UNFOLDING PRESENCE: 
AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

by

Helma Sawatzky

B.F.A., Emily Carr University of Art + Design, 2009
B.Mus., Hanzehogeschool Groningen, 1992

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

in the 
School of Communication
Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

© Helma Sawatzky 2011
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Fall 2011

All rights reserved.
However, in accordance with the Copyright Act of Canada, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for “Fair Dealing.” Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law, particularly if cited appropriately.
APPROVAL

Name: Helma Sawatzky
Degree: Master of Arts
Title of Thesis Unfolding Presence: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of photography

Examining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Kathleen Cross
Lecturer, School of Communication

Dr. Gary McCarron
Senior Supervisor
Associate professor, School of Communication

Dr. Laura U. Marks
Supervisor
Dena Wosk University Professor of Art and Culture Studies
School for the Contemporary Arts

Dr. Ron Burnett
External Examiner
President, Vice-chancellor
Emily Carr University of Art + Design

Date Defended/Approved: October 7, 2011
Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the “Institutional Repository” link of the SFU Library website (www.lib.sfu.ca) at http://summit.sfu.ca and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author’s written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

While licensing SFU to permit the above uses, the author retains copyright in the thesis, project or extended essays, including the right to change the work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the work in whole or in part, and licensing other parties, as the author may desire.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

revised Fall 2011
STATEMENT OF ETHICS APPROVAL

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

(a) Human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics,

or

(b) Advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University;

or has conducted the research

(c) as a co-investigator, collaborator or research assistant in a research project approved in advance,

or

(d) as a member of a course approved in advance for minimal risk human research, by the Office of Research Ethics.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed at the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Last update: Spring 2010
ABSTRACT

Media theorist Marshall McLuhan argued that media actively shape and transform the spatial, temporal and biopsychosocial dimensions of our lives, facilitating modes of perception and experience that are, arguably, medium-specific.

Seeking to better understand the movements of mediation that unfold in and through acts of photography, I conducted a series of in-depth interviews with five artist-photographers in which I asked them to describe what photography does for and to them, what it ‘affords’ and what it ‘requires.’ Through these interviews, the medium and practice of photography emerged as an influential participant in a range of complex existential and hermeneutic processes.

Drawing on Deleuze’s concept of the fold, I mapped the movements of mediation as they unfold in embodied consciousness as a flow of un/folding a sense of time, space and presence, of enfolding embodied being-in-the world and of infolding a range of contexts that give perception a place in experience.

Keywords: Photography, mediation, perception; experience, phenomenology, post-phenomenology; meaning making, hermeneutics; un/folding-enfolding-infolding; flow
for now we see

through a glass darkly
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis offers a snapshot in time of a constellation of perceptions and experiences, stories and images that congealed into this narrative articulation during the summer of 2011. Many people, places, things and contexts participated in its becoming—all of which I celebrate with gratitude.

I especially wish to acknowledge the following people: the study participants who generously shared their experiences and perspectives—your stories are the life of this thesis; my supervisor Gary McCarron, whose eclectic curiosity and down-to-earth advice infused this project with much-needed lift and thrust; Laura Marks, whose keen theoretical eye and passion for the unexpected both widened and deepened the overall picture; Ron Burnett, whose perspectives and questions set in motion myriad trains of thought heading in future directions; my fellow graduate students and faculty who offered their support and encouragement along the way; my friends, whose engaged conversations and generous affirmations have kept me afloat. My heartfelt thanks goes out to you all!

Finally, I offer special thanks to my family for a lifetime of love and support, and to my husband and best friend Rick, who tirelessly listened, encouraged and valued this project and who never doubted my ability to complete it —two are better than one...
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLOSSARY</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION
1.1 About photography ........................................................................................................ 1
1.2 The matter of mediation .............................................................................................. 4
1.3 Resonances ...................................................................................................................... 6
  1.3.1 Contemporary arts ................................................................................................... 7
  1.3.2 Postphenomenology ................................................................................................. 8
  1.3.3 Film and media studies .......................................................................................... 9
  1.3.4 Unfolding the fold ............................................................................................... 12
1.4 Overview .......................................................................................................................... 15

## CHAPTER 2: FRAMES OF REFERENCE
2.1 Thinking through the fold .............................................................................................. 18
2.2 Anemone theory ................................................................................................................. 22
2.3 Photographer ...................................................................................................................... 30
  2.3.1 Embodiment ............................................................................................................ 30
  2.3.2 Intentionality ......................................................................................................... 32
  2.3.3 Perception and expression ....................................................................................... 34
  2.3.4 Mediated experience .............................................................................................. 38
2.4 Photography ......................................................................................................................... 43
  2.4.1 Medium ................................................................................................................... 44
  2.4.2 Ihde’s human technology relations .......................................................................... 47
2.5 Lifeworld ............................................................................................................................. 49
  2.5.1 Media as ecologies ................................................................................................... 52
  2.5.2 Media as mediated .................................................................................................. 54
2.6 Conclusion ........................................................................................................................... 56

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.1 Interpretative phenomenological analysis ...................................................................... 57
3.2 Theoretical underpinnings of IPA .................................................................................. 58
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Phenomenological</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Hermeneutic</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3 Idiographic</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Data collection</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Sample selection</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Sampling methods</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Interview process</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Data analysis process</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Participant profiles</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.1 Debra</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.2 Mike</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.3 Brendan</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.4 Emma</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7.5 Jason</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Conclusion</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Unfolding presence</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1 Un/folding time</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2 Un/folding space</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3 Unfolding perception</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.4 Un/folding affective intensity and feeling</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.5 Unfolding presence</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 The camera</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Technological intentionality</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Photographic seeing</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Infolding contexts</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 Meaningful practice</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 A case study</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Enfolding</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1 Pleasure</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Summary</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 iBODY: Embodiment matters</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Mediation: Dynamics of movement and (ex)change</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Photography: Unfolding presence</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Artist-photographers</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 iMedium: The researcher as medium</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Future unfoldings</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 In folding</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES ........................................................................................................... 128

APPENDICES ........................................................................................................... 133
APPENDIX A  VERBEEK’s POSTPHENOMENOLOGICAL VOCABULARY ..................... 134
APPENDIX B  LETTER OF INVITATION........................................................................ 135
APPENDIX C  PROJECT DESCRIPTION | ethics application #2010s0776 .................. 137
APPENDIX D  INTERVIEW QUESTIONS | ethics application #2010s0776 .............. 139
APPENDIX E  CONSENT FORM | ethics application #2010s0776 ......................... 140
APPENDIX F  ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER | page 1 of 2 ........................................ 142
APPENDIX F  ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER | page 2 of 2 ........................................ 143
APPENDIX G  INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION SAMPLE | page 1 of 3 ....................... 144
APPENDIX G  INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION SAMPLE | page 2 of 3 ....................... 145
APPENDIX G  INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION SAMPLE | page 3 of 3 ....................... 146
APPENDIX H  INFOLDING CONTEXTS | additional examples .............................. 147
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Sea anemone opening</td>
<td>p. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Unfolding</td>
<td>p. 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Enfolding</td>
<td>p. 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Infolding contexts</td>
<td>p. 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Visualization of Peirce’s phenomenological categories</td>
<td>p. 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Nine elements of flow</td>
<td>p. 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Ihde’s human-technology relations</td>
<td>p. 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>A map of interview themes</td>
<td>p. 71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY

Affect
In the context of this thesis, the notion of affect is taken up as defined by Brian Massumi in Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation. Drawing on the philosophical thought of Spinoza, Bergson and Deleuze, Massumi (2002) differentiates between affect and emotion. Affect is defined as an “unqualified” intensity (impulse, stimulation, vibration) interfacing with the body’s autonomous nervous system. Emotion, on the other hand, is “a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal” (p. 28).

Being-in-the-world
Being-in-the-world — être-au-monde (Merleau-Ponty) or In-der-Welt-sein (Heidegger) — refers to a phenomenological understanding of human existence in its simultaneously existential and hermeneutic dimensions. Sobchack (1992) points out that “the subject of consciousness and experience is embodied, situated and finite” (p. 38).

Consciousness
Husserl argued that all consciousness is consciousness of something and finds its point of emergence in the lived body as both a sensing and sense making entity. In the context of this thesis, consciousness refers to the state of being or process of becoming aware of and responsive to something that affects a person in some way. This ‘awareness’ is understood as a complex multiplicity that may involve perceptive, affective, cognitive and other experiential registers.

Duration
Bergson (2007) developed the concept of duration (la durée) to address the flow of time as “a multiplicity of moments bound to one another by a unity which runs through them like a thread” (p. 156). Instead of the word “moments” Bergson also uses “successive states of consciousness” (p. 155). In the context of this study I use the term duration to identify the unfolding of time as an experiential space that we experience in and live through.

Embodiment
Merleau-Ponty (2002; 1945) emphasized embodiment—being (in) a body or being-flesh—as the ground for all experience, as our unique and situated “point of view upon the world” (p. 81). Our lived-body constitutes our presence in the world, our ability to perceive and
act in the world, and, by extension, our presence to others as an object in the world that, in turn, is perceived and acted upon in various ways.

**Experience**

Experience can be defined as “a lived process, an unfurling of perspectives and meanings, which are unique to the person’s embodied and situated relationship to the world” (Smith, Larkin, & Flowers, 2009, p. 21). Experience unfolds as “co/herence,” as “living cohesion” (Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger as cited in Sobchack, 1992, p. 22).

**Fold, the**

In *The fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Deleuze (1993) elaborates the image of the fold. It involves a non-linear conception of life as infinite potentiality unfolding across time and space as encounters between “the pleats of matter, and the folds of the soul” (p. 3). In the context of this thesis I develop a more phenomenologically oriented unfolding of this concept in the context of what I refer to as *anemone theory* (see also Chapter 2.1 & 2.2).

**Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics addresses “the method of interpretation first of texts, and secondly of the whole social, historical, and psychological world” (Blackburn, 2008c). In the context of this study, it is predominantly used as the adjective *hermeneutic* (hermeneutic dimensions) to address those dimensions of perception and experience that involve some type of sense-making or contextualizing of what was perceived in a context of meaning (see also Chapter 3.2.2 & 4.3).

**Indexicality**

Photographic ‘truth’ has historically been linked to the indexicality of the medium, “the fact that [photographs] are, in certain respects, direct physical imprints of the reality recorded in them” (Messaris, 1997, p. x), the notion that “the photograph is seen as a representation of nature itself, as an unmediated copy of the real world” (Sekula, 1982, p. 86). The concept of the index finds its origin in the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, whose taxonomy of signs distinguishes between *icon, index and symbol*. An *icon* directly resembles what it represents, a *symbol* mediates certain “intellectual operations” (when you see ‘x,’ you know it to mean ‘y’) (Doane, 2007, p. 133). An *index* operates like a trace or a finger pointing to that of which it took an imprint (e.g., the rays of light that touch the photographic film). In her discussion of the indexical, Doane (2007) argues that both film and photography are “excellent examples of sign systems that merge icon, index and to some extent symbol” (p. 134).
Intentionality

Husserl’s concept of \textit{intentionality} identifies the directedness of human beings towards their world. In the context of \textit{anemone theory}, intentionality is understood as something that is \textit{pliable}—something that can \textit{unfold} (increase, expand) or \textit{fold} (decrease, withdraw), and \textit{selective}—something that is motivated by particular interests and intentions. In this movement, a particular medium (e.g., photography) can be understood as unfolding intentionality in particular ways.

Lived-body

The lived-body is both “an object in the world, the flesh of its flesh,” and “a subject in the world. It is both agent and agency of an engagement with the world that is lived in its subjective modality as perception and in its objective modality as expression” (Sobchack, 1992, p. 40). In the context of \textit{anemone theory}, the lived-body is understood as a \textit{medium} that ‘infolds contexts’ (Massumi, 2002; see also Chapter 2.2).

Mediation

The concept of \textit{mediation} identifies a process of (ex)change, of passing something along while also changing something along the way. This change involves qualitative and quantitative dynamics. Verbeek (2005) identifies mediation as a central concept in relation to studying human-technology relations. He points out that “artifacts mediate human experience by transforming perception and interpretive frameworks” (hermeneutic aspects of mediation), and they “mediate human existence by giving concrete shape to their behaviour and the social context of their existence” (p. 195). In the context of \textit{anemone theory}, media are thought of in their capacity to \textit{fold} or \textit{unfold} (time, space, perception, presence), to \textit{enfold} (to create a temporal-spatial duration in which certain experiences become possible) and as \textit{infolders} of contexts, as entities that bring their own particularities to an experiential encounter.

Perception

In \textit{Phenomenology of perception}, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002; 1945) argues for the primacy of \textit{perception} as the body’s interface with the world. Through perception, Merleau-Ponty argues, “a world forms itself around me and begins to exist for me” (p. ix). Sobchack extends Merleau-Ponty’s argument by pointing out that the primacy of perception goes hand in hand with the “primacy of expression” which “is synopsized in lived body experience as the primacy of communication” (Sobchack, 1992, p. 41).

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the \textit{study of experience as we live it}. Since Husserl laid the groundwork for this
influential philosophical movement, it has been articulated in different ways. Husserl’s approach has often been referred to as *transcendental* phenomenology, in its ambition to describe the essence of particular phenomena and its emphasis on the transcendental ego. *Existential* phenomenology (e.g., Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Sartre) emphasizes the existential reality of embodied being in the world. *Hermeneutic* phenomenology (e.g., Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur) emphasizes the central role of interpretation in relation to experience, that we experience in and through a range of ‘contexts’ (e.g. our personal ‘fore knowledge,’ but also history and culture). *Semiotic* or *linguistic* phenomenology (e.g., Derrida) emphasizes the central and mediating role of language in experience. *Ethical* phenomenology (e.g., Levinas, Scheler) emphasizes the profoundly relational dimension of being-in-the-world and the responsibility that unfolds in the encounter with the other (van Manen, 2011). More recently phenomenology has been incorporated in a range of *qualitative research methodologies*—e.g., Amadeo Giorgi’s phenomenological psychology, Van Manen’s hermeneutic phenomenology, and the method I chose to work with—*Interpretative phenomenological analysis* or IPA (Smith et al., 2009; see also Chapter 3).

**Postphenomenology**

The ‘roots’ of postphenomenology as an empirical research strategy can be found in the work of philosopher of technology Don Ihde. He describes postphenomenology as “a modified, hybrid phenomenology” (Ihde, 2009, p. 23) that focuses on a philosophical analysis of human-technology-world relations, and that draws on phenomenology for its core concepts (e.g., intentionality, embodiment, lifeworld). Its prefix ‘post’ identifies “a postmodern aversion to context-independent truths [or ‘essences’] and the desire to overcome the radical separation of subject and object, but that does not result in relativism” (Verbeek, 2005, p. 113).

**Presence**

Presence refers to being somewhere, in a particular place at a particular time, but also to a sense of being present and a sense of something or someone being present (Chandler & Munday, 2011). A sense of presence enfolds the ‘existential axes’ of human existence—time, space and embodied consciousness. In the context of *anemone theory*, I use the expression ‘unfolding presence’ to address actual and imagined, perceptive and expressive dimensions of lived experience, as well as levels of intensity and awareness.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us.

(McLuhan, 1994; 1964)

Each technology not only differently mediates our configurations of bodily existence but also constitutes them. That is, each offers our lived bodies radically different ways of “being-in-the-world.”

(Sobchack, 2004, p. 136)

1.1 About photography

What is it about photography? Since the introduction of the first portable snapshot cameras in the early 1900s, photography has become ubiquitous as a social practice. Most of us have grown up with ‘vernacular’ photography—the snapshots of family, friends and events that frame the everyday unfolding of our lives. Photography is everywhere. It is used as a tool to document, collect, classify and catalogue all kinds of visual data, serving a range of different purposes. Photography is integral to journalism and news reporting, law and surveillance activities, advertising and fashion, scientific data collection, media and film production, medical and surgical interventions, education, visual art, and to contemporary digital culture. Indeed, digital technologies have launched the life of photography into a different orbit altogether. Camera technologies are now part of the basic functionality of a range of digital devices through

---

1 In February 1900, the George Eastman Kodak Company introduced the first ever hand-held ‘snapshot’ camera, the Brownie camera.
which we live our daily lives. The speed, instantaneity and fluidity of the digital medium has facilitated the production and exchange of more photographs than ever before.

Simultaneously, the wide range of contexts and uses of photography have given rise to a vast array of research initiatives and theory formation from a wide range of perspectives—history, visual culture, semiotics, psychoanalysis, aesthetics, contemporary art, media studies, sociology, anthropology, philosophy and more. The number of publications—books and journal articles—on the subject of photography has seen exponential growth over the past few years. Although the discourse on photography far exceeds the scope of this thesis, I will briefly highlight a few of the seminal voices that have shaped the ways in which we have come to think about photography—Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag.

Cultural theorist Walter Benjamin (2008) explored the medium of photography in its capacity to create originals (film negatives) that could be reproduced perpetually (as prints) and disseminated to mass audiences. He philosophized about how photography, as an “optical unconscious,” could become an agent of change in relation to socio-political and economic transformations. The camera indiscriminately records what appears within the bounds of its view finder, presenting us with a representation of reality. The resulting photograph can cause us to notice things that were always there for us to see but which we failed to notice until they were made visible by virtue of the frame (See also Dant & Gilloch, 2002). Semiotician Roland Barthes was interested in the photographic images that populate our everyday lives. In his early work, Barthes (1988)
thorized photography as a language, as a symbolic form that is able to communicate through a system of connotation, ‘speaking through’ a range of symbolic forms and structures (e.g., objects, style, poses, aesthetics) that share meaning within a certain cultural context (pp. 15-31). In his final publication on photography, Camera Lucida, Barthes (1981) explored the affective life of photographs. Cultural theorist Susan Sontag (2001) pointed to the ways in which cameras and the practice of photography enact both “an aesthetic view of reality”—the world as a visual field in which everything is ‘up for grabs’ as subject matter, and “an instrumental view of reality”—in which the camera becomes a data collection tool that serves to capture all ‘relevant’ data with the intent of facilitating efficient decision making processes (p. 176, emphasis added). Sontag situates the practice of photography within paradigms of science, power, surveillance, narcissism, passivity and consumption, and problematizes the ways of being-in-the-world that are mediated by and ‘instrumentalized’ though the practice of photography.

So—what is it about photography? How do photographers experience the process of doing photography? What does photography ‘afford’ or do for them? What does photography ‘require’ or do to them? Does photography, as McLuhan (1994; 1964) argues, extend the human sensorium? Does photography, as Sobchack (2004) argues,

---

2 In Camera Lucida, Barthes (1981) differentiates between studium and punctum in relation to a photographic image. The studium refers to those aspects of a photograph that constitute its general interest to us as human beings. With the punctum, Barthes seeks to name the particular affective impact that a single aspect in a single photograph has on a single viewer. The punctum is what “will disturb the studium,” a manifestation of that “accident that pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)” (p. 27).
mediate and constitute a particular way of being-in-the-world? Does it extend, shape or transform our relationship with or ‘intentionality’ toward the world in some way? Does photography participate in how we make sense of things? How do we negotiate the human-technology relationship in the context of photography? In Unfolding presence: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of photography, I explore ways in which photography mediates perception and unfolds particular ways of “being-in-the-world.”

1.2 The matter of mediation

Two opposing schools of thought have long framed the discussion of human-technology relations: instrumentalism, which views technologies as essentially neutral tools that do something for us—a view in which the person using a technological artifact is ‘in charge’ and the technology is merely a means to an end, and technological determinism—a conception of technology that locates power and agency in the technology itself—a view in which technologies are theorized as having the power to do things to us that we may not want to happen. Both approaches are essentially monodimensional and disregard that the relationship between human beings and particular technologies is exactly that—a relationship in which each one affects (acts on and through) the other. In terms of photography, the photographer uses the camera, lending his or her unique approach and intention to the use of the device while, at the same time, the camera influences and shapes the actions of the photographer. Because of this relation of mutual (ex)change, this study of photography will focus on the relational and
transformational concept of mediation: How do the medium (the technological artifact) and practice (the doing of photography) mutually mediate what emerges as experience from the perspective of the photographer?

Philosopher of technology Peter-Paul Verbeek (2005) identifies mediation as a core concept in studying human-technology relations:

When technological artifacts are looked at in terms of mediation—how they mediate the relation between humans and their world, amongst human beings, and between humans and technology itself—technologies can no longer be pigeonholed simply as either neutral or determining. On the one hand, the concept of mediation helps to show that technologies actively shape the character of human-world relations. Human contact with reality is always mediated, and technologies offer one possible form of mediation. On the other hand, it means that any particular mediation can only arise within specific contexts of use and interpretation. (p. 11)

Mediation is an elusive phenomenon. Like the wind, which can only be seen or felt through what it moves and changes, mediation merely materializes in its effects. It is what moves between entities and brings about change of some kind. In this study of how photography mediates perception and experience, I attempt to catch some of these movements in their moment of unfolding. In order to do so, I look for the ‘ripples in the water’ and the ‘trembling of the leaves’ as they emerge in the words of those who share their experiences with and through photography.
Much of the discourse on photographic mediation has considered the photographic object—the film, the negative, the print, and its essence as indexical trace, its participation in representational regimes, its discursive association with history, memory and death,\(^3\) as well as its ambiguity as a sign. Although these scholarly investigations of photography have identified many important issues in relation to the uses and abuses of photography, I found that these debates had less to offer in terms of how the practice of photography mediates the human-world relationship. The primary focus of this study is neither the camera as apparatus nor the photograph as object in the world. Instead, it considers what emerges in the relationship between a person, a technology and the world. Photography emerges as a participant in a process with complex existential and hermeneutic dimensions. In order to further contextualize this research, I therefore sought out those fields of inquiry that offered fruitful ways of exploring the configuration human-technology-world as it pertains specifically to mediated perception and experience.

### 1.3 Resonances

Several domains of inquiry have influenced and shaped my thought on mediation and the human-technology relation, notably research that is taking place in the context of post-phenomenological approaches to science and technology studies (e.g., Verbeek, Selinger, Ihde), phenomenological and Deleuzian approaches to film and

---

\(^3\) *Camera Lucida* by Roland Barthes (1981) has been especially influential in anchoring photography in discourses on memory and death.
media studies (e.g., Deleuze, Massumi, Sobchack, Marks, Hansen), and the contemporary arts. In all of these fields of inquiry, technologically mediated experience is a central concern.

### 1.3.1 Contemporary arts

As both a musician and visual artist, I will begin with acknowledging the significant influence of the arts on shaping my thoughts about mediation. Music, film, dance and the visual arts have frequently mediated the ‘time-spaces’ in which my sensing began to make meaningful connections with sense-making. My own art practice has provided a fruitful context for sensing, feeling, experiencing and thinking through a range of different media. But perhaps even more so, experiencing through the work of others stimulated the formation of new thoughts and ideas.

In his study of media, McLuhan (1994; 1964) consistently turned to the arts in order to better understand what media do in terms of embodied being-in-the-world. He writes:

>The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without resistance. The serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in sense perception. (p. 18)
At every turn, artists are confronted with the reality of McLuhan’s assertion that the medium is the message. In the context of creative practice, significant time and effort is invested in choosing a medium and in exploring the range of possibilities that a particular medium or form affords and how these particularities interface with other contents of the work. Some of the artists whose work has made me live through what media do and who have fleshed out the concepts and ideas emerging in this research project are Bill Viola, David Claerbout, Mark Lewis, Pipilotti Rist, Olafur Eliasson, as well as the artist-photographers who were interviewed in the context of this study and who generously shared their thoughts on the medium of photography.

### 1.3.2 Postphenomenology

*What things do: Philosophical reflections on technology, agency and design* by Dutch philosopher of technology Peter-Paul Verbeek (2005) has mediated my thought on the human-technology-world relation. Moving away from both instrumentalist (technology is a neutral means to an end) and substantivist (technology is a determining, controlling force on society) conceptions of technology, Verbeek proposes a ‘postphenomenological’ philosophy of technology that considers how technological artifacts mediate the human-world relation, interpersonal relations and the human-technology relation. Drawing on the work of Don Ihde, Bruno Latour and Albert Borgmann, Verbeek (2005) develops a postphenomenological perspective for analyzing “how artifacts help shape how humans can be present in the world and how the world can be present for them” (p. 195). His postphenomenological vocabulary brings into
language both the existential and hermeneutic movements of mediation (see Appendix A).

The ‘roots’ of postphenomenology as an empirical research strategy can be found in the work of philosopher of technology Don Ihde. He describes postphenomenology as “a modified, hybrid phenomenology” (Ihde, 2009, p. 23) that focuses on a philosophical analysis of human-world relations, and that draws on phenomenology for its core concepts (e.g., intentionality, embodiment, lifeworld). Verbeek (2005) points out that the prefix ‘post’ identifies “a postmodern aversion to context-independent truths [essences] and the desire to overcome the radical separation of subject and object, but that does not result in relativism” (p. 113). Unlike philosophical schools of thought that have developed as academic disciplines in which its scholars predominantly engage with and write about the seminal texts within the field, postphenomenology is committed to doing phenomenological research, to the analysis of “what things do,” of the actual roles of technologies in human experience and existence (Verbeek, 2005).

1.3.3 Film and media studies

Another significant influence on the ideas that took shape in the context of this research emerges from Deleuzian and phenomenological approaches to film and media

---

4 For an introduction to postphenomenological research and several examples of postphenomenological research projects, see: Human Studies journal, volume 31:1 (2008).
studies, notably through the writings of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Brian Massumi, the phenomenology of film experience as elaborated by media theorist Vivian Sobchack, and the work of film theorist Laura Marks whose *enfolding-unfolding aesthetics* weaves together strands of phenomenological and Deleuzian thought.

Deleuze’s reflections on the “time-image” and Massumi’s writing on affect identify forms of experience that emerge as unclassified potentialities. With the concept of the “time-image,” as elaborated in *Cinema 2*, Deleuze (1989) envisions a form of cinema that mediates a time-space in which new thoughts can emerge. If a film deconstructs conventional narrative and makes it impossible for the viewer to ‘relax into’ the predictability of what comes next, if a film creates gaps by rupturing a sense of linear continuity in terms of time and space, it makes room for new ideas, new connections, new thought to emerge. What is especially relevant in relation to the subject of mediation is the idea that a medium can fold and unfold time and space in particular ways.

Brian Massumi’s writing on affect significantly shaped my ideas on embodiment and mediation. In *Parables of the virtual: Movement, sensation, affect*, Massumi (2002) draws on the philosophical work of Spinoza, Leibniz, Bergson and Deleuze to develop a conception of the human body as a medium, a “resonating vessel” (p. 28), a simultaneously sensing and sense-making entity. Massumi argued that the body “doesn’t just absorb pulses or discrete stimulations; it *infolds contexts*, it infolds *volitions* and *cognitions* that are nothing if not situated” (p. 30, emphasis added).
Massumi differentiates between intensities or affects that act on the body as “pulses” and “stimulations,” and processes in which particular intensities are named (or qualified) and given a place in conscious experience:

Both levels, intensity and qualification, are immediately embodied. Intensity is embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin—at the surface of the body, at its interface with things. Depth reactions belong more to the form/content (qualification) level, even though they also involve autonomic functions such as heartbeat and breathing. The reason may be that they are associated with expectation, which depends on consciously positioning oneself in a line of narrative continuity. (p. 25)

Vivian Sobchack’s work on the phenomenology of film experience as elaborated in *The address of the eye* (1992) and *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and moving image culture* (2004) were instrumental in anchoring my ideas on mediation in a phenomenological understanding of embodied consciousness. Like much of the discourse on photography, many approaches within film theory have engaged its subject of inquiry from a range of ‘content-driven’ approaches—e.g., semiotics, structuralism, psychoanalysis, Marxist theory, feminist theory. The discursive focus of these approaches resulted in film theory that isolated issues of relevance from the whole of film experience. Sobchack (1992) writes:

In most of its classical and contemporary articulations, then, film theory has focused not on the whole correlational structure of the film experience, but has
abstracted and privileged only one of its *parts* at a time: expression-in-itself, perception-in-itself, and mediation-in-itself. (p. 18)

Instead, Sobchack emphasizes that all of us are “materially embodied, particularly situated, and informed by an intending consciousness that has its own ‘projects’ in the world” (p. 24). Core thoughts in relation to my research are that perception, expression and mediation all merge in the sensuous, sense-making ecology of embodied consciousness, and that our experiences of and through a medium like film or photography incorporates all these dimensions.

### 1.3.4 Unfolding the fold

I read Deleuze’s (1993) book *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* in preparation for an essay I was working on in the summer of 2010. In this paper—*Anemone theory: An exploration of digital media as phenomena*—I explored many of the ideas elaborated in this chapter. When I invited Dr. Laura Marks to be part of my thesis committee in September 2010, I shared this essay with her by way of introduction. I found out at that time that she has been working with Deleuze’s concept of the fold in the context of her theoretical reflections on *enfolding-unfolding aesthetics* (Marks, 2009, 2011b). Both of us use a language of folding, unfolding and enfolding, and the idea of *selective unfolding* in relation to mediation, but we do so in different ways.
Marks (2011b) unfolds her theory of mediation within a Deleuzian conception of life as a *plane of immanence*, life as an enfoldment of infinite possibility from which parts can unfold or actualize:

In Deleuze’s interpretation of Leibniz, the smallest unit of matter is the fold, not the point. Each fold, being connected to the entire plane on which it subsides, has a point of view on the whole: this is how Leibniz describes the soul, or the monad. The principle that the smallest unit is a fold makes it possible to conceive of the plane of immanence as a vast surface composed of an infinite number of folds. The plane of immanence is the infinite, which contains all that has existed, will exist, and has never or will never exist, in a virtual state. Sometimes one of these enfolded units unfolds: it becomes actual. (p. 8)

Within this enfoldment of possibility, Marks proposes that we consider mediation as “a continuous, enfolded, connective tissue between the beholder and the beheld” (p. 7). She theorizes this mediating layer as information, as a force that filters and shapes what becomes visible to us as the real. In this process of unfolding images from the world, media are selective “unfolders:”

Media are unfolders, selecting some aspect of an event to unfold and usher toward perception. Every medium unfolds events in its own way, and ignores other aspects of it that remain enfolded. (p. 10)
Deleuzian perspectives like Marks’ *enfolding-unfolding aesthetics* are deliberately ‘decentered,’ elaborating ideas on a ‘plane of abstraction,’ as movements, formations and forces. Writing in a philosophical climate in which the Cartesian ego\(^5\) ruled supreme, and in which human consciousness was consistently implemented as the horizon of the knowable, removing human beings from the centre of ‘the world as we know it’ was a deliberate philosophical and political move on Deleuze’s part. Within Deleuzian thought, human being, doing and becoming is but one unfolding from the infinite possibility that is life. I deeply value a philosophy that acknowledges that ‘what is’ doesn’t equal all that can become, a philosophy that acknowledges that human perception and knowing are but partial unfoldings. On the other hand, I also agree with Sobchack (1992) who argues that Deleuze’s philosophy “neglects the *embodied situation*” (p. 31) of our existence, the fact that all of us—Deleuze included—are human, and our perspective on the world and being-in-the-world is bounded by our embodied, enworlded situation: It is what we have to ‘work with.’

Therefore I enter this inquiry into mediated perception by acknowledging that Deleuze is ‘on to something’ when he argues—with French philosopher Henri Bergson—that consciousness is something, while embracing my existential embodied situation in which consciousness unfolds in experience as consciousness of something. While being

---

\(^5\) The *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Blackburn, 2008a) defines the *Cartesian ego* as follows:

The self conceived as Descartes presents it in the first two *Meditations*: aware only of its own thoughts, and capable of disembodied existence, neither situated in a space nor surrounded by others. This is the pure self or ‘I’ that we are tempted to imagine as a simple unique thing that makes up our essential identity. Descartes’s view that he could keep hold of this nugget while doubting everything else is criticized by Lichtenberg and Kant, and most subsequent philosophers of mind.
reflexive about my bounded, situated point of view on the world, I unfold my
intentionality towards the world with openness and curiosity, ready to be surprised by
the world—much in the same way that the artist-photographers use the medium of
photography to pay close attention to all that the world unfolds before them.

1.4 Overview

In Chapter 2: Frames of reference, I elaborate the concepts that mediate and
facilitate my analysis and discussion of the interview data collected in the context of this
study. I draw on Deleuze’s concept of the fold, several core concepts from the realm of
phenomenological inquiry, Verbeek’s postphenomenological perspective and Mihaly
Csikszentmihalyi’s psychology of optimal experience in order to contextualize my
discussion of mediated perception and experience. In Chapter 3: Research methodology,
I discuss my choice of method, its theoretical foundations and the research process
(sample selection, data collection, participant profiles, and analysis process). In Chapter
4: Analysis, I discuss the interview data through the theoretical frames of reference laid
out in Chapter 2. In Chapter 5: Discussion, I situate this study in a wider sphere of
practice. I identify limitations and future possibilities of the study findings and suggest
possible avenues for further inquiry.
Our perceptions are undoubtedly interlaced with memories, and, inversely, a memory, as we shall show later, only becomes actual by borrowing the body of some perception into which it slips. These two acts, perception and recollection, always interpenetrate each other, are always exchanging something of their substance as by a process of endosmosis.

(Bergson, 1988, p. 67)

And all media as extensions of ourselves serve to provide new transforming vision and awareness.

(McLuhan, 1994; 1964, p. 60)

With his influential aphorism “media are the extensions of man,” Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan argued that media actively shape and transform the temporal, spatial and biopsychosocial dimensions of our lives. His analysis of a range of media emphasized how each medium “creates a new pattern, a new atmosphere, a new environment for human perception” (Guthro, 1965). Drawing on a range of organic metaphors, McLuhan pointed to the ways in which media intimately interface with the ‘human sensorium,’ making possible modes of perception and experience that are, arguably, medium-specific.

McLuhan’s media ontology was an important starting point for *Unfolding presence: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of photography*. Seeking to better understand the movements of mediation that unfold in and through the medium of photography, I conducted in-depth interviews with five artist-photographers in which
I asked them to describe what photography does for and to them, what it ‘affords’ and what it ‘requires.’

Talking about photography in terms of picking up a camera, pointing it at something and pressing the appropriate button in order to take a picture may serve the purposes of a user manual, but fails to capture the life of the medium in relation to human being-in-the-world. Similarly, to consider the medium of photography as something that simply extends or amplifies something (e.g., the eye, or a predominantly visual engagement with the world) runs the risk of becoming equally reductive in terms of capturing experience as it unfolds for the photographer with and through the medium of photography. If we are to really grasp how and what a medium mediates, we need to both widen and deepen our field of vision to extend beyond what cameras do. We need to ‘zoom in’ on the plane of individual experience in order to notice the intricacy and complexity of what unfolds in and through the medium of photography. We also need to ‘pan out’ to the communal plane in order to consider how the medium of photography functions in particular spheres of practice as a historical and socially embedded form.6

In the participant interviews, photography emerged as an influential actor in a range of complex existential and hermeneutic processes. The concept of mediation

---

6 Walter Benjamin pointed out that “the manner in which human sense perception is organised, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstance as well” (Benjamin as cited in Blencowe, 2008, p. 144). In his emphasis on history, Benjamin’s words echo those of Karl Marx (2009) who wrote in his 1844 Economic and philosophical manuscripts that “the forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present.”
functioned like a contrast dye that gives visibility to a complex web of previously invisible connections and flows. Human experience indiscriminately crosses disciplinary boundaries and fields of inquiry. The vast scope of the subject matter and the obvious limits of my own academic expertise required some pragmatic decisions in terms of contextualizing this study. In this chapter, I bring together several relevant frames of reference that will serve to meaningfully support my analysis and discussion of the interview data. I predominantly look to phenomenology, post-phenomenology, psychology and Deleuzian approaches to media theory for concepts that will help bring into focus the myriad movements of mediation as they unfold in the human-technology-world relation. My main challenge was to find a way of ‘mapping’ mediation through a conceptual framework that emphasizes simultaneity, multiplicity, multi-directionality and complexity, while still ‘holding things together’ as a coherent experience. I chose to work with Deleuze’s image of the fold as a guiding concept for thinking through technologically mediated perception.

2.1 Thinking through the fold

Engaging the thought of 17th century German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Deleuze (1993) uses the concept of the “infinity of the fold” (p. xvii) as a way to explore perception and consciousness. Life as infinite potentiality—a plane of
immanence\textsuperscript{7}—unfolds across time and space as encounters between “the pleats of matter, and the folds of the soul” (p. 3). In the image of the fold, Deleuze emphasizes the unity of all matter in which “the inorganic fold happens to be simple and direct, while the organic fold is always composite, alternating, indirect (mediated by an interior site\textsuperscript{8})” (p. 10). Deleuze rejects conceptualizations of life that construct clear separations and oppositions between inside/outside, organic/inorganic, subject/object, or virtual/actual.

Deleuze uses the term soul to address all living organisms. “If life has a soul,” Deleuze (1993) writes, “it is because it perceives, distinguishes, or discriminates” (p. 105). With Leibniz, he argues that each living organism enfolds its own unique capacity to unfold, grow, develop, change and evolve:

Folding-unfolding no longer simply means tension-release, contraction-dilation, but enveloping-developing, involution-evolution. The organism is defined by its ability to fold its own parts and to unfold them, not to infinity, but to a degree of development assigned to each species. (p. 9)

His understanding of perceiving souls as folded in with the pleats of matter—human beings, animals and microscopic organisms alike—emphasizes differentiation within continuity, interconnectedness and interdependence.

\textsuperscript{7} Flaxman (2000) describes Deleuze’s plane of immanence as “a transcendental, preindividual, and even prephilosophical field of infinite variation [...] composed of incorporealties (events, singularities) that are not the ‘conditions of possibility’ but the genetic conditions in which possibilities are created.” (p. 7)

\textsuperscript{8} Here, Deleuze identifies embodied consciousness as “an interior site” that mediates, as a medium.
I can envision the concept of the fold most easily when I think of marine life—a coral reef alive with anemones, sponges, starfish, jellyfish, shellfish, crustaceans, and a wealth of colourful fish existing together in a state of immersion and fluidity—differentiation within continuity. Many of these marine creatures display their folded nature well. For example, the sea anemone is able to fold and unfold most of its sensorium (Figure 1). Its folding and unfolding expresses its specific intentionality towards the world. Deleuze (1993) points out that conscious perception is “a matter of threshold” (p. 101), in which “the relation of the inconspicuous perceptions to conscious perception does not go from part to whole, but from the ordinary to what is notable or remarkable” (p. 100). Perception, therefore, involves “dynamics of mediation, a negotiation of meaning and response, a selective un/folding: the sea anemone unfolds in response to a change, a movement, a sensation that was of particular ‘interest’ to it (e.g. the possibility of food)” (Sawatzky 2010).

9 Sensorium is the Latin term for “the seat of sensation” (Sensorium, 1989), referring to the composite of our capacity to perceive. McLuhan used this term in the context of his theory on the effects of media on the human senses.
Throughout *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Deleuze’s conception of the fold emerges as a compelling yet abstract analytical figure for theorizing ‘life, the universe and everything.’ Rather than speaking from a place of embodied entanglement with the world of people, places and things, Deleuze’s philosophical reflections on being and becoming remain at a distance, as coming from a metaphysical voice somewhere ‘out there looking in.’ In the context of this study and its specific focus on embodied experience, I have used the image of the fold in a way that, in some respects, moves away from one of the main thrusts of Deleuze’s philosophical project—that of radically separating life as a *plane of immanence*, as infinite possibility enfolded in the universe,
from the bounded, situated point of view of the ‘phenomenological subject.’ I use the image of the fold to think through the movements of mediation as they act in, on and through embodied consciousness, as they emerge in experience.

2.2 Anemone theory

Like the sea anemone, the human soul can be thought of as an intricately folded organism that enfolds its entire perceptive and expressive potential within itself. Being alive can then be understood as unfolding perception and presence in particular ways,

10 Lawlor (1998) observes that Deleuze offers a “double challenge to phenomenology” (p. 17)—the “challenge of immanence” (p. 15) and the “challenge of difference” (p. 16). In the context of phenomenology, human subjectivity operates as a ground against which all things figure, thereby not accounting for the possibility of something completely different to emerge. I am not a philosopher, and my understanding of Deleuze’s ideas and the complex philosophical contexts in which they took shape is limited. I do however ‘get’ his argument that the human subject can never be the ground for all that is and can become. On the other hand, can we imagine a human ‘subjectivity’ that embraces the bounded nature of our “embodied situation,” that acknowledges and is reflexive about the limits of our situated points of view, and that faces the world with openness and curiosity, ready to be surprised. As I read, experience, learn, and share conversation with other people, my perceptions and understandings of things are continually changing, as are my frames of reference in terms of what can become perceptible to me and how. Because my embodied point of view on the world is what I have to work with as a human being and as a researcher, I reflexively choose to speak from that embodied, situated, bounded place. It seems to me that to do otherwise is to reinstate the idea that we can transcend ourselves and consider our place in the world from a point of view other than that of our humanity.

11 For a definition how I used the concept presence in the context of this thesis, see Chapter 4.2 or Glossary.
as selective unfoldings. In the same way we can think sense perception through the concept of the fold, in terms of perceived intensities—as particular articulations across the human sensorium. Think of how lovers often close their eyes when they kiss, as if to unfold (amplify, intensify, increase) the sensation of their lips touching. Or how we close our eyes when listening to music or savoring our favorite food, ‘folding’ the sense of sight in order to unfold or be more intensely present through our sense of hearing or taste.

In thinking media and mediation through the fold, we can consider how particular media unfold, as McLuhan argued, “a new pattern, a new atmosphere, a new environment for human perception” (Guthro, 1965) while simultaneously folding others. I sometimes think about folding/unfolding in relation to the process of mixing recorded sound. A sound engineer uses a mixing board to create articulations within the overall sound spectrum, by boosting some frequencies and pulling back others, creating a three-dimensional ‘sound image’ in which some sound sources are brought forward or

12 The notion of selective unfolding—as both a manifestation of a particular intentionality or directedness and a degree of intensity—resonates with Leibniz’ conception of the amplitude of the soul. Deleuze (1993) writes:

But in truth the soul is what invents its own motives, and these are always subjective. We have to begin from all of the smallest inclinations that ply our soul in every direction, in the flash of an instant, under the stress of a thousand ‘little springs’: disquiet. That is the model of the pendulum or balance wheel, the Unruhe [trans. ‘unrest’], that replaces the scale. The action is voluntary when the soul – instead of undergoing the total effect into which these little appeals enter – gives itself a certain amplitude, such that it bends entirely in one direction or toward one side.” (p. 79)

The way in which I use this concept allows for different actors to mediate this selective unfolding (e.g, the camera technology) whereas Leibniz’ conception attributes a selective unfolding to an act of will, a choice.

13 What is particularly interesting in these examples is that the sense of sight tends to take ‘center stage’ and seems to be the first sense we choose to fold in order to perceive more intensely through our other senses.
emphasized in relation to others (e.g., when dealing with a musical recording in which a soloist needs to be ‘separated out’ from the rest of the instruments). The same recording can sound completely different, based on how the incoming signals are shaped through such processes of mediation. Similarly, technological artifacts can be understood to amplify certain ‘frequencies’ within the human sensorium (featuring a ‘soloist’ among the senses) while ‘dialing back’ others. For example, a photo camera tends to ‘amplify’ (extend, unfold, intensify) a visual orientation towards the world, while (partially) folding other ways of being present.

To unfold, as Deleuze (1993) points out, means “to increase, to grow” (p. 8). In the context of mediated perception and experience, unfolding can be thought of as opening ourselves up to (the possibility of) experiences, as increasing our sensory and psychic availability to interface with the lifeworld (Figure 2). Unfolding incorporates movements of amplification, intensification, extension, widening, and deepening. Conversely, the movement of folding would identify processes of closing off one’s perceptive and expressive availability—a voluntary or involuntary withdrawal “into the recesses of a world” (Deleuze, 1993, p. 9). Folding/unfolding is a selective process mediated by our unique personal interests and by a range of contexts that facilitate particular unfoldings while perhaps constraining or preventing others. In the context of
In this study, the practice of photography emerges as one of those contexts that mediates a selective unfolding.\footnote{As elaborated in Chapter 1, Marks (2011b) also identifies media as selective unfolders in the context of enfolding-unfolding aesthetics: “Media are unfolders, selecting some aspect of an event to unfold and usher toward perception. Every medium unfolds events in its own way, and ignores other aspects of it that remain enfolded” (p. 10). In the context of my approach to un/folding-enfolding-infolding, I also identify media as selective unfolders. My emphasis, however, is on how media unfold the human sensorium in particular ways.}

Figure 2: Un/folding
Enfolding (Figure 3) identifies those movements of mediation that facilitate a sense of immersion, of absorption, of one-ness with something outside of oneself, of being connected, of embracing and being embraced, of communion with something or someone, or of immersion in technologically mediated environments. Enfolding differs from unfolding presence in that it expresses a ‘lateral’ movement, a more ‘relational’ and ‘connected’ dimension of experience.

Infolding contexts (Figure 4) identifies those movements of mediation in which sensing connects to some form of sense making, in which something is ‘added to the mix,’ in which the spatio-temporal duration of sensing/perceiving is in some way affected, filtered or shaped by a ‘third party.’ This ‘added ingredient’ can refer to things

---

15 Technologically mediated immersive environments could include virtual reality environments, computer gaming environments, multimedia art installations, theme park environments like Disneyland that blend technological media effects with actors, props and sets, but also shopping malls or restaurants—all spaces that intend to create an ‘experience’ for the user, viewer or customer.

16 In section 2.3.4.2 I elaborate Csikszentmihalyi’s psychology of optimal experience or ‘flow’, which I also identify as a manifestation of enfolding.
‘in here‘—my personal history, feelings, memories, needs, or desires that shape how I unfold my perceptual availability to the world and how I make sense of what I perceive, or it can pertain to things ‘out there‘—to the socio-political and historical contexts of the life world in which things come to mean in particular ways—a culture, a worldview, religious beliefs, rituals, etc.

To illustrate the process of **infolding**, I turn to the simple example of mixing a cake batter. Folding batter involves the careful blending of two substances with very

---

**Figure 4 : Infolding contexts**

To illustrate the process of **infolding**, I turn to the simple example of mixing a cake batter. Folding batter involves the careful blending of two substances with very
different densities. You usually fold a light and fluffy substance (e.g., beaten egg whites) into a substance with a dense consistency without losing the airiness crucial to the success of the cake recipe. Moving the spatula around the outside of the bowl, you gently swirl the two together. Initially both substances will be quite separate, appearing streaked and layered. As the folding motion continues, both substances combine to make a third, different texture that incorporates qualities of both. Like the example of the cake batter, the movement of infolding involves diffusion, transformation and (ex)change. As Bergson (1988) pointed out, “perception and recollection, always interpenetrate each other, are always exchanging something of their substance as by a process of endosmosis” (p. 67).

Embodied experience is not linear. It emerges as simultaneity, as a coming together of the unfolding of the existential dimensions of life—of time, space, and embodiment—and the infolding of myriad contexts that stretch across the entire spectrum of sensing and sense making. Experience, like the sea anemone in the water, undulates, moves, shifts and changes shape continually. If we consider the example of a lover’s kiss, the instance of unfolding the sense of touch by folding the sense of sight (closing one’s eyes) is infused with contexts that mediate (amplify, intensify etc.) the experience as it unfolds in the moment—love, desire, anticipation, a sense of romance, a fear of loss, or memories of past kisses may infold the sensuous unfolding/enfolding, charging the moment with affective intensities and meaning. At the same time, the sound of a phone ringing, an unpleasant odour or a troubling thought could instantly fold this precarious moment of un-folding-enfolding-infolding, giving way to alternate
unfoldings infolded with other contexts. The medium of photography plays an interesting role in relation to remembering and reliving past experiences. Both taking photographs and looking at photographs re-mediate past experiences in some way, infolding other contexts, (re)situating the experience in different contexts of meaning and significance.

In the context of this study, I consider the photographer, the medium of photography and the lifeworld as active participants that mediate what coalesces in the moment as experience. As I argued previously, the practice of photography is more than a simple act of picking up a camera and pressing a button. The interview data support the notion that the medium of photography mediates particular ways of being present in the world, that a photographer lends his or her own particular intentionality to these unfoldings of presence, and that the practice of photography becomes a means of ‘infolding contexts,’ of experiencing, expressing or enacting one’s relation to and existence in the world.

In order to further contextualize and support my discussion of the study findings, I incorporate several useful concepts from philosophical and theoretical approaches invested in understanding perception, experience, media and mediation—notably phenomenology, post-phenomenology and media studies. I do not intend to offer in-depth accounts of each of these research traditions, but draw on these bodies of work

---

17 I suspect that the power of things ‘on the periphery’ to interrupt a particular moment of unfolding depends on how invested or immersed people are in the experience, and the relative importance (life threatening event or a welcome distraction) of the interruption in relation to unfolding experience.
for concepts and vocabulary that will meaningfully support and illuminate this exploration of how photography mediates the human-world relation. In the next three sections I consider each participant in the human-technology-world relation—the photographer, the medium of photography, and the ‘lifeworld’—in their capacity as media, as actively shaping and transforming experience. The concept of the fold—and the movements of un/folding-enfolding-infolding—will server to hold things together in one figure, that of mediated experience.

2.3 Photographer

The iconic image of a photographer looking at the world through a camera view finder visualizes several core concepts for thinking about the human-world relation as it is enacted and mediated through the practice of photography—embodiment, intentionality and perception.

2.3.1 Embodiment

In Phenomenology of perception, French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002; 1945) emphasized embodiment—being (in) a body or being-flesh—as the ground for all experience, as our unique and situated18 “point of view upon the world” (p. 81). Embodied being is our ‘existential’ presence in the world, our interface with the world, our expression of identity to others, our agency to act, and the point of

---

18 The term ‘situated’ acknowledges the contextuality of our existence—the existential fact that our lives unfold in particular social, historical, and political contexts.
convergence for how we make sense of things. Embodiment enables us to perceive—to see, hear, smell, taste, touch—and makes it possible for us to think, feel, speak, act, remember, imagine, form and transform.\footnote{Being able-bodied is not something I take for granted. For many years I supported people who were born into bodies with a range of mental and physical disabilities. In terms of un/folding, we can consider disabilities as types of folding (e.g., the senses of sight, mobility, speech), decreasing our capacity for perception and expression. Much of our work as support workers was to seek out different ways of facilitating alternate unfoldings of perception and presence for those we supported.} Sobchack (1992) observes how the lived-body is an \textit{essential pre-condition} for meaningful experience:

For Merleau-Ponty, the lived-body is not merely an object in the world, the flesh of its flesh; the body is also a subject in the world. It is both agent and agency of an engagement with the world that is lived in its \textit{subjective} modality as \textit{perception} and in its \textit{objective} modality as \textit{expression}, both modes constituting the unity of meaningful experience. (p. 40)

As the ground for all experience, the lived-body is also its medium. Our bodies bear the traces of our personal history and hold our thoughts, wants, desires, imagination, memories and beliefs. The lived-body is not a passive recipient of outside stimuli, but actively mediates what emerges as conscious experience: it “\textit{infolds contexts}, it infolds \textit{volitions} and \textit{cognitions}” (Massumi, 2002, p. 30, emphasis added). Massumi (2002) emphasizes the simultaneity and complexity of embodiment as a dynamic of movement and sensation:

When I think of my body and ask what it does to earn that name, two things stand out: It \textit{moves}. It \textit{feels}. In fact, it does both at the same time. It moves as it
feels, and it feels itself moving. [...] If you start from an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation, the slightest, most literal displacement convokes a qualitative difference, because as directly as it conducts itself it beckons a feeling, and feelings have a way of folding into each other, resonating together, interfering with each other, mutually intensifying, all in unquantifiable ways apt to unfold again in action, often unpredictably. Qualitative difference: immediately the issue is change. Felt and unforeseen. (p. 1)

The capacity of the body to move and feel, “to affect or be affected” (Massumi, 2002, p. 15) finds its expression in the medium of photography. It is often the moment or process of being affected that moves the photographer to act, to take a photograph, to capture something of what affected the photographer.

### 2.3.2 Intentionality

Another useful concept for thinking through how photography mediates the photographer’s embodied experience is that of intentionality—the directedness of human beings towards their world. German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl used the concept of intentionality to argue that consciousness is not an abstract state of being—I am conscious(ness)—but rather that “all consciousness is consciousness of something”
Sobchack (1992) emphasizes the mediated and mediating nature of consciousness:

Consciousness is not empty as it is given in experience. Consciousness as we live it and reflect upon it in experience is always mediated and mediating, is always consciousness of something (even when it is reflexive: consciousness of itself and its activity). For Husserl, then, intentionality was a term that described the invariant directedness of consciousness, its always correlational character or structure. (p. 34)

When we consider intentionality as the “invariant directedness of consciousness” in terms of un/folding-enfolding, we can differentiate degrees of interest and intensity. Our perceptual availability to the world, our being present with and through our senses can be folded or unfolded (heightened, intensified). We can choose to do things that unfold our intentionality in particular ways, ways that we value or enjoy. For example, the Buddhist practice of mindfulness uses meditation as a medium for heightening or enlivening modes of being present that our everyday lives tend to ‘fold’. If we think of the photographer looking through the camera view finder,

----------

\(^{20}\) Husserl emphasized the “’fullness’ of consciousness” (Sobchack, 1992, p. 34). At any point in time, our consciousness is full with all kinds of contents. For example, if I stand on a beach looking out on the ocean, I may be conscious of the sun on my skin, the sound of the waves, the smell of the ocean, the wind moving through my hair, a stone poking through my shoe, the presence of somebody standing beside me, but also of things I remember, deadlines I need to meet, decisions I need to make and so on.

\(^{21}\) Unfolding presence in a way that we value already implies an infolding of contexts, in that the heightening of our perceptual availability and intensification of our sense perception takes place in a context that is meaningful or valuable to us.
we see an enactment, extension and amplification of embodied intentionality, of being
directed towards the world in a very particular and focused way.

2.3.3 Perception and expression

_Sight includes at any given instant an infinite manifold at once, and its own qualitative
conditions open the way into what lies beyond. The unfolding of space before the eye,
under the magic of light, bears in itself the germ of infinity—as a perceptual aspect. Its
conceptual framing in the idea of infinity is a step beyond perception, but one that was
taken from this base. The fact that we can look into the unbounded depth of the universe
has surely been of immense importance in the formation of our ideas._

(Jonas, 2001, p. 151)

Merleau-Ponty (2002; 1945) argues for the _primacy of perception_ as perception
is the body’s interface with the world. Through perception, Merleau-Ponty argues, “a
world forms itself around me and begins to exist for me” (p. ix). Perception, as the
unfolding of embodied intentionality, is inherently _relational_, “perspectival” and “finite”
(Carman, 2009, p. 631): I perceive, experience and act from my embodied point of view
on the world and my embodied being-in-the-world, at a particular time in a particular
place.

For Merleau-Ponty, perception is not an intentional act—something you decide
to do from time to time—but rather an existential mode of being, a continuous interface
with what he describes as “the flesh of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). Drawing on
Gestalt psychology,\textsuperscript{22} he invokes the concept of the \textit{figure}\textsuperscript{23} to identify that which stands out in the perceptual field:

Now the sensation and images which are supposed to be the beginning and end of all knowledge never make their appearance anywhere other than in a horizon of meaning, and the significance of the percept, far from resulting from an association, is in fact presupposed in all association, whether it concerns the conspectus of a figure before one, or the recollection of former experiences. Our perceptual field is made up of ‘things’ and ‘spaces between things.’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2002; 1945, p. 18)

The perceptual field includes, but is not reducible to, the visual field, and the ‘things’ that come to figure in perception need not be visible ones. The human sensorium, however, tends to merge a range of perceptual data—of sights, sounds, smells, taste, touch, movements, contexts—into a coherent identifiable ‘something’ that we can relate to—into a figure or a Gestalt. Sobchack (1992) points out that the human senses,

\begin{itemize}
  \item A Gestalt identifies “an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.” It is the central concept in a theory of perception, elaborated in the 1890 paper \textit{On Gestalt Qualities} by Austrian philosopher Christian von Ehrenfelz. In the early 1900s, the concept was taken up by Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Köhler in the context of Gestalt psychology (Blackburn, 2008b).
  \item Figure and ground are two key concepts in visual representation. The figure is that which is perceived as object or point of focus, whereas the ground refers to the background from which the figure emerges or against which the figure stands out. The fact that we see certain things as objects and the rest as “spaces between things” points to the selective nature of perception. In his later work on media, McLuhan (Sutton, 1975) started to use the figure-ground concept as well, arguing that “the medium is ground, the so-called message is figure.” In saying this he argued that media tend to operate in the background, unfolding a space for human experience, structuring our being-in-the-world in particular ways. He pointed out that media “have embedded in them their own assumptions about time and space,” and that any analysis of media should always consider figure and ground together as they constitute each other (Gabriele & Stober, 1998).
\end{itemize}
while offering “different openings to the world [...] cooperate as a unified system of access” (p. 77). Therefore, as Sobchack argues, perception can be understood as both synaesthetic and synoptic:

> Perception is not constituted as a sum of discrete senses (sight, touch, etc.), nor is it experienced as fragmented and decentered. All our senses are modalities of perception and, as such, are co-operative and commutable. Such cooperation among and commutation of our senses occurs in existence because our senses all figure on the finite and situated field that is our body. (p. 76)

Thinking perception ‘through the fold’ in the context of photography, the photographer is likely to unfold his or her perceptive availability through the sense of sight more emphatically than through the other senses, privileging the visual dimension of things. The sense of sight, however, is infolded and enfolded by the other senses. For example, a sound or a scent may direct the eye to its source, which may lead to a visual engagement with what was found there. In the same way memories may articulate perceptual and visual unfoldings in which something stands out through its resonance

---

24 Macpherson (2011) proposes that perceptual processes are perhaps best defined as “those that allow a subject to gain information about the world” (p. 8). In light of this definition, one would extend Aristotle’s identification of ‘the five senses’—sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell—to include other senses that are perhaps more deeply ‘embedded’ in embodied being, or that can be understood as ‘compound manifestations’ of multiple sources of sensory input. MacPherson offers to expand the human sensorium beyond the ‘basic five’ to include: 1) Proprioception: “awareness of movement of the body and of how much force is required to move the body” (p. 22); 2) Equilibrrioception, or the sense of balance (p. 23); the Vomeronasal organ, which detects pheromones—although McPherson points out that this sense common in many animal species is contested in human beings (p. 26); Specific articulations within the sense of touch: “distinctive pain” (nociception), “temperature” (thermoception) and “pressure” (p. 27). Like Sobchack, MacPherson emphasizes that the senses do not operate as neatly separated entities, but rather infold each other to emerge as a whole, as a unified figure.
with what was ‘on your mind’ at the time. Therefore, what surfaces as conscious perception from a ‘sea’ of inconspicuous perceptions on the part of the photographer, what is singled out in some way by his or her unique embodied point-of-view as notable or remarkable, as ‘subject matter,’ is like a crystallization of multiple un/foldings and infoldings.\textsuperscript{25}

Sobchack further emphasizes the interrelational nature of perception—of seeing and being seen, of acting in the world, of being with others. Therefore the primacy of perception goes hand in hand with the “primacy of expression” which “is synopsized in lived body experience as the \textit{primacy of communication}” (Sobchack, 1992, p. 41). In the context of photographic acts, we can consider both the photographic act and the resulting photographic image as expressions of someone’s embodied point of view. These expressions—the photographic act and the image—have the capacity to communicate something to those who see it.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{25} I do not mean to suggest here that every photographic act is deliberated in every aspect of experience and encounter. Many photographs are ‘mindless,’ in many respects. We may take a photograph that is not intentionally framed but includes a ‘something’ that was of interest on some level, a sign along the road, a bug or a quality of light. We may just quickly snap a picture of something in order to remember to do something or follow up on something later. The photograph, in turn, will frequently surprise us, make us notice things that we didn’t notice at the time that we took the picture. This aspect of photography can be understood within Bergson’s notion of the \textit{actualization of the virtual}.

\textsuperscript{26} For example, I remember many holidays in which the acts of one photographer along the side of the road would cause many other people to pull over and have a look at what was being witnessed by that photographer (e.g., a wild life sighting) and subsequently follow suit by photographing the same event.
2.3.4 Mediated experience

In this section I briefly reflect on two scholars whose work on perception and experience resonates well with a conception of the movements of mediation as a process of un/folding-enfolding-infolding. The first section considers the phenomenological categories of American pragmatist philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. The second section highlights an influential body of work by Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on the psychology of optimal experience, or ‘flow.’

2.3.4.1 Peirce’s phenomenological categories

Peirce’s phenomenological categories—Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness—offer a useful framework for teasing apart some of the complex, many-mixed movements that unfold within perception and experience (Figure 5). Peirce (1958) describes his three phenomenological categories in relation to what he refers to as the phaneron, “the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not” (Peirce, 1958, §1, section 284). What is of particular interest in this approach is that Peirce does not distinguish between actual and imagined dimensions of experience, nor does his conception exclude those

---

27 I decided to include Csikszentmihalyi’s work as part of the perspectives that frame this inquiry after it ‘crossed my path’ several times in the context of this study. Although most of the concepts I chose to work with find their home in the realm of phenomenology, his psychology of optimal experience resonates well with a conception of mediated experience as a flow of un/folding-enfolding-infolding, as a coming together of multiple dimensions of sensing and sense making in the immersive context of an activity that is enjoyable to the participant.
sensations or feelings that do not bear a direct relation to the life-world. Although Peirce distinguishes these three conceptual categories—Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness—he notes their profound interdependence within an experiential continuum, emphasizing that “they are so intangible that they are rather tones and tints upon conceptions” (§5, section 353, emphasis added).

Figure 5: Visualization of Peirce’s three phenomenological categories
Firstness refers to realm of immediate consciousness: a ‘this-ness’ or ‘that-ness’ of something—a colour, a smell, a texture, a quality of light—qualities of feeling\textsuperscript{28} that exist as “mere may-bes, not necessarily realized” (§1, section 304). For Peirce, Firstness is the realm of all that could be, of possibility, of “freshness, life, freedom,” of “unlimited and uncontrolled variety and multiplicity” (§1, section 302). Secondness is a dyadic concept, of “two subjects brought into oneness” (§4, section 326). It refers to an action (a response, a struggle) in relation to being acted upon. Marks (2000) writes that “[i]t is in the realm of Secondness, of ‘brute facts,’ that qualities become attributes of objects and events, which are perceived in their individuality and in opposition to everything else. This we might term the realm of the real” (p. 197). Thirdness is the space of mediation, of continuity, of connection, of growth, of positioning, of reflection, of giving things a place in experience. Thirdness establishes a relation between Firstness and Secondness. Peirce emphatically argues that meaning always exists in a triadic relation, that it cannot be reduced to mere “quality and reaction” (Book 3, §3, section 345).

Peirce’s phenomenological categories seem to capture the essence of the practice of photography well. Firstness identifies that which captures our eye—a burst of color, a quality of light, a sense of awe, something that jumps out, that surprises us, that delights or disturbs us in some way. Secondness enfolds the photographic encounter, of conscious perception, of picking up the camera, of struggling to find a way

\textsuperscript{28} Peirce uses the word ‘feeling’ as something yet to be qualified or interpreted, as a duration of a sensation, a monadic structure.
to capture the this-ness or that-ness of something in such a way that it translates into
the two-dimensional formal space of the photographic frame. Thirdness connects
Firstness and Secondness in a ‘structure of meaning.’ Its mediating movement ripples on
long after the picture is taken. It points to the ways in which something becomes
meaningful to us, it enfolds the process of infolding contexts, of giving something a
place in experience.

2.3.4.2 Creativity & Flow: The work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Since the 1970s, Csikszentmihalyi has done extensive research on creativity,
optimal experience and flow. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) identifies creativity as “a central
source of meaning in our lives” (p. 1). Creativity, he argues, is the core of what makes
humans unique within the animal kingdom, and being involved in creative activity
makes us feel more alive. Csikszentmihalyi emphasizes both the relational and
contextual nature of creativity: It is not something that happens in isolation, but unfolds
and becomes meaningful “in the interaction between a person’s thoughts and a socio-
cultural context” (p. 23).

The sense of feeling more alive, of “optimal experience,” Csikszentmihalyi refers
to as flow. Although the activity or context that mediates a flow experience will be
different for different people, flow experiences do share a set of common features:

In our studies we found that every flow activity, whether it involved competition,
chance, or any other dimension of experience, had this in common: It provided a
sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality. It pushed the person to higher levels of performance, and led to previously undreamed-of states of consciousness. In short, it transformed the self by making it more complex. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 74)

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) identified nine consistently recurring phenomena among his study participants when they described “how it feels when an experience is enjoyable” (p.111) (See Figure 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clear goals</th>
<th>Immediate feedback to your actions</th>
<th>Balance between challenge and skills</th>
<th>Action and awareness are merged</th>
<th>Distractions excluded from consciousness</th>
<th>No worry of failure</th>
<th>Self-consciousness disappears</th>
<th>Sense of time distorted</th>
<th>The activity becomes ‘autotelic’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>You experience a sense of inevitability or ‘meant-to-be-ness’ about all aspects of the creative process</td>
<td>You know where you are at and how well you are doing</td>
<td>In a flow experience there is a productive tension between your skill level and the challenge inherent in the creative activity. If there is no challenge, you will feel bored and lose interest. If, on the other hand, the task is too difficult, frustration and anxiety ensue</td>
<td>Your sense of presence in the unfolding moment is heightened</td>
<td>You are fully immersed in what you are doing. You no longer pay attention to anything that is peripheral to this experience or creative act</td>
<td>You have a sense of being in control or of being part of something bigger than you</td>
<td>You lose concern about how you appear to others and may feel that “the self expands through acts of self-forgetfulness” (p. 113)</td>
<td>You lose track of time and your experience of time may fold or unfold: an hour may feel like a minute or a minute as if it lasted a life time</td>
<td>You do what you are doing for its own sake, the activity becomes an end in itself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Nine elements of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, pp. 110-113)
In thinking flow through the fold, we can see it as an enfolding, a state of immersion in which a particular activity unfolds time and space, perception and presence in intensely focused ways and in which a sense of purpose or meant-to-be-ness infolds the activity. Flow unfolds presence in a way that is pleasurable and that heightens the sense of being alive. In this context, the medium of photography is an active participant in shaping the unfolding of time, space, perception and presence.

2.4 Photography

When considering photography as a medium from a perspective of mediated perception and experience, we can differentiate several dimensions of mediation: the design and operation of the camera as a technological device, doing photography as a creative practice, and participating in photography as a practice of representation that is embedded in a range of discursive contexts. Although an in-depth discussion of the wider social, political and economic impacts of technology is well beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to recognize that photography as a technology and commodity is a force within a range of socio-economic, ecological and political orbits. As a commodity it partakes in cycles of obsolescence that follow in the wake of the continual push towards technological innovation. It also is part of larger technological systems that facilitate its ‘program’ (e.g., the demand for analog or digital media to store or materialize images, machines that make photographic prints, people that produce or sell or operate or fix these machines, electronic waste cycles etc.).


### 2.4.1 Medium

In his book *What things do: Philosophical reflections on technology, agency and design*, Verbeek (2005) develops a conceptual framework that facilitates analyses of the mediating effects of technologies and the many different relationships that human beings have with technological artifacts.\(^\text{30}\) Verbeek (2005) emphasizes both the *existential* and *hermeneutic* dimensions of technological mediation, and the mediating effects of technological artifacts (e.g., amplification, reduction, translation):

From a hermeneutical perspective, artifacts mediate human experience by transforming perception and interpretive frameworks, helping to shape the way in which human beings encounter reality. The structure of this kind of mediation involves amplification and reduction; some interpretive possibilities are strengthened while others are weakened. From an existential perspective, artifacts mediate human existence by giving concrete shape to their behaviour and the social context of their existence. This kind of mediation can be described in terms of translation, whose structure involves invitation and inhibition; some

---

\(^{30}\) The notion of the *Cyborg*—a hybrid being that consist of both biological/organic parts and artificial/technological parts—offers another conceptualization of the human-technology configuration. Philosopher Bernard Stiegler theorized the human as an essentially “prosthetic being” (Mitchell & Hansen, 2010, p. xiii). Reflecting on Stiegler’s philosophy, Mitchell and Hansen (2010) emphasize the continuous *co-evolution* of human beings and their technologies:

Technics, then, is of the essence, the medium for human life. The human and the technical coevolve, and media, in both its singular form, as a quasi-autonomous giving of the sensible, and its plural form, as a constantly evolving set of concrete exteriorizations of the human, designates something of their relation. And it does so in two distinct yet tightly correlated registers: as an always concrete articulation of the conjunction of human sensory and perceptual ratios with the technical processes that broker or mediate the givenness of space and time for human experience, and as a general condition for human life at any moment of its evolution. (p. xiii)
forms of involvement are fostered while others are discouraged. Both kinds of mediation, taken together, describe how artifacts help shape how humans can be present in the world and how the world can be present for them.\textsuperscript{31} (p. 195)

American philosopher of technology Don Ihde elaborates the notion that each technology unfolds particular modes of engagement through his concept of \textit{technological intentionality}. Verbeek (2005) explains:

\begin{quote}
Idhe has, from a phenomenological perspective, characterized this mediating role of artifacts in terms of what he calls \textit{technological intentionality} (Ihde 1990, 141).\textsuperscript{32} By this he means that technologies—like consciousness for Husserl—have a certain directionality, an inclination or trajectory that shapes the ways in which they are used. […] They have an intentionality, a trajectory that promotes a specific kind of use (140-143). They do not have a determining influence, for one can indeed write a slowly composed and carefully thought out text on a word processor, and write conversationally with a pen. But the technologies in question \textit{promote} or \textit{evoke} a distinct way of writing. Technologies, as it were, contain an “implicit user manual” (Procee 1997, 159).\textsuperscript{33} (p. 114-115)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{31} The idea that technologies selectively unfold how human beings can be present in the world and how the world can be present for them runs parallel to Marks’(2011b) elaboration of media as unfolders in the context of enfolding-unfolding aesthetics (see also Chapter 1.3.4).


The “implicit user manual” of a photo camera unfolds a technological device that is designed for a single operator: a camera is equipped with a single view finder, one lens and one shutter release button. Its functionality as a recording device for still images encourages the photographer to engage the world within this paradigm. Its technical functionality tends to separate the photographer from his or her context as the camera needs to be held in front of one’s face in order to compose an image within the view finder’s frame, interrupting other forms of social engagement (e.g., face to face contact). Operating the device successfully calls for a cognitive investment on the part of the photographer in terms of making a range of technical decisions like selecting the desired aperture and exposure time. Although digital cameras have radically changed the camera’s technological intentionality—e.g., by featuring an LCD screen for instant playback, and the incorporation of autofocus and other automated functions that facilitate speed and instantaneity—they still require somebody to operate it, someone to—as philosopher of photography Vilém Flusser (2000) would have it—enact its program.

34 A video camera, for example, is more likely to direct its users towards narrative because its *modus operandus* enacts duration or the flow of time rather than stand-alone still images.

35 Moving against ‘common practice’ is possible to some extent, yet calls for determination on the part of the photographer. Artists tend to seek out forms of alternate use, of finding new ways of employing media, of working against its ‘program.’ Marks (2011a) argues that “artists are especially good at alternative unfoldings” (np).
2.4.2 Ihde’s human technology relations

Ihde identifies several forms of technologically mediated intentionality (Figure 7). He identifies *embodiment relations* in which the technology interfaces with and extends the ‘human sensorium’ (e.g., wearing glasses): Human intentionality ‘merges’ with and is transformed by a technological artifact. The second types of relations are *hermeneutic relations* which involve a type of *reading* of technologically generated information. Ihde (1990) explains that “through hermeneutic relations we can, as it were, read ourselves into any possible situation without being there” (p. 92) (e.g., a thermometer). In *alterity relations*, the technology as ‘other’ is the focus of our attention and the terminus of our action (e.g. withdrawing money from an ATM machine). *Background relations* refer to those technologies that indirectly transform our experience of the world by working in the background (e.g., automatic or semi-automatic devices like heating systems or refrigerators). Ihde locates these relations in a “human-technology continuum” (p. 93, emphasis added) marked by movement, transition and simultaneity.

---

36 In his article “Cyborg intentionality: Rethinking the phenomenology of human-technology relations,” Peter-Paul Verbeek (2008) extends Ihde’s human technology relations to include forms of intentionality in which technological intentionality infolds the human. *Hybrid intentionality* refers to those instances when the technological merges with human flesh to the extent that we can no longer “tell them apart” (e.g. pacemakers or antidepressant medications). Verbeek sees *composite intentionality* as an augmentation of Ihde’s hermeneutic relations. In composite intentionality, the emphasis shifts from reading the world through a particular technology to experiencing a world that is only available in its technological representation, in which technological intentionalities function as “relevant in themselves” (p. 393) (e.g., virtual worlds, new media installation works).
The human encounter with photography also unfolds within this continuum, fluidly moving back and forth between different modes of engagement. Depending on the skill level of the photographer and the technical demands of the camera being used, photography will frequently oscillate between *embodiment* and *alterity* relations, from engaging the world through the camera in such a way that the technological artifact seems to disappear to moments where all attention is focused on the operation of the technology itself, trying to work out the technical end of things—focal length, aperture, exposure time, etc.

Photography nearly always operates in some type of *hermeneutic* relation in terms of enabling us to ‘read the world through it’ in some way. Because the camera functions as a recording device directly interfacing with what is in front of it, we tend to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IHDE’s HUMAN TECHNOLOGY RELATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology in direct interface with human intentionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embodiment relations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hermeneutic relations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alterity relations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background relations</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 7 Adapted from Verbeek (2005, p. 389)
look at photographs as factual, direct representations of reality.\textsuperscript{37} We turn to photography to document places, people and things. We also tend to read the past through photography, using photographs as mediators of memory and as witnesses of history. In the context of contemporary photographic practices, photography seems to increasingly function as a \textit{perceptive} technology, as a medium that sees for us.\textsuperscript{38} In a sense, photography seems to increasingly operate in a \textit{background} relation—both in terms of the ubiquity of photography and the mindless ease with which we can now snap, share and delete digital pictures using our cell phones, PDA’s and other digital devices.

\section*{2.5 Lifeworld}

The world is the ‘shared ground’ for human existence and experience. Not only does the world unfold the spatial, temporal and material dimensions that make life possible, it also constitutes the many contexts in which meaning making becomes

\textsuperscript{37} Photographic ‘truth’ has historically been linked to the \textit{indexicality} of the medium, “the fact that [photographs] are, in certain respects, direct physical imprints of the reality recorded in them” (Messaris, 1997, p. x), the fact that “the photograph is seen as a re-presentation of nature itself, as an \textit{unmediated copy} of the real world” (Sekula, 1982, p. 86, emphasis added). Although, technically speaking, the camera records what is in front of it at the time that the shutter opens, photographic framing is a form of editing and manipulation: the photographer can make things appear in certain ways. Staging photographs has been part of photographic practice since its inception. Digital photography and the \textit{Photoshop} era have done their fare share in terms of further debunking the “myth of photographic truth” (p. 86). Most people seem to have a ‘baseline awareness’ that anything that appears in photographic images may be doctored.

\textsuperscript{38} These days, when I visit museums, exhibitions, ‘tourist attractions,’ and events, I see the people around me holding up their smart phones and small digital point and shoot cameras to photograph everything in sight. It is as if the act of looking is deferred, and people appear to spend more time looking at the small LCD display on the back of the camera than they do looking at what is there in front of the lens.
possible. Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology emphasizes that our being-in-the
world, our *Dasein*, “is ‘always already’ thrown into this pre-existing world of people and
objects, language and culture, and cannot be meaningfully detached from it” (Smith et
al., 2009, p. 17). Husserl’s *lifeworld* concept captures this “taken-for-granted” context of
everyday life (p. 15), the “all-encompassing and everpresent contextual, global horizon
in which our lives take their place” (Rechter, 2007, p. 36).

The lifeworld can be thought of on both individual and communal planes. From
the first-person perspective, the lifeworld refers to “the rational structure underlying
[someone’s] ‘natural attitude’ \(^{39}\) [...] the beliefs against which [one’s] everyday attitude
towards [oneself], the objective world and others receive their ultimate justification”
(Beyer, 2011). On a communal plane, the lifeworld concept points to the shared ground
within a group or a culture, the ‘a priori’ structures of meaning that make
communication and “mutual translation” possible (Beyer, 2011). The lifeworld
simultaneously functions as the ground or horizon against which events and experiences
come to stand out as ‘figures’ while actively mediating what can become visible and
how.

---

\(^{39}\) *Natural attitude* is a central concept in Husserl’s phenomenology. It refers to the common attitudes and pre-conceptions that frame our every-day taken-for-granted understanding of reality. In order to achieve the *phenomenological* attitude (as opposed to the natural attitude), Husserl argued, we need to ‘*bracket*’ our natural attitude. In other words, we need to shelve our preconceived notions and beliefs about the nature of things and come to phenomena with a ‘fresh eye’ and an open
mind. Coming from a perspective of mediation, in which language itself is recognized as a medium in its own right, I align myself with those scholars (e.g., Heidegger) who argue that perception and experience are always already mediated.
In relation to photography, the lifeworld unfolds and enfolds its context for practice in existential and hermeneutic ways. Like consciousness, photography is always photography of something.\textsuperscript{40} Irrespective of whether the picture ‘turns out’ or not, the camera opens its shutter to capture the light reflecting off the temporal, spatial, material ontology of the world as it exists ‘out there.’ Because the medium of photography indiscriminately registers whatever is present in its field of vision, it can frequently surprise, shock or delight us by revealing something that we did not notice when we were taking the picture.\textsuperscript{41} Simultaneously, the lifeworld as the ground for meaningful practice enfolds contexts that mediate what the photographer selects as note-worthy, significant, compelling or beautiful. \textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} Here I am not considering digital image editing practices (e.g., Photoshop) where images can be constructed or assembled from a range of photographic data. I am referring to those photographic acts that involve a camera and the technical process of registering the light reflections of any phenomenon or thing that may find itself in front of the lens during the time of exposure—actual places, people, things or more ephemeral phenomena like light (e.g., time exposures). This act may be intentional on the part of the photographer, or accidental. On these grounds I claim that photography is always photography of something.

\textsuperscript{41} This surprise element was theorized by Walter Benjamin as the “optical unconscious” (see also Chapter 1.1). Within a Deleuzian/Bergsonian conception of photography, the appearance of the unexpected could be theorized as an actualization of the virtual. Both ideas underscore the selective nature of human perception, and that the photographic frame can mediate ‘appearances.’

\textsuperscript{42} The lifeworld can also be conceptualized as a type of force field that sustains a particular unfolding of socio-economic, historical, cultural ‘informational’ structures that mediate what can become visible and how. Marks (2011a) explains how what we encounter as our lifeworld is but one particular encoding of the infinity of possibility that precedes perception: Information thus organizes noise into something considered meaningful. Information is a quantitative unfolding from the infinite that precedes our perception. Information is what has been selected from the infinite as valuable, and unfolded. The rest (so, almost everything) remains enfolded. In turn, what we finally perceive with our senses, in many cases, is unfolded from information. In our society much of what we deal with first-hand has already been encoded as information. (np)
2.5.1 Media as ecologies

If we understand media as actively shaping human perceptions and actions, as creating environments for individual and collective life, then concepts like *ecology* or *ecosystem* are far better suited to address the interrelational complexities of media than “conceptions of medium/media as a narrowly technical entity or system” (Mitchell & Hansen, 2010, p. xiii). McLuhan’s concept of media incorporated “the totality of technical, social and aesthetic reality” (p. xvii). Thinking of media as ecology emphasizes the (inter)relation and (inter)dependence of living beings to one another and to the environment that facilitates and contextualizes their practices. Media as ecology also points to complexity and change. Mitchell and Hansen (2010) emphasize the inherently dynamic relation between media and human being-in-the-world:

A more exact sense of what we mean by ‘the human’ would emphasize the sense in which humanity is a work in progress, a radically historical form of life distinguished not simply by ‘media’ but by cycles of media innovation, invention and obsolescence. For in media, to paraphrase the Bible only slightly, we live and move and have our being. And they do not remain static, but constitute a dynamic, historically evolving environment or ecosystem that may or may not sustain a recognizable form of human life indefinitely. (p. xiv)

---

Digital culture offers a very compelling example in terms of thinking of media as ecology, as something that creates particular environments for living. Many real-life practices and behaviours find their parallels in our lives online—e.g., ‘friending’ or ‘unfriending’ people on Facebook, cyber bullying, public surveillance activities by posting videos on Youtube, creating the life of your dreams in a virtual world like Second Life, etc.
Photography as a technology and as a practice seems to have become integral to contemporary life, a type of ‘shared language’ fully integrated into the information streams that contextualize our existence, that infuse our lifeworld. Web-based interfaces like Flickr and Facebook facilitate an unprecedented flow of photographic images embedded in interactive structures that make it possible for its users to un/like, un/link or comment. Sobchack (2004) describes how, once a medium or a technology becomes “culturally pervasive,” it begins to operate as a media ecology that constitutes a particular ‘climate’ for us to inhabit:

[W]e can see how a qualitatively new techno-logic begins to alter our perceptual orientation in and toward the world, ourselves and others. Furthermore, as this new techno-logic becomes culturally pervasive and normative, it can come to inform and affect profoundly the socio-logic, psycho-logic, axio-logic, and even the biologic by which we daily live our lives. (p. 137)


My reference to a medium or a technology in the context of this section on media ecologies can refer to a singular device or a range of devices and platforms that together operate as a particular context of practice (e.g., digital culture / the internet).
2.5.2 Media as mediated

Whereas the notion of media ecology points to how media unfold environments for individual and collective life in the ‘here and now’, a consideration of how media themselves are mediated seeks to identify the range of contexts—historical, social, political, economic—that facilitate their being and functioning. In his book *Media technology: Critical perspectives*, media theorist Joost van Loon (2008) considers the ways in which media themselves are mediated, how the lifeworld unfolds and infolds the social and historical contexts in which media can unfold their presence and influence. Van Loon identifies four domains that mediate media—form, historicity, cultural embedding, and embodiment. Form, he argues, gives us insight into “the formation of particular logics” in terms of modes of sensing, interpreting and reasoning” (p. 9). Form is a contextual concept in that media not only ‘embody’ a particular logic, but that they are “embedded in specific environments” and practices (p. 10). To better understand the ‘life’ of a medium, one also has to consider the historical context in which it emerged. Cultural embedding refers to the ways in which media are an integral part of the social forms that make shared meaning possible, forms that tend

46 In *Critical terms for media studies*, Mitchell and Hansen (2010) identify similar foci within media studies. Starting with the premise that “media themselves are mediated,” they emphasize the complexity of the human-technology-world relationship as it emerges through “a three-way set of exchanges among the dimensions of individual subjectivity, collective activity, and technical capability” (p. xv, emphasis added). This perspective joins the ‘in here’ and the ‘out there’ on both experiential and hermeneutic planes, while emphasizing that mediation is an ongoing movement of transformation and change. Incorporating the biological, the social and the technological into the ‘mediation equation’ points to the intricacy and complexity of what emerges in perception and experience.

47 This argument resonates well with Sobchack’s observation that media “can come to inform and affect profoundly the socio-logic, psycho-logic, axio-logic, and even the biologic by which we daily live our lives” (Sobchack, 2004, p. 137).
to endure or linger over time.\textsuperscript{48} Van Loon argues that “there is no meaning outside mediation,” and that sense-making is always \textit{performative}, an “enactment” (p. 13):

The emphasis on the enactment of sense-making enables us to identify specific modes of agency, subjectivity, intentionality, as well as necessity, determination and impact; in short, enactment highlights the process of motivation. All forms of mediation are \textit{motivated}. (p. 14)

His final premise is that media have “a \textit{logical} starting point in the human body itself” (van Loon, 2008, p. 14). Drawing on McLuhan, Van Loon emphasizes \textit{embodiment}, the ways in which “mediation extends the human body; its ability to perceive, to express itself, to ‘reach out and touch’ others across space and time” (p. 15). The socio-political and historical trajectories of embodiment underscore that that the body is “not a self-evident singularity, but itself differentiated (gendered) and politicized” (p. 15).

\textsuperscript{48} The general belief in the ‘truth’ of photography would be one such example. From its inception photography operated within paradigms of scientific observation. For a brief history of photography, see also Batchen (1997).
2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have elaborated the frames of reference that inform my exploration of how photography mediates experience in the human-world relation. Using a conception of mediation as un/folding, enfolding and infolding (‘anemone theory’), I explored how all participants in the photographic encounter—the photographer, the medium of photography, and the lifeworld—mediate and are mediated, and how perception and experience emerge as many-mixed. I looked to the fields of phenomenology, post-phenomenology, media studies and psychology for concepts that will meaningfully support my analysis and discussion of the study findings.

In relation to the photographer as medium, I discussed embodiment, intentionality, perception and expression, as well as two models of experience: Peirce’s phenomenological categories and Csikszentmihalyi’s psychology of optimal experience. In terms of photography as medium, I considered Verbeek’s postphenomenological perspective, technological intentionality and Ihde’s human-technology relations. In terms of the world as medium, I discussed Husserl’s life world concept, the notion of media as ecologies and media as mediated. Throughout this chapter I emphasized the entanglement of the existential and hermeneutic dimensions of experience.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This inquiry into the experiential aspects of photography unfolds as an ‘interdisciplinary’ project that weaves together phenomenological, hermeneutic, psychological and other strands into the complex fabric of mediated experience. To do justice to a study of complexity, detail and difference, I looked for a research methodology that would ‘get at’ or ‘touch on’ all these dimensions. Initially I considered artistic research strategies. As a visual artist who predominantly works with photography I could draw on my ‘first hand’ experiences with the medium of photography. I was concerned however that this approach would leave my particular preconceptions on the ways in which photography interfaces with one’s experience of the lifeworld insufficiently challenged. I decided to seek out an approach that would allow me an in-depth engagement with the stories of others. A survey of various qualitative research strategies led me to interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a good match for an in-depth inquiry into the experiential dimensions of the practice of photography.

3.1 Interpretative phenomenological analysis

Emerging from the field of applied psychology, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was first formalized in a 1996 publication by Jonathan A. Smith in the journal Psychology and Health (Smith, 1996). It was subsequently taken up in several
psychological research trajectories—health psychology, clinical and counseling psychology, educational psychology—as well as in the field of nursing research. More recently, IPA has found its way into other fields of inquiry that seek to explore “the human predicament” as it unfolds in experience (Smith et al., 2009, p. 5). IPA is an inductive qualitative research method that is exploratory in nature and often “explicitly process-oriented” (p. 46). Its conceptual framework brings together several core concepts and approaches from the spheres of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiographic research.

3.2 Theoretical underpinnings of IPA

3.2.1 Phenomenological

IPA is phenomenological in its commitment to study “what the experience of being human is like, in all of its various aspects, but especially in terms of the things which matter to us, and which constitute our lived world” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11). Drawing on the collective, cumulative contributions of several key phenomenological philosophers—Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre—IPA conceives of human beings as sensing and sense-making creatures whose intentionality towards and experience of the lived world—“the world of things, people, relationships and language” (p. 16)—is “embodied, interpersonal, affective and moral” in nature (p. 21). In the context of IPA, experience is understood as “a lived process, an unfurling of perspectives
and meanings, which are unique to the person’s embodied and situated relationship to the world” (p. 21).

3.2.2 Hermeneutic

The central focus on interpretation and meaning making (the “unfurling of perspectives and meanings”) points to the hermeneutic aspects of IPA. Building on Heidegger’s argument that phenomenology is essentially “a hermeneutic enterprise” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28), and that particular phenomena become visible through our interpretation of them, IPA places the hermeneutic circle at the heart of its methodology: Processes of interpretation and meaning making are understood as dynamic and non-linear, as cyclical movements between the parts and the whole on multiple contextual planes. IPA involves a “double hermeneutic,” in that the researcher tries to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of a particular phenomenon or experience (p.35).

3.2.3 Idiographic

IPA’s commitment to “do[ing] justice to the complexity of human psychology” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 38) is reflected in its “idiographic sensibility” (p. 37). IPA works with small samples of people who are “purposively-selected and carefully situated” (p. 29) in order to offer “detailed, nuanced analyses of particular instances of lived
experience” (p. 37). In this methodological context, the case study signifies a “focus on the particular” (p. 32), “intended to demonstrate existence, not incidence” (p. 30).

3.3 Data collection

Data collection for an IPA study usually involves semi-structured interviews with “purposively selected” participants. Interview questions are open-ended, and the interviewer attempts to ‘follow the lead’ of the participant as much as possible. The interviews are transcribed and analysed on a case by case basis. The researcher takes each interview transcript through several levels of analysis. The analysis of the interview data begins with identifying things that matter to the participant—“key objects of concern such as relationships, processes, places, events, values and principles” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 83)—and the meaning that these things have for the participant—“what those relationships, processes, places, etc. are like for the participant” (p. 83). After these exploratory notes, the researcher gradually moves from the particular to the identification of emergent themes to making connections across emergent themes towards looking for patterns across cases.

3.3.1 Sample selection

In the context of an IPA study, participants “are selected on the basis that they can grant access to a particular perspective on the phenomenon under study” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49, emphasis added). For this reason, IPA studies seek out a fairly
“homogeneous sample, for whom the research question will be meaningful” (p. 49). For the purpose of my research it made sense to interview photographers who were intentional about their commitment to the medium of photography. In order to ensure a fairly ‘homogeneous’ sample, I chose to focus this study on professional artist-photographers—actively practicing visual artists for whom photography is their medium of choice. To further increase homogeneity within my sample, I interviewed artists who all live and work in the same north-American city.

My decision to interview artist-photographers significantly focuses this inquiry of photography in terms of its situatedness in the context of a creative practice, which, in turn, is embedded in discourses on aesthetics and contemporary art. Of course, these contexts are bound to infuse the participant accounts in significant ways. If the purpose of this study were to make generalizable claims about what photography is, then this sampling choice would constitute a significant limitation. On the other hand, if this study can unfold a rich account of what photography can be, and is for some people, it may contribute to understandings of this human-technology relation that are multifaceted and complex. The particular intentionality and commitment that these artists have towards the medium of photography emerged in detailed, illuminating and reflexive accounts of photographic practice.

49 Of course, homogeneity is a challenging construct because most differences between participants could be argued to exist ‘below the surface,’ in the invisible realm of past experiences, memories and attitudes.
3.4 Sampling methods

I used three methods for identifying potential participants. Two participants were identified through my personal professional contacts. One participant came through a referral by my thesis supervisor. The remaining two participants were identified through referral by study participants (‘snowballing’). Each participant was contacted by way of an email message which included an introduction, my reasons for contacting them, a brief description of my study and a description of their commitment, should they agree to participate (Appendix B). All five invitations were accepted and followed up with the scheduling of an interview.

3.5 Interview process

The interview meeting was scheduled via email. In all cases I met with participants in a location of their choice. Three participants chose to meet in their own home; two chose to meet at their place of work. Some participants requested to see the interview questions beforehand, in which case I provided them with the interview schedule that was submitted as part of my ethics approval (Appendix C & D). Each interview was preceded by a time of casual conversation in which I would introduce myself if necessary. The participants were then asked to sign a consent form (Appendix E) before commencing with the actual interview. I prefaced each interview by emphasizing that the interview questions were merely a guide, and that the participant should feel free to talk about their unique experiences in their own words. Because I
was interviewing artists, I specifically asked them to set aside the ‘artist statement’ and really draw close to the experiential dimensions of photography. All participants were aware of my familiarity with the medium of photography and with ‘life as an artist.’ This sense of common ground seemed especially helpful in establishing rapport throughout the interview. It also enabled me to pick up on themes and nuances that I might have missed otherwise.

The interviews were audio recorded and ranged in length from approximately 45 minutes to almost two hours. After each interview I took some time to record my impressions and experiences as well as any ‘contexts’ that may have mediated the interview: the weather, the presence of particular objects in the interview space, or interruptions (e.g., phone calls, text messages, people entering the room). I completed these ‘field notes’ on the day of the interview while my impressions were still fresh. I would usually work on the transcription of the audio recording in the days following the interview. The transcription also included an account of ‘expressive utterings’ like laughter, sighs, silences or the struggle to find words. I made sure to complete each transcription before conducting the next interview. The transcription process, although extremely time consuming, was very valuable to me as it really allowed me to ‘dwell in’ each participant account and reflect on its contents.

---

50 An artist statement usually involves a strategic, political, discursive positioning of one’s art practice in the wider context of the discourse on contemporary art. Although these position statements have their function, they could easily reduce the complexity and richness of experience to a single discursive strategy (e.g., institutional critique).
3.6 Data analysis process

In order to make the interview transcripts easy to navigate, I created a table that assigned one column to the verbatim interview transcript. I incorporated separate columns for time markers, paragraph numbers, line numbers, exploratory comments and emergent themes. I identified each question and each answer with a paragraph number, and numbered all lines within each paragraph, enabling me to easily reference the transcript in my analysis of the interview data (see Appendix G).

The analysis process involved several steps. My transcription of the audio recording caused me to spend a lot of concentrated time with each participant account. After completing the transcription process, I would read through the transcript very slowly and use the exploratory comments column to take note of anything that seemed relevant in any way. I would write down comments and questions, and, as I went through more interviews, I would begin to identify similar thematic strands among participant accounts. I also began to identify some emergent themes, gradually moving away from description of what a participant was saying towards a more interpretive engagement with their stories.

After I completed working through all five interviews in this manner, I began to look for ways of organizing or structuring my emergent themes in such a way that I could meaningfully discuss them. At this point I decided to step back and take a break from the analysis process in order to gain a fresh perspective on things. During this time
I began to re-consider Deleuze’s concept of the fold—of thinking about mediation in terms of un/folding-enfolding-infolding—as a possibility for ‘bringing it all together.’ I was hesitant about this because I did not want to make the participant accounts fit a pre-existing theoretical perspective, but instead let their stories guide the way. After much deliberation I decided to use the fold as a mediation metaphor, as I really believed that it would not reduce but amplify and support the richness of the interview data. At this point I went through the participant interviews again and organized all emergent themes within each interview in terms of unfolding time, space, perception, presence, a sense of enfolding, and infolding contexts. This list went through multiple cycles of reorganizing the themes (see also Chapter 4, Figure 8).

3.7 Participant profiles

I include these participant profiles to provide some context to the people who bring their voices and stories to this exploration of the experiential dimensions of photography. Their names were changed in order to respect participant anonymity.

---

51 As elaborated in Chapter 1 and 2, I wrote an essay titled Anemone theory: An exploration of digital media as phenomena in the summer of 2010. In it, I used the concept of the fold to talk about what media do in terms of unfolding perception and experience. IPA is an inductive research method that seeks to take its lead from the participant accounts, rather than imposing a pre-existing theoretical framework. Only after an in-depth engagement with the interview data does the researcher seek out connections between the particularities of a participant’s lived experience and theoretical perspectives that are relevant to the analysis of the interview data. Only after much reflection did I decide to elaborate the concept of the fold as the conceptual framework for my analysis and discussion of the interview data.
3.7.1 Debra

Debra is 61 years old. She holds both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in visual arts, and has been active as an artist-photographer for over 40 years. I interviewed Debra in the living room of her apartment on the afternoon of December 29, 2010. When I entered her home, she was busy working on a book project for which she had spread out a large quantity of photographs on a white bed sheet covering her living room floor. In order to make room for us to sit down, she carefully packed up her photos while talking to me about her project. We decided to make ourselves comfortable by sitting down on the floor. We were facing several of her art projects that were standing up against the wall—among which a series of large close-up photographs of Debra and that of her now-deceased husband. These images ‘infused’ our conversation as Debra reflected on the image of her husband, the memories of the work they did together, and the significance the piece held for her. The overall tone of the interview was reflective and quiet.

3.7.2 Mike

Mike is 69 years old. His first experiences with photography were in his early teens when he received a little snapshot camera as a birthday gift. He did not consider photography seriously (as a vocation) until much later, during his years at art school. Mike has a bachelor’s degree in both photography and graphic design. Since then he has worked as both a photographer and teacher. I interviewed Mike at his home on the
afternoon of January 9, 2011. He briefly introduced me to his wife and then guided me into his studio space to show me some of the large photographs he had just finished printing. While looking at the prints, Mike began talking about how much he loves using his old 8x10 view camera—how it is able to render the textural detail that is so important to him, and how it allows him to manipulate space in ways that other cameras cannot. We decided to do the interview in a cozy corner of the studio space. I sat down on a couch near the fire place and Mike pulled up an office chair. He had printed out the list with interview questions I sent him prior to the interview, and regularly referred back to these, expressing his concern about wandering off topic too much. The interview was filled with colourful storytelling and lots of laughter.

### 3.7.3 Brendan

Brendan is 51 years old. Growing up in the era of snapshot cameras, photography was part of his life from an early age on. While in art school, he predominantly used photography to document art work—his own and that of others. As his art practice developed, he seriously began working with photography, partly because he simply did not have the space for making sculpture and installation art. Brendan has both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in visual arts. I interviewed him on January 13, 2011 in one of the class rooms at the school where he currently teaches. The environment turned out to be challenging in terms of sound—the acoustics of the room, the environmental noise from the heating tubes running through the ceiling and the significant sound output coming from the class room next door made for a recording
that was challenging to transcribe. The interview was also interrupted several times—by the need to request silence from the people next door, by cleaning personnel entering the room and later by an instructor informing us that we would need to clear the room in time for the next class to commence. In spite of these interruptions, we were able to explore the interview questions in great depth.

### 3.7.4 Emma

Emma is 50 years old and grew up in a family of photographers. Her grandfather was an avid hobby photographer, her father’s work as art historian involved a lot of photo-documentation, and her elder brother had his own dark room in the basement of the family home. He regularly called on his ‘little sister’ to pose for his pictures. In art school, Emma took a photography class as an elective. Since then, photography has become integral to her art practice. She has a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in fine arts and works as a musician, visual artist and teacher. I interviewed Emma in her home on January 24, 2011. It was a very grey and rainy day. I arrived on her doorstep at 11 am, soaked through by the rain. Emma made some tea and we introduced ourselves while waiting for the tea to steep. She informed me that she had not slept well that night, that she had not been up long, and that she didn’t really feel awake and ‘with it.’ We sat down with our cup of tea in her little sitting room for the interview. In the corner of the room stood a framed print of an art project she recently worked on—a stack of books with the spines facing the viewer, of which the titles read like a poem.
3.7.5 Jason

At age 33, Jason is the youngest of all the photographers I interviewed. He has both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in visual arts. Much like Brendan, Jason grew up with snapshot photography, and received his first camera as a Christmas gift when he was about 10 years old. After a time of experimentation with the medium, Jason lost interest in photography and focused his creative energy on making sound recordings instead. In art school he predominantly studied drawing and painting. He didn’t consider working with photography until his senior years in art school. His choice to work with photography was motivated by its immediacy and ability to realize concepts quickly. Although photography continues to play a central role in his art practice and his personal life, he expressed that he doesn’t really enjoy the process of taking pictures all that much. I interviewed Jason in his studio on January 27, 2011.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have elaborated interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as my research methodology, identifying its theoretical roots in psychology, phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiographic research. I reviewed my sampling methods, interview process and data analysis process. I briefly introduced each of the participants, whose voices will bring colour and life to Chapter 4: Analysis.
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

In this chapter I discuss my analysis of the interview data, seeking to identify ways in which photography mediates perception and experience. An understanding of the various movements of mediation as un/folding-enfolding-infolding will serve as the conceptual framework for my discussion of the thematic strands emerging from the participant interview data. As elaborated in Chapter 3.6, I organized emergent themes within each interview in terms of a relative emphasis on unfolding time, space, perception, presence, a sense of enfolding, and infolding contexts. I used the interview data to identify different nuances within each of these categories (see Figure 8). These articulations within categories identified an additional layer of difference in quality, intensity and intention.

For the purpose of better understanding the complex, embodied and situated articulations of the experiential aspects of photographic practice, I will discuss each aspect separately, fully aware of the fact that they emerge in experience as a coherent ‘figure,’ or Gestalt.

---

52 This particular figure went through many cycles of revision. Just like photography takes a slice of time and fixes it as a still image, so this inventory or map presents a still image of thoughts and understandings that are very much in motion, that are ‘becoming’.
Figure 8: A map of interview themes

**UNFOLDING PRESENCE**

Un/fold time
- here/now
- memory

Un/fold space
- deepening
- widening

Un/fold perception
- perceptive intentionality
- extending the senses / sensitivity / awareness
- Capturing something / moments
- synaesthesia
- Aesthetic pleasure

Un/fold presence
- expressive intentionality
- mindfulness (feeling a meaningful connection)
- affective intensity & feeling (‘more alive’)
- An enjoyable thing to do / fun / play

Un/fold imagination

Un/fold (creative/artistic) ability

**THE CAMERA**

- Technological intentionality
- ‘Photographic seeing’

**ENFOLDING**

Experiencing a state of ‘flow’
- Un/fold (creative/artistic) ability

Immersion
- absorbing activity

Inclusion | embrace | connection
- experiencing a sense of being part of or included in something (photographer & viewer)

**Embodyment**

Communication | sharing

**INQUIRY**

- Photography as mode of inquiry
- Visual feedback | recording (change)
- Photography as dialogue with the life world
- Reflexivity

**INFOLDING CONTEXTS**

- Meaning making
- Identity (performance / enacting)
- Memory & imagination
- Aesthetics & feeling
- Recognition & likeness
- Story & narrative
- Ethics & responsibility
- History & culture
- Discourses & politics
- Mediating the medium
  (Experiencing photography through other media and practices)

**COMMUNICATION**

- Photography as process of translation
- Photography as communication
- Photography as mediating ‘spaces’ for dialogue
4.1 Unfolding presence

A sense of presence enfolds the ‘existential axes’ of human existence—time, space and embodied consciousness. For the artist-photographers that were interviewed, photography intimately interfaces with their experience of each of these dimensions. I use the expression ‘unfolding presence’ to address actual and imagined, perceptive and expressive dimensions of lived experience, as well as levels of intensity and awareness. In other words, presence can refer to being in an actual place at a particular time, or having a sense of being present in a space or place (actual or imagined). It incorporates both the perceptive availability to a ‘world’ and consciously acting in a ‘world.’ In the context of mediated perception and experience, the word ‘presence’ refers to a heightened sense of being-there, or an amplification or articulation of a particular mode of being.

4.1.1 Un/folding time

In the context of experience, time is not the ‘machinic constant’ that organizes our lives, that is neatly sliced up into equal chunks—seconds—which are grouped together into bigger chunks—minutes—which are then mapped out and displayed on the dial of a clock as numbers. Our sense of time emerges as a rather elastic entity that continually changes shape. In experience, chronological time can fold and unfold in myriad ways. Common expressions like “I saw my entire life flash before my eyes,” “I thought it would never end,” or “how time flies” point to the elasticity of our experience
of time, and its entanglement with our psychic life—our emotions, desires, fears, imagination, memory, etc.\textsuperscript{53}

The folding and unfolding of time as experienced in the context of photography occurs in different ways and at different points in the photographic process. The interview data indicated several common threads among participants: the photograph as a way of folding time into a still image which, in turn, mediates future unfoldings of memory, the photograph as a way to stop time in order to unfold detail to human perception, and the \textit{practice} of photography as a particular way of unfolding time in experience, as a particular mode of being.

A common idea within photography is that of capturing moments—the ‘snapshot’ recording a visual trace of events, people, times and places that serves to mediate \textit{memory}. In relation to memory, taking a photograph simultaneously folds and unfolds the time and events contained within the image for those who were part of it. Brendan talked about how photography mediates “a way to hold on to the experience,”

\textsuperscript{53} A wealth of fantasy and sci-fi stories explore the folding and unfolding of time—magical places we can travel to and return from without missing a second of ‘earth time’ or the possibility of time travel, a core element in the science fiction genre. Some famous examples are children’s fiction like \textit{The Lion, the witch and the wardrobe} by C.S. Lewis or \textit{Alice in Wonderland} by Lewis Carroll. Several new media artists are very inventive in using photography and film media to unfold time in unusual ways (e.g., David Claerbout and Bill Viola).
a way of “holding the past in the present” (§72: 7-10). Mike values photography for its ability to “stop time,” giving him an opportunity to take in all the visual detail of a scene:

> One thing about still photographs is that [...] they take in so much— you know—that you can be standing in a scene and—it’s all there in front of you, but you can’t process it all— it’s just too much. But the camera records it in all its complexity, and then you can look at it later and you can come to know a scene — [...] You’re taking a tiny, tiny slice of time out of a huge continuum— and it’s a very specific moment and I think that’s fascinating— to be able to stop time and see it like that. (§22: 4-11; 25-30)

Besides the un/folding of time within the photographic image, several participants described the temporal experience of going out to photograph, or preparing to take the photograph. Emma talks about how photography mediates a mode of being in the world that is “really slowed down and observing.”

> I like the activity of photographing things. I think it takes me into a certain mode of being in the world that I quite like. [HS: Like— how would you describe that mode of being?] Well— just really slowed down and observing— often— you know— [...] I think of it as slowing down— I mean— that may be partly because I’ve photographed so much with my Hasselblad — but even if I had a different camera. And it can be very pleasurable to just like suddenly notice things that you may not have noticed otherwise. (§64: 18-22; §65; §66: 1-10)

---

54 During the interview transcription process, each participant interview was structured into paragraphs and line numbers. Each question by the interviewer and each respective answer were assigned a paragraph number. The lines in each paragraph were numbered starting at 1. Therefore, this reference (§72: 7-10) refers to paragraph 72 of Brendan’s interview transcript and cites from lines 7 through 10.

55 For the purpose of readability, I removed all ‘utterings’ (things like “uhm,” “hm-hm” or “OK”) and word repetitions from the interview quotes included in this thesis. When the voice of the interviewer is included in the transcript, it is prefaced with HS for “Helma Sawatzky.”

56 A Hasselblad is a professional quality medium format camera that is considered to offer superb image quality. Among photographers, a Hasselblad camera is revered in similar ways as a Ferrari would be among car lovers.
Of course, it is important to note here that the photographer’s subject matter would significantly mediate the temporal experience of photography. If someone photographs sports events, wars or other situations in which speed is ‘of the essence,’ the experience of time is likely mediated by some kind of adrenaline rush. The photographers interviewed in the context of this study predominantly photograph ‘slow subject matter’ like nature, landscape, interior spaces, objects or people who intentionally pose for the image.

4.1.2 Un/folding space

The notion of unfolding space in the context of a medium that renders actual three-dimensional space as two-dimensional representations may seem to be a bit of an oxymoron. For the participants, however, both the practice of photography and the photographic image mediate experiential unfoldings of both actual and imagined spaces. The context of photography mediates a mode of engagement with the world that extends sensory awareness of being in and moving through space. Every repositioning of our body directly influences our point of view in relation to what it is we may wish to photograph. Brendan points to the profoundly spatial and embodied nature of taking photographs:

*Point of view comes back to ‘Where were the eyes?’ [...] and well the eyes have to be on the ground— because they are in a body on the ground. They have to be— they’re embodied eyes— they have a posture— they have a physiology. (§134: 2-9)*
Every photograph involves a type of negotiation of where we are in space in relation to that which we want to photograph. For Brendan, this spatial negotiation is central to his practice and experience of photography. Committed to finding that point of view that makes the pictorial space *enfold as many viewers as possible*, he carefully negotiates distance, camera height and viewing angle:

*Then I go and you move in and you move in – you’re kinda like “I need to be here or there or this way or stand this way”– so I really had to kinda do it like a kind of choreography with my body to move into the right place [...] It’s just like a little dance – like do I move back three inches or like do I just tilt my head this way?* (§116: 5-11; §118: 1-4)

Another spatial unfolding that emerged from the interview data pointed to the ability of photography to mediate a sense of *moving deeper into things*. Mike, Emma and Debra really enjoy that the camera facilitates a sense of *proximity* and *intimacy*. Photography affords them a way to literally and figuratively *zoom in* and draw the eye into the intricate details of the visible world—surface textures, colours, reflections, the play of light, etc.—things that would go unnoticed if it were not for the frame that makes it possible to ‘enter in’ to the micro-level detail of the material world. Mike compares this experience to looking through a microscope:

*It’s not unlike [...] picking up a microscope and looking at a very small portion of something— and getting to know a bit about its structures. [...] It’s all about minutiae and stuff. [...] But it’s not sharpness just for the sake of sharpness. It’s so that people can see what it was that actually drew me to that— you know— the smoothness of something or the roughness of it or the fineness of it. (Mike §22: 19-23; §114: 3-6; 16-23)*
Mike’s account also articulates that the eye mediates a sense of touching surfaces, and that photography allows him to ‘touch’ the detail and texture of surfaces that ‘drop below’ the threshold of what is possible for our sense of touch to register directly (e.g., the microscopic). Simultaneously, a lifetime of touching things infolds our experience of what our eyes are touching through the camera view finder, or through the photographic print.

Besides spatial unfoldings that deepen our field of vision, photography can also be used to unfold space laterally—to mediate a sense of opening up, of widening, of removing the constraints of the frame. Debra uses photography to mediate spatial unfoldings that move beyond the boundaries of a single frame, that widen the field of vision in some way:

*We tend to think about focusing when we’re using the camera. We’re looking in closely and we’re kind of looking in one direction. But the struggle that I’ve had all my photographic life has been to widen that view. Whether it is panoramic or doing sequences or breaking boundaries—all those kinds of things [have] been to widen.* (§14:116-133)

Debra describes her desire to mediate a widening of our field of vision, being intentional about moving against the human and technologically structured tendency of photography to constrain our field of vision. Creating panoramas—images that reach beyond our normal field of vision—or sequences that make it possible to combine multiple points of view into one field of vision expand conceptions of photography and perceptions of space beyond the ordinary. Debra uses the camera and photography to
enact a particular intentionality towards the world, one that chooses to seek out different points of view, different possibilities.

### 4.1.2.1 Imagined space

Several participants talked about how the photograph’s pictorial space offered them another way of unfolding space. For Brendan, this spatial unfolding emerged in a very pragmatic, need-driven context. After he finished art school, he could not afford the studio space necessary for creating sculptural works and installation art. He talked about how his space was reduced to a desktop in the basement of his parents’ home and how he began using photographs from magazines to unfold spatial experiences through images:

> That’s what was really strong and apparent all the way through it [...] I had to let go of the three dimensional space because it was a luxury to have that here–to have the studio where I could actually build in three dimensions and work in three dimensions. So I never let go of the experiential component of what was going on in photographs – so the photographs became much more relevant now because all the space was actually in the photograph. (§24: 1-13)

Mike also really enjoyed photography’s ability to unfold imagined spaces. For a while he would combine film negatives to create hybrid spaces or new symbolic configurations that felt slightly surreal because of the differences in scale and proximity:

> I really liked that notion that you could put negatives together to create a whole new space or a situation. (§38: 7-10)
4.1.2.2 Imagination

Even in the era of digital image manipulation (e.g., Photoshop), photography continues to mediate a sense of reality. Most of us look at photographs as credible representations of the world as we know it, as reality. The believability of photographic images as ‘real’ offers many possibilities for the unfolding of photographic space as a theatre in which we can stage all kinds of fictions. Emma specifically mentioned that she enjoys working with photography because it allows her to “edit the world” (§38: 5-6) and build her own “believable fiction”:

*I think the thing that has kept me in working with photography—like that I go away and I come back—is that constructing. You can construct your own reality—you can build your own believable fiction—you can communicate how you see the world—you know—that it’s like the very core. What I get a huge amount of pleasure out of [is] constructing things. I think of it as [...] a space that’s almost theatrical—but I don’t really like work that is theatrical [laughs]—but I think of it a bit in that way. It’s like that combination of theatrical and real. (§88: 1-16)*

For Emma, photography unfolds imagination, it allows her to construct her own “weird fantasy space[s]” (§38: 5-19). Photography also mediates a space for telling stories—for narrative—and for raising questions—for dialogue. Emma likes to use photography to unfold a space in which the viewer can explore different ideas.

For Mike, the unfolding of imagination in the photographic image is connected to his ability to create “pocket environments” through acts of photographic framing (§66: 1). He expressed that what he encounters in the world around him “is often way—way more interesting and bizarre than anything you could invent” (§82: 36-38). He
frequently photographs ‘real’ spaces that incorporate a certain amount of theatricality and artifice. Here the subject matter unfolds imagination through like-ness, in which past experiences infold the photographic encounter with a sense of “it was just like...” or “it felt like...”. For example, Mike described his impressions and feelings when he was photographing a shipyard that began to look more and more like a stage set:

*I went in to watch several of these ships being built— and so it starts off with it being completely bare inside there and then [when] components start arriving and the whole thing starts to take shape and it’s quite— it’s visually very exciting and the scale of it is just amazing— you know— so huge. And they were — I felt like I was [...] witnessing the building of an opera set or something— that’s what it felt like— or a Russian Constructivist play set— that’s what it felt like. (§70: 10-24)*

Jason’s approach to unfolding imagination seems to emerge from a more cognitive, conceptual approach, in which photography becomes a way of visualizing an idea. Rather than discovering something ‘out there,’ as Mike prefers to do, Jason uses photography as a way of effectively unfolding the ‘in here.’ The particular attraction of the medium of photography for Jason was its immediacy—his discovery that photography could communicate an idea faster than other visual media like drawing or painting:

*I sort of learned that photography played a very interesting role in that it helped to communicate certain ideas more quickly [...] than other media like drawing and painting. [...] I’m thinking more specifically of conceptual photography—conceptual art – and how the photograph could be a way to realize [...] concepts and ideas more quickly. And that’s when I became interested in using photography myself. (§6: 28-40)*

Unlike drawings or paintings where the viewer tends to linger on the surface to engage the sensuous aspects of its material presence—colours, textures, reflections, brush
marks—photography has the ability to move the eye immediately into the pictorial space. Jason’s love for working conceptually made him turn to photography as a medium that could “realize” concepts and ideas quickly.

### 4.1.3 Unfolding perception

Like the example of the sea anemone discussed in Chapter 2, we can think of our entire perceptive potential as folded into our embodied being. Our capacity to perceive far exceeds the selective unfoldings through which we engage life. In the context of photography, we unfold our intentionality towards the lifeworld in a particular way, in terms of a focused or heightened attentiveness towards opportunities for taking photographs. This unfolding of perception tends to involve a mix of intent (a particular subject matter) and chance discoveries. For example, when Brendan is location scouting for a photography project, he is very intentional about trying to maintain a balance between a more selective perceptual unfolding towards potential subject matter while maintaining a perceptual openness that allows him to still be available to notice whatever else is present:

> I would be carrying a form of intentionality that’s more cognitive [...] that way. [...] It’s a strategy of working – a way of working. It’s effort inside a practice– to do something specific with an intentionality. But I’d still try to be available– I mean– that was the whole point in scouting– you still like to be available to whatever is present. So when I work that way– in that mode of having intentionality set out– I [...] have to figure out how to be available. (§88: 13-29)

The body is the ground and medium for all perception. When the body is compromised in some way—through illness or disabilities—its perceptive and
expressive capacity folds in some ways.\textsuperscript{57} Brendan talked about how several neurological injuries\textsuperscript{58} compromised his ability to use photography as his way of unfolding perception and presence in the world. He described the resulting depression as a \textit{folding} of his availability to the world:

\begin{quote}
And it was as if this real amazing way of being present had dwindled down and the world– it was like the light in the world had kind of been snuffed out in a way. And it was a really alarming situation for me to be in– and I thought ‘Whoa– Yikes!’ (§85:4-9)
\end{quote}

Photography is an active mediator of perception. Both as an activity and technology, photography makes us pay attention in different ways. Following the directedness of the camera eye, our gaze turns outward to see what’s there, to notice things. Most participants explicitly state that photography has made them more perceptive. Debra emphasizes that her practice of photography has added complexity and richness to the way she perceives the world:

\begin{quote}
And that’s probably why I like photography the most – is that I can explore this kind of dialogue with the outside world. And kind of build a muscle of complex sensing, seeing – which includes hearing, touch, etcetera– within the world. But it’s different than kind of saying ‘Well I know all the birds and I’m classifying them.’ It’s a very different kind of awareness. (§20: 1-11)
\end{quote}

Several participants really enjoy how photography mediates a slowing down of perception and how photography creates a sense of intimacy. Jason, on the other hand,

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{57} It is worthwhile to notice how resourceful, adaptive and resilient human beings are in finding other ways of perceptive unfolding when one or more senses are compromised. For example, how blindness moves us to ‘see’ through other senses.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{58} Brendan was involved in two car accidents. The sustained injuries significantly affected his ability to practice photography. Although he continues to deal with pain and challenges to his physical mobility, he has since recovered enough to be able to take up photography again.
\end{quote}
expressed a preference for modes of photography that mediate a ‘quick eye’ and a sense of action. He describes how his approach to photography involves a type of continuous feedback loop of seeing/judging in order to select that “millisecond” in which something suddenly stands out:

It’s kind of like that photojournalistic what do they call it—decisive moment⁵⁹ thing where dynamic physical elements just kind of arrange themselves in a way that they’re somehow pleasing to the eye or interesting or displeasing to the eye even just— you know— it’s difficult to think about [a] concrete example — but [...] sometimes that just happens. And photography is very much about for me— is very much about capturing that. I mean— you know— a person walking down the street for [...] every millisecond of what they’re doing — for the most part it’s really boring and then for one moment the way his or her arms, legs, face—arranges itself in relation to background objects—all of a sudden it becomes interesting. (§34: 3-25)

For most participants, photography mediates a multisensory and synaesthetic⁶⁰ engagement with the world. Several participants identify a sense of touch as a core aspect of both vision and photography. When I interviewed Debra, we were sitting in front of a large photograph of her husband’s face. Looking at the image of her now deceased husband, Debra described photography as a form of touch. Her feelings of love towards him ‘infold’ her account of this photographic encounter:

At the same time I’m really conscious of [my husband]’s skin — like how the camera and using the camera is an intimate gesture— you know— that it’s—

⁵⁹ French photographer Henri Cartier Bresson introduced the notion of the decisive moment to describe his photographic practice. The decisive moment refers to the idea of a photographer being in the right place at the right time, capturing that moment in which all elements—compelling content, as well as formal-compositional aspects—align themselves into a ‘winning’ photographic constellation.

⁶⁰ Synaesthesia (Dixon & Smilek, 2011) refers to a phenomenon in which the senses intermingle. A person with synaesthesia may see a colour when they hear a particular sound. In the context of this study, synaesthesia refers to those instances in which photography is experienced through another sense as well (e.g., touch).
there’s a touch involved with the shutter— in the same way that a kiss might be—you know, there’s a kind of— [...] there’s an affection for the moment. There’s an intimacy in the moment. (§8: 31-41)

4.1.4 Un/folding affective intensity and feeling

Debra’s example touches on the multiplicity and infolded nature of perception and experience. The act of looking, through a camera or otherwise, is infused with what Brendan describes as the “quivering flesh” of “embodied sentient being” (§ 138: 15-17). For most of the participants, the practice of photography interfaces with sensations of affect 61 and feeling. How this connection unfolds is different for every participant. For example, when Mike goes out to photograph, he will look “feverishly” until something “hits” him either in his “peripheral vision” or “just … straight on” (§28: 25-27):

I was photographing all the time, but nothing was really hitting me. It was almost like I was replaying Walker Evans and all these other people [laughs] Lee Friedlander— you name them. They were just— they weren’t really something that was specific to me. [...] But then we got to [name of city]62— and we were driving through the outskirts of the city. I was just looking feverishly for something to do— and we went through this particularly dead kind of industrial area and came around this corner and here was this amazing gem of a little house. (§30: 4-22)

The experience of something hitting him or catching his eye is frequently related to a sense of awe, fascination, curiosity, or a sense of having discovered “a real gem”

61 Massumi (2002) differentiates between affect and emotion. Affect is defined as an “unqualified” intensity interfacing with the body’s autonomous nervous system. Emotion, on the other hand, is “a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal” (p. 28).

62 The city name was removed for the purpose of anonymity of the study participants.
(“My God! This is an amazing subject!”). In this process, photography offers him a way of engaging with or responding to this ‘affective jolt.’

For Brendan, sensation and feeling frequently precede photographic encounters. He describes how he will experience an inner ‘sense’—a sensation, a feeling, something “tickling” him—which then motivates him to go out in the world to find a space or place or configuration of objects that resonates with his inner sense:

Well— it starts before I go outside [laughs] […]— way before I pick the camera up. […] And it was a very simple realization that there was some sense that I had to figure out where it was. […]The sense was internal— I was experiencing and it was like tickling me inside— and I was going ‘Where is this? What is this? Where is it? Where do I have to be to be with it?’ So […] that’s how I started location scouting. (§56: 1-3;14-25)

For Brendan, sensation and feeling unfold in and resonate with space. In the interview, he emphasized that he is not interested in narrative or story. It is all about using photography to mediate a sense of embodied presence in a space that functioned as a sounding board or context for the unfolding of his inner sense.

Emma talked about “the excitement of looking through a camera and just sort of falling in love with everything” (§12: 2-5). She deeply values how photography provides a context for noticing things, for looking at and ‘feeling through’ encounters with the material world:

I think where it comes down to that thing of like really slowing down and feeling the beauty of something and feeling very much bowled over by it. […] To have an activity that allows you to connect to that sense of observation is really wonderful. (§90: 24-31)
She sometimes turns to photography as a way to comfort herself, as a way to reconnect to the world, as a way to unfold embodied consciousness and regain her footing in life:

Like [...] I’ll be upset and I’ll just [...] go for a walk and just look at things [...] just see things being beautiful [laughs] ... of the world and notice the raindrops on the hydrangea leaves or the way the light’s reflecting off the water– you know– like to just calm me down–and somehow being able to photograph it is my way of really being observant.[...] I think it can be grounding– just to be observing the world, right? [...] if some situation happens that really brings you up into your head and– it’s meditative. (§62:1-10; §64:1-5)

4.1.5 Unfolding presence

Most participants talk about photography as a grounding activity, as something through which they experience and enact a connection to the world of people, places and things. It offers them a context of unfolding presence, of being available to and part of the world as sensing and sense-making beings. Several participants describe photography as a practice of mindfulness, of experiencing and fostering a greater awareness of life and their place in or connection to it.

For Debra the camera offers a way “to give a kind of trace of [her] own consciousness in the moment” (§6: 3-7). She is very deliberate about experiencing a sense of presence in and connection to a place, a history, or people before taking up a camera to photograph. For Debra, photography is performative: it enacts an unfolding of her presence in the world:

So, what I’m responding to is performative, is with the body, its articulations of inner states through the body in relation to the more than human. And with the camera– so [...] the camera is this tool that has this kind of ability to dialogue or
to create a trace or an image dialogue with the world, where the world is imprinting itself as much as you’re revealing yourself through the way that you’re your camera. So there is a kind of mix that’s happening here between outside and inside, you know? It’s like you have the opportunity with the camera to kind of hang on to the real world— or the tactile, the physical world as you make some kind of descent or ascent or move laterally— to move and [then?] to explore your own perception or the possibilities that you might have in terms of the present or the future— to create possibilities. (§16: 1-28)

The way in which she ‘is her camera’ seems to point to the importance of how she is present to her surroundings when she photographs, to an enactment of a particular ethics. She chooses to enact an engaged posture of witnessing rather than the more distant stance of the observer. If Debra doesn’t feel a meaningful connection to a particular place, narrative or history, she is not interested in photographing it.

Experiencing a meaningful and mindful connection to her subject matter is ‘of the essence:’

If there’s not something in the place or the quality of light or something that pulls me in, into that kind of intimacy— because [...] there’s something about [...] the intimate that draws me, that I like to create— [...] that I like to come close [...] And there’s a gentleness often that I like— even when I’m working with harsh subject matters— I really like the gentleness. I like the quietness. So, when things are very loud or noisy or very, very urban or— I’m not so happy. I am not interested. (§34: 28-44)

Debra identifies a sense of intimacy, gentleness and quietness as mediators of that sense of presence and connection. Describing her experience of photography as something that is meditative and solitary in character also surfaces in Emma’s interview (see quote section 2.4).

---

63 I use the term ethics to identify certain values or moral principles that guide and motivate a person’s actions. In Debra’s case, it refers to her rejection of the posture of outside observer in relation to photographic practice. She chooses to contextualize her photography within the paradigm of ‘witnessing,’ which is suggestive of connection, involvement and caring.
All participants agree that the practice of photography mediates and amplifies particular ways of being present while sidelining others. Several participants talk about how engaging with photography gets in the way of social interaction. Their intense engagement with the visual dimension of things tends to take up most of their perceptive ‘bandwidth’ and compromises their ability to really be present with people in a social sense. Emma talked about how she tends to shy away from photographing people because she is very aware of becoming “very non-verbal” when she photographs. She describes it as “switching modes:”

*I get very nonverbal […] when I’m photographing. […] I feel very much like I’m switching modes. If I have to be articulate with somebody while at the same time I’m trying to photograph— it’s really like a [makes squeaking sound] [both laugh] I pull myself out and then— wwhhraagh!— like it feels quite wrenching. It’s […] almost like my brain gets wired a certain way to shoot and then it’s not the way I need to be wired to talk or be in a relationship. (§ 56: 19-32)*

Jason describes his experience of photography as one of becoming single-minded, focused and obsessive. His attention shifts from the social dimensions of being present towards the visual, formal-aesthetic, and technical modes of engagement involved in taking a photograph:

*It kind of takes over whatever I’m doing. So if I’m having a meal and feel the need to take a picture at the meal— then I forget about the fact that I’m with people. I forget about the fact that I’m eating because I just get a little bit sort of obsessed. […] I guess it contradicts what I’m saying – but there’s a part of me that […] always wants to at least make the best photograph I can, I think— or if I shoot something, I think ‘Well, did I capture that properly?’ So […] I do become kind of single–minded once I’m trying to take a picture of something. (§28: 3-18)*
Brendan also acknowledges that photography is a particular way of unfolding presence in the world, and is reflexive about when he chooses to be present ‘as a photographer.’ When Brendan wants to be fully present with people and places, he prefers to leave the camera be. He describes how photography always involves a process of exclusion, how engaging the world through the “frame” in some ways takes away from the fullness of embodied being:

“I would have to pay attention differently [...] to what’s around me. So I would have to—I would start to exclude because I’d bring up the—pull out a frame—and I’d have to start to exclude—and that’s not the point of why I was there. [...] So [...] the decision would be made around— [...] what do I—am I here to exclude? Am I gonna exclude myself from just being present—so that I can look through the frame and be present through the frame? (§162: 1-15)

The participant accounts describe how photography facilitates particular ways of unfolding presence. Several participants experience it as a form of shifting gears or changing modes that emphasizes the visual and formal-aesthetic aspects of perception. For some participants, photography is incorporated into a practice of mindfulness, of enacting a connection to or communion with the lifeworld. For all participants photography is experienced as an absorbing activity that consumes and structures much of their perceptual availability to and interactions with their surroundings.
4.2 The camera

4.2.1 Technological intentionality

The issue of technological intentionality—the ways in which the camera in
general and specific cameras in particular mediate experience and practice—frequently
surfaced in the participant interviews. The camera both simulates and mediates human
vision. Like the eye, the lens focuses reflected light onto a light-sensitive surface. Like
the human retina, the film or digital sensor is able to retain or record a trace, an image
(a memory). Mike expressed his fascination with how “the camera is always turned on
the world outside” (§ 96: 1-2), present in space and engaging the moment:

*Generally speaking when you’re a painter or a person who is drawing or
whatever— you start with a blank piece of paper whereas we start with the world
out there. So just the simple act of taking the most mindless photograph— it’s
still recording the world as it is at that moment— you know —and I think that’s a
fascinating thing. (§96: 11-20)*

As a technology designed to function as a recording device, it ‘encourages’ us to
engage with the lifeworld through the act of taking photographs. Emma described how,
when she first began taking photographs, she would photograph everything in sight, just
to find out what things looked like photographed:

*In the beginning it was sort of that thing— like the excitement of looking through
a camera and just sort of falling in love with everything— and I see my students
do this too— [...] photographing things just to find out what it’s like to
photograph them [laughs] almost— or what do things look like photographed—
and I was a bit like that— when I started with my camera— just wandering around
with it all the time and photographing everything in sight. (§12: 1-13)*
The camera operationalizes the selective nature of human vision: we tend to photograph what captures our eye, what sparks our interest, or what is important to us. It facilitates and mediates the recording, collecting, selecting and ordering of photographic images. It creates a visual record of things that we, as camera operators, singled out as subject matter at some point in time. This visual record is less selective than human perception however. Often, when looking at the photographs we took, we discover many things that we didn’t notice at the time.

Each type of camera lends its particularity to the photographic encounter. Some cameras add slowness to the practice of photography (e.g. view cameras, analog medium format cameras) whereas others mediate speed and instantaneity (e.g., Polaroid cameras, digital point & shoot cameras). Some cameras afford higher image quality than others. Most participants specifically mentioned that their camera preference had a lot to do with the camera’s ability to produce high quality images.

Different cameras also call for different physical commitments on the part of the photographer. Carrying a camera around takes significant effort, and, by extension, motivation. Whereas contemporary digital snapshot cameras and cell phone cameras require next to no physical commitment, many other cameras do. For example, Mike describes how his large tripod mounted 8x10 view camera imposes both physical and seasonal restrictions:

*I think I’m more of a seasonal photographer and partly [HS: What do you mean by that?] Well, partly because of the way I work. Because working with a view camera –that’s made out of wood and leather– I can’t be out in the rain. So in
the winter [...] my picture taking just stops— unless I— that’s why I’m thinking—
maybe I should be doing some still life— so that I can keep it going all year round.
And I suppose I could switch down to using my small hand cameras— but I just
love the images I am doing with the big camera. (§106: 2-6)

Emma talked about how her choice of camera directly affects both her choice of subject
matter and way of working. Working with her Hasselblad camera makes her shift
continually between embodiment relations (seeing the image in the view finder) and
alterity relations (dealing with the camera’s functionality)\textsuperscript{64}:

I’m very formal in the way I compose [images]. So I [...] often feel like I’m kind of
organizing and I’ve shot a lot with Hasselblad – so you have to really be
methodical in terms of your composition because everything is backwards.\textsuperscript{65} [...]I
shoot a lot with a tripod – a Hasselblad on a tripod – so that has a certain [HS:
slowness to it?] Yes, slowness, and [...]I usually take a lot of time framing
something and I’m hardly ever photographing anything moving [both laugh] – or
if I am, I am videotaping. (§24:1-16)

All participants are deliberate about when they choose to bring a camera and, if so,
what type of camera they choose to bring. They are very aware of the demands of the
device and the ways in which photography affects their mode of being present with the
world of people, places and things.

Several participants pointed to the ‘physics’ of photography as an important
component of the experience. For most participants, the technical challenge of creating
a good photograph is enmeshed with a practice of photography that resembles what
Csikszentmihalyi describes as flow (see Chapter 2, section 2.4.2.2). For most

\textsuperscript{64} See Chapter 2.4.2, Figure 7.
\textsuperscript{65} The ground glass of a Hasselblad camera displays the viewfinder image in reverse.
participants, the photographic act oscillates between embodiment and alterity relations quite naturally—from engaging with one’s subject matter to engaging with the camera itself. For one of the participants however, the physics of photography seemed to interrupt the sense of flow he likes to experience when he is engaging in creative activity:

> **My education and experience has taught me [that] the best way to do it [take photographs] is to do it over and over, and if you don’t like the results—do it over again. So like I mentioned before, there’s a lot of fine tuning. But you’re doing a kind of fine tuning that’s mediated by a lot of physics—and [...] it’s difficult to fight the physics sometimes. So I’m talking about the way that things in the real world present themselves through [...] the glass of the lens and then onto a two-dimensional plane—and all the other sort of technical aspects of photography—depth of field and that sort of thing. (§54: 5-22)

Jason’s sense of struggle and interruption related to the technical challenge of operating the camera may be the result of his choice of camera and the possibility of ‘perfection’ that particular camera affords and his subsequent frustration with anything less than perfect.

### 4.2.2 Photographic seeing

A sustained and reflexive engagement with photography—of engaging the world through a view finder—can foster a type of ‘photographic seeing’ in which the whole

---

66 Many artists work with large format view cameras in order to produce the large negatives needed for making large high resolution prints. Also, each art community has its own quality requirements. Jason was educated in an environment where the dominant culture ‘set the bar high’ in terms of preferred practice. Jason’s perfectionism may further mediate a lack of enjoyment when good results are hard to obtain. Later on in the interview he expressed his preference for artistic processes that almost make perfection impossible—thereby making it easier for him to ‘go with the flow’ and just enjoy what does happen within the confines of his obvious lack of control.
world is evaluated in terms of its photographic potential. Mike described how he is “always looking at the world as if it is a picture now” (§76: 4-5), and how years of working with black and white photography mediated his visual encounter with the world in very specific ways:

As a result of constantly working in black and white [...] I think I began to even see the world in black and white in a way– you know. Not literally, but there somehow was something about the way I looked at things– I was discounting the colour of things. (§76: 15-22)

Similarly, Mike’s subsequent move to colour photography made him evaluate possible subject matter in terms of colour, paying careful attention to where and how colour appeared in the image. He told the story of going out to photograph an architectural space. In the process of setting up the shot, the entire scene was evaluated in terms of colour harmony and rhythm, and any items that attracted ‘undue attention’ (in this case a red flower) were removed in order to create an image in which the viewer’s eye would be “able to wander over the whole image and not be riveted in one spot” (§78: 39-42). In light of these remarks one could conclude that photography unfolds perception in a way that is very selective and that could easily become reductive.

The awareness of how and where things appear in the frame identifies photography as an aesthetic or formal-compositional activity. The camera as a framing device invokes an aesthetic discourse on what constitutes a good photograph. Photo-technical issues such as focal length, depth of field, sharpness and exposure, and compositional concerns such as figure/ground relations, colour, shape, lighting, etc. are
bound to ‘infold’ photographic practice. Emma described how learning to photograph involves a type of socialization into the formal-aesthetic considerations of composing images, of learning “how to see compositionally:”

*Well [...] it’s the classic thing where people are focused through the lens on something within in the frame and they’re not paying attention to what is going on everywhere in the frame and so they’ll focus in on one aspect and not notice the compositional relationship between elements. So I think that you have to learn how to see compositionally, because I think that our human vision tends to be selective.* $(§18: 1-12)$

The practice of framing is more than a formal compositional activity. It is a practice of ‘giving visibility to’ things that may go unnoticed otherwise. For Brendan, his photography is exactly that: a way of “giving regard to those things that ... may not appear in any other way except through the bound frame”$(§104: 1-6)$. Emma describes photographic framing as a process of decontextualization and abstraction:

*So it’s got that literal quality [...] photography takes something that’s three dimensional and it [...] translates it into this two dimensional composition of colour and line and form– and so it [...] abstracts it [...] just by [...] how you crop it, you fictionalize.* $(§44: 19-26)$

Photography is, in its very essence, a practice of selection—of framing, of being intentional about what is included and excluded in the pictorial frame—and as such it creates fictions and ambiguity.

4.2.2.1 The matter of light

Photography as a medium involves both an *existential-quantitative* and an *aesthetic-qualitative* relation to light. The absence of light makes photography
impossible, whereas too much light overwhelms and ‘blows out’ the image. Much of photographic practice is about waiting for and capturing those moments in which the light brings the image to life. Mike, for example, described how he and his colleagues would go on assignments to photograph architecture and spend an entire day simply mapping the movements of the light in order to determine when to photograph what.

The *aesthetic-qualitative* aspects of light emerged as central to photographic practice as well. The aesthetic-qualitative aspects of light emerged as central to photographic practice as well. 67 Most participants seem to be, like the medium of photography itself, very sensitive to light (or ‘photo sensitive’). Emma talks about how ‘just noticing the light’ can be a grounding and pleasurable experience:

Say things like colour and light— they’re so [...] it can be so central and pleasurable just to notice [...] Like I never really appreciated the beauty of the rainy weather in [name of city] if I wasn’t photographing – like the light is actually really gorgeous today. (§66-13-23)

The sense of the light being ‘right’ frequently comes up in participant accounts. Light mediates a particular sense of presence—a certain mood, atmosphere, a heightening of perceptual awareness that interfaces closely with the practice of photography. For Debra, a certain quality of light mediates a sense of enfoldment and intimacy:

If there’s not something in the place or the quality of light or something that pulls me in, into that kind of intimacy [...] that draws me, that I like to create—you know—that I like to come close [silence] —and there’s a gentleness often that

67 In the context of cinematography, the quality of light is frequently treated as a separate character in the story, as an infolder of contexts. Gritty murder investigations and suspenseful thrillers are rendered in high contrast blues, teals and grays (e.g., *The Bourne Identity*), whereas more romantic or nostalgic films use diffuse golden hues to make everything shimmer and glow (e.g., *The Illusionist*).
I like—even when I’m working with harsh subject matters—I really like the
gentleness. I like the quietness. (§34: 28-41)

When considering Debra’s story in terms of un/folding-enfolding-infolding, the practice of photography can be thought of as unfolding a greater perceptual awareness of the quality of light, which enfolds Debra’s embodied presence in a particular space. The quality of light, in turn, infolds her perception with a sense of intimacy, gentleness and quietness, which, in turn further unfolds Debra’s perceptive availability to her surroundings.

Brendan talked about an experience he had while he visiting several sacred spaces in Mexico. Spending time in this new place, he became deeply aware of the solid material presence of light:

What I really learnt a lot about was how solid light is—so that the space between things was filled with light—and that [...] that material condition was also available to the body—that [...] it was part of the space of the body. I don’t know if I can be clearer about it—I don’t know—I wasn’t clear about it then—I just knew it was fascinating. When I came back to [name of city]—I came back to a new city. This was a whole new way of being in space—so it had a profound influence on me just in terms of how I knew where I was. (§122: 19-35)

When considering this account in terms of un/folding, enfolding, infolding—we can identify an unfolding of Brendan’s perceptive sensitivity and availability to the material presence of light through an enfolding immersive, embodied encounter or event which, in turn, infolds subsequent experiences: His experience of a familiar place was made new—mediated, amplified, extended, shaped and transformed—by a remarkable transformative experience.
4.3 Infolding contexts

Throughout the analyses of the interview data, I identified a need to ‘bring into language’ a difference between the existential and hermeneutic aspects of mediated experience. On an existential plane, photography mediates an unfolding of time, space, perception and presence in ways that the participants enjoy. However, what finally emerges as experience for each of the participants is profoundly mediated by what they bring to it— their own unique body, history, psychology, world view and intents (wants, needs, desires etc.). To use the metaphor of preparing a meal, it is as if each participant is given the same ingredients and comes up with a completely different dish: each artist-photographer is ‘given’ the lifeworld—as the field of vision and horizon of meaning—and a camera, and yet, each person perceives, experiences, acts and lives through the medium and practice of photography in very different ways.

The movement of ‘infolding contexts’ seeks to differentiate between sensing and sense-making.\(^\text{68}\) It seeks to identify a wide range of things that that give experience its unique articulation—its unique flavour, colour or shape—as it emerges in the embodied consciousness of the photographer. It encompasses the entire spectrum of ‘things in-here’ and ‘things out-there,’ both virtual and actual dimensions—all that swirls through and mediates what eventually surfaces as conscious experience. The movement of infolding contexts also addresses the “situated” nature of meaning making and

\(^{68}\) For visualizations of infolding contexts, see Chapter 2.2: Figure 4, Chapter 2.3.4.1: Figure 5 and Chapter 4.1: Figure 6.
acknowledges human beings as both sensing and sense-making creatures. It acknowledges photography as a medium for both perceiving the world and acting in the world—both of which, in turn, infold the experience of and through photography. It also acknowledges that the medium of photography, as van Loon (2008) argued, is a socially embedded, historical form that infolds its own discourses and spheres of practice.

The interview data offered many different accounts of infolding contexts. In Figure 6, I listed some of the contexts that infold or mediate experience as it unfolds for the participants in and through the practice of photography (i.e., memory, imagination, affect and feeling, aesthetics, recognition and likeness, story and narrative, ethics and responsibility, history and culture, discourse and politics). See Appendix H for an elaborate list of examples from the interviews that illustrate the infolding of a wide range of contexts.

4.3.1 Meaningful practice

For all participants, the medium of photography provides a means of engaging the world, a means of obtaining visual feedback on the world, a way of visualizing narrative, a way of imagining and a way of mediating spaces of dialogue with viewing audiences. Within the practice of photography as a form of inquiry, the medium facilitates the unfolding of time, space, perception and presence in the world, as well as the ability to record a visible trace of these moments or encounters. Photography is an activity that requires an investment of time which, in turn, unfolds as a space for
exploration and contemplation for the photographer. As a context and conduit for human intentionality towards the lifeworld, photography enfolds sensing and sense-making, it enfolds both existential and hermeneutic planes of experience.

4.3.1.1 Inquiry

For most participants photography unfolds as a form of inquiry into the world that interfaces with deeply existential questions. For Brendan, photography mediates a sense of connection to a universal “human sense” that “moves through us” and that is “bigger than [us]” (§84: 53; 10-16):

*If there is something called—some sense—some human sense or some sense that becomes the human— I think it is more important to say it that way— in some sense that becomes the human— it’s important to facilitate that— to bring that into the world. So that it’s available for other people— so that there are other people who can realize the sense of being human. (§74: 1-11)*

Brendan connects his personal inquiry to a sense of responsibility he feels to create art that mediates this existential encounter with others.

Debra also conceives of photography as something that mediates a deepening of her inquiry about the world and her place in it. She infolds her practice and experience of photography with the idea of *story* and *narrative*:

*Or it’s like where I’m trying to learn. [...] Like we’re always within our own story. We’re in the middle of our own story. And in that story that we have about ourselves and about our relationship to the larger world –there’re always kind of*

---

69 *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *inquiry* as “the action of seeking [...] for truth, knowledge, or information concerning something; search, research, investigation, examination,” but also as “the action of asking or questioning; interrogation” (Inquiry., 1989).
multiple questions, often unconscious questions that we have and that we’re trying to figure out. And that within that story there are always puzzle pieces in the world. And we recognize the puzzle piece when we see it. (§38: 1-14)

Within this context of inquiry, photography unfolds forms of visual feedback on the world. Debra talks about how looking at and perceiving through photography has made her more attentive and aware, and how the image editing process constitutes “an additional rearranging of perception” (§30: 59-60):

This has been a very, very wonderful method of inquiry for me– and for me to get feedback on my relationship to the world, and to have that kind of cultural trace– that I can see that life […] with its flaws and mundane and problematic and wondrous and touching and tragic and joyous kind of components to it. (§58:13-23)

Like Debra, Mike also talks about how photography has made him more observant, how it helps him understand things and see things in greater detail than he would without the photographic encounter. He emphasizes that photography enriches his experience of the world:

I think I’ve become a lot more observant since becoming a photographer. It’s just natural that you would because […] you’re so used to looking at things in the world– and then when you see them once you’ve photographed them–[...] you’d see stuff there that you didn’t notice at the time you took it. The next time you go out, you’re looking even more carefully than you did the first time. So I think that definitely– and I think it makes the world a richer place for me. (§136:1-15)

For most participants, the photographs themselves function as a space of discovery,70 mediating a further unfolding of perception. Mike experiences taking photographs as a way of ‘stopping time’ so he can use the index of all the camera saw to

70 Here, the photograph functions as what Benjamin (2008) refers to as an optical unconscious, or what Deleuze (1994) would identify as an actualization of the virtual.
really take in all the detail. Debra uses her photo editing process as a way of discovering things that she did not see or notice at the time. Emma also talked about how photographs frequently surprise and delight her:

*So– classic thing is– I was photographing Christmas at my aunt’s house [which] has a lot of African art. And I took this photograph of my aunt and my grandmother– and they both had these horns sprouting out of their head from these masks [laughs] – and I had not noticed [it] at the time that I took the picture. I was delighted afterwards ’cause it was so funny. (§18: 19-29)*

4.3.1.2 Enactment

Debra experiences her particular approach to and practice of photography as *performative*, as an intentional way of unfolding her own presence in the world and a way to enact her participation and implication in *world-making*:

*So a part of how I talk about that is looking at the word ‘witness’– like, how do we witness? How do we [...] give a trace of ourselves within a culture– because we are creating culture.*(§8:44-49)

Debra deliberately distances herself from a posture commonly associated with photography, that of the outside observer. Instead she enacts her method of mindfully “moving parallel” with the “more than human,” of taking on the more engaged posture of “witness,” and of only photographing those encounters in which a personally meaningful connection has been forged to that which appears in the image.

Brendan is also reflexive and intentional about how he enacts his relationship to the world through photography. Developing his photographic practice at a time when identity politics were high on the artistic and political agenda, Brendan had to negotiate
his work in relation to the values that framed much artistic production. In the interview, he emphatically spoke about his experience of being “the wrong guy” (§78: 30):

Because [...] at the same time that I was doing this work— I mean politically people were interested in— in terms of its poetic nature— they weren’t interested in the politics of it— because the politics of representation at that time was what people were really dealing with— a lot of people. And [...] politically at that point in time too— I was the wrong guy. [laughs] [HS: can you explain what you mean by that?] I was the wrong guy, ‘cause I was [...] a white man. (§78:20-34)

In the discursive climate of the 1980s, white men were frequently critiqued for embodying a cultural domination of both the gendered and racial ‘Other.’ This cultural context infolded Brendan’s emerging art practice. Aware of his gender and physical height, Brendan started to photograph spaces with the ‘camera eye’ positioned at the height of his sternum, in order to include other bodies71 in his point of view on the world:

I was concerned about including other bodies in that point of view— and I still am incredibly concerned with who else can stand there and [...] who are they?— and what type of body is that? (§54: 20-26)

In this narrative, infolding contexts involves a dialogical movement. The lifeworld infolds a particular discourse in response to which Brendan reflexively infolds his own beliefs and priorities and unfolds his own dialogue: he seeks to create photographs that enfold

71 Brendan identified the level of his sternum as a camera eye level accessible to a female viewer: Even now – I still don’t shoot from my eye level. I shoot from the height that’s about – say– my sternum— and imagine that that’s where my eyes are. [...] What I felt was - if I shot from a lower point of view– I would be including more people in my point of view. So it was more a way to accommodate more people– the possibility that there were more body types that were smaller than me – more bodies that were smaller than my body. So I wanted to be able to include more people in– as the viewer– and I also realized that most women are smaller than me– right? So that was important too that – again– it wasn’t just like any body, but there are specific bodies. Many of them are gonna be women. (§ 42: 25-28; §46: 1-16)
as many viewers as possible and that reach beyond the discursive constraints of identity politics and representation in order to let the world arrive in all its phenomenological depth and riches:

*I think that we just have to let the world arrive too in whatever way it arrives – and look through whatever means that we can muster up and be part of – and I think that if we deny that – then all our political forms of representation will never get back there – can never get us back there– and we’re always dealing with something else– and ignoring that. (§138: 55-64)*

4.3.2 A case study

Peirce’s phenomenological categories of *Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness* are helpful concepts for thinking through some of the complex circular, simultaneous un/foldings, enfoldings and infoldings that emerge in a photographic encounter—from the visceral, affective intensity of ‘hitting on something’ to the complex hermeneutic processes of meaning making. I chose one of the stories from the interview data that illustrates well how the practice of photography brings together a range of perceptive, expressive and interpretative activities.

Mike told the story about how one of his art projects came into being—that of photographing a taxidermy shop. He talked about how he was walking the city streets looking at store fronts:

*I just wanted to see if it would be possible through store fronts and neighborhoods to build up a portrait of [name of city] in a very specific time. And to maybe hint at what the culture was through what’s in the store windows. (§40: 69-76)*
Mike’s intent to create a portrait of the city through photographing storefronts can be seen as an infolding of a particular purpose which, in turn, mediates a ‘selective’ unfolding of his perceptual availability to the world. The context of photography also infolds and unfolds what is perceived and how: Photography makes him look for what sparks (visual) interest, for what makes for intriguing subject matter. While considering store fronts, Mike is very interested in those *chance encounters* in which something catches his eye, in which something sparks his interest:

*When I start out, there’s pure chance – where I suddenly hit on something [...] and it clicks– [HS: catches your eye...]and then I start working feverishly on it* (42:4-10)

In this particular project, a taxidermy shop caught his eye:

*I was just wandering along the street and then suddenly I saw these animals in the window of this place [laughs] and I was drawn across to see that– and I was just amazed by it. [...] So basically what drew me was the liveliness of these animals and the incongruity of the space that they were in, and that’s what brought me in.* (§40: 78-83; 142-145)

Mike talks about being “drawn across” the street by something that captured his eye, by something that was perceived on the periphery and that caught his attention. This chance encounter of something unusual jumping out at Mike can be seen as an instance of Peircian *Firstness* (Chapter 2, section 2.4.1) in which something of interest passes a threshold of unconscious perceptions. Being ‘acted upon’ by this unusual window display caused a reaction in Mike and motivated the action of entering the shop in order to have a look around:
But this guy—he had rented two storefronts. And one side was his little office and [on the other side was] his shop of horrors [both laugh] where he did all the deconstruction and reconstruction. [...] It was like Dante’s Inferno in there. (§40: 91-97)

Mike’s reference to “Dante’s Inferno” points to an infolding of imagination that mediates his experience of the taxidermy shop. Memory also infolds this encounter. Mike recollects his childhood fascination with dioramas and its associative connection to the display of animals inside this taxidermy shop:

*I remember my mom taking me to the Museum of Natural History and to the ZOO– but mostly the thing that really hit me was the Museum of Natural History with all those dioramas– and this seemed like a really insane diorama.. (§40: 120-126)*

After obtaining permission from the store owner to photograph there, Mike immerses himself in the project—an enfolding flow state mediated by the practice of photography:

*Yeah, ‘cause at that point of—at first I didn’t know what the theme was — I was just thinking “God, this is an amazing subject. I’m just gonna immerse myself in it and see what happens.”* (§44: 1-6)

Photographing the taxidermy shop unfolds a ‘duration of engagement’ and perceptual openness. Time, space, perception and presence are mediated by the

---

72 Getting permission is very important to Mike. It affords him the freedom to go back to a location and photograph there until he gets what he wants. It also is his way of showing respect for other people and their spaces:

I don’t like not getting permission as I think it’s disrespectful [and] it doesn’t allow you the option to go back— you just sort of take it [the photo] and run off like a thief in the night. And more often than not you might get something that’s close to what you want but it’s better if you can go back and just do it over and over again until you get really what you want. (Mike, §42: 11-21)

73 See also Chapter 2.3.4.2: Creativity & Flow: The work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.
context of photography and the engagement with a camera. Composing images within the frame becomes both a narrative and aesthetic engagement with the subject matter. As Mike continues to work on his project, he begins to infold contexts that are meaningful to him:

*And yet it was so wonderful too because— as for its allegorical meanings, or metaphorical meaning— you know. [...] For me it’s like it said it all about what’s happening to wild animals and wilderness and wildlife— it’s all getting surrounded by the stuff that we put up, you know. And that’s literally what’s happening to animals – they’re being forced into ever smaller sort of islands of so-called wilderness. It’s not really wilderness anymore. (§40: 127-141)*

Editing the negatives unfolds as a process of discovery in which Mike looks for patterns, directions and emerging narratives, which he then seeks to complete by identifying the gaps in the ‘story’:

*Once I get into that process of delving into it, then I’m coming back, developing film, and looking at my contact sheets and I begin to see there’s a pattern[...] It could be about anything but as you start to pull out the ones that are the strongest and just look at those side by side, they start to suggest a direction. And then you can see the holes [...] where you really ‘Oh, if I’d only had had this – then it will all work’— you know— and at that point – that’s when I do step out the door with a definite goal in mind. (§42: 23-39)*

Mike’s experience of the taxidermy shop as mediated through his photography moved through Peircian *Firstness* of something catching his eye, and of experiencing a sense of awe and fascination, to the *Secondness* of reacting to this ‘being acted upon’ to the realm of *Thirdness* in which Mike, through a photographic engagement, gives things a meaningful place in experience. Of course this is not a singular movement that results in fixity and closure, but a multilayered complex ‘networkology’ in which many different
(f)actors—embodied, environmental, technological, cultural and others—infold the ‘experiential undulation.’

Mike also talks about some of the contexts that infold his photographic practice. His work is exhibited and sold in commercial galleries. Although Mike’s preference is to create complete projects consisting of multiple images, and to approach his photography in terms of unfolding narratives, a commercial gallery is more interested in aesthetically pleasing pieces that can be presented as ‘one-offs’ to potential customers:

Maybe this is a disadvantage for me when I’m working in a gallery situation [...] for a private gallery. They’re not so interested in you having a whole series that [...] holds together. They want individual things that people wanna buy and put on their wall [...] and that’s why I said –you know– those ones that I’m printing now are not ones that they would have wanted –but I want them. To me it’s important that whatever I do– I like working in series and sequences rather than just individual pictures. (§44: 11-41)

Photography plays a part in un/folding intentionality towards the world in particular ways. It unfolded a time-space in which Mike could creatively interact with something while reflecting on it. It provided Mike with a way to respond to something that moved him in some way. It offered a way of representing this encounter to both the photographer and a viewing audience. It unfolds a source of aesthetic pleasure. It unfolds a space for dialogue and contemplation. Photography as a discourse and art form infolds contexts that in turn unfold particular contexts of experience (e.g., the art gallery).
4.4 Enfolding

Folding/unfolding considered the ways in which photography mediates our perception of time, space and embodied consciousness. Infolding contexts acknowledged that perception is never pure and that photography as a culturally embedded historical form infolds contexts, that the lifeworld infolds contexts and that the photographer also infolds his or her unique constellation of contexts that ‘swirl together’ in experience. With the concept of enfolding, I seek to address different ways in which photography mediates a sense of immersion, a sense of connection, a sense of being part of something. It gives expression to those dimensions of experience that include and exceed the bounded, situated, embodied point of view of the photographer. Each of the participants expressed their own particular stories of how photography mediates a sense of enfolding.

For Mike, photography is a way of enacting his enfolding of the world, and of feeling connected to it. He talked about how he enjoys working with his large format view camera, how he loves looking at the image on the ground glass of the camera, and how this process of carefully framing a photograph gives him a sense of embracing a part of the world as ‘his world’ for a moment:

*But if I can kind of create my own little world that is something I can get my arms around and know “Gee– this was real for me” [both laugh] – it may be totally different for someone else. (§64: 1-9)*
For Debra, a sense of the enfolding, a sense of being fully present with and connected to what she frequently refers to as the “more than human” is essential in her approach to and experience of photography:

At some point I will move from that being kind of separate from where I am in the place to being fully engaged in the place. It’s like suddenly I’ve gotten out of my head – and – [...] I’ve brought in both the mind and the body together in some kind of way and I’m more present to where I am and recognize that I am somehow a part of this – you know – I’m not separate from it in a kind of observational way. And that’s the thing I’m talking about in terms of that moment of engagement with the camera. At some point, in the using of the camera – sometimes it can happen quite quickly as you’re photographing – you’re fully in the world. But a lot of the times it takes time. You might use a couple of rolls of film until you get really present. And something of a real dialogue begins to happen with that more than human or the bigger world that you’re in. (§30: 9-33)

Emma brought up the notion of flow in relation to a sense of enfolding (see also Chapter 2, section 2.4.2). Because Emma is both a musician (a singer) and a visual artist, she was able to compare both media – improvised music and photography – in terms of the types of experiences they afford her. She described how improvised music unfolds as an ephemeral, time-based, collaborative and performative event:

In improvised music [...] your first task is to connect with the other musicians and to be in the moment – not thinking ahead – not planning – not anticipating generally – although you can to a certain extent. But if you plan too much – then it tends to take you away from listening to the musicians and being present. And being impulsive – so trusting your impulse – if you feel that you need to do something – then you do it. And when everything is working well – you really feel like you’re in a kind of flow state where you’re very connected to the energy in the room and the creative impulses that are happening – and unexpected things happen – being open to the unexpected. (§22: 44-63)

Photography, while mediating a different type of engagement with the world, still mediates a sense of enfolding, of immersion and absorption:
Shooting [photographing] can give you that same feeling of being in a kind of heightened awareness and in a kind of flow state where I don’t know what’s gonna happen but I feel very observant and I feel very focused and I really like that – just that becoming very visual and being surprised often by what I’m seeing [...] so yeah– being surprised and also being like open to kind of falling in love with something. (§22: 63-76)

4.4.1 Pleasure

For most of the artist-photographers that were interviewed in the context of this study, the medium of photography is enjoyable, the practice of photography is a source of pleasure. Emma talked about how “the activity of photographing things” mediates a “mode of being in the world that I quite like” (§64: 19-22). Debra indicated that being a ‘studio-based artist’ doesn’t appeal to her, and that she loves photography because it allows her to enact a “dialogue with the outside world” (§20: 1-4). Mike really enjoys the entire process of taking photographs and loves the view camera for the kinds of photographs he can create with it:

I really like space a lot and I think that’s a major part of my work. I try to put people into the spaces that I’ve photographed and the view camera is great for doing that because it’s the only camera I know of where you can actually manipulate space. [...] The fact that you can take that plane of focus – that’s this invisible kind of shield, a sheet of glass of focus sitting out there in space– and you can move that around anywhere to effect the focus and perspective– makes it just perfect for what I’m doing. (§112: 1-19)

For Brendan, photography is also an intimate interface—a medium that enacts a meaningful connection between his “inner sense” and the world out there, a medium that enables him to share experiences with others through images.
Although there were some parallel strands, Jason’s account of his experiences with and through photography differed in substantial ways. As a contemporary visual artist, Jason chose to work with photography as his subject matter, using his art practice to participate in a discourse on photography and representation by pushing the boundaries of what is and isn’t considered to be photography. Although Jason really enjoys how quickly photography can realize an idea or concept, the act of taking the photograph –within the standards of practice for art photography—seems to present him with an interruption in his experience of creative flow:

“I enjoy coming up with the idea. I enjoy planning the picture. I enjoy looking at the results and I enjoy editing the results– and then I also enjoy making the final thing– but there are steps– if you wanna talk about the really procedural or process related steps– I can’t say I really enjoy them. (§10: 33-42)

Jason’s relationship to photography seems to be more’ functional.’ Photography is a means to an end in a much larger creative process, whereas for the other participants the very act of going out there, engaging the lifeworld in the context of photographic practice unfolds a way of being present that is a source of pleasure. For them, doing photography mediates a sense of enfolding, of immersion, a heightened sense of awareness and presence in and to the world of people, places and things that ultimately makes them feel more alive. At the same time, photography interfaces with processes of meaning making, communication, and participation in world-making.
4.5 Summary

The participant interviews offered a wealth of qualitative data—literally and figuratively—about their experience of, with and through photography. In this chapter, I used the concept of the fold to discuss the multiplicity and simultaneity of mediated perception and experience. The stories, reflections and language of the study participants support the notion that the medium of photography participates in unfolding a particular sense of time, space and presence, that photography frequently mediates a selective unfolding of the ‘sensorium,’ amplifying the visual register of perception, that photography offers a medium for enacting one’s engagement with the lifeworld, that photography mediates a direct encounter with the world of places, people and things, that photography mediates and is mediated by both photographer and the ‘lifeworld’ in which its practices are situated. The participant accounts identified photography as a medium that interfaces with sensing and sense making, and that these flows are infolded with sensations, thoughts, feelings, memories, discourses, narratives and other contexts that enliven experience and that make it meaningful to the photographer. I also found that a certain affinity for and ability with the medium of photography greatly affect the extent to which photography can become a meaningful or enjoyable extension of one’s being-in-the-world. Throughout this analysis, the language of ‘anemone theory’—un/folding, enfolding and infolding—was able to identify simultaneity and multiplicity, amplification and reduction, contextuality and complexity, and the continuous mixing of the ‘out there’ with the ‘in here.’
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

I began this interpretative phenomenological analysis of photography with a series of questions: What is it about photography? What does it afford? What does it require? Does it extend the human sensorium? Does it mediate a particular way of being-in-the-world? Does photography extend, shape or transform our relation with or intentionality towards the world? Does photography participate in how we make sense of things? And if so, how? How do we negotiate the human-technology relationship in the context of photography?

The study participants offered rich, reflexive and insightful articulations of the experiential dimensions of the medium and practice of photography. They expressed their unique experiences of, and perspectives on, how photography unfolds time and space, how photography interfaces with perception, how it mediates a sense of presence and how it unfolds a context for meaningful engagement with and inquiry into the lifeworld. The participant accounts also identified many ways in which the photographer mediates the medium, and how a range of ‘contexts’ infold the photographic encounter—how hermeneutic threads like intentions, memories, thoughts, ideas, imagination, narratives and discourses interweave with the perceptions of the sensuous body. Mediation and embodiment were the key entry points into this study of the experiential dimensions of photography.
5.1 iBODY: Embodiment matters

In emphasizing the ‘primacy’ of embodiment, I align myself with those scholars who acknowledge that human being-in-the-world cannot be reduced to a socially constructed form or entity (e.g., in the context of identity politics) or disassembled into ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ parts (e.g., the concept of a transcendental ego in which the mortal body is but an inferior shell for one’s true essence). Throughout the interview data, the body emerges as the medium of experience, integral to both sensing and sense-making. The study participants frequently identified the experiential immediacy of bodily sensuousness, and its intricate involvement in processes of sense making:
iBody— the body as medium.

Massumi (2002) argued for the autonomy of affect—affects—the “unqualified” intensities continually interfacing with the body’s autonomous nervous system:

Brain and skin form a resonating vessel. Stimulation turns inward, is folded into the body, except that there is no inside for it to be in, because the body is

74 Affect theory can be broadly divided into two schools of thought. One builds on the work of psychologist Silvan Tomkins, who conceives of affects as a series of biologically based “self validating” experiences that can occur across a range of intensity: interest—excitement; enjoyment—joy; surprise—startle; distress—anguish; anger—rage; fear—terror; shame—humiliation; ‘dis-smell,’ ; (Sedgwick & Frank, 2003, p. 100; 102). These experiences are different from Freudian ‘drives’—e.g., the sex drive—in that they are not ‘purpose driven.’ Another school of thought, coming from a Bergsonian/Deleuzian tradition emphasizes that affect is pre-individual, pre-cognitive and unqualified, an intensity-effect perceived in the body (Massumi, 2002).
radically open, absorbing impulses quicker than they can be perceived, and
because the entire vibratory event is unconscious, out of mind. (p. 28-29)

As elaborated in both the Glossary and Chapter 1.3.3, Massumi (2002) differentiates between affect and emotion. Emotion is conceptualized as a “qualified intensity” (p. 28) that is named or ‘narrativized’ in the process of making sense of things:

- An emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. (p. 28)

This important differentiation between affect and emotion identifies the lived body as an intricate and complex medium, as both the point of origin\(^75\)—in terms of sensing ‘impulses’ or ‘vibrations’—and point of convergence—in terms of sense making, or ‘sociolinguistic fixing’ of perceived intensities—for what emerges as conscious experience. The primacy and autonomy of affect in relation to the sensuous body as medium identify an important dimension of human-technology relations that can easily go unnoticed as it is mostly “unconscious, out of mind.” Technologies should be

\(^{75}\) It is not my intent to ‘re-instate the Cartesian ego,’ to place the human being at the center of the universe. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of our bounded, situated, embodied state- what else do I have to work with but my own capacity to sense, perceive and make sense of things. In saying this it is not my intent to confine all that the world is and can be to what we can perceive (the phenomenological subject). Rather, I conceive of human beings as having a capacity to become and change- what we have to offer ‘the world’ is a posture of attentiveness, an openness to being surprised by the world, and a willingness to move with what moves us.
considered in their capacity as extensions and amplifiers of the human sensorium, in their capacity as affective devices that mediate dimensions of experience that are not directly quantifiable and that involve the ‘quivering flesh’ of embodied being.

5.2 Mediation: Dynamics of movement and (ex)change

In my analysis of the interview data I focused on mediation as a dynamic of movement and (ex)change—a continual flow of un/folding, enfolding and infolding. I emphasized the organicity, multiplicity, simultaneity, complexity and contextuality of mediated perception. In taking up mediation as the central dynamic in understanding the human-technology-world relation, I align myself with Verbeek (2005) who identified mediation as the core concept for “understanding the role of [technological] artifacts in the practices and experiences of human beings” (p.11). Verbeek’s postphenomenological perspective emphasizes both the existential and hermeneutic aspects of human-technology relations. He argues that “humans and the world they experience are the products of technological mediation, and not just the poles between which the mediation plays itself out” (p.130). He goes on to explain that the ways in which technological artifacts mediate “sensory perception” in fact determine “the very possibilities human beings have for interpreting reality” (p. 131), thereby connecting the existential and hermeneutic mediations that unfold in the human-technology relation. Both technological artifact and the life world are identified as mediating “the ways in
which human beings can be present to their world, and the ways in which the world can
be present to them” (p. 11).

Verbeek’s postphenomenological vocabulary (see Appendix A) offers a useful list
of concepts for analysing human-technology relations. What appears to be missing from
this ‘picture’ is language that identifies the lived body as medium. In light of the study
findings, I would suggest that embodiment—the lived body as sensing and sense-making
medium—and the dynamic complexity of the movements of mediation—the continuous
feedback loop between un/folding perception and infolding contexts—adds a valuable
dimension to our analysis and understanding of the human-technology-world relation.

5.3 Photography: Unfolding presence

As argued in Chapter 1, past and present discourses on photography have
focused predominantly on the photograph as object in the world—its ontology (e.g., the
photograph as indexical trace), its semiology (e.g., the photograph as a symbolic form,
the truth of photography) and its aesthetics. In the contexts of cultural studies, visual
culture studies and a range of discourses within contemporary arts, the medium and
practice of photography have been theorized in terms of their historical and socio-
political functions within the field of representation (e.g., discourse on race and gender)
and its embeddedness in structures of power (e.g., public surveillance, military uses etc.).
Specifically phenomenological analyses of photography (e.g., Damisch (1978), Cheung
(2010a), Cheung (2010b), Pettersson (2011)) continue to focus predominantly on the photographic image. 76

With Unfolding presence: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of photography, I hope to contribute an embodied perspective on the experiential dimensions of doing photography. The experiential dimensions of photography are important to consider in the context of contemporary society in which photography has become ubiquitous as a social practice. As camera technologies are part of the basic functionality of the devices through which more and more people engage the world (iPhones, PDA’s etc.), more people incorporate photography in the way they go about life—seeing, feeling, experiencing and communicating through photographic acts. Digital cameras and wireless technologies have made it possible to communicate with each other and experience together through photography. When I walk around ‘down town’ I see many people take a picture, look at it together and talk about it with their friends or family. I see people take pictures and send them to a friend in the context of a texting exchange.

76 During my research for this thesis, I did not find much in terms of phenomenological approaches to the practice or doing of photography. French philosopher Hubert Damisch’s (1978) Five notes for a phenomenology of the photographic image focuses its analytic eye on the photographic image as a historical, cultural object. I also came across two publications by Chinese artist and philosopher Chan-Fai Cheung. One publication involves an entry titled Photography in the Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics (Cheung, 2010b), in which Cheung reflects on the indexicality of the photographic image and imaging process, the image as text or semiotic structure and on photographic seeing as a reduction of the “perceptual world to a photographically framed world” (p. 262). The other publication involves a photo book titled Kairos: Phenomenology and Photography (Cheung, 2010a).
This study hinted at the significant changes in practice and experience that follow in the wake of digital technologies. Both Jason and Emma commented on how digital photography has added immediacy, instantaneity, quantity and speed to the medium of photography. Emma offered an example of how the digital camera enabled her to creatively collaborate with those she was photographing:

I think [digital photography] allows that collaboration and then invites them into constructing the image and they see what you’re doing—like I was shooting this band and I was shooting with flash and long exposures—so I was sort of abstracting— you know—it’s like schmearing with freezing—and they got really into it—they’re so excited—cause I’m like ‘This really worked—I mean—look at this’—and then they had all kinds of ideas about how to exploit that effect and everybody became relaxed and it was more playful. (§34:31-44)

Jason offered an expanded conception of photographic experience by considering online image viewing as part of the practice of, and experience through, photography:

I consider this to be kind of like a practice of photography—just sort of viewing archives of images—[...] a kind of mining the internet for images and just sort of presenting this collective archive in the world that [...] you access through Google Images or whatever— that’s photography too. (§36:4-17)

This study offers an in-depth close-up encounter with the intricacies of the experience with and through photography. Some of these experiential dimensions may translate to different forms of photographic practice. Others may be specific to the type of intentionality that these artist-photographers bring to the medium.
5.4 Artist-photographers

There are several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results of this study. One limitation and, simultaneously, strength of this study is its relatively ‘homogeneous’ sample. I interviewed five artist photographers—two women and three men—who all live and work in the same geographical area. All are ‘practicing’ artists whose work is exhibited, represented and sold within the context of contemporary art; all are invested in creative practice and seek to ‘unfold’ their creativity through the medium of photography; all have taught photography at some point in time; four out of five participants hold a master of fine arts degree and four out of five participants are over 50 years of age. All participants grew up in North America and are fluent in the English language. All these ‘contexts’ infold the participant accounts. For example, several participants used language indicative of the infolding of a range of theoretical discourses in their experiences of and reflections on their own practice (e.g. phenomenology, psychoanalysis or the ideas of influential thinkers on photography). Several participants situated their practice of photography in dialogue with specific local and global discourses on photography and contemporary art.

The similarities between the study participants in terms of cultural background, education, occupation, contexts of practice and choice of medium offered many parallel strands between their stories. This shared ground enabled me to focus on the different

---

77 Two participants indicated different cultural roots (Asian; Eastern European). One participant was ‘born abroad’—the British West Indies— but grew up in the United States.
and personal articulations within similar phenomena. I was able to see how each participant negotiated his or her interface with the world of people, places and things through the medium of photography in different ways. I noticed how each lived-body as a medium constitutes a unique point of view on and experience of the world. Smith et al. (2009, p. 198) emphasize that bodies not only differ from each other in terms of their genetic, biological and physical characteristics, but also in terms of their expressive and experiential unfoldings. The uniqueness of expression and experience could be accounted for, in part, by its mediated nature. What emerges as conscious experience is a result of sensing, perceiving, and, as Massumi (2002) argued, the infolding of a range of “contexts” that are unique to our being and becoming.

The fact that all study participants are artists is also worth noting as both a strength and limitation of this study. As artists, the study participants have lived with the medium of photography for a long time and were able to articulate many particularities of their experiences in great depth. As mentioned in Chapter 1, McLuhan (1994; 1964, p. 18) identified artists as expertly in touch with “the changes in sense perception” that media set into motion. In the context of artistic practice, the choice of medium is a very deliberate and specific choice. Artists tend to think a lot about what a medium does and whether it affords them access to those experiential and expressive possibilities that are important to them in the context of their creative work. Because of this uniquely focused intentionality and purpose, artists’ experiences of and through the medium of photography may differ significantly from the experiences of those who engage with photography in other contexts or for other purposes. This difference could
also manifest as a difference in degree: The intensity of experiences with and through photography surfacing in the participant accounts may emerge in ‘amplified form’ because of their personal ‘investment’ in that particular medium.

5.5  **iMedium: The researcher as medium**

A study of mediated perception would not be complete without being reflexive about my own role in analysing, interpreting and articulating an account of the interview data. IPA as a research methodology acknowledges the central role of the researcher as *medium*. Smith et al. (2009) argue that “the IPA researcher is engaged in a double hermeneutic” in which “the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them” (p. 3). They describe this mediating role as one of amplification and illumination:

> Interpretation in IPA is a form of *amplification* or *illumination* of meaning, which is cued or sparked by a close engagement with the data, and which requires creativity, reflection and critical awareness for its full development. (p. 204-205)

If I were to consider my research process in terms of un/folding-enfolding-infolding, I can identify a range of mediating movements. The context of the interview unfolds the intentionality of both researcher and participant in particular ways. As a researcher, I am intentional about folding my own preconceptions as much as possible in order to be fully present in the moment and attentive to what the participant has to
say (‘bracketing’). While transcribing the interview data, I experienced my time listening to the interview audio recordings as an unfolding of a ‘time-space’ in which I was able to ‘steep’ in the words and stories of each participant account. After the transcription phase, I gradually moved from description to interpretation—a complex process of folding some parts of the narrative, of unfolding others, and of infolding contexts.

The story that unfolds in my thesis is infolded with the particular focus of my interests, with the thematic strands I chose to work with, with the images and metaphors that mediated my understanding of what was said, and with the words and language I chose to bring this story to life. It was as if I took up my camera and framed my subject matter in a particular way, choosing a certain ‘depth of field’ and ‘focus’ as a way of, to quote Brendan, “attending to and giving regard to those things that may not appear in any other way – except through the bound frame” (§104: 1-6).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis has been a helpful research strategy for me. It mediated a type of engagement with my subject matter that facilitated dialogue on several different levels—in the interview itself and through my engagement with the interview transcripts. It afforded me a form that allowed me to think through

I found that my own experiences as an artist and photographer offered a shared ground from which to engage the discussion and enrich my understanding of the participant accounts. My familiarity with the technical language of photography, with the common discourses that frame its practice, and with the creative process helped me pick up on things more quickly and probe deeper into what the participants were expressing in the interviews. In this respect my personal experience of the interviews was marked by moments of recognition, although I have tried to be careful and reflexive about making assumptions or jumping to conclusions in relation to what someone was telling me.
the stories of others, in the same way that I tend to think through art. If I were to speak from an artist’s perspective, IPA as a research methodology is a medium that I enjoy working with.

5.6 Future unfoldings

(This is ) the adventure that is our future, as we immerse ourselves ever more deeply in our own technologies; as the boundaries between our technologies and ourselves continue to implode; as we inexorably become creatures that we cannot even now imagine.

(Stone, 1995, p. 183)

More than ever before, human being and becoming are actively extended, facilitated, modulated and transformed by a range of technologies that could be called intimate interfaces in that they become ‘essential’ in how we see, hear and connect with our life world. Like never before, a range of portable, personal electronic media facilitate our everyday lives—computers, mobile phones, PDAs, digital cameras, portable media players—digital devices ubiquitous to the point that we no longer notice their presence. If we indeed “immerse ourselves ever more deeply in our own technologies” (Stone, 1995, p. 183), then questions of what these technologies afford (what they facilitate or give access to), and what they demand (what we invest or what we give up in exchange) become important.

This IPA study of the experiential dimensions of photography marks a beginning of unfolding a more in-depth engagement with mediation and embodiment. As Verbeek
(2005) suggested, the concept of mediation is a useful and revealing entry point to studying human-technology relations, and can open up many new ways of thinking about a range of phenomena in relation to embodied experience.\textsuperscript{79} I can envision several directions for further inquiry into mediated experience both in- and outside the context of photography. I am interested in exploring to what extent these study findings are particular to ‘the artist’s perspective’ on the medium of photography. I also want to explore how contemporary photographic practices interface with embodied consciousness, with the ways we see, perceive, act and experience embodied being-in-the-world. I am also interested in the notion of “affectivity” (Hansen, 2004)—the ways in which electronic and digital media are able to unfold an ‘affective duration’ for the sensuous body to inhabit.

5.7 In folding

I would like to end the final chapter of my thesis with some of the words that inspired its becoming:

\begin{quote}
Photography [is] a tool or means to communicate that idea or solidify that idea in more or less an instant […] it [is] sort of a vehicle for ideas. (Jason, §8:6-14)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{79} One formation of scholars that focuses on mediation as a core approach to interdisciplinary research initiatives is Orbis Mediologicus: The Project for Mediology at Pratt Institute. They propose mediology as “the study of the logics of media and mediation conceived in the widest possible sense, including biological, chemical, linguistic, imagistic, financial, musical, gestural, architectural, and new and emerging forms of mediation.” http://orbismediologicus.wordpress.com/what-is-mediology/
So much of what happens nowadays I just don’t understand. I guess maybe never did, really. But if I can kind of create my own little world that is something I can get my arms around and know “Gee– this was real for me!” (Mike, §64:1-8)

[Doing photography] can give you that same feeling of being in a kind of heightened awareness and in a kind of flow state where I don’t know what’s gonna happen but I feel very observant and I feel very focused and I really like [...] becoming very visual and being surprised often by what I’m seeing [...] being surprised and also being like open to kind of falling in love with something. (Emma, §22:63-76)

We write the moment and it can point towards the vastness of the moment but it can’t give the fullness – you know— it gives something else in the way that a poem gives you something else. [surprised sound] Oh! You know— a surprise – and it opens up things in ways that you didn’t know— so there’s that feedback that’s not so much about you or your ego but feedback about what it is in that moment— about you – your history in the present. [...]– not so much about the egoic self but that self that really isn’t there— you know— that invisible presence – that consciousness—you know– that awareness, that curiosity... (Debra, §60:8-26)

If there is [...] some human sense or some sense that becomes the human— right?— I think it is more important to say it that way— in some sense that becomes the human—it’s important to facilitate that— to bring that into the world, so that it’s available for other people— so that there are other people who can realize the sense of being human. (Brendan, §74:1-11)


Marks, L. U. (2011a). Enfolding-unfolding aesthetics, or the unthought at the heart of wood. Unpublished work.


# APPENDICES

| APPENDIX A | Verbeek’s postphenomenological vocabulary | p. 134 |
| APPENDIX B | Letter of invitation | p. 135 |
| APPENDIX C | Project description | p. 137 |
| APPENDIX D | Interview questions | p. 139 |
| APPENDIX E | Consent form | p. 140 |
| APPENDIX F | Ethics approval letter | p. 142 |
| APPENDIX G | Interview transcription + analysis sample | p. 144 |
| APPENDIX H | Unfolding contexts | p. 147 |
### HERMENEUTIC

- Experience
- How reality appears to humans
- Perception (microperception)
- Interpretation
- Transformation
- Amplification
- Reduction
- Constitution of objectivity

### EXISTENTIAL

- Existence
- How humans appear in their world
- Action
- Involvement
- (efforts and focal engagement):
  - with the artifacts themselves
  - with the context of the artifacts
  - with what the artifacts make available
- Translation
- Invitation
- Inhabitation
- Constitution of subjectivity

### MOST RELEVANT HUMAN-ARTIFACT RELATIONS

- Embodiment relations
- Hermeneutic relations
- Embodiment relations
- Alterity relations

### POINTS OF DEPARTURE

- Artifacts mediate perception and context of interpretation (macroperception)
- Experience takes shape as perception interpreted within a context of meaning
- Artifacts mediate action and context of existence
- Existence takes shape as action in a context of existence

Adapted from Verbeek (2005, p. 196)
APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear [...],

I am contacting you because [...] you might be interested in participating in my research project.

I am a recent graduate from the BFA (photography) program at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, currently pursuing graduate studies at SFU School of Communication. My fascination with the medium of photography has found its way into my MA thesis project, in which I seek to explore the phenomenology of photography.

I hope to interview 3 to 6 artist photographers about their experiences with the medium. The interview process would involve one to two interviews of about 1 hour in length. An optional second interview would serve as a follow up interview in which we would explore in greater depth the themes that emerged in the initial interview. The purpose of the interview is to simply have a conversation in which you talk about and describe your personal relationship with photography. I hope to schedule the first interviews within the next few weeks.

If you are interested in being interviewed about your ideas and experiences regarding the practice of photography, please let me know as soon as possible!

Sincerely,
Helma Sawatzky

[omitted: email address]
[omitted: home phone #]

ABOUT THE PROJECT

For my MA thesis research, I am working on an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of photography. I am looking at the experiential dimensions of photographic acts:

• What does photography do for you?
• What does photography do to you?
• What does photography mean to you?
• Does photography play a part in how you perceive or make sense of things?
I am interested in interviewing people for who photography constitutes a meaningful way to engage with their lifeworld. In the context of this particular study I focus on artist/photographers. The purpose of these interviews is to facilitate a conversation about the connections between photography and experience from the perspective of the photographer. These first-hand experiential accounts of photography will then be analysed in order to identify key experiential themes. These themes—the points of convergence and difference between participant accounts—will become the basis for a ‘dialogue’ with existing theories and philosophies of photography. In this way, I hope to contribute an embodied perspective to the discourse on photography.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

- The interview process involves one to two interviews of approximately 1 hour in length. The second interview would be an optional follow-up interview to explore in greater depth the themes that emerged in the initial interview.
- The interview(s) will be conducted in a mutually agreed upon location. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed (for the purpose of analysis). Research ethics approval requires that your identity be protected (your name will not be used) in all publications using the interview data.
- Each participant will be asked to sign an interview consent form before the interview takes place.

TIME FRAME

I hope to complete the interviews over the next two months. I would like to do the first interview in the next few weeks, and plan for a follow up interview towards the end of January or the beginning of February.

If you have any other questions — please contact me by email or phone:

[omitted: email address]
[omitted: home phone #]

Helma Sawatzky
Title of Study/ Project:

Unfolding Presence: A Phenomenology of Photography

Principal Investigator: Helma Sawatzky
MA Candidate
Email: hsawatzk@sfu.ca
Phone: [omitted]

Senior Supervisor: Gary McCarron
SFU School of Communication
Email: gmccarro@sfu.ca
Phone: [omitted]

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PURPOSE

This project involves an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). It seeks to explore the lived experience of the event and/or process (phenomenon) of photography.

PROCEDURES

- I will be conducting semi-structured interviews with 3 to 6 professional artist/photographers.
- The purpose of the interviews is to probe the participants in terms of their perceptions, experiences and views on the practice of photography. The interview data will be subjected to an iterative analysis process in which emerging themes pertaining to the phenomenological (experiential) and hermeneutic (meaning making) dimensions of the photographic event will be identified. The thematic strands—the points of convergence and divergence between interviews—will then be brought into dialogue with theories of perception, experience and photography.
- The interviews will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon location.
- Each interview will be approximately 60 minutes in length.
- The outcomes of this analytical process will be written up as part of the MA thesis.

FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW

- Participants may be asked for a follow up interview to probe deeper into some of the thematic threads that emerged in the initial interview. Participants indicate whether or not they consent to be contacted for a follow up interview on the interview consent form.
SAMPLE SELECTION

• The purpose of interpretative phenomenological analysis is to gather detailed descriptions of a particular experience or phenomenon. For this reason IPA proposes a purposive sampling technique: an intentional seeking out of those participants that have a vested interest in the topic under investigation.

• In the context of this study I will be interviewing 3-6 artist/photographers living in the greater Vancouver area. This sample size is typical for an IPA study.

• All study participants will be adults.

• The selection of participants will follow these methods:
  1. I will draw on my professional contacts, as I am an artist/photographer myself.
  2. I will use the snowball sampling method. This means that existing study participants propose future participants from their network of personal and/or professional contacts. At the end of the interview I will ask the participant whether s/he can think of anyone else they know that may be interested in participating in this study. If they suggest somebody to me, I will ask the participant on how they want to proceed (e.g., Do they want to contact their proposed participant and ask them to contact me? Do they want me to contact them directly (mentioning their name while making contact)? I will follow their requests for making the connection.

CONFIDENTIALITY

• Research participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

• The participant name will be removed from all transcription data and replaced by an anonymous identifier (e.g., participant A, participant B).

DATA STORAGE

• The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by the principal investigator (Helma Sawatzky). Both the audio recording and the transcription data will be kept on a USB stick which will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.

• The audio recording will be on file for three years, after which it will be deleted.

BENEFITS AND/OR RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS

• This study provides participants an opportunity to talk about something that is meaningful to them, to contribute a personal account of their experiences with photography.

• This study holds no anticipated risks for its participants.

• Study participation is strictly voluntary. Participants will not receive financial remuneration for their participation in this study.
APPENDIX D  INTERVIEW QUESTIONS | ethics application #2010s0776

Title of Study/ Project:

Unfolding Presence: A Phenomenology of Photography

Principal Investigator    Senior Supervisor
Helma Sawatzky            Gary McCarron
MA Candidate             SFU School of Communication
Email: hsawatzk@sfu.ca   Email: gmccarro@sfu.ca
Phone: [omitted]         Phone: [omitted]

A SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I will be conducting semi-structured interviews with 3 to 6 professional artist/photographers. As the direction of the interview follows the lead of the participant – it is not possible to establish a fixed list of questions. Listed below are sample questions that give an impression of the scope, focus and tone of the interview.

1. What was your first encounter with photography? / When did you begin taking photographs?

2. Was there a particular point in time in which you began to take a real interest in photography? Why?

3. Can you tell me what photography [does for / means to] you?

4. Can you describe what you enjoy [taking pictures of/photographing] and why?

5. What [makes/moves] you [to] take a picture?

6. Can you [tell me about / think of] [an example /a situation / time in your life] when taking (a) photograph(s) was particularly meaningful to you? Why was that?

7. Can you describe a [situation/circumstance] in which you feel compelled to take pictures? (PROMPT: Can you describe another one?)

8. Are there situations in which you don’t feel that urge? (PROMPT: Do you have a sense of why that is?)

9. Can you tell me [ how / what ] you feel when you are taking photos? (PROMPTS: How about just before? During? After? Do you feel different before or after you’ve taken a photograph?)

10. Does your experience with people or things or situations change if you have a camera? / Do you feel different when you are taking photographs from times when you are not? Can you describe how this is different?
Title of Study/Project: Unfolding Presence: A Phenomenology of Photography

Principal Investigator
Helma Sawatzky
MA Candidate

Senior Supervisor
Gary McCarron
Associate Professor

I am a student of the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby BC, Canada. I am conducting interviews for my Master’s thesis project exploring the experiential dimensions of photography.

During this study, you will be asked to respond to questions that probe the various dimensions of experience in relation to the practice of photography. The interview was designed to be approximately one hour in length. However, please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the interview or move on to the next question, whichever you prefer.

Your identity will be kept confidential. Only myself and the faculty supervisor mentioned above will have access to this information. Both the audio recording and the transcription data will be kept on a USB stick which will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. The audio recording will be on file for three years, after which it will be deleted.

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Helma Sawatzky (principal investigator). Phone: 604-542-5130 | Email: hsawatzk@sfu.ca

If you have any concerns or complaints, you may contact Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director of the SFU Office of Research Ethics. Phone: 778-782-6593 | Email: hal_weinberg@sfu.ca

PARTICIPANT’S AGREEMENT

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.
4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.

6. I agree that Helma Sawatzky may keep the interview data and use my identifying information, as well as the content of the interview.

7. I understand that the use of this interview may include a published paper, or papers, the Master’s thesis, and the possibility of use in the context of a PhD dissertation or a book at a later time.

CONSENT TO FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

I may wish to contact you in the future in order to clarify items and ask for further information. This may also be done by phone or email.

Do you agree to allow me to contact you for a follow-up?

I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference.

I approve of the use of my personal information as agreed upon with the above conditions. Subject to these confidentiality conditions, I authorize Helma Sawatzky to use this interview for the purposes of research, which may be published.

__________________________________________________________________________  __________________________________________________________________
Name of Participant                  Name of Researcher

__________________________________________________________________________  __________________________________________________________________
Signature                            Signature

__________________________________________________________________________  __________________________________________________________________
Date                                 Date
Dear Helma,

Re: Unfolding Presence: A phenomenology of photography
- Appl. #: 20100776

I am pleased to inform you that the above referenced Request for Ethical Approval of Research has been approved on behalf of the Research Ethics Board. This approval is in effect until the end date December 19, 2013, or only during the period in which you are a registered SFU student.

The Office of Research Ethics must be notified of any changes in the approved protocol. Request for amendments to the protocol may be requested by email to dore@sfu.ca. In all correspondence relating to this application, please reference the application number shown on this letter and all email.

Your application has been categorized as “minimal risk” and approved by the Director, Office of Research Ethics, on behalf of the Research Ethics Board in accordance with University policy R20.01, http://www.sfu.ca/policies/research/r20-01.htm. The Board reviews and may amend decisions or subsequent amendments made independently by the Director, Chair or Deputy Chair at its regular monthly meetings.

.../2
“Minimal risk” occurs when potential participants can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms incurred by participating in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the participant in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research.

Please note that it is the responsibility of the researcher, or the responsibility of the Student Supervisor if the researcher is a graduate student or undergraduate student, to maintain written or other forms of documented consent for a period of 1 year after the research has been completed.

If there is an adverse event, the principal investigator must notify the Office of Research Ethics within five (5) days. An Adverse Events form is available electronically by contacting dore@sfu.ca.

All correspondence with regards to this application will be sent to your SFU email address.

Please notify the Office of Research Ethics at dore@sfu.ca once you have completed the data collection portion of your project so that we can close this file.

Best wishes for success in this research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director
Office of Research Ethics

c: Dr. Gary McCarron, Supervisor

/jnw
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>EMERGENT THEMES</th>
<th>DEBRA</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT</th>
<th>EXPLORATORY COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:46</td>
<td>photography mediates a sense of connection between the self and the world</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ah yes, I was first introduced to photography in [province name]—ehm, when I was publishing—eh—the yearbook for the University of [city name]—and we decided to turn it into a book on—ehm—the student revolution, and to make it a photographic book. And out of that experience— and in—in particular—eh—because of [name omitted] who I, I later married—who was a photographer, eh, I found myself really loving the way that photography—ah—created that connection between the photographer and the outside world, with people, or with the land or with nature—and I love that. I love that sense of connection and the richness that formed in that dialogue between the use of the— the camera and the outside world and of course the self. But it wasn’t only about seeing. It was also about listening and becoming more conscious and aware of where you were.</td>
<td>narrative; visualizing; public presentation witnessing events of the student revolution documenting historical events? Did Debra’s love for photography develop alongside her love for photographer [name omitted]? (lines 7-14) Could this context amplify for her the experienced relational/connection aspects of photography? photography creating a connection to the outside world (lines 11-14) &gt;&gt; outside of the ‘self’? The camera mediating a connection between the self and the world: “I love that sense of connection that formed in that dialogue between the use of the camera and the outside world and of course the self” (lines 15-17) Conceiving of photographic acts as a dialogue (line 17): what is dialoguing with what in this encounter? Photography as a way of paying attention? (see also Brendan - interview 1: §104: 1-6) A way of listening? Of connecting to embodied consciousness? (lines 21-22) QUOTE “I love that sense of connection that formed in that dialogue between the use of the camera and the outside world, with people, or with the land or with nature—and I love that” I love that sense of connection and the richness that formed (lines 16-17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>DEBRA</td>
<td>Line(s)</td>
<td>Transcript</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hmmh— so would you say that photography then works for you as— as— as— as an extension of—of your— your being, or.</td>
<td>Some of my previous communication seems to have given Debra the idea that I view a camera as a type of prosthesis. In our pre-interview conversation, I may have mentioned McLuhan’s idea of media as ‘the extensions of man’ – which may have a very different (and less organic) connotation for her than it has for me... It was not my intent to introduce the idea of a camera as a prosthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:58</td>
<td>DEBRA</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Well, I mean what you’re talking about is this— this idea that— that we use it as a kind of prosthetic device to extend our abilities.</td>
<td>Explores the camera as a medium in relation to consciousness (lines 5-6) – her comment explores the photograph as a ‘psychic trace’ (which Brendan mentioned in relation to article by Christian Metz)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:05</td>
<td></td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Not necessarily.</td>
<td>Connection to time—a significant moment—a making significant by way of the photographic event. (also: Idea of ritual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:07</td>
<td>Photograph as psychic trace</td>
<td>DEBRA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Uhm, I think—I think there— that there’s something in that—in that idea that— that when I— when I use the camera... the camera is a way to— ehm... to be con... to— to give a kind of trace of my own consciousness in the— in the moment. But at the same time it isn’t my consciousness because what the camera shows is not something I am thinking. We assume that— that it is, but it’s not. It’s seeing in a different way the world than, than I see the world.</td>
<td>MEDIATION vs. REPRESENTATION: What is represented? Or what is facilitated / given access to by the photograph? Resists a common assumption that a photograph can accurately represent thought (or feeling?) (lines 7-9): The camera doesn’t show (or represent) what she thought – but does seem to mediate it– make space or time for it– create an image that enters memory and thereby our inner narrative formation. The camera seems to constitute some type of distance/removal/alteration of/ from what was felt or thought In what way does the camera see the world differently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>DEBRA</td>
<td>Interview Transcript</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Can you– can you talk a bit more about that?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debra &amp; I were both sitting on the floor and the photographs of [name husband] and Debra were leaning up against the wall and were very ‘present’ (due to size, scale of subject matter and location) during the interview.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ehmm, so… when let’s say – looking at these four images here of, of [xxxx] and I in dialogue— and this piece is called “I am appropriating you”– ehm– when I’m, I’m making the photograph… so this is a collaborative work – there’s something that’s happening that ‘s performatve. Where– where in our gestures and in our actions, we– we are articulating – ehm– contents that we may or may not be conscious of. We’re playing out– we’re playing and playing out something. Ehm– and– that, that narrative that emerges from the unedited images – uh– can only be found uh– later. It– it– it may or may not be– be an accurate reflection of what happened at that time– because– as soon as you move from… there’s the act of photographing– which is in itself a very sensual act [5 minute mark] involving all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debra emphasizes the relational and communicative aspects of making these pictures; “in dialogue”– “a collaborative work” (Line 3, 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Debra also identifies the space of photographic representation as ‘performatve’ – a space of articulation, of language (which seems particularly relevant to her in relation to her marriage to a First Nations man).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Photography can give access to unconscious contents (lines 8-11) of performances that, for Debra, come to visibility later on– while she reviews and edits her images.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Reviewing photographs as analysis, as a way of discovering or constructing? narrative, how/what they mean. (See also Mike interview 1 §42.24-32)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Photography as a visual feedback loop to/of our lives: a central part of making sense, of situating our ‘selves’ in (relation to) our life world? ‘unfolding presence’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>For Debra photographs do bring into being a story, a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**INFOLDING CONTEXTS**

**NOTE:** This table offers a small selection of citations from the interview data to further support the idea that a wide range of contexts infold perception and experience. I emphasize that experience is a ‘many-mixed’ phenomenon, and the interview fragments included below could find their home in several of the ‘categories.’ Also, this list of categories is by no means complete, but offers an initial survey of thematic strands that emerged through the data.

### Inquiry

**MAKING SENSE OF LIFE**

Or it’s like where I’m trying to learn— that we always have [...] —like we’re always within our own story. We’re in the middle of our own story. And in that story that we have about ourselves and about our relationship to the larger world, there’re always kind of multiple questions, often unconscious questions that we have and that we’re trying to figure out. And that within that story there are always puzzle pieces in the world. And we recognize the puzzle piece when we see it. But sometimes we may push it— to try to get the puzzle piece and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t. (DEBRA, 38: 1-17)

### Identity

**BEING ‘THE PHOTOGRAPHER’ AS PUBLIC IDENTITY**

I could say that it [photography; being a photographer] gave me permission to look at a lot of things and put myself into situations that I wouldn’t otherwise maybe have had entrance to. (MIKE, §20:7-11)

**FAMILY HISTORIES**

I took those self portraits and did multiples— say, from that single experience— it might be three images— and I did them [...] over a seven to fifteen period of time, where it expanded out so that you could see [a] whole range of change that was occurring and that included a video with stories of the four women— which kind of located the piece historically— you know— in terms of my own family and the four generations of women. (DEBRA, §20:5-17)
**Memory**

A MEMORY OR EXPERIENCE INFOLDS FUTURE ENCOUNTERS

And then I kept on photographing but nothing else really struck me except that place— I just kept thinking about it a lot. Then when we got back to Canada, to [name of city], that [name of city] is full of tiny little cottages— you know— and I’d never noticed them before— and to me that— when I think back on it— the city was kind of dull— but that experience really woke me up to how special these places were. (MIKE, §30: 48-61)

REPRESENTING THE PAST

I've spent time with the foliage and the flora and the fauna. And what I wanna do— I wanna represent the park with the trapper. So— here's my preparation. I have some kind of intent here. That I want to represent the park, and I don't know how to do that. But forty years ago I had a dream. Talk about preparation— to do a shot— forty years ago I had a dream and in that dream I saw... (DEBRA, §42: 143-155)

**Imagination**

IMAGINATION INFOLDS FUTURE ENCOUNTERS

It was a place called Murania [an imaginary world from a 1950s television show featuring Gene Autry] which was ruled by a evil queen [...] [laughs]

But that’s what’s got me thinking about this and I thought— I got to see this place [a place that became his subject for a photo shoot] and photograph it. (MIKE, §54: 34-44)

EDITING THE WORLD: SELECTIVE UNFOLDING

Although I think very early on, using photography, I was very aware of that the camera allowed me to edit the world, that I could edit out everything that I didn’t want and I could build this whole world that only contained the things I wanted it to contain— and I really saw it as a tool for like sorting [laughs] and selecting [HS: building your photographic garden]. Yeah— kind of— build your own kind of weird fantasy space that only had the things in it that you wanted and it was very fictional for me right from the beginning. (EMMA, §38:5-20)

CREATING FICTIONS

I think the thing that has kept me in working with photography— like that I go away and I come back— is that constructing: you can construct your own reality, you can build your own believable fiction, you can communicate how you see the world— you know— that it’s like the very core. What I get a huge amount of pleasure out of [is] constructing things – I think of it as [...] a space that’s almost theatrical— but I don’t really like work that is theatrical [laughs]— but I think of it a bit in that way. It’s like that
Aesthetics

FEELING THE BEAUTY OF SOMETHING
And I think the whole idea of beauty is really important to me too— but in a complex way [...] I don’t know how to articulate it very clearly. Like I think where it comes down to that thing of like really slowing down and feeling the beauty of something and feeling very much bowled over by it— that that’s like this incredible— like to have an activity that allows you to connect to that sense of observation is really wonderful—and I want to make things that are gorgeous. (EMMA, §90: 18-33)

CREATING A PERSONAL EXPRESSION
I tend to avoid doing things that are obviously beautiful in themselves— just ‘cause it seems like that’s too easy to do— you know. [HS: And— and are you referring to stuff here like the sunset and the garden] Yeah— that kind of thing— yeah. Although I think maybe I’m starting to rethink that a little bit. Well, part of it is— there’s such a huge history of landscape. It’s hard to do something unique— and maybe that’s not the thing to be worried about anyway— maybe the thing is to really—if you’re gonna deal with something like that— just do it as well as you can possibly do it— and maybe—if you do it as well as you can and as often as you can, something personal will come out of it— but I guess that’s my worry— is that how much of it is of the scene that’s really making the image and not myself— and I guess the other thing too is— how do you do it so that it sort of feels any different from work that was done before, you know. I’d want it to have some kind of current feeling to it if I could— I don’t know— and I don’t know what the answer is to how to do that but it is something I have been thinking about. (MIKE, §60: 48 -§62:27)

Affect & feeling

DESIRE TO TRANSLATE FEELINGS INTO PHOTOGRAPH
When you’re with somebody – I think your brain filters how you see them— you know— and your heart does. And – but I wasn’t getting photographs that mirrored what my idea was of those people. [laughs] I thought that was very disturbing. [both laugh]. And I thought “Oh, what is this? Why is it this way?” And I realized what it probably was that you see a moment when you wanna take the picture and you press the shutter— but there’s a whole lot of stuff that happens between when you decide to take the picture— and it takes time for your finger to react and the camera itself takes even more time to react— and so by the time you got that picture actually recorded onto film, it’s a different moment than you chose. And
quite often what happens is that the person is now caught in a transition between the pose or the expression they try to give you and the one that now they’re moving towards. [...] I wanted it [the photograph] to reflect not just what they looked like but what I was feeling.

(MIKE, §34: 1-27; §36: 1-3)

FINDING RESONANCES
But what it ended up coming to—and it was a very simple realization that there was some sense that I had to figure out where it was—and [...] the sense was internal. I was experiencing and it was like tickling me inside. And I was going, “Where is this? What is this? Where is it? Where do I have to be to be with it?” So [...] that’s how I started location scouting. [...] I was trying to find out where it was in the world. And [...] sometimes it can be—I’m surprised at how direct the correspondence can be; sometimes it’s not at all—it will be just enough to get me moving towards something, and then in moving I find something—which is an interesting way of working.

(BRENDAN §56: 15-25; §58: 1-10)

CONSTRUCTING A NARRATIVE
I’m still working on this body of work that I’ve been working on for about twelve years— that is about a fictional character [...] It just wasn’t in anybody’s imagination that a woman could be a serious artist— that wasn’t a narrative that was available. [...] I was really interested in finding precedents for my practice – so I was doing a lot of research [...] looking at the Parisian Avant Garde between the wars because there was a lot of interdisciplinary work happening at that time. And I knew there was a lot of women involved— as performers. So I hoped to find a precedent for my practice– so I was looking for somebody who was a singer who was also a visual artist. (EMMA §50: §50: 2-5; 46-49; 13-24)

PHOTOGRAPHY AS PERFORMATIVE
There’s something that’s happening that’s performative. Where in our gestures and in our actions, we are articulating contents that we may or may not be conscious of. We’re playing and playing out something. And that narrative that emerges from the unedited images can only be found later. It may or may not be an accurate reflection of what happened at that time. (DEBRA, §8: 6-17)

PHOTOGRAPHY AS AN ‘OPTICAL UNCONSCIOUS’
So there’s always a kind of dialogue when you’re fully engaged with the world. There’s a dialogue with space, with objects, with weather, with touches, with taste, with everything that’s very complex. And the camera can record a small kind of spectrum of that, or can record perhaps
sometimes something that we don’t see—you know. That’s also there and that’s where the expanding or the kind of deconstructing, or the rearranging of perception occurs. And so that there’s the act of photographing and there’s the act of editing which can also cause an additional rearranging of perception—and also evoke physical responses. (DEBRA, §30: 42-61)

**Ethics & responsibility**

**RESPECTING THE OTHER**

It is more difficult nowadays, cause it’s such a litigious environment that we live in. But nevertheless I think that morally you really… I wouldn’t want somebody to photograph me and then use it in a way that was hurtful, you know. So why should I do that to somebody else? If they’re not comfortable with the way they look or what they’re doing or what they can afford to wear or where they live or whatever—then I have to respect that. (MIKE, §74: 9-23)

**PREPARING TO BE PRESENT IN CERTAIN WAYS**

… but following [the pipe ceremony], the First Nations people felt that they were gonna tell the story then from their point of view, but people kind of dispersed. And I did ask an elder then if he would tell the story, and if I could record it. And I offered him tobacco—which is traditional. So this is about preparation. But while I’m asking him to—this is also I’m preparing myself. So prior to even coming, I was really careful about how I was with myself to […] to think good thoughts in preparation for going there—so that when I was there, I could be really clear. (DEBRA§42: 30-4)

**History & culture**

**A PHYSICAL CONNECTION TO HISTORY**

I feel this really strongly when I look at photographs—that were taken way back in history. Those photographs were formed—as you know—by light […] actually striking that subject—bouncing off that subject and coming back and registering through the lens and onto the paper ultimately. So there’s a direct physical connection actually between a print of something and that event that took […] place maybe a hundred years ago or ten minutes ago. (MIKE, §22: 36-50)

**BEING PART OF A HISTORY, A DISCIPLINE**

I’m just really drawn to photographs—not just for doing them now, but for being part of a whole discipline that—I guess now it’s […] getting to be an older discipline, but at the time it wasn’t. But nevertheless it still has a very strong history[...] It’s a very complex and rich area of its own and has its
own aesthetics and everything. And the history of photography really is the history of the world from the day it was invented till now. (MIKE, §20:9-16; 26-32)

IMPORTANCE OF FEELING A CONNECTION TO HISTORY
There was a historical specificity in terms of content […] in which I still brought in that notion of engagement. […] And where I’m not interested is when I have no – when there’s no kind of historical present day dialogue with the content area I am inquiring about or investigating. (DEBRA, §34:14-18; 19-24)

ENACTING A CONNECTION TO HISTORY
There is an honouring or acknowledging of the history in the present. For me that is very important. And that’s where that tension between presence and absence comes in. (DEBRA, §44:3-8)

---

**Discourse & Politics**

**CREATING CULTURE**
How do we [...] give a trace of ourselves within a culture— because we are creating culture. We [...] might be from two different cultures, but we’re in the present and something different is happening. This is not a cultural norm. [...] So what are we trying to do? I mean, we’re trying to be more alive– you know– we’re trying to articulate something about the uniqueness of our relationship (DEBRA, §8:47-60)

**FEMINIST DISCOURSE**
I mean it’s like the work is quite funny as well. So I think this is all in response to your question about playfulness [laughs] –this is [...] a roundabout answer, but like the role of play can be sort of like a very effective strategy when (en)countering rigid structures, you know. Like poke fun at them while at the same time it’s like playing with their conventions as well too. It’s a very feminist project, [a] very feminist use of play— I guess a kind of interventionist strategy. (EMMA, §50: 127-171)

**PHOTOGRAPHY AS AN ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSE**
I talked about it about five years ago too in an interview with a reporter. He said: “Yeah– I don’t see it [‘it’ refers to making photographs that mediate a sense of embracing the viewer into the pictorial space, that acknowledge their embodied presence] either in other people’s work and I’m just wondering why not.” And then I really coyly said “Well– because they’re really not really that engaged with the world.” [laughs] But they can afford to have that separation or that – It’s also [...] could be a form of just being naive— that you never really had to be present in a way that accounted for their body. And I think [...] that that becomes– that then you
come back to questions of privilege and sexed bodies and patriarchy. (BRENDA, §50: 30-47)

ART MAKING AS DISCOURSE ON ‘WHAT IS PHOTOGRAPHY’
I’m trying to get back to when I actually last made […] a purely photographic object. […] I’ve made a lot of works with the scanner, and I think around that time I made a pretty serious break from making a photograph. I would argue that these things are still photographs, and I argue with my most recent work where I’m taking archived images and [...] printing them and manipulating those inks– [...] I would argue that all these things are still photography but the last time that I’ve taken a photograph and then made a print from it through traditional means [HS: either a digital file or film?] Yeah– and not intervened much beyond that– it’s been quite a few years. (JASON, §44: 12-34)

Mediating the medium

USING THE CAMERA GESTURALLY
So having done Chinese brushwork and having been exploring performance and working with the body and observing my daughter and participating in playing with my daughter –’cause my work has always been to do with the immediate and my own life—that I began to use the camera through [a] brushstroke idea– almost like using the camera much more like a musical instrument, gesturally in relationship to whoever I was photographing. (DEBRA, §14: 153-165)

USING PHOTOGRAPHY TO CREATE VIDEOS
I photographed every cover– so that was 797 covers. And I tried as best as I could to align the date stamp so [...] then I made a video where each image was up on the screen for –I forget how long– two seconds maybe– so it’s like 27 minutes of these almost 800 book covers going by. And I’m working on another video using the digital camera to shoot out the front window. I’ve been shooting the same view every morning for over three years– so that’s gonna be a video. So […] there’s certain things I can do with that camera [the digital camera] that would be harder to do with another kind of camera that I’ve been excited about– [laughs] so I’m gonna keep going with that. (EMMA, §32: 17-37)

USING PHOTOGRAPHY TO MEDIATE INSTALLATION WORK
I did sculpture, some sound work, a lot of installation work and was using my camera to document space without thinking that I was actually making photographs. I was just collecting data– so I was using it to do a lot of field work. And then I would translate that data into installations, right? […] It became really apparent […] that the experience of being somewhere could be mediated through a photograph and not through a set, a three-
dimensional set – like that your body would be present in. But that there was a way to create a similar kind of experience or response to the image with an actual photograph. (BRENDAN, §18: 12-21; §26: 1-10)

**Language & Translation**

**DISCONNECT BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPH & FEELING**

I’d start photographing them – just portraits and so on. But when you photograph somebody that you really care about– it can often be really frustrating because you don’t get what you have in your mind’s eye. (MIKE, §31:19-24)

**Communication & dialogue**

**USING PHOTOGRAPHY AS LANGUAGE**

And then I began to be able to do things like use everyday objects for their symbolic power. So I could use open windows and doors or telephones or storefronts or maybe even a cottage in the background or whatever, or a vacant lot next to one that was really full to begin to speak about the psychological moment that I was having with those. That was pretty exciting for me. (MIKE, §40:1-13)

**USING PHOTOGRAPHY TO MEDIATE A SPACE OF DIALOGUE**

That beauty is important to me in the end result and that can take a lot of different forms. And then, beauty is subjective and ideologically kind of charged right? So, beauty is an interesting way to talk about socially constructed notions of what’s beautiful. But I think I value the kind of seductiveness of photography and that [...] if you make something beautiful, you can kind of hold somebody for long enough to [...] potentially invite them into a fairly complex sequence of thoughts–like that beauty is kind of the snare. [laughs] [HS: In what way? Oh, the beauty in the image is the snare] Yeah, the beauty in the image is (like?)—of holding [HS: inviting people] somebody’s attention– and inviting them to stay there and be with what you’re asking them to consider. (EMMA, §90: 34-57)