



Open
College
of the Arts

Learning Log

Photography 2

Documentary



**This is part 2 of 5:
Part Two: The B&W document**

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Cover photo

Eddy Out recovered after a treatment against leukaemia: 38mm, f/2.8, 1/40s, ISO200

1. Part Two: The B&W document

Introduction – 25th of August 2016

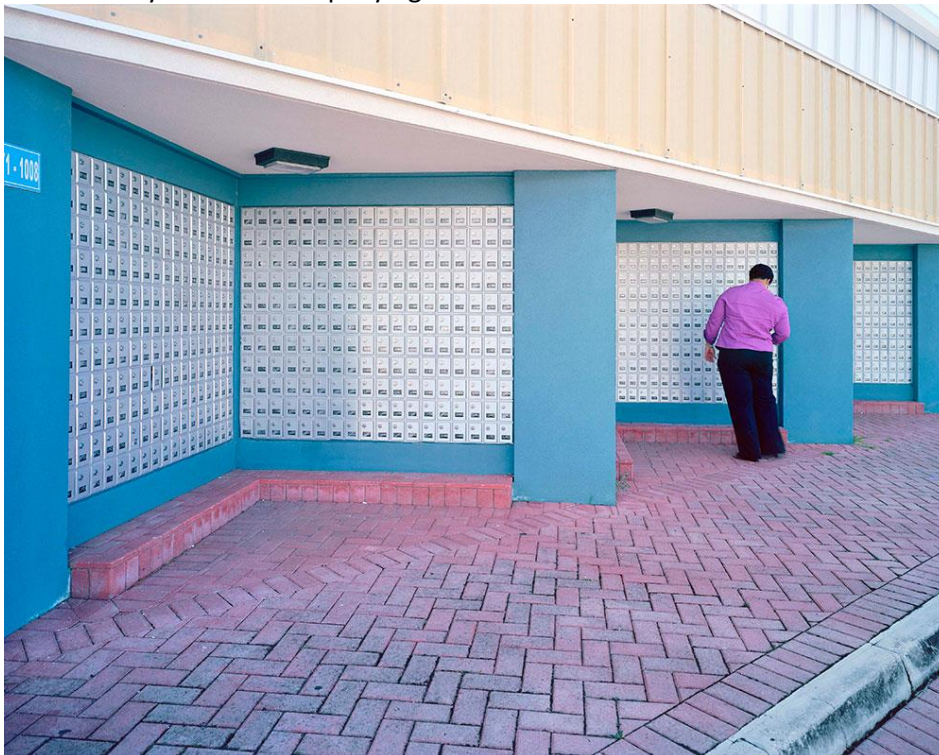
This document is part two of my learning log which I keep for the course Documentary. This course is part of the BA (hons) Photography degree programme of the Open College of the Arts (see www.oca-uk.com for more information). This learning log is like a journal, a logbook, a workbook, or a notebook I created to document my learning.

- This learning log is structured according to the chapters of the course-book (OCA, 2012). Also, each entry in the log is dated and the entries are mostly in chronological order.
- All images in this learning log are my own work (© Maurice Timmermans) unless stated otherwise.
- Focal lengths are always 35mm equivalent focal lengths (efl) unless stated otherwise.

Exhibition: *Show us the money* – 25th of August 2016

Last weekend I visited the Photo Museum in Antwerp, Belgium (www.fotomuseum.be/en.html). The exhibition *Show us the money* is about the world's off-shore tax havens and corporate financial nerve centres. The exhibition consists of three projects each using a different artistic strategy to expose this global issue.

When I first heard of this theme I was very curious to learn how one would photographically depict this theme, which is not very visual. I was impressed to see the three projects. The first project *The Heavens* by Paolo Woods (Netherlands, 1970) and Gabriele Galimberti (Italy, 1977) is a blend of investigative journalism and photography. The photographers registered their own company, The Heavens, in Delaware and travelled the world to produce photographs of tax havens. *The Heavens* relies heavily on the accompanying text.



The Heavens: Paolo Woods and Gabriele Galimberti



Paolo Woods and Gabriele Galimberti : The Heavens

The second project *You Haven't Seen Their Faces* by Daniel Mayrit (Spain, 1985) consists of images of the 100 most powerful people of the City of London (according to the annual report by Square Mile magazine). Mayrit appropriates the imagery of surveillance cameras to call on them to account for their role in the 2008 financial crisis. The series focuses therefore on how a given image-production system such as surveillance cameras determines the way the viewers interpret the context surrounding the images. The viewer has no context or explanation of the facts, but almost inadvertently assumes their guilt because they have been 'caught on CCTV'.



Daniel Mayrit: You Haven't Seen Their Faces

The third project *Wealth Management* by Carlos Spottorno (Hungary, 1971) guides us through the visual world of his fictional WTF Bank (a fictional private bank). This fictional bank does not only know the rules for tax avoidance, this bank also influences the rule makers (politicians, world leaders). The project reads like an advertisement and comes across very real (<http://spottorno.com/web/wealth-management-0>). The project has an ironic undertone (I read WTF as internet slang for What The Fuck).



Carlos Spottorno: Wealth Management



Carlos Spottorno: *Wealth Management*

These projects make me think about what is documentary. Difficult to define. The first project is documentary for me. The second project is fictional (these images are not real surveillance images, they are created by the artist) but it can be seen as a documentary about image making devices, about the institutions distributing images and about how these influence the viewer's interpretation. The third project is also fictional, but makes a statement about the real world. I've read *When Is a Documentary?* (Eitzen, 1995). Eitzen states that the question "Might it be lying" is the key to figuring out whether and when something is a documentary (fiction cannot lie). Using this question I must conclude that only the first project is documentary, an outcome which is in line with my own feelings about it.

Exercise: Reading McCausland – 2nd of September 2016

McCausland's main points:

- The rise of documentary photography does not spring from fashion, but evolves from other movements in (the history of) photography.
- Documentary photography is an application of photography direct and realistic, dedicated to the profound and sober chronicling of the external world.
- Documentary is not about pretty pictures but about scientific, uncompromisingly honesty (although the camera usually does nothing but lie).
- Photography is art, but not in the old sense: it is bound to realism.
- As society changes the arts change. Now we want truth, not rationalization, idealization or romanticization. A work of art must have meaning and content. It must communicate, speak to an audience.
- The personality of the photographer should not be montaged over the subject for this will defeat the serious aims of documentary photography.

Why is this article relevant to this course?

- This article is an opinion about what (documentary) photography should be. It is an opinion from 1939. After reading the student will be able to place this opinion in history, realise that opinions about photography are different from person to person and change over time. And will learn to think critically about these opinions, form his own opinion and incorporate this into his own photography (work).

Exercise: Reading David Campany – 2nd of September 2016

- In 1936 Bill Brandt published *The English at home*. It contained 63 photographs showing different social classes (many juxtaposed). The English in 1936 were not ready for such a book. It had little impact.
- Part of this book was the photograph for which Bill Brandt is well known: *Parlourmaid and Under-parlourmaid Ready to Serve Dinner*. It is regarded as a milestone in documentary photography and in art photography.
- After the second world war England was no longer a country of marked social contrast. Appearances were levelling out and 'reading' people from their surfaces had become much more difficult.
- Brandt did surrealism, nudes, landscapes and worked as a photojournalist for the magazines (reportage). His preference however was for the self-contained image.
- Later in life he was 'discovered' by the big audience. The audience perceived him as a photographer who made a shift from documentarist to artist.



Bill Brandt: Parlourmaid and Under-parlourmaid Ready to Serve Dinner, 1933

The article does not tell how B&W became such a trusted and respected medium in documentary. But I guess:

- All photography was B&W. In the 1930's and earlier B&W became associated with documentary. Many people (up until one or two decades ago) learned to equate B&W with 'realism' and the authentic. Until the 1970s B&W photography was people's window on the world (via the illustrated magazines).



Bill Brandt: Nudes, Landscapes, Documentary (www.billbrandt.com)

Exercise: Reading Maartje van den Heuvel – 3rd of September 2016

Short summary:

- In Western society is an increased role of the media in how we experience reality. Our world view is no longer solely determined by experiences that we ourselves have directly; Our experience of the world increasingly takes place via the media.
- There is an increased visual literacy. Visual literacy refers to the competence of image-makers in employing more and more complex visual language and of viewers in being able to understand, fathom and interpret this.
- The competence visual literacy is not developed today by reading about it, or by being taught orally. It is developed almost exclusively by looking a lot at mass media. Or, if you are an image maker through making your own images.
- Two historical documentary traditions: From the West: the Anglo-Saxon line of 'human interest' photography and film and from the East: communist and socialist photography and film. Documentary in these traditions has a function: that of militant eye-witness.
- Anglo-Saxon: Documentary was meant to describe things from actual life objectively and realistically. Lewis Hine, FSA project, illustrated magazines, Magnum.
- Communist and socialist (Russia, Germany): against the bourgeois medium of painting. Portraying the struggle of the working class (every day, heroic).
- In the 1960s and 1970s the documentary photographer was a left-wing activist, 35mm camera, coarse-grained, high contrast.
- From the 1970s the viewer's belief in the transparency and objectivity of the documentary has been increasingly undermined by attempts being made to reveal the manipulative effect of media images. Television has taken over the role of window on the world. Emergence of docudrama and realityTV. Documentary moving into art.
- Documentary frees itself from classical documentary tradition. Trends:
 - Technical/stylistic: sharpness of detail and colour (Düsseldorf Art Academy, Struth, Gursky, Ruff).
 - Narrative structure: from picture story with accompanying text to typological series.
 - Subject: also middle class (Parr), upper class (Knorr), porn industry (Sultan).
 - Distance between image maker and subject: subjective photography (Goldin, Van Manen).
 - Speed and routine: also more in-depth, long-running projects (Sekula, Sheikh).
 - Limits of ethical norms: explicit and less censored (Peress).
 - Use of internet as distribution channel.
 - Combining photographs with existing, historical ones (Germain, Grimonprez).
 - Investigate the language of documentary, how the suggestion of reality is constructed (Sugimoto, Wall).
 - Imitation of journalistic and documentary images (Hondius).
 - Re-enacting (Huyghe, Draeger).
- For some artists the reflection on the documentary tradition is the main aim in their artistic work (Hondius, Draeger).

Research point: Socially committed photographers – 3rd of September 2016



(1982)

Paul Trevor, Chris Steel-Perkins, Nicholas Battye (the Exit Photography Group): *Survival Programmes in Britain's Inner Cities* (www.amber-online.com/exhibitions/survival-programmes-in-britain-s-inner-cities_2)



Chris Killip: *In Flagrante* (1988)



Nick Danziger: The British (2001)



Jacob Riis: How the other half lives (1888)



Lewis Hines: Child Labor, Construction of the Empire State Building

For some of these photographers social documentary could be their prime focus. Most had other activities as well (photography (editorial, corporate), editor, ...).

Exercise: Martin Shields – 3rd of September 2016



Martin Shields: Young footballers (Glasgow, 2002)

Denotations (what we see):

- Two young boys dressed in football outfits, each with their own ball, walking arms around each other in run-down residential area (apartment buildings). They face away from camera.
- The street is empty. There are no other people in the frame.
- The football outfits are from different teams.

Connotations (what we infer):

- The photograph is about the friendship between the boys.
- The children like playing football in this run-down area. The area is suited for play.
- The photograph is about sportsmanship. After the game members of opposite teams walk away in a friendly manner. The outfits seem very clean though. Something does not feel right with this photograph.

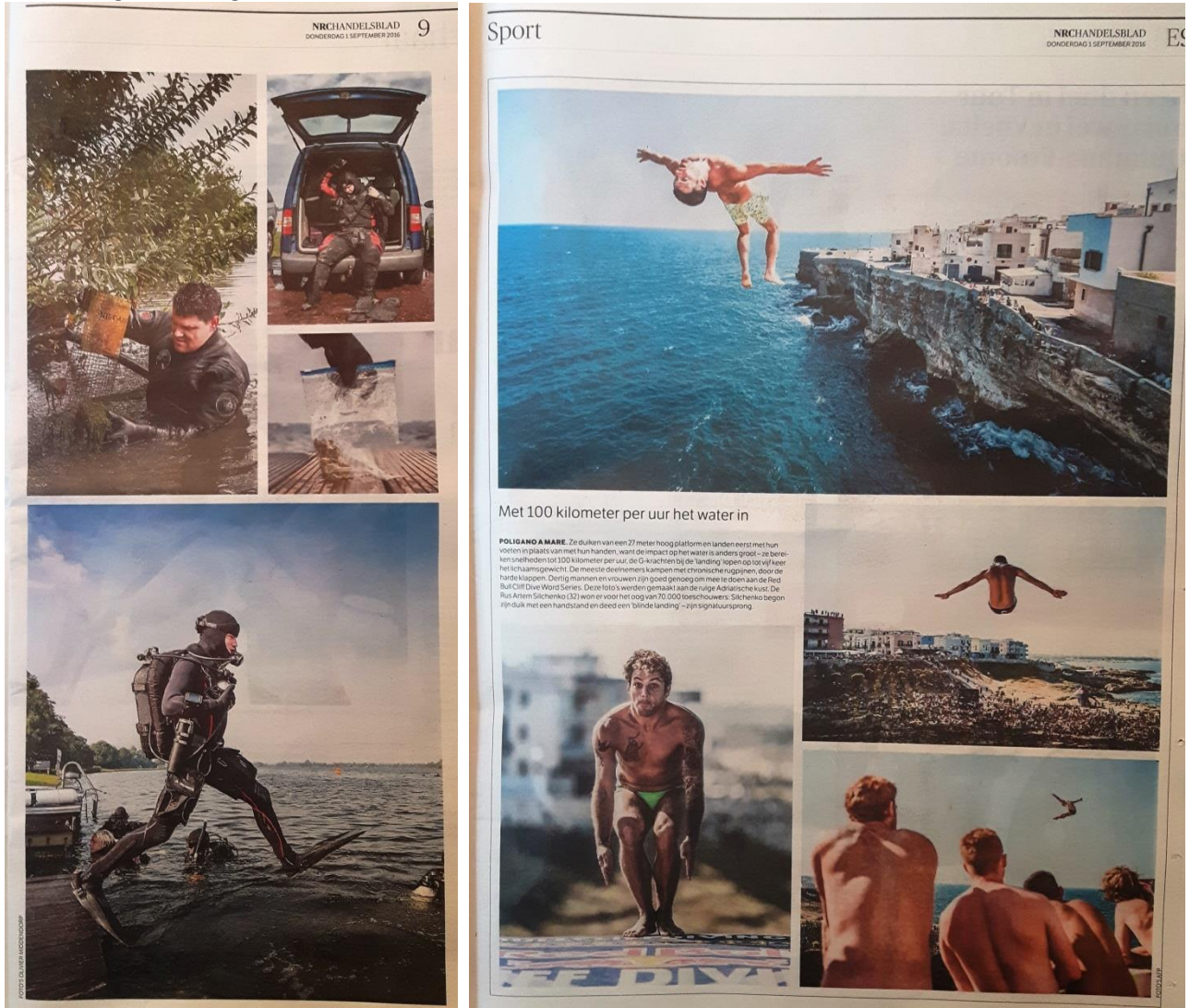
After reading the tear sheet of the newspaper I understand the editor needed a photograph to go with this news item. I do not think the photograph adds relevant information to the news item. I think it is only confusing. Why does the editor want us to show a photograph of the boys? The photograph is more about the boys than about the council estates. Does this photograph say people are happy in the dilapidated council estates? Does the photograph have a political meaning, saying nothing should be changed? Is the photograph staged? The outfits are clean, why do the boys carry two balls?

Perception of an image is very much influenced by the accompanying text and by knowing what the function is of the photograph (art, news, advertising, family album, social media, ...).

Extracurricular: *Sugar* – 4th of September 2016

This part of the course has too little actual photographing in it. I compensate by executing some extracurricular photo projects.

In *NRC Handelsblad*, a Dutch newspaper, small photo essays are regularly published. Often in the form of a grid / collage.



Examples of presentations of photo essays in *NRC Handelsblad* (1st of September 2016)

As an exercise I made the following photo essay *Sugar* about the craving for something sweet in an *NRC Handelsblad* –like format.

For these images we really need colour as the B&W version shows.



SUGAR

The craving for something sweet



Sugar: 35mm, f/1.8-f/3,5, 1/100s-1/40s, ISO100-ISO125



Sugar (B&W version)

Reflection:
Maybe the images should be different sizes.



Sugar: 35mm, f/1.8-f/3,5, 1/100s-1/40s, ISO100-ISO125 (alternatives)



Sugar: 35mm, f/1.8-f/3,5, 1/100s-1/40s, ISO100-ISO125 (alternatives)

I think I like the last alternative best.

Just practicing: *Fear* – 10th of September 2016

As an exercise I produced the following image in the studio. This is not documentary. This is not B&W. It depicts a feeling of fear.



Self-portrait, Fear: 50mm, f/8, 1/125s, ISO100

Exercise: Symbols – 10th of September 2016

A symbol is something that represents something else. It is a signifier which does not resemble the signified.

I think Robert Frank meant all his photographs in *The Americans* to have symbols in them. For the viewer however it is not always easy to see and understand the symbols he used. Of course all words, flags and traffic signs are symbols. There are many photographs in the series which depicts these. But there is more.



Robert Frank: Parade – Hoboken, New Jersey, 1955, from the series The Americans

The flag itself is a symbol. But the fact that the flag blocks the view of the woman looking at the parade is a symbol too. National emblems like a flag may provide a focus, but they also stand in the way of seeing. Nationalistic feelings prevent people from seeing the world in perspective, blocks different ways of looking at and understanding the world? Does Frank critique McCarthyism?



Robert Frank: Trolley, New Orleans, 1955, from the series The Americans

The facts that the white people sit in the front and the black people sit in the back stands for racial segregation.



Robert Frank: Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1955, from the series The Americans

The word is of course a symbol. But the word “save” also has a religious connotation. In this photograph it symbolizes religion. The pumps look like people attending a worship service. The photograph is ironic. Frank is telling us spiritual values are replaced by materialism?



Robert Frank: Movie premiere, Hollywood, 1955, from the series The Americans

In this photograph the movie star is a symbol for what average people want to be or want to achieve, or want to have (famous, rich, beautiful). The movie star is not important in this image (blurred), it's about the average people in the background looking at the movie star.



Robert Frank: Rodeo, New York City, 1955, from the series The Americans

In this photograph the cowboy symbolizes individual autonomy and American nationalism. This cowboy however is far away from nature, he is in the city. Does Frank mean the old values and beliefs do not fit modern society, are out of place, do not fit anymore?

<https://artblart.com/2015/01/20/images-from-the-americans-by-robert-frank/>

Exercise: Salgado – 10th of September 2016

Work by Salgado to which Mraz refers:



Sebastião Salgado: Guatemala 1978, from the series Other Americas



Sebastião Salgado: Brazil, 1981, from the series Other Americas

Sadness, misery and doom. Alienation. Estrangement is conveyed through formal structures such as windows. Gazes do not meet.



Sebastião Salgado: Mexico 1980, from the series Other Americas

Día de los Muertos is essentially the opposite of what Salgado represented in this image.



Sebastião Salgado: Mexico 1980, from the series Other Americas

In Salgado's image, an agave isolates the Mexican children, who are photographed within the sharp points that seem to threaten and imprison them, a symbol for the quotidian pain of living in this part of the world.



Sebastião Salgado: Gold miners of Serra Pelado, Brasil, from the series Workers

It represents a significant advance over *Other Americas*, for here estrangement is not mysterious; rather it derives directly from the manifestly horrible conditions in which these poor devils live and work.



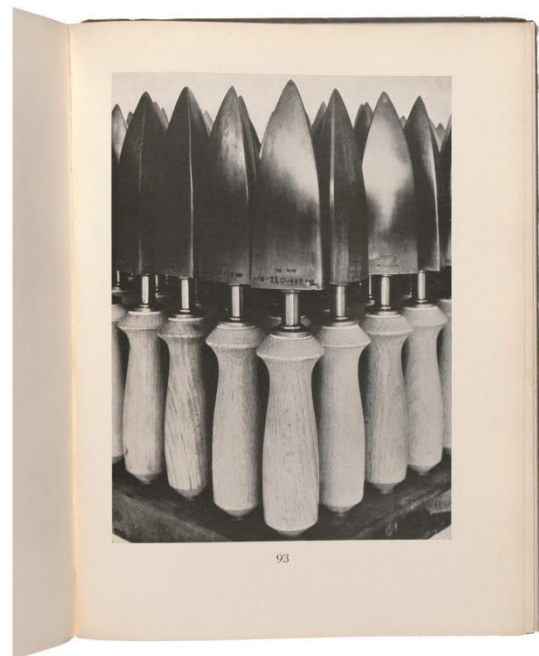
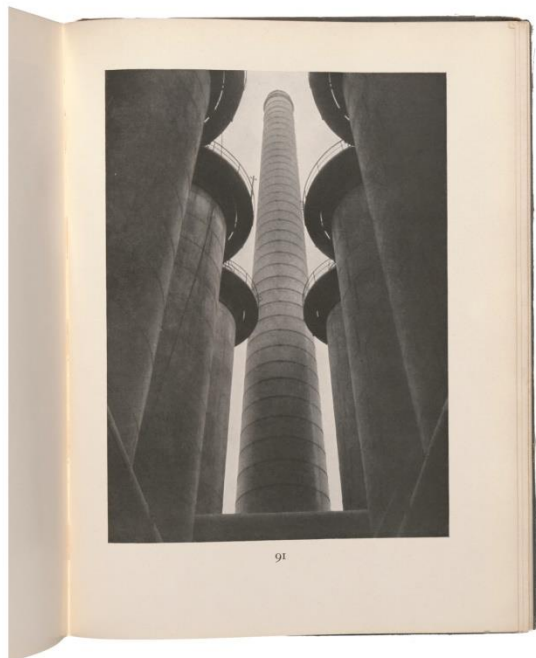
Sebastião Salgado: Terra

The final image of the section, 'Migrations to the Cities': a conglomeration of abandoned toddlers and the cityscape behind them serve as mutually reflecting mirrors of, and metaphors for, the future.

Exercise: August Sander – 11th of September 2016

People of the 20th Century can at the same time be seen as a sociological project, a historical document and a photographic masterpiece. Some see it as one of the earliest photographic typologies. Sander's aim was to photograph the representatives of every social class, profession and roles of German people roughly between the years 1910-1935. By omitting the names of the subjects he attempted to induce the viewer to move from the particular to the general when studying his typology (Freidus, 1991). Sanders formulated his typologies (without the help from social scientists) in a so-called semi-medieval guild system, a seven-category mental construct of his own (Incirlioglu, 1994).

Sander's project was inspired by the *New Objectivity*, a return to order after the First World War and a reaction against expressionism. In photography this *New Objectivity* became known as the *New Photography* movement. It's style is sharply focussed and matter-of fact (a reaction against pictorialism and more poetic styles). Examples of photographers associated with *New Objectivity* and *New Photography* are Albert Renger-Patzsch and Karl Blossfeldt.



Albert Renger-Patzsch: *Die Welt ist schön* (1928)

In Sander's *People of the 20th Century* people are understood as the product of environment and occupation which is a clear challenge to the middle-class ideal of the autonomous personality (Incirlioglu, 1994). Sander's typology makes a statement about society and the German people which was not approved by the Nazi-authorities. They forced him to stop working on the project, thousands of his glass negatives were confiscated and destroyed.



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Karl Blossfeldt: Urformen der Kunst (1929)



August Sander: People of the 20th Century (1910-1935)

Exercise: In the American East – 11th of September 2016

What do you get when you ask a fashion and advertising photographer to make portraits of the working class in the American West? You will probably end up with fashion and advertising photographs and not with documentary photographs. Richard Bolton comes across as a sour critic who expected engaged documentary photographs and is disappointed when his expectations are not met. When one photographs people against a white background using a large format camera one decontextualize the subjects. The viewer cannot learn much about the subjects other than how they look.

The relevance to documentary practice:

- The surface is all you've got. You can only get beyond the surface by working with the surface.
- All photographs are accurate, none of them is the truth.
- Documentary is the clash between the objective and the subjective, between description and self-expression.
- The format (the working method) communicates. If you want it or not.
- A photograph exploits its subject. A photographer exploits his subjects.
- The photographer has a social responsibility.
- When documentary is moved as art into the museum or gallery: The work is also used to promote the artist and the museum or gallery. This may change the original meaning of an image.
- The photograph is polysemic, it has no single independent meaning, but many possible meanings depending on context and use.



Richard Avedon: In the American West

Practising: Portrait of Eddy Out – 18th of September 2016

As an exercise I produced the following portraits of my friend Eddy Out. If I would provide captions to these images they would gain in poignancy: Eddy Out, recovered after a treatment against leukaemia. Five years ago this treatment did not even exist, so if he was taken ill five years earlier he would have been dead already. These captions would make the images more documentary in character?

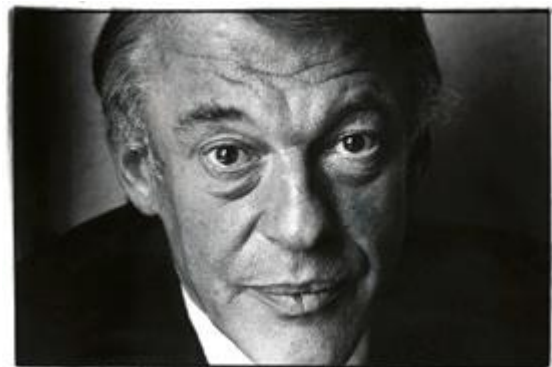


Eddy Out: 38mm, f/2.8, 1/40s, ISO200 and ISO160

Reference to:



Robin de Puy: An-Sofie Kesteleyn, who had been seriously ill (Dutch National portrait prize 2013)



Vincent Mentzel: Hans van Mierlo (1986)

Instead of pushing the subject to the edge of the frame, I worked with the light coming from camera's right and with a strong vignette like Vincent Mentzel often uses on his B&W portraits.

Research point: Humphrey Spender's *Worktown* – 19th of September 2016

Style and themes:

- B&W (obviously), straight, detached, detailed, everyday, no emphasis on the aesthetics, photographs grouped by theme.
- The themes are of the visible kind. The viewer can ask himself the question Why these themes? Education, housing conditions could also be themes.
- The purpose was to record everyday life (www.massobs.org.uk/). It was set out to be an anthropological study of Britain's culture.
- Spender made the photographs using a concealed camera (www.bolton.ac.uk/Worktown/HumphreySpender.aspx). In this way it was possible to observe people more objectively (and without any form of personal interaction).
- This makes the photographed into "the other", an object of study.
- I think the invasion of people's privacy should be weighed against the scientific value of the project. My opinion is that the scientific value is (very) limited and that there are other ways to realize the same results without invading people's privacy in such a massive way.

Exercise: Making sense of documentary – 20th of September 2016

Every photographer is exploiting his subjects in a way. In my opinion even when the photograph was commissioned by the subject. To me this is not a problem as long as the subjects agree with having their photographs taken and as long as the photographer is honest about the purpose of the photographs and how they will be used.

As an FSA photographer these kind of ethics would provide a problem. If a photographer would say: "Hey, hello. I'm a photographer and I would like to take your photograph to show middle-class people poverty and convince them to accept the New Deal legislation". Then many people would refuse, because otherwise they would be portrayed as being poor and needy.

I was shocked finding out that FSA photographers manipulated their scenes so often (the scene itself and/or by making use of false captions). Until now I was under the impression that the FSA photographers had strong ethics about manipulation...

Exercise: Researching surrealist photographers – 27th of September

I researched André Kertész, George Brassai and Man Ray. Key visual and conceptual characteristics their work has in common:

- Objects or persons that seem out of place or strange in combination with each other.
- Photographs evoke feelings of estrangement.
- The scenes depict feelings or dreams (unconscious desires).
- Use of symbols.



Man Ray, George Brassai, André Kertész

Exhibition: Scarlett Hooft Graafland – 27th of September 2016

Two weeks ago I visited photography museum *Huis Marseille*, Amsterdam. Exhibition with work of Scarlett Hooft Graafland (Netherlands, 1973). Fine art photography, often surrealistic.



Scarlett Hooft Graafland: Roofs and Lemonade Igloo



Scarlett Hooft Graafland



Scarlett Hooft Graafland: Turtle (2012)

Was this inspired by Man Ray?



Man Ray: Pray (1930)

Research: Vivian Maier – 27th of September 2016

Five photographs by Vivian Maier which clearly show surrealist elements.



Vivian Maier: Self-portrait (1955)

Surrealist photographers work with collages and double exposures. Vivian Maier often uses reflections and shadows to make self-portraits.



Vivian Maier: Street (Undated)

Strange juxtaposition, humour.



Vivian Maier (1978)

Reflections show the psychological state of the portrayed.



Strange, absurd, dreamy situations

Vivian Maier: New York, May 10th 1953



Vivian Maier: Chicago, June 1963

Strange, absurd, dreamy situations

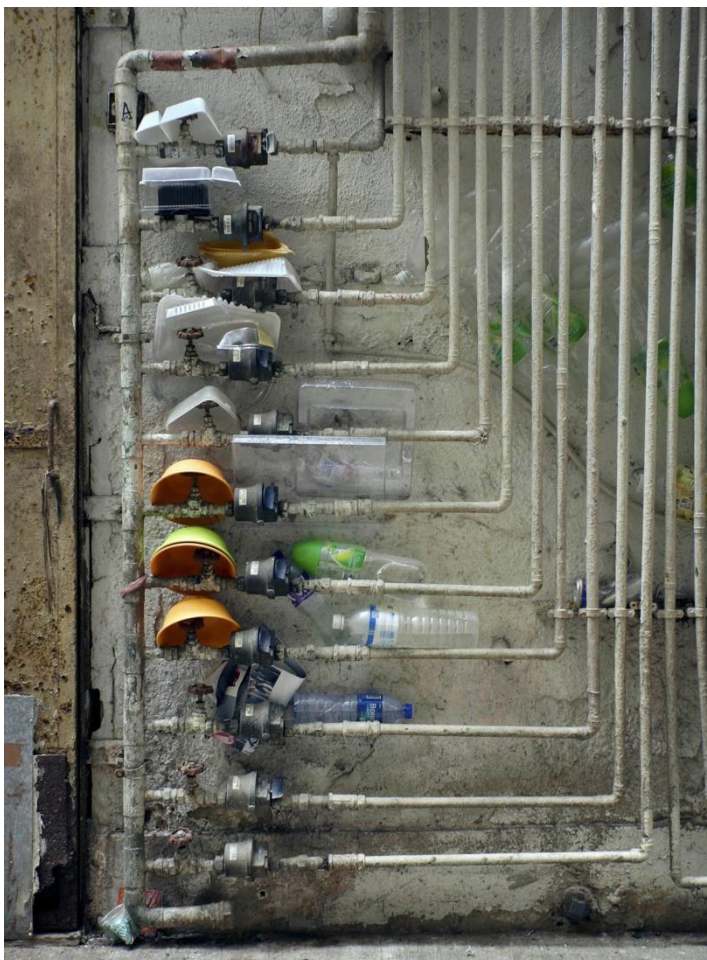
Exercise: Street photography – 24th of September 2016

Some of the weekly instructions are not suitable for B&W. For example instruction #41: The different shades of grey are astonishing.

The #4 instruction was very inspiring. Maybe because it is by Michael Wolf (Germany, 1954), one my hero photographers.



Michael Wolf: *Sitting in China (bastard chairs)*



Michael Wolf: *Hong Kong's back alleys*

#4

Document some evidence of human ingenuity that would otherwise go unnoticed. Do it without including any humans in the picture.

—Michael Wolf

Street photography is defined as “un-posed, un-staged photography which captures, explores or questions contemporary society and the relationships between individuals and their surroundings.”

Street photography does not need to include people although it usually does.

Another example in this category is David Helbich (Germany, 1973). His work *Belgian solutions* is funny.



David Helbich: Belgian solutions



David Helbich: Belgian solutions

But the #4 instruction for me is better suited as a long term project. So I decided for #19.

#19

Expose the banalities of the
new urban landscape.
—George Georgiou

How to interpret this instruction? After reading the discussion on Flickr
<https://www.flickr.com/groups/instruction19/discuss/72157625974185602/>
this is my interpretation:

The instruction is to show everyday scenes and within those scenes the estrangement one can feel;
how planned public space sometimes can make you feel uneasy, disconnected from others.

Example of the work of George Georgiou which depicts just this:



George Georgiou: Fault Lines

<http://www.georgegeorgiou.net/projects.php>

Other examples of photographers who's work meets this instruction:



Paul D'Haese: Belgopolis

<https://www.lensculture.com/articles/paul-d-haese-belgopolis>



Claudia Eschborn: Hamburg Süd

<https://www.lensculture.com/articles/claudia-eschborn-hamburg-sud>

For the exercise I decided I wanted photographs of the little play grounds the municipalities build in residential areas. I did not restrict myself to a newly built area. Instead I travelled in Soest, Amersfoort and Blaricum in search of banalities which estrange me.

At first I thought of photographing in the evening, like the opening photograph of the Neighbourhood watch series.



Neighbourhood watch (1): 35mm, f/2.8, 1/60s, ISO6400

But this is not the look I wanted. So instead I tried photographing on sunny days. It took a while before I found the feel I was aiming for, as you can see in the following contact sheet. Colour is an important quality of a playground, which is obviously lost in B&W. The last two photographs in the contact sheet are best. Direct sun light, midday, strong contrasts, abstract, lines, shapes and tonalities. No people in the frame. A quiet image. This is what I am aiming for.



Contact sheet: finding the look for the exercise

I visited the area in Amersfoort called Nieuwland (New Land) again today and completed the portfolio.



Estranging playgrounds 1: 35mm, f/8, 1/400s, ISO100



Estranging playgrounds 2: 35mm, f/8, 1/250s, ISO100



Estranging playgrounds 3: 35mm, f/8, 1/320s, ISO100



Estranging playgrounds 4: 35mm, f/8, 1/125s, ISO100

This is the image I like best.

As an exercise I made this collage.



Collage Estranging playgrounds



Estranging playgrounds 5: 35mm, f/8, 1/160s, ISO100

Reflection:

Am I really happy with this result? No. I don't really like shooting landscapes. I often prefer working in colour. The series is mostly about form. A bit intellectual and abstract. Real emotion is lacking. There are no people. There's not much of a story. The series is just not good enough. The numbers 3 and 4 are ok. If I would continue working on the series, then maybe I will have a decent series in a couple of months. Takes a lot of time and does not feel very satisfying to me.

What's good about the series: The B&W and the absence of people help the estrangement. A different version would be to have (a) grown-up(s) pose in a surreal and disconnected way in these playgrounds. A bit like the people in Edward Hopper paintings. But would the series then still be documentary? No, I don't think so.

Exercise: Street photography second attempt – 30th of September 2016

Second attempt at this exercise. Street scenes in Amersfoort this time.



Contact sheet Street scenes Amersfoort



Contact sheet final selection



Estranging street scenes 1: 38mm, f/5.6, 1/500s, ISO100



Estranging street scenes 2: 38mm, f/5.6, 1/80s, ISO100



Estranging street scenes 3: 38mm, f/5.6, 1/125s, ISO100



Estranging street scenes 4: 38mm, f/5.0, 1/250s, ISO100



Estranging street scenes 5: 38mm, f/8, 1/60s, ISO100

Reflection:

This feels better than the first attempt. Still think the subject matter is a little bit boring. Some of the images work better in colour. When shooting you must know if you're shooting for b&w or for colour.

Practising: Photo essay – 22nd of September 2016

Today I made this photo essay about my parents. My father lives in a nursing home (because of dementia). My mother visits him every day and takes him for a short walk in the park. My father cannot communicate anymore. I handed him my camera in the hope he could communicate in a visual way by making photographs. But he does not know how to operate a camera anymore.



Walk in the park with Alzheimer's (22nd of September 2016): 38 mm, f2.8-4.5, 1/500-1/30s, ISO100

My exhibition: Neighbourhood watch – 27th of September 2016

In September and October my work is exhibited at the BredaPhoto international photo festival in Breda, The Netherlands. I produced this work during the masterclass of BredaPhoto in February-June 2016. I am trying to get this work exhibited in Soest (where I live) too.



Neighbourhood watch: Installation view at BredaPhoto (September 2016)

Exercise: Connections between styles – 27th of September 2016

Connections between the styles of Moriyama, Petersen and Sobol.

- B&W, high contrast, grain
- Subjective
- Fast, dynamic, rough, blurry
- Sometimes sexual, sensual
- Not much text to anchor meaning
- Difficult to interpret
- Disorienting
- Direct, spontaneous, intimate
- Intuitive, emotional



Anders Petersen: Roma (2005); Jacob Aue Sobol: Arrivals and Departures (Moscow, March 2012)



Daido Moriyama

Planning the assignment – 20th of September 2016

I developed two ideas for the assignment.

1. *Typically Dutch*

This project is a visual study of what is typically Dutch. National identity is about:

- Language
- Landscape or streetscape
- Traditions
- Culture
- Politics
- History
- Cuisine (food)
- National symbols: flags, national colours, Dutch brands, the head of state

I have taken out factors like ethnicity and religion which in my opinion are not something typically Dutch (more something Western European).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_identity

Top 100 of things which are typically Dutch (according to Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf*):

www.telegraaf.nl/vrij/reizen/20652134/_Top_100_Typisch_Nederlands_.html

Top 10 of typical Dutch things:

<http://archief.ondertussen.nl/lifestyle/10-typisch-nederlandse-dingen/>

Typically Dutch:

www.nederlandvoorbeginners.info/typisch-nederlands.htm

The aim of the project is to produce eight single narrative images. Best is to produce more than eight images and make a selection of the eight best images.

Ideas for images:

- Close-up of a lunch box in a workplace (for example an office = office lunch).
- A lunch (bread and cheese, chocolate sprinkles, Calvé peanut butter) with a mug of milk, traditional Dutch china in a rural kitchen (the kitchen of my mother-in-law).
- Streetscape showing Dutch brands like Heineken, Albert Hein and Hema (Amersfoort).
- Streetscape showing cyclists (Amsterdam).
- Landscape showing flat land, water, dykes, grassland with a windmill or a church at the horizon.
- A celebration like a birthday or Sinterklaas (interior shot).
- A streetscape showing terrace houses.
- People eating raw herring on the street (The Hague, Scheveningen).
- Interior scene of people in a meeting (the Dutch way of making a decision).
- Interior of a classroom showing how children learn Dutch.
- A national celebration like King's Day or World Championship Football.
- A portrait of a Dutch girl showing Rembrandt lighting (or is this too much about photography?).
- Landscape showing watermanagement (dykes, dams, locks).

Visual clichés like wooden shoes and tulips should be avoided. Most interesting are scenes which depict typically Dutch behaviour.

This project should be shot in colour because national symbols have colours. This information should not be lost. In general I believe that documentary projects should by default be in colour (our world also has colour). B&W may be used if there is a good reason for it.

2. *Fatherhood*

My father is suffering from dementia and is not able to communicate anymore. At the same time my children are growing up fast. This changes the way of me being a father and the way of me being a child of my father. This makes me think about what constitutes fatherhood. The nature of fatherhood changes over time. The project is a visual study of fatherhood.

Research:

<http://americanvalues.org/catalog/pdfs/wp-11.pdf>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Father>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2146066/pdf/canfampphys00121-0173.pdf>

<http://www.parentingscience.com/evolution-of-fatherhood.html>

The idea is to ask eight (or more) people to show me their (idea of) fatherhood. This should be an everyday scene (showing reality) in which there is a child and a father. The person can be photographed with their child or with their father. This idea can be pushed to the limit when the father has passed away, or the child has not yet or never been born.

The aim of the project is to produce eight single narrative images. Best is to produce more than eight images and make a selection of the eight best images.

This project can be shot in colour and in B&W. B&W would provide visual consistency over the series of photographs. Because this part of the course is about B&W photography it would be a nice exercise to do the project in B&W (despite the fact that there is no real good reason for it). During shooting the emphasis should be on light, composition, lines and tonality.

Choosing an idea

Which idea should I chose? To me the second project seems more interesting, it's a clear-cut concept and I can meet and interview people of different ages and backgrounds.

I will ask my tutor for advice.

Tutor's advice (23rd of September):

"I think the fatherhood idea gives you more possibilities in showing your personal voice so I would go with this one, the other idea would be quite objective I think. Try monochrome and colour and see which you feel carries your ideas more effectively."

I agree.

Further development of the idea

What is the role of the father in modern society?

- A provider of income for the family?
- An authority to enforce social rules?
- To nurture infants and children?
- Acting as a mother surrogate?
- A male role-model?

- A teacher?
- A friend to whom you can go for advice?
- A companion with whom to undertake leisure activities?
- Someone to care for when he gets older?
- Someone who is absent?
- Is fatherhood itself a kind of leisure activity?

The viewer of the series will be invited to think about these questions.

The series will consist of photographs of a child with his/her father or a father with his child(ren). The photograph should depict the way the portrayed want to show the role of the father / see the role of the father.

Questions: The photographs can be taken

- Inside and outside?
- With and without flash?
- Posed or reportage style?

Stages in fatherhood:

1. The unborn child (never born child)
2. Infant
3. Child
4. Teenager
5. Adult
6. Child is a parent himself / herself
7. Father who needs care or nurturing himself
8. Deceased father (absent father)

It would be nice to have a photograph of each stage. But I think this will make it more difficult to find people who want to cooperate. I'll try anyway and see how far this project will take me.

Every week I sent my *Photo of the week* by e-mail. I used this communication channel and Facebook to recruit people who want to be part of the project.

The text (in Dutch):

Beste vader of kind van een vader,

Voor een fotoproject dat ik doe in het kader van mijn opleiding fotografie vraag ik je medewerking.

Het gaat om een serie foto's waarin mensen hun vaderschap laten zien.

Het doel van de fotoserie is om een beeld te geven van de rol van vaders in de huidige maatschappij.

De rol van een vader verschilt natuurlijk van persoon tot persoon en van situatie tot situatie. En de rol verandert naarmate het kind en de vader opgroeien en ouder worden.

Het vaderschap kent verschillende stadia:

- *Het ongeboren kind (het nooit geboren kind, het overleden kind)*
- *Baby*
- *Kind*
- *Tiener*

- *Het volwassen kind*
- *Het kind is zelf een ouder*
- *Vader die zelf zorg nodig heeft*
- *De overleden vader (de afwezige vader)*

Het vaderschap is in elk stadium heel anders en kenmerkt zich door andere dingen.

Wanneer je mee wil doen met het fotoproject, denk dan na over wat het vaderschap voor jou op dit moment inhoudt en hoe je dat kan laten zien. Wat is de rol van jou als vader of de rol van jouw vader?

De foto zal een dubbelportret of een groepsportret zijn in een omgeving of tijdens een activiteit die uitdrukking geeft aan het vaderschap. De serie zal bestaan uit tenminste acht foto's van verschillende combinaties van vader en kind(eren).

Wil je meedoen, of ken je iemand die mee wil doen, laat het even weten. De foto's worden de komende maand gemaakt.

Alvast dank je wel.

Groeten,

Maurice Timmermans

Using Google translate, the same text in English:

Dear father or child of a father,

For a photo project I'm doing in the course of my studies photography I ask your cooperation.

It is a series of photographs in which people show their fatherhood.

The purpose of the series is to provide an image of the role of fathers in today's society. The role of a father, of course, differs from person to person and from situation to situation. And this role changes as the child and father grow up and get older.

Fatherhood has several stages:

- *The unborn child (never-born child, the deceased child)*
- *Baby*
- *Child*
- *Teenager*
- *The adult child*
- *The child is itself a parent*
- *Father who needs care*
- *The deceased father (the absent father)*

Fatherhood is very different at each stage and is characterized by different things.

If you want to get involved with the photo project, think about what fatherhood means for you at this time and how to show it. What is the role of you as a father or the role of your father?

The photograph will be a double portrait or a group portrait in an environment or during an activity that expresses fatherhood. The series will consist of at least eight pictures of different combinations of father and child (ren).

*Want to join in, or do you know someone who would like to participate, please let me know. The photographs are taken in the next month.
Thanks in advance.*

Regards,

Maurice Timmermans

I expect to shoot a lot indoors. I want to use flash. I experimented with a bare speed light @105mm which gives a spotlight effect and balances ambient light:



Desired look for the project: 35mm, f5.6, 1/30s, ISO100, speed light @105mm

I can also obtain this look outdoors, as long as the sun does not shine (speed lights are not powerful enough to overpower the sun; shutter speed too slow).

This look is inspired by Dutch photographer Merlijn Doomernik. He often uses hard flash light when photographing for Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad.



Merlijn Doomernik often uses hard flash light when photographing for NRC Handelsblad

Executing the assignment – 9th of October 2016

First photograph (7th of October)

Father: Jaap (stepfather)

Child: Sanna (19 years old)

Quote of Sanna: “My father died when I was six years old. My father would have liked me finding a new father figure. Someone who I can get along with well. My stepfather is a kind of father to me. We have good conversations over drinks. We find each other funny.”

Setting: Living room, having a conversation over a glass of wine.



Jaap and Sanna: 35mm, f/5.6, 1/30s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (1/4 power)

Aim is to create an intimate spotlight effect. Accentuating light on the photograph of Sanna's biological father next to her. Balancing the ambient light outside. Vantage point should be lower and camera should be level to obtain straight verticals. I placed the camera and the speed light on a tripod, radio controlled shutter release. Sanna and Jaap just talked and drank their wine.

Contact sheet:



IMG_8898, rating = 4



IMG_8902, rating = 4



IMG_8908, rating = 4



IMG_8941, rating = 5

I like image 8941 best. Composition and lighting are better. It is a spontaneous moment. It shows they're having fun. Outside evening light was dying and in this photograph just enough light remains outside. The flash produces a shadow of a wine glass on the chair of Jaap. I also converted to black and white.



Fatherhood 1, Jaap and Sanna: 35mm, f5.6, 1/60s, ISO100, speed light @105mm



Fatherhood 1, Jaap and Sanna: 35mm, f5.6, 1/60s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (b&w version)

Second photograph (16th of October)

Father: Vincent
Child: Madelief (6 years old)

Quote of Vincent: "Fatherhood is not like a strong bond between me and Madelief which is there all the time. It is more like moments of strong connection interspersed with the rush of everyday life."

Setting: Bedroom of Madelief. Vincent reading a children's book to Madelief before bed.

Contact sheet:



IMG_8982-bewerkt@1000px-2, rating = 5



IMG_9019@1000px, rating = 4



IMG_9065@1000px, rating = 4



IMG_9078@1000px, rating = 4

I like 8992 best. Reasons: better composition, feels more natural because this is the way Vincent reads to Madelief.



Fatherhood 2, Vincent and Madelief: 35mm, f9, 1/160s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (b&w version)



Fatherhood 2, Vincent and Madelief: 35mm, f9, 1/160s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (b&w version)

Third photograph (17th of October)

Father: Jacques

Child: Maurice (49 years old)

Quote of Maurice: "My father suffers from dementia and lives in a nursing home. Communication between him and me is not possible anymore."

Setting: Jacques and Maurice sitting on Jacques' bed in the nursing home. The photographs on the wall are of Jacques' father and of his three children.

Contact sheet:



IMG_9147, rating = 5



IMG_9204, rating = 4



IMG_9207, rating = 4



IMG_9217, rating = 4

I gave my father the shutter release. He was able to push the button, I had to explain it four times. In the end I decided for the image in which he has no active role and in which there is no communication (suggested) between us. Very much like our fatherhood at present.



Fatherhood 3, Jacques and Maurice: 35mm, f8, 1/60s, ISO100, speed light @105mm



Fatherhood 3, Jacques and Maurice: 35mm, f8, 1/60s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (b&w version)

Colour or b&w? – 19th of October

It's time to think about what I am shooting for: b&w or colour.



Colour or b&w?

I asked my peers (both students of Amsterdam Photo Academy) for advice.

Bart responded: b&w tells the story better, the colours are distracting (especially the purple), maybe more light and more contrast in post.

Desiree responded: this series should be in colour, I don't find the colours distracting, the b&w are less interesting and look like photographs from the past. I find the context (environment) of the first two photographs distracting. The setting is shown somewhat too literal. In the third photograph the viewer wonders why the two are sitting next to each other on the bed, it is intriguing and therefore more interesting to look at. About the flash: it produces an intimate look, the spotlight on being together. In the first photograph this effect is less, because the two are further apart.

Conflicting advice..

For me, colour brings essential information to the photograph which is lost in b&w. I find the colour photographs more interesting to look at. The photographs should not be an abstraction of reality but show as much details as possible of every setting. The setting is part of the photograph and should not be considered as something possibly distracting.

Conclusion: I am shooting for colour. Colour possibly disrupts visual consistency throughout the series, but in my opinion the way of lighting (flash@105mm) counters this effectively.

Fourth photograph (20th of October)

Father: BartJan

Child: Manu (7 months old)

Quote of BartJan: "I really feel like a father when I'm riding my bicycle together with Manu."

Setting: BartJan on his bike with Manu in the centre of Amsterdam, close to where they live.

Contact sheet:



IMG_9231, rating = 5



IMG_9254, rating = 3



IMG_9270, rating = 3



IMG_9288, rating = 4

The sign on the door was a happy coincidence I discovered when we set up the shoot: "La vie moderne". I aimed to include the sign on the door. I chose 9231 because the other photographs are too posed.

Reflection:

- I should have asked BartJan to turn on the headlight of the bicycle.
- For this photograph I prefer the b&w version, because the sign makes a reference to antique / modern.



Fatherhood 4, BartJan and Manu: 35mm, f5.6, 1/40s, ISO100, speed light @105mm



Fatherhood 4, BartJan and Manu: 35mm, f5.6, 1/40s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (b&w version)

Fifth photograph (6th of November)

Father: Thijs

Child: Joep (16 years old) and Emile (13 years old)

Quote of Thijs: "My sons are able to rig their sailboats themselves now."

Setting: Rigging the "Splash" sailboat of Joep on the terrain of the aquatics association of Zeewolde close to the water of the "Wolderwijd" lake.

Contact sheet:



IMG_9411, rating = 5



IMG_9419, rating = 4



IMG_9427, rating = 4



IMG_9448, rating = 4

Image 9411 depicts best the fact that his son is able to rig the sailboat himself. Thijs is standing and watching his son, without intervening.



Fatherhood 5, Thijs and Joep: 35mm, f8, 1/160s, ISO100, speed light @105mm



Fatherhood 5, Thijs and Joep: 35mm, f8, 1/160s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (b&w version)

Sixth photograph (11th of November)

Father: Jan
Child: Tom (23 years old)
Quote of Jan: "We share a passion for classic Volvos."
Setting: Jan welcomes Tom at Jan's home in Dalfts.

Contact sheet:



IMG_9499, rating = 4



IMG_9525, rating = 4



IMG_9539, rating = 4



IMG_9546-bewerkt, rating = 5



IMG_9576, rating = 4



IMG_9599, rating = 4

Reflection: the shoot took too long, dying light in the late afternoon (too dark). First setting too much clutter (drainpipe). Remember to use the centre focus point of the Canon 6D at dusk (the focus is a little off). Low vantage point (9599) is OK for the cars, but not for the people. I used the V-shape of the roof as a compositional element and meaning "coming home; being in a safe place".



Fatherhood 6, Jan and Tom: 35mm, f4, 1/30s, ISO100, speed light @105mm



Fatherhood 6, Jan and Tom: 35mm, f4, 1/30s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (b&w version)

Seventh photograph (13th of November)

Father: Jan

Child: Saskia (48 years old)

Quote of Saskia: "We like to discuss current events and the news."

Setting: Dining table in Saskia's home.

Contact sheet:



IMG_9670, rating = 4



IMG_9676, rating = 4



IMG_9679, rating = 5



IMG_9687, rating = 4

Reflection:

- Next time use 1/4CTO gel to match colour temperature of the lamp better. Now in post I had to warm up the newspaper a little.
- I did not aim for perfect symmetry. I like that better.
- I hung the speedlite in the lamp, facing down and @35mm.
- In 9670 Jan is sitting too low. A cushion in his seat fixed that.
- I like 9676 and 9679 best. In the end I chose 9679 because there is great connection between them and the image shows matching wrinkles near the eyes.



Fatherhood 7, Jan and Saskia: 35mm, f8, 1/80s, ISO100, speed light @35mm



Fatherhood 7, Jan and Saskia: 35mm, f8, 1/80s, ISO100, speed light @35mm (b&w version)

Eighth photograph (13th of November)

Father: Martijn

Child: Sophie (12 years old) and Roos (10 years old)

Quote of Martijn: "Sports and playing games is our connection."

Setting: Playing a board game in the living room.

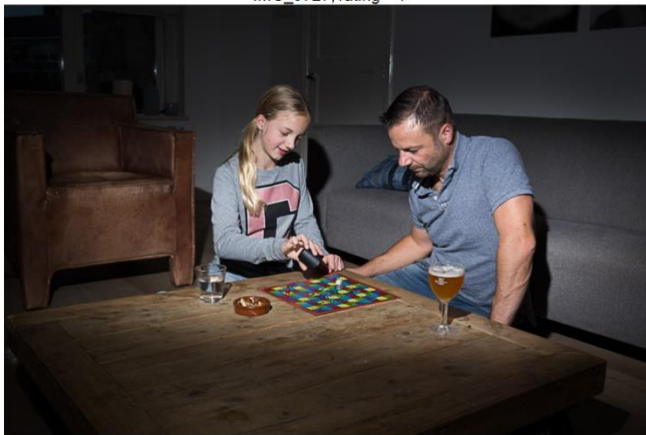
Contact sheet:



IMG_9727, rating = 4



IMG_9729, rating = 4



IMG_9742, rating = 4



IMG_9775, rating = 5

I chose 9775 because in this image Sophie is provoking her father (not showing the dice under the cup). She is looking how her father will react. A sign of puberty?

Reflection:

I removed clutter and carefully positioned the chair. I also should have removed the pillow behind Martijn.



Fatherhood 8, Martijn and Sophie: 35mm, f8, 1/50s, ISO100, speed light @105mm



Fatherhood 8, Martijn and Sophie: 35mm, f8, 1/50s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (b&w version)

Ninth photograph (26th of November)

Father: Chris

Child: Jayda (14 months old)

Quote of Chris: "We love going for a walk in nature. Jayda leads the way."

Setting: Going for a walk in the forest near Soest, The Netherlands.

Contact sheet:



IMG_9794, rating = 3



IMG_9796, rating = 5



IMG_9799, rating = 4



IMG_9802, rating = 4

Reflection:

I like the composition of 9796 best. Chris is looking slightly up along the treeline. Jayda is closer to the flash and therefore a little brighter. I corrected that in post.

Working with a one-year-old must be well prepared, fast and easy going. The shoot cannot last very long. It was not for very long when Jayda started to cry and the shoot was over. I took some bonus shots of Chris comforting his crying daughter.



Fatherhood 9, Chris and Jayda: 35mm, f6.3, 1/80s, ISO100, speed light @105mm



Fatherhood 9, Chris and Jayda: 35mm, f6.3, 1/80s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (b&w version)



Fatherhood 9, Chris and Jayda: 35mm, f8, 1/40s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (bonus image)



Fatherhood 9, Chris and Jayda: 35mm, f8, 1/40s, ISO100, speed light @105mm (bonus image 2)

Selection (1st of January 2017)

We have nine images and they should be eight. One should be left out. I chose this one to be the first photograph (Jaap and Sanna). The reason for this is that this photograph introduces the passed away father. In this way the image is different from all the others. Placed in chronological order (age of the child) the remaining photographs tell the story of fatherhood in a chronological way. Now we have a simple narrative, the first photograph (Jaap and Sanna) would complicate the narrative too much.

Presentation (1st of January 2017)

The series should be delivered/presented on the blog. I want a full screen presentation on my Wordpress site. So I changed the theme to a more appropriate design.

Last month I changed the website of my company (www.tpim.nl) to a responsive website with a modern design. The knowledge and skills I acquired doing that helped me to rebuild my blog.

The result can be seen at: <https://ocadocumentarymauricetimmermans512591.wordpress.com/>

Steps taken in the design of the website:

1. Menu structure: Home, Blog, Assignments, Learning Log, About.
2. Home page should be a full screen slide show.
3. Pages should be thumbnails of photographs, but like Flickr, not square tiles in a mosaic.
4. Choice of theme. Responsive, modern theme. Dark design.
5. Resources: <https://000.nl/hoemaak-ik-eeen-website/>; <https://dcrazed.com/creative-responsive-photography-wordpress-themes/>; <https://colorlib.com/wp/free-photography-wordpress-themes/>
6. Longlist: Shapely, Harmonic, Aperture, Temptation.
7. There is no way to add new themes to free wordpress.com sites. That's too bad. Only Harmonic is available. I will use this one. Slide show on the front page is not possible, only one static image. That's too bad, but it will have to do.
8. Resources for Harmonic theme: <https://theme.wordpress.com/themes/harmonic/>

Reflection on the assignment – 1st of January 2017

This is a big project, I spent a lot of time and I learned a lot. Working with different people, talking to them about fatherhood and getting to know them. A very rewarding experience. To me this project is still ongoing. In the future I will continue making photographs for this series. It feels like I can fill a whole book with this series. But for now I have to consider the assignment finished.

Accompanying text or not?

I started the project wanting to document the names, ages, settings and quotes. And I should. But when I present the images, do they need accompanying text or captions? After designing the website I decided against accompanying text. I only added two lines of text to explain the concept, the idea behind the series: "Show your fatherhood! A series of images in which people show their fatherhood." In this way the viewers have wider possibilities for their own interpretation of the images. If the series was to be presented in a book I would put the captions (names, ages, settings and quotes) at a separate page somewhere at the end of the book.

Reflection on tutor report – 10th of January 2017

I want to say thank you to my tutor for her report. These are my reactions / conclusions / what I learned from the tutor report.

A very positive and flattering feedback. My peers are also very positive about this body of work. The lighting is very contemporary and fashionable, so I guess that is one of the reasons why people like it so much.

This positive feedback puts a lot of weight on my shoulders. Will I be able to continue this success? It is very tempting to keep working in this fashion, because now I feel comfortable doing this and it is easy to repeat this in order to get a successful outcome.

However tempting I know this is not something I should do if I want to keep learning and develop myself as a photographer. So I want to try something very contra-intuitive for me. I'd like to investigate the credibility of the photograph. Photographs (and especially news photographs) tend to connote authenticity to the viewer when

- They are of low technical quality
- They lack "good" aesthetics
- They lack construction (don't seem to be staged)
- They look like amateur snapshots, surveillance stills, stills made by action cams or dashboard cams, snapshots made with smartphones.

These can be considered as markers for authenticity. I've done some research on the web and looked for literature about the subject of authenticity. The plan is to do the essay (part 4) about this subject and to bring it into practice by doing the assignment (part 3) about the same subject. My intent is to produce a body of work called *Surveilling Mrs. T.* with 10 photographs of my wife in everyday situations. The body of work should suggest authenticity and guilt by using the visual language of investigatory photography and surveillance cameras.

Am I able to tell a convincing story using this visual language? First I must learn this visual language by visiting some private investigators who use investigatory photography in their work. Will they teach me? Is this a good subject for my critical review (part 4)? Can you suggest literature about markers for authenticity? I expect this literature to be part of media studies or of psychology of communication instead of being part of the history / philosophy of photography.

I understood that you taught Forensic and Scene of Crime Photography? Maybe you can tell me something about the strict protocols forensic photographers have to follow in order to preserve chain of custody and to achieve objectivity? What I am interested in is in what kind of visual language this results.

My tutor suggested the following pointers:

- More development of a personal voice. I am aiming to realise this by executing assignments / projects which have a personal or emotional meaning to me.
- Emphasis on sequencing and presentation of images. I will continue to do that because I think it is an integral (and very important) part of a photo project.

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