Photography 2
Digital Image and Culture
## Contents

Before you start 5

Introduction 10

### Part One The constructed image

Introduction 17
Project 1 The origins of photomontage 18
Project 2 Through a digital lens 22
Project 3 The found image in photomontage 26
Project 4 Photomontage in the age of the internet 30
Assignment one Combined image 34

### Part two The archive and the found image

Introduction 39
Project 1 The artist as curator 40
Project 2 The artist as archivist 42
Project 3 The digital family album 46
Project 4 The artist and the World Wide Web 52
Assignment two The archive 57

### Part Three We are all photographers now

Introduction 61
Project 1 The dynamic image 63
Project 2 Digitising atrocity 66
Project 3 Re-thinking photojournalism 1: the citizen journalist 73
Project 4 Re-thinking photojournalism 2: ‘post-photojournalism’ 76
Assignment three Critical essay 80

### Part four Digital identities

Introduction 82
Project 1 The ‘digital self’ 83
Project 2 The gaze in the digital age 86
Project 3 Similar but different: memes, cloning and replication 92
Project 4 The selfie revisited: testimony or trophy? 95
Project 5 Sexualised images 98
Assignment 4 Digital identities 1 100
Assignment 5 Digital identities 2 101
Conclusion 102
Assignment six Pre-assessment tutorial 103

## References 105
Before you start

Welcome to Photography 2: Digital Image and Culture.

In recent decades digital imaging technologies have had a profound impact upon myriad aspects of our daily lives, and also on contemporary art and its institutions. In this course, you’ll be introduced to the work of practitioners who exploit the possibilities and potential of digital photography and imaging technologies, and you’ll explore the diverse and complex themes that their work addresses. Alongside tracing the genesis and trajectory of digital photographic art, you’ll examine the various ways that vernacular digital imagery is consumed and disseminated, and consider the wider social, ethical and philosophical implications of these rapidly evolving platforms and processes.

You’ll be encouraged to take exploratory and experimental approaches to making practical work, using both your own photographs and found imagery. This course fosters a conceptual approach to practice, and you’ll expand your awareness of contexts and frameworks in which to develop your personal practice and your creative vision. You’ll further develop your visual communication skills and work to realise your ideas into compelling visual products. You’ll engage in current critical debate and consider relevant social and cultural perspectives in relation to digital imagery, its production and its consumption.

Your OCA Student Handbook should be able to answer most questions about the basics of this course and all other OCA courses so keep this to hand.

Learning outcomes
On successful completion of the course you’ll be able to:
• demonstrate detailed knowledge of visual and conceptual strategies in digital photographic practice and explore your own critical digital photographic projects
• demonstrate an awareness of the wider social and cultural contexts in which the digital image operates and discuss relevant ethical perspectives in relation to your own practice
• explore and realise a range of ideas and creative starting points, and exercise judgement in the production of visual material
• manage learning resources, conduct self-directed contextual and visual research, and appraise your progress with increasing confidence
• demonstrate increasing autonomy and a developing personal voice, exercise your communication skills confidently and interact effectively within a learning group.

Even if you don’t intend to submit your work for assessment, it’s useful to take ownership of these outcomes to aid your learning and use as a means of self-assessment. You can check your progress against the learning outcomes in your learning log, when you review your progress against each assignment.
Your tutor
Your tutor is your main point of contact with the OCA. Before you start work, make sure that you’re clear about your tuition arrangements. The OCA system is explained in some detail in your Student Handbook.

If you haven’t already done so, please write a paragraph or two about your experience to date. Add background information about anything that you think may be relevant for your tutor to know about you (your profile) – your experience of photography so far, your reasons for starting this course and what you hope to achieve from it.

Email your profile to your tutor as soon as possible. This will help them to understand how best to support you during the course. Arrange with your tutor how you’ll deal with any queries that arise between assignments. This will usually be by email or phone.

At the end of each part of the course you’ll complete an assignment and send it to your tutor for feedback. Reflect carefully on your tutor feedback and, if appropriate, go back to the assignment and make adjustments to it based on your tutor’s comments. If you submit for assessment, making such adjustments demonstrates responsiveness and learning and will help improve your mark. Note down what you’ve done differently, and why, in your learning log.

Studying with OCA
If you haven’t already done so, now is a good time to work through the free introductory course ‘An Introduction to Studying in HE’ on the OCA student website. Don’t be tempted to skip this introductory course; it contains valuable advice on study skills (e.g. reading, note-taking), research methods and academic conventions which will stand you in good stead throughout your studies.

The OCA website will be a key resource for you during your studies so, if you’re new to OCA, take some time to familiarise yourself with it. Log onto the OCA student website and go Link 1. Watch the video and make notes.
Your learning log
Your learning log is an integral part of this and every other OCA course.

Use your learning log to record your progress through the course. Your learning log should contain:
• your thoughts on the work you produce for each exercise
• your ideas and observations as you work through the course
• your reflections on the reading you do and any research you carry out
• your tutor’s reports on assignments and your reactions to these.

Even if you’ve used a hard-copy learning log in the past, for this course you should set up your learning log as an online blog. This blog will document your work for the exercises and assignments and provide links to research material. Setting up a blog is easy using the OCA Wordpress template which you’ll find in the ‘Resources’ section of the OCA student site. You’ll also find study guides to keeping a learning log and setting up a learning blog.

You may want to keep an optional research folder to store things like material you pick up at exhibitions or galleries, cuttings from newspapers or magazines, etc.

Planning ahead
This Level 2 course represents 600 hours of learning time. The course should take about a year and a half to complete if you spend around 8 hours each week on it.

As with all OCA courses, these course materials are intended to be used flexibly but keep your tutor fully informed about your progress. You’ll need to allow extra time if you decide to have your work formally assessed.

Photography 2: Digital Image and Culture is divided into four parts. There are six course assignments:
• Assignments One and Two are practical assignments.
• Assignment Three asks you to write a 2,500-word critical essay on an aspect of digital photographic culture. You can choose from one of four topics, or decide on your own in consultation with your tutor.
• Assignments Four and Five are devoted to producing a project on ‘digital identities’. You’ll start this in Assignment Four and resolve it in Assignment Five in the light of your tutor’s feedback.
• Assignment Six is your pre-assessment review – preparing your work for assessment.

Each part of the course addresses a different issue or topic and is separated into projects designed to tackle the topic in bite-sized chunks. As well as information and advice, each project offers exercises and research tasks that slowly build up and feed into the assignments that you’ll send to your tutor.

The first assignment has a diagnostic element and is designed to give your tutor a feel for your work at an early stage in the course.
Thinking about assessment

Once you’ve completed and submitted your first assignment, you’ll need to decide whether you want to go for formal accreditation at the end of the course, i.e. assessment. Your tutor is there to help you decide. There’s a study guide to assessment and how to get qualified on the OCA student website, with more detailed information about assessment and accreditation. For assessment you’ll need to submit:

• all six assignments as submitted to your tutor plus any amended versions (i.e. amended in the light of tutor feedback)
• your tutor reports
• your blog url.

Please make your original assignments available to the assessors on your blog, exactly as they were submitted to your tutor.

Except for Assignment Four (work in progress), you should submit final, amended versions of your assignments in hard copy, as appropriate to your individual project.

Only work done during the course should be submitted to your tutor or for formal assessment.
Assessment criteria
These are central to the assessment process for this course, so if you’re going to have your work assessed to gain formal credits, please make sure you take note of these criteria and consider how each of the assignments you complete demonstrates evidence of each criterion. On completion of each assignment, and before you send your assignment to your tutor, test yourself against the criteria – in other words, do a self-assessment and see how you think you would do. Write down your findings for each assignment you’ve completed in your learning log, noting all your perceived strengths and weaknesses, taking into account the criteria every step of the way. This will be helpful for your tutor to see, as well as helping you prepare for assessment.

Assessment criteria points
The assessment criteria for this course are as follows:

• **Demonstration of technical and visual skills** (35%) – materials, techniques, observational skills, visual awareness, design and compositional skills.

• **Quality of outcome** (20%) – content, application of knowledge, presentation of work in a coherent manner, discernment, conceptualisation of thoughts, communication of ideas.

• **Demonstration of creativity** (25%) – imagination, experimentation, invention, development of a personal voice.

• **Context** (20%) – reflection, research, critical thinking (learning logs, critical reviews and essays).

Pre-assessment review
If you decide to have your work formally assessed, you’ll need to spend some time at the end of the course preparing your finished work for submission. How you present your work to the assessors is of critical importance and can make the difference between an average mark and an excellent mark. Because of this your tutor is available to guide you on presenting your work. There’s more about this at the end of this course guide (Assignment Six).
Introduction

Since its invention, photography has impressed itself upon both the art world and society. The resemblance of photographic images to their subjects was initially a cause of anxiety for artists, but it is this quality that continues to touch and influence nearly all spheres of culture and society today. Photography is used by virtually all institutions to catalogue and communicate, and it is no exaggeration to suggest that it has become intrinsic to the fabric of our culture, economy and politics.

Because of its prevalence, and its persuasiveness, the photographic image continues to be a topic of controversy and contest: when and where it is appropriate to take photographs; what and who we can take pictures of; whether or how images should be manipulated; when and where they should be published; what they may or may not mean… These are all questions that students and professional photographers must ask themselves. However, they are also questions that come up frequently in everyday conversation and popular culture and are regularly debated in the media. Like it or not, we are all stakeholders in photography; photography connects all of us.

Until now, you’ve mostly explored the techniques and processes associated with photography and applied these to particular genres and visual strategies to construct meaning and narrative. You’ll have ample opportunity to continue to develop your practice in this way (you may already have found an approach or field of photography you wish to pursue), but Digital Image and Culture differs slightly in that it takes a deeper look at the medium of photography itself, both historically and in its current, rapidly-evolving forms.

Course overview
The first part of the course looks at the notion of the constructed image, from an historical starting point and early combination printing techniques, to the first use of digital processes by artists in the 1980s and 90s. You’ll start to look at the impact of the internet and see how artists have employed both rudimentary technologies and more complex digital processes to make work addressing various themes.

Part Two expands upon the use of found imagery. You’ll take on board the concept of the artist as curator and explore the creative use of archives of various kinds, including the family album.

Part Three examines the prevalence of the digital image, and in particular questions our relationship to images of humiliation and violence. We also explore the impact of digital photography upon photojournalism. At this point in the course you’ll write a critical essay on an aspect of digital photography and culture.

The final part explores the relationship between the digital image and our individual identity. We discuss the notion of the ‘gaze’ and explore the increasing complexity of our digital existence alongside our physical one.
‘Post-photography’
Although this course takes into account the broad history of photography, the principal period we shall be exploring here is what W.J.T. Mitchell, in his influential book *The Reconfigured Eye* (1994), describes as the ‘post-photographic era’.

You might assume that the term ‘post-photographic era’ would define a more recent period than the mid-1990s. We tend to think of the ‘digital revolution’ in relation to photography on two fronts:

1. The plasticity of the digital image – which wrongly assumes that the analogue photographic image is neither malleable nor prone to deception.
2. The increased democracy of the digital image, ever more accessible and available in all respects. With the increased availability of the internet (in the UK, from the late 1990s), this second and more recent development continues to evolve apace. A key piece of work in this area is Fred Ritchin’s *After Photography*, which considers, and optimistically proposes, the democratic potential of the digital image, and its associated applications and platforms, to oppose institutions and governments.

There are as many ways to consider the conditions of this ‘post-photographic era’ as there are specialisms and uses of photography within our daily lives. We can choose to see digital photography as simply a technological progression within the medium, much like any other. After all, a photograph of something will usually still communicate the same thing, whether it was shot on film or on a digital camera. However, beneath the visible surface – and beyond it – we can, and in this course we will, examine the myriad implications of these differences.

‘Digital photography’ or ‘digital imaging’?
Significantly, much of Mitchell’s narrative is around the development of the digital image, encompassing its origins in Russell A. Kirsch’s laboratory in the mid-1950s and the range of processes that enable, for instance, astronomical images to be rendered. One of the first distinctions we should explore before we begin is what we mean by ‘photography’ and by ‘digital imaging’. For many people and institutions the term ‘photography’ is redundant or anachronistic. The police service, for example, has retired the term ‘photography’ to describe the activity of their forensic photographers, and replaced it with ‘digital imaging’, to more accurately reflect the diversity of their methods and processes of obtaining visual data, including moving image as well as more specialist processes like infrared and thermal imaging.

Many of the practitioners discussed in this course, and indeed many others, participate within the broad discourse of ‘contemporary photography’ or call themselves ‘photographic artists’ while employing all manner of imaging equipment, software and techniques. Although we anticipate that most students will continue along relatively traditional creative trajectories (i.e. ‘lens-based’ photography), you should consider creative possibilities beyond this and, as always, push your practice forward in terms of processes, techniques and technologies.
While you should always work closely with your tutor, and always be prepared to justify your creative choices, if you find yourself asking ‘does my idea fit within a “photography” course?’; then the answer will be ‘yes’! (Probably. And within reason!) You should aim to explore the boundaries and parameters of the digital image, test your preconceptions and embrace innovation.

**Course structure and expectations**
If this is your first Level 2 course, you may find the expectation that you’ll take ownership of your self-directed assignment briefs challenging to begin with. There is a summary of the assignment task at the beginning of each part of the course. As soon as you start working on a particular part of the course, you should consider yourself as working on that assignment. You’re expected to develop your idea – both practically and conceptually – over the course of the projects in that part of the course; developing these three practical assignment tasks, plus an essay (Assignment Three), should be the main focus of your creative output throughout each part. You should document the evolution of your projects (test shoots, contact sheets and evaluation) within your learning log as you progress. While there are some practical exercises throughout the course, the majority of the tasks are centred on reading set texts or watching certain videos, and writing short reflective pieces within your learning log.

**Separating the wheat from the chaff**
As with your previous courses, we expect you to conduct independent research by reading reviews, blogs and articles in addition to those listed in the course materials. For some of the reasons outlined above, digital photography and digital culture are very popular topics and identifying useful, scholarly critical articles from more journalistic commentary and comment is a key skill. Exercising good judgement in terms of your choice of sources is particularly important when it comes to researching and writing your critical essay in Part Three. A list of ‘reliable’ journals, websites and blogs is supplied in the reading list at the end of this course guide. (Although they’re ‘reliable’, you’re free to disagree with the opinions articulated within them). However, when you’re looking at content published elsewhere, consider these basic criteria to assess the usefulness of an article:

- What are the author’s credentials?
- Does the publication have an editor? Has the article been peer reviewed?
- How sophisticated is the language used?
- Has the author substantiated or illustrated their arguments or ideas?
- How recent is the article? Are the ideas current or relevant?
- What is the relevance of the topic to the publication? How frequently does the author write about the topic?
- Is there any kind of ‘agenda’ to the article? Is it an ‘advertorial’ or some other form of spin or PR?

Be aware, though, that even ‘bad’ sources can have their uses: they might provide you with a *vox populi* or give you a counterpoint for an argument, for example.
You’ve been provided with two books to accompany the course:


You’ll be directed to read sections of these at relevant points in your studies. You’ll find the rest of the required reading in the Resources section of the student website. Some of these texts will be more challenging than others. Making notes of the points as you read is a good way to ensure a ‘close’ reading of a text. You may need to re-read a text if it is particularly challenging. If you’re stuck on a particular point in an essay, consider posting a question on the Digital Image and Culture forum on the student website Link 2. You should also use the forum (as well as your tutor) to ask what articles and sources your fellow students have found if you’re stuck for sources on a particular topic.

Referencing your reading
Whenever you read something that you might want to refer to in your projects and assignments, get into the habit of taking down the full reference to the book, article or website straight away. You must fully reference any other work you draw on if you plan to go for formal assessment. To do this you should use the Harvard referencing system. You’ll find guides to academic referencing on the OCA student website. Getting down the full reference at the time will save you the frustration of having to hunt for the details of a half-remembered reference long after the event – and ensure that you don’t inadvertently plagiarise someone else’s work.

Finally… be social!
Some of you may feel jaded by or sceptical of social networks and aspects of digital culture. Others may not yet have even tried using a learning blog. Given the content of this course, you are strongly encouraged to embrace all things socially networked and embedded within digital culture. In order to gain an appreciation for many of the topics discussed in this course, you’ll benefit greatly from first-hand experience with applications and websites such as Twitter, Facebook and Flickr. As with your previous OCA courses, do engage with your peers and continue to build virtual as well as face-to-face networks (where possible) to help support and sustain your studies and your practice.

Please see the guidelines on ‘netiquette’ and on how to network with other OCA students.
Link 3
Before you start working on Part One, try this preliminary exercise.

**Exercise**

We all encounter photographs on a daily basis. For a few decades now, commentators have talked about a ‘flood’ or a constant ‘bombardment’ of images, permeating ever deeper into our lives. Depending of course on where you live, the intensity of this will vary a great deal. To try to get a sense of this, dip your toe into the floodwater and re-photograph every photographic image that you encounter on a single day.

The quality of the image doesn’t matter – use a camera phone or compact camera. You should include videos as well as still photographs; just shoot one frame to document a sequence.

- Construct a grid or compile a contact sheet of all your images.
- Write a short reflective piece in your learning log about this exercise. What have you learned from this exercise? Has it alarmed you? Has it confirmed any preconceptions? What do most of the images you encountered show? Does this tell you anything about the environment you live in?
Part One
The constructed image

Stan Dickinson, *Cricket Matches*, 2013
Use the grid below to keep track of your progress throughout Part One.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Complete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The origins of photomontage</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Through a digital lens</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The found image in photomontage</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Photomontage in the age of the internet</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The sweeping changes brought in by the introduction of digital imaging have revolutionised photography. Rather than signalling an end for the medium, these changes have reinvented it, creating a new generation of artists who use the medium in a provocative, powerful or playful way. In this first part of the course, you’ll begin to develop an understanding of the impact that digital culture has made on photography, and use a variety of techniques to make your own experiments within digital practice. You’ll explore the history and role of constructed images in digital culture and look at some key practitioners who produce images using a wide variety of digital means.

Your assignment will be to produce two series of 4–6 images that incorporate some of the techniques you’ve discovered in the work of the artists explored in Part One. One series should use traditional cut and paste techniques, the other digital montage techniques. Please turn to the end of Part One now and read the assignment instructions carefully. You may find it useful to print it out and pin it up over your work area so that you can refer to it throughout your work on this part of the course.

Photography has always been sensitive to technological change but it is fair to say that we, in our lifetime, have seen one of the most fundamental changes in the medium in its relatively short history. The introduction of the computer into the studio – and the subsequent introduction of the digital camera – has ushered in new and innovative ways of working with photography.

What makes a digital or algorithmic image different from an analogue one? One of the primary differences between the two is that the digital image is endlessly reproducible without any loss of quality. It is infinitely malleable and easily transferable from one carrier to another. As Daniel Rubinstein suggests in his essay ‘Digitally Yours’, the digital or algorithmic image is also one that often exists only as a digital artefact and not, for example, as a print:

Unlike its predecessor, the digital image is a matrix of digits, a mathematical equation, a binary sequence which can be recorded to disk, transmitted electronically as a stream of data and construed as a visual pattern by algorithms which control the way the image will appear on a display device. Following this line of thought, the difference between an analogue and a digital photograph can be expressed as follows: An analogue photograph is both an object and an image.¹

However, all of the artists we look at here are interested in producing printed images from digital and found materials. In doing so, they allowing us to pause and consider the ways in which we consume images today.

Project 1 The origins of photomontage

Photography has been subject to manipulation since its birth and its history has been inextricably linked to science, chemistry and engineering. (Photography’s founding father, Henry Fox Talbot, worked closely with Charles Babbage, whose inventions paved the way for contemporary computing.) Often, early photographs signalled a desire to capture an aspect of the world, such as movement, before it was possible consistently to do so.

In Oscar Gustave Rejlander’s The Juggler (1865) a young man is depicted casually juggling a number of balls.

The unnaturally even spacing of the flying balls, their sharp focus without a hint of blurriness, and the relaxed, even blasé expression of the juggler combine to convince the viewer that this is not live action, but a facsimile. This image is probably a composite print, made artificially in the studio by combining a negative of the figure with one or more of the balls printed into the area above him.

As Phillip Prodger notes in Time Stands Still: Muybridge and the Instantaneous Photography Movement, the kind of instantaneity suggested in The Juggler (i.e. the kind that could freeze rapid action) remained elusive throughout this period and would only come later, with the advancements ushered in by Muybridge. (Hand-held cameras with high shutter speeds would transform the subject matter of photography, with exposure times decreasing from 40 seconds in 1850 to a fraction of a second by the time Harold Edgerton shot the famous milk drop exploding into a corona in 1957.)

Rejlander’s image depicted something that was – at that point – beyond the limits of the camera. However, the Industrial Revolution was creating a need to depict speed and movement and it would not be long before Eadweard Muybridge stepped out of the wings with his experiments with electronic shutter releases.

With its ‘staged’ appearance, The Juggler is perhaps more reminiscent of a Victorian painting than a photograph and in many ways this image is emblematic of Pictorialism – a term coined to describe photographs from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century which moved beyond the concept of a photograph as a mere depiction of ‘reality’. One of the most recognisable images from this
movement is Henry Peach Robinson’s *Fading Away* (1858). This made use of five negatives and combination printing techniques to depict a young girl dying of consumption. Today, this image looks obviously doctored, but to a Victorian sensibility the image was controversial; death by consumption was not considered a suitable subject for photography. The allegorical compositions of the Pictorialists relate directly back to the history of painting.

As photography developed, confidence in the medium’s intrinsic value grew and distinctive genres began to emerge within the medium. The often backward-looking approach of the Pictorialists eventually gave way to the Modernist movement of the early 1920s which ushered in an intense period of experimentation for photography. Led by the pioneering Bauhaus School and artist László Moholy-Nagy, this group – with their experimental and playful approach to the photographic image – were to pave the way for a generation of digital practitioners who, instead of scissors, light and glue, began to work with the camera, software and the pixel.

Please go to the student website and read:

• Chapter 8 ‘Obedient Numbers, Soft Delight’ from Geoffrey Batchen (2002)


You should also read Joan Fontcuberta’s essay ‘I Knew the Spice Girls’ (pp. 56–63) from the collection Fontcuberta, J. (2014) *Pandora’s Camera: Photogr@phy after Photography*, London: MACK, provided with your course materials.
The layered image

The technique of layering – the placing of one or more images over another to make a second image – has been in continuous use by artist-photographers since the end of the nineteenth century. Early photographers such as Rejlander used layering techniques to evoke painterly compositions. Later, these techniques were used to great effect by the Surrealists and the Bauhaus group to convey ideas that could not be expressed within the single frame.

The arrival of digital imaging, with its ability easily to separate an image into its constituent layers, opened up a Pandora’s box for artist-photographers. Now any image could be manipulated and layered on top of another to create a seamless composite. In 1980, US artist Nancy Burson was one of the first to produce an influential series of composite portraits using digital techniques:

In 1968 she began to consider a project of producing computer generated portraits that could add the development of ageing onto the faces. Her concept was not totally possible until the late 1970s when computer scanning of images was developed. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was interested in her ideas and in 1978 MIT and Burson were making the first ‘aged’ portraits. This process was labour intensive and slow and it was not until 1982 that the processing speed was increased. 2

As digital techniques became more sophisticated, many began to experiment with layering. Today, contemporary photographic practice is suffused by artists using this technique, including Esther Teichmann, Corinne Vionnnet, Idris Kahn and Helen Sear.

British-based artist Idris Kahn overlays multiple texts or musical scores to create intriguing single-frame compositions. Working almost exclusively in monochrome, Kahn uses multiple layers to construct highly complex compositions.

Read about Idris Kahn’s work at Link 1.

Welsh artist Helen Sear uses manipulation, layering and colour to create highly aesthetic images where the interplay of subject and ground is constantly in play. Both Kahn and Sear use the digital layer as a fundamental part of their creative process.

Read Jesse Alexander’s blog post on Helen Sear’s work at Link 2.

---

2 Nancy Burson, ‘Big Brother’ www.vam.ac.uk/users/node/2583 [accessed 04.06.15]
Helen Sear, from *Beyond the View* series
Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

**Exercise 1.1**

Using the list of artists given above as inspiration, create a series of six to eight images using layering techniques. To accompany your final images, also produce a 500-word blog post on the work of one contemporary artist-photographer who uses layering techniques. (This can be any of the artists cited in any section of *Digital Image and Culture*.)
Project 2 Through a digital lens

The introduction in the late 1980s of professional digital backs suitable for rendering high-quality images meant that many artists working with photography now turned towards digital methods of production. Canadian artist Jeff Wall was one of the first and most established photographers to experiment with digital imaging in relation to photography. He often produced large-scale photographic works which referred directly to the history of painting. (Wall trained initially as an art historian). Wall’s early images were presented not as paper prints but rather as large-scale transparencies mounted in light boxes. In changing the method of display, Wall was searching – from the late 80s on – for a better way to express developments in the technical world. These were changes that he believed traditional autographic photography was not capable of expressing.

Jeff Wall, A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai), 1993, transparency in lightbox 229.0 x 377.0
Courtesy of the artist.

For Wall, applying this technique to photographic material is a process akin to cinematography. In common with film, the image on a light box relies on a hidden space from which light emanates to be seen. Wall believes that this inaccessible space produces an ‘experience of two places, two worlds in one moment; providing a source of disassociation, alienation and power.’

Wall often uses digital techniques to make reference to existing compositional structures within painting, as seen in one of his most recognisable (and complex) digital photographs, A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai) (1993).

3 www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/wall-a-sudden-gust-of-wind-after-hokusai-t06951
[accessed 04.06.15]
This image takes its inspiration from an 1832 series of woodcuts, *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* by Japanese painter and printmaker Katsushika Hokusai, and re-stages it for a new millennium. Using local actors, Wall produced tableaux that mimicked its original source. As with many of Wall's works, the digital interventions are intended to be seamless, allowing the narrative structure of the image itself to remain to the fore. The resulting image is both fantastical and believable. In *After Hokusai* Wall shows us that our belief in photography as a mirror on reality is misplaced. Rather, photography is a highly subjective medium, which can, like painting, bring disparate elements together to create a fictional whole.

The relationship of photography to painting is further explored in the digital practice of Wendy McMurdo. McMurdo's experimentation with digital practice began in the early 90s with her project *In a Shaded Place – The Digital and the Uncanny* (1995). This project looked at the relationship to authenticity and originality in the face of an emerging digital culture. Using the image of the doppelgänger or double to explore issues of identity in a digital world, McMurdo produced a series of digitally montaged interiors where the figures of children, one ‘real’ and the other not, appeared to meet an alternative self. The children pictured in McMurdo's photographs represented the first generation of 'digital natives' – children who would grow up in a digital world, which would affect almost every aspect of their lives. ⁴


⁴ For a definition and discussion of 'digital natives' see: https://comminfo.rutgers.edu/~tefko/Courses/e553/Readings/Selwyn%20dig%20natives,%20Aslib%20Proceedings%202009.pdf [accessed 0.4.06.15]
Both Wall and McMurdo use digital montage to refer back to the narrative traditions of tableaux painting and also to critique the status of the photographic image as document. Their work often references previous works of art (usually painting); in doing so, their work is emblematic of a post-modern generation that frequently re-presents or alludes to the work of others. This has been an important strategy for artists since the beginning of photography and has been further developed by Japanese artist Hisaji Hara. In his series of expertly-staged tableaux entitled *A Photographic Portrayal of the Paintings of Balthus*, he takes the strange and mannequin-like gestures of the figures in the works of painter Balthus as a starting point and re-uses these gestures to create his own referential photographic tableaux.
Wall, McMurdo and Hara use medium- or large-format cameras to produce their highly detailed images which are often displayed as large-scale prints. The work is often carefully lit and then composed. In this sense, their work, like that of the earliest photographic experimenters (Rejlander, Peach Robinson, etc.), refers back to the pictorial traditions of painting. However, rather than mimicking existing tableaux, artists such as Hara extract a gesture or particular pose or action that evokes a memory of that image. They then take this fragment and re-make the image through their own lens. The resulting work could in some ways be described as ‘an image of an image’, but by using radically different techniques, Hara re-works Balthus’ image and in so doing creates something new.


Watch American artist Daniel Gordon discuss his work and his digital montage methods at [Link 3].

Exercise 1.2
Discuss a photograph that takes an existing work of art as its starting point. Write a 500-word reflection on your chosen piece in your learning log.

Next, re-make an existing work of art using photography. This can be a simple re-staging – using photography – of an existing painting, drawing or print (see, for example, Sam Taylor-Wood’s Dutch still life-inspired Still Life video portrait at [Link 4]) or a more elaborate figurative tableau (like that of Hara).
Project 3 The found image in photomontage

Since the arrival in the early twentieth century of readily available printed photographic matter in the form of mass-produced newspaper and magazine reproductions, artists have used and re-used photographic material to make their own work. One of the most important of these was German-born artist Hannah Höch (1889–1978). Höch, along with her fellow Dadaists, used print media and found photography from a variety of sources to produce politically motivated images using collage and montage.

Whenever we want to force this photo matter to yield new forms we must be prepared for a journey of discovery. We must start without any preoccupations; most of all, we must be open to the beauties of fortuity.


In her use of found images from contemporary media, Höch’s work both incorporates and critiques the media culture that surrounded her at that time. In her series From the Ethnographic Museum, she combined reproductions of tribal statues in museum catalogues with images of eyes and limbs cut from contemporary magazines to produce an unsettling series of cut-up bodies which reflected on the colonial attitudes of the time.

Hannah Höch, Double Vision, c.1928 (collage)
Photomontage was embraced by the Dadaists in the Weimar Republic from the post-World War I period onwards, but had existed since the birth of photography itself, and often for political ends. Höch noted:

*For decades photojournalism has used photographs to cut up very modestly but quite consciously, often pasting on parts of photographs whenever it felt a need to do so. For example, when a potentate was welcomed in Trochtelborn, and the journalistic photo taken on the spot was not impressive enough, various groups of people from different photographs were glued to it, and the sheet was photographed again, thus creating an immense crowd when in reality the welcoming crowd was only a male choir.*

Photomontage was used to devastating political effect by German artist John Heartfield (1891–1968) whose anti-Fascist photomontages are some of the most influential works ever produced in this medium. Like Höch, Heartfield used found image and text to create a powerful anti-Fascist commentary; these ideas were then disseminated in a variety of forms. The manipulations of both Höch and Heartfield were purposefully crude. Whilst carefully composed, their aim was not to deceive the eye but rather to get their ideas across in as immediate a way as possible.

Photomanipulation was of course also used to different ends. The close relationship between photographic manipulation and politics is explored in W.J.T. Mitchell’s *The Reconfigured Eye*. Mitchell gives several examples of photographs submitted as evidence at trials but later discovered to be manipulated and therefore worthless as evidence.
Peter Kennard follows in the tradition of Höch and Heartfield and uses both analogue and digital montage to question socio-political structures. In *Haywain with Cruise Missile* (1980) Kennard inserted three nuclear warheads into a reproduction of John Constable’s portrayal of an idyllic East Anglian scene, *The Hay Wain* (1821). The impetus for this work was the proposal to base US cruise missiles in rural East Anglia. Using simple and direct compositional techniques, Kennard effectively conveys his message.

**Peter Kennard, *Haywain with Cruise Missile*, 1981, Photomontage, Tate collection**

- Read a review of Hannah Höch’s 2014 exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in London at Link 5
- Read Sabine Kreibel’s essay ‘Manufacturing Discontent: John Heartfield’s Mass Medium’ at Link 6
Exercise 1.3

Listen to Peter Kennard talking about *Photo Op*, a piece made in collaboration with Cat Picton-Phillipps, at [Link 7](#).

If you can, look also at British artist Lisa Barnard’s recent book *Chateau Despair*. Barnard used found archival news images of ex-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher alongside shots of the then Conservative HQ to construct her narrative. See [Link 8](#).

To complete this exercise, use readily available images to make a short narrative series of four to six collages based on a recent or contemporary news event.
Project 4 Photomontage in the age of the internet

The arrival of affordable digital cameras in the late 1990s, along with the accelerated growth of the internet and the development of mobile devices, had a profound impact on a new generation of artist-photographers keen to reflect on the changing world around them. British artist Eva Stenram uses digital technologies to explore how both photography and the ways in which we use the internet play a large part in the representation of desire and human sexuality. Here, the artist describes her Drape series (2011, ongoing):

*Drape* uses vintage pin-up photographs as its source material. These photographs, probably mostly from the 1950s and 60s, depict women that are posed in interior (semi-) domestic sets in front of curtains or drapes. After scanning these pin-up photographs, the curtains or drapes were digitally extended in order to partially obscure the women. The background (the drapes or curtains) and foreground (the model’s body) are exchanged and this digital manipulation causes a rupture within the scene. Once the backdrop falls in front of the model, showing just parts of her body, our voyeuristic desire becomes clearer. By deflecting and redirecting the viewer’s gaze, our attention is drawn to the rest of the scene that sets the fantasy, yet often remains overlooked.  

Stenram is one of a growing number of artists working with found material. Her constructed images are made up of material, often found online, which is then scanned and manipulated on-screen. The resulting images are represented as photographic prints.

---

5 www.evastenram.co.uk/pages/mumdraped.htm [accessed 04.06.15]
British artist Stephen Gill works in a similar way, scanning and re-photographing images alongside objects found on location. In his Hackney Flowers projects, Gill uses fragments of organic material (flowers, etc.) along with photographs to give a poetic and multi-layered picture of life in Hackney Marshes.

Watch Stephen Gill describe his exhibition Best Before End at Foam, Amsterdam, at Link 9

Hear Eva Stenram discuss her Drape series at Link 10

Gill is a highly experimental photographer who often rips, tears, folds and even burns the photographic image to create the effects he wants. These strategies are present also in the work of another British artist, John Stezaker. Stezaker uses the cut and the tear to uncomfortable effect, forcing connections between previously unconnected images. In Marriage LXI he splices together two found photographs, originally intended as publicity shots. In bringing these two images together to create a third meaning, Stezaker suggests that the identities created in these publicity shorts are both constructed and infinitely interchangeable.
Look at the image below by student Stan Dickinson and read what he has got to say about his series of work, *Cricket Matches*.

The assignment brief, written with a journalistic ‘leaning’, was to photograph an event, but this series subverts the idea that photo-journalism is the only way to present visual imagery in response to events. It references collage, still life, and postmodern appropriation; it uses images and graphics from internet research, news publications and second hand books; and it combines physical ‘cut and paste’ construction with digital manipulation. The outcome is a series of large-scale photographic prints that do celebrate a history of cricket between England and Australia, but also pose questions about social and cultural change and, above all, consider how photographic artists might create meaning within the torrent of 21st century images.
Read:

- David Campany’s Deutsche Börse essay on John Stezaker at [Link 11](#)
- ‘Why do we call it Love when we mean Sex?’ in the collection *Pandora’s Camera*, provided with your course materials.
Assignment one

Combined image

Produce either a series of four to six portraits (looking at Stezaker and Stenram) or a series of four to six landscape-based images based on your immediate surroundings (as with Gill’s Hackney Marshes series). Complete Parts 1 and 2 of the assignment and upload the finished images to your learning log together with a short reflection (500–1,000 words) on your motivations, references and methods for both parts of the assignment.

Part 1
Use traditional ‘cut and paste’ techniques (scissors/scalpel and glue) to produce a series of simple photomontages using elements from two to five original or found photographs. These can be found images and/or images that you’ve shot yourself. Re-photograph your finished photomontages and present the work in your learning log as a digital file.

Part 2
Using digital montage techniques (Photoshop or similar image-editing software) produce a digital montage using elements from a minimum of two and a maximum of five digital files. Use components that you have shot yourself rather than found images for this exercise.

Here are some further online resources that you might find useful:
Listen to Daniel Gordon discuss his digital portraiture with MOMA curator Eva Respini: Link 12
Hisaji Hara: Link 13
Hannah Höch: Link 14
Peter Kennard’s Photo Op and censorship: Link 15, Link 16
Eva Stenram: Link 17, Link 18
Jeff Wall: Link 19, Link 20, Link 21
Contemporary photographic collage: Link 22

Reflection
Before you send your work to your tutor, check it against the assessment criteria listed in the introduction to this course guide and make sure that it meets all the criteria.

Your tutor may take a while to get back to you so carry on with the course while you’re waiting.

Reworking your assignment
Following feedback from your tutor, you may wish to rework some of your assignment, especially if you plan to submit your work for formal assessment. If you do this, make sure you reflect on what you’ve done and why in your learning log.
Photography 2

Part two

The archive and the found image in digital culture

Manipulated found image
Use the grid below to keep track of your progress throughout Part Two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Complete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The artist as curator</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The artist as archivist</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The digital family album</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The artist and the World Wide Web</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research point</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

In Part Two, you’ll explore the important role of the archive and the found image in contemporary photographic culture. In particular, you’ll look at the ways in which a new generation of artist-photographers is using the worldwide archive of the internet to produce new work that looks beyond the single frame by re-purposing, re-contextualising and re-working existing images.

Your assignment will be to produce a series of related images that use a readily available online archive (or archives) as their starting point or subject. You’ll present these in a small book (at least 12 double pages). Please turn to the end of Part Two now and read the assignment instructions carefully. As in Part One, you may find it useful to print it out and pin it up over your work area so that you can refer to it throughout your work on this part of the course.
Project 1 The artist as curator

What I would suggest to a lot of young people who want to become photographers in a post-modern world is that they can become photographers of images. They are the ones who frame what is important on Flickr. They can say that these 50 images need to be looked at today so that we are not swamped by thousands or millions of images to look at.

(Ritchin, 2008)

It is easy to understand why artists have become increasingly interested in the use of the found image. With the advent of digital imaging and the internet, photographs spin around us at an increasing rate. Why then take an image of our own? As photographer and writer Fred Ritchin implies above, the role of editing has never been more critical. More images are released now than at any point in history and we, as photographers, must find new strategies of working with them. As Ritchin suggests, it is perhaps only through the act of editing – controlling what is left in and what is left out – that we can begin to make sense of the image in the digital world.

In this part of the course, we’ll look at the work of two artist-curators whose work in understanding the photo archive in the digital age has been highly influential to a new generation of artists, the German artist Joachim Schmid and Dutch-born designer Erik Kessels.

Schmid became interested in working both with the archive and with vernacular photography whilst browsing in the flea markets of Berlin in the 1980s. From the material he found there (vernacular snapshots, images shot in the suburbs of Berlin, etc.) he began to identify certain themes emerging. Sifting through the photographs in his collection, it became clear that there are certain things that we habitually photograph. Children in prams, swans on lakes and photographs of birthday cakes – all appeared in the images, again and again.

In his collecting, Schmid was not looking for the aesthetic or historical qualities of any one image or artist, but instead sought to use amateur photography to create a larger picture. Every photograph he found on any subject – photographs of television sets in the corner of living rooms, for example – would be grouped together within one frame. As single images, the photographs might mean little to those coming across them. When viewed as a group, however, these images take on new meaning. Like fragments of a jigsaw puzzle, they come together to show the larger picture.

As an artist-curator collecting outside the constriction and bias of the institution, Schmid paved the way for a new generation similarly interested in exploring the role of photography as ‘evidence’ of broader social impulses. Rather than rely on one photograph to tell us the ‘truth’ about any given incident, he suggests, we can call on multiple viewpoints. We can use photography as data to build a more democratic picture of any given point in time.
Read the essay ‘Archive Noises’ in Fontcuberta, J. (2014) Pandora’s Camera – Photogr@phy after Photography, London: MACK, provided with your course materials.

**Research point 1**
Read Sharon Boothroyd’s interview with Joachim Schmid at [Link 1](#)

Listen to Joachim Schmid talking about his collection and curation of discarded vernacular photography at [Link 2](#)

**Exercise 2.1**
Bring together a series of 12 images (a typology) in which a particular motif appears again and again. For this exercise, you may use found images (images you have at home as part of a family archive, for example) or images found online (from photo-sharing sites such as Flickr, for example). Select an appropriate way to display your series (as an animated slide presentation, in grid form, as single images, etc.) and present them on your learning log.

Look at the work of Corinne Vionnet. In her series *Photo Opportunities*, Vionnet uses Flickr archives to pull together vast series of images taken from a similar position in popular tourist sites. She then uses digital layering techniques to bring these images together into the one frame. See [Link 3](#)
Project 2 The artist as archivist

I don’t see any necessity in producing images myself – everything that I would need exists, it’s just about finding it.

( Oliver Laric )

Today, unsurprisingly perhaps, Schmid looks to what is now the largest archive of vernacular imagery for source material for his work – the internet. A trip to a flea market today is unlikely to uncover the volumes of discarded photographs that Schmid and Kessels found in the 1980s and 90s. Since 2000, the arrival of the digital camera has meant that we’re more likely to store images online than to print them out to paper. The supply of vernacular photography has shifted from the street to the World Wide Web.

We use photography to document our daily lives more now than at any point in the history of the medium. Today, however, we’re more likely to put our hand into our pocket and take out a camera phone than we are a digital camera. How does this change in the way we take images affect their content? What is the difference between a photograph taken on a camera phone and one taken on a camera (digital or otherwise)? After all, both can now produce images of good quality.

One of the main differences in the way we document each other on a day-to-day basis lies in the speed with which we do so. This shift in the method of production mirrors earlier developments. Each successive technological advance in photography’s relatively short history has been related to duration (quicker shutter speeds and shorter exposure times, etc.), with every aspect of the operation of producing an image becoming faster and faster.

---

See also ‘The Real Thing / Interview with Oliver Laric’, Art Pulse magazine
http://artpulsemagazine.com/the-real-thing-interview-with-oliver-laric [accessed 04.06.15]
This momentum continues with the evolution of the camera phone where the image can be taken, transmitted and shared in almost the same moment. These easily shared images are rarely translated into photographic prints, however. Rather they are designed as ephemeral markers of mood or place, destined primarily for social media or online photo-sharing sites. These images circulate on the internet where, just like those Schmid found at the flea markets, they can be picked up and re-circulated by others.

Are people photographing the same things as those pictured in the photographs collected by Schmid in the 1980s? People do continue to point their camera at their families and at those around them – typically at key events in their lives. A Google image search for ‘cutting the cake’ reveals the social conventions that accompany marriage and the traditional cake-cutting ceremony, for example. These don’t give us much information as single images, but when grouped together, they begin to give us clues about social structures that go beyond the single image.

The album as archive
Like Schmid, Dutch designer, curator and artist Erik Kessels has worked with the found vernacular image for many years. And also like Schmid, Kessels began to collect amateur photographs – mainly discarded photo albums – at second-hand markets across Europe. In his highly influential series of projects *In Almost Every Picture*, he presents various series of found images in book form. Most remarkable from this series is book #7, which shows a series of photographs taken of a young girl from age 16 through to old age, as she made annual visits to a fairground shooting range in the Netherlands.

*In almost every picture #7 tells the story of a Dutch woman whose life is seen from the point of view of a fairground shooting gallery. The chronological series begins in 1936, when a 16-year-old girl from Tilburg in Holland picks up a gun and shoots at the target in a shooting gallery. Every time she hits the target, it triggers the shutter of a camera and a portrait of the girl in firing pose is taken and given as a prize.*

*And so a lifelong love affair with the shooting gallery begins. This series documents almost every year of the woman’s life (there is a conspicuous pause from 1939 to 1945) up until present times. At the age of 88 Ria van Dijk still makes her pilgrimage to the Shooting Gallery. In Almost Every Picture #7 is a biography of one woman’s life from an unusual perspective, one which allows us to witness the times she lived in, as well as acting as a revealing look at the changing face of photography through the decades.*

---

The role of chance or mistake in photography
The other books in Kessel’s *In Almost Every Picture* series focus on different themes: a family’s pictures of its Dalmatian dog (#5), a woman’s record of 60 years of passport pictures (#6), a collection of shots of a woman taken by her husband on holiday in Barcelona (#1). In #13 (what else?) the only uniting theme is that – in every shot – a thumb occludes the frame. It seems that even our mistakes are predictably similar.

Kessels believes that ‘mistakes’ are important in photography. Joan Fontcuberta too thinks that chance is an essential part of the picture-making process, and that cutting out mistakes or chance from the picture is dangerous. Consider his comments on the role of chance in photography, and the move from the analogue to the digital photobooth:

*In most cities, the new digital photo booths have now replaced the old analogue booths. The punters are delighted: their range of options has been expanded and their customer satisfaction greatly enhanced. Among other advantages, the new booths make it easier to eliminate chance and correct errors. The old booths would often catch us with our eyes closed or making a funny face, burdening us for years with the unfortunate results on our passport or driving license. This is no longer the case. Before printing the photo we can inspect it on screen and approve or reject it. If we don’t like what we see, we simply delete it and try again without any material cost whatsoever until we are perfectly satisfied. Considered in perspective, however, cutting chance out of the picture is creatively dangerous. How many masterpieces in the history of photography have been the unforeseen results of a happy accident?*

(Fontcuberta, 2014, p.63)

---


Also read:
Tim Clark’s interview with Erik Kessels on the vanishing photo album: [Link 4](#)

‘Archive Fever: Photography between History and the Monument’ by Okwui Enwezor: [Link 5](#)
Exercise 2.2
Write 500 words in your learning log on a piece of work by one contemporary artist-photographer who uses the archive as source material. You may focus on any artist you wish here but you may wish to select either:
• an artist who exhibited as part of the exhibition *Archive Fever* (2008): Link 6
• one of the British artists’ projects produced by UK organisation GRAIN: Link 7
There is more truth in the image of reality, which is perennially enduring, than the vision of the real, which is fleeting. 

(Fontcuberta, 2014, p.180)

If photographs are used as objects with which to remember the significant events and people in our lives, then it is to the photo album that we look to archive these events and to create the ‘larger picture’. The photo album has long been of special interest to artists, bound up as it is in the construction of family narratives and collective identity.

In the last decade, however, the family album has migrated from the physical album to the digital archive. It is much more likely now that we will view our family photographs on the screen of our smartphone rather than the pages of an album. Today, many more photographs are being taken but – correspondingly – less can be shown. We often only have time to view images fleetingly. On screen we use our finger to swipe quickly through dozens of images, with each set being replaced by another at regular intervals. This state of being is perhaps perfectly encapsulated in the popular smartphone app Snapchat. An image appears on screen, but only for 10 seconds. You look, consume and then move on to the next image as the previous image disappears into the digital ether.
In 2011, working with the gallery staff at FOAM in Amsterdam, Erik Kessels produced an installation intended to explore this situation. He and the gallery staff printed out every image uploaded to the social photo-sharing site Flickr within a 24-hour period. The resulting print-outs – normally destined for the screen only – were piled up together and placed in the corner of a room. Gallery-goers were then invited to walk around the vast mountain of discarded images.

Installation shot Erik Kessels, 24 Hrs in Photos, 2011, FOAM, Amsterdam.
The emergence of the ‘selfie’

At first glance, the thousands of photographs piled up in Kessel’s 2011 installation look as if they might have been ripped from the family album. It is only on closer inspection that you realise that these photographs are not examples of the more formal portraits of traditional analogue photography but much more candid images (usually portraits) taken on a camera phone – a sprawling collection of selfies, group portraits, pictures of cats, holiday shots, lovers and family members, nudes and food – and cataloguing everyday life in almost microscopic detail.

The camera phone is now used to take the vast majority of photographs of friends and family and this method of production affects how, why, where and what is photographed for consumption – usually online. One of the most significant trends in camera phone photography is the rise in popularity of the self-portrait. Typing the word ‘selfie’ into a search engine reveals the extent to which young adults in particular use this form of photography as a common language. This is a world where young adults habitually use the (often hyper-sexualised) self-portrait to introduce themselves to others. This should come as no surprise, suggests Fontcuberta (2014, p.17):

*Nowadays some couples establish romantic relationships via the internet and we should not forget that from the Renaissance on many portraits have been used ambassadorially, as a form of introduction with a view to arranging a marriage between members of different dynasties or noble lineages.*

The ‘selfies’ shown above are, of course, not destined for the family album. Rather, they are made to be consumed and shared on online forums and mobile phones. They circulate within an economy which is both private (the images themselves are often of an intimate nature) and highly public (they are distributed in a way that makes them accessible to many).
The self-portrait has been a favourite subject of the artist-photographer since photography’s beginnings and photographers have used both traditional and experimental modes of representation to document the self. Irish artist Trish Morrissey and Dutch photographer Hans Eijkelboom both include themselves in their work. Rather than creating straightforward self-portraiture, however, they choose to insert themselves into the picture in unusual ways, using what could be described as performative strategies. Erik Kessels describes Eijkelboom’s *With My Family* series (1973):

*Eijkelboom rang the doorbell in the afternoon, while the husband and father of the house was away at work. If the wife and children were in, Eijkelboom photographed himself between them as the father of the house. He did this in several families and there’s no occasion where he looks out of place. Eijkelboom is a master when it comes to identity and questioning identity. A similar project in this period is called In de krant, which translates to “being in the newspaper”. For ten consecutive days, Hans Eijkelboom set himself the task of being a by-stander in images appearing in the same newspaper. So for this period Eijkelboom snuck behind the local press photographer and stepped in the frame wherever the guy took a picture. We see photographs of demonstrations, accidents, shop openings and other local interest events. For this period, in the newspaper, you could find the artist always standing somewhere in the background of the image. A performance recorded by accident daily. Small Universe will feature Eijkelboom’s identity project and a series called 10 Euro Outfits. For this, Eijkelboom photographs himself wherever he travels in outfits he bought for ten euros.*

---


---

8 [www.rencontres-arles.com/C.aspx?VP3=CMS3&VF=ARLAR1_52_VForm&FRM=Frame%3AARLAR1_108&LANG=English](http://www.rencontres-arles.com/C.aspx?VP3=CMS3&VF=ARLAR1_52_VForm&FRM=Frame%3AARLAR1_108&LANG=English) [accessed 04.06.15]
Trish Morrissey believes that the family album presents an idealised version of family life, which often belies the truth. In her project Seven Years, Morrissey sought to deconstruct the trope of family photography by meticulously mimicking it. The project’s title refers to the age gap between the artist and her elder sister.

See: Link 8

In this series, Morrissey:

…functioned as director, author and actor, staging herself and her sibling in tightly controlled, fictional mis en scene based on the conventions of family snapshots. In order to construct images that appear to be authentic family photographs from the 1970s and 1980s, Morrissey uses period clothing and props, both her own and others, and the setting of her family’s house in Dublin. They assume different characters and roles in each image, utilizing body language to reveal the subtext of psychological tensions inherent in all family relations. The resulting photographs isolate telling moments in which the unconscious leaks out from behind the façade of the face and into the minute gestures of the body. 9

Both Eijkelboom and Morrissey plunder the aesthetics of family portraiture to produce work that playfully explodes the perfect narratives and perfect families often presented in the family album.

Read the essay ‘Fugitive Identities’ in Fontcuberta, J. (2012) Pandora’s Camera.

Watch Norwegian artist Vibeke Tandberg’s experimental self-portraiture employing photomontage techniques at Link 9

9 www.trishmorrissey.com/works_pages/work-sy/statement.html [accessed 04.06.15]
Exercise 2.3
In your exercise for this section, you’ll produce a piece of work that either explores the family album and its iconography or reflects on representations of the self in digital culture.

Do ONE of the following:
1. Produce a series of six photographs (these can be photomontage, staged photography, work using found images, work including images from your own family archives, etc.) which reference the family album in some way.

OR

2. Produce a series of six photo-based self-portraits that use digital montage techniques to explore different aspect of your identity.

Produce a 500-word blog post outlining your working methods and the research behind your final submission. (Whose work did you study in preparation for this exercise? Why did you choose the techniques that you did and how effective do you think your choices have been, for example?)
Project 4 The artist and the World Wide Web

When computers look at photographs they do not see aunt Helena, a sunset or a birthday cake with candles. Here a photograph is calculable information, not different from other bits of calculable information that we quaintly refer to as songs, films and books.  

Both Eijkelboom and Morrissey use performative strategies (inserting themselves into the picture as actors within a scene) to expose the fragility of the illusion of unity presented in the family album. Their work also reminds us of a photographic convention – the family album – that has been transformed by digital culture. In the digital era, photographs are more likely to circulate online on photo-sharing sites than to be printed out to paper, so how will the family album of the future be constituted? Nowadays, we're more likely to carry a portable image on a smartphone screen than a paper one in our wallet. In future, it seems likely that we'll go to the screen rather than to the pages of an album to remember the past. And, more often than not, we'll go to photo-sharing sites to deposit our archives.

Photo-sharing sites provide a rich resource for artists such as Penelope Umbrico. In her influential work Suns from Flickr (2006 –) she prints out multiple images of sunsets, all found on this one photo-sharing site. Umbrico often uses simple modes of presentation to display her ideas (small machine prints, mounted directly onto the wall, etc.) From these elements, she creates installations, which vary in size from the modest to the monumental.

Screenshot of Suns from Flickr
This is a project I started when I found 541,795 pictures of sunsets searching the word “sunset” on the Flickr site. I took just the suns from these pictures and made snapshot prints of them. I find it particularly absurd that the sun, the quintessential life giver, constant in our lives, symbol of enlightenment, spirituality, eternity, all things unreachable and ephemeral, omnipotent provider of optimism and vitamin D… and so ubiquitously photographed, is subsumed to the internet, the most virtual of spaces, equally infinite but within a closed electrical circuit. Looking into this cool electronic space one finds a virtual window into the natural world. ¹¹

As Umbrico’s work makes clear, we as artists can now easily access any publically available archive and, like Umbrico, there are many artist-photographers who are choosing to do so. British artist Mishka Henner’s Dutch Landscapes series (2011) manipulates Google Earth images to make visible locations censored by the Dutch authorities. The military authorities use crude imaging techniques to blur or heavily disguise sections of online maps containing militarily sensitive installations. Henner takes screen grabs of these visually redacted sites and uses captioning alongside the image to reveal what had been concealed.

¹¹ www.flickr.com/people/sunsfromflickr-umbrico/ [accessed 04.06.15]
When Google introduced its free satellite imagery service to the world in 2005, views of our planet only previously accessible to astronauts and surveyors were suddenly available to anyone with an Internet connection. Yet the vistas revealed by this technology were not universally embraced.

Governments concerned about the sudden visibility of political, economic and military locations exerted considerable influence on suppliers of this imagery to censor sites deemed vital to national security. This form of censorship continues today and techniques vary from country to country with preferred methods generally including use of cloning, blurring, pixelization, and whitening out sites of interest. Surprisingly, one of the most vociferous of all governments to enforce this form of censorship were the Dutch, hiding hundreds of significant sites including royal palaces, fuel depots and army barracks throughout their relatively small country. The Dutch method of censorship is notable for its stylistic intervention compared to other countries; imposing bold, multi-coloured polygons over sites rather than the subtler and more standard techniques employed in other countries. The result is a landscape occasionally punctuated by sharp aesthetic contrasts between secret sites and the rural and urban environments surrounding them. 12

Henner uses the found image to expose the control and censorship exerted by the Dutch authorities. By using the data analysis made possible by search engines, he gives us a hitherto unavailable picture of ourselves.

12 www.mishkahenner.com/Dutch-Landscapes [accessed 04.06.15]
Similarly, American artist Evan Roth exploits the technology of the internet search engine to produce self-portraits that explore the relationship between identity and technology. In his series *Cache Self Portraits*, Roth brings together all of the images he looks at online over a given period of days or weeks.

*His recent Cache Self Portrait series deals with the hidden data that passes through our browsers every day. While most of us never see our cache, Roth has altered his computer’s local drive to save every image that is downloaded, without overwriting. He assembles the thousands of images – everything from website logos to Google map directions and banking information – into “a sort of portrait, in this case of me”.*

In displaying every cached image held in his computer during any given period, Roth makes visible the scale of our engagement with online imagery. His sprawling installations, murals and online artwork reflect on the ways in which we continue to process large volumes of data and images in the digital era. Like a cubist collage, they present a vision of the self as fragmented, complex and constantly in flux.

---

13 [www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/aug/20/evan-roth-badass-hacktivist-artist](http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/aug/20/evan-roth-badass-hacktivist-artist) [accessed 04.06.15]
Read ‘New Media and Vernacular Photography: Revisiting Flickr’ by Susan Murray in Lister, M. (ed.) (2013) *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, Abingdon: Routledge (pp.165–82), which is provided with your course materials.

Also read:

- David Chandler’s essay on Mishka Henner’s *Dutch Landscapes* at Link 10
- ‘When is a cliché not a cliché? Reconsidering Mass-Produced Sunsets’ by Annebella Pollen at Link 11
Assignment two

The archive

Produce a series of related images that use a readily available online archive (or archives) as their starting point or subject.

Make a small book for this project, using proprietary software, to be viewable online. In your book, you may use a selection of images from primary sources (your own images) and/or secondary sources (images found online and/or scanned from other sources). Think about a theme for your book and use the references provided throughout Part Two as inspiration. Your book should contain a minimum of 12 double pages and can contain text if you wish, or simply a collection of images. Provide a link to where your tutor can view your book and also provide a few double-page spreads as still images as part of your learning log.

If you have any queries on your subject, then discuss these in advance with your tutor. Use BLURB or other proprietary software that will allow you easily to construct your book and publish it to the web. Remember that it must be accessible to view via your learning log.

See Link 12
Watch Link 13

Here are some further online resources you might find useful:
An online project conceived by the National Media Museum, Bradford, which comprises a collection of essays examining critical issues relating to media. Link 14

Stephen Gill’s Hackney Kisses Link 15

Mishka Henner’s Dutch Landscapes Link 16

Erik Kessels Link 17

A New Age of Story Telling: Erik Kessels at TEDxBreda Link 18

Erik Kessels on Hans Eijkelboom Link 19

Evan Roth Link 20
Reflection
Before you send your work to your tutor, check it against the assessment criteria listed in the introduction to this course guide and make sure that it meets all the criteria.

Your tutor may take a while to get back to you so carry on with the course while you’re waiting.

Reworking your assignment
Following feedback from your tutor, you may wish to rework some of your assignment, especially if you plan to submit your work for formal assessment. If you do this, make sure you reflect on what you’ve done and why in your learning log.
Part Three

We are all photographers now

Jesse Alexander, from the series *Cyanotypes*, 2006
Use the grid below to keep track of your progress throughout Part Three.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Complete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 The dynamic image</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Digitising atrocity</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Re-thinking photojournalism 1: the citizen journalist</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Re-thinking photojournalism 2: ‘post-photojournalism’</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research point</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

As photographic technology has evolved, so has the demographic of its users. Like other technologies, photography, once an esoteric subject pursued by the very affluent, is now accessible to anyone with a mobile phone. Furthermore (as you saw in Part Two), there are so many images freely available (from archives, online, even car boot sales) that you don’t even need to pick up a camera to engage with the medium of photography in creative ways. Part Three considers some of the social, economic and ethical implications of the increasing ‘democratisation’ of photography, particularly in relation to photojournalism and the media more broadly. You’ll examine how the internet has shaped the ways in which we consume photographs and also consider the extent to which it has changed what we point our cameras towards.

The title of this part of the course is taken from name of the 2007 exhibition We Are All Photographers Now! held at the Musee d’Elysée in Lausanne, Switzerland. Curated by William Ewing, the show explored many of the themes addressed within this course, and touched upon a continuing anxiety within the photography world surrounding the identity of the medium as an expressive and valid art form in the face of the ever increasing ways that vast quantities of images are appearing.

The question of whether ‘we are all photographers now,’ and the question posed in Part Two, whether we are a generation of ‘editors,’ might be answered within the phrase: we are all ‘broadcasters’ now. This term has traditionally been applied to media personalities and journalists, celebrated for communicating a specialism (sports, politics, entertainment) to mass audiences through media channels like television and radio. Websites, the internet blog, and particular applications such as Twitter and Periscope have given us all the potential to articulate our individual voices, and to some extent, to compete with traditional media institutions. While access to this kind of technology certainly does not guarantee that it will be used intelligently or responsibly (as the majority of professional broadcasters do), it certainly prompts us to examine the ways that we disseminate and consume information, and what role the photograph plays within this.
Your assignment for this part of the course is to write a 2,500-word critical essay on ONE of the following:

- Using relevant case studies, discuss whether digital cameras and related technologies for the dissemination of digital imagery have affected our choice of subject matter or how we take photographs.

- Has the ‘digital revolution’ created more problems than opportunities for today’s professional photographers? Discuss this question using relevant case studies and/or specific aspects of modern professional photography.

- Discuss how the conditions of the ‘post-photographic era’ relate to a particular area or institution of photography.

- What is your understanding of the ‘digital self’ and what is the effect of our everyday use of photography upon it? Discuss using relevant case studies and published research.

You’ll find full guidelines for this assignment at the end of Part Three, so turn to these now.
Project 1 The dynamic image

The practical differences between the analogue and the digital image also carry far-reaching implications for the nature of the medium. The ‘ontology’ of the photograph – how it is unique in its nature and compares, philosophically speaking, to other forms of representation – has always been debated. However, this has become increasingly so as it has evolved into digital forms. That fact that the digital image has no material physicality (until it is printed) is perhaps the most important aspect of the apparent digital/analogue dichotomy. The digital image tends to only ever have a temporary presence on a screen and/or archived on a hard drive. Referring to his irritation over the ease at which a photograph can be presented on a screen, a belligerent colleague once announced (with a degree of irony) that ‘a “photograph” has to have a front and a back!’

The digital photograph is made up of defined pixels rather than the continuous tones of the analogue image, and beneath the visible surface lies its invisible stream of ‘1’s and ‘0’s that writers such as W.J.T. Mitchell have compared to DNA and described as the picture’s ‘genetic code’. 14 While we tend to think of this binary code as primarily for defining the visible, ‘manifest’ image, 15 it can also contain a host of metadata recording other related information, such as time and place of capture, authorship, captions and keywords, as well as technical data of the exposure. All of these things are what we might have traditionally scribbled on the back of the photograph. The digital photograph, we might conclude, simultaneously has both a ‘front’ and a ‘back’ – almost like an infinite Möbius structure.

14 This will be elaborated on in Part Four, Project 3. See Mitchell, 2011, p.20.

15 Fontcuberta elaborates on the potential of the digital image to continue to have the same kind of ‘latent’ qualities that is an integral part of the analogue process, as the digital image file, in its coded form, is in a dormant state and requires a kind of ‘development’ to become visible, conceptually at least, in the same way that this takes place in the darkroom (Fontcuberta, 2014, p.37).
Hyperphotography
Fred Ritchin, in his chapter ‘Toward a Hyperphotography’ in After Photography (2009), discusses the potential of this metadata, particularly in its implications for the relationship between the photographer and the subject, and how viewers might contest the apparent message of an image or its editorial contextualisation.

‘Hyperphotography’ could be described as the ‘interactive revolution’ (Ritchin, 2008, p.153) whereby not just viewers, but also the subjects of pictures have become a much greater part of the ‘life’ of the photograph following the initial photographic exposure. (Within vernacular photography, this takes place extensively within Facebook, whereby parts of an uploaded image – such as a group portrait – can be ‘tagged’, so that ‘rolling over’ the image with the cursor defines who that individual is and clicking on it can take you to their profile page.) There are instances throughout the history of photography where the subjects of famous images have contested the photographer’s version of the narrative contained within the image. For example, the children within Dorothea Lange’s Migrant Mother have contested the photographer’s account of the circumstances of the making of this famous image. However, Ritchin also cites many recent examples where the internet has allowed subjects to question the editorial contextualisation that their image or property has been made a part of. We can see this as quite a marked shift in the traditional power relationship between the photographer and their subject.

We are already within the age of hyperphotography, but Ritchin prophesises that photography will play an increasingly pre-emptive function within society,16 particularly because of the ability to create an infinite network of images across the digital sphere with hyperlinks and metadata. Ritchin is optimistic in his aspirations for this; his own online project PixelPress.org creates exhibitions and thematic archives of images through open submissions, and allows for political comment to emerge from poignant juxtapositions of narratives. Ritchin also suggests that photorealistic virtual imagery (ever more indistinguishable from lens-based pictures and increasingly used instead of photographs in advertising) might be – transparently – fabricated, and used to deliver cautionary messages: for example, revealing the projected estimates of how far a glacier might recede within a timeframe. Such a tableau could be hyperlinked to published scientific research or other evidence to support the authenticity of the ‘illustration’ (Ritchin, 2008, pp.149–50), or perhaps more accurately, the ‘hyperphotograph.’

16 This has been happening for decades in the form of the CCTV. This idea has also been dramatised in Minority Report (Dir. Stephen Spielberg, 2002).
Watch Fred Ritchin’s lecture, where he discusses several key aspects of the digitalisation of photography, including his description of ‘photographs of the future’, at Link 1

**Exercise 3.1**


Look at the websites Ritchin discusses. Can you find any visual examples of ‘cubistically unmasking photo opportunities’? Look for multiple points of view around a single news event or story. Make some notes in your learning log.
Project 2 Digitising atrocity

For Death must be somewhere in a society; if it is no longer (or less intensely) in religion, it must be elsewhere; perhaps in this image [the photograph] which produces Death while trying to preserve life. Contemporary with the withdrawal of rites, Photography may correspond to the intrusion, in our modern society, of an asymbolic Death, outside of religion, outside of ritual, a kind of abrupt dive into literal Death. Life / Death: the paradigm is reduced to a simple click, the one separating the initial pose from the final print.

(Barthes, 1982, p.92)

From its beginning, people have used photography to document the grotesque and horrific effects of violence and injury upon the human body. Certainly many images of horror have been made by morally motivated professionals with a desire to share the reality of pain, violence and taboo horrors across the globe. However, many – if not perhaps the majority – of the most disturbing images of the abuse and damage inflicted upon the human body have been made by professionals in other fields – as well as ordinary people with a thirst for the macabre.
Post mortem

We might think that photography, death and memorial form an awkward axis, and photographing the dead may be socially taboo. But with that said, a trend for taking ‘selfies’ (aka ‘corpsies’) before, after and even during funerals has emerged, indicating perhaps the extent to which the digital camera/smartphone has shifted barriers around what is considered appropriate subject matter to photograph and what isn’t. 17 While many such selfies seem to be taken and shared amongst peers for comic effect, photography has played a part in funerals and memorial rituals since its invention. In the nineteenth century, ‘post mortem’ photography was very common, partly because infant mortality rates were higher than today. Photographing a deceased loved one was perfectly normal; often the only time an individual had his or her photograph taken was in death. Interestingly, it is increasingly common practice for hospitals and maternity units to suggest that parents whose babies are stillborn or die prematurely have a photograph taken with their baby. Organisations such as Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep, established in 2005, offer ‘remembrance photography’ or ‘heirloom portraits’ free of charge to families, as a way to help with the grieving process and to create a lasting, positive record from such a painful and tragic occurrence.

For examples, see http://selfiesatfunerals.tumblr.com/ and http://hashtagfuneral.tumblr.com [accessed 04.06.15]

Dead Child On a Sofa, c.1855 (daguerreotype, applied colour, quarter-plate)
Historic post mortem photographs can be found in Robert Flynn Johnson's photo book *Anonymous: Enigmatic Images from Unknown Photographers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), which is a collection of photographs from his archive of vintage photographs divorced from their authors. Alongside these kinds of images, the final chapter, 'Endings and Infamy,' contains images of violent deaths – decapitated car crash victims, crime scene photographs, and perhaps most disturbingly, a picture of the execution of a man in China (c. 1900) by decapitation. There is a quaintness to this particular photography book – published just as digital imagery, and the size of the photographic archive, was growing exponentially.

The internet has no shortage of gruesome photographs and videos to satiate the appetites of the most curious or morbid. There are numerous websites that offer viewers a diverse range of highly disturbing images, gleaned from across the globe and related only by their unpleasant and disturbing content – from scenes of violent crimes and accidents to physically harmless but cruel pranks. These kinds of photo-spectacles have a heritage – although less gratuitously – within the weekly illustrated magazines, particularly of the 1930s, which in places read like a photographic freak show. Within a print media context, this tradition extended into the ‘lads’ mags’ (*FHM, Loaded, Front*) which were at their most successful in the 1990s, before the internet became the dominant place for both sexualised and sensational imagery.
Research point (optional) 1


‘Shock and awe’
Although websites showing violent and offensive imagery are voyeuristic and generally used purely for entertainment, the internet could be applauded for allowing images depicting the true extent of state-inflicted violence to be seen. Photographers have generally been critical of publishing institutions, governments and the general public, for a failure to look at their images of the real effects of war and violence and the injury it inflicts upon the human body, revealing – at best – a sanitised version of war, or – at worst – an effectively censored version of events.

The flipside of the democracy of the internet, however, is how it can be used to broadcast what are arguably some of the most offensive and disturbing photographs and videos currently on the internet, namely the broadcasts by al Qaeda, IS and other terrorist organisations since the early 2000s, depicting decapitation, dismemberment and death by burning. Terrorist organisations have made extremely effective use of the internet and social media to disseminate imagery to incite fear as well as to elicit sympathy and recruit members. Such broadcasts are highly choreographed, often dressing victims in Guantanamo Bay-style orange jumpsuits, and even using post-production techniques such as selective colour desaturation to emphasise aspects of the violence and accentuate the vividness of the macabre scenes.

Clonophobia
In his book Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present, W.J.T. Mitchell discusses the immense significance of the ‘image’ within the ‘war on terror’ which ‘… was launched with the production of an image of destruction on 9/11’ (Mitchell, 2011: p.77). On the one hand, he outlines the ways in which terrorist groups create horrific spectacles to insight fear: ‘…terrorism involves spectacular symbolic acts, the creation of images that traumatize their beholders.’ (ibid p.12). On the other hand, discussing counterpoints to these, he outlines how, during the Iraq war, the Bush administration and US military carefully designed certain ‘photo ops’ (see Ritchin, 2008, p.147) such as: the draping of a US flag over the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad (to be quickly substituted for an Iraqi one when the imperialistic connotations became apparent); Bush’s ‘mission accomplished’ speech delivered from the USS Abraham Lincoln; and Saddam Hussein’s dental examination before the world’s media (ibid pp.89–94). It is ironic that the words attributed to the operation to decisively implement regime change in Iraq in 2003 (‘Shock and Awe’) are so directly applicable to the war of images that Mitchell discusses.

18 A list of eight such sites can be found at www.makeuseof.com/tag/8-gory-sites-dose-cheesy-horror-si/ However, the content of these sites is likely to offend and you are under no obligation whatsoever to look at any of them.
Central to Mitchell’s discussion are the Abu Ghraib photographs that entered the public consciousness in April 2004. These images gave a visual presence to the torture and maltreatment of prisoners of war and ‘enemy combatants’ throughout the ‘war on terror,’ torture that the allied governments tried so hard to deny took place, or even attempted to justify. Critic Mary Warner Marien has suggested that the Abu Ghraib images have elicited ‘… perhaps the largest worldwide public interpretation of photographs’ (Warner Marien, 2014, p.494) and their meanings have been analysed by numerous writers and film-makers as well as visual artists. As well as creating some of the defining images of the epoch of the ‘war on terror’ – secondary only to the images of the destruction of the Twin Towers – the Abu Ghraib photographs encapsulate core aspects of the social uses of photography of their time and the preceding period: to document frivolous activities (US broadcaster, Rush Limbaugh, famously compared the acts to fraternity initiation rituals (Mitchell, 2011, p.118)) and to be shared amongst select peers to facilitate a sense of belonging and community. Of course the images depict far graver and more despicable acts than mere frivolity, and because of this, self-replicated, spread and ‘went viral.’ We will return to these images and these ideas in Part Four.

• Read about Abdel Karim Khalil’s *We Are Living the American Democracy* at Link 2

---

**Research point (optional) 2**

If you’re interested in this topic, see:


**Films:** *The Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* (Dir. Rory Kennedy, 2007)

*Standard Operating Procedure* (Dir. Errol Morris, 2008)

**Artworks:** Hans Haacke’s *Star Gazing* (2004)

Abdel Karim Khalil’s *We Are Living the American Democracy* (2008)

---

**Exercise 3.2**

Find one or two recent photographs within the public domain that you consider to be ‘controversial’ or to transgress social barriers. Write a short entry in your learning log (up to 500 words) about why you feel it is controversial.
Project 3 Re-thinking photojournalism 1: the citizen journalist

The speed and ease with which pictures can now be transmitted from maker to audience (via a news desk, for instance) is, for photography, arguably the most significant practical effect of the digital revolution. Digital photography has had an impact on all fields of photography, but nowhere more profoundly than in the field of photojournalism.

While, one hopes, there will always be a need for professional news-gathering photographers to be commissioned to take photographs at ‘newsworthy’ events – whether reporting on a major natural disaster or a stage-managed press conference – the photographs most likely to ‘break’ in the news nowadays tend to have been made, not by the most efficient photographer who happened to be in the right place at the right time, but by the most technologically savvy passer-by.

Simon Roberts’ series *The Last Moment* both strikingly illustrates how people use their camera phones to make personal photographic records of ‘newsworthy events’, and acts as a kind of elegy to traditional photographic institutions and ideals. Roberts’ formally striking images take as their starting point photographs from newspapers, deliberately scanned to reveal the halftone patina of the analogue reproduction. He then creates an opaque mask across the image and deletes portions, revealing behind it the individual cameras that are snapping the event. The event itself becomes secondary to the numerous citizens and their phones who participate within it. (This work also resonates with Penelope Umbrico’s definition of ‘collective practice’ – Roberts’ series documents this in action.)
Roberts draws our attention to the demise of Kodak, who brought us the concept of a memorable and precious ‘Kodak Moment’, as well as the hallowed ‘decisive moment’: the translation or expression of an event’s true meaning within a single photographic exposure, the ability to achieve which was traditionally considered to demonstrate mastery of the art of photojournalism (Cartier-Bresson, 1999, p.42). See Link 3

Along with the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004, the 7/7 London bombings in 2005 are widely regarded as marking a crucial moment for ‘citizen (photo-) journalism’. On that day, the BBC received 50 photographs from members of the public in the first hour of the bombings, and Alexander Chadwick’s screen grab from a video sequence he uploaded has become one of the defining images of that event. Chadwick’s blurry, impressionistic image of a line of passengers walking along the underground track at King’s Cross station has, like iconic images of previous historical events made by professionals, become indexical of the terrorist attacks of that day.

The poor technical quality of Chadwick’s photograph – typical of this kind of ‘user generated content’ (UGC) – is worth considering. Celebrated war photographer Robert Capa (who captured the only photographs of the first wave of landings on Omaha Beach and whose memoir of the Second World War was titled *Slightly Out of Focus*) is reported to have said:

*If you want to get good action shots, they mustn’t be in focus. If your hand trembles a little, then you get a fine action shot.*

(Robert Capa, quoted in Kershaw, 2002, p.43)

The equivalent visual quality comes naturally to the camera phone image and provides the kind of realism that Capa pursued. Regarding user generated news imagery, Stuart Allan (in Lister, 2013, p.194) writes:

*More often than not the raw, blurry imagery being gathered was prized because it offered a compelling eyewitness perspective, in effect making a virtue of technical deficiencies as a matter of pragmatic necessity.*

To a public jaded with the plasticity of the digital image, the familiarly poor technical quality of the UGC news image might, ironically, restore confidence in the authenticity of the photograph, and go some way to explaining its acceptability to consumers.
Institutions like the BBC have exploited the phenomenon of the citizen journalist and invite people to upload UGC through their website, which they tend not to pay contributors for. Picture agencies concentrating on UGC include Scoopt (2005) and Demotix (2009), which, interestingly, have been absorbed by stock library giants Getty and Corbis, respectively. The rise of the citizen journalist has obvious economic implications for paid photojournalists, and the proliferation of lower-quality imagery across the media might degrade our perception of a ‘good’ picture. However, the normalisation of photographing sensitive and controversial subjects also has wider ethical implications for what is deemed to be morally acceptable behaviour. Within a broader historical context, the impact of the invasive methodology of the paparazzi is worth considering. Although the death of Diana, Princess of Wales and Dodi Fayed in 1997 prompted a degree of soul-searching amongst newspaper editors, the public appetite for ‘celebrity’ news over national and international current affairs has not subsided.

When criticised as ‘voyeuristic’ for taking pictures of suffering and humiliation of any kind, the clichéd retort from photojournalists and paparazzi tends to be along the lines of ‘I’m just doing my job!’ Do ordinary people who are similarly criticised for whipping out their phones reply to outraged passers-by with ‘I’m just doing what anybody would do!’? If the rising volume of UGC indicates the increasing acceptability of recording such events, what might this mean for society’s relationship to the photographic image more broadly?

- Read Jose Navarro’s blog criticising the BBC’s use of images of the 2012 Denver cinema shootings at Link 4
- Read this useful essay on the 7/7 bombings and citizen journalism at Link 5

Exercise 3.3 Breaking the news?
Read this blog about the New York Post’s image of a man about to be killed by a subway train. Read the details of the blog carefully and write up your own analysis of the event. Comment on the ethical decision of the commuter who took the picture. Link 6
Project 4 Re-thinking photojournalism 2: ‘post-photojournalism’

There is so much information out there these days, and it’s very hard to capture the attention of a – for the most part – apathetic public. By showing important images of a war or social issue to people using a unique aesthetic, I believe I can capture their attention and shine a light on some of these stories.

(Benjamin Lowy, quoted in Shore, 2014, p.252)

The rise of the citizen journalist and the increasing use of UGC in the news has certainly has a significant economic impact upon professional photojournalists. However, the myriad shifting contexts where news stories and imagery can be found today, and the opportunities that these might offer, is equally important to consider. The rise of television in the 1950s presented photographers – whose illustrated magazines were the dominant form of news and entertainment, rivalled only by the newsreel – with a comparable challenge. Many photojournalists are turning to more sustained, investigative, documentary projects; others, such as Michael Wolf and Cristina De Middel, produce work for gallery audiences, monographs and print sales (see Ritchin, 2008, p.146).

The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2002 provide us with some interesting examples of the way photojournalists have evolved their practices in response to changes in the business and technology associated with photojournalism. There are two key points to note. First, the documentary photograph – particularly depicting conflict – was already embedded in the contemporary art gallery at the start of the conflicts, and the potential contribution of citizen journalists was recognised on 9/11. Second, as in the Vietnam War (with which the invasion of Afghanistan is often compared), the frequency with which the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have been reported has risked creating ‘compassion fatigue’ and photographers and editors have had to develop new strategies to retain audiences’ attention.

Research point (optional) 3

If you’re interested in the idea of compassion fatigue, see David Campbell’s ‘The Myth of Compassion Fatigue’ at Link 7

Not in relation to these conflicts, but also worth noting, is Richard Mosse’s project Infra (2012). See Link 8

---

19 This phrase is borrowed from the final chapter of Robert Shore’s anthology Post-Photography: The Artist with a Camera. London: Laurence King, 2014.
If you can’t beat them, join them

Benjamin Lowy and the late Tim Hetherington are two photographers who worked in Iraq and Afghanistan. Far from shunning the technology that was supposedly endangering their trade, they embraced the aesthetic and practical capabilities of the iPhone. Not only did the technical capabilities of the camera phone offer a reasonable practical alternative to their bulkier DSLRs, but the ergonomics of the smartphone made it possible to transmit their photographs back to their picture editors much more swiftly and easily than traditional methods permitted. The familiarity of the smartphone, less intimidating than a professional DSLR, clearly has benefits in terms of relating to the subjects depicted. Indeed, Stuart Allan describes how, after witnessing the fate of another professional photographer and his camera while documenting the 2010 London riots, Lewis Whyld swapped his camera for a Blackberry smartphone (Lister, 2013, p.196). In the quote above, Lowy describes the iPhone as possessing a ‘unique aesthetic’. Perhaps, as you saw in Project 2, as well as the familiarity of the ‘camera’ to the subject, it is the familiarity of the smartphone image (Lowy sometimes uses the filters within the Instagram software) that gives it a fighting chance of catching the attention of apathetic audiences. And, ironically, perhaps we see the professional imitating the amateur to achieve authenticity.

Dipping into the archive

Magnum photographer Thomas Dworzak was working in Afghanistan in September 2001. He went immediately to Northern Afghanistan which was controlled by the Northern Alliance, soon to be the coalition’s allies. For a period under the Taliban, all photography was banned, apart from photography for ID purposes. Dworzak published a collection of portraits that he purchased from a high street studio photographer in Kandahar. The surreal collection comprises illicit images that the Taliban sitters would request in addition to a prosaic ID photograph – generally posed with their pistols and rifles against pastoral backdrops, or colour-tinted black and white formal portraits. Although the book (Taliban, London: Trolley Books, 2003) contains some of Dworzak’s own photographs exploring how (comically and eerily) the face was expunged from Taliban society, it is predominantly a collection of found images, which subverts the regime by exposing the contradictory behaviour of its adherents. This collection can also be seen on Magnum’s website in marked contrast to the agency’s traditional content.

See Link 9

Although not depicting Afghanistan or Iraq, Patrick Chauvel’s series Guerre Ici [War Here] (2009) addresses the problem of image fatigue very directly. The celebrated photojournalist literally ‘brings home’ the conflicts he has experienced, perhaps neglected by audiences, by digitally combining fairly traditional, dramatic, adrenaline-filled images of war zones (such as Beirut, Panama and Chechnya) with innocuous views of Paris, eliciting a sympathetic and urgent response from viewers who might otherwise be jaded by yet another image of fighting from a distant land.
Luc Delahaye is another photojournalist who has moved his imagery from news contexts to the gallery space. Working with large-format analogue technology, his ongoing series History presents large panoramic photographs of scenes and details from world events, showing ‘big’ pictures or perhaps vignettes within the ‘bigger picture’. Often, Delahaye turns his camera on his previous profession and reveals the role of the media within these events, such as *The Palestine Hotel* (2001) (see Link 10).

Like Jeff Wall, Delahaye connects his art to the narrative-rich fine art tradition of ‘history painting’ – large-scale tableaux representing pivotal, ‘pregnant’ moments from history like Eugène Delacroix’s *July 28: Liberty Leading the People* (1830) and Emanuel Leutze’s *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851).

![Emanuel Leutze, Washington Crossing the Delaware, 1851](image)

### The individual cost

In his essay ‘Documentary Pictorial: Luc Delahaye’s Taliban, 2001’, Mark Durden discusses a particular image which gazes down upon a dead Taliban fighter facing upwards. Durden compares Delahaye’s photograph to Don McCullin’s famous image of a dead Vietcong soldier in *Hue, Vietnam* (1968), and discusses how the representation of the Taliban fighter echoes classical depictions of Christ. Delahaye’s photograph also exemplifies a thread within war photography from Iraq and Afghanistan, and responses to it by contemporary artists, which is an acute examination of individual soldiers. Commercial photographer Alastair Thain has done this in a literal sense: using custom-built cameras and highly specialist film, Thain takes exceptionally detailed portraits of his subjects and prints them in enormous proportions. His images of British Marines, made in 2009 (commissioned by the Imperial War Museum) and printed 5 metres high, have a heroic quality but also show the exhaustion and fragility of these young recruits in the middle of training sessions.

Back ‘in the field,’ the circumstances of the conflicts have curtailed, or even compromised, the access – and perhaps objectivity – of photojournalists, for example through the practice of ‘embedding’ photographers and reporters within military units who protect them but also manage what they witness and, in turn, what they are able to report home. This has, however, resulted in some sustained and intimate studies of coalition soldiers and their units as photographers have documented the units themselves rather than the ‘action’ they are involved with. Most intimate of all perhaps are Tim Hetherington’s observed portraits of sleeping US Marines at the Restrepo outpost in the Korengal Valley: Link 11

- If you can access a copy, read the final section ‘Post Photojournalism’ (pp.225–69) in Post-Photography by Robert Shore, London: Laurence King, 2014.
- Watch Tim Hetherington’s documentary Restrepo which he made with Sebastian Junger while embedded with US Marines in 2008 at one of the most dangerous outposts in Afghanistan: Link 12

**Exercise 3.4 Post-photojournalism**
Look at the work of one of the practitioners discussed in this project. Write a short analysis of one of their projects or the practitioner’s overall approach. Comment on how appropriate you think their creative responses are. What is your impression of the evolving nature of photojournalism?
Assignment 3

Critical essay

Write a critical essay in response to ONE of the following questions:

- Using relevant case studies, discuss whether digital cameras and related technologies for the dissemination of digital imagery have affected our choice of subject matter or how we take photographs.
- Has the ‘digital revolution’ created more problems than opportunities for today’s professional photographers? Discuss this question using relevant case studies and/or specific aspects of modern professional photography.
- Discuss how the conditions of the ‘post-photographic era’ relate to a particular area or institution of photography.
- What is your understanding of the ‘digital self’ and what is the effect of our everyday use of photography upon it? Discuss using relevant case studies and published research.

Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Your essay should be 2,500 words, +/- 10% excluding quotes.
- Include a cover page with the title and a word count, including and excluding quotations and any footnotes.
- Include examples to illustrate your discussion and list your sources in a list of illustrations at the front of the essay.
- Your essay should be fully referenced and include a bibliography at the end. Follow the guide to academic referencing on the student website.
- Your essay should be in a standard font and 1.5 or double-line spaced.
- You may include additional material (primary research, correspondence) within appendices at the end if you wish.

If you wish to write your own essay question you may do so, but please confirm your title with your tutor before you start writing.

Reflection

Before you send your work to your tutor, check it against the assessment criteria listed in the introduction to this course guide and make sure that it meets all the criteria.

Your tutor may take a while to get back to you so carry on with the course while you’re waiting.

Reworking your assignment

Following feedback from your tutor, you may wish to rework some of your assignment, especially if you plan to submit your work for formal assessment. If you do this, make sure you reflect on what you’ve done and why in your learning log.
Part four
Digital identities

Jesse Alexander, Brick Factory, Near Katmandu, Nepal, 2013
Use the grid below to keep track of your progress throughout Part Four.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Complete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Selecting and identifying</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The gaze in the digital age</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Similar but different: memes, cloning and replication</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The selfie revisited: testimony or trophy?</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Sexualised images</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exercise</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research point</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

As you will already appreciate, identity has always been a dominant theme within photography. Practitioners have used photography to explore and assert their subjective viewpoint of the world, while institutions have used our images masterfully, as a means of control. Within the context of the digital image, identity has become an increasingly complex issue – dramatically increasing the ways in which we are represented by others and the ways in which we represent ourselves. Many claim our personal identities are under threat, as our civil liberties are curtailed by changes to legislation allowing for surveillance of our correspondence and (particularly within a British context) the omnipresent CCTV. Many are uncomfortable with how our individual ‘digital identity’ (information about our age, gender, who we communicate with, where we go, what we purchase and what terms we tap into search engines) is sold by service providers to corporations so they can tailor adverts for products and services to us.

Identity is a recurrent theme throughout contemporary art and visual culture, manifested everywhere from the gallery to the cinema and literature. In Part Four you’ll look at several key aspects of identity in relation to the current digital climate. You’ll continue to look at the exponential proliferation of images, but in particular at increasingly sexualized images. For your final project (completed over two assignments) you’re asked to come up with personal, self-directed visual responses to the theme of ‘digital identities’.

Your assignment at the end of this part of the course is to start developing a project around the theme of identity within the current climate. This could be autobiographical in nature or a critical examination of some aspect of digital culture. For Assignment Five, you’ll resolve this project in the light of your tutor’s feedback.

You’ll find full guidelines for both assignments at the end of Part Four, so turn to these now.
Project 1 The ‘digital self’

Mr Lely, I desire you would use all your skill to paint your picture truly like me, and not flatter me at all; but remark all these roughness, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me; otherwise I will never pay a farthing for it.

(Oliver Cromwell, Oxford Dictionary of Quotations)

The portrait-photograph is a closed field of forces. Four image-repertoires intersect here, oppose and distort each other. In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art.

(Barthes, 1982, p.13)

Art has always provided opportunities for people to manage and manipulate the way they present themselves to other people. A visit to any half-decently conserved country house will reveal centuries of family history through painted portraits representing individuals in a highly mediated and self-conscious way, encompassing visual clues about their status, personalities, interests, and often, exaggerating their physical attributes. It wasn't until the mid to late nineteenth century, that the portrait – in the form of a photographic image – became accessible to a much wider social demographic.

The invention of the carte de visite in 1854 makes an interesting point of reference, and provides intriguing parallels with the current use of the portrait in social media today. Cartes de visite were postcard-sized portraits (economically accessible to the middle and upper classes) reproduced in large numbers and used in a similar way to how a business card might be used nowadays or left as a ‘calling card.’ Celebrities’ cartes de visite were readily available to the masses and became part of a family’s collection of photographs. Some photographers were able to produce cartes de visite with multiple frames, offering varied poses, outfits, props and backgrounds; this allowed the sitter to present the breadth of their attributes and accomplishments. (For more on the carte de visite, see Warner Marien, 2014, p.81.)
These multi-framed *carte de visite* portraits are analogous to contemporary matchmaking and dating websites and apps like Tinder, where users construct a written profile, augmented with a portfolio of photographs – usually displaying the diversity (or not as the case may be) of their hobbies and interests. There are comparisons here to Facebook and other social networks and applications. However, online dating profiles, where users effectively market themselves and put themselves in a position to be assessed on their suitability as a casual or long-term partner, offer a particularly vivid illustration of how we use the photograph to present an image, as Barthes put it, of ‘…the one I want others to think I am…’

**Avatars and alter egos**

We’ve all heard stories about people met online who, despite sounding highly promising, turn out to have exaggerated or manufactured part or all of their character or physique. (The internet has also been blamed for allowing paedophiles to pose as other children online to groom victims.) Many engage with the digital sphere in far less malevolent ways, using it to set up fictitious ‘avatars’. This may be something as simple as making up a self-flattering email address or chatroom username, or something much more elaborate. The online game *Second Life*, launched in 2003, offers more elaborate possibilities for the creation of an alternative digital persona, and provides a pertinent point to consider the disruption of the boundaries between the ‘real’ and the virtual world. The game does not have rules or objectives in the traditional sense, but allows players to create their own virtual 3D environment and visit those made by others. Players create their own animated avatars which can interact with others through live chat or written dialogue. Certainly, many use *Second Life* to connect and communicate on ‘adult’ terms; however, there’s a lot more to the *Second Life* environment than just flirtation and titillation.

While most people ‘play’ *Second Life* for entertainment, people – particularly from the creative and entertainment sectors – have used the virtual world to promote their work and generate income. Artists, for example, can digitise their work and exhibit and market it in one of hundreds of *Second Life*’s virtual art galleries (see Link 1). Musicians too have used equipment to digitise their performances and broadcast concerts both at real venues and simultaneously within *Second Life*.

Several practitioners have explored the theme of alter egos and masquerade within the ‘real’ world – for example, Nikki S. Lee’s various ‘projects’; Jim Naughten’s *Re-enactors* and Gina Lundy’s *Tribute*. Robbie Cooper travelled the world to meet and photograph the actual people behind their *Second Life* avatars. Cooper’s photobook *Alter Ego: Avatars and their Creators* (2007) juxtaposes portraits of people and images of their avatars, along with captions explaining how they use the game and what it means to them. The characters many invent are highly elaborate fantasy beings – some only just remaining humanoid! You can see a selection at Link 2.

---

21 If you’re unfamiliar with Tinder see www.marieclaire.co.uk/blogs/543941/tinder-the-online-dating-app-that-everyone-s-talking-about.html [accessed 04.06.15]
Psychologists and psychoanalysts have presented and discussed various theories of the multifaceted nature of the human psyche, which often involve conflicts between how we think we are or would like to be and who we really are. In the 1920s Sigmund Freud coined the idea of the ‘id’, and of the ‘ego’ and the ‘superego’ which manage the base instincts of the id. The superego consists of the ‘conscience’ and the ‘ideal self’, which ‘…is an imaginary picture of how you ought to be, and represents career aspirations, how to treat other people, and how to behave as a member of society’. 22

It would be simplistic to draw a definitive comparison between Freud’s ‘ideal self’ and the ‘digital self’, not least because the ‘digital self’ is a highly elusive phrase which has yet to be concretely defined. Certainly, how we mould our online personas is a part of it; however, the term also encompasses the impact of digital technologies on our behaviour, and the knock-on effects of that behaviour on others. How, for instance, does the omnipresence of the smartphone within the home, or the dominance of ‘screen time’ over ‘face time’, influence personal and intimate relationships?

Read some blogs on the digital self at Link 3

**Exercise 4.1**

Write an entry in your learning log (up to 500 words) about the creation of false or alternative identities online. You can touch upon any of the points discussed above, or perhaps review one of the photographic projects mentioned.

---

22 McLeod, S. A. (2008) *Id, Ego and Superego* [www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html] [accessed 04.06.15]
Project 2 The gaze in the digital age

The psychoanalytical term ‘the gaze’ has become part of the lexicon of contemporary photography. It originated with Jacques Lacan and is interlinked with his theory of the ‘mirror phase’ – the stage in human development when we realise that we have a physical form, which we cannot yet master (c.1940). The relevance of the gaze in relation to visual culture is summarised by Sturken & Cartwright (2001, p.81):

One of the primary elements of the concepts of the gaze is a kind of split that viewers experience in looking at images. This is related to Lacan’s notion of the alienation that results from the split between seeing the image as oneself and also as an idea – as both the same and not the same as oneself. This can also be understood as the split that results from being simultaneously the surveyor and the surveyed, in looking at oneself through the implied gaze of others. The split self of the viewer is always connected to the idea that the gaze is omnipresent.

Gendered gazes?

Feminist critiques around the 1970s – most notably Laura Mulvey in her famous 1975 essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (Evans & Hall, 1999, pp.381–89) – asserted that both in art and in culture more broadly, women have been represented primarily for male audiences, defined as either mother figures or objects of sexual desire, and mediated via what Mulvey called the ‘male gaze’. Cinema has provided no end of examples of how photography exerts and extends the male gaze. See, for instance, Rear Window (Dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), Peeping Tom (Dir. Michael Powell, 1960), One Hour Photo (Dir. Mark Romanek, 2002). In these movies, we are also shown how the apparatus and processes associated with photography are inherently voyeuristic.

Édouard Manet, A Bar at the Folies-Bergère, 1881–82 (oil on canvas)
Manet's famous painting is often discussed as an illustration of the male gaze. The barmaid is clearly the main focus of the artist's attention, although the mirrored wall behind her is a point of great intrigue, both in terms of the unusual perspective that it represents and because of the top-hatted man to the right of the canvas. It is his viewpoint that is depicted in Manet's painting, and his gaze that is returned by the barmaid.

Cinema is a relatively contemporary example of the male gaze in visual culture; painting and sculpture have equally been criticised for encoding and enforcing a patriarchy in relation to looking. In his seminal book *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger wrote that ‘men act, women appear’ (Berger, 1972, p.47).

The vociferous and active feminist critiques from the 1970s onwards of both the male-dominated art institutions, and the 'male gaze' that they upheld, involved numerous periodicals, publications and exhibitions that positively discriminated in favour of female practitioners (Wells, 2009, p.87). Considering the creative output of many practitioners in the post-modern era, collected in group shows such as *Shifting Focus* (curated by Susan Butler, Bristol Arnolfini, 1989), and the influential writings of Mulvey and her contemporaries, the obvious question arose as to whether a 'female gaze' exists as a counterpoint to the male one.

Such discussions circulated during a period of immense change in the representation of, particularly, the male body within popular imagery (most notably within advertising), as well as intense hysteria around the body due to the HIV/AIDS crisis. The enhanced equality between the sexes that resulted from feminist politics, the changing dynamics of social and domestic roles (the social acceptance of more 'feminine' behaviour and routines – the rise of the 'metrosexual' man of the 1990s, for instance), and the increasing social and institutional acceptance of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, makes a male/female binary to encompass a 'gendered' gaze seem woefully inadequate. That is not to dismiss the continued dominance of the male gaze within popular culture and media institutions, however. Society possesses, as Sturken & Cartwright conclude, ‘… a multiplicity of gazes and looks that mediate power between viewers and objects of the gaze’ (2001, p.93).
Barbara Kruger’s accusative and visually aggressive collages appropriate the rhetoric of advertising slogans and tabloid headlines to deliver polemic messages around the patriarchal dominance of institutions and the male gaze.

‘Smile – you’re on camera’
The above examples aside, the ‘gaze’ doesn’t necessarily involve a sexual or ‘voyeuristic’ element – the pleasure of looking, secure in the knowledge that the subject is unaware of being looked upon. However, the gaze has been described pejoratively as an unequal, imbalanced relation of power between the watcher and the person or thing objectified. A range of ‘gazes’ have been identified by thinkers – ‘medical’, ‘imperial’, ‘postcolonial’ and ‘tourist’ – all of which, to some degree, place the viewer in a position of superiority above others.

Michel Foucault was an influential philosopher who wrote about power/knowledge relationships, institutions, and the role that images and looking play within these. In one of his most celebrated books, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), Foucault argued that modern society exercises discipline, not through punishment for straying away from decorous behaviour, but through the creation of ‘docile bodies’ (i.e. us) who self-regulate and conduct ourselves according to socially acceptable activity as defined by institutions like schools, hospitals and workplaces. According to Foucault, a key apparatus within social self-regulation is the concept of ‘panopticism’. Foucault used the architectural analogy of Jeremy Bentham’s ‘panopticon’ penitentiary to illustrate this model. Bentham’s theoretical concept (‘theoretical’ as he never managed to build one) is a cylindrical building lined with prison cells, monitored by a guard from a central position with the potential to
observe each cell from this vantage point. While it is impossible for a single person to keep a constant eye over each single prisoner, the knowledge that the guard could see them coerces the prisoners into compliant behaviour. The omnipresent two-way telescreens, and the graphic eye and slogan ‘Big Brother is Watching You’, immortalised by George Orwell’s dystopian Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949), provides an earlier, alternative expression of panopticism, and popularised the phrase ‘surveillance society’, which is used in today’s political discourse.  

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.  

(Michel Foucault, ‘Panopticism’, 1975, in Evans & Hall, 1999, pp.61–71)

Foucault’s theory of panopticism has particular resonance with contemporary debates around CCTV surveillance as well as the monitoring of our digital data by both corporations and the security services. On the one hand, sceptics see this as a breach of personal privacy and infringement of civil liberties, while others claim that such measures are necessary for national security, and that those with nothing to hide should have nothing to fear. Corporations such as Google have been criticised for amassing great quantities of data about our consuming habits. Their Google Earth and Streetview projects, which are making virtual 3D images of the entire globe, have also been subject to criticism. When Google began their Streetview project there were dozens of popularly documented cases where their car-mounted cameras inadvertently recorded burglaries and other malevolent or furtive activities.

For resources on ‘surveillance societies’ see www.surveillance-studies.net [accessed 04.06.15]
Mishka Henner’s controversial project *No Man’s Land* (2011) offers several points to consider in relation to contemporary photography and the concept of the ‘gaze’. First, the work’s validity has been contested, as Henner appropriated screen grabs from Google Streetview and published them within his photobooks and as gallery prints. However, given that the work was celebrated for exploring the boundaries of contemporary photography by being shortlisted for the 2013 Deutsche Börse Prize, that particular question seems to have been squarely answered. Second, the images that Henner extracted from Google Streetview depict prostitutes soliciting by roadsides in parts of Italy and Spain – engaging in what most people would consider self-exploitative and demeaning activities for the pleasure of men. As such, the work has been interpreted as abusive and exemplary of the male gaze. (The elevated position of the Google car camera has the effect of looking down on these women.) Indeed, Henner has talked about receiving irate and threatening messages from outraged viewers, asking how he would feel if one of his relatives was similarly captured on Streetview. He has also talked about more ludicrous messages suggesting that his book amounts to a guide for serial killers to locate victims.

If *No Man’s Land* exemplifies or implies any kind of ‘gaze’ it is perhaps the all-encompassing, indiscriminate gaze of corporate institutions that are almost impossible to avoid. Even those practising illegal activities (in this case prostitution) are caught by Google, archived and retrievable. If Henner is to be likened to a misogynistic flâneur (akin perhaps to Manet’s man at the bar, or the photographer Brassai who stalked Paris’s seedier streets at night in the 1920s and 30s) then Henner’s territory is a digital, virtual one. The gaze that he presents to audiences is not a gendered one, but an institutional or perhaps ‘digital gaze.’

This article was written around the time that the possibility of a ‘female gaze’ was proposed to counterpoint that of the ‘male gaze’.

Exercise 4.2
Although written several decades ago, Michel Foucault’s theory of ‘panopticism’ still has relevance and currency within visual culture discourse. Go to the student website and read Foucault’s essay ‘Panopticism’ (reproduced in Evans & Hall (1999) Visual Culture: The Reader, London: Sage, pp.61–71. (PH5DIC_Visual Culture_Panopticism) Write a short summary of Foucault’s arguments, and comment on the relevance of his theory to digital culture.
In his influential book *The Selfish Gene* (1976), scientist and vocal atheist Richard Dawkins coined the term ‘memes’. To summarise Dawkins’ thesis, organisms are essentially vessels at the mercy of the genes that encode them, and these discrete entities essentially drive an organism’s behaviour. It is these genes, not individuals of a species, that are transferable via reproduction, and this lies at the heart of competition and evolution. Organisms better adapted to a particular environmental pressure are more likely to succeed and their genes to be inherited. But whereas genes directly code for the specific physical properties of an organism – units of biological information – ‘memes’ are units of cultural information, which are exchanged not within a ‘gene pool’ but within a ‘meme pool.’

Dawkins uses the example of birdsong. Within a population of songbirds there will be a variety of different tunes and alerts. Some of these will be more effective than others for attracting a mate, warding off a competitor, warning a mate of danger, etc. The key distinction between genes and memes is that one is replicated biologically and the other is imitated. In the human context a meme might be a phrase or an expression, a song or a narrative, a concept or an idea.

*Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation.*

(Dawkins [1976], 2006, p.192)

The endless expanse of information across the internet gives almost bottomless depths to our human ‘meme pool’. The accessibility of information and interconnectivity of individuals through social media, in particular, make for analogies and parallels to biology: the idea of a frivolous (or macabre) video ‘going viral’, for instance. Many internet memes don’t simply involve sharing, but entice participation or creativity. In 2014, for instance, millions of people filmed themselves having a bucket of cold water tipped over their heads. Participants in the ‘Ice Bucket Challenge’ (originally started to raise awareness of motor neuron disease) would nominate friends to take it on; if they declined, they were expected to make a charitable donation. Memes tend not to be this altruistic, however, and often focus on the ridiculous. In 2009, for instance, Melissa Brandts and her partner, holidaying in Canada, set up her camera on self-timer mode to take a self-portrait, but before the shutter clicked, a
squirrel popped up in front of the lens. Brandts submitted the picture to *National Geographic* for a UGC feature. This inadvertent ‘photo bomb’, which has become known as the ‘Crasher Squirrel’, triggered endless re-interpretations, many of which involved cutting and pasting the squirrel into historical photographs. 24

W.J.T. Mitchell considers replication and duplication in a far more sinister way. In his challenging book *Cloning Terror: The War of Images from 9/11 to the Present* (2011), Mitchell considers the roles of images in the ‘War on Terror’ alongside the controversy surrounding legislation on stem cell research in the US during the Bush administration, likening the Bush reaction to 9/11 as an ‘autoimmune’ response. His thesis is argued from the standpoint that the ‘War on Terror’ (a phrase avoided by the Obama administration), rather than reducing the threat from terrorism, has exacerbated it.

Mitchell coins the phrase ‘clonophobia’ which generalises a fear of the clone – firstly, in a biotechnological sense (the dominant neo-conservative right being hostile to such research), but particularly from a security perspective. He describes how terrorists and their ‘cells’ are popularly and politically attached to biological terminology, and represented in the media (and frequently by themselves) as a stream of self-replicating, faceless entities. Against this backdrop, Mitchell considers the image of the clone within popular culture – notably the volumes of clone-related science fiction narratives.

… both image-making and war-making have undergone a radical transformation in our time, a transformation that can be summarized in the phrase, “cloning terror”. By this I mean, on the one hand, the reproduction or proliferation of terror, often in the very act of trying to destroy it, and, on the other hand, the terror or horror of cloning itself, both as a biotechnology and as a figure for the indefinite duplication of life forms, especially those life forms (such as cancers and viruses) that are seen as bearers of death or threats to identity.

(Mitchell, 2011, p.57)

With the creative possibilities of seamless replication that the digital image offers, and given some of the social and cultural comparisons noted above, it is hardly surprising that the doppelgänger or cloned figure (often made possible through use of the ‘clone’ stamp in Photoshop) crops up time and again in photographic art from the 1990s onwards. In Wendy McMurdo’s *In a Shaded Place: The Digital and the Uncanny* (1995) (see Part One), McMurdo combines additional images of her child subjects as they encounter their ‘digital’ counterpart. Much of Paul M. Smith’s work interrogates stereotypes of masculinity. In *Artist Rifles* (1998) and *Make My Night* (2000), Smith reconstructs poses from war games and drink-fuelled nights out, respectively. Smith uses himself as the model and combines multiple frames and poses to create seamless montages. Joan Fontcuberta has also used himself in numerous works and series.

---


The global Occupy movement made extensive use of images. In ‘Occupy the Image’ Liam Devlin discusses the image of US police officer John Pike, who was originally photographed pepper-spraying a group of protestors at the University of California in 2011. Pike has become an internet meme; cut out of the original photograph, he has found his way into various famous images of conflict and struggle and other celebrated artworks.  
[Link 5](#)

**Exercise 4.3**

Taking inspiration from an image or idea you’ve researched, create your own photographic response to an internet meme. This may be something original, or your own interpretation of an existing meme. It might be funny or profound, but it should make people want to look at it and share it.
Project 4 The selfie revisited: testimony or trophy?

Since its conception, photographers have turned the camera on themselves. As an expression of his anguish at what he saw as the waste of his extensive research, when his efforts were overlooked by the French government in favour of Daguerre's process, Hippolyte Bayard created photography's first self-portrait, representing himself as a drowned man. Bayard's picture is exceptional for two reasons: because the other pioneers of photography did not turn their cameras on themselves, and because Bayard's photograph is a deliberate attempt at creative expression, at a time when his contemporaries tended to be preoccupied by the medium's more limited potential to create accurate facsimiles.

#selfie

Since Bayard, plenty of practitioners of photography have used self-portraiture as a means of artistic expression. Noah Kalina has photographed himself every day since 2012. Published at various stages, the latest edition of Every Day (Link 6) shows 12 years of Kalina's life marked on his face within an eight-minute video. This is a striking video to watch, and it has been seen by millions on the internet, but what is also remarkable is that the project coincided with the beginning of a much more widespread phenomenon – the 'selfie', credited by the Oxford English Dictionary as the 'word of the year' in 2013. (You started looking at the 'selfie' in Part Two.)

According to its definition, distribution via social media distinguishes a 'selfie' from other kinds of self-portrait. The selfie is taken by the subject, at arm's length, and the arm tends to be visible in the frame. Something that might be considered narcissistic has become a ubiquitous activity. We might imagine the selfie to be confined to youth culture, but people from all spheres of society – from prisoners to politicians – have been caught in the act. Prisoner Dale Done was discovered to have been using a smuggled mobile phone after posting selfies to his Facebook account from behind bars. Peter Kennard and Cat Picton-Phillipps' satirical photomontage Photo Op (2005) (see Part Two) combines a photograph of a grinning Tony Blair taking a selfie (made by a photojournalist during the 2005 election campaign) with a blazing oilfield 'behind' him, alluding to his motives for invading Iraq in 2003. The selfie has even inspired the title of a US TV show (although it failed to take off) and a dance song, #selfie by the pop group Chainsmokers, which features the vacuous banter of young socialites against a generic thumping pop beat.

26 Consumers can now purchase specially designed 'selfie sticks' to attach a camera or smartphone to extend the field of view for taking selfies. Many public galleries are banning their use.
Aesthetic consumerism

The selfie, and the kinds of ‘status update’ functionalities on social media that they are used in conjunction with, vividly illustrates how we all use photography to affirm experiences. Writing well before the digital age, Susan Sontag described the compulsion to photograph, and the relationship between experiencing a moment and photographing it:

*Needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted. Industrial societies turn their citizens into image-junkies; it is the most irresistible form of mental pollution. Poignant longings for beauty, for an end to probing below the surface, for a redemption and celebration of the body of the world – all these elements of erotic feeling are affirmed in the pleasure we take in photographs. But other, less liberating feelings are expressed as well. It would not be wrong to speak of people having a compulsion to photograph: to turn experience itself into a way of seeing. Ultimately, having an experience becomes identical with taking a photograph of it, and participating in a public event comes more and more to be equivalent to looking at it in a photographed form.*

(Sontag, 1979, p.24)

In one of Sontag’s final pieces of writing, she discussed the infamous Abu Ghraib photographs of the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at the hands of US reservists. Sontag comments on the role of photography within these specific acts – as having been orchestrated to be photographed, rather than just documenting something they arranged:

*To live is to be photographed, to have a record of one’s life, and therefore to go on with one’s life oblivious, or claiming to be oblivious, to the camera’s nonstop attentions. But to live is also to pose. To act is to share in the community of actions recorded as images. The expression of satisfaction at the acts of torture being inflicted on helpless, trussed, naked victims is only part of the story. There is the deep satisfaction of being photographed, to which one is now more inclined to respond not with a stiff, direct gaze (as in former times) but with glee. The events are in part designed to be photographed. The grin is a grin for the camera. There would be something missing if, after stacking the naked men, you couldn’t take a picture of them.*

---

While shocking and abhorrent, the Abu Ghraib photographs present us with the idea of the photograph as trophy – not only confirming the authenticity of an event or a moment for posterity, but assuming not just a symbolic value but also a material value that is perhaps greater than the event itself. Certainly this is true in terms of the actions of Private Lynndie England and her peers, which were received with worldwide condemnation. (These actions included forcing inmates to simulate masturbation, attaching electrodes to inmates’ genitals, etc.) But is this the case with how we use photography in more mundane ways?

Exercise 4.4
Write a short (around 500 words) post in your learning log in response to the question: what does the phenomenon of the selfie tell us about how photography is popularly used nowadays? Illustrate your post with recent examples from the internet.
Project 5 Sexualised images

While we might regard it as little more than a harmless symptom of our digital social lives, there is a darker side to the selfie, particularly amongst young people. Research showed that 40% of 14–16 year-olds surveyed had participated in ‘sexting’ – sending sexually compromising pictures, messages or video clips via a phone or the internet. While this may be alarming, the associated practice of re-distributing sexually explicit photographs of someone (usually female) between individuals or on social media without their consent is perhaps even more disturbing. One of the most extreme cases of this kind of cyber bullying was in Ohio. When their relationship broke down, the boyfriend of 18-year-old Jessica Logan distributed nude pictures that she’d sent him, which resulted in her being harassed and bullied in school and within her community. Logan eventually committed suicide in 2008 as a direct result of the shame and humiliation she felt as a result of the images being publicised.

While we shouldn’t forget that these kinds of practices invariably involve coercion and are a form of sexual abuse, its widespread nature demands searching questions around the premature sexualisation of children more generally, and urges us to consider the role that the photograph plays within it. The ease with which pornographic material can be found and shared across digital platforms is generally cited as a key reason for the premature sexualisation of boys, and for both boys and girls, ‘saturation’ of sexualised images of women ‘in the media’ and within popular culture tends to be held responsible.

Furthermore, the plasticity of the digital image – or rather, how widespread and common its manipulation is – is accused of distorting and falsifying all of our perceptions of the reality of the human form. For decades, the populist thinking has been that this is to blame for unrealistic body expectations as well as various physical and psychological disorders. There have even been calls for editorial and advertising images to be accompanied with health-warning style captions, revealing when a photograph has been significantly altered.

How embedded and widespread the doctored image is within our culture is, however, a given – and not just in popular culture and advertising. As Joan Fontcuberta discusses in his essay ‘Ode to a King’s Legs’ (Fontcuberta, 2014, pp.113–25), the Photoshopped image crosses into political imagery and domestic photography. In the essay he criticises the Spanish royal family’s 2005 official Christmas photograph, which was cobbled together from several frames because, apparently, it wasn’t possible to assemble the king and queen with all of their grandchildren on the same day. These kinds of group shot montages – like the removal of blemishes and whitening of eyes (even ‘mirroring’ of eyes to improve symmetry) – are commonly offered by high street portrait studios and wedding photographers alike. Interestingly, a 2013 advert for L’Oreal skin cream featuring Cheryl Cole attempts to blur the boundaries between the manipulated advertising image and an image attainable by the ordinary consumer. Using the phrases ‘pixel-perfect your skin’ and ‘look photo ready from every angle’, we are invited to share in the illusion of the commercial photo shoot and post-production techniques and suggest that this treatment need not be exclusive to those in the entertainment industry.

---

28 Ritchin discusses this in the lecture mentioned previously: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=S41UY8jgkxU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S41UY8jgkxU) [accessed 04.06.15]
29 Campaign by McCann, London/Hay Stack [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoMM4wyzY-E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoMM4wyzY-E) [accessed 04.06.15]
One thing is obvious – we are making and distributing images of ourselves in increasing and perhaps alarming quantities. In certain disturbing cases, this takes place through coercion and is abusive. For the most part, however, making an image of oneself (even, for some, a sexualised image if it’s made in a consensual, non-exploitative way) has become increasingly normalised behaviour. But if the manipulated commercial image is guilty of making us feel self-conscious and physically inadequate, why are we so eager to share images of ourselves? Perhaps the social benefit of the selfie, and the proliferation of domestic images of ourselves more generally, is that it’s creating a backlash of real pictures – a counter-insurgency against the ‘bombardment’ of the manipulated advertising image and imagery from popular culture that is believed to dominate our behaviour and, ultimately, rule our happiness.
Assignment 4

Digital identities 1

Develop a project around the theme of identity within the current digital climate. This could be an autobiographical exploration examining how you relate to digital culture, or it could be a more critical examination of an aspect of digital culture.

You should develop your project over the course of Part Four. This is your chance to find and articulate your personal voice in relation to digital culture.

Start by listing or making a brainstorm diagram/mind map of possible ideas and starting points. Put this in your learning log. Expand your list or develop your diagram as you work through Part Four. Try out a few of these ideas, and develop further those that seem to be the most effective or interesting.

When you have developed at least one idea to a point where you would like to receive feedback from your tutor, submit it to them by whatever means you both agree.

Assignment Four is your digital identities project ‘in progress’. It is not expected to be a fully resolved, visually coherent or clearly contextualised submission. As well as visual material (contact sheets, work prints, etc. depending on the nature of your practice and your project) you should include a short text (around 500 words) setting out:

- the specific themes your work is addressing or what your work is attempting to communicate
- a list of the practitioners you’ve looked at in relation to this assignment
- a bibliography
- a brief self-evaluation.

You may wish to consider requesting an audio/visual tutorial for feedback on this assignment. Your tutor will give you guidance on how to develop and/or resolve and most appropriately present your project.

Reflection
Before you send your work to your tutor, check it against the assessment criteria listed in the introduction to this course guide and make sure that it meets all the criteria.

Reworking your assignment
Following feedback from your tutor, you should rework your assignment (see Assignment Five).
Assignment 5

Digital identities 2

Use your tutor’s feedback on Assignment Four to help you develop your digital identities project to the point of resolution.

The method of presentation that you choose for your project should be appropriate to, and complement, the work you make. Your work may suit a print-based submission, or it may be appropriate to present your work in a book, audio-visual form, web-based project or installation.

Your project should involve substantial artistic investigation, and the method of presentation should do your efforts justice. You should view the project as the culmination of the Digital Image and Culture course.

Include a 500-word text that contextualises your project and provides a self-evaluation.

Reflection

Don’t forget to check your fully resolved project against the assessment criteria before you submit it to your tutor. You could include the results of this process in your self-evaluation.

Reworking your assignment

Following feedback from your tutor, you should rework your assignment in preparation for assessment (see Assignment Six – Pre-assessment tutorial).
Conclusion

*There is no reason anyone in the right state of mind will want a computer in their home.*

(Ken Olson, President of Digital Equipment Corp, 1977)

As you come to the end of this course, you should have developed an overview of the current state of play with regard to the role of the photograph in digital culture. The short history of photography is one that has been fundamentally shaped and driven by technology. More than any other art form, photography – with its intimate relationship to the machine – has reflected the social, scientific and technical developments that have surrounded it. It should come as no surprise, then, that photography has been so irrevocably affected by the arrival of what could be described as one of the defining inventions of our age, the computer.

The history of photography has been shaped by those wishing to test the limits of technology. Many have been led by a desire to picture what cannot be made visible by the camera alone. These artist-photographers have used the darkroom, chemistry and experimental techniques to advance perceptions of what a photograph might be.

As digital cameras and related technologies have evolved, it has become possible to generate high-quality moving image content on many cameras and camera phones. The relationship between the still and the moving image is one that is reflected in the work of many emerging artist-photographers. As technology advances, it is now possible to work easily – at home and in the studio – with the moving image and many are choosing to do so. In John Thomson and Alison Craighead’s 2009 piece *Several Interruptions*, for example, the new media artist duo used readily available content found online to produce a piece of work which echoes the triptych formation of traditional Christian iconography:

*‘Several Interruptions’ (is a) series of disparate videos, no doubt gleaned from YouTube, showing people holding their breath underwater. Facial expressions blossom from calm to palpable terror as each series of underwater portraits are held in synchrony. As the divers all finally pull up for breath, the sequence switches.*

Watch the piece at [Link 10](#)

The artists use the internet to produce a portrait of a society shaped by the technology that drives it. It is likely that the future of photography is one that will embrace the digital image in culture – in all its aspects – too.

---

Assignment 6

Pre-assessment tutorial

The purpose of this final assignment is to help you review your work and decide how you’re going to submit it for assessment. Even if you’re studying for personal development alone, it could still be helpful to take stock of the work you’ve made during this course and think about how you might develop it further. Although this sounds like a relatively straightforward and quick exercise, students generally find it takes much longer than they anticipated! Tackle this task methodically and allow yourself plenty of time to do justice to the effort you’ve made throughout the course.

Reviewing your assignments
Make sure that you’ve carefully considered your tutor’s feedback on your assignments, and made any changes that they’ve recommended. It’s your decision whether or not to submit your assignments with the changes your tutor has suggested. However, you should at least consider their comments, and demonstrate this by taking appropriate actions. It may well be that your assignments are fine as they are, but since you have this opportunity to take another look at them, we suggest you do so.

For assessment you should submit your original assignment (so that the assessor can look at it alongside your tutor’s feedback). Except for Assignment Four, you should also submit a hard-copy version including any revisions made in the light of tutor feedback, or any additional or revised images.

Pay particular attention to your critical essay (Assignment Three). This piece of work will be primarily used by the assessors to consider the fourth assessment criterion, Context – reflection, research and critical thinking.

Reviewing your learning log
Make sure your learning log is up to date. If you skipped any of the exercises then now is the time to complete them.

Look at your tutor reports and any correspondence with your tutor or peers and follow up on any suggestions they may have made (practitioners, techniques, books) that you’ve previously overlooked.

Check that the content of your learning log is logically accessible. Ensure all posts are appropriately ‘tagged’, e.g. assignments, exercises, research, reflection. The ‘reflection’ element is vital: a blog without any reflective aspects will not constitute a true learning log.

If you’ve kept an additional hard-copy research folder, it’s advisable to either photograph or photocopy it for security. Make sure that all your work is clearly labelled with the number of the exercise and/or assignment.
Your submission must look professional. Assessors are allocated equal amounts of time to look at individual students’ work, so remember: first, you don’t have to vie for the assessors’ attention; second, how quickly can the assessors access your work? They would rather spend the time looking at your work than looking for it!

If you have feedback from previous course assessments, remind yourself of the assessors’ comments. These may be useful to help you think about this submission.

**Assessment expectations**
Grades awarded at Levels 1 and 2 (HE4 and 5) don’t count towards your final degree classification. Nonetheless, you’re encouraged to strive for high achievement. It can also be helpful to use Levels 1 and 2 as opportunities to identify which areas you need to develop if you’re going to improve your grades for Level 3. You should have been checking your assignment work against the assessment criteria throughout this course, but ask yourself again now where you think you would place yourself in relation to each of the four criteria and identify where you think your strengths and weaknesses are.

**Pre-assessment tutorial**
Once you’ve made the necessary amendments to your learning log and assignments, and considered how you’ll compile your submission for assessment, contact your tutor to request feedback on your submission. (It may be that it will be more practical to get some feedback slightly earlier on in this process, rather than once everything is completed.)

Please be aware that your tutor will not be able to look at every detail of the work you submit, and that he or she is only expected to provide their general impression of your submission and comment on the extent to which your presentation choices complement your work. Don’t expect or ask your tutor for their opinion on what grade they think you may achieve at formal assessment.

You might find the following OCA assessment resources useful:
Assessment process: Link 11
About digital submissions: Link 12
References
Reading and resources

Essential reading

Recommended reading

Websites
1000 Words www.1000wordsmag.com
American Suburb X www.americansuburbx.com/
FlakPhoto http://flakphoto.com/
Guardian photography www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/photography
International Center of Photography www.icp.org/
La Lettre de la Photographie www.lalettredelaphotographie.com
LensCulture www.lensculture.com/
National Media Museum www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/
Photomonitor www.photomonitor.co.uk
Tate Gallery resources www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/
The Telegraph www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/photography/
Victoria & Albert Museum www.vam.ac.uk/page/p/photography/
Journals

Aperture www.aperture.org
British Journal of Photography www.bjp-online.com/
Foam www.foam.org/
Hotshoe International www.hotshoeinternational.com
Photography & Culture www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfpc20#.VXMBhIL2vao
Photographies www.tandfonline.com/loi/rpho20#.VXMCgFL2vao
Photoworks www.photoworks.org.uk
Source www.source.ie