

Dedicated to my parents.

Also, to the memory of two tutors at Bath Academy of Art: Peter Kinley who painted the most perfect picture of an aeroplane, and Michael Kidner who introduced me to the word 'dialectic'.

In the Beginning and Always:
An Archaeology of Childhood,
Found in Landscape and
Photographs

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Abstract

For historical enquiry photographs are useful in providing records of events and influential to the construction of narrative. Photographs are also adept to facilitating the subjectivity of an individual encounter with the flow of historical time. Organised around a set of personal memories and historical events associated with landscape, this thesis considers an image-based historiographic method to retrospectively illuminate subjective formation. Under examination is the question of how we become aware of ourselves in space and time, through the encounter of historical narratives which encircle our location.

This question of historicity, or sense of becoming, is framed within a language of photography formed through relationships with specific objects and images drawn from the landscape environment of childhood. Being proposed is a model of art practice for which the curiosity of childhood establishes a methodology and critical attitude in navigating an individual path across a range of formal and theoretical considerations. Attention is given to the motivation behind landscape-oriented practice and the compulsive attachment of memories given to photographs in the same way we do with places and objects associated with our autobiographical past.

Revisiting the time and place of one's childhood through photographs is not only to reflect upon landscape and memories but also to encounter the historical circumstances that shaped the environment in which that childhood occurred. In a practice that includes the collecting photographs as well as generating new ones, photographs are not a means of recording, or confirming, where we are at any given moment. Our location and historicity are not a set of fixed coordinates or events but a continuous recalculation within a stream of time. Rather, photographs, conditioned by pictorial conventions and historical context, are the means by which we navigate the stream. It is less what a photograph depicts and more what may be revealed through our encounters with them.

The research is developed through informed acts of photography and writing structured around intuitive gestures. Recognising the subjectivity that inhabits engagement with the past and its pictorial representation, I direct elements of theoretical and formal discourse into a wider reflexive attitude towards personal practice development and historical enquiry. Practice is organized

into the three distinct methods of observing, collecting and making which have their origins in childhood activity. A varied photographic voice is accompanied by written reflection employed to situate practice within a framework of personal memory and cultural history. In part it is a biographical wandering through the circumstance of romantic rural landscape set in context with Cold War military technology and shifting geo-politics.

As a guide I turn to Walter Benjamin who used his own memory of childhood to help address the question of situating the biographical self within history. Benjamin points towards a methodology of historical enquiry drawing upon multi-disciplinary research encompassing visual art, archaeology and memory work. In the production of a cultural history, the methods of archaeology and memory work have the ability to disrupt existing understandings of past. They are methods of enquiry that can alter our relationship to images, demonstrating how photographs do not offer a pure unmediated apprehension of their subjects.

The thesis is not intended to confirm the status of a given practice or discipline. Nor, is it to necessarily add to the existing vast body of scholarly knowledge attached to Benjamin. Rather, it is to demonstrate Benjamin's value to a broader inheritance of ideas and conceptual attitudes that help grant license to an on-going transformation of individual practice. Key to my own practice engagement with the past is a conceptual spatialisation of memory developed through an interpretation of Benjamin's dialectical image. Across an encompassing montage of memory, individual photographs continually shift their relationship to space and time.

Rooted in the conscious subjectivity of childhood memory and constituted through action of the present, a diversity of practice is enabled by intuition and analytical scrutiny. Manifest through deliberate interventions with the conceptual and material properties of photographs, practice becomes the exchange of images in a relay of memory. Rather than a fixing of isolated moments, photographs and memory exist as collective ripples spreading out across time and space. Originating in the past but forever reforming into the future.

Structure of Submission and Suggested Order of Reading

This doctoral submission consists of photographic practice, thesis writing and reflective writing.

The submission is organised into separate companion parts: a practice portfolio and written thesis. The portfolio exists as a physical object. Available here is a digitised version.

It is anticipated that the reader will refer to the portfolio on occasions of their choosing while reading the written thesis. However, the portfolio should be considered independently before embarking the thesis as a whole. It is recommended the portfolio is viewed in its entirety after first reading the opening Prelude of the written thesis.

The written thesis includes four chapters. Chapters One and Two setting out the theoretical context of in which the research and practice development is situated. Chapters Three and Four examining site context and methodology of practice. Each of the chapters are accompanied by illustrations.

Thesis chapters are interspersed by six pieces of reflective writing including an opening Prelude. While located in context with specific chapters these interludes can also be read independently and in any order.

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History is a magical mirror. Who peers into it sees his own image in the shape of events and developments. It is never stilled. It is ever movement, like the generation observing it. Its totality cannot be embraced: History bares itself only in facets, which fluctuate with the vantage point of the observer.

Siegfried Giedion¹

All theorising is flight.

Iris Murdoch²

¹ Siegfried Giedion *Mechanization Takes Command: a contribution to anonymous history* (Oxford University Press 1970 [1947]) 2

² Iris Murdoch *Under The Net* (Vintage/Random House, London 2002 [1954]) 91



Prelude

Early Influences

In January 2013 almost to the day I was due to start my Doctoral Research, very unexpectedly my mother passed away following a brief illness. As a consequence, the start to my research was delayed. I will never be able to fully measure the impact my mother's passing may have had upon the development of my study, although it is fair to say that such events have a considerable effect on all aspects of life. The focus of my research was always going to refer to my early childhood in which my parents would of course play a significant part. The finitude of mortality would never be far from my thoughts.

When it comes to traces of the past, whether photographs or marks made in a landscape, it is my father who usually who comes to the fore. My relationship, or rather my family's relationship to landscape of Salisbury Plain was prescribed almost entirely by my father's work as a farmer and the photographs he took. Much of my account of family history refers directly to these two activities. There is a certain masculinity inherent to my understanding of landscape formed through mechanised farming and aspects of boyhood play. This does not by any means discount the presence of my mother and the enormity of her influence on what is remembered as being a distinctly happy childhood.

Together with our parents, my two brothers and I lived in a home that is remembered for being full of shared humour and encouragement for the curiosity of knowledge. Outdoors we were given a freedom to explore. Thought should be spared for our mother living among constant boyish behaviour of which our father could often be the lead protagonist. And it must not be forgotten that it would have been my mother who, with love and care, bought me many of my toys including my obsessed-over Airfix models. It now pains me to acknowledge that not only did I subsequently trash these precious things, but I would give little consideration to my mother's understanding of a boy's fantasy world of machines and war. And this was a woman who would sometimes have to assist trainee soldiers 'lost' on manoeuvres and who as a child herself was evacuated from her home during the blitz.

I will not dwell either on the specifics of my parent's relationship or more broadly the working relationships that can exist between married couples raising a young family when involved in agriculture. Needless to say, while it may appear otherwise, such a relationship can be very equal; mutually supportive as much as it can be extremely hard physical work for both parties.

One of the benefits of having farming parents is that while they may spend much of the time working, in a sense they do not 'go off' to work. They always feel relatively accessible and the division between home and work will blur. It has been suggested that as soon as we were old enough to sit in a Land Rover my elder brother Nigel and I would accompany our father on the farm. (Our younger brother Jeremy will have joined us four years later.) During the summer months and the intense periods of hay-making and harvest, our mother armed with ample picnic, would take us to watch the proceedings.

As children, our parents never felt remote. Whether at home or in the fields mum or dad would be willing to give commentary on what was taking place. While the memory of everything concerning workings on the farm may be associated with our father the pleasure of these memories is only possible because of the feeling of security provided by the permanent presence of our mother. It would have been her words as much as my father's that would have informed the images of a world being soaked up by an eager young mind.

My father recalls mum once remarking on his inability, or reluctance, despite his interest in photography to photograph people. To address this deficit after Jeremy was born Dad began to photograph the three of us often lost in various casual situations like family picnics. He did so in black and white as by this time he had set up a temporary domestic darkroom. Some of these prints remain in existence and I vividly recall watching their images emerge under the red glow of the safety light.

Before he had a darkroom, my father produced a number of Kodachrome Slides now in my possession. One of the few such slides containing noticeable figures shows my mother and I, although we occupy only a small proportion of the image. It must have been taken around 1964 or 1965 when I would have been aged three or four. I am assuming this is just before I began going to school. Nigel is absent and being two years older therefore assumed to be at school. Mum and I are standing next to what appears to be the bulky end of a very large irregular metal box on wheels.

It is not difficult to conclude that mum and I are serving the purpose of indicating scale. My younger self, however, is clearly taking the matter seriously as I stand to attention, facing the camera with a very satisfied looking smile. My mother, glancing towards the object dominating the scene, looks far less excited. As if calming a large animal, she gracefully touches the galvanised steel juggernaut with her hand. She is probably wishing to draw my attention away from my dad with his camera, and no doubt explaining to me the significance of the moment, which is the delivery of the prefabricated part of a new grain drier being installed in the farmyard.

With my own photography I have generated something of a reputation for taking pictures of large goods vehicles - part of my established interest in transport infrastructure - seen from less than conventional angles of view. There may be all sorts of reasons why I possess this interest although it would be easy to assume it arises out of being surrounded by large farm machinery at such a young age. In other words, because of my dad's work. I also learnt from him that the conventional view is not always the better one. (Among his slides is one taken of a group of grain carting vehicles gathered in the farmyard, all seen facing away from the camera.) Despite these influences, looking at this portrait of mum and it is nice to think that it was she who introduced me to the rear ends of lorries.

There are many qualities to the landscape in which I spent my childhood. Some become evident in photographs, most are better experienced in person. Either way, it would be difficult to summarise these qualities here. When I return to the Plain during the summer months, there is a particular location I like to visit and always at a certain time of day. It is a relatively high location with a commanding view, just off the accessible tank track where I can park my car. From my position on the crest of a Down by Upavon airfield I can look in the direction of Salisbury itself, taking in the further airfields of Netheravon and Boscombe Down and the hills above Bulford. Looking westwards, beyond Larkhill and the out of bounds artillery ranges, the hills of Dorset are just about discernible on the far horizon.

Towards the end of a good long summer's day, as the sun starts to slowly sink towards the West and the light acquires a reddish-golden hue, a distinctive calm can envelope the Downs. The air is clear, and wind drops to nothing. It should be possible to hear a pin drop, but instead of a pin you hear the hum of insects and continuous song of skylarks together with, most notably, the

sound of the Netheravon skydiving 'Jump Plane' ascending and descending - these are the most perfect atmospheric conditions and because the air is so still it is possible even to hear the parachutes open over a good mile or more away. Along with evening dog walkers, on a distant hill top, it is possible the last remaining full-time tractor driver working for my father's former employer may be seen finishing off his already long day. On some occasions, an army unit is hunkering down for the night in one of the nearby dry valleys.

As I survey the scene I reflect on the past and also on how the atmosphere is exactly as I remember from all those years ago. There is no late evening harvest to witness although the ghosts are almost palpable. It takes little for me to recall the almost carnival-like atmosphere created by my father and fellow workers toiling towards the warm and dusty end of the day. At home down in the river valley the grain drier outside my bedroom window will have been generating its monotone drone all day. It will continue long after I am asleep. Standing by my car, often with shutter release in hand I settle into the self-indulgence of remembering long childhood summers; those seemingly carefree days spent outdoors. I remember the sensation of resisting tiredness and emotional lament brought on by the realisation that another near-perfect day is drawing to a close. During my meditation there arrives a certain moment - it does not last long and is difficult to locate precisely - when the scene is bathed in the perfect deep warm tone of the setting sun and the stillness takes on a particular intensity. It is in this moment I receive the overwhelming feeling that my mother is about to appear and call me in for bedtime...



Introduction

Establishing Territory

*The corner of a corner of England is infinite
and can never be exhausted*

Hilaire Belloc³

Witnessing the Past

At the beginning of *Ways of Seeing* John Berger clearly states how the relationship between what is seen and what is known is always tenuous. This relationship, he tells us, is “never settled”. We may explain the world which surrounds us by using words however, “words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it.”⁴ It is seeing which first establishes our place in the world. Berger claims that seeing begins with what first stimulates us, which is more than the optical. What we subsequently see we do so to bring “within our reach”. Our seeing is a form of “touch” that helps to situate ourselves in relation to other things.⁵

By no means as polemical as Berger’s seminal work, this study offers an individual account of how we might come to terms with an evolving knowledge of a world encountered through images. These are encounters in which the notion of touch becomes significant through the physicality of images, and the processes of their making. It is the personal story of negotiating one’s understanding through acts of both seeing and the use of words. A negotiation that forms the basis of a creative visual practice using photographs.

The story I present is one formed by memories of the past located in childhood, characterised by a landscape experienced through the eyes and mind of a young boy. As an adult, more than fifty years later, the boy is looking again across the same seemingly empty landscape and he does so principally with a camera. Interestingly, the landscape appears today very much as it is

³ Hilaire Belloc *The Sea-wall of The Wash in Hills and the Sea* (Methuen, London 1906) 104

⁴ John Berger *Ways of Seeing* (BBC/Penguin, London 1972) 7

⁵ Berger *Ways of Seeing*...8

remembered: open, expansive and very rural, its distinctive physical qualities, laden with the mysteries of ancient history and contemporary military activity. This is an area of rolling chalk down-land in southern England known as Salisbury Plain. The child and adult observer are myself and what is pictured through the camera and remembered provides starting points for this creative practice-led enquiry into a nexus of landscape, memory, history and photographs.

Running through my enquiry are questions concerning the nature of seeing and about the value of photographic images in constructing a personal account of historical narratives that intersect with the landscape and time of my early childhood. In other words, what we might call a visual historiography, or historical account that is conscious of its own making. The activity of photographing in the landscape can be most satisfying and affirming. As I contemplate the environment, soaking up its atmospheres and fondly remembering the past, I also delight in the romance of being a creative artist practicing his photographic skills upon a cherished subject. The results are some carefully measured, well-executed and possibly arresting photographs. But do they tell the full story of what is being encountered, of what is being seen and why?

The experience of producing these photographs suggests to me that being encountered is something more than what is presented through the camera: a recognizable prospect reaching towards the horizon and composed in a single moment of time. This is an expansive image flavoured with the sense of a melancholic attempt to record something that has already happened. The image may be considered and thoughtful, yet it can also feel passive and not quite fulfilling. Physically present in the landscape I am aware of what is much less discernible in the moment of a single photograph. I am struck by the apprehension of duration, of narrative and in particular of things being absent. These are things outside the appearance of a scene, that is 'captured' from distance across a rigid picture plain. Occurring is something that feels much more palpable, like the pressing against a proximity of space formed, it would seem, out an intuition of place and narratives of the past. This is a space eliciting the desire to reach into the prospect in front of me and grasp at something of that past.

In my deliberations with the camera I am conscious of generating a certain kind of photograph, one that for all its possible 'objective' elegance might feel

somehow predetermined, or detached, from the circumstances out of which it arises. Contained in their production is a noticeable leaning towards conscious traditions of landscape photography. Traditions encouraged by what could be considered an inherent “automaticity” of the camera which tends to unify the world through stylistic appearances.⁶ In the conceptual intent, or conceit, is lost the more fluctuating phenomenological qualities of experience and practice.

Out of this situation emerge two key questions informing my enquiry. The first is retrospective: from where does this intuition of place and time originate and how does it influence what I am doing? This is a matter of thinking about photographs less as a means of reflection and more as an essential tool for the subjective formation of a widening exploration of the past. A past that is presented by the landscape in front of me and the memory childhood it evokes. The second, is more pro-active concerning the development of a more critical attitude with a practice of photography practice that can engage more directly and dynamically with my intuition and experience. In other words, how do I move beyond a situation of simply pointing my camera towards a landscape redolent of my past and the frame becoming filled with the apparent calmness of an ever emerging present? [fig 0.1]

Another way of putting this is, how do I recognise my own subjectivity in what I am doing? How may my reflection on the past be explored beyond an exercise in passive looking? If, as Berger suggests, our situation in the world and history can be ascertained through our relationship with images, where in our seeing does the world, including a relationship with photography, begin for us? One such beginning for me is the memories of family slide-shows held in the living room of our Wiltshire farm-house home around the time I would have been five to nine years old. These events generated considerable excitement among the children and it is as much the slide-show, with its the sense of dreamy magic and homely comfort, that lends any image its familial quality.⁷ What is curious about these slides is that unlike many family archives its character is perhaps not that usually associated with a family ‘photo album’. It would seem my father’s motives were related less to the recording of family events and evidence instead his interest in aspects of the formal and pictorial qualities of

⁶ A programmatic automaticity that encourages the production of less critical images is a condition of photography discussed by Vilem Flusser. I use the term more literally in the sense that the optical properties of the camera coupled with the pictorial conventions of landscape photography and painting proceeding it tends to produce a rather predictable type of image. Vilem Flusser *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (Reaktion, London 2000)

⁷ At the time few photographs existed in the form of family albums. While something of a keen ‘amateur’ photographer many of my father’s photographs were in the form of slides. At some point during this period though, with much excited curiosity on my part, he set up a temporary darkroom and produced black & white prints.

photography.⁸ Many of the slides depict landscapes and the marked evidence of farming activity, there were also experiments with optical qualities of light and atmosphere. Surprisingly few contained people, other than farm labourers as incidental figures. There were however some memorable sets of images depicting notable events such as the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Aviation* air show at RAF Upavon in 1962.⁹ [figs 0.2/0.3]

Contained in these early photographs are some of the key characteristics of an environment that helped defined my childhood. Military aircraft were a significant feature in what was on reflection a curious juxtaposition of ancient landscape and futuristic Cold War technology. Also detectable is, I believe, something of my own future relationship with photography and formation of visual sensibilities. This will include an instinctive attraction to machines in the landscape, attention paid to context and what I now recognise as a non-hierarchical approach to composition. But the absence of contemporaneous documentation of the day-to-day events presents, in the context of memory, interesting questions about the use of photography in examining the past. As I hope my study will bear out, photography can prove a valuable tool, although the point to stress is that such an examination can include both the production of new photographs and looking at old ones. I will not be examining photographs of myself or specific moments I remember in order to confirm something that might already be known however. Led by memory, photographs instead perform a new mapping of a relationship to place and history. Alongside photographs made by my father are those collected from additional sources including images of places to which I have never been.

Through methods of photography and associated writing, the thesis I develop points towards the broader question of how we become aware of ourselves in space and time through the encounter with historical narratives encircling our

⁸ It is the case very few 'family photographs' exist of my parents, brothers and myself covering the period up until around my late teens at which point I left the family home anyway. While this may now seem slightly disappointing or unusual compared to other families, I do not believe it suggests anything untoward about our family relationship. Rather, maybe the argument could be made, as I imply in my account, that valued 'family photographs' as such do not necessarily have to contain images of family members. I will also strongly argue that I, personally, do not require photographs to maintain strong memories of my family including my departed mother. It is the case, however, that in his own photography my father has shown little interest in photographing people. With the advent of more automated and affordable snap-shot cameras, coincidentally at the time her sons were leaving home, my mother started taking photographs herself and in considerable quantity. There now exists many images of my brothers and I in adult life, as well as subsequent grandchildren, made on the occasions of family events and get-togethers. Also, one must not jump to conclusions. Looking through my father's sprawling archive now, indicates how later in life he took many photos of my mother and growing family of grandchildren. The one observation he now makes about young family life was that because at the time it was all happening in front of him he possibly did not always feel the need to record events. His own photography seems to have been as much about exploring the making images as it might have been a process of documentation.

⁹ This event took place on June 16th 1962, marking the 50th anniversary of the formation at RAF Upavon of the Royal Flying Corps, precursor to the Royal Air Force.

location. I consider this question in terms of a realisation of personal *historicity*: an individual search for historical authenticity formed in the relationship with landscape, images and objects gathered from the remembered environment of childhood. My thesis considers an historicity (or sense of becoming within historical time) constituted through a language of photography. This is not so much a language of recording where we are at any given moment and is one in which photographs are more the means by which to navigate, with adjustment, our position within a flow of time. Historicity is determined less by fixed coordinates but is a continuous recalculation among the flow's eddies. It is therefore less what photographs depict and more what may be revealed through our relationships with them which can be both subjective and less than passive.

Questions of historicity and our place in the world are not new. How we become aware of the world through the experience of time, memory and, in particular, language exercised some of the more significant European philosophical thinking of the first half of the 20th century, including that of Heidegger and Wittgenstein during a period of heightened concern about the nature of being.¹⁰ This was not intellectual enquiry of a rarefied theoretical kind but more reflective of a reality brought into sharp focus by war and the impact of technological modernism. It was one rooted in lived experience and the materiality of environment. Guiding my own enquiry towards these deeper philosophical questions is through one of the more idiosyncratic voices to emanate from the inter-world-war period: Walter Benjamin.

Although largely unrecognised during his short lifetime, since the 1970s Benjamin has posthumously come to be a considerable influence on the discourses of contemporary visual culture. In particular, his work on image reproduction is acknowledged as foreshadowing many of the established ideas in the discourses of contemporary photography. Interestingly though, in this instance, the means of entry to questions of historicity has not been provided by Benjamin's thinking about photography but his reflections on childhood. For Benjamin the past and memory were an emancipating force in a coming to terms with the tumult of the modern world. A world in which the narrative of history was no longer one of linear progress but of disruption, and in which time appears to give way to space.

¹⁰ For example Heidegger's *Being and Time* first published in 1927 and Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* published posthumously in 1953. For an account of the context in which Heidegger, Wittgenstein as well as Ernst Cassirer and Walter Benjamin became developers of new philosophical thinking in Europe during the early part of the 20th century see: Wolfram Eilenberger *Time of The Magicians: The Invention of Modern Thought 1919-1929* (Allen Lane, London 2020)

The critical point to Benjamin's childhood account is how he suggests the experience of childhood is lived out first not so much in history but through a haptic geography; exploring with eagerness the environment immediately at hand. He or she sees and touches the world before learning through reading words and hearing stories. The child lives in the here and now, free from the machinations of history that define the world around them. In due course history emerges as a space within which childhood is then situated and is further navigated throughout life. The possibilities of mystery can be carried forward from childhood to help inform an underlying premise that the certainty of memory and one's place in history are forever mutable.

Landscapes and the environments of childhood may be carried in memory throughout life as the source of identity and assurance. Yet, due to their richness of history, landscapes can also remain the object of curiosity as the extent of their meaning continues to be discovered. Contained in the desire to photograph the landscape of my childhood, to experience its apparent 'emptiness' is to a certain degree something of the counterfactual, or perhaps more accurately the counterintuitive. For however powerfully I may feel a presence of the past, by definition the past itself does not exist to be looked at. To be looking intently, or to immerse oneself 'in landscape' is to not become closer to a memory but to feel the distancing of time. At best all we have are suggestions made by the evidence of objects and traces, including photographs. We also have images in the mind as memories. But even at the moment we think or translate these images into written or visual form the past to which they refer is already absent.

Photographs of all kinds – those made by ourselves and those received – offer a tantalising promise of reexperiencing the remembered places, people, and moments of a previous time. Having the reputation of being the most mimetic of visual arts, providing apparently evidential truths, photography can be a seductively elegiac. Perhaps especially so if referring to the place of childhood. Despite this appealing quality, Roland Barthes reminds us that whatever a photograph may purport to be, it is not restoration of the past for us to visit.¹¹ The best a photograph can do is indicate a reality that may have previously existed. A reality that is no longer present in the *now* and is firmly attached to an ever-receding *then*.¹² It is a significant paradox how photographs

¹¹ "The photograph does not call up the past... The effect it produces upon me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time, by distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed." Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Vintage, London 1993 [1982]) 82-85

¹² Drawing upon Barthes' observations made in *Camera Lucida*, John Tagg argues the photograph's memetic quality is less a benefit and more a *burden*. As a consequence of its indexical quality, rather than the photograph itself, what

furnish an encounter with the past that occurs only in the experience of *now*. It is a characteristic that opens up various opportunities for critical enquiry of theoretical concepts and methods. In the inherent disjuncture between past and present is created a conceptual space in which history and practice are entangled. And this essential condition of photography is central to the theoretical and methodological development of my thesis. What at first presents itself as a function of conceptually passive observation becomes more a phenomenological attitude of action. It is a shift in emphasis from indexical methods of documentation and the informational to one of wider interaction with the mutable qualities of medium of photography itself.

In their promise of reaching to the past, photographs can be approached as artefacts and as instruments of enquiry. As such they assume a certain authenticity. Susan Sontag observes that photographic images are less “statements about the world” so much as “pieces of it” that are easily made and acquired.¹³ To collect photographs is to suggest a collecting the world and its history(s). This presents an interesting question for practice and the production of work regarding the distinction between generating new images and the use of pre-existing ones made by others. My own methodology includes both. Among the photographs used in my research are those acquired from a range additional sources as well as those taken by my father. All originating from the time of my childhood.

What interests me is how despite its indelible attachment to the past, when I contemplate a photograph as old as myself, it can seem curiously portentous of the time that has elapsed since. A photograph I generate today will also in turn yield to the passing of time and the anomalies of history and thought. From out of this subjective realm emerge further questions informing my study. If we accept that inherent qualities of photographs influence our understanding the past, how might they become the opportunity for reconsidering our relationship to the experience of time? How can a photographic practice self-consciously open up a personal past within a context of historical enquiry?

we tend to primarily see is the subject, of which evidential truths are demanded. John Tagg *The Burden of Representation: Essays of Photography and Histories* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1993 [1988]) The key passage in *Camera Lucida* to which Tagg refers: “The important thing is that the photograph possesses an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time. From a phenomenological viewpoint, in the photograph, the power of authentication exceeds its power of representation.” Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* ... 88-89

¹³ Susan Sontag *On Photography* (Penguin, London 1979) 4

Rather than literally look *at* the past, metaphorically at least we are perhaps more likely to look *into* the past; as if a spatial entity by which the past is not distance leading away from us but more a volumetric proximity for us to enter. It is a condition within which discoveries are to be made or puzzles to be solved. Material evidence in the form of objects and images offer means of entry and provide clues to what may have occurred. Such information however, will at best provide only a partial account requiring the need for speculation and possible invention. This becomes interesting given that history, the principal method of explaining the past is predicated on values of certainty and our memories we are often hesitant to doubt.

Reflection upon the happy memories of childhood, as Benjamin has shown, need not mean the sentimental act of nostalgia in reaction to a disenchantment with the world. Benjamin and many of his contemporaries were particularly exercised by a 'crisis of Modernism' acutely felt during the years following the First World War, and which was the preoccupation of cultural historians and artists alike. But, it has been recognised that Benjamin was less a cultural commentator and more an experimental participant. For Benjamin the past is not finished and the future open ended. Rather the past remains incomplete and its fruition is made possible in the present. The point being made is that embracing a return to childhood, is not the return to something assumed to be better but provide the necessary active agent for a wider enquiry into history's inconsistencies and any sense of vulnerability engendered.

Although its passing is unavoidable, childhood, in its many forms of experience, is a common possession for all of us. Proceeding with an examination of one's own story within the wider narratives of history is to acknowledge the simple claim that the world is not, and has never quite been, what it seems. (Or, as it is remembered.) Behind such a presupposition and attitude of approach will inevitably lead to questions concerning the hitherto unseen and unknown. In terms of a personal story, nothing sinister or dark need be inferred by this and, in fact can be a return to a re-energised sense of childhood curiosity and discovery. (Although, of course, readings of wider history can disrupt some of the more naïve assumptions about the world received during what is, for some of us, the comfort of youth.) Even with the factual promise of photographs, when it comes to what is absent we have to rely on the scope our imaginations of which an abundance can be found in childhood.

A practice motivated by reflection raises questions of representational strategy. Is the purpose one of systematic analysis by piecing together a defining image or the discursive exploration of its various elements? Is the aim to replicate an existing past or consciously speculate on alternative realities? Questions concerning the production and purpose of images have for a long time been central to the cognate fields of art history.¹⁴ It is a history also bound up with a parallel probing into material qualities of art objects and representational technique. Similar questions are applicable to more analytical 'scientific' disciplines including the one most commonly associated with examining the past: archaeology. For it is accepted that the subjective conditioning factors of a chosen pictorial device will mean a visual representation is never wholly transparent.¹⁵

¹⁴ For over half a century a standard reference on the theories of image and likeness, and certainly at the time I was an art student, has been Ernst Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* which was first published in 1960. E.H. Gombrich *Art and Illusion* (Phaidon, Oxford 1977)

¹⁵ Stephanie Moser and Sam Smiles eds. *Envisioning the Past: Archaeology and the Image* (Blackwell, Oxford 2005) 1-11



fig 0.1

Andrew Cross *Untitled* 2018

Photograph originated on large-format negative.

The view is from a location near Upavon Airfield looking south towards Netheravon airfield across a dry valley containing Chisenbury Field Barn, a cluster of former agricultural buildings repurposed for military training. In the far distance is Boscombe Down airfield and Bulford Down.



fig 0.2

From a 35mm colour slide taken by my father around February 1962. The view is north towards RAF Upavon on the horizon, across fields being prepared for cereal crops. This is farm activity that at the time my father was managing.



fig 0.3

From a 35mm colour slide taken by my father at the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* at RAF Upavon 16th June 1962. DH Sea Vixens of the Fleet Air Arm Aerobatic Display Team. I also attended the event as a fourteen-month old baby.

Image Ventriloquism

Even when its orientation may seem clear to the artist, behind the development of an art practice can be a considerable degree of imprecise curiosity and supposition. When the practice involves a personal narrative combining landscape with the subjectivity of childhood memory, there is also the great temptation to be romantic and indulgent. Directing the course of my study therefore, is the desire to give structure and greater scrutiny to a practice not dissimilar to the imaginative scope of childhood play. What Levi-Strauss might term the loose “bricolage” of speculative acts and intuitive gestures.¹⁶

The value of photography’s relationship to a personal historiography can be found not only in the recording of events but in photography’s heterogeneous conceptual and practical qualities. Within a single subjectivity, photography offers a range of methods and procedures with which to extend engagement with the meaning of a photographic image and significantly the “photographic object”. Artist/photographer James Welling notes how photography offers a “diverse vocabulary” that is actually “independent of subject” into which can be placed one’s “own voice”.¹⁷ Welling refers this vocabulary as *image ventriloquism*.¹⁸

This concept of image ventriloquism is central to how I understand my own practice and how it has developed within the context of this research. I believe it helps to answer the question I pose at the beginning of this introduction regarding a tendency of photography to render landscape into a unified image of contemplation. Any romantic attitude of my own is always set in context with the knowledge of how an agricultural or military landscape is not a singular pictorial construct, but a complexity of dynamics of production and mapping values. An image ventriloquism therefore, opens up the possibilities of employing more than one photographic method with which to clutch at, or to ‘excavate’ the multiple narratives contained within my landscape of childhood. Like archaeological artefacts photographs become opportunities to readjust memories and our relationship to the past.

¹⁶ I use the term ‘bricolage’ in reference to Levi Strauss’s concept of bricolage developed in *The Savage Mind*. Bricolage is the skill of using whatever is at hand and recombining them to generate something new and additional. Bricolage functions in parallel to the construction of mythological narrative whereby signs already in existence are used for purposes that were not necessarily intended. Claude Levi-Strauss *The Savage Mind* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1981 [1966]) 16-36

¹⁷ James Welling in conversation with Hal Foster in *James Welling: Metamorphosis* Exh. Cat. (Stedelijk Museum voor Kunst, Ghent/Kunstforum Wien 2017) 143

¹⁸ “when I discovered photography, I realized that it was the perfect ventriloquist’s medium. I could throw my voice into different sorts of pictures. I could speak in many different formal languages” James Welling Talks to Jan Tumor in Artforum (April 2003) 217 See also: Heike Eipledauer *James Welling the Ghost of Painting in Photography* in *James Welling: Metamorphosis* Exh. Cat. (Stedelijk Museum voor Kunst, Ghent, Kunstforum Wien 2017) 43

Many of photography's 'genres' and methods, notably landscape photography, exist as distinct and singular traditions that may tend to define an individual practice by geographical focus or recognised style. Crucially though, this need not be the case and a diverse practice like Welling's is evidence of a wider heterogeneity in which his own highly individual voice is not pinned down by any one identifiable photographic method or tradition. In giving any formal structure an otherwise apparently haphazard range of methods, an aim of my research, however, is not to define a mature individual style of photography. Rather it is to exercise through their operation a range of photographic possibilities reflecting diversity of landscape and childhood experience.

For some contemporary commentators the heterogeneity of photography is critical to an interplay between art and wider visual culture; reflected in a post-modern shift of conversation from how photographs are created to how they appear. David Campany who is also drawn to the idea of image ventriloquism notes that modern photographic art has been a continuity of language according to given conventions of picture making with increasingly the commandeering of pre-existing imagery.¹⁹ These two positions of creating *images of the world* and working with *the world of images* do not necessarily sit comfortably together and are often seen at variance, expressed as the distinction between *photographer* and *artist* who uses photographs.²⁰ Welling and Campany suggest both attitudes can be comfortably combined in an encompassing ventriloquist's voice.

With the help of Benjamin my thesis proposes that the particular vocalics of a varied photographic practice can be established in the memories of childhood and it is the habits and activities of childhood play that not only give character to a practice but also form the basis for an attitude of criticality. This study is therefore the mapping of a trail leading from points located across childhood to their comprehension, and manifestation now. Such varied photographic vocabulary can open up a looking and reaching into the past that places the traditions of landscape observation in a broader consideration of process. A phenomenology of *doing* in correspondence with observing through the principal childhood activities of collecting and making is significant. Memories are represented as images to be gathered, made and remade. What arises is a

¹⁹ David Campany *Image Ventriloquism and the Visual Primer* in *Thomas Ruff* Exh. cat. (Whitechapel Gallery, London 2017) 190

²⁰ Beginning his interview with James Welling [see: note 17] Hal Foster makes reference to the same distinction as an 'identity' which an artist like Welling emerging from Cal Arts in the mid 1970s had to make. The wider inference of the interview is that Welling successfully bridges both.

dynamic encompassing image montage of place and time, originating in the remembered past that continuously unfolds in the lived experience of now.

Rooted in the activities of childhood is the methodological framework for an opening up and expansion of photography's heterogenic qualities and subsequent subjectivity. Methods may range from actions 'in the field' to exploring physical properties of photographic print. It includes the generation of photographs and the collecting of photographs. There is also the fashioning of objects to be photographed and gathering of additional visual material. This is to suggest an engagement which is less passive contemplation and more a proactive attitude informed by process. It points towards a conceptual density and object materiality that is manifest in various methods and qualities of making. In other words, opening up the possibilities of seeing not only by looking but also by the implications of *touch*. This is to suggest an attitude of image ventriloquism facilitates the inflection of thinking rather than its summarization expressed in the singular moment of a photograph.²¹

Circumstance: gender, vocation, place, time.

Led by a practice seeking to invoke a condition of apprehension through the tangible form of images, my study is also the examination of a past through writing employed for theoretical analysis and as itself a practice of reflection. The aim is to demonstrate how contained in the memory of landscape and childhood can be the methodological framework for practice and for re-evaluating the historical circumstances in which childhood occurred. I place practice in the context of two main theoretical considerations. One is the methods of historical enquiry, notably the archaeological to which contemporary art has an established close relationship. The other applies to the environmental circumstance of early childhood. This life situation is examined through various qualities of landscape and its meaning. Weaving between these theoretical contexts and practice is the scope of childhood imagination and aspects of childhood play. Raymond Williams remarked that "we begin to think where we live."²² The place in which my own earliest thinking began was among familial comfort and a joyful rural isolation of Salisbury Plain. This is a landscape that comes furnished with its own romance of ancient

²¹ The thoughts I attempt to articulate here will be informed by a number of sources some of which appear later in this thesis. An important influence is again TJ Clark and his essay *Strange Apprentice* (see note 6) In the essay Clark draws attention to the remark attributed to Cezanne "Je Vois, par touches" (I see in touches...)

²² Raymond Williams *Culture is Ordinary* originally published in *Conviction* N. MacKensie ed. (MacGibbon & Kee, London 1958) 74

history and mysticism. I was there because my parents were farmers, so from the time I was born a certain pragmatic attitude to landscape was formed. Much of Salisbury Plain is also used for military training. When first becoming aware of the world around me I was surrounded by the evidence of military activity both in the air and on the ground. This military presence became the source of youthful fascination for its technology, especially aircraft. At the time, my relationship to landscape was not through a conscious attachment to its natural qualities. As I understood it, landscape was a setting for the operation of certain machines. Very similar to how I played with toys on my bedroom floor.

The story that is emerging is one, it has to be acknowledged, that is noticeably gendered: the fascination with machines, the suggestion of warfare and exploration of scale in the landscape and on the bedroom floor, the role of my father and his photographs. As well as military activity, mechanised agriculture also tends slanted in the same direction of maleness. Such a gendered formation represented itself through particular objects and activities that were attractive to a young boy and readily available to him. A premise of my research is the question of how individual circumstances can influence historiographic methods. It is an encounter with the past through practice that can reframe the circumstance of childhood in context of continuous re-evaluation throughout later life. In later life an attitude towards these particular childhood reference points may therefore become more circumspect.

This reframing, I believe, reveals a range of vulnerabilities to which any reflective practice, if it is to be of value in the context of contemporary discourse, has to become sensitive, including questions of social formation and cultural identity. While cognisant of such questions and their implications, my study however, is not the specific examination of gendered formation through an exercise of post-analytical social critique. To draw attention to a specific gendered condition, for example to speculate on the alternative childhood for a young girl in the same situation, would present a very different proposition and direction to my research. It is a direction not unfamiliar to me, although in this instance I am guided along an alternative path.

Undeniably my reflection is heavily informed by my parent's vocation in farming for which my father was a pivotal figure. His photographs equally significant. Although less documented, the presence of my mother is also

considerable, as it would be in the case of many farming families.²³ Even if the key reference points of the written history are gendered, the underlying language of experience, as the novels of Thomas Hardy can suggest, may be more nuanced.²⁴ It is possible the context of landscape and agricultural life is too richly complex and multi-layered to apply a singularly ‘traditionally’ gendered narrative account. At the time of childhood, with my attention noticeably drawn to tractors and aeroplanes, I may have been less aware how my character was being equally informed by a balance existing between nature and agriculture understood through a close relationship to domesticated animals, and the seasonal cycles of flora, fauna and weather. A reading of which can be considered more poetic than pragmatic and one with which both my mother and father were very conversant. The distinction between machine and nature, however, is not necessarily a gendered experience as indicated by the childhood account of ‘nature’ writer Richard Mabey.²⁵

Yet, despite the rural idyll of my childhood this was 1960s, the time of Prime Minister Harold Wilson’s ‘white heat’ of technology and a period when the heroics of the Second World War occupied the imaginations of young boys. My childhood was one of wonderment and desire to understand a modern and futuristic world as it presented itself not only in comics or ‘Boys Own’ picture books but the fields and skies around me. Benjamin’s experience demonstrates it is a coming to terms which begins in childhood and continues throughout adult life. While it is tempting to think of the memories of childhood as somewhat unique, as with other periods of one’s life they are not experienced in total isolation. Moreover, while these memories are rooted in the past, they continue to reverberate and are experienced in the present. In common with otherwise seemingly isolated and unexceptional lives at the time, every day events of a farm-based upbringing on Salisbury Plain rubbed up against much bigger historical circumstances. As with many during the late 1960s, my childhood was one inflected by the technological and cultural modernity of the

²³ My mother and father met at the Reading University in 1950. My mother studying Dairy Production and my father Agriculture. My father informs me that at the time Reading University was somewhat unique among the ‘red-brick’ universities in being approximately 50/50 co-ed. However, although women were training to enter agriculture more broadly there were encouraged to do study the more specialist Dairy Production – deemed to be more appropriately women’s work - and it was overwhelmingly men who studied Agriculture per se. Unfortunately, I did not take the opportunity to ask my mother her opinions on this before she passed away in 2013.

²⁴ I refer to the character of Bathsheba in *Far From The Madding Crowd*. Although perhaps not documented as much as it should be, it is recognised that women, and children, were heavily involved in farm labour certainly prior to the mechanisation of agriculture. A number of contemporary women farmers also write about their experiences including Amanda Owen and Novella Carpenter or women (romantic) authors like Catherine Friend and Suzanne McMinn who have become drawn to farming. See also Agnes R. Quisumbing, Ruth Meinzen-Dick et al. eds. *Gender in Agriculture: Closing the Knowledge Gap* (Springer, Berlin/New York 2014)

²⁵ Richard Mabey *A Good Parcel of English Soil* (Penguin, London 2013)

Cold War and the 'space race' along with the 'revolutions' of youth and consumer culture.

Bookended by the first manned space flight and the Apollo moon landings my early childhood was one of technological imaginings.²⁶ Born less than twenty years since the end of the Second World War I was very much part of what Geoff Dyer refers to as the *Airfix Generation*; a generation of young British boys who believed in mechanised supremacy and whose experience of war and technology was through constructing plastic model kits.²⁷ [fig 0.4] My Youthful curiosity was not furnished by the natural environment but by the made-made activity on display. With availability of detailed toys, a fascination with technology, the experience of play interacted directly with adult worlds of agriculture and military training. Particularly in the air, technology is also a means of connecting to the world as it reaches to the horizon, and beyond.

With a youthful fascination for military technology comes something of an ambivalence born of relative security and innocence. The thrill experienced catching sight of a silver jet aircraft - to marvel at its futurism - is easily indulged while remaining reasonably uninformed, or not fully understanding of wider implications.²⁸ The drama of a tank or combine harvester blocking the road is received with equal excitement. Later, through the political awakening of teenage and early adulthood a moral stance will be developed that is antithetical to notions of warfare. Yet, while being much more critically informed, that sense of guiltless technological wonderment is never quite lost.

The title of my study, "In The Beginning And Always" is borrowed from the Latin motto attached to RAF Upavon. This is a place and a history, situated literally and metaphorically at the centre of my childhood story.²⁹ During the 1960s, my father was farm manager of 3500 acres of land adjacent to the aerodrome and leased from the British Army.³⁰ [figs 0.5 & 0.6] Rich in

²⁶ I was born April 14th 1961, two days after Yuri Gagarin's historic space flight. The last Apollo moon landing was in December 1972.

²⁷ Geoff Dyer *Airfix Generation in Anglo-English Attitudes: Essays, Reviews and Misadventures 1984-99* (Canongate, London 2013) 141 - 148

²⁸ For further account of how during the post-Second World War British aviation industry was the subject of national public pride see: James Hamilton-Paterson *Empire of The Clouds: When Britain's Aircraft Ruled the World* (Faber & Faber, London 2010)

²⁹ Opened in 1912 Upavon Aerodrome was the first airfield established by the newly formed Royal Flying Corps which subsequently became the Royal Airforce in 1918. For many years Upavon was home the Central Flying School. During the 1960s it was an administrative headquarters for RAF Air Transport Command. Although remaining an active airfield the RAF ceased operations at Upavon in 1993 and the airfield handed over to the Army for use as an administrative centre. The airfield remains the home of the Wyvern Army Gliding Club. Ron Priddle *Wings Over Wiltshire* (ALD, Sheffield 2003) 311-337

³⁰ As manager of Upavon Farms from 1962 - 1971 my father worked on behalf of the notable local land-owning farmer Barry Wookey who leased the land and various properties from the then War Department (later the Ministry of

mythology and the traces of settlement over the millennia, since the beginning of the 20th century much of Salisbury Plain has also been the UK's largest military training area.³¹ This is a physical landscape conditioned by a geopolitical context of which at the time of childhood I would have been, at the most, only superficially cognisant.

Bridget Kendall notes that anyone counting themselves as one of the Cold War generation is likely to have some vivid recollection associated with “that strange, strained era”. For those of us fortunate to remain untouched by devastating conflicts and spasms of brutal repression, the Cold War was something of an ethereal backdrop to our lives “neither war nor peace but something running dimly in the background, hidden in twilight hues, in between”.³² At the time of a happy, untroubled childhood, I would later learn that on Salisbury Plain the military preparations for geopolitical tensions and re-orderings were being played out around me.

In acts of remembering, what may start as something seemingly individual and localised can quickly develop into an historically multi-layered and geographically dispersed investigation. For example, how the pleasurable childhood memory of an aircraft in the summer sky over rural Southern England can be placed in direct relationship to a significant and yet largely overlooked problematic moment of British post-colonial military disengagement in the Middle East and what was the mysterious name of Aden.³³ As an exercise in historical evaluation, my study does not attempt to resolve the ideological tensions and moral contradictions that might inhabit these memories. Rather than reflect upon history from the position of moral certainty, the intention is keep questions of history open and active by revisiting them from the perspective of childhood curiosity and impulse. The point being argued is that that a fondness for remembered childhood and a questioning of historicity are not mutually exclusive. Being proposed is an ethics of practice that does not presuppose a knowledge of truth but

Defence.) The house in which we lived was military owned and maintained, although my father (or my mother) did not work for the Army.

³¹ The Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA) covers an area of around 38,000 ha of Wiltshire bordered by Tidworth in the East and Warmminster and the Wylie Valley to the West Lavington and the Vale of Pewsey to the North and Amesbury to the South.

³² Bridget Kendall *The Cold War* (BBC, London 2017) xii

³³ I refer specifically to the ‘Aden Emergency’ of 1963-67, which marks the rather ignominious conclusion to British colonial rule of the South Arabian Peninsula since 1839. The port of Aden had been a key point on Britain’s trade routes with India and the Far East. During the Second World War and early Cold War the RAF established a major strategic airbase at RAF Khormaksar for its Near East and Far East operations. The ‘Emergency’ began in 1962 with a nationalist uprising in the Aden protectorate (now part of Yemen.) The escalation of events hastened the end to British rule and military presence with final withdrawal taking place in November 1967. See: Peter Hinchcliffe, John T Ducker & Maria Holt *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat from Aden* (I.B. Tauris London 2013) Jonathan Walker *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in South Arabia 1962-67* (Spellmount, Staplehurst 2005)

recognises the possibilities of contingency and the yet to be discovered; a condition that can have both creative potential and political purpose.

Of particular interest is how historical reflection can enable a re-evaluation of the past and re-negotiation with its memory. It is a question of method in which practice becomes both part of the memory making process as well as its scrutiny. As an example, through the collecting of photographs additional narratives may become attached to places and events not directly witnessed. Incorporating supplementary photographs can extend the scope of what is both remembered and historically examined. This is engaging the past from points that are uncertain and remain ambiguous. Photographs are not used to confirm how something is already believed to have been but lead to the re-discovery and re-adjustment of what is known. Implied by this attitude is a recognition of the possible dissonance inherent to art. Its pleasure not found in a resolution of harmony but in a continuous ambiguity of intuitive desire and impersonal rigor, recognition and misrecognition, questioning and disappointment. Harmony remains ideal but as Adorno pointed out, harmony “proves unreachable according to its own logic”.³⁴ Part of art’s appeal is through a relationship to the idea of history that is forever unstable. Art insists upon continual adjustment to the divergences of history.

Development of my study has required a necessary weaving of practice and theory; doing and thinking, producing visual statements and writing. The process is a co-ordination of the formal and discursive, the strategic and intuitive. There has also been the threading of autobiography into historical narrative; a collapsing of past and present into an overall attitude of reflexivity and analysis. In doing so I propose an encounter between practice and theory that opens up possibilities for both. Enabling wider critical understanding of practice and giving tangible form to theory. In this regard my study is not the analysis of completed artworks but the investigation of origins: how a relationship between doing and thinking leads to the realisation of new works. In turn it is the question of how such works can generate meaning that hitherto may not be realised. My study therefore, is not the attempt to find definitive meaning to any given outcome. Methods and purpose may become better understood but the bricolage from which my practice emerged remains essentially undisturbed; existing as a language of things which according to Levi-Strauss is spoken through “the medium of things”.³⁵ The nature of

³⁴ Theodor W. Adorno *Aesthetic Theory* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1997) 110. Quoted in Christopher S. Wood *A History of Art History* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, Oxford 2019) 6

³⁵ Claude Levi-Strauss *The Savage Mind* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1981 [1966]) 21

encounter with landscape and memory through photographs cannot be fully resolved. Rather, in the methods of practice, is the origination of value and meaning that by definition are forever curious and evolving.³⁶

³⁶ While writing my thesis I have been mindful of remarks made by Paul Winstanley “Many artists avoid commenting on their own art for fear that it might tie them down to a single position or point of view, or narrow the possibilities for the interpretation or use of their work ... so why do it? First there is much to say that often does not get said... Second, the knowledge that the creative endeavour is a process of engagement that lasts one’s entire working life, for good or for bad, is best understood by the individual who pursues and endured it. What an artist should never do when writing about their work is attempt to interpret or give meaning to it; only the viewer can do that, bringing his or her own experience and requirements to bear. But the artist can describe this ongoing engagement in all its aspects.” Paul Winstanley *59 Paintings* (Art/Books, London 2018) 7



fig 04

Box cover art for 1/72 scale Airfix kit of the De Haviland Beaver. The kit was first issued in 1971 just after our family moved from Wiltshire to Oxfordshire. I have a very clear memory of a DH Beaver of the Army Air Corps, similar to the one depicted here, flying low over the family home in Wiltshire. The AAC was based at Middle Wallop south of Salisbury and AAC aircraft including the Beaver and helicopters would regularly fly low along the Avon valley. The box art shown here is from one of the original 1971 kits and is in the classic 'red-stripe' design of the late 1960s. The artist for nearly all of the 'red-stripe' paintings was Roy Cross.

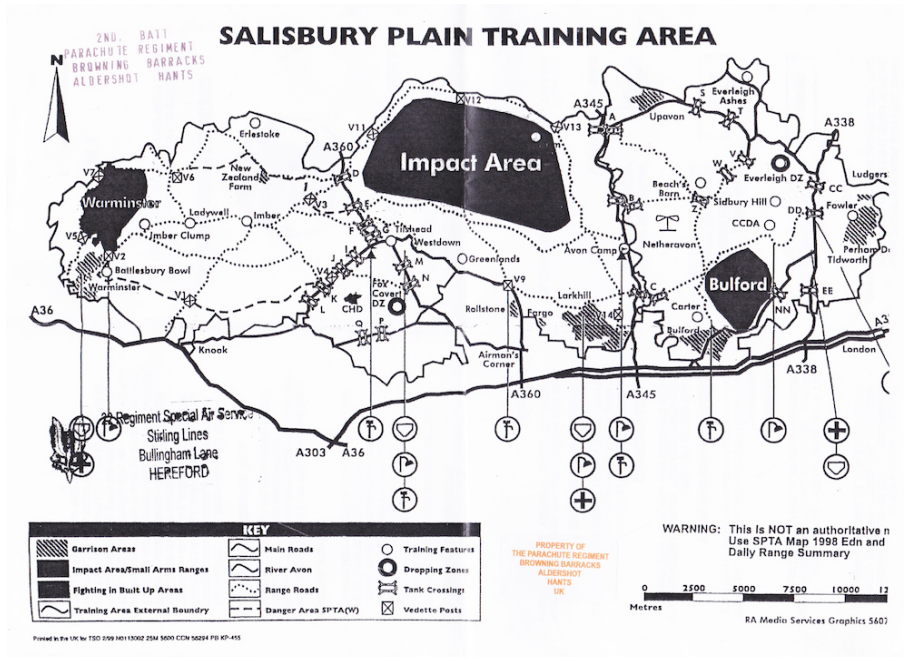


fig 0.5

An A4 sized paper 'Aide Memoire' map of the Salisbury Plain Training Area issued for army personnel in 1999. Upavon is located top right edge of the area.

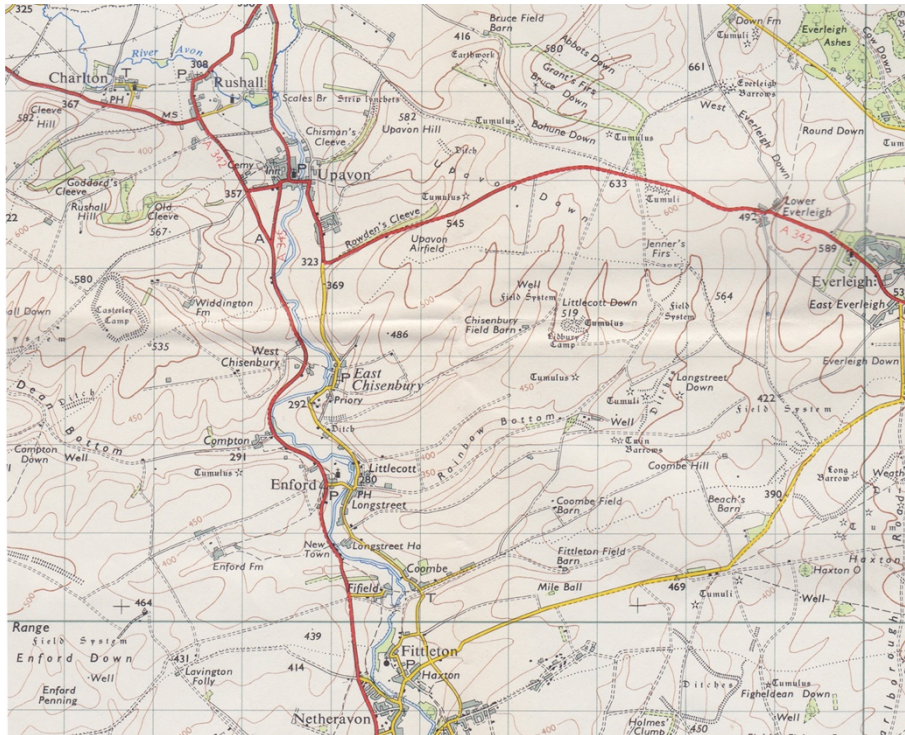


fig 0.6

A detail from Ordnance Survey One-Inch Map:
Sheet 167 Salisbury. Published 1960.

The selected area is centred on the landscape most familiar to me as a child. My family lived at Littlecott Farm located on the (yellow) minor road between the villages of Enford and East Chisenbury. The area of farm land my father managed was mostly to the east of this road extending from Enford northwards to Upavon Hill. To the east the area extended as far as Littlecott Down. The main yard for the farm was located at the Village of Upavon. Although not drawn in any detail, the location of RAF Upavon is indicated by 'Upavon Airfield'.

Childhood

Childhood memory is the inspiration behind significant examples of contemporary literature and cultural production; much of it constructed around semi-autobiographical content. It is easy to think of Dennis Potter's television production *The Singing Detective* (1986) and its lead protagonist Philip Marlow perched high in the trees of the playwright's native Forest of Dean.³⁷ From his vantage point Phillip observes the world around him and ruminates on the future that lies beyond the edge of the Forest. In his novel *Austerlitz* (2001) WG Sebald explores a journey back into a distant and mostly forgotten childhood employing a narrative that is structured around places and photographs.³⁸ Both writers highlight the potential of complex narrative drawn from childhood memory. Of particular appeal is how their work can be multi-layered and chronologically pliable, as well as being expressed through disjunctive forms of visual imagery.³⁹

Potter's use of autobiographical experience is often the vehicle for exploration of how an isolated community like that of the Forest of Dean experiences the rapidly changing social environment of the Post-War period aided by the arrival of pop culture and television. Offered on late-night television during the late 1970s, Potter's plays, elicited considerable curiosity the transition through teens towards adulthood, and it would be tempting to establish further relationship with Potter's work. His value in understanding the development of my own practice is less than certain.

The autobiographical writing of Walter Benjamin however, provides a distinctly philosophical reflection on the historical understanding of environment, technology and childhood play. Although he does not excite the intrigue of someone like Potter or any perfected work like *Blue Remembered Hills* (1979) or *The Changing Forest* (1962),⁴⁰ the value of Benjamin is found in an accumulation of short essays, aphorisms, and sparks of poetic insight. Rooted

³⁷ Dennis Potter *The Singing Detective* (BBC Television 1987)

³⁸ WG Sebald *Austerlitz* (Randon House, London 2001)

³⁹ My earlier research included a focus on Potter and Sebald. I see *The Singing Detective* and *Austerlitz* offering two counter trajectories of narrative. Potter's is a projection forward into adulthood from moments in childhood and Sebald's the rediscovery in adulthood of forgotten moments of childhood. Each writer provides a perspective of the Second World War when they were both young children; Potter in England and Sebald in Germany. My interest in Potter is also in how he uses the particular character of the Forest of Dean where he spent his childhood as the setting for many of his stories. Sebald also deals with notions of place and he also constructs 'new' places and narratives through the collecting of anonymous photographs. See: Glen Creeber *The Singing Detective: A Critical Reading of the Series* (BFI, London 2007) Humphrey Carpenter *Dennis Potter: The Authorized Biography* (Faber & Faber, London 1998) W. Stephen Gilbert *Fight & Kick & Bite: The Life & Work of Dennis Potter* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1995) Carol Jacobs *Sebald's Vision* (Columbia, New York 2015) Eric Downing *Bildung, Archaeology and Photography in W.G. Sebald in Photography, Archaeology, Psychoanalysis and the Tradition of Bildung* (Wayne State University, Detroit 2006) 271-309

⁴⁰ Dennis Potter *Blue Remembered Hills* (BBC Television 1979) *The Changing Forest* (Vintage, London 1996 [1962])

in the material fabric of everyday life his philosophical method is manifest through a delight in writing that encompasses the anecdotal and playful. If one overlooks the potentially suffocating cultural weight the precedes the name of Walter Benjamin, on offer is a veritable and almost unlimited toy-chest of elements from which to pick and re-deploy for one's own purposes.

The focus of interest is on Benjamin's series of closely related texts that can be referred to as the *Berlin Writing*.⁴¹ These are: *One-way Street* (1925-26), *Berlin Chronicle* (1932) and *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* (1934)⁴² In these works Benjamin gives articulation to questions concerning the "biographical historicity of the individual" in relation to the more "enigmatic" questions of history.⁴³ Exiled in Paris during the turmoil of 1930s Europe, as the intellectual milieu of which he is part becomes dispersed, he identifies the source of his own sense of historicity located in his memory of childhood at the turn of 20th century.

It has been observed by some scholars, including Esther Leslie, that Benjamin recognised how the world of childhood play is never far from world affairs.⁴⁴ Across the wider extent of his work, Benjamin regularly wrote about children's literature and toys. Childhood is frequently referenced as he speculates on the question of how the self-in-the-present can be understood by re-examining the past in which the self was formed. It is in the imaginative scope of childish play Benjamin proposes that clues to the self's understanding of the social and historical can be found.

Benjamin explores a world of described through dialectic tensions between the old and the new, the past and the present, the near and the far, the tangible and the imagined, the ordered and the chaotic. These tensions are acutely felt in the experience of the child. Benjamin's vision of 20th century modernism arises out of recollection invested in the physical and remembered environment of childhood. Of particular value is how the method of his later writing helps to suggest an exploration of childhood memory through visual practice. It is possible to identify in Benjamin's childhood experience the activities of observing and making. In addition to the *Berlin Writing* Two further

⁴¹ The term *Berlin Writing* is used by David Darby in *Photography, Narrative, and the Landscape of Memory in Walter Benjamin's Berlin* in *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* Vol 75 no 3 (2000) 210-225

⁴² *One Way Street* in Walter Benjamin *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (NLB, London 1979) 45-106, *Berlin Chronical* in Walter Benjamin *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (NLB, London 1979) 293-348 *Berlin Childhood around 1900* trans. Howard Eiland (Harvard, Cambridge MA 2006)

⁴³ Walter Benjamin *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928) Quoted here from Craig Owens *The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Post-Modernism* October Vol 12 (Spring 1980) 70-71

⁴⁴ Sam Dolbear, Esther Leslie, Sebastian Truskolaski eds. Introduction to *Walther Benjamin: The Storyteller* (Verso, London 2016) xxvii

texts that receive attention are *The Storyteller* (1936) which links the pedagogic value of stories with the crafting of objects, and the earlier *Unpacking my Library* (1931) which celebrates the activities of collecting.

Benjamin's account of childhood becomes manifest through a layered, composite of imagery that in turn reflects the palimpsest character of memory. Benjamin provides a valuable model for a philosophical-poetic mode of writing that is distinctly visual and allegorical in character. It is a method granting considerable licence in which "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else".⁴⁵ The child is not only curious observer but central protagonist, physically and conceptually interacting with the environment around them. Howard Eiland, translator of *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, suggests that Benjamin is making a case for memory that is more than psychological and is fundamentally ontological.⁴⁶ Arising out of his childhood reflections Benjamin develops a distinct historiographical method. Underlying concepts of temporality offer an alternative to a continuity of historical progress in which fragmented images or objects of memory are remade into historical moments of fulfilment. He once commented that childhood memories are not "narratives in the form of a chronicle but ... individual expeditions in the depths of memory."⁴⁷

In developing his spatial conceptualisation of memory Benjamin evokes the archaeological. Memory is characterized as a "medium" in which strict chronology is not so important. Also referred to as a "theatre", within this layered space of volumetric depth architectural features and technological objects become things that have significant roles in articulating the historical narratives interconnecting coordinates of time and place. Memory, Benjamin informs us, is not "an instrument" for exploring the past and suggests it is more a spatial entity of experience in which the past is permanently contained waiting to be 'excavated' just as the earth is the "medium in which ancient cities lie buried." Drawing out the metaphor, he emphatically declares that "He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging".⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Walter Benjamin *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928) Quoted here from Craig Owens *The Allegorical Impulse ...* 70-71 This is the principle of the monad, or totality refracted into its constituent elements each of which, however insignificant is capable of reflecting the whole. See Frederic Jameson *The Benjamin Files* (Verso London/New York 2020) 7-8, 238

⁴⁶ Howard Eiland *Translator's Foreword* in Walter Benjamin *Berlin Childhood...* xii

⁴⁷ Walter Benjamin *Letter to Gersham Scholem September 26 1932* quoted by Howard Eiland *Translator's Foreword* in Walter Benjamin *Berlin Childhood ...* xi

⁴⁸ Walter Benjamin *Excavation and Memory* in *Selected Writings Vol 2* eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith (Harvard, Cambridge MA & London 1996) 576

Archaeology

One could suggest that the manner in which we examine photographs has something inherently archaeological about it. Indeed, significant scholarly attention has been given to this particular quality, including the work of Kitty Hauser and Frederick Bohrer.⁴⁹ Although by definition photographs cannot fully offer up the past, like the objects they depict, photographs in themselves offer a means of examining the past almost as if one might be looking directly at it. But for any claim of their objectivity photographs also create a conceptual space in which the subjective operates. What Hauser refers to as the “archaeological imagination”.⁵⁰

Being drawn to the archaeological may seem inevitable for a practice that pays attention the landscape of Salisbury Plain. Even in the context of military history, the area’s archaeology remains unavoidable⁵¹ It is also interesting how the history of modernist English art, from Paul Nash to Richard Long, is frequently peppered with reference the chalk landscape and archaeology of Southern England.⁵² Notions of the archaeological, including Benjamin’s metaphor, extend their influence more widely throughout the discourses of post-modernism and since the 1970s, many hybrid visual art practices. The 2013 exhibition *The Way of The Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary In Art* staged by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a good representation of a manifestly retrospective quality and wider historiographic sensibility.⁵³

The archaeological can easily conjure a romantic image of digging the earth, and gathering detritus, which has been adopted many times since Robert

⁴⁹ Kitty Hauser *Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology & the British Landscape 1927-1955* (Oxford University Press 2007) Frederick N. Bohrer *Photography and Archaeology* (Reaktion, London 2011)

⁵⁰ Kitty Hauser *Shadow Sites...* 30-56

⁵¹ There is the paradoxical manner in which the Ministry of Defence finds itself the ‘custodian’ of a very high concentrations of ancient earthworks as well as flora and fauna of specialist interest. At around 38,000 ha The Salisbury Plain Training Area now constitutes the largest area of ‘unimproved’ chalk grassland in North West Europe and contains approximately 23,000 ‘ancient monuments’. 20,000 ha are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. “It is evident that the high level of preservation of ancient earthworks in this area is a direct result of its acquisition for military training. [...] Paradoxically, the presence of the very organization that – albeit unintentionally – safeguarded the archaeology dissuaded the archaeological community a large from seeking access.” Rory Canham, Wiltshire County Archaeologist in Foreword to *The Field Archaeology of The Salisbury Plain Training Area* David McOmish, David Field, Graham Brown eds. (English Heritage, Swindon 2002) Such apparent contradictions and coexistence between military training and landscape conservation are central to the research of Rachel Woodward. See: Rachel Woodward, Professor of Human Geography, Newcastle University. See: Rachel Woodward *Military Landscapes: agendas and approaches to future research in Progress in Human Geography* Vol 38 No 1 (February 2014) 40-61, *Khaki Conversation: an examination of military environmentalist discourses in the British Army in Journal of Rural Studies* 17 (2001) 201-217

⁵² A good example is Paul Nash’s painting *Equivalents for the Monoliths* 1935 (Tate London) Nash also photographed the standing stones of Avebury. Two early works by Richard Long include *Silbury Hill* 1971 and *Cerne Abbas Walk* 1975 (Both Tate, London.) See also: Alexandra Harris *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (Thames & Hudson, London 2010)

⁵³ *The Way of The Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary* Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago November 9 2013 – March 9 2014

Smithson's seminal projects of the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁵⁴ In defining, an archaeological 'turn', in contemporary art, curator Dieter Roelstraete, places emphasis on forms of 'fieldwork' similar to those associated with the traditional practices of archaeology coupled with a fascination for the materiality of objects including outmoded forms of analogue technology.⁵⁵ But, is the materiality of fieldwork and discarded artefacts too literal an interpretation? Surely it is possible to suggest there is more at stake than metaphor and something more profound in the material evidence that the practices of an archaeology may uncover.⁵⁶

Among the discourses of contemporary archaeology is recognition that the materiality of objects is insufficient itself to generate a meaningful archaeology. The value of archaeological data - the material 'finds' - is contingent upon what is asked of it. A search may be made for something believed to already exist, but true discoveries are made from fluctuating interplay between different patterns of knowledge and question.⁵⁷ What gives photographs their archaeological quality, is very much the same.⁵⁸ The displacement of the past *then* and the present *now* offers a particular archaeological way of understanding the past.

An interesting feature of *The Way of The Shovel* is how the past (or pasts) in many cases extends not much further than the lifetimes of the artists concerned. To explain this contemporary focus, Roelstraete points to a search for meaning in response to historical uncertainties and technological shifts of a post-Cold-War and post-9/11 era. Following the historical stalemate engendered by the Cold-War, historical time appears again to be urgent. Visual artists are training their attention to such over-arching historical perspectives that have shaped the world in which they currently live and may have directly influenced their own individual pasts. However, the historical and temporal axes that have arisen are no longer unified like the binary opposition of the

⁵⁴ Robert Smithson features heavily in the essays accompanying *The Way of The Shovel* as do images of artists with shovels.

⁵⁵ Dieter Roelstraete *Field Notes in Way of The Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary* (MCA, University of Chicago Press 2013) 15 *The Way of The Shovel* is a more tangible development of an essay of the same title Roelstraete wrote for the on-line publication *e-flux journal*. (spring 2009) A sequel essay *After the Historiographic Turn: Current Findings* was also published in *e-flux journal* (summer 2009). A version was published to accompany an exhibition Roelstraete curated in 2010 for the Ursula Blickle Stiftung, Kraichtal Germany entitled *The Archaeologists*.

⁵⁶ Susan Alcock offers an expanded critique of the archaeological metaphor. Archaeology and memory are two concepts easily bound by metaphor - the burying of memories and subsequent digging down to recover them - that can distract from the hard evidence of archaeological data. Susan Alcock *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments and Memories* (Cambridge University Press 2002)

⁵⁷ Richard Morris *Time's Anvil: England, Archaeology and the Imagination* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 2012) 15

⁵⁸ "...the ground is often a bit like photographic film, registering certain things regardless of their importance." Morris *Time's Anvil ... 12*

Cold War but irregular, overlapping and of varying trajectories. In this context defining artists' retrospection is an increasing hybridisation of practice coupled with post-modern critical discourses that had already begun to challenge the teleological hegemony of 20th century modernist history.⁵⁹

Place and Memory

Salisbury Plain can seem a somewhat unique, timeless and spiritual place. Places, however, are not a fixed entity. Doreen Massey reminds the very notion of place is constructed out of articulations of natural and social relations.⁶⁰ Places arise out of the histories attached to them and critically the way in which these histories are told. And one may conclude from this the way we might individually tell stories to ourselves? Revisiting after many years, it is possible to vividly recall that young child who used to spend much of his time in the landscape observing and dreaming the technological world around him.⁶¹ A sentimentality of childhood can be easily satisfied. As the object of detached contemplation, framed through the lens of a camera it would be easy to treat the landscape romantically.

The romance of the past is a condition Benjamin was very aware of when writing *Berlin Childhood* and sought to limit through "insight" into the "social irretrievability" of the past.⁶² The landscape or environment of childhood is not merely a backdrop to what is remembered. Like the histories of place, a landscape is an articulation of various social and pragmatic relations of which agriculture and warfare are very particular examples. Informing my thesis is an expanded concept of the environment in which childhood is remembered. A childhood landscape that becomes a *site* combining physical topography, objects and imaginative dream-space. This environment is very much what I believe Benjamin identifies as a montage of fragmented images and surfaces, many of which are subsequently mediated through photographs and other forms of representation. In this regard the landscape of childhood could be considered not as something physically discrete and separate to the self but more as phenomenological attachment.

⁵⁹ In providing further expansion of Roelstraete's key point about post Cold-War history I found very useful Jan Verwoert *Living With Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art*, Art & Research Vol 1, No 2 (Summer 2007) reproduced in Ian Farr ed. *Memory* (Whitechapel/MIT, London 2012) 146-154

⁶⁰ Doreen Massey *Places and Their Pasts* History Workshop Journal, Issue 39 (1995) 182-192

⁶¹ See: Interlude 1 *Aeroplane* and Interlude 2 *Blackburn Beverley*

⁶² Walter Benjamin *Berlin Childhood around 1900* ... 37

My own landscape of childhood includes a variety of physical spaces ranging from the topography of chalk Downs and agriculture of fields to the domestic interior of the home and play space of the bedroom floor. For the child, fields and rooms are not only physical spaces but, as Gaston Bachelard recognised they are also phenomenological spaces for daydreaming in which the imagined perceptions of scale expand and contract beyond an empirical reality.⁶³ Manifest in childhood play, in visual art or the written word a landscape can be very much a 'state of mind'.⁶⁴

More than a single entity, a remembered landscape of childhood is the spatial and temporal reconfiguration of multiple points of reference. A collection of places, objects, images and events that are not defined by one single narrative but vested with various shifting memories and histories which will be both individual and collective. What historian Pierre Nora might refer to as 'Les Lieux de Memorie' (Sites of Memory), these are situations yet to be fully realised and have potential to condense historical meaning.⁶⁵ During childhood, many remembered events will be personal and localised: exploring open fields with siblings and friends, or the playing with toys on a bedroom floor. Other events, like Neil Armstrong stepping onto the moon, watched on television in the depth of night time, will have been the knowing participation in something shared with multitudes and profoundly far-reaching.

As an academic discipline archaeology tends to be associated with histories beyond the scope of memory and if recent archaeological thinking involves memory it tends to be at the cultural level addressing questions of origins.⁶⁶ In the context of visual art archaeology is emphasised through the materiality of practice. Expanding the conceptual scope of the archaeological and offering a useful bridging between cultural and personal memory; between historical analysis and biographical experience, is the research method of *memory work*. Originating in feminist social theory based on written personal accounts, memory work has broadened into a wider challenge to more conventional research practices of historical evaluation.⁶⁷ Annette Kuhn describes memory

⁶³ Gaston Bachelard *The Poetics of Space* (Beacon Press, New York 1994[1969]) In particular the sections *The House* 3-37 *Intimate Immensity* 183-210

⁶⁴ Christopher Neve *Unquiet Landscape: Places and Ideas in 20th-Century British Painting* (Thames & Hudson, London 2020 [1990]) 11

⁶⁵ Pierre Nora *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire* in *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989)

⁶⁶ This is implied by Roelstraete with, as an example, the collective responses among contemporary artists to the Soviet era, and outmoded technology. Dieter Roelstraete *Field Notes in Way of The Shovel ...*

⁶⁷ Memory-work is cited as being first developed by Frigga Haug in 1987. See: Jenny Onyx, Jennie Small, *Memory Work: The Method* in *Qualitative Inquiry* Vol 7 (no 6 2001) 773-786. A recent example of its use in wider historical research is in relation to the historical re-evaluation of the technology of warfare and the conference *Places of Progress* hosted by Technische Universität Braunschweig/Museum Peenemunde. September 2019. A paper based on my thesis was delivered as part of the conference.

work as the process through which memory becomes the raw material for creating narratives about our past. It is the telling of stories, through various means including photographs, that become a key element in the “making of ourselves”. Significantly, such “narratives of identity” are very much determined by the contexts in which they are set and the methods by which they are told.⁶⁸

Memory work does not possess the same metaphorical or romantic appeal of an archaeological dig. There is no discernible aesthetic style, although memory work does have its own “modes of expression” characterized by qualities we recognise in Benjamin: the “fragmentary, non-linear quality of moments recalled out of time”⁶⁹ Combining the discipline of cultural analysis and forms of cultural production, Kuhn argues that memory work is both a practice and a methodology. In other words, a conceptual method embracing recognisable modes of production, applied across practices.

In memory work there is an interesting navigation of autobiography within the wider examination of historical narrative formation. An image of broad cultural appeal may also be of intense personal significance. Out of memory work emerges a sensibility or way of thinking about the past that enables and directs chosen modes of artistic production towards key moments and objects as the sites of memory. In the form of practice, memory work becomes self-reflexive and historiographical in character, conscious of the narrative of its own making and concerned with the value of its possible meaning.

Practice

Questions of landscape, memory and history may be present in the general ferment of ideas surrounding an art practice, but they do not always take immediate form. Instigation of an idea is often contingent. The origins of my study were triggered by an invitation to participate in the exhibition *North & South* (2007) hosted by Southampton City Art Gallery.⁷⁰ It was the opportunity to produce a work addressing notions of identity and place. Under the pretext of the cultural history of Southern England, I finally realised the desire to

⁶⁸ Annette Kuhn *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (Verso, London 1995) 1-9

⁶⁹ Kuhn *Family Secrets* ... 5

⁷⁰ *North & South* exhibition. Southampton City Art Gallery, Johan Hansard Gallery, Vardy Gallery, University of Sunderland 2007

engage the landscape of my early childhood. A place I had not properly visited for a number of years.⁷¹ [fig 0.7]

The origins of an art practice can be varied and my own began with a training in fine art painting. A subsequent career in exhibition curating meant further exposure to multidisciplinary contemporary art and design of which uses of photography may only be a part.⁷² A relationship with photography was established much earlier and not through any formal training. My father was something of an ‘amateur photographer’. As well as producing colour slides which feature in my study he also built himself a black & white darkroom in which I would join him to marvel at the magic of the chemical process of producing prints. At the age of ten, shortly after our family moved away from Wiltshire I became an avid ‘train-spotter’.⁷³ An enthusiasm for railways has remained with me ever since and is a central theme to my current practice.⁷⁴ Significantly, trainspotting at the beginning of the 1970s was a hobby for which a key tool was an obligatory Kodak Instamatic camera. The hobby could also include the obsessive collecting of railway literature and associated ephemera, including maps, diagrams and data sheets.

The pluralist nature of Pop Art, and Conceptualism, and equally the simplistic rigor of Minimalism, were of considerable personal appeal at the time of my art school training in the early 1980s. This was a fervent time when considerable shifts were being made in attitudes and practice of which one was possibly not fully aware of at the time. Heavily influenced by events in the North America, British art schools were starting to emerge from an era dominated by the formal qualities of abstract painting and sculpture.⁷⁵ The influence of abstraction however, remained important to my development as a visual artist and it is through the work of painters like Alan Green and Brice Marden⁷⁶ that, as a young student, I was intuitively drawn to the conceptual

⁷¹ Andrew Cross *An English Field* 2007 The form of this work was a two-channel moving image installation that included footage filmed from a glider flown from Upavon Airfield. See also: Chapter 4 *Practice Methodology*.

⁷² After leaving Bath Academy of Art in 1983, from 1984 – 1999 I worked in a number of exhibition and project organising positions that included performance and site-specific events as well as gallery-based exhibitions.

⁷³ My family moved from Wiltshire in February 1971 to West Oxfordshire when our father establish his own poultry farm. Interestingly RAF aircraft continued to feature as the new home was under the flight path for RAF Brize Norton. My first trainspotting trip was to Reading in November 1971.

⁷⁴ For example: Andrew Cross *Some Trains in America* (Prestel, London 2001) *Foreign Power* 2003 (video) short-listed for Becks Futures Prize 2004 and the *Parallel Tracks* exhibition, National Railway Museum 2014.

Ferroequinology a documentary film by Alex Nevill featuring my train filming activities in the USA is due for release Summer 2021

⁷⁵ Up until this time it could be argued that an art school like Bath Academy of Art was highly influenced by painters and discourses associated with the magazine *Artscribe* under the editorship of James Faure Walker (from 1976-83) and notable for its commitment to abstract painting of the kind typified by the work of Patrick Heron.

⁷⁶ Two exhibitions had significant impact: a retrospective of Alan Green’s paintings at MoMA, Oxford in 1980 when I was attending an art foundation course and Brice Marden at the Whitechapel Gallery, London in 1981 during my first years as a BA student.

possibilities of ideas being present, but which are not depicted in an image: “more a thereness than a likeness”⁷⁷

The *North & South* commission became the start of regular visits to Salisbury Plain made mostly for the purposes of photographing the landscape. These visits precipitated further activities relevant to childhood memories, including the collecting of toys, supplementary photographs and additional visual material. Over the proceeding few years these activities evolved into the more structured practice which has become the subject of this study. The general orientation of this practice, across its various methods has not been directed towards any specific memory itself but the exploration of methodology and image form through which an experience of memory recall is evinced. Attention is given to both what is depicted and how the image is produced; its origins and technical properties. Development of practice has been marked by a shift being made from photography as passive observation, to a position of more purposeful interaction with the conceptual qualities that photography offers.

Photographs taken during these recent visits depict a topographical landscape unchanged from how I remember it from childhood. The purpose though is not to somehow simply ‘capture’ any evocative atmosphere or residue of the past to be found in an otherwise ‘empty’ landscape.⁷⁸ Wider historical narratives are explored through additional methods of photography. The gathering and representation of supplementary photographs generate new spatial mappings of childhood memories originating in the physical landscape I am photographing or reimagining in miniature. Featuring heavily among the collected photographs are those taken during the Aden Emergency of 1962-67. [fig 0.8] Many of these photographs feature the same RAF aircraft that flew regularly above the skies of Wiltshire. [fig 0.9]

Collected photographs have become the means of ‘revisiting’ unwitnessed events and locations to which I have not been to. It is a quality found in the reproductive properties of photography which Benjamin recognised as enabling a transcendence of time and space. Yet these images have become part of the remembering and a blending occurs between one’s own memory

⁷⁷ Alex Danchev *Cezanne: A Life* (Profile, London 2012) Quoted in Julian Barnes *Keeping an Eye Open: Essays on Art* (Jonathan Cape, London 2015) 108

⁷⁸ Tomoko Yoneda’s examination of landscape and cultural memory in works like *After The Thaw* maybe considered good examples of such photography whereby the sites of significant historical events are depicted in their contemporary condition ‘emptied’ of more immediate evidence of those events.

with memory generated by others received through the legacy of their photographs.

Barthes provocatively declared there is “nothing Proustian” in a photograph.⁷⁹ A photograph is never a memory itself and does not account for anything that has occurred since the image was taken. Memory is ascribed to photographs according to their significance to those remembering. In attempting to revisit the past through photographs one can only do so through traces offering a view made possible only from a position of the present.

Critical to my thinking is how in the use of photography attention can be taken beyond ‘Proustian’ moments of memory recall; the spontaneous flood of intense autobiographical experience triggered unexpectedly by an isolated object, image or sensation. Something of the reverse may operate. In place of extrapolating narrative from a fragment is more the compression of narrative into a single image. This is an attitude that has been adopted by Welling who in his early work sought to produce an image of “great density” in which many lines of thought intersect.⁸⁰ It is therefore not so much the discovery of a memory trigger that matters but identifying the particular fragment in which memory may be encapsulated.

In this regard fragments excavated from the memory space of childhood have the potential to become something more allegorical. Memory is not so much regained or recreated through a practice of photography but is produced and reformed by the inception of new and supplementary images. Less the replication of something as it is believed to have been remembered but more the apparent first time witnessing of something now known to have occurred. This is how an archaeology of childhood may be formed and is a process in which the remembering practitioner intervenes.

⁷⁹ Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* ... 82

⁸⁰ James Welling *Selected Writings 1979-87* in *James Welling Mind on Fire* (MK Gallery, Milton Keynes./Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver/ Prestel, London/New York 2012) 167



fig 0.7

Andrew Cross *An English Field (aerodrome) & (barn) 2007*
Digital video
Commissioned by Southampton City Art Gallery
for the exhibition *North & South 2007*



fig 0.8

An original 10x8 press print depicting the children of British service personnel attending the primary school at RAF Khormaksar, Aden. Issued in March 1967 by the British Government it shows the children being escorted home by armed guards. Such security measures were the result of increased ant-British hostilities during the Aden Emergency. The accompanying caption information indicates the desire to promote the impression that despite the unstable situation it is 'business as usual' for the everyday life of British families stationed in Aden. The significance of this photograph is that the children appear to be exactly the same age as myself. During 1967 when British service families returned to the UK a number of RAF children appeared at my primary school in Upavon; raising the speculative thought I may have known some of the children in this photograph.



fig 0.9

An Army Air Corps DH Beaver seen at RAF Khormaksar, Aden c.1966. The image is produced from an original 35mm slide acquired from an anonymous source.

Purpose

Susan Neiman reminds us that we are “historical beings”, unable to describe ourselves without doing so in space and time. My investigation of the past is motivated less by the desire to somehow be closer to a landscape with which I am emotionally attached but rather to understand the wider historical meaning of my childhood environment. In the spirit of Benjamin, the landscape, and the activities I associate with it, is the best starting point for establishing an historicity of early life. Neiman further suggests that we cannot grow up without considerable input from our parents and the generation into whose history we were born. This is a context with which we need to come to terms “if we are ever to truly separate from them”.⁸¹

The purpose of my research is less to draw specific attention to a given history and more on the possible methods of situating the self within history. Attention is given to how these methods open up the scope of subsequent meaning. I propose that enabled by photographs, art practice offers a unique opportunity to speculate more discursively on questions of historicity. The archaeological and memory work may lead to pleasing confirmation of what is remembered, or to alternative, sometimes surprising or possibly challenging accounts. An art practice may not provide conclusive answers to conundrums of history but can offer the means of ‘mapping’ a relationship to past events and drawing attention to the complexities of meaning.⁸²

Unlike Neiman I am not a moral philosopher and my project is not an exercise in offering up the past to cast judgement. However, I believe there is a moral aspect to my reflection in a search for some sense of truth that my practice may lead me towards. What I do share with Neiman is the belief that abstract ideas become most compelling when “refracted through particular experience”.⁸³ This is the attitude, found at the heart of Benjamin’s writing. Critical analysis infused with personal reflection and anecdote need not obscure more fundamental philosophical and political questions that help explain why the world surrounding us appears to us the way it does.

⁸¹ Susan Neiman *Learning from The Germans: Confronting Race and the Memory of Evil* (Penguin, London 2019) 9

⁸² Mindful of Alfred Korzybski’s remark ‘the map is not the territory’, I suggest the mapping of a relation is not the same as having a fixed position. One’s position and its meaning, remains open to further repositioning. As my examination of Benjamin indicates the mapping of memory is always unstable and speculative.

⁸³ Susan Neiman *Learning from The Germans ...* 19

Thesis Structure

This practice-led study examines through methods of photography themes of the autobiographical circumstance of landscape and childhood memory. My thesis situates these themes within a wider social purpose of historical enquiry for which the principal method is an individual visual art practice. The contention is that childhood memory establishes both the methodological basis and critical attitude informing the development of practice and historical reflection.

While important aspects photographic theory informs the arguments being discussed, the thesis situates photography in a broader context of practice and historiographical enquiry within contemporary art. Providing theoretical context for visual art as a biographical practice addressing historical narrative are the conceptual methods of archaeology and memory work. A significant focus of theoretical orientation to the thesis, in particular the function of childhood memory, is found in the work of Walter Benjamin which becomes critical to the articulation of historical method applied to both visual practice and the autobiographical through a lens of childhood memory. In Benjamin's childhood reflections I have been able to recognise a wider cultural value to my own personal memory and the way this informs my visual practice. Benjamin's distinctive method of temporal and spatial fragmentation reflects the disjunctive nature of memory and imaginative scope of childhood giving the licence and framework for developing practice into the active formation of an historicity of the individual.

The thesis is organised in four theoretical chapters reflecting core areas of research: examination of the past, Benjamin's thinking on childhood, the influence of landscape and practice methods. Expanding the autobiographical context out of which the programme of research originates, six short pieces of reflective writing, or 'Interludes' are interspersed among the four theoretical chapters. Formed around the memories of particular objects, people and events, the texts draw out, from a personal perspective, a number of themes relevant to the conceptual concerns of the research. Through the childhood experience of space, time and the miniature, emerge childhood musings on the adult worlds of farming, aircraft and the history of war. The writing of these texts has been an important part of my practice development and research. They have been a way of articulating some of the ideas that have emerged through the practice methods of observing, making and collecting. In this

regard the reflections have also been instrumental to balancing practice and theoretical development in my research.

Chapter One *Engaging the Past* examines conceptual methods of the archaeological which has a close and particular relationship with photography. Archaeology is also a thematic informing a wide range of contemporary art practices and is examined here including a focus on the practice of artist Mark Dion. In my examination emphasis is placed less on the archaeological as a practice and more a conceptual method of engaging the past applied across a multiplicity of practices. A further method under consideration is memory work. Characteristic of Benjamin and sharing similar qualities of the archaeological, in the context of individual practice, memory work helps situate personal memory within wider historical narrative.

Chapter Two *Childhood Memory and Walter Benjamin* provides the underpinning to a methodological framework for practice and historical enquiry with a focus on the childhood reflections of Walter Benjamin. My reading of Benjamin is used to draw together a range of theoretical concerns into a broad conceptual framework for practice. This framework draws upon childhood experience to establish three core practice methods of observing, collecting and making. Key aspects of Benjamin's interest in toys and play include the collecting of material objects and forms of imagery that are used in the child's reimagining of the world in their own terms. Set in relation to the dream space of childhood imagination and a fascination with technology these activities help articulate the wider historical context in which childhood occurs. I also examine how Benjamin uses childhood to formulate a distinctive spatialisation of memory which leads to his concept of the dialectical image.

I conclude the chapter with an account of *The Dialectical Image in Practice*. This includes the analysis of two appropriated photographs originating from the time of my early childhood during the 1960s. Particular attention is given to how these photographs exist in relation to the passing of time and formation of memory that has occurred since they were originally taken. I use an interpretation of Benjamin's dialectical image to explain how within the scope of accumulated images will be individual fragments that articulate the relationship between remembered experience and wider historical narrative. Rather than extrapolating from the fragment a set of possible interpretations it is more the identification of the one fragment into which can be condensed a multitude, or constellation, of interrelations. A fragment that in

encapsulating the full extent of memory becomes the allegory for wider historicity. In practice this fragment can be a single gesture constituted in the various properties of a photograph.

In **Chapter Three** *A Landscape of Childhood* landscape and the place of childhood memory is explored through a number of theoretical concerns. This examination of the landscape circumstances of my own childhood moves emphasis towards the influence of biographical experience of upon the development of practice sensibilities. The landscape of my own early childhood, Salisbury Plain is examined as a context of intersecting historical and technologically informed narratives. The many economic and social factors, including agricultural and military activity that are brought to bear on Salisbury Plain suggest varied readings of landscape in terms of wider social formation and practices. In my analysis I draw on a range of theoretical literature from social geography and contemporary art discourses, as well as the literature of contemporary place-writing. Emphasis is placed upon landscape as both a subject and object of human agency including the phenomenological experience of a child. A landscape of childhood that includes physical topography, imagined spaces and fascination with aircraft technology is considered in broader terms of an identifiable place and conceptual site.

In **Chapter Four** *Practice Methodology* I provide a detailed account of my practice methodology and how its origins may be traced back to childhood experience. It is suggested that out these origins has arisen the formation of particular practice methods and aesthetic sensibility. An overarching framework for a diverse photographic practice is structured around three principal methods drawn from childhood experience: observing, collecting and making. This practice is examined in the context of a broader experience of visual art practices and the influences of critical discourses discussed in earlier chapters. In further consideration of the heterogeneous qualities of photography relevant to my own practice I examine a selection of diverse contemporary photographic practices, notably William Christenberry, Cindy Bernard, James Welling and John Spinks. Placing my practice in a wider context of influence I also consider the significance to miniature models and professional experience of exhibition curating.

In the **Conclusion** I summarize how my archaeology of childhood has enabled considerable shifts in methods and attitudes of my practice that in turn have

generated a greater sense of personal historicity. The various strands of my research have led accumulation of large quantities of visual material which has in turn led to a concentration of images to form the accompanying practice portfolio. Drawing on theoretical analysis and experience of my practice, I give a final articulation to how photographs are not fixed entities - moments of frozen time - and are fluid and mobile, passing through time, contexts and changes in meaning.

The companion **Practice Portfolio** presents selected elements of extensive photographic output to form the encompassing image montage of place and time, originating in my childhood experience and continuing to unfold. These elements include freshly generated photographs, reworked collected photographs plus additional appropriated visual material including maps and printed illustrations. The sequencing of the portfolio does not reflect any specific chronology or narrative. Each selected image exists as an individual print and as part of the greater whole setting up a number of possible formal and theoretical interconnections. Presented as a completed work there remains a range options as to how the portfolio may be exhibited or published. The wider body of content that this project has generated provides a larger resources form which further discreet selections may be made for the purposes of exhibition or publication.

Interlude 1

Aeroplane

Peter Kinley's 1977 painting *Aeroplane* is very characteristic of the artist's restrained visual language. Recognisable figurative forms rendered to finely nuanced shapes, sitting harmoniously within the picture where any illusionistic depth and material painting surface coexist in careful balance. At the same time literal and metaphorical, both dynamic and static, a bold flat shape hovers calmly in an even expanse of blue. Part of the painting's intrigue is the uncertainty of view. Although seen vertically against a wall are we in fact looking directly up into the sky? Deprived of vestigial detail or distinguishing insignia the bold child-like rendition of fuselage and un-swept perpendicular wings is instantly readable as a pre-jet-age airplane.

I first encountered this work around in 1980 when as a young art student at Bath Academy of Art Peter Kinley was one of my painting tutors. *Aeroplane* immediately resonated although it wasn't all due to my boyish fascination for machines of transport. My concerns as an artist, I felt confident at the time, were all to do with abstraction and landscape. Peter's paintings seemed to articulate perfectly a relationship between a landscape informed figuration with the pure formal qualities of painting that seemed to be so prevalent in British painting at the time. Interestingly, in some of Kinley's other works I also recognised particular shapes and colours of rounded forms and house motifs as distinctive characteristics of the Wiltshire landscape in which I spent my early childhood.

Kinley's *Aeroplane* is derived from a specific early childhood memory from his native home in Austria where he would marvel at the new means of transport flying overhead. In this case a Sabena airline twin prop Savoia- Marchetti S73. The aeroplane was painted repeatedly from 1977 until the artist's death in 1988 and during this time Kinley also painted multiple versions of battleships and submarines. As a teenage refugee in England during the Second World War, like so many boys, Kinley made model airplanes and was well versed in the classes of battleships. One can only speculate on the aeroplane's manifestation of human ingenuity or role as a symbol of aggression although his relationship to machines of war would have been particular and profound. Yet, a fascination with technology continued throughout artist's life and he had a particular

romantic attachment to flight. Aircraft were symbols of freedom and independence of spirit.

Despite the specifics of Peter's childhood memory, the aircraft he paints is largely unspecific. There are some elements that possibly locate it in the history of aircraft technological development but there is nothing that indicates clearly a particular place or moment in time. In its very simple geometry and graphic information *Aeroplane* offers something much more universal. If anything, historical coordinates can be found not in any recognisable image but more readily in the qualities of the painting itself. The interplay between figuration and abstraction that dominated so much post European painting including Peter's early influence the French painter Nicholas De Stael as well as British near contemporaries like Patrick Heron or Bob Law. The aeroplane's form and composition - its scale, shape, colour and position in relations to sky/canvas edge - is determined very much by the requirements of the painting and no longer an 'accurate' rendition of a specific memory. In many respects a painting, or indeed any artwork, becomes independent to the various observations, methods and ideas, including memories, that interact in its making. In a work like Peter's *Aeroplane* the intertwined narratives of personal history, painting history and wider cultural history begin before the artist even contemplates the artwork and continue long after he or she considers it finished.

Conversely, in such an object the extended narratives of time are collapsed into a singular entity existing in the present. The artist's experience is met by the experience of the viewer and it is in this encounter that the artwork can function, and its meaning formed; sometime in a way the artist may not have anticipated. Over time it occurred to me that Peter's *Aeroplane* was also part of my own childhood landscape. This painting is of the lone propeller aircraft heard high in the sky during long summer days. The aeroplane that is largely imagined; clearly audible it remains mostly unseen. Such an aeroplane is the Netheravon Jump Plane.

Netheravon is a village located along Wiltshire's upper Avon valley where the river cuts almost due south from the Vale of Pewsey into the vast expanse of Salisbury Plain; skirting just east of Stonehenge, before joined by further tributaries among the flood-prone fields surrounding Salisbury's majestic cathedral. This is a valley of ancient water meadows, old mill races, small parish churches and thatch cottages. Additional villages have the delightful

names of Upavon, Chisenbury and Enford. In contrast to the dry empty openness of the chalk down-land of the Plain itself, the valley feels unusually populated and particularly picturesque in that quintessentially and Constablesque English rural manner.

Some eighty years after Constable painted his famous scenes of Salisbury Cathedral and Stonehenge the otherwise less noticed high shoulders of the Avon valley found a new purpose befitting the technological revolutions of the early 20th century: the siting of new aerodromes. The first was Upavon established in 1912 as home the then newly created Royal Flying Corps (later to become the Royal Air Force) Very quickly others followed, including Netheravon until a line of airfields was randed down the valley as far as Old Sarum just north of Salisbury itself.

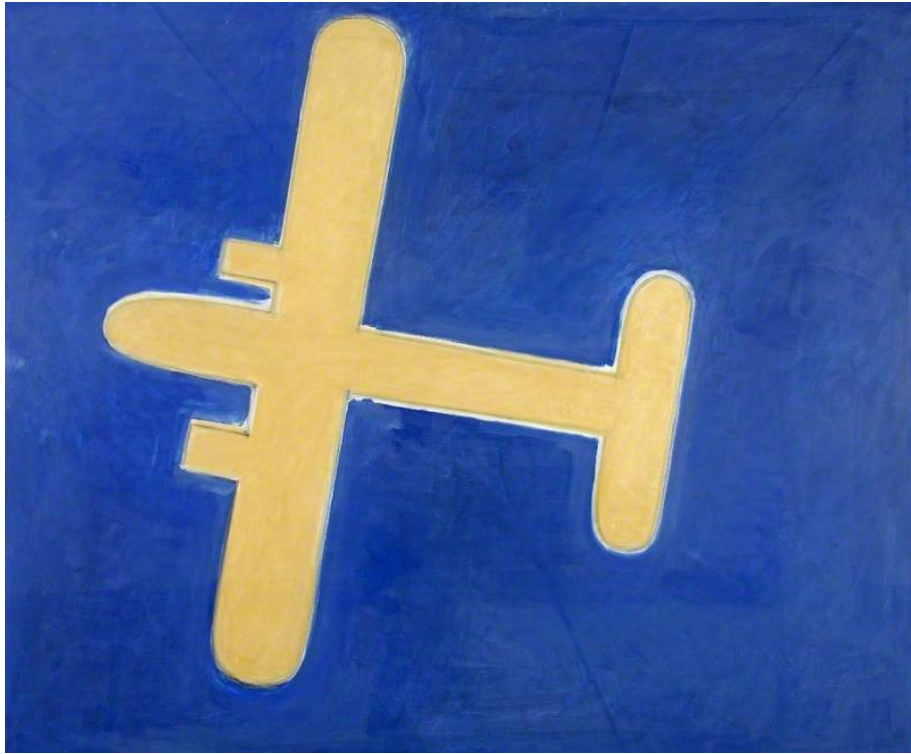
Over the past half century or more those most familiar with this landscape may choose to describe one of the valley's defining characteristics in less visual terms. On any day throughout the year, assuming relatively clear skies and no more than moderate wind, can be heard the unmistakable sound of a propeller aeroplane straining its way high up into the sky. Unlike the jet airliners that stealthily grace most of our skies leaving contrails to mark their trans-global journeys the Jump plane doesn't really go anywhere. It does however, go up and down in a repetitive ballet releasing its passengers to dance their way back down to the ground.

As the workhorse of the Army Parachuting Association the Netheravon Jump Plane has only one function. After taking off from the airfield situated upon the shoulder of the downs, the plane slowly ascends through series of circuits until the desired altitude when it will deposit its payload of fearless skydivers. It will then quickly descend to ground before repeating the process with a further group of parachutists.

Propeller engines under strain generate a distinctive whine that can be heard in all corners of the landscape and unlike most aircraft the sound of the Jump Plane does not travel across the sky, filling a void and fading away. An oscillating drone, the sound hangs in the air, lingering like the sultry summer haze and background hum of nature. Heard and yet unseen the song of the Jump Plane is an equivalent to Vaughan William's Lark Ascending: a powerful evocation of English landscape and attachment it conjured in the mind in the absence of a literal image. It is an emotional contemplation of place and time

condensed into a single abstracted image suggesting that the experience of attachment is somehow elemental, equally intimate and shared. Experienced in the real-time of the present while fundamentally well as rooted in the past.

After a number of decades, the Jump plane continues to be an audible presence in the skies above Wiltshire. And as with much of the surrounding landscape the sound remains relatively unchanged - although it is now a different make of airplane to the one when I knew as a child. Then a De Haviland Dragon Rapide, now a Cessna Caravan. To those who are used the Valley's comings and goings, little attention will be paid to this tiny object almost invisible against the pale blue. Unless, that is, you are a small boy with not much else to do in the warm summer heat than to romanticise about machines in the sky and with only a hint of understanding their true significance. Such a boy hiding in the long grass, will be training his eyes in dreamy wonderment upwards into the deep endless blue and hope to catch sight of the parachutes as they open.



Peter Kinley *Aeroplane* 1978 – 83. Oil on canvas

Chapter One

Engaging the Past

... once you draw a line around your hand and then take your hand away the mark where your hand was exists even though your hand is no longer there. What does exist is an imprint and that is the beginning of art, in there being nothing which is something. Art is the result of thousands of years thinking how to think.

Bob Law¹

In this chapter I map out a theoretical context in which my study is situated and photography practice operates. Attention is given to the archaeological and memory work as conceptual methods of historical enquiry. My starting point is a photograph's inherent attachment to the past and subsequent disjuncture between what is depicted *then* and the present *now* in which the photograph is read. This becomes the formation of conceptual space that the question subjectivity to how a photograph is read and encourages the application of an 'archaeological imagination'. Contemporary literature including Kitty Hauser's *Shadow Sites: Photography, archaeology & the British Landscape 1927-1955* and Richard Morris' *Times Anvil* emphasises the subjectivity of the imagination in conceptually opening up the archaeological with photography in a shared multi-disciplinary approach to landscape and the past.²

Speculation is then given to the archaeological as a critical discourse for contemporary art. Consideration is given to how the archaeological is manifest across hybrid practices that possess a notable orientation to the past and to recent history. A focus on an 'archaeological turn' in contemporary art is provided by the 2013 exhibition *The Way of The Shovel: On the Archaeological*

¹ Bob Law, artist statement 1967 in *Bob Law: A Retrospective* (Riding House, London 2009) 78

² Kitty Hauser *Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology & the British Landscape 1927-1955* (Oxford University Press 2007) Feeling an inherent attachment to Wiltshire's ancient history, in my initial research I was immediately drawn to literature that was concerned with the archaeological. As well as *Shadow Sites* of particular interest was Hauser's later biographical work *Blood Old Britain* about the life and work of 'aerial' archaeologist O.G.S. Crawford whose early life was spent in Wiltshire and work in military observation centred on places associated with my childhood. Kitty Hauser *Bloody Old Britain: O.G.S. Crawford and the Archaeology of Modern Life* (Granta, London 2008)

Imaginary in Art.³ The exhibition placed emphasis on recognisable archaeological qualities of artefact and field work. However, a cautious approach is taken to a literal translation and metaphorical appeal of archaeology found in material qualities of practice and extent of manifest 'pastness'. While the materiality of things is important to my thesis I train my argument towards the archaeological more as a conceptual way of thinking about the formation of history and knowledge. To make the case I use as example the highly distinctive practice of Mark Dion's an artist very much characterised with an abundant gathering of material things. As part of a wider critiquing of the ideological formation of knowledge however, Dion employs the archaeological across a variety of scientific and cultural interests. He does so with a playfulness of ideas across a variety of practical activities.

As one of the critical discourses informing pluralist Anglo-American art practices in the latter part of the 20th century the archaeological had considerable impact on the practices of landscape engaged art and associated photography. In the wake of 1960s and 1970s Conceptualism, Post-Modern art criticism points towards a redefinition of art itself. Commentators including Douglas Crimp, Rosalind Krauss and Craig Owens observe a critical shift in the photograph from the object of a formal discipline to a more theoretical and contextual condition.⁴

In considering the archaeological in this context I am conscious that any history of contemporary art can be understood as history written to confirm a given account. It is not my intention however, to align my own practice with any recognisable tendency or provide a definitive answer regarding the status of contemporary art as a form of archaeology. Rather it is to identify in the archaeological and contemporary art particular qualities that support a method of engaging the past through a heterogeneous photographic practice.

I conclude the chapter with an examination of memory work. Providing focus in regard to photographs is Annette Kuhn's *Family Secrets*.⁵ As both a method and practice of positioning oneself in relation to wider historical narratives, memory work further highlights the subjectivity of the remembering

³ *The Way of The Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art* Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago November 9 2013 – March 9 2014

⁴ Together with Hal Foster these writers who I reference later in this chapter, were closely associated with the art history journal *October*. Established by Krauss and others in New York in 1976 *October* become very influential for establishing postmodern debate in late 20th century art-historical studies.

⁵ Annette Kuhn *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (Verso, London 1995)

individual. Significance of the individual and its relationship to history will be further examined in chapter two with a focus on Benjamin's childhood reflections.

Photographs and the Archaeological Imagination

Due to essential properties constituted in the effects of light recorded on a light-sensitive surface, photographs have a unique relationship to the past; to look at a photograph is to immediately pay witness to something that has existed previously. This is part of a photograph's indexical relationship to whatever is 'captured' through the lens. They are bound equally to specific moments in time that are forever growing apart: the point exactly when the photograph taken and the present experienced at the time they are being examined.

It is a relationship to the passing of time quite different to that of painting or any other graphic art, yet photographs are not immune to changing values and interpretation. John Berger explains that to lend a photograph a past and future is what makes it meaningful. In contrast to the photograph itself however, meaning is not instantaneous. Meaning ascribed to a photograph is an unfolding found in the development of connections made in the *responses* to the photograph. Whereas a photograph isolates the appearances of a disconnected instant, when torn from the passage of time, remembered images are the residue of continuous experience.⁶ Berger argues that contained in photographs therefore is an inherent ambiguity arising out of a discontinuity between the recorded moment and the subsequent moment(s) of looking. This disjuncture between moments along the passage of time, as an "abyss" of ever-growing proportions.⁷

A photograph's inherent relationship to the past, and how photographs traverse time and space, has been the subject of considerable theoretical study. Benjamin in his early philosophising on photography spoke of photographs generating a 'space' across which past and present interact. This is a space otherwise informed by a consciousness of what is being depicted that

⁶ John Berger *Another Way of Telling* (Readers & Writers, London 1982) 93. Berger notes that a painting or drawing is a 'translation' formed in a visual language. Taking the example of Peter Kinley's graphic suggestion of an aircraft described in *Interlude 1: Aeroplane* is a series of marks consciously made not only in relation to the real or imagined 'model' but also in relation to each other; a sequence of choices that exist permanently in coincidence. By contrast, in a photograph the image of a passing aircraft in the sky will be received and is a single 'constitutive' choice made in relation to an attributed past and future (before and after the aircraft comes into view).

⁷ Berger *Another Way of Telling* ... 89

necessarily gives way to unconsciousness. (Between what is real and what is imagined.)⁸ Jae Emerling suggests photographs have become akin to an envoy or a messenger travelling back and forth through time. They also confront us in a manner that is not a memory itself but a becoming in time that is subsequently carried forth as a memory. As much as it is permanently tethered to the past a photograph is also carried into the future upon the currents of time. A photograph can be conceptualised not only as a moment fixed in time but is an image that exists within the experience of time.⁹

The temporally disjunctive nature of photographs has its origins at the very beginnings of Western representational art. The Corinthian maid Dibutade is credited with ‘inventing’ drawing by tracing the shadow cast by a candle of her lover on the eve of his departure overseas.¹⁰ The relationship between the lover’s absence and his trace has been taken up by artists and philosophers since. Although temporally unmeasurable in the way a dated photograph can be, this account of the formal relationship between what is and what is not present in an image is important to my overall thesis. The evolution to my own thinking was shaped by an attraction to the work of minimalist painters of the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹ Like drawing and painting, photographs can have a relationship to reality that is metaphysical as much as it might be purely optical. It is not only what is depicted that matters. The separation between presence and absence as an index of abstract thought, opens up the image to possibilities of the inchoate and intuitive.

Similar to an abstract painting, photographs, are also implacably mute. Susan Sontag notes that, in themselves photographs are unable to explain anything, and therefore are “an inexhaustible invitation to deduction, speculation and fantasy.”¹² The implications for are significant. Central to my argument is that the heterogeneous nature of current art photography practice lends itself very well to creating ambiguities between fact and fiction both within and what surrounds an image. In what Berger refers to as “confabulations”, the narratives that photographs may suggest often manifest themselves, not

⁸ Walter Benjamin *Little History of Photography in Selected Writings Vol 2* eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith (Harvard, Cambridge Mass 1996) 511-512

⁹ Jae Emerling *Photography: History and Theory* (Routledge, Abingdon 2012) 165

¹⁰ Julian Bell *What is Painting?* (Thames & Hudson, London 2017) 9-10

¹¹ An example would be Bob Law whose artist statement of 1967 I quote at the head of this section. Others include Alan Green, Jon Groom and Brice Marden. The work of these artists I was introduced during my time as an art student.

¹² Susan Sontag *On Photography* (Penguin, London 1979) 23

explicitly in single images but discursively among the variety of spaces that exist between images.¹³

The conceptual ambiguity generated by photographs can open up their operation to speculation and it is the imaginative scope of inventive interpretation that enables photography to offer a distinctly archaeological way of examining the past.¹⁴ More than the immediate usefulness as an archaeological aid documenting sites and artefacts, photographs merge a speculative past with an 'objectivity' of the present. More than record transparent information retrieved from archaeological sites, photographs provide their own interpretive position. They are conditioned by pictorial devices, technical protocols and ideological framing.¹⁵

Akin to the archaeological find, a photograph is only a fragment of something from which a wider image or account of the past is constructed. In generating meaning of the 'find', Richard Morris observes how the imagination is critical to rethinking what is already evident, already known and unlocking further and new meaning. In examining the past, the "archaeological imagination" is the "anvil upon which readings of the past are formed".¹⁶ The imagination is used to question the sources which form our understanding of history. To look at things archaeologically requires a focus on things beyond an experience that one is certain about.

Photographs are also archaeological in a similar way to how landscapes are understood to be. Both are sites carrying traces of past events and the echoes of absences. Photographs offer us something immediate in the present and at the same time are themselves traces of the past. In dealing with absence as much as presence Hauser suggests that a key quality of the archaeological imagination is how it refuses to fully acknowledge the loss of anything. In themselves photographs are constitutionally unable to represent the past, they can only point to it thereby reducing history to trace. Yet, photographs convert the passing of time into graphic signs irrespective of whether many or none of the myriad of traces can be discernibly read or not. For Hauser, the

¹³ Berger tells us that language is "a living creature" and resides in "the inarticulate as well as the articulate". John Berger *Confabulations* (Penguin, London 2016) 5

¹⁴ Kitty Hauser *Shadow ... 2*. See also: Frederick Bohrer *Photography and Archaeology* (Reaktion, London 2011)

¹⁵ See: Frederick N. Bohrer *Photography and Archaeology: The Image as Object* and Jonathan Bateman *Wearing Juninho's Shirt: Record and Negotiation in Excavation Photographs* both in Stephanie Moser and Sam Smiles eds. *Envisioning The Past Archaeology and the Image* (Blackwell, Oxford 2005) 180-191 & 192-203

¹⁶ Richard Morris *Time's Anvil: England, Archaeology and the Imagination* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London 2012) 5

documentary 'limitations' to photography are paradoxically integral to its usefulness as a method of archaeological enquiry.¹⁷

Through a condition Hauser cites as a photograph's anteriority, attention can be directed to what may have occurred before, and possibly after, the photograph was taken. In all its material features the past may not be immediately (or evidently) visible but, "it is immanent and therefore (imaginatively at least) recoverable".¹⁸ Showing trace evidence or the most-subtle of visible clues, photographs can point to events temporally off-frame outside of the image, and while methods of systematic analysis may be applied, the image also applies itself to associative knowledge in the form of memory or the imaginary.

Frequent reference to the archaeological imagination there can be found within contemporary 'theoretical' archaeological discourse.¹⁹ Emphasis on the imagination, and attendant subjectivity, appears to be instrumental in shifting the practices and discourses of archaeology away from materially identifiable ways of doing things, to a way of intellectually reasoning with the past. In the same manner Hauser observes, in photographs the archaeological imagination functions across a plethora of analytical evidence as well as spatial and temporal dimensions, some of which like carbon dating, arise out of a range of specialist 'archaeology' related practices.²⁰

The notion of an archaeological imagination is also helpful in understanding how archaeology exists today as a discipline within the scope of humanities and social sciences that also extend to creative arts. Something very different to its roots within art history, early modern science and antiquarianism. Ian Alden Russell suggests the creative potential of the imaginary is critical to how archaeologists "compose pasts from traces, residues, absences and presences – approximating, mixing and inventing techniques and methods..." The emphasis to note here being a *composing* of the past.²¹

¹⁷ Kitty Hauser *Shadow Sites* ... 57-104

¹⁸ Kitty Hauser *Shadow Sites* ... 2

¹⁹ For example, see: Julian Thomas *Time, Culture and Identity: An Interpretative Archaeology* (Routledge, London 1996) Michael Shanks *The Archaeological Imagination* (Routledge, Abingdon 2016 [Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek CA 2012]) In the UK the Theoretical Archaeology group was founded in 1977 with the aim of "promoting debate and discussion of issues in theoretical archaeology". Its members include Colin Renfrew, Chris Tilley and Matthew Johnson.

²⁰ In his essay accompanying *The Way of The Shovel* Bill Brown notes that such specialists include surveyors, engineers, chemists, botanists, geographic information systems (GIS) analysts, archivists, accountants and many more. *Anarcheologie: Object Worlds & Other Things, Circa Now* in *The Way of The Shovel* (MCA/Chicago University Press 2013) 255 Note 12

²¹ Ian Alden Russell *The Art of The Past: Before and After Archaeology* in *Way of The Shovel* (MCA/Chicago University Press 2013) 298

The archaeological imagination, Hauser reminds us is 'perceptual matter' in which the role of the viewing subject is crucial.²² Colin Renfrew also emphasizes that in their excavations archaeologists establish "a direct personal link with the past". Richard Morris suggests, that as well as the 'they' who L.P. Hartley said do things differently, the past also involves 'us'.²³ The meaning of an artefact is determined by the questions asked of it and those questions are formed in the present by those examining the artefact. They do so using the subjectivity of their imaginations to produce narrative in a manner that Morris likens to a form of "ventriloquism".²⁴

Archaeology and Contemporary Art

Ideas of an archaeological imagination lead us away from a traditional understanding of archaeology defined by institutional scientifically managed material practice. Implied is a more discursive way of thinking applied across various practices and discourses. Ian Alden Russell claims that in the alignment between archaeological process and creative thinking there is collectively a concerted effort to "address the composition of the past".²⁵ Bill Brown draws further relationship with composition: "an archaeological assemblage is the identification of a group of artefacts recovered in close association, within the same datable component of a site; an artistic assemblage is a bunch of objects glommed together to form one work".²⁶

According to the organisers of the exhibition *The Way of The Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art*, an archaeological 'turn' gives description to what has been a growing trend among visual artists questioning "historical truth" through the "melding of archival and experimental modes of storytelling". Staged in 2013, the exhibition featured the work of 34 artists covering a variety of multi-disciplinary practices including object-based work, photography, video installation and performance. Exhibited works took on forms described variously as "historical accounts, documents, physical and metaphorical acts of excavating and unearthing, memorials, reconstructions,

²² Kitty Hauser *Shadow Sites* ... 31

²³ Colin Renfrew in *Mark Dion Archaeology* eds. Alex Coles, Mark Dion, (Black Dog Publishing, London 1999) 15. Morris is referring to L.P. Hartley's well-known remark found in his 1953 novel *The Go-Between*. "The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there". In Richard Morris *Time's Anvil* ... 4

²⁴ "If archaeological remains do not lie, it is only because they are dumb, conveying nothing (nothing of much interest anyway) of their own accord. Insofar as meaning comes from a dialogue between what we find and what bring to what we find, the production of narrative is a kind of ventriloquism. It is not only logic and science that we bring, but also our imaginations." Morris *Time's Anvil* ... 17

²⁵ Ian Alden Russell *The Art of The Past* ... 313

²⁶ Bill Brown *Anarcheologie* ... 255

re-enactments and testimonials.” A central purpose of the exhibition, was to illustrate how the archaeological has become an overarching method for contemporary artists seeking to define their practice first and foremost in relation to history and who are motivated to “restore justice to anyone or anything that has fallen prey to the blinding forward march of History”.²⁷

The Way of the Shovel is one among a number of exhibitions organised to showcase art practice in context of historical enquiry or to specifically draw parallels between fine art and archaeology.²⁸ Equally, a number of contemporary archaeologists, notably Colin Renfrew have been arguing the case that archaeology can contain, and learn from, the practices of art in opening up a more multidisciplinary ‘creative’ approach to the past.²⁹ Renfrew founded a research initiative at Cambridge University that centred around commissioned works by Anthony Gormley, Richard Long, David Mach and Cornelia Parker.³⁰

It may be easy to find parallels between sculptural and drawing based art practices and the more recognisable object and graphic based characteristics of archaeology. Additional contemporary cross-disciplinary activities and discourses including land art suggest a natural coming together of two otherwise deeply historic traditions. However, while they may have much in common the exact substance of the relationship between art and archaeology appears to remain the subject of speculation. Among the various essays accompanying *The Way of The Shovel* there is plenty of reference to ambiguity and contradiction between the two disciplines. This said, it is possible for the targeted audience of the exhibition to infer that that something of a definitive art-historical statement is being made. With noticeable attention being given to the past, a multidisciplinary contemporary art, less easily defined by other traditions, to be considered a form of archaeology feels highly appropriate if not rather convenient.³¹

²⁷ Madeleine Grynsztejn, Dir. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, in *The Way of The Shovel* ... 13

²⁸ Examples include the 2003 exhibition *Deep Storage Collecting, Storing and Archiving in Art* Earlier was the commissioned projects that formed the 1993 Spoleto Festival *Places With A Past* staged in Charleston South Carolina that drew a direct relationship between site-specificity with historical re-evaluation in the context of social engagement. As one of its ‘themes’ Documenta 12 in 2007 asked the question *Is Modernity our Antiquity?*

²⁹ See: Colin Renfrew *Figuring it Out* (Thames & Hudson, London 2003) and *Art & Archaeology: Collaborations, Conversations Criticisms* eds. Russell, Cochrane (Springer, New York 2014)

³⁰ The output of these commissions is documented in *Substance, Memory, Display* eds. Renfrew, Gosden, DeMarries (Cambridge University Press 2004)

³¹ It is also not the purpose of my research to provide a full critique of *The Way of the Shovel* and the terms in which the exhibition was curated. Nor the politics of wider institutional funding and market forces that inform the manner in which such an exhibition is presented and promoted. Forming a relationship with another discipline or area of study can be significant. Recently in the UK there has been the formation of independent visual arts commissioning agencies promoting, for example, ‘art & heritage’, ‘art & ecology’, and ‘art & conflict’.

Dieter Roelstraete curator of *The Way of The Shovel* places the relationship between contemporary art and archaeology in context of a wider shift in attitude towards history. He observes that "it is one of the defining ironies of our time that the one sector of culture [contemporary art] most commonly associated with looking *forward* should appear so consumed by a passion for looking not just the proverbial other way but in the opposite direction - *backward*." As such the archaeological turn marks a radical "reconsideration and reformulation of [contemporary art's] relationship to history, both its own (art history) and others (history proper)." The trend constitutes an about face from the standard modern reflex of rejection or denial of the past to one of embrace. An irony being that "with the Avant Garde's traditional claims to 'newness' in particular - [contemporary art] should be so preoccupied, both in its choice of subject matter and its choice of techniques, in both *form* and *content*, with the old, the outdated, the outmoded - with the past."³²

A changing relationship to history seems to be the key point Roelstraete is making. Art with an historical leaning however, is not itself atypical. The practice of artists adopting imagery, concepts and ways of making used in previous times continued throughout the modern period. Historical quotation or 'appropriation', in the history of art could be described as timeless.³³ Julian Barnes, a writer adept at drawing parallels between contemporary experience and periods in the past, reminds us that even art movements which are deliberately self-consciously retrospective, like neoclassicism or the Pre-Raphaelites, at the time would have considered themselves as definingly modern.³⁴ The argument Roelstraete makes is that in the current tendency it is the "critical level" of historical consciousness itself, which qualifies as being paradoxically new.³⁵

Of particular note is that the pasts of interest tend not to be the extended periods of ancient time usually associated with archaeology and are within the artist's own lifetime or periods immediately preceding their birth. Periods of which evidence remains visible if not necessarily immediately readable. Roelstraete identifies one of the defining characteristics of the archaeological

³² Dieter Roelstraete *Field Notes in The Way of The Shovel* (MCA/Chicago University Press 2013) 15 (Emphasis in the original.) *The Way of The Shovel* is a more tangible development of an essay of the same title Roelstraete wrote for the on-line publication *e-flux journal*. (spring 2009) A sequel essay After the Historiographic Turn: Current Findings was also published in *e-flux journal* (summer 2009). A version was published to accompany an exhibition Roelstraete curated in 2010 for the Ursula Blickle Stiftung, Kraichtal Germany entitled *The Archaeologists*.

³³ Jan Verwoert *Living With Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art*, Art & Research vol 1, no 2 (Summer 2007) reproduced in Ian Farr ed. *Memory* (London Whitechapel/MIT 2012) 146

³⁴ Julian Barnes *The Man in the Red Coat* (London, Jonathan Cape 2019) 65

³⁵ Dieter Roelstraete *Field Notes* ... 19

turn as a nostalgia for recently out-moded – mostly pre-digital – recording technologies, for example 16mm cine film.³⁶ The existence of such technologies gives recent generations the ability to replay past events. A facility vastly accelerated when the content of such recordings become digitized.³⁷

In Roelstraete's account, the new historical consciousness of artists is invested in human agency and its material traces. The physical doing, making and collecting of things appears to be a core aesthetic and methodological value of the archaeological turn.³⁸ This value evidences itself in two significant ways. Firstly, in the habits of an artist's practice that appear to be shared with the archaeologist, most notably forms of 'field work' and the gathering and display of artefacts. Secondly, a shared "profound understanding" of the materiality of culture. Art and archaeology, Roelstraete claims, both remind us of the "irreducible materiality of the world in the age of its purported dematerialization."³⁹ Materiality offers a haptic method of close-scrutinising the world. To intuitively grasp and read the cluttered fabric of the world is to recognise the "overwhelming importance of mere "matter" and "stuff".⁴⁰

Such practices though, mark a notable shift from forms of 'archaeological aesthetics' found in the work of a number of modernist artists including, for example, by Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Paul Nash. According to Alden Russell, distinguishing the later conceptualism is a move away from visible representations of archaeology towards to what became "more reflective and critical treatments of the manifestations of traces of human agency".⁴¹ Robert Smithson's landscape interventions being the primary example.⁴² [figs 1.1 – 1.4]

³⁶ Dieter Roelstraete *Field Notes* ... 25

³⁷ This is a condition reflected across many areas of contemporary culture as Simon Reynolds observes writing on popular music, "never before has a society been so obsessed the cultural artefacts of its own *immediate* past." Or, in other words a past very much of a current culture's own making and very much within living memory. Facilitated by ease of technological reproducibility Reynolds observes the consequence in a nostalgic regurgitation of largely unself-critical fashionable trends. Simon Reynolds *Retromania Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past* (Faber and Faber, London 2011) xiii. In *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* Laura Mulvey discusses how digital technologies have opened up "new ways of seeing old movies". New forms of "spectatorship" in the manner of "delayed cinema" facilitating focus on isolated moments through repeat viewings that disrupt chronological sequence. Laura Mulvey *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (Reaktion, London 2006) 8

³⁸ Further to physical activity and trace making – the marking the landscape in the manner of Richard Long and Robert Smithson – throughout Roelstraete's arguments there is abundant reference to metaphorical 'digging', 'unearthing' 'uncovering' among art practices. Dieter Roelstraete *Field Notes* ...14-47

³⁹ Roelstraete is referring to how through technological digitization "Dematerialization has become one of the bedrocks of the global economy" and principle method of communication and exchange. *Field Notes* ... 46

⁴⁰ Dieter Roelstraete *Field Notes* ... 47

⁴¹ Ian Alden Russell *The Art of The Past: Before and After Archaeology in The Way of The Shovel* (MCA/Chicago University Press 2013) 308

⁴² Robert Smithson in particular is a key figure featuring significantly in not only Roelstraete's essay *Field Notes* but also three of the further four accompanying texts by Bill Brown, Sophie Berrebi, and Ian Alden Russell. Furthermore, three participating artists, Tacita Dean, Joachim Koerster and Zin Taylor each exhibit work that directly references the work of Robert Smithson in particular *Spiral Jetty*.

Many of the examples of practice presented in *The Way of The Shovel* could be characterised as forms of 'fieldwork': surveying, mapping, the gathering and analysing of objects, and actual examples of physical excavation of the ground. As Roelstraete points out, such fieldwork extends the notion of the 'field'. Where art was once made primarily in studios, workshops and darkrooms, it is increasingly created on laptops, in libraries and perhaps more crucially archives.⁴³

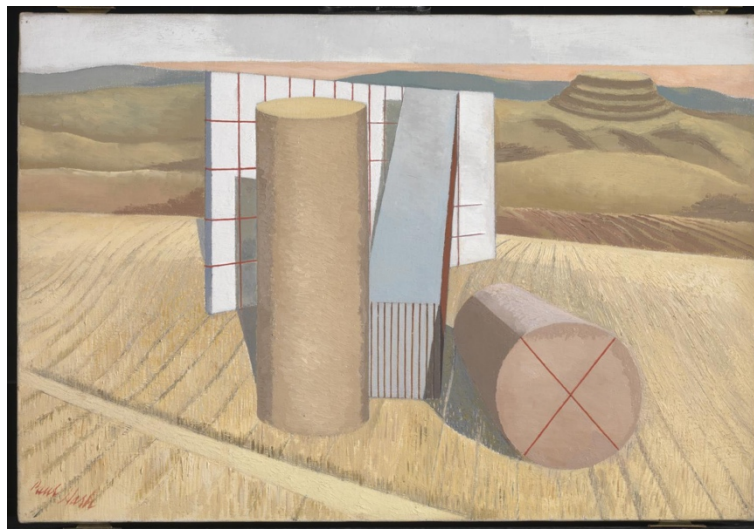


fig 1.1

Paul Nash *Equivalent for the Megaliths* 1935 (Tate)

⁴³ Dieter Roelstraete *Field Notes* ... 21. Alongside the practices of fieldwork artists are also exploring the languages of museum display: for example, systems of taxonomy and the aesthetic of the vitrine which feature highly in the often elaborate 'installations' produced by Mark Dion or forms of historical reconstruction characteristic of the work of Michael Rakowitz. Roelstraete suggests that "the archaeological optic is without a doubt one of the founding principles, if only aesthetically, of modern museum culture". *Field Notes* ... 45



fig 1.2

Paul Nash *Avebury* 1942 (Tate)



fig 1.3

Robert Smithson *Amarillo Ramp* 1973

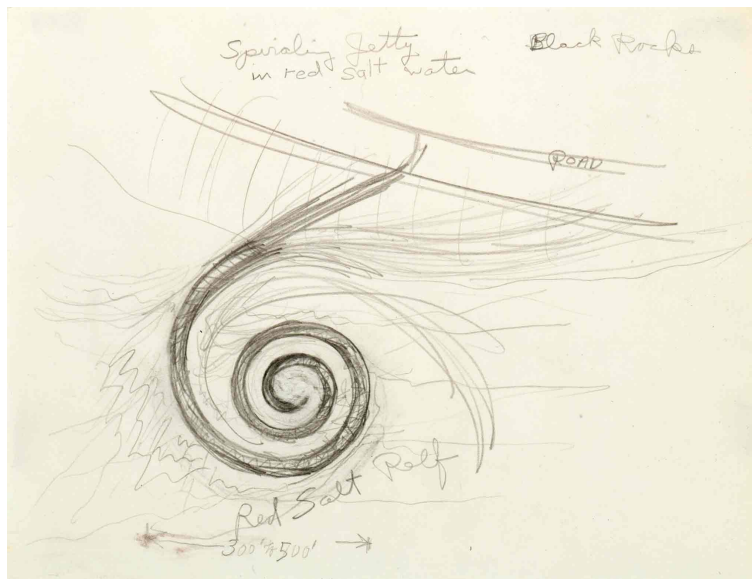


fig 1.4

Robert Smithson *Drawing for Spiral Jetty* 1970 (MoMA New York)



fig 1.4

Tacita Dean *Beautiful Sheffield* 2001 (Tate)



fig 1.6

Joachim Koester *To Navigate, In a Genuine Way, In The Unknown...*
Exhibition installation 2012 MIT List Visual Art Center

Already the sites for the preservation and dissemination of knowledge, archives have become the territories of exploration in which contemporary artists ‘excavate’ represent and reinterpret their ‘finds’. Tacita Dean and Joachim Koester are good examples.⁴⁴ [figs 1.5, 1.6] Central to such practices can be the gathering of archive material in which objects and physical images including photographs are perceived as texts (and conversely physical written texts treated equally as objects). and where writing itself becomes integral to a visually artistic oeuvre. Such use of sourced material is readily understood as research and indeed there has been a move towards the idea of art as a form of research and the artist as a producer of knowledge.⁴⁵

Roelstraete also points towards increasing academic demands for art-historical and theoretical literacy placed upon artists particularly within the museum-art school complex. Which, as an example, includes artists undertaking PhD research. These are demands that can determine the nature of critical discourses surrounding artistic practice indicating how field work and the archive can take on a distinctly theoretical dimension. It is possible to conclude therefore, that materiality alone does not fully explain the underlying consciousness of an artistic “historiographic impulse”.⁴⁶

If it is the case that certain visual art practices do possess archaeological qualities, in what ways is this manifest? Like Benjamin’s attractive metaphor, there is potentially an issue of stylistic appeal to notions of fieldwork in the image of both the artist and archaeologist. However, the subjectivity of the imagination would suggest an attitude to thinking more rigorously philosophical than one characterised materially. A broader philosophical approach to the meaning of archaeology can be found in Giorgio Agamben’s archaeological ‘vigilance’. This is to trace back through time not through materially as such but with a persistent form of thinking that leads to the exposure and examination of what is otherwise obscure and uncertain.

⁴⁴ *The Russian Ending* 2001 by Tacita Dean included a series of twenty early 20th century black and white gravures depicting destruction and desolation sourced from a number of flea markets around Europe. Joachim Koester’s *Message from Andree* 2005 uses archival imagery of an ill-fated balloon expedition to the North Pole in 1897 led by Swedish explorer Salomon August including rolls of film found buried many year later.

⁴⁵ Dieter Roelstraete *Field Notes* ... 21 Within the Exhibition contents section of *The Way of The Shovel* are texts as artworks by Moyra Davey, Rebecca Keller, Michael Rakowitz, Hito Steyerl and Zin Taylor. Mora Davey is a good example of an artist who uses written texts as an integral part of her practice publishing a number of purely text-based artists books.

⁴⁶ Roelstraete *Field Notes* ... 21 Roelstraete makes the distinction between artist as ‘historiographer’ to artist as ‘historian’, previously proposed by Mark Godfrey. Rather than the historian’s use of overtly, and largely appropriated, historical material including photographic imagery there is in the work of the ‘historiographer’ a centrality of writing itself in the narrating of stories about the past. See: Mark Godfrey Artist as Historian in *October* no120 (Spring 2007) 142

Persistence is implied by Benjamin's digging. The emphasis though is not on what is excavated but rather on the subjectivity of the person digging. Maybe the question of whether art is archaeology or archaeology is art is misleading. Or, rather emphasising a need to affirm one way or the other is not helpful. If accepting the close relationship between art practice and the archaeological, more useful will be the question of what kind of archaeologist the artist might be? In other words what are the origins for the artist's archaeology?

Mark Dion

To help articulate the distinction between an archaeology of characterful style and philosophical rigour I turn to the example of Mark Dion, who perhaps more than any other contemporary artist most comfortably assumes an 'identity' of archaeologist.⁴⁷ Dion's diverse practice frequently enacts literal and metaphorical 'excavations'. He also creates elaborate exhibition displays of collected material that borrow from the aesthetics of 19th century museum display and the field-work station. [figs 1.7, 1.8] On first appearance many of Dion's finished 'installations' may suggest a casual amassing of things, yet his philosophical focus is very precise. Somewhat paradoxically, Dion's practice points to how conceptually the archaeological arises not in what is materially evident but through an attitude to generating knowledge.

Dion's wide-ranging projects often draw upon the lives and characteristics of historical figures associated with aspects of exploration and discovery in the natural sciences. As much as he may have a passion for the various areas of interest, Dion makes it very clear he is neither, for example, an ichthyologist, archaeologist, ornithologist or ecologist. Yet, he knows "enough to shadow their methodology." And it is 'in the field' that Dion likes to do his shadowing.⁴⁸ Following in the tradition of Robert Smithson, Dion can be himself a performing protagonist in his work. The character that Dion appears to adopt most frequently, suggests Iwona Blaswick, is that of a "dilettante: the gifted amateur...with a polymath interest that can produce the most unexpected

⁴⁷ Introducing Dion's work Roelstraete states that "No survey of the archaeological impulse in contemporary art would be complete without the work of Mark Dion". *The Way of The Shovel* (MCA/ Chicago University Press 2013) 100

⁴⁸ "Anything that takes me out of doors as a performance is pure pleasure; and to be surrounded by thoughtful, joyful people really excited about their work. I have never really been enjoyed the life of the studio or the laboratory. It always amazes me when I go for beers with biologists that they want to tell stories about the three weeks field collecting, but not so much about five years in the lab processing the collected material. The same can be said for archaeologists and geologists." Mark Dion in conversation with Iwona Blaswick in *Mark Dion Theatre of The Natural World* exhibition cat. Whitechapel Gallery (London 2018) 18

discoveries.”⁴⁹ Like Smithson he has ventured into some very remote landscapes and his practice is inherently collaborative.

The manifestations of Dion’s own explorations and discoveries have been described in terms of theatrical settings. The character of such theatre he suggests arises as much out of a “kinship with surrealism” and the way it reaches beyond the self-referential and the decorative. His attraction is to “the abject, the fragmented...the uncanny in nature...hybrids, monsters, the occult” And, he is very conscious of how these more imaginative qualities sit in relation to the certainties of scientific fact.⁵⁰

The sense of surrealist ambiguity and playfulness is central to Dion’s critique of art and scientific knowledge. Neither a scientist nor an art historian Dion considers it his role to disrupt the “supremacy, logic and ubiquity” of historical certainty particularly when manifest in the traditions of taxonomy and the museum. (Whether it be species of flora and fauna or art movements.) Being an artist, Dion believes he has “no obligation to represent truth or objectivity” and is therefore able to produce his own taxonomies that can “frustrate” and “irritate” expectations and assumptions of display. He does so with the motive of questioning the assumed objectivity and power that is assigned to such scientific methods.⁵¹

As an artist, Dion is able to throw some illumination of the cultural contexts within which such experts and their explorations and discoveries are defined. As an example of the historiography inherent to his practice is how he constructs “...archetypical figures who embody approaches and attitudes specific to certain periods.” These figures are often “manifestations of organisations and bureaucracies and having the trappings of moment ideology and attitude”.⁵²

The effectiveness of Dion’s character shadowing is confirmed by the observations of Colin Renfrew. Renfrew suggests that what makes Dion’s practice more than just an amateur archaeologist making a good go of looking like a professional is because it is so plausible and persuasive. The critical point though is that taking on the appearance of an expert by no means makes him an expert of any kind. Renfrew writes in relation to one of Dion’s most

⁴⁹ Dion in conversation with Blaswick ... 7

⁵⁰ Dion in conversation with Blaswick ... 14

⁵¹ Dion in conversation with Blaswick ... 11

⁵² Dion in conversation with Blaswick ... 16

apparently 'archaeological' of projects *The Tate Thames Dig* of 1999. Over a number of weeks during the summer, the artist and a team of volunteers gathered varied discarded and washed up artefacts along the shoreline of the River Thames in front of the then new Tate Modern and original Tate Museum (Now Tate Britain).⁵³ [figs 1.9 - 1.11]

Renfrew notes how the resulting finds, displayed in an elaborate cabinet reminiscent of a Victorian museum, are the results of "meticulous processes of recovery, conservation, classification and installation. They are coherent, interesting good to look at. Yet on closer inspection they are not quite what they seem."⁵⁴ He continues, "Everything in one of [Dion's] displays looks right - almost." However, while it may be defined as the study of the past as inferred from the surviving material remains, archaeology is "primarily about knowledge, information, and it depends on mainly on stratigraphic excavation giving particular attention to precise context from which each find comes." Otherwise, "Gathering curiosities from the foreshore is really beachcombing."⁵⁵ [fig 1.12]

Drawing attention to the uncertainty of distinction is for Renfrew the critical point to Dion's practice. Quite simply is it the real thing or not? Is he an archaeologist or not? When set in the context of an art museum, Dion's authentic looking archaeology asks "subtly disquieting questions" born out of an acute awareness of the division between what passes as natural and what is considered artificial, which underlies much museum and scientific classification. It is a divide that Dion appears to cross with resolute ease.⁵⁶

Renfrew argues that a work like *Thames Dig* is 'too thorough to be dismissed as mere counterfeit endeavour, too meticulous to be seen as play.' It may not be the archaeology of traditionalists but it "recapitulates" the archaeological process. The process becomes subject to scrutiny, "It partakes in the immediacy of contact with the past through the material remains, the finds, which archaeology yields up. It puts it on display. It raises penetrating questions."⁵⁷

⁵³ See: *Mark Dion Archaeology* Alex Coles, Mark Dion eds. (Black Dog, London 1999)

⁵⁴ Colin Renfrew *It may Be Art But Is It Archaeology? Science as Art and Art as Science* in *Mark Dion Archaeology* Alex Coles, Mark Dion eds. (Black Dog, London 1999) 14

⁵⁵ Renfrew *It may Be Art ...* 14

⁵⁶ Renfrew *It may Be Art ...* 18

⁵⁷ Renfrew *It may Be Art ...* 22



fig 1.7

Mark Dion *Library for the Birds of London* 2018
Installed at Whitechapel Gallery, London



fig 1.8

Mark Dion *Misadventures of a 21st Century Naturalist* 2017
Installed at ICA Boston.



fig 1.9

Mark Dion *Thames Dig* 1999



fig 1.10

Mark Dion *Thames Dig* 1999



fig 1.11

Mark Dion *Thames Dig* 1999



fig 1.12

Mark Dion *Thames Dig* 1999
Completed work installed at Tate, London

Dion's practice further indicates how being concerned whether something is archaeology or not is not the relevant question. To repeat Morris's earlier point about the value of questions, Dion highlights how it is more the matter who is asking the question, how they are asking it and why? For all the critique of museums or knowledge and ideology that makes us, "uncertain where science ends and art begins, or indeed quite what the difference is", much more significant is the presence of Dion's individual and distinctly idiosyncratic fascination for the natural world. In Renfrew's opinion, through his diverse and one might add allegorical practice, Dion is doing "what excavating archaeologists do, [establish] a direct *personal* link with the past."⁵⁸

Allegory

A conceptual reorientation from the material nature of selected objects, towards the process of that selection, becomes a matter of interpretation. In the context of art, it is a question given helpful illumination by Alden Russell. The "aesthetics and epistemic structures of archaeological practice" are present within contemporary art less because art and archaeology are the same but rather archaeology is a metaphor that is shared across modern thinking more broadly. Possessing such an "endemic place" in modern thought the metaphor of archaeology is extended into *allegory* and therefore shifts critical engagement from "rhetoric" to "affect".⁵⁹

To be considered allegorically lends the archaeological further suggestion of something constituted less in the material and more the imaginary and subjective. (The material being the props or prompts around which an allegorical narrative or subjective image is constructed.) It is in respect of the allegorical, that Alden Russell argues the contemporary turn to the past is the "deployment of the past as a technique". Unlike 19th century archaeology that sought inspiration through emulating the past, when unburdened by demands of history the past becomes "not the destination but the way."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Renfrew *It may Be Art ...* 15 (My italics)

⁵⁹ Ian Alden Russell *Art of The Past ...* 311

⁶⁰ Alden Russell *Art of The The Past ...* 313. Earlier in the same essay Alden Russell observes that "practitioners of archaeology are forever confronting the epistemic tensions between the processes of observation, documentation, interpretation and resolution of the image of the past. Although trained to apply scientific methods, the archaeologist interprets objects and experiences. [The archaeologist] composes images of a place and time we cannot visit. [...] The past no longer lies behind, and the future no longer lies ahead. Rather, the past and future become the result of a parallax view within the present, and archaeology becomes an optic of processing, interpreting and composing time and materiality." 299

Allegory returns us to post-modern art discourses of the 1970s and 1980s, in particular Craig Owens' highly influential 1980 essay *The Allegorical Impulse in Art: Towards a Theory of Post-Modernism*.⁶¹ Initially a review of the collected writings of Robert Smithson, the wider implications of Owens' observations that Smithson's work represented a "liquidation of art tradition" in the allegorical form of ruins was far reaching. Owens drew heavily on the work of Benjamin in recognising the implications of photography as an allegorical art.⁶² He saw the revival of allegory in contemporary art as a paradigm shift involving, in particular, forms of appropriation and site-specificity.⁶³ In a challenge to formalist aesthetics of abstract painting and sculpture, is the concept of representation (or re-presentation) of existing forms over the presentation (or creation) of new and notionally unique ones.

Owens understood allegory as a composite sign made up from a cluster of discarded or overlooked symbols collaged together. A resulting "shabby" composition is the "ruin" of the historic language of modernism.⁶⁴ In his analysis of Owens' essay, Jan Verwoert suggests a more recent contemporary relevance to the function of allegory that reflects a radical transformation of the historical situation. Replacing a loss of more clearly defined historicity experienced, for example during the Cold War, is the current overwhelming sense of historical complexity.⁶⁵ The transformation, Verwoert argues is observable in the practices of appropriation now common to contemporary art. Appropriation is no longer the reuse of fetishized commodity rendered historically 'dead', it is now the invocation of something that lives through time. This analysis of allegory has particular implications to how meaning is generated through the archaeological imagination. No longer an object of static contemplation, as an object or image moves through time, it does not itself change, only our relationship to it. As it does so, allegorical meaning continuously supplants an antecedent one.⁶⁶

Owens suggests that "under the gaze of melancholy" something becoming allegorical is a distancing from the history that produced an original image.

⁶¹ Craig Owens *The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Post-Modernism* in October Vol 12 (Spring 1980)

⁶² Owens cites Benjamin as the only 20th Century critic who treats allegory "without prejudice". Quoting from the essay *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* Owens suggests that "Benjamin's theory of allegory proceeds with the perception that "any person, any object, any relationship can mean anything else"." Owens *The Allegorical Impulse ...* 84.

⁶³ As examples of the appropriation Owen's cites Troy Brauntuch, Sherrie Levine and Robert Longo. For site-specificity Carl Andre and Robert Smithson.

⁶⁴ Robert Smithson's *The Monuments of Passaic* 1967 would be a good example.

⁶⁵ Jan Verwoert *Living With Ghosts ...* 150-151

⁶⁶ For further analysis of Owen's essay see also: Gail Day *Between Deconstruction and Dialectics* in *Oxford Art Journal* (Vol 22, No1, 1999) 105-118.

Allegory is consistently attracted to the fragmentary, the imperfect and the incomplete which require deciphering. In other words, the ruin. The principal condition of the ruin is human activity “reabsorbed into the landscape” and therefore they indicate history as “an irreversible process of dissolution and decay: a progressive distancing from origin”.⁶⁷

The site-specificity of the ruin has further significance for photography. Smithson acknowledged photography as inherent to his practice because many of his site interventions were impermanent and installed in remote locations. Because of its impermanence, Owens observes that such work is frequently “preserved” only in photographs which he suggests gives allegorical potential to photography. The photograph is always referring to something that is absent. Quoting Benjamin, Owens draws the analogy: “An appreciation of the transience of things, and the concern to rescue them from eternity, is one of the strongest impulses of allegory.”⁶⁸

As an ‘allegorical art’, Owens argues that photography fulfils the “desire to fix the transitory, the ephemeral, in a stable and stabilizing image.” Referring to the work of Atget and Walker Evans who self-consciously “preserve that which threatens to disappear”, the allegorical is invoked because they are only fragments and thus affirm “arbitrariness and contingency.” Therefore, Owens concludes, we should be prepared to encounter allegory in photomontage and archives. Again, citing Benjamin, he remarks it is “the common practice” of allegory to “pile up fragments ceaselessly” and without necessarily clear evident intention.⁶⁹

Walker Evans once commented that “a document has use, whereas art is really useless. Therefore, art is never a document, though it certainly can adopt that style.”⁷⁰ In this regard, the lucidity of ‘truth’ that is assumed of a photograph is transformed from the informational into an object of contemplation. True value and meaning is delayed until well beyond the moment when the photograph was taken as it circulates in widening areas of discourse.

With the ease of its mimetic capacity, in an ‘expanded field’ of art, photography could be comfortably absorbed into a range of conceptual art practices like performance or land-art; principally as a method of evidencing those practices

⁶⁷ Owens *The Allegorical Impulse* ... 70.

⁶⁸ Owens is quoting from Walter Benjamin *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* trans. John Osbourne (London 1977) 223

⁶⁹ Owens *The Allegorical Impulse* ... 71-72.

⁷⁰ Leslie Katz *Interview with Walker Evans* in *Art in America* (March-April 1971) 82-89

especially given either their ephemerality or physical remoteness.⁷¹ An important characteristic of conceptually oriented art practices of the 1960s and 1970s was what Jeff Wall identifies as a ‘de-skilling’ of photography whereby the priority is not the craft of photography itself but the nature of its relationship to additional practices, less in the creation of an object and more the expression of an *idea*.⁷² Somewhat paradoxically however, assuming the attitude of a casual document, recording or trace made in the landscape, in the absence of the original artistic act the photograph itself takes on full significance as the resulting artwork and its attendant meaning.⁷³ [figs 1.13, 1.14]

Photographs therefore become part of a new critical environment concerning the nature of art and objects and their relationship to each other. Photography interacts with additional practices such as sculpture, performance, collage and text to complete a multiplicity of artworks. Demonstrated through the emergence of Pop Art during the 1950s and 1960s visual experience and visual sensibility were being increasingly governed by ‘pictures’ found in newspapers magazines, television and cinema. Pictures included more ‘commercial’ graphic art practices of reproduction and distribution, but most significantly it meant photography.

In his influential 1977 exhibition and essay *Pictures* Douglas Crimp, identified a renewed impulse among artists to make images of “recognizable things” through media which had the power to replicate: photography, film and video.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the ‘realm of the imagination’ had reappeared to displace the analytical and perceptual modes of formal abstraction. Critically for the position of artists and art discourse, despite their immediacy, pictures can be opaque in true meaning: “The actual event and the fictional event, the benign

⁷¹ The expanded field was the post-modern context for the production and presentation of art that extended well beyond the gallery and traditional forms, which Krauss outlines in her seminal essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*. Rosalind Krauss *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* in *October* Vol 8 (Spring 1979) 30-44. Reproduced in *Post Modern Culture* Hal Foster ed. (Pluto Press, London 1985) 31-42

⁷² Jeff Wall *Marks of Indifference: Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art* in *Reconsidering the Object of Art 1965-1975* exh. cat. (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles 1995) The suggestion of ‘de-skilling’ is made in reference to for example Ed Ruscha’s ‘pointless’ gas stations and Douglas Huebler’s ‘artless’ duration pieces. It is also worth noting that Bernhard & Hila Becher’s photographs of industrial structures were first presented as ‘Anonymous Sculptures’. However, over time the Becher’s photographs have become an important social record of building types that have since disappeared from European and North American landscapes. They are also technically well-crafted photographs. The work of Ruscha and others can now also take on unintended social and an aura of nostalgia.

⁷³ See: David Green and Joanna Lowry *From Presence to the Performative: Rethinking Photographic Indexicality* in David Green ed. *Where is the Photograph?* (Photoworks, Brighton 2003) 47-60

⁷⁴ Douglas Crimp *Pictures* exhibition catalogue (Artists Space, New York 1977) reproduced in *X-tra* (Vol 8 No 1 Fall 2005) 17-30



fig 1.13

Bernd & Hilla Becher From: *Gas Tanks* 1965 - 2009

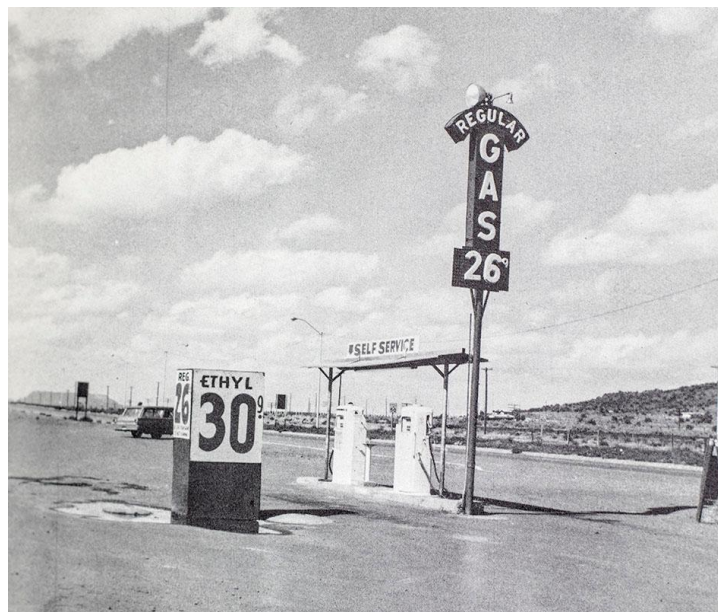


fig 1.14

Ed Ruscha From: *26 Gasoline Stations* 1963

and the horrific, the mundane and the exotic, the possible and the fantastic are all fused into the all-embracing similitude of the picture”⁷⁵

According to Hal Foster, the art discourses pursued by critics such as Crimp, Krauss and himself, were no longer concerned with the intrinsic *forms* of art and focused more on discursive problems *around* art.⁷⁶ Replacing the attention to purity of medium, found for example in the discourses of abstract painting, were more diverse possibilities of practice and much greater concern for context of meaning; context found in both subject content and also the socio-political traditions of specific media that existed largely outside of purely artistic traditions.

Arguments over the ontological and ideological nature of photographs, and status of photography as an art medium, were very much at the heart of post-modern debate. In her 1999 essay *Reinventing the Medium*, Rosalind Krauss reflects on how photography allowed artists of the ‘Pictures Generation’, including Louise Lawler, Richard Prince and Cindy Sherman, to address the existing saturated condition of images in the world.⁷⁷ Unlike traditional artistic media, by concentrating on photography’s inherent qualities of the simulacrum and the copy artists were able to do so without paying too much attention to photography’s particular material conditions. In Krauss’ terms, the photograph becomes a *theoretical* object, and a tool for the deconstruction of art practice in general.⁷⁸

Krauss later reflects how, although perhaps lost in the rhetoric, crucially this change of direction in art criticism, was not a total rejection of medium specificity. Recognition of what might be considered the material poetics of a medium as well as its social construction is important to the idea of image ventriloquism that informs this study. Illustrating the point, James Welling, whose practice will be discussed in more detail in chapter four, was originally

⁷⁵ Crimp *Pictures* ...18

⁷⁶ Hal Foster in Jarret Earnest *What it Means to Write About Art: Interviews with art critics* (David Zwerner, New York 2018) 144-159

⁷⁷ Rosalind Krauss *Reinventing the Medium* in *Critical Enquiry* 25 (Winter 1999). Krauss suggests it is precisely in its non-specificity as a medium of limitless reproducibility that the photograph in post-modern critique becomes attractive as a theoretical object defined more by context than by objective function. It is therefore why photography was adopted by many post-modernist artists as the basis for a more wholesale questioning of art including issues such as uniqueness and authorship rather than critiquing specific kinds of art like painting. Yet curiously, photography’s “apotheosis” as a medium within art historical discourse, its commercial, academic and museological success - the “triumphant post-war convergence of art and photography” –happens to coincide a moment of photography’s ability to collapse the very notion of medium specificity. (A further paradox to add to Lippard’s dematerialisation of art object noted earlier.)

⁷⁸ It is a line of thought that can be traced back to Benjamin’s essay *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility* (1936). An argument being that photography is not simply a form of art, but that art itself becomes a form of photography. See: Jae Emerling *Photography: History and Theory* (Routledge, Abingdon 2012) 2

grouped among the ‘pictures generation’ yet never lost sight of the desire to make photographs of anything in the world that might interest him, including American railroads and the landscape of his native Connecticut. The consequence has been the forging of a practice that is highly individual while being fully cognisant of photography’s varied history.⁷⁹

The thrust of Krauss’s argument was more concerned with an increasing disenchantment with the “teleology” of modernism oriented toward “formal perfection”.⁸⁰ It is a sentiment shared by Hal Foster who found problematic that modernist art history also presumed a continuous “break with the past”. He argues that rather than in opposition to each other, the relationship between the (diachronic) temporal historical traditions of art and the more spatial (synchronic) contextual conditions in which individual art forms and events are situated, should be considered more in critical coordination. A condition that invites an opening up the past for more continual and subjective re-evaluation.⁸¹

In Krauss’s “reinvention of the medium” there is a shift in the understanding of medium from the traditional sense of painting, sculpture, drawing, photography and so forth to more “a set of conventions derived from (but not identical with) the material conditions of a given technical support, conventions out of which to develop a form of expressiveness that can be both projective and mnemonic.”⁸² Implied in this post-formalist condition, photography is no longer the attempt to create an image equivalent, or supplicant, to what may otherwise be a known, or assumed, condition. This may include a specific memory. However, rather than supplicant, the photograph becomes itself an active protagonist in the formation of what is being remembered.

David Company, argues that a reason why photography is vital within contemporary art practice is precisely because it has an ability of “walking the

⁷⁹ James Crump *James Welling Monograph* (Aperture, New York 2013)

⁸⁰ Rosalind Krauss in Jarret Earnest *What it Means to Write About Art: Interviews with art critics* (David Zwerner, New York 2018) 272-283

⁸¹ Hal Foster *The Return of The Real: The Avant-Garde at The End of The Century* (MIT, Cambridge Mass/London 1996) xii

⁸² Krauss *Reinventing the Medium ...* 296. In the specific examples Krauss provides of post-conceptual practices the ‘support’ of James Coleman’s projected works is the technology of commercial presentations and advertising; the ‘medium’ to which Jeff Wall’s large illuminated photographs refer is painting, and specifically history painting. See also: Mark Godfrey *Photography Found and Lost: On Tacita Dean’s Floh* October no. 114 (Fall 2005) Similarly, the medium of Gerhard Richter’s Atlas is the archive and Tacita Dean’s Floh the flea-market although the difference in these two cases is the use of found photographs or anonymously authored photographs sourced from elsewhere. Godfrey does not propose directly a reinvention of medium in the way Krauss does, although the emphasis is very much on the characteristics of Dean’s sourcing of ‘found’ photographs rather than their technical specificity.

tightrope between art and non-art, uselessness and use, expression and document.”⁸³ Although theoretically there is an acceptance of the ambiguity of authorship, within the ‘market’ of contemporary art photography there seems to persist the seemingly emphatic dichotomy between the practices of ‘photographers’ making ‘images of the world’ and ‘artists’ exploring ‘the world of images’. Campany suggests this distinction presumes that one has to be “either suspicious of photography or have an affection for it; one either operates a camera or operates *upon* photographs.”⁸⁴ The formation of a ventriloquism is to encompass the possibilities of both attitudes. The shared focus can be on memory and a personal link with the past. A past which will also be shared with wider history.

Memory Work

Implicit in the gathering of ideas and influences that underpin what an artist might do will be the possibility that things remembered, consciously or otherwise, are then transformed into, or at least contribute to the creation of an image or object. Myself photographing the landscape of Salisbury Plain would be an example. Such a creative act can itself function remarkably like a form of memory as described by Pierre Nora; subsisting, in “gestures and habits, unspoken craft traditions, intimate physical knowledge, ingrained reminiscences and spontaneous reflexes.”⁸⁵ It could be suggested that artworks and memories share similar qualities in how they come into existence and function; contextual and only in-part self-conscious for either the artist, or the rememberer. Furthermore, memories, like artworks, do not necessarily exist in social isolation and ‘acts’ of remembering are often shared. Accordingly, differing subjective experiences of these same things lead to multiple narrative relationships and meanings.

In her examination of memory work, Annette Kuhn observes narratives may remain personal, and relatively hidden from view, but forevermore intersect with the narratives that provide the ‘popular’ or ‘official’ accounts of the same

⁸³ David Campany *Image Ventriloquism and the Visual Primer* in *Thomas Ruff* exh. cat. (Whitechapel, London 2017) 192

⁸⁴ Campany *Image Ventriloquism ...* 190. There are practices that successfully straddle both positions and Campany cites the work of Thomas Ruff as an example of proof to how the two positions with the same practice need not be contradictory Ruff’s practice encompasses highly crafted images of architecture and portraits (like many of his colleagues from the Dusseldorf School) as well as re-presentations of press-photographs, and the manipulation of low-resolution digital images found on-line.

⁸⁵ Pierre Nora *Realms of Memory* (Columbia University Press, New York 1996) reproduced in *Memory* ed. Ian Farr (London: Whitechapel/Cambridge MA: MIT 2012) 62. Also: Pierre Nora *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire* in *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989) 13.

experiences. Memories, like meanings, are also mutable, especially when the they are shared among a multitude. Individual personal memories and shared cultural memory become easily conflated. In the construction of self-narratives Kuhn identifies memory as the “raw material” acquired through an “unearthing and making public” stories that otherwise don’t quite fit within the “central interpretive device of culture”.⁸⁶

Recalling her experience as a seven-year old the 1952 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth, Kuhn describes how in the intervening years her personal recollections became surprisingly similar to the popular memory. They have merged to such a point that it becomes difficult to distinguish the difference. Popular memories she observes are marked by the ways in which they “bring together the lives of ‘ordinary’ people who are its subjects and its producers”. Popular memory involves “the rememberer, the subject, placing herself – what she did, where she was – at the centre of the scene.” Kuhn remembers most vividly the domestic setting and circumstance of watching the coronation on television, yet her memory is also full of associative memory – the attending foreign dignitaries, the of images of street parties – that have been in public circulation as photographs since the event.⁸⁷

Her account of the 1952 coronation is Kuhn’s examination of family unity as a symbol of national unity. Personal reflection develops into a wider consideration of underlying tensions of class and gender within the attempts to forge a sense of nationhood in post-war Britain. The point Kuhn proposes is that it is not so much that memories differ but that what is produced are “differing relations to remembering”. Although the meaning of memories may alter, ultimately “the remembering never stops”.⁸⁸

Although involving the study of physical photographs the ‘practice’ of Kuhn’s memory work is one of writing and cultural criticism. Originating out of a (sometimes painful) personal reflection on childhood a more political dimension develops in the form of self-re-evaluation in the context of family and national identity. As a published work, *Family Secrets* informs the reader

⁸⁶ Annette Kuhn *Family Secrets* ...1-9 The existence individual stories to which Kuhn so much importance goes some way to illustrating the concept of *counter-memory* that has entered discourses of cultural criticism over recent years. The term originally coined by Michel Foucault has come to refer to the active recognition of that which is otherwise overlooked or forgotten by the social collective memory that informs dominant authoritative narratives of history. More precisely, the transfer of historical knowledge through the development of practices, in particular aural traditions, that operate outside the ‘writing’ of ‘official’ history; its signs and symbols. See: Svetlana Boym *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books, New York 2001)

⁸⁷ Kuhn *Meeting of Two Queens* in *Family Secrets* ... 68

⁸⁸ Kuhn *Phantasmagoria of Memory* in *Family Secrets* ... 120-121

how the study of cultural artefacts in the form of family photographs can be applied to not only personal memories and sense-impressions, but also communal memories shared with others. In a modest way, Kuhn allows the reader to become, according to Trev Broughton, “her own cultural critic, her own historian”.⁸⁹

As I explore in the next chapter, purposefully considering one’s own position in history was a question that preoccupied Benjamin while developing the *Berlin Writing*. As he did so Benjamin recognised a less than straight-forward relationship between personal memory and wider history. According to Nora memory and history are far from synonymous and, in fact, appear to be fundamentally in opposition to each other. In *Les Lieux de Memoire*, he argues the need for an awareness of how memory can be transformed in its passage through time.⁹⁰ Memory, Pierre Nora tells us, is life in “permanent evolution, opening to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformation” and significantly “susceptible to being long dormant and periodically being revived”. History, on the other hand, in its claim to “universal authority” is “wilful and deliberate”, and actually concerned with forgetting the active disappearance and annihilation of the past. Within the collective demands of the social, the fluidity of memory is forced to settle and established itself as history. Rather than as something spontaneous, Nora suggests that history is experienced more as a “duty”.⁹¹

The argument is that history seizes upon memories in order to distort and transform them, to render them permanent. Inverting an understandably common assumption, he suggests that memories do not reside in the past but are a “perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present”.⁹² Memories exist only in the present because it can only be in the present that we experience memories. History on the other hand is the *reconstruction* of what is no longer, a *representation* of the past that remains relative; always incomplete and troublesome. Nora’s observations are made in relation to social and collective memories displaced under the pressure of a culturally self-conscious historical sensibility. For example, the desire to confirm a particular society’s pre-determined destiny. This is what Nora refers to as an ‘accelerated’

⁸⁹ Trev Broughton book review in *Feminist Review* Vol 60 Sept 1998 135-137.

⁹⁰ Pierre Nora *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire* in *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989)

⁹¹ Nora *Between Memory and History*...8-9

⁹² Nora *Between Memory and History*...8-9

Also, to paraphrase popular historian Simon Schama in one of his more forceful televisual moments. “What is the present if not continuous memory...” *Civilisations* Series 1 Episode 3: *Picturing Paradise* (BBCTV 2018)

history; the certainty of something that has already happened and is therefore fulfilled.

At this point it is worth clarifying the difference between personal (individual), and collective forms of memory. Jan Assmann defines collective memory in two distinct ways. There is communicative memory which involves the self in relationship to others in the form of social interaction. Cultural memory concerns history and shared narratives generated through events and objects, invested in cultural meaning. Individual memory concerns 'inner' personal experience. Personal experience may include the experience of cultural memory although it is not strictly a collective experience.⁹³

Paul Ricoeur adds that memory can be at the same time specific and individual as well as multiple and plural. He states that, "One does not simply remember oneself, seeing, experiencing and learning; rather the situations in the world in which one has seen, experienced and learned."⁹⁴ It is implied that the relationship between "situations in the world" of the self, accord with the intersubjective between individual and collective experience. Ricoeur further states "These situations imply one's own body and the bodies of others, lived space and finally the horizon of the world and worlds within which something has occurred." In other words, memory is phenomenological; the body in relation to places and objects. This can include the individual, as well as the collective invested in wider historic cultural meaning.

In a further personal reflection on childhood and familial memory, Brian Dillon suggests that in the act of remembering there is a "seduction" of imagining oneself at the centre of something, whereby memory is ordered according to an idealist fantasy that exists "to guarantee one's own central presence". Memory is mostly made up of disparate moments of time and points of space and we are tempted to believe our own consciousness is the "sole medium" that gives them form with a significance of almost spiritual dimension. Writing about his own childhood experiences, Dillon proposes the position of a "materialist" taking comfort from the thought that he is the product, "thrust into the foreground, of a haphazard spatial backdrop, not its centre, still less its master".⁹⁵

⁹³ Jan Assmann *Communicative and Cultural Memory* in Astrid Erll and Anser Nunning eds. *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 2008) 109-118

⁹⁴ Paul Ricoeur *Memory, History, Forgetting* (University of Chicago Press 2006) 36

⁹⁵ Brian Dillon *In The Dark Room* (Penguin, London 2006) 193

Accounts like Kuhn's and Dillon's confirm that memory is fragmentary and non-linear: a particular current of thought that is commonly understood to run through Benjamin's childhood recollections. When mapped through external mnemonic prompts - objects, images, places - such elements can be encountered randomly and are interchangeable. Unlike historical narratives that tend to run in only one direction, memory moves backwards and forwards. With no clear beginning, middle and end a memory work can also be unending: at every turn can be the discovery of something else to look into and further questions raised. Memory is also multi-faceted and multi-layered. Personal memories overlap with collective experience and a multiplicity of individual memories. While personal memories belong to the person who remembers, as Kuhn suggests that person is not "sole owner of such memories." Overlapping associative memory extends far beyond individual experience to bring the personal together with the social, cultural and historical in a wider network of meaning.⁹⁶

Forms of memory work can be recognised as processes of developing knowledge in which practice in many guises - aural, written, performed, drawn or photographed - becomes critical to the remembering. In understanding the true purpose of such practices, comparison with anthropologist Tim Ingold's account of an *education of attention* is useful. In it knowledge does not exist alone as disembodied information transferred across time, but by becoming manifest in forms of doing. The (remembering) self is a centre of awareness and agency in a field of practice - sets of skills and tasks - defined by phenomenological experience and engagement with environment in all its forms.⁹⁷ Knowing does not exist abstractly in the relations between structures in the world and structures in the mind but exists imminently in the life and consciousness of the person knowing as it unfolds within the field of practice. In other words, it is in the processes of the unfolding that knowledge resides not in the information transmitted.

Instrumental to Ingold's account of an evolution of knowledge is the notion of 'guided rediscovery' whereby the use of guides akin to acts of imitation or forms of instructions (such as a notional map) facilitate the realization of that which is imminent. However, in extending the metaphor, having an accurate

⁹⁶ Kuhn *Family Secrets* ... 4

⁹⁷ Tim Ingold, *The Transmission of Representations to the Education of Attention in The Debated Mind: Evolutionary Psychology vs Ethnography* ed. Harvey Whitehouse (Taylor & Francis, New York 2001)

map (or navigation system) is not the same the same as knowing the way⁹⁸ Like the development of knowledge, understanding the journey involves more than the ability to follow precise instruction, and requires the additional processes of improvisation and self-discovery. It means being attuned to environment, in part imaginatively, and not simply carrying information.⁹⁹

Kuhn cites memory work as both a method and a practice that makes possible the exploration of a web of interconnections between multiple memories and multiple narratives. Central to the functions of memory work is the making evident, in comprehensible form, experiences of the individual in relation to the social, the personal with the historical, the inner (imagined) and the outer (physical).¹⁰⁰ My own interest in memory work is with that which makes us remember – the materially visible prompts, traces and other reminders of the past – and how a visual art practice can direct attention to such things. In other words, how an art practice can lay the foundation for subsequent remembering.

In my understanding of the term, the distinction between *memory work* (verb) and *work of memory* (noun) is significant. While memory may be known to be uncertain, a work of memory implies completion or at least the desire for completeness. In the context of the personal, a work of memory would offer such completeness in the form singularity or self-containment on the part of the narrative creator. A self-formulation reliant on the spontaneous recollections of moments as they occur solely in the mind. Therefore, subject to the possibility of editing to suit subconscious desires for a generally untroubled and seamless linear narrative.¹⁰¹ Memory *work* suggests something more pliable and continuous: a process as opposed to a resolution. Memory work is also a more rational and directed practice arising out of various acts and methods of remembering that themselves inform and shape memory. A memory work can be transformative for the rememberer and it can also change how something is remembered.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Global Positioning System is a good example of a navigational aid that does not necessarily furnish knowledge of geography. In fact, on the contrary as research indicates that GPS reduces cognitive mapping. See: Greg Milner *How GPS is Changing Our World* (Granta, London 2017)

⁹⁹ The figurative reference of the 'field' is Ingold's and not mine although it should be easy to see how his thinking appeals to my own search for the understanding of personal narrative through landscape engagement. The notion of guided rediscovery may also help further explain how an observation of landscape through the supposedly objective qualities of photography get problematized by subjectivity.

¹⁰⁰ Kuhn *Family Secrets* ... 1-9

¹⁰¹ Kuhn *Family Secrets* ... 1-9

¹⁰² In *Matter and Memory* Henri Bergson makes the distinction between 'pure memory' that is spontaneous and hallucinatory, and 'memory image' that has a more direct relationship – perceived or imagined – through sensory experience with the world external to the body (including encounters with mnemonic aids). New York 1912/2004. See also: Paul Ricoeur *Memories and Images* 2004 reproduced in *Memory* ed. Ian Farr (Whitechapel/MIT, London 2012) 66-70

According to Kuhn, memory work is a form of enquiry akin to detective work, or indeed archaeology, that proceeds along a trail of evidence. The process is open to external influences and the possibility that not only are parts of the story missing but that there could be more than one story to tell or discover. In the context of art practice memory work functions similarly to historiography wherein the manifestation of memory through the process of writing, or a chronicling through images, is conscious of the history of its own production and also a product of that history and tradition.¹⁰³ The practicing of memory itself shapes the stories that we tell of ourselves. Similarly, an art practice concerned with memory, becomes an act of remembering.

Informing my own memory work is the question of what occurs when associative memory is brought into a creative art practice that is self-conscious and reflexive? Material artworks can accommodate multiple memories: the representation of something that is remembered and at the same time the trigger of additional memory of supplementary things. It is pertinent to ask what further memories may be generated and whose memories? Within the intentions of practice, as well as a trail of evidence I would like to propose the possibility of a relay as material fragments are passed from one remembering subject to another. At the point of exchange, while maintaining something of the originators memory, the subsequently 'appropriated' fragment becomes part of the formation of a new memory.

Kuhn notes that, remembering makes no insistence on the presence of the rememberer at the original recollected event. Events and place outside of one's immediate experience can be absorbed into one's own remembering. With constantly changing perspectives formed in the current moment, memories are less deposited as an archive but rather are carried along the journey of our lives. Perhaps it is only when look back can we make sense of what we carry with us?¹⁰⁴

Carrying something of the past forward through time to make sense of its historicity is central to the formation of my visual practice and historical enquiry. Outlined in this chapter have been elements of theoretical context and research method in which my practice is situated and can aid my thinking.

¹⁰³ The possibilities of art practice as form of historiography is proposed by Dieter Roelstraete in reference to the essay (primarily on the work of Matthew Buckingham) *Artist as Historian* by Mark Godfrey. *October* No 142 (Spring 2007). "My preference for naming the artist as historiographer rather than historian is related to the centrality of writing (or, more broadly, narrating in art practices...one could think of these practices' relationship to the act of chronicling – the production of texts as much as images, or production of imagery conceived as text." Dieter Roelstraete *Field Notes* ... 20

¹⁰⁴ Kuhn *A Phantasmagoria of Memory in Family Secrets* ... 107-108

Methods of the archaeological and memory work demonstrate how the subjectivity of such a practice can shape the nature of remembering and form of the past that is being carried forward. These are also discourses within which a practice may be situated. Their value is in providing context for the diverse ventriloquism of photography that an artist like James Welling speaks of and I feel articulates my worn work.¹⁰⁵

My own practice involves the making of new photographs and collecting of old photographs which are brought together to form an evolving image montage. Photography is an ideal vehicle for carrying the past and conceptually opening it up for reconsideration. Recent discourses of contemporary art have highlighted the allegorical value of photographs extending their potential meaning beyond the record of specific events. In the contexts of art and the archaeology photographs are both records of events and objects to be remembered. Like memory itself they are fragments that temporally and spatially are interchangeable: their meaning mutable and transferable.

What needs to be recognised though is that these theoretical discourses do not determine the existence of such a practice or fully explain its meaning. Accompanying any practice immersed in the historical discourses and traditions of art will be hitherto undefined individual circumstances from which the practice will emerge and continue to have significant influence. This is demonstrated in the practices of Mark Dion and James Welling together with William Christenberry and John Spinks who with Welling will be discussed in chapter four. Giving historical account and theoretical explanation of any art practice is very much an exercise in post-rationalisation, and this study is no less so.

In later chapters I will consider more closely the circumstances of my childhood environment and how this childhood experience has informed how I developed an engagement with landscape and history through photography. Before doing so in the next chapter I consider more closely how childhood can form the context from which a methodological framework of historical enquiry may arise. In doing so I turn to the work of Walter Benjamin whose own varied method he developed out of his recollections of childhood and the phenomenological experience of material environment. It is a method that transforms personal memory of origins into historical reflection conscious of

¹⁰⁵ James Welling in conversation with Hal Foster in *James Welling: Metamorphosis* Exh. Cat. (Stedelijk Museum voor Kunst, Ghent, Kunstforum Wien 2017) 143 [See: Section One, Introduction, Note 12]

the materiality and language of practice. A method that bridges theory with and attitude of action.

Interlude 2

Blackburn Beverley

Characterising the landscape my father used to farm is a series of high chalk ridges and deep dry valleys that rise up from the Avon valley. Running from west to east any one of these ridges offer a commanding view across further ridges that give the impression of a flat open plain stretching south towards Salisbury.

It is in the direction of this view I am inclined to orientate my camera whenever I visit the landscape of my childhood. An open plain with vaulting sky full of history and memory. In the centre of the frame far on the horizon some seven to eight miles away, can be made out the distinctive presence of a large building with a pitched roof. To those who know, this massive building is the unmistakable Boscombe Down Weighbridge Hangar that has dominated the Wiltshire skyline near the town of Amesbury since 1955.

During the 1960s RAF Boscombe Down was home to the then the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment and remains to this day an important centre for defence technology development. Many a notable and most up to date, if not futuristic, aircraft will have flown and be tested at Boscombe Down. There is however, only one aircraft for which I have the most definite and vivid memory of witnessing as a child from my vantage up on the Downs. This was the most distinctive and instantly recognisable barn-like hulk of a Blackburn Beverley as it banked over Boscombe Down prior to landing, or possibly just after taking off. Seen at such a distance The Beverley was probably the only plane easily identifiable apart from the delta wing of Vulcan Bomber of which one or two would also have lived at Boscombe Down.

Unlike the slick aluminium supersonic jets that graced the skies of the new post second world war era there was nothing futuristic about the Beverley. Bulky, seemingly ungainly and definitely slow, the Blackburn Beverley was very much like a cartoon character of itself. Not unlike the crude aircraft a young boy at the time might make a drawing of, which perhaps was one of the reasons for the affection the Beverley seemed to elicit. (The distinctive shape can be recognised in the military aircraft that sometimes appear in Steve Bell's comic strip *If...*) At the time of its introduction in the early 1950s the Beverley was the largest aeroplane the RAF had ever acquired, designed to meet the need for airlifting large quantities of equipment and personnel.

I now know that on that occasion what I must have seen was aircraft XB261 the A&AEE's very own resident Beverley that was used, among other things, for testing various 'drop' techniques on the army ranges of Salisbury Plain. – Something inside me says my memory is close to the time my family left Wiltshire and this was possibly one of the last opportunities to sight a Beverley. What I didn't realise at the time was that the Beverleys time in general service with the RAF was already a thing of the past. XB261 was the last active RAF Beverley and made its final flight from Boscombe Down in 1971.

The Beverley's years of active service coincide with Britain's post-war withdrawal 'from Empire' and contraction of military presence in areas including the Middle East and Far East. The awkward, bumbling Beverley seems suitably synonymous with bungled campaigns like Suez and Aden. It must not be forgotten though that the Beverley alongside British service personnel played significant roles in a number of successful operations delivering aid and evacuating victims in places of natural disaster and conflict.

As well as one of the last gasps of colonial influence Aden was one the last operations of active duty for the Beverley; proving itself ideally suited for the rugged conditions and short landing and take-offs required in the deserts of the Yemen. In somewhat undignified fashion the British finally departed Aden – apparently in the dead of night – in November 1967. It would have been in the year leading up to this date that I remember Upavon Primary School receiving a large influx of 'RAF kids'. As with many British military postings overseas the families of many service personnel were also accommodated and there were a number of schools including and a primary school at RAF Khormaksar which the main British base in the region and strategic staging post between the UK and the Far East.

Although the name Aden has always stuck in my mind, I didn't actually know where Aden was until much later in life. In keeping with my interest in making connections between places, an ideal world I would track down the site of the former RAF school. Even if it is now only an empty plot. However, given the very sad and devastating situation that currently befalls the Yemen I do not believe I will be making a visit any time soon.

In the meantime, to gain a further knowledge of Aden I resort to mostly sourcing photographs, studying maps and other historical material. This includes a black & white press print issued by the British government in April 1967 to suggest all was under control and life was normal for its service personal. This was at the height of the Aden Emergency prior to final British withdrawal in November that year. The image shows children on their way to the RAF primary school.

I have also amassed a collection of 35mm slides taken around 1966 by what is believed to be a fireman working at RAF Khormaksar. Not the most accomplished with a camera although this doesn't really matter for the true plane-spotter that this person clearly was. I subsequently learn that during the Aden 'Emergency' of the 1960s RAF Khormaksar was the busiest of all RAF bases. Many of the flights to and from Khormaksar, including those by the Beverley, would have come under the auspices of RAF Transport Command which during this period was headquartered at RAF Upavon.

During my childhood in Wiltshire I must have seen Beverley's on more than one occasion. However, the image of XB261 turning over Boscombe Down is the only sighting I clearly recall. Interestingly though, I can now look at an original colour slide, taken by someone unknown, of a Beverley in the warm evening light at RAF Khormaksar and both the scene and atmosphere seem curiously familiar. It is as if I now possess the memory of Aden that was originally captured by this unknown person. I feel able to recall a place that I have, in fact, never visited.

On 6th December 1967, two Beverleys, on their way to decommissioning, made a commemorative final fly-past over RAF Upavon. If I witnessed this event I will never be certain, it was a Wednesday and I would have been at school.



RAF Beverley at RAF Khormaksat circa 1966. From an original anonymous 35mm slide.

Chapter Two

Childhood Memory and Walter Benjamin

Childhood does not lie at peace in the shadows for any of us, and needs more than a rich satisfaction of prose to say "Yes that's how it must have been".

Dennis Potter¹

The previous chapter outlined a theoretical context for historical enquiry and its implications to an individual art practice manifest in photography. Analysis of the archaeological and memory work indicates the significance of the subjective in how the past is formed and understood in the present. This chapter focuses on the work of Walter Benjamin who offers a compelling argument for the subjectivity of childhood memory to be a valuable basis for a method of situating the autobiographical self in relation to historical narrative.

To borrow the often-quoted expression closely associated with Benjamin's thinking I will be mapping out my own "constellation" of considerations drawn from his extensive writing.² I do so to establish a framework of conceptual thinking and provide theoretical methodological 'tools' to support my own archaeology of childhood. Already the subject of considerable academic study, with the aid of literature from Benjamin scholars notably Esther Leslie, Max Pensky and Gerhard Richter, I have been able to identify qualities of Benjamin's thinking and method that have been pertinent to the development of my thesis and understanding of practice.

The chapter examines Benjamin's thinking on memory and history, space and time as it emerges from his childhood experience. Or, perhaps more accurately, how Benjamin used his memory of childhood as the basis for a philosophical reconsideration his own historicity. The focus is on the *Berlin Writing*.³ The

¹ Dennis Potter Review of *Leonard Park Green Wood*, *Sunday Times* 1962 Reproduced in Dennis Potter *The Art of Invective: Selected Non-fiction 195-94* (Oberon, London 2015) 35

² "...image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a new constellation." Walter Benjamin *The Arcades Project: On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress (N2a,3)* in *The Arcades Project* eds. Howard Eiland, Kevin McLaughlin (Harvard, Cambridge Mass 1999) 462

³ The term *Berlin Writing* is used by David Darby in *Photography, Narrative, and the Landscape of Memory in Walter Benjamin's Berlin* in *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* Vol75 (No 3 2000) 210-225

specific texts are: *One-way Street* (1925-26),⁴ *Berlin Chronicle* (1932)⁵ and *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* (1934).⁶ Further texts of interest include earlier less autobiographical essays on childhood⁷ and parts of *The Arcades Project*; the dense and extensive unfinished work that develops further the methodological style of the *Berlin Writing*.⁸

Benjamin's method was very distinct from academic philosophical writing of the 1920s and 1930s, arising in part from his work as a critic, radio broadcaster and translator of French texts including Proust and the poetry of Baudelaire. Although overlooked by intellectual circles during his lifetime, the variety and sometimes contradictory nature of his writing seems now to be an appropriate new mode of thinking for the ideological disorientation being felt during 1920s and 30s Europe.⁹ Following the First World War technologically aided rational notions of human progress had lost credibility and Benjamin was not the only philosophical thinker looking for new answers to existential questions in the reality they found themselves.¹⁰

Benjamin's response to the questions of being was a fusing of theoretical thinking with everyday observations that placed phenomenological experience at its centre. Of particular value is how Benjamin developed a visual and spatial quality of writing developed from his autobiographical account of childhood. It is a method rooted in the memory of observing material things and the physical interaction with objects. It has been suggested by Max Pensky that Benjamin's phenomenological experience of material culture led to a way of "making a materialist historiography" in which historical 'truth' is realised by the assembly and reassembly of "recovered bits of historical appearances."¹¹

In the early 20th century works of Einstein and Freud had already undermined a teleological reason-based account of history. The significance of what Benjamin draws out is that history can no longer be thought of as simply 'the

⁴ *One-Way Street* in Walter Benjamin *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (NLB, London 1979) 45-106,

⁵ *Berlin Chronical* in Walter Benjamin *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (NLB, London 1979) 293-348

⁶ Walter Benjamin *Berlin Childhood around 1900* trans. Howard Eiland (Harvard, Cambridge Mass 2006)

⁷ *Old Toys* (1928) in *Selected Writings* Vol 2 eds. Michael Jennings, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith (Harvard, Cambridge Mass 1996) 98-102. *Cultural History of Toys* (1928) in *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings* Vol 2 ... 113-116. *Toys and Play* (1928) in *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings* Vol 2 ... 117-121

⁸ Walter Benjamin *The Arcades Project* eds. Howard Eiland, Kevin McLaughlin (Harvard, Cambridge Mass 1999)

⁹ In explaining the burgeoning relevance of Benjamin in the late 1960s/early 1970s, Berger suggests a pressing "need in us which Benjamin now answers and which, never at home in his own time, he foresaw." John Berger *Walter Benjamin* in *John Berger Selected Essays* Geoff Dyer ed. (Bloomsbury, London 2001) 186-190.

¹⁰ See: Wolfram Eilenberger *Time of The Magicians: The Invention of Modern Thought 1919-1929* (Allen Lane, London 2020) Eilenberger aligns Benjamin with Ernst Cassirer, Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein as revolutionising philosophical thinking during a critical period of European history. Each is heavily influenced by the trauma of the First World War and aspects of their differing social and intellectual lives.

¹¹ Max Pensky *Method and Time: Benjamin's dialectical images* in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin* David S. Ferris ed. (Cambridge University Press 2004) 180

past', but as an emergent and fragmented temporality in the present. In *Theses on the Philosophy of History* Benjamin remarks that unlike "Universal History" which is "additive" mustering data to "fill empty time", materialist historiography is "constructive".¹² The centrality of the self is critical. "A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines the present in which he himself is writing history."¹³

Pensky argues that throughout his life Benjamin struggled with theoretical accounts of historical progress and believed that theory in general remains too dependent on the stabilized intentions of the theorist.¹⁴ Historical interpretation is much more a matter of method, and in Benjamin's case one with a distinctly visual sensibility. Hence an attraction to the unconditioned mind of the child whose imagination does not contemplate the material world empirically but "creatively in feeling" unencumbered by the determinism of adulthood.¹⁵ Significant is how the narratives of a child's story-making brings imagined life to material objects and environments.

Pensky identifies distinctive elements that develop in his early writing and political interest in youth.¹⁶ Firstly, there is the notion "time differentials" in the form of interruptions and discontinuities that operate against the predominant version of chronological time. Secondly, the idea that these time differentials are contained in, or expressed by, fragmented moments and objects otherwise overlooked as immemorable in the context of historical time. Critical is how this alternative temporality is experienced in sudden arresting "focal points" of redemptive fulfilment that emerge from the material sediments of history; what Benjamin refers to as "dialectical images".¹⁷

Giving articulation to the underlying combined methods of *observing*, *collecting* and *making* that inform my practice and discussed in Chapter Four,

¹² Walter Benjamin *Theses on the Philosophy of History* in Walter Benjamin *Illuminations* ed. Hannah Arendt (Fontana, London 1992 [1973]) 254

¹³ Benjamin *Theses on the Philosophy of History* ... 254

¹⁴ Pensky suggests Benjamin is unwilling to commit to the historical determinism of Marx or Hegel. *Method and Time* ... 180

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin *A Child's view of Colour* in Walter Benjamin *Collected Writings Vol 1 1913-1926* Marcus Bullock, Martin Jennings eds. (Harvard, Cambridge MA 1996) 50

¹⁶ Pensky *Method and Time* ... 191-193 Prior to the First World War Benjamin was briefly involved in the so-called Youth Movement that aimed to educational reform. He soon, however, became disaffected especially with any assumptions of socially conceived individuality and service to the state. Or, perversion of the 'creative spirit'. See: Eric Downing *Photography, Archaeology, Psychoanalysis and the Tradition of Bildung* (Wayne University State Press, Detroit 2006) 180-182

¹⁷ Although in *Method and Time* Pensky is referring mostly to *The Arcades Project* that includes Benjamin's ideas of 'redemption' and 'Messianic time' are taken from *Theses on The Philosophy of History* completed in the Spring of 1940 and just before his untimely death.

in this chapter focus is given to Benjamin's fascination with the technologies of looking, childhood play and the collecting of objects. A further notable characteristic of Benjamin's methodology of practice is a distinctive spatialisation of memory that is itself suggestive of the spatial and temporal experience of the child. It is out of this sensibility that the concept of the dialectical image can be given particular form: an 'emergent' image combining otherwise spatially and temporally disparate elements that together create a possible moment of synthesis between a present *now* and past *what-has-been*. Attention is given to the dialectic image in my thesis because it becomes helpful in understanding a remapping of childhood memory across a diversity of photographic images as they are gathered into a singular work. A specific account of dialectical image, as I understand it to mean, in relation to key images in my research is given at the end of this chapter.

The value of Benjamin's writing extends beyond the particularities of method, his concepts of historical materialism. As indicated in chapter one, further aspects of his thinking have also contributed significantly to contemporary art discourses. My thesis, however, is not a reanalysis of Benjamin in the terms of visual practice alone. And it is not necessary for me to provide a further reworking of what is already a widely referenced discussion.¹⁸ It is the case though, that like many other contemporary visual artists before me, including Mark Dion, Benjamin's writing has aided thinking about my own work within wider historical narrative. To find interest in Benjamin's thinking does not have to mean making further contribution as to what has been otherwise referred to as "hermetic" Benjamin debate.¹⁹

I liken my relationship with Benjamin to that of American novelist and screenwriter Larry McMurtry. In *Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen* a relationship is drawn between Benjamin's childhood in metropolitan Berlin with McMurtry's own in the remote plains of western Texas.²⁰ McMurtry recognises a universality in Benjamin's attempt to write about "world - as

¹⁸ In 1998 it was noted by Peter Osborne, "More books on Benjamin, and still the pile grows... Benjamin's prose breeds commentary like vaccine in a lab." Peter Osbourne *Philosophizing Beyond Philosophy: Walter Benjamin Reviewed in Radical Philosophy* 88 (1998) 28

¹⁹ See: Alex Coles Introduction to *The Optic of Walter Benjamin* ed. Alex Coles (Black Dog, London 1999) 9. The volume also includes an interview with Mark Dion.

²⁰ Larry McMurtry *Walter Benjamin at The Dairy Queen: Reflections at Sixty and Beyond* (Simon & Schuster, New York 1999) McMurtry is a writer who articulates another significant romance of my life: the American West and the road trip. Undertaking long road trips in the USA are an essential element to my practice of photographing North American Railroads. Interestingly McMurtry wrote *Walter Benjamin at The Dairy Queen* at a similar age to I am completing this thesis. Suggesting to me the value of Benjamin to autobiographical reflection from a position of late middle age. Given a choice reading material, at any point during decades since my art school education I would have always chosen McMurtry over Benjamin.

opposed to European – history”.²¹ He realises the history of 20th century West Texas is also subtly inflected by technical modernity and war. Narrative can be extracted from the apparent emptiness of landscape geography as it can from the density of European culture. That is, if one observes closely enough - “stay in one place long enough or return to the same place long enough”- some interesting connections and “ironies” can accumulate.²² Like Benjamin, McMurtry very eloquently weaves his childhood experiences on a ranch into the methods of writing, after all “...what is [writing] but a herding of words.”²³

Perhaps part of Benjamin's appeal, as McMurtry suggests, is because he is “erudite (though not scholarly)” making it easy to apply his thinking to one's own experience.²⁴ In realizing Benjamin's value, I have been drawn to the notion of “inheritance” proposed by Gerhard Richter, whereby Benjamin's “legacy” is not received as a “self-evident given” but remains on “open question”.²⁵ What is passed on is only a selection. What is received is a choice. The true meaning of an inheritance is not in receiving what was intended when written but rather what it means to the person inheriting. The act of inheriting is a form of resistance to closure and completion of meaning. Benjamin remains a figure onto whom it is easy to project one's own ideas. By embarking upon a process of rereading and reworking Benjamin's *Berlin Writing* I am able to prescribe my own value to his work and establish its particular relevance to a specific body of research.

The Berlin Writing

Writing in his late thirties about the memories of childhood, Benjamin began developing a methodology that could help him theorize the act of remembering as he set out from the position of exile “to bid a long and perhaps lasting farewell to the city of my birth”. His childhood experienced at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in the homely environment of a middle-class Jewish family in Berlin would also help him articulate the wider historical condition in which Europe was finding itself during the 1930s. As at the start of the century some thirty years earlier, Europe was again at a pivotal moment and the promise of modernity was turning into something far less stable and more destructive.

²¹ McMurtry *Walter Benjamin at The Dairy Queen* ... 23

²² McMurtry *Walter Benjamin at The Dairy Queen* ... 29

²³ McMurtry *Walter Benjamin at The Dairy Queen* ... 54

²⁴ McMurtry *Walter Benjamin at The Dairy Queen* ... 23

²⁵ Gerhard Richter *Inheriting Walter Benjamin* (Bloomsbury, London 2016) 1-14

Of importance to my thesis is not the specific circumstances of Benjamin's early life but how it gives rise to his method of reflection. It would seem he turned to the theme of childhood memory not as refuge from the onslaught of historical events but rather in reconciling contradictions of history to facilitate their redemption. Benjamin believed true historicity is reflected above all in lived experience to which there is ever lasting attachment. In *Theses on The Philosophy of History* which he completed in 1940 Benjamin writes:

*Reflection shows us that our image of happiness is thoroughly coloured by the time to which the course of our experience has assigned us. [...] Our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption. The same applies to our view of the past, which is the concern of history. The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption.*²⁶

Manifest in *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* the method of Benjamin's reflection takes the form of carefully selected short interlocking vignettes; descriptive passages that he referred to as *Denkbilder*.²⁷ These written fragments of image can exist, and be read, both independently and collectively in a realm that defies specific temporality. In the mind of the reader, accounts of particular moments and particular places exist not in the form of chronological narrative prose but more as free-moving objects in space. It is a method that acknowledges memory is constructed out of a myriad of discontinuous recollections and events. Image "fragments" in the experience of remembering coalesce to form new "constellations" of narrative that interweave individual memory with collective social history.²⁸

Writing in his introduction to *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, Benjamin believes it possible that the "images" of a metropolitan childhood are perhaps capable of "preforming" later historical experience.²⁹ Esther Leslie suggests that this is the condition for creating a fusion of "disjunctive temporal elements" in the viewpoint of the child and also the adult. Benjamin inaugurates a historiography that "aligns the mechanisms of remembering with the process

²⁶ Benjamin *Theses on the of Philosophy of History* ... 254

²⁷ In 1933 Benjamin published a small collection of short reflections entitled Thought Figures in *Die Literarische Welt* under the pseudonym Detlef Holz. Under the heading *The Good Writer* Benjamin writes "The good writer says no more than he thinks." In *Selected Writings Vol 2* ... 723-727

²⁸ Benjamin *The Arcades Project: On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress (N2a,3)* 462

²⁹ Benjamin *Berlin Childhood around 1900* ... 38

of construction”.³⁰ This is a temporal axis that aligns present with the past to make the autobiographical recollection a more social “question of reflection”.³¹

In what Howard Eiland describes as the “dialectical method of montage”, Benjamin’s method becomes fully developed into the more highly considered philosophic-poetic mode; containing “simultaneous isolation and assemblage”.³² *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* is the more concise reworking of the somewhat unfinished and meandering autobiographical narrative of *Berlin Chronicle* and the earlier collection of *Denkbilder* and philosophical musings, *One-Way Street*. Of interest is how development of the *Berlin Writing* involves Benjamin experimenting with his own methods of writing. He is able to put into practice his own ideas concerning *constellation* and *fragment*. At the same time, he develops a prose style that reflects his growing interest in visual images.³³

The spatial and visual qualities of the *Berlin Writing* stand apart from Benjamin’s otherwise extensive output and is key to my own ‘inheritance’ of his work. Being much more personal in style and approach, these texts mark a clear departure from the author’s theoretical output up to this point. In the *Berlin Writing* Benjamin consciously and confidently locates his own personal experiences as the object of attention. It is the first occasion in his extensive oeuvre that Benjamin uses the first person.³⁴ The significance of this shift of emphasis has been widely speculated on and very often done so in respect to the circumstance of his political and cultural exile during the 1930s. To some Benjamin’s scholars, including David Darby, it is Benjamin’s attempt to find a vision and literary style aimed at depicting the changing social and physical landscape through which he was living.³⁵

³⁰ Esther Leslie *Overpowering Conformism* (Pluto, London 2000) 69 -72

³¹ Leslie *Overpowering Conformism* ... 69 -72

³² Howard Eiland, foreword in Benjamin *Berlin Childhood* viii

³³ In *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience*, Howard Caygill observes that with frequent reference to panoramas, maps, telescopes, photographs, the view through windows, Benjamin’s writing is informed by a model of experience that comes from principally the visual rather than the linguistic field. As such Benjamin’s methodology points towards a particularly visual spatialisation of thought that can have implications to other forms of practice other than writing. Howard Caygill *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (Routledge, Abingdon 2000)

³⁴ At about a quarter of the way through *Berlin Chronicle*, after ‘mapping’ areas of the city through particular childhood experiences and introducing the function of selected ‘guides’ to the navigation his reflections, Benjamin makes the following claim: “If I write better German than most writers of my generation, it is thanks largely to twenty years observance of one little rule: never use the work “I” except in letters.” Benjamin also suggests the entitlement of self-represented by “I” is a subject “not to be sold cheap” and its arrival in his writing in the form of childhood reflections is a strategy that has benefited from years “waiting in the wings” (A little further on in the same passage Benjamin asks the question of whether the age of forty is “not too young an age at which to evoke the most important memories of one’s life”) *Berlin Chronicle*... 304-305

³⁵ Darby indicates that the Berlin texts in their own right, tend to receive less detailed scholarly attention (prior to 2000) than the wider writing on ‘technological modernity’ of which the photography essays are key elements. While the *Berlin Writing* is popular among readers, this until more recently lack of more detailed attention may be, in part, because by their author’s own admission the Berlin texts represent something of an anomaly within the overall development of his writing not least because of they are among the most personally intimate and his only use of first

Benjamin's project of childhood reflection is inherently historical and not nostalgic. Leslie argues that Benjamin is "chronicling social history"; evading the sentimentality or individualism of writing of more straightforward autobiography.³⁶ Admitting to the salutary effect of remembering childhood from the position of exile, in his introduction to *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*, Benjamin explains how he seeks to limit the effects of nostalgia, and "the feeling of longing", through the "social irretrievability" of the past. But, not "the contingent biographical".³⁷ In the context of a practice that dwells on photographs from the time of childhood a critical point to be drawn is how Benjamin's social 'irretrievability' resonates with the photograph's inability to 'restore' the past. It is perhaps therefore not difficult to find some parallel between an intervention with the conceptual space of a photograph's temporality and Benjamin's method of 'image' writing.

In *Berlin Chronicle* Benjamin claims his own reminiscences do not amount to an autobiography. Standard autobiography, he believes, is "time, sequence and all the things that may constitute a continuous life". In his own reflections he speaks of "moments of discontinuities" gathered together in spatial dimension. The critical point being how the images Benjamin is recalling take on a form not as they may have been experienced during the moment that is being recalled but come into being "at the moment of their recollection".³⁸ In other words, as he recalled images Benjamin reconstituted them through writing executed in the present. The chronology of passing time is abolished similar to how Barthes suggests a photograph operates.

The play of words in the practice of writing is also key to the development of Benjamin's method. Previous to the *Berlin Writing* Benjamin wrote extensively about play in the wider context of pedagogy.³⁹ However, Richter notes that Benjamin more generally has a particular "apodictic" and "refractory" way of thinking and writing. In reading his work one can sense "penetrating and poetic tropes".⁴⁰ Leslie suggests play is at the heart of Benjamin's thinking about

person narrative. David Darby *Photography, Narrative, and the Landscape of Memory in Walter Benjamin's* ... 210-225

Also, in *The Colour of Experience*. Howard Caygill provides an account of the Berlin texts spanning the transition between two distinct phases, or "production periods" in Benjamin's output.

³⁶ Leslie *Overpowering Conformism* ... 71

³⁷ Benjamin *Berlin Childhood around 1900* ... 37

³⁸ Benjamin *Berlin Chronicle* ... 316

³⁹ As well as the texts on toys previously mentioned Benjamin also produced a radio broadcast in 1929 entitled *Children's Literature*. See: *Radio Benjamin* ed. Lecia Rosenthal (Verso, London 2014)

⁴⁰ Richter also observes "Benjamin's writing is replete with internal tensions and inconsistencies, a preference for apodictic statements over systematically developed deductions, and an idiosyncratic predilection for catachresis at the expense of generally accepted forms of argumentation." *Inheriting Walter Benjamin* ... 101

technological and social development reflecting his interests in childhood and the educational development of young adults. Benjamin sees playfulness and curiosity integral to the child's imagination as he or she opens up the world to exploration, discovery and wonderment.⁴¹

Technology and Dream Space

In the *Berlin Writing* can be found a number of Benjamin's early encounters with the technologies of communication and travel. In particular, those technologies that would have offered opportunities to traverse time and space with considerable ease: railways, the telephone and photographs.⁴² David Darby notes how *Berlin Chronicle* is punctuated by topographical references that take as lines of orientation from the S-Bahn urban railway.⁴³ Benjamin reflects how "No distance was more remote than the place where the tracks converged in the mist."⁴⁴ *Berlin Chronicle* also reveals that the visual and spatial development of his thinking stems not only from the experience of rail travel but also from the obsessive collecting of picture postcards many of which were received when he was a child, and from which he gains "numerous insights" into his later life including his fascination with travel.⁴⁵

Darby and Leslie both observe that in his childhood encounters with technology Benjamin formulates his theory of experience in the modern age.⁴⁶ It is also from here Benjamin develops his particular methodology giving spatial dimension to remembered moments. Technology provides a unifying frame of reference that blurs the temporality of past and present as well as the here and there. A relationship between image reproduction and notional 'travel' through the imagination is described further in *Berlin Childhood* in which Benjamin describes his experiences of the *Imperial Panorama*.⁴⁷

The Panorama was a rather extravagant 19th century apparatus of public entertainment that included a presentation of 'travel scenes'. The object of

⁴¹ See: Dolbear, Leslie and Truszkowski *Introduction: Walter Benjamin and the Magnetic Play of Words in The Storyteller* (Verso, London 2016)

⁴² Although the metropolitan railway and stereoscope would have been technological marvels at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, in *Berlin Chronicle* Benjamin remarks "...in this age when Railways are beginning to be out of date, [Railway Stations] are no longer, generally speaking, the true 'gateways' through which the city unrolls its outskirts as it does along the approach roads for motorists. [...] the same is true of photographs. Only film commands optical approaches to the essence of the city..." *A Berlin Chronicle*...298-299

⁴³ David Darby *Photography, Narrative, and the Landscape of Memory in Walter Benjamin's Berlin* ... 215

⁴⁴ Benjamin *Berlin Chronicle* ... 331

⁴⁵ Benjamin *Berlin Chronicle* ... 327

⁴⁶ See: David Darby *Photography, Narrative, and the Landscape of Memory in Walter Benjamin's Berlin* ... 210-225

Esther Leslie *Overpowering Conformism* (Pluto, London 2000) 69 -72

⁴⁷ Benjamin *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* ... 42-44

Benjamin's youthful attention, this was series viewing windows with stools set in a circle providing stereoscopic views onto an automated rotating set of illuminated images of distant places. Benjamin recalls a transparency of the town of Aix, a place he had not been to, and how "I tried to persuade myself that once upon a time, I must have played on the patch of pavement that is guarded by the old plane trees of Cours Mirabeau."⁴⁸ In *Arcades Project* Benjamin makes one of his many perceptive insights into the development of mimetic technologies of the lens by observing how the panoramas in their "tireless" attempts at imitating nature "prepare the way" not only for photography but also cinema. (And in the example of my own childhood, television.)⁴⁹

This framing of childhood in the context of the wider world is evidence demonstration of Benjamin's universal value. As McMurtry recognises, Benjamin's experience is applicable to childhood environments very different to that of early 20th century bourgeois Berlin. Indeed, the detail of the technology may change but, in essence a childhood encounter with the technology of 1900s Berlin and 1960s rural England may be very similar. Leslie observes how Benjamin begins to challenge one's own certainty about a known or remembered experience. *Here* feels like *there* and *now* feels like *then*.⁵⁰

Of note is how it is the imaginative promise of technology that informs the child's relationship to place. Reading Benjamin in this way suggests how, in retrospect, it is technology as much as anything that defines the historical circumstance in which the child finds him or herself. It is the marvel of technology that directs the attention of the child's gaze and their imagination to both past and future; the child is transported to beyond the boundary of their immediate terrain. Technology transports the child's imagination to faraway places and faraway times.

A process of spatialising memory - the displacement of specific coordinates of location and disruption of temporality - is central to Benjamin's concept of "Telescoping of the past through the present".⁵¹ For many readers of Benjamin, including Leslie, the telescope was an instrument that clearly caught his attention. Reference to optical devices appear regularly throughout Benjamin's

⁴⁸ Benjamin *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* ... 44

⁴⁹ Benjamin *Arcades Project* ... 5

⁵⁰ Leslie *Overpowering Conformism* ... 71

⁵¹ Frequently referenced, Benjamin appears to first coin the term in *Arcades Project* ... 471

writing as he observes how new visual technologies alter not only a view of the world but also a view of history and of visual culture itself.⁵²

The telescope, and its counterpart the microscope offer new, more forensic, ways of examining and therefore thinking about objects that are distant and close. In the telescope's temporal corollary, distant moments in the past are reanimated more closely and afresh; brought together on a unifying 'optical' plane. Within the frame of Benjamin's writing an allegorical lens gathers personal experience from childhood and adulthood together in equal focus.

Childish play is again central to Benjamin's intertwining of material environment, technology and quotidian experience.⁵³ Evidence of this can be found in *Mimetic Faculty* where he suggests children's play is everywhere permeated by mimetic modes of behaviour and its realm by no means limited to what one person can imitate in another. "The child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher, but also a windmill and a train".⁵⁴ Through mimicking the world around them the child not only replicates appearances but searches for alternative identities. In the *Butterfly Hunt* the young Benjamin, while transfixed by a butterfly witnessed in a park, in his mind transposes himself with the butterfly which takes on the qualities of "human violation" (in other words a hunter).⁵⁵

It is through play the child insinuates his or her self with inanimate objects. The reanimation of energies latent in actual objects is a motif that occurs repeatedly across the small vignettes that Benjamin sketches out in *Berlin Childhood*. In *Hiding Places* Benjamin describes in expansive terms a child's mimetic relationship to the material spaces that enclose them at play. "The dining table under which he has crawled turns him into the wooden idol of the temple, its craved legs are four pillars."⁵⁶

⁵² Esther Leslie *Telescoping the Microscopic Object: Benjamin the Collector* in *The Optic of Walter Benjamin* ed. Alex Coles, (Black Dog, London 1999) in particular the section *Irregular (Re)Collections* 58-63

⁵³ Further insight into Benjamin's wider thinking on technology as an encompassing condition of being is provided by Leslie. She highlights a general corruption that occurs in the translation between the German *technik* and the English technology. *technik* transmits a more open sense as it embraces the adjective *technisch* emphasising the form of making and controlling as well as machines used in these processes. *technik* means technique and technics as well as technology which is their study. Therefore, as well as describing technological objects Benjamin uses the term *technik* to include both social and technical processes and conditions. Preface to *Overpowering Conformism* ... xii

⁵⁴ Benjamin *On The Mimetic Faculty* in *Illuminations* ... 160

⁵⁵ Benjamin *Berlin Childhood around 1900* ... 50

Also see: Sam Dolbear and Hannah Proctor *Cracking Open The Teleology: Walter Benjamin, Charles Fourier and the figure of the child* in *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* (Vol 24 No 4 2016) 495-505

⁵⁶ Benjamin *Berlin Childhood around 1900* ... 99

Although Benjamin suggests the mimetic faculty is less prevalent in modernity it nevertheless exists still in the perception of the young child and the formation of language. In his return to childhood, Leslie observes how Benjamin makes a critical link between a social-historical phylogeny and the development of the self.⁵⁷ Historical time is mapped onto the development of the individual; the phylogenetic onto the ontogenetic. Through play the child's utopian perspective parallels the primitive moments of capitalist technological development. Benjamin asserts that the real potential of new technologies results from the fantastic projections of children, as much as the experimental fantasies of early industrial progressivists. It is a process that defines the socio-economic formation of the epoch leading up to the pivotal moment of the First World War.

Throughout the *Berlin Writing*, Benjamin appears to express something of an ambivalence towards technology. He celebrates his childhood fascination with the promise offered by technology at the beginning of the 20th century. At the same time, he is increasingly concerned about a destructive potential and erosion of an existing culture. What we learn from this is further evidence that the return to childhood is not simply an exercise in nostalgic reflection. A telescoping of the time passed between childhood and the present means that to be looking at one is also to be examining the other.

The drawing together past and present into a continuous plain of focus is significant to my practice and, to borrow from James Welling, the development a varied photographic "vocabulary" within a single biographical "voice".⁵⁸ For example, to point a camera at a landscape redolent of memory is to not only be photographing the present now but to be imaging the potential of everything that has occurred in this place since the origins of that memory. To incorporate into a method of reflection a collected photograph is, in part, to fill that 'empty' space. (These are photography's 'archaeological' qualities discussed in Chapter One. See also: Interlude 6 *Salisbury Station*.) As a photographic voice is exercised, different images combine to continuously remake the past in the evolving present.

Welling provides further illumination on the optical transcendence of time offered by photography. He has likened the camera to a "time machine". The principal (pre-digital) technologies of lens, negative and paper allow the

⁵⁷ See Dolbear and Proctor *Cracking Open The Teleology ...* 495-505

⁵⁸ James Welling in conversation with Hal Foster in *James Welling: Metamorphosis* Exh. Cat. (Stedelijk Museum voor Kunst, Ghent, Kunstforum Wien 2017) 143 [See: Section One, Introduction, Note 12]

photographer to “create a photograph that could have been made any within the last one hundred years.”⁵⁹ One could further add that to work directly with material photographs is to also intervene with the temporality of their existence. This emphasis upon agency of method is reflected further in Benjamin’s thinking about the interaction with the material world that he sees so central to childhood experience, and to his making of an historiography. Benjamin’s use of the autobiographical also points away from a position that is purely objective, or passive, to one that is the active negotiation with a history formed during the time of childhood and remains carried in the present.

Collecting and Toys

Benjamin’s thinking is often seen as heavily informed by the pedagogic qualities of storytelling. In his 1936 essay on the Russian writer Nikolei Leskov - *The Storyteller* - Benjamin draws close comparison between the communication of narrative and the crafting of material objects. He suggests that there are two ways of telling stories; one is rooted in the experience of travel to faraway places; the other in knowledge in past local lore.⁶⁰ In doing so Benjamin likens storytelling to the traditions of the artisan craftsman whereby the natural habitat of the storyteller is equivalent to the milieu of the craftsmen’s Guild. It is at the Guild that the resident master craftsmen, who know the past and understand time, exchange experiences with travelling journeymen, who know distance and space.⁶¹

Leslie notes that the German word for the passing on of experience is *erfahrung*, and its root meaning is in the word for travel: *fahren*.⁶² The Guild is an environment in which is combined the “lore of faraway places” with the “lore of the past”.⁶³ The storyteller draws from received experience and transforms it into the experience of those hearing the tales. Experience is conceived out of practised knowledge of what is close at hand. The tactility of the hand becomes significant to the transmission of experience and wisdom of the storyteller/craftsman into a *thing*: a crafted object and the stories the object suggests. Benjamin informs us that storytelling “does not aim to convey

⁵⁹ James Welling in conversation with Hal Foster in *James Welling: Metamorphosis* Exh. Cat. (Stedelijk Museum voor Kunst, Ghent, Kunstforum Wien 2017) 141. Welling is referring to black & white photographs. Marked by my father’s colour slides my own historical frame is since the availability of colour photography.

⁶⁰ *The Storyteller* in *Illuminations* ed. Hannah Arendt (Fontana, London 1992 [1973]) 83-107

⁶¹ McMurtry draws an illuminating comparison between Benjamin’s craftsmen/storytellers and cowboys who at times of rest can be found whittling wooden sticks. Larry McMurtry *Walter Benjamin at The Dairy Queen ...* 27

⁶² See Esther Leslie *Walter Benjamin: Traces of Craft* in *Journal of Design History* (Vol 11 No 1 1998) 5-13

⁶³ Benjamin *The Storyteller...* 85

the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. The traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel.”⁶⁴

Transmission therefore occurs through the materiality of things (objects and the environment) and in the social processes of the manufacture of things. In Leslie’s reading, the language of communication is therefore broadly technological in the meaning of Benjamin’s *technic*.⁶⁵ In the context of technic technologies function phenomenologically and are not considered at variance with nature or the ideas of narrative. Within the context of historical time the desire to recover or redeem experience from the past is given a distinctly bodily quality. In the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin states “Our life it can be said is a muscle strong enough to contract the whole of historical time”.⁶⁶ The tactility of the hand, so key to childhood play and to the craftsman/storyteller is essential also to the ‘digging’ archaeologist. “To the process of rescue belongs the firm seemingly brutal grasp”.⁶⁷ The hand, however, does not work in isolation. Intrinsic to the craftsman and storyteller is an accord between the eye and hand. Through their relationship to thinking, the activities of seeing and handling exist in tandem.

The handling of crafted objects, especially in the form of toys, draws attention to the conceptualisation of the world in miniature. This is an important point of conceptualisation that informs my own childhood experience and practice development. (See: Interlude 3 *Airfix Generation* and Chapter 4 *Practice Methodology*.) Benjamin himself does not say too much about the miniature, or scale; perhaps only in passing with reference to the “Lilliputian” quality of some toys.⁶⁸ Benjamin is much more interested in traditions of crafting toys and their pedagogic qualities.⁶⁹ Scale however, is implied in much of his writing about play and environment.

Miniaturisation, or reduction in scale, can have universal and aesthetic appeal. Levi-Strauss observes how the miniature “gratifies the intelligence and gives rise to a sense of pleasure”⁷⁰ Reduction of scale reverses the need to understand an object as a totality of interconnected parts and often diminishes

⁶⁴ Benjamin *The Storyteller*... 91

⁶⁵ Leslie *Walter Benjamin Traces of Craft* ... 5

⁶⁶ Benjamin *The Arcades Project* [N13a,2]...479

⁶⁷ Benjamin *The Arcades Project* [N9a,3]... 473

⁶⁸ *Toys and Play* (1928) in *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings* Vol 2 ... 117

⁶⁹ See: *Cultural History of Toys* (1928) in *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings* Vol 2 ... 113-116

⁷⁰ Clause Levi-Strauss *The Savage Mind* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London 1981 [1972]) 24

certain dimensions and qualities of the real object like smell or temporal dynamics. Simplified in this way, the miniature extends our sense of power over the homologue of the thing, and consequently can be “grasped, assessed and apprehended at a glance.”⁷¹

There can also be a redemptive quality to the miniature. Bachelard remarks how the miniature allows us to be “world conscious without risk.” Curiosity is engaged without any fear or need to negotiate directly with the real object. The wild animal is tamed and the enemy aircraft no longer a threat. An exercise in “domination” that has “metaphysical freshness”. It detaches us from the surrounding in a manner that is particularly restful; allowing the imagination to be both “vigilant and content.”⁷²

Not only do children play with toys, they also collect them. Perhaps more accurately children collect all manner of things that become part of their ‘toy collection’. And the gathering of ‘material’ is for Benjamin as important as its potential fashioning into ‘objects’. Collecting is not only a cerebral activity he describes the activity in bodily terms. “Collectors are the physiognomists of the world of things”⁷³ Collecting is also inherently autobiographical. Setting a scene for his essays about play, cognition and the enchantment of objects, Benjamin was himself an avid collector of children’s books and toys. Many of his remarks about collectors and ideas about collecting could easily be about himself.⁷⁴

Although primarily about his own collection of books in *Unpacking My Library* (1931) Benjamin extols the broader virtues of collecting itself over any categorising principals of a given collection where any imposition of order is a balancing act of “extreme precariousness” between the presumption of knowledge and the pleasures of acquiring knowledge through the idiosyncratic means that the best collections represent. Contained in the life of a true collector is a “dialectic tension between disorder and order.” A condition that, naturally, has its origins in the imaginative scope of childhood.

In *Cabinets from Berlin Childhood* Benjamin writes “Each stone I discovered each flower I picked, and each butterfly I captured was for me the beginning of a collection, and, in my eyes, all that I owned made for one unique

⁷¹ Levi-Strauss *The Savage Mind* ... 23

⁷² Gaston Bachelard *The Poetics of Space* (Beacon Press, New York 1994 [1969]) 161

⁷³ Benjamin *The Arcades Project, The Collector* [H2,7; H2a,1] 207 The same remark appears in *Unpacking My Library: a talk about collecting in Illuminations* ... 62

⁷⁴ See: Benjamin *The Arcades Project, The Collector* [Convolute H]... 203-211

collection.” It is significant how Benjamin’s collection was at variance with his parents ordered storage of precious items in cabinets. The objects of his own collection “multiplied and masked themselves” in drawers, chests and boxes where “the things of childhood” could remain untidied. Benjamin informs us that to clear out this assortment of things would have involved demolishing a construction comprised of “prickly chestnuts that were spiked cudgels, tinfoil that was a hoard of silver, building blocks that were coffins, cactuses that were totem poles, and copper pennies that were shields.”⁷⁵

The transformation of objects, particularly those discarded by adults is key to the formation of an imagined ‘spirit world’ existing in parallel or beyond the ordered comfort of the home. Benjamin affiliates the child with the explorer and hunter as they seek the spirits sensed in things. In *Untidy Child* from *One-Way Street*, Benjamin writes that for the child “things happen as in dreams, it knows nothing is permanent.” To be held in the hand, examined closely, the collection becomes the locus of an imaginative enterprise.⁷⁶ Leslie notes how Benjamin’s observations extend beyond the “factuality” of the object under scrutiny. The child collector flaunts a charged, imaginative, romantic attachment to objects. Collecting is not the accumulation of inert objects but rather, “an imaginative transformation of objects into desired deposits”⁷⁷ Such deposits, one could easily assume, become the strata of memory that is excavated in later life.

Benjamin makes a critical link between collecting and memory: “A sort of productive disorder is the canon of involuntary memory, as it is the canon of the collector.”⁷⁸ Similar to Proust to whom he is referring, Benjamin believed that ‘true’ memory is involuntary and can arise spontaneously summoned up by objects encounters randomly.⁷⁹ Involuntary memory provides an unanticipated link between experience in the present (the encounter) and the one in the past (the moment or thing remembered).⁸⁰

The idea of involuntary memory and its composition of isolated elements corresponds with Benjamin’s ideas of non-linearity, disrupted temporality, fragment and constellation. Again, in *Unpacking My Library* Benjamin remarks that “Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector’s passion borders

⁷⁵ Benjamin *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* ...156

⁷⁶ Walter Benjamin *One-Way Street* ... 73

⁷⁷ Leslie *Telescoping the Microscopic Object: Benjamin the Collector* in *The Optic of Walter Benjamin* ... 64-66

⁷⁸ Benjamin *Arcades Project [H5,1]* ... 211

⁷⁹ The ‘Proustian’ moment that Barthes refers to. Cited in the Introduction. Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Vintage, London 1982/1993) 82

⁸⁰ Leslie *Telescoping the Microscopic* ... 68

on the chaos of memories”⁸¹ The past suffused in chance and fate is present in the “confusion” of the collected objects. In the *Arcades Project* he writes, “In the theory of collecting, the isolation, the segregation of every single object is very important.”⁸² He adds “the fact that the object is detached from all original functions of its utility makes it the more decided in its meaning.”⁸³

In Benjamin’s terms, collecting becomes a form of “practical memory”.⁸⁴ A totality of the collection is created as a reflection of the individual collector and in which things collected resist the “mediating construction out of large contexts.”⁸⁵ The integral character of this ‘totality’ is one where objects fall into a peculiar (idiosyncratic) form of “completeness” (the “incomprehensible connection”) whereby the “wholly irrational character of the object’s mere presence” is overcome through the integration into a new “expressively devised historical system”.⁸⁶ The act of collecting generates meaning where meaning may otherwise not be evident. Ultimately, the collector “brings together what belongs together.”⁸⁷

Mark Dion’s historical critique can be seen as an echo of Benjamin’s collector. The collection as historical system becomes a “magic circle” of “profound enchantment” for the collector whose every memory and thought becomes “the pedestal, frame, the frame, the base, the lock of [the collection].”⁸⁸ It is in this magic circle that the collector, as physiognomist, performs. The centrality of the individual collector is critical. Their relationship to the collection is distinctly phenomenological and in particular tactile.⁸⁹ Benjamin observes, “one only has to watch a collector handle the objects in his glass case. As he holds them in his hands he seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as though inspired”⁹⁰

⁸¹ Walter Benjamin *Unpacking My Library: a talk about collecting* in *Illuminations* ... 61-62. A number of the ideas explored in in this essay about Benjamin’s own collection of books, can also be found in *The Arcades Project, The Collector [Convolute H]* ... 203-211

⁸² Benjamin *The Arcades Project [First Sketches]* ... 848

⁸³ Benjamin *The Arcades Project [First Sketches]* ... 848

⁸⁴ Benjamin *The Arcades Project [H1a,2]* ... 205

⁸⁵ Benjamin *The Arcades Project [H2,3]* ... 206 Also contained in this passage: “The true method of making things present is to represent them in our space (not to present ourselves in their space).”

⁸⁶ Benjamin *The Arcades Project* ... [H1a,2] 204-205

⁸⁷ Benjamin *The Arcades Project* ... [H4a,1] 211 In a comparison with the ‘allegorist’ who relies on “profundity to illuminate meaning” Benjamin writes “Perhaps the most deeply hidden motive of the person who collects can be described this way: he takes up the struggle against dispersion. Right from the start the great collector is truck by the confusion, by the scatter, in which the things of the world are found”

⁸⁸ Benjamin *Unpacking My Library* ... 62

⁸⁹ Benjamin *The Arcades Project [First Sketches]* ... 848 Benjamin states that character of a collection resides in a “phenomenologically quite remarkable type of “completeness”.” Also “Collectors are beings with tactile instincts.” *The Arcades Project [H2,5]* ... 206

⁹⁰ Benjamin *Unpacking My Library* ...62

I believe a point to be made here is how the kind of collection that Benjamin is proposing - and Dion produces - does not conform to any pre-existing blueprint. Benjamin's enthusiastic collector has a relationship with the material world like that of a child: full of enchanted wonderment and opportunity for a tactile cognition and imaginative re-visioning. This is the "childlike element which in a collector mingles with the element of old age".⁹¹ In the hands of a true collector Benjamin implies that the acquisition of an object is its rebirth. He observes how children's modes of renewal extend beyond the "touching of things [and] giving them names" to include the processes of painting of objects, cutting out of figures and application of decals.⁹² A "renewal of existence" can be accomplished in a multitude of ways of which collecting is only one of many.

In the realms of a child's imagination and handling, Benjamin emphasizes the toy existing in detachment - "emancipation" - from the social conditions (and pedagogic intentions) of the toys design and manufacture.⁹³ A parallel can be drawn between a detachment from utility in the collected object and child's reimagining through play. A child's collecting of toys and other "objects on the margins"⁹⁴ is to give them a "renewal of existence".⁹⁵ In the hands of the collector, objects become more decided in their meaning. Likewise, in the hands of the child, each toy also becomes a "magic encyclopaedia" of knowledge.⁹⁶

It is noticeable how Benjamin does not discriminate over the content of a collection. Rather, he focuses on the nature of collecting itself.⁹⁷ In his analysis of child's play and its objects, Benjamin keeps returning to the simplicity of basic materials crudely fashioned, often discarded in places of adult work where things are made.⁹⁸ A concise formulation of this view can be found in *Construction Site* from *On-Way Street*, Children are "irresistibly drawn" to the detritus created by work. In appropriating the discarded children form "their

⁹¹ Benjamin *Unpacking My Library* ... 63

⁹² Benjamin *Unpacking My Library* ...63

⁹³ *The Cultural History of Toys* in *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings* Vol 2 ...115. The question of toys and pedagogy is addressed across this and two related essays also in *Selected Writings* Vol 2: *Old Toys* ... 99-102 and *Toys and Play* ... 117 - 121

⁹⁴ Benjamin *Old Toys* ... 100

⁹⁵ Benjamin *Unpacking My Library* ... 63

⁹⁶ Benjamin *Unpacking My Library* ... 62

⁹⁷ A good collection can include everyday objects like "pocket handkerchiefs, hand mirrors and the like" even a "misprinted tram ticket." Benjamin *The Arcades Project* [H2a,2]. ...207. Also referenced in the 1937 Writings *Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian* Knut Tranowski trans. in *New German Critique* No 5 (Spring, 1975) 27-58

⁹⁸ Benjamin *The Cultural History of Toys* ... 113-116 Benjamin traces the history of toys from before industrialisation, when they were produced on the side by artisans as miniature reproductions of objects for daily use. As such toys contained for children indications of the adult world. After the period of industrialisation in the 19th century toys became ever more distant from the adult world.

own material world, a small one within a large one and they do it themselves.”⁹⁹
The discarded debris of the construction site is also a landscape that has the potential to further exercise the child’s imagination and transport them elsewhere.

The imaginative spatial expansion through interaction with objects becomes as significant as existing narratives attached to individual objects. It is a key point of relevance to a practice gathering visual material oriented around certain objects which are the focus of childhood memory. It is not so much the specific narratives to which this supplementary material refers. Rather, it is an underlying method of interaction, extending and reshaping the scope of memory to incorporate the possibility of additional histories. Between collected objects and images, memory becomes remapped across an ever-expanding landscape of childhood. (See: Section Two, Interludes 1-6.)

Spatial Mapping of Memory - The Dialectical Image

There is a key passage in *Berlin Chronicle* when Benjamin recalls a moment of revelation occurring some years after leaving Berlin. Sitting in the Parisian Cafe Des Deux Magots he receives a sudden insight into his childhood memories. Benjamin describes being compelled to draw a “diagram of my life”. With “the force of an illumination” this mapping of social spaces based on “biographical relationships” reveals to him “in a flash ... their most vivid and hidden intertwinings”.¹⁰⁰

Benjamin informs us that the purpose of this account is to illustrate how the experience made particularly apparent to him “the kind of regimen cities keep over the imagination” and how “the veil ... woven out of our lives shows the images of people less than those of our encounters with others or of

⁹⁹ Benjamin *One-Way Street* ... 68
Walter Benjamin Selected Writings Vol 1 Marcus Bullock, Michael Jennings eds. (Harvard, Cambridge Mass 1999) 449. It is quoted here in full: “Brooding pedantically over the manufacture of objects (visual aids, toys, books) destined for children is silly. Ever since the enlightenment, this has been one of the stuffiest speculations of educational theorists. So obsessed are they with psychology, they cannot see that the world is full of the most incomparable objects that capture children’s attention and dictate what they do. What is more, some of those objects are very specific. The fact is, children have a special tendency to seek out any kind of workplace where the work being done quite clearly concerns things. They feel irresistibly drawn to the detritus created by building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry. In waste products they recognize the face that the material world turns to them and to them alone. In putting such products to use they do not so much replicate the works of grown-ups as take materials of very different kinds and, through what they make with them in play, place them in new and surprising relations to one another. In this way children form their own material world., a small one within a large one and they do it themselves. It is the standards of this small material world that need to be borne in mind in any attempt to create deliberately for children, unless one would rather have one’s own efforts alone, aided only by the concomitant props and instruments, show one the way to reach them.”

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin *Berlin Chronicle* ... 318

ourselves". Benjamin's revelation is in part that his map provided "the astonishing insights... into the differences of people's lives". Perhaps more critically is how the map emerged in his mind in figurative form. "This is what the sketch of my life revealed to me as it took shape before me on that Paris afternoon. Against the backdrop of the city, the people who had surrounded me [in Berlin] closed together to form a figure".¹⁰¹

This passage is a precursor to the notable aphorism included within *The Arcades Project*. The 'figure' becomes the much better-known 'constellation'. Similar to the earlier diagram, the constellation image emerges in a singular moment of realization:

*It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.*¹⁰²

The concept of the singular image is not unique to Benjamin.¹⁰³ Albert Camus in the essay *Between Yes and No* suggests that when reduced to a certain essence - a stasis - when "nothing leads anywhere any more... the whole of life can be summed up in an image" Camus writes in his early twenties about the event of a return from metropolitan Paris to his childhood Algiers which evokes a particularly vivid memory of his mother's poverty: the image of childhood returns and with it the "transparency and simplicity of paradise lost." It was from this writing that Camus would later famously announce that "a man's work is nothing but the slow trek to rediscover, through the detours of art, those two or three great and simple images in whose presence his heart first opened."¹⁰⁴

One can read Benjamin's moment of synthesis in the Café Des Deux Magots as illustrating his concept of the dialectical image, which he explores

¹⁰¹ Benjamin *Berlin Chronicle* ... 319

¹⁰² Benjamin *The Arcades Project (N2a,3)* ... 462

¹⁰³ Ronald Schleifer cites Benjamin's 'constellation' as analogues with metaphors used by further 20th century thinkers - Heidegger's 'collisions', W.B. Yeats 'arrangements', Paul Ricoeur's 'levels' as examples - to provide a more atemporal account of historical phenomena without the "simplifying reductiveness of cause and effect". Ronald Schleifer *Modernism and Time* (Cambridge University Press 2000) 76-78

¹⁰⁴ Albert Camus *Between Yes and No* in *Lyrical and Critical Essays* (Vintage, New York 1970) 30-39

throughout *The Arcades Project*. Pensky observes how in Benjamin's use of the term, his concept of the dialectical image remains largely ambiguous, in part due to a style of writing that is "characteristically elliptical and compacted form".¹⁰⁵ Benjamin does not himself offer any substantiating theory of the dialectical image or clearly expressed guide to its use within *The Arcades Project*. The dialectic image has therefore been the subject of considerable scholarship and also interpretation by academics and artists alike. It is here that Richter's notion of inheritance surely comes into play, opening up the dialectical image to continuous elucidation.

Of interest here is how Pensky's reading proposes the dialectical image as the "evocation of an alternative temporality" offering "image-based historical sensibility" as a more genuine "mode of historical interpretation."¹⁰⁶ Helping to explain this, it is often in context of architecture that a clarity of understanding to Benjamin's thinking can be found. He does not treat architecture as a series of isolated things measured objectively but as an interwoven subjective experience of an urban fabric. For some readers, Benjamin's attitude towards architecture "exists between antiquity and modernity", it is a relationship between "technology and art" that becomes the "expression of tension between the process of modernization and traditional aesthetic value".¹⁰⁷ Architecture is less the constitution of empirical space than a way of observing and comprehending a spatiality that is also temporal and historical.

Regarding the possibilities of Benjamin's graphic 'figure', Margaret Iverson suggests a diagram is a hybrid form of representation. As a graphic trace a map or plan is both a form of 'index' taking a registration of something unique (a set of objects for example) while incorporating the diagram's abstraction from what is immediately given in perception. Significantly a diagram can be a "graphic trajectory of an action" (or in Benjamin's example a series of actions or events). Across its spatial plain, a diagram or map also offers dynamics to what would otherwise be a "temporal unity of the pictorial field."¹⁰⁸

Reflecting upon these qualities of architectural space and the diagram it is possible to see how Benjamin's dialectic reforms the relationship between past

¹⁰⁵ Max Pensky *Method and Time: Benjamin's dialectical images ...* 177 Pensky, proposes as the most sustained interpretations can be found in Susan Buck-Morss *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (MIT, Cambridge Mass 1991)

¹⁰⁶ Pensky *Method and Time ...* 177

¹⁰⁷ Iain Borden, Joe Kerr, Alicia Pivaro, Jane Rendell, , *Things, Flows, Filters, Tactics in The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space* Borden, Kerr, Pivaro Rendell, eds. (MIT Press, Cambridge Mass and London 2001) 3-4

¹⁰⁸ Margaret Iverson *Photography Trace and Trauma* (Chicago University Press, Chicago and London 2017) 67

and present as no longer temporal and linear but spatial and multidirectional. Images become the “synthesis between what has been and now”. The implication for photography is that the ‘what-has-been’ does not reside in an ever-receding temporality. Rather the past contained in photograph is continuously renewed. Past and present are embraced simultaneously across the ‘constellation’ which extends beyond the spatial and temporal coordinates, or compositional frame, of any given photograph. This is an encompassing image that within consciousness arises in a singular moment of comprehension. Or, as Benjamin suggests, an arresting moment of “dialectics at standstill”.¹⁰⁹

As referred to in the introduction of this thesis, important to Pensky’s reading of Benjamin is the emphasis on dialectical image as a *method* - manifest in written and visual language - of *making* historiography. Historical ‘truth’ is realised objectively by the assembly and reassembly of appearance gathered from the past. Fragmentary and continuously formed in the present, the dialectical images create a more active critical condition where “past and present lose their familiar contours.”¹¹⁰

A year or two following his inspirational moment in the Café Deaux Magots Benjamin loses his drawn diagram. He tells us that he was never able to restore this diagram in the form it arose so vividly before. In having to recall the diagram, which was itself drawn according to memory “as series of family trees”¹¹¹ the new map that emerges in Benjamin’s mind takes on yet another and quite different form:

*Now however, reconstructing its outline in thought without directly reproducing it, I should, rather, speak of a labyrinth. I am not concerned here with what is installed in the chamber at its enigmatic centre, ego or fate, but all the more with the many entrances leading into the interior. These entrances I call primal acquaintances; each of them is a graphic symbol of my acquaintance with a person whom I met, not through other people, but through neighbourhood, family relationships, school comradeship, misunderstandings, companionship on travel, or other such [situations].*¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Benjamin *The Arcades Project* (N2a,3) ... 462. Quoted in Pensky *Method and Time...* 177

¹¹⁰ Pensky *Method and Time...* 180-181

¹¹¹ Benjamin *Berlin Chronicle* ... 319

¹¹² Benjamin *Berlin Chronicle* ... 319

It is interesting that it was not Berlin itself but in Paris some years removed, where Benjamin recognises the influence on his life of childhood environment. With a nod towards the 'flaneur', he tells us that it is Paris that taught him "the art of straying." Benjamin informs us that for a number of years he has "played with the idea of setting out the sphere of life...graphically on a map".¹¹³ Susan Sontag observes how in Benjamin's writing recurring metaphors of maps and diagrams, labyrinths and arcades, vistas and panoramas, evoke a vision of the city environment as well as a certain way of thinking about life. In providing a visual 'mapping' to the act of memory Benjamin situates himself in a childhood past conceived as a landscape through which he wonders and reflects. Throughout the development of the *Berlin Writing* it is in his childhood recollections that Benjamin also finds a figurative mapping of the subsequent development of his life and 20th century European culture.¹¹⁴

In the account of his labyrinth Benjamin makes more tangible the concept of 'constellation' as a discursive set of interconnected elements including objects, images, and experiences across space as opposed to time.¹¹⁵ Translating the temporality of past events into objects situated across a fixed plain introduces a particular visual spatiality to narratives of memory that also collapses time. Giving figuration to a narrative constituted as a material entity, ascribes memory discrete form.

Berger gives insight to the function of objects in Benjamin's grappling with the meaning of history. He suggests the antiquarian and the revolutionary (Benjamin was both) can have two things in common: their rejection of the present. Berger describes Benjamin's attitude as that of a "thinker who needed a fixed object in front of him in historic time, in order thereby to measure time". He did so to help him grasp the import of the specific passage of time which separated him from that object. This was in order to redeem that time from "meaninglessness". Mindful of Benjamin's insights into photography, Berger is also keen to point out that Benjamin's sensitivity to the dimension of time was not only "limited to the scale of historical generalization. He was equally sensitive to the timescale of a lifetime or to that of a second."¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Benjamin *Berlin Chronicle* ... 295

¹¹⁴ Susan Sontag introduction to Benjamin *One-Way Street and Other Writings* ... 7

¹¹⁶ John Berger *Walter Benjamin* in *John Berger Selected Essays* Geoff Dyer ed. (Bloomsbury, London 2001) 186-190.

Significant to the trans-figuration between Benjamin's first (lost) map and his second, is the formation of a mutable graphic 'memory trace' whereby the method of remembering (the original diagram) becomes part of what is remembered. The practice of creating a new graphic image itself changes the original figuration of memory. In turn, new figurative form is given to the act of remembering and subsequent *remembering*. The lines, shapes and scribbles on the paper generate their own architecture and landscape: places with character and narrative. In other words, the method by which a memory exists in the present - the method of its 'excavation' becomes part of the memory itself.

This is a further key point to the relevance of Benjamin's thinking to a visual; practice that is itself a form of excavation of memory. The chosen photographic methods of my practice, which are explained in more detail in chapter four inform and shape what is remembered and how. (And, as discussed in chapters one it is important to remember how photographs can be material artefacts and material traces.) Edward Casey explains that in the process of remembering, we are not simply visualising or recalling the past but creating impressions and development. The past provides the depth of memory, yet it is "continually reshaped in the present".¹¹⁷ Benjamin's making of a material personal historiography extends beyond the specifics of locations and events into a more generalised correlation between objects and places, in which their specificity of time and place become less important. Originating in the past moments of experience, when manifest in material form, including photographs, the process of remembering is carried beyond the present and into the future.

To sum up, it is possible to suggest that the form of the *Berlin Writing* takes on the character of a landscape: a structured space or set of spaces and objects which are navigated through the attempt to transcribe a chronicle of history. As Leslie notes people and events "dissolve into social spaces and speculations on things."¹¹⁸ This speculation on things returns us to Benjamin's medium of memory and the archaeological digging of one's buried past. In this 'medium' elements (or, fragments) are suspended and always with the potential for multiple interconnection in which they may form an emerging *constellation* of a story. Significant though is that in developing a narrative out of these

¹¹⁷ Edward Casey *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2000) 275

¹¹⁸ Leslie *Telescoping the Microscopic Object* ... 59

fragments there is no pre-existing map that draws their interconnections. It is through the application of a method of memory that mapping is formed.

It seems Benjamin is implying that memory does not seek out the past but rather the past is always present in memory; if not immediately recognized. The past, however it is constituted, lies imminent under the surface of the “medium of past experience”. Hence the metaphorical requirement of ‘digging’.¹¹⁹ Benjamin concludes that “genuine memory must yield an image of the person who remembers, in the same way a good archaeological report not only informs us about the strata from which the findings originate, but also gives account of the strata which had to be first broken through.”¹²⁰

Benjamin makes frequent reference to soil, strata and spades. Memories also become isolated “fragments” in the rarefied context of a “collectors gallery” awaiting insights from a later life. He insists that the “unearthed” (memory) fragments of the past must not, collectively, be treated as a “continuous narrative” in the story of life. Rather, to successfully produce such treasured findings requires also “fruitless searching” across the ground that is being dug. The digger’s “spade” must therefore be assayed in “ever new places”.¹²¹

It is not only the events of childhood that that are of interest, but also the objects and everyday activities that gave character and definition to the place in which childhood took place. Therefore, it is through wider probing with the ‘spade’, that stories parallel to one’s own will be emerge through the things that are discovered during the search. The full implication of Benjamin’s metaphorical ground testing is not only that what is unearthed can become what is remembered but how the method of remembering, the unearthing, becomes itself memory.

Dialectical Image in Practice

To conclude this chapter, I return to the dialectical image and demonstrate its operation as I understand Benjamin’s intended use of the term, and its significance to the development of my thinking through practice. This example is also an indication of the shift in my practice towards the reuse of collected

¹¹⁹ Walter Benjamin *Excavation and Memory* in *Selected Writings Vol 2 ...* 576

¹²⁰ Benjamin *Excavation and Memory ...* 576

¹²¹ Benjamin *Excavation and Memory ...* 576

photographs as a means of unearthing memory as Benjamin encourages: the *reaching into* the landscape of childhood and *grasping* at the past I expressed earlier in the Introduction. In the following two chapters I will give a more detailed account of my landscape of childhood and wider practice methodology.

The focus here is on two particular photographs that although not quite starting points for any chronology of my wider research nevertheless serve as a distillation of the historicity of my practice and 'bookend' the companion practice portfolio. These are colour slides from the 1960s acquired from very separate origins: my father's archive and an anonymous source found during the activities of collecting. Framing the wider conceptual scope of my practice these two images also provide key points of reference in a mapping across the wider conceptual site of practice and landscape of childhood. The dialectical nature of these two photographs is in how they condense space and time into a unified experience that is the meeting point of differing practice methods: a meeting point upon which the practice development of my research pivots.

In my own understanding of the dialectical image the two opposing possibilities of constellation - one expansive, the other condensed - are not excluding of each other. This is an example of the dialectic in operation. When applied to photographs singular images can exist independently and at the same time be part of a larger set of elements. What I am suggesting, is that the constellation forming in sudden moment of realisation - dialectics at standstill - may emerge when contemplating just one photograph. It is the experience of elements depicted within the image coming into alignment with elements of association outside of the photograph, including other photographs. And, critically these associations will form between multiple moments and places of memory and not only the circumstances in which the photograph was taken.

The first photograph conforms to the commonplace 'memory prompt' of the family photograph, although its character is perhaps not that usually associated with a family 'photo album'. Most notable is the absence of any family figure or hint of domesticity. My relationship with this image however, begins with the warm memories of family slide-shows held in the living room of our Wiltshire farm-house home around the time I would have been five to nine years old.

Part of the excitement and intrigue for me being so young was because most of the slides, all taken by my father, alluded to a time just before the formation of my lived memory. These included the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Aviation* air show at RAF Upavon in 1962, an event I attended as a fourteen-month-old baby.¹²² Among the more memorable images was the drama of two old traditional thatched barns being burned down.¹²³

Seen in the selected slide is an expanse of the Wiltshire landscape my father was farming when he took the photograph sometime around February 1962. It is one of at least three slides apparently taken on the same clear and bright winter's day revealing the extent of cultivation across the landscape. [fig 4.48] The image depicts a rather pale and seemingly empty, slightly undulating landscape. Due to its high chalk content the bare freshly cultivated soil appears bleached out by the bright sunshine. A few clumps of leafless trees dot the far distance. The sky occupying the top two thirds of the images is a clear pale blue with the faintest wisps of white clouds.

It is possible to sense the stillness of the clear frigid air. The one prominent feature is a Land Rover parked off-centre in the middle foreground; without any prior knowledge, it is easy to assume the vehicle belongs to the photographer. Compositionally the vehicle is perfectly placed within the picture frame and is the one part of the image in sharpest focus. To anyone familiar with the tranquillity of such a scene it is not too difficult to imagine the 'ticking' sound caused by the contracting hot metal of the recently switched-off engine.

The familial character of this and related images is determined by the landscape and its centrality to our family life. On any given day the workings of the farm could be witnessed through activity and traces found in the landscape. Knowing my father was responsible for this activity the area felt very much like our own special domain, delineated by the horizon line in my father's photographs and the escarpment boundary of my daily childhood view.

By contrast, the second selected photograph suggests somewhere quite different, very warm and full of noise. [fig 4.49] Dominating the frame, almost

¹²² June 16th 1962. Marking the 50th anniversary of the formation at RAF Upavon of the Royal Flying Corps, precursor to the Royal Air Force.

¹²³ As shocking as this may now seem, my father suggests it was not unexceptional at the time. Along with the farmland the buildings were owned by the War Department (latterly Mod) and the removal undertaken under WD's auspices.

in silhouette, and suspended in air, is a large, rather bulky and ungainly looking military aircraft. It is an example of the unmistakable Blackburn Beverley, the RAF's somewhat uniquely characterful heavy transport aircraft used extensively for logistical operations throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Viewed from relatively close range the Beverley appears to be taking off from a runway.¹²⁴ It is possible to imagine the loud high-pitched whirr of the propellers. The airfield one assumes is not in the verdant rural setting of an RAF base located in England. The immediate area adjacent to the runway appears unkempt and sandy. The quality of atmosphere suggests a very hot environment. Beyond the runway there is little to be seen apart from the evident haze of bright sunlight reflecting off what appears to be ocean water.

The slide is one of a large archive, acquired during my research from an anonymous source, documenting numerous aircraft at RAF Khormaksar, Aden in 1966. Taken by someone unknown at a location many thousands of miles from Wiltshire, what is interesting is how the image possesses a similar familiarity to my father's slides. Indeed, I can comfortably imagine this image projected upon the wall of our family home and seeming to be not out of place. In part, this will be due to the characteristics of the Kodachrome slide that during the 1960s unified a multitude of individual narratives across the world; images with a particular luminosity of saturated light that is as immediately recognisable as any content.

This image of the Beverley further resonates with my own memory in more specific ways. Although taken in the Middle East the bright hazy heat is also evocative of the memorable hot listless summer days of childhood experienced upon the Wiltshire Downs or at the seaside. Perhaps most significantly, the lumbering hulk of the aircraft, fixed in the momentary instance of the photograph, lingers in the air in the same way it does in my own memory of witnessing a Beverley in flight. (See Interlude 2 *Blackburn Beverley*)

Emerging through the shared familiar qualities of Kodachrome are parallel narratives of childhood that intertwine. These narratives correspond to the experiences childhood experience so important Benjamin. One is the knowledge of an immediate physical place the other a dream space beyond lived experience that is imagined through selected objects. Both images point

¹²⁴ At a casual glance the Beverley could also appear to be landing. However, comparison with related slides suggest the aircraft is indeed taking-off.

towards the remembered reality of landscape, aircraft, farming and family. They also suggest the possibilities of things less immediate and well known, places and events outside of the images themselves. These would be histories beyond the horizon of my childhood but to which the sky and aircraft would sometimes connect.

It is curious how photographs can 'remind' us of something not actually experienced. Identifying a spectral quality Kuhn suggests that such images are phantoms that inhabit and alter our memory.¹²⁵ This could be considered similar to the way in which images and technology infiltrated Benjamin's childhood imagination. Multiple memories and associated historical narratives begin to overlap and reform. In the example of the Beverley, the 'memory' of an event encapsulated in someone else's photograph becomes part of my own memory and shifting sense of historicity. As Kuhn observes, in the methods of memory work the remembering is never concluded.

Attributing memory to a photograph that is subsequent to the time and context in which the photograph was taken is arguably, is a further example of Benjamin's dialectics in operation. Especially so when an image, taken for whatever reason, becomes a particular point of focus in relation to wider history. We also learn from Benjamin that inherent to a practice of historical reflection is the placement of one's life within the dimensions of space as well as time. It is why emergence of the constellation may have visceral qualities. Originating in childhood experience it is the formation of an historicity expressed through the memory of bodily interaction with the physicality of environment and objects.¹²⁶

Photographs, Kuhn reminds us, may affect to show us our past, but how we use them is really about the now, not then. As traces of former lives, even 'landscape' photographs, are called upon as evidence in a never-ending process of making and remaking or ourselves now. As images and bodily experiences are carried through time, this process of renewal has significant implications for practice which my research attempts to evince. The distillation of these two photographs highlights the main motivations and directions of my practice.

¹²⁵ Annette Kuhn *A Phantasmagoria of Memory* in Annette Kuhn *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (Verso, London 1995) 105-121

¹²⁶ Janet Donohoe proposes that place is constituted in the lived, experienced world of the subject more than it is simply the setting for experience. Many places are embodied in such a way that we carry them with us and they inform our constitution of the world. Places inform a kind of body memory that can be awakened if we return to those places. Embodied memory also informs our experiences of future places including places and events 'visited' through images. See: Janet Donohoe *Remembering Places: A Phenomenological Study of the Relationship between Memory and Place* (Lexington Books, Lanham/London 2014)

One is towards a direct engagement with what is pictured and the other to utilise available resources to discover something of the places and histories that emerge through my memories and reflection. It is in terms of the latter that the Beverley has become increasingly allegorical.

In keeping with my practice to date, an immediate response has been to photograph the landscape of the Land Rover image. Indeed, an act of 're-photographing' the same views featured in four of my father's slides was one of the first coordinated productions of a discrete body of work, in the project my research. Such a response draws attention to a significant characteristic of my photography developed across a range of projects in which documenting a particular landscape is the core method. Constituted in some emotive memory, the primary subject, whether a rock festival or my father's presence in the landscape, is invariably elided. No matter how little the actual landscape may have changed, the object of focus, whether my father's Land Rover or the stage at a rock festival, is entirely absent.

The more significant impact of my research upon this practice is in how my reading of the archaeological and Benjamin has granted the licence for a more direct engagement with what has been absent. Through an optic of childhood memory, objects like the Land Rover and Beverley invite entry into the image and encourage imaginative travel beyond the depicted moment in time and space. A question that arises is how can the absent object be reformed out of memory and reintroduced to the site of its origins? One answer is in extending the revisiting of the sites of origin to more wide-ranging and distant places in the search of relevant objects or to record what is absent. In this respect the methods and process of revisiting become a significant part of the practice although this does not always have to mean actual bodily travel. In the case of the Blackburn Beverley and its association with Aden, the options are severely limited anyway.

No example of the aircraft remains extant and under current conditions it is not possible to visit the location of the former RAF base at Khormaksar. Recognition of these key considerations establishes a premise for adopting an alternative photographic 'vocabulary': the use of appropriated photographs. In the collecting of photographs, an 'excavation' serves to not only evidence the absent object but to manifest their status as 'things' within the wider context of place and history. Intervention with the photograph itself, through its appropriation and a method of *remaking* is a further re-establishing of the

object and its comprehension. The forming and reforming of the object's representation through new and multiple images generates a corresponding and growing volume of memories and knowledge that also alters existing coordinates of time and space.



fig 4.48



fig 4.49

Interlude 3

Constant Scale

In detail, I don't remember too much of my childhood bedroom, my own space separated from the remainder of the family home. I recall its location and approximate orientation, the position of my bed, the window, but not much more. I remember certain things, for example the wooden farmyard made by my father as a low-cost Christmas present to both my brother and I, or a favourite toy tractor. What I recall most are objects on the floor set out in a manner to reflect how they may appear in the real world. Childhood play is an early exercise in the fine-tuning in small-scale of apparent clutter.

The positioning of miniature farm buildings and machinery can be very particular. Farmyards possess their own particular spatial logic; finally balanced somewhere between order and disorder. (A composition that you would find very difficult to draw) Purpose built structures may be arranged along conventions of straight lines and right angles. Add-hock additions will pay more respect to pragmatics than design. Set against these structures will be placed machinery parked and angled according to casual convenience as much as any planned order.

The relationship between farmer and infrastructure is often one of making do and getting by. It is a process of gathering and stacking, of montage and collage. Against a neutral backdrop of hard-standing and barn cladding, the colour compositions created by farm machinery grouped together becomes a coded abstraction: blue (Ford), red (Massey-Ferguson), green (John Deere) and yellow (New Holland). A proper farmyard is one that has all the appearance of a child's room where toys have been casually discarded until next time. And no true parent would want to tidy up a farmyard.

Growing up on a farm meant that in many ways I had a fortunate childhood not least because many of my toys and aspects of my play reflected my father's work. There are not many professions today where this may be the case. These were toys that in some respects continued something of the pre-industrial age tradition of toy making where the master craftsman produced miniaturised versions of their own products. The toy tractor is possibly the perfect toy. While the contemporary tractor is a most sophisticated machine its function is essentially the same as is always has been: it pulls things behind it. And isn't that one of the most basic forms of play?

Every time the farm that my father managed acquired a new tractor or piece of farm machinery, he would often receive from the machinery dealer (TH Whites of Devizes)

complementary toy versions for us boys. (Britains Ford 5000) Within the composition of the miniaturised (pictured) version of the real world how that tractor is parked within its new home can become agonisingly precise.

It is also true that growing up on a farm I spent a lot of time outdoors. And it is possible I have clearer memories of this outdoor space than the interior spaces of the home or classroom - though I do remember clearly the family dining table upon which I made my Airfix models. Rather than seeking a physical space of my own, 'walled off' from the wider adult world around me, my childhood world of my own making was split from the adult world through miniaturisation. The garden and immediate farmyard would be part of the space in which I played creating my own miniaturised versions of the world around me. This private world of toys and models was in dialogue with the public adult world and interacted directly with the open outdoor spaces I found around me.

Venturing further afield in the real adult world (when taken on family outings) I would seek out real life prototypes of my miniatures in the fields beside the road or in the sky, and I would take elements of my miniature world with me - often select groups of plastic soldiers tucked in my pocket. When visiting the grounds of stately homes or exploring the Dorsetshire coastline the humps and crevices of an embankment became lookouts and hideaways for my own special forces to reconnoitre. Compelled to follow my parents along walks I would occupy myself by plotting alongside the path extensive railway lines for tiny imagined Triang-Hornby trains to trundle along. Literally a real model railway landscape built according to my own rules of landscape engineering and composition. (We are not talking about spinning round on a table top loop.)

This need to be accompanied by my toys was less so when it came to the vast open fields of the farm itself, where my father would often take my brother and I to witness and feel a sense of participating in what was going on. Sharing the bench seat of his Land Rover or, better still during harvest, in the cab of one of the grain carting lorries, we would be taken to vantage points from which we could survey the scene. Our father's domain was 3,500 acres of gently rolling Wiltshire down-land leading to the immediate horizon. It was space to which was not indifferent to me. We occupied this space and, significantly, it was a space in which my father played for real. It was landscape upon which, on a regular basis, my father effected change.

Why would I need my toys here? This was where toys and childish play came to life as real machines. Here too the activity of farming would have its own spatial qualities of play. The relationship between machine and landscape acted out according to conventions that has a young child I would have readily understood. A group of tractors or combine harvesters going about their business will always feel positioned in the correct manner. A roving constellation

whose ever- changing configuration is held in balance by an invisible gravity. Their relationship to each other purely pragmatic, and therefore perfect.

In a field, despite its informal shape, farm machinery behaves according strict conventions. A regimented logic cuts (literally) across the perceived natural order of the landscape. To the young boy who understands the pleasures of cutting and dividing, gathering or stacking the first incision of the plough or combine harvester, or the depositing of a bale, is the most thrilling of moments. Who needs to make drawings, cut or fold paper, play with building blocks at home when you have this spectacle in front of you?

Dotted throughout the landscape are occasional isolated buildings - mostly 'field-barns'. The positioning appears both casual and strategic, which to a degree they are. None of them look quite the same as another. How they came to be there one is not quite sure, although it is as if they have always been there (which in my experience is the case) and that their shape and location is the only way they could ever be. These structures become essential elements in creating a particular place providing orientation and articulation of the landscape. The surrounding topography comes into being because of their presence. Their purpose is largely known: for parking machinery or being filled with hay bales. However, the true narrative of their coming into existence remains invisible.

A military presence in the landscape is equally omnipresent. You are aware of it and (one assumes) it is aware of you. Like the field barns, aircraft hangars occupy the landscape looming above high points on the gently rolling plain. You can see the giant hanger at Boscombe Down some five to six miles away. Very mysterious and unknown in a way that a military installation is so good at being. (Apparently at the time the largest aircraft hangar in Europe.) Between here and there, RAF Netheravon where they do the sky diving. Your eye scans the sky in the appropriate place watching for the parachutes to open. (You know when the divers were about to jump because the DH Dragon Rapide that took them on the ascent would momentarily cut its engines.)

Above all was the 'camp' of RAF Upavon, the airfield that lay high on the shoulder of the valley escarpment and located almost centrally within the farm. Curiously paternal in its presence, both authoritative and reassuring, from almost any location your eye could always catch glimpse of its three enigmatic hangars guarding the far horizon or peeping over the top of the gentle crest of a down.

Military activity is essentially a game of hide and seek: you want to be able to see the enemy, but you don't want them to see you. My miniature soldiers were always hiding, inside or behind something. They may not have been visible, although I knew they were there. (And my

commanding bird's eye view could survey the entire theatre of operation.) It would not be out of place to see groups of real camouflaged soldiers in amongst roadside trees and bushes. No different from the places my friends and I would also make 'dens' and play 'at war'.

Occasionally you might spy a tank on the horizon or it might suddenly appear in front of you trundling down the road. (Tanks are good at surprising.) Aircraft would suddenly buzz overhead; you could almost see the faces of the crew. Much further away could be the distant boom of artillery fire. Things did go bump in the night. And in the morning, we might find the evidence: the tracks of tanks cutting across fields, small broken parts of vehicles, sometimes spent cartridge shells and my favourite, the small white parachutes of flares. (As miniature versions of the chutes that opened over Netheravon they were the perfect scale.)

It was this invisible unspecified activity that fuelled a craving for yet more information on military equipment and the desire for the making of ever more models and the inventions of one's own imagined scenarios. My own territories that when not being farmed are occupied by military forces, where also the pictured spatial relationships between objects becomes the process by which imagined narratives are conducted. Yet the military would appear to have little regard for the conventions of landscape. A tank will venture in any direction at will and aircraft cross the sky with ease. This is a world where a different order is at play. It is not one of pictures but of strategic diagrams and maps. And I am party to some of the military's secrets. In the 1960s military installations are not marked on the Ordnance Survey except I know they are there and what purpose they may serve.

Playing within the home, elaborately patterned carpets would form a complex territory across which way-marking was critical for the positioning of toys. And for way-marking you need a map. With maps you can apply your own imagination to the world as it actually exists. Real terrain with real facts, and on your own terms. That is a church and that is a railway line but what lies in between is much more unknown and open to one's own occupancy. Maps were by far the most interesting things on my parent's bookshelves, they literally lead me to somewhere else.

Among my small constant scale military forces, it is not really the weaponry that interests me. On any given vehicle it is not only where the driver is located but also the navigator. As well as somewhere to hide, soldiers need the means to plan their next move: where to establish a road or build a bridge? The most important piece of equipment for my Action Man was his map case. As an inseparable part of *my* landscape. Agriculture and the military: it's all about strategies and tactics mapped onto and played out within the spaces around me.

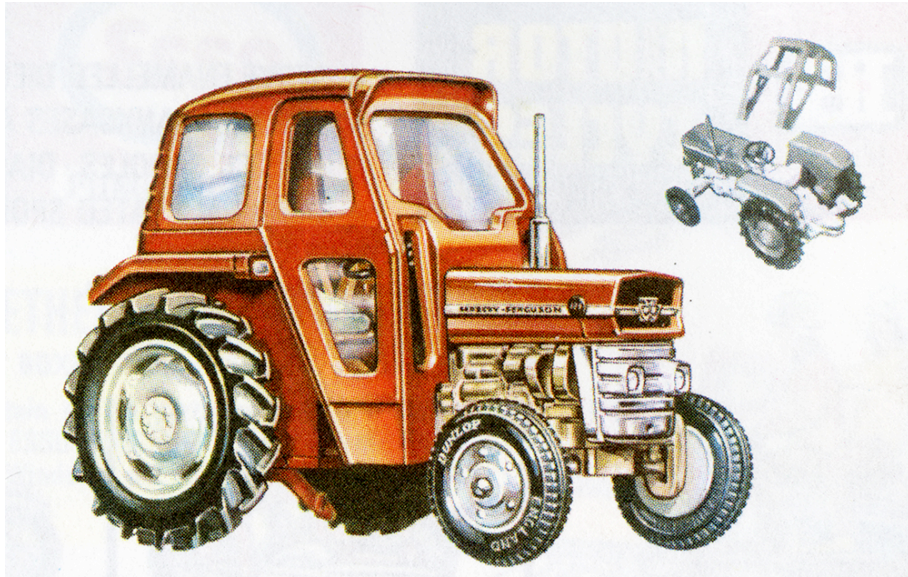


Illustration from the 1969 Britains Models catalogue

Interlude 4

Child in Time

If a painting is a canvas filled with time, a farmer's field is a landscape filled with time. The imperatives of nature and effects of intervention combining to create a cycle of configured moments to be observed; progression in which time is measured day by day, week by week season by season. A happy young boy growing up among fields, is immersed in a shapeless pool brimming with an abundance of time. Childhood memories dominated by carefree hot summer days spent in expansive open space, infused with the atmosphere and excitement of harvest. Time has no particular order or definition, rather a growing cluster of images drawn together by an emerging consciousness. Images free from the routines of adult work, that do not occur in sequences appearing and receding according to level of cognition and emotional import.

Moments with family, on the farm, with friends and with toys, or when an army helicopter flies low over the house - picnics, rides in grain carting lorries, mucking about in the river, expeditions with my Action Man, a combine harvester suddenly catching fire. These were days that started before I knew them. And days that, literally, never ended, as sleep was surrendered to with the sound of the grain dryer across the yard roaring into the night. Even among the periods of boredom, this was time for feeling part of something exciting, a time for being happy, secure and contented.

Harvest. The highlight of the otherwise endless summer - indeed, the sole reason for summer existing - would come to its inevitable end with stubble burning quickly to be followed by ploughing in of the remains. The yellow glow of summer fields quickly rendered into the brownish grey of chalky soil. Harvest though had come after haymaking - an earlier flurry of mechanised activity of warm summer days with its the smell of hot diesel oil mixed with drying grass. Christmas was in winter. However, I didn't know which came first winter or summer, or even if one necessarily followed the other? During winter there would sometimes be snow which could mean we could not get to school. Summer days were long although I don't necessarily recall winter days being short.

I remember once travelling on the bus back from school and in my pocket was a 1966 penny coin minted that same year. However, it would seem I was unaware that England won the World Cup until after the summer when our school headteacher brought the subject up. (It would have occurred during harvest and at the time my family had no television. Unlike many men my father was not interested in football.) Some events could be anticipated: mostly

Christmas and birthdays. My birthday is in April (the 14th to be precise) On my 5th birthday I had a party at home - I remember everyone being in the garden. It was often good weather on my birthday. My mother would comment on the Swallows. On that particular birthday my present was a Matchbox Kingsize Low-loader with Bulldozer (complete with detachable cab.)

Otherwise, punctuations were somewhat arbitrary and uncertain like our father getting us up in the night to watch the moon landings. I couldn't really make out much of the hazy image on the television screen that had first appeared in our home during 1967. My elder brother and I would be collected from school and sometimes on the way home our dad would take us to inspect the farm (or on occasion, when they weren't active, venture up onto the artillery ranges.) If something on the farm had to be attended to could result in a delay getting home. The frustrations of an unoccupied time being acutely felt, especially if it meant missing a favourite TV programme.

As a child one tends to exist within a single time, less conscious of being carried along a narrative of time. A private dream world of play would not contain a continuity experienced in the same way as our parents. Outside the container of each day, filled or empty of events, moving slowly or fast, any other concept of temporality was piecemeal. A relationship between what is happening today and what might happen tomorrow or, that today is a consequence of something that happened yesterday, may not be easily grasped. Unlike the landscape itself there was no map that could explain time as a linear terrain containing its contours, obstacles and pathways.

As far as I was aware the physical characteristics of the spaces around us had always been exactly thus. What DH Lawrence referred to as a sense of becoming 'final', the accumulative effect of being present. Surely the hill in the middle distance must have always been there. But the clump of trees and distinctive barn located on the hill? They must have grown or been built. Yet, it was not a question to contemplate. A time when these familiar features of my everyday may not have existed was difficult to comprehend. We lived not far from Avebury and Stonehenge. There were even earthworks on the farm. However, like my father attempting to explain the trajectory of an Apollo spacecraft on its way to the moon, the stories of how such ancient places came about were as good as fiction.

Growing up on a farm a young boy's desires and aspirations, through observation and play, were more than stimulated by a growing sense of time and place that adult daily life occupied. Situated on Salisbury Plain during the 1960s there was, also a readily understood relationship to the recent past. A past that seemed to occupy much of the present and possibly the future. Throughout rural Wiltshire, evidence of the military endeavours that had recently passed, and whose shadow continue to linger was difficult to avoid. Lurking in the distance, mysterious

military installations containing unknown secrets provided endless fascination. Tanks on the horizon, planes in the sky - the Saladins and Centurions, the Vixens, and Vulcans - could be an everyday presence.

It is partly through play we develop an early sense of history. Although simplistic and romantic, the imagined war of play existed both in the past and in the present. Perhaps because of this, the Second World War was a definite point of historical departure, a back-stop to an emerging sense of temporality. Beyond the war the past was much more unknown and of much less interest. The world then was black & white and grainy. People looked much more old-fashioned. Before the Second World war there were bi-planes and not jets, trains were steam, and on farms there were no tractors but horses.

The geopolitics of history that may have filtered through was not really legible to someone so young. Although linked to some of the machines so admired, the true meaning of names that emerged from the background of radio, television and adult conversation - Borneo, Aden, Vietnam - remained unclear. There was much not spoken about. It was some years later I realised that Alfie, the somewhat troubled farm labourer who lived next door, had been a prisoner of war in Singapore. He was also considerably younger than the 'old man' I believed I had known. Apparently, I also later learned, characters like Alfie were not the most effective farm labourers but were kept in employment through a sense of debt and gratitude for their wartime service.

Without history of a certain kind, it is possible the place I knew growing up would not exist. This is because the landscape in which we lived, and my father farmed, is essentially a military one. Contents of the landscape from ancient earthworks to airfields were developed on the premise of defence. (The true adult version of hide-and-seek.) However beautiful and romantic the flora and fauna, the natural smells and sounds, it is very difficult to imagine Salisbury Plain without a military presence.



Lunch time break for combine drivers.
From an original 35mm Kodachrome slide taken by my father in the late 1960s.

Chapter Three

A Landscape of Childhood

*While once they were allowed
Some flighty bits on the side*

*Maps now look to be meaning
At its most monogamous:*

*No cherubs; no Here Be Dragons;
No galleons tilting in the bay.*

*Holding an increase in fact
To Equal an increase in truth,*

*They ignore the traveller's need
To tell the lie of the land.*

Neil Curry
*New Maps For Old*¹

In this chapter I examine from a range of perspectives the landscape circumstances in which my early childhood was lived. Before examining more closely the relationship between this landscape and my current practice in Chapter Four, I consider the implications of various theoretical and cultural meanings of landscape. Adopting a similar multifaceted attitude to that of Benjamin, a landscape of childhood is considered as something more than the physical characteristics of environment but a place of imaginings that expand into the site for historical enquiry and practice development. Less a landscape to reflect upon and more a conceptual condition with which to engage.

If I possess a particular artistic attitude to landscape, it is one summed up by Christopher Neve writing about 20th century British landscape painting. Fundamentally, landscape by itself is meaningless. What gives landscape meaning is our relationship to it. A landscape “works on our feelings in profound ways, arousing in us a sense of ourselves in relation to the outside world.”² As a young painting student in the early 1980s, with a somewhat

¹ Neil Curry *Walking to Santiago* (Enitharmon Press, London 1992) 9

² Christopher Neve *Unquiet Landscape: Places and Ideas in 20th-Century British Painting* (Thames & Hudson, London 2020 [1990]) 160

romantic disposition, I was drawn to landscape in ways that felt very similar to artists like Paul Nash and Ben Nicholson. As these artists indicated though, landscape, like painting, is not to be merely contemplated but is the context for action. Therefore, the introduction to the dynamic conceptualism of artists like Richard Long and Robert Smithson was of immediate appeal. The basis of this appeal will have had some origins established during my rural childhood, and the experience of agricultural production.

I begin this chapter with a brief account of Salisbury Plain, its natural beauty already heavily charged with cultural and mythological meaning. Human agency in the form of social and economic practices is an essential condition to how landscapes operate and are read. Salisbury plain is no less so, where the character of the landscape is highly influenced by the technological activities of agriculture and the military. Equally important is phenomenological experience especially to that of the child which Benjamin recognised in his memories of childhood Berlin. Some recognition is also given to the growing popularity of place-writing which often emphasises the specifics of locality understood through certain aspects of autobiographical experience which may including childhood. Broadening the possibilities beyond locality, in articulating my own attachment to place I draw upon the concept of topophilia which highlights elements of human trace present in the combination of topography, architecture and objects that can also manifest themselves across multiple locations.

Significant to methods of practice is the concept of site as distinct from place. Site is a multifarious condition that is defined by sets of relationships as much as by identifiable physical form. Relationships that include the dynamics of time and space situated across multiple points offering multiple viewpoints. The concept of site extends the reach of an archaeological imagination and theoretical potential of heterogeneous art practice. As Benjamin articulates, the imaginative scope of childhood memory is the shift from place to site. Conceived as site, the landscape of childhood encompasses memories and narratives that extend beyond lived experience and the specifics of location or topography.

Conditioning the childhood experience of Salisbury Plain was the horizon and especially the sky. The implications and imaginative scope of what lay beyond was linked to aircraft. How historical narrative intersected with the situation of place was further informed by an inherent technological presence. I

conclude the chapter by examining the significant interrelationship between the fields of Salisbury Plain and the sky above that is unified by mechanised flight.

Salisbury Plain

The bulk of Salisbury Plain, is a broad swathe of uninterrupted chalk down-land dominating the lower half of the county of Wiltshire. For a landscape situated in the densely-populated Central Southern England, the Plain is unusually open and relatively unoccupied by settlement. In fact, Salisbury Plain constitutes the largest surviving tract of 'unimproved' chalk grassland in North-West Europe. Also well-known for the location of Stonehenge and many other sites of ancient history, this is a place steeped in mythology stretching back several millennia. The Plain contains the visible imprint of past communities that lived, worked and died there.

A significant reason for the Plain's otherwise apparent 'emptiness' today is because from the latter part of the 19th century Salisbury Plain was developed into the largest Army field training centre in the UK.³ Officially known as the Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA) it is a tract of 94,000 acres that extend from the garrison town of Tidworth in the East 22 miles to Warminster in the West. Formed mostly by high exposed down-land the SPTA is bordered along its northern perimeter by a prominent escarpment overlooking the Vale of Pewsey.

Near to this northern edge is situated the part of Salisbury Plain to which I am most attached. It centres on the villages of Upavon, Chisenbury and Enford nestled below the Downs along the upper River Avon valley which cuts north to south through the Plain from the Vale of Pewsey towards Salisbury itself. Here, as previously noted, my father was manager of 3,500 acres of farmland leased from the military authorities.⁴ The area covered mostly high Downs to the east of the Avon.

³ See: *The Field Archaeology of The Salisbury Plain Training Area* David McOmish, David Field, Graham Brown eds. (English Heritage 2002) N.D.G. James *Plain Soldiering* (Hobnob, Salisbury 1987) Henry Buckton *Salisbury Plain: Home of Britain's Military Training* (Phillimore, Chichester 2008) Rod Priddle *Wings Over Wiltshire: An Aeronautical History of Wiltshire* (ALD, Sheffield 2003) Colin Cruddas *In Wiltshire's Skies* (The History Press, Stroud 2010)

⁴ As manager of Upavon Farms from 1962 – 1971 my father worked on behalf of the notable local land-owning farmer Barry Wookey who leased the land and various properties from the then War Department (later the Ministry of Defence) The house in which we lived was WD owned and maintained, although my father (or my mother) were not employed in any capacity by the Army.

The name Upavon is significant. Taking advantage of the exposed escarpment, it was on Upavon Down that in 1912 the British Army chose to establish its new aerodrome for the newly formed Royal Flying Corps. Later as home to the RAF's Central Flying School, Upavon became synonymous with military aviation and many pilots from around the globe received their first training at Upavon.⁵ Britain's first military airfield had already been established at nearby Larkhill in 1911 and further expansion reached a peak during the Second World War with a total of eighteen airfields located within the vicinity of Salisbury Plain. Although experiencing contraction during the Cold War period regular military flying in across Wiltshire skies continues today.

Upavon aerodrome (or Upavon Camp as it was known locally) is located more or less centrally to the area my father farmed. [fig 3.1] From a number of suitable vantage points close to the airfield it is possible to see beyond the Avon valley and westwards across the bleak expanse of artillery ranges. Looking southwards the view extends as far as the garrison town of Bulford and Boscombe Down, the somewhat secretive airfield used for military flight testing. Much closer and more approachable is Netheravon airfield that was and continues to be used for parachute jumping. [See: Prelude *Early Influences* and Interlude 1 *Aeroplane*] Visible to the North across the Vale of Pewsey is the characteristic Marlborough Downs. [fig 3.2]

The landscape today contains many visible traces that strongly resonate with my childhood memory; topographical features, flora and fauna that have altered very little over the intervening decades. Isolated architecture, including aircraft hangars and agricultural barns remain intact. Although no longer farmed to the extent it was in the late 1960s, what can be seen and perhaps more significantly *sensed*, feels very much as it used to be.⁶ Most striking is how the landscape which features in my own photographs appears relatively

⁵ The Royal Flying Corps was established as part of the Army. In 1918 the RFC was amalgamated with the Royal Naval Air Service to form the Royal Airforce as a separate military service. Upavon was a centre for pilot and flight instructor training until 1946 when RAF Upavon became the Group Headquarters for RAF Transport Command, later Air Support Command, until 1973. During this period the amount of flying was reduced to air cadet training. The RAF ceased using the aerodrome which has transferred to the Army as an administrative headquarters. The airfield remains active and is home to the Joint Forces Wyvern Gliding Club. Rod Priddle *Wings over Wiltshire: An Aeronautical History of Wiltshire* (ALD, Sheffield) 2003 311-337

⁶ Following the collapse of the Soviet Empire and reunification of Germany, the return to the UK of the British Army on the Rhine increased the demand for training provision of the SPTA. This is one of the reasons the area my father managed is now used almost exclusively for military training. The Wookey family (Rushall Farms) still hold a lease on the land and some areas are periodically farmed, either directly for cereal crops or sub-let to neighbouring livestock farmers. The Wookey family have been pioneers of what is now known as organic farming and the land holds Soil Association organic status. The rotating agriculture programme is in-part to maintain this status. See: Barry Wookey *Rushall: The Story of an Organic Farm* (Blackwell, Oxford 1987)

unchanged from the one depicted in my father's photographs taken in the early 1960s. [fig 3.3]

Military activity on Salisbury Plain is significant to my memories and to the landscape's current familiarity despite having lived away from here for nearly fifty years. As much as my childhood memory is full of the various activities of farm machinery in many shapes and sizes, of cows being fed and herded, on any given day it would also be possible to casually witness military vehicles on manoeuvres or an assortment of aircraft flying low overhead. During the day or night, the deep boom of distant artillery fire could be heard emanating from ranges the other side of the valley. These are sights and sounds which have remained present all this time.

From the presence of aircraft hangars, clusters of farm buildings, or the proliferation of more-subtle ancient works one cannot help but feel the presence of other lives present and past; despite how seemingly 'empty' the landscape appears to be. Although my own personal memory might be both intense and very particular, one cannot escape the layering of many other historical narratives across the area of view. Wiltshire is particularly well appointed with powerful symbols such as Stonehenge and Avebury. The rolling chalk hills themselves, with small isolated villages that have come to represent an historicized rustic image of the English countryside as featured, for example, in the paintings of John Constable or the novels of Thomas Hardy.⁷

Not all histories are so easily recognisable, nor are they necessarily that old. The considerable military presence is perhaps the single most significant example. Many of the better known British military campaigns of the modern era have something of a direct connection to Salisbury Plain. It is worth noting though, the apparent contradiction between a bucolic English landscape and recent military or geo-political history is not necessarily unique to Wiltshire. Studies by geographers, including Rachel Woodward, or the work of film maker Patrick Keiller indicate the extent that military stewardship informs many aspects of the UK landscape yet remains relatively hidden.⁸

⁷ 'Hardy Country' is predominantly Dorset but Wiltshire is part of Hardy's semi-fictional Wessex and the landscape character is very similar. Stonehenge is the setting for the final passage in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Stonehenge features in paintings by both Constable and Turner.) A very good account of the rural life on Salisbury Plain during the 19th century can be found in WH Hudson *A Shepherd's Life* (Little Toller, Wimborne Minster 2010 [1910])

⁸ For example: Rachel Woodward *Gunning for Rural England: the politics of the promotion of military land use in Northumberland National Park* in *Journal of Rural Studies* (Vol 15, No1 January 1999) 17-33 Rachel Woodward *Military Geographies* (Blackwell, Oxford 2004) Rachel Woodward *Military Landscapes: Agendas and Approaches for Future Research* in *Progress in Human Geography* (Vol 38 No 1 February 2013) 40-61 Patrick Keiller *Robinson in Ruins* (Film, BFI 2010)

However, the noticeable military presence on Salisbury Plain has the curious effect of drawing the past and the present closer together in ways perhaps not so readable elsewhere. Unlike many other economic activities, including agriculture, the Army's relationship to the land has remained mostly unchanged since the First World War. While many of the technologies and strategies of warfare have altered radically, the basic principles of mechanised, mobile, land warfare remain consistent. From a certain distance, large groups of military personnel and their support vehicles, including tanks, look and behave the same today very much as they did during the 1960s.

Within the horizon boundary to my childhood reside many stories that could be researched and told. Equally there is likely to be many that will remain forever unknown. Salisbury Plain is pre-eminent in any discussion of archaeology. Romantic notions pre-historic and Wessex culture were very much created here, and their charge continues to resonate today. These myths will contrast with the experiences of many who passed through the area, for example on National Service during the 1950s and 60s, spending days and nights in a cold and windswept landscape. Present day aviation pilots and skydivers will have an especially unique understanding of the same landscape. There will also be the many lives that over centuries have grappled with a very challenging (pre-mechanised) agricultural economy. More recently the area has been central to modern mythologies of the New Age Society including some notable controversial clashes with authority centred on Stonehenge and rights of access.⁹

⁹ See: Andy Worthington *Stonehenge: Celebration and Subversion* (Alternative Albion, Marlborough 2004)
Andy Worthington ed. *Battle of The Beanfield* (Enabler Press, London 2005)



fig 3.1

Andrew Cross *Untitled 2007* (Upavon)

Photograph originated on medium-format negative.
Looking towards the aircraft hangars at Upavon airfield.



fig 3.2

Andrew Cross *Untitled 2015* (Upavon)

Photograph originated on large-format negative.
Looking north over the village of Upavon and the
Vale of Pewsey towards the Marlborough Downs.



fig 3.3

Andrew Cross *Untitled* 2008 (*Chisenbury Field Barn*)

Photograph originated on medium-format negative.
The horizon to the right of the image is the runway
area for RAF Upavon.

Accompanying a relatively isolated and romantic rural childhood, were much broader socio-historical conditions of the 1960s, including the geopolitical events concerning Britain's changing role in the world since the Second World War. From the perspective of a young child, to what degree one would have been aware or understood such influencing factors is difficult to measure. The reading of Benjamin indicates, it is possible with some hindsight to recognise the signs. Alongside the ebb and flow of the farming calendar, military activity and by extension its geo-politic purpose, would be a constant background presence. Alongside those working in agriculture many within the wider civilian community were connected, directly or indirectly, to the either the army or RAF. The extent of itinerant military families was reflected by the demographics of local schools. At Upavon County Primary School which I attended, each term a fresh group of 'RAF kids' would arrive and leave with some regularity. (See: Interlude 2 *Blackburn Beverley*)

To an uninformed young child's ear enigmatic names like Aden and Borneo could be heard in adult conversation with the sense that something was exercising concern. These names however, remained enigmatic, belonging to far-off exotic places and possibly beyond the scope of one's imagination. 'War' was very much the object of boyish play and it would have been difficult to draw a direct relationship between military activity on Salisbury Plain and any 'reality' of conflict at the time. To many English children of the 1960s, war as such, was understood to be already over.¹⁰

In my own consciousness the name Aden in particular must have lodged itself firmly as it has continued to dwell in my mind ever since. I did not know where Aden actually was or what it meant until much later in life. The significance of Aden in British colonial history was not properly realised until embarking upon this programme of research and the episode of the Aden Emergency of 1963-67 remains largely out of the public spotlight.¹¹ The possibilities of what Aden could be as a place, has always intrigued me and if the present-day situation in Yemen was different I would want to visit. What I am certain of now is that in 1967-68 a number of children arriving at Upavon school would have been with returning RAF families at the time of Britain's final withdrawal from the

¹⁰ It is curious that in my memory a celebration of Empire did not feature in my primary school education or wider conversation. It would be interesting to speculate on why this was. It may reflect my parent's attitudes as much as local education policy. A consideration though is that the military presence was not romanticised and treated as something very much matter of fact.

¹¹ Whether from the perspective of anti-colonialism or imperialist nostalgia, the Aden Emergency of 1963-67 and the manner of military withdrawal is not an episode reflects well on British history. See: Peter Hinchcliffe, John T Ducker & Maria Holt *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat From Aden* (I.B. Tauris London 2013) Jonathan Walker *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in South Arabia 1962-67* (Spellmount, Staplehurst 2005)

region. What I also now know is that the RAF logistical operations to and from Aden were being coordinated from RAF Upavon.¹²

Formation of Landscape

Looking across the same high ground that five decades earlier my father farmed, can be powerfully evocative and emotionally moving for one of his children. As much as by what is viewed, the emotional response is often triggered by elements of what one might refer to as ‘atmosphere’ received in the form sounds and smells. The atmosphere of the Downs above Upavon is exactly as I remember it from fifty years ago. (See: Prelude *Early Influences*)

Through lived experience we occupy landscapes with our minds and our bodies; they are a sensory and dynamic experience. A condition that Neve reminds us is why landscape representation in visual art is far more challenging than might be commonly assumed. Similar to paintings, landscapes are “transfigured” by states of mind whether it is a mood of elation, sanctity or foreboding.¹³ Such states of mind are often private. Accordingly, in a landscape that is otherwise shared publicly, individual experiences can be varied and highly subjective. It is worth bearing in mind the comments of JB Jackson: “The word [landscape] is simple enough and it refers to something which we each think we understand; and yet to each of us it seems to mean something different”.¹⁴

Our relationships with the physical characteristics of a landscape are often more much more than through cultural formations like a landscape painting and many such relationships are pragmatic. Settlements are established in landscapes. Landscapes provide us with food and the resources the resources for many forms of production. Landscapes can be worked as well as being work in. Landscapes are also consumed. We play in landscape, exercise and seek spiritual fulfilment. Landscapes can often be seen as places of well-being and by the same token they are often associated with death. As well as being closely associated with evocation of dead ancestors, landscapes themselves can be dangerous places and the sites of humankind’s more egregious behaviour.

¹² At the time RAF Upavon was Group Headquarters of RAF Transport Command. Actual transport squadrons were not stationed at RAF Upavon but elsewhere including RAF Lyneham in Wiltshire and RAF Abingdon in Oxfordshire. Rod Priddle *Wings over Wiltshire ...174-194*, Michael Bowyer *Action Stations: Military Airfields of Oxfordshire* (Patrick Stevens, Wellingborough 1988) 13-22

¹³ Christopher Neve *Unquiet Landscape: Places and Ideas in 20th-Century British Painting* (Thames & Hudson, London 1990/2020) 137

¹⁴ JB Jackson *The Word Itself in Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (Yale, New Haven 1984) 3

Cultural formations, however, do influence our understanding and the value placed on landscapes including anxieties as well as pleasures. Arousing public passions towards rural landscape can often be a threat of urbanisation or the fears of environmental exploitation. However, perhaps nothing changes the perception of landscape, for everyone involved, more than warfare. There is considerable research into the impact of war can have on the psychological response to place even from the safe distance of history.¹⁵ The physical scaring of landscape, and the historically charge engendered by war can be the subject of some significant contemporary photographic practices. Simon Norfolk's *Afghanistan Chronotopia* (2002) Sophie Ristelhueber's *Fait: Kuwait* (1991) and Tomoko Yoneda's *After The Thaw* (2014) are good examples.¹⁶

It is therefore all the more curious that the place influencing my own peaceful sense of self is the same place were in recent years military personal have trained for combat operations in, for example, Afghanistan. The drone of an army helicopter can be as much part of the atmosphere as the chorus of sky larks. Unlike the true conditions of warfare, it is possible to witness army training on the SPTA without being placed in danger or suffering trauma. Many aspects of military activity can come and go apparently by stealth - the traces seen but often not the actual activity. Yet, its presence is somehow always felt, and it remains the case that, even in the safest of situations, the presence of a tank makes one very conscious of one's own behaviour.

Landscapes and the places we make of them are forever biographical. They tend to feature at the centre of many of the stories we tell of ourselves. Hence the significance of landscape in contemporary place writing. It would be very difficult to conduct this enquiry and not have some consideration for the phenomenon of place and recognize its significance as a point of focus to much contemporary cultural production including contemporary art.¹⁷ Within the literary anglosphere recent decades has been witnessed a growth in 'nature' and 'place' writing exemplified by the work of Robert Macfarlane, Anna Parvord and Phillip Marsden among many others.¹⁸ The popularity of place writing seems to reflect a desire for a 'sense of place' in an otherwise alienating and unsettled world. The implication is a need for the clarification of identity for

¹⁵ As an example in the context of visual studies see: Donna West Brett *Photography and Place: Seeing and Not Seeing Germany after 1945* (Routledge, Abingdon 2016)

¹⁶ Simon Norfolk *Afghanistan Chronotopia* (Dewi Lewis 2002) Sophie Ristelhueber *Fait: Kuwait 1991* (Errata Editions 2008) Tomoko Yoneda *After The Thaw* (Akakasha 2014)

¹⁷ See: Tacita Dean and Jeremy Millar *Place* (Thames & Hudson, London 2005)

¹⁸ For example: Robert Macfarlane *The Wild Places* (Granta, London 2009), Philip Marsden *Rising Ground: In Search for the Spirit of Place* (University of Chicago 2016) Anna Pavord *Landskipping: Painters, Ploughmen and Places* (Bloomsbury, London 2016)

the self in relation to a definable location. According to Lucy Lippard, the “latitude and longitude” within the map of a person’s life.¹⁹

Generally autobiographical in form, infused with elements of localism and personal isolation, place writing is often the reflection on both the character of a particular geography and the situation of the self within the contemporary world. Place writing can also be a form in which the particularities of geography and personal narrative become a conduit for wider historical consideration. And it is through wider research into place that some surprising, and sometimes darker narratives from the past can emerge.

A good example would be Madeleine Bunting’s *The Plot* which focuses on an isolated rural acre and old chapel building on the edge of the East Riding of Yorkshire in which she spent her childhood and from where is drawn a history of England from Neolithic times to the present day through the narrative of her father who romantically tied his life to this small piece of land. Bunting’s story is also one of ‘return’ involving the recovery of childhood memory in which she discovers how “wisdom sits in places.”²⁰

Given my own autobiographical attachment to Salisbury Plain it would also be very easy to be drawn to an extensive contemplation of place. *The Plot* in particular, has been an encouraging influence on my own uses of writing in which personal reflection on childhood and place becomes the departure point for speculation on wider concerns. With further modulation drawn from Benjamin, in my own reflective writing I attempt to translate my childhood experience of place into sets of dynamics and relationships to objects. However, I wish to move, as it were, away from the lure of place as an embodiment of identity and consider, in the manner I believe Benjamin did, the wider context of childhood environment as a site informing the method of reflection and is born out of childish play.

In articulating something of place with multifarious qualities is the idea of Topophilia which was ascribed to the poetry of John Betjeman by WH Auden. In his introduction to Betjeman’s 1947 selection of verse *Slick but Not Streamlined*, Auden suggests how Topophilia is not a mere attraction to a geographical place, but also a sense of history manifested through a disparate

¹⁹ Lucy Lippard *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multi-Centered Society* (New Press, New York 1997) 7

²⁰ Bunting in the prologue to her book is quoting a saying of the Western Apache Native Americans. Madeleine Bunting *The Plot: A biography of an English Acre* (Granta, London 2010)

variety objects and other forms of human trace.²¹ The 'quantity' and 'quality' of history is irrelevant. Essentially eclectic, of interest could be a railway station or pub as much as a roman wall. Also implied is how the objects and histories of interest are not necessarily contained as a whole within a single place but dispersed across multiple locations linked by typology or narrative. Although geology and flora may come into play, topophilia is not strictly the same as the attachment to the totality of a natural setting.

Betjeman's particular form of topophilia has come to characterize a certain 'suburban' image of Britain of the inter-war period; not fully 'modern' expressed by new urban architecture nor naturally 'wild'. It has a slightly surrealist character seemingly peculiar to aspects of British art, represented by painters such as Paul Nash and Eric Ravilious combining (or struggling to reconcile?) tradition with the modern.²² The image of Betjeman's Britain, and a landscape imbued with national identity has itself become a tradition that is now looked upon nostalgically and seen at variance with a landscape threatened by relaxed planning, speculative housing, motorways and out-of-town shopping centres and business parks.²³

It should be possible to think of topophilia in the manner it was possibly originally intended, whereby history, and the landscapes that contain history, are not only rooted in the certainties of a traditional past but in a less determined present which continues to evolve. It is a condition that reflects Benjamin's materialist historicity. In the work of Eric Ravilious which is closely associated with chalk down-land, all kinds of intrusions whether a steel shed, pylon or piece of farm machinery can be a source of delight as much as the Downs themselves. A more contemporary Topophilia may be found in the photographs of Simon Roberts depicting largely leisure oriented social interaction with the English landscape, including, for example, hang gliders launching of the same South Downs that feature in the paintings of Ravilious.²⁴

Since the pioneering work of human geographers including Doreen Massey and Denis Gosgrove, landscapes are increasingly understood as social as much as they are topographical.²⁵ As places landscapes reflect natural and social

²¹ WH Auden in John Betjeman *Slick but Not Streamlined* (Doubleday, London 1947)

²² See: Alexandra Harris *Romantic Moderns* (Thames & Hudson, London 2010) and Kitty Hauser *Shadow Sites: Photography, archaeology & the British Landscape 1927-1955* (Oxford University Press 2007)

²³ I am conscious of this image in my own work. A good example is *An English Journey* 2004 (Johan Hansard Gallery/Film & Video Umbrella)

²⁴ Christopher Neve *Unquiet Landscape: Places and Ideas in 20th-Century British Painting* (Thames & Hudson, London 2020 [1990]) 31 Simon Roberts *We English* (Chris Boot, London 2009)

²⁵ See: Denis Cosgrove *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (University of Wisconsin, Madison 1998) and Doreen Massey *For Space* (Sage, London 2005)

relations even if some of these relations are not always immediately readable. Many of these relations are not bounded by the prospect which might be observed. Although it might be a site of ancient historical or 'natural' interest, Salisbury Plain is equally determined by its more recent military history, the complexities of which extend beyond the specifics of any given geology and aesthetic. In terms of military practice landscape will invariably be defined by the sobering abstractions of technological and geopolitical co-ordinates.

Landscape could be said to put together the human-made and the natural, the wild and the cultivated, the elements and humankind's attempts to defy them. In the history of art, landscape has tended to celebrate the limits of the human world, and perhaps more accurately demarcating that world affirming that people have occupied environments that were not put there simply for convenience.²⁶ In explaining landscape as a cultural formation through art, WJT Mitchell's proposes landscape not as a genre of aesthetic qualities but rather a medium: a set of general practices that are found across all cultures. Landscape is "both represented and presented, both signifier and signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and a simulacrum, both a package and a commodity inside the package."²⁷ As a medium of exchange between the human and the natural, between the self and the other, landscape is also an expression of value and therefore an instrument of power and politics.

Alexander Wilson observes that being subject to ideological formation the experience of landscape is in most cases also mediated. In whatever manner we engage with landscape it is fundamentally a way of "seeing the world and imaging our relationship with nature". In other words, being in the world.²⁸ Therefore, the function of the subjective self becomes critical to how we relate to landscape. The methods of imagining in either visual or written form is significant. As landscape architect Anne Whiston Spirn suggests, landscape is a form of language: the first "human texts".²⁹ As a requirement for existence, ancient peoples learnt how to read landscape characteristics and their effects. Landscape contains the equivalent of words and parts of speech - patterns of shape structure, formation and function. Like words, the full meaning of landscape elements is only realized when positioned in context within narrative. Landscapes are dialogues that connect a place with its dwellers,

²⁶ These specific observations are taken from TJ Clark *The Painting of Modern Life* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1984/1999) 182-183

²⁷ W.J.T. Mitchell *Imperial Landscape in Landscape and Power* (University of Chicago Press 2002) 5

²⁸ Alexander Wilson *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez* (Between the Lines, Toronto 1991) 14

²⁹ Anne Whiston Spirn *The Language of Landscape* (Yale, New Haven 1998) 25

resulting in a vernacular coherence across space and time. Like all languages landscape can be read at many different levels. A general sense of meaning may form across a range of conditions however, to fully understand the nuance of detail is likely to require local knowledge.

Archaeologist Christopher Tilley, proposes that rather than observe them as a single image in the manner encouraged by the traditions of painting, to experience landscapes in a multitude of forms, is to experience them phenomenologically.³⁰ Instead of emphasizing a separation between subject and object - an emphasis on landscape as 'natural' and 'other' to human activity - a phenomenological approach to landscape emphasizes an 'intertwining' of being and place. In the relationship between people and things is the equal weaving of the body in space with the subjectivity of the mind. Landscapes as such are both physical and perceptual.

As dynamic phenomenological environments, landscapes operate at varying scales and speeds from the vastness of a plain to the intimacy of the home. And one might add, the miniature worlds of children's toys. In observing and occupying landscape, we are open to their sensual complexities. Conversely landscapes are open to our senses and our imaginations.³¹ Any engaged response to a given landscape will be a combination of intuitive and calculated actions. Whether through the pragmatics of farming, the objective of a military commander or the emotions of an artist, these responses will be a state of mind.

Whiston Spirn proposes, the philosophical foundations of any landscape-oriented practice, and the origins of its aesthetic sensibilities, are imprinted in childhood.³² Robert Macfarlane eloquently describes how to young children a natural topography is "full of doors ... and they swing open at every step." In exploring such an environment to a young child landscape is not a "backdrop or wallpaper", it is "a medium teeming with opportunity". This echoes Benjamin's metamorphization of the domestic environment into castles of

³⁰ While often identified with a condition that precedes our own presence, it must not be forgotten the extent to which landscape is a cultural construct whereby the etymology of landscape is complex and historically relatively recent. In the European context the various expressions of a landscape image extend back no further than the 15th century Renaissance and most critically is intrinsically tied to techniques and style of representation. In this regard, the word landscape refers fundamentally to an image. Kuan-Min Huang *Toward a Phenomenological Reading of Landscape* in Yu and Lau (eds.) *Libi Nigri 14, Phenomenology and Human Experience* (Bautz, Nordhausen 2012) 46-47.

It is worth bearing in mind the comments of JB Jackson. "The word [landscape] is simple enough and it refers to something which we each think we understand; and yet to each of us it seems to mean something different". JB Jackson *The Word Itself in Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (Yale, New Haven 1984)

³¹ See Christopher Tilley *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (Bloomsbury, London 1997)

³² Whiston Spirn *The Language of Landscape ...* 5

fantasy. In accentuating the freedom of childhood distinct from a burden of adulthood Macfarlane further adds: “What we bloodlessly call ‘place’ is to young children a wild compound of dream, spell and substance.”³³

Between Place and Site

GK Chesterton offers a caution against the romantic seduction of place: “The moment we are rooted in a place, the place vanishes”.³⁴ In considering both natural and social relations Massey emphasis the significance of time in the formation of place particularly when we rely on the past to confirm notions of authenticity. However, places are always in open-ended process. In this sense they are events. their relationship to memory, Janet Donohoe observes how places are formed out of complex set of relations that include the temporality of events, within a variety of spatial experiences. Places are not merely mnemonic “triggers”, they are “living” aspects of memory, history and meaning. In this regard places serve not as settings for our lives but more as equal participants. Imbued with personal and collective memories, in connecting us to the past, places make the past *present*.³⁵

Donohoe also reminds us that while memory is usually thought of in terms of time, as the revitalisation of past moments, memory is equally always “implaced”.³⁶ With each memory there is a dual focus on both the ‘thing’ remembered and a position within the flow of time. Events are recalled in association with the location of their occurrence. Given that in some respect my enquiry is a question of past meeting present, it is perhaps appropriate that as well how and when, the question should include *where* that meeting occurs? The place of meeting is however, much more than definable coordinates in time and space. In the context of visual practice, the ‘where’ will be situated as much in the methods of remembering - the operations and protocols of photography - as it is in the location of events remembered, or, indeed, being photographed.

Edward Casey observes that inherent to the notion of place is something ‘primal’ or ‘absolute’. Being in place is a condition of existence and in

³³ Robert Macfarlane *Landmarks* (Hamish Hamilton, London 2015) 19-20

³⁴ G.K. Chesterton *Heretics* (1905) quoted in Patrick Wright *Last Orders for the English Aborigine* in Sally Davison, Jonathan Rutherford eds. *Race, Identity and Belonging: A Soundings Collection* (Lawrence & Wishart, London 2008) 60-71

³⁵ Janet Donohoe *Remembering Places: A Phenomenological Study of the Relationship between Memory and Place* (Lexington, Lanham and London 2014) xi

³⁶ Janet Donohoe *Remembering Places* ... xi

philosophical traditions bound to the location of physical bodies.³⁷ Site on the other hand is more dynamic and diagrammatic. Rosalind Krauss highlights how in terms of post-formalist art aesthetics, an 'expanded' site can include the dimensions of time, movement and multiplicity of viewpoint.³⁸ In the context of conceptual art practices site is very much a matter of function or process and can be fragmented and scattered across multiple physical points. Site can also exist in language and the information that connects different points. It can be a text or photograph proposing a physical condition, or narrative. It can be an 'archive' from which discursive relations between things may be formed.

In the way interconnecting narratives can emerge from across multiple points of reference, Craig Owens proposes the site of artistic practice, as opposed to the object, as distinctly allegorical. Owens' drew his initial thinking of the allegorical from the 'monumental' land art of Robert Smithson.³⁹ A similar analysis may also be applied to the practice of Mark Dion, as discussed in chapter one. Laying behind such practices is the method of an organising logistics. Whether, in the example of Smithson, the trucking of rock material across the desert or, in the example of Dion, the sifting of dredged detritus from the River Thames, a parallel may be drawn with the organising methods of agriculture or the military. [figs 3.4, 3.5]

To think of site in this way does not however, mean a matter of scale. Hauser argues that photographs, as well as the landscapes they may depict, can themselves be conceived of as a subject that is framed as *site*. As sites they evidence organised activity or carry the traces of past events; whether immediately readable or otherwise. As such, at any given moment, or appearance, encapsulated in a photograph is the agglomerated end product of "more-or-less" hidden stories. As such these are stories that reside in the photograph waiting to be discovered.⁴⁰ A multifarious site, whether an expansive landscape, a collection of objects or a single photograph, can be encompassed within Benjamin's medium of memory. The implication being that in the continuous unfolding of memory any of these sites offer up an

³⁷ Edward S. Casey *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (University of California Press, Berkeley and London 1997)

³⁸ Rosalind Krauss *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* in *October* Vol.8 (Spring 1979) 30-44

³⁹ Craig Owens *The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Post-Modernism* *October* Vol 12 (Spring 1980) 67-86.

⁴⁰ Kitty Hauser *Shadow Sites: Photography, archaeology & the British Landscape 1927-1955* (Oxford University Press 2007) 58-60

unlimited array of fragments that reveal hidden truths. Fragments that may become forever infinitesimal yet can yield meaning of increasing significance.⁴¹

Technological Dynamics

To reflect upon a landscape of childhood, to unpick that place and its past is to expand the dynamics of one's relationship into a site. Across the military landscape of Salisbury Plain, there can also be traces that refer to places and events elsewhere; this is where training exercises are undertaken for conflicts in very different parts of the world. A cursory history of British military campaigns since the acquisition of Salisbury Plain informs us that with the exception of Northern Ireland these campaigns have taken place well beyond the shores of the United Kingdom.

As evidenced in many British Army Training Manuals of the Cold War period the principles of training for land-based warfare remain largely unspecific in terms of place and are process oriented. [fig 3.6] In the practices of military training can be recognised something of Foucault's concept of *heterotopia*. Heterotopias are sites formed not by objects in space but by sets of relations. They may be defined by a single location but are multi-dimensional in function and cultural meaning. Accumulating different moments in time and juxtaposing several spaces into one situation, heterotopias exist "outside of all places" transcending the here and now and the near and far. By exerting counterpoints to the position of the self, simultaneously "represented, contested and inverted", heterotopias are the foil to the romance that place can engender.⁴² The same idyllic fields in which I would play and invent imagined worlds, have also been used for military simulation of central Europe and Afghanistan.⁴³

⁴¹ I am referring to Benjamin's well-known analogy, the 'fan of memory' found in *Berlin Chronicle*. "He who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments; no image satisfies him, for he has seen that it can be unfolded, and only in its folds does truth reside ... remembrance advances, from small to smallest details, from the smallest to the infinitesimal, while that which it encounters in the microcosms grows ever mightier" Walter Benjamin *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (NLB, London 1979) 296

⁴² Michel Foucault *Of Other Spaces* in *Diacritics* Vol 16 No 1 (Spring 1986) 22-27

⁴³ In the more restricted area of SPTA is Copehill Down FIBUA (Fighting In Built Up Area) built in 1989 and looking remarkably like a central European town. At a location near Upavon is a permanent 'Middle East' training compound. Vehicles are often painted in 'desert-sand' camouflage. On occasional visits made up to 2014 it was possible to witness training exercises for deployment in the Middle East evidenced by Army personal acting the role of the Taliban.



fig 3.4

Construction of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* 1970.



fig 3.5

Construction of Robert Smithson's *Amarillo Ramp* 1973.

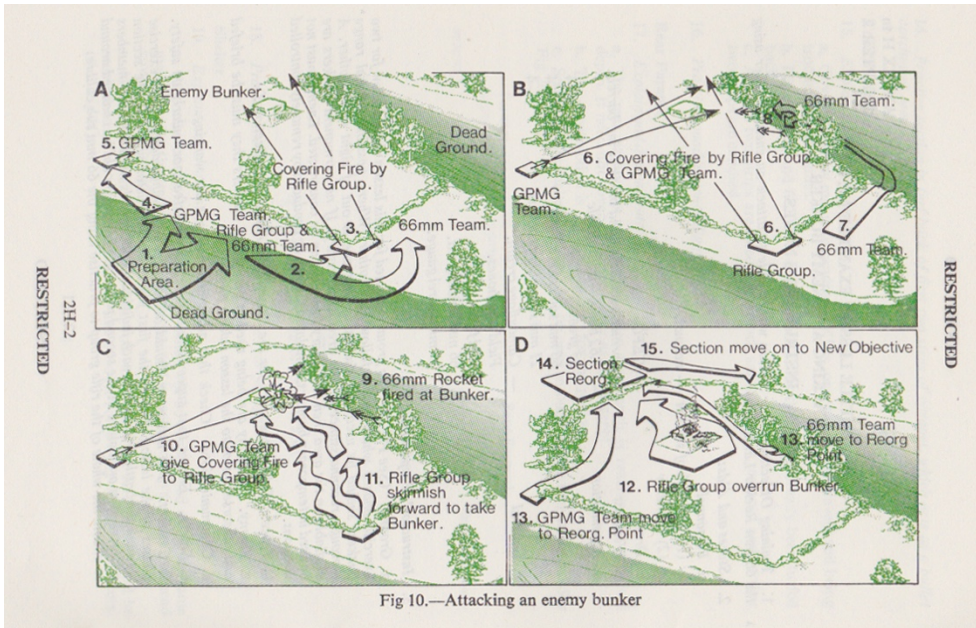


Fig 10.—Attacking an enemy bunker

fig 3.6

Illustration from: *Infantry Training Vol 1, Pamphlet 3 Battle Lessons and Exercises*
Published UK Govt. Ministry of Defense 1979

In a manner I believe Benjamin would have recognized, within the landscape environment of my childhood, forms of technology, in particular flight, have a prioritised role in an abstracted understanding of space and time. The connections to other more distant places established by military technology override culturally informed, aesthetic understandings of local conditions. Benjamin identifies the modern technologies of mobility and photographic reproduction as carriers through time and space. In the urban context of his childhood the train and later the automobile offered not only bodily transference to a different place and time, they encouraged an imaginative escape to *elsewhere*. It was a traversing of space and time Benjamin experienced also with the panorama and postcards.⁴⁴

It is perhaps curious that Benjamin does not appear to have been attracted to aircraft, despite mechanised flight being a significant feature of modernity in the first part of the 20th century.⁴⁵ In my own landscape of childhood, it is the aircraft that dominates a youthful fascination with technology and imaginative exploration. Aeroplanes, like ships, are carriers far beyond the horizon and the terra-firma that constricts the train and automobile. In the human psyche, flight also represents a powerful imaginative notion of freedom. From the story of Icarus to the Apollo Moon landings the desire to escape the grip of earth's gravity and experience the freedom of flight enjoyed by birds has been the desire of many. Throughout much of the 20th century flight was an exotic privilege of only a few. Even in today's age of relatively cheap long-haul mass travel the technological marvel that is the modern jet aircraft continues to instil in many a sense of wonderment.

It is possible to suggest that the 'topography' of my childhood landscape includes the air above as much as the chalk downs. Any architectural presence in this landscape includes aircraft in the sky as much as the large shed like aircraft-hangars that indicate the location of airfields. In his autobiographical account of the commercial airline pilot, Mark Vanhoenacker articulates very clearly how the space above the ground is not empty void but an abutting volume of air through which the aircraft channels its journey.⁴⁶ The air is another material stratum, and like the landscape upon which it sits this volume is a container and therefore available to 'excavate'. So, while my exploration of

⁴⁴ In *Berlin Chronicle* for example, Benjamin extols the virtues of firstly trains and then automobiles.

⁴⁵ It is worth noting how aircraft featured in the architectural drawings of Le Corbusier. Commissioned by the magazine *The Studio* in 1935 he published *Aircraft: The New Vision* a collection of photographs and short dramatic captions that cast the aeroplane as the pinnacle of modern technological achievement. As well as examining the design aesthetic of aircraft Le Corbusier also explores how flight offers new perspective – a bird's eye view – on urban environments.

⁴⁶ Mark Vanhoenacker *Air in Skyfaring: A Journey with a Pilot* (Chatto & Windus, London 2015) 127-161

childhood may lead beyond the known horizon the actual points of contact were always present in the air above me and their traces may still be found.⁴⁷

In the physical and imaginative scope of landscape, reaching up towards the blue beyond as well as stretching over the distant horizon, has verticality as much as it has horizontality. Experienced remotely from the ground the comprehension of an aircraft suspended in the sky, like a fish in water, can be difficult to grasp. In a child's mind however, comprehension can be aided by distinct forms. One is the bold graphic delineation of a drawing that combines plan and elevation in the same view.⁴⁸ Another form is the miniature toy which can be held in the hand as it 'flies', literally at arms-length, around the child's head.

Growing up a young child during the 1960s I was part of what Geoff Dyer refers to as the "Airfix Generation".⁴⁹ British boys who were very much immersed in fascination of technological development and reflective historical glory following the allied victory of the Second World War only two decades previously. Much of our attention was occupied by factual inquiry into the machines of the age - jet aircraft and space rockets - and with the machines that had characterised the war - aeroplanes, tanks and battleships. Such a childhood fascination was stimulated by the availability of sophisticated 'realistic' toys including Airfix plastic kits, Corgi toys and Action Man. (See: Interlude 4 *Airfix Generation*)

With these exacting miniature replicas it was possible to create our own miniature mechanised worlds. And as indicated by Levi-Strauss, the miniature could easily gratify a young boy's sense of intelligence and desire for control over his domain.⁵⁰ In addition to scale models, new forms of information technology, including television and colour photographs in magazines furnished eager imaginations. Given my own childhood circumstances any shared fascination with military and working machinery I may have had with my generation was given a whole other level of particularity.

⁴⁷ It is worth noting again Peter Kinley's remembering of his childhood Vienna is of an aircraft in the sky. And as I also suggest in my prologue, one of the more powerful evocations of the English landscape found in music is Vaughan Williams *Lark Ascending* which offers no suggestion of an identifiable place or topography but rather the ethereal qualities of a bird in flight. See: Richard King *The Lark Ascending: The Music of the British Landscape* (Faber & Faber, London 2019)

⁴⁸ This is a technique employed by Peter Kinley in his painting *Aeroplane* 1978. See: Interlude 1 *Aeroplane*

⁴⁹ Geoff Dyer *The Airfix Generation in Anglo-English Attitudes: Essays, Reviews and Misadventures 1984-99* (Canongate, London 2013) 141-148

⁵⁰ Claude Levi-Strauss *The Savage Mind* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London 1981 [1972]) 23-24. (See Chapter Two note 69)

To comprehend the aeroplane flying is, in the mind of the observer, to reach beyond the object itself. The aircraft becomes a *thing* in *context*. Heidegger claims that the self-supported nature of the object is insufficient to our understanding of it. An aircraft's "thingly" character is not constituted in being a represented object alone and is the result of more complex characterisation we attribute to it.⁵¹ As Vanhoenacker reminds us, along with ships and steam locomotives, aircraft are invariably ascribed gendered souls.⁵²

In his postulation of a 'Thing Theory', Bill Brown observes that the modern era has been one of being both "overwhelmed by the proliferation of things and singularly attentive to them"⁵³ Reckoning with the intellectual ambivalence of being overwhelmed by technological things, and at the same time domesticating them, Brown claims that throughout modernity we have attributed to things human characteristics in the attempt to convince ourselves we understand them. This is a further echo of Benjamin's attention to the child's relationship to their environment found in *Berlin Childhood*. Brown suggests, however, that what is being experienced is a lesson in the "insufficiency" of the desired object. He notes that ultimately there is, of course, "no soul within the toy, not even the mechanical toy".⁵⁴

Translated into a graphic shape, a scale-model or merely the figment of a child's imagination the 'thingly' character of the aeroplane has the potential to become allegorical; especially in the technology-led evolution of world power during the Cold War. To borrow again from Heidegger, my landscape of childhood was 'enframed' by technology.⁵⁵ It is with the technological 'language' of farming and the military that the environment of Salisbury Plain is read. The presence of a tractor, or tank, makes the object of the field become the thing of the field and which causes the landscape to come into being. The same can be said for an aeroplane and the sky.⁵⁶ The technology of flight ties together the landscape and overarching sky that dominates Salisbury Plain.

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger *The Thing in Poetry, Language, Thought* trans. Albert Hofstadter (Harper Collins, New York 2001 [1971]) 165

For further postulation on things See also: Bill Brown *Things* (University of Chicago Press 2004)

⁵² Vanhoenacker *Machine in Skyfaring ...* 85-126

⁵³ Bill Brown *Thing Theory* in *Critical Enquiry* Vol 28 No1 (Autumn 2001) 14. See also: Bill Brown *Things* (University of Chicago Press 2004)

⁵⁴ Bill Brown *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (University of Chicago Press 2003) 6

⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger *The Question Concerning Technology* in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* trans. William Lovitt (Harper Collins New York/London 2013 [1977]) Here Heidegger expands on technology being a human activity with a means to an end, and similarly to *The Thing* he states that the technological object like a jet aircraft is not an end in itself.

⁵⁶ For further expansion on landscape coming into being through human technological presence in the context of architecture see Martin Heidegger *Building Dwelling Thinking* in *Poetry, Language Thought* (Harper Collins, New York 2001 [1971])

Seen from the sky the history written into the ground acquires a whole new dynamic.

From the very outset of mechanized flying the military potential of the new technology was immediately recognized but an interesting by-product was the considerable impact it had on the archaeology of the area. In both *Shadow Sites* and her subsequent biography of O.G.S. Crawford, *Bloody Old Britain* (2008) Hauser gives an account of how forms of photographic aerial observation developed during the First World War over the battlefields of Northern Europe, when tested further on Salisbury Plain evidenced archaeological presence in the landscape hitherto unknown.⁵⁷ Out of military pragmatism was born the new method of aerial archaeology which revolutionised archaeological study by revealing traces visible only from the air and suggesting the vast extent of Neolithic settlement on Salisbury Plain, confirming a value of the area beyond the more immediate example of Stonehenge.

The ability of landscape and the air above to generate, and contain, a multitude of personal memories and historical narratives is very much the circumstantial context for my enquiry. As the depository for the past and a site filled with personal memory, this very distinctive landscape in which I spent my early childhood has been a departure point in the development of my photography practice over recent years. Critically, it is a principle that could apply to many other different landscapes and other childhoods.

The aim of my research is not to make a special case for Salisbury Plain itself in terms of landscape 'character' or 'pastness', either quantitatively or qualitatively. Nor is it to enhance memory of the past by gathering up evidence and re-presenting it within a given aesthetic of a personalized landscape photography. While childhood memory is the principal frame of reference, it is the basis for a much wider methodological enquiry: how the past contained in landscape and memory can lead to the development of a more expanded visual practice. Account of how the character of my own practice has been informed by the memory of childhood spent on Salisbury Plain is provided in the following chapter.

⁵⁷ Kitty Hauser *Shadow Sites: Photography, archaeology & the British Landscape 1927-1955* (Oxford University Press 2007) Kitty Hauser *Bloody Old Britain: O.G.S. Crawford And The Archaeology of Modern Life* (Granta, London 2008)

Interlude 5

Airfix History

I was born in 1961 and, to quote Geoff Dyer, born firmly into the 'Airfix Generation'. Only a decade and a half since the end of the Second World War the 1960s saw a generation of young boys, through their games and toys, eternalise what was understood to be the heroic triumphs of the Battle of Britain, El Alamein and D-Day. The names of General Montgomery, Douglas Bader, and Guy Gibson were names known equally as the 1966 England Squad of Booby Moore, Geoff Hurst and Gordon Banks. This was despite the probability of parents putting experience behind them in pursuit of a better world, and those actually born during the war being totally uninterested as they discovered the pleasures of sex drugs and rock & roll.

There were a number of strands to our war experience including films, comics, die-cast metal toys and games on wastelands involving invisible enemies, invisible weapons. Maybe some of us had relatives who could recount real-life tales of war but access imagery, and the factual information that we craved, was on the whole, for whatever reason, very limited. And among what was available the things that really piqued interest. For example, the exact layout of a Lancaster Bomber cockpit was, in films like the *Dam Busters*, often obscured by stories of patriotism, love and camaraderie.

The key to our reimagining of war was the Airfix model. Kits of plastic parts designed to reproduce to exacting scale the machinery of war. With accompanying same-scale figures Airfix was the perfect representation of the battlefield condition in miniature. With the necessary parts we could assemble piece by piece our own image of historical events. Airfix provided the means to connect with the larger experience and the process by which the war was still active in the imaginations of a post-war generation.

The making of Airfix models was the framework for constructing something out of the complex history of conflict and technological progress. Possibly less crude than simply about us and them. But, then machines were a more comfortably readable vocabulary of war: an emphasis on the machine winning or losing which at the same time detracts from the reality of slaughter and disastrous decision making

The historical narrative that Airfix provided did not begin or end with the Second World War. Also available were Napoleonic and American Civil War figures and artillery, WW1 aircraft, the sleek silver planes of the British post-war aircraft industry, and Cold War aircraft of the USA and USSR. Particularly exciting was the small range of Apollo spacecraft. If the technological promise of previous generations had been violently shattered by war we were,

literally (re)piecing together war machines in more peaceful and innocent circumstances. The encounter was between a Spitfire and a Messerschmidt with their pilots remaining nameless small pieces of plastic.

The range of kits on offer was large and Airfix taught, at least some of us, that the Lancaster was not the only bomber and the Spitfire and Hurricane not the only fighters as portrayed by popular myth. The less well-known seemed to appeal to my sense of being expert and therefore I was not attracted to the more famous types. Of more interest were aircraft that were neither fighter or bomber – at least not in the conventional sense: the ‘pug’ like Lysander, the curiously technical Defiant or water-born and ungainly Walrus.

Better still were military vehicles that were not front-line weapons but rather logistical support: The Matador lorry, DUKW amphibian and my particular favourite, the RAF refuelling set so integral to an aircraft’s ability to fly. Emerging out of this 1/72 and 1/76 scale collection was an understanding that successful warfare was not only fighting heroics but also about support systems expressed in complexity and cooperation. One of the exciting qualities of a bomber kit was the number of aircrew, some of whose jobs was not so clear: navigators, engineers etc. Their eventual hidden location within the completed model made their roles all the more enigmatic.

In many respects Salisbury Plain of the 1960s was an ideal Airfix environment. As well as experiencing the delights of a rural upbringing my boyhood fascination with machines was well served and my growing collection of small-scale military hardware matched by the real-sized examples that I could witness about me. Columns of Centurion tanks would often rumble by and DH Beaver Army Flying Corps reconnaissance aircraft fly low over our home. I often spent my time in the fields watching and small Chipmunk aircraft from RAF Upavon. I remember clearly the arrival of the first RAF Hercules aircraft and the excitement it caused in our school playground as it practised field landings in the visible distance. Meanwhile way above our heads, and on television, men were landing on the moon.

The Airfix project however lacked perfection and remained inherently incomplete. Much could be said about the poor ways in which these kits were assembled and painted. Few completed models will have survived the numerous crude destructive ways in which boys at a certain age ultimately dispense with childish things. In my own case only a very small proportion of my models were ever properly finished. Yet this incompleteness was key to their essential quality: easy to adapt to suit the imagined landscape a bedroom floor. (Unlike the metal of Dinky toys, plastic was instantly mutable.) Later in life I realise that the trick would have been to not even start making them. Once a thirst for knowledge had been partly quenched, what

began with the lure of the illustrated catalogue, would often end with something unfinished and ultimately discarded.

During childhood it isn't enough to simply recreate the world and its history. Rather it was necessary to create one's own narratives. Properly curious children aren't satisfied with their toys as first presented, they take things apart and alter them for their own purposes. In the process thought to be one of getting closer to truth, altering the principal image of the Airfix model history was being reactivated for the benefit of the imagination.

If you were 'serious' about your models there was an extended world of the Airfix model that was occupied by adults with particular skills, expertise and historical knowledge. The world of the diorama, the scratch-built, and the 'conversion' of a given model into a different version of the prototype. This was a realm of meticulous attention to detail and historical accuracy, aided by obscure add-ons obtainable from specialist club of town-based model-shops (not toy-shops) and their sometimes-intimidating proprietors.

What mattered was the recognition that toys were for unserious children and models for those of us who considered ourselves more expert and 'mature'. From distance this alternative world of the miniature could be observed through the Airfix Magazine ("For the plastic modeller") the Military Modeller or Scale Models. Articles of sometimes difficult to understand text accompanied by a selection of grainy photographs and complex diagrams, would describe how to convert the basic kit into something much more particular.

These magazine articles could induce a certain sense of desire and mystique. After the initial flourish of the imagination and bust of excitement, to someone still quite young and, it has to be said, naive, these magazines were ultimately the source of frustrated dreams. The tantalising prospect of turning some motor racing mechanics into a group of map-reading military officers would have to remain a desire unfulfilled until a much later stage in life. What was not necessarily evident to someone so in-experienced was that, much in the same way of school homework, such exercises required time and patient diligence. Which doesn't always sit so well with the emerging confusion that can be teenage experience.

Now, some decades later, Airfix models inform my recollections of that period of my life and place. (If not a possible sense of guilt towards my parents who furnished my obsession.) As if exploring a networking site to find old friends I trawl ebay to come across faces I recognise. The distinctive late 1960s 'Red Stripe' era box art paintings of Roy Cross (no relation) enticing me like a guilty pleasure towards the promise of a more simple and innocent time. Indeed, many of these images conjure up specific memories like the VC10 that my parents must have bought to occupy me during a particularly wet sea-side holiday. Or, the pontoon bridge set

which I did not have myself, but which somehow evokes the memory of a friend's home. Fortunately, more than one person stockpiled in their attics whole armies, navies and airforces only to be discovered at a later date by family members clearing out the clutter of a deceased close relative.

To my delight some remain after all these years still in their 1960s packaging unsullied by a young boy's clumsy hands. Yet somehow when these boxes arrive through the mail, they show much more of their age than perhaps they appear on the website. I am looking at them now in the present with the reality of at least forty years of ageing and not the alluring image I hold in my memory. I can't help myself though and have no regrets. Such is a relationship with the past. The kits remained stored and untouched. As they should do, always the object of a dream rather than an unfulfilled reality.



2

Illustration from the 6th Edition of the Airfix catalogue (1969)

Interlude 6

Salisbury Station

The first journey I made by train was in August 1969. My brother, nearly 10, and myself, aged 8, travelled (unaccompanied) from Salisbury to Honiton in Devon. There we were met by our two cousins and their father who were on a camping holiday. Heightened by the thrill of adventure, elements of the journey I remember clearly: the carriage compartment, looking out of the window at passing stations, and that the diesel locomotive was a marooned liveried 'Warship' class.

The specifics of this first train journey are important. If they did not matter then, they certainly do now. Call it what you will, 'train spotter' or 'railway enthusiast', this is what I became shortly after our family moved to Oxfordshire in 1971. And I remain so. During my early childhood any interest I may have had in trains was in a sense marginal. Marginal, that is, to aircraft, military vehicles and agricultural machinery. At the time trains seemed to be glimpsed momentarily from a distance. There was the line just to the north of Upavon passing through the Vale of Pewsey and one to the south at Salisbury. Railway lines tended to be passed under or over on car journeys to other places.

I have a few very specific early memories of trains which would have come before any substantial railway knowledge. I can now vividly imagine what these trains would have been, and where they were going; the locomotives, rolling stock, how they would have appeared and sounded. During the time of childhood, anything I knew about trains is likely to have filtered through from my Uncle and cousins who seemed to know much about these things. (During our Devon holiday a visit was made to the Dart Valley Railway, one of the UK's first preserved steam railways.)

I entered the world just at the time England's rural steam railways were starting to be closed down. Some would have been within the orbit of my early life. It is possible that my very first train journey was, in fact, made as a baby in a carry-cot along the Chipping Norton branch line in Oxfordshire. Chipping Norton being the place of my birth before our family moved to Wiltshire. Unfortunately, I can no longer ask the one person who might be able to verify this fact: my mother. Anyhow, within the protocols of trainspotting I am not sure if the experience really counts.

Something I do clearly recall noticing is the disused line of the former Midland & South Western Railway which ran north to south passing through nearby Marlborough, Savernake and Ludgershall. The rails will have been lifted only two-three years before learning of their demise. My early inquisitive mind will have established that active railway lines were becoming somewhat rare and therefore special.

Steam trains were very much a thing of the past. Or so it was thought. It transpires that Salisbury was one of the very last stations to receive a steam operated main-line service. The final week of scheduled main-line steam operations on British Rail was the week of July 2 - 8 1967 and included one or two Salisbury services from and to London Waterloo. (The final full main-line service was Waterloo - Bournemouth.) The fact this event passed unnoticed seems now to be unusual. I would have been six years old and the occasion of witnessing a main-line steam train would have been very memorable.

One would like to think the last steam train would have been something of interest to my father but apparently not so. Any lack of attention may well have been because, apart to the die-hard railway enthusiast, the passing of steam may well have occurred without the general public sentimentality that we would now perhaps expect. At the time, such a change will have been part of the natural course of events in the technical modernisation of British life. What I do know for certain is that my parents were both very busy people. That first week in July could very easily have been first week of harvest. One of the reasons my brother and I were on our way to Devon on our own was because, due to the demands of harvest, as a full family we were never able to holiday together during the months of high summer.

Over the years since moving away from Wiltshire I have come to learn a lot about the railways of that region. I now possess an almost forensic knowledge of all its lines including the disused ones, I know exactly what kinds of trains operated where and when during the 1960s. Perhaps unusual among railway enthusiasts I am not generally nostalgic in my passion. In recent decades I have developed the strong attraction to the freight trains of North America, suggesting an interest in railways as a purposeful economic infrastructure. I certainly do not believe there was a golden age embodied in steam locomotives.

My interest in the past is historical. It is true my fondness for old West Country branch-lines informs my romance for the region, but this is very much framed within a context of acknowledged social change. If I did have a period of British railway history to which I would like to return it is the early 1970s; somewhere between the big pop-festivals of 1970 and the release of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* in 1973. Yes, I want to be standing again on station platforms with my notebook, but I now wish to pay more attention to those events in music history I was, at the time, too young to fully appreciate.

The main reason for delving into the railway history of 1960s Wiltshire, similar to wider historical research of the period, is because I want to learn as much as I can about the world around me when I was very young, especially the world of my burgeoning interests. In a sense this is an exercise in filling the gaps of a wider memory of events which now appears to have been tantalisingly close. The ability to furnish this desire with detailed knowledge is largely due to the work of the many railway enthusiasts and historians with possibly much more of an organised and methodical railway obsession than my own. Thanks to these dedicated individuals there is now available an abundance of published material providing as much as one can possibly gather. And much of the visual material is the products of those railway enthusiast photographing as many locations and events they could manage as things were changing before them.

These photographs of a world no longer visible, are now appearing on ebay in the form of original 35mm colour slides and negatives of varying kinds. Over recent years I have begun collecting photographic images of Salisbury Station covering the period between 1962 and 1970 including those final years of steam engines. How enticing it is, to think I could so easily have witnessed the same trains. And, how frustrating..! Perhaps I was in Salisbury at the same time, with my mother shopping, or with my father at the livestock market which was very close to the railway line. It is odd to think, these grubby dilapidated steam engines were still operating, while sliver jets flew the Wiltshire skies and when the Apollo space programme was at the height of its development.

The provenance of these photographs remains unknown and one may make the confident assumption that many if not all of the photographers no longer remain with us. What is very possible, as artist Richard Wentworth has suggested to me, I now possess more of a memory of these events than the original photographers. Memory is not and does not have to be direct lived experience. We gather memory from a multitude of sources. Depending what I choose to do with these collected photographs the memory they carry could, for the foreseeable future, remain very much in my possession.

The questions that this activity of gathering photographs poses are central to what I do; in terms of both the collecting and the remembering: Whose memory? What form does it take? And, for how long, will it remain? As I become older and reflect back on my childhood these appropriated memories enrich my life, yet I know they are not exclusively my own. Like a temporary custodian I therefore have a responsibility, not least to those in whose experience the memories originate. Like the act of storytelling that was of such importance to Walter Benjamin, memory is a valuable commodity which is passed between generations, communities and individuals. It ultimately enriches our individual and collective lives, our sense of who we are and how we fit within a progression of time.



Salisbury station circa 1966. From an original anonymous 35mm slide.

Chapter Four

Practice Methodology

Don't be too painstaking in putting in every rivet. Leave something to the imagination and try and develop the art of suggestion.

Terence Cuneo

*Tanks and How to Draw Them*¹

To recap, the premise of my research is that the landscape and autobiographical experience of childhood provides a site and methodological framework for historical reflection and practice development. In this chapter I provide an account of how my visual practice originates out of this experience of place and memory, and the historical circumstance that informed my childhood. Through activities of wider research emerging narratives have been explored and articulated across a range of photographic methods directed towards an over-arching attitude of enquiry and practice

Image results of this practice and its various operations of photography are presented in the companion Practice Portfolio. The portfolio reflects a number of intersecting personal and historical narratives that have emerged and been brought together in one collective image montage.

I begin this chapter, by mapping-out key reference points and significant influences in the development of my practice. I also describe in detail, the use of particular practice methods arising out of my research, the purpose being to demonstrate how the practice has altered during the course of this research and how this has been shaped by core theoretical considerations discussed in this thesis. Helping situate the biographical self in relation to wider historicity has been the childhood reflections of Walter Benjamin which offer structure and character to a methodology of practice. Benjamin also provides a powerful metaphor for an excavation of memory equivalent to the archaeological digging of the earth. Conceptually, the archaeological, opens up the

¹ Terence Cuneo *Tanks and How To Draw Them* 1943. Reproduced in Patrick Wright *Tank: The Progress of a Monstrous War Machine* (Faber & Faber, London 2000)

imaginative possibilities of historical reflection especially when applied to photographs.

An art practice with orientation towards the past is by no means unique. Benjamin and the archaeological are important reference points to current discourses of contemporary art. On a superficial level, the influence of Salisbury Plain could easily suggest an inherent archaeological character to my practice. More significantly, my understanding of the archaeological is neither manifest in the focus on a particular landscape or in specific material qualities. Rather, within a within a framework of memory work and material historical enquiry, the archaeological is applied as a conceptual way of thinking across a range of practices, images, objects and sites. The archaeological becomes manifest in the subjectivity of a conceptual relationship with these various elements, out of which photography lends itself well as a primary method.

My 'mature' visual art practice is one characterised by the production of exhibition and print-publication oriented bodies of still photographs and moving image works. Although my research concerns principally photography my practice was first formed during a BA training in fine art painting completed at Bath Academy of Art in 1983. It is also a practice that throughout my professional career has been shaped around the activities of exhibition curating and academic teaching.

Aspects of youthful memory have been present in my practice since the time of being a student. In the development, the past two and a half decades, of an intentional photographic practice, landscape representation has tended towards a highly formal, and passive engagement. Out of this context my study has led to greater understanding of how autobiographical content can provide the articulation of wider historical sensibility. A reading of Benjamin during this research has given rise to a more conscious use of childhood memory and historical context. This has been reflected in a more active and extended engagement with the medium of photography in relation to the respective methodical qualities of *observing* and *doing* through activities of collecting and making. Methods which have their origins in childhood.

The methods of observing and collecting images could be recognised as having their natural place in the broad practices of photography and historical research. The methods of making perhaps more marginal. During the course of this research making has however become a critical part of the wider

practice. Its origins lie in the childhood activities of toys and the construction of miniature worlds. The distinction between passive observation and doing is important to state. While there is a degree of personal indulgence through a throwback to the times of childhood the activity of making has become central to a greater emphasis, like the activity of reflective writing, placed on *thinking through doing* which supports the production of photographic works. Regardless of how collecting and making may inform the production of images, with additional process activities surrounding photography, such as walking in the landscape, there has been conscious recognition of these processes as essential methods in their own right. The wider thinking that arises out of these methods itself influences how their origins in childhood are reflected upon. In turn the activities of making and collecting inform a more critical and interactive relationship with photographs more broadly, whereby the fragmentation of memory and its resulting subjectivity, is not only acknowledged but is in a sense heightened.

Demonstrated by the companion practice portfolio my current practice may be characterised by a less than homogenous use of photography. Lacking any significant formal photographic training, and perhaps reflecting my fine art training and work as an exhibitions curator, I have always been drawn to the multiplicity of ways of working made possible by photography. It has certainly never been my intention to establish a distinctive photographic 'style' in the manner by which many recognised names in photography are identified. Rather I am drawn to the proposition of "image ventriloquism" that was introduced in the Introduction.

To illustrate the diversity of photographic methods that may be employed within the construction of a personal historicity and to situate my practice in relation to those of others whom I admire I look at comparative examples including the works of William Christenberry, Cindy Bernard, James Welling and John Spinks. Placing my practice in a wider context of influence I also consider the significance to miniature models and professional experience of exhibition curating.

Introduction to Practice

An important moment in the development of my practice that anticipates my current research was the making of the work *An English Field* (2007) commissioned by Southampton City Art Gallery. [figs 4.01, 4.02] *An English Field* is a two-part moving image work made with the intention of investigating the landscape that defined my early childhood and which at that point I had not re-visited to any significant extent for a period of nearly three decades. At the time of the commission I was working extensively with moving image and approached the project in a manner reflecting recently completed works. A preceding and closely related work was *An English Journey* (2004), that featured a journey made by heavy goods vehicle from the Port of Southampton to Manchester and filmed almost exclusively from the vehicle driver's cab. [fig 4.03]

The intention of *An English Field* was to document in video the landscape around Upavon using the platform of a 'vehicle' that had an intrinsic relationship to the landscape. The choice was a glider flown from Upavon aerodrome, contrasting with the memory of my more static childhood view located firmly on the ground. Each part is approximately 10mins in duration and presented in parallel on two separate screens. On one screen (*Aerodrome*), is shown a continuous take of glider flight from the moment of launch to landing filmed from inside the glider cockpit. Pointing perpendicular to the direction of flight the camera scans the landscape according to the behaviour of the glider. On the second screen (*Barn*) the camera focuses its attention on a semi-ruined agricultural barn structure from a single 'locked-off' camera position. *Aerodrome* is silent while *Barn* is accompanied by audio recorded in the same location which evidences a range of sounds ranging from birdsong and insects to aircraft and distant artillery fire. If *Barn* is an evocation of the landscape I remember, *Aerodrome* is the reversing of the view I had as a child gazing at the sky.²

While 'landscape' may provide a broad context for my photography I would not consider my practice one as a landscape photographer, as exemplified by the work of Jem Southam or Dan Holdsworth.³ Nor, more broadly as a landscape artist. Motives are certainly not driven by intentions of landscape conservation

² Viewable on-line at www.andrewcross.co.uk

³ My practice, in-part, shares similar strategies and techniques closely associated with such examples landscape photography: the use of large-format camera etc. I reference Southam and Holdsworth partly because I have either exhibited alongside or shared conference platforms with these two photographers. I have also written about Holdsworth's work. See: Andrew Cross *On the Art of Staring in Dan Holdsworth* (Photoworks/Steidl, Brighton 2005) 62-63

or environmental activism found in the work of, for example Fay Godwin or Andy Goldsworthy.⁴ There is a possible correspondence with the historically highly charged work of Tomoko Yoneda or Chloe Dewe Mathews the deals directly with Cold War or British Military history and its apparent absence from contemporary landscape.⁵ I would argue a significant distinction, not only in method – mine is much less systematic – but that my engagement with such histories is contingent to the circumstances of my childhood. Convenient, broadly geographical, thematic groups do, however, occur across my work, including North American or rural English landscapes. However, I would not consider an attention to certain locations and topographical conditions as defined entirely by any given landscape ‘type’. For example, my draw to many differing places in North America is due to the presence of railway lines.⁶ [fig 4.04]

⁴ See: Fay Godwin *Land* with texts by John Fowles and Ian Jeffrey (Heinemann, London 1985). Fay Godwin *Landmarks* with texts by Simon Armitage and Roger Taylor (Dewi Lewis, Stockport 2001). Andy Goldsworthy *Projects* (Abrams, New York 2017)

⁵ I refer specifically to Yoneda’s series *After The Thaw* examining architecture and sites of Cold War activity in former Soviet Eastern Europe and Dewe Mathews’ *Shot At Dawn* documenting the sites of court-marshal executions of British Army ‘deserters’ during World War One.

⁶ Either by design or due to circumstance, since my early childhood and throughout much of my life, I have been fortunate to experience a variety of landscapes with wide-ranging topographies or other defining qualities, all of which have had offered some form of appeal. They include the rural and urban, romantic and modern, intimate and expansive. It is perhaps of no surprise therefore that visual art practice is bound up with at least some form of landscape engagement: through interests like transport infrastructures I spend time visiting and being ‘active’ in landscapes, I produce images of landscapes. My practice has encompassed landscapes as diverse as rustic idylls, desert plains, industrial infrastructures and chaotic cities. What is interesting is how a range of landscapes can be linked.

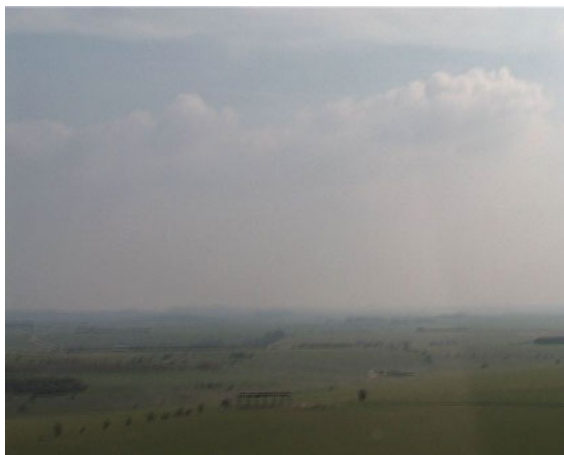


fig 4.01

Andrew Cross *An English Field (aerodrome)* 2007

Digital video 11 mins silent



fig 4.02

Andrew Cross *An English Field (barn)* 2007

Digital video 9:30 mins w/audio



fig 4.03

Andrew Cross *3 hrs from here: an English Journey* 2004

Digital video 108 mins w/audio
Installation at John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton

My engagement with landscape is conducted with purposeful spatial and temporal 'situating'. Landscape is observed according to two principal formal conditions. Landscapes can be occupied (or dwelt in) and they can be traversed (or moved through). These two basic relationships translate very easily into forms of practice expressed in the two contrasting elements of *An English Field*. Firstly, documenting the same location over a duration of time and/or from different positions of view, or 'plotting' a journey over distance and time. In terms of pictorial composition and individual image aesthetic an acknowledgement of landscape painting might be identifiable, the deliberate formal framework is made with the influence of photographic practices found in conceptualist art.⁷

A critical distinction that presents itself is a difference between landscape as an object of contemplation - a picture, or vista - and landscape as site of action to which a practice is applied. Extended possibilities of site emerge through the consideration of conceptual art practice and recent theoretical landscape discourses that were highlighted in Chapter Three. The implication being an engagement not so reliant upon the pictorial traditions of landscape representation. Or, rather in the context of method these traditions are interrupted, and contingency becomes a conditioning factor. For example, inherent to *An English Field (Aerodrome)* was the behaviour of the glider which, in turn, is influenced by a combination of pilot skill and meteorological conditions.

Bearing in mind Mitchell's observation that landscape is a condition of practice, it could be possible to suggest that my own attention is beyond the landscape itself towards the conveying of something ulterior to the physical or aesthetic characteristics of place.⁸ Growing up on a farm taught me that landscapes are in a continuous state of flux and gradual change. The rural landscape so familiar to me as a child was subject not only to the natural seasons but also to social and economic forces that were also very much the product of intervention. Landscape, therefore, is always something with which one has a very direct and causal relationship.

In many instances the basis for my landscape photographs, is precipitated by a prior interest in particular activities, objects or events. Two established subjects of my practice provide example of this. Firstly, railways and secondly

⁷ Particular examples would include Ed Ruscha's *26 Gasoline Stations* (1963) and *Every Building on Sunset Strip* (1966) and Keith Arnatt's *Self Burial* (1969).

⁸ W.J.T. Mitchell *Imperial Landscape in Landscape and Power* (University of Chicago Press 2002) 5

the sites of 1970s outdoor music festivals. In both cases a landscape site or condition may be instrumental to determining the event and how it is experienced and remembered.⁹ However, the landscape itself and the photographing of landscape is not the primary purpose of engaging in a given location with either of these subjects. It is an interest in railways and the memory of rock festivals that has led me to specific landscape locations not the other way around.¹⁰ [fig 4.05] This premise does not mean, however, that the resulting images remain unconditioned by the aesthetic traditions of landscape representation.

Further qualities of these subject interests pre-empt aspects of wider cultural context and research activities. An interest in railways, can open up a vast area of historical and geographical investigation leading not only to the anticipated fields of engineering but also areas of economic development and social history. In my own early teenage experience, pouring over maps and books of railway photography I became familiar with places and landscapes I had never visited and was discovering them as pictured a number of decades previously.¹¹

A teenage attraction to a range of contemporaneous American music led to a raft of images and associations that included vast unfathomable landscapes and exotic cultural conditions. Through song lyrics and music literature an introduction was provided to some of the social and political dynamics that lay behind these images.¹² Therefore, as the basis of memory work, recollection of these experiences and their reconstitution will inevitably involve the overlapping of my own personal and many different cultural memories including, the mythology of the Wild West, the 1960s hippie counter-culture and the civil rights movement.

⁹ For example, Andrew Cross *Some Trains In America* 2002 which documents railroads in numerous locations across the USA and Andrew Cross *Hats Off to Roy Harper* 2009 which documents the site of the 1979 Knebworth Festival on its 30th anniversary 11th August 2009.

¹⁰ As pointed out in the introduction railways have been critical to my relationship with photography which began at a young age. The photographing of locomotives in particular can be a central activity to the collecting practices of 'train-spotting', and my experience was no exception.

¹¹ See Andrew Cross *One Photograph* in *Photography & Culture* (Vol 6, Issue 1, 2013) 81. Here I discuss the influence on me as a teenager of the photograph *7 April 1953* by the renowned British railway photographer R.J Blenkinsop. The photograph was originally published in Blenkinsop's *Shadows of the Great Western* (Oxford Publishing Co 1972) containing photographs taken during the 1950s and which today remains one of my more treasured books of railway photography.

¹² A good example would be Neil Young's *Southern Man* (1970) which speaks about racial discrimination in the Southern States of the USA.



fig 4.04

Andrew Cross *Siberia* CA 1997

Originated on medium-format negative.
From *Some Trains In America*



fig 4.05

Andrew Cross From: *Hats off to Roy Harper* 2009

One of fifteen images.
Originated on medium-format negative.

Comparative Photographic Practice 1

William Christenberry

Part of my teenage musicscape included what was referred to as Southern Rock represented by groups like The Allman Brothers from Georgia and Lynyrd Skynyrd, known for their 1974 classic *Sweet Home Alabama*.¹³ The political intentions of this particular song has always been the subject of contentious debate however it is possible that the song was responsible for opening up to my own intrigue about the State of Alabama and its history. Accordingly, this interest could in turn explain part of my immediate attraction to the work of William Christenberry.

Of appeal is Christenberry's focus on his origins in a remote rural environment resulting in a near life-long documentation of his native, Hale County, Alabama which began towards the end of the 1950s and continued through to his death in 2016. This decades-long project that records the traces of both incremental change and the persistence of place, is a very good example of continuous return to a landscape full of memory that is both very personal as well as collective.¹⁴ [figs 4.06 – 4.09]

More significant to my practice is how Christenberry's photographs point towards an engagement with his chosen subject extending beyond the practice of photography itself. Although associated with the emergence of American colour photography in the 1960s and 1970s typified by William Eggleston, Christenberry's wider practice encompasses also sculpture, painting and drawing. [fig 4.8] The photographs themselves come very close to a form of ventriloquism in itself. Encompassing a broad range of photographic methods and technical qualities within closely defined episodic works, Christenberry's images appear almost casual in their approach while at the same time thoroughly serious in their intent. His 'photography' alone is not what appears to drive the content of the work. What the photographs do provide is the foundation upon which a distinctive voice concerning place is articulated.¹⁵

Christenberry's work can also be cited as an example of photographic practice situated within a more heterogeneous relationship to wider artistic practices

¹³ Interestingly the group originated from Jacksonville, Florida. The song was written and recorded at Muscle Shoals Studio in Alabama.

¹⁴ See *William Christenberry* (Smithsonian Museum/aperture 2006) Essays by Walter Hopps, Andy Grunberg, Howard N. Fox

¹⁵ See: Walter Hopps *The Bricoleur* in *William Christenberry* (Smithsonian Museum Washington/aperture New York 2006) 16-17

developed in the USA after Pop Art of the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed. His work is discussed alongside Robert Rauschenberg or Ed Ruscha as easily as with Walker Evans or Stephen Shore. Although training as a painter in the formalist tradition of Abstract expressionism, Christenberry is part of a generation of American artists to emerge during the 1960s and 1970s who began to reject the reductive medium specificity dominating painting and art criticism at the time.

A rejection of the modernism espoused by Clement Greenberg was often motivated by the desire for a more relevant engagement with the social and cultural conditions of the time including, in the USA, the Vietnam War, civil rights and the youth 'counter-culture'. In expanding the possibilities of art was a new-found freedom to express these concerns without any restriction of medium or technical facility. In his untrained use of the camera Christenberry found an articulation of both the history of agricultural poverty in Alabama and the undercurrent of racial extremism; two essential historical conditions that lurk underneath the appearance of an isolated rural serenity of the Deep South.



fig 4.06

William Christenberry *Horses and Black Buildings, Newbern, Alabama 1978*



fig 4.07

William Christenberry *Kudso and Buildings, Greensboro, Alabama 1978*



fig 4.08

William Christenberry *Green Warehouse, Newbern, Alabama 1978*



fig 4.09

William Christenberry *Green Warehouse 1995*

Comparative Photographic Practice 2

Cindy Bernard

Further perspective on particular tropes of American culture, inflected through a lens of personal memory is offered by Cindy Bernard. Like Christenberry, Bernard's photographic practice is stylistically diverse and merges into wider activity, hers is a ventriloquism born out of a rigour inherited through the conceptualism which dominated contemporary art in her native Southern California at the beginning of the 1980s.¹⁶ Emerging out of this rigour is a quietly measured politics addressing the constructed historicism of American landscape and the tendency for that landscape to be mythologised. The remembered landscapes of Bernard's experience are not so much the material place of her childhood but rather the received landscapes of cinema and the road trip. The landscapes of her attention may be invested with the romantic narratives of journeys although these are not journeys of her own making but those of film directors and her grandfather.

Ask the Dust 1989-91 consists of twenty-one photographs 'recreating' landscape scenes from Hollywood films made between 1954 and 1974. With a forensic exactitude, Bernard reconstructs from each film a selected shot devoid of actors and additional props by using production records supplied by film directors and production managers. The chosen films - one for each year - range from 'classics' as *North by Northwest* (1959) and *Chinatown* (1974) but also disaster films such as *Them* (1954) and exploitation films like *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* (1965) [figs 4.10, 4.11]

The chronology of *Ask The Dust* which invites reflection on history with a certain sense of familiarity. Although this is not a timeframe strictly coincident with Bernard's these are films she may well have encountered during that period and more significantly will resonate with the narrative of turbulent US politics of the Cold War period that she was born into. Included among the images are well-known landmarks such as the Golden Gate Bridge and Monument Valley that have come to symbolise the United States' historical certainty and the mythology of the West. Also included, however, are much less recognisable locations reflecting less visible events such as land corruption explored in Roman Polanski's *China Town* or the presence of antiheroes like Bonnie & Clyde.¹⁷

¹⁶ Bernard studied graduated from CalArts in 1985. Among other activities she is founder and director of SASSAS (The Society for Activation of Social Space through Art and Sound.)

¹⁷ Mark Durden *Filling the Void* in *Cindy Bernard* exhibition cat. James Hockey Gallery (Farnham 1995)

Reviewing the *Ask The Dust* series for *Artforum* in 1990 Colin Gardner suggests Bernard's strategy is a "two-way deconstruction" reminding us that landscape is never a neutral site and is itself ideologically constructed as much as the cinema that portrays it.¹⁸ Draining the original cinematic reference of all filmic narrative and semiotic connections Bernard's photographs serve as paradigms for various frames of historical discourse as well as art and popular culture. These discourses continue to evolve to reveal a construction of popular culture, and history more broadly, that is monocultural and gendered. Contexts that Bernard resists pointing to directly but allows to permeate through her work.

A popular tradition of the burgeoning post-war American leisure culture, and one considered in the command of fathers was the family road trip. In *Grandfather Photographs* 1989 Bernard printed twenty photographs selected from a collection of 3500 slides made by her maternal grandfather on family road-trips spanning three decades from 1950 to 1979. [figs 4.12, 4.13] Key to the selection is the idea of the road itself and its reach across the North American continent and through its mythological status. This is the promise of freedom and its personification is the Western hero. For Bernard, however, the road symbolises confinement as well as freedom. The supposed triumph of civilisation over the West also meant the hero was left with nowhere to go.¹⁹

Bernard's reuse of photographs and photographing in reference to cinema is suggestive of postmodern practice of a slightly earlier generation of American artist that includes Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine and others. These and other members of the Pictures Generation seemed to suggest that governed by pictures from across all forms of popular media, a second-hand quality informs our visual perceptions. A relationship to family photographs is not the same. Even when produced from a previous time family photographs can feel close to one's own life. Family history is important to Bernard and in the form of her grandfather, an understanding of hero is highly nuanced. Her grandfather's epic journeys and his photographs are informed by a lament for the shared value of family bonds as much as by any recognition of archetype. Bernard reminds us how even the most dominant of

Kerry Brougher *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945* (MOCA Los Angeles 1996) 131

¹⁸ Colin Gardner *Cindy Bernard* review in *Artforum* (December 1990)

¹⁹ Mark Durden *Filling the Void ...* For further reflection see: Neil Campbell *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational, Global, Media Age* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln) 2008

culturally constructed imagery will be experienced through a filter of personal memory and association.



fig 4.10

Cindy Bernard Ask *The Dust: Vertigo (1958/1990)* 1990



fig 4.11

Cindy Bernard Ask *The Dust: Bonnie & Clyde (1967/1991)* 1991



fig 4.12

Cindy Bernard *New York* (William Adams 1951) 1989



fig 4.13

Cindy Bernard *Oregon* (William Adams 1952) 1989

Comparative Photographic Practice 3

James Welling

Bernard's photographic practice is a reminder of Jerry Thompson's remark that "The camera is not only a tool for generating images."²⁰ In other words, cameras are a source of photographic material, and not the only source, which the artist physically and conceptually shapes into a form prompting the viewer towards content. Content that may reflect both personal and cultural experience. Photographs are much more than the documentation of surface appearances.

Also present in practices of photography, is the materiality of making, and revealing the consequences of such process of making is a conscious strategy in the stated image ventriloquism of James Welling. Among Welling's many series of works are photographs of industrial architecture, studio-based constructions, abstract 'pictograms' and documentary images of US railroads. According to some observers, including James Crump, Welling successfully marries modernism with post-modernism, the object of the photograph and its images, representation and abstraction.²¹ He continuously demonstrates the variety of photographic methods possible within a single practice and the freedom with which he freely moves from one to the other successfully "combining stylistic and epochal contradictions with aesthetic elegance and poetic melancholy".²²

Underpinning Welling's multiple photographic voices is a consistent and deliberate attention paid to history. Very much the history of photography itself in relation to wider histories of painting, sculpture and architecture but also an historical context reflecting his upbringing in the North Eastern United States. A context in which the family and the local have are situated in relation to historical forces of industry, technology and art.

Largely self-taught as a photographer after initially studying painting and sculpture, Welling could be considered having started from the position of an artist interested in the world of images and ending up as a photographer very much with a camera but employing all the camera's possible technical forms. Welling's practice is not defined by an easily recognised style and his many subjects are organised around the many processes of making photographs.

²⁰ Jerry L. Thompson *Why Photography Matters* (MIT Cambridge, Mass/London 2013) 7

²¹ James Crump *James Welling Monograph* (Aperture, New York 2013)

²² Ingrid Brugger *Foreword* in *James Welling: Metamorphosis* Exh. Cat. (Stedelijk Museum voor Kunst, Ghent, Kunstforum Wien 2017) 11

Welling himself will frequently refer to himself as a photographer but what is much more difficult to say is what kind of photographer he is? Closely associated with the 'Pictures' generation of artists central to the postmodern critique of the 1980s Welling originally sought to fuse modernist photography with conceptual practice. He has since, Heike Eipledauer notes, developed an approach shaped by "experimentation and radical stylistic diversity that evolves along the borders of photography, painting, architecture and film".²³

Welling's practice seems to resist medium specificity in favour of medium hybridity. He states: "photography continues to lead to new directions. Unpredictability and change are basic to the medium and are central to my work."²⁴ Never limiting himself to any single procedure, large-format, medium-format, 35mm, film, digital are all deployed and, similar to Christenberry, sometimes a range of formats may be used within a single body of work. Alongside highly accomplished picture-making Welling has also regularly produced what is sometimes referred to as camera-less photographs. This particular strand of his work draws parallels with wider practices of art-making, including drawing, which situates his practice within discourses concerning the broader nature of art as much it does the specifics of photography. What is emphasised are the possibilities of photographic practice that are more than about using a camera to look. It is an encounter with reality through the material touch provided by the processes of photography. [figs 4.14 - 4.17]

No matter how technically 'neutral' some of Welling's approaches might appear to be, unlike the more calculated conceptualism of some of his peers like Richard Prince or Louise Lawler, he has never attempted to produce images lacking pictorial interest or lose sight of the potential subjectivity of emotion and expression: "A photograph records both the thing in front of the camera and the conditions of its making ... a photograph is also a document of the state of mind of the photographer".²⁵ Welling recognises that inherent to photography is a paradoxical state of presence and absence, a space in which the artist subject is able to intervene. Much more than an instrument for recording, through the agency of the artist a self-reflexive photographic practice can pose questions of individual intention, emotion and expression,

²³ Heike Eipledauer *James Welling the Ghost of Painting in Photography in James Welling: Metamorphosis* Exh. Cat. (Stedelijk Museum voor Kunst, Ghent, Kunstforum Wien 2017) 19

²⁴ James Welling in conversation with Hal Foster in *James Welling: Metamorphosis* Exh. Cat. (Stedelijk Museum voor Kunst, Ghent, Kunstforum Wien 2017) 171

²⁵ Interview with Devan Golden in *Bomb Magazine* 87 (Spring 2004) 48

forms of subjectivity which are historically more closely associated with painting, and largely absent from post-formalist critique.²⁶

Similar to Christenberry and Bernard the memories of childhood and familial history seem to inform aspects of Welling's work. The content of both artists' practice reflects a wider consideration of the places and circumstances from which they originate. Welling openly acknowledges the lingering spectre of his sensibilities formed in the rural Massachusetts where he grew up and which also features in the popular landscapes paintings that as a child originally attracted him to art. In 2017 Welling produced work based on paintings by his grandfather who was a prolific amateur 'hobbyist' artist. Informing this work was the memory of how the presence of these landscape paintings in the family home had a profound impact, although his grandfather himself had died five years before Welling's birth in 1951.²⁷ Welling has also produced an extensive series of colour photographs made of the interior and landscape surrounding the preserved home of the painter Andrew Wyeth. Eipledauer suggests that in the Wyeth work is the invocation of a 'ghost' from Welling's youth in the form of a "nearly" romantic relationship to painting. The photographs also offer a reinterpretation of Wyeth's paintings whose realism, very popular with a mainstream audience, is frequently marginalised by the discourses of 20th art history.²⁸

²⁶ Heike Eipledauer *James Welling the Ghost of Painting in Photography* in *James Welling: Metamorphosis* Exh. Cat. (Stedelijk Museum voor Kunst, Ghent, Kunstforum Wien 2017) 31

²⁷ Heike Eipledauer *James Welling the Ghost of Painting in Photography* ... 43-47

²⁸ Heike Eipledauer *James Welling the Ghost of Painting in Photography* ... 51



fig 4.14

James Welling *4:55 PM Departure, South Station, Boston MA 1991*



fig 4.15

James Welling *From: Cento 2019-2020*



fig 4.16

James Welling *From: Wyeth 2010 - 2015*



fig 4.17

James Welling *From: New Abstractions 1998 - 2000*

Comparative Photographic Practice 4

John Spinks

By way of contrast to Welling and Christenberry I want to consider what appears to be a more singularly focused practice of landscape - or place - photography. However, it is no less searching than, for example William Christenberry, in the exploration of hidden, dark narratives within landscape. In the practice of English photographer John Spinks can be recognized the propensity to a kind of melancholia experienced through a fractured sense of belonging that is combined with a broad curious fascination with how English landscape, in particular, can withhold as much as it may reveal.

Elements of Spinks' practice and current PhD research focuses on historical concerns similar to my own interests, including deeply personal and collective narratives running through English landscape. Although Spinks is ten years younger than myself, and we are of differing backgrounds, we both recognise reference points belonging to a shared cultural memory. In particular the political context of 1980s Thatcherism and industrial decline as well as more recent events such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁹ [figs 4.18, 4.19] *The New Village* published in 2017³⁰ is a series of "quietly attentive" and yet hesitant, meticulous landscape and figure portraits generated between 2000 and 2014 during visits made to the place he grew up during the 1970's and 1980s: a former (unnamed) coal mining village in central England.³¹ Interestingly, very little evidence is provided of the community's original purpose or what the people who continue to live there do now. Rather attention is given to the liminal environment of the village 'edgelands'³² and the more "mysterious traces of human intervention" that seem to feature such

²⁹ The title of Spinks current PhD research with the University of Creative Arts, Farnham, is *Nuneaton: A Phenomenology of place, remembrance, and loss. What are the parameters for a subjective memorialising of placeness through photography?* and is due to be completed October 2023. Additional information is the result of conversations with Spinks during June-July 2019. The focus of his current research is a series of landscape photographs made 2008 – 14 at Harrowdown Hill a small corner of rural Oxfordshire which was briefly thrown under the public spotlight in 2003 with the tragic death of scientist and nuclear weapons expert David Kelly who had been embroiled in Britain's politically highly involvement in the US-led invasion of Iraq. Before embarking on a successful career in commercial advertising and portrait photography Spinks graduated in BA Photography from Surrey Institute of Art & Design, Farnham in 1993. Coincidentally, While Spinks was a student I was Curator of the James Hockey Galley at SIAD although at the time I had minimal involvement with students on the photography course.

³⁰ John Spinks *The New Village* (Bemojake, London 2017) This body of work was also the focus of Spinks' MFA completed at the University of Plymouth 2014.

³¹ Sean O'Hagan in *The Observer* 25 July 2017

³² The indeterminate liminal spaces where urban areas end, and the countryside begins, Edgelands have become increasingly the subject of creative practice and wider cultural attention. In part thanks to the publication of *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness* by Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts. (London 2001) In the sleeve notes Richard Mabey describes edgelands as the most despised and ignored of landscapes "where the veneer of civilization. Often cited in the context of edgelands are the photography informed paintings of George Shaw also based on the place of his childhood in which the gable ends of houses, disused garages and scraggy paths leading to nearby fields and woodlands feature significantly.

unattended spaces where, David Chandler notes amid “the shadows and wandering imaginations often lingers the darkness in people.”³³ [fig 4.18]

At the core of Spinks’ research are the limits of representation inherent to the particular properties of photography. A recognition that for all its pretensions of documentary ‘truth’, and what is expected of it, photography is also severely limited in what truth it can provide. Spinks speaks of the propensity of photography to draw attention to material evidence of events registering effects or symptoms of, for example social circumstances like economic decline or conflict. (Alternatively, the impact of natural occurrences like floods or hurricanes.)

What is more challenging for photographs is to tell us accurately and without prejudice what exactly the event is, or was, and what it would be like to experience it directly. Our understanding of such conditions is heavily dependent on received or additional knowledge. Such knowledge when provided directly, for example by captions or accompanying text, can lead to didacticism or ideological influence.³⁴ The kind of directed information that a photographer like Spinks is all too conscious of and strives to avoid.

Spinks’ response is to concentrate on a method somewhat in contradiction to the traditions of documentary photography. In other words, a method not concerned with revealing but rather one of consciously *not* revealing: to present overtly ‘muted’ photographs with minimal contextual information. Relying therefore on the viewers’ own recognition of visual references, such as the characteristics of a landscape, forms of vernacular architecture, styles of clothing, and the possible cultural meanings they might infer.³⁵ In other words, within very narrow parameters, Spinks exploits what a ‘crafted’ photograph is particularly well equipped to convey: the subjective conditions of ‘atmosphere’. These are conditions in which imagination rooted in childhood experience supplemented by adult knowledge can be so effective. Spinks is keen to point out that despite its documentary credentials, a body of

³³ David Chandler *What Are You Looking At* in John Spinks *The New Village* (Bemojake, London 2017) Spinks has also remarked in relation to his Harrowdown Project how within much of the apparently idyllic and innocuous English landscape can usually be found links to much aspects of military and colonial history.

³⁴ See: John Tagg *The Burden of Representation* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1993) and John Tagg *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2009)

³⁵ Someone looking at Spinks’ photographs who lived in the UK during the miner’s dispute of 1984-85 and its aftermath will easily recognise the signs of dramatic economic decline that will have impacted upon mining villages.

photographs like *The New Village* is in part a “work of fiction” requiring the viewers imaginative response for its full realisation.³⁶

I cite Spinks’ practice as an example that is able to draw deeply upon personal memory and speak to a wider collective experience of historical narrative. An absence of didacticism in his photographs is also key to Spinks’ subtle critique of contemporary landscape photography’s more common conventions. Recognizing the limitations to documentary truth, Spinks is suspicious of the authority with which a photographic ‘project’ manifests itself, most notably in the presentation method of the photo-book. Elegantly assembled, such books tend to place significant importance on a self-contained sequencing of images organised to suggest a particular way of reading, often to demonstrate the “assumptions of profundity” especially in regard to a project that is specifically about place.³⁷ Spinks’ method of critique is to work within the conventions of these common photographic tropes. By frustrating expectations of the viewer, he leaves the exact focus of the images more ambiguous, thereby inviting much greater speculation on meaning.³⁸

Although informed by similar concerns, my own response to the conventions of landscape photography is to move away from the development of a singular practice towards a more heterogeneous application of photography’s various possibilities. In other words, while respecting the craft of certain photographic methods, these are situated alongside additional methods. The photographic ‘project’, I hope becomes more discursive in its form as well as direction. This approach may reflect the characteristics of a training and professional career different to that of Spinks’ and is not situated within the practices of editorial and commercial photography. Despite potentially different practice characteristics and stylistic qualities, core aspects of intention and critical position can be, however, very similar.

³⁶ John Spinks interviewed in *Creative Review* (June 26th 2017). It is worth noting that while much of Dennis Potter’s work was based on autobiographical experience he always insisted it was fiction. Potter was also the son of a coal miner in the Forest of Dean.

³⁷ These observations were made during a conversation with Spinks on 16 July 2019 when he also remarked that a definition of ‘place’ is “the perfect excuse to take pictures”

³⁸ For example, the images that make up *Harrowdown Hill* (See note 26) on one level to be read as a series of photographs of trees in what appears to a quintessentially English rural landscape.



fig 4.18

John Spinks *The New Village: Estate 1*



fig 4.19

John Spinks *Harrowdown Hill: Landscape 2*

The Influence of Miniature Models

Alongside Christenberry's broad yet carefully directed photography, are a number of detailed sculptural models depicting some of the key buildings which feature in his photographs. [fig 4.09] What is not clear from reading about these sculptures is their true purpose. They appear to be part of the broader practice of assemblage and gathering of materials immediately to hand which Christenberry has used throughout his life as an artist. There is also the suggestion of originating out of a childhood activity of drawing and making models of landscape features familiar to him. Like dolls houses and other childhood toys the models may also serve as containers for imaginative speculations.³⁹

Given how Christenberry is perhaps better known for his photographs it could be easy to assume that the additional practices of model-making and painting are somehow secondary to the photographs. (Although commentators are often at pains to emphasise the broad nature of the wider practice.) With an accuracy associated with architectural models but reflecting 'character' through colour and texture as much as structural form, the exacting nature of some of Christenberry's models is, however, different from the looser expressive qualities of his paintings. The models seem to provide a similar function of documentation to his photographs, for which I would like to offer my own observations drawn from model-making associated with the field of hobbyist model railways.

One of the high benchmark standards to which many a British railway modeller will aspire is the example of Pendon Museum. This is something of an extraordinary story of obsession and commitment that was originally motivated in its beginnings in the late 1940s through the work of one singularly determined individual Royce England. England's idea was to record in three-dimensional form and in exacting scale-detail, vernacular rural architecture at a time when buildings were being radically altered or demolished altogether. More than half a century later the legacy of England's vision is remains an 'unfinished' project that continues to be developed by a community of dedicated modellers.⁴⁰ [figs 4.20, 4.21]

³⁹ Howard N. Fox An Elegiac Vision in *William Christenberry* (Smithsonian Museum/aperture 2006) 188-196

⁴⁰ Stephen Williams ed. *In Search of a Dream: The Life and Work of Royce England* (Wild Swan, Didcot 2001)
Chris Pilton *Cottage Modelling for Pendon* (Wild Swan, Didcot 1987)

As a conceptual project Pendon and its individual models serve as a form of collective 'index' that 'captures' the physical character of landscape and architecture at a fixed moment in time. It is uncertain whether Christenberry's models are constructed with similar obsessive attention to accurately measured detail - they are of a much larger scale than Pendon's 1/76 scale (4mm = 1 foot) - although they most certainly serve as an additional means to photographs of recording the changing landscape. Rather than sequencing time and space in the manner that a series of photographs can provide, the model concentrates attention into a singular three-dimensional physical object.⁴¹

In an experience shared with architects as well as the modellers of Pendon, the process of model-making provides a very different engagement and understanding with the object of attention than two-dimensional drawings or photographs. It is one demanding as much interaction with material as it is concerned with observation. Speaking from personal experience the model-making and its sequence of detailed decision-making, in contrast to the momentary capture of the photograph, is also a method of slowing down, encouraging a thinking process about material objects that are in dialogue with each other and with further objects.

A more acknowledged relationship between models or sculptured objects in contemporary photographic art exists in the work of James Casebere and Laurie Simmons. [figs 4.22, 4.23] Of interest is how in the construction of their images, both artists openly employ the artifice of the miniature and toy-like, which serves as a starting point for as the exploration of cultural origins and critique of history. One may also argue that Simmons' gendered critique of girl-oriented toys is from the perspective of an urban or suburban experience and, presented on pedestal plinths, appear as miniature depictions. Both Simmons and Casebere offer something more imaginative and playful than Christenberry's accurate renderings of specific buildings, although it is the case that the formal orientation of the former is that of tableaux in which the function of the model-making is in direct support of the resulting photographic image.⁴²

⁴¹ This seems to be a common motivation among the community of railway modellers and notably features women as well as the anticipated men. A publication that fascinated me at young age, around the time I first encountered Pendon in the early 1970s was Vivien Thompson's *Period Railway Modelling: Buildings* published in 1971. This was a time when many British railways stations were being closed and/or having their original Victorian or Edwardian buildings demolished. Vivien Thompson *Period Railway Modelling: Buildings* (Peco, Seaton 1971)

⁴² Interestingly the kinds of models exemplified by Pendon are often encountered through photographs which with additional digital 'enhancement' often strive for unambiguous realism. When viewed at exhibitions model dioramas are often presented within with proscenium type framing device.

Across a range of art practices, the miniature and constructed model in varying forms holds powerful appeal especially to someone who from an early age paid considerable attention to toy farm vehicles and model trains. What is absent from the work of Christenberry, Casebere, Simmons and the example of most model railways like Pendon, is a relationship to the floor. An all-important consideration of childhood play and a context that locates the miniature more firmly in the context of real-scale environment. An art practice that also exploits the appeal of the miniature and the toy and for which the context of scale and floor is critical is the early sculptural works of Joel Shapiro. Shapiro was another US artist searching for his own way forward from 1960s and 1970s Conceptualism and Minimalism who I first encountered as a student in the early 1980s. [figs 4.24, 4.25] It is possibly this work that has the most influence upon my own use of miniature models in the context of an art practice.

In the early 1970s Shapiro began exhibiting ankle-high solid geometrical forms dispersed across the gallery floor. Hinting at the playful and the child-like these small sculptures both “charmed and provoked” in a multivalent response to the impersonal industrial monumentality of Minimalism.⁴³ Vacillating between abstraction and representation – notably the use of a detail-free monolithic house – the ostensive modesty of these forms, their simple sculptural language and materiality, would generate considerable spatial and emotional charge. Suggesting the character of buildings, vessels and figures, Shapiro’s work indicated it was possible to consciously appeal to the imaginative scope of childlike play within the rigorous reductive language of abstraction.

What interests me is how the arrangement across a floor, reminiscent of a child’s bedroom, might oscillate between an imagined landscape and what could potentially be otherwise apparently discarded objects. Each object when placed on the floor could be considered a self-contained entity while also suggesting compositional narrative relationships. Aiding such overlays of the imagination is also the crude materiality of wood, cast metal and plaster, usually evidencing the processes of their treatment. A quality that Benjamin recognised as critical to the child’s imaginative relationship to objects and the craft tradition of toys and storytelling and which makes any representational scale less easy to determine. This is also noticeable quality in the photographs of Casebere and Simmons enabling the allegorical, and which is entirely absent

⁴³ Roberta Smith Joel Shapiro exh. cat. (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York 1982) 11

in an exacting miniature quasi-factual world like Pendon striving to fix time and form.



fig 4.20
Pendon Museum



fig 4.21
Pendon Museum



fig 4.22

James Casebere *Landscape with Houses (Duchess County New York) #1* 2009



fig 4.23

Laurie Simmons *Woman/Purple Dress* 1976-77



fig 4.24

Joel Shapiro Exhibition installation, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York 1975



fig 4.25

Joel Shapiro *Plaster Sculptures* 1975 - 2014

The Influence of Exhibition Curating: A Bucolic Frolic

I have used the three examples of Christenberry, Welling and Spinks to examine the possibilities of photography relevant to my own practice. Each artist/photographer, in varying ways may be considered to inform or have parallel concerns to my own attitudes of practice and preoccupations. Before describing in more detail my current practice methodology, I first want to take a brief look at how the experience of exhibition curating has influenced a more multi-disciplinary attitude towards practice. This is less an intended critique of any singularly honed positions and more the exploration of converging interests and insights.

A Bucolic Frolic: Distractions from The Modern (2012) was an exhibition co-curated with Andrew Mummery and was an experiment combining our shared interests in the histories of English rock music and English landscape.⁴⁴ The exhibition arose following a staging at the Mummery + Schnelle Gallery of *The Solo* (2010), my collaborative moving image work with rock drummer Carl Palmer. Included in the exhibition were some of my own photographs together with a painting of the Wiltshire landscape by Peter Kinley and an early 'field' drawing by Bob Law. Also included was a series of drawings by Roger Dean, designer of some iconic 1970s record covers and an early influence on my interest in the visual arts. Additional items included copies of 'underground' newspaper *International Times* and printed ephemera associated with 1970s outdoor 'free festivals'. [figs 4.26, 4.27] An exhibition publication in the form of a free 'newspaper' contained a variety of texts and images including my photographs of festival sites accompanied by a text taken from Rob Young's *Electric Eden*.⁴⁵ Architect Adrian Friend wrote a short article entitled *Landscape into Architecture* in which he references military activity on Salisbury Plain. [figs 4.28, 4.29]

A short introductory text in the exhibition newspaper read:

'A Bucolic Frolic: Distractions from the Modern' takes a look at some tendencies to be found in English art, design and music from the 1960s to the present day which indicate a particular refusal to accept an inevitable onslaught of economic and technological modernity, preferring instead visions of alternative worlds and reinterpretations of the existing one.

⁴⁴ *A Bucolic Frolic Distractions from The Modern* Mummery + Schnelle, London 29th June – 18th August 2012.

⁴⁵ Rob Young *Electric Eden: Unearthing Britain's Visionary Music* (Faber & Faber, London 2010) 476-505

The exhibition groups together painting, photography, graphic design, architectural propositions and material related to the music and politics of outdoor free festival movement.

Rather than an un-tethering from earlier cultural references, or seeking the comfort of a nostalgic Romanticism, suggested in this exhibition is something that is much more of an awkward but necessary renegotiation with landscape and the ancient to be found in expressions of the sometimes fantastic and utopian; a desire to embrace the past as part of the future, combining the spiritual and the directly political, the local with the cosmic, the wandering and ephemeral as much as the permanent.

The exhibition was not the product of a clearly defined research method and did not draw any specific conclusions. Intentionally discursive, the exhibition did however, contain both formal and conceptual content that went on to inform this current study. Across its various elements, the exhibition reflected an intentionally open attitude with regards to idiosyncratic interests and the display of collected material alongside recognised artworks. The overall appearance of the exhibition combining a range of visual material within a thematic whole, serves as a prototype to how the results of this study may be presented.



fig 4.26

A Bucolic Frolic Exhibition Installation, Mummery + Schnelle 2012



fig 4.27

A Bucolic Frolic Exhibition Installation, Mummery + Schnelle 2012

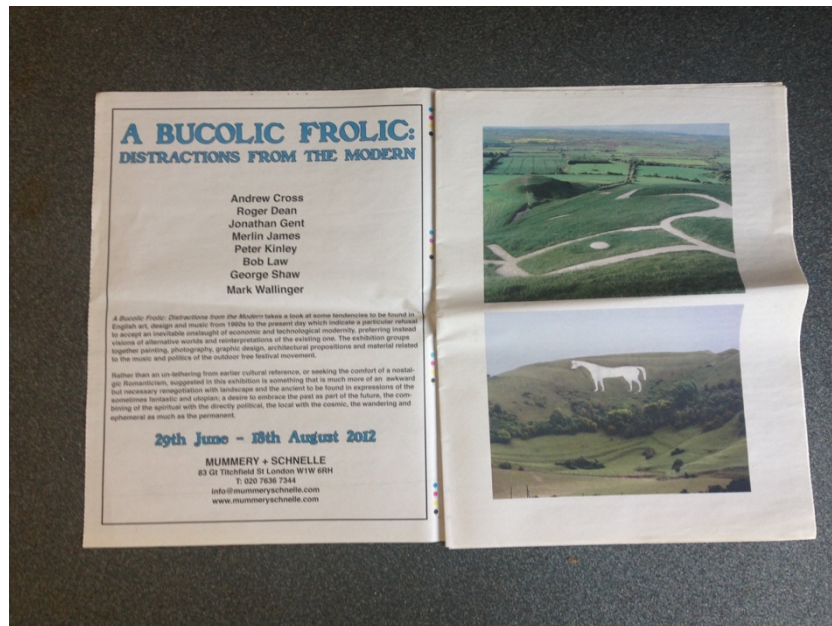


fig 4.28

A Bucolic Frolic Exhibition 'newspaper'.

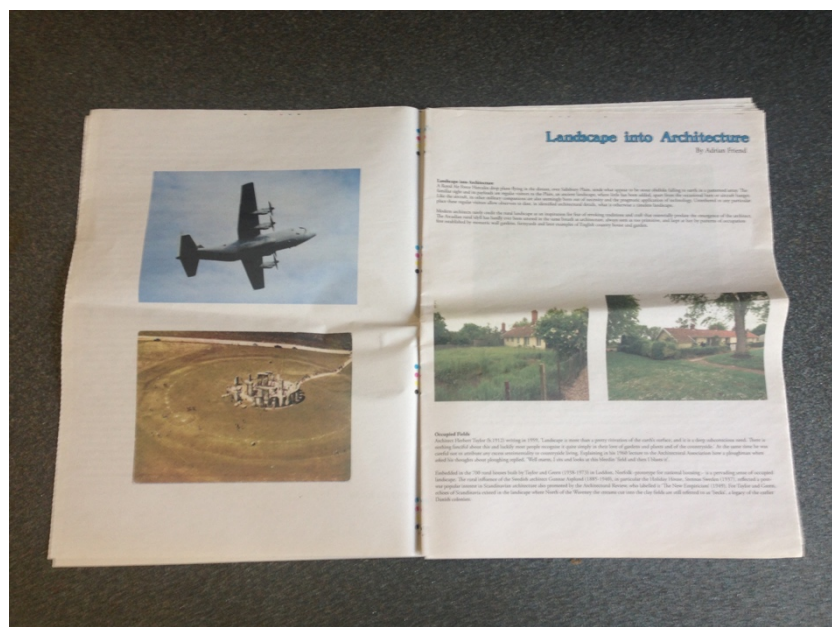


fig 4.29

A Bucolic Frolic Exhibition 'newspaper'.

Principal Research Practice Methods

Reflecting wider research, rather than define my practice methods by photographic operations alone, they are characterised by the broader methodological themes of:

Observing through being in landscape with a camera

Doing through separate methods of *making* and *collecting*

While chosen methods exist in parallel, they also reflect something of a chronological progression in the development of practice as a whole. Prior to this programme of research my practice was governed by narrowly defined technical and conceptual protocols of generally passive landscape observation. This method of photographing topography is the context in which wider research and practice development began.

As already indicated, a significant conceptual and methodological shift has been made from a largely contemplative relationship to landscape and memory towards an attitude of intervention with image production and construction of meaning. This shift has manifested itself through a more conscious multidisciplinary approach to practice and research enquiry.

Across a range of activities has been the augmenting and re-mapping of the landscape of childhood through the methods of collecting and reusing collected images and hand-making miniature models. Significant is how these wider methods may have been inherent to my character arising out of childhood. They also help with the conceptualisation of childhood as a site for practice development in the manner Benjamin achieved with the *Berlin Writing*. It has been through the reading of Benjamin as well as the conceptual qualities of the archaeological that has given meaning and articulation to a diversity of methods that have become integral elements to a single art practice.

Portfolio and potential exhibition presentation of photographic prints remains an over-arching context for the production of completed individual and serial works. While a completed work in its own right the companion portfolio also serves as a 'visual primer' for further curated elements drawn from what is now an extensive working archive of imagery. Signalling most strongly the orientation of future practice development has been found the collecting of photographs. Equally significant is how in addition to the gathering of additional visual material, the principal research practices of writing and

extensive reading have become essential elements of a wider methodology. Similarly, wider critical analysis becomes itself the object of evaluation.

Principal Practice Method 1

Observing

The principal photographic operation of this method is the on-going production of colour photographs that arise out of numerous walking visits made to Upavon since 2007. The motivation of these visits is primarily one of contemplation of landscape and associated personal memory, although such visits have often organised around the activity of taking photographs. In total, approximately six-hundred photographs have so far been generated using this method.

There is no consistent programme to how the photographs are made and organised. They are generally made in response to the situation encountered at the time visits are made, or a number of loose ideas that may occur prior to a visit. These ideas may include the relationship being formed with a specific memory. Initially, these photographs were generated using a medium format 6x45 film camera and these constitute the largest number of to-date approximately five-hundred negatives. During the research programme the use of a 5x4 field camera has become more frequent and now total approximately fifty negatives. In addition, a much smaller number of images have been originated digitally, mostly out of logistical expediency at the time they were generated. Over the full period in which this body of photographs has been generated, there has also been a steady progression from a situation when many medium format images would be taken during any given visit to one where a more focused approach is adopted by using the larger format camera.

Determining the choice of scene can be a number of programmatic, aesthetic and technical considerations. Arising out of these choices can be an orientation towards generating a particular sub-set of images. Attention may be given to certain landscape features or traces found in the landscape as the result of military activity. For example, one subset of images includes four abandoned 'foxholes'. A subset may be generated in response to photographs previously taken which leads to repeat visits to the same location. Equally, a number of scenes may remain the subject of only one image.

The first intentional set of images was made in response to photographs taken in the early 1960s by my father. This was in part an exercise in orientating myself with the area although the result was to evidence the change, or rather the relative little change, in landscape character over the intervening years.

Four locations were visited regularly over a period of approximately 12 months during 2008/2009 and employing the consistent method of photographing on medium-format negative (6x45). The approach was deliberately imprecise with the framing of images based only on the memory of the previous image beginning with my father's original. For each location a final set of four images were selected. [figs 4.30 - 4.33]

For whatever purpose, to make photographs or to simply walk, there has been no predetermined timetable to when visits take place although most occur during the months between March and October. Visits have been made at various time of the day from early morning to dusk and of varying duration. A range of weather conditions may be encountered although visits are generally organised to coincide with favourable weather. Photographs are taken within, or in close proximity to, the area of land managed by my father. As part of the MoD's Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA) these are remote areas and away from the public highway. In most instances a degree of walking across rough open ground is required before finding the desired location. [fig 4.34]

Visits begin with driving from my home in South London, or place of work at Solent University in Southampton.⁴⁶ Entry onto the SPTA is made via three points of access where the public roads bordering the area meet dedicated military-built gravel roads ('tank tracks'). Although unmetalled, these roads are drivable by car and at most times remain routes of public access. A selection of suitable locations will be used for parking my car, from which various walks are made. All necessary equipment (e.g. camera, tripod etc) has to be carried. The amount, and type of equipment may determine the scope of each walk and selection of locations from which to make photographs. [figs 4.35, 4.36]

Within this principal framework of walks more than one approach can be adopted according to camera format and intended image composition. Using medium-format (6x45) it is possible to take hand-held images without need of a tripod. This encourages a more casual and spontaneous approach greatly extending the scope and flexibility of a walk. Particularly in good light conditions this can be my preferred way of working. It encourages a more intuitive approach to taking images and there is the tendency to produce closer-range images of landscape features. While more expansive views are possible, they are better produced using a tripod. If more calculated images are intended, or lighting conditions require longer exposures, then a tripod will be used.

⁴⁶ Solent University supplies some of the necessary equipment and is where all film processing is undertaken.

Due to size, weight and technical qualities, use of a 5x4 field camera requires a more calculated approach. A field camera has been used mostly for expansive landscape views that encompass long-distance detail. These particular scenes have been concentrated on two high point locations enabling wide and long-range views. At these locations repeat images have been made over a number of visits.

When using either camera format compositional decisions are made 'in camera'. Negatives are scanned to a high resolution and a process of selection and editing undertaken. An initial selection will be made from scans viewed on screen. A3 sample prints are digitally printed and further selections made from these. The process of decision making in post-production will develop on from decisions made 'in the field'. Selection is orientated towards forming small broadly thematic groupings as exemplified by the foxhole group, or a series made over time at a specific location. A number of further considerations come into play at this stage of selection concerning content of the images. These may be purely technical; exposure focus, composition and so forth or how local environmental and meteorological conditions effect the image.



fig 4.30

Andrew Cross *Untitled* 2008/2009 (View towards Upavon Camp)

Originated on medium-format negative.



fig 4.31

Andrew Cross *Untitled* 2008/2009 (View towards Upavon Camp)

Originated on medium-format negative.



fig 4.32

Andrew Cross *Untitled* 2008/2009 (View towards Upavon Camp)

Originated on medium-format negative.



fig 4.33

Andrew Cross *Untitled* 2008/2009 (View towards Upavon Camp)

Originated on medium-format negative



fig 4.34

The area of focus is in the centre of this satellite image. South of the A432 road and east of East Chisenbury. The prominent white roads are unmetalled 'tank' tracks of the kind visible in fig 4.25.



fig 4.35



fig 4.36

Principal Practice Method 2

Collecting

The principal operation of this method is the use of appropriated imagery to expand the content and historical scope of my existing photographic practice. The predominant process is collecting original photographs from a range of mostly anonymous sources. These photographs include 35mm colour slides and black & white press photographs. A number of black & white negatives have also been collected including 35mm film and 4x5" glass negatives.

Additional visual material is also collected and falls into a number of loose categories including military maps, military training manuals, hobbyist modelling magazines, and the catalogues of model kit and toy manufacturers. Some items relate directly to the sourced photographs. For example, the official programme for the 1962 *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* held at RAF Upavon. [figs 4.37, 4.38]

The appropriation of photographs began with colour slides taken by my father during the early 1960s. These slides depict the landscape and events on the farmland he managed. As mentioned previously a small number of these slides were used as the starting point for some of my own photographs. Acquiring further photographs from a number of anonymous sources has been carried out through internet-based auctions (e.g. ebay). Additional printed visual material has been obtained also mostly through internet-based searches with only a few examples being in my possession since childhood. The transference of photographs and additional material into new forms of imagery include both digital processes and analogue darkroom techniques.

Featured in the companion *Practice Portfolio* are collected photographs focused in two thematic areas. One is the 50th Anniversary of Military Aviation air show held at RAF Upavon on June 12 1962. The other being events in Aden during the 1960s in particular aircraft activity at RAF Khormaksar. Manifestation of these two themes has become possible due to the fortuitous sourcing of two large collections of 35mm colour slides. [figs 4.39] Worthy of note is how the two themes are linked through the same photographic medium and similar aircraft appearing in both sets of slides. Of significance is that at the time when the slides were exposed, RAF Upavon was the administrative headquarters for RAF Transport Command operations in Aden.

A separate yet closely related group of images is over thirty 10x8 black & white press photographs taken during the Aden Emergency of 1963 - 1967. These prints have been acquired from dealers specialising in prints released from former press agencies. The Aden press photographs are supplemented by a further group of former publicity prints originating from commercial archives depicting Blackburn Beverley aircraft.⁴⁷ [figs 4.41, 4.42]

Internet searches are conducted on a reasonably regular basis although not according to a strict system. Initial searches were unspecific, mostly due to lacking prior knowledge of what might be available. A chosen search has its basis in either a range of childhood memories or subsequent knowledge that has accrued during the process of further research. The input of information can become critical and sometimes may require a degree of experimentation before finding the most effective use of search key words.

Advent of the internet has radically altered the manner photographs are interacted with and researched.⁴⁸ Perhaps reflecting the nature of internet-based activity more generally, searches are inherently speculative and may meander and change accordingly. Something may unexpectedly present itself, generating a new focus of attention. As a key example, Aden became a focus following earlier search for material relating to the Blackburn Beverley. As the Beverley was well-known for its service in the Middle East, photographs of the aircraft in Aden began to appear which precipitated a subsequent set of searches for information about the British military presence in Aden and operations at RAF Khormaksar.

There is continuous process of refining searches in the attempt to make them more efficient. Although there has not been the scope incorporate all of the collected material into the practice or theoretical considerations of my current research, the process has generated a number of potential avenues of future research, suggesting possible future directions for practice development.

There are a number of qualities to these photographs that makes their appropriation of interest. A good example is offered by the black & white press prints covering the Aden Emergency. These prints were issued by either the British Government Ministry of Information or what appears to have been US

⁴⁷ It is significant to note that the slides are original and from an unknown source and therefore I possess full copyright. Having been released from press archives into the public domain the press prints come without copyright restriction.

⁴⁸ See: Daniel Rubenstein *Fragmentation of the Photographic Image in the Digital Age* (Routledge, Abingdon 2019)

based press agencies offering a slightly different version of events. What is also of interest is the inclusion of additional caption information and evidence of treatment by picture editors, including cropping marks and application of drawn lines and shading to enhance reproduction contrast.

Unlike my own photographs and the appropriated slides, the press photographs will have already existed in historical and cultural contexts. They speak directly about the political and social narratives of the Aden conflict as reflected in newspaper reports. As such they indicate a departure from a relationship to childhood memory, towards a specific aspect of British post-colonial and Cold-War history. With physical evidence of their journalistic use there is also a greater sense of historicity.⁴⁹ If the RAF Khormaksar slides represent a bridge between Upavon and Aden, then these prints offer the opportunity to investigate Aden as a more independent project.

During the acquisition of photographs and secondary material there is a parallel process of curation concerning the formation of final works. Taking the two collections of slides as examples, they each contain elements of formal and conceptual correspondence. Originating in the same basic format any subsequent treatment made to the images is equal across both sets. Both groups reflect a fascination with aircraft technology and they both contain images of the same types of RAF aircraft. Both collections offer interesting perspectives on aspects of spectatorship combining the personal and the collective: the obsession of an individual 'plane-spotter' and the public spectacle of the air show. From the position of autobiography, they offer corresponding perspectives on memory. The Upavon air show was an event at which I was present, albeit as a 14-month-old baby. The Aden slides depict a place and events I did not witness yet to which I feel an attachment.

The 50th Anniversary of Military Aviation images are now a collection of forty-five slides generated by, it seems, two individual photographers. (In addition to these are nine slides taken by my father.) The identity of these photographers remains unknown although there are indications they had privileged access to non-public areas, suggesting perhaps they were working in some professional capacity. Included are aircraft in flight, static aircraft as well as evidence of the large public attendance and recognisable landscape context. The picture quality of the slides is generally good. Some of the

⁴⁹ In recognition for their historical status however, I indicate their place of origin and date of publication. In my representation of them I make no attempt to deny their physicality as paper prints.

compositions are interesting in the context of contemporary photographic styles today, and in ways they may not have been considered positively at the time.

The RAF Khormaksar slides are a single collection of one-hundred and twenty-six images of aircraft taken from within the confines of the air base around 1966. The exact provenance of these images is not clear, but it is evident the photographer worked at RAF Khormaksar, which was also a civilian airport.⁵⁰ Of interest is the obsessive nature of the photographer's attention to aircraft, which contrasts with a lack of technical proficiency. Many of the images are over-exposed, out of focus, and include movement blur. However, it is evident the emphasis would have been on capturing the image of the aircraft rather than recognition of photographic traditions.

The application of a working method begins the slides being scanned at a very high resolution. Their individual condition varies considerably and there follows a sometimes, lengthy process of digitally 'cleaning' each image of accumulated dust and making 'corrections' to exposure and colour balance. Many of the Aden slides have, over time, been subject to conditions impacting upon image colour and physical state of the celluloid. Any cleaning or colour correction is limited and largely approximate, arriving at an image condition that feels generally appropriate. At this stage A4 sized digital test prints are generated to aid further editorial decisions. The resulting body of digital scans forms a data bank from which a number of permutations are possible for final physical output of images. [fig, 4.35]

One particular photographic process has become a primary outcome which also leads from a method of collecting to one of making: the production of a physical 'negative' and subsequent analogue darkroom print. Selected images are 'converted' using standard procedure within image editing software to produce a negative image. These images are then digitally printed onto acetate to produce physical negative to the approximate size of 20x24". The physical negative is then used to produce a colour contact print using standard analogue darkroom processes including 20x24" photographic paper. [figs 4.38, 4.39]

⁵⁰ The result of email correspondence (March 2018 - May 2019) between myself and the on-line seller, who specialises in selling old colour slides and acquired this collection from another party.

There are formal and conceptual implications of this method of reworking appropriated photographs. Similar to a collage, the processes of making become apparent, and the new print takes on qualities that are much more than the representation of the appropriated image. The combined processes of digital conversion, printing onto acetate and contact printing appears to alter the image in some interesting and unanticipated ways. The process generates unforeseen effects that are largely out of immediate control during printing. (Unlike a digital process which is predicated on maximum control.)

With each new print there is generally an increase in contrast and saturation of colour. Areas that would otherwise appear overexposed possess more noticeable image texture. For example, what might originally appear to be a bleached-out sky becomes darker with cloud detail. The process is also prone to physical 'damage' of the acetate negative. Minor scratches can easily occur which are mostly accepted as inevitable. Such marks add to existing 'blemishes' that remain inherent from the original slide. They also draw attention to the physicality of the analogue darkroom process.

The result is a print that is qualitatively different from any purely digital output and each print is unique. This serves to confirm David Company's observation that one of the ironies of the internet, so often associated with the immaterial, is the availability of a "bounty of physical material images".⁵¹ Indeed, it is very much the material nature of these collected photographs - how they are received as slides and the subsequent analogue darkroom prints - that is an important aspect to my practice. Conditioned by a materiality and temporality of making, the analogue processes of the darkroom contrast with the perceived ethereal immediacy of the digital process. The physicality of the new print returns the image to the object uniqueness of the original slide.⁵² Firmly anchored to the moment of its making over fifty years, the image is also regenerated anew in the present as a further unique object. As much as it relates to the past, the image projects into the future.

⁵¹ David Company *Image Ventriloquism and the Visual Primer* in *Thomas Ruff* exh. cat. (Whitechapel London 2017) 194

⁵² Many of the slides come with their original card mount, and sometimes with handwritten reference notes.



fig 4.37



fig 4.38

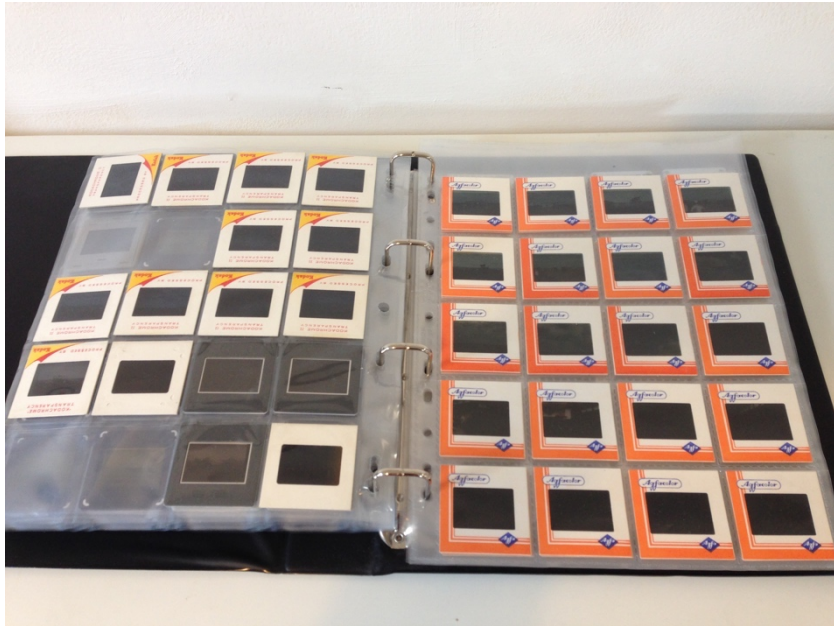


fig 4.39



fig 4.40



fig 4.41



fig 4.42

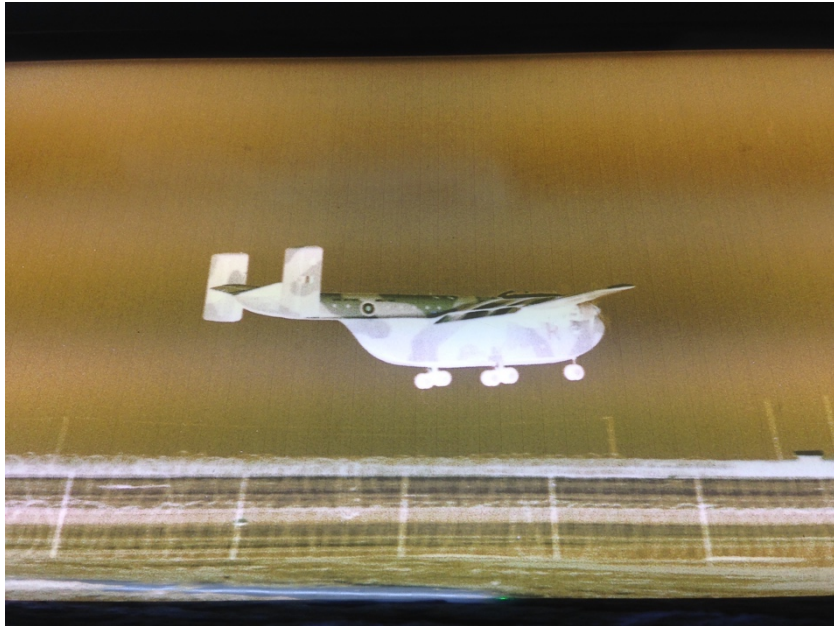


fig 4.43



fig 4.44

Principal Practice Method 3

Making

The principal operation of this method is the construction of miniature scale-models to generate the potential of an 'imagined' landscape that is subsequently photographed. It is a method arising out of a childhood experience of creating a miniature world furnished by the availability of now classic metal diecast toy vehicles including Dinky, Corgi and Matchbox. Perhaps the most significant among a collection of scale-replicas were Airfix plastic model kits.

Coincident with revisiting Upavon, since 2007 has been the collecting replacement examples of approximately sixty original Airfix models that I remember possessing as a child. The kits were 1-72 scale aircraft and 1-76 land vehicles plus various sets of 1-76 figures. The sourcing of these kits is through internet-based auctions (e.g. ebay). Once acquired the kits remain complete and unmade in their distinctive packaging of the late 1960s including the 'classic' box-art illustrations by artist Roy Cross. (no relation) [fig 4.40] In addition to Airfix kits I also began collecting additional replacement toy agricultural machinery. These toys were manufactured by Britains who produced at 1/32 scale a range of tractors, farm implements and plastic livestock models.

Commensurate with collecting these kits came the intuitive desire to revisit the experience of model-making. (Although it must be emphasised not the assembling of the vintage Airfix kits.) In what may have amounted to something of a childhood obsession, the making of plastic kits was, however, a less than proficient activity which led to models being completed to varying levels of quality, and sometimes left unfinished. None of the models survived into advanced teenage years. With the benefit of hindsight, what was also driving this interest in model-making, and despite a limited skill set, was a desire to develop such skills beyond the realms of childish play. This aspiration was excited by the availability of magazines that catered for the more advanced modeller. For example, *Airfix Magazine* and *Scale Models*.⁵³ Despite the low-quality reproduction values of the time, these magazines came with an almost exotic-like appeal of historical, technical sophistication with intricate scale accuracy. [fig 4.41]

⁵³ The first issue of *Airfix Magazine* was dated June 1960 and published monthly until its demise in 1988. The magazine was relaunched in 2010 as *Airfix Model World*. The first issue of *Scale Models International* was dated October 1969 and published monthly until its demise in 2008.

The current activity of constructing models began in a loose and arguably nostalgic ad-hoc fashion. They fall into two general categories: land-vehicles and landscape features including buildings and trees. Individual vehicles are chosen according to specific memories drawn from childhood – therefore Cold War - and observations made during the period of this research, including the appearance in archive images. Buildings are a mixture of those as they exist in the landscape today as well as examples featured in memory. Trees are modelled on examples that occupy the landscape. In addition, is the inclusion of a helicopter which serves as a connection to the air but whose presence on the ground is not at variance to its purpose, and a small number of military figures.

Vehicles are constructed from commercially available contemporary plastic kits at either 1/32 or 1/35 scale which are the two standard scales for hobbyist military modelling. (Specific choices may be conditioned by availability kits, although a hobbyist activity of this kind is now catered for by a much-expanded range of available kits, and supporting material, compared to five decades previously.) The buildings and trees are ‘scratch-built’ to 1/32 scale using a variety of materials commonly used for the construction of architectural models. All models are constructed in a small domestic studio-space. There is no systematic programme to the order in which specific models are constructed and often the decision to do so can be spontaneous. [figs 4.42, 4.43]

Although the model-making remains an independent activity in its own right, the resulting objects have become entered into the wider practice of photography. The method is at an early stage of development and resulting photographs considered in terms of working ‘sketches’ suggesting further refinement.⁵⁴ Future development remains uncertain and in the collective context of my practice and its manifestation as a whole in the companion *Practice Portfolio*, the sketch quality may be sufficient.

The completed models are photographed in a relatively spacious group arrangement on the floor of a relatively non-descript architectural space that approximates to a domestic room or studio. No attempt is made to disguise the existing context, the miniature scale of the models is clearly apparent against the real scale of the existing architecture of the room, and the inference

⁵⁴ Experiments have been made photographing a similar arrangement of agricultural machinery using the same landscape features. Work has also begun on constructing a group of contemporary military vehicles based on those witnessed during recent visits and therefore defined by the post-Cold War period wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

of a gallery space is not disguised. Equally the influence of Joel Shapiro's sculpture is fully recognised. However, the compositional arrangement is largely intuitive informed by memory and knowledge and there is the attempt to imply a casualness to the composition made in reference to the childhood bedroom floor.⁵⁵ The photographs are generated digitally with the camera mounted on a tripod. Artificial lighting is not used and remains natural. A final composition is achieved following what can be a lengthy process of experimenting with arrangements and camera positions. [figs 4.44, 4.45]

There is very little in the way of published analysis into the practices of scale military modelling. However, cursory examination of available reference material indicates a focus on creating an exacting miniaturised 'reality' of a specific place and moment in time, set in context of a wider historical event such as a specific wartime battle. It is a three-dimensional 'image' that could be considered the equivalent to a 'photographic' rendering of historical coordinates. Additional features include figures that are combined with a vehicle, or vehicles, to create a specific narrative scenario or 'diorama'. Key to a diorama will be the landscape setting and the inclusion of additional features such as buildings, fauna and figures.

My own approach exists at variance with such examples of exacting standards and is informed by a conscious recognition of artifice in both the model and subsequent photograph. It is important that my own model making reflects a childhood experience of limited technical skill and knowledge. Remaining marginally unfinished or incomplete the model operates, as the child's toy does, within an imaginative realm providing only limited approximation to the real world to which it refers. Unlike the diorama, or tableaux, the resulting photograph does not attempt to create a fully illusory space like that of the tableaux or diorama.

The final arrangement of models is unspecific and largely speculative. Rather than being precisely measured against a known pre-existing image or history, meaning may be determined more by a fractured subjective memory. The specifics of an arrangement remain uncertain and subject to imaginative extrapolation. An aim is to provoke the question of what do these objects represent, and to what history they may refer? At a glance a model may appear accomplished but on closer inspection may reveal some minor errors or

⁵⁵ The possibility of using domestic items such as a carpet are discounted as this is considered to be too literal and would add an unnecessary further level of complexity.

elements of rough incomplete finishing. This is a self-imposed limit to the level of authenticity and attention to detail applied through technique. How a point of finish may be arrived at is not easily measured and dependent very much on an intuition. [figs 4.46, 4.47]



fig 4.45

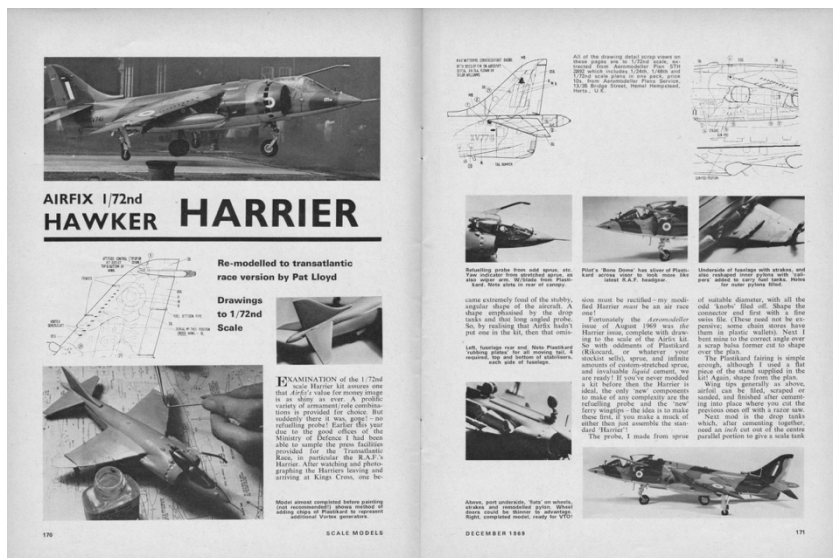


fig 4.46

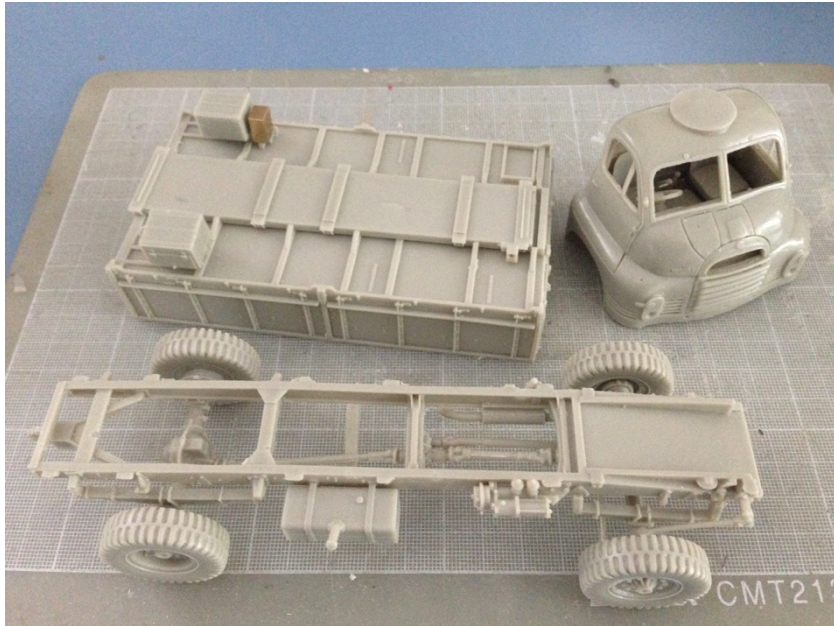


fig 4.47

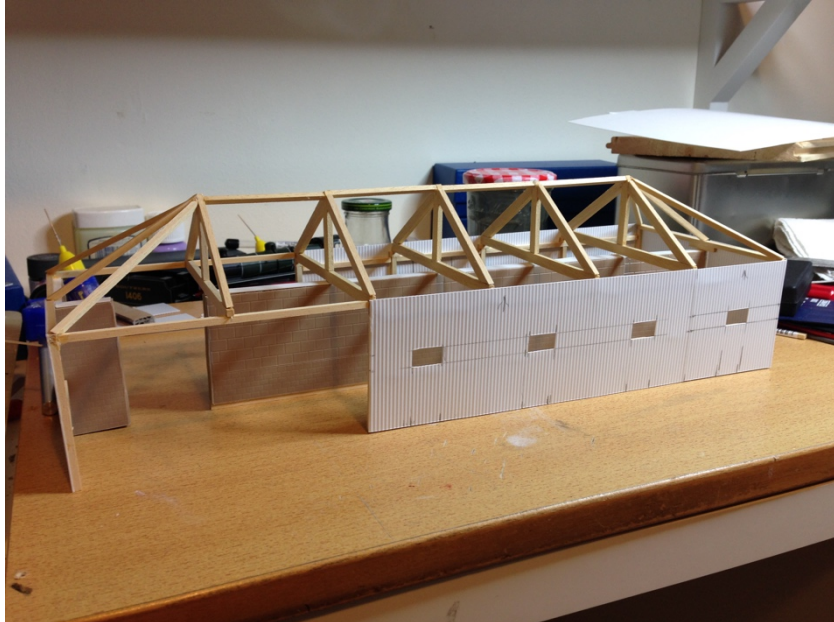


fig 4.48



fig 4.49



fig 4.50

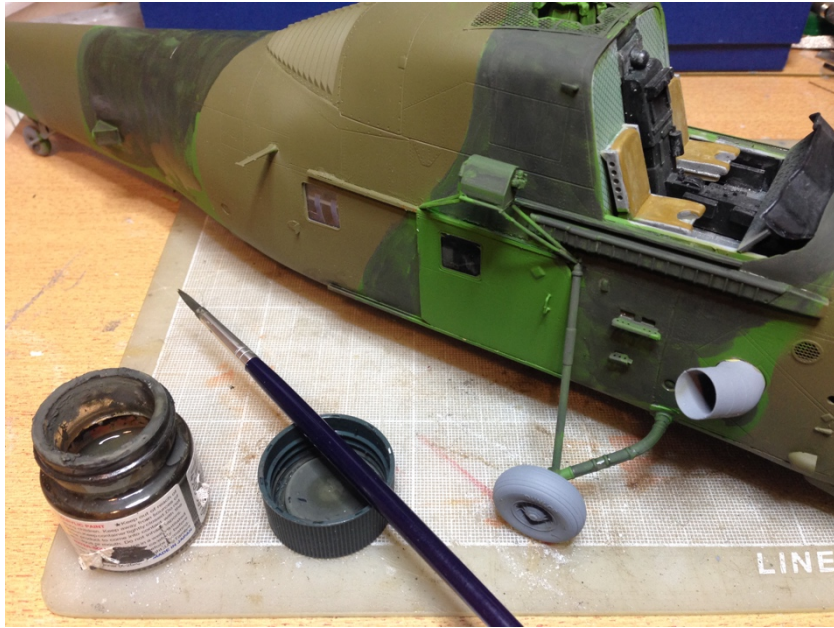


fig 4.51



fig 4.52

Composition of Practice Portfolio

The portfolio contains eighty-one digitally printed pages each measuring 420x525mm and includes sixty-five individual page images. [For the purposes of thesis examination, the portfolio is presented in digital format.]

The selection and ordering of images is made according to a number of interrelating considerations and values. Many of these are subjective and based on aspects of memory, additional historical and geographical knowledge. There is no immediate evident logic to the ordering of images although a number of possible narrative sequences may be discernible. Formal qualities of image properties including composition and colour also greatly inform selection and arrangement.

An overall 'curatorial' aesthetic is applied to engender the clear sense of a diverse yet tightly formed portfolio. This aesthetic is also designed to suggest a bricolage of images and objects reflecting the underlying methods of *observing, collecting* and *making*.

Included among the range of images are the following:

- Photographs produced in the landscape since 2007. (Originated on large and medium format colour negative).
- Reproductions of original 35mm colour slides taken by my father during the 1960s.
- Reproductions of original 35mm colour slides from anonymous sources taken at the 50th Anniversary of Military Aviation at RAF Upavon 12 June 1962.
- Reproductions of original 35mm colour slides from an anonymous source taken circa 1966 at RAF Khormaksar.
- Reproductions of original black & white press prints covering the Aden Emergency during the 1960s.

The portfolio is designed to exist as an entity without accompanying written thesis. Dotted throughout portfolio is a small number of pages containing only brief texts of a reflective nature. These texts provide a small amount of context indicating the origins of images and the meaning of the collective body of work. These are a number of supplementary pages that provide a full title index of the images and further reference to the wider archive from which the portfolio is drawn.

While it forms a conclusion to this research project, in the context of an art practice the portfolio is only one point in a continuing development. As well as a conclusion to one project the portfolio also serves as a visual primer for a number of possible future outcomes of an exhibition and/or publication drawing upon the large archive of imagery that has been generated through this period of research. A multiplicity of completed works are possible ranging from the exhibition of individual large-scale prints to the presentation of specific groups of images in book format.

The products of this research form an expanding and evolving image bank, and information resource that can be drawn upon multiple times and multiple ways. Each method and thematic element of my practice remains in a condition of development. Accordingly, how this material is presented will be contingent upon further on-going research beyond the conclusions to this specific body of research.

Summary Thoughts

Becoming clear to me during the progress of this research is however much my practice might lead to the production finished works, it is primarily a matter of *process*. The greater acknowledgment of process has become evident across the full range of my methodology including writing as well the production of images. A good example of the fore-fronting of process in my thinking offered by the making and subsequent photographing of scale models. A question that may arise is which is more the 'finished' work, the models themselves or the photograph of them? It is a question currently unresolved and may remain so. Like Benjamin's child engaging with a wider world through the imaginative fashioning of objects, as much as it satisfies a certain desire for making finished things, the true value of my own model-making is as a method for facilitating personal historical reflection *during* the making. The conscious incompleteness of the model-making process, and its apparent fragmentary qualities, corresponds to a formation of memory through the montaging of image fragments.

How this process of making and photographing concludes remains an open-ended question. The photographing of the completed models is a further extension of process of reflection and irrespective of the results therefore continues as a necessarily open-ended activity. Multiple permutations of model and photograph are possible for any future exhibition or publication. Any 'curatorial' considerations at that point will be informed by much more - aesthetics of display and so forth - than conditions that determined the process of making.

A similar situation exists for the working with collected of photographs. In terms of generating a practice as the formation of a personal historicity it is the realisation of a photograph's physical existence that establishes the critical starting point to the formation of that historicity. The wider *doing* of gathering, editing and reworking of images becomes the process which facilitates the onward process of historical re-evaluation. In the context of this process the completion of these images remains equally a continuum To become 'finished' will require additional conceptual strategies concerning the representation of appropriated imagery, some of which apply to some of the art practices discussed in Chapter Two.

An emphasis on process has also informed my selection of comparative practices. I indicated at the beginning of this chapter that, although there may be a certain orientation to my practice, I do not identify myself as a specific type photographer, Rather, as someone who is making a visual exploration through selected operations of photography. The lineage of this practice originates from multiple sources. I believe this to be also the case by and large with my choice of comparisons reflecting how among the many possibilities of photography there can be a search to give voice to perspectives on the past.

A wider conclusion to be drawn concerns memory and the unstable nature of images especially photographs. Any given collection of photographs, whatever their origin, does not automatically constitute an accurate index of a life or historical narrative. As I suggested in the introduction to this thesis, personal historicity is not determined by a set of fixed coordinates. Photographs may provide foundation stones upon which an individual historicity can be established but the layout they provide will be inherently irregular. The archaeological nature of photographs in the context of Benjamin's exploration of childhood goes some way to evidence this. As the practice of an artist like Cindy Bernard demonstrates, to explore the past through photography is to highlight the mutability of the photographic image as cultural construct, while at the same time not devaluing its significance to personal memory.

History is not necessarily recorded through photographs, nor are we required to accept as given any history presented to us through photographs. At best photographs can only point to things present or absent, and all that these things may mean or represent. In the making or collecting of photographs we are able to individually participate in the formation of any history that may become attached to photographs. And any subsequent understanding of the past is both our own and one that is shared.

Conclusion

Photographs in the Theatre of Memory

You relate the events you have seen and are still seeing to the field. It is not only that the field frames them, it also contains them. The existence of the field is the precondition for their occurring in the way they have done and for the way in which others are still occurring. All events exist as definable events by virtue of their relation to other events.

The field you are standing before appears to have the same proportions as your own life.

John Berger¹

¹ John Berger *Field* in *Selected Essays* Geoff Dyer ed. (Bloomsbury, London 2001) 357

At the beginning of this thesis I gave brief account of an exercise in personal memory involving the photographing of my landscape of childhood. With the resulting photographs arose a possible frustration, or lack of ultimate fulfilment. Despite their qualities and the pleasure derived in the process of their making, there is a lot more subjectivity invested in what I am doing than might be reflected in the calm, calculated images that I produce. In part this could be a matter of photographic style, although I feel it reflects the theoretical contradiction that inhabits a photograph's fundamental property of fixing appearances. For all its ability to document everything evidenced through the camera the resulting 'still' photographs are restricted in their accounting of the full phenomenological experience of my encounter with landscape and memory.

To some extent my thesis is an example of how a photographic based creative practice can navigate and overcome some of photography's essential limitations. Photographs of all kinds can be an aid to memory, but they can also become obstacles largely because of the tendency for the captured moments in photographs to signify the subsequent fixing of memory in time and space. Although photographs are commonly thought to hold things still, in reality they themselves are much more fluid and mobile, as I believe my research reconfirms. Photographs are not bound by time and can move through space, they can shift in relation to other things and can change in meaning.

While conscious of such contradictions I do not disregard the results of an acceptably conventional exercise in photographing landscape. These photographs remain emphatically those of the landscape that was so integral to my formative years, and with which, through my parent's vocation I had something of a direct association. And they continue to be the foundation to the practice and the ideas developed during this research. From the outset, I felt the need to devise a new way of working that would appear radically different in form. Rather what has evolved is more a rethinking of what was already contained among the wider scope of what I was doing. Motivated by the emotional response to landscape and associated memories, the project of my research grew out of what was a largely intuitive, yet reasonably focused practice of photography; My enquiry set out to address questions concerning the origins of this intuition and how photographic practice could be purposely structured to interact more directly with the memories and narratives contained within the landscape of childhood.

The answers to both questions are broadly theoretical although answering the question of practice has seen a significant shift in emphasis and attitude. A way of explaining my thesis is the attempt to map a reorientation of purpose and meaning from the purported objectivity of photographs towards the explorations of their subjective uses. It is a journey taken via ideas of the archaeological, memory work and influences of multidisciplinary art practices. Along the way I have avoided offering simply a further explanation of the already established if complex theoretical framework connecting photographs with memory. Instead, I hope I have successfully demonstrated how the key to unlocking the subjective potentials of photographic practice can be found in the very object of its attention. Reassured by cultural theory and philosophical thinking that insists that history and ideas of common culture are best understood through lived experience, the personal reflection on childhood has been placed centrally in my research.

My thesis explains a model of practice development shaped by a set of formal and theoretical considerations that has enabled wider historical reflection inflected by individual circumstances of origin. My landscape of childhood has become the starting point for an enquiry into a phenomenology of place, Cold War geopolitics and historical value of photographs. Both the archaeological and memory work have a close relationship with conceptual qualities of photography, that can interrupt flow of historical time and permit its re-evaluation. Throughout the development of research there has been the growing recognition that an apparently homogenous method of landscape observation can encompass a complex set of conceptual relationships. Concepts that extend to manifest themselves across a much more heterogeneous set of photographic operations and protocols.

Leading me towards my conclusions has been a range of theoretical readings from which the work of Walter Benjamin has stood out as a particularly helpful guide. Through his own childhood reflections is developed a method of situating the self within historical narrative. With an emphasis on the autobiographical Benjamin encourages a recognition of the self in the “mysterious work of remembrance”. The significance being the self’s capacity for “endless interpolations into what has been”.² Located within the memory of phenomenological spaces, the intimacy of specific objects and a dream world of technological fascination, can be found the origins of an interaction

² Walter Benjamin *Berlin Chronical* in Walter Benjamin *One-Way Street and Other Writings* (NLB, London 1979) 305

with the wider world that becomes the exploration of historical narrative. Benjamin explores childhood as the site for developing the imaginative scope of environment and play that materialise through combined methods of observing, collecting and making. The child's 'imaginative enterprise' inherent to Benjamin's method suggests a search of memory that moves between locations, objects and images across an expanded mapping of space and time.

Within a framework generated of childhood memory landscape offers much more than being the object of ever deeper contemplation of place and its image. A practice rooted in childhood memory can be forever evolving and multifaceted. (A realisation I have come to recognise since the time I was a painting student in the early 1980s.) History is apprehended and re-constituted across a collection of image types. What emerges is an encompassing montage of history: a body of heterogenic photographs and additional visual material originating from widely dispersed points in time and space that have become associated with childhood. No longer 'buried' in the past these 'excavated' images gain possession of new meaning. (What Benjamin may have referred to as redeemed.) As a whole they are experienced in the Now of their encounter. This is the Now constituted in the continuous present as it is being lived.

Understanding this position in my own practice, has been the recognition of the necessary shift in attitude from one of contemplation to one in which photography is an attitude of action. Landscape is not the only situation in which to perform. As well as the means of looking, photographs themselves become sites of intervention. It is a move implied in Benjamin's historical materialism and is manifest through an image 'ventriloquism' that encompasses both creating images of the world and the working with the world of images.³ Photographs together with the historical contexts and associated knowledge which they bring, become part of an expanded site of investigation. My account of the dialectical image put into action, given at the end of Chapter Four provides an encapsulation of how my research has been the transformation of a photographic practice into the essential method of constructing an individual historiography. It is an account of apprehending history through the encounter with photographs and past they evoke. Individual photographs are idiomatic of a disjuncture between past and present out of which a comprehension of history presents itself. A discontinuity of time, unique to photography that is archaeological in character

³ See: Introduction, Notes 12 & 13.

and creates a conceptual space within which historical enquiry can establish itself.

The archaeological quality of photographs was discussed in Chapter One. Manifesting a notable orientation towards the past among contemporary art practices, as evidenced by exhibitions including *The Way of The Shovel*, and the work of Mark Dion, notions the archaeological has been very influential. Although the practice of archaeology is often understood in the terms of traditions with certain material attributes, the imaginative scope elicited by photographs points to how the archaeological is fundamentally more a conceptual way of thinking that can be applied across a range of practices. In the discourses of archaeology itself, the work of Kitty Hauser, Richard Morris and others it is learned how the archaeological, as a method of historical enquiry that, like art, can be inherently subjective. So, too the allied method of memory work which more specifically places the individual self in context of historicity.

Through specific analysis of Benjamin's childhood reflections, in Chapter Two these methods of historical enquiry and their implications to art practice are overlaid by the possibilities of a personal historicity. Benjamin offers a useful metaphor of an archaeological excavation through the figuration of a person 'digging' their past. I have suggested in chapters three and four the 'field site' for overturning the layers of my own memory is both conceptually and in reality, quite extensive. Analysis of my landscape of childhood suggests a physical and phenomenological site extending beyond the topography of place to include a broader range of material and conceptual elements. A site containing much more than personal memory and formed out of complex sets of relations and multiple narratives.

An underlying characteristic of my practice and wider research is that it is inherently accumulative. This is a process defined by the gathering and production of ever increasing amounts of visual material. Chapter Four detailed a range of methods that, although punctuated by discrete bodies of work, are continuous and remain incomplete. The activity of collecting was particularly significant to Benjamin's thinking on how an individual's sense of history is constituted in their interaction with the material world. In the *Berlin Writing* Benjamin ruminates on the origins of collecting found in childhood curiosity and play. He is especially drawn to the child's ability to imaginatively transform otherwise discarded and overlooked objects into meaningful

characters and forms. In the collecting of material for research any 'excavation' of the past, even when concentrated in certain areas, will contain large elements of speculation. It is significant how judgements informed as much as by intuition, as much as careful calculation can lead to surprise discoveries and shift the focus of attention in sometimes unforeseen ways. Further indication of the archaeological imagination at play.

Running against the flow of accumulation, my practice has always contained an instinctive current that is reductive. Reflected also in the work of artists I have been drawn to since my time as a student. This is expressed in the editing and 'curating' of visual material into tightly discrete entities. In part this tendency is a pragmatic necessity to ensure constituent parts are readable as a finished totality. It is also aesthetic, reflective of a personal disposition towards practices of formal and conceptual abstraction that characterise a number of modern art traditions, in particular those found in painting.⁴ It is an orientation towards carefully placing selected elements within a conceptually focused overall 'composition' and whose relationships, while they seem 'correct', may not be immediately apparent. Moreover, there is the furnishing of a desire, when contemplating an individual element, or photograph, to summarize as much memory as possible.

Whether an aesthetic quality of my own practice may be considered 'minimalist' or not, it could be read as in marked contrast to the manner of collecting characterised by the *Cabinet of Curiosity* that flavours Benjamin's account of the collector and informs the work of an artist like Mark Dion. Mine is not the character of the antiquarian or natural scientist, nor is it the celebration of idiosyncratic alternatives. There is no room for the clutter of surplus loose material that may have attracted Benjamin and which can give Dion's works their distinctive appeal. Instead it is the proposition that narrowly selected images or objects are capable of evincing multiple and complex narratives. I would contest, however, that this approach proposes no less a critique of how historical knowledge is constituted through the collecting of things.

As I draw together my concluding thoughts the question of the how amassed material coalesces to form the encompassing 'image montage' becomes increasingly important to articulating my contribution to knowledge. To help

⁴ In addition to the work of my painting tutor Peter Kinley I would cite the work of minimalist painters including Bob Law, Alan Green and Brice Marden, and sculptor Joel Shapiro.

answer this question I return to Benjamin's concept of the dialectical image, with its associated elements of constellation and fragment, that was discussed in Chapter Two. A more readily understood reading of Benjamin's constellation is the configuration of disparate individual elements coordinated around a defining thematic. It is a helpful organising concept easily applied to many hybrid material practices found in contemporary art, including those that constitute the 'archaeological turn'.

Constellation may also be a suitable way to characterise the evolving composite image of my own practice. However, with the aid of Max Pensky's analysis of the dialectical image, in my reading of constellation, I am drawn to the concept of a singular image that emergences suddenly out of a field of complexity. In other words, the focusing of attention, in my own case, on individual photographs. Rather than an expanding multiplicity of image, the constellation is the condensing of connected elements into tightly organised individual figure - or fragment. 'Excavated' from of the memory of childhood, fragments are collected and repurposed. It is the curiosity and 'imaginative enterprise' of childhood that seeks out individual fragments and assign them with allegorical meaning.

In another of his better-known metaphors Benjamin gives a reductive character to memory work. The "fan of memory" articulates focus upon individual segments of ever increasing detail as they reveal themselves with the fan's unfurling.⁵ Each segment or fragment has the potential to encapsulate a multitude of memories and historical narratives that exist behind them. One of Benjamin's most appealing qualities to his philosophical thinking, perhaps his major value to modern European thought is the belief that an encompassing account of the world can expressed by the existence of any object as it is being contemplated. A fragment exists in dynamic relation to every other fragment and at the same time in each fragment is written past present and future state of the world.⁶

Writing about Benjamin's interest in childhood in context of his thinking on photography, the Benjamin scholar Gerhard Richter notes that photographic

⁵ "What Proust began so playfully became awesomely serious. He who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments: no image satisfies him, for he has seen that it can be unfolded, and only in its folds does the truth reside; that image, that taste, that touch for whose sake all this has been unfurled and dissected; and now remembrance from small to the smallest details, from the smallest to the infinitesimal, while that which it encounters in these microcosms grows even mightier" Walter Benjamin *Berlin Chronical* in *Walter Benjamin One-Way Street and Other Writings* (NLB, London 1979) 295-296

⁶ Wolfram Eilenberger *Time of The Magicians: The Invention of Modern Thought 1919-1929* (Allen Lane, London 2020) 23

images enter consciousness as fragments of “what can be meant by a historicity being made visible.” Piecing together an individual history is the “patient art of explication” practiced by the “reading of traces” along a path of time.⁷ In capturing something that, inevitably, threatens to disappear, a photograph “interrupts the passage or gait of time” that is otherwise perceived as seamless and one-directional. A photograph also “goes with time” potentially forever representing itself in the present in a way that encourages a reflection upon the experience of a “going-along”.

Richter observes that every photograph demarcates an “historical archive, staging a technically mediated interpretation of time” that permits an image to be brought back as often as desired, to be “made visible and exhibited anew”.⁸ The organizing principles of a photograph interrupts any existing temporality and spatiality of memory. The interruption enables the gathering into the image of a single recoded moment a multiplicity of remembered moments. Any photograph, even those taken relatively recently, give us something as it was, never as it is or at any point since has been. As they inhabit time and space, the Land Rover and Beverley images are joined by subsequent photographs I either generate in the landscape or by other means including the collecting and reworking of existing images, objects made and remade. These ‘new’ photographs take up their own place in the accumulation of memory and history. They also become further trace elements to be tracked across time in relay of images passing between moments of Now.

A significant point behind Richter’s observations is that as we become more noticeably distanced from the moment of a photograph’s recording – the example of Berger’s abyss referred to in chapter one – we are drawn ever closer to an experience of finitude. When examining a photograph, we are dealing with a form of legacy that will outlive aspects of content and the observer. Photographs of, or associated, with childhood embody something unique in how they gesture towards the temporality of life. Focus is given to an existence that is fleeting and from which so much is to come.

Richter suggests every photograph has “wrested” from the passage time a reminder of something that at some point in the future “will have been completed”. Photographs encapsulate what Benjamin, with a degree of

⁷ Gerhard Richter *Going with Time: A miniature on Time and Photography after Benjamin in Inheriting Walter Benjamin* (London 2016) 134

⁸ Gerhard Richter *Going with Time ...* 126-127

melancholy, laments our, “poor brief childhood”.⁹ At the same time, a photograph permits an “anticipatory reference back in time.” Childhood images, Richter notes, offer “a charged relationship between announcement and deferral.” And in doing so highlight the assured and indomitable progress of time¹⁰

As mentioned in chapter one, Jae Emerling likens photographs to emissaries from the past that challenge us in the present.¹¹ No matter how familiar their various contents have become, it remains the case that at the moment the two photographs I am discussing were taken, my own sense of memory had yet to fully form. Confirming Barthes’ remark that a photograph is not a memory, absolutely everything in the form of memory, experience and accrued knowledge, that these images suggest *Now*, has occurred *since* the photographs was taken.¹²

Returning to the two photographs I used to explain the dialectical image in Chapter Four, what gives the Land Rover particular charge is how the image signals of my father’s presence in the landscape and by extension my own. (And it must be pointed out the presence of my late mother who at that moment was elsewhere looking after the infant me.) With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to read this photograph as a moment of stasis that pinpoints a pivotal narrative moment. In contemplating the image, it is tempting to imagine my father, in his own act of reflection, to be looking back at the Land Rover as evidencing of himself and a particular stage in his family’s life at that time. A moment when the future is also being pondered.

However sentimental the personal attachment, this image is illustrative of a photograph’s changing relationship to time and narrative. When the photograph was taken my parents would have been turning the age of thirty. They will have recently moved to Wiltshire for my father to take up his new position as farm manager. His first on a farm of this scale. As a farming couple this would have been very much a joint venture along with the family they started under three years previously. If one could picture my father as he is taking the photograph one might be struck by his youthfulness (And I would be alarmed at the realisation of my own present lack of youthfulness!) It

⁹ Walter Benjamin *Franz Kafka: On the tenth Anniversary of His Death* Quoted in Richter *Going with Time* ...129

¹⁰ Gerhard Richter *Going with Time* ...133

¹¹ Jae Emerling *Photography: History and Theory* (Routledge, Abingdon 2012) 165 See Chapter 1, Note 8.

¹² My use of grammatical tense is borrowed from Barthes application of linguistics to the reading of photographs that he analysis in *Camera Lucida*.

becomes something of a shock to be reminded that this image was made at least fifty-five years ago.

More than one temporality is evinced by the image. Recent cultivation of the soil and other details suggest the familiar agricultural cycle. More disconcerting is to comprehend how, when taking this photograph, my father would have no knowledge of the future to come. A future including not only the narratives of his own life and that of his family, but all the events that we now recognise characterising the 1960s. Of course, he would not have been alone in being unaware of what the future held. The same future that now forms an increasingly distant past yet at the time could have seemed unimaginable. He took his photograph before the release of the Beatles' 'Love Me Do'. The Cuban missile crisis had yet to unfold and for President John F Kennedy to make his 'man on the moon' speech, before being assassinated. Also, to come was the Aden Emergency during which the Beverley photograph was taken. Over the course of time personal attachment to both the Land Rover and Beverley photographs intensifies and is not diminished by any growing knowledge and historical understanding. Despite their disparate origins both image fragments become permanent reference points in my biographical story and evolving historiography.

If it is accepted that a photograph is not a memory, how may we therefore account for a photograph's accommodation of the memory subsequent to its taking? Emerling suggests that, because of its mechanical reproduction, a photograph may permit through its study *returns* to that past and at the same time, repetitions of its impression continuously made into the future.¹³ Crucially a photograph existing in the *now* is not a further recreation or doubling of what was *then*. As an image is carried forward through time - a material presence in the form of a printed photograph - at any subsequent point of contemplation, further remembered events will inevitably enter into its context of meaning.

With the gathering of memory, comes the growing awareness of an unavoidable paradox. Photographs may open up the space of historical time, but in the application of memory is the growing knowledge of an ultimate futility. No matter how much I point my camera at a landscape, or study an existing photograph redolent of my past, however strongly evoked, the past remains absent and continues to recede through time. All that is experienced is the

¹³ Jae Emerling *Time Images in Photography: History and Theory* ... 165-190

ever-emerging present of *Now*. Critically, in an expanded site of enquiry what, in its heterogeneity, photography offers so convincingly is a comprehension of the past in balance with the present. Photographs are not memories but as Emerling proposes, an autonomous “becoming in time”.¹⁴ The past and present come into proximity to present an historicity that is made through the materiality of photography as much as what is depicted.

In its accumulation of visual material, the project of my practice and research remains incomplete. By whichever method they are produced, photographic fragments are continuously generated and re-generated, with their meaning always being reformulated. And it is essential that the model of practice that my research offers remains as such. Photography therefore is not about fixing time and reflecting from a safe calculated attitude of distance from behind a crafted individual style. Rather it is a participation in the exchange of images across time and encountered in the *Now* as we continue to live it. An exchange that demands varied viewpoints and encourages image diversity. Benjamin confirms that to fully understand the past one “must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter”. Most critical is the need to continuously develop and alter the method of reflection; the metaphorical digging must “assay its spade in ever-new places, and in the old ones delve to ever-deeper layers”.¹⁵

And so, in closing I turn for one last time to my trusted, if not sometimes erratic guide. Benjamin articulates particularly well how at the point in life when an awareness of finitude becomes increasingly unavoidable, our memory will seek to go back to where it all started. And, for all its historical complexity, in order to gain a sense of the whole that is the accumulation of life experienced up until this point, it is only appropriate to think about the world as it was when it began to present itself to us. Uniting the then with now, photographs, like the landscape they may represent, offer us a space in which to think and consider everything that has occurred since that beginning. The whole may only appear to us in a fleeting moment, but if we are vigilant in our looking we will apprehend intense flashes emanating from a whole universe of constellations.

¹⁴ Jae Emerling *Photography: History and Theory* ... 167

¹⁵ Benjamin Berlin *Chronical* ... 14

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IN THE BEGINNING AND ALWAYS

In The Beginning And Always

Andrew Cross

2021





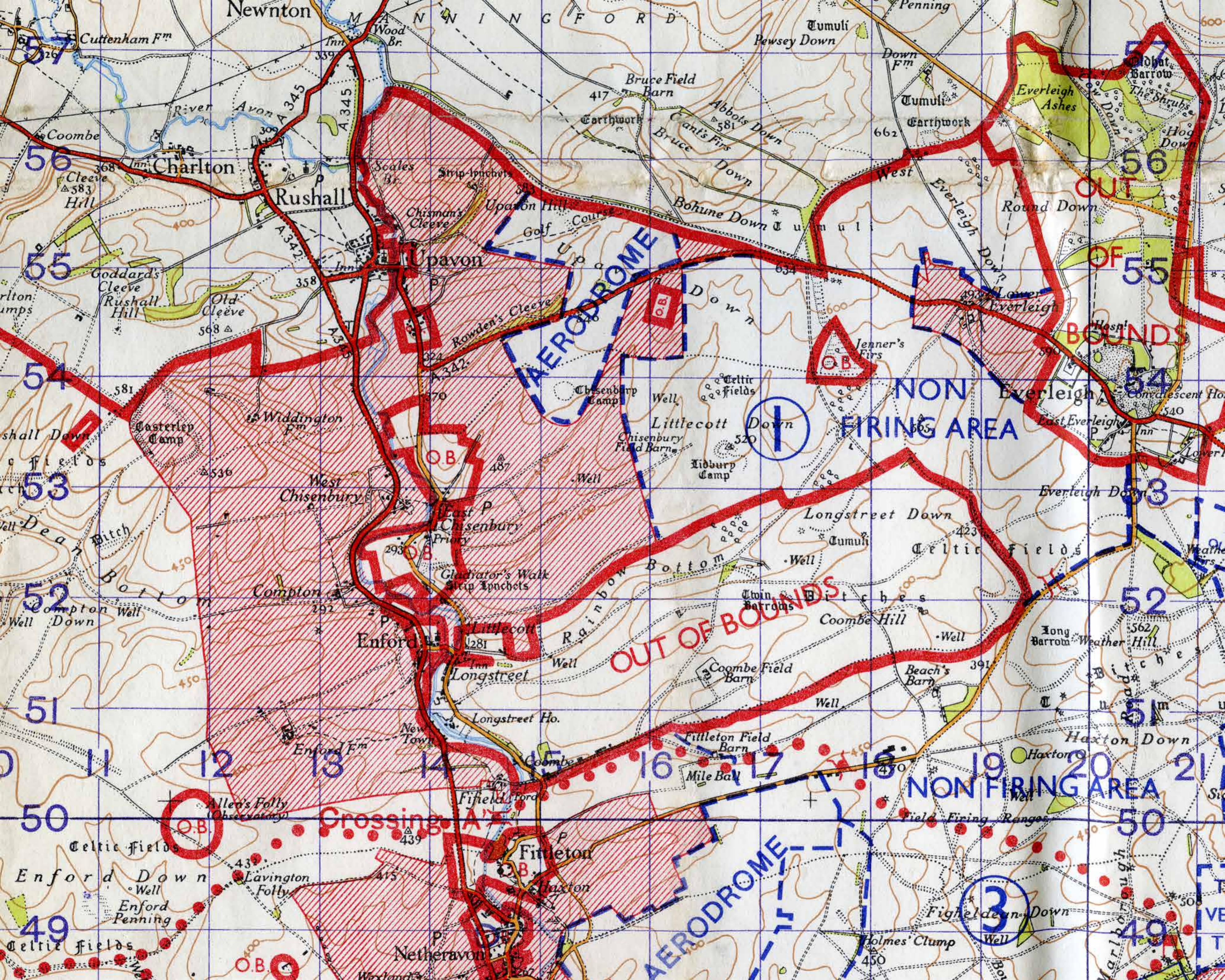
What does it mean to point a camera towards a landscape?

To anticipate something already known? To depict what appears before the lens?









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Not for the first time, something of an answer may be found among the histories of painting. Referring to Pissarro's *Paysage à Pontoise*, T.J. Clark suggests the existence of a charged proximity pressing gently against the picture plane. A proximity being kept in balance with the space leading to the horizon.

The illusionistic space of the painting is not a prospect but an intuition of place and extent: a **Here** where we are **Now**. The landscape in view embraces contiguous points of reference, both visible and remembered, brought into relation through an awareness of time.







Photographs are not memories but a becoming in time. The comprehension of a there and then, experienced in the circumstance of a here and now. Like paintings, photographs possess a sense of form reflecting the manner in which they have been made and how they exist as objects in time. A reality of things beyond what is represented.

Rather than evidencing the world through flawless objectivity, a less certain speculation is required. Cezanne claimed to see by touches. We should want to touch reality as well as look at its image.





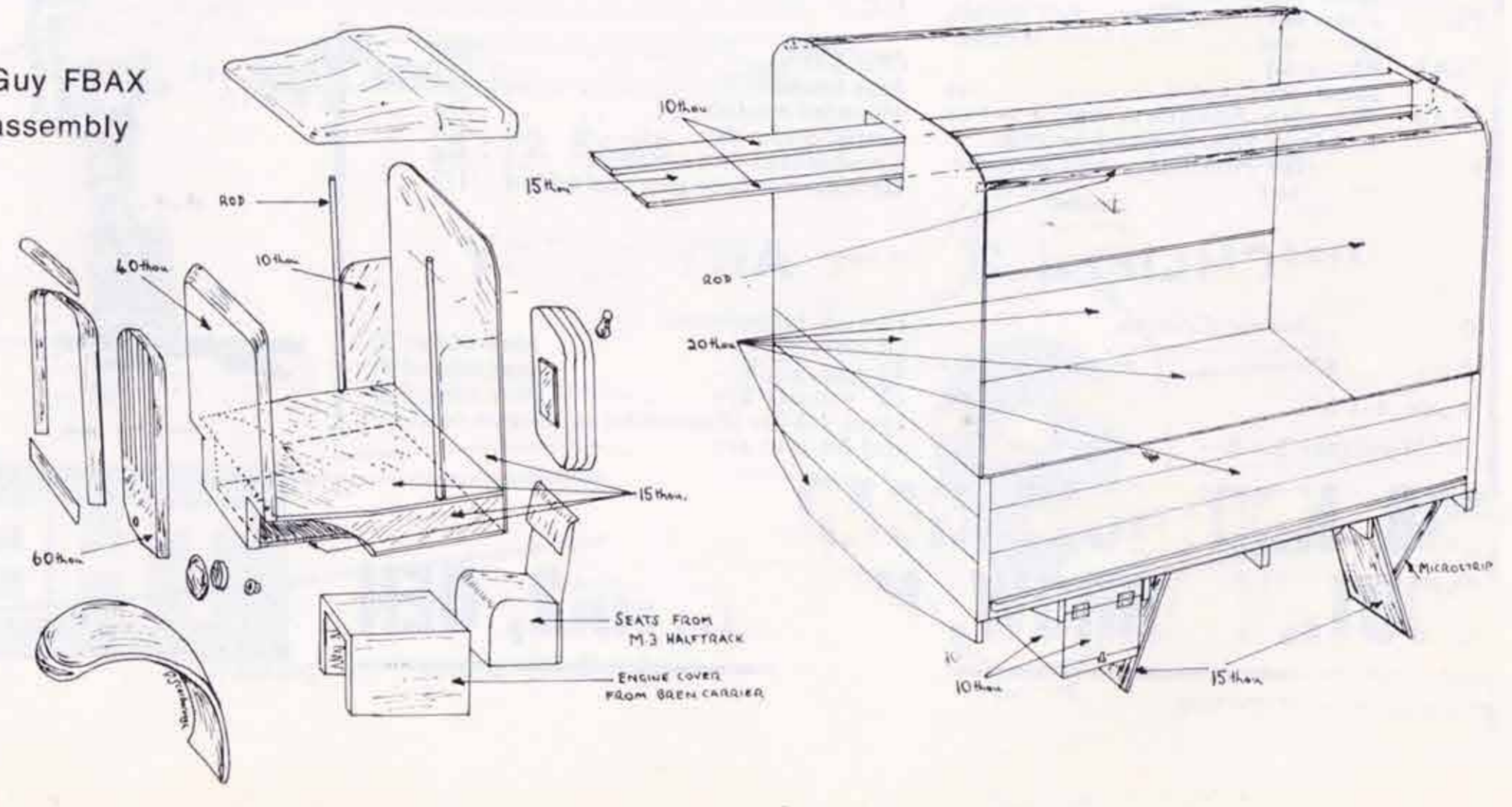


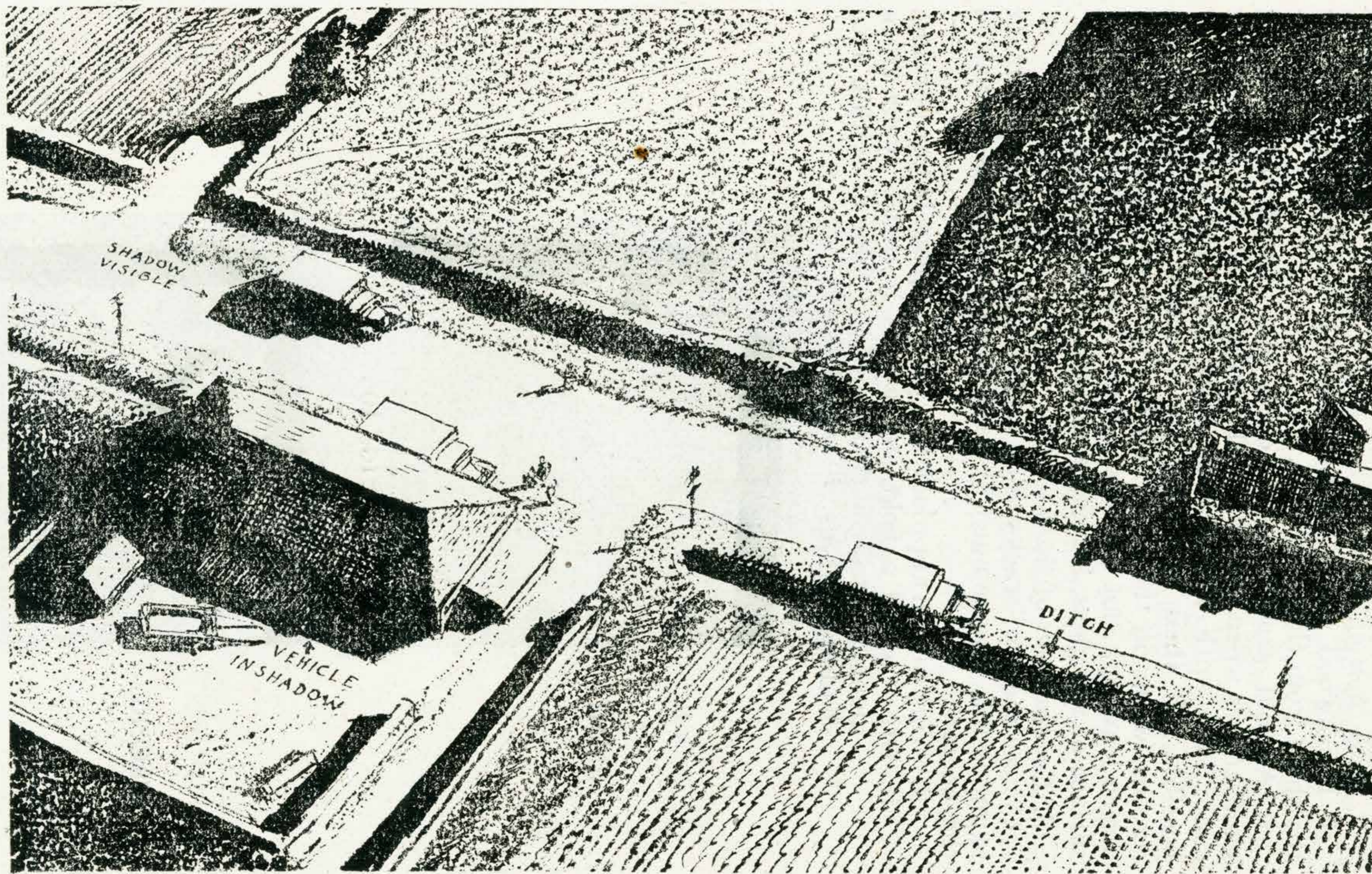






Guy FBAX
assembly





SHADOW
VISIBLE →

VEHICLE
IN SHADOW →

→ DITCH

















I am intrigued by photographs of an event at which I was present but cannot recall:
the Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Aviation air show staged at RAF Upavon on 16th June 1962.
I was fourteen months old.

These are colour slides, some taken by my father and others collected from anonymous sources.
The unknown photographers, were they spirits of the future character I would become?
And what of all those who appear in their photographs, and the futures anticipated?

Possessing these images make the event feel closer in time than it actually was.
The one hundredth anniversary of military flight has already passed.





Item

5. Fly Past

Shackleton

3.25 p.m.

Argosy

Britannia

Comet 4

Comet 2

Canberra

Valiant

Victor

Vulcan

Javelin

Lightning

Sea Vixen

Scimitar

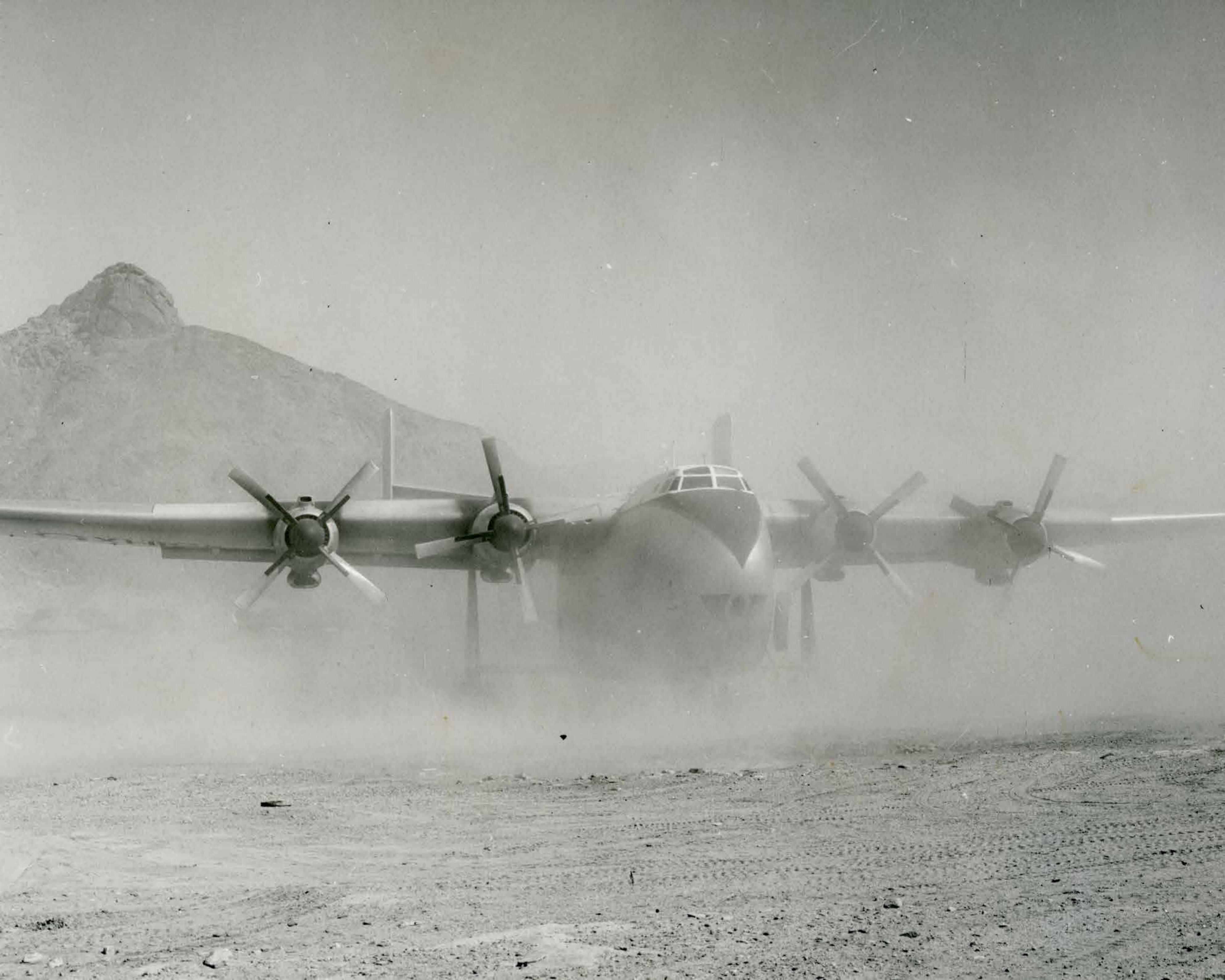












FIVE YEARS OF SUN AND SAND

The Beverley heavy transport aircraft of No. 84 Squadron, based at R.A.F. Khormaksar, Aden, have just completed five years service in Aden, where some of the worst flying conditions in the world are to be found. During that time, the squadron's aircraft have carried 47 million pounds of freight and 60,000 passengers over a total distance of nearly 2 million miles throughout the Middle East. A large part of the squadron's flying has been to up-country airstrips of the Federal Regular Army, at many of which there is only a short rolled-sand runway.

Picture shows: A Beverley aircraft of No. 84 Squadron almost hidden by swirling sand at the Federal Regular Army airstrip at Beihan, north of Aden.

Information Division,
Air Ministry,
Whitehall,
London S.W.1

June, 1963



NO
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32 INCLUDING DRIVER

CENTRAL PRESS
ASSOCIATION

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ARMED ESCORT

ADEN: BRITISH CHILDREN ARE ESCORTED HOME FROM THE KHORMAKSAR SCHOOL IN ADEN VIA A BUS WITH ARMED GUARDS. THE GUARDS ARE PART OF THE STRICT SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS BEING CARRIED OUT BECAUSE OF RECENT ANTI-BRITISH ACTIVITY HERE. THE CHILDREN, DISPLAYING NO FEAR, SEEM HIGHLY AMUSED BY THE ELABORATE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.

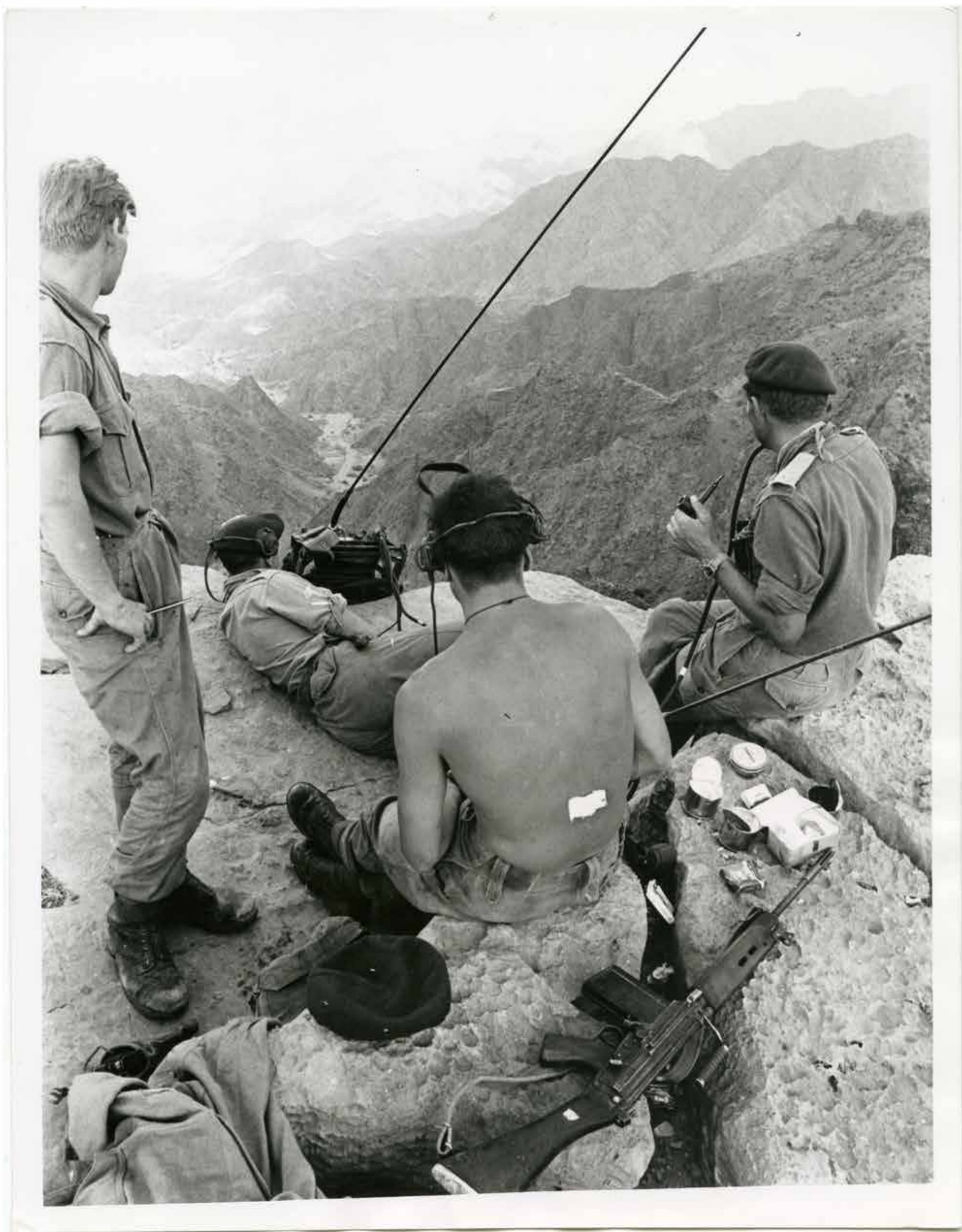
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The name Aden emerged out of background adult conversation. The administrative headquarters of RAF Transport Command was at RAF Upavon and Upavon Primary School included children from the families of RAF personnel. Some of those appearing during 1967 may have been returning from Aden as Britain finally relinquished control of its former strategic colony in the Middle East.



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YEMEN

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JUN 26 1964

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(For use Sunday, June 21, with Arthur L.
Gavshon's London APN story on empire)

MIDDLE EAST HOT SPOT

British paratroopers stationed in Aden direct recent operations against dissident tribesmen of the South Arabian Federation. The federation, launched with British encouragement in the area of her former Middle Eastern empire, is under attack by President Nasser of Egypt. Aden, still constitutionally a British colony, is the center of Britain's Middle East command.

A



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THE FACES OF YEMEN (1)

TAIZ, YEMEN: A TYPICAL YEMENI TRIBESMAN
GLARES INTO THE CAMERA WITH A TRACE OF
SUSPICION IN HIS EYES, DURING A MEETING OF
ANTI-ROYALIST WARRIORS IN TAIZ, YEMEN.
HIS RIFLE RESTS AGAINST HIS SHOULDER AS HE
LISTENS TO A REBEL SPEAKER. THE TINY ARAB
NATION, WHICH BORDERS TROUBLED ADEN, HAS BEEN
A WORLD HOT SPOT EVER SINCE 1962 WHEN A
REVOLUTIONARY GROUP HEADED BY GENERAL ABDULLAH
AL-SALAL DECLARED THE COUNTRY A REPUBLIC.
HIS FORCES HAVE BEEN GETTING DIRECT AID FROM
THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC. ROYALIST TROOPS
OPPOSED TO THE REPUBLICANS HAVE CONTINUED TO
FIGHT WITH HELP FROM NEIGHBORING SAUDI-ARABIA.

NX-1-2-3 LAT-1 ASI-1
CREDIT (UPI PHOTO) 5/12/64 (JB)
(SEE ALSO PLA 1423891-892)

APD 150X 25





Two RAF Belvedere twin-rotor helicopters, which have established what is believed to be a world distance record for helicopter flights, photographed over Aden. They left Odiham, Hants, in mid-January and flew a total of 4,260 miles.

The Daily Telegraph
PUBLISHED
7 5 MAR 1962
ART DEPARTMENT

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Handwritten scribbles and numbers: 1100, 1200













Why has the RAF given its aircraft romantic names: *Spitfire, Hurricane, Argosy, Vulcan*?
Or named them after places: *Lancaster, Wellington, Beverley*? Aircraft of the Luftwaffe were
known by their manufacturers: *Messerschmitt, Heinkel, Dornier*. Well-known planes
of the US Airforce by numbers: *B17, B23, B52*.

By most accounts warfare is not organised around the composition of words but
the calculation of numbers: resources, logistics and co-ordinates. cursory observation
would also suggest something else is involved. Fundamentally pragmatic and reminiscent of
play: seeing and avoiding being seen.











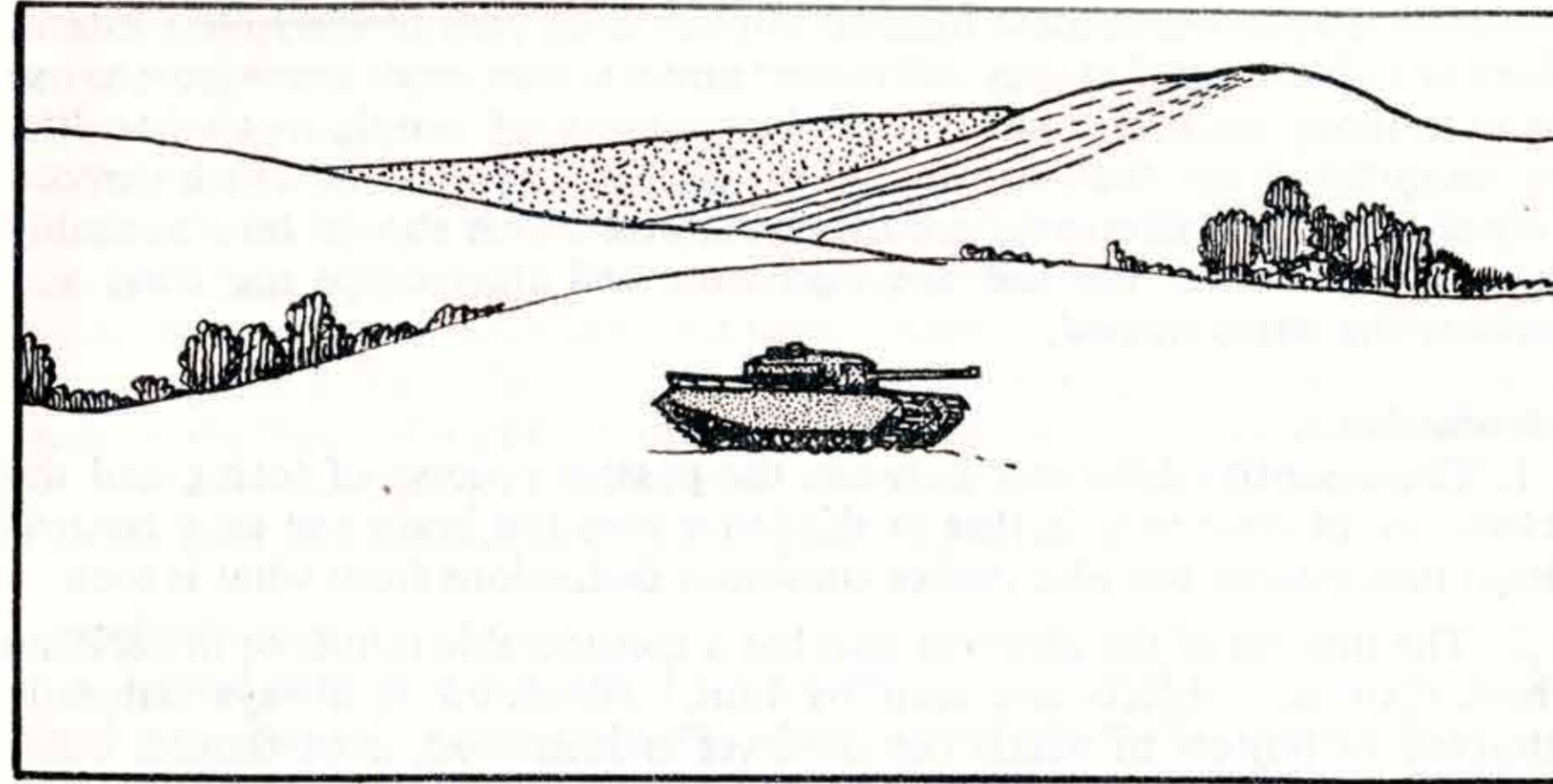


Fig 3. CONTRAST IN SIZE













INTO THE REMOTE PLACES



I was born in April 1961. In September 1961 my father became the farm manager of 3,500 acres of Wiltshire countryside where our family lived until moving to Oxfordshire in February 1971 just before my 10th birthday. Most of this farmland was leased from the British Army and surrounded the airfield of RAF Upavon. Opened in 1912, Upavon was the founding station of the Royal Flying Corps, later the Royal Air Force. For many years RAF Upavon was home to the prestigious Central Flying School. During the 1960s the station was administrative headquarters of RAF Transport Command. At this time RAF Transport Command was heavily involved in military operations in Aden prior to the final withdrawal from the former British Colony Middle Eastern colony in 1967. Children of RAF personnel, including those returning from service at RAF Khormaksar, attended Upavon County Primary School. In the decades since the 1970s, the land my father managed has not been farmed to the extent it was and is now used primarily for Army training purposes. RAF Upavon closed in 1993 and the camp taken over by the Army for use as an administrative headquarters.

In The Beginning And Always was the motto for RAF Upavon.

Into The Remote Places was the motto for RAF Khormaksar.

This portfolio includes photographs generated since 2007 on colour negative film and images from the 1960s generated from original colour slides. Among the latter are photographs taken by my father as well those that have been acquired from anonymous sources. Additional images include original 1960s press prints acquired from former newspaper archives.

The portfolio has been compiled to accompany a PhD thesis completed in 2021 for Brighton University. It also exists as an independent work in its own right

List of Images

- 1 A view looking towards an area known as Pintial with Mk I Land Rover in the foreground.
From an original 35mm Kodachrome slide taken by my father in February 1962.
- 2 *Untitled 2008/2009.* Originated on medium-format negative.
- 3 *Untitled 2019.* (A view close to Upavon Airfield looking south over Chisenbury Field Barn towards Netheravon and Boscombe Down.)
Originated on large-format negative.
- 4 Fly past of RAF Victor at the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* RAF Upavon 16th June 1962.
From an original 35mm slide of anonymous source.
- 5 RAF Beverley at RAF Khormaksar circa 1966.
From an original 35mm slides of anonymous source.
- 6 Reproduction of a detail from Salisbury Plain Training Area map. Based on OS One-Inch map. Published by the War Office and Air Ministry 1959.
- 7 The controlled burning of an old timber barn to make way for a new purpose-built farm-machinery storage shed.
From an original 35mm Kodachrome slide taken by my father in 1962.
- 8 *Aden street scene with British soldier on patrol* An original press print issued by the Joint Public Relations Staff, Aden.
Published in the *Sunday Telegraph* 30th October 1966.
- 9 *Untitled 2007.* (A view of Chisenbury dry valley.) Originated on medium-format negative.
- 10 *Untitled 2017.* (A view south east over Chisenbury dry valley.) Originated on large-format negative.
- 12 *Untitled 2017.* (A view towards Upavon Airfield from the south above Pintail.) Originated on large-format negative.
- 13 *Untitled 2020.* Originated on medium-format negative.
- 14 *Untitled 2009.* Originated on medium-format negative.
- 15 *Untitled 2008.* Originated on medium-format negative.

- 16 Grain and fertilizer being loaded into a seed drill.
Taken on Upavon Down with the Vale of Pewsey and the Marlborough Downs visible in the distance.
From L-R: John Hurkett, Charlie Drewitt, Frank Besant, Fred Dark, Teddy Yates, Freddie Jury.
From an original 35mm Kodachrome slide taken by my father in 1962.
- 17 Lunch time break for combine drivers.
L-R: Arthur Hurkett, Charlie Drewitt, Fred Clements, John Hurkett, Tom Clements.
From an original 35mm Kodachrome slide taken by my father in the late 1960s.
- 18 Grain carting lorries parked in the yard of Littlecott Farm, Enford.
From an original 35mm Kodachrome slide taken by my father in the early 1960s.
- 19 Reproduction of an illustration from the article *Truck Conversions From The Airfix RAF Emergency Set* by Gerald Scarborough.
Published in *Airfix Magazine* December 1970.
- 20 Reproduction of an illustration from *Camouflage, Military Training Pamphlet No.46, Part 4: Vehicles, wheeled and tracked*.
Published by the War Office 1941 (Restricted).
- 21 *Untitled 2017. (Foxhole)* Originated on large-format negative.
- 22 *Untitled 2017. (Foxhole)* Originated on large-format negative.
- 23 *Untitled 2017. (Foxhole)* Originated on large-format negative.
- 24 From an original 35mm Kodachrome slide taken by my father in February 1962.
A view towards RAF Upavon from the south above Chisenbury dry valley.
The image illustrates the extent of cultivation at this time. On close inspection tractors can be seen working the fields.
- 25 *Untitled 2008/2009.* Originated on medium-format negative.
- 26 *Untitled 2008/2009.* Originated on medium-format negative.
- 27 Sea Vixens of the Fleet Air Arm Aerobatic Display Team at the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* RAF Upavon 16th June 1962.
From an original 35mm Kodachrome slide taken by my father.

- 27 The public car park adjacent to RAF Upavon at the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* 16th June 1962.
From an original 35mm Kodachrome slide taken by my father.
- 28 Sea Vixens of the Fleet Air Arm Aerobatic Display Team at the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* RAF Upavon 16th June 1962.
From an original 35mm Kodachrome slide taken by my father.
- 29 Sea Vixens of the Fleet Air Arm Aerobatic Display Team at the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* RAF Upavon 16th June 1962.
From an original 35mm slide of anonymous source.
- 30 Reproduction of a page from the souvenir programme published to accompany the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* RAF Upavon 16th June 1962.
- 31 Fly past of RAF Vulcan at the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* RAF Upavon 16th June 1962.
From an original 35mm slide. of anonymous source.
- 32 Fly past of RAF Vulcan at the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* RAF Upavon 16th June 1962.
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- 34 *Untitled 2019.* (A view south from close to Upavon Airfield looking over Chisenbury Field Barn towards Netheravon and Boscombe Down.)
Originated on large-format negative.
- 35 *Untitled 2019.* (A view south from close to Upavon Airfield looking over Chisenbury Field Barn towards Netheravon and Boscombe Down.)
Originated on large-format negative.
- 36 *A Beverley Aircraft of No. 84 Squadron* An original press print issued by the Air Ministry News Service June 1963.
- 37 The reverse of above.
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- 40 A view north over the village of Upavon 2015 Originated on large-format negative.

- 41 *War in the Mountains* An original press print issued by United Press International, London Bureau 7th May 1964.
- 42 The reverse of above.
- 43 *Hot Colony* An original press print issued by United Press International, London Bureau 12th October 1965.
- 44 The reverse of below.
- 45 *The Faces of Yemen* An original press print issued by Central Press Association 18th May 1964.
- 46 *Two RAF Belvedere helicopters over Aden* An original press print issued by Central Press Photos Ltd. Published in the *Daily Telegraph* 5th March 1963.
- 47 The reverse of above.
- 48 RAF Argosy at RAF Khormaksar circa 1966.
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- 50 A pair of Fleet Air Arm Sea Vixens at RAF Khormaksar circa 1966.
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- 53 Army Air Corp DH Beaver at RAF Khormaksar circa 1966.
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Originated on large-format negative.
- 56 *Untitled 2015.* (Chisenbury Field Barn) Originated on large-format negative.
- 57 *Untitled 2017.* (Chisenbury Field Barn) Originated on large-format negative.
- 58 *Untitled 2015.* (Chisenbury Field Barn) Originated on large-format negative.
- 59 Reproduction of an illustration from *Eye Training for Crews of AFVs* Published by the War Office 1956 (Restricted).
- 60 1/32 scale model of RAF Wessex. Digital photograph.
- 61 1/32 scale group of three British Army officers reading maps. Modelled according to the article *Model Soldiers, Conversions in 54mm scale* by Roy Dilley.
Published in *Airfix Magazine* January 1971.
- 62 Arrangement of 1/32 & 1/35 scale models. Digital photograph.
- 63 Arrangement of 1/32 & 1/35 scale models. Digital photograph.
- 64 Paratroopers at the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* RAF Upavon 16th June 1962.
From an original 35mm slide of anonymous source.
- 65 *Untitled 2016.* (A view south from above Chisenbury towards Netheravon and Boscombe Down beyond.)
Originated on large-format negative.
- 66 RAF Beverley at RAF Khormaksar circa 1966. From an original anonymous 35mm slide.

Archive



A selection of original 35mm slides taken by my father 1962



Original 35mm slide taken by my father 1962



Photographs originated on medium-format negative 2008-9



Original 35mm slide taken by my father 1962



Photographs originated on medium-format negative 2008-9



Original 35mm slide taken by my father 1962



Photographs originated on medium-format negative 2008-9



Original 35mm slide taken by my father 1962



Photographs originated on medium-format negative 2008-9



British Army Ferret Scout Car modelled at 1/35 scale



British Army AFV432 modelled at 1/35 scale



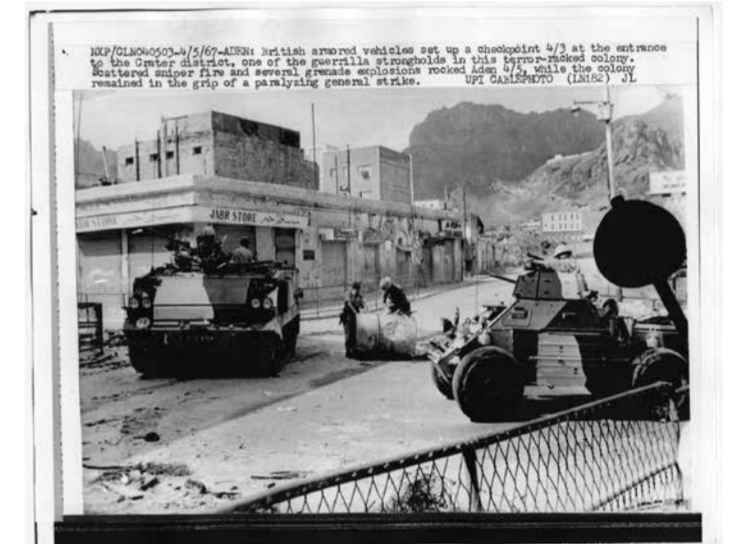
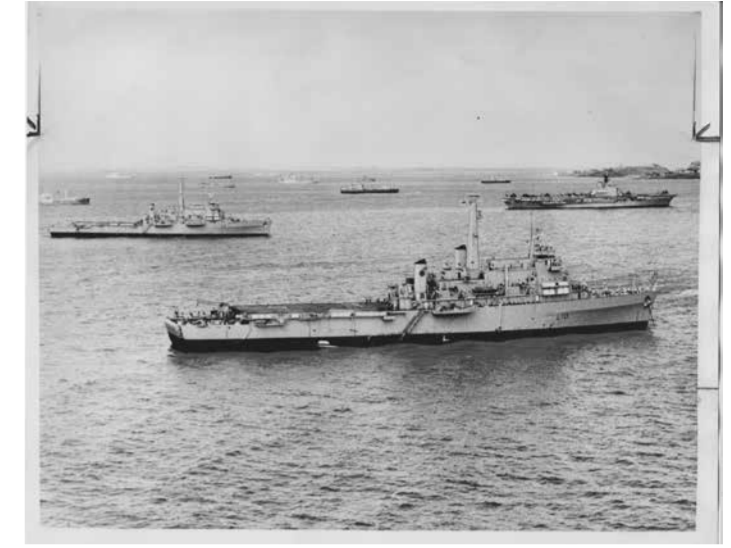
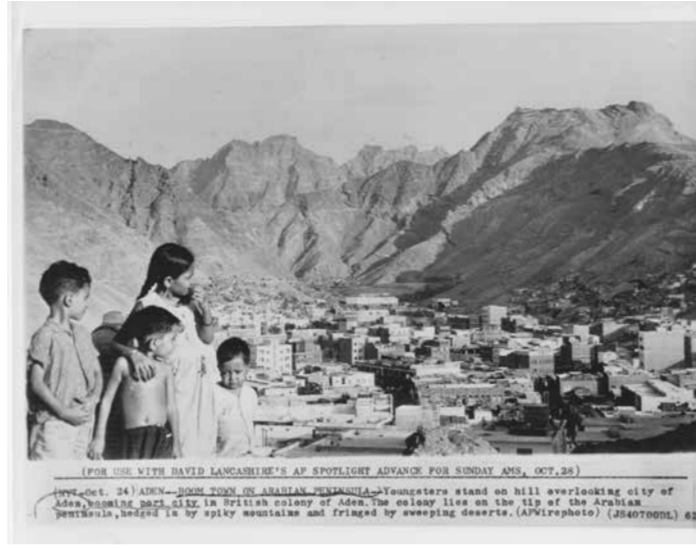
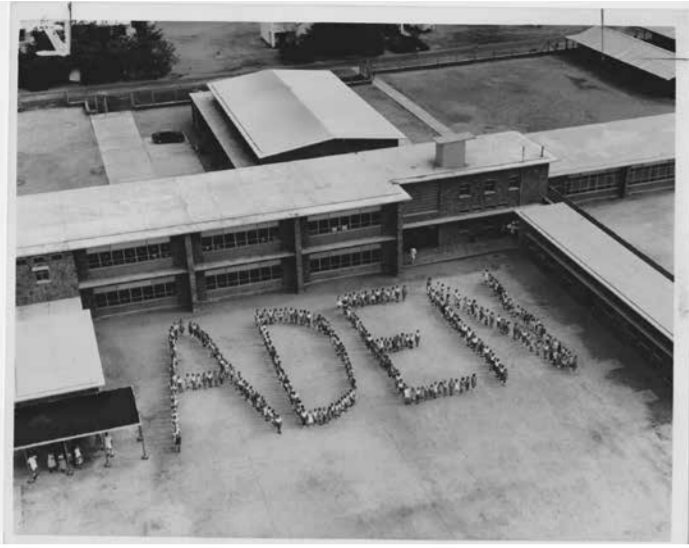
British Army Bedford QL modelled at 1/35 scale



Fordson Super Major modelled at 1/32 scale



A selection of original 35mm colour slides depicting the *Fiftieth Anniversary of Military Flight* held at RAF Upavon 12th June 1962. Acquired from anonymous sources.



A selection of original press prints covering the Aden Emergency 1963-1967. Acquired from former press photographic archives.



A selection of original 35 colour slides documenting aircraft at RAF Khormaksar, Aden circa 1966. Part of a larger collection acquired from an anonymous source.

