentation an easy one to make? With something that you were concentrating on, like photography, what was the first thing you collected? Have your choices changed over time dramatically?

DC I suppose the first image we collected was a typical portrait of a very beautiful lady, but I became comfortable with that and it grew from that. Then, particularly if you move into any degree of installation, video or abstract work, you have to challenge yourself in how to engage with it, how to live with a piece, or how you don't live with a piece. There is also a stepping-stone as you experiment with one particular artist. I would do a lot of reading, a lot of research, and a lot of collating of information. It is about that journey for me. As I like to get to know an artist, understand their influences, or the way they are progressing, that knowledge can then ping-pong into a different area. There is a 'cause and effect'.

CONSUMING, COLLECTING OR NETWORKING?

NP Where do you go to see art or photography. Is there a difference for you between an art fair and a museum exhibition? Do you have a preferred way of engaging with work?

DC There are many different ways I have of doing so. I know you refer to me as a collector, which is a title that is often used. However, I regard myself as more of a 'consumer' than a collector because it is not that I can ever say, "I want to own every piece of art in the world," or "I want to have an example of everything." Yes, I want to be able to enjoy and interact with them, but there are lots of works that I would never be able to afford. I would want to see them and engage

with them, but short of trying to go in at nighttime and take them under my arm... (Laughter).

For me, there is also a lifestyle balance. My wife and I both travel quite a bit for our respective jobs, and one of the things I do, as a counterbalance, particularly with the UK if I am going over to London or somewhere like that is, rather than get the redeye flight in the morning, have a meal, get the last flight home, and be knackered for a few days afterwards, I will travel mid-morning, stay overnight, meet up with friends and have a bite to eat. I took out memberships with a lot of the public spaces, so that keeps me in touch with what was going on.

NP Does it ever work the other way around? Do the exhibitions dictate where you might be doing certain business?

DC Unfortunately, not. If there is something I want to see strongly enough, I will go over, myself, and see it, even if it is not a business-related thing. To come back to your original question, I do engage with commercial galleries. Commercial galleries, if they are in Dublin, they are on my doorstep. Like any gallerist, they are going to have eight to nine shows in a year. If you respect the gallerist and you respect the ethos where they are coming from, you will go to see their shows. Sometimes, the opening nights are not always the most appropriate because they are more of a social gathering than a chance to really engage. But sometimes they are also a chance to meet and engage with the artist.

Commercial galleries do introduce you to new and different artists.

NP There is no one-way of attraction, then?

DC No. For anybody collecting art, whether it is photography or any other visual art form, you are always going to put something on the wall, and your best mate will come in and say, "Jesus, my grandmother could have done that. That is not art," or whatever else.

It doesn't really matter a damn, because if you like it, are enjoying it, and are living with it, that is all right. It's not

necessarily that you are viewing it as an investment, where you are keeping it somewhere before it flitters on. It is an emotional journey for us.

NP That would seem to suggest quite a different relationship from considering yourself as a consumer rather than as a collector?

DC We were over in New York a couple of years ago. In visual arts, my love is Marlene Dumas. I don't know if you would know her. They would sell for ridiculous prices, but there was a particular opening of her work. We managed to gatecrash the opening. We blagged our way in. It was extraordinary to see that work, which she did in Palestine. I would never have one of those pieces, but being able to engage as a consumer in that sort of way, those images are etched in my mind.

NFS Do you have colleagues and friends who also collect, or is it a solitary pursuit for you?

DC I know lots of collectors. In fact, I probably know more English collectors than I know Irish collectors. That is partly a reflection of the economic times in Ireland, but also, there is a much stronger tradition in the UK, and in France, Germany and the US, than there is in Ireland. It is like anything in life. People sometimes collect for the right reasons and for the wrong reasons. You can see people who have made their billions who want to build a museum to house their collection, and they will then employ curators, one-to-one, and will say, "I want an Andy Warhol," "I want a Francis Bacon," or whatever, and they are ticking boxes because they think that is what the collection needs. They don't reflect their personality, their loves or their engagement.

NFS There are also interesting networks around photography collectors. Alan Griffiths runs a website called 'Luminous Lint', which is about historical and archive contemporary photography. Recently, on Facebook, he posted snapshots of all the other collectors that he spotted at 'Paris Photo'. It was like: "This is the group of people I mix with." It seemed to suggest there are conversations taking place about who is collecting what, because they perhaps don't want to be in

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competition or asking for advice and guidance on things.

NP Interestingly, among gallerists, we have talked about how important Instagram has become. People are posting images when they're going around the fairs and saying this and that. It is actually amazing how many collectors are using Instagram as well, which is something I didn't expect.

DC Most collectors will be very open and engaging. There is a UK organisation over here that we are members of and I have a lot of time and respect for, which is the Contemporary Artists Society, based in London. They try to push contemporary art out of London and around the rest of the UK, and they do it in a very refreshing way.

THE CONTEMPORARY CUSTODIAN: A COMMERCIAL PERSPECTIVE

NP As a gallerist, I believe it is important to consider the actual placing of work and not just the selling of work. That could be thinking about locating works in accessible places where private collectors are open to loaning the work out to public institutions. It makes me wonder, how much are contemporary artists thinking about this side of their work too? And how much consideration do they give to the editioning and versioning of their work?

DC I think it is incredibly important for artists to approach it like that because a big problem is artists are extraordinarily creative in what they create, but rarely do they have skillsets on the business or commercial sides of things. Like everyone else, they have to pay the bills and they have to live. Also, particularly with photography, fabrication costs can be massive. To any emerging artist, that can be the single biggest barrier. There are two problems that can arise in particular.

I did a talk in the National Gallery of Photography in Dublin¹ about a year ago. It was mainly artists who were there. I said one thing, and I could immediately see by the reaction in the room that I had really hit on a sore point. So many photographic artists might not even sell their first edition, so their bed gets pushed up because they are stacking all the

pieces underneath the bed. As this starts happening, first of all, they start getting damaged at corners, so then they become unusable which ultimately becomes very demotivating for an artist.

The second problem is that some institutions can be very abusive of their position in terms of giving to an artist. They won't pay artist fees, or they will say, "We want you to do the show here. You go off and cover the fabrication costs. It is on your CV and it is good promotion, but there are no artist fees paid." The good ones will always pay because they respect the role and the relationship, but that is, beneath the surface, one of the big political problems that is out there².

NFS Do you think about the legacy of the works you acquire? I don't know whether you've ever thought about foundations or things like that?

DC It is a relevant question. I just haven't come up with the answer. It is a thing that Anne and I have discussed a lot. We are the contemporary custodians of a piece. The one thing I would be very fussy about, for want of a better word, is the 'conservation' of work in terms of how I store it, how I hang it, or anything else like that. Particularly for photographic pieces, it can be very easy for work to be damaged. The conservation of work is something that is always foremost in my mind. Where it is going to go in 40 or 50 years' time when we are dust? I don't know, but we do want something to happen with it so that it doesn't just get put in a skip or something like that. Our collection has become too much a part of our lives that way.

NFS Nat, how do you choose which artists you represent? Are your judgements based on the people whose work you like? Given you run a commercial proposition, do you select artists whose work you know you can place and sell? How do you make a dividing line between the two, or do you seek an overlap?

NP In terms of Division of Labour, which is my gallery, and the artists that I work with, I am very interested in those issues. That is why Division of Labour exists, because I am interested in how these artists are seen within a legacy of

their work. For one reason or another, I am not happy with their position currently, so I want to improve it. The artists I am working with are, I think, really important artists, and I like their work. It may not necessarily represent my taste, as I collect as well, on a very small scale, but a lot of the work I buy is very different from the work I represent. But “no” is the simple answer, I choose the artists I believe in, that are important to art history.

Those are quite grand ambitions actually for quite a small gallery, but I am aware of that.

NFS In terms of conservation, do you think it is better to loan work through private and public collaboration?

DC There is always a risk factor when loaning work. We are very open on that, as long as there is due diligence from hand-over to being returned to us. I suppose the driving force for myself and Anne is that we also want to help the artist. It is not about, “We own that.” This is part of their work, so if there is a particular exhibition on and a particular curator wants to draw on that particular work, because they regard it as definitive or whatever the case is, once there is a process, we would want to encourage and support that.

NFS Do you feel that you have more of an affinity with the commercial or public gallery scene?

DC Sometimes, there are barriers and perceived barriers. The commercial gallery can be intimidating, where people say, “I need to have a Masters in Art Theory to engage with the work.” That is why with public spaces, because they are able to say, “This is a public space,” they are much more comfortable in engaging with it.

One of the great attractions with photography I would argue is that, as an art form, it is much more democratic than sculpture or canvas, say, because we all have our iPhones or camera phones, and we all take our holiday snaps and family snaps. When it comes to looking at a photograph or anything, people are much more comfortable at engaging with it. They are not feeling so intimidated: “Do I have the knowledge base

or not?” They can look and say, “Yes, I connect with it. I like it,” or “No, I don’t like it,” but perhaps can understand it.

VALUE IS NOT SOLELY MONETARY

NFS I think there have been and perhaps will continue to be various moments within photography’s lineage which can be deemed to offer accessibility and connection. Given this context, what is intriguing is how, as a collector and gallerist, you both understand and define the value of a photograph?

DC I think at first there has to be a visceral response, this could be positive or negative. The work, for whatever reason has to stick or resonate. In some cases this can be all it takes.

NP Absolutely, Dónall and I have talked previously about value and we believe great art and photography exists with and without its commodification and that any value it may have is not solely monetary. So the value and the validation of an artists work comes through various established pathways and structures: representation, publications, publicity, reviews, exhibitions, artfairs and the biennales – these are the standard processes of validation. However, photography and, to be more concise, technology, does and will continue to upset this status quo.

So, to answer the question, I understand and define the value of art, in a similar way as Dónall, but in most cases I refine the value judgement by following those established validation routes. Firstly, we would research an artist, looking at their experience and exhibition history. I think all art has a monetary value. I recently saw a Robert Storr lecture³ about the crisis in the markets, and he said all good art will be sold for some monetary value in time, it is just a matter of whether the artist is dead or alive. Going back to these pathways to validation, photography does have a lineage in accessibility, and it’s development can be traced with the advancement in the technology which might, as I said, upset the status quo – in that we are now able to see great photos on our smart phone, iPad and laptop. So who knows how the future will effect the consumption of art? But I suspect photography will be at the coalface of this debate. Will collectors stop

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collecting? I don't know? Music consumption has changed, but people still buy CD's and vinyl and go to gigs.

NFS Indeed, the wider effect both socially and culturally of digital technology and production is fast evolving and fascinating. In this space do you worry at all about the longevity of any of the work that you own?

DC One of my favourite pieces, which is in the living room and I look at nearly every night, even if I am watching TV, is a Nan Goldin. It is not digital, but a lot of other work would be, so it can cross over that way. I have a respect for vintage photography, but I don't have a particular interest in going down that road in terms of collecting. Photography is very fragile, and it is the hardest to take care of, particularly if it is mounted on aluminium. The corners are so fragile, and even with scratches. It is like anything fragile. It is just caution and care in where you hang it, and that you are not putting it into direct sunlight. Even without direct sunlight, there is an oxidation that takes place. That is part and parcel, and we have noticed deteriorations.

COLLECTING AS A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY: PREMIERE LEAGUE OR THE FRINGE FAIRS?

NP Geographically speaking, in terms of buying photography where do you go? Do you visit all your local Dublin galleries, and which art fairs do you seek to attend?

DC In terms of buying and engaging in the buying side of things, it comes down to five areas. The main areas are the art fairs, the auction markets, the commercial galleries, directly from the artist, and then there are graduate shows. To add to that on the engagement side of it, rather than buying, there are the public spaces, shows and exhibitions. The fairs can be a bit like cattle markets because the focus is on the sleazier side of commerciality. At this year's 'Paris Photo' it took us two days fully to engage properly. If you try to do it too quickly, there is a visual overload that comes in and you are missing the subtleties of work.

I used to scribble things in my notebook and then half the

time, I couldn't read my own writing. Now, my iPhone is that notebook. If I've seen something, I might not recognise the artist. I will photograph the image, the nametag and the gallery name. It allows me then to go off and at a later stage, sit down in the in-between times, do research, collect more information, and then if I want to get publications on that particular artist, to add to the research or whatever, I can. There is a journey and a process in that way, an etching in my mind of particular artists who are on the radar.

We have gone to quite a range of art fairs. It is not every year that we go to every one of them. It is like everything else: it is what happening. We like 'ARCOmadrid', the 'Brussels Art Fair', and 'Frieze' in London. I haven't been to 'Frieze' in New York, but I have been to 'Armory' in New York, and I've been to Basel. I suppose in terms of the huge commerciality, you are talking about 'Frieze', 'Armory' and 'Basel'. They're the Premier League in terms of that commerciality side of things. If I take 'Armory' in New York as an example, there are fringe fairs. There might be 'SCOPE'...

NFS 'VOLTA'?

DC 'VOLTA', or ones like that. It is often at those fringe fairs, that there is much more engaging work because there is a lot of pressure on the commercial focus. There is some very exciting work that comes through on that side of things. I should also add that apart from art fairs, you also have the likes of 'DOCUMENTA' and 'Venice Biennale'. The great appeal of these is that they are not just for collectors, particularly 'DOCUMENTA'. They refresh and bring a re-engagement with them. Sometimes, the general public is not aware of that sort of thing, but by going there, what you bring back can be very powerful.

NFS Is there a concern over the proliferation of art fairs and their dominance on the art market? Can this lead to a disconnection with the artist?

NP It is really difficult for gallerists too in this age of over-proliferation. There are 200 art fairs and these could be considered as international art fairs now. Then, there are all

the satellite fairs. It is becoming more and more difficult to know which fairs to show at and which collectors go to which fairs. There is an awful lot of research that has to take place, time and energy which really we would like to be spending on looking after the artists we are working with.

DC I don't know how to reverse it because there is also a laziness that comes with art fairs from the museum side of things and even certain collectors, where they say, "I don't need to go to the galleries. I will just go to the art fairs and see what is fashionable or great at that time." I do believe it is about developing the right policy and strategy as an organisation and saying, "Okay, we are going to support contemporary art practice. Every year, we are going to spend a certain amount of money and we are going to buy that in from, for argument's sake, emerging artists." Then, suddenly, over a 10-year period, there could be an extraordinary collection built up. If they wait 10 years and then say, "Well, okay, these are the ones we want," they are not only paying a premium, but they are paying much more than can be afforded in terms of public money.

There is a responsibility for public organisations to engage with local politicians and get them to see the cultural values of long-term planning, rather than just short-term political thinking in terms of fitting to a budget.

CULTURALLY WE ARE VERY DIFFERENT...

N/S How do you see the distinction between the term you have adopted, as 'gallerist', and someone you might call a 'dealer'?

NP I travelled extensively last year, and I realised there is a difference. In Europe, we are very proud of this thing where we are gallerists and there is an integrity behind it, but if you go to Asia or New York, it is very different. You are a dealer and that is what you do. Culturally, we are very different, obviously, but that is not to say that because you are a dealer, you don't care about art. I suppose I work within the European tradition that a gallery is a really important place. 'Art' doesn't become art until it goes into a gallery. In a studio, I would debate whether art is art. Galleries are important

because they are different, run by individuals, not employed, each with their own rationale and way of looking at art – this difference can only be a good thing and why in the hierarchy of galleries often the younger ones have more experimental and diverse programmes.

DC When you refer to China, to put it into context, China has only really emerged and changed since Mao. There has only been 30-odd years of change, and most of that change is in the past 10 years. China now has a bigger middle-class population than the US. The US is the biggest market economy in the world, and yet China, in terms of purchasing power... As a consequence, when you take the art auction houses in China, the total volume of the sales of those exceeds Sotheby's, Christie's and Phillips de Pury for the rest of the world put together, such are the volumes there.

Although, there is currently a focus on the traditional, there is a maturing of the nation's dealings with contemporary art which is just part of the commercial journey.

NPS Would you say there are other differences between the established and emerging international markets?

NP Yes, however globally there is a lot of hearsay and speculation. You hear all sorts: Africa is the next best thing, and South American collectors are more sophisticated than European collectors – all sorts of stupid generalisations. And I'm ashamed to say, there is an enjoyment in the idea of discovering a new land of opportunity. I try not to get involved with these conversations with other gallerists over post-art fair drinks, but it does happen. In truth, it's all too early in the scheme of things, the market changes so rapidly and is so new.

THE RESPONSIBLE COLLECTOR

NP Dónall can I ask you, is owning art for you ever a strategic decision?

DC No. A lot of collectors are over-advised by so-called 'professionals' who say, "You must collect within a certain

The thirst for such acceptance from younger artists has been exacerbated by the proliferation of art fairs

theme, a certain gender or a certain niche.” I have no problem with that. There is a one collector of ours who is a very good friend based in London who will only collect text-based work. That motivates him and he has a passion about it, and that is great. It comes in so many different ways. I do have a problem if a professional comes out and says, “You must only collect text-based work because this is what you want to define...” It has to come from within. If someone wants to be more eclectic, so be it. It is a bit like art school with the students saying, “Well, this is the way you must do it.” It would stifle creativity.

NP Do you take any curatorial advice for your collection?

DC Yes, but believe me, I debate back and argue back. It is a two-way process. I don’t accept, just because I am being given curatorial advice, that I should take it on automatically. But as it is teased out, with certain parts, I will say, “Yes, that makes great sense. Let’s follow that particular track,” or “No, I am not buying that.”

NPS As a collector, do you see that the work you collect and the decisions that you make need to have responsibility in their own right as well? In other words, do you regard the legacy you are putting together in the same way that a public collection would be required to have a mission statement, as a collector who is regarded and seen in a certain light, do you have to maybe consider that too?

DC I suppose there are two responsibilities. There is one short-term and one long-term. The long-term responsibility: we haven’t identified for ourselves what is going to happen at all at some stage in the future. Yes, we want something to happen. It is too precious to simply wish to sell it or anything like that.

In the short term, there are a couple of different responsibilities. One of them is supporting the artist, which includes the lending of the work and supporting the artist in terms of exposure and that side of things. The other side of support in terms of the artist: I am not sure of the UK figures, but with visual artists, whether photographic or canvas, in Ireland, you are talking about 80% of practising artists that would earn less than, say, £15,000 a year from that as their

chosen trade. They would supplement it with other income, whether it was teaching, working in an institution, waiting, or whatever the case was. To be a practising artist is very difficult by the very nature of it.

If we see something that we personally engage with, like or connect to, there is a responsibility as to how you nurture that relationship. Often, with certain artists, I would have a friendship where I would keep in touch. I would mentor, or talk to them in a more informal way than mentoring.

It is very easy to lose hope, their needs to be more support mechanisms. Certain parts of the art world connect socially, but not in a formal structure. I have argued there needs to be much more development around giving skill-sets to artists and photographers to understand the commercial world, but also how they form cooperatives, support themselves, promote themselves, collectively feed off each other, and have the critical interaction at a professional level, which is very important.

Therefore I see that our responsibility can take many shapes and forms. It is not always just about the ownership of a particular art piece.

MAKING A FUTURE IMPACT

NFS Is there too much pressure on the young photographer to simply seek acceptance and success within the commercial gallery?

DC There are many different conflicts out there, but there are also many different income streams available, whether it is a bursary from the Arts Council or from a public institution. There is a responsibility of art colleges, artists' communities and other support mechanisms to understand all these things.

If photographers become lazy and don't continue to explore and push their own intellectual boundaries, and how they express that artistically, they are going to die. It might not be this year, but it is going to happen at some stage.

All I am saying is, let's educate and let's have that discussion

or debate. It is not that they must just go straight from an art school into a commercial gallery, get up on the walls, and have me, as a collector buying their work. I want them to understand the artistic world.

NP I think you are right. The thirst for such acceptance from younger artists has been exacerbated by the proliferation of art fairs as well, and because of the amount of strain on galleries to put on artists' work, they are seeking younger and younger artists to show at too early a stage.

DC Particularly in London, I see the way the graduate shows are exploited and the access that is given to commercial galleries before anyone else can get in. Then, if you are a small fish in a big gallery, you can be dumped very quickly, and there is a lot of manipulation that goes with it. The time to educate is before they are accessing into that.

NPS It brings us back to the importance of making the work and then considering the market afterwards. This in turn seems to reinforce what you were saying about building up relationships, whether that is with the gallery because you respect what they are doing, or the photographers for the work they are producing.

With the emerging photographer, do you see it as a leap of faith that they are going to continue with that pursuit? Are you hoping to buy into their story and trusting their future trajectory?

DC Yes and no. If they crash and burn and give up art or photography, they must make their own choices. I am still going to get the emotional attachment to that particular piece that we bought. I am not looking at it ostensibly from a value point of view. As someone who is used to the business world and strategic planning, I see sometimes the lack of it in the art world, so I have a certain feeling towards that, particularly with emerging artists.

There are people who will not buy emerging artists' work because they will go, "If this person disappears after a year or two, I am left holding the baby."

It is still a baby. (Laughter).

NFS Do you try and draw other connections between your role in business and collecting, and does this go as far as seeking to influence or affect policy in the arts?

DC I hang artwork in my offices. Some of the staff members would love some pieces. Others would be horrified, but that is part of it, and I like that engagement that it draws out of them.

Also, I have certain skill-sets from the business world. I have a passion for the art world, so I will try to make those skill-sets available to the art world. For example, I sit on the Board of Directors of the Visual Arts of Ireland, which is effectively the representative body that deals with all the visual arts in Ireland.

I wouldn't want to see any art institution, for argument's sake, run by a board of directors of all accountants, lawyers or engineers. Like good governance in all structures, you draw on different skill-sets, so that there is an accountant, a lawyer, an artist, a curator, and a psychologist. Particularly when finances are very tight, in the art world, there isn't the same focus on money as there is in the commercial world, which means that bills can be run up and then suddenly that body or structure is out of business. If there is someone there who is questioning them on that side of things, it keeps things on course.

It doesn't mean we should always do things simply because there is going to be a revenue stream. It is a balancing of responsibilities.

NP It can also work the other way with artists on the boards of public companies. In the 1970s John Latham and Barbara Steveni pioneered the Artist Placement Group⁴, which was incredible but unfortunately very short-lived.

DC I think you are dead right on this. Artists have extraordinary creativity. The way they think and look at different things can be very powerful.



MISHKA HENNER

Mishka Henner's work explores and subverts the value of photography in today's media-saturated world. In 2013, he was awarded the ICP Infinity Award for Art and shortlisted for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize. He is also shortlisted for the 2014 Prix Pictet.

His works are held in the Tate Collection, the Centre Pompidou, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Portland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He has exhibited internationally in numerous group shows and surveys, and is a member of the ABC Artists' Books Cooperative. He lives and works in Manchester, England.

PHOTOGRAPHY FOR EVERYONE

NFS Your ‘Photography Is’¹ book really seems to want to evoke new debates on photography, which is very much the essence of this project and could perhaps be best summed up by fellow NEWFOTOSCAPES contributor David Campbell in his blog post, “So rather than ask what photography is, perhaps we should probe what it does, how it does it, and who does or does not want it to work in particular ways.” How did the ‘Photography Is’ idea come about, what has been the reaction and have any actions resulted?

MIH The book came out of a frustration with what I considered to be a rather limited discourse about photography in the Photographic community (with a capital ‘P’). When you spend time absorbed in the magazines, the text books, and the blogs, it can seem like a limited number of voices dominate the conversation. And the same is true in the world of photobooks, gallery exhibitions and blogs. It’s easy to start believing that the borders of photography are determined by a tight-knit, enigmatic, and institutionally-backed cartel of decision-makers and followers. But the truth is very different of course and the great thing about photography is that in its practical applications and its emotional resonances, it really does belong to everyone, irrespective of status.

FREEDOM? HACKING AND VISIBILITY

NFS Your recent master class on image hacking in Birmingham, UK, opened up lots of ideas around impossible authorship, mass appropriation and the potential for exploitation that digital media brings. It tracked live flights across the sky and watched container ships sail real-time in the Gulf, zoomed in on Iranian nuclear plants and found gold and diamond mines in Australia and Peru. Perhaps the most terrifying thing was just how easy it was to access this kind of information on the Internet...

MIH That’s right, it’s all just a few clicks away. And that’s just the tip of the iceberg.

NFS You also showed a 600-page document² that you found

online, used by secret agents on how to ‘use’ the Internet, teaching Google Hacking and the Invisible Internet. How did you find this, and why did you decide to share it publicly online?

MH Someone sent me an article about a freedom of information request which resulted in the document being available online. The most surprising thing about it is how basic the level they’re teaching their experts is. I expected a lot more but it tells you what most amateur internet users probably already know.

N/S Which makes the whole openness of the internet event more terrifying. But if I talk to an Ethical Hacking and Network Security computer scientist, and he’s describing real cyber attacks, it sounds like something out of Star Wars. Does the fact that the Department of Homeland Security and Executive Office of the President have tracked you worry you? Are there certain countries you’d avoid going to...?

MH No, I’m sure they’ve been browsing the work for pleasure rather than searching for anything sinister. National security is hardly being threatened by the work I’m doing. Then again, their behaviour of late has reflected a state of such excessive paranoia that it’s difficult to know for sure.

SATISFYING THE ESTABLISHMENT OR THE CROWD

N/S How is it do you think, that your work and approach successfully seems to satisfy both the gallery establishment, as exemplified by your selection to the ‘Deutsche Börse Photography Prize’ in 2013³, as well as enthuse new audiences who perhaps engage and embrace attitudes of democracy, such as self-publishing for instance, offered by the new media ecologies?

MH My work exists in different formats that can travel seamlessly from one to the other; prints on walls, jpegs on a screen, books in the hand. I’d like to think that at the heart of my works are ideas that can be legible in any number of forms.

NFS I'm interested in how your re-appropriation of images disrupts value systems, creates new appreciation and commercial markets. This is something we are interested in exploring here at NEWFOTOSCAPES, and the idea of digital technology changing the ways that commercial markets work around photography. So with *Less Américains*⁴ for example, you scanned photographs from Robert Frank's seminal photobook on American street photography from 1958 and erased more than half of the content using Photoshop. *Les Américains* is regarded by many in the photography world to have an almost sacred value – and the original prints are highly collectable with a corresponding price tag. But it's interesting that your work has sparked fresh interest in Frank's photobook, brought about new appraisal and appreciation as well as a very lively debate about the irrelevance of originality and arguments for plagiarism in the digital age.

MIH I don't know if it's sparked fresh interest in Frank's original but I hope it's altered the way some people look at it. The question of who images ultimately belong to is interesting to me. So much goes on in the way we process and remember them that it'd be naïve to suggest images are stable and permanent, which is one reason for making *Less Américains*.

NFS It's also interesting to hear that you're potentially on the cusp of a relationship with an American commercial gallery, who are specifically interested in the opportunity to sell copies of your *Less Américains* prints...

MIH The prints have a different quality to the images in the book and I'm curious to see how they'll be received in that arena.

NFS That's really interesting. What do prints offer for you and how will they build upon the ideas of the work?

MIH The scale, production values and context in which they're seen means that prints are different to books in any number of different ways. For example, if we were to make an exhibition of this book we'd no doubt have to rethink the entire project and find a way to make it work on the walls. It's not always a straightforward translation but it does allow you to transform

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the relatively confined presentation of a book into a more expansive physical space offered by the gallery.

NFS Did you ever send Frank a copy?

MIH I did, with a personal note.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BEING AN ARTIST

NFS Less *Américains* is one of a number of print-on-demand books you've made through Blurb, do you see self publishing as a commercial avenue of work or is it more a way of building new audiences?

MIH I'm selling more books now than I ever did before and it's helping to bring in some financial support but not much. Selling books is about sending ideas out into the world; it's not a viable way to earn a living.

NFS When you made 'Astronomical'⁵, a twelve-volume photobook representing a scale model of the solar system, you made a short video showing you flicking through the pages and uploaded it to Vimeo, which was picked up by New Scientist and has since spurred more than 400,000 views. That's a pretty fantastic amount of people. In fact, it would take around 10 years for an average-sized publicly funded gallery to get those kinds of audiences. Are you more interested in how people discover and engage with your work online, in book form, or in the gallery, or is it that you find all forms of interest?

MIH The advantage of the Web is that huge audiences around the world can be reached very quickly with the most basic tools. All you need is a good idea and an internet connection. But the consequence is a viral work quickly becomes superseded by another item just a few hours later. That's the way it works. Whereas an exhibition will sit there for two or three months and is a physical thing that isn't just for the eyes, which is another dimension that can't be matched by only showing work online. So there are serious limitations to existing solely online and I'm producing more and more work for physical spaces. There's also something more fundamental I'm starting

to learn about the political economy of being an artist which seems to have very little to do with internet culture but remains tied to economic relations that happen in more traditional forums such as fairs, galleries, collecting institutions, and so on. Those domains have little to do with popularity and more to do with the tastes and values of a relatively small number of decision-makers.

VISIBILITY IS SIGNIFICANT

NFS A lot of art which uses technology is able to get out into the world quickly, which feels right, because often this kind of work reflects the social or political impacts of the media we are using right now. The concern may arise as those same ideas and the technology that artists are using to produce the work will inevitably also be superseded very quickly, whether it's physical or online. But I think what is very interesting is that both facets become a reflection of that moment.

MH Yes, I agree. The immediate critical reflection that artists can offer is vital. There's a false notion of neutrality behind much of the discourse coming from the Web and new technology industries. Revelations like we've recently had about the NSA's activities demolish those falsehoods.

NFS Absolutely. It was interesting to see Hito Steyerl's new work *How Not to be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* included in this year's Venice Biennale exhibition Il Palazzo Enciclopedico (The Encyclopedic Palace). Steyerl's video was deliberately installed at the far back corner of the Giardino delle Vergini behind the Arsenale (to reach it the artist joked, one must swim two canals and climb a wall), and included footage of photo calibration targets which were used in the age of analog aerial photography to test the resolution of airborne cameras (as Michael Connor interestingly linked in his review for Rhizome "like a kind of optometrist's chart for the ancestors of drones"). Viewed from above these photo calibration targets look like giant pixels. *How Not to be Seen* uses the format of an instructional video to suggest how viewers can remain invisible in an age of image proliferation, with strategies including camouflage and how to make yourself smaller than a pixel. It is a very humorous piece of work, but

seen in the context of the NSA scandal and whistleblower Edward Snowden's own attempt to 'disappear' the piece has a particularly edgy resonance today. For your own work, context and platform – or how and when the work gets out into the world seems to be equally as vital as the work itself?

MH I'm sure methods for us to disappear will become more prevalent and valued over time. But for an artist, visibility is significant. I do have other identities that make and put other work out into the world which can't be traced back to me. But I do consider the promotion of the work as part of the work itself rather than something separate outsourced to someone else. Maybe that's got more to do with the DIY nature of my own work and the limited resources I have, but it's become part of my working process. So the films are works in themselves and I take a lot of care in preparing them.

COMMODIFICATION OF CULTURE

NFS But equally, at times there is clearly more than promotion taking place here, and I think when the work derives from visual culture, reflects it and then explores what it can put back into the world, like a full circle it can offer some really exciting prospects. So for instance with the Feedlots image you made for the front cover of Vice magazine, in your show at Open Eye Gallery⁶ in Liverpool it featured as a billboard poster print. But you also sought to repurpose, the freely distributed used copies of Vice magazine that you sent out across the world, by signing and numbering as an edition of 150 you presented them back to the world, in a beautiful foil embossed envelope, a 'valuable' artist limited edition. There's a disruption to the market value, as well as changing the original intention for that image, what it was meant to be used for and then how people engage with these different manifestations, the meaning that derives in these different contexts, why is this of interest to you?

MH The simple gesture of repackaging or recontextualising changes everything. It's not so different to the subversive quality of a good impersonator or comedian. They only have to repeat the phrase or prose of a politician with a slightly different emphasis to radically alter its interpretation. It's

very easy to do and can transform forever your perception of something. I still remember the influence Spitting Image had on me growing up. You couldn't look at Margaret Thatcher or any of her cronies without seeing those awful dolls and hearing the venom they spat out. It's an effective way of tearing down the facades the powerful build for themselves and there's little that can be done about it.

With the Vice catalogue, it was about making a connection between the works on the walls in the show at Open Eye which represented the commodification of beef, oil, and photography, and the commodification of culture itself, as seen throughout the pages of the magazine. In a sense, the reader isn't so different to the cattle being fattened up, ready to be sold on the market. Instead of corn feed, we're fed lifestyles, products and aspirations. The process of production and consumption, like the structure of the feedlots, is meticulously calculated to maximise profit for the investors. So turning it inside out in the context of an exhibition made a lot of sense.

As for how people discover and engage with the work, it's out of my control. What I've learnt is there are so many different communities out there and they read the works very differently. Astronomical sits on the shelves of teenage emos, professional astronomers, celebrities, students and photobook collectors. It's probably the one work I've made which has truly left the photography and art ghetto.

EMBRACING NEW OPTICS AND PERSPECTIVES

^{NFS} Sarah James writing for Frieze Magazine⁷ recently connected your work to early 20th century avant-garde artists such as Hungarian constructivist László Moholy-Nagy, whose abstract works explored the integration of technology and industry into the arts. Angela Lampe, Curator at National Museum of Modern Art Paris also just showed your work in the major exhibition Views from Above at Centre Pompidou, which considered how elevated perspectives – from the first aerial photographs of the mid-nineteenth century to satellite images today have transformed artists' perception of the world. In that show your work was seen alongside the likes of Ed Ruscha, Jackson Pollock, Paul Klee and Robert Smithson.

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How do you feel about this connection to modern art, and being discussed in the context of new landscapes?

MH In my late teens, when I knew next to nothing about art history, I emulated the paintings of Miro, Klee and especially the work of a Polish painter called Jan Mlodozieniec who's almost unknown outside Poland. There's a playfulness of form and colour in those works that appealed to me then as it does now. I haven't painted for many years but finding a similar strategy in the by-products of surveillance tools might have something to do with the kind of work I've been making, especially with Dutch Landscapes. The Pompidou made the connection between that work and the cubists and constructivists. It may have been in the back of my mind somewhere but it wasn't in the foreground.

NFS What I believe is really refreshing about your work is your courage to experiment with the breadth of today's image media in the realisation of your often politically orientated ideas. Provocations, as we had with the cubist and constructivist movement, questioning our expectations of the norm, these now seem to be a core element of your practice, is this perhaps a form of activism towards a post-photographic world?

MH The language of documentary photography is far richer than the canonical 20th century works constantly upheld by many commentators and institutions. Developments in drone imaging, data aggregation, and networking have revolutionized the way we look at and interact with the world. To ignore these developments by focusing on the aesthetics and styles of past practitioners is to miss the point entirely. All the greats that I admire embraced new optics and perspectives to develop a concerned visual language fit for the age they lived in.

NFS There's definitely an aesthetic shift in surveillance technologies over the last few years, which is synonymous with how image technologies are developing generally. With regard to technology and the new aesthetics, everything becomes crisper, more detailed, higher and higher resolution. Very quickly the blurriness of resolution in Dutch Landscapes feels like the rough quality of VHS video – which takes on

its own charm. Technology's aesthetics shift and change so quickly, just like fashions, even glitches are interesting. As nations we want to see further and with more detail than we ever have. On an individual level, its blown every notion of privacy out of the water, but no-one seems to really question, because everyone is in awe. Where do you think surveillance technology might take us next?

CONCERN LIES AT THE HEART OF IT ALL

MIH We're entering an age where citizens' lives are expected to be lived in transparency whilst the State sits behind impenetrable walls of secrecy. There's a precedent for this in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and just about any other dictatorial regime. It's easy to fear the worst but as an optimist, I'd like to think that however bad it gets, history shows us that artists and poets always seem to find a way through the facade.

NFS This seems to further raise the bar for the concerned photographer seeking authenticity. You have previously talked about your frustrations with the current language of photography and how this has informed your way of working. How do you think that our current landscape is being shaped by new and emerging technologies and what do you believe should be the focus for the dedicated image-maker of today?

MIH I think that some form of concern lies at the heart of it all. What that concern is and how the image-maker finds a visual means to express it is really down to them. But as a rule, I'd say that style, process and technique should really be the servants of concern.

NFS It feels like there is something quite intuitive in your approach to the production and the values within your work, which perhaps adds to its powerful commentary upon culture and society. What are you immersing yourself within at this moment and how is that helping you formulate your instincts?

MIH On a very basic level I'm immersed in the production and distribution of artwork and am learning to negotiate all the stuff that comes with that; Working with galleries, collectors,

curators, critics, etc. It's a whole economy in itself and getting my head around it hasn't been easy.

NFS This project uses the term 'antennae' as a metaphor to describe those practitioners, thinkers or writers that we each use to help position our place within this new and evolving landscape. I think understanding our contemporary loci has more relevance today than seeking speculations on a possible photographic future, so who are these for you and why do they matter?

MH I'm interested in just about anyone who has something to say about the times we're living in, whether they're an artist, musician, journalist or clairvoyant. Photography isn't the sole medium in crisis, just about everything is in free fall and I'm fascinated by how people in different fields deal with it.

FRANCIS HODGSON

Francis Hodgson is a photography critic for the Financial Times, Professor in the Culture of Photography at the University of Brighton, and the former Head of Photographs at Sotheby's, London. A specialist in photography of many years standing, he is unusual in having worked at a senior level both in the cultural and in the commercial aspects of photography.

Francis was for some years the manager of the print room at The Photographers Gallery in London. He later founded and directed Zwemmer Fine Photographs, a gallery specialising in photography, and has worked with several other galleries.

Francis was also director of photography at Photonica, a major stock image library, where he was responsible for opening up the stock photography market to more artistic photography than had been considered possible. He was also at one time director of content at Eyestorm, the online art dealership. He has acted as representative and agent to photographers, and has been a writer and broadcaster on photography for many years.

UNDERSTANDING OUR VISUAL CULTURE

FH I find myself concerned, as the new evolution of photography blends all sorts of points of views together, that the old photographic culture is beginning to be dissolved.

There is a phrase that I have been using rather a lot, and I hope it resonates with you. I worry about the “Digital Soup”: that, increasingly, people are expected to be adept at the whole Mac culture. It no longer matters so much whether they come from a sound background, a journalism background, a photography background, or what have you. Gradually we are losing each separate chunk of all that as no longer very relevant.

The old crafts of photography, which were anchored in a 150-year-old cultural rooting, have very quickly been dissolved into a shallower digital rooting, which has got a 10-year-old background and which leans much less on previous culture. This comes from the culture of sampling in music 20 years ago. It became possible to say, “I am a practising musician” without any culture in music. That little cultural shift is most important. It is now possible – indeed it is quite common – to be a photographer without being literate in photography. That leads to all sorts of misapprehensions about what it means to archive pictures, publish pictures, distribute pictures, and so on. That is where I thought we should start...

NFS That is perfect. Your column in the Financial Times provides an influential voice on photography, and hopefully will provide an important perspective to NEWFOTOSCAPES. It is true that we should not forget our lineage, but equally we must locate it in a broader context to help us achieve our future potential.

FH Remember, I used to work at Sotheby’s. Central for me, or at least to one aspect of my interest, remains the object itself. I do think that a photograph is something very, very different when it has a physical corporeal actuality. A lot of how a photograph came to be is visible in how it physically is.

At the deep core, I believe that photography is about communication. If you are trying to communicate something

at any serious level, there has got to be a shared cultural... it is not quite 'language'. That is not quite the right word, but let's call it 'language' for the time being. An artist who sends things out into the world, asking people to use all of the resources of their visual culture to make sense of it, but who does not herself put deep visual culture into the output of it, is asking too much of viewers.

My worry, if you like, in that first paragraph that I gave you, is that the very traditional Brassai night-time photographs of the street in Paris are interpretable by people with a shared culture to Brassai. By diving into your own visual culture, you can make sense that he has dived into his culture, and there is a meeting.

Where it is not clear which culture the originator has mined before making an image available, either by un-archiving it or otherwise re-releasing it, whichever modern form we are talking about, then it is impossible for the receiver of that picture to receive it fully.

People are being asked still to use rich and complex resources of a visual culture to unpick images, but the people who are sending them out are not using rich and deep resources of visual culture to offer them up. You get miscommunication built into the systems themselves. That is a bit of a worry. It is a bit alarming.

On the other hand, the old-fashioned version of it was very traditional. It was rather tied to distribution mechanisms. If you read *Picture Post* or *Life* magazine, you expected a certain kind of imagery.

If you saw again a picture you first saw there in a museum 30 years later, it had become a very different thing. We understand that. That is okay. Pictures had that shift, much more than any other medium of communication... There is no context in which a pop song doesn't look like a pop song; But there are contexts in which photographs don't look like the thing they were sent out as. They change much more.

If you pick up a novel by Thackeray and you read it on a train

or you read it in a class, it still has the same basic cultural weight. That is not true of photographs. It is very important that photographs actually change. Even if you only see an excerpted bit of a theatre on YouTube, it still has the platonic idea of the theatre all over it. That is not true of photographs. This great suppleness that digital has offered people, has come at a price. The price is that the context of the photograph, which was so important to how we used, received and read them, is now more slippery than ever.

There are various huge pleasures in that shift, but there are risks and dangers in it, too.

MEDIATION AND ACCEPTORS TO CREATORS

NFS Pleasures, like your recent observations on autochromes?

FH Yes, autochromes have come back into fashion, and the reason they have come back into fashion is that now we are used to looking at photographs on a screen.

The idea of things being backlit is comprehensible to an iPad user in the way that autochromes had not been comprehensible for 100 years. Autochromes were weird. You always saw them in a book and you could not understand why they were magical. Only when you went to the V&A could you see one on a light box and 'get' these things. Now, everybody sees them the way they were meant to be seen.

NFS That article perhaps acts as a reminder of how the object is changed when mediated by the screen. There is a nice collusion of traditions which when they come together they offer up something new?

FH Of course. I hear that and in fact I am inclined to agree that it is on the plus side of the ledger. It used to be that the various contexts that photography reached us in were themselves very familiar tools. It was a magazine, it was a book, it was a poster, or whatever it was, but you knew that the photographs formed a part of the channel whereby pictures reached you, which was a defining part of the job that the pictures were doing.

A picture, which might have great cultural breadth and depth, was only using a bit of that when it was being used in a poster. It was using more of that when it was being used in a magazine. When you are looking at pictures on a tablet, even if you know how to reinvent that former context, the real context remains yours. My delight is that much more responsibility now sticks with the receiver of a photograph, to the point where I am now beginning to argue that the receivers (users, consumers...) of photographs are more important in doing things to them than the photographer². That is an incredible point to reach.

N/S And in terms of doing things, you mean reproducing?

FH More than that. If you like, the dominant tendency for the acceptor of the picture at the moment is the reworking and remining of things which are wrongly called 'archives'. Many of the 'archives' that are mined for great interest were not archived by anybody. They are just piles of pictures. There is no fixed context attached to a picture other than the new one that I give to it when I push it out into the world again. That context is no longer dependent on the tablet, the book or the poster. It is to do with an intellectual cloth that I give with the picture. There are many examples of reattributing pictures to a new context where that becomes more interesting than the former context (or the contexts in the plural) that they had. That is a result of the digital revolution, but it is one which is very poorly understood at the moment. My sense is that if you are a subscriber to the New York Times, the pictures arrive at you, ready for you to turn them into something; whereas, they used to arrive at you with a New York Times imprimatur on them saying, "Here is your picture of the day."

If you go for a walk on a beach and pick up a piece of driftwood, no creator is involved in the pleasure you get from that piece of driftwood. As a receiver, you are your own artist. Equally, of course, there is no expectation of it communicating to you. There has always been an element of that in photography. The most obvious example of that is 'happenstance'. If you found a picture – wherever – which happened to look like your deceased great-grandfather, it would move you in ways that were not in the control of

any photographer. It would move you for reasons that were internal to you. I think that model has become the general model in content in photography. It is no longer much to do with what it was before. Have you seen *Want*: Kasmin's book of postcards, on beggars from around Europe?

NFS As in the Art Dealer?

FH Yes. John Kasmin. The book is a collection of early postcards of beggars, but really put into the context of this famous art dealer with his own quite exceptionally broad visual culture. These things acquire tremendous traction which they never had as post card studies of beggars. That is the new model of message holding. The old idea was that somebody wanted to say something to you, and the new idea is that all pictures come to you equally and you can make something of them if you wish to. That seems to me very, very new. That is digital.

BRANDS AND RARITY?

NFS Are the current shifts affecting perceptions of value within photography?

FH My thoughts are (no doubt like your own) not yet fully formed in that area. I would say this. The old values in photography were essentially, craft values. A picture was valuable because it had a long apprenticeship behind it and it had the kudos of an editor, owner or a distributor putting an imprimatur on it. Those values were cobbled together from things – borrowed from painting, borrowed from ordinary crafts, and borrowed from silversmithing or engraving. That is under threat. If you look, there has been a vast split between the new values ascribed to photographic art and the low values that still remain on photographic trade and commerce.

Superficially, at one and the same time, the Corbis model of a picture, selling many times but for small amounts of money, is competing with a picture allegedly selling very few times but for huge sums. As it happens, I don't think that the latter model is quite true, and this is something which is complex. If you care to hear, my thought is that the art model, where

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we are told that such and such a picture sells for \$1 million or more, is not quite so. The reason it is not so is because it used to be that rarity was the great motor for value in the art world. It is not anymore.

Now, there is a branding phenomenon which has pushed rarity to the side. To be very crude about it, if you look at Warhol's 'Silkscreens', there are only very few purple Elvises. You have a purple Elvis, I have a green Liz and he has a red Queen. Actually, there are really quite a lot of the branded 'Warhol Silkscreens'. The limited edition which was supposed to base its appeal on rarity has been split. There is a limited edition, but there are an unlimited number of variants of that edition.

If you buy a Ferrari and I buy a Ferrari, they purport to be pretty rare compared to Mondeos, but they are not actually rare things. My Ferrari is the same as yours, basically. The rare one, which would be the handcrafted motor car, made by a bloke in a garage on his own, may be a better car than a Ferrari, but you will never get it sold because there is no branding on it. That is what has happened in the art world.

I think there are something fewer than 50 Vermeers in museum collections. Vermeers are really incredibly rare. He did not paint very many pictures. There are hundreds and hundreds of Rineke Dijkstra pictures of teenagers, because even though each one is restricted to 6 or 10 or 15 or whatever in the edition, actually it does not much matter to most owners whether they have one or another. There are few in the edition, but lots in the 'Super Edition'. That is a model which has not been digitised. That is a model which purports to be derived from things we're well used to: the limited supply that existed for editioned bronzes, for example, but re-worked to fit an era in which branding is far more important a motor than rarity.

NFS You mentioned that low values for commerce and trade have remained?

FH The commercial model, the Getty Images model has been digitised. It is really quite difficult now to say there is great value even to a fashion photographer because his client sits over the screen and edits as he goes. Again, it is the receiver

of the pictures who ‘controls’ them, and in a very real sense authors them. In the commercial context, there is a more formal badge: “I am paying for this, so I am the receiver with a title”. The art world still has the old values stuck within it; whereas, the other distribution methods for photography, taking their lead from Flickr, where there is almost no value to things and they are free to be turned into whatever anybody wants to turn them into, show the new values.

It used to be that people worried whether photography was an art form or not. Fine: it won that battle a long time ago and there was no problem identifying that some photographic activities were assuredly artistic in nature. Now, photography is merely content that goes down a number of different channels and only the most traditional channel – which is itself branded through Sotheby’s, Christie’s and the gallery network – still has the old habits attached.

THE SLIPPERINESS OF DIGITAL

NFS Are you comfortable with the pluralities associated with photography?

FH I revel in those pluralities, but I think the difficulty comes when a treatment slips from one to another without it being clear that it has done so. I absolutely love the idea that a picture can be all things to all men, and I note that it is the vindication of 150 years of photography being thought to be marginal, which it clearly is not any more and has not been for some time. But I did like the idea that things were defined by the channel in which they were. I did like the idea that your Brassai on a book cover was different to your Brassai in a museum. Now that these things slip and slide from context so easily and so quickly and with so little signposting, I worry that their very rich communication power is diminished because people have to see “the lowest common denominator” or “the easiest reading”. It all comes back to something which I thought had long gone, and as it does so, photography’s status in each context looks like the junior partner. Photographs are becoming once again dependent on the words that go with them in each context.

Professionally, I am a reader of photographs. I am a specialist reader of photographs. I have spent a long time saying to people: "You don't need words to go with them if only you read them carefully enough." That does not seem to be the case anymore. Much more than I expected, the digital revolution has put words in the forefront and has reduced pictures to a job illustrating whichever concept fits them at any one time. That is a retrograde step that I was not expecting. Your Walker Evans was completely able to stand without a caption, or with only the slightest kind of caption, but everybody who read a Walker Evans 'Subway' picture knew the context, the love and affection for mankind of the photographer, and the slightly sneery curiosity. Everything was in the pictures.

Now, if you look at Mishka Henner reworking things off Google, nothing is just in the pictures. They have to stand with their own explanation. That is a little bit of a regret to me. I suppose the graph that I would draw you, if you don't mind my saying it this way, as it is a bit crude, is to say that through the last 50 years of the 20th century, photography was by far the most important medium of communication that there was. It was far more important than prose, far more important than the cinema. Photography was the shared culture of everybody. Perhaps the only equivalents would have been the other great hybrid media, music and architecture, which everybody was free to understand in the same way.

Photography, of course, has diminished a little bit in importance because it has been pushed out of the way by younger cousins in imaging, of which the late model, cinema, is one, but there are lots of others, including video games. What I did not expect was that as it has come away from the forefront and is less avant-garde, photography has reverted to its 19th century position of constantly needing explanation with it. That is because of this slipperiness of digital. We are no longer able to rely on a photograph being what it is in a context because its context won't be the same as that from which it is being received.

CULTURALLY CONFIDENT MESSAGING

NFS But equally is the photographer not more responsible for

understanding the context of the work that they are making? Previously, the decisions over a contact sheet would've been made by the picture editor in the context of their magazine; whereas now, in this multiple channel scenario, there is not only a changing of relationships with the audience based upon their preferences as receivers but also the channels they tune in to. Therefore the photographers own brand has the potential to become the draw not the magazine?

FH I suppose that a very tiny minority of photographic practice has the kind of articulacy turned towards the subject matter that you are describing. The majority are no longer quite sure what it means to be a 'practising photographer'. The academic world, for example, demands they are now 'researchers'. There is an uncomfortable squeezing together there.

Going back to your principal point, there are huge numbers of people putting out pictures for some kind of communication purpose, through Pinterest, Flickr or Instagram or whatever, who are not in any real sense what we would have once thought of as being 'publishing photographers'. They are just people who have got something to say. They do not conform to the pattern that you have just described. They do not have articulacy about their subject matter. They have a desire for immediacy and they have an urgency to say things and hear things said. They do not have a fully rounded treatment of the subject. I have been writing for some time that we need a new category. The operation of a camera is not necessarily photography. The category has grown wider than most of us have noticed.

NFS How do we deal with that sense of cohesion with photography in that 'attention economy', then?

FH Photography is so broad that it is rather surprising that it has grown its own cultural norms. The phrase that I use a lot is: "Photography is a very ordinary cultural activity. It responds to analysis." We used to think it was not so. People use these very odd words about photographs. They go, "It's great," or "It's crap," but they don't analyse things in the way that we do for a pop song or a movie. The standard response

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to culture is to see how it stands up in an analytical way, even if you are not a scholar. Even if you are just going to the movie with your friends, you come out and have a discussion, which takes for granted that you have a bit of movie culture. That is the analysis. That was not so with photographs years ago.

The power of advertising photography was very largely to do with the way it came under people's skin. They did not know that it was open to analysis. We went through that: late-stage 20th century art- or near-art-photography was very knowing. Practitioners became knowing about the analysis that would be made, and you got the growth of ironical, savvy and fly uses of pictures.

We have reverted, in the digital age, to a vast majority of non-fly usages. There are, of course, practitioners in art schools and derived from art schools who are pursuing that line, but they are a tiny proportion of what has actually been happening in photography, which is the reversal away from culturally confident messaging. For example, I look at thousands and thousands of pictures of an environmental kind to do with sustainable development because of my involvement with the Pictet Prize. The elite professional communicators that I am seeing for the Pictet Prize are certainly using a cultural confidence that their viewers will know what they are talking through the way they talk about it. But in general, digital photography is pushing cultural 'elitism' to one side and reverting to a place where photography was many years ago, in the development of its culture, of being useful as illustration, very rapid, very light, and very thin of the kind of messaging it did possess.

IN SPITE OF THE AUTHENTIC

NFS You feel it is losing its power?

FH Yes, I am seeing that it takes an active effort by a certain kind of practitioner to hold on to that power; whereas what I had expected would happen now, when I was looking forward some years ago, would be that digital would share out that cultural power more widely. I am not finding that it is so.

By the way, we keep using this word ‘digital’ as though somehow the means of manufacture of pictures were solely at issue. It is not, nor just the fact that it is digital transfer. It is the fact that there is a new audience that receives its pictures mainly digitally. It is not: “Digital photography has done this or become that.” It is just that the audience now has digital culture rather than what went before.

It is reminiscent of a strange debate some 30 years ago, called the ‘Authentic Music Debate’. Very loosely, the idea was that you could play Beethoven better if you could get authentic instruments and train people to play them again. Instead of playing a clarinet, you would play a basset horn, a serpent or one of those things. Quite a lot of recordings were made and there was quite a fashion for authentic music. It still goes on, to some extent. The problem, as you will immediately guess, is that authentic music presupposed that the ears of the audience were cleansed of having heard anything since they had heard their Beethoven. Of course, you cannot do that.

Beethoven’s version of a piano was that thing called a ‘fortepiano’. It was a wonderful thing, actually made by Broadwood in London. But a fortepiano sounds weak to anybody who has heard a modern Steinway in a concert hall. Even though you were playing the right thing, and no doubt playing it very well, you could not cleanse the ears of your audience from the sound of a concert Bechstein or a Steinway. That is what is happening with photography. The attempt to hang on to the culture of photography is beginning to look like archaism. It is beginning to look like a self-indulgent hobby, almost, for a certain number of people who are interested in that culture, like me; whereas, with the tremendous blasting forward of rapid dispersal, lightweight, thin-value, quick-dissemination – but also quick-forgetting – the new photography is a bit like what happens in spite of the authentic music debate.

WRITING FOR THE BROADSHEETS

NFS Surely, this is the time for optimism and to delight in the pluralities of photography and see the forthcoming challenges as a series of opportunities and possibilities. It is important

that, as educators, we understand our responsibility to find the relevance and the appropriate spaces to ignite that passion, as you say, in the ‘new life of the light fantastic’⁴.

FH I complete agree with that, but we are working with a very small proportion of the available material, even to get hold of somebody who wants to be educated in the way that you are describing. I am very glad to write sometimes for the Financial Times (FT), it is a huge privilege, but of their readers, only a proportion read that section, and of the proportion who read that, only a proportion of that were concentrating at the time, and of the proportion who were concentrating etc... With the best will in the world, you are looking at tiny numbers of people. I’m not sure how one can measure traction anymore, whether things need to get recirculated on the Internet, or whether on the contrary they have more heft offline.

NFS It is that additional circulation and dialogue enabled by the Internet that is fascinating. Surely, it is not solely the brand of the FT that is the potential draw for new audiences but your voice and ‘brand’?

FH Of course. You used the word. I am, at a very modest level, and at an unsuccessful level, a brand. That brand takes its form in whatever context I appear. The FT, Brighton University, the Pictet Prize or my own blog are all manifestations of the idea that people might be interested in that kind of attitude to photography. I made a speech at the Huis Marseille last year talking about how ‘quality matters’⁵. I was and am still concerned that there are not shared standards of excellence in photography. There is not a shared vocabulary of quality in photography. People don’t know how to agree what’s good. That’s an amazing observation for a mature medium.

There is an interesting groping for standards of excellence by a very small number of people, like some critics, like myself, and some analysts. There has been a spectacular failure of trickle-down in photography. In every other art form that I know anything about, there is plenty of good academic thinking and writing about the thing, and that takes a light form when

it reaches the customers, the consumers, the practitioners and the users. Not in photography.

At an academic level in photography, there is a lot of very interesting stuff being worked out, but that stuff does not reach even professional photographers much when they go about their business. That is why when I started years ago I was so interested in starting to write for broadsheet papers and not for specialist photographic journals. My sense then – and it's still my sense – was that it was not that there was a shortage of cultural thinking of good quality and of a high level out there; it was that somehow the channels by which it reached the people who might put it to use were blocked. People receive photographs without knowing whether they are highly crafted products of a refined culture or whether they are accidental. That is not so in other media.

If you walk around Leicester Square at 10 o'clock at night, there are lots of people discussing films, arm in arm on their way to get a hamburger or the Tube. They may not be scholarly, but they know their places in a shared culture with confident certainty.

At the very minimum, they know what they were watching. Was it a European auteur complicated thing or was it an American car chase thing? I'm not even sure that level of confidence is shared in photography. I often see people using photographs without the faintest idea that they are any kind of cultural artefact at all. They just... are.

NFS The approach you are describing here requires a certain level of patience, concentration and training?

FH I don't see us as training photographers anymore. There is no way that in the 600-odd photography degree courses in this country, with each of them producing 40 people a year on every course... say it's about 24,000 students a year? They are not going to be photographers. What they will be are people with a new understanding of analysis of the principal culture that they have, which is visual. That is really wonderful and that is a really exciting contribution to make to a society.

PHOTOGRAPHY REMAINS A COTTAGE INDUSTRY

NFS Is there an overarching sense that there has been a lack of investment for photography?

FH I think I would draw you a slightly odd picture, which is that in spite of one or two examples, like Getty, most obviously, photography remains a cottage industry. Everything else that you are likely to talk about in the big cultural sphere has been handed over to these monolithic corporations which have very tight control over the marketing and the branding. They have very tight control over distribution because they own the channels. Publishing companies, film companies, TV companies, even things like opera houses, they've all come very much to look like big corporate monoliths. Even universities, of course. There is no such thing in photography. Of course, one has to think carefully about Getty, Corbis and those people, but the way I explain them is to say that I think that they are still amalgamators of lots of different brands. When you buy Getty, you are actually buying Rex Features, Photonica or whatever it is. I don't see that there is yet a Getty house style in the way that there is a BBC house style or a Random House style or an MIT house style...

Photography remains a cottage industry. Add to that what you are describing, which is the tremendous new ability for everybody to make and distribute pictures through easily-available channels, and you have a reversal back to more cottagey, if I can put it that way. Of course, my cynicism kicks in to start saying, "Well, actually, Flickr, YouTube and even iPhones belong to people who control the distribution more than we think they do." Even though you think you are 19 and are sending a message to your friends, actually, you are sending it down channels that are controlled by 'megacorp' in a way that you don't really realise that they are.

NFS Yes, as we saw recently with Snapchat...

FH Exactly. Facebook and the rest are forever being caught doing this.

NFS Which is why it's important that creative producers, as

much as fulfilling their desire to feed the network, are equally aware of the implications of their actions brought about by the policies employed more often than not by the 'free' corporations on the Web.

FH I agree.

MOST IMAGES ARE VALUELESS

NFS What happens if we stop seeking to control the image on the Web, i.e. establishing copyright and consider instead where is the value?

FH You could make an argument which goes this way around: Most images are valueless. There are too many of them, they are sent out in too cavalier a way, and they really are not very interesting things. For an image to acquire value is a judgmental development made by somebody voluntarily, and normally by the receiver nowadays and not by the 'outputter'. The outputter hopes that pictures will be taken seriously, but actually the revolution is that it is now up to the receiver to do that or not.

The locus classicus to see all of this is in Marvin Heiferman's book, which is called 'Photography Changes Everything'⁶. Very brilliantly, Marvin works out that pictures now only mean what the person using them wants them to mean. The fact that a picture might have come from somewhere – say the Smithsonian – before being used, or that it will go elsewhere afterwards, is not the point. It is what it is because somebody uses it to be that. That is an anti-cultural phenomenon if you understand culture as being the valuing of those accretions of meaning and of heredity.

If you like, all culture is historical, and photographs are increasingly divorced from history.

NFS In Fred Ritchin's piece for Marvin's book, he talks about the potential of the photograph to draw together those histories, traces as additional layers of information.

FH Ritchin is very interesting but he is still dealing with that

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minority of actively committed transmitters that I am talking about. The majority of photographic activity has not been volunteered to be cultured in that way. That is our problem. To treat culturally of things which are only dragged to culture by the scruff of the neck is to slow them down tremendously. Actually, the way I think about pictures is really one picture at a time. Does it respond to the analysis I need? Then, does the series respond? Then, does the making of series like that? It is a very slow process.

What I am finding is that pictures are being re-output, and the chain of interest drops away each time. If something was done on Google Images and then some kid at Goldsmiths' puts it out again, and then somebody puts the thing into a book, each time, the first output falls away. That is not the old model of the recycling of images.

It used to be that Man Ray's 'Violon d'Ingres' was much more appreciated when it came in the book with in the background some tale of Man Ray having done it, with some tale of Ingres having it done before, and with some tale of Kiki de Montparnasse being a whore with a heart of gold and all of that stuff. The tale survived each reissuing, so that a picture had some of its own previous history as part of its cultural wealth.

I don't see that so often anymore. You have to go looking for that in words again. It used to be that pictures could be allusive, could cite things, or could refer to things, internally. Indeed, and I am sure you have seen somewhere, I have written about the great dangers of internal captions in pictures⁷. It is a particular thing of my own.

I worry about words in pictures because words are easier to receive than pictures, but that is what is happening with the new, rapid re-dissemination of pictures. What you re-disseminate is an illustration to new words. It is the same picture, but the words are different each time. That is new. In my role as an educator, that is what I am trying to teach people to deal with. If you like, it is a form of institutional cynicism.

Were you to want to write a novel about London, you would

read *Our Mutual Friend* and be able to refer to Dickens. Clearly, some of the weight of Dickens would survive in your new novel. That is the old model in the visual arts, but I don't think it works in photography anymore. Now, what happens is you quote Dickens, you put him in a new context, and you tell us what that new context is. Dickens has fallen away and what you have is a new context, illustrated by the same picture.

That, I do think, is very new.

I am expressing it clumsily, but I hope you see that there is a real cultural shift between things accreting: meanings, allusions, fringe meanings, quotations, references... and the new version, which is where the picture is 'certified good', used to have meaning, and now has good branding of its own, ready for a new use.

AFTER THE BIG BANG DO WE ONLY HAVE CAMERA OPERATORS?

^{NFS} Which is why your voice is important for *NEWFOTOSCAPES*, your own description as a "specialist reader of photographs", very much acknowledges the craft of reception. I do wonder how this sits for the young photo-enthusiast as this is not the world that they know and for many of them this may not be where photography came from for them either?

^{FH} You are absolutely right and I do not disagree with that. We quite rightly describe mine as a specialist profession. I am a reader of pictures, and I am a pretty experienced and good reader of pictures. That is bringing added value to a tiny proportion of the super pictures that are out there. What I do is give examples of that slow-cooking culture, which is nearly 200-years-old, the photographic culture. That itself, of course, has roots in previous visual cultures and also has roots outside photography in anthropology, in Lavatarian physiognomy, for example, and in a wealth of other stuff. I have always loved the way that to be interested in photography is both a licence and an obligation to be interested in anything at all. There is nothing which photography doesn't touch somewhere. Photography absorbed a lot of culture that was not part of itself. Then, there was a Big Bang and photography touched

absolutely everything. There is no discipline that we deal in that is not affected by photography.

In places like medicine, we used to think, rather dimly, that photography was a good way of making memoranda. Very quickly, it became clear that photography was a central diagnostic tool with scanning, X-rays, later scanners... The explosion actually changes the things that it touches. Photography does not arrive in disciplines and just become an extra tool in the toolbox. It profoundly changes anthropology, politics, and pop music... wherever it has landed. They are all hugely changed.

If that is so, the question then becomes: "What is left in the middle after the Big Bang?" Photography used to be a defined activity. There was a bloke with a mahogany and brass tripod doing what we know. It is not any more, and it is not at all clear to me that we are using a word which corresponds to people's perceptions of their practice when we say "photographer".

I have started using expressions like 'camera operator'⁸ to make the distinction. In the movie business, there are camera operators. There are lighting cameramen, who are different, and correspond to what we would call a 'photographer'.

It is a trivial example, but you will see exactly what I mean. The fellow who just ticketed your car while you have been talking to me takes a picture dozens of times a day. He is a professional user of cameras – indeed, his pictures have to quite literally stand up in court – but he is not what we would call a 'photographer'. The same with the estate agent who takes those pictures just before he lies to you about the house that you are going to buy. He takes hundreds of pictures a week, that guy, and they are commercially integral to him but he is not what I call a 'photographer'.

WE HAVE GOT TO A VERY ODD POSITION

NFS Yes. It does boil down to the purpose and the intent when you are taking that picture, the man snapping my car getting clamped is very much an evidential thing. What about

those photographers or people working with the emerging photographic technologies still early in their genesis? It is equally important is that our vision does not become blinkered by the baggage associated by the provenance of the two-dimensional object? With inventions such as the Lytro, light field cameras, which is exploring the scientific nature of light. Conceptually, that is an incredibly different entity. As soon as the receiver can start moving through an image, the ability for the photographer to re-envision new storytelling methods becomes different?

Actually, I think those spaces to explore the potential of what photography can be, become really interesting.

FH Isn't it always true that the analysis and the patient unravelling of how it worked always lagged behind exciting new departures by the daring?

When your new Canon was launched in 1962, it could do things that no photographer yet knew that he wanted to do. Somebody in a lab invented a very fast flash or whatever they did. I don't think there is anything new in the idea that the technologies leave scholarly persons trailing in their wake trying to work out how they do what they do. I am happy with that. That is true in any art form: that there are daring practitioners kicking everything down and that there is the steady craftsmanlike analysis taking place behind, which goes, "Aha, you did that, not that." That is clear enough.

I wish that I thought that the new mass use of photography was daringly kicking things down. I don't think it is. I think we have got to a very odd position.

NFS Did you think that has ever occurred?

FH Yes, I do think for instance that advertising culture in photography very much capitalised on what people's family snaps looked like, for example. They looked like that because they were not very good photographers. I think it used to do that, but I don't think it does any more.

NFS Has technology enabled an increased sophistication in

mass image production? It is interesting that both Kodak and Instagram had that shared desire to eliminate operator failure.

FH I am a bit hesitant. The reason I am is that I think that the Instagram world is not really about communication. It used to be that if you had a Brownie, you were trying to say something to somebody. With Instagram, you are not. You are simply adding something to a verbal message. Instagram goes with short sentences and short words.

NFS Yes, but can the same not be said of the annotation underneath glued photograph in the family album?

FH Modern family albums are very odd. Modern albums are hard drives full of pictures and metadata which nobody knows what to do with, precisely because their words don't sit very easily with them.

I guess I'm saying that all photography, at some level and however non-scholarly, used to be aimed at communication. Now, it does many things which are not really communicative. It marks territory or marks presence. It lists, identifies, and so on. These are not the effort of somebody to persuade or tell or argue. They are qualitatively different. I don't think you entirely agree, but that is the position I have reached.

NFS It may just take some time to comprehend, rightly or wrongly, it may take just that little bit longer. What is really important is that new audiences and producers are invited into this discussion.

FH You are absolutely right that we do need to do these things slowly, but I think I would wager that I could find something interesting to say about any picture at all, and so can you. Doing that does not necessarily elevate that picture from 'non-cultural' to 'cultural'; nor does it elevate the creator from 'non-communicator' to 'communicator'.

NFS Passing on that skill and that ability to read...

FH Is of great, great value. Absolutely, it is.

DEWI LEWIS

Dewi Lewis established his publishing house in 1994.

Internationally known, its authors have included photographers such as Martin Parr, Simon Norfolk, William Klein, Frank Horvat, Paolo Pellegrin, Sergio Larrain and Bruce Gilden. He works in close collaboration with a number of European publishers and is a founding member of The European Publishers Award for Photography, now in its 20th year.

Dewi Lewis began working in the arts in the 1970s. He was the founding Director of Cornerhouse, one of the major UK Centres for Contemporary Visual Arts and Film, which he ran for ten years. In 1987 he established Cornerhouse Publications which achieved recognition internationally for its ambitious and imaginative publishing programme and was a winner of the Sunday Times Award for Small Publisher of the Year.

An Honorary Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society, Dewi Lewis was awarded the Society's inaugural RPS Award for Outstanding Service to Photography in 2009, and in 2012, the Kraszna-Krausz Foundation presented him with an award for Outstanding Service to Photography Publishing.

NEW AUDIENCES AND THE PHOTOBOOK RENAISSANCE

NFS What is really fascinating at this moment is the rejuvenation of the image online and how that in turn is manifesting itself as artefacts and in particular the physical photobook. It isn't a time of print versus digital but more what happens when those things come together. This is an exciting time for you coming into your 20th year as a photobook publisher, what is your perspective on the photobook in this new landscape?

DL I would say that at the moment there is a renaissance of the photobook, very much at the same time, as things have developed in the digital world. I think one of the key things is that aspects such as digital printing have allowed photographers to do short run books, small editions of perhaps 50 or 100 copies. Often those have come from projects that might even have been developed online.

I think there's a real tie-in between the two; I would say digital has expanded the audience and interest in photography. By that I mean essentially online, that the more images, the more projects that are out there, then the more that people seem to be picking up on ideas for new projects.

I think it's all very positive. I don't see any negatives. I don't see any squeeze on publishing in print as a direct result of things happening online.

NFS Do you think the online surge is bringing in new audiences as well as increasing the engagement and level of investment in the photobook then?

DL I think it's very much bringing in new audiences. One of the comparisons – I think it's not dissimilar to the way in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s that there was a great interest in film, in movies. In a strange sort of way photography has almost supplanted that.

Twenty years ago you were supposed to have an awareness of key directors, what was happening, etc., in movies. Now it's

almost as if photography has become something that people are supposed to be aware of. It's a much more central position that it holds in culture generally.

NFS Okay. That's quite fascinating. In the conversation with Francis Hodgson, he talked about his reservations and concerns that these things aren't necessarily pulling together. He's concerned with the... almost the lack of culture, I think in a sense that's taking place in photography with the dominance of digital consumption. Or maybe from the point of view of a publisher you're suggesting there is a greater understanding of the value of both the image and the photobook generally in the context of the photobook?

DL No. I think Francis is right in lots of ways although – I think as a cultural artefact, photography has become much more significant. It's also become much more throwaway. In terms of the broader understanding of what photography can mean, I'm not really sure that that's developed very much.

I would say that people's view on photography is still pretty instant really in the way that they are responding. I mean from conversations I've had with him (Francis), I think one of the things that he's very aware of, and I am as well, is that if you go into most colleges, for example, the awareness of any historical background is pretty slim with a lot of the students. In a way, you tend to think that that's a real negative. But at the same time, I think essentially there's a very new and separate form of photography which has been developing over the last few years. I would still say it's important to have a knowledge of what has gone before. But in many ways the references are of things from other cultural areas in terms of whether it's fashion, music, theatre – it's other experiences. It's not just about relying on photographic heritage. I think there is that change.

OBSOLESCENCE, RECOGNITION, STABILITY AND CHANGE?

NFS Is that where you see the photobook, positioning itself in this digital space fusing experiences into a single commodity? Are the rules changing for the production of photobooks?

DL The rules are certainly changing. I think one of the things with the photobook is that it does provide a line, a route through things. It becomes almost a historical marker. If you look at the work of people like Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, exploring the history of the photobook, then you can follow a line of how photography is developing and changing. That is important.

The great problem with the Web, with the Internet, is the built-in obsolescence in a sense that there's so much out there. We respond to things very quickly. We move on from them very quickly. The photobook gives some stability and certainty to things.

NVS The volumes by Gerry Badger and Martin Parr are fascinating as they provide an opportunity to observe the changes in photography and witness perhaps the trends in photobook publishing. In this space the publishers are the gateholders but in the self-publishing arena this control is flipped. You've talked previously about the dangers of self-publishing, the ease of producing your books online, perhaps means books come into reality which aren't quite ready for production. I think there is an interesting dynamic between the books that traditionally aren't quite ready to be made, but the ability of pushing and exploring different ideas, without having to go through the establishment, frees the photobook from the commercial reality – it exists as a commodity doesn't it?

DL Yes. I think there are a few elements in that. One, and something I always say to younger photographers, is that their great, great grandchildren can go along to the British library and ask for a copy of that book in 100 or 200 years time, at least in theory.

That actually means that when you're making a book, you're doing something which has an immense longevity to it. As a photographer, wouldn't you want it to be something that those great, great grandchildren would be proud of when they look at it in 200 years time?

There's that element that the true photobook should really be

something which is a culmination of a lot of thought, a lot of time, a lot of consideration.

The big problem about it is cost. In many ways it becomes a financial problem, so that those photographers who have access to money can do as many books as they want. They can keep producing small print runs, small editions. Those photographers who are harder pressed financially can only work on the Internet. They can't afford the thousands of pounds that would be needed to put every new project into print form.

I do think it is valuable to see almost instant books, to see something that's coming through very much as a concept, as an idea, as something which is almost throwaway.

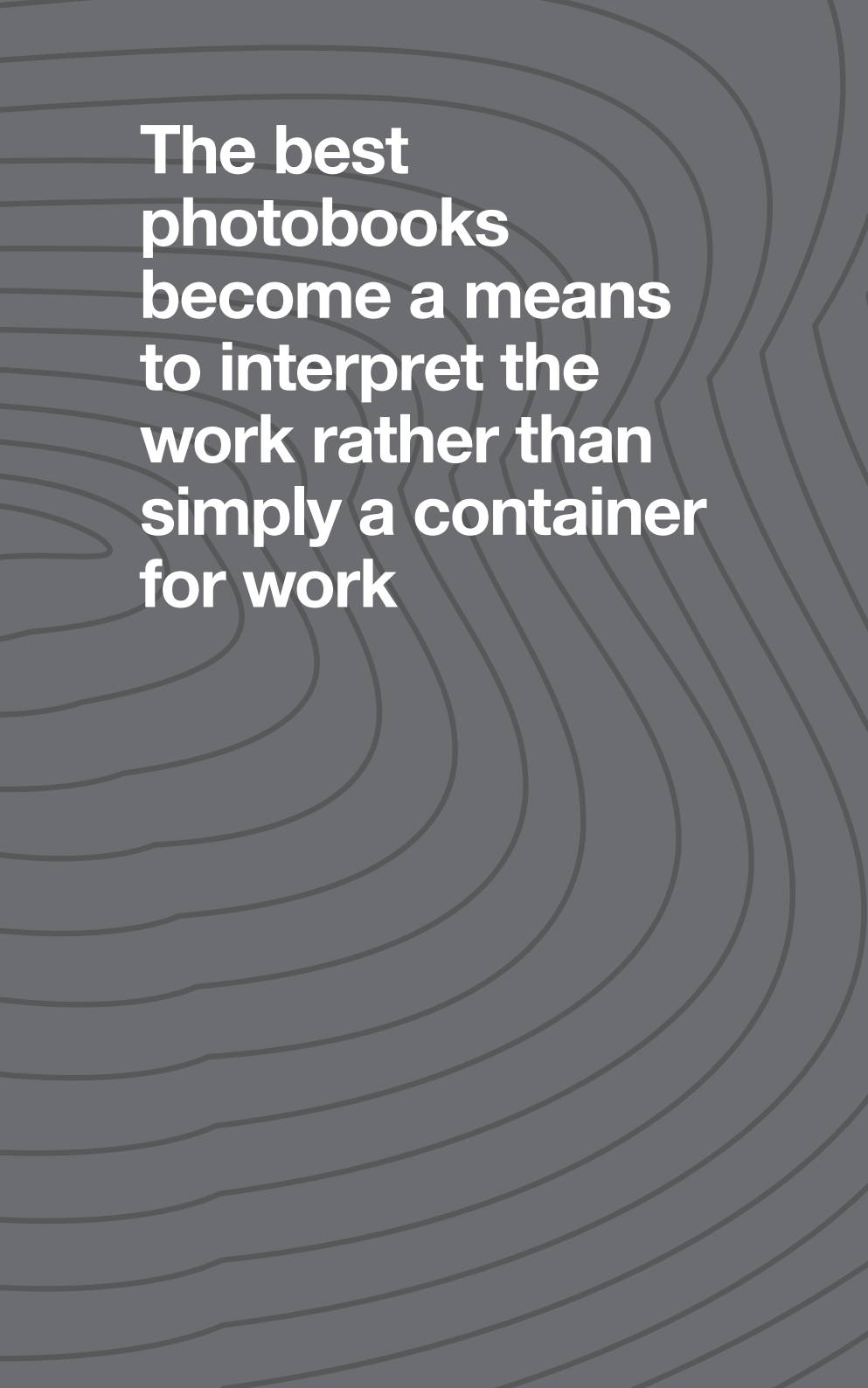
I suppose the other thing is that the book has for a long time been effectively a portable portfolio. It's something you can send around the world. You can get your work seen by curators and others far more easily than going off to meet people or showing them your proper portfolio. Those who have the advantage of having things in print have an advantage in terms of getting exhibitions.

It all goes towards creating a strength for those photographers who have that opportunity. It's not as democratic in that sense.

BEYOND PRODUCTION: THE PHOTOBOOK AS A COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITY

NFS Equally, it is the recognition of the relationship that the photographer has with a particular publisher. Fundamentally, as much as the potential to have work shown in galleries, surely there should be the acknowledgement of the craft in the edit, construction of the narrative that you're exploring that becomes a recognised entity in terms of the book as the product of that process.

DL Yes, definitely. The book is also a collaboration. I think the role of publisher is often misunderstood. It's often seen as just someone who puts a photographer's work out into the marketplace. For me, it's considerably more.



**The best
photobooks
become a means
to interpret the
work rather than
simply a container
for work**

I think our role is very much challenging the work. It's clearly working on the edit. It's trying to give it a design concept that feels right for that body of work. It's a number of those things. Actually, a photographer who self-publishes will often be working with a group of people. The best books involve a real relationship between a number of people, not just the photographer doing it by himself or herself. Sadly, a lot of designers are not really recognised for the input that they make into a book project.

I think the credibility that you can get from having a book can be significant, I don't doubt that. But I think again it's actually ultimately down to the photographers themselves. If you give five photographers the opportunity to have a book, one of them will use it in a different way to the others. One will be very proactive in getting the work out there, meeting people, persuading an audience to be interested in the book, etc. At least one of those five will sit back and do nothing. It's not just a matter of having the book, it's actually then thinking about what they do with it and how they use it properly.

NFS It becomes a vehicle for something?

DL It becomes a vehicle, yes.

NFS We have talked about how a photobook has become something different and now has different opportunities associated to it, but how do those behaviours associate within the digitally social environment? Are the reading habits of a technologically driven audience impacting on the construction of the narrative of the books that you're producing as well?

DL I'm not convinced they do really. I think in a sense, the way that the book has moved over the last 5 to 10 years is that the book has become essentially much more an object, an art object. The focus has really been on creating a tangible artefact – this is something that people seem very concerned about.

If you look at recent designs you'll have lots of inserts in a book, the placing of images in strange relationships, so some might be on the side and some landscapes might be effectively printed the wrong way around so you're turning and moving

the book. You'll have objects inside. You'll have techniques like embossing and inserting different papers, all those things. It's very much the development of the book as object, rather simply the book as content.

NFS So that would seem to suggest that books are going beyond simple production values? In Michael Mack's commentary for TIME's Best Photobooks of 2013 he states we're, "at a time when photobooks are overloaded with diverting tricks."

DL Exactly.

NFS Fundamentally, it is about understanding the potential of the photobook form which is a piece of technology in its own right. Which today one would expect of the image on the screen, requires active engagement from its audience in order to convey its message.

DL That's the ideal, when it works. That's certainly the reason you would approach things in that way, thinking about it as the object and having various devices inside. But I think Michael is absolutely right, that there's been an increasing move towards "trickery" in his terms.

But as I say, I think the best photobooks become a means to interpret the work rather than simply a container for work.

COMMERCIAL REALITIES AND THE SCREEN EXPERIENCE

NFS Yes, absolutely. I suppose the question then really is how much the commercial viability of a photobook informs the decision around freeing a narrative from those conventions for you then?

DL Right. That's a very interesting point because there is a real difference between a book which is produced essentially as an art object and a book which has to work within a harsh commercial environment.

One is that the reason that most books look the same in the larger commercial bookshops is because they have to survive certain things. They'll get moved around, bashed and severely handled.

All the commercial bookshops work on the basis of sale or return, damaged books will be returned to the publisher. The publisher is supposed to fully reimburse the bookshop. If you're looking at a design concept of a book and you feel that it's physically vulnerable in any sort of way, as a commercial publisher you have to be very nervous.

If you're a photographer doing something where you're producing perhaps 100 copies and they're all going to go to specialist shops, then you can be much more relaxed about that. There is a difference; commercial rules don't apply in quite the same way in terms of the physicality of books.

NFS Is that the space where multi-platform outputs or print-on-demand can offer a hybrid opportunity? Can these processes still deliver a treasured object?

DL Print-on-demand, I think, is still so much in its infancy. The quality of digital printing is considerably better than it was – the Indigo presses can produce some very good work – but rarely are they as good as proper offset printing. The on demand facilities that are available in various book shops for text books and maps, etc. can't cope with the demands of imagery properly. We're still in very early days there.

I think one of the reasons that books have become so object led is almost a reaction against this on demand approach. The books almost become personalised. Many photographers will do things where, if they're doing a small edition, they'll perhaps try and individualise each copy of the 100 print run – not simply by signing but perhaps by some sort of differentiation on the cover, perhaps doing a handprint of some sort. They're trying to create a difference.

NFS It is becoming clearer that the physical artefact and digital publication aren't in opposition to one another, they're...

DL They are very complimentary to each other. I think the digital book, is again something very much in its infancy. I still think that the designers who will really solve how to make fascinating e-books are probably in their late teens, probably just about to go to college and will surprise us in five years time.

At the moment I still think we've got designers who are trying to adapt their skills, their techniques into the digital world. I don't come across many who really start from that digital point of view, from the e-book point of view. When they do it will be fascinating.

N/S True, especially with the move away from terms such as interactivity or multimedia, to 'experience' and 'touch'. We now have small and medium touch devices where physical interaction is enabled by a gesture through a screen.

I think you're absolutely right, we're only a few years in to that type of technology becoming as large scale as it has. But there is the sense that you clearly see those things will exist alongside each other and perhaps provide a different interpretation of that same information.

DL I think the great problem – I mean if you look at the iPad for example and you look at the books that are being produced for that, there's a real problem in terms of converting existing print books to iBook's. If, for example, you're working on a large format book where you have a double page spread which involves a number of images, then once that's reduced down in size to the iPad, you're not seeing enough of the detail to make that double page properly work.

There are all sorts of tricks and techniques that you use in terms of the sequencing of the book. You may be trying to create echoes from one page through to a page which is five or six further on. That's very hard to replicate on the iPad. You can't easily close half a dozen pages together and look at what was before and what's after it, you have to scroll through. You get a visual background noise when you're scrolling through. There are all sorts of techniques that you'll use in the book form that you can't adapt into the iBook form.

I think printed books will be around for a long time. It's not that people will stop wanting to buy them. The problems are going to come because – will there be enough commercial printing out there?

I WANT PEOPLE TO SEE THE WORK

NFS Given the multiplicity of photo publishing, do you think the role and status of the photobook is changing then?

DL It's much more subject to fashion. It's much more throwaway. It's going to become increasingly like that with photobooks, that they're going to come out, they're going to get attention for some months and then they'll totally disappear.

Some will be revered and feature in books such as Martin (Parr) and Gerry's (Badger), but a lot will simply be turned into recycled paper. I can certainly see that happening. I think the role of the book has also changed in that, certainly with younger photographers they don't see it in terms of longevity that I was talking about before. They do see it as something which is almost a calling card, something that they'll work on for frequently a very short time and then move on to something else.

But I still hanker for books which I want to look at in 10 years time. I'm torn between both, really. I do see a value in the quick, the instant, the throwaway, but I wouldn't want to be just doing that.

NFS But the hybridity of the photobook in the digital landscape means that it can be inherently iterative. It doesn't necessarily have to conclude instead it remains fluid, constantly in motion.

This perspective seems to be something that you are touching upon with 'The Reluctant Father'¹ project?

DL In a sense 'The Reluctant Father' is 'open' on the Web. We have taken the view that there is a real difference between the experience on screen and the experience of the book. Therefore it's fighting the fear that if you put everything out there in the public arena, then that will mean that no one will buy the physical object.

The website features everything in the book, it's in a slightly different form really to fit the medium. Then it opens up to

allow people to comment, to contribute their thoughts and ideas about it. In that sense it has a collaborative element to it.

N/S Is that a rare thing for a publisher to be open and interested in different approaches?

DL It is interesting, I would say just about every publishing contract would stop a photographer reusing that work in any extensive way without the publishers permission. For any given book we'd be concerned if the photographer wanted to use a third of it in another book. If they wanted to use half of it on a website, we'd also be concerned. So yes, it is a departure in this way.

N/S Would you say it is that desire to find new and different ways to do things that motivates you still?

DL I suppose it's a mix of things. At its base it's probably boredom. It's actually very boring to do the same thing. If you read about or look at various new and different things they often become interesting to you.

I've been looking at doing e-books for round about a year or so, we'll be starting that this year. I've gone full circle on other things. At Cornerhouse I was involved in running galleries then I decided, "No, I don't enjoy that anymore – I want to focus on other things". Now I would rather like to be running a gallery.

N/S Would you approach that differently now?

DL I've always started from the basis that the reason I'm publishing photobooks is that I want people to see the work. Essentially, I suppose a democratic approach really.

I've never wanted to produce 100 copies of a book at £1,000 and just have 100 people have access to the work. I'd much rather have lower priced books and more people seeing them. These days it's a balance – there are lower numbers produced for most books but there are more books being produced. It is hard to get out to the audience that we'd like to.

We will produce limited editions and special editions to help finance things but it doesn't really appeal. Again, if I was running a gallery I would want to be doing it to get an audience in, not to sell prints at extremely high prices.

A NEW ERA FOR THE SCREEN-BASED PHOTOBOOK

NFS The e-book development will be in addition to the print?

DL Yes, initially it's relatively straightforward. It will look at our backlist of titles, things that we believe should be available and things that are out of print. But also some new titles that we think will work very well as e-books.

The thing I'm grappling with at the moment is that there's no way that I would expect to pay the equivalent of a physical book price for an e-book. Yet lots of e-books are being sold at these very high prices. I actually want to be able to price them at really quite low figures.

The ideal would be the same pricing as Angry Birds. It would be great if you could do things at 69p. The reality is we're probably going to be able to do things around about the £4.99 mark, something like that, around about £5. But I want to make them accessible. I want people to take a risk on things.

I'll also take the view that as an e-book buyer you don't really want to make a big financial investment in them because again, it's the longevity question. You're not going to be looking at them regularly in the way that you might a physical book. I can't imagine that if I bought an e-book today, that in 20 years' time I'd track it down off a hard drive and look at it again.

NFS So you could say you see it as the perfect opportunity to capitalise upon the potential of these new ecologies, exploring new narratives and work with a new breed of photographers?

DL Yes, I think it's all of those things. Firstly it certainly opens up the possibility of doing things with less risk. There are projects which you think are worth doing but the cost of putting them into print is just impossible. There are projects

where you feel they need extra layers of information. Of course, the e-book is ideal for that.

That's particularly true when you're looking at reportage-based projects, where you want people to have the opportunity to see those links out from the project to the greater world. The problematic area still seems to me to be those quieter photobooks where essentially it's really about the image. Books that you could compare to poetry I suppose, quiet, calm, where it makes no sense to have external links, where it's about the aesthetics and placement of the image on the page. Those I still can't see how they work as e-books.

NFS Is there a concern for the traditional print-based photobook in the future though?

DL No, I think printed books will be around for a long time. It's not that people will stop wanting to buy them.

The problems are going to come because – will there be enough commercial printing out there? Will the commercial printers be able to survive on reduced numbers, reduced numbers of books being produced, etc.? What will happen to the brochures and catalogues that commercial organisations print now? If they stop printing them, where will the printers get the work which allows them to do the books? It's that end that I think has the problems, not the finding of customers for printed books.

NFS Recently, publishing has seen some major shifts, disrupting the status quo of power for the publisher and associated gatekeepers in favour of today's informed consumer.

DL There are major shifts I suppose. Amazon certainly was really important. I can't see that we would still be publishing today if Amazon didn't exist. It's partly because the major book stores who, until very recently, had quite a stranglehold on the whole publishing industry.

They were never really that interested in visual books, they still aren't – you'll only ever find a very small selection of photobooks.

**The newcomers'
photobook,
the first time
photographer, is
not going to be
seen and therefore
no one is going to
buy it. I fear new
work is going to be
really marginalised**

But what's happened in the last few years is that with the growth of the photobook, you've also had increasing numbers of small outlets, specialist outlets, and specialist online booksellers. Not just Amazon but people, the Photo Book Store in the UK, Beyond Words, a number of people like that who have their own small audiences, their small group of customers but manage to work to very high standards of customer service, who are very well informed about things.

We now sell a lot of books through those smaller suppliers. That's been a big shift. But distribution has always been a problem and it's a problem for any publisher, large or small. We all feel that distribution is not good enough – but I can't see any resolution to it.

SLOW DOWN, TRULY BELIEVE AND EXPERIENCE

N/S The photobook today increasingly seems to have become part of the process for photography as much as an end product. It would be wrong to say that self-publishing is something that's only happened as a result of the new landscape and its associated tools. But the independent photobook scene with specialist shops and online communities certainly seems to have increased the presence and audience via a combination of both live and digital events.

DL I know. That's definitely true. The self-publishing route, as you say, is not new. Martin Parr, Paul Graham, many photographers, their first books were self-published. I think the key difference now is that generally the print runs are much lower than they historically were.

But set against that, you can produce a book where you may only sell 400 or 500 copies but you can almost guarantee that considerably more people will know about it. That's through the online networks, people see the book, they'll talk about it. They may not buy it but they're aware of the book, of the photographers work. They'll see reviews about it.

When I started publishing photography, getting reviews of photobooks was almost impossible. There was no online system then. In the UK the national press didn't review

any photography books so you were really just down to the handful of magazines. Now there are blog sites, there are just so many ways that you can get information about a book out there. It doesn't mean you'll sell more, but it does mean that people will know about it.

NFS So how can we best help the upcoming image-maker or people who have that desire to understand, engage and capitalise upon the opportunities for publishing in the new landscape?

DL I wish I really knew that, I think the key is preparation, even though we're saying, "Yes, it's fine to publish work in progress, to get it out there quickly," but, I think one of the key things to say is to get them to slow down, to actually get them to find a project that they really believe in.

The big problem is that so many feel they've got to do something quickly so they grab at anything, even whether it means something to them or not. You get a sense very quickly from talking to a photographer or looking at their work whether they believe in what they've done.

There are some projects done by young photographers which are extraordinary and have enormous depth, but most tend to be a bit throwaway and really they need to spend time.

I think of photographers like Tom Wood and his book 'All Zones Off Peak'² that took 15 years of work. I'm not suggesting photographers wait that long, but I do suggest they take a bit longer in working through a project.

NFS I remember being in awe of Tom's dedication, but if I remember correctly he also sought to increase engagement through exhibitions as the body of work evolved? Which would seem to mirror the approach of contemporary photographer's such as Rob Hornstra with his 'Sochi'³ project. Creating an assemblage of experiences through photography and using the Web to amplify that message.

DL Sure. I think Rob is an interesting example. I think you have to appreciate that he's already a well-established

photographer who's done some great projects. With the 'Sochi' project he's feeding out, releasing elements of it over time. That's partly a strategy to help with fundraising and all sorts of things. But I think that's absolutely right, I don't have any problems with that. Photographers have done that for a long time.

I just think the problem really is there's no reason why work can't get out there quickly. There's no reason why a project can't be really very small. Some projects might be six images, photographers shouldn't be afraid of that. They shouldn't try and overblow something that hasn't got substance. But I think the key thing is, it's about finding your subject.

NFS It is also about working with the form itself, whether it be a book, an exhibition or a website. In each of these strands the photographer needs to consider both the subject matter and the experience as combined elements that will unfold and unravel revealing the narrative of the project.

DL I think that's a very good point actually, thinking about the format for everything. For me there are too many examples of photographers who are thinking in terms of their book, their website, everything that they do, their exhibitions, in the same way.

I think actually the hardest thing to work on is the Web. The hardest way to present your work interestingly is there. I think that photographers today have to be multi-skilled. They have to be thinking in terms of, not just the images they're taking or why they're taking them, but how they want them then to be used. Often there's not enough thought being given to that.

CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND CRITICALLY STIMULATED

NFS A common factor with some of these ideas, seems to be a lack of self-criticism within contemporary photographers, as you're saying, patience...

DL I think that self-criticism is so central and sometimes so missing. You don't want people to lack confidence in their

work, but equally you want them to examine it from every possible perspective and really decide whether or not what they're doing is working.

It goes back to what we were talking about with Francis Hodgson's comments about a cultural context. Sometimes there are younger photographers who are replicating the work of people before them without being aware of it. They can be wasting an awful lot of time and sometimes they need that redirection.

NFS What stimulates and drives you to plough new avenues in this evolving and new photographic terrain?

DL Currently they're not so different to what they've always been really. It is trying to see as much work as possible. Then actually trying things out and really working through ideas. It really is a mix of going out to see things and talking to people. The networking thing is so critical, it's essentially the experience of it. It's not about expecting any tangible benefit. I think that's one of the things that I would say to anyone really, that when you approach it simply from what's the benefit for you then it tends not to work.

Again, one of the things, it might be a negative for photographers, but they shouldn't try and work out a commercial project. They should work out a project that they believe in, that's of interest to them and that they feel could sustain that interest for a few years.

But in terms of influences, my influences are very much looking at what other people are producing. I look at Steidl books, Mack books and Here Press⁴ at the moment are doing some very interesting things. It's a mix of things like that.

NFS How is the landscape of the photobook changing? Has there been an impact with the rise of independent publishers like Harry Hardie with Here Press?

DL The first shift really was 20 years ago, when it became possible for smaller publishers and individuals to get involved in publishing.

Once the new digital world came into effect really – then costs came down, the pace changed and all sorts of possibilities opened up. You started to see small publishers. Small publishers do things differently to big mainstream publishers. Our decisions are made by myself and by Caroline. We don't have to present things to a committee that looks at sales, statistics and the rest. Therefore you naturally produce different things as a result.

There are more people doing things. What you do tend to find is that those publishers, like Here Press, currently doing relatively small editions, relatively thin volumes initially, as they evolve, produce bigger and more substantial books over time.

It's very rare that publishers stay at the same level. It's not that one is better than the other, it's basically that they get more ambitious and become financially more stable and are more aware of distribution networks.

NFS What will this mean for the new generation of image-makers and audiences of photography?

DL As we touched upon earlier I don't believe the model for the large bookshop chains is sustainable. The market growth of the independent store, following a similar path to the specialist record shops, means there will be a real shift in that retail side of things. There will probably be no more than six or eight specialist photobook shops in the UK. This combined with the dominance of online retailers such as Amazon means that when the likes of Simon Norfolk or Martin Parr bring out a new photobook people are going to buy it – people know what to expect. However, the newcomers' photobook, the first time photographer, is not going to be seen and therefore no one is going to buy it. I fear new work is going to be really marginalised.

STEPHEN MAYES

For over twenty-five years, **Stephen Mayes** has managed the work and careers of top-level photographers and artists in areas as diverse as art, fashion, photojournalism and commercial photography. As creative director, CEO and ambassador for the medium of photography, he has written successful business plans and reshaped operations for American, Asian and European imaging companies.

Stephen was Creative Director of eyestorm.com, working with artists such as Damien Hirst, Ed Ruscha, Richard Misrach. As Director of the Image Archive with Art + Commerce, he represented the archives of Robert Mapplethorpe, Steven Meisel, David LaChapelle and others. Stephen was part of the founding management team of Getty Images and his work as SVP and Group Creative Director helped to launch the company as the world's commercially most successful image supplier. He has deep experience in world-shaping photojournalism as Director of Network Photographers in London and, most recently, as CEO of VII in New York, both high-profile co-operatives of leading photojournalists. From 2004 to 2012 he took an annual assignment as Secretary to the World Press Photo competition in Amsterdam.

Often described as a "futurist" Stephen has broadcast, taught and written extensively about the ethics and practice of photography.

WHERE THE VALUE IS

NFS Essentially, the premise of these NEWFOTOSCAPES 'encounters' is to speak to people whom I feel in many ways have a particular role and a particular opinion and voice on what's taking place today in photography. In your case, very much as a leading figure and somebody who very clearly has compassion and belief in terms of what should be happening.

I wanted to touch upon your recent concept of the cell phone as game changer alongside the breadth of your experiences. Because I think that feels like a really important foundation for how you maybe think, engage and are able to put ideas out there.

But equally, I'm really interested in this idea of value of the image and of photography. Because I think often really interesting people, and potentially some of the things we've initiated at Coventry, can engage in the concepts and debates and all the exciting stuff. But the nuts and bolts have got to come back to some sense of commerciality and value within the origin, and our role and purpose as photographers.

SM Can we start on value?

NFS Yes, sure.

SM Because I actually think that's really key. I think it's very astute to pick up on that. On the one hand, we can bemoan the commercialisation of everything. Even the art world is so commercialised. To my mind, having worked in the art world to some extent, I find it actually even more commercial than advertising. It's so much about creating this monetary return on imagery.

But what I find fascinating about value is that it's a way of measuring the effectiveness of communication. If people are going to give you money, you're connected. You've given the viewer something they can use. So I've always found value to be incredibly interesting.

I've spent a lot of time in the stock industry, where the real

money is. Look at Getty with their billion dollar turnover, most of which comes from selling these incredibly bland images. Yet it has such a high value, as opposed to someone like Simon Norfolk producing these beautifully, conceptually considered, well-executed images. It's just extraordinary. There's a lot to learn from that. Where the value is tells you a lot about what's happening with the social consumption of imagery and what it means.

So I think value is a really key area. The other fascinating thing about value is that we need to reassess where the value is. So up until this point, photographers and agencies and libraries have always considered the value to be in the picture. You license a picture, pay this much money for it and that's the value of it.

I spent a lot of time at VII¹ re-thinking value, because I went into VII at a time of great decline in the industry. The editorial and photojournalism industry was in trouble and continues to be in trouble as prices fall. Yet the value of the imagery was obviously very high. To have people of that degree of integrity and skill dedicating lives and health to bring back these images is plainly high value, and yet people weren't paying for it.

What I did with VII was to reassess what their value is. I said, "Actually, your value is integrity. The point is that you're credible and people believe you. That's what people will pay for; not the images." So making the imagery doesn't cease, but the imagery becomes less important as a measure of value than some of the other attributes that you bring to the image.

NFS I think this is where it really feels like, when you're talking about the image of the 21st century... The idea of the image coming of age, as you talked about at the Nikon symposium². So are you feeling that, with that transition from the rarity and control, how do you see the value proposition of a photographer?

SM I think currently that's what's happening: value is moving from the photograph to the photographer. The value of an image is not the finished object but what the photographer brings to the process. It's very hard to say where that will be

in five years' time. But my feeling at the moment is... It's different in different sectors. In stock, it is truly a commodity; it's really interesting. I want to talk about stock in a minute, because it's been hugely overlooked and yet it's incredibly significant.

Other than stock, I think authorship becomes incredibly important. So you look at how people are consuming imagery. The vast bulk of it of course is in social media, where people consume information on the basis of who's telling you something rather than on the intrinsic value of the information. We "follow" people because we trust them and it's the same with photography. It's less about the image; it's who it's coming from. A picture of breakfast is a picture of breakfast, but, "Oh, that's your breakfast? I'm interested." It's a very basic way of expressing it.

At a higher level, if James Nachtwey³ comes back with a photograph from the Congo, it's going to have a higher value than Jo Shmo's picture from the Congo. Partly on aesthetic grounds, but also because of his credibility, it's that we know this figure, we know who he is. Nachtwey's a big man and we believe him. Whereas Jo Shmo – was that an accident; did he set that up? We just don't know.

INTRODUCE OURSELVES TO NEW AUDIENCES

^{NFS} Which is where it opens up interesting notions of the icon. In other words, we could choose quite well known and established photographers who now through social media potentially have quite a large following. But equally may not. Because we talk, I think, about mainstream media, and challenging/questioning newspapers, magazines, television and broadcast. But I think even inside photography we have our icons that are being challenged and questioned about why their image is more important.

SM In point of fact, Nachtwey's a really interesting example. I reference him quite a lot, because in many ways he is in exactly the same position as a first year student in your University at Coventry. He's also having to invent himself all over again and introduce himself to an audience who's never heard of him.

So when I say Nachtwey's got a reputation, he's got a reputation in a very small circle of print media aficionados. Which frankly is people over 50, and in the scale of things is this really so important? If Nachtwey wants to be relevant, he actually has exactly the same problem as anybody else. We're all on this starting line of having to introduce ourselves to new audiences. So a lot of people with the reputations are people that you and I have never heard of, because we don't follow those Instagram feeds, Tumblr or whatever.

I'm doing this whole thing at the moment of trying to find all these people who have half a million followers. It's really interesting; there are actually quite a lot of them. That actually becomes their value. Their value becomes the number of people who pay attention to what they're saying.

We see this a lot, for example, in fashion. Where they're using social media very, very effectively. Of course because it's consumer product and if you show up in a fashion context with half a million followers who are all potential buyers of handbags and shoes, you've got a high value. It doesn't really matter how good your pictures are; there's that other element. These are people we've never heard of.

^{NFS} The re-positioning of photographers and photography is a key principle for this project, which raises questions on this sense of scale and social media. In a recent post by David Campbell, he talks about abundance and the image flood⁴. This has become an overused term in this new landscape, we need something quite different. I remember last year I wrote something for the Times supplement that worked with this idea of the burgeoning new landscape, but unfortunately, I did marry it with the analogy of experiencing a thunderstorm and how should we react and respond.

But social media has that same thing, because I think companies went through this phase where "We have to be on social media to be able to sell." I think this is David's point about the image flood; the image flood isn't an image flood directly into your house. It's because you choose and you filter, you select.

I also remember Richard Stacey's post⁵ on the dangerous concepts of scale and social media. He suggests that social media is inherently personal and conversational. So in other words, actually it works very well on small groups, rather than this large scale.

SM I think it depends so much how it's done. If a TV commercial speaks to your need, you connect with it. The fact it's been seen by 8 million people at the same time is irrelevant. By the same token, I think social media can work in the same way.

There are different levels of it. If I want to know what my brother's up to then there are five of us who are interested. But if my brother as a musician is giving personal insights into his work and what he's performing and how his work is developing, he can have a very personal relationship with a large number of people. But you're right; scalability is an issue.

PLACING YOURSELF IN SOCIETY

NRS But being able to access that person from anywhere is a game changer though. A key goal, having been involved in education for the last 18 years, has been to get students seeing that photographer that they aspire to, who's work they love, as a person.

I think the great thing about the connected nature of social media and those photographers who are embracing it, is the ability to invite your audience into your process and get them to understand your approach, your way of working. So merging, that relationship of the social into the professional I think becomes a really powerful mechanism now that wasn't there previously.

SM One of the people I follow is a guy called Jake Levine who is the General Manager of Digg.com. As you probably know, Digg is a news website where the front page is made by the readers. The more votes a story gets, the higher up it goes and it goes to the front page. So it's one of these user driven things. He talks about their research into why people consume news on social media. People say, "It's because I want to be

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images**

informed; I want to know what's happening, etc." He kept drilling down and the end of the day, it always comes back to one core reason why people consume news, which is about placing yourself in society." I thought that's such an amazing insight.

A lot of it is about association, about positioning ourselves. It's about who do we talk to, who do we listen to? It's all about positioning ourselves and affirming our place in society.

I think that's where social media is so powerful; effectively it's a psychological tool more than an informational tool. To me, that is why social media is so incredibly powerful. It hasn't created anything; it's tapped into a very, very deep need that we always have.

NFS That's true, it is that idea, I think, of where the image supplants the voice. The reason we're getting more images isn't necessarily about photography in the traditional sense of communication, a way of building up a character, a personality and talking with one another.

SM It's phenomenal and fantastic. What I love is the degree of visual literacy that we now live with. A lot of it, to be honest, I attribute to advertising, which has always been a metaphorical form of communication.

Advertisers never actually show you what the product looks like; they show you what it feels like. They talk about how you want to relate to the product. Nobody wants to actually see what it looks like, because it's got a dent and it's flawed and it's got a bit of dirt...

Advertising has absolutely educated us in conceptual and metaphorical visual communication. I think that's bred an incredibly sophisticated audience.

THE FLUID IMAGE

NFS It's your point about images becoming streams⁶. Because in a sense we don't seek to deconstruct an image perhaps as we used to around advertising photography, or people's literacy

through an image, or through broader digital ideas. It's where it becomes a stream, because... it becomes something more, becomes something different. One of the problems I see within photography education is that we're still trying to solely teach people the semiotics of the fixed image which surely, raises the relevance of that now.

SM I think that's exactly right. I was talking to somebody yesterday who was very stressed about history, saying, "What happens to all these pictures? How do we archive them?" My question was, "Why?" Why would you archive them? The point that then came out of that was how then do we identify important pictures?

Having worked with so many photographers over the years, one of the things I've learnt is that what makes an important picture comes back to the value question. When people react to it, photographers think it's an important picture. So I've poured over edit boxes and light boxes; "Should it be this one or that one?" All these details. But as soon as the image appears on the cover of Time magazine, that's it, it's cemented. This is my best picture.

So, in other words, I think we do live with this slightly specious belief that there is such a thing as an important image and such a thing as an unimportant image. I think Sontag writes about this in 'Regarding the Pain of Others'. That a picture, of course, has no impact whatsoever, until it's adopted by a political cause or a social movement.

So the image itself is just an image. It's only when it's applied that it develops significance. That, I think, hasn't really changed. Now we might call it a meme rather than an icon, but people will select what they think is important. These images will surface; they will perform a function.

What that means historically I'm less concerned about. I'm not a historian... Once it's done, it's done. I'm the wrong person to talk to about that.

NFS But it does get us thinking about what a photographer is. Essentially, I think, as you have alluded to, we will still have

photographers who wish to make photographs, perhaps as art objects, to be displayed on a wall. But I think the thing that's really fascinating is we now have more options to explore. Freeing us from the predetermined routes such as the art photographer or more commercial photographer or...

ARGUING WITH FRED

SM I have this argument with Fred Ritchin⁷. Are you familiar with Fred? We agree on a lot of stuff, but we disagree on the importance of the front page. He's distressed by the absence of a front page in today's online environment, because he sees it as the place where society comes together and looks at an important issue of shared interest.

My argument with that is that the problem with the front page is it's incredibly exclusive. Because for all the gas attacks in Syria, who's looking at the situation on the border of Burma and the people being persecuted there? Who's looking at the 5 million people who've died in Congo in the last 10 years? So the notion of the front page is very appealing, but I find also very dangerous.

I find what happens now is that attention does spread. Society in a sense does lose its focus. But because we select – coming back to what you were saying about we choose our filters. People who care, people who need to know will find out. What always troubled me about working in the conventional media was that it excludes so much information.

I've got some hilarious stories about this. I would put an incredibly important story into the Telegraph magazine and 6 million people would read it on a Sunday. I never knew how many of them gave a damn. They were probably just flicking through on the way to the crossword. But now, the fact that maybe 6 million people don't see the image but 500,000 people who actually care, who will add a comment, who will donate money, who will volunteer is, to me, much more significant.

NFS Yes, it offers that ability for action. One of the things I've been thinking about and you said it, is the idea of trust and credibility, it's key that we educate ourselves.

I think this is where people like Howard Rheingold⁸ are important, when he writes and talks about being ‘net smart’. What do you see as those skills that photographers or people working creatively with visuals need to engage with?

YOU’RE A STORYTELLER? PLEASE TELL ME THAT’S NOT TRUE

SM I’m going to take a step back from that, and come back to it. But I think it comes down to storytelling, fundamentally, which remains a skilled activity. What I see generally... When I look at the flow of stuff on my social feeds, there’s a tremendous amount of pictorialism, by which I mean pretty pictures.

I find that really interesting. I find that people find it thrilling to make a picture which is pretty. They find it really interesting and rewarding to look at a picture which is pretty.

On the one hand, it’s opened up this creativity and expressive thing to this huge number of people, which I just find wonderful.

So I think what we’re living with at the moment is a very pictorial environment where it’s very visually rich. I talk about metaphor and all the rest of it, and that’s definitely current. But to me, the skill then of the, if you like, dedicated image-maker comes about then harnessing those deeper levels of metaphor and storytelling.

Where I wanted to digress a little bit is I was talking about storytelling to a friend of mine who’s a professor of philosophy at Columbia University. She specialises in the ancients, so she studies Plato and Homer. I made some throwaway comment about “I work in journalism and I’m a storyteller,” and she was horrified. She was really horrified. “You’re a storyteller? Please tell me that’s not true.”

I said, “Of course; that’s what we do. We tell stories in pictures.” She suggested that it is a modern perversion, that we’re confusing journalism with storytelling. In the *Iliad*, Homer wrote about a war. We have no idea if that war

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happened. It doesn't matter if the war happened; we don't care if the war happened, because there's another truth. He was telling us about archetypes and emotional and social truths. The fact that there may or may not have been a war is actually beside the point.

One of the things which I see now beginning to open out again is that we are on the verge of returning to storytelling and that very traditional, very human way, where we are talking about metaphor and meaning beyond literal representation.

To me, I think the key is video. Video is now assuming the role of a factual vehicle. The picture, the still photograph becomes very much more about the idea.

So people talk about this as a competition; "Video's going to overtake/eclipse photography; photography will be irrelevant." I don't think so. I think they run completely parallel courses. I think they fulfill different functions. What I see with the growth of video online is it releases still pictures to talk in a much more metaphorical way. And indeed to become storytellers, and let the video people be the journalists.

Let the video function be the journalism and the still photography be the storytelling.

So when you ask what the skills are that we need to teach/learn/explore, I think it is a deeper level of thought about storytelling and how you layer information into imagery in a way which is significant and understandable by people. That was a long answer. Did that make sense?

THE COMPASS ANALOGY

NFS Yes, I think it's good. Potentially, my feeling is that it can also go beyond that. If we've got the deeper level and the core of the story, which brings us back to the element of 'time'. You were talking about time coming back into photographs. Time, for me, has always been in the photograph.

I look at people like Muybridge, who I've obviously looked at a lot. But then I know one aspect of his, which is about

movement. Then you look at the breadth of his portfolio – we now talk about portfolio careers. Actually, he was selling images; he was really an entrepreneur. Because at that time there wasn't necessarily a predetermined career path to follow.

The great thing about what you talk about with the cell phone is it allows us to start thinking differently about where photography can go. The analogy for this project is really that it's more about the idea and function of the 'compass'. In other words, how do we go about navigating these ideas as the landscape evolves, when new mountains are formed and the paths weave and intersect organically rather than follow a linear trail? It is fundamentally important that we pause, question and consider where we go at this time.

SM I love the 'compass' analogy; that's very good. I was on a panel last week with a bunch of photographers and photo editors. Once again, it was said very emphatically by the rest of the panel that the cell phone is just another tool. I said, "I so disagree." To think like that is to trap yourself, to contain yourself.

NRS It does remind me of the argument that took place a couple of years before I first met you, I was reading Howard Rheingold's book on virtual reality. I think the interesting thing about virtual reality wasn't the technology. It was the idea that we could have an alternative world where we existed. Which in many ways, is where we are now, through mobile technology and the Web, made possible by framework of the Internet. It's not this data glove; it's not these goggles (although soon maybe with the Google Glass) that we place on. But, as we are doing now, I can simultaneously physically exist in the UK, and via audio-visual digital technologies communicate with you on the other side of the globe. For me, this is just a single reality. So I think the metaphor around the mobile phone goes down to not the technology but your six points of portability, invisibility, immediacy, connection, context aware and streaming. It's more what it offers.

SM I think they are really important, because of the coming together of all those attributes. Each of them is not particularly new. It's the confluence of all those things in one instrument.

To me, the instrument is more than a technology; I keep coming back to this notion of the psychology of it. I'm fascinated with how deeply intimate our cell phones are

NFS It is a fluid extension of our body, in a sense.

SM The technology facilitates that, but actually it taps something very deep and very profound. What's extraordinary and what makes it very contemporary is that it is so deeply intimate. At the same time, so incredibly public.

Where it goes to, I agree, I think you're right; the 'compass' analogy is great. In some ways, I'm enjoying not even having a 'compass'.

NFS Perhaps... but maybe we are each our own 'compass'. Because through the decisions on what we are writing and picturing, whether we go left, right or straight forward...

SM Actually, no, we're not. We think we are. I think one of the great things that's happening at the moment is that those of us who for so long considered ourselves gatekeepers and arbiters aren't. It's the billion people on Facebook. They're telling us. Any of us who think we're defining this is missing the point. All I'm doing is I'm scrabbling to catch up and watch.

NFS But you're doing it for yourself, I suppose...

SM I'm doing it for myself, that's right.

A COLLECTIVE WAY OF WORKING

NFS How do you see the roles of the gatekeeper, of agencies and institutions now in this new terrain?

SM I think it's primarily brand. So, when I talk about VII and their values with integrity, that's the brand of VII; they're credible. That's what made a lot of the projects we did possible. When we did something for Red Cross, for their 150th anniversary, the Red Cross needs impeccable blue chip credibility in everything they do. That was VII. It could have been Magnum... It's not unique to VII, but

that was the valuable attribute.

It's primarily brand. If, I was to start an agency today, first of all I'd have myself certified (Laughter), but it wouldn't be like that. The agency I would set up today would be a photographer, a videographer, a post-production person, critically a PR person, and maybe a technologist. But it would be a collection; maybe more like a legal practice, where under one group of people you've got everyone pursuing their own careers. But they're all there because they share some basic common direction.

That, I think, would be my form of an agency, would be to bring people together who complement each other, rather than repeat what each other does.

I'm excited about the value of Public Relations management. A good PR person is phenomenal. I experienced this at VII. I worked with a really excellent PR person and watching what happened to the stories we produced in her hands was mind-blowing. That I was able to place it into Time magazine and Sunday Times was very nice. But she got it into people's minds, through running events, social media, all the different tools of modern PR.

To me, that's absolutely critical.

NFS So it is more that sense of a collective, where a number of people have very strong skills and it is through their collective way of working, operating they make change happen, yes?

SM That's right. It may even be as loose as just having offices in a space together, rather than any formal connection.

There was a great article in The New Yorker about a year ago about this, which really pulled it all together. One of the examples they used was that, in the new Apple building in California, in Cupertino, they actually designed it so that the toilets were all in the most inconvenient places. If you wanted to go from your office to the rest room, you had to cross the main atrium; you had to mingle. You couldn't do it without meeting somebody.

NFS That sounds really fascinating, that recognition of the importance of and sense of space. Thinking of a space and place where we experience things is key.

Similarly, organisations like Nesta in the UK have explored the notion of serendipity. Where you work is not so much about the office you work in and how fancy or cool that office is, but more, where you exist can facilitate other chance offerings. I think that's where it isn't just something physical; it's something digital as well.

SM You're right; it is 'also', not 'instead of'.

THE LIMITING RESOURCE AT THIS POINT IS IMAGINATION

NFS I'm still fascinated whether you think the mainstream agencies and institutions will continue to exist/survive?

SM They will for the next five years. I think Getty has got a good few years left in them. The agencies like Magnum, VII and Noor it is less certain. Economically it's very tough. There's infrastructure and costs that were carried by the old model and it's become very difficult to support them in the new model.

NFS You have previously talked about meeting Stephanie Goralnick. How do you think creative practitioners like her will be able to make the transition to earning their living by capitalising upon their online significance? Interestingly, during your Nikon talk, you mentioned she had 250,000 followers, six months later, she now has 500,000 followers. So in six months her following has doubled.

SM I'm not sure of the exact figures, but she has increased a lot.

NFS Okay, traditionally though it would be the job of the agency to understand the value and how that can translate into financial reward. So, how does the individual seek and start exploring themselves as a commodity?

SM It's a very tricky one. One of the questions that I've thought of a lot but can't answer is that, with all these opportunities comes extra load. In the old days, the photographer always had to maintain their equipment, had to be a sales person, had to go and make the pictures and do the editing. Now you have to do all your own marketing, web development and project maintenance.

Once you have something on a website, it's got to be maintained. So if you've got 10 things on a website, you've suddenly got 10 things that need perpetual maintenance and attention.

So the load on the individual just gets heavier and heavier, while all the opportunities get bigger and bigger.

To operate individually right now is tricky because you need to understand the technology of the Internet; you need to understand the marketing skills. You need to understand all this stuff, which frankly none of us understand all of that.

NRS True. I agree it is tricky and difficult, but equally you do talk incredibly positively about this moment, with the demise of that commercial structure. Because it is now a matter of opportunities, although it's difficult, we need to have different skills and more skills.

It does perhaps take us back to the birth of photography when there wasn't a business model for someone to follow. Over the years perhaps, as photographers we became lazy? I think it is maybe more work now, and I think you are right it is a different sort of work with a balance of skills, but it does mean, "I can now decide who this is for and potentially speak directly with the people who might be interested in this work."

So it should question the status quo, and basically say, "for this new era of photography it is unknown, but it's down to us to decide and to work that through."

SM Yes, I think that's exactly right. It's very interesting to me, looking back. I started working for Network Photographers in London in 1989, so I've been doing this for 20-something

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years. It's extraordinary – I've been re-reading some of the things I wrote about and thought about 20 years ago. How frustrated I was with the system and the constraints. It's fascinating to see now how positive change is possible at this point.

It's tremendously exciting. A question I ask people a lot is so what do we gain? But also, what do we lose? There's no doubt we lose stuff as well. But overall, I think it's just we're exactly at that sweet spot where so much is possible.

The limiting resource at this point is imagination. I fall into this trap myself all the time. I try to not refer to the past when thinking about the future, but of course I do; I have to. It's the only way I can understand what's happening. But that's the trap of imagination. We continuously need to ask, "How could this be different?"

SO WHAT DO YOU BRING?

NFS But surely this is where the breadth of roles you've undertaken in your career and the significant things that have been involved with, have helped to transform the value of art. Bringing in new audiences, different audiences, it's not that you've always worked with a particular type of photographer or image-maker or artist. Surely that breadth of experience is what you would bring to the table that helps the photography community understand and locate ourselves?

SM It's an incredible privilege. I have to say, I feel quite overwhelmed by the opportunities I've had; it's really been amazing.

It's interesting – slightly anecdotal, but I remember when Tony Stone approached me – I was working at Network Photographers. I was hook, line and sinker into photojournalism. A head hunter came and said, "Would you like to work for Tony Stone?" which was this full-on commercial agency: couples running in the surf at sunset and all that. I was horrified. Eventually I thought, "Well, maybe I'll learn something." I made the jump.

It was painful but it was so valuable. Then, each time I've made one of these jumps it's been painful, because I have to reinvent myself.

When I went into the commercial world, nobody had ever heard of me. I went from being known for what I did to "Who the hell are you?" I had to do it all over again. That's been really an incredible process. The same when I went to work for Art And Commerce which specialises in fashion or when I went into the art world. Every time I was challenged, "So what do you bring?" It's forced an inventiveness and a creativity and has just been an incredible privilege.

NFS Through the projects and the conversations that you engage with, I see you as one of the more outspoken people on this change. Not negatively but critically, in a way that seeks to offer...it's not about solutions, because I think you're absolutely right. It's not saying... This is the problem we've got; this way of making money has gone. But there isn't just one solution.

SM Absolutely. At Tony Stone which became Getty Images, I have to say, working with Jonathan Klein and Mark Getty as my immediate bosses was just a fantastic opportunity. They're whiplash smart and what I learnt from them about business I could then relate to photojournalism. Then moving into the art world and seeing how that works in such a completely different way with more ideas to carry between disciplines has been fantastically important.

NFS Are there particular examples where you think perhaps, that through your varied experiences that new innovations have resulted?

SM I used to pride myself on being an innovative thinker. Along with many other things like ego, that's been beaten out of me over the years (Laughter).

What I realise is that actually, no; it's not necessarily that I'm an original or innovative thinker. But I have a privileged perspective through the different things I've seen and I suppose just from my thought process of connecting stuff. So

I don't think I've invented much, but I think I have brought a fresh vision through joining those dots.

EVERYONE HAS SOMETHING

NFS It does often seem that it isn't about new ideas. In a talk earlier this year, I gave at the Photographers' Gallery – looking at social media. I set out with this idea of new mind-sets, and actually in the end I came to the conclusion that it's more about alternative mind-sets. Because I think the idea of new, is that it's got to be different. Whereas, as we discussed earlier maybe there are parallels with photography's birth, some 150 years ago.

I love your recognition of the people that you surround yourself with, or have had the privilege to work with. Which brings us back to the analogy of the 'compass' and navigation. This project is structured into three sections; the 'catalyst', the 'encounter' and the 'antennae', together they seek to reveal and help locate the reader in understanding their position at this moment in time within a rapidly changing environment.

So who would you see as being your 'antennae' now?

SM Well, I'm still reeling, to be honest, from the loss of Tim Hetherington⁹. He was very much an antenna. Over the 15 years that we talked together it reached a stage where I couldn't tell whether something was his idea or my idea. We would just share and mingle. He was a rare, rare thinker. I really miss that.

Jonathan Worth, I pay a lot of attention to. I've always been very impressed by his energy and inventiveness and making things happen.

One of my colleagues at VII, Gary Knight is very big thinker, and also a doer with a track record of achievement. He's got ambition, but also he's done it.

A young guy called Samuel James, who's in his mid-twenties, has very little presence in the industry now, but I think will have a significant presence.

There are many, many exciting, interesting people. So in a sense, that antenna is still there.

It comes down to curiosity. In a way, it's invidious to name names, because everyone's interesting if you listen. Everyone has something.

NFS I think this is where it's also needs to be the idea of people outside of photography...So, what do you see as the next direction for the types of projects that you're going to get involved with?

SM Yes, that's absolutely spot on. Throughout my time in photography I've always tried to look outside. That's where a lot of the innovations come from, people thinking differently.

At the moment, I'm really, really fascinated by advertising. Because, if you think about it, advertising is about imagery that changes behaviour. If we as journalists are serious about the things we cover and we want to make a change, we have to understand how advertising works. It's effective; it works. People do actually change their behaviour as a result of the imagery they see. So that's one of my big interests.

One of the people I'm trying to hook up with is a guy called Chris Riley, who I met in Tokyo. He's an advertising guy, part of the original Just Do It campaign and worked a lot with Mac. He and I are trying to find a project to do together, because that to me is key. I want him to be talking to photojournalists. A lot of photojournalists will hate it, but some of them will get it, and they'll be better for it.

KATRINA SLUIS

Katrina Sluis is an antipodean curator, writer and theorist who has worked in media education since 2000. Based in London, she is presently Curator (Digital Programmes) at The Photographers' Gallery and Senior Lecturer at London South Bank University.

With a background in systems administration, her research critically addresses photography's relationship to computation, its social circulation and cultural value. Her exhibition projects include *Born in 1987: The Animated GIF* (2012), *Jon Rafman: BNBNPJ* (2013), *Olia Lialina and Dragan Espenschied: One Terabyte of Kilobyte Age* and *For the LOL of Cats: Felines, Photography and the Web* (2012). Her recent writing has featured in *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture* (2nd ed) and publications including *Aperture*, *Photographies*, *Philosophy of Photography* and *Photoworks*.

BECOMING PART OF NEW TOPOLOGIES IN NETWORK CULTURE

NFS It's a real pleasure to be speaking with Katrina Sluis, the curator of the digital programme at The Photographers' Gallery, London. We really appreciate you agreeing to contribute to the conversation with NEWFOTOSCAPES. What is really admirable about your approach is the dialogue that seems to exist between the different strands of your practice, artist, academic with the scholarship and questioning of the field. How does that multiplicity manifest itself in the programming of 'The Wall' at The Photographers' Gallery? It seems like you have adopted a really clear stance?

KS Thanks. I would agree that my interest in photography has very much been informed by working as a practitioner and then also as an educator – I first set eyes on the first Apple QuickTake digital camera in the mid 1990s when I was studying Fine Arts in Sydney. At that time I was spending hours in the colour darkrooms perfecting prints but also found myself making websites, paintings and learning Photoshop. Once I graduated I began teaching in a Photomedia department and working for CompuServe, an early Internet Service Provider.

During this period I developed a fascination with the photographic medium, which only intensified when my painting lecturers told me 'photography isn't art'. Another big influence was 'Photography is Dead! Long live Photography!', an exhibition, held in 1996 at the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney inspired by the 'post-photographic' moment, which completely changed the way I thought about the medium. But this is the exciting thing about photography, isn't it? Its slipperiness... and the way it's always undergoing some sort of technological revolution or death.

Ten years later, I noticed that many of the questions that had haunted photography in the 1990s – such as indexicality or the 'truth value' of the image – were not necessarily the most interesting issues concerning the medium, particularly as photography became wedded to the mobile phone and the Web. The pressing questions no longer concerned the singular

image; it's meaning, and its relationship to the 'real'. Rather, it became photography's ability to replicate and become part of new topologies in network culture. On this basis, Daniel Rubinstein and I wrote an article¹ for Photographies that explored popular photography as a networked and screen-based practice. We argued, of course, that this has enormous implications for the valorization of photographic culture, which educators, photographers and museum professionals are all trying to grapple with.

CURATION AND IMAGE-MAKING CULTURE

NFS So how does this manifest itself within your role at the Gallery then?

KS For The Photographers' Gallery, one way of addressing this new landscape has been to create the post of Curator of Digital Programming. In one sense, this is a problematic set-up which separates the digital from the rest of the programme, and presumably requiring a curator with a connoisseurial understanding of digital practices. This, perhaps, would appear to work in contradiction to what we see in wider culture – where digital technologies are undoing established forms of knowledge and cultural authority. The development of a separate programme also seemed to suggest that what was happening elsewhere in the building was not digital, when of course, the works that sit on the upper floors of the Gallery are all touched by digital processes, either directly or indirectly. So the question then becomes what should a digital programme within a media-specific Gallery actually do? My answer to that question, at least for the moment, is to problematise photography as a screen-based, networked and diffused practice – in partnership with different communities of practitioners. And to consider how a photographic museum might relate to cultures of image-making online and how can that infiltrate or even 'pollute' an institution such as The Photographers' Gallery?

NFS So was that the pitch that you made to them in terms of making that space work?

KS Yes, absolutely. For me the post presents a real challenge

in bringing theory and practice together to engage with photography within the context of programming and education. I think that photography, at least in the way it is traditionally taught has very few ways of coming to terms with these dramatic shifts, and there is a parallel problem for the museum where cultural authority is bound up with an understanding of the analogue photographic print. Having been in post for over a year now, the next stage is to really start thinking about how, with limited resources, to make these conversations and issues more present within the programme.

N/S That's a good place to start thinking about the programme, which as you say is just over a year old, do you see a development from the first show, 'Born in 1987: The Animated GIF'² through to now? What is really interesting is on the text accompanying 'The Wall', 'is that this forms part of a research programme of collaborations and commissions, highlighting photography's role in the digital realm'. Is that your statement, how are you progressing these ideas?

K/S That is my ultimate ambition for 'The Wall', so far the programme has very much progressed in the first year as a series of experiments in which we wanted to understand the practical limits of the video wall and the ways it can be used. Like many cultural institutions who dip their toes in the digital, the Gallery wanted a permanent digital display on the ground floor but had little understanding of how to resource it and support it! So unlike the traditional photography curator, much of my time has been spent in dealing with the technical and conceptual limits of hardware and software. Whilst opening the programme with 'Born in 1987: The Animated GIF' was strategic decision to engage with a particular practice of screen-based online image-making, it also was a very practical one – as a show which would not technically tax the newly-installed untested video wall!

N/S So you could say the gallery got three people for the price of one, with your practice, curation and technical expertise?

K/S I think they are beginning to realize that! I have in the past year become a zen master in video codecs and my background in computing and systems administration has

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been a real boon. You really need to be able to understand a very technical language when working with certain kinds of material, and I think this made a difference to Olia Lialina and Dragan Espenschied when I worked with them on 'One Terabyte of Kilobyte Age'³.

A CONVERGED SET OF PRACTICES

NFS Do you feel there are particular lessons that you have learnt through the programme so far, not only technically in terms of how this form, this media can associate with work inside the gallery, but also lessons about audience engagement or the development of your resolve and ideas?

KS Oh dear... that's a really big question!

NFS Sorry, its just when I think and look back at the programme... it is really interesting going from a form that can only be digital, with the animated gif, through to work which has a sense of humour, through to the studies in stillness and time. There is a really interesting critiquing of the subject, the technical photo-skilling and the mass that is generated by data and files. But there is definitely both a playfulness but also an underlying seriousness...

KS I think a lot of the programme has emerged from the problem that the digital in itself is not a new photographic medium but a converged set of practices, bound up increasingly with the politics of software. I think that by operating in an institution that is concerned with medium specificity, the programme has really tried to play with the paradoxical diffusion and intensification of the photographic image in the digital age. The hybridity of the screen image has been a key kind of theme that you can see within 'Born in 1987: The Animated GIF' and also in Susan Sloan's show. There are also questions of cultural value in relation to the photographic image, which in part inspired 'For the LOL of Cats: Felines, Photography and the Web'⁴. Bringing the gallery into temporary alignment with different image cultures and addressing the knowledge of different groups who are themselves curators and creators of images (such as cat photographs) is an important aspect of this. Olia and

Dragan's work, 'One Terabyte of Kilobyte Age', when re-located to a gallery of photography also brings attention to the shifting visual landscape of the Web and how millions of early users online shared images and stories before the automated platforms of Facebook and Instagram. Whilst there is silliness, there is also a seriousness in bringing the knowledge from different image-making communities and making it present within gallery. How and if this knowledge infiltrates the institution and may or may not change its relationship to the public is a key question here, and there is a need to further explore and understand this area.

HERALDING THE ANNIHILATION OF PHOTOGRAPHY

^{NFS} There is something in the text you wrote for Source magazine, that rings true here, '...there is a danger that the museums will shrink away from any attempt to engage with photography's altered materiality', I think that is a key question about how those notions begin to relate and stick together, so that we don't have or rather we try to remove a sense of hierarchy within the provenance of photography. Within the context of the ^{NEWFOTOSCAPES}, how we're trying to think and frame things, is about that sense of acceptance of the provenance but equal acceptance of the idea that if we start calling it the 'image', and I notice that more often than not you relate to the image as opposed to the photograph. Is it that the 'image' can be something more, it can offer something that perhaps moves forward or connects or offers the sense of something beyond?

^{KS} Yes, the term 'image' can be a productive way in which to think about photography's very interesting place in wider visual culture and the way in which the 'photographic' is implicated in everything from 3D software to bio-metric systems. Of course, questions of provenance and medium specificity are problematised by the digital – in my job interview I joked that if the Gallery wants to put a screen in the ground floor aren't they accepting or even heralding the annihilation of photography, in a sense? Once a 'photograph' is on a 'screen' isn't it actually a video? An animation? This is of course an old question and in the 1990s it was always

**Once a
'photograph'
is on a 'screen'
isn't it actually
a video?
An animation?**

commonly argued that in spite of the photograph's radical transformation into data we still of course understand the JPEG on-screen as a photograph, with all its cultural and social baggage. However I would argue that this comfortable conclusion ignores the very real issue that computers are increasingly viewers and archivists of photographic images which are then made operational in everyday life – and they 'read' these images of course very differently.

Returning to the programme, if we consider Jon Rafman's 'BRAND NEW BRAND NEW PAINT JOB'⁵ and Anthony Antonellis' 'Photoshop Skillz'⁶, these were placed very much in dialogue with the upper floors of the Gallery which had three concurrent shows dealing with 'photo collage'. Jon and Anthony play with the tools and economies of cut-and-paste culture in the digital realm. So there are times when the programme comes into dialogue with what is happening elsewhere in the building and at other points, for example, heads off to explore different terrain. But a real limit I find is that whilst the screen can of course tap into popular image-making online, it is a content-hungry reproductive machine. How can one (in the space of the screen) open up what is most problematic, for example, about cat photographs, which have their own specific affect and agency as viral images? We will shortly be publishing a long-overdue set of essays which accompany the cat show, in order to expand on these questions. So I do think there is a problem concerning how these debates are made present in the programme.

NFS Does that mean that you wish to see the screen operate as a vehicle beyond its physical presence inside of the Gallery, so that it can exist and live outside connecting beyond the Gallery?

KS Definitely. I have always felt that the Web offers a more interesting platform for programming, and it would be great to use 'The Wall' as a portal to feed back into the Gallery what is actually set up to happen elsewhere. Of course, there are limitations to overcome technically, because at present the video wall software is developed with advertising and digital signage markets in mind, as such the screen is a kind of 'digital billboard'. Another consideration is that of

copyright – and I am receiving contradictory legal views concerning whether the display of live web content from a computer in a public gallery (as opposed to on a screen at home) violates this.

NFS In a connected age, it still amazes me how scale and place can have such implications. So the publication that you are working on to accompany the programme, this will form part of your idea to extend the function of the screen from its presentational means to that of something being part of a wider set of debates?

KS Yes, absolutely.

RE-THINKING VISUAL LITERACY AND THE AUDIENCE

NFS The inclusion or participation of the audience and their relationship to the screen within the physical gallery is also something that you are very much interested in dealing with. Surely, these are quite complex issues and ideas in what is a very immediate space, in that it directly confronts you as you enter the gallery? Equally, I get the sense that you do feel that the digital programme has the ability to not be as intimidating to younger people as well as people who are perhaps interested in wider questioning of visual culture. How do you feel you are able to pull together those two often contradictory or conflicting ways of dealing with things?

KS This is an issue that is really close to my heart as an educator, and it's probably worth mentioning that I balance my role at the Gallery alongside teaching at London South Bank University where I work with a lot of young people for whom museums and galleries can be quite alienating. There is presently a lot of debate concerning the role of publically funded museums and galleries, what cultural values they espouse, and their relationship to the public. A lot of my thinking in this area comes out of an AHRC-funded research project that London South Bank University and the University of the Arts did with Tate Britain, called Tate Encounters: Britishness in Visual Culture⁷. As part of the project London South Bank University students from migrant and diasporic

backgrounds became co-researchers who considered the way in which ‘Britishness’ is constructed by the museum, exploring their own relationship to the institution and its collections.

In the same way, there is the potential for The Photographers’ Gallery to become much more porous, and acknowledge the ways in which the implicit knowledge of photography held by different audiences are relevant and helpful to the institution. For example, a key focus of Gallery education has traditionally been visual literacy, based on pedagogy originating in historical (analogue) models of photography and spectatorship. How does the Gallery and its educators understand (or not) the meaning or agency of an image posted on Reddit, Snapchat or Instagram? How do we re-think visual literacy from a position which is not based on the analogue photographic print? There is a real opportunity to collaborate on these problems with young people and others engaged with network culture. It is important for The Photographers’ Gallery to understand the limits and specific value of its own knowledge on the one hand, and on the other, facilitate other groups to reflexively understand their use and engagement with photography.

NFS This sounds like a great way to co-develop and engage the audience in collaboratively designing the future of the Gallery itself.

KS Yes, however it requires a huge commitment from the institution and its staff – and a desire for a qualitative, rather than quantitative, engagement with an audience.

NFS Yes, that’s true but it can be a really difficult balancing act. The fluidity of this present moment in time is the premise behind *NEWFOTOSCAPES*. This rapidly evolving terrain means we can no longer simply say here is the map and this is the information that you should know. We can’t therefore elucidate the one book of knowledge and answer the questions from our students, as the solutions are no longer fixed!

KS Absolutely, yes! One could even extend this observation to most forms of knowledge production today.

NFS What I believe is more appropriate is to explore of the

concept of the ‘compass’, so we shift our attention to how we navigate ourselves on our personal journey of exploration. So, you charted us through the ideas that became really important for you around the 1990s and the digital but I do fear that there is still a generalised lamenting, within higher education photography in the UK, upon that moment of the digital which in reality occurred well over ten years ago.

KS Yes, I know what you mean. The ‘compass’ idea is intriguing.

THE COMPUTATIONAL IMAGE

NFS It seems that for you that perhaps the key debates are already moving away from the idea of the networked image, your latest text is talking more about the undecideable image and the relationship of the algorithms and metadata?

KS My more recent academic writing has been engaged with the ‘softwareisation’ of photography² – which means dealing with a messy assemblage of algorithms, metadata, bodies and code – whether we look towards the camera itself, or the photograph’s social circulation online. For example, what does it mean that with the tweak of some metadata an image can change its velocity, context and visibility? What are the implications of photography as a computational object? Rather than engaging with photography’s ubiquity however, there is still a tendency to obsess with decoding what the singular image might represent, and attending to the details visible within the image. However, clinging to historical models ignores, for example, the politics of search engines and aspects of computational culture and so on which are really mediating the image and which maybe aren’t so visible. I also have a real frustration that so many lazy photography teachers have not updated their reading lists in years, and young photography students are left reading Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes and wondering what they may have thought about Google Street View or drone imagery.

NFS So for somebody new into this field, a lot of those terms e.g. ‘computational images’, would be quite alien to them, how might we begin to enable them to approach and understand

**Photography
is about a
computational
object**

this new way of thinking that your describing? Are there key people that you feel are talking about that?

KS The usual starting point for someone new to the area is the work of Lev Manovich, who wrote 'The Language of New Media' in 1995 and, more recently, 'Software Takes Command' (2013). Manovich is a pretty accessible writer, who in attempting to define the specificity of new media gives an overview of key concepts such as automation, transcoding, modularity, interactivity and other key ideas. Another key essay worth mentioning is Langdon Winner's 1986 *Do Artifacts Have Politics?* where Winner outlines how technologies are inherently political in necessitating certain kinds of social arrangements.

In approaching the contemporary abundance (and control) of images, Paul Frosh's 'The Image Factory' is a fascinating account of the stock photography industry, which is extremely helpful in thinking about the database-driven photographic culture of the Internet. Although Heidegger's 'The Question Concerning Technology' or Martin Hand's 'Ubiquitous Photography' can also be a starting point for the image-maker today. The consumption and circulation of images online also relates to what has been termed the 'attention economy' and Culture Machine recently did a special issue on this concept. I also highly recommend Laurel Ptak and Marysia Lewandowska's new book 'Undoing Property' which contains essays by key thinkers including Florian Schnieder and Matteo Pasquinelli that centre on issues of authorship, cultural value and the public realm which are relevant to contemporary photographic discourse. Online, the Institute of Network Cultures is also a prolific publisher and facilitator of debates around digital culture more generally, from the politics of social media to search engines.

ANTENNAE, INSPIRATION AND BROKERING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

NFS That's superb, I'm not sure I have been able to take all that in! I think you may have just crammed the 'new' compulsory reading list for today's image-maker, into a single breath!

It's fascinating, the sheer breadth and new thinking available to help navigate this fluid landscape. I see these stimuli as key to helping us tune our 'antennae', much as would happen physically to our senses when we visit new, unknown and alien places. So who would you say are your antennae, who do you look to, who helps you locate yourself?

KS Well, one of my guilty pleasures is to immerse myself in the research of computer scientists – who are busily building the interfaces and tools through which we will create, share and archive photography in the future. Reading academic papers from this field is always a provocative experience – and fascinating in terms of how 'photography' is imagined and invoked in relation to everything from computer vision to personal information management. I also keep a close eye on the work of MIT's Camera Culture research group, Google's Cultural Institute and Microsoft Labs – who all speak different 'versions' of photography. One of the things I have loved about working with Sharp on 'The Wall' has been spending time with staff working in their research labs in Oxford, who imagine the use, context and value of screens in an entirely (sometimes alien!) way.

With respect to 'antennae' I would say that Twitter has become an indispensable way of discovering, following and interacting with people whose projects you have some affinity with. The serendipity of the Web is brilliant – I remember my joy stumbling across James Bridle's work via Tumblr back in 2011 when I was writing a book chapter on photography and computer spectatorship. His research on 'the new aesthetic' went viral last year, and his work may be familiar to the photo community through projects such as dronestagram. Paul Wombell, who curated this year's Mois de la Photo, takes up parallel themes in the biennale with a focus on the automation of the photographic apparatus. Paul curated PhotoVideo at The Photographers' Gallery in 1991, and is a key person in both defining and expanding the debate around photography and technology. When I re-read the catalogue essays for PhotoVideo I am startled at how much resonance they have 22 years later.

NFS I know what you mean. Photovideo was forward thinking

and its underlying message does perhaps still offer ways for us to consider the potentials. It does act as a reminder though, as it is these types of spaces and people that keep us engaged and hopefully keep us progressing photography rather than just re-living and re-teaching what we already know.

KS Absolutely, other sources of inspiration have been the brilliant discussions with practitioners who operate both inside and outside 'photography' proper. In the past year, Allesandro Ludovico, Penelope Umbrico, Mishka Henner, David Raymond Conroy, Dr Lop Lop, Wendy McMurdo, Rainer Usselman and Sakrowski have all been recent sparring partners. Marco Bohr's 'Visual Culture' Blog is one of the best concerning the photographic image today. There are also a range of brilliant women whose work I respect who have been working with art and technology since the 1990s, including Olga Goriunova, Annet Dekker and Inke Arns. Olga herself has curated exhibitions on software art, and her recent writing explores art platforms on the Internet and, elsewhere, new media 'idiocy'. She has contributed an essay on memes for the forthcoming publication 'For the LOL of Cats: Felines, Photography and the Web'.

However, speaking as someone who was seriously into MUDs and BBS culture as a 16 year old, it is still the creativity and subversion of everyday users of the Web which is my main source of provocation and contemplation – from ASCII art (from a time before the Internet had pictures) to the use of "Photoshop justice" to respond to, for example, the UC Davis pepper spray incident. And of course there is a parallel arc of art on the Internet, from Jodi.org to ubermorgen.com who have been busily subverting interfaces and systems in network culture. There are brilliant communities built around these practices – from Rhizome.org to Furtherfield – which, although their main focus is not photography, are still involved with digital visual culture. And whilst London, regrettably has no ZKM or FACT, small galleries such as Arcadia Missa in Peckham are popping up and Carroll/Fletcher up the road from The Photographers' Gallery represent important practitioners such as Thompson and Craighead.



NOTES

JONATHAN SHAW

- ¹ Shaw, J. (2013). Reflections on time, motion and photomechanics, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 11:1, 52-70
- ² Boud, D. (2001:10)
- ³ <http://www.bjp-online.com/2014/03/industry-concerned-about-getty-images-free-for-all-approach/>
- ⁴ As well as Szarkowski's subsequent book of the same title
- ⁵ Howard Rheingold "Global Transmedia MOOCs. Virtual community pioneer Howard Rheingold interviews educator Jonathan Shaw about his groundbreaking experiments in online, collaborative learning in the arts." <http://dmlcentral.net/blog/howard-rheingold/global-transmedia-moocs>
- ⁶ Daisy Ware-Jarrett 2013 article on phonar. MOOCs: A Student's Perspective <http://www.topuniversities.com/blog/moocs-student%E2%80%99s-perspective>
- ⁷ Stephen Downes writing on the abundance of knowledge. <http://halfanhour.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/education-as-platform-mooc-experience.html>
- ⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuNTL3YYi5c>
- ⁹ <http://www.livingbooksaboutlife.org>
- ¹⁰ <http://www.slideshare.net/JonathanShaw2/js-bric-abraclr>
- ¹¹ <http://jonathan-shaw.com/blog/2013/11/imagination-and-the-art-school-talk-now-on-adobe-tv/>
- ¹² Hall, G. (2013) On the unbound book: academic publishing in the age of the infinite archive. *Journal of Visual Culture*, volume 12 (3): 490-507
- ¹³ Braidotti, R. (2006: 31)

ANDY ADAMS

- ¹ Flak Photo is an online photography channel that presents the work of artists, curators, bookmakers and photo organizations to a global audience of people who are passionate about visual culture. <http://flakphoto.com>
- ² Flak Photo Network & Photo Books function to ask questions and share links that encourage thoughtful, extended conversations about contemporary photographic practice. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/flakphoto> & <https://www.facebook.com/groups/flakphotobooks>
- ³ The Future of Photobooks: A cross-blog conversation, produced by Flak Photo and Miki Johnson. <http://andyadamsphoto.com/photobooks/>
- ⁴ The Making Pictures of People: Recent perspectives on photographic portraiture exhibition in association with Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. <http://flakphoto.com/exhibition/making-pictures-of-people>

- 5 Looking at the Land: 21st Century American Views. Exploring current ideas about photographing landscape and the tradition of picturing place. Produced to accompany America in View: Landscape Photography 1865 to Now. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design. <http://flakphoto.com/exhibition/looking-at-the-land>
- 6 Online Photographic Thinking essay for Words Without Pictures by Jason Evans PDF available at <http://andyadamspphoto.com/talk/WWP-OnlinePhotographicThinking-JasonEvans.pdf>

DAVID CAMPBELL

- 1 Katharine Viner, deputy editor of the Guardian and editor-in-chief of Guardian Australia, gave the AN Smith lecture in Melbourne. "The rise of the reader: journalism in the age of the open web" 9th October 2013 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/09/the-rise-of-the-reader-katharine-viner-an-smith-lecture>
- 2 The Multimedia Research Project is a pioneering study, commissioned by World Press Photo. Led by Dr. David Campbell examined the current practices in multimedia against the background of the disruption in the traditional media economy, and the revolution in how people consume news today. <http://www.worldpressphoto.org/multimedia-research>
- 3 The Sem Presser Lecture is given every year during the Awards Days weekend in Amsterdam, a gathering to celebrate the year's prize-winning photographers. <http://www.worldpressphoto.org/videolibrary/talks>
- 4 "Photojournalism in the New Media Economy". This 'back catalogue' post helpfully identifies a number of key themes from what David published over the last couple of years, pulling together posts and articles that deal with each theme. <http://www.david-campbell.org/2011/04/08/the-back-catalogue-photojournalism-in-the-new-media-economy/>
- 5 The podcasts and slides from David's WPP Multimedia Research presentation can be found here. <http://www.david-campbell.org/multimedia/world-press-photo-multimedia-research/>
- 6 A revised version of David's review of Fred Ritchin, Bending the Frame: Photojournalism, Documentary, and the Citizen (New York: Aperture, 2013) that appeared in Source 76, Autumn 2013. <http://www.david-campbell.org/2013/11/17/documentary-photography-age-anxiety-fred-ritchlin/>
- 7 'Restrepo' and the Imagery of War interview with Tim Hetherington by Michael Kamber http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/22/behind-44/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0

CHARLOTTE COTTON

- ¹ What's Next: Aaron Schumann and Charlotte Cotton in Conversation. Originally published in FOAM: What's Next? #2 <http://www.seesawmagazine.com/whatsnextpages/whatsnext.html>
- ² Cotton, C. (2014). *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*. Thames & Hudson, London. This edition has a revised introduction outlining the evolution of photography from documentary tool to art form, and an updated final chapter focusing on the younger generation of artists who emphasize photography in the digital age.
- ³ Words Without Pictures was conceived of by curator Charlotte Cotton and artist Alex Klein. WWP published every month for a year, one short, un-illustrated, opinionated essay about an emerging or changing aspect of photography.
 - Book published by Aperture: <http://www.aperture.org/shop/books/words-without-pictures-book>
 - Educational PDF: http://www.albany.edu/faculty/dgoodwin/shared_resources/WordsWithoutPictures.pdf
- ⁴ Charlotte Cotton guest-editor Issue 004 of *The PhotoBook Review*. Interview: <http://www.aperture.org/blog/interview-with-charlotte-cotton-video/>
- ⁵ #phonar (an abbreviation for Photography & Narrative) is a free and open photography class offered by Coventry University. It was founded by Jonathan Worth and Jonathan Shaw in 2009. <http://phonar.covmedia.co.uk>
- ⁶ Either/And has been devised by the National Media Museum it is a series of commissioned essays, interviews, images and films to serve as the catalyst for online public discussion. The first cycle edited by Ph: a collective of more than thirty early-career UK researchers working with photography. <http://eitherand.org>

DÓNALL CURTIN & NATHANIEL PITT

- ¹ *Conversations on Collecting*, a one-day informal symposium on all aspects of collections and collecting. Held at the National Gallery of Photography on 26th January 2013. <http://www.galleryofphotography.ie/conversations-on-collecting/>
- ² In 2004, a-n commissioned a team of experts from University of Newcastle to undertake a research study into current context, attitudes and approaches to paying artists for their skills and services. <http://www.a-n.co.uk/publications/article/193995>
- ³ Robert Storr is an internationally renowned curator, critic, art historian,

artist, and he is widely considered to be one of the most influential Americans in the art world. Robert Storr speaks at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis on March 6, 2009, as part of its Annual Distinguished Speaker Series on “What to Do about Art When the Art World Gets the Jitters?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ih7-iYF4fzg>

- 4 The Artist Placement Group (APG) emerged in London in the 1960s. The organisation actively sought to reposition the role of the artist within a wider social context, including government and commerce, while at the same time playing an important part in the history of conceptual art during the 1960s and 1970s. <http://www2.tate.org.uk/artistplacementgroup/>

MISHKA HENNER

- 1 Photography Is presents more than 3,000 phrases that define one of the most democratic and ubiquitous of all art forms. <http://www.mishkahenner.com/Photography-Is>
- 2 Source Code <http://www.mishkahenner.com/filter/bookshop/Source-Code-11>
- 3 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize was established in 1996, each year the Prize has celebrated the best in photography, whether a publication or exhibition.
- 4 Less Américains (2012). A remake of Robert Frank’s classic photobook, The Americans, erasing the old to make something new. <http://www.mishkahenner.com/Less-Americans>
- 5 Astronomical, 2011, Our solar system in twelve volumes. The width of each page is a million kilometres. On page 1 the Sun, on page 6,000 Pluto. <http://www.mishkahenner.com/Astronomical>
- 6 Mishka Henner: Precious Commodities, 2 MAR 2013 - 29 APRIL 2013 Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, UK.
- 7 Sarah James reviews Mishka Henner’s ‘Precious Commodities’ exhibition at Open Eye Gallery. Frieze Issue 156, June-August 2013 <https://www.frieze.com/issue/review/mishka-henner/>

FRANCIS HODGSON

- 1 ‘Bibi’ by Jacques Henri Lartigue. Ahead of his time? The French photographer’s pioneering Autochromes are ideally viewed on a computer screen by Francis Hodgson. Financial Times 14 January 2013 <http://on.ft.com/11wsNhR>

- ² We're All Editors by Francis Hodgson. Photoworks 17 March 2014 <http://photoworks.org.uk/editors-francis-hodgson/>
- ³ Founded by the Pictet Group in 2008, the Prix Pictet has rapidly established itself as the world's leading prize in photography and sustainability. <http://www.prixpictet.com/earth/>
- ⁴ New life for the light fantastic. How photographers capture magic, on film or in megabytes by Francis Hodgson. Financial Times 14 January 2012 <http://on.ft.com/y2txIc>
- ⁵ Francis was filmed along with nine other participants in the Fotoboekenmarathon (main theme: quality versus quantity), held on Dec 16, 2012 at the photography museum Huis Marseille in Amsterdam <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dj3Wq-I7tc>
- ⁶ Heiferman, M. 2012. Photography Changes Everything. New York: Aperture.
- ⁷ Latin America's violent past in pictures by Francis Hodgson. Financial Times 29 November 2013. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/7171aae72-569e-11e3-ab12-00144feabdc0.html#slide0>
- ⁸ Photography Changes Everything blog post by Francis Hodgson. <http://franchishodgson.com/2013/02/20/photography-changes-everything/>

DEWI LEWIS

- ¹ The Reluctant Father follows Phillip Toledano's journey at the beginning of fatherhood. From dismay and confusion, to the blinding light of unalloyed love. <http://thereluctantfather.com>
- ² All Zones Off Peak by Tom Wood (1998) is an extraordinary book. Wood has spent over fifteen years and shot over 3,000 rolls of film photographing Liverpool and its people from a bus. <http://www.dewilewispublishing.com/PHOTOGRAPHY/WOOD.html>
- ³ Rob Hornstra and Arnold van Bruggen have been working together since 2007 to tell the story of Sochi, Russia, site of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games. <http://www.thesochiproject.org>
- ⁴ Here Press is an independent publisher dedicated to exploring the use of documentary photography in book form. It was founded in 2011 by Harry Hardie and Ben Weaver. <http://www.herepress.org>

STEPHEN MAYES

- ¹ VII was created in 2001 by seven of the world's leading photojournalists and by 2005 VII was listed in third position in American Photo's "100 Most Important People in Photography." <http://viipphoto.com>
- ² "Global Voices: Photography in the 21st Century". NIKON SYMPOSIUM, Tokyo, 14-15 June 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPfVSH1519o#t=4290>
- ³ Photojournalist James Nachtwey is considered by many to be the greatest war photographer of recent decades. https://www.ted.com/speakers/james_nachtwey
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- ⁶ Photographs Are No Longer Things, They're Experiences. Interview with Stephen Mayes by Pete Brook on Wired's RAWFILE. 15 November 2012 <http://www.wired.com/2012/11/stephen-mayes-vii-photography/>
- ⁷ Fred Ritchin is Professor of Photography and Imaging at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. <http://www.pixelpress.org/fredritch.html>
- ⁸ Rheingold, Howard. 2012. Net Smart: How to thrive online. Cyberculture expert Howard Rheingold shows us how to use social media intelligently, humanely, and, above all, mindfully. <http://rheingold.com/netsmart/>
- ⁹ Stephen Mayes exploring the work of photo-journalist Tim Hetherington <http://www.imagesource.com/blog/stephen-mayes-on-photography/>

KATRINA SLUIS

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- ² The Photographers' Gallery launched its new digital programme with Born in 1987: The Animated GIF, an exhibition devoted to the overlooked image format native to the web and the computer screen. <http://joyofgif.tumblr.com>

- ³ One Terabyte of Kilobyte Age by Olia Lialina and Dragan Espenschied. The exhibition showcased over 16,000 amateur home pages from the free web hosting service Geocities, last updated during the second half of the 1990s. <http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk/one-terabyte-of-kilobyte-age>
- ⁴ For the LOL of Cats: Felines, Photography and the Web. Photographs of cats have come to dominate the web's image culture. <http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk/felines-photography-and-the-web>
- ⁵ BRAND NEW BRAND NEW PAINT JOB by Jon Rafman. It is a project where famous paintings are used to wallpaper amateur 3D models collected from Google 3D Warehouse. <http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk/brand-new-brand-new-paint-job>
- ⁶ PHOTOSHOP SKILLZ by Anthony Antonellis shows off his 'skillz' animating the tools and filters of Photoshop in his 2011 video. <http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk/photoshop-skillz>
- ⁷ A three-year AHRC funded research project at Tate Britain led by Professor Andrew Dewdney investigated questions of migration, culture and identity as they relate to the heritage sector. <http://process.tateencounters.org>
- ⁸ Rubinstein, Daniel and Sluis, Katrina (2013) Notes on the Margins of Metadata; Concerning the Undecidability of the Digital Image. *Photographies*, 6 (1). pp. 151-158. <http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/6238/>

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