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PHOTO / BOOK / CLUB;

Connections made and missed, digital and other, between the contemporary photobook and its readers, 2004-2018

Keywords

photobook, post-digital, publishing, community, reader

Abstract

In the post-millennium period, the photobook has become a central form for the presentation and dissemination of photographic works by contemporary practitioners. As interest in the medium has increased rapidly, so too have the communities, dedicated events, platforms and competitions which shape the photobook world. Yet there is little critical discourse accompanying this new age of the photobook, and where consideration of the medium exists, it tends towards maker-centric or art-historical discourse. In response, and in a continuation of *The Photobook Club* project, this research sets out to critically interrogate what happens in the space between the production and reception of the contemporary photobook. In doing so this work addresses not only the making, but the making public, of the medium.

The thesis begins by opening up the photographic canon, a process which tethers the newly unified term 'photobook' to a taxonomy of photographic relationships with the page, termed 'lineages'. The specificity of critique this enables is employed first in an investigation into how the contemporary photobook is impacted by networked technologies in the guise of post-photography and post-digitality. Aided by content analysis and framed within Michael Bhaskar's theory of publishing, the research witnesses a number of contemporary design and production trends in response to, and adoption of, new technologies: with different effects across the lineages. Subsequently, attention is turned to the photobook world with extensive surveys, elite interviews and discourse analysis providing a detailed account of an emergent community whose tendency towards production and sophistication has contributed to the contemporary photobook being seen as a new form of a longstanding medium. Finally, literary and montage theory is combined with empirical research, which employs graphical elicitation, in order to provide the first research-informed account of photobook reading.

Through the contributions this research makes to the field of study in an ethnographic review of community and discourse; a historical and contemporary contextualisation; and an account of photobook reading, it is able to demonstrate how the photobook is forging stronger connections with engaged and like-minded readers, whilst excluding others. As response, the research is structured by, and concluded with, a proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook, which connects the maker, scholar and reader, and provides a set of potential tools to interrogate the purpose, realisation and impact of a range of photographic publications. In this way, the research brings together photographic and publishing discourses with a focus on the ground between making and reading, seeking to allow stronger and more informed connections between authors and existing, as well as potential, readers.

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Glossary

Existing terms used in the thesis, and essential to understanding are listed here. Where definitions come from external sources for their clarity and brevity, they are accompanied by a citation. At the conclusion of the thesis, on page 278, a list of terms which are products of the research are presented.

Amplification: A term borrowed from Michael Bhaskar, amplification refers to acts which result in the increased distribution or consumption of a given work (2013:114).

Artists' book: In this thesis, the artists' book speaks of books by non-photographic artists' that tend to be made by individuals or small groups, with small audiences and an avant-garde nature.

Audience: refers to the intended groups, communities or institutions that the photobook maker seeks to engage with through their publication. The audience is not a single person encountering the book but this individual (the reader), resides within the audience.

Author: In order to separate the author of the photographic work contained in a photobook and the other creatives who play an instrumental role in publishing. Author is used to specifically relate to the photographic work, though they are often also the named author of a book. See also: maker.

Contemporary photobook: The prefix 'contemporary' is used in order to make clear where this research is specifically referring to the photobook of the period considered in this research (2004-18). So, while photobook remains an overarching term for the medium, the contemporary photobook is chronologically aligned with the thesis.

Dummy: The photobook dummy is a proof version of a photobook that historically has been submitted to publishers or reviewers, prior to publishing. As is seen on page 117, lately the dummy has become a more public component of the photobook's life.

Framing; Another term from Michael Bhaskar. Framing is the process by which a piece of work is shaped into a publication (a frame) — not only does this contain the work but also presents it (2013:84).

Graphical elicitation: A method of data collection and subsequent analysis which can be employed to assist the review of experience and emotion, complimenting ‘data collected through the interviewing process’ and ‘stimulating thoughts’ (Copeland and Agosta, 2012:514).

Linked-digital technology: This term defines a shift in technology from isolated to connected¹, and thus brings with it opportunities for email, message boards, forums, social media and web collaboration. The term is defined as starting in 1988 according to Jon Palfrey and Urs Gasser (2008).

Maker: The term maker is used to highlight the multiple people involved in the production and publishing of a photobook; to recognise that it is often not a singular individual’s endeavour. Maker² then refers to what Joachim Schmid calls a ‘complex process’ and ‘involves an author, an editor, a designer, a publisher, and a printer’ (Schmid, 2018).

Photobook: The photobook is a single or multi-authored, bound work with photography as its primary content. It is an expression of a unified thought, position, location or time, which has been constructed with awareness of the book as an output (see page 52).

The Photobook Club: A project launched in 2010 to promote and facilitate discussion around the photobook. *The Photobook Club* is a global community of readers and is discussed in the case study found on pages 203-211.

¹ Referring to the lack, or presence of, connections to further technologies or networks. A calculator or desktop PC from pre-internet days are isolated, a mobile phone with 4G or wifi connections is connected.

² It is important to acknowledge that while there are similarities, the use of maker here is not intended to evoke the recent maker movement in digital technology and hacktivism

The photobook community: A group of individuals who reside within the contemporary photobook world. They often have broad backgrounds and varying relationships with the photobook (see pages 160-165).

The photobook world: A term used to describe the many events, institutions and spaces of photobook construction, production, distribution, discussion and readership that are formed by the above community. This is a purposefully broad term and would include large, public events, along with unknown personal and private collections (see page 152).

Photo essay: A form of visual storytelling associated most commonly with photojournalism or social engaged practice. It was common in colour magazines like *LIFE* and is often attributed to the work of Eugene W. Smith.

Post-digital: Discussed in Chapter Two, beginning on page 108, the post-digital refers to the comparative settling after the storm of digital. The post-digital speaks of the omnipresence of linked digital technology in our lives, as well as both an increasing passivity towards digital technology and an often active stance against it. While explored at greater depth later, the predominant application of the term derives from Florian Cramer's investigation into the post-digital first published in 2014.

Post-photography: Explained in depth beginning on page 105, post-photography refers to a new landscape of photography which has seen a transformation from the fixed to fluid image, and with it a series of challenges to the ontological understanding of the medium.

Print-on-demand: A publishing method whereby copies of a publication are only produced when they are bought or requested. Print-on-demand technologies describe companies who operate printers and binders to operate on behalf of authors who do not have the technology to print themselves.

Publication: is used to speak of the corporeal photobook in its final form (thus not a

proof copy). It is the physical book which is sold, read and occupies shelves. It is a term which accentuates a difference to publishing.

Publishing: refers to the making public of a publication. It speaks of the many acts and pragmatics of taking an inert object (the book, the publication), and generating activity. It involves the pricing, edition size, distribution, point of sale and promotion of the work as well as a myriad of other components. Discussed starting on page 87.

Publishing model: In Michael Bhaskar's language, a publishing model is a publisher's purpose and strategy in bringing a work to a public (2013:137).

Reader: is used to speak of an imagined and actual audience member who spends time with a given photobook. When speaking of the reader we will also be able to refer to readers, and the reading they perform.

Verso/Recto: In publishing, verso and recto are used to illustrate the page or leaf of a reading — verso being the overleaf (and thus in English language the left hand page) and recto being the right-hand side. The fluidity of verso/recto and the connotations of page turning is used as a structural device in this research with a recto preceding each chapter and a verso concluding.

Preface

While many believe that the photobook is the ‘central form of expression within photography’ (PhotoBookMuseum, 2014a:6), and that it should be the de facto space for the medium, I have always been mindful of such confidence. In place of this conviction in the photobook as photography’s natural home, I have maintained a belief that it is only in combination with a considered strategy, and other tools for augmentation, activation and distribution, that the photobook’s potential for rich engagement can be exploited. So, my advocacy and interest in the medium is not celebratory but critical and contextual, it is an advocacy for a better understanding of the purpose of photobook publishing and how photographic work operates in the codex. My practice has consistently strived to facilitate these conversations regarding the photobook — setting up *The Photobook Club* (discussed starting on page 203), as a practical response to what were perceived as gaps in photobook discourse and access. The project organised meetings, initiated travelling book exhibitions, ran workshops and curated collections, quickly becoming a worldwide initiative with more than 50 local communities and thousands of participants. The research articulated in these pages, is both a continuation of my work with *The Photobook Club*, and an informing enquiry which has shaped the project over the past five years. As such, it is hoped that what is presented here will continue the tenet of *The Photobook Club* to promote and enable a productive and critical photobook discourse.

Acknowledgements

My fullest thanks to my supervisors; Emmanuelle Waeckerlé, Jean Wainwright and Camille Baker for their incredible support over these five years. I am indebted also to *The Photobook Club*: to the organisers and community that has formed around the photobook worldwide, and that this research has been consistently inspired and informed by. My thanks to all those who took part in the interviews conducted as part of this research — for being generous with their time and openness in conversation. To Doug Spowart for his sharing of previously unpublished work with me, Kelly Bryan for her re-visualising of graphical elicitations and Bonifacio Bario Hijosa for his work in translation. Finally, my love and gratitude to those around me who have made possible my embarkation on this work. To have the ability to undertake a five year research project is a privilege that has been afforded by many people, not least Mum, Dad, Kate and Rachel. Thanks.

Author's declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed



Dated

12.5.2020

Introduction

The Photobook Club aims to promote and enable discussion around the physical photobook format — 2010 founding statement

In writing and scholarly work published in relation to the photobook since the turn of millennium, much has been said about the history, form and artistic merit of the medium, but little has sought to address the space between the production of the photobook and its reception. It is a problem I first became aware of as an educator when introducing my students to the photobook as a space of learning in 2009. Canons of the photobook existed, as did celebrations of the form in competitions and festivals, but there were few dealings with the reading of the book, nor how the structure and construction of the photobook bore connections to its potential reading and readership. It is a gap in scholarship that I began seeking to remedy with the introduction of reading groups in *The Photobook Club*, whose purpose was to share books, and with it, readings. I provided contextual information to aid public readings too, and shared reflections from readers sent in from around the world. This project provides one answer to a gap in discourse at the intersection of contemporary photography and publishing, but it was without a full understanding of the question itself: regarding the connections between the photobook and its readers.

To understand the key questions around the photobook, and subsequently to provide accounts and explanations of its form and respective world in the contemporary landscape, I undertook this five year research project as an extension and parallel of my work with *The Photobook Club*. My role as a researcher coming from my position as a member of the photobook community is particular, and has been a significant asset to the research. While some areas of study were previously unfamiliar, and assumptions were constantly and consistently challenged, a rooting in the networks, communities and conversations of the subject has been a great asset. Certainly *The Photobook Club* has been vital in my research and data collection: as a network of engaged participants and organisers, it presented a wonderful resource composed of readers, makers, academics and those who lie outside of established photographic and publishing communities but have an affinity for the photobook. In the following

pages, the shape and containment of this research is outlined, together with key methods and data sets. For a more complete view of *The Photobook Club*, a case study is presented on pages (203-211).

Scope of the research

Before beginning, some parameters are needed in order to ensure that the intent of this research is supported and enabled, rather than diluted. It is appropriate to consider these parameters in three primary areas: the medium, the time and the location: what is to be studied, when, and where. Presented here are notes on time and location, with an ontological review and taxonomical definitions of the medium found in Chapter One.

The time (2004-2018)

The timeframe of this research should offer a broad spectrum against which we can see changes where they occur, and concise enough to go well beyond an overview. We must operate at a moment which reflects the presence of digital technologies that have had such an impact on photography and publishing, and provides the opportunity to see and analyse the many connections and disjunctures of the period. A number of potential starting points present themselves: from inventions, publication dates or points of recent historical significance. We might consider that, like John Palfrey and Urs Gasser did, the 1980's offered a significant change in our relationship to technology, as this was the time when digital social technologies came online (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008). We might alternatively take the introduction of publicly available 'print-on-demand' systems like Blurb in 2005, or the advent of global web 2.0³ platforms like Facebook in 2006, as illustrative of new beginnings. Certainly, these points help to focus a search for a particular time, but they form only partial links with the photobook itself, and so it will be the publication of photobook-specific histories and selections that have created a canon for the photobook that I use as a guide. These publications, for the most part, sit around the turn of the millennium — with Andrew Roth's *The Book of 101 Books* launched in 2001 (Roth et al) — but for many it is the

³ Known as the second iteration of the web which saw sharing, communication and collaboration as central to a progression beyond static reference pages.

introduction of the first history of the photobook by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger (*The Photobook; A History Vol 1*, 2004), which signals a new moment for the photobook. So it is that 2004 acts as our starting point.

In part due to the nature of this work, sitting within a restricted period of time, and with a wish to analyse the potential plateauing of interest in the form, 2018 presents a logical choice to conclude the period of time this research focuses on. 2018 saw a call for parties involved with the photobook to come together and reflect, at the *Photobook:RESET* event organised by *Self Publish, Be Happy*, and is at a point towards the end of this five year research project. A suitable alignment for an ending. 14 years is a short period of time⁴, but for the photobook, it is 14 years which have been lived at incredible speed. This period sees changes for the medium running in parallel and tandem with technological shifts and new theoretical paradigms of digitality and photography. So, it is every intention of this work that in addition to a critical and theoretical consideration of the contemporary medium, it will also offer a view to a zenith of the photobook in its much larger history.

The locale

The photobook world is just that, a world of connected occurrences and individuals which can be found on all continents, albeit at varying intensities. There are areas that might appear to be hubs or hives of activities, and there are entire countries which seem to have a plethora of happenings without a central or dominant location. The rise of interest in the South American photobook, or the continuing influence of Japanese photobooks, are both worthy of a thorough investigation, but they do not occur in this research. It must be acknowledged that this research has a North American and European bias to the works cited and reflected upon, as well as the thought and theory adopted and outlined in the structure and methods section (pages 24-32). There are a number of reasons for this, all of which should be considered for the limitations they place on the work, as well as the benefits of such specificity.

⁴ Considering 1843 (With Anna Atkins' *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype impressions*) as the birth of the photobook and concluding in 2018 this period is only 8% of the photobook's life.

- North America and Europe is an area which provides some degree of knowability: that is to say, it is an area in which, through research, it is believed an awareness of an appropriate volume of photobook happenings, publications and conversations can be attained.
- Existing knowledge of the area and works: something that will be challenged throughout this thesis, but which outweighs the limitations of working in an unknown location.
- A focus on this area acknowledges that concepts like the post-digital are not global⁵, and demonstrates a desire to avoid production of knowledge that would rely heavily on the work of geographically-based scholars and practitioners, or would reflect a personal interest in works of various regions⁶.

There are places in this research where this location-specificity is relaxed: primarily in data collection and content analysis. Here, it would be counter-productive to seek only voices from certain geographic areas and excluding books from content analysis from outside our location would open up a myriad of problems for little benefit.

The structure and methods of the thesis

‘Mixed method inquiry is an approach to investigating the social world that ideally involves more than one methodological tradition and thus more than one way of knowing... all for the purpose of better understanding’ (Jennifer Green cited in Johnson *et al*, 2007:119).

The holistic nature of this research has meant that I have engaged with the making, reading and community discourse of the photobook. In doing so I have utilised literature review, a range of theories, and a number of original data collection activities as well as incorporating elite interviews not only for data collection but also as a way to test some of my findings. This mixed methodological approach has allowed me to become ‘receptive to a wide variety of kinds, and sources of information’ which has

⁵ Or even the technology to make such a state possible.

⁶ As an example of what the work seeks to avoid we could look at *The Chinese Photobook: From the 1900s to the Present* (2016), a book which features the writing of several Chinese authors but is titled and sold in relation to the books editors: Martin Parr (British), and Wassink-Lundgren (Duch Artists).

'favoured iterative, multi stranded, labyrinthine research' which 'is flexible and open to surprises' (Thin, 2004:37). A mixed methodological approach is best employed within clear parameters and so, each chapter of the thesis has adopted a particular framework to ensure clarity and a cogency of research. Furthermore, in order to aid single chapter reading, literature review is incorporated in a heuristic manner within each chapter respectively.

In this section, the structure of the thesis is presented in relation to chapters (which also form the four key research questions). Each chapter title is followed by a summary which includes reference to the key texts and methods which are adopted, as well as the proposed critical framework in which they reside.

The research questions

What happens in the space between the production and reception⁷ of the contemporary photobook? What can this tell us about the medium in the post-millennium?

This framing question, which acts to provide a clear remit for the research, can be seen as the coalescing of several smaller questions I began to ask in my time with *The Photobook Club* and as a lecturer in photography. It is an outcome of conversations informal and structured, academic and otherwise, and has been clarified in early fieldwork for this research project, as well as in conversation with my supervisors. Within this frame, sit a series of questions that offer a chapter structure to the thesis.

- What does the emergent term photobook refer to, and how are the histories which lead to it able to be re-opened in order to aid investigating connections with readers?
- How have linked digital technologies impacted the production and publication of contemporary photobooks in reference to characteristics of post-photography and post-digitality?

⁷ Not only in a linear manner but in a cyclical one too.

- Who comprises the newly formed photobook world, and how does the discourse of this community, their events and platforms, contribute to the shape of the contemporary medium?
- What is it that photobook readers do when they pick up a book, and how much can be accounted for by accompanying fields of study in film and literature?

The genesis of the questions around the photobook and linked digital technology, and the role of community, have been present since the early meetups of *The Photobook Club*. It was there that I became increasingly aware both of a desire for many members, myself included, to wax lyrical about the book as an object in the face of digital platforms, and how the books we were seeing around the table, were frequently influenced by recent lists and awards. A questioning of the histories or roots of the photobook was considered a fundamental component of the foundations for this research at its outset but was subsequently given space as a dedicated chapter and research question after seeing how the histories of the photobook can provide a companion to speaking about intent in publishing. Finally, though the process of reading a photobook has been a continual fascination, this question has morphed considerably from an initial interest in the neurological mapping of reading to something which operates with a broader purview in order to provide a more holistic account of the event.

While attention has shifted in places during the five year research project, and questions have evolved⁸, the underlying critical interrogation of the space between the book and the reader has remained. Key to responding to these questions, and filling in a gap in scholarship of the space between the photobook and its readers, is the introduction of a purpose-informed taxonomy of lineages. These lineages are a finding of Chapter One and also a critical tool, alongside others, for subsequent chapters. Thus, it is important to note here that their production is the result of significant literature review, content analysis, and moreover, that they have been tested in a

⁸ Early iterations placed significant emphasis on ascertaining the impact of particular figures in the photobook world, as well as on the digital photobook/photobook relationship, the independent publishing scene and how provenance can be established through crowdfunding and social media.

series of elite interviews. In the conclusion to this research, page 290 features a reflection on the lineage model as a contributor to this, and future study.

A critical framework for the contemporary photobook

As has been noted in the abstract, and the preceding section on the structure of the thesis, this research has worked towards the construction of a proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook. It can be argued that this is the first such framework, especially when we consider how it brings together photographic and publishing discourses with a focus on the the ground between book and reader. The framework constructed looks to bring lucidity to a space which is currently unclear. Each chapter is responsible for the formation of one of four parts of this framework, with an updated diagram accompanying each verso at the end of the chapter. It is deemed helpful, however, to also see the completed version here (see Fig. 2.), to preface a reading of the thesis and aid in the comprehension of its structure. The framework progresses from the intent of work, through its use of the photobook in making work public, to the manner in which it is presented and spoken about, onto a consideration of the reader's interaction with it. Thus, it is a model of the translation from maker to reader. The intended use, and impact of the framework is discussed in the conclusion (beginning on page 277).

A proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook

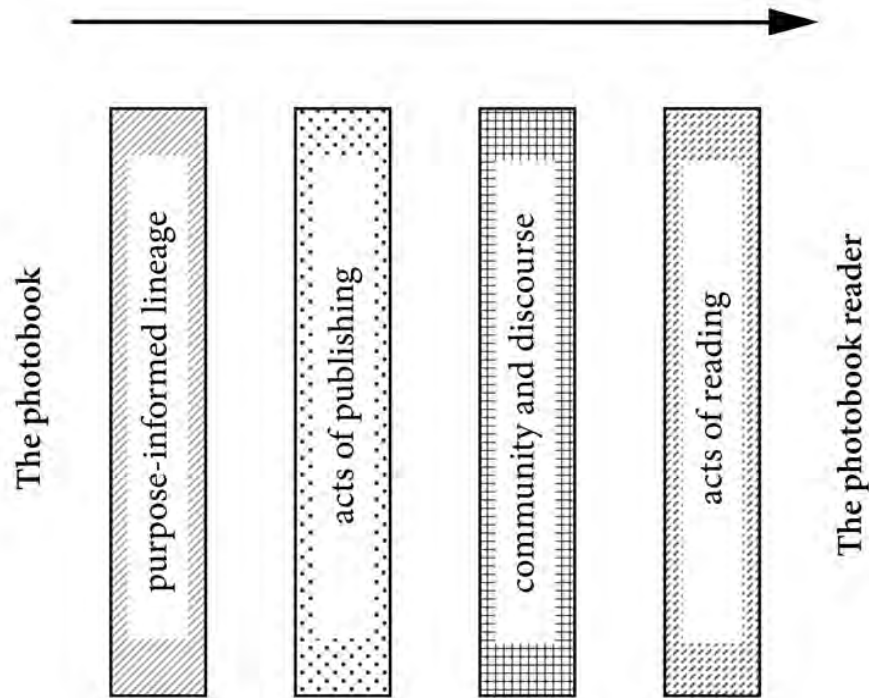


Fig. 2. *A proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook* (2019)

Chapters and methods

Chapter One. Tracing the histories and lineages of the photobook:

What is the contemporary photobook?

In Chapter One, I ask how the photobook has come to be defined, and how we may be able to re-trace the form with an emphasis on the purpose of publishing. In answering this question about the emergence and situation of the contemporary photobook, an art-historical framework was required in order that I could cite the form in relation to its precursors, seed forms and associated mediums. The chapter begins with a review of the interactions between the photograph and the book which spans the earliest printed and bound works of the mid 19th century, to the print-on-demand works of the post-millennium. Subsequently, additional contextualisation is sought with an investigation into nomenclature in which texts by Johanna Drucker, Alex Sweetman, Gerry Badger and Martin Parr, and Lesley Martin are encountered. The culmination of this research

is a working definition of the photobook which sets the foundations for further questioning. This comes in the form of a close inspection of four proposals for intra-photobook categorisation from Lesley Martin, Philip Zimmerman, Jorg Colberg and Doug Spowart. The prevalence of production and thematically influenced taxonomies in this review leads to the formation of purpose-informed 'lineages' of the contemporary photobook, which shifts thinking from the making and production of the photobook, to its role in making public a given piece of work. These lineages are made clear via a series of definitions, and as part of the critical method, are tested both against a set of photobooks and their accompanying textual information through content analysis, and with key players in the contemporary field in the form of elite interviews.

Chapter Two. Making and Making Public:

How has linked digital technology impacted the contemporary photobook?

In this chapter, I pose questions regarding how, with the possibilities and challenges that networked technologies have introduced, makers have responded in the production and publication of their contemporary works. By adopting a post-digital and post-photographic perspective, I have been able to locate the contemporary photobook in a specific moment for the medium, intertwined with the time considered in this research. The chapter starts by distilling the complexities of publishing with the aid of Michael Bhaskar's theory of publishing which provides a solid foundation from which to begin investigations into the nuanced impact of linked digital technology on photography and culture. The writing of Florian Cramer, Sy Taffel and Lotte Phillipsen in the post-digital, as well as Daniel Rubinstein, Katrina Sluis, and Joan Fontcuberta in the post-photographic, help to formulate the notion of reactive and pragmatic 'acts'⁹. Again, as part of my critical method, these acts are subsequently tested in the field via their application to content analysis of over 50 contemporary photobooks, joined by elite interview responses which help to contextualise findings. Finally, specific pragmatic acts are proposed, and applied, in a fictional re-publishing of a prominent photo essay/photobook.

⁹ Choices made in the construction and publication of the photobook.

Chapter Three. Community and discourse:

How does the photobook world shape the contemporary photobook?

The key question I explore in this chapter focusses on how the formation of a photobook world, the individuals who comprise it, and the discourse it contains, shapes the photobook and our thinking of the contemporary medium. This chapter adopts an ethnographic¹⁰ framework, supported by discourse¹¹ analysis, elite interviews and the photobook reading survey. It takes this approach in order to consider the role of the photobook world in constructing what good photobooks are, and what themes are important when considering the contemporary medium. An answer to the question of community and discourse is formulated by first charting the rise and popularity of the medium through a review of the multiple fairs and festivals dedicated to the photobook in 2015. Following this, the photobook reading survey is employed to evidence the professional make-up of the photobook community, and their involvement in the production or dissemination of works. The themes which emerge from these data collection activities are investigated further through elite interview responses, literary review and theory, all of which contribute to the posing of the contemporary photobook as a new form of the existing medium. Here, Jodi Dean's theories in the context of political discourse offer a useful manner in which to think of this new form not only in regards to the photobook world, but what can be done to forge new connections with readers outside this community. Finally, a case study is presented on *The Photobook Club*, a project which has attempted to move away from a discourse which highlights the maker, to one which highlights the reader.

Chapter Four. An account of reading:

What do we do when we pick up a photobook?

¹⁰ Rather than anthropological, taking definition from Tim Ingold, who states that:

'The aim of ethnography, as I understand it, is to render an account—in writing, film, or other graphic media—of life as it is actually lived and experienced by a people, somewhere, sometime. Good ethnography is sensitive, contextually nuanced, richly detailed, and above all faithful to what it depicts. These are all admirable qualities.' (2017:21)

¹¹ A benefit of the state of the photobook world as hybrid (digital and physical) has fortuitously meant that much of what was encountered in this chapter has been self documented by the community themselves (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:121) and is thus readily located for analysis.

The final chapter tackles a fundamental question necessary to any critical investigation into the photobook and its readers: how do we read the photobook? This chapter naturally lends itself to a literary framework, however, the nature of the medium means that while literary theories were encountered and used to seek answers, it was in close collaboration with visual theories. This chapter demanded the pulling together of many theories and data collection activities in order to speak with confidence about how we read the photobook, but is still firmly located in a literary and visual framework. The reading of the photobook is first considered in relation to its physical presence and space (encountering Jinghui Hou and Jean Baudrillard), as a still montage (from film montage theory in Kuleshovian and Eisensteinian form), and as a text (from literary theory in formalism, structuralism and reader-response theory amongst others). Following this, content analysis of a graphical elicitation exercise is adopted to visualise trends and themes that can be included alongside prior learning for an account of contemporary photobook reading. Before this account is proposed, a final consultation of literature is undertaken, presenting several existing theories for reading the photobook for analysis, with a focus on Doug Spowart's ten steps of reading the medium. Finally, a series of eight acts of reading are put forward and evidenced, with excerpts from the literature and collected data which has informed them. These acts are presented not only to evidence the reading of the photobook, but to aid discourse, production and purpose — applications which are highlighted in the conclusion of the chapter.

Conclusions

The conclusions of the thesis are built around the culmination of the proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook which is contributed to at the end of each chapter. It provides a manner in which to summarise and distill the outcomes of the research, and is accompanied by writing on its use and application that is designed to shift our perception and conversation regarding the medium to that of a reading economy.

In Table 1, a summary of the methodological structure of the thesis is provided. Here it is the primary methods used which are noted, so, while elite interviews are found in Chapter One, they were supplementary, and therefore not indicated here.

Chapter frameworks and methods		
	Framework	Primary methods
Chapter One (taxonomy)	Art-contextual	Literature review Content analysis Tests of findings
Chapter Two (publishing)	Post-digital and post-photographic	Literature review Content analysis Tests of findings
Chapter Three (community)	Ethnographic	Discourse analysis Survey Elite interview
Chapter Four (reading)	Literary and visual	Literature review Graphical elicitation Elite interview Reading survey

Table 1. Chapter frameworks and methods

Data sets

Each data set which this research pulls from is detailed briefly here, with the titles of the sets noted (which will be how they will be referred to throughout the research), and accompanied by a brief summary of method and purpose.

Elite interviews: In the first stage of the elite interview process, 27 interviewees, representing a range of relations to the contemporary photobook, were asked to fill out a structured interview sheet regarding their relationship with the medium.

Subsequently, ten were chosen for a face-to-face, semi-structured interview. At the culmination of this activity it was acknowledged that there were some influential and respected voices that were important to hear, but had not taken part in the initial data collection, so four more interviews took place (with Lesley Martin, Michael Mack, Julia Borissova and Bruno Ceschel). Throughout the thesis, this data set is referred to as the 'elite interviews'.

Photobook reading survey: This survey of 178 photobook readers was produced in two stages, and promoted through *The Photobook Club's* website, Twitter and Facebook pages. The first version of the survey was open to anyone who had attended a *Photobook Club* event so as to include questions pertinent to the initiative itself. The second was open to any photobook readers wishing to take part. The survey considers readership and the photobook in a broad manner, from the buying and storing of photobooks, to an exploration of the reading and discussion of works. As a citation convention and in accordance with the information sheet provided as part of this data collection, respondents to the survey are referred to by their country of residence and an alphabetic letter in ascending order for each country. Throughout the thesis, this data set is referred to as the 'photobook reading survey'.

Thesis style notes

UCA Harvard referencing is used throughout the thesis with one minor adjustment to the use of indented quotations. While all quotations over 25 words are indented, some that are shorter are also included where it aids clarity to the reading, such as the short responses to the photobook reading survey or elite interviews.

Throughout the thesis, visual articulations (see Fig. 1.) appear as ways in which to communicate, elaborate and punctuate the writing. These visualisations have been a constant in the research process and have assumed the role of both yardstick and sounding board for what has occurred, and what is being hypothesised.

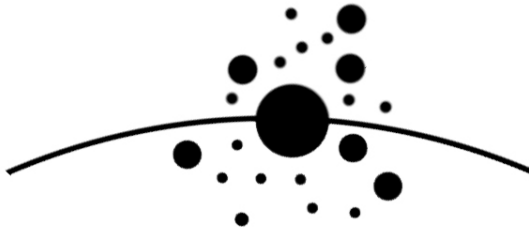


Fig. 1. *A detail of a visual articulation from Chapter Three (2019)*

Chapter One. Tracing the histories and lineages of the photobook:
What is the contemporary photobook?

Recto

‘The ‘photobook’ label is increasingly used to designate a book’s aesthetic and market value to the exclusion of all other types of worth. This obscures individual books’ historical, cultural and ideological origins, obstructing our ability to assess the photographic book’s nature and value’ (Shannon, 2010:55).

The photobook today is inescapable in the photographic community, enjoying what could be described as a ‘renaissance’ (Rule, 2015:15). It is the subject of dedicated journals, festivals, competitions and websites, as well as occupying locations in niche bookshops, large art galleries and museums. Whilst this state has not been arrived at overnight, it is fair to say that it has been a relatively steep ascent to a position of prominence¹². This research will come to pose a series of critical questions about this ascension, within broader, technological, photographic and cultural contexts, but in this chapter, I ask a fundamental question — what is a photobook? This inquiry is framed with a view for exploration which is not limited by existing definitions or thinking, but looks to associated mediums and their respective histories to aid comprehension, classification and contextualisation.

The chapter begins with a brief historical account of photography’s relationship with both publishing and the printed page, before turning to a more specific review of literature and nomenclature which deals with the designation of the photobook from an ontological perspective, including several criteria for photobook competitions. This provides a working definition of the photobook that brings clarity to the development of the chapter. In searching for more critical specificity within the umbrella term ‘photobook’, I introduce a series of existing attempts to categorise types, or styles, of photobooks. These proposals all provide useful tools for an understanding of the production of the photobook, but are arrived at through informal analysis of works with attention primarily to the construction of the photobook. In response, and building on the work of Philip Zimmermann, this chapter contains a taxonomy of proposed ‘lineages’ of purpose which can be traced back to varied functions of the book in

¹² This rise is contextualised and documented in parts of Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

photographic publishing. Language is posited as a primary indicator of lineage: a notion which is tested via a review of photobook metadata and the concept of lineages themselves, as a taxonomy, is tested via elite interview with key players in the photobook community. The chapter is concluded with a discussion regarding the potential use, and impact, of lineages which can be a significant asset in comprehension of the current state of the photobook, as well as how the medium can be supported in realising its makers' purported intentions. The findings of this chapter not only provide the foundations for the rest of the research in this thesis, but the first stage in a proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook: one that is able to highlight, and interrogate, the connections (made and missed) between the photobook and its reader.

A brief history

The photobook will come to be defined in later pages of this chapter, but we begin with a review of the interactions of photography and the book through history. It is useful to note at this stage what we are already excluding in our research: the periphery of possible interactions of photography and book. Books in which photographs are used as an aid to learning (seen in a digital camera guide for example), as scene setting (typically on covers of novels and biographies) or as subject (books on photography such as Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (1981) are all tangential to this research, and are thus left aside. Homing in on works in which photography plays a leading, visual role, allows us to concentrate on the form that has come to be known in the contemporary landscape as the 'photobook' but is still broad enough to permit a contextual investigation.

Early photography and the book

Photography and the book have had a substantial history well before the period of time we focus on in this research. More than a century before the first appearance of the word 'photobook¹³', artists, scientists and photographers were seeking to distribute and disseminate work through codex-like artefacts (Fernández, 1999). Succinctly put by the authors of a series of key histories of the photobook, Gerry Badger and Martin Parr, 'nineteenth century photography was basically book related. The proper place of photography was deemed to be the library or the archive' (2006:9). The book was an ideal container of reference material for the scientific, cartographic and topographic studies that occupied much of photography's early history, fuelled by governments and institutions exploring the potentials of this new medium as well as interest from an elite audience for whom the form offered new ways to explore the world.

'Studies of travel, picturesque landscapes, ancient monuments and works of art, genre imagery, archaeological, engineering and ethnographic documents constitute the basic oeuvre of the earliest photographic books, reflecting the

¹³ In his thesis which looks at the ontological origins of the photobook and charts its 'historical, material and conceptual characteristics' (2017:iv), José Luís Neves uncovers multiple uses of the term since the 19th century but locates the first relating to what we now think of as a photobook as occurring around the turn of the millennium (2017:18).

pedagogical cultural interests of the educated classes, with their tendency to be high-minded and “improving” (Badger and Parr, 2004:16).

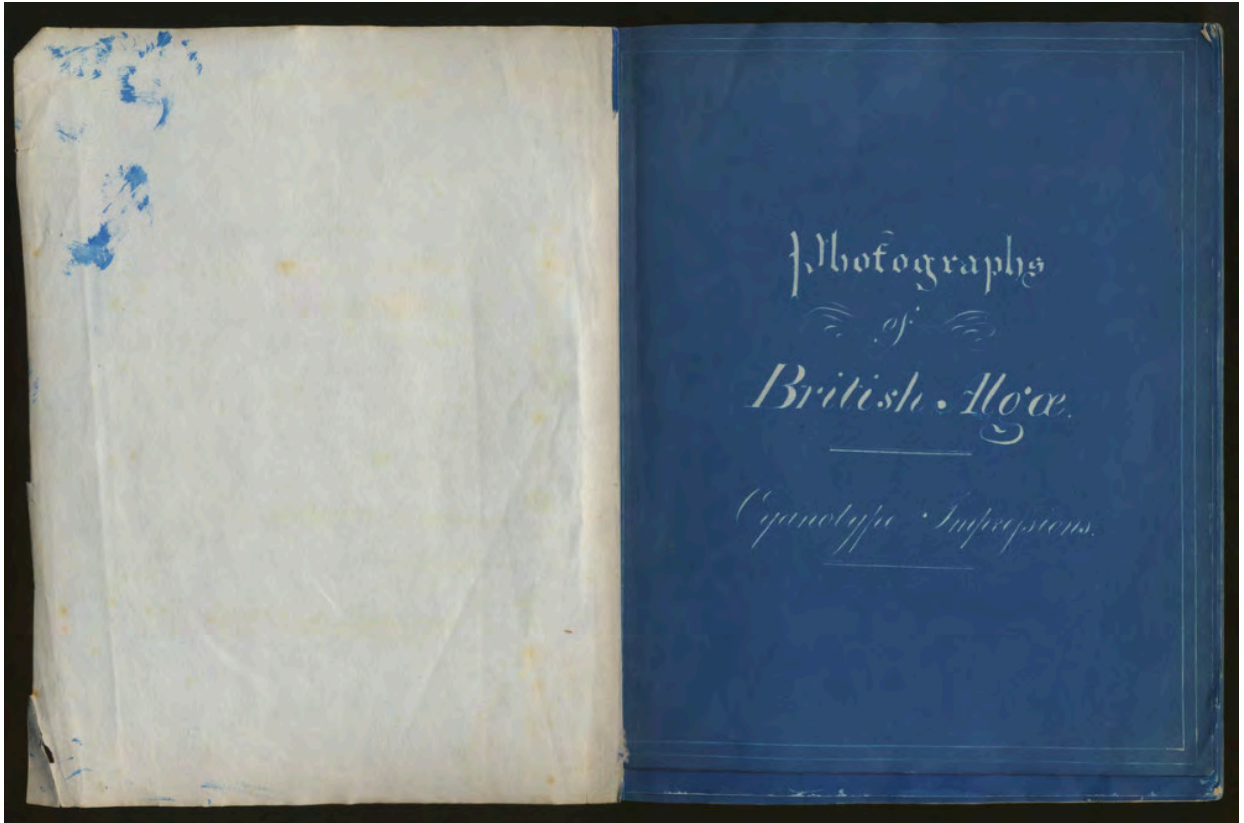


Fig. 3. *Cyanotype Herbarium, the First Fascicule of 'Photographs of British Algae', by Anna Atkins, 1843, Inv. 11887 (n.d)(original in colour). Permission granted by the History of Science Museum, University of Oxford.*

Well known examples of the period are found in the likes of Anna Atkins' self-published *Cyanotypes of British Algae*¹⁴ (Atkins, 1843)(see fig. 3) and William Henry Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature*¹⁵ (Talbot, 1844), which formed a book when collected in sections or fascicles and could be bound at the discretion of the owner¹⁶. These works were groundbreaking, not for the ways in which text interacted with image, or image created a relationship with page; but for the photographic content itself, the photobook acting

¹⁴ A book which has now been taken by many as the very first photobook (Hijosa et al, 2015).

¹⁵ Fox Talbot's work also has a claim in being the first photobook — though it was published later than Atkins' work as it was traditionally published as opposed to Atkins' self-publication.

¹⁶ Perhaps a precursor to the introduction of unique books and personalisation that has become more common in the time considered in this research. Daido Moriyama's *Printing Show at Tate Modern*, (Tate, 2012) and Takashi Homma's *RRREECCONNSTRUCCTTT* photobook (Homma, 2014) provide two contemporary examples.

primarily as a container, or vessel. In this era, while European photographers played a significant role in the development of photography and the book¹⁷, it is hard to escape the presence of Anglo-American colonialism with works like Captain Linnaeus Tripe's *Photographic Views in Madura Vol I* (Tripe, 1858), Timothy O'Sullivan's images made for the US War Department to aid expansion into the West (O'Sullivan, 1875) and Edward Curtis' *The North American Indian* (Curtis, 1907). At the turn of the century Curtis' work demonstrates an increasing interest in the photograph, and photography, as art. It is a publication which borders on the artistic and scientific, something which Shamoan Zamir notes in her essay on the book and its 'hybrid style' (2012:35-36). Around the same time, *Camera Work*, published by Alfred Stieglitz emerges and is published from 1903-1917. A publication which demonstrates clearly an adjustment in the perception of photography as art, but as a byproduct, like others of its time, featured works by photographers who were themselves 'almost the only readers' (Fernández, 1999:12).

Printing progress, the public book and the photo essay

If much of the 19th century had seen the photograph as a means of record and exploration, World War I only heightened this connection, whilst also reducing resources, opportunities and audiences for works produced. The interwar years however, created an environment conducive to new expression, and thus to new art, new modes of photography and new publications. Advances in printing technology (halftone and photogravure) meant that photographs and paper were no longer restricted to small and expensive volumes, but could be incorporated in mass-market literature: magazines, books, posters and journals. These often accompanied specific political agendas, ideological standpoints or manifestos, as Gerry Badger and Martin Parr identify in relation to *Fotodinamisimo Futurista (Futurist Photodynamics)* first published in 1913 (Badger and Parr, 2004: 90). In this period, the Soviet Union and Germany, with a substantial stake in the origins of modernism and constructivism, play a large part in the increasing use of text and image in populist publications with colour and design overt in their playfulness with the book, the image, and cinema. As Alex Sweetman summarises, new 'graphic techniques and film montage' had impacted

¹⁷ See for example Maxine Du Camp and Honoré d'Albert's publications.

upon 'photobooks published during the 1920s', ushering in a new era for the form, and many others with it (Sweetman, 1985:189). In the lead up to, and during World War II, the photograph was increasingly employed in the form of documentary (or humanist) works which were often realised in book form. Thus, publications presented by the Farm Security Administration (FSA)¹⁸ and its photographers have become some of the best known documentary works of the 20th century, while in Germany, *Deutschland* is published in 1936 (Cartensen et al,1936), running 'through the cultural and economic achievements of Hitler's Germany' (Badger and Parr, 2004:176).

'In the interwar period, the so called 'documentary' genre... largely identified itself with the emergence of the 'photo-essay'. This was a new publishing form as well as a new discursive space for photography' (Brunet, 2009:56).

During the early to mid twentieth century, the photo essay began to emerge as a platform for photographs and text to embolden one another. It is a form concerned with the world in which its authors and readers were situated, adopting Reithian values in its relationship to communication. Eugene Smith's *Country Doctor* (1948), featured in *LIFE* Magazine, is perhaps the most well-known example, and established the photographer 'as a master of the uniquely commanding young art form of the photo essay' (Cosgrove, 2012). This art form brought domestic and international issues through the letterbox typically in newspaper, or colour supplement, form¹⁹. Here, in the interaction of photography and text, there is a symbiosis in working towards a common goal: the communication of an event, situation or narrative. Photographers would typically be sent by newspapers (sometimes accompanied by journalists) to tell a story through a series of images and while some results could be seen as prescriptive, the emphasis on storytelling through multiple images, as apposed to single records and portraits, was a seismic shift.

¹⁸ Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor's *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (1939) for example.

¹⁹ Thus strictly not a book, but here there are a surprising number of similarities which have ensured its inclusion: the relationship between text and image as well as the use of sequence and design across the spread.

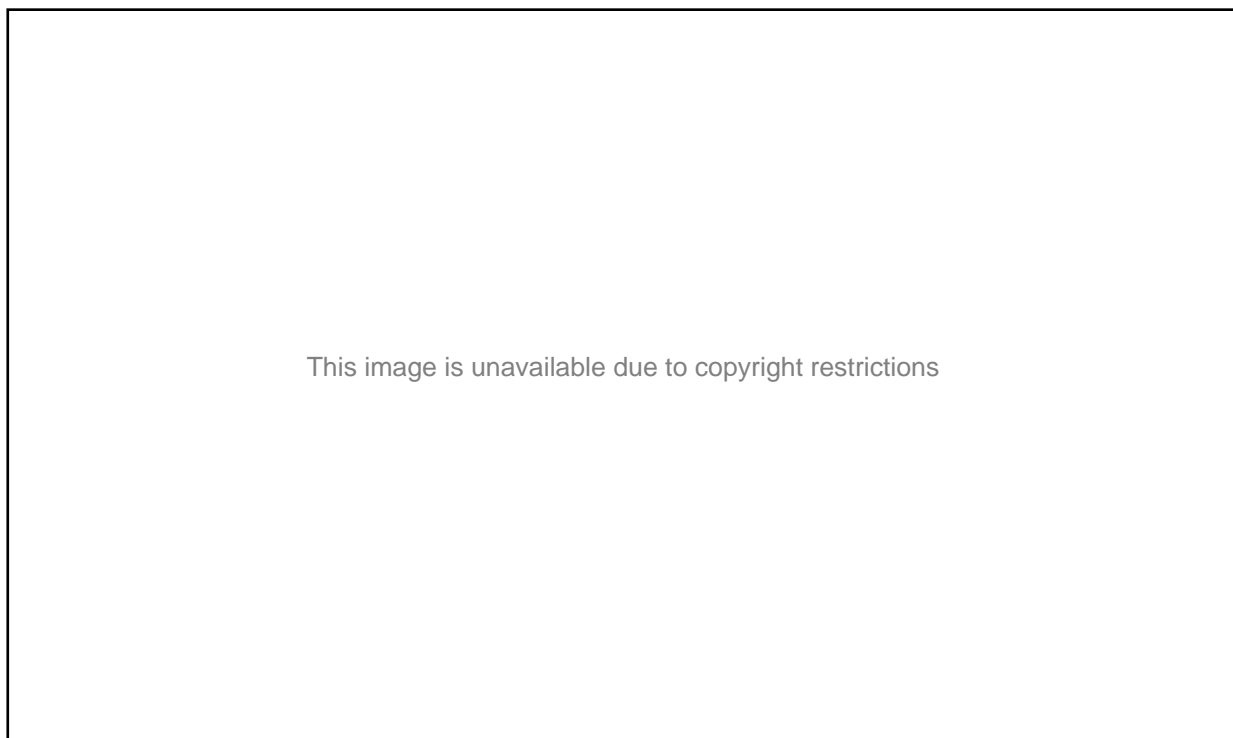


Fig. 4. A spread from Eugene Smith's 1948 *Life Magazine* photo essay, "Country Doctor." (2017)

The artists' book and self-publishing

'In the 1960s making a book became a political as much as a creative gesture and independent publishing evolved as a holistic and critical practice supported by a fluid network' (Waeckerlé 2013:7).

Accelerating to the 1960s²⁰ and 1970s, the impact of inkjet printing (1951) and the xerographic process (1959) altered the way in which the edition could be conceived. The possibility of short runs, which were high quality (inkjet) and low-fi large print runs (xerographic), supported the dissemination of printed matter. The coincidence of this technology with an increasingly politicised creative moment was manifested most noticeably in forms like the anti-art *Fluxus* group, for whom the ability to subvert large

²⁰ For some, this period sees the genesis of the contemporary photobook in the publications of Ed Ruscha (beginning in 1962), of which a considerable amount has been written. Clive Phillpot's 1999 essay *Sixteen Books and then Some* (Phillpot, 2012: 208-233), Ian Walker's *A Kind of a 'Huh?': The Siting of Twentysix Gasoline Stations (1962)* (Walker, 2012) and Jeff Brouws, Wendy Burton and Herman Zschiegner's *Various Small Books: Referencing Various Small Books by Ed Ruscha* (Brouws et al, 2013) as examples.

press and gallery systems, as well as traditional publishing, was hugely important. Dick Higgins, who published the *Something Else Newsletter* from 1966 to 1983 noted within Volume 2 that ‘The book industry is the most stupid and the most corrupt of all in the country. What should be part of an information flow is part of a very possessive information monopoly’ (Higgins, 1973:1). Higgin’s belief was echoed by *Printed Matter* co-founder Lucy Lippard speaking about her own strict definition of the the artists’ book of the time, which she saw as ‘mass produced, relatively cheap, accessible to a broad public...’ (Ault and Lippard, 2006). This stance came at a time in which conceptual art and the dematerialisation of the art object (in the sense of craft) was popular, and anti art (in its institutionality and exclusivity) sentiments were rising. Photography and the book both played a substantial role here for their democratic and everyday nature — familiar tools and objects used and understood beyond the art world. For photography specifically, it was its indexicality which solidified its place as a vital instrument of the movement.

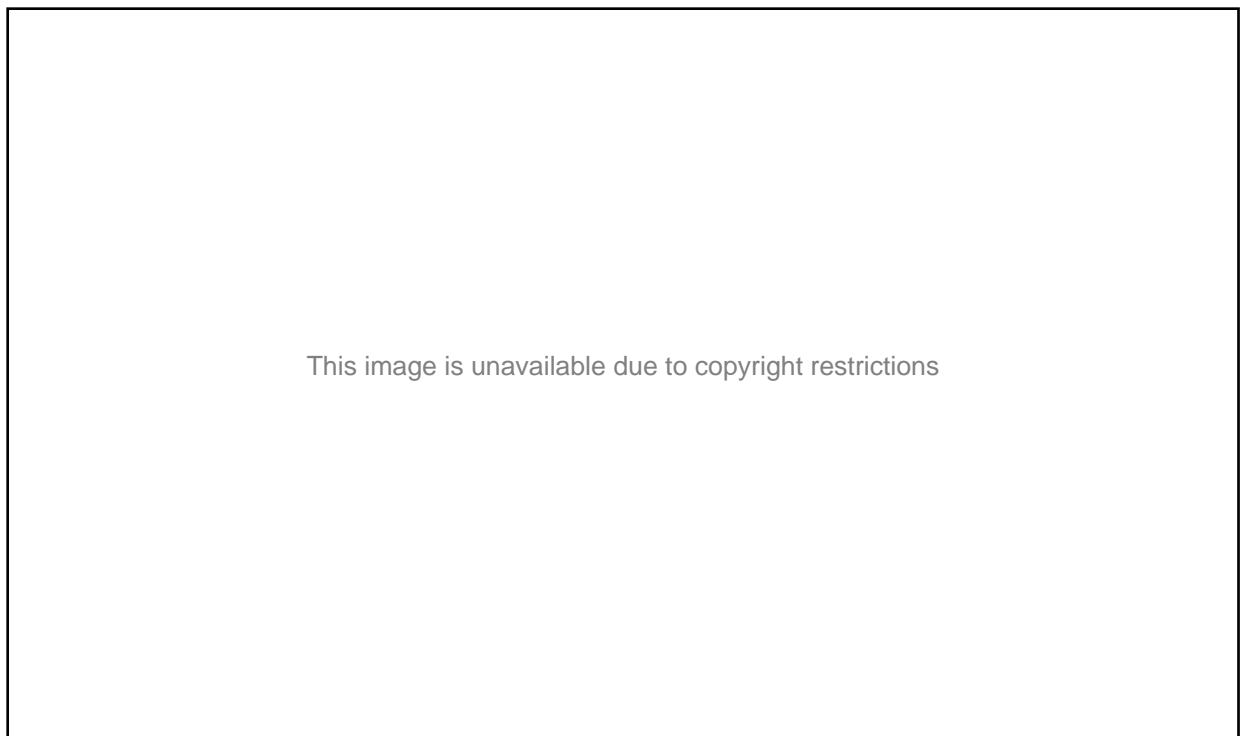


Fig. 5. *Every building on the Sunset Strip*, (1966) by Edward Ruscha (1995)

Then, ‘from the mid-1960s onwards’ much of the photographic world looked to ‘American photography with voracious interest, eagerly buying American photobooks to

find out what was happening in photographic culture' (Badger and Parr, 2006:17). So, the latter stages of the 20th century are represented in many libraries, and on many bookshelves, by books from relatively large American publishers, galleries and museums. There was however, a big shift on the horizon. From the 1990s, self-publishing, and the print-on-demand technologies which helped to herald it in²¹, grew at a considerable pace. While expensive for a single copy, print-on-demand, which enables the printing of any number of copies (with an economy of scale) from a single digital file, presented a new flexibility. The technology has been used for personal albums, professional portfolios and artists' books. It is the medium which bound the Artists' Books Cooperative together (ABC, 2015) and was the subject of a 2013 exhibition at the Cleveland Museum of Art titled *DIY*.

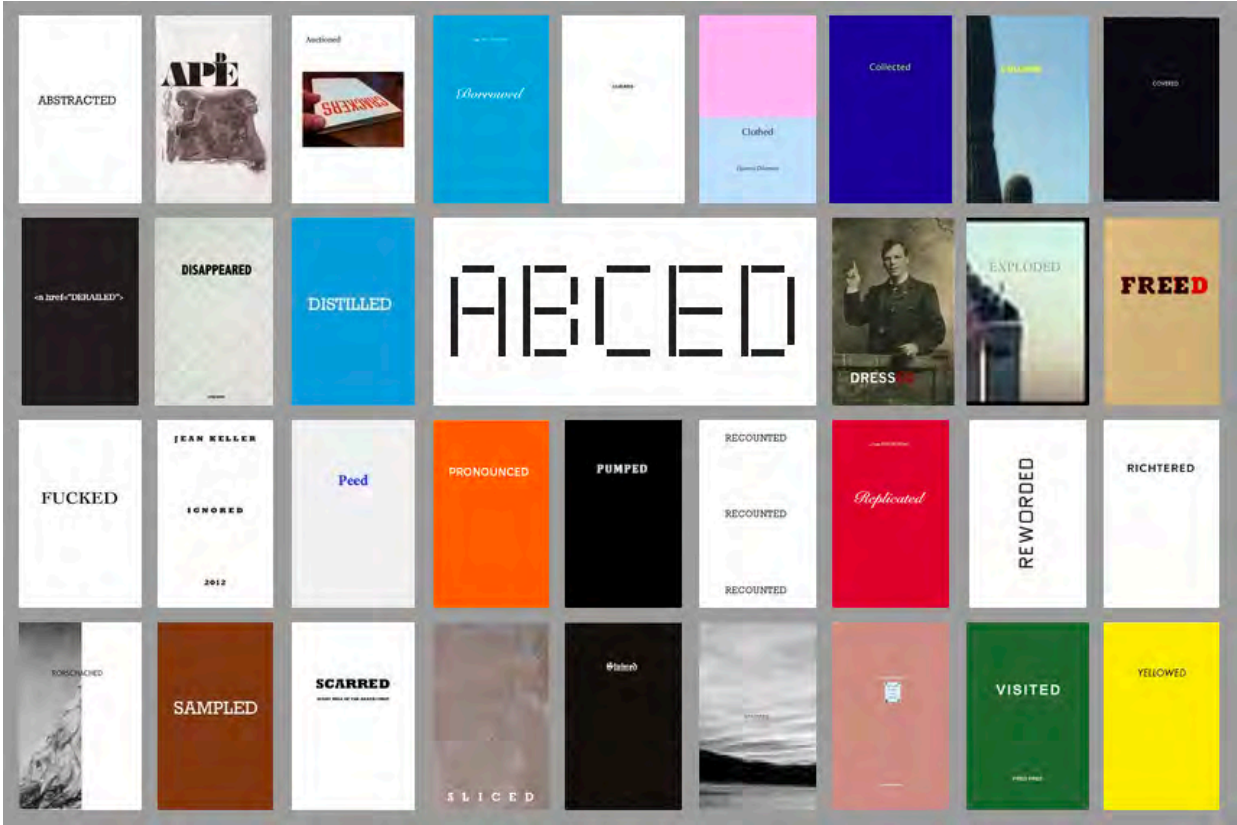


Fig. 6. *ABCED* (2012)(original in colour), a series of books produced by the *Artists' Books Cooperative* to celebrate Ed Ruscha's 75th Birthday. Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by ABC (The Artists' Books Cooperative).

²¹ MyPublisher was launched in 1995, the first visual print-on-demand service (Business Wire, 2013).

This is not to say that all self-published works have relied on print-on-demand technology, but that it is indicative of a broader change which sees makers able to produce books without the need for an outlay of thousands of pounds. There is a reduction of risk and skill required to publish, a situation made more potent with the removal of editorial control over the author and the manner in which networked technology encourages 'like-minded individuals' to get together (Badger and Parr, 2014:107).

The potted history presented here shows a great breadth of relationships between the photograph and the book, its link with with broader artistic, social²² and political shifts, and has touched on numerous themes in brief. Many of these will be expanded on as we progress in this chapter, but it is worth noting suitable sources for further reading into the history of photography and the book. *Fotografia Publica*, an exhibition and publication curated by Horacio Fernandez offers a comprehensive survey of photography in print (Fernandez, 1999). The works selected, and introductory essay, display an interaction between photography and the public through a number of different means: posters, leaflets, photo-essays, magazines and what we might now retrospectively define as a 'photobook'. *The Photobook: A History* volumes I-III, produced by photographer Martin Parr and critic Gerry Badger (Badger and Parr, 2004, 2006, 2014) offer a revisionist history of photography through selections of works that are of significance to the creation of the medium and its life since inception. Other works include Andrew Roth's *101 Photobooks* (Roth, 2001), and his subsequent partnership with the Hasselblad Centre for *The Open Book* (2004) as well as numerous geographically themed and time-based works²³ like *Japanese Photobooks of the 60s and 70s* (Vartanian, 2009) or *The Dutch Photobook; a thematic selection from 1945 onwards* (Gierstberg and Suermondt, 2012).

This overview has provided a sense of a history on which the photobook is built — one that has not operated exclusively in a photographic or artistic context, but bordered on

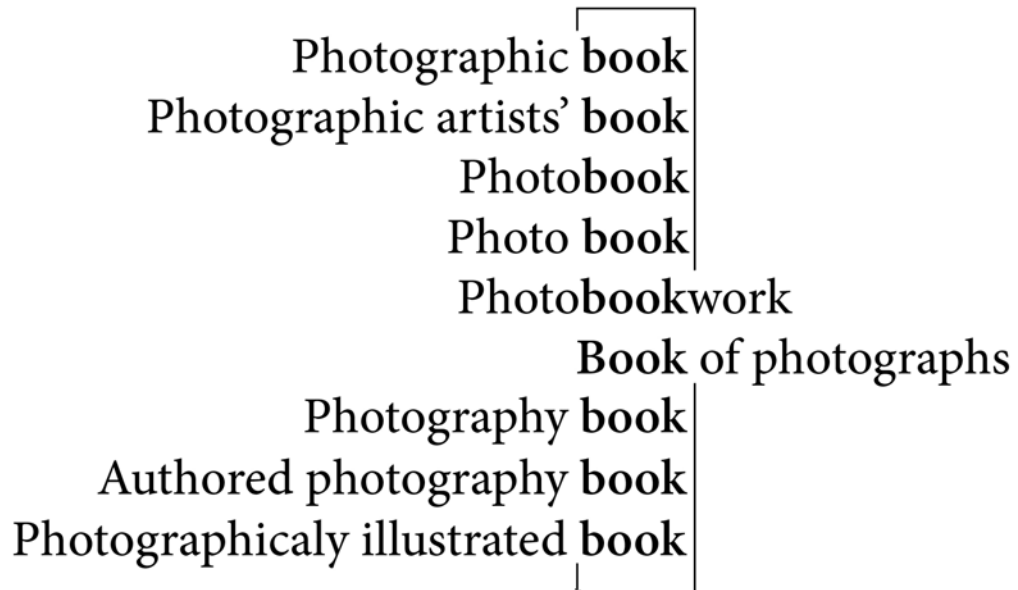
²² Carol Armstrong's deconstruction of a number of British photobooks in *Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843-1875* (1998) offers a great depth of contextualisation within Victorian culture.

²³ A thorough list of these works can be found in David Solo's *Photobibliomania* (Library of the International Centre of Photography and Solo, 2014).

the scientific, editorial, journalistic and political too. In the next section, via a review of literature from the perspective of nomenclature, we will witness the emergence of a term which has provided unification of the multiple histories evidenced here.

The photobook; nomenclature²⁴ and definition

In this section, the photobook is defined from an ontological perspective. Considering what it is that constitutes the medium — from the role of the image to the presence of conceptual design — providing a foundation for an intra-medium taxonomy (pages 61-77).



Photographic book
Photographic artists' book
Photobook
Photo book
Photobookwork
Book of photographs
Photography book
Authored photography book
Photographically illustrated book

Fig. 7. *Naming the photobook* (2015) — a list of all the terms encountered during this research which make reference to photography and the book.

Through literature review for this, and subsequent chapters, there are a range of terms which have been applied to photography/book relations, but, it is clear that 'photobook' has found a place as default, and de facto. It is a terminological ascension which David Company posits as indicative of the emergence of a discipline which requires, and enjoys, its own finite and identifiable nature (2014:3). Company is not an isolated voice considering the implications of nomenclature. In the introduction to *Photography and the Artist's Book* (Wilkie et al, 2012:15), there is an acknowledgement that the 'temptation to define the form is hard to resist' and 'equally difficult to contain' (Wilkie et

²⁴ Where this chapter looks to move onto more pressing concerns for the direction of the research, José Luis Neves' 2017 thesis *The many faces of the photobook: establishing the origins of photobookwork practice* provides an excellent, and thorough account of multiple descriptors for the photobook.

al, 2012:15). Both sentiments are concerned with control: how are we able to speak, teach, and write about these works, without an accepted lexicon that will establish a common ground for critique and exploration. While it is little surprise that we now predominately use a standardised term, it is curious to see that it has taken the position without a comprehensive and explanatory case. Here, I will offer a retrospective explanation through literature review and the analysis of definitions found in competitions and catalogues, making clear what the term 'photobook' implies.

The photobook, photobookwork and related terms

Most writing which has sought to define the photobook place emphasis on productions that embrace a symbiosis of photography, sequence and design. They are holistic artefacts. It is this cohesion that formed a central part of one of the few early attempts to define the medium by Alex Sweetman. Sweetman coins the term 'photobookwork' (1985:187) as a way to stress the importance of the cohesive nature of the work. The crux of the definition is in the disentanglement of books which feature photography in an arbitrary or purely aesthetic/chronological form, and those whose sequence relates to the conceptual aspects of the work. Sweetman takes aim at some of the most iconic works of the 20th century to prove his point. Richard Avedon, Irving Penn and Henri Cartier-Bresson are all cited as creators of 'mere portfolios between covers where the art is the single image, not the expressive action of the whole'. Sweetman continues to a definition:

'The photobookwork, then, is a series of images — that is, a tightly knit, well-edited, organised group or set of images in a linear sequence presented in book form' (Sweetman, 1985:187).

This sentiment of cohesion is mirrored in John Gossage's statement featured in the introduction to Martin Parr and Gerry Badger's inaugural book on the photobook and its history, stating that:

'Firstly, it should contain great work. Secondly it should make that work function as a concise world within the book itself. Thirdly, it should have a

design that complements what is being dealt with. And finally, it should deal with content that sustains an ongoing interest' (Badger and Parr, 2004:7).

The 'concise world' and the 'expressive action of the whole' have been significant in the solidification of the term in a number of additional spaces such as the formation of the world's first Photobook museum (The *PhotoBookMuseum*), a photobook edition of the *British Journal of Photography* (Bainbridge and Smyth, 2015) and the launch of the *Aperture PhotoBook²⁵ Review* in 2011 (Aperture). It is worth noting though, that while institutions like Aperture help shape our understanding of the photobook and promote the term's use, they also reveal the complexities of categorisation as we see in Lesley Martin's introduction to issue 001 in which five different terms are referenced (underlined for clarity):

'What is the PhotoBook Review?

A publication dedicated to the consideration of the photobook - focusing on the best photography books being published, from the coffee-table book to the handmade artist's edition...' (Martin, 2011:2).

There are definitions which place emphasis in different directions, or in relation to different themes of the photobook. Elizabeth Shannon for example, suggests that a 'photobook is an autonomous art form' and that the 'photographs lose their own photographic character as things 'in themselves' and become parts, translated into printing ink, of a dramatic event called a book.' (Shannon, 2010:57), Whereas the Tate Gallery's definition makes prominent the low cost, and large audience for the form:

'The photobook is a book of photographs by a photographer that has an overarching theme or follows a storyline – a convenient and reasonably cheap way of disseminating the work of a photographer to a mass audience' (Tate, n.d).

²⁵ Note the capitalisation here which the review uses for titles and contents but not in discussion of the medium when there is a switch to the lowercase 'photobook'.

Evidently there are difficulties here in defining the photobook, and a broad range of perspectives on what should be classified as such. The issue is complicated further if we take into account terms like 'photography book' and 'photographic artists' book'. The former is often employed by journalism institutions like the Guardian (O'Hagan, 2014) and The Financial Times (Holland, 2014) to offer a round up of new titles, or select the best of the year. So too the 'photography book' is used in some mainstream categorisation strategies. Waterstones use 'Art, Fashion and Photography books' as well as 'Photography book and books on photography'²⁶. The 'photographic artists' book' on the other hand was used in an academic publication of the same name (Wilkie et al, 2012) and in its use suggested a proximity to the artists' book and its associated forms.

Catalogues and competitions

A struggle to organise and archive the photobook is present in most libraries which contain them, and must be a headache for librarians in relation to new works which may be bound by old cataloguing criteria²⁷, unknowing of the boom that was to come. The problem is not one unique to the photobook: the term 'artists' book' was not used until 1973 (Di Sciascio, 2010:14). In the digital, a new challenge emerges in the cataloguing of works — that of mediation. Maria White notes in *An Odd Word* (2015) the choice of the British Library and Library of Congress to adjust rules on metadata for listed works. The new system allows for listing of media and interaction such as 'audio' and 'play' while also introducing an 'unmediated' tag. White refers to this tag's application to the book as 'an awkward, inelegant word... an almost unnatural word to describe the most natural of actions: the reader engaging directly with the item' (White, 2015:03:59²⁸). Just as organisational habits of libraries can tell us something of the photobook in recent history, the many recent launches of photobook competitions

²⁶ The 'photography book' has also been adopted by Darius Himes and Mary Virginia Swanson in their *Publish Your Photography Book* title (Himes and Swanson, 2014). For a publication that aims to sell based on interest in medium, it is understandable to see the inclusion of a term that is more widely recognised and casts a bigger net than the niche *photobook*. Of note is that the term 'photobook' also presents itself in this publication — not only in interviews and featured writers but also on chapter content pages.

²⁷ In 1977, Art Librarian Philip Pacey recognised a need for discussion on the subject and produced the *Art Library Manual: a Guide to Resources & Practice* (Pacey, 1977).

²⁸ This book uses time as a page ordering system.

might offer further understanding of current ontological categorisation of this somewhat illusive medium. Two of the biggest competitions in the contemporary photobook world have been included in the following section, one for a published work, and one for a dummy photobook.

Aperture PhotoBook award, entry details 2015

‘A book in which the dominant content is photography, whether authored by more than one photographer/artist or authored by an editor, produced in physical form, and published in an edition of no less than one hundred copies... books by or featuring the work of more than one photographer/artist are eligible in all categories’ (Aperture, 2015).

Here, the focus is on the dominance of photography within the work, and authorship. Aperture are creating a criteria that is open for interpretation, certainly when we question the word ‘dominance’ we might be led to thinking about volume, space or affect. In doing so, a wide net is cast, and there is little here that would be excluded. This criteria highlights the need for an edition of 100 or more — a decision that clearly suggests a move away from unique books which are art objects, or sculptural pieces.

Kassel Dummy Award, entry conditions 2015

‘Formally, a submitted work has to have the following criteria of a photobook: A photobook is a non-periodic collection of printed photographs (or reproduced on photographic paper) with text or even empty pages, with a binding and a cover. It can be made from paper or other suitable materials. There are no restrictions as to its content. It goes without saying that photographs are the major component of the book’ (Fotobook Festival, 2015).

This bold entry posits a clear definition of the photobook. Design and concept are hinted at through use of text or blank pages, and physical properties of the book itself

are also considered. To have a binding and cover are likely to be received as sensible, acknowledged and perhaps even unnecessarily included, yet binding and covers can be contentious issues. A number of writers, photographers and artists have mused over the possibility that these sort of definitions limit the book. Richard Kostelanetz once asked whether a book could 'be a long folded accordion strip? Can it have two front covers and be "read" in both directions?' (Kostelanetz, 1985:29). Others have asked similar questions of publications both photographically inclined and otherwise²⁹. With the Kassel criteria, just as with the Aperture conditions, there is an attempt to explain the role of the photograph in the book which seems a suitable place to reify a working definition for this research.

A working definition

The lack of cohesion in the reflections, definitions and criteria of the previous pages makes trying to find a suitable place to lay a marker for the photobook somewhat difficult. Recurring themes of cohesion and holism as well as edition size and physical construction are convincing enough to suggest multiple definitions, though such specificity without an initial comprehension (or overarching definition) may hinder the use of this research. Therefore what exists here is an ontological definition of the photobook which this research uses³⁰. An amalgam of encountered offerings, it is intended as a starting point for a more robust and critical taxonomy which is presented in the next section.

The photobook is a single or multi-authored, bound work with photography as its primary content. It is an expression of a unified

²⁹ Magnum's original *Postcards from America* (Goldberg et al, 2012) was pre-sold as a book and arrived as a selection of road-trip ephemera, a poster-style book (loose leaf), several zines and a series of postcards. Japanese photographer Rinko Kawauchi (2013) has similarly experimented with unbound works - *Approaching Whiteness* was published in 2013 as a series of limited edition scrolls. 'The sequence of frames flow from right to left and connote the passage of time as an uninterrupted sequence' (Goliga, 2013).

³⁰ Any definition or term that attempts to define or enclose will also exclude. The casualty here, which is a dynamic, democratic and worthwhile endeavour is the album book — the book of holiday snaps and New Year get togethers — often gifted items intended for a small (1-5), and well known audience. Here, 'Photo Book' is employed as a representation of the term used by the likes of PhotoBox (2015), Snapfish (2015), Tesco Photo (2015) and Blurb (2015). These Photo Books are seldom discussed in relation to the photobook, nor will they be here because their history is so specific as to warrant separate investigation.

thought, subject, position, location or time, which has been constructed with awareness of the book as output.

Breaking down the photobook: four proposals

Since this research began in 2014, there have been four proposals to categorise *within* the photobook term itself — in the form of a taxonomy (Colberg, 2018)(Martin, 2017) or spectrum (Spowart, 2018a)(Zimmermann, 2016), each with a slightly different approach. Here, each of the four proposals are considered in turn for the ways in which they break down the photobook, and seek specificity or knowledge in the action. We start with Jorg Colberg's *Towards a Photobook Taxonomy* (2018).

Jorg Colberg's *Towards a Photobook Taxonomy*

In early 2018³¹, critic Jorg Colberg presented a taxonomy of the photobook on his popular *Conscientious* blog, attempting to define the photobook and its different forms in relation to the way in which its narrative operates. Colberg is clear in saying that the content of the photographic work itself, the 'subject', is not taken into consideration, but that it is 'how the books operate, how, in other words, the story is being told' which is of significance (Colberg, 2018). This choice both solves and presents problems. It manages to move away from a potential trap that would suggest all books about war must be documentary works, or that personal and intimate family pictures could only be assigned to personal expression or artists' book status. This may be liberating for makers, but when we propose any sort of categorisation method we also reveal our interests and intent; here it is in a close reading of a work which elevates the educated and informed reader.

Colberg proposes for us five types of photobook: the catalogue, monograph, journalistic, lyrical and narrative dream (Colberg, 2018), some of which have additional sub-categories leading to a total of 17 categories. The accompanying descriptors for each category mirrors the emphasis on operation and the mechanism of the book work:

'Text plays a major role, but its interaction with the photographs isn't quite as limited as in the case of the photojournalistic book.'

³¹ With Colberg's caveat that it was by no means final and could be added to with suggestions.

‘Of late, the use of archival materials has become prominent. What is more, some of the photographs might be made to mimic conventions used in scientific or institutional settings.’

‘...the narrator relies on the viewer being able to provide the content, thus possibly allowing for narrative ambiguity’ (Colberg, 2018).

Colberg's taxonomy is a system which can be applied with relative ease. Even with the inclusion of 17 total categories I am able to quickly relate each to a book on my shelf and it seems to capture some current trends well, particularly in documentary storytelling. It is a helpful proposition for those making or studying the making, of the photobook. However, its precision (17 styles in total), and concentration on sequence and medium content through esoteric and formalist reading³² means it has limited applicability for the purposes of this research.

Lesley Martin's *A Taxonomy of the Contemporary Photobook*

Lesley Martin's *Invitation to a Taxonomy of the Contemporary Photobook* (2017:11-14) is built around ‘trends’ and ‘tracks’ (2017:11). Her proposal is precise in its remit, looking to understand the ‘recurrence of a particular set of ideas — a coalescing of new forms’ (2017:11). Thus, Martin is concerned in the main with what the contemporary photobook features (in content), and what form it takes. For her, there are three defining tracks.

‘Thematic Track; The Archive’ (2017:11): Here there is a resonance with the ‘preoccupations of the photography world at large’ (2017:11) which has turned its attention to the archive in recent years. Martin cites the ‘shift from a world of physical objects and economies to a more virtual one’ (2017:10) as one of the causes of this interest, and notes also that it is part of a need to reconsider how it is that we see, and have seen, the world around us.

³² Which can constrain questions regarding broader connections between photobooks and their readers.

'Narrative Track; Photobook as Puzzle' (2017:12): 'These are books that eschew the traditional organisational hooks and are organised neither chronologically nor as a clear progression from beginning to end' (2017:12). Martin cites *Redheaded Peckerwood* (2011) as an example and brings into the 'photobook as puzzle' track the mixing of media, and the mixing of truth that is common in the contemporary photobook — 'The weave of fact and fictional retelling is facilitated by the tipping-in of documents, letters, and other clues to help readers assemble the narrative for themselves' (2017:12).

'Production Track; Baroque Form' (2017:13): As well as theme and narrative, Martin considers the commonalities of material for the contemporary photobook, and is clear that the digital has brought about many possibilities for the contemporary printed page:

'One could scan the many entire histories of the photobook, from the earliest albums up until the turn of the millennium, and come up with a comparatively limited number that rely on unusual production flourishes for their effect. Now, it is almost considered a given' (2017:13).

Martin suggests a spectrum of engagement with what she calls the 'Baroque era' (2017:13), with books which skirt what is possible while still being called a book, and on the other end, books which 'engage sparingly with the smorgasbord of possibilities — One Special Touch' (2017:13). Martin's taxonomy, much like Colberg's, is easy to apply to books on the shelf, and similarly begins to identify particular themes which are visible in books encountered through this research, but leaves the reader predominantly excluded.

Doug Spowart's *A Photobook Spectrum*

The first of two spectrums (a homage to Clive Philpot) comes from a previously unpublished article by Doug Spowart, originally intended for dissemination in a book by Larissa Leclair that never made press. Spowart has since published the work online (Spowart, 2018a). In this spectrum, his identification of particular types of books

borrowed from, and borders with, an artists' book discourse, looking to make connections with a world outside the photobook. He begins the spectrum by noting:

'The definition of photobook today could include a roughly printed or photocopied zinelike object created by a child, to a blatantly over-designed limited edition book'

'The boundaries of the photobook discipline are blurred by their intersection with a variety of other book genres including the expansive mediums of artists' books and zines' (Spowart, 2018a).

At one end of Spowart's spectrum is the deluxe photobook, and at the other end, the artists' book and livre d'artiste, emphasising the photobook as occupying a space within. Spowart's spectrum is comprised of nine colour waves which are as follows:

'Infrared – The Deluxe Photobook

Red - The 'Classic trade' Photobook

Orange – Design Photobook (collaboration)

Yellow – POD Photobook

Green - Emergent - PhotoStream* [of Consciousness], Photozine* or Instaphotobook*, Imagistbooks*

Blue – Photopapers* Photomag* (broadsheet / newspaper / magazine)

Indigo – Innovative Artists' Book

Violet – 'Artists' Book' Codex

Ultra-Violet - 'Book Arts', Livre d'Artiste Book'

(Spowart, 2018a).

The categorisation and characterisation for Spowart is focussed on process or material factors, as demonstrated by a selection of the following descriptors.

'Printing techniques such as silkscreen, photoetching and gravure, inkjet, digital press and alternative imaging techniques like cyanotype.'

'Books engineered in ways that demand interaction, both through the visual senses but also through the haptics of handling and reading – the turning of pages.'

'Print runs may be small and limited or quite extensive... of 1,000 copies or more'

'Often these books may be the result of crowd sourced funding and may be derived from online image storage or social media platforms like Instagram' (Spowart, 2018a)

So, where Colberg is concerned with the mechanics of the sequence and Martin is interested in themes and trends, Spowart looks instead towards the mechanics and practicalities of photobook making. Each of these proposals are successful in their aims to find understanding of the form in their taxonomic breakdown, and present for us a number of interesting questions to explore³³, but they primarily operate in a discourse of production and study. If we are to seek answers around connections with readers, it would stand that we may wish to move towards a discourse which foregrounds the function of the photobook in reaching and engaging with readers, something we begin to find in Philip Zimmermann's spectrum.

Philip Zimmermann's *Photo-Bookwork Graphic-Continuum Chart*

Philip Zimmermann has produced what he terms a *Photo-Bookwork Graphic-Continuum Chart* (2016)(see Fig. 8.) which proposes a spectrum with a continuous line of examples which span from, on one end, the 'photography book' and on the other the 'photo-bookwork³⁴'. Alongside this runs a parallel spectrum of 'identifying characteristics' which feature things like 'dustjacket' or 'full page bleed or creative use of white space'. This demonstrates a similarity with Spowart in the mechanics of the production of the photobook, but what differentiates Zimmermann's position is his

³³ In particular, Spowart's spectrum poses questions about audience, authorship and market (with the spectrum moving from the deluxe and trade to the artisanal) which would be interesting to investigate in future research.

³⁴ In parenthesis is the accompaniment 'or photo artists' book (Zimmermann, 2016).

insistence that what separates works on the spectrum is their intention, stating that 'obviously the difference from one end of the scale to the other is intention' (Zimmermann, 2016)³⁵. Zimmermann goes on to note the distinction between the representation of work which is trying to promote a show, and where the book is used as an expressive medium and the images have not previously been shown. This accent on intent shifts the location of critique towards the relationship between the makers' choices and their desires for the book. This is succinctly put in the closing remarks of the chart in which Zimmermann takes aim at books which pretend to be something they are not:

'There are many books which use the external trappings of artists' books like fancy covers and production materials, but do not use the language or have the intent of an artists' book, nor do they exploit how books work as a medium except in a very simplistic way. (Many of Martin Parr's books are great examples of this. I think of dressed up books like this as sheep in wolves clothing. I like sheep and I like wolves, but in this case it's one species pretending to be another)' (Zimmermann, 2016).

Zimmermann's chart was introduced at a symposium in 2016 and since has been located on the College Book Arts' *Art Theory Blog*, where it is accompanied by some additional contextualisation and a call for consideration regarding why the book is to be published, and what it is for:

'The question is: 'What is it that you want to use the book for?;' the photographer must ask themselves that. The monograph does the job of promoting single photographs or bodies of work, if that is what one needs and wants to do. But books are capable of much more' (Zimmermann, 2016).

Here more than in the other spectrums and taxonomies proposed we find a sentiment that resonates with this research, and its intentions to understand where the photobook is, and isn't, making connections with its readers.

³⁵ One of Zimmermann's test questions regards the reason for a book existing and helps him to locate the book on the chart.

The No-Value-Judgement*
THE PHOTO-BOOKWORK GRAPHIC-CONTINUUM CHART
Originally created for the 2016 Visual Studies Workshop Photo-Bookworks Symposium, Rochester, NY
by Philip Zimmermann, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ

ANOTHER in the book, who led in the right, I feel such like a party representative of the photographic artist. I did not consider using a book or book object, but I did. The book is not a chronological study, nor are the media largely one or the other, though some examples may include examples from both and some may have been used up or there is in or across books and all that is worth the of how they fall on the continuum. Each sub-section is unmarked, but not more less or similar. In other words, there is no difference at the right end left side, just in the rough vertical, (horizontally) there are not many hundreds of photo books, but there are both ends of the spectrum, it may well be to select the few that are best. Thank for justice and recognition from David Miller, O'Hara, Malhotra, Anne Quammen and Patricia Dillingham.

PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK

Diane Arbus | Diane Arbus
Retrospective | Joel Meyerowitz
Paul Capogrossi | Meditations in Silver
Fifty Years | Edward Weston
Nationality Doubtful | Josef Koudelka
Keweenaw | Grand Canyon and the West
PhotoEye | Gordon Parks
Helen Carter-Bresson | The Detective Moment
(monograph) | Alfred Stieglitz
J.H. Lartigue | Les Femmes
Heartland | David Laundy
Helmut Newton | World Without Women
(monograph) | Paul Outerbridge
Elliot Erwitt | Personal Best
Private View | Maria Tattilo
Laura Volkering | Solomon's Temple
Photographs of British Algarve | Anna Atkins
Henry Fox Talbot | The Pencil of Nature
American Photographs | Walker Evans
Bill Brandt | The English at Home
William Eggleston's Guide | William Eggleston
Richard Avedon | Portraits of Power
La Chapelle Land | David LaChapelle
Josef-Peter Wilkos | Heaven or Hell
The Black Book | Robert Mapplethorpe
Cecil Beaton | Cecil Beaton
Andrew Gursky | Andreas Gursky
Chuck Close | Chuck Close
About Forty Years | Nicholas Nixon
Lewis Baltz | The New Industrial Parks
Marking the Land | Jim Deane
Charles White | Monsters
Mount St. Helens | Frank Godke
Jeff Wall | Daybreak
Manifestations of the Spirit | Minor White
Stephen Shore | The Hudson Valley
Basic Forms | Bernd and Hilla Becher
Bruce Davidson | East 100th Street
The Ballet of Sexual Dependency | Nan Goldin
St. Eugene Smith | Miyama
Man and Beast | Mary Ellen Mark
Lee Friedlander | America by Car
LARRY CLARK
Terry O'Neill | American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar
Small World | Martin Parr
Ed Panar | Animals That Saw Me
Song Book | Alec Soth
Brad Zellar and Lester B. Morrison | House of Coates
Arrived to Light | Mike and Doug Strunk
Elihu House | Barakat | Dravid By Roses
Pyramet | Mike Stack
Jim Goldberg | Rich and Poor
Para in the Rain | Brassa
Wolfgang Tillmans | Concrete
700 Suns | Michael Light
Fazal Sheikh | Ramadan Moon
Naked City | Weegee
Peter Beard | The End of the Game
Robert Adams | Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan | Evidence
Encounters With the Dani | Susan Meiselas
Deja Vu | Ralph Gibson
William Klein | Life is Good and Good for You in New York
Human Being | Andra Medica
Nathan Lyons | Reflections in Passing
Crushed | Jason Fulford
Richard Bingham | Roy's A Laugh
Conversations With the Chief | Danny Lyon
Sophie Calle | Exquisite Pain
The Half Life of History | Mark Klett
Todd Walker | For Nothing Changes...
No Man's Land | Miska Henner
Sophie Riestelhuber | Fat
Hidden Islam | Nicola De Luigi
Duane Michals | Taxis One and Sex Mt. Fujiyama
In This Dark Wood | Elizabeth Tennard
Robert Frank | Lines of my Hand
You Are the Weather | Roni Horn
Ken Okada | One
The Map | Kikuo Kawada
Lydia Meyer | The Unabomber's Wife
In Every Picture | Erik Kessels
Christian Patterson | Redheaded Peckercod
Two Rivers | Carolin Drake
Paul Graham | A Shimmer of Possibility
The 3rd Person Archive | John Szarkar
Bill Burke | I want to take picture
Moses | Mariela Sencari
Monica Heller | Riley and His Story
Threecat | Tale Shaw
Alejandro Cartagena | Carpenters
Securities | Joan Fontcuberta
Christian Marclay | Fourth of July
A Hundred Times Nguyen | Alfredo Jaar
Adam Bromberg & Oliver Chanarin | Bible
A History of Light | Daniel Heitling
Keith Smith | Patterned Apart
Wrong Size Fits All | Brad Freeman
Francesca Schamps | Drone
Long Story Short | Philip Zimmermann
Hadi Naitaan | Star Gazing by Microscope
Alpha | Doug Aiken
Gibson Medlar | Rocks, Litvitz, & Invasion
Party (Map Red Book) | Cristina de Middel
John Szarkar | Brutus Kid Caesar
Twentieth Gasoline Stations | Ed Ruscha
Scott McCarney | Memory Loss
Joan Lyons | The Fall Moon
Michael Snow | Cover to Cover

PHOTO-BOOKWORK
[or PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTISTS' BOOK]

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Some identifying Characteristics Along the Continuum

Collection of more or less random images ("greater hits"). No narrative.
One photo per two-page spread, if almost always on the right side.
Gloss coated white paper stock.
Numbered pages.
Most care is given to accurate reproduction of photos.
No use of Photoshop to alter images.
Larger price runs.
Photographs used as illustration.
Conventional order binding.
Dustjacket.
Introduction, foreword, or an essay by a luminary.
Edited by a book designer or a publisher.
Designed by a graphic designer.
Little production input by photographer / artist.
Very little text, and usually that text consists of photo titles.
All photographic images have titles and dates.
Concept by photographer / artist.
Artist / photographer makes the picture and creates the sequence.
Matt coated paper.
Possible narrative text by artist / photographer.
Established publisher.
Thematic contents.
Independent or self-published.
Unusual book structure.
Possibly estimated.
Page numbers (and indexes) are done away with.
Use of found or appropriated photographs.
Book designed by artist / photographer.
Uncoated paper.
Use of sophisticated conceptual content.
Unusual and appropos materials (materials and paper experience).
Text placed over or integrated into photo and used in an expressive way.
Photobook used as expressive tool with photos.
Full page blocks or creative use of white space by cropping.
Accurate reproduction of photos not primary concern.
Creative modification of printing curves and registration.
Use and knowledge of nature of "bookishness".
Unusual use of print technologies.
Photographs that are created for the sole purpose of being part of a book.
Unity of expression. And usually some sort of narrative arc.

*No-Value-Judgement: Although my personal preference and interest is in the photographic artists' book (or photo-bookworks), I use the no intrinsic value judgement here. I am just trying to create a rough sliding scale of typologies for books with photographic content. Obviously the difference from one end of the scale to the other is a difference in intention. If the photographer merely wants a record of a body of work, or is trying to promote a show at a gallery, the book will be very different than one where the book is used as an expressive

medium where the photographic images have not been shown in any other form before. But there are many books which use the external trappings of artist's books like fancy covers and production materials, but do not use the language or have the intent of an artist's book, nor do they exploit how books work as a medium except in a very implicit way. (Many of Martin Parr's books are great examples of this. I think of *London* as books like this in sheep in wolves clothing. I like sheep and I like wolves, but in this case it's one species pretending to be another.)

Fig. 8. The Photo-bookwork Graphic-continuum Chart (2016). Permission to reproduce this chart has been granted by Philip Zimmermann. This chart is also available at <https://www.collegebookart.org/bookarttheory/4109494>.

Purpose-informed categorisation

The intra-photobook definitions that we have just witnessed, demonstrate an understanding that the photobook, as a single term of unification, can both bring together, and hide, intricacies, complexities and nuances that could be vital to our critical analysis of the medium. Martin, Colberg and Spowart have sought order in taxonomies and spectrums which look at the significance of design, production and content from the position of art-criticism, whilst Zimmerman, in his spectrum, begins to move towards a consideration of the function of the photobook in the process of publishing. It is this focus on intent, and purpose in publishing, that we will need if we are to successfully explore the relationship between the photobook and its readers. So, what happens if, instead of looking at construction, edition size, cost or authorship as defining characteristics, we look to them as products of function? What happens if we look to the purpose of publishing as central to categorisation? This I propose, would allow a more precise, and robust, interrogation of the connections between the photobook and its readers in a taxonomy of purpose. Such a shift would not preclude discussions of aforementioned topics, but would rather give critics and readers a context in which to discuss such intricacies as printing methods, with an eye to how it affects the ability of a publication to meet its public. This way of thinking about the photobook is not commonplace, and while a series of questions relating to intent appear in Darius Himes and Mary Virginia Swanson's practical guide to publishing (2014:28-9)³⁶, it has had little bearing on subsequent writing in that book, nor on broader photobook discourse (the subject of Chapter Three), and significantly, is not rooted in quantifiable research.

The lineage of the photobook

What is proposed over the coming pages is a taxonomy of 'lineages' from which the contemporary photobook emerges. This categorisation system is the product of literature review, reflections on the potentials and limits of the proposals found on the

³⁶ The three reasons Himes and Swanson propose in publishing a photobook are 'You have a story to tell', 'Your inner artist has something to say' and 'You want to take your career to the next level' (2014:27-8). Aspects of these can be seen in the lineages which will be proposed shortly, but it is suggested that our lineages allow for applicability on behalf of the reader or critic where these questions are directed exclusively to the photobook maker.

previous pages, and an ongoing consideration of the books that line my own shelf and that of my local library³⁷. In this process, these lineages trace the photobook back to roots which are anchored in purposeful uses of the codex to aid connections between photographic work and readers. While the focus of lineages for our purposes is not historical, they do evidence how the photobook has proliferated not from nothing, but from a series of non-unified spaces of discourse and production. In considering the photobook from the perspective of purpose, I am referring to the purpose of publishing — that is, the making public of a body of work through, and with, the medium of the photobook. Naturally, this purpose is often closely linked with the purpose of the body of work itself, but, as posthumous publications, collections, and the use of the archive would remind us, it may not always be the case.

Photographic book

Artists' book

Photo essay



The Photobook

Fig. 9. *The Lineage of the Photobook* (2017)

To elucidate the three lineages seen here, tables are presented in order to provide an overview of each lineage, key notions from literature review with which it aligns, and several examples are included to aid comprehension.

³⁷ Additional reflection on the production and use of this taxonomy of lineages can be found on page 290.

The photographic book/photobook

The photographic book/photobook	
Associated terms	Photography book, book of photographs, monograph, trade photobook, coffee table book.
Definition for the thesis	The photographic book/photobook is a book of photographs. The photographs are brought together with a commonality that is often thematic but could also be geographic or aesthetic. While they may have been produced by one artist, in one location, they may also have been produced by many artists in many locations in different periods of time.
Keywords	Collect, present, display, assemble.
Purpose	The photographic book/photobook presents a collection of photographs in a unified space. The purpose of publishing is to provide an assemblage, or experience that is not available elsewhere. Thus, the photobook in publishing terms, is a container of work.

The photographic book/photobook

Support from encountered literature

The lineage of the photographic book/photobook is one that can be traced back to the very first interactions of photography and the book that we saw in this chapter. Interactions which relied on the book as a container of images. In this lineage the content of the book is of primary interest to the audience and thus, whilst there has been progression in content since Gerry Badger and Martin Parr articulated the prevalence of 'travel...landscapes... ancient monuments and works of art' which reflected 'the pedagogical cultural interests of the educated classes' (Badger and Parr, 2004:16), these themes may still be present in contemporary examples of the lineage.

The photobook's function as a container is supported in literature by this lineage's exclusion from many considerations of the photobook: most noticeably by Alex Sweetman who described Richard Avedon and Henri Cartier-Bresson's publications as 'portfolios between covers' (Sweetman, 1985:187). The photographs in the photographic book/photobook may not originally have been made with the intention to be displayed in a book, but, as per the definition of the photobook as a whole, there is consideration of the book as output in the editing and sequencing of the work.

The photographic book/photobook	
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Atkins, <i>Photographs of British Algae : Cyanotype impressions</i> (1843) • Henri Cartier-Bresson, <i>The Decisive Moment</i> (1952)(see Fig.10.) • Richard Avedon and Truman Capote, <i>Observations</i> (1959) • William Allard, <i>Vanishing Breed: photographs of the cowboy and the west</i> (1984) • Steve Pyke, <i>Philosophers</i> (1995) • Jeff Wilson, <i>Home Field</i> (2010) • Walter Chandoha and David La Spina, <i>Walter Chandoha, the Cat Photographer</i> (2015) <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%; text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>This image is unavailable due to copyright restrictions</p> </div> <p>Fig. 10. <i>The Decisive Moment – 1st Edition, 1952</i> (2019).</p>

Table 2. The photographic book/photobook

The artists' book/photobook

The artists' book/photobook	
Associated terms	Artists' photographic book, photographic artists' book, artists' book.
Definition for the thesis	The artists' book/photobook is primarily a personal reflection on the world. While it may be produced in response to a global event or cultural phenomenon, the reaction and production of work is frequently of an individual (or collaborative) perspective, and rarely eludes to objectivity or uses such language as to suggest absolute truths.
Keywords	Explore, experiment, personal, subjective, art, interrogate.
Purpose	When considering purpose, the use of the photobook in this lineage generally encompasses two categories; artistic freedom and interrogation of the book as medium. The book provides the makers an opportunity to explore their work in the confines (and possibilities) of the printed codex with control over (individually or collectively) design, printing, binding and so on. This is a situation which also encourages interrogation and exploration of the medium itself, challenging what the book can be in a self-referential and often arcane manner. Thus, the photobook in publishing terms, is an artwork and a vehicle for self-expression.

The artists' book/photobook

Support from encountered literature

The lineage of the artists' book/photobook is one that when traced back, does not emerge at the root of the artists' book itself, but rather what it became. Lucy Lippard reflected on the change in that what the artists' books she saw, were not the 'idealistic, populist' publications she wished for, but rather were 'art, avant-garde art' and as such were not accessible to a broad public (Ault and Lippard, 2006). It is a transition noted also by Ermanno Rivetti who highlights experimentation:

'As television and radio began to flex their muscles, artists' books were no longer adequate vehicles for political discourse... they became more conceptual, abstract and even more open to experimentation' (2012:17)

This lineage is one which is 'defined (and confined) by an art context' (Lippard, 1985:47). So it is, that the lineage shares a trait that the *Camera Work* periodical exhibited, in that the audience for the publication were the same people whose work was featured or whom were submitting work for the publication (Fernández, 1999:12). In this lineage the photobook provides a space of authorial control and experimentation which leads to unusual production techniques which would once have been rare and are now almost considered a given' (Martin, 2017:13). In addition, the photobook can be a guarantee for the maker that 'that their artistic statement will remain unchanged, wherever and whenever their book is read' (The PhotoBookMuseum, 2014a:18).

The artists' book/photobook

Examples

- Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963)
- Sally Mann, *Immediate Family*, (1992)
- Carrie Levy, *51 Months* (2005)
- Sophie Calle, *Take Care of Yourself* (2007)
- John Gossage, *The Thirty-two Inch Ruler* (2010)
- Anouk Kruithof, *A Head with Wings* (2011)(see Fig. 11.)
- Rebecca Noris-Webb, *My Dakota* (2012)
- Ron Jude, *Lago* (2015)



Fig. 11. *A Head With Wings* (2011)(original in colour).

Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Anouk Kruithof.

Table 3. The artists' book/photobook

The photo essay/photobook

The photo essay/photobook	
Associated terms	Photojournalism, documentary photobook, concerned photography.
Definition for the thesis	The photo essay/photobook is concerned with the world in which its authors and (importantly) its readers, are situated, often striving to inform, educate and entertain. Whilst its origins lie in an emboldening of images with the use of text, and this is common in the lineage, it is not always present.
Keywords	Inform, document, raise awareness, witness, record, highlight, reveal.
Purpose	The purpose in this lineage is for the photobook to act as a vehicle and platform for the maker to communicate narratives about the world, to audiences that could be described as previously unaware, or who do not possess an interest in the subject of the book or medium itself. Thus, the photobook in publishing terms, is a carrier of work.

The photo essay/photobook

Support from encountered literature

The lineage of the photo essay/photobook may of course be traced back to the photo essay itself that 'pioneered a new way of reaching and influencing an audience' (Webb, 2013:115), but the purpose of photographic publishing to inform and educate is not restricted to this form. In his essay on the photobookwork, Alex Sweetman highlights how Weegee's publications on depression-era New York were 'among the most exuberant examples of popular camera journalism' and 'exemplary of the thirties ideal of a full integration of words and pictures, accessible to a broad, semiliterate audience' (Sweetman, 1985:191). This concentration on connecting with an audience beyond those who may ordinarily seek out such work is key to this lineage and highlights the role of publishing in activating work. In speaking of the artists' book as an agent for social change, Johanna Drucker identifies how, in cases where the maker seeks to speak of injustice, discrimination or provide information, the book is 'a platform for social critique or as a means of advocating directly for specific policies' (Drucker, 2004:287).

In contemporary photobook literature Jorg Colberg makes clear that 'In photobook form, documentary photography has been enjoying a renaissance, in part because the book is an ideal vehicle for such stories' (2017:38). The work in this lineage could be a 'searing documentary photo-essay crafted to affect social change' or may be constructed to 'tell a story about [a] local community' (Himes and Swanson, 2014:29), in either case, the photobook that operates in the lineage of the photo essay/photobook performs its role with an emphasis on the public component of making public.

The photo essay/photobook

Examples

- Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937)
- Dorothea Lange and Paul Schuster Taylor, *An American Exodus; a Record of Human Erosion* (1939)
- Weegee, *Naked City* (1945)
- Paul Hunter, M.J Delaney, Brenda Jordan and Ken Leech, *Needle of Death: An Addicts Day and an Examination of the British Heroin Scene* (1967)
- Eugene Richards, *Cocaine True, Cocaine Blue* (1994)
- Ad van Denderen, *Go No Go* (2003)
- Laia Abril, *The Epilogue* (2014)
- Kate Nolan, *Neither* (2014)(see Fig. 12.)



Fig. 12. *Neither*, Kate Nolan (2011)(original in colour).

Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Sybren Kuiper.

Table 4. The photo essay/photobook

In highly condensed form, the tables from the prior pages are replicated in Table 5. It shows how, when we accentuate the purpose of publishing, we reveal very different uses of the photobook form. These uses are not entirely fixed, but are indications of the need for specific critique. As an example, it would be unreasonable to judge a book in the artists' book/photobook lineage for its physical construction which limits its ability to carry work to a broad audience since this may well not be the makers' intentions in publishing. On the other hand, it would be appropriate to level such a critique at photo essay/photobook makers, who must ensure that the construction of the photobook itself is conducive to its use as a carrier³⁸.

A condensed table of lineage		
	Purpose	Function of the photobook
Photographic book/photobook	To collate and present	As container
Artists' book/ photobook	To explore, interrogate and promote	As artwork
Photo essay/ photobook	To inform and educate	As carrier

Table 5. A condensed table of lineage

The language of lineage

Already in our articulation of each lineage (see Tables 2-4.) there is a significant amount of information which can help in the identification of lineage traits and thus, the assigning of photobooks to lineages, but more can be done to help this activity. In the absence of the maker of the photobook, whom we could ask about their purposes in publishing, we can instead turn to the next best thing: photobook metadata. In many cases it is the language accompanying a photobook which most clearly indicates the

³⁸ We can already begin to infer from the tables on the prior pages and Table 5, that each lineage of the photobook is likely to have its own accompanying audience — something we return to In Chapter Two, where the relationship between purpose, the photobook and publishing is developed in detail.

lineage of the work, and provides for us a practical tool for categorisation. Let us firstly look at the language of the photographic book/photobook, beginning with one of the clearest examples, Henri Cartier-Bresson's *The Decisive Moment*.

'Assembling Cartier-Bresson's best work from his early years. Published in 1952 by Simon and Schuster, New York, in collaboration with Editions Verve, Paris, it was lavishly embellished with a collage cover by Henri Matisse' (Steidl, 2014).

And here an accompanying text for *EarthArt*, a more recent example of the lineage:

'A spectacular collection of breath-taking aerial photographs of the Earth's surface – from the Bahamas to Iceland, New Zealand to North America and Europe to Alaska – ordered by colour to display the stunning variety of the colours of the Earth' (Phaidon, n.d).

Notice in both, the presence of collecting or assembling, as well as the embellishment of the former book, and colour sequence of the latter. This is no surprise given one of the form's primary purposes: to collect and present. This is unlike the language of the artists' book/photobook which in the example below of Rebecca Norris Webb's *My Dakota*, foregrounds the personal, and explorative:

'In 2005, Rebecca Norris Webb set out to photograph her home state of South Dakota, a sparsely populated frontier state on the Great Plains with more buffalo, pronghorn, mule deer and prairie dogs than people. South Dakota is a land of powwows and rodeos, corn palaces and buffalo roundups; a harsh and beautiful landscape dominated by space, silence, brutal wind and extreme weather. The next year, however, everything changed for Norris Webb, when her brother died unexpectedly of heart failure. "For months," she writes in the introduction to this volume, "one of the few things that eased my unsettled heart was the landscape of South Dakota. For each of us, does loss have its own geography?" My Dakota is a small intimate book about the west and its weathers, and an elegy for a lost brother' (Radius Books, 2012).

Finally, we should expect to find in the language of the photo essay/photobook, themes and words which indicate a purpose of informing and educating. Here, an extract from Laia Abril's *The Epilogue* (2014) highlights how this specific story speaks of larger issues and gives voice to the family of Cammy Robinson:

'This is the story of the Robinson family – and the aftermath of losing their 26 year-old daughter to bulimia.

'Working closely with the family Laia Abril explores the dilemmas and struggles confronted by many young girls and their families; the problems families face in dealing with both their sense of guilt and the grieving process...

'Cammy Robinson's life story is reconstructed through flashbacks – memories, testimonies, objects, letters, places and images. The Epilogue gives voice to the suffering of the family, the indirect victims of 'eating disorders', the unwilling eyewitnesses of a very painful degeneration' (Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2014).

This last sentence is particularly important to note, because it reminds us of the connection between project and publication. The ability to 'give voice' is facilitated through the book, so, while a considerable amount of data which feeds into lineage is borne directly from project (publication content), it is not separated from the act of publishing (of which, more in Chapter Two). Now, let us put into practice an awareness of the way in which language can inform lineage, and see how, with the keywords, purpose and themes identified in Tables 2-4, we can deal with a homogenised list of contemporary photobooks. Here I have used the top 17 books from the Photo-Eye best photobooks of 2015 list (Photo-Eye, 2015) and alongside each publication indicate its assigned lineage and the language which informed the choice.

Content analysis using the language of lineage

Content analysis using the language of lineage	
<p><i>Imperial Courts: 1993-2015</i> by Dana Lixenberg (2015)</p>	<p>Photo essay/photobook</p>
<p>'she encountered...collaborative portrait...evocative record...underserved community' (Photo-Eye, 2015f)</p>	
<p><i>Until Death Do Us Part</i> by Thomas Sauvin (2015)</p>	<p>Photo essay/photobook</p>
<p>'focuses on the unexpected role...pays homage...tradition...archive' (Photo-Eye, 2015c)</p>	
<p><i>Songbook</i> by Alec Soth (2014)</p>	<p>Photo essay/photobook</p>
<p>'community life in the country...search for human interaction...tension between American individualism and the desire to be united' (Photo-Eye, 2015n)</p>	
<p><i>You Haven't Seen Their Faces</i> by Daniel Mayrit (2015)</p>	<p>Photo essay/photobook</p>
<p>'100 most powerful people...highly responsible...comfortable anonymity' (Photo-Eye, 2015e)</p>	
<p><i>My Last Day at Seventeen</i> by Doug Dubois (2015)</p>	<p>Photo essay/photobook</p>
<p>'group of teenagers...housing estate...gained entry...world of not-quite-adults... relationship between artist and subject' (Photo-Eye, 2015j)</p>	
<p><i>Pony Congo</i> by Vicente Paredes (2015)</p>	<p>Photo essay/photobook</p>
<p>two extremes of childhood...viewer is confronted...stress of the wealthy...victims of family and social pressure...very few dare to talk about' (Photo-Eye, 2015l)</p>	
<p><i>Moises</i> by Mariela Sancari (2015)</p>	<p>Artists' book/photobook</p>
<p>'her father...she was...Sancari proposes' (Photo-Eye, 2015i)</p>	

Content analysis using the language of lineage	
<i>Nude Animal Cigar</i> by Paul Kooiker (2015)	Artists' book/photobook
'his fascination...fictive collections...his studio' (Photo-Eye, 2015k)	
<i>Lago</i> by Ron Jude (2015)	Artists' book/photobook
'his early childhood... the vagaries of memory...Jude meanders...landscape of his youth' (Photo-Eye, 2015h)	
<i>Taking Off. Henry My Neighbor (sic)</i> by Mariken Wessels (2015)	Artists' book/photobook
'real picture story...failed marriage...amateur nude art...archive...artists' book' (Photo-Eye, 2015o)	
<i>Bottom of the Lake</i> By Christian Patterson (2015)	Artists' book/photobook
'family telephone book...hometown...highly subjective' (Photo-Eye, 2015b)	
<i>Diary</i> by Boris Mikhailov (2015)	Artists' book/photobook
'repression...artists book...hometown...intimate scrapbook' (Photo-Eye, 2015d)	
<i>Some Thing means Everything to Somebody</i> by Peter Mitchell (2015)	Artists' book/photobook
'own experience of time...personal ephemera...handmade fonts... autobiography' (Photo-Eye, 2015m)	
<i>Early Works</i> By Ivars Gravlejs (2015)	Artists' book/photobook
'eccentric scrapbook...Gravlejs's encyclopaedic curiosity...self-mockery' (Photo-Eye, 2015e)	

Content analysis using the language of lineage	
<i>In the Shadow of the Pyramids</i> By Laura El-Tantawy (2015)	Artists' book/photobook
'first person account...memory and identity...sentimental and passionate' (Photo-Eye, 2015g)	
<i>Crackle and Drag</i> by TR Ericsson (2015)	Artists' book/photographic book
'monograph...archives...his family's past...guide to the artists' work...inspired chronicle' (Photo-Eye, 2015c)	
<i>Bottom Ash Observatory</i> by Christien Meindertsma and Mathijs Labadie (2015)	Artists' book/photo essay
'[Author] became intrigued...process of incinerating municipal solid waste... commissioned photographer Mathijs Labadie to document...scientific enquiry' (Photo-Eye, 2015a)	

Table 6. Content analysis using the language of lineage³⁹

Interestingly there are no pure⁴⁰ photographic book/photobooks here, a sign perhaps of the direction the photobook has taken with an affinity in some areas for the more authentic and apparently less commercial. This rendering of photobook lineages will likely frustrate some in the photobook community⁴¹, and it is not without its issues (the weighting of assignation on language and book metadata without consultation with the makers), but it is seen as an essential, and original, way to interrogate the contemporary photobook in a manner conducive to our focus on the connections between the photobook and its readers.

³⁹ The last two books from Table 6 have been placed in the artists' book/photobook lineage presented a slight difficulty in assignment, with the former bordering on a retrospective (a form of book work that would also align with the photographic book/photobook) and the latter hinting at a lineage of the photo essay/photobook. Thus, both have been assigned hybrid lineages.

⁴⁰ Pure; non-hybridised.

⁴¹ This reception may not be unlike Michael Hampton's bold reconnection of the artists book presented in *Unshelved* (2015), an undertaking Hampton indicated was unsuccessful in promoting discussion but suggested such a quietness of response could well be that his thesis 'threatens the distinctive coteries and contagious clubs that have built up in the realm of the artists' book' (Hampton, 2015;15).

The implications of purpose-informed lineages

The set of three lineages which sit under the umbrella term 'photobook', not only serve to provide a new tool for appropriate and specific critique of the contemporary photobook, but also clearly present a key area of study for this research. The employment of lineages highlights how the unifying term 'photobook' is able to bring together, but also mask, a series of histories of purpose that could help clarify missed and made connections with readers. In Figure 13, the three lineages established are presented as taxonomical foundations, on top of which the photobook resides (see Fig. 14), obfuscating the former in the process.

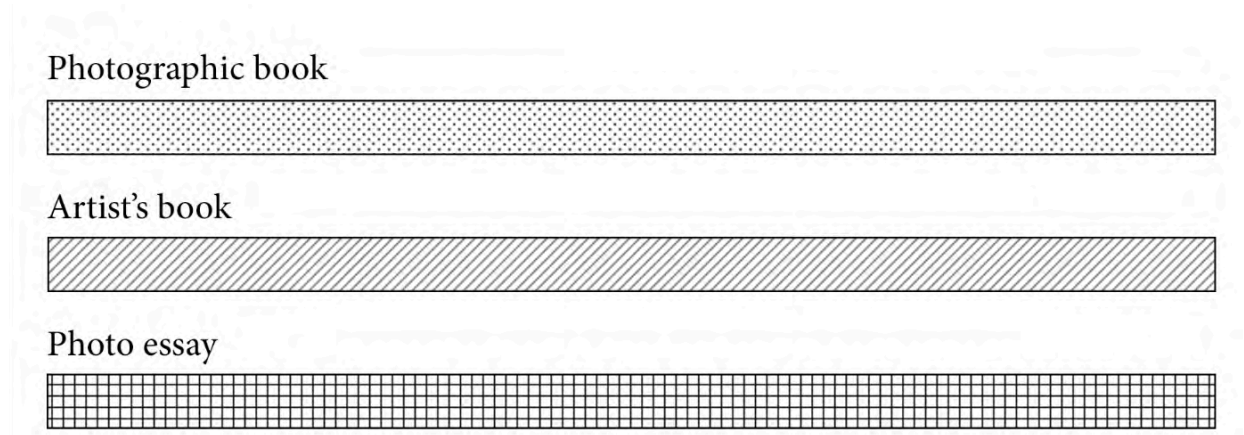


Fig. 13. *The lineages of the photobook as foundation* (2019)

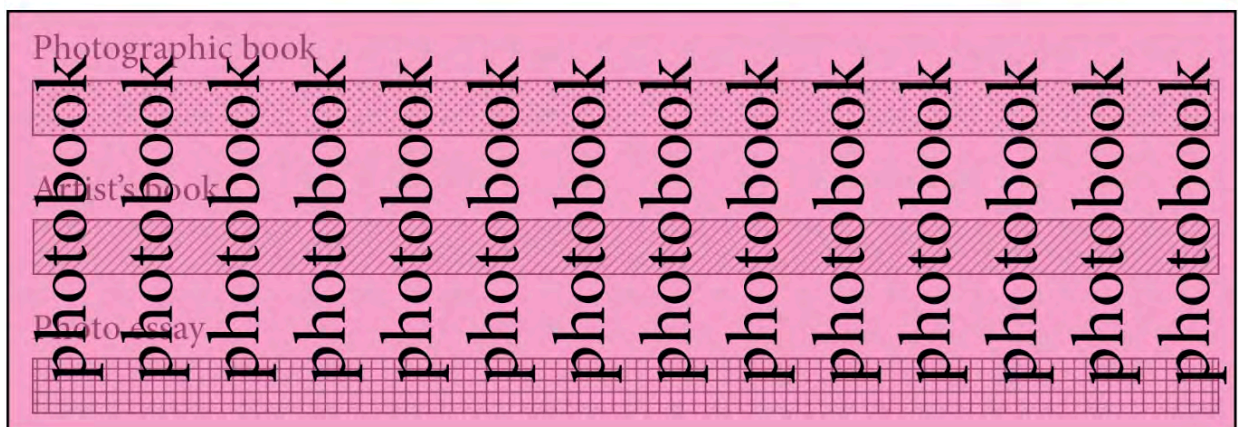


Fig. 14. *The covering of lineage by the new photobook term* (2019)(original in colour)

The choice to establish lineages informed by purpose and not categories defined by technology, construction or art history owes a great deal to the historian John Tagg's rethinking of the history of photography as the 'histories' of photography (1988), a proposal that allows these histories to be seen in the context of the spaces in which they operate. Tagg made clear that:

'Photography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest in it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work... It is this field we must study, not photography as such' (Tagg, 1988:63).

While Tagg had weightier intentions than ours, and sought to challenge the institutional use and misuse of photography as a tool of power, the concept is one which has been instrumental in thinking about the defining, and application, of lineages. The use of lineages is designed to explore the actions and interactions of photobooks with the world: the maker's employment of the form as a functional medium to meet purpose. In this way we will be able to create a possible critical framework which foregrounds the connections between the photobook and its readers, rather than to itself. As has already been noted, the proposal to introduce a critical, purpose-informed tool of categorisation, and subsequent critique, is a significant departure for the current thinking of the photobook, and for some may encounter resistance. With this in mind, as I conducted the elite interviews which help to shape this research, I asked interviewees about their perspective on purpose and the photobook, and the potential for the lineages proposed in this chapter. While the initial reactions of individuals within the photobook community should not be taken as any tangible measure of success or failure of the proposal, it does provide an indication of the possibility for application.

Suzanne White, subject librarian for photography saw merit in the application of lineage for students of photography but made clear that it was just one possible way to begin thinking about photobook and success:

'So you're thinking of those different areas as kind of theoretical approaches... kind of ways of critiquing... I think those are three areas that [students]

definitely could use... but no doubt there are lots of other ways as well... there's very different theoretical starting points but maybe that is one way of looking at it. I think that could be a successful way of judging whether [photobooks] achieved what they set out to do, definitely.' (White, 2018)

Sarah Bodman, editor of the *Journal of Artists' books* and Head of the *Centre for Fine Print Research* at UWE Bristol could see how lineages could be traced to particular historical moments but emphasised the difficulty in knowing the intent of the maker (Bodman, 2018). Complexity of application was noted too by Sarah Bay Gachot, a writer, critic and book fair coordinator who spoke of the difficulty when encountering hybrid publications (Gachot, 2018). Emma Lambert, a photography lecturer and book maker acknowledged that she had not previously considered purpose much in her encounters with photobooks but saw how lineages could aid this way of thinking. Interestingly, Lambert, without prompt, was quickly able to speak about her own collection using lineages to categorise:

'I think predominantly I'm going towards the artists' book/photobook.

'When I started off buying photobooks nearly ten years ago or so, it would have been the photographic book/photobook' (Lambert, 2018).

Alejandro Acin, photographer, editor of *IC Visual Labs* and publisher, considered lineages in relation to audience and the function of the photobook, highlighting that for many 'there isn't always an interest in dissemination to a large audience' and that instead, some makers seek 'to question the book itself and the book as a medium': characteristics which reside firmly in the artists' book/photobook lineage. Acin was keen to emphasise the individuality of projects and their unique relationship to success, whilst also retaining a focus on the aims of work. A significant ally for lineages:

'For me it feels a little hard to make a general formula for what success could be because every single body of work or every single project has its own idiosyncrasies and its own universe and they are all very different, so a successful project could be selling 9,000 copies but if those copies are costing

£150 and can only be sold to 9,000 rich people then is that a successful approach or is that a very limited audience? It depends on how or what the book's aim is' (Acin, 2018).

Doug Spowart, photographer, academic and photobook critic could see the applicability of the lineage which could tap into an already conscious readership within the photobook community:

'I think they're really good, straight-forward, thematic views. And it's kind of interesting when [we're] looking at books, we open a book and might say 'yeh, it's one of them' which fits quite nicely with that idea. And it's interesting because it gives you a parameter on how you look at that' (Spowart, 2018b).

Tate Shaw, artist, photobook critic and director of Visual Studies Workshop gave one of the most positive receptions to the idea, seeing a benefit in lineage thinking which combats the current trend in photobook histories. Shaw continues to proffer the need for more thought regarding the impact of design aspects on the meaning of the work⁴²:

'I think these lineages make sense and they are necessary and I think that what's disappointing in a way about the histories that are coming out is that they are geographically based... I think that what would be really helpful is for more exploration of what an essay is and how those physical components like sequence and turnings and design aspects... how all those things factor into meaning in the work somehow... It's interpretive stuff to get at. But I like what you're at there — I think it's important' (Shaw, 2018).

Michael Mack, publisher, wanted to illustrate that while lineages like these can be useful, there could be a bigger issue present which needs to be addressed in that the content of work has become secondary to the market value of the work. In addition, like the visualisation of the photobook term as an obfuscating layer (see Fig. 14.), Mack notes a loss of clarity:

⁴² A subject I agree would be fascinating and much needed, but is unfortunately not in the remit of this work.

'I agree. I would also suggest that there is perhaps a step back prior to assessing those three particular strands which is the fact that the whole photobook space is significantly enmeshed into the collector's market place... This is why content driven ideas have become secondary because of primary interest being the market place. Your delineation of those particular strands is intelligent but it also signifies how much we have lost clarity in terms of the possibilities of a relationship between photography and the book form' (Mack, 2019).

Bruno Ceschel, editor and publisher (*Self Publish, Be Happy*) interestingly spoke of lineage even before I had mentioned it, locating his interest in the 'lineage' of the artists' book. Ceschel made this alignment in relation to their reason to exist, a supportive sentiment for this research:

'I never really question the term 'photobook' because it is perfectly functional. I do very much think a lot of publications that are in the *SPBH* collection, as well as the publications I do... as being much more in line with traditional artists' books than photobooks. But this is more in terms of their form, and the reason for them to exist, for me as a publisher as well as the author of the book' (Ceschel, 2018).

These responses to questions of lineage, its application, and what it may be able to tell us about the connections photobooks make or miss with readers, demonstrate that while some further questions around market value, hybridity and application exist, the general direction of our lineage proposal is being met with positive sentiments. The task now is to implement lineages into a proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook, one which seeks to challenge existing discourses and occurrences in a medium which has developed at a fast pace, often masking its relationship to intent and purpose.

Verso

In this chapter we have not only formulated a considered definition of the photobook, but have progressed from this and constructed a key component of a proposed critical framework for the contemporary medium in the form of purpose-informed lineages. These lineages are the product of literature review which spanned the history of photographic relationships with the book, the photo essay and artists' publications, as well as recent considerations of nomenclature and intra-photobook categorisation. While it would have been possible to categorise with an emphasis on production traits, narrative structures or subject matter, the proposal made in this chapter to foreground the intent of publishing as a categorisation tool is a move that encourages a precise critique of the ground between the photobook and its readers — a key tenet of this research. It allows for a robust interrogation of the book as a form connected with its authors and readers, not an isolated work or art object. The result is a series of three lineages: the photographic book/photobook, the artists' book/photobook and the photo essay/photobook, each of which have been contextualised via literature review and solidified in the review of the language of photobooks. The three lineages relate specifically to the purpose of publishing work through the medium of the photobook, and so whilst there will be strong connections with the purpose of producing the work that is the subject, or content of the publication, the two are not inseparable. So it is that different lineages use the photobook in different manners — as container, artwork and carrier, and should thus be critiqued in line with these potential uses.

In consideration of the use and application of lineages, I proposed that the language accompanying photobooks is essential in assignation, something which was demonstrated in the content analysis of a series of photobooks and their contextual data. Further thought regarding the relevance and potential for lineages was shown in discussing the possibility of purpose-driven categorisation and critique with a number of key players in the photobook world. Our first chapter then, has built a rigorously informed initial component of a proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook (see Fig. 15.). It proposes that, in understanding connections made and missed, between the photobook and its reader, we must first comprehend the purpose of the work in question. Without this first step of a framework, the critique and

discourse which it is tasked with engendering, will lose focus and revert to existing patterns, which, as the following chapters illustrate, can be problematic for the photobook.

A proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook

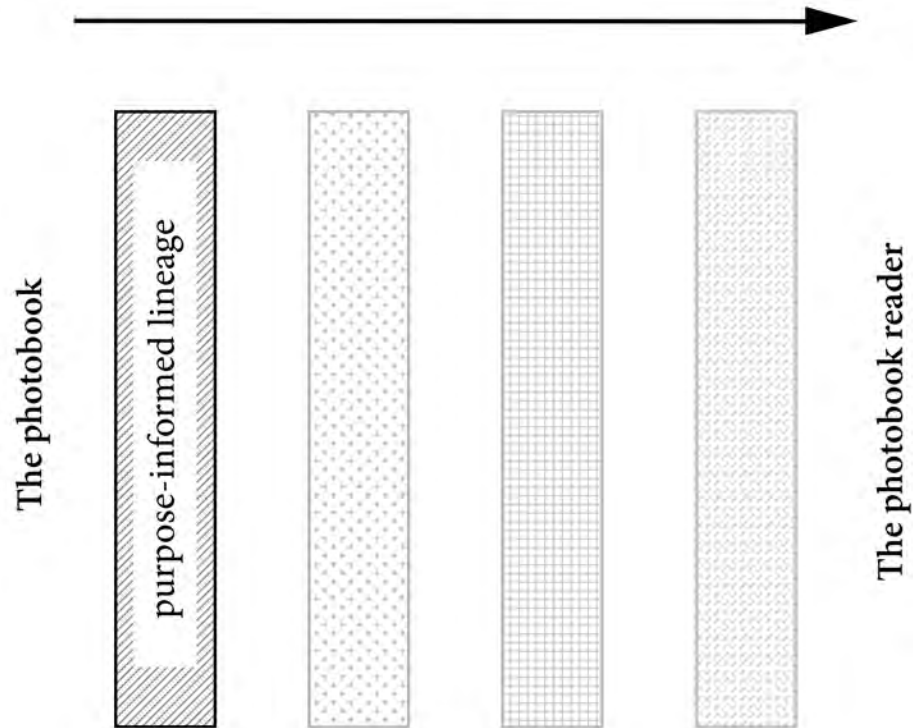


Fig. 15. *A proposed, partial critical framework for the contemporary photobook (I)* (2019)

With lineages in mind, we turn our attention now to one of the most significant components in the potential for connections to be made or missed between the photobook and its readers: the process of publishing. With an emphasis on purpose I will seek to elucidate how the roles of the publication and publishing, or making, and making public, are central to how and why the photobook ends up in the hands of particular readers.

Chapter Two. Making, and making public:

How has linked digital technology impacted the contemporary photobook?

Recto

In Chapter One, we interrogated the photobook from a historical and ontological perspective, a line of inquiry which gave rise to a set of distinct lineages in a new taxonomy for the photobook — each with its own language, and need for specific critique. In this chapter, we build on this proposal and set out to interrogate the photobook as a physical publication, and its role in the complex process of publishing. In doing so, key questions about the contemporary photobook as a product of networked technology are set forth. How is the contemporary photobook manifested in an increasingly digital medium of photography? What characteristics and traits have emerged in a technised moment? What impact does linked digital technology have on the contemporary photobook and its connections with readers?

The chapter starts with an articulation of the publishing process supported by Michael Bhaskar's theory of publishing (*The Content Machine*, 2013) which includes filtration, framing, amplification and models. These components are visually rendered in a series of lineage-based 'spheres': depictions of the expected reach of publications for the photographic book/photobook, artists' book/photobook and photo essay/photobook. Having established these expectations for the contemporary photobook, rooted in the function of the photobook as medium of publication, we move to analyse the ways in which linked digital technology may present new possibilities, but also challenges, for makers operating in the time considered in this research. Through extensive literature review regarding the post-digital and post-photographic, a spectrum of reactive and pragmatic acts is introduced. In turn these are utilised via a series of test questions applied to a large data field to see how the contemporary photobook has been impacted by linked digital technology, and the results are analysed in relation to lineage. The chapter concludes with a case study of a photo essay/photobook which exhibits pragmatic and reactive acts and which I have re-imagined to more fully exploit possibilities of publishing in the 21st century in aiding connections with readers.

Publication and publishing

We have already begun to consider the function of the photobook in the process of publishing, with the medium performing different roles in relation to lineage in Chapter One. Here, in the first parts of this chapter, the relationship between publishing and purpose is developed by first mapping out the process that is 'publishing' before moving on to its role for the photographic book/photobook, artists' book/photobook and photographic book/photobook. Doing so will permit a critique which enables questions around what can constitute made, and missed, connections with readers.

Filter, frame and amplify

In 1992, Dewi Lewis and Alan Ward wrote *Publishing Photography*, in which they provided a guide for the photographer looking to see their work in print. Inside, Lewis and Ward produced a series of tasks which fall under the auspices of publishing. While now this list appears somewhat outdated, or at least, traditional, it is a useful image of the multi-faceted nature of publishing:

'Finding projects which might work in book form... Developing and refining those projects...Preparing them for production... Supervising all stages of production... Financing the production... Marketing the book to the book-buying public... Selling the book to the retail outlets... Distributing it to those outlets... Receiving and accounting for the income generated' (Lewis and Ward, 1992:12-14).

This list may seem to be quite prescriptive, but it provides a plethora of sub-stages and choices which can radically alter the direction a book travels in its life. What it, and the potential actions and events which could flesh it out provide, is a representation of an undertaking which begins with a project, and moves towards a public. It is a process that, depending on approach, can involve numerous actors: those that we have already

termed the 'makers', as well as many others who may reside on the periphery in reviewers, booksellers, archivists, librarians and academics⁴³.

Publishing then, is 'anything but straightforward' (Bhaskar, 2013:4), made even less so when we understand how unique the process is for each piece of work. However, in Michael Bhaskar's theory of publishing we find a set of clear terms and corresponding events associated with publishing which bring simplicity, and the ability to see an overarching process, with sufficient flexibility for the individuality of lineages, and specific works. In Figure 16, Bhaskar's key components of publishing are visualised and augmented in relation to the photobook⁴⁴ in what could be considered a timeline⁴⁵. It is a process which begins with 'filtering' (2013:106), the 'pivotal moment after the decision to produce or write in the first place' (2013:107). Filtering for the photobook can either be the individual maker who decides to publish from his/her existing works, or may be in the form of a publishing house or collective who invite submissions or seek specific works to reify. Filtering is informed by a publishing model (of which more shortly) which, for now, may be summarised as a reason to make work public.

Filtration leads into the production of the publication itself in what Bhaskar calls 'framing' (2013:84), with the frame referring to the presentation, and containment, of content. As Bhaskar points out, we never find 'pure, unmediated content' (2013:84): whether seeing an artwork rendered in a photographic book/photobook, watching a friend's holiday videos in Instagram, or reviewing a photographer's portfolio on a website, all are framed. Far from only containing content, frames are inextricably linked to the content's possibilities and actions in the world, 'they actively create the experience of media', and while they are presentational, 'because of this — they are also receptional.' (2013:89). We can easily see the benefit of thinking in frames for the

⁴³ More is written on the subject of photographic and arts publishing than is referenced in this chapter. Along with the Lewis and Ward book already noted, Darius Himes and Virginia M. Swanson's *How to Publish Your Photography Book* (2014), Anettette Gilbert's and Hannes Bajohr's edited collection *Publishing as Artistic Practice* (2016), Anna Nyburg's *Emigrés* (2014) and Bruno Ceschel's *DIY Photobook Manual and Manifesto* (2015) are all good starting points.

⁴⁴ Bhaskar does provide his own visualisation for the 'content machine' (2013:168) but its complexity is somewhat distracting for the purposes of this chapter.

⁴⁵ A hesitance here relates to the fact that there is an interconnectivity to aspects of publishing which are not strictly chronological.

photobook. In the uniqueness of form the medium exhibits it is even easier to witness than in traditional publishing — the large, heavy photobook not only presents work but may encourage a reader to sit down to experience the work (receptional). The next term to be introduced by Bhaskar is that of ‘amplification’, which refers to acts that result in the increased distribution or consumption of a given work (2013:114). Simply put, ‘leaving a manuscript on a bench is not amplifying it in the way photocopying it and posting it to all your neighbours is amplifying it’ (2013:114). Amplification is a slightly problematic term for photobook publishing because its connotation is that something already exists *before* amplification, whereas in many instances, the amplification of a photobook will start prior to framing, or during that process — in dummy production, pre-sales and other amplification tactics. Bhaskar though is aware of the relationship to framing, and that amplification is far from an afterthought: ‘most of the time you don’t simply frame content, but you frame in order to amplify’ (2013:115). We have here the central stages in the process of publishing and what can collectively be termed ‘acts of publishing’ — choices that inform the production and augmentation of the work that are illustrated in Figure 16. For the purposes of this chapter, as we interrogate the space between the photobook and its readers, we will focus on framing and amplification (rather than filtration); components of publishing which have a considerable, and visible impact on how work reaches intended readers.

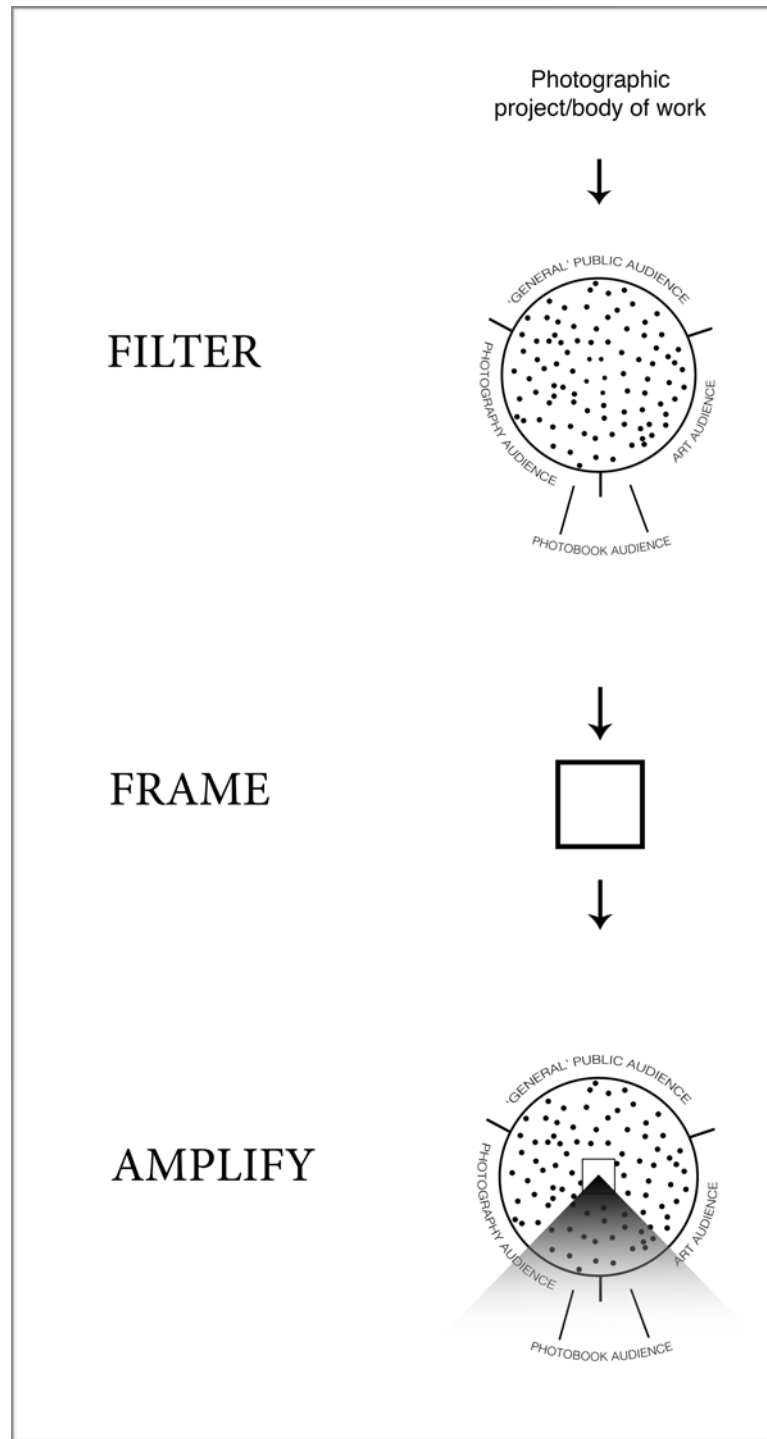


Fig. 16. *A view of photobook publishing* (2019) This diagram illustrates Bhaskar's theory of publishing which begins with the decision to make a work public (filtering), before developing a suitable platform for the work (framing), and then seeking to disseminate and publicise (amplification).

Models, lineages and spheres

A final term to be introduced, Bhaskar's 'models' of publishing place an emphasis on purpose in the process of publishing; a natural companion to our own thinking about lineages. They are for Bhaskar, the 'motivating factors behind any publication' (2013:137). As such, they are naturally numerous and unique, but, for our research, can be related to the motivating factors of each lineage. Here, we return to Table 5, to see the purpose and use of the photobook in respective lineages. In each row below, a model of publishing is visible: from the photographic book/photobook which seeks to collate and present, to the photo essay/photobook which aims to inform and educate.

A condensed table of lineage		
	Purpose	Function of the photobook
Photographic book/photobook	To collate and present	As container
Artists' book/ photobook	To explore, interrogate and promote	As artwork
Photo essay/ photobook	To inform and educate	As carrier

Table 5. A condensed table of lineage

What Bhaskar's models of publishing provide for us, is a theory which helps facilitate the understanding of model by analysis of frame and amplification, or, the identification of frame and amplification from model analysis. Put differently, with the knowledge of the physical construction of a given book, and some of the acts of amplification we can witness, we can deduce the model, or purpose of publishing, and vice versa. This is particularly helpful when this chapter looks to see the impact of linked digital technologies on the photobook. It will allow us to firstly, present expectations of the framing and amplification acts of particular lineages, before subsequently, comparing these expectations with the actualities of a series of contemporary publications.

In order to present these findings, I shall not only rely on text, but also the aid of an illustration of photobook publishing in the form of 'spheres'. Publishing spheres⁴⁶ are a manner in which the function of the photobook can be visualised with a view to the readers each lineage seeks to connect with. Each sphere (see Fig. 17.) features at its centre a frame (or publication), and is surrounded by a set of potential audiences for the work that represent a range of readers spanning the fields we have witnessed so far in relation to lineage (general public, photography, art and photobook⁴⁷). Between frame and audience lie small dots, representing acts of amplification: choices and actions which help the makers to fulfil their intentions of reaching particular readers. These acts of amplification are partly dictated by the frame itself which can open up, or limit, possibilities regarding distribution, access and cost.

To make clear the role of the sphere, we can work with our example visualisation (see Fig. 17.). In this sphere, the framing of content, and the amplification acts adopted by the photobook maker result in a broad readership in a general public audience. For this publication, it is likely that the framing of content is relatively cheap, and enables a large edition which is enhanced by amplification acts which see distribution and/sale in public spaces (acting as a carrier). A real-world example in this instance would be Guy Martin's *Libya's Missing* (2012) which was framed as a newspaper and left outside London tube stations, next to the *Evening Standard* and *Metro*. The choice to frame photographic work which dealt with the missing people of the conflict in Libya in a newspaper permits the (relatively) cheap and easy distribution of the work and both financially, and physically, permits giving the work away at public spaces⁴⁸. Were the work framed in a hardbound book costing £25 to produce, it would be considerably more difficult to amplify with the same acts. Over the coming pages I will map out how each lineage, with different purposes for the use of the photobook, is expected to connect with readers in different audiences, via different means.

⁴⁶ This choice of word encapsulates the roundness of the diagram but also hints at the second meaning of the word in being an area of interest or action. It will be noted that the word 'model' is not used. While it is a useful term for our research, it encapsulates many nuances and idiosyncrasies that we are not able to reflect upon in our broader look at the lineages of photobooks instead of individual works.

⁴⁷ Shown as a subset of the art and photography audiences.

⁴⁸ This is not the only way to make public work such as this but it illustrates how frame and amplification are tightly linked.

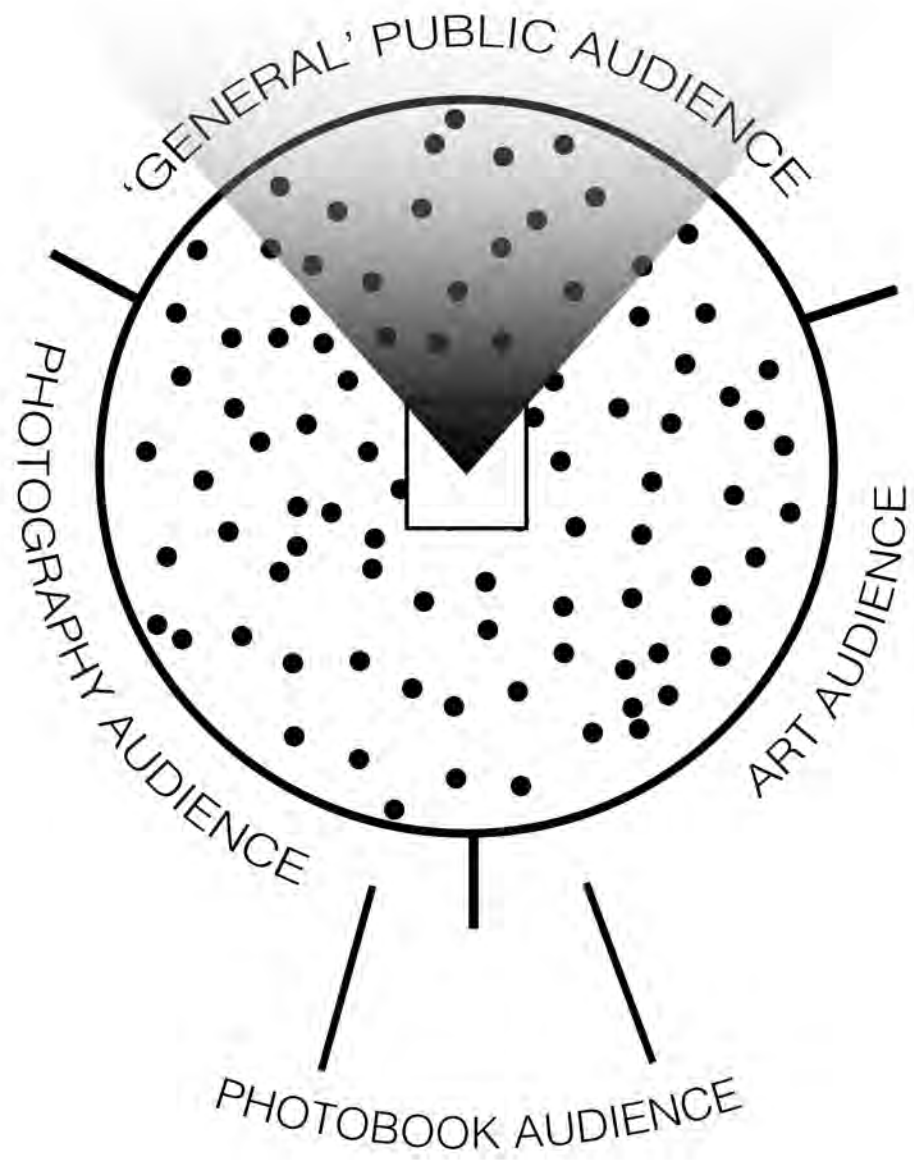


Fig. 17. An example of a publishing sphere (2019)

A purpose-informed perspective on publishing models

Via extensive literature review, Chapter One provided us a set of lineages rooted in multiple purpose-informed histories of the interactions between photography and publishing. On the following pages, these lineages⁴⁹ are returned to, with condensed tables from Chapter One, accompanied by a consideration of how the photobook, in acting as a container, artwork and carrier reaches the audiences that their makers seek to connect with. In addition, a publishing sphere is produced for each lineage which visually charts the expectations of the reach of photobooks with regards to purpose.

⁴⁹ The photographic book/photobook, artists' book/photobook and photo essay/photobook.

The photographic book/photobook

Publishing and the photographic book/photobook	
Definition	The photographic book/photobook is a book of photographs. The photographs are brought together with a commonality that is often thematic but could also be geographic or aesthetic.
Keywords	Collect, present, display, assemble
Purpose	The photographic book/photobook presents a collection of photographs in a unified space. The purpose of publishing is to provide an assemblage, or experience, that is not available elsewhere. Thus, the photobook acts in publishing as a container of work.

Table 7. Publishing and the photographic book/photobook

In this lineage, due to a publishing model in which the photobook functions as container, it is subject or medium (photography, not the photobook) which forms the basis of an audience. So, whereas in the subsequent lineage of the artists' book/photobook there may be readers who are interested in the manner in which the book operates — the design, sequence, layout and so on — in this lineage, these are not prominent considerations. Instead, the theme, subject or geographical area which provides the unification of the book also dictates the audience. This is to say that it is the cyclist more than photographer who will likely be interested in *Mountain High: Europe's 50 Greatest Cycle Climbs* (Friebe and Goding, 2011). The root of this lineage in photography books which often depicted 'travel...landscapes... ancient monuments and works of art' which reflected 'the pedagogical cultural interests of the educated classes' (Badger and Parr, 2004:16), is still visible today, with photobooks on architecture, landscape, sports and histories occupying prominent, and accessible spaces in even the high-street bookshop. Often colloquially referred to as a coffee-table book, this lineage has the ability to appeal to 'people who aren't necessarily a creative type', who may buy, or be gifted the book (Gachot, 2018). There are expected to be secondary audiences in those interested in photography and art, but not a photobook audience. Despite the lineage's presence in the content analysis later in the

chapter, the books included there have tended to come from competitors on the edges of the photobook world and, as we saw in the photo-eye list of 2015 on pages 75-77, no photographic book/photobooks were included there. It is proposed that this is a product of this lineage's general exclusion from definitions of the medium. Something that can be seen in Lesley Martin pointing out that the shortlist often gives a representation of the best types of photobook that year but, that even this 'may not include a Rizolli coffee table book about lifestyles and hotels' (Martin, 2019). With this information, an expected publishing sphere has been produced (see Fig. 18.), which articulates the relatively narrow (subject interest) audience in the general public as well as those in art and photographic audiences, but not the photobook.

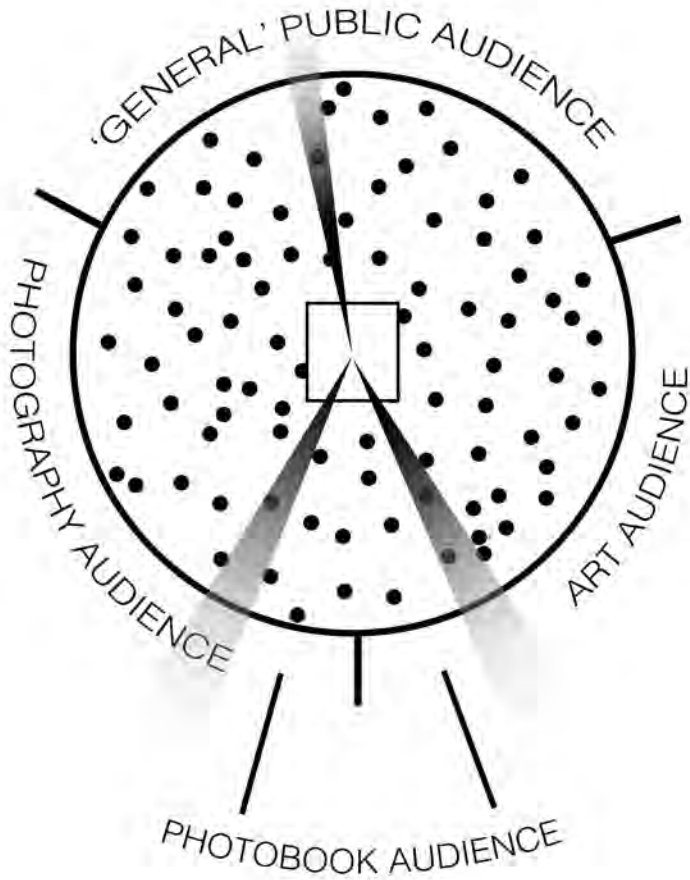


Fig. 18. *An expected, lineage-based publishing sphere of the photographic book/ photobook* (2019)

The artists' book/photobook

Publishing and the artists' book/photobook	
Definition	The artists' book/photobook is primarily a personal reflection on the world, while it may be produced in response to a global event or cultural phenomenon, the reaction and production of work is frequently of an individual (or collaborative) perspective.
Keywords	Explore, experiment, personal, subjective, art, interrogate
Purpose	The use of the photobook in this lineage falls into two categories: freedom and interrogation. The book provides the makers an opportunity to explore their work in the confines (and possibilities) of the printed codex with control over (individually or collectively) design, printing, binding and so on. This is a situation which also encourages interrogation and exploration of the medium itself — challenging what the book can be in a self-referential and often arcane manner. Thus, the photobook functions in publication as an artwork in itself.

Table 8. Publishing and the artists' book/photobook

This lineage's firm position in an art context, with the abstract, conceptual and experimental characteristics of the post-60s artists' book (Rivetti, 2012:17) results in a significantly smaller, and more niche audience than Lucy Lippard first imagined for the lineage's namesake (Ault and Lippard, 2006). Instead of works accessible to a broad public, this lineage's model of publishing adopts the function of the photobook as artwork itself. Certainly this is a reflection Hannah Watson of Trolley books has made about the desires of the photobook audience for 'the small and interesting books that aren't mass market commercial things — that's what photographers want' (Smyth et al, 2015:27). It is a sentiment evident also in Alejandro Acin speaking of the desires of the photobook makers for whom 'there isn't always an interest in dissemination to a large audience' (Acin, 2018).

The audience for the photobook in this lineage therefore, is relatively insular. Primarily of interest to others who are making (as with *Camera Work* on page 40), or have a

particular interest in the form. Perhaps the most succinct manner in which to think of this lineage is how Sarah Bodman describes artists' book fairs as places in which 'you could lock the doors and keep the public outside and you would do just as well with the other makers buying stuff' (Bodman, 2018). So, it is visualised in the expected sphere below (see Fig. 19.), that the potential readers for this lineage are not to be found in a general public; but in those with an interest in the mediums of photography, the artists' book and the photobook, or a combination of these interests.

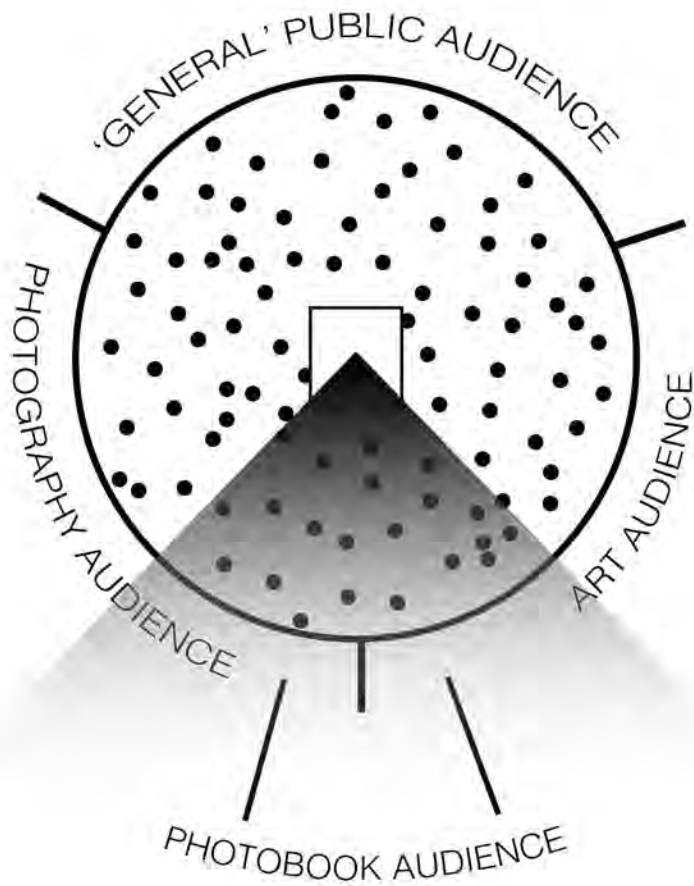


Fig. 19. *An expected, lineage-based publishing sphere of the artists' book/photobook* (2019)

The photo essay/photobook

Publishing and the photo essay/photobook	
Definition	The photo essay/photobook is concerned with the world in which its authors and (importantly) its readers, are situated, often striving to inform, educate and entertain. Whilst its origins lie in an emboldening of images with the use of text, and this is common in the lineage, it is not always present.
Keywords	Inform, document, raise awareness, witness, record, highlight, reveal, educate
Purpose	The purpose in this lineage is for the photobook to act as vehicle and platform for the maker to communicate narratives about the world, to audiences that could be described as previously unaware, or who do not possess an interest in the subject of the book or medium itself. Thus, the photobook functions in publication as a carrier.

Table 9. Publishing and the photo essay/photobook

The etymological origin of this lineage (the photo essay) was capable of reaching large audiences with relative ease: circulation of LIFE magazine ‘reached one million within four weeks of the first issue in late 1936, and in 1938 the magazine boasted a pass-along factor of fourteen.’ (Webb, 2013:116). So, while less grand numbers are expected of this lineage, its model still seeks access for a broad audience with the photobook’s function as a carrier of information, a platform for social critique, and a means of advocacy (Drucker, 2004:287). Such a use of the photobook can be further divided into its focussed use with a particular community addressed by the content, or, its distribution to a wider audience to inform, a nuance that Sarah Bodman points out in asking whether:

‘if you are using social documentary to bring awareness to something, but only making 300 copies, how many copies would you need to change the world? Or is it 300 well placed copies?’ (Bodman, 2018).

In either context, readers reside in an audience who can be described as not possessing a pre-existing interest in the subject contained within, or medium of, the photobook. That is to say that the readers of Guy Martin's *Libya's Missing* (2012) noted on page 92, may not have been seeking out such content on their evening commute. This means that amplification is a vital consideration of the lineage: certainly more so than the artists' book/photobook lineage in which readers may subscribe to blogs, revisit specialist bookshops and attend fairs. Lesley Martin highlights the significance of amplification, saying that 'you can't just put a book out into the world and expect it's going to make an impact. You actually do have to extend the reach of that book' (Martin, 2019). While there is interest in the medium from a secondary audience of photographers and makers who may be seeking inspiration for their own works, the lineage's expected arc of reach is situated primarily in a general public audience.

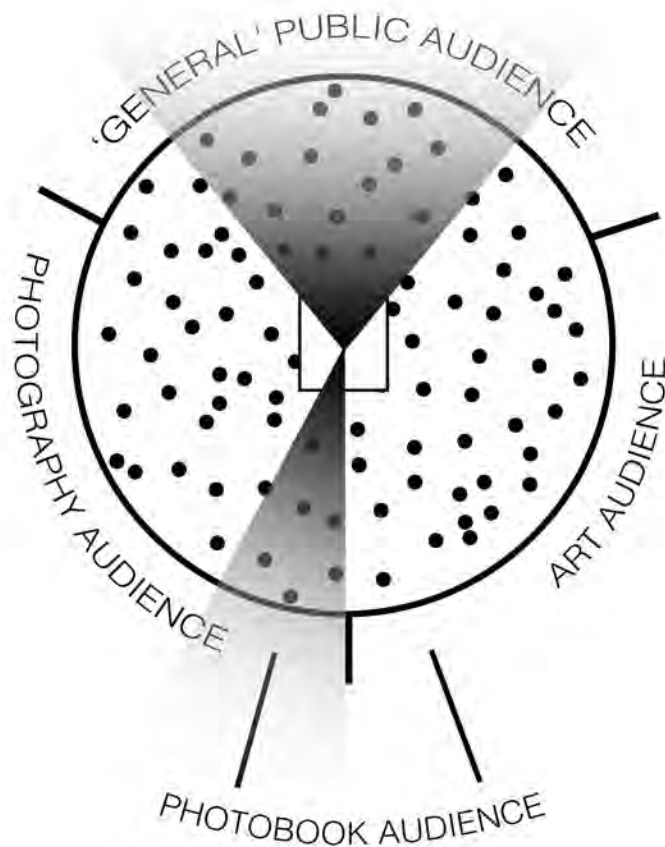


Fig. 20. An expected, lineage-based publishing sphere of the photo essay/photobook (2019)

What the lineage-specific focus of the previous pages has evidenced, is how, with the photobook functioning in very different ways in different lineages, the audience that the medium is seeking to connect with is not homogenous, but multi-faceted⁵⁰.

Accompanying each lineage investigation was a publishing sphere depicting the expected reach of the photobook — a research-informed proposal for respective audiences. It is important to make clear that these spheres are not formed from content analysis of contemporary photobooks, but instead the encountered literature presented in the prior pages. This presents the opportunity for comparison later in the chapter with spheres formed from content analysis of contemporary works. For now, we turn to the consideration of the time in which this research sits (2004-18), and ask whether the technological introductions and advancements of this period, can be seen to impact the form, or even the function, of the contemporary photobook.

⁵⁰ This already is a reminder of the significance that this way of categorising the photobook holds — for now we are able to critique connections with readers with a specificity that the term 'photobook' did not provide.

Linked digital technology and its impact on the contemporary photobook

No holistic and critical view of the photobook would be possible without thought regarding the impact of linked digital technologies leading to, and during, the time considered in this research. In fact, much of the research conducted would not be possible, and many of the subjects under scrutiny would not exist, without linked digital technologies. Video hosting websites to share made and owned photobooks⁵¹, large photobook-specific discussion groups in Facebook⁵², publications produced via Skype conversations⁵³, print-on-demand publishing, and large online retailers⁵⁴, are just a few examples of the multiple ways in which the photobook has been enabled and impacted by networked technologies. In this section I will begin by articulating what is meant by 'linked digital technologies', why the specificity of the term is important, and how our new era of digitised existence has come about. We will though turn quickly towards the most pressing concerns of this chapter: the impact of these technologies on photography, and the broader cultural landscape that it resides in.

Linked digital technologies: A timeline

John Palfrey and Urs Gasser suggest in *Born Digital*, that those born after 1980 can be labelled 'digital natives', a categorisation that exists because this is 'when social digital technologies such as usenet and Bulletin board systems, came online.' (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008). Here, platforms in which users can interact *through* linked digital technology are key; the computer with word processing and graphic art capabilities is drastically altered when it is connected to other computers by internet or ethernet. Palfrey and Gasser's proposal that the 1980s are a pivotal moment for linked digital technology rings true when considering it as a birth, but does not provide a particularly comprehensive view, particularly when image sharing, print-on-demand companies

⁵¹ Youtube and Vimeo are popular spaces to house flick-throughs of books. Performed by makers, reviewers and sellers The format has become a standard component in publishing a photobook. *Have a Nice Book* (Yosigo et al, 2019) and *Photobookstore* (2019) present two examples.

⁵² As of 6 April 2016 the invite-only Facebook group *PhotoBooks* has 10,747 members.

⁵³ In 2014 I worked with Nathan Pearce, a photographer from Southern Illinois on a photobook called *Midwest Dirt* (2014). Nathan and I only spoke via email and Skype, never meeting in person.

⁵⁴ *Photo-eye* and *Photobookstore* are both large (for the medium) book selling spaces with the latter launching well into a period of dominance by Amazon.

and platforms integral to the photobook community such as Facebook, were still over a decade away. On the next page, a timeline of technological introductions, together with significant⁵⁵ photobook events (see Table 10.), go some way towards creating a map onto which we can more accurately explore the interaction between the two. Subsequently, I first articulate the emergence of post-photography and then post-digitality as two frameworks for a critical interrogation of the time that this research is concerned with.

⁵⁵ The platforms and publications cited are subjective but chosen to emphasise pivotal and recognisable moments in these parallel histories.

A timeline of linked digital technologies and photobook events		
	<u>Photobooks and related events</u>	<u>Linked digital technologies</u>
1979	PhotoEye founded	Usenet systems
1994		Amazon founded
1995		MyPublisher launched — a visual print-on-demand service
2001	Andrew Roths' <i>Book of 101 Books</i>	Apple iPod launched
2003		Myspace and Photobucket launch
2004	<i>The Photobook: A History vol I</i> by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger	Flickr, Facebook (local)
2005		Youtube and Blurb
2006	<i>The Photobook: A History vol II</i> by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger	Facebook (open), Twitter
2007		The iPhone is released Tumblr and Google Streetview
2008	Photobook Festival Kassel inaugural edition	
2009		WhatsApp, Facebook like button
2010	<i>The Photobook Club</i> founded	Instagram
2011	<i>The Photobook Review</i>	Snapchat
2012	<i>DIY Photobooks</i> at Cleveland Museum of Art, <i>Aperture Photobook Awards</i> begin	
2014	<i>The Photobook Museum</i> opens	Google Glass launched
2015	<i>Self Publish, Be Happy: A DIY Manual and Manifesto</i>	
2017	<i>Photobook Phenomenon</i>	
2018	<i>photobook:RESET</i>	Facebook has third consecutive year losing young users

Table 10. A timeline of linked digital technologies and photobook events

Linked digital technology and post-photography

Inevitably, the changes brought about with the introduction of linked digital technologies have had a dramatic effect on photography in its many guises, and post-photographic discourse concerns itself with these adjustments. Not only with how digitised processes and the convergence⁵⁶ of technologies have shaped the last three decades of photographic development, but in turn how this development has led to a point at which the ‘photograph is now a type of ‘algorithmic image’’, (Rubenstein and Sluis, 2013:29). It is a framework which seeks to comprehend the radical recalibrations of what was once understood about the construction, reception and behaviour of the photographic image. When we speak about post-photography, we are not referring to changes regarding resolution, advances in lens technology or speed of image transfer; but fundamentally challenging assumptions and principles about photography that have remained with us, relatively unscathed, since the 19th century. Henri Cartier-Bresson’s ‘Decisive Moment’, in which you must catch the fleeting instant before it disappears and ‘there is nothing you can do about it’ (photoinduced, 2007) is countered with image selection from video capture, and a belief in the finality of the image has been challenged with light field technology⁵⁷ and the power of the radiometric capture range (RAW). The once fixed is becoming fluid.

Three key themes of the post-photographic are presented here in brief, after which they are expanded on with additional support from literature:

- **The abundance of imagery:** Accompanied by both proliferation of cheap and to-hand cameras (often embedded within phones), as well as the rapid decrease in cost of digital storage, is the sheer quantity of images produced by both professional and amateur alike. Studies provide us with statistics about the amount of images made, uploaded and shared via online platforms (Nielsen, 2014), and while differences in

⁵⁶ Here I speak not only of convergence in devices (a phone also having a camera, email functionality and so on) but also in adoption and employment of hard and soft technologies — instagram is a platform which is used by professionals and amateurs alike just as the camera phone, youtube and street view are also.

⁵⁷ An algorithmic image making process in which the sensor records detail at multiple depths allowing for the photographer or viewer to adjust focus after the event. The technology has been pioneered and put into commercial available devices by Lytro (who have since folded with some technology and employees moving to Google (Grinin and Price, 2018)).

figures are sometimes pronounced, there is no reasonable way to suggest we are not making many millions more images a year than ever before.

- **The fluidity of the image:** The algorithmic image is itself only a potential image — called into action by software and rendered through hardware. As such, it is able to be adjusted at will and poured into new spaces with ease. The result is the copyability of the image, the potential for infinite re-framing (in Bhaskar’s language) and increasingly atomised photographic works. This is to say that photographs are as easily moved as they are uploaded in the first instance, and quickly find themselves duplicated on social media sites or even illustrating news articles. In David Bate’s words; ‘the electronic process links image production to immediate processing, display and transmission’ (Bate, 2013:82-3).
- **A heightened questioning of veracity:** The ease of appropriation, redistribution and alteration, present new complications for a post-photographic world — a fragile ecosystem of trust in which the image is treated with scepticism. The change is profound, and articulated succinctly by Fred Ritchin, speaking at the *FOAM; What’s Next* conference in which he says that the photograph ‘no longer has the automatic credibility that it used to have... people do not automatically believe you any more’ (FOAM, 2011).

An abundance of imagery is what has caused many to declare a flood of images that could engulf photography as we know it. Erik Kessels visualised and concretised the metaphor in an installation of printed images from 24 hours of Flickr uploads, which were piled up in the *FOAM* gallery floors in Amsterdam (Kessels, 2011)⁵⁸. Only a year later James Estrin of the New York Times spoke about the innocence of the professional photographers at Perpignan festival, in the face of what reads very much as amateur photography:

⁵⁸ While Kessels’ visualised the phenomenon, he has not insinuated that it is a problem, in fact much of his work (the *Useful Photography* series in particular) has been based on images now easily found in online archive much like Flickr.

'The prizewinners are applauded by their colleagues in the crowd who seem oblivious to the tsunami of vernacular photographs about to wash away everything in its path' (Estrin, 2012).

Despite Estrin's response, which suggests a lessening of the potency of the image, there has never been such a position of prevalence in society as the image holds today, something Joan Fontcuberta notes in an introduction to *The Post-Photographic Condition*; 'all facets of life, from personal relations to economics, and from communications to politics have been rocked to their foundations', going on to highlight that 'this new world will not only have a tremendous impact on the images but the image, itself, will become its core fibre' (2015:11). Such a revision of the status quo is made possible by the fluidity of the image and the new networks which surround it. The image now is mobile, and can be morphed at will. Images entering into a visual platform are themselves only ephemeral. This is perhaps best seen in apps like Instagram (stories) and Snapchat, which accentuate non-permanence, but it is present in almost all visual spaces which, with ease, are updated and therefore outdated. Where the book, exhibition, magazine or photo album once held images in a state of permanence and fixity, the same is no longer so common:

'Old methods of codification... are being replaced by archives of instantaneity. These fleeting archives do not need to be thought of as a nostalgic longing. They are, simply, a new way to account for the images that mark a time when infinite surveillance and infinite geo-tracking potentially jeopardise visible longevity' (Bate, 2013:82).

A contributor to the flowing stream of images and their ubiquity, is what Edgar Gomez Cruz and Eric Meyer term the 'fifth moment of photography' (2012:215). Owing to linked digital technology, they declared the moment in reference to the convergent technologies of the mobile phone, which allows image distribution via the same technology as construction in the 'simplicity of uploading photos from the device to websites' (2012:215). This ease, a product of linked digital technology's impact on photography, is not only a considerable contributor to the abundance of imagery, but also presents new questions for the photographer. An emphasis on the immediacy of the image and its ability to float in different spaces presents new possibilities in

dissemination of work; but consequently difficulties for those seeking to increase the longevity of works and retain control of their viewing environment. When images are moveable digital artefacts poured into different screens in different locations at different times, what experience can the photographer create for the viewer?

In the post-photographic, one might also focus on the fluidity and abundance of the image in relation to its believability, or a heightened question of veracity. As we have already seen, for Ritchin, this is the case: we no longer implicitly trust. The same sentiment is present in Camila Moreiris' conviction that the abundance of images 'is not an example of numerical bounty but of a saturation that dismantles visibility, washing out what can be seen, observed or monitored' and that 'the age of post-photography is one in which the accountability of an image is no longer based on its validity' (Moreiris, 2017). These themes of abundance, fluidity and veracity are naturally interconnected, and all are central to a photographic discourse in the 21st century as, well as to neighbouring practices and fields of study⁵⁹, with photographers, and those working with the image, responding in a manner of different ways. For many, the revised landscape of photography removes barriers, and opens up a fluidity of working with images and other media in new ways; whereas for others, it symbolises the degradation of the medium or even, its death⁶⁰.

Linked digital technology and post-digitality

The previous section which looked at the impact of linked digital technology on photography, runs parallel to, or could be argued to be contained within, the post-digital. It is a term which attempts to bring together thinking that deals with our revised relationship with the world, now mediated through digital devices. Post-digital discourse does not look solely towards industry or medium as we have, but also to collective and individual attitudes towards everyday life and the choices which populate it.

⁵⁹ Here, post-photography becomes intertwined with with James Bridle's concept of the 'New Aesthetic' (2011), and the idea that we are increasingly seeing through, and being seen by, machines (Paul, 2015).

⁶⁰ The death of photography has been announced at several points in the mediums lifetime.

What we saw in the timeline (see Table. 10.), in the introduction of linked digital technologies, forms the basis of the post-digital: a period of swift adoptions of new systems, and disruption to traditions. Changes significant enough that even in 1995 Robert Pepperell forecast in the *Post-Human Condition* that ‘we are approaching the electrification of existence — there is a tangible sense of a storm in the air’ (1995:i). In the time of this research however, this storm is passing, and for some, it has passed. The ‘electrification’ that Pepperell spoke of has become an ‘undercurrent to existence’ (Openshaw, 2015:5) and in 2014, Florian Cramer was clear in stating that ‘the disruption brought upon by digital information technology has already occurred’ (Cramer, 2014). The belief that the tumultuous *introduction* of linked digital technology is over, is a starting point for much post-digital writing. It is though important to note that this is the end of the beginning, and not the view that the digital is behind us:

‘The prefix ‘post’ should not be understood here in the same sense as postmodernism and post-histoire, but rather in the sense of post-punk (a continuation of punk culture in ways which are somehow still punk, yet also beyond punk)’ (Cramer, 2014).

David Berry and Michael Dieter note that prominent contemporary notions ‘such as post-internet, postdigital and the new aesthetic’ are ‘attempts to grapple with the immersive and disorienting experiences of computational infrastructures as they scale up and intensify’ (2015:4). In some cases, this ‘grappling’ can be manifested in activities counter to the digital; that ‘instead of throwing ourselves into the network, more and more of us seem to be digging our heels into the solid earth beneath our feet’ (Openshaw, 2015:8). For others it is the transformational processes themselves that are brought about by the digital which may become a focus. More likely though, is that individuals will engage with activities which blend attitudes, something which Kenneth Goldsmith’s observes in his students who ‘mix oil paint while Photoshopping, and scour flea markets for vintage vinyl while listening to their iPods. They don’t feel the need to distinguish the way I do. I’m still blinded by the Web’ (2011:226).

The messiness of post-digital grappling, and the potential for varied manifestation, can cause some difficulty in speaking about certain actions, events or artefacts as post-digital, but we can be supported by identifying central themes in post-digital literature:

- **Hybridisation (old and new) and (old as new):** Florian Cramer articulates the use of old and new alongside one another (2014) (supported also in Kenneth Goldsmith's observations of his students (2011:226)) as well as the use of old media in a system which resembles new media formations. A number of examples are presented in Karen Archey and Robin Peckham's introduction to *Art-Post Internet* (2014), as well as in Sy Taffel's extension of hybridisation to include 'a rejection of the binary oppositions of digital/analogue, human/nonhuman, nature/culture, and virtual/real' (Taffel, 2015:327).
- **A move away from technological fascination:** This covers both a disenchantment with the digital, but also the deeper questioning of progress that this technology brings with it (Berry and Dieter, 2015:4). It is a practical reaction presented in Cramer's use of a hipster-hating meme in which a young writer has taken his typewriter to the park as a way to introduce the notion of renouncement. He points out that the action is 'a deliberate choice of renouncing electronic technology, thereby calling into question the common assumption that computers, as meta-machines, represent obvious technological progress' (2014). Cramer later summed up the decision of the writer as a post-digital choice in which there is a desire to use 'the technology most suitable to the job, rather than automatically 'defaulting' to the latest 'new media' device' (2014)⁶¹.
- **An attempt to 'ground ourselves':** A term borrowed from Jonathan Openshaw (2015:8), this phenomenon of reaction or protection against the digital, and new values of the offline are seen in many other places besides, from Kevin Kelly's writing (2008) to Nathan Jurgenson's coining of the 'in real life fetish' (2012) (and to Alessandro Ludovico's suggestion of the new space for print publications (2012). While it shares some ground with the characteristic which preceded it, here we speak

⁶¹ In this instance a typewriter provided the author a device which could produce and print works for sale in the park — something which even wireless and battery powered digital machines would limit to shorter periods of time.

more of a conscious eschewing of the digital, and a seeking out of increasingly corporeal artefacts or experiences.

- **A revealing of code and process:** This refers not only to the glitch aesthetic and to works which ‘reveal their own coded materiality’ (Paul, 2015)(Cascone, 2000) but also the prevalence of process based narratives and provenance in non digital forms. For Hannes Bajohr, who borrows the term technisation from Hans Blumenburg:

‘If the digital is a concept of reality or a temporality, increasingly transparent to scrutiny, the post-digital is what performs the sudden yank that makes it apparent again. It provokes a disharmony in the structure of the obvious, thus drawing attention to it, and makes the process of *technization* (sic) experienceable’ (Bajohr, 2016:104).

Most commonly, these themes are not found in isolation within the art we see, music we listen to, or choices we make in everyday life — they are found intertwined. We might illustrate this with two short examples. The *Espresso Book Machine* (On Demand Books, 2016) is a printer⁶², which, via a networked connection to thousands of written works, and the speed of digital printing, is able to produce for a user a physical book to their own specification in minutes. The *EBM* speaks not only about a hybrid approach to production (new technology— internet of things, old technology — the book) but also about the thought and choice of the reader or consumer — a move away from technological fascination. The *EBM* makes very apparent the bringing into a corporeal world a text which is readily available in a fluid, digital state. Faig Ahmed’s tapestries (see Fig. 21.) exhibit post-digital characteristics of hybridity in overtly digital occurrences (glitch and liquification), incorporated into a most traditional technology (weaving), but also reveal a coded process. This drawing of attention to processes predominantly veiled from us by technology is evident in a great many places in art, music and photography: from the surge of glitch art, to hack labs which seek to

⁶² One could easily argue that it is also a bookbinder, shop and catalogue all in one.

unblackbox technology⁶³, and the introduction of musical genres like vaporwave, vaportrap and synthwave.

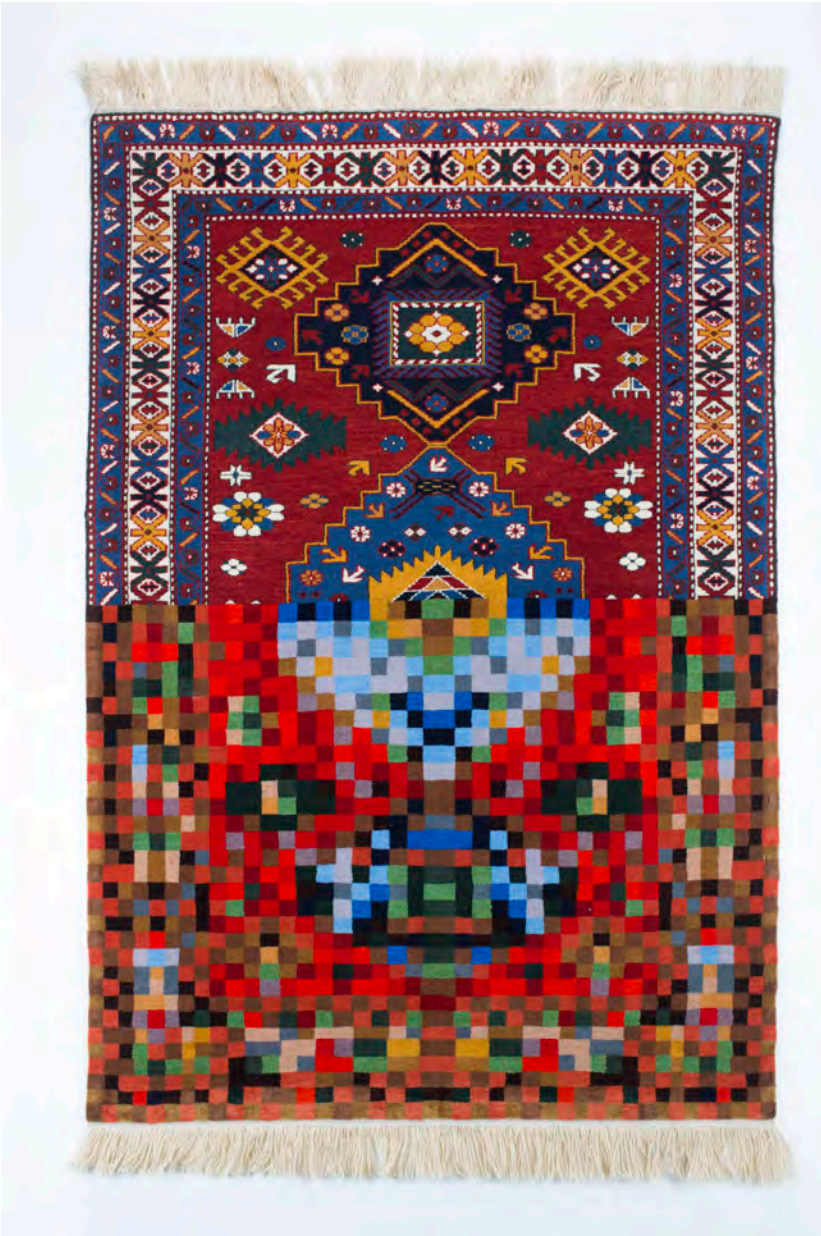


Fig. 21. *Tradition in Pixel* (2010)(original in colour) Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Faig Ahmed's studio.

⁶³ The unblackboxing of technology can be attributed to Bruno Latour's construction of technology which 'blackboxes' — in that its 'technical work is made invisible by its own success' and that 'the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become' (1999:304).

Having evidenced the impact of linked digital technologies from an industry and medium-specific angle, as well as contextualising all that we have seen within a post-digital landscape, we should look now to see what is illuminated when we bring the contemporary photobook back into our discussions.

The contemporary photobook as a post-digital medium

It is proposed in this section, that the contemporary photobook and its accompanying community, events and discourses⁶⁴ are a product of the post-digital, and the post-photographic. This positioning goes some way towards an explanation of the rise in popularity of the medium, as well as the form it takes and manner in which it is activated, or amplified. We will first locate the contemporary photobook in relation to the post-digital themes noted on the prior pages, before turning to reflect on its post-photographic location.

It has been briefly noted already that the many activities, events and discourses that occur around the contemporary photobook would not exist without the undercurrent of networked technologies: permitting and facilitating the organisation of like-minded people in corporeal and digital spaces. It is technisation which has led to a global atmosphere for the photobook, with competitions and fairs amplified beyond their locality, aided by a network of platforms and persons. But it is not only that the photobook is facilitated *in* an environment of post-digitality — it exhibits more overt traits too. One such trait is that of hybridisation, and what Cramer describes as “new media’ cultural approaches to working with so-called ‘old media’” (2014). Hybridisation in the form of new and old, is not only seen as subject in particular works (like those in the catalogue of Jean Boîte editions (2015)), but in the digital organisation of individuals in relation to an old media (the book). Facebook pages, blogs, Instagram accounts and other linked digital spaces are a constant companion to the corporeal book. Most significantly perhaps, hybridisation and the combining of old and new is found in the very production of a photobook. This may be in the assemblage of dummy books and self-published works incorporating digital printing with hand binding, or lithographic and digital printing combined in the same document. Even before this

⁶⁴ Which is the focus of Chapter Three.

though there is a marrying of the old and new in the transformation of the algorithmic image to the printed page; for while there are many photographers still working with film, only a handful will not digitise images before their reproduction⁶⁵. It may seem an obvious occurrence but this is noteworthy not only in locating the photobook in the post-digital but also in the post-photographic.

These photobook-specific examples of post-digital habitation point to a more considered use and application of linked digital technologies, and a move away from technological fascination. A questioning of progress via a 'counter to the trajectories of digitisation' (Berry and Dieter, 2015:4) that can be further supported in a number of places in regards to the contemporary photobook. Most overtly this is in the form's popularity with makers and readers during a period which offers so many other mediums with new possibilities for connecting with an audience. This critical questioning of new technologies and their opportunities is evident in reviewing the digital counterparts to the contemporary photobook — of which very few exist. While there are notable exceptions like *The Sochi Project* (Bruggen and Hornstra, 2013), the overwhelming majority of photographic works which result in photobooks do not have thorough online replicas, or alternate versions. The digital spaces of makers' books not demonstrating augmentation or exploitation of possibilities, but a rather more traditional use of web platforms⁶⁶. There is a conviction in the printed page. It is something that will be seen later in this chapter in the case study of *Monsanto©, A Photographic Investigation* (Asselin, 2017) in which the project is commended for its occupation of the codex form.

A key post-digital theme which can complicate reflections on purpose is found in a rebuttal to technology, and an attempt to 'ground ourselves' in the 'most tactile and analogue forms of human culture' (Openshaw, 2015:8) in response to the massive upscaling of linked digital technology. It is a phenomenon that is suggested in looking at the likes of *Parkrun*, *Slideluck Potshow* and *The Photobook Club*, and is something

⁶⁵ Not to mention artists working with explicitly digital and even camera-less subjects and methodologies — Joachim Schmidt and Doug Rickard for example.

⁶⁶ Looking over the websites and online project spaces of some of photographers who have produced popular photobooks over the last ten years — Alec Soth, Ron Jude, Christina de Middel, Carolyn Drake, Anouk Kruithof — reveals only image galleries, some textual information and images of the books themselves.

which is apparent if we turn our attention to the spaces in which we see and interact with photobooks⁶⁷. For now though we might best illustrate the point by witnessing how Adam Verity theorises the tension in the selling of artists' books online:

'[An] amalgamation of the handmade, tangible book with the online space is potentially problematic ideologically, as the aesthetic and conceptual underpinnings of the artist's book seem to stem partially from a reaction against mass production and commercialisation. The ease of access then could be seen as opposing the movement's principles, where artists typically share work at book fairs, via mail order, or through independent bookshops' (Verity, 2012:93-4).

This desire to make with one's own hands, in a world where such tasks are decreasing due to the dematerialisation of labour, art practices and numerous other aspects of daily life, is an unsurprising reaction. It is seen in Julia Borissova and Emma Lambert's elite interviews, and is a reaction that is associated also with value and significance: the notion that as digital dissemination is seen as cheap and easy, and printing work is costly and consumes physical space, it has a greater value. As Ludovico states:

'The result [of publishing] is a stack of paper occupying a significant physical space, and space seems to have become one of the most valuable resources in our consumption-oriented age' (2012:29).

In wider culture we can also attribute certain trends to a desire for the corporeal: many contemporary cafes, bars and restaurants feature materials which exude a tactile and analogue aesthetic, regardless of their authenticity. They are lit by industrial style lightbulbs, feature copper bars with a distinct patina and even serve food which is increasingly ingredient-focussed with provenance and locality highlighted⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ Which we will undertake on page 155.

⁶⁸ This is not a suggestion of causality but an interesting note to provide a broader context to our discussions.

Lastly, we arrive at the revealing of code and process associated with the post-digital, a theme commonly illustrated by glitch art, in which the inner workings of coded processes are revealed. In this respect the photobook is not a clear example. However, when coupled with the theme of grounding, this interest in revealing and presenting process is startlingly common in regards to the contemporary iteration of the medium. It is suggested that the desire to reveal the construction and workings of the photobook itself is in response to increasingly veiled digital technology; it is why so many naked-bound books (see Fig. 22.) have emerged alongside textured cloth covers and muted tones. These works, and their makers, reveal a construction which acts as a banner for corporeal existence and industrial process⁶⁹.



Fig. 22. *In the Car with R* (2012)(original in colour) — A photobook by Rafal Milach demonstrating the visibility of process in the fabrication of a photobook with its

⁶⁹ Though they are still the result of a hybrid analogue/digital production.

utilitarian rubber bands, thick, muted card stock and exposed binding. Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Rafal Mllach.

More visible still in this theme is the emergence of the dummy book as an object of review, sale and conversation. The dummy book is itself not a new object or point along the journey of publication, but in the post-digital, it has moved from the relatively private to the frequently public. Dummy competitions and fairs have proliferated since the mid noughties⁷⁰ and makers' sharing of the form has similarly expanded. It may seem strange that in dummy competitions, editions of up to 50 are allowed, but it is as a result of process interest that the dummy is often the final publication and that the act of making has satisfied the maker. When Florian Cramer speaks of contemporary zines and super 8 films, he suggests they 'focus less on content and more on pure materiality' and we may well position the photobook in the same manner so that: 'the medium, such as paper or celluloid, is indeed the message – a shift from semantics to pragmatics, and from metaphysics to ontology' (Cramer. 2014).

The contemporary photobook as a post-photographic medium

The location of the contemporary photobook in relation to the post-digital is significant, but not alone, it is important to acknowledge also how the medium has offered a response to some of the central tensions and concerns of the photographer in a post-photographic landscape. Some of these overlap with those in the post-digital, but others that we will focus on are quite specific to the photographic medium. As we have already noted, in the post-photographic, what was once a static photograph is now a fluid and computational image, which can be duplicated, altered and transformed with an ease and scale unprecedented before linked digital technologies. It is a situation that brings about a trio of tensions: abundance, fluidity and veracity. To which the photobook offers some resolution. If we first consider the abundance of imagery in society that led to James Estrin's comments on page 107, it is clear to see how the photobook may offer for the maker, a counter to the scale and ubiquity of the image. The photobook can be seen as a physical intervention into a scrolling mass of images,

⁷⁰ See the survey of photobook events in 2015 found starting on page 152.

an object with a 'sense of unhurried conclusiveness', allowing the reader to 'pause, to reflect, to take notes' (Ludovico, 2012:30). It is also, for the photographer, that object that will ensure 'that their artistic statement will remain unchanged, wherever and whenever their book is read' (The PhotoBookMuseum, 2014a:18). The photobook is not the only form of response⁷¹ to image ubiquity, and nor is it surprising given photography's long history of interactions with reproducibility and a desire for legitimisation:

'Post-photography endorses the de-materialisation of authorship by dissolving the notions of originality and ownership... the digital revolution prompts yet another dematerialisation, that of content, and dissemination on the internet gives artworks a fluidity far greater than that of existing channels' (Fontcuberta, 2015:7).

The photobook counters the fluidity of the image — with its increasing temporality and de-territorialised nature (Moreiras, 2017) — by re-instating authorship and controlling the display of photographs. By the form of the book as fixed, those involved in the making of the work are able to install authorial control of the work to a degree that screen based publications, websites and social media feeds are unable to. The finality of the page and the fixity of the book is a great ally to the photographer, in that not only are they able to determine the frame (the book) of presentation, but also a controllable, receptional device for the viewer. They are able to construct a book so large it demands the reader sit down at a table, or so small and thin that it encourages a flick through. In this process the photographer is able also to accentuate the gap between the amateur and professional, one that is becoming increasingly opaque, and potentially irrelevant. This gap emerges as while publishing has to an extent been democratised, there are still barriers to entry in cost⁷², skill⁷³ and dissemination⁷⁴ that

⁷¹ Increasing interest in arcane processes and the post-millennium surge in semi-limited prints and affordable originals through platforms like *20x200* (2019) is testament to this.

⁷² Many photobook publishers demand close to €20,000 to print works (something which is akin to vanity publishing) but even a humble DIY edition *can* easily demand a significant amount of financial outlay.

⁷³ In Chapter Three, we consider how self-legitimation may cause a barrier and be protecting the role of the professional.

⁷⁴ The professional is often well connected and familiar with strategies for the traditional spreading of work in a way that many enthusiastic amateurs may not be.

are replicated also in the gallery world; so while a photobook or gallery exhibition is no more valid a presentation strategy than the use of a website, it carries with it a connotation of authenticity and trust in response to a heightened question of veracity:

‘The printed page, the bound (codex) book with its title and author page, looks authoritative; it can be described as embodying or containing wisdom in a way that the unstable electronic text does not’ (Brigitte Frasse in Wirth, 1995: 143-4).

It is a trust which is particularly significant for those operating in the lineage of the photo essay/photobook in which the embedded wisdom of the book and the ability for the book to be unchanging and unaltered through its life is of significance. What the photobook offers, in combating the tensions of abundance, authorship and veracity in the post-photographic, is a medium through which photographers are able to reinstate some of what is felt to have been lost (veracity, authorial control and the fixity of the photograph). It presents a platform through which to respond to a landscape in which the photograph has moved away from the ‘condition of exclusive object that it once enjoyed’, becoming ‘trivialised’ and ‘dematerialised’ (Fontcuberta. 2015:12).

We are beginning, in both the location of the contemporary photobook in the post-digital, and the post-photographic, to see quite different ways in which the maker might respond, deal, or exploit these new possibilities, trends, and technologies. In the next section, these approaches are fortified in the form of a spectrum which highlights strategic, oppositional and interrogatory choices in publishing as a response to a post-digital and post-photographic context for the photobook.

A spectrum of impacts on publishing

Throughout our considerations of the contemporary photobook as a product of the post-digital and post-photographic, we have consistently seen different ways in which makers may choose to approach publishing in a new landscape. Whether this is deciding on the right ‘tool for the job’, as Cramer’s typewriter in the park has done, or seeking tactile experiences as a counter to the fluidity of the digital. However, few attempts to provide an account of these different sentiments or attitudes in a post-digital or post-photographic landscape are documented. One notable exception is found in Lotte Philipsen’s article *Who’s Afraid of the Audience?* (2014). Philipsen highlights the difference in academic and artistic discourse regarding the aesthetics of contemporary digital artworks, and proposes that there are two distinct perspectives through which these pieces are spoken about: the ‘digital’ and ‘post-digital’ (2014). Phillipsen makes a key distinction between a digital perspective (which concerns itself with production), and a post-digital perspective (which is more concerned with aesthetic reaction). This is a helpful notion which, as this research does, emphasises the gap between construction and impact, but the terms themselves are unwieldy for our purposes; and while she begins to deal with reception, the manner in which work reaches a viewer/reader and the pragmatics of making public, is not present. So, rather than using Phillipsen’s terms and distinction as they are, we will forge our own, which borrow in part from her emphasis on production and reception conversations.

Reactivity and pragmatism

There is an individuality at play in how we all deal with our own electrification of existence, but viewed collectively, we are also able to see two distinct categories emerge from the literature encountered thus far. There are those choices that react, or respond, to the digital — often by eschewing or interrogating it, and there are those choices which are more strategic in nature — combining themes raised in, and possibilities emerging from, the ubiquity of linked digital technology. We might term these, *reactive* and *pragmatic* approaches⁷⁵, as illustrated on the spectrum in Figure 23, in which the centre represents a neutrality of approach.

⁷⁵ Although we are speaking specifically about photographic publishing, these terms could be just as easily applied to other areas of art, publishing, photography, education or numerous other fields.



Fig. 23. *A post-digital and post-photographic spectrum of pragmatism and reactivity* (2019)(original in colour)

Sitting at one end of our spectrum, the ‘reactive’ illustrates an overt response to the pervasion of linked digital technologies and their impact on photography and broader culture. Note the tension and energy suggested by the term ‘reactive’ in a scientific context, as well as the secondary action implied in the humanities. A reactive perspective might rail against, or creatively respond, but its *raison d’être* relies on the digital as instigator and often catalyst. The reactive, if we are to think of Lotte Phillipsen’s writing, often sees an emphasis on production in an isolated context: the text as the object of study. The reactive taps into post-photographic desires for photographic permanence, truth and authorial control (pages 105-108) in the face of ephemerality and distrust. It is also closely linked with post-digital themes of grounding and an emphasis on process and provenance (pages 108-113). As an example, we could adopt this spectrum as a way to see the heightened reactivity of a bookshop which shuns digital reading⁷⁶.

On the contrary, the ‘pragmatic’ finds its focus away from reactionary thought and practices, instead tending towards a critical perspective in relation to digital technology. This perspective views digital technology merely as a useful tool, one which has no inherent benefits over analogue, and is no longer concerned with discussions of

⁷⁶ The bookshop *Book/shop* based, in New York and Oakland, epitomises the reactive in post-digitality. The shop positions itself as oppositional, and with undertones of betterness in flyers made echoing the manifesto or mission statement found on their web space which begins by saying that ‘some people like to read on a screen. Other people need the variety and artistry, the sight, smell, and feel of actual books.’ Before concluding that these people are ‘allergic to cheap bestsellers’... delighting in ‘the out-of-the-way and the rare’ (BOOK/SHOP, 2016).

disruption (2014). The pragmatic, if we are to think again of Phillippsen's writing, encourages an emphasis on production in relation to purpose: the text as a thing in the world. The pragmatic may exploit the fluidity of the image in the post-photographic (page 106) and the ease of digital production in its encouraging of multiple modes of engagement with work. In the post-digital, the pragmatic adopts hybrid approaches (page 110) and takes a conscious and critical review of the most appropriate technologies (page 110) for publishing. As an example, we might look to the aforementioned Espresso Book Machine⁷⁷ and its pragmatic, hybrid approach. Reactivity and pragmatism have the power to shape a publishing model⁷⁸, impacting on the connection between the photobook and its readers via framing and amplification. We will explore now how the effect of linked digital technology can be seen in the contemporary photobook and, in this analysis, will provide the data to be able to produce a set of updated publishing spheres — this time reflecting actual works via content analysis. By subsequently bringing these together with the expected spheres from earlier from pages 95-101, we will generate an answer to the key question of this chapter: how linked digital technologies have affected the contemporary photobook.

Questions of reactivity and pragmatism

The questions which will guide our application of this spectrum have been formed in direct reference to the definitions of reactivity and pragmatism found on the previous pages. In addition, the impact of linked digital technology on publishing itself has been considered, and so too has the sphere of publishing. So it is that the probes presented on the next page, and levelled at photobooks in the subsequent section, are robustly designed as an amalgam of all that has led to this juncture in the chapter. Applying this spectrum of reactivity and pragmatism via the questions in Table 11 does not purport to produce absolute and infallible results but is a way to engage the critique of works from a stance which is informed by the context of the contemporary photobook.

⁷⁷ The Espresso Book Machine epitomises the nonchalance of the pragmatic as well as the integral 'best-of-both-worlds' approach to publication and production — the machine is able to translate digital text to printed word via the choices of a reader, which, be they inclined towards aesthetics or legibility are both pragmatic decisions in that they reformat works for an intended use.

⁷⁸ Why it is that publishing is undertaken.

Questions of reactivity and pragmatism	
<p>Does the photobook emphasise its own materiality?</p> <p>Designed to see if the photobook offers a grounding in the post-digital and a post-photographic emphasis on permanence, here we will look for an emphasis on the physical qualities of the work in the object and the metadata that accompanies it.</p>	<p>Yes = reactive No = neutral</p>
<p>Is the makers' role in the production of the photobook or its controlled experience foregrounded?</p> <p>This question looks to ascertain whether a desire for post-photographic authorial control, and the fixity of the book is present in metadata.</p>	<p>Yes = reactive No = neutral</p>
<p>Does the photobook overtly reference the technology of the photographic work or production of the publication?</p> <p>Here, we look to see whether the work is oppositional to digital technology <i>or</i> highlights its explicit interest in technology. Does it perform the yank of the post-digital, or exhibit a fascination?</p>	<p>Yes = reactive No = neutral</p>
<p>Has the photobook been published alongside other editions or versions?</p> <p>Intending to ascertain whether hybridity or a view to reach different audiences with different mediums or price points has been considered.</p>	<p>Yes = pragmatic No = neutral</p>
<p>Do resources, spaces of discussion or links to further reading accompany the photobook?</p> <p>The photobook here may be strategically implying its inherent veracity and timelessness to instigate discussions or provide entry or call to action regarding a particular subject.</p>	<p>Yes = pragmatic No = neutral</p>
<p>Is the book easy to access without purchase?</p> <p>Either through digital downloads, or the inclusion of links to public libraries or collections, this question seeks to find out how linked digital technology can aid access.</p>	<p>Yes = pragmatic No = neutral</p>

Table 11. Questions of reactivity and pragmatism⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Each answer to these questions may be given in the affirmative, or neutral, but not in the negative in order that we only review what is visible and evidentiary. It is the makers' and/or publisher's web page in which the publication is presented, where information will be sought.

Application: Reactive and pragmatic acts in ‘The’ contemporary photobook

It is intended that already the reader of this thesis, with the support of the questions from Table 11, will be able to apply the post-digital spectrum to those books, or even other objects, which surround them — just as with the lineages from Chapter One. So it is that the individual results of application of these questions in the form of a data set, are not included here. What I do present are the results of content analysis of publications which represent an unbiased cross-section of the photobook in a given year. In order to have a clear sample for this task, the 2015 survey of events which is presented on page 152, has been used as a field of data collection, with each competition’s winners and, where possible, shortlisted entries noted. These works are joined by the publications from Marc Feustel and Laurence Vecten’s meta-list of 19 year-end best-of lists to create a pool of 500+ photobooks (2015). From this point, a sampling method which sees all books prefixed with ‘The’ has been adopted in order to create a balanced and realistic number of works to examine⁸⁰. The result are 59 publications, of which seven are removed either for the lack of information available to make analysis possible, or that they do not fit with the pre-established definition of ‘photobook’ (established on page 52) that we are working with in this research. What remains are 52 photobooks, 42 of which clearly exhibit either a reactive or pragmatic approach to particular publishing acts. In order to better understand what this means for the contemporary photobook and connections with readers, it is lineages we must return to: because it is lineages that foreground purpose, and lineages which permit and encourage a specific and appropriate critique for the function of the photobook in different publishing models.

Following a brief articulation of the findings from the questions, a new publishing sphere has been produced and is presented alongside its expected counterpart from

⁸⁰ A note on data encounters: in data collection it became quite apparent that while some competitions provided consistent archives of previous winners and shortlists, a great many did not. This piece of research being conducted in 2016, when many competitions are running once again meant that uncovering 2015 results (in particular shortlists) was often a matter of navigating through dead URLs and reading titles from photographs of programmes or display notices. This is not only in the smaller events but also established institutions like *Recontres Des Arles*. Such an oversight is frustrating for a researcher but more significantly telling of the frenetic pace and ephemerality of the photobook and surrounding discussion. This also indicates a reactive and somewhat DIY approach to web documentation — a sign often of a lack of institutional support, money, webspace or even web administration knowledge.

earlier in the chapter. It is the photographic book/photobook which is first to come under scrutiny for its exhibition of reactive and pragmatic acts.

'The' photographic book/photobook, reactivity and pragmatism

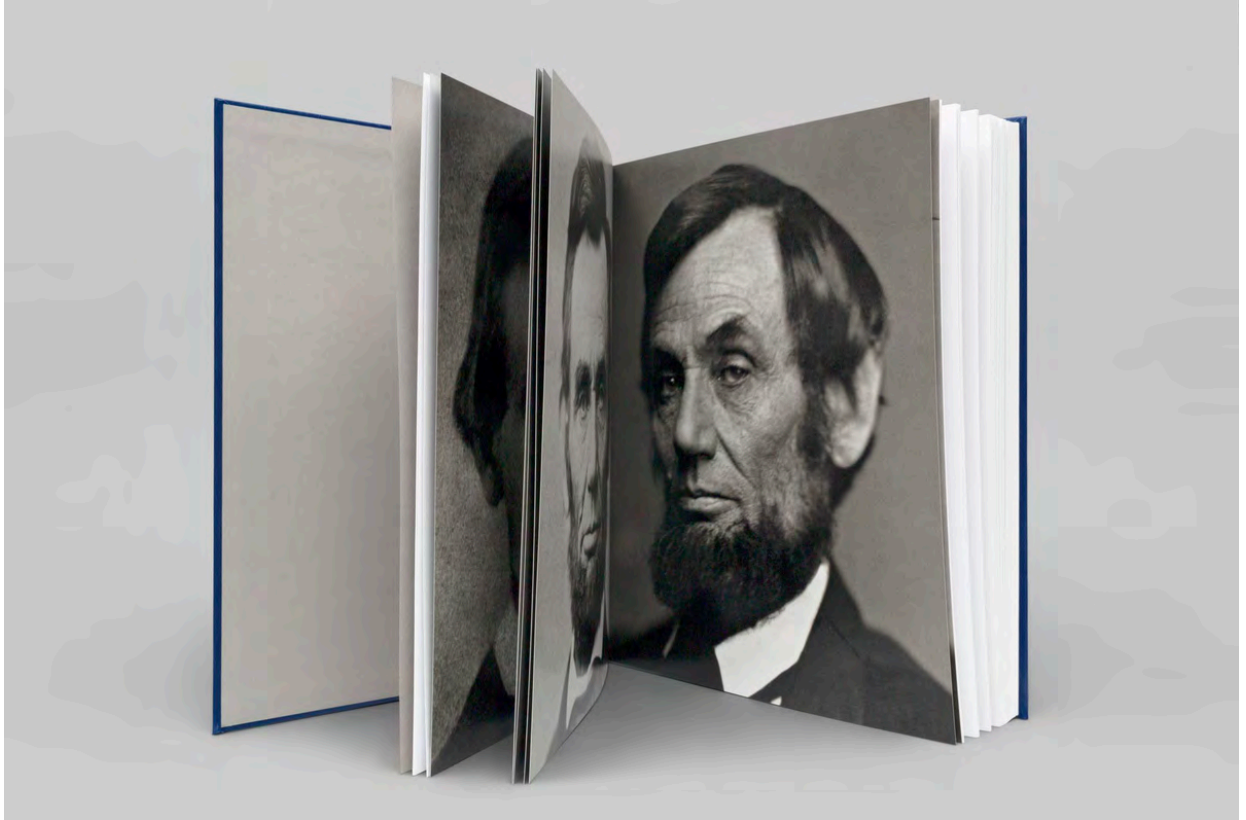


Fig. 24. *The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr (2015) (original in colour). Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Steidl and the Meserve Foundation.

In our survey pool, this lineage is comprised of 13 books, of which nine are in the pure lineage, and four are shared with the photo essay. In total (pure and otherwise), the lineage exhibits 11 acts which were recorded as reactive, and one as pragmatic. All but one of the publications in this lineage was a hardback and several were housed in slip cases or even a presentation box — a nod to the authorial role of the book we highlighted on page 118, and Bridget Frasse's comment regarding the 'authoritative codex' (Brigitte Frasse in Wirth, 1995: 143-4). One result of this is that the average cost

in this sample of books is just over €100⁸¹, a significant figure, but, in the context of lineage, understandable.

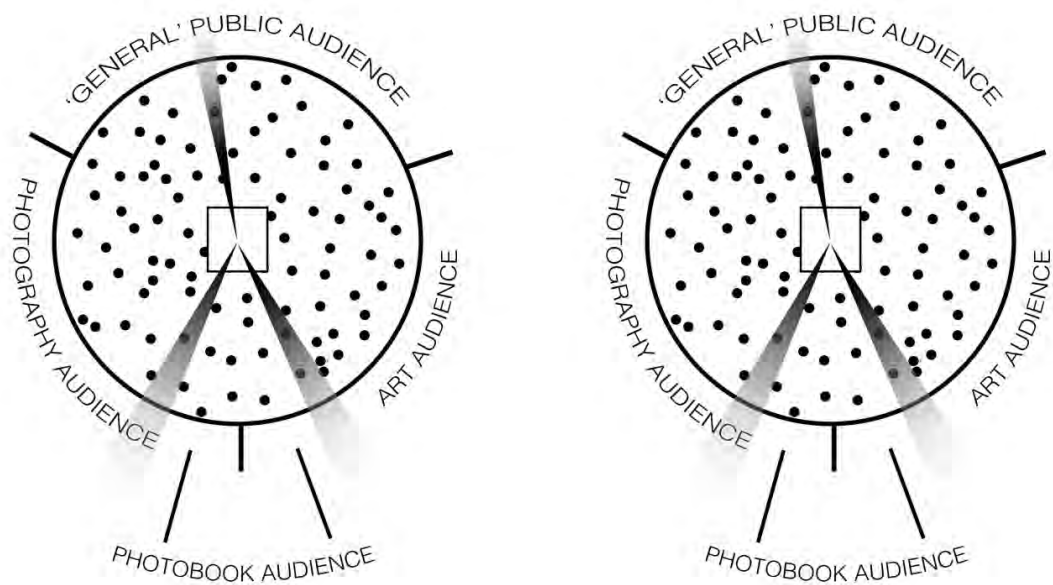


Fig. 25. *Before and after; A lineage based sphere of the photographic book/photobook (expected) and a content analysis based sphere of the photographic book/photobook (actual) (2019)*

The model of publishing for this lineage, which uses the photobook as container and seeks to present what is not available (with the same quality of convenience at least) by other means, has retained connections with its readers. Whilst the ubiquity of images in online space presents the ability to source collections of thematic images by other means, the photographic book/photobook has, in its reactivity, maintained an experience for readers which is not available elsewhere: with an emphasis on the authorial, tactile and high quality characteristics we see in content analysis. Thus, there is no evidence to suggest that this lineage has missed connections with readers, instead retaining or even strengthening its connections with subject-oriented readers in the general public, and medium-oriented readers in the photography and art audience.

⁸¹ This is slightly skewed by one book in particular, removing this brings the figure to €61.

'The' artists' book/photobook, reactivity and pragmatism



Fig. 26. *The Meteorite Hunter* (2015)(original in colour) — A photobook by Alexandra Lethbridge. Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Alexandra Lethbridge.

This lineage is made up of 23 photobooks, of which seven are a hybrid with the photo essay/photobook. Unlike the photographic book/photobook lineage, here, the corporeal manifestation of the works is extremely varied: with handmade books, a newsprint publication, books with booklets inside, padded covers, torn pages, multiple papers and a multitude of bindings. This is to be expected, and presents an echo of the original presentation of the lineage in Chapter One, as well as that found in this chapter. 26 acts which are visible for review have been assigned to the reactive, and five for the pragmatic — a less extreme imbalance than for the photographic book/photobook but still one that is clear. 16 of these publications are accompanied by their original sale price which provides an average of just over €44 — cheaper than the lineage prior, but still a significant cost.

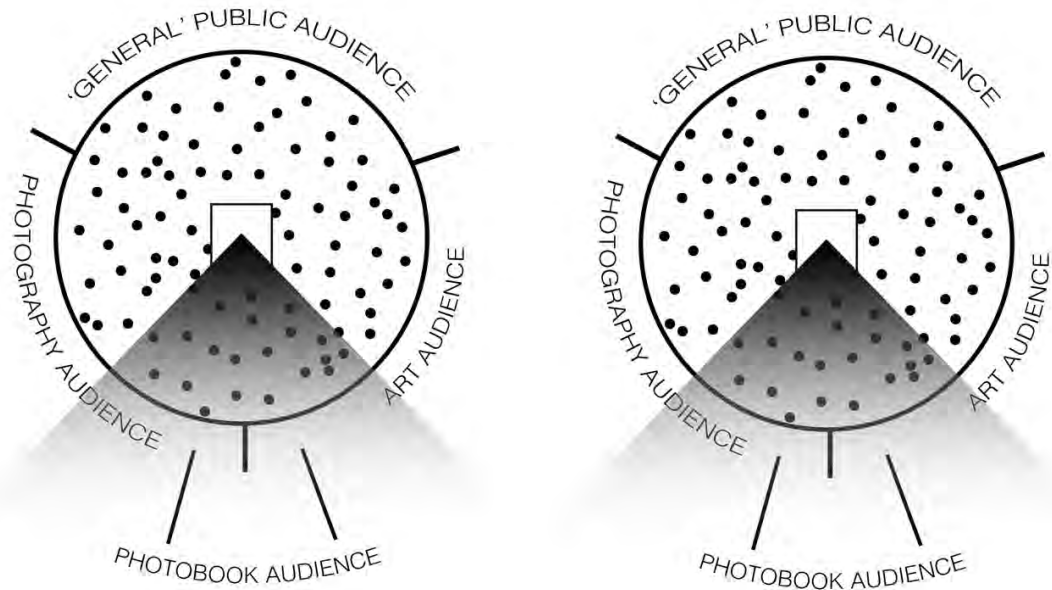


Fig. 27. *Before and after; A lineage based sphere of the artists' book/photobook (expected) and a content analysis based sphere of the artists' book/photobook (actual) (2019)*

The model for publishing in this lineage, in which the photobook acts as artwork and connects with like-minded readers who possess a medium interest in the book itself, remains. While the photobooks seen in content analysis have witnessed more reactive than pragmatic acts it has only served to solidify the lineage as one of experimentation and conceptual exploration. In this lineage, I am reminded of Lesley Martin's thematic track of the 'Baroque' photobook:

'One could scan the many entire histories of the photobook, from the earliest albums up until the turn of the millennium, and come up with a comparatively limited number that rely on unusual production flourishes for their effect. Now, it is almost considered a given' (2017:13).

'The' photo essay/photobook, reactivity and pragmatism



Fig. 28. *The Floods* book - *Standard 1st Edition* (2015)(original in colour) — A photobook by Joseph Wright. Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Joseph Wright.

Last to be presented is the photo essay/photobook. A total of 22 books, of which four share lineage with the photographic book/photobook, and seven with the artists' book/photobook. The photo essay/photobook in quality of reproduction closely resembles the photographic book/photobook and in construction, has borrowed elements from the artists' book/photobook. These proximities begin to raise questions when we consider the knock-on impact on cost and restrictions for acts of amplification. The photo essay/photobook, which costs an average of €54 in hybrid lineages, and €50 across books in a pure lineage would appear to have moved some distance from the photobook's function as carrier, and a model of publishing which sought connections with a broad public readership.

This said, while the contemporary photo essay/photobook is manifested in curiously expensive forms (eight of 11 in the pure lineage are hardback books), there are also some examples of pragmatism. 11 acts of pragmatism have been identified here, as opposed to 15 of reactivity. Most of these acts though are small: from a short video of the artist introducing a key theme of the work online as with Latoya Ruby Frazier for *The Notion of Family*, (Aperture, 2018) to the presentation of a ‘conversation starter’ about body shaming in relation to Haley Moris-Cafiero’s *The Watchers* (The Magenta Foundation, 2015). Perhaps the most substantial are in the form of Gert Ludwig’s iPad App (2011)⁸², and a one hour artist talk presented on Aperture’s web page for Jan Gross’ *The Jungle Book* (Aperture, 2017). Despite these minor pragmatic acts it would still be posited that the contemporary photo essay/photobook is reactive in nature, and fails to exploit the possibilities of linked digital technology to retain a proximity with the lineage’s publishing model. It has instead moved closer in frame and publishing model, to the artists’ book/photobook as represented in a publishing sphere which no longer connects with readers in a general public audience.

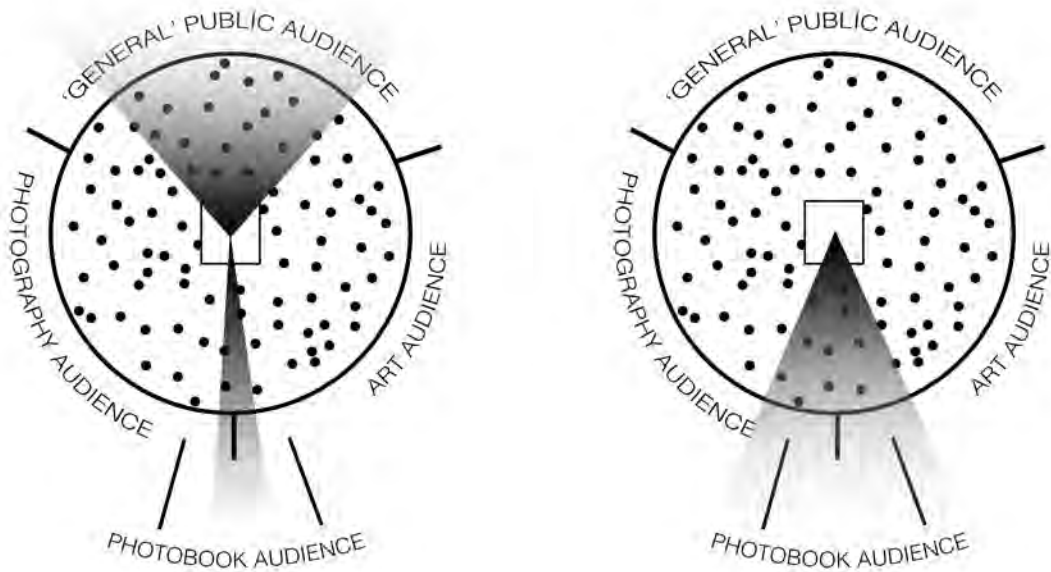


Fig. 29. *Before and after; A lineage based sphere of the photo essay/photobook (expected) and a content analysis based sphere of the photo essay/photobook (actual) (2019)*

⁸² Though it is not advertised with the same emphasis as the book (and not available worldwide)

'The' contemporary photobook

'It is now de rigueur for any photographer of ambition to make a book. Whether their primary arena is in the commercial studio, the war zone, or the art gallery, a successful photobook gives a considerable boost to a photographer's credibility' (Badger and Parr, 2006:7).

Our findings through the chapter illustrate that even in reactive publications, connections are forged with a reader and in many ways strengthened: in the desire for tactility, permanence and control. But simultaneously we have shown an interesting lack of pragmatism in all lineages (and most significantly for the photo essay/photobook). This can be best illustrated with two statistics. Of all 52 books encountered, a total of 29 makers' web spaces had links to photobook accolades they had received, whereas none had links to the locations of publications in public libraries. In fact no maker had provided information on how the work could be seen in person prior to, or without, purchase⁸³. Linked digital technology has made the updating of websites and the hypertextual linking of content simple and quick enough for more than half the makers to ensure new accolades or presences on lists were accurate, but the amplification of the work in a broader public context with this act, has remained undone. This is of less concern for the photographic book/photobook than the other lineages, for it seeks to present an experience or assemblage not available elsewhere, but for the artists' book/photobook, and most significantly the photo essay/photobook, this appears to be a missed connection with potential readers.

The contemporary photobook — two lineages become one

In the time of this research, it is posited that the lineage of the photo essay/photobook has merged with the artists' book/photobook, and has adopted some of its characteristics. So while photobooks are purporting to educate, inform, record, document or give voice, they may be derailed in these intentions by an increasing interest in operating a model of publishing which places production, authorial control and medium interrogation at the fore. The dominance of reactive choices regarding

⁸³ In addition, only a handful had any accompanying resources to aid conversations. No books were produced by print-on-demand technology, only one had an accompanying digital edition and none presented pricing structures to facilitate access.

materiality and production was clear in this chapter, and contributed to an average price of the photo essay/photobook of €54 and the artists' book/photobook of €44: prices which are telling of a medium which is far from accessible to those without a pre-existing interest. Michael Mack, Alejandro Acin and Lesley Martin all identified pricing as a significant issue for the contemporary photobook:

'I don't know if you have looked at some pricing but some of it is absolutely crazy crazy, crazy crazy... it's very rare that I will spend more than £50 on something, it has to be really something I want, to do that, to spend that amount of money... ' (Mack, 2019).

'Very, very few people spend... the ones who buy books, very few of them spend 30, 40 pounds on a book' (Acin, 2018).

'When you talk about bigger audiences then you do have to address two things. You have to address the form that you are creating and you have to address the price-point. Very simply' (Martin, 2019).

Since pricing is not typically separated from production, it is the framing of work in publication which is the root cause here and can be expressed as the difference between thinking of the frame as an artwork (where cost is of less concern), or carrier (where it is a vital consideration). An emphasis on the tactile elements of the book and the quality of reproduction has a direct impact on cost of production and a subsequent impact on price, audience and amplification:

'You cant have something super complicated, the best paper and all of that stuff and make it work unless you have tremendous funding from somewhere' (Martin, 2019).

'If the focus is so much on that and it has 'to be this paper' and it 'has to be this printing' and it 'has to be printed in this place in Italy or Germany'... the result is something which ends up being very expensive and the fascination is then not with the original idea' (Mack, 2019).

'Whilst we applaud experimentation with formats, materials and design, perhaps an over focus on these aspects of photobook creation has been at the expense of what truly matters; photography' (McLean, 2015:54).

For the photo essay/photobook this indicates a shift in purpose towards a showcasing of the makers' work, an interrogation of the photobook medium, and with it, an audience which is far more photobook exclusive than it purports to in its language. Speaking about her book *The Epilogue* (2014)(a photo essay/photobook), Laia Abril was clear in how hard she had to work in order for this not to be the case:

'Honestly, I do not know anyone in recent years who has been a consumer of photobooks and has not had something to do with the world of photography. No one. The public is us. Without a strong mailing campaign and effort on my part, *The Epilogue* would not have reached readers from the area of eating disorders' (Abril et al, 2015:28).

The photo essay/photobook, in merging with the artists' book/photobook under the contemporary photobook umbrella, is judged as such, and thus, a critique regarding purpose, lacks. If we were to adopt a lineage-specific critique we would seek to encourage more pragmatism and less reactivity in response to post-digitality and post-photography. Michael Mack, in a reflection on his own interest in publishing, provides a clear summary of what we have witnessed here:

'The reason I was interested in publishing instead of exhibitions and curating was because of that possibility of the dissemination of ideas in a democratic way. Yet what the photobook market has come and done is to reverse that by an investment in terms of the market value of a collectible item and also that is, as you say, predicated more and more on the print value and the extraordinary... the slip case, the three volumes... all these factors... it takes you further and further away from the simple straight forward ideas and the judgement of the content' (Mack, 2019).

The contemporary photobook — introducing pragmatic acts

This research is not content with identifying and evidencing the connections made and missed between the photobook and its reader, it seeks also to identify possibilities for stronger connections — in this case, pragmatic approaches to the post-digital and post-photographic. Pragmatic acts in the framing and amplification of content must be considered on an individual basis, but there are several suggestions made here for the contemporary photobook, particularly for works which propose to inform and give voice. It should be taken as understood from the prior section that some of these possibilities can only be employed with a simultaneously pragmatic approach to quality.

Print-on-demand (POD) can be operated in the home studio or via the machinery of Blurb, Lulu, or other such companies⁸⁴, and far from acting as a one-size fits all solution, can be tailored to produce desired affects. By printing only the stock needed, the photobook is taken away from high overheads involved in the production of an edition and the storage woes this can lead to. Naturally there will be resistance to such a bold suggestion. Joachim Schmid, a prolific POD self-publisher sees this in ‘photographers’ complaints about the poor print quality or the insufficient binding of these books’ (Schmid, 2018:116). There are many thousands of books for which this would indeed be a poor option; nevertheless, there are thousands more that could benefit from print-on-demand as a technology which reduces financial outlay and is able to respond to demand. Of course the print-on-demand photobook does not carry the same respect in many circles as the edition but this should not stand in the way. An eloquent manifesto for the technology can be found by *Publication Studio* who by operating ‘one-at-a-time’ are able to reduce ‘waste, both financial and in terms of materials’ (Bailey et al, 2015:59). Other solutions lie in a de-fetishising of the photobook and engagement with cheap production and printing process falling outside of print-on-demand. While it is acknowledged that such an alteration will undoubtedly recalibrate the reading experience of a book, it is a shift which will benefit those readers who are not as keenly invested in reproduction values as the makers themselves and, with tiered publishing, there is the possibility to continue to meet the needs of multiple readers and audiences:

⁸⁴ Perhaps part of the reason POD has had relatively small take-up in the photobook world is due to the conflation of the term with these company’s products which can be just as expensive as ‘regular’ publications.

'There should be like a hard bound and a paperback just like there is in books with the mass market paperback and then the hardcover edition, that seems to make a lot of sense to me for the collectors who want to put down the money for the perfect version and then the people who just want to be able to experience that work' (Gachot, 2018).

For the possibilities of tiered editioning we might look towards the novel or music album, both of which have established approaches to multiple products. For the novel, the hardback precedes the paperback by a number of months which then in turn, depending on reception, precedes mass-market versions. Thus the eager author-afficionado can get their hardback quickest of all, but must pay for the privilege, whilst others might wait, and spend less, for the paperback or mass-market version. There is even more range in the tiered editioning of music distribution which ranges from the experiential concert (expensive and infrequent), through collector's vinyl, CDs and general listener's digital purchases right through to the subscriber's access and free streaming music with adverts via Youtube or Spotify.

Author Corey Doctorow is a proponent of tiered editioning, often releasing four with each publication (hardback, paperback, audio and DRM-free ebook), ranging from \$0 - \$25 (Doctorow, 2017). Doctorow understands that the ebook does not compete directly with those looking to buy a hardback⁸⁵, and that with principles of Kevin Kelly's eight 'generatives' in mind (Kelly, 2008), offering versions is a sensible way to satisfy the connoisseur and a broader public. This, we should keep in mind, is with the novel and non-fiction book, mediums which have a less concrete relationship with design and materiality than the photobook, and so it is reasonable to expect that the lessons here not only apply, but can be expanded, onto the photobook. The combining of print-on-demand technology, PDF publications and the perfect (unrestricted) edition, or similar amalgamations, would seem quite logical. It may appear here as though I am suggesting how authors or artists should make work, that I am telling Cezanne how to 'paint his apples' (Bolton, 1992:268), but, without intervention, the photobook is likely to

⁸⁵ Something seen also in the case study on *Invisible City; A Digital Resource* (Johnston and Schles, 2012), seen on pages 203-211.

continue in its current physical form which, in strengthening a physical connection with an emergent audience of the photobook, weakens potential connections in communication with those outside this small and particular community⁸⁶. To see a detailed case study of the role that reactivity and pragmatism do, and can, play in the lineage of the photo essay/photobook we need only look as far as the winner of the 2017 Aperture photobook award; *Monsanto®: A Photographic Investigation* by Mathieu Asselin (2017).

⁸⁶ Of which there is a considerable analysis found in Chapter Three.

Monsanto®: A Photographic Investigation

Note: There are other books in the photo essay/photobook lineage which present clearer examples of how reactivity may impact a publishing sphere⁸⁷, however *Monsanto®: A Photographic Investigation* has been chosen as a case study. This choice has been made because this publication exhibits both reactive and pragmatic traits, and in this manner is a far more nuanced example with which to work.

Mathieu Asselin's book, published by Kettler Verlag and designed by Ricardo Baez, is an exemplar of the contemporary photo essay/photobook. The photographic investigation itself explores the murky world of Monsanto and its impact on lives and land in the US and abroad. It combines Monsanto's own advertising with newspaper clippings, video stills, essays, maps and Asselin's own photographs. It is comprehensive, clearly the result of significant time in research and production and is literally and figuratively a heavyweight book. Such rigour is admirable, as is Asselin's determination that 'the story needs to be told' (Bush and Asselin, 2016). It is though with our spectrum of reactivity and pragmatism, combined with lineage, that we can more critically interrogate this work and see how it can demonstrate not only how the work has connected with certain readers, but also where it has missed connections and how such lesions can be fused.

The most overt indication of reactivity in the publication is its existence as a tome of a work, which incorporates different paper stocks, occasional pull-outs and a slip at the back, all of which is contained in hardback format. This, and the sheer scale of the work is the primary contributor to a retail price of €55. It is a cost of frame which inhibits the possibilities of amplification. In this instance the work is both less likely to be purchased by those without an interest in subject or medium and extremely costly for Asselin himself to donate or lend to new readers. Inside the photobook world, for an audience interested in the medium of the photobook, this may be of little concern. The physical offering of *Monsanto* has been praised by one of the jurors for the Aperture photobook award, Christiano Raimondi, who highlighted the importance 'that this book exists in physical form, as a document, and not just in the virtual world' (Smyth, 2017).

⁸⁷ Later in the thesis we will see this in reference to Kare Nolan's *Neither* (2014) and Daniel Mayrirt's *You Haven't Seen Their Faces* (2015).

Certainly this is a valid perspective, and one that chimes with a conversation I had with Asselin in which he noted not only that *Monsanto* was always intended to be a book, but that this was due to the intimacy of the book and the ability to return to it over a period of time (Asselin, 2019). Yet there is still a tension between the overt physicality of the publication and the lineage in which it operates, something Asselin recognises:

‘The book has a cost of €55 — this is not very democratic even in the EU, and even if I made some mistakes regarding the cost of the book, it was important to have a book like that, a clear story, a simple design and the book as an object’ (Asselin, 2019).

Interestingly, in no reviews or commentary of the work is this tension alluded to, an indication of the insularity of the photobook world which is explored in Chapter Three. It could be said that just as elements of this publication exhibit reactivity, so too it encourages language of reactivity in review. Loring Knoblauch of *Collector Daily* brings attention to the book’s ‘scrapbook or dossier feel’ (Knoblauch, 2017), and Ruben Lundgren, jury member of the *Kassel Dummy Award* who sums up the publication as a ‘perfect package of photography, design and text’ (Asselin and Peces, 2017) without thought regarding what such perfection may have the potential to obfuscate.

The physical manifestation of *Monsanto* has not stopped Asselin’s efforts to have the work spark conversation with exhibitions at *The Photographers Gallery*, *FotoMuseum Antwerp* and even the European Parliament building in Strasburg, all accompanied by free newspapers with a condensed version of the book within. Asselin has gone some way to amplifying the work in order to reach broader audiences, but even these are relatively exclusive spaces, and the newspaper is reaching the same audience as the exhibition. It is a difficult balance to strike between the need for success in the art and photobook world and the desire to speak to a broader audience, because the two are not separable. Alejandro Acin points out that the photobook is only one part of a bigger strategy, and Asselin recognises that success in his career helps more works to emerge, and with increasingly wider audiences:

'Matthieu has had quite a lot of interviews on TV as well so I think the photobook plays a part within the whole strategy of the project but its just a small part. I don't know if it's the most important one but it's a part of a bigger strategy' (Acin, 2018).

'Success gives exposure to the work... like a loudspeaker, it gives me further reach. And on the other side it gives me exposure, personally as a photographer... maybe my next work will have further exposure... if I do my job right' (Asselin, 2019)

Most interesting of all the acts with which *Monsanto* engages, is the choice to produce a digital publication, made available for free with a fair use⁸⁸ download. Whilst of itself a pragmatic act, the timing of its introduction (a full two years after the physical publication), demonstrates its place as a combative response to the primary publication's reactivity, and in this, whilst re-aligning closer with its lineage, brings focus to what may have lacked in the original publication when considering audience (or how frame impacts amplification). Asselin is frank when discussing the limits of the original publication, and has done a considerable amount more than many makers in activating his work and ensuring it operates with purpose:

'It's a simple as: many people didn't have access to the book for different reasons, one being the price, so the idea is to make it accessible to everyone with an internet connection. In few weeks more people have download the book than the total English sales of the book, people from everywhere. That is a wonderful thing' (Asselin, 2019).

This speaks also of the need for a cheaper, smaller second edition (Asselin, 2019). Clearly, this is a maker who comprehends the significance of connections with readers. It is hoped that in the lack of clear and exclusive reactivity (or pragmatism), this short case study helps to show what it is that such a spectrum can do for asking tough questions of published works and how answers may be worked through in numerous ways. *Monsanto* has provided a rich work to explore and throughout the research has

⁸⁸ 'Individuals such as teachers and pupils, lecturers and students or personal use. Educational establishments such as schools and universities. Other providers of instruction such as museums and youth organisations' (Asselin, 2019).

been one of the most pragmatic in approach to publishing (when considering the latter adjustments in the digital download at least). There are though some adjustments that could be made in order to more strategically utilise the technologies and values of the post-digital and post-photographic.



Fig. 30. *Monsanto: A Photographic Investigation* (2017)(original in colour). Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Verlag Kettler.

Returning to lineage — Monsanto®: A Photographic Investigation

Here, I offer a re-publishing of *Monsanto* (the original 2017 publication) with the lineage of the photo essay/photobook in mind, and Asselin's words as guide; 'the most important thing is to reach the people, without that the rest doesn't matter much' (Asselin and Bush, 2016). This is a way of making clear, and actionable, some of the themes which have occurred in this chapter. Several publishing acts are posited here that could be applied to this work, but more pressingly, to other works which have exhibited few, or no, pragmatic acts. I have prioritised those adjustments which are made possible, or more feasible, with the introduction of linked digital technology that

is so essential in the time period of this research, but have also included components of publishing which have been possible without this.

- The original publication remains in its current form but is clearly subsidising the public outreach activities below. Buyers of the original publication are given tiered purchase options in which they may choose to pay for one or several of the following:
 - An additional original publication to be sent, with cataloguing information, to a library of their choice
 - 10 or 100 copies of the newspaper to be shipped alongside the publication for the buyer's distribution
 - The donation of a custom print-on-demand book to a space or institution of their/Asselin's choice
- The original newspaper remains in its current form but rather than being found in photographic spaces and duplicating the location of the main publication, it is given to cafes, schools, libraries, hairdressers, dentists and other communal spaces.
- A new, print-on-demand, custom book option is available. This publication, part subsidised by sales of the original publication is made available to schools, universities, community groups, libraries and so on. It provides the opportunity for teachers or leaders to create a publication which suits best their interest in the project/its alignment with curriculum and so on. It is accompanied by suggested questions for essays and discussions⁸⁹ as well as sets of images for workshops and more interactive learning.
- A website is created which details the ways in which people can get involved in campaigns, fund-raising, support or the sharing of their own information. It provides downloadable content for free which includes PDFs of sections of the book, and a PDF, together with instructions for hacking a laser jet printer, to print and staple low-fi zines.

⁸⁹ Such as those that *The Photobook Club* promotes (see pages 203-208).

- A series of reading events much like a book tour are organised. In these, Asselin is able to travel with the book, and newspapers, to relevant communities, institutions and spaces of learning to share the work in a discursive manner.
- In addition it would be expected that Asselin and the makers of the publication as well as all those responsible for the publishing of the work, would review progress and impact at three, six and 12 month points as well as the longer tail of the project after two, five and ten years.

What these adjustments do for a sphere of publishing is to completely recalibrate them. By removing the publication itself from the sphere, a complete view of acts of publishing (the multiple choices occur in framing and amplification) is possible, and we are able to consider afresh how best to reach readers in a given audience.

‘If ‘making public’ is tangible to the point of uselessness, amplification is a definite, traceable process with results that are all too tangible in the increased consumption or awareness of a given work’ (Bhaskar, 2013:115).

In Figure 31, the current approach of *Monsanto®: A Photographic Investigation* is visualised. Whilst the €55 book is represented only by the photobook and photography audience, the exhibition newspaper is represented by a small foray into a general public. In Figure 32, the three publications the strategy elucidated sees a more passive approach to the art and photography audience but a focus on the photobook audience in order to help fund the other outreach acts. The website and distribution helps to provide a broad spread and the customisable POD book and resources intensify the work’s impact in schools and other institutions. The photographic work Asselin produced has been poured into several frames and amplified with numerous acts: ensuring all the time that the model of publishing in which the frame is a carrier, has been central. None of this has precluded connecting with readers in the photobook audience, in fact it has sought to engage them in the further amplification of the work. This case study is not intended to show flaws in Asselin’s process (it is one of the most robust pieces of photographic publishing in the time of this research), but it

demonstrates how even some of those works which already seek to exploit some opportunities of linked digital technology, can do even more.

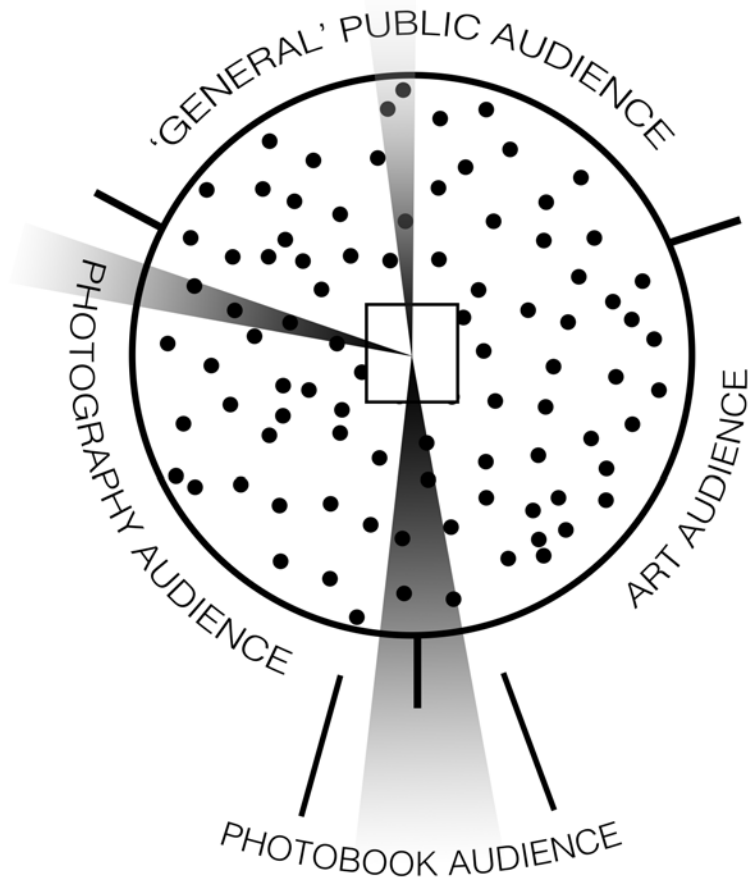


Fig. 31. *The publishing sphere of Monsanto: A Photographic Investigation* (2019) — based on the original 2017 publication.

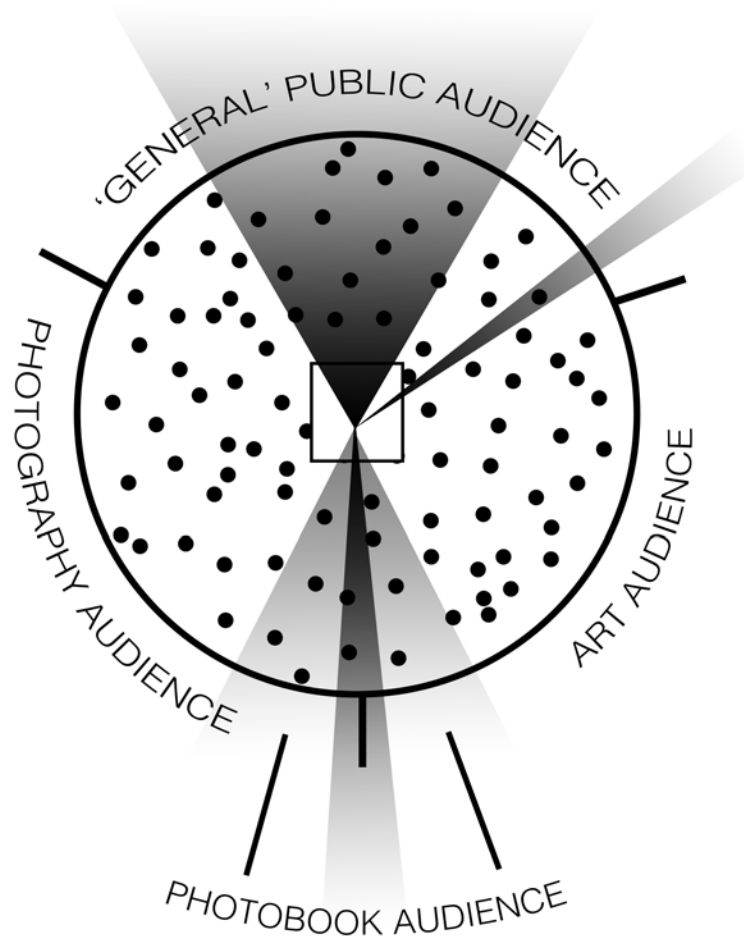


Fig. 32. *A proposed publishing sphere for Monsanto: A Photographic Investigation* (2019)

Verso

In this chapter we have located the contemporary photobook in a post-digital and post-photographic landscape. Doing so not only provided a key contextual account of the medium for the thesis, but presented an opportunity to consider the impact of such a situation on the construction of the photobook itself. It was suggested that, as a product of post-digitality and post-photography, the contemporary photobook exhibits a variety of characteristics directly influenced by the intensification of a digitised life, and that these may be characterised on a spectrum of reactivity and pragmatism. From here, a series of questions were devised which related to the literature of the post-photographic and post-digital, and enabled a thorough investigation of a pool of contemporary photobooks in order to witness and evidence impact in more than 50 books spread across the three lineages established in Chapter One⁹⁰. It was seen that while the photographic book/photobook and artists' book/photobook exhibited predominantly reactive traits, this did not alter their model of publishing or function of the photobook and did not derail connections with readers. However the photo essay/photobook, in an adoption of predominantly reactive acts, had moved closer towards the sphere of the artists' book/photobook, and was exhibiting signs of missed connections with a potential readership.

This chapter has, through a mixed methodology of literature review, elite interviews and content analysis, been able to create a considered view of the contemporary photobook in a post-digital and post-photographic context. What's more, with the proposal to critique the photobook as exhibiting reactive or pragmatic characteristics it has demonstrated how the photographic book/photobook and artists' book/photobook lineages of the photobook have retained, or strengthened, connections with readers in their tactility, fixity and experimental nature, yet the photo essay/photobook has not. In the construction of our proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook this chapter has provided a second stage which encourages the questioning of publications encountered by readers and critics from a reactive/pragmatic standpoint

⁹⁰ While lineages are deeply embedded in the chapter. It is still possible to see the findings without — that the contemporary photobook is predominantly pragmatic, and that there is a tendency towards production techniques which result in expensive objects for instance. I have used lineages as a way of understanding this with more appropriate specificity but it simple to imagine how instead a categorisation of publisher or subject matter could be applied.

and also offers tools to illustrate how framing and amplification of a photographic work is connected to a model of publishing.

A proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook

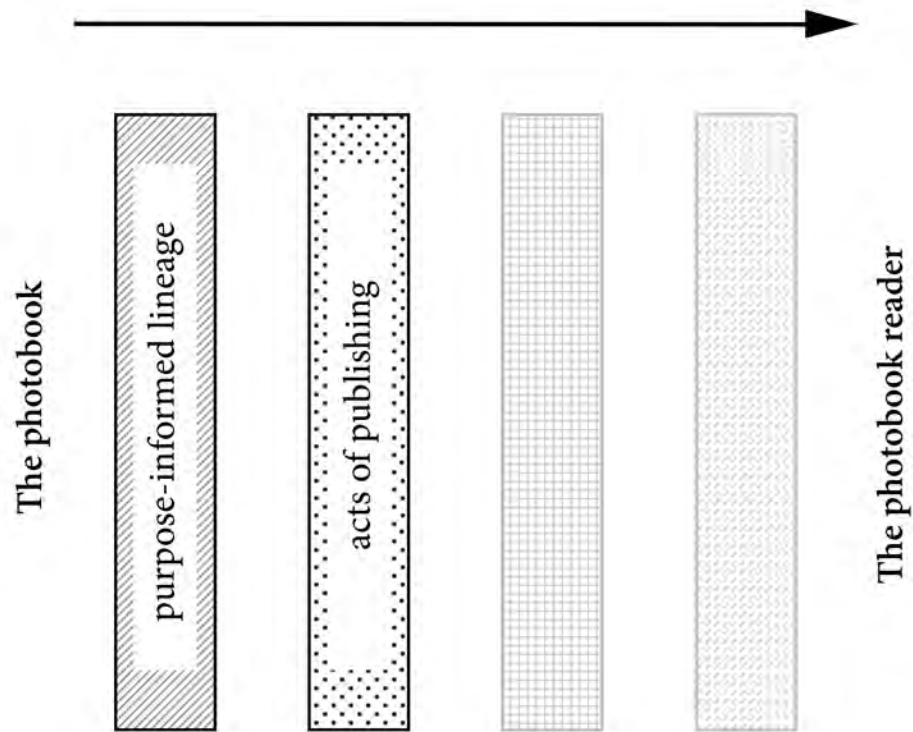


Fig. 33. *A proposed, partial critical framework for the contemporary photobook (II)* (2019)

Throughout this chapter we have considered the audience of the photobook (in its three lineages), and have gone on to see how, for the artists' book/photobook and photo essay/photobook at least, an audience specifically interested in the medium forms a primary readership. Yet it has not been made clear who comprises this audience, nor how they may contribute to its form in parallel to the post-digital and post-photographic contexts in which it resided. So, it is here that we turn now.

Chapter Three. Community and discourse:

How does the photobook world shape the contemporary photobook?

Recto

The thesis to this point has dealt first with the photobook's inception and *raison d'être* in the form of lineages, and subsequently with its entry into the world via publishing in a linked digital context: a process which revealed potentially limiting factors in the medium's reach beyond a photobook audience. It may be evident then that we must continue the formation of a possible holistic, critical framework for the contemporary photobook by asking questions of this audience, the community of practitioners making photobooks, and how their discourse may impact the shape of the medium. In undertaking these investigations we will see how the dominance of production and making (rather than making public), of Chapter Two, manifests in events and conversation of the photobook world, and how the individuals who comprise the community itself are shaping a particular identity for the photobook which is sophisticated and maker-centric. This situation, combined with an evidencing of the emergence of a photobook world in the time of this research, and our findings from earlier chapters, leads to the suggestion that we must begin to think of the contemporary photobook as a new, iterative form of the historic photobook.

We start the chapter by evidencing, through extensive data collection, the popularity and rise to prominence of the contemporary photobook during the time of this research: demonstrating the unification of activities which the term 'photobook' has helped bring about. Subsequently, we look to identify the individuals who comprise the photobook community — those who have an active role in shaping the photobook and its world. In this section, we witness the privileged place of the maker, and the limited audience of the medium, before contextualising what we have learned about the photobook community by reviewing its textual discourse in two separate areas. Firstly, the open, social dialogue presented on Facebook groups dedicated to the form, and secondly, the accompanying text to medium-specific awards and accolades. Bringing together the findings from event, community and discourse analysis, with the help of elite interviews, literary review and theory allows us to build a picture of the photobook world in key areas relating to its insularity, sophistication and maker-centrism.

Further exploration of these characteristics demonstrates their interconnected nature, that much of what is witnessed can be theorised by considering the contemporary photobook to be seeking its own 'legitimisation' (Bourdieu, 1996:96), and that in its abundance, there is a belief that the contemporary medium is successful and effective. It is from here that I produce a proposal to consider the contemporary photobook as a new form of the existing medium: a notion which helps to articulate the unification of the photobook which has disparate lineages but has, through its situation in a post-digital, post-photographic context, emerged as something novel. This proposal is accompanied by a visualisation which charts lineage movement in relation to the photobook world, following which a series of adjustments to current discourse are put forward, and a case study on *The Photobook Club* is presented as an example of a reader-centric initiative.

Chapter style notes

In this chapter, there is a key distinction to be made in the use of the terms 'textual discourse' and 'discourse'. The former refers to text-based discourse which is reviewed in this chapter via online discussion groups and reflections, and statements from photobook awards and competitions. The latter, 'discourse' is used in its broadest sense to describe the conversations, products, events⁹¹ and writing that are concerned with the photobook. While events come under this umbrella term, the community itself does not.

⁹¹ We are including the products (photobooks) and events of discourse as they are seen as 'statements' which reflect the way Gillian Rose articulates discourse to be 'groups of statements that structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking' (Rose, 2016:187).

Orienting ourselves in the photobook landscape

Before we can consider an investigation into the individuals who organise themselves around the contemporary photobook, we must firstly describe the world they occupy. With so many activities not just in the physical realm, but the digital also, it can be a difficult area to map, let alone navigate. What's more, with no pre-existing definitions, I must set my own, with the knowledge of all that has been encountered in literature review, data collection and case studies to this point. My components of the photobook world are designed to be simple, and clear: events, community, textual discourse and products. The last of these, in the form of published photobooks themselves, has already been discussed (throughout Chapter Two). The others form the initial structure of this chapter, and are outlined briefly now.

Events: An exploration and evidencing of the many photobook-specific fairs, festivals, competitions and other events of 2015 goes a way towards evidencing the rise of the medium and the gradient of this trajectory. The results not only look to connect with the theorisation of the photobook as a post-digital and post-photographic medium from Chapter Two, but also provide a background for the subsequent investigations in this chapter.

Community: The individuals who coalesce around the photobook, either directly involved in its life (in publication or publishing), or with a professional or personal interest in the medium, are the second focus of our investigations. Looking at the characteristics of those who comprise the photobook community generates a record of this specific time in the photobook's life, but also offers explanation for some of the findings in this, and other chapters. Primarily here it is the responses to the photobook reading survey which enable us to speak with confidence about the make-up of the community.

Textual discourse: Looking at the manner in which conversations around photobooks take place provides a view of both the everyday discourse of the form and how the photobook community deems certain photobooks and their qualities to be good, or successful. In looking at everyday conversation, two Facebook pages, each with

thousands of followers and hundreds of regular contributors, have been chosen as a lens through which to see an open photobook discourse. Subsequently, it is reflections of jury members on awards which provide a view of the manner in which the contemporary photobook is articulated by critics, and, in relation to what is deemed exemplary of the medium.

In addition to these areas of investigation and data collection, this chapter will also reference elite interviews with major players who represent various relationships with the photobook world, and anchor a great deal of what is evidenced and theorised here.

Events and the photobook

The survey of activities which occupies the following section, grasps and displays the many photobook-specific events which occur in what we refer to as the 'photobook world'. The result is the ability to acknowledge a timeline of growth for the photobook, and the data to support a view of a world which is — in corporeal events — vibrant and active. I begin the chapter with this data collection activity as an illustration of the emergence of a photobook world and community which did not exist in its current form, or scale, before the time period this research is concerned with.

2015: A reverse chronology

'It was quite fantastic to have a whole weekend discussing the world of photography books. This could not have happened 10 years ago as the recognition of this field of study was not established yet' (Martin Parr speaking about the first FotoBookFestival Kassel in 2008 (Fotobook Festival, 2019)).

On the foldout, found on the following page (see Fig. 34.), is a view of all fairs, festivals, competitions, workshops and open archives that were photobook-specific during 2015 in the US and EU. In addition, each occurrence was traced back to its inaugural event to provide a reverse chronology which seeks to establish a timeline of ascendance for these events.

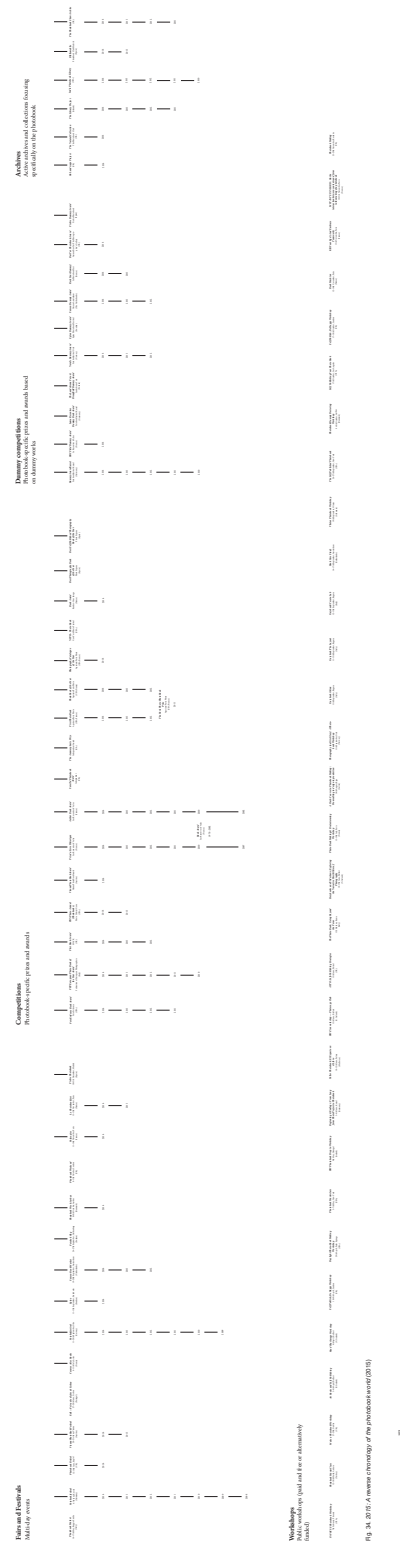


Fig. 34. 2015; A reverse chronology of the photobook world (2015). A full PDF of this chronology can be found at http://mjohnstonphotography.co.uk/2015_matt_johnston_chronology_of_the_photobook.pdf

The simplicity of the visualisation presented here allows for a demonstration of a chronology of growth, for while there are a number of events that have run for many years, and one that has existed since before the millennium (Arles), the overwhelming majority have formed since 2008. This is a date which tallies with our consideration of time on page 102, in that it is developing in the wake of multiple books-on-photobooks, and the impact of Martin Parr and Gerry Badger’s photobook history publications (begun in 2004). What’s more, it tallies also with our interrogations on the relationship between post-photography, post-digitality and the photobook from Chapter Two, with a key period from 2004-2008 in which Youtube, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and the iPhone are all launched in only four years.

A condensed timeline of linked digital technologies and photobooks		
2004	<i>The Photobook, A History vol I</i> by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger	Flickr, Facebook (local)
2005		Youtube and Blurb
2006	<i>The Photobook, A History vol II</i> by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger	Facebook (open), Twitter
2007		The iPhone is launched and released Tumblr and Google Streetview
2008	Photobook Festival Kassel inaugural edition	

Table 12. A condensed timeline of linked digital technologies and photobooks

‘I saw the momentum building for photobooks really around 2004 — I mean when the first Parr/Badger photobook history came out’ (Shaw, 2018).

To exhibit photobooks and to run photobook competitions prior to 2008 was not unheard of, but, while the photobook was often featured in art spaces such as galleries and museums, it was rarely there purely on its own steam: that is to say that more commonly the photobook would be included as an element in an exhibition on printed

artistic works, a component of an artists oeuvre, or as historical reference point. While the events cited in my visualisation (see Fig. 34.) are based in specific locations within the EU and North America, they are international in scope, benefiting from a decentralised audience which can be organised, or made aware of a particular event or initiative via linked digital technologies. In these places, the photobook, rather than a location, becomes organising and coalescing principle; consequently allowing for a collection of like-minded individuals.

A closer look at the data reveals two interesting sub-narratives⁹². Firstly, the popularity of the dummy competition. It has already been suggested that as a reactive trait in the post-digital and post-photographic there is an increasing interest in the process of production, and here we see it clearly. There are 16 regular competitions in our review and an additional ten which are dummy-specific — a significant representation for a niche component of the photobook's journey to publication⁹³. Secondly, and not unconnected, is the presence of photobook-making workshops, with a total of 30 recorded, which to give some perspective, is against a total of only 15 fairs or festivals in the same year. Almost all of these workshops are geared towards the construction of a photobook or dummy book, not to the reading or comprehension of the potentialities of the medium. This is an indication of their audience being those interested in making, something which gains further significance when we look at the spaces of these workshops, fairs and competitions.

The construction of space

The locations we have reviewed here can tell us more about the contemporary photobook, in the manner in which they are, literally, constructed. In these spaces, the photobook is found rarely within pristine decor and on polished tables. The material make-up of these spaces exudes an atmosphere that is remarkably similar to the atmosphere of 'naturalness' and 'authenticity' described in 1968 by Jean Baudrillard in

⁹² There is more that could be explored here, and the elite interviews with Alejandro Acin, Sarah Bodman and Sarah Bay Gachot provide additional insight into the role of fairs and festivals on the photobook and artists' book, but it is not a key tenet of this chapter.

⁹³ Some of these competitions for the dummy seek to find works to publish (often the winner gets support or a publisher's commitment to the project).

Le système des objets (*The system of objects*, 2005). This may seem far removed from contemporary attitudes towards materials, but whilst 50 years have passed, the same hierarchies of material value (in a cultural sense) can be found. Earthenware, copper and wood have, in almost all uses, been technically surpassed by composites and synthetics, yet they can lay claim to far more cultural value in the home than the likes of titanium, polycarbonate and carbon fibre. In fact the ode to wood that Baudrillard proffers in 1968 has new resonance at the time of this writing, with fashionable phone cases, sunglasses and bike handlebars all being constructed in wood. To employ our new language emerging from Chapter Two, we could see the choices of event organisers to use wood panels, shipping palettes, trestle tables and rough OSB as pragmatic: these are cheap, readily available materials that can be used and re-used in subsequent spaces and arrangements. We could also see this as a reactive projection of certain themes we explored in Chapter Two regarding the revealing of process and an emphasis on production (page 111).



Fig. 35. *Dummy Exhibition Madrid (2015)*(original in colour) Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Mauro Corinti.



Fig. 36. *Offprint, Tate Modern (2015)*(original in colour). Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Antonio De Luca.

Certainly, the reactive seems to be at play in the first *Offprint London* event in 2015 (see Fig. 36.). *Self Publish, Be Happy*, who co-curated the festival, had its volunteers dressed in boiler suits, despite the lack of messy activities taking place. Speakers stood against a wall made from plastic crates (which were new⁹⁴) on a step ladder while seats were (again new) kick-step stools. These decisions suggest a conscious projection of a certain narrative around making photobooks which is industrial in nature⁹⁵. The construction of the space in which we see books could be extended to the online presentation of works which are often featured against wooden tables (see Fig. 37.), but this is a tangent to the focus of this section to ascertain what the events of the photobook world can tell us about the formation of a contemporary photobook discourse. So, while what we have evidenced here should not be taken as definitive at this stage, already the presence of making workshops, dummy competitions and overtly industrial spaces, is a strong indicator of a core component of the photobook world being the *making* of works.

⁹⁴ Had these crates been reclaimed, the choice would more easily align with a pragmatic perspective. They were not used in subsequent iterations of the show in 2016, 2017 or 2018.

⁹⁵ Or even rebellious. There is something of the punk aesthetic about many photobook-specific events and environments. It was particularly prevalent in a magazine article in the *British Journal of Photography* in which 'five of the best' indie photobook publishers were pictured reclining on a tatty sofa with the headline 'London's Calling' — a reference to their geo-location and The Clash (Smyth et al, 2015). This is a marked difference to the spaces in which many of the photobooks on show at such events are actually produced. Instead of industrial printing presses, most 'on press' images from photobook makers reveal highly automated, clean techno-factory views which are hard to differentiate from the production of other products.

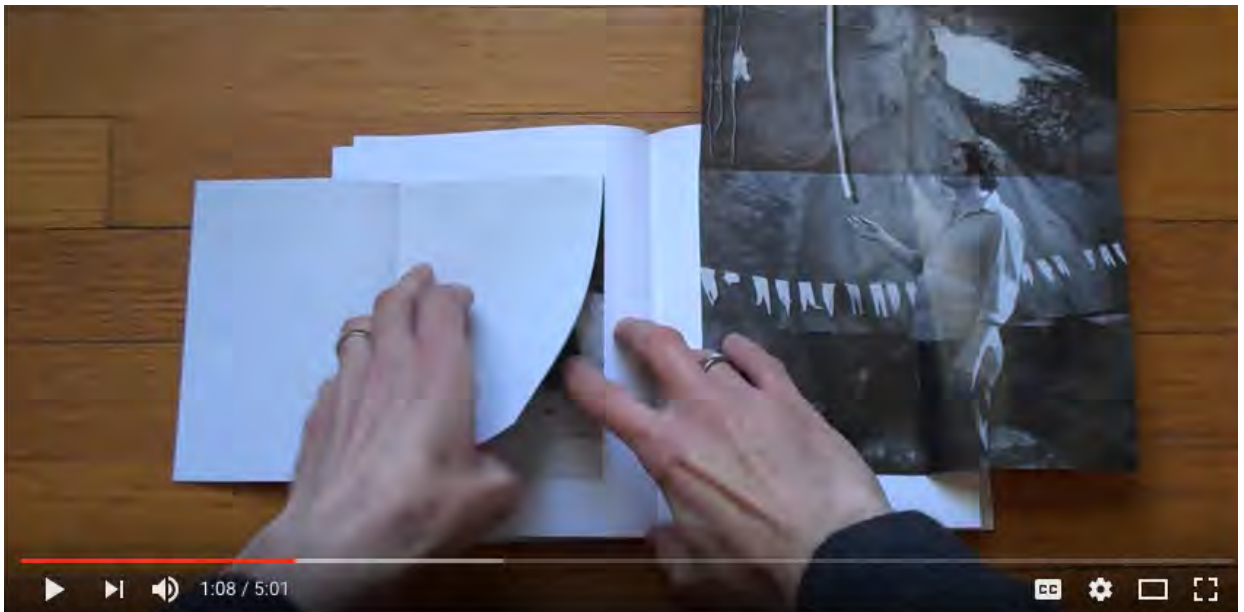


Fig. 37. *Presenting A Head With Wings By Anouk Kruithof* (2011)(original in colour).
Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Jörg Colberg.

The reverse chronology of events we have seen in this section, combined with the timings of photobook-specific taxonomies (from Chapter One) and the interrelation of the medium with linked digital technology (Chapter Two), presents a compelling view of the introduction of the photobook world. It is a world which no longer occupies spaces at the edges of more established mediums and their events, taking control of its own presentation and communication. It is a significant moment for the form, and is indicative of the parallel emergence of community and textual discourse. It is here that I turn to next, by firstly investigating the individuals who comprise the photobook world, and then, how their textual discourse impacts the medium.

Community and the photobook

With the purview of this section to ascertain the composition of the photobook community, we must first be clear what constitutes such a community⁹⁶: at what point may we draw lines of definition around a group? It is tempting to include all those involved in the photobook's life: from inception, through publication, to its residence in the hands and homes of readers; but the latter parts of this journey may be so varied and disparate as to obfuscate learnings from such an investigation. It is tempting to suggest that it is only those directly involved in production or dissemination of photobooks that should be included; but this will cause some issues in accentuating the role of makers without due consideration of the other manners in which people come together in a given community. I will take community then, to mean those individuals who are involved in the production, dissemination, review or general discussion of the photobook, as well as those who are not involved in these areas (of contribution), but for whom the photobook is a medium of interest. This broad picture of a community seeks really only to exclude an audience that is not otherwise interested in the medium⁹⁷: most likely the audience of the photographic book/photobook and, were it not for findings from Chapter Two, the photo essay/photobook also. In order to locate such a community, and conduct research which is pertinent, I have turned to readers of *The Photobook Club* (of which a case study is presented on pages 203-211). It is a project which provides an audience that have diverse relationships with the medium: from authors of multiple works, to avid collectors, those with a scholarly interest and everything in-between.

In total, the photobook reading survey was completed by 178 respondents — a significant sample and one which provides a sufficient cross section through which to extrapolate findings to the photobook community in a broader context. The survey

⁹⁶ The writing of Gerard Delanty (2010) and Etienne Wenger (1998) has been an aid to considering what constitutes community for the purpose of the initial survey construction. It is not in the interests of the direction or cogency of this thesis to engage in reflections on the appropriateness of the term but if of interest, Robert Kozinets' *Netnography* (2010) provides a useful introduction in relation to digital ethnography.

⁹⁷ By means of comparison, we could say that, were we concentrating on folk music, the community would comprise of musicians, DJs, promoters, dancers, event organisers and folk music enthusiasts, but not someone who has been gifted, or bought, only a couple of Fairport Conventions albums.

answers that we are primarily interested in here regard the professional identification of respondents, and are shown in Table 13.

Professional identification of respondents to the photobook reading survey	
Photographer	88
Photography teacher (or related subject)	28
Designer	18
Writer	16
Curator	17
Publisher	17
Photography student (or related subject)	16
Editor	5
Other creative profession (if not already listed above)	23
Not connected to the creative industries	37

Table 13. Professional identification of respondents to the photobook reading survey⁹⁸

A maker-centric community

The figures in Table 13 confirm that the photobook is a medium of multiple creatives: the makers. Almost half of the 178 individuals surveyed consider themselves to be photographers, and those who do not are still involved in creative industries. The contemporary photobook is a space where design, photography, writing and curation come together — a convergent medium — so it is not surprising to see a similar profile of those who are a part of its community. Only a small minority (just over 20%) indicated they were not involved professionally in the creative industries at all, but interestingly, of these 37 individuals, 16 are still involved in some way in the production

⁹⁸ It will be noted that the tally of roles adds up to more than 178 — this is due to 57 respondents identifying as having a mix of roles (typically creative). These roles have been included to provide a full picture of responses.

of photobooks. There are other interesting narratives which emerge from the data which have been brought out and presented here.

- Out of 178 total respondents, 118 identified as being ‘Involved in the production of photobooks — either as a photographer, designer, publisher, binder etc.’ and 66 identified as being ‘Involved in the selling or dissemination of photobooks (as a shop owner writer/reviewer etc.)’.
- There was significant overlap, meaning that the total number of respondents who can be placed as having a role in the production *or* dissemination aspects of photobook publishing is 125 (out of 178: 70%).
- This itself is worth noting as of 66 respondents that said yes to ‘Are you involved in the selling or dissemination of photobooks (as a shop owner writer/reviewer etc?)’, 59 also said yes to ‘Are you involved in the production of photobooks — either as a photographer, designer, publisher, binder etc?’ (89%).
- Of the 118 respondents identifying as involved in the production of the photobook, 86 consider themselves part of the photobook community and 100 share thoughts on the photobook in public spaces.
- Of the 66 respondents identifying as involved in the dissemination of photobooks, 53 consider themselves part of the photobook community (80%) and 59 share thoughts on the photobook in public spaces (89%⁹⁹).
- Within the combined 125 respondents involved in production or dissemination of the photobook, 96 considered themselves a part of the photobook community (77%), and of these same individuals, 105 share thoughts on the photobook publicly (84%).
- Of the 53 individuals who did not identify as being involved in the production or dissemination of the photobook, 21 considered they were part of the photobook community (40%) and 33 share thoughts on the photobook publicly (62%). This makes the visibility of such contributions in relation to the makers, only 24%.

These narratives present a picture of a community which is oriented around production, with few respondents not contributing in some way to the content of the community (books, conversations, platforms and so on). It is a situation which has

⁹⁹ Not surprising, considering the question which included those who review the photobook.

produced innovative publications from an increasingly diverse community, but this community's foundations, built on production, can be problematic.

The identification of the contemporary photobook community as one in which the maker is prominent, is counterpart to what was present through Chapter Two, in an emphasis on publication, rather than publishing, brought about via reactive traits in the post-digital and post-photographic landscape (pages 124-130). It is something which is far from unique to the photobook, and even in fields which are populated by non-corporeal products, making is still often at the top of a community's hierarchy. In 2015 Debbie Chachra, a scientist and biological infrastructure professor, wrote an account of creation-focussed tech-culture in which there is an 'identity built around making things —of being “a maker”' and a 'widespread idea that “People who make things are simply different [read: better] than those who don't”' (2015). For Chachra, the democratisation of access through linked digital technology, the ability to make, has simply continued a gendered hierarchy of making over not making, and devalues the work of those who analyse, characterise and critique (2015). Later in this chapter, the prevalence of the maker, and a focus on production will be returned to, together with what is learned from an exploration of the discourse of the contemporary photobook.

An insular community

'Honestly, I do not know anyone in recent years who has been a consumer of photobooks and has not had something to do with the world of photography. No one. The public is us' (Abril *et al.*, 2015).

In addition to maker-centrism, we should acknowledge the insularity of the photobook community: the notion that the photobook community is not only small, but also self-perpetuating¹⁰⁰. This is something which may be suggested in the data set in Table 13 as the dominance of makers and creatives, but has been brought to the fore most often in the elite interviews for this research, and with a variety of accompanying reflections.

¹⁰⁰ In his elite interview, Doug Sport in saying that the market for photobooks is 'your peers and your mates and buddies' (Spowart, 2018b) almost perfectly mirrors the *Self Publish, Be Happy* Manifesto, in which audience is said to be 'first and foremost. You and your buddies' (Ceschel, 2015:502).

For Sarah Bay Gachot, the photobook community she is a part of is formed at photobook-specific events (and thus relatively closed-off), though she is quick to point out that it can be a 'porous community', and that 'artists, musicians, architects [and] creative types seem to like artists' books and photobooks' (Gachot, 2018). Gachot's positivity around the community and its connection with a creative audience is markedly different to that of Michael Mack, who cites the term 'photobook' itself, and its proliferation, as a 'touchstone to a bigger problem' in which there exists a 'ghetto' of the photobook with everyone 'rallying around the photobook flag'. It is a situation that Mack describes as being a 'dead-end' (Mack, 2019). Coincidentally, this dead-end provides a connection to Lewis Bush's terming of the photobook community as a cul-de-sac, with connotations of 'suburban conservatism', 'curtain twitchers' and 'general closed-in-ness' (Bush, 2016). Bush is clear in his view of the contemporary photobook which evokes a robust suggestion of insularity:

'We don't really engage with the fact that the world outside the photo book cul-de-sac generally isn't that aware or interested [in] what we do. That's partly because sure, the photo book is a relatively newly recognised medium, but I think part of it is also because most photo book makers don't make any serious steps to speak to that world. I often feel that we are the ones relegating ourselves to our obscure cul-de-sac with a sometimes unquestioning adherence to a medium which might be very beautiful and often very appropriate to the stories we want to tell and the ideas we want to share, but perhaps often isn't remotely appropriate to the audiences we sometimes think we want to speak to' (Bush, 2016).

Insularity is also present in Tate Shaw speaking about the common occurrence of makers producing works for their peers (Shaw, 2018) as well as Sarah Bodman and Alejandro Acin's comments regarding the insularity of photobook and artists' book events (Acin, 2018)(Bodman, 2018). When we speak of insularity then, we are not only referring to the dominance of particular creatives in the photobook community, but of the notion that they are speaking to, and producing for, one another. The themes raised so far in relation to the community of the contemporary photobook will be returned to shortly, but first, it is the turn of textual discourse for analysis, as it is there

that we might expect to find some of the richest data to confirm, challenge or contextualise what we have seen thus far.

Textual discourse and the photobook

In this section, having charted the popularity of the medium, and witnessed characteristics of its community, I ask how the textual discourses which occur in this community contribute to the way in which we understand the form, what is deemed important, and even, what makes a good photobook. As a community whose discussions take place in online spaces and via physical publications and events, it is apparent that we are not able to listen in to all conversations. We are though able to look at representative textual discourses from distinct spaces within the photobook world. For the purposes of this section, I will concentrate on two such spaces: the everyday postings of members of social media pages dedicated to the photobook, and the specific places in which photobooks are judged (competitions and awards). For the first of these, the everyday conversations which take place in photobook-specific spaces, I use two large Facebook groups *Flakphoto Books* and *PhotoBooks* for data collection¹⁰¹. These are two groups with over 10,000 members¹⁰² each. They are what Howard Rheingold would call ‘social aggregations’ (1993:3) and represent a significant portion of the digital space of the photobook, and in number, account for the most concrete gathering of the photobook world — an ideal place in which to see how the photobook is discussed and framed.

A linked digital discourse

‘Social media is the communication vehicle of choice [for the photobook world] and participants in the photobook network are driven to frenetically seek updates, reviews, new releases, posts about their books and the latest gossip through social media channels’ (Spowart, 2015).

What is quickly apparent in an analysis of these spaces, is an absence of conversation, though this is not to say that there is an absence of activity. Both Facebook groups are populated by a great volume of posts — a regular stream of

¹⁰¹ It is important to go where the community resides in digital ethnography (Pink et al, 2007:118), and few spaces exist which more clearly present a meeting point of the photobook community.

¹⁰² On October 8th, 2019 the member totals were 13,315 (PhotoBooks) and 11,436 (FlakPhoto Books)

activity — but when seen closer there is little beyond the initial contribution of content. Evidence is available in considering the top 50 posts on these pages on a given day during this research: the 4th of November, 2016. Table 14 shows: the total number of members of the group on this day, how many of the top 50 posts were shared from other Facebook locations (thus not an original contribution of content to the group), how many of these 50 posts were promotional¹⁰³ in nature, and how many comments, in reply to a posting, were present across these top 50¹⁰⁴.

Shares, comments and posts in photobook-specific digital spaces				
Group	Members	Shared posts (across 50 posts)	Comments (across 50 posts)	Promotional posts (out of 50)
<i>FlakPhoto Books</i>	10,266	31	3	30
<i>PhotoBooks</i>	11,639	19	39	35

Table 14. Shares, comments and posts in photobook-specific digital spaces

Taking this in order, the quantity of shared posts tells us that, whilst these contributions have been made to particular Facebook groups, they originate elsewhere, and (via further investigation) are almost all promotional in nature. This could indicate a conversation spanning digital spaces, but in all but a few cases the post has been shared from the poster's own profile, or from another dedicated photobook space, taking with it what commentary was present. This brings us to the number of comments for these 50 posts. This is not an average per post, but the total number of comments across all 50. In both cases it is a small number, particularly so in the case of *Flakphoto Books*, but it is no surprise when we factor the last column in by way of explanation. If well over half of the contributions to these spaces are promotional in nature, it is an unlikely environment for conversation to prosper. This is a confirmation

¹⁰³ Promotional posts were those which highlighted books for sale, or photobook events, in which the poster stands to benefit. This includes bookshop or gallery workers posting about new books to their collection, as well as designers, writers, publishers and photographers (the makers), linking to publications they have been involved in.

¹⁰⁴ These figures are particularly stark when we note that the 'top posts' of the groups feature those which have been commented on most often. While it might seem odd not to take a more objective view of the 'latest posts' (which yields even lower numbers), it has been eschewed for the 'top posts' option as this is how almost all members will see the group.

of what was established in the earlier section of this chapter; whereby the photobook community was posited as maker-centric.

What we are witnessing is not the fault of the groups themselves, in fact this analysis could be seen as counter to what the groups set out to do¹⁰⁵. But the very intent of these groups, and their statements of purpose, are illustrative of a larger trend in the photobook world towards contribution, and away from critique and conversation. The result is that groups like these replicate the format of the fair or festival — they are spaces for sharing (what has been made), selling (what has been made) and promoting (what has been made), rather than seeking understanding or entering into critical and supportive discussions. Where contributions do occur (which are not directly promotional in nature), they rarely encourage dialogue, and tend to highlight a small group of already well-heard voices in the photobook community. As an example, of the 178 respondents to the photobook reading survey, a total of only 38 individuals or institutions were acknowledged by respondents as people or platforms to look to for thoughts and reflections on the medium: a statistic that reveals the expected dominance of certain players in the field and, when we look at those cited most often (the top ten¹⁰⁶), a lack of reader, or action-focussed critique. Of these ten, three are book sellers, one is a collector (market focussed), one is a publisher and one is the *PhotoBooks* group which we have already reviewed. It is not to say that a book seller cannot be critical, nor that Aperture are not much more than just a publisher, but the majority of this list has a clear interest in the popularity of the medium. What this analysis of two key digital spaces of the photobook community reveals, is that while there is an abundance of contribution to a particular hub, or network, that contribution is often one sided, and most commonly, lacks consideration of purpose. Despite these social media spaces having presented little criticality in their form, it would stand that

¹⁰⁵ Flakphoto Books about page: 'Hello! This group is for people who love photography books. Feel free to promote your personal book projects, sell a book that needs a new home or simply recommend the titles you've been enjoying. All are welcome. Join us! -AA' (FlakPhoto Books, 2019).

PhotoBooks about page: 'This is a virtual space to share everything related to photography books! Here you will find posts on photobooks, links to reviews, blogs, photobook meetings, interviews, book publishers and more. Do post about your favourite photobooks and personal projects and, the most important, get inspired and enjoy wonderful world of beautiful photography books!' (PhotoBooks, 2019).

¹⁰⁶ Jorg Colberg (27 respondents), Aperture (22), Gabriela Cendoya (12), Photoeye (12), ASX (12), Flakphoto Books (10), Tipibooks (9), Collector Daily (9), The Photobook Club (9), Colin Pantall (8) and Photobookstore (8).

these conversations might be engendered in other spaces of necessary criticality and review: spaces in which books are judged.

A discourse of success

If the postings to social media spaces dedicated to the photobook tell us something of the contributive nature of conversations formed in open, and unstructured platforms, looking at the language of structured spaces, in which the photobook is appraised, is likely to provide insight into what the photobook world deems to be good, or successful works. More than 400 publications featured in the photobook-specific competitions of 2015, with the vast majority listing only title, author and publisher information online or in available resources. Even those books that won competitions, are seldom represented beyond a replication of the photobook's metadata. In most cases, there is an absence of justification for selection as a winner. As an example, the accompanying text when Mark Duffy's *Vote no. 1* (2015a) was given the first prize at the *Vienna Photobook Award* (2015), is a direct quote taken from Duffy's own project statement, verbatim (Duffy, 2015b). No commentary on why the book won the prize, nor even on the construction of the work, what it was like to read, or what it feels like to hold. This is far from an anomaly. From the same year, the *Bar Tur Photobook Award*, which went to Jack Latham's *Sugar Paper Theories* (2016), provides little in understanding why the book won, or why the judges enjoyed it:

'Jack Latham (b. 1989, UK) has won the Bar Tur Photobook Award 2015. Now in its second year this significant annual award offers an emerging photographer the opportunity to work with The Photographers' Gallery and independent UK based publisher Here Press, to produce their first book to a value of £20,000.

The winner was announced at a special ceremony at The Photographers' Gallery on Tuesday 1 December 2015 and the winning project will be published in Autumn 2016.

Latham's winning project, *Sugar Paper Theories*, traces an infamous true crime case in Iceland. Known as the Reykjavik Confessions, it involved the testimonies of six people, who confessed to two murders they had no apparent memory of' (The Photographers' Gallery, 2015).

There are some attempts to expand and articulate choice, but they are very much outliers. The *Amorphosis* prize in 2015 was one of the clearest justifications found across more than 25 competitions, but even this offered predominantly vague suggestions as to its selection. The text accompaniment to Carolyn Drake's winning book *Wild Pigeon* (2014) is presented below:

'Arriving separately at a unanimous decision, the jury finds Carolyn Drake's extraordinary photobook *Wild Pigeon* to be the clear winner of the first edition of the Anamorphosis Prize.

Of the moment, intimate in scale yet broad in scope, the artist has elevated the form of the photobook with this enduring, original work. *Wild Pigeon* is uncompromising and unflinching in the highest expression of self-publishing. Here is a book that takes risks but is never careless, elucidates with an uncommon light without forsaking the beauty of mystery, speaks in a language foreign yet is clearly understood. Drake demonstrates a true and tireless dedication to her practice and a fearless pursuit of veracity with this authentic testament to her experiences and engagement within Uyghur culture. We are grateful for the ways in which this book honestly and creatively iterates her approach and puts her imaginative exchange with the Uyghur people at its centre. *Wild Pigeon* tells an old story in a new way, not an easy thing to do. Our perceptions are changed and our imaginations heightened because of the originality of Drake's pursuit' (Anamorphosis Prize, 2016).

It is admirable that this competition has noted the process of judging (in articulating an arrival at a separate, unanimous decision) and the impact on a reader (and their changed perceptions), but aside from this, it is built around esoteric sentiments that do not engage with work which purports to be a photographic document, nor its \$100 price

(something which one might expect could be at the heart of a review). Drake's webpage for the book helpfully provides links to all the places which have featured the book in best-of lists, or places in which the work has been spoken of aside from the publication, but none of these are outside of a photographic/artistic domain. What *Wild Pigeon*, *Vote no.1* and *Sugar Paper Theories* demonstrate, is that photobook awards, far from providing the critical discourse lacking in social media spaces, instead replicates a predominantly contributive approach. In order to evidence that these instances are not anomalies, we will look to the Aperture photobook prizes — the biggest of their kind.

Textual discourse analysis: Aperture Photobook Awards 2015

Arguably the most prestigious photobook awards of the year, the Aperture Photobook prizes (given in three categories) cross over into the broader photographic world (being announced at Paris Photo and launched via Aperture's magazine), and hold great respect within the photobook community. It is an ideal competition to provide a thorough companion to those we have already seen, and, it begins to hint also at some other trends in photobook discourse. In Tables 15, 16 and 17, the accompanying text for all three category winners is presented, with all text coming from the awards themselves (Aperture, 2015).

Discourse analysis: Daniel Mayrit, <i>You Haven't Seen Their Faces</i>, Winner of First Photobook Award	
Project description	Daniel Mayrit plays with the semiotics of law enforcement in <i>You Haven't Seen Their Faces</i> . Full-bleed close-ups of the declared "100 most powerful people in the city of London" are printed in the style of grainy CCTV footage, with condemning information against them scrawled on every image. The book is a response to police fliers handed out after the 2011 riots in London, when surveillance images of alleged rioters' faces were publicly distributed in a presumption of guilt. Mayrit flips this visual language on those believed responsible for events that are arguably far more damaging: the recent economic crises that have wracked Europe.'
Consideration of publication	Full-bleed close-ups of the declared "100 most powerful people in the city of London" are printed in the style of grainy CCTV footage, with condemning information against them scrawled on every image. Yannick Bouillis calls the design "streetwise"; held together by screws at the top, the images are printed on lightweight brown pages akin to butcher paper, and fastened to stiff cardboard. A map of the suspects' headquarters is tucked into the back.'
Consideration of publishing model	Not present
Justification for winning	Not present

Table 15. Discourse analysis: Daniel Mayrit, *You Haven't Seen Their Faces* (2015), Winner of the First Photobook Award.

Discourse analysis: Diane Dufour and Xavier Barral <i>Images of Conviction: The Construction of Visual Evidence</i>, Winner of Photography Catalogue of the Year	
Project description	<p>‘Published to accompany an exhibition of the same name that originated at LE BAL, Paris, <i>Images of Conviction</i> is a fascinating historical survey of the ways photography has shaped official versions of truth — from the Shroud of Turin to crime-scene photography of the freshly dead, to video evidence of drone strikes.</p> <p>The volume offers a variety of answers to the question posed by editor Diane Dufour in her introduction — “How does the image take shape in truth-seeking scientific and historical discourse?” — without losing its sense of mystery.’</p>
Consideration of publication	<p>In this meticulously designed catalogue...</p> <p>The design is sedate but never boring, alternating between pale grey and clean white paper. The images are all reproduced in black and white, with a chilling negative image printed on the cover. “Everything is made so that the catalogue stays neutral, but not cold,” says Julien Frydman, who also praises the diverse, well-edited texts.’</p>
Consideration of publishing model	Not present
Justification for winning	Not present

Table 16. Discourse analysis: Diane Dufour and Xavier Barral, *Images of Conviction: The Construction of Visual Evidence* (2015), Winner of the Photography Catalogue of the Year.

Discourse analysis: Thomas Mailaender, <i>Illustrated People</i>, Winner of PhotoBook of the Year	
Project description	<p>When artist Thomas Mailaender was given access to the Archive of Modern Conflict's photo archives, he decided to "print" some of the negatives he found onto a whole new medium: the human body. Using a UV lamp, Mailaender projected these negatives onto models' pale skin, leaving sunburnt imprints of the images.</p> <p>"What's interesting to me is the relationship between the immaterial archive and the living bodies," says Yannick Bouillis. "He made something that goes beyond just the selection of images — he's putting pure culture onto something natural, the body."</p>
Consideration of publication	<p>Full-Colour documentation of this performance alternates with archival images in <i>Illustrated People</i>, a playful softcover book encased in a translucent red plastic jacket. While the archival images have a faded appearance, printed in black-and-white on plain matte paper, the "sunburn" pages are bright and glossy.'</p>
Consideration of publishing model	Not present
Justification for winning	Not present

Table 17. Discourse analysis: Thomas Mailaender, *Illustrated People* (2015), Winner of the PhotoBook of the Year.

While these awards are situated firmly in a photographic/photobook discourse (in their location at *Paris Photo* and a dedicated photographic institution (Aperture)), it is surprising to see an absence of thought regarding publishing models¹⁰⁷. None of those

¹⁰⁷ Especially so given not all works submitted or winning reside in the artists' book/photobook lineage which would justify a predominantly esoteric conversation

works that won one of the most prestigious prizes in photobook publishing are accompanied by a public consideration beyond publication¹⁰⁸ (the photobook itself), and none have been accompanied by any considerable justification for their position as winners. Instead, what is present is a description of the work and an emphasis on the production-oriented esoteric minutiae of the contemporary photobook. Combined, this presents a discourse of appraisal and success which is, much like the community itself, making-centric.

At this juncture, it is worth consolidating our findings. I first evidenced the growth of the photobook via specific events, before reviewing the composition of the photobook community which revealed itself as maker-centric and insular. Following this, I turned to the open discourse of the contemporary photobook on social media and found evidence of maker-centrism, in the form of a large number of promotional posts. In addition, a lack of criticality was identified alongside a contributive trend in discourse. Finally, I directed scrutiny to the awards and accolades of the photobook and how the discourse that accompanied competitions similarly eschews criticality, but also introduces in places an emphasis on the publication and its construction. I have identified three key characteristics in a review of the photobook community and discourse (maker-centrism, contribution and insularity), characteristics that will be analysed in greater depth through the rest of this chapter, with a view to understanding: both why they have occurred, and the impact they have on the contemporary medium.

¹⁰⁸ Such conversations could happen in the judging process but the public justification does not suggest so.

Combined characteristics of the photobook world

The beginnings of this chapter have been populated with the collection and initial analysis of data, in order to determine what the photobook world, community, and its associated textual discourse, is. It has brought forward three key areas which we must now engage with more thoroughly. Each is presented on the subsequent page (see Table. 18.) along with where it has been evidenced thus far in our investigations. It is in this order of characteristics that clarity will be sought through literature and elite interviews.

Combined characteristics of the photobook world			
	Events	Community	Textual discourse
Contributive discourse	Workshops and volume of competitions and dummy competitions encouraging production and submission.	Prevalence of makers in photobook spaces resulting in contribution and promotion.	Lack of discussion visible in photobook-specific social media spaces.
Maker-centrism	Prevalence of production oriented workshops. Construction of spaces with materials which emphasise their process of production.	Majority of community are involved in photobook making.	Presence of publication consideration but not publishing strategies in awards and accolades.
Insularity		Majority of community are involved in photobook making. Those buying and reading works are also making.	Makers as audience encourage insular, or esoteric discourse found in competition justifications.

Table 18. Combined characteristics of the photobook world

Contribution and the fantasy of abundance

Jodi Dean's theoretical proposals regarding new political discourse¹⁰⁹, which is rendered ineffective as a result of technological fetishisation, and the fantasy of abundance, offer an interesting perspective with which to view the contributive nature of some contemporary photobook discourse, and how trust and belief in the photobook as a technology, could be impacting its connections with readers. Dean proposes, that in a new political landscape, shaped by linked digital technology, there are simultaneous discourses that do not intersect. She notes that contributing to a discourse feels positive, but has little bearing on action, policy and change. One of the key aspects of Dean's theory is that in new politics, abundance is confused with efficacy and action:

'The internet enables millions not simply to access information but to register their points of view on websites and blogs, to agree or disagree, to vote, and to send messages. Communications, media, and information enthusiasts point to this abundance of messages as an indication of the democratic potential of networked technologies' (Dean, 2009:26-7).

While Dean refers here to the internet, and to views, we should think not only of the many online contributions evidenced on prior pages (in a contributive manner), but also the corporeal events and meetings which are facilitated and distributed via the internet, and increased access to bookmaking, which permits more makers than ever before to see their work in photobook form. She says that the fantasy of abundance:

'covers over the way facts and opinions, images and reactions circulate in a massive stream of content, losing their specificity and merging with and into the larger flow of data' (2009:26).

Dean suggests that in contributing to this 'ever-circulating content', we believe that it matters and may even affect change, when really it is 'a drop in the ocean' (2009:26),

¹⁰⁹ Applying a political critique as apposed to an art-historical or conceptual one is a statement of intent for the contextualised use of the photobook which can be amplified beyond an insular community, beyond esoteric discussions and beyond an emphasis on publication.

which becomes easy to ignore for its very lack of specificity. Purpose is central to Dean's critique of political discourse. In her example regarding the *war on terror*, it is clear what the purpose of contributions is: the revising of policy, or recognition and debate around concern by the official sphere of politics. For politics and the photobook, it is belief and trust in the technology being able to affect change which is dangerous.

'One *believes* that one's contribution matters, that it means something to and within a context broader than oneself. Contributing to the information stream thus has a subjective registration effect detached from any actual impact or efficacy... The terabytes of commentary and information, then, did not indicate a debate over the war. On the contrary... the antiwar messages morphed into so much circulating content, just like all the other cultural effluvia flowing through communicative capitalism's disintegrated spectacles' (Dean, 2009:31).

The contribution of content in this example, be it the signing of petitions, sharing of posts or use of hashtags, makes the sender feel as though they are doing good — that they have, through technology, been able to voice their opinions in a democratic manner and that these opinions, part of a groundswell, will be heard and responded to. For the photobook (and particularly the photo essay/photobook), there is a mirroring in the contributive nature of conversation as well as publication¹¹⁰. There are points of focus which attempt to propose particular concepts or possibilities for the photobook — such as *Paradox's* strategies for public engagement (2016), but they are small in comparison to the mass of self-promotion and contributive content. There is no blame here though on those contributing: the photobook world is built on it. It is the structure of linked digital technologies that make unpopular, or difficult notions garnering little in the way of quantifiable support, sink to the bottom, while new and exciting content bringing with it a flurry of briefly-expressed pseudo discourse (a like, retweet, share...) rises to the top and reinforces, via a hermeneutic circle, what is good.

For Dean, technological fetishism in political discourse is a misplaced belief that in technology facilitating voice, we are making a change. The same can be said for the

¹¹⁰ The promotional nature of posts in social media suggests that there is a lack of any discourse around most publication.

photobook. Makers load into their work the intentions to speak, and in producing the publication seem happy that the work is done. In reality, to produce a publication is only a small part of publishing (the framing only), and an even smaller part of contributing to change and action in the lineage of the photo essay/photobook. Yet the fantasy of abundance is what prohibits change, or papers over the missed connections of the photobook and its readers: the volume of photobooks, competitions, events, dedicated photobook spaces, workshops and courses are responsible for a great acceleration of the medium but may also contribute to its containment. The lack of thought regarding publishing, and the long tail of the publication, is not only a product of a contributive discourse, it is also a result of maker-centrism in the photobook world.

Maker-centrism: publication over publishing

At *Photobook Bristol* in 2015, the Irish photographer Kate Nolan was invited to speak about her publication *Neither* (2014) which had almost sold out. Nolan was relieved with this occurrence as it allowed her to move on to her next project. It was, to all present, a successful publication. Not in the sense that it had been profitable (the book itself had not), nor in the sense that it had served those Nolan had worked with on the project well (we heard little concrete evidence of this), but that it was well thought-of. The book had garnered positive reviews from a variety of places in the photobook world (Nolan, 2015), not to mention she was invited to speak at this event about the publication. This is an example of a maker-centric emphasis on publication, and not on publishing. It is a book that in Nolan's words 'seeks not to answer questions, but rather to give voice to the experiences of the women of Kaliningrad¹¹¹' and was sold in an edition of 250, for €35: via the photographer's own site, Tipi Bookshop, Photo-eye, Photobook Store and a handful of brick-and-mortar specialist shops. *Neither* represents the impact of a discourse which, whether contributive or esoteric in nature, eschews the subject and process of publishing.

The emphasis on making, and on the publication, was not only present in Nolan's own introduction to the book, but also to those who have written about the book, and who feature on the book's webpage: all foregrounding the publication as exemplar of the

¹¹¹ Aligned to the lineage of the photo essay/photobook.

photobook medium (Leclair and Chaldek in Nolan, 2015). Colin Pantall, who himself has written an account of Nolan's publication — which does not consider the publishing of the work — has conversely also written about the introspective nature of the contemporary photobook, which can be more concerned with mechanics than its relation to the real world:

'We also contribute to the continuing introspective nature of photobooks... They don't always address the world as it is, but rather introspect over the mechanics of how and why the photobook and its narratives operate' (Pantall, 2012).

What we see here is a well-trodden path in art criticism, summed up in Andy Grundberg's essay *Connoisseurs Vs Contextualists* (Grundberg, 1990) and operating in a Marxist tradition that has been developed in reference to photography by Abigail Solomon-Goddeau and Allan Sekula among others. It is Martha Rosler though, who most lucidly explains the phenomenon by speaking of the life of her political, anti-war montages grouped under the title *Bringing the War Home*. This work, which Rosler originally insisted was not presented in a gallery, was later brought into that discourse of history and connoisseurship and lost potency:

'[the artworks] were picked up by a gallery for a portfolio show, then written about by Art in America then more shows, collections of 'war' images — They were normalised and included in art history but as such 'They have become art, and in becoming art they no longer "are" the works I made but rather representations of them' (Rosler, 2004:356).

Rosler herself was not complicit in this transition from 'work' to 'art', but Nolan is a part of this move. She states: 'with this project, I am seeking to give a voice to the amazing women who I spent so much time with' and that 'the book form allows a greater opportunity than the gallery space to provide the women with that voice' (Nolan, 2015). Yet the book in price and volume is limiting. It is a tension which is longstanding for the medium, and was even noted in the first documented essay on the photobook (or photographic book as it was called then) when art critic Elizabeth McCausland spoke

of a desire for high quality production, but the need for balancing with access and audience (McCausland, 1942:2783-94). Back to the contemporary, we can see this tension in a variety of works. Let's consider another publication, one which we have already encountered from its winning of the Aperture first book award in 2015. Daniel Mayrit's *You Haven't Seen their Faces* (2015) is a series of 100 portraits through CCTV of the most powerful people in the city of London.

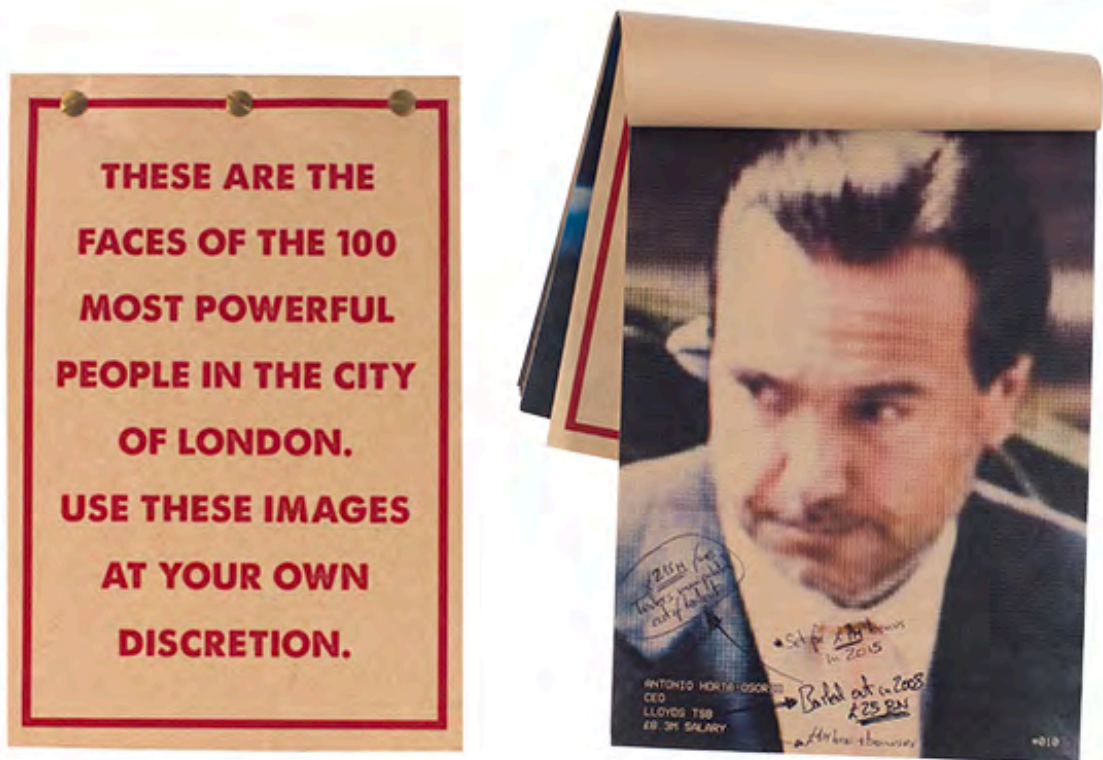


Fig. 38. Daniel Mayrit, *You Haven't Seen Their Faces*, RIOT BOOKS, Madrid, 2015 (2017)(original in colour). Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Daniel Mayrit.

The cover of the book instructs you to 'use these images at your own discretion' and the screw binding allows for the images to be taken out relatively easily. The book is a limited edition of 350 copies and costs €38¹¹², a price which might make such action

¹¹² Mayrit has since issued a PDF of the book over a year later that is rather difficult to find; in that it is not linked to, or mentioned, on Mayrit's own site.

as suggested less than likely. The way Mayrit writes about the work¹¹³ suggests an audience which must be fairly well versed in media or photographic studies, and the focus of arcane discourse has been continued subsequently in others writing about the book. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Mayritt makes clear an intention to mobilise and to initiate a 'sort of physical reaction' by including a map that identifies the subjects and their workplaces. 'We wanted for the book to allow readers to take action if they wanted, for them to really use it' (Bausells, 2016). As far as it is possible to see, no such action has occurred. Reviews and commentary avoid this missed connection of the work and its readers and focuses instead on intention (removed from outcome) and of course, photobook-specific discussion. Colin Pantall in reviewing *You Haven't Seen Their Faces*, exhibits a fascination with the material properties of the book which resonates with an interest in the corporeal properties of the book in a reactive manner, from Chapter Two.

'The book is printed on wrapping paper which has a horizontal grain so there is a lining that is reminiscent of analogue TV. It feels like screengrabs are being shown here from some old-school name-and-shame World In Action type show...But ultimately, it's not about the pictures, it's about the paper and the printing and the texture of the printed page. Everything looks rougher and feels rougher in book form. It looks like crap on the computer screen, but it looks great in the printed version. That's not because of the image quality. It's practically collapsing into the page (and up your arse?) in the printed version, it's far rougher than you can see on the screen. And that's the way it should be' (Pantall, 2015).

Maker-centrism, as it has been evidenced in this chapter, provides additional answers to the state of the contemporary photobook as an object that was presented in Chapter Two, and could be described as exhibiting post-digital and post-photographic

¹¹³ 'The series focuses therefore on how a given image-production system such as surveillance cameras determines the way the spectators interpret the context surrounding the images. Do we take them in in the same way when presented in a leaflet as if encountered on a different medium? Does the fact that the police assumes the authorship of the images makes it different than when the author is an artist? How much does technology itself affect the reading of the image? Is it the inherent features of this type of technology that confers their truthfulness? What happens when those features are replicated precisely with other devious devices of digital manipulation?' (Mayrit, n.d).

reactivity¹¹⁴. It begins to hint at an esotericism and exclusivity in the structuring of a world of connoisseurs. In order to more completely deal with this possibility, it is helpful to turn now to the third key theme of this chapter and see how insularity, along with maker-centrism, might contribute to an increasingly sophisticated, and self-contained world.

Insularity and resulting sophistication

‘The photobook in its new guise seems almost by definition to exclude the mass market. Yet much photography used to be quite specifically a mass activity’ (Hodgson, 2015).

The contemporary photobook is far from mainstream¹¹⁵, and as Francis Hodgson suggests in describing an exclusion of the mass market, and Hannah Watson (Publisher, Trolley book) notes in photographers wanting ‘the small and interesting books that aren’t mass market commercial things’ (Smyth et al. 2015:27), it may well be an intentional and overt decision. Even the larger publishers, like MACK, are relatively small operations: print runs are incomparable to recipe books, novels, or even non-fiction works, and the chance of finding the *Aperture Photobook of the Year* in a non-specialist shop or gallery outside of major cities, is slim. This forces a question of the contemporary photobook in regards to its niche or insular position — does it matter? For some elite interviewees, a limited community and restricted audience is not something to be considered a pressing concern, a sentiment seen most clearly in Alejandro Acin and Sarah Bodman speaking about limited audience and the community as consumer:

‘I mean... people will be interested if they want to be. The photobook community keeps... questioning... how we can come out of this little bubble —

¹¹⁴ In that it foregrounds desirable traits around material, provenance and process, whilst masking over a discourse of pragmatism which would challenge the purpose of material and process in respect of lineage.

¹¹⁵ Photobook exhibitions have occurred at major international galleries like the V&A, MoMA and Reine Sofia, but all have positioned the book in an art-historical context and have featured works predominantly from before the tie of this research.

with the practitioners also being the consumers. And I think for this to happen, it will happen you know what I mean?' (Acin, 2018).

'Most of us, we're preaching to the converted because all the people who come to those events or fairs or anything generally are there because they want to be there... I don't know if that means your audience is more limited but does everyone have to be into it?' (Bodman, 2018).

Certainly there are some advantages of a small world. For the contemporary photobook¹¹⁶, the protection, support and prevalence of like-minded individuals in the photobook community (and thus audience), has aided the forming of ever-more advanced publications. But while a small community may encourage the pushing of boundaries and experimentation in a supportive group (and away from commercial pressures), there are issues which arise from this situation. In speaking with Lesley Martin, Aperture Publisher, coordinator of their photobook awards and publisher of *The Photobook Review*, this was a common thread in considerations of the medium:

'You get into the spiral of increasingly more and more arcane projects which is one of the things that I think is a potential downside and danger of that sort of increasingly insular world of the photobook in which we are becoming more limited in who we are speaking to because there's certainly a fall off, I think, in people who do have the time to commit to learning how to read the photobook because it is a less mass media and popular form' (Martin, 2019).

It is something Bruno Ceschel of *Self Publish, Be Happy* acknowledges also in suggesting that in a comparison between 2008 and 2018 'the quality, the variety, the design of it would definitely be better now. The language is more sophisticated' (Ceschel, 2019). This presents benefits and drawbacks, something we see in returning to Lesley Martin:

¹¹⁶ At least in the lineages of the artists' book/photobook and photo essay/photobook.

'I think that's both a boon and a challenge to the photobook world. On one hand it drives some really dedicated and committed participants in the photobook community as makers, as readers, as collectors. On the other hand there is that limiting factor that is very difficult to break into what we would now consider a mass media with the photobook' (Martin, 2019).

For Martin, one of the most important and influential voices in the contemporary photobook world, we have 'isolated ourselves in the pursuit of the most beautiful, the most sophisticated, the most arcane thing', and while Martin sees a place for this, she stresses that we 'can't fool ourselves in thinking that some of these things are going to be able to be shaped for wider audiences' (Martin, 2019). This, for the photo essay/ photobook in particular, but for the artists' book/photobook too, presents a problem. It is not only physical access, but the barriers of content too which result in those outside the photobook community being 'more likely probably to pick up a coffee table book... rather than diving into the artists books or artists' photobooks' (Gachot, 2018). It is a situation reminiscent of Lucy Lippard lamenting the avant-garde nature of the artists' book which was 'accessible in terms of form but not of content' (Ault and Lippard, 2006). The isolation that increasingly sophisticated works can create is bolstered by the discourse of success we have witnessed in this chapter. A discourse which considers the physical and metaphysical production of the publication as separate to intentions or impact. This poses two problems: most evidently that the intention, impact and publishing strategy of the work is not discussed, but also that in speaking about the intricacies of the physical publication, it is these elements of publishing which are foregrounded as being important and worthy of conversation. As this discourse builds firm connections with readers inside the photobook community¹¹⁷, interested in the minutiae of the physical publication, connections are missed with potential readers or even intended readers. What's more, it stands that as photobooks become 'more and more arcane' (Martin, 2019), the discourse which accompanies it must keep up, and it too enters an ascension of esotericism¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁷ Of whom 79% (from the photobook reading survey) indicate that an understanding of the format (the photobook) is a part of their intention with reading.

¹¹⁸ This is one of the factors which contributed to the formation of *The Photobook Club* — a desire to hear thoughts and reflections on photobooks which were unfettered by a need to justify expert status or be aware of numerous other publications.

An insistence on the poetic unpicking of the photobook as publication, alongside vagaries of success and appraisal, are the markings of a medium which Pierre Bourdieu would describe as residing within a 'sphere of legitimisation' (1996:96). Speaking strictly, Bourdieu placed photography, cinema and jazz in this sphere in the 1996 publication *Photography as a Middle Brow Art*. In doing so, Bourdieu brought attention to the idea that these mediums were not automatically perceived as art — not consecrated in the same way that poetry or sculpture was — but in a hierarchy of legitimacy, resided above fashion and cookery. The photobook, when we consider the way in which it is spoken about, and the wealth of competitions and awards which swirl around it, appears to crave the control of its own legitimacy. In an interview with Doug Spowart, who has himself been involved in the judging of numerous competitions, he gave a clear indication of the legitimising and scene-constructing characteristics of photobook accolades:

'We call ourselves photobook makers and we will judge, discuss and review the photobook and we end up with a community of practice which in some ways ends up self-justifying what they do. All amongst themselves often without much connection with the broader publishing fields including artists' books, zines, design and artbook publishing' (Spowart, 2018b).

Self construction is not only a product of the critic or the community at large, but also of the maker, who must justify their work first and foremost in relation to it being a photobook, and not to the subject or intention of the work. Bourdieu notes that 'in the process of legitimation... passionate photographers are always obliged to develop the aesthetic theory of their practice', and that this is done in order to 'justify their existence as photographers by justifying the existence of photography as true art' (Bourdieu, 1996:98). This offers further explanation for the increasing sophistication of works which, in becoming esoteric, in turn reinforces the need for similarly arcane approaches to their review, and, in this pattern, gradually becomes more insular and specialist. Returning to Bourdieu:

'Because the originality of a work faces threats from two quarters, first the threat of going unnoticed because there is no audience capable of recognising it, and secondly that of being negated because the particularities of its style will be turned into processes, the role of the group which recognises and sanctions the work seems to be essential' (1996:148).

None of this is to suggest that the photobook needs to legitimise its own existence (either as art or its own form) but that instead it is caught in a loop of self-construction which is not meaningful to those outside the photobook world¹¹⁹, and serves little purpose to the progression of the form. If we are to adopt a belief that the photobook can be more than (as well as) an object of enjoyment, point of discussion and influence for other makers, the self-justification structures, language and discourse of the medium will need to be adjusted accordingly. Here, we conclude our consideration of the three themes emerging from our initial data collection, having augmented and expanded on each, as well as identifying their connections. As well as a thorough view of the photobook world, this provides an answer to questions about how this world impacts the photobook itself. I return here to the table presented earlier in the chapter, this time augmented with a consideration of the impact these themes have on the contemporary photobook (see Table.19.).

¹¹⁹ And perhaps also the photographic world.

Expanded characteristics of the photobook world	
Contribution	The contributive nature of the contemporary photobook discourse encourages more contribution, and in this act, a message (photobook or conversation) which is intended to begin dialogue or affect change, is instead 'morphed into so much circulating content, just like all the other cultural effluvia flowing through communicative capitalism's disintegrated spectacles' (Dean, 2009:31). The result is a belief in the contribution to a healthy discourse of the photobook (which we have not seen), or in the case of photobooks themselves, a lineage-specific belief in the medium which for the photo essay/photobook may not be enough.
Maker-centrism	The clearest theme running through all we have seen in this chapter and Chapter Two. The central location of the maker in the community and the production-oriented discourse of the form results in increasingly esoteric language. A concentration on the connoisseur and not contextual considerations (the same binary as publication/publishing) means that what is seen to be valuable and important is not the impact of work but how it is received by peers. To paraphrase Martha Rosler: the work has become a photobook, and in becoming a photobook it no longer is the work that was made.
Insularity	The insular nature of the photobook world, together with the characteristics above, permits a rich exploration of the medium which is not critiqued in relation to purpose. Because of this, a plethora of exciting and innovate works emerge in a new language of the contemporary photobook. With it, an increasingly sophisticated reader, each supporting the other. As a result, while those in the photobook world are in a golden age of productivity and interest, the intentions of work are mislaid, and the probability of readers from outside this world is reduced not only by the elaborate productions of Chapter Two, but also the exclusive language of the contemporary medium.

Table 19. Expanded characteristics of the photobook world

The contemporary photobook; A new form of a longstanding medium

Collectively, what has been interrogated in this chapter, from the contributive nature of discourse through maker-centrism and community insularity, contributes to, and is a product of, a new photobook world which has developed at an incredible pace since the start of the period this research is concerned with. For the contemporary photobook, all roads point upwards: an ascension of interest, publications, events and language. All rising in a self-constructing, and self-enforcing spiral. As time passes, publications are produced and a discourse helps frame how we see these new works before yet more emerge and a spiral is formed. It is a spiral with ever more specialist photobooks, language and practitioners with each informing, and being informed by, the other. In Figure 39, photobooks are represented by white dots which are located within, and as a part of, an ever tightening world.



Fig. 39. *The spiral of the contemporary photobook* (2019)

So, as the contemporary photobook emerges under its unifying banner (the photobook) so emerges a community and discourse which ascend with it. As the community becomes more specialist, publications become increasingly arcane, and with that, language must develop to understand these new works, whilst a belief in abundance makes the presence of critical voice less likely, and impact beyond a tightening circle of individuals less likely with it. This is the landscape for a new form of the photobook: a form which is reflective of the contemporary environment and a product of those who occupy it. While the new form of the photobook sits atop a considerable history for the photobook — as evidenced in Chapter One — it can be seen as a distinct product of the unification of the photobook term (Chapter One), the medium's new situation in regards to post-digitality and post-photography (Chapter Two), and the characteristics of the photobook world seen in this chapter. It is important to clarify that it is posited the photobook is a new *form* of the medium, and not a new medium itself, though the research in this chapter could suggest some see it as a new medium¹²⁰. The distinction made here is visualised on the next page (see Fig. 40.), a graphic which attempts to speak not only of the ascension of the medium, but also its relationship with purpose-informed lineages. So while we see a growing interest in the medium in the time of this research (in its new form), we also see how the photo essay/photobook leans towards the artists' book/photobook and the photographic book/photobook remains outside.

¹²⁰ The suggestion that we consider the photobook today as a new form of the medium has also been brought up in an elite interview in which it was described as being in 'baby form' with a 'lot of growing up to do' (Anon, 2018), Lewis Bush identified that the contemporary photobook is a 'newly recognised' medium (Bush, 2016) and David Company has spoken also of the 'early days' (2014) for the photobook as a discipline.

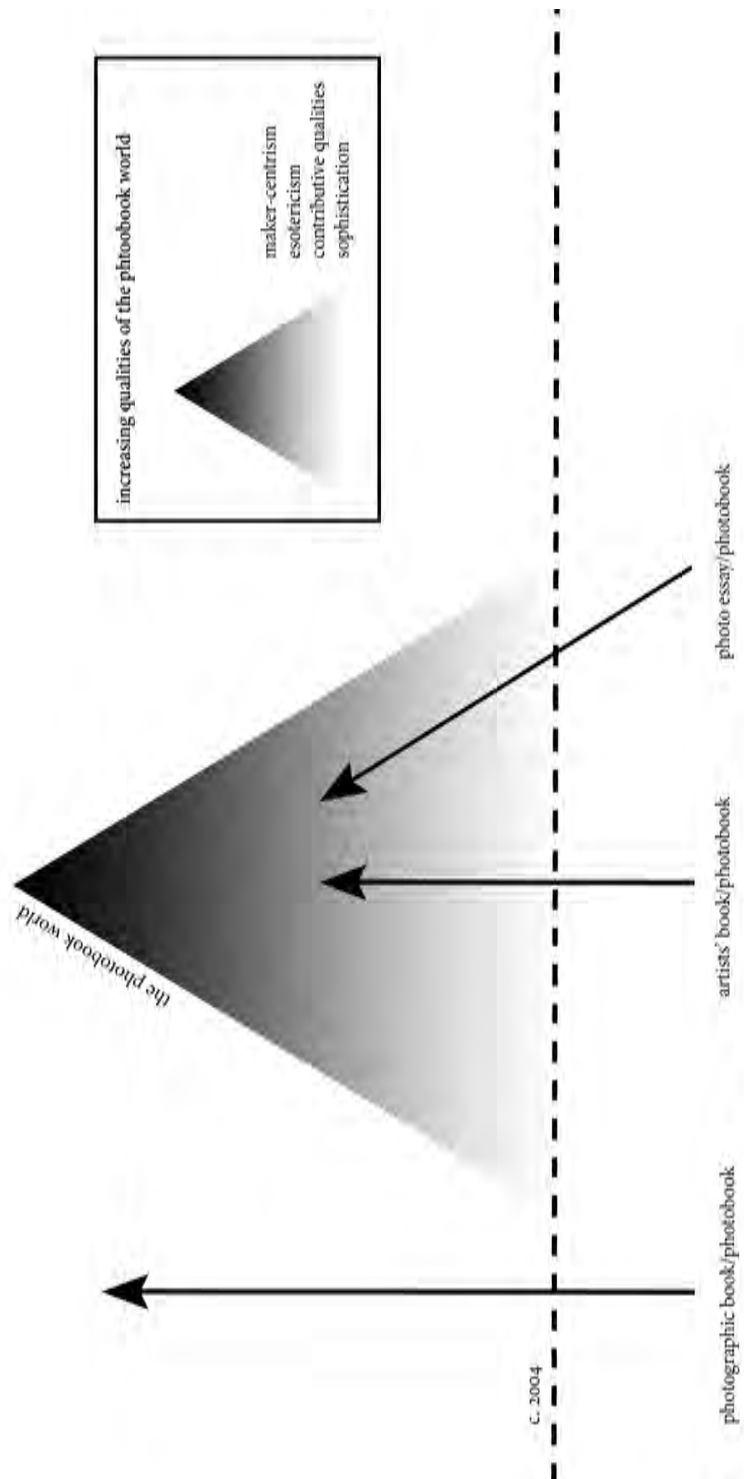


Fig. 40. *The contemporary photobook; a new form of a longstanding medium* (2019)

What is visually rendered here in Figure 40, are the connections between the photobook and its readers that are both made, and missed in the medium's new form. In the lineage of the photographic book/photobook, its position as outlier to the photobook world, and its properties explored in Chapter Two, suggest that it continues to operate in a manner which will connect with intended readers. For the artists' book/photobook, its emergence as a guiding lineage of the new form of the photobook presents new, and deeper connections with readers. Its audience, which in lineage has resided in like-minded individuals and other makers, is not altered, but enhanced in the increasing sophistication and esotericism of the photobook world. For the photo essay/photobook however, a move towards the artists' book/photobook and its place in the photobook world has meant that it presents an increasing number of missed connections with an audience established in relation to lineage (which we evidenced in Chapter Two, pages 129-133). Where new connections are being made for the photo essay/photobook, and it is enjoying the supportive and experimental nature of the new form of the photobook, it is missing connections with readers outside this world: something that is expected of a lineage which seeks to inform and impact upon those outside such a specialist space.

A new form, and a need for action

In its new guise, the contemporary photobook is experiencing a lag of critical thinking¹²¹ behind a frontier of experimentation which is incubated in a small community. For the photobook, with all the increased access to book-making that linked digital technology has provided, and all the works published in the new spirit of the photobook as a new, unified form, there is a set of sub-narratives which are more nuanced and problematic for the young photobook. Put differently, where there are vibrant spaces of dramatic progression, radical experimentation and unfettered play, there are also missed connections with readers in a lack of pragmatism, morphing lineage publishing spheres and exclusive discourse. This phenomenon can be

¹²¹ During the time of this research it is beginning to emerge; with much writing and thought regarding the medium being seen throughout this thesis, it is however still predominantly lacking consideration of the reader and the impact of works beyond the photobook community.

illustrated by returning to Jodi Dean and her proposal to think of different spheres of discourse — one which is official, and informed policy, and the other which is contributive and cyclical. For Dean, there is no connection between the two.

‘We might express [the] disconnect between engaged criticism and national strategy as the difference between the circulation of content and official policy’ (Dean, 2009:31).

It is a proposal which resonates with the contemporary photobook, not least for her terming of the non-official sphere as ‘engaged criticism’, because this highlights that, far from being a passive discourse, the intentions of individuals and discourse in this space is engaged, and well meaning. This sphere is the photobook world (which itself is new): circulating content but not reaching through to a discourse beyond. In order to break through to the other sphere, it is not enough to produce more books, or better books, but to shift strategy. A need to move away from the current status quo, and bring to the fore a discourse and community which is supportive of the intentions of the contemporary photobook beyond its current, narrow parameters. The medium has a chance to be made potent through amplification and publishing strategy: to make connections with new readers. Particularly for the photo essay/photobook this is imperative, and while few photobooks will have such lofty goals as to avoid wars and disband neoliberal ideologies, many will be able to impact on smaller events, policies and decisions. If a photobook wishes to change the perception of local councillors on the proposed construction of a warehouse on a nature reserve, it would do well to implement a publishing strategy that aided residents and nature lovers in the geographic area, and offered new perspectives and an open conversation to those with the power to make policies. As we have throughout the research, a visual articulation of the contemporary photobook, as seen in relation to Dean’s theories of technological fetishism and fantasies of abundance, is incorporated to aid our discussion.

In Figure 41, we see a circle representing the photobook world with all manner of activities, publications and discourses taking place. On the outside are points at which crossovers between the photobook world, and a world beyond, take place. There are few of these and, as we saw in Chapter Two, they are predominantly associated with

the photographic book/photobook and a small number of pragmatic acts of the artists' book/photobook and photo essay/photobook that seek to speak beyond an established audience. These points can be illustrated well in returning to Laia Abril speaking of the action needed to amplify *The Epilogue* (2014): Without a strong mailing campaign and effort on my part, *The Epilogue* would not have reached readers from the area of eating disorders' (Abril et al, 2015:28).

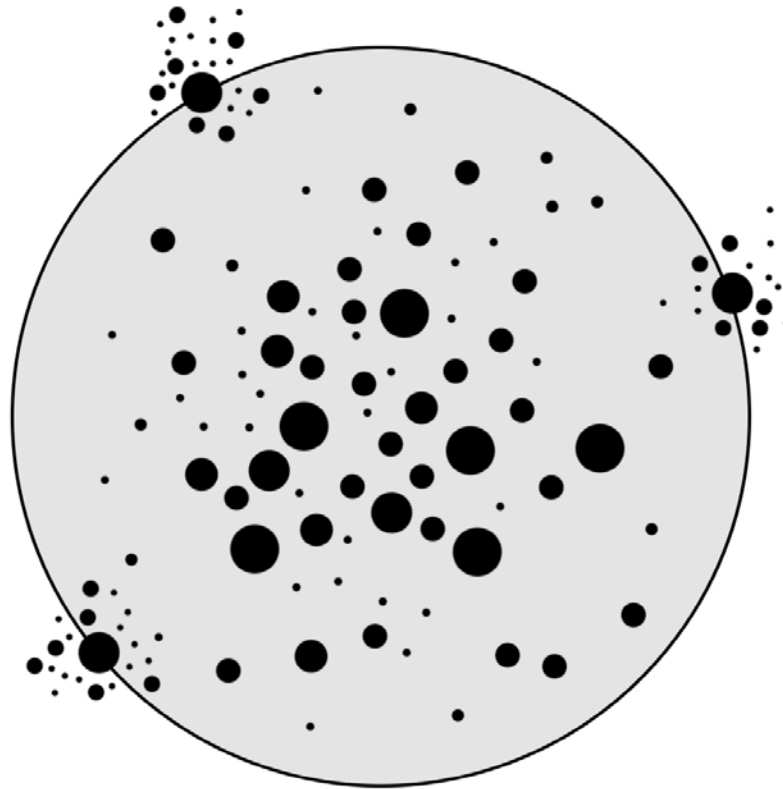


Fig. 41. *The containment of the photobook world* (2017)

In Figure 42, we see from a different angle, the insularity of the photobook world, and how these points of crossover are able to enter into a broader discourse only with action (and I suggest, pragmatic acts of framing and amplification), as well as adjustment of a discourse which is maker and publication-focussed, to one which is reader and publishing-focussed.

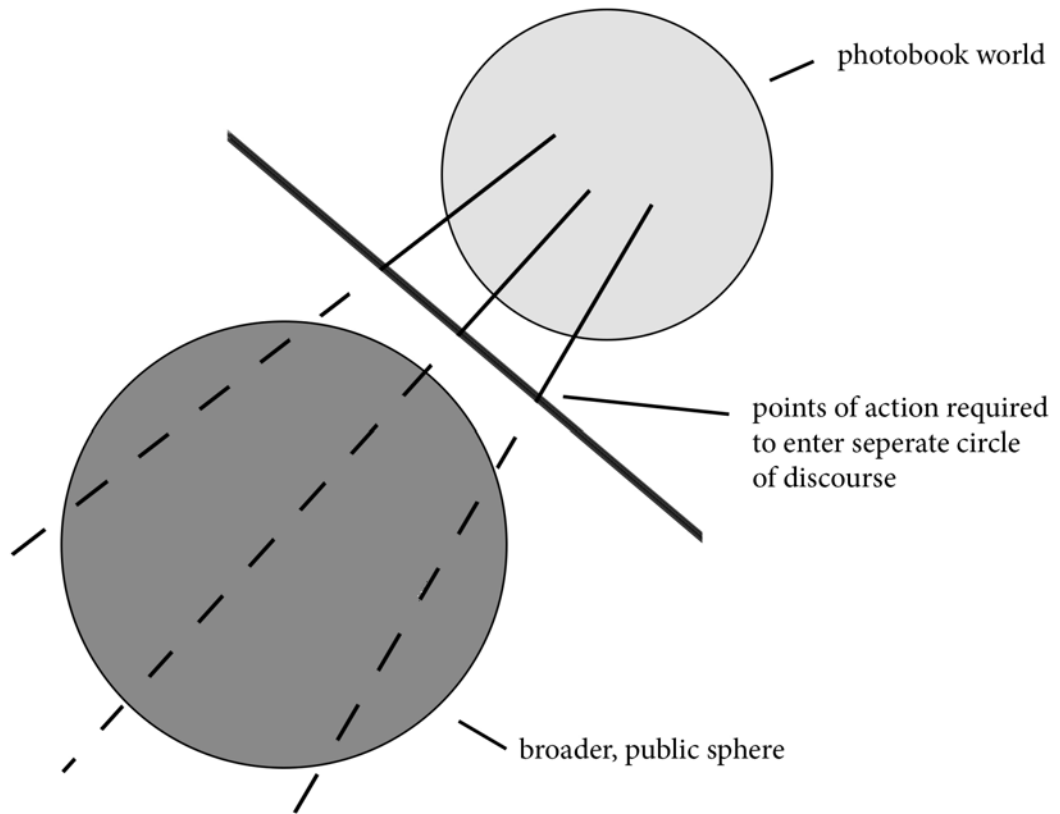


Fig. 42. *The photobook world and a need for action* (2017)

Rightly, it will be asked of this research, how exactly the photobook world is able to encourage and facilitate points of action in order to break away from the insularity of its own community. So, while each publication requires its own publishing model, there are broader changes this research points towards. These are not new, with each stemming from research to this point, and each being put forward as an essential component of the photobook world, and the manner in which it frames, speaks of, and appraises, the new form of the photobook.

A need for a discourse of lineage and pragmatism

As was discussed in Chapter One, there have been a number of attempts to create categories or sub-sections within the larger photobook umbrella — each of these has provided a manner in which to organise or archive from a scholarly perspective, but none have offered a shift in our thinking about what to expect from a photobook. When

this is combined with the plethora of activity and discussion which surrounds the photobook we have seen in this chapter, in its non-delineated, new, form, the result is equally exciting and worrying. Protest photography, longitudinal documentary work and fashion imagery are found alongside each other in large halls and exhibition spaces¹²² with a commonality which is their bound-ness in book form. This presents the photobook as a beautifully diverse form, with its makers and readers enjoying works from varied perspectives and realised in a myriad of different forms. When though we reintroduce the intention that lineages emphasise, we can see how this unification can remove the individuality of the lineages, their intent, their purpose, and replaces it with the credibility of the photobook as a single form (see Fig. 14.).

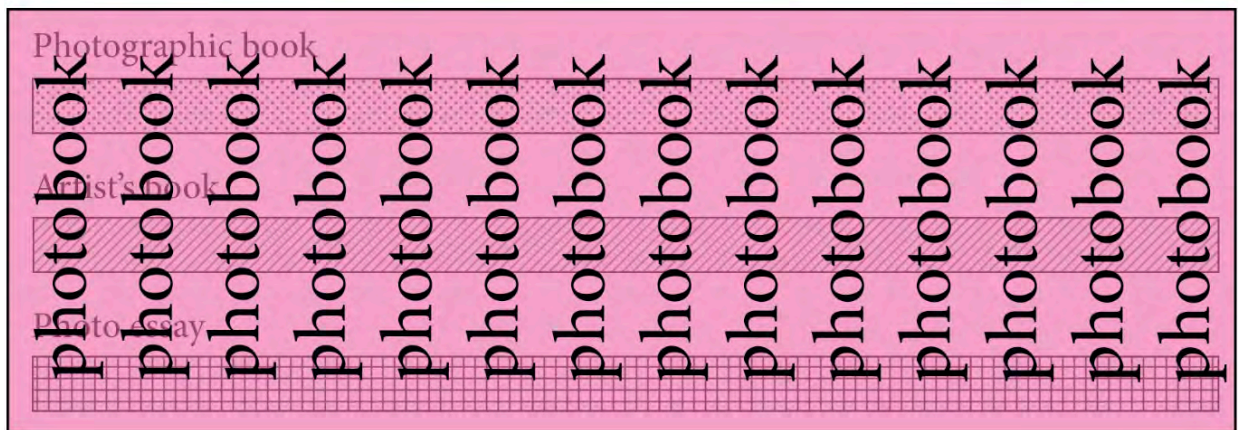


Fig. 14. *The covering of lineage by the new photobook term (2019)(original in colour)*¹²³

The result is that, as we have seen in the Photo-eye best-of list on page 75, numerous types of photobooks, setting out purportedly to do different things, are judged and selected as best photobooks: a concept which judges works against (often hidden) criteria in regards to what makes a good photobook. Lineages problematise something which for many is not an issue, they challenge the state of the photobook, but they do so with a firm understanding that via this challenge, the photobook will become more

¹²² Lineage asks us to think about whether ethically speaking, it is right to produce luxury items for an affluent community, based on plight, neglect, disfunction, misfortune or any suffering of the world and its inhabitants. The following section, which begins the conclusion of this chapter, highlights what occurs when lineage is not prominent in the photobook world.

¹²³ The covering up of lineages (see Fig. 14.) is not suggestive of a desire for photobook makers to cover up respective histories but a happenstance of an excitement of the contemporary photobook.

robust, rigorous and successful in its given aims. Were we to adopt a common critique of works against their intentions, or at least within the lineage which they operate as part of, we might move away from a self-created criterion for excellence and success as exemplars of the new form of the photobook. There is nothing inherently bad about a community making and consuming their own content in a self-sustaining ecosystem, but we must wonder, with the everyday language of photography, and common nature of the book, why this is the case with the photobook, especially with the 'context of our current complex and mediated world' where 'books provide the necessary slowness and focus that allow for a better understanding of the multi-dimensional truths behind... events' (Palmieri, 2015:50). While the new form of the medium prospers in its own world, without the support of a shift in discourse towards intent, dissemination, amplification and purpose based critique, its ability to connect with new readers is hindered.

It is not intended for the proposed lineages borne from this research to be applied in the marketing, archiving or other dealings with the photobook, nor is it intended in any way to limit fruitful interactions between lineages. Instead lineages might enter into our considerations of the photobook in stages of creation and review, and while the specific lineage terms *may* be used, they are most importantly symbols of intent. The adoption of this approach to the photobook begins to break down the hold of the term 'photobook', and asks that publications seek to be more than exemplars of this form: providing a more focused location of the work. While the below examples of conversations are oversimplified, crude even, it does illustrate this point quite clearly.

Current discourse

A: *Have you seen Jeff East's new photobook on the rural poor? It's great!*

B: *No, how much is it / Who designed it? / What does it look like? / Who published it?*

Future discourse

A: *Have you seen Jane West's photobook? It's great, it's about the dairy industry.*

B: *No, who's it for? / What's it trying to do? / Why is it a photobook?*

Naturally, following some of the answers, questions might again rise about design, publisher, sequence, printing and other predominantly niche elements of the book, but at this point they would be increasingly relevant: no longer the default. This is the crux of the thesis in relation to lineage — that as default, ‘the photobook’ is not appropriate. The photobook as default descriptor fails to connect with any purpose of work. ‘Photobook’ as an umbrella term allows for broad inclusions and celebration, but in this amalgamation and abundance, all are assigned to a medium of vagaries. In a 2016 blog post to the College Book Art Association’s *Book Art Theory blog*, Emily Larned proposed that we should look to consider and speak of the reception of publications as much as their production. She asked:

‘How essential to one’s book arts / artist’s book / artistic publishing practice are the inter-related processes of...

research? writing? editing? typography? composition? graphic design?
communication? correspondence? determining edition size? sourcing
materials? making materials? identifying vendors? printing? binding? shipping?
pricing? warehousing? marketing? determining an audience? promotion?
distribution? circulation? appearances at fairs, bookshops, zine shops, etc?
exhibition? curatorial concerns? building relationships? reception? determining
impact? sequentiality: how each book informs the next?

Aren’t all of these areas worthy of attention/consideration as part of the praxis surrounding the “art of the book?” Wouldn’t the work of the field be exponentially enriched if each of these aspects were as carefully considered as the paper, binding, or printing?¹²⁴ (Larned, 2016).

Adapting the contemporary photobook discourse to engage with lineage should not only be the responsibility of the maker but also of the engaged reader or scholar who lies within the photobook world. Currently, this reader is most visible as a critic, reviewer, blogger or event facilitator, and will have most impact in these same positions. The engaged reader need not be so established however: they could just as

¹²⁴ The list has been edited for cogency.

easily be a photobook reader who may share occasional Tweets or Facebook posts about the book, they might only have sporadic conversations about the book with peers, colleagues, students, but in these instances is able to reference intent and lineage in relation to their experience.

Here, the acts of publishing which were established in Chapter Two can aid the critique of work and form a basis of reflection on the merits of individual books. Informed by lineage, acts of publishing offer a way of speaking which connects the minutiae of publishing with impact; thus providing an introduction, or compromise in a shift of language. To see how this might work, we could return again to the discourse of competition which has been shown in this chapter to concentrate predominantly on production, and not what this production permits. So, let us imagine how a re-formation of text accompanying a winner for a competition or shortlisting may be helpful in looking to acknowledge the pragmatics of action for the book (and while such criteria can be subjective, so is the review of design and the quality of the photographic project itself).

While the design of the publication and its physical realisation brings an extra dimension to the work, it is the author's attention to the detail of what they are setting out to do which is most impressive. Each publication sold in hardback is accompanied by a paperback version on lighter paper stock complete with a library card to enable the buyer to deposit it with their local library or school and easily hand over all required information about the work — ensuring it will reach the hands of those who might otherwise be completely unaware of the subject depicted.

This adjustment shifts discourse from the making of works, to the making public of works, a consistent theme through this thesis and one that gives cause to return to our concept of pragmatic and reactive acts of publishing from Chapter Two. To summarise work from pages 120-122, these two positions were introduced as a way of reviewing and thinking about the many choices in production, distribution and dissemination which are made by authors, and which can adopt a reactive stance: confronting or avoiding digital possibilities, or pragmatic: strategically utilising contemporary tools. If

the goal is for a book to be a success as measured by the photobook community, what would otherwise be reactive may well be pragmatic¹²⁵. It is proposed that in order to respond to this occurrence, we acknowledge that the reactive and pragmatic must relate to specific audiences, as well as authors, and that in looking for primary and secondary audiences we will be able to better respond to the demands of the work.

‘a successful project could be selling 9,000 copies but if those copies are costing £150 and can only be sold to 9,000 rich people then is that successful approach or is that a very limited audience? It depends on how or what the book’s aim is. A lot of people are using books as a career development tool, one of the good things is that they stay for a long time, you make them and they stay there on your shelf for quite a long time, so it’s an interesting way to close some projects or some work’ (Acin, 2018).

‘Stephen submitted a photobook into the *Australian Photobook* award a couple of years ago, that was on the typhoon that hit the Philippines in 2003 [*Typhoon*, 2014] and it’s a 160 page book with a page size around A3 super formatted as a concertina book. In engaging with that book I was just so overcome by it. I couldn’t get all the way through it... so I’m affected by that, but that book is 16 or 20,000 dollars a copy, I don’t think too many people are going to have it wrapped up and given as a gift. But it exists, and is included in the public record’ (Spowart, 2018b).

It is often spoken of in the photobook world that on 'no one buys books' (Acin, 2018) at least 'very few of them spend £30 or £40 on a book', yet books at this price, and well above, dominate (see pages 125-130). With regard to purpose, and with lineage publishing spheres in mind, this is far from a pragmatic stance, and one that photo essay/photobook at least must take charge of. Pragmatism will encourage a discourse which shifts towards the process and actions of publishing to include the mundane details of a strategy which might include public collections, libraries and multi-file digital downloads. And, by the same spiral of ascending esotericism, this may well create a

¹²⁵ The interactivity of a book and its open binding, while increasing cost and reducing reach could well be considered strategic for their impact on other photobook readers who are equally unconcerned about price or reach

spiral of ascending pragmatism, rendering the photobook a common sight as apposed to a rarity, in schools, community centres and accessible archives. There is a real benefit in engaging with a discourse of pragmatism in re-establishing connections with readers and the intent of specific photobooks. Without this, and with the knowledge of prior chapters, it is likely that the photographic book/photobook may continue to operate well, exploiting its reactivity and that of its audience, but that the photo essay/photobook will continue to more closely resemble the artists' book/photobook, and fail in its aspirations and potentialities. In the next section, *The Photobook Club*, cited in the abstract as the root of this research, is the subject of a case study which seeks to reflect on how it has sought to make small interventions which foreground the reader and emphasise the post-publication life of the photobook.

Case study: *The Photobook Club* and photobook readers

Here, I introduce my own initiative, *The Photobook Club*, a project which runs counter to the maker-centrism and esoteric discourse seen in this chapter. It is not an easy project to speak about, given that it is the result of so many passionate individuals' time and effort, and has since its launch grown in ways I did not expect and could not have managed on my own. So, what I deal with here is that which I can speak confidently about — detailing how and why *The Photobook Club* launched, before introducing the physical 'meetups' associated with the project and the augmentation and amplification of a particular photobook.

A response to a restrictive discourse

The Photobook Club was founded locally in 2010 at Coventry University as a learning tool to aid student engagement with an impressive collection of photobooks in the library, but has since spread to 35 countries across the globe: from Morocco to Sao Paulo and Paris to Reykjavik. Fundamentally, it was begun as a project which intended to challenge assumptions of significance with regards to particular, canonised works, and open discussion in a non-hierarchical manner to the photobook. I saw that, as interest in the medium grew, there were few spaces or platforms for discussion outside of academic or art-historical contexts. The goal was to create an online reading group which would not speak of the production of the photobook but instead its reception, and would be started by re-opening a discourse regarding some of the most spoken-of works of the 20th century. With the first book chosen for online discussion (Robert Frank's *The Americans* (1959)), I not only introduced the book online but also invited photobook aficionado Wayne Ford to share connected works, Frank's other publications and some background regarding the publication. With this, *The Photobook Club* sought to escape from any presumption of prior knowledge, and to offer enough contextual scaffolding for someone to approach the book for the first time and feel confident in sharing their thoughts: meaning that new readers could pick and choose the content they engaged with. Following the generation and sharing of this content,

readers who were seeing the book for the first, or sixth time¹²⁶ were asked to share their thoughts, all of which would be posted on the front page of the main website (see Fig. 43.). This democratised voice and created a platform where all reading reflections were presented as equally valid as one another's. In total, over the course of 26 months, *The Photobook Club* undertook 11 such readings, receiving reflections from a variety of different readers including scholars, teachers, students, photographic hobbyists and historians. However, in 2012, this aspect of the project's life stopped, as during that time it had been noted that 1) to translate personal experiences (such as reading) to easily consumed sentences and paragraphs online is both difficult and daunting, and 2) there was a desire to handle these works in a similarly supportive and real space. So I began to take physical classroom sessions I held at Coventry University, (which accompanied these online discussions), into public spaces.

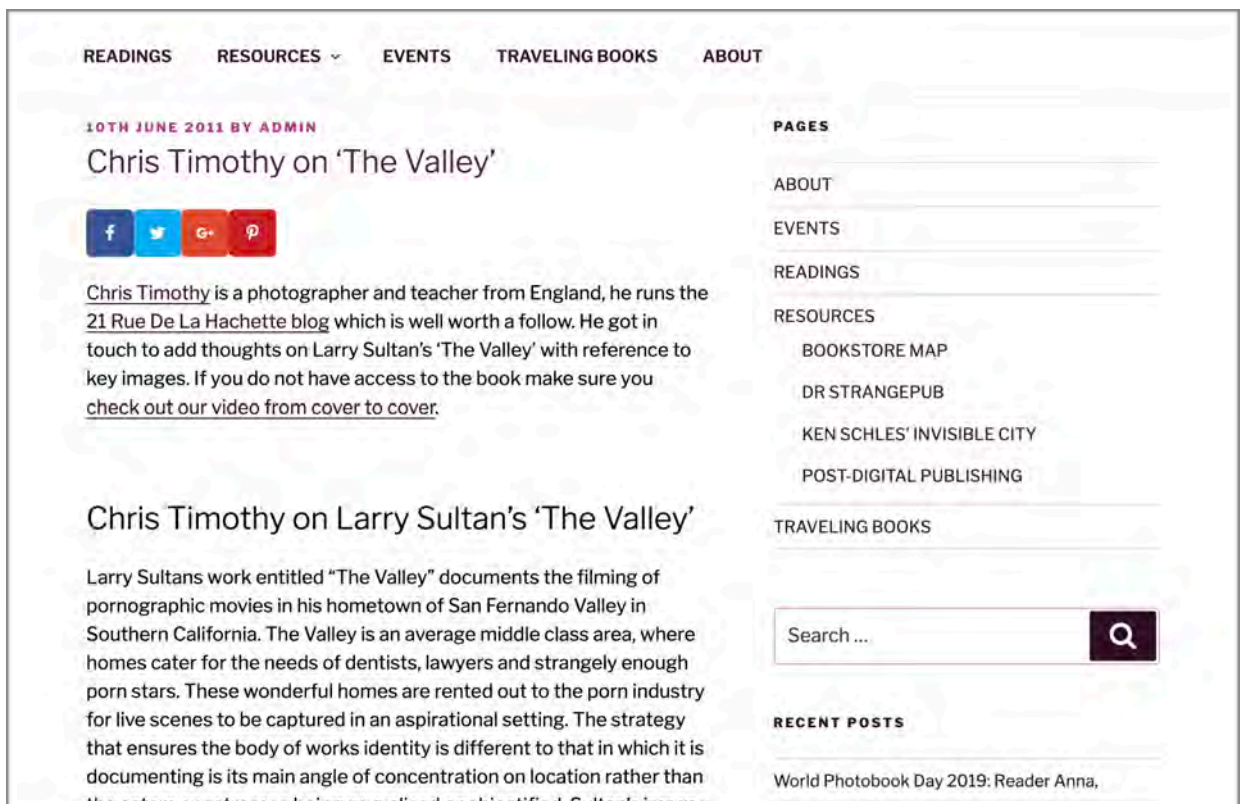


Fig. 43. *Chris Timothy on 'The Valley'* (2011)(original in colour).

¹²⁶ Where books were cheap and/or easy to find in local libraries links were provided to purchase/borrow. Where books were out of print, rare, or expensive, I photographed each spread of the book and made videos shared in Vimeo.

The meet-ups of *The Photobook Club*

Moving from an online discussion of photobooks to corporeal sessions was an attempt to provide a less structured way to engage readers in reflecting on photobooks. At the events, called 'meetups', participants were encouraged to bring a photobook on a given theme for open discussion. The philosophy of non-hierarchical discourse, and a non-assumptive and plain-speaking approach remained, and ensured that the event placed no emphasis on the pedigree of the individuals round the table, nor the books brought in. As an example, the inaugural meetup held in Coventry and all other locations I began to run events in, had an open approach to what a photobook was: whereby attendees would bring in works and as a group we would consider what for future sessions, we would consider a photobook, or not. Often, I may not have agreed with the definition we arrived at, but it would remain. Soon after a meetup I ran at *Photobook London*, I was invited to speak about the initiative at the London Design Festival, a platform that introduced *The Photobook Club* to interested communities in Barcelona and Madrid, before growing by public presentation and word of mouth to more than 50 locations by 2016 (see Fig. 44.).



Fig. 44. *Google Maps: Photobook Club Branch Locations in 2016* (2016)(original in colour)

In each location, an organiser or group of organisers takes on the role I adopted in Coventry and London — the facilitator rather than expert. They would help to generate discussion, bring in additional books for those without, organise events and synthesise discussion but would not teach. And so while each community has its own personality, and is locally organised and curated, the ethos of openness, discussion and access still continues. As Jenny Hartley’s extensive survey of reading groups highlights, with any style of book group, the reasons to meet are as broad as the attendees (Hartley, 2002), so too is the way in which books are chosen and the manner in which discussion takes place. This is clearly evident in *The Photobook Club* just through a cursory glance at book lists emerging from different clubs, which range from the mainstream to highly specialised, and locations of events, which span from galleries and bookstores to universities and cafes (see Figs. 45, 46 and 47.). So while these communities share a common philosophy and passion for the photobook, they are unique and autonomous.



Fig. 45. *The Photobook Club Barcelona meet around the 'box of books' (2013)*(original in colour). Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Oscar Ciutat.



Fig. 46. *The Photobook Club Reykjavik's inaugural meetup* (2015)(original in colour). Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Simone de Greef.



Fig. 47. *The Photobook Club Jakarta* (2014)(original in colour). Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Ridzki Noviansyah.

In the form of meetups, the project has met many of its objectives around the opening up of photobook discourse, and even managed to make an impression on some significant players in the photobook world. Martin Parr attended an event in Tokyo and in an interview with Martin Birt commented that:

‘There’s a whole network of photobook clubs around the world. I got invited the other day to give a talk to the Bangalore Photobook Club. I think that is really amazing’ (Birt and Parr, 2014).

Meetups, and *The Photobook Club* more broadly, however, are not without their limitations. Most noticeably was my own use of the word ‘club’ at the outset: a term which implies an exclusive group which may use particular language or operate in a manner which is difficult to penetrate. I am under no impressions that this word alone leads to insularity, but at a number of events, and in the review of *Photobook Club* readers in Table 13, it is evident that the community here is still populated predominantly by makers. As a response, I have attempted a variety of forms of photobook mobilisation or amplification in order to reach beyond the confines of the photobook world.

Mobilising and augmenting the book

As part of the project’s remit to facilitate discussion around the photobook, at numerous points since 2010 I have undertaken acts of mobilisation with particular books and collections¹²⁷. Here, I will introduce a collaborative project with photographer Ken Schles which sought to activate a book beyond its limited audience.

¹²⁷ In addition to the example here I have also worked to mobilise a collection of photobook, that deal with our interactions with land (*The Natural Collection*) which has been taken to schools and even an exhibition in Australia.

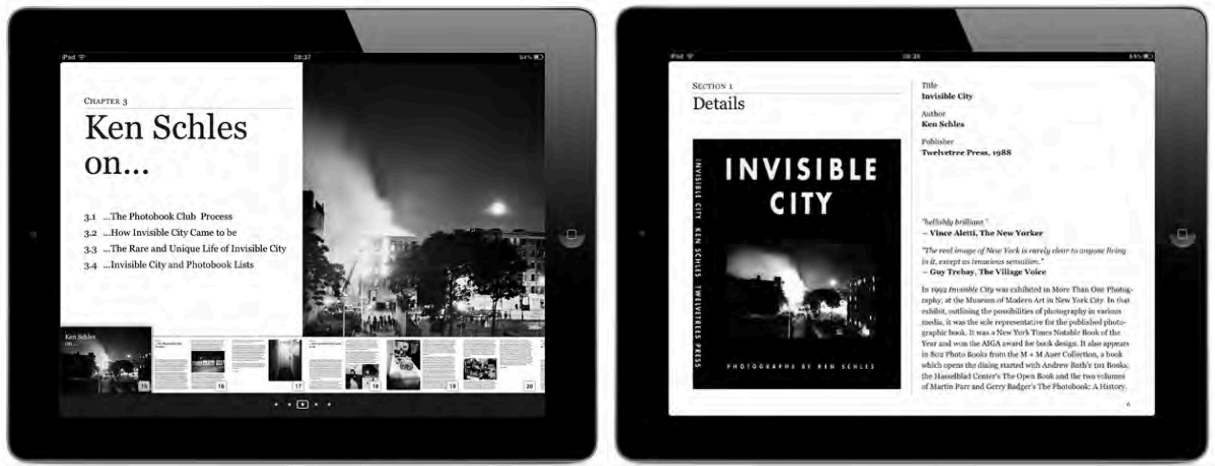


Fig. 48. Screenshots from 'Invisible City; A Digital Resource' (2012)

In 2011, Schles' *Invisible City* (1988), a book about New York's East Village in the 1980s, was read on *The Photobook Club*. Chosen for its iconic status and lack of availability, it was a perfect publication to open up to a new audience. What was particularly fortuitous here was that Schles, as the work's author, was frustrated himself in the limits of access to the book which (with a second hand value around \$1000) meant that, with few exceptions, the book was retained within a small community of designers, photographers and book collectors¹²⁸. And so, following a month-long look at the work online, and with contributions from a range of readers, I set about augmenting the conversation and framing it as an ebook and interactive PDF. The objective was to offer a considered, contextual account of the original publication and to present not only each spread from the book, but also each image in a slideshow and reflections on reading already received, for free, in two accessible forms. In addition, with Schles' help, I was able to include his original lecture notes from a talk about the book at the *International Centre of Photography* in New York and even a video of a new dummy for an alternative edit of *Invisible City*, one that Schles called *Night Walk*.

The resulting publication was called *Invisible City: A digital resource*, and was published on iBooks in May 2012 and as a downloadable PDF in November of the

¹²⁸ I do not use the term 'photobook world' here as when the work was published in 1988, such a world did not exist as it is spoken of in this thesis.

same year¹²⁹. Within the first six months it had been downloaded more than 2,000 times, a significant figure when we consider it was the same as the original print run for *Invisible City*. It was well received, featuring in *European Photography* as one of Markus Schaden's pick of the best digital photobooks (Schaden, 2013:71) and described by writer Taco Hidde Bakker as one of 'the most surprising 2012 photobook publications', which he reflects upon as 'an excellent example of how... photobooks can be lifted out of the shadows and be studied in a public realm beyond the traditional library' (Bakker, 2012). Schles himself speaks about the project in a section of Darius Himes and Mary Virginia Swanson's *Publish Your Photography Book*, articulating his frustration about how many great photobooks remain 'hidden', asking 'what would our world be if science were so obscured?' (Himes and Swanson, 2014:148). This act of amplification is only of a single publication and is far from perfect¹³⁰, but it demonstrates not only how augmentation, republication and activation can vastly increase readership, but also, that such acts do not adversely impact the demand for the paid-for, physical publication. Thus, the maker is not fiscally disadvantaged with the increase in awareness of, and access to the publication via digital means. In Schles' own words:

'The digital experience neither replicates nor replaces an experience of a physical book. But then it isn't meant to. It stands on its own merits... what was once a dead end now lives within the context of a dynamic and engaged conversation... you are welcome to savour this eBook study before committing to the rare copy... or the beautiful reprint from Steidl — for free' (Himes and Swanson, 2014:149).

This project with Schles has played a significant role in the prompting of the research found across these pages — it demonstrated to me that with a willingness to expand the reach of a work, and with only basic skills and resources, the photobook could be activated to connect with new readers and strengthen connections with existing ones.

¹²⁹ Both are still available for free and being accessed regularly with total downloads approaching 5,000.

¹³⁰ At the time of this project my considerations were primarily around those on the periphery of what I would now call the photobook world. Were I to undertake a similar initiative today, my focus would be on more precise acts of amplification which might look to engage with those fully outside the photobook community: individuals with histories in Alphabet City, gentrification and politics, architecture and New York's cultural geographies.

The short case study of *The Photobook Club* presented here shows how the project has sought to elevate the role of the reader and a non-hierarchical discourse, as well as aid the reach of photobooks. At the end of this thesis, on page 292, more thought is given to the project's next steps, but here it provides an example of the possible ways in which action can be taken to aid connections between the photobook and its readers.

Verso

In this chapter, by first undertaking substantial data collection and analysis in three areas (photobook events, community and discourse), I was able to generate the first thorough account of what has come to be known as the 'photobook world'. A review of all photobook-specific activities in 2015 formed the basis of an investigation into activities which revealed the popularity of the dummy competition and construction based workshops: two findings which suggested a strong focus in production. This was confirmed by analysing the results of the photobook reading survey in which 178 respondents reflected on their professions and connection to photobooks, which demonstrated a clear majority of makers in the photobook world. In the final component of data collection for the chapter, textual discourse analysis was undertaken in two distinct spaces — a pair of open and unstructured photobook-specific Facebook pages, and similarly medium-specific competitions. Once again, confirmation was present in a highlighting of making and production but, in addition, both contributive and esoteric discourses were identified.

Having undertaken this first-hand research, the chapter looked to offer contextualisation and explanation of the emerging traits of maker-centrism, insularity and contributive discourse via literary review and elite interviews. These themes were augmented and connected, pulling in related characteristics of esotericism and sophistication as well as seeking theoretical comprehension by way of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of self-legitimation and Jodi Dean's theories of the fantasy of abundance and technological fetishism. Following this, it was proposed that the very traits witnessed in the chapter can be attributed to the contemporary photobook as a new form of the medium. One which is forging strong connections with a particular (and insular) group of readers, whilst missing connections with others who lie outside the photobook world. In response, during the latter stages of the chapter I proposed how, with the support of findings from the previous two chapters, the discourse and thus products of the photobook world may be adapted to engage with lineage, pragmatism and the purpose of publishing. Here, a case study of *The Photobook Club* offered an example of a reader-centric project which challenges the existing conversations of the photobook world.

This chapter has evidenced the state of the contemporary photobook world and how its characteristics may not be supportive of all lineages. It has identified places in which the contemporary form misses connections with readers, but has also put forward potential solutions. As this component of our proposed critical framework is slotted in, it is worth remembering that it can be used not only to understand how, and why, the contemporary photobook operates as it does, but how it can be better supported in the future too.

A proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook

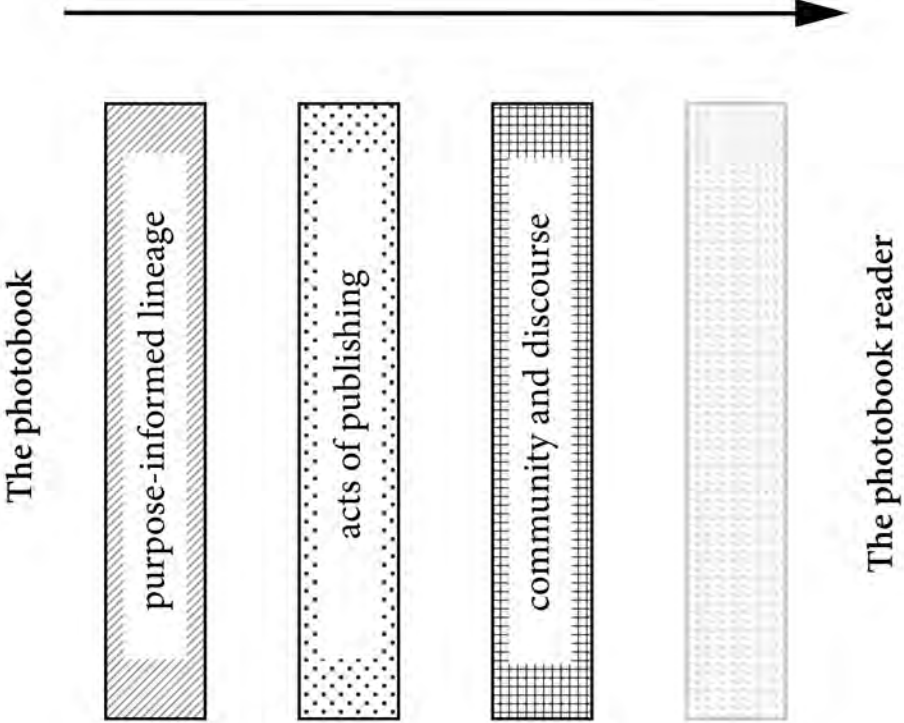


Fig. 49. *A proposed, partial critical framework for the contemporary photobook (III)* (2019)

Having integrated the inception, realisation and discourse of the photobook, we are left now to seek answers to a question which is fundamental to our intentions in this research: how do we read the contemporary photobook? Answering this is significant in the overall development of this research and argument put forward. Concentrating on what happens when one reads a photobook is one way to challenge the dominance

of research that centres on the maker and the product (the photobook), and the established photobook environment in which there is an emphasis on the success of works in relation to their accolades and reviews.

Chapter Four. An account of reading:

What do we do when we pick up a photobook?

Recto

‘...watching a short film
...reading the script of a theatre play
...a walk in the countryside
...visiting a museum
...having a conversation
...eating chocolate
...there is nothing like reading a photobook’

(an example of the breadth of comparisons to reading a photobook self-suggested by respondents to the photobook reading survey)

In Chapter One, it was proposed that thinking in relation to intent, with the aid of purpose-informed lineages, would help us better understand and critique the contemporary photobook. Then, Chapter Two considered the role of publishing in a post-digital and post-photographic context, witnessing how for some lineages, the dominance of reactive acts of publishing could miss connections with readers. And most recently in Chapter Three, we saw how the photobook world, in its construction and discourse, has helped to shape a new form of the medium — one that is at a point of rich experimentation, but is maker-centric, and lacking a critical framework which transcends celebration and niche discourse. This already is a sizeable contribution to a holistic comprehension of the contemporary photobook, but if we are to fulfil our aims to fully interrogate the connections between the photobook and its readers, there is a gap in our scholarship: the subject of what we do when we pick up a photobook, and how it is that we read the form. Not only is this essential in the culmination of a proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook which seeks to challenge maker-centrism, but it is also a longstanding strand of my own research from the inaugural meeting of *The Photobook Club* in 2010: to highlight the often overlooked role of the reader. As this is relatively uncharted territory, and the photobook can be considered as object, montage and text, it is a tall order; but, with a mixed methodological approach which creatively deals with challenges encountered, the result will be the first research-informed account of photobook reading.

The chapter starts by asking in turn, how we can understand reading the photobook from its location as object, then sequence¹³¹ and finally as text — a journey which sees a selection of theories interwoven and compared with data collection. Montage theory, structuralism, formalism and phenomenology all play a role here, and provide ways in which we can think about the reading of the photobook in an inclusive manner. I pause at this point to solidify what has been learned, before embarking on one of the more creative pieces of data collection in this research; whereby empirical research and graphical elicitation is adopted in an attempt to garner reflections on reading the photobook without constraint or even the use of text. After a review of the two subjective accounts of photobook reading which have been published during the time of this research, there is a proposal to consider a total of eight acts of reading which account for a variety of interactions with the medium from a distance and up-close. The chapter concludes with a reflection on these possibilities for the application of the findings and their presence in a proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook.

Theory and data: ‘plugging in’

‘...plugging the theory and the data into one another in keeping with Deleuze's conceptual play of the zigzag that he describes as: "the lightning bolt spark of creation and the 'crosscutting path from one conceptual flow to another', a path set off by the spark of creation, unpredictable, undisciplined, anti-disciplinary, and nonstatic." The result of "thinking with theory" across the data illustrates how knowledge is opened up and proliferated rather than foreclosed and simplified’ (Jackson and Mazzei., 2011:vii).

What occurs in this chapter when data is brought in to the investigation could be referred to as ‘plugging in’ (Jackson and Mazzei., 2011:1), a simple term used by Alison Jackson and Lisa Mazzei to articulate Deleuze and Guatarri’s assemblage

¹³¹ There is a separate consideration which is not included here — which concerns the construction of narrative, or storytelling. While it is a natural partner when we consider montage, our purposes are not to understand how stories are told, but how readers connect with photobooks. As a starting point for research into narratives in the photobook, Gerry Badger’s essay *It’s all Fiction: Narrative and the Photobook* (2014:15-47) is recommended.

theory as a practical melee for the researcher and practitioner. When Jackson and Mazzei speak of plugging theory into data, they speak of a two way relationship — not that one informs the other, but that they both inform each other — and progress thinking in a cyclical and inclusive manner. This is what happens throughout this chapter with literary theory informing the way in which I have returned to the photobook reading survey and other data collection methods and vice versa. Data and theory rotating along as I incorporate, jettison and refine — towards accounting for the reading of the contemporary photobook.

Acts of readership and chapter style

Towards the end of this chapter, a series of 'acts' of reading are proposed. They are formed in an amalgam of literature review, personal reflection and data collection. As a result of this multi-faceted approach it is these acts which really bring together the research, and through which a greater clarity of methodology is observed. Therefore these acts have been replicated here at the start of the chapter so as to provide a reference for the reader of the ground which must be covered.

Act I: **Distance reading** — the information we gather consciously or collect unconsciously prior to picking up the book or entering a first reading.

Act II: **Inspectional reading I** — a brief material consideration of the photobook.

Act III: **Inspectional reading II** — a brief consideration of the photobook's contents and non-material form.

Act IV: **Progressional reading** — a linear investigation which, depending on reading, may be more passive and film-like, or active and scholarly.

Act V: **Conceptual reading** — a questioning of the production of the work — why does it operate in this manner? What is being communicated?

Act VI: **Assimilatory reading** — connections made to other works, experiences or actions — dependent very much again on the reading conducted.

Act VII: **Shelf-reading** — the physical positioning of the photobook and its connection to an ongoing cognitive connection with the work.

Act VIII: **Re-reading** — any secondary reading of a work, this will involve a potential return to **Distance reading** but may also jump ahead to later acts.

Fig. 50. *The Eight Acts of Reading* (2018)

Reading the photobook as an object

Seldom does a review of a photobook fail to mention the haptic qualities of the book placed in front of the reviewer. In more informal spaces too, the materiality of the book is often at the forefront of discussion — in conversations at *Photobook Club* events, in the classroom, book fairs and bookshops. It is a key aspect of the reading we perform with the photobook and, as we have already witnessed in Chapter Two, is experiencing a particular prominence in the contemporary photobook landscape. How though might we put into words the role of the book-as-object in our reading? As signifier of experience? As pragmatic container? There aren't many places to turn for help. Existing considerations of materiality and the photobook with a focus on reading¹³² are few, but in relation to the artists' book an interesting work is found in Tim Daly's *Book Handling as a Research Method* (2018). Daly announces touch as a 'fundamental aspect of interacting with books', which are designed and destined to be handled at 'close-quarters', far away from the formality and distance imposed by artwork on walls of galleries and museums. Daly goes on to stress that ignoring the handling of a book would be to miss out on 'entire swathes of intertextual nuances... the deliberate choices of the artist...' (2018). The necessity for engagement with the physical which Daly makes prominent is echoed in numerous statements from the photobook reading survey and elite interviews. Here, this essential component of photobook reading is split into two distinct areas — the haptic experience of reading, and the material life of the book. This concentration allows us to consider the photobook as an object in a holistic sense, which goes beyond our most overtly active engagements with the book¹³³.

A haptic experience

Whilst the physical form of the photobook from a taxonomic or production perspective, features in pages of many publications seeking to offer overviews of the photobook, it

¹³² Commentary on materiality in relation to production and process are considerably easier to come by

¹³³ A task of the acts of reading proposed in this chapter is to move towards a more longitudinal consideration of reading — to not confine a reading to the moment the work lies before us.

is not often that the impact of haptics¹³⁴ on the reading experience is recognised. However, as the introduction of digital reading platforms begins to question what physical interaction does for the reader, the topic has become crucial in areas of neuroscience and cognitive development research. Studies into the difference between screen and book reading have shown (speaking here not specifically about the photobook) that even before taking into account the haptic engagement of reader with text, the limitations and literal boundary of the physical page aids reading. In their 2017 research, Hou et al suggested that in reading texts, the presentation of the content which allows for cognitive maps to be built, was most successful in its impact on comprehension, and that while this is possible in digital spaces, the book is still an ideal platform. It has ‘four corners and a frame – two long and two short borders – with which to orient oneself. A reader can see where a piece of textual information is in relation to the page corners and borders’ (Hou et al, 2017). The edges of the page then act as a border to another world, and a physical, as well as cognitive space of reading — a powerful tool for the photobook and its ability to communicate.

Often when individuals describe the power of the book (in the face of the digital especially) they return to somewhat nostalgic or romantic notions regarding weight, texture and smell¹³⁵, but these components of a book’s materiality are proven to aid the comprehension of a work which is, quite literally, at hand. Multi-sensory learning theory purports that:

‘the sensorimotor experience of the reading medium’s materiality influences cognitive processing of the text content. According to the multi-sensory learning theory... people learn best when information is presented across multiple sensory modalities...the use of hands in the reading process can facilitate information encoding. The richer the sensorimotor engagement that a reader experiences with a text, the greater the opportunities for

¹³⁴ The book, and in particular the photobook, has a complex relationship with haptics which spans what might be termed ‘haptic poetry’, ‘haptic technology’ and ‘haptic sensing’ (or haptic perception). Therefore when I use the term ‘haptics’ I am referring to the combination of these sub terms that add together to encompass all physical interaction with the book — whether mechanically driven (page turning) or exploratory (feeling paper texture).

¹³⁵ Even Kevin Kelly in his describing of embodiment employs romantic language in speaking of the difference between text on screen or in a book... ‘sometimes it is delicious to have the same words printed on bright white cottony paper, bound in leather. Feels so good’ (Kelly, 2008).

multisensory information encoding and for the text to be comprehended' (Hou et al, 2017)¹³⁶.

Put differently, it is the 'spatiotemporal permanence and extension of the physical substrate of paper' together with the 'fixity of printed text' (or image) which combine in the reader for a unique experience not easily replicated (Mangen and Schilhab, 2012). This is echoed in responses to the photobook reading survey, when participants were asked about the approach they would take to reading a book that was new to them. Several responses are presented below which give a sense of a broader picture regarding how readers communicate the place and importance of material and objecthood, in the reading of the photobook:

'The first thing I do is feel the material — the heft of the book, the cloth, the paper... the form of the object informs the content. Then I start at the beginning' (United States, V).

'I feel the cover and smell the book first, flip it back and forth and look at the spine, then I start from the beginning. I usually only read text after a first pass at the images' (United States, D).

'First I examine its physical construction, the cover, the binding, the paper stock, the printing. Then I examine how it begins' (Spain, M).

What is most interesting in the responses seen here is a separation between the physical and otherwise — 'first' is the physical examination and 'then' is the beginning. This is not to say that the physical is then ignored, but that it is not as overtly present as at the very first interaction with the work. This may be an innate occurrence for the book which *must* be handled before it can be worked or read. To underline the relationship between the working and reading, or the hand and eye, we can turn to a simple question posed in the elite interview sheet. Here, respondents were asked on

¹³⁶ Interestingly the study conducted by Hou et al found little support for the hypothesis of the medium materiality mechanism (which has been studied and suggested by numerous other scholars (see Mangen and Shilhab, 2012), but they did use a skeuomorphic digital text and proposed that their findings 'implied that reading on a screen could match that of reading from paper if the representation of the document on electronic reading devices resemble that of the printed book' (Hou et al, 2017).

the below diagram seen in Figures 51 and 52, to 'select up to five eyes and five hands to show the weighting you apply to these different but related facets of a reading.' For the section of the interview sheet looking at a photobook that was new to the reader, the average response is seen in Figure 51, and for a photobook that was being returned to, is seen in Figure 52.

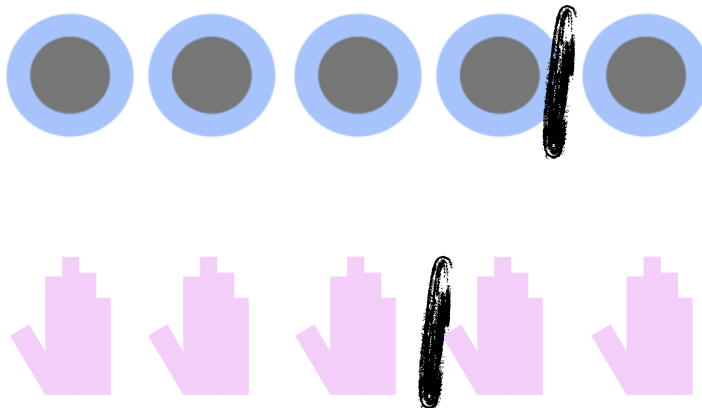


Fig. 51. *The weighting of hand and eye in the reading of a new photobook 4.46/5 average (eye), 3.61/5 (hand) (2018)(original in colour)*

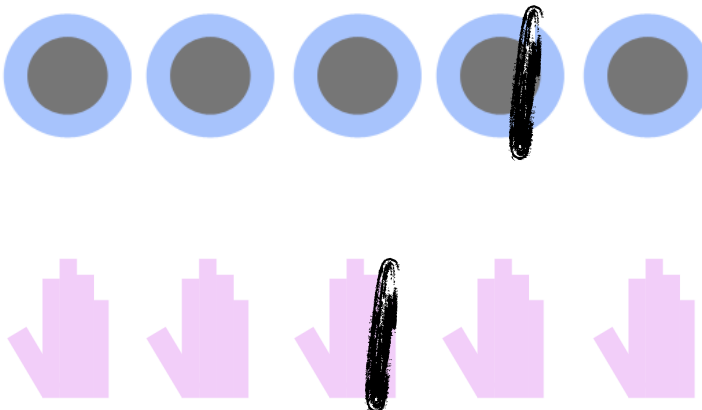


Fig. 52. *The weighting of hand and eye in the return reading of a photobook 4.28/5 average (eye), 3.11/5 (hand) (2018)(original in colour)*

Further evidence comes in the form of another direct question about the importance of the physical properties of the book — with respondents being asked to illustrate on the graduated diagrams below. Again this question was asked once in relation to approaching a new book (see Fig. 53.), and once for returning to a book (see Fig. 54.).



Fig. 53. *The importance of the physical properties of a new photobook 4.29/5 average (2018)(original in colour)*



Fig. 54. *The importance of the physical properties of a photobook that is being returned to 3.69/5 average (2018)(original in colour)*

When we look at the photobook as an object, and consider its material influence on reading, we can see from these survey responses, and the literature which highlights multi-sensory reading, that the physicality of the photobook runs deep into our experience of the medium, and is on an almost equal footing with the role of the eye¹³⁷. Especially noteworthy is how sensorimotor reading can articulate one of the potential benefits of the photobook as a medium of communication: it explains the power of the photobook, in which haptic reading is such an integral part of the overall experience. Next, we turn to the photobook as an object away from an intense reading: what happens to the photobook when it sits on our desk, shelf or bedside table?

A material life

¹³⁷ This is a clear indication that current reading of the photobook is far removed from a notion of the book as container or vessel and is instead enmeshed in the content of the work itself.

‘We keep circling, reading, re-reading, cycling into the next book even before we’ve finished the last, so that the two books remain open, and then more; ten, fifteen books opened or book-marked, cluttering the room’ (Stadler, 2018:119).

The physical book must be stored in some way by its reader, archivist or custodian, and, unlike a digital work, it is common that this placement will allow for regular engagement by the eye, if not the hand. The photobook’s placement on shelf or desk aside other works in a chronology, or an arbitrary fashion throws up new readings without opening the book itself — new proximities which are begun physical and become mental — we must make way for this side of reading. A reading which could be best demonstrated by Jean Baudrillard, for whom any collection of objects become ‘mental precincts over which I hold sway, they become things of which I am the meaning’ (2005:91). This ‘sway’ might be exhibited in any manner of different ways: from the positioning of a title on a bookshelf, to its lending, gifting, re-reading or even, in an extreme case, destruction¹³⁸. For most respondents to the photobook reading survey, the material life of the book is played out in a work studio, or at home, sometimes both. Books are being stored on shelves, coffee tables, dedicated bookcases and on the floor. Their organisation can be a living thing — as new books come in and slot into new spaces, or books are removed for pressing work and returned haphazardly.

¹³⁸ When I spoke with Sarah Bay Gachot about her relationships with books she noted that many of the books she buys are bought only to take apart and reassemble in collages. This is a most vivid depiction of making a text one’s own.

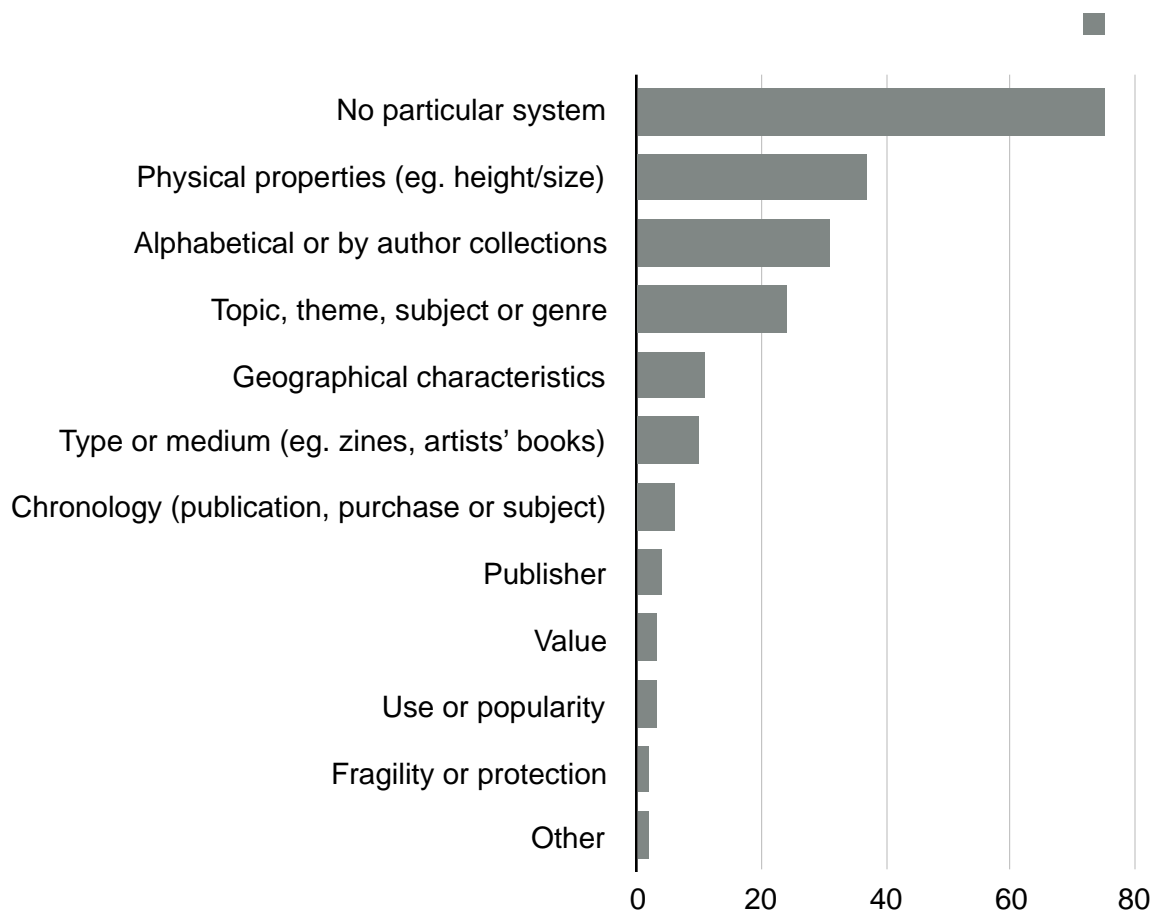


Table 20. The organisation of photobooks, responses from the photobook reading survey

What we see here is a process of re-contextualising that Baudrillard spoke of, and which artist Eric van Der Weijde notes when conversely, he speaks of decontextualisation — ‘The book, as an object, gains strength as it gets decontextualised by its viewer, owner, or bookcase in which it stands’ (van Der Weijde, 2018:145). For van der Weijde, it is the removal of the publication from its contextual location of production that is lost, but its contextual location of reception which gives it new strength. Put differently, as we organise (or refuse to organise) our photobooks, they are moved away from their positions as a product of the maker to a product of the reader. We bring meaning to works in the swapping, borrowing and lending we conduct — we bundle them with some of the meaning we have made with them, introducing and recommending new works to new people. It is in these acts that the photobook, or any book for that matter, breaks free of its temporary physical inertia. For while the

book can be democratic in principle, and reach far and wide in theory, as we saw in Chapter Two it needs to be amplified by those who wield it¹³⁹. It is not however only the reader who is responsible for the amplification of the book. The photobook maker too is able to curate the life of particular works with readings, performances, activities, signings, exhibitions and even follow-up publications — all of which would fall into our discussion of the acts of publishing laid out in Chapter Two. There are then also the archivists, scholars, museums and libraries which are able to change the course of a book's life or at least align it with certain canons and discourses. With the significance of the hand in reading, haptic significance in cognitive processing and the social life of the book as object in mind, we will look to progress to a new consideration of the reading of the photobook: as a series of spaces.

¹³⁹ Only 63 of 178 respondents to the photobook reading survey said that they actively lent photobooks to others.

Reading the photobook as a series of spaces¹⁴⁰

There are numerous locations in which we find detailed proposals for, and applications of, the theory of single image comprehension¹⁴¹ but it shall not be here. An overview of the single image in this space is unnecessary, and based on responses to the elite interview and the photobook reading survey, bears little on the experience of reading¹⁴². Instead it is the construction of meaning through image pairings and sequences of space that is of most significance. In concentrating on the reading of the sequence, we reiterate a core principal of the photobook that harks back to Alex Sweetman's proposal in 1985 for the 'photobook work' which is not a 'portfolio between covers' but 'a series of images... in a linear sequence' (Sweetman, 1985:187), and in turn to Ulises Carrion speaking in 1975 about the artists' book, pioneered by poets, as being:

'A sequence of spaces.

Each of these spaces is perceived at a different moment

- a book is also a sequence of moments.

A book is not a case of words, nor a bag of words, nor a bearer of words'¹⁴³
(Carrion, 2018:27).

Carrion and Sweetman speak of sequence, linearity and moments and time — concepts which have been served better by research into film and montage than the photographic image in an isolated sense. And so it is to montage that we turn first, in looking to develop further our account of contemporary photobook reading.

¹⁴⁰ While in this section we deal with spaces — to include blank space and allow for complex sequencing and non-linearity, we are fundamentally talking about a series of images.

¹⁴¹ Barthes' *Image, Music, Text* (1977) is a prime example.

¹⁴² There are exceptions that open up separate areas of research — the photo essay/photobooks connection to the index and evidence is one such example but for clarity and flow, this falls outside the remit of this chapter. Neither survey nor interviews featured responses which drew attention to the single image.

¹⁴³ Interestingly, in his 2012 manifesto, artist and photobook maker Eric van Der Weijde declared that to him 'the book is a carrier' (van Der Weijde, 2018:145) for his work, a notable exception to the holistic approach to photobooks that dominate.

Montage: locating meaning

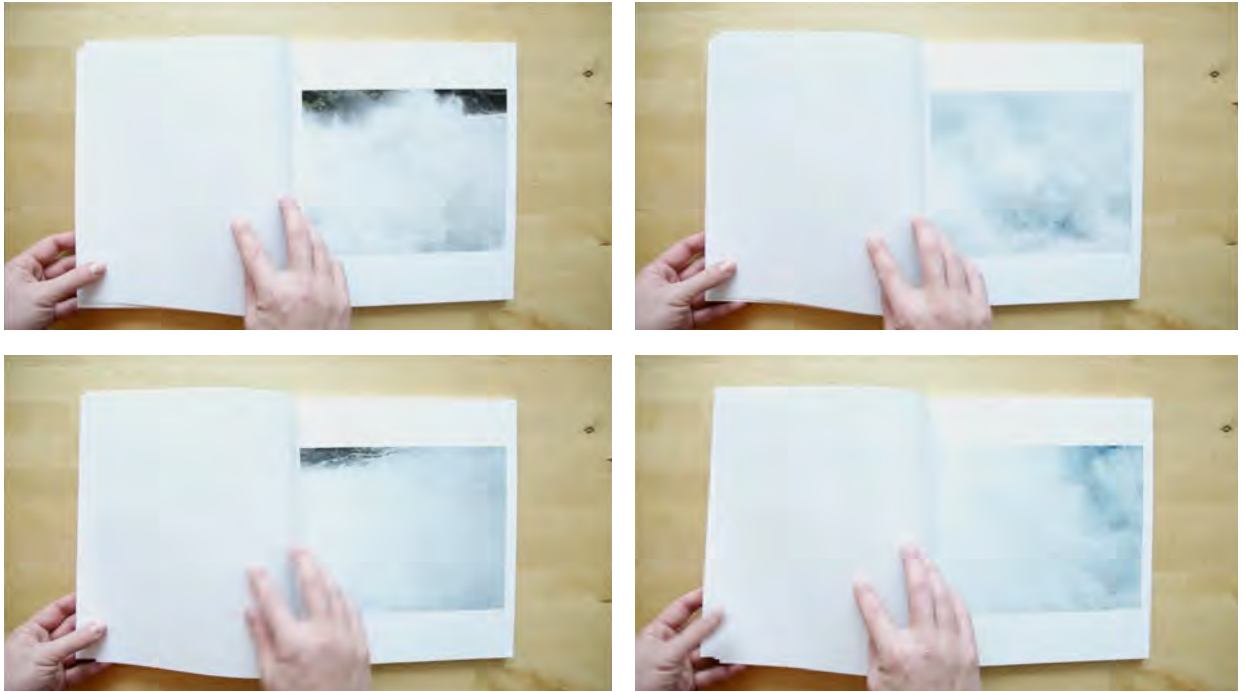


Fig. 55. *The opening of Ron Jude's Lick Creek Line (2012) (2017)*(original in colour) — An example of the power of the sequence over the single image with the effect of moving, gushing water: greater than its constituent parts. Permission to reproduce these images has been granted by Ron Jude.

We enter into film and montage theory with the acknowledgement that cinema is not a perfect analogy for the photobook — though the manner in which frames are tied together in sequence (through roll film and timeline [cinema] and binding [photobook]) offers a clear starting point for the construction of meaning in sequence. To begin a comprehension of what occurs when separate images, constructed in different times, and with different means in mind, come together, there are few clearer presentations as via Takeshi Kitano's narrative game featured in the 600th edition of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Kitano's process was to take an initial set of 69 images and from this set, create mini-narratives of four. Kitano responded with 14 and an additional 16 were produced by other filmmakers (Mendelbaum, 2005). A set then of 30 narratives, each comprising four images and each using as their only source the original 69 photographs. What Kitano demonstrates is the arbitrary and coherent, or necessary elements of the sequence which are 'arbitrary, because there is no evident connection between the images in a given narrative; necessary because once the images are

grouped there appears to be a connection (causation, linearity)'(Rohdie, 2006:7). The narrative relies on the image as a 'document' and the constructed narrative as 'pure contrivance... real without being true... belonging at once to fact and imagination' (Rohdie, 2006:8). In this way of thinking about narrative, the relationship between images is one of supplementation: 'the 'next' image is a modifier of the previous image but in a strict line of continuity so that what you understand is causation and consequence' (Rohdie, 2006:13). Because of this, order of viewing is still of significance, though importantly, the alteration of order still constructs a narrative, only a different one¹⁴⁴. Keith Smith demonstrates how this occurs via a series of three images (see fig. 56.)

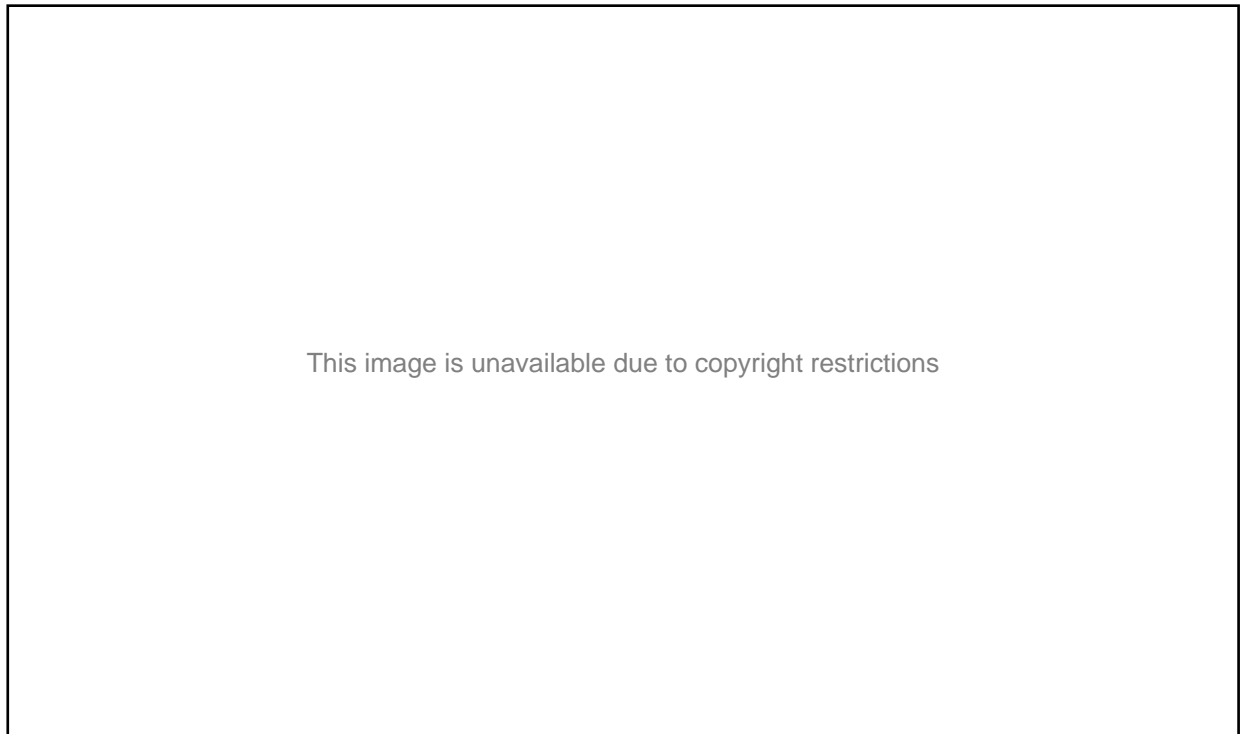


Fig. 56. *Order of viewing* (1994)

To see this play out in a photobook, we could look at Ed van Der Elsken's *Love on the Left Bank* first published in 1956 (1999) or in the contemporary, Watabe Yukichi's *A Criminal Investigation* (2011). At its core, this is a Kuleshovian interpretation of the montage or sequence — one that is constructed 'brick by brick' in order to form

¹⁴⁴ With the 'flitting' navigation of the photobook we will see later in the chapter we could suggest that by this concept the photobook, viewed in many different manners, and without strict guide, is a container of quantum narratives able to lurch into life under appropriate ordering conditions.

meaning (with desire as a tenant of Kuleshov's experiments). And it is a useful baseline from which we might look to incorporate an Eisensteinian emphasis on the clash, rather than building, of meaning. For all the passion in Eisenstein's critique of Kuleshov's theory of sequential montage, he in fact acknowledges it as an explanation of some montage, but not all, and importantly, as an overly simplistic interpretation. This oversimplification is countered with Eisenstein's own notions of what happens when (writing specifically about film) images are placed together — a 'collision' and 'conflict' (Eisenstein in Rohdie, 2006:87). Via this theory, the space *between* images is the primary location of meaning, or interpretation, and neither 'previous' or 'next' image give anything to one another. Instead both lends itself to a space of conflict, which rather than being on the screen or page, is in the mind of the reader. Eisenstein's own examples could quite readily be photographic:

'The picture for water and the picture of an eye signifies "to weep";
the picture of an ear near the drawing of a door = "to listen";
a dog + a mouth = "to bark";
a mouth + a child = "to scream";
a mouth + a bird = "to sing";
a knife + a heart = "sorrow,"' (Eisenstein, 1977: 30).

It is useful to remember in Eisenstein's conflict that the equations above do not need to refer to the same object or being. By this it is meant that the mouth may belong to a man — it is not the bird's mouth — in fact it could have been made at a different time, even by a different cinematographer or photographer, the conflict would remain. Eisenstein's dialectical montage, when combined with continuity or sequential montage, provides a suitable way of considering almost all photobook sequences. The opening to Gregory Halpern's *A* (2011) presents a recent example (see Fig. 57.) — we are at first confronted with a domestic cat, snarling back in our direction before the second image (on the next page) offers a semi-open and dilapidated garden gate. Here a sequential narrative (that suggests we pass the cat on the way to the gate and so on) can be layered with the modification of Kuleshov's montage theory and the conflict between images of Eisenstein. As a wonderful example of the interpretation of

meaning, the following quote is of Tate Shaw speaking about this same sequence of images. Text underlined is to make clear the role of the reader in constructing meaning.

'It starts on the cover with a photo of hands holding an x-ray signifying injury. With the memory of the x-ray in your mind, you then engage with overlaid and inverted maps, suggesting an excursion through multiple injured, damaged cities. The book's next photograph is a scrappy little cat meowing a warning, followed by a broken gate and overgrown threshold; then a glinting shard of glass on a bed of rocky dirt. The cat is a guardian before the gate of an urban garden in ruins. This mode of sequence is a visual and lyrical language. A lot where a house was demolished, followed by a house with a hole in the side, then another patched house, then a bush we could hide within, fort-like. This is about our basic need for shelter. These photos represent the housing crisis, the great recession, the blight in the urban core of our small cities' (Shaw, 2012:4).

None of this suggests that such a reading is correct of course — as Eisenstein understood '...it is not in fact phenomena that are compared but chains of associations that are linked to a particular phenomenon in the mind of a particular audience' (Rohdie, 2006:36). For the photobook, that audience is unlike the cinematic audience: 'in the cinema, the time, pace, and sequence and thus the montage of images is controlled by the film' whereas in photography 'it is the spectator who "animates" the pictures', something that David Bate draws attention to in his essay on the syntax of the photowork (2014:54). The reader/operator in the photobook's case is not a timed device but a reactive human, thus, no photobook has a length of reading, or associated equipment (outside of itself). This is the freedom of the reader — to work through a book at pace, leisure or both as the reading survey suggests is common.



Fig. 57. *Spreads from Gregory Halpern's A (2011) (2017)*(original in colour). These spreads do not all follow directly from one another — again a reminder fo the role of the reader and the ambiguity of the photobook sequence. Permission to reproduce these images has been granted by Gregory Halpern.

Montage: made by the reader

What we have thus far seen in relation to montage and the photobook might best be described as ‘potentiality’, at least in the sense that Aristotle speaks of potentiality and actuality.

‘Actuality is to potentiality, Aristotle tells us, as “someone waking is to someone sleeping, as someone seeing is to a sighted person with his eyes closed, as that which has been shaped out of some matter is to the matter from which it has been shaped” (1048b1–3)’ (Cohen, 2016).

To continue the metaphor, we could suggest that meaning is that which has been shaped in reading, from the raw material of the actual photobook. It is a process which must certainly be included in our account of reading. By shifting discourse solely from the intentions of the author to the understanding of reader response, we open up a connection between maker and reader that is otherwise absent or vastly abstracted. As Barthes understood, ‘a text’s origin is in its destination, not its origin’ (1987:148)¹⁴⁵. In her essay *Liminal Moments At The Edges: Reading Montage Narratives in Artists’ Books*, Victoria Cooper explores this tension between maker and reader, between the intentions of both, and the resulting performance of a specific reading. Cooper is speaking very specifically about books in which montage is found *within* the page, not, as we have thought of it, as something which combines separate images and spaces on separate pages. Nevertheless, what Cooper speaks of in her interactions with specific artists’ books as a ‘collaboration’ (2019:17) between maker and reader, we can easily see as a crossover to the broader photobook.

Thinking of the photobook as a series of spaces then is not as clear as it first sounds, rather, the photobook is a series of potential spaces, suspended in quantum narratives which are constructed from two sides of the book. On one side the makers construct a sequence of spaces in order to intend meaning, whilst on the other, the reader constructs their own sequence of spaces which *may* lead to a very different

¹⁴⁵ It is because of this shift that data collection is such a prominent and imperative component of this chapter.

construction of meaning. Keith Smith offers a succinct summary in his use of the terms 'random' and 'directed' referral. For Smith, the 'random referral' is a free association made by the viewer, and 'directed referral' is an intentional relationship set up by the picture maker (Smith, 1994:105). This is something which also appears in literary theory. In *The Implied Reader* (1995), Wolfgang Iser presents a case for steering literary criticism towards the effect of the text upon the reader, in the gaps of text. He describes these points as the moment 'at which the reader can enter into the text, forming his own connections and conceptions and so creating the configurative meaning of what he is reading' (40). This resonates for the reader of the photobook — a medium which employs the gap in numerous guises, but most clearly in the use of non-imaged pages. Thinking of the role of the reader, and the potential and actual nature of meaning, it appears there must be space in any account of photobook reading which permits and documents both for the decoding of the maker's message as well as a more overtly personal, phenomenological response which may be able to operate without the former maker. For now, we turn to a consideration of the photobook as a text in its most traditional sense, in order that some of the challenges we face in speaking about the readership of the photobook, might be resolved, or aided, from the substantial history of literary and reader theory.

Reading the photobook as a text

'One might very roughly periodise the history of modern literary theory in three stages: a preoccupation with the author (Romanticism and the nineteenth century); an exclusive concern with the text (New criticism); and a marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years' (Eagleton, 1994:74).

Having considered the photobook and its reading from the perspective of material and space (qualities which are particular in the photobook), we now look to see whether literary theory might offer ways to reconcile some of the nuances we have opened up in relation to the construction of meaning and the maker - photobook - reader relationship. This investigation into literature and the text is far from exhaustive — this is not the remit of the research, nor this particular research question, so it does not adhere to a strict chronology or exhibit a comprehensiveness that can be found in a variety of other works¹⁴⁶. Taken in its broadest sense, the 'text' can refer to anything that constructs meaning, and could span to include architecture, design, cinema, music and text itself. For the purposes of this section we will be considering text in a more precise form, as textual literature — the primary focus of the broad church that is literary theory. We begin by moving through literary theory from author to text, and finally to reader, providing a backbone for different ways in which we can think of the photobook as text.

Production and the text

In looking to introduce key literary perspectives that might offer useful elements to apply to our account of the reading of the photobook, we might be best starting with an approach which, while far from straightforward, is at least contained within the text itself. Formalism¹⁴⁷ adopts a position in which meaning is derived solely from within the work at hand, and does not rely on external texts or structures (as we will shortly see in

¹⁴⁶ Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1994 and 2010), Gaggi Silvio's *From Text to Hypertext* (2015) and Sara Upstone's *Literary Theory: A Complete Introduction* (2017), *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* edited by Jane Tompkins (1980) and *Readers and Reading* edited by Andrew Bennett (1995) offer some examples.

¹⁴⁷ Otherwise known as Russian Formalism in recognition of the movements origin in the early 20th century.

structuralism). Formalism does not take into account the manner or circumstances in which the work has been produced, in fact such approaches are 'scorned' (Cook, 1995:131) and instead the text is considered as 'an autonomous object divorced from the specific circumstances of its creation and creator, and from the historical and social context of its reception' (Cook, 1995:130).

Leaving out details which would range from the author's previous works, through the economic, social or political situation of the time, has allowed in literary study a focussed approach to the critical space of literature on the page. Even content itself (letters and words — the semiological element of the text) is placed aside in the formalist approach in order that the form, the structure of the work itself, and how it operates, becomes the focus of discourse. It is perhaps best illustrated not with a literary example but with a photograph or artwork, where we would speak of, and analyse, only the visual elements of the piece — tone, texture, colour, structure. In the photobook world these elements might be replaced by a dissection of the rhythm, flow, pace, inclusion of space and reflective spreads, and can be found in many photographic departments in education as well as reviews, in Jorg Colberg's photobook taxonomy noted in Chapter One, and many responses to the photobook reading survey:

'First I would look at the pictures but not in the linear order, then I would read the text and then I would look at the pictures in the linear order trying to understand why a particular picture was chosen and why the pictures are in that particular order' (Poland, A).

'I... show newbies what works, how books are sequenced successfully or not and maybe understand a bit more about how a photographer developed this body of work' (United States, J).

Formalist reflections on reading from the photobook reading survey are often accompanied by other ways in which to think of the book, and even in the second response above we can see that the photobook is not seen in an entirely isolated context — the development of the work is brought into this comment. Here,

structuralism can help us better understand how (and why) a given work operates. Structuralists look for underlying connections in the work which relate to structures of a group of texts, as well as structures lying outside of the work: means of production, time of production, writing style and genre, political systems and so on. As Guy Cook summarised, 'Structuralist critics sought... to identify the underlying structure of a genre or group of texts, expressed—sometimes only partially—in particular texts' (Cook, 1995:141).

A mistake in the application of structuralism is sometimes to place significant weighting to the author of the work: biographically, or even psychoanalytically, but this is only the smallest subsection of structuralism. In Guy Cook's *Simple model of literary communication* the author is only associated with literary scholarship and biography (Cook, 1995:128). This rejection of the author/artist themselves as an area for study, precludes the need for an in-depth understanding of the author, and instead searches for patterns and connections between texts and structures. This quest for the identification of commonalities is exemplified by the work of Tzvetan Todorov and Vladimir Propp, who proposed particular patterns in which narratives (fairytales) operate, right down (in Propp's case) to the particular characters that are present in certain genres of narrative (Propp, 1968). Immediately, the structuralist approach to literature begins to resonate in the readings of photobooks I make, and readings I speak to others about¹⁴⁸ in an academic context. It encourages intertextual reading which can itself be one of the primary forces of some photobooks — Jeff Brouws' *Twentysix Abandoned Gasoline Stations* (1992) and Broomberg and Chanarin's *War Primer 2* (2018¹⁴⁹) are two notable works which spring to mind. The photobook lineages established in Chapter One demonstrate a structuralist approach — seeking to find connections between a grouping of texts and larger structures which could themselves be further extrapolated in relation to structures of truth, record, pleasure, desire and self-projection¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁸ In fact in 2011 I proposed four types of photobook narrative or structure from my readings — the flat, arc, cluster and scatter. They have been used by a number of teachers.

¹⁴⁹ First published in a very limited release in 2011.

¹⁵⁰ As do most other attempts to categorise or group the photobook.

In the case of the photo-essay/photobook, a relationship to the knowable world, to referents, is central to the purpose and production of the work. If we take a publication like Ben Robert's *Occupied Spaces* (2011), which documents the *Occupy* movement in London, it would be of great deficit to our experience were we not to entertain a structuralist approach in looking to comprehend why such a work has come about, and moreover, why it matters. Similarly while Joan Fontcuberta's work and publications¹⁵¹ are intriguing *without* knowledge of his approach to art, an understanding of his interrogation of authenticity and in turn this relation to Francoist Spain, brings considerable depth to any encounter with many of his works: 'I lived for 20 years under the Francoist regime, so like all my generation I suffered from the lack of transparency and the doctoring of documents to reconstruct history' (Jeffries and Fontcuberta, 2014). Often it is the blurb, précis or publisher's description of a given work which encourages a structuralist approach. In the first example, we can see the publisher making clear the connection between Oscar Monzón's work *Karma* (2013) and Luc Boltanski's theories, as well as how these in turn speak of private and public. In the second example, even clearer, the text spells out how *Brittle Land* by Alexandra Navratil (2016) relates to much bigger themes, or structures, in photography.

'Never fabricated, these photos, most of which we can imagine were stolen, refer to Luc Boltanski's concept of "body car". Being the only object which both completely absorbs us and that we can manipulate at our own will from the inside, cars cause a sensation of passing elsewhere with a sense of security. They offer a private space among the midst of public sphere and create a familiar realm which permits the most private experiences. Óscar Monzón is interested in this distinctive feature, he violates the enclosed space, catches the scenery with a flash and defies the privacy of the cars drivers' (RVB Books, 2016).

'Taking the former Agfa-Orwo filmfactory in Wolfen-Bitterfeld as a point of departure, the book divulges the interdependent histories of photographic

¹⁵¹ Herbarium (1985), *Fauna* (1989), *Sputnik* (1997) and *Orogenesis* (2007) are all included in the MACK publication *The Photography of Nature and the Nature of Photography* (Fontcuberta et al, 2012).

emulsion, gelatin, labour, exploitation, exhaustion, chemical contamination, fragility and slow violence' (Roma Publications, 2016).

While not explicit, the subtext of these accompaniments to photobooks, is that the work would not have been fully realised or understood by the reader if they had not identified these connections: a key tenet of the structuralists' argument in literary theory. Structuralism requires an investigation that goes beyond the single text, it asks of those using it (consciously or not) that they must be well-read — familiar with the time of publication, political landscape, comparative works and so on. A structuralist approach to the photobook is visible in the canons created by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger as they form thematic selections in relation to the likes of protest, identity or memory; but is less common in reflections from the photobook reading survey¹⁵². What is more prevalent in responses to that survey are reflections on reading which which speak from a subjective, experiential position, something which literary theory has often shied away from and even explicitly rejected (Bennett and Royle, 2009:11).

Reception and the text

'Phenomenological criticism is an attempt to apply the phenomenological method to literary works... the actual historical context of the literary work, its author, conditions of production and readership are ignored; phenomenological criticism aims instead at wholly 'immanent'; reading of the text, totally unaffected by anything outside it' (Eagleton, 1994:59).

It was because of the ambiguity, or alien-ness of the reader, that it took until the latter stages of the 20th century for the reader as an individual to finally be accounted for, in what is known as reader-response criticism. Like the name suggests, this places the reader, their actions and response, as the locus of meaning in the text, and as such directly challenges much of what has come before: it is a single-minded focus on the

¹⁵² Open the cover. Look for the colophon. Find out where it was printed, who by, who helped make it etc. Who is it by is less important. My first thought is, when did this come out, how was it produced, where was it produced. These things will all influence my reading. (Bahrain, A).

I always read the acknowledgements first regardless of the book to get an insight into the 'author' but then just from page 1 to the end, reading any forewords etc as it comes. (England, X).

reader's experience of literature (Leitch. 1995:35). Theorist Stanley Fish emphasised that meaning is not on the page, but in the flow between the page and the reader: a position which resonates with Smith's 'referral' and montage theory as well as Bettina Lockemann's reflections in her essay *A Phenomenological Approach to the Photobook* (Lockemann, 2014) in which she highlights the 'togetherness' of book and reader:

'By holding together images of a sequence the photobook accommodates the quest for immersion in a perfect way. It supplies a unique experience, as a single beholder usually looks at it. This person can take her own time to look at the images, to study them, to immerse herself in them; this person decides when to move forward, when to turn back, and how long and how often the photographs are looked at. The medium of the photobook is able to create an intimate togetherness of the book and its beholder' (Lockemann, 2014:126)

Reader-response criticism then, was in direct opposition to new criticism (Tompkins, 1980:ix) and it argued that a 'poem cannot be understood apart from its results' (Tompkins, 1980:ix). It is a clearly defined position and one that for the photobook reader and reviewer has significant presence, in particular via the way we speak about our readings.

'I turn the pages slowly in sequence from beginning to end. I tend not to read any text or captions. I keep checking in with what (if any) emotional reaction I'm experiencing; questioning why. Is it the style of photography, the content, the context, the photographer's influences, the publication - etc.' (New Zealand, H).

'Read it slowly all the way through then return to the pictures that confronted me the most or that I liked the most' (New Zealand, B).

'I enjoy to see the work without knowing the context, thinking about my own thoughts and reading, and then reading the accompanying essay or text if it is there. If there is none, I will often then go online to read about the work' (UK, U).

Naturally however, reader-response gives some cause for concern, in the manner in which it opens up a post-modern Pandora's box of permutations in understanding the meaning of text. Goodbye to the notion of any true, complete or decoded reading. Opening up literary theory to the unique perspective of the reader, be that phenomenological, psychoanalytical or otherwise, opens possibilities, and simultaneously closes off an area of knowability regarding the text. It is this most recent of movements within literary theory which is subsequently split into a consideration of the uniqueness of the reader who is able to determine reading, and an awareness of the 'location' of the reader (Bennett, 1995:4), in a manner which in many ways echoes structuralism's intent to look at social landscapes of production. Reader-response theory, and research methods like reception analysis, which could be partnered with Stuart Hall's reception theory, would be one way in which to comprehend what happens in the mind of the individual (or collective reader). But to undertake such an investigation would take this research in a very different direction — towards a more overtly cognitive connection between maker and reader and beyond, something which is proposed in areas of possible future study on page 289. For our purposes, we must ensure that there is a space in our account of reading for this future investigation, and an acknowledgment of the assimilation of reading with the individual reader.

An amalgam: Object, space, text

By considering what happens when we read a photobook, from its physical form to haptic reading, meaning-making in the montage and our approach to text itself, we are well armed with a myriad of inter-connecting theories and evidence. Clearly this multi-faceted interrogation was not going to conclude with alignment with a single theory or approach, but a combination of many, an amalgam. So, at this half way point, and before beginning the substantial graphical elicitation section of the chapter, it is worth noting a number of elements which are presenting themselves for inclusion or consideration, in an account of contemporary photobook reading.

From the photobook as object:

- The hand and eye are present in almost equal measure, though the tactile nature of the work seems to occupy much of an initial inspection.
- The material life of the book, and the encounters before reading itself begins, and after it is concluded, are significant; and thus while they lie on the outside of what we might formally consider a reading, they should be included in our account if possible.

From the photobook as a sequence of spaces:

- The reader is an active constructor of meaning and in their operation of the book may reveal new, or random meanings and narratives.
- The intention of the maker may not always be realised.
- The manner and order in which the book is navigated, will have a huge bearing on the reification of potential meanings.

From the photobook as text:

- Both formalist and structuralist readings are evident in relation to the contemporary photobook, though the former is more common.
- The impact of texts with which reader-response and phenomenological approaches grapple, that may offer the maker useful insights but are too specific for our own uses here.

These notes, borne of the research so far, are now plugged-in to a new data field in the form of graphical elicitation. It is a method employed to offer additional context to what has been seen, and in recognition of the fact that often we struggle to use language in speaking of the experience of books (Higgins, 1985:12).

Graphical elicitation

In forming a thorough response to questions about how we read, we have encountered much rich information that is enhancing our understanding of photobook readership; but neither literature review nor solely verbal or textual data collection can provide all that we strive for, in investigating our interactions with, and through, the photobook. Therefore, in order to account for the activity of the reader and for the possibility of a variety of mixed approaches to the reading of the photobook, a series of graphical elicitations were asked for in the elite interviews. This method was adopted to compliment descriptions and analogies of reading, and to encourage an open response to questions of experience and navigation. Two graphical representations of the book were provided for respondents. The first is a grid of circles which barely resembles a book (though one might imagine the circles as images or pages), the second is more book-like in that it is played out as a sequence of rectangles; onto which respondents would illustrate/represent their reading. While these graphical responses have the potential to be the primary focus of an investigation into reading, and could lead to a hypothesis in their own right, they are used in combination with the various theories and reflections already considered — to propose our new account of contemporary photobook reading.

Figure note: Because of the desire to retain the flow of the thesis, figures are included that can fit across the width of the page — making it easy to see patterns but not detail.

Graphical illustrations: the experience of reading

Presented here are a number of useful illustrations from the full set of responses which best demonstrate connections, patterns, styles and the uniqueness of reading. Figure 58 shows every grid response to the question below when considering a photobook which is new to the respondent.

Using the following grid and any mark-making required, attempt to illustrate the experience of reading a photobook¹⁵³.

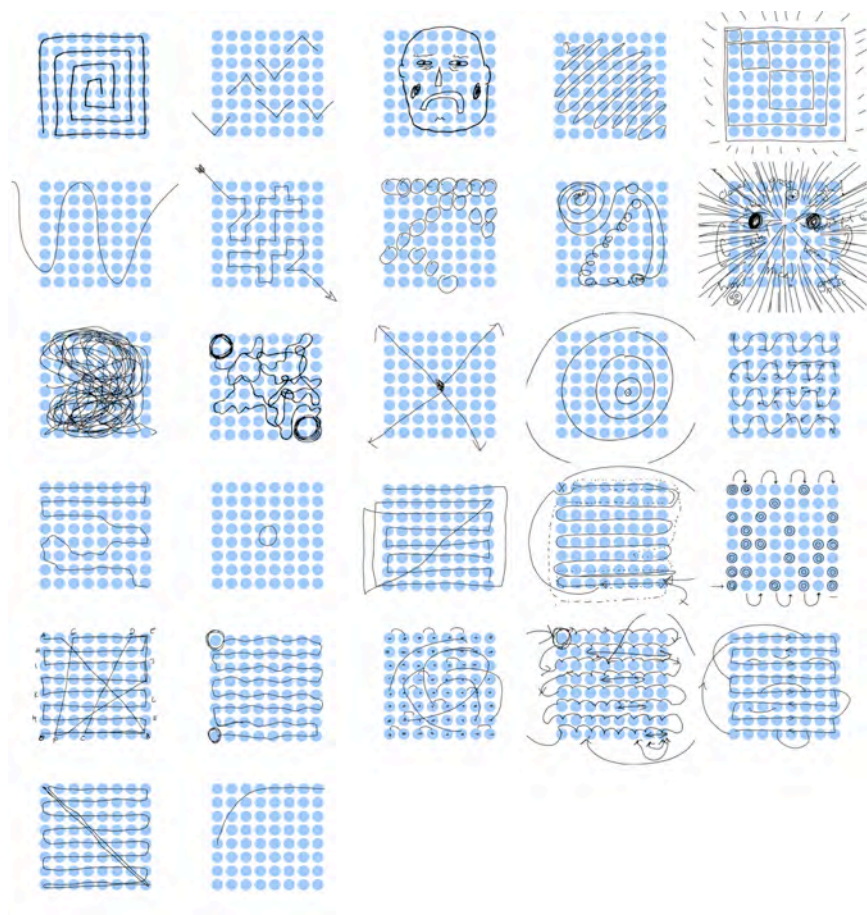


Fig. 58. *The experience of reading a new photobook (2019)*(original in colour)

¹⁵³ It is worth noting the design of these grids as they, and the questions they relate to, are very similar. In this first question, participants are asked about the experience of reading whereas in the second, it is the navigation of the book. In order to present suitable spaces for elicitation, I chose for the first a series of nodes within a square, this was to move away from a traditional representation of a book whilst still giving something from which respondents could react and interact. In the second question a series of rectangular spaces is presented in a linear order, mimicking the book and allowing for an elicitation of navigation to be presented with a common starting point — just as in the book itself.

While it might appear at first somewhat confusing, this simple representation of responses already indicates that while reading is unique (as no two responses are close enough to be confused), there are similarities and connections between responses. It is these similarities that have been highlighted in the following illustrations which are categorised based on shapes, directions and other mark-making properties. These groupings are not strict, certainly we can see some responses which could be moved between categories, but they begin to show a few ways in which the photobook is experienced.

Meandering

We will call our first selection of responses ‘meandering’ as they traverse the grid in a way which is not linear, but does include fixed points which might be taken as a beginning and an end (some make this clear, others are more abstract). Yet within these meanderings there are quite clear distinctions between grids, some which resemble waves, others which are reminiscent of the navigation of a maze. Thus they have been further broken down with a subcategory below.

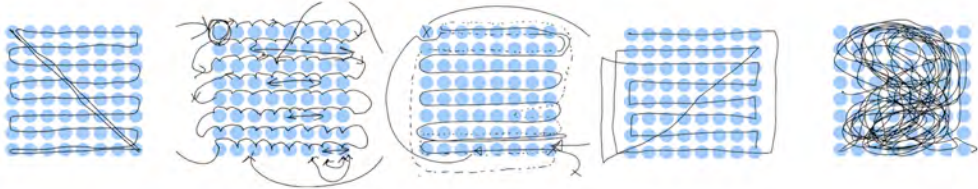


Fig. 59. *Meandering — layered* (2019)(original in colour)

These responses in many ways look like those below in the *meandering — maze* group, but are separated for the way that they include a portion of the journey which doubles back, goes over an existing path or in the case of the response at the end, layers over itself numerous times.

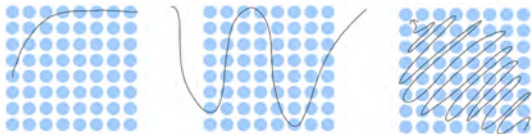


Fig. 60. *Meandering — waves and arcs* (2019)(original in colour)

The simplest of explanations required here, for these responses seen in Figure 60 are in wave or arc form¹⁵⁴.

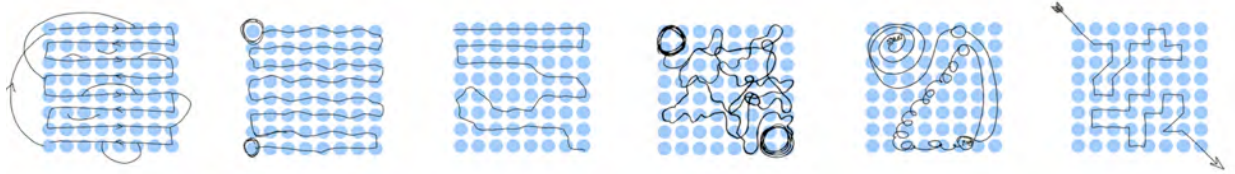


Fig. 61. *Meandering — maze* (2019)(original in colour)

These responses all resemble the navigation of a maze, though some (the first primarily) are straight-forward in their navigation of the maze. These responses indicate a start/end of an experience, something which could be taken to indicate a literal progression through the book or a mental journey which may not correlate with in-book position.

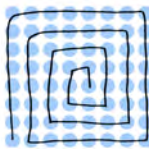
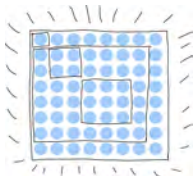


Fig. 62. *Meandering — spiral* (2019)(original in colour)

Much like the maze responses seen above, this spiral indicates a route which is not overtly defined. It deserves separate attention however for the way in which it suggests a depth or a condensation of reading — either as the book progresses or in reverse.

Layered



¹⁵⁴ There is an argument to deal separately with the arc for it does not oscillate and instead cuts a very clear path through the work.

Fig. 63. *Layered* (2019)(original in colour)

While an element of this response could see it included in radiating below, or even in spiral (see Fig. 62.), it is here in its own right for the way in which it makes quite clear the layering of reading and the depth of what could be different stages of reading — one to take in the whole work, followed by a series of tighter readings.

Focussed

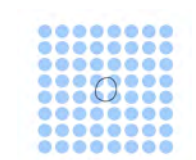


Fig. 64. *Focussed* (2019)(original in colour)

The illustration of reading seen here appears to be very particular and focussed. It would be possible to think of this as a reference reading — an encounter with a photobook where a particular piece of information was being found. It is quite separate from all other representations of reading seen in this data collection activity.

Nodal

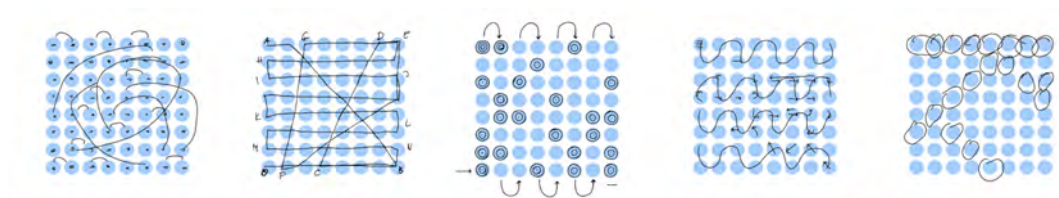


Fig. 65. *Nodal* (2019)(original in colour)

A nodal grouping has been formed of responses which emphasise individual points on the grid as well as the connections seen between them.

Radiating

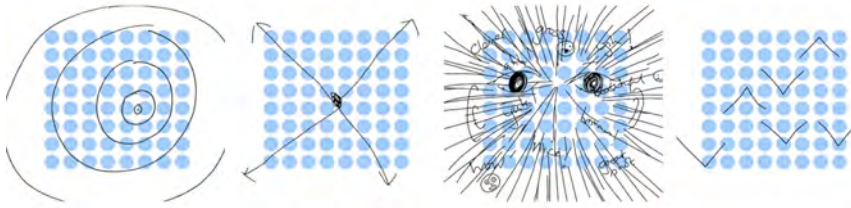


Fig. 66. *Radiating* (2019)(original in colour)

Finally, four responses which make more of the world outside the grid than those prior. These visualisations suggest a journey which moves from within the grid (and thus book), to that which lies outside of it. Here we might suggest there is a relationship to personal response or to other events in the world, mental connections and assimilation of experience.

Already there are a multitude of ways in which photobook readers consider their experience of reading, and in most cases, these are far from straight-forward or linear in nature. What helps further our comprehension of these grids, is when we begin to look also at the graphical response to the visual spreads produced for respondents. Here, a difference in wording (from 'experience' to 'route') and platform for response (moving from an abstract grid to a relatable book spread), helps to contextualise the abstract nature of experience into the more objective space of navigation.

Graphical illustrations: navigating the photobook

Figure 67 shows every spread response to the question below when considering a photobook which is new to the respondent.

If you are to 'trace' a route through this photobook, what might it look like? Would you travel in a linear fashion or meander in and around. Make any markings on the following diagram to represent how you think of your reading.

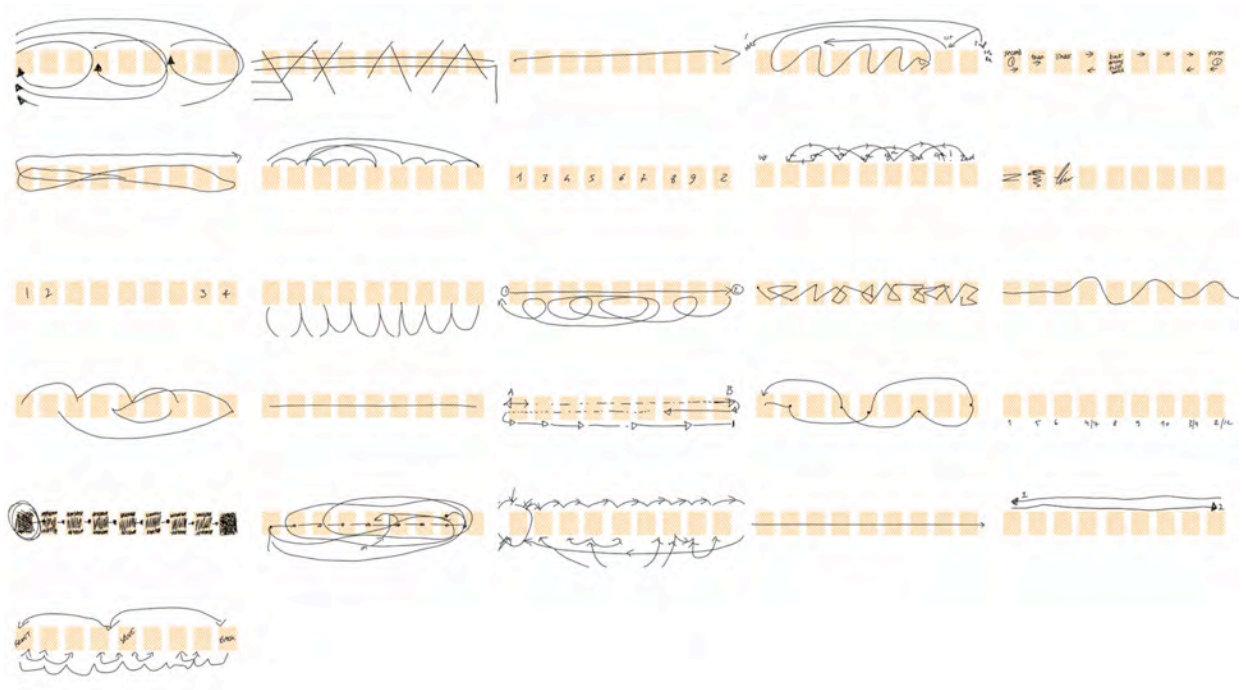


Fig. 67. *The navigation of a new photobook* (2019)(original in colour)

While again we are presented here with a wide range of approaches to navigating the book itself, we can see clearly some shapes and patterns emerging as rather prominent (see Figure 67). We will break these down as before into different typologies. Here the temptation is to force these new elicitations into the terms (meandering, focussed, nodal etc.) we used above, but to do so is in many instances too much of a stretch in favour of simplicity, whilst ignoring the uniqueness of

navigation and experience as individual components of photobook reading. So while there are some similarities, this is only due to the appropriate nature of specific terms.

Linear (flats)



Fig. 68. *Linear - Flats* (2019)(original in colour)

The above representations of route are linearly focussed if not exclusively so, they represent a progressional reading *through* the book.

Linear (waves)



Fig. 69. *Linear - Waves* (2019)(original in colour)

While the wave and maze-like representation of experience was quite dominant, here as a way to navigate through the book it is much less so. The middle example seen above could be classed as linear, but the choice of the responder to move far from each block/page before returning to the next has provided its inclusion here.

Flitting



Fig. 70. *Flitting navigation* (2019)(original in colour)

The flitting route through the photobook is not intended to suggest a lack of attention in the reading, but instead that the reader will jump from one place to another, and based on the above, will perhaps not engage with a linear reading of any sort in their first encounter with the photobook.

Repetitive and circular

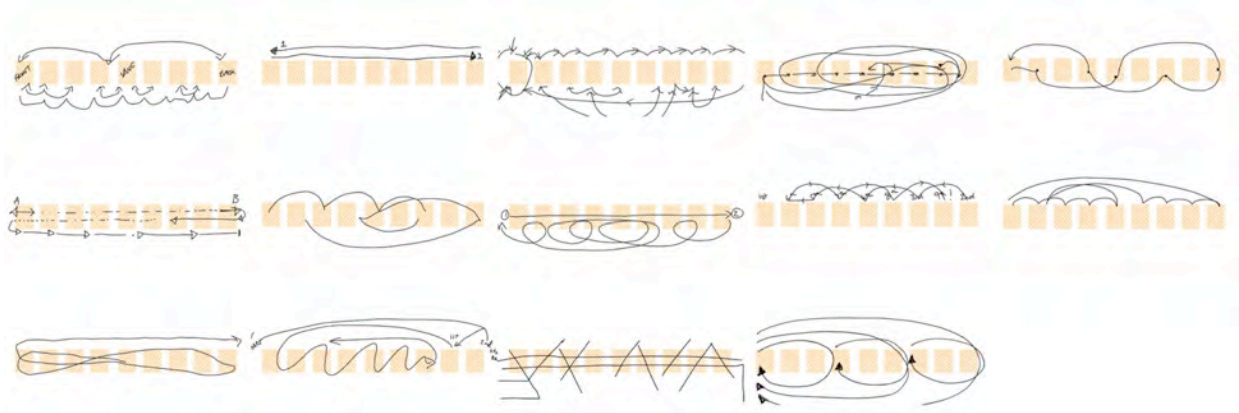


Fig. 71. *Repetitive and circular navigation* (2019)(original in colour)

The most common style of route through the photobook by far, was to be found in those responses which showed a multi-directionality and an often circular interaction with the book. Many of these examples have an element of linearity which is either followed or preceded by a repetitive element, returning to points in the book, approaching from a different angle and so on.

We can witness that while the experience of reading is incredibly varied, the way in which readers actually work through the book is in many cases quite similar. It is hoped this visualisation of reading is also a clear reason for the need for a medium-specific account of reading. These spreads illustrate that reading a photobook cannot be understood purely through literary theory, nor purely through montage — a need compounded when taking into consideration our life with photobooks as objects, and the moments at which we return to them. Included on the following pages are five demonstrations of different approaches to new and return reading, which articulate some respondents very different approaches to reading a photobook again.

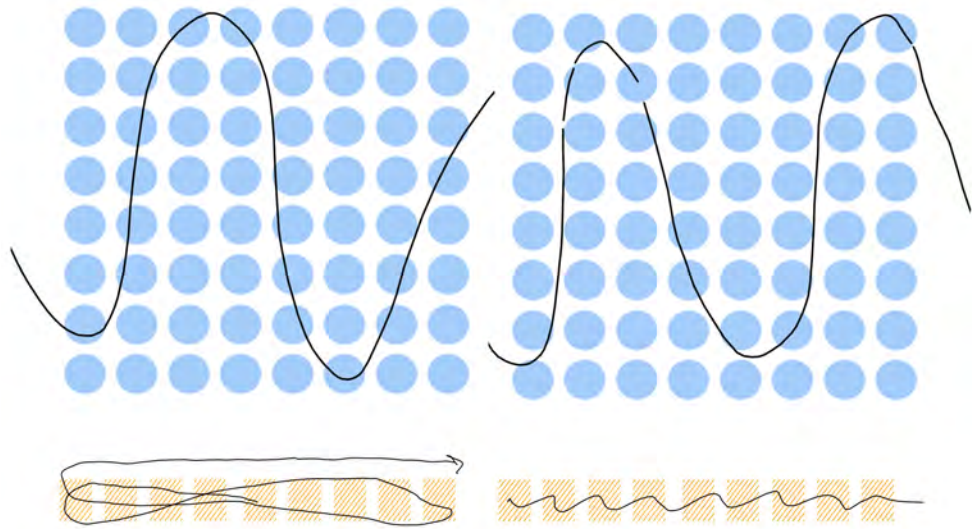


Fig. 72. *Jeff Brouws, new and return composite (2019)*(original in colour)

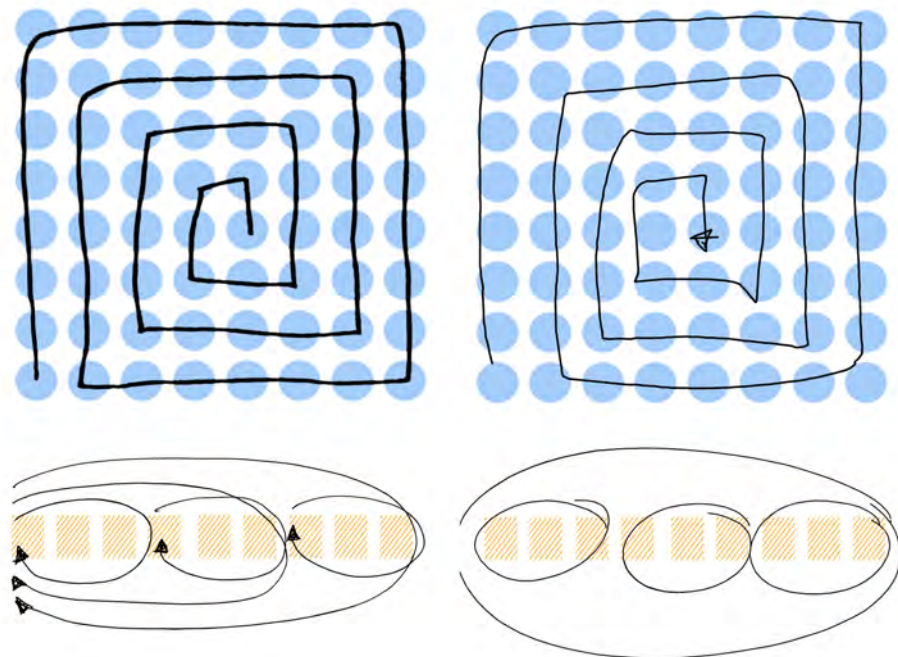


Fig. 73. *Alejandro Acin, new and return composite (2019)*(original in colour)

Jeff Brouws and Alejandro Acin's grids (new on left, return on right) show very little change in the experience of reading the photobook. There are small differences but barely perceptible. Interestingly, when we look also at their spreads (route through the

book), we can see that while again Acin's remains quite similar, Brouws' is quite dramatically different.

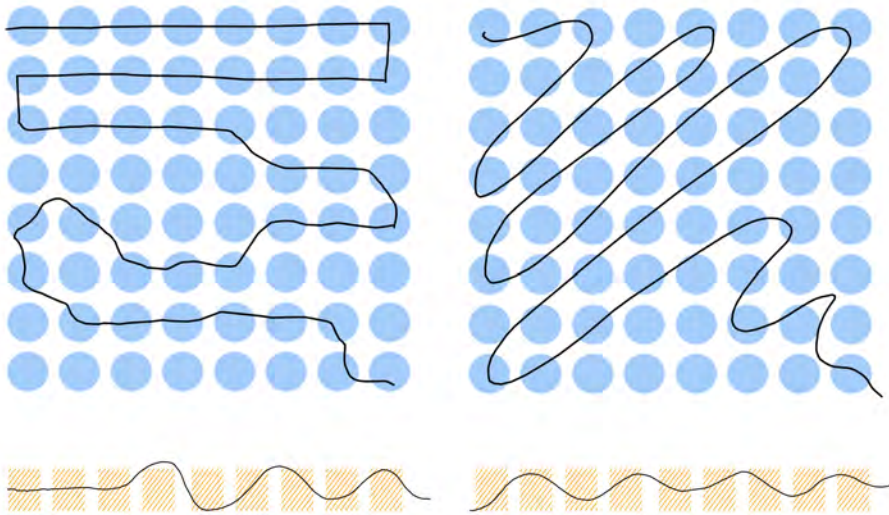


Fig. 74. *Georgia Hutchins, new and return composite (2019)*(original in colour)

Georgia Hutchins' grids show a change from a maze-like experience to a wave based experience — perhaps evidence of a new familiarity with a book that no longer requires a decoding or effort in the 'working out' of the book, how it operates and what it is telling us. Here, we see that while the experience of the reading is noticeably different, the navigation through the book itself remains close to identical.

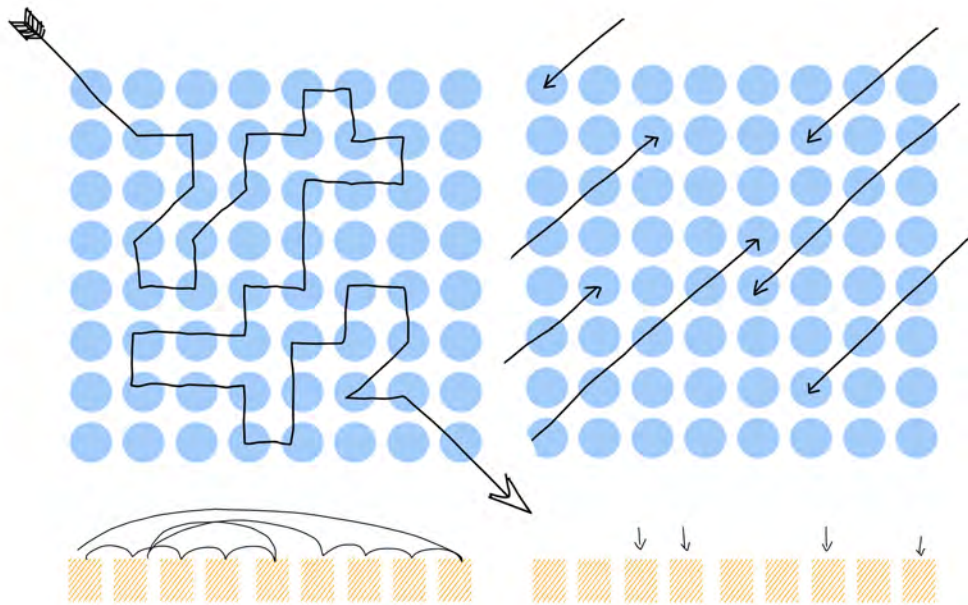


Fig. 75. *Lewis Bush, new and return composite* (2019)(original in colour)

Lewis Bush's grid is representative of a number of similar changes to approach which go from the meandering, exploratory or maze-like, towards the more particular, nodal and specific: a sentiment echoed in some of the written notes explored in the next section. His spread offers a clear match.

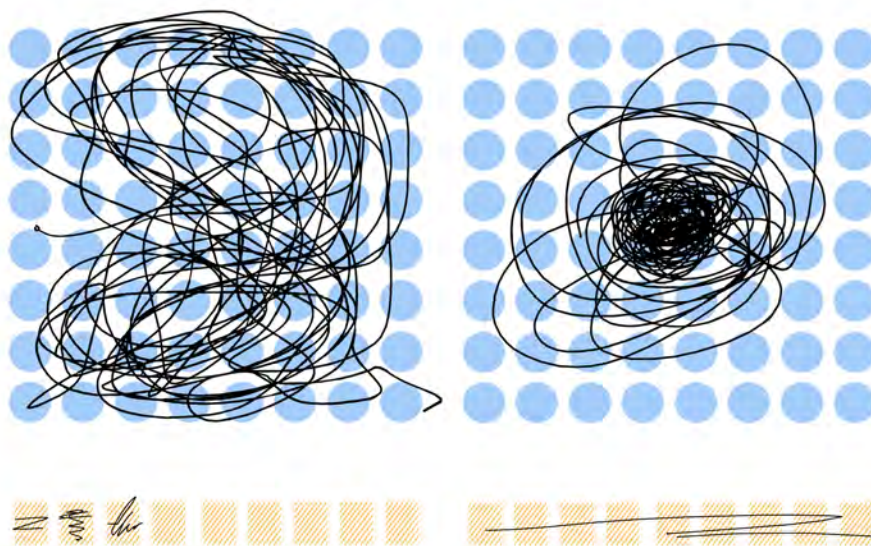


Fig. 76. *Wayne Ford, new and return composite* (2019)(original in colour)

Then finally there is the grid change of Wayne Ford, for whom the experience of the return reading is represented with a clear intensification of mark making — a more focussed reading than that which occurred before, something which could be read also into the spread, which moves towards a more repetitive, multi-directional route in the return read.

Graphical illustrations: key findings

What these graphical representations of the experience and navigation of the photobook provide for us, is the first ever visualisation of photobook reading — a view into an activity which was previously only hinted at, or at best, described from a highly personal perspective. The choice to use a graphical elicitation method has provided for us a series of reflections which have all been translated to, or even begun in, a common language, with common reference points, and an equity of limitations and opportunities. What this new view shows us, and what should help inform our account of reading, are a number of key findings in interactions with the photobook.

- **No two people approach or experience the photobook in the same way:** Whilst this might seem to be evident to most, we can now see this statement clearly played out in our respondents reflections, and are now able to speak with some confidence about the need for reader-centric discourse around the photobook.
- **In navigating the photobook, there are some dominant trends:** Whilst the above remains true, there *are* some particular trends in navigation and experience of the photobook¹⁵⁵ which are detailed in the following points.
- **The reader operates beyond the page:** Apparent in almost all — but overtly so in those grids and spreads which jump, use nodes or else operate in a maze-like manner, is the connection that must be made by the reader: a joining of dots or an amalgamation of images and ideas, some brought from the book, others from the reader. If looking at the grid or the spread, this is visualised in every mark made outside the circles — the 'to' in 'dot-to-dot'. It is the largest component in many responses — lines and marks spending more time away from, than within the circles.

¹⁵⁵ It is acknowledged that our lexicon, and the limitations of the space provided will have confined responses and thus made trend-spotting somewhat easier.

Much like Wolfgang Iser who we encountered on page 235, the reading of the photobook invites the active reader, but, where Iser insinuates the potentiality of the reader's role, here we see it played out for real.

- **Returning to the photobook offers a different experience.** Our first interactions with the photobook are noticeably different from our re-interactions — that is evident both in the experience and in the navigation. Whilst I expected returning to a work to be a more focussed read across all responses, this was not the case — some adopting a more focussed reading the first time through.
- **Styles of experience and navigation are not clearly connected.** By investigating the experience of and navigation through the photobook, we have been able to evidence the relationship between the two. What we see here is that while some navigations and experiences are pattern-able¹⁵⁶, most are not. This is a considerable outcome that serves two purposes — it again frames the reader as the key actor in the photobook (on equal footing with the maker), and it suggests that the author-ordered-sequence is not as prominent in contributing to experience as the reader-ordered-sequence.

¹⁵⁶ In that we can make an objective observation connection between the two

Existing theories of photobook readership

Despite its relatively new status as a medium for study and scrutiny, there have been several attempts to decipher the act of reading the photobook, though all have focussed on personal reflection or else relatively niche (and structuralist) interpretations. An example of the latter can be found in Gerry Badger's article titled "*Reading*" the *Photobook* (2011:3) in the opening issue of *Aperture's The Photobook Review*. Here, while Badger raises a series of pertinent questions about how we read, few answers are proffered, instead what becomes clear is an exclusivity which echoes our findings from Chapter Three. Badger, speaking about the difference between a quick glance at a photobook and a more engaged reading, uses language which proposes a hierarchy with those able to engage with a structuralist reading at the top:

'One might take the analogy between a good and a bad symphony conductor. The bad conductor treats the score primarily on a visceral level, treating each passages, a tune or phrase, as an episode in itself. The good conductor is aware of the music's intellectual as well as its visceral qualities. He gets the most out of each passage, of course, but also treats the work as a whole and not just the sum of its parts, pointing out its overarching structure'. (Badger, 2011:3)

Other attempts to speak of the reading of the photobook have not suggested such exclusivity, though they have not been supported by the sort of substantial evidence we have gathered in this chapter. Joanna Creswell and Oliver Whitehead in the *Photographer's Gallery* publication *Loose Associations* produced a diagrammatic interpretation of the photobook, titled *Some Thoughts* (Cresswell and Whitehead, 2015:26-7) which located readers and experience in the following manners respectively:

'READERS

Actively
participate,
look,
exchange,
borrow,
give,
take,
steal,
feedback'

'EXPERIENCE

The photobook can
give us a way to experience
the photographs physically.

A photobook can be a series
of 'things'; interwoven, connected or
discrete; a journey, a set of happenings,
and emotional response,
a restraint of feeling, a public
and private space.'

Cresswell and Whitehead, 2015:26-7)

Deceptively simple, this mapping of an interaction with the photobook resonates with much of what we have taken from literary theory and the substantial data collection of this chapter. The active participation, borrowing and giving, recall Iser: our filling in of the gaps and imagining. The physicality we have witnessed is present, and in the last stanza we can picture the many graphical responses to reading. Unfortunately for the purposes of a thorough interrogation of the medium, Cresswell and Whitehead's eloquent thoughts are not easy to wield or clear in their potential for application — they

will resonate with the photobook reader in a poetic manner but offer little to the researcher, or to deepening our understanding of photobook reading.

Moving on, there is a 'guide' to photobook reading by Doug Spowart which provides a series of ten steps when encountering the medium from a personal perspective. While not overtly presented as a note on *how* we read, the content can certainly be interpreted as such. Spowart begins a reading with notes on environment, and the need for a passive space (Spowart, 2016) through which the book can become active — a common theme in response to questions of environment posed in the photobook reading survey. Next the reading truly begins from a distance in the assessment of the physical properties of the book: 'is it a conventional codex... is it odd shaped...' which 'may have implications for my subsequent viewing' (2016:2). This tallies with the suggestion of a pre-reading of the work explored on page 222. It is now that the handling of the book enters a reading via the weight, texture, cover and fit of the book in hand: 'I have not opened the cover or turned a page and yet it is now communicating with me' (2016:4).

At step six we begin what would often be referred to as the reading of the book: the content. This content is seen as eagerly awaiting its reader in the Aristotelian sense of the potential and actual (page 234): 'I am a machine for activating the book's content and presenting it for my personal interpretive action' (Spowart, 2016:5)¹⁵⁷. What follows is the location of experience, meaning and assimilation of findings. A description of process which vaguely elucidates the multi-sensory and multi-processual aspect of reading: 'my olfactory responses to paper — ink, glue smells gassing off... Ocular observations — colour, tone, shape and juxtapositions of texts, images and the semiotics of symbols and codes' (2016:6). Followed by consideration of message: 'the message/information expressed on the pages solicits sometimes a literal response whilst other elements act as triggers that tug on deeper connections' (2016:7), and finally: 'the book has spoken to me. It has connected with my lived experience' (2016:7).

¹⁵⁷ Here we clearly are presented with reading which is not accounted for in a structuralist or formalist approach and must look instead to reader-response and phenomenology.

Components of Spowart's guide are borne out in the results from the photobook reading survey — his words are repeated, almost verbatim at times, confirming some of his keen observations. It offers an ingredient¹⁵⁸, together with all of the theories and concepts already encountered, to proffer an account of photobook reading which is built on the rigorous research of this chapter. Via literature review, elite interviews, data collection and graphical elicitation, what is seen in the following pages is, I believe, as complete as such a proposal is likely to be.

What is put forward then does not align itself with any existing theory or literary study, for it should be clear by now that no single theory is adequate in describing and then understanding this particular readership. It must be useful — for this this should be a practical way to speak of photobook experiences and thus should not be constructed in language solely of academia. It is to be seen as a useful guide not only for understanding the complexity of our readings but also how the author and other agents of the photobook are present in various acts of reading — from the product of the book and intended referral, to press releases, selecting reviewers and so on. Thus, this account considers the book before it arrives on our desks or in our laps, and after it leaves — for the book spends the smallest portion of its life in the hands of its reader.

¹⁵⁸ Spowart's guide is based on personal experience and while a quite suitable means of thinking about readership, is not as extensive or as holistic an approach as I would like to undertake.

An account of contemporary photobook reading

What follows is a proposal for an account which allows us to map out our experiences with photobooks against a given set of acts which have been developed in an inclusive, rather than exclusive, manner — attempting to permit extension and individuality rather than restrain it. This account is constructed of eight acts of reading which, while operating in an order, could be reworked in the removal or accentuation of some acts, to allow for broad approaches. The acts of reading are followed closely by an exploration of the relationship between acts of reading and lineage (from Chapter One) and with acts of publishing (Chapter Two).

While this will surface again it is noted here that, as well as acting a useful resource for subsequent researchers, this account would be of great assistance to the photobook maker, the casual photobook reader and to the photobook student or critic. By clearly articulating a process of reading, we can use it, together with other components of our proposed critical framework, for the photobook reader to robustly and appropriately understand and critique works. To be clear in how this account has been arrived at: it has been a selective and assimilatory task which has been ongoing through the investigations and encounters throughout this chapter, as well as fieldwork in relation to my position with *The Photobook Club* and attendance at numerous events — as such there is no strict causality to be established. However each set of findings (from literary theory, the sequence and object, elite interviews and the graphical illustrations contained within) has been incorporated into what follows (and is noted).

Eight acts of reading

Act I. **Distance reading:** the reading that comes before any physical encounter with a photobook. This includes our existing knowledge about the publisher, designer, photographer or book itself, but also includes reading which is informed by blogs, photobook communities, friend's recommendations and photobook stores. This reading is exemplified by comments like:

'I buy photobooks about topics that interest me. I don't usually care about prizes or blogs, while it is true that prizes and blogs make me be aware of them' (Spain, E).

'Sometimes I get enthusiastic by a good review and decide to buy without having had a physical experience with a book beforehand. Most often it's a network of influences. In recent years I easier buy books by publishers and photographers/artists I know or am friends with' (The Netherlands, D).

'A book or photographer I know from previous experience or reputation will mean I have preconceived ideas about what to expect and the complexity of the visual language' (UK, J).

Distance reading is a space in which the structuralist approach to reading may be employed or begun — the reader (or potential reader) locating works in relation to particular themes, discourses or genre's, based on the information that accompanies the publication, or the conversation that surrounds it. In addition, this act may bring in the space of seeing the book (established on page 155) and how this, together with all other components, leads to a framing of following readings.

Act II. **Inspectional reading I:** includes a physical and haptic inspection of the book as an object and signifier of the work within. This means that not only will size, shape and texture be considered, but also the colour, font and any graphic display information. This reading is exemplified by comments like:

'I prefer being able to hold the book in my own hands as the experience feels more personal' (UK, AC).

'Feel paper

I watch the front and back cover

I watch the finishing' (Portugal, G).

'I would probably hold the book in my hands first to familiarise myself with its tactile aspects. I would then open it up and flick through its pages at random' (Murarescu, 2018).

It is here in the first inspectional reading that the hand, as we saw on pages 220-224, is prominent, and here too that a material formalism may be employed in order to seek answers to the literal construction of the work in hand.

Act III. **Inspectional reading II:** building on the first inspectional reading, here the reader opens the book and begins to form a loose picture of the work in the mind. This inspectional reading is not by any means thorough — it is in ways similar to the act of reading a single page of a novel from the first chapter. The reader looks to get a sense of the style of the writing/work as a way to figure how, and if, they might progress with their reading. This reading is exemplified by comments like:

'I flip through pages from back to front, turn it and weight it in my hands, flip through the first pages and if I like it, continue' (Spain, L).

'Front cover, back cover, weight, format, a first fast reading to feel the rhythm, a second slower reading, text (if present) reading' (Brazil, A).

The second inspectional reading is a very specific reading that will often only act as a way to decide whether further acts will be engaged with, or whether this is in fact the end of the reading. We could consider it in relation to reader-response, but in doing so should emphasise that the reader is only engaging with a brief, surface reading which

combines design, haptic qualities and photographic content (and not, due to the flipping, much thought regarding sequence).

Act IV. **Progressional reading:** a progressional reading can range from a relatively passive spectatorship of image progression, to an active consideration of the montage elements in the work. The primary purpose of this reading is to ascertain *what* the work is and potentially *how* it operates. This reading is exemplified by comments like:

'I start at the beginning, generally skipping any text, and flip through the book at a reasonably quick pace' (United States, V).

'Flick though, stop at image that grab me, read any text (short in length) that can give book context written by the artist, then go through page by page in order' (Australia, H).

While the progressional reading might most clearly be echoed in the sequential, supplementary montage of Kuleshov it is also, just as in cinema, applicable to the dialectic, and often, both together. There is space in the progressional reading for formalist and structuralist approaches, though the former is more prominent and neither is required — as seen in the reflections above, often this progressional act is less critical and more experiential.

In relation to the graphical elicitations, the progressional read is connected to a specific set of navigation paths, and in turn, experience paths (or shapes). Both the wave and maze, and the linear navigation paths, are common in progressional reading, so too the meandering of experience.

Act V. **Conceptual reading:** unlike progressional reading conceptual reading is an analytical and reflective reading which looks to understand *why* the work is constructed in the manner it is. Here we begin to think about purpose and intention. This reading is exemplified by comments like:

'First of all I just glanced in the book to explore it and know what kind of photographic work i'm going to face, after that I try to take my time to follow the sequence and figure out what is the main idea' (Mexico, A).

'I enjoy to see the work without knowing the context, thinking about my own thoughts and reading, and then reading the accompanying essay or text if it is there. If there is none, I will often then go online to read about the work' (UK, U).

If there is a clear home for the formalist approach to the photobook it is here in the conceptual reading, which seeks to understand the operation of the work and how it constructs meaning. Whilst there is in the above quotes a nod to reading outside of the text, this encounter is specifically about the photobook and thus keeps this act away from a structuralist approach. This act features a more purposeful reading which might rely on the repetitive and circular navigation paths, and lead to experiences which are in line with the layered and focussed patterns established on pages 247 and 248.

Act VI. **Assimilatory reading:** here, the findings from previous readings are comparatively analysed (consciously or not) with existing knowledge and other works. This is conducted with reference to particular interest in the reading of a given work. Thus, a photographer working towards publishing their own work will extrapolate and assimilate in a different manner to the student asked to speak about the merits of psychoanalysis for photographic critique. This reading is exemplified by comments like:

'Also I tend to connect it with other works, sometimes by other authors or even my own work. Sometimes I also play at imagining how the very same book (with the same images) could have been different' (Spain, O).

'The new one [book] I'm trying to place on a spectrum that will help me read it. What is this similar to? I then start to try and decode it (Bahrain, A)'

'When the book cover is closed there is the moment of reflection and attempt to engage with what it was that I just experienced and what was the meaningfulness of that, how do I internalise that?' (Spewart, 2018b)

Where the conceptual emphasised a formalist approach, the assimilatory can be seen as structuralist; for the way in which it forges connections with texts outside of the one which is being read. As much of this happens away from the turning of the page and literal navigation, it can be seen more readily in the experience responses which take the form of the layered and radiating shapes from pages 247 and 249.

Act VII. **Shelf-reading:** this reading is the least definable of all — it exists beyond the concentrated reading above, and essentially refers to any interaction with the book after this initial interaction and which cannot be described as 're-reading' (to follow). There will be many works that are never re-read in a concentrated manner, but may be turned over in the hand or opened to a particular page, perhaps merely flipped through — this I will categorise as shelf-reading. Shelf-reading takes note of the placement of books but also the effect they have as we pass them, lend them to others or revisit them. This reading is exemplified by comments regarding organisation of books like:

'Books by same artist grouped together where possible. Books of the same size grouped together. And bookshelf arranged with consideration to spine colour tones and themes' (Australia, C).

'Sometimes I'll just grab something off a shelf, flick through it for a few seconds, simply because it caught my eye and I'd not thought about that book for a while' (UK, I).

In shelf-reading, the navigation and experience is difficult to apply with any certainty. Even structuralism, which can go some way to describe the mental sway we hold over books, and what happens in the act of organising and re-organising, only accounts for a very small fraction of this act.

Act VIII. **Re-reading:** to attempt summarising any return to a book for more than a shelf-read is bold indeed, but the clear difference in attitude and experience from both the survey and elite interviews shows that there is merit in separating a re-reading. This is any engagement with a book which comes after the reading acts presented to this point — this is the only space in which it can occur as it relies on existing reading acts to navigate its 'post' position. The re-reading may often occur in a search for something in particular (research/to lend/show) or the familiar return to a favourite work. In re-reading, comparisons to listening to music or walking are prominent:

'I feel that with a book that I have owned for longer, I will spend a longer amount of time with it as it has a bond with me that will always be explored. Yet with a newer book, there is some sort of resistance about what to expect, so there is more of a critical nature about reading' (UK, E).

'Re-reading a photobook for me is more like a walk in a beautiful place I have been before and chosen to come again' (Hampton, 2017).

Worth highlighting is the last comment which emphasises that while re-reading implies a return to the same text, it is not in any sense a repetition of a previous version.

'Read the same text twice and you inevitably get two different interpretations via two different selves that have mutated in the interim' (Cutler, 2011).

Re-reading may well circle back to the progressional, or conceptual, or yet further to the inspectional acts, but, as we have established earlier on page 252, it is typically, noticeably different the second time around. Just as with shelf-reading, without a specific reader to speak of, it is unhelpful to prescribe the shapes or approaches of this reading, but is enough to say that it will adopt the characteristics of the act that is returned to.

For clarity, the complete acts are presented in Figure 50, with brief accompanying definitions.

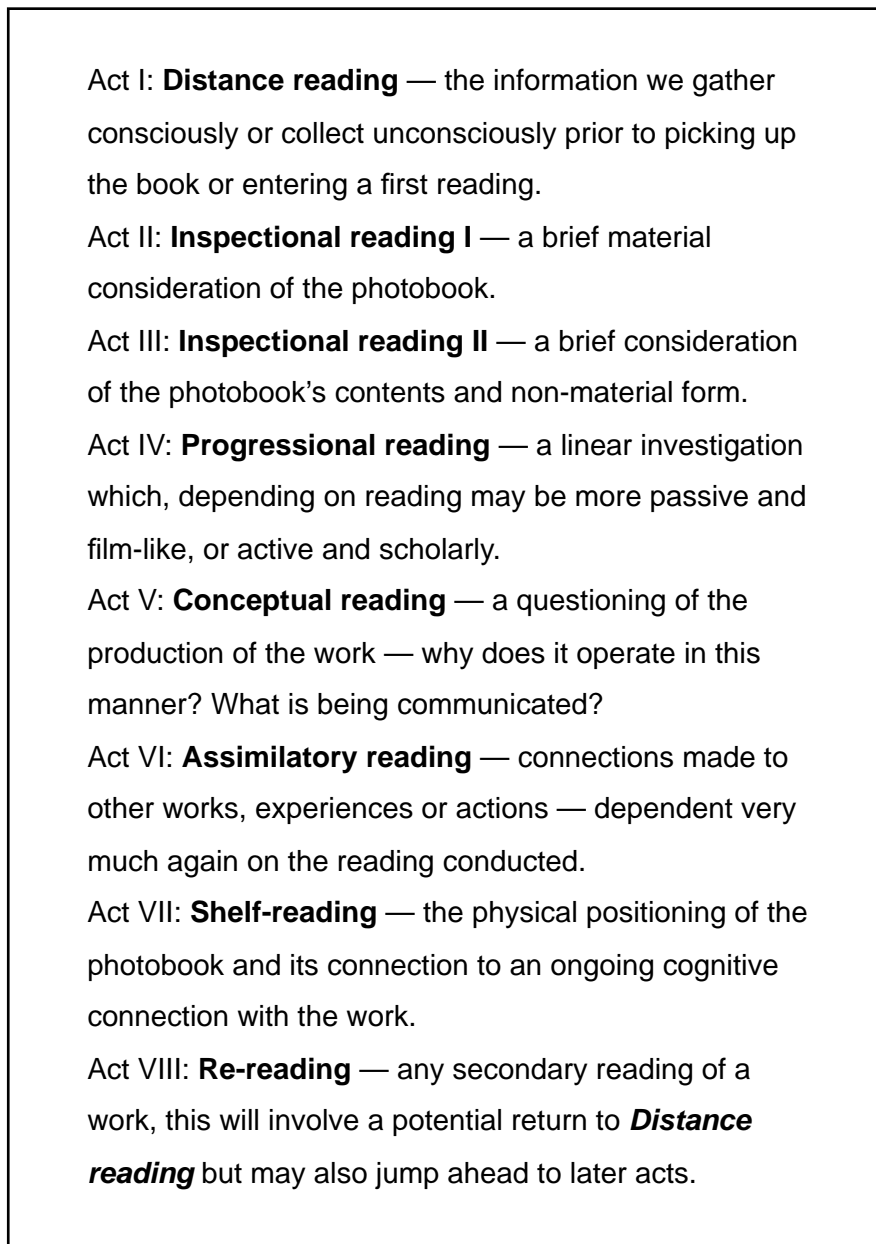


Fig. 50. *The Eight Acts of Reading* (2018)

The order presented here (see Fig. 50.) is close to chronological. Of course it is possible that no distance reading occurs, especially if the book is given (though here I would suggest the gift-giver constitutes an agent of distance reading and pre-supposition), but for the majority of cases, this will always come first. This precedes the inspectional readings which may well be brought together (hence the titling), in particular when time may be of some limitation as is the case in book fairs and shops. These readings then have laid a groundwork for the more overt elements of photobook

reading — the progressional, conceptual and assimilatory. These readings are likely to go together and are equally likely not to be differentiated by most readers — each contributing to the other. Some will isolate particular acts for particular purposes, like the tutor researching to speak about the interplay of form and function, or the reader who seeks only for the narrative: the story. All are valuable readings, and while an order is proposed to help understand the reading process, a hierarchy is not, nor is the suggestion of particular ways to read, or structures to improve reading. Then comes shelf-reading and re-reading, though here let's note another limitation — this time 're-reading' which attempts to encompass all subsequent encounters with a photobook. It falls short of speaking about the many different reasons we re-read books, and it falls short of detailing the various processes of those re-readings, but such detail in such a unique act would be counter productive to our aims. To re-read may well mean to identify quite particular and known information, it might just as well be to jog memory, for pure enjoyment, or even to see what's different in approaching the book again.

At the side of the acts of reading (see Fig. 50.), is an arrow which moves from 'maker' to 'reader'. This is to highlight the transference of the construction of meaning in the book connecting with its reader. At the beginning of our acts it is predominantly the maker that is able to inform and shape our interactions. It is the maker (or other makers in the photobook world) which will often inform our distance reading (I) and it is the maker's physical construction of a work which will shape the haptic inspection of act II. At act III, in which the reader performs a brief inspection of the content of the work, a judgment of the work is made and at this point the active reader enters into our acts in a more pronounced way. Through the middle acts (IV and V), the maker and reader work together in the construction of meaning. There is what might be considered a conversation between the two, or as Alejandro Acin put it: 'directing a movie with someone else's script' (Acin, 2017). Then, as we approach the assimilatory reading of act VI, it is now the reader who is the primary maker of meaning. This is not to say they are not assimilating an experience orchestrated in part by the maker, but that it is an act so far removed from the makers control, and so personal, that it is the reader who is dominant. This continues as the book is stored and displayed (act VII) and returned to in the future (VIII). The book is now truly an object over which the reader holds sway and to which they bring meaning (Baudrillard).

The significance of acts of reading

Having covered a vast amount of ground in this chapter, it is essential that we contextualise what has been found in relation to previous chapters, and to the culmination of our proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook. It would have been possible to construct this thesis without this chapter present, but it would not have done justice to our intention to interrogate the relationship between the photobook and its reader. This chapter has had to develop and employ an approach to a subject which had not previously been explored in any great depth, and certainly not documented in the manner, or to the extent, that we have here. It is then, one of the most overt contributions to knowledge that this research makes, but does not stand alone, and becomes stronger when combined with findings from other chapters (and thus other components of our overall framework for the photobook).

In thinking of purpose-informed lineages, our acts of reading provide a structure for the photobook maker to consider — a tool which articulates the parameters of most interactions with the medium, and can offer a series of areas in which to invest time and thought. As an example, the photographic book/photobook maker may wish to emphasise the inspectional reading of their publication, or may instead seek feedback on the assimilatory readings of their work. This is not to say such actions could not have occurred before, but that without a common language and without a rigorous account of reading provided here, such actions may have been less fruitful. Our acts of reading also provide a counterpart to discussions of publishing, and once again with lineage as an accompaniment, will encourage a consideration of the impact that publishing acts have, on acts of reading: the choice to produce a work with distinct and overt materiality is likely going to accentuate inspectional reading (I). Just as an intertextual artists' book/photobook may highlight assimilatory reading. Acts of reading can also be a significant asset to both a comprehension of, and critique applied to, the way in which books are discussed (the subject of Chapter Three). They could be employed by competitions and awards, but may have a greater power in identifying the nature of critique, reflection and discourse as a whole.

In addition, the introduction of these acts also challenges one of the key findings of the previous chapter — the prevalence of maker-centric discourse. In a subtle manner, the acts and their incorporation into the photobook world could allow non-maker readers to be heard, and in turn provide a space for those individuals around the table of the new photobook world. As the arrow alongside the acts of reading demonstrates, so much of the photobook's life is in the hands of the reader, but it is a part of the medium which until now we have considered very little. A discourse which is better balanced to include the reader, acknowledges and relishes the ambiguity of communication through the photobook, and the action of the reader who is as much responsible for constructing meaning as the maker. When partnered with lineage and pragmatism, the reader (lay or experienced) should be instrumental in helping to define the form of the contemporary photobook as it advances, in order that it may not only reach physically, but connect, with its readers.

Verso

This, the last chapter in the thesis, has been complex — a result of the lack of pre-existing literature and the need for a custom methodology to allow for a holistic approach. It is because of this that it has yielded such a unique set of data, and from it produced findings which have filled in the last of the components of a proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook. As a result of the work in this chapter, such a framework for the first time, positions the reader as central to our understanding of the medium.

Our investigations began by breaking up the different ways in which we can think about reading the photobook — as an object, a series of spaces and as a text. This allowed us to weave together data from first hand research, and explanatory and contextualising accounts of reading from literature, as well as theoretical proposals for the process and experience of encountering the photobook. In this manner we were able to adopt and adapt thinking from related fields of literature and cinema, in order to begin constructing our account of reading. However, while the textual research undertaken formed the foundations of the chapter, it was supported also by the incorporation of the graphical elicitation exercise with elite interviewees which provided a visualisation of the active reader, their navigation through the book, and the multiple different ways in which the contemporary photobook is read. The results from all of the investigations in data collection, literary review, theoretical encounters and graphical elicitation, were subsequently plugged in to one another in order to forge eight acts of reading. Acts which it is proposed will encompass almost all interactions with the photobook, and will permit individual adjustments and alterations with ease.

As well as serving an important role in offering the first research-informed account of photobook reading, these acts can be utilised in helping to adapt the situation of the new form of the medium that is the contemporary photobook, in order to re-establish connections with lineage, pragmatism, amplification; and thus readers. The final section of the chapter was given over to discussion regarding the application of these acts, something which will be encouraged in its position as the last component in our proposed critical framework.

A proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook

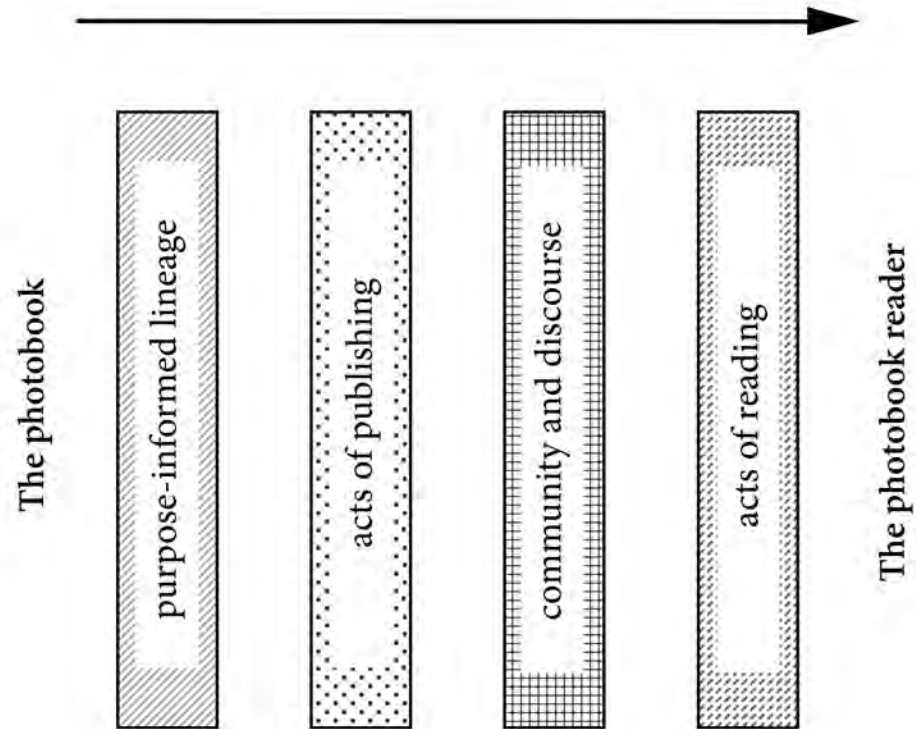


Fig. 2. *A proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook* (2019)

Conclusion

This research set out to investigate the space between the contemporary photobook and its readers, and has provided a critical consideration of this territory via the tracing of purpose-informed origins of the medium, the impact of linked digital technology, the role of community and discourse, and an account of photobook reading. In this process, the culmination of findings from each chapter have contributed to the building of a proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook as well as a new set of terms to accompany it. The product of the mixed methodological approach adopted for the research, both the terms and framework itself seek to provide critical tools for the maker, reader and scholar alike to better interrogate what happens between the production and reception of the photobook in the medium's contemporary state. Much of this work has built on the work of others — it has not traversed entirely uncharted landscapes — but while individuals like Doug Spowart, Philip Zimmerman, Alessandro Ludovico, Lotte Philipsen, Emily Larned and Jodi Dean have been instrumental in its construction (as well as all those interviewed for this thesis), it is the attempt at connecting previously disparate notions, theories and accounts which makes the framework borne from this research a considerable piece of new knowledge. It is intended that this framework and the new terms of this research can be (in full, or in component parts) inserted into the emerging critical discourse that surrounds the photobook — influencing production strategies, through to critical writing and even the construction of awards and accolades. It is hoped that its logical development — in covering four components of the photobook's journey to its reader — will encourage its use in spaces away from the academic and esoteric, as well as within.

In this conclusion, I shall firstly present the proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook and accompanying new terminology, before concisely summarising each chapter and what its findings demonstrated in relation to the connections (made and missed), between the photobook and its readers. This provides a clear view of the response this research makes to the key research questions set out in the introduction¹⁵⁹, and is followed by a reflection on how these findings call for a

¹⁵⁹ Regarding the ontology and taxonomy of the photobook, its form in the post-digital, the community and discourse that has emerged around the medium, and the manner in which it is experienced by readers

shifting of attention from production, to reception, in the photobook world. Finally, the particularities of the research, and areas for potential future work are presented to conclude the thesis.

A critical framework for the contemporary photobook

The completed proposal for a critical framework for the contemporary photobook that has been built chapter by chapter is presented below, underneath which are a series of terms that have been constructed through this research and are intended to be used alongside the framework. The framework itself, and its constituent parts, should allow for a common ground for connected thinking and discourse, between different parties involved in the construction, dissemination, review and reception of the medium. What is key to its application is that it can be applied on a small or large scale, and to individual works or collections of works. It is malleable enough to be useful, and rigid enough to act as reference and common instigator. It is expected that this framework will offer most to the makers, scholars and engaged photobook readers: for whom the framework poses a series of critical questions, and offers a terminology for aspects of the publishing process and works they are making or reading which did not exist before.

A proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook

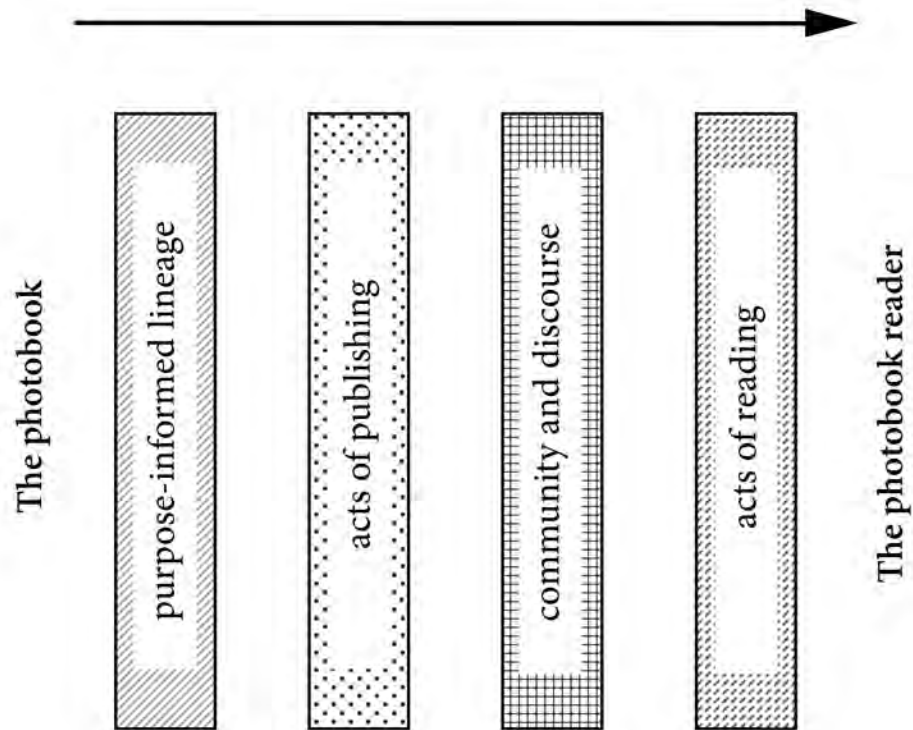


Fig. 2. *A proposed critical framework for the contemporary photobook* (2019)

What is presented below is a list of terms which form an accompaniment to the proposed critical framework in Fig 2. They are listed in the order they appear in the research and are written in bold in their first appearance in the following sections on *Connections (made and missed)* (pages 280-287) and *Shifting attention: reading economies* (287-289) to make clear their locations in respective chapters.

Lineage: is used to describe the multiple purposes that the photobook serves in the making public of a given body of work. It represents three histories of intent with regards to the photobook which are traced in Chapter One to the photographic book, artists' book and photo essay (pages 61-82).

Photographic book/photobook: The photographic book/photobook is a book of photographs. The photographs are brought together with a commonality that is often thematic but could also be geographic or aesthetic. While they may have been produced by one artist, in one location, they may also have been produced by many artists in many locations in different periods of time (page 64).

Artists' book/photobook The artists' book/photobook is primarily a personal reflection on the world. While it may be produced in response to a global event or cultural phenomenon, the reaction and production of work is frequently of an individual (or collaborative) perspective, and rarely eludes to objectivity or uses such language as to suggest absolute truths (page 66).

Photo essay/photobook: The photo essay/photobook is concerned with the world in which its authors (importantly) its readers, are situated, often striving to inform, educate and entertain. Whilst its origins lie in an emboldening of images with the use of text, and this is common in the lineage, it is not always present (page 69).

Publishing sphere: Used to visualise the potential reach of publications in relation to framing, amplification and the use of reactive or pragmatic acts (page 91).

Pragmatism: In the thesis, reactivity is one side of a spectrum of reactions to new, post-digital and post-photographic landscapes. It speaks of the strategic use of new

technologies without fascination or rejection and often incorporates old media too (pages 120-122).

Reactivity: In the thesis, reactivity is one side of a spectrum of reactions to new, post-digital and post-photographic landscapes. It speaks of the rejection, fascination and interrogation of these new environments (pages 120-122).

Acts of publishing: Deliberate choices which relate to the framing and amplification of photobooks which may range from choices regarding printing technology, scale of a book and binding type to the shops it is seen in, competitions entered into and reviewers sent to (pages 87-89).

Photobook community: The events, individuals and discourse which occurs around the contemporary photobook, documented in depth and revealing particular characteristics of maker-centrism and insularity (pages 160-165).

Acts of reading: In chapter 4, a series of acts of reading are proposed which attempt to describe the process of engaging with a photobook from a distance (and before physical reading commences), to how it spends time on our shelves and how we re-read it (pages 263-272).

Reading economy: A proposed shift in an economy for the photobook — from one that is maker-centric and insular, to one that looks out towards readers actual and potential (pages 287-289).

Republishing: The choice to revisit published works which may not have met their makers remit and may have more to offer to existing and/or potential readers. Some works may be republished with changes to physical construction and pricing, others may adopt larger adjustments to contents and design, as well as anything in-between (page 288).

Connections (made and missed), between the photobook and its readers

The proposed critical framework seen above is a product of the research questions posed in each chapter of the thesis, and the resulting findings which evidenced what connections (made and missed) can be seen between the photobook and its readers. In this section, these key connections and critical tools emerging from the research are presented¹⁶⁰ alongside a summary of each chapter's methods, and the manner in which the associated framework component is designed to support critique.

In Chapter One (pages 35-84) I asked what the photobook is from an ontological perspective, and how we might better understand its journey to a contemporary state. I provided a methodical review of literature, in order to create a working definition of 'the photobook'.

The photobook is a single or multi-authored, bound work with photography as its primary content. It is an expression of a unified thought, subject, position, location or time, which has been constructed with awareness of the book as output. (Page 52)

Following this, I sought to break down the umbrella photobook term into a taxonomy of purpose, which could be traced to photography's different relationships with the book. While this undertaking built on the work of Doug Spowart (2018a), Lesley Martin (2017), Jorg Colberg (2018) and Phillip Zimmerman (2016) as well as Jose Luis Neves (2017) and Alex Sweetman (1985), the result was three new, and distinct **lineages**. These lineages, (the **photographic book/photobook**, the **artists' book/photobook** and the **photo essay/photobook**) offered a way to look at the photobook away from the more traditional view of construction techniques, format, narrative structure and publishing formats that populated the encountered literature in this chapter.

Built to support the critique of the space between the photobook and its readers, these lineages would continue as a critical tool throughout the research, and so it was important to test them against a pool of contemporary publications before additional

¹⁶⁰ Also noted in the verso of each chapter.

response from the elite interviewees surveyed. Their responses confirmed the significance and applicability of lineages as an answer to some of the problems the unifying ‘photobook’ term presents, ensuring they would become a component of those chapters that followed. Thus, a critical tool, and with it key terms, for subsequent investigations was established — the notion that in order to appropriately critique photobooks, we must understand what they seek to do in becoming public, and not witness them only as artefacts and symbols of the newly unified term ‘photobook’.

While lineages themselves are key in re-tethering and connecting the contemporary medium to histories of purpose in publishing, alone they are not demonstrative of connections between the medium and its readers. Instead they are adopted as an important critical device¹⁶¹ to help elucidate the relationship between intent and publishing in a taxonomy of photobooks. Thus, the ‘purpose-informed lineage’ component of the critical framework encourages an interrogation of the purpose of encountered works. For the maker, an honest reflection on whether the work is seeking to affect change in policy or attitude, act as career tool, corral works in a convenient and commercial platform or any other way in which publishing can aid the work at hand. For the scholar and reader, the same questions are asked, and with the language of lineage as guide, it should be possible to understand what the work is purporting to do.

In Chapter Two (pages 85-146) I established an account of photobook publishing which emphasised the difference between making, and making public. With respect to lineages, and with the aid of Michael Bhaskar’s theory of publishing (which encapsulates the filtering, framing and amplification of a publishing model), I produced a series of expected publishing visualisations (or **spheres**) which articulated the tenet of individual lineages. Subsequently, with literature review of post-digital and post-photographic texts from Joan Fontcuberta (2015), Florian Cramer (2014), Jonathan Openshaw (2015) and Kevin Kelly (2008) among others, I evidenced that the contemporary photobook can be seen to exhibit a variety of traits¹⁶² symptomatic of

¹⁶¹ The role of the lineage as a critical tool is discussed on page 290.

¹⁶² Detailed on pages 113-119.

these contemporary, post conditions for photography and digitality. More precisely, it was shown that there are both 'reactive' and 'pragmatic' adoptions and applications of linked-digital technology. While there have been attempts to cover a range of themes within post-digitality (Cramer, 2014)(Paul, 2015), as well as one notable suggestion of a split in discourse (Philipsen, 2014), this way of interrogating current publications provides a new tool for critique.

Within the remit of this research, in this chapter I went on to produce a series of questions designed to elucidate how publications adopted these reactive or pragmatic traits, and tested them against a large sample of 52 publications. At this point I returned to publishing spheres in producing a series of actual (rather than expected) visualisations based on the findings from this content analysis. This combination of content analysis and literature review uncovered several ways in which the photobook connects with readers, which are situated in post-digital and post-photographic contexts:

- It was demonstrated that prevalent contemporary acts in publishing (pages 125-133) are able to strengthen connections with particular readers¹⁶³ in their employment of desirable tactical and haptic qualities. When combined with lineages, this was the case for both the photographic book/photobook and the artists' book/photobook.
- There were also connections missed witnessed with some readers for whom an emphasis on production of the photobook results in prohibitive quantities and costs. This was true of the photographic book/photobook which exhibited predominantly the same production traits as the photographic book/photobook, but which has a very different audience.

Regarding publishing, the '**acts of publishing**' component of the critical framework emboldens an investigation into the practicalities of the physical transferring of work to a reader. For the maker, this is a point at which lineage must be remembered, for the acts adopted (pragmatic or reactive) must allow for the purported intentions to be realised. Acts of publishing and the use of a publishing sphere should help to

¹⁶³ Which Chapter Three would go on to suggest are often makers themselves.

foreground the making public of publishing, not to be derailed by an existing discourse and fascination with process and production. For the scholar and reader, an investigation into the relationship between lineage-based intent, and the actualities of publishing, is enabled and encouraged. By considering the physical construction of the work, its cost and acts of amplification, it is possible to provide a robust critique of how publication and publishing compare with the work's lineage situation.

In Chapter Three (pages 147-214), having investigated and responded to questions concerning the taxonomical origins of the contemporary photobook, and how the form and making public of the photobook is affected by linked digital technologies, it was important to identify how the community and discourse that surrounds the photobook helps to define what the medium has become. This chapter thus was built on a substantial contribution to the field in the form of a large ethnographic account of the make-up of the **photobook community**. Comprising a review of events in 2015 across North America and Europe, a large survey of 178 photobook readers, elite interviews and an analysis of the discourse found in social media photobook spaces along with prominent photobook awards, the chapter identified several prominent connections between the photobook and its readers:

- The prevalence of the maker and maker-centric discourse strengthened connections with those invested in (as well as practicing), the production of photobooks. It provides a common language for discourse which foregrounds production.
- The dominance of the maker (and making), overshadows considerations of reading and the making public of publishing. The foregrounding of production (similar to that seen in Chapter Two) thus potentially misses connections with non-makers and those outside the photobook world.
- Esotericism and sophistication of the contemporary photobook provides the ability for those in the photobook world to enter into niche conversations about work, and to progress publications with the support of an increasingly sophisticated visual and haptic language. This aids connections with specific readers, especially in the lineage of the artists' book/photobook.

- Simultaneously this esotericism and sophistication masks the intent of publications primarily in the photo essay/photobook lineage and sees the insularity of the photobook world hinder external engagement (one if its aims, page 99).
- The proposal that the contemporary photobook is a new form of a longstanding medium both demonstrates how an emerging community has connected with the newest form of the photobook, as well as how this form is seen as disconnected to its histories of purpose and intent in publishing.

The 'community and discourse' component of the framework seeks to bring attention to the way in which works are spoken of, explain how they are considered, what is good, and in turn, what sort of works are made. Furthermore, it provides a set of terms which can act as a common lexicon for the photobook. For the maker, it is proposed that they will consider the information they present to accompany published works, as well as the way in which their photobooks are discussed in relation to lineage. It is suggested that this section of the framework supports a self-critique and a robust reflection on what positive reviews or competition shortlisting say about the work in relation to its purpose. For the reader and scholar, this part of the framework makes clear the impact of their voice on the future of the photobook and that, in incorporating lineage and acts of publishing into discourse, the maker-centric and esoteric qualities of current conversations may be adjusted to foreground connections with intended readers of works. Whilst the themes of this chapter: contribution, maker-centrism, sophistication and insularity (all leading to the new form proposal), have been witnessed specifically in relation to the photobook, they may well offer useful starting points for a critical foray into neighbouring mediums of the artists' book and zine.

In Chapter Four (pages 215-274), I approached a significantly under-researched area of the photobooks life between production and reception: how we read the photobook. This research question acknowledges that while substantial research exists in relation to the reading of text, the image and moving image, there has yet to be an empirical account of this combination for the photobook. Recently there have been some personal reflections on this element of the photobooks life — from Joanna Cresswell and Oliver Whitehead (2015) and Doug Spowart (2016), to the work of Tim Daly (2018) and Victoria Cooper (2019) — but none have attempted to locate an account of

reading in empirical research combined with extensive literature review. In order to respond to this gap in research regarding the photobook, and see what could be gleaned from associated fields of research (in literary and montage theory), the question was broken down into sub-questions which asked how we might be able to think of reading the photobook as an object, a series of spaces, or as a text.

Each of these was investigated in turn by plugging in data from the photobook reading survey and elite interviews with encountered literature review. While these activities provided considerable information, it was understood that relying only on text could inhibit potential reflections on reading (an experience notoriously hard to translate into words). So, I set out to ascertain how non-textual data collection could offer a view of how readers experience and navigate the medium. I employed graphical elicitation as a way to invite a set of reflections on reading which could take almost any form, and by categorising and analysing these responses, I witnessed first hand the multiple ways¹⁶⁴ in which the photobook is read: consequently emphasising the role of the reader and confirming their place as meaning makers. Once again these insights were inserted into existing data and encountered literature in order to propose an account of reading of the contemporary photobook which has implications for the makers, readers and scholars of the form. As a result I put forward a series of eight **acts of reading** (see Fig. 50.) which span the experience of reading from initial awareness of a publication, through material reading, and on to re-reading.

¹⁶⁴ The data reflected upon on pages 245-252 demonstrates that while each response was unique, there were similarities that were able to be categorised in key groups (meandering, layered, focussed, nodal and radiating for the experience of the photobook and linear flats, linear waves, flitting and repetitive and circular for navigation the form).

Act I: **Distance reading** — the information we gather consciously or collect unconsciously prior to picking up the book or entering a first reading.

Act II: **Inspectional reading I** — a brief material consideration of the photobook.

Act III: **Inspectional reading II** — a brief consideration of the photobook's contents and non-material form.

Act IV: **Progressional reading** — a linear investigation which, depending on reading may be more passive and film-like, or active and scholarly.

Act V: **Conceptual reading** — a questioning of the production of the work — why does it operate in this manner? What is being communicated?

Act VI: **Assimilatory reading** — connections made to other works, experiences or actions — dependent very much again on the reading conducted.

Act VII: **Shelf-reading** — the physical positioning of the photobook and its connection to an ongoing cognitive connection with the work.

Act VIII: **Re-reading** — any secondary reading of a work, this will involve a potential return to **Distance reading** but may also jump ahead to later acts.

Fig. 50. *The Eight Acts of Reading* (2018)

Much like with lineages, the emerging eight acts of reading are not in themselves evidence of connections (though they show *how* readers connect with photobooks). Instead they are critical for the completion of the proposed critical framework; presenting the 'acts of reading' component as a reader-centric account of navigation and experience which can be vital for structuring conversations and actions that impact on how the contemporary photobook connects with readers. For the maker, having a research-informed view of the process by which audiences will become readers, will greatly aid their consideration of acts of publishing — scaffolding a structure for discussions regarding the communication of a particular body of work. For the reader

and scholar, the acts of reading present tools that can be employed to aid the critique of a given work, and to further understand their own experience with it, as well as to present reflections clearly, and with focus, back to makers. As with previous chapters, there is the opportunity for extrapolation of these acts to the artists' book and zine as well as the book arts.

Shifting attention: reading economies

Taken together, what the findings to the research questions (in the form of connections), and the construction of the proposed critical framework and associated terms do, is to foreground the role of the reader. What is presented here to draw together the research is a proposal for a shifting of attention, action, and acknowledgment, from the production of works, to their reception — rooted in the research present in these pages. It is hoped that, as we find ourselves on a plateau, or slight descent from 'photobibliomania' (Solo and the Library of the International Centre of Photography, 2014), we can build a more sustainable future. By thinking of **reading economies** rather than production economies, a subtle transformation in production itself occurs, from making, to making public, and from an employment of technology for production to an employment of technology for reception. If then we adopt a shift of attention — what does it look like?

A reading economy (Stadler, 2018:118-127) is one which would not eschew financial commerce — it would understand the need for a sustainable and remunerated practice, and thus would strive to produce for readers a work at an identified and practical price-point. Decisions in production would be met following these financial parameters, and while this imposes limits, they will be present to focus publication models and acts. A reading economy is one in which the photobook maker is acutely aware of the need to activate the social life of the book and to form, locate or bring together a public for the work's reception. Stadler makes the case that there is 'no pre-existing public' and that passivity will not suffice:

‘Publics begin in wilful actions, an invitation, an event. A public can arise in any defined space that is open to strangers — a street, a meeting hall, a plaza or bar, or a book...’ (Stadler, 2018:122).

There are echoes here of the intention *The Photobook Club* launched with, and has continued to develop, and a reminder that key for the photobook, which is already visible in many (technically) public spaces, is the invitation to strangers — activation of a group of individuals who may, as yet, be unaware of the publication and moreover, the form of the photobook. Establishing a reading economy does not create a simplified, algorithmic production methodology seeking only to be popular with readers¹⁶⁵, but addresses the power imbalance in a relationship that relies on maker *and* reader. As the role and voice of the reader becomes clearer in photobook discourse, a number of problematics we have encountered in this research are mitigated or challenged. The judging of what a good photobook is¹⁶⁶, will morph to the reflection on reception and efficacy of the book to bring readers together, impart ideas or spark conversation. The maker may be more inclined to document and archive aspects of a publication’s life-after-publishing as integral to their practice. Whilst a reading economy is a proposal for the future of the photobook¹⁶⁷, the proposal need not leave behind the many wonderful publications produced in the period of this research, which may have been swallowed up in frantic abundance. Instead, **republiation** is a way in which to revitalise, and even for those works that were reader-focussed, may reform conversations in a new context: pertinent for the photo essay/photobook in particular. Republishing is not to be confused with a second printing, nor even a revised edition — instead all of those minutiae of the act of publishing must once again be encountered and reflected upon in relation to the reader. For some, much will change, for others perhaps only geographical distribution,

¹⁶⁵ Such as Amazon’s adoption of algorithms.

¹⁶⁶ As chapter three demonstrates, this is currently a collection of loose criteria revolving around the project and construction of the book, separated from intent.

¹⁶⁷ It should also be noted that there are spaces where a reading economy is central to a business model, not-for-profit or other such initiative. *The Photobook Club* we have already discussed, as of course *Publication Studio* but so too some of 10x10 Photobooks’ activities (reading rooms in particular), and the performances and readings organised by *SPBH* at *Offprint London*.

price, or printing method¹⁶⁸. Regardless, the choice of republishing is one borne of action and intent on behalf of the photobook maker. In this way, it is a suitable opportunity to reconsider the questions of Chapter 2 — which sought to reveal reactivity and pragmatism in publishing acts (page 123).

‘to republish is to work against the invisibility of objects and information by extracting them from the fabric of the real or of history in order to summon them, show them again, and open up the field of their potential readings’ (Bobin and Villeneuve, 2012:16).

Bobin and Villeneuve’s call for a re-opening is an act that stems from a belief that there is a ‘responsibility’ of the maker to ‘reinsert the object into the public sphere’ (18), a belief which this research suggests may be latent or temporarily obfuscated in the climate of the contemporary photobook. Connections have been witnessed with an emergent photobook world, built on esotericism, the unification of lineages under the ‘photobook’ banner and an emphasis on the quality and sophistication of production. Yet simultaneously these traits of the new form of the photobook construct restrictions and miss connections with readers unfamiliar with the medium, a potentially damaging situation, especially for the lineage of the photo essay/photobook. I have developed a criticality which has been lacking in relation to the medium and, as was noted in the preface, have built on a desire for better understanding and strategic use of the form. It is hoped that this research and the resulting proposed critical framework will spark a new discourse around the contemporary photobook, one which foregrounds purpose, publishing and a reading economy.

The particularities of the research and identification of further study

As a body of research which seeks comprehension of the substantial space between the photobook and its readers, this thesis has had to adopt the most relevant methods and subjects of investigation in order to remain focussed (outlined on pages 22-32).

Whilst this focus is essential, it has meant that some subjects, theories and methods

¹⁶⁸ As well as a consideration of whether print itself remains the most appropriate form or whether eBooks, PDFs or websites can fulfil the role more completely.

have been left aside for their tangential and not essential nature. In addition, some of the methods and areas of study could have been partnered differently, so here the particularities of the research, and areas of potential further study have been highlighted.

A key, and prominent finding of the research (as they allow for a speciality of critique and reflection as well as evidencing a connection with the photobook's history), which is incorporated into a number of conclusions and reflections, is that of lineages. Thus here it is useful to reflect on their emergence, use and limitations. The three lineages¹⁶⁹ of the photographic book/photobook, artists' book/photobook and photo essay/photobook are the product of literature review and content analysis of contemporary works termed photobooks (pages 75-77), and have been tested in speaking to numerous elite interviewees. They offer for this research a helpful critical tool but are not in themselves used to inform the research — only to create specificity in speaking about findings and tether the contemporary photobook to the medium's history (in order that it is not witnessed as something entirely new). Were one to remove the lineages from the research in chapters two, three and four, the same findings would be present, but their contextualisation would differ. For this reason, lineages are one of the particularities of the research, and it may be interesting for a future researcher to review the findings with a different critical tool to hand, or indeed a taxonomy which looks not to purpose of publishing but instead could plug in some of the alternatives found on pages 54-60.

One of the most commonly discussed topics at *Photobook:RESET* in 2018 for having a restricting effect on the photobook, was that of distribution. So while publishing spheres and acts of publishing touched briefly on the topic in the *Monsanto* case study (133-140), this research has not attempted to engage with the subject with the rigour that has been applied in other areas. For the maker in particular, the distribution possibilities and amplification methods of the contemporary photobook would be a logical next area for exploration, providing support to rectify some of the missed connections made clear in this work.

¹⁶⁹ In forming these lineages a fourth was witnessed in the photo album/photobook *but*, while this could be used by future researchers, its criteria did not meet the working definition of the photobook.

The remit of this research was to move away from a maker-focussed interpretation of the photobook, yet the maker is an important component of any construction of meaning, so it is noted that they feature only in small sections of the writing. To present the findings of this research back to some of the makers, whose books are featured in the content analysis of Chapter Two, would create a lively discourse, and may be able to further understand the intentions of the maker in utilising the photobook for photographic work.

Not unconnected, the eight acts of reading, as well as the methods which informed them (in graphical elicitations and the photobook reading survey) could be investigated with readers from outside the photobook world. Those responses which were interwoven with the literature review to form an account of reading in Chapter Four, were from existing readers of the photobook, so while they are an accurate representation of current reading patterns of those reading the photobook, they do not account for the potential reading of audiences unfamiliar with the field. It would be illuminating to see how the sophistication of the photobook documented in Chapter Three could be explored in relation to the lay reader through the same methods, the results of which could be particularly helpful to makers of the photo essay/photobook.

Finally, we return to the scope of the research itself from a geographical perspective. This research limited itself to North America and Europe, an act of necessity but one that has excluded different perspectives on the contemporary photobook and even, potentially, different purposes. Further investigation is needed to see how the contemporary photobook operates and connects with readers in different parts of the globe or, whether the contemporary photobook is truly a global medium — acting as a ‘type of visual Esperanto’ (The PhotoBookMuseum, 2014b).

Epilogue

It has been noted at several points in this research and is articulated fully in the case study of *The Photobook Club*, that while this five year period of research is its own, self contained work, it has emerged from questions that have been present in my mind and practice for at least five years prior. At the outset of this research, my interests lay in a thorough dissection of the photobook community — to see the power structures it contains. Yet as the research progressed, this became less significant in comparison to exploring a way of thinking which was purpose oriented.

Such a change has influenced my own practice and the operation of *The Photobook Club*. I have strived wherever possible to see that the initiative is reflective of the findings from this research which highlight the role of the reader over the celebration of new works. So too I have begun to incorporate lineage-specific critique in my own writings: a review for the photobook *Doug's Cabin* (Bueno, 2019) in 2019 (Johnston) and an invited blog post for the College Book Art Associations *Book Art Theory* in 2018 (Johnston, 2018), as well as adopting intent-oriented questioning in artist interviews (Lutz and Johnston, 2019). There are a number of other ways in which *The Photobook Club* itself, as a community and series of events, can benefit from additional consideration and practical interventions¹⁷⁰ which will be developed following this research project — with the intention for the initiative to act as a locus of a new reading economy for the medium¹⁷¹.

Beyond the parameters of *The Photobook Club* there are other challenges and projects I wish to begin at the culmination of this initial research project. It will be my primary objective to seek a wider readership for this research and the data from which it has

¹⁷⁰ There must be a more precise and structured approach to some of *The Photobook Club's* discourse — in order to support the entry of new voices to the photobook world. So too a discussion with *The Photobook Club* communities is needed in relation to the discussion of participants' own works — I will propose (which is all one can do in distributed authorship networks) that every third, fourth or fifth event might be turned over to a critique of works in their early stages of conceptualisation — allowing for a steered focus-group review, with specific reference to intent, purpose and the pragmatics of publishing and distribution.

¹⁷¹ In part by the testing and implementation of both the proposed critical framework and new terminology, both of which shall be shared with *The Photobook Club* community.

pulled, than a thesis is likely to receive. I will be looking to distill much of what has been spoken of in these pages into a form which may be more accessible to a broad community of photobook makers, led by the proposed critical framework, diagrams and key terms developed in the research. Subsequently it will be an intention to further investigate the role of the reader, and in particular assimilatory reading, with a research project informed by reception analysis conducted with books across all three lineages, and readers from within, and outside the photobook world.

In my photographic work I am already putting lessons learned from this research into practice — working on developing two photo essay/photobooks in collaboration with A-Level subject teachers in Geography and History. These photobooks will seek to translate the rich sensorimotor experience of the photobook to classrooms which have no pre-existing knowledge of the medium. Finally, as an educator, I shall be striving to incorporate an emphasis on purpose-informed publishing in my own course, as well as disseminating the concept and the practicalities of this shift to other undergraduate and graduate programmes in the UK and abroad.

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