

“Tell all the Truth but tell it slant” Emily Dickinson

I believe that my work and practice, as a photographer, theatre-maker and artist, is rooted in the idea and concept that a word, a performance or an image contains within it a metaphorical resonance, and that this resonance can both expand and narrow the viewer’s experience.

What I am starting to realise about my process and the work that I am seeking to produce, is that the act of taking a photograph is itself as important as the photograph that is made.

Since 1839 and the announcement of the first daguerreotype to today’s ‘selfie’, photography has been used to present a truth, create its own fiction, evoke memories, depict poetic landscapes, document and advertise.

In ‘The Social Photo’ by Nathan Jurgenson, he states that **“The self – that feeling that you are you and not someone else – is a story you tell yourself to connect the person you once were to who are now and to who you will become”** and goes on to explore that the photograph of the self is not only an act to record yourself but a **“mode of thinking about yourself”** (Jurgenson, 2019: 54).

In 1988, while training as actor I played the character Fedotik in Anton Chekhov’s ‘Three Sisters’. He was an army officer, who has within his possessions a camera with which he records the birthday party of Irina.

At Christmas 1987, I recorded a Christmas party with some friends from the course. I am interested in the similarities and connections between the fiction of the play and the

reality of wanting to record a personal moment, and to explore the essential difference that in one photography the people present were acting, while in the other the people were being themselves. As Jurgenson points out **“Photography plays an integral role in linking the self over time”** and that you are **“memorialised within the frame”**. (Jurgenson, 2019: 55)

Caught up with the beginning of the MA at Falmouth University was the passing of my father-in-law on the 7th September 2019.

John Berger in ‘Understanding a Photograph’ states that **“A photograph is a result of the photographer’s decision that it is worth recording that this particular event or this particular object has been seen.”** (Berger and Dyer, 2013: 18)

Throughout 2019 I took a number of informal and off-the-cuff photographs, not really knowing if I would display them publicly or reflect on them, though I suspect there was a deeper recognition within myself of the journey I was on with my photography and my continuing exploration and relationship of my presence to world around me.

In November 2019, as part of an exhibition at Conway Hall called ‘Reflection’, I displayed ‘7 Spice Peking Duck’, clearly indicating in the text that accompanied the four photographs, that this was one of the final meals that myself and my partner cooked for Alan and my mother at their home in Fleet.

I believe my work is rooted in the present but is seeking to explore the past, and how we have come to the realisations or concepts that we have and that my photography is informed by my theatre-making process. My current projects, similar to my self-portraits from the past, and while not full enactments, demonstrate an attempt to explore a staged moment in order to encapsulate the ideas I am seeking to capture.

In the book 'Each Wild Idea' Geoffrey Batchen goes onto argue that the desire to create a photograph was an attempt to bridge the artistic and emerging concepts which were occurring between the periods of Enlightenment and Modernity. Using Foucault's thesis on panopticism, he sees a connection between photography and the **"economy of gazes as constituting each of its contributors as a self-reflexive doublet – as both the subject and object"** (Batchen, 2002: 22). and that the desire to photograph is in some-way **"a mapping of bodies in time and presence"** (Batchen, 2002: 23): that through this artificial eye of the camera, the photographer is both recording what is in front but also their physical presence of being there.

I would go further and suggest that even a photograph that was not taken by the viewer also has the aura to transports them to the location, the time and the place of the photographer: to the very spot.

In the project that I began at the start of the MA in September 2019, 'remembrance of day-dreams' is an examination of childhood objects that I still have in my possession and my intention is to expand this further by re-visiting the home and places that I grew up in Fleet.

I see my work over the FMP as a fusion between several projects: the photography of my father-in-law, the revisiting and reassessment of portraits taken when I was younger, and the connection of objects from my childhood and the house I grew up in.

In addition to this is see a strong bond between the photograph and text. 'In Looking Back One Learns to See: Marcel Proust and Photography' Mary Bergstein explores the **"visual culture from a close reading of Proust's In Search of Lost Time and his letters, combined**

with an abiding interest in the history of photography” (Bergstein, 2014: 9). Writing about Lynda Nead and her book ‘The Haunted Gallery’, Bergstein states that **“she advances the alluring idea that light induced the states in which Proust travelled back and forth from the unconscious (oblivion) to conscious (suddenly remembered) thought”** (Bergstein, 2014: 221).

In ‘The Photograph: A Strange and Confined Space’, Mary Price writes that Proust was a touchstone for Walter Benjamin and photography. Benjamin wrote about a photograph having the potential to possess an aura, and he credits Proust as **“the first great imaginative writer to make extensive use of wonder and magic of photography”** (Price, 1999: 150). The photographer Alex Soth talks with Sean O’Hagan of The Guardian in a 2019 interview about his **“sudden realisation that everything in the universe was connected” while sitting in a chair at the edge of a river”** (O’Hagan, 2019).

In summary I would end with the words of Lyle Rexer in their introduction to Will Steacy’s “Photographs Not Taken”. He states that **“the desire to photograph the whole world, all of it, is not an attempt to record or create memories. It is a need to affirm experience as expressible, if not comprehensible and to create an aura of talismanic protection.”** (Steacy, 2012: 3)

In the same way that a character on stage can have a moment of self-realisation about their own existence and their presence in the world, a photograph can possess similar qualities and magic, and to act conduit to the past as well as the future.

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