

# Restaging Place: Performativity and the camera. Parliament Square recast through social media photography

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I, Judith Brocklehurst confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

# Abstract

This practice-related study of a politically charged public place, Parliament Square, London is led by an examination of social media photographs that have been taken there and posted online. The photographs have been removed from the fast flow of social media, transposed to analogue film, slowed and analyzed. During this physical process four social activities emerge: tourism, protest, state occasion and the everyday. An investigation into each of these areas is instigated by a close examination of one related photograph. This investigation occurs theoretically and in the realm of performative sculptural, photographic and film practice.

As well as being a study of the actual place, the Square offers a public location from which to reflexively examine its virtual equivalents online. Through performative practice, my study highlights commonalities between the role of photographs, monuments and public places as methods of representing historical understandings and their democratic potential: the 'everyday' of the Square and photography. The study investigates the role of photography in the construction of place – deconstructing how tourists pose and gaze into the camera to return to the singularity of the individual experience. The enquiry continues to look at Parliament Square as a place of political protest counter to the dominant state narrative of the past and the present. It is a place where particular narratives are embodied and celebrated, often misrepresenting the complexity of the past.

The four photographs are restaged in the studio. Here they become a distorting mirror of both actual and virtual places revealing an absence that arguably occurs within all photographs. This absence might allow the viewer to relate to the subject depicted, find common ground, as well as develop a critical self-awareness and openness to the views of others.

# Impact Statement

Like a photograph this thesis captures a moment in time: the explosion of social media use and its effects on actual and virtual public places. Instagram provided a source of data but also a platform for dissemination of that research, as such like social media and the technology used to access it this study has built in obsolescence. However the subject of this study is cross-disciplinary, within it I have used experimental research methods and presentation formats. Inside academia it could therefore offer starting points and insight into many different research areas, for example: photography, social media, urban design, cultural, political and social uses of technology, and heritage studies.

The research method I developed could help enhance the validity of artist practice within social science research. Particularly my presentation of processes through the use of QR tags within the text which link to online video content. This method of investigation and presentation repositions performance, film, photography and sculpture from the end result of research to integral method. The successful use of these experimental and creative methods might encourage others to push the boundaries further and also add to the debate as to how arts practice fits within academic study. Ideas and methods used in this thesis might initiate the development of experimental teaching methods such as creative workshops, performance based lectures to introduce and inspire new research methods.

Outside academe this study might influence public policy towards actual and virtual public places. Whether that be in their design: to encourage the public to become more socially and politically involved or aware. Or the inclusion of temporary or permanent art works that might provoke thought about the purpose, possibilities and value of historic urban and also virtual public spheres. Although the actual place studied is specific: Parliament Square, the ideas discussed pertaining to its use by the public and those who determine how it appears and how it might change could be applied to many similar places around the world.

This influence could occur through public dissemination of this research online, specifically on Instagram. Pushing in particular for the need for people to become more aware of the possible positive and negative uses of social media. Like a photograph this thesis will have a different impact on different people, it might at some point be dusted off and evoke nostalgia for the initial struggles for critical use of globalised social media, and how it began to become interwoven with debates surrounding actual local public places.

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# Notes on layout and practice

1. The practice element of this study is embodied in this thesis in two forms: There are 7 films which can be accessed through 'Quick Recognition' or QR tags (see note 2) and a series of hand printed analogue photographs.
2. The Quick Recognition (QR) tags link to online films. A QR tag reader app on a smartphone or tablet can be used to access the films, and then lay the smartphone on the page to watch the films. (Alternatively the Vimeo web address can be typed in or these films are also available on the CD Rom at the back of this thesis).
3. The hand printed photographs have been developed using templates and printed paper that are also bound into this thesis. I used techniques and materials that I employed regularly in the studio to bring these processes into the bound book. The photographs and films accompany and are relevant to the text, however they are not referred to directly within it and are therefore not listed in the illustrations but within the table of contents. (For further discussion of the way the thesis is laid out see pg. 47).
4. Further documentation of my practice which I posted on Instagram can be found under the hash-tag #parliamentsquarere staged. These were posted from my Instagram account: Psquare11. A selection of these photographs can also be found in the film *Experimental Restagings* on pg. 278.
5. All of the Instagram photographs in this thesis were shared in the public domain and are therefore available for public/academic rather than commercial use, according to UCL and Instagram guidelines. I have made all accounts anonymous.
6. In this eversion images that are subject to restrictive copyright have been replaced by graphic approximations of the originals and hyperlinked with images available online.

# Introduction

I decided to research Parliament Square in Central London after it became a mental and physical roadblock during the writing of my MA final report (in 2010). The report - titled *Never Such Innocence Again* from Philip Larkin's poem *MCMXIV* (1964)<sup>1</sup> - was a description of a walk from Edwin Lutyen's, *Cenotaph* (1919), the symbolic empty *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* on Whitehall, to the *7 July Memorial* (2009),<sup>2</sup> in Hyde Park. This walk was guided by information available on the Internet via smartphone. Monuments and their socio-political function anchored my research at a moment when new ephemeral public places were opening up online. During my walk I crossed Parliament Square (henceforth the Square).<sup>3</sup> It was the most complex place to analyse and make sense of, as well as to physically navigate. As I tried to cross the busy roads to the grassy area in the centre, I began to ponder my relationship with the Square, its statues and buildings. At the time of writing my report the grass was occupied by peace protesters, amongst them Brian Haw,<sup>4</sup> who called their camp Democracy Village, embodying philosopher John Dewey's view that 'a democracy is more than a form of government: it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience' (Dewey (1916) 2004:130). The peace protesters' flimsy dwellings and impromptu discussions in a communal gazebo were in stark contrast with the building opposite – the Houses of Parliament, and the democratic processes within.<sup>5</sup>

It was the contrast between the two versions of democracy that kept me in the Square. At a time when democracy in its different forms seemed to be increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> MCMXIV - 1914 was published in 1964 as part of the *Whitsun Weddings* Anthology.

<sup>2</sup> The memorial in contrast to the *Cenotaph* was designed by a team including architects Carmody Groarke, engineers Arup, and landscape architects Colvin and Moggridge and advised by sculptor Antony Gormley in consultation with the victims and their families.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this research I defined the physical boundaries of the Square by what is immediately visible from its centre. However, it is not only the buildings that surround the Square but the social and political function of the pillars of state housed within them that have an effect on what happens in the Square and who visits it.

<sup>4</sup> Brian Haw had camped on the grass and then the pavement in Parliament Square for 10 years from 2001, in protest against UK and US foreign policy.

<sup>5</sup> This is a Parliament that prides itself on its sovereignty, its role as lawmaker and as a scrutiniser of the elected government, see Parliament Official Website (2017) *Parliament's Role*.

unstable and under threat, it felt apposite to examine in greater detail the themes that emerged while writing my MA dissertation. These threats to democracy may be perceived to arise from the upsurge in populism and the rise of 'illiberal' democracies or even authoritarian regimes. This political shift has in part been attributed to the increasing influence of the Internet as a significant method of political communication but one which might also serve as a distraction from such dangers. The different possible uses of Instagram point towards the performative democratic potential of social media and particularly social media photography as a virtual public place that might aid communal acts rather than hinder them.<sup>6</sup>

My current research explored how the communicated experiences that occur in the Square form different communities, from a nation to local protest groups, tourists and passers-by. I have explored the different ways in which these communities are bounded and kept secure, their laws, freedoms and methods of policing. Rather than a walk through the Square this research became a form of occupation - not physically but virtually. Initially as with my MA I used a Google search to gain knowledge of the Square and was presented with a hierarchical list of sites to visit. However, it was social media photography platform Instagram that showed me how other people - the *demos* – represent this place and themselves through their photographs. These photographs became my guides to the Square and the democratic potential of social media photography.

In the course of my research my creative studio practice evolved to become an intrinsic part of my method of investigation. My studio became the place where I examined, took apart, and remade photographs, changing, restaging and recasting different elements. In the context of my studio my smartphone was a provider of raw material, a creative tool and intermediary between locations and ideas. The study of the photographs became, as Professor of English and art history W.J.T.

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<sup>6</sup> The term performative originated from the word perform; yet it has taken on a very different meaning. The definition of the word perform is to carry out or execute a task, when in the context of a stage or an audience, to follow a script. Initially performative philosophy sought to explain and reinforce established social and political conventions through the performativity of language (see Rose-Redwood and Glass 2014:xv). Through the work of Judith Butler (who was influenced in her thinking by Austin and Derrida) performativity has become just the opposite. Butler's performativity allows for social norms to be challenged which might lead to personal and societal transformation. It is Butler's definition of the term performative to which I adhere to in this thesis. (I discuss Butler's theories and performativity in more detail on pg. 64).

Mitchell describes, a 'form of theorizing' (Mitchell 2005:6). Rather than imposing theory on these photographs, physically analysing them led the enquiry. As an artist, practical, tangible, visual investigation through material processes is central to the way I understand the world. My practice brought to the fore terminology such as recasting and restaging which in turn provoked different theoretical approaches. It unlocked ways of thinking that would not have emerged without making.

At the time I began my research in 2011 Instagram was new with nowhere near the global cultural reach that it has now. For the purpose of this research I take the view that this online photo-sharing platform is also a public place.<sup>7</sup> Like the Square it is a location where communities can be formed and political opinions aired or swayed. Therefore the themes that emerged from my initial MA study of the Square - communication, community, security and freedom - can also be helpful in understanding the mechanisms of this and other virtual places. The study of the social, political, commercial and cultural interactions between new intangible virtual public places and the historic, apparent solidity of the Square has been at the core of this thesis. Both of these places can be environments in which 'public spheres' might be formed. Philosopher Jürgen Habermas describes these spheres as 'social space generated in communicative action' (1996:360) which chimes with Dewey's description of democracy being linked to communication and action. Habermas's definition draws attention to differences between place and space and how they are formed. The problems surrounding this differentiation are ones that I return to in regard to geographer Doreen Massey's, philosophers Martin Heidegger's and Henri Lefebvre's definitions of place and space and their social construction.<sup>8</sup>

Photography took the role of the mediator between the two places, a visual form of communication which opened up other strands of investigation, those of visibility

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<sup>7</sup> Instagram was launched in 2010 and in the first three years went from 5 to 10 to 50 million active monthly users. It now has over 500 million active users. Source: Wikipedia *Timeline of Instagram*.

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger's work must be treated with caution due to his affiliation with the National Socialist Party and his subsequent failure to apologise or even acknowledge his involvement. Many including philosophers François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida as well as his ex-student political theorist Hannah Arendt have made arguments for the validity of his work. I concur with Lyotard's argument that Heidegger cannot be dropped from the philosophical canon. In *Heidegger and "the Jews"* (1990), Lyotard suggests that Heidegger must be read in the light of his silence on the Holocaust, but that this human fault can be applied to everyone. Much like Lefebvre the political climate and the place in which Heidegger wrote is intrinsic to his thought and plays a part in how his work is interpreted now (see pg. 29 footnote 33).

and visibility. Both actual and virtual places make people visible to each other, both can be visually powerful and spectacular. Through photography I explored the risks of being visible; the Square is under surveillance as well as being a place of encountering and being seen by others.

Online visibility might mean being judged by 'likes' but it is also a means by which personal data can be harvested. Along with being seen, the visual strength of the statues, buildings and photographs might enforce a form of self-censorship, conformity or consensus but also of belonging. The inherent absence I found within these photographs led me to question my own role as a viewer and researcher. I considered if I was a detached voyeur or if these photographs demanded that I had a civil contract to fulfil as photography theorist Ariella Azoulay describes it (2008:14). Was I complicit, empathetic or a mixture of all of these? The analysis of photographic space and the position of the viewer led me to question my own use of the words: other, critical awareness, tolerance in regard to both actual and virtual places, all of which can be considered as privileged standpoints. Other possibilities such as those offered by media theorist Felix Stalder emerged such as commons and digital solidarity.

The photographs shared on Instagram became not only the link between virtual and actual places but also the method of examining them. My studio turned into a form of *Camera Obscura*, a darkened room in which I captured images from outside. The smartphone acted as the pinhole through which they were projected: a conduit between the Square and my studio, which allowed me to tap into the online archive of photographs produced by thousands of people who visit the Square. My studio was the natural environment in which to examine the photographs and unpick the mechanisms at work in and between these places.

Inspired by a photograph on Instagram of a group of cyclists blocking traffic in the Square, I slowed the flow of digital photographs by photographing the bright digital screen onto analogue black and white film, which I then printed in the darkened room. Sifting through these appropriated photographs I began to see different uses of the Square and make my own taxonomy. Four different areas of interest became

clear: everyday, tourism, protests and state occasions.<sup>9</sup> From each of these four piles I chose one photograph to be my guide.<sup>10</sup> In my studio I began to deconstruct and react to each of these photographs in different ways, going on to reconstruct and restage them. These were actions which as professor of photographic culture Liz Wells states questioned the photographs' 'face value' (2015:324). My practice in the studio became part of a wider theoretical method of deconstructing, understanding and restaging the place in which they were taken, shown and seen. Each of these four photographs took me in different directions which examined some or all of the themes above. Each chapter is written in a slightly different style and takes a different theoretical approach to the photograph and the Square. The back and forth between the studio and the Square became part of the structure of this thesis with each of the four main sections: everyday, tourism, protests and state occasions supported by a theoretical and practical approach derived from a theoretical and physical examination of the photographs themselves.

The everyday photograph of the rain-soaked Square led me to examine the Square's everyday: the normality of overseen and forgotten monuments. Monuments that might in Lefebvre's view form a consensus but may also, according to sociologist John Michael Roberts, be anchors for protests. In both cases they are modes of communication which form different, sometimes dissenting communities around them. To escape my own familiarity with the Square I used photographs as a method of transport and travelled to New York, if only virtually, to visit artist Tatzu Nishi's *Discovering Columbus* (2012), a recontextualisation of Gaetano Russo's (1892) *Christopher Columbus* statue in Columbus Circle, Manhattan. Nishi built a replica of a swanky apartment around the statue, in which people could rediscover the statue and its connotations. In reaction to Nishi's work I explored monuments in three

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<sup>9</sup> While deciding on this taxonomy, I considered many photographs taken in the Square and subsequently posted on Instagram which made different social activities visible. Two areas I considered but did not include in the scope of this thesis were advertising and selfies. Advertising, whether self-promotion of YouTube channels or global commercialism using a highly visible place for commercial product placement, came into the study in other ways. The phenomenon of the selfie might have led to a more in-depth investigation of identity which I touch on in my enquiry into tourism and protest (pg. 113 and pg. 180). I am aware that there are other social activities not often pictured on Instagram that occur here. One example is media usage: films, TV shows and news programmes often use the Square as a backdrop. I touch briefly on the role and relationship of mass media with social media on pg. 186.

<sup>10</sup> A more detailed description of the criteria that I used to choose each of these photographs occurs on pg. 50.

different ways, inspired by three different writers: Historian Charles Griswold described them as 'a species of pedagogy' (Griswold 1992:80), as 'holders of collected and collective memory' according to historian James E. Young and as 'aids to a dangerous forgetting', in the warning of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman.

Returning to London, the photograph of tourists at the foot of Nelson Mandela challenged me to differentiate the individual from the visual sameness of the mass of photographs. I examined the pose of the protagonists as a form of visible ownership and cultural positioning with reference to philosopher Roland Barthes and art critic John Berger. The tourists' gaze I analysed in terms of sociologist John Urry's perspective as a form of visual consumerism of place, which is only enhanced by photography. A position which might be countered by a more feminist reading of tourists' interactions which according to tourism researchers Betsy and Stephen Wearing have the capability of creating a space of 'social value' (1996:240).<sup>11</sup> The issues that arose in the Square found an echo in online places which led to an examination of visual sameness on Instagram and the effects of being exposed to 'other' people.

Taken on the other side of the Square, namely on the pavement opposite Parliament the photograph of passive protesters is a visual echo of Democracy Village and Brian Haw's camp, both long since removed. I deconstructed this photograph and through Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT) uncovered an alternative social structure. This theory attributes diverse elements such as the pavement, the grass and the statues in the Square an array of possible social roles which can then be enacted or performed. The dialogues and tensions between these social actants opened up discussions of security, freedoms, boundaries and invisibility in the Square but also online.

Finally the photograph of soldiers marching through the Square on the occasion of the State Opening of Parliament returned me to the history and traditions of the Square: its formal use and purpose. I followed philosopher Vilém Flusser's premise

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<sup>11</sup> I discuss Wearing and Wearing's definition of space and place which chimes with Habermas and Massey on pg. 23.

that photographic space is achronological.<sup>12</sup> The way my eye moved over its surface, circling between the soldiers' archaic redcoats and their modern weapons, became the basis of an attempt to unsettle the chronology of the Square itself. This unsettling of the past allowed for an examination of possible potential futures for the Square and current discussions on the editing of controversial statues in public places.

The oscillation between practice and theory is mirrored in the structure of this thesis. The four main areas of exploration are linked, informed and guided by my practical work with the photographs in my studio. The virtual trip to New York prompted me to build a stage in the studio, on which I broke down and changed the context of the photographs. My own creative processes became visible as I performed or enacted different elements and materials.<sup>13</sup> In turn these processes affected the way that I looked at and interpreted elements within the Square. On the stage the photographs were abstracted but continued to mirror the place from which they came allowing me to explore the syntax of the place, to break down or short-circuit chronology. The stage within the studio became a scene within a scene or *mise-en-abyme* which provoked an exploration of philosopher Jacques Derrida's complex term *khora*: which could be described as a place of becoming which opens up an unsettling mirrored abyss.<sup>14</sup> This was a place where I examined my own role as researcher as well as my role as a viewer of these photographs. My presence on the stage and within the studio questioned the truths that the *Camera Obscura* once embodied. As cultural historian of visuality Jonathan Crary maintains, the *Camera Obscura* has collapsed as a metaphor for the dichotomy between objective truth and subjective feeling with the 'repositioning of the observer,' from 'outside of the fixed

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<sup>12</sup> Flusser's use of the term space in regard to photographs differs from Wearing and Wearing and Habermas's definition who relate space to its social production. Flusser uses the word space to define the photograph as a location which is separate from the actual place, one that functions in a different achronological and also political manner. I discuss this further on pgs. 35, 66 and 136.

<sup>13</sup> This way of working combined two meanings of the word perform. I was following and reacting to the script that the materials suggested. By filming these actions, I was aware that I was performing for a potential audience.

<sup>14</sup> The term 'becoming' can be understood in terms of Heraclitus's (535 - c. 475 BC) philosophy of the flux of life: nothing stands still. A 'place of becoming' might be what Heidegger described as a *lichtung* or clearing in which being happens, being and thinking in a place creates the clearing (Heidegger 1962:171) (see pg. 141). The idea of a place of becoming chimes with Massey's proposal that places are always in process. See pg. 136 for Elizabeth Grosz's feminist elucidation of *khora* with regard to urban place.



relations of interior/exterior presupposed by the *Camera Obscura* and into an undemarcated terrain on which the distinction between internal sensation and external signs is irrevocably blurred' (Crary 1992:24). I had become the subjective presence within the photographs. Inside the studio, I formed new networks, recast statues and built up a collection of potential actants; objects, photographs and films that were brought to bear on each other.

The smartphone cast a shadow over this research. It has been the channel for the flow of photographs between the Square and my studio. In the studio it was a camera to capture my performed actions. It offered the promise of digital truths like the *Camera Obscura*. Yet its black screen proved to be a distorting mirror to actual places. It allowed me to examine the role that technology can play in representing places and therefore in their social construction, and it is itself a place, an interface between actual and virtual. As I worked, I cast out these reconstructed photographs sharing them on Instagram, I geo-tagged them into the Square, collected and archived them under the hash-tag #parliamentsquarere staged. On the pages of this thesis the smartphone becomes visible; by reading QR tags it becomes the link between the reader and videos of my studio processes (see note 2 pg. 9).<sup>15</sup> The analogue hand printed photographs included in these pages contrast with the digital films and set up a visual dialogue between the virtual and actual which is explored in the text. The inclusion of photographs, templates and the paper negatives they were made with allows works and processes from the studio to be tangibly present in the thesis rather than only documented.

This thesis is structured to guide the reader through my processes and indicate how my investigation of the Square progressed. After an initial tour of the Square guided by the Google search algorithm, I introduce my practice and explain the role that it played in activating the four photographs to become my guides. The chapters relating to each photograph and theme are arranged in the order that they were written; I chose to write them in that order to investigate specific aspects of the actual and virtual places in relationship to the photographs in order to incrementally

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<sup>15</sup> A method I experimented with in my MPhil upgrade paper that I have continued here.

build up a layered picture of the Square and its diverse social functions. The digital and analogue artworks that are segmented between the chapters are works that helped form or which were informed by the theoretical investigations.

The everyday chapter (3) comes first as a way of exploring monuments, but also the effect of context. It is closely linked and almost interchangeable with the tourism chapter (4). In order to explore the everyday of the Square I chose to be a tourist, to make a tour of monuments in America and Germany to get away from my over-familiarity with the Square. Whereas the tourism chapter opens a discussion of mundane everyday sameness apparent in the tourist's photograph. This sameness however initiates a discussion of the value of difference and otherness. After the first two sections I return to examine my practice, reappraising it as a way of questioning the role of the viewer/researcher of photographs as well as anchoring the practice at the core of this thesis. The second pair of chapters (6 & 7) follow: protest and state occasion are linked by their seeming polarity. The deconstructional and achronological approach to both leads to an exploration of overlapping themes of political communication and community. Before going on to draw conclusions from my research I reflect in more detail on the role the smartphone played as a technological tool as well as exploring its democratic potential.

In this thesis I have attempted to address the political, social and cultural intricacies of my own everyday activities, dwelling in a city and online. I have occupied the Square virtually and restaged the place physically. The Instagram photographs that have been my guides have recast the Square in different roles. They point towards the democratic potential of social media platforms on which they were found and the Square where they were taken. Both are places where the views of the *demos* – the people - can be seen, and where those people can see each other. They are places where people might see and act on what they have in common.

# 1. Algorithmic Tours: From Google to Instagram

In this chapter I set out to discover information about the Square online, how it was formed, what it is used for and how the actual public place is represented in the virtual public realm. I reignite my interest in democracy and explore different theoretical approaches to place and space and my own research position.

As I stood on the grass in the centre of the Square and looked around, I noticed its asymmetry.<sup>16</sup> Most of the statues and the trees are towards the back of the Square on the far side from the Palace of Westminster. Roads, busy with traffic, surrounded the central grassy area. The two crossing points led to most of the pedestrians staying away from the centre and instead crowding onto the pavement nearest the Palace. There is a heavy solid material physicality about the place, grass, tarmac, Portland stone, paving slabs, bronze statues and granite plinths. I looked up at the monuments and then down at my phone to find out more about them. I googled 'Parliament Square', and the search engine presented me with a personalised list of web sites to visit.<sup>17</sup> These sites constructed from numbers and codes appeared brightly lit on my smartphone. I wondered how the list had been constructed and ordered. I flicked across to look at a Google image search and saw a grid of photographs in no particular order: glossy depictions jumbled together with photographs of protesters and old postcards. Looking for information on 'search engine algorithms' I discovered that the two algorithms used to search the Internet – my initial navigational tools - work in very different ways. The general Internet search rather than image search is based on a mix of my own previous searches as well as an amalgamation of what other people click on. The personalised list that I am offered by Google creates what Internet activist Eli Pariser calls a 'filter bubble'

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<sup>16</sup> I have stood in the Square many times. This is an agglomeration of all those times from 2011 to 2017.

<sup>17</sup> The use of the brand name Google to define looking something up on the Internet has become so common that it has become a verb. Accordingly, I will use lowercase for google – to look up and uppercase for Google – the firm.

(Pariser 2011).<sup>18</sup> The search algorithm is the filter that lets through only what I expect to see, an echo chamber of my own previous choices and views. Google adopts a different algorithm for image searches that identifies images by keywords in filenames, titles and the text that surrounds the image. The design of this algorithm produces a set of less personalised results, no longer informed by my previous searches and only partially determined by the most popular searches that other people have made. Aware of how this itinerary had been put together I began to follow its suggested route.

### *Wikipedia: Performative democracy*

At the top of the list on my smartphone screen was Wikipedia. The site describes the physical location I was standing in. Initially it defines the open place by the buildings that border it.

Legislature to the east (in the Houses of Parliament), executive offices to the north (on Whitehall), the judiciary to the west (the Supreme Court), and the church to the south (with Westminster Abbey).<sup>19</sup>

Parliament Square Wikipedia page, 2016

There follows a description of the history and formation of the Square: In 1868 the area was cleared of slum housing to form a public square in order to help alleviate traffic congestion.<sup>20</sup> It was the home of the first traffic light installed in the same year. Statues began to be erected. When the statue of Edward Smith-Stanley, the 14th Lord of Derby and former Prime Minister, was unveiled in 1874 by Benjamin Disraeli, he said of the statue:

We have raised this statue to him not only as a memorial, but as an example; not merely to commemorate but to inspire.

Disraeli (1874), Statue of the Earl of Derby Wikipedia page, 2017

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<sup>18</sup> This scenario also occurs on Facebook and is explained in detail by Eli Pariser in his Ted Talk (2011).

<sup>19</sup> The Church visible on the south side of the Square is St. Margaret's which was originally built to offer services to local parishioners so as not to disturb the monks in neighbouring Westminster Abbey. The Abbey, set back from the Square, is a major tourist attraction, drawing people through the Square to visit it, as well as playing a role in State occasions. The specific influence of the Church on society doesn't fall within the purview of this study. The Supreme Court only took up residence in Middlesex Guildhall to the west of the Square in 2004 and thus was not a factor in the original layout of the area.

<sup>20</sup> This Wikipedia entry is not entirely accurate as the Square was first cleared in 1808.

This statement points to the underlying politically pedagogic character of the Square that was established by the statues and enhanced by the surrounding edifices of the church, government and legal system. The statues of politicians link this place intrinsically to the democratic process of government over the road in the Palace of Westminster.

Scrolling down through the Wikipedia site there is more detailed information regarding the statues: George Canning (1832), Edward Smith-Stanley - 14th Earl of Derby (1874), Henry John Temple - 3rd Viscount Palmerston (1876), Sir Robert Peel (1877), Benjamin Disraeli - 1st Earl of Beaconsfield (1883), Abraham Lincoln (1920), Jan Smuts (1956), Winston Churchill (1973), Nelson Mandela (2007), David Lloyd-George (2007) and Mohandas K. Gandhi (2015).<sup>21</sup> All of the men monumentalised were politicians; all had led their countries. A list of the artists who made these statues is also visible; information about who petitioned and raised funds for them to be erected is not. The presence of each of these statues opens another layer of meaning in the Square. Further googling of these men and their history could reveal more. I could see interesting paths that might lead to an examination of Peel's principles of policing by and for the people, or Mandela's acceptance of violence as a necessary evil to achieve political change. Just by plotting these paths, a network of political thought and power might appear traversing actual and virtual places. However, for the moment I stayed on my algorithmic route, determined by the online search engine.

Wikipedia represents the Square in words and images. One click behind the scenes the structure of the site reveals a complete record of its editorial history. The information on the site is written by many different people, governed by clear democratically agreed rules and social norms that shape its appearance, content and uses:

Enforcement on Wikipedia is similar to other social interactions. If an editor violates the community standards described in policies and guidelines, other editors can persuade the person to adhere to acceptable norms of conduct, over time resorting to more forceful means, such as administrator and steward

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<sup>21</sup> The statues are listed here in order of when they were unveiled (dates in brackets).

actions. In the case of gross violations of community norms, they are likely to resort to more forceful means fairly rapidly.

#### Wikipedia Community guidelines 2017

Communication on an equal footing is what forms the consensus of common knowledge gathered on Wikipedia. It seems more transparently regulated than the public Square it describes. By clicking on the *Talk* and *View history* tabs at the top of the page the changes are evident, each modification and discussion surrounding each decision is visible. The community of contributors to Wikipedia is largely self-policing, yet when someone steps out of line administrators can exclude them, revealing a subtle hierarchy of content control. Stepping out of line might mean deliberate sabotage by changing details on a site. This emphasises Wikipedia's role as a producer but also a safeguarder of communally established truths. The capacity to form communities is one factor that led philosopher David Kolb to define online environments as places.<sup>22</sup>

Looking at the rather book-like Wikipedia page I pondered if virtual sites can be defined as places and if so what other factors would play a part in this definition. Would those factors be the same or different to that of actual ones? Kolb concludes that if people spend time to 'reflect and to shape and be shaped' virtual places can be created (Kolb 2000:123). His definition of place casts light on the slippage that occurs between meanings ascribed to place and space. Heidegger differentiates between space and place, describing space as abstract or geometric and place as locational and social (1971:155). Lefebvre however contends that space is socially produced and uses the word space as an overarching term in which 'places' are only a part. He defines three subcategories: *spatial practice* - how a society produces and reproduces space as a whole; *representations of space* - how spaces are planned and ordered; and *representational spaces* - how spaces are lived (Lefebvre 1974:32). Massey problematizes definitions of both words in an attempt to avoid the simplification of space as abstract and meaningless and place as local or everyday. She sees these two definitions interweaving interacting in a process (Massey

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<sup>22</sup> Kolb was writing in 2000 when the Internet was still relatively new, slow and comparatively rudimentary. Social media was not yet in sight.

2012:6/7). Massey sees 'space' as a social 'product of interrelations, as constituted through interactions... as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity...in which distinct trajectories coexist ...it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished, never closed' (Massey 2012:9). Massey uses the word 'space' to draw attention towards wider concerns for unknown others, although she warns that familiar everyday places can become a retreat, somewhere to avoid global abstract problems of space (ibid 2005:5). In accord with Massey, Wearing & Wearing describe place expanding through social interaction to become more inclusive space (1996:230). This emphasis on spatial social interaction shifts the definition of space towards Habermas' description of the 'public sphere' or Dewey's 'publics' which are formed through communication (see pg. 133) and back towards Kolb's definition of communal online places. So perhaps it is Massey's description of an interweaving process that I identify with most in terms of this thesis.<sup>23</sup>

Following Kolb and Massey's definitions, both Wikipedia and the Square can be described as public places and social spaces. Both places celebrate and enact democracy in different ways. The word democracy has at its origins the formation, ordering and rule of a group of people. However, unlike the etymology of the word community which has an association with communal and communication (a connection made by Dewey, see pg. 142), democracy has at its root in the Greek words for people *demos* and for power *kratia*. Chiming with Dewey, historian Dipesh Chakrabarty defines two types of democracy, the pedagogic and the performative. Pedagogic assumes that politics and democracy have to be learnt formally, performative that the personal is political, therefore that democracy is not the end result of education but the result of action (Chakrabarty 2002:5,6).<sup>24</sup> Democracy can be both pedagogic and performative, although Wikipedia's purpose is to impart information it is participative: it can be formed, changed and informed performatively by its users. Chakrabarty in common with Dewey and Habermas interprets democracy as something that can occur outside formal hierarchical

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<sup>23</sup> I will use the word place when referring to specific virtual or actual locations.

<sup>24</sup> Democracy can be performed on a small or large scale; one large-scale example might be that of the revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989 described in *Performative Democracy* (2016) by Elzbieta Matynia. Small-scale performative democracies might be local action groups forming around a specific problem (such as LGBT homelessness see pg. 263) as described by Richard Sclove in *Democracy and Technology* (1995:77).

institutions of governance and equates it with communication and action. This is not to decry the processes of representative parliamentary democracy which are also participative and constituted through active political involvement, but it releases democracy from its institutional framework.

Political scientist Lance Bennett describes the characteristics that might be attributed to people who fall within these definitions in relation to modern technology. Within the pedagogic is the dutiful citizen who 'joins civil society organizations and/or expresses interest through parties that typically employ one way conventional communication to mobilize supporters' (Bennett 2008:14). Within the performative is the actualizing citizen who largely 'favours loose networks of community action often established or sustained through friendships and peer relations and thin social ties maintained by interactive information technologies' (ibid 2008:14). Wikipedia's negotiated understanding of the Square, which is regularly altered and amended by active actualizing citizens, sits in contrast with the didactic purpose of the Square and the pedagogy of its statues.

The Wikipedia page goes on to describe the legal constraints on the Square in relation to Brian Haw's protest camp. Laws were changed in 2005 and amended in 2011 to make protests without permission within half a mile of Parliament as well as the possession of camping equipment illegal in the Square, thereby enshrining in law two of many attempts to remove Haw from the Square.<sup>25</sup> The equivalent to the *Talk* and *View history* pages online might be legislative documents stored at the National Archives and in Hansard both of which are available online.<sup>26</sup> Such sources reveal some of the decision making that occurred with regard to which politicians were to be monumentalised in the Square and why, but not the intricacies of the behind the scenes lobbying or funding. Neither does it record the political interpretations of laws that allow demonstrators to be arrested using anti-terror laws or evicted due to the rerouting of pedestrian crossings under the guise of ensuring public safety (see pg. 159 and 177).

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<sup>25</sup> See the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act (2011:101).

<sup>26</sup> A verbatim record of the democratic processes of the British Parliament is available in the form of Hansard which is available online. The discussions relating to Wikipedia's content can be found on the edit section of each page.



The pivotal point within a democracy or community is when freedoms are curtailed to the point of censorship, oppression or coercion of personal political views. This might be in the extreme form of the arrest of protesters in the Square or the exclusion of rogue editors on Wikipedia. It can also take other forms such as the exclusion of narratives and editing of history. Bauman describes the inevitable struggle to find a balance between freedom and security. 'There is a price to be paid for the privilege of "being in a community" ... The price is paid in the currency of freedom, variously called "autonomy", "right to self assertion", "right to be yourself"' (Bauman 2001:5). On Wikipedia as in the Square community norms are expected to be adhered to, which according to Bauman can be at the expense of certain individual freedoms.

### *Greater London Authority: Pedagogic statues*

Second on the itinerary of my algorithmic tour was the Greater London Assembly website. Here the Square is listed under Arts and Culture and is referred to as a 'garden'.<sup>27</sup> I was told in the clear authoritative voice of government that the Garden Square plays 'an important role in our heritage, as a place of ceremonies and significant historic events. It is part of the ceremonial route between Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall' (GLA website 2016). The message has altered in tone since Labour politician Sadiq Khan succeeded the Conservative Boris Johnson as London mayor in 2016. Previously the garden was described as a square: 'an area of significant historic and symbolic value to the British people and many others worldwide' (GLA website 2014). The claim was backed by the listing of various institutional endorsements: 'In 1987 it was designated as the Westminster Abbey and Parliament Square Conservation Area and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site' (ibid 2014). Khan's political stance can be clearly felt in the more recent version of the site. The statue of Nelson Mandela is singled out to set the tone for the political meaning of the Square.

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<sup>27</sup> Garden seems a softer, more benevolent term, first applied to the Square when it was cleared (See page 223).

A sculpture of Nelson Mandela by the late Ian Walters was unveiled, in the presence of Mr Mandela, in August 2007. This nine foot bronze statue honours Mandela as one of the greatest fighters for freedom in the 20th Century. It is also a permanent statement of London's abhorrence of apartheid and every other form of racism.

GLA website 2016

By promoting Mandela the site echoes Disraeli's words on the unveiling of Smith-Stanley when he intimated that the statue was intended to be a source of inspiration and political idealism. Those ideals however are mutable. The message of the GLA site, like that of the Square itself, can be altered to fit different political principles. On the GLA site there is only one voice and one interpretation available, that of the present local government which tells of ceremonies, pomp, tradition and heritage and anti-racist ideals. The Square has over time been used and appropriated to disseminate different political messages, each new monument changing the possible meanings that can be made there.

I speculated about how people react to these changing interpretations of history. Lefebvre describes different ways in which knowledge might be formed in reaction to certain places. He distinguishes between *connaissance* and *savoir* - the knowledge that serves the power of the ruling class which 'seeks to maintain hegemony by all available means and knowledge is one such means' (Lefebvre 1974:10).<sup>28</sup> He describes how people use *connaissance* - common sense - during their everyday lived experience of place to subvert, repurpose, reinterpret or merely ignore the intended *savoir* and in so doing decipher places for themselves. Combining Lefebvre's definitions of knowledge with those of Chakrabarty it could be argued that the GLA site seeks to impart its pedagogic democratic narrative or *savoir*. In contrast, Wikipedia gathers common knowledge or *connaissance* which could be equated to performative democracy. Sociologist Elzbieta Matynia situates performative democracy within a wider representative democratic system:

Performative democracy represents a kind of political engagement – critical for any democracy - in which the key identity of its actors is that of citizens and in which the good of society at large, and not that of a narrow interest group, is at stake.

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<sup>28</sup> This is Lefebvre's interpretation of the words; *savoir* could also be translated as knowledge and *connaissance* as learning.

Streets and public squares are the places where citizens have the possibility to take part in this version of democracy. Yet despite the reference to Mandela the GLA website makes no mention of the importance of the Square as a site of protest. Its role as a place to question government is not promoted to those who want to know more about or visit the Square.

### *Evening Standard: Monumental protest*

Next on my personalised list of sites to visit was an *Evening Standard* article from 2013 concerning the removal of the last vestiges of Brian Haw's protest camp. It starts with a long quote from Westminster Council leader Philippa Roe:

For too long this green public space was blighted by tents and encampments which have restricted the use of publicly owned land, but we have worked hard to find a solution to this problem without prohibiting the rights of free speech and protests. Westminster is a thriving city — not a campsite.

Roe In Murphy 2013

Towards the end of the article Roe's view is balanced by a list of celebrities who are petitioning for a statue of Haw to be erected in the Square. What differentiates this site from the others I have visited is that for the first time public comment is invited. It is also a commercial site. As I scrolled down through the comments I was accompanied by flashing adverts.<sup>29</sup> The forum for public debate, an area of open discussion, felt raw and unedited. Although comments have probably been controlled and censored behind the scenes, unlike Wikipedia there was no record of the editing process, no obvious rules of participation. I read:

sorry, whats more important, one guy has a tent and a banner protesting against an illegal war and our PM at the time lying to his country..or an egg mayo sarnie on a glorified roundabout?[sic]

Comment section in Murphy 2013

The *Evening Standard* site is far removed in tone from the self-regulated Wikipedia page seeking to offer an encyclopaedic description or the authoritative voice of the GLA. Individual voices and opinions are expressed. In reaction to the article factions have emerged and comments have become polarized.

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<sup>29</sup> The comment section has now been closed and the article archived.

Bonkers. He hated you if you looked even vaguely middle class. The only way into the sanctum was to resemble a crusty. Horrible man whose campaign achieved squat. Apparently pissed MPs after a good night on the piss at the various members' bars would mock him. I am sure Haw didn't give a toss.

Comment section in Murphy 2013

This site is part reportage part public reaction. It tells a particular narrative of Brian Haw and is a place for people to respond to the story, the man himself and his eviction. It also represents in words the physical tensions in the Square. Councillor Roe makes her opinion clear that it is Haw's actions that have restricted access to the Square.<sup>30</sup> It is therefore for the greater public good that the council cleared the camp. In comparison to her reasonable tone the comments seem brash and harsh, akin to overheard snippets of conversation bandied around on the street. Lefebvre's definition of his term 'monumental space' seems to fit with these contrasting views of the Square and the way they are expressed. Lefebvre describes a space in which monuments 'effect a consensus' of 'generally accepted power and wisdom' (Lefebvre 1974:220) but also permit a 'continual back-and-forth between the private speech of ordinary conversations and the public speech of discourses, lectures, sermons, rallying cries and all forms of theatrical utterances' (ibid 1974:224). Monumental space forms part of Lefebvre's theory that space is socially produced:

Social space is a social product ... the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action ... in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power.

Lefebvre 1974:26

Interpreted through Lefebvre's theories the Square can be seen as a socially produced space.<sup>31</sup> Planned and built to celebrate a particular time and method of governance, namely Victorian imperial politics, it is also produced by those who visit it and 'live it'. In terms of 'monumental space' the Square has a dominant narrative 'of generally accepted power and wisdom' which can be appropriated by people like Brian Haw. Allowing a place for protest and upholding the right to free speech is, according to Lefebvre, part of the system and maintains the *status quo* (ibid

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<sup>30</sup> Pedestrian crossings were closed off during his occupation, and there has always been a battle between pedestrian access to the central area and the need to keep the traffic flowing.

<sup>31</sup> Lefebvre's use of the word space includes actual physical locations and their social functions and causes.

1974:387). The feeling of consensus but also the reaction against it, he suggests, is due to 'the level of affective, bodily, lived experience' (ibid 1974:224). Space is not only read as a series of instructions, it is lived, as psychologist Derek Hook explains with reference to Lefebvre. Designed to bring about physical affective reactions monumental space 'commands bodies, prescribing or proscribing gestures, routes...this is its *raison d'être*' (Lefebvre in Hook 2005:9). Haw can be seen as an embodiment of the differences and conflicts between the 'fleshy body of the living being, the spatial body of society and the social body of needs' (op cit 1974:396). He lived in the Square and was subject to the changing rules as drawn up by the democratically elected council, yet he held ideals that challenged national policies. His choice of this place to make his protest was not based on his resistance to the statues but in order to be visible to politicians in the Houses of Parliament opposite.

Lefebvre's views are somewhat problematic; his beliefs that 'the state' is a dominant power that wishes to oppress the people (op cit 1974:23) might lead to an unnuanced and polarised view of politics and public places. Yet Lefebvre's way of interpreting social production of public places provides an initial radical position from which to discern many shades of grey from his stark black and white view. As art historian Rosalyn Deutsche explains: '[Lefebvre] provides a starting point for cultural critiques of spatial design as an instrument of control' (Deutsche 1996:77). I found Lefebvre's proposal that the examination of the social production of space can be a way of looking back in time particularly relevant to my examination of the Square.<sup>32</sup> Lefebvre argues that social activities of the past affect the way spaces are now, and reflexively past social mores can be uncovered through physical traces in the present (op cit 1974:37).<sup>33</sup> Provoked by this thought I continued to trace social activities and their place-making effects to and fro between virtual and actual places.

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<sup>32</sup> I am using Lefebvre's use of the word here: spanning physical location and social activities.

<sup>33</sup> The same method could be used to interpret Lefebvre's thoughts through the context in which he wrote. At the end of the 1960s, Paris was at the centre of great political unrest in Europe. Battles between students, workers and police were being fought out on the streets. Streets which only a hundred years previously had been remodelled by the prefect of Paris, Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, in an attempt to permanently design such battles out of urban life. In the 1860s huge swathes of old buildings and small streets were cleared, to create an all-seeing central position from which radial boulevards fanned out to allow ease of troop movement and therefore control of the city and its inhabitants by Napoleon III's government. Philosopher Walter Benjamin described this large-scale alteration of Paris's street structures critically 'as a monument to Napoleonic

The three sites that I visited as I worked my way down the list represent: firstly, the people's collected wisdom and communal knowledge that has been gathered on the Wikipedia site; secondly, the voice of the governance of the Square which seeks to curate a particular narrative on the GLA web page; and thirdly, a mass media view and its particular vociferous public on the Evening Standard site. All these virtual places have picked up on the Square's history, its purposes, its structure and uses. The Google list went on for pages, gradually including less familiar websites. The form of the list itself created a hierarchy, a linear way of navigating and understanding. It was socially constructed by the popular choices of others but also tracked and recorded my choices, binding me into this system. The algorithm itself was specifically designed to fulfil this role; to guide and direct the user on a popular well-trodden route, in this case to an understanding of how this particular place is represented online.<sup>34</sup> As I looked up from the screen, sat on the wall at the back of the Square, I realised that I had a perfect view across the grass towards Churchill and Big Ben.

### *In search of another view*

I began to search for an alternative view of the Square and switched to look at the photographs on my Google image search. The image search may move away from the personalised socially constructed hierarchy yet many of the photographs mirrored this same perfect view. There were the odd shots of Haw's encampment and more recent protests, yet these spectacular glossy depictions taken by professional photographers outnumbered other possible views of the Square. Artist and theorist Guy Debord warned of the dangers of being in awe of the commercial visual world which he described in the *Society of the Spectacle* (1967). The spectacle he explains is not a collection of images; 'rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images. This removal from authentic experience,' he goes

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despotism' in *The Arcades Project* (1999:23-24). The clearance of slums and the medieval street pattern from what is now Parliament Square was small scale by comparison.

<sup>34</sup> As well as providing personalised results based on previous usage, search algorithms can also be manipulated. They can be hijacked by different causes that 'play the algorithm' skewing the results, in order to lead people to particular sites (see Cadwalladr 2016).

on to say, 'leads to an inhibition of critical thought' (Debord 1967).<sup>35</sup> Debord like Lefebvre equates visual power of architecture and monuments with political power. His approach to the city and its power structures also emerged from his relationship to Paris, its political struggles, history and architecture (Harvey 2012:xiii). In the context of the Google image search Debord's description of the 'Spectacle' seems particularly prescient: 'In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation' (Debord 1967). The Internet and the smartphone might provide a new way of seeing the world. However, understood through Debord's terms they also have the capability for distraction and isolation by potentially removing the need or even desire to interact with anyone or any situation directly.

As I scrolled through the googled images I pondered if the sheer amount of visual information might lead to a visual overload which could, in the words of cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard, cause an 'implosion of meaning' ((1981)1994:79). It might, as Debord suggests, lull the viewer into uncritical thought: an online torpor. Journalist David Harris suggests that Debord's work predicted 'our distracted society' and that 'his ideas were essentially pointing to the basis of what we now know as neoliberalism' (Harris 2012).<sup>36</sup> This flow of images could then be seen as part of what is known as the 'attention economy'. Data gleaned from the attention people pay to certain content online can be bought and sold. This is part of the neoliberal free market economy in which companies such as Google are, in professor of law Tim Wu's phrase, 'attention merchants' who manage to give the illusion to the user 'of getting something truly desirable at no apparent cost' (Wu 2016:265). I realised

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<sup>35</sup> Debord's distrust of photographs and image making stems perhaps from the early use of photography against the protesters on the barricades of the Paris Commune in 1871 (Sontag 1977:5). The action of the Communards can be seen as a direct reaction against the change in the social structure of the city brought about by Haussmann (Harvey 2012: 10 and 136). Street photographers were employed by the authorities to take pictures of the communards who were only too willing to pose on their impressive street fortifications. Many of those pictured were later identified, captured and executed (Przyblyski 2001:55). Debord's more immediate reaction was against the commercial world's use of photography and film to isolate the individual, and remove them from the city where they might disrupt or question authority and commercial systems.

<sup>36</sup> The term neoliberalism originally described a school of particularly free-market oriented economics. Since the financial crash of 2007-8 it is often used in a pejorative way and has 'become a means of identifying a seemingly ubiquitous set of market-oriented policies as being largely responsible for a wide range of social, political, ecological and economic problems' (Springer, Birch & MacLeavy 2016:2).

while I was gaining information from my online search of the Square I was also giving it away.

The Google search engine is itself not a neutral platform. As I followed my Google search results I was aware of being tracked through hyperspace. Adverts popped up for recently browsed items. When I cleared the cookies and browsing history off my Internet browser, I was presented with a 'clean' itinerary and a new list that bypassed my filter bubble.<sup>37</sup> As I sat in the Square I was aware that I was visible in two public places, and considered what this visibility might mean politically.<sup>38</sup> Google as a commercial company wields political power because of the amount of data it gleans about its users. Personal data is sold, sifted and mined by governments for security purposes and by companies for commercial gain.<sup>39</sup> From the perspective of both Lefebvre and Debord, Google is part of or equivalent to the commercial and state *savoir* while operating under the guise of helpful impartiality.

I continued to browse through the results of Google image search. Lower down, the commercial views became less predominant. Contrasting photographs were thrown together. A photograph of orthodox Jews demonstrating for Palestinian Independence, sat next to Dr Who's Tardis, landed in the Square for a photo shoot. A black and white image of a woman sprawled on the pavement appeared next to a display of life belts laid out on the grass to symbolise migrants lost at sea. The algorithm could be seen to be producing its own version of a *détournement*: a method which Debord and his collaborators in the *Situationist International* proposed as a way of deconstructing the spectacular society by juxtaposing incongruent images or texts in order to change their meaning and unsettle the viewer.<sup>40</sup> Debord described this as a way of disrupting frames of reference:

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<sup>37</sup> Cookies are information files that are downloaded onto a user's computer when they first visit a new website. The site is then known to the computer which subsequently speeds up further visits. They can also be used to target advertising and store personal data.

<sup>38</sup> In 2013 former CIA employee Edward Snowden leaked information about the extent of the US National Security Agency's global surveillance programme. His revelations about the widespread harvesting of personal data by governments and commerce made evident how visible people have become even when sitting in the privacy of their own homes.

<sup>39</sup> Google also has ownership of thousands of undifferentiating machine generated images from satellites, CCTV and Streetview cameras.

<sup>40</sup> *Situationist International* were a shifting group of artists, writers and political theorists, mainly Marxist in their ideology, who critiqued advanced capitalism through their art, writing and activism (1957 -1972).



Détournement is the opposite of quotation, of appealing to a theoretical authority that is inevitably tainted by the very fact that it has become a quotation — a fragment torn from its own context and development, and ultimately from the general framework of its period and from the particular option (appropriate or erroneous) that it represented within that framework.

Debord 1967:209

Each photograph on my grid of search results offered an alternative path, a way to break away from the popular route and explanatory texts. I followed links from the photographs to the sites from where they had been drawn and found myself plotting a course between *Conservative Home: Tory Diary* to *Indymedia* to *The Sun*, *The Guardian* and *Demotix* as well as some of the sites I had already visited.<sup>41</sup> Through the photographs, I found less information about the Square and its history but more about the current political climate. This crisscrossing of the Internet could be seen in Debord's terms as a *dérive*:

A technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances' that might 'involve playful-constructive behaviour ...the *dérive* includes both this letting-go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities.

Debord 1958

Many sites I visited were at odds with my expectations, based on the photograph I had started with. A photograph of a violent demonstration led me to a site full of far-right invective. The photographs seemed slippery and even treacherous; the same photograph could be used for diametrically opposite political causes. As my eye moved between the photographs and my perfect view of the Square, the sometimes jarring juxtapositions seemed to break down the chronology and popular hierarchies and unsettle my initial assumptions.

### *Instagram: Democratic social media?*

As I stared at the phone I thought again of Debord's warning that an overload of images might lead to an inhibition of critical thought. Criticality is itself not a neutral position, something I will examine later in this chapter. In the hope of finding a way of avoiding the omniscient search engine I downloaded the Instagram app and set up

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<sup>41</sup> Demotix.com is run by a photographers' co-op.

an account.<sup>42</sup> The idea that it is hard to ascribe exact meanings to photographs, that they are slippery, made me curious to see what this photo-sharing app could show me in comparison to the Google search. Instagram offers four different ways of looking at a photograph shared on its platform. Each one places the photograph in a different visual context:

1. There is the individual user's context. In this context photographs are positioned in chronological order along with all the other photographs that person has chosen to take and display.
2. There is the context of the personal feed, the haphazard network of friends and follows that updates each time an individual user posts a photograph.<sup>43</sup> This is a disparate feed of photographs which throws up juxtapositions of locations, content and style.<sup>44</sup>
3. Another way of grouping photographs is by using the hash-tag, which orders photographs by the same reference tag. #NelsonMandela for example brings together photographs from Parliament Square with memes and other statues or photographs from around the world.
4. Of most interest to me when looking for photographs of the Square is the locative geo-tag which links photographs to a particular place, building up a chronological record of everything recorded on this app in this place. This archive reaches back to 2010 when the app was released.

A single photograph posted on Instagram can take on different meanings within these distinct contexts. There is no longer an algorithmic filter between the photographs and the viewer. The app shows many different people's views. It makes people who use the app and the places they are photographed visible to each other. Within the structure of the app communities can be formed, particular ways of

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<sup>42</sup> I opened my first Instagram account in 2011 when it was an independent company, not yet owned by Facebook.

<sup>43</sup> Users can choose to follow whomever they want to, some known and some unknown.

<sup>44</sup> The design of the app has altered to impose delay on some results so that individual users feed keeps updating even if no one has taken a photograph. This has probably been done to keep the users' attention on the app for longer, possibly for monetary gain as advertising has also been introduced to what was once a non-commercial zone.

seeing the world and what people find important can be exhibited. When I looked at individual accounts I could trace people's paths to and from the Square in which I sat, I could see where they had stood, what they had looked at. As I looked at the photographs I felt I was seeing a performative democratic street level view of the Square more akin to the lived experience described by Lefebvre as *connaissance*.

Photography can itself be seen as a democratic form of visual expression, one that is cheap and available, that doesn't rely on a learnt skill such as painting or drawing. Critic Walter Benjamin referred to photography in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) as the 'first truly revolutionary means of reproduction' (Benjamin (1936)2008:11). Both professor of contemporary art Jae Emerling and Wells discuss Benjamin's claim in terms of the relationship between photography and art: Benjamin 'posits that the reproducibility of images ... has an implicitly democratizing (if not socialist) political potentiality' (Emerling 2012:31). Which as Wells explains, should cause the singularity of painting to 'wither in favour of the photograph which [Benjamin] welcomed as a more democratic – or less exclusive medium' (Wells 2015:295). Benjamin is not without criticism of photography he saw the aesthetics of some photographs as part of the beautification of the capitalist world (op cit 2012:32). A point that could be made about many of the Instagram photographs I saw in the Square.

Exploring photography's democratic potential in a broader ambit photographer John Kippin interprets Flusser's 'philosophy of photography' as 'something that can be endowed as a means by which to challenge the post industrial world of technocratic determinism and to open up a space for the possibility of freedom. [Flusser] argues that photography is the only form of revolution effectively available to us' (Kippin 2015). Kippen goes on to bring the revolutionary means of reproduction together with democracy: 'Revolution and Democracy are strange bedfellows and perhaps the ideas that appeal the most to our sensibilities are revolution *through* democracy' (ibid 2015). But what of these Instagram images, the app renders them equal in size and makes them available to many, what is their effect on me and on others who see them?

These Instagram photographs could be equated to what artist Hito Steyerl calls 'poor images' (2009). To keep them moving fast they have been compressed, their quality diminished. Yet the speed and the sharing give it a new value. The photograph becomes a method of communication, something which is capable of conveying more than just that moment it was taken. I took a photograph in the Square and shared it on Instagram. The virtual realm into which the photograph has been thrust is as contested and congested as the Square in which it was taken. As Steyerl explains 'the networks in which poor images circulate thus constitute both a platform for a fragile new common interest and a battleground for commercial and national agendas' (Steyerl 2009). Steyerl turns the 'poor image' like a mirror, to look at those who it represents:

Poor images express all the contradictions of the contemporary crowd: its opportunism, narcissism, desire for autonomy and creation, its inability to focus or make up its mind, its constant readiness for transgression and simultaneous submission. Altogether, poor images present a snapshot of the affective condition of the crowd, its neurosis, paranoia, and fear, as well as its craving for intensity, fun, and distraction.

Steyerl 2009

The currency of these photographs is measured in 'likes' and reach but is of short duration. As I stood in the Square I was aware of being a voyeur of other people's lives, but also of being looked at myself, not only by people physically present but also by machines: closed circuit surveillance cameras as well as global positioning systems embedded in my phone. There seemed to be a correspondence between my online route, preselected by algorithm, and my closely tracked presence in the actual Square. By making myself more visible by posting a photograph on Instagram I wondered what effect this visibility could have not only on myself but also on the place. What Debord described as the 'spectacular society' has now merged with what the writer Bernard Harcourt dubs the 'expository society' (2015:90). People are no longer just bombarded by images and adverts promoted by mass media; they have become the media. They produce the content by willingly exposing themselves. Harcourt draws parallels between the visibility of the spectacular/expository society and the visibility of what historian of ideas Michel Foucault described as the panoptic

or 'punitive society' (ibid 2015:88).<sup>45</sup> Being visible to the eyes of other people in a square or on social media platforms such as Instagram, or being observed by unseen security systems mirrors Foucault's description of the disciplinary gaze:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.

Foucault (1975)1995:202-203

For Foucault an awareness of being visible is what causes people to adhere to social norms or the rules of the place in question. People exercise self-control in the eyes of others. In an echo of Foucault, Bauman sees community life collapsing due to the perceived need for security. He describes 'a deepening imbalance between individual freedom and security' (Bauman 2012:170) which is leading to a situation where 'the impulse to withdraw from risk ridden complexity into the shelter of uniformity is universal' (ibid 2012:179). People would rather conform and go unnoticed than take the risk of being visibly different or breaking rules or norms. A willingness to expose themselves on the one hand but on the other hand a disposition to conform - leads Harcourt to the conclusion that people have ceased to care that they are being watched (Harcourt 2015:92). I questioned if my own awareness of my visibility might make me behave in a certain way. Did I just conform accepting visibility as part of a globalized community life, off and online? This coupled with the thought that the phone that was giving me information was also taking it from me I found troubling.

Data gleaned from being visible everyday on Google, Facebook and Instagram has a market value and can be a method of surveillance. Lack of political neutrality is not specific to Google. It can be seen in the whole virtual realm which has now become part of the global economic system. This system, as Wu argues, monetises the attention it is given by its users, which in turn, according to ex-Google analyst James Williams, leads to apps and virtual places being designed to be addictive. 'The

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<sup>45</sup> The social theorist Jeremy Bentham coined the term Panopticon in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century with regard to architectural buildings, particularly prisons. The design was such that the prisoners could always be seen from a central position but cannot tell when they are being watched. See footnote 33 pg. 29 for how this idea was expanded to urban design by Haussmann.

attention economy incentivises the design of technologies that grab our attention,’ he says. ‘In so doing, it privileges our impulses over our intentions’ (Williams in Lewis 2017). This chimes with Harcourt who describes online behaviour as an addiction where ‘we lose track of time ... We are so engrossed we do not even feel the craving’ (op cit 2015: 111). This was the place which I was inhabiting: becoming less aware of the Square and only occasionally glancing at the pavement at my feet, I posted photographs and clicked like buttons, waited for people to like my posts in return. My position seemed to have been predicted by Debord who in 1967 wrote that ‘the present phase of total occupation of social life by the accumulated results of the economy’ has led to ‘a generalised sliding from having into *appearing*, from which all actual ‘having’ must draw its immediate prestige and its ultimate function’ (Debord 1967). There seems to have been a reversal in the Situationist belief that radical ludic behaviour in public places could reveal the ‘beach beneath the street’<sup>46</sup>. Now the industrial scale at which personal data is harvested from ‘fun’ social media activity reveals the factory under the virtual playground.

As I examined the numerous photographs tagged to Parliament Square, I questioned the apparent democratic nature of this app. The data mining endemic in the attention economy might undermine its democratic potential as a communal place formed by collective sharing of photographs. ‘The dynamics of the attention economy are structurally set up to undermine the human will,’ Williams explains. ‘If politics is an expression of our human will, on individual and collective levels, then the attention economy is directly undermining the assumptions that democracy rests on’ (Williams in Lewis 2017). Journalist Paul Lewis expresses the fear that the addictive use of the Internet is ‘chipping away at our ability to control our own minds’ (Lewis 2017). That in turn might lead to a moment when democracy ceases to function and people are so engrossed they might not notice.

## *Habitual places*

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<sup>46</sup> This was a slogan often seen as graffiti in Paris during the student protests of 1968. It is associated with the *Situationist International* group of which Debord was a part.

I looked up from scrolling through the flow of Instagram photographs and assessed what effect looking at other people's photographs was having on the way I saw the Square. In digital places attention is sought and kept by its 'persuasive design' (ibid 2017). These design features are ubiquitous and seemingly harmless mechanisms such as 'like buttons' and 'notifications', yet people appear to be unaware of their underlying function. I looked at what people were paying attention to in the Square; there were clusters of people around the statues of Mandela and Ghandi, a steady stream along the pavements near the red telephone boxes. No one much stopped to look at the older statues. The flow of people in the Square and where they pay attention is mirrored in the photographs they post on Instagram. I wondered if the Square also has a persuasive design. One that people see and react to without necessarily understanding the effect. Writer Robert Musil emphasises this slippage between purpose and effect:

The purpose of most ordinary monuments [is] to conjure up a remembrance to grab hold of our attention and give pious bent to our feelings, for this, it is assumed, is what we more or less need, and it is in this their prime purpose that monuments always fall short.

Musil (1927)1995:61

I ponder whom it is that makes assumptions about what people 'need' to remember or forget? Musil concludes that monuments 'elude our perceptive faculties' (ibid (1927)1995:61). As people become accustomed to their surroundings, might they be unaware of the meaning and influence those places have on them. According to Musil, 'anything that constitutes the walls of our life, the backdrop of our consciousness, so to speak forfeits its capacity to play a role in that consciousness' (ibid (1927)1995:61). Heidegger takes a phenomenological approach to examine this same issue, probing how conscious and aware people are of the places they inhabit. In his text *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1951), he draws a link between building or making a place and the act of dwelling in it – dwelling explored in both sense of the word 'living in' but also 'thinking about' places: 'Building as dwelling that is, as being on the earth, however, remains for man's everyday experience that which is from the outset "habitual"- we inhabit it' (Heidegger (1951)1971:147).<sup>47</sup> Heidegger maintains that the habitual everyday has obscured the link between living in a place

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<sup>47</sup> The text was published during the acute housing crisis in Germany that followed the Second World War.

and dwelling as thought. In a later text *Memorial Address* (1966) Heidegger describes a situation that echoes Harcourt's description of being immersed online, where speed and all-pervasive modern communication technologies can carry people 'off into uncommon, but often merely common, realms of the imagination, and give the illusion of a world that is no world' (Heidegger 1966:48). He describes how this unroots people from actual places, and renders them unthinking. 'It is one thing to have heard and read something that is merely to take notice; it is another thing to understand what we have heard and read [or seen], that is, to ponder' (ibid 1966:52). Heidegger warns of a dislocation from actual places and the difficulty of finding time and space for meditative thought.<sup>48</sup>

In reaction to Heidegger, Kolb examines the architecture of the Internet to see if virtual locations can offer a place to dwell and ponder. He picks out the need to develop 'a sense of self-reflexive belonging' as one possible 'component of a sense of place' (Kolb 2000:123) as well as the need to inhabit virtual or actual places self critically (ibid 2000:125). For Heidegger and Kolb dwelling in either a virtual or actual place becomes more than being there physically; it becomes thinking about being there. They make the point that places exist not only in their physical presence but also in the way they are thought about and understood. Heidegger's plea is that people '*must ever learn to dwell*' ((1951)1971:161). He seems to intimate that this is an ongoing process, which chiming with Massey might mean that as places and situations change they in turn must be rethought.

## *Critical places*

To a different degree Massey, Lefebvre, Heidegger and Kolb all identify unthinking inhabitants of places. Are these people politically naïve, disinterested, busy? Are they a problem that needs to be solved by intervening in those places? There is a problematic judgemental critical 'us and them' that emerges here, one that I want to try and avoid in my own way of thinking about these actual and virtual places. Both Debord and Kolb advise critical thought as a way of breaking away from habitual use.

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<sup>48</sup> Heidegger describes thought as an act that brings physical places into being, but also one that is capable of clearing an abstract enlightening space (see pg. 141).



However the word critical might also need to be disentangled from my own habitual usage, and in so doing help clarify my own research position. Critical thought can be defined as a clear rational approach to evaluating information which inevitably involves self-awareness in order to assess that said rationality. Being self-critical in Kolb's terms and in terms of unthinking inhabitation of places, whether they are virtual or actual, might help people 'deal with the immersive and seductive qualities of new media' (Kolb 2000:226). It could then be argued that critical thought is the turning point between unthinking dutiful inhabitation and self-aware actualizing action. However this assumes that criticality is egalitarian.

The word critical is etymologically derived from the word crisis, a term which philosopher Immanuel Kant examined in terms of a crisis of thought in his text *What is the Enlightenment* (1784). Kant identified a conflict between what is known through *a-priori* scientific knowledge and what is learnt through experience. He sought to reconcile the rationalism of philosophers such as René Descartes with empiricists such as John Locke. The schism between the views of those who argued that objective truths could only be deduced in the mind with those who contended that knowledge is formed through subjective experience and the senses was the crisis Kant sought to address. Responding to philosopher David Hume's religious scepticism Kant noted that individual reason sits within and sometimes against the knowledge or understanding of the world given by state and religion (Kant 1784). As professor of philosophy Michael Rohlf explains:

Modern science, the pride of the Enlightenment, the source of its optimism about the powers of human reason, threatened to undermine traditional moral and religious beliefs that free rational thought was expected to support. This was the main intellectual crisis of the Enlightenment.

Rohlf 2016

For Kant critical philosophy was the way to navigate this divide. Rationalism had to be balanced with religion and the established structures that control society. Individual, everyday, human understandings of the world were important but they were not there to overthrow the establishment. Modern critical approaches to society's problems such as that taken by philosopher Max Horkheimer in *Traditional and Critical Theory* (1937) who hoped to change society through critique have

dissolved into post-modern fragmentation. Arguably a new crisis of thought has emerged during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as grand or meta-narratives were undermined by the plurality of small individual narratives, as philosopher Jean-François Lyotard described in *The Postmodern Condition* (1989). The destabilising effect of postmodern or post-critical thought is being played out in different cultural and political realms.<sup>49</sup> Art historian and critic Hal Foster defends the position of the critic arguing that although ‘critique is driven by a will to power, and it is not reflexive about its own claims to truth’ (Foster 2012:4), the post-critical position should not go unquestioned. ‘The post-critical condition is supposed to release us from our straitjackets (historical, theoretical, and political), yet for the most part it has abetted a relativism that has little to do with pluralism’ (Foster 2012:3). Foster seems to be arguing that even though the post-critical position has established that there is no single truth or grand narrative this has not fed into or helped create a diverse society. Being post-critical might actually nourish the new meta-narratives of globalisation and consumerism which modern critical theory sought to expose and challenge as divisive to society. Arguably habitual use of a place virtual or actual can inure people to their inherent structure and new and old meta-narratives. Whether Parliament Square, Google or Instagram, common sense or everyday lived experience can be one of going along with the suggested pattern of use – being a dutiful citizen rather than an actualizing one that might be critical and therefore question, upset, or subvert. Citizens might also move between these two modes depending on the circumstances.

As I looked at photographs on Instagram, my own amongst them, establishing my own research position seemed a complex task. While bearing in mind Foster’s warning that it is a ‘bad time to go post-critical’ (2012:8), I remain aware of

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<sup>49</sup> The problems of moving from modern critical theory to post-modern post-critical thought can be clearly seen in the education context. Researchers into the philosophy of education Andrew O’Shea and Maeve O’Brien describe the shift in terms of educator and philosopher Paulo Freire’s definition of ‘critical pedagogy’ in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). ‘On one hand post-modernism as a philosophical style continually problematizes the human agent’s capacity to confront and transform the ideology of the human world. On the other hand the strengthening wind of neo-liberal policies further legitimize the privatization and commodification of education and reinforce the allocation of cultural power...to specific groups perpetuating old forms of injustice as well as new ones’ (O’Shea & O’Brien 2011:2).

sociologists John Urry and John Law's suggestion that the position of the researcher has shifted to sit within and be part of or enact the social.

The sensibilities of the nineteenth Century inheritance, though still informing much social inquiry, are under pressure from an alternative, complex and performative sense of social inquiry... methods are never innocent and that in some measure they enact whatever it is they describe into reality.

Urry and Law 2003

It is perhaps architectural historian Mark Jarzombek's description (made in reference to architectural practice) of a negotiated position between critical and post-critical that best describes my own theoretical starting point for my research.

If the future lies with the Post-critical there is enough healthy nostalgia for the Critical that it might survive. This is not to argue one against the other. Instead I believe that architectural discourse would be best served if the two were put in some kind of relationship to each other. But that could only happen if they are mediated by a tertiary form of 'critical practice', one that is akin to investigatory journalism. It would aim to point out the hypocrisies, ambivalences, complexities and ambiguities of our various aspirations.

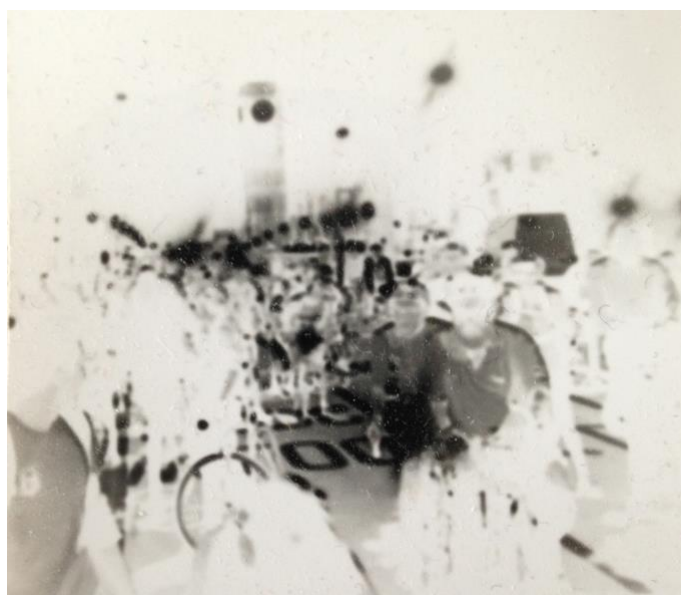
Jarzombek 2002

I left the Square and returned to my studio. There I continued to investigate the hypocrisies, ambivalences, complexities and ambiguities of what the Instagram photographs revealed about visibility and visuality in actual and virtual places and their communal democratic potential.

*Critical Mass, contact print, 2017*



*Critical Mass*, pinhole camera paper negative,  
2017



## 2. The studio as Camera

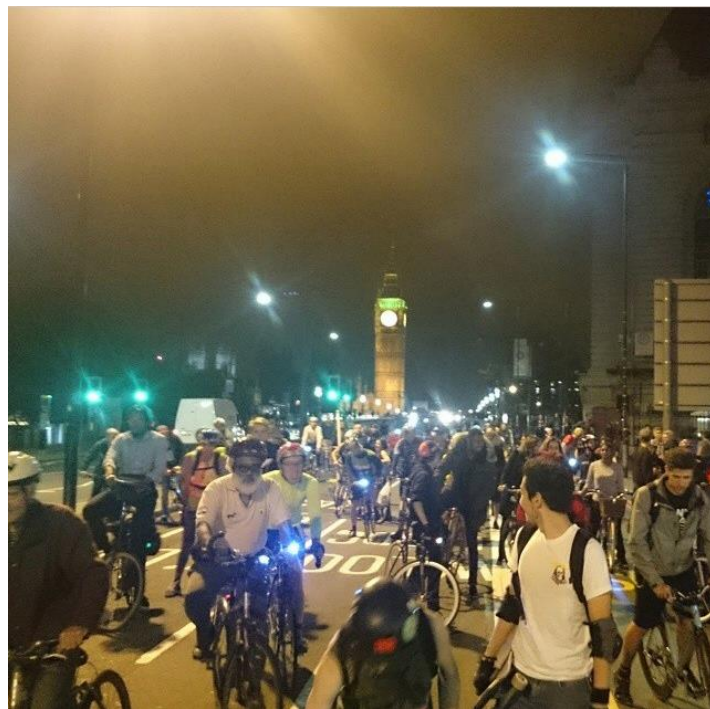


Figure 1 Anon, *Critical Mass*, found Instagram photograph, 2014

In this chapter I describe how my 'critical practice' evolved in the studio starting with ideas sparked by one particular photograph (figure 1). My studio practice opened up different ways of looking at and interpreting the Instagram photographs that then became my guides to the Square. I outline how the photographs and cameras became both my research tools and my raw material, around which a complex discourse between public place, politics, commerce and representation revolved. As a result of my actions in the studio I settled on four photographs of different social activities seen in the Square: everyday, tourism, protest and state occasions, and four different yet interlinked research methods for exploring them.

In the darkened studio I looked at the flow of Instagram photographs of the Square on my smartphone and realised that the piece of technology in my hand could be seen as a lens linking the bright public exterior world to this small private interior place. The smartphone transformed the studio into a post-modern *Camera Obscura*.<sup>50</sup> A device mentioned by Aristotle as a tool for looking at the world as far back as the 4th Century BC. In the mid 17<sup>th</sup> Century Descartes saw the *Camera Obscura* as a scientific affirmation of the universal 'truth' of vision (Crary 1992:42). To prove its complete objectivity he recommended the use of a lens of an eye retrieved from a recently deceased human cadaver or, failing that, one from a cow to focus the light into the darkened room. Instead of receiving images projected through the lens of a dead eye, I saw the Square through multiple live smartphone images channelled by satellite technology into my studio/darkroom. These photographs showed me not a singular truth but a multitude of views. However the rationalist interpretation of objective singular visual truth that the *Camera Obscura* helped to establish persists in the form of the photograph. As Wells and Price point out, 'in everyday parlance, photographs are still viewed as directly referencing actual and observable circumstances' (2015:20). Arguably, there is a parallel between the acceptance that a photograph has a singular inherent truth with the habitual use of the Square or of online places. As I looked at the many different views of the Square

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<sup>50</sup> The *Camera Obscura* takes the form of a dark room or box into which an image of the outside world is focussed through a small hole or lens. The image can then be seen upside down on the opposite wall or side of the box. Literally meaning dark room, the *Camera Obscura* replicates the mammalian eye. As on the retina the image appears upside down due to light continuing to travel in a straight line through a biconvex lens.

on Instagram I reminded myself of Debord's warning that an excess of images might lead to an inhibition of critical thought. By deciding to take these photographs as guides to actual and virtual places I needed to be aware that they should not be seen as reliable.

### *The Camera: A lesson in slowness*

One evening in the studio I spotted a photograph (figure 1) posted on Instagram only moments before. The photograph depicted a crowd of cyclists blocking the road near the Square. The group were part of *Critical Mass* who meet once a month and cycle *en masse* around the city. They briefly change the hierarchy of the roads, slowing and blocking traffic as they meander on a route decided upon on the spur of the moment. It represents a celebration of the bicycle as an egalitarian mode of transport, criticises dangerous drivers and mourns cyclists killed on the streets. The cyclists form through their actions a physical mass of opinion; in Chakrabarty's terms they are taking part in performative democracy aiming not only to momentarily change the rules of the road but also the long-term rules of the land.

The photograph (figure 1) captured a moment of disobedient deceleration and the subsequent interruption of the normal flows and patterns of behaviour. It offered a lesson in resistance and slowness that could be applied to photography in general and specifically to the high velocity flow of Instagram and other social media platforms. The photograph became the starting point from which I began to develop my own 'critical practice' - a method of working through ideas physically and theoretically that is, as Jarzombek described, akin to a combination of investigative journalism and its equivalents in contemporary art practice.

I associated Jarzombek's description with artist Simon Starling's work *Shedboatshed* (2005) which is an example of art practice as research method or 'figuring out', as Marquard Smith describes it. *Shedboatshed* is 'a work of art that both *embodied* and *evidenced* its research' (Smith 2008:xvi).<sup>51</sup> Starling's investigation through his art

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<sup>51</sup> Starling's site-specific response to globalisation, *Shedboatshed*, involved the artist dismantling a riverside shed near Basel, Switzerland. With the wood from the shed he built a boat following a local design. He used the boat



practice of materials and their possible social use and meaning resulted in a physical manifestation of that research process. In the studio my own investigation of these photographs was also a physical one. The works that are presented in this thesis combine the ephemeral digital documentation of those processes stored on virtual platforms with some of the physical materials I used, such as coloured paper, photographic prints and tracing paper.

In response to the lack of material presence of the digital Instagram photographs and to the opaque technology through which I received them I built a pinhole camera,<sup>52</sup> a miniature of the *Camera Obscura*, out of the packaging that my smartphone had arrived in.<sup>53</sup> I set up the pinhole camera to take photographs of the smartphone screen. The exposure times were long, the paper negatives I produced were schematic. This re-enactment of early photographic techniques slowed the photographs. The paper print made them tangible, the process problematized the difference between digital and analogue as well as the veracity of what I was seeing.

In order to move closer to the smartphone technologically and also speed up my own processes of image capture and production I switched from the pinhole camera to use a basic single lens reflex (SLR) film camera. It has a less direct mechanism and a viewfinder to frame the desired image; light no longer directly hits the paper but is instead focussed through lenses, controlled by timed shutters eventually exposing the film, all at the push of a button. The film negatives I took of the Instagram flow opened up the possibility of using my enlarger to produce larger photographs and further investigate photographic processes.<sup>54</sup> Having captured images from the Square in the darkroom I wound the film on to a cartridge, then placed it in a

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to transport the remaining wood from the shed along the river to the gallery and there rebuild the shed in a new context.

<sup>52</sup> The smartphone is an example of black box technology, people no longer know how the technology they use everyday works, or how they could fix it.

<sup>53</sup> Pinhole cameras are built around the same principal as a *Camera Obscura*, the pinhole acts as a lens focussing light from outside onto light sensitive paper attached to the interior of the light proof box. This produces a paper negative.

<sup>54</sup> To enlarge the paper negatives from the pinhole camera I used a scanner, inverted and changed the scale in the computer, then printed them on an inkjet printer. This interchange between analogue and digital format felt too abrupt. The dark room offered more scope to investigate the photographs physically but also theoretically.

lightproof canister, developed, stopped and fixed the film.<sup>55</sup> I switched on the light and unrolled the film, then hung it up to dry. I repeated the process by also taking photographs of some of the images found on my Google image search of the Square.

From the negatives I printed up contact sheets, cut them into individual photographs and spread them out. I had collected photographs of monuments, buildings, soldiers marching and tourists posing. I felt a sense of ownership of these photographs, a sense of having captured them myself rather than merely having flicked through them online. By ordering and sorting old and new photographs transferred to the same physical format I began to see patterns emerging from the different ways that the Square and the things that happen there were represented. As Alexander Galloway, a writer on digital and analogue culture, describes 'information exists whenever worldly things are "in-formed," or "put into form"' (Galloway 2012:82). Galloway refers to a metaphor used by Flusser to illustrate his point: 'the leaves that fall in the autumn have no information because they are scattered to and fro, but if one puts them into form - for example by moving them around to spell out a word, or simply by raking them into piles - the leaves gain information' (ibid 2012:82). Through this process of sorting I began to create a visual taxonomy of the Square. The four main piles I formed were: everyday photographs, tourist photographs, photographs documenting protests, photographs of state occasions. The act of ordering and categorizing different photographs reflected my own subjective judgement: tourists pose, protestors look away, flags are flown, soldiers march, the everyday photographs often don't contain any people or landmarks at all. I looked at the accumulated sorted piles of photographs and selected one photograph at random from each category to see where each one might lead.

The photographs weren't picked at random but were also not chosen to illustrate a particular preconceived narrative. These narratives emerged after studying in detail a large number of photographs that I had collected. I worked with an array of them in the darkroom to see what might materialize, often in conjunction with other historic photographs gleaned from my initial Google image search. The criteria for

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<sup>55</sup> The three chemical processes needed to *develop* the film, *stop* it from further developing and becoming too dark, then *fix* the image on the film.

choosing the photographs were subjective rather than random, however the process of collecting them from Instagram was more haphazard.<sup>56</sup> The everyday photograph ended up in that particular pile because it didn't represent a person or an event, statue or building as its main focus. It reached the top of the pile because of its visual strength and its slightly melancholy mood, especially after being translated into analogue black and white. The photograph of tourists posing in front of Mandela's statue was chosen from many others partially because of its popular location and the posed similarity to many others; what made it stand out as interesting to study in more detail was the racial mix of those pictured (see pgs. 109, 119 and 261). In my studio I worked with many protest photographs that were more dynamic than the one I eventually chose. Others that depicted burning benches or police in riot gear were eventually rejected. The protest photograph emerged from the pile because of my reaction to it in the studio: the visual structure offered lines to cut along, the cut up pieces suggested collage and the political implications that accompany that technique. The most problematic photograph to settle on was the one which was to start my investigation of the formal use of the Square for state occasions. I rejected photographs of Armistice Day, state visits and the unveiling of statues to eventually analyse a photograph of the State Opening of Parliament offered a new achronological way of analysing the origins of the Square.

### *Theory and practice*

I printed a larger version of each of these photographs and set about examining them to see where each one might lead. Each photograph represented an area of social activity or a feature of the Square that could be investigated. They also suggested a research method that could be followed to investigate that activity, one that sometimes alternated between the theoretical and the practical. Deleuze's description of the relationship between practice and theory is not directed

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<sup>56</sup> Hundreds of photographs are taken in the Square every week. Throughout my research I visited the square virtually on Instagram to see what photographs had been deposited, often collecting, saving and printing ones of interest. As I amassed photographs from the Square and sorted them into piles, the amount of photographs in each area was uneven. The two largest piles were those of tourists and protests probably because of the amount of tourists passing through the Square and the photogenic nature of protests.

specifically at art practice, yet it portrays my own 'relay' between desk and darkroom and the interaction or communication between theoretical and practical ways of working through the ideas that the photographs provoked.

Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall and practice is necessary for piercing this wall.

Deleuze in Foucault 1977:206

For me this situation was sometimes reversed: the wall I encountered developing visual ideas in my practice was pierced by a theoretical approach. I started at my desk with the everyday photograph and a theoretical investigation of how photographs communicate. The photograph of tourists turned this situation around and led to an investigation stemming from activities in the studio of how photographs can be staged to communicate certain opinions and social positions. The photograph of protesters guided me to an examination of physical and theoretical deconstruction, Actor Network Theory and performativity. Finally the photograph of a state occasion led me to consider the slippery achronological truths of photographs through the back and forth between analogue and digital processes.

### *Everyday: Communication and context*

This humdrum photograph of the mirrored, rain-soaked Square (figure 2) provoked me to consider what the everyday of photography might be. It communicates with the person who took it, to those who are pictured in it and others who see it, but how? Photography theorist Patricia Holland argues that there is a need to look beyond the photograph to understand how it might be understood. 'To make sense of pictures which are not our own, we must change gear to become *readers* of the pictures and engage in textual and semiotic exploration, paying attention to cultural as well as photographic codes' (Holland 2015:169). Holland contrasts *readers* with *users*, those who bring a wealth of personal surrounding knowledge of those pictured (ibid 2015:138). If I am a *reader*, how do I read? I want by and large to avoid semiotics as the sole method of understanding what is communicated by any

image.<sup>57</sup> Semiotics tends towards equating an image with text that can be easily deciphered and *read* by following fixed scientific rules which would then give different people the same meaning. For me this method of interpreting an image does not necessarily help me to understand the numerous different meanings an image could evoke in many different minds. Semiotics fix the photograph in a rational Cartesian Paradigm, leaving little room for emotion and personal experience, uncertainty and subsequent associations that seem essential to visual interpretation.<sup>58</sup> Yet the semiotic definitions *index*, *symbol* and *icon* as defined by philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce in the 1860's ((1903)1970: 51) do offer a useful counterpoint to other methods of interpreting images.<sup>59</sup> They are particularly helpful in differentiating photographs from other forms of images.

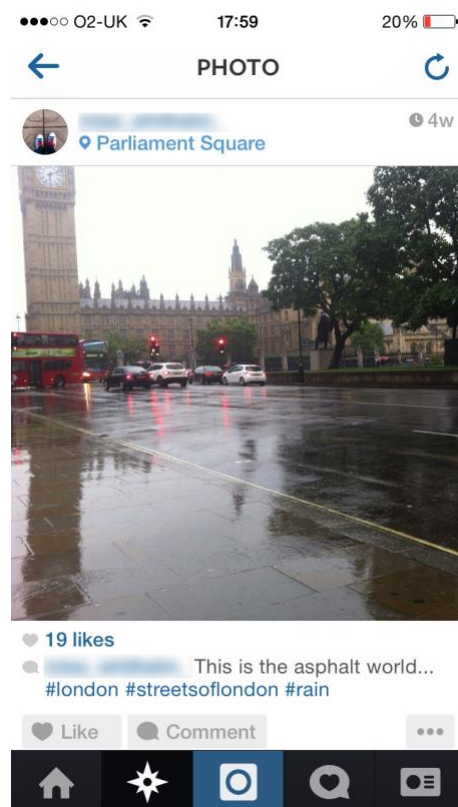


Figure 2 Anon, *Everyday*, found Instagram photograph, 2014

<sup>57</sup>The word image is used here instead of photograph as semiotics has a wider reach than the interpretation of photographs. It can be used to deduce meaning in paintings, drawings etc.

<sup>58</sup> The Cartesian Paradigm evolved from Descartes' philosophy which was the basis of rationalism. It called for the separation of the mind from the body and the senses or emotions in forming a reasoned scientific understandings of the world. Heidegger reversed Descartes' famous statement 'I think therefore I am' to examine being and existing as a prerequisite for thought (see Aho 2009:11).

<sup>59</sup> Peirce's theories were developed a few decades after early photographers such as Niépce, Daguerre and Fox Talbot were first successful with the technique.

Peirce's pragmatic approach can be implemented to examine how associations are made between photographs and the actual world, and how things are learnt through interpreting or *reading* them. I returned to examine the pinhole photograph of *Critical Mass*<sup>60</sup> using Peirce's definitions: The *index* is the images' direct physical relationship to what it depicts, which in this photograph is the record of an exact moment of ongoing actions: The photograph (figure 1) seems to have been taken quickly, it is slightly blurred. It captures social interaction; people are looking at each other, not at the camera.<sup>61</sup> The *icon* is the connection through a shared resemblance: people, bikes, roads and streets can be identified; Big Ben can be seen, the location recognized. For those that know what *Critical Mass* is, it has *symbolic* association - the *symbol* depends on a known connection that may not be directly present in the image but is widely understood. For those who don't know of *Critical Mass*, the group of people on the street could be identified as a protest because people know what other protests look like. There are, however, no banners; the people are on bikes, and it is dark. The symbolism of their actions can only be guessed at, interpreted from connections made between visual evidence and what the viewer knows. Following this semiotic method a wider meaning can begin to be deduced: It is a record of a protest, it is in a known place, Parliament Square.

In the darkroom, I felt that the pinhole camera made from a discarded iPhone box and the photograph I had produced unsettled Peirce's definitions. The re-taking of the photograph echoed the repeating and doubling that occurs in photography: taking a photograph of a photograph had delocalised it and transported it further from its original source. Stripped of lenses, filters, mirrors or digital code the pinhole camera had a more immediate relationship with its subject confirming the direct indexical nature of photography. However the new analogue photograph is deceptive, it relates only *indexically* to the light emitted from the smartphone. But the photograph of *Critical Mass* with Big Ben in the background is *iconically* as close and as recognisable as the original digital image. Cultural context is, according to

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<sup>60</sup> The fact that I chose to analyse the semiotics of the photograph of *Critical Mass* rather than the rainy everyday photographs shows something of the problems of the method. The everyday photograph (figure 2) offers little to get hold of in the way of signs and symbols, instead it provokes an affective response an indefinable mood.

<sup>61</sup> Indexicality is what has been used to differentiate photography from painting, where even small incidental details are planned (See further discussion on the problems of this differentiation on pgs. 274 and 282).

Holland, part of the way a photograph is read. In my studio the 'widely known' *symbol* of the pinhole photograph had subtly shifted; for me it became symbolic of photography itself. By using the phone's box to photograph the phone itself, the empty space inside the commercial packaging became linked with the function of the missing contents. The analogue photograph reproduced from the digital original 'creates a confusion about the real' (Sontag 1979:110). A rational reading cannot capture its entire effect much as the photograph cannot capture the whole scene. There is always something out of sight beyond the frame and also something missing within a photograph.

Something that is not to be found in a semiotic reading of this photograph is affect: the thrill and theatricality, the adrenalin rush of the act, a feeling evoked in the body rather than a conceptual understanding. As Berger poignantly wrote 'all photographs are a form of transport and an expression of absence' (Berger (1975)2010:17). For me, the photograph (figure 1) provoked a feeling of envy: 'I am not there'; also a feeling of regret: 'why didn't I go?' It had the capacity to transport me to the Square yet I was still in the studio missing out. My emotional response was mixed up with and inseparable from what I rationally knew about the subject matter of the photograph. I had what Mitchell describes as a double consciousness with regard to this photograph, a partly rational, partly irrational response. He discusses this in the light of Barthes' transition from claiming that the science of semiotics could conquer the irrational in images, to his belief that the wound or the emotion - what he called *Punctum* - in an image always triumphed over the rational semiotic *Studium* or reading of it (Mitchell 2005:9). The potential for a photograph to evoke personal emotional reactions is one aspect that allows for a slippage in possible meaning. What they are intended to communicate is not in the end what they convey.

The parallels that can be drawn between the way photographs communicate and the way places might be read or understood was the starting point for the everyday photograph to become my guide to the Square. Rational historic semiotic readings of places, like photographs can be augmented and unsettled by each individual's senses, feelings and memories and personal social political and cultural standpoints. Statues can, like photographs, be seen to capture a particular moment in history, a

particular political view whose meaning might be interpreted in many different ways. Holland's point – that the wider cultural context in which a photograph is taken and seen affects how it is read -, coupled with the capacity for photographs to be a mode of transport, inspired me to let the everyday photograph take me on a journey to New York. I stayed in the dark studio, allowed my smartphone to become a method of transport and followed the movements of others, as they became 'tourists of reality'.

Through the camera people become customers or tourists of reality...Bringing the exotic near, rendering the familiar and homely exotic, photographs make the entire world available for appraisal.

Sontag 1979:110

Writer and political activist Susan Sontag's description makes clear how interchangeable the everyday places and the tourist sites can be and that it is the camera that serves to make them exotic or different. Through photographs I began to explore how intended meanings and semiotic readings of the Square might be unsettled, challenged or affirmed by framing them within a different cultural context.

### *Tourism: Staging and the viewer*

The posed nature of this photograph (figure 3) led me to think about how people use photography to stage what they want to communicate rather than how photographs can be read or understood by the viewer. In this section I searched for the source of an image rather than exploring how the outcome might be read. This source encompasses a relationship between the place or the stage and the subject with the unseen camera and photographer.

The photograph of two people sitting in front of the statue of Nelson Mandela (figure 3) made me think about why people take photographs: it can be an act of recording, interpreting, valuing, it can become a physical externalised memory. In Sontag's opinion photography is essentially acquisitive, a matter of owning a view, a person, a moment through the taking of a photograph (1979:4). Decisions have been made prior to the photographic portrait of two people sitting in the Square being taken: where to sit, where the photographer should stand, who and what is in the



photograph, what the actors want it to mean? It has been staged, and staging suggests that photographs can be a way of creating as well as of capturing reality.



Figure 3 Anon, *Tourists*, found Instagram photograph, 2014

The long exposure times needed by the pinhole camera indicate why in the early days of portrait photography there was the need for people to stay still and pose for a photograph. Props such as classical columns and books were used literally to prop people up due to technical necessity of keeping the sitter still but also to tell a story. Portraiture, once the preserve of the wealthy, was opened up even to those of low income through photography (See Wells 2015:328). This cheap and comparatively fast process allowed people to consider how they wanted to present a representation of themselves to other people.

Portrait photographs offered a chance for the sitter to show their aspirations (Holland 2015:148). They could construct a new reality in the photographic studio (see Figure 4 and 5). However they also offered a possibility to show where the sitter felt they socially and physically belonged (op cit 2015:329), such as in the

photograph of *Sara Forbes Bonetta* (figure 5).<sup>62</sup> Objects and people could be arranged in particular locations to communicate a particular narrative: the illiterate held books, the poor wore their Sunday best. The objects were part of the socio-political dialogue within the photographs, the photograph itself was often displayed as a status symbol within the home. Photographs can situate those portrayed within a societally understood visual language or in Peirce's semiotic terms within a widely understood symbolism. They are composed in order to do this rather than captured or acquired.



Figure 4 Anon, *Stafhell and Kleingrothe photographic studio*, 1898



Figure 5 Camille Silvy, *Sara Forbes Bonetta*, albumen print, 1862<sup>63</sup>

Beyond the personal socio-political realm of portraiture, staging poses questions as to the creation of photographic realities in a wider global political context through the construction of historical narratives. The debate as to whether photographer Roger Fenton arranged cannonballs on a track in the Crimea to dramatize his photograph *Valley of the Shadow of Death in the Crimea* (1855), as Sontag suggests (2003:48), or cleared them to take another more barren image continues to this day (figures 6 and 7).<sup>64</sup> Fenton had been commissioned by the British government to

<sup>62</sup> The photograph (figure 5) of Queen Victoria's goddaughter Sara Forbes Bonetta, taken in 1862, not only shows the propping up of the sitter but also the way a photograph could be used to indicate belonging and class status. It also reveals her exceptional circumstances. West African Forbes Bonetta was orphaned and sold into slavery. She had the good fortune to be 'given' to Queen Victoria who ensured she entered into the British upper middle classes, where such photos were commonplace. She married and had three children, but died of tuberculosis aged 37. (See Gerzina 2003:5 for a reassessment of the visibility of Black Victorians).

<sup>63</sup> Photograph: Courtesy of Paul Frecker collection/The Library of Nineteenth-Century Photography

<sup>64</sup> The filmmaker Errol Morris has investigated Sontag's claim that Fenton deliberately moved the cannon balls on to the road to create a more dramatic image at length. Morris collated many experts' views on the order of the

document the war in Crimea. His brief was to counterbalance the bad public image of the war, making him one of the first war photographers but predestining his images for propaganda use and historical doubt.



Figure 6 Roger Fenton, *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*, Crimea, 1855

Figure 7 Roger Fenton, *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*, Crimea, 1855

Just over eighty years later photographer Frank Capa took a very different picture during the Spanish Civil War. His depiction of a *Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death* (1936) (figure 8) has the appearance of an image captured in the heat of battle but was most likely the result of a staged moment gone terribly wrong.<sup>65</sup>

Both Fenton's and Capa's photographs are amongst the best known staged war photographs. They point towards the ever present possibility of deceit in photographs not only because of how they can be read or what emotions they stir but towards the invisible person behind the lens who has composed the image. The place where both these photographs were taken played an important part in their meaning and composition. Looking at the photographs of the Square that I had amassed in the studio, none had the global impact of Capa's or Fenton's yet the way people positioned themselves in relation to the camera in a particular place came into focus. I wondered if this was the effect that a particular place had on people or the effect of the camera or perhaps both.

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photos and analyzed Fenton's own letters home, while trying to build up the historical context. His conclusion was that the more he looked, the more interpretations of the images he found (Morris 2007).

<sup>65</sup> It is thought that Capa had asked the Republican militiamen to pose for him during siesta time, which was normally a strictly observed ceasefire. The militiamen fired a few shots as they posed for Capa, he then photographed them exuberantly running downhill towards the safety of a trench. The fascist troops, alerted by the unusual firing, picked off the soldier as he ran and Capa had captured his iconic image (see Hilton 2008 and Whelan 2006).



Figure 8 Frank Capa, [\*Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death\*](#), Spain, 1936

Barthes describes his own reaction to the camera as one of posing (Barthes (1980)2000:10). Whereas William Henry Fox Talbot's description of his home Lacock Abbey suggests that architectural structures also play a part in what is photographed. Writing in 1839 he stated: 'this building I believe to be the first that was ever known to have drawn its own picture' (Fox Talbot in Batchen 1999:66). Even though he was completely involved in the process of making photographs and the cameras, there was an element of chance as to what was captured.<sup>66</sup> Fox Talbot's proposal that Lacock Abbey drew itself gives the building agency. Like the camera that might change the way people behave in front of the lens, the building has a way of directing the way it is viewed. Now the building combined with Fox Talbot's photographs lead the eye and therefore the camera and the photographer causing it to be photographed in a certain way (figures 9 and 10). This effect can be seen not only in buildings but also in cities and in the Square. In my studio I plotted where photographs were taken over a certain time period on a map of the Square. The process revealed where the photographers' eyes were led and therefore what was

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<sup>66</sup> The lack of viewfinder on my pinhole camera, similar to those built by Fox Talbot in the 1830s, suggests that it was perhaps the inability to pre-emptively frame the photograph that may have been why he wrote himself out of the role of photographer. Fox Talbot developed a method of calotype printing which made paper sensitive to light using silver iodide.

represented more often.<sup>67</sup> The photographs visible to me in the studio also indicated the physicality and the social aspects of the practice of photography in the Square.

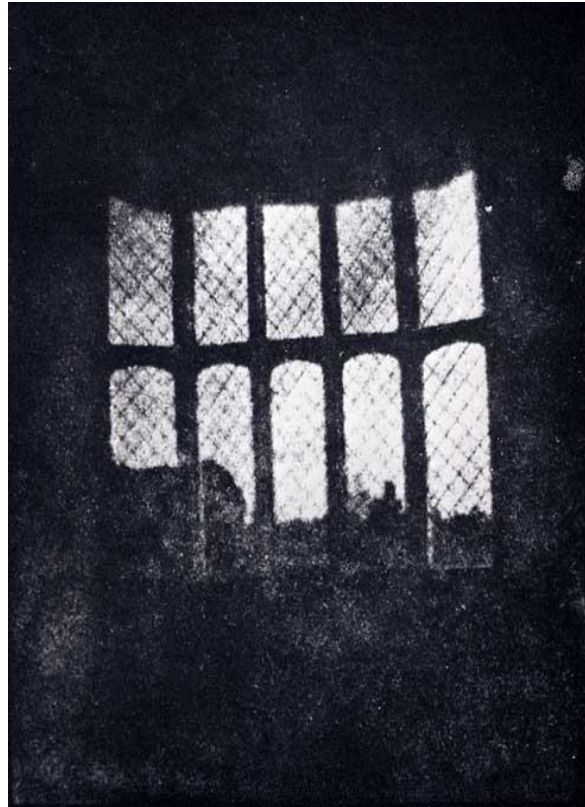
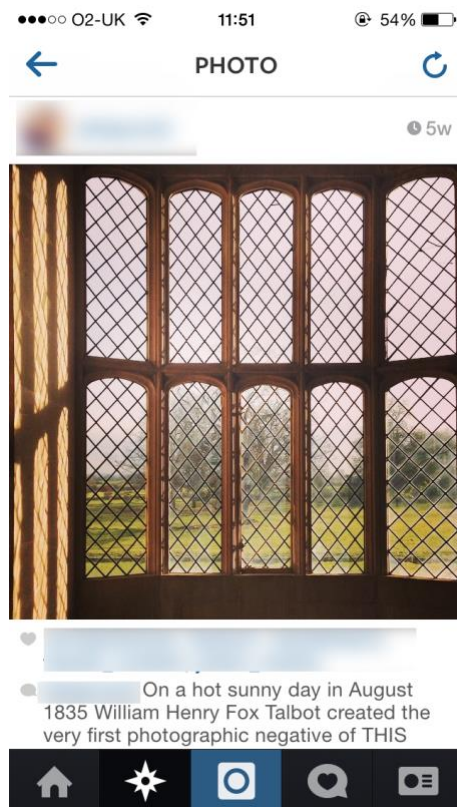


Figure 9 Anon, *Latticed Window*, found Instagram photograph, 2015

Figure 10 William Henry Fox Talbot, *Latticed Window*, 1835

Building a stage and restaging the photograph (figure 3) in the studio, brought up specific areas to investigate theoretically. The pose those depicted had adopted, their gaze into and beyond the camera and their choice of backdrop bore similarities with many other photographs I had collected.<sup>68</sup> This led me to try to differentiate these tourists and what they might be trying to communicate with this staged photograph from the mass and consider how photography can lead to a social awareness of others.

<sup>67</sup> Big Ben and the statues of Churchill, Gandhi and Mandela were particularly popular along with a row of red phone booths that seem to have been placed strategically to provide the perfect tourist shot with Big Ben in the background.

<sup>68</sup> I describe the different photographs and props I used to restage the photograph (figure 3) in appendix I.

## *Protest: Deconstruction, networks and performativity*

The research method suggested by the photograph of a small group of protesters, (figure 11) situated me initially in my studio. Where the act of physical deconstruction of the photograph into different elements led me to consider Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT), in relation to how the camera and the photograph might be performed or enacted.



Figure 11 Anon, *Protest*, found Instagram photograph, 2014

The photograph suggested lines to cut and fold. Before I had even considered what the photograph might mean as a whole I had cut the newly printed black and white image into bits. Different elements became separated from the whole. The different pieces of the photograph depicted different elements or actants in the Square. According to Latour each element, whether curb stones, grass, pavements, statues or protesters is part of the social network of the Square. Latour describes such networks as a collective entanglement of humans and non-humans where 'each artefact has its script,' which has a 'potential to take hold of a passer-by and force

them to play roles in its story' (Latour 1999:177).<sup>69</sup> The photograph and the camera can also be seen as non-human actants, they are technical delegates for a human enunciator - the person who spoke them into being. The enunciators and engineers - those who made the objects - become absent leaving the object to 'stand in' (ibid 1999:189) for their human instigators. In Latour's terms: In the studio I enacted the script that the photograph suggested to me which resulted in a physical deconstruction of it's meaning.

The networks Latour describes are not only spatial and material but also temporal. When people interact with any of these actants they can 'in a minute ... mobilize forces set into motion hundreds of years ago in faraway places. The relative shapes of actants and their ontological status may be completely reshuffled' (ibid 1999:189). For example, the smartphone camera has a string of delegates attached to it from the inventors of the *Camera Obscura* to Fox-Talbot and Steve Jobs amongst which sits my own pinhole camera. The digital smartphone photograph has links to many other forms of images: drawings, paintings and collages, analogue photographs. The shared social-media photograph has connections to other scripts which link it back even further to cave paintings; it also connects to other forms of public communication such as postcards graffiti, murals or fly posters.

People are part of these networks: they 'live in the midst of technical delegates' and are 'folded into non-humans' (ibid 1999:189). The array of possible scripts that the camera and the photograph offer are in Latour's terms enacted by the humans in the network. In my studio holding the cut up bits of the photograph I considered what script I had followed, what others were available? What was inherent in the materiality of the print or in the content on the thin surface that had guided my hand? How had I known what to do? Had I *read* a script?

Law equates the term enactment with performance: 'we are dealing with enactment or performance' (Law 2007:12). By doing so, he highlights the link between a script

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<sup>69</sup> 'Non-humans' is Latour's term for things and objects which he also refers to as actants.

that can *read* and enacted and language, which can in philosopher Judith Butler's definition be performative: <sup>70</sup>

In the first instance, performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act," but rather as the reiterative and citational practices by which discourse produces the effects that it names.

Butler 1993:2

Law re-names Actor Network Theory, using instead the term 'Material Semiotics'. The use of the word semiotics draws attention to a possible problem with ANT. For me, Law's term supposes that objects and their scripts are *read* and that therefore common understandings and performances can be made or played out. The assumption that objects or visual representations can be rationally *read* like a language is in contrast to the physical reactions and feelings they might provoke, which as with Peirce's semiotics seems problematic.

Law's emphasis on materiality and the generative nature of enactment however, moves this theory away from a purely rationalist language-based approach to understanding the world. The physical materiality of enactment changes the meaning of semiotics: 'It [ANT] assumes that nothing has reality or form outside the enactment of those relations' (Law 2007:2). Butler also expands her definition stating that performativity leads to a sedimented materialisation (op cit 1993:15). Arguably the act of photography is performative, not only in the way that Butler describes as linked to the 'speech act' (1993:70) or discourse but also in relation to the non-human agency of the camera. Sociologist Christian Licoppe discusses how Latour's Actor Network Theory and Butler's Performativity can critique each other but also combine to unsettle the stability of the distinction between 'man and machine' or the 'materiality of things'. Licoppe argues that these are not an *a-priori* given 'but are ceaselessly produced in social performances in which their reproduction is not routine or matter of fact and in which they always run the risk of being significantly reshaped' (Licoppe 2014:42).<sup>71</sup> Those taking part enter into a relationship with the camera and the photograph within the Square where they become part of the subtle changes in the social network that forms this place. Seeing

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<sup>70</sup> Butler builds on but also subverts John L. Austin's idea of 'performative utterances' in (Austin 1970).

<sup>71</sup> See pg. 274 for a discussion of Licoppes' ideas in relation ANT and Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940),



non-humans as social actants subtly shifts Lefebvre's theory that space is socially produced towards Massey's view of space as social process: this process can be performed, and also be performative.<sup>72</sup> Photographs are not only a visual materialization or record of these different relationships but also an intrinsic participant in them. They can become guides to how the eye is led and to what end.

In the studio I physically enacted or performed the photograph. However, cutting it up could be interpreted as a performative, subversive act which gave the photograph a new material reality. Reconstructing it - sticking it back together again and collaging it with other photographs - generated another political reality. In Latour's terms collage and montage can be seen as one of the scripts that photographs offer, a process which according to Wells is political as well as aesthetic.

The notion of construction derived from two sources: first, the idea that art can intervene politically, as in the example of the Soviet constructivists or of the German *monteurs*. Second, in post-modern terms, 'construction' directly related to deconstruction theory and practices. Both approaches refuse to take the world at face value.

Wells 2015:324

By creating new political realities with this photograph, I had begun to question not only the face value of the photograph but also of the Square. I had followed one of the many possible scripts suggested by the photograph in the context of the studio and by the other photographic images and tools that surrounded it. The people pictured were there with a political intent; they were performing for the camera, enacting its script as well as reacting to other elements in the Square. By being present they were performing the place, according to geographers Reuben Rose-Redwood and Michael Glass: 'Political spaces can be materially and discursively performed' (2014:2).<sup>73</sup> But they were also changing it and forming it through their actions. This place is not merely a 'pre-existing container' or 'a stage upon which embodied performances and affective subjectivities are enacted; rather spaces of social and political life are *constituted* through the reiteration of performative acts'

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<sup>72</sup> Social norms can be followed and reinforced within this process but also challenged.

<sup>73</sup> Rose-Redwood and Glass use the term space in the same all-encompassing way as Lefebvre, drawing place as specific location and space as formed by social activity together.

(ibid 2014:xiv). A situation which Butler has more recently described in relation to protesting crowds that ‘gather the pavement and animate the architecture’ through their actions (Butler 2011).

The deconstruction of the photograph (figure 11) and its new realities led me to an exploration of the discourse between the non-human actants that are part of a web of social relationships between human and non-humans in the Square. My physical involvement with this photograph instigated theoretical discussions on surveillance, freedoms, visibility, visibility and the civil responsibility of the viewer of photographs in both actual and virtual places.

### *State Occasion: Time, truth and reality*



Figure 12 *State Occasion*, found Instagram photograph, 2016

A close visual examination of an analogue reproduction of this digital photograph (figure 12) set in motion a theoretical process to understand the Square in an achronological way. The back and forth between analogue and digital photographic techniques coupled with use of green-screen technology began to unsettle a linear

historical narrative of the Square as well as narrative 'truthful' readings of the photograph.<sup>74</sup>

While talking about all images rather than just photographs, Flusser describes a duality which results from the way images are scanned by the viewer's eye: 'One's gaze takes in one element after another and produces temporal relationships between them'. As this happens again and again when looking at an image "before' can become 'after'" (Flusser 1983:8-9). He explains that at the same time as making these temporal loops within the image, the eye forms spatial links between elements in an image which creates 'a space of mutual significance' (ibid 1983: 8). This could be described as 'photographic space' where space and time come together on the flat surface which is structurally different to that of the 'linear world of history' (ibid 1983: 8). This is what Flusser sees as the images' magic - although the viewer might resort to a rational reading, they cannot escape from the magical side of images. Thus, he says, 'it is wrong to look for 'frozen events' in images. Rather they replace events by states of things and translate them into scenes' (ibid 1983:9). Flusser goes on to explain that in his view images are mediations between humans and the world and are needed to make the world comprehensible.

As my eye scanned the analogue version of the appropriated photograph (figure 12), I saw specks of dust and scratches from the analogue processing on the same surface as traces of the pixelated digital original. I considered what the two layers of photographic techniques had to say about the meaning of this photograph in which soldiers marched, weapons in hand. If this was not to be seen as a 'frozen event' but rather a mediator between myself and the world outside my studio, what did it make comprehensible, what did it tell me about the nature of photography? I returned to reflect on what the process of exchange between digital and analogue had to say about this particular photograph, a digital depiction of a repeated tradition in a historic Square. Wells and Price discuss the origins of the belief in the veracity of photographs with reference to poet Charles Baudelaire's description of

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<sup>74</sup> I used a green-screen app on my phone to create layers of photographs and film. The app creates instant collages by removing any green area and replacing it with an underlying image or film. The app allowed me to mix photographs from the Square with my own performative actions within the studio.

the photographs 'absolute material accuracy' and its use 'to support intellectual enquiry' (Wells and Price 2015:15). This position of trust and accuracy led to photography becoming an 'important means of communication for the industrial age' (ibid 2015:16). Together with Peirce's rational semiotic method of reading, the photograph gained enormous social and political power to sway public opinion, through its perceived neutral function in reporting events.<sup>75</sup>

Arguably, the trust in photography to tell the truth has always been misplaced. Whether through careful staging of images to tell certain stories or manipulations in the dark room, photographs have often been used to create or alter realities. Josef Stalin attempted to revise the visual history of the Russian Revolution by removing Leon Trotsky amongst others (figures 13 and 14) from photographs.



Figure 13 Anon, *Lenin and Trotsky*, 1919

Figure 14 Anon, *Lenin without Trotsky*, Date of censure unknown

The position of the photograph as documentary proof or 'truth' has become more complex with the addition of digital photography. As computer scientist Lev Manovich argues, the link between the photograph and its physical 'real' referents can be manipulated to the point of complete removal. He discusses the paradox of digital photography which in his view tears up as well as reinforces semiotic codes (Manovich 2003:241). Manovich sees many similarities between analogue and digital photographs. Both can be manipulated and degraded; the difference, he finds, resides in the technology that is used to make the photograph. Digital technology

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<sup>75</sup> Belief in images, paintings or statues has a troubled history. For example the reformation saw catholic images destroyed, Islamic law prohibits religious imagery: idolatry was often met with iconoclasm. Photography initially separated itself from this history yet the idolisation of the veracity of photography has become increasingly problematic.

like analogue can be used to create something that looks real yet is entirely fictional.<sup>76</sup> But unlike analogue, digital photographs can have no actual referent - they can be 'a photograph which exists only in the computer' (ibid 2003:241).<sup>77</sup> Baudrillard describes this same scenario in a wider world view in which reality is gradually replaced by representation:

Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum. Such would be the successive phases of the image:  
it is the reflection of a profound reality;  
it masks and denatures a profound reality;  
it masks the absence of a profound reality;  
it has no relation to any reality whatsoever;  
it is its own pure simulacrum.

Baudrillard (1981)1994:6

Baudrillard's description encompasses ideas of staging and digital manipulation and undermines semiotics by the removal of the referent. The digital image is not only faster; it is calculated, made up of zeros and ones; it is no longer only an 'indirect product' or 'technical image' (Flusser 1983:20) of reality, it is reality. The possibility of a fictional reality that can be created in a computer raises thoughts about the creation of fictional pasts, but also of technologically determined futures. As Baudrillard states: 'We need a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin to reassure us as to our ends, since ultimately we have never believed in them' (Baudrillard (1983)1993:350).

Baudrillard's questioning of the past and his belief that people do not realize they are living in a hyper-real simulacrum is one of many ways of looking at the effect of technological image reproduction. Concerned about the unrelenting speed with which images travelled around the world and about the effect that was having on

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<sup>76</sup> See pg. 282 for an in depth examination of artist Andreas Gursky's work in relation to Manovich's point.

<sup>77</sup> The full extent of what digital or digitised photographs communicate isn't always apparent. 'As photographs are increasingly freed from their role as representational objects and are now digital processes, images have become an important component of global networks of communication and dissemination that are operative beyond vision' (Wilkinson 2015). Each digital photograph contains a mass of invisible coded information, the time and date it was taken the place, algorithms can recognise faces. Social media photographs rely on an enormous industrial and commercial digital network needed to store and move them which allows them to be seen. Super computers used to store and circulate this data are situated in countries with cold climates to reduce the energy needed to keep them cool. Social media photographs are still physical yet their physicality is spilt between where they appear and where their valuable data is stored, sometimes by thousands of miles. This is yet another context in which these found Instagram photographs can be seen.

the way people saw the world, Heidegger described in the 1960s the effect of what he called 'calculative thinking'.

Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next. Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself. Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking that contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is.

Heidegger 1966:44

Heidegger's concern that technology changes the way people think and behave continues to have echoes today. The distraction and addiction and habitual use of smartphones is more calculative than meditative. Flusser believed that 'nothing can resist the force of this current of technical images - there is no artistic, scientific or political activity that is not aimed at it... there is a general desire to be endlessly remembered and endlessly repeatable (ibid 1983:20). I wonder if this is the case: Do 'technical images' now go so fast and are so often repeated as never to collect weight or meaning? Or is there, as Heidegger hopes, a way of being caught up in this speed and tumult of technology but at the same time be outside it, contemplating it (Heidegger (1955) 1977:35)) (see appendix II pg. 279). I found that the subtle differences between repeated images made me aware of my own perceptual individuality, and therefore that of others and their individual experience.<sup>78</sup> Photographs, whether analogue or digital, created or manipulated, do not cease to have political and social meaning.

Consideration of this photograph (figure 12) allowed me to follow temporal loops on the photograph's surface. Through these achronological movements I pondered the 'fictional' history of the Square from my perspective in the durational present. It suggested ways of looking at the Square, equating it to an altered photograph that had been changed over time to tell different narratives. Through the practical method of photographic manipulation I explored how understanding absences and alterations in the telling of the past might influence the possible futures of the Square.

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<sup>78</sup> In an echo of Baudrillard, art critic Aaron Schuman describes how artists are interacting with the proliferation of photographs online: a situation 'in which photographic representations, rather than objects themselves, are the subject of composition and contemplation; images have become symbiotic with, rather than symbolic of, the physical world itself (Schuman 2015:118).

## *Communications from the Camera*

I returned to my initial photograph of *Critical Mass* to assess where this preliminary investigation of photography had taken me. The crude pinhole had cast light on the origins of the camera as a means of capturing light and directly re-presenting what that light bounced off, the indexical recording of where the camera was pointed. The SLR camera sped up this process. The four photographs had opened up different research methods with which to examine the Square. I had found the photographs slippery; they gave the impression of infallible reporters of events; they mirrored yet distorted; they were capable of constructing and unsettling reality. I felt I had become somewhat isolated in the studio *Camera Obscura* and began to reflect on the platform from which I had channelled the photographs. Social-media widens the possibilities of what a photograph can communicate and to whom. The underlying theme of communication and its social and political effects had begun to emerge from my investigations. Having been shared on Instagram, the *Critical Mass* photograph was transformed from a personal record to a form of mass communication. During that process it became political and social.

In the privacy of the studio I wondered if both actual and virtual public places are capable of being places in which habitual acts - or inhabitations, as Kolb refers to them - could be questioned by the communication of other people's views. Do Instagram photographs have the potential to change ways of seeing or representing a place that runs counter to the established views created by the statues, commercial structures and state edifices? Both Instagram and Parliament Square are public places in which, as Dewey related, people meet, communicate and learn from each other.

The very process of living together educates. It enlarges and enlightens experience; it stimulates and enriches imagination; it creates responsibility for accuracy and vividness of statement and thought.

Dewey (1916)2004:9

The Square and online platforms such as Instagram can be seen as democratic places in which what Habermas defined as a public sphere might be opened up: The public

sphere in its ideal form is 'made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state' (Habermas (1962)1992:176).<sup>79</sup> By coming together as a group to articulate their own questions, the cyclists of *Critical Mass* could be seen to be forming a public sphere. I wonder if the photograph of *Critical Mass* has the same capabilities online.

Habermas argues that the structure of the Internet makes it unsuited for the creation of public spheres: 'the horizontal and informal networking of communications diminishes the achievement of traditional public spheres' (Habermas 2009:53). Habermas blames private mass media consumption for eradicating the sharing of knowledge in public space (in Behrendt 2008:37). However, I believe that it is partly because of their more egalitarian informal nature that online communication can have a political effect.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless Latour worries that the increasing use of technological tools, which drift between human and non-human, between objectivity and subjectivity, will cause a technological distancing that will change social politics and lead to a depoliticizing of politics itself (Latour 1999:215). Photographs such as that of *Critical Mass* (figure 1) shared online, like the action itself, seem to belie this position. The depiction of a political act, participated in by a large group, in the centre of the city suggests that public places still have a political script that can be interacted with or enhanced technologically.

Social media photographs can be part of provoking or keeping political and social debates alive. They can also question the reliance on mass media photographs as a form of reliable reporting. Within the social media platforms themselves individual participants can make other people aware of their use of online platforms.

Throughout this research I have not only used Instagram as a source of raw material for my practice and of visual information about the Square but also as a place in which to situate and expand my studio processes and project them into the public realm. My research sits within an array of artistic practices manifest on Instagram.

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<sup>79</sup> Public sphere is a much more defined term than realm, which I would use as a general term for an area in public sight.

<sup>80</sup> Networks are not entirely egalitarian; they too have structures and hierarchies. See Andrew Anthony's *A restless tour through power* (2017) a review of Niall Ferguson's *The Square and the Tower* (2017).



The platform offers, as it does to all of its users, a place to communicate. Some artists use this possibility solely to promote their work and to network with other artists and gallerists. Others use it as a source of inspiration or a source of raw material; an extreme example of which is artist Richard Prince's appropriation of other people's Instagram photographs as his own work (see pg. 284). These uses remain however within the conformities and norms of the app and the art world. The collective Forensic Architecture use social media images to form an 'architectural image complex' to piece together in-depth analyses of disputed political/military events.<sup>81</sup> Unlike Prince who highlights the vacuity of the commercial art world, their work begins to uncover the subversive political possibilities of social media photographs.

Artist Magdalena Olszanowski describes Instagram as an 'exceptional space' where users can make their own space where no actual space exist for them, this space can then become a space in which 'the personal can be made public, where it becomes collective and visible' (Olszanowski in Holowka 2018:195).<sup>82</sup> It is the chance to create virtual places that can break away from the norms of the app and society that makes Instagram extraordinary. The possibilities offered by these new places are changing the way some artists work. Once brought into existence the new online places interweave between the private studio and the public arena. This might be a place to carry out a sort of institutional critique as seen in the work of artist James Bridle who reveals the military origin of the apps' digital infrastructure (see pg. 178). Whereas artist Cornelia Parker used Instagram to create a place to record and piece together a visual narrative, which then influenced the video work she made as the official election artist for the snap general election in June 2017. As she describes:

Instagram for me seemed to be the natural vehicle and it became my sketchbook... Because I had been working with Instagram and had been using video a lot for that, I decided I wanted to make a time-based piece, to capture a moment in time.

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<sup>81</sup> Forensic Architecture describe the architectural image complex as 'a space time relation between multiple sources... which makes viewing spatial' (Weizman 2017:187) The group are currently appealing for social media films and photographs pertaining to the Grenfell Tower fire, London 2017.

<sup>82</sup> Olszanowski uses the word space in the way that Lefebvre does to connote both a location and the social activity that produces it.

The resulting film *Election Abstract* (2017) was constructed from her Instagram photographs. Her film plays on social media tropes such as cat photography and everyday views but mixes them with behind the scenes photographs of political hustings and press conferences as well as shocking events such as the Grenfell Tower fire. As part of the remit of the role Parker had to remain neutral in party political terms, however the film captures the tension and emotions of this fraught time. Other artists create places which are more overtly political and provocative.

Olszanowski's description is echoed by artist Nemi Epeba who explains the importance of sites such as Instagram in her own practice: 'they are places where I can explore, challenge and deconstruct. For me, they are spaces essential for survival' (Epeba in Tchokokam 2017).<sup>83</sup> Epeba's Instagram feed is a mix of sometimes disturbing films and images she finds and edits. They are collaged and juxtaposed to address a personal responsibility to take an active role in decolonizing society.

I believe in the power of text and images. And that we all have a responsibility in all that we do to think critically about our self and our placement in the world. How to communicate through images? Who is looking and what do they see? How does my own gaze operate? How do I represent blackness? Is it pale, weak, exclusionary, challenging, repressive, open? The focus is always on creating a space that confronts and works against racist and sexist discourses, also within my own self.

Epeba in Tchokokam 2017

Used in this way Instagram goes some way to subvert the gallery system. It affords studio visits for all who care to look. It is egalitarian: everyone has the same tools, the same format, the same place available. It offers the possibility to make a visual public statement.

My research practice sits within these politically engaged arts practices that develop Instagram as an experimental place. Although it uses the radical visual language of

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<sup>83</sup> There is a slippage in the use of the words space and place that occurs in both Olszanowski and Epeba's description of Instagram. Both describe virtual places created by the artists which offer the possibility for social interactions and might transform place into an active social space or public sphere as discussed on pg. 23.

collage and montage, at the moment my practice does not take the form of overt activism such as artists' collective Keep it Complex or artist Wolfgang Tillmans' pro-E.U. calls for action. It is more akin to artist Cindy Sherman's subtle use of the platform.<sup>84</sup> Famous for her staged self-portraits, Sherman posts digitally manipulated selfies on Instagram to throw light on the filters and distortions that Instagram users can deploy to enhance their everyday. Art critic Noah Becker describes the effect of Sherman's posts:

The line between real life and posed events that Instagram affords heightens the confusion as to what is actually happening. That area between real life and the theatre of the selfie is what Sherman is already so adept at presenting, but in the context of an era where Donald Trump has repeatedly criticized women for their physical appearance, her images of distorted female faces take on a much more defiant tone.

Becker 2017

Sherman leaves only cryptic comments on her manipulated photographs leaving the viewers to make their own interpretations. Her photographs, as Sontag might have said, confuse the real. Journalist Stuart Jeffries describes the effect that artist's accounts on Instagram might have on those viewing, relating his views specifically to Tillmans' photographs: 'because we're looking at an artist's Instagram, rather than our friend's, the everyday is transfigured...Tillmans makes us look at the everyday differently' (Jeffries 2018). I think it is not only artist photographs that are capable of transforming the everyday.<sup>85</sup> The photographs that I selected had already begun to do this in relation to the Square. When I began to create a place on Instagram by projecting some of the restaged photographs onto my account they became public, they began a dialogue and opened up a social space. The reactions and conversations that resulted fed into my investigations. Other people's views mattered, and their photographs of their own practices also allowed me to expand my own way of working with these four photographs of the Square.

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<sup>84</sup> Keep it Complex is an artists' collective that provokes conversations about how the political establishment works. They offer virtual and actual resources to encourage people to take part and realize that they have a political voice. Wolfgang Tillmans mixes his trademark photographs of his everyday with overt political campaigning on his Instagram feed.

<sup>85</sup> I am not suggesting that Instagram makes everyone an artist, rather that it affords a glimpse of the world through other people's eyes.

*Everyday, analogue print, 2017*



[Folding](#), digital film, 2017



### 3. Everyday: The Monument



Figure 15 Anon, *Everyday (cropped)*, found Instagram photograph, 2014

This photograph, taken on a rainy day, leaves monuments and edifices on the periphery and overlooked. They are part of Parliament Square's *everyday*, they are normal and might go almost unseen. Guided by the photograph and the platform on which it was found, I consider Lefebvre's and philosopher Michel de Certeau's use of 'the everyday' as a concept to try and understand how urban places are read, lived and navigated. As with a semiotic reading of a photograph, a semiotic reading of a place may not reveal what people feel and how they 'live' a place. In this chapter I reflect on what effect these monuments and places have on individuals and communities. However, context is key - what is one person's everyday is another's extraordinary. Looking at Instagram, I realise that the mixing of contexts and conflation of locations is its *everyday*.

When I picked this photograph from the pile (figure 15) it seemed a particularly everyday photograph. This is a snatched photograph of an urban road junction. It is devoid of people, a passing shot of the Square on a gloomy summer's day. The focus for me was neither Big Ben, not quite in the shot, nor the statue of Winston Churchill hidden under the trees, but the reflections in the grey rain slick streets. It seems to echo Musil's claim that monuments become invisible: the rainy asphalt is of more interest. Monuments are part of Parliament Square's everyday; they are the constant, always present but often unnoticed, unknown or unquestioned. The mundanity of the photograph and my inability to see what it might tell me about the Square led me back to Instagram where the photographs became a form of escape or transport and also a guide to somewhere new.

### *Change of context: London to New York*

Photographs transported and guided me, yellow cabs passed beneath the towering skyline, flashy adverts and well-known sights flowed by. As I looked down at a satellite eye view of Manhattan, I recalled Michel de Certeau's description of the city, from the top of the World Trade Center, as a stage of concrete steel and glass (de Certeau 1988:91) where he saw walkers 'whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text': they write without being able to read it' (ibid 1998:92). De

Certeau argues that people in their everyday life don't read the places they inhabit. As they move through the city their lived experience writes new text. Art historian Rosalyn Deutsche argues that de Certeau 'supports practices that resist the levelling rationalities of established systems by forcing recognition of particularities' (1996:210). De Certeau like Massey sees people and their everyday social practices as part of the process of making places. His proposals also have parallels with but complicate Lefebvre's lived *connaissance* and the state-imposed *savoir*. Urban art researcher Cecile Sachs Olsen argues that like Lefebvre, de Certeau doesn't describe a binary opposition between the establishment and street but a problematization of the city, a provocation to think politically about place.

The «space-talk» of de Certeau should hence not be seen as providing us with answers to what is the «true» or correct meaning of or way to deal with urban space, but rather it should be seen as a way of questioning space.<sup>86</sup>

Sachs Olsen 2013

Following de Certeau there is no correct way of reading a place, it is always changing and therefore must be lived but also questioned. With this in mind I resumed my travels in New York. I had travelled to see a different monument. It has been placed in a strange context that I hoped would aid my questioning of how monuments are seen and understood. The over life-size statue of Christopher Columbus stands on a 21-meters-high column on a traffic island at the corner of Central Park. It is 120 years old, part of the furniture for New Yorkers, yet not widely known outside the U.S.A. I was drawn to visit not because of the statue itself but to see how artist Tatzu Nishi had reimagined the monument with his work *Discovering Columbus* (2012).

As I moved through New York I pondered what the word monument means. It is often confused or too quickly interchanged with memorial. Art critic Arthur Danto makes a clear distinction between the two words and their meaning:

We erect monuments so that we shall always remember, and build memorials so that we shall never forget. Thus we have the Washington Monument but the Lincoln Memorial. Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends... Monuments make heroes and triumphs, victories and

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<sup>86</sup> Sachs Olsen like de Certeau and Lefebvre uses space as an all-encompassing term including actual places and abstract social space.



conquests perpetually present and part of life. The memorial is a special precinct... where we honor the dead. With monuments we honor ourselves.

Danto 1985:152

In Danto's terms a memorial is a commemoration of death, a public site for individual mourning and ritualised collective commemoration. A figurative monument is a celebration of a life, an elevation of one as an example to all.<sup>87</sup> Danto came to his view while writing about Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982), its position and meaning in Washington D.C.'s monumental landscape. Danto's definitions offer a position from which the complexities that might disrupt his definitions might be defined. Griswold describes monuments as a 'species of pedagogy' (Griswold 1992:80); they could then be described as having their own social pedagogic language, the complexity of which increases as they are seen in an ever-widening context. An echo of Danto's 1985 definitions is represented physically and philosophically in New York in 2012.<sup>88</sup> The Columbus monument marks the beginning of the 'New World', while the *September 11th Memorial* (2011), designed by Michael Arad commemorates an ending not only of the many killed but possibly the end of innocence: the first foreign attack on a mainland American city. There is though a subtext that could unsettle Danto's classifications.

Bauman fears that monuments and memorials often aid forgetting not merely by becoming invisible as Musil described but that they are actively used to aid forgetting. Monuments should in his view constantly be setting alarm bells ringing about what people are capable of doing to each other (2010). By seeking to find out who was involved in the erection of any one monument it can become clear that monuments like photographs are not reliable holders of public memory. Control of historical narratives through the commemoration of certain figures or events attempts to unify individual values to be in line with particular state narrative. This can be seen as part of the issue of how people navigate and read places raised by Lefebvre and de Certeau. However, sometimes multiple conflicting narratives can

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<sup>87</sup> There are crossover points in these definitions; there are monuments that memorialize for example the *Lincoln Memorial* in Washington D.C.

<sup>88</sup> 2012 was the time of my visit to New York.

exist in one site; an example of that is *Grand Army Plaza* in Brooklyn.<sup>89</sup> The assortment of memorials in the plaza makes apparent the tides of political and commercial influences that have held sway in that public place. Both monuments and memorials can trigger collective memories but they can also allow for collective forgetting or acceptance.

I looked at my phone and searched for more photographs and information about the statue of Columbus. Looking at the photographs and information I found there, I tried to read the monument. This statue of Columbus is a celebration not only of an iconic historical figure but also of his significance to the place in which the monument stands. It symbolises the 'discovery' of the Americas in 1492.<sup>90</sup> The Internet where I found this information can be seen to offer an alternative memory system, an external collective memory repository, where meanings can be communally formed and retrieved. This may be true of Wikipedia; yet the Google search engine has, like the monuments and memorials, has been designed to persuade. It is not neutral, it does not provide the whole picture.

As I approached Columbus I began to question more closely the set of connections between the monument and its subject, between the event, person or ideal depicted and the body of people who commissioned it. Why certain materials were used and why particular artists were commissioned? All of these elements together seem to create an initial pattern, yet the resulting network of associations is made more intricate by the context of the object in time and place in a particular location. Interacting with these factors are the individual understandings constructed by the people who see and experience the monument. Those who pass by every day, occasionally bother to look or even think about it make very different associations than those who travel thousands of miles to see, touch, be touched and remember. The protesters who gather around the high stone column have a very different relationship with the statue and its history to those who parade by and salute.

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<sup>89</sup> The Plaza was built on the site of a battle of the American Revolution (in 1776) and came to memorialize the Civil War, but has other monumental narratives running through it. It hosts statues of Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy, various fountains, along with two memorials to notable local businessmen.

<sup>90</sup> I am aware of the contentious nature of the word *discovery* in this context.

## *Context: The monument made strange*

I arrived at Columbus Circle in midtown New York and climbed up the scaffolding steps that had been constructed around the column. My perspective was already shifting, I could see the city as never before. Five stories up, at the top of the steps, I entered what felt like a contemporary swanky Manhattan apartment where the weather-worn figure of Christopher Columbus stood in a new context (figure 16). The statue had been staged in a new context, surrounded by the accoutrements of everyday modern life: a flat screen TV, plush sofas and chrome coffee tables. The scale was disconcerting, domestic furniture seemed to shrink. The contrast made the statue strange, defamiliarizing the viewer and unsettling the meaning of the monument as well as the surrounding objects. Nishi had even designed the pink and gold wallpaper that surrounded Columbus, basing his hand-drawn patterns on Hollywood films, Disney characters, Coca-Cola bottles, Cowboys and Indians - American iconography remembered from his childhood in Japan.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> 'Making strange' or defamiliarization has been explored by psychologists such as Sigmund Freud and writers such as Leo Tolstoy. Tolstoy, for example described everyday objects without naming them as if he had never seen them before (see Schklovsky *Art as Technique* (1917) 2017:10). Guy Debord's technique of *detournement* could also be seen as an example of making people aware of the strangeness of everyday life. Writer Georges Perec described the process of making familiar places become strange through meticulous observation in *Species of Spaces* ((1974) 2008:53).



Figure 16 Tatzu Nishi, Instagram photograph, *Discovering Columbus*, 2012

Columbus had not only been relocated to a semi-private domestic setting, he had been placed face to face with contemporary America, confronted with a kitsch interpretation of the symbols of America's global cultural dominance. The pink wallpaper indicated that this is the culture that, from a Japanese perspective, represents America now rather than the stone statue that may have represented its past. Nishi's new context built around Columbus skews his position from the hero of the 'new world' towards trivial yet ostentatious ornament, or even colonising oppressor. Nishi disturbed the possibility of rational everyday semiotic reading of the statue. The normal *indexical* surroundings, the mirrored glass of corporate office blocks that usually circle the statue had been replaced by artifice. The statue remained *iconic* in Peirce's terms because it shares a resemblance with other depictions of Columbus. The known connection or *symbolic* reading is what Nishi disrupted by changing Columbus's cultural context (which Holland described as being important in the reading of photographs see pg. 52). As I looked around the room I pondered what had taken place: a straight semiotic reading that might echo Danto's view of monuments had been unsettled by Nishi's recontextualisation. The

celebration of Columbus as the founder of America had been deliberately and critically upset, hidden from public view, boxed into a private sphere.

I searched for more information to change my own contextual view of the statue. This monument to Columbus was erected in 1892 as part of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the Americas and only 27 years after the end of the Civil War. It was paid for by an American Italian language newspaper which, when searching for a suitable sculptor, made it clear that only those of Italian birth need apply. The granite column supports the figure by Gaetano Russo, carved from Italian Carrara marble. Bronze reliefs depicting each of Columbus's ships are fixed to the column. At the base there is an inscription:

To Christopher Columbus, the Italian residents of America.  
Scoffed at before; during the voyage menaced; after it chained;  
as generous as oppressed, to the world he gave a world. Joy and glory never  
uttered a more thrilling call than that which resounded from the conquered  
ocean in sight of the first, American island, land! Land!  
On the xii of October MDCCCXCII the fourth centenary of the discovery of  
America in imperishable remembrance.

Columbus Circle monument inscription.

The inscription implies the pressure felt by this burgeoning community to be part of a wider ethos of America and what better way to do that than claim the discoverer – Columbus as one of their own.<sup>92</sup> The monument is a public embodiment of the Italian community's pride, pinning their claim to their new home with expensive solid stone. Erecting the monument linked the Italian community of 1890s New York with the discovery of the continent, 400 years before, but also to the pioneering American dream, which offered hope of financial success, and opportunity to all who arrived on those shores.

The 1890s was a time when Columbus as a historical figure was being instrumentalized as a unifying national figure. In 1892, the same year that this statue was unveiled, President Benjamin Harrison made it law that Columbus Day was to be celebrated across the United States as a national holiday to instil a sense of

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<sup>92</sup> The period from 1890 to 1917 saw large-scale immigration from Italy to the United States, after the reunification of Italy and the economic hardship that followed, particularly in the south. Most Italians settled in the large cities of the North East: New York, Boston, and Philadelphia.

nationhood.<sup>93</sup> This was at a time when Sioux Indians were still subject to violent persecution and Italian Americans amongst other immigrant groups were often subject to discrimination and exploitation.<sup>94</sup> As political scientist Howard Zinn argues in his critical re-writing of American history, the *People's History of America* (1980), the history of America is very much a history of injustice. Zinn describes how Columbus has been deliberately positioned as a hero so as to support a particular 'technical' telling of American history where the genocide of the Arawak Indians could be made acceptable in the name of progress.

To emphasize the heroism of Columbus and his successors as navigators and discoverers, and to de-emphasize their genocide, is not a technical necessity but an ideological choice. It serves - unwittingly - to justify what was done... The easy acceptance of atrocities as a deplorable but necessary price to pay for progress is still with us ... one reason why those atrocities are still with us is that we have learnt to bury them in a mass of other facts.

Zinn (1980)2013:9

I began to see what the monument could symbolise about the complexity of American society and identity. Cultural critic Edward Said describes America 'as an immigrant-settler society superimposed on the ruins of considerable native presence, American identity is too varied to be a unitary and homogenous thing' (Said 1994:xxix). America existed and was populated before Columbus and subsequent colonisers arrived. As new groups of immigrants landed, they in turn sought cultural space and dominance. The monument of Columbus could be seen as a remnant of a still fragmented national cultural identity. The political voice of the Native American community has gradually grown louder, bringing new post-colonial interpretations of such monuments to wider public attention. An awareness of the extreme abuses wrought by colonialization and current ongoing racial inequality is putting statues such as this one under scrutiny.

My visit to see Nishi's recontextualisation of Columbus took place in 2012; since

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<sup>93</sup> Columbus Day is still celebrated in some states on the 12<sup>th</sup> October, the date that Columbus first saw land (what is now the Bahamas).

<sup>94</sup> Civil War Generals William T. Sherman and Philip Sheridan used the same techniques they had deployed in the defeat of the Confederacy – the destruction of food sources to subdue the native Indian population. Between 1865 and 1890 they instigated the wholesale slaughter of herds of American buffalo, the natural resource of the indigenous population. This action anchored the Plains Indians to the reservations and made them dependant on government handouts.

then, the polarisation of opinion about statues of Columbus has increased. In the era of President Donald Trump who is attempting to demonise all immigrants the American dream has been subjugated to a singular white male narrative 'Make America Great Again', a backlash to Trump's predecessor Barack Obama's multicultural 'Hope'.



Figure 17 Anon, *Columbus Defaced*, Instagram photograph, Boston, 2016

The cultural meanings of this monument to Columbus are still changing. In 2015 across the United States, statues of Columbus, including those in Boston (figure 17), Detroit and New York, were targeted by 'Black Lives Matter' activists.<sup>95</sup> They used the iconic strength and public situation of the monuments to promote their own political cause but also further destabilised, through iconoclasm, the figure of Columbus as a suitable anchor for American ideals.

Nishi had done his own defacing but of another order; the monument had been

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<sup>95</sup> Statues of Columbus have long been targeted in South America. In 2004 a statue of Columbus in Caracas, Venezuela, was publicly hauled down on Columbus Day, and the public holiday renamed as 'Day of Indigenous Resistance' (See Nieto 2004).

enclosed and removed for a time from its public position. Columbus's temporary upmarket apartment had been paid for by the government-supported Public Art Fund and also by corporate sponsors Bloomberg. The money enabled the artist to refocus public attention onto what was just another small part of the complex political and social landscape of the city. Its original purpose - often forgotten, ignored or unknown in the daily hubbub - had been re-examined by taking it out of its everyday context. Nishi's intervention proffered an invitation to discover Columbus anew. His contemporary home created the possibility of a new pedagogy which challenged and questioned this specific monument and perhaps monuments in general.

As I sat looking at Columbus's feet, surrounded by Nishi's comfortable living room sofas, I read a few articles written in response to the work. Cultural critic James Panero, writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, describes his memory of this place as a scary traffic crossing at the edge of his known universe. He compares himself to Columbus and the fears of flat earthers. In his view the statue has been hijacked and removed from public view, Nishi has made the 'dignified statue a spectacle, with hijinks'. He denounces his installation as a cruel joke: 'Outmoded in both form and content, Columbus Circle was ripe for ridicule' (Panero 2012). I flicked to art critic Roberta Smith's review in *The New York Times*. She is more favourably inclined to the political messages she sees in Nishi's work and remarks on the privileged private space that the previously public Columbus now occupies (Smith 2012). As I read on through other reviews and comments, different discourses emerged from the various reactions to *Discovering Columbus*: the relationship between the form a monument takes and its content or meaning. Do monuments form a consensus of opinion or provoke contention? Are these opinions and understandings, formed in reaction to a monument, held in private, or do they have a public effect? Underlying this discourse are issues of politics, pedagogy, aesthetics and the control of knowledge.



## *Communication: Form and content*

Panero describes only two forms to monuments: 'traditionalist', by which I assume he means figurative; and 'radical', presumably abstract. He equates the age of the statue with dignity, its figurative form with traditional values. Abstract monuments are in his view a relatively new and not entirely welcome addition to the urban landscape.<sup>96</sup> Panero's views bring to the fore the link between the form a monument takes and what meanings might be made by those looking at them. In her seminal text *Sculpture in an Expanded Field* (1979) art critic Rosalind Krauss traced the link between figurative sculpture and monuments which she described as having a 'symbolical tongue':

The logic of sculpture, it would seem, is inseparable from the logic of the monument. By virtue of this logic a sculpture is a commemorative representation. It sits in a particular place and speaks in a symbolical tongue about the meaning or use of that place.

Krauss 1979:33

Krauss's description implies that figurative monuments can be symbolically read and impart meaning about the place in which they are seen. She goes on to describe how the possibility of symbolic communication has gradually given way or expanded. In so doing, monuments have become removed from symbolic communication and have also become nomadic, less rooted in the meanings of a particular place. She argues that through abstraction modernist monuments seem to only represent themselves.

One crosses the threshold of the logic of the monument, entering the space of what could be called its negative condition - a kind of sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place. Which is to say one enters modernism, since it is the modernist period of sculptural production that operates in relation to this loss of site, producing the monument as abstraction, the monument as pure marker or base, functionally placeless and largely self-referential.

Krauss 1979:34

Panero's views may elide with Krauss's description of the move to abstraction and with what that means for the way sculpture or monuments might be understood,

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<sup>96</sup> Abstract forms have been part of the monumental vernacular for a very long time, for example obelisks, pyramids and standing stones.

but from very different standpoints. Panero's opinions echo the criticism that the choice of Maya Lin's stark *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982), Washington, provoked. Not only did Lin receive personal racist and sexist abuse, her design as professor of international politics Jenny Edkins explains, was seen 'as an example of elitist, modernist trend to minimalism in art' (Edkins 2003:77). Cultural critic Marita Sturken describes the initial reception that the planned monument received: the view was that modernist abstraction was an elitist inaccessible language, 'an abstract form that the public would find difficult to interpret' (Sturken 1997:49). Artist Frederick Hart who sculpted the figurative monument that was to accompany Lin's design stated at the time that 'figurative art was the only artistic style that was truly public' (in Sturken 1997:49).<sup>97</sup> The assumption seemed to be that *symbolic* meanings could not be made without an *iconic* reference point.

Yet the clear-cut abstract lines of Lutyen's *Cenotaph* (1919), 'an embodiment of nothingness' (Winter 2003:105) according to historian Jay Winter, seems to cut through this line of argument. As Winter argues, this 'abstract architectural form had somehow managed to transform a victory parade, a moment of high politics into a time when millions could contemplate the timeless, the eternal, the inexorable reality of death in war... it did so without the slightest mark of Christian or contemporary patriotic or romantic symbolism' (ibid 2003:105).<sup>98</sup> Arguably monuments do not need symbolism in order to impart meaning. Abstract monuments can be experienced differently to figurative; possibly it is the absence of symbolism that allows for more personal interpretations as the similarities in the political and public reaction to the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* and the *Cenotaph* reveal.

Both monuments go beyond the political, and beyond conventional architectural forms, to express existential truths too often obscured in the rhetorical and aesthetic fog of war and its aftermath.

Winter 2003:107

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<sup>97</sup> Frederick Hart's *The Three Soldiers* (1984) is a depiction of three soldiers of different racial backgrounds who stand at ease, looking at the names on the abstract monument. It was commissioned to appease conservative distaste towards Lin's visually severe 'scar in American soil' (Mitchell 1992:35). Lin felt the figurative sculpture compromised her design.

<sup>98</sup> The *Cenotaph* was planned initially only as a temporary monument on the route of the victory parade held in London in 1919.

Both monuments proved to be popular with veterans and those mourning loved ones. The *Cenotaph*, initially meant to be temporary, became a touchstone for the Nation after World War One, often adorned with personal keepsakes and small wreaths. As personal memories faded, it became the main national war memorial. The *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* is not 'siteless' in Krauss's terms; it has become a place for individuals to mourn and remember but its anti-monumental form and position on the *National Mall* in Washington makes a political comment.<sup>99</sup> Sturken goes on to clarify that the equation of Lin's work with the abstract modern canon of sculptures, such as Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981), is misguided as the names engraved on the monument move it away from pure abstract minimalism. As Danto describes, Lin's monument is in some way figurative as it reflects those who look at it but it also unsettles the reality that surrounds it.

The gently flexed pair of walls, polished black, is like the back of Plato's cave, a reflecting surface, a dark mirror. The reflections in it of the servicemen, the flag, the monument and the memorial are appearances of appearances. It also reflects us, the visitors, as it does the trees. Still, the living are in it only as appearances. Only the names of the dead, on the surface, are real.

Danto 1985:153

Perhaps it is the absence of figurative representation that leaves room for personal involvement that has made these abstract monuments so popular.

In the 1990s, in a suburb of Hamburg, I remember seeing *Mahnmal gegen Faschismus* (1986), conceived by artist Jochen Gerz (figure 18).<sup>100</sup> He constructed a lead-covered pillar. Attached was a metal stylus with which he invited all to sign their names on the soft lead to commit themselves to remaining vigilant in the face of fascism. As the pillar became covered in names, it was gradually sunk into the ground, burying the names, comments and sometimes Neo-Nazi rants. As historian James E. Young describes, its abstract form and socially produced content was born of a fear that traditional memorials 'seal memory off from awareness' (Young 1993:28). Artists like Gerz believe that public art should be deployed to 'challenge

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<sup>99</sup> The Mall is the site of the Washington Monument, The Lincoln Memorial, and is flanked by museums and galleries and state legislature buildings such as the Capitol, initially planned in 1791 by Peter Charles L'Enfant.

<sup>100</sup> *Mahnmal gegen Faschismus* - Monument against Fascism.

and denaturalize the viewers' assumptions' (ibid 1993:28).<sup>101</sup> Gerz designed his abstract monument to disappear which left the absence as a reminder to people that it is up to them to 'rise up against injustice' (Young 1992:55). In the end this monument had no form only content.



Figure 18 Jochen Gerz, [\*Mahnmal gegen Faschismus\*](#), Hamburg-Harburg, Germany, 1986

Gerz's counter-monument questions the traditional form of a figure, usually a man on a stone plinth or column.<sup>102</sup> In contrast to the championing of a particular human and their deeds or values, cast in bronze or carved in stone, raised prominently in a central square to imbue it with meaning, Gerz chose to place his empty leaden pillar in the concourse of a shopping centre. Highlighting not the heroes who fought against fascism but the banality of everyday evil, which can be countered with everyday civil courage.

Gerz's monument asked for a performative democratic involvement in the formation of its content. Despite its eventual invisibility, the monument can in Griswold's

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<sup>101</sup> Denaturalize could be interpreted in the same way as making strange, an unsettling of everyday beliefs.

<sup>102</sup> This culturally specific depiction of figurative monuments has its origins in the promotion of the ideal human form in Greek and then Roman statuary. I am aware that this is a western Eurocentric viewpoint and that public statuary has other roots in religious iconography in the Americas, Africa and Asia.

description be understood as ‘a species of pedagogy. It therefore seeks to instruct posterity about the past and, in so doing, necessarily reaches a decision about what is worth recovering.’ (Griswold 1992:80). However, the species of pedagogy that relates to *Mahnmal gegen Faschismus* might best be described in reference to educator and philosopher Paulo Freire’s radical transformative pedagogy: based not on transmission of facts but production of meaning.<sup>103</sup> The species of pedagogy that Columbus (without Nishi’s intervention) propounds is quite different, therefore the content or meanings to be drawn from looking at the statue of *Columbus* seem more didactic. The content is derived from an interpretation of the ‘truly public’, easy to interpret figurative form and symbolic subject: Columbus. The figure embodies strands of different narratives. One is of a community seeking to be part of a wider, state-approved account of history by claiming its founding father as their own. The wider context could clearly be seen as the government of the time teaching its people what it is to be an American citizen, united by a national history. This attempt to form a national identity is seen by Edward Said and many others as impossible.

What is being taught or learnt from these monuments alters with the passing of time. Sometimes the person depicted is no longer recognized; what they stood for has been forgotten. Or in the case of Columbus traditional understandings of his actions as a heroic, brave discoverer of the new world are now seen by post-colonial historians as not merely ‘questionable’, as Panero puts it, but pernicious (see Zinn (1980)2013:9). His monument represents entwined narratives: the continued contemporary ignorance of the sophisticated nature of the communities that were enslaved and destroyed, but also the freedom offered by America to those fleeing oppression and poverty in Europe and elsewhere. Current social norms cast a different light on the values that Russo’s statue of Columbus sought to portray. The original commissioners of the monument, the New York Italian community, now have differing views. Some, like John Cavelli secretary of the National Italian

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<sup>103</sup> Freire described a ‘critical pedagogy’ that questioned hierarchical teaching methods, favouring instead like Dewey an approach of active communal learning: ‘For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other’ (Freire (1970) 2006:72).

American Foundation see Nishi's intervention as 'a wonderful and innovative way of bringing people closer to Columbus'. Others, such as Frank Vernuccio, a board member of the Enrico Fermi Cultural Committee, see it as 'silly revisionism' (in Pogrebin 2012).<sup>104</sup> The content, even when filtered through Nishi's installation, is seen by this community to continue to venerate or to revise, to question or reinforce Columbus's heroic pose. Outside this community the content also divides opinion. The Native American demonstrators who surrounded the statue on Columbus Day held placards denouncing him: 'Columbus Murdered My Relatives'. They were seeing Nishi's work as only augmenting the common, mainstream misperception of Columbus as a hero (ICMN 2012). Those who celebrate Columbus and those who despise him congregate at the monument; it provides a place to make their opinions known in public.

Looking out from Nishi's apartment I speculated on the people who are not part of this system of understanding at all. The ambivalent who sit at home in front of the TV in their own apartments, maybe not that far from Columbus Circle. They may feel neither a consensus nor a need to rebel or take part, they remain unmoved by Nishi's arguably elitist art world alterations. Their estrangement from the meanings imposed by monuments could arguably be seen as a wider social trait. As Baudrillard remarked on Jorge Luis Borges' fable, the historical landscape that survives is almost arbitrary and doesn't bear any direct relation to lived history (Baudrillard (1981)1994:1).<sup>105</sup> The chasm that opened up between the stone representation - the *sign* of Columbus - and what he actually did - the *signifier* - is only partially addressed by Nishi. Making a pastiche of an apartment has unsettled the perceptions of the monument's solidity and meanings, but perhaps the juxtaposition of Columbus with post-modern arbitrary 'spectacular culture' only trivialises the didactic use to which he has been utilised.

Nishi's rediscovery of Columbus is a positively genteel method of critique compared

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<sup>104</sup> A Bronx non-profit organization dedicated to Italian-American heritage.

<sup>105</sup> Borges' *On Exactitude in Science* (1946) is a one-paragraph short story addressing the relationship between the territory and the map. Baudrillard drew upon it to discuss how the sign has subsumed the signifier.

to the fate of other monuments to Columbus (see footnote 76) which brought to the fore existing diverse reactions and shed light on the understanding of monuments and the public places around them. Like the photograph, the monument is neither safe nor neutral. The Janus monument looks forward and back in time: it can offer a historical consensus, a promise of the security of shared values and common goals for the future, but at the same time it can also provoke contentious feelings of difference and misunderstanding and histories untold.

### *Community: Consensus or contention*

Lefebvre's view that monuments effect a consensus is countered by literary critic Michael North's view; he writes that 'monuments achieve a public resonance by taking up topics too important for agreement' (North 1992:26). Columbus had been a highly controversial figure elsewhere in the Americas, whereas the monument in New York had been 'hiding in plain site', according to Nicholas Baume who heads the Public Art Fund which commissioned Nishi (Baume in Pogrebin 2012). The artist reignited the debate by addressing not only who and what is represented but how and why, thereby reminding people of the complexities of representation of (geo)political power in public place.

Monuments give form to memory. They allow people to reflect upon their history, values and experience. Unfortunately, we no longer share a consensus on what that history, those values and that experience should be. We barely agree on what we should remember rather than forget, and we share no common understanding of what form our memories should take.

Panero 2012

For Panero consensus seems to be a necessary and good thing in both form and content. North's 'resonance' of contention is put aside in favour of the need for clear values and a collective memory. For me, the questions raised by Nishi - who gives form to memories and histories, the way they are represented and to what ends - can be taken back to Parliament Square where not just one statue resides but eleven.<sup>106</sup> Consensus on any or all of the eleven would be difficult to find. Consensus, in Lefebvre's view, is where people conform to state narratives and coalesce; in

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<sup>106</sup> At the time of writing there were eleven. A new statue of Millicent Fawcett is due to be unveiled in 2018 (see pg. 260)

Panero's opinion, people come together through a self-organising principal, a view to which Griswold also adheres. For Griswold consensus occurs when citizens and state are a unified whole; he arrived at this idea (similarly to Danto) when describing the collective making of the *National Mall* in Washington. He does not deny the involvement of particular designers but describes the Mall's slow evolution in these terms: 'It is as though an invisible hand has guided the many changes effected on the Mall, a communal logic imperceptible as a whole at any given time' (Griswold 1992:83). Neither he nor Panero acknowledges the hidden nature of state power that Lefebvre argues is manifested in 'monumental space'. Yet Griswold recognizes that there is a two-way relationship between people and monuments: they shape them but are also shaped by them (ibid 1992:81). Panero bypasses the reasons for this lack of consensus, ignoring the fracturing of society and individualisation of culture. Counter to Panero, Mitchell argues that autocratic monuments that try and impose a certain point of view on the public often sink into unthinking obscurity; they become the wallpaper or meaningless ornaments to our everyday (Mitchell 1992:44). Which raises the question as to whether consensus is formed by remembering or forgetting. Those monuments which inspire debate exemplify what a monument could be, namely provocative.





Figure 19 Michael Arad, *September 11th Memorial*, found Instagram photograph, New York, USA, 2011



Figure 20 Horst Hoheisel, *Aschrottbrunnen*, found Instagram photograph, Kassel, Germany, 1987

Near Columbus Circle is Arad's *September 11th Memorial* (2011). It features water cascading down into the voids left by the excavated footprints of the twin towers. Each void is surrounded by the names of those who died in the attacks (figure 19). It borrows from the empathetic response to Lin's use of individual names but also has a visual echo of Horst Hoheisel's counter monument in Kassel, Germany. The reconstructed *Aschrottbrunnen* (1987) is a monument in reverse (figure 20).<sup>107</sup> It recreates the original twelve-meter high stone pinnacle structure of the fountain as a negative mirror image sunk into the ground. It marks the fact that the fountain was destroyed in April 1939 as being a 'gift from a Jew'. An uncomfortable hidden memory or wound is opened by Hoheisel's design. The water disappears downwards into a negative replica of the original form of the fountain. In Kassel the discussion and contention became part of the monument. The monument in reverse became a 'Mahnmal' a reminder of the dangers of forgetting. The German word 'Mahnen'-

<sup>107</sup> *Aschrottbrunnen* - Aschrott fountain

warning adds another meaning to the English word monument: *monere* in Latin means to remind but also to warn.<sup>108</sup> A warning monument or ‘Mahnmal’ rings alarm bells, as Bauman might have put it.

Historical events can be problematized and made tangible and raw by monuments or counter-monuments such as the *Aschrottbrunnen* and Gerz’s *Mahnmal gegen Faschismus* (figure 18). They can provide a public warning not to repeat the mistakes of the past, but also involve people physically and emotionally in the complexity of history and its changing representation in public. Previous to its reconstruction, the fountain was widely believed to have been destroyed by allied bombing. Possibly giving an indication of people’s willingness to forget an association with past atrocities through the creation and belief in a false narrative.

Arad’s *September 11th Memorial* is not a counter-monument although it borrows its language; it was not designed to excite debate but as what could be called a ‘therapeutic monument’ (Savage 2006:103), built to soothe and heal.<sup>109 110 111</sup> The *September 11th Memorial* does though bring me back to symbolism. The twin towers are gone, the photographs of their destruction are etched in the collective consciousness. When these monumental towers still stood, they were meant to represent the wealth of capitalism: the centre of world trade. They were the place from which de Certeau looked down on the thronged streets trying to discern

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<sup>108</sup> Mahnen can also be translated as to urge or to exhort.

<sup>109</sup> Arad’s design was named *Reflecting Absence*. A title that described not only the physical aspects of the design - the voids which have pools at their base - but possibly also the psychological and social effect he hoped the memorial would have.

<sup>110</sup> Professor of art and architecture Kirk Savage uses this term when writing about the 9/11 site before a decision had been made about the design of the memorial. Savage points out that the commemoration of victims could be equated to a public admission to a state of powerlessness, one that only began to be marked publicly since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He cites the *Cenotaph* as an early example but singles out Lin’s *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* as the first truly therapeutic monument (Savage 2006:106). The reality of this term is born out by Vietnam veteran Robert Musgrove’s comments about the memorial ‘this will save lives’ in Ken Burns’ documentary *The Weight of Memory: The Vietnam War* (2017). Savage defines the therapeutic monument thus: ‘The monument is not a fixed moral text or image but rather a flexible, multifaceted space in which to evoke feelings and create memorable experiences’ (ibid 2006:109) – an experience which often focuses on the list of names in the case of Lin and Arad’s designs.

<sup>111</sup> The *September 11th Memorial* is part of a wider complex which includes a museum recounting the details of the attack. Tears are expected as the narrative of the day unfolds, tissue dispensers are placed in each room. The museum glosses over any nuanced take on the conflicts that led up to the 9/11 attacks, giving only a sparse account of the political, religious and commercial complexity of what is very much an ongoing conflict. The approach the museum is taking reinforces my impression of the purpose memorial as a place of cathartic healing rather than questioning.

patterns of existence. For others, however, they were a symbol of western oppression and the exploitation of 'Islamic' states. Either way the towers could be seen as a form of idolatry, which according to Mitchell forms a symmetry with iconoclasm. The deliberate destruction of the idol creates the secondary images of destruction, and eventually the counter image of the voids (2005:22).

The role of photography re-emerges here as a method of capturing and understanding events that shape places. Photographs helped create the towers' iconographic status; they captured them at the moment of their destruction. The voids are now a place of ritual commemoration where people seek out a known name, place a flower and take a photograph (figure 19). It is also a site of photographic pilgrimage where people go to witness that commemoration and to be seen to stand at the site of such an event. The destruction of a monumental building or a monument sets up new symbolic photographic possibilities. Those photographs in turn draw different communities of interest around them, as do monuments.

Photographs are capable of interrogating the hierarchies of the cityscape. Photographer Berenice Abbott's project *Changing New York* (1939), along with a political commentary written by Elisabeth MacCausland hoped to 'provide a political civic education to a generation of Americans lacking historical perspective and uninformed about how their cities were being transformed' (Weissman 2011:122). The first photograph in the collection depicted a statue of Colonel Abraham de Peyster (figure 21).<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> The statue to the former Mayor of New York (1655-1699) was erected by his three times great grandson in 1895.

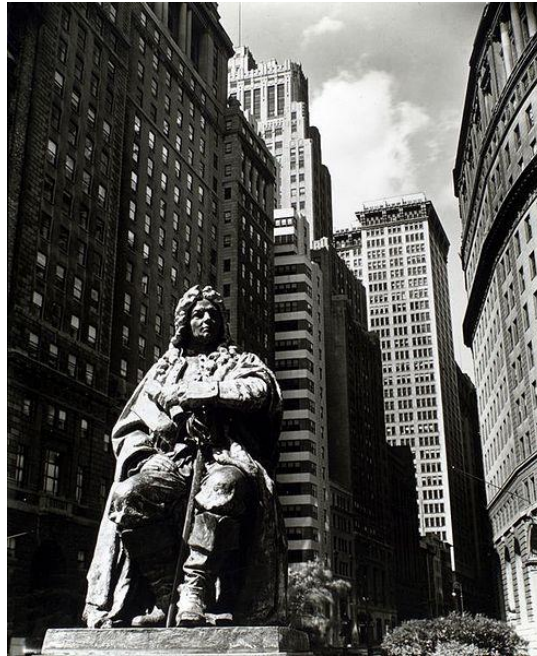


Figure 21 Berenice Abbott, *Colonel Abraham de Peyster*, New York, 1939

Art Historian Terri Weissman interprets the photograph as a critique of both the solidity of the statue and the buildings: ‘the two enormous structures, one cast in shadow, by the other, awkwardly tilt forward and in so doing subvert de Peyster’s apparent timeless durability’ (ibid 2011:121). Abbott’s photograph of de Peyster brings together the possible pedagogic purposes of monuments and photographs. Abbott’s somewhat didactic purpose, ally the photograph with the monument as a species of pedagogy. However the series of questions that Abbott set out to guide her project, ones that I want to keep in mind throughout my own investigations, open up the scope of her intentions:

What is the city?

How shall it live for the eyes of the future?

What tangible and visible signs of the city’s life shall be seized upon and transmuted into the permanent form of a photograph?

How shall the two dimensional print in black and white suggest the flux of activity of the metropolis, the interaction of human beings and solid architectural constructions, all impinging on each other in time?

In Weissman 2011:123

Abbott sought to create a portrait of New York. Through photography she hoped to make people aware of how the structure and ownership of the city influenced their everyday lives. The spatial dialogue surrounding the monuments and their capacity to build a consensus can be questioned by photography. Private individual,

sometimes contentious, understandings in reaction to monuments can become visible through photographs, ones which might exist alongside a collective identity.

### *Context: Private or public views*

By enclosing the monument to Columbus, enveloping it in a new aesthetic layer, it could be argued that Nishi played with people's perceptions of private and public place. In so doing, he questioned the values individuals hold in private and those that are enacted as part of a community. Panero, for example, uses his personal memories of a loved landmark to bolster his political standpoint. His private reactions are brought forth to understand the public object. Historian David Lowenthal describes this public private relationship: 'We treasure connections with a wider past. Gratified that our memories are our own, we also seek to link our personal past with collective memory and public history' (Lowenthal 1985:197). Monuments such as *The Cenotaph*, *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, and *The July the 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial* in Hyde Park can offer a place for the expression of private grief in public. They could be seen to mark the boundaries between individual experiences and established versions of historical events. Monuments such as these can be the place where personal memories and values become collective.

In *The Texture of Memory* (1993), Young aims to break down the consensus or 'collective memory' of a memorial preferring instead the term 'collected memory' which he describes as 'the many discrete memories that are gathered into common memorial spaces and assigned common meaning' (Young 1993:xi).<sup>113</sup> The consensus around an event might be 'collected', formed from the ground up rather than being prescribed or collective. Young cites the example of *The Memorial Route of Jewish Martyrdom and Struggle* (1988) in Warsaw. Exceptionally, as Young describes, it was the state that took on the role of collecting and recollecting 'Polish Jewry' to connect the disparate monuments in the city marking particular events that they considered could not be read as a legible whole. The monuments were linked by a series of stone tablets engraved in Polish and Hebrew recounting personal narratives of

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<sup>113</sup> Young uses the word space to generalise memorial locations.

Jewish and Polish resistance and suffering in the Ghetto (Young 1993:203).<sup>114</sup> Young describes the duality between the way the symbolism of such monuments are read and understood by Jewish visitors and Polish locals. As with the *reading* of photographs, the personal and cultural context is key to the meanings that are made.

Despite the commissioning of counter monuments and representations of collected memories the normative path of memorialization and monumentalization moves from the transient - flowers, photographs and paper notes - to stone and bronze. *The September 11th Memorial* in New York replaced the makeshift individual shrines and temporary monuments that dotted the city streets in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The ground on which the memorial site is situated is partially privately owned; although the place might be open and public, the land is not. Smith in her review of Nishi's work wonders if 'in a time when public space is increasingly controlled and privatized, one way or another, the idea that public monuments could be incorporated into private spaces available only to the rich and powerful doesn't seem so far-fetched' (Smith 2012).<sup>115</sup> It is this other definition of private - privately owned - that artist Vito Acconci describes as part of what defines the nature of public places. 'The establishment of certain space in the city as 'public' is a reminder, a warning that the rest of the city isn't public. Public space is a place in the middle of the city but isolated from the city... a space in the light away from the plots and conspiracies of dark smoky rooms' (Acconci 1992:159). Privatization of monuments might deprive them of their purpose of control of Lefebvre's 'lived obedience'; privatised public places would also become unavailable as places to gather and grieve, celebrate or demonstrate. Privatised public places are often dotted with, in my view, bland contemporary sculpture and are sometimes

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<sup>114</sup> Another example of 'collected memory' in the form of a monument is the *Stolperstein project* (1992- ongoing) or stumbling blocks. Artist Gunter Demnig initiated the project, laying brass cobblestones into the pavement near houses in which victims of the Holocaust had lived. The stones mark their name, their birth and death dates and the camp in which they died. Over 50,000 Stolpersteine have been laid throughout Europe. The research to uncover who could be commemorated is often done by local schools; people who live nearby polish the stones and hold yearly commemoration services. The *Cenotaph* has also been described as a stumbling block for politicians due to its situation in the middle of Whitehall between Number 10 and the Houses of Parliament (in Edkins 2003:66).

<sup>115</sup> Smith uses the word space where I would use the word place to connote specific public locations.

controlled in draconian ways to prevent public 'misuse'.<sup>116</sup> The convergence of Acconci's and Smith's ideas points towards a situation in which public places are becoming private; at the same time public places are encapsulated and formed by private ones. The smartphone and social media could also be seen as blurring definitions of private and public places. Consensus and social norms have taken on a new meaning when so many personal views are shared on social networks. Nishi plays with this relationship and highlights that the two are merging. Through technology, public and private, virtual and actual continuously interweave.

Social anthropologist Paul Connerton traces the increase in the cultural fascination with monuments and memorials to the advent of modern production methods during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which changed people's relationship to the things around them. 'It was when the age of mechanical reproduction caused objects to become obsolete at an ever accumulating speed that many Europeans devoted their energy to the cult of monuments (Connerton 2009:27). Professor of comparative literature Andreas Huyssen expands on Connerton's association of monuments and memorials with technology. He describes how the fear of forgetting in a fast changing post-industrial world leads to an 'intense memory practice' (Huyssen 2003:26). The sharing of photographs online could be seen as part of this practice which could lead either to a 'cyber virus of amnesia' or a 'productive remembering'. Huyssen describes productive cultures of memory as intimately linked 'to processes of democratisation and struggles for human rights, to expanding and strengthening the public spheres of civil society' (ibid 2003:27). Huyssen's views on memory chime with Young's term 'collected memory'; both propose and describe new possibilities for how multiple histories can be shown publicly and how the past can be represented more democratically. Lyotard however describes a contrary position: a separation of memory from consciousness and conscience.

Whenever one represents, one inscribes in memory, and this might seem a good defence against forgetting. It is, I believe, just the opposite. Only that which has been inscribed can, in the current sense of the term, be forgotten,

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<sup>116</sup> An example of privately owned public space is Paternoster Square in London. It is tightly - privately - policed to prevent demonstrations and adorned with a faux classical column that actually hides air vents from the underground car park. Another example is Zuccotti Park in Downtown New York (see pg. 165).

because it could be effaced... One cannot escape the necessity of representing. It would be sin itself to believe oneself safe and sound. But it is one thing to do it in view of saving the memory, and quite another to try to preserve the remainder, the unforgettable forgotten, in writing.

Lyotard 1990:26

Lyotard addresses the unrepresentable, what he calls 'the immemorial'.<sup>117</sup> He describes the danger of giving form to something - some part of history – that in his view cannot or should not be given form to, because it leads to another kind of forgetting, the forgetting of responsibility (see pg. 257). Lyotard's view chimes directly with the 'built in absence' in Gerz and Hoheisel's counter monuments. After I had climbed back down to the base of Columbus's column and looked back up at Columbus, hidden from public view, I considered if the statue should be permanently removed. By doing so, would Columbus's acts be reassessed? Would they become more or less visible?

### *Change of context: New York to London*

My time was up, I left New York and returned to London. New York faded into code and images. My pieced together virtual excursion dissolved into my everyday, I was actually in London in my studio, I had never left. I had found a picture of *Discovering Columbus* on my Instagram feed and followed the virtual trail until I almost felt I had visited the work, climbed the steps and seen the view and even touched Columbus's stone foot. The nature of the visit confirmed to me that a virtual involvement with an actual place online is a 'real' one. Nishi's work and Columbus are now monumentalized by the media. When I searched online long after the construction had been taken down, everything was still there, the images, the articles. I had explored this public place alone, via private routes on the Internet, looking at photographs made public by those who really were there, who shared images and posted comments as they went. The role of ephemeral personal photographs can be recast from guarding private individual memories to revealing a common shared experience. Private lives can be traced online becoming visible and palpable - a

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<sup>117</sup> Lyotard was writing in reaction to philosopher Theodor W. Adorno's stance epitomised by his 1949 statement: 'to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (Adorno in Godfrey 2007:10). Lyotard problematizes Adorno's stance with regard to the representability of the Holocaust its aftermath, through the use of the word immemorial.



collection of instant memorials. Social media blurs boundaries between private experience and public show, events are collected and shared. Instagram and similar platforms can be seen as a collected archive of representations of both private and public places, of people and their experiences.

My disembodied trip to New York, inspired by the rainy everyday photograph of Parliament Square (figure 15), initially relied on my visual interaction with other people's photographs. Back in my studio I assessed if this experience had changed my view of the Square and of Instagram. Looking at photographs of Columbus in the studio, it had become clear that shifting and mixing contexts is Instagram's everyday. It can constantly alter the photograph's meanings. Nishi's recontextualisation of Columbus had taken the statue out of its everyday, upsetting the possibility of a semiotic reading of the statue and the place it occupies and imbues with meaning. My visit threw into further doubt if places like photographs can or should be *read* semiotically. Researchers of tourism Emma Waterton and Steve Watson expand the meaning of semiotics as a way of understanding places.

The photograph is emblematic of the embodied nature of the tourist experience and is affective to the extent that it is produced in moments of engagement that are less than expressive and at the same time more than representational.

Waterton & Watson 2014:5

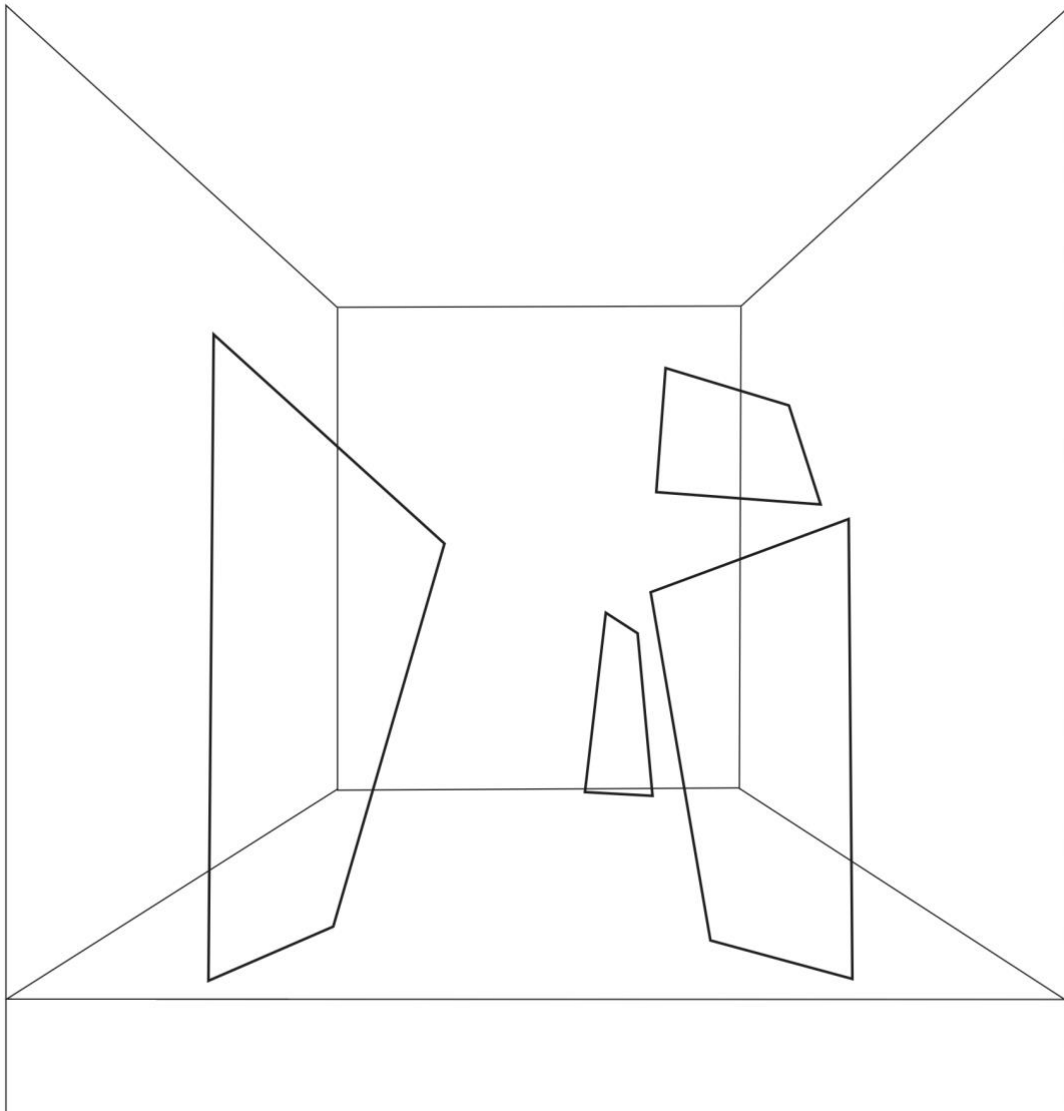
Waterton & Watson seek to include embodied affective and performative responses to places in the way they are understood.

In my studio, influenced by Nishi's restaging of Columbus, I began to practically and theoretically restage the next photograph (see pg. 273 for a description of these early experiments). This photograph led me back to Parliament Square but showed it to me through a tourist's eye. I continued to let photographs guide me as a 'tourist of reality' (Sontag 1979:110).

*Tourist Stage, analogue print, 2017*



*Tourist Stage, print template, 2017*



## 4. Tourism: The Differentiated Photographer



Figure 22 Anon, *Tourists (cropped)*, found Instagram photograph, 2014.

The Square provides a backdrop for thousands of photographs every day, only some of which are shared on Instagram. The use of the Square as a stage on which to pose and be photographed was part of my reason for choosing this photograph (figure 22) to guide me through a tourist's view of the Square (see pg. 269 for more on the social mores of the pose). The photographic composition is simple: a man and a boy face the camera, they are sitting on the base of Nelson Mandela's statue, both are smiling. Behind them sits an older couple mirroring their pose, their gaze elsewhere. Another reason for choosing this photograph was the racial mix of those pictured. This seemingly simple photograph opened up complex questions concerning the relationship between visiting a place and how meanings are made through the way visitors choose to represent themselves in situ. The similarity in composition with many other photographs, even though the people who took them may come from very different cultural backgrounds, also raised questions. This visual similarity does not necessarily mean that their individual experiences were the same. The purpose of this chapter is to try to distinguish the tourist and their photographs from the agglomeration into which they are often subsumed. Reasons for the similarities between the photographs emerge along with underlying differences, all of which question the relationship between the camera, the place and the person visiting. Through a combination of theoretical and practical enquiry in the studio common aspects are revealed: the propensity to perform in the same way, to pose for and gaze into or through the camera, elide with individual/personal experiences of otherness and begin to reveal the strong undercurrent of male dominance in this particular place.

The roots of mass tourism and photography are intertwined. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century more people began to travel more frequently as a leisure activity.<sup>118</sup> Particular locations became places not only to be visited but also recorded. Developments in photographic technology aided that recording as smaller, cheaper, portable and easier to use cameras enabled the documentation and dissemination of

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<sup>118</sup> As transport became cheaper, travelling for leisure - tourism, opened up to people of lower income rather than being the preserve of the aristocrats who participated in the Grand Tour (from approx. 1660 - late 1800s).

more and more tourist sights and views. These pictures in turn enticed others to visit. Photographs along with guidebooks such as Baedeker provided controlled, bounded versions of places that became common to all visitors. Urry sees the publication of Bradshaw's European train timetables in the 1840's, which increased the ease and therefore popularity of individual travel along with the guide books and cheap quick image reproduction as the origins of mass tourism. Package tours and cheap postal systems led to the popularity of postcards and a proliferation of images that were linked to a particular way of looking at places. All of these factors led to a cycle of more and more people travelling to see and be seen in particular accepted places and views. Establishing a pattern of behaviour that, as Urry states, is still visible in the way tourists visit, perceive and represent places today (Urry 2016). To be pictured within these 'foreign' scenes became part of the ritual of the visit. Such actions sit within the social history of portraiture and the traditions of photography. As Wells suggests, paintings can be seen as a guide for how photographic travel images developed and why particular motifs repeat themselves in many tourist photographs (Wells 2011:33-34).

The similarities of this photograph (figure 22) with others taken in the Square that are visible on Instagram might indicate a tendency to conflate the *tourist* into *tourists* as if they and their experiences are all the same. I want to examine more closely what causes this visual sameness? Is it a reaction to the place or to photographs already seen? Is it the people themselves performing their role as tourists, or the effect of the camera and resulting photographs or a combination of these factors? Do platforms like Instagram lead to further repetition? (See pg. 133 for more discussion of what I will go on to characterize as small acts of rebellion).

## *Sameness*

Photographs often pre-empt and motivate a visit, whether seen online or in guidebooks: it is increasingly rare to visit a place without knowing what it looks like first. Visitors from many different backgrounds perpetuate the repetition or mimicry of guidebook imagery; geographer Olivia Jenkins describes this as the 'circle of

representation' (Jenkins 2003). En masse the photographs could appear bland and banal, detached from their different cultural origins, but also strange in their repetition. Wearing & Wearing caution that equating tourists' experiences with the images can narrow and distort what is actually happening outside the frame.

A concentration on tourist destination as image in tourist advertising and tourist research ... assumes that each individual's experience of the tourist destination will be similar. Some research indicates that such a conceptualization is, in fact, counterproductive.

Wearing & Wearing 1996:230

However, it is through this accumulation of tourists' and others' photographs that I can see the way this place is represented and reconstructed. Wearing & Wearing argue that the concentration on the tourist destination as 'image' can lead to a one-dimensional understanding of such places; places can be seen in a more multi-faceted way, when they are seen in terms of 'social value' (ibid 1996:240).<sup>119</sup> I want to bear in mind the importance of social value and interaction when studying my selected photographs. I wonder why these 'other' tourists depict this place and this statue in the same way. Sameness does not necessarily negate the individual, personal and emotional understandings of the Square, but runs parallel to it. The uncanny similarities of visitor representations may itself begin to unsettle my everyday view of the Square and shed light on the instinctive use of technology with which it is depicted and seen.

The common factors within this photograph (figure 22) become more complex in the context of the personal Instagram account on which the photograph was posted. The photograph immediately takes on different meanings which belie the sameness. What I know about the subject of the photograph becomes entangled with its visual structure. Barthes called this knowledge the *studium*, which combines with the more immediate *punctum*: that which 'rises from the scene, shoots out like an arrow and pierces' the viewer ((1980)2000:26). Barthes describes the *punctum* as an accidental element in the photograph which disturbs the *studium*. The combination of *studium* and *punctum* moves away from a semiotic reading of signs, icons and symbols (see

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<sup>119</sup> The move towards defining places through their social value might begin to change my use of the word place towards adopting the words 'social space' in Massey and Wearing and Wearing's terms (see pg. 127).

discussion of Peirce pg. 54); it brings about a subjective reaction in the viewer. The same photograph can affect people in different ways, depending on their own experience and on the context in which they see it and what they know about it. The *studium*, although grounded in language and explanation, is also subjective but doesn't have the same emotional impact as the *punctum*: 'what I can name cannot really prick me. The incapacity to name is a good symptom of disturbance' (Barthes (1980)2000:51). This echoes Derrida's description of *khora* as unnameable third space where things can be sensed and felt rather than named. Barthes proposes another possible reaction: that of unmoved indifference. It is my initial reaction to this photograph (figure 22), possibly due to its banal similarity to many other photographs. My own reactions to the photograph are subjective and individual, and can be equated to the ways in which each individual sees and relates to the Square.

I wondered: if no immediate *punctum* reaction occurred could a photograph become more poignant over time? Maybe an emotional involvement emerges out of what is known about the photograph, or in combination with other photographs. My relationship to this photograph shifted as I found out more about the man who is depicted in it. With this information I began to imagine why he might have visited Parliament Square - possibly he was on a daytrip, maybe he was a Londoner on his day off. To begin with, the *studium* was what kept me from indifference towards this seemingly mundane photograph. Through his personal account I see that BH is a British soldier; there are photographs of him training in Cyprus and of the memorial to Lee Rigby outside Woolwich Barracks. He has taken another photograph in Parliament Square, a selfie with a woman in front of Big Ben on #armedforcesday.<sup>120</sup>

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The fact that he is a soldier made me reassess his possible motives for taking and sharing the photograph. With only a small amount of information about the people depicted in the photograph I appreciated the individual visible choices contained

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<sup>120</sup> I have shortened the subject's name in order to keep the subject and owner of the Instagram account anonymous as during my research the account had been made private for some time. The account is now public; however, this particular photograph has been removed.

<sup>121</sup> Soldier Lee Rigby was murdered by two men near Woolwich Barracks in May 2013. The men who carried out the attack claimed they took this course of action to protest about British foreign policy in 'Muslim lands'.



within. I also wondered about who had taken the photograph - was it the woman in the selfie taken on Armed Forces Day (see above)? The photograph is on his phone, posted from his account. His informal placing of himself in a significant location could be read as a motivation behind both photographs; the place marked by Big Ben and the statue of Nelson Mandela has an importance for someone signed up in the armed services.<sup>122</sup> As Wells points out, this photograph could be seen as a form of self-identification with national ideals or patriotism: BH is visually participating in a national but at the same time personal ritual.

Photography significantly contributes to our sense of knowledge, perception and experience, and to (trans)forming our feelings about our relationship to history, geography and, by extension, to our sense of ourselves.

Wells 2011:56

Participating in the act of photography can be a way to become part of a place and its meanings in situ. As I look at the photograph in my studio, my perception of the Square alters. For Barthes it is the *punctum*, the emotional connection with a photograph that breaks the semiotic reading of it. For me, the unnameable affective response is centred on the ease of his pose in contrast with his professional role; his choice of Mandela to pose with intrigues me.

### *The same pose*

The pose the subjects adopt places this photograph within the realm of portraiture. This is no spontaneous capture; the photograph has been staged to construct a particular narrative. Choices have been made in regard to the camera and to the backdrop: they are reacting to the visual structure and symbols offered by the Square, with its inscribed sets of movements, possible views. The camera lens and the promise of a photograph frame them within a scene. They could also have been influenced by photographs that pre-empted or motivated their visit, which then might have led them to repeat and mimic and own the same photograph now with themselves posed within it.

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<sup>122</sup> The statue of Nelson Mandela was sculpted by Ian Walters and unveiled in 2007 by Prime Minister Gordon Brown and London Mayor Ken Livingstone in the presence of Mandela himself.

When BH poses in front of Mandela in Parliament Square, he enters into a relationship with the statue and what it symbolises but also with the camera, as both vie for his attention. Barthes describes his own reaction to being in front of the camera. He notes that the camera causes him to pose: 'Once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of 'posing', I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image' (Barthes (1980)2000:10). The subject of the soon-to-be-made photograph performs for the camera in anticipation of the photograph. By so doing they make themselves 'other' - a replica of themselves caught in time and place. If photographs pre-empt what might be seen and known about a place before it is visited, the camera causes the photographed to pre-empt how they might appear in the photograph. The photographic replica is not inauthentic or false but 'other', a projection of an aspect of themselves and how they want to be seen. Since Barthes wrote *Camera Lucida* (1980), technology has evolved and people can now see themselves instantaneously becoming the photograph. As journalist Jacob Silverman writes, posing has now perhaps become more intertwined with how people behave all the time: 'our experiences become not about our own fulfilment, the fulfilment of those we are with, or even about sharing; they become about ego, demonstrating status, seeming cool or smart or well-informed' (2015). Increasing numbers of people are constantly searching for a photogenic moment, always aware of the lens, always posturing.

The lens of the camera frames the view and picks out the individual in the crowd. BH's static, passive pose contrasts with Mandela's dynamic one. Why did he and many others choose Mandela? Berger examines, through the slower process of painting, some of the factors at play in the decision-making of where to pose and be pictured in his analysis of Thomas Gainsborough's painting *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (1750) (figure 23). Berger argues that by being depicted in the landscape Mr and Mrs Andrews are turning the *land*, something which is understood by labourers, into a *landscape* - something to be appreciated by their own class. Berger argues that, by having themselves painted posed on their land, the image speaks of a privilege of access not only to land and wealth but most importantly to ideas and principals to

which others are not privileged, or could even be punished for trying to attain. In this case Berger moots that the landscape becomes symbolic of their *high ideals* and sense of ownership. The rural idyll symbolises philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas of being in harmony with nature. 'Their enjoyment of 'uncorrupted and unperverted' nature did not, however, usually include the nature of other men. The sentence for poaching at that time was deportation' (Berger 1977:108). The land was harsh for those unseen harvesters of the picturesque hay bales.<sup>123</sup>



Figure 23 Thomas Gainsborough, *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, 1750

Photographer Fay Godwin photographed rural landscapes as a way of 'interrogating' the hidden spatial injustices of seemingly rural idylls to reveal privilege of access and wealth. As Wells describes, echoing Berger's analysis of Gainsborough, 'critique emerges from content: classic pictorial modes are easily read and indeed, may contribute strategically to paradoxical tensions between harmonious composition and more interrogative subject matter' (Wells 2011:191). These pictorial modes are sometimes repeated in everyday social media photography, which can also through their composition criticise and interrogate. The democratic possibilities that mobile photographic devices offer allows for portraits to be posed for and taken in places

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<sup>123</sup> In *The Dark Side of Landscape* (1980) John Barrell discusses this situation in depth. He describes a situation in which the 'undifferentiated poor' were in this period of landscape or portrait painting depicted as an acceptable part of the décor if they were seen at all. The painted poor were part of a rural idyll which hid conflicts and extreme poverty beneath a thin veneer of oil and varnish (Barrell 1980:5).

that are significant to those involved. Claims of ownership of ideas and ideals can be constructed and shared. *Mr and Mrs Andrews* probably didn't traipse across the fields to have their portrait painted in silk shoes and best clothes. The image was constructed to impart meaning through their stance, choice of backdrop and props (see pg. 272). As the camera gradually opened up the field of portraiture to more and more people, the pose and the backdrop became part of a shared visual vocabulary. Through the smartphone people can now be pictured almost wherever they choose and share their choices publicly. Looking at the many tourist photographs taken in Parliament Square, something is immediately apparent: even though the equipment has changed, with fast shutter speeds and digital cameras that allow smaller and smaller sections of time to be caught, thereby negating the need to stay still, the initial response is still to stop and pose for the camera. People pre-empt themselves as a photograph; they perform being photographed and perform similarly in very different places. I suggest it is the camera and not the location that provokes this particular behaviour. However, it is the choice of backdrop that makes or sometimes imposes particular meanings. Places like the Square can be activated to construct a political standpoint.

Public portraiture is an integral part of the dynamic of Parliament Square; its statues are akin to a national version of a family photograph album, rogues and all. The statues are displayed and mounted differently and their subjects adopt different poses depending on the custom of the times.<sup>124</sup> The National Portrait Gallery once overlooked the Square (until 1869); the early statues were inspired by many of the portraits within (see Hicks 2015:168). Photographs of the Square on Instagram show a variety of reactions to the statues: some mimic the poses of the statues (mostly of those out of reach), Mandela is often hugged, Gandhi seems to demand a more formal approach. Unlike Columbus Circle in New York and many other squares around the world, there is not one dominant statue that leads to a singular narrative but many. The different narratives of the statues interact and overlap.

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<sup>124</sup> The statues in the Square fit within the logic of figurative sculpture as monuments that Krauss describes. They are recognisable icons of those whom they represent (1979:33).

Ian Walters' depiction of Mandela shows him as a lively elder statesman in the midst of a speech. Its base is built into the steps on the corner of the Square near Westminster Abbey. It was the first statue in the Square not to be placed high up on a plinth.<sup>125</sup> The statue, like the one of Gandhi nearby, is constructed to allow access; to permit or even encourage photography and allow photographs such as BH's to be taken with him rather than of him (another reason perhaps for the preponderance of photographs of Mandela). Both the monuments' positioning and stance echo the ethos of their subjects. They are socially egalitarian, accessible, unlike the other monuments in the Square which are physically and politically of leaders to be looked up to. Mandela's arms are raised in mid oration; the statue imitates the captured moment of a photograph, not posed but in the midst of giving a speech. The sculptor Philip Jackson based his statue of Gandhi on a photograph posed for outside 10 Downing Street during a visit to London in 1931. On the same trip Gandhi struck a very similar stance when photographed with cotton workers in Lancashire. Now his statue is mostly photographed surrounded by wealthy Indian tourists who replace the Lancashire working girls, creating new photographs with very different political meanings.

At the time they visited London in the 1930s and 1960s, the British establishment scorned both Gandhi and Mandela. Winston Churchill derided Gandhi, calling him a 'half naked fakir' (in Herman 2009:379). Mandela was branded a terrorist who should be hanged.<sup>126</sup> The inclusion of their statues in the Square could be seen to symbolise a Britain trying to be seen to come to terms with its imperialist colonial past while at the same time associating itself with leaders of great stature. Like many of the older monuments both Gandhi and Mandela's statues were partially privately financed. The complex web of political and sometimes commercial interests that are responsible for what is visible in the Square in the form of monuments remains

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<sup>125</sup> Krauss describes how the pedestal or plinth on which a monument stands is part of its language 'their pedestals [are] an important part of the structure since they mediate between actual site and representational sign' (1979:33). The modernist incorporation or removal of the plinth was part of the move to abstraction (1979: 34). Although the statues of Gandhi and Mandela are figurative the removal of the plinth is significant in the way the statues are read as well as interacted with.

<sup>126</sup> Posters and badges calling for Mandela to be hanged were made by members of the *Federation of Conservative Students*. Members at the time included David Cameron, PM from 2010-16 and current Speaker of the House John Bercow, both of whom deny any involvement with the production of the posters (see pg. 273).

largely concealed. Visually the monuments and the photographs of monuments of Gandhi and Mandela proclaim global ideals of racial harmony, strength of leadership with a national ideology of post-colonial diversity. There is though an underlying invisible demarcation of power and wealth and global influence around these bronze figures. The imminent arrival of Gandhi's statue was announced on Chancellor George Osborne's trade trip to India in 2014; Gandhi's statue became briefly a tool to strengthen bilateral business bonds.

BH's choice to pose in front of Mandela's statue enters him into a relationship with the political and social complexities the statue represents, but his reasons for it to be taken and shared may be many. It could be seen as a form of ownership and belonging in the Square, in London, in Great Britain; specifically, the visual association with Mandela could show his tacit support of multiculturalism, or a belief in the struggle for equal racial rights. However, the photograph is also a record of a social interaction, one that bonds this small group of people together. Wearing & Wearing move towards a feminized critique of male-oriented theories of tourism 'which assume a subject/object relationship to the tourist destination and a bounded conceptualization of the tourist place' (Wearing & Wearing 1996:230). They bring to the fore the importance of social relations in a public place. The objectification of the photograph and the bounded Square as a tourist destination can be reassessed in terms of a place that allows acts of micro and macro social cohesion. The photograph (figure 22) seen in this social context takes on a political potential. It also has the capability to swiftly reach beyond the Square and affect the way it might be seen by others in the future.

Despite finding out more about BH through his Instagram feed, I don't know exactly why the photograph was taken. As Holland describes, I can only interpret what I see in this posed photograph through my 'reading' of its cultural context (see pg. 52). This photograph sits within the tradition of posing with props to allow certain meanings to be 'read'. Its staging creates a photographic reality and places it in a wider global political context through the construction of a personal historical narrative. I chose this photograph partially because it raised uncomfortable

questions of race, nationhood, belonging and otherness. There is a complex socio-political dialogue within it. The statue of Mandela is more than a prop; it is a powerful global symbol of black liberation and the struggle for racial equality. BH is white, his companion of mixed-heritage; they are as the caption points out 'chillin with #NelsonMandela' all of which led me to ask what is the reality that this photograph constructs?

Is BH like *Mr and Mrs Andrews* able to stake a claim to the ownership of ideas through an image? Does he share a knowing gaze and position himself deliberately within the place? Both he and *Mr and Mrs Andrews* are following well-rehearsed social scripts of portraiture in a public place, posing for the camera or painter in front of a symbolic landscape or scene in order to create meaning.<sup>127</sup> Where does this meaning come from? Cultural theorist Stuart Hall when discussing the visibility or invisibility of Black British culture explores how state-constructed cultural sites such as museums but also public places such as the Square play an 'educative' role.<sup>128</sup>

Through its power to preserve and represent culture, the State has assumed some responsibility for educating the citizenry in those forms of 'really useful knowledge', as the Victorians put it, which would refine the sensibilities of the masses. This was the true sense of their 'belongingness': culture as social incorporation.

Hall 2002:73

For Hall 'meaning' comes from what is visibly on display, which connotes what knowledge is deemed useful in order to form a national identity. 'A shared national identity thus depends on cultural meanings which bind each member individually into a larger national story' (ibid 2002:74). He goes on to warn that those who cannot see themselves reflected in the mirror that national heritage provides 'cannot properly 'belong'' (ibid 2002:74). The inclusion of Mandela into the panoply of Victorian and mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century political statuary could be seen as an attempt by

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<sup>127</sup> The Andrews would have constructed the painting with Gainsborough's help and eye, this landscape may not have existed in reality. Like Andreas Gursky's digitally altered 'truer' picture *Rhine II* (see pg. 282), Gainsborough often composed fictitious landscapes. Working on a folding kitchen table 'he would place cork or coal for his foregrounds and make middle grounds of sand and clay, bushes of mosses and lichens and set up distant woods of broccoli' (Pyne in Lethbridge 2017).

<sup>128</sup> Hall uses the word 'state' in a similar, all encompassing way as Lefebvre, and challenges its educative *savoir* with the need for *connaissance* knowledge from the people.

the state to widen who can see themselves in the mirror it provides, and to which meanings the citizenry 'subjects itself' (ibid 2002:74). People subject themselves to these dominant meanings, in Hall's view this behaviour needs to be unsettled and decolonized.<sup>129</sup> Culture and therefore 'national heritage', he argues, is produced. It is not just the preservation by the state of past ideals through material artefacts.

In fact what nation 'means' is an ongoing project under constant reconstruction. We come to know its meaning partly *through* the objects and artefacts which have been made to stand in for and symbolize its essential values.

Hall 2002:74

The erection of a statue celebrating the life of Mandela might be interpreted as the state rewriting the cultural narrative, an attempt to decolonize dominant meanings. The presence of the statue allows for other stories to be told that unsettle previous ones yet it might also hide or distort the lack of representation of black or visibly 'other' people that preceded its erection? The statue of a black African man, as then Prime Minister Gordon Brown orated, represents 'a beacon of hope that no injustice can last forever' (Brown 2007). Public representation of 'one of the most courageous and best loved men of our time' (ibid 2007) offers the possibility to imagine, hope and work towards other futures.<sup>130</sup> It goes some way towards Hall's call to redefine the nation and re-imagine "'Britishness' or 'Englishness' in a more profoundly inclusive manner'. Hall warns that to continue 'to misrepresent Britain as a closed, embattled, self sufficient defensive 'tight little island"' would be fatally disabling (Hall 2002:80-81). As land becomes landscape it also becomes heritage, a place to construct meaning, to belong or be left out.

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<sup>129</sup> A point recognised by London's Mayor Sadiq Kahn which can be seen through his emphasis of the symbolic importance of Mandela's statue on the GLA website (see pg 27).

<sup>130</sup> Another example of visibility not linked to questions of race, is Marc Quinn's statue *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (2005). The statue of Lapper which occupied the Fourth Plinth in London's Trafalgar Square in 2005, can be seen as an example of the effect or the hopes for what the visibility of 'otherness' might add to the variety of cultural meanings that can be made in a public place which is otherwise dominated by a particular state narrative. Lapper by being made visible is not homogenised or included but recognized, represented and celebrated. While her disability draws attention to Nelson's lack of an eye and arm. Quinn explains that he saw Lapper who was born without arms and with short legs as 'a new kind of hero – people who instead of conquering the outside world have conquered their own inner world and gone on to live fulfilled lives. To me, they celebrate the diversity of humanity. Most monuments are commemorating past events; because Alison is pregnant it's a sculpture about the future possibilities of humanity' (Quinn 2006).



Social media photography apps such as Instagram could be seen as offering a way of enlarging the cultural mirror, one in which more people see themselves represented in public and quickly reflected in the form of likes and comments. The photographs can be seen as a place where the process of the construction of culture occurs. They can be read as a relationship between those posing and the places in which they have chosen to be photographed. BH and his companion in the photograph may not be privileged but they are there making themselves visible. Instagram makes the popularity of Mandela's statue visible, the power of positive association can be seen in the hundreds of images of people posing with and hugging the statue. Arguably these shared visual indicators of social values are capable of altering the meaning of the place in question, as well as altering the circle of representation. However, even taking into account the widening effect that technology might be having on the accessibility and cultural importance of places such as Parliament Square, there are many people who do not visit and remain absent from this place and therefore from social media depictions of it, whether by choice, financial disadvantage or by simply feeling unwelcome.

### *The same gaze*

Tourists cast their eyes around the Square searching for a place to pose and construct their own narratives. At the same time, they may feel the pull to perform in front of the lens anticipating the impending photograph. This relationship between camera, place, visitor and image is part of what Urry and Larsen describe as the 'tourist gaze' (Urry and Larsen 2011). By choosing to position himself in front of 'global icons' such as Mandela and Big Ben, BH has become part of an 'economy of signs' (ibid 2011:28) - he appropriates or consumes the place visually. According to Urry this process is an integrated part of the global-tourism network generating not only money and employment but crucially images. 'There are not two separate entities, the 'global' and 'tourism' bearing some external connections with each other. Rather they are part and parcel of the same set of complex and interconnected processes' (ibid 2011:3). Such photographs are not a by-product of this industry but a driving factor. The circle of representation is indicative of a cycle

of consumer behaviour: Other people's photographs influence the way this place is seen, and what photographs might then be acquired, and how people picture themselves being there (ibid 2011:14). Striking a pose in a place which arguably engenders a sense of ownership of place, associates the act and the photograph with earlier forms of portraiture such as *Mr and Mrs Andrews*. BH is the subject of the gaze, but has possibly composed the photograph, constructed the private and public narrative within it, taken ownership of it by posting it on his Instagram feed.

I return to Sontag's view that photography is acquisitive, like Urry she equates travelling and photography with a materialistic 'strategy for accumulating photographs' (Sontag 2003:9). The photographer is for Sontag a 'super tourist' hunting for images (ibid 2003:42).<sup>131</sup> Waterton & Watson add: 'photography energizes the tourist's gaze' (2014:20). The dynamic hunt for photographs can sometimes be felt in the Square as groups accumulate, cameras at the ready, to get the best shot - a shot that is often the same as many others which leaves open the question as to why this occurs. The pose removes this photograph (figure 22) from the spontaneity of the hunt but still hints at a trophy gained. The pose may connote an embodied performance, the gaze however turns the emphasis onto the self-centred power of the observer. As Berger states: 'we never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves' (Berger 1977:9). To gaze is to objectify – to own, to be gazed upon is to be objectified.

The use of the term 'gaze' is not neutral; it indicates a power relationship, judgement and consumption.<sup>132</sup> Urry and Larsen describe the tourist gaze as a culturally learnt phenomenon: 'people gaze on the world through a particular filter of ideas, skills, desires and expectations, framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and education' (Urry and Larsen 2011:2). Wearing & Wearing seek to

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<sup>131</sup> This contrasts with other views of photography that link the act to a more passive nurturing of photographs, practiced by artists such as Andreas Gursky or Jeff Wall who cultivate and gather their images (see pg. 282).

<sup>132</sup> The gaze is carried out at a remove, it is a power relationship which film critic Laura Mulvey explores in terms of the 'male gaze'. She describes how in the medium of film the male is often the voyeur, actively looking at the passive 'looked at' female (Mulvey 1989:19). Mulvey later adapts this view to accommodate the agency of the female spectator (ibid 1989:29). In Mulvey's terms, the 'male gaze' objectifies and commodifies the female body in the way that the tourist gaze could be seen to objectify places and 'authentic locals'.

problematize Urry and Larsen's use of the word gaze to understand the tourists' experience and place an emphasis on image rather than social value, emotion and affect (Wearing & Wearing 1996:235). I think their approach can open up the social function or role of a photograph rather than closing down the study of tourists through their photographic images altogether.

Deutsche explains that the formation or framing of a landscape assumes the existence of a viewer; it's a relationship that wields power.

A landscape... is an object framed for, and therefore inseparable from, a viewer. If the image of the city is indissolubly bound up with vision and therefore with subjectivity of the viewers and if as the metaphor of voyeurism makes clear, vision is mediated by fantasy and implies relations of power and sexuality, then urban analyses can no longer ignore what are in fact constitutive elements of images and landscapes.

Deutsche 1996:213

As I gazed at these photographs on Instagram, I wondered if my own position is that of a voyeur? I am aware that everyone is implicated in a power relationship bound up with Sontag's description of the acquisitive process of photography, whether from behind or in front of the lens, whether looking at a photograph or about to be in one. It is the role of the gaze in combination with the camera that I want to look at in terms of commodification and objectification, to see if these elements can indeed be challenged by looking at the photograph as a social actant. Whether in guidebooks, postcards on Instagram, Facebook or Street View, photographs are part of a relationship with and therefore construction of place. They have become ways in which people navigate, decide to visit and move around places in advance and during their visit. Moreover the symbolism within the photograph often vies for power and attention with the actual material place. Flusser's description draws out this relationship in terms of political power.

Photographers have power over those who look at their photographs, they program their actions; and the camera has power over the photographers, it programs their acts. This shift of power from the material to the symbolic is what characterises what we call the information society and post-industrial imperialism.

Flusser 1983:30

In 1983 Flusser saw the power relationships between camera, the photographer, photograph and viewer as indicating a closed loop, locked into post-industrial imperialism: what could be called capitalist consumerism. This however clashes with Barthes' description of the unnameable affective relationship people have with photographs which takes them outside of politics and into a different kind of power relationship. A relationship which touches on how knowledge is formed, and the resonance between *a-priori* knowledge and the senses (see pg. 41). The two ways of understanding, as Kant discussed, are not mutually exclusive but the difference between them questions how meanings are made from photographs. Flusser's views link not only with Heidegger's ideas of 'enframing': the narrowing of people's view through the unthinking use of technology (see pg. 281). Both Heidegger and Flusser investigate fears of technological determinism, which cultural critic Raymond Williams describes in these terms: 'New technologies are discovered by an essentially internal process of research and development which then sets the conditions for social change and progress' (Williams (1975)2005). Flusser and Williams's definition could also form part of a particular definition of the tourist industry. 'Mass' tourism and photographic dissemination are part of a cycle of homogenisation and commodification. In this scenario a combination of the camera and other photographs pre-program the visitor to behave in a certain way in relation to the camera and the place and therefore produce repeats of those previous images.

Commodification of place through the 'tourist gaze' has been part of the tourist industry from its origins in the Grand Tour. Previous to that, pilgrimages to religious shrines can be seen as an early form of the commodification of place and the ritualization of travel. The guidebook became a part of the process of ownership and of behavioural practice. The 1878 Baedeker *Guide to London and its Environs* makes plain in a didactic tone that the tourist's time and money are equated to the proportionate gain of pleasure and education, which could only be derived from efficient visiting of the right places.

The chief objective of the handbook for London... is to enable the traveller to employ his time, his money and his energy to the best advantage, in order that

he may derive the greatest possible amount of pleasure and instruction from his visit to the greatest city of the modern world.

Baedeker 1878:v

Places began to be seen as objects to be collected - the acquisitive nature of photography allowed it to become a method of showing that a place or a view has been acquired. Barthes goes further: His description of the *Guide Bleu* of Paris as an agent of blindness: 'by reducing geography to the uninhabited world of monuments' ((1957)2000:76) draws the guide book and the monument together as agents of blindness.<sup>133</sup> People are absent, social possibilities are negated by the didactic tone and singular narrative of the guide and the monument. Visitors adding themselves in generic poses could be seen to be both conforming to and communicating that norm, locked into Jenkins 'circle of representation' - a cycle of perpetuating the 'spectacular' marketing photographs of Parliament Square, as seen on the first Google image search. Debord pushes this position to its extreme in his own definition of tourism:

Tourism — human circulation packaged for consumption, a by-product of the circulation of commodities — is the opportunity to go and see what has been banalized. The economic organization of travel to different places already guarantees their *equivalence*. The modernization that has eliminated the time involved in travel has simultaneously eliminated any real space from it.<sup>134</sup>

Debord 1967

Debord's bleak description draws parallels with the effect of the speed and the ubiquity of digital images and reflects why people feel the need to mimic the imagery of others in a rush of unthinking consumerism. The act of photographic consumption is sparked by the place and by other photographs that have been taken there. It perpetuates what Urry describes as 'capitalism's arrangement of the world as department store' (Urry 2003:167).<sup>135</sup> People are drawn up and down the aisles/streets of consumable photographs, seemingly unable to resist the urge to take a photograph of themselves in these 'new' places. This position now echoes in

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<sup>133</sup> The *Guide Bleu* is the French equivalent to *Baedekers* tourist guides.

<sup>134</sup> In this instance Debord differentiates between place as location and space as distance which might equate to cultural difference.

<sup>135</sup> This refers to Susan Sontag's description that photography's effect is 'to convert the world into a department store or a museum without walls in which every subject is depreciated into an article for consumption, promoted into an item for aesthetic appreciation' (1979:110).

the consumption of Instagram's constant feed of photographs. Consumption differs from the acquisitive nature of photography described by Sontag. Arguably consumption is short term, it doesn't satisfy for long.

For tourists, Parliament Square is a place of leisure or pleasure, not only instruction or consumption. Tourists have time to be in the place to look, wander and drift. Lefebvre points out tentatively that 'pedagogy of space' might emerge when people are at leisure (Lefebvre 1974:384). It is in the 'space of leisure' where 'a transgression of 'users' in search of a way forward – to surmount divisions: the division between social and mental, the division between sensory and intellectual and also the division between the everyday and the out of the ordinary' (ibid 1974:385). Lefebvre describes an inbetween space which he argues is in contrast with the working everyday and in which 'time retrieves its value and space of labour is critiqued' (ibid 1974:384). Here Lefebvre is not necessarily referring to what is learnt from a place in the sense of what is learnt from the statues, which as Griswold explains could be seen as a species of pedagogy (see pg. 93). He is referring to an awareness that can be gained from being bodily in the space of leisure that can engender critical awareness. People can be taught didactically by a place and be part of forming it through conformist conduct but they can also form another part of it through non-conventional behaviour. Photography can be a part of either of these social interactions.

Instead of seeing photographs as reflections or distortions of a pre-existing world, they can be understood as a technology of world making. 'Images are not something that appear over or against reality, but parts of practices through which people work to establish realities....technologies of seeing form ways of grasping the world'.

Crang in Urry and Larsen 2011:167

If, as geographer Michael Crang argues, photography can be understood as a part of the social process involved in making places which engages in questioning as well as creating social norms - does this process also exist in virtual places? Photographs of the Square shared on social media can be seen as a public exhibition of status and tagging, a form of temporary territorial marker. However, sharing the photograph makes it socially active: the photograph goes out into other public and private

places. There is the possibility that they can then go on to have different effects. The tourists' photographs can be seen in a different light when the photographs are understood as part of a social interaction rather than solely a product of consumption.

The shift from the basic conceptualization of the tourist as itinerant gazer to that of interacting person points to a shift also from tourist destination as place to a more interactive space; from the image of the destination to its social value.

Wearing & Wearing 1996:230

The use of place and space becomes interesting here, place is bounded and specific whereas space allows for a personal, social, interaction and is produced by all those who are part of it. Seen in this way, rather than as an abstraction, space can be understood as social, in concurrence with Massey. This links to Habermas's description of the public sphere as a 'social space generated in communicative action' (Habermas 1996:360). Places cease to be merely objectified, consumed, destroyed or homogenised by the tourists' gaze. The photographs can go on to have other social roles that might in Mitchell's terms want something from the viewer and be vital enough to be able to challenge Debord's depressing view of the city.

### *The same stage*

The search for photographic opportunities happens within the complexities of the city, yet the city is in some ways designed to direct the gaze: site becomes sight and visa versa. The design of Parliament Square was influenced by grander-scale projects such as Haussmann's panoptic rebuilding of Paris which occurred between 1853 and 1870 (see pg. 29 footnote 33). To a certain extent the Square like the radial streets in Paris directs the gaze and therefore the camera. The Square offers a wide panorama of the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, and the Supreme Court with the increasing number of statues in the foreground. Like Fox-Talbot's description of his home Lacock Abbey – 'the house that drew itself'. Parliament Square and its many counterparts world wide become the places that 'photograph themselves', even to the extent where they are almost subsumed by photographs, much as they are overwhelmed by the mass of tourists' bodies. Such a situation could lead to a certain

blindness due to the repetition, or the implosion of meaning because of the visual overload of which Baudrillard warned.

The presence of tourists in the busy Square changes it physically: tourists slow the pace on the pavements and clog the crossings as they stop to take photographs. Urry describes how historically the presence of many tourists has changed places, often in a way that privileges the gaze or frames the view. During the Victorian and Edwardian eras promenades and piers were constructed, places were designed specifically to allow people to stroll and look at specific vistas. In the Square a strategic row of almost redundant red telephone boxes line the pavement, in sight line with Big Ben. These semi-obsolete forms of communication now act as retro props in the scene of the Square and have become part of a different form of visual communication. Arguably such constructions increase the divide between visitors and locals. As in Gainsborough's painting of *Mr and Mrs Andrews* there is a divide between those who work the *land* and those that look at the *landscape*. A split occurs between those who see the place as part of their working environment and those who look at it as unusual: a foreign 'landscape'. The Square, it seems, is partially designed to be a photo attraction, guiding the gaze and suggesting where to pose. The statues of Mandela and Gandhi are part of this scene-setting, they are marked on Google maps with a symbol of a camera. The only other statue to be marked in this way is Winston Churchill.<sup>136</sup> Google pre-empts the photograph and guides tourists to the photo opportunity. Who sets this stage? Is it set by those who wish to project a positive 'guidebook' image of Britain, and therefore making the photographs and the Square a form of soft propaganda? It certainly satisfies the tourists' expectation of what images and experiences they will collect and be able to take home with them, prescribing how they should 'perform' the Square. Or is it perhaps more haphazard? I wonder if visitors to the Square are differently or even less blind to its construction than those who pass through it everyday.

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<sup>136</sup> When I plotted photographs taken in Parliament Square onto a map, they show a cluster along Great George Street looking past the telephone boxes towards Big Ben, also around Mandela's and Churchill's statues. The rest are spread more evenly around the Square.



The arrangement of the telephone boxes in the Square points towards locals being involved with constructing tourist sites, arguably to shield themselves from the prying eyes of visitors - what writer on tourism Dean MacCannell calls a 'staged authenticity' behind which they live their everyday lives (MacCannell 1973:590). If places are altered in reaction to what locals think visitors want to see of their culture, do they become staged – or inauthentic? MacCannell's use of the words 'inauthentic' and 'scene' suggest the Square is something other than 'real', something artificial.<sup>137</sup> However, putting on a performance could be seen as the way most people react to being seen in public places. Geographer Tim Edensor investigates the performativity of tourists as an extension of sociologist Erving Goffman's description of the performative nature of our public social life, which he refers to as 'front stage' as opposed to a 'backstage' informality. Goffman describes the front stage social roles that people play as an intentional form of behaviour – an act that is all about 'impression management' (Goffman in Edensor 2001:61) where the presentation of the 'self' in everyday life was the goal. But, as Wearing & Wearing argue, Goffman's 'self' was male' (Wearing & Wearing 1996:234). For Goffman being in public in the view of others is an important part of what is performed.<sup>138</sup>

When the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behaviour as a whole.

Goffman 1956:23

Performance might suggest artifice but possibly also a need to be seen to conform to accepted public norms in public as Butler maintains (2010:192). She builds on Goffman's ideas in terms of public performance of gender, which she argues is socially performed rather than naturally acquired. However, the Square is full of people from many different places, genders and classes. Who do they perform for: each other, for the camera, for the locals? The spatial aspect of being with others and of sharing space with unknown people relates to Massey's proposal that space is a dimension of multiplicity, it can offer the possibility to be performative. It is this

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<sup>137</sup> This situation is discussed by Nick Stanley in *Being Ourselves for You* (1998:21).

<sup>138</sup> The social norms and gender conformity of the mid 1950s when Goffman was writing were challenged by the individualism that emerged through the counter-culture of the 1960s.

interaction that is so important for Wearing & Wearing as a way of pulling away from the gaze and the image as a primary understanding of the tourist's experience. 'It is the experience of the interaction in this space that affects the socially constructed self that comes with and goes home with the tourist' (Wearing & Wearing 1996:230).

According to Lefebvre and Massey, social interactions are part of a place's construction or its ongoing process.<sup>139</sup> It is the effect of the interactions between different people that cause Wearing & Wearing to 'argue for a conceptualization of space which incorporates the dynamic social relations of the place and the multiplicity of experiences which imbue it with meaning for the people who interact within it' (ibid 1996:230). Wearing & Wearing redefine space, yet again, as social; the concept of place is pulled away from male dominance towards professor of women's studies, Elizabeth Grosz's interpretation of Plato's *khora* which the writer on gender and architecture describes as 'an in-between space of becoming' (Grosz 2001:91).<sup>140</sup> This definition is in stark contrast to the masculine places which Lefebvre vividly portrays.

The arrogant verticality of skyscrapers of public and state buildings, introduces a phallic or more precisely a phallogocratic element into the visual realm; the purpose of this display, of this need to impress, is to convey an impression of authority to each spectator. Verticality and great height have ever been the spatial expression of potentially violent power.

Lefebvre 1974:98

The Square, although lacking in skyscrapers, is loaded with perpendicular monuments and striking architecture, built and positioned to create an imposing and, I would argue, masculine place. Lefebvre as well as Wearing & Wearing's positions open up oppositional readings of BH's photograph. The soldier BH could be seen as wanting to be part of the hegemonic male-dominated prevailing narrative of the Square. It has been designed by men, it is populated by statues of great men, telling a largely male version of history (see pg. 269). BH associates himself with the figure of Mandela and the strength of Big Ben. However a different way of looking at

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<sup>139</sup> I am using the word place here to anchor my discussion to the actual physical location of Parliament Square whereas both Lefebvre and Massey may have used the wider term space.

<sup>140</sup> The term *khora* was first used by Plato in *Timaeus* (360BC). There have been many interpretations of the term and concept since. Grosz's interpretation for example varies from Derrida's. I discuss this further with relation to the position of the viewer of photographs in the next chapter (see pg. 136).

the photograph could incorporate the caring, social interaction that this man has been involved with: a day out, mingling with the crowds, people watching, interacting with friends online. Both of these readings may be valid. The male-female binary that Grosz sets up and Wearing & Wearing explore in relation to tourism could offer a way of looking at diverse power relations. As architecture researcher Brady Burroughs points out: 'the category 'women' (and 'men') could be exchanged with any number of categories of identity that make up our shifting subjectivities within unequal relations of power' (Burroughs 2013). What seems important here is the recognition that, although the Square promotes a dominant narrative, individual visitors form multiple social relationships. The tourist photographs on Instagram hint at the social interactions that occur within the Square; the photographs show how people negotiate the place, they show the blurring of private and public, a mixture of front and back stage behaviours.

### *The differentiated tourist*

The repetition of similar motifs, poses and views found in the tourist photographs on Instagram has revealed aspects of the social construction of the Square. The sameness has different possible causes: it could arise from the perceived need to conform when presenting the front of stage self, whether in the Square or on Instagram. It could be influenced by the need to perform the role of subject in the gaze of the camera's lens. It could derive from the dominance of the physical environment and its leading narratives and powerful personalities portrayed by the statues. Parallel to this sameness, however, is a multiplicity of experience that can be guessed at in the gaps between the frame and the personal accounts which give each photograph a different context. The personal story partially revealed by BH's other Instagram photographs makes this one photograph more vital. It disrupts Debord's culturally elitist (see pg. 255) view that mass tourism makes places banal and only fit for unthinking consumption. Art critic Paul Teasdale points out that 'despite the online channels and platforms that allow our lives to be shared instantly it's important to remind ourselves that every experience is still qualitatively different and unique. If images and stories evoke memories, what texture do these memories

take on? How do our individual memories of the same experience feel?' (Teasdale 2015:15). These repeated, yet texturally different personal photographs can be a way of knowing the place that comes from the people, what Lefebvre defined as *conniassance*. The photographs contrast and get mixed up with the statues and the official representations of the Square. They are subtly different from the didactic guidebook photographs that impart a state- and capital-sanctioned *savoir* knowledge. Lefebvre's conviction that monumental spaces effect a consensus is echoed online: Instagram also effects a consensus through the limitation of its format and the ways in which people normally use it. But like monumental space, that consensus is challenged by the way people behave there and contest the space, through the visual equivalents of 'theatrical utterances.' As Edensor explains:

Tourism is a process which involves the ongoing (re)construction of praxis and space in shared contexts. But this (re)production is never assured, for despite the prevalence of codes and norms, tourist conventions can be destabilized by rebellious performances, or by multiple, simultaneous enactions on the same stage. <sup>141</sup>

Edensor 2001:60

On Instagram a reaction against the repetition of poses that has become the norm becomes visible. People make ironic poses, having fun – hugging Big Ben, or writing captions that are at odds with the photograph they have posted. Tourist photographs can be seen in the repetition of scenes to be actively reinforcing conventions. However, partly because of the subtle 'textural' differences between repetitions, photography could also be seen to question and break down conventions. Instagram could be seen as a way of reappraising the dominant tourist/commercial/state narrative of this place, the photographs as diversely multiple rather than 'the same'. In so doing, they challenge the dominant narrative that Grosz describes as 'phallogentric adherence to universal concepts of truth and methods of verifying truth; objectivity; a disembodied, rational, sexually indifferent subject; the exploration of women's specificity in terms that continue to valorise and privilege the masculine' (Grosz in *Wearing & Wearing* 1996 233). Grosz argues that, in terms of the *khora*, meanings are made by those who occupy and interact within a

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<sup>141</sup> Edensor use of the word space is in accord with Lefebvre's. Rebellious performances could be equated with performativity.

space. I would argue that Instagram offers a space where those social interactions become possible and apparent.

Within the chronological flow of Instagram photographs from the Square small acts of rebellion or different ways of seeing this place can be observed. The act of photography can itself become reflexive and self critical, even ironic as Edensor describes (referring to a group of tourists at the Taj Mahal): 'Through their comments and their performance before the camera, they also critique the conventions of tourist framing and the centrality of performing dutiful acts of photographic recording' (op cit 2001:75). Tourists have time to look and time to interact with a place that sets them apart from their working counterparts. They are recognizable *en masse* but at the same time they are all 'other'.

## *Encountering the other*

BH's photograph was shared online like many other photographs. This public offering points to another area of common ground in the sameness of these photographs: that of community. BH is communicating not only to his friends that he is visiting this place; he is making a public statement. His photograph like many others becomes part of the virtual commons, public property. The common visual aspects hint at collective experience and shared understandings. Dewey sees public communication as an integral, ongoing part of the formation of communities.

Society not only continues to exist *by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may fairly be said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication. There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge -- a common understanding -- like-mindedness as the sociologists say.

Dewey (1916)2004:4

Chiming with Hall, Dewey emphasizes that society exists in the process of transmission, that transmission goes both ways and is not hierarchical. It is a conversation that involves difference. A network or community is not just made of links but presupposes the gaps or the links that go nowhere. Communities are as

much about what is not there, who is absent and why. Naoko Saito, a professor of education, questions the 21<sup>st</sup> Century interpretation of Dewey's proposed "'Great Community"—a public space in which different individual voices are heard through mutual learning and cooperation' (Saito 2009:101).<sup>142</sup> Saito is concerned that Dewey's pragmatic ideas concerning democratic communal education have become subsumed in American-led globalisation, where 'otherness' is consumed, assimilated or got rid of. Saito sees community and communication in a different light; she draws attention to the importance of understanding otherness rather than trying to incorporate it into the communal whole. 'This is a way to revive Dewey's call for creative democracy in our times. That call must be addressed also towards the need for humility in the face of alterity, in the face of the strangeness of the eccentric, both outside and inside of one's own home, such as to resist the lure of assimilating difference into the same' (2009:110). This is not a call for tolerance but a self-reflexive awareness of people's capacity to judge what is 'other'.<sup>143</sup> As communities are often formed by the exclusion of others, sameness is to be treated with caution; otherness can be seen and understood but not homogenised or tolerated – which assumes a superior position. This is hard in a time when, as Bauman points out, community is 'defined by its closely watched borders rather than its contents' (Bauman 2012:94). Whoever decides what the norm is seemingly holds power to decide where these borders are drawn.

Philosopher Alain Badiou also questions the terms of reference for the word 'other'. He shakes its philosophical grounding by arguing that our conception of the 'other' leads to a tolerance of difference which is based on a false dichotomy.

This commonsensical discourse has neither force nor truth. It is defeated in advance in the competition it declares between 'tolerance' and 'fanaticism', between 'the ethics of difference' and 'racism', between 'recognition of the other' and the 'identitarian' fixity.

Badiou 2001:20

The ideology of the right to difference is based on there being a stable singular

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<sup>142</sup> Saito's use of the word space in a description of community is very much in accord with Massey and Wearing and Wearing's definitions of the term.

<sup>143</sup> Foucault associates *othering* with power and knowledge. To *other* is to point out perceived weaknesses in order to gain a position of power and strength (see Raj 2007:101)

person to which there is an ethical right to be different from.<sup>144</sup> It is the positioning and nomenclature of the 'western developed' world in the hierarchal position to define who is 'other' that Massey hopes to guard against through spatial politics which makes people aware of each other's difference as a form of pluralist understanding and cooperation rather than dominance. Such a proposition casts light on 'ourselves' as existing not at the judgemental centre but on a plane, albeit an uneven one. If 'the other' is recognized through perceived difference, Badiou argues that there is a necessity to recognize the same (ibid 2001:20). The tension between Dewey, Saito and Badiou's views on otherness and sameness returns me to the tourist's photograph from which I started.

Instagram, like Parliament Square, is a public place where difference is encountered through other people being visible to each other. Yet virtual places allow people to be in many locations, with many other people at once, constantly confronted with other views, other times and scenes.

Photographs are more than just representations, and while photographic images are caught up with the moment, photographic objects have temporal and spatial duration. They are performative objects generating affective sensations. Photographs are 'blocks of space time' that have effects beyond the people or place or events to which they refer.

Urry and Larson 2011:155

Urry's description places photographs within Massey's description of space as the dimension where things happen at the same time, the dimension of multiplicity, and a dimension that presents people with the 'other' and the question of how they are going to live together (Massey 2013). Being in any public place the individual is subjected to other people's gaze; their gaze in turn makes them other, and they are aware of being other. Being photographed can enhance and capture that moment. The moment of capture is a moment, as Barthes described, where the subject becomes other to themselves. In the interface between the virtual and actual, awareness emerges of the photograph as 'other', yet at the same time becoming

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<sup>144</sup> Said's views chime with Badiou's, he writes: 'To build a conceptual framework around a notion of Us-versus-Them is, in effect, to pretend that the principal consideration is epistemological and natural—our civilization is known and accepted, theirs is different and strange—whereas, in fact, the framework separating us from them is belligerent, constructed, and situational' (Said 2001:577).

intrinsically part of the actuality: a scene within a scene. Pursuing Grosz's description of the *Khora* in terms of actual places, Wearing & Wearing emphasise that social interaction between people can create social value which is removed from consumerism.

When the term is applied to a physical place with which people interact and to which they attach cultural meaning, it represents a social process where a place acts as a material resource which over time has social significance for a group of people. Social value then refers to the meanings attached to places by groups of people. The place becomes a space, taking on the sense of social value.

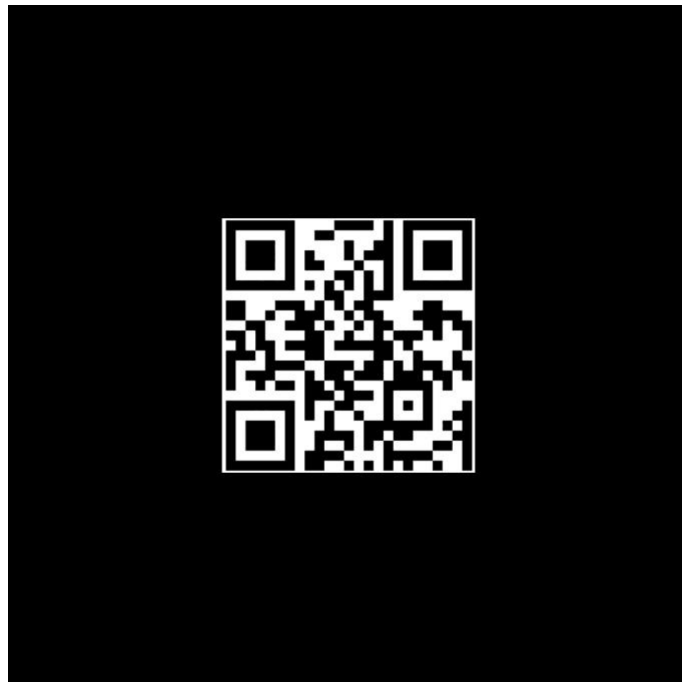
Wearing & Wearing 1996:235-6

Photography and Instagram's position, I would argue, is within this polyphony of social interactions rather than voyeuristically apart from it. From this perspective the objectifying gaze, the similar poses and the dominant place can be seen in a different context. Vilém Flusser describes how the physical act of looking at these performative objects deconstructs the relationship between space and time. He describes the manner in which the eye moves across the space of the surface, taking in different elements which break away from chronological structures of understanding. The eye makes spatial links between elements in a photograph and creates 'a space of mutual significance' (Flusser 1983:8). Space and time come together on the flat surface, one that is structurally different to that of the 'linear world of history' (ibid 1983:8). Flusser's view echoes Massey's suggestion that a spatial approach offers a different way of understanding the world than the temporal. She describes time as the 'dynamic dimension of succession' (Massey 2013): one that has been the principal way the world is seen in terms of a modernist progress towards a single fixed future. Massey's proposes that spatial ways of looking at the world offer multiplicity rather than linearity. Massey like Grosz states that places are always in the process of being made through social interaction; they do not reach a static endpoint through the linear progression of historical events. Arguably the presence and apparent solidity of monuments can be unsettled by the flimsy surface of a photograph and the accumulation of many people's views of that monument. The process of representing places photographically is entangled with the social interactions that make up what Massey calls the ongoing 'process of place'



(2005). Each tourist makes choices as to where to pose, where to direct their gaze and their cameras on the stage the Square offers: they recast the Square for their own purpose. By sharing the photograph on Instagram they make their political and social position public and open to question.

[Restaging](#), digital film, 2017



## 5. Scene within a Scene

In this central chapter of my thesis I return to focus on my practice as a core part of my research method. In my studio the smartphone had become akin to the lens of a *Camera Obscura*; it focused the images of the bright public realm into the darkened studio. The photographs that it channelled had become my guides and my raw material. The stage that I had built in the studio became the place on which I examined these photographs: taking them apart and remaking them, changing, restaging and recasting different elements. The stage became a scene within a scene within the studio but also a distorting mirror to the Square. As the viewer of these photographs, my physical reaction to them had now become visible on the stage: I had become part of this scene. I had become what Crary calls the subjective presence that breaks down the Cartesian truth of the *Camera Obscura* (Crary 1992:24).

### *Clearing*

In the small, sometimes messy and badly-lit studio the stage became a place to frame ideas; it created a clear white area which could be lit and where experiments could be documented. The process of building it and then using it opened up new ways of thinking about and questioning the meaning of the Instagram photographs. Heidegger's very physical and practical analogy of the *holzweg* brought my way of working in the studio and the process of thinking and writing about the photographs and the Square closer together. The *holzweg* (pathway in the woods) can be read in two ways: metaphorically in German it has been used to connote being lost or on the wrong path. For Heidegger, 'questioning builds the way' (Heidegger (1953)1977:3), whether in words, thought or materials. He sees the phenomenological possibilities of the *holzweg* (Heidegger (1949)2002:ix), the act of clearing the path of trees in the forest creates the path, the path is used to move along and also lets in light. The wood is cleared down the path and is used to build or to burn. The path allows more trees to be cleared. It is a process of movement that owes much to the sharpness of

the axe, to the technique of the holder, and to the trees that are cut. The act is physical but at the same time theoretical and philosophical. Heidegger also uses the German term *lichtung* or clearing in relation to these same ideas; the clearing is a space where 'Being' or questioning happens (Heidegger (1927)1962:171).<sup>145 146</sup>

## *Mirroring*

Derrida links Heidegger's ideas surrounding the term *lichtung* to Plato's spatial term *Khora*.<sup>147</sup> Plato's *khora* appears within the *Timaeus* (360 BC) which is an 'elaborately wrought account of the formation of the universe' (Zeyl 2014). Derrida describes the discussion of *khora* in *Timaeus* as a *mise-en-abyme*, a scene within a scene which opens up an echoing chasm or abyss between the sensible - what can be felt - and the intelligible - what can be known (Derrida 1995:104).<sup>148</sup> Derrida interprets the intriguingly complex word to mean something slightly different to Heidegger's *lichtung*: stating *khora* is neither 'sensible' nor 'intelligible' and 'beyond categorical oppositions' (Derrida 1995:90). Philosopher John Caputo adds another layer of interpretation onto the term: 'For Derrida *khora* may be taken as one of those "places" ...where the abyss in things opens up and we catch a glimpse in the groundlessness of our beliefs and practices' (Caputo 1997:98).<sup>149</sup> *Khora* is a common Greek noun 'but a word in which a certain formlessness or namelessness has left its mark'. This common origin, Caputo argues, places the word outside the 'view and grasp of philosophy' (ibid 1997:98).<sup>150</sup> *Khora* is an in-between place; questioning might occur within it or because of the groundlessness and uncertainty as to how to understand the world: whether through the senses or through logical knowledge. *Khora* is for Derrida 'the opening of a place "in" which everything would, at the same

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<sup>145</sup> In German *Lichtung* means a clearing in a forest, a place where light is let in.

<sup>146</sup> One of Heidegger's key questions is: what is the meaning of being or *Dasein*? Although this is an unanswerable question as Bolt explains, it is the process of questioning that 'rouses us from our habitual way of thinking about the world' (Bolt 2011:172).

<sup>147</sup> Derrida discusses the origins of Heidegger's 'questioning of Being' in Platonism (Derrida 1995:120).

<sup>148</sup> *Mise-en-abyme* literally means placed into the abyss, but can also mean a scene within a scene, or the abyss caused when two mirrors are placed opposite each other, creating a repeating chasm of reflections.

<sup>149</sup> Caputo uses the word place even though he is dealing with abstract ideas concerning *Khora*, maybe to define it as a non place, whereas Zeyl (see below) interprets *khora* as space.

<sup>150</sup> The term can be interpreted simply as 'space' or it could be understood as a 'third space' or 'receptacle' (Zeyl 2014).

time, come to take *place* and *be reflected*' (op cit 1995:104). Both terms, *lichtung* and *khora*, address how place can be inhabited and thought about. For me they are terms that can be explored physically as well as theoretically.

Building the stage opened up an area within the studio that I used to mirror the Square. The restaged versions or reactions to the Instagram photographs that I assembled on the small, well-lit wooden platform set up a resonance or oscillation between the studio and the Square. The mirroring could be equated to a *mise-en-abyme* or mirrored abyss of scenes within scenes. However, to compare the stage as a physical place to the *khora* would ground the term which should remain formless. It is the space of oscillation and resonance that might exist between the studio and the Square that could be understood as *khora*. In Derrida's description *Khora* exists in the process: 'She is nothing other than the sum or the process of what has just been inscribed 'on' her' (op cit 1995:99).<sup>151</sup> The formation of a space which only exists through process brings Derrida's ideas around *khora* back towards Heidegger's term *lichtung*. In terms of the studio stage this might mean that it is a space that is activated by and exists through a process.<sup>152</sup> Derrida turns the term *khora* towards a critique of everyday political structures since it undermines logic and laws.

As Derrida deconstructs the term *khora*, he moves on to discuss the *mise-en-abyme* in relation to political places, which he considers are a 'structure of overprinting without a base' (op cit 1995:104). Derrida argues that there is an uncanny emptiness beneath imposed structures or orders of gender, class, race or belonging. Parliament Square could be seen as a place that enforces such structures which, through the distorting mirror of the stage in the studio, I have sought to make strange or unsettle.

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<sup>151</sup> Derrida ascribes the French pronoun 'elle' to the *khora* (Derrida 1995:98), following Plato who described the *khora* as a womb-like receptacle.

<sup>152</sup> The difficulty and slippage between the meanings ascribed to place and space become more complex within Derrida's description of *khora* and how this abstract term applies to actual places. *Khora* might be understood as an abstract space brought about by thought processes that unsettle actual places, rather than the social interactive definition of space.

## *Projecting*

The mirroring between stage and the Square created a scene within a scene, a distorted, fragmented version of the Square. Each object I made in the studio had different roles, meanings and interactions. By enacting and photographing these dialogues I developed my own physical visual syntax which could be rearranged to provoke new connections. The restaged photographs that I produced remained largely private and fed into my research; occasionally I reversed the situation and sent out these altered visibilities back into the public realm.

The darkened studio when brightly lit can be used as a projector like the *Camera Obscura*; by lighting the interior, images can be projected back out through the lens. In the case of my studio the smartphone lens could be reversed to cast some of the mirrored restaged images back out into the public realm of Instagram. I attached some of these photographs to the Square by geo-tag and archived them under the hash-tag #parliamentsquarerestaged. The smartphone became the means to expand the reach of the studio. In other people's hands the phone became the place where my work was displayed, whether in the public square or in someone's private home. Looking at the screen, the viewer was presented with a scene within a scene in which I as the artist was sometimes present.

Putting the photographs back into the public domain became part of the process. Making an art work and how that work re-enters the outside world is, according to Bolt, part of performative practice in the studio: 'It is through process or practice that the outside world enters the work and the work casts its effects back into the world' (Bolt 2004:150). She relates this process to Heidegger's term 'thrownness' - the flux of life. In this context casting something back out into world can allow for another way of understanding process not as the means to an end but as an openness to what those materials are and where those processes might lead. 'The danger of representational thinking', Bolt warns, 'is that when we hold before us an 'idea' of what we think we are making, we may not be open to what the work may

address to us' (ibid 2011:95). By restaging the photographs I am not sure of a single end result; rather I am opening up a series of possibilities. Heidegger describes the practical actions as creating their own kind of sight – or insight.

Practical behaviour is not 'atheoretical' in the sense of 'sightlessness'. The way it differs from theoretical behaviour does not lie simply in the fact that in theoretical behaviour one observes, while in practical behaviour one acts...action has its own kind of sight.

Heidegger 1962:99

Placing my practice on the stage and then on Instagram, made it public, part of the scene. That necessitated a different way of looking at my practice and what role I had played in the research.

## *Performing*

Interacting with these photographs, objects and technologies allowed me to get a grasp of and become part of what Law and Urry discuss as the role of contemporary social science research. They argue that social science research methods should be performative: 'they have effects; they make differences; they enact realities; and they can help to bring into being what they also discover' (Law &Urry 2002:3). I asked myself: what kind of reality was I enacting and why? What would change in this view if I were to replace 'social science' with 'art'? My role as a researcher/artist had been a decelerated version of the viewer of photographs. I had considered, while looking at the photograph, what was of interest to me and why, but over a long period of time and in great detail. In the studio as a viewer I became physically visible, even in some way part of these photographs.<sup>153</sup> I wondered if my physical presence might somehow unsettle the viewer of these new restaged photographs.

## *Unsettling*

To further consider the position of the viewer I return to the idea of the mirrored abyss - the 'scene within a scene', which Derrida refers to - with reference to my own position as the subjective presence within the restaged photographs. In his

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<sup>153</sup> I became visible on the stage and in the studio as I documented my interaction with the photographs.

critical examination of representation, science and research, *The Age of the World Picture* (1938), Heidegger reacts to Descartes' objectifying, scientific way of viewing the world. Heidegger warns that man's positioning of himself as the relational centre creates a problematic situation: 'Man' is in and 'gets' the picture he cannot step out of the world view that only relates to his own role within it. 'Man becomes that being upon which all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its Being and its truth. Man becomes the relational centre of that which is as such' (ibid (1938) 1977:128) (see pg. 251 & 281). The *mise-en-abyme* can be part of questioning the relational positioning of the viewer and the artist/researcher at the centre of what they are looking at. Foucault explores the power structures of the viewer, the artist and the subject of an image through an in-depth analysis of Diego Velázquez's, *Las Meninas* (1656) (figure 24).



Figure 24 Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656.

The painting seems to be a series of scenes within scenes. Velázquez places himself within the primary scene in the act of painting while looking out of the frame at his subjects – King Philip IV and his wife Mariana of Austria. In so doing he places the viewer in a strange position inviting them to be part of the picture while at the same time remaining outside. Foucault explores this painting not only in terms of the relationship between the viewer, the subject and the painter, but also in terms of knowledge.



A mere confrontation, eyes catching one another's glance, direct looks superimposing themselves upon one another as they cross. And yet this slender line of reciprocal visibility embraces a whole complex network of uncertainties, exchanges, and feints. The painter is turning his eyes towards us only in so far as we happen to occupy the same position as his subject.

Foucault (1966)2005:4

The painting becomes a mirror which doesn't reflect visibly but psychologically. The painting's structure and the painter's gaze activate the viewers. Velázquez's intended subjects - the powerful King and Queen of Spain who are sitting for their portrait - can only be seen in a hazy reflection in the mirror at the centre of the painting, the viewer has 'usurped' their position as the relational centre. The process of painting is visible within the painting. The artist and the view of the life behind the scenes of the court are given pictorial value. Foucault argues that Velazquez, through his use of scenes within scenes, upsets hierarchical structures, revealing them, as Derrida might say, as 'groundless'.

At the end of *The Age of the World Picture* Heidegger describes what could be Velázquez's situation but also hints at *khora* - an in-between space or state which allows for *Being* and reflection.

Man will know, i.e. carefully safeguard into its truth, that which is incalculable, only in creative questioning and shaping out of the power of genuine reflection. Reflection transports the man of the future into that "between" in which he belongs to Being and yet remains a stranger amid that which is.

Heidegger (1938) 1977:128

Heidegger describes the incalculable as an 'invisible shadow' ((1938)1977:135), something that cannot be or is not represented yet is still present in the world. 'In keeping with the concept of the shadow, we experience the incalculable as that which is withdrawn from representation, is never the less manifest in whatever is, pointing to Being, which remains concealed' (Heidegger (1938)1977:154). Derrida's interpretation of *khora* has echoes of Heidegger's thoughts about the 'incalculable'. For me an awareness of process and the pursuit of creative questioning rather than a desire for an end result or 'world picture' has occasionally opened up a glimpse of a strange, uncanny 'in-between'. Heidegger's use of the word truth remains problematic. Research could be said to be establishing or proving truths about the

world, but as Bolt points out in reflection upon Heidegger's text 'truth is not propositional, truth is existence as it unfolds' (Bolt 2011:151). The camera plays its own role in this process; it provides a mirror for my own creative practice. Perhaps what I have been doing could be described as creating after-images and mirrored abstractions which are left on the inner eye once the light has gone. The inner eye is where vision mixes with feelings and other sensory impressions as well as *a-priori* knowledge to make an impression of the world.

Heidegger argues for the reinstatement of art as a valid way of understanding the world and 'man's' place in it but insists that an aesthetic way of perceiving artworks stands in the way of this relocation.<sup>154</sup> This repositioning of art requires a decentering of the self as artist or as viewer, perhaps moving closer to Latour's view that objects and subjects might become mutually creating rather than objects serving human needs might aid this decentering. Art and research should be capable of destabilising rather than affirming.

I have tried throughout this process not to utilise my art practice as a tool. Instead, I wanted to follow Bolt's recommendation and be open to what the work might throw back at me. I am visible in the work as I enact or perform the photographs, yet I am also an observer: I am somewhere in-between. The bodily movement of process rather than the stasis of a finished work has revealed much to me about the relationships between viewer, photograph and Square. The Square is in process; the viewers actively move between producing and consuming photographs. They live the 'truth' of these objects and social situations, taking part in their own social science research, according to Urry and Law a 'fluid and decentred social science, with fluid and decentred modes for knowing the world allegorically, indirectly, perhaps pictorially, sensuously, poetically, a social science of partial connections' (Urry & Law 2002:8). My actions in the studio are small scale; the photographs that I have been influenced by are taken by private individuals, yet at a primary level they are capable of questioning the Square. Law describes how underlying fundamental understandings of society can be altered by small interventions.

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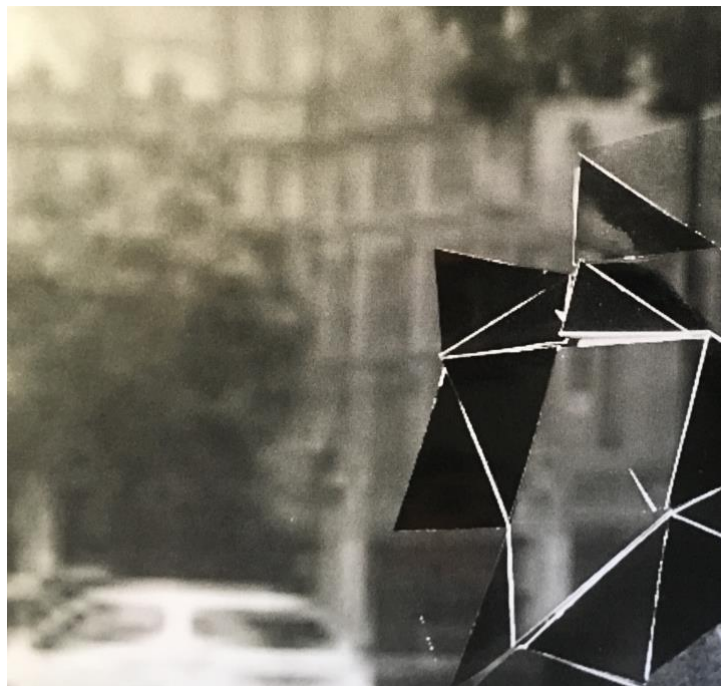
<sup>154</sup> In appendix II I expand on this point with particular reference to the work of Andreas Gursky, Mischka Henner and Richard Prince (see pg. 284).

...without a foundational macro and micro the distinction between macro- and micro-sociologies similarly makes little sense except as a performative effect of those sociologies (Law: 2000): class, nation state, patriarchy become effects rather than explanatory foundations. This is not to say that they are not real – they may indeed be made real in practice – but they offer no framework for explanation.

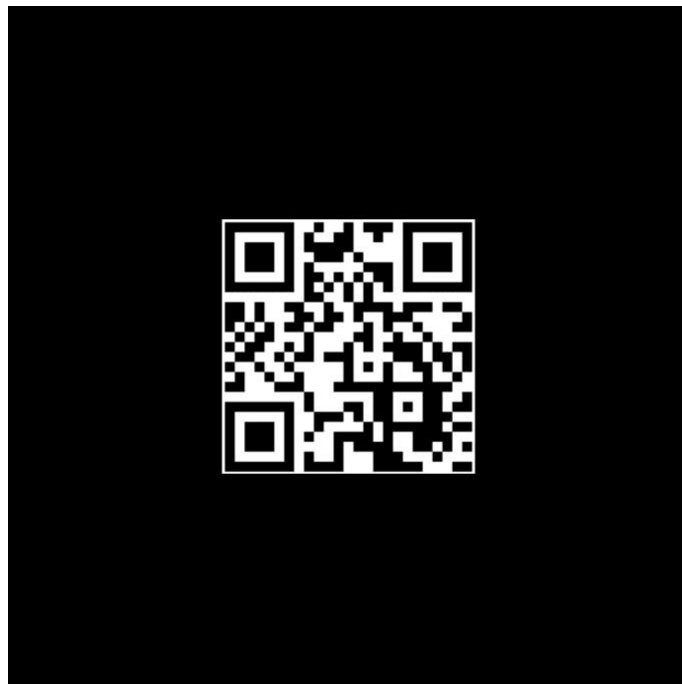
Law 2007:8

Arguably scale and chronology are upended by process and performativity. The nation state which could be seen as the core reason as to why the Square was built can be destabilised. It is itself something that is performatively enacted rather than an explanatory structure. With this in mind I return to examine the last two photographs which depict a small group of protesters and the State Opening of Parliament, a visual show of power and strength.

*Mirrored Everyday*, analogue print, 2017



[Black Mirror](#), digital film, 2017



## 6. Protest: The photograph's political purpose



Figure 25 Anon, *Protest (cropped)*, found Instagram photograph, 2014

The photograph that guided me through this section is somewhat incongruent (Figure 25). It is the photograph of a protest, yet for me it has the feeling of a calm everyday occurrence, echoing my actions in the studio where I had broken the photograph down into its components. The process of theoretical deconstruction opened up a dialogue between different elements; it allowed me to explore what was happening within the photograph but also outside the frame. Photographs of protests can be a record of an event, a call to participate. They can be a method of surveillance but also of subversion. In any of these roles photographs of protest problematize the role of the viewer. By imparting knowledge of an event, the viewers become complicit. The viewers can then choose to remain invisible or to participate and be seen in public, knowing this visibility might make them vulnerable.

As I isolated and examined different elements - in Latour's terms: human and non-human social actants - depicted in the photograph, I began to think about what the overall social or political role of this photograph might be. Berger's analysis of the function of photography within society seemed an appropriate starting point (figure 25). In contrast to Barthes' deconstruction of semiotics by placing value on emotional responses over logical, Berger takes up an overtly political, namely Marxist, standpoint. He describes photographs arresting the flow or the duration of an event, while at the same time extending the reach of the event outwards (Berger (1967)2013:90). Photographs, he argues, become ambiguous when seen out of context, the viewer is drawn into hypothesising about the past and the future of the event depicted. 'The particular event photographed implicates other events by way of an idea born of the appearances of the first event' (ibid (1967)2013:92). Therefore, the more that is known about what is depicted the more associations can be made which in turn extends the event out beyond the moment of its occurrence. When these events correspond, Berger continues, ideas form and the photograph works 'dialectically' (ibid (1967)2013:92). In the studio, while reconstructing the photograph, I juxtaposed different elements, and new associations emerged. Bearing in mind Berger's counter-semiotic caveat that 'one cannot take photographs with a dictionary' (ibid (1967)2013:94), I attempted to describe what I initially saw and the connections I had made in order to open up a dialogue within this photograph. As I

anticipated, this widened its meaning beyond the event it depicts. By tracing the photograph's connections into the past and the future, I extended the ideas and the thoughts it triggered from the particular into the general.

### *Isolating elements*

**Tents:** Initially my eye was drawn to examine the two makeshift tents on the pavement. They are replicas of tents, not habitable, constructed from fabric which has been thrown over lengths of wood and string. The sheets bear (in this photograph) unreadable slogans that are facing the Houses of Parliament across the road. I began to make associations; these imitation tents were located in the same position that Brian Haw set up camp between 2001 and 2011 to protest against the war in Iraq. The structures seem to be a deliberate visual and physical reference to his camp.

**Bare feet:** Next I studied the man sitting on the floor in front of the tent. I noticed that he has bare feet. Another man stands at the far end of the structure, he also has no shoes. Their exposed feet single them out from the group behind and from others in the Square. I felt it made them seem vulnerable but also passively unwilling to move, incongruent with the everyday well-shod pedestrians moving through the Square. In contrast, the people behind the shoeless men have bags on their shoulders; they are passing through, just pausing to talk.

**Rope:** A rope leads away from the tents. It demarcates the grass from the pavement. I guessed that this faintly visible line is probably only intended to keep people off newly sewn grass. However I knew that it also marks a line between legal jurisdictions. The position of the tents on the pavement rather than the grass obliquely indicates a boundary that is a visual reminder of Brian Haw's legal struggle to remain in situ in the Square.

**Pavement:** The diminishing perspective of the empty pavement led my eye to the main cluster of activity framed in the photograph. However, the pavement also leads out of the frame and situates the invisible photographer safe from the traffic. This perspective also included me as the viewer. The pavement protects and guides,



keeping the pedestrians segregated from the traffic: it controls and leads, it moves people along.

Placards: A small sheet of paper hangs from the ropes bearing the hand-written words 'Peace Picket'. The word picket makes sense of the feeling of intransigence I sensed from this photograph. It brought to my mind photographs of miners guarding the entrance to doomed pits. Here the words help to draw a moral line which the protesters are trying to protect: it implied militant long-term action, a constant reminder of opposition to military action. The other slogans on the side of the tents directed towards Parliament cannot be read. This shifts the photographic composition towards depicting the act of demonstration rather than the specific issue. The whole transitory construction is provisional, hand-made.

Conversations: I noticed that the people captured in the photograph are talking to each other; two separate conversations are occurring. I have found that protests often open up a place for dialogue. Shared on social media the photograph has the potential to become a continuation of that process.

Thermos flasks: Two thermos flasks are propped on the curb behind the tent suggest that a longer presence is intended.

Grass: The grass is empty of people. However it could be seen as being rich in symbolism. I recalled a report on the history and future of the Square, where this particular patch in the centre of the Square had been given great weight: 'Grass is at the core of England' (Hansard Society 2011:61). The green grass is England, it could be seen as much as a symbol of national identity as the statues. It also offers an open place to sit, to look, to play and to gather.

Statues: The statues of Churchill and Lloyd-George, to my mind, almost blend into the background. I focused on them only because I knew the inert heavy bronzes isolated on their plinths were there. I recollected a photograph taken just before the statue of Lloyd-George was unveiled during Haw's inhabitation of the Square. It showed the empty plinth topped by a tent: the protest aimed to draw attention to Lloyd-George's controversial policies in the Middle East.

Buildings: The edifice in the background of this photograph, I discovered online, houses the treasury. It was designed to accommodate the Ministry of Works and completed in 1908. Visually, its columned facade and Portland stone exterior speak of civic pride, of wealth and power.

Bicycle: The caption below the photograph explains what is going on in the scene. 'A pedantic policeman wouldn't let me tie my bike to a ...'. On closer inspection the bicycle can be seen to be part of the structure of the tents (helping to anchor it). For me the bicycle sparked other associations that link the photograph to the *Critical Mass* celebratory protests but also to the Suffragette Movement. Bicycles were a vital and egalitarian way for activists to get around the city and partake in civil disobedience. The caption and the photograph tie the bicycle and the photographer to the protest. The photographer's bike as well as the act of photography implicates her in the action. The relationship of the photographer to the subject is altered. I became aware that this photograph has the potential to incriminate as well as incite, document and publicise. I wondered what position that put me and other viewers in – removed in both time and location from the event it depicts.

Traffic lights: Almost invisible are two sets of traffic lights. The lights are designed to regulate the flow of traffic to prevent a standstill. The Square was home to the first gas-powered traffic light; their presence still indicates the Square's initial function, not as a place for pedestrians, tourists or protesters but for traffic. It is a roundabout; the lights only call a temporary, regulatory halt to the flow. As Berger suggests, the photograph has also interrupted the flow of the event (Berger (1967)2013:90). In my studio the physical photograph (figure 25) became spatial as well as temporal; it gave me a cross section of an ongoing incident, as well as a set of elements that could be studied and rearranged.

### *Making new connections*

I haven't listed these elements in any particular order. They could be re-ordered, possibly to denote their relative power to influence behaviour or to politically galvanise. They could be put into diverse hierarchies of interest and interpreted

differently by each person who looks at the photograph. What those viewers know and what they feel about what they see might lead them to make very different connections which could open up other dialogues. If each viewer sees this photograph differently, the role of the viewer cannot be removed from the diverse possible roles of the photograph. I saw these elements, in Latour's terms, as an entanglement of social actants. The photograph had captured humans and non-humans in a moment where they all had a distinct role to play within the context of the protest.

From the personal connections I made between the visual elements, overlapping areas of interest emerged and dialogues opened up. I started by exploring the hidden boundaries in the Square: the laws and freedoms that create these borders, and the acts of public transgression/law breaking and law enforcement that make them visible and representable. The photograph has the capability to be a part of both the acts of surveillance and subversion because it makes both visible. Like all the others in my study, this photograph (figure 25) was found on Instagram. This and other similar social media platforms have complicated the role of photographs, particularly of protests. I investigated whether a photograph can question, challenge or sidestep the rules of the location, virtual or actual, in which it is seen.

I also wanted to see if the photograph was capable of sparking and being part of a dialogue between viewer and subject matter, which, as Foucault discussed with reference to *Las Meninas*, could unsettle perceived power foundations. The positioning of the photograph as part of the conversation gave it agency and raised questions about how the viewer relates to the people, the politics and the sometimes violent events depicted. As I became more occupied with the photograph, I questioned whether viewers can remain a distanced voyeur or if, through the act of looking, they cannot be other than involved. I pondered if this involvement occurs only when the viewers open themselves up to a social relationship or a 'civil contract' (Azoulay 2008) in other words, if they act on such photographs, rather than remaining a passive consumer. Are such photographs capable of empowering or galvanising others to act through seeing them on social

media? Underlying all of these questions was my interest in what could be learnt from, through or with this photograph, what it had to impart about the role of the actual and the virtual place as a location for protests, political activism and dialogue.

### *Opening a dialogue between...Grass and pavement*

The photograph (figure 25) is haunted by the ghost of Brian Haw's occupation of this small area of Parliament Square (2001-2011). The flimsy sheet structure echoes Haw's home, a tent where he managed to stay for ten years, not only through physical endurance but through legal action (figure 26). After the first year of his protest against the second Iraq war he moved his encampment a few meters from the grass to the pavement. He thereby moved from the jurisdiction of the Greater London Authority who had sought to evict him from the grass to that of Westminster Council who control pavement and street. The pavement seems a less forgiving environment to live in. It is nearer the road and further away from the 'English idyll' of the well-kept lawn. In this location his camp grew as he erected more and more placards and displayed photographs of children maimed by western bombing in Iraq and Afghanistan. The inclusion in this photograph of the white sheet, strung up in the same position in which Haw camped, makes that legal boundary between the grass and the pavement visible again. It provoked me to think about what other boundaries exist in the Square and why they came into being.



Figure 26 Dave Etzold, *Brian Haw's Protest Camp*, circa 2007

Over time, places both urban and rural have been divided into areas governed by different laws; the divisions shift and change as the social use of the areas alter. Boundaries are the thresholds between different localities that are controlled by different authorities where distinct laws or freedoms are enforced. As architectural historian Iain Borden writes, boundaries exclude and prohibit but also join places together: they are 'at once exclusionary yet conjunctural' (Borden 2000:21). For Bauman, boundaries are indicators of power and control (Bauman 2012:113). The lines that border places are often invisible in everyday usage of places and only become visible when laws are transgressed or enforced. Looking for the remnants of older boundaries and their formation can give an insight into the struggle between those who make and enforce the law, and those who are included or excluded by those laws. Boundaries once visible highlight the importance of questioning these moral and ethical values such as the right to freedom of speech in public places.

From as early at the 12<sup>th</sup> Century what is now Greater London was made up of separate areas known as Liberties, which were governed by different authorities and different laws. The rules and subsequent freedoms varied enormously from area to area. *The City and Liberty of Westminster* which was formed in 1585 held control of what is now Parliament Square. The Liberty was set up in the wake of the power vacuum that followed after the dissolution of the monasteries which triggered an enormous transfer in power from the church to the state.<sup>155</sup> As part of this national reallocation of control, local governance of the Square and its environs was ceded from Westminster Abbey to the secular Liberty.

The word liberty when used to describe the delineation of an area, links liberties i.e. freedoms and written laws directly with place. Liberty also tends to have a positive connotation of what freedoms an inhabitant has in that location rather than indicating rules that restrict, yet the two go hand in hand. Freedom to behave in certain ways varied widely from Liberty to Liberty, depending on the governing body and the lie of the land. There was and still is a direct correlation between the fabric

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<sup>155</sup> When the Abbey was dissolved in 1540, Westminster was a separate city from London. After the dissolution of the Abbey the responsibility for local governance still remained within the church until 1585. At this point an Act of Parliament was passed taking legislative and judicial power away from the church and giving it to the newly formed *City and Liberty of Westminster* and the *Court of Burgesses* (see Merrit 2005:90).

of the area, the behaviour of those living or working there and its laws. Just over the river in the *Liberty of the Clink* (1530-1889) - part of what is now Southwark -, prostitution, theatres and bear-baiting were all permitted. Within the bounds of the *Liberty of the Mint* (1550-1773), debtors were free from their debts but crime was rife and living standards low. Both of these areas were exempt from the main City of London's administrative areas, where laws were more conservative.

Remnants of these bounded areas can be seen in the form of the street furniture. It heralded the changes which brought the laws of the Liberties into line with the city as a whole. Bollards marked with 'Clink 1812' signalled the introduction of new laws to protect pedestrians.<sup>156</sup> The first bollards were repurposed cannon taken from defeated French warships, upended and sunk in the ground with a cannonball in the open end.<sup>157</sup> These non-human objects indicate the delineation of certain parts of the street for different use: walking on the pavement, driving on the road, they signify a subdivision of place, controlled by social norms.

The grass in the centre of the Square was for a time bounded by ornate railings that had been commissioned to be 'sufficiently high and strong to exclude a mob on important occasions, but should not necessarily interrupt the view' (in Burch 2003:28).<sup>158</sup> Reacting to the proposed removal of the railings in the early 1930s one police officer wrote that 'an open square would only be useful for vagrants and "in my view, the removal of these railings would attract a most undesirable, unclean person to this spot"'. In addition, he feared children might treat the Square as a playground' (in Hansard Society 2011:30). The railings were eventually removed during the Second World War to be melted down for munitions. When the Square was redesigned in the early 1950s as part of *The Festival of Britain* (1951) opening

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<sup>156</sup> The Liberty was ordered to widen and generally keep pavements clear in 1786 (Public Act, 26 George III, c. 120). The administrators eventually ordered bollards to delineate safe areas for pedestrians; the bollards were modelled on cannon inscribed with the date they were installed (see Visit Bankside website). The bollards signify how the governing body in the *Liberty of the Clink* changed its laws and therefore its relationship with the inhabitants, taking on the role of protector and carer as part of the acts of governance.

<sup>157</sup> Martin H. Evans in-depth blog 'Old cannon re-used as bollards' explores how the 'cannon bollard' went from dockside repurposing to the model for the modern bollard.

<sup>158</sup> Alfred Austin, secretary at the Office of Works, to Edward Barry in 1864.

ceremony, the intention was to create a more people/pedestrian friendly Square.<sup>159</sup> Yet again objections from police and politicians alike meant pedestrians remained excluded though by other means than railings (ibid 2011:31). The layout of the Square favours motorised vehicles over pedestrians, which points to its initial purpose to ease horse-drawn traffic congestion. When navigating the Square on foot street furniture has been noticeably used to manage freedom of movement, and more subtly freedom of speech.

At the height of Haw's protest and the mass occupation of the Square by the 'Democracy Village' there was only one pedestrian crossing to the central portion of the Square. This meant 'just 500,000 people a year risk crossing three lanes of traffic to reach the centre of the square, while more than 30 million visit the parliament area' (Hunt 2008). In the Square in 2010 and 2011 railings could be seen blocking dipped curbs where pedestrian crossings once had been, marking the ongoing struggle between cars, pedestrians and law makers. Early in 2011 Westminster Council reversed this trend to exclude pedestrians, putting in new crossings which increased the flow of people passing Haw's protest site.<sup>160</sup> This increased 'freedom' of movement allowed the council to take Haw to court arguing that he was now obstructing the more frequented pavement (Morrison 2011). Haw won the argument and his camp stayed in place until his death later that year. The pedestrian crossings remain as a signifier of social struggles for the use of the land. Pedestrians are corralled by painted lines and directed by traffic lights to cross into the central area at certain points, the physical objects embody the council's reordering of the Square.

Boundaries mark the social acts, both past and present, that have occurred in a particular location. For sociologist Georg Simmel boundaries are social constructs which manifest themselves physically in places: they are 'not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially' (in Borden 2000:225). Latour expands on Simmel's idea. His description of a speed

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<sup>159</sup> *The Festival of Britain* opened in May 1951 and centred on the south bank of the Thames near Waterloo. It featured newly built concert and exhibition venues, showcasing modern design, art, science and technology. The remodelling of Parliament Square could be seen as part of a ripple out effect from this new centre of modernism.

<sup>160</sup> By this time Haw was in hospital with lung cancer, but others had taken over his position and cause.

bump's role as part of a social network to control traffic can easily be extended to the traffic lights, crossing markings and railings in the Square.

Not only has one meaning, in the example of the speed bump, been displaced into another but an action (the enforcement of the speed law) has been translated into another kind of expression. The engineers' program is delegated in concrete.

Latour 1999:187

These physical objects indicate the thresholds between different laws; they can be seen as social actants that control and direct behaviour and movement. Borden describes how people navigate public places: they check themselves against threshold symbols that delineate hidden boundaries. These may be anything from bollards to expensive cars to chain link fences or ornate railings (op cit 2000:225).<sup>161</sup> According to Borden the city is understood visually, boundaries are seen, felt and reacted to in different ways, depending on feelings of belonging within or outside them. Rules embodied by traffic lights, dipped curbs and bollards are performed without much thought. The affluence of an area is calculated by analysis of the value of parked cars, styles of buildings, levels of rubbish or graffiti. Most often these judgements and reactions are not thought, but as de Certeau and Lefebvre argue, lived. Instagram photographs of the Square can be a way of mapping these lived navigations, the grandeur of the buildings, the prominence of monuments and heavy policing. Possibly those things or events that cause the most affective reactions are what is most regularly photographed.

The pavement in this photograph can play many roles. It demarcates pedestrian safety. It also recollects the unforgiving environment that Haw chose to live on. It became the legal tool of government when obstructed. The reactions provoked by boundaries are not always to conform, but to push against them. As anthropologist Tim Ingold points out, the pavement, seen on a meta-level, can be understood as a repressor of natural order; the grass always tries to push through the cracks (Ingold 2016). The Square is a place that offers a stage on which to mount protests surrounded by the Church, the State and the Judiciary. It presents a series of rules

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<sup>161</sup> Physical boundaries overlap with personal social boundaries; feelings of belonging, entitlement or alienation are all relevant in the way people behave in public places.



and restrictions as well as legal, social and physical boundaries that can be publicly and therefore visibly challenged.

### *Stone façade and tent*

The nature of the grand stone buildings is counteracted by the humble structure of the tent. Massey argues that erecting a tent unsettles the heavy stone clad buildings, altering their meaning by recasting them in a different role to that which they were intended.<sup>162</sup> For some Haw's encampment was unpalatable and unsightly while for others it was the embodiment of street level performative democracy, a physical questioning of authority. The visual contrast between stone and tent made Haw's issues and his precarious situation highly photogenic. The subsequent photographs drew people to visit, sometimes as an additional tourist attraction, sometimes to support him. The camp became a rallying point for gatherings and discussions about Haw's issues with government policy: Britain's military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also his legal struggle to be allowed to remain in the Square. In the Square diverse publics can often be seen forming around different problems and exerting distinct claims on the same place at the same time.<sup>163 164</sup>

From a Latourian viewpoint seemingly innocuous street furniture takes on new meaning. Each element of the photograph indicates different ways in which the Square is inhabited and what social behaviour is expected and controlled. Control is not always a bad thing; arguably society needs a certain level of control as a form of social cohesion and safety to keep it from anarchy and entropy. However there is a need to find the balance between freedom of the individual and safety of the group. Sociologist Sharon Zukin describes what can occur when the balance tips too far in one direction and how that might manifest itself in the public realm where 'the politics of everyday fear' can be used as a reason to 'militarize public space making them more secure but less free' (Zukin in Bauman 2012:94). Though they seem

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<sup>162</sup> Massey discusses this contrast in relation to the Occupy movement camped outside St Paul's Cathedral, London, between October 2011 - February 2012 (Massey 2013).

<sup>163</sup> John Dewey describes 'publics' (plural) emerging and forming around different problems to which they have sympathy (Dewey (1927)2012:116).

<sup>164</sup> Photographs of protests in the Square are often posted by tourists or passers-by on Instagram, who comment on the unexpected added attraction or spectacle that the demonstrators provide.

innocuous, the bollards and railings and the paving stones at Churchill's statue's feet have as much purpose in controlling movement, thoughts and feelings in the Square as the bronze statues rising above them. Breaking free from control and constraint questions the intended purpose of these objects. New roles can be found, monuments can be co-opted as anchors for protests as well as promoting state ideals (see Roberts 2014:19). As Butler clarifies: protests involve people coming together 'to lay claim to a certain space as public space' as well as to 'make a claim in public space' (Butler 2011). For Butler it is the act of claiming public space that is common to and underlies all protests. 'Collective actions collect the space itself, gather the pavement, and animate and organize the architecture' (ibid 2011). I would argue that this can also be the case with a single person such as Haw whose unusual actions changed the material functions of the Square as much as a mass demonstration. In this photograph (figure 25) the tent activates the buildings to become part of a network of social interactions. Other non-human objects in the Square are included in this network which, as Butler states, are then animated and become part of an act of protest: part of the public.

Latour extends his theory of non-human social actants to ideas (in Law 2007:2). Although fleeting and intangible, the invisible forces that are at play in an idea or an ideology can be made material and discernible when people come together to form a public. Arguably photography can be seen as part of the process of ideas taking on social 'actant status', solidifying the moment when ideas are made material by people coming together in a public place. As political scientist Jane Bennett states: 'material bodies, both human and non-human, produce material effects in excess of the symbolic ones they also bear' (Bennett 2014:4). For me the invisible idea is made visible and physically present as a social actant in this photograph (figure 25). In the material form of the photograph the idea plays a role as it ripples outwards from the event in space and time.<sup>165</sup> The public group which is depicted gathered around the tent are giving social form to an idea; this is echoed by the group of viewers virtually gathered around the photograph online. Photography not only captures the process

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<sup>165</sup> I would describe digital images as having a material form, physically held within the smartphone or computer.

of ideas becoming visible through people gathering to protest and therefore taking on their own socio-political role. It is also part of that process.

The way this group has chosen to gather and protest by re-enacting Haw's protest (in 2014) seems to be in deliberate visual opposition to the surroundings. It also echoes previous photographs of those gatherings, and its sameness triggers memories. The columned façade of the government offices on Great George Street takes up the background of the photograph. Its windows are too high to see into the rooms within, thus recalling Acconci's description of the private smoky rooms where decisions are made (see pg. 103). People can be *othered* by architecture, referring to the facades of postmodern office buildings, Borden explains that the 'architecture of the postmodern city acts as a Sartrean "other's look" a deep mirror for looking into. The boundary emerges as a thick edge... and is ultimately a zone of social negotiation' (Borden 2000:21). The buildings here are not postmodern nor do they offer a shiny repelling mirror. However I think the analogy of being *othered* by architecture can be transferred to older urban locations, such as the Square (see pg. 133 for further discussion on the *other*). The façades of the buildings expect obedience, as do the traffic lights, the CCTV cameras, the pavement. It could be argued that any individual's relationship to these objects, be it to a railing or a stone façade, a pavement or a statue is one of being *othered*. People gauge themselves against these objects as they figure out their social position within a place. Being made to feel *other* is a form of exclusion from a community. This is a form of control and therefore power: community boundaries are drawn and policed. It may also corral those *othered* together to form a community in opposition.

Coming together as a group, sitting down on the pavement and removing their shoes sets this gathering apart from the social norms of the place. Erecting the tent blocks the flow of pedestrians and becomes a confrontational action. Antagonistic actions in public change the written and unwritten rules of the Square, repurposing the pavement and the architecture as a stage for the airing of oppositional views and for political debate. The kind of social space these actions create could be what anarchist Hakim Bey described as a 'temporary autonomous zone or TAZ' (1991). In this zone, Bey argues:

Information becomes a key tool that sneaks into the cracks of formal procedures. A new territory of the moment is created that is on the boundary line of established regions. Any attempt at permanence that goes beyond the moment deteriorates to a structured system that inevitably stifles individual creativity. It is this chance at creativity that is real empowerment.

Bey, Temporary Autonomous Zone, Wikipedia page, 2016

Individuals or groups who physically set themselves against what is expected not only step across tangible boundaries but behavioural and legal ones. New rules, independent from those that govern the Square are temporarily set into action, whether the protest takes the form of a creative moment or a longer occupation. Arguably these performative acts change the materiality of the place, if only for a short while. Political theorist Hannah Arendt's term for the coming together of people to 'act in concert' to discuss or protest matters of public concern, is the 'space of appearance' (Arendt (1958)1998:199).<sup>166</sup> Like Bey, Arendt describes this space as transient: 'wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever' (ibid (1958)1998:199). The space of appearance, Arendt argues, can be a source of power and vitality and public visibility. She sees it as an essential right. Butler re-examines Arendt's idea in the context of the Arab Spring.

Bodies on the street redeploy the space of appearance in order to contest or negate the existing form of political legitimacy – and just as they sometimes fill or take over public space the material history of those structures also works on them and becomes part of their very action.

Butler 2011

Butler makes the link between people's physical presence and their interaction with the architecture and history surrounding them.<sup>167</sup> The props they bring with them and the performative acts they might take part in alter the social dialogue. In the photograph (figure 25) the flimsy, thin white sheet in the shape of a tent is at odds with the imposing buildings, its weakness emblematic of Haw or any individual taking a stance against the establishment. Haw's act of camping in the public Square

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<sup>166</sup> Arendt clearly links the word space with the social but also physical act of gathering to 'act in concert'. She, like Habermas thinks that space or the public sphere is formed through this communal act. Butler ties this act to the street and architecture using the word space to connote not only the social gathering but also where it is physically happening.

<sup>167</sup> The Arab Spring comprised of a series of public uprisings that took place across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 which often manifested themselves in mass demonstrations in public places such as Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt.

can be seen as a precursor of the Occupy Movement. As the name suggests, the Occupy Movement's pitching of tents changes urban public places dominated by state or commercial interests into ones where people live. The act of camping and living in public drew attention to the lack of wealth and privilege of the 99%.<sup>168</sup> Massey described the protesters' tents pitched in protest in the middle of the city as making a poignant contrast to the solidity of St Paul's and the corporate buildings in Paternoster Square (Massey 2013).<sup>169</sup> A contrast that had already been seen as protesters set up camp near Wall Street in New York's Zuccotti Park earlier in 2011.<sup>170</sup> Through these actions places can be transformed; they are restaged highlighting the individual and their personal private needs.<sup>171</sup> The tent wall offers only the thinnest of barriers between private and public place. The fragility of the tent and the basic conditions lived out in public animates the government buildings and alters their meaning, drawing attention to the precarity of many individuals.<sup>172</sup> At the time this photograph was taken and shared, the act of pitching a tent was illegal. A by-law had been passed to deter further attempts to re-occupy the Square. So the act of erecting even this imitation of a tent was deliberately provocative.

### *Bare feet and statues*

The bare footed protesters seem vulnerable to me in this photograph (figure 25). The individuals pit themselves against the power of the establishment embodied by stone and bronze in the Square. They await eviction with a thermos of tea, expectant that their act of provocation will cause a reaction, like Haw who was subject to

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<sup>168</sup> 'We are the 99%' was one of the slogans of the Occupy Movement, drawing attention to the 1% who hold wealth.

<sup>169</sup> Occupy protesters first attempted to pitch tents in Paternoster Square opposite the London Stock Exchange in October 2011. However because this is a tightly controlled, privately owned public place to avoid eviction the protesters moved next to St Paul's where they stayed until February 2012.

<sup>170</sup> Formerly called Liberty Park Plaza, the area was severely damaged during the 9/11 attacks and eventually reopened and was renamed after the current owner John Zuccotti in 2006. In a mirror image of London, protesters in New York chose Zuccotti Park precisely because its status as a privately owned public place meant it was subject to different bylaws than public parks which have a dusk curfew. Zuccotti Park was the first of many Occupy camps, St Paul's and Finsbury Square being the most notable in London.

<sup>171</sup> Local workers brought food to the protesters and offered warmth and shower facilities in their places of work (see Kadet 2011).

<sup>172</sup> Precarity could be defined as the position of individuals living a precarious existence monetarily, socially and psychologically. Professor of development studies Guy Standing delineates a 'global thinning of democracy' (Standing 2012) and makes the link between precarity, globalisation and the Occupy Movement.

constant scrutiny by the police. Various attempts to evict him are well documented and stand in stark contrast to this placid scene. The photogenic and powerful nature of those scenes of discord are distant from the calm barefooted tea drinkers, yet for me, the police's absence from this particular photograph recalls the more violent photographs.

Just outside of the frame of this passive protest photograph is the statue of former Prime Minister Robert Peel. Although not physically visible, his ideas are present as a tension within the photograph. As Berger states, photographs open up possibilities to envisage what might occur after the photograph has been taken. Possible futures can be imagined based on what is known through other photographs and events. The scene contains no police, no visible attempt to enforce the bylaws, to confiscate the tent or physically move the protesters on but the potential is there. Peel's ideal of how the policing of a country should work adds another layer to the social interactions at work in this place.<sup>173</sup> At the core of these principals, conceived when Peel was Home Secretary in 1829, was policing by consent:

To maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police, the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.

#### Peelian principles handed to the Metropolitan Police 1829

Peel wrote into British law what is already contained within the etymology of the word police, deriving from policy, but also from 'politia', meaning the body of citizens, and 'polis', the city. 'Police' read in this way encompasses people, law and urban place; the will of citizens as a whole and the laws of the city set by politicians. The link between the three - law, place and people - is contained within this photograph (figure 25). It depicts the right of free speech in a public place but also the need to control such protests for the perceived benefit of the mass population. Moreover it also depicts the right of the people to police the actions of the government through freedom of public assembly. The camera bears witness but is

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<sup>173</sup> As well as serving two stints as Home Secretary, Peel was Prime Minister between 1834–1835 and 1841–1846.

also part of the event. The ethos that ‘the public are the police’ puts policing into the hands of all. Yet the reality of police overstepping their own rules or even being encouraged to ‘crack down’ on protesters forms another fine line which becomes palpable in this photograph: The balance of when to enforce the law and how.

The right to protest and question laws is often cited as being at the core of western democracy. It is enshrined in Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>174</sup> However, public questioning of policies often transgresses local laws and oversteps boundaries. In Haw’s case his protest caused restrictive changes in the law: camping equipment is now banned, pedestrian flows were changed. Haw’s recourse to the legal system however allowed him freedom to remain in the Square. The persistence of individual bodies in particular places can change opinions about the laws of public freedom and their enforcement by drawing attention to the right to protest. Protesters question the democratic rhetoric of ‘public places’.<sup>175</sup> Habermas describes a situation in which what he calls ‘actors in civil society ... can assume a surprisingly active and momentous role’. Their chance to affect the dominant political sphere only occurs ‘at the critical moments of accelerated history,’ which is when ‘these actors get the chance to reverse the normal circuits of communication in the political system and the public sphere’ (Habermas 1996:380). Arguably Haw changed the establishment and public narrative of the Square for a while. He embodied the freedom to resist a foreign policy which was initiated on the rationale that Iraq posed an immediate threat to British security.

The clash between the positive use of the word freedom and its relationship to law, law enforcement and security is regularly played out in the public realm, whether carried out through passive aggressive street furniture, acts of transgression or

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<sup>174</sup> Article 11 – Freedom of assembly and association

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.
2. No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State.

<sup>175</sup> The effect Haw’s protest had can also be seen in the reaction against the *Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011*. Civil rights advocacy group Liberty expressed their concerns surrounding the effect of the bill on freedom of speech and protest that ‘the expansive and ill-defined restrictions’ (Liberty 2011) would have in Parliament Square.

active policing. Butler points to the physical presence of people on the street as representing innate freedom to express human needs. When the line is crossed and people are physically repressed, so are those freedoms: 'to attack the body is to attack the right itself, since the right is precisely what is exercised by the body on the street' (Butler 2011). Butler's account describes what Haw lived out physically and visibly in the Square. The Square has a history of skirmishes between the police and those seeking political change through public protest. Arguably photographs of such confrontations have redrawn the line in the public perception of what acceptable policing is. Many of these photographs can be found easily online, and the history surrounding them unravels further convolutions of the narrative of the Square.



Figure 27 Anon (*Daily Mirror*), *Ada Wright on Black Friday, 1910*

One of the earliest protest photographs that I came across on my initial Google search was taken on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1910 - a day which came to be known as Black Friday. It depicts suffragette Ada Wright lying on the floor covering her face, surrounded by a group of men including two policemen (figure 27). The situation in which a *Daily Mirror* reporter took the photograph is described by *The Times* the following day.

Meanwhile, the police in front of the gate at the corner of Parliament-street and Bridge-street were kept busy repelling the raiders, some of whom came up smiling every time to the attack, while a few scolded like viragoes and most were simply stolid. They were in every case seized and pushed, sometimes



carried, to the other side of Bridge-street. The horse and motor traffic there was not stopped, but was somewhat hindered.

The Times 19<sup>th</sup> November, 1910

This excerpt emphasises the importance of a physical presence in making a political point known, felt and seen. Hindering the traffic, for example, always draws attention to a cause. The Liberal Government of the time made an attempt to stop publication of the photograph, however *The Mirror* defied these attempts, placing the photograph on its front page (see Halkon 2015). The treatment of women on this day by the police can be laid at the door of one of Peel's successors in the role of Home Secretary: Winston Churchill. There is debate as to whether he directly ordered brutality rather than arrests to try and quell the protests that had been organised to try and sway Parliament to vote for the Women's Suffrage Bill, or if he merely failed to stop it (see Colmore 2008). However his approach to policing the suffragette's protest fits into a pattern of his militaristic suppression of public protest. He had ordered troops and London Metropolitan Police to put down protests by miners in Tonypandy, Wales only 10 days before (8<sup>th</sup> November 1910).<sup>176</sup> The photograph of Ada Wright (figure 27) on the pavement, covering her face with her hands, was used and interpreted in many different ways. To me she appears vulnerable, she cannot be easily identified, the policemen's role is ambiguous, and the boy who seems to be smiling in the background adds a strange note. The fact that Churchill's statue has prime position, yet Ada Wright and others remain obscure only adds to the feeling of male dominance of the Square.<sup>177</sup>

The dialogue between elements in the Square depicted in the photograph begins to open up other discussions and themes. The correspondence between the photographs' capability to both surveil and subvert, the contrast between virtual and actual, staged and real, viewer and viewed all stem from this one photograph.

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<sup>176</sup> The facts are disputed as to who gave the orders to send in troops. Nevertheless Churchill's favoured method of control in these situations seems to have been a show of force, see Shelden (2013:234-5) and Herbert (1988:123).

<sup>177</sup> See pg. 271 for discussion on the addition of the statue of suffragist Millicent Fawcett.

## *Surveillance and subversion*

The photograph of Ada Wright (figure 27) draws out the duplicitous nature of the photograph and the possible consequences that stem from her coming into public visibility. The photograph, from a contemporary perspective, questions Churchill's version of Peel's policing by consent. The camera's capability to surveil and identify lurks beneath the surface of the photograph of her prostrate body on the pavement. The photograph of Ada Wright on the front page of *The Mirror* shocked the public, turned her into a public figure and publicized her cause.

Photographs make people visible. This visibility can promote a cause but at the same time it can put those made visible at risk. Figure 29 shows an incongruent accumulation of photographs of women: some are society portraits, some taken surreptitiously by the police of the subject while in prison, others by journalists as the women were arrested, others under coercion. Reminiscent of the Paris Communards (see pg .31 footnote 26) these photographs became weapons against those depicted. This police flyer depicting suffragette activists was circulated to public art galleries after Mary Richardson defaced Diego Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* (1651) in the National Gallery in 1914 (figure 28). Richardson justified her act as a protest against the arrest of Emmeline Pankhurst a few days before: 'I have tried to destroy the picture of the most beautiful woman in mythological history as a protest against the Government for destroying Mrs. Pankhurst, who is the most beautiful character in modern history' (NPG website). The flyer's purpose was to aid the identification of possible future assailants; the photographs became shields to protect paintings by 'the Great Masters' from their potential female iconoclasts.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Richardson's action was not a one-off; there were many similar incidents. However, as art historian Lynda Neade explains, the attack on the *Rokeby Venus* captured the public imagination (Neade 1992:15).



Figure 28 Diego Velázquez, *Detail of Rokeby Venus*, 1651 slashed in 1914

Figure 29 Criminal Record Office, Surveillance Photograph of Militant Suffragettes, silver print mounted onto identification sheet, 1914

Richardson's actions can be seen in wider feminist terms as an act against the male gaze which objectifies the naked female body. Arguably the act of slashing the canvas added a meaning to the painting of a nude woman that had not been there before. The iconoclasm, represented by the damaged canvas, led to the painting becoming symbolic of the suffragettes' cause. The slashes in the painting could be seen as destroying its beauty but also unsettling the viewer. As Mitchell argues: 'iconoclasm is more than just the destruction of images; it is a "creative destruction", in which a secondary image of defacement ... is created' (Mitchell 2005:18). The destruction or subversion of images or statues is still a valuable method for protesters, whether in the public art gallery or the public square. The secondary image that is created by destruction may pull the viewer towards forming different meanings about the original.<sup>179</sup> Photographs pass through similar paths, their meaning pulled upon by different forces, as can be seen in figure 29: the carefully posed society portrait can become a police mugshot. The same photograph may subvert but also surveil at the same time and therefore must always be treated with caution (Berger (1967)2013:21).

When photographs are taken of controversial events, whether of Brian Haw or Ada Wright, whose protests were forcefully countered by the police, the camera and the photograph take on a politically charged, active social role. The camera can become

<sup>179</sup> Neade discusses reactions to the secondary image of the *Rokeby Venus* being used by art critic Tom Philips to denigrate feminist interpretations of the nude (Neade 1992:27).

another form of policing, the photograph a form of evidence placed in the judicious eye of the public through newspapers, social media or the courts (see Trottier 2015:214). The camera like the police can be a deterrent, a reason to conform.

Pointing the camera becomes a method of exerting control. Professor of art history John Tagg describes the camera and the law in equal terms:

What engages me then is not that the law and photography are *exposed* as the docile instruments of an exterior power but, on the contrary, that, in the performative force that animates these spectacles, the language of the law and the language of photography are violently instated.

Tagg 2009:xxvi

For Tagg the camera is a weapon that is violently instrumentalized. Geoffrey Batchen, historian of photography, is critical of Tagg's view of photography as a 'convenient conduit that enables these more or less powerless subjects to be represented by forces of modern oppression as objects of knowledge, analysis and control' (Batchen 1999:7). He follows instead Foucault's idea that power flows rather than oppresses from the top down.

Power must be seen as something that circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands ... In other words, individuals are vehicles of power not its point of application.

Foucault 1980:98

Batchen prefers to see 'photography *as* power' (op cit 1999:169). The camera is often caught up in networks of power; it and the photographs are part of the flow. The presence of the camera can be a form of self-protection or resistance but it can also become a reason in itself to repress. Confiscation of cameras prevents photographs from being taken limiting the freedom of what is seen - in other words: censorship.<sup>180</sup>

Like Berger, Butler considers photographs capable of extending an event outwards. In Butler's view it is only 'live streaming' that truly represents what is happening on the street: 'extending the scene' without interference from editorial bias or state intervention.

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<sup>180</sup> There are many films of police brutality posted on YouTube in which officers attempt to stop filming (see Schneider 2015:229). Some private public places such as Paternoster Square and Granary Square prohibit filming or photography which could be seen as a pre-emptive form of censorship.

The street scenes become politically potent only when and if we have a visual and audible version of the scene communicated in live time so that the media does not merely report the scene, but is part of the scene and the action; indeed, the media *is* the scene or the space in its extended and replicable visual and audible dimensions.

Butler 2011

Digital media researcher Fatima Aziz describes how participants in the Freedom Marches held in Pakistan in 2014 used social media to amplify their involvement. 'Performance of citizenship through selfies ... becomes a dialogical gesture, transforming rally participants/photographers into claimants addressing their appeal to other protesters as well as government officials and foreign media' (Aziz 2017:23).<sup>181</sup> Aziz goes on to describe how the use of Instagram can be transformative. During the act of protesting it can be used in the manner Butler suggests as 'a public broadcasting platform', but also as a form of 'visual signature' which when shared '*en masse* can challenge power' (ibid 2017:23).<sup>182</sup> The photograph found on Instagram as Batchen argues is *power*, it is an interlocutor part of a flow between the event and the viewers. It is a node of communication about the place and the cause that the protesters support. I think social media photography platforms are capable of performing a similar role as actual public places – they can become a place in which the reach and the political potency of an event can be extended in time and space.

### *Virtual and actual*

Instagram is a regulated, commercial, virtual public realm which relies on its users to generate content but also to self-police and report abuses of its rules: what Peel might recognise as consensual policing. However censorship is still an issue here.<sup>183</sup> The public sphere created by the users of social media is interwoven with actual

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<sup>181</sup> The Azadi or Freedom March was held between August and December 2014. It was organised by Imran Khan's TPI opposition party to protest about vote rigging. The aim was to walk with a rolling and ever changing group of participants from Lahore to Islamabad.

<sup>182</sup> Aziz mentions that those posting selfies at the march were mainly male due to the self-policing actions of female users of social media, who instead posted 'indoor selfies' wearing badges of support to avoid parental stricture. Taking selfies as a family group had begun to be more acceptable and also political (Aziz 2017: 24).

<sup>183</sup> Censorship on Instagram relies on people reporting photographs they find distasteful or exploitative. There are general guidelines for unacceptable content which include picturing menstrual blood and female nipples (male ones are seemingly inoffensive).

places. It offers another 'space of appearance' - a place where, for example, police brutality can be exposed and politicians called to account or sexual harassment challenged. It is a place where issues and ideologies can be aired in public. As with the London Liberties, different areas of the web are controlled by different rules, some more permissive than others. These distinct sites and communities are defined by rules that govern how they look visually and how people behave there. For example highly surveilled activist groups often use Snapchat because of its impermanence.<sup>184</sup> Snapchat could be seen as closest to Hakim Bey's TAZ as it is so fleeting. Its multimedia messages disappear after a few seconds. Such transience seems to encourage an increase in boundary-breaking use, both political and personal.<sup>185</sup>

What occurs on social media which doesn't necessarily happen in live streaming is the extension of the political dialogue from the streets to the virtual public sphere. On Instagram publics gather virtually around a photograph in the same way that they gather around an issue visually represented by a tent or a banner or a monument in actual places. Underneath the photographs, dialogues ensue and 'likes' accrue. Communication and action in actual and virtual places interweave and interact. Butler links protesting directly to the act of online communication: 'what bodies are doing on the street when they are demonstrating is linked fundamentally to what communication devices and technologies are doing when they report on what is happening in the street' (Butler 2011). Protesters move through the fabric of the Internet in a similar way as they do through public squares, to act and make their cause public. This movement online is often simultaneous with the movement on the street. Cultural media theorist Eric Kluitenberg describes how acts of communication add to and strengthen the physical protest: 'Nomadic fluidity of activist operations across any and all media that makes them resilient and efficacious' (Kluitenberg 2015). Both acts - protesting and documenting/sharing the

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<sup>184</sup> Snapchat is an encrypted message platform. Messages disappear after a short period; appropriately the app symbol is a ghost.

<sup>185</sup> Snapchat has been used by teenagers under the age of consent to send nude pictures of themselves to other users (see Gayle 2015). This can result in both those sending and receiving the images being placed on the sex offenders' register. Snapchat amongst other encrypted social media platforms has been used by Islamic extremist groups to recruit but also promote their radical causes (Majeed 2016:268).

act of protesting online – are forms of performative democracy and exercise freedoms that bring a ‘space of appearance’ into being in actual and virtual places. Being visible and being heard are vital parts of an open political life of a country. Without public questioning, policies are carried out unchallenged or unnoticed.

Other methods of protest emerge that subvert or appropriate the online social space that can be created on Instagram; photographs may slow that flow and create a space for conversation. Following in the tradition of social realist photography, activist photographer Ruddy Roye takes photographs of homeless and deprived people on the New York streets and documents his conversations with them (figure 30).<sup>186</sup> Arguably the photographs that he posts create an ongoing virtual version of ‘Occupy’ on Instagram.<sup>187</sup>

Roye’s photographs keep deprivation and the precarity of the individual visible in the increasingly glossy commercial place that Instagram is fast becoming. His photographs also provoke debate amongst very different members of society, a discussion that probably would not take place in public on the street. Artist James Bridle’s project ‘Dronestagram’ (figure 31) subverts and appropriates Instagram to reveal the underlying nature of the technology that powers it. Bridle reveals that the network of satellite communication that allows users to access photographs from around the world is also employed by the military for drone strikes and surveillance. That gives me an uncanny chill when I look at the many frivolous photographs that are shared.<sup>188</sup> Bridle plotted each media report of drone strikes by the US and its allies through Google Earth, posting the geo-located satellite photographs online. These are photographs from before the strike; they immediately bring to mind the photographs used to show the apparent precision of such bombing raids. Bridle

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<sup>186</sup> This is a broad field of photographers and styles that could encompass people such as Diane Arbus’s investigations of the everyday strangeness of people on the streets or more abstract architectural images of Berenice Abbot.

<sup>187</sup> Roye is aware of the fine line he treads between what could be seen as voyeuristic depiction of vulnerable people living on the street and his own position as a photographer making money and gaining recognition through his work. By placing emphasis on his conversations, which are attached to the online posts, the text and comments that follow relocate the subject of the photograph to the position of co-producer of their depiction.

<sup>188</sup> This uncanny feeling returns me to Derrida’s description of the groundlessness underneath societal power structures (see pg. 145).

describes these photographs as ‘before images’ (Bridle 2015): a photograph which pre-empted the event which befell it.<sup>189</sup>

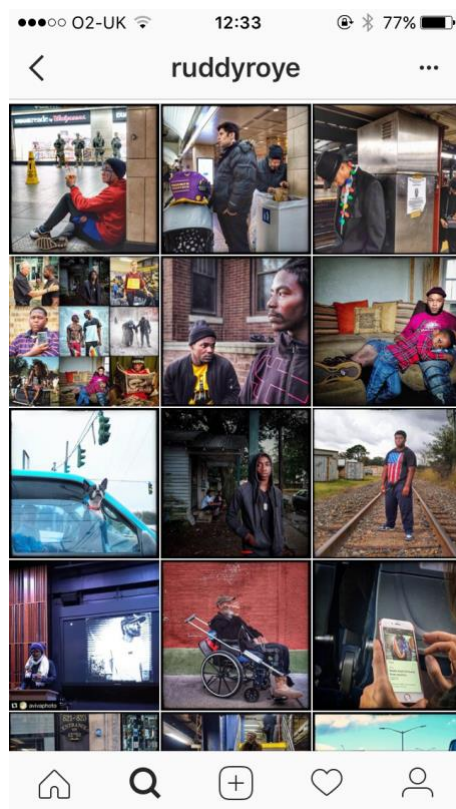


Figure 30 Ruddy Roye, *When Living is a Protest*, Instagram photograph series, 2016

Figure 31 James Bridle, *Dronestagram*, 2014

Bridle’s subversion of both Google and Instagram turns the technology to view itself. His work raises awareness of the photographs that remain hidden and the dangers of becoming inured to photographs of death and destruction. His interventions on Instagram make apparent the omniscience of the technology. For me, his work questions whether surveillance makes the general population feel safe, or if people even care that they are being watched; it makes me wary of the military capabilities of the phone in my pocket.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>189</sup> ‘Before Images’ could be seen as akin to apparently mundane CCTV images of events taken shortly before a crime occurs.

<sup>190</sup> An example of this is the strange lack of awareness or fear apparent in police behaviour during some of the most recent filmed shootings of stop and search subjects in America. Many of these crimes were perpetrated by white officers on black subjects. This indifference might suggest that some people no longer fear the repercussions from images of their own misdeeds.



The freedoms that Instagram provides allow Bridle and Roye to create a place in which they can draw attention to their issues and causes. They draw a gathering of followers who question the place in which they show their own images and push out the boundaries of what the platform can be used for. Arguably most people stay on the Internet-equivalent of the pavement and cross by the crossings. They remain only partially aware of the control that is exerted over them or which they impose on themselves in these virtual places.<sup>191</sup> However, as sociologist John Michael Roberts describes, digital places have their own decentralised network of social norms (see pg. 129). The social control does not come from one central source; in a digital echo of Foucault he argues that this ‘new form of control no longer relies on governing individuals in localities through one central point of command in the guise of the state... control operates through codes and databases that anticipate and indeed socially construct the behaviour of discreet populations’ (Roberts 2014:117). In my opinion a power flow of normative behaviour can be seen on Instagram as hash-tags and trendsetting users set the visual and social tone.

Instagrammers belong overwhelmingly to a certain demographic.<sup>192</sup> They follow certain codes; their photographs are affected by socially constructed norms, even in the event of a protest. The camera could be seen as an instigator of self-control, as Barthes noted when he controlled himself in advance of a photograph being taken, the possible publication of images continues that process. The knowledge that a wider possibly unknown audience will see the photograph probably has an effect on what photographs are taken and how people perform in front of the lens. Although visual control of the network may be decentralised, the awareness of being publicly visible through a photograph has an effect: ‘the panopticon’, as feminist author Sally Munt puts it, ‘imposes self vigilance’ (Munt 1995:115) (see pg 37 footnote 36). This self-vigilance is learnt from the realization that photographs have other possible roles and can tell other narratives, independent of those intended by those who took

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<sup>191</sup> There was a move to boycott Instagram after the new owners Facebook tried to alter the rules of ownership of images in 2012.

<sup>192</sup> 58% of users are aged between 18 to 29, 33% between 30-49. 39% of photographs are taken in urban settings and there is a relatively even use across income and education brackets. See ‘Social Media Demographics to Inform a Better Segmentation Strategy’ (York 2017).

it or appear in it. Self-vigilance may involve appearing to abide by the rules of both actual and virtual places. On the other hand, self-vigilance might result in people deciding not to use this form of media, a self-imposed virtual form of social exclusion or self-censorship which leaves them unseen.

There is a place on the Internet that allows its users to remain invisible - a place governed by its own laws. It was set up to allow people freedom to communicate without being traceable to a location or an identity. Originally coded by the US navy to keep their communications secure, 'the dark web' became a great aid to the instigators of the 'Arab Spring' amongst others. It allowed activists to agitate and organise demonstrations in public arenas such as Tahrir Square, without risk of governmental persecution. Virtual invisibility allowed public dissent to become visible. This virtual place can be used to avoid censorship and to evade arrest for political activism; it can also offer a platform for criminal activity, the supply of drugs, arms and pornography. There is a symbiotic relationship between the architecture/coded design and social behaviour in virtual places as there is in the actual city. In Lefebvre's terms the dark web is a socially constructed place just like anywhere else. Those rules and constructs are changed by the way people use it: The dark web is also the home of hackers, such as 'Anonymous', who bring together the roles of police, protesters and online activists.<sup>193</sup> The hackers are part of a loose affiliation that takes the form of a decentralised web from which different splinter groups emerge. Their general ethos was summed up by journalist Carole Cadwalladr who compared the group's decentralized structure to that of al-Qaeda, 'If you believe in Anonymous, and call yourself Anonymous, you are Anonymous' (Cadwalladr 2012). From their untraceable virtual base camp they 'occupy' and disrupt government and commercial sites, leaking potentially incriminating documents. They take down Islamic extremists' websites and reveal personal details of their fighters. Hackers are not unlike the protesters: they animate and repurpose the virtual architecture of the web for their own causes.

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<sup>193</sup> The dark web also provides cover for state-sponsored hackers such as 'Fancy Bears' group which has close links to the Russian government.

## Staged and real



Figure 32 Anon, *Anonymous Selfie*, 2015

Attempts to control people through surveillance can be thwarted in both actual and virtual places by hiding one's identity. Anonymity can be protected on Instagram through the use of pseudonyms; faces can be shielded by masks or hands. Out in the Square, protesters associated with 'Anonymous' attempt to occupy Parliament Square every 5<sup>th</sup> November wearing Guy Fawkes masks. With phones in hand some of these protesters take selfies to promote their own participation, probably leaving the bona-fide hackers at home on their computers (figure 32). Stopping to pose for an 'Anonymous' selfie could be seen to change the protesters' cause from an anti-capitalist protest to social media self-promotion which adheres firmly to the rules and social norms of the social media mainstream.

The caption under the photograph reads: 'The revolution will not be televised as people are too busy taking selfies'. This plays on Gil Scott-Heron's lyrics for *The*

*revolution will not be televised* (1971).<sup>194</sup> Scott-Heron's song rails against the mainstream media and its capacity to lull people into inaction through their belief that everything will be made better by adherence to the consumerist doctrine. The lyrics make clear: mass media is not to be trusted, as it will not show what is really happening. 'The revolution is live', happening on the streets. The use of this quote in reference to the 'Anonymous' selfie takers brings social media into the same bracket as mainstream media.<sup>195</sup> It is capable of being a disempowering distraction from the actual live purpose of the protest. On the other hand, the selfie can be a political statement which transforms a 'banal activity into a citizen act, an active performance of political identity' (Aziz 2017:27). Part of the strength of the act of taking a political selfie, Aziz argues, involves showing your face and identity which makes this particular act stronger.

The 'Anonymous selfie' indicates the seductive nature of the technology, the social pressures of sharing and the perceived need to curate a public self-image. It also brings to light that social media is drawing ever-closer to mass media as a source of information and a way of making sense of what is happening in the world. The smartphone has put the general public into the position of reporters. News is now gathered in the form of phone photographs and Twitter sound bites, the reliance on social media to provide news is also a factor in the rise of 'Fake News'.<sup>196</sup>

With the suspicion that some photographs may be engineered to gain attention, the viewer needs to exercise even more caution when looking at photographs of protests. Roberts states that 'we now live in a pictorial age in which publicity is gained through photographs and representations. Political activists can therefore stage image events and articulate their political standpoint to others through media spectacles' (Roberts 2014:161). Roberts' proposal that events are put on in politically

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<sup>194</sup> The song was built on a phrase that was coined during the civil rights movement in the early 1970s.

<sup>195</sup> Activists in the Occupy Movement also used social media to rally support for their cause. Professor of media communications Christian Fuchs interviewed many activists to understand their relationship to social media platforms they were using. He found that most were aware of the contradictory character of social media 'as both tools of domination and tools of struggle and that social media use is connected to power struggles' (Fuchs 2014:70).

<sup>196</sup> Fake news has been accused of weaponizing social media, organisations such as Facebook and the BBC are now becoming aware of the need to educate people how to spot such items, thus safeguarding their own status as news providers - BBC or a community service - Facebook (see Waters 2017).

potent places deliberately to be photogenic and to capture attention leads me to question the event, the political cause, and the photograph's (figure 25) authenticity or veracity. Journalist and lecturer Paolo Gerbaudo describes the often premeditated and 'organised' nature of staged protest photographs that function almost like (urban) scenographies designed for the display of collective dissent (in Kluitenberg 2015:3). An example of this might be Greenpeace's air pollution campaign where activists fitted gas masks to many of London's statues and monuments (figure 33). The aesthetic of protest photographs may often be exciting and dynamic, they captivate the eye, but I wonder if they are capable of drawing the viewer in and involving them in the cause, especially if the viewer suspects the photographs were designed to do so?



Figure 33 Chris Ratcliffe (Greenpeace), *Greenpeace air pollution awareness campaign*, 2016

At what point do photographs become staged, can they be staged merely by the framing of the camera's lens? The composition of the photograph (figure 25), depicting the makeshift tent with its incongruent group gathered around it, feels slightly staged to me. The protagonists are aware of the photographer, they are partially complicit with her, allowing her to take the photograph. It is undramatic, not quite what Roberts might describe as an 'Image Event': a photograph whether staged or spontaneous which captures, distils and conveys the atmosphere of the protest (Roberts 2014:161).



Figure 34 Anon (Reuters), [May Day Protest](#), 2000

Whereas the photograph of Churchill's statue with a grass punk hair cut (figure 34) might well be seen as such. It creates a visual juxtaposition which subverts not only the 'sacred grass of England' but changes Churchill's role, co-opting him to the side of the protesters. Similar to the damaged canvas of the *Rokeby Venus*, the secondary image created through iconoclasm (even if only temporary) is politically powerful and can be used to bolster dissenting political positions.

The photograph was circulated around the world, publicizing the protesters' cause and at the same time the brand of 'Cool Britannia', democracy, free speech or shock at the iconoclasm (on the front page of *The Telegraph*).<sup>197</sup> The photograph of Churchill catches the eye; viewers are drawn to it by its visual strength. The incongruity of the grass Mohican on his head seems to only add to his bullish expression.

Photographs are a representation of an event, a way of keeping hold of it in a miniature two-dimensional form. Whereas artist Mark Wallinger's representation of Haw's protest encampment involved a life-size restaging within the Tate's Duveen Galleries titled *State Britain* (2007) which could be seen to turn Haw's tents, banners and photographs into art. The representation of the protest was legal and part of the art establishment. The artwork was displayed along the exact line of the mile wide

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<sup>197</sup> The term Cool Britannia came to prominence in the early 1990s due to the resurgence in the pop and fashion industry. It was often used in reference to New Labour's election victory in 1997.

exclusion zone around Parliament, which happens to run through the Tate.<sup>198</sup> Writer on philosophy Sinéad Murphy argues that in the context of the gallery the protest became defused and robbed of its political power. Murphy equates the tolerance shown in letting Haw stay in the Square, which she argues strengthened liberal democracy, with the way the art world functions. Murphy's arguments chime with Lefebvre's opinion that protests are tolerated to maintain the *status quo* (see pg. 28). The art world, she argues, 'operates primarily as mode of control' (Murphy 2012:4); the permissive art world acts as a 'kettle' to 'physically and psychologically contain a growing population of allegedly "free thinkers"' (ibid 2012:5).<sup>199</sup> Wallinger's representation of Haw's camp could, however, also be a measure of the iconic power of Haw's protest.

In reaction to the transformation of his protest into art, Haw handed out maps to Tate visitors in order to guide them back to the original in Parliament Square. Wallinger sees his work as a form of praise and appreciation and memorialization of Haw's political ideals, now wiped from the Square by changes in the law which in itself could be seen as a legal enshrinement of his protest. One is 'real' and one is staged. For me, Wallinger's recontextualisation of Haw's protest, unlike Nishi's work with Columbus, does not question Haw's protest or his particular visual political language; it somehow hollows it of meaning. Aesthetics of protest can be powerful as in the case of Ada Wright. They can also mislead and detract from an issue. I wonder if this is what occurs when any protest is captured and made permanent and more aesthetically powerful by a photograph?

Powerful aesthetic protest photographs can, when seen in the context of the Square, change the meanings people make there. For me, the curious photograph of the tent (figure 25) - which is somehow a more authentic re-enactment of Haw's protest than Wallinger's art - has already revealed the capacity of photographs to unsettle an accepted view or understanding of an actual place. The photographs of Haw and suffragette Ada Wright seem to haunt the Square. If the piece of grass on Churchill's

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<sup>198</sup> The zone in which no unauthorised demonstrations are allowed to take place.

<sup>199</sup> Kettle is a term used by protesters and police to describe a situation in which protesters are contained in a small area, often for a long period of time. It is a technique often used to defuse protests.

head makes the viewers feel some kind of affection for him, the Ada Wright photograph might cause them to reassess the historical and political depiction of Churchill as the epitome of 'the British bulldog spirit'. They might think again about his prime position opposite Parliament: was he a brave defender of the realm, a misogynist, a brutal home secretary? The network of photographs and their attached narratives reveal he was a mix of all these things. A greyer, more tangled version of historical events emerges, mediated through the build-up of photographs that can be found linked to this place online.

### *Viewer and viewed*

The Instagram photograph of protesters (figure 25) fits into a wide set of networks, both virtual and actual. It coexists in different contexts and forms, it links with other protest photographs in other squares and with older events in the same location. It sits within a flow of miscellaneous tourists' photographs that are staking their own claim on the different possible interpretations of this site. In Latourian terms the photograph offers different social roles from which different meanings can develop each time it is enacted. The photograph is constantly capable of changing its significance and provoking new understandings of this and other places. However in all of these contexts questions particularly pertaining to the position of the viewer remain: What is the viewer's response to a photograph? Does looking make the viewer complicit as they enter a relationship that brings them into the scene and makes them part of the 'image event' (Roberts 2014:161)? At what point do they identify with the people or the subject? Can the photograph change their political views, does it draw them into crossing the lines depicted or can they remain removed, surveilling the scene from a distance?

What is noticeable about the many photographs of protests found online is that most of those pictured, unlike the main protagonist of this photograph (figure 25), do not look into the camera. The denial of the gaze can signify non-complicity in the process of photography, possibly an implicit acknowledgement that the meanings made from a photograph can be treacherous. Those depicted are far removed from the posing tourists who have a preconceived involvement with the composition and



the reasoning behind the photograph. The gaze into the lens implies some kind of relationship with the camera and the photographer. The denial of the gaze, whether by actively looking away or being unaware of the camera, leaves the viewers implicated. It might be that those pictured do not want to be looked at or objectified by the camera in this situation. Or they are so involved in the moment that they do not see the camera. The viewer looks but those depicted don't look back. The camera, as Tagg described, becomes more like a weapon as its violent, aggressive hunting 'script' comes to the fore. The viewers of the hunted or those exposed to unwanted visibility are placed firmly in the position of the voyeur.

Haw, as part of his protest, chose to display disturbing photographs of children in an attempt to stop British military involvement. Viewers of the photographs are put in the position of being a voyeur of someone else's pain which is represented in a way that, in Sontag's words, 'gives mixed signals. Stop this, it urges. But it also exclaims, what a spectacle' (Sontag 2003:68). The ethics of showing these photographs are complex. Viewers looking at them in Great Britain live in a democratic country; a democracy however that keeps invading other countries and dropping bombs on its civilians. By looking at these disturbing photographs the viewer is also invading the privacy of the children shown and their families. As Sontag states, maybe the only people who should look at such photographs are those who are in a position to do something about it (ibid 2003:37). Haw was trying to do something about the situation. He used his location opposite Parliament to show these photographs to politicians who were in a position to change policy, possibly justifying his use of photographs of injured children to do so. However, Berger suggests that photographs of agony accuse everybody and nobody. Viewers are caught between their personal inability to act and help the people caught up in the horror depicted in the photograph, and their powerlessness within the political system where they are unable to intervene and stop the causes of such agony.

Confrontation with a photographed moment of agony can mask a far more urgent confrontation... The next step should be for us to confront our own lack of political freedom. In the political systems as they exist we have no legal opportunity of effectively influencing the conduct of wars waged in our name.

To realize this and to act accordingly is the only effective way of responding to what the photograph shows.

Berger (1967)2013:33

Photographs of suffering and conflict, serve to depoliticize the viewer and remove them from responsibility which he argues is evidence of the 'general human condition' (ibid (1967)2013:33). It could be argued that Haw's attempt to change policy and end UK involvement in destructive conflicts failed. Yet his persistent presence can be seen as a triumph for free speech; it allowed him to voice his individual standpoint for as long as he physically could, even when his camp was deemed an eyesore and his pleas were largely ignored.

However, the immediacy of personal multiple eyewitness photographs taken by amateurs that report on and witness 'live revolutions' and conflicts around the world, can be seen as a positive force. It does still set social media apart from mass media because it is accessible - it is interactive, formed by its participants. Viewers have to be aware that not only photographs can be duplicitous but also the sites in which they are seen.

Hence it is not surprising that struggles for visibility have come to assume such significance in our societies today. Mediated visibility is not just a vehicle through which aspects of social and political life are brought to the attention of others: it has become a principal means by which social and political struggles are carried out.

Thompson 2005:49

Sociologist John B. Thompson considers that the visual aspect of protest is now the main way in which people engage in such activity. People have access to all of these photographs through the technology that they carry with them everyday. Google Streetview 2008 shows Haw defiant on the pavement: the large photograph of the child's bandaged head is blotted out by facial recognition technology. The generic technology masked the face to preserve anonymity. This blotting out is a reminder of the automatic algorithmic censor which adds another controlling factor to what is visible online.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Researcher of politics and computing Rodrigo Ochigame and professor of anthropology James Holston highlight how algorithms can become proxies for human censors: 'In the algorithmic control of information there are no clearly identifiable censors or explicit acts of censorship. The filtering is automated and inconspicuous, with a tangled chain of actors (computer scientists, lines of code, private corporations and user preferences). This

Instagram is built on the idea of photogeneity and spectacle; it urges caution, however, when posting photographs of 'newsworthy events'. Even so searching certain hash-tags on Instagram can expose, in an instant, a stream of photographs very similar to those that Haw displayed. #freepalestine reveals a photograph of a dead baby shot through the heart, #syriawarcrimes a child's body under rubble. Posting these photographs as a form of protest on Instagram is done with similar intention to Haw. Placing them in the public realm makes these harrowing occurrences visible to a wider audience and in so doing tries to gather public support to stop them. However, the aim to shock or shame into action is often met with the same bewildered inertia that Berger describes. In this virtual public place photographs can be reported to the controllers of the site. They are sometimes removed if people find them offensive but in general it leaves the discretion in the hands or eyes of those using the site. People have to make a conscious decision to actively search for these photographs online, or follow the people who might post them, whereas in the Square Haw and his photographs were interrupting the everyday life of those passing through. Instagram urges caution to its users treading a fine line between censorship and freedom.

Be thoughtful when posting newsworthy events.

We understand that many people use Instagram to share important and newsworthy events. Some of these issues can involve graphic images. Because so many different people and age groups use Instagram, we may remove videos of intense, graphic violence to make sure Instagram stays appropriate for everyone.

We understand that people often share this kind of content to condemn or raise awareness. If you do share content for these reasons, we encourage you to caption your photo with a warning about graphic violence. Sharing graphic images for sadistic pleasure or to glorify violence is never allowed.

Instagram help page 2017

The question of the threshold between offense and political openness brings me back to Sontag's dichotomy between fascination with the spectacle and call to become involved. Visibility however does not guarantee action or change. People

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complex process systematically limits the diversity of voices online and in many cases suppresses certain kinds of speech' (Ochigame and Holston 2016).

may look but they do not necessarily see; and if they do not see they do not understand or act. Butler is concerned that individuals and nations have developed a way of not seeing: 'this 'not seeing' in the midst of seeing, this 'not seeing' that is the condition of seeing, became the visual norm, a norm that has been a national norm, one conducted by the photographic frame in the scene of torture' (Butler in Wilkinson 2015). Butler discusses these issues with regard to photographs of torture taken by the American service personnel who perpetrated abuse on inmates in Abu Ghraib.<sup>201</sup> Has this condition of 'not seeing' come into being because of an overload of horrifying photographs that has resulted in all viewers becoming battle-hardened? Writer Jayne Wilkinson considers that photography and the inherent framing is part of the problem that allows people not to see. 'Butler thus identifies that photographic meaning and power are embedded in photographic processes, not only in photographic objects. Because frames delimit what is perceivable, what is understandable as a grievable life' (Wilkinson 2015). New boundaries emerge, the frame delimits what is known about the subject and their lives and also what the viewers feel they can do. The camera seems to remove the photographer and the viewer from involvement. The divisions arise as soon as the camera is lifted and pointed; the reasons for taking the photograph may have been aesthetic, political, empathetic or antagonistic. But as Barthes comments, indifference is always a possible reaction to a photograph (Barthes(1980)2000:27).

The main problem is, as political philosopher Jodi Dean points out, that there is a disparity between an issue becoming visible and people caring or taking action. 'All sorts of horrible political processes are perfectly transparent today. The problem is that people don't seem to mind, that they are so enthralled by transparency that they have lost the will to fight' (Dean 2002: 174). For me, distance and absence are inherent in photography. I wonder if this results in a general dissociation of the viewer from what is depicted, that they always have to overcome? Photographs posted by Roye and Bridle and the ones shown in the Square by Haw, amongst many others, raise awareness of many worldwide problems and injustices. There is a

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<sup>201</sup> American service personnel documented torture and inhumane treatment of prisoners on their mobile phones in Abu Ghraib prison, Iraq, in 2003. Eventually these images were used as evidence to prosecute the soldiers involved.

difference between being visible and the effect of being seen. The aesthetic power of many of these photographs is seductive but arguably they rarely galvanize the viewer to act.<sup>202</sup>

In an attempt to address indifference and inaction Azoulay proposes a different way of looking at photographs. She describes photography as a space of 'political relations' (Azoulay 2008:12) a view which is capable of setting all participants in photography on an equal footing removing the need for the viewers to reach a common objectifying understanding of the subject.<sup>203</sup> Instead Azoulay attempts to set the photograph free: 'every photograph belongs to no one'. The viewer 'can become not only its addressee but its addresser, one who can produce meaning for it and disseminate this meaning further' (ibid 2008:14). Azoulay pushes the process of photography beyond the relationship between the photographer and the subject to include the viewer instigating a 'civil contract'. Wilkinson interprets Azoulay's concept as a bond which is activated 'through the imprinting of an image that is always the product of an encounter, but an encounter that is without a single author, and cannot generate a single narrative for a single person exclusively' (Wilkinson 2015). This stance alters the hierarchy of the photograph; by putting the viewer on an equal footing with the subject they become involved and responsible. Azoulay introduces the word 'contract' to avoid terms such as empathy, shame, pity or compassion as 'organizers of the gaze' (op cit 2008:17).

When and where the subject of the photograph is a person who has suffered some form of injury, a viewing of the photograph that reconstructs the photographic situation and allows a reading of the injury inflicted on others becomes a civic skill, not an exercise in aesthetic appreciation.

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<sup>202</sup> The effect a single photograph can have politically and socially is a problematic area. Photographs are often credited with inciting action or even changing the course of history. For example, the photograph of Phan Thi Kim Phuc called *The Terror of War* (1972), otherwise known as *Napalm Girl*, was taken by Nick Ut after a South Vietnamese ARVN napalm strike. The photograph shows her running from her village, naked and badly burnt. This photograph is often cited as an image that changed public opinion in America and even hastened the end of the Vietnam War. According to journalist W. Joseph Campbell this is a myth; he argues cogently that, firstly, public opinion had already turned against the war and that, secondly, the war did not end for another three years (Campbell 2017:132). When this photograph *The Terror of War* was deleted from a Norwegian newspaper's Facebook page in 2016, due to Facebook's nudity laws, the photograph took on yet another meaning and role. Editor-in-chief Espen Egil Hansen addressed Facebook: 'I am upset, disappointed – well, in fact even afraid – of what you are about to do to a mainstay of our democratic society' (Hansen in Harding, Levin and Wong 2016). In this case the photograph had an effect and drew attention to Facebook's sweeping censorship algorithms. It is though hard to measure the galvanizing effects that photographs have; they undoubtedly do raise awareness and emotion which can lead to action and changes perception.

<sup>203</sup> Azoulay's use of the word space in the context of a photograph chimes with Flusser (see pg. 136).

Azoulay advises that photographs need to be ‘watched’ rather than looked at. Watching implies that it will change and alter in time and space. The process does not end at the digital click of the shutter or the publication/sharing of the photograph. The photograph continues outwards from the event, gathering more viewers and more meaning. Here Azoulay’s ideas move close to Butler’s and Berger’s: ‘the language in which photography deals is the language of events. All its references are external to itself. Hence the continuum’ (Berger (1967)2013:20). The photograph offers a place to gather multiple views and to link external ideas; all those seeing it are joined together, allowing a space for ‘civic negotiation’ (Azoulay 2008:16).<sup>204</sup> In the context of the public realm, whether virtual or actual, photography offers an indivisible, ongoing space that allows for discussion. For Azoulay watching photographs offer the possibility of learning a new skill of citizenship that is not related to nations but to a duty to each other (op cit 2008:16). Arguably, the disturbing photographs that Haw brought to Parliament Square as part of his protest challenged visitors to think about the meanings that the monuments suggest and to ask themselves: Is it acceptable to monumentalise a political system that advocates the protection of one country by aerial bombardment of another?<sup>205</sup> Even if viewers of disturbing political photographs choose not to act, they are in a position to make a choice; they are exposed to information that can be constructed into knowledge. The possibility of choice contrasts with other places, for example in totalitarian regimes such as China where mass and social media are tightly controlled.

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<sup>204</sup> Azoulay’s use of the term space here is akin to Wearing and Wearing’s definition. It is used to describe the social dynamic created between those pictured and those viewing a photograph which can become a ‘space of political relations’ (Azoulay 2008:16).

<sup>205</sup> Protesters affiliated to Haw camped on the empty plinth before the Lloyd George’s statue was installed in 2007 to draw attention to his controversial policy of bombing the ‘niggers’ in the Middle East (In Seymour 2010). Thus bringing historical actions, policies and attitudes into direct relationship with contemporaneous policies and strategic drone strikes.

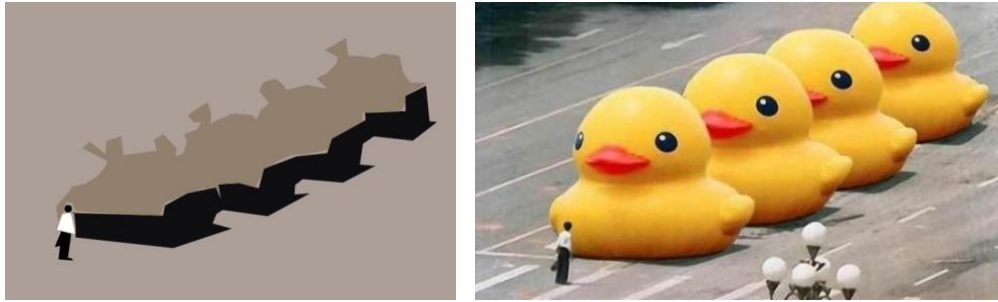


Figure 35 Jeff Widener, [Tiananmen Square protests](#), 1989

Figure 36 Anon, *Reconstruction of the 'Tank man' photograph*, (date unknown)

Photographs of the protests in Tiananmen Square, Beijing in 1989, for example, are banned (figure 35). The famous photograph of a single man in front of four tanks has been reconstructed in different, sometimes absurd ways in an attempt to evade the censors and communicate that this event happened at all (figure 36).<sup>206</sup> However the awareness of the absence of such information may provoke people to act as much if not more than the glut of photographs that may dull the senses and which the viewers then feel they can do little or nothing about. In this situation of visual overload viewers may be shocked into inaction; they may also be unaware of the restrictions that are in place due to their own misperception of their freedoms.

### *Absence and presence*

In examining one specific photograph (figure 25) I have ended up looking at what is not there, what is no longer visible, what is absent or beyond the frame. Having started with the concrete, the pavement and the buildings, I have ended with the invisible. Tangible traces left by absence of light, people, times past, indicates that photographs are, as Berger states, 'an expression of absence' and part of the process of photography.

A photograph, while recording what has been seen, always and by its nature refers to what is not seen.

Berger 2013(1967):20

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<sup>206</sup> Tiananmen Square has been scrubbed clean of all reference to the protests of 1989, while a memorial to Jan Palach is situated in a prominent part of Wenceslas Square in Prague. The student committed self-immolation in 1969 as a protest against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. (For further discussion of censorship in China see Kaiman 2013).

Derrida referred to photography as *skiagraphia* meaning shadow writing - the absence of light is what leaves a trace and makes the marks on the paper.<sup>207</sup> The word trace is used by Derrida to describe a situation much like Heidegger's 'invisible shadow'. Trace connotes an absence that remains uncannily present. 'The trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself' (Derrida 1973:156). Expanding on his idea of 'the trace', Derrida formulated the word *hauntology*, which I think applies to the situation I have found myself in. Derrida derived the term by combining the words and the meaning of haunting and ontology - (the nature of being). *Hauntology* encapsulates his questioning of 'Being' as not always entailing presence. Derrida used this concept to examine the legacy of Marxism, exploring the idea that the present and the future are haunted by possibilities of what could have been, akin to Dickens's Christmas ghosts. As journalist Andrew Gallix describes, there exists a 'nostalgia for lost futures' (Gallix 2011) - a longing for things that could have been (see pg. 279).

The photograph is a thing that exists in the world; it has an ontology, yet it is also defined by an absence. *Hauntology* also has a spatial as well as temporal aspect: what is outside the frame, haunts or affects what is in it. Reversing Berger's idea that the event depicted expands outwards, events could be seen to crowd inwards from outside the frame to affect what is seen. In the studio I took the photograph (figure 25) apart, cut it up, pieced it together with other photographs, folded, turned and spliced it. I am left with a photograph that has been changed by these processes, abstracted, detoured with photographs from different places and different times. Boundaries have been dissolved as the photograph has spiralled out to touch on many issues and raised many new questions about the way people depict public places and behave in them. The right to protest and be visible is contrasted with uncaring mechanised hypervisibility. Throughout the exploration of this photograph I have attempted to trace the complex relationship between protest, technology and public places. I have watched and changed the trajectory of the photograph as it

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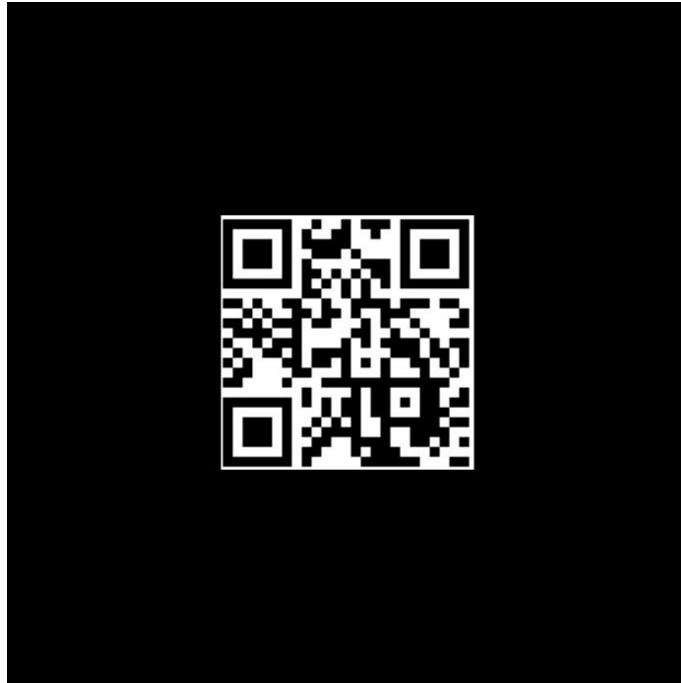
<sup>207</sup> Emerling discusses Derrida's description with reference to Fox-Talbot's description 'shadow writing' (Emerling 2012:41).



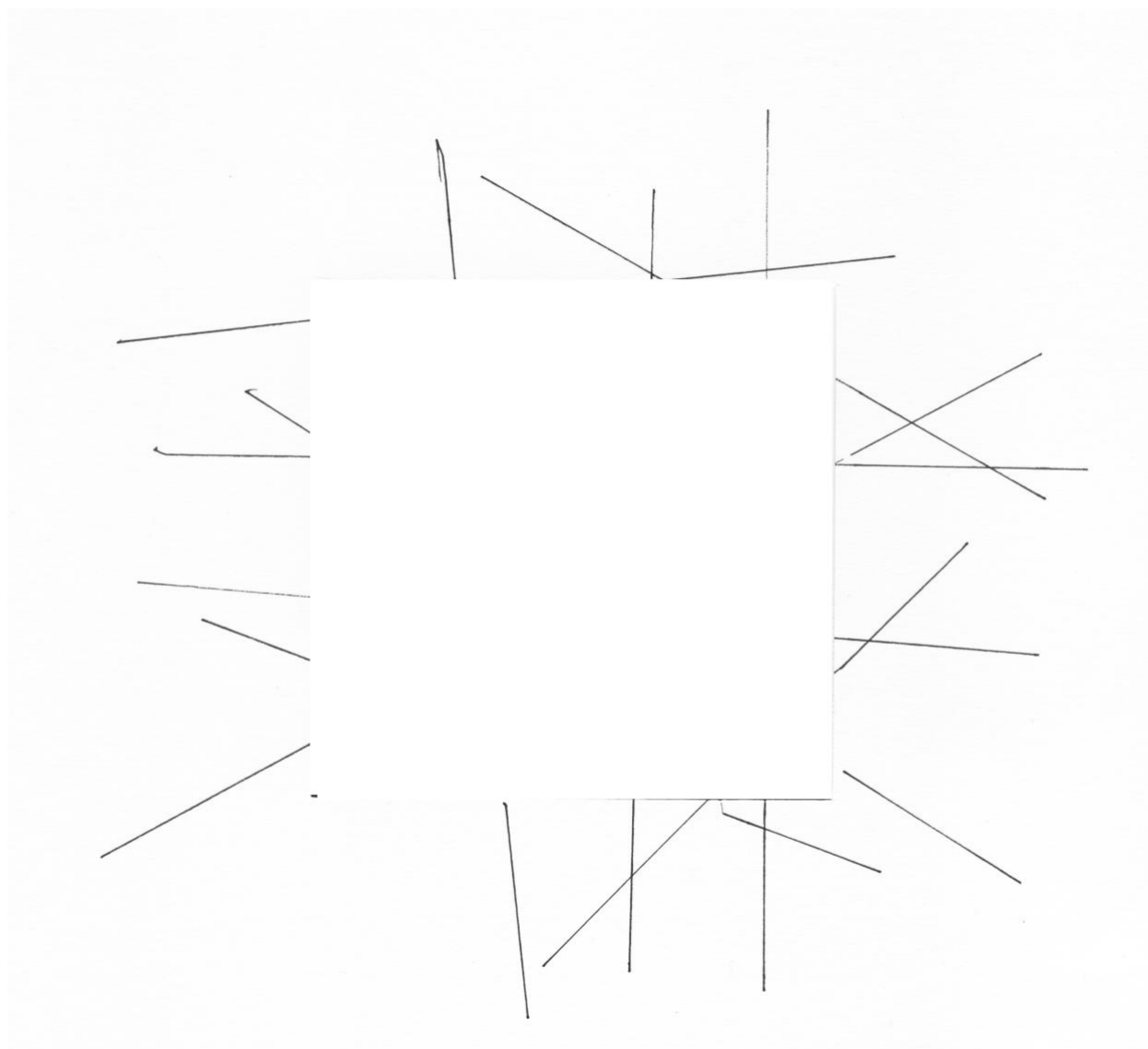
passed between actual and virtual places, as it gathered ideas and became a relational space in itself.

I wonder if there is always an element of what could be called *khora* in each photograph: an emptiness within it that allows it to become a vessel for the viewers to inhabit it with their own ideas about what they are seeing, to place themselves within it. I would argue that there is an absence and a fluidity of meaning in all photographs that allows space for many different viewers to find resonances with their own lives. Once they find that place, a non-objectifying relationship with 'others' might be possible. This civic negotiation starts in the way the viewers or watchers relate to the protagonists and realise that there is not one way of looking at a photograph and the ideas that emerge, but many.

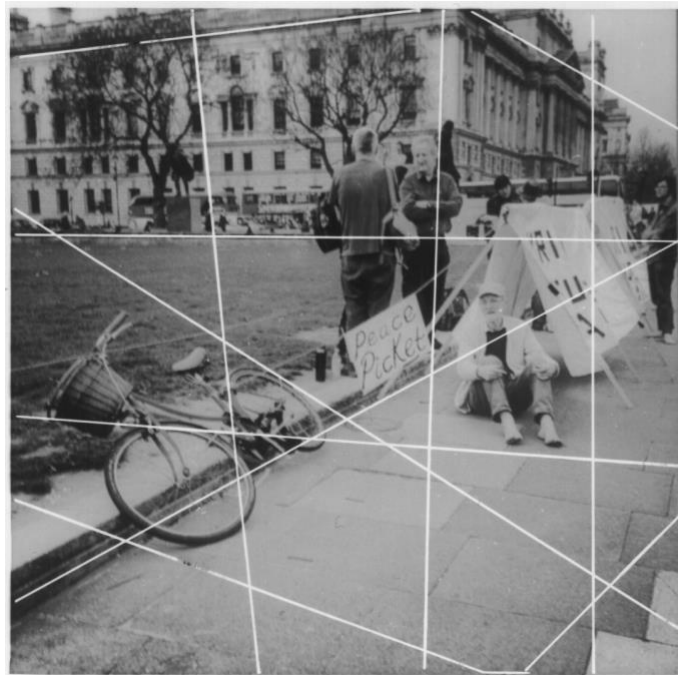
[Boundaries](#), digital film, 2015



*Invisible Lines, template, 2017*



*Invisible Lines*, analogue print, 2017



## 7. State Occasion



Figure 37 Anon, *State Occasion*, found Instagram photograph, 2016

The photograph that informs this chapter is the most recent one of the four that I chose to be my guides to Parliament Square. The caption underneath reads: 'Nothing could be more British than watching the State Opening of Parliament in the pouring rain'. It shows the Queen's Household Cavalry dressed in red ceremonial jackets marching past the Houses of Parliament, taking part in an occasion which predates the Square. The photograph (figure 37) allowed me to look back from the present and the way these traditions are upheld and depicted now, to the Square's role in Imperial nation building. It also opened up questions as to what the possible futures of this public place might be, unsettling ideas of a progression from its pedagogic origins.

### *Durational present*

The photograph (figure 37) offers a connection to the past, not only to when it was taken in Parliament Square on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016, but also further back in time. The immediate glossy surface of the photographs can be excavated to examine how the event it depicts and the place it occurs in came into being. This photographic plane can be looked at as an archaeological site, its topography bears traces of history, tradition, politics and state that came together at the moment this photograph was taken. It has already been swept into the past, yet I am looking at the photograph or watching it in the present. The moment it was taken has gone, leaving this apparently static representation of a pin-point in time behind. In the model of time conceived of by philosopher Henri Bergson and further developed by philosopher Giles Deleuze, the present is 'durational', forever moving, leaving the ever increasing past growing out beneath it. Photography theorist Damian Sutton describes the difficulty involved in understanding, analysing or representing the durational flux of the present: 'It is much harder to capture and measure the continuous process of change...In effect when we measure time's passing we spatialize duration, creating 'cut out and keep' images that we can compare in order to conceive of change' (Sutton 2008:89). Sutton's description could refer to photography in general and more specifically to Instagram.

Photographs can be seen to be 'cut out and keep' static, 'spatialized instances' with which people try to keep hold of the passing present. Massey calls for a reappraisal of the assumption that by representing or spatializing time it is made static and considered 'closed, immobile quantifiable and pertaining to the world of representation, in contrast to the flow, passage and unrepresentability of time' (discussed in Ross 2012:105). To begin to address 'dualistic opposition' between time and space that has persisted since Bergson and Deleuze, Massey emphasises that 'a reimagination of things as processes is necessary for the reconceptualization of places' (Massey 2012:20). Massey brings space and time or, as she puts it, geography and history together to be able to consider them together as 'space-time' (ibid 2012:27).<sup>208</sup> This is 'the dimension of multiple trajectories, a simultaneity of stories so far. Space is the dimension of a multiplicity of durations' (ibid 2012:24). Even though the photograph appears to make time static and spatial, the photograph itself keeps moving and changing in meaning through time. The moment captured in the photograph is already in the past; however, every time I look at this photograph both it and I myself have subtly changed. This makes sense of Azoulay's call to watch which repositions the viewer and the photograph into a dynamic field. The virtual stock of photographs geo-tagged to Parliament Square could be part of this reimagining and reconceptualising of space and time. The photographs themselves can be re-evaluated, in Massey's terms, not as spatially fixed slices of time but ongoing processes at work in the world; they could be seen as traces of multiple trajectories and durations which chimes with Derrida's formulation of hauntology.

The photograph (figure 37) leads me to examine the Square and the people in it as part of a whole ongoing 'process of becoming' (Massey in Zhou 2014:13). I would argue that photography is a constituent in this process. Photography and photographs have followed paintings, etchings and drawings in influencing the way a place is perceived. These visual representations trace the changes, they are capable of both revealing a political process and being part of it - whether it be Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs Andrews* defining the rural scene as a 'landscape' rather

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<sup>208</sup> See pg. 23 for Massey's explanation of her preference for the term space rather than place.

than 'land', Abbott's photographs of *Changing New York* or the continuing resonance of the photograph of Ada Wright prone on the pavement in Parliament Square. Arguably, the influence of photography has increased now that the technology used to capture photographs is also the technology used to disseminate and view other people's photographs. The virtually stored photographs are traces of multiple trajectories through actual places. They provide small insights into ongoing durations. The photographs themselves have their own trajectories, reaching out into space and time with unknown results. As Emerling describes, a photograph can trace how places change, but they are always in some way 'holed' or incomplete.

Images possess a radical untimeliness: thus their ability to haunt, which stems not from historicity but from their ability to trace a geography through the life of a culture. This geography is 'interleaved' and 'holed'; comprised of places of passage and forgetting.

Emerling 2012:15

This photograph (figure 37), offers a moment to examine certain trajectories back and forth in time, opening up what Azoulay calls 'potential histories' (Azoulay 2013:551) as well as imagined possible futures which might emerge as part of the processes that are ongoing in this place. Defining history and traditions as processes chimes with Massey and Lefebvre's view of how places continue to change over time. These processes are visible in this photograph; they are interlinked and work with each other contiguously.

To reiterate, this study is also a process which involves representing places theoretically and visually. Massey is concerned that representation can deprive 'space' of its dynamism (Massey 2012:21). She uses the word 'representation' to mean conceptualised or a written-down version of space; whereas I want to expand this term to look at photography and Instagram, as well as the place that the photograph depicts. However, I want to avoid stasis. Looking at any photograph presents the viewer with the representation of a moment in the past, which could be seen as a flattening static spatialization. Watching becomes a more appropriate stance: it allows photographs to become a method of understanding the past in the present. Watching them offers a method in which a place and its history can be interpreted and reinterpreted over time. Photographs can then be seen as dynamic actants, actively involved in shaping the present and the future. This investigation



begins in the shifting present in order to delve into the past without certainty or fixity. I am aware that I cannot know everything that there is to know about this occasion or the history of the Square - as Williams maintains, a large part of 'history' is the fictive 'story' (Williams (1976)2014:314).

## *Past - the process of history or failing to avoid chronology*

Deleuze proposes that the past does not remain static because of the flux of the present. European philosophy scholar James Williams explains Deleuze's reasoning: 'no settled history could lay claim to the past... History necessarily changes the past, because the past only exists through processes in the present that make the past a changing event in the present' (ibid 2011:19). When this position is combined with Massey's belief that places are also in a state of constant becoming, it seems important to be aware of the dangers of a teleological reading of the past from the seeming finality of the present.

With this hazard in mind I examine the possible origins of 'The State Opening of Parliament', the occasion that has been captured in this photograph (figure 37). Like other official occasions that occur in Parliament Square - the marching of veterans on Armistice Day, royal weddings or state funeral processions -, 'The State Opening of Parliament' derives its form from the past although its contemporary function may well have altered. The past is often manipulated to suit present needs, as historian Eric Hobsbawm points out: 'Nothing appears more ancient, and linked to an immemorial past, than the pageantry which surrounds British monarchy in its public ceremonial manifestations.' However, those "'traditions" which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented' (Hobsbawm 1983:1). The monarch has officially opened each new parliamentary session on this site for over 500 years. The structure of the occasion has evolved and changed, drawing together a hotchpotch of customs that refer to different historical and political situations. The occasion could be seen as an echo of the old Palace of Westminster itself which was an odd assembly of buildings from different eras

including chapels and assembly rooms as well as what was originally a royal residence. It was largely destroyed by fire in 1834; only Westminster Hall and a few other buildings were saved from the blaze. King William IV offered the London seat of the monarchy, Buckingham Palace, as a replacement but his proposal was rejected by Parliament. Historian Philip Salmon links the wish to remain on the original site of the first Parliament in 1295 with a certain historic sentimentality and a belief in the politics of place. The decision to stay put was in his opinion a way of maintaining links with past events (Salmon 2009). After much debate about what style this new building should take, Neo-classicism was ruled out due to its association with republicanism and revolt.<sup>209</sup> A competition was announced which specifically called for the style of the design to be either Gothic or Elizabethan. Charles Barry and Augustus Pugin's Victorian Gothic design for the 'New Palace of Westminster' was chosen to set this sense of pride in history into solid stone; the palace was finally completed in 1853.<sup>210</sup> The choice of this gothic revival style could in architectural terms be seen as conservative as it relied heavily on medieval perpendicular architecture. It was, however, also linked with religious nonconformist thought. Barry's design was chosen because it was in harmony with buildings that had survived the fire. This visual link emphasises that security in the purpose of Parliament was to be found in links to the past, on this site and in the embodiment of gothic architecture.

The New Palace was designed specifically for the State Opening. Separate entrances were built for the Monarch, the Commoners and the Lords. According to Parliament's official website, the State Opening is a 'symbolic reminder of the unity of Parliament's three parts: the Sovereign; the House of Lords; and the House of Commons' (2016). This current accord was born out of conflicts which are now marked by staged events within the ceremony. A complex series of actions unfold, each one linked to an historic event: The cellars are searched for gunpowder in memory of the failed plot to blow up the Monarch at the State Opening of

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<sup>209</sup> An example of the neo-classical architectural style is The White House in Washington (completed in 1800). See: Parliament's official website (2017), Rebuilding the Palace.

<sup>210</sup> Barry worked predominantly in a neo-classical style and recruited Pugin to add the gothic element. Neither lived to see the completed building.

Parliament in 1605. The Vice-Chamberlain is held hostage by the Monarch to ensure their safe return. The Monarch arrives through their own entrance at the base of Big Ben and is robed in a chamber where the death warrant for Charles I (1649) hangs prominently on the wall.<sup>211</sup> These acts emphasise the past tensions between the monarchy and parliament. The conflicts are currently defused by the carefully orchestrated version of this symbol of 'unity', which shows a glorified simplification of a complex messy past.

The public aspect of this event - the Monarchs' procession from Buckingham Palace to the Palace of Westminster, accompanied by troops in ceremonial garb - only began in 1852. Queen Victoria was the first Monarch to take part in the procession, and the first to enter the New Palace of Westminster. At that time there was a relatively empty area in front of this new grand palace to parliamentary democracy. The 'Garden Square' had been created after slums had been cleared and the land planted from 1806. It had not yet been co-opted by Parliament and aggrandized and imbued with political purpose. In 1867 Edward Barry (Charles Barry's son) was commissioned by parliament to design and commission statues in the newly named 'Parliament Square'. The statues were intrinsic to the intended purpose of the place, as the extensive research of Westminster's public sculpture carried out by art historian Philip Ward-Jackson reveals: Parliament Square 'from the first ... was designed as a showplace for statuary, and in particular for monuments to statesmen paid for by public subscription' (Ward-Jackson 2011:187). Political historian Geoffrey Hicks clarifies Parliament Square's particularity, describing it as a 'rare and useful example of a British outdoor space deliberately designed to exalt parliamentary politics' (Hicks 2015:165).<sup>212</sup> The Square's origins are deeply embedded within Victorian political culture and values, as historian Angus Hawkins describes: 'politics was the public life of the community' (Hawkins 2015:3); that public life 'most Victorians viewed ... as a historically informed sphere of moral conduct' (ibid 2015:4).

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<sup>211</sup> Charles I was beheaded in 1649. According to the High Court of Justice in passing sentence, he had: 'traitorously and maliciously levied war against the present Parliament, and the people therein represented' (in Manganiello 2004:543).

<sup>212</sup> Hicks uses the word space in this context whereas I would use place to denote a specific location.

Politicians were seen as offering strong individual leadership in this sphere rather than an abstract ideology.

The decision as to which monuments were to be displayed or commissioned was long argued over by the Commissioner of Works, William Cowper, in consultation with Edward Barry and the Memorials Committee. In the end it was decided that this place was to be reserved for politicians in order to laud the activities of recent political importance; there were to be no monarchs, engineers, soldiers or poets in the Square.<sup>213</sup> Hicks describes the Square as a 'visual representation of the 'Great Men' theory of history and explicitly intended to be so by the politicians who have decorated it' (Hicks 2015:165).<sup>214</sup> The initial headcount of statues was limited to five, all of them former Prime Ministers. Four of which were Victorian: Robert Peel, Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Derby, Lord Palmerston; one George Canning, Georgian: all were erected in the 1880s.<sup>215</sup> The Square could be said to have reached a level of 'completion' in 1883 when the last of the Victorian statesmen's statues, that of Disraeli, was erected.<sup>216</sup> At the time Lord Elcho described the positioning of the new statues inside the Square's decorative railings as 'like sheep into a pen' (Ward-Jackson 2011:188). The intended dignity of the statues was an invitation for satire from the very beginning.

The Victorian politicians who commissioned Barry to lay out the Square and arrange the statues within it, wanted to use it for a very specific purpose. As Hicks explains, his views echoing those of Griswold who described monuments as a species of pedagogy:

It served a pedagogic function by providing exemplars of great lives for the public to observe; it served a political function (somewhat overlooked by architectural and art historians) as an outdoor temple to Parliament; and it served an imperial function by echoing antiquity. Perhaps most obviously, these memorials reflected the growing significance of 'great lives' in the culture of the nation.

Hicks 2015:168

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<sup>213</sup> Isambard Kingdom Brunel had been one of the suggested subjects to be monumentalised.

<sup>214</sup> The term 'Great Men' theory of history was developed by writer Thomas Carlyle, who believed that it is heroic leaders who determine historic events (Carlyle 1841:21).

<sup>215</sup> Canning's statue was first erected in 1832 inside the Palace yard; it was then moved to the Square although not to the position it currently occupies.

<sup>216</sup> The Square was again described as complete in by George Grey Wornum 1950 (2011:208).

Canning is the most obvious example of the link to imperial visual ideals and ideology. He is depicted in classical robes, indicating the connection that the designers of the Square and behind them the ruling classes of the time were seeking to cement in the public mind. The British Empire was to be associated with Roman and Greek Empires through public statuary. In so doing, they sought to link the strength of these figureheads with a wider ancient Imperial ideology. The Empire was to be understood as a benevolent force keeping the *Pax Britannica* across the world, building infrastructure and educating the 'natives', as had the *Pax Romana* had before it. The statues play a role in the construction of the edifice of Empire and its *Pax* which has little to do with peace and more to do with the exertion of power. 'Parliamentary politicians were the heroes of the late Victorian era' (ibid 2015: 169). The commemoration of anyone other than royalty in the form of a statue was at this time still a radical novelty (Ward-Jackson 2011: xxxv). Placing these well-known 'Great Men' of Empire on plinths <sup>217</sup> in the newly reconfigured public square transformed the site from an open garden to a sacred site for political veneration. As Hicks makes clear: 'for the Victorians, to commemorate Parliament outdoors was to sanctify the British political ideal' (op cit 2015:169). As is currently the case with Nelson Mandela, some figures were more revered and visibly celebrated than others. Disraeli for example lived on in the public imagination, perhaps because he was favoured by Queen Victoria or because he was the most recent of those depicted to die. His death was commemorated on its anniversary by wreaths of primroses, his favourite flowers, being laid at the statue's feet not only by the right-leaning Primrose League, but also sent by Queen Victoria herself (figure 38).

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<sup>217</sup> Until modernity all statues were placed on plinths, see pg. 117 footnote 125 for discussion of the role of plinths, with reference to Krauss's text *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979).



Figure 38 Anon (postcard), *Benjamin Disraeli statue*, 19th April probably 1903 or 1904 <sup>218</sup>

Underpinning the creation of the Square is another process which encompasses history, tradition and nation-building: that of the politicization of place. Over the period of the Square's first 100 years, what was slum housing became part of the establishment. The dark web of streets - a dangerous place that allowed the individual to remain hidden or anonymous and that had once been what could be described as lawless but free - was replaced by a new restrictive, yet apparently safer public area. The new Square was created by the use of railings, planting and new road layout. However it was the depiction of politicians in bronze, raised up above the head height of the public, that made this a charged political place. The suggested narrative that Square offered was expectant of particular reactions: ones of dignified respect for politicians and politics in general and the societal values that they represented.

It was not the end of Empire but the First World War which began to change the way the Square was seen. Arguably the intended pedagogy began to backfire. The credibility of 'Great Men' lay shattered in the trenches (see Hicks 2016:166). The

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<sup>218</sup> The statue appears to be headless in this photograph. According to the person who posted it on photo sharing platform flickr, this was a problem that occurred during the development of the photograph rather than the depiction of an actual event. There is no evidence that the statues were vandalised during this time. As Hicks writes: 'Monuments in the urban landscape were cared for as carefully as they had been chosen. It was important that the shrine to great parliamentarians be kept in a fit condition for veneration' (Hicks 2015:171). Footage of the unofficial laying of flowers can be seen on a Pathé News reel shot in 1916.

amount of figurative statuary being erected throughout the land decreased significantly after 1918. In Parliament Square no more statues appeared until Jan Smuts in 1956, apart from Abraham Lincoln whose statue had already been planned pre-1914 and was unveiled in 1920. The *Cenotaph* (1919) up the road in Whitehall became the national focus. It was placed in the middle of Whitehall, and became a central point of informal national mourning after 1919. The clean abstract lines, a symbolic grave of the humble unnamed soldier, became a psychological stumbling block (Edkins 2003:66 and 108) for politicians rather than a celebration of them. Then again, as writer Alan Bennett makes clear in his screenplay for the film *History Boys* (2006), national memory can be swayed and focused away from the reasons why wars take place, diverted from examination of political failure to focus on the sentimental commemoration of the fallen (Bennett 2006).<sup>219</sup>

The Square was changed physically by the material needs of the Second World War. The railings and ornate lampposts were removed and melted down for munitions, the statues of 'Great Men' thus released from the pen. The world had changed around the Square. Despite grand plans in 1949 to pedestrianize it, when architect George Grey Wornum submitted final renovation plans in 1950 they were more modest. His request for new uniform plinths for all the statues to bring them into line with his minimal deco-classical terraces was rebuffed (Ward-Jackson 2011:189). Even without the identical plinths local Conservative MP Harold Webbe described the reconstruction as 'terrifically modern and shockingly restless in its asymmetry (ibid 2011:189).<sup>220</sup> Grey Wornum was adamant that after his intervention (and the addition of one more statue, that of Winston Churchill with whom he had consulted upon its positioning, see pg. 297) the Square was complete. No more statues were to be added, as he didn't want the Square to fill up like a graveyard (ibid 2011:208). This was an indication of how quickly the Square and those represented in it had become obsolete in its pedagogic, imperialistic and political function (see pg. 271). Grey Wornum was looking at the Square in an aesthetic light, not as part of an ongoing rewriting of history. 'It was no longer regarded as a temple to Parliament

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<sup>219</sup> The scene around the war memorial in which the boys quote from Larkin's poem *MCMXIV* takes place in the film and not in the play which preceded it.

<sup>220</sup> Grey Wornum was working at a time when much of the city was still being rebuilt after heavy war damage.

but effectively as an open-air museum for a collection of Victorian memorials' (Hicks 2015:174). Despite Grey Wornum's assertion that the Square was finished, politicians of the time retained an interest in this place as a political forum. Its pedagogic and political function began to be revived as memories of the gritty reality of war faded to be replaced by the need to commemorate heroes. However, as Hicks points out, the focus had subtly begun to change: 'In the mid-twentieth Century, not being a British politician was an asset in memorialization.' Britain was looking outwards to the Commonwealth as the last vestiges of empire fell away (ibid 2015:14). South African leader Jan Smuts, a staunch ally during the war, was the first statue to be commissioned since the First World War. Sculptor Jacob Epstein was chosen to create the statue. He was not an uncontroversial choice (see below); the statue unlike the earlier ones was paid for not by public subscription but entirely by Parliament.

After the long-disputed statue of Churchill was unveiled in 1973 there followed a long hiatus before the next few statues were unveiled.<sup>221</sup> It was to be nearly 35 years before David Lloyd-George and Nelson Mandela were added in 2007, followed by Mohandas K. Gandhi in 2015. A new version of 'Great Men' history was being written in the Square - one for the postcolonial age which questions the previous initial pedagogy of this place, yet uses the same language of statuary. Ideas of linear progression as a way of understanding place seem hard to escape. While attempting to reveal the origins of the state occasion depicted in this photograph (figure 37) and the place in which it is occurring, I have ended up tracing a single narrative, enticed by finding 'facts' that seem to add up to a causal chronology of events. Maybe a visual investigation, resulting in a spatial representation, might produce a patchwork of historical knowledge rather than a linear text. Massey quotes Laclau to pinpoint the problem that continually arises: the attempt to fix history is flawed; history is unrepresentable (2012:27). This version of the - possibly fictive - history of Parliament Square is formulated from the present. As the present is always moving on, so history is always changing. This problem can be seen in the way the Square

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<sup>221</sup> The statue of Churchill proved initially controversial. His wife wished for one of the other proposals - by sculptor Oscar Nemon - to be chosen from the initial competition as she found it more sympathetic than the rather bullish depiction by Ivor Roberts-Jones (Ward-Jackson 2011:212).



has been reconfigured to suit particular presents as well as this attempt to understand these reconfigurations from my standpoint in 2017.

### *Present- temporal relationship*

At this juncture I think Flusser's description of the chronological unsettling that occurs as the eye moves over the surface of a photograph might be useful to problematize the linear approach to understanding the 'history' of the Square. 'One's gaze takes in one element after another and produces temporal relationships between them. It can return to an element of the image it has already seen, and 'before' can become 'after'" (Flusser 1983:8-9). The eye moves around the Square as it does over a photograph, shifting between statues from different political eras, the grass, the pedestrian crossings, the railings. The chronology becomes muddled; events, people, times mingle and overlap, juxtapositions open up new stories. The 'multiple trajectories, a simultaneity of stories so far' (Massey 2012:24) might become more visible and question the singular linear narrative. The photograph and the Square exist in the present: they contain an accumulation of past events and actions, though far from concluded or static. They are part of space/time as Massey described it. I return to the photograph, initially to examine what is visible rather than what is known or can be found out, then try to apply the same method of 'achronological looking' to the Square.

Looking at the photograph (figure 37) again, this time with a deliberate intent to unsettle the temporal order and also the foundational linear narrative, I had been pulled into, my eye moves between the modern weapons and the red jackets, the Victorian gothic railings and the interlocking steel crowd barriers. The soldiers' black machine guns stand out against the bright red jackets and archaic bearskin hats. The first British troops to wear red coats were those of the New Model Army, set up by the Parliamentarians in 1645 to fight against Charles I during the Civil War. Now they are worn by those who guard the Queen. The hats are worn to impress; they create the illusion that the soldiers are taller and more imposing. Whether worn for ceremonies or battle, their function remains the same. The red coats draw the eye like the busses and telephone boxes in many other photographs of the Square. The

mix of pageantry, guns and crowd barriers creates a strange mix of celebration and domination. In Lefebvre's terms, this photograph traces trajectories of control and power: *savoir*, knowledge from above, is imposed on the people in the form of this public event. The people watching use their lived common sense or *connaissance* to live with that imposition (which also chimes with de Certeau see pg. 79).

The photographer experiencing this sight in the rain finds that the action she is involved with couldn't be more British. There seems to be a certain pride in the stoicism of waiting in the typically British rain to see the Queen and the parade. This could in Lefebvre's terms be a moment where monumental space effects a consensus (Lefebvre 1974:220). The public pageantry and show of strength promotes cohesion and creates a feeling of communal national identity which could be drawn from many factors: the pageantry, the crowd waiting patiently in the rain for the Queen. However, the caption beneath also suggests that the photograph was shared with a certain amount of self-deprecating irony or *connaissance*. The photographer is aware of the slightly ridiculous 'British' experience of standing in the pouring rain, behind the unsightly crowd barriers, for a momentary glimpse of the Queen and her guards.

As I look at the photograph the archaic dress uniforms and the modern weaponry are seen at the same time. The juxtaposition of the historical ceremonial dress is used to create a contemporary spectacular effect. It could be understood in Hobsbawm's terminology as a suspiciously modern tradition, a subtle public show of time-honoured, imperial military strength and power, masquerading behind the pomp. The complexities of the past are suppressed in order to promote a strong unified nation, echoing the description on Parliament's website. The contradiction inherent in the red jackets worn by the troops now guarding the Queen falls away. The photograph provides another hint though that the unified appearance of history in the present belies a fractured and bloody past, that could in turn question the visual purpose of the machine guns resting against those red coats.

I wonder what links can be made when I view the Square in this achronological way and what complexities might emerge. My eye makes visual links between distinct

aspects of the Square: Statues from different eras interact, remnants of Grey Wornum and Barry's configurations of the Square coexist and intermingle. The entirety of the Square is much more complex than the photograph: it was designed as a political place and remains so. The recent additions are meant to redress the past, adding a postcolonial global narrative. But the anomalies of the past bubble to the surface. A temporal short circuit occurs for me between the statues of South African General Jan Smuts, Nelson Mandela and Gandhi. As my eye moves between these three figures, different times and events are compressed and can be reimagined in the present. Smuts' statue was unveiled in 1956; it was seen and commented on by Mandela in 1964.<sup>222</sup> Further back, the junior lawyer Gandhi had been in negotiations concerning the rights of the Indian population of British Transvaal with then Colonial Secretary Smuts in 1908.<sup>223</sup> Smuts was a personal friend of Churchill, as well as inextricably linked with racial segregation in South Africa. For me, Smuts is a pivotal figure in the Square in revealing contradictions and challenging accepted state versions of history, the promulgation of which the Square has always been used to display.

### *Past –potential absence and potential histories*

Currently Smuts might be seen as the villain of the Square; moves are afoot to edit him out of this place in the wake of the row over Cecil Rhodes' statue in Oxford. Rhodes was a mining magnate turned colonial politician who used his wealth to carve out the state of Rhodesia. As part of this divisive colonial legacy, Rhodes endowed the University of Oxford with funds to provide scholarships for international students to attend the College where he had studied. The campaign to rid Oriel College of his likeness has died down with the College declining to remove the statue, on the grounds that he provokes debate and therefore awareness.<sup>224</sup>

The College believes the recent debate has underlined that the continuing presence of these historical artifacts is an important reminder of the complexity of history and of the legacies of colonialism still felt today.

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<sup>222</sup> See Appendix I (pg. 267) for a more detailed discussion of Mandela's visit to the Square in 1964.

<sup>223</sup> The British Transvaal later became part of South Africa.

<sup>224</sup> Statues of Rhodes on African campuses, for example the University of Cape Town have been removed (in April 2015).

Leaked documents suggested the college had given way to alumni who threatened to cease donations to the college if the statue was removed (ibid 2016). Yet arguments revolving around freedom of speech as well as the under-representation of black and ethnic minority staff and students continue to swirl around the statue. If Smuts were to be edited out of the Square like a doctored photograph, this would negate the possibility to find out who he was and what role he played in the lives of Mandela, Gandhi and Churchill as well as the wider world. Campaigning for his removal returns the Square to its original political purpose of smoothing over past wrongs and awkward events by raising only certain people onto plinths (see discussion of Cromwell below).

In the same way that statues are erected, their dramatic removal can also be seen as a community-forming or unifying act. Monuments to Lenin were removed from many squares around Eastern Europe post-1989 – making a clear statement of intent to break away from communist doctrine. American troops helped local Iraqis to pull down Saddam Hussein’s statue in Firdros Square, Baghdad in 2003 (figure 39) to signal the end of his regime. Artist Stefanos Tsivopoulos in his work *Precarious Archive* (2015) highlighted the many times that the statue of US President Harry S. Truman in Athens, Greece had been toppled, vandalised, repaired and attacked again.<sup>225</sup> The statue was seen as a symbol of political and cultural colonization, the archive of destructions traced fluctuations in Greek public opinion towards America. In America the proposal to remove the statue of General Robert E. Lee from where it has stood since 1924 led to protests and the murder of an activist by a white supremacist in Charlottesville, Virginia.<sup>226</sup> In the aftermath President Donald Trump

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<sup>225</sup> Tsivopoulos’s archive included many documents and photographs not only of Truman’s statue. The archive was activated by different performers who changed what was on display, thus changing the narrative available from the documents.

<sup>226</sup> Lee fought for the southern confederate states in the American civil war for the retention of slavery. In a parallel with Columbus historian Emory Thomas describes how Lee has been built up as an American hero and the patron saint of the American South (1997:13). Thomas goes on to temper this view. For me Lee’s views on slavery are incredibly provocative; it is hard to see past them and call him, as Thomas does, a ‘great man’ (1997:14). Writing to his wife in 1856 Lee makes his views clear: ‘In this enlightened age, there are few I believe, but what will acknowledge, that slavery as an institution is a moral & political evil in any Country. It is useless to expatiate on its disadvantages. I think it however a greater evil to the white man than to the black race, & while my feelings are strongly enlisted in behalf of the latter, my sympathies are more strong for the former. The blacks are immeasurably better off here than in Africa, morally, socially & physically. The painful discipline they are

intervened to decry the removal of statues celebrating confederate heroes in the southern states of America, in so doing he condoned the violent racists who were 'defending' the statue. Many statues honouring confederate figures were erected at a time of heightened racial tensions during the instigation and abolition of the Jim Crow laws (see Wilson 2017).<sup>227</sup> Which brings to the fore a question that should be asked at the erection or destruction of any monument: why now? Battles for political territory and racial equality continue in America. Lee's statue became an anchor for both sides to express their views: one side was set on its removal, the other - mainly white supremacists and Neo-Nazis - violently demanding it be kept. At the point when blood is spilled in the debate about the removal of a statue, freedom of speech and security become tightly bound to the bronze figures. It might at this point be tempting to follow what Bauman signposted as a universal reaction to hide from risk-ridden complexity and remove controversial statues such as Rhodes or Lee and in so doing attempt to erase past and present pain and division. Yet this move might only serve a darker purpose to enflame the right but also to forget the hard won battles such as the civil rights movement and the end of segregation. The Mayor of Charlottesville, Mike Signer, who initially argued to keep but recontextualize the statue now believes it should be removed.

It became very clear to me that the historical meaning of this statue has been inalterably changed. It's changing every day in part because we're getting new threats on a daily basis from terrorists who see it as a lightning rod and want to come back here...people are frightened of what the statue will do to us. I think that it has become a public safety threat and that is its meaning now.

Signer in Laughland 2017

The context of these statues could be changed in order to explore the complex, painful and unresolved legacy of the civil war, slavery and ongoing racial injustice. Even long after the statues have been dragged away and melted down, the dramatic photographs that ensue such removals become symbols of regime change of ideological shifts, battles won and lost (Figure 40). (See Mitchell's discussion of

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undergoing is necessary for their instruction as a race, & I hope will prepare & lead them to better things' (Lee in Thomas 1997:173). Lee's opinions can be seen in context of the era of colonialism where empire and imperialism were sometimes seen as philanthropic duty; another example of this thinking is Kipling's poem *The White Man's Burden* (1899).

<sup>227</sup> Jim Crow laws had enforced racial segregation in schools, public transport systems, and other public buildings in the former confederate states in 1896. The laws were only finally abolished in 1964.

iconoclastic secondary images pg. 99)



Figure 39 Goran Tomasevic (photographer), [Saddam Hussein statue in Firdos Square](#), Baghdad, Iraq, 2003

Figure 40 Casey Toth (photographer), [Confederate Soldier statue in Durham](#), North Carolina, USA, 2017

In the square many of the early statues have been repositioned – Disraeli, Palmerston and Peel were demoted from the front edge of the Square to the back in Grey Wornum’s reconfiguration, as their political influence waned.<sup>228</sup> However Smuts would be the first removal. The statue of Oliver Cromwell which stands just out of frame of this photograph (figure 37), never quite made it into the Square. His statue is positioned in the New Palace Yard. The Statue was excluded from the Square after an initial trial period because, according to Stuart Burch writing in his PhD study of the Square, Cromwell’s ethos did not fit with the contemporaneous, imperial Victorian figures (Burch 2003:259-260).<sup>229</sup> Cromwell who was partially responsible for the New Model Army’s formation and whose signature appears on Charles I death warrant, was and still is a divisive figure.<sup>230</sup> In the 1890s he was seen as too controversial to be placed in the publicly accessible space, not because of his stand against the Monarchy but due to his violent campaign in Ireland (ibid 2003:20). The statue was eventually erected in 1899 just inside the railings surrounding the Palace of Westminster, looking out over the Square from the safety of a high plinth. It was

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<sup>228</sup> See pg. 297 in appendix I for a wider discussion of the impermanence of statues compared with historic photographs.

<sup>229</sup> Stuart Burch’s is the only PhD thesis I could find that deals exclusively with Parliament Square.

<sup>230</sup> A move was made recently by members of Parliament to have his statue removed and melted down, due to the war crimes he committed in Ireland. See the early day motion 1172 tabled by MP Tony Banks (2004). A plaster statue of Cromwell had been situated briefly in the Square as a test to see where other statues should be situated in 1871 (Ward-Jackson 2011:188).

just beneath this statue that an INLA car bomb killed shadow secretary of state for Northern Ireland, Airey Neave, in 1979.<sup>231</sup>

Editing statues makes uncomfortable pasts less visible. Far from addressing and righting current wrongs such as racism, misogyny or inequality this can decontextualize the issues from their historical connections, making them less open to question or understanding. As seen with the contrary history of the soldiers' red coats, parliament has not always been at one with the monarchy. When a visual clue is left in place it can spark a moment of critical awareness that the Square has been constantly edited and reformed to suit the demands of the political climate of the time. Undoubtedly Smuts was a proponent of racial segregation which is what makes him unpalatable in a post-colonial world; yet the intricacies of his life and political roles that can be uncovered by just a cursory search online would be lost if his presence was removed from public view. Smuts negotiated a compromise with Gandhi in 1914 which gave the Indian population more rights in South Africa. Gandhi came to admire him as a 'politician' (with all the possible duplicity that the title might bring), giving him a pair of sandals he had made himself, possibly a symbolic way of humbling the man. Yet he also felt betrayed by him.

In a parallel to the protests surrounding Cecil Rhodes statues across Africa, a newly unveiled statue of Gandhi was met with derision in Accra, Ghana, as he is widely perceived there, as a racist. It was Gandhi's experience in prison in South Africa which formed his political ethos, yet he was also part of the colonial racial hierarchy, seeing himself as above the local black population (see Burke 2016). Smuts finally lost office because of his objection to all-out apartheid in 1948, and died soon after in 1950. In the same year that Smuts' statue was unveiled in 1956, Nelson Mandela was on trial for rebelling against the apartheid system. He was tried and found guilty, along with a group of mainly Jewish activists including Ruth First, Joe Slovo, Leon Levy and Lionel Bernstein. The media coverage led to an upsurge of anti-Semitism in South Africa, fuelling the belief that there was a Jewish, communist plot to topple the white government.

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<sup>231</sup> INLA – Irish National Liberation Army – a republican splinter group of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

In the case of Smuts as well as the loss of reference to 20<sup>th</sup> Century global politics, the story behind the statue itself would be lost to view. Its sculptor Jacob Epstein was a controversial choice in the still largely conservative and partly anti-Semitic British political and art establishment, not only because of his religion but because his style, as this snippet of a letter to the commissioner of works sent in 1953 makes plain.

May I beg & implore you to see that his work may resemble and be a fitting representation of a very fine gentleman, instead of the grotesque, bulging, ugly statues that he (Epstein) usually makes.

Epstein National Archives File 2014

The bronze figure placed on South African granite was intended as a gesture of appreciation of colonial loyalty during World War II. It was also a signifier of Epstein's gradual acceptance into the art establishment. He had been vilified 'as a barbarian Jew, infiltrating and corrupting British art' (Brockington 2004). The opposition to his work and the juxtaposition of his own personal history with Smuts, reveals the pressures to conform to a committee-led ideal of realistic figurative representation. Later in 2006, sculptor Glynn Williams' proposal for a 'sliced' Lloyd-George was rejected; Williams was made to alter his proposal and conform to the norm of the Square and the political establishment (Ward-Jackson 2011:217). In Lefebvre's terms this could be seen to situate and differentiate Epstein's and Williams' depictions of Smuts and Lloyd-George, as well as the other statues, as tools of the state rather than a form of art that might question a dominated place - socially analytical forms of art such as Nishi's *Discovering Columbus* or Krzysztof Wodiczko's work *The Homeless Projection; A proposal for the city of New York* (1986). These are artworks that are capable of revealing and unsettling political structures. Somehow reminiscent of Abbott's ideals, (see pg. 100) Wodiczko projected photographs of homeless people of the locality onto statues in New York. For Deutsche the project linked the city's infrastructure with its policies: people made homeless by the city's corporate interests became monumentally visible.

[The project contests the] belief that monumental buildings are stable, transcendent, permanent structures containing essential, universal meanings. *The Homeless Projection* proclaims on the contrary the mutability of their language and calls attention to the changing uses to which they are put as they are continually recast in new historical circumstances and social frameworks.



Artists' interventions such as these or the changing set of artworks on the Fourth Plinth in London's Trafalgar Square allow an opportunity for critique, which I would argue, is much needed in a place such as Parliament Square.<sup>232</sup> In the physical absence of such works in the Square the role of critical questioning could happen virtually through interventions on social media.

All the clues about these overlapping histories are visible but must be sought out: The Jewish sculptor vilified by politicians, the Indian activist making sandals for his gaoler. Nevertheless the visual triggers are there and provide a possibility for the viewer to find links across time and discrepancies in a singular establishment narrative of the Square. The ability of many visitors to use Google on a smartphone in situ might reveal some of the links that I have uncovered. Personal memories may emerge, conversations occur; photographs are sent out which, like this one (figure 37), can spatialize history making links with Accra, Cape Town, Oxford and Charlottesville. As convoluted networks between these statues appear, time is not made static by being made spatial (either in the photograph or in the Square). Spatialized or represented 'space - time', as Massey would call it, (Massey 2012:27) is dynamic and forever changing as the viewer's eye moves around it. The context evolves and changes for each viewer. Visual shortcuts and links are made that break down the sequential order of events and things; each statue and each change that has been made to the Square can be linked by different viewers, allowing different narratives to be constructed. Seen in this way, the Square can begin to escape its singular pedagogic origin.

This multiplicity has always been 'the present' of the Square but the complexities tend to get smoothed over and eroded with time. The present Square could be seen as an incomplete political and social archive; it holds a multitude of origins or potential histories as Azoulay puts it. There are many potential pasts that can be revealed in the ongoing presents. Places, like photographs, need to be 'watched' rather than statically looked at. Azoulay talks of using photographs to go back to a

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<sup>232</sup> The Fourth Plinth was intended for an equestrian statue of William IV but remained empty for 150 years, due to a lack of funds. Since 1998 the plinth has been the site for regularly commissioned site-specific art works.

point zero in order to address conflict and political decisions made at the time. Referring to the archive of photographs she built up relating to the Palestinian conflict, Azoulay discusses the need to 'reconstruct the constituent violence' of the images and the political decisions that were occurring at the time (Azoulay 2013:551). I would argue that statues and places as well as a photograph can be a point zero.

It is not sufficient for such history to criticize the existing situation. It must reconstruct the possibilities that have been violently erased and silenced in order to make them present anew at any given moment.

Azoulay 2013:553

Watching the Square and the archive of photographs that Instagram and the Internet provide could enable many points zero to be examined. Although the Square has not witnessed the level of violence and oppression as the Middle East, most of those represented are closely linked with contentious political decisions that resulted in bloodshed (see debate surrounding Lloyd-George (pg. 153) and Churchill's (pg. 179) national and international use of police and military strength). Azoulay sees photographs as catalysts which enable an examination of the fracture points in history - points where multiple futures were still possible. I wonder if there is such a thing as a point zero. Origins tend to suggest the search for an original cause, whereas I think what Azoulay is hoping to find is a moment where many causes were possible and could have led in different directions. When looking at the Square, there was always something there before it which contributes to how it is now. The absences, removals, editing that can be traced by analysing old digitised photographs or reading old guidebooks can reveal what different possible histories and therefore possible futures have been erased from the Square.

One possible point zero from which to analyse the Square and its messages could be the removal of *The Buxton Memorial Drinking Fountain*. It was described in the 1878 Baedeker guide to London as 'a handsome Gothic fountain erected in 1865 as a memorial to the distinguished men who brought about the abolition of slavery in the British dominions' (1878:173). It was not only a monument but served the practical social function of providing clean drinking water. Were the Fountain still there today it could provide a contrast to the 'Great Men' narrative that still pervades the

Square. By paying homage instead to those parliamentarians who abolished the slave trade, it could have served as a reminder that collective democratic action can bring about change for the common good. However, the Fountain would also stand as a reminder of a time when this practice was allowed.<sup>233</sup> Instead the Fountain was moved in 1949 to the relatively unvisited Victoria Tower Gardens. It remains a monument to the white men who abolished slavery rather than a memorial to those millions who suffered and were exploited as slaves. The wealth which flowed from oppression is embodied in the infrastructure of the Square and the city, the Fountain could be a reminder of a moral duty to act differently in the world today. The Fountain stands in proximity to the statue of Emmeline Pankhurst (unveiled in 1930) in Tower Gardens which seems to have become a place where evidence of a more radical past is sidelined as an adjunct rather than the foremost political narrative. Whereas Britain's colonial past remains ingrained yet invisible in its public places and memorials.<sup>234</sup>

As statues and monuments were moved or removed, other projects that were mooted but never came to pass indicate the struggles for control over what the Square should celebrate and what meanings should be made there. The large Egyptian stone obelisk known as Cleopatra's Needle was once earmarked for the spot (in 1877); it was eventually placed on the Embankment. It is left to the imagination as to how this immense looted treasure dating from 1450 BC would have affected the connections, associations and understanding of colonial nationhood that could then have been made. The Middle Eastern politics of Lloyd-George or Churchill may have been seen in a different light with the dignified stolen stone monolith for company. At the time of its transport to London the obelisk was another symbol of British world dominance. In 1910 monarchists made a bid to wrest control of the Square from parliament when a colossal royal memorial structure was proposed after Edward VII's death. The idea was revived in 1936 in a proposed commemoration of George V (Ward-Jackson 2011: 189). More recently, a large unicorn fountain was planned for the Queen's Silver Jubilee (1977), but was

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<sup>233</sup> The Bristol Slavery Museum remains the only institution to be solely dedicated to examining slavery and its legacy.

<sup>234</sup> Victoria Gardens is now the proposed site for a UK Holocaust Memorial.

subtly vetoed due to the cost. In 2003 Burch predicted that Margaret Thatcher would be the next statue to arrive (Burch 2003:351). This plan is still occasionally mooted but sidelined due to fears of vandalism, masked by citing bureaucratic parliamentary rules.<sup>235</sup> Ward-Jackson wrote, in 2011, of rumoured plans for the existing statues to be lined up in an avenue in line with the north door of Westminster Abbey, shifting emphasis away from Parliament towards the Church (Ward-Jackson 2011:189).

Monuments like photographs seek to project the past into the future. Successive governments choose particular people such as Mandela; who are picked out as much for their importance in the present as for what they are meant to project from that present for the benefit of the future.<sup>236</sup> There is a hope that the statues and the people who choose them may play a part in forming what that future might be. These decisions made in the present face an uncertain reception and interpretation in the future. It cannot be known how they might be co-opted or subverted by future political or social contingencies, as is demonstrated by the arguments about Rhodes, Smuts and Lee. The current, ever increasing use of social media perpetuates the already substantial digital archive of the Square; it will provide a detailed body of evidence of the 'process of place', as well as platforms for campaigns for erasure, using hash-tags such as #rhodesmustfall. The erasures and additions as well as the way these monuments are animated and used by differing social groups will be well documented, providing a people's eye view of its shifting civic pedagogic purpose.

### *Potential or traditional futures*

The title of this section 'State Occasion' is in itself an etymological and temporal contradiction; 'state' implies the stasis and solidity of a nation whereas the roots of the word 'occasion' link it to the unexpected happening or occurrence. Law destabilises the foundational idea of the nation state, arguing that it is socially enacted rather than offering an explanatory framework for a place like Parliament Square (see pg. 146). The static solidity of the statues and architecture offer scripts

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<sup>235</sup> For more details about the proposed statue of Margaret Thatcher see (Mason 2017)

<sup>236</sup> This echoes Abbott's view of photography's role in holding onto a moment for the future (see pg. 100).

which can be enacted, which in turn allow the ideals of the nation state to be represented in the Square. The tension between the two words underlies this investigation: there is constant friction between the slowly changing, largely state-determined location and the temporal social activities which occur there. Derrida's criticism of spatial power structures through the idea of *khora* might be brought back into view here. The back and forth between what is known or intelligible and what is felt or sensed might open up the ground under these structures. In this place the power of the state to instigate and guide the roles of the actants dominates and supersedes the unexpected interventions. Although these ceremonies are carefully choreographed, tensions remain. The Square, like the Palace of Westminster, was most probably designed with such state ceremonies in mind. Its layout and statues dignified the arrival of the monarch; it made the ceremony that was about to take place behind closed doors visible to the gathered public. All of the state occasions that take place here, whether royal weddings or Armistice Day march-pasts, maintain clear social divisions between participants and spectators. The photograph is taken from behind the barriers in almost the same position in the Square to that of the protest photograph (figure 25), yet the place is transformed. This occasion is far removed from carnivalesque demonstrations, ramshackle tents and spontaneous critical mass cyclists or indeed from the flows of office workers and tourists. However, the same process of visual animation of the surroundings takes place. In this situation though, the architecture and statues are not appropriated by the protesters or owned by the posing tourists, but reinforce the state's intended pedagogic purpose. This ceremony is repeated, year after year, along with many others - it has become a tradition.

The word tradition can be applied to personal rituals and repeated social habits such as taking a selfie; however, when traditions are developed and instigated by the state it is often for a specific reason. Tradition like history is a process made or carried out in the present. Although associated with the past, it is part of what forms the future. Williams defines tradition as 'a handing down of knowledge' but with a predominant sense of this activity entailing respect and duty (Williams (1976)2014:314). He warns that adherence to tradition can be used to dismiss

innovation. The parliamentary decision to reject a move away from this location can arguably be seen as an example of this narrow idea of linear progression: Buckingham Palace could have offered more room to allow all of the members of parliament to sit at the same time as well as for public galleries to be larger – a different, more transparent democracy might have developed in a different place (Salmon 2009).<sup>237</sup> Like Hobsbawm, Williams draws attention to the speed at which anything can become traditional - 'it only takes two generations' (op cit (1976)2014:314), yet how traditions often retain the appearance of an unchanging ancient ritual. For Williams the development of tradition is an active ongoing process that can be bent and used to suit present political contexts and can point the way to particular futures. Parliament Square fits into a pattern of such public places that were built across Europe in the late nineteenth-Century in order to promote particular national narratives. The rise of nation states relied on the promotion of 'ethnic unity' (Bauman 2012:169). This, as Bauman explains, meant the differentiation between state-imposed traditions and those that might be seen as holding smaller communities together.

The nation-state, after all, owed its success to the *suppression of* self-asserting communities; it fought tooth and nail against 'parochialism', local customs or 'dialects', promoting a unified language and historical memory at the expense of communal traditions.

Bauman 2012:173

Public places were being redesigned and created to display national identity. As Hobsbawm noted in *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), buildings and monuments in Wilhelmine Germany 'were the most visible form of establishing a new interpretation of German history' (Hobsbawm 1983:274–5). A more fragmented version of this scenario is represented in the erection of Christopher Columbus' statue in New York, which could be seen as the Italian community seeking ownership of a founding father of the American state. In Great Britain the visual interpretation of history as centred round imperial yet democratic politicians formed part of Victorian national identity. The now traditional parade before the State Opening of

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<sup>237</sup> It is now proposed that Parliament leave the Palace of Westminster while it is renovated, causing much discussion over how the change of the design of the chamber might lead to different, less adversarial debates with many different opinions being voiced. Such a design change was rejected by Churchill after damage caused by bombing in World War II made sitting in the House of Commons almost impossible as he valued the intensity of the chamber.

Parliament added a public aspect of pomp and pageantry that before had only been seen behind closed doors in the Palace of Westminster. The duty and respect that are expected of the public watching this occasion is built into the place and the event.

The Square is a place where history and national identity can be regularly reconstructed, interpreted visually and represented to the public, as historian Maiken Umbach states: 'built environments...were important media in which a sense of the past was configured and communicated' (Umbach in Hicks. 2004:28). Photographs of the Square trace how its Victorian style was modernised in the 1950s and received a gradual postcolonial makeover in the last ten years, while retaining its state intended pedagogic purpose. The traditional state ceremonies that occur in Parliament Square are intended by the governing state to perpetuate the respect and duty due to the Monarch and Parliament that are inherent to Britishness; as former MP Graham Allen explains: 'Although the Queen never gives a political ideology to the British people, she regularly expresses fundamental values for the British state. Her presence embodies the values of duty and public service' (Allen 2002:39). Pomp and ceremony is expected and embraced by parts of the population and rejected by others.<sup>238</sup> This is perpetuated, I would argue, to engender security through cohesion and continuity. With the attempt to build and unify a nation, the past is used to build a secure future. However Journalist Mary Riddell identifies the strange imbalance that the monarchy causes in contemporary Britain: 'it is insulting that citizens who can talk to politicians without ceremony must assume a pantomime obeisance in addressing a minor royal. In an informal age, modern Britain, with its creaky ceremonial, its swan-umping, guard-changing and State Opening of Parliament, less resembles an evolving nation than a revival of HMS Pinafore' (Riddell 2002:24).<sup>239</sup> People build their own national identity, Bauman argues: 'the institutional scaffolding capable of holding a nation together is thinkable increasingly as a do-it-yourself job' (Bauman 2012:185), eroded by globalisation and

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<sup>238</sup> Parades such as the Changing of the Guard and the State Opening of Parliament are also heavily marketed as tourist attractions.

<sup>239</sup> 'HMS Pinafore' is a comic opera written by Gilbert and Sullivan. It was first performed in 1874. Gilbert and Sullivan's productions often offered an absurd pastiche which lampooned Victorian era values and mores.

individualism. Social media platforms such as Instagram might be places where the nation state can be seen to be breaking down, either through the influence of commercial globalisation and mass consumerism or perhaps through delocalised customs and tribes/communities increasingly being built online. In this unstable situation the public square still offers a place to take part in traditional occasions, to share them with other people in a crowd, to be part of a community, as the photograph of the state occasion and its caption indicates.

The photograph (figure 37) shows how things, ideas, objects and people interact. As Massey writes, they are in process, always changing; reimagining things as processes allows place to be reconceptualised.<sup>240</sup> Traditions and histories can be seen as part of this changing process. I wonder where these processes are taking the Square: what are its potential futures? Recently plans have been proposed to change the Square again, not physically but socially: *A Place for People - Proposals for Enhancing Visitor Engagement with Parliament's Environs* was published by the Hansard Society in 2011, in the wake of Brian Haw's contentious removal from the Square.<sup>241</sup> The Hansard Society's aim is in tune with the original purpose of the Square: It seeks to promote the virtues of parliamentary democracy. Their study suggests that the Square should be a place for citizenship. Conversely this suggestion could also run counter to another enacted effect of the Square which sociologist Richard Sennett describes: 'images of communal solidarity are forged in order that men can avoid dealing with each other' (Sennett 1970:34). A problem which the Hansard Society wants to resolve with, in my view, archaic solutions.

The Square should be a forum for spontaneous and organised citizenship similar in style to a Speakers' Corner. It should be a place where the great thinkers, writers, and artists of the day can give talks and lectures and engage in discussion with the public about their ideas. The Square could also on occasion be a theatre for bringing alive our democratic history: a place where key moments in the development of British democracy are dramatised.

Hansard Society 2011:8

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<sup>240</sup> Reimagining things as processes could be understood in Law and Latour's terms: things or non-humans are enacted; through that enactment objects, places and their meanings are constantly changing and therefore in process.

<sup>241</sup> The Hansard Society is very much part of the establishment it was founded in 1944 by politician Stephen Hall-King, the first subscribers were Clement Atlee and Winston Churchill. It describes itself as 'an independent, non-partisan political research and education Society' which 'believes that the health of representative democracy rests on the foundation of a strong Parliament and an informed and engaged citizenry' (Hansard Society 2017).



The authors of the report go on to recommend the invention of new traditions to revitalise the Square, suggesting the celebration of International Day of Democracy, World Heritage Day, or the Magna Carta anniversary. These events would be instigated not by parliament itself but by a steering group. They suggest handing over partial control to a community of users who would manage the Square more adroitly than the rather heavy-handed Greater London Authority and Westminster Council.<sup>242</sup> This is a slightly awkward attempt to wrest control of the Square from those who have traditionally held it in an attempt to make its governance more transparent. Although this report appears to advocate relinquishing control, it seems to me to be an exertion of soft power in order to sanitise the Square of its recent history of ‘eyesore’ protesters.<sup>243</sup> Underlying many of these proposals is a desire to promote civic duty and an understanding of history that is now mediated not by statues but through modern technology. The Hansard Society recommends channelling current patterns of visitor behaviour to promote their committee-approved historical narrative of the Square.

A diverse range of smartphone applications should be developed to enable the public to engage with Parliament and the World Heritage Site from outside the building. These would enable Parliament to offer the public a broader range of information about the building, its function and history and leverage greater value from the art and archival collections.

Hansard Society 2011:10

Much of the archive is already available online; however, it is hard to navigate and to draw out particular ‘storylines’ from the mass of documented debate. As with squares, archives are precarious; Tsivopoulos’s work makes apparent that archive information can be activated in different ways (see pg. 212) and is open to (mis)interpretation. Apps such as History Pin already model this kind of interpretation of history by allowing users to overlay old photographs onto present places.<sup>244</sup> The app produces hybrid photographs by combining live images from the

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<sup>242</sup> Specifically the authors of the report propose a steering group: ‘In order to manage participation in the Square a steering group should be formed involving neighbouring institutions, the local authorities and user representatives. This Group should develop a protocol for light touch management of activities in the Square, incorporating concerns around noise and access as well as a code of conduct’ (Hansard 2011). There is little sign that these proposals have been acted upon in the last 6 years, since the report was published.

<sup>243</sup> Brian Haw’s protest camp was cited as being an eyesore by politicians (in Moore 2010).

<sup>244</sup> History Pin is an international, not-for-profit organisation whose purpose is to ‘connect communities with local history’ (History Pin 2017).

camera of a phone, with crowd-sourced and archival photographs geo-cached with GPS.<sup>245</sup> Yet the apps' interpretation is often lacking in political insight; users and visitors are often presented with a single narrative. Another example is the Talking Statue's project which offered the chance to listen to statues of mainly literary figures dotted around inner London.<sup>246</sup> Moving away from adapting technology currently in use, the authors of the Hansard Society report speculate on how augmented reality could be used to change perceptions and use of the Square.

Elements of the real-world physical environment could be augmented by computer-generated imagery to enable people to see the past, present and future of the built environment. This technology could, for example, bring alive the development of Thorney Island, and recreate 'lost' features such as the River Tyburn and the sections of the Palaces of Westminster and Whitehall that have now vanished.<sup>247</sup>

Hansard Society 2011:10

In this possible future of the Square, technology could be used in the same way as the monuments have been: to tell a singular narrative that would keep social norms in place. This might be seen as helpful towards maintaining a cohesive national identity; however, this future version of the past might, like the monuments, ignore the intricacies of current society as well as the complexities of the past. Geographer Ash Amin maintains that sanitisation and simplification should not become the future of such places.

I think I prefer the noise, disorganization, and unpredictability of the ordinary contemporary square of popular protest or tolerance for diverse usages and groups, even as a basis for building citizenship. If urban renewal is about nurturing alternatives and creative potential, then part of the task is to find ways of giving voice to subaltern, excluded and marginalized citizens.

Amin 2000:234

Amin offers an alternative imagined future which involves valuing the different social processes that are part of the Square. He echoes Bauman's view that 'togetherness, far from requiring similarity ... actually *benefits* from the variety of lifestyles, ideals and knowledge' (Bauman 2012: 177). Amin and Bauman value the past for its noise

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<sup>245</sup> Most smartphones have very accurate Global Positioning Systems.

<sup>246</sup> Talking Statues is a publicly funded project which allowed the statues to speak by connecting to a smartphone app. None of the statues in Parliament Square have been enabled to speak - maybe they would argue too much? Projects such as this do raise awareness of who these figures are, bringing them back into sight. However none of the statues are particularly controversial figures, the project remains within the monuments' consensus-forming remit and avoids tackling contentious issues.

<sup>247</sup> Thorney Island was the name of the area of scrubland where Parliament now stands.

and disturbances. These muddled pasts suggest futures where the possibility is left open for people such as Brian Haw, Ada Wright and Jan Smuts to be valued. The idea of a speaker's corner debating area is a nod in this direction, as is the inclusion of local voices. A more inclusive approach to how the Square might develop and change could be guided by Azoulay's thoughts on how the past can become a critical guide to the present and the future.

Potential history should be understood here in the dual sense of unrealized possibilities that still motivated and directed the actions of various actors in the past, and of possibilities that may become our own and may be reactivated to guide our actions.

Azoulay 2011

The past always augments the reality of the present; how the past is depicted in the public realm determines to a certain extent what alternative futures can be imagined. If the complexities of the past become tangible, more critical awareness of the present and the futures might also emerge. Amin describes how public squares in their multiplicity do already offer a platform for other voices. I think this is enhanced by the way social media and open source information platforms like Wikipedia inform the way places can be perceived by those who watch them closely and critically. Like the Square, social media platforms such as Instagram are public places that could become sanitised and homogenised, but they are also dirty and noisy, disparate and disrespectful. Such platforms are also capable of offering a public voice and a place where communities can be formed and new grass-roots traditions can be nurtured. The future is bound up with digital technology which has already digitised the past, reproducing it as a flat achronological plane. It is as incomplete a depiction of time past as any library, museum archive or square, while offering easier access to information. The algorithmic past (which could be seen as a model of Bergson's durational present see pg. 199) offers a chance to investigate the history of a place in situ. Here, unknown statues can be searched for connections made and old possibilities reactivated.

As discussed in my Google tour of Parliament Square, a more anarchic algorithmic view is offered by the image search engine which throws together images from different sources and different times. The uneasy juxtaposition of images is closer to

Amin's description of a city square which returns me to the role of photography as a perpetuator and challenger of tradition but also the simplifier of historical narratives. Azoulay, as already discussed, sees archival photographs as a way of reassessing singular victor narratives of history. Sontag suggests it is 'the zeal of photography to debunk the high culture of the past transforming it from art into a cultural document' (Sontag 1979:131). I would argue that Sontag's statement could have a wider field of interpretation, where photography can also unsettle high political cultures. As sociologist Philip N. Howard maintains: 'images are powerful because they can bolster or dissolve political authority' (Howard 2015:124). The tradition of photographic representation and its role in memorializing the nation has developed parallel to the Square, changing its topography and role.<sup>248</sup> Through the smartphone, contradictory histories can now be seen while physically present in the Square.

When the old Palace of Westminster burnt to the ground in 1834, a large crowd of spectators booed and jeered; brought together by the spectacle, they vocally expressed their contempt for parliament and parliamentarians. Over time different groups have gathered here for different purposes. As Hicks points out: if a space is political it will be seen as such not only by supporters of the state and the government but by the opposition. Public places, both virtual and actual, allow many views to be visible. Communities are formed in and by these places in different ways. Feelings of togetherness or shared values offered by public places are echoed online. However the digital architecture and customs of some platforms, particularly those which are interacted with through algorithms, offer a different form of community. Algorithmic communities are not based on what Bauman saw as a togetherness formed by shared but appreciated differences or the freedom of communication; but it are brought together by the online echo chamber of similar views.

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<sup>248</sup> Photography's role in memorializing the nation is often written about in much the same terms as monuments. Photographic historian Elizabeth Edwards, writing about *The National Photographic Record Association Archive*, describes different positions: (to paraphrase) collective memory can be understood as social memory – memory held by a specific group, sometimes though the collective is privileged over the individual reactions (Edwards 2006:54). Photographs like monuments can be seen as anchors around which different understandings, causes and social groups gather. With reference to this archive which was collated between 1897-1910 she writes: 'it was a form of holding on to the past in both its real and metaphorical roles. This was a past that was still alive in the rural areas and beneath a thin surface of modernity' (ibid 2006:55). Edwards is writing about a collection of photographs which could now be equated to Instagram. Hash-tags can be seen to form a taxonomy within the archive which memorializes people, events and places.

Control over the depiction of history and tradition in the Square has shifted between those seeking to promote the *Pax Britannica* and those maintaining the flow of traffic necessary to preserve the *Pax Capitalista*. At the time of writing there is a situation described by Howard as the *Pax Technica*, in which networked devices combine with global corporations and national governments to build a mutually secure system based on stability and predictability (ibid 2015:230). This *Pax* or control system is built by harvesting social media and other personal data which is used to instigate order and cohesion. The possibly illusory stability and predictability engendered by traditions such as The State Opening of Parliament and a belief in historical state narratives might soon be taken over by the collation of 'big data'. The ease of collating this data is increased by the escalating size and reach of the monopolies that control the Internet: Google, Amazon and Facebook.

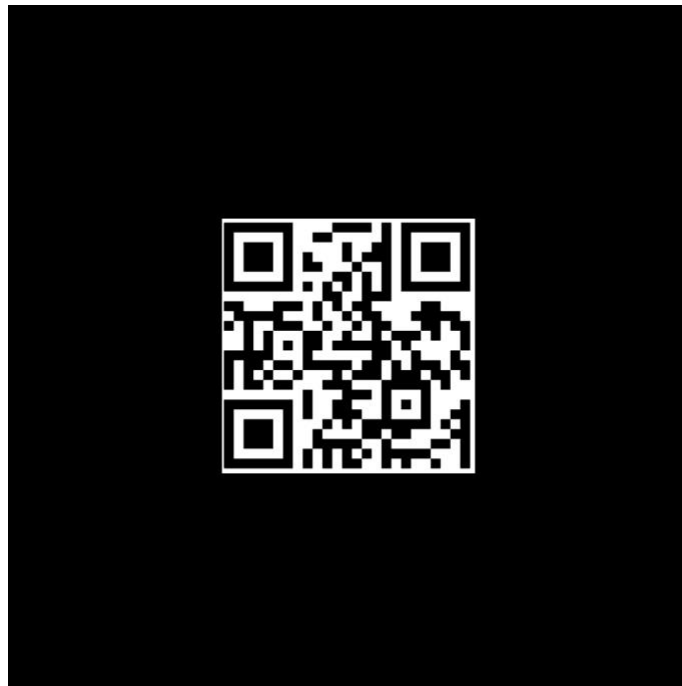
The data is gathered from networked smartphones and computers whose users freely and/or unwittingly share this valuable information about themselves, their location, political views and monetary transactions through their online social activity. This meta-data lies invisible under the surface of the Instagram photographs that have been my guides. The photographs are capable of providing even more information than appears on their surface. The data is a raw material; it can be mined by governments and conglomerates, used to predict and manipulate behaviour. However, I wonder if the data can be mined in the sense that it can be made explosive.<sup>249</sup> This would demand a knowledge of the way these systems work. Methods which are at the moment used to play the algorithms to spread fake news and create advertising revenue could also be used to raise awareness of the way this data is being exploited. If the data were to be mined in a different way personal information might be diverted away from it being used for commercial purposes or to gain political influence and redirected for the common good.<sup>250</sup>

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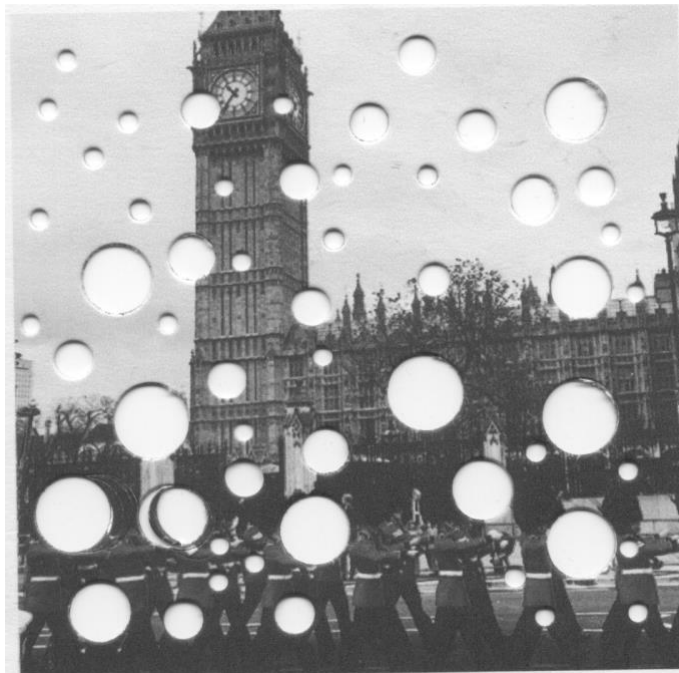
<sup>249</sup> Artist Fred Wilson used the word 'mining' to describe his reinterpretation of artefacts at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, USA in 1993. In *Mining the Museum*, Wilson juxtaposed artefacts from the archive such as shackles used to control slaves and placed them next to silver sugar bowls normally on display. Mining the museum for artefacts and information but at the same time exploding its established didactic narratives by suggesting new ones.

<sup>250</sup> This is beginning to happen: crowd-sourcing data can be used in many fields from tracking traffic congestion to medical research and climate change research.

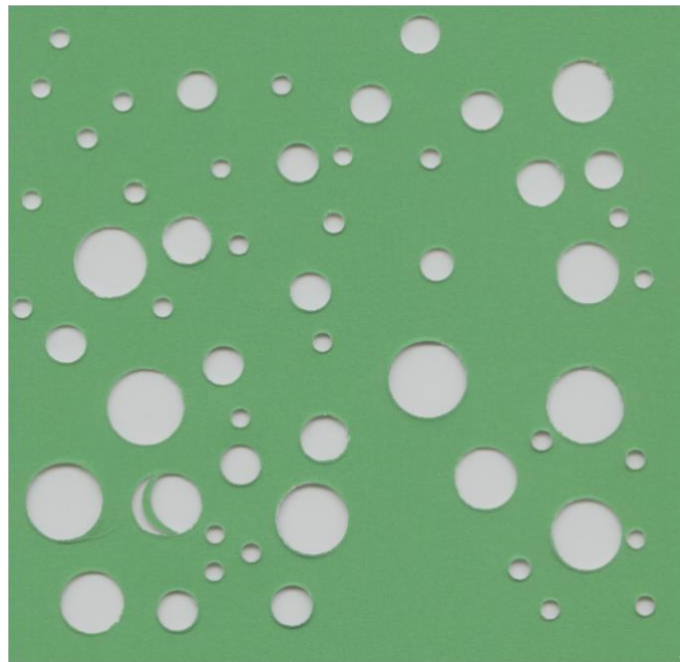
[Analogue Holes](#), digital film, 2017



*Holes*, digital print/collage, 2017

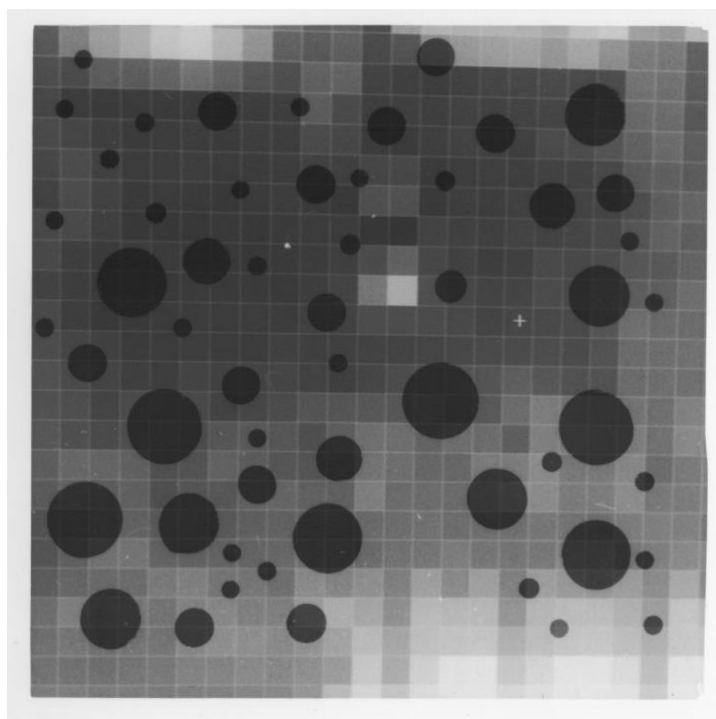


*Holes, print template, 2017*





*Digital Holes*, analogue print, 2017



## 8. The Smartphone Mirror

Throughout this study my smartphone has played a pivotal role but has remained largely invisible and unscrutinized. It has been a provider of raw material, a creative tool in the studio, an intermediary between the public and private sphere; it allowed me to look without being seen.<sup>251</sup> It has the potential to be a mode of display and a political actant. However it frames, constrains and directs what can be seen and what is represented, while itself often remaining unnoticed.

### *Black Mirror*

Standing in the Square I took out my phone with the intention of taking a photograph and caught a glimpse of the sky and the trees mirrored in the black surface. I saw an echo of the *Claude Glass*, a polished, black, slightly convex, oval mirror which was used by artists and travellers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century to view the landscape. It not only framed but also changed the appearance of what was captured in the pre-photographic lens, making what was viewed in it more painterly. Artists such as Gainsborough were influenced by the way landscape could be seen through the *Claude Glass* as art historians Amal Asfour and Paul Williamson describe:

The landscape is reduced to a manageable size, placed in a frame, and spatial distance is undermined in a way that suggests the presence of an unexpected conceptual gap between the viewer and the painted scene. The *Claude Glass* diverts attention from the landscape proper to a pre-processed image; physically present in a natural environment, the sketcher looks away from the real scene to see only its reflected image.

Asfour and Williamson 1999:170

In order to view the reflected image in the glass, people, whether tourists or artists, had to face away from the view they came to see. The captured reflection was perhaps preferable to the actual unconstrained sight. The term 'black mirror', often used to describe the *Claude Glass*, has persisted to describe the smartphone. It is not only the description that has endured, the actions too are similar: backs are turned

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<sup>251</sup> In Appendix II I look at how artists have repurposed online photographs, making it the raw material for their own ideas (see pg. 279).

and camera phones held up, the whole view is hidden, the 'pre-processed image' is preferred, only certain aspects are chosen framed and kept. Arguably smartphones mirror, distort and delimit the surroundings whether through the normalizing Instagram eye which is governed by likes, as Silverman describes, or through its internal mechanisms: the choice of filters, the framework of the system.

Unlike the *Claude Glass* the black mirror of the smartphone hides its technology; it is hard to see beneath or beyond it. Galloway describes the interface (the screen) between the different realities of virtual and actual as 'autonomous zones of activity' (Galloway 2012: vii). In his view interfaces are places in their own right. In the Square, for example, people interact with the actual location through the interface of the smartphone screen. The technology, whether phone or *Claude Glass*, places a barrier between the actual and its ideal representation. I wonder if people become lost in this interface zone: does it just provide another script to participate in, amongst many others? Is this interface one which distracts from criticality rather than provoking it? Conversely, Grosz argues that people cannot completely escape their embodied surroundings: 'This computerized or virtual space is always housed inside another space - the space of bodily dwelling. You can't be in a computer space unless you're also in another space' (Grosz 2001:24).<sup>252</sup> Watching people interact with each other and their phones in the Square is like watching a slow choreographed dance. All are moving to an invisible script.

### *Heritage mirror*

The movements and scripts can be traced on Instagram. When photographs are taken, geo-tagged or hash-tagged, they accumulate to form personal public online archives. Like any archive they are framed and defined as much by what it holds as what it does not.<sup>253</sup> Nonetheless, Instagram provides a less controlled, more user-generated and therefore more varied view of the Square than the Google image algorithm. The tool that has been used to produce and consume them has become

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<sup>252</sup> Grosz uses the word space in an all-encompassing manner akin to Lefebvre.

<sup>253</sup> BH has curated his Instagram account deleting photographs to tell a particular narrative and present himself in a particular way.

cheaper and therefore more widely used, thus widening the frame. I am aware that access to the technology, leisure time to use it as well as disposable income to pay for 3G contracts all influence which photographs are posted, and therefore what image of the Square is formed online. These decisions have a bearing on the way the Square is perceived. (See pg. 119 for discussion of Hall's proposal that 'heritage is a mirror' (Hall 2002:74)). I have equated these found photographs with what Steyerl describes as poor images precisely because of their capacity to cast light on those who take and look at them.<sup>254</sup>

Poor images present a snapshot of the affective condition of the crowd, its neurosis, paranoia, and fear, as well as its craving for intensity, fun, and distraction.

Steyerl 2009

These Instagram photographs are not only a guide to the crowd, but also to the crowd's interaction with the tools that they use. Steyerl's exploration of poor images succeeds an earlier text written by filmmaker Juan Espinosa. Writing in 1979, Espinosa describes the possibilities offered by the availability of cheap video cameras to prospective filmmakers in Cuba. In *Imperfect Cinema* (1979) Espinosa explains how the accessibility of technology democratises culture. This widening doesn't denigrate what is on the gallery walls or cinema screens; it does question it by putting the means of producing popular, accessible and interesting 'images' into many people's hands.

Popular art has always been created by the least learned sector of society, yet this "uncultured" sector has managed to conserve profoundly cultured characteristics of art. One of the most important of these is the fact that the creators are at the same time the spectators and vice versa. Between those who produce and those who consume, no sharp line of demarcation exists.

Espinosa 1979

Whereas Steyerl picks up on the affective condition of the crowd that is mirrored by the images they produce, Espinosa draws attention to the interaction between the crowd and what they produce. He singles out the development of new, cheaper technology as a major factor. Similarly the smartphone camera and screen places the

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<sup>254</sup> Arguably not all Instagram photographs might be classified as poor images in Steyerl's terms. She is referring to images that are gradually degraded as they travel around global networks. Yet Instagram photographs are fast moving and ubiquitous and often not treated as what might be termed rich images on gallery walls.

person holding this device in a position which, as Espinosa describes, blurs the demarcation between producer and consumer. The immediacy of taking, sharing and viewing blurs this differentiation further. Seen in this way the smartphone is part of a social relationship. It develops and changes the discourse between what can be invented, what comes on to the market and how it is used, rather than determining and controlling the behaviour of people who use it.<sup>255</sup> Both Espinosa and Steyerl's thoughts could be seen to have their roots in Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), where, as Emerling states, Benjamin describes photography as inherently political: 'the shattering of tradition that reproducibility signals, whereby plurality of copies is substituted for a unique existence, offers revolutionary potential' (Emerling 2012:11).

The smartphone and its connectivity have augmented the function of the analogue camera; that does not mean it has become obsolete, or that its potential has been exhausted. However, the way people relate to photographs and to the places they see through them has been changed by the addition of the digital screen on which the newly taken photograph can immediately be viewed. For me the digital screen links the camera to the function of the *Claude Glass* and the *Camera Obscura*. This questions the position of the producer and the viewer, placing them somewhere between subject and object, a scenario which Crary describes vividly in relation to the collapse of the 'objective truth' of the *Camera Obscura* (Crary 1992:24).

The smartphone, like the analogue camera, the *Claude Glass* or the *Camera Obscura*, can be seen as sites 'at which a discursive formation intersects with material practices' (ibid 1992:31). All offer ways of framing vision, ways of understanding and representing what is seen by others through an intermediary technology. The *Camera Obscura* is the older technology; Crary warns, however, that it is dangerous to trace a linear progression linking it directly to the photographic camera. The *Camera Obscura*, he argues, is a functioning object formed by discourse, a discourse which because of the link to photography has positioned the *Camera Obscura* and the observer of images into a binary opposition which obscures a more complex

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<sup>255</sup> A situation which could be described as technological determinism (see pg. 124).

position. For conservatives, he argues, the *Camera Obscura* is part of an 'account of ever-increasing progress toward verisimilitude in representation, in which Renaissance perspective and photography are part of the same quest for a fully objective equivalent of a "natural vision"' (ibid 1992:26).

The Cartesian interpretation of the mechanical non-human eye can be used as an argument for rationality for science and singular truth. Crary points out that the *Camera Obscura* is often deemed by 'radical historians' to be means of control: They see 'the *Camera Obscura* and cinema as bound up in a single enduring apparatus of political and social power, elaborated over several centuries, that continues to discipline and regulate the status of an observer' (ibid 1992:26). Whereas Benjamin and Espinosa, amongst others, see the camera and the photograph's revolutionary potential.

### *Fragmented mirror*

The *Camera Obscura* was seen as an epistemological linchpin for a rational scientific understanding of, and therefore control of, the world. Writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and artists such as J. M. W. Turner began to shift understandings of vision as the provider of a singular regulatory truth. Crary describes a liberation of vision in the 1820s and 1830s which led to a 'repositioning of the observer': from 'outside of the fixed relations of interior/exterior presupposed by the *Camera Obscura* and into an undemarcated terrain on which the distinction between internal sensation and external signs is irrevocably blurred' (ibid 1992:24).

This liberation occurred due to coinciding factors which questioned the empirical truth of the apparatus, focusing instead on the embodied, subjective reaction of the observer. It resulted in a non-linear assessment of the discourse surrounding these technological devices and the images they produce. This narrative includes Peirce's semiotics which very clearly steers the discussion towards the possibility of rational reading of signs; it also includes Barthes' critique which emphasised the importance of individual affective understandings (pg. 55). Crary singles out Goethe's investigations of colour, experiments which concentrated on the emotional 'affect'

of 'after images' unsettled the very purpose of the *Camera Obscura* and displaced the observer.

Modernity, in this case, coincides with the collapse of classical models of vision and their stable space of representations. Instead, observation is increasingly a question of equivalent sensations and stimuli that have no reference to a spatial location.<sup>256</sup>

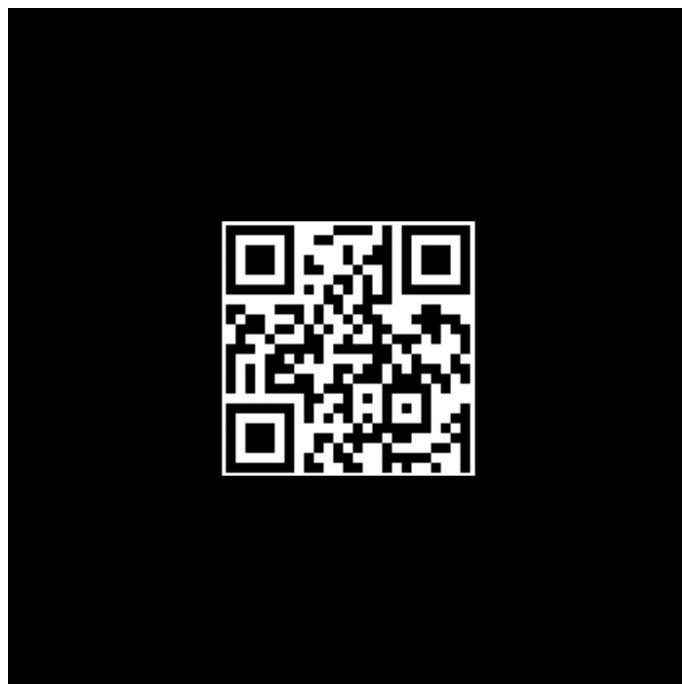
Crary 1992:24

The blurring of the roles of producer and consumer, as described by Espinosa, further complicates the repositioning of the observer. If the consumer is seen as the viewer, the viewer is also drawn into being part of the production. The viewer has moved not only from a position of objective outsider to subjective sensor, but also from passive consumer to active producer. The smartphone and Instagram make the producer aware of the viewer. When taking the photograph, the producer knows that that they will receive feedback as to who 'liked' it; this also influences what images might be taken and posted. When the photographs are sent out, do they cause a sensory overload? Do they control those who see them, do they alter how places are perceived and understood by others? For me, the unsettling of objectivity and the blurring between viewer and producer questions how knowledge is formed and how the world is understood. It returns me to ideas of process, social interaction and also making and seeing art as contributors to communal knowledge.

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<sup>256</sup> Crary's description of the breakdown and distancing that occurs between actual places depicted or seen in the 'space of representation' adds yet another facet to understanding the different interpretations of space and place.

[Cutting](#), digital film, 2015





# Conclusions: Place restaged, cameras performed, Parliament Square recast through social media photography

This cross-disciplinary study started in 2011 when Instagram had only just been launched. At the time of writing this conclusion in 2017 it had become a global phenomenon used by millions of people to communicate with each other across national borders. Meanwhile Britain was busy attempting to reform and reposition itself as a 'sovereign' nation, outside the community offered by the European Union. It seemed at odds with this fast-changing political and technological environment to write a conclusion, especially to a study that sought to put the emphasis on process ahead of origins or finalities.<sup>257</sup> As Massey emphasises, 'things' must be reimagined as processes to allow for a reconceptualization of place (Massey 2012:20). These 'conclusions' then might be reimagined as a series of linked snapshots of 'work so far' that unravel complex multiplicities rather than define singular truths.

This study has many strands; in Mitchell's terms, I have studied pictures or in this case social media photographs as a 'form of theorizing' (Mitchell 2005:6). Primarily this theorizing investigated the role of photography in the social construction of actual and virtual public places, and how the two interact. The investigation took place through the written word and also practically in the studio.

Through the processes of theorizing, deconstruction and restaging the Square has been recast, and different interlinked themes emerged. The themes span the

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<sup>257</sup> I am aware that this thesis like the two smartphones that have been my tools has a built in obsolescence. It deals with a fast moving durational present where apps, the Internet and the way people use them are changing at a pace. Instagram might be superseded by other apps or fragment under the weight of its use, it might be deemed too commercial by certain groups who will disband and reform on other platforms to avoid the increased advertising in what used to be a commerce free platform. I see this investigation of place and social media as ongoing. Once I have finished writing I want to spend more time in the studio processing my thoughts and many of the visual ideas that did not reach this final edit. I also want to see what reactions these fragmented restaged images receive when they are reintroduced to the flow of Instagram.

different social activities that occur in the Square: everyday, tourism, protests and state occasions. One recurring area of interest has been the link between communication and community. This can be seen in the Square's intended nation-building function: a pedagogic celebration of parliamentary democracy, and also in the visual communication of performative political ideas online. Intertwined with the theme of community are issues of security and freedom. The social roles that monuments and photographs play in how freedoms are guarded and communities maintained is part of another major strand that flows through this study. The photographs show the way in which borders, laws and social mores of these communities manifest themselves in the fabric of places.

I looked at two aspects of representation: *visuality* - how things appear and *visibility* - being seen. I also tried to establish the position and role of the viewer, observer or watcher within as well as outside the frame. This took place through physical experiments in the studio as well as a political discussion on the page. I developed in Jarzombek terms 'a tertiary form of 'critical practice', one that is akin to investigative journalism' (Jarzombek 2002). My practice allowed me to move between the studio, the writing and the Square in an attempt to produce a body of work that 'both *embodied* and *evidenced*' my research (Smith 2008:xvi).

The more I found out about the meta-structures of the Internet and how they can be used to influence the national democratic processes, the more I became aware of the need for criticality, as Foster maintains (Foster 2012:3). The smartphone has been a key tool in this process: it is a camera, a mode of display, an encyclopaedia and an archive, all of which can be forms of communication. The photographs I accessed through the smartphone have been guides to the way in which places such as the Square and objects such as monuments are interacted with, enacted/performed and represented. They play a part which has a bearing on how the past is understood (history), and how that understanding might be handed on (tradition). Which in turn influences what different possible futures might be formed.

## *Community, communication, common sense*

The smartphone provided me with access to the Internet and thereby to thousands of different photographs of Parliament Square online, all of which had something to communicate. The commonality or sameness in some of the photographs allowed me to form a creative taxonomy and place them into groups: tourists, protesters etc. In this case I was the one drawing the boundaries and deciphering what was the norm for a particular group. In turn the study of these groups showed me the way the Square communicates through its buildings, statues, other people, street furniture, soldiers and placards. These different forms of communication as Dewey maintains gather different communities together through the establishment of common ground (Dewey (1916)2004:44). The common ground or meeting point might be different depending on what form of communication is used. As I sorted the photographs, I saw shared interests as well as common sense negotiations of place: posing, resisting, observing. Comparing the differences and similarities of activities and methods of communication between the actual place Parliament Square and the virtual public social media platform Instagram revealed tensions in their conflicting public roles.

By restaging of the photographs in the studio I examined how the Square is regularly restaged. The stage: the statues, pavements, railings and photographs are part of a changing social community depending on who enacts them. This community could be seen as a 'parliament of things' (Latour 1993:142). Latour's interpretation of the word parliament separates it from the place of legislature and moves it towards its etymological meaning – 'talking together' -, thereby linking 'parliament' more closely to Dewey's learning through communal communication rather than a hierarchal imposition of knowledge (*savoir*). By looking at the Square as a 'parliament of things', hierarchies can be flattened, scales and chronologies reset by those enacting, performing, challenging or 'living' the Square. Statues can be anchors for protest, paving stones a means of control, photographs can be contentious political activists, phones a means of imposing conformity: these roles are not fixed, they are temporary, interchangeable and mutable.

In this study I traced how actual and virtual public places overlap. The photographs have been the link. They revealed much about ‘the crowd who took them’ (Steyerl 2009): there are distinct groups of people who behave in a distinct manner; within the groups each individual enacts the objects in the Square for their own purposes, often at the same time.<sup>258</sup> Instagram mirrors and extends these moments in time and space. Both ‘spaces’ open people up to the presence of others, as Massey states (2013). I remained aware that the term *other* could indicate a hierarchical tolerance of difference which is based on a false ‘us and them’ dichotomy, as Badiou, Foucault and Said point out. Nevertheless the exposure to others can have different effects. One of those effects might be as Dewey described, that living together that creates knowledge (Dewey (1916)2004:9). Another possible reaction could be that of self-censoring conformity. In Sennett’s view people exist together and negotiate public places while hiding behind a mask of civility, an act that ...

...protects people from each other and yet allows them to enjoy each other’s company. Wearing a mask is the essence of civility. Masks permit pure sociability, detached from the circumstances of power, malaise, and private feelings of those who wear them.

Sennett in Bauman 2012:95

Here Sennett echoes Goffman’s ideas of front and back stage behaviour. In the Square and many other public places the smartphone can act as a mask. People seem to be hiding. The Instagram app could also be seen as offering a public platform to show off a mask of a better self to the world, creating a public persona which adheres to the expected code of a particular community. Philosopher Beate Rössler discusses Sennett’s stance in conjunction with Arendt’s views on the decline of the public realm through the incursion of the intimate. In Rössler’s view this incursion has led to a loss of ‘civic commitment to public welfare’ (Rössler 2005:170-171). In this scenario the mobile phone could be seen as a step towards the ‘individualization, isolation and anonymization of (urban) culture’ (ibid 2005:172). However locations, whether virtual, actual or photographic, offer places where civility doesn’t just hide behind a mask or a phone. As Azoulay describes, civility can

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<sup>258</sup> For example: at the time Mandela’s statue was unveiled in 2007, Haw was still protesting in the Square. He and his followers used the press and police attention to make themselves more visible and staged vocal protests during the speeches.

open the possibility to take responsibility and become involved in society. This could be done as a result of looking at a photograph or through taking them as Aziz describes (see pg. 180).

I feel that a balance has to be found between the two sets of behaviour that the word 'civil' implies. On the one hand, civil might mean that people are expected to conform in order to belong to a community.<sup>259</sup> On the other hand civil can be associated with a responsibility towards others and a respect for the value of difference. Political theorist Bernard Crick advances a pluralistic view of civil society; he uses the term 'harmony' rather than unison to describe the way people live together in a community in which difference is a good thing (in Bauman 2012:177). Stalder proposes that the Internet offers diverging paths. These paths might lead either to global commercial domination which negates the old model the nation state or to, in my view, a more hopeful vision of community-building through expanding participation, autonomy and solidarity (Stalder 2013:59). Stalder upholds the autonomy of the individual but combines it with active public solidarity, seeing them as a mutually beneficial part of being online. Unlike Rössler, Stalder views the blurred boundaries between public and private as a political strength rather than a weakness.

On Instagram and in the Square I saw how people use their common sense to negotiate both places, and how both places allow common understandings to be formed, shared and celebrated. Both are lived, performed or enacted. As I wrote this conclusion, pro-EU demonstrations were taking place in the Square and were shared and liked on Instagram. The sense of nationhood that the designers of the Square sought to build is now swayed by the power of the data produced by social media. How both these places are navigated and understood is therefore of great importance.

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<sup>259</sup> This conformity might be, as Sennett describes, a superficial act a form of self-protection. It could also be an enforced conformity, a fear of showing difference. Another possibility is an unthinking habitual conformity which Kolb describes.

The lived knowledge of place, as de Certeau described it looking down from *The World Trade Center* in New York needs, as Kolb and Foster state, to be critical (see pg. 40). Dwelling which Heidegger uses to link thought and place, has an inherent criticality which can allow people to break away from conformity of state or commercial *savoir*. *Savoir* can as Lefebvre argues be countered by a lived common knowledge.

The ruling class seeks to maintain hegemony by all available means. The connection between knowledge (*savoir*) and power is thus made manifest, although this in no way interdicts a critical and subversive form of knowledge (*connaissance*); on the contrary it points up the antagonism between a knowledge that serves power and a form of knowing which refuses to acknowledge power.

Lefebvre 1974:10

In a time when Twitter and other social media platforms are used to fire up racial divides and radicalise, and the main points of access to the Internet are Facebook, Google and Amazon, Kolb's call for critical awareness online needs to be heeded. The larger the reach of these companies the more data can be mined, put together and used to predict and control behaviour. These monopolies need to be challenged and broken down and Net-neutrality guarded.<sup>260</sup> A nascent movement seeking the right to access virtual space or 'digital justice' is emerging parallel to those seeking spatial justice.<sup>261</sup> <sup>262</sup> I am left with the question: how can this transnational, commercially dominated place ever be governed or made safe without restricting its apparent freedoms?

Both of these places, the Internet and the Square, are democratic; yet they are democratic in very different ways. They are public social places where people gather and challenge social and political norms through performative democracy. Yet the Square also embodies the impersonal national institutionalized, pedagogic version of

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<sup>260</sup> Net-neutrality keeps Internet loading speeds the same for all web sites. If certain companies are allowed to pay for higher loading speeds they gain commercial advantage and become even more dominant. Speed whether actual or virtual equates to commercial gain. In the US, Federal Communications Committee has voted to abolish Net-neutrality giving those big businesses a huge advantage and diminishing the egalitarian nature behind what founder Tim Berners Lee envisaged (in Solon 2017).

<sup>261</sup> For example: communities in Detroit are building their own Internet service provider (Rogers 2017).

<sup>262</sup> The term spatial justice emerged from Lefebvre's ideas and addressed the right to public space and decent housing. Massey's work can be seen as fitting into this broad area of study which includes 'radical geographers' such as Edward Soja, David Harvey and Dolores Hayden.

democracy. It celebrates and promotes a didactic if somewhat modified version of British Imperial democracy. It is the representation of the largely unexamined imperial past of a nation in danger of sliding into nationalistic parochialism. It is parochialism which, according to Bauman, denies the benefits of cultural difference to society.

Neither the patriotic nor the nationalist creed admits the possibility that people may belong together while staying attached to their differences, ... that togetherness far from requiring similarity... actually benefits from a variety of life styles, ideals and knowledge.

Bauman 2012:177

After a brief foray into addressing postcolonial politics by erecting statues of Gandhi and Mandela, the Square like the country might be seen to be retreating in on itself, becoming narrower in outlook. The erection of the conservative statue of Millicent Fawcett can be seen as a small step in redressing the gender imbalance. However the same could be said of Margaret Thatcher, who is often mooted as the next politician who should appear in the Square. It was Thatcher, who used the phrase 'there is no alternative' to signal that the globalised market economy was now the dominant force.<sup>263</sup> Paradoxically a monument to the former Prime Minister Thatcher might raise awareness of the closed future that a lack of alternative to global neoliberalism that she championed might suggest. It could though, also generate a sense of nostalgia in her still numerous admirers. A bronze 'Iron Lady' in the Square would most definitely prove divisive.

Communications scholar James Curran updates the effect of the free market and the Internet on democratic processes:

The nation state has been rendered less effective by the rise of the deregulated global markets and mobile transnational corporations. This has weakened the democratic power of national electorates...The Internet has energised activism. But in the context of political disaffection, increasing political manipulation at the centre, an unaccountable global order and the weakening of electoral power the Internet has not revitalised democracy.

Curran 2012:17

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<sup>263</sup> This phrase 'there is no alternative' was used by Thatcher in many speeches and was often shortened to TINA, (see Berlinski 2008).

The lack of alternative to this system could be seen as leading towards a ‘post-democratic’ era. A state of affairs which philosopher Jacques Ranciere describes as a situation where the presence of people would be removed and replaced with a process of modelling and simulation (in Stalder 2016:209).<sup>264</sup> Stalder describes social media platforms as environments that people live in rather than information transport systems (Stalder 2016:225) - they are people's everyday. He warns that these online places such as Facebook and Instagram might give a sense of free will to those who inhabit them but they are controlled and biased environments (ibid 2016:226).<sup>265</sup> Coupled with the joining up of big data that might lock society into an algorithmically planned and predicted post-democratic future. Space to intervene in this system is hard fought. Although people are never entirely free of these influences in either virtual or actual places. Social media platforms do offer a public platform from which people can critique market forces and political systems. Instagram holds the promise of the views of the people: the demos. Its format encourages the formations of rhizomatic networks of mutable communities and performative democracies that can break free from national boundaries and critique commercial structures.<sup>266</sup>

In the current political climate, recently blurred national borders are coming into sharper focus again, in Trump's USA as much as in Europe. Decisions as to where and how borders are drawn and who belongs in certain places, and who is excluded from certain communities are causing societal rifts. Exclusion from community is what Wodiczko was drawing people's attention to on a local scale by projecting photographs of homeless people onto statues. His ideas resonate in the Square, where police in the 1930s voiced concern that the removal of barriers - the ornate railings - might make it attractive to ‘vagrants’ and the ‘unclean’. Communities have boundaries and those who can't or won't adhere to the norms of that community are excluded. The visual contrast of societal extremes is also what ‘Occupy’ and Brian Haw drew upon to highlight precarity and human vulnerability. Heidegger worried

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<sup>264</sup> This is reminiscent of what Howard describes with his term *Pax Technica* (see pg. 262).

<sup>265</sup> These are my own translations from Stalder's writings in German.

<sup>266</sup> Deleuze and Guattari categorize the rhizome as ‘ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles’ ((1980)2004:8).



that technology might lead to an 'unrootedness' from belonging, whether local or national. However recent studies suggests that smartphones, their network devices and apps can offer common ground and shared experience; people can belong in a community even if it is scattered and delocalised.<sup>267</sup>

## *Security and Freedoms*

The Square communicates the solidity and security offered by the establishment. By giving the population a sense of national community, the Square can be seen as part of a method of control. Its statues and ornate railings are part of that dialogue. While writing this conclusion, a man drove a car along the pavement of Westminster Bridge, killing three and injuring many more.<sup>268</sup> He crashed the car into the railings, and then ran into New Palace Yard where he fatally stabbed a policeman before being shot dead. Photographs of the Square on Instagram showed police cordons, an air ambulance and chaotic scenes. Tourists became citizen journalists and their tourist snaps became reportage and global news. In the aftermath of this terror attack the Square itself was cordoned off, whereas on Instagram the virtual Square was still open a place to gather freely.<sup>269</sup> It became crowded with visual messages of solidarity posted from around the world.

The attacker's use of the Square and the Palace of Westminster as a stage for the promotion of his own political and religious beliefs was only brief. The Square, however, has been subtly changed by his actions. For a while it became a bloody political conflict zone, a crime scene. Familiar statues were made strange by hazard tape and forensic teams in pale blue overalls. As Berger states, photographs such as those of the incident confront the viewer with their own lack of political freedom and power to react, caught between horror, fear and inaction. The viewers' lack of freedom and the inaction that might follow after seeing photographs of an attack could be confronted by passive Internet clicktivism, or physically on the street. In the instance of a terror attack Instagram offers people a place to make themselves and

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<sup>267</sup> See UCL 'Why we Post' study (2017)

<sup>268</sup> A death toll which rose to four within two weeks of the incident.

<sup>269</sup> The geo-tag function on the app allows for photographs to be attached to particular places even when people are absent and the photograph was not taken there.

their views visible when the actual place is closed off and absent of the usual mix of people. Tourist photographs taken on past visits are given a different meaning as they are reposted to Parliament Square with captions offering a mix of support and outrage. For a short while a compassionate community was formed. People's understanding of a place was changed by what they saw on their phones; quite possibly their feeling of security was shaken but they may also have been moved by the overwhelming public reaction. These repurposed tourist photographs form what could be seen as documentation of shock, of lost innocence, of memories of happier times. The photographs are made poignant by their new context and are transformed into a memorial.

The attack on Westminster Bridge and Parliament only emphasised the processes at work in the Square. It continues to change; the Instagram archive maps those changes chronologically without any judgement or hierarchy. Soon after the police tape was removed, tourists and protesters returned. In the wake of this and other attacks the urban landscape is gradually altered to deal with the fear of further violence. Everyday vans and vehicles have been weaponized; in response public places become militarized, as Zukin points out. The climate of fear allows for a tightening of security. The repurposed cannon used to make bollards, which protected the pedestrians from horse-drawn vehicles in the Liberty of the Clink and elsewhere, take on a new significance. Once a form of attack, in the urban landscape, the bollards become a form of defence. There is a material parallel in the Square: the railings that once penned in the statues became munitions which were then used to defend Britain against German attack. There is an oscillation in the materiality of the Square, a process of moulding and casting of material roles that mirrors shifting political purpose.

The Square may subtly change. More protective barriers might appear to keep the peace or the *Pax*, whether that is for the benefit of trade, keeping the tourists safe or to aid maintaining a way of life in defiance of a perceived threat. At some point protection becomes restriction. I wonder if barriers are there to make people feel safer or as a deterrent - do they prevent or merely relocate such attacks? The social cost of security is often a restriction of freedom, the exclusion of strangers and

suspicion of those who are visibly 'other'. The CCTV cameras look down over the Square as part of the security system, yet their role might somehow have been reversed as terrorists seek publicity from iconic photographs of destruction. Questions remain: do the cameras look at, look after or incite?

## *Khora and Camera*

A central binding thread of this study has been my own art practice. The studio offered a private place to experiment, to deconstruct and restage the photographs. Many of the ideas developed through studio processes relayed back into the theoretical study of the Square and its virtual public representations online. Privacy gave me the freedom to experiment without being judged or needing to self-censor. The smartphone, its camera and screen allowed me to stay in the dark of my studio while looking into the public Square which led me to consider the studio as a *Camera Obscura*. In the studio I became the subjective presence that collapsed the truth of the Camera, dismantling the photographs so as to unsettle their semiotic face value. Cray's metaphor for the dichotomy between objective truth and subjective feeling can be problematized by Heidegger's view. Heidegger describes the need to stand outside the picture and be a stranger, not the relational centre (see pg. 281). This led me to question my position as a researcher. Was I within a 'world picture' relating what I saw only to my own view, or did the studio offer a place to step outside and view what I was seeing more critically.

When the tools I was using the analogue camera, the smartphone and the photographs I was looking at are included within a network of non-humans and humans including the *Camera Obscura*, the *Claude Glass*, rather than a hierarchy of technological and epistemological progression, I could be displaced as the relational centre while still being part of a network. As Law explains research like photographs can create a reality rather than explain it from a removed objective position:

Something seismic is happening here. A vital metaphorical and explanatory shift is taking place. We are no longer dealing with construction, social or otherwise: there is no stable prime-mover, social or individual, to construct anything, no builder, no puppeteer... In this heterogeneous world everything plays its part, relationally.

Law 2007:12-13

Questions remain, in Foster and Jarzombek's view there is a need to retain criticality which inevitably involves some kind of distancing from what one is involved in and reveals the dangers of post-critical thought which for 'the most part it has abetted a relativism that has little to do with pluralism' (Foster 2012:3). At the end of this thesis I am still pondering if it is possible to take a research position which is at the same time critical and removed while still being part of something. Is there somehow as Heidegger describes of standing within the world while at the same time being a stranger to it?<sup>270</sup>

I hope to have avoided instrumentalizing my studio processes to illustrate or ascertain certain results, and also to have remained somewhat decentred and self-critical. As some of my restaged photographs re-entered the changing socio-political community online, I was aware of Deutsche's advice: 'art involved with politics of images' acknowledges that 'the image is a social relation, it chooses to be openly in the world, intervening in diverse political spaces' (Deutsche 1996:231). In my studio I will continue to examine public places and photographs using the smartphone and Instagram as a supplier of raw material as well as a creative social-political space where I have a supportive community. Online other people and things will now interact with these images. They are my proxy in the Square where I am not the relational centre nor am I the voyeur.

I have tried to be constantly aware of my own position and role as the viewer of these Instagram photographs and how that can be extrapolated to look at the different roles the social media photograph can play within society. The different terminology used by different people to describe this role suggests different kinds of involvement with what is depicted in the photograph. There is the gaze: voyeuristic objectification described by Urry. Peirce suggested methods of semiotic reading and Barthes a mixture of what is felt and known which could equate to the oscillation described by Plato between sensible and intelligible. Crary chose the word observer because unlike the word spectator – describing a passive position outside the events depicted – observer implies one who is 'embedded in a system of conventions and

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<sup>270</sup> Heidegger describes this in between state in relation to art and technology (see pg. 283).

limitations' (Crary 1992:6): observing the rules. Deutsche defines the dangers of assuming an autonomous position as a viewer, which might establish 'a binary opposition between subject and object, [and make] the subject transcendent and the object inert, thus underpinning an entire regime of knowledge as mastery' (Deutsche 1996:211). Deutsche's view coupled with Crary's description of the development of visual technology as instrumental in disciplining and regulating the status of an observer (op cit 1992:26) binds the position of the viewer to the technology of viewing. Berger, Sontag and Azoulay make clear that all positions in regard to photographs are essentially social, political or civil. The voyeur's distanced objectifying stance arguably has as much political effect as someone establishing a 'civil contract' as Azoulay describes, and 'watching' a photograph. I would argue that some photographs for example the photograph of protestors, like Velazquez's *Las Meninas* are looking back at the viewer, therefore place them within the frame.

My explorations of the *Camera Obscura* and the mirroring back and forth between the Square and the studio through the phone allowed me to think about the ideas stemming from the word *khora*. Moving on from Plato and Derrida, I looked at Grosz's interpretation of *khora* as a social space: a space where the viewer is part of the image viewed.<sup>271</sup> Maybe the viewer always oscillates between a subjective presence and an objectifying voyeur. Therefore those viewing should ask like Mitchell: 'what do pictures want?' (Mitchell 2005:28). As Emerling points out, photography is not merely a dichotomy where photographs can make visible and empower but also convict.

Photography is a multiplicity that has always been contingent on strategies, materials, readings, uses and affects that came from outside it. "Photography" is a name that is an assemblage of multiple and often contradictory lines of discourses, motivations and power.

Emerling 2012:65

What bearing does the positioning of the viewer have in a society where many people are constantly viewing photographs? It could be argued that viewing photographs on a smartphone in situ, like the landscape seen through a *Claude Glass* has distanced people from what they are seeing and from each other. At the same

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<sup>271</sup> I use the word space here rather than place because of the social but also abstract connotations of *khora*.

time being actually and virtually visible has become more closely implicated in powerful systems that can control people's behaviour. 'Looking implies subjects who arrange things into images and who are themselves constituted by looking' (Deutsche 1996:211). Could the speed at which images travel, and the immediacy that they can be seen also play a role in this distancing and thereby play a part in increasing the use of the Internet as a form of control. Virilio warns that 'delocalized perception' plays a part in the panoptical cyberspace of the Internet that will destroy 'aesthetics that was a product of western modernity' but also the 'ethics of western democracies' as (Virilio 2005:121). The hyper aestheticization and the tyranny of self-image that occurs on Instagram, could be seen as damaging to the individual and therefore society, as people look inwards rather than out. The lack of engagement created by delocalised or distanced perception might also be part of what is damaging the ethics of western democracies. As Berger, Dean and Butler point out: people see but they do not act.

Conversely, if there is an oscillation between the voyeur and social involvement, this might according to Massey make people more spatially aware of the existence of others. The augmentation of places through Instagram photographs could still in some way lead to a dismantling of existing cultural frameworks and question unthinking, uncritical inhabitation of places through increased social interaction and awareness of others. The proliferation of cheap, easily useable technology has an effect on performative democratic involvement, as Espinosa explains with regard to the cheap video camera.<sup>272</sup> The smartphone enables quick production and distribution which allows people to communicate. Because it makes people visible and gives people a voice, it can also be a means to be politically active.

## *Visuality and visibility*

In Parliament Square the Instagram photographs became guides to how the eye is led and to what end. What people shared online opened up a discussion as to the

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<sup>272</sup> I am aware that some smartphones are extremely expensive. However they proliferate through second hand or cheaper, less well-known brands. It is estimated that 36% of the world's population own a smartphone and 66% in the U.K. see (Statista (2017) *Smartphone users worldwide from 2014 to 2020*).

visual nature of an online public place. The mirroring back and forth between virtual and actual, historical and contemporary photographs opened up discussions of different terms: *visuality* - the spectacle; *visibility* - what it means to be seen in public; *absence* - what is not seen or represented but might be felt. The complexity of the position of the observer or watcher remains key: oscillating between political participant and voyeuristic consumer. In the studio I saw the visual strength of the Square with its representations of 'Great Men' and instructional architecture, animated by personal individual narratives, through other people's eyes.

Debord and Lefebvre describe the need to break down 'spectacular monumentality' and explore visual power structures of the city. Debord practiced this physically through the *dérive* or drift. He encouraged his followers to engage in 'counter' movements through the city. However the actions of Debord and his group of fellow psychogeographers – the *Situationist International* - only go so far in breaking down and revealing the power structures of the city. The arrest of one of their number in 1958 while walking through the Les Halles district in Paris one evening is another example of the risks of visibility. Abdelhafid Khatib, an Algerian, was breaking the curfew placed on North African men. His ethnic background made him a target for harassment; the city was not free for him to creatively and playfully explore and appropriate. His absence from subsequent *Situationist International* publications only emphasises that the privilege of ideas which as Berger describes enables only a few to see the land as landscape is still afforded primarily to white men.<sup>273</sup> Being visible has risks and repercussions, as Khatib found to his cost. Geographer Andrea Gibbons argues that if Khatib's call for concrete action had been heard, the colonial mindset of the authorities which led to harassment might have been addressed in a different way on the streets of Paris (Gibbons 2015).

If Khatib were active today, his invisibility could be countered by social media photography. Like artist Raju Rage who uses the act of taking selfies to inject or insert themselves into a particular place and narrative, Khatib might have been able to turn his vulnerable visibility into an empowering image. Rage took selfies in *The*

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<sup>273</sup> Khatib's invisibility in the canon of *Situationist International* works also casts light back onto my own privileged position as a white middleclass researcher and artist.

*Homosexualität\_en Exhibition* (2015) in Berlin, Germany, carving out a new place in the white homosexual narrative: 'I wanted to present a dark ghostly shadowy presence in direct contrast to the whiteness, the white-washedness being conveyed' (Rage 2016:4).<sup>274</sup> Photography and in particular social media photography enables such interventions into places and their set narratives.

The presence of Haw and Wright unlike that of Khatib in Paris has left traces in the form of photographs. The photographs are visually strong although they show moments of vulnerability: Wright hiding her face and cowering on the pavement, Haw's ramshackle tents and his regular arrests. The tourist BH and the small group of protesters in the Instagram photographs have also intervened in the Square temporarily, clearing a small area for their own purpose.

The clearance of slums to make the Square, the pointed camera, the absence in the photographs and the freedoms of the Internet all open up places and a possibilities for people and their views to be seen.<sup>275</sup> I have fragmented and distorted the visual strength of the place in the studio, then mirrored back into the Square through Instagram. The process opened up what Heidegger might describe as a *lichtung* or, in Derrida's terms, a *mise-en-abym* - mirrored abyss or *khora*. It led me to explore what is unseen, the incalculable and the immemorial. What cannot be seen but emotionally sensed, what cannot be represented but should not be forgotten. This in-between, which is not absence or presence, is what allows the viewer to become involved. In this in-between ideas and relationships can be formed that unsettle truths and foundational structures. Danto's description of the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1982) brings ideas of reflection back into the public realm: the memorial 'reflects us, the visitors, as it does the trees. Still, the living are in it only as appearances. Only the names of the dead, on the surface, are real (Danto 153:1985). The emotion that is felt in this moment of reflection and the position of the viewer chimes with Crary's description of the collapse of the *Camera Obscura* where 'the distinction between internal sensation and external signs is irrevocably blurred' by

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<sup>274</sup> *The Homosexualität\_en Exhibition* (2015) organized by the Schwules Museum and Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin.

<sup>275</sup> Chris Otter describes the effect of slum clearance which led to people behaving differently because they were in the 'public eye' (2008:71).



the subjective emotional presence (Crary 1992:24). Photographs, monuments and public places are not finished objects offering singular truths, they are part of a process offering multiple interpretations and fragmented reflections.

### *The future: history and tradition*

During this study I have been involved in multiple places: the Square, the studio, the virtual place of Instagram and the photographic places offered by all the different photographs that I have *watched*. Deutsche's view that imaginary totalizations of the city as an image should be resisted as they might lead to a 'fiction of knowledge' (Deutsche 1996:210), when read alongside Laclau's statement that history is unrepresentable (in Massey 2012:27), makes me wary of drawing hard conclusions from my study. Building a monument or taking a photograph might be seen as an attempt to make history visible in the present, fix a narrative or be part of the process of handing on history into the future through the processes of tradition. The places and the photographs remain in flux; I feel that they cannot be totally closed off and made safe, finished or neutral - their future cannot be predicted.

The statues in the Square might be seen to embody Carlyle's belief that 'the history of the world ...is the biography of Great Men' (Carlyle 1841:21) The 'Great Men' represented in the Square indicate the society from whence they came and the desire of that society to determine what values the future might be shaped by. Writer Leo Tolstoy's view of 'Great Men' expressed in *War and Peace* (1869) places the figures in the Square in a different, more precarious and subservient position: 'The significance of great individuals is imaginary; as a matter of fact they are only history's slaves realizing the decree of providence' (Tolstoy (1869)2010:1167). Tolstoy's views echo Borges: there is a certain amount of unplanned fate as to who ends up monumentalised on a plinth. Interpretations of who these people were and what they mean to society now is in constant evolution in the durational present, as Deleuze and Bergson argue. These figures, whether they represent a consensus or are contentious, do however also provoke people to take part in the process of history. Whether like BH that involves posing for a photograph in front of Mandela,

or those who take a more active role in the process and demonstrate for the removal or installation of certain monuments.

People are often polarised by public statues; they adopt them for their own purposes. However their effect on what is actually remembered or forgotten through their presence is almost contradictory, as Connerton points out:

The relationship between memorials and forgetting is reciprocal: the threat of forgetting begets memorials and the construction of memorials begets forgetting. If giving monumental shape to what we remember is to discard the obligation to remember, that is because memorials permit only some things to be remembered and, by exclusion, cause others to be forgotten.

Connerton 2009:29

Connerton echoes Lyotard who argues that it is memorialization and memory itself that can aid and even be a form of forgetting. 'Whenever one represents, one inscribes in memory, and this might seem a good defence against forgetting. It is, I believe, just the opposite' (Lyotard 1990:26). While Lyotard is discussing the holocaust in terms of its representation through writing, his arguments can be transferred to the cityscape as Musil and Bauman have discussed (see pg. 40). Decisions as to the removal of controversial monuments deny the complexities of history. New ones might, according to Connerton, do the same.

Writing in response to calls for the statue of Nelson to be removed from his column in Trafalgar Square, Journalist Simon Jenkins argues that 'the back projection of morality is the darkest form of historical distortion. History's virtue is that it encourages us to evolve our moral compass, but we can't change history because it is a stern tyrant' (Jenkins 2017). Chiming with Amin's assessment of the disorganised, unpredictable urban square (see pg. 228), Jenkins adds: 'London is a diverse and sometimes offensive city. I would rather it was both than neither' (ibid 2017). City squares should not be homogenised and made acceptable through teleological editing. Instead the statues need to be regularly questioned and recontextualized. Nishi's reinterpretation of Columbus in New York and artist Yinka Shonibare's *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle* (2010) which celebrated the multicultural legacy

of empire in Trafalgar Square, both provoke the viewer to reconsider the current meaning and history of a particular place and person.<sup>276</sup>

Questions as to why particular monuments are erected at a particular time and why certain artists are chosen to make them lead to wider questions of memorialization.<sup>277</sup> Connerton argues that the urge to memorialize has in the past indicated shifts in global power.

When a nation feels itself to be no longer a place where history on a grand scale is being made, it turns inwards to cultivate its memorials... the self-doubt which accompanies the transition from great power to at the very most a middle range power led to the politics of nostalgia in Britain.

Connerton 2009:28

It will be interesting to see what effect Gillian Wearing's statue of Fawcett might have on the Square. Her presence will alter the context of the other statues. The statue will depict a woman who had a political effect; it might begin to change the way women are represented in public monuments. 'The traditional monument has tended to confound gender politics', as art historians Pam Meecham and Julie Sheldon maintain: 'The female form is often used to represent what she does not possess – justice, liberty, equality' (2005:95). The proposed statue is due to be unveiled on the centenary of the Representation of the People's Act (1918). It depicts Fawcett holding a placard which reads 'Courage calls to courage everywhere'.<sup>278</sup> Along with Ghandi and Mandela her presence will indicate an acknowledgement of the power of performative democracy affiliating her with protesters in the Square rather than the 'Great Men'. The choice of Fawcett will give people visiting the Square a symbol of female strength and political activism; they

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<sup>276</sup> Art critic Adrian Searle describes the piece as an 'ironical corrective to Rule Britannia patriotism... But the thing about ships in bottles is that they're not sailing anywhere. Perhaps this is a further symbol of Britain today' (Searle 2010). However Shonibare's celebration of Nelson's role in creating multicultural Britain is at odds with writer Aupa Hirsch who called for consideration of the column's removal primarily because Nelson was actively pro slavery (See Hirsch 2017).

<sup>277</sup> Gillian Wearing's use of the placard links this figurative monument to her conceptual photographic piece *Signs that say what you want them to say and not Signs that say what someone else wants you to say* (1992-1993). It could be argued that Wearing is not a figurative sculptor and the job should have been given to a female artist who is. Although arguably her use of 3D scanning and printing in the process of creating the statue has brought the art of portrait statuary up to date. As well as creating textures and detail on the finished statue that would be hard to achieve by hand, these techniques give the statue a very different quality to others in the Square.

<sup>278</sup> Fawcett used this phrase in a speech after the death of suffragette Emily Davison who was killed by the King's horse at Epsom in 1913.

might see their own struggles encouraged or reflected. Does it also indicate something of the country's current inward looking stance, having looked outwards for a brief while with Mandela and Gandhi?

If the new monument to Fawcett goes some way towards resetting the 'moral compass, the reinstatement of *The Buxton Memorial Drinking Fountain* in the centre of the grass would go much further. It may be that a more participatory approach which creates a social space in which to communicate could change the dynamic of the Square. Maybe there is a need to apply a critical ethical rigour to the problems of today rather than imposing current values on the past. The Fountain might go some way towards reminding people of a social responsibility to explore painful pasts - 'like feeling the scar from a wound', as critical theorist Homi Bhabha describes (2012). It might also nurture a concern for the future in the way that Gerz and Hoheisel's counter-monuments have done. As a working water fountain it could serve as a reminder that the wealth and infrastructure that were responsible for the Square were built on shaky moral foundations. As historians Catherine Hall et al. argue: 'Slave-owners (who then became former slave-owners) played an important role not only in the birth of the Victorian economy but in its success, especially in finance and commerce' (Hall et al 2016:14). The period post emancipation between the 1830s and 1870s established London as the centre of global capital flows, 'transferring financial and human capital generated in slavery to the new industrial and commercial economy' (ibid 2016:23). Not only statues but whole cities and global commercial infrastructures were built as a result of slave trade wealth. Historian Madge Dresser takes this further: 'though transatlantic slavery is at the root of modern racism, it transcends race. It epitomises a most exploitative form of globalisation, which has since resurfaced in new forms' (Dresser 2003). I see the abolition of slavery as a pivotal point, that can put local and national issues into a wider context which still, as Dresser explains, has repercussions today. The Fountain could, like a photograph, as Azoulay describes, be a point from which new potential futures could be imagined.

The Fountain was erected in the Square in 1834, thereby preceding the monuments to 'Great Men'. It symbolizes group collective action and the power of democratic legislature to change the accepted societal *status quo*. Drinking fountains were part of communal life at that time; they served a practical purpose of supplying clean water to all who needed it.<sup>279</sup> Placed in the Square now as a working fountain it could act as a place to meet and talk. It could provide free drinking water to those visiting, negating their need to buy water in plastic bottles thus setting the global problem of climate change and pollution centre stage albeit in a low-key manner. It could highlight the problem of the lack of access to clean water for *others* across the globe. It could be a physical suggestion that collective action and a concern for global ecopolitics are more important than national introversion or global consumerism that fuels production and pollution. This revival of the Fountain's old purpose might engender new traditions, a handing on of other ideals.

Indirectly, the Fountain symbolises that Victorian and therefore today's society is based on the wealth of the slave trade. Which indicates that despite its abolition British society remains unequal, racially prejudiced and predominantly commercially driven. As Deutsche points out, it is hard to escape the incompatibility of the two purposes of public places: 'to be endowed with substantive sources of unity - uniformly beneficial but also as places where state power is exercised' (Deutsche 1996:275). According to Deutsche public places can never represent the totality of the public; they always seek to implement power.

Instead of addressing Britain's colonial past which is littered with injustice, oppression and institutional racism but has no memorial or museum, the area next to the Square, Victoria Gardens, is to become the site of a Holocaust Memorial/Museum.<sup>280</sup> It seems that the establishment would rather deal with the past wrongs of other nations than examine Britain's own.

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<sup>279</sup> Cholera outbreaks were frequent during this time, water supplies were privately owned, therefore not freely available to all.

<sup>280</sup> This Holocaust Memorial will of course change the way the area is read and understood, thereby also changing the way the Buxton Fountain nearby is seen. The Imperial War Museum has complained that its own memorial exhibition performs the same purpose as the newly planned memorial. The debate as to the proposed Memorial's location and validity brings to mind the argument made by Norman Finkelstein in *The Holocaust Industry* (2000) that the holocaust 'is being sold, it is not being taught' (2000:frontis piece).

## *Place, space and common ground*

Throughout this study I defined the Square, the social media platform of Instagram and my studio as locations or places, rather than use the word space. Through Massey and Grosz's interpretation, space gradually began to emerge as something social that is not bound to one particular place. It is perhaps this ephemeral social space which can offer ways of questioning and appropriating actual places. The idea of the reinstatement of *The Buxton Memorial Drinking Fountain* might provide an alternative way of looking at the city, at the nation and at democracy; one that is not closed but also critically aware of complex burdensome pasts that create tense hierarchal presents. This could be achieved through the shifting of stone and installation of flowing water.

But I wonder: what would be the equivalent online? Writer Matt Haig warns, with reference to social media, that 'we need to ensure we are still the ones using the technology – and that the technology isn't using us' (Haig 2017). His views on the perils of social media seem to describe a new version of technological determinism. Social media determinism might engender 'emotional contagion' where people become unsure what their own emotions are and what is 'data behaviourism'; how those emotions and thoughts can be seen, mined, predicted and manipulated for political purposes.<sup>281 282</sup> However, I remain optimistic that the Internet can offer alternative public social *spaces*.<sup>283</sup> In a reaction against the dominance of 'there is no alternative' neoliberalism Massey maintains that 'only if the future is open is there any ground for a politics that can make a difference' (Massey 2013:11). Online there are ways of escaping the restrictions of the *Pax Technica* through freedoms offered

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<sup>281</sup> Emotional contagion 'is the phenomenon of having one person's emotions and related behaviours directly trigger similar emotions and behaviours in other people' (Emotional contagion, Wikipedia, 2017).

<sup>282</sup> The involvement of Cambridge Analytica in feeding certain social media users targeted advertising in both the Trump and Brexit campaigns was not illegal as such but breached personal net privacy guidelines. Psychometrics derived from big data is changing the way elections are run; see Mavriki and Karyda (2017:38). There is much evidence to suggest the involvement of hackers affiliated to the Russian government in attempting to undermine the 2016 and 2017 French and German elections in favour of far right candidates: see (Auchard 2017) and (Beuth et al 2017).

<sup>283</sup> Some of the recent revelations of sexual harassment came in the form of social media posts, which then galvanised others to do the same under the #metoo hashtag. The Internet is still a place awash with porn legal and illegal, these campaigns only go some way to combating objectification of bodies for sexual purposes. It will need service providers to take a much harder line to eradicate exploitative and corruptive content from the mainstream of the web.

by knowledge of alternatives and collective action. Photography, partially because of what Emerling calls its multiplicity is, I would argue, one of these ways.

Throughout this study photographs have been the common ground between the public places of the Internet and the Square and the private studio. The piles of photographs that I sorted through link me to the many different individuals who all have their own views and ways of inhabiting places. Rather than seeing social media as a damaging individualisation of society, it can in conjunction with actual public places be a location where people gather to find and build common ground - in Bauman's terms 'a life in common'.<sup>284</sup> For Bauman 'the search for a life in common must start from an examination of life-politics alternatives' (Bauman 2012:52). This life in common can be found online in the form of Wikipedia, Creative Commons, open source mapping and coding sites, but also on commercial social media platforms such as Instagram.<sup>285 286</sup> Stalder describes the formation of this common ground as a balance between individuals and a group cause. 'The interaction between the singular appropriation and communal readiness or availability forms a central dynamic inside the commons. Communication amongst the members is the most important method of self-organization' (Stalder 2016: 247-248). This description echoes Habermas's definition of the public sphere (see pg. 72). Projects such as LGBT tech's 'Power On Project' (2017) in Washington DC might be an example of how commons can be formed within the commercial system, which also goes some way to critique it.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> The way photographs can be attached to a particular actual place by geo-tag is for me an important factor in the way Instagram can be used politically and socially.

<sup>285</sup> Creative Commons is an organisation that offers 'institutional, practical and legal support for individuals and groups wishing to experiment and communicate with culture more freely' (Berry 2005).

<sup>286</sup> Commercials now interrupt the feed of images on Instagram leading some users including myself, to question its integrity as a creative outlet.

<sup>287</sup> Recycled smartphones and free data were given to homeless LGBT youth in the city who then used Snapchat and Instagram to communicate with each other to access health care and work opportunities (in Murgia 2017). The phones themselves became a refuge for the homeless and offer the possibility of common ground and peer support.

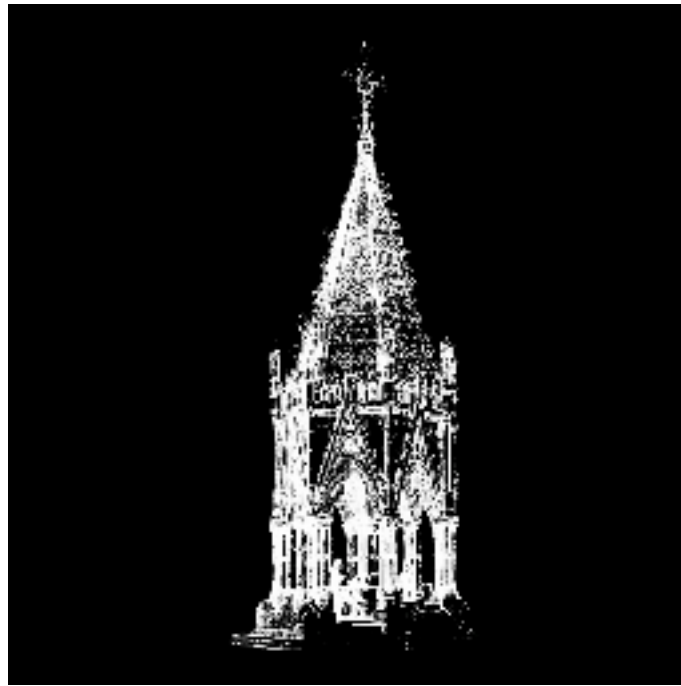
## *The photograph and the Square*

Photography offers a way of understanding how places can be socially reclaimed. Photographers such as Fay Godwin and Berenice Abbott photographed both the rural and urban landscape as a way of appropriating what could be seen as dominated places (see Wells 2015:338). Street photographer Ruddy Roye does the same as he makes urban poverty visible in the increasingly commercially saturated Instagram. Their approaches lead to a way of questioning privilege of access, not only to land and virtual places but also to ideas. Photographs can be world making as Crang points out: Godwin demonstrated her right to be on the land by trespassing to picture it, Abbott's urban photography demonstrated not only her right as a woman to be on the streets in this role but also the inhumane conditions in which people lived (Weissman 2011:114). I have examined the everyday simple acts of taking and looking at photographs and made them complex and critical. The photographs I looked at led me on different trajectories through and between the three places studio, Square and Internet.

In the Square and online these photographs might raise awareness of a place's power structures and how they can be turned to other use. The photographs might demand that people learn to code to create their own places, or learn how to make their presence felt but not seen - how not to leave a data trail. On Instagram taking a photograph can allow people to restage and occupy places. A photograph might allow for local understandings of global problems to become visible on differing sometimes-conflicting individual terms. Photographs expose people to the opinions of others and can make local or personal issues a global common cause.



*Ghost Fountain*, paper negative, 2017



*Ghost Fountain*, analogue print, 2017



## Appendix I: Characters, Props and Backdrops

In the studio inspired by Nishi's recontextualisation of Columbus's statue and for more practical reasons, the need to define a clear area within the small and sometimes messy studio, I had built a stage. The stage became a site in which I could experiment with different practical methods of investigating the Square and the photographs. The experiments provided terminology such as recasting and restaging which in turn relayed back to theoretical approaches. This short appendix traces some of the characters, props and backdrops that became part of my early practical investigations while 'restaging' the tourist photograph (figure 22 and 43). It complements the methodological approaches within this study as described by Jarzombek and Smith: it is a critical 'figuring out', a piecing together of gathered information through different processes.

### *Characters*

In the studio BH's photograph ended up pinned on the wall alongside two others taken in Parliament Square. One was taken in 1942 and depicts trainee pilot Jellicoe Scoon from Grenada (figure 41). The other is of Nelson Mandela taken on a visit to London in 1962 (figure 42). In the setting of the studio, the photographs hovered between possible roles as historical and political instigators of thought and raw materials which could be activated, disassembled, reconstructed and restaged. As raw materials the photographs were malleable; they allowed invisible connections to become palpable. Characters could be attributed new roles in relation to each other, the Square and the viewer. As my eye moved between and around the surfaces of the three photographs, they crossed boundaries of time, their meanings began to intertwine and change.

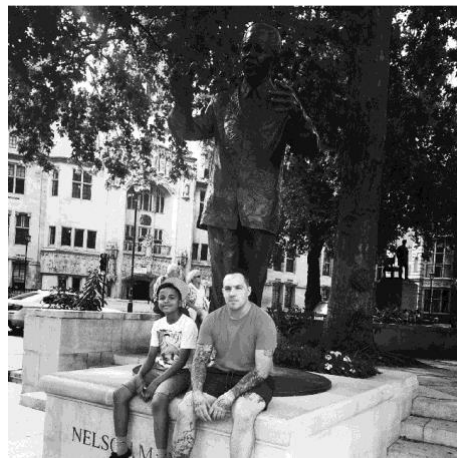
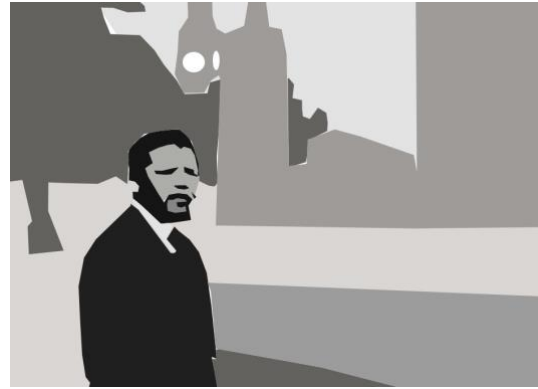


Figure 41 Brock F.J. (Imperial War Museum), *Jellicoe Scoon*, 1942

Figure 42 Anon, (Mayibuye Centre), [Nelson Mandela](#), 1962

Figure 43 Anon, *Tourists*, 2014

Together with the photograph of the tourist in figure 43 - BH, these three photographs could be seen as part of a network rather than a linear passage of events. Collectively they raised questions concerning the social value of racial and cultural representation and visibility. I had already photographed all of them on the SLR analogue camera, and removed them from their digital sources then printed them in the darkroom. At first I experimented by merging elements of each photograph through double exposures and collages. The effect these photographs had on each other suggested that they like the statues are not fixed in time or meaning. I continued to draw links between the photographs by investigating outside the frame: Jellicoe Scoon like BH was a soldier, I found the photograph through my initial Parliament Square Google search on the Imperial War Museum's (IWM) online digital archives. The IWM's caption provides scant information: 'RAF student pilot Jellicoe Scoon, a West Indian from Trinidad, in Parliament Square in

London, 26 March 1942' (IWM website). He smiles into the camera, standing to attention, his upright stature echoing Big Ben behind him. His formal stance contrasts greatly with the relaxed pose that today's soldier, BH, adopts in the Square in 2014.

The choice of how and where to pose that the subjects made in each of the photographs is personally, socially and politically indicative of the individual and the times the photographs were taken. In the 1940s Scoon stands erect, face to camera; he seems formal and dutiful. Mandela's sideways stance in the 1960s seems less formal, yet he appears uneasy with his surroundings. By 2014 BH and his mixed-heritage companion lounge at the base of Mandela's statue. The stance of the protagonists and the framing of the shot all have an effect on the viewer. These effects might be aesthetic, emotional, informational and political or a combination of these and others. These are my readings of the photographs; it is hard to remove what I know about the photographs from their visual language. All of these photographs are in some way staged with a view to communicating a narrative; this narrative changes over time as the photograph moves out of the control of the protagonist and photographer. When I saw these photographs together, the shared visual aspects as well as individual differences of context and meaning pulled me as the viewer in different directions, but all speak to the issue of race and representation.

Jellicoe Scoon's woollen-gloved hands made him seem vulnerable despite his uniform. His personal vulnerability echoed the precarious state of the nation at the time. In 1942, parliament was convening away from the Palace of Westminster which can be seen behind him, after an incendiary device had gutted the main chamber.<sup>288</sup> The attempt to destroy icons of national importance and therefore to challenge their power makes Scoon's photograph all the more powerful: defiance becomes apparent in his upright stance. The photograph was taken on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1942. Two days later the RAF carried out a bombing raid on Lübeck, Germany,

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<sup>288</sup> This understanding of the photograph could be seen as fitting into Barthes' definitions of *Punctum* and *Studium*.

destroying its historic centre. This attack was to trigger what became known as the Baedeker Raids, a series of air bombardments against British targets listed as 3 star or above in the 1937 *Guide to Great Britain*. Baedeker's instructional purpose was used with devastating effect. Amongst the buildings damaged were cathedrals in Norwich, Exeter and Canterbury as well as York Minster, all of them targeted by the Luftwaffe for their culturally symbolic value in an attempt to demoralise the population (figure 44). The visual power of iconoclasm was recognised as a weapon by both sides in the conflict. Politics, tourism and conflict became bound together.



Figure 44 Anon, [\*Baedeker Raid damage to St Martin le Grand Church\*](#), York, 1942

There is little to find out about the backstage life of Scoon, gradually stories of his war experience have emerged online during the course of this study, yet no clue is given as to his fate. His pose is one often adopted by tourists and the photograph may have been taken as a keepsake of a visit, yet the meaning of the photograph has changed: It has become a valuable symbol of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora's history, telling a complex tale of belonging, service to King and Country, pride and nationhood.<sup>289</sup> The photograph is, as Hall describes, an artefact that contributes to the process of what a nation means (see pg 135). It reveals a not widely known history, one that is not only relevant to the British Afro-Caribbean community. The visibility of black pilots and soldiers during World War Two can strengthen the

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<sup>289</sup> See website: Caribbean aircrew in the RAF during WW2 (2017).

community's feeling of civic duty, bravery and belonging. It can also challenge a white retelling of history.

Scoon may of course have had to endure abuse, racism and poverty after the war, just like the Afro-Caribbean service men protagonists of Andrea Levy's book *Small Island* (2006). Scoon's visual presence in my studio adds a different historical aspect to BH's photograph: they are soldiers, they are caught up in international conflicts, they mirror a changing society. BH is a white soldier who has chosen to be seen with the representation of black empowerment. Mandela was not welcomed by the UK government at the time of his visit in 1962 but who has now been used as a symbol to signal a global openness, which broadens the possible narratives available for visitors to the Square to identify with. In my studio I started to cut out and mix aspects from each of the three photographs propping them on the stage to observe the different effects they had on each other.

The feeling of historic permanence in the Square is unsettled by the unintentional indexical details captured in the background of the photograph of Scoon. The statue of Viscount Palmerston seen in the distance behind him is no longer there. It was moved in 1973 to make way for Churchill's brooding presence. Ever the military tactician, Churchill had picked out the location for his statue. Like those depicted in the photographs Churchill was aware of the importance of picking the right position to be seen. The photograph of Scoon has outlasted what it depicted in the Square.

The statue of Mandela also stands highly visible, in the diagonally opposite corner of the Square to Churchill. His inclusion along with Gandhi and Millicent Fawcett is evidence of the way the site is used to display changing national and global values. Old didactic narratives are swept aside, figures such as Viscount Palmerston, his deeds almost forgotten, have been demoted to the back of the Square. When I looked for information on Palmerston what I found revealed another layer of historical and visual links that could be plotted between the statues, the three photographs and those depicted.

When Winston Churchill campaigned for rearmament in the 1930s, he was compared to Palmerston in warning the nation to look to its defences. The policy of appeasement led General Jan Smuts to write in 1936 that "we are

afraid of our shadows. I sometimes long for a ruffian like Palmerston or any man who would be more than a string of platitudes and apologies".

Viscount Palmerston, Wikipedia 2015.

The links continue to build up. On seeing the statue of Jan Smuts during his visit to Parliament Square in 1962, Nelson Mandela joked with fellow activist Oliver Tambo 'perhaps there will be statues to us one day' (in Cohen and Battersby 2009:45). The photograph of Mandela (figure 42) is a record of his deliberate provocation of the South African and British governments. His visit took place when he was under threat of arrest in South Africa and when members of the Conservative Party, who supported the apartheid regime, had branded him as a terrorist. His public visibility in London was a signal that he could thwart the authority of both. His present visibility has taken on another symbolic value: Mandela's statue has now joined and in some ways challenges the old order of Smuts, Palmerston and Churchill.

## *Props*

The Square offers a stage on which these characters play a role and create multiple meanings. However the protagonists are not alone. Other possible roles are offered by the buildings and the monuments but also by the things that are invisible, just out of frame. These items could be unphotographed or unnoticed items such as discarded coffee cups, newspapers or beer cans. The detritus left behind by visitors to the Square can, as Benjamin described in *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940), indicate much about those who passed through and left it behind (Benjamin (1927-1940)1999:350). The discarded items indicate where people sit, their social status; in terms of Actor Network Theory these items become proxies or traces of humans who left them behind. The trail of Instagram photographs can also be seen in this light. Online I found other unseen items that also played a role in 'restaging' BH's photograph. At the time of Mandela's visit in 1962 and for some time afterwards, the British establishment saw him as an anti-hero. I found vitriolic posters from the 1980s calling for him to be hanged (figure 45). I printed one out and made it into a placard, then added it to the mix of potential elements on my studio stage. This became an object which could bring past circumstances back into view.



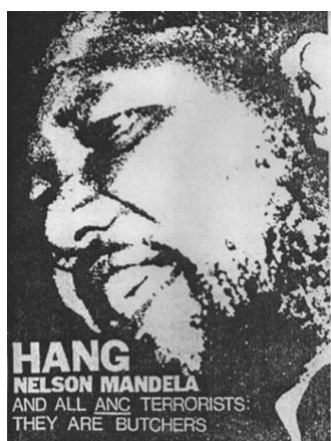


Figure 45 Anon (made by members of the Federation of Conservative Students), *Hang Nelson Mandela Poster*, 1985

I brought these items together in different configurations on my stage. The re-  
assemblage became a method of questioning the current hierarchy of the Square.  
The process made visible some of the obscured complex connections and political  
hypocrisies. It elevated BH's photograph and other similar photographs geo-tagged  
in that location from the bottom of the pile of 'poor' or ubiquitous photographs to  
be part of a network including photographs of Scoon and Mandela. As part of this  
restaging I placed the 'Hang Mandela' placard next to BH. The result was unsettling,  
for me it seemed to show how thin post-colonial veneer of the Square and national  
politics is. The racist past still haunts the present. This juxtaposition was not carried  
out to cast aspersions on BH but to make visible the danger of a wider political trend  
to populism and the right that might threaten the multiculturalism pictured.<sup>290</sup> The  
placard like the photograph of Scoon is also an artefact that contributes to the  
process of the nation. Like the statue of Smuts the placard is a reminder that racism  
is not eradicated by the erection or destruction of statues.

The found photograph, coffee cup, poster were transformed and became something  
new. These items are present in the Square but go unseen or unnoticed. By giving

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<sup>290</sup> When visiting the Square soon after Mandela died I witnessed a peaceful gathering around the statue being disrupted by Britain First activists seeking publicity for their campaign to free 'Marine A'. Marine A was later named as Alexander Blackman, a Royal Marine who was convicted of killing a Taliban prisoner in 2013 and was released in 2017. Britain First is an overtly fascist group formed by members of the British National Party, which campaigns against multiculturalism and the 'islamification' of the UK.

them a new role and greater prominence, they could be seen to counter the established meanings of the Square. Coffee cups became marble plinths; hierarchies, chronology and scales were rearranged and challenged as Licoppe and Law describe. The sculptural elements I accumulated and made perform or enact roles on the stage. Together they offered a way to look at the Square as constituted from different contrasting elements which come into dialogue with each other. I photographed the restagings and my interaction with these different actants and by so doing cultivated different networks of meaning - an alternative visual language of the Square which didn't take either the Square or the photographs at face value. As I worked through my ideas, gradually the people in the photographs moved from centre stage to the periphery: they became part of an ever-changing entanglement of actants.

## *Backdrops*

As my focus shifted from the people in the photographs and their intertwined personal yet political stories, the indexical background and non-human objects began to encroach and take over; it revealed the mutability of the Square. I experimented further, printing the photographs again but masking out the posing protagonists, the statues and landmarks. That left me with the edges and incidental indexical areas. I mounted these individual portions of the photographs on wooden supports to allow them to stand freely, then introduced them onto the empty stage. For me the absence of the original figures created an expectancy of action, and a chance to explore absence as a concept in regard to the Square, to monuments and photography. The stage was in an in-between state: although populated with the indexical backdrops, it remained oddly empty but expectant. In the absence of people the backdrops were brought onto equal terms with the characters who might potentially interact with them. On the studio stage the backdrops became primary actants rather than a secondary scene.

## *Deconstruction and restaging*

The photographs of Scoon and Mandela repositioned BH's photograph in a historical context. The deconstruction and reassemblage of all three drew out the more overt political nature of BH's photograph which led me to consider the political potential of social media photography. It also led me to address the problems with a belief in the singular truths offered by photographs. Combining the three photographs together caused a strange social interaction. As Flusser describes connections between elements in photographs can form a social space of 'mutual significance' (Flusser 1983: 8). The stage acted as a receptacle for my own restagings of the Square: it was at times empty, absent of characters backdrops or props yet expectant. It offered the possibility to mirror but also alter the Square. The deconstruction and reconstruction of these three photographs on the stage was a process not only of taking away but also of adding what is not seen but maybe felt. During this process the stage became a place of social interaction and resonance between ideas and objects which arguably shifted the stage towards being what could be termed as a *khora*-like place of becoming.

Removing the human subjects, the statues and landmarks away from centre stage questioned Goffman's ideas about front stage and backstage behaviour and its relationship to what MacCannell calls 'staged authenticity'. He describes it as 'a kind of repressive de-sublimation of tradition. This refers to the many distinctive reconstructions of traditional objects, thoughts and behaviour which are such evident features of contemporary communities' (MacCannell, 1992:298). In using philosopher Herbert Marcuse's term 'repressive de-sublimation', MacCannell is enforcing his belief that traditional practices are being modified to suit a capitalist agenda. 'Staged authenticity' is a part of what MacCannell sees as cultural determinism being overtaken by social determinism, which chimes with Goffman's and also Butler's belief that people behave in certain culturally and social determined ways when in public.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Cultural determinism: the belief that the culture in which a person is raised determines much of their emotional and behavioural tendencies. Social determinism: the belief that social interactions and constructs are major factors in influencing behaviour.

Like Wells, MacCannell sees deconstruction as a way of unsettling the ideological power flows that generally control places and traditions. This unsettling might allow for a *connaissance* or street level common knowledge to provoke critical self-awareness.

Deconstruction gives us access to the realm of absolute possibility in theory, in the imagination, and where it exists, in life. But an allied sociology of interaction or dialogue is still necessary to gain access to the realm of contingency and determinism, and especially resistance to, and struggles against, determinism.

MacCannell, 1992:3

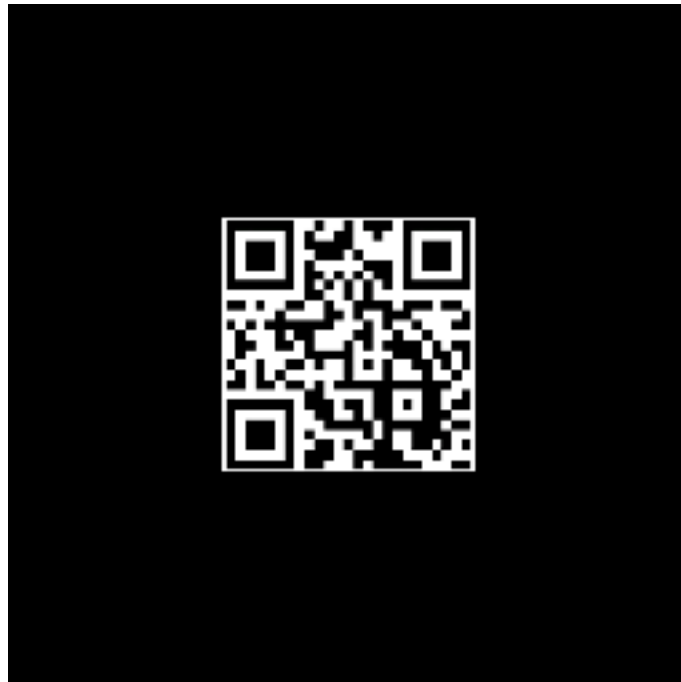
For MacCannell social interaction is key to the deconstruction of dominant narratives of state and capitalism. Writing in 1992, his description of a 'radical hybridization of cultures as a precondition for the inventiveness and creativity which will be demanded from all of us if we are to survive the epoch of the globalization of culture currently dominated by advanced capitalism' (ibid 1992:3-4) seems to ring true today. For me, the studio stage acted as a place in which to deconstruct and instigate new social interactions.

Urry describes photographs as 'performative objects'. In my studio these three photographs and the separate elements within them became part of a network of humans and non-humans; they could be seen as 'material others' that could be socially performed. In the Square other people's photographs (historic ones seen on Google or contemporary ones on Instagram) might allow the viewers to gain a different sense of place and time; it links them to the possible emotions of a place through their own affective feelings. Arguably Instagram also offers a place in which deconstruction of staged authenticity occurs through social interaction, which can, although it struggles against online social norms, provide a hybrid creative place.

These three found photographs (figures 41,42 and 43) all occurred in Parliament Square and in some way continue to occur there: They suggest that the representation of an individual can continue to influence meanings made in a place and the social relations that happen there. On Instagram photographs tagged to the

Square hint at the many personal trajectories of other people's lives that continue to criss-cross the Square. Some of them leave spatial photographic traces behind, some do not. Tracking their possible reasons for being there and having their photograph taken can reveal more of what Massey describes as the social process of place. This particular investigation of the relationship between these three photographs occurred early on in my research. The methods I explored involved the physical breakdown of the photograph and its restaging. The methods I developed were then applied more directly to aid my understanding of what a particular captured moment had to reveal about the political nature of the Square and about the medium of photography itself, neither of which should be taken at face value.

*Experimental Restaging*, digital film/stills,  
2014-17



## Appendix II: Nostalgia for the real

This background study clarifies and delineates some of the theoretical and practical strands that flow through this study: Broadly - people's relationship to technology, and in particular - artists' relationship to digital photography and their use of online images as raw materials. This appendix is a re-examination of my practice in the studio in terms of Heidegger's phenomenological approach to technology. I pay particular reference to artists Andreas Gursky's digital photograph *Rhine II* and the works of Mishka Henner and Richard Prince who work with photographs found online.

The effect of technological developments in photography can be seen as part of a wider societal issue. In Heidegger's opinion technology narrows the frame through which the world is viewed, experienced and understood. He explored his concerns in *The Question Concerning Technology* (1955). In the text, initially he turns to the origin of words to reveal a dichotomous relationship between humans and technology. Seen through Heidegger's text the photographs and homemade pinhole camera in my studio can be perceived as a phenomenological approach to understanding how both work. This led me to a contemplation of the social role of the photograph and why people are drawn to take them.

Heidegger's text starts with the premise that 'questioning builds the way' (Heidegger (1955)1977:3): his questions create the path that he follows. Through this questioning he reveals what he sees as the perils but also the hope in people's relationship with technology. Heidegger deconstructs language to uncover the 'essence' of the words' meaning. 'Essence' is not a singular stable attribute; it is rather, according to Barbara Bolt, a process: 'a happening where the Being of something is unconcealed' (Bolt 2011:175). Heidegger's constant questioning leads him to two definitions of technology. Technology can be understood as a means to an end: technology as a method of instrumentalizing the world, in which everything is on hand and available for humankind's purposes as 'standing reserve' - everything

is reduced to a resource by technology (op cit (1955)1977:17). He also describes technology as a human activity which he explains could be seen as the 'anthropological approach' to understanding technology: the action of using tools to make something is intrinsic to being human.

Like Latour he seeks to define a human relationship to technology through an assessment of contemporary and older forms of equipment; Latour though does not see this as a progression or judges one form of technology to be better or more humane than another. Heidegger describes 'a saw mill in a secluded valley of the Black Forest as a primitive means compared with the hydroelectric plant in the Rhine River' (op cit (1955)1977:5). Both of these, despite Heidegger's nostalgia for the former, are human-made tools which are used to harness the 'standing reserve' of moving water as a 'means to an end' for human purpose, whether sawing wood or making electricity. Heidegger's nostalgia is something to be aware of when reading his work.<sup>292</sup> Baudrillard explains why nostalgia can be so enticing: 'when the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning' (Baudrillard (1983)1993:347). For me, the pinhole camera and analogue photographs were not nostalgia they were an effort to understand what technology does – communication, capturing and creating realities. I also used it as a method of slowing the process of photography down and making it physical.

Heidegger was concerned with what he perceived as the instrumentalization of the world and the subsequent narrowing of people's view of that world, that he worried occurred through modern technology. He believed that by returning to the origins of the word 'technology', other possibilities could be revealed and other roles ascribed to it. In the text he associates the Greek word *techné* with creative revealing, a poetical bringing forth a kind of knowledge (Bolt 2011:183). In contrast to the modern use of the word technology he associates with technology a mode of production or 'challenging forth'. This use of technology has become a dominant aspect of humankind's interaction with the world and masks what could be poetically 'brought forth'.

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<sup>292</sup> Heidegger's nostalgia or homesickness can be seen as a dangerous affinity with the blood & soil ethos of the National Socialists.



Both challenging and poetic revealing take place within what Heidegger names 'Enframing' - a narrow ordering of people's view of nature and of tools, only taking into account their use or purpose. 'In Enframing, that unconcealment comes to pass in conformity with which the work of modern technology reveals the real standing reserve' (op cit (1955)1977:21). For Heidegger the will to master technology only constricts the view further. This could be seen as a form of technological determinism: humankind cannot escape the script within which technology keeps them; they are no longer in control. The camera could be seen to physically narrow people's view, not only through the frame of the lens but through the way people see the world as a potential image.

In his text *The Age of the World Picture* (1938) Heidegger points towards science's role in narrowing the way humans look at the world. Science's primary position in investigating, understanding and representing the world is a closed loop of research which tests only *a-priori* knowledge. 'Explanation is always twofold: it accounts for an unknown by means of a known, and at the same time it verifies the known by means of that unknown' (Heidegger (1938)1977:121). For Heidegger, rigid scientific methods produce 'a world picture'. The world is objectified and reduced to a resource in which mankind is immersed and cannot see beyond this framework. 'Man becomes that being upon which all that is grounded as regards the manner of its Being and its truth. Man becomes the relational centre of that which is as such' (ibid (1938)1977:128). Heidegger argues that the individual self as the relational centre is problematic, the world can be seen as purely a resource or a means to an end: 'Man' is in and 'gets' the picture and cannot step out of this way of seeing and understanding the world. This opened up questions about my own role as researcher and artist and my use of the smartphone. Was I the relational centre, instrumentalizing these images, blinded to a wider view by being within the picture?

Photography might be seen as playing a part in this narrowing. When a photograph is shared and seen by others, it perpetuates a particular way of seeing, depicting, understanding and acquiring the world. This could account for the sameness in many of the photographs I found on Instagram. Both camera and photograph are also capable of a poetic bringing forth echoing the dual possibilities of the photograph.

Mitchell describes a 'double consciousness' (Mitchell 2005:9) towards photographs, which might lead to a rational narrow reading of what is shown, but which can at the same time provoke a magical or poetic understanding of what is depicted. The camera could be seen as tool that produces a logical reproduction of the world but it is also capable of unsettling reality.



Figure 46 Andreas Gursky, [Rhine II](#), 1999

The uncanny emptiness of photographer Andreas Gursky's image of the River Rhine *Rhine II* (1999) (figure 46) can unnerve viewers leading them to question its veracity and what it might mean. For Heidegger, the essence of the Rhine was brought into being by poets such as Hölderlin. He describes the damming of the mighty river and cultural symbol to provide electrical power as a 'monstrous' challenging forth of nature; that the Rhine has become a means to an end by the 'vacation industry' and is only appreciated by bussed-in tourists saddens him (Heidegger (1955)1977:16). Gursky too could be seen as harnessing the visual power of the Rhine. Yet 'paradoxically,' he states, 'this view of the Rhine cannot be obtained in situ, a fictitious construction was required to provide an accurate image of a modern river' (Gursky in Taylor 2004). Gursky's *Rhine II* is at once an accurate but also a digitally altered photograph, banal yet sublime. Manovich's ideas that the digital photograph has moved away from its indexical origins and has torn up the rules of semiotics link closely with the way Gursky describes the process of producing his photograph. Gursky has created something new in the computer, which has been materialised through printing. The new reality of the Rhine is then seen framed on the gallery wall.

Heidegger describes the power plant on the Rhine as turning the river into a 'water power supplier': it is deriving its essence from the power station (op cit (1955)1977:16). The way Gursky sees the river could be described in the same way: the Rhine is an image supplier which derives its essence from the digital camera and computer. The camera could be seen as only a means to harness the Rhine to make money for the artist; the photograph was sold for 4.3 million dollars in 2011. At the same time it reveals another kind of understanding of the river - an essence that is 'brought fourth' through the relationship between the artist, the location, the camera and the studio where it was modified and printed. Gursky, by digitally remodelling the real riverbank and removing the people and buildings, has made the river abstract, unreal in its seeming everydayness. The Rhine in the photograph has become 'strange': it is familiar but has been made different enough to defamiliarize the viewer. The computer has allowed the original digital code to be changed, the zeros and ones have been rearranged into a new truth. It is this kind of activity that unconceals or reveals what Heidegger describes as the essence of technology.

The essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it.

Such a realm is art.

Heidegger (1955) 1977:35

Artists call on technology, whether old or new, to operate in the duality Heidegger describes. Technology is part of allowing people to see something anew while sometimes being part of the challenging forth and instrumentalization of the things around them. The camera enables its operator to re-present something into the world that was not there before; the image is something new brought forth by the camera. Gursky's picture of the Rhine further problematizes the double consciousness evoked by the photograph; the rational digital code has been altered to create an uncanny, more than real image. What Heidegger called 'calculative thinking' has been called upon to provoke meditative contemplation of the Rhine. It has had an 'incalculable' (Heidegger (1938)1977:154) effect: This constructed photographic space is a new reality. It gives something to the viewer that can be felt that might be incongruous with what is seen.

The wealth of visual material accessible through the smartphone provides me with what Heidegger might call a 'standing reserve' of photographs; some were made by satellites, others by drones, camera cars or humans. These could be seen as raw materials: to be viewed for information or to regulate the view of the observer. But they can also become critical and strange. While Gursky takes his own photographs and digitally manipulates them to find the essence of a certain place or situation, artists Mishka Henner and Richard Prince use almost unaltered found photographs. In *No Man's Land*, 2011, (figure 47) Henner blew up unaltered Google Streetview photographs of sexworkers found by cruising online to almost life size proportions. Whereas Richard Prince in his work *New Portraits*, 2014, (figure 48) reproduced screen shots of Instagram photographs, changing only some of the comments.

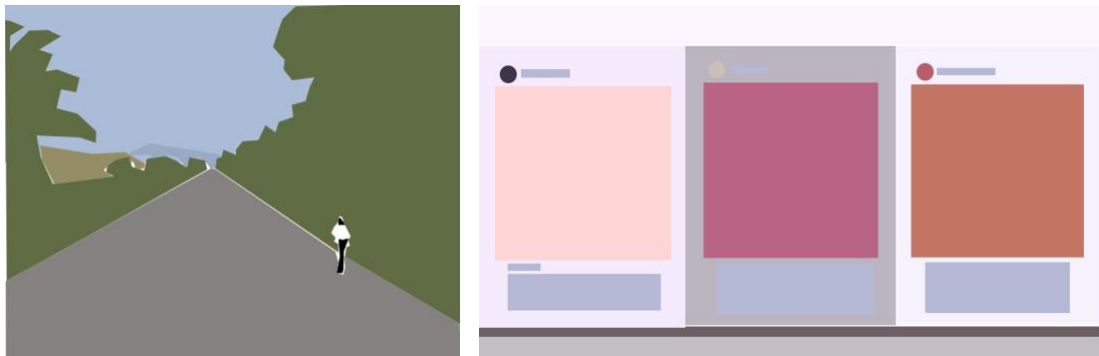


Figure 47 Mishka Henner, [\*No Man's Land\*](#), 2011

Figure 48 Richard Prince, [\*New Portraits\*](#), 2014

Both works highlight that everyone's data, whether visual or numerical, is available; both works have been criticised for different reasons. Prince has been sued by some of the account holders because he used and monetised their photographs. Prince is surfing on the tip of the commercial wave seeming only to profit rather than make any other point about the photographs plundered from Instagram accounts. Henner's work has also been criticised: Although his photographs are taken by the mechanical, multi-lensed Google Streetview camera, he could be seen to be exploiting the vulnerability of his subjects. Unlike Prince's photographs these women have not chosen to be seen or photographed; they are most likely already exploited. Although problematic, Henner's work for me is the more interesting as he is making the viewer aware of layers of precarious and unnoticed situations. He unsettles the

viewers, drawing them in and making them take part in the objectification of the male as well as the mechanical gaze.<sup>293</sup> Both works draw attention to the commercial aspect of photography - a monetisation of the image or the image as currency. Google and Instagram are part of that system, the smartphone is a point of access to it; because of that it can be a regulatory device, feeding data to corporations and governments.

Examining these works towards the end of this investigation led me to reassess my position. In the studio I have been performing a role and particular actions suggested by the photograph, but also challenging them. I have been using other people's photographs but deconstructing and fragmenting them in such a way that they have become almost unrecognisable. I am aware of my debt to the original photographs and the photographers who took them.

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<sup>293</sup> The mechanical gaze, in this case are Google street view cameras mounted on a car which photograph everything as they drive past. The mechanical gaze could also take the form of satellites and CCTV: impersonal fixed cameras that are not necessarily directly controlled by humans.

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