Photography and its failure to represent

John Hillman

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD at the University of the Arts London & Falmouth University.

Word count: 78,231

June 2017

Declaration: "I certify that this work has not been accepted for any degree other than that of Doctorate of Philosophy. I declare this work is the result of my own investigations except where identified by references and I have not knowingly plagiarised any other work."

Signed:

John Hillman

Abstract

This PhD research project examines the agency of photography and the photographic image. The research develops insights into photography as one of the dominant image making, cultural practices in the Twenty-first Century. Its focus is on digital photography and it begins by understanding agency as distributed, connected and networked: properties predominantly associated with an image that is digital. The intended contribution to knowledge is a philosophical engagement with how images embody notions of representational failure because they present themselves as image in support of a fiction of reality. What this means philosophically, is that there is no access to reality other than through representations that fail to represent.

Underpinned by the question as to whether and how "practice interpellates a subject of the signifier" (Burgin, 2011: 196) the research considers the role of photography in helping to determine individuals as viewing subjects. Since photography is the "quintessential practice of life" (Kember & Zylinkska, 2015:07) in which seemingly every moment is recorded, captured and represented, this project investigates how we become who we are through interactions and encounters with photography. I conclude that photographic agency conceals a structure sustained by a form of labour and production that is masked by creativity and enjoyment. The research also provides new ideas towards understanding how technology has shaped perceptual experiences and aligns agency to algorithms and software.

Since amateurs and casual image-makers – those "without the spirit of mastery" (Barthes 1977/1975: 52) – are the producers of the majority of images we encounter today, much of the inquiry focused on their experiences. This approach, focusing on the amateur, was also taken within the context of the "massive production of photos in the conduct of everyday life" (Hand, 2012: 02) and the "identifiable increase in image-making as an ordinary aspect of people's lives" (Ibid: 03). In this sense photography is

addressed as a dominant cultural practice. Drawing on the experiences of those who take photographs, the research develops an understanding of an interconnected object of inquiry: photography and the photographic image. Practice contributes two fold to this research. Firstly, as the output of photographic labour, secondly, in the form of my own practice, as a set of responses to the theoretical ideas developed within the project.

This research delivers a refined theory of photographic agency. It proposes, through a chain of reasoning, that in photography we do not create likeness of places. Instead, we grasp how unlike places photographs really are and in turn the ground of representation is questioned and repositioned. If photography is not "another visual form of representation, but an immersive economy that offers an entirely new way to inhabit materiality and its relation to bodies, machines and brains" (Rubinstein, 2015), then it is this new, emerging and complex photographic ontology that my project contributes toward.

"Signification makes capitalism possible because it alienates the individual from its environment by introducing a layer of mediation into all of the individual's interactions. Rather than simply feeling hunger and eating the nearest apple in the manner of a human animal, the subject will seek a satisfaction that transcends the apple through the apple. For the subject of the signifier, unlike for the human animal, an apple is never enough" (McGowan, 2016: 23).

Table of contents

List of Figures

Introduction and background

i. Introduction

This PhD research examines the agency of photography and the photographic image. The new contribution to knowledge is embedded into the three conclusions it makes and the refinements it proposes for contemporary photographic theory. My focus throughout this project has been on the agency of photography, namely what photography does. I conclude photography's agency operates as a pervasive force, often distributed across a digital network, providing the foundations to think image in new terms.

The conclusions I draw from this research can be briefly summarised as follows: Firstly, through photography we do not create likeness of places. Instead we substantiate the realisation of how unlike place photographs really are. In these terms photography forces us to think about how representation replicates its own deficiencies and how seeing is inflected with other forces of experience. Although this conclusion may not appear exclusive to photography, the argument I build through this thesis shows why photography as a medium expresses this most clearly. Furthermore, through this I make the case for conceptualising photography as a radically different object. Since I made use of non-representational theories I believed it necessary to consider what impact this would have on how we understand the symbolic order and subjectivity. Therefore, my second conclusion argues for a subject of the signifier that is interpellated by practice but where the signifier is an indicator not only of the absence of objects and a lack of material presence but also the proximity of affects. Thirdly and finally, I conclude that photographic agency conceals power structures that sustain labour and production masked by creativity and enjoyment. In this way photography pre-conditions, "Enframes" (Heidegger, 1977) the conditions of its own production. But in its wake it creates the compulsion to produce and enjoy image for its own purpose: image for image.

Underpinning my research is the examination of photography as a non-representational practice that exposes questions about representation itself. Thus photography's agency is understood as an affective force that configures a relational network of people, places and things. And latterly, within digital culture, agency is governed by computer algorithms. These changing configurations of image necessitate and bring about new forms of perception.

Throughout this research practice has been considered in two distinct ways. Firstly, as an output and especially in the context of the work I carried out with participants (see Chapter Three). In other words, my focus was directed toward the activity of photography and what it subsequently produces in the form of photographs and experiences rather than the specifics of individual images. Secondly, my own practice was used as a method to express and take some of the theoretical ideas in different directions (see Appendix 1).

In order to examine the agency of photography, I approach from four positions. Firstly, I consider how photography structures notions of space and place. Secondly, I examine how photography configures subjectivity. Thirdly I reflect on how the forces of production and pleasure shape what photography is. Finally, I consider how technology has shaped perceptual experiences and aligns agency to algorithms and software. I use these interlinked approaches to make the following claims: arguing that photography does not create likeness of places; rather it substantiates the realisation of how unlike place photographs really are. Approached in this way, photography engages with the inadequacies of representation and the experiential forces that structure seeing. Such forces may be expressed through non-representational theories, which I use throughout this research.

I then examine how a particular subjectivity is formed through photography. Differing lines of argument are pursued throughout this thesis including: how practice interpellates a subject of the signifier, how subjectivity is configured through processes of production in order to become a multiple subject of

processual production/consumption and how technology limits and binds subjectivity. Following Lacan's notion of the split subject I consider the split or divided signifier. This is not the signifier as separated from the signified but a way to comprehend the signifier as being neither a visual form (as understood through semiotics) nor an affective force: but the gap and flow between these two differing fields. I go one step further to suggest the agency of a divided subject of photography can be described by how it indicates the gap between a false proposition of visual likeness and the function of the signifying chain in the unconscious.

Finally, I conclude that photography expresses a form of process and production that provides continuity between pleasure and labour. Photography is a way to measure the value of experience, wherein photographs add a surplus value to experience. But photographs also obscure the forces of labour and work behind a veneer of creativity and enjoyment.

In summary, this thesis argues for and understands photography as a practice embodying a relational and multi-agential force. These forces can be defined by how they configure the subjectivity of those who use photography. And this changed subjectivity creates a new perception of image. This relational and multi-agential force also maintains reality by the imposition of a fantasy of internal and external relations. It is in this regard I understand and use the Cornish Alps as a case study wherein reality is experienced as a fiction. Finally and crucially, the agency of photography shapes a demand for image 'in itself.' This demand creates a continuous and ultimately unsatisfied compulsion to produce and enjoy image for its own purpose: image for image.

ii. Background and overview of the project aims

The research was an initial response to how photography frustrates and rewards those who encounter it. In 2011, while teaching, I noticed two discernible views coming from students, as they began developing their

technical skills and making their own images. One was that they were often likely to see what they described as '*images in the world*,' while the other was seeing the '*world as image*.' These positions were summarised by students who suggested everywhere they went they could apparently '*see photographs.*' Their conclusion was there were images to be made all around them. Furthermore, they claimed the images they made did not always reflect how things had originally appeared. And this was especially the case when students were photographing landscapes. These 'everywhere images' of places were elusive and easy to imagine but fundamentally difficult to image. While places appeared to contain the sites of so many potential images they were also reluctant to relinquish them easily. Together, I understood these positions as pointing toward a tension between space, place and its representation. However, they also seemed to raise a number of other questions. If there really were images in the world, then what was it about photography – despite claims of being a mechanical reproductive process – that appears to make it unable to adequately capture such images? This was not a problem concerning technique or equipment, nor was it a concern over the claims or counter claims of a photographic truth. Instead, this problem appeared to reach to the very essence of what photography is and what it does. It also suggested that continuing to produce more images might only lead to more failures and more frustrations.

There is a long historical tradition claiming photography to be the instrument of the mechanical reproduction of reality. Clearly such a position, in which photography is a window on the world, fails to adequately confront issues of representation and of subjectivity or rather it casts them in a particular shape. If photography is not simply copying the world as it is seen, then photography must be mediating its own versions of what the world is. In this sense, if images are indeed seen to be 'out there' in the world, then to what extent do these images exist simply because photography is one of the dominant mediating practices of the 'world as image?' In this research I address this question initially through Heidegger's conceptualisation of 'world as picture' (1977) and the 'Enframing' (*Ge-stell*) of experience. I use this to examine

how the subject is integral to Heidegger's conceptualisation. However, I deviate from taking an exclusively visual approach, instead, through a non-representational account of photography I point not to *images being in the world* but to photography's agency as an organising and affecting activity. Finally, I describe how an epistemological shift in the subject who photographs coincides with an ontological shift in the object of their perception. But such changes are not solely reliant on the visual, on the expression of the logic of representation, as I argue they also occur due to the interlacing of a particular set of technologies and of the subject who photographs.

iii. The question of *how* photography mediates not *what* photography mediates

There is a further step to take in outlining the beginning of this research. To be concerned with representational practice is to bring into question the very concept of a subject. Roland Barthes suggested, there will always be representation while a subject "casts his gaze" (1984/1980: 69)[1] outwards toward the conditions of the "dioptric arts" (1984/1980: 70). However, I explore whether the reverse can be said to be true – that subjects are conditional on representational practice. In making this claim for subjectivity formed by representations my attention is not focused on the visual. Instead, I understand practice as operating on the affective register in order to bring into being a viewing subject. Affect allows a move away from representation, to consider what happens "beneath, beyond and even parallel to signification" (O'Sullivan, 2001: 126). And it is the purpose of this project to examine how photography creates a subjectivity, not through its representational force but through a form of "vital materiality" (Bennett,

---

[1] Barthes' essay, *Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein*, is referenced by Burgin in *Geometry and Abjection* (1996:39) where he begins by suggesting Barthes is spatializing Althusserian ideology. Burgin concludes that ideology becomes conceived in an inhabited space of representation. Referencing the same Barthes essay, in *Diderot, Bathes, Vertigo* (1986) Burgin considers whether fantasy is a tableau that stands in for the desires of the human subject. This point is developed later in this thesis with reference to the location of the "Cornish Alps" as a fiction inside reality (see Chapter One).

2010),[2] which may be determined by the general properties of reproduction and repetition. From these premises, my concerns are predominantly not photography's content – what it represents – but its agency, *how* it mediates not *what* it mediates.

iv. Community based workshops

With the above in mind I began this research approaching the *how* question from a variety of positions. I focused on whether learning photography requires us to *see the world photographically.* I undertook community-based workshops, with a view to asking questions about the transformative function of photography. This research concentrated on the 'keen amateur' or interested, hobbyist photographers, their opinions and their images. Following Hand (2012: 3), my reasons for working with this group was their expression of the 'ordinary,' and in this sense their work was distinctive from 'professional' or 'art' practices. As a group, amateurs are "fuelled by care and affection rather than by profit and selfish, narrow specialisation" (Said 1996: 83). They are able to bring an everyday perspective to a traditional photographic orthodoxy. Furthermore, the realm of the ordinary provides insights into the general conditions of what has become known as 'ubiquitous' photography (Hand, 2012; Rubinstein and Sluis, 2008). This aspect of the research was designed to directly engage with *how* photography does what it does in an ordinary way. As Barthes noted the amateur "establishes himself *graciously* (for nothing) in the signifier" (1977/1975: 52); they take simple, ordinary, pleasure in the substance of their activity. Largely unencumbered by knowledge of traditional photographic theory, the participants in my research, following an action research model[3], gave their lived experiences of photography in the form of

---

[2] 'Vital materiality' is a term Jane Bennett (2010) uses to examine human and non-human forces and their role in events. I explore Bennett's ideas later in this thesis but the term 'vital' is used extensively in her book as a force within things. Later in this thesis I explore the appropriateness of the term 'vital photography,' not as genre or type of image but more as a means to describe it as an affective process.

[3] Participatory Action Research (PAR), which was followed in spirit, generally takes a community group-based approach (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Primarily, my choice in

unstructured interviews and discussions. How photography mediates has therefore often been expressed in personal or ordinary ways. I have taken these responses and considered them through the theories of non-representation, affect, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marx's theory of labour and value.

Using data, surveys and unstructured interviews, drawn from the workshops, the project philosophically engages with three main topics: the contexts of spatial relations, visual representations and with the practice of photography itself. Over its duration the research has taken on a wider project of understanding the implausibility of the visual, through an analysis of digital photographic image making practice.

v. The theoretical and philosophical approaches

As a process of scholarly research I used theoretical and philosophical approaches to help understand the reach of my project. In addition to the participatory research undertaken, the '*how*' question was examined directly through the synthesis of a number of critical positions. The leading approach adopts non-representational theory. To date, this theory has been focused on areas such as: human geography, affect, politics and anthropology. With the notable exception of Daniel Rubinstein, few scholars have attempted to map a conceptualisation of non-representational theory to contemporary photographic practice. This project will therefore bring clarity to this particular line of thought. Since photography is generally understood as a representational practice, the application of a non-representational theory, which claims to be a "politics of what happens" (Thrift, 2008: 2), will help uncover *how* what happens happens.

My contribution to the wider investigation of photography is to inject the notion that photography produces subjectivity – a subject of the signifier –

working this way was to allow the voice of the participants to take center stage. This method is often associated with helping to enact change for those who are part of the study itself.

through its technological processes, from *how* it operates. This argument is developed from Heidegger's notion of technology being "a way of revealing" (1977: 5) a truth about the world. In this Heidegger argues technology brings forth something previously concealed by how it 'transforms,' 'stores' and 'distributes.' We might usually think of technology as being concerned with making things we can use. However, for Heidegger the essence of technology is that it operates not through *making* (*techné*) processes but through *revealing* ones: processes that bring something into presence. Technology is therefore something we use to bring into view – to reveal – the things around us.[4] Heidegger goes a further step in developing his thought with the notion of 'Enframing' (*Ge-stell*) as literally the framing or ordering of reality. In itself, 'Enframing' is not technological, it is the assembly or bringing together of that which will be revealed. In this thesis, I develop arguments, via Jacques Lacan, in Chapter Two and Chapter Five, that when a subject "Enframes" (Heidegger, 1977) the world they are in effect setting out the conditions for revealing not only their own reality but also creating the circumstances of their own subjectivity.

It is sometimes difficult with abstract philosophical arguments to find any practical application of the ideas they express. However, in the case of 'transformation,' 'storage' and 'distribution' and the bringing into being of something 'previously concealed' these are clearly all processes we can readily associate with modern digital photographic technology. I take Heidegger's argument not as a way to suggest the technology of photography reveals the world representationally. Instead, I argue photography helps formulate a reality that appears to be organised through labour and production. This important point, which is at the heart of my findings, I develop in Chapter Four.

---

[4] Although this might suggest Heidegger is only referring to technologies that have a direct relationship with the visual world, his argument is in fact far wider reaching. For example, the technology associated with driver-less cars reveals questions about autonomy and even ethical decision-making processes. Furthermore, we might consider how the building of a wind-turbine 'brings forth' the wind as a component in a system of producing energy.

I also created a body of work, which responded to the aforementioned workshops but also directly investigated a perceived tension between space, place and its representation (see Appendix 1). As stated my focus throughout was not to directly address 'making images' of places or people. I did not want to create a documentary project nor did I wish to produce work that aesthetically examined or critiqued traditional landscape photography. In *Landscape and Power,* W.J.T. Mitchell (2002) sets out how depictions of landscape do not simply present a singular locality; instead they combine three principle aspects of 'space,' 'place' and 'landscape.'[5] But his tripartite construction is still based primarily on representational terms. My own approach is focused on the affective power of considering 'place as image' and directly considers *how* place may be mediated through images. This position progressively evolved into examining how images mediated a 'sense of place' and ultimately plots a way to articulate how a constellation of different photographic practices creates a particular subjectivity. Parallel to this analysis I shifted my understanding of image from what it depicts representationally to its non-representational force.

vi. The subject of the signifier

Underpinning the research is the question as to whether and how "practice interpellates a subject of the signifier" (Burgin, 2011: 196). Drawing on psychoanalysis and Lacan, Victor Burgin describes the 'subject of the signifier' as when the subject or viewer is called to interpret the signs in a work. He opposes this with an account of the 'subject of knowledge,' who is addressed when an artist represents a political situation or event and in their work. In this case the artist is suggesting to their audience that they should *know* about this. Burgin stresses that such events are usually already conveyed in the media and in the news. In this case, the artist is actually saying to their audience: "what you should know is how concerned I am

---

[5] In *Landscape and Power* (2002) Mitchell uses Lefebvre's conceptualisation of the three ideas of space. While I do not address Lefebvre's accounts of space, I acknowledge they directly and indirectly inform Burgin and Harvey whom I draw on in this thesis.

about these events" (2014). This, Burgin suggests, is moral narcissism wherein the artist feels their audience should know something.[6] Burgin refers specifically to a 'subject of the signifier' in his essays *Interactive Cinema and the Uncinematic* (2013) and *Uncinematic and Virtual Signifier* (2011: 195). My examination of what constitutes the subject of the signifier is detailed in Chapter Two where I consider how photographs, experienced as part of a continuous flow of different forms of imagery, might determine individuals as viewing subjects. If photography constitutes or establishes individuals as subjects, then this claim is made primarily in the context of the "massive production of photos in the conduct of everyday life" (Hand, 2012: 2) and the "identifiable increase in image-making as an ordinary aspect of people's lives" (Hand, 2012: 3). With photography being as dominant as it is diverse, in the Twenty-first Century it is considered the "quintessential practice of life" (Zylinska, 2016: 7) in which seemingly every moment is recorded, captured and represented. This project implicitly extends a line of thinking, adding photography to a framework of object-relations, considering how we become who we are through interactions and encounters with photography. This is similar to the approach outlined by Kabesh in *Soundspace*, (2013: 65) which focuses on integrating the senses into a study of object-relations. Kabesh draws on Winnicott to explore "sound as an object that, like the transitional object, is out there waiting to be found and used by the growing infant" (2013: 66). He concludes that sound "brings about aliveness, richness and depth of experience" (2013: 74) helping us to understand and locate ourselves physically and emotionally. This approach is useful to my project since it locates sound into an argument concerned with human relations and their connections to material and mental landscapes. It will explore how photography operates through perceived and imaginary registers and how it may contribute to the understanding of how a 'space' becomes a 'place' but also how subjecthood is formed.

---

[6] This brief explanation was taken and paraphrased from the question as to "what is meant by a 'subject of the signifier'?" that I asked Victor Burgin after his talk at Winchester Centre for Global Futures in Art Design & Media (Burgin, 2014).

vii.   The Cornish Alps

The original title of this project was "Representing communities and the post-industrial landscape in the shadow of the 'Cornish Alps'." This gave focus to an area, outside of St Austell in Cornwall. Locals in and around this location describe visible, conical shaped mounds of waste produced by china clay[7] mining as the Cornish Alps. This landscape is constituted largely of industrial waste produce, yet it is paradoxically described as an alpine idyll. In this sense, as with photographs, the location suggests something that it is not. The Cornish Alps is the setting around which the practice components of this submission are based. This location has taken the form of a case study within the project. My initial reason for basing the research around this region was driven by two factors. The first being a curiosity connected to this particular landscape[8] provoked by the ever-present physical shape it cuts into the horizon. The second were social concerns for the region and for this area in particular, since it currently represents one of the few remaining large industrial mining areas in Cornwall. Nevertheless, employment opportunities remain limited and many households face a high risk of poverty (see Chapter One).

As an image-maker I was drawn toward making work that could respond to the place itself as well as commenting on the prevailing social conditions. However, with regard to the latter point I eventually realised, I would be creating work that as Burgin has expressed, was an act of "moral narcissism."[9] I therefore abandoned this approach and concluded the use of community workshops within my research was a more honest way to

---

[7] It may be interesting to note that china clay is a product used extensively in the manufacture of paper. It is therefore not without some irony that as the photographic image becomes less associated with the medium of paper and a photographic ontology is reoriented toward digital technologies and the subsequent (re)-presentation of the image, that this project examines what photography is becoming through a landscape that is closely connected to the manufacturing of paper, the medium it was once deeply associated with.

[8] It is a location that can be seen from many parts of Cornwall, including most of my own routes home and even from the University campus.

[9] Victor Burgin also made this point during the questions session of his lecture (2014).

connect with local people in the region. As the project evolved and its emphasis shifted toward a philosophical and theoretical engagement with photography (see the next section), the Cornish Alps became useful as a case study through which the research ideas could then be articulated.

viii.   The two parts of the submission – theory and practice

This PhD submission consists of two parts: a written component and a supporting practical component. The written component contains literary research, analysis and thinking as well as providing a theoretical context for the practice. Connecting theories of affect, memory and perception, space and place, non-representational theories, new materialism and technology the project reconsiders and resituates debates connected with contemporary photographic theory in which digital technologies – amongst them the network, the algorithm and the virtual – are enfolded into image making practice. As Palmer (Cubitt, Palmer & Tkacz, 2015: 144) noted, digital photographic theory has shifted its attention from questions of truth (Mitchell, 1992) towards those of production, distribution, circulation and consumption (Lister, 2013; Hand, 2012; Frosh, 2003). This perspective on the conditions of digital photography alters how we understand photographic agency. My research therefore examines how photographic agency operates, paying specific attention to how images locate us within a place or how a place is formed by being imaged or imagined. It is the triad of place, subject and image that situates the research.

ix. The practice

The practical components of this project synthesise the theoretical research and are points from which my thinking develops. Originally, the submission was to be practice-led, however, practice has now taken a lesser role in the overall submission. During the research process I considered my own practice and the effect my thinking had on the work I wanted to produce. Since I make continued reference to non-representational theories in my thesis, it became increasingly difficult to easily reconcile a submission of a

body of 'representational' work. Furthermore, the writing and theoretical component of my research was expanding beyond the limited word count of a practice-led or practice-based submission. In support of this position the practice has been articulated within this thesis in Appendix 1.

This research therefore references practice in all its forms but practice itself does not constitute the body of the submission. There are two distinct forms of practice this research references: participatory/collaborative practice and my own practice (focused on spatial representational forms and consisted of still and moving images). The details of each piece of practice are described and contextualised later in Appendix 1 but in summary there are four main pieces: *Ritornello*, *Absence from Work*, *Periphery*, and *Sky Lift*. *Ritornello* makes explicit reference to theories of perception, representation, difference and repetition. *Absence from Work* joins theories of affect and memory within an interlaced practice of still image, video and audio. *Periphery* takes non-representational theory as its basis and specifically uses algorithms and computer programming to create an interlocked scripto/visual work. While *Sky Lift* expresses the theories of space, place and representation, responding to questions of how we 'move through' and experience place and image. Taking the panorama as a quest for a "complete view," as a desire to see everything, the work configures an idea of place that is both inside, in thought, and outside, in its material presence. It uses as its point of reference the Alps and the 'Sky Tip'[10] created by the clay industry with the core of the work being a ski lift imported to Cornwall from the French Alps.

Along with the above pieces, I produced edited videos of the workshop interviews and other documentary material. These articulate and develop ideas that have evolved from the theoretical research, such as how photography operates relationally, creating particular sets of social circumstances. They also develop some of my moves toward trying to

---

[10] The Great Treverbyn Tip or Sky Tip is a central figure in many of the landscape photographs I created throughout the research. It is visible throughout St Austell and is considered an iconic, local landmark.

produce work that develops ideas of the 'un-photographic' or 'post-photographic' forms.

The participatory/collaborative practice took the form of community based photographic workshops, working with members of the public recruited through community education initiatives. The practice and the methods used for gathering data from these workshops are outlined in detail in the methodology section.

My own digital image based practice and the preparatory work have been informed and influenced by the research carried out in the workshops. The work has also been produced in response to the theories examined throughout the period of the project. My work does not serve to articulate or illustrate theoretical ideas; rather it embodies the principles discussed within this written document.

x. The theory – photographic agency

The intended contribution to knowledge within this thesis is a philosophical engagement, through photography, of how space, place and people are interwoven and intertwined. This leads to an articulation of a refined theory of photographic agency. The project begins from the assumption that the agency of photography and the photographic image can be thought through in a new way. It should be noted I use the term agency as a way to understand a particular capacity for 'photography to photograph' or for 'photographs to be photographic.' That is to say, my examination investigates *how* photography acts on the world.

The use of 'agency' derives from a reading of a specific part of Deleuzian New Materialism, as articulated by Jane Bennett (2010). Bennett's work engages with the complex of forces that configure and structure events. She pays particular attention to the force of objects, to things. For Bennett, matter should not be reduced to or conceived as a set of inert things. Instead, random or chance forces emerge precisely when things come together.

Bennett uses Spinoza's 'affective' bodies and Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory to develop her theory of distributive agency (2010: 21). Agency is conceived as distributed action, expanded across parts of an assemblage of human and non-human things. Usually active agency is thought to belong to humans, to the realm of intentional choices and therefore it is difficult to conceive how inert 'things' map back onto this idea. But Bennett suggests 'things' can act positively and support action rather than constrain it. She cites Bernard Stiegler's study of tool use; in which tools call attention to prior and projected usage. Her theory claims, "people, animals, artifacts, technologies, and elemental forces share powers and operate in dissonant conjunction with each other" (2010: 34). The arrangement of things – perhaps the relation of people, camera, object, light or the configuration of storage, data, screen, image, network and audience – reframes questions about where responsibility lies, how judgments are formed or how events play out.

I begin by proposing that photography cannot be adequately understood through its material properties or processes (for example through an account of lenses, light and the surfaces upon which an image is fixed). These no more speak of photography than we can describe a home by listing the components of a building and explaining how they are put together. Given how this appears to be an imperfect method of description, I consider a different understanding of the agency of photography and photographs. The common view is to see photography as a way of documenting or recording subjects, often with mechanical accuracy, it is in this sense photography is determined by representation and by what photographs depict and show. While I concede there are gains from examining photography through the above positions, I suggest there is something new to be learned from taking a different approach.

As I argue throughout this thesis, photographic agency is a distributed social force. It structures and organises, not only to represent but also to create conditions for an immersive or 'experiential' approach to how we understand

the world (this is predominantly because of photography's relationship to the wider agency of other technologies such as the Internet, mobile technology, databases etc.). However, I argue, re-thinking photographic agency can help address how countless aspects of everyday life are mediated. I suggest photography operates, through processes of production and distribution, as a regulating activity, which configures and to an extent determines emotional and affective registers. By way of an example, the agency of photography (as a phenomena embedded in social media) is evident not through reflecting the world visually, but by 'retweeting' it; not by making likenesses, but by obtaining *likes*. It does not reveal a world to us, it merely reposts it. In summary, photography does not hold a mirror up to ourselves; rather photography is a kind of mirage that covers over what its *self* is. An image does not provide a window onto *an-other* world; instead, I suggest, photographic images provide a way to understand what Deleuze (2014/1968: 181) defined as the elements of representation – identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance – by considering the substance of their very *own* production. To be clear, by using the term production I am not referring to a re-examination of the ideological and cultural discourses responsible for the production of meaning and representation, in line with the approaches outlined by Burgin (1982) and others. Instead, I extend this line of thought through a reflection of:

> how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions (Lorimer 2005: 84 cited in Waterton, 2017).

Approaching representation through re-thinking photographic agency is necessary because as Deleuze argued, representation and the discourse of the representative are founded upon the universal premises that "*everybody knows, no one can deny*" (2014/1968: 172, italics in original). I take from Deleuze that when representation is not thought about then identity,

opposition, analogy and resemblance go unquestioned. To date, there has been a tendency to approach representations only through what they show us, what they mean when they are interpreted and what they signify. What photography offers is an alternative model to consider representation, non-representationally. This is not to create a paradox but to suggest a way for representations to be understood outside of what they visually show us or what we interpret them to be or mean. This move is made more possible and perhaps even more urgent through photography's now digital condition.[11] I claim there is *urgency* because we are producing more photographs than at any time in our history. And there is *possibility* because photography is not only able to record, witness and show us things but it also shapes our responses, interactions and creates affective intensities as part of digital culture. This being especially true since photography is more embedded into the character of the Internet and its information networks, its mobility and its content creation. In recognising how "technologies co-evolve with the dynamics of systems of which they are part" (Hand, 2010: 15) we can see how photography is now not what photography *visibly* once was. In its digital form photography stresses other properties aligned more closely to labour, to repetition, to enjoyment, to flows of data, to incorporation, to being a form that can re-form, to the virtual and to the *invisible*.

This submission addresses the underlying research question and proposes an approach for developing thinking within the somewhat interchangeable terms of 'post-photography' (Batchen, 2002a) or 'after photography' (Ritchen, 2009). Batchen identifies the photographic as "residing everywhere, but nowhere in particular" (2002a: 109). Signalling that photography is overdue a conceptual rethink, Batchen suggested the post-photographic is a reminder of a disappearing presence (2002a: 127). This research grasps the presence and absence of photography by taking

---

[11] Photography has been the dominant mode of representation in modern industrial capitalism for over 100 years. Although film-based photography might be largely viewed as an historical or redundant process, digital photography is thriving to the extent that there is now more photography than ever (Lister, 2015).

presence as photography's ubiquity and *absence* as the disappearing grip of the force of representation.

For Ritchen, 'after photography' is a distinctly digital moment and as we have entered it, it too has entered us (2009: 9). The interlacing between the digital and our own subjectivity develops as a thread tightening throughout my project. Digital photography, as many participants in the research expressed, changes how we see the world but it also changes where, how quickly and who we share that experience with. These latter processes are more closely aligned to *how* we experience our digital world than *what* we represent of it. As Rubinstein noted, photography is not "another visual form of representation, but an immersive economy that offers an entirely new way to inhabit materiality and its relation to bodies, machines and brains" (2015, no pagination). It is this new, emerging and complex photographic ontology my research helps define. It does so by rethinking photographic agency as the articulation of the flows of production and social forces.

Recent thinking associated with non-representational theories would benefit from a clearer articulation of their relationship to contemporary photographic practice. This project will help bring clarity to these lines of thought in the following way: It proposes a way of thinking about 'photography as event.' Arguing that photography conceals its processual act of labour and production behind a veil of creativeness and pleasure. This detracts from thinking about objects, space, place, people as being mediated through forces such as repetition, re-forming, invisibility, indeterminacy, dissimilarity and difference. Thus I make a challenge against the visual toward the "more-than-representational" (Lorimer 2005: 83 cited in Waterton*, 2017*). I intend to show it is possible for photography to make this challenge by adopting a non-representational approach. Finally, in foregrounding the non-representational, I suggest a photographic signifier can be understood outside of representational sign systems.

xi. The theory – semiotics, cultural practice, networked images and algorithmic photography

Paul Frosh suggests two positions have tended to polarise opinions around photography. One is focused on the aesthetic analysis of the photographic image as a distinct object. This is approached most usually through a semiotic framework. The other takes photography as a historical, cultural practice or representational form. This has resulted in an underlying "tension between aesthetic object and sociotechnical practice" (Frosh, 2015: 1608). Frosh (Ibid) suggests that in contemporary photographic theory – dominated by the digital – we might consider the "networked image" (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2008) as taking on the properties of the aesthetic object. For Frosh, the networked image is an aggregated form of image, whose value comes from its popularity and its circulation. Through tagging and metadata seemingly disparate images can be linked and grouped together. Focusing on the snapshot, these images make "specific historical conditions appear natural and universal" (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2008: 24). Their underlying condition is also an "insecure presence" (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2008: 23), since they are not only easily disregarded because of their everyday subject matter but also because they are absorbed within a flow of data shaped by computer algorithms.

The concept of an 'algorithmic image' comes from Uricchio's argument that there are new ways to see and represent the world which are dependent upon algorithmic mediation between a viewing subject and the object they view (Uricchio 2011: 25). In algorithmic photography, looking is mediated by software rather than *directly* by cultural practice.[12] The most obvious example of this effect is the use of augmented reality features and applications (I examine this in more detail in Chapter Five).

---

[12] Software is of course, a product of culture, so the argument is not that cultural and historical factors are overridden. Rather it is to suggest the dominance of software and the central but often hidden role it plays. Lev Manovich examines how software shapes particular aesthetics in his book *Software takes Command* (2013), which I refer to in this thesis.

Frosh (2015) makes a distinction between the sociotechnical practice of algorithmic photography and the networked image as aesthetic object. While this distinction may be useful, I argue there is correlation between the two since the networked image is circulated through the algorithmic processes of Internet searches. Equally, algorithmic photography as understood here, is likely to produce and re-produce the banal, interchangeable forms of snapshot photography. For example, the AR (augmented reality) inspired features such as facial recognition or smile detection are conceived around our existing notions of what snapshots should look like.

Although Frosh's distinctions are helpful to differentiate these nuanced positions I believe the networked image is invariably also situated *within* and formed *from* the underlying logic of algorithms. Joining these positions together I develop an interdependent, ecology of photographic theory. A theory, which as Burgin suggested, when he first edited his "contributions towards photography theory," is 'inter-disciplinary' due to the heterogeneous nature of its object of study (1982: 02). In Burgin's *Thinking Photography* (1982), and in many of the subsequent formulations of photographic theory, inter-disciplinary methods were used largely because what was being studied was the visual representations photography made possible and these were indeed heterogeneous. My approach is to also use inter-disciplinary methods but with the aim of conceptualising photographic theory as an inter-dependent, ecological, structure re-described through non-representational approaches. Here I should state clearly, I am not dismissing photography's function as the carrier of visual representations. Photographs continue to be a form of image. As my thesis will show and as its title indicates, I develop my ideas initially from thinking through representational practice – from considering the visual as an agent. However, even at the beginning of my research there was doubt as to whether addressing *that which is visual* would be sufficient to uncover anything substantially new.

xii.   The theory – non-representational theory

Non-representational theory or theories are a set of ideas and partial theories, which suggest that 'practice' or 'activities' are how the world can be described. As its name implies, it is a theory that is non-representational: it does not privilege representational accounts of the world.

Nigel Thrift's *Non-Representational Theory* (2008), sets out NRT as a 'radical empiricism' that differentiates itself from sense-perception or the standard observation based empiricism. Such radical empiricism offers a theory for understanding how knowledge comes from somewhere but not necessarily somewhere that we can directly observe or sense. For Thrift, lived or actual experience is incorporated through "inter-relations" and phenomenological experience (2008: 6). Attempting to capture the 'onflow' of everyday life, he suggests non-representational theory embraces movement over frozen states, and that life is fundamentally based on and in a form of movement. In this way, life is considered not through an extraction of single moments but to "'buds' or 'pluses' of thought-formation/perception" (2008). These emerge through pre-conscious or pre-cognitive processes that build a force in order for things to take shape. Thrift privileges the pre-cognitive as something more than a simple addition to consciousness. Arguing that since within the small window of consciousness we may be somewhat easily distracted, there may be more value in paying attention to the preparation for action of pre-cognitive moments. Thrift uses the term 'onflow' as it does not presuppose location or body or specific sense. It expresses the indefinable, experiential, sensations of lived life; it is a term of 'seeming-ness' rather than one of definition. Significantly, in non-representational theory, how things seem is more important than how things are. Movement is considered as series of instants within life, offering an escape from a "consciousness-centred core" (2008: 5) and as a way of capturing life's potential. This perspective defines how experiences of the world may not necessarily be confined to representational practices but they may also be enacted or embodied by or through other phenomena. These ideas are useful to photography and especially digital photographic experiences as they can be used to reveal something of the structure of the

'image environment' without relying on or presupposing representational meaning. Equally, digital photography and specifically the structure of the networked image when examined appear to encapsulate some of the ideas set out by non-representational theory. Thrift proposes the use of NRT as a "strategic intervention" (2008: 147) and in this sense I take it to be used to situate arguments inside of wider theories. In effect, there can be no 'outside' or at least no theoretical distancing just theoretical distraction. In this vein, if pre-cognitive intentions or decisions are understood as playing an important role in "what it means to be captivated by an environment in a world marked by literal and metaphorical dislocations" (2008: 7) we might ask whether the natural state of photographing is to (re)-present some disappointment with how the world is against how the world seems at the time.

Non-representational theory also considers how action is response or reaction to a form of "joint action" (2008). Thrift claims cognition occurs through or emerges out of the different demands placed upon it, the multiple distractions vying for attention through voice, body language, senses etc. The complex of experiencing everyday life is then filtered through processes that may choose to guide or monitor or interpret different situations. Ultimately, our cognitive abilities embrace both performative and theoretical aspects - feeding these into our imagination and our responses. At the heart of non-representational theory is sense of play. Thrift suggests the logic of cognition is expressed through a privileging of this playfulness, which is not confined to childhood experience but continues throughout our lives. The affective significance of play therefore allows us experience the world not as something represented but as a "responsive activity" (2008: 147). Here I understand playfulness as a semi-structured, imaginative, endeavour but I am also drawn to Burgin's essay '*The Location of Virtual Experience'* (2013b: 23) in which he quotes Rabindranath Tagore's poem 'On the Seashore.' The poem begins with the line 'On the seashore of endless worlds, children play,' and toward the end of his chapter Burgin cautions against the "ideal of unfettered play" (2013b: 33) suggesting it may well be sentimental and

idealistic and based upon "stereotypes from media based common sense and opinion" (2013b: 33), especially in its relation to specific 'playful' behaviours of artists. History is absent from the idealisation of play, Burgin suggests and while non-representational theory may employ the notion of play to invoke a particular kind of freedom and unrestraint, we may also need to differentiate play that is childish from childlike (2013b). Using play as a way of shifting attention toward embodied experiences and relationships I consider the playfulness of cultural artefacts, especially digital snapshot photography. In Chapter Four I develop an argument focused on the labour (work) and pleasure (play) of photography. Photography is a new social form of play and communication. Both these uses are not as well served by traditional representational methods of analysis and methodological challenges have emerged from Frosh (2002; 2003), Batchen (2008) and by others (Lister 2014; Garde-Hansen 2014; Pink 2011; Rubinstein & Sluis 2008; Van Dijck 2007; Gómez Cruz & Meyer 2012 etc.). I examine these more closely in relation to the participatory practice component of my research; their significance is important as implicit in many of their ideas are the new characteristics of photography, which are part of a larger ecology of the image. This ecology is anti-biographical and to a certain extent pre-individual. These are terms also associated with non-representational theory (Thrift, 2008).

As is well documented, the increased interest in photography or at the very least in taking photographs using a digital imaging device drives a change in behaviours and responses (Hand, 2012; Frosh, 2015; Van Dijck, 2007; Rubinstein & Sluis, 2008 et al). Non-representational thinking suggests that we take account of these interactions and subsequent changes that create specifically *new* relations. This model of the world is presented as being ultimately mutable, changeable and within it there is a flow of forces into which we may be inserted and reshape things as they equally reshape us.

Thrift acknowledges that non-representational theory is experimental in its pulling of the social sciences into the performing arts and there is

undoubtedly a difficulty in defining the specifics of what non-representational theory is. To a certain extent, in articulating the breadth of what it takes in it becomes difficult to extract or form useful examples of non-representational theory that do not then spill into other disciplines or other theories. But perhaps we should accept this as being central to its project; the construction of an approach to everyday life that does not shy away from the complexities of *what happens,* or at least does not reduce what happens to representational accounts or utterances that convey us toward absolute meanings. What emerges from this acknowledgement of different possibilities is the adaptive properties of human and non-human things and how at their centre is no single reductive idea or essence but instead a force that works to interpolate and to be interpellated *by* the world. Thrift's ideas appear to form around or through thinking otherwise: gesturing toward ideas rather than pointing directly at them. Like Massumi's descriptions of affect (2015), in Thrift we are always intuiting our way toward measuring what we understand rather than describing it with any real clarity. Within non-representational thinking there is an assumption that there can never be absolute accuracy when describing possibilities.

xiii.   The theory – photography as event

The conclusions in this thesis presuppose photography's existence as a *pluralist assemblage* in which subject/object encounters and interactions form what I term 'photography as event' – "an effect that seems to exceed its causes" (Žižek, 2014b: 03). Before summarising my research conclusions, I will explain why photography should be thought of in this way and how 'photography as event' helps support the refinements to photographic agency I am making and also helps deliver an inter-dependent theory of photography.

Referring to photography as pluralist assemblage I make direct reference to Deleuze and Guattari's well-used and seemingly popular term across the

humanities,[13] of assemblages. Following many other scholars, I make use of it as a concept to articulate different ideas and thought. Primarily, the application of assemblages is relevant in helping move from hierarchical thought to one of equality and presence, to shift away from binary modes of thinking toward complexity and dynamism. Assemblages also provide the conceptual tools to think through how combinations of different heterogeneous forces (fantasy, desire, representation, technology, semiotics, geography etc.) produce dynamic, even real effects. In addition to the above, I draw on Gómez Cruz and Meyer who approach photography as a series of assemblages, suggesting photographic agency "takes place when a set of technologies, meanings and uses align" (2012: 204). Finally, my deliberate use of the word 'pluralist' emphasises photography as taking place in a multiplicity of ways.

An 'event' might be thought of as an interruption of general day-to-day activities, an unpredictable encounter, contingent upon different forces. An event is something that happens, an experience of different sensations and different perceptions. It is difficult to imagine how an event might be adequately visually represented as it may be better described by forces, actions and outcomes. Although, none of these contain what the event actually is. In the chapter *The Sublime and the Avant-garde* (1991: 89), Lyotard argues that post-modern art, in its attempt to deal with the inexpressible, has the characteristics of an event. Lyotard states: "The inexpressible does not reside in an over there, in another world or another time, but in this: that (something) happens" (1991: 93). In some forms of art the paint itself is the uncertain event, the 'something that happens.' As reality is not easily expressible by words or concepts, Lyotard's makes a (post-modern) move from representation toward event. In this respect, the concept of event or even a series of events is a better description of the experience of life and reality than understanding life through objects and images.

---

[13] Drawn from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004). The concept of assemblages has been widely used in political science (DeLanda, 2016; Bennett, 2010; Connolly, 2002) in cultural studies (Massumi, 2002) and social science (Latour, 2005).

To clarify this further, within this thesis 'photography as event' is understood not as the moment when camera and subject come together. Nor is it the occasion of image and interaction; of data and network; of light and time. Although these are events, specific to parts of production and they might also be simply considered as activities describing a traditional idea of what photography is. Instead, I use 'photography as event' as an amalgam of processes, such that 'data and network' are no less a part of photography than 'light and time.' Photography in this way becomes more of an overarching description (with less emphasis on what specific images photography makes). The *something that happens*, the event-ness of photography happens when it is processual, when it is a force directed not at verisimilitude but at a set of conditions that present themselves as being *photographic*. Alain Badiou describes the event as how truth is formed from a break in the order that appears to support it (2005: xii).[14] In this sense, the event reveals something usually hidden, illustrating the underlying logic of the world as contingent rather than absolute. Here, disclosure or sudden awareness of a truth has striking similarities to Heidegger's notion of technology as revealing and the ordering of reality through 'Enframing.' Following this thinking, I argue photography breaks into and (re)-organises the flow of experience in a particular way. While this suggests a connection to issues of duration and time, these are not the concerns of this research.[15] Instead, the interruption caused by photography is evidence of photographic agency and its capacity to select, distinguish and divide experience. Photography – in its many forms – is not a separate apparatus passively recording reality, it is causal in the disruption of what is happening and an

---

[14] We might consider Brexit as an event that disrupts the continuity of Britain's membership of the EU and reveals a truth about the structures, interests and motivations of political and social actors. Thus, although the democratic process allowed for a Brexit outcome, the event disrupts expectations. Although a two questioned referendum could clearly result in one or other outcome. The significance of Brexit was partly due to a perceived unexpected result and what this then indicated about the campaigns linked to either side of the argument.

[15] It should be noted that duration and time are important to the conceptualization of event. For example, Deleuze and Guattari (2004) express event in terms of the acceleration and deceleration of processes. However, as stated, time and duration are not the focus of this research.

agent within the disruption it creates. In engaging in photography we adopt a bearing on how we experience reality, not because we make images. I claim 'photography as event' is not a Kodak moment, nor a click of the camera shutter. It is the conditions making those things possible that renders a rupture in the systematic ordering of reality and makes something like an image occur. As a consequence, the staging of life for the camera has made reality itself appear to be photographically determined.

xiv.   A brief summary of the research conclusions

Within this research, photography emerges as a complex area of study. It is also true that photography may not need to be approached in this way. Indeed, many people who take photographs, even those who participated in this research, may still wish to consider photography as an uncomplicated pastime, hobby or activity. However, the importance of the research conclusions is to open up the fissures in photographic theory, which have developed as photography itself has mutated in the Twenty-first Century and to provide new waypoints for thinking about photography. My conclusions do not claim photography is not a representational object or that photographs are not images, merely that the tools used to think only in these terms limit our understanding of what photography has become.

The use of representation, as the basis for understanding photography, sets in place the conditions for binary thinking – black vs. white, male vs. female, gay vs. straight. However, I argue, this is not how the world is constructed. A non-representational approach[16] offers a way to think of photography and photographs not as material objects (this would also be an oppositional move against representation and would only create an *alternate* signifier), instead,

---

[16] Few scholars have applied non-representational theory to photography. Although the most widely published is Daniel Rubinstein (for example see Rubinstein, Golding & Fisher, 2013 and Rubinstein, 2017) who has approached photography through fractals. While I share many of Rubinstein's positions I apply his philosophically orientated positions onto practical models. Unlike Rubinstein I make specific use of Marx's surplus-value to inform my ideas of production and creativity. I also diverge from Rubinstein's fractal photography theory.

photography is approached through an exploration of its affective, non-representational, largely in-visible essences. [17] Taking as its basis my thinking of 'photography as event,' over the following chapters this research makes three conclusions.

Firstly, because photography duplicates, repeats and replicates, I argue it brings into being a world *viewed* as opposed to a worldview. It is here I move photography's association with vision and technology in different directions, suggesting photography is the *expectation* of a largely technologically informed vision. Many of the general photographs we take are anticipated, hoped for and pre-shaped by common image formulas – the selfie, the sunset, 'hot dog legs' – visual content is significant only because it replicates, because it embeds itself into an array and flow of other duplicate forms and because it is shared across a network. What was evident from my research workshops was that participants consistently knew what types of images they wanted to make. However, this suggests photography takes place through a fantasmatic frame, supplemented by technological enhancements to perception, such as facial recognition and smile detection.

Following D.N. Rodowick (2007: 42), I claim the 'automatism' of technology not only binds or limits subjectivity and creative agency but also fundamentally alters how we perceive the world. It shapes the types of photographs we take and the ways we take them. It also determines the distinctiveness of digital photography, since aesthetics are often "driven by device functions" (Frosh 2015: 1607). Furthermore, technology re-orientates the relationship between photographic theory and our usual understanding of terms such as composition and indexicality (although these are concerns of representation), I consider technology as configuring photography as a 'mode of thought' rather than aesthetic expression.

---

[17] For example, when thinking of books as containing stories, books are understood from a representational perspective. Books can also be understood in a materialist sense, as objects, as things placed on a bookshelf. However, what if we were to consider how books themselves affect us, what if we consider how books contain the impetus for other books, as processual experiences?

Thus in my first conclusion, through which I question the relationship between space, place and people, I claim photography does not describe or represent a particular reality: instead it exposes us to the randomness of a world viewed and to its inconsistencies. It does this not by providing a representation of a view of the world but through its increased proliferation, through its recursive nature and because, as a form, it can be re-formed, re-worked and repeated. What this indicates is that photography, with its capacity to duplicate and replicate, and express configurations and processes, cannot be fully understood through representational thinking. Investigating photography's relationship to space, place and people a number of new configurations emerge. For example, the concatenation of images making up Google Street view is a processual organization of real space onto a virtual screen space.[18] Therefore, through photography we do not create likeness of places, rather we substantiate the realisation of how unlike place photographs really are. In this way photography forces us to think, not only in visual terms but also in how representation replicates its own deficiencies and how seeing is inflected with other forces of experience.

The second conclusion of the research addresses the question whether practice interpellates a subject of the signifier. Given my non-representational approach to photography, bringing this question into the scope of my conclusions is challenging, nevertheless, I believe it can be adequately met. Representation is constrained by the terms of subjects and objects. If there are signifiers then it follows there must be a process of reading, of interpretation. Lacan emphasised the signifying order as a closed structure with subjects *subjected* to a signifying regime. The effects of a signification system or structure – for example language – are not recognised by the subject. Instead, the structure *speaks the subject.* In arguing the

---

[18] We may visually feel as though we are experiencing movement through a place but we are in fact moving through a database of images. The visual experience attempts to mask this but photography, as expressed in this conclusion, also suggests new ways to understand spatial arrangements. Being driven by data and output through algorithms the photography of Google Street View (Google Maps, 2017) depicts space as a series of Enframed (Heidegger, 1977) or bordered instances.

subject is the 'subject of the signifier,' Lacan asserts there is no subject without language. This creates a subject "totally subjected to [the] structure. . ." who becomes, "in this sense de-subjectivized" (Žižek 2013:571 of 8412). Therefore, we might conclude the subject is fundamentally unknowable. However, my understanding is that for practice to interpellate a subject of the signifier, practice brings into being a subject who is *subjected* to the structure of the practice, and practice is a signifying system. If we remain close to Lacan's schema, then the effects of the signifying system within practice are concealed from or not recognised by the subject. Therefore, the subject of the signifier is interpellated through a hidden function of practice. However, I claim that hidden function is in part representational but is also part non-representational, and thus the subject of the signifier may also be a subject of affect.

To argue whether a subject of the signifier can be interpellated by practice would, in many ways, be a reductive argument. When Burgin (2011: 196) made this claim he addressed how he understands *his* work as functioning and it is not my intention to prove or disprove Burgin's understanding about his own work. Instead, I take the question as a way of bridging ideas between representation and non-representation. I believe it indicates a way to view subjectivity from a perspective that is not only within the symbolic order. My understanding of what Burgin means by a 'subject of the signifier' is that signifiers shape subjectivity and this shaping then forms new work. If we are to retain a concept of the signifier, I argue, what it signifies is not only signs and the symbolic, representational forms of work but it also a manifestation of work as a processual experience that is missing its object. In this way, images are not only constructed from interpretable signifiers, they are also forces that structure perception and behaviours.

In summary, I argue a subject of the signifier is interpellated by practice. But addressing this question the signifier is moved away from its use within semiotics and the symbolic order. In this new configuration a signifier is not only a representational object, it also something organised and formulated

by the demands and processes of production and pleasure. It is also an indicator not only of the absence of objects and a lack of material presence but of the proximity of affects.

In my third and final conclusion I claim it is possible to approach photographic representation from a new position. This approach offers a way to rethink the arcs of representational practice as dynamic social forces of production. I consider the proliferation of photographic images within contemporary society to be a direct consequence of a relation between a specific form of creative labour – of work – and its means of distribution. I propose there is a 'surplus value' [19] embedded in photographic images and this is best understood by a closer examination of their production and mediation, rather than reflecting on them as representational surfaces.

A key observation from this research grew from the participatory workshops, where what people photographed was of less importance than the fact they had taken photographs at all. This led me to think photography through ideas connected with relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002) and how photography may have a particular social function. This aspect of the research, and my findings from this, informed the next step in my thinking. This moved from representation and its 'ways of seeing' to a relational framing of 'ways of being' to my concluding agential account of a 'ways of becoming.' Photography, embedded into a process of distribution and circulation, is a practice of production but usually it hides the processes of production behind its own visual surface. As a result, we have tended to privilege visuality when grasping photography as a discrete object of study.

---

[19] Taking the term 'surplus value' from Marx (1887/1991: Chapter Seven) I use it to indicate there is an additional process in the production of images that goes beyond its labour-power of production. Marx defines use-value as being present in the production of something. Products may have a use-value and value. If a product is exchanged for the cost of its production then there has been no creation of surplus-value. As a consequence, money does not then become converted into capital. Marx points out that the process of creating surplus-value is a continuation of the production of value.

My third conclusion is that photography pre-conditions, "Enframes" (Heidegger, 1977), the conditions of its own production by forcing behaviours and animating different processes of thinking that are the *sine qua non* of photography itself. This changes objects, people or things, from being 'something in their own right' to being 'something to be photographed.' That is to say, photography puts into place the conditions for the photograph to exist. Heidegger (1977: xxix) refers to this as the 'standing-reserve,' as things that are made available to be used. Photography activates cognition through impulses and instinct through conventions. And by shifting our attention away from the visual to the register of *what happens* we can understand photography through processual terms, how it duplicates, repeats and replicates. We then understand something of the ultimately unsatisfied compulsion to produce and enjoy image for its own purpose: image for image. Through these terms, photography can be understood as an expression of *process* and *production*, providing continuity between pleasure and labour, between *jouissanc*[20] and effort. By reconfiguring our understanding of the photographic image in this way, its agency is understood in terms of how it conceals power structures that sustain an activity of labour behind a veneer of creativity and enjoyment.

As I have indicated, representation is unable or often fails to reflect upon representation itself. This is likely the most urgent question we confront as image makers, or as Lacan suggests:

> The point is not to know whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather to know whether, when I speak of myself, I am the same as the self of whom I speak (2006/1966: 430)

While writing this part of this thesis, I received a message from someone who had participated in the research and who I had not seen since the last workshop over a year ago. I believe what they write expresses the

---

[20] Here I use *jouissance* (Lacan, 2006/1966:149) to suggest the inaccessibility of photographic pleasure, which I claim forces us to take more and more photographs.

conclusions of this research and articulates the subject of the signifier as I conceive it. Here 'photography as event' enters the space of thought, feeling and even well-being, yet it preserves a condition of production, distraction and *jouissance*.

> *A quick thank you John, you always picked up on when I was in a bad head space and you helped me see the point / timing in my photography where my mind was not at ease. Lately I've really been able to discern between happy family snaps, attentive discipline to the 'rules' (Ha ha, Yeah right!) and creative fun. I was in a bit of a bleak place lately (no, not Nanpean!) and I have used my camera to drag myself back onto my feet! So, in part, thank you!*
> *(Anonymous Research Participant)*

xv.   Overview of methodology

I took three distinct approaches within the research, partly influenced by Action Research methodologies, I engaged in a process of creation and subsequent reflection. The three approaches were as follows: Firstly, making and looking at photographs was examined through participatory practice. This took place in community-based workshops. Secondly, I used scholarly research into theories I felt were relevant to photographic theory (affect, new materialism and non-representational theories. I also examined theoretical ideas traditionally connected to photography including psychoanalysis and Marxism) to inform the visual work produced. The relevance of these areas was ascertained by attendance at conferences, through literary searches and from my reading of primary material. My own practice, which developed out of this activity, was successively refined over the course of the research. Thirdly, by taking findings from the participatory practice, the scholarly research and reflecting on multiple forms of practice I undertook a philosophical engagement with the ideas that emerged. This is expressed within this document.

I drew from some of the principles of Participatory Action Research (Reason & Bradbury-Huang, 2008), Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2006) and Rose's Visual Methodologies (2002) and these contributed to my research methods. Since I was able to facilitate and run community-based, photographic workshops over a three-year period of the research it was important to remain aware of the various relationships that evolved during this time. Participatory Action Research involves researchers and participants, working together as equal partners over long periods of time. Although the research participants varied during the timeframe, some did remain throughout. This allowed for greater continuity and the opportunity for a deeper qualitative analysis of the activities being undertaken.

Initially, I believed the photographic image making involved in the research, could be deployed toward some form of useful purpose or social change. As this is not a social science based project I was mindful of not over-stressing any potential social change orientated outcomes or aspirations that the project may have had. Rather, I was adapting a model from social science to frame an enquiry, informed by practice. I explore these issues in more detail later in this document in Chapter Three where I describe the participatory practice. Action Research is centred on usefulness as well as on an equitable relationship between researcher and participant (Reason & Bradbury-Huang, 2008:04), and I believed these principles were useful for structuring a non-hierarchical research process.

Action Research involves "cycles of action and reflection" (Reason & Bradbury-Huang, 2008:04), broadly following this format I used a process of reflecting on findings and acting on points of departure to develop creative and theoretical ideas. These went on to form the basis of my own practice. This was especially the case in my practice piece "Absent from Work," which incorporates a method I developed when recording unstructured interviews. These became the journal video element of the work. The sharing of my practice with participants also allowed further development of the research, as increasingly the research context of the work was discussed during

workshops. This process of creation and reflection continued while the workshops were run throughout the duration of the project (three years).

I approached the project by trying not to have any preconceived notions or ideas. I took some ideas from Grounded Theory methods, since these are associated with interview-based collection of data, and I used this approach to develop and build theories through the synthesis and conceptualisation of data. Grounded Theory builds from the systematic collection of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), however my data collection was not systematic. In fact, the initial stages of my research used unstructured interviews and discussions. I then took the interview data as the initial substance of my enquiry. During this early stage it became evident that the process of working with participants would open up multiple ideas to explore in connection with the research.

Early in the project I used video to record the discussions. It then became apparent these videos could become a form of practice in their own right. Subsequently, I paid closer attention to the production values, the setting up and context of these videos. This included investment in microphones, lighting equipment as well as paying close attention to standardizing the format of recorded interview. I used a systematised approach to recording the videos and began to consider how the videos could serve a purpose beyond data collection and recording. Some of the video work, for example in the piece "Absent from Work," became intrinsic to the creative practice.

Much of the interview method evolved and responded to the varied situations of the workshops. Taking a more systematic approach to setting up the interviews gave participants time and the opportunity to structure and formulate their responses. Although this clearly influenced the topics they shared, it also contributed to formalising and standardizing my approach.

Grounded Theory suggests not having any preconceived notions or ideas. In broadly following this model, I asked participants to speak freely about

their experiences and allowed their responses to venture off into any area they chose to speak about (some discourse analysis was used of interviews where they discuss a range of topics related to the project including photography, the landscape, and representation). In addition, as photographic images were the basis of this project my analysis also considered vision and visuality in Rose's[21] terms (2002: 6) asking how we are made to or allowed to see. Through the participatory element the project takes into account how images can be a "site of resistance" and how "ways of seeing mobilized by the image, are crucial in the production and reproduction of visions of social difference" (2002: 15). My focus on visual practice leads specifically to addressing the research question of "whether practice *can* interpellate a subject of the signifier" (Burgin, 2011: 196, my italics). As Burgin's own writing and practice draws extensively on the psychoanalysis of Freud and latterly Lacan I use this to help provide an explanation of the affective and associative properties of images (Burgin, 2009: 109). Although the study of photography presupposes an account of the visual – and I make no attempt to dismiss its importance to photography – as I stated earlier, my theoretical inclination has been to examine more than the visual in order to help refine the ontological terms of the medium.

My methods also included practical research in the form of visits to the china clay area, image production and various forms and developments of studio-based experimentation. The work I produced over the duration of the project was shared with workshop participants, peers and supervisors. It was continuously refined and modified and often used in support of a number of research-connected papers given at national and international academic conferences over the last five years.

The scholarly research contained within this document examines my own practice and the practice of participants in the research through combined

---

[21] In her work Visual Methodologies (2002), Rose sets out a range of approaches to image analysis including questions around the production of imagery, questions about the image itself and questions around audiencing.

multiple theories including non-representational theory, affect, agency and perception. It examines place as a constructed notion – stressing not *images of place* but place-as-image – and specifically questions the role of photographic images in forming this construction.

I attempt to reconcile the traditional view of a photograph as a representational surface by considering of photographic images as doing more than representing objects or people in the world. Aligning photography with non-representational theories, I raise the question as to whether the object of consideration in photography is not the image itself, but something operating like a "thing-power" (Bennett, 2010; Thrift, 2008; Connolly, 2013; Brown, 2001) of images[22].

Alongside this analysis of photography and the photograph, the research focuses attention on how participatory practice (or perhaps it should be better described as a social practice or social mediation) embodies ideas directly connected to networks and to the relational aspects of photographic image making. The research suggests that methodological approaches which use photographic practice as method and tool, for example within social science (Collier & Collier, 1986/1967; Pink, 2009; Holm, 2008b etc.), should take into account how photographs activate subjectivity and how agency is not determined only by the visual. In this sense, interpreting photographs through what they show is similar to treating the symptoms rather than the cause of a disease. Social science projects which use photography and neglect to consider how a 'subject who photographs' is a subject already formed by photography risk basing their findings on an already established symbolic determinism.

---

[22] The specifics of this new theoretical framing are addressed throughout this document. I draw on current ideas related to the relationships between 'things' (and for the purposes of this research photographs are considered as things) and people. Objects become things when they are made to stand out from the world. A theory of things deals with subjects and objects and the relationships between them. It asks how objects enable human subjects to form and transform themselves (Brown, 2001).

It is important to develop refinements to current understanding given photography's heterogeneous qualities, its continued questionable ontological status and the attention now being paid to its ubiquity and transmission (Hand, 2012; Frosh, 2015; Gómez Cruz & Meyer, 2012; Rubinstein & Sluis, 2008; Cubitt, Palmer & Tkacz, 2015). Using photography within visual arts research I interrogate, adopt, adapt and examine how it functions in order to present findings that will not only have purpose for arts practitioners but may also have an application for other disciplines. Implicitly, this project tests the validity of methodological monism by applying a pluralistic approach to the diverse and difficult to grasp object of photography.

xvi. Description of the practice

As stated earlier, although practice as such is not part of the submission practice has been a consideration throughout the project. My personal practice (see Appendix 1) for this research was created as a response to visiting the area around the Cornish Alps, to extensive research into the social and cultural history of the area including time spent at the china clay museum and site visits to the private industrial area. The work is also underpinned by theoretical research and responses from the participatory workshops. My practice is therefore a culmination of a series of encounters with different fragments of experience. Here, I make deliberate use of the word 'fragment' as Burgin (2006a: 26; 2006b: 172) uses it and along with 'breccia' (1996: 179) to convey perceptual experience. Speaking about the 'sequence image' – a never-ending stream of imagery which we might term the Internet – Burgin suggest images may be bridged by the "already known" (2006b: 172); they can be read through previously expressed narratives. In this way, Burgin stresses how narrative or stories are enfolded into our experience of image, both as part of our inspiration and interpretation. Referring to breccia, Burgin borrows a metaphor from Freud, when he describes the fragments held together in a dream, to conclude the present is a "collage of disparate times, an imbrication of shifting and contested spaces" (1996: 182). These descriptions of heterogeneous experience

provide the basis for resistance to finding a singular, definitive meaning or inspiration for work. Practice then becomes a concatenation of different objects, thoughts and influences. While Burgin is hesitant to precisely define any terms of the sequence image, he admits it is the form he has always worked with (2009: 267), the indeterminate sense of fragment, breccia, and sequence are readily indicative of unconscious processes. From Burgin's thinking, I took stories and conversations gathered from the workshops to help structure my practice. It should be noted the word 'structure' is precisely the wrong term to use because a structure is generally taken as formal and systematic, whereas my application of it to practice was to express an *unstructured* sense of arbitrary fragments.

Absent from Work (see the full exegesis in Appendix 1, section i., page 206) is based on the thinking outlined above. The work layers multiple narratives – those of a mine captain and those of participants in the research. Through its form I created a fragmentary and multi-mediated experience. It juxtaposes a still composite image of written pages from a mine captain's journal with audio and video of people reading excerpts from their own lives.

The work *Periphery* (see the full exegesis in Appendix 1, section i.v., page 212) also builds on the fragmentary premise, taking images and texts from the Internet and connecting them into a single work. Created later within the research process, this piece embodies thinking connected to the algorithmic image, created by association and by software, with data seemingly at the centre of the generation of meaning. The work itself unfolds from a single hash-tagged word. It could use any word and the work would then become a different work. However, its structuring principle would remain the same.

In addition to the application of fragmentary thought to practice, throughout this thesis I also use quotes from interviews and discussions with participants as a way of reinforcing the ideas synthesised from theory.

All of the pieces of practice draw on a range of interconnected ideas and themes. What links them are their engagement with spatial presence and spatial representation. Four specific pieces of practice were created during this project:

- *Ritornello* a series of constructed images depicting a constructed landscape.
- *Absent from work* references a set of historical moments that occurred in a specific location through an historical object.
- *Periphery* an interactive application that uses shared and random data across the Internet.
- *Sky Lift* consists of a ski gondola (imported from Flaine, a village in the French Alps), the work consists of video, audio and images.

I apply examples of how the practice operates throughout the thesis with each piece of practice described in detail in Appendix 1 of this document.

My approach to practice was not to use theory to speak about photography but to use an expanded understanding of photography to speak about theory. The result is that, through this process, something different and new emerges in our relationship to photography.

To an extent, I would have to claim that my thesis is not research on photography, rather it is research in photography. Which is to think of photography as being practiced within it. Here, I use the term photography not just as a process of making images but as a way to think about what images do. In this way, the research speaks philosophically about photography in order to construct a critical experience of it as an object of study. What I hope to have explained is the reason for the presence and 'absence of work' that has permeated my thesis submission.

xvii. Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis presented a challenge since the underlying logic of hierarchical forms is part of what this thesis critiques. The logic of one chapter following another stresses a particular linear importance – suggesting some information is needed before others – however, in concluding this research I propose the structure of this thesis, shares something of Freud's account of the logic of the dream. Wherein Freud suggests the dream is arranged like "a piece of breccia, composed of various fragments of rock held together by a binding medium" (Freud, 1955 (1974), 181-182; Burgin, 1996: 178). The binding medium, which in this case is the thesis itself, contains knowledge that comes together from different areas, each of equal importance. Another theoretical structure, which helps describes this thesis is Deleuze and Guattari's 'rhizome' with its anti-genealogical form (1983: 11). Following the rhizome, this thesis and my research has been partly resistant to successive stages of organisation. For the purposes of clarity and readability a structure has been imposed upon it. However, the order in which concepts, ideas and thinking appear does not represent a logical hierarchy or a successive lineage of importance.

The written submission of the thesis has been structured into thematic chapters. These chapters articulate the ideas and concepts that have informed the entire project. In each chapter I synthesise theoretical ideas and show how these inform my research conclusions and the arguments I make throughout the thesis. These are followed by the references and bibliography Finally, there are three Appendices: Appendix 1 contextualises the practice created for the project, it also draws together how the practice relates to the overall research conclusions; Appendix 2 contains information about the participatory workshops, including an outline of the curriculum and an example of transcribed interviews; Appendix 3 lists my personal research outcomes from the project.

The thesis divides theory in the main chapters from practice in Appendix 1 for the purposes of clarity and readability. However, I maintain that my practice contains theoretical thinking and therefore it may be misleading to

have differentiated them such that one aspect appears to be exclusively focused on 'theory' while the attention of Appendix 1 is exclusively on 'practice.'

The research project

In his book *Difference and Repetition*, in the chapter 'Image of thought,' Deleuze begins with the following: "Where to begin in philosophy has always – rightly – been regarded as a very delicate problem for beginning means eliminating all presuppositions" (2015/1994: 171). Deleuze expresses the difficulty in finding a point of beginning that does not start from 'somewhere.' Since somewhere is always located in relation to somewhere else, it is difficult to find a point from which to begin. The challenge, then, is to find a point from which theory can be picked up, adapted and worked with.

What follows is the theoretical research and ideas I have engaged with throughout the project. It consists of a series of thematic chapters, each of which articulate a particular line of thought and enquiry. These correspond with the main themes of the project. In each chapter I summarise the theoretical positions in these areas and relate these back into my research.

One of my stated aims is to use photography to articulate a philosophical engagement of how space, place and people are interwoven. The first chapter undertakes this through a consideration of space, place and landscape. Taking as its point of investigation the Cornish Alps, it describes its relevance to the project in detail. Since this landscape derives from the china clay industry this chapter makes the connection between production and the subsequent distribution, circulation and consumption of images and the physical production of landscape. It does this by relating Marx's ideas of surplus value into the production of both landscape and images. Moving from this materialist analysis, it then considers *production* in terms of image and the imaginary and suggests an emphasis not on images of landscape but landscape-as-image. Finally, Chapter One considers how place occupies and acts upon subjects. I apply non-representation theories into this conceptualisation by considering the term '*within* space' as way of understanding being both 'with' and 'in' a location. This term also makes implicit reference to physical and psychical experience. Chapter Two

considers the subject of the signifier and the formation of the subject through the experience of practice. I argue a subject of the signifier is the potential of the subject to be shaped by photography's prospective claim to be more or other than representation. Chapter Three looks at the participatory practice in detail and considers photography as a relational activity. In it I make a claim for photography as preconditioning the conditions of its own production. I consider the significance of how in my conclusions the external world appears mediated through a series of manipulated or failed exercises. I also make some analysis of the participatory element of the project and consider what capacity the research had to enact a research driven way of thinking. It is not a chapter on methodology, it takes method as its object of study but it uses it to help understand the configuration of research-led forces that are overlaid onto other human and nonhuman formations. Chapter Four looks at how photography becomes what it is through a set of processes: namely labour and enjoyment. It considers how photography reflexively shapes both subjectivity and external reality. This chapter develops an ontological account of how photography *becomes* photography. It considers how photography paradoxically undermines its own representational paradigm by perpetuating and re-presenting its own forms. I go on to consider how photography is experienced by a late capitalist subjectivity and focus on how image comes into being and the process through which the world becomes imaged and photographed. And I claim one quality of photography is how its *failure to fully grasp* the thing it represents is representative of how reality is in itself not fully graspable. Chapter Five examines how technology has reformed photographic practice, the photographic object. It focuses on the specific shifts in photographic and image making practice that technology has produced. And it considers photography as a way of thinking through the complex positions intrinsic to its own conditions and to representation as social force. I set out how photographic theory should evolve to accommodate what photography has become. And frame a discussion around the concurrency of perceptual experiences that emerge from the synthesis of digital technology and photography.

Chapter One: space, place and the Cornish Alps

1.1.   Introduction

In this chapter I set out a philosophical engagement with space, place and landscape and explain why and how the Cornish Alps, as a location, and as a case study it is relevant to this project. The Cornish Alps were originally invoked in the research project title and have been something of an on-going '*leitmotif*' throughout its duration. For this research the location has two discrete functions. Firstly, it is the visual and conceptual subject matter of the project and it features in many of the works of practice. Secondly, within the context of the research – especially the practice – I initially thought of the Cornish Alps as landscape *of* representation. However, since the project questioned the ground and function of representational practice it has been necessary to reconceptualise the Cornish Alps or at least to re-think it in different terms. In this chapter I use the Cornish Alps as a case study to articulate the theoretical positions within this research.

Most recently, using non-representational theories, landscape research has been re-thought around conceptions of "affect," "agency," "emotion," and "practice." This was a move by human geographers and anthropologists such as Thrift (2008), Ingold (1993; 2000) and Wylie (2007), in order to shift thinking away from visual representations toward what began as a 'non-representational' idea but which became a more inclusive stance; one foregrounding all the senses with a particular emphasis on encounters, embodiment and events (Waterton, *2017*). I map this change to thinking about landscape onto similar thoughts around photographic practice.

The purpose of this chapter is also to trace the significance of the Cornish Alps; in it I state how it informs the practice created for this project. Beginning with a brief description of the location and an outline of the socio-economic context of the area, I then consider the theoretical thinking connected to space, place and landscape. For clarity, I will examine the distinction between space, place and landscape and how they relate to one another

and provide an understanding of the relationship between each of these terms. I examine space, place and landscape and reflect on what defines spaces that are representational compared to those that might be understood as non-representational. To this dialectical analysis I apply a Marxist reading of surplus value to argue, that while we may be in a location, a location is also, in some way, within us. Place occupies and acts upon us as subjects – this then equates to a state of '*being with*' a place and '*being in*' a place. Place is therefore not external from a subject: it is mediated by subjects and, in turn, subjects are mediated by it. How subjects *are brought into being* is a common theme through all the chapters in this thesis and my attention to this process helps support my answer to the underlying question of this research.

This chapter is divided into six sections, the first sets out the context of the Cornish Alps and its relevance to the research. The second draws parallels between the production of landscape and the production of image and uses Marx's surplus value as a way of understanding how image and landscape share similar conditions. The third section shifts away from image to imaginary and makes the concept of landscape-as-image. Building on this the fourth section then asks how photographs make things appear photographic. The fifth section then examines how place acts upon a subject and what kind of relationship this enacts. The chapter then concludes with a sixth and final summary section.

1.2.   The Cornish Alps: a place of reality and fiction

The outskirts of St Austell in Cornwall are the setting, context and background for the project. Locals, familiar with the area, describe the conical shaped mounds of waste produced by china clay mining as the Cornish Alps. This is a reformed landscape of industrial waste produce, which is described by locals as an alpine idyll. Originally white in colour, due to being made up of 'mica,' the outline of the landscape in the area has altered over the 100 or more years of open cast china clay mining activity. Early paintings of the area depict peaks as distinctly more classically Alpine

in look than their current state. In recent times, respective owners of the mining areas have landscaped many of the original peaks - sky tips as they are technically referred to - into terraces as part of a programme whose aim was to blend the landscape into its existing surroundings. Today, the connection of the Alps to this region in Cornwall seems a little tenuous. It could therefore be said that language sustains the myth rather than any clear physical resemblance in the landscape.

In *Landscape and Memory*, Schama states:

> It is clear that inherited landscape myths and memories share two common characteristics: their surprising endurance through the centuries and their power to shape institutions that we still live with (1995: 15).

The memories of the Cornish Alps are tied directly to its industrial past and present. The pyramid peaks of the clay area landscape no longer represent work in the clay mines – instead they have become part of its local heritage and a symbol of both change and resistance. As I write, the building of a new 'eco town' in the area around Carluddon has attracted protests from local residents who fear their landscape is being endangered. As one protester posted onto the Facebook group "No Eco Town," the sky-tip is "more than a pile of sand. [It's] a part of our history, heritage & national identity" (No Eco Town, Facebook, 2015). For now, the threatened sky-tip at Carluddon, one of the final few remaining, remains as the logo for the local primary school.

Historically, many families who were born, educated and lived in the so called 'clay villages' would have expected to have worked for or found employment in the local mines companies. Today, many leave the area and even the county to find employment. According to local Government statistics for overall economic deprivation, Cornwall is ranked 122 out of 326

local authorities in England (where 1 is most deprived).[23] St Dennis South, an area within the china clay mining region, is ranked having the second highest 'households at risk of poverty' in Cornwall.[24] Jobs and employment opportunities are relatively scarce in the entire area. The china clay industry, while still maintaining a relatively small active mining programme, is generally in decline in Britain.

At present china clay represents the largest mining industry in Cornwall, although year on year, the scale of mining has been systematically reduced. In the sense that the area is still industrially active, it cannot be truly defined as a 'post' industrial space as my research title suggests. It may therefore be better to suggest it is a place in transition, moving from an industrial space toward a post-industrial one. It thus becomes less a presence in the present and moves toward becoming the heritage of the past or an object of historical interest.

The 'Visit Cornwall' website boasts about a dramatic Cornish coastline and the "wilderness of Bodmin Moor and its panorama of big skies" (Visit Cornwall CIC, 2017) alongside sits the old industrial heartland – a landscape, awarded World Heritage Site status that contains the remnants of Cornwall's mining past.[25] The industrial clay area is often overlooked in the typical representation of Cornwall to tourists. A notable exception to this is the Eden Project, which is sited in one of the abandoned clay pits.

---

[23] This data is taken from *Cornwall Council Briefing note on Economic Deprivation Indices 1999-2009* (Cornwall Council, 2013). This is the most up to date information available on the Cornwall Council.

[24] This data was taken from a regional analysis of Experian's Mosaic data and presented in a Cornwall Council report, *Edge of Poverty* (Cornwall Council, 2012).

[25] It should be noted that Cornwall's mining heritage is generally considered to be tin mining and not china clay mining. The cause of this is usually attributed to the romantic aesthetic beauty of tin mine buildings and the spread of their locations throughout the county. The open cast clay mines are only located in the central region and are largely inaccessible to the general public. In economic terms the china clay industry, as stated, is still relatively active while tin mining is largely now only a feature of the tourism industry and television dramas. The area from which opinion is sought usually defines the different positions vis-à-vis the importance of either tin or china clay mining.

There is a latent social narrative of the Cornish landscape that Willett (2009) noted in her PhD thesis *Why is Cornwall So Poor?* For Willett, Cornwall is paradoxical, perceived to be a fantastic place to live while simultaneously also being recognised as one of the poorest parts of the United Kingdom. Cornwall is therefore "described, discussed and imagined" through "a particular set of illusions and narratives" (2009). The articulations of described, discussed and imagined narratives have been part of this investigation. However, it is not the narratives themselves that interests this research but how they interlace together, are mediated and understood through different regimes and registers. I suggest, with a non-representational move away from privileging the visual, we can find new ways to re-consider our interactions and our agency.

My deliberate description in the original title of this thesis of the location as being one that is post-industrial was an attempt to highlight something of the social and cultural transformations that landscape symbolically conveys. Inevitably, landscape is experienced at different moments, interrupted, disjointed and lived within. It may also be understood as fictional well as being real. In the following section of this chapter I explore the relationship between the fictional landscape and its production. Later, I suggest, like images, that place sits at the interface between a fictional, imaginary, inner space and a material, real, outside space. However, this dialectic between fiction and reality may be disturbed when fiction is located on the outside and the real appears overlaid with a fiction.

When viewing a drama film we are invariably shown a fiction presented in the guise of some form of realty. We are, arguably, asked to willingly suspend our disbelief[26] at the impossibility of what we are experiencing and to accept it as a 'reality' for the duration of the film we are watching. Photographs also function in a similar way – presenting a certain view of a

---

[26] This term was coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his work *Biographia Literaria* (1817/2013) and is generally accepted to indicate a willingness to believe what may usually be considered 'unbelievable,' specifically for the purposes of enjoyment.

particular reality. Nevertheless, photographic truth is not at the centre of my argument, nor is the discussion of whether or how a camera can express something of reality to its audience. Instead, the focus of my research began, as I have stated earlier, by examining the function of representational practice and how it interpellates a 'subject of the signifier.' The Cornish Alps is, I suggest, an example of a signifier located within a real environment. I argue, the Cornish Alps presents itself as the opposite of cinema and the opposite of photography: it is reality experienced as a fiction. It may therefore be understood as the production of a 'reverse photograph.'

1.3. The production of landscape and the production of image

At the beginning of this project I considered the Cornish Alps as an *accidental* diorama. Along with being credited as the inventor of photography, Daguerre is also known for perfecting the diorama. "The diorama - like most illusionism, and particularly like photography – is a demonstration of a technical power to transform the material of the world into representation" (Slater, 1995: 219). For me, there was little doubt that the Cornish Alps appears to be evidence of the industrial power to fashion a direct material transformation of a landscape. As Slater identified, two senses are invoked by the diorama: "wonder at the experience of being transported to a fully realised unreal world; and wonder at the (incomprehensible, hidden) technology which makes it all possible" (Ibid). I considered the location as having the qualities set out by Slater and the concept of the diorama and its relationship to the Cornish Alps has remained with me for much of this project. However, the use I have made of the term was to shift my representational thinking,[27] and to consider what actually is an image.

---

[27] One of the distinctions that can be made between a diorama and photograph is the specificity of the medium through which the object or referent is represented. In photographic terms this is usually a flat surface, such as the photographic print or a projected or screen-based surface. Whereas the diorama is three-dimensional, it contains depth. It can be navigated through the three geometrical planes of 'x', 'y' and 'z' (it should be noted that often the experience of the diorama's audience is restricted to a horizontal x-axis, along a separating boundary, nevertheless there is always potential to move into the

Considering this landscape as a diorama suggested I could limit discussion around the natural landscape and pay attention to questions of representation. It also offered a way to conceptualise natural landscape which is then transformed into representational object. This line of thought also suggested questions related to fantasy and the idealisation of space, as well as questions as to what actually are 'real' or 'natural' landscapes. It was also pointed out to me by a participant in this research, that there is no place or location that is completely 'natural' or 'unspoilt.' These terms are all only qualified by ignoring particular conditions of production. It was these prompts that took the research further away from being a project about landscape or landscape photography toward looking at the how space, place and people might be interconnected. With these interconnections in mind, I focused my attention on production and labour and relating these to the construction of place and to photography.[28]

Participants in the research, who spoke about the china clay area, did not always echo Slater's reflections of being transported to a different, unexpected place and the sense of wonder at creating it. They acknowledged it as a picturesque location and there was a sense of wonder at how the entire landscape had been altered. But there were also concerns at romanticising the location. As one participant noted, *"I think the idea that people who have been part of it all their lives think that it's made picturesque, trivialized, is very telling."* Furthermore, as an area where people live and work, one expressed: *"People feel sometimes, it was their livelihood, it was hard, it was difficult, it didn't pay well. And now it's just part of the tourist trail in Cornwall"* (Anonymous Research Participant). While another

---

diorama). This then brings the terms of 'movement' and a third 'z' axis into the considerations of image and representation.

[28] The starting points for researching this area was Marx, Lefebvre and latterly a series of lectures I attended given by Professor David Harvey. From a photographic position I read Alan Sekula's "Photography between labour and capital" (Wells 2010: 443) and his work "Fish Story" (1995/2002). All of these are discussed in the following pages.

acknowledged, *"I've always had an artistic outlook and I've always liked the china clay area from that point of view"* (Anonymous Research Participant). From conversations, discussions and interviews, the views about the area were largely as one might expect. The area represents industry, work and employment for local people. However, an idealised, fantasy version of the landscape, expressed by the name the Cornish Alps, is in direct tension with the day-to-day experience of living there. Accompanying any idealised view of the landscape is nostalgia for the industrial past of china clay.[29] Additionally and as I stated previously, the sky-tip is more considered an intrinsic part of local identity.

When working with participants I identified a gap between the fantasy and the actual landscape. Initially, convinced that photography could bridge the gap, the research eventually revealed photography to be able to only provide a representation of difference between fantasy and reality. The desire to reconcile these two was therefore often not met. For example, as one participant expressed: "*I became dissatisfied with the photographs because they didn't capture the emotion and the scale of the landscape I was walking in.*" Another noted, "*when you take a photograph it's got body or shape but when you look at it, it's flat*" (Anonymous Research Participant). While some were also very aware that photography often failed to capture everything: the sounds, the smells and the mood of a place. "*Hearing birds sing, seeing the sun rise, seeing it set, that's what matters, that is what is important to me*" (Anonymous Research Participant). Clearly, here, the visible is only one part of an interconnected experience and sense of place. If our understanding of landscape and place comes through senses and experiences including movement, sound and time (Ingold, 1993 & 2000; Pink, 2011; Tuan, 1977) then despite it being one of the dominant forms of representation, the visual is rarely exclusive from other experiences. In addition, as Wells notes,

---

[29] This nostalgia was evident when I visited and spoke with staff at Wheal Martyn museum. Many of the items they held in their archive were objects local people had donated that they *"just didn't want to throw away."* At the time I visited in 2013, much of the archive at the museum had been moved to Exeter University. The archive seemed to have become more of a repository for minor, personal items, which were only very loosely linked to the mining history of the area. I discuss this process in more detail in Appendix 01 of this thesis.

"landscapes bear an imprint" (2011: 20), and such an imprint is not only something we can see but also an imprint of history, of production and of time passing.

A common sense, (and largely anthropocentric) view, suggests landscape is outside in the world; and thus subjects have to enter into landscape. But thinking about how landscape also enters us opens up a more profound understanding of the experiences we have. For example, rather than landscape being read or interpreted as an external text (Wylie, 2007: 70), landscape should be thought of a process that pre-figures our own presence. Furthermore, as much as landscapes bear an imprint, we also bear its imprint inside us. The nostalgia for the china clay industry, the claims that the sky-tip is part of the local identity, the references to cultural heritage and tradition, all suggest landscape is as much inside as it is outside but it is more usually discussed in a particular, romantic and representational way. Liz Wells observes that as spiritual identity is intertwined with landscape (2011: 211) it inevitably heightens tensions in regard to wider national identity. Examining a wide range of photographic work from the Baltic and Nordic areas, Wells connects ideology and nationhood through photographic imagery. Her assessment, following Brecht, is that as ideologies change so do the shape and form of our representations.

Although industry is a largely hidden activity, occurring on the periphery of locations, there is a contradiction which seems to preference a certain visibility of the landscape. Such visibility is largely configured through romantic ideas of what is experienced. This was supported, throughout the project, by the observation that landscape was regularly referred to by participants using romantic language, such as: *"mystery," "discovery," "the real comes from your heart," "harmony," imperishable beauty."*

What is apparent is how these notions lack any reference to how landscape is produced. They remain firmly within the frame of romantic ideas of representation and appearances. Being focused in this way they obscure the

connection between the industrial transformation of space and the economic pressures of capital. Even the term 'post-industrial,' which indicates historical, social and cultural transformations of landscape, has become romanticised, aestheticized, perhaps even abstract. It takes on a vagueness connected to a wider misunderstanding of 'industry,' which is often associated with an inaccurate concept of "machines, smoke, the transformation of raw materials" (Stiegler, 2012: 9). Whereas industry is also "standardization, economy of scale, calculability applied to all processes: there is industry in all realms — traveling, the realm of affects, or in the 'cognitive' domain" (2012: 9). Industry then is not only a romantic construct but a part of a 'process of production.'

Following a direction set out by Allan Sekula in his essay "Photography between labour and capital" (Wells, 2010: 443), in which he suggests photographs create an imaginary world but claim it as reality, I next consider the relationship between photography and the economics of capital – the processes of production – in order to establish a connection between the two.

Sekula's essay deals firstly with the archive followed by a range of claims that: "visual and pictorial histories reproduce established historical thought" (Wells, 2010: 448); "history takes on the character of spectacle" (Wells, 2010: 448); viewers of photographs identify with the authority of photography (Wells, 2010: 448); historical documents become aesthetic objects and are then uncritically viewed (Wells, 2010: 448). All these arguments begin with the visual and focus heavily on looking at what photographs show. However, if we consider photography as a thing into which labour power has been expended and in which labour is embodied (Marx, 1867/2015:28), then any visual meaning, contained on the surface of photographs, becomes less significant to our understanding of photography. This may not appear a radical conceptualisation of photography but I suggest it makes photography a different object to think through. As I state elsewhere in this thesis, I do not propose what photography visually shows is unimportant; instead I highlight

how photographic representation has privileged its visual condition at the expense of other qualities. One reason this is helpful is because we need new ways to understand why we are engaged in more photography and producing more photographs. It is unlikely we can account for this change only because we need to see more images of people, objects and things. I suggest the circumstances in which everyone is becoming a 'photographer' are driven by a configuration of the forces of labour and pleasure and with pleasure being driven by desire and fantasy.

As the first conclusion in the research proposes, photography provides continuity between pleasure and labour. Its agency is not only discernible through visibility or through representation but also through how the labour of production is mediated by pleasure. The most obvious example of the pleasure of hidden labour is the uploading of images to social media sites such as Facebook. Images form a substantial amount of content for the site; in turn these images attract users' attention. Attention is converted into revenue for Facebook through advertising. The infrastructure is made freely available however fundamentally user generated content is what produces value on the site not the technology provided by Facebook itself. Through this logic, the production of content (images or text) is intrinsic to the economic success of the site. Clearly most people add content to the site for pleasure, yet it is their labour which contains the surplus value that Facebook is able to convert into capital and profit.

Following this, I argue photographs are ideological – although this is clearly not a new claim – but my proposal is that they operate ideologically through their form as well as through the cultural meanings they are interpreted as having. What this means is that ideology is manifested in how they make invisible their own production. That is to say, any 'labour value' contained in photography is made less apparent because what is taken as being a manifest property of the photograph is 'the visual' not the material labour of photography. In ideological terms, images hide their purpose by positioning the visual at the centre of what they are. The 'use value' (and here I am

making 'use' of Marx) of photography is considered to be what they show visually and how they can be interpreted or understood. However, if use value is also understood through labour production then photography can be opened up to questions about its specific process, about repetition and about duplication. That is to say, common to all photographs is a single mode of production, namely photography. What this suggests is that when looking at photographs we are both *presented with* and *blinded from* their ontology. By reflecting on the visual we maintain a focus on photography as a process of 'making selectively visible' that which a mode of production and labour 'Enframes.'[30] However, the labour and production appears to be lost.

This is not a technical argument for photography and I am not suggesting technically difficult or challenging photographs somehow contain more value. Instead, when considering technology I take Heidegger's notion of *techne* (1977: xix)[31] in which a subject is established – *becomes* constituted – through technology rather than adopts it as a means to do certain things. Heidegger sees technology and art as ways of disclosing; enabling "what is coming into appearance to appear" (Costello, 2012: 103). He considers both as different modes of a revealing process.

In summary of the above points, moving away from the visual to considering embodied labour and production helps develop a new understanding of photography. I argued photography is ideological in two ways: firstly, as it has been traditionally understood, in relation to the cultural production of the visual image but it is also ideological, I claim, because it hides its mode of labour and production and stresses the visual. Labour and production refer

---

[30] Heidegger's term has been referenced elsewhere in this thesis. In this context it is used to suggest how "both men and things . . . take their places in the stark configuration . . . for use" (1977: xxix). It is therefore used here to suggest ordering, assembling order or configuring production and labour together into something which has a use.

[31] Heidegger examines the etymology of the word technique and describes how the word *techne* refers to crafts as well as the fine arts (arts of the mind). He states its use as a term for bringing forth and revealing. He also draws attention to its link with *episteme* and therefore suggests it has a direct connection to knowing (1977: 13).

not only to the effort taken to construct a photograph but also to the complete photographic process – specifically it takes into account processes such as: reproduction, repetition, duplication, difference and sameness, circulation and consumption. Importantly, following Heidegger, these are processes of revealing. The significance of this position is how it brings to the surface a series of questions connected with processes and makes these specific to the condition of photography. When extracted from its visual surface we are then able to examine photography as a different kind of commodity. What this means, as I detail below, is asking why photographs might trigger behaviours (such as picturing sunsets or portraits with smiles, swiping, sharing, zooming or even looking itself).

Following the above, our attention can be moved away from questions around the 'similarity of the object photographed to the image created,' toward the *condition* of similarity between photographs. Drawing from Deleuze [32] (2014: 02), I argue a start point for photography is not the contemplation of endless numbers of sunset photographs, which can be quickly found from an image search. Instead, these serve to intensify the actual sunset that, in advance, pre-configures the photographs of it that will follow. In a similar fashion, there is an actual face which is the repeat of all the selfies taken of it. To be clear, this is not a return to the visual by another route. What I am suggesting is a model to reflect differently upon mechanisms of representation and repetition. Drawing from Marx again, what is common to all photographs of sunsets and all selfies is not that they can be visually exchanged for one another but that they are products of the hidden labour and production of photography. The force behind the production of photography is a fantasy of verisimilitude driven by an always-unsatisfied desire. This is to say, they duplicate and repeat the conditions of their own existence and these conditions reproduce the logic of capital in

---

[32] Deleuze himself is borrowing from Charles Péguy's account of the fall of the Bastille and the study of Money's Nymphéas in his book "Clio," as a way of considering repetition for itself. Péguy's book on "history in relation to life," takes the notion of Bergson's *durée* and sees duration as part of the process of ageing (Bell & Colebrook, 2009: 144).

which dissatisfaction creates demand. At its most radical this means photography, far from being a force for change and resistance, can also be understood as inescapably a site of stability and conformity.

Each new photograph of a sunset celebrates and replaces all previous photographs of sunsets. What we gather from this is not how unlike[33] a real sunset they visually are (I discuss this further in Chapter Four) but how similar each photograph is to the other.[34] This is increasingly evident in the age of ubiquitous photography (Hand, 2012) and was shown in the research when participants produced similar versions of the same subject matter. Photography's value is as an immaterial, objective social relation that exists in the form of affects. No doubt the visual content of a photograph will have an affective impact but so too does photography as a process. I claim photography is processual not only before it becomes visual but also in excess of the visual, since it maintains its processual properties, through sharing, distribution and interaction.

To conclude, similar to most landscapes, photography contains a hidden value of its production. Photography is as much responsible for a configuration of social relations as it is for providing us with visual likenesses. Therefore, as well as being understood by what it shows, photography can be approached as being a process of reproduction, repetition, duplication, difference and sameness, circulation and consumption in its own right. By putting aside the visual and understanding photography through these processes and how it operates through the drives of fantasy and desire photography intensifies real experience, this is examined in the following section.

---

[33] Photographs appear to contain the essence of their distance from reality while still maintaining a claim on the real. The distance is what makes a photograph an image, as posited by Derrida (1998: 23) wherein there is *différance* between a signifier / image and what it signifies / the object.

[34] Here I differ from Daniel Rubinstein who claims photography is a force of *difference.*

1.4.　The intensity of the image

Intensity is a change in a quality of something, for example temperature, speed, pressure or altitude. Through intensity we might experience colours becoming more vibrant, sounds more audible, contrasts more distinct. When measuring the temperature of water we might use a thermometer to indicate any quantitative changes that are occurring. This measurement, expressed in numeric forms represents the qualitative change of intensity that is occurring[35] (Mader, 2014: 225).

Building on how photography intensifies real experience, it is possible to suggest when there is a quantitative change in the number of photographs or the amount of photography in the world, there will be a qualitative change to our experience of representation.　That is to say the intensity of representation increases, as there are more instances of representation in the world. As we see more and take more photographs the intensive force of photography increases. But since photography is in the world and of the world I suggest this change in intensity also changes the experience we have of the world.

This is not always in a positive experience. Throughout the research the volume of photographs in the world was often a topic of discussion with participants. Inevitably, with so much access to so many images who cannot ask the question as to why we would need any more? It is in partial response to this that it is useful to consider, if not the merits of adding to the images in the world, then certainly the effect of there being so many more.

As one participant expressed: "*I think it takes the mystery away. I have a friend who's gone on holiday to the place I'm going and she's sent me*

---

[35] Deleuze distinguishes between the scientific measurement of intensity and the philosophical pursuit of what its character is. For example, "temperature would be an intensive ordinate; the measured temperature would be the co-ordination of such an intensive ordinate of temperature with the extended substance of, say, the mercury of a mercury thermometer. The extension of the mercury would be the extensive expression of the intensive ordinate of temperature, or its co-ordination with the extended mercury" (Mader, 2014: 244).

photographs of everything. So, you sort of know before you get there" (Anonymous Research Participant). It would appear that, in this example, Google Street View has changed everything. The intensity of our visual experiences changes expectation; it changes what we see because it has already been 'pre-seen.' There are other consequences, too. As another participant revealed when discussing their teenager's holiday: "*With my eldest daughter, she's sent photos every step of the way. Which is of their suitcases before they go, pictures of them getting in the car, the plane. It's just a complete visual experience*" (Anonymous Research Participant). Lamenting the days when postcards were all that were sent home, it seems today if people *can* photograph then they tend to, no matter what the subject matter.

How might the change to the quantity of images make any difference to reality? I claim while there is cause to think about the visual but it is also helpful to think about process and production – to think in terms of reproduction, repetition, and duplication as instrumental in changing the intensity of real experience. The website *ShotHotspot* (Johnson, 2016) helps users find great places to take photographs anywhere in the world. The site states it uses location data embedded into images to work out where are the best places to take photographs from. Users can also upload their own hotspots, which are then ranked according to how many comments, likes or views they receive. The site itself was conceived after the site's owner had 'exhausted' the photographic locations in his area. The site, apparently, becomes more accurate and useful the more people who contribute to it. In *ShotHotspot*, we see the interlacing of a number of ideas. Firstly, although driven by the visual image, the site functions through algorithms, interactions and databases. In theory it could have little connection with how images look and everything to do with how images as data are responded to. It operates directly within the terms of reproduction, repetition, and duplication. Secondly, it becomes self-fulfilling, since the more popular the location the more likely people will go there to take photographs and therefore the more popular it will become. Thirdly, the site operates on the basis of the pre-

configured visual image. Locations are selected because they have already been photographed.

On August 18th 2016 a photograph of a five-year-old Syrian boy was reported to have "sparked outrage" (BBC News, 2016). [36] The image apparently prompted 'an outpouring of anger' at the situation in Syria. A similarly affective and potentially more controversial image (since it depicted a dead child) was published in September 2015 of the drowned Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi. [37] There can be little doubt that the affective power of these photographs came from the nature of their visual content. However, they also created a change of intensity in how the world was experienced subsequently. Of course, photography has historically played a role in altering public opinion and shaping how events are remembered.[38] But I claim there is something decidedly 'post-photographic' in relation to these two particular images.

As part of a mediated and connected environment these images were shared extensively across social media and conventional media outlets. In fact, in the case of the first image, it was not originally produced as a still photograph but is a still taken from a moving image recording of the events (whether this technological distinction is relevant or valid is an additional question for photography today but not one addressed directly in this thesis). As objects of information these images became part of the processes of reproduction, repetition, duplication, circulation and consumption. Reactions to them were in excess to what they visually contained, as if they contained a more potent

---

[36] For the full news story see the BBC News (2016). The story returns over half a million results on a Google search for the boy's name and the word 'photograph.'

[37] Kurdi's death also has its own Wikipedia (2016) entry in which there is a specific section denoting 'reactions to the photos.' In this section there is reference to the global spreading of the photograph. There is also reference to the impact the photograph had on the Canadian federal election. The material affects of a photograph may well be considered to correlate directly with what they depict. However, I argue they are also as a response to the intensities they create as part of real experience.

[38] For example, the image known as 'Napalm Girl' taken by Nick Ut, taken in 1972 is regarded as one of the iconic images in the collective memory of the Vietnam War (Sontag, 1977).

force. It would appear that the reactions were not focused on the particular but more widely on the universal suffering the images represented. In this way, the images confronted global political problems but they also presented paradoxes of how the representations of real events show us not only the event but also interrupt the expectations of the day-to-day. This is 'photography as event,' a force revealing the illogical actions of the world in a seemingly rational – photographic – form. How they create such a force was in part visual, what they showed but it was also because of the processual characteristics of photography.

When photographing in the china clay area myself, as part of the project, I constantly battled with trying to produce work expressing *something more*. This issue was made more challenging as participants were often producing similar images and there was an expectation on their part that my work would be different, simply by virtue of my personal interest in the outcomes of the project. But inevitably, as one participant expressed it, *"sometimes the photograph isn't even there, because of the particular effect of the light, the time of day, the angle of the sun, the level of light, the clouds, whatever. Sometimes you go to a place and there isn't a picture"* (Anonymous Research Participant). Even when photographs are not there, even when the standing in the *ShotHotSpot*, photography enacts something else. As one participant explained, after not managing to get the photographs they had wanted: "*The actual experience is interesting to me, because I had a camera and a tripod I was sort of invisible to anyone who was passing. People didn't bother to recognise me . . . they walked round me. And I quite liked that invisibility and that ability to just set up and observe things without participating myself"* (Anonymous Research Participant).

The above brief examples demonstrate how photography and real experience are intertwined. Not only as affective experiences of seeing places and seeing images of places or seeing events depicted in a photographic way. They also indicate how the world is mediated by intensities, by quantities and volumes and data. They show a response, a

becoming or *being* not directly tied to the visual because it relies on other things to be experienced. What these examples express is how photography interrupts our experience of the world. In this sense photography does not present a picture of the world as it is; instead it provides a fantasy of visual continuity and presence. Inevitably, photography is a way of being both with and in the world simultaneously.

1.5.   Being 'with' and 'in' place

Gaston Bachelard, in *The Dialectics of Outside and Inside* (1994: 211), explores a poetics of 'being.' Countenancing philosophical and linguistic determinations in relation to space, he proposes that language itself is dialectically structured by appearing to be either open or closed: "through *meaning* it encloses, while through poetic expression, it opens up" (Bachelard,1994: 222, italics in original). Following Bachelard, I suggest there is a dialectical relationship between the materiality of the industrial clay mining landscape and its apparent fictional representation – the Cornish Alps as fantasy. Suggesting 'inside' and 'outside,' appear to represent the "sharpness of the dialectics of *yes* and *no*" (Bachelard, 1994: 211) Bachelard uses poetics to reconcile the two terms. He claims some hyphenated words may blend both spaces, exampling 'being-there' as a term requiring a stress on either 'being' or 'there.' De Certeau develops a similar position with the '*here'* and '*there'* of walking claiming it introduces the notion of near and far (1988: 99). The terms 'reality' and 'fantasy,' also have a similar, sharp dialectic. They also clearly operate as binaries: a reality vs. a fantasy. However, it is difficult to see how this binary account of space functions. There is no doubting how the clay area came to look like it currently looks – as a result of industrial labour, of mining. It became what we see today because of the mechanisms of capital and economics of employment. In this sense, the landscape has been shaped by a day-to-day, year-on-year reality of clay mining. How then, is it possible to simultaneously consider the landscape as a fictional space of fantasy and as the real consequence of industry?

Like similar parts of the United Kingdom, the clay area seems out of synchronisation with life in the Twenty-first Century and its largely immaterial and service economy. There is a peculiar coexistence of old industry and inactivity, of work without work or place out of time.[39] As one participant in the research observed: "*This part of Cornwall would be very, very, different if it wasn't for the clay industry*" (Anonymous Research Participant) but his words reflect not only on the physical appearance of the area, they were also a commentary on the social-economics of living there. As they suggested: "*People dislike working in the clay industry. They get up in the morning not wanting to go to work. They also feel rather insecure about their jobs*" (Anonymous Research Participant). While another noted the devastation when the industry laid off thousands of people.

Largely because of their scale the open cast mines appear as vast sites in which little is taking place. The area feels isolated and cut off from the reality of Cornwall and the rest of the United Kingdom. As a local resident describes: "*When we first moved here, which was about 30 years ago, we had a choice between moving into the clay area and outside of the clay area. It was interesting to note there was a marked difference in pricing. And the estate agent's business was divided into clay area and non-clay area. We ended up living on the edge!*" (Anonymous Research Participant). Bachelard identifies a particular "geometrical fixation" (1994: 213) suggesting the world is constantly organised and marked out. Boundaries and borders form and create the shapes of space. This delineation arranges the world we experience into a series of places and 'other places'. The demarcation of place by boundaries requires the acknowledgment of the authority and justifications of boundaries and the institutions creating and supporting them

---

[39] The communities in the region have many ongoing challenges, "St Austell Gover Ward, South East (3,332), St Austell Mount Charles, North West (3,420) and St Austell Poltair, South East (5,612) are all in the top 20% most deprived in the country" (Cornwall Council, 2016). Other statistics from *St Austell, St Blazey and China Clay Area Regeneration Plan* (Cornwall Council, 2016) paint a challenging picture and include: unemployment for the area in 2010/11 was 2.9% of the population (compared to 2.3% of the population for Cornwall and the South West); and 36.7% of people living in the area had no qualifications compared to 18.8% in England and Wales.

– the land registry, the council, the police, private surveillance etc. These apparatus (or to use Foucault's term) the 'dispositif,' contain place through their various discourses of ownership and access as well as by means of their physical barriers and marked out divisions between one area and the next. It is not a significant divergence to connect the notion of the geometrical organisation of real space with that of the perspectival arrangement of space in representational painting. Brunellesschi's 'cone of vision' situates a subject at the point of its triangle, facing toward the flattened plane of the painting. Representational space is thus organised around an observer, the horizon and its points of infinity – its vanishing points. Nevertheless, this single and reductive account of space is "inappropriate to the description of psychological functions" (Burgin, 1996: 40) of the subject. Space is never just a physical interaction it is inevitably also a psychical interaction, too.

We might conclude, from this partial social sketch, that reality in the clay area is clearly distinguishable from any fantasy implied by the name the 'Cornish Alps.' However, I argue the reality of the clay area constitutively requires a fantasy of the Cornish Alps. In expressing an unconscious desire in defining something such as the Cornish Alps we come up against a paradox. (It should be stressed, I take the description of the Cornish Alps to be more than a matter of verisimilitude between two places.) Instead, I conclude the Cornish Alps is the expression of unconscious desires, wishes and conflicts of the people who live in the area. In this case, this is their way of being able to or managing to 'be-there,' as Bachelard might have put it. But this is not an act of resistance toward a clay industry as some oppressive force. This is a manifestation of how reality needs a "fantasy in order to retain its consistency: if we subtract fantasy, the fantasmatic frame, from reality, reality itself loses its consistency" (Žižek 2014: 324). The fantasmatic frame, so much like the photographic frame, imposes a set of relations. It operates through a particular logic of inclusion and exclusion. It therefore requires logical thinking in order to understand it. We might begin by asking, in the specific context of the Cornish Alps, what conditions need to be satisfied in order for there to be this fantasy? I suggest, firstly, there is a direct

metonymic association, this emanates from the verisimilitude of one landscape with another landscape. This, of course, is also part of the logic of representation – it requires a judgement in order to decide that one place resembles another. But how does fantasy enter into the relations of space, place and landscape? Psychoanalysis offers the account of transference to describe the way in which a patient relates to their analyst. It is seen as an unconscious use of the analyst. Similar to the way Freud described transference the research showed the Cornish Alps represents a facsimile of impulses and fantasies (Freud, 1905: 157) for the local population.

1.6.   Summary of Chapter One

In this chapter I set out my reasons for working in and around the Cornish Alps and how I consider it to be a case study that examples a signifier located within a real environment. I claimed it could be understood as the opposite of photography: as a reality experienced as a fiction. I then described how the visible is only a part of an interconnected experience of place and argued how the visible masks the means of production both in the landscape and in photography. I went on to describe how I understood photography to be ideological in two ways: as it has been conventionally understood, in relation to cultural production but also in how it hides its mode of labour and production and places emphasis on the visual.

Focusing on how photography embodies processes such as duplication and repetition, I claim all photographs contain the hidden labour and production of photography. They duplicate and repeat the conditions of their own existence and these conditions, in turn, reproduce the underlying logic of capital in which dissatisfaction creates demand. I suggest photography may be considered to be a site of stability and conformity and by creating apparent likenesses of the world photography configures itself as an immaterial, objective social relation.

The large quantity of (digital) images currently created generates a qualitative change to our experience of representation: it changes what and

how we see because it has already been 'pre-seen.' I detailed the affective experience of seeing places and seeing images of places and seeing events depicted in a photographic way. This suggested the world is mediated by intensities, by quantities and volumes and data as well as by visual encounters. As a representational force photography interrupts our experience of the world.

Finally, in relation to the Cornish Alps, I described how reality requires a fantasy in order to maintain its consistency. The fantasmatic frame and the frame of photography both maintain and impose particular internal and external relations. I argue every landscape represents a facsimile of impulses and fantasies for those connected to it and the Cornish Alps overtly exposes these in the guise of being a reality experienced as a fiction.

Chapter Two: the subject of the signifier

2.1.   Introduction

This chapter considers Victor Burgin's description of the subject of the signifier and the formation of a subject through their experience of practice. Since Burgin takes this notion of the subject from psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, I firstly look at how Lacan conceptualises the term[40] and then reflect on how it can offer a way to think about contemporary photography. I do not claim to detail how a subject is formed or what or who the subject actually is as this would be beyond the scope of this project. Nor do I give detailed analysis of all of Lacanian theory. Instead, I examine Lacan's ideas in relation to the subject and use this to critically understand what the subject of the signifier refers to. I also make reference Foucault's formulation of a subject who emerges through discourse, as this is implicitly linked to Althusser's structural Marxist concept of ideological "interpellation" (Althusser, 2008:48). My focus in this section is on how the subject of the signifier has been understood for this thesis and for the practice connected to the research.

In light of my use of non-representational strategies, I also cannot ignore how the tracts of post-human thinking and the 'new' and 'vital' materialist theories pick up on Lacan's symbolic subject. For example, Braidotti suggests Lacan's subject is "as out-dated as a Polaroid shot of the world that has since moved on" (2013: 189). Braidotti's 'posthuman nomadic subject' enjoys many of the qualities I assign to photography – it being embodied, embedded, multi-faceted and relational (Braidotti, 2013: 188). However, I believe there is work to be done to reconcile a symbolic subject who is an inherently split being and a posthuman nomadic subject who expresses the "actualizing flows … of vital information … [across] networked systems"

---

[40] Fink (1997: 35) points out it is not possible to demonstrate the existence of the Lacanian subject and Lacan's attempts to isolate the subject take many different forms and approaches.

(Braidotti, 2013: 190).[41] I claim the splicing of these two ideas is useful since it affords a critique of the symbolic order and of representation from within itself.

Finally, I take Butler's (2015) view of subject formation as an on-going activity and its orchestration – in terms of gender, race, status etc. – precedes any individual action of determination. In this sense, the matrix of subject formation exceeds a structured symbolic order, spreading beyond binary representational notions of subject and object, of you and I, of male and female or of black and white. Instead it continuously flows, adapts, synthesises and mutates, such that symbolic frames of reference are understood as being neither as stable nor as clearly definable as they might have once been understood as being.

2.2.   The signifying system

As outlined briefly in the Introduction, for Lacan the signifying system or order is a closed structure. Subjects experience enclosed signifying regimes, however, the *effect* of a signification system or structure is fundamentally unrecognised by subjects themselves. [42] The fundamental inability to recognise these regimes as being constructed systems leads to a false sense of reality. In *Ecrits*, Lacan states: "man is, prior to his birth and beyond his death, caught up in the symbolic chain in the play of the signifier" (2006/1996: 392). If we understand the symbolic system as a game it would be considered as one that is already defined and has already begun and into

---

[41] There is a danger here of conceptualising an *'enchanted world'* of things that have energy and force. Since, as Žižek notes, the force they appear to elicit is a "result of our benign anthropomorphism" (2014: 09). With such an anthropomorphism we are returned to a subject who confers upon the rest of the world characteristics of a representational subject.

[42] By taking language as an example of a signifying system, then the degree to which the structure of language is largely unrecognised or ignored might be understood as language '*speaking the subject.*' It is of course one of Lacan's more famous assertions that the unconscious is structured *like* a language. There is an emphasis, sometimes lost, on the word *like* because Lacan is not suggesting the unconscious is a language that can be translated or indeed understood simply that it resembles or has the features of language as we comprehend it (2006/1966: 223).

which the subject enters and inside of which the subject learns the rules as they are presented to them.

Describing a subject as the 'subject of the signifier,' Lacan claims there can be no subject without a signifying system, without language. The signifying system – formed from a relationship of "one signifier to another signifier" (Lacan 1970: 31) – is an interconnected structure and *from* this "emerges something that we call the subject" (Lacan 1970: 31). When a subject enters into a signifying system, reality is then mediated through it. Drawing on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Butler suggests mediation is an attempt to overcome 'otherness' and achieve a form of self-identity that amounts to the realisation the subject is what it "encounters outside of itself" (Butler, 2015: 114). Here, we might take Butler's 'otherness' as something located outside of the subject, which is within an external signifying system. Thereby we can conclude an encounter with the other, with the system, is what forms the nature of the subjects themselves. For Butler this then is a subject whose identity is performed but as I shall argue, the *capacity* to be shaped, to signify provides insight into how the subject is expressed.

Throughout this research the subject of the signifier is taken as defining a particular nature or being of the subject. Subjects are part of the symbolic order but as Lacan explains in Écrits (2006/1966: 12), it is the symbolic order – that which is outside – that is a constitutive part of the subject. Without the symbolic the subject remains empty or void. In his 'Seminar on "The Purloined Letter," Lacan states the subject always "follows the channels of the symbolic" (2006/1966: 21) and it is the symbolic order that *determines* the subject; thus for Lacan there is no subject as such. As Žižek explains, the term 'subject of the signifier' should be taken quite literally; there is "no substantial signified content which guarantees the unity of the 'I'" (2006: 244). A subject is therefore potentially multiple, plural and contingent, making the 'I' of the subject a purely performative thing. However, one might say in declaring myself 'I' there is not someone new who is suddenly created; it is merely a description I chose to give to myself. The subject of the signifier, is

not reducible to one particular signifier, in this case 'I.' Instead, it is the very "act of signifying" (Žižek, 2006: 245) that adds to the 'flesh and bones of the subject.' Although Butler suggests it is language, which fabricates and figures the body, "to produce or construct it, to constitute or to make it" (Butler, 2015: 19), she also stresses bodies (and here I add subjects) are not entirely reducible to language alone. The *knowability* language provides is subject forming, however, it seems it is not necessarily only inscription which formulates a subject but the efficacy of language to shape and for the *subject to be shaped* that is also important. It is this forming *capacity* which fills an empty subject through the agency of the symbolic system and its actors – the signifier and the signified in the shape of the sign.

2.3. The signifier, the signified and the sign

For linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the signifier and the signified are the two components that make up a sign.[43] Signs consist of two sides: their form and their content. The relationship between these two is as a result of social convention rather than being inherent in their properties. Saussure claimed signs were each determined by their relation to other signs. Any understanding of the word 'dog' is reliant upon social convention. Understanding does not form because the word is in any way directly connected to the animal to which it refers. The implication here is that any relationship between language and reality is fundamentally arbitrary (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 10).

Poststructuralists develop structural linguistics to suggest the meaning of signs is derived from their fluid or changing relations.[44] It is possible to make

---

[43] Saussure's (1974) concept of the sign, through his study of linguistics, is the foundation of European post-structural semiotics. This is distinguished from the American formulation, through Pierce (1894), of semiology, which is more concerned with an overarching schema and the formation of the index.

[44] Jørgensen & Phillips (2002: 11) use the metaphor of the fishing-net to describe the relationship in structuralism between signs. Signs are the knots on the net, fixed in location to one another. This fixed notion of signs was challenged by later structuralists and by the poststructuralist since signs differ according to the context in which they are used.

four points in relation to how linguistic signs operate. Firstly, they do not reflect any pre-existing reality. Secondly, they are structured into discursive patterns or systems. Thirdly, the systems or patterns of discourse are maintained through discursive practices.[45] Finally, the maintenance and any transformation of these patterns should be analysed through the contexts in which the signs operate (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 12).

Research participants often tried to understand practice by asking what the author/artist/photographer was trying to do. Their reference to and desire for an authorial voice suggested they believed there was some absolute truth *behind* an image. This belief guided how they might de-code or understand images and but it also varied depending on the types of work they were looking at or speaking about. For example, everyone had a certain confidence they knew what a photograph of a sunset showed or meant but they were less sure about, what they saw as, more complex photographic works (for example, by photographic artists such as: Laura Letinsky, Adam Fuss, Jeff Wall, Olivier Richon, Paul Seawright, Martin Parr etc.).[46] In the confusion was a desire to understand the genesis of the work itself. It seemed, in order to find meaning signifiers needed to be directly linked back to a signified or to the signified as it was thought to have been conceived by the author. In other words, for a sign to be read it needs its signifier and signified to be connected together. This connecting of signifier to signified, is an almost forensic process and it tends to dominate the visual study of images. As I conclude in this thesis (in Chapter Six), the dominance of interpreting the visual representation is in question, not least by non-representational theories.

Jørgensen & Phillips suggest a better metaphor is the Internet, rather than the fishing-net, as new links are constantly emerging.

[45] For Foucault, discourse creates a *decentred* subject. A subject does not express themselves by language; instead language speaks through the subject. Discourses control what we can know about things and produce the subjects we are. Foucault arrives at the discursive subject through his teacher Louis Althusser and the ideological subject who is interpellated – constructed through language (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 14-15).

[46] I explore specific participant responses to work in more detail in Chapter Three.

To summarise and clarify what is particularly difficult to define; a sign is comprised of a signifier and a signified.[47] The signifier – linguistically this would be a word – indicates the signified and the signified is the absent object to which the signifier refers. The relationship between the two of them – signifier and signified – is one of signification. In order for there to be signification there needs to be a subject, a judge, a verifier to interpret the symbolic order. It is the divided subject that is the focus of the next section.

2.4.   The divided subject

Lacan's idea of the subject is based upon the notion of it being divided or split. The subject is split between the unconscious and the conscious, between the ostensibly unconscious, automatic, operations of the signifying order and the false sense of self that is understood as manifested in the conscious (Fink, 1997: 45).[48] A split subject contains two sides: one visible and exposed – the conscious – and one hidden: the unconscious (Fink, 1997: 45). Žižek has argued the subject is an empty space, a void, preceding ideology and from which ideology is expressed (2013: 7751/8412). In Lacan's writings, the discourse of the unconscious is the discourse of the Other,[49] this is then opposed to the discourse of the conscious ego or "false being" (Fink, 1997: 45). The subject is not a whole but nor is it a whole that

---

[47] Lacan makes a further distinction between the sign, the signified, the signifier and the trace. The trace has an actual referent – for example a footprint is a trace of a foot. Whereas a signifier can be arbitrary, it need not have any relationship to what it represents.

[48] Fink outlines two different forms of subject; one is nothing but the split between conscious and unconscious (the split is a consequence of how language functions when we begin to speak) while the other subject is a "sedimentation of meanings" (1997: 69) built from the relationship of one signifier to another. Thus, there are two faces or 'versions' of the subject. The first being a subject understood through signification. Fink suggests this is the "subject of castration" (1997: 69), a subject whose subjectivity is created by meaning or as he puts it "absorbed by meaning, 'dead' meaning" (1997: 69). The second version is the subject who is actually the split (and here Fink uses the term breach) itself.

[49] The Lacanian 'Other' is a complex idea, whose full explanation is outside the scope of this thesis. However, it is taken to refer to an external reality or that which is not the subject. Lacanian approaches make various uses of a distinction between the 'big Other' and 'small Other,' as ways of defining an external symbolic reality. The lack in the Other is a lack of the 'Other of the Other' which also allows for a way of thinking outside of the symbolic order.

has been divided; crucially the subject is the divide itself. I shall return to this notion later in addressing the failure of representation and symbolic order.

What I take from this outline for my research is how the irreconcilable is a feature of subjectivity. This then suggests we can discover more about the subject by examining a configuration of disconnected forces rather than striving to understand it as a homogenous entity.

Lacan's subject is not only implicated within the symbolic order but it is also shaped by the affective register of desire, fantasy and enjoyment (*jouissance*). When the symbolic exercises power and authority over the subject, it forces an underlying unconscious-dependence of the subject's being on symbolic structures. This is sustained by the affective phrase of desire, fantasy and enjoyment. Therefore, although Lacan's theory is clearly centred on the symbolic and built within representational terms, I also understand it to be able to accommodate affective, non-representational forces in its description of the subject.

Žižek (2008) helpfully distinguishes Lacan's subject from the conceptualisation of 'post-structural' subjects, via its subtraction of different modes of subjectification. [50] The subject of the signifier is an empty subject who is then filled out by a richness of 'lived subject-positions' (2008: 197). Crucially, for Lacan, language does not mask its own pre-subjective processes; instead it masks the *lack within the subject itself*. We can describe the subject of the signifier as a subject who, through the symbolic order, inevitably fails to adequately express themselves. In this way, the common sense understanding would be that the subject is unable to find the signifier, (or the right words) in order to say what they wanted or intended to say. There is then an excess of unexpressed signification and meaning

---

[50] In post-structuralism the subject is caught inside processes that precede the subject themselves, for example language, writing, desire. Emphasis is placed on the different "modes by which individuals assume their subject positions" (Žižek 2008: 197). This is largely the position determined by Foucault in which the subject becomes a subject through the configuration of knowledge, discourses and the apparatus of authority.

within a subject that cannot be fully articulated. However, as one might expect, Lacan takes an opposing position. For Lacan, the surplus of signification hides the lack of symbolic structure within the subject. Crucially, from this perspective, I argue it is the failure of representation that reveals a subject of the signifier and the more representation attempts to succeed the more it obfuscates the subject's lack.

This final assertion provides a way to think through photography beyond the traditional semiotic and visual paradigms and is core to this research. While conventionally, the symbolic is the privileged site of representation, its failure to fully realise itself – and this experience was observed consistently throughout the research as participants often struggled to express themselves adequately through their work – asserts not only its own negation, but also the compulsion to continue to fail in order to produce an inevitably, inexpressible subject. Consequently, we continue to take images while images fail to express or represent adequately. The more images we take the more we hide this subjective lack. If we were to take this conclusion to its end, then the more images produced, the more we obscure our understanding of the empty subject of the image. However, this conclusion is not as bleak as it might appear. Since what it allows is the freedom to interrogate representational practice not through visual likenesses and hidden symbolic meanings but through its agency, by what it hides, what it reveals, what it activates and what it instigates. The subjectivity it provides is not simply connecting together a chain of more signifiers, in an endless search for unattainable meaning or truth. What images do is located elsewhere in the action and affects of the image. How we approach photography, outside of the terms of representation, is examined in the following section.

2.5.   The divided subject of photography

I claim photography is like the divided subject: split between the ineluctably false proposition of visual (conscious) likeness and the function of the (unconscious) signifying chain. In a Lacanian reading of photography this

traumatic split, dividing these two, constitutes photography itself. In this formulation photography is not the producer of visual representations nor is it part of the unconscious structure of the signifying chain but it is the divide between these two. From my research, I claim the excess of our standard representational account of photographic images masks the lack of representational capacity within photography itself. This is precisely why non-representational theories are valuable for understanding what photography does because they open photography to more than the visual. We can then take the failure of representation as the indicator of the truth of itself, since it expresses the radical distance of meaning from the actual practice of meaning creation. This is similar to when we say how difficult it can be to put feelings into words. In photographic terms, when photographs insufficiently show us things, what they reveal is a truth about the limitations of representation itself.

In the introduction of 'The Question Concerning Technology,' William Lovitt writes as though he could be speaking specifically of photographs: "Enframing is a mode of revealing, a destining of Being . . . nothing whatever, including man himself, appears as it intrinsically is; the truth of its Being remains concealed. Everything exists and appears as though it were of man's making" (Heidegger 1977: xxxiv). Enframing is not about placing a frame around things and making them into an image as we might, at one level, consider photography operates. Rather, Heidegger's Enframing is a way of gathering together and revealing a truth. Of course, there are many (often documentary) photographs that operate in this way in a literal sense. But in the context of this research Enframing suggests it is not only the visual surfaces of photographs which reveal a truth. Rather, Enframing also brings into being a subject who gazes upon the visual. Heidegger's (1977) concept of 'Enframing,' in which the world is gathered together and something new is then revealed, structure photographs as challenging and calling forth a challenge to representation and the emergence of the viewing subject.

Throughout my observations over the period of the research, I concluded there was a tension when understanding image as a visual text (or representational surface) and image as an agent or force (as a thing that caused affects). I argue two stages structure our encounters with images. In the first instance, image as text requires a subject to enact the interpretation (this is the domain of classic representation). At this stage we are variably equipped to read images as text via the signifiers they contain and any 'reading' or 'interpreting' suggests a domination of subject over object, of viewer over the image object. However, interpretations are sustained by the capacity images have to affect and for a subject to be affected. This is driven by the agency of photography. This "affective punch" (Lisle *in* Kuc & Zylinska 2016: 115) of photographic images represents a re-orientation of the image, away from favouring the viewer, to suggesting images "demand something of the viewer" (Lisle *in* Kuc & Zylinska 2016: 115), in other words they need and demand a response.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari claim art is "a compound of percepts and affects" (1994: 316). Describing art as an autonomy of sensations, which "function[s] as a force that transforms inner and outer experience" (Bogue 2013: 02) they offer a critique of the subject object distinction. For Deleuze and Guattari, percepts are not perception: they describe the absence of the human subject, while affects are the *becomings* of something non-human. These abstract terms describe a new rendering of the modes of engagement *with* and interpretation *of* the image. They suggest image as independent of the subject: as something existing in itself. The image may be, as I have established, a visual surface requiring interpretation but it is also an actor, with agency that can produce cultural, social or personal responses. In order to reconcile these, I argue the visual surface masks its real purpose of indicating a core absence in the subject. The affective agency of the image – the second stage in our encounter – presents a shock to the perceived balance of the subject/object interpretation and the relations it contains.

Through extended study of a range of similar types of work, participants usually felt they developed better visual interpretative skills. The predominant method for participants, and this appeared to be instinctive, was to understand work by looking at what was visually shown and try to 'read' or interpret the meaning of what was represented. Participants made personal connections, associations and subjective interpretations. These responses sometimes had less connection to any symbolic structure and were connected to how the participants felt. While their reactions might be triggered by what images showed they were sometimes triggered by the interaction itself. In other words, some responses were only vaguely linked to what they were looking at. As reactions were not always predictable or universal we can conclude representation operates in complex ways. [51] I argue there is a tension between agency and interpretation. Images, in their pre-interpretative state maintain an imaginary balance of relations that rests upon a symbolic network. The interruption of interpretation reveals the failure of images to adequately express any representational claims. This then reveals the void of an affected subject who brings to the symbolic structure an opening into the Real through the agency and force of the image. The paradox is that the symbolic structure is only sustained by the parameters of this real/symbolic dichotomy. Furthermore, the circulation of affect is sustained only when we realise the limits of representational analysis. We can use this Lacanian based position as a way to explain the operation of photographs such as that depicting Alan Kurdi. The limits of the visual representation of a dead child disrupt the balance of its symbolic structure. In this case, when confronted with a representation of the real, the subject fails to recognise it as either real or representation. It appears simultaneously as both an obscene reality presented in the form of a fiction but also an unbelievable fiction presented as the real. Furthermore, in this instance, it becomes a force of political action, of shared data, of reaction and response. These forces have material impacts beyond the photograph itself. While "the

---

[51] During some sessions participants were shown a range of images and wrote down their instant responses. Inevitably the responses were as diverse as the number of participants. It does, however, indicate the degree to which there are fewer universal readings of images than we might expect.

strength or duration of an image's effect is not logically connected to the content in any straightforward way" (Massumi 2002: 24), the image contains the symbolic structure of its own limits; visually, it can only show so much. But as a compound of sensation (Deleuze & Guattari 1994) it also operates independently within the world and is potentially limitless. Furthermore, as an indicator of the subject's lack of unexpressed meanings, photographs such as this, can reveal amongst other things the failings of images to adequately critique political situations directly.

The representational terms of the signifier are no longer, and perhaps never were, adequate to describe the affect of images. But I suggest it is possible to adapt how we understand the operation of the signifier by modelling it on Lacan's split subject.

2.6. The split signifier

As I have shown, when signifiers are considered not only through their correspondence with representational ideas but also in how they activate non-representational and non-visible affective forces, we are able to construct a different sense of what images are and do. But if we are still to retain it as a term, then I suggest the meaning of 'the signifier' needs stretching to accommodate a wider sense of what it determines. For the subject of the signifier, the signifier points at a matrix of drives and representations. [52] I suggest, like the subject, the signifier is better understood as split between an inside and outside, a conscious and unconscious. It is both a symbolic object and affective force. When a signifier is understood simply as a visual resemblance to a signified it becomes easy to overlook the complex of forces that sustain it.

---

[52] This is an epistemic shift away from the structural account of how signifiers and signs operate. Although I am advocating for signifiers to be moved outside of semiotics, I acknowledge this move would probably be served better by a different word. However, I believe it is more useful to point toward a concept that is outside of the logic of a chain of signs, signified and signifiers from within the same logic than to suggest some alternate, independent system, since any independent system would merely become an alternative representational form.

The split signifier indicates both the visual and the affective, agential forces. But there is a further move that can be made, following Lacan's argument for defining the subject I suggest the split within the signifier is what constitutes the signifier itself. The signifier is neither a visual form (as understood through semiotics) nor is it an affective force: it is the gap and flow between these two differing fields.

A well-used metaphor in theory[53] is the Möbius band, which presents an inside as outside in a single, continuous movement. At any point there are always two sides of the Möbius band but that which faces us can always be followed through to the inside without any differentiation. The split signifier as an object retains both visual and affective force but the move between these two states, like the move around the Möbius band, is continuously altering. This shifting emphasis was observed when working with participants speaking about photography. Accounts of the image oscillated between its visual meaning and a felt, emotional force. Images were both, incompletely, what they showed and what they made participants feel. They were never entirely visual nor were they entirely affective but what they were able to do was to repeat this oscillation between states. The more images produced, the more they became image in another form. On the occasions when there was a single image – a rare, unrepeatable captured moment, for example – the material importance of the image became central to its understanding and its value. But when the image was one of many, one of a series or of a proliferation of repeating forms, its internal logic seemed different. Its individual importance was reduced and the relationship to its subject was also altered. The subject of images shifted from how they were experienced – as single events – to multiple, repeated and recorded versions of the same event. In this way perception varied as more or less images were encountered. Suggesting images are not only expressions of visual

---

[53] See the following section for Burgin's use. While other authors who have also made use of Mobius band metaphor in a similar way include: Lacan (2006/1966), Deleuze (1998), Massumi (2002).

likenesses and affective forces but they also re-produce a particular subjective experience through their repetition and duplication.

What then does it mean to be a subject of a 'split signifier'? I suggest we begin with two senses of the void: the void of the subject and the void of the signifier. An example that summarises these two positions is automatic CCTV footage, which remains unseen and archived.[54] The (nonhuman) agency of the CCTV camera renders the insignificant in visual form only on the occasion when it needs to be seen. Otherwise, it remains hidden, even after it has been recorded. The void of the subject is, in this case, the viewer who is never required to see or judge the image. The void of the signifier is its almost total uncoupling from content of "sensation and stimulus" (Tagg, 2008: 24). Thus what is photographed but not seen is content that is not only without a viewing subject, but also content that requires a subject who is not there.

In the next section I outline Burgin's own conceptualisation of the subject of the signifier. For Burgin signifiers are split, being both within 'work' and also experienced, fragmentarily, 'outside' of work.

2.7.   The subject of the signifier within or through practice

In his essay "Interactive Cinema and the Uncinematic," Victor Burgin suggests his audio-visual works interpellate "a subject of the signifier" (2013: 83). Explaining what he means he begins by describing the space of the gallery in terms of time. This may be an unfamiliar way to consider physical space, since conventionally, we might be more inclined to consider space in terms of its structure, its architecture, its geometry or its formal qualities. But spatial and signifying practice has remained a constant in much of Burgin's later practice. This coupling should be taken as suggesting signifiers help

---

[54] In 'Mindless Photography,' John Tagg considers the disconnection of visual presentation from the recording of car number plates by the London Congestion Charging system. For Tagg, there is no subject, no communication and no psychic investment (2008: 21). This then is the void, the preeminent example of the gap between the split subject.

form our understanding of space and in a parallel reversal, signifiers are therefore *spatially* constructed.

Burgin makes a direct comparison between the space of the gallery and with that of the movie theatre, with cinema. In this form, space is defined by not only by what is contained within it but it is also distinguished by what happens inside of it. There is a clear time-based nature surrounding the question of 'what happens' and time is intrinsic to our perception and to experience. The duration or time of an artwork, Burgin states, does not necessarily coincide with the spectators' viewing of it. In the cinema the audience is assumed to view a film from beginning to end. Viewing is organised around a strict timeline, which will largely coincide with the length of the film from beginning to its end (Burgin, 2013: 83). Burgin suggests one might acceptably ask how long is a film but it is unlikely we would be given a precise answer the question of how long (in durational terms) is a photograph, painting or a piece of sculpture. Differentiating his video works from cinema, since they are designed to loop seamlessly, beginnings or endings are negated, Homay King describes Burgin's loops as providing "a refreshing critique of infinitely recursive forms and the stagnation that accompanies them" (2015:100). What King describes is the articulation through practice, not of an endless circular looping but a spiral looping. As Burgin himself has put it, the spiral looping within his work, is synonymous with a layering structure that has an affinity to painting.

The structure of Burgin's audio-visual works undoubtedly creates a formal tension with regard to how one might understand conventional narrative cinema. While the loops are linear in their form, with no defined start or end point, the narrative does not unfold conventionally instead it layers onto itself. Burgin suggests the overarching conditions for spectatorship of his audio-visual works are essentially closer to the viewing of a painting in a gallery than to the experience of cinema. Viewers can move around the gallery, entering and leaving as they chose and they can decide for themselves how much of the work they experience. This freedom of movement around

representational space is similar to the movement one might experience within a diorama.

He stresses that within his work the importance of each element is equally weighted. This is significant since what, in the creation of the work, may have been conceived as the first component, may not necessarily be experienced as the first element by the viewer. Therefore, any part of the work will at any point *become* the first thing a spectator experiences. Burgin suggests his work is descriptive rather than narrative and this is due to the fact that "the elements that compose a narrative obey an invariable sequential order" (2013: 84). Whereas the viewer defines the experience of the artwork largely on the basis of when they enter or leave the gallery. Within his work there is a discontinuity of time, which Burgin compares to the psychoanalytic session, where no single part is considered any more significant than any other. This non-hierarchical structuring is reinforced by the subjective nature of when the work is understood as beginning or ending.

Implicit in the looped structure used by Burgin, is the inevitability of repetition. It is a process of reiteration that serves to typify both temporality and meaning. The associative connections produce meaning for the spectator such that there is not a unified narrative but a series of fragmentary sequences. Burgin states that the "viewing subject as *subject of the signifier* may come into being on a Möbius band of impressions and associations" (Ibid: 85). The work elicits an experience in which everything is significant yet nothing in particular stands out. To the phenomenological experience of the work, Burgin suggests the spontaneous thoughts and recollections of the viewer are also added into the work. This, he argues, is the "mutable aspect of our everyday reality" (Ibid).

Burgin's consideration of the subject of the signifier, which he contrasts to a subject of knowledge, is useful to conclude with. Since, replacing 'knowledge' with the 'signifier' suggests a mediated form of experience, one specifically mediated through representation. But as I described above, the

experience is *more* than a semiotic reading of representational forms: it is also created by the relationship between forms, between time, between fragmented experiences, between different intensities of sensation. I take Burgin's subject to be one shaped not only by a world of representations, present in the work, and fragmentarily 'outside' of the work and within the internal psychic space of the subject but also one shaped by being shaped itself.

2.8.   Summary

The gap between the subject's ordination into a symbolic order of power and their own miss-recognition of who they are is known as symbolic castration. It should not be understood as a metaphor of feeling without power or as the expression of loss. Symbolically, castration is the gap between the external symbols, the representation of the subject's symbolic authority – that are not of the subject's nature – and the subject themselves. To momentarily misappropriate Lacan in order to explain this, the madman is not the person with the camera who aspires to be a photographer but the person with the camera who thinks they are a photographer. As I stated, the largely 'amateur' or 'hobby' photographers who participated in the research were modest about their abilities. Their engagement with photography and the research was in some sense relatively uncomplicated. Over the course of the research it became evident that knowledge played an important part in any interpretation of practice (photographs or indeed other forms of work). While working with groups of people, who had less information about the artists or the context of the work itself, it was clear that many people wanted to find meaning through an authorial voice or they would even look to a voice of authority in the room – someone who appeared to know more about the work than they did. At some point, though, they either connected or disconnected with work on a personal level. If they allowed themselves to not be caught up in an anxiety about what they were or weren't supposed to understand, they eventually found a way to approach the work. Often they would express a range of concerns in the form of: "*I ought to have a visual concept of what I see. And I should be able to communicate that,*" or "*I'm not from an artistic*

background. I'm very factual," or "*I just don't get it.*" Certainly over the longer periods of the project, as one might expect, discussing work became easier for participants as they acquired what they felt were the right tools and language to read work. It could be observed that they began to acquire a sense of agency over their own responses to work.

Interestingly, when discussing their own work there were more evident impacts on the participants themselves. Firstly, by learning new photographic skills they were able to do new things and create new things. Secondly, by making work they gained a different level of, often technical, appreciation of the work of others. Finally, their own work tended to have most affect upon them when they were actually producing the work – taking photographs – rather than when they simply looked at their own work.[55] The regime of the symbolic and visual dominated the conversations about photography. A surprisingly large number of participants would photograph objects to literally convey meaning – the window on the world was a common theme that resulted in a large number of photographs of views through domestic casement windows. Similarly, there was a tendency to interpret photographs literally, to simply read the image as if it were a rebus.

For the participants, it is difficult to precisely indicate where or how a 'subject of the signifier' emerges. Impressions and personal associations were certainly part of the process of interrogating and trying to understand work. These were the reference points participants used to access work or to try to engage with it. Inevitably, these kinds of observations link photography and personal memory and experience, since many of the connections are

---

[55] This observation requires more analysis and is outside of the scope of the project but it was useful to see how participants would largely view their own work in a modest and conservative way but could then be deeply moved by the work of others. In terms of the participants, the moment of 'shooting' was responsible for the most transformative moments. While reflecting on other work produced subtle changes in opinions and views these happened over a period of time and seemed to require particular critical skills through which the changes could be expressed.

made on a personal level.[56] But these discussions around the meaning of work often inadequately fulfilled the participants desire for understanding.

My conclusion is that the subject of the signifier comes into being because a subject has the potential to be shaped. There is no actualised subject only the gap in which there is 'capacity to become.' The subject, as the void between the conscious and the unconscious, emerges as the failure to be fully in either one or other of these states. This constitutes the split subject. Similarly, the signifier is neither only a visual nor affective force: instead it is the possibility to be either or none of these (in the following chapter I explore how new materialism moves beyond a traditional sense of subjectivity, breaking with traditional subject/object dualisms). The impossibility to actualise an image is precisely because we tend to view photographic images as "weak propositional linguistic utterances" (Watney, 2006: 34), rather than as forces of different intensities and sensations, including but not limited to visual sensations. Representation effectively masks the operations of photography such that we are continually returned to questions of similarity and likeness. The void or split is best understood as a potential to be something other. A subject of the signifier is therefore the potential of the subject to be shaped by photography's prospective claim to be more or other than representation.

---

[56] The personal affective nature of photography is examined in Chapter Three and was an influential part of the early stages of this research when participants photographed ten things that were important in their lives. This part of the work initiated thinking more closely about affect and about how photography made people respond emotionally.

Chapter Three: a community of participants

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I consider photography through the fieldwork of community-based workshops I undertook. These workshops focused on the examination of the practice of others and considered what relations and affects emerged from these controlled research experiences. The people who took part had an interest in photography but were non-professionals and none had any formal academic background in photography. At an early stage, when working with these participants, I quickly and perhaps too hastily, concluded that photography could be a relational activity. Here I use the term relational as Nicholas Bourriaud developed it in *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) in which art practice takes the shape of human interactions. My conclusion was primarily drawn from the social aspect of the workshops and how participants responded both to photography and to each other. I do not believe I was wrong to identify something relational within photography. However, I now see that while I was accurate in seeing there was an effect, I had not clearly articulated how it was caused. Primarily, my analysis lacked a sufficient account of emotions, feelings and the affective nature of not only photography but also the social circumstances in which my research was conducted. Photography undoubtedly is relational: it has the potential to contain a social dimension or to help shape the social. However how this operated did not appear to be directly linked to the subject matter of photographs. Instead, it seemed as though the subject matter could be incidental.

How photography is used and understood has radically transformed in recent times, largely due to it becoming a predominantly digital practice. The devices used to create, view and store images are also profoundly different. In this way photography is less likely to be associated with paper and chemistry and more likely to be thought about in terms of screens and software applications. The final transformation has occurred in the mediation or transmission of images, largely as a result of the Internet. One of the

consequences of these changes is there is less distinction between amateur and professional photography. Understanding photography through sociological terms relied on a relatively clear distinction between these two (Gómez Cruz & Ardèvol, 2013: 35). This was generally because the intentions of the amateur were considered fundamentally different from the intentions of the professional.

As I have stated, it has been usual to concentrate on the visual content of images produced by photography, as its main object of study. More recently scholars (see Gómez Cruz & Ardèvol, 2013; Hand, 2012; Rubinstein, 2015; Shurkus, 2014 etc.) have begun to pay greater attention to aspects of photography that go beyond its representational properties. This shift in thinking about photography – away from subject matter – can offer a partial ethnographic perspective, focusing on the activity of photography rather than its output. Gómez Cruz & Ardèvol note that, an extension of the social science functions of photography (for example, as a device for capturing memories), may well be better explained through the practices of sharing images and the groups created by these forms of practice (Gómez Cruz & Ardèvol, 2013: 36). There is, then, scope to map out new approaches to methodological inquiry within photographic participatory practice and collaborative working. My research indicated the limits of considering digital photography only in visual terms because, in the context of workshops, digital photography was experienced and discussed in a number of other ways. Participants often spoke of anything but the images they had made. Instead their concerns centred on, amongst other things: their intentions, their feelings, their experiences, their success and failures.

Taking the principles of Participatory Action Research and Grounded Theory as a starting point I conducted a number of activities including structured and semi-structured in-depth interviews, general conversations, analysis of work and a loose ethnographic observation of my participant groups.[57] Over time

---

[57] Since these methods involve the participation of others and I was aware of the need to address some of the issues raised by Sophie Tamas in her book *Life After Leaving* (2011).

this built into a body of work (videos, audio recordings, writings, images) out of which I extracted some of my research findings. I also responded to this body of sometimes vague and peculiar evidence, to produce my own works of practice that either tested or affirmed the things I uncovered.

I begin outlining the structure of the workshops and introducing the background to the theoretical concepts I use. Taking research as being more than a proposal for collecting specific types of data, I considered it to be the "building block of human knowing, a complexified form of learning and human identity forming whether the whole of the research is greater than the sum of the parts" (Clarke & Parsons, 2013: 37). Thus, the following section will provide an analysis that disassembles the participatory element of the project and stresses not what the research was but what it did, what capacity it had to enact a research driven way of thinking. This chapter takes method as its object of study and uses it to help understand the configuration of research led forces that are overlaid onto other human and nonhuman formations. This approach brings clarity to my conclusions as to how photography might be relational. It also supports the basis of my first research conclusion, in which I make a claim for photography as *preconditioning the conditions of its own production*.

3.2. The community-based participatory workshops

Community-based, participatory practice is not a new approach – there are a large number of projects centred on participatory photography most notably PhotoVoice (2014), which "create participatory photography

---

Tamas describes her concerns with "participants having their own priorities and goals" (Ibid: 68) and stressed that as a researcher she was dependent upon them and their "willingness to play along." Tamas sought a non-hierarchical relationship with subjects of her research, which meant that she tried to assume a "position outside the text," but concluded this was "politically irresponsible, empirically impossible and epistemologically indefensible" (Lal, J. 1996 cited in Ibid). I was therefore aware of the need to establish and acknowledge that the participatory element of the project is influenced by my presence and by the momentum and focus of the research itself. Tamas herself goes on to consider cooperative inquiry as a method wherein researchers work with others who have similar concerns and through them a new understanding is developed that helps form new and creative ways of looking at the world.

programmes that achieve meaningful improvements in the lives of participants" (PhotoVoice, 2014), along with technology-based projects such as Memory Traces (2014) based on the MIT developed 'Open Locast' (2014) framework. 'Open Locast' seeks "to improve connections between people and their social, cultural, and physical spaces" (Ibid). There are many other socially engaged photographic projects, which are usually focused on interest groups or specific areas. Examples of these include: "Across 116th Street" (Davis, 2013), "The Hapa Project" (Fulbeck, 2001), "Hello Neighbor" (Levine, 2008), "The Archive of Unmade Photographs" (Hackemann & Strandquist, 2014). These projects tend to focus on the social issues and use photography as a tool to articulate specific social issues or to bring together disparate groups or individuals. Rarely do these projects explore the function of photography or image making itself in terms of what it does or how it affects the project.

As stated in the introductory section of this thesis the community-based participatory workshops were run over a three-year period of the research. Participants were members of the public recruited through community education initiatives. Although most participants varied during the timeframe, some remained throughout. The workshops themselves consisted of some different activities including photographic instruction, looking at a range of different photographs (projected on screen or in books), briefing participants with small tasks and on completion discussions about the tasks and reviewing the work produced.

The profile of the participants was a mix of age, sex and social demographics. All lived in Cornwall, although most were not born in the county. All considered themselves to be relatively unskilled or amateur photographers. Most had signed up to learn how to use their camera from a technical point of view and many also wanted to gain computer skills and learn post-production techniques. None had any formal education in photography, although the educational background of the participants was

mixed, it included some who had degrees, post-graduate qualifications and doctorates.

The sessions were organised weekly and would last for two to three hours. The number of weeks a single group attended would vary but ranged from eight to twenty weeks. Throughout the sessions I conducted unstructured interviews and discussions about the work. Some of these were formally recorded, using either audio or audio and video capture.

Although most participants stated they would photograph any subject matter, many were interested in traditional subjects such as landscapes and portraits. The tasks the participants were set were designed to develop their thinking with photography. Some specific tasks looked at place and landscape but most were open and general and designed to allow them to express their own ideas. One of the early responses from participants was how taking photographs had altered their relationship to space. This was explained when they described how their walking habits had altered, since they were taking more time look around and take photographs. This was a theme throughout the study; going out to photograph caused participants to take time to search for images in the world. As a consequence they felt they looked at things in more detail. Although this concerns the realm of the visual, what it starts to demonstrate is the interconnected nature of the visual on action and behaviours.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, it was clear throughout the research that attending the workshop was a social activity for the participants. As Gómez Cruz & Ardèvol also noted in their ethnographic study of amateur photographers: "there is a close relationship between the practice of photography and the social nature of the group" (2013: 38). This relationship between individuals, between the group and between photography and even particular photographs helped create a collective social identity. Something cohered photography to the group and the group to photography that provided a sense of belonging to one another and a sense of responsibility

toward the things they photograph. Throughout the discussions participants expressed political and social concerns for what they had seen and photographed. What were created are very specific bonds linking the connective elements of images and humans in complex ways.

3.3.   Relational aesthetics

What is central to relational aesthetics is not the communication of an artist's intention or individual truth through visual representations, but the social context created by the work itself. Bourriaud states:

> The philosophical tradition that underpins relational aesthetics was defined by Althusser as a 'materialism of encounter'. The essence of humankind is purely trans-individual, made up of bonds that link individuals together in social forms (2009: 18).

For Bourriaud, culture is not a reflection of society rather it produces it. This then offers a resistance to notions of form. Relational aesthetics is concerned with work that contains a variable set of elements that are open and not fixed. In this way, work is not connected to meaning via its materiality, instead the relationship of the material and the viewer becomes the work.

Relational aesthetics is based on an intersubjective encounter of people and this then produces artwork. Without the encounter and the people the artwork does not exist. Although the physical space used for the workshops within this research was not a gallery space and the work undertaken was never overtly declared to be art, what Bourriaud's idea introduces is how photography can be understood as an unbounded open object that puts in place a particular set of relationships which create its own being. It is important to note that the 'social aspect' to photography is what differentiates it from other creative practices. Participants used photography as a reason to socialise, to meet, to walk, to discuss, to visit places. They talked about photography itself as a set of skills, they also talked about photographs and what they showed, and they also talked about things that were prompted by

the photography. Photography is a practice that enables experiences such as seeing, creating and sharing. In this sense, photography as an activity can spread out, creating different social contexts.

As social groups become more established they become more connected both to their common interests and also to each other. While much of what occurred socially in the workshops could be interpreted as the normal interactions of small groups of people placed together, for the purposes of this research I propose a different reading of the outcomes. Within my research, I concluded photographs became what Bennett describes as a "vital force" (2010). They are in one instance visual likenesses and then in another they are a connective tissue. At any one moment they are inert pictures of things in the world while also being affective forces of 'world making' in themselves. It is this thinking which informs some of the ideas of new materialism.

3.4.   New Materialism

New materialist[58] thinking attempts to address concerns beyond traditional materialism, where social production was the primary focus, by attempting to take into account how feelings, emotions and affect contribute to a wider collective construction of culture (Coole & Frost, 2010: 07). This claim to pay attention to affect, suggests the principles of new materialist thinking might be suitable for understanding how photography operated within the workshops. Its relevance to photography in general and to my research directly is also not because it has appeared as the 'theory of choice,' of the humanities in the Twenty-first Century. Instead, its value lies in how new materialist discourses appear to stem from "mediatic" phenomena (Parikka,

---

[58] New materialist thinking is useful to elaborate on how "perception, action, politics, meanings (and, well, non-meanings) are embedded not only in human and animal bodies, but also in much more ephemeral, but as real, *things* even non-solid things" (Parikka, 2012: 95). It provides consideration of the agency of things and locates them within a unified complex of inter-activity, wherein phenomena have a force and their impact can be recognized and conceptualized.

2012: 95) and therefore offer ways to think about how media produces, transmits and processes 'culture.'

DeLanda and Braidotti, independently, coined the terms 'new materialism' or 'neo materialism' in the latter half of the 1990s (Van der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2010). Much of the development of this new or neo materialist thinking takes ideas from the philosophical writing of thinkers such as Deleuze, Latour, Spinoza and Whitehead.[59] Theoretically speaking, traditional materialism (e.g. existential phenomenology, structural Marxism) largely failed to maintain purchase on the textual approaches associated with cultural studies, which reached their height of popularity in the 1970s. The determinist positions of materialist thinking therefore gave way to a more humanistic reaction, which would attempt to provide an understanding for the "human enterprise of constructing reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1971: 208). Perhaps inevitably, linguistic and textual theoretical approaches have now been deemed inadequate for confronting the urgent challenges and changes of contemporary society, especially in areas such the environment, demographics, geopolitics and economics (Coole & Frost, 2010). Ultimately, the privileging of "language, discourse culture and values" (Coole & Frost, 2010: 14) strengthened a common neglect of material phenomena and of processes. Setting the scene for a return to materialism. The 'linguistic turn' also problematized "any overture toward matter or material experience as naively representational"(Coole & Frost, 2010: 14). Thus the 'things' that shaped society were largely ignored beyond a study of their non-agential forms or as seemingly inert, passive objects. So it is, that the reprisal of

---

[59] The distinction between idealism and materialism can be described in simplistic terms. For idealists, ideas determine society, giving rise to material forms; ideas come first followed by things. For materialist, the material and modes of production are the determining factors in producing our ideas; materials come first, and this material base determines how we think. For Marx it is a materialistic determinism that sets out how things are; the forces of production are reproduced and these create and fix the structures of society in specific ways. Idealism is generally understood to be the opposite of Marx's materialist analysis of society. The new materialist project in part positions itself in opposition to both idealist and materialist analysis. Drawing on Althusser, it argues that contradictory and diverse social formations undermine any notion of the monolithic material conditions. How we come to understand society is, in this sense, overdetermined by multiple material forces.

materialism, in its 'new' or 'neo' version, countenances a more radical political move toward the material world. [60]

The disparate threads of thinking which make up new materialism have as their common ground the foregrounding of 'material individuals,' their 'biological needs,' a 'world of objects,' 'micro-powers' and 'economic structures.' (Coole & Frost, 2010: 27). New materialism is fundamentally pluralist, open and relational. It rejects a dualist approach to thinking about culture, resisting the standard human/non-human, subject/object, inside/outside, analogue/digital, and new/old binaries. Instead, it proposes a reading and new importance on the monist tradition that emerged from the likes of Lucretius, Hume, Nietzsche and Bergson. Making its break from conventional humanist positions, it takes as its concerns: machine processes, the 'non' or posthuman (Braidotti, 2013), the vital force of things (Bennett, 2010), the relational network, assemblages of the animate and inanimate (DeLanda, 2006).

The focus in new materialism is transferred from humans as remote and removed subjects with specific assumptions connected to human agency, to "questions about the nature of matter and the place of embodied humans within a material world" (Coole & Frost, 2010: 13). This post-human agency, is not tied to human action alone, instead it considers how assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) and relational networks have some form of vital power or force. Privileging of a transcendental human subject (and any agency it may have) is problematic once attention is paid to subjective identity itself. For example, the history of a subject is not a simple reflection of himself or herself: instead history creates a subject in its process. There is, therefore, a "performative ontology" (Van der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2012: 87)

---

[60] In *Absolute Recoil* (2014a: 5), Žižek defines what he sees as four main versions of materialism: reductionist, the new wave of atheism, discursive and new materialism. He suggests that materialism itself is a return to a form of idealism. Specifically, this can be exampled in the way that matter is considered within a "network of purely formal/ideal relations" (2014a: 5). It is this relational manifestation of materialism, which Žižek suggests proves difficult to reconcile with a conventional materialist analysis and therefore may be viewed as idealist in its construction. Žižek's stated Hegelian dialectical analysis is also disturbed by the underlying, non-dualist position that matter takes on within the various mappings of a new materialism.

at work. Consequently, any subjective potential (as discussed in Chapter Two) is restricted by the configurations of a seemingly delimited past.

New materialism challenges the notion that meaning is created through linguistic oppositional structures or the dualist notions, which have dominated the humanities, arts and cultural theories. Historically we have considered photographs to be amongst many things: "failed propositional linguistic utterances" (Watney, 2006: 34) or "nothing but artifice" (Barthes, 1984/1980: 87), "historical objects" (Bate, 2009:16) or "significant surfaces" (Flusser, 2007: 08), "transparent pictures" (Walton, 2010: 14), "icons" (Freedland, 2010: 50), superficial (Benjamin, 1972), indexical proof (Bazin, 1980: 237), "intersensory" (Edwards, 2009: 31), networked (Lister, 2007; Rubinstein & Sluis, 2008; Van Dijck, 2011 *all cited* in Hand, 2012: 11) I understand a new materialist position as helping contain these differing positions inside a heterogeneous theoretical framework.

3.5. Photography as a way of questioning of how we look and see

I claim there are two factors to consider in relation to the workshops. Firstly, their social formation was similar to any group of people with a common or shared interest. Secondly, photography created a mode of acting, thinking and speaking. In discussions, the participants' comments suggested they found photography to be different from the act of seeing. *"You can use the camera like a kaleidoscope. You can turn it round. You can really alter the image dramatically,"* or *"Photography is not just what you see . . . it's portraying it differently,"* or *"I took these. This is actually my son . . . I was playing with the lights. It wasn't 'till I looked back later that I realised quite how sad he was."* This last response conflates a process of making images with reflection back on the event and articulates how photographs mediate something not evident at the time. In this way images later bring into view a different or unexpected response or truth. This truth is somehow a stronger affective force as it moves from being latent to manifest (terms that Freud (1917/1984, 1953/1986) uses to describe dream content). Taking these

findings further, as Laruelle has argued, photography is not the supplement or aid to what we see or remember but instead it can be understood as offering a radical critique of our perception (2011: 51). What is revealed is photography's implicit questioning of how we look and see. This is made possible because the mechanisms of looking are part of the conditions of photography's production. Furthermore, looking pre-conditions the conditions of photography but now, as participants stated when they saw photographs everywhere, it seems that very look is already photographic in its orientation.

During the workshops photography was not only about simply showing visual representations to one another – although clearly this is a part of what happened. Instead, photography brought to the surface the nature of looking, perception and mediation. While photography showed a (re)-semblance of the things it rendered, it also revealed truths about how representation operates. Basically representation mediates experiences but it also mediates something of itself (I develop this in Chapter Four where I consider how a hidden operation of representation mediates for its own sake, thus affording a relationship of image-for-image). Laruelle suggests photography is a counterpart to the world, sharing its representational features but all the while it "enjoys an absolutely different transcendental status since it is by definition immanent to vision-force" (2011: 19). It is a reflection of the "subject as vision-stance" (2011: 27), which means it not only shows something of what the world looks like but it also reflects back something of what it is in itself. For Laruelle, photography is a "vision-force" (2011: 27); a part of an external body that looks onto the world. Therefore, what photography shows is the existence of this vision-force itself and in doing so invalidates something of the very logic of the world (2011: 13). Developing these ideas I consider photography as being understood as a form of external *skopeō* [61] – a means by which it is possible to examine the world but also one which simultaneously exposes something of the processual mechanisms of

---

[61] Skopeō, translated from Ancient Greek meaning 'to see,' is part of the etymology of the word Kaleidoscope used by one of the participants in their description of the camera.

looking. My research indicated there was an implicit tension between perception and photography's failure to fully render the world as perceived and this appears to undermine photography's own representational purpose. Visually speaking, what participants *wanted to show* was seemingly frustrated by what they were *able to show*.

My conclusion from the workshops was that thoughts about photography move beyond the transcendental 'photograph-of' something, to a point where photography was understood as having the capacity to affect how the group behaved and responded to things. In other words it impacted upon them relationally, thereby creating something unique to their group. The group without photography would have simply been a group. The group with photography was a group collectively frustrated and fascinated by representational practice such that the external world felt more and more mediated in a series of manipulated or failed exercises. As Laruelle suggested, photography opens onto the world a new relation (Ibid: 36) and in this sense it is a fiction which does not supplement the world but replaces the world with itself. As the case study in Chapter One articulates, this is also how I have considered and understood the Cornish Alps.

3.6.   The photographic potential to affect

The 'affective turn' as it has become known is a shift away from text. It sets out to give a deeper consideration and interest in emotions and feelings. I have already referred to 'affect' extensively within this thesis. In this section I identify in more detail what is understood by affect and how it has been conceptualised. It is worth beginning with two perspectives for this research. Firstly, affects may be a subjective experience; a subject may be affected by an image. This may well be caused by what the image visually shows but its cause may also be because the image is part of larger network of experiences. For example, when looking at a dating application such as Tinder we may be affected by the sheer numbers of profile pictures we see rather than by any individual one. In this sense photography is an affective expression of something processual. Secondly, affect is a response between

subjects and objects, between the human and non-human and again the dating application example suggests something of how affect is in some way a mutual experience. The application contains the capacity to affect and its users similarly, can be affected. It is important to state that with respect to photography, I consider affects operate through both the visual and the non-visual. This allows us to feel something because of *what* we see but also to feel something because of *how* we see.

The theoretical writings informing affect come from a range of thinkers including: Foucault, Marx, Irigaray, Freud, Bergson and Deleuze. It is through affect, that emotions are seen as the expressions of society. But understanding *through* affect suggests that there may be an objective position from which one could approach affect *objectively.* However, affect is often theorised as a 'lived' concept – one that opens up new thoughts for its readers. Affect attends not to things in themselves but to "things-in-the-making" (Massumi, 2015: viii). That said the 'affective turn' is closely associated with the wider conceptual move toward materiality, toward objects and it forms part of thinking connected to New Materialism outlined earlier. A strand of thought, which brings affect into the New Materialist discussion, is how it relates beyond the boundaries of subject/object or specifically how the 'non-human' or 'posthuman' is *affected* (this is developed further when affect is explored in my examination of the role of technology in Chapter Five). In what follows I provide a general outline of what affect is and does.

At its most straightforward the 'capacity to affect and to be affected' (Massumi takes this from Spinoza's definition of *affectus*) are what defines the *politics of affect* (Massumi, 2015). Its importance in theory is because affect has an ability to shape, circulate and influence individuals and environments. This has also meant that it has become the subject of interest across a wide range of study including human geography, cultural studies, feminist studies and politics. In its transmission, from body to body, from

object to body or from object to object, affect reveals something of the interconnected nature of our being and being within.

As a force, affect depends upon contingency and proximity. It is "transindividual," "relational" and "of the nature of culture" (Massumi, 2015: 205-208). But affect is not personal, Massumi suggests, affect is situated outside of what we understand as individuals and the collective. He uses the example of a disaster, where there may be "a collective rush to safety" or there may be someone else who assists, thereby setting an example for others (2015: 120). Affect in his example appears, as some kind of conditioned response but it should be understood as creating heterogeneous trajectories, in that not everyone may be affected in the same way by the same event; not everyone runs for safety and not everyone stays to assist. Kember and Zylinska describe affect "as a synonym for the mutual effects of subjects and objects, minds and bodies" (2015: 25). In essence, it is a universal and all encompassing (in that it covers *all phenomena*) experience. Affect is in everything and everywhere and it "augments or diminishes" the individual's power to act (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 283).

In arguing (or as he describes '*skirmishing*') against representational analysis, O'Sullivan (2001: 125) considers affect as what defines the aesthetic of art. He states that "you cannot read affects, you can only experience them" (2001: 126), by this undermining a reading of the art object as text. O'Sullivan examines whether affects can ever be described in terms of language or whether it might be possible to consider "art as event," an "event site" or at least the "place where one might encounter the affect" (2001: 127). He suggests "that as beings in the world we are caught on a certain spatio-temporal register: we see only what we have already seen (we see only what we are interested in). At stake with art, then, might be an altering, a switching, of this register" (2001: 127). Distinguishing between a representational view of the world – representations of the self and the self as representation – he suggests affect is the connection *to the world*. Art

becomes the access point, the node of connection.[62] Through affect, art becomes about what an object can do. Therefore, the aesthetic of art makes, to the viewer, the invisible visible and resets their connection to the world. Shifting outside of the representational regime undermines theories that suggest there is an intertextual nature to the production of meaning. If art is no longer a text then it can no longer *be* intertextual. Therefore, affect is an experience theorised to be outside of or in opposition to the standard understanding of representational practice. However, I argue affect is also experienced through representational practices not in opposition to them. There is room for representation within the affective theorisation of connecting *to the world,* but this may well require an understanding of what Burgin terms a "trans-individual unconscious" (2009: 160) as it contributes to an ecology of what is spectacle.

In attempting to gain more clarity around affect I argue there is a task to reconcile the 'experiential' *with* the 'representational.' The theories articulating affect stress experience over representation. But this is not to suggest that representations cannot be experienced or that experiences do not come from representational practices. I propose these two interfere with one another in ways that oppositional positions do not fully accommodate. When considering photographs we are generally required to ask 'what something is' and 'what it signifies' – we ask something of the work through its ontology and secondly through its epistemology. [63] The ontological question is usually approached via methods involved in production of the practice and its specificity. This locates particular forms of practice amongst other similar forms of practice. Photographs are generally good objects for grouping by subject matter since things like landscapes and portraits[64] are

---

[62] In a technological sense, a computer terminal or mobile device, an uploaded image, a tweet or a status update, are ways that are both into and *forming of* a connected network. I examine these ideas in terms of technology later in Chapter Five.

[63] These were common questions, at times framed differently, from participants throughout the workshops.

[64] What is interesting is how using the subject genres from the tradition of painting photography can become a sub-set of painting history. This is outside of my argument here

relatively easy to define. The epistemological question is usually considered through the context of a particular practice (for example, in photography's case whether it is a snapshot or photojournalism). The classical notion of epistemology and ontology assumes the properties of objects are independent of our knowing or discovering them. However, as Barad describes through Bohr's criticism of the transparency of measurement, in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, there can be no observational independence (2007: location 2400/10050). Barad outlines the doubts connected to practices of representation simply because the boundaries between the object being observed and the agency of observation are not known. In contrast, the affective nature of practice is understood precisely through the reaction practice provokes as a penetrated, embodied, experience. The boundaries between subject/object become to an extent indeterminate. However, during this experience it may be impossible to determine, at a quantitative level, any useful measure of our emotional response. Experience therefore takes the form of affect *measured by* affect, such that we use our own affective responses to gauge what are the affects others experience. While affect provides a means to articulate embodied practice without there being any cut between subject/object, mind/body, material/immaterial and animate/inanimate, its force is not the only thing that determines practice. There also remains the impossible to determine ontological or epistemological status of practice – often defined through representational terms – that needs to take into account the apparatus of measurement: the human subject. A human subject who as well as being subject to the affective forces of an image may also read the intertextual space of images semiotically. These ways in which images are understood tend to rely on what is shown visually. But as I have claimed, while we may be affected by seeing images of refugees or war or loved ones, we may be equally affected by the sheer numbers, interactions and associations connected to these images.

---

but it should be noted that particularly with digital photography there are many new sets of subject groupings which are not derived from fine art or painting.

In Burgin's argument for the "trans-individual unconscious" (2009: 160) he states there is no subject who is outside of social life. His claim does not dismiss the semiotics, social history or political economies of the image, instead, it suggests what is needed is an account of the total environment of the image. His aim being to describe not how image objects from film, art and photography are the same but to "construe their differences *differently*" (Italics in original 2009: 180).

As stated earlier, without photography the groups in the workshops would simply be social groups. Due to the presence of photography they became a group who had a mediated version of the world that shaped, challenged or supported their views. When one participant expressed, *"Having the camera actually takes me into detail,"* they were referring to how they saw parts of their subject. But another reading of this suggests the detail they themselves were revealed as being. This affective relay of seeing and revealing happens at the interface between subject and object. Affect is the other side of the representational transaction between an image object and its audience subject. However, as I have described affect operates through experience and process not through the deciphering of symbolic meaning. Nevertheless, the very process of reading an image symbolically gave rise to affective responses throughout the participatory elements of the research.

3.7.   The research-assemblage

Given the complex nature of how affect and representation operate and their bearing on agency I offer a different approach to the problem. In this section, following Fox & Alldred (2015), I consider the 'research-assemblage' as an alternative way of understanding the participatory practice. The re-staging of the human subject poses fundamental challenges and questions in relation to my research methods and their findings and to the consideration of participatory practice in more general terms. As stated above, the focus of new materialism is to extend traditional materialist analysis and to address how individual desires, feelings and meanings make a contribution to social

production (Fox & Alldred, 2015: 03; Braidotti, 2000:159; DeLanda, 2006: 05). Importantly, the new materialist idea of agency is not limited to human action but takes on the non-human, the relational, the force of affects, the animate and the inanimate (Fox & Alldred, 2015: 03). A research-assemblage brings together the components of research and provides a way to consider research activity and interactions.

In what follows I examine how Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory, territorialization (the segmentation of the whole) and coding can be applied into the participatory aspects of this project. Applying Deleuze and Guattari's thinking onto my research method tests and articulates their ideas through my methods. Since assemblages are a way of understanding the shift from human agency to affect they help explain not what things are – bodies, things or social institutions – but the capacities produced within them.

Applying assemblage theory to the research processes, each activity or function becomes an affective instrument in the economy of the research – it becomes an "abstract machine" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 156). Assemblages are more than the conglomeration of different things: they have a 'part-to-whole' relationship. Each part of an assemblage needs to interact together to create a property of their own which is then not reducible to the properties of the parts. An assemblage cannot be created from just a random selection of objects – a paperclip, an apple, a book, for example. These objects do not represent an assemblage. Instead, Deleuze described an assemblage as being made from a horse, a warrior and a weapon. Brought together these three things cannot be reduced to the other (DeLanda, 2016). A research-assemblage yields a complete whole from the properties of its parts.

Ultimately, the aim in this section is to account for the processual flows characterising new materialist research-assemblages. I use this examination to see how affective forces can be understood as working. I have broken down my participatory method into individual 'abstract machines,' such that

they function diagrammatically. Diagrams are defined as the "moment at which nothing but functions and matters remain. A diagram has neither substance nor form, neither content nor expression" (DeLanda, 2016). I pay especially close attention to the *capacity* of the research-assemblage – what they do – rather than the 'what it is they are.' Beginning by disassembling the 'research machine' I was using, I break it into operating parts – assemblages – in order to evaluate how each part functioned. Applying Jane Bennett's approach in her book *Vibrant Matter* (2010), in which she argues for a 'vibrant materiality' where human and nonhuman forces are configured to enact political force, this becomes an ecological, systematic examination of the interdependence of each of my research-assemblages. Bennett's own sense of the distributed agency of things as 'actants,' draws on Latour and Deleuze and Guattari's theories of assemblage, in which agency is "distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field" (Bennett, 2010: 23). Agency is considered then not a human force but as coming from a collective grouping of things, events and clusters of activity.

Within the collaborative/participatory component of the project there are five distinct operators. These are all relational, they flow into one another and can be defined as follows: The recruitment assemblage, the briefing assemblage, the activity assemblage, the data collection assemblage and the data analysis assemblage. Each of these processes flowed in what might be recognised as the traditional linear timeline of research. However, over the period of the research, they also cycled backwards, in a non-linear sense. For example, this can be seen in the way early data analysis eventually altered how data was collected and how the activities were then enacted. It also affected the form of the briefing and even the recruitment process. Therefore, even though the process apparently appeared to be linear, it was also contingent upon reflection and reactive responses. Through assemblages it is possible to reveal not specific human actions or experiences but the relations that form assemblages and the flows between these relations (Fox & Alldred, 2015: 06)

The recruitment assemblage partly operated outside of the main research mechanism. In order to recruit participants, I used members of the public who had registered for one of the photography courses run by Cornwall Education Service. These were varied courses that attracted adults interested in learning more about photography. Participating in any of the research activities was entirely voluntary. Since the research activities themselves resembled the content of the courses, requiring little additional work by the participants, there were no instances of anyone electing not to undertake the research. The recruitment assemblage acted to gather particular groupings of people together. Its function was largely external – neither the participants nor I were able to significantly influence the assembly of the groups of individuals. The criteria for inclusion were strictly limited to those who had expressed an interest without any other coercion. The recruitment assemblage was, as Deleuze and Guattari express, 'nomadic,' it was open to the interrelationships of where it was at that time, starting from its current situatedness (Clarke & Parsons, 2013: 39). The ontological status of the participants was produced through a set of relations and outside operations. Their interactions with the external and formal procedures, which enrolled them onto a course, were not coordinated through or by the research. For the participants the research was unanticipated. They became a part of it because of their interaction with something else. As one participant expressed in response to their overall experiences: "*I didn't come to learn that but I appreciate I have learned that*" (Anonymous Research Participant). In more general terms the unexpected relations – interconnected friendships that developed between some individuals, especially those who attended over a long period of time – all began from what was an essentially arbitrary administrative process that was outside of everyone's control.[65] This capacity for interaction was produced inside of the recruitment assemblage but it was not its specific aim. Interaction was a known potential, possibly even a 'surplus value' of recruitment, but

---

[65] One group of participants has continued to meet regularly, sharing their photographs and going on trips around the South West.

recruitment did not happen in order to create any interaction directly. This is an important distinction. The purpose of the recruitment assemblage was never directly aligned to one of its possible outcomes. If the recruitment process was explicitly set up to enable interaction then there would need to be a different set of criteria for selection. Since the tool for recruitment was fundamentally removed from the mechanics of the research it provided a form of blind study.

At a certain stage during the process participants on the courses became research participants. At which point "the research-assemblage comprise[d of] its own relations, which are all the paraphernalia of academic inquiry: researcher, methodologies, research instruments, theories" (Fox & Alldred, 2015: 08), becomes part of their affective responses. The most important outcome from considering this research-assemblage is the shift from autonomous participant to a collective research-participant and how this happens and the effect it has. By implication participatory research needs to have a space for a participant, in other words there needs to a gap into which participants can be placed.[66] For this research-assemblage, the participants were an essential ingredient. What they experienced was investigated by a process that needed to be sensitive to the affective flows between them and between the ultimate research outcomes. What I noted was that once people *became* participants there were tendencies to project what they believed were desired outcomes. Becoming a participant in a photographically-based research project brought in different modes of behaviour that were likely to be orientated toward specific types of photographic outcomes. Holm notes, in her work using photography in *Visual Research Methods* (2008a), that her participants often needed instructions to tell them what to do. This indicates responses and behaviours can be influenced. But if visual researchers need to instruct their participants in what photographs to take we must surely ask what value the participants bring to the overall research outcomes? This

---

[66] I believe this is a useful analogy to the emergence, through practice, of a 'subject of the signifier.' In a specific space within research is inserted the participant who becomes defined by and through the research assemblage.

highlights a shortcoming with methodological approaches that use photographic practice as method and tool within social science (for approaches see Collier & Collier, 1967/1986; Pink, 2009; Holm, 2008b etc.). Here, the assemblage suggests that there are valuable questions that can be framed from examining the relationship of the participants within the overall research structure as well as their relationship to the research instruments and apparatus.

Moving to consider the briefing assemblage, this set in action the practical activities. Its function was to engage and inform participants about photography and encourage them to take photographs – but being mindful of Holm's (2008a; 2008b) findings, not to directly influence or define the photographs they would take. Various assignments were given to participants with the expectation that they would produce images in response. In the early stages of the project, this briefing assemblage was framed around the giving of instructions. Often participants interpreted these with representational responses. When participants were asked to illustrate a view as to whether photography operated as a window onto the world or held a mirror up to ourselves, the resulting images were invariably of windows and of mirrors. Mindful of Holm's (2008a; 2008b) findings, where seeing what others produced could influence and effect the kinds of images participants took, briefs were not repeated and were given out, where possible, on weekly basis.[67] This flow of influence is especially useful to consider since it indicates a wider observation from my own research concerning how participants repeat familiar visual tropes. This tendency appears to undermine the unique value of visual methods, since borrowing from other sources expresses universal rather than individual notions. Once again, Holm (2008a) indicates a similar symbolic, performative facet to photography in her findings.

---

[67] Holm states: "students commented that once they saw the photographs of others that they got additional ideas on how to express aspects of their lives that they had not known how to express or had not thought about at the time" (2008a: 17).

What then was the function of the briefing assemblage? It is difficult to define it without making reference to the outcomes it produced in terms of work. However, as an operator in the project, it organised a set of implicit representational ideas. It appeared that representation was always by default referred to because of photographic traditions and a somewhat conservative view of the function of cameras. While some participants matured their representational ideas, for example by imagining themselves to be "creating visual poetry," as one described his work, generally speaking there was an expectation that the briefing assemblage was orientated toward the production of representations of things in the world. It was therefore difficult to disentangle the expectations and functions of the semiotic regime to open up new outcomes. One can conclude something of a staged process whereby a symbolic motif or visual idea is taken from the brief and photographed. At this stage the extent to which participants can be guided or influenced is largely determined by how the briefing is delivered.

In critiquing the affective power of the briefing assemblage I would consider how the administration of the brief itself acts on researcher, participant and the objects caught in its process. At its simplest, its affect is to organise potential systematisation of outside 'things' (the eventual representational subjects of images to be produced). It undoubtedly refined choice, by giving participants some elements to focus on. It took influence itself from the research only in that its basis was a certain type of activity commensurate with the research aims. Therefore, research was the defining condition of the activity but in other similar contexts research could be and indeed may well be absent.

Increasingly, as the project itself evolved, the briefing assemblage conformed to a 'rhizomic' ontology by which it helped shape the knowledge it produced in accordance with its own methods (Fox & Alldred, 2015: 05). In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, rhizomes have no end or beginning, they are located as conjunctions 'between' things (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 27). Proceeding as it did from "the middle, through the middle" (2004: 28), there

was never a sense of completion expressed as enough research material. Instead, the more capacity this assemblage contained the more it absorbed into itself.

For participants who contributed to the research over a longer period, there was a change in how they were affected by the briefing assemblage. They were able to respond to less structured briefings (briefing objects) usually in more elaborate ways. In this way, participants and briefs began to develop responses to support the knowledge the research was creating. There was, then, an onflow of research into outcome and outcome into research, which took affects from time and experience. It is important to stress the non-subjective conditions at play here. Although the participants were actors within the research, their efforts were contingent on other forces, including in this case, experience and the time period over which they participated.

I wish to consider briefly, what is the (new) materiality of the briefing assemblage? It pre-empts any material outputs of the research, therefore I would like to consider the immanent or emergent 'force' it contains in order to make things happen. This assemblage takes ideas, as its start point, to enact *virtual* work, the thinking process, or to prepare a form of labour (a particular work or labour which *physically* takes place in the activity assemblage). It gathers material together (participants, briefs, ideas, experiences, influences) and energises these with potential toward new 'emergent' action.

Assemblages are made up of segments, in other words of component parts. Specifically, they contain segments of content – material - and segments of expression. Unlike Aristotle, for whom reality is 'pre-categorised,' Deleuze claimed there were no pre-segmented categories; the world was seen as an indivisible and continuous whole that eventually segments (DeLanda, 2016). Segmentation of the whole is defined as 'territorialization' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 46). Territorialization, for Deleuze and Guattari, expresses

how well defined the identity of an assemblage is (2004: 46)[68]. In the briefing assemblage the component parts take on a spatial distinctiveness and this eventually results in activity. But this is not a direct expression of any agency, this is a responsive action. In terms of the research, where participants decided to take their ideas, how far they allowed their ideas to travel outside of where they were and how far identity was expressed is a form of territorialization.

There are two other terms used by Deleuze and Guattari to helpfully describe the operations of the research-assemblage, these are 'coding' and 'decoding.'[69] Coding is concerned with the prescription of behaviours, for example DNA or religious actions and rituals. Coding might account for an aesthetic sensibility of a particular genre of photography. For example, if a brief made reference to landscape then it follows that through coding the responses would likely conform to a particular set of aesthetic rituals to produce a given type of image. Expressed in these terms, this research-assemblage is oppressive, operating directly upon participants toward the production of knowledge. It requires them to learn or acquire sets of relevant skills. The parameters of coding and territorialization alter over time and with the participant's application of said skills. The participants respond to input parameters, changing the form of the assemblage. In social research terms, I argue this creates a changing and variable structure (assemblage/strata) that does not evolve in a linear sense; rather it controls its own state through parameters that are ultimately set by the conditions it creates. The more sensitive to, or perhaps a better term here is 'expressive' of the research participants become, the more changes occur in the state of the assemblage.

---

[68] A metaphorical example of this might be the difference states of water, whereby ice is clearly defined and territorialized, whereas steam might be considered to be deterritorialized.

[69] Deleuze and Guattari suggest coding and decoding applies to 'strata' rather than assemblages, however DeLanda (2016) offers a way of parameterising an assemblage in order to avoid the binary strata vs. assemblage opposition. He suggests that by adjusting the amounts of coding/decoding and territorialization/deterritorialization we can transform an assemblage into strata and back again.

The immanent force of knowledge drives this but so do other affective agents.

The activity assemblage operates in response to the briefing assemblage and it is also the phase that materialises outcomes. If we return to Deleuze's simple definition of the assemblage – the warrior, horse and sword example – then within this assemblage we have participant, camera and brief and together these create emergent knowledge.

This modelling of assemblages onto the process I used highlights how research is contingent on a number of facets but fundamentally how participants affected the research by becoming participants *for the purposes of the research*. These conclusions also mirror my wider conclusions (as developed in Chapter Four) in relation to how photography produces image *for* image. Having considered the role of the participants it remains for me in the following final three sections in this chapter to describe image as it was experienced during the workshops. In doing this I consider theoretical and philosophical accounts of each image form: the affection-image, the 'emotional-image' and the 'memory-image.'

3.8. The 'affection-image'

The affection-image, as described by Deleuze in 'Cinema 1: The Movement Image' (1983), is the face in close up. Deleuze expresses how the image moves between what he sees as 'power' and 'quality.' While his writing on the affection-image is, characteristically, difficult to summarise, he claims affect is expressed through the face, facial equivalents or propositions (1983: 97). By way of example he describes Dreyer's *'Passion of Joan of Arc,'* claiming the "affect is like the expressed of the state of things, but this expressed does not refer to the state of things, it only refers to the faces which express it" (1983: 106). This describes a doubling back to the image itself. Affect is understood only because it is a close up expression of the faces that give it its own substance. From this I understand the affection-image to be a looping phenomenon that transmits a sensation of itself. As I

concluded in this research, photography pre-conditions – Enframes in Heidegger's sense – the conditions of its own production. This description of the affection-image, renders a similar line of thinking since the affection-image refers not to a state of things but to the sensation which expresses it. I consider Bill Viola's work '*Moving Stillness (Mt. Rainier)*'[70] (1979)*,* can be read as an example of an affection image – one which is neither a close up nor a portrait. The work consists of a screen suspended above a large pool of water. A projected image, split into RGB light, of footage of Mount Rainier is projected through the water onto the suspended screen. Periodically, the surface of the water is disturbed which then causes the beams to split creating a moving, distorted image on the screen. Eventually, as the water stills, the recognisable visual image returns to the screen. While the exhibition description of Viola's work suggests it "reveals fundamental human truths" (Blain Southern, 2015), I read *'Moving Stillness (Mt. Rainier)'* with a different purpose. It is the disturbance of the water in Viola's work that reveals the make up of the work itself. In this process, the audience is confronted with the visual becoming non-visual, becoming the components of red, green and blue light. It expresses to the viewer not the visual but the expression of what is needed to become visual. Affect is not transmitted through the visual but via the change of state through which the sense of the image becomes something non-visual. Although he makes no reference to this particular piece, Thrift (2008: 196) connects much of Viola's work with an embedded affective form transmitted to its audiences. I suggest *'Moving Stillness (Mt. Rainier)'* articulates two states and as these come together we experience something of the way image is structured. The enduring essence of the image is disrupted by the disturbance in the water; with one remaining latent while we experience the other. Referencing what he terms as affective cities, Thrift describes affect as "part of a reflexive loop" (2008: 172), and claims its role should no longer be ignored. The result of the transmission of affect is a residual feeling that remains in us and separately from its ability

---

[70] The parallel between Viola's work, which depicts a mountain and the Cornish Alps is not deliberate nonetheless it is something of a happy coincidence.

to alter the mood of a particular moment. It reveals how objects or environments pierce us, as we take inside what they emit.

In another version of how affect functions; Ahmed suggests that "to be affected by something is to evaluate that thing. Evaluations are expressed in how bodies turn towards things" (2010: 23). Affect is an embodied theory, a theory of the body of feelings and emotions and how we are shaped by the *shape of things*. It is the 'shape of the things' and how they affect us that indicates why the example of Viola's work is important and relevant. It articulates a movement between the visual and what constructs the shape of the visual. The affective experience of this movement is formed by the disruption of two distinct forces, in this case image and the components that make up the image. I develop this idea throughout my practice (see Chapter Seven) as a way of expressing the intersection of visual and non-visual *image qua image*.

The difficulty in defining what affect is or does is in part created by how scholars have used it to account for or describe the agency of multiple experiences. However, what is unifying in many of these examinations of affect is they emanate from the 'event' of an encounter. An encounter can be totally contingent experience – a relation occurring between 'thought' and 'things outside of thought' or 'things' that appear not to depend upon the original thought itself. An event is an instance or instances when things happen, after which all things change and the normal flow of things happening is disrupted. In this sense, affect appears in the following way; an encounter happens creating an event, which disrupts how things were proceeding and the force of this is 'felt' through affect. I have already outlined 'photography as event,' but photography is also affective, providing a way to feel the event that has happened.

Throughout the workshops, the discussions around photography produced a range of positive and negative feelings. But these were never limited by what photography showed visually. There were technical discussions linked

to general frustrations about photography as a practice and there were also discussions about subject matter, about inspiration, aesthetics and meaning. Finally, there were extended discussions about subjects linked to or prompted by the images. Nevertheless, I conclude these discussions structured a particular way of dealing with photography. For the participants, while they were aware that a photograph was not the phenomenological world they inhabited, the world and the participants were still unavoidably affected by the false, abstract, reality of the image. Photographs were not simply the visual reproduction of a version of reality. Which is to say, even though rationally the image cannot and does not show everything, nevertheless the image has a particular reality of its own. As a participant expressed: *"I like to get a reaction. It doesn't have to be a good reaction or a bad reaction. But I like a reaction. Then I know I've taken what I would call a good photograph."*

When discussing Viola's work, Thrift concludes that what we are shown are affective shortcuts and catchphrases. These shortcuts are made possible largely because of the way the boundaries between cultural objects, such as movies or photographs, become indistinct from society itself. They then move from fable, to metaphor, to shortcut. He suggests Viola lays out these clues for his audience in slow motion. They show everyday life enacted into large signposts of affects (2008: 197). Thrift's assessment of Viola – and his way of sign posting affects – may well be what is often absent when we consider photographs to be simply 'images of' something. Affect is transmitted in hidden shortcuts, in the reactions we have. I claim these reactions are not only a response to the visual subject matter but also to the unseen structure that makes an image possible.

3.9.   The 'emotional-image'

Describing how emotions affect our experiences Ahmed (2004: 28) suggests we may be moved in particular way by "an encounter with another." In feeling hurt we transfer the response of being hurt not only toward the encounter itself but to the other, thus: "'it hurts' becomes, 'you hurt me,' which might

become, 'you are hurtful,' or even 'you are bad'" (2004: 28) Ahmed argues that the register of these affective responses create "borders between selves and others" but also transmit meaning onto others. Feelings therefore function affectively or at the very least they transfer affects between bodies. They also appear to activate our emotional register suggesting we become more emotional as we pay more attention to our feelings.

It is not difficult to read Ahmed's description of emotions as one of the ways we might experience photographs. Throughout the workshops there were emotional responses to photographs that meant photographs became modes of affective transmission but also objects in their own right. In one example, a participant gave an extended and emotional account about a suitcase of photographs that she said represented the life of a deceased friend of her mother. The suitcase had remained under a bed in her mother's spare room. But now that her mother had died she was unsure what to do with the *"life of this person."* The value of photographs seems, in this instance to be difficult to express. There was certainly a sense in which the images themselves were visually likely to hold little or no significance to anyone other than the original owner. Yet, as a collection and as described in this story the suitcase of photographs had a particular affective force.

For Massumi, emotions are "only a partial expression of affect" (2015: 5). He outlines that in any given moment, a single emotion draws on only a limited "depth and breadth of experience" (2015: 5). There are other feelings remaining but they are virtual; in some way they are poised, about to be expressed at "the next step" (2015: 5). He suggests the freedoms we sense we have, are linked to both the depth of expression we are able to mine and connected to the potential we have for accessing these experiences as we go forward. Massumi suggests emotions are too personal, too individual and therefore fall short of Spinoza's definition of affects as being ways of connecting to others. The emotions Ahmed examines are not subjective but inter-subjective, in that they express the "'sociality' of emotion" (2004: 8). She suggests, rather than the course of feelings coming from within, from

inside moving outwards that emotions can also emanate from outside and "bind the social body together" (2004: 9). Ahmed's emotions are structuring, creating boundaries and surfaces by the ways we respond through emotions to objects.

Returning to the participant's story of the suitcase of photographs, there was no need to see what they showed in order to understand the dilemma she was describing. As anonymous objects in a suitcase they seem to represent the sum of everyone's mortality. The suitcase indicated how death is something that will "unmake whatever meaning we have made" (Critchley, 2015: 42). For the participants in the workshop this story was about the suitcase itself, as a container of images – similar, perhaps, to a server on a network. Expressing a metaphor of digital image storage it conveys the collection as testimony of a particular life. I conclude social emotions structure and transmit affect in the ways Ahmed indicated. There is more to explore here especially where the emotional-image is not only personal, but also has the capacity to shape through collective emotions. However, perhaps the story of the suitcase suggests that when exchange or circulation ends so too does memory and meaning.

3.10. The 'memory-image'

Memory and photography have always been closely linked, especially when photography is seen as way of making and sharing memories (Sontag, 1977; Barthes, 1984/1980; Holmes, 1859). Digital photography and the associated technologies of the network, the Internet and the capacity to share has reconfigured the relationship photography has to both individual and collective memory. Most obviously, the immediacy and disposability of digital photographic practice indicates ways in which we may experience a new and different type of memory making. When Holmes (1859: 738) suggested photography was "mirror with a memory" he pre-empted a complex of frustrations connected to how we retain our gaze and how we suspend the time. However, photography is never simply 'mirror' or 'memory.'

Freud understood the camera as an *extension* of human memory; a 'prosthetic' device used for retaining what may otherwise be lost. It is, as he described, "an instrument which retains [the] fleeting visual impressions," (1989/1930: 279). In reflecting on the camera in this way Freud's emphasis was not on the visual recording of things but on how cameras enabled a particular human recollection and memory. The camera, in this sense, is an instrument of memory making rather than a tool for creating images containing meaning. With this specific understanding of the camera the 'fleeting visual' moments of the present, transform into something connected to the past through its mechanical recording and human recollection.

As Bate has argued (2010: 254-255), photographs can be the containers of trace memories, which lead back by an associative path to earlier displaced or suppressed memories. In his argument he suggests there is both an historical or voluntary memory and a personal, affective, involuntary memory. Both these are interwoven, through a chain of associations, can be experienced in different intensities and may be triggered by a photograph.[71] The process Bate describes above was evident when, during the workshops, participants were asked to photograph items that reminded them of their lives. The challenge was to photograph things that represented life experiences rather than family or friends. Participants produced images of a range of subject matter including: sunsets, holding hands and favourite books. However, it was the presentation of this work and specifically the personal and emotional responses to certain images that indicated photography's strong associative connection to memory. And as with Bate's argument, the images provoked a range of connected discussions that covered a diverse range topics such as: solar farms versus wind farms and their relative visual impacts, the passing of time, gifts, Sunday lunch, coastal path erosion, children growing up, meeting partners, etc. Nonetheless, although there seems to be clear connection of photographs to memory I

---

[71] In Bate's article "The Memory of Photography" (2010), to which I am referring, he describes a series of personal and historical associations connected to Fox Talbot's photograph titled 'Trafalgar Square,' 1844.

argue this is limited by the conventions with which we perceive the very notion of memory. Primarily, our understanding of memory is usually as an image-based phenomenon. In her PhD thesis, *'Choking on the madeleine: encounters and alternative approaches to memory in a contemporary art practice'* (2015), Andersdotter makes a compelling case for memory to be considered as 'memory-event.' Setting out a critique of the metaphors of memory, she argues they create presumptions and conventions about memory itself, limiting any deeper analysis of how memory operates (Ibid: 35). I wish to suggest there is a further step that can be taken to consider the photograph's relationship to memory, which extends both Bate and Andersdotter's analysis.

At a time when there are so many images taken we might consider how memories become photographs by the 'chance selection' of instances extracted from the disparate experiences we refer to as the present. Memories were a key topic of discussion throughout the workshops and it was clear to participants that photographs triggered memories, retained them and influenced them. Many discussions were dominated by stories photographs prompted. As stated, we can conclude that what images show visually accounted for how memories were discussed, but it is also reasonable to argue that memory also contains other characteristics which are non-visual. Following Andersdotter (2015), an alternative reading of photographically prompted memories suggests the metaphor of 'memory images' is restricted by a visual reading of them. Fundamentally, I argue understanding photographs in representational or metaphorical terms is at odds with how memory is also an affective experience. Given that memories are not static or fixed yet photographic images yield both these properties there is a vexed claim to connect photography only on the basis of the visual with memory. The discussions around photography's influence on memory are not new ones. As Bate indicates in his paper, in an interview in 1974 Foucault "complained that popular memory was being obstructed" (2010: 250) by a range of apparatuses.

As well as seeing photographs as containers of trace memories is the alternative not a more accurate account of how memory operates? Namely that memory is a container of trace photographs. Here we cannot fail to imagine the experiences of the holiday slide show (in both its transparency film, projector and screen guise as well as its more modern digital screen based version), the Facebook timeline[72] or the photographic album, as they become the very essence of memory itself. This retroactive rewriting of historical memory, a curating of the past, happens when the past becomes included in the signifier (Žižek, 2008: 59). In Lacanian terms, out of this 'misrecognition' of the past an illusion of memory is brought into being. While Bate suggests, in support of his argument, that "photographic images do not destroy personal memories," but "interact with them in very specific ways, which may not always be conscious" (2010: 255), there is reason to suggest the conditions of memory are pre-configured by how we adopt photography as one of its primary transmitters. There is a double movement, from Bate's description of photographs as containers of trace-memory through to memory as a container of trace-photographs. Consistent with the discussions with participants in the research, memory operated through photographic images, such that past-events were structured by the photographs that represented them. Participants commented directly on their photographs as if they were the experience itself, only occasionally realising any inconsistency and when they did, correcting themselves to refer back to the photograph as being what had happened. I believe this misrecognition – and of memory becoming image – indicates a difficulty with realising the substance of memory itself. It suggests the ontological constituency of memory is borne by a process of misrecognition and in the case of photographs a degree of symbolic overdetermination. Photographs are not only things that visually show us 'other things,' but they can also have other meanings invested in them as they are seen as the visual trace of a particular occasion as they perform and structure memory. In all of these ways, it is possible to appreciate a certain fascination with the manifest

---

[72] The very term 'timeline' suggests a particular association to history, memory and temporal experience and as such gives it a metaphorical overdetermination.

image we see in a photograph. But I argue there is something not fully explained by only the visual. I suggest we might consider the photograph or image itself as a remainder or excess that is left over and exists beyond any visual content. If we understand the photograph – not only through what it shows us visually but also as the presence of some thing, which is usually unseen, then we are confronted with a photographic status, which is close to that of the Lacanian Real, namely, some thing resistant to the symbolic order.

This crucial link of the symbolic, what we see and experience visually in a photograph and the domain of the unseen constitutes the structure of a photographic ontology (which I develop further in Chapter Four). As I argue, photography is situated in the gap between these two positions. I suggest memory becomes the container of trace-photographs precisely because it is unable to confront the Real of memory as it might otherwise be recalled. This operation of memory relies on latent thoughts of photographs as visual objects contained within the mind and expressed as memories. However, once photographs have visually shown us how things may have appeared then their non-representational status – as data, as relations, as forces – provides insight into two further concerns. One is that in order to escape the 'non-visual' presence of the photograph we assign a metaphorical meaning onto its visual surface. Here I draw on Žižek's (2008: 73) reading of Lacan to suggest this action is an emphasis not of a more general incapacity to self-reflect but a realisation of the ontological uncertainty we may reveal when we approach the substance of photography. The second concern is in reframing our understanding of photography through memory. Thus we should not seek out the hidden meaning or kernel that somehow lies behind the visual form; rather we determine why such forms are transposed into what we understand as memory-images. In this sense, we cannot penetrate the meaning of photographs through understanding them as a trace-memory. Instead, we undertake an examination of the form of memory as the container of trace-photographs.

An example comes in the closing scenes of the film *Titanic* (1977) where there is a slow camera pan showing photographs from Rose DeWitt Bukater's life. As Rubinstein and Sluis (2013: 22-23) note, presenting these photographs of a "life lived," suggests life unfolds in a series of linear and structured moments. It presents the "image of a life comprised of perfectly framed, perfectly exquisite, motionless keepsakes" (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013: 24). It is easy to understand memory structured in this way, as apparently interchangeable with a rational and logical representation of life and time. As seen, these are not photographs of things that have happened in life but are a "life that is being frozen, arrested and flattened until itself becomes a photograph" (Ibid). The photograph, in this context, acts as the measure of experience and an indicator of time's passing. It is a metaphor of memory understood as 'consisting of' and 'structured by' trace-photographs. But there is fundamentally, something both false and familiar in this presentation of the past. [73] Developing this I argue two brief points to articulate the memory-image. Firstly, my claim for memory as a container of trace-photographs is supported by an alternative reading of the metaphorical use of images as standing-in-for memories. The overused cliché of photographs as a container of memory can be re-thought to propose that memory is structured like a photograph. Following this logic, it is not only the visual properties of photographs that suggest a structure for memory but also the form of image itself. A modality of photographs, presented as an unfolding succession of more and more images manifests itself, most obviously, in how the network of digital images is experienced but it has always been a part of the production of photography. In this way memory becomes a successive linear, narrative of individual moments. Secondly, I argue, the configuration of a continuous and seemingly never ending series of memories, formed photographically, are only possible because each suggests that they may at some point be the last in a series of repetitions.

---

[73] Rubinstein and Sluis go on to make a brief comparison of scenes from *Titanic* (Cameron, 1997) with *Momento* (Nolan, 2000) suggesting in the former, photographs indicate linear time while in the latter time is presented as an infinite looping structure (2013: 22-40).

Thus we may reflect upon every photograph as being the last ever taken at any one particular moment.

Taking these two points together, the memory-image is not an object through which we understand the representations contained in the photograph. Rather it is the way memory becomes a container shaped by both the visual and the form that makes a photograph possible.

The images discussed during the research were usually new photographs taken by participants. As such they were not recollections of an event from the distant past. In showing some thing from the past in the present the representational surface of a photograph and the object represented on it, not only have a metonymic relationship but also a temporal one, wherein moments from the past become a part of the present. [74] The movement of photographs through time and duration brings past into the present, making them a reminder of time's passing. They create a narrative of history and eventually become evidence portraying 'how it was.' Photographs may also point towards a future, provoking a response predicting 'how it will be.' Using this experience of encountering a photograph and responding to it in a specific way, Barthes questioned what photography was 'in itself.' His conclusion was twofold: firstly, the photograph is an empty object depicting what has been, secondly within the photograph is his notion of the punctum, whose action is to prick and leave a feeling of pity for "what is going to die" (1984/1980: 117). Barthes seems to be concerned with representational and affective processes but the punctum is possibly defined too narrowly. Photographs generally provoke a complex of responses, relayed through perception and memory not just one of pity. Within this complex, memory is continually re-constructed, adjusted and layered upon through the successive experiential encounters. As I have argued photographs modify memory, shaping it to their own form such that memory becomes photographic.

---

[74] In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes writes about looking at a photograph of Napoléon's brother Jérôme declaring: "I am looking at eyes that looked at the Emperor" (1984/1980: 03).

The past is perceived and comes into the present through our current knowledge of it. In this sense, memory and a photograph's relation to it, is constructed retroactively. In the way many participants recalled, the memories of the past were constituted afterwards as a reflection back onto the illusion of a remembered or imagined truth. Bergson has suggested perception is an organized experience aligned not only with what is seen in representational form but also with what is thought, remembered or imagined. He argued that, "there is no perception which is not full of memories," (Bergson, 2010/1896). Our perception is not a straightforward reaction with our senses; it is a process whereby details of past experiences are mixed with sense data. It is the 'signs' that trigger former images and whose agency is the capacity for memories. However, for Bergson, there is a core perception, a 'pure perception,' onto which memories are then grafted. This abstract, core perception is one that is confined to the present moment and is fully 'absorbed.' He suggests that during processes of recollection we force ourselves to be detached from the present to confront a general sense of the past, which is then adjusted down into a specific region of the past in order to remember. He likens this process to the focusing of a camera. (2010/1896: 73). In this he attempts to distinguish whether a memory from the past is any different to perception in the present. Mapping a line between at one end pure memory and at the other pure perception, he locates the memory image in the centre. Movement that traverses the line is 'thought,' and in thought there is no precise demarcation between the end of memory and the beginning of perception. Memory and sensation move into the present and they become present to us. In this way, "to picture is not to remember. No doubt a recollection, as it becomes actual, tends to live in an image" (2010/1896: 74), and Bergson appears to support the memory as trace-image. He continues describing how "a remembered sensation becomes more actual the more we dwell upon it, that the memory of the sensation is the sensation itself beginning to be" (2010/1896: 74). In this Bergson suggests our memory and any sensations we experience through memory become intrinsically part of our present. Photography can make 'the

present' into 'a past remembered' at a time in the future, as 'image.' Therefore, our recollection of the past may be conjoined with an image created in the past, producing a sensation of memory in the present. As Bergson noted, "the more I strive to recall a past pain, the nearer I come to feeling it in reality" (2010/1896: 74). Bergson's line of continuum relies on movement from memory to perception. Different levels of perception occur as a response to bodily movement within phenomenologically experienced circumstances. Such that what we encounter and how we encounter it influences the ratio of perception and memory thoughts. One of the earliest responses in the research was from participants who indicated their perception of the landscape was altered when they used their cameras 'to see.' They looked for and found different things around them. They took longer to pass through spaces, they altered direction and changed their pace. In this interactive experience landscape and image were shaped through bodily sensations and these in turn influenced the balance between pure perception and pure memory.

3.11. Summary

In this chapter I began by introducing how the research showed there was a relational component to photography. Taking *Relational Aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 2002) as a start point in order to understand interactions in practice, within this chapter I sought to examine its causes. I concluded the relationship between the research workshop participants and between photography and even particular photographs helped create a collective social identity. I claimed bonds link the connective elements of images and humans in complex ways. Building on this in section Three, I outlined Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (2002) and how in the research photography had been used as a reason to socialise, to meet, to walk, to discuss, to visit places. Identifying these interconnected responses to photography, I believed they expressed some of the ideas of new materialist thinking. Section Four therefore outlined new materialism and how post-human agency is connected to both humans and things. Throughout this thesis I make use of new materialist thinking in order to frame, order and

contain differing conceptions of photography. As I have been careful to point out, my conclusions do not discard photography as a representational practice; instead they augment it and orientate it toward other purposes. Most specifically, as outlined in Section Five, photography is a way to question perception itself. In keeping with this line of thinking I describe photography as being able to simultaneously expose the processual mechanisms of looking while also visually examining the world itself. What is significant is the ability to recognise how the mechanisms of looking are part of the conditions of photography's production. Specifically, the conclusions from my research workshops were that the external world appeared mediated through a series of manipulated or failed exercises. Accompanying the question of perception, in Section Six I considered how affect is conceptualised in relation to photography. If affect has an ability to shape, circulate and influence individuals and environments then it most certainly describes an aspect of the agency of photography. I do however caution how experience takes the form of affect *measured by* affect, such that our affective responses gauge what are the affects others experience. I therefore map out how the experiential needs to be reconciled with the representational rather than in opposition to it. In this sense I follow Burgin's call for an account of the total environment of the image (2009: 180).

In Section Seven I examine affect and agency through Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) theories of assemblage. In applying theories of assemblages I consider the capacities produced within research workshops. This Section details how practice, in the context of this research, was formulated and responded to. One important outcome was to take account of the shift from autonomous participant to a collective research-participant and how this happens and the effect it has. In other words, participants become a part of the investigative apparatus they are being used to investigate. And it seems this aspect cannot be distinguished from my earlier assertion that affect is measured by affect as they indicate similar problems. Here, I conclude valuable questions can be framed by examining the relationship of participants to the overall research structure as well as their

relationship to the research instruments and apparatus. In this sense, when using participants to express something of participation, we might ask whether this form of participation is the same as the participation it expresses.[75] This question equally has a bearing on using photography to understand photography.

In the final three sections I described image as it was experienced during the workshops. These sections provided theoretical and philosophical accounts of each image form: the affection-image, the 'emotional-image' and the 'memory-image.' I claim each of these provide start points for descriptions of image that are part of my contribution toward an account of the total environment image (Burgin, 2009: 180). In addition, they support my understanding of how photography *becomes* photography, which is the topic of the next chapter.

---

[75] I have deliberately re-purposed Lacan's question: "to know whether, when I speak of myself, I am the same as the self of whom I speak" (2006/1966: 430) as discussed in the introduction of this thesis. I also make similar use of this question in relation to photography in the conclusion of the thesis.

Chapter Four: becoming photography

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I make a new claim for photography, in line with the thinking in this thesis, in which photography is interpellated by forces of production and pleasure. In other words, photography becomes what it is through a set of processes: namely labour and enjoyment. While these ideas have been introduced and explored earlier in Chapter One, the focus of this section is twofold. Firstly, to determine an interpellated photographic subject. Secondly to argue when photography is formed by abstract forces, the notion of photography as a subject, reflexively shapes both subjectivity and external reality. The primary conclusion from this section will be toward an ontological account of how photography *becomes* photography. My central assertion articulates how photography as a process paradoxically undermines its own representational paradigm. This follows on from the previous chapter's examination of how the mechanisms of looking are part of the conditions of photography's production. The logic being that if representation stands in for experience and photography is a conduit of representation then photography *represents* a particular mode of photographic representation. In cohering to photographic convention we perpetuate the illusion of photography as a distinct practice and create a notion of image for image (this is similar to how we might save money – a representation of value – for its own sake).

It should be noted the context throughout this section is the digital environment and my arguments are focused on the proliferation of photography or "ubiquitous photography" as Hand (2012) and others have defined it. While my initial arguments could also be applied to analogue or film based photography, I develop a final point in relation to digital technology, the network and the algorithm which relates specifically to the contemporary *digital* environment. One further assumption is that photography is a fluid process in a state of motion. Although I make clear distinctions between them, I also interchangeably consider photography and its product, photographs, in order to support my claims.

As I have consistently stated elsewhere in this thesis, there is a standard, representational view of photography: one in which photographs show us things, where they document, report and attract our attention. As objects of representation photographs freeze time, capture moments and record events. It is almost impossible to imagine, in the modern world, passing significant time without any interaction with images. In this sense, photography has become the milieu defining many of the parameters of daily life and activity. Through photography many of the intricate complexities of everyday experience are visually brought together. And within the struggle to contain or grasp the sum of who we are, photography provides a visual logic through which we can configure and organise an intermediary frame of reality. It is a process that binds all kinds of contemporary experiences together and as such is likely to be indispensable for thinking through our everyday experience of reality.

Within a world of representations, photographic images have become the symbolic texture of our knowledge. Structuring interconnectedness, in which people, events and objects become many things: frozen, shared, distributed, reconfigured, altered, exaggerated, ignored or synthesised. But is it possible for photography to ever be distanced from its symbolic identity? I approach this by considering how photography is experienced by a late capitalist subjectivity and focus on how image comes into being. Such a consideration of the materiality of photography exposes not what a photograph is, but the process through which the world becomes imaged and photographed. Žižek noted, Marx's "interpretive procedure" (2008: 03), which he shared with Freud, avoided the "fetishistic fascination" (2008: 03) with the unspecified content that lay behind the form. Therefore, according with Žižek, both Marx and Freud did not examine the "hidden kernel" (2008: 03) of their subject instead they sought to explain why the commodity (for Marx) or the dream (for Freud), assumed the forms they did. In order to consider the constitution of photography, my starting point therefore begins with considering it as taking the forms and properties of a commodity.

In Volume 01 of '*Capital*,' Marx identifies the commodity as the *a priori* beginning point. He states that in capitalist societies wealth appears as an "immense collection of commodities" (1887/1991: 27). The reason Marx chooses to consider commodities is largely due to their "universal presence" (Harvey, 2010: 15): they are part of the everyday experiences surrounding us. While this reasoning could be applied to any number of commodities, in what follows I hope to illustrate specifically how photography embodies some of the expressions of Marx's Capital. In this way photographs become useful to think through some of the ideas in Capital but it is also possible to use a reading of Capital to conceptualise photography in a particular way. Marx's attention to labour within capitalist production theorises an abstract subject, which is formed through social relations. Using a similar approach, I intend to explain a *photographic subject* that is not, as one might expect, the visual object as it is seen in a photograph. But following the wider direction of my research and through a conflation of Marx and photography, I hope to express an understanding of the shaping force behind photography. This force, I argue, shapes an interpellated 'subject of photography.' To be clear, I am not re-purposing theory in order to present *the subject that is known as photography*. Instead, I formulate a subjectivity that is photographic. From this perspective photography becomes photography not through the formal properties of the medium but by how it becomes a particular form of social praxis.

My overall aim is to consider, in a Lacanian sense, how the distance photography produces from 'what it shows' to 'that which is,' is formed. Or, to restate the question: how can the gap that creates an opening in a reality – a reality from which photography is distanced – result from the reality in which it is situated? This question speaks to the *becoming of photography,* or how photography becomes photography.[76] As I have realised, this is not

---

[76] As I hope will become clear, I use the term 'becoming of photography' as shorthand for appropriation of the terms that Marx himself has used. Namely as he wrote in the preparatory text *Grundrisse*: the *general abstract determinants* of photography, the

well served by Deleuzian metaphysical ideas of *becoming* when these are mapped onto the fundamentally material accounts of practice articulated by participants in my research. Therefore, I make materialist analysis, adopting Marx's approach, but arriving at an ontological account of the *becoming* of photography. This process of *becoming* is, I shall argue, the 'subject of photography.' Thus in this chapter, I explain how photography is not adequately understood when it is considered to be about depicting landscapes, faces, sunsets and other things found in the world. Instead, photography serves a different purpose – one conveying concepts that lie beyond or are inexpressible through representation. In this chapter I set out how photography can be understood as the subject of itself. This locates photography as a radical force of expression, encompassing not only the picturing of things but crucially the logic that makes images possible.

There is a tendency to engage with photographs by expressing something about them, most often by describing them and then assigning some form of affective response. This usually comes as expressions such as *"I like it," "It's the kind of image I love," "It reminds me of . . ."* etc. However, these transcendental responses overlook the photograph as an object of study in itself and consequently produce a limited character of photography dominated by visual representation. As the primary constitution of the visual world, I claim photography offers an understanding into the paradoxical nature of all forms of representation. Furthermore, I suggest one often-overlooked quality of photography is how its *failure to fully grasp* the thing it represents is representative of how reality is in itself not fully graspable. But what remains when we distil from photography the visual, what happens when we abstract the diverse subject matter of every image from image in itself?

---

categories that make up its structure and the *interellation* between these things (Marx cited in Harvey, 2010: 10).

4.2. Use-value, exchange-value and labour; using Marx to understand photography

In order to abstract the diversity and range of commodities Marx identified their dual character as 'use-value' and 'exchange-value,' (1991/1887). Both represent a 'value form' which is attached to the commodity. Use-value represents the usefulness of the commodity, while exchange-value expresses what the commodity can be traded for. For example, computers share a common 'use-value' but this is not expressed equitably into what they cost to buy: their exchange-value. Therefore, some computers fulfil the same use but cost more than others. Marx's conclusion is that what commodities share is the 'socially necessary' human labour taken to produce them (1991/1887: 15-18) and their exchange value represents the labour embodied into them.

Use-value exists as an absolute property. In this way a photograph can be deemed to be useful or not useful for a particular purpose. Exchange-value is relative to factors expressed in a space in constant motion and the wider context of the exchange of commodities. Hence, photographs may be exchanged or shared relative to the other photographs we take. Finally, the value-form is relational to the "evolving space-time" (Harvey, 2010: 37) of the global market. Most obviously social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter embody the current relational nature of global image exchange. From this we may sketch out a conclusion, following Harvey's (2010) own geographical arguments, that the dialectical relationship of absolute, relative and relational processes also describes the dynamics of photography. And as Harvey argues, relational space-time is not constant but variable. Therefore, the dynamics of the process are subject to the impact of other factors on the 'global market.' In photography's case, as technology or even world events speed-up the market demand for images, consequently the overall dialectical relationship is altered. But how can we use and develop Marx's conceptual apparatus to consider further the 'becoming of photography?'

As briefly outlined above, my argument begins from a set of associated assumptions based upon Marx's understanding of how commodities are created. Firstly, use-value: photographic images can have differing use-values, such that not all photographs are equally useful. Use-value may be determined by what photographic images show visually, who made them and where they are distributed or where they are seen. The usefulness of photography is manifested partly in the photographs it produces. My second assumption takes the notion of exchange-value and adapts it as an indicator of interaction and response rather than the exchange of money. While some photographs are exchanged for money and some photographic activity is a commercial undertaking, today, a significant amount of photography is not obviously or directly exchanged for monetary gain. I argue the exchange-value of images is an expression of a different kind of value, one largely determined by social interactions. Thirdly and finally, following Marx, I assume the labour embodied into photography is not proportional to labour time. In this assumption, photography exemplifies the general difficulties of taking Marx's notion of labour at face value. The time it takes to produce an image can potentially be measured in fractions of a second. Therefore, equating the labour cost to production time would not be logical. Addressing this issue in *Capital*, Marx identified two forms of labour: abstract and concrete. Both of these are "congealed" in commodities (Marx, 1991/1887: 29). Concrete labour is the time taken to produce a commodity (or in this case an image) and it is directly connected to its use-value. Whereas, abstract labour is how the exchange-value of a commodity is created. A precise definition of abstract labour is difficult to define in *Capital*, with Harvey (2010) explaining it as an abstract notion and Jameson suggesting that from abstraction it appears to also become "a thing in its own right" (2011: 25).[77] Although, Jameson adds that this "figural reification" (2011: 25)

---

[77] Stanek suggests concrete "labor produces the use value of a commodity, while its exchange value is determined by the amount of abstract labor socially necessary for its production" (2008: 70). But this again, fails to identify what abstract actually labour is. It is possible to understand what concrete labour is and when we are participating in it but Stanek's explanation does not provide an explanation for when we are undertaking abstract labour. Harvey has suggested the two forms are entwined since concrete labour does not occur in one part of the factory while abstract labour goes on in another.

is also fundamentally part of the structure of capitalism itself. The key point being that the notion of labour is crucial to the setting of exchange-value. It is also how a particular subjectivity is defined through Marx: the subject of labour forces. And we can conclude the importance of Marx's analysis was identifying exactly how abstract labour[78] is embedded into commodities. For photography, abstract labour creates a subject who photographs. But this is not only those who go out and take photographs or those who look at photographs. Photographic subjectivity is also a structuring condition of society in general.

How do these assumptions of use-value, exchange-value and labour help determine anything new about photography? Firstly, they provide a distinct way to situate photography within the late capitalist system by helping to consider a concept of abstract labour as one of photography's defining notions. Investigating labour further via photography creates a circular enquiry through the labour of production (making), of distribution (sharing) and of analysis (looking). These are the foundations of a particular photographic subjectivity – a subject always in the process of making, sharing and looking. In photography, most obviously, it is possible to identify aspects of the concrete labour of production – this is usually fetishized through equipment and technique and was a popular topic with research participants. However, my study showed that even the most technically demanding photographs were not always considered by participants to be the most interesting or 'exchangeable.' Therefore it is possible to conclude that exchange-value is not determined by concrete labour. However, this appears to return us to focusing on the visual. If the most technically perfect images have a limited value form then surely the differential is in what they depict. Photographs are mainly used in order to show something; they are

---

[78] Marx described the *two-fold character of labour* – abstract and concrete – as being the best part of *Capital* (Callinicos, 1983: 107). The concern for Marx was not the concrete labour involved in, for example, baking bread or making cars, but the form of labour itself and he asked why commodities were made "for the market rather than as products for direct use as in previous societies" (Callinicos, 1983: 107).

exchanged or shared precisely because of what they are photographs of. But what can be deduced from this is that they provide some form of visual pleasure. Although, clearly some photographs may not show scenes that we might immediately associate with pleasure. Nevertheless, a form of satisfaction or pleasure is derived from looking at photographs (Burgin, 1982: 152) and making photographs. Therefore, a photograph is representative not only of abstract labour and production *but also of kind of pleasure*.

4.3. Abstracting photography into labour and pleasure

By focusing on abstract labour and abstract pleasure we can begin to think about why there are photographs. This is not to explain why they exist, merely to pose a question in regard to the function of their existence. Through Marx, it is possible to state that when producing images abstract labour and abstract pleasure exerts a force through photography. I develop this later, but what is important to note at this point, is how we can use this to move my analysis *away* from what photographs visually show. Since, no matter what a photograph depicts, it is always a *representative* of the abstract forces of labour and pleasure. This can be put in slightly different terms, in order to draw a similar conclusion: photographs are taken as successful representations because they do not show us they are photographs. Such that the labour of production, distribution and analysis is largely absent from the substance of the image itself. Moreover, when using theories of representation as the tool to understand what photographs show, we risk excluding enquiry into the structure and shaping of digital images as fragmented, incomplete and processual forces. To be clear, this is not conveniently ignoring the cultural/political approaches to photography of Sekula, Burgin et al that emerged in the 1970s. However, these accounts still took their foundation and determination from a predominantly modernist view that privileged and critiqued representation from the position of what the surface of images showed.

The wider significance of my own position is that, at some level, if theories about photography are only concerned with what the visual image depicts,

then they fail to provide a rich and full account of what photography is, how it *becomes photography* or how it functions or the abstract determinants that make it possible. Even Burgin has suggested looking too long at a photograph invited a degree of frustration (1982: 152). I take Burgin's claim not only as critique of the deception of monocular perspective but also an indication of how the object of photographic study is limited when it is confined to only what images show visually. It is also worth expressing again, as Golding (2012: 02) has stated, the re-staging of representation as an "immersive economy" (2012: 02) may no longer prefigure or be produced by the image. The refutation of representation comes about due to representation's own inadequate account of multiple, disjointed, fragmented and disrupted contemporary states of being. Golding's position is not only a critique of representation (rather than representations themselves) but also the construction of a new mode of thought configured for the Twenty-first Century.

4.4. Digital abstraction

The significant technological change for photography in the closing years of the Twentieth Century and now within the Twenty-first is its digital form. There is, then, a further abstraction of photography occurring when considering it as a digital medium. When Batchen explains photography as becoming "one small part of the voracious data economy that characterizes contemporary capitalist life" (2000: 179), he reduces it to sequences of digital data. Photography's data is usually materialised as coherent and visually recognizable forms, via software, but it can equally remain as raw digital information.[79] Taking digital data as the substance of photography it is possible to re-think use-value along with its relationship to the visual. In their un-processed form digital images may appear to have no discernable use. Use-value only manifests itself once data has been rendered into something visually sense making. However, I argue, in certain circumstances, use-

---

[79] An analogue example would be exposed but unprocessed film that contains the potential to be image.

value can also be linked to the volume of data: such that quantity becomes a measure of use.[80] By taking this approach the overall volume of images amends individual images with a different use. An example of this would be Microsoft's 'Photosynth,' an application which relies on large numbers of user-generated photographs to create 3D models. Each individual photograph is part of a larger 'synthesis' making up a 3D model. In this structure there is no emphasis on any individual image. Therefore, the success of 'Photosynth' is contingent upon the volume of information and essentially governed firstly by the amount of data not its visual quality. Another example, of the dominance of data is when search engine results are narrowed by image size or by format and file type. In this case, data defines the results returned rather than the visual content of images. What images are presented is defined by specific qualities of data. In this way, images are placed into use not because of what they show but specifically because of their data properties. Similarly, when a 'popular' image – one that has been 'liked' or 'up-voted' – is elevated or promoted via algorithms written into social media applications such as Instagram or Facebook, although the visual content may instigate initial user interaction, the responses and how the software algorithms privilege 'popular' images are driven by metadata representative of growing popularity.

Therefore, the way images are put into use means the logic of use-value and exchange-value does not always have to depend on what images visually show. Instead, as these examples show, there is a correlation with abstract data and to specific kinds of interactions within software. In this sense, images acquire a use-value because of data not linked specifically with anything visual. Images become part of a larger composite, with their specificity merged with other similar images or they become more popular because they have been 'liked' or 'up-voted.' They may even be revealed in a search because they have been selected by an algorithm as having a

---

[80] In '*The Digital Image in Photographic Culture*' (2013) Rubinstein and Sluis take a slightly different approach linking abundance directly to pleasure by suggesting pornography thrives on plenitude (2013: 30).

matching format of data which correlates to a set of filters. Ultimately, use-value and exchange-value are connected to how these particular images are used and shared across a network as a result of algorithmic, non-human, labour and interactions.

Interactions may be governed by the logic of computer algorithms but algorithms themselves may also have gained a particular status of their own. As Parisi suggests, algorithms are not computer instructions, rather they are agents, "performing entities" (2013: ix) able to manipulate, form, assess and create data. Thus they are the underlying structure shaping daily interactions, transmissions and the "digital spatiotemporalities" (2013: ix) of society.

To be clear, there is no suggestion that the visual is not a component of these processes. Nevertheless, there is a conflation of value-form, exchange-value and use-value, wherein photographs are experienced by a relationship of use and exchange. In this sense, photographs are used in order to be exchanged but use and exchange appears to mask real social relations, especially when our interactions are governed by the agency of algorithms. In this way images not only stand in for the objects they depict but they are also mediate in place of real interactions.

4.5. Labour as a response to exchange and use

While this thesis does not present a detailed account of the amalgam of different values, it does propose one further reconfiguration in regard to an understanding of abstract labour. Photography provides a model for understanding labour, not as the "congealed" substance within commodities, but as the response to the force of exchange and use-value described above. What this suggests is when data-as-image becomes embedded in a process of interaction and promotion, abstract labour should be understood as a response or compulsion to produce or contribute 'more.' There is a continuous desire, created by use and exchange, to create more, many more of the same images. Abstract labour then becomes linked not only to

production but also to what might crudely be termed a "libidinal economy" (Lyotard, 1993), an economic system of desire.

Marx's *Capital* describes the movement of value and commodities through a boundless spiral of ever-expanding reproduction. In his analysis the system appears to operate as a continuous, coherent and immanent flow.[81] This 'flow of immanence' is a mode of *becoming,* fundamental to the overall process and to any value and commodity movement. As Marx describes, within this process there is a metamorphic conversion in which forms undergo continuous and perpetual change (1887/1991:71) (at its simplest: value is represented by money, money is exchanged for commodities, commodities are created by labour and the investment of money). It is in the manifestation of late capitalism, where labour undergoes a change as it oscillates between production and pleasure. And photography expresses this change perfectly when we consider the process of image production as part of a wider circulation of image-as-data.

4.6. The motivation to photograph

From interviews conducted throughout this research I identified at least two different motivations for taking photographs. As one participant said, *"I can't tell you the actual reason I take photographs. I enjoy looking at the end result. Sometimes . . . As a person I like to invoke a reaction in people. I like to rub people up the wrong way all the time. With my pictures, I like to get a reaction"* (Anonymous Research Participant). But as they added, *"I used to take photographs purely to assist me with my roofing business, so I didn't have to climb up a ladder!"* (Anonymous Research Participant). While this quote sets out two specific activities: 'photography for pleasure' and 'photography for work,' overall I observed a less clear distinction between these two processes. This suggested that photography was not only

---

[81] At its most elemental, the structure of consumerist capitalism is inconsistent with a split or divided subject as conceptualised elsewhere in this thesis, since this requires a break or divide that appears in the form of a fundamental miscommunication.

undertaken for pleasure but also an obligation, a pressure, almost a demand to work. This is indicated in the following quote, *"My eldest daughter is a teenager on holiday at the moment. When I went on my first holiday I bought my postcards from the shop, sent it to my mum and she didn't get it until after I got home. With my eldest daughter she's sent photos every step of the way. Which is of their suitcases before they go, pictures of them getting in the car, the plane. It's just a complete visual experience"* (Anonymous Research Participant). This conversation described the way photographing everything had become a duty or requirement and as such it was simultaneously a form of both pleasure and work.

Unsurprisingly, in relation to what participants considered they were doing when they took photographs, there were distinct approaches to practice. One approach, which might best be described as documentation, was considered to be the central reason for taking photographs. Further discussion around this suggested its purpose was not always clear, but the aim was for images to be viewed later as a reminder or most often as an aid to memory. Aligned to this was how photography was used as a confirmation of having been somewhere or having seen something. This was strongly linked to taking photographs on holidays or trips. Another approach to practice was focused on creativity, where images were mainly defined by their aesthetics and were dominated by largely familiar subject matter such as sunsets, abstract shapes and close-ups etc. This approach was aligned with seeing photography as an art practice and with a particular understanding of art dominated by the visually picturesque. One different approach from the above was when photography was used to experiment with photography itself. In this context images were taken – often with little regard to their subject matter – in order to see what the camera could do. This approach saw photography and its equipment as a means and end in itself. Frequently experimental, this approach was made more accessible by digital technologies and the close to zero cost of producing images.

4.7.   In summary

In summary of my points so far, I have taken Marx's concepts of value to express the abstract properties of photography. Following Harvey's interpretation of Marx, I claimed the dialectical relationship of absolute (use-value), relative (exchange-value) and relational (value-form) processes describe the dynamics of photography. Since photography has different uses and photographs differing exchange-values (how they are interacted with) what is common to photography is abstract and concrete labour. Therefore photography is a process embodying differing amounts of labour: of production (making), of distribution (sharing) and of analysis (looking). The value-form – the use or exchange value of photographs - represents the abstract labour within photography. This then constructs a photographic subjectivity in the form of a subject who is always in the process of making, sharing and looking. Having set out a relatively traditional Marxist analysis of photography, I attach the notion of pleasure to labour. This is to position my theory of photography away from being about pictures of things or objects or people in the world, to being about the structure created by two forces. Therefore, all photography is representative of abstract labour and pleasure. However, I argue, the labour of production, distribution and analysis is largely absent from the substance of the image itself, which is why photographs appear as successful representations. Therefore, any progressive theory of photography needs to re-stage itself by refuting the ground of representation since it is inadequate to account for multiple, fragmented and disrupted contemporary states of being. I then outlined how in the context of the network, interactions mask real social relations and use-value and exchange-value may also represent non-human labour of algorithmic operations. Finally, I described the reasons participants gave for taking photographs. These observations indicated how, concealed from the visual, are abstract forces of photography that undergo changes which oscillate between both production and pleasure.

Building and developing on the arguments summarised above I will now formulate the *becoming of photography,* paying specific attention to how

experiences become valued, how labour and enjoyment merge further and how photography appears as a socially useful force. I then set out a theory as to why photography, as a mediating object, is responsible for its own proliferation.

4.8.   What do images do?

There is a temptation to particularise photography by subject matter and in this way construct a defined idea of what an image is. However, I claim this is a false unification. To define images by a particular genre is not useful to understanding what they do or why they are formed. When examined in terms of production, exchange, movement and circulation, images have no single definitive agency instead they are constitutive of a multi-agential force. What images do and what value they have extends beyond the categories used to define what they show. How then might they be understood as being socially useful? As with Marx's analysis of commodity exchange, where the creation of need is critical, there is a demand for images from websites such as Facebook, Twitter and the Internet in general. In this context the labour expended on photography has an apparently socially useful value. And it is in these terms that photography fulfils a particular human need. In order to formulate the *becoming of photography* in an abstract sense it is necessary to abstract what photography does. For the purposes of clarity, I understand photography as being a process responsible for the transformation of experiences. Rather than the philosophical term 'event' (Žižek, 2014b; Badiou, 2005) as used elsewhere in this thesis, I use the word 'experience' because events are recognized reflexively in their opening up of truth (Badiou, 2005: xii). In this sense, the transformative experience, described as an abstraction of photography, can only retroactively be part of an event. I claim the structuring of experience, through photography, does not deliver a form of truth. Instead, photography is a way to measure the value of experience, wherein photographs add a value to experience. As a consequence experiences change, they acquire a new value through their being represented. It then follows that within a society dominated by images,

photography appears as a socially necessary or useful activity, adding a surplus value into experiences.

4.9.   The becoming of photography

In formulating a definition of photography I suggest it is understood as 'a process through which an experience is mediated into a subject that will then be imaged.' From this formulation the cycle of a *becoming photography* begins with a metamorphosis – a change in form from *experience* to *representation* – this is followed by a process of exchange manifesting in new experiences of looking at images. This circulation of experience follows Marx's commodity-money-commodity cycle. This time, however it is translated as experience-image-experience or subject-image-subject, wherein image becomes, like money, the mediating object. As with the expression of late capitalism the formula as easily moves toward image-subject-image in which mediation becomes an end-in-itself, resulting in an endless replication of image-qua-image. In this way, the human *need to create* is used as the motivator for the labour and production of more images. And ultimately, the pleasure of exchange is never fully satisfied when there is always another image to reflect on and always more work to be made.

The conflation of work and play yields an indistinct boundary between creative labour and production and is bound to change the notion of value. And where more clearly is this displayed than how digital photography is used in contemporary society? As I have stated photography and images are central to websites such as Instagram, Flickr and Facebook. With averages of per day of 350 million photographs (Smith, 2013) uploaded to Facebook, 95 million photographs (Instagram, 2017) uploaded to Instagram and 1 million photographs (Etherington, 2014) uploaded to Flickr, there can be little doubt we are producing and sharing a lot of photographs. As Marx (1887/1991) established, value is a social relation and for these kinds of photographs their value is fundamentally immaterial but it nevertheless it remains objective. This unconstrained production of images and their

continuous exchange is the constitutive and irreducible force of Twenty-first Century photography.

The analysis Marx undertook was grounded in the industrial production of commodities which would increasingly be made in factories. In contrast, late capitalism is determined by an interconnected network where information flows between nodes (Castells, 2010: 501). Such networks are fundamentally open structures, able to expand, develop and adapt endlessly. Their colonisation means that for "the first time in history, the capitalist mode of production shapes social relationships over the entire planet" (Ibid: 502). And as Harvey has suggested in relation to Marx, "material circumstances determine consciousness" (Harvey, 2010: 113) therefore the material circumstances of our life – the global system we function within – largely determines how we think and behave. Importantly, when social relations alter then technology must change and equally as technology develops our social relations adjust (2010: 117). In these terms photography is one such altered technology and one which has shaped new social relations, new activities and new distractions.

In the relationship connecting abstract labour and abstract enjoyment with photography, there are two parallel positions to be outlined. Each gives a different perspective on the *becoming of photography*. In our usual understanding of the basic constitution of photography we might say an experience gains a particular form of value – we can call this photographic value - when it is photographed and subsequently when the photograph of the experience is shared. Photography mediates experience into image and image then becomes a mediated experience of the original experience. The world becomes photographic in its interconnected and fundamentally social relationships, wherein symbolic reality is interpellated by a combination of both photographic labour and photographic enjoyment. Within this process forces, such as affective responses to visual content, usually dominate. The dominance of the visual has resulted in it taking on the role of being the "universal equivalent" (Marx, 1887/1991: 44), against which images tend to

be measured. As it is used in *Capital*, universal equivalence can be understood here as the character photographs express. In the above outline, photography is a tool to represent, to help remember and to give clarity to the world. But as I have stated earlier the sense in which the world is not 'fully graspable' is implicitly neglected when photography focuses itself on what it visually shows, and when it attests, primarily, to creating a vantage point and to framing. In this largely uncontroversial way of thinking, abstract labour and abstract enjoyment are a value measure contained within photography understood as a commodity.

On the other hand, we can take photography – the representative of a form of abstract labour and abstract enjoyment – as being socially necessary only because there is a demand for images. This demand emanates from digital social networks. However, I claim abstract labour and abstract enjoyment, in this understanding, are not the measure of photography as commodity but experience as commodity.[82] The paradox is that photography becomes the cultural material overlaying itself onto how we encounter experiences on a daily basis. In this sense, the mediation of experience into image is not dependent on a reality that waits, externally, to be made into a photograph. Instead the demand for image 'in itself' creates a continuous and ultimately unsatisfied compulsion to produce and enjoy image for its own purpose: image for image. The value created by abstract labour and abstract enjoyment cannot then be measured in the image itself, in how we understand photography, since in this formulation image is no longer the commodity but takes the place of money, and is situated in-between reality. Value is therefore a property of the experience to be mediated and it is measured by abstract labour and abstract enjoyment and its intermediary is photography.

---

[82] The commodification of experience was discussed by Harvey (2016) in which he suggested experiences were a form of commodity that speeded up the cycle of capital. Unlike goods, experiences expire quickly and therefore need to be replaced quickly. The consequence of this is that the speed of capital is increased without necessarily needing to create more commodities.

4.10. Defining the surplus

A printed black and white photograph might be understood as *more* than shades of tone printed onto paper. It is in this way, we might claim such an image is a photograph because it has a set of properties – it freezes time, it portrays objects, or people or places (Wells, 2010: 01) – but we may also invert this and say any image, which freezes time, portrays objects, people or places, does this because they are photographs. What are considered to be photographs happen not because of the properties that enable them to be identified as such, but because there is something *more* than a photograph in a photograph.[83] Surplus in both labour and enjoyment takes the form of something produced in these activities, which is *more* than labour and *more* than enjoyment. In both labour and enjoyment what is left over, or surplus, is discernible and describable through photography and in a photograph itself. Where the value of a photograph is related directly to something that is other than itself then what the image refers to has a value, which is reflexively determined (Marx in Žižek, 1989: 20; Žižek, 2006: 106). Reflecting on this, we can state that what is depicted in a photograph helps creates a value for the image made of it. We might then ask what is it in this external thing that is creating a demand for a photograph and is the value of this thing in any way related to it ever becoming a photograph? Again, here is a determination of a particular reality – when a surplus creates a demand for the labour and enjoyment of photography – which then produces a value. The conclusion here is that reality becomes photographed only when it already contains something additional that is recognised as being potentially photographic.

Nevertheless, there is no deadlock when photographs can only be determined to be photographs because they are not the reality they depict and yet external reality contains *within it* something potentially photographic. Instead, I argue the photographic is a surplus of experienced reality,

---

[83] Zizek makes a similar argument for the surplus in anti-Semitism, in which there is more "Jew in Jew" (1989: 107).

structurally limited by the symbolic but that becomes unlimited by being placed within a network. Within the network, images hide their symbolic determination through their over use – in the guise of the repetitions of sunsets, selfies and Selena Gomez [84] – such that the representation becomes the very thing we experience. Simultaneously, the returning kernel of the Real, blinds us to its own reappearance, maintaining its own distance from any symbolic equivalence. Therefore, we cannot know photographs are *real representations,* instead they are real and they are representational independently. I argue the endless streams of photographs are a response to an impossible and radical unknowability of experienced reality. But as stated, any attempt at unmasking reality is a false goal, toward examining what lies behind the manifest content of the symbolic. Instead, following Freud, what needs to be addressed is why the symbolic exists in the form it does.

Photographic symbolic structuring, when separated from any notion of depiction, allows for the properties or character of photography to be understood. This is in contrast to standard, representational positions of photographic theory, which fail to accomplish more than being a process for confronting the surface of images. More importantly, understanding the structuring forces of photography we can reveal a subject interpellated through both labour and enjoyment. A way of uncovering this subject is to abstract - or to use a term Marx (1991/1887) himself uses - to *unfold* photography as I have been doing throughout this chapter.

As stated elsewhere in this thesis, there is a drive to take photographs that can be linked to well understood and familiar reasons, such as memory, documenting, creativity, etc. Primarily these are centred upon what photographs show: the image they make for us to see and notions of a visual truth. Producing objects of representation is, I suggest, the result of labour and enjoyment operating effectively together. This was expressed by

---

[84] The image of Selena Gomez was rated as the most popular Instagram image of all time in 2016 (Delbyck, 2016).

participants throughout my research, when they described their reasons for taking photographs: they took photographs because they enjoyed taking them and it was not only pleasurable but at times also challenging *work*. In photography, in making images and looking at images, work and pleasure become confused, even difficult to separate.

When labour and enjoyment come together in photography they produce a complex, non-binary and uncertain subject. As Žižek has noted, work and enjoyment coincide within late capitalist subjectivity (2016: 488) and he suggests the mundane YouTube videos of people doing everyday things such as 'unboxing' or chores such cleaning their cars, are an example of the escape from "nervous hyperactivity" (2016: 488). The production of repetitive, duplicate images experienced in the form of 'ubiquitous photography' is also a way of distracting from the otherwise "frantic daily rhythms" (2016: 488) of late capitalist social relations. What this indicates is a reality shaped not only from representation but also from essentially distracting processes. Laruelle develops an argument in which he states that what we take to be a *photograph of something* is an "economy of representation" (2011: 51) in which there are no distinctions between what is shown since everything belongs to representation itself. He continues, that in rendering indiscernible any distinctions outside of representation photography is not a supplement to perception but a radical critique of it (2011: 51). Building from this, I suggest, when participants searched to articulate the '*some thing*' that motivated their photography, this thing manifests itself as surplus labour and enjoyment, which creates a non-visual, force that transcends or critiques representation. This hidden force takes on a different intentionality from being the recorder of things in that photography becomes a distraction or a rhythm or an event in itself. It is not a discrete object but a process of relational forces, not unlike the Capital Marx describes.

The very possibility of image-qua-image happens only when social relations (most obviously exampled by a digital network of interconnected images) are

determined in a particular way. This means photography is not a disconnected object to be interrogated or examined in isolation only for what it shows us. Photography is a propagating, distributing, self-replicating process, which is simultaneously both visual and non-visual, material and non-material. Not only does it show us the world it also configures responses and behaviours within the world. But as I have stated, the purpose of this section is not to examine methods of engagement with the truth behind the visual but to contribute into a different explanation of photography. Crucially, I argue, paying attention to the visual acts as an obstacle to realising other engagements with what photography does. Thus I claim photography is a multidimensional object of study that opens up an experiential way of thinking about the world.

At this point, the dialectical nature of my argument should be relatively clear. Simply put, photography is both a representational object and a non-representational force. However, the implication of the static nature of representational objects and the focus on the visual has the effect of photography appearing to be fixed. Of course, cultural contexts and meanings alter what photographs show us but the object itself remains unchanged. Introducing the notion of non-representational forces, photography then becomes much more experiential and this helps explicitly expose its properties as part of a process.[85]

There is a final concluding point concerning the dialectical thinking of representation and non-representation. The visual masks what is happening beneath the surface of photographic appearances; while we work and enjoy making images to look at, the pre-occupation with the symbolic hides how images, despite their diversity of content, share some other common purpose. In the recording and documenting of our lives they are also, as I have argued, fundamental expressions of labour and enjoyment. Again, this

---

[85] This *in motion* nature of photography directly relates back to Marx's own use of the dialectical method whereby Capital exists and is described as a process not a static thing (Harvey, 2010: 12).

may be shown when we photograph a particular moment and it becomes a representation of happiness. But labour and enjoyment are also expressed in an abstract sense when, for example, we share, interact and respond to the same images. In *It Has Not Been – It Is. The Signaletic Transformation of Photography* (2016), Sandbye formulates a parallel conclusion, describing photography as "process, presence, and bodily 'affect'" (2016: 105). As with my own research, Sandbye's intention is to introduce new ideas to photographic theory and thus offers insights in to the articulation of "sensations and new emotional, as well as conceptual, paradigms and epistemologies" (2016: 100). The difference in approach is that Sandbye's focus is largely on the visual. Therefore, although the direction of travel is similar to my own, the analysis tends to take a more representational stance. Crucially, where Sandbye sets out the "presentation of the photographic construction of presence" (2016: 107) via the visual, I argue there is a *construction of presence* rooted in the visual and non-visual structure of photographs. Specifically, this suggests an interpellation, or calling into presence of a photographic subjectivity through both visual and non-visual means. A rudimentary example of this is when swiping through images on a mobile device we become activated and entwined in photography's relational structure. Our demand for there to be another image after every swipe creates two imbricated cycles: one in which images are made to supply our demands and the other where we swipe continuously in order satisfy a curious desire. Clearly, there are other complex processes at work here, for example, the interactions of databases and other users. This was observed throughout my research whereby participants suggested photography had a two-part structure: it both satisfied and demanded.

If photography operates at an intersection of two forces – of labour and enjoyment – undefined by either one or the other, oscillating between them, how might we understand an apparent surplus of both? This is experienced when, on a representational level, a surplus escapes a photographic image ultimately resulting in a sense of lack and desire to repeat the search for that which has escaped. As the participants expressed, there is a form of

enjoyment at working with photography in order to find '*some thing.*' Although, at times it was linked to frustration: *" . . . increasingly I became dissatisfied with the photographs because they didn't capture the emotion and the scale of the landscape I was walking in"* (Anonymous Research Participant). It also motivated a particular subjectivity: *"I've come to a point where I have a better camera and I wanted to learn how to use it. For me it's been a completely creative, cathartic process that has brought me full circle back to my former creative self"* (Anonymous Research Participant). This process is, fundamentally, how interpellation operates. Although photography is unable to absolutely resolve the searching for 'some thing,' its failure necessitates a form of re-invested additional action in itself. What is created is a responsive photographic behaviour, which requires acting *as if* photography can at some point fulfil what is lacking. In this sense, photographic actors, with their repetitive actions – photographing their food or themselves or their cats – are inscribed into a normal process of behaviour.

4.11. Labour and enjoyment as a non-representational process

But how are labour and enjoyment part of the non-representational process of photography? A common observation from the research was how large numbers of photographs are taken but never looked at. These digital files are downloaded from cameras and stored on hard drives but then never opened. They remain forever as code, as data objects: never to be materialised by software into anything resembling the visual. In this way, they fail to exert the forces associated with the representation of reality. Images in code form have no sense of composition, no logic of framing or of depth of field or any other elements associated with photography. Their surfaces cannot be read: they are neither a window onto the world nor a mirror held up to the world. Instead, these unrealised digital images express another potentiality. They are quite literally part of photography's surplus and inevitably within them labour and enjoyment are elided. I argue, the shift they indicate is part of the wider move from making, manufacturing, buying and selling – the activities of mercantile capitalism – to the 'liking,' 'scrolling,'

'swiping' and 'status updates' of late capitalist subjectivity. Which is to say we are no longer engaged in labour to produce things in the traditional sense, instead we work to show our enjoyment, to indicate our mood and to declare our interests. These unseen digital files are only one aspect of this process. But they are the crudest form of de-materialised image, requiring algorithms and software to actualise them.

The de-materialised digital image is an abstraction from photography, and while all images are at some point de-materialised, these leftover images are especially indicative of the underlying structures of digital photography. In this state they point directly toward photography's own conditions of production and thereby threatening photography's representational paradigm (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013: 25). But they are also an expression of surplus labour and enjoyment that is left as an unrealised but ultimately passive force.

We should consider what value these images have when they are made and kept but ultimately remain in the form of data. Žižek offers one possible answer when he writes of "interpassivity" (1997/2008: 144) as the other side of interactivity. In this state, the object takes away any subjective reaction. When images are kept with a possibility of them being viewed later, the awareness that they are kept provides a kind of satisfaction, in which the computer is understood as looking at the images on our behalf.[86] Žižek develops interpassivity as a form of enjoying through the other. However, it is equally indicative of the overwhelming mediation of experience. This over-saturation of representations means we can only respond to them by a further proxy. This means we are ultimately forced to distance ourselves because we cannot be confronted by the scale of the task of having a direct response to each one.

---

[86] Here I have modified and updated Žižek's argument from *The Plague of Fantasies* (2008/1997: 145) in which he suggests films recorded on a VCR are stored for viewing. The VCR in a way watches the movies in place of them being watched in reality. The VCR is the 'big Other,' of symbolic registration.

Implicit in this is how excess images diminish all image value by an inherent over supply. There are, quite simply, more images than we have time to look at. This was highlighted in conversations during the research where claims such as *"I have so many images I don't know what to do with them"* (Anonymous Research Participant) would suggest a photographic gridlock. But there is another possible conclusion; these images are also the effect of a voracious desire to photograph and share our day-to-day experiences. In these vast quantities, they can be considered as the residues of a late-capitalist discourse which motivates a subject who passes over and interacts with so many information flows but may be barely conscious of its detail. In this analysis, the volume of image data represents new modes of being and behaviour. In a similar fashion, the 'likes' an image attracts, the Tinder matches achieved, the re-Tweets that propagate the Internet are all an accumulation of different kinds of data interactions. These shape responses and behaviours. The significance for subjectivity is how it moves from image itself to abstracted behaviours and processes. In the extreme, it no longer matters what we see, intuit or interact with, only that we do so – directly, or as Žižek suggests, via a proxy. This shift from the binds of representation sets up questions as to the veracity of subjectivity and experience. Such that within representation the subject is established as a "rational being capable of objectifying the world" (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2013: 26) and the knowable world is limited only to a form of rational representation. Non-representational thinking provides new states of being not defined by the binary of image and object. Instead the knowable world is unlimited by the flows of image, image, image.

Increasingly, throughout my research, the overload and fatigue of the visual seemed indicative of a point of crisis. With the overwhelming volume and scope for taking photographs, for capturing every event, acting as a mask over events themselves. Since almost all situations can become *literally* the subject of photography, then photography itself appears endless and abundant. This is especially the case in the context of the networked image, when we cannot precisely point to where the image is located and nor can

we determine how many versions of it there are. This profusion of images is a direct consequence of the technical apparatus of photography resulting in digital images being fundamentally cheap and easy to produce and store. Rubinstein and Sluis suggest, images are no longer "pre-given but must be extracted out" (2013: 32) of the mass of data on the network. This then alters the connection of image as 'a giver of meaning' to image as 'the establisher of an audience.' Their argument claims images make a particular subject. Furthermore, they suggest the apparatus is not mastered by a technically informed subject: rather technology produces a particular kind of subjectivity. Whereas in the industrial age a factory was a separate location in which work was undertaken and components were put together, in the information age the technology forming the network has created a space in which we not only interact but it is also the means by which our interactions are determined.

4.12. Summary

In this chapter I have unfolded an abstraction of photography by paying close attention to the forces of labour, enjoyment and the manifestation of forms of value through them. I have reiterated my claims for photography to be understood not only by representation but also as a paradoxical reflexive commodity form, one that mediates experience and conveys values forms. Simultaneously it is also the thing that is experienced, exchanged and shared. As images proliferate into every aspect of our lives they shape a representational subjectivity as well as a subject of processual production and consumption. While I only touched upon the wider user base of digital photography, referring mainly to the participants in the research, it should be noted that photography is the manifestation of users who claim to control a *means of cultural production.* The extent to which they exert control has not been examined here, but the creation of "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1986: 242) is shown and measured by the interactions and connections subsequently formed.[87]

---

[87] For a different but detailed analysis on this topic in terms of Instagram use, see "Themes, Feeds, Sequences, Branding, Faces, Bodies" (Manovich, 2016).

Any new engagement with photographic theory needs to consider two hidden properties in photography. The first which is largely familiar, is the disconnection masked by the symbolic, of the sign and its signified, while the other is the connection between image and image; between interaction and real social relation; between work and pleasure. From this we can formulate how photography is limited if we consider it as a way to simply create texts to be deciphered. Instead, photography structures a contemporary subjectivity within late capitalism that is multiple, simultaneous and undecidable. A subjectivity configured as an interconnected human and post-human repeating process.

At the beginning of this chapter I considered the gap distancing 'what is' and 'what is shown.' While representations indicate reality, they do so from within the reality they indicate. Again, this paradoxical problem is one I have indicated throughout this thesis and framed parallel questions to address it. This is similar to when we use words to describe the inadequacy of words themselves. I suggest photography's purpose is to indicate such a gap. And perhaps, going further, photography insertion into the symbolic is how it reveals how curiously un-photographic the world is. And this is potentially the most radical thing photography can do, not to be complicit with a world as image but to expose the unavoidable misrecognitions and delusions of the visible.

From this perspective photography is not a tool for keeping memories or to document or to create objects that resemble things in the world. Through the recursive logic of the digitally infinite, it offers a means to image life as processual rather than as a subject of symbolic representation. While we have chosen to ignore this facet, photography is fundamentally the expression of a moving, flexibly, creative force of production. However, in political terms, we need to confront the invisible exploitation enabled by a seemingly unrestricted enjoyment and endless distractions (of more and more images) embodied in creative, flexible and mobile forms of labour. It is

this new configuration for society that inevitably ushers a "creativity, mobility and flexibility of the capitalist forms of domination."(Tomšič, 2015: 228).

Chapter Five: the technological event

5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines technological functions and considers from the research how photography operates and is understood. Technological change is not a homogenous event: there are distinct consequences and issues emerging from technology's impact. In its widest context technology has changed aspects of modern society and is therefore probably too broad a concept to be useful. As a consequence, my research focused on specific shifts in photographic and image making practice that technology produced. I have described previously the masking effect of the visual; in the same way, technology also masks its own functioning. For example, photographic enabling technology, which operates 'in the background,' operates invisibly to structure the types of images that are produced. In relation to technology's formation of specific kinds of image, Rubinstein and Sluis note, "the thing that remains unchanged and unexamined is the acceptance of photography 'as a process whereby a purely informal idea (world as it is) mediates itself through light and shapes the unstable matter of chemical emulsion into an analogical print' (Petersson, 2005)" (2013: 27). I claim the shaping of analogue and now digital media happens only *after* we already know what those shapes look like. Extensively throughout my research participants used technology built into their cameras to replicate the kinds of images they had already seen. In this sense the world is structured by a symbolic and photographic ordering. An example of this would be how facial or smile recognition software on cameras forces a particular kind of portrait, one recognised by both software and photographer alike. During this recognition, subjects are mediated through and targeted by technology but they are also simultaneously created by technology: without the technology there is no place for the subject to be located. I claim in this sense, technology produces and constructs subjectivity, rather than there being a subject who somehow gains mastery over technology. In this way technology creates the order we inhabit and through it certain behaviours are controlled, monitored, measured and guided. The applications used on mobile devices to share

media example this perfectly with their seamless facilitation of the sharing process. What was evident from the research is how technological apparatus governs behaviours that then become a photographic sensibility. This is exemplified when a particular location is favoured as being the position from which photographs are taken of a scenic view. It may also be in the various aesthetic rules (rules of thirds, leading lines, strong diagonals) used to guide photographers into creating formally 'interesting' or correct pictures. This underlying guiding or structuring nature of photographic technology became the start point for my research.

What now follows is an outline of the shifts in thinking about photography, which take on how technology has reformed photographic practice, the photographic object and the subsequent cultural impact. It will argue, following Rubinstein and Sluis (2008), that the digital image's resemblance to an object is unconnected to our understanding of indexicality. Instead, it is more closely aligned to processes such as the algorithms of computer programmes or that of darkroom chemistry. I will argue how photographic theory should evolve across the horizon of what photography has become and frame a discussion around the concurrency of perceptual experiences that emerge from the synthesis of digital technology and photography. Ultimately, this chapter considers photography as a way of thinking through the complex positions intrinsic to its own conditions and to representation as social force.

5.2.   The camera as computer

David Bate outlined three key factors of technology and their relationship to photography: cameras have become computers; the camera records, processes, distributes and displays images; and the Internet is a network for the dissemination of images (Bate, 2013a: 77-94). These factors distinguish the technology of digital photography from its analogue counterpart. The assertion that the camera is a computer – or as Bate points out that the computer is now camera – means a timely reconsideration of the activities

connected to processing, distribution and dissemination is required. All these factors function, regardless of the content of the images create.

The evolution from analogue to digital has not been a simple, single, step change. There is a tendency to draw a distinct line between what is now termed 'analogue' photography and its apparent successor 'digital' photography, as if one appeared overnight usurping all previous forms of photographic practice. The historical development of 'analogue' photography itself has generally been driven by the discovery of new technologies. Technological change is therefore not new to photography or photographers. In this sense we might easily conclude a move to digital image making is simply another phase in photography's continuum. However, a distinctive difference in photography's digital evolution is how unlike previous advances in which were somewhat exclusive to photography itself (such as the introduction of miniature or 35mm cameras), digital technology is pervasive, ubiquitous and "insinuates itself into something we too blithely refer to as everyday life" (Kember, 2013: 56).

While early digital photography had no direct relationship to an environment of easy distribution and dissemination, the "proliferation, diversification and dispersal of photography in and across private and public, amateur and professional realms" (Kember, 2013: 57) has contributed to the sense of photography being *even less a discrete object* theorists have contested it to be or not to be. In terms of early digital photography, dissemination was incredibly exclusive, relying on expensive 'high end' computing and, relatively rare at the time, fast connections to the Internet. More recently, during the late 90s and early 2000s the costs associated with digital photography significantly reduced and consequently, at the consumer level, interest in photography increased (Hand, 2012: 08). During the following fifteen years dramatic technological changes shifted our engagement with content on the Internet from being passive consumers or audiences toward becoming creators and curators of personal content; the so called Web 2.0. While digital photography or at least the digitization of images was a

significant part of this shift, it should be noted that technological changes also affected other forms of content including the written word, graphic design, moving image and sound. Alongside the technological modifications of traditional media forms the Internet also heralded new forms of interactivity and alternative ways to mediate media.

These developments of Internet and digital content, occurring around the end of the last century and the beginning of the next, were loosely identified as being part of the phenomena of 'new media.' Toward the middle of the first decade of the Twenty-first Century a further technological change meant 'social media' began to dominate as the method of interacting and interfacing between different digital media forms. The platforms of social media created focused spaces for content (written, images, sound etc.) to be interacted with. Significantly, as Kember and Zylinska have noted, the term new 'technology' became frequently conflated with new 'media' (2015: xiv) such that both terms lost their specificity and distinction.

Digital photography has evolved and used the language and tropes of analogue photography to describe its functions. Even within the processing workflow of Adobe Photoshop software the darkroom skills and vocabulary of dodging and burning are maintained within its toolbox. In describing what appears as a natural evolution for photography from analogue to digital, it is also possible to detail how these changes have altered our responses to images *and* to photography, since the two are both linked and yet also distinctively changed by technology. If we examine the photographic process step by step the first change brought about by the 'computer as camera' / 'camera as computer' behaviour is the ability to almost instantly review the images taken. In the pre-digital past professional photographers used Polaroid film to check exposure and composition. With digital technology review and reflection on images becomes faster and more closely linked. As Bate has noted, being able to review images on the camera gives "every amateur the tools for technical reflection and analysis" (2013a: 82). Importantly, the relatively low or zero cost of taking digital images, compared

with shooting on film, also contributes to the processes of reflection, analysis and re-shooting but not in ways we might immediately consider. From interviews with amateur photographers who took part in the research there is a clear temptation to shoot high numbers of images. This tends to result in a somewhat faster, less comprehensive reflection on what image has been made giving a 'failsafe' of shooting more in the hope of getting '*something*.' Nevertheless, getting something is not always the same as getting what is expected or wanted. We may agree with Bate that: "the electronic automation of technical processes, enables 'anyone' to achieve better, more consistent results" (2013a: 82), such that the distinction between amateur and professional is diminished. But in practice, technology only allows for certain photographic conditions to be met or achieved. It acts as a support or guide to producing photographs, but its really significant contribution to improving them is in its removal of some of the delays inherent in film-based photography. With digital photography the opportunity for reflection, analysis and re-shooting is enabled but the quality of these processes is largely down to the judgements of the individual operating the camera.

In addition to being able to reflect on an image just moments after it has been taken, the digital photographic process provides tools for manipulation. The degrees to which image manipulation can be competently achieved varies from individual to individual but the sense in which images can be 'Photoshop-ed,' and therefore improved upon, prevails within the reflection and analysis stage. When working with participants during the research they relied on post-production tools, which would be used to correct mistakes or poor technique. Often this became a way of deferring any kind of intervention in the image making process. Ultimately, without the requisite skills, post-production does not appear to offer any quicker route to image creation.

In conclusion, the camera as computer, along with technology has reconfigured practices and behaviours. The significant reduction in the cost of making images compared with film means more images are made. The process of making and reflecting on images is also more closely aligned

since this often takes place on the same device. Photographs are manipulated or processed by software to improve upon them or to create more realistic resemblances. At present, film or analogue like effects on digital images are available for users of Instagram. I suggest this may be because film might be considered more authentically photographic.

5.3.   Toward a new ontology of the photographic image

Within the history of representation, it was photography's invention, around 1839, which signalled the point from which painters were freed to consider what painting itself was. With its ability to capture images with greater precision and detail, photography liberated painters from a particular field of aesthetics and brought to an end the need for painting to represent the "programme of metapolitical ordering of the visual and the social" (Lyotard 1991: 120). Thus after its invention as an industrial and technical process, photography gradually moved painting into becoming a "philosophical activity" (Lyotard 1991: 121). Such a philosophical enquiry asked of itself the question: 'What is painting?' With its purpose being the investigation of the rules governing the "formation of pictorial images" (Lyotard 1991: 121). While painters were to focus on the formation of images that photography cannot make, their attention became focused on the realm of the visible. In this interrogation the visual is understood as not only that which the eye sees but it also occupies the space of the mind (Lyotard 1991: 125). Similar to this shift in the representational regime that took place in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century and which subsequently gave rise to the Modernist movement, the post-photographic era of the digital presents an ontological challenge to the image and a direct challenge to representation itself (Lister 1995 & 2013; Rubinstein and Sluis 2013; Ritchen 2009).

In photographic terms there is a genealogy of the photographic image: from shadows being cast onto a wall; to the camera obscura; to glass plates; to film and to digital mediums. This linear evolution, largely linked to technological developments, brought about what we understand as a photographic image. What determines a 'good photographic image' in the

eyes of a photographic industry defined largely by those who make and sell cameras, are the same criteria that previously governed painting. For example: colour, linear perspective, the rendering of colour value, the frame, formats, the support, the surface, the medium, the place of exhibition etc. (Ibid: 24). As painting has already asked itself, it is time to re-evaluate what determines a 'good photographic image' and ask 'what good is a photographic image?' The importance of photography today is not its ability to form new photographic likenesses or its memory-storing capacity, nor is it in its capacity to document injustices, crisis and revolution. Instead, considering photographic agency we can frame questions that re-think the relationship to representational structures and to the systems of labour, capital and surplus value, as argued in the previous chapter. But there is another purpose for photography, which is not only to expose the contradictions and hidden struggles of representation. It also thinks immanently not by illustrating or depicting philosophical questions but by giving form to their expression.

In order to develop this, I consider Jacques Rancière's (2007) idea of dissemblance. Rancière's *The Future of the Image* describes a context where there is "no longer reality, only images" (2007: 01). In the eponymous first essay he describes the 'image in and of itself,' suggesting images remain the same regardless of the medium they are shown on. Using the example of the Robert Bresson movie, *Au hasard Balthazar (1966),* Rancière states the intrinsic nature of the images in the film remain the same no matter where they are shown. They are not, he suggests, dependent on a particular technical medium, they have no medium specificity but operate through a relationship between "visibility and a power of signification and affect" (Rancière, 2007: 03). Describing sequences of the film, he argues that the 'images' in the film comprise of a coupling and uncoupling of the visible, its significance and its effect (2007: 4-5). Making a comparison with literature, he suggests, images "create and retract meaning," functioning at the level of perception, action and affect (2007: 4-5). Through either satisfying or thwarting of perceptual anticipation images construct complex meanings. He

proposes any understanding of images should stress the perceptual gap created between what things appear to be and what things are. This happens when our anticipation of what we will see or what will follow is misdirected.

I read Rancière as proposing a dialectical movement between the raw presence of the image and the image as a site for coding and decoding historical discourses. Understanding an image becomes a process in which it is necessary to deal with its cultural codes *and* its formal properties. He argues there are two types of image: those of resemblance – producing likenesses or faithful copies – and those operating at the level of 'dissemblance,' of alterity. These, he suggests, "produce a discrepancy" (2007: 7). He argues art creates images of dissemblance and these need not be exclusively visible (2007).[88] Making a distinct claim for perception – for thought as an agent – in the understanding of art images, he suggests perceptual anticipation is either satisfied or thwarted. The philosophical challenge is to consider, in a world of endless and repeating images, whether perception has shifted to a state of perpetual satisfaction and if photography provides a rendering of perception that is largely unconcerned with discrepancies or dissemblances? Instead, continuity, clarity and continuation have become its determining forces. To clarify this, as photography develops technologically we experience, multiple forms that appear to closely resemble the reality we experience at the same time reality itself (as I have argued in this thesis) has become more photographic. There is then, in theory, only a limited opportunity for images to produce forms of discrepancy.

Rancière describes contemporary photographs as a skin detached from the surface of objects they depict. In claiming they resist discourses that express meaning (2007: 9), he suggests they lack an interpretative capacity. This is because they take on a role of almost strict resemblance. In this sense

---

[88] Rancière stresses that images are not necessarily always visible – thus art here does not only refer to painting - he notes other forms, particularly literature and music also create non-visual images (2007: 7).

contemporary photographs are distinguished by their "senseless materiality of the visible" (2007): their technical production is the guarantee of their essence. A logical conclusion from this is when photographs are technically sophisticated they tend to only be understood as resemblances. Such photographs lose their ability to express themselves through meaning or interpretation. Put simply, photography's technical developments (e.g. higher optical definition and image rendering precision) produce images that are, more and more, philosophically concerned with resemblance. Following Rancière, I claim the lack of interpretative capacity in photography is, in fact, its radical force. No matter how technically accomplished an image is, it always remains an image of something. Through the denial of the fundamental failure of resemblance photographs operate ideologically, by implying there is no substantial gap between what we see and the reality depicted. However, the form of image I argue stages reality itself. Behaviours such as swiping continuous images, of one image following another and another, are now part of the conditions of our mediated personal reality.[89] This seemingly infinite stream of image is now how most images are experienced and understood.

Rancière identifies two potentialities of the photographic image: one as an encoded message of ideology, while the other is the personal (the *punctum*) non-message (2007: 11). Although, Barthes (1984/1973) claimed what is photographed produces a punctum *immediately* and in an un-mediated form, Rancière challenges this, arguing such immediacy prevents affect itself "being experienced, named, expressed" (1984/1973: 15). He challenges Barthes' notion of the punctum as a pure and unmediated experience. The "relationship between mechanical impression and the *punctum* erases the whole history of the relations between things" (1984/1973), for Rancière photographs *should* oscillate between being a testimony or documents of history (the *studium*) and a visible surface of "senseless naked presence"

---

[89] Other examples of the contemporary conditions that stage reality include publishing images, storing images in databases, tagging, deleting, sharing and liking. These new forms of perception are structured by photography and have become standard behaviours in our interactions with images.

(2007). But in the digital world presence is less easily defined and, as I develop, the affective punch of the *punctum* is felt not only through visible surfaces but also through actions and interactions. Rancière sees the *punctum* as a direct form of indexicality: wherein it reminds the viewer that what is shown in the photograph was also once in front of a camera. It is a kind of "hyper-resemblance" (2007: 08): not a copy of reality but a direct connection back to the reality from which it came and of course it was Barthes who also suggested a sense of "*that-has-been"* along with the "*this will be"* (1984/1980: 96) in the way the *punctum* operates. This affect creates a disturbance that happens as part of image experience. What was evident from my research was not only how the form of a photograph's resemblance to a *photographed* reality resonated but also the importance of the relation to the *previous* and the *next* photograph. The connective phrase between previous and next is how in the digital world there are seemingly infinite numbers of previous and next images. Therefore, when people take so many similar photographs the notion of the personal becomes more and more improbable. Rancière's essay on the image outlines a set of operations at work in images, where a purely visual force – articulated through the *punctum* – has an uninterrupted and direct relation to resemblance. My conclusion is that the *punctum* and its relation to resemblance is not only a connection back to a reality but also an indicator of the relationship to an infinite number of images which flow as part of the networked image experience. What I observed throughout my research was that the *punctum* not only pricks through the visual but is also embodied within the continuous rhythms and processes of selection and interaction. The personal connections made with images are as much about the processes of interaction, selection and choice as they are about what is visible.

The operations of selection and choice are commonly associated with photographic production. While they appear to be largely objective and neutral, inevitably, on closer examination selection and choice are governed by a radical automatism of technology.

5.4.   Automatism and how we annotate the world

As I have stated, opinion on photography is generally polarised around two positions: the photograph as aesthetic object (approached usually through a semiotic framework) and photography as an historical, cultural practice or representational form. These positions have resulted in what Paul Frosh describes as an underlying "tension between aesthetic object and sociotechnical practice" (2015) that has dominated thought on photography. Frosh suggests contemporary theory should consider the networked image (Rubinstein, 2008) as aesthetic object situated in opposition to a sociotechnical practice of algorithmic photography (Uricchio, 2011). However, I argue the networked image is also situated within and formed from the underlying logic of the computer algorithm. By joining these positions together, I outline an argument toward an interdependent, ecology of photographic theory.

Considering how technology shapes how we perceive the world, my argument is to understand photography not as a process that captures a reality. Instead, reality is now perceived and mediated in a photographic way. This helps explains something of the uncertainty of the world. As I have argued above, gestures inform digital photographic perception and these are now highly distinctive. Along with traditional methods of interaction – such as looking at images in photographic albums – we also encounter photography through swiping, pinching, zooming, tagging, deleting, storing and sharing etc. Photography embodies behaviours, it anticipates a way in which it will be interacted with and as we perform many of these behaviours they become implicit in the very structure of our daily existence.

Following D.N. Rodowick (2007: 42), I argue the instrumental qualities or 'automatism' of technology not only binds or limits subjectivity or creative agency but also fundamentally alters how we perceive the world as photographed. In this sense, technology significantly shapes the types of photographs we take and the ways we can take them. Such that the distinctiveness of digital photography, the aesthetics of its representation are

"driven by device functions" (Frosh 2015: 1607). In addition to this, technology re-orientates the relationship between photographic theory and our usual understanding of terms such as composition and indexicality. Different cameras or different camera applications produce different types of images. They can determine a viewpoint, a position and even a perspective. Additionally, some functions directly support how images are constructed (for example, a camera viewfinder grid overlay organises and structures the frame). This structuring takes place according to an understanding of 'harmony' and 'balance,' both of these terms being commonly associated with the picturesque. In this sense, we can conclude that the technology in cameras is weighted toward the production of picturesque images.

Theoretical arguments associated with indexicality – the connection between a sign and its referent – are further problematized when seeing is supplemented by layers of additional information. As in-camera augmented reality features combine information they create a new relationship between object and data that is contingent upon different factors. These may include a user's contacts or their current location. Theoretical disagreements around photographic indexicality usually only concern themselves with visual similarity and resemblance; they do not take into account the extra information or meta-data that can be attached to, may reside within, is captured by, or influences the creation of digital images. When considered in the context of these aspects of the image, contemporary thinking associated with indexicality appears decidedly under theorised.

Fundamentally, I claim technology governs how we take and view the photographs we view and take. But it is also a bridge between aesthetic object and sociotechnical practice. It mediates between a viewing subject and the viewed object, structuring how we see what we see. Looking becomes a complex act, often technologically determined and navigated. But technology not only frames *how* we look it also helps shape subjectivity, as Rubinstein and Sluis argue: "it is not the subject who masters technology,

but technology that produces the cultural and linguistic forms that construct subjectivity" (2013: 33).

Throughout this section I consider photographic images as material and virtual objects of data and information. This understanding challenges positions that guarantee subjectivity to be at their centre. It creates critical distance from the idea that the world is encountered as a photograph – an image or a picture in a literal sense – since it considers photographs as objects expressing the temporal characteristics of the network. Again, my research indicated we experience reality in photography not simply because the world appears to look a little like a photograph but also because we interact with the world in ways structured by our relationship to digital images. Thus images have a role in spatially configuring environments and articulating the possibility of a non-subjective experience. New theories of photography require a different consideration and re-evaluation of the structures and forces that produce, configure and distribute meanings. As these forces ultimately shape our worldview, they also come to define the co-ordinates of our own agency. In this sense, one of my central claims is that, photography augments the world with a layer of additional information. Photography is "an immersive economy that offers an entirely new way to inhabit materiality and its relation to bodies, machines and brains" (Rubinstein, 2015: no pagination). In my assessment this new, emerging and complex photographic ontology initially arises from layering representational practice with additional information and data.

Therefore, rather than a view of the photograph as signifying surface (Flusser, 2007) we should consider photographs as being a part of a process that organises information (Rubinstein, 2015). This organisational function then allows photography to implicitly ask questions about seeing and presents a critique of the relationships between humans and objects. However, there is some difficulty understanding photography in this way, through the existing photographic discourse. An approach to this problem is to consider the processes through which the camera annotates a world of

objects, by examining the relationships between image creation, transmission and display. These relationships are not necessarily discrete and may be outlined as follows.

Firstly, at the creation stage, images are likely to be already viewable on a screen. This screen is possibly similar, if not identical, to the one that will display it later as a separate image (this is especially the case when considering cell phone cameras). In the creation state, the screen image may well be layered or augmented with a range of image-making information. Such informational prompts act as guides or controls in the image-making process. For example, these settings may prevent a photograph being taken unless part of the image is correctly in focus. They may also indicate faces, through facial recognition features or show areas of darkness (under-exposure) or lightness (over-exposure). Fundamentally, in digital photography, image creation and image display often occur simultaneously. The camera is therefore not only an image-making device; it is also capable of image viewing.

Secondly, the increasingly instantaneous link between image creation and image transmission is largely facilitated by mobile devices, networks and data connections. Creation and transmission, in this sense, become a singular event. The transmission or the broadcasting of images in real time has now become a standard feature of social media. Once shared, images may then gain new information and significance through time coding, tagging or social media interactions, they may also contain information such as geo-positioned data. These additional layers of information reinforce indexicality: the 'being there then' part, of photography.

What this shows is that the processes of creation, transmission and display are entwined together. This creates a state of potential immediate and mediated interaction. Their instantaneous nature underwrites a relationship binding them together. The prompts and constraints imposed on our interactions with creation, transmission and display are invisibly structured

and organised by hardware and software, with both being deliberately designed to appear to facilitate processes rather than to control them. However, how we look, what we share and what images we consume are in essence governed by the algorithms of software. In a process of mediated looking, through the camera or any other device, there is only a limited possibility of unaware or unintended exploration. Any agency of seeing is guided and modulated by software commands, information and data instruction. The motivation for this functionality is to add value to the seen object and to append what is being looked at with a layer of additional augmented content. But in photographic terms, this works in order to create formulas for endlessly replicated images. In a similar way it also helps to distribute these to those who wish to consume or 'like' similar or identical images.

I contend that any new conceptualisation of photography needs to encapsulate the changes outlined above. Indexicality is no longer only associated with a visual truth. It is now joined to the truth of the meta-data written by the highly mobile camera onto the image. Via the screen of the camera, reality is simultaneously and directly overlaid by image such that image is no longer discrete from reality.

In addition, the production, distribution and consumption of images are largely facilitated through developments in technology, the continuous growth of the Internet and the connections joining the network[90]. These developments in technologies, resulting more significantly, perhaps, in the convergence of the camera with cell phone, have created conditions that allow for exponentially more images to be created transmitted and shared. Photographic subject matter may well have changed very little over the decades. However, the volume of images produced has substantially increased and their function has evolved. In *Ubiquitous Photography*, Martin

---

[90] Burgin has noted this point in various interviews and articles, including in "Mutating Photography," (Pontbriand, 2011: 144).

Hand (2012: 12) argued that in the digital age photography has become interwoven into society and its radical pervasiveness means it is embedded into multiple and diverse social, political and cultural forms. Alongside this, mobility and portability have also contributed to the omnipresence of digital photography.[91]

As Sarah Pink (2011) observes, when images are interwoven in everyday movement, they take on a central role in perception and meaning making. An example of altered perception can be seen in Google Street View where the amalgamation of photographs, geo-locational data, time and place are reconfigured into a new organisational system. As Francesco Lapenta suggests, the "shift in organisation of the representations of the world can be interpreted as a paradigmatic shift that transforms the new synthesised images of the world into a new socio-organisational principle" (2011: 19). This mapping of the world onto the virtual space of the computer screen creates a new virtual place. Even the method of user interaction abstractly represents everyday movement through a mediated data and information environment. Within this technological organisation and representation, the basis of information regulation and control are established. While the aesthetics and presentation of Google Street View is clearly an attempt to simulate reality, in fact it bears little resemblance to the random and arbitrary world as it is usually perceived. [92]

When viewing the world through a camera it is possible to see technical data relating to camera settings, facial recognition overlays, focus points, contacts, GPS, time and date information. Depending on how it is distributed, an image may also go on to include a variety of tagged information such as the names of the people depicted in it. It may attract 'likes' or comments or

---

[91] Sarah Pink (2011) suggested, when re-thinking the meaning and values of the image we should also take account of concepts of movement and place. The image, as she suggests, is produced and consumed as we move through environments. Her argument makes a claim to undermine the dominance of the visual, placing images into the realm of an experience of environments.
[92] As stated earlier in this thesis, my research found that images from Google Street View were considered as taking away the usual feelings of surprise when visiting a place.

other social media interactions. This mixture of representational and informational data differentiates digital photography from its analogue counterpart. Photographs attempt to explain not only the visual world they also order the circumstances in which we encounter the randomness of the material world.

If the existing photographic discourse is to develop it needs to take into account a new conceptualisation of photography that incorporates the consequences of an image/screen and reality overlay; indexicality as a concept appended by image meta-data; and mobility as a mediating environment. It needs to express how each of these creates a new perception that is a concurrent experience. Such that objects, overlaid by informational enhancement, augment our phenomenological experience. In this sense digital overlays bring a richness and depth of experience mediated through the doxa of the camera, the computer screen and software. And controlling interfaces tend to model and organise the world rather than accurately represent its underlying disorder.

5.5. Using metamodelling

If photographic theory and discourse is to be developed with the above in mind, there is a further application of philosophical thinking that can be used as a means to reconfigure our understanding. Felix Guattari's concept of metamodelling critiques existing notions of the model. A metamodel is the "reductions of diagrammatic space made of intersections and disjunctions, operated by abstract signs and symbols" (Parisi, 2014: 4). In other words, a metamodel is a diagrammatic account of signs and symbols rather than a hierarchical one. This proposes the relationship between signs and symbols is one of layering rather than of direct correspondence. The model – or the direct French translation of 'pattern' – may be understood in two distinct ways: one as a form of behaviours learned and inherited through and from institutions and social apparatus such as the family, education, socio-political

structures. The other is where there is a direct mapping of configurations and processes.

I argue contemporary photography can be understood in the way Guattari proposed as metamodelling: in that it does not represent objects but it 'diagrams' behaviour, patterns or information. These models function relationally, creating a direct association between patterns of visual objects and data. In representational terms, what is seen can also be expressed through its correspondence with informational data. In this sense, the disorder of the world is simultaneously configured and organised through both its visual representational patterns and its structuring data.

Thus as photography becomes a managing process it creates, organises and forms new interrelations. An example would be geo-tagging and date tagging as they help organise and curate photographic collections. But these features can also be used to inform why, where and what we photograph. In this sense associated data is as important as the representational form of image – the where or when images were taken being as valuable as what they visually show. Similarly, enhancements in camera interactivity such as touch screens and real time interaction provide direction and guidance. They encourage people to take certain types of photographs.[93]

Using Guattari, I consider photography as producing 'photographic diagrams.' These change what we see and how we behave because images "frame, configure and enact the power relationships in the digital age" (Rubinstein 2015). The placing of a layer of informational data onto images reveals their and our own association with a structuring network of software and databases. To augment, annotate, pattern and diagram the world transforms it into information. A consequence of this is that we begin to situate the subject, not at a Cartesian centre but rather as an arbitrary node

---

[93] An example of this is the Apple iPhone Panorama function in which an arrow on the screen guides the movement of the user toward the next visual point in order to create a seamless image. The arrow governs horizontal and lateral movements, choreographing photographic behaviours and resulting in interchangeable panoramic visual forms.

within a network. Representation seems no longer adequate or useful for explaining the world in terms of its form. Instead, as both camera and photograph are the very foundations onto which information is overlaid, what is needed is a new conception of photography to understand how we create different images from data (within my practice for this research I examine this with the work *Periphery*, see Appendix 1) Through this we can explain a changed world by describing and annotating, not our conventional ideas of form, but the chaotic and random form of ideas within the network.

5.6. Thinking photographs through difference and repetition

In his book *Difference and Repetition*, (2014/1968) Deleuze describes representation as a "site of transcendental illusion" (2014/1968: 349). This illusion is expressed by the view that there is some form of original idea, identity or reality, which may then be represented. Deleuze makes a philosophical challenge to this connection and offers a way to interrogate the problem of representation itself. Although I make no claim for an in depth reading of *Difference and Repetition*, its restaging of difference examines how representation only provides partial descriptions of the world. It is therefore useful as an approach for my research, since it presents strategies for uncoupling representation from photography and helps frame the consequences of doing this. Deleuze makes an ontological claim for 'difference' and 'repetition.' His assessment of traditional philosophy is that it considered difference through four representational forces: identity, resemblance, opposition or analogy. He suggests that difference has only ever been understood in relation to sameness. Articulated through these four forces, difference is understood by its lack of identity to a concept, as perceptually lacking resemblance, through the logic of opposition or through the insufficient judgement of analogy. But, for Deleuze, difference is not something that can be adequately understood by simply contrasting x and y, or for example, how we may wish to describe a photograph as being different from a painting. Deleuze argues our understanding of difference comes through the four forces of representation making difference a subset of sameness – wherein difference is a difference from something else. Instead,

he suggests difference is a concept in its own right, a difference in itself, without using any formal comparative structure. This reconceptualization might begin to be expressed in the following way: we have a photograph understood in and of itself and not contra any concept, resemblance, in opposition to or analogous with a painting. What I understand Deleuze as offering is a way to be able to articulate 'photograph-ness' – or any other 'object-ness' – without resorting to representational comparisons.

Deleuze then takes his notion of difference to support his other conception of repetition, as a 'repetition of difference.' He proposes repetition operates as a becoming of new differences. In this sense, repetition is not a repeating notion but an actualised, new present. For example, in art it could be argued that any repetition is never *perfectly equivalent* to the object it repeats.[94] Thinking through Deleuze we might express this as re-invention or re-production where the prefix 're' is better understood not as 'again' but as 'anew.'

Building on this, one of the historically consistent properties of photography is its reproducibility and repeatability. With this comes the consequential endless production of "bland, banal and repetitious" (Rubinstein & Sluis, 2008: 23-24) networked snapshots that are indistinguishable, ignored, and perpetuate the "notion of the world going about its business in a natural way" (2008: 23-24). Repetition shapes and defines experiences and expectations sometimes in a negative sense. As participants in my research stated: "*Finding new places is a problem. You can't keep going back and photographing the same places all the time*" (Anonymous Research Participant). Similarly, another questioned: "*Somebody must have stood there, before. Even just taking a photograph with their telephone. So what is it that makes your photographs different? That is a big problem*" (Anonymous Research Participant). Here the question of creating something original,

---

[94] The theme of repetition and difference is explored in my practice "Ritornello" and examined in detail in Chapter Seven.

unique and different is perplexing and compounded by photography's built in ability to reproduce and repeat. For participants in my research the problem of finding something new or a way to express something different differently was one of their central struggles of photography[95]. As another noted: "*I then began to think how do I see this world? I'm a certain age. I ought to have opinions about this world. I ought to have a visual concept of what I see. And I should be able to communicate that . . . but I haven't got it yet. I think in clichés. It worries me*" (Anonymous Research Participant). Here, the problem is personal and focused on the quality of their ideas or thoughts, which translate into photographs (or potentially any other creative practice). Seeing and thinking becomes problematic. And in this particular case they had a desire to express more sophisticated ideas than they were currently able to do. More generally, many participants needed an idea of what to photograph before they felt they could comfortably produce work. At the same time having seen many photographs they were cautious about copying or repeating the same things. It was only as a last resort that participants would end up copying a photograph they had seen before. And often this would be justified by considering it as a way of practicing a technique or simply seeing how an image had been made.

From my research interviews and from my own practice I recognise a contradiction built into photography, which oscillates between it being a practice of technology and one of creativity. As the apparatus of photographic image making is structured in essentially the same way – consisting largely of a subject, a light source, a lens and a medium, it is difficult not to be constrained by a sense that every image a camera produces has the same genesis and thereby has the same defining properties. For most of the participants interviewed (largely amateur or self proclaimed beginner camera users), subject matter differentiated and defined their photography and governed how similar or different their work

---

[95] I acknowledge this may be a universal struggle for all creative pursuits. But here I am suggesting photography appears to structure creative challenges precisely through how it functions.

was. It is useful to consider some important although difficult to answer questions to demonstrate representation's constraint over how we think about photography.

Firstly, does subject matter define work (in the sense of genre) or does an approach to practice define subject matter? Since all participants had a prior sense of what a portrait, a landscape or a sunset etc. should look like, did they set out to repeat the aesthetics of these *already seen* images? [96] The answer to this, supported by general observation and conversations over the course of the research, is that many people take photographs of similar subject matter in a similar way. As I stated before, any Google Instagram or other image search will reveal the visual codes of particular subject matter. A systematic grouping of photographs – as we might see in an image search – tends to reaffirm our expectations, reinforcing our own sense of what is natural and what is universal.

Secondly, does being exposed to an abundance of images containing repeating formulas and familiar aesthetics, make creating images a less subjective exercise? The standard argument would be that the properties of photographic representation are not immanent to its subject matter. Our judgement of subject matter is therefore made against our own subjective evaluation, since there is no normative dimension in reality we largely judge against the photographs we have seen. For example, a photograph of a flower makes no difference to the flower itself but any qualitative assessment is based on a comparative account of both our ideas and experiences of flowers and photographs. Insofar as there may be a connection between an idea and its representation, Deleuze expresses a Deleuzian Idea (note the capitalised "I") as a "brute presence" (Deleuze 2014/1968: 74), that is "not 'representable' in things" (2014/1968: 74). In this sense, Deleuzian Ideas are

---

[96] There is a further argument here, which I have already briefly touched on building on Flusser, in which technology largely defines how subject matter is rendered. An example of this would be the distinctive aesthetic of 'point of view,' super wide GoPro camera footage. Heidegger had a similar concept of 'Enframing' (*Ge-stell*), which is the essence of technology.

a site of virtual (thought) and actual (material) impacts. This conceptualisation is similarly expressed, albeit with a direct political emphasis, in the work of Jane Bennett in her book *Vibrant Matter* (2010). Bennett, who draws on Deleuze, suggests there is 'vital materiality,' a force at work in things. For her, this gets activated when 'things,' objects, are brought together, along with thought, into a "contingent tableau" (2010: 05). My own, somewhat incomplete, reading of this is to see this as a moment of collision between thought, things and their representation. In the moment when objects become material things they take a kind of responsibility for themselves that is absent when they are seen as entirely representational signs. Simultaneously, they also signify a specific force located elsewhere within the world. This is not a force of representational thinking, of subject/object relations, but is a part of what Deleuze and Guattari describe as "a plane of consistency (the abstract machine)" (2004: 78) a complex network of relations and forces.

Where the above addresses photography as the production of surfaces of representations I wish now to consider photography in a different way. For photography, Deleuze's notion of repetition, in which pure difference is repeated, offers a particular paradox in that it "restores the possibility of what was, renders it possible anew" (Agamben, 2002: 316). Photographic repetition could therefore be seen as a statement of 'possibility.' More precisely, this may be expressed as 'the idea of making any image possible,' rather than making any possible image. Beyond the material conditions of production, we might ask what are the circumstances that make an image possible? Implicitly, photography asks this question as it actualises new instances of 'photograph-ness,' with every single image.

If we consider photographic repetition through subject matter then we arrive at little more than a convenient combination of subject, genre or type etc. And at a certain point we have to construct an artificial blockage, which delineates each of these groupings. These then are differences in kind and in degree but they are not 'pure difference' in its Deleuzian sense, simply

because we make a final distinction in order to differentiate one thing from the other. For example, we might wish to group all photographs of flowers together, we might further refine this by grouping all flowers with white petals then we might differentiate by shape or size. At some point, though, we will need to stop refining the criteria we are using to delineate the images. What then happens if we abstract photography from its representational function and concentrate on the photograph itself? At what point would we arrive at a similar blockage?[97] I suggest one impasse might be at the 'idea of an image.' Beginning with the notion that all images contain a priori a sense of image, is there a moment at which representation itself can be circumvented and overcome? I suggest theoretical photographic abstraction would take as its basis the assemblages and accumulative structures that make the very 'idea of an image' possible.

Martin Heidegger writes that one of the events of modernity is when the world becomes a picture and the human becomes a subject. For Heidegger, a world picture is only possible when we have the conceptual tools to create one. He asks: "Does every period … have its world picture … is this only a modern kind of representing?" (Heidegger, 1977: 129). Later he explains, it would have been impossible in the age of the Greeks "to have had anything like a world picture" (1977: 133). For Heidegger, a world picture is a modern, representational phenomenon. It happens only because the world can be comprehended as an object for interpretation and only when humans are conceived as subjects. A challenging aspect of his argument is the question as to why he states previous ages did not have a world picture or conceive the world as picture.[98] This can be resolved by considering how the word 'picture' is used and how Heidegger sees it as a term understood by the

---

[97] My argument is distinct from Fried's idea of medium specificity (particularly in relation to photography – see Costello, 2008, Elkins, 2005, Fried 2005), which tends to use difference as a subset of sameness and largely concentrates on representational terms.

[98] In *The Order of Things* (1970), Michel Foucault makes a parallel genealogy through practices of resemblance to representation in order to define the episteme of particular periods.

human subject who perceives it. His use of the word 'picture' is not to describe a copy or imitation, instead, it is used to express something that "stands before us" (1977: 133). It is not a picture of the world but "world conceived and grasped as picture" (1977: 133). He argues this only turns out to be possible when representation itself is *the* system of knowledge through which the world is understood,[99] and it is modernity that is the first such period. This is the moment when the human subject is privileged with a central role in the world and it signals the rise of humanism: "Humanity stands at the centre of existence and explains and evaluates the sum total of reality. Human beings become the authors of the world" (Naugle, 2002: 143). What is being argued is that other ages had a 'world-view' but this is not the same as what has been described as a 'world as picture.' The principal difference is that when the world is conceived as picture it is then perceived as something standing apart from the human subject, something constructed, produced, conceived and used. Heidegger is not suggesting, like Sontag in 'In Plato's Cave,' that "to collect photographs is to collect the world" (Sontag, 1977: 3) or that to photograph puts one "in a relation to the world" (1977: 4). His theory is not about understanding the world through pictures. For Heidegger, what he is claiming is that the world *becomes a picture* and this only happens when a subject can conceive of it.

Heidegger's term Enframing (*Ge-still*), poses another difficulty, since he suggests a relationship to technology that is "always arrived at too late" (Heidegger, 1977: 24). This retroactive account of Enframing, the technological essence through which reality is revealed to us, means we only recognise it for what it is *after the event*. Is it then possible to fully understand a 'world as picture' only once we move into a post-representational, post-

---

[99] A contemporary example of how a representational structure creates a particular worldview could be drawn from the film *The Holiday* (2006, Dir. Nancy Meyers). In the film, Amanda Woods (played by Cameron Diaz) is a successful director of movie trailers. Throughout the film, Woods' life decisions are conveyed by a voice over narration in the style of the movie trailers she herself makes. The decisions Woods takes and her views of events in the film are thus articulated through the discourse, or Enframing, she is most familiar with – that of the movie trailer.

photographic moment? Or to express this point differently, in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* he quotes historian André Monglond, stating:

> The past has left images of itself in literary texts, images comparable to those which are imprinted by light on a photosensitive plate. The future alone possesses developers active enough to scan such surfaces perfectly (Benjamin 2002/1982: 482).

What we can take from Heidegger is the 'world as picture' is an Enframed experience providing a form of knowledge through a system of representation.

Heidegger asserts the world can be explained and evaluated "from the standpoint of man and in relation to man" (Heidegger, 1977: 133). Thus a subject has to make sense of a world picture. He further stresses, "man as representing subject, however, 'fantasizes,' i.e., he moves in *imaginatio,* in that his presenting imagines, pictures forth, whatever is, as the objective, into the world as picture" (1977: 147). What is illustrated here is how the imagination creates or brings into being the 'world as picture.' These two ideas – world as picture and the formation of the subject – have been central themes throughout my research.[100]

Returning to my research question of whether work interpellates a "subject of the signifier" (Burgin, 2013: 83), we would have to consider the work – or the 'world as picture' – having inscribed within *it* a position for the subject (of the signifier). This is also part of Heidegger's argument, although his emphasis is slightly different. Where Burgin's subject is one of interpretation, a subject who deals with the play of signs rather than the world as it appears. Heidegger's subject confronts a representational world in a similar way but

---

[100] Photography is useful for considering the implications of Heidegger's ideas. And in the Twenty First Century, a time of ubiquitous photography (Hand, 2012), Heidegger's 'world as picture' is interchangeable with and more relevant when expressed as 'world as photograph.'

it is knowledge, structured through representation that is in question. The correlation between 'actualised forms,' the world as it appears and ideas are configured and obscured by a representational layer. What we experience then is a world rendered pictorially,[101] that is repetitive, familiar and standardized (Judovitz, 1988: 68).[102] It normalises, regulates and orders things. So our idea of the world and our idea of a world picture are ultimately enfolded into our 'idea of an image.' The subject who photographs makes a representational frame inside of which they are actively formed, configured and bound but they also make what we come to recognise as image.

Appearances *appear* to be at the heart of our photographs, they form part of the logic of photography and support its claim to represent something of the world to us. Abstracting photography from the visual, as Deleuze abstracted difference from sameness, is useful because it opens up questions of photographic agency. And in what follows, I examine this in more detail.

One commonly used example of the authority and power of a photograph (Bate, 2009: 2; Clarke, 1977:19; Campany, 2016; Snyder & Allen, 1975: 164) is its application in a passport or identity card. In this context the photographic portrait operates beyond only representational terms. It becomes imbued in the discourses of authority, power and control. A portrait in a passport confers upon its owner the seemingly uncontested notions of identity, citizenship and nationality. However, the determinants of identity, citizenship or nationality are never simply fixed or singular. When invoked by a passport, these determinants are activated by the resemblance of the owner to their representation shown by their image on a particular page that document. The agency of the photograph, in this context, is its ability to

---

[101] Increasingly, I argue, the majority of pictures we encounter are what we might understand as 'photographic' in their construction (rather than paintings or graphic illustrations – even many Internet memes have photographic imagery as their basis).

[102] Judovitz's (1988) essay, along with Heidegger's is cited in Daniel Rubinstein's currently unpublished article 'Nothing to see here: Photography and the Politics of Invisibility' (2013) As I have stated elsewhere I make use of Rubinstein's published views but due to its unpublished status I have deliberately not cited his article directly.

legitimize an individual in the eyes of the state and its instruments of authority (Police, Border Guards etc.) through the comparative similarity of appearances. The passport photograph does not, as Barthes suggests (1984/1973:04) simply refer back to what is seen. Instead it confirms another modality of being. It authorises or otherwise a particular, recognisable, legal status (here I pause to highlight my use of the word 'recognisable,' as it too carries within it the affirmation of something visual). In this context, a photograph is one contingent version of a legal and institutional identity.

There is no actual authority contained in the passport photograph. We only see the affects of authority by the actions taken on behalf of the state in response to passport photographs. Were we to examine it more closely for any affinity it may have to its owner's likeness, we may even be surprised at how un-like passport photographs we actually are. In this aspect alone, we accept an illusion of resemblance and a kind of authority of representation. Our acceptance is necessary for a particular agency of photographic authority. But the potential un-likeness[103] of a passport photograph is, I claim, an example of identity projection whereby only certain aspects of information support a particular circumstance. An identity given by a passport photograph is far removed from being individual and personal, in fact it is uniform, organised and offers only limited resemblance to its subject. It takes identical elements, such as lighting, backgrounds and poses, as its foundation. In this sense, the passport photograph does not operate in the way we understand most photographs to. Rather it functions at the level of Althusser's theory of interpellation where a person is 'interpellated' or 'hailed' by ideology when they recognise themselves as a 'subject' (Althusser, 2008/1970: 48). Although Althusser explains interpellation in the form of a narrative, [104] he points out that the existence of ideology and the

---

[103] There are clearly limits on how un-like our passport photographs we may be. However, I use this example to stress the innate, day-to-day assumptions of representational authority.

[104] Althusser's narrative suggests that a when a Police officer calls out 'Hey, you there!' interpellation occurs at the point at which the person being addressed recognizes it is them being 'hailed' (Althusser, 2008/1970:48).

transformation of an individual into a subject are "one and the same thing" (2008/1970: 49) there is no "temporal succession" (2008/1970: 49). As I stated, power and authority are not contained within the passport itself. It may be confirmed but it cannot be measured in any useful way by examining the physical passport. Here we experience the affective power of a particular type of resemblance, whose paradox is that it is both individual and universal. The individual is created by the universal formula of the passport photograph's tropes.

It is also possible to draw something further from Althusser's theory of interpellation. Where Althusser suggests ideology [105] is a system of representations within society (2005/1965: 231), he identifies representations as being "images, myths, ideas or concepts" (2005/1965). These representations have a totalising effect on individual experience, with the world then seen as being shaped in a particular way through representations. It is this system,[106] described by Althusser, which forms the background for individual experience. Within it the specific material and social practices of society, at a particular time in history, inform our individual understanding of the world. Representational systems are therefore at the core of the social world. What then is a passport photograph's more radical position? Instead of being understood as a reproduction of the appearance of an individual it represents a wider question of about the certainty and authority of identity. This question may initially be framed through the terms of visual likenesses but in order to think critically about it we need to detach the visual from its references. The photograph in the passport does not depict its subject in any meaningful way, rather they are a projection of a particular form of systematic state identity: they *reproduce* identity rather than *represent* it.

---

[105] Throughout this thesis I consider ideology as being socially constructed knowledge.

[106] The word system is used here as it is Althusser's term but we may also be inclined to consider the word 'structure' in its place. The problem this brings is the more general criticism of Althusser's project as being Structuralist Marxism.

Following this, in more general terms, there is only a further step in which we might assess photography as the context through which history, social politics and power are reproduced through image rather than represented by it. These terms are made possible not simply by likenesses or resemblances but by a relational structuring of image itself to a network of other images. Thus we no longer photograph the events happening in the world instead we organise the world *in order to photograph.* And we embed photography within a network of other images that adhere to parameters supportive of our own subjectivity.

5.7.   Summary

In this chapter I claimed that mediated experiences are best understood as being pre-formed. As an example of this I identified how technology, in all its guises, generates particular kinds of images and certain kinds of expectations of image. In addition, these acquire a retroactive position, wherein we assess image as image in order to make sense of them. What this means is that something like a camera's smile recognition technology pre-supposes smiles as a feature of standard portraits. In doing this, smiles then become one of the realities of portraits. Logically, if photography creates a particular subjectivity then we can also appreciate technology as similarly creating a particular form of photography.

In section two I identified how the camera is now a computer or, more accurately, how computers have become small enough and mobile enough to become cameras and image making devices. This has meant image making is aligned with mobility and connectivity and, as I have pointed to elsewhere in this thesis, it also becomes a part of the architecture of computer algorithmic processes. The conflation of so many features into a single device has changed the 'location and time of photography' meaning that reflection and analysis take place on one device, possibly even within the same small period. I argued photographs become photographs because technology structures them in that way. And in turn they structure a subjectivity to understand them. What this means is that photographs are not

objective things in the world: access to them only occurs from an engaged and subjective position.

In this chapter I also highlighted how the current period of post-photography was similar to the time when painters were liberated (due to the invention of photography) from their obligations to represent the world visually. And I suggested this could be best understood as how photography could be used to give form to philosophical questions. Through the writing of Rancière I approached the philosophical question of what makes an image and I identified how current photographic technology favours a practice dominated by resemblance. In contrast, images of dissemblance create a disturbance in representational conventions. My argument is that it is possible to read the structures of representation from practice that holds no faithfulness to representation itself. As I have described earlier in this thesis, amateur photographers can often produce work that does not adhere well to the terms of resemblance, even when technology assists their efforts. Nevertheless, photography still has an affective power and agency. Thus, in spite of the naiveté of some types of photographs it is still possible for them to subjectively engage complex feelings and emotions. Functioning as dissemblances – images that fail to represent – they also expose the terms of resemblance by their fundamental negation of its structure. The *punctum* was described as not only a connection back to a reality but as also having a relationship to the infinite images which flow as part of the network of image experience. The *punctum* is a response to the continuous rhythms and processes of selection and interaction. And understood in this way, our personal responses to images become as much about the processes of selection and choice, as they are about what is visible in the image. My move here is to incorporate contemporary aspects (digital technology) of photography into an understanding of the *punctum*. This expresses something of how the instrumental qualities of technology not only limit subjectivity or creative agency but also fundamentally alter how we perceive the world as photographed.

I then argued that we experience reality in photography because we interact with the world in ways structured by our relationship to digital images. As images spatially configure environments they also articulate the possibility of a non-subjective experience. I make the claim that photography augments reality with a layer of additional information that is not just visual. An example of how this occurs is when in digital photography, image creation and image display occur simultaneously on the same screen. In this way, photography creates a context in which the world is a reality overlaid with image. As creation and transmission also become a singular event, additional layers of data and information reinforce indexicality, the 'being there then' part, of photography. I claim this informational layering is fundamental to any new understanding of photography. And such a conceptualisation of photography should incorporate the consequences of an image/screen and reality overlay; indexicality as a concept appended by image meta-data; and mobility as a mediating environment. I then suggested Guattari's concept of metamodelling offers a way to understand photography as a non-hierarchical managing process. This then situates a human subject, not at the Cartesian centre of all things but as a node within a network. This points to how we consider the creation of different images from data.

In the final section of this chapter I considered the challenge of how we can uncouple representation from photography if representation functions to create subjectivity. Especially since to remove representation would effectively erase the subject who understands through representation. I identified a contradiction built into photography that oscillates between technology and creativity and that both of these have an impact on photography as a representational practice and constrain how we think about photography itself. I then asked what are the circumstances that make an image possible? Here, I concluded representation eventually has to create an artificial blockage. Through a discussion of Heidegger's notion of the world as picture (1977: 129) I articulated how a perceiving subject is needed in order to understand the world. Thus, experiencing world as picture can only happen through a system of representation and subjectivity is

intrinsically linked to this. I argued that photography exposes a representational frame inside which subjects are actively formed, configured and bound. Then I developed a line of thinking taking into account not only the properties of likeness and resemblances but also the relational structuring of image itself within a network of other images. I concluded that we organise the world in order to make images and these become embedded within an understanding that is supportive of our own subjectivity.

Throughout this chapter, and against a backdrop examining representation, both technology and subjectivity have been considered as part of a process that *appears to already know.* I have suggested how photographic theory and discourse need to evolve to accommodate the wider scope of what, largely as a result of technology, photography has become. An inevitable consequence of technology is how it masks its processes and how it appears to be neutral while in fact it is a limiting and controlling process. I also set out an argument as to how indexicality could be re-considered. And I framed discussion around the concurrency of perceptual experiences. All are important areas that contribute to the re-siting of a photographic theory, which I argue should take on properties of the non-hierarchical diagram or pattern. These properties are also part of the form of the network of photographs we experience on a daily basis. This is why photography, as a way of thinking, is able to articulate radically complex positions about its own conditions and the social force of representation.

Chapter Six: conclusions

6.1. Introduction: the agency of photography and the photographic image

This research project has examined the agency of photography and the photographic image. In this thesis I have set out a philosophical engagement, through photography of how representations are interwoven and intertwined. I have claimed images embody notions of representational failure, because they present themselves as image in support of a fiction of reality. The new contribution to knowledge it makes is embedded into its conclusions and the refinements it proposes for contemporary photographic theory. Such refinements include the incorporation of non-representational approaches into existing photographic theory.

The conclusions I draw from this research are that a function of photography is not to create likeness of places or things. Instead it demonstrates the realisation of how unlike place or things photographs really are. This conclusion then opens a way to think about representation and its negation. To be clear, this seemingly paradoxical position is possible, partly, because photography mediates directly what is in front of the camera and photographic perception has generally been orientated toward understanding photography under the terms of resemblance and representation. Having predominantly used a non-representational approach in this research I wanted to investigate what impact this would have on how we understand the symbolic order and subjectivity. To this end I argued a subject of the signifier is interpellated by practice but the signifier is an indicator not only of the absence of objects and a lack of material presence but also of the proximity of affects. Thirdly and finally, I conclude that the agency of photography conceals power structures that sustain an activity of labour masked by creativity and enjoyment. This creates a compulsion to produce and enjoy image for its own purpose: image for image.

The contribution to knowledge I have made is that, combined, these findings help reconfigure photographic theory. They offer a way to move beyond a representational paradigm by marshalling a new approach that does not focus on what images show, since so many images show us the same things. If the fundamental gesture of photography is a promise to represent then this thesis has offered a way to critique this promise and its foreclosure. This thesis does not disregard representation as a force. It does however, consider how representation can be shifted from the dominant position it has in relation to photography.

Photography enables this because, while it may be concerned with a visual surface showing images of the world, it also shapes responses, forces interactions, organises rhythms and creates affective intensities. It does this not just because of the pictures of things it shows but through a networked relationship of image to image. This image to image relationship, as experienced most obviously on the Internet is, as I argued in Chapter Four easily conflated into image *for* image. As I suggested, photography also stresses other, non-visual, properties aligned to labour, to repetition, to enjoyment, to flows of data, to incorporation, to being a form that can re-form: it contains the characteristics of the virtual and the *invisible*. In this thesis I applied non-representational theories to the subject of photography to articulate and understand these aspects which current photographic theory has yet to fully incorporate. I make no claim to have re-written photographic theory, instead I express something of the gaps within it. Throughout this research I have taken different perspectives on photography and reconfigured them with alternative ideas and thinking.

My attention during this research began with, and has continued to be focused on what photography does: its agency. I conclude, understanding the agency of photography helps radically think image in new terms. As I have argued throughout this thesis, photography is a relational and multi-agential force therefore to consider image only in limited terms of description

or interpretation falls short of understanding the fundamental power of photography today.

6.2. The realisation of how unlike places photographs really are: the conclusions in Chapter One

In support of my arguments, in Chapter One, I started by examining through a case study of the Cornish Alps how photography helps to configure our notions of space and place. I argued that while photography appears to function as a mechanism for mediated reproduction most often it fails: it does not create likeness of places. Instead, our reading of photography should be in order to substantiate the realisation of how unlike places photographs really are. This argument, which begins in chapter one section three, determines the direction of my thinking throughout this project. As I conclude in the Chapter One, by failing to adequately represent, photography exposes how the world is also mediated by affective intensities, by quantities and volumes and data in addition to encounters with the visual. Today photography interrupts our phenomenal experience of the world. Since what we see has usually been 'pre-seen' in the vast quantities of already existing photographs, the notion of 'images of the world' becomes shifted into the world-as-image. The staging of life for the camera also creates a photographically determined reality and our attention on the visual hides the modes of labour and production and the choreographing involved in producing what we see. To this end, I consider photography as an event whose agency is the capacity to select, distinguish and divide experience.

All of these initial observations and conclusions in Chapter One helped my research to critique representation and question the tools conventionally used to understand what photography does. However, these conclusions also posed a question about understanding photography through photography. Namely, that when we use photography to express something of the photographic, is this photography the same as the photographic

substance it expresses?[107] My research therefore became organised to understand image and its agency from differing perspectives. Taking a non-representational approach I set out to examine how we can speak of image by: how it activates behaviours (swiping, selecting, deleting, interacting); how it configures subjectivity (as the result of a potential to be shaped) – not by showing idealised images of others – through the doxa of its technology; and how it discloses representation as an obscuring force (masking the disconnection of the symbolic, the sign and its signified and a social relation between work and pleasure).

6.3. A gap in which there is a capacity to *become:* the conclusions in Chapter Two

In Chapter Two, having set out a position that questions representation, I consider the symbolic order and the subject of the signifier to reconcile a symbolic subject into non-representational positions. My arguments develop a notion of the subject of the signifier as being possible when there is a gap in which there is a capacity to *become* (I go on to consider the *becoming* of photography and the photographic subject in Chapter Four). Similar to photography's failure to render the world visually, the subject is never actualised. The subject *is the split* caused by a failure to be either fully conscious or unconscious. Again, following Chapter One, I concluded the affective agency of photography appeared to exceed the visual. But through our affinity to representation the other operations of the photographic image are masked, such that we continually return to questions of similarity and likeness. My argument here relies on photography being understood only partially by the symbolic order. What I consider the most useful term from my conclusion is how both photography and subject are shaped by 'potential.' This potentiality manifests itself as a void or split. In the case of photographic images this also allows them to be configured by other means (in terms of digital data and computer algorithms) and in other ways (in terms

---

[107] Here I have re-purposed Lacan's question: "to know whether, when I speak of myself, I am the same as the self of whom I speak" (2006/1966: 430) as discussed in the Introduction of this thesis.

of how it operates as a social relation). I examine the relational aspect of practice in Chapter Three.

6.4. Pre-conditioning the conditions of photography's own production: the conclusions in Chapter Three

In Chapter Three I introduced how the research showed there was a relational component to photography. The aim of this chapter was in part to construct an argument supporting a philosophical claim for photography as preconditioning the conditions of its own production. I concluded photography and photographs help create a collective social identity and within my own participatory practice photography had been used as a reason to socialise, to meet, to walk, to discuss, to visit places. I determined something in these interconnected responses to photography expressed the ideas of new materialist thinking, in which agency is linked to both humans and things. My conclusions did not discard photography as a representational practice; rather they augmented it with other purposes. I therefore describe a photography that is able to simultaneously expose the processual and repeated mechanisms of looking while also visually examining the world itself. What becomes significant from this is being able to recognise how the mechanisms of looking are part of the conditions of photography's production. In addition, if photography can be intrinsic to creating a collective social identity then this too is preconditioned by the mode of photography's production (in Chapter Five I consider how photography's mode of production has evolved in the digital age). Once again, challenging our established notions of photography, I conclude from the research that the external world is mediated through a series of manipulated or failed exercises. But far from indicating something wrong with photography, these manipulations and failures help expose the mechanisms of representational practice. In this way, photography frames new questions about perception.

If photography is not just about reading signs and interpreting the visual, I suggest we need to consider how affect is part of the overall experience of

image. Since affect has the ability to shape, circulate and influence individuals and environments then it also describes something of the agency of photography. I examined affect and agency through Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) theories of assemblage by breaking down each stage of the participatory process. I concluded some valuable questions could be framed by examining the relationship of participants to the overall research structure as well as their relationship to the research instruments and apparatus. The most significant maps back onto photography as a research method. Asking, how can we know if the photography we use to express something about itself is constituted in the same way as that which it expresses?

Following Burgin's suggestion for an account of the total environment of the image (2009: 180) I map out how the experiential can be reconciled with the representational. As Burgin (1982) attempted in the 1980s, photography theory calls for both a symbolic semiotic account along with a psychoanalytic account. I have no doubt these two remain relevant. Nevertheless, what is now missing is a means to integrate them more fully into a reticulated, non-hierarchical theoretical diagram of image as agent. I begin this by providing theoretical and philosophical accounts of image forms: the affection-image, the 'emotional-image' and the 'memory-image.' I believe these also support my understanding of how photography *becomes* photography, which is the subject of Chapter Four.

6.5.   Invisible exploitation enabled by creative, flexible and mobile forms of labour: the conclusions in Chapter Four

In Chapter Four I examined how photography is interpellated by production and pleasure. I abstracted photography into the forces of labour and enjoyment expressed how they create a form of value. This process was unconcerned with what images were depictions of. In this way photography is concerned with being a paradoxical reflexive commodity form that mediates experience and conveys value forms. I argue, as images proliferate into every aspect of our daily lives they shape both a representational

subjectivity and a subject of processual production and consumption. Such subjects claim to control a means of cultural production that is currently measured by interactions and connections, suggesting image can be understood as a social relation.

I argue that photographic theory needs to consider two hidden properties in photography. The first is how the sign and its signified are disconnected and this is a gap masked by the symbolic order. The second is the connection between image and image, between interaction and real social relation, between work and pleasure. Both these help structure a contemporary subjectivity within late capitalism that is multiple, simultaneous and undecidable. One configured as an interconnected human and post-human repeating process.

In this chapter I also considered the gap distancing 'what is' and 'what is shown,' highlighting that since representations indicate reality, they only do so from within the reality they indicate. Developing this toward an account of photography I suggest the most radical way photography can function is to not be complicit with a world as image, but to expose the unavoidable misrecognitions and delusions of the visible.

I argue the recursive logic of digitally infinite photography offers a means to image life as processual rather than as a subject of symbolic representation. Taken this way, photography is the expression of a moving, flexible, creative force of production. As I conclude in this chapter, in political terms, confronting the invisible exploitation enabled by the unrestricted enjoyment and endless distractions (of more and more images) embodied in creative, flexible and mobile forms of labour may help halt the untrammelled capitalist form of domination that takes on the very same structure.

6.6. A process that appears to already know*: the conclusions in Chapter Five

The focus of Chapter Five was on technology and how technology generates particular kinds of images. I argued we view images retroactively wherein we assess image as images in order to make sense of them. Building on my previous arguments, I claim if photography produces a particular subjectivity then technology similarly creates a particular form of photography.

I went on to consider how digital photography is part of the architecture of computer algorithmic processes and how the 'location and time of photography' has altered. Thus photographs become photographs because technology structures them in that way. Ultimately, I state photographs are not objective things in the world: access to them can only occur from an engaged and subjective position.

Through the writing of Rancière (2009b) I approached the philosophical question of what makes an image and I identified how current photographic technology favours a practice dominated by resemblance. I examined the notion of dissemblance and images that fail to represent – as they also expose the terms of resemblance by their fundamental negation of its structure. I then rethought the *punctum* in terms of photographic digital technology since our responses to images become as much about the processes of networks, connections, selection and choice, as they are about what is visible in the image. I also argued we experience reality in photography because our interactions with the world are structured by our relationship to digital images.

I examined Guattari's (1995) concept of metamodelling as a way to understand photography as a non-hierarchical managing process, situating a human subject as a node within a network. This pointed to how we can consider the creation of different images from data. Arguing for photography as the creator of a representational frame inside which subjects are actively formed and bound, I developed a line of thinking around the relational

structuring of image itself within a network of other images. I then concluded we attempt to organise the world in order to make images and these are embedded with an understanding supportive of our own subjectivity.

In Chapter Five both technology and subjectivity were considered as being part of a process that *appears to already know.* I then re-considered indexicality and the concurrency of perceptual experiences. Both contribute to the re-siting of photographic theory. Such a theory may need to take the properties of the non-hierarchical diagram or pattern. Given that such properties are also the form of the network of photographs we experience on a daily basis, photography as a way of thinking can articulate radically complex positions about its own conditions and the social force of representation.

6.7.   The contribution to knowledge

The contribution to knowledge this thesis makes is in its approaches towards photographic theory. Through non-representational theories it understands, describes and argues for photography as a practice embodying a relational and multi-agential force. In turn, this agency configures subjectivity and also helps configure what photography is. What I argue, precisely, is that photography contributes to a continuous and ultimately unsatisfied compulsion to produce and enjoy image for its own purpose: image for image. It does this not as we might imagine through the aesthetics of representation and resemblance (as these mask photography's purpose) but by the replication of its own deficiencies and through the concealment of its own forms of production. Exposing this facet reveals not only how seeing is inflected with other forces of experience, but also how representation can never be analogous to anything more than a process of substitution. At the same time, the opposing side of photography, its reverse, is not in how it fails to show but in how it shows us failure: the failure to fully mediate experience. This gap is where both photography and the subjectivity it describes are located.

In this thesis, my explanation and understanding of photography as a way to expose inconsistencies in representation has taken different approaches. My critique of representation in part indicated the gap between signifier and signified. Alongside this I incorporated my understanding of the role of the network of social relations that connect images to each other. Most importantly, behind the forces of representation, I identified photography as oscillating between being an act of labour and production to one of enjoyment and pleasure. In the same way, the subject of the signifier also has a capacity to be a subject of affect, of desire, of fantasy and jouissance. As this thesis proposes, there is a need to alter our perspective and consider photography as a force and process in which both labour and pleasure overlap. In these terms we can recognise how the contemporary need to make more and more images is connected to a desire to obtain satisfaction and fulfilment.

This research emerged from a frustration with photography, since photography always appears limited to terms of interpretation and cultural or historical contexts. In this sense, the promise of image is never completely fulfilled. I claim photographs understood as visual surfaces (Flusser, 2007) obfuscate a logic which suggests images are always more than what they show but they are equally less than what we believe them to be. When image becomes the driving force for comprehending image we have, perhaps, already confused fulfilment with accumulation. This is sustained as photography continues to fail to represent the things it shows us. Which, of course, begs the question as to how we can understand photography at all if all we do is look at the things it inadequately represents to us. In terms of beginning to fully understand photography, perhaps we have simply been looking in the wrong place.

References and bibliography

Adams, R. Baltz, L. Bercher, B & H. et al., 2009, New Topographics, Germany: Steidl.

Agamben, G., 2002, 'Difference and Repetition: on Guy Debord's Films' in McDonough, T., (Ed), Guy Debord and the Situationist International, pp. 313-319, Cambridge: MIT Press.

Ahmed, S., 2004, The Cultural Politics of Emotion, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Ahmed, S., 2010, The Promise of Happiness, Durham: Duke University Press.

Althusser, L., 2006, 'The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter' in Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings 1978-1987, pp. 163-207, London: Verso.

Althusser, L., 2005/1965, For Marx, London: Verso.

Althusser, L., 2008/1970, On Ideology, London: Verso.

Andersdotter, S., 2015, Choking on the madeleine: encounters and alternative approaches to memory in a contemporary art practice, Ph.D thesis, University of the Arts London, London.

Badiou, A., 2005, Being and Event, London: Continuum.

Bailly, L., 2012, Lacan, London: Oneworld Publications.

Barad, K., 2007, Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning, Durham: Duke University Press.

Barker, R., 1792, *Panorama: London from the Roof of Albion Mills,* [Colour aquatint mounted on linen], Lancaster House, London.

Barthes, R., 1977/1975, Roland Barthes, Berkley: University of California Press.

Barthes, R., 1984/1980, Camera Lucida, London: Flamingo.

Barthes, R., 1984/1973, Mythologies, London: Paladin.

Batchen, G., 2000, Each Wild Idea. Writing, Photography, History, London: MIT Press.

Batchen, G., 2002b, 'Snapshots: art history and the ethnographic turn' in Photographies, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 121-42, London: Taylor Francis.

Bate, D., 2009, Photography the Key Concepts, Oxford: Berg.

Bate, D., 2010, 'The Memory of Photography' in Photographies, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 243-257, London: Taylor & Francis.

Bate, D., 2013a, 'The Digital Condition of Photography: Cameras, Computers and Display' in Lister, M., (Ed), The Photographic Image in Digital Culture (second edition), Oxford: Routledge.

Bate, D., 2013, 'The Emancipating Machine' in Dahlgren, A., Petersson, D. & Vestberg, N.L., (Eds), Representational Machines, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

Baudrillard. J., 2009, Why Hasn't Everything Already Disappeared?, London: Seagull Books.

Bazin, A., 1980/1960, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' in Trachtenberg, A., (Ed), Classic Essays on Photography, New Haven: Leete's Island Books.

BBC News, 2016, 'Battle for Aleppo: Photo of shocked and bloodied Syrian five-year-old sparks outrage', BBC News. [Online].
Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-37116349
[Accessed September 2016].

Bell, J., & Colebrook, J., (Eds), 2009, Deleuze and History, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd.

Benjamin, W., 1982/1970, Illuminations, London: Fontana.

Benjamin, W., 1972/1931, 'Short History of Photography' in Screen, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 5-26, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Benjamin, W., 2005/1999, Selected Writings Volume 2, Part 2 1931-1934, Jennings, M.W., Eiland, H., & Smith, G., (Eds), Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Benjamin, W., 2002/1982, The Arcades Project, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bennett, J., 2010, Vibrant Matter, Durham: Duke University Press.

Bergold, J & Thomas, S., 2012, 'Participatory Research Methods: A Methodological Approach in Motion' in Forum: Qualitative Social Research, Vol. 13, No. 1,
Available online at: http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1801/3334 [Accessed August 2016].

Bergson, H., 2010/1896, Matter and Memory, Kansas: Digireads.

Bishop, C., 2006, (Ed), Participation, London: Whitechapel Gallery.

Bishop, R. & Cubitt, S., 2013, 'Camera as Object and Process: An Interview with Victor Burgin' in Theory Culture and Society Vol. 30, No. 7/8, pp.199-219, London: Sage.

Bishop, R. & Manghani, S., 2016, Barthes / Burgin, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Blain Southern, 2015, *Moving Stillness (Mt. Rainier).* [Artwork].
Available online at: https://www.blainsouthern.com/exhibitions/moving-stillness-mt-rainier [Accessed November 2015].

Bogue, R., 2013, Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts, Oxford: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P., 1986, 'The Forms of Capital' in Richardson, J.E., (Ed), Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education, pp.241-58, Connecticut: Greenword Press.

Bourriaud, N., 2002, Relational Aesthetics, Dijon: Les Presses du Réel.

Braidotti, R., 2000, 'Teratologies' in Buchanan, I. & Colebrook, C., (Eds), Deleuze and Feminist Theory, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Braidotti, R., 2013, The Post-Human, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Breitbach, J., 2011, 'The Photo-as-thing' in European Journal of English Studies, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 31-43, London: Routledge.

Brooks, P., 1984, Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative. New York: Vintage.

Brown, B., 2001, 'Thing theory' in Critical Inquiry, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 1-22, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bull, S., 2010, Photography, Oxford: Routledge.

Burgin, V., 1982, (Ed), Thinking Photography, London: Macmillan.

Burgin, V., 2006a, The Remembered Film, London: Reaktion Books Ltd.

Burgin, V., 2006b, 'Possessive, Pensive and Possessed' in Green, D. & Lowry, J. (Eds), Stillness and Time: Photography and the Moving Image, pp. 165-176, Brighton: Photoworks,

Burgin, V., 2009, Situational Aesthetics, Belgium: Leuven University Press.

Burgin, V., 2011, Parallel Texts, London: Reaktion Books Ltd.

Burgin, V., 2013a, 'Interactive Cinema and the Uncinematic' in Campbell, N., Cramerotti, A., (Eds), Photocinema the Creative Edges of Photography and Film, pp. 70-87, Bristol: Intellect.

Burgin, V., 2013b, 'The Location of Virtual Experience' in Kuhn, A., (Ed), Little Madnesses, pp. 23-37, London: I.B. Tauris & Co.

Burgin, V., 2014, Lecture delivered at Global Futures Speaker Series, Winchester Centre for Global Futures in Art Design & Media, 11th November 2014.

Burgin, V., 2015, 'A Perspective on Digital Light' in Johnson, L., (Ed), Mobility and Fantasy in Visual Culture, pp. 271-280, London: Routledge.

Butler, J., 2015, Senses of the Subject, New York: Fordham University Press.

Callinicos, A., 1983, The Revolutionary Ideas of Marx, London: Bookmarks Publishing Co-Operative.

Campany, D., 2014, 'Photography, Encore' in Time Present: Photography from the Deutsche Bank Collection, Berlin: Deutsche Bank.
Available online at: http://davidcampany.com/photography-encore/
[Accessed July 2016].

Cameron, J., 1997, *Titanic.* [Film].

Castells, M., 2010, The Rise of the Network Society, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Clarke, B & Parsons, J., 2013, 'Becoming Rhizome Researchers' in Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 35-43, Oslo: Open Journal Systems.
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7577/rerm.685

Clarke, G., 1977, The Photograph, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Coleridge, S.T., 1817/2013 Biographia Literaria, Project Gutenberg. [Online].
Available online at: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6081/6081-h/6081-h.htm
[Accessed May 2015].

Collier, J & Collier, M., 1986/1967, Visual Anthropology, Photography as a Research Method, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Connolly, W.E., 2002, Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Coole, D. & Frost, S., (Eds), 2010, New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Cornwall Council, 2012, Edge of Poverty. [Online].
Available online at: https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3628939/Edge-of-poverty.pdf
[Accessed May 2015].

Cornwall Council, 2013, Cornwall Council Briefing note on Economic Deprivation Indices
1999-2009. [Online].
Available online at: https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3629156/EDIBriefingNote.pdf
[Accessed May 2015].

Cornwall Council, 2016, St Austell, St Blazey and china Clay Area Regeneration Plan.
[Online].
Available online at: https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3631547/facts-figures-020211.doc
[Accessed July 2016].

Costello, D., 2008, 'On the Very Idea of a 'Specific' Medium: Michael Fried and Stanley
Cavell on Painting and Photography as Arts' in Critical Inquiry, Vol. 34, No. 2, (Winter), pp.
274-312, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Costello, D., 2012, 'The Question Concerning Photography' in the Journal of Aesthetics
and Art Criticism, Vol. 70, Issue 01, (Winter), pp. 101-113, Hoboken: Blackwell.
DOI:10.1111/j.1540-6245.2011.01502.x

Costello, D & Iversen, M., 2012, 'Introduction: Photography between Art History and
Philosophy'*,* in Critical Inquiry Vol. 38, No. 4, (Summer), pp. 679-693, Chicago: University
of Chicago Press.

Critchley, S., 2015, ABC of Impossibility, Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing.

Cubitt, S., 2014, The Practice of Light, London: MIT Press.

Cubitt, S., Palmer, D. & Tkacz, N., 2015. Digital Light, London: Open Humanities Press.

Davis, S.L., 2013, *Across 116th Street*. [Online].
Available online at: https://sonialouisedavis.com/across-116th-street/
[Accessed July 2017].

de Certeau, M., 1988, The Practice of Everyday Life, London: University of California
Press.

DeLanda, M., 2006, A New Philosophy of Society, London: Continuum.

DeLanda, M., 2016, Assemblage Theory, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Delbyck, C., 2016, 'The Most Popular Instagram of all Time', Huffington Post. [Online]. Available online at: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/the-most-popular-instagram-of-all-time-is-a-picture-of-selena-gomez-sucking-on-a-straw_us_57863192e4b0867123deedf8 [Accessed August 2017].

Deleuze, G., 1983, Cinema 1: The Movement Image, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, G., 1998, Essays Critical and Clinical, London: Verso.

Deleuze, G., 2014/1968, Difference and Repetition, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F., 1983, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F., 1994, What is Philosophy?, New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F., 2004. A Thousand Plateaus, London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Derrida, J., 1998/1967, Of Grammatology, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Diderot, D., 2013/1757, Le Fils naturel, Paris: Flammarion.

Diderot, D., 2017/1758, Discours sur la Poésie Dramatique, London: Forgotten Books.

Edwards, E., 2009, 'Thinking Photography Beyond the Visual' in Long, J., Noble, A. & Welch, E., (Eds), Theoretical Snapshots, pp. 31-48, London: Routledge

Elkins, J., 2005, 'What Do We Want Photography to Be? A Response to Michael Fried', in Critical Inquiry, Vol. 31, No. 4, (Summer), pp. 938-956, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Etherington, D., 2014, 'Flickr at 10: 1M Photos shared per day', Techcrunch. [Online]. Available online at: https://techcrunch.com/2014/02/10/flickr-at-10-1m-photos-shared-per-day-170-increase-since-making-1tb-free/
[Accessed August 2017].

Fink, B., 1997, The Lacanian Subject, Between Language and Jouissance, Chichester: Princeton University Press.

Fink, B., 2014, Against Understanding, Volume 2, London: Routledge.

Flusser, V., 2007, Towards a Philosophy of Photography, London: Reaktion.

Fox, N & Alldred, P., 2015, 'New materialist social inquiry: designs, methods and the research-assemblage', in International Journal of Social Research Methodology, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 399-414, London: Taylor & Francis.
DOI: 10.1080/13645579.2014.921458

Freedland, C., 2010, 'Photographs and Icons' in Walden, S., (Ed), Photography and Philosophy Essays on the Pencil of Nature, pp. 50-69, London: Blackwell.

Freud, S., 1984/1917, Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Middlesex: Pelican Books.

Freud, S., 1986/1953, The Interpretation of Dreams, London: Pelican Books.

Freud, S., 1989/1930, Civilization, Society and Religion, Group Psychology, Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Fried, M., 2005, 'Barthes's Punctum' in Critical Inquiry Vol. 31, No. 3, (Spring), pp. 539–574, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Frosh, P., 2002. 'Rhetorics of the overlooked: on the communicative modes of stock advertising images' in Journal of Consumer Culture, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 171-196, London: Sage.

Frosh, P., 2003. The Image Factory, Oxford: Berg.

Frosh, P., 2015. 'The Gestural Image: The Selfie, Photography Theory, and Kinaesthetic Sociability' in International Journal of Communication, Vol. 9, Feature pp. 1607–1628, Los Angeles: USC Annenberg Press.

Fulbeck, K., 2001, *The Hapa Project*. [Online].
Available online at: http://www.thehapaproject.com
[Accessed June 2017].

Garde-Hansen, J., 2014, 'Friendship Photography: Memory, Mobility and Social Networking' in Larsen, J. & Sandbye, M., (Eds), Digital Snaps the New Face of Photography, pp. 87-108, London: I.B. Tauris.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A,L., 1967/2006, The Discovery of Grounded Theory, London: Aldine Transaction.

Gómez Cruz, E. & Meyer, E. T., 2012, 'Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the emerging fifth moment of photography' in Photographies, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 203-221, London: Taylor & Francis.

Gómez Cruz, E. & Ardèvol, E., 2013, *'Performing Photography Practices in Everyday Life'* in Photographies, Vol 6, No. 1, pp. 35-44, London: Taylor & Francis.

Google Maps, 2018, *Google Maps*, Google. [Online].
Available at: https://www.google.co.uk/maps
[Accessed October 2017].

Guattari, F., 1995, Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetics Paradigm, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hackemann, R., & Strandquist, M., 2014, *The Archive of Unmade Photographs*. [Online].
Available online at: http://www.nomovement.com/Archive-of-Unmade-Photographs
[Accessed August 2017].

Hand, M., 2010, 'The Rise and Fall of Cyberspace, or How Cyberspace Turned Inside Out' in Hall, J. Grindstaff, L. & Ming-Cheng, L., (Eds), Culture: A Sociological Handbook, pp. 357-367, London: Routledge.

Hand, M., 2012, Ubiquitous Photography, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Harvey, D., 2010, A Companion to Marx's Capital, London: Verso.

Harvey, D., 2016, *Value Theory in Marx,* lecture delivered at BIH Summer School, Birkbeck, University of London, London, 19th -21st July 2016.

Heidegger, M., 1977, The Question Concerning Technology, New York: Harper and Row.

Holm, G., 2008a, 'Visual Research Methods: Where Are We and Where Are We Going?*'* in Nagy Hesse-Biber, S. & Leavy, P., (Eds), Handbook of Emergent Methods, pp. 325-342, New York: Guildford Press.

Holm, G., 2008b. 'Photography as a Performance' in Forum: Qualitative Social Research, Vol. 9, No. 2, Article 38, Berlin: Institute for Qualitative Research and Center for Digital Systems.
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-9.2.394.

Holmes, O. W., 1859, 'The Age of Photography' in The Atlantic, Vol. 3, No 20, pp. 738-748, Boston: The Atlantic Monthly.

Huang, Yi-Hui., 2011. 'Understanding Digital-Synthesized Photographs Through Theories of Knowledge: A Case Study of Tom Bamberger's Cultured Landscapes' in Art Education, Vol. 64, No. 5, pp. 35-42, London: Taylor & Francis.

Ingold, T., 1993, 'The Temporality of the Landscape' in World Archaeology, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 152-174, London: Taylor & Francis.

Ingold, T., 2000, The Perception of the Environment, London: Routledge.

Instagram, 2017, *Instagram Statistics*, Instagram. [Online].
Available online at: https://instagram-press.com/our-story
[Accessed September 2016].

Jakobson, R., 1995/1990, On Language, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Jameson, F., 2011, Representing Capital a Reading of Volume One, London: Verso.

Johnson, D., 2016, *ShotHotspot, The Photography Locations Finder. Abandoned, photo shoots*. [Online].
Available online at: http://www.shothotspot.com
[Accessed September 2016].

Jørgensen, M., & Phillips, L., 2002, Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method, London: Sage.

Judovitz, D., 1988, 'Representation and its Limits in Descartes' in Silverman, H.J., (Ed), Postmodernism and continental philosophy, pp. 68-84, New York: State University of New York Press.

Kabesh, A. T., 2013, 'Soundspace' in Kuhn, A., (Ed) Little Madnesses, pp. 65-76, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

Kember, S., 2008, 'The Virtual Life of Photography' in Photographies, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 175-203, London: Taylor & Francis.

Kember, S., 2013, 'Ambient Intelligent Photography' in Lister, M., (Ed), The Photographic Image in Digital Culture (second edition), pp. 56-76, London: Routledge.

Kember, S. & Zylinska, J., 2015, Life After New Media, London: MIT Press.

King, H., 2015, Virtual Memory, Durham: Duke University Press.

Kuc, K. & Zylinska, J., 2016, Photomediations: A Reader, London: Open Humanities Press.

Lacan, J., 1970, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, New York: Norton.

Lacan, J., 1991, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953 – 1954, New York: Norton.

Lacan, J., 2006/1966, Écrits, New York: Norton.

Laruelle, F., 2011, The Concept of Non-Photography, Falmouth: Urbanomic.

Lasén, A., & Gómez Cruz, E., 2009. 'Digital photography and picture sharing: Redefining the public/private divide' in Knowledge, Technology & Policy, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 205–215, Dordrecht: Springer.
DOI: 10.1007/s12130-009-9086-8

Latour, B., 2005, Reassembling the Social, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lefèbvre, H., 1991, The Production of Space, Oxford: Blackwell.

Lent. M. S., 2014, 'Praxis of Potentiality' in Johnson, L., (Ed), Mobility and Fantasy in Visual Culture, pp. 115-123, New York: Routledge.

Levine, K., 2008, *A Photo Project's Message: Hello, Neighbor*, National Public Radio Inc. [Online].
Available online at: https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93515006 [Accessed June 2017].

Lister, M., 1995, (Ed), The Photographic Image in Digital Culture (first edition), London: Routledge.

Lister, M., 2013, (Ed), The Photographic Image in Digital Culture (second edition), London: Routledge.

Lister, M., 2007, *'Sack in the Sand'* in Convergence, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 251-274, London: Sage.

Lister, M., 2014, 'Overlooking, Rarely Looking and Not Looking' in Larsen, J. & Sandbye, M., Digital Snaps the New Face of Photography, pp. 1-24, London: I.B. Tauris.

Lorimer, H., 2005, 'Cultural geography: The Busyness of Being "More Than Representational"' in Progress in Human Geography, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 83–94, London: Sage.

Lyotard, J.F., 1991, The Inhuman: Reflections on Time, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lyotard, J.F., 1993, Libidinal Economy, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Mader, M.B., 2014 'Whence Intensity? Deleuze and the Revival of a Concept' in Beaulieu, A. Kazarian, E. & Sushyska, J., (Eds), Gilles Deleuze and Metaphysics, pp. 225–248, New York: Lexington Books.

Manovich, L., 2013, Software Takes Command*,* London: Bloomsbury.

Manovich, L., 2016, Instagram and Contemporary Image, Creative Commons license. [Online].
Available online at: http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/instagram-and-contemporary-

image
[Accessed Dec 2016].

Marx, K., 1991/1887, Capital - A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1, Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Massumi, B., 2002, Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation, Durham: Duke University Press.

Massumi, B., 2015, Politics of Affect, Cambridge: Polity Press.

McGowan,T., 2016, Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets, New York: Columbia University Press.

Memory Traces, 2014, *Memory Traces*, MIT. [Online].
Available online at: http://locast.mit.edu/memorytraces/
[Accessed May 2014].

Merleau-Ponty, M., 2005/1945, Phenomenology of Perception, London: Routledge.

Mitchell, W.J.T (Ed), 2002, Landscape and Power, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mulvey, L., 2006, Death 24 x a Second, London: Reaktion Books Ltd.

No Eco Town public group, Facebook, 2015, *No eco town public group*, Facebook.
[Online].
Available online at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/104453242945947/
[Accessed August 2015].

Nolan, C., 2000, *Momento.* [Film].

Open Locast, 2014, *Open Locast*, MIT. [Online].
Available online at: http://locast.mit.edu
[Accessed May 2014].

O'Sullivan, S., 2001, 'The Aesthetics of Affect, Thinking Art Beyond Representation' in Angelaki, Journal of the Theoretical Humanities, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 125-135, London: Routledge.

Parikka, J., 2012, 'New Materialism as Media Theory: Medianatures and Dirty Matter' in Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 95–100, London: Taylor & Francis.

Parisi, L., 2013, Contagious Architecture. For an Aesthetic Computation of Space, London: MIT Press.

Parr, A., (Ed), 2010, The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Peirce, C. S., 1992/1894, The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, Vol. 1, (Eds), Houser, N., & Kloesel, C., Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

PhotoVoice, 2014, *Photovoice.* [Online].
Available online at: http://www.photovoice.org/about/info/activities
[Accessed May 2014].

Pink, S., 2007, Doing Visual Ethnography, London: Sage.

Pink, S., 2011, 'Sensory digital photography: re-thinking 'moving' and the image' in Visual Studies, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 4-13, London: Taylor & Francis.

Pontbriand, C., 2011, Mutations: Perspectives on Photography, Göttingen: Steidl/Paris Photo.

Prins, E., 2010, 'Participatory Photography: A tool for empowerment or surveillance?' in Action Research, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 426-443, London: Sage.

Rancière, J., 2009a, The Emancipated Spectator, London: Verso.

Rancière, J., 2009b, The Future of the Image, London: Verso.

Rancière, J., 2011, The Politics of Aesthetics, London: Continuum International.

Reason, P. & Bradbury-Huang, H., 2008, The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice, London: Sage.

Ritchen, F., 2009, After Photography, New York: Norton.

Rodowick, D.N., 2001, Reading the Figural, or, Philosophy after the New Media, Durham: Duke University Press.

Rodowick, D.N., 2007, The Virtual Life of Film, London: Harvard University Press.

Rodowick, D.N., 2014, Elegy for Theory, London: Harvard University Press.

Rose, G., 2002, Visual Methodologies, London: Sage.

Rose, G., 2015, 'Rethinking the geographies of cultural "objects" through digital technologies: interface, network and friction' in Progress in Human Geography, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 334-351, London: Sage.
Available online at: http://oro.open.ac.uk/43319/3/digital%20and%20cultural%20v4.pdf
[Accessed August 2016.]

Rubinstein, D., 2013, 'Nothing to see here: Photography and the Politics of Invisibility', Weblog. [Online].
Available online at: http://www.danielrubinstein.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/
Rubinstein_Nothing-to-See-Here.pdf
[Accessed July 2017].

Rubinstein, D., 2015, 'What is 21st Century Photography?', Photographers Gallery Blog. [Online].
Available online at: http://thephotographersgalleryblog.org.uk/2015/07/03/what-is-21st-century-photography/
[Accessed July 2015].

Rubinstein, D., 2017, 'Failure to Engage: Art Criticism in the Age of Simulacrum' in Journal of Visual Culture, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 43-55, London: Sage.
DOI: 10.1177/1470412917690970.

Rubinstein, D., Golding, J., & Fisher, A., (Eds), 2013, On the Verge of Photography, Birmingham: ARTicle Press.

Rubinstein, D., & Sluis, K., 2008, 'A Life More Photographic' in Photographies, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 9-28, London: Taylor & Francis.

Rubinstein, D., & Sluis, K., 2013, 'The Digital Image in Photographic Culture' in Lister, M., (Ed), The Photographic Image in Digital Culture (second edition), pp. 22-40, London: Routledge.

Said, E., 1996, Representations of the Intellectual, New York: Vintage Books.

Salvesen, B., 2009, New Topographics, London: Steidl.

Sandbye, M., 2016, 'It Has Not Been – It Is. The Signaletic Transformation of Photography' in Kuc. K., & Zylinkska. J., (Eds), pp. 95-108, Photomediations: A Reader, London: Open Humanities Press.

Saussure, F., 1974, Course in general linguistics, London: Fontana/Collins.

Schama, S., 1995, Landscape and Memory, London: Fontana Press.

Schuster, J., 2013, 'Between Manufacturing and Landscapes', in Photography & Culture, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 193-212, London: Bloomsbury.

Scruton, R., 1981, 'Photography and Representation' in Critical Inquiry, Vol. 7, No. 3, (Spring), pp. 557-603, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sekula, A., 2002/1995, Fish Stories, Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag GmbH.

Shurkus, M., 2014, 'Camera Lucida and Affect: Beyond representation' in Photographies, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 67-83, London: Taylor & Francis.

Slater, D., 1995, 'Photography and Modern Vision' in Jenks, C, (Ed), pp. 218-237, Visual Culture, London: Routledge.

Smith, C., 2013, 'Facebook Users Are Uploading 350 Million New Photos Each Day', Business Insider. [Online].
Available at: http://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-350-million-photos-each-day-2013-9?IR=T
[Accessed August 2017].

Soja, E., 2001, Postmetropolis, Oxford: Blackwell.

Sontag, S., 1977, On Photography, London: Penguin.

Stanek, L., 2008, 'Space as Concrete Abstraction: Hegel, Marx, and Modern Urbanism in Henri Lefebvre' in Kipfer, S, Goonewardena, K, Schmid, C, Milgoom, R, (Eds), Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Henri Lefebvre and Radical Politics, London: Routledge.

Stiegler. B., 2012, 'Interview: From Libidinal Economy to The Ecology of the Spirit' in Parrhesia, Issue 14, pp. 9-15, London: Open Humanities Press.

Tagg, J., 2008, 'Mindless Photography' in Long, J. J., Noble, A. and Welch, E., (Eds), Photography: Theoretical Snapshots, pp. 16-30, London: Routledge.

Tamas, S., 2011, Life After Leaving, Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press Inc.

Thrift, N., 2008, Non-Representational Theory, Oxford: Routledge.

Tomšič, S., 2015, The Capitalist Unconscious, London: Verso.

Tuan, Y-F., 1977, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Uricchio, W., 2011, 'The algorithmic turn: Photosynth, augmented reality, and the changing implications of the image' in Visual Studies, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 25–35, London: Taylor & Francis.

Van der Tuin, I. & Dolphijn R., 2010, 'The Transversality of New Materialism' in Women: A Cultural Review, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 153-171, London: Taylor & Francis.

Van Dijck, J., 2007, Mediated Memories in the Digital Age, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Van Dijck, J., 2008, 'Digital photography: Communication, identity, memory' in Visual Communication, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 57–76, London: Sage. DOI:10.1177/1470357207084865

Van Dijck, J., 2011, 'Flickr and the Culture of Connectivity: sharing views, experiences and memories' in Memory Studies, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 401-15, London: Sage.

Van House, N.A., 2011, 'Personal photography, digital technologies, and the uses of the visual' in Visual Studies, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 125–134, London: Taylor & Francis. DOI:10.1080/1472586X.2011.571888

Viola, B., 1979, *Moving Stillness (Mt. Rainier),* [film, projections, light and water].

Visit Cornwall CIC, 2017, *Visit Cornwall | Holidays in Cornwall*. [Online].
Available online at: https://www.visitcornwall.com
[Accessed August 2017].

Walton, K., 2010 'Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism' in Walden, S., (Ed), Photography and Philosophy Essays on the Pencil of Nature, pp. 14-49, London: Blackwell.

Waterton, E., forthcoming, 'Landscape and Non-Representational Theories' in Howard, P. Thompson, I. & Waterton, E., (Eds), The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies. London: Routledge.
Available online at: https://www.academia.edu/2049869/Landscape_and_Non-Representational_Theories
[Accessed June 2017].

Watney, S., 2006, 'Tunnel Vision: Photographic Education in Britain in the 1980s' in Afterimage, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 32-36, New York: Visual Studies Workshop.

Wells, L., (Ed), 2010, The Photography Reader, Oxford: Routledge.

Wells, L., 2011, Land Matters, London: I.B. Tauris.

Wikipedia, 2016, Death of Alan Kurdi, Wikipedia. [Online].
Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Alan_Kurdi
[Accessed September 2016].

Willett, J., 2009, Why is Cornwall So Poor? Narrative, Perception and Identity, Ph.D thesis, Exeter University, Exeter.

Winnicott, D.W., 1953, 'Transitional objects and transitional phenomena: a study of the first not-me possession'*,* International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, Vol. 34, pp. 89-97, Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell.

Winnicott, D.W., 1971, Playing & Reality, London: Tavistock Publications.

Wylie, J., 2007. Landscape, Oxford: Routledge.

Žižek, S., 1997/2008, The Plague of Fantasies, London: Verso.

Žižek, S., 2006, The Parallax View, London: MIT Press.

Žižek, S., 2008, The Sublime Object of Ideology, London: Verso.

Žižek, S., 2011, How to Read Lacan, London: Granta Books. [E-book].

Žižek, S., 2011b, Living in the End of Times, London: Verso.

Žižek, S., 2013, Interrogating the Real, London: Bloomsbury. [E-book].

Žižek, S., 2014a, Absolute Recoil, London: Verso.

Žižek, S., 2014b, Event, London: Penguin Group.

Zizek, S., 2016, 'Can One Exit from The Capitalist Discourse Without Becoming a Saint?'
in Crisis and Critique, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 481-499, Dialectical Materialism Collective.
[Online].
Available online at: http://crisiscritique.org/
[Accessed January 2017].

Appendix 1: practice

In this appendix I discuss and contextualise my practice. When discussing my work, I apply the theoretical ideas from this thesis, outline my approach to the practice and examine how the practice informs theory and vice versa. The practice discussed here has been made during the course of the research and is a response to the theoretical research and the community workshops. As stated in the introduction, practice can be understood as two distinct forms: a participatory / collaborative practice and my own personal practice. The participatory / collaborative practice has been discussed previously, in Chapter Three. Visual work resulting from this aspect of the research is not a part of the submission. Therefore, what follows is an examination of my own personal practice. Along with these major pieces, I also produced edited videos of the workshop interviews. Some of these have been used in the presentation of my research at conferences.

i. Absent from Work

DESCRIPTION: *Absent from Work*, 2014. Colour, high-definition, digital video projection loop. Projected to closely match print dimensions. 03:32 minutes. Performers: Workshop participants.
One archival inkjet print 86.6 x 57.7 inch / 220 x 146.6 cm

'Absent from Work' consists of a single large grid based image of photographs taken of the pages of a china clay mine captain's notebook. Each page details the mundane happenings of day-to-day life working in the china clay industry at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. The piece was drawn from an examination of the archive at Wheal Martyn Museum. The museum archive contains few written items and consists mainly of physical objects donated by people who have worked in the clay mines or locals who live in the area.

On examination I could see the notebook had been used in specific way. Conventionally, working left to right, its author had documented daily life and events. However, he had also turned the book over and working from the rear, noted down those members of staff who were 'absent from work.' Thus how the notebook had been used was embodied directly within it. Seemingly the notebook contained an instruction or direction, reminding us of how it had once been used and handled.

This photographic work illustrates the action of the author of the notebook and his rotation of the book. It also suggests the day-to-day similarity and monotony of life working in the clay mines. This work, through its depiction of associative elements, fulfilled my desire to not simply 'document' the area but to suggest images through words and to allow the viewer to construct their own narrative account of how life was working in the clay mines and how the notebook was used.
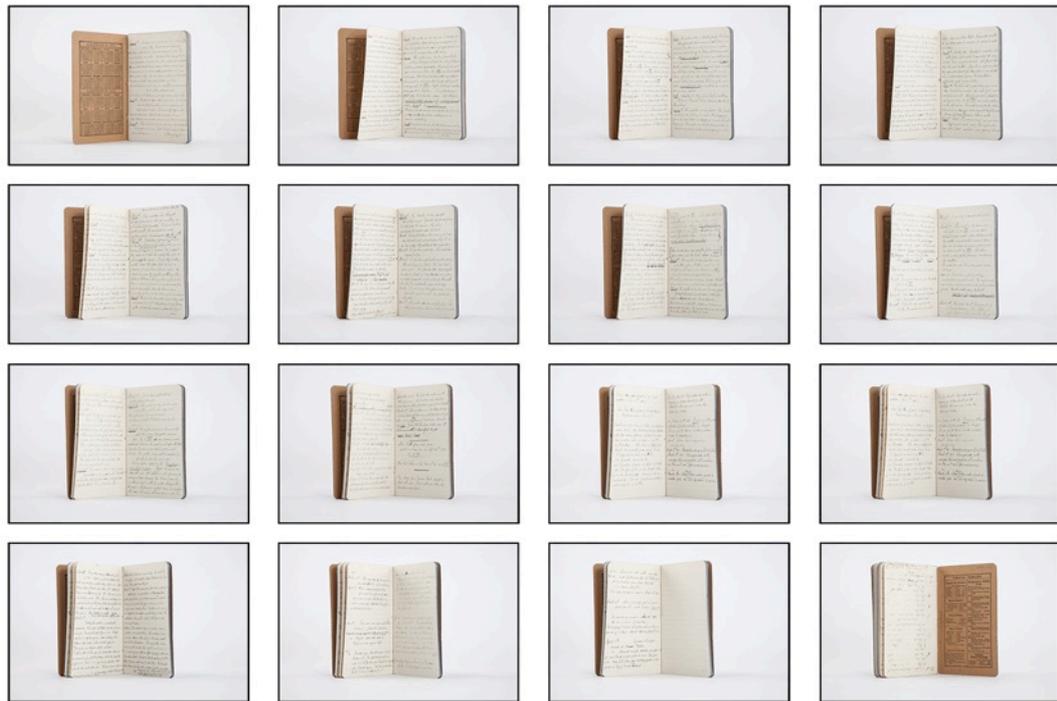
Figure 1 *Absent from Work, 2013 – J. Hillman*

After creating the initial images, I considered how this piece could be developed to relate to how I understood affect. This work creates a context for the viewer to think about how the notebook was used. It was my intention to be as neutral as possible, to record and display the images of the notebook in a way that did not impose a position. I used a traditional 'new topographic,' detached approach[108] to photographing objects in the studio.

The work is the beginning of a process, which is explored throughout the research and linked to the associative function of image, text and how it mediates its meaning to the subject viewer. The development of these ideas can be seen through the illustration below (*Figure 2* Absent From Work, 2014 installation diagram - J. Hillman). The main image of the notebook is displayed in conjunction with a looped video of research workshop

---

[108] See the work of New Topographics (Salvesen, 2009) that attempted a form of "stylistic anonymity".

participants reading from their own journals of life in 2014. The installed work created a context for considering the journaling or recording of 'everyday life.'

Figure 2 *Absent From Work, 2014 installation diagram - J. Hillman*

In this work, the connections operate on a number of levels: literal, associative, metaphorical and poetic. This piece represents one method for depicting a landscape without showing it physically and describes life in the area at a specific time.

ii. Ritornello

DESCRIPTION: *Ritornello*, 2015. Fourteen framed archival inkjet prints 26 x 13 inch / 66.25 x 33.02 cm

'Ritornello' (the little return) is a series of square diptychs predominantly showing the industrial landscape of the china clay area. Each pair of images is created from a single image wherein the left and right image is moved along the horizontal aspect. It has been suggested, by those viewing the work, that the pair of images are similar to stereoscopic images, although closer examination shows they are not simply shifts from a single viewing position. In fact the images are a result of horizontal panning. Together they form a distorted panoramic image, one that simultaneously overlaps but also creates a gap between the left and right photograph. They attempt to suggest a question about monocular vision of traditional Euclidean perspective, which posits the notion that at the centre of everything is the observer. This

work suggests vision is not objective and that perspective is a spatial construction. The 'cone of vision', which is focused back toward a single observer, could be split, or perhaps horizons could be shifted infinitely into new spaces. In common with much of my practice, the suggestion is for the viewer to construct a new landscape from the two combined images in the space between.

Figure 3 *Ritornello 01, 2013 - J. Hillman*

This work also represents a reversal of the idea that from different positions we see the same thing differently: within this work it is the image that has moved and occupies different positions. The viewer therefore does not move but sees the exact same image differently.

iii. Practice as theory and research

How do 'Absent from Work' and 'Ritornello' feed into my research question? Both of these pieces represent practice produced early in the research. They informed the project in the following ways. Firstly, they introduced a way of working with grid structures. The grid makes direct reference to location and place. It situates us as viewers of work and in terms of perspective it places the viewer deliberately in a central position, as the one who looks. Secondly, they drew attention to different ways to present landscape. In 'Absent from

Work,' the piece references a narrative of historical moments that occurred in a specific location through an historical object. My interest in making this work was to consider how narrative constructs place and to layer multiple narratives into a work. Along with the written text from the mine captain is the gesture he made by rotating the notebook. There is also the narrative of the repeating format of the images of the pages, presented as a grid. Finally, I juxtaposed the contemporary narratives to convey how place can be understood not visually but as interconnected stories. I believe the basis of this work is to represent place non-representationally.

'Ritornello,' is a series of images depicting a constructed landscape. Its presentation, as two squared photographs, recalls stereoscopic images. Here I wanted to subtly indicate something of the virtual, 3D environment, a space that has no physical presence. The gesture of the work also suggests a process of returning to the same space and experiencing a different encounter with an environment. Each return provides a new work, based on experience and perception of the previous work.

Both these pieces of work begin by taking perception and representation as a problem. Perception, being multi-dimensional, is fundamentally an experience between object and subject. I understand both of my pieces of work to be, at the essential level, an organisation of objects into a photographic configuration or tableau. When Bennett (2010) described objects as having a vital materiality she was suggesting something additional takes place in perception: it is not the decoding of objects but a tangible force of engagement. When objects are framed and read as a tableau our usual position is to perceive them as representational (in the Eighteenth Century Diderot[109] discussed the tableau in relation to painting and later Barthes (1984/1980; 1977/1975) used it in relation to cinema). Creating a tableau is to select, to make a cut out from reality, to create an interruption of durational principles. Furthermore, as Burgin states, a tableau may be the "projection

---

[109] See '*Entretiens sur le Fils naturel*' (Diderot, 2013/1757) and the '*Discours de la poésie dramatique*' (2017/1758).

into the field of representational practices, of fundamental psychological processes described in psycho-analysis" (1986: 129). The symbolic strength of the tableau is how it embodies a response that is not simply the translation of object into meaning. Instead it is the inter-relationship of things that creates a multi-dimensional, surplus of responses. Objects in a tableau are contingent on a network of many-to-many and one-to-many relationships. It is at the intersection, where objects meet the world, that objects then interpellate subjects: they bring us into the realm of *their own* representation.

Today we see photographic heterogeneity as map, document, layer, collator, quantifier, memory and measurer of, amongst other things, individual worth; a worth valued or judged through interactions within the network. These elements of photographic life, or the life-ness of photography, indicate relational properties are as important as visual ones. We can consider representational and material forces to be relational as well as situational, describing complex arcs of connections taking in affect, context, memory and perception in order to acquire agential force. However, such material force or agency of individual objects is not direct: it is mediated through representational frameworks and through affective encounters of perception. Vital materiality can be seen within the Internet – at its simplest in the number of 'likes' an image might attract on Facebook or Instagram. As these actions provoke responses the inert data objects that initiate them are using a social system to organise themselves toward 'life-ness.'

Following Lacan's assertion that the unconscious is "structured like a language," I believe we can understand the world itself as being structured *like* a photograph. This then opens a discussion for photography to address the implausibility of the visual: photography needs to account for a multi-layered ecology of perception, of the conditions of its production and of affect. In this sense photography creates 'situational assemblages,' that emerge from where objects are located and its work is to add into those objects different forces, systems, rhythms and affects.

Absent from Work and *Ritornello* are works that are begin to examine non-representational structures. They both use representation as their foundation but in their own way they stress a negation of representational forces and they activate a subject/object ambiguity. They are also statements that contribute to my conclusion as to how unlike place photographs really are. Here, the complexity of place becomes apparent through the way visual representation alone fails to adequately make sense of it.

iv. Periphery

DESCRIPTION: *Periphery*, 2015. Interactive application using live data from Instagram, Flickr and Google search sources. Installed as a continuously updating projected work.

In this section I examine my work *Periphery*. I begin by describing the work and the reasons for creating it within the research. I created this work relatively late within the research process and it was produced as a response to an earlier intention not take any photographs myself. Firstly, I will explain this approach and I will then to explain how *Periphery* embodies and supports this idea.

It has long been my view, despite this project being about photography, that more photographs were not necessarily the means by which my questions could be adequately answered. Rather than adding more photographs into the world I believe, echoing Burgin, it would be better to attempt clarity of understanding of the ones already here. From this premise I began the research and focused on the community, participatory element as the primary practice for submission. However, the practice of others, while useful, became only part of the research. A substantive contribution to my findings began to emerge from participants' interactions with each other: from their relationship to and with photography and inevitably to how their photography was practiced. My research lacked a visual articulation of the ideas and theories that were beginning to coalesce. Therefore, it became clear that while theory and investigation was critical for the project it also

needed a practice through which it could be embodied. This meant practice became not an articulation of theoretical ideas but a means to experience these ideas in the form of practice. Embracing practice in this way made it a form of micro-experiments: explorations of the written ideas and thinking in another form.

If theory was to express certain empirical facts about practice, then I reasoned my practice would need to be able to withstand a scrutiny of its purpose through those same theories. My focus was on shared practice: a practice of participants and of relational networks. And the network is the specific influence for "Periphery," as it embraces shared and random Internet data.

I began by questioning what was image? I reasoned that if image was not only visual it must be an amalgam of different things. Thus images are created from connections, from relationships and in the context of the Internet from other people's digital information or data.
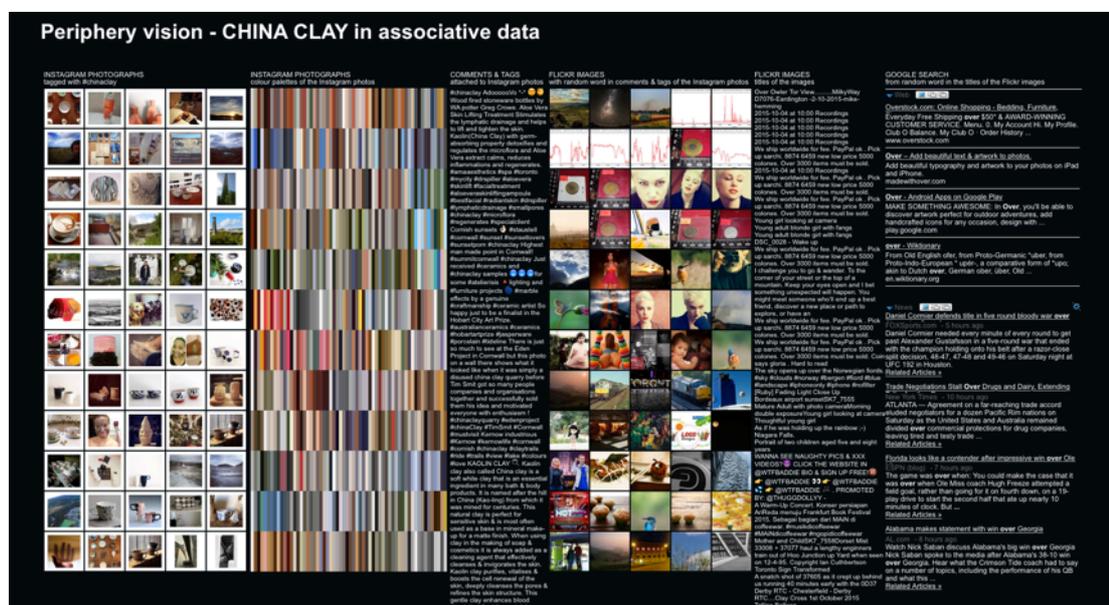

Figure 4 *Periphery, 2015 - J. Hillman*

Periphery is a dynamic, changing set of projects. The current version discussed here is "Periphery vision – china clay in associative data," is a

computer based application. It takes as a starting point a connection to Instagram. The application searches through the Instagram API for images tagged with the term #chinaclay. This search returns the images to *Periphery* and they can be seen displayed in the first column. If a new image is uploaded to Instagram the tag #chinaclay is used and the webpage refreshed the work will change throughout. "Periphery" therefore requires an Internet connection to Instagram in order to exist. All the images in the first column are taken by users of Instagram, while they may not necessarily know their work is being used their images are all publicly available through their individual Instagram feeds. The only reason these images appear in the work is by virtue of their meta-data or as it is termed on Instagram their specific tagging with a particular keyword.

The second column of the work interprets the loaded Instagram images and converts the colours from each image into a column of ten colour palettes from each image. This column is a graphical representation of the colour data contained in each of the searched for Instagram images. It is each image represented only as colour without any perceptual realism of form or shape. It is created by an interaction of the code I have written with the images downloaded.

The third column contains the comments and tags that have been attached to the Instagram images. This will contain the tag #chinaclay but also any additional tags or comments associated with the images and written by users of Instagram who have seen or interacted with these specific images. This column represents another layer of image – the meta-data of image. Unlike the technical specific meta-data this is social data, written comments about the images and bespoke associated tags. The column does not delineate the text so the meta-data and comments from each image joins the other.

The fourth column is created by selecting a random word from the third column and carrying out a search on the other popular image site Flickr. In essence this column repeats the process searching images carried out in

column one but with a word randomly generated from the results of column one and on another image site. By column four we are quite removed from the original search for #chinaclay. The bound associations of columns one, two and three are now randomly connected through the selection of a single word that may have been written in the comments or tags.

Column five, like column three, contains the titles of the images from the Flickr search. Depending on how these have been input by the users of Flickr they may include hash tags relating to the images and some descriptive text.

The final column six, takes a random word from the column five, the image titles and performs a Google word search. It includes a search from the web and a search from news sources available via the web.

This work represents a shift toward what I now describe as an 'anticipated image,' which is an image created in order to be shared, broadcast, networked and linked with other information. It is a future oriented image, linked by algorithms, code, associations and randomness. As a form it represents the 'de-presentification' of lived experience, being the embodiment of coded, connected, outcomes. It is dynamic and always changing and yet it is simultaneously created from pre-existing linked forms.

We currently experience digital images as being more amenable and liable to forms of recombination, fragmentation and to being encountered through associations and connections. As I have stated in Section 01 of this thesis semiotic approaches to signification are no longer the most appropriate tools for describing and explaining such images. In *Reading the Figural* (2001), D.N. Rodowick suggests a linguistic reading of images is both interrupted and disrupted by the different spatiotemporal organisation of contemporary forms of representation. His account of the figural reconciles image and text as being discursive in a non-linear, non-uniform and discontinuous sense. For Rodowick, the figural is not a combination of image and text, it is an interstitial space located between them both that conforms to the properties

of each but can be reduced to neither one nor the other. In the digital age a common property of image and text is computer code, from which they are both shaped. Computer code is organised by instructions and procedures within software that are algorithmic in their structure. These processes then largely determine the location and form of images.

When Victor Burgin (2009) remarked that photographic images are perceived environmentally, he described their dissemination across different realms and how they are experienced as heterogeneous rather than unified objects. For Burgin, image fragments coalesce through differing, mediated, virtual spaces, (such as the Internet) and they mix with the personal fantasies and memories of the viewer. Therefore, images are never one single thing located in one single place. This perspective on what images are and where they are located is pertinent to networked digital images, which mutate and reform continuously. The networked, digital image is the expression of the "interlacing of physical and algorithmic attributes, aesthetic and political forms, which characterise the age of information capitalism" (Rubinstein, Golding & Fisher, 2013: 08). In this way, visual representation is no longer the solid ground of the image. Instead images move beyond representation, becoming forces that structure a reality rather than document it. Taking these arguments, 'Periphery' presents image as an always shifting, incomplete relation between information and data. The inherently flexible work of the image is carried out under the guise of endless pleasure and enjoyment, of the obligation to photograph, to share, to annotate, to comment and to interact within a network of human and object relations.

If the figural is binding a network of image and text into a new form, then the underpinning organisation of computer code and algorithmic manipulation expresses how the force of the figural can be fashioned. How software interacts with algorithms and data structures is, as Lev Manovich describes, the "software medium" (2013: 207). 'Medium' describes a technique which is defined by the material or methods used. A medium is therefore a "combination of particular techniques for generation, editing and accessing

content" (2013: 335). The properties of a media object, Manovich argues, are not specifically defined by its format or file type, for example image or text, but also by the software medium that accesses it. Therefore, an image or text could be considered to be a data structure made visible or accessible through a software medium. The software medium organises data into a familiar or recognisable form but it also may combine it with other data (meta-data) in differing ways.

Periphery makes no attempt to visualise abstract data, which I argue would be a fundamentally representational project. Instead, it organises and builds relationships between the data structures of image and text in order to demonstrate a new conceptual instrument – in which what is visual is seen as incidental or peripheral. Images are not purely visual nor are they purely perceptual objects but I argue they are always relational – they are formed from and create new relationships. What this work expresses is that a key characteristic of networked images is that they are organised around associations and framed by their repeating or random discontinuities rather than by their claim to being 'pictures of something or other.' Furthermore, if software explicitly configures and structures the images and text we encounter, then simultaneously it must also be generating new coordinates for these descriptions of the world.

This work illustrates the research conclusions, as it can be understood as situating photography at the heart of the image for image process. Image within *Periphery* is not about showing something as we might usually expect to do when looking at photographs. Image here begins with a hashtag. It is unimportant what the images show (hence the colour palette breakdown of image) instead the agency of photography here conceals power structures that are sustaining of the labour of photography masked by creativity and enjoyment. If the conditions of photography are pre-configured in 'Periphery,' it is because image making is not about looking nor about what we see but about the circumstances that make looking an act that sustains the photographic image as a relational, commodity form.

v. Sky Lift

DESCRIPTION: *Sky Lift*, 2016. Ski lift pod (from Flaine, France) installation structure. Medium: fibreglass, metal and plastic. Dimensions: height 79 inch, width 81 inch, depth 53 inch / height 200cm, width 205cm, depth 134cm. Two colour, high-definition, digital video projection loops. 10:49 minutes and 02:00 minutes.

In this section I reflect upon my work *Sky Lift* through the notion of the panorama. *Sky Lift* is an installation work, a composite project that incorporates a ski lift from the French Alps and a series of visual works. In Burgin's essay *Time of the Panorama* (2009: 293-312), he presents the panoramic form, reconceptualised as an all-encompassing approach to imaging space. It encapsulates within practice a response to questions of perception, of technology, of viewpoint and movement. Drawing on Burgin's essay and also on Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (2005) I consider the panorama as a way to understand viewing and representational practices as part of 'being with-in' the world. As I stated in Chapter One, the panorama and its theatrical equivalent the diorama have been associated with photographic history, most notably through Daguerre's own interest and experimentation with both these forms prior to the invention of photography. The panorama and diorama incorporate, through technology, a blend of visual and theatrical spectacle.

I argue the panorama offers a model of how practice interpellates a subject of the signifier and as I have argued a subject of affect. The panorama is an attempt to satisfy a desire for a view of everything. As I have argued in this thesis, the gap between the signifier and what it signifies can never be filled. But a fully immersive panorama relies on the belief that the gap is eradicated and the world can be rendered completely and coherently. A subject of the signifier is rarely faced with the intractable gap of signification because the promise of the signifier is infinitely undeliverable. In this sense, we might imagine a subject who, when looking at a panorama, turns around and around but always fails to locate the edge of the frame of the image.

The principles of the panorama are its tension with the concept of the frame, its claim to present a richness of visual perception, its close association to the technology of the day and its replication of the experience of viewing. Early panoramic paintings approached the genre in different ways; some offering a 360-degree view in which the spectators moved, while in others the images themselves moved in front of a static audience. The earliest experimentation with panoramic painting, for example that of Robert Barker (1792), was always to make the audience feel in some way visually immersed. In the age of digital photography technologies such as image stitching and Apple's Quick Time VR (virtual reality) are technology's equivalent of the completed view. In digital forms a mediating device such as a keyboard or mouse controls the visual space and usually the viewer is static while the image itself moves. In terms of 3D modelling, the familiar, participant driven form of the panorama is most evident in computer games wherein we move through or around a virtual environment from almost any point within a 3D model. Other approaches blend the conventions of the panorama with technology for example Tom Bamberger's *Cultured Landscapes*, photographs, which seamlessly repeat and extend the horizontal axis (Huang, 2011).

Burgin (2009: 293-312) observed that moving around a gallery conforms to the principles of the panorama since both looking and movement are combined. Depending on the conditions there is a freedom to explore representational space, in almost any order one choses. Burgin uses these ideas to articulate the sequence-image: neither a still image nor image sequence. The sequence-image is a spatial and temporal configuration, created from successive recollections, associations, perceptions and fantasies. (2009: 297). This conceptual image object joins future and past. My own use of this considers not a form of image but to reflect on how types of image form.[110] In looking at this I created two video experiments, one

---

[110] Here we can consider Jakobson's (1995/1990) structuralist semiotics axis of syntagmatic connections to describe a mode of viewing that is essentially sequential. Whereas the

takes a still panorama and separates the elements (near, middle distance and far distance). The two movie clips are combined and reversed, producing an unfolding panorama[111] (see *Figure 5* Dioramic Panorama 01, 2015, video practice screen shots - J. Hillman). The other work (see *Figure 6* Riding the Ski Lift Through the Cornish Alps, 2014, video screen shots - J. Hillman) is a video and text piece depicting movement through the landscape.

---

paradigmatic axis of associative relations account for the personal connections. The sequence image could be understood as combining both syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations.

[111] This video work also deliberately echoes the format of *Ritornello* in moving form.

Figure 5 *Dioramic Panorama 01, 2015, video practice screen shots - J. Hillman*

Figure 6 *Riding the Ski Lift Through the Cornish Alps, 2014, video screen shots - J. Hillman*

The narrative structure of the panorama is specifically personal, individual and continuous and representative of how we encounter representational forms by processes of selection and association. The panorama invokes multiple acts of perception, of looking and of framing. It is a connecting experience of representation, understood not only as a geometric – Euclidean fixed point of stable and static vision – but also as a connection between multiple encounters. It contains numerous events that emerge from a basic interruption of viewing in which we perceive fragments of experience at any given moment. Viewing, in this reading, is an incomplete event.

The ideal interaction with the panorama is close to an immersive experience in which there no longer is an outside, a space beyond the visual. The frame or border of the image while physically present is by implication deferred, postponed via a stitching together of multiple edges. Panoramic perception could be considered to operate as Barthes described the *punctum*, in that it consists of personal responses to the photographic mise-en-scene. However, Burgin argues it may also be on the 'side of the studium,' as panoramic perception can be formed from common experience, such that associative connections interlink (2009: 296). He argues, even in the

immersive experience of the panorama we still elect to see what has already been seen. The perceived freedom of association creates images sequences, which we imagine to be personal but which may also be bound through commonplace association. [112]

In my work with the panorama I engage with spatiality through practice. This confronts a world perceived through technology (post production image stitching, in-camera guidance etc.) and through different embodied mediating experiences. In the virtual 3D image environment the camera becomes the body as it moves through space, while in the gallery we may move around space that contains the panorama. Merleau-Ponty describes a spatiality of situation, suggesting we know where we are in a bodily sense without relation to "other positions or to external coordinates" (2005/1945:115). [113] The body and movement are linked to our experience of perception. The spatiality of situation describes objects and bodies inhabiting space and linked through perception and movement to other phenomena. In *Situational Aesthetics* (2009: 10), Burgin describes how two objects are perceived along a continuum and how they are then defined. The continuum of perception is formed through movement and Burgin concludes the idea of "perceptual experience as a single object does establish a high degree of latitude in the naming of objects as subdivisions within the subjectively experienced perceptual continuum" (2009: 12). In my practice, the panorama is a perceptual continuum along which the subdivisions of objects are separated only by a matter of duration.

The panorama is strongly connected to depictions of landscape. Therefore, in parallel to my resistance to creating practice emanating from a traditional form of landscape imagery, I also wanted to explore the panorama in order

---

[112] This is also analogous to the algorithmic suggestions brought to us when using websites such as Amazon or Google, in which there is a perceived association to other similar data.

[113] Merleau-Ponty (2005/1945) makes an analysis of bodily movement in order to understand something of external space or the relationship of the body to external space and to define what a body is. He argues that the body should not be considered simply as an object, because it can have and remember certain experiences.

to approach landscape technologically and aesthetically. In fact, my sense of how digital technological processes contribute to image making allowed no other approach than one which addresses some of the problems of developing an ontology of photography. These include viewpoint, movement and time, all of which are recast when examining the panorama in the Twenty-first Century. Consequently, I consider the panorama to be a metaphor for representational experiences and conclude this section with my own conceptualisation of the photographic panorama as embodied in my work *Sky Lift*.

Firstly, the panorama is a perceptual continuum, experienced by the creation of subdivisions of objects and scenes within the larger scene. Each of these are either personally formed or culturally informed. They come into being through movement. Considered together, each becomes part of a personal continuum and each is individually a section or part of a sequence. However, the order in which the subdivisions of objects are experienced is largely irrelevant. They unfold, not in a conventional linear narrative sense but in the arbitrary events of experiencing subdivisions of the overall object. The panorama affords the viewer the opportunity to see everything, all at once, without defining any particular point of interest. Locating something of specific interest is the task of the viewer and how, when and where that happens is largely uncontrolled. As Burgin notes "the experience of looking at the resulting image belongs to the subjective register of durée rather than to the mechanical abstraction of the 'instant'" (2009: 304), it takes time to look and to contemplate. Viewing representational forms amounts to a process of detaching smaller image objects from an overall larger one – like taking detailed individual snapshots from an overall image. The panorama is itself an exemplar of the incomplete photographic 'event,' since the image itself is not stripped away of all other distractions: it is the viewer who needs to frame the image(s) they wish to experience.

Secondly, the panorama embodies movement, even when it is presented as a still image. Camera and viewer movements are integral to any concept of

the panorama. Movement therefore contributes to the panorama both when it is produced and when it is viewed. Its form represents the movement used to create it and also requires movement in order to understand it. Unlike some other photographic forms how it is created defines how it comes to be viewed (although as Frosh (2015), Rubinstein (2015), Rubinstein & Sluis (2008), Gómez Cruz (2012) have noted technology can be argued as having an influence in a non-representational sense). Some movement around the panorama can be controlled or guided but this can feel restrictive, therefore the freedom to experience it in any order is one of the properties of the movement it requires. Movement is not generally associated with the stilled photographic image. More usually it is associated with film, cinema and television. Halting a moving image has the effect of extracting stills "from their narrative surroundings for extended contemplation" (Mulvey, 2006: 161). The panorama is a stilled image, which needs movement to experience it but that then requires a further extraction of stills to understand it.

Thirdly, panoramas require technical intervention: they need specialist software or hardware to produce them. My research has shown that often they are the default mode of producing an image when nothing else appears to be worth photographing. The apparatus required to create a panorama have an in-built doxa driving the production of certain types of imagery. The significance of in-built photographic functions is, as Flusser claims, that the "freedom of the photographer remains a programmed freedom" (2007: 35). This he extends to the choice of object photographed. Not only do cameras control and decide how we take photographs but also they only "photograph what can be photographed" (2007). Developing Flusser's point, all photographs are already contained within categories inside a camera and the world pre-empts the photograph. The photograph then creates significance from the 'information' of the world. Flusser critiques observational independence. The distinction here is in the conceptualisation of a photographer being independent from the apparatus of photography. For Flusser the photography becomes a photograph because of how the camera functions.

To conclude, my description of the panorama combines the visual with the experiential. Within a panorama we make our own subjective work, our own subdivisions of our understanding of image. We produce, in our minds, image for image and image from image. The panorama needs us to work in order to produce our enjoyment from the representation it gives. Yet, what we are presented with is a fiction experienced in the form of a totalising reality. Hidden behind its surface is the form of its own production, namely our labour in finding an enjoyment in image. As I identified earlier in this thesis, in the Cornish Alps we are confronted with its obverse: a reality appearing as a fiction, wherein something appears to have escaped the frame and become both a place and place as image.

vi. Cadence: the research findings and the practice

How should we understand the written research findings and the practice together? Firstly, we must retain a position that allows photography to be understood in all its differences. For this, our current theories of representational signification may be sufficient. However, once we have expressed something about the visible we must then embark on a different work. In conclusion, I return to Burgin's introduction to '*Thinking Photography*' in which he highlights that the theory of photography is dominated by a criticism, comprised of opinions and assumptions that have become the "indisputable 'facts' of history" (1982: 04). So it is, that there is something indisputable about what photography shows us. However, as I have argued, photographic images not only show us the world they configure the relationship we have to the world. This is a relationship shaped by affective intensities, quantities, volumes and data as well as relatively straightforward encounters with things that look good visually. Photography is an event whose agency is the capacity to select, distinguish and divide experience. Photographic images can no longer be simply reduced to an interpretable visual experience, rather they are one of the structures of experience itself. Understood in this way, photography interrupts what we see, not when we think in terms of its visual form but when we imagine the

alternative: our failure to see the distinction between representational images of the world and the complexities of the world as image.

Appendix 2: participatory workshops

i. Overview:

Over the course of the research a range of community based, participatory workshops were carried out (see the Introduction, section iv. and Chapter Three of this thesis). The focus of these workshops was to look at the transformative function of photography.

All workshops included teaching some basic camera skills. They also included unstructured interviews and discussions.

ii. Curriculum outline:

The curriculum for the workshops varied depending on the overall duration and group size. Sessions usually consisted of the following modules and deliverables:

- Basic technical camera skills.
- Assignments (weekly or sometimes carried out during the session).
- Critical thinking / discussion (this included: discussion of the research project; participant interviews; discussion about the practice of other photographers; reflective discussion about the participants' own practice or their responses to the assignments).
- Brief history and theory of photography.

iii. Participant group size:

Participant group size varied from between 8 to 15 participants.

iv. Duration:

The duration of the workshops varied throughout the research:

- Single day (approx. 6 hours).
- Five three-hour sessions over a period of five weeks.
- Ten three-hour sessions over a longer period of ten weeks.

v. Example transcriptions from the research:

The following are transcribed examples of unstructured interviews and discussions with participants. In the first two interviews participants were discussing one of the workshop assignments.

The assignment asked them to photograph ten things they would want to take with them were they forced to leave the friends and loved ones. The only restriction was that they were not allowed to photograph faces or take conventional portraits.

Anonymous Participant #1: *"It was very, very difficult. Very difficult. The only thing we want are photographs of our loved ones. So I went round the house looking at everything and decided that most of the stuff if it went up in flames I wouldn't bother about. It wasn't important. But I assembled a few items and as you can they are items that 'just might make me cry.' I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing but it would be an emotion that would stir me. [Describes her photograph] Coronation cup and saucer, Nineteen Fifty-three. I have no idea how this survived. I come from a family that probably didn't have much, it was just after the war, there wasn't much about, life was like that you probably didn't know any different. But this survived. And that's been with me since 1953 and I was born in 1949. It's the start of my life really. I don't know whether a Coronation cup and saucer is a good omen or not. [Describes her photograph] The Sunday Jug. On Sundays and high days and holidays the jug was filled with evaporated milk to poor over tinned fruit and we thought that was a real treat. We really did. Every member of my family has held this jug, I mean my mother, my father, my grandmother, my bothers and sisters and when my parents died and we sorted out what was there,*

what wasn't there, I got the jug and the others were jealous. I'm not proud of that but you can see the context in which this jug was held. It was difficult to photograph. [Describes her photograph] A little piece of coal. I photographed it on a piece of glass. My mother gave me this when I was about twenty. I don't know why it has survived with me but it has. [Describes her photograph] The rings. The ring at the front is battered, it went under a train. None of them fit me. In context I've got bigger hands now, but I lost one of my fingers and wearing a ring on this finger draws attention to the fact that there's no little finger. But they are the rings and they mean a lot to me, especially the one in the front. [Describes her photograph] The Carriage Clock, there we are. I've still got the clock it's looking a bit tarnished. He said he was fed up with living with three girls, a dog and no clock so he gave me a clock for Christmas. There we are. And I think that just reminds me of how life just . . . he's very practical! [Describes her photograph] The Painted Pot, those of us with children know that we've all had these brought home and we don't know what to do with them. The Painted Pot, there we are. But the pot is immaterial. There's no photograph of Katherine. [Describes her photograph] And again, the painted stone, Elizabeth made this and painted it, again it's an object that she's touched, she did something with, it's my Elizabeth's. That's it."

Anonymous Participant #2: *"I got quite emotional about it. The project changed half way through as you will see. The objects either mean something to me or represent something to me. [Describes her photograph] This is my husband's pocket watch, which I gave him on our wedding day and it is set at a specific time. But I can't divulge why. I'm under strict orders. [Describes her photograph] The rose and the book, I don't know if it's self-explanatory a bit. The washerwoman; my husband gave me twenty-one red roses every time I had a child. So roses remind me of my children and the amount of washing I do for them. [Describes her photograph] This is something I would really miss. The dinner table and when I asked the rest of the family what I*

would miss they said to me the dinner table. Sunday dinner, because it's the time that we then as a family completely unload and we all say what we've got to say. It was nice to think that the children thought it was as important as I have always. [Describes her photograph] That is to demonstrate that if we were on our own we would miss touch. That is my hand and my husband's hand. Difficult to photograph. They do look aggressive, even though I was only trying to depict a hand being held. It almost looks like your grabbing hold of them. [Describes her photograph]. Smell, I would miss the smell of roses. Also because roses are associated with my children."

The following example interview took place when participants discussed their experience taking photographs.

Anonymous Participant #3: *"The last thing I wanted to do was take picture of signs, then I realised signs meant anything that means anything to anybody. As I drove into town I realised there was the sign of the cross, in bright lights and I though how nice, we're being looked after – even though I'm not a Christian. Then I thought, that is what I can take the photographs of. I took my camera and tripod out that night and tried to sort of get pictures, where the cross would be at the top of the picture with some chaos below . . . they're not wonderful pictures. They taught me that light is abstract . . . The actual experience is interesting to me, because I had a camera and a tripod I was sort of invisible to anyone who was passing. People didn't bother to recognise me in the dark. They sort of just walked round me. And I quite liked that invisibility and that ability to just set up and observe things without participating myself.*

Because I played about a bit and got certain effects I then began to think how do I see this world? I'm a certain age, I ought to have opinions about this world. I ought to have a visual concept of what I

see. And I should be able to communicate that . . . but I haven't got it yet. I think in clichés. It worries me."

In this example participants were initially asked to give some reasons as to why they they took photographs and what subjects they liked photographing.

Anonymous Participant #4: *"I can't tell you the reason I take photographs. I enjoy looking at the end result, sometimes. Sometimes to preserve the moment. As a person I like to invoke a reaction in people. I like to rub people up the wrong way. I like to get a reaction. It doesn't have to be a good reaction or a bad reaction. But I like a reaction. Then I know I've taken what I would call a good photograph.*

I like photographing people, being themselves – on the street candid photographs, but not just the person, the shops, the way people do things, the way we interact on a – I'm finding it hard to express in words what I see in my mind. What I see in my mind as a photograph doesn't translate to words often. There are sometimes no words for an image . . . I'm not comfortable doing this [the interview]."

Appendix 3: research outcomes

i. Published Material

'**Surplus Value: Surplus Image**' in What's Left? Marxism, Literature and Culture in the 21st Century, Journal, London: Open Lib Humanities (2017).

'**The Indecisive Moment**' Introduction to the South West Photography Graduate Prize, Exhibition Catalogue, Plymouth: FotoNow (2017).

'**Snapchat: a brief encounter**' Membrana and Fotografija magazine article (2016).

Review of 'Virtual Memory' in Visual Studies Journal, London: Taylor & Francis Group (2016).

'**Why study for a degree in photography?**' in The RPS Journal, pp. 450-451, (2016).

'**Periphery Vision**' chapter in "Electronic Visualisation and the Arts," pp. 79-80, Swindon: BCS Learning & Development (2016).

'**Annotating the World**' chapter in Busch, C., & Siek, J., (Eds) "Kultur und Informatik: Augmented Reality," pp. 55-64, Glückstadt: VWH, (2016).

Review of 'Mobility and Fantasy in Visual Culture' in Visual Studies Journal, London: Taylor & Francis Group (2015).

'**Virtually Invisible: Photography and the image in the demotic space**' in International Journal of the Image, Vol. 04, Issue 04, pp. 57-61, Champaign, Illinois: Common Ground Publishing (2014).

'Re-imaging space, place & memory using digital photography' chapter in "Electronic Visualisation and the Arts," pp. 260-266, Swindon: BCS Learning & Development (2013).

ii. Exhibitions, Conference Papers & Presentations

The Cornish Alps: reality expressed as a fiction
Responding to a Landscape, GRAIN symposium, MAC Birmingham (2017).

Proximity, sharing and choice: the constituents of a digital subject
APHE Conference, Norwich University of the Arts, Norwich (2017).

Rendering the displaced object
'Pointed or Pointless: Recalibrating the Index' conference, at the Photographers Gallery, London (2017).

Panel chair and co-hosted "State of Photography"
Birmingham City University, Birmingham (2017).

Artist talk and exhibition: **'Periphery'**
Hadassah University Gallery, Jerusalem, Israel (2017).

The un-photographic subject
Photography + (con) text Photography in Academic Research symposium, UCL (2016).

Periphery Vision
EVA, London (2016).

Annotating the World
14th Culture and Computer Science conference, INKA, Berlin (2016).

The indecisive moment: the multiple instances of photography
Artist talk, Plymouth College of Art (2015).

Situational Assemblages
Mnemonics Summer School, University of London (2015).

Reshaping the landscape

APHE Conference, Nottingham University (2015).

Infinite imaginary: beyond the visual

21st Century Photography – art, philosophy, technique, Central Saint Martins, London (2015).

Commenting out the sketch book

Collaborative project with Chelsea College of Art funded by AIR's Research & Innovation Investment Scheme (2015).

Uncertain Connections: Between Text and Image.

Writing Communities: People as Place, Falmouth University (2014).

Parataxis, power and the photograph

Collaborative/joint paper with Queens University, Kingston, Canada at Photomedia, Helsinki (2014).

Virtually Invisible: Photography and the image in the demotic space.

Fourth Conference on the Image, Chicago (2013).

Re-imaging space, place & memory using digital photography

EVA, London (2013).

Absent from Work

Kindling the Scarp, Exeter University (2013).

Ten things to take with me

Regionalism & Representation, University of Warwick (2013).

Ten things to take with me: a community education project to re-image space & memory

Sensingsite, Goldsmiths & CSM London (2013).

A Landscape of Objects

Environmental Utterance, Falmouth University (2012).

Method and metaphor: photography as a research process and a performance practice

Block 3 UAL Presentation (2012).

Writing Nature in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

New Independent School of Philosophy (2012).

The Journey

Group Exhibition, Shire Gallery, Cornwall (2011).