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Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the acknowledgments.”

King Tong Ho

Photographic Representation:

An Investigation

into

Emerging Photographic Technologies,

Using Street Theatre in Hamilton.

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of digital imaging technology in the past decade has re-questioned the aesthetics of art and design. It has challenged conventional conceptions and assumptions about 'truth' and has affected the re-negotiations of representation in photography.

This thesis is a practical project. It explores representation in photography in the evolving digital era.[1]

The portfolio in the form of a visual document is the major component in this thesis and is accompanied by a written exegesis. The purpose of this portfolio is twofold. Firstly, by using digital manipulating tools, it explores the newer and extended context,[2] of image making and the potential this offers for developing a newer aesthetic in photography. It also demonstrates the outcomes of technological research[3] by a practitioner in photography experiencing the transference from analogue[4] to digital[5] photography. The supporting exegesis forms a discourse with the portfolio and contextualizes the project.

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[1] At present, analogue chemical processes are still the dominating processes in photography and digital technology is undergoing constant development. I therefore refer to the present situation as the 'evolving digital era' and the term digital only refers to digital photography in this project.

[2] Although 'context' often means the site where something exists, in this exegesis, I use the term to refer to the content of representation. Elizabeth Mangini describes the context as "In one sense, context is the photograph's physical location: gallery, museum, book, newspaper, tabloid, ID card... However, context can also be the subject matter of the photograph itself: portrait, landscape, event, architecture, travel and so forth..." (Mangini 2000, p.50)

[3] Ink jet technology is part of this technological research, Epson NZ Ltd. have used me to test and demonstrate the quality of their newest ink jet printers and printing substrate. As a result, they have used the images of this project for promotional purpose when launching their new printers and printing substrate.

[4] This refers to the process of optical recording onto film with chemical processing.

[5] This refers to the process of optical recording, including the scanning of film, onto digital file.

INTRODUCTION

The title of this project is ‘Photographic Representation: An Investigation into Emerging Photographic Technologies, Using Street Theatre in Hamilton.’

I chose street theatre in Hamilton as the subject of this project because street theatre is a constructed, manipulated and improvised performance. The performers construct their concepts and ideas, they then manipulate their performances to suit various situations and improvise when there are interactions from the audiences. Every performance is unique, even though it departs from the same concept, new representations or identities are developed as it emerges. This project has parallels to this process. I use analogue photography to document the constructed performance as raw data, then I use digital technology to manipulate the context of the data. I also ‘improvise’ during the manipulation and development of new ideas. The context of the final body of work usually departs from its original representations and bears new concepts and identities on its own.

Moreover, street theatre is bizarre in a real world situation. The context of the raw data tends to be fictitious and yet reflects reality. It provides opulent ideas for this project.

With emerging, innovative, digital imaging technology, the practice of photography has been extended to include manipulation[6] by digital tools in the post-photographic[7] stage. This has challenged notions of analogue photography which argued that once an image was recorded by optical means[8] then the image became a physical (mechanical) proof of origin of

[6] This refers to the visual or physical alteration of an optically recorded image.
[7] This refers to post ‘optical recording’ of the image.
[8] Usually it is recorded by camera on film.

an event. Only the skillful, professional practitioner could apply imperceptible alteration to the proof of origin using analogue process but the process is time consuming and labour demanding. Using digital technology, the origin may undergo endless changes. This leads to the unreliable status of photography as (proof of) origin and challenges the belief that photography is a truthful representation of an event. Its 'documenting of reality' is now reviewed. The changes of representation in photography are currently argued by a range of practitioners, artists, writers, and critics. This thesis was motivated by these discussions and is aimed to contribute to the ongoing discourse in the form of a visual document on which the viewer/reader can reflect. In this thesis, I position myself as a practitioner in photography to investigate these issues through a practical project.

The theoretical framework for this exegesis has been constructed with reference to a range of researchers of whom Pedro Meyer, A. D. Coleman, Jerry Uelsmann, Anthony Aziz and Sammy Cucher are the most influential.[9]

With recent technological developments in digital imaging, image makers are now able to produce good quality prints at affordable prices. This has resulted in the prevalent use of digital technology by the public. I refer to this phenomenon as democratization. This phenomenon extends the role of the photographer from an optical recorder to an image maker who can alter the context of a photograph in the post-photographic stage. Being cognisant of this shift, I define myself in this thesis not as a 'photographer' but as an 'image maker'.

[9] Meyer, Aziz and Cucher are heralds in working with digital technology. Uelsmann is a prominent figure in photographic manipulation using chemical process. Coleman is a contributive critic in photography.

The portfolio contains a series of twelve A2 Giclée Prints[10] selected from the images that I have produced and discussed. They reflect on issues arising from working alongside the street performers in Hamilton. It investigates an extended context of representation, and also reflects my investigation into the technological aspects of digital technology. The exegesis explains, analyses, and discusses my research on this project. Accompanying this document is an appendix that serves as a visual reference to the exegesis.

In the first chapter I discuss the changing notions of representation in photography in the evolving digital era. This is followed by an outline of research methodology I have employed.

The third chapter provides a commentary on my images and discusses issues related to them. In the conclusion, I summarize the key ideas I have discussed.

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[10]The term giclée originated in 1991 with Jack Duganne who coined the term to refer to fine art prints created with digital output. It was intended to be a word which would be added to the lexicon of printmaking terms in the vocabulary of fine art printmaking. It's derivation comes from the word "gicleur," the French word for "nozzle." Gicler is the French word for "to spray" (as from a nozzle) and thus the direct object of the "spraying Nozzle" would be giclée as most digital printers today use nozzles to direct ink onto a substrate. The main intention of the word giclée was to distinguish "fine art prints" from those created for non-art or commercial purposes.
To date, most giclées have been made with Iris ink jet technology. However, recently introduced, alternative ink jet technologies are also producing beautiful results. The term Giclée has evolved into a broader term describing a high quality, digital print produced from a wide variety of printer manufacturers. (International Association of Fine Art Digital Printmakers 2000)

NOTIONS OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE EVOLVING DIGITAL ERA

In this chapter, I will discuss notions of photography in the evolving digital era.

In every technological revolution, new systems are created to supersede ones currently in use. Inevitably they also influence our perception of the medium.

Representations of Reality

Since its beginnings, photography has been perceived as a source of information by the public. In the middle and latter part of the 19th century, it became a medium for documenting both medical and scientific observations[11] and continued concurrently to replace painting as the predominant method of representing images of reality.

In the 1970s Susan Sontag (Lunenfeld 1996, p. 95) discussed this phenomenon in a series of essays that examined notions of truth and meaning in photography. She wrote:

> a photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened

[11] However, not until 1876 were actual photographs of the mentally ill used to illustrate a medical text. In that year, Henri Dagonet published, in his 'Nouveau Traité Elementaire et Pratique de Maladies Mentales', eight plates of photographs reproduced by the new photoengraving process, illustrating '33 types of the insane'.
Notably however, four years earlier, in 1872, Charles Darwin had made similar use of photographs (some supplied by another English psychiatrist-photographer, James Crichton-Browne) to illustrate his 'The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals.' In both cases the photographic illustration was intended to provide the most truthful, accurate, and reliable representation of nature. (Esman 1994)

In discourse around this issue, the photograph became a heavily examined artifact. However, with the expeditious advance in digital imaging technology in the 1990s, further discussions were raised around the re-consideration of the notion of photography.

Peter Lunenfeld quoting Mitchell in his 1996 essay, Art Post-History: Digital Photography & Electronic Semiotics (p. 95) said:

> ...in the era of the dubitative digital photograph, the public is forced to trust in the source of the image, or in the veracity of the image's context.

As technology advances, our notions of representation in photography change. The crisis of loss of representation is sometimes argued as the *death of photography*. The discussion on the *death of photography* in the evolving digital era is restless and a range of differing positions have been adopted in the debate. Significant among these are the views of Fred Ritchin, A. D. Coleman, Geoffrey Batchen, Barbara E. Savedoff and Frederick Murphy. Ritchin believes:

> Photography has, in a significant way, been degraded. Those not in power have lost a sometime friend, and those in power are losing the ability to judge the world and themselves from other perspectives. Photography is perceived like writing, as subjective, capable of insight. This will make many of us happy. But its fact-based, mechanistic qualities, which have been able to change world opinion even against the most powerful governments, have been devalued to the point where photography is much less a threat to established points of view.... (Ritchin 1991, p. 1:15)

Coleman's writing on The Future of Photography: A New World in 1987 takes a slightly different slant on the observation arguing the potential deterioration of the photograph as information.

> ...as these technologies make possible the manipulation of this imagery, what happens is that the credibility of the photograph as a vehicle for information and as, in some sense, a witnessing device — a vehicle in visual communication for what you might call the language of report - is going to inevitably deteriorate. And that's going to generate a major cultural shift in our relationship to photography as information. (Coleman 1987, p. 77)

Geoffrey Batchen in his essay on Ghost Stories: The Beginnings and Ends of Photography, argues that because technological change has always been part of photography, the introduction of imaging technology is unlikely to cause the disappearance of the photograph and its culture.

> ...It should be clear to those familiar with the history of photography that a change in imaging technology will not, in and of itself, cause the disappearance of the photograph and the culture it sustains. For a start, photography has never been any one technology; its nearly two centuries of development have been marked by numerous, competing instances of technological innovation and obsolescence, without any threat being posed to the survival of the medium itself.
>
> ...Even if a computer does replace the traditional camera, that computer will continue to depend on the thinking and world view of the humans who program, control and direct it, just as photography now does. While the human survives, so will human values and human culture - no matter what image-making instrument that human chooses to employ. (Batchen 1994, p. 7)

In contrast, however, Barbara E. Savedoff considers that the new technology will signal an end to photography. In her essay, Escaping Reality: Digital Imagery and the Resources of Photography, she asks:

> Will future generations come to see the transformations of traditional photography—the apparent disjunctions of space, the defamiliarization of ordinary objects, the fortuitously frozen moments—as constructions of the photographer, rather than as revealing something uncanny about our world? It is impossible to know for certain, but changes in the expectations surrounding photographs could very well lead to such changes in the way future viewers see photographs, altering the kind of pleasure, and the kind of pain, that photographs give. Photographs have always served a nostalgia for the past. Perhaps the “classic” period of photography, the first one hundred and fifty years or so when we were able to see photographs as revelatory of the world, will soon itself become the object of nostalgia. (Savedoff 1997, pp. 213-4)

Murphy however argues a variation on this position. He suggests that it is now not the image itself that becomes the indicator of truth but the manufacturer of the image. In concluding *Is Photography Dead?* he says,

> As a way of creating prints and published images, yes ...
> As a public art form it is at the very least mortally wounded...Our belief in public images will come to rest less on the images themselves, photographs or not, than with our trust in the person or organization presenting them to us.

> No. Where we can give our trust or, in full knowledge, consent to suspend our disbelief, we will find that with the empowerment of digital technology, photography as we know it, photography as the act of documenting the human condition, its realities, its myths, successes, failures, joys and sorrows will be enriched with new vigor, reach, potential and accessibility. (Murphy 1996)

These arguments suggest a fundamental change in our notions of the representative reality of photography.

It is these technological developments and their aesthetic and conceptual implications that form the basis for my research. I adopt a position similar to that expressed by Anthony Aziz and Sammy Cucher. They argue:

> Through developments in digital technology, photography has been freed once and for all from the rigid conventions of Realism. Like life itself, it is now capable of representing not just what is real, but what is possible. (Aziz and Cucher 1996, p.129)

This pursuit of the possible as a form of presenting the 'real' enables me to re-negotiate the limitations of time and physical perspective to create images that add to the reality/meaning of the image.

Photography as Referent

In the era of mass communication, it can be argued that we are less dependant on only one source of information. The proliferation of media means that we are deluged by information from a plethora of sources of which very few are traceable. What still gives photography a key role in communication is its 'visual/optical recording ability' and a creditable connection to reality (photography as a referent to the truth). The visual/ optical recording ability may be irreplaceable in the foreseeable future but its veracity has deteriorated because of easy post-photographic manipulations. As a result we may now only rely on photography as a *reference* to the truth. Denise Miller argues that this referent is not without

risk. She says:

> Punctuated by the new modes of working and the factors that bear on the process, the medium's history of manipulation and the various image maker's viewpoints emphasize that all photographs may be 'truths told slant'. (Miller 1998, p. 38)

Adding to this risk, is the nature of the digital file. George Legrady describes this as having a 'verifiable past and a possible future'. (Legrady 1996, p. 90)

Digital file is subjected to change at any time. Its present state as origin is unstable. Its past is difficult to trace. Its future is unknown. Photography in digital form is an unreliable referent.

It can be argued that the unreliable referent itself does not form any misrepresentation. James L. Enyeart suggests:

> ....Images alone cannot lie. In order to succeed in their misdeed, they need a host of lies in other media to back them up. (Enyeart 1994, p. 34)

Pedro Meyer also states that:

> ...The image is not to be given credibility just because it's a picture. The responsibility for guaranteeing the integrity of the information is with the publication, not with the medium. (Meyer 1995a)

Therefore it might be argued that the context of the image may hold the verification of authenticity[12] and integrity, not necessarily the image itself.

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[12] For clarification of this notion, the following is an example on the 'context as authentic verification' of the image:
When the United States' army photographer Ron Haeberle first published his photographs, depicting the 1969 My Lai Massacre by their army, in the Plain Dealer, not many Americans believed in what their army had done these things and the Plain Dealer received many stating that the photographs should not have been printed. Even after the incident was later widely published by papers like the Washington Star, New York Post and the Television, there were still enormous numbers of people who simply refused to believe the images. (Goldberg 1991, pp. 230-4, precied)
It suggested that the authenticity of the sources played an important role in the integrity of the photographs. In this incident, the Plain Dealer (as a comparatively smaller newspaper) needed support from other reputable sources to maintain its credibility.

Digital communication has advanced digital imaging for more than a decade. We are aware that the digitalization of analogue photographs for distribution of information was practiced long before the democratization of digital imaging, not to mention the traditional changing of photographs to dot grain for printing publication. It can be argued that the change in the physical nature of the image, in both of these situations does not question the veracity of photographic representation because our trust in its hosts remains unchanged. These are simply technological changes to enable efficient mass reproduction.

Conceivably, the advances in digital imaging technology do nothing more than prompt us to recognize the confined representation of photography, as it always was. If the physical change of the analogue origin of the photograph to dot grain or pixel is a necessity for communication, digital imaging technology with its pixelated files only simplifies the process. The unstable state of the digital file is the result of the democratization of digital manipulation in the era of mass communication.

Digital Manipulation as an Extended Tool of Photography

The alteration of the analogue origin of the photograph for social, political or artistic purposes has been part of photographic history. What concerns us now about digital imaging is the accessible, user friendly and affordable tools (the democratization) that contribute to imperceptible digital manipulation. This manipulation challenges our perception in recognizing what an image represents.

Anthony Aziz and Sammy Cucher say that:

> ...every image, every representation, is now a potential fraud. And as the eternal debate rages on about the appearance of truth and *truth itself*, simulation is the only truth we can trust. (Aziz and Cucher 1996, p. 126)

This pervasive competency in digital manipulation is also described by Andreas Müller-Pohle as 'the perfection of photography':

> ...photography participates in the digital universality and gains new, expanded functions. If, in the analog state, it was mainly a technique of reference and a visual aid, it now becomes a technique of preference and an instrument of thought. (Müller-Pohle 1996, p. 229)

Both arguments refer to the powerful tools of digital manipulation. Manipulation brings both confusion and a new context to photography. However the confusion may not be in the medium itself, but in the viewer's perception of the notion of 'reality'. Not everyone is comfortable in coping with the transition from analogue to digital. It brings with it a new and extended context, which presents huge potential, for giving birth to a newer aesthetic[13] in photography, and it is this potential that I am exploring in this thesis.

Manipulation to Change Identity

Daniel Dixon, son of Dorothea Lange, commented in 1994 that:

> ...for most of my mother's professional life, her mission was to record, not to interpret, the truth. She subordinated herself to her material. She didn't intrude her personality or manipulate the elements. Indeed, unlike most artists, she rigorously resisted the impulse to create. That's why the most compelling feature of her work is its almost painful integrity. (Dixon 1994, p. 164)

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[13] "But I believe that, inevitably, out of all this hacking around and experimenting and reiterating the past, etcetera, some new and very medium-specific forms are going to emerge. I believe that eventually you're going to see some version of purism, some version of inquiry into what is it in the nature of computer to do, in terms of electronic imaging, versus what is extraneous to electronic imaging....
So I think there are potentials within this technology that simply have not really been realized yet, certainly not fully.... I may not like that stuff. I may not want to look at images on screen. I may love the finely crafted silver print. But I have to look at this technology and say that this is going to be the direction for a lot of people, and certainly for information-based imagery, information-oriented imagery-photojournalism, etcetera. This is bound to be the direction it goes on." (Coleman 1998, p. 149)

This is an interesting position to adopt and Dorothea Lange was a notable proponent. However, one might argue that despite the fact that some photographs are constructed by the photographer in a ‘subordinate’ role; in an effort to establish ‘integrity’, the approach does not preclude a range of ‘readings’ of the image that may be quite different to that which the photographer believed was articulated. Similarly it is not always safe for the ‘reader’ to assume that because an image was constructed by a photographer deemed to have a high level of integrity, that it is true that the photograph is ‘real’. Possibly two well known historical examples illustrate this.

For several decades Robert Doisneau’s famous photograph The Kiss was used as an archetypical documentary shot depicting the romance of two young lovers kissing in the street. However years later it was discovered to be a set-up shot. (Rosas 1995)

Similarly Robert Capa’s war photograph The Death of a Spanish Loyalist Soldier became an archetypical depiction of bravery. For many years this image was used as an example of massacre and heroism captured in the reality of war. However, it was challenged that the photograph was a set up shot and that even if it was not a set up shot, it was argued that the soldier was merely falling off and was not shot to death.

In 1998, the subject of the photograph was conclusively identified as a 24-year-old Republican volunteer named Federico Borrell García. It is now known that Borrell was the only member of his militia to die the day the picture was taken. The revelations have convinced Capa biographer Richard Whelan that the famed photograph is authentic. (Squiers 1998, pp. 19-20)

However, I would argue that the ‘bravery’ identity was given by the source. Vicki Goldberg in her book The Power of Photography: How Photographs

Changed Our Lives,[14] suggests that the photograph does not provide us with the truth. It is us who give the truth to it.

Manipulation to change identity[15] for a richer context is not the sole prerogative of an art photographer.

Jerry Uelsmann, renowned for his analogue-manipulated photographs has argued that photography, rather than being a fixed moment of recording and printing, is in fact a metamorphosis. He believes that the invented reality can in fact contribute a greater meaning than the one captured in a single movement of the shutter.

> It has taken me many years as an active image maker to fully embrace the idea that the entire photographic process is an act of metamorphosis...
> Along with the change came a broader acceptance of the belief that the artist can invent a reality that is more meaningful than the one that is literally given to the eye.... (Uelsmann, 1999)

This 'change of identity' has been practiced in different ways by photographers in an effort to extend the context of photography. Now that we are offered the powerful, digital, post-photographic tools, I believe what is important is not how we manage to use them, but how we fully utilize their potential to enrich the context of our images.

Manipulation for a Truer Truth

Our instantaneous response to the manipulation of the photograph is that the image isn't 'true' to the origin. This assumes that we are changing the reference of what the photograph represents. It, of course, also follows the

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[14] Refer to the paragraph of Giraffe and Stilt Walkers (Plate 27) under 'Commentary on Images' chapter on page 39.

[15] The images Mum, I Am Bored (Plate 35), Stilt Walkers Dancing at the Beach (Plate 31) and Snake Reading Newspaper (Plate 41) are examples dealing with change of identity for a richer context. Refer to 'Commentary on Images' chapter.

assumption that the pre-digital photograph was not manipulated. This is debatable.

In 1996 when Natalie Bookchin, an American artist collaborated with U.S.S.R. born artist Lev Manovich to digitally reconstruct a series of 'missing snapshots', she stated that their work combined the American snapshot culture and Lev's memory of the peculiar aesthetics of Soviet visual culture to form a photographic aesthetic which never existed. She argued that these images represented a 'true' memory of both cultures.

> The culture of the snapshot — the imperfect, hurried capturing of a moment in one's history — did not exist [in the U.S.S.R]...
> -We use digital photography not to lie but to 'tell the truth'.
> -We use digital photography to simulate not the extraordinary, but the ordinary.
> ...These images combine real memories of Lev's life in Moscow with American fantasies...The images also bring together the code of Western snapshot tradition (the blur, the awkward, crop, the impact of the flash) and the peculiar aesthetics of Soviet visual culture... And, of course, just as real snapshots are never a result of an innocent eye but are conditioned by the codes and styles of the visual culture of the time, our snapshots point to classic photographic practices-pictorialism, soft pornography, constructivism, the decisive moment. These come together to construct a photographic aesthetic which never existed — the aesthetics of Soviet snapshot photography. (Bookchin and Manovich 1996, pp.138-9)

However, the interesting point here is the conceptual approach[16] to reconstructing the artists' memory. It may be considered as fictitious but we should not neglect the fact that the reconstructed images could reflect reality. On one hand, the 'reality' is very dependant on the veracity of the host who produces it. On the other hand, when well articulated, the conceptual approach may represent a truer truth that can never be captured by straight photography,[17] especially if we admit that reality is a combination of segments or layers of memories.[18]

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[16] The image Bliss Asylum (Plate 24) under 'Commentary on Images' chapter on page 38 is an example of conceptual reality.

[17] The term 'straight photography or photograph' is often used by photographers and writers. It refers to the process of recording with an optical device either on film or digital file without any alteration in the context of the image.

[18] The image Balloon Launching (Plate 15) under 'Commentary on Images' chapter on page 37 is an example of reconstructing segments of memory/reality.

This argument challenges Henri Cartier-Bresson's notion of 'The Decisive Moment':

> Of all the means of expression, photography is the only one that fixes forever the precise and transitory instant. We photographers deal in things which are continually vanishing, and when they have vanished, there is no contrivance on earth which can make them come back again. We cannot develop and print a memory... We must neither try to manipulate reality while we are shooting, nor must we manipulate the results in a darkroom. These tricks are patently discernible to those who have eyes to see. (Cartier-Bresson 1952)

It may be argued that technology advances the aesthetics of representation. The aesthetics of the 'decisive moment' was a result of the mobility of handy 35mm camera and high speed film. Recently digital manipulation has brought with it a newer aesthetic to photography. *Manipulation for a truer truth,* contradicts the notion of the decisive moment, and brings a new context to the representation of photography.

This new context, the technological advances that stimulate it, and the artistic innovation that accompanies it, provide a rich platform for investigation.

Denise Miller in her 1998 essay, Collecting American and US-resident Photography as Art + Idea argues that technology advances aesthetics but digital technology has not yet developed a new aesthetic and the current aesthetic relies on a photographic presence.

> ...media is an extension of media, but technology creates an aesthetic. Until artists are more interested in what technology can be than in the technology itself, the aesthetic does not advance. Throughout history, technological advances and artistic innovation have gone hand in hand. Plays beget films, photography begets digital; however, while the technicalities and technologies of plays, films, and photography have evolved an aesthetic, digital has not done so completely: hence, this branch of photography (some would argue it has yet to be fully articulated and separately identified as a medium) currently relies heavily on a photographic presence. (Miller 1998, p. 45)

I would suggest that if the ‘visual/optical recording’ character of photography is lost or does not exist, then the aesthetic could possibly no longer be considered photography. In my work I do not consider computer generated images as photographic images. This newer aesthetic would only be an extended part of the mainstream aesthetic which continues to rely on a photographic presence.

The Stakeholder behind Manipulation

I would suggest that manipulation is simply a process at any stage within photography and is the result of collaboration amongst ‘stakeholders’[19]. Often the photographer is not the only stakeholder in the photograph; the subjects, hosts of the subjects/objects, or any participants are also possible stakeholders who contribute to the manipulation of the context of the image. Generally the majority stakeholder in an image is the photographer. Not only do they hold the copyright of the image in most cases but they are also often the major contributor to the context of the image.

In digital constructions, the stakeholder(s) can lose control of the authenticity of the image. An image, once released, might possibly be manipulated undetectably with or without the consent of the stakeholder(s).

Every image, with untraceable origin, or hybrid of several images, becomes an image on its own. An image as origin only exists in a certain time and space. To document this transient state as origin, a physical, tangible, archival output may be produced, this acts as an authentic proof.

[19] Here I refer stakeholder as a person who contributes to the context of the image, either partially or wholly.

This may also imply that a digital image has unlimited versions of origin. To avoid confusion, I suggest that one considers the time when the image is published as being its state of origin.

There are different perspectives about the necessity of a tangible archival output. A. D. Coleman in his 1996 essay, Connoisseurship in the Digital Era argues for a tangible output, he says:

> But what they [digital files] will not, cannot do is put you, literally and metaphorically, directly in touch with the art. Translated into pixels, restricted in size to the screen dimensions of whatever computer monitor they're viewed on, works of art necessarily change. Some will look better this way, some worse; but all will look different. No matter how persuasive the digital representation may feel, it cannot replace laying eyes on the actual object, the first-hand encounter with the thing itself: its scale in relation to your own body, its surface texture, its smell, its complex physicality. (Coleman 1996, p. 156.)

Pedro Meyer in his editor's note 'Do Not Touch' in his website in August 1999 suggests an interesting perspective, he argues:

> However let me introduce a new concept into this equation. The longing to touch an image can actually be done in ways never ever thought possible before. Today, when I have a digital photograph up on the screen, I as a photographer can with the aid of my mouse, or stylus, touch and transform every single pixel of the image, in ways that have no correlation to any previous experience. I certainly never had the tools to touch every single grain within a traditional photograph.
> The action of transferring the pressure from my finger on to any portion of the image has no parallel in chemical based photography. I can darken a single pixel if I want to, by just placing the right amount of pressure - with the chosen tool to do so - through the use of my fingers.
> The sensorial transference from my hand to the image, by way of the mouse or pen, is beyond any previous experience in the field of photography. So who said you can't touch a photograph? Or think about the touch screens where viewers are actually encouraged to touch the image, precisely the opposite to the notion of 'do not touch'.
> Who said that the sensorial aspect of photography has been lost? (Meyer 1999)

My perspective, as an image maker, is to consider the tangible archival output as one way of presenting my work. It also provides proof of origin of the work displayed.

It is fair to say that the majority of image makers seldom print, or can not afford to print, their work (whether the originals are in the physical form of slides, negatives or in digital form) until there is a need for displaying their work[20]. Though the traditional output requires a much higher resolution, it does not imply that the viewing quality or derived pleasure is different. It is only a matter of two different media. In this sense, a tangible archival output is inevitable to serve the specific needs of the viewers.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the democratization of digital imaging technology may not itself change our notions about photography, it merely prompts us to be aware that, from time to time, our notions of photography change in response to coping with the new environment that the new technology offers.

I have established my position as an image maker who seeks to explore, by using the digital imperceptible manipulating tools, the newer and extended context that presents the potential of adding newer aesthetics to photography. In the following chapters I will discuss both the methodology I have employed to develop this and the manifestation of this position in my work. This latter aspect will be developed through a commentary on specific works selected for the portfolio.

[20] In a traditional sense, this may be for gallery display, print publishing, museums and collectors which require a physical output. Or in digital sense, for monitor display which is in the form of a digital file.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will discuss the rationale and describe the methodological approach I have adopted. I will also discuss with specific references, the process of its implementation.

Establishing a Relationship with Subjects

My initial concerns with this project focused on the complex ethical and procedural issues involved in working with other artists, whose art was to form a point of departure for my own project. Initially, through the University, I applied for ethics approval,[21] primarily because my research data relied on human subjects. For me to effect an indepth investigation and synthesis, I had to establish a respectful and transparent relationship with the performers. My initial involvement with them began in May 1999, stemming from a written contact with Mark Servian, a key figure in the group. I discussed with him my proposal for this project and interviewed both him and Graeme Cairne in July 1999. Following that I investigated the work and political/artistic positions of other performers, focusing on both current and previous performances. In the following months I met most of the artists during their performances and discussed the plan of my thesis with them. I showed them examples of my recent work and proposed photographing their performances. In proposal, I agreed to provide them with prints of the images I took of them for this project. This initiative was designed to serve three purposes. Firstly, the performers became used to my photographing their work and I was able to photograph inobtrusively, resulting in more spontaneous and unaffected images. Secondly, a mutual trust began to build between us, and my work as an artist interacting respectfully yet independently was able to be

[21] Ethics Application 99/68, approved on April 4, 2000.

established by practice. This level of mutual respect and trust I deemed pivotal to the quality of the project where an indepth altering of context was crucial. Thirdly, the process also allowed me to establish a practice of reciprocation where I was able to give back to them something in response to their generosity towards me. Along with this a discourse between us as artists was able to be developed. I prepared an accessible abstract of my project proposal for them, so all parties were able to understand the whole process of my thesis and I asked them to sign a consent form for this research study. From this point, I was able to begin photographing their performances in late November 1999 and conduct formal interviews in February 2000.

Data Processing

I used analogue photography to document the performers' work. I did this so I was able to put myself in the position as a professional photographer/ artist undergoing the transition from traditional to digital practice. The digitization of one's previous stock photographs is an inevitable part of this process and I wished to explore the potentials inside this transference. All of my original data were 'straight photographs' on 135 format colour transparencies. I used small format for its mobility and colour transparency for its truer colour reproduction.

I interviewed individual performers to investigate the ideas, concepts and objectives behind their work and to clarify their opinions about street theatre. This allowed me to produce a body of work developed from my own position but reflective upon theirs.

I developed concurrently, a diary of all my shoots and interviews. This diary served as a notation source of my observations, perceptions and reflections on the performances and audiences' response. It also served

as a record of initial responses to analysis and interpretation of my photo shoots[22]. The image Stilt Walkers Dancing at the Beach[23] illustrates how the image's final form departed from the notation source recorded in the diary.

Following the compilation of photographs from these shoots, I selected potential images from the raw data and scanned them to convert them to digital files. From this point onward, I manipulated them digitally. This process of manipulation drew upon an analysis and synthesis of my observation and also interfaced this data with my own interpretations, imagination and personal expression, producing a series of 'draft images' that I could then reflect upon.

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[22] I include here a diary page as an example.
20/02/00
I had mentioned to Salamander during my interview with her that I wanted to include some shots to depict their private life in my thesis. She said that she had organized a beach party amongst themselves and invited me to join them.
Today, I expected to shoot some pictures of the performers' private life, how they entertained themselves in their leisure time. It was not easy to find this lovely beach with very fine sand (Ocean Beach) which was located in the west coast near Raglan. Arrived at 6 p.m. nobody was there except I saw Salamander's van. Then I saw her daughter with a friend of Mike's. Chatted with Mike's friend for a long while. Wandered around and took some beautiful shots of the sunset, especially the one with a naked kid dancing on a deserted tree trunk and another with grass in the foreground and dramatic cloud in the backdrop.
It was almost 9 p.m. when I met Paul Beere with his drums, Graeme and Adriane and some people that did not belong to the performance group were also there. They lit a fire on the beach and started playing drums. Some strangers gathered around too. It was after 10 p.m. that I had to return home because I had teaching duty the next day. The party had not really started yet. Though disappointed, I had got two good shots out of ten frames.
On the way home, I meditated to figure out how the shots that I had taken could have any representations about the private life of the performers. Obviously, I did not see that it would work. I considered changing the context to represent their romantic lifestyle as street performers.
Arrived home at 1:30 a.m. in the morning.

[23] Refer to 'Commentary on Images' chapter on page 41.

Process

Although this has varied sometimes, generally the process employed to produce these images has followed a similar pattern.

Following rough sketches of potential syntheses in my mind, I generally began by experimenting with layouts, images, elements and composition to establish and compare various representations of my idea. This initial process of manipulation involved a re-thinking and re-evaluating of the original concept and the visual representation of my potential image. This was an integrated process; not only because the images departed from their own representations and absorbed new concepts of my own, but also because my original ideas changed, moving to become new concepts bearing new ideas. This process further allowed me to investigate the various options of representations of the data leading to a more eloquent and meaningful context for this project.

Data Analyzing and Editing

The primary criteria affecting the selection from the original 2,200 images I took for this project was the potential of each photograph to extend or exploit the nature of digital syntheses. The potential to represent new identities, concepts or contexts was a priority.

At this point in the editing process I was confronted with the necessity of excluding some exciting and impressive images because they already were distinct representations in their own right. I have included two straight images Liar[24] and Paul behind Balloon[25] in this exegesis to discuss this issue, however they do not appear in the final portfolio. At this point in the

[24] Refer to Plate 11 in 'Commentary on Images' chapter on page 34.
[25] Refer to Plate 45 in 'Commentary on Images' chapter on page 47.

development of the project I established a reference group to comment on my work. This group was comprised of my supervisors, friends of different cultural backgrounds and professional colleagues. The reflection this afforced me, allowed me to fine tune the concept, context and aesthetics of my work and also check on the articulate quality of the images. The image Snake Reading Newspaper[26] is an example which illustrates this.

Theoretical Research

Parallel to the image processing was my research into contextual material. This research was crucial to the writing of my exegesis but also formed a point of reflection on, and discourse with my practice. I researched theoretical writings about analogue and digital photography, and also work in the wider forums related to issues of 'truth' and representation. However the primary context I chose for this project was an analysis and creative exploitation of the potentials of digital imaging. Because digital photography is a relatively new area, the majority of theoretical writings were articles from periodic journals and websites[27] . Conversant with this strand of investigation was my research into the historical, political and cultural profiles of street theatre. Through this I gained a better understanding of the performers' background and influence. I also researched new and emerging digital technologies, especially those which had the potential to upgrade the production and quality of my body of work. This research led to the choice and production of Giclée Print for the final output of this thesis presentation. Internet research played an important role in my research as I was able to gather current material related to the study of new technology, both on theoretical and technical areas.

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[26] Refer to Plate 41 in 'Commentary on Images' chapter on page 45.
[27] Examples are Creative Camera, Leonardo for journals and www.zonezero.com for websites.

Research into Technological Interfaces on the Project

The primary objective of the technological research in this project was to construct a personalized process using affordable resources but achieving a professional result. I spent considerable time exploring various options in selecting and testing combinations of materials for the final production.

I used Nikon FM cameras and lenses that had been part of my equipment since the mid-seventies. They were very reliable and produced very high quality images.

I also used the Power Macintosh 9500 with 264 MB of ram and a total of 14 GB of hard disk for most of the image manipulation. This 4-year old computer is slow when compared with the new Macintosh G4 but it is also much more stable. Its slowness however allowed the time gap for me to thoroughly re-consider my layout and context during the manipulation process.

For me the scanning was the most crucial process in obtaining a high quality output. After some testing, I used the newly released Polaroid SprintScan 4000 Scanner, a reasonably priced scanner, and scanned to the maximum file size of 64 MB. My emphasis was on achieving the required tonal range for a high quality digital file.

I devoted some time to colour management and experimented heavily in this area. Using Adobe Photoshop 5.0.2, I managed to calibrate and achieve a stable WYSIWYG result[28].

I also experimented with several ink jet printers. The Epson six-colour dye ink printer produced prints of exceptional quality, however Epson dye ink is

[28] This enabled me to create a close relationship between colour as it appeared on the screen and colour as it appeared in the output.

not intended for archival printing, so I also tested the newly released Epson six-colour pigment ink printer which is designed to produce archival quality prints required by the fine art market. Epson claims to produce a 'print life' exceeding one hundred years without fading[29] when printed on special Epson archival paper. I found the printing quality very impressive, but despite experiments there was a noticeable shift in colour when viewed under light conditions other than standard daylight. This phenomenon is called Metamerism.[30]

My research also led me to test the Epson Stylus 3000 four-colour dye ink printer for printing sizes up to A2. I tested a third party colour printer profile designed by ConeStudio for archival Lysonic E ink. I found that when I printed onto Somerset Photo Enhanced Paper[31] the result was excellent. (In the later stages, I developed my own way of adjusting the colour to suit the subtle mood of this project.) I decided to use this substrate for my portfolio for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to investigate and illustrate the unlimited range of substrate that the ink jet technology could offer. (With chemical colour printing, we are generally restricted to a limited selection of substrate.) Secondly, this substrate gave a subtle quality of colour and material. In comparison, I printed all the plates for the *Commentary on Images* section of this thesis on Epson Premium Semigloss Photo Paper with the same Epson Stylus 3000 four-colour dye ink printer as used in the portfolio. (Six-colour dye ink produces a better tonal range and less grain than four-colour dye ink, however it is also less stable. I did not use six-colour pigment ink because of the metamerism phenomenon which

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[29] See: research report by Wilhelm Imaging Research, Inc. posted in http://www.wilhelm-research.com., retrieved on Aug. 18, 2000

[30] Metamerism is an effect created when objects having different spectral distributions look alike under one light source but appear different when viewed with a dissimilar light source. Metamerism is most frequently seen when two coloured objects match in daylight, but differ markedly in colour when viewed in tungsten-filament light. This arises because the visible absorption spectra of the two objects differ significantly, although the tristimulus values in daylight are identical (the colours have the same set of colour coordinates but different spectral reflectance curves). (Inkjet Art Solutions 2000a)

[31] Somerset Photo Enhanced Paper is a coated watercolour paper designed for photographic reproduction. It claims to have a life of over twenty years when printed with Lysonic archival ink.

required further investigation.) Photographs printed on glossy paper produces the best colour and tonal reproduction when compared to other surfaces such as satin and matt. For this reason, glossy paper is commonly used for photographic reproduction. This served to reflect the physical quality of this project in the traditional perspective of photography. Though it is obvious that the tonal range and colour reproduction of the Epson Premium Semigloss Photo Paper is superior to that of the Somerset Paper, my research would suggest that it is the character of the ragged surface of water colour paper that reduces the colour and tonal quality, thereby producing the more subtle finish.

The following are details of the technological materials and equipment supporting this project.

Hardware

Camera System:

Nikon FM mechanical cameras with lenses from
24mm to 80-210mm zoom

Computer System:

Power Macintosh 9500 and G4 running Mac OS 8.6 and 9.02

Monitor:

Apple Multiple Scan 20 Display and Sony Multiscan E200

Scanner:

Polaroid SprintScan 4000 Scanner

Printer:

Epson Stylus 3000 four-colour Dye Ink Jet Printer

Software

Adobe Photoshop Version 5.0.2

Adobe Pagemaker Version 6.5

Microsoft Office 98

Working profile: Kodak ProPhoto RGB

Materials

Film: 135 Kodak E200 Ektachrome

Printing Ink:

Lysonic E four-colour dye ink for Portfolio

Epson four-colour dye ink for Exegesis and Appendix

Printing Paper:

Somerset Photo Enhanced (100% cotton, velvet finish, acid free, radiant white 225gsm paper) for Portfolio

Colourtech Cartridge Paper (120gsm) for Exegesis

Epson Premium Semigloss Photo Paper (251gsm) for Appendix

Packaging

Medium density fiber board

Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationships and synergy between these technologies and the materials that interfaced with them allowed me to produce uniquely resolved prints that I believe complemented the quality of the created images.

The research methodology was designed to meet the specific needs and profile of the project. It evolved from the process of establishing an initial point of contact and a viable working relationship with the street performers. From this point it became bifurcate, with the project being fed from theoretical and technical readings and analogue data gathered and analysed. Conversant with this was a process of digital synthesis, experimentation and reflection which led to the production of the finished work.

COMMENTARY ON IMAGES

This chapter provides a brief commentary of significant images that led to the final portfolio. In it, I discuss the context, process and issues that were features of their development.

Shop Window

This image (Plate 1, refer to Appendix.) spoke about the courage and professionalism of the street performer. It was the point of departure for my research. One of my initial observations of street performers was the strange dynamic of attention set against the studiously ignoring behaviour of the public. In response to this, I noticed that street performers often constructed pieces that either challenged this 'ignoring' or integrated it into the performance.

In this image, I placed the performer (Plate 4) ,who often performed as a human sculpture[32] in a busy street, inside the abandoned shop window where a man passed by on his bicycle, with bread in his mouth (Plate 2 and 3). The dislocation of the performer drew the viewers' attention to focus on the relationship between the location, the performer and the passerby.

The attention I was able to draw to the performer by changing her context, underscored the alienation that she achieved as a human sculpture in a busy street. The man on the bike came to personify the studious dismissal evident in much public behaviour around street performance.

This is a significant image because it inspired me to explore the context of

[32] By human sculpture I mean a common act in street theatre which the performers freeze their postures for several minutes. As an example see: 'Gumboot Dancers and Women Suffragettes' paragraph on page 48.

a performance as a departure point of this research project.

Toy Gun Violence

Mayme, in her costume, set up a playroom for children in the Garden Place[33] (Plate 5). I was photographing next to the children who quietly watched her performance. The atmosphere was peaceful and joyful. Suddenly I heard 'gunshot' noises from a boy with his toy gun. He had aimed it at the performer with her toys and was 'shooting' her (Plate 6). I was stunned and immediately took a few photographs of the boy. I had no other chance to move to an alternative position and take some extra records.

It concerned me as to what would motivate a child to 'play out', in response to a harmless and gentle performance, an act of annihilation. Was it a response to somebody being different? This resulting image (Plate 7) is constructed to depict exactly what happened even though I was not able to take a straight shot at that time. In the image I am raising the question the event posed for me. The darker question raised by this incident is also, if we believe that a toy influences the behaviour of people, why are such things so permissively integrated into our social behaviour? Here is a child in a park, surrounded by lunch time shoppers, who shoots a woman with a fluffy toy.

I suspect that outside of the lens of my camera, nobody even noticed.

The digital manipulation in this situation enhanced my message and context. It allowed me to create this 'enhanced realism'. I re-constructed what I witnessed. The question is posed then, should the photojournalist

[33] Garden Place is the central park in the main street of Hamilton. It is used by shoppers and workers during the day but most specifically at lunchtime. It offers seating facilities in a landscaped area and is often a site chosen by performing artists.

be challenged when a manipulated image like this appears in the newspaper? One may say that the photojournalist missed the shot and therefore cannot re-construct it again. However, an opposing argument might ask: what if the incident was taken by video for the TV news? The news editor would quite likely put the two shots in sequence and re-construct the whole scene again. This is a very common approach in television news production which is generally practiced and accepted as a recording of the 'truth'. The question I pose then is why can't this be done with a still image?

The opposing argument would suggest that if we accept this manipulated image as a news photograph, depicting what exactly had happened, then how can one maintain the 'authenticity' of photojournalism? Perhaps the authenticity of photojournalism lies in the intention and position of the photojournalist and editor[34], not in the image itself. I would suggest to the news industry that we can classify digital manipulation as reconstructed photography and state this when releasing the image for a clear indication to public viewers. A suggestion from Norway proposes that the word "Montasje" be employed, using the capital "M" as the standard signal for modification. (Larish quoted in Lunerfeld 1996, p.95)

Similarly Coleman writing in The Future of Photography in 1987 suggests:

> It seems to me that may be the time has come for the ASMP [American Society of Media Photographers] to consider proposing some kind of legislation that might require, underneath photographic illustrations — as distinct from photographs — something that says, "Not from a single negative," or "Not from an original photograph," or "From original photographs by X, Y and Z."... Because the question becomes how are we then to treat those images made with this technology [digital], through these strategies, that are presented to us as informational — not simply as illustrational, but as informational? How then are we to deal with the information level of images that have the appearance of photographic credibility? I think there's going to be a major cultural problem. We've got a century and a half invested in the idea of the photograph having some kind of authentic transactional relationship to what's depicted. (Coleman 1987, p.78)

[34] Refer to 'Photography as Referent' paragraph under 'Notions of Photography in the Evolving Digital Era' chapter on page 8.

On the same issue however James Enyeart argues that simply addressing the problem as digitally based, ignores the fact that manipulation of the photographic image has been a concern long before the advent of this new technology. He says:

> ....If we allow the discussion of integrity and accuracy of an image to be resolved by electronic marking, then we will have abandoned the basic, required trust in the news industry itself. Tattooing (encryption) of digital images in the communication industry will not solve the concern for the ease with which falsehoods can and have been created through such means as cropping, retouching, selective use of lenses for effect, and splicing, all of which have been used since the advent of glass plate negatives. (Enyeart 1994, p. 33)

Pedro Meyer, however suggests that the adoption of a symbol to signal digital manipulation, does not in fact address the issue of alteration enabled by digital technology because editorial practice has had a long history of recontextualizing and manipulating the 'meaning' of photographer's work. In ZoneZero (April 1997), he states:

> The issues surrounding the photographic representation are receiving increasingly a lot of attention as the digital age moves forward. I have been asked repeatedly if I believe that digitally altered images should be marked with a special symbol to differentiate them from, lets say, traditional images.
> My response has been that a symbol to show that a photograph has been digitally manipulated, begs the following question: what of all the images that have been manipulated without having been created in digital formats.
> Before we continue we should define the limits and parameters of what a "manipulated" image actually consists off [of]. To think those issues through is already part of the answer.
> In the end what is everyone so scared of? is it about issues of image credibility? and if so, isn't it about time that we come to terms with the fact that photographs have never been THE truth about anything.
> Photographs, as I see it are open-ended in their interpretation, and that I believe is their beauty and mystery. How can one explain that a picture can have its meaning completely altered just by a caption. So if photographs can't define themselves on their own, but are dependent upon external factors, shouldn't we start to worry more about those external factors than we have allowed that to happen up to now.
> As photographers we all know endless stories of our images being cropped, presented in lay outs to make an editorial point not in the images themselves, or have had our work edited out of context. What sort of symbol should those images carry?
> I find the idea of placing a symbol next to a picture to address the issues of manipulation, to be a simplistic solution to a very

> complex issue, namely that of who has manipulated what and when. I suggest on the other hand that the more people are aware that there are all these manipulations (and that is what is happening), and that they even exist, be they digital or not, the better we are off. Therefore we should have open discussions about such issues. (Meyer 1997a)

It would seem to me that if we accept a drawing of a defendant inside a court room as an artist's impression, surely we can include a reconstructed photograph in news photography? If not, is it because the imperceptible alteration enabled by digital manipulation often cannot be distinguished from an untouched photographic record?

In his book 'Truths & Fictions: A Journey from Documentary to Digital Photography', Pedro Meyer discusses one of his constructed images *Contestant #3*, depicting a beauty contest in Kentucky: His rational for the renegotiation of time in producing this image parallels my own. He says:

> ...I observed that all the images from that initial moment fell short of the visual statement I wanted to make. In every one, content and geometry had failed to come together, to borrow Max Kozloff's phrase. This specific "decisive moment" wasn't to be found, it had to be created, much as photographers have done all along when they patiently wait for their subject to perform as anticipated. The only difference is that they bide their time before the shutter clicks, and I do it afterwards. (Meyer 1995b, p.111)

His adopted position on this issue is disputed by writers like by Barbara E. Savedoff who believes that Meyer trades on the documentary aura of straight photographs. She states:

> Meyer's choice of words is rather jarring, since 'the decisive moment' is so closely tied to the idea of perfect timing. The phrase conjures a fleeting moment of visual significance synchronically recognized and captured, not a lost moment reconstructed or an ideal moment invented. A digitally altered image can seem to capture the decisive moment only insofar as it is able to trade on the documentary aura of straight photographs. But the more widespread and sophisticated digital alteration becomes, the less this will be possible—even for straight photographs. (Savedoff 1997, p. 213)

When defending his position however, Meyer argues:

> People are no longer so sure if what I photographed actually existed, or if I brought together two or more diverse moments in time. Maybe the image looks ‘straight’ to use a very questionable adjective, but generally understood. So what does that picture then tell us about TIME? May be the critics have not given much thought to this issue because they are looking in the wrong place. Conceptually the photographic image has already entered into a new world, while our critics are still looking at the old model of construction. (Meyer, 1997b)

I would advocate Pedro Meyer’s position on time and reconstruction as valid practice though he holds an alternative position to my own as regards the labeling of a manipulated image.

The image Toy Gun Violence is a reconstruction by combining fragments of an event. The elements of the image are original, their composition simply fuses a time space and the moments of recording within it, into one cohesive image.

One might also argue that the photo essay, as a well practiced method of narration in news and documentary records, is in fact a series of photographs in manipulated sequence. They may be of different incidents, in different locations and possibly by different photographers, but put together they illustrate a news event. By synthesizing several photographs into one image, I achieve a similar result. Perhaps an image such as this also poses a questioning of the nature of photojournalism.

After Performance

Street theatre is a tough profession. Jobs only come in during the weekends of the dry and hot summer. Under the bright sunlight, wearing the clumsy costume on stilts for several hours, the performer becomes wet with sweat. They tire out after the performance.

This fatigue was captured in the image of Paul (Plate 8). It was taken after one of his performances. His exhausted expression told the true story behind the quixotic lifestyle. However the background was not conducive to the concept. Primarily this was because it did not establish that this was after a performance. To clarify the meaning of my image, I relocated him to an outdoor, empty stadium (Plate 9) and the result (Plate 10) was, I believe, more eloquent.

Liar

Right after last year's election, Graeme Cairne[35] confessed to his supporters that he was a liar. For more than a decade, he promised that he would become elected to parliament but failed. He was ashamed of himself and said that he would never take part in politics again. To beg his supporters' forgiveness, he hung a tag with a slogan 'liar' around his neck and put himself on the 'stocks' in Garden Place (Plate 11). He asked people to throw rotten fruit at him. His supporters did this and amongst them was a lady wearing a mask with the portrait of Bill Clinton, the president of the United States. It was at a time not long after the Monica Lewinsky scandal had broken and the references were easily understood by the public.

It was the masked lady who set this scenario up: Graeme Cairne was not a liar to his supporters. Though he failed to make his way to parliament, he claimed that he maintained his political position. He saw that he was failed by the public. He perceived himself as a man of integrity. In contrast, "Bill Clinton", who was beating up Graeme, was the president of United States but he had lied under oath in his relationship with Monica Lewinsky and gotten away with it.

[35] Graeme Cairne is a prominent street performer who adopts political and social issues to street theatre to influence the populace. He has a nickname 'Wizard of Hamilton'.

Whether the lady purposely wore the mask, or whether I added the mask to her face, the context of this image appears the same. But the former becomes identified as a straight photograph whereas the latter would be an altered image. A photojournalist might assure me that my role in these situations has been very different. For the straight shot, I may be accepted as reporting exactly what happened. However, if I put the mask in the photograph, I may be considered as misrepresenting the truth, because it had never happened. I would argue that if a photographer misses the shot, or deliberately does not take the photograph, then he is not documenting the truth either. A traditional view of a photojournalist is that one is expected to record what has actually happened and remain unbiased to the incident. However in practice, the public never knows the intention of the photojournalist if he/she misses the shot or deliberately chooses not to record it, or (inevitably) records only part of the situation. As a result, in these cases the incident, will potentially never be 'known' by the public.

From my perspective, it is preferable that the incident be reconstructed and made known to the public if the photojournalist has missed a single 'take' at the shot, but the image would be signaled as a digital construction.

However Liar was in fact a straight shot. It does not form part of my portfolio but complements the position established in my discussion on the Toy Gun Violence image. I have also included this image in my exegesis for another reason. It is an illustration of the fact that the image maker does have an influence upon the viewers' interpretation of the image whether he adopts manipulation by digital or traditional means (cropping, framing etc.). Interestingly enough many members of my reference group suggested that this image featured unresolved and inferior 'digital manipulation' because the mask of Bill Clinton on the lady's face was 'too fictitious'. However the key point here is the 'manipulation' by the photographer and its influence on perceptions of the performing

stakeholders. In this image, the primary performer, Graeme Cairne, may have perceived himself as the primary stakeholder, the masked lady may have perceived herself as the primary performer, but the photographer had the ability, through composition, to nominate either. The event remained the same but the composition of the shot supported one particular reading: the reader of this image will be influenced by factors outside of the two participants' knowledge or control. Thus the third stakeholder, the photographer, even in a straight shot, becomes the 'suggestor' of meaning.

The Suits on a Lonely Beach

The Suits is an entertaining performance. The five members wear masks and suits and improvise during the performance, actively engaging with the public. Generally they do not please the audience, because they tease and harass them. Their performance is often egocentric and melodramatic. They astutely imitate the public's behaviour and are confrontational. However, part of their performance depicts their sorrow. Ashamed of what they have become they tie themselves together and walk languorously away from the site of the performance.

They know that their performance cannot survive without an audience but their acts have a kind of dichotomy; needing support from the audience but repelling them.

I placed a despondent shot of The Suits (Plate 12) on a lonely beach (Plate 13), without an audience. From their perspective, it may suggest their sadness when left alone by a public whose attention they are destined to survive upon. This internal tension between the dual role of activist and commissioned entertainer is a complex one and this image (Plate 14) suggests the alienation and dislocation inherent in it.

Balloon Launching

This image Balloon Launching (Plate 15) is about the performers' spirit. The performers used a primitive method to launch a tiny, inferior hot air balloon, but they took it very seriously. About ten performers gathered together and contributed to the event. Mark, who is now running Free Lunch[36], said that people in Hamilton often sneer at them, but that is what he sees their street theatre as being about. He says they do not intend to fulfill a specific aim in their performance.

To construct this image, I combined several segments of their performance; the 'scholar' presenting his researched formula (Plate 16); the ritual posture (Plate 17) celebrating the event; and the individuals in appropriate uniforms. All of these aspects signified the devotion and seriousness of the performance. But by comparison, the launching of a tiny, insignificant balloon (Plate 18) was considered as a trivial act by the audience.

However, I placed two contrasting, sophisticated balloons (Plate 19 and 20) in the image to dramatize the mood, alter the emphasis and introduce the uncertainty of 'fiction' into the image.

This notion of connecting fragments to question the subject has been discussed by many contemporary commentators/artists. Frank Horvat states:

> ...Computer photography takes its elements from reality, the only difference is these realities don't happen to be in the same place at the same moment.
> ...I think a photograph, or image — I don't even know if I should call them photographs — is successful when one doesn't quite know what was pasted in and what was real. What I'm trying to do is leave an uncertainty about what's real and what's not.
> (Horvat 1994, p. 77)

[36] Free Lunch is an agency in Hamilton, which acts as a representative for the street performers, and it is probably the first professional agency for street theatre in New Zealand.

The uncertainty of reality and fiction is also described by Joan Fontecuberta as ‘Reality ...blended into fiction.’ She states:

> Contemporary art supports the notion of falsifiction [falsification] as an intellectual strategy. Beneath the fun and provocation lies a satire on the role of photography in the contemporary era. Can it still be considered a technology in the service of truth, a medium of evidences? Today, nothing is evident; on the contrary, we navigate in a cloud of ambiguity, through virtual spaces that are substitutes for experience. In the context of ‘media culture’, concepts of truth and falsehood have been stripped of all validity. Everything is both true and false, establishing a new protocol of relations for images and systems of knowledge transmission, which tend to reposition the social functions of technologies that produce images and redefine notions of what is real.
> ...Today, in contrast, reality is blended into fiction and photography can complete its cycle: to convey the illusory and the prodigious in the thread of the symbolic, where reality is ultimately produced. (Fontecuberta 2000, pp. 7-9)

From my perspective, it is undeniable that photography suggests segments of ‘physical’ reality. These segments are uncertain and unstable because of their illusive contexts. When they are read by an individual viewer, they are interpreted differently because they are conceptualized according to each individual’s own notion of reality.[37] As a result, these segments of reality are partially transformed into fiction.

Bliss Asylum

Where I grew up, it was common for many children to suffer from serious illness due to poverty. One of my close relatives, from my own age group had a mental health problem following recovery from illness she suffered when she was five. She was also my neighbour. She was a burden to her family, being dependant and demanding. We often visited her family and

[37] Jon Mided discusses every individual’s own notion of reality in a slightly different perspective. He states: “All reality is subjective, there is no objective reality. No two people share an identical sense perception, so no one can experience any circumstance without their own subjectivity intervening in the form of interpretation.” (Mided 1998)

we could hardly communicate with her. In my memory, my family always felt sad for her, we thought that she was living in a different and unpleasant world.

A group of women performers opened a boutique in June of this year and I was invited to their opening fashion show. The show was stunning. However, it would have disappointed anyone expecting a visually enjoyable performance with sexy and handsome models. Instead, the models were ‘patients’ from an asylum. I was intrigued by the slogan written on their shirts: Bliss Asylum.

I used the image (Plate 21) of Wendy crying as the main subject and placed the other patients to represent the world of asylum (Plate 22 and 23). The crying Wendy has two possible identities in this image. She may represent the secular, real world or she may be a mental patient. This fashion show challenged my belief that the world of mental patients (Plate 24) is inscrutable.

Giraffe and Stilt Walkers

When I photographed the performers, I noticed that they really enjoyed stilt walking. I guessed they loved the feeling of the high profile and they felt proud of their skills in manipulating the difficult apparatus. For me it was reminiscent of the giraffe and the parallel relationship the performers had with the animal and its physical perception of the world. I went to the zoo in Hamilton and photographed the giraffe (Plate 25) and watched with interest the audience’s reaction to the animal in the zoo. I selected an image of the back of the stilt walkers (Plate 26) and arranged them inside the zoo next to the giraffe. There are two possible interpretations of this image (Plate 27). Firstly, the perspective of the stilt walkers when comparing themselves with the giraffe and secondly the notion of the

‘audience’ in a zoo. The question is raised, who is the actual ‘audience’ in the zoo, the animal or the human beings?

From a Chinese cultural perspective, there is also another reading. We have a Chinese saying that no matter how tall you are, there must be someone taller than you. This teaches us to be humble. The stilt walkers are proud of towering over the audience, but when stilting next to the giraffe, the ‘towering over’ position changes though the stilt walkers may not be aware of it. It suggests inevitably that one may be towered over by others.

Underlying ‘truths’ in every culture are represented through different images (metaphors either visual, oral or written). These are read in different ways by different people and an image constructed by a photographer inside one ‘cultural’ framework may have quite a different ‘reading’ when the image is viewed outside of that framework. Vicki Goldberg in her book ‘The Power of Photography’ uses the recording of the Beijing demonstrations as an example:

> In June 1989, when Chinese troops moved against the student demonstrators in Beijing, the world saw an astonishing image on TV: A lone man stepped in front of a line of tanks and held up his hand to tell the people’s army not to move against the people. The tank tried to move around him, but he moved before it, risking his life to stop the advance of all that armor. Still photographs of the event were printed everywhere, and sometimes a frame of the TV sequence was reproduced. Throughout the Western nations this became an image of individual courage standing firm before the armed might of the state...
> This photograph is not shown only in the West. The Chinese exhibit it too. In the summer and fall of 1989 the Chinese government mounted photographic exhibition in most fair-sized cities to support the official version of the crackdown, even providing buses to bring people in from the countryside. Television also showed film of the student unrest. All the pictures concentrates on student violence, and on dead soldiers. These images were not faked. Whoever did the killing, some soldiers did die. The Chinese government contends that it

> was forced to call in the troops to contain student violence. The picture of the man who held up his hand to stop a tank is exhibited to show the restraint of the troops, who chose not to run over a lone man blocking the march of an entire line of tanks. (Information from Michael Gasster and Roderick MacFarquhar.) The photograph tells that story just as faithfully and honestly as it tells another story in the West, for photographs do not give us truth — we give truth to them. (Goldberg 1991, pp. 250-1)

This example of dual readings is also demonstrated in the previously discussed image Liar.

Stilt Walkers Dancing at the Beach

I was invited to the private beach party of the performers and expected that I could depict and illustrate aspects of their private lives. The party was scheduled to start at six on a Sunday evening. When I arrived the beach, it was beautiful with the warm evening light glancing across the sand. I strolled along the beach and took some initial images. For a long time, nobody turned up and eventually I met an unfamiliar friend of one of the performers. We introduced ourselves and chatted for more than a hour until we got bored. I then decided to wander around to take some sunset shots and came across a naked child dancing on a deserted tree trunk that lay partly submerged in the sand (Plate 28). I could only shoot three frames but I knew that the images would be rewarding. I also took a nice dusk landscape shot with water reflection.

The first group of performers appeared at eight-thirty. They started making a fire and playing music. However at ten-thirty I had to return home as it took another two hours driving to reach the city.

The party had not even begun.

Though I was disappointed that I did not have any shots depicting their

private party, I had taken some good shots that suggested new contexts for this project. This beach was a favorite place for the performers and I had been afforded an opportunity to record it, separate from their influence. For the image Stilt Walkers Dancing on the Beach (Plate 31), I chose a pair of stilt walkers, Vanessa and Veronica, whose dainty dancing pose was recorded on another occasion (Plate 29 and 30). I let them dance at the beach with the child. The dancing, naked child reflected the performers' intrinsic romantic character, and the mood was enriched by the warm evening light. The concept was changed from describing their private lives to illustrating the spirit of stilt walking. For ethical reasons, the child shot did not depict the subject's face. This synthesized image departed from my original idea, but in doing so generated new meanings of its own.

It is an image that I am pleased with because it captures the essence of something intangible; the fragile beauty of fantasy and lightness in an essentially New Zealand context. I am always aware that these performers are often gaped or sneered at in their urban worlds. By displacing them I believe I was able to show the grace of their vision outside of the perceptions of the everyday audience.

Glütmax and Landscape

This dusk landscape shot (Plate 32) with a cool dramatic skyline and water reflection on the beach revealed a strong feeling of loneliness and emptiness. It recalled for me the performance called Glütmax which the performers wrapped their naked bodies in cheese cloth bags, then coloured fluid made with flour was poured over them. After this had been done they kept moving and changing their pose; sometimes they intertwined, sometimes they created non-human shapes. They were like struggling amoebas.

I chose the image (Plate 33) of the semi transparent bodies of Sandra and Wendy inside the cheese cloth bags, without the coloured fluid, as I wanted to preserve the human sense of their bodies. Then I placed them inside this dusk landscape shot.

Through this construction, I sought to demonstrate their inner feeling of struggle and solitude. In this situation (Plate 34), their bodies become part of the landscape and share the loneliness and emptiness of that world.

Both Stilt Walkers Dancing at the Beach and Gültmax and Landscape, after the manipulating process, transcend their original performance and depart to represent new identities with alternative and arguably richer contexts. Jerry Uelsmann describes his manipulated landscapes as:

> ... my landscapes do not document reality as it is literally perceived, my hope is that they transcend that reality, enriched by the source of my own experience. I would like the synthesized and reconstructed images I create to challenge the inherent believability of the photograph. (Uelsmann, 1999)

Both images also seek to pursue a similar notion of inherent believability, through the invention of reality.

Mum I Am Bored

This image Mum I Am Bored (Plate 35) was constructed from two photographs. They were taken when the performers set up an installation before their performance on the Millennium Eve in Aotea Square in Auckland.

The performance was about a man giving birth to a baby at the Millennium. The message “I am bored” was originally written on an ironing board with a placemat that depicted a teenager harassing a woman but the photograph (Plate 36) didn’t capture the boring mood of the installation and the message didn’t really get through. The second image (Plate 37),

was taken after a rain shower and illustrated the boring and depressed atmosphere explicitly. This dull wide shot with a soft toy on the ironing board in the foreground and another flap over board in the far background delivered a cogent message. The dislocation of one board from the other heightened the sense of alienation and futility. By combining the message and the mood of both photographs, I was able to establish a dialogue with the viewer and as a result the image is more articulate and focused than the two individual straight photographs. I also sought to change the message in the image so it represented the boredom of a child rather than that of a teenager. I did this by replacing the placemat of the original image with the soft toy. The toy was to serve as a generic indicator of childhood.

Snake Reading Newspaper

At the beginning of the new academic year, there were some street performances at the orientation week of Waikato University. They were sponsored by the Waikato Times, a local newspaper. Andrew Timbrell and a team of performers were responsible for creating a family room setting with newspapers in an outdoor environment. Then individual performers carried out different performances within this setting. The performances ran for the whole week.

In this image, Mike Main was recorded in a snake costume wandering around inside the ‘family room’ doing nothing special (Plate 38). There was a moment when he read the newspaper and my intuition told me that I could do something with this. In our Chinese culture, a snake is considered to be a very lazy character and we have a saying that if someone is as lazy as a snake, he/she is hopeless. Some cultural gaps appeared in direct translation of this idea because New Zealand (which has no snakes) has tended to adopt the Judeo Christian association of the snake as being venomous, evil and untrustworthy. However it was when

Sandra and Driod performed two days later in the same set, that I took an interesting shot that would support my message; a couple on the sofa covered themselves with newspaper (Plate 39).

I placed the snake who was reading the newspaper and the lazy couple covered in similar documents in the same environment (Plate 40).

The final image (Plate 41) depicts a diligent snake reading the newspaper while a lazy couple, covered in similar documents,[38] relax under the sun against a reconstructed, serene backdrop.

When I had completed it, I also showed this image to a photographer who did not know about this project. He saw this image as being a 'set up shot' in location and did not realize that it was a synthesized image. He, as an individual viewer, interpreted this image with no knowledge of the objectives of this project nor the intention of the image maker. His reading of the image was that it was a straight photograph of a theatrical outdoor performance however he was not sure what the performance was trying to illustrate.

In this image, I believe that I managed to broach the cultural gap in reading by contextual and compositional manipulation. The river scene is passive and associated with relaxation. The inclusion of sleeping figures in armchairs, arrayed in garments slightly reminiscent of pyjamas also supports this atmosphere. I have also constructed a formal 'living room' construction of furniture but emphasized the disorder of the newspapers to suggest the fatigue and untidiness at the end of a day.

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[38] The Newspaper taken to the beach is an architypical New Zealand construct. The paper is often used to protect the face from the severity and burning nature of the summer sun. In peak summer because of the ozone depletion, burn time is sometimes as short as nine minutes of exposure. In general people have to consider some form of screening and newspapers are common.

Dolls on the Farm

Russell Shaw, one of the performing artists, is a painter and sculptor who tends to use dolls as his subject. During my interview with him, he talked mainly about his creative work rather than his performance. This work (Plate 42) with dolls protruding out the paper sphere, hangs from the verandah of his home. It impressed me when I first met him. I decided to use his work as a starting point and produce this image (Plate 44).

I 'abandoned' the sculpture on the other side of the fence dividing a desolate farm (Plate 43). I manipulated the hue to create the somber mood of this morning shot. I intend to suggest the concept of giving birth to babies by irresponsible parents and the possible deprivation of not having a decent childhood.

When I showed this image to my reference group, there were two distinct interpretations: Firstly, it suggested that human beings are ruining the natural environment and resources and as a result, it is all of us who suffer. Secondly, one referent, who was brought up on a dairy farm, said it recalled for him the birth of new calves and the loneliness of abandoned still born or deformed offspring.

The use of the landscape as a context can hugely affect the reading of a photograph. Just as the Waikato river, is used in Plate 41 to suggest relaxation, and the beach in Plates 14 to suggest alienation or emptiness so here, the moody Waikato hillsides are heavily suggestive of foreboding or ill ease.[39]

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[39] In his 1996 documentary, Cinema of Unease, Sam Neil saw the New Zealand landscape as "...a metaphor for a psychological interior... the darker heart of a menacing land." (Neil and Rymer 1996)
This notion of the landscape as living metaphor is also explored actively in New Zealand film making and literature. Most specifically it has been illustrated in David Eggleton and Craig Potton's 1999 photographic publication *Here on Earth. The Landscape in New Zealand Literature*. (Eggleton and Potton 1999)

Gene Fool

Paul Beere, one of the performers with whom I worked, created an exceptional performance. Gene Fool is arguably one of the best street performances that I have ever photographed. It is very entertaining and enlightening. He delivers the ‘genetic modification’ issue to the public in such an captivating way that the audiences take home with them both the sense of entertainment and the awareness of the implications of genetic modification.

Paul and Dave, as research doctors of genetic modification, started the performance by showing off the achievements of their research. Then Paul volunteered to be tested by Dave. The process was simple: Dave put Paul inside a huge balloon to go through the modification process. From enthusiasm through to sadness, the genetic modification ended up being a disaster.

I have produced two images about this performance. The first one (Plate 45) is a straight shot, a close up of Paul’s face inside the balloon. I included the image for discussion because it is another example of straight photography which already has a distinct and impressive representation of itself. The vague and distorted feature of Paul’s face behind the colourful balloon expresses a profound feeling of hopelessness and helplessness. I have had interesting feedback from the reference group and most of them assumed that the image was digitally manipulated. It was, for many of them difficult to perceive that this was a portrait behind the surface of a balloon.

The second image (Plate 46) is a synthesis. It depicts Paul’s physical change inside the balloon after genetic modification and carries a subtle expression of sorrow (Plate 48) in the foreground. In contrast, the two megalomaniacal doctors are still boasting their achievements in the background (Plate 47).

By putting two contrasting segments of the same performance together, this image represents both the inherent desire of human beings to have control over others and simultaneously the outcome of such an initiative.

Flea Market

At the ending of the Gene Fool performance, the victim was dead and the body was wrapped in a sheet of matting and pulled away (Plate 49). It was a powerful act and recalled for me the death of my father.

My father died of an illness in a hospital, I had to collect his body for the funeral and one of the staff from the funeral service went with me. What distressed me was that he wrapped the body of my father in a mat and dumped it into the back of the van. I was deeply hurt by his behaviour because my father was not respected. I lamented not only the death of my father, but also the fact that too often we are afforded no respect after our death. This distressing fragment of memory always lingers in my mind.

Flea Market deals with this. I placed the body as a corpse in the flea market next to the mannequin (Plate 50). The image is littered with signs of the ‘offcast’ and the neglected. Second hand markets are a growing phenomenon in New Zealand and many stalls contain the articles from deceased estates. The personal experience of my father’s bad treatment translated instantly into this context (Plate 51).

Gumboot Dancers and Women Suffragettes

Gumboot Dancers is a very popular street performance. A group of four performers in farming clothes perform traditional farming songs and dances. It purports to be a plain performance without politics. The performers gratify and entertain the audiences, young and old by catering

to their preconceptions of rural banality. Sometimes the performers freeze their postures for several minutes, a common act in street theatre called human sculpture. Their postures are self derisive and compelling.

My first impression was that this was a trivial performance but gradually I realized my interpretation was influenced by my different cultural background. I grew up in an Asian commercial and industrial city without the influence of farming culture. Even now, Gumboot Dancers is not my favorite performance and I find it difficult to produce an image which reflects what it sets out to achieve. Initially I explored the relationship and dialogue between gumboot dancers and the audience (Plate 52) and had produced an image about the dancers pissing in front of the shoppers. I also added the disproportional city dogs sneering at their philistine behaviour (Plate 53). However I felt the image (Plate 54) was mediocre.

There was an undercurrent of meaning in this performance that referenced the displacement of rural culture inside an inner city context.

At this point, I went through my stock and found an image of a prominent wall mural depicting the women's suffrage centenary[40] (Plate 55). These women formed a contradictory relationship with the gumboot dancers. I reshot the wall mural for a better angle and placed the gumboot dancers in frozen 'faux pas' postures (Plate 56) in front it.

The image now came closer to exploring the social dislocation. This image (Plate 57) now bears a range of possible narrative interpretations: Firstly, the contradiction of class. Farmers, (the working group) have been and still are, major contributors to the economy of New Zealand. The group is often considered to be a slightly naive, conservative, and under educated class of citizen. By contrast the effective citizen (as an educated woman

[40] This wall mural is in central Auckland and was designed in memory of the women suffragettes in New Zealand since 1893.

activist or politician) is symbolic of the hard won and acknowledged reformer. The contrast between the two classes is reflected in the opposing postures of women suffragettes and the gumboot dancers. My reference group also suggested that the image has another reading. It reflects the ideal world (prerogative group) and the real world (the peasant group). This image became far more successful for me than the previous image (Plate 54), its tension encourages viewers to read it in their own way.

Council's Discouragement

Street theatre in Hamilton is distinctive and has a history of performing political and social acts and gaining intense commentary on its performances. This has, from time to time, caused conflict with the city council. During my interviews with the performers, one performer expressed the opinion that the Hamilton City Council has been purposely providing them with commercial work to consume their energy and time and keep them quiet as social activists. Although this comment was disputed by another performer as paranoid, it intrigued me and I reflected for some time on the implications of it.

For the whole duration of the photo sessions on this project, I witnessed very few political and social performances and did not offer me sufficient data with which to work. However, I made a point of photographing the news clippings of the past controversies simply as a file record. I placed these news clippings (Plate 59, 60 and 61) in the foreground of Council's Discouragement (Plate 62). This image actually records the stilt walkers rushing to make it to a scheduled performance.

I chose this image (Plate 58) for two reasons: firstly, the gesture of the stilt walkers represented their positive and anticipatory attitude towards

commercial work; secondly, the backlight cast strong shadows on the news clippings and suggested a strong feeling of ‘being abandoned.’ The blurred movement of the news clippings, contrasting with the ‘moving forward’ of the stilt walkers, emphasized the message that their controversial performances were momentarily past events, yet they still accompanied them. In small cities like Hamilton, controversial events are not forgotten easily by the public and performers live with both the present and the past of their performances.

One may dispute whether these integrated images deliver the intended message. I would argue that they are easily understood by the performers themselves without too many explanations. They understand their own performances well, they know what this project is about, and in this image these are references primarily for them to read.

As for general viewers, the captions on images like these play a crucial part in conveying their messages. The captions become supporting references to the reading of the images.

Conclusion

In this commentary I have briefly discussed each image, using specific examples to focus on the principles underpinning my position as an image maker. The images form a set of points for reflection on street theatre in Hamilton, both in terms of its appearance and the issues that lie under its surface. From this series of work discussed here I have chosen twelve images to represent this research project. They are presented in an A2 portfolio and are a result of the synergetic relationship between these performers and aspects of my experience of life as a man.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I summarize and conclude the exegesis. This exegesis forms a discourse around my position as an image maker who explores and investigates the possible developments of newer contexts and aesthetics by using the manipulative tools of digital technology. In this conclusion, I will outline the perspectives on photography in the evolving digital era that have been influential in the development of my work.

In designing the research methodology of this project, I have outlined both my rationale and its implementation. In terms of the ongoing evaluation of my work, I valued the contribution of my reference group. Their pertinent opinions and diverging perspectives on my work not only affected the visual resolve but also lead me to become more cognisant of the perceptions and interpretations of other people.

In terms of theoretical research, I investigated a range of theoretical positions held by practitioners, writers and critics. These opinions formed a discourse with my own work and lead eventually to an alignment of my own views with artists and writers like Anthony Aziz, Sammy Cucher, Pedro Meyer, Jerry Uelsmann and A. D. Coleman.

In exploring the newer context of the digital image, I have developed new ideas, reflecting both the street theatre performances and my own considerations of their work. Together these have contributed to the new representations. I expect the viewer to reflect upon my work and develop his/her own perception and interpretations on these images.

My investigations and experiments relating to technological issues around the digital image were crucial to this project. I begun by selecting and testing the available hardware and software and experimenting with

scanning and colour management. This experimentation enabled me to produce high quality digital files and maintain constant colour reproduction. I also focused on exploring the potentials of several ink jet printers, and examining the effects of various combinations of different types/brands of ink and a collection of substrate. These investigations allowed me to work through a range of processes in resolving the final body of work and achieve high quality production in the portfolio. They also enabled me to establish a considered and informed position as an image maker dealing with the interface between new technologies and notions of photography.

In this exegesis, I have argued eight key points:

Digital manipulation is an extended tool which presents considerable potential in the development of a newer aesthetic in photography and this newer aesthetic is an extended part of the mainstream aesthetic which relies on a photographic presence. This has been discussed with references to Anthony Aziz, Sammy Cucher, Andreas Müller-Pohle and Denise Miller.

Manipulation to change identity for a richer context has been part of the photographic history; digital technology only facilitates the process. This has been argued in the chapter 'Notions of Photography in the Evolving Digital Era' and illustrated in the work Gumboot Dancers and Women Suffragettes, Dolls on the Farm, and Glütmax and Landscape.

I have argued that reality is a combination of segments or layers of memories. A 'truer' truth or conceptual truth could be constructed, using digital manipulation, by combining these segments of memories from a range of time frames. I have made reference here to Natalie Bookchin and Lev Manovich in the chapter 'Notions of Photography in the Evolving Digital Era' and illustrated the idea in the work Balloon Launching,

Bliss Asylum, After Performance, Flea Market and Council's Discouragement.

In the era of mass communication, photography serves as reference to the truth and the context or the source of the context establishes the authenticity of the image.

I have established that a stakeholder is a person who contributes to or influences the context of an image. The photographer, subject(s), and the host(s) of the subject/object in the image are all potential stakeholder(s). This issue has been discussed with reference to the image Liar.

Because digital file is an unstable origin, a tangible, archival output is required for the specific requirements of displayed work. It is also required to serve as authentic proof of origin. I have considered here the positions of A. D. Coleman and Pedro Meyer.

Developing from this point I have suggested that the news industry should allow for the reconstruction of 'reality' in a news event, by manipulation. However, I have suggested that these images should be labeled as manipulated images. This has been considered with reference to Coleman, Enyeart and Meyer and contextualized in the commentary on Toy Gun Violence.

When an individual viewer reads an image, they may interpret it in various ways and the image is conceptualized according to one's own notion of reality. As a result, reality is partially transformed into fiction.

By manipulating the image (either by traditional or digital means), the image maker has influence on the viewer's interpretation of the image.

Because underlying ‘truths’ in every culture vary, cultural difference influences our perception and interpretation in reading images. The meaning of an image may be very different when read by viewers from different cultural backgrounds. The exegesis discussed this issue with reference to Vicki Goldberg and the commentary on Snake Reading Newspaper and Giraffe and Stilt Walkers.

In this project, I have investigated the development of newer contexts by using digital manipulating tools and I believe that newer aesthetics will gradually be formed when digital technology is explored by more artists/ practitioners.

In the evolving digital era, image readers should not only consider physical appearance/reality when reading an image but also investigate the image’s underlying meaning. This frees photography from its inherited confined representations of reality. With the growing potential for digital manipulation, the context of photography becomes more complex; the practitioner has to be aware of not only what he is photographing, but also of what can be done afterwards. This allows for a wider scope of representation in photography and I would suggest that we adopt a positive attitude when considering this.

There are many reasons why some photographers and critics are opposed to digital technology. Image manipulating and photographic veracity are but one objection. As for the opposition to digital technology, I believe these opinions are valuable and serve as points of consideration by the industry. However I would urge image makers to approach the potentials of this technology with an open mind and view the digital developments in

the context of the substantial historical practice of manipulation in photography.

I believe that digital technology will have dominant influence on photography in the future and it may eventually replace analogue processes.

Within this thesis, I have attempted to explore and articulate these issues through both the written exegesis and in the practical work.

Photography will grow and metamorphose but will continue to be a medium for communication.

POSTSCRIPT

Recent research findings released just prior to this exegesis going forward for examination now question the initial claims of archival quality associated with Somerset Photo Enhanced (See p. 25). Inkjet Art Solutions quoted Cone of Cone Editions in the Epson-Inkjet discussion that “We printed on Somerset Photo Enhanced extensively at SIGGRAPH in the form of 34” x 47" sheets. It is an awesome product that we are really excited about. It’s primary trait is it’s uncanny ability to take ink... as much as you can throw at it. We ran up to 400% inks on it, without bleed, without mottle. The blacks were unlike anything I have seen thus far on a paper with a coating. It still remained sharp. Linear absorption.” Followed by a note: “Somerset Photo Enhanced has been submitted to Henry Wilhelm for longevity testing with Lysonic E inks. Update on September 13, 2000: Wilhelm Imaging Research report on June 20, 2000 indicates that images printed with the ‘Lysonic i W-2’ inkset for the Iris printer will only last 3-4 years before noticeable fading occurs. We have also received notice from two users that the Lysonic E inkset and the Xtreme Gamut inks are fading quite quickly on the Somerset Photo Enhanced paper. Recent conversations with Legion West Paper (the distributor) indicate that this paper is now not considered a good choice for long term storage and display, when using almost any DYE-based color inkset (although monochrome dye inksets seem to fare much better). However, Legion West Paper still consider the paper to be a good longevity choice for use with pigment inksets such as MIS Archival, Generations and the Epson Archival Ink.” (Inkjet Art Solutions 2000b)

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