![Open College of the Arts]

Learning Log
Photography 2
Documentary

This is part 5 of 5:
Part Five: New forums for documentary

Student
Maurice Timmermans (512591)
Burg Grothestraat 47
3761 CL Soest
Netherlands
+31 6 15086222
maurice512591@oca-uk.com
www.flickr.com/photos/mauricetimmermans

Tutor
Helen Warburton
25B Hargrave Road
Islington
LONDON
Greater London
N19 5SH
United Kingdom
helenwarburton@oca.ac.uk

Contents

Cover photo
"Djorden in his drinking shed" from the series "Drinkplaatsen": 35mm, f/8, 1/160s, ISO100
(the work "Drinkplaatsen" – "Drinking places" is ongoing)

1. Part Five: New forums for documentary

Introduction – 21ˢᵗ of February 2017
This document is part five 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.

Exercise: *Cruel + Tender* – 21ˢᵗ of February 2017
What did I learn from reading the brochure and looking at the videos?
- Work with which I can identify is often the most interesting to me. I mean that I can identify with the photographer (choice of subject, concept), or with the feelings the work evokes.
- The work of Rineke Dijkstra evokes strong feelings in me. The raw emotion photographed in a quiet and structured way. Very much how I would like to work myself.
- The work of Lewis Baltz evokes feelings in me of emptiness and estrangement. I really like the strict geometrical compositions, with minimal context.

What does this say about me as a photographer? Is this the way or the style of working I prefer for myself? I think so. The subject must have emotional relevance to me. And I like to work in a structured, planned way, producing images of high technical quality.

Rineke Dijkstra: Mothers (1994)
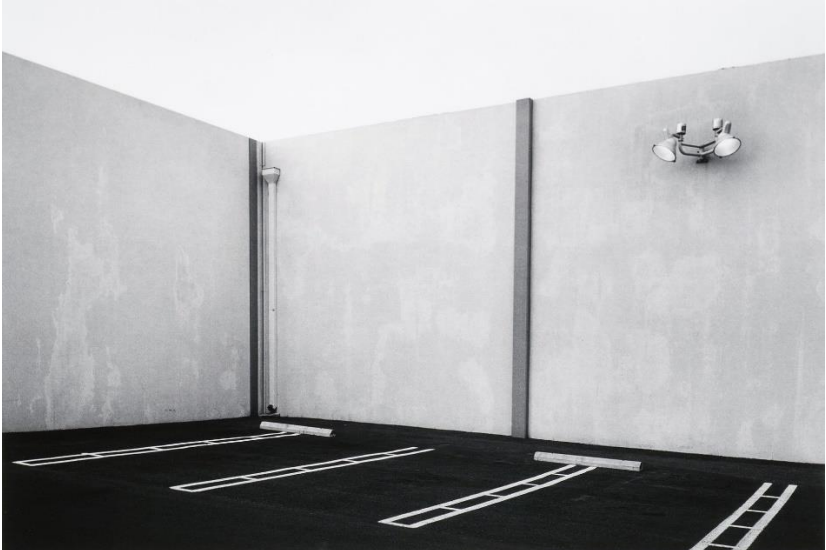
Lewis Baltz: The New Industrial Parks near Irvine (1974)

Exercise: *Judgement Seat* **– 21st of February 2017**
List of key research materials which are referenced in the text:

- Jean Baudrillard, L 'Echange symbolique et la mort, Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1976, pp. 85-88.
- Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," trans. Harry Zohn, in Illuminations, New York, Schocken Books, 1969, p. 223.
- Newhall, Photography: 1839-1937, p. 64.
- Edward Steichen, "Photography and the Art Museum," in Museum Service (Bulletin of the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences), June 1948, p. 69.
- Szarkowski, "Photography and Mass Media."
- John Szarkowski, The Photographer'sE ye, New York, MoMA, 1965.
- Szarkowski, Looking at Photographs, New York, MoMA, 1973.

Art Fair: *Haute Photographie Rotterdam* **– 21st of February 2017**
Two weeks ago I visited the 2017 art fair in Rotterdam. From visiting the exhibitions of the art galleries I must conclude that female nudity sells. Interesting work I saw was a series of portraits by Stephan Vanfleteren (Belgium, 1969) of the students of the maritime school IBIS.

Stephan Vanfleteren: "Engelen van de zee"

Vanfleteren often works in b&w and I am impressed by his work (I think he is one of the greatest temporary portraitists). These portraits have a historical feel to them. Maybe because of the b&w, the clothing and a classical way of portraying the subjects (pose, lighting).

Another body of work I saw was *Le Château Rouge* by Martin Essl (Austria, 1982). In July 2015, this body of work was published in a book. The result of a three-year work started when Martin Essl moved to Paris. The Paris metro station which gives the book its title becomes the starting point of a

dreamlike and colourful fiction. The photographer offers a poetic journey to the viewer's imagination, an intimate and luminous diary of daily life. It has no chronology and no narrative. Still I am drawn to the work. It has strong visual coherence (analog colour film) and a great use of colour.
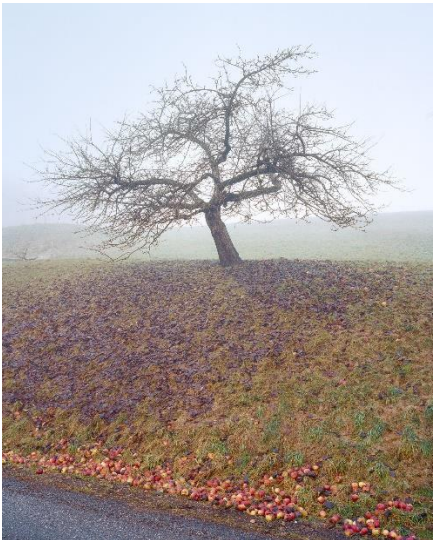
Martin Essl: Le Château Rouge

Exercise: *Open See* – 22nd of February 2017
I don't agree to the suggestion in the course-book that presenting documentary work in a gallery space will always be problematic. Photography museums also exhibit with the aim of education / information. Presentation on a gallery wall does not automatically lead to "aesthetic imperative" and "loss of the referred" as the work of Jim Goldberg in my opinion clearly shows. As long as the work can be shown within its context, I think a documentary project is very much possible within the gallery walls.

Not every documentary will be chosen to be exhibited in a (commercial) gallery, because not every project will sell. Even museums will take into consideration the interest of the general audience.

UK. London. 'Open see' exhibition by Jim Goldberg at Photographers Gallery, 2009. Installation photo.

Last year I saw the exhibition of the documentary project *Calais, From jungle to City* by Henk Wildschut (Netherlands, 1967) at photography museum *Foam* in Amsterdam. I think this exhibition is also an example of a successful documentary project within the gallery space. In this exhibition Wildschut used photographs, video and a handout with text. He avoids the emotional photos of refugees familiar to us in newspapers and television. Instead he shows the resilience, the ability to survive and adapt.
https://www.foam.org/museum/programme/henk-wildschut
https://www.foam.org/userfiles/hw_handout.pdf

Henk Wildschut: Calais, From jungle to City

Henk Wildschut: Calais, From jungle to City

Amsterdam, Foam photography museum. Installation view of 'Calais, From jungle to City' by Henk Wildschut (April-June 2016)

Exercise: *Postdocumentary Photography* – 22nd of February 2017

The key points made by Ine Gevers:

- Blurring boundaries between photograph as document and photograph as art. That's why we speak of postdocumentary photography.
- Antiquity: aesthetics = ethics of perception. The beautiful = the good. Nowadays: tension between ethics and aesthetics; they are almost like opposites.
- Photography can open up our world, enlarge our awareness, create knowledge and make everyone share in experiences.
- Photography can also turn people into objects, reducing their vitality to a picture and murdering their individuality.
- Photography can also facilitate the dominant ideology and power (colonialism, propaganda).
- Examples: Martha Rossler, Alan Sekula, S-21 photographs.
- Reaction on "the society of the spectacle": the strategy of not showing. Example: *Real Pictures* by Alfredo Jaar (Rwanda).
- Keith Tester: Man's alienation from the world and from himself. Solution: The choice is to no longer accept the world as it is or as it appears, but to see the world that we experience and participate in as a complex of problems and challenges that we have to face. To experience alienation in the world.
- Alain Badiou: the artist is someone who as a result of a deeply encroaching, often traumatic event, feels the necessity to pursue a personal truth and to remain faithful to it in spite of considerable opposition. According to this argument, being an artist and ethics are inextricably bound up with each other. Truth is therefore something you encounter (in the form of an event).
- Rossler: Photographers and artists have shifted their attention to 'the small', the personal. Their goal, it seems, is no longer to change the world but to know it. But it is possible to change the world, precisely by means of the personal = political approach of Badiou.
- Only those images acquire meaning that have it in themselves to unleash such a truth-process, followed by a process of completion encompassing artist, image and viewer.
  Ethics and aesthetics merge here.
- Autonomy = the free place for all those involved: the photographer, those represented and the viewer

Exercise: *Kingsmead Eyes* – 22nd of February 2017

http://www.kingsmeadeyesspeak.org

A nice concept. A mix of photographs, poems (text, also handwritten), video, audio (poems recited). Every child is presented as an individual and as an artist. It is an effective way for the viewer to get into the thoughts and into the worlds of these children.

Kingsmead Eyes. Simran: The synchronized swimmers diving into the pool. I was trying to catch them as they went into the water.

Kingsmead Eyes. Shakur: My Mum walking down the corridor in our flat. I like this picture because my Mum looks like a model in it.

I think the selection of the texts and photographs the children have produced is key in this project.

Reflection on *Some documentary projects* – 23rd of February 2017

***Not Our Time* by Penny Watson**
Nice body of work. What can be improved on this series? I think at times the series is too polite and too much the viewpoint of a visitor. I would like more depth. What is life like in a nursing home? The viewer looks at Nana and does not see what Nana sees. How does Nana feel? We now see pictures of an elderly lady getting up, eating, having a nice walk along the seafront and having her hair done. The viewer does not get to know her.

There is this one photo though, the one of Nana pouring herself a glass of Crème de Menthe. With this photo maybe something more or deeper is told.

If the brief is 10 images and the photographer shows 19 images, then the photographer has trouble deciding what story to tell. The series lacks focus.

The text is very instructive / educational for students of the OCA. But does it add to the work of art? Is it necessary?

Alternative ideas:
- Nana only has peripheral vision. Can this be mimicked using a partially covered lens? In this way the photographer can show us what Nana is seeing, what her world looks like.
- What about working in b&w? The style of photography when Nana was young.
- Choose an aspect of Nana's life which has to be shown. Thinking about the past, loneliness, illness/coming death, lack of privacy or being dependent on others. Focus on this aspect.

Penny Watson: Not Our Time

Behind the Scenes by Beth Aston

Very personal, shocking story, good visual coherence. I like this series very much. I think the b&w is a good choice. In colour it would possibly be too shocking, maybe even abhorrent. Now it is more an abstraction and the viewer must interpret the images in order to "see" the illness.

Questions:
- If this is about anorexia, then using yourself as a subject is telling. Anorexic patients are very involved with themselves and how they look (the cause of the disease).
- I would like to see more images or captions if there are any. Does the work show a way out of the misery? Or can the viewer also conclude that she will probably die?

A Dozen Eggs by Harry Pearce

Nice concept. Great approach with the captions and all. I would have made some other decisions concerning technique, composition, perspective and lighting. I don't like the needless tilting of horizons, now it seems like a design trick.

Feet by Omar Camilleri

Great idea for presentation. Above a pedestrian zone (where people walk, stand, on their feet). The b&w ensures visual coherence and prevents images from becoming abhorrent ☺.

The Dad Project **by Briony Campbell**

Video, text and photographs. Very personal, very moving. Would I be willing and able to do a project like this? Seems like photographing / documenting one's life instead of living it. I am grateful Campbell was able because the result is formidable.

100th Street **by Tanya Ahmed**

Nice concept. Working in b&w must be a reference to the work of Bruce Davidson. This is how I like to work: collaborative. The postcards and the writing on images is a nice idea. Maybe I would not have chosen the images in which the people are very much posing and smiling (saying cheese). I probably would have chosen images in which the subject position themselves in a more natural way, more as they are in their day-to-day activities.

Re-photographing a past project of another photographer must also produce interesting photos if one was not to make a reference to this past project. Will the work be strong enough to stand on its own? I think this work does. What makes this work interesting:

- The viewer can see how the neighbourhood has improved.
- Ahmed lives there herself. Authentic, personal view of the area.
- Collaborative approach which shows in the photographs.
- Postcards with text messages om the back / writing on images.

Practising portraiture – 26th of February 2017

Yesterday I made some portraits using a black backdrop, one main light, one light on the backdrop, 50mm lens, close to the subject. Standard portraiture, not intended as documentary or art.

Sienny: 50mm, f/6.3, 1/160s, ISO100

Sigrid & Ben: 50mm, f/8, 1/160s, ISO100

Extracurricular: Portraits Antoine Schneck style – 5th of March

Yesterday I made a selection of 15 portraits I made for this series. I also made a "Two frame video" which can be viewed here:

https://vimeo.com/206801484

"Two frame video" on Vimeo

Portraits Antoine Schneck style: 50mm, f/8, 1/160s, ISO100

Exhibition: *Gathered leaves* (Alec Soth) – 5th of March 2017
This Friday I visited the Photo Museum *FOMU* in Antwerp, Belgium. The exhibition *Gathered Leaves* is a retrospective which draws from four critical series from his oeuvre: *Sleeping by the Mississippi* (2004), *Niagara* (2006), *Broken Manual* (2010) and *Songbook* (2014).

I think Alec Soth is a book photographer. I like viewing his work in a book best. At his website http://alecsoth.com/photography/ most if not all of the photographs in the four series can be viewed.

This video shows Alec Soth talking about his exhibition(s) in Minneapolis in 2011: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spn7JJSRng4

I like *Sleeping by the Mississippi* very much. You can view the book (Soth, 2008) here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwnevYAbrpQ It is a series which combines landscapes, interiors and details with portraits. For my personal project I would like to combine landscapes, interiors, details and portraits too. So this is educational for me. My question is: how did he select and sequence the images?

- The images start in winter, then spring and end in summer.
- Every photo is on a new page on the right, captions on the left (no juxtaposition of images).
- Alternation of landscapes, interiors, details and portraits.
- Associative sequence of images. Content flows from one image to the next. For example the series ends with 3 images of beds.
- Colours flow from one image to the next.

Different sequences could very well be made. I'd like to know the rationale behind the choices of Soth.

Alec Soth: Peter's Houseboat, Winona, Minnesota 2002 (from Sleeping by the Mississippi)

Alec Soth: New Orleans, Louisiana 2002 (from Sleeping by the Mississippi)

Alec Soth: Adelyn, Ash Wednesday, New Orleans, Louisiana 2000 (from Sleeping by the Mississippi)

Extracurricular: The homecoming – 6th of March 2017

As an exercise I planned to make a grid of the homecoming of my daughter Isabelle. Self-directed brief:

- Shoot at Schiphol Airport.
- Show emotion.
- Show context.
- Produce a grid with 4-6 photographs.

I shot 229 photographs with 50mm on full frame @f/2.8. I did not like working with the 50mm. I had to stand too far away from the subject. Next time I will work with 35mm (like I normally do). I selected 15 images:

The homecoming: Contact sheet

The homecoming: Contact sheet (further edit)

I simplified the story. Now it is only about Isabelle's friends picking her up at the airport. The choice for b&w is purely aesthetical. In colour the pink suitcase would draw too much attention.

The homecoming: finished grid

The following alternative is better. There is an alternation of the faces: high-low-high and the detail shots are diagonal now. This feels better.

The homecoming: finished grid (alternative)

Photographing an event – 19th of March 2017
Yesterday I photographed the annual Rotary bridge drive. Reportage style, using an on-camera flash directed at wall or ceiling when possible. Selected 12 images from 439 photographs.

I aimed to use a variety in focal length, variety in overview, portrait, detail, participants and organisation. As a preparation I watched the Lynda.com course: *Shooting a Photo Essay: Documenting an Event* with Paul Taggart.

Lynda.com course: "Shooting a Photo Essay: Documenting an Event" with Paul Taggart.

Selected images: Annual Bridge Drive 2017
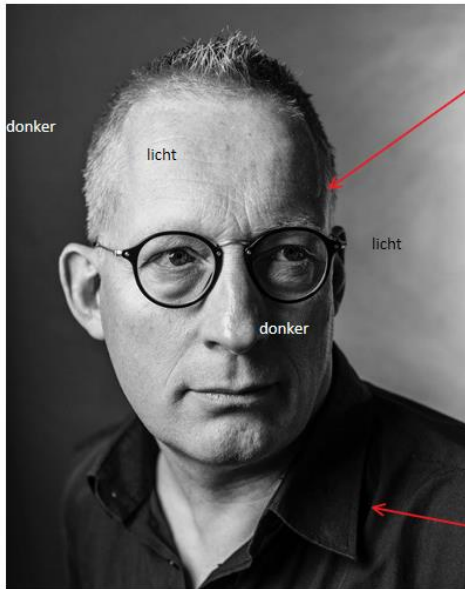
Bridge Drive 2017: 32mm, f/4, 1/60s, ISO400

Practising portraits – 27th of March 2017
Last week I visited photography student Desiree van den Boogaard who shot a portrait I like very much.

Desiree van den Boogaard: Portrait of Stef

Portret van Stef door Desiree van den Boogaard

Hier een rimlight. Heel subtiel. Zeer professioneel. Nu komt het gezicht mooi los

Persoon is gericht (kijkt naar) het licht zoals je dat op de achtergrond hebt. Licht en kijkrichting mooi op lijn, voelt logisch. Het licht voor lijkt op de achtergrond te schijnen; komt logisch over.

Rechteroog net in een beetje licht

Prettige zwart-wit conversie, oogt naturel. Zones van Ansel Adams zitten er in: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zone_System Behalve natuurlijk de twee of drie lichtste zones, want die komen in zo'n portret niet voor.

Prettige hoogte van de lens, niet extreem tegen iemand opkijken, niet extreem op iemand neerkijken. Nu heb je het gevoel in contact te zijn.

50mm, prettige vertekening: er is iets bijzonders, maar blijft subtiel, de kijker is niet zeer bewust van.

Donkere kleding bij donkere achtergrond. Nu is het gezicht wat de aandacht trekt. Dat is goed. Achtergrond had nog iets donkerder gemogen?

Kadrering mooi; hoofd iets links van midden, geeft ruimte voor kijkrichting en licht op achtergrond.

Mooie afwisseling donker-licht-donker-licht. Geeft mooie contrastwerking zoals nodig voor zwart-wit.

Door draaiing hoofd en door belichting schuin van boven, krijg je schaduwwerking onder kin. Geeft krachtige kaaklijn en eventuele onderkin valt weg. Heel mooi gedaan.

Analysis why I like this portrait so much (in Dutch)

As a practice I shot some portraits with a similar set up.

The set up (27th of March)

IMG_1228-bewerkt, rating = 3

IMG_1207-bewerkt, rating = 5

IMG_1233-bewerkt, rating = 4

IMG_1221-bewerkt, rating = 3

Portrait of Raymond: 50mm, f/6.3, 1/160s, ISO100

Reflection:
Lighting on background too subtle? No rimlight.

IMG_1266-bewerkt, rating = 3

IMG_1261-bewerkt, rating = 5
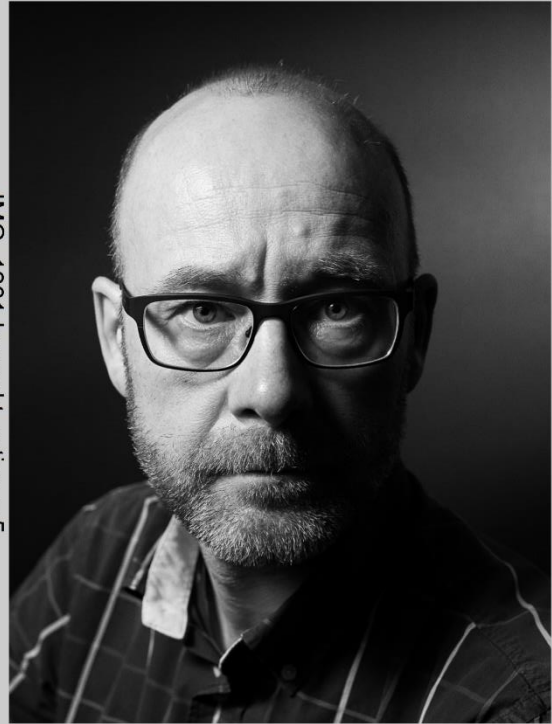
IMG_1269-2-bewerkt, rating = 4

IMG_1264-bewerkt, rating = 3
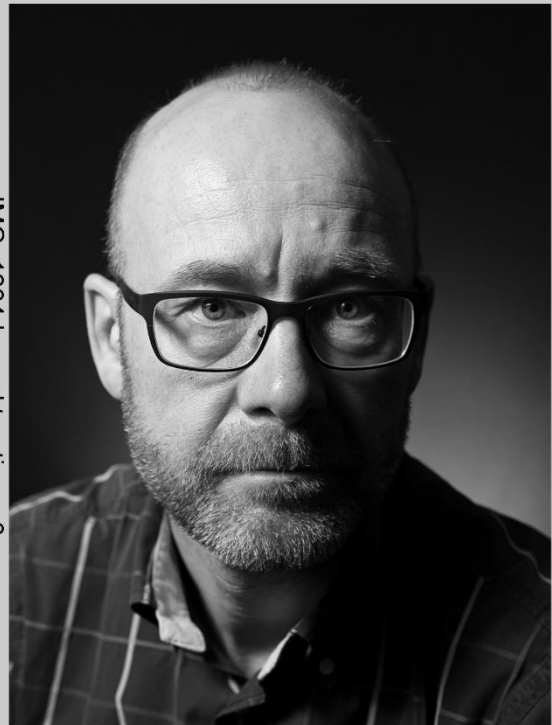
Self-portrait: 50mm, f/6.3, 1/160s, ISO100

Reflection: More light on background is better. Facial expression too harsh/severe?

28th of March: set up using the studio lights. With this set up the rim light is better controlled:

The set up (28th of March)

IMG_ 1341-bewerkt, rating = 4

IMG_ 1294-bewerkt, rating = 4
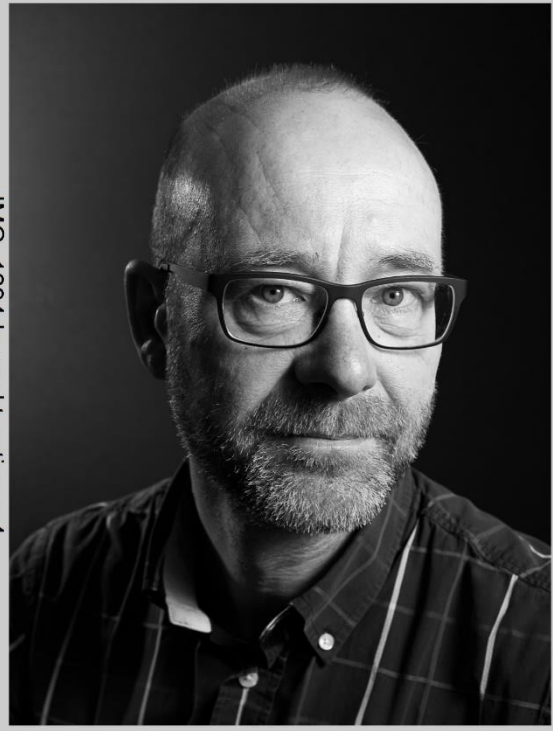
IMG_ 1394, rating = 4

IMG_ 1334-bewerkt, rating = 5

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

IMG_1485-bewerkt, rating = 4

IMG_1446, rating = 4

IMG_1489-bewerkt, rating = 5

IMG_1451, rating = 5

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

Reflection: I really like the way the 50mm (slight distortion) gives a gentle and often unexpected "twist" to the portrait.

Practising portraits – 30th of March 2017
Shot some portraits of my friend and fellow-photographer Bart de Ruigh.

Portrait of Bart: 35mm, f/8, 1/100s, ISO100, speed light @105mm

Bart boxed in: 35mm, f/2.8, 1/30s, ISO800 and 35mm, f/4, 1/30s, ISO1600

Reflection:
- Next time use a tripod, like I often do. It slows me down and gives me time to think and carefully design the image (composition).
- Do not be afraid of the shadows cast by the bare speed light. Work with them compositionally!
- Although the sensor is excellent for low light, I don't like anything over ISO200. The quality of the image is below my standard. The boxed in images were shot with available light. Not suited for large prints

Exhibition: Los Alamos – 3rd of April 2017

At the photography museum *Foam* in Amsterdam I visited the exhibition *Los Alamos*. This is the portfolio of photographs William Eggleston took on various road trips through the southern states of America between 1966 and 1974. Mundane, banal scenes (deceptively normal). The images seem easy to make, but I think if one would try it would be hard, very hard, or even impossible to get results which come close to Eggleston's. Eggleston says only to take one shot of a subject – "only take one picture of one thing". This has probably to do with Eggleston's troubles of having to choose (selecting images). In Eggleston's view all pictures and all subjects are equally important (democratic photography). So how can you choose? I saw the documentary "The Colourful Mr. Eggleston" from the BBC "Imagine Series" presented by Alan Yentob (2009) which gives some insights in his way of working:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jZ_HkaTXh8

William Eggleston: Los Alamos

The exhibition made me even more aware of the use of colour for my own photography. And it made me (again) realise that street photography is not really my thing. Not enough control over the outcome to my taste. And what is really the story these photographs tell?

Also on display was the work of Japanese photographer Daisuke Yokota (1983): *Matter* ("experiments with the material forms of the medium").

And the work of French photographer Stéphanie Solinas (1978): *Dominique Lambert*. Starting with the photographic ID of twenty persons called Dominique Lambert, the results of a personality test, a description (in words), a transformation into a police photo-fit, a portrait is made of a model who resembles the photo-fit.
www.stephaniesolinas.com/stephaniesolinas/dominique_lambert___stephanie_solinas.html

All the steps are on display except for the photographic IDs, these are turned upside down. To make the viewer wonder: Will the photographic ID resemble the portrait?

I like the concept and it resembles something I saw the other week. The work of German photographer Anneke Hymmen (based in Amsterdam): *Remodelling*.
http://annekehymmen.nl/projects/ and http://hymmen-and-hiroi.com/
Together with art director Kumi Hiroi she asked people to describe in words a fashion ad. Without seeing the ad the description is then translated (reconstructed) into an image.

Hymmen and Hiroi: Remodelling

Exhibition: A passion for TASCHEN – 8th of April 2017
Visited the exhibition in Maastricht at the "Museum aan het Vrijthof". The exhibition is oriented around the library of a TASCHEN collector. Many Art and Collector's editions, original photographs, bestsellers and objects were displayed.

What did I take away from this exhibition? I liked the examples of a book about sharks presented in a shark cage and a book about the lunar landing presented in a lunar lander. Presenting work done in a way which echoes the subject / the content.

Furthermore I liked the books about the TV series *Mad Men*. In these books video stills are presented with text (scripts). I found it a nice way to tell a story using images. Maybe I will use this as a concept someday. What makes a photograph cinematic? These photographs are. Lighting and styling has been done carefully. Landscape format 16:9 or wider. There is something casual left.

Spread of Limited Art Edition "Mad Men" (Taschen)
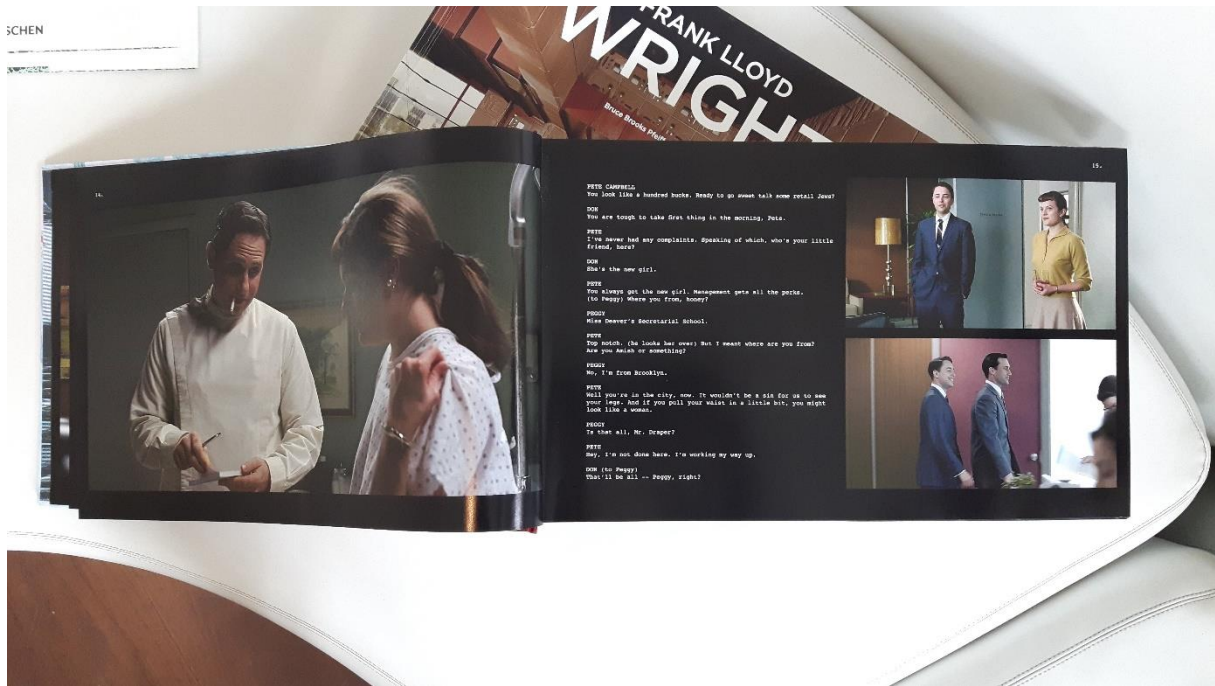
Spread of Limited Art Edition "Mad Men" (Taschen)

Reviewer Feedback Lensculture Portrait Award – 16th of April 2017

Reviewer's feedback:

Hi Maurice – thank you for sharing these images, and of course for creating them! I enjoy this work very much.

I admire your work because in each of these images you are creating a simple subject out of the complex concept. The complex concept is made up of the person you portray, the use of the photographic syntax, and the way in which we sense your style and input.

The images are un-related, not a series, however they bear some resemblance to each other. The man on the tractor is important in the frame in the same way the child under water is important. We know where to look because your choices all direct us this way. Each image you present does this for the viewer. In this way, you create your style. See?

I think the image that is most important is No. 3. The saturation of the black clothing on the person is very important and makes a reference to the telephone poles, the fence poles and the negative space (white mist, white ground). The balance you provide with contrasts is important. The stance of the person is confident, and you have created an assisted reality portrait. This image is the most interesting.

The other interesting image is No. 4 because, as you say, the context is missing. The studio lighting is classic and does exactly what you want by isolating the figure. I would ask you to consider what would happen if you allow yourself the freedom to remove the light reflections on her eyes. Is this a step too far for you? You must always ask and answer the question of why you choose the image to appear the way it does because you will always be judged by what we see. Is this a document? Is it representative? Is it objective? No matter the answer, we hold the photographer to account. The constructed reality portrait always implies that you made all the decisions based on your concept of the photograph.

A piece of advice about directing the pose/posture of the subject – pay attention to the effect of the eyes! In No. 5, the man's eyes are cutting to the picture plane and the right eye seems severe. This "cut" of the eye creates tension and anxiety. The image is sharpened in the frame, but the contrasts are pleasing.

Keep up the good work. I encourage you to make more photos such as No. 3. Switch to film and medium format cameras, which will add a layer of subjectivity to the portraits and help you marry your intention to the outcome of the photograph. Medium format photography requires you to take a slower approach.

Additional Recommendations

Recommended Books & Photographers

- The Artist Statement: How and Why to Write Yours by Jennifer Schwartz (http://www.crusadeforart.org/publications-1/the-artist-statement-how-and-why-to-write-yours)

- How to write an Artist's Statement (http://www.artbusiness.com/artstate.html)

- Sally Mann (http://sallymann.com/)

- Horst P. Horst (http://www.horstphorst.com/works.php)

- The Nature of Photographs, Stephen Shore

Portfolio Reviews & Festivals

- FotoFest (USA)

- PhotoNOLA (USA)

Recommendations for Gaining Exposure

- Association of International Photography Art Dealers

Reflection on review:

Portrait of Mirthe (with and without reflections): 50mm, f/8, 1/160s, ISO100

Removing the light reflections produces an interesting constructed photograph. The black of the pupils makes reference to the black surrounding the head. It is less conventional and even more estranging. When viewing a series of portraits like these I associate it with taxonomy. Idea: pinning a series of similar portraits in print on wall using pins (like the ones used for insects).

Interesting remark about switching to medium format and film. Slowing down is what I want to achieve by using a tripod. Why working with film would add a layer of subjectivity I don't understand, but film will indeed be less "clean" and "perfect" than digital. Medium format would certainly add something to a portrait like Mirthe's: bigger print showing more detail. Digital medium format cameras are getting more and more affordable. I could rent one and try one day.

More reflection in my learning log entry: "Reflection on tutor report and rework – 20th of June 2017".

Practising portraits – 17th of April 2017

Studio portraits of my mother. Classical lighting (studio light with shoot through umbrella from the left, two speed lights on the background). Gradient grey to black produces less contrast in the bottom of the photograph (grey background versus blouse), max contrast around the head (hair versus black background). My mother wants smiling photographs and I don't.

Lida: 50mm, f/7.1, 1/125s, ISO100

Planning the personal project – 5th of March 2017

In my learning log for part 4 the brief can be read. This is the shooting list:

The series consists of fifteen b&w photographs which are quiet, non-sensational and do not show people actually drinking alcohol. Aim for images like:

- Group portrait of participants of a wine course.
- Portrait of the owner of an off-licensed store.
- Landscape photograph of a beer brewery, vineyards or the growth of hops.
- City scene showing advertisements for alcohol.
- A soccer stadium which carries the name of a beer brand (advertising links alcohol to being attractive, sportive and even to driving a racing car).
- The use of alcohol in rituals in the Christian church (the blood of Christ).
- Portrait of an alcoholic in rehab.
- Portrait of the owner of a bar or a restaurant.
- Close up of bottles of alcoholic beverages showing there is no legislation for labelling of alcoholic beverages as exists for other foodstuffs.
- Portrait of a young person. In captions telling about his/her drinking behaviour.
- Portrait of an older person. In captions telling about his/her drinking behaviour.
- Law enforcement officers taking alcohol tests.
- Alcohol related injuries in the emergency room of a hospital.
- Alcohol related car accident (aftermath photograph).
- Police officers working in a street with many bars to prevent violence at night.
- Bottle bank in residential area.
- Sports canteen in which alcohol is for sale.
- Alcohol for sale at a gas station.

Execution of the personal project – 5th of March 2017

Last Friday I visited Belgium. I started at "Bierparadijs" (Beer Paradise) a shop / wholesaler which sells over 1.000 different kinds of beer. Later that day I visited the city brewery in Antwerp.

Contact sheet "Bierparadijs" (first 4 images) and city brewery "De Koninck", Antwerp, Belgium

Reflection:

- Shooting for b&w requires more attention to tone and composition. Lines and forms are important, as is differences in tone (contrasts). In this respect only the 5th image is satisfactory.
- The images should show the intertwining of alcohol and the landscape, economy, history, etc. Only the fifth image does that. On the building the text says: "…since 1833".
- I should have made contact with the people visiting the store. Portraits of people loading their cars with beer would have been nice. Photographs inside the store would have been nice too. This is the next step in the project.

7th of March
Heineken brewery Den Bosch.

Reflection: sometimes I just hate working in b&w. Don't think I can use these photographs except maybe the fourth one. This one shows how intertwined alcohol is with our cityscapes.

Heineken brewery Den Bosch and Winehouse Den Bosch (contact sheet)

15th of March
The drinking shack of Djorden.
This shack was built by Djorden and his father in the backyard of their home. It is used by Djorden and his friends to drink, talk and listen to music. Before going out Djorden and his friends start drinking here (Dutch: "indrinken").

The shack was partly in sunlight. This was a difficult situation. I used flash with umbrella inside the shack (speed light @ full power was just enough). The aim of the flash was to create "a world within a world". Now the viewer can see both the shack, the backyard and the inside of the shack.

Reflection: a series of people in their drinking shacks (in colour) would also be a nice idea. The title of such a series would be: *Drinking Places* (Dutch: "Drinkplaatsen"). Maybe I must find 15 drinking places and make this series instead.

Djorden in his drinking shack: 35mm, f/8, 1/160s, ISO100 (contact sheet)

Djorden in his drinking shack: 35mm, f/8, 1/160s, ISO100

25th of March
The drinking shed of Laurens (with Demi).
The parents of Laurens rather have him and his friends drinking in the garden shed than somewhere outside.

Reflection:
- Had a tough time with the reflection of the flash on the back wall. Flash on left side did not work. Maybe should have shot diagonally (not frontal) from the right.
- Second image: should have let her face the light more, instead of face the camera.
- In postproduction I could reduce this reflection a little bit.
- Can this be a series? Alternation with detail shots of what's on the tables? Maybe better to make a series of 15 sheds in this style.

Demi (and Laurens) in the drinking shed of Laurens: 35mm, f/8, 1/160s, ISO100

Demi with Laurens in the shed of his parents: 35mm, f/8, 1/160s, ISO100

22nd of April
The party tent of Davy (with Kevin).

Davy with Kevin in the party tent: 35mm, f/8, 1/30s, ISO200

Davy with Kevin in the party tent: 35mm, f/8, 1/30s, ISO200

Choosing for the second response to the brief –20th of April 2017

I have been working on two responses to the brief. I have experienced some difficulties in getting access to people and places for the project on alcohol. The alcohol project is maybe too ambitious. It would take me maybe over one year to complete it. The idea of the series *Drinking places* maybe is easier to complete within a feasible timeframe. I am afraid however that this series of fifteen photographs of the same subject in the same visual style will be boring.

So I asked fellow-students during hangouts. Their reactions:
- They liked the second response. This made me feel more confident.
- The alcohol project is more academic, colder, outsider's view.
- The second response is more personal (which they prefer).

After this hangout I decided to finish the second response and to submit the second response for assignment 5.

But I still want to continue photographing the *Drinking places*….

Second response to the brief – 9th of March 2017

You cannot not communicate

My father lives in a nursing home (because of dementia). My mother visits him every day. He cannot communicate anymore, so visits do not last very long, due to the simple fact that they cannot talk about anything. Instead she takes him to the park for a short walk every day.

Sometimes I visit my father. He still recognizes me. But since we cannot communicate, I normally visit him together with my mother and I end up talking most of the time to my mother. One day I handed my father a 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.

Still I would like to think communication is still possible. That's why I will visit him a whole day long and photograph. Normally I cannot stay longer than maybe one hour, because there is nothing to talk about and he will not stay in chair for longer than 5-10 minutes and will walk away. By photographing I will be able to stay longer, because then I have something to do. The aim is to figure out what story he tells me through his actions and through his looking at objects or people. I will make photographs and the resulting series of photographs is the story he tells.

Communication is the act of conveying intended meanings from one entity or group to another through the use of mutually understood signs and semiotic rules (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication).

The main steps inherent to all communication are:
1. The forming of communicative motivation or reason.
2. Message composition (further internal or technical articulation on what exactly to express).
3. Message encoding (for example, into digital data, written text, speech, pictures, gestures and so on).
4. Transmission of the encoded message as a sequence of signals using a specific channel or medium.

5. Noise sources such as natural forces and in some cases human activity (both intentional and accidental) begin influencing the quality of signals propagating from the sender to one or more receivers.
6. Reception of signals and reassembling of the encoded message from a sequence of received signals.
7. Decoding of the reassembled encoded message.
8. Interpretation and making sense of the presumed original message.

Nonverbal communication demonstrates one of Paul Watzlawick's laws: you cannot not communicate (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Watzlawick). This law strengthens me to find messages of my father.

The photographs must be focused on signals with an encoded message. The viewer of the series may interpret and make meaning of the presumed original message.

The aim is to produce 15 photographs in colour.
Shooting list:
• A close-up portrait of my father 'Antoine Schneck style' (no context, just the face).
• What or who he looks at.
• What he does.
• What seems important to him.
• Traces of his lost personality or reflections of his current personality.

Use 50mm at f/2. Not everything will be in focus (a lot of blur), possibly like he experiences the world around him. The series will show fragments and slices of his world possibly without coherence (also like I assume he experiences the world around him). Shooting at 50mm will prevent having much context in the frame (because my father lacks context or an overview too).

Work of other photographers:
https://www.lensculture.com/search/projects?fallback=not-found&q=alzheimer
Mostly from the viewpoint of the observer. Juxtapositions with photographs of the past. Often b&w. Some I like very much:
https://www.lensculture.com/search/projects?fallback=not-found&q=alzheimer&modal=project-85377-mother-and-father
https://www.lensculture.com/search/projects?fallback=not-found&q=alzheimer&modal=project-360917-inside-the-blue-eyes

Many projects are about feeling sorry for the patient. This is not what I want to do. No abhorrent photographs, no observer's view, no reducing the subject to a patient.
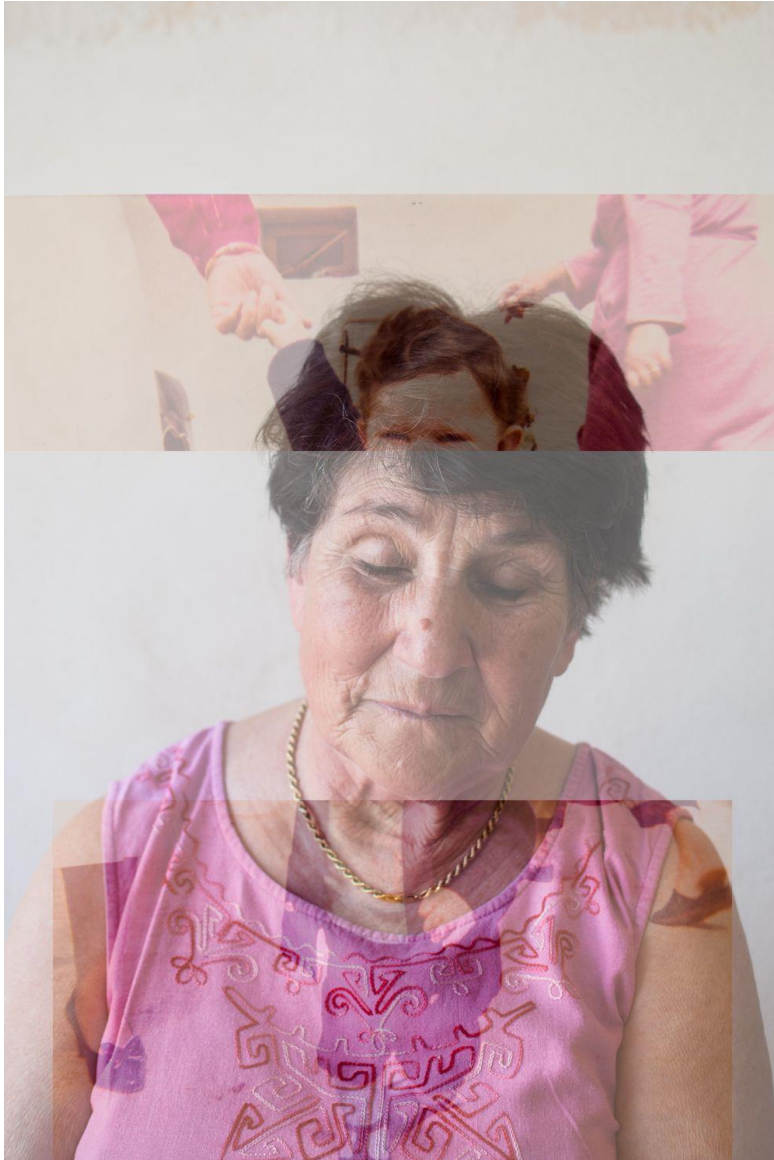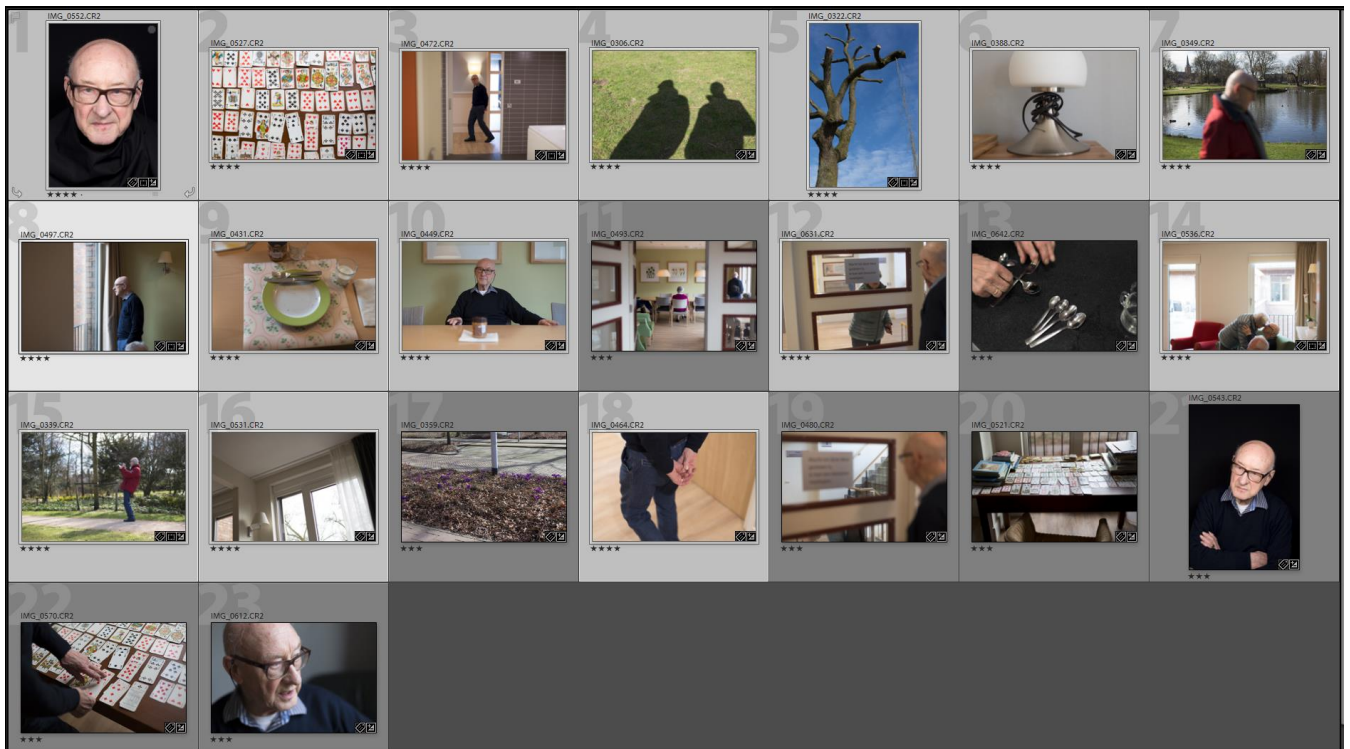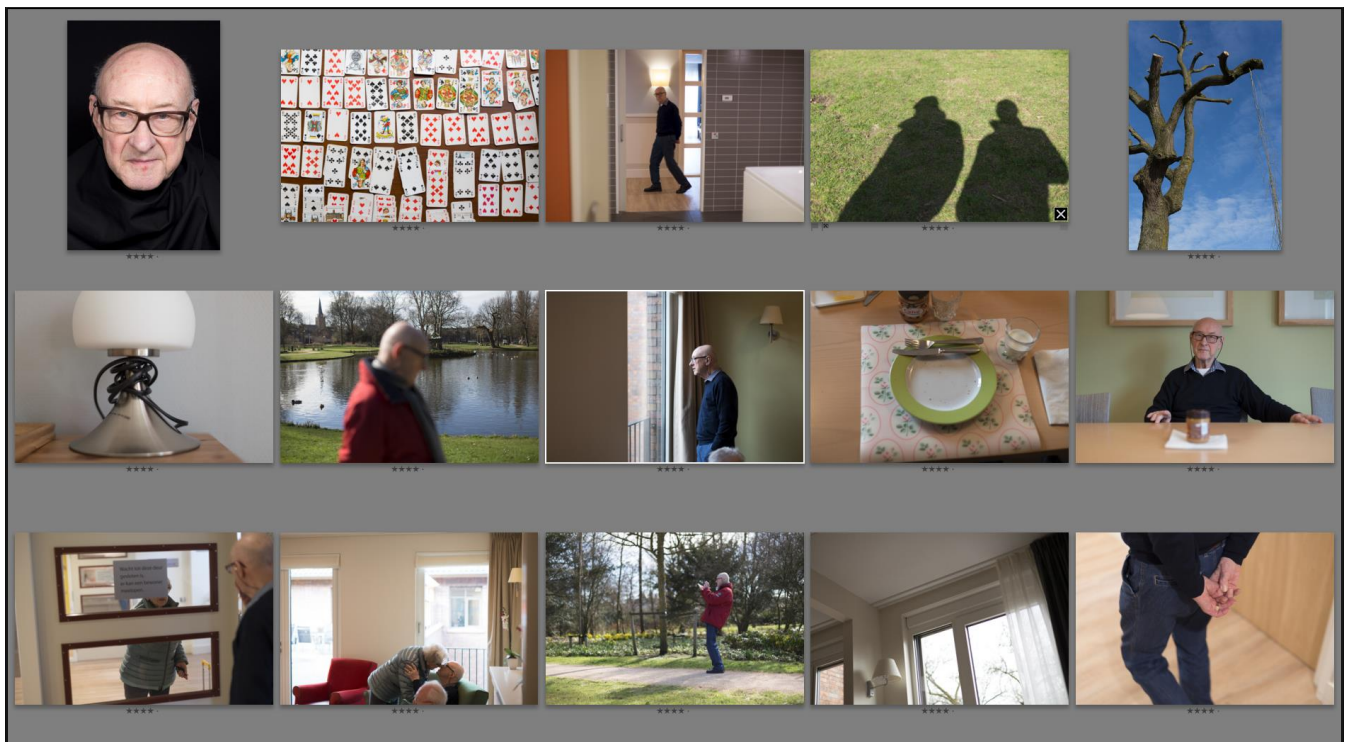
Fabrizio Bilello: Inside the Blue Eyes

More reflection in my learning log entry: "Reflection on tutor report and rework – 20th of June 2017".

12th of March
Last Friday I visited my father and spent the day with him. I shot 371 photographs. Selected 23. Selected and sequenced 15:

You cannot not communicate: Contact sheet

You cannot not communicate: Selection and sequence (1)

15th of March.
Form of presentation. I considered prints (on the wall), slideshow (video), book. I do not prefer prints on the wall, because then the viewer can choose the order in which to view the photographs. I would like the viewer to experience the series somewhat like my father experiences the world. No short term memory. You forget what you have seen. Everything passes quickly. Much of what you see is confusing and incomprehensible. So maybe a video. Or a book?

Text to go with the series in final presentation:

You cannot not communicate
First axiom of communication by Paul Watzlawick (1921 – 2007, Austrian-American communications theorist, family therapist, psychologist and philosopher)

My father lives in a nursing home. He is suffering from dementia and the effects of multiple infarcts. He has almost completely lost the ability to speak or to understand language. Communication with my father seems impossible. Due to the simple fact that we cannot talk about anything, visits do not last very long. Usually we go for a short walk in the park.

One day I handed my father a 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. So I tried a different approach and photographed him. This series of photographs depict what my father is still able to communicate. Some traces of his lost personality and reflections of his current personality.

I will print 24 images and ask my peers for advice on selecting and sequencing the series.

20th of March
Alternative selection and sequence (added two still-lives and took out the view on the window and the portrait sitting at the table). I am still thinking which images depict better what my father communicates. I have to ask others (made two appointments, one this week, one the week after).

You cannot not communicate: Selection and sequence (2)

Asked fellow-student Bryn Davies for his thoughts. He provided me with the following example of a project on dementia:

Bryn:
"Last year I was in a group exhibition with a woman called Kinga Kocimska who did a conceptual series on Dementia. I have put the link below for you to get some ideas.
http://kingakocimska.com/?bw_gallery=dementia "

Kinga Kocimska: Dementia

More reflection in my learning log entry: "Reflection on tutor report and rework – 20th of June 2017".

25th of March
Visited photography student Desiree van den Boogaard. Talked about selecting and sequencing. This series. The photographs below show the way she approaches selecting and sequencing. About sequencing: her vision was to start with an establishing shot showing the institutional situation. Then showing things that characterise my father and end with a portrait. This is the opposite of my approach so far (which started with the portrait as an opening shot and continued with an establishing shot of the playing cards).

Grouping into similar images
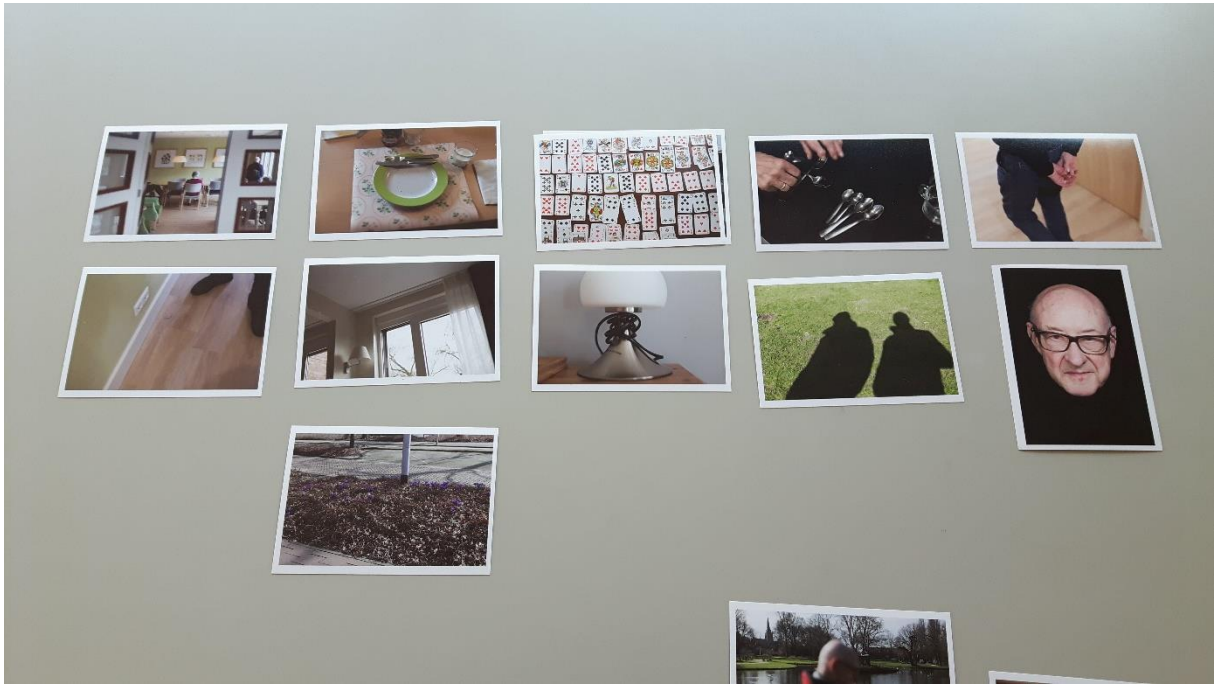
Selection and sequence (11 images)

Selection and sequencing 13 images in pairs for use in a book.

Reflection:

- What is the story? My father or me and my father? Is it about communication or about me wanting to know/understand my father. This is the trouble of choosing family as a subject. Motivation / theme / concept get blurred.
- Focus: the story = me wanting to understand my father's personality, his feelings, his world, his day-to-day experiences. For this communication is necessary. Communication from my father to me.
- Some photographs are maybe too much from the viewpoint of the observer. I should select only images which tell something about my father.
- But we still need the portraits to show the viewer who we are dealing with. These portraits are inevitably from the viewpoint of the observer. The series cannot consist of still-lives only.
- There are many storylines in the 24 images: my father, outside in the park, inside in the nursing home, my mother visiting. In a book you can show more storylines than in a grid. But still a choice should be made. It should have focus, be simple and straightforward.
- Idea: the portrait(s) in b&w so the viewer distinguishes them from the other images.
- Idea: produce a slide show of images and combine that with a short video (portrait of my father "talking").
- There are two images portrait format and the rest is landscape. Re-shoot the portrait format images?
- I have some doubts: are the images strong enough? Isn't this the same crap every art school student produces in case of lack of a good subject/theme, because of laziness, because of lack of photographic ability?
- When editing you need to know if it is for a book, for a grid, for a slideshow, etc. This makes a big difference.
- I have the feeling for this project 8 images can be enough to tell the story.

27th of March

I decided for a book and not for a video. The book determines the sequence in which the images are viewed, like a video does. But the book makes it possible for the viewer to view the images at the viewer's own pace and to revisit some of the images. Plus I am worried that a video will make the viewer feel sorry for my father and will prevent the viewer from looking at my father beyond the patient he is.

Edit for a book. Establishing image (first image) on right page (my father is on the inside of a closed door). Then 7 pairs of images on left and right page. Two storylines: First inside the institution, portraits paired with what my father is communicating. Last four images is about me and my father and some reference about what the situation is and about the future.

The pairs of images are chosen in a way they echo each other (colour, shapes, lines). First pair are frontal shots; second pair: green and beige; third pair: black and lines match; fourth pair: grey, light; fifth pair: green, light has the same direction; sixth pair: shapes of my father silhouettes match, so the viewer knows the left shadow is my father's; seventh pair: shapes of my father's fingers echo the shapes of the branches of the tree.

The tree is the ending shot. There is only one branch left (all other possibilities of communication are cut off) and it grows in an unexpected direction.

Edit for a book

30th of March
Visited photography student Bart de Ruigh. Talked about selecting and sequencing. We considered the first edit boring. Next we tried to pair images which together make it more exciting.

First edit with Bart (for a book)
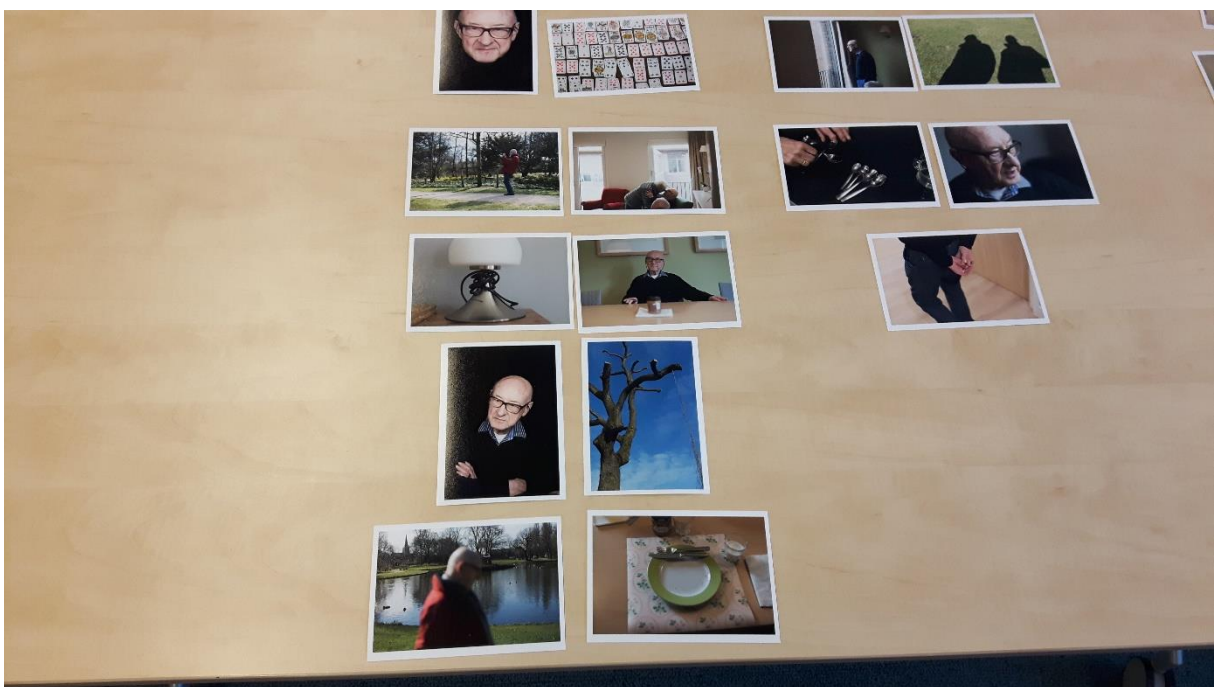
Second edit with Bart (for a book)

19th of April
Making the final edit for a book. Because of portrait and landscape orientation I chose for a 21x21cm square format. Process of making a design:

Step 1: choosing pairs of images

These are 9 pairs of images, we must lose 2 pairs. And we must lose photographs in the "pairs" consisting of three photographs.

Choices made:
- I deselected the images with my mother. This is an extra storyline. May confuse the viewer. I want to keep it simple.

- Lose this one . Because my father is looking straight at the viewer. I only want

  the first image to be looking straight at the viewer.

- Thought about using as an ending shot. I like that, but it introduces a female figure prominently. This is difficult for the viewer to understand. In the end I decided to use

  as an ending shot. It is a repetition of the card photograph. But it makes the viewer understand that my father is laying this card game. I do this to make it easier for the viewer to understand the series. And it focusses the story on my father.
- I do not want to choose photographs which show too much the institution (nursing home). The text will make this clear, the photographs should show what my father is communicating, his personality.
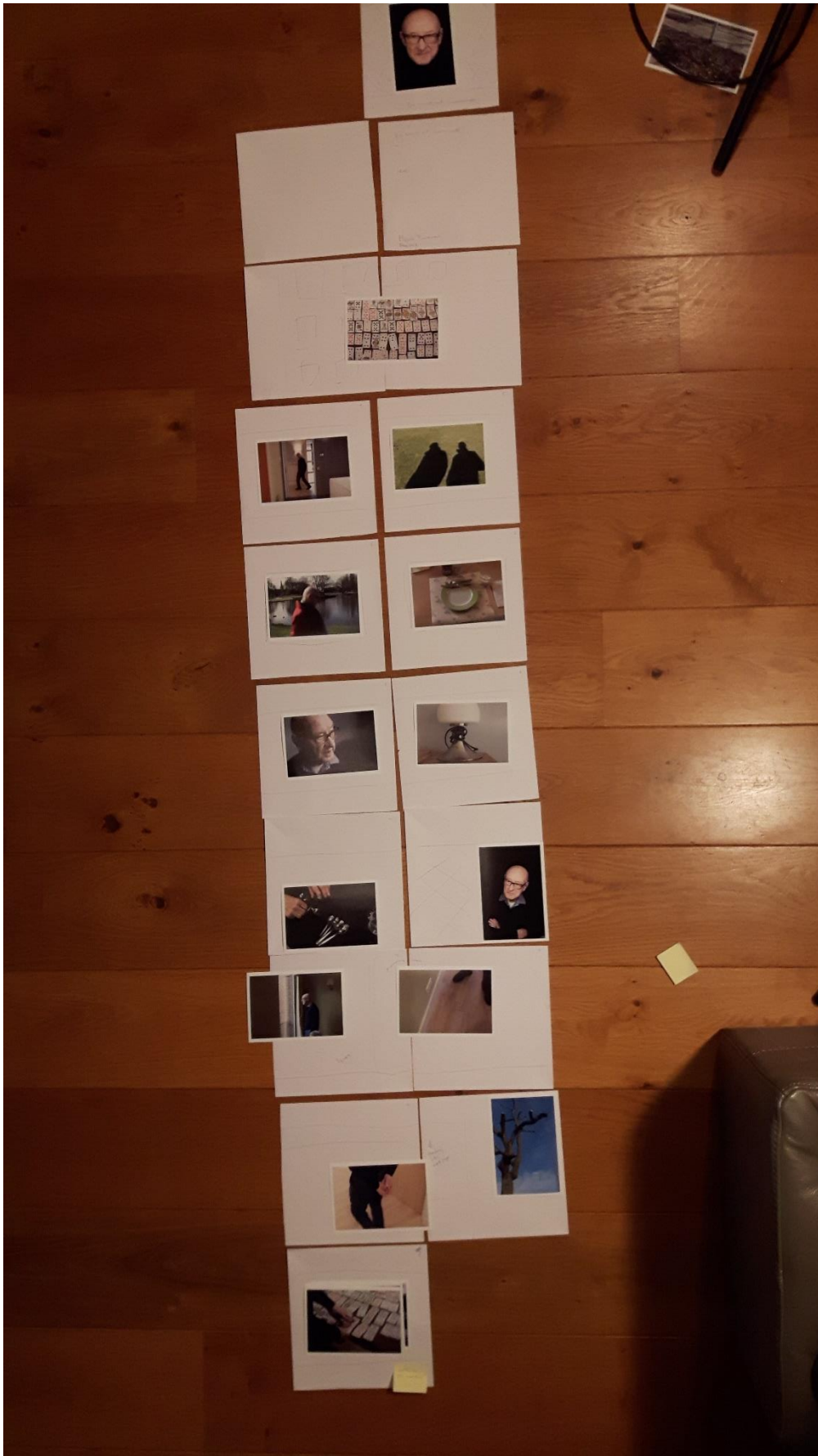
Step 2: Sketch of the design

The book should be a spiral with transparent covers. The cover of the book = the first photograph = the opening shot. Then, after the text, the second frontal shot: establishing shot of the card game. The establishing shot is "repeated" in the ending shot also of the card game (back of book). After the establishing shot I introduce myself, the photographer as the person my father is communicating with, in the first pair. Then the next 5 pairs of images telling the story. When I look back on my edit of 27th of March I see that I often choose the same pairs. This final edit feels good.

Remarks:
- Card game on two page spread, white band on left.
- Every spread has one or two white bands above and/or beneath the photographs. Right and left bleed to the edge of the page.
- Second pair (circle of pond = circle of plate = white borders around the images).
- Black pair: at the bottom of the page, right page fill with black.
- Feet pair: bleed right image into left page.
- Last pair: bleed left image into right page (because right = portrait orientation).
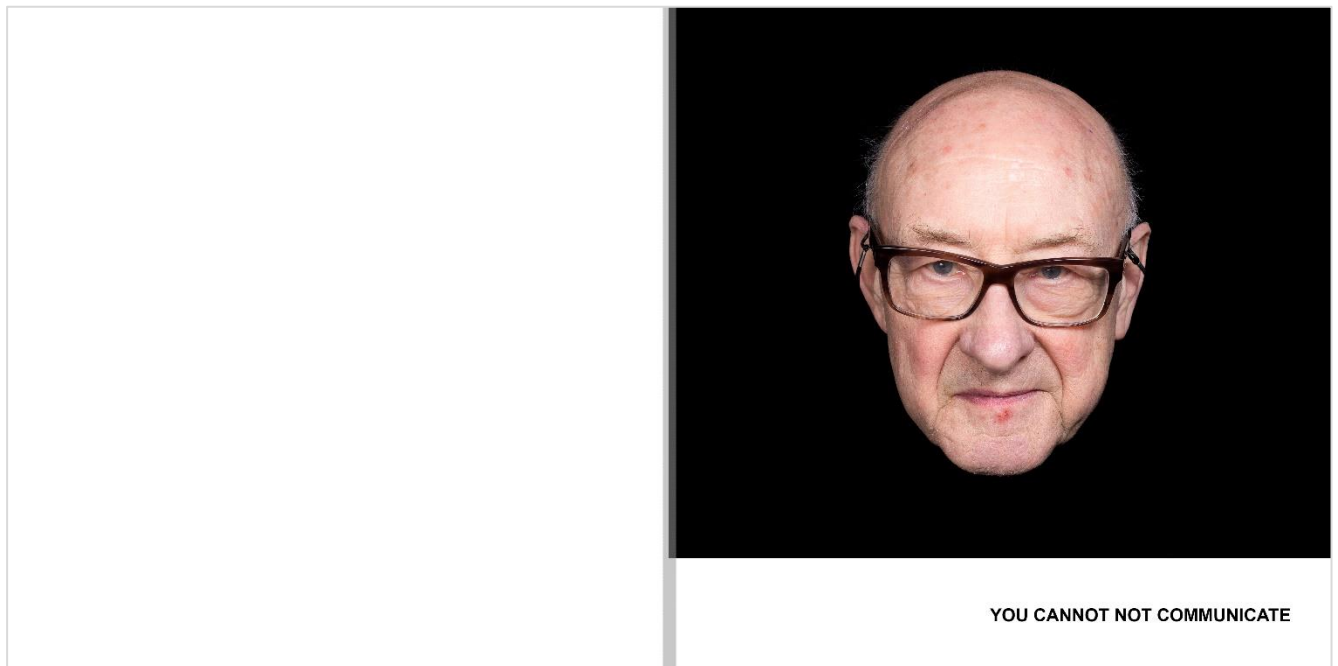
Final text:

You cannot not communicate
First axiom of communication by Paul Watzlawick (1921 – 2007, Austrian-American communications theorist, family therapist, psychologist and philosopher)

My father lives in a nursing home. He is suffering from dementia and the effects of multiple infarcts. He has almost completely lost the ability to speak or to understand language. Communication with my father seems impossible. Due to the simple fact that we cannot talk about anything, visits do not last very long. Usually we go for a short walk in the park.

One day I handed my father a 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. Strengthened after reading the first axiom of communication by Paul Watzlawick I tried a different approach. I photographed him. This series of photographs depict what my father is still able to communicate. Some traces of his lost personality and reflections of his current personality.

Design of the spreads (27th of April):

Cover

YOU CANNOT NOT COMMUNICATE

First axiom of communication by Paul Watzlawick
(1921 – 2007, Austrian-American communications theorist, family therapist,
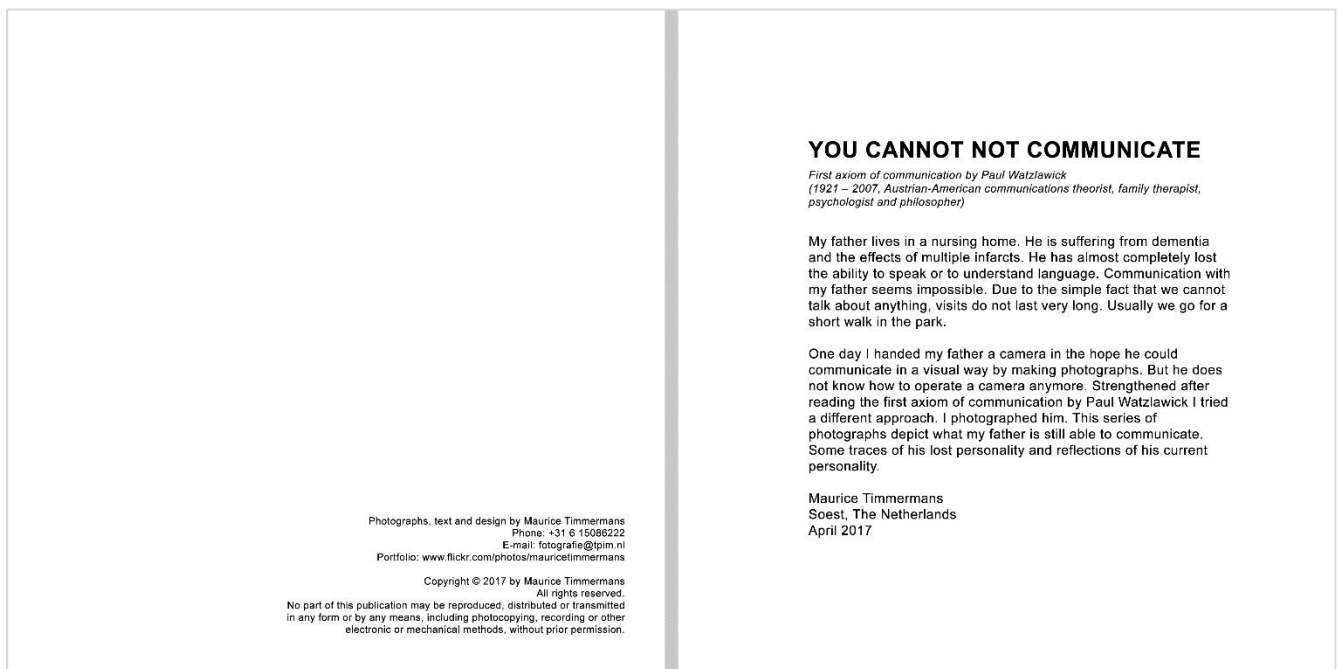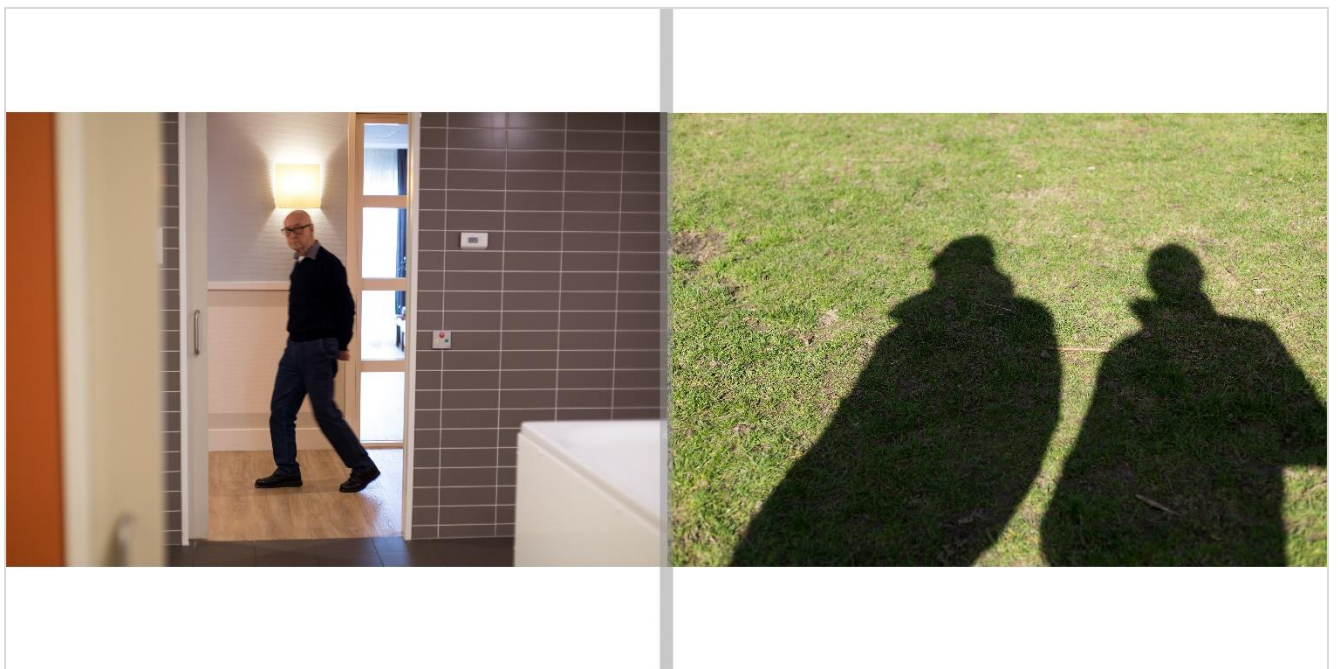*psychologist and philosopher)*

My father lives in a nursing home. He is suffering from dementia and the effects of multiple infarcts. He has almost completely lost the ability to speak or to understand language. Communication with my father seems impossible. Due to the simple fact that we cannot talk about anything, visits do not last very long. Usually we go for a short walk in the park.

One day I handed my father a 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. Strengthened after reading the first axiom of communication by Paul Watzlawick I tried a different approach. I photographed him. This series of photographs depict what my father is still able to communicate. Some traces of his lost personality and reflections of his current personality.

Maurice Timmermans
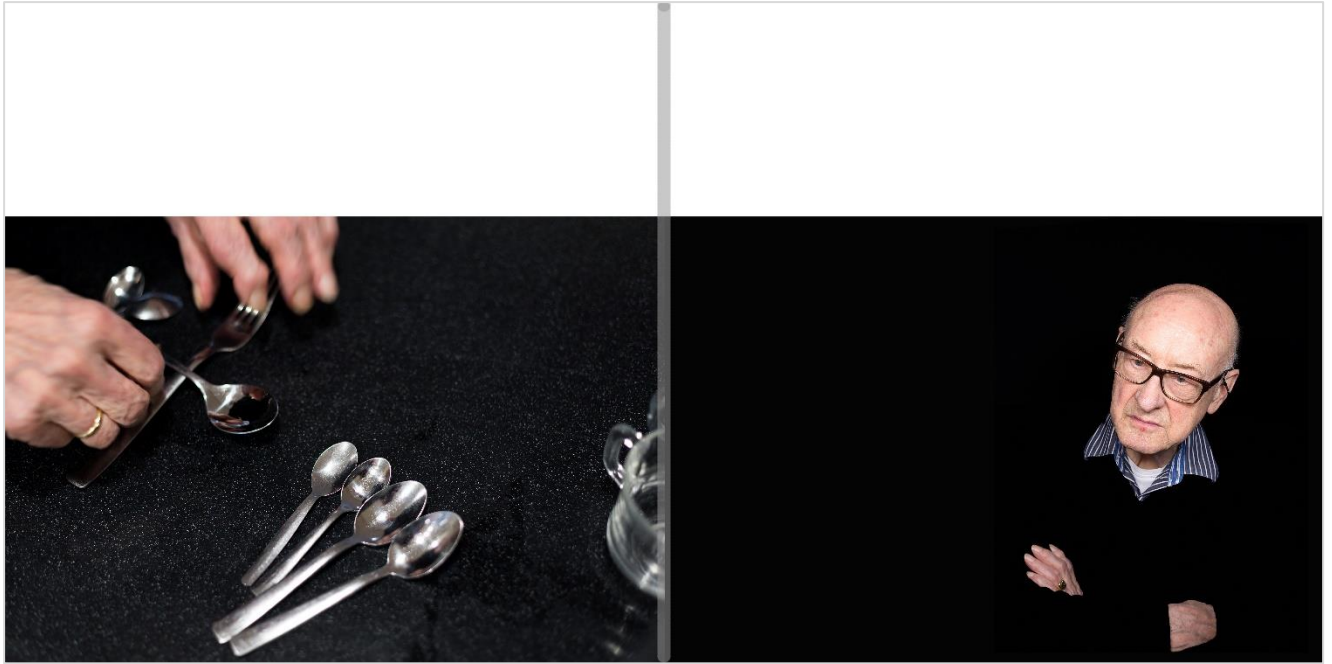Soest, The Netherlands
April 2017

Pages 2-3

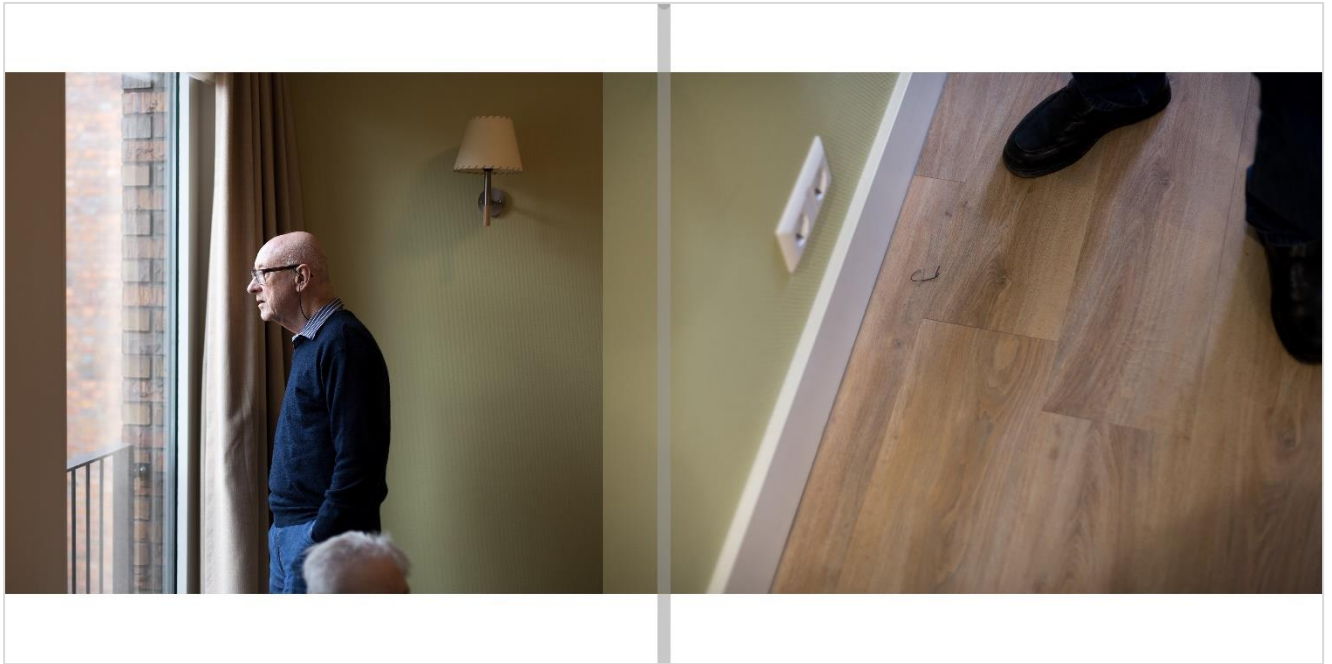*Pages 4-5*
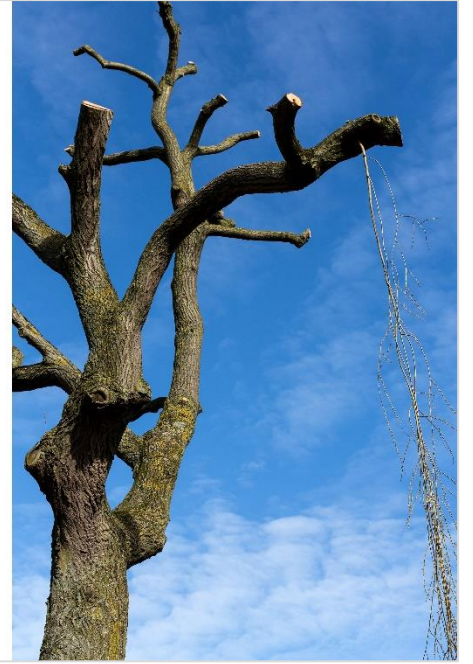

Pages 6-7

Pages 8-9

Pages 10-11

Pages 12-13

Pages 14-15

Pages 16-17
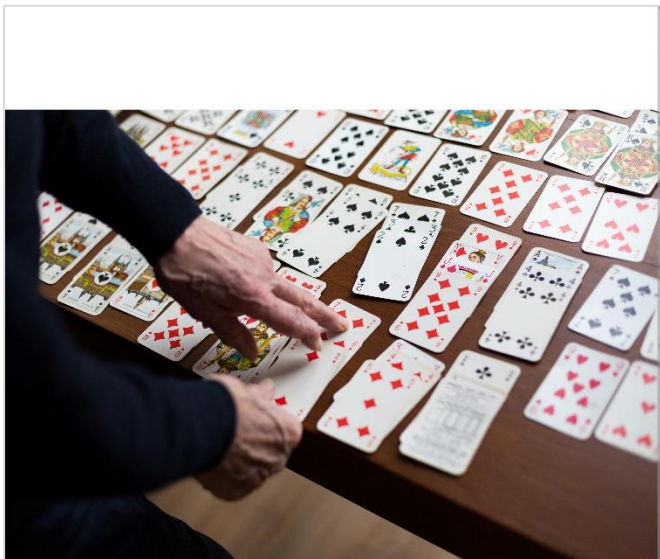
Back

Considered alternatives for pages 16-17

I decided for the alternative previously shown (no changes).

Considered alternatives for pages 12-13

I like the top one best. Better proportion of my father's head relative to what is in the other photograph. I will change this in the final version.

Demo of final version:
https://www.fotofabriek.nl/preview/?id=5F8ABAC049549B9EAEB087BCA9B0FD8A

(white pages will be torn out)

Reflection on tutor report and rework – 20ᵗʰ of June 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.

- Thanks for the compliments about the work in "overall comments".
- The brief for assignment 5 requires a text of around 300 words. My text consists of 161 words. It is meant to be minimal in order to leave enough room for interpretation by the viewer. I could add some text explaining to the viewer dementia as a disease. But after thinking more about this: is it necessary for the viewer to have this explanation? Most people know what dementia or Alzheimer is. There are many varieties. I would have to explain which variety is applicable to my father's condition. And when doing so, I am reducing my father to a patient even more. This is something I do not want to do.

  Does the viewer need to know more about dementia to understand what the series is about (to anchor the images)? I don't think so. I will leave the text as is and by doing so I will defy the brief. I strongly believe the result will not be better if I add more words.

  I fully agree with what Alan Bamberger writes about what an artist statement should be like (source: www.artbusiness.com/artstate.html):
  - Write the artist statement in simple understandable language which anyone can understand. Be specific, not vague.
  - Keep it brief, people have very short attention spans. Focus on basic information like: why you make your art, what inspires or drives you to make it, why people should care, what is signifies or represents, what it communicates, what's unique or special about how you make it, and what is means to you.
  - Your artist statement should hook and invite further inquiry, so give too little and not too much.
  - Personalize your artist statement, write in the first person.
  - Your statement begins the narrative, your viewers take it from there. Do not pressure the viewer or try to dictate the outcome. Give readers the option to agree or disagree with you.
  - Avoid comparative or evaluative comments that have been made about your art by third parties such as gallery owners, critics, collectors, or curators. These testimonials belong in your resume.
  - Briefly explain the connection between what your art expresses and the medium you're expressing it in.
  - Avoid obscure references. If you have to make such a reference, explain it fast, or say it in your own words.
  - Tell the story about what led up to your art only if it's short (no more than two or three sentences), compelling, and really really relevant. People are generally not interested in progressions of antecedent events.
  - Avoid comparing yourself to other artists. You can write about artists which influence you, but do not invite readers to compare you with the greatest artists who ever lived (we all know who's going to win those battles).
  - Avoid instructing people on how to see, feel, behave, respond, or otherwise relate to your art. Nobody likes being told what to do. Instead write about what the art makes you feel or about which feelings you express with your art.
  - Before you go public with your statement get feedback from peers, friends or strangers.

  Other sources which were more or less relevant to me:
  https://www.gyst-ink.com/artist-statement-guidelines/
  http://www.wikihow.com/Write-an-Artist-Statement
  https://www.theartleague.org/blog/2015/08/24/artist-statements-we-love/

https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2013/apr/15/writing-artist-statement-tips-language
https://www.format.com/magazine/resources/art/how-to-write-artist-statement
http://artspartner.org/files/all/artists_statement_bio_info.pdf (this one is very helpful)

- The choice for a spiral bound book was at first a practical one. With limited budget one can get very acceptable quality from fotofabriek.nl (similar to Bob Books in the UK). The minimum number of pages is 24. With only 15 images I have less pages. The solution is to order a spiral bound book and tear out the white pages. Something one cannot do with a bound book.

  One of my peers (OCA student Jonathan Hall) gave me feedback on the idea of a spiral bound book: the spiral stitches together (keeps together) images or parts of images and thus produces spreads with their own meaning. The spiral prevents the spreads (and thus the meaning) from falling apart. Is it like the dementia-patient does? Stitching together parts or separate things to create meaning (good or false)?
  This feedback strengthened me to go forward with the spiral bound book idea.

  The photobooks at the fotofabriek.nl come in three paper varieties of paper: standard, satin and UV gloss. I have ordered before from fotofabriek.nl (also for assignment 3) and UV gloss gives best contrast, colour and details in the blacks. I feel that the work I have produced will best be printed on UV gloss.
  I talked about paper choice with fellow student Bryn Davies who is very much into printing and paper choices. He recommended standard (not matt) photo paper too for this project.

  I have made a book dummy which I printed on Epson Lustre paper (accurate colour, contrast and details in the blacks). This felt like a natural choice for me. I cannot see how the work would benefit from matt paper or any kind of exotic fine art paper which would distract the viewer from the content (the images). I do not like it if the medium distracts the viewer from the content.

  Let's do a thought experiment: how would I design the book if I had unlimited budget? Then I guess I would design a big format ring binder which could be opened by the reader. The reader may ask himself: are the pages still complete and in the right order? Which is somewhat like a dementia patient might ask himself in moments of clarity.
  I envision the ring binder having a black velvet cover with a square hologram embossed. The hologram is the cover image. I wonder what a 3D image would look like instead of the 2D image I now have of the head of my father.
  I envision the images pages printed on photographic lustre paper and text pages printed on a different kind of paper, thinner, matt and white.
  I estimate there would not be a market for such an expensive book. Furthermore a book like that would need much more images and much more pages than the project has now.

  Conclusion: after re-thinking the book design I am still confident that I made the right decisions before submitting the assignment. I will order the book as planned from fotofabriek.nl and will submit the book for assessment.

- Additional analysis of examples of work which deals with Alzheimer's and dementia.

Fabrizio Bilello: Inside the Blue Eyes

I find the series of Fabrizio (www.fabriziobilello.com/portfolio/inside-the-blue-eyes/) a successful example of work about Alzheimer's. De photographs are foggy and fragmented (composite of photographs of "now" and of the past; family album). The viewer tries to make sense of the confusing image in (possibly) the same way a dementia patient does of his situation. The photographs are meant to depict what the subject might be thinking or feeling. I interpret the images as if the subject is "living in the past".

I was not familiar with the work of Peter Granser (Germany, 1971): *Alzheimer* (http://granser.de/alzheimer.html). Maybe that is a good thing because I might be discouraged executing a similar project. But then again everything has always been done before, which does not have to be a problem because similar projects turn out to be different (style, the story told). Granser alternates headshots, environmental portraits and still-lives of several people.
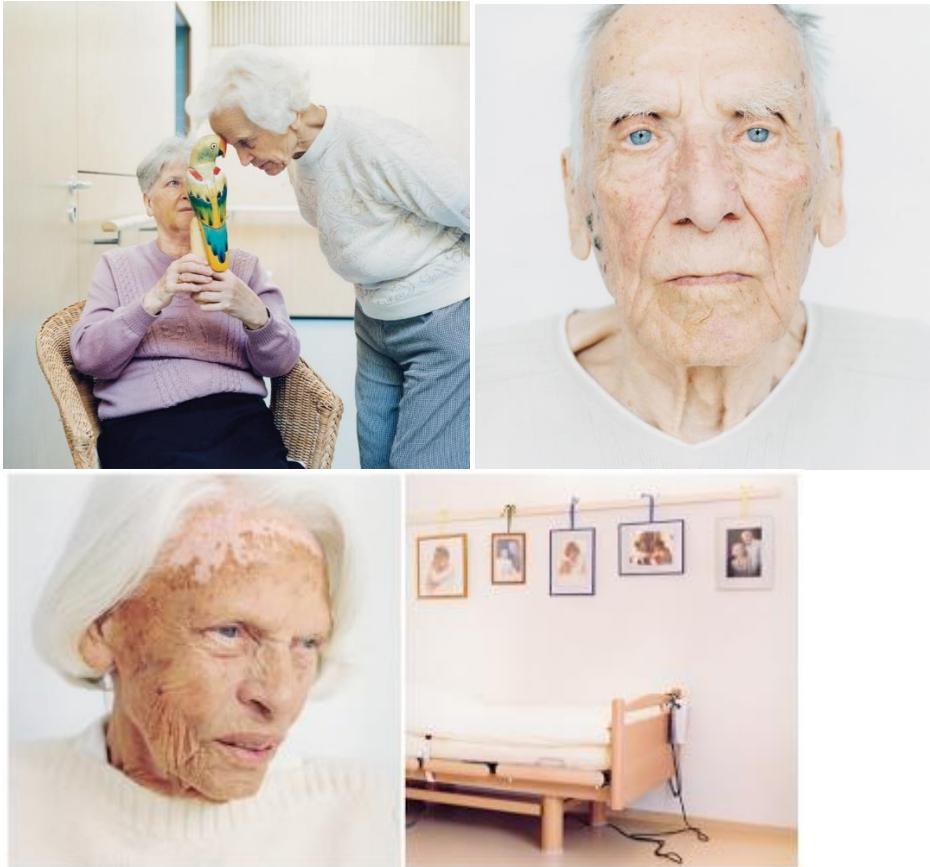
Peter Granser: Alzheimer

I like the *Alzheimer* series because the subjects are depicted with dignity, respect and the images do not evoke feelings of being sorry for the subjects (traces of the illness are not shown explicitly).

Kinga Kocimska: Dementia

I find the work of Kinga Kocimska interesting. It cleverly and humorously depicts situations which seem to be in order, or suggest to be in order (normal) but are not. The viewer experiences something which might be similar to what a dementia patient experiences (estrangement, not understanding, losing logic). The images are technically well executed. http://kingakocimska.com/?bw_gallery=dementia

- Research pointers within feedback of Lens Culture Portrait Award:
  The first link is a commercial one prompting to buy an e-book. I have put the book *Crusade for Your Art: Best Practices for Fine Art Photographers* by Jennifer Schwartz on my wish list. The second link was very helpful and I used this as background info when writing the text for assignment 5. I knew of the work of Sally Mann and Horst P. Horst and it was a pleasure revisiting their sites. *The Nature of photographs* (Stephen Shore, 2007) was already in my possession (coincidence?) and I have read and studied the book. Funny that a book about photography can also have very little text and still be effective (for the reader). The photo festivals mentioned are both in the USA which I do not visit regularly (that's a pity). The list of members of the Association of International Photography Art Dealers might come in handy in the future.

2. Reference list

- OCA Course-book (2012) *Documentary*. Document Control Number: PH2doc050213. Barnsley (UK): Open College of the Arts
- Shore, Stephen (2007) *The Nature of Photographs*. London (UK): Phaidon. ISBN 978-0-7148-5904-0.
- Soth, Alec (2008) *Sleeping by the Mississippi*. Göttingen (Germany): Steidl. ISBN 9783865217530