

# SNAP/SHOT: IDENTITY, MEMORY AND THE DIGITAL MEDIATION OF EXPERIENCE

by

Erin Ashenhurst  
B.F.A., Simon Fraser University, 2003

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

In the  
School of Interactive Arts and Technology  
Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

© Erin Ashenhurst 2011  
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
Summer 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:** Erin Ashenhurst  
**Degree:** Master of Arts  
**Title of Thesis:** Snap/Shot: Identity, Memory, and the Digital Mediation of Experience

**Examining Committee:**

**Chair:**

---

**Dr. Kate Hennessy**  
Assistant Professor  
School of Interactive Arts + Technology

---

**Dr. Thecla Schiphorst**  
Senior Supervisor  
Associate Professor  
School of Interactive Arts + Technology

---

**James Bizzocchi**  
Supervisor  
Assistant Professor  
School of Interactive Arts + Technology

---

**Dr. Janet Marontate**  
External Examiner  
Associate Professor  
School of Communication

**Date Defended/Approved:** July 14, 2011 \_\_\_\_\_



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY

## Declaration of 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](http://www.lib.sfu.ca)> at: <<http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/handle/1892/112>>) 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, BC, Canada

## 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

## ABSTRACT

Demonstrating the remarkable popularity of digital photography in recent years, Vancouver has witnessed masses of Olympic revellers and throngs of Stanley Cup rioters actively employing camera phones. Created and shared in a matter of moments, digital images are used as evidence to construct character and illustrate personal histories on blogs, photo sharing and social networking sites. This investigation uses practice and photo-based research to examine two key themes related to amateur digital photography: identity and memory. Presented as two case studies, the web-based visual art project *At Arm's Length* considers performativity in portraiture, while the video installation *Waves* unravels the role of images as triggers for memory. Exploring the making, manipulating and sharing of images, I suggest digital photography creates a sense of influence over lived experience. Bridging academic and artistic contexts, this work endeavours to provoke discussion around subjectivity and the construction of visual narrative in digital photography.

**Keywords:** digital photography; identity; memory; performativity; social media.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my senior supervisor, Dr. Thecla Schiphorst for her encouragement, insight, and unwavering support. I credit her guidance and warm sense of humour for keeping me on track throughout my experience at SIAT (and I firmly believe my approach to academic writing benefited greatly from a little ‘interpretive dance’). I would also like to thank Jim Bizzocchi, whose perspective added structure and depth to the discussion presented in this thesis. His creativity and positive outlook motivate me to endure the complexities of both artistic and academic process. I am grateful to Dr. Jan Marontate for offering her support, consideration, and remarkable breadth of knowledge. Her lectures, peppered with compelling anecdotes, worked to fuel my interest in visual studies. I am also indebted to Dr. Dorothy Barenscoff for rekindling my interest in art history and photography, and Dr. Jerry Zaslove whose support and kindness lead me safely through Prague and, years later, into graduate studies.

For their invaluable participation in my projects (and my life), I would like to thank my friends: Shannon Miller, Derek Lam, Lisa Fletcher, and Kristin Carlson; my grandparents: Keith and Mary Mills; and my parents: Brooke Mills and John Ashenhurst. Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Jason Yamashita, for all his patience, reassurance, and expert picnicking skills.

To my parents & the Grands, whose tenacious encouragement,  
support, and indulgence made this work possible.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	viii
Glossary.....	x
<b>1: Introduction: Digital constructions.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Mediation of Experience.....	1
1.2 Motivation.....	3
1.2.1 Research Questions.....	3
1.2.2 Assumptions.....	5
1.2.3 Research Goals.....	6
1.3 The Structure of this Investigation.....	8
<b>2: Method and Approach.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Practice-based research:.....	11
2.1.1 Process.....	14
2.2 Photo-based Research.....	18
2.2.1 Analysis of Data.....	19
<b>3: Building Identity: Literature review.....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 Introduction: A Pixilated Self.....	23
3.2 Early Portraiture.....	26
3.3 Performativity and the Image.....	29
3.3.1 The Self as Muse.....	34
3.3.2 The Self and Others.....	37
3.3.3 The Documented Self.....	41
3.4 Conclusion.....	43
<b>4: At Arm's Length: A project on identity.....</b>	<b>46</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	46
4.2 Description.....	48
4.2.1 The Beach.....	50
4.2.2 The Lobby.....	52
4.2.3 The Apartment.....	54
4.2.4 The Collection.....	55
4.3 Process.....	58
4.4 Further Considerations.....	64
4.5 Summary.....	65

<b>5: Building Memory: Literature review</b> .....	<b>67</b>
5.1 Introduction: The Self in Context .....	67
5.2 [Re]collection and the Image .....	70
5.3 Kodak and the Domestic Photographer.....	73
5.3.1 Displaying the Family.....	76
5.3.2 Evidence of Leisure .....	79
5.3.3 Constructs and Captures .....	81
5.4 Conclusion.....	86
<b>6: Waves: A Project on memory</b> .....	<b>88</b>
6.1 Introduction: The Way We Were .....	88
6.2 Description.....	90
6.2.1 The Happy Couple.....	91
6.2.2 The Turn .....	92
6.2.3 The Fight.....	93
6.2.4 Forgiveness .....	95
6.2.5 Banality .....	96
6.2.6 Departure .....	97
6.2.7 Rinse and Repeat.....	98
6.3 Discussion .....	99
6.3.1 Reflection .....	103
6.4 Summary .....	104
<b>7: Discussion and Conclusion</b> .....	<b>106</b>
7.1 Little Narratives.....	112
7.2 Future Work .....	116
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>119</b>
<b>Reference List</b> .....	<b>120</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Spectators and presenters photograph the spectacle of one another at the CTV stage on Robson St. during the 2010 Winter Olympics. ....	2
Figure 2. Visualization of research questions. ....	4
Figure 3. Visualization of thesis structure. ....	8
Figure 4. Portrait of the artist, circa 1983. ....	12
Figure 5. Wide-shot in apartment, <i>At Arm's Length</i> (2010). ....	13
Figure 6. Discovery-Led Process for Speculative Projects by Lisa Grocott, 2003, p. 86. ....	15
Figure 7. My process of exploration, reflection and analysis inspired by Fig. 6. ....	15
Figure 8. Visualization of my methodological approach. ....	17
Figure 9. Stills from <i>Waves</i> (2010). ....	21
Figure 10. From top to bottom: portraits by Erin Ashenhurst, Justin Ramsey, Rachel Scott, and Nick Siu (Developed in Communications 325: Visualization and Visual Culture, Simon Fraser University, Prof. Janet Marontate and David Murphy). ....	25
Figure 11. Robert Cornelius (1839), <i>Self-Portrait</i> , daguerreotype. ....	28
Figure 12. Man Ray, <i>Marquise Casati</i> , 1922. Centre Pompidou © Man Ray Trust / ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2008 Photo CNAC / MNAM Dist.RMN / © Adam Rzepka. ....	36
Figure 13. Claude Cahun, <i>Self-portrait</i> , 1928. Collection Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes, France. ....	38
Figure 14. Cindy Sherman, <i>Untitled Film Still #14</i> , 1978. Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York. ....	40
Figure 15. Raw photograph vs. digitally edited image posted as a profile picture on Facebook, 2008. ....	43
Figure 16. Picnic in the <i>Jadines de Turia</i> Valencia, Spain, 2009. ....	47
Figure 17. Opening webpage of <i>At Arm's Length</i> (2010). ....	48
Figure 18. iPhone portrait on beach, <i>At Arm's Length</i> (2010). ....	50
Figure 19. Wide-shot on beach, <i>At Arm's Length</i> (2010). ....	51
Figure 20. iPhone Portrait in lobby, <i>At Arm's Length</i> (2010). ....	52
Figure 21. Wide-shot in lobby, <i>At Arm's Length</i> (2010). ....	53
Figure 22. iPhone Portrait in apartment, <i>At Arm's Length</i> (2010). ....	54
Figure 23. Wide-shot in apartment, <i>At Arm's Length</i> (2010). ....	55

Figure 24. Webpage from project research blog, <i>At Arm's Length</i> (2010).....	59
Figure 25. Webpage from project research blog, <i>At Arm's Length</i> (2010).....	61
Figure 26. Sadie Kydd, <i>Untitled (View from the backseat featuring sandals and green sippy-cup)</i> , (2011), taken with Apple iPhone 3G.....	68
Figure 27. Photograph of the Mills family, as publishing in <i>The North Bay Nugget</i> , November 1960 on the occasion of Mary Mills (my grandmother) winning the 'Mrs. Canada' competition.....	78
Figure 28. Tina Barney, <i>Sunday New York Times</i> , 1982. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. ....	82
Figure 29. Richard Billingham, <i>Untitled (Ray's a Laugh 6)</i> , 1995. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Reprinted in <i>Ray's a Laugh</i> , Billingham, R. (1996). Zurich: Scalo Publishing. ....	85
Figure 30. Members of the Ashenhurst family, Mississauga, Ontario, 1965 (approx.).....	88
Figure 31. Opening frame of <i>Waves</i> (2010).....	91
Figure 32. Frames at 00:27 and 00:33 seconds into <i>Waves</i> (2010).....	92
Figure 33. Frames at 00:47 and 00:57 seconds into <i>Waves</i> (2010).....	93
Figure 34. Frame at 01:01 of <i>Waves</i> (2010).....	94
Figure 35. Frames at 01:10 and 01:15 of <i>Waves</i> (2010). ....	95
Figure 36. Frame at 01:21 of <i>Waves</i> (2010).....	96
Figure 37. Frames at 01:31 and 01:46 of <i>Waves</i> (2010). ....	96
Figure 38. Frames at 01:55 and 01:59 of <i>Waves</i> (2010). ....	97
Figure 39. Frame at 02:06 of <i>Waves</i> (2010).....	98
Figure 40. Frames at 02:09 and 02:14 of <i>Waves</i> (2010). ....	99
Figure 41. Stills from <i>Distancing</i> (2009).....	104
Figure 42. Canucks fans take pictures at the central branch of the Vancouver Public Library, June 15, 2011.....	108

## GLOSSARY

<b>Facebook</b>	A social networking site launched in 2004. Participants create profiles, add other users as ‘friends,’ and exchange messages.
<b>Flickr</b>	An image hosting website and online community first developed by a Vancouver-based company in 2004. Users can share personal photographs and link images to blogs and social media sites.
<b>Hipstamatic</b>	A digital photography application developed for the iPhone, which applies filters and effects to images taken by the iPhone’s camera. One popular treatment creates a retro appearance simulating images taken by the <i>Hipstamatic 100</i> , an analog film camera of the early 1980’s.
<b>Instagram</b>	A digital photography and photo sharing application. Much like Hipstamatic, it applies filters and effects paying homage to the <i>Kodak Instamatic</i> and <i>Polaroid</i> cameras. Images can be shared through a variety of social networking sites including Facebook.
<b>iPhone</b>	First released by Apple Inc. in 2007, the iPhone is a smartphone including features such as a camera, a media player, text messaging, and web browsing. Additional application software can be added to allow for social networking, gaming, and GPS navigation.
<b>Photoshop</b>	Pixel-based image editing software first released in 1990 by Adobe as <i>Photoshop 1.0</i> , it has since been marketed in their <i>Creative Suite</i> with programs such as <i>Illustrator</i> and <i>InDesign</i> . Due to the program’s popularity, the term ‘Photoshopped’ has come to refer to images that have been digitally manipulated.
<b>Twitter</b>	A social networking and microblogging site allowing participants to post text-based messages called ‘tweets’ of up to 140 characters. The process of subscribing to a user’s Twitter feed is known as ‘following’, making the subscriber a ‘follower’.

# 1: INTRODUCTION: DIGITAL CONSTRUCTIONS

## 1.1 Mediation of Experience

*The spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images.*

~ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 1967, p. 4

It is the afternoon of February 28, 2010 and I am holding my phone above my head, clumsily angling it towards the throngs of pedestrians occupying the streets of downtown Vancouver. I've removed my mittens in order to engage with the touch screen of the iPhone's camera application. As the crowd congeals around the obstacle of CTV's broadcasting stage on Robson Street, the act of pedestrian navigation becomes its own sport. Under the blanketing excitement, anxiety squirms. As more bodies join the mass, I briefly contemplate matters of personal safety, but more persistent is my need to clench the action in an image. The subjects of my photographs are cheering, wandering wide-eyed, climbing trees and lampposts, stripping down to reveal Canadian flags painted on their bodies, or flailing props promoting their national pride. However, many are also enthralled with the preview screens of their own cameras.

Images taken of the revelry following the Canadian men's hockey team's Olympic gold medal win are posted in abundance in personal collections on sites such as *Flickr*, *Twitter* and *Facebook*. Few shots of the celebratory masses do not include phones, digital cameras, or camcorders being held aloft to survey the festivities. While individuals were participating in the display, they were also

concerned with gathering photographic documentation. Gazes are focused down from the live action to assess how it is framed on the screen of a device. Characters are occupied by their attempts to appear vibrant for the camera while creating self-portraits staged amongst the merriment. The experience is captured, filtered, and reconstructed in pixels.



**Figure 1. Spectators and presenters photograph the spectacle of one another at the CTV stage on Robson St. during the 2010 Winter Olympics.**

The increasing popularity of mobile devices equipped with camera technology and data plans indicates that many urbanites have the means to almost spontaneously photograph moments of the everyday. On blogs, photo-

sharing and social networking sites, digital images are used as evidence to construct identity and illustrate personal histories. The activity of photography has entered the realm of the mundane. Rather than the ritual setup of film photography often limited to designated occasions, the process of taking a digital picture can be accomplished with the same single-handed action as answering a phone call. Skipping the development and printing process, images are shared with the audience of the World Wide Web moments after they come into existence.

## **1.2 Motivation**

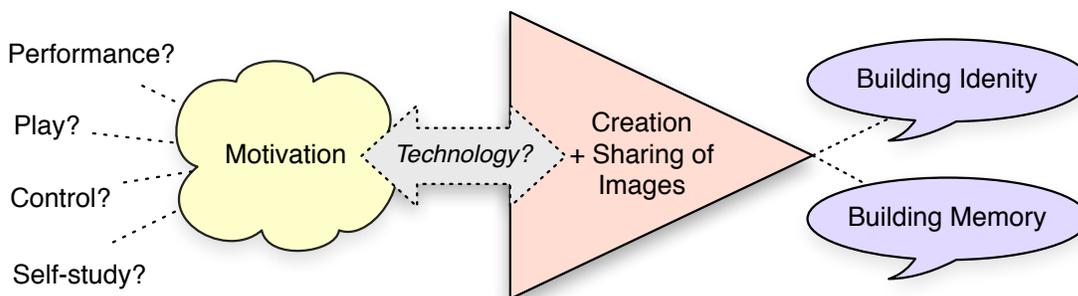
### **1.2.1 Research Questions**

The technology facilitating the process of making and sharing digital pictures continues to become more efficient and affordable, but convenience alone does not explain why such activity is a prevalent phenomenon. My research questions arose through observations and an examination of my own behaviour. During a trip to Prague in 2000, I used a series of inexpensive disposable film cameras to capture the elements of the city that struck me as classically European. Much of the film wasn't developed until my return home to Canada months later when the hundreds of images were assembled in an album to be shelved. Since purchasing a phone with camera capabilities in 2009, I noticed that photography has been integrated into my everyday activity. Sending images has become shorthand for otherwise lengthy explanations of visual material or geographic locations. Pictures are descriptive notes to myself, or ways to document ideas. While my phone creates photographs of lower digital

quality than my other cameras, it is often called upon in their absence to produce images of rare events or occasions otherwise deemed “photo-worthy”.

While clicking through a poorly organized batch of image files, I searched for some validation for taking and saving so many pictures. When a quick Google search brings up a plethora of easily acquired visuals of almost every popular tourist attraction, why do vacationers still feel the need to take their *own* photographs? Why do some people post and share numerous portraits taken within only a few months, days or hours when their appearance remains consistent? Why, when armed with a digital camera, is one shot rarely enough even when hundreds or thousands of image files are already idly consuming hard drive space on home computers?

In my research, I am interested in what elements of play, performance, self-study, or control inspire amateur photographers to construct and share digital images — and how evolving technologies work into the process.



**Figure 2. Visualization of research questions.**

### 1.2.2 Assumptions

I suggest that the activity of mediating one's experience through a digital device is popular because it is gratifying. Making, manipulating and sharing images creates a sense of influence over the visual narrative of experience. Although digital images may be framed as representations of lived events, they are fraught with fabricated cues. Vamping for the lens, or averting their gaze towards a fictional distraction to suggest "candid" shots, subjects compose their preferred narratives. Through performativity, composition, and photo editing software, a document can be tweaked or outright invented. In this work, I investigate two key themes — identity and memory. While they are linked, and even part of one another, I consider how each acts as a motive in the practice of digital image making and photo sharing.

In looking at identity, I first came to question why many members of my generation appear to have a wealth of images featuring themselves as a sole subject in the frame, while portraits of either of my parents pictured alone are scarce throughout their twenties, thirties, and forties. Engagement with social media, blogging and messaging, has created a need for images associated with identity. The building of an online presence endorses an indulgence in the fashioning of visual identity that might otherwise be painted as vanity. In my study, I use the development of a web-based visual art project, *At Arm's Length*, to consider the efforts of performativity invested in portraiture.

With regards to memory and the employment of photographs as triggers in the course of remembering, I began questioning myself about the authenticity of

the visual narratives implied in my personal images. In posing as the subject for a photograph, I may display enthusiasm or composure that has little relation to my sentiments about that moment in time. I may edit an image in order to make the sky appear brighter, or, literally, the grass greener. These interventions in the image may be intended to bring it closer to a cultural ideal of “reality” as captured by the photo, but will they actually work to change the way I remember the lived experience? Perhaps I am refining an image in order to construct a more positive memory. Or is it possible that my alterations are more accurate as to how I essentially saw and sensed the moment pictured? Perhaps it felt like the brighter day. I look at concepts around images functioning as visual aids of memory by way of a video installation titled *Waves*. Exploiting consumer level digital picture frame technology, *Waves* plays with creating a visualization of a tangent of reminiscence. Within this inquiry, the notion of self-reflection and self-inquiry plays a critical role in my artistic practice and in my emerging theories of how that practice is situated within the culture of contemporary digital enactments.

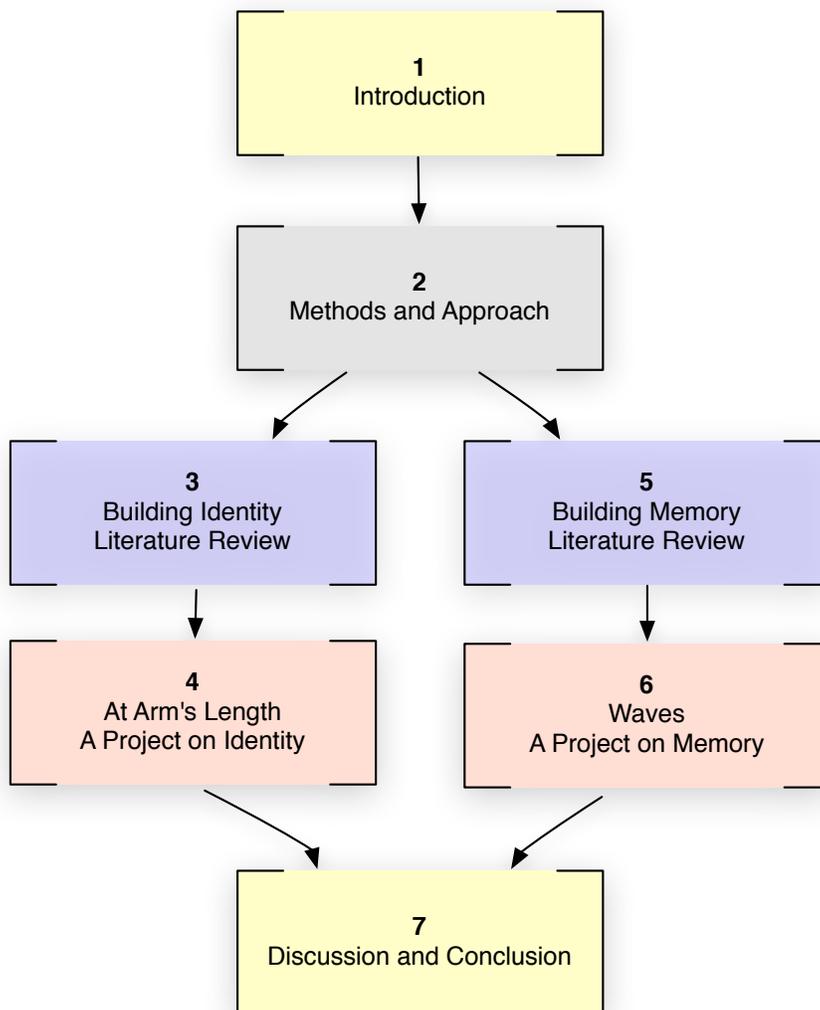
### **1.2.3 Research Goals**

My research uses artistic practice to investigate phenomena in contemporary culture and the influence of changing technologies. My goal is to explore ideas surrounding amateur or personal photography through artistic inquiry and use my findings to inform my creative work within a contemporary community of practice. I am studying digital photography because I am interested in its popularity as it relates to human behaviour and meaning making. My research domain lies at a meeting of artistic practice, sociological theory, and the

study of technology as it relates to culture. At the heart of my work is a desire for a deeper understanding of contemporary culture and the human motivation for recording aspects of personal experience.

I've chosen to engage with visual arts as a means to reach beyond a purely academic audience. Christopher Frayling of the Royal College of Art describes practice-based research as "research where the end product is an artefact – where the thinking is, so to speak, embodied in the artefact, where the goal is not primarily communicable knowledge in the sense of verbal communication, but in the sense of visual or iconic or imagistic communication" (1993, p. 1). By exploring ideas visually, my artistic projects (my findings) can be shared in the form of videos or websites. The tools of social media and online culture are used to enable the presentation of my work, and to enforce the discussion of such technology as a theme in my projects. Throughout my work, I aspire to provoke dialogue around performativity, subjectivity and visual narrative in the everyday.

### 1.3 The Structure of this Investigation



**Figure 3. Visualization of thesis structure.**

My exploration is structured into seven chapters. Following the Introduction, Chapter 2 describes the methods used to develop this research. The objective of Chapter 2 titled 'Method and Approach' is to explain more about my own specific practice and process, how the dynamic of research has influenced my practice, and why practice-based research was the most

appropriate method to employ in order to reach my goals. I will not clutter the chapter by elaborating on the validity of practice-based research as a methodology, since contemporary scholars and artists have already explicated the topic in depth (Sullivan, 2009).

In Chapter 3, I conduct a literature review focusing on the theme of identity as it relates to the activity and products of digital photography. Looking to concepts from the history of photography, sociology, and the work of artists, I examine self-portraiture and the role of performativity.

The examination of identity leads to the first of two projects, both which contribute to my evidential data. Chapter 4 illustrates the first of these two projects. 'At Arm's Length: An identity project' describes the development of a web-based photography project exploring the process of digital self-portraiture for one fictional subject. The project was the product of collaboration between myself and actress Lisa Fletcher who was cast as the subject. To inform the imagery, we each took inventory of our own samples of self-portraiture and made decisions based on recurring themes and rhythms. The result is a sketch using lush photography and humour to portray the potential efforts of deception invested by a subject in the creation of profile pictures for social media.

Following the discussion of *At Arm's Length*, Chapter 5 presents a second literature review. This analysis focuses on the theme of memory and the function of photography as providing visual triggers in the process of remembering. Sociological perspectives on family photography, the display of photography in the home, and the activity of vacation photography are examined along with a

study of composition and its influence on narrative. The photographic work of artists acts to exemplify the idea of the subject engaged in a performance before the backdrop of the surrounding environment.

In Chapter 6, a description of the video installation *Waves* explains how a series of still images was animated to construct a visualization of a speculative memory and provides an analysis of the project's themes. An idyllic image of a couple posed by the water dissolves into additional images of a less picturesque nature. The footage is looped, allowing the viewer to bear witness to the repetition of the subjects' difficult relationship as caught in stills. The addition of sound adds another dimension of complexity to the viewer experience and positions viewers as privy to a reminiscence not their own.

Chapter 7 returns to the initial discussion of mediated experience and the influence of technology on the methods by which photography is put to use in contemporary culture. This final chapter revisits the spectacle of photographic practice exhibited during the 2010 Olympics and the 2011 Stanley Cup riots and offers perspectives on performativity, identity, and memory. Conclusions point to the possibility of multiple truths and the value of subjectivity and personal experience as forms of knowledge. Lastly, I discuss my considerations for further research and the prospective aims of future projects.

## **2: METHOD AND APPROACH**

In this chapter, I will be discussing two methods: practice-based and photo-based research. These methods blend in my process of discovery as I examine behaviour, sketch out concepts, and wade through uncertainty. Practice is my guide during the course of creation and idea generation, while photo-based research provides a mode of analysis for data collected from source documents (i.e. profile pictures found on Facebook) as well as my own visual work (i.e. the portraits of *At Arm's Length*). To facilitate a discussion of each method and how they make up my approach to the themes of identity and memory, I will employ the example of a photograph from my childhood.

### **2.1 Practice-based research:**

There exists a picture of me at around the age of three or four. The quality of the image closely resembles those produced by recent image-editing applications such as *Instagram* or *Hipstamatic*, which act as more comprehensive versions of *Photoshop*. Users can choose from standardized filters adding warm tones, saturation, and film grain to their digital photography. One of the most popular effects results in an appearance approximating Kodak film from the late 1970's. Although image quality is no longer a reliable indicator of the historical moment, the décor featured in my photograph affirms its historical authenticity. My small frame is sitting on ornately patterned linoleum flooring. Sporting a red vinyl smock featuring a picture of a duck, I am leaning over with

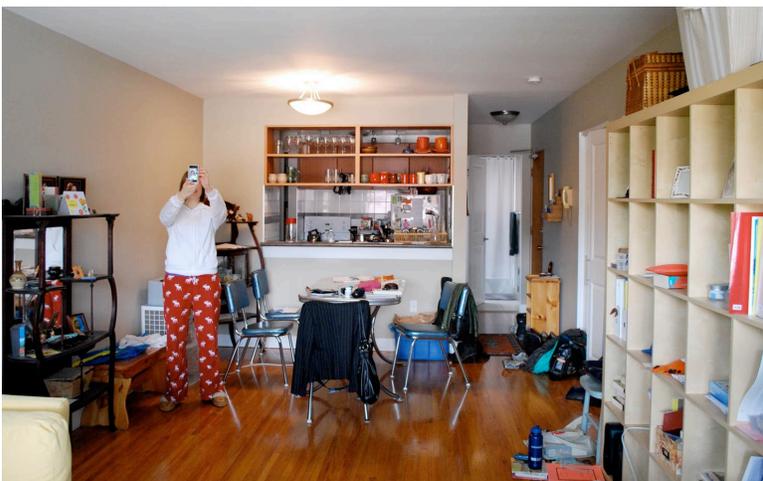
my legs splayed out to either side. Under shiny bangs, my face is only the curves of downturned cheeks, chin and nose, while my attention is fixated on the painting I am making. The paintbrush is longer than my child-sized forearm and, judging from the clumpy marks on the construction paper and those inadvertently decorating the protective newsprint someone wisely thought to put down, I am still developing motor control. What seems evident is my engagement with the activity before me. Despite my limited command of the medium, I appear content to study the transformation of colours into murky swirls as my paintbrush churns into the page. The process of making has become a method of research. Painting is transformed into an experiment, or perhaps it always was.



**Figure 4. Portrait of the artist, circa 1983.**

Looking at the image of the painting child, it might seem suspect to propose that she is conducting research, however — at such an age — there are few activities that are not attached to thinking, testing, and drawing conclusions.

My own contemporary practice may lack the naivety of an afternoon spent adding colours to make brown (although similarly disappointing results still occur). With experience, I may work with more deliberation in my process, awareness of my actions, and examination of my own behaviour, but the desire to become immersed in production and marvel at the results remains. I've chosen to use and study the medium of digital photography because it allows for a sense of immediate satisfaction in the capture of a moment, yet permits meticulous revisions in postproduction. In the development of *At Arm's Length* and *Waves*, I managed to convince friends to collaborate in the staging. In *At Arm's Length*, actress Lisa Fletcher participated in the research, lending me her own self-portraits for scrutiny. In *Waves*, benevolence (and a bottle of wine), convinced friends to perform a fictional quarrel in a public park under the watchful gaze of the park's shady residents. This social element of my practice keeps me motivated to follow through on ideas and makes the hours of solitary digital editing tolerable.



**Figure 5. Wide-shot in apartment, *At Arm's Length* (2010).**

### 2.1.1 Process

Through the process of observing, collaborating, and developing visual and written material, I am able to focus on cultural phenomena and learn through a reflexive process of deconstructing and reimagining. To follow the example of my childhood painting, the muddled pattern of paint directly reflects the actions of the maker's body and the layered procedure of application. However simple, the final result exhibits a research process while acting as a product independent of the artist. This product embodies the actions behind its own creation and becomes a form of data unto itself. Finnish artists Maarit Mäkelä and Sara Routarinne (2007) present a perspective on the activity of making as a cognitive process allowing for data collection and also data creation:

*In established fields of research, making is generally regarded as consequent to thinking—at least in theory... in the field of practice-led research, praxis has a more essential role: making is conceived to be the driving force behind the research and in certain modes of practice also the creator of ideas. (p. 22)*

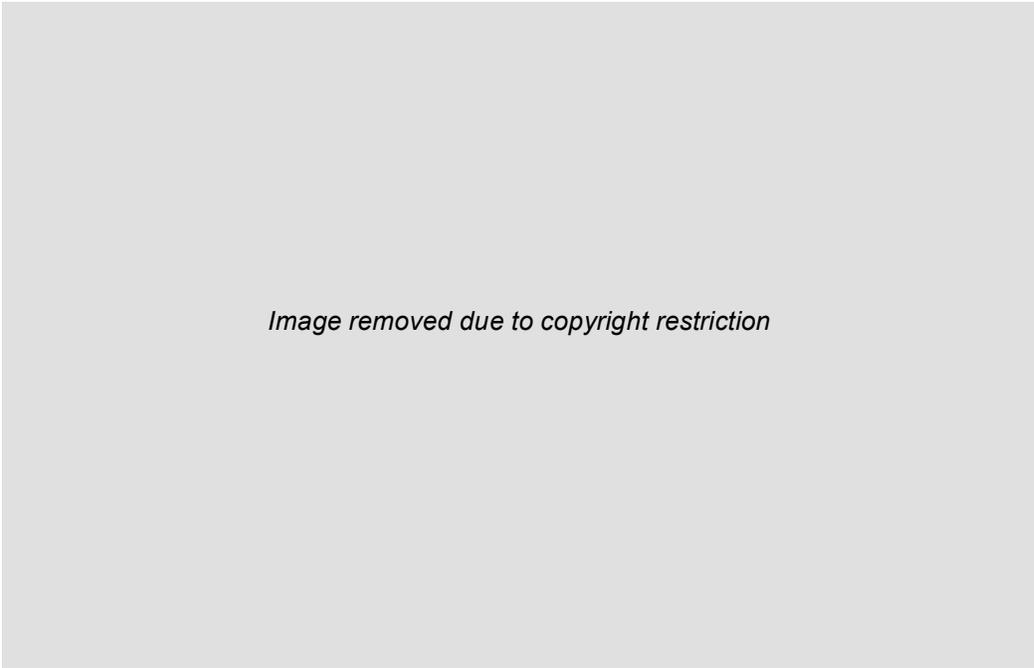


Figure 6. Discovery-Led Process for Speculative Projects by Lisa Grocott, 2003, p. 86.

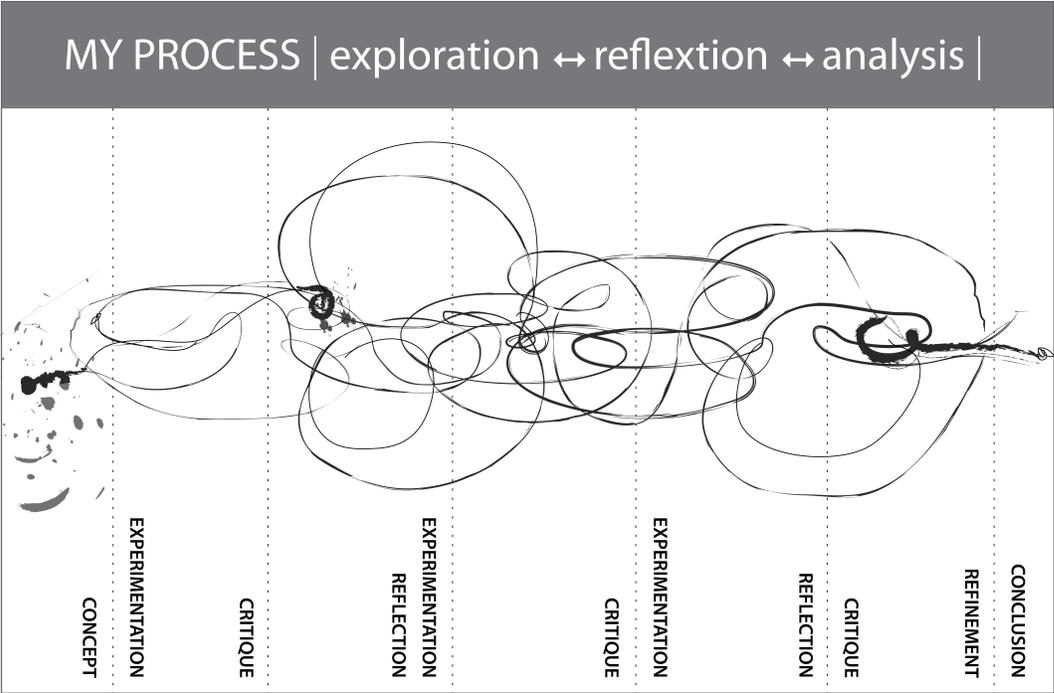
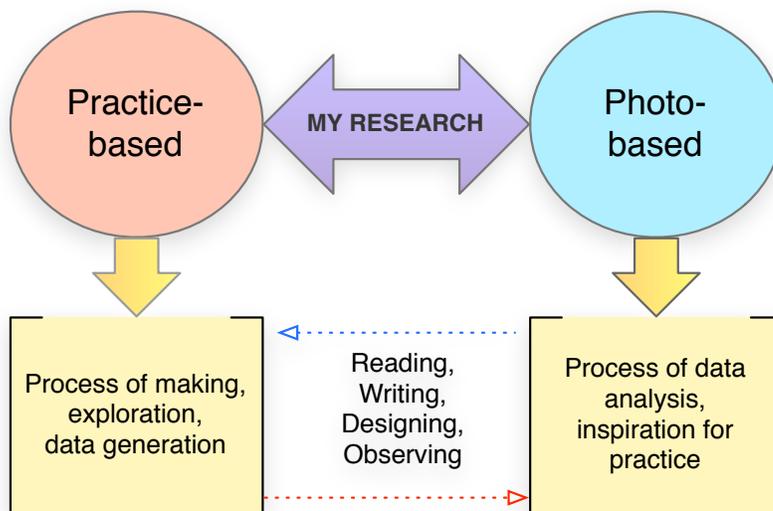


Figure 7. My process of exploration, reflection and analysis inspired by Fig. 6.

Because photography as a medium has a wide-ranging existence outside the white walls of the gallery, my ideas are sparked by encounters with the everyday and a conscious awareness of my personal picture-taking habits. In his essay, “Composites, multiplicities, complexities and duration”, artist and academic David Thomas describes his work stating, “Art practice is a way of researching through the practice of making art. Such making is not just doing, but is a complex informed physical, theoretical, and intellectual activity where private and public worlds meet” (2007, p. 85). In both *At Arm’s Length* and *Waves*, the private is drawn out into the public sphere. Moments of experimentation, imperfection, conflict and disappointment are packaged into fictions to be shared with an audience of viewers in both the gallery space and online. Irreverence and humour make these bundles more digestible, inviting spectators to question how the work may relate to their own behaviours.

Having spent years working as a graphic designer trying to communicate ideas and commercial messaging to various audiences, I am drawn to a process in which research and development may involve parallel activities of reading, writing, observation, and visual experimentation. In his book, *Art Practice as Research*, Graeme Sullivan writes, “If taken from the perspective of the artist, both the creation of knowledge and its use are best seen as a dynamic structure that integrates theory and practice” (2009, p. 83). Inquiry into a concept may begin with either the production of visual material (sketches of a set, or camera phone images of myself trying on various characters), a close reading of pre-existing work (picking through the prose of Barthes, or studying a photographic

postcard), or observation of cultural phenomena (watching people taking pictures of a spectacle or posing for the camera in front of Lake Louise). However, as development continues, a reflexive structure of making and contemplation allows for problem solving and propels the research forward. Sullivan refers to this sequence as a “cyclical process of inquiry” (p.66), while Christopher Frayling offers the question, “How can I tell what I think till I see what I make and do?” (1993, p. 7). The learner, as both practitioner and researcher may use all tools in tandem to contribute to new knowledge, disassemble, reorganise, identify issues and assess outcomes.



**Figure 8. Visualization of my methodological approach.**

As my process of making is entangled in a context of reading, writing and observing, I find my research questions become embodied in my visual practice. In the example of *At Arm’s Length*, questioning the validity of a portrait led me to explore Goffman’s theories of performativity and then to collaborate with a

trained actress in the construction of fictional imagery. I've chosen to structure this thesis to reflect the nature of my process. Addressing the literature review as two chapters, one on identity, one on memory, allows each to focus on a key concept as investigated in the two featured projects. Following each literature review is a discussion of the project relating to the theme of either identity or memory. This structure of pairing literature and project chapters around an isolated theme is intended to enforce the relationship between traditional scholarly research and artistic practice.

## **2.2 Photo-based Research**

While practice-based research describes my general method and process, photo-based research informs an analysis of source documents and the visual material of my own production. If I am to look at the earlier example of the photograph featuring the tiny painter, I am able to make meaning and draw conclusions from the elements pictured, although I have no recollection of the moment the image was produced. The image represents a building of identity and memory for both the subject and photographer. It is an image I appreciate due to a projected sense of consistency between my character as an "artist" then and now. It seems I have internalized the image though I do not remember the occasion or what I thought or felt at that time. If I hadn't been told it was a picture of me, it could very well be of a similar child. For my mother, the photographer, the image has a richer life as a trigger for memory. She can claim to remember elements of the experience pictured. Jon Prosser and Dona Schwartz (1998)

describe the benefits of using photography in research as a method of record keeping:

*When viewed as visual records, researchers depend upon photography's capacity to provide extra-somatic 'memory'. The ability of the camera to record visual detail without fatigue suggests that 'camera notes' may be superior to fieldnotes recorded by tired social scientists. (p. 122)*

Using the details of the image, my mother is able to construct narrative. She may speculate on the setting, the activity, the clothing, my temperament and skill. However, while she has knowledge of the subject, many qualities of the specific instance pictured remain unknown. Was I aware of being photographed? Am I experimenting with colour theory, painting a picture of a campfire, or just trying to make a mess? What elements of the context might have influenced my behaviour? Were other family members or acquaintances present? Douglas Harper disputes that "the photograph can be thought of as 'data'; in fact the unique character of photographic images force us to rethink many of our assumptions about how we move from observation to analysis in all forms of sociological research" (1998, p. 34).

### **2.2.1 Analysis of Data**

My analysis of photographic data focuses on identifying patterns, examining the embodied act of constructing the image, and presenting potential narrative. As noted by Órla Cronin, "Any photo-based investigation needs to pay as much attention to the contexts in which photographs are used as it does to their manifest content" (1998, p. 76). In the case of the example, the image of the child is kept in a well-sorted photo album and used by the family as evidence of

their offspring's artistic tendencies. My understanding of the same image might change immensely if the photograph were among the several images of unfamiliar children I have discovered abandoned in public spaces: the sidewalk, a bus seat, a ditch. In future chapters, I will discuss how images are displayed in the home or shared online in order to build personal histories or establish character for the subject and their chosen audience.

Questioning authenticity is a key concept throughout my work. While I am interested in validity in the context of research evidence, I also question the construction of validity and find it a problematic component in socially mediated imagery. Questioning the notion of 'truth', Douglas Harper (1998) argues:

*We recognize that the photographic image is 'true' in the sense (physical or electronic manipulation aside) that it holds a visual trace of a reality the camera was pointed at. But more fundamentally, all images, despite their relationship to the world, are socially and technically constructed. (p. 29)*

Jon Prosser claims that contextual validity is more easily achieved when dealing with film or video because the moving image has the potential to establish more continuity while the photograph "may contain a single transitory one sixtieth of a second worth of information" (1998, p. 106). *At Arm's Length* demonstrates a deceptive performance of a subject in front of the camera. It can be imagined how such a performance may be more easily maintained for a single shot. With the relentless advancement of photo-editing software, that image can be enhanced or, in the extreme, cut and reassembled with new imagery to create a purely fictional composition. However, even the most spontaneous, untouched images cannot convey a complete set of information. It is helpful to identify the

cues that are captured in an image in order to parse potential meanings and perspectives on visual material. In the project *Waves*, these cues are explored as faces smiling for the camera transition to irritated glances and looks of gloom.



**Figure 9. Stills from *Waves* (2010).**

While photographs may not convey a broad sense of actual events or authentic characters, they are commonly used to construct narrative. However conventional, I find narrative useful as a way of exploring and understanding cultural phenomena and personal experience. In ethnographic research, narratives can be called upon to make data meaningful. As Douglas Harper (1998) describes ethnography's relationship to story construction:

*Ethnography is most usefully thought of as a created tale which describes reality more successfully if it doesn't not attempt to fulfill the impossible and undesirable (for ethnography) standards of science. Ethnography should draw upon narrative; emphasizing the point of view, voice, and experience of author. (p. 31)*

This practice of constructing a point of view is explored in *Waves* where a tangent of memory is visualized by bringing a still shot to life. Although much of my research investigates patterns present in larger systems, my concern in art making focuses on the particular. Amateur digital photography is about the creation of personal documents, which each carry specific and wildly individual meanings. In Lynn Butler-Kisber's book, *Qualitative Inquiry*, she observes, "Narrative researchers question whether anything can truly be generalized when context plays such an important role in understanding" (2010, p. 64). In order to employ narrative and visual interpretation, my research embraces subjective voices and a sense of plurality rather than attempting to demonstrate a distinct truth.

By blending practice-based and photo-based research methods, my process allows for an exploration of concepts through the production of visual material, close reading and analysis of photographic documents, reading, writing, sketching, and observation. During the subsequent discussions of identity and memory, I will call on relevant literature from the fields of sociology, communications, cultural studies and art history, as well as drawing from the artistic work of practitioners. By examining material developed by both scholars and artists, I wish to present a multifaceted perspective on the mediation of experience.

### **3: BUILDING IDENTITY: LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Introduction: A Pixilated Self**

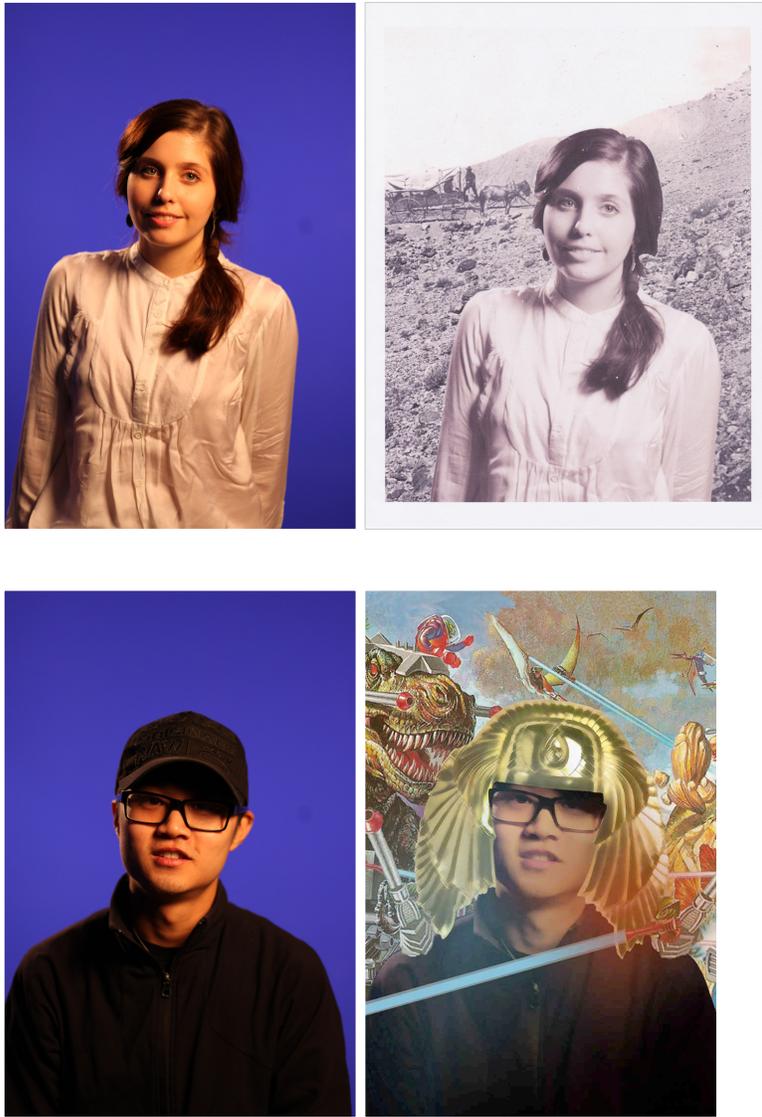
“Hey, how do I do to get rid of this zit?” calls a student from across the computer lab. I am in a university classroom for a course on visualization in the School of Communication. The students are absorbed in their monitors; their hands making diminutive sweeps with the computer mice, while the enlarged pixels displayed onscreen blur and morph. The objective of the exercise is to explore the editing tools of Adobe Photoshop by altering a portrait taken in front of a blue screen. Each student is working on an image of herself. Despite the meagre weight of grades allotted to the assignment, the students seem captivated. Some are bloating the pixels of their pupils, adding perfect white circles of reflection to each eye. Wisps of hair are deleted along with moles; laugh lines, shadows, and scars. I lean over to the professor and comment on the students’ unusual devotion to the task at hand. He assures me that if they are anything like the previous class, many of these students will spend hours working on their portraits.

In her book, *The Mirror: A History*, author and researcher Sabine Melchoir-Bonnet discusses how the technology of the mirror appeals to the imagination. By reflecting an image of the subject detached from her physical body, the mirror introduces the notion of alternate truths. Melchoir-Bonnet (2002) writes:

*The face-to-face encounter, a space of intimacy wrested from the gaze of an other, is not only the passive perception of an appearance, but a projection, a circling from desire to reflection and from reflection to design. To observe oneself, to measure oneself, to dream oneself and to transform oneself: these are the diverse functions brought into play by an encounter with the mirror beyond the cultural stigmas long attached to looking at one's self. (p. 157)*

Watching the students scrutinize their own images displayed before them on computer monitors, it is easy to mistake the screen for a mirror. It is a magical mirror in the ways it allows for not only contemplation, but also the actual visualization of alternate truths.





**Figure 10. From top to bottom: portraits by Erin Ashenhurst, Justin Ramsey, Rachel Scott, and Nick Siu (Developed in Communications 325: Visualization and Visual Culture, Simon Fraser University, Prof. Janet Marontate and David Murphy).**

With the aid of contemporary photo-editing technology, the narratives constructed in an image can be rebuilt and shifted towards falsehood. However, even without the luxury of pixel manipulation, the portrait carries with it a peculiar aura. When the subject is aware of the camera, she may model herself in front of the lens to exude her preferred version of herself both physically and socially.

This self is frozen for critique. Under the gaze of the spectator, the cues provided by the staging and manner of the subject convey a narrative of character and context. The meanings interpreted from these cues are not fixed, but continuously being composed through variable cultural archetypes, values and conventions. Technological innovation transforms the process involved in creating a photograph and, in doing so, wields historical influence on how the visual cues captured in a photograph may be understood. The project *At Arm's Length* was produced through a study of patterns and popular cues in the photography used for online profile pictures. To provide a context for the discussion of the project, this chapter will explore the technological beginnings of photographic portraiture, the concept of performativity, and examples of influential artistic work employing portraiture and self-portraiture.

### **3.2 Early Portraiture**

*What was inevitably felt to be inhuman, one might even say deadly, in daguerreotypy was the (prolonged) looking into the camera, since the camera records our likeness without returning our gaze.*

~ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 1968, p. 187–188

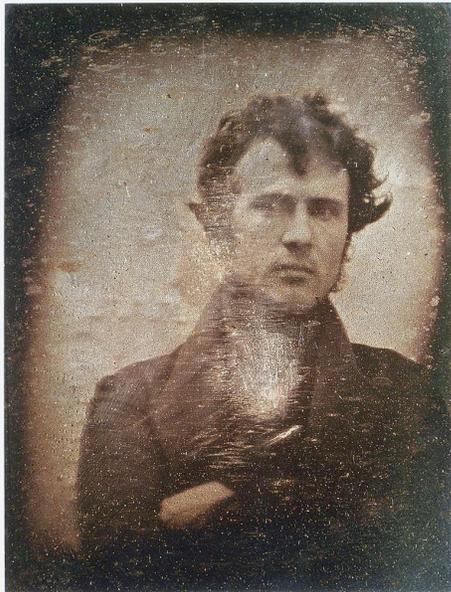
The first photographed self-portrait is recorded as being made by Robert Cornelius of Philadelphia around the year of 1839. Earlier that year, Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre had developed a process using silver-plated sheets of copper to create photographs in Paris. Through experimentation and his knowledge acquired as a brass founder, Cornelius made his own daguerreotype plates. Using himself as a subject, this self-taught photographer stood perfectly still for a period of approximately 15 to 20 minutes and created a portrait. In the

image, he appears slightly off-centre — a positioning error he regretted (Kessler, 1983, p. 37). With arms folded in front of him, eyes focused slightly past the camera, and no trace of a smile, the image resembles an apparition burnt into the burnished surface. Read through contemporary conventions, Cornelius's portrait captures him as aloof, wary, disengaged (and baring an uncanny resemblance to actor Colin Firth playing Jane Austin's Mr. Darcy in the 1995 mini-series *Pride and Prejudice*). The image is of a brooding, troubled character, a well-dressed Jack Kerouac, however many of these cues in his posture and expression may be explained by the technology of the period. Due to the extreme stretch of time a subject would need to spend keeping still in order to create the image, photographers in the years to follow developed posing strategies that allowed for greater comfort. Scholar of photographic culture, Liz Wells (2009) comments on the prevalent staging of the time, noting:

*The head resting in the hand achieved the popular Victorian soulful look, as well as helping the sitter to keep still. Smiles were difficult to sustain under such circumstances: the modern ubiquitous snapshot smile should be seen as a technological achievement as well as a change in social mores. (p. 131)*

To some extent, the early portraits could be touched-up to produce effects similar to the appearance of airbrushed film, or the current practice of "Photoshopping" so widely applied to digital portraits shared online. In 1854, André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri invented the '*carte-de-visite*', which involved creating multiple copies of a portrait produced as small paper prints about the size of baseball cards. These prints could be distributed to friends and family to be mounted on a larger decorated card for display or collection much like assembling photo albums. With the help of the photographer's embellished

backdrops and props, “class differences were far less visible in such pictures than they were in everyday life” (Wells, 2009, p. 132). In *cartes-de-visite*, shopkeepers, ladies, officials and tradespeople appear in their best costuming with stiff composure. The similarities in the subjects’ poses and expressions seen in such early examples are not unlike the consistencies in framing and facial communication that can be observed in a sampling of profile pictures posted on social media sites such as Facebook. Affected by the technology of production and social norms of their contexts, subjects employ performativity to fashion a more desirable self and display their associations within cultural groups.



**Figure 11. Robert Cornelius (1839), *Self-Portrait*, daguerreotype.**

### 3.3 Performativity and the Image

In the staging of portraiture, there is a moment of arrested movement in which the subject, aware of the camera, surrenders to a pose. During the course of creating this pose, the subject anticipates how she may appear in the future photograph. In his book *Camera Lucida* (2nd ed. 1982), French theorist Roland Barthes wrote, “once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes, I constitute myself in the process of ‘posing’, and I instantly make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image” (p. 48). This transformation, the styling of the body into a deliberate, static self, can be understood as a performance.

In the example of the visualization class project that began this chapter, the portraits of the students were taken on the first day of class. Students were led individually into a room with a green-painted backdrop and asked by the photographer to sit on a stool so that they would be positioned in the centre of the frame. They were not informed prior to class that they would be photographed and several expressed dissatisfaction with the spontaneous nature of their clothing or hairstyles. With limitations on their positioning and props, students relied heavily on facial expression to communicate identity in the portraits. How to animate a face in a single image in order to be read as enthusiastic, attractive, gregarious, funny, or intelligent? In social interactions, a sequence of cues can be employed to present these characteristics over time. In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), sociologist Erving Goffman examined human interaction and how subjects use performativity to

construct social identities. Exploiting the language of dramaturgy, Goffman explains the subject as a social actor using various settings or contexts as theatrical stages. Assisted by props and costumes, an actor may learn to navigate a breadth of social environments by recognizing the codes of behaviour expected in each, and adjusting her performance to fit. The success of social actors is based on how accurately they identify the norms of a situation and how convincingly they are able to produce a suitable identity. Goffman (1952) claims that a fundamental dialect is present in all social interactions:

*When one individual enters the presence of others, he will want to discover the facts of the situation. Were he to possess this information, he could know, and make allowances for, what will come to happen and he could give the others present as much of their due as is consistent with his enlightened self-interest... Full information of this order is rarely available; in its absence, the individual tends to employ substitutes—cues, tests, hints, expressive gestures, status symbols, etc.—as predictive devices. In short, since the reality that the individual is concerned with is unperceivable at the moment, appearances must be relied upon in its stead. (p. 22)*

As the portraits in the visualization class were not only used for the photo-editing project, but also distributed as a class list and frequently referred to in attendance checks, students' photographs functioned as shorthand for their identities as members of the class. The cues they chose to communicate in their performances as photographed subjects, combined with the post-production alterations and additions they digitally applied to the images, became triggers referencing the living individuals. In the moment of the portrait, the camera stands in for the subject's interaction with a projected spectator. As a surrogate for a future audience, the lens is permitted the authority of a gaze. In discussing

the gaze of an audience on a performer as in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1998), Jacques Lacan writes, “the evil eye is the fascinum, it is that which has the effect of arresting movement and, literally, of killing life. At the moment the subject stops, suspending his gesture, he is mortified” (p.118). In the case of a photograph, the performer freezes in anticipation of the shutter click. The believed audience influences the subject’s performance. The idea of a spectator such as a professor searching through portraits to identify who is missing from the class, may cause the subject to consider presenting the performance of an eager, conscience, and often punctual student to the camera’s bare stare.

In order to communicate qualities and character in a photographed performance, subjects must depend on cues devised from cultural archetypes and social norms. Philosopher Judith Butler wrote extensively on gender and performativity. In *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (1993), Butler describes gender as a matter of performativity, stating that constructs such as femininity “cannot be understood outside a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms” (p. 95). Writer Moya Lloyd explains that gender, in Butler’s reading “has the same citational structure as language: specific signs have to be repeated in order to produce a particular effect” (2006, p 63). In this sense, the performance of the subject is not purely voluntary. In order to be understood, performative behaviour is constrained by a specific set of conventions that are built through collective repetition. Each culture provides “a tool kit of habits, skills, styles, perspectives, norms, roles, and values out of

which each individual can construct a potentially unique strategy of action” (Triandis, 1997, p. 443). It is with these tools that a subject builds an identity and a visual narrative as the subject of a photograph.

In the research for my project *At Arm's Length*, I considered a selection of Facebook profiles and noted consistencies in the compositions of the portraits. Some subjects made eye contact with mischievous grins, or glanced to one side of the camera, chins tilted down coyly, eyes wide and head cocked. The observable similarities of expression used for self-portraits shared online point to this repetitive use of cultural norms to inform a subject's performance and aid in her transformation into a perfected, readable document. Anthropologist Robert LeVine describes culture as "an organized body of rules concerning the ways in which individuals in a population should communicate with one another, think about themselves and their environment, and behave towards one another" (1982, p 4). He adds that the "rules are not universally or constantly obeyed, but they are recognized by all and they ordinarily operate to limit the range of variation in patterns of communication, belief, value, and social behavior in the population" (p 4). Psychologist Dan McAdams (2006) expands on the idea of a limited range of variation in behaviour by explaining culture as providing a common framework or "set of categories for a given set of individuals". He notes:

*Although not all individuals in the set will abide by or even endorse the entire framework, almost everybody recognizes the framework, if only dimly, and finds that he or she has to come to terms with the framework in order to function adequately in the set. (p. 277)*

In this sense, the framework offers a coherent structure upon which an individual may build the narrative of identity. With the rise of the middle class, the concept of individual identity is prevalent in the West. In her book, *The Art of Self Invention* (2008), sociologist Joanne Finkelstein looks at how this concept of a coherent self is seen as the engine of modern society in that “the quest for adventure through travel and trade, and the desire for autonomy achieved through democratization and social mobility, are predicated on the existence of a striving, centred, coherent self” (p. 132). French ethnographer and sociologist, Marcel Mauss perceived the self as a cultural mask. As discussed by Finkelstein, Mauss saw the pursuit of identity as a “universal desire to master consciousness and project a social presence” (Mauss, 1985 [1928], p. 20, Finkelstein, 2008, p. 132). Social media sites such as Facebook have developed systems with which individuals can construct their identities through text, images, and video. The Facebook interface has specific avenues built in to support the values of love, family, and friendship by encouraging users to post their relationship status, family members, and most of all, collect “friends”. As the World Wide Web craves new content, the Facebook user is able to add documents of experience such as vacation photos, or drunken party pictures from a camera phone in a matter of seconds. Social media allows the individual to construct her identity as a consistent narrative and create a social presence independent of her physical body.

### 3.3.1 The Self as Muse

Before the prospect of posting images online, individuals found other venues in which to display their own portraits and publicize their identities. In the days of Italian heiress Luisa Casati, the annual Paris salons were an occasion for social climbing. In 1908, the twenty-seven year old Marchesa arrived in Paris with the objective of acquiring a portrait from painter Giovanni Boldini. The sitting was to last for weeks until the painter was content with his representation. As described in the book *Infinite Variety: The Life and Legend of the Marchesa Casati* (1999) by Scot D. Ryerson and Michael Orlando Yaccarino, Casati's choice of attire was unusual:

*Most of the painter's patrons chose sensibly refined dresses of white or beige, or pastel shades for their portraits, but Luisa arrived as if from some flamboyant funeral ... snugly fitted into a floor-length gown of black satin ... adorned by a sable muff and oversized hat... To complete this arresting image, her black greyhound was present, wearing a silver mesh collar. (p. 26)*

The reaction to her portrait several months later at the opening of the Paris Salon was tumultuous, and curiosity peaked about the identity of this macabre figure with the greyhound. Over the next several decades, the Marchesa would cultivate a mythical persona through her indulgent behaviour and ostentatious costuming. Her commissioned portraits done in paint on canvas and photography were displayed in salons and published in magazines and newspapers. In these portraits, the Marchesa's eccentric taste in accessories included her array of exotic animals: parrots, cheetahs, panthers, leopards, and snakes. She was often pictured ornately costumed to evoke characters like Medusa, the Empress Theodora, and Cleopatra. She wore designer Léon

Bakst's costume for the *Queen of the Night* and *Arlecchino bianco*, and sometimes she preferred to appear in the nude bordered by a black cloak. During her life, Casati played the patron and muse to artists including Augustus John, Cecil Beaton, Romaine Brooks, Umberto Boccioni, and Man Ray. Long after her reckless financial spending led to a debt rumoured to be \$25 million and her death in 1957, their images of her lavish performances inspired fashion designer John Galliano to create the 1998 Spring/Summer collection for Christian Dior (Ryersson and Yaccarino, 2009). For the Marchesa, fashion provided a vast set of cues to build the visual narrative of her portraits. Looking at style as a system of classification, it "engages the imagination and trains us to recognize the symbolic impact of material goods" (Finkelstein, 2006, p.195). Casati used clothing and props to infuse drama into her appearance and her general experience of the world. As Finkelstein writes, fashion is "a process that transforms the mundane activities of everyday life into more elaborate and complex aesthetic experiences by altering the emotional investment surrounding the display" (p.195).

At the height of her dream world in 1922, the Marchesa was photographed by Man Ray at the Hôtel du Rhin. After setting up his equipment, Ray turned on his lights and blew the fuses in the room. In his biography, he writes of how he was limited to the interior lighting of the room. He warned Casati that the poses would be longer and she would need to keep very still. Once Ray developed the negatives, he found them blurred and considered the sitting a failure. One image showed the Marchesa appearing to have three pairs of eyes. Upon showing the

print to his client, Ray was surprised by her reaction: “She was enchanted with this one—said I had portrayed her soul, and ordered dozens of prints” (Ray, 1963). Comparing Ray’s portrait to the ‘Photoshopped’ portraits developed by students in the visualization class, the Marchesa’s delight in her own distortion does not seem unnatural. Canadian scholar of visual culture Ron Burnett, provides the view that, “images are not just products, representations, or copies of reality. They are the way in which humans visualize themselves and how they communicate the results” (2005, p. 9). Of her performance, the Marchesa has been quoted as stating “I want to be a living work of art” (Ryersson and Yaccarino, 1999, p. xiii).



**Figure 12. Man Ray, *Marquise Casati*, 1922. Centre Pompidou © Man Ray Trust / ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2008 Photo CNAC / MNAM Dist.RMN / © Adam Rzepka.**

### 3.3.2 The Self and Others

During the period when Marchesa Luisa Casati was commissioning portraits to construct her notoriously eccentric persona in the social circles of Europe, French photographer Claude Cahun was experimenting with self-portraiture to address performativity, identity, and sexuality. From the 1910s to the 1930s, Cahun constructed images of herself featuring curious costuming and photographic effects. Often associated with Surrealism, Cahun (born Lucy Renée Matilde Schwob), with the assistance of her life-long partner Marcel Moore (born Suzanne Malherbe), created black and white photographs titled “self-portraits”. Read through symbolism of gender and duality, *Untitled (Self-Portrait)* (1928) has Cahun dressed in a man’s checkered suit, looking back at the lens while positioned before her reflection in a mirror. Her reflection appears to be gazing back into the ambiguous space of it’s own dimension beyond the glass. With the gesture of an indignant vaudeville performer, Cahun is posed on a stage as a metallic-clad angel in *Le Mystere d’Adam* (1929). She fixes an antagonistic gaze on the implied spectator beyond the camera with an intensity not unlike the Marchesa’s. Using double-exposure, *Que Me Veux-tu?: Double Self-Portrait* (1929) shows a bald Cahun as a creature with two heads. In an effect more extreme than Man Ray’s alleged lighting accident that resulted in a six-eyed Casati, Cahun’s heads originate from the same set of shoulders, but one twists in profile to regard its sister. In her images, the artist becomes the protagonist of hallucinations, creating an identity as a “non-human actor” (Welby-Everard, 2006, p. 7). In Cahun’s prose titled *Captive Balloon*, the tools of her performance seem

to turn against her. She writes: “but the face paints that I used seemed indelible. I scrubbed so hard that I tore off the skin”(1926, p. 486).



**Figure 13. Claude Cahun, *Self-portrait*, 1928. Collection Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes, France.**

One of Cahun’s few self-portraits in which the subject’s gaze is not directed towards the camera was made in 1927. Peculiar black goggles conceal the artist’s eyes. While she is coded as a dapper male in an ascot and slick-back hair, the dark circular frames over her eyes give the look of empty sockets. The close cropping of the portrait and the goggles help build a resemblance between this work of Cahun and a project of another performative artist, Andy Warhol. In *Photo Booth Self Portrait* (1963), Warhol uses the technology of the photo booth to play with performance and sequencing. Dark sunglasses obscure the artist’s eyes while he positions his head very close to the camera to appear in shadows,

raises his hand across his face in mock tragedy, parts his lips, produces a pout, or—in one shot—removes the dark lenses to better examine the view beyond the curtain of the booth. With only the camera lens to bare witness, Warhol plays to an anticipated audience and produces poses that remain astonishingly familiar in the contemporary visual culture of social media.

Throughout the late 1970's, another American artist, Cindy Sherman, produced a photographic series, *Untitled Film Stills*, in which she fashioned herself into archetypal female characters. Using the language of cinema, the images are comprised of careful detail in dress and setting to create recognizable effects, but they are not in reference to specific films. While the Marchesa adorned herself in costumes suggesting empowering personas like Theodora, Empress of the Byzantine Empire, Sherman's characters use fashion and props in such a way as to be familiar, however bear no distinctiveness past perhaps the stock labels reserved for end credits: "waitress", "victim", "mistress", "hairdresser", etc. They are tropes. The tight frames of photo booths or contemporary portraits made by hand-held camera phones are expanded in the *Untitled Film Stills* which reveal the environment surrounding the subject as a stretch of narrative clues employing the conventions of cinematic culture. The aggressive eye contact often seen in images of Casati and Cahun is absent. Film theorist Laura Mulvey (1975) described the conventions of film using Freud's theory of scopophilia stating, "in their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-

ness” (p. 19). The spectator is allowed to examine the subject freely as she does not challenge his gaze. She becomes “woman as object... She is isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualised” (Mulvey, p. 12). In the *Untitled Film Stills*, the subjects of Sherman’s series look towards the unknown waiting on the outskirts of the photograph. Art critic Craig Owen wrote that Sherman’s characters “frequently glance anxiously outside the frame at some unspecified menace, thereby implying the presence of a narrative even while withholding it” (2006, p. 77). Although Sherman uses herself as the sole figure in the images, she does not refer to them as self-portraits. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Sherman states, “I feel I’m anonymous in my work. When I look at the pictures, I never see myself; they aren’t self-portraits. Sometimes I disappear” (Collins, 1990).



**Figure 14. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #14*, 1978. Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York.**

### 3.3.3 The Documented Self

In contrast to Sherman's metamorphosis into the forms of others, British artist Jo Spence posed as versions of herself in her 1985 work, *Transformations*. In a sequence of four portraits arranged around a photo of a newly wedded couple, Spence remained in the same vest and collared-shirt, but changed her hair and facial expressions as if depicting multiple personalities. In artist JK Keller's experiments in self-documentary, the props, costuming, and grooming, which assist Sherman in her disappearing act are treated as playful trappings. Over the course of 12 years, Keller took headshots of himself posed with an expression reminiscent of those required for government-issued identification. Each instance has the subject's eyes positioned in approximately the same location with a blank wall acting as a backdrop. Keller's images first appear in a sequenced block of headshots titled *The Adaption to My Generation*. Edited in rapid succession, the portraits taken from 1998–2006 make up the video project *Living My Life Faster*. In the space of two minutes, the video shows a quick moment of each image—creating an effect that holds Keller's face as a constant while tendrils of hair, beards, moustaches, glasses and clothing thrash in a frenzy across him. Behind the variations in styling, Keller presents a starkly coherent self, face broadening slightly as it ages by the second.

While Keller's photographs resemble the formal portraits of passports, they use the same close-cropping unavoidable in hand-held camera phone self-portraits. With slight adjustments to his facial expression, Keller's images could be transformed from reading as "citizen" to "Facebook friend". Although camera

phones have extended the role of photography in creating and maintaining social relationships, Lisa Gye's research into the impact of mobile camera phones notes, "the kinds of photos that are most often taken with mobile camera phones are those that reinforce the user's individuality rather than their ties to other groups" (2007, p. 284). The paradox of this sense of individuality appears when comparing the images of online "friends". In his study of amateur photography, sociologist Richard Chalfen has commented, "the fact that people sharing the same culture will independently agree so well on their patterned choices of appropriate imagery and associated conventions makes many collections of personal pictures 'look' so much alike" (1987, p. 142).

Social norms and cultural conventions contribute to visual similarities in the performances of subjects in terms of costuming, props, posture, and facial expressions; however, the technological limitations of the device used to produce the portraits also add to the sense of uniformity. The design of many camera phones favour subjects ranging from two to five feet in distance from the lens. Objects less than one foot tend to be a blur, while objects past 10 feet also sacrifice sharpness. This accommodates for the production of self-portraits taken by holding the camera at arm's length. Under the scrutiny of one's own gaze, the activity of self-portraiture is one of full indulgence. Photos may be viewed immediately and assessed as quickly as inspecting one's appearance in a mirror. The self-portrait becomes the "simulacra" of the subject's reflection—a reflection that is malleable, controllable, and ultimately correctable (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 165). Through digital manipulation and cropping, the identity represented in

pixels can easily become preferable to the identity burdened by unruly flesh. *Figure 15* shows the original file of a self-portrait taken with the aid of a mirror, compared to the image posted as a profile picture on Facebook. With her gaze focused away from the lens and the reflected camera cropped out of the frame, the subject works to suggest a mysterious photographer is leading the activity. The responsibility for the creation of the document is made ambiguous and the extent of the subject's narcissistic efforts is disguised. The element of deception involved in the construction of a self-portrait is explored in the project, *At Arm's Length*.



**Figure 15. Raw photograph vs. digitally edited image posted as a profile picture on Facebook, 2008.**

### 3.4 Conclusion

*The photograph is the advent of myself as other, a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity.*

~ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1982, p. 49

Portraiture can assist in the exploration of identity by providing a visual document of the self, an image for contemplation. Ron Burnett writes that images “are at the very center of any coherent and historically informed definition that can be made of human nature and the cultural and social configurations that humans create.” He adds, “language, images, and sounds are inherent parts of human thought and the human body, as well as generative sites for the thinking, feelings process” (2004, p. 9). For the subjects of daguerreotypes, sitting stiffly in their Sunday best allowed for the creation of portraits that had previously been accessible predominantly to persons affluent enough to pay the fees of an artist. For the Marchesa Casati, paint and photography enabled her to play with performativity and create visual narratives propagating an idiosyncratic personality, a Lady Gaga in her own right. Used in promotion of her identity, these images functioned as tools for social momentum.

Coinciding with the Marchesa in time and on occasion, geography, Surrealist Claude Cahun created similarly performative portraits, fashioning herself into narratives addressing social, sexual and political issues. Andy Warhol used his frames of photo booth posturing to emulate an apathetic talent, a cynical witness hamming it up for the paparazzi-like flash of the machine. Cindy Sherman’s characters seem similarly subjected to a dominating lens. Inserting herself in filmic narratives, her performative personas prompt critique of the archetypal roles of women in both conventional cinema and Western society. While Sherman transformed herself into diverse variations on a theme, JK Keller presents a closely cropped frame of identity, affording consistency with a facial

expression crafted to be “as ‘subtly objective’ as possible” (Keller, 2008, website). For the users of sites such as Facebook, similarly framed images created by hand-held phones or laptop cameras are posted as representations of their social selves. Performativity and image editing software enable the construction of a subject’s favoured visual narratives. Built through a plethora of cues based on cultural norms, users project their identities across the topography of the World Wide Web.

In the web-based project *At Arm’s Length*, the process behind building these self-portraits is inspected through irreverent fabrications. The narrative of a subject’s headshot is seen in a new light when matched with a wide shot revealing the moment of capture. However, one may question if any image can really be measured as “truthful”? In an interview with writer Peggy Phelan, renowned American photographer Richard Avedon (1993) gives his perspective:

*A portrait is not a likeness. The moment an emotion or fact is transformed into a photograph it is no longer a fact but an opinion. There is no such thing as inaccuracy in a photograph. All photographs are accurate. None of them is truth (p. 35).*

In *At Arm’s Length*, narrative folds in on itself to compose a study of fictional deception: an actress plays a character, performing as a subject, parading as her idealized self.

## 4: AT ARM'S LENGTH: A PROJECT ON IDENTITY

### 4.1 Introduction

*A single note out of key can disrupt the tone of an entire performance.*  
~ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 1952, p. 52

I came to the realization that I had made a poor choice of rental bicycle a moment after I squeezed the handbrakes and unexpectedly continued my acceleration down the gravel incline. The family of tourists scattered across the narrowing path below were oblivious to the failings of the contraption or my increasing distress as their small children glanced dully at a specimen of the park's feral cat population. In a panic, I made the dubious decision to careen into the rough stonewall enclosing the park. The fingers of my left hand, sandwiched between the stone and the handlebars, looked like a crushed bird wing and I was transformed into the absurd spectacle of an adult weeping in public. I was physically hurt and embarrassed since, not only was I at an age when one is expected to have mastered basic bicycle functions such as "braking", but I was a tourist blubbing on a beautiful summer day in front of small children, well-dressed Europeans, and seemingly judgemental Spanish cats.

With comforting from my travel companion, I managed to salvage my faulty bicycle, wash my bloody digits in a fountain and bind them into a Kleenex-encased stump. While he set up for our picnic, I sat gloomily cradling my lame paw. After arranging an impressive spread of charcuterie, cheese, and baguette

my partner readied his camera. With the sun shining across Valencia's *Jadins de Turia* and a growing audience of feral felines attracted by the smell of *Queso Manchego*, canned mussels, and human blood, I instinctively smoothed my hair, grinned for the camera, and banished my damaged hand behind the boulder that was providing surface for our feast. The photo went up on Facebook as evidence of our covetable experiences traveling in Spain.



**Figure 16. Picnic in the *Jadines de Turia* Valencia, Spain, 2009.**

A year later, when I came across the image file on my computer, it inspired a course of inquiry. In the case of our charming picnic, my performativity as a subject was not based on a process of mindful decision-making, rumination on the pros and cons of concealing injury, or debate on how best to achieve a “nice” photo. With the appearance of the camera, I moved into position virtually automatically, hiding the telltale sign that would point to fault in my day of touristic indulgence. Posted online, the image displays the visual narrative of the cheerful

experience we intended to have when we first entered the bike rental shop that morning. The occasion looks to be a success. I appear to be effective in my role as happy, capable, vacationer — someone not in the least preoccupied by thoughts of disinfectant. I began to consider how the activity of creating and sharing images is pervasive; how social media has encouraged the construction of identity through imagery; and how performativity is used to convey a *vie en rose*. Inspired by these questions, I conducted practice-based research resulting in part in the development of *At Arm's Length*. This chapter offers a description of the photography project, an account of the process behind its creation, and a discussion of my further considerations for the work.

## 4.2 Description

*Photography is a kind of primitive theater, a kind of Tableau Vivant, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead.*

~ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1982, p.32

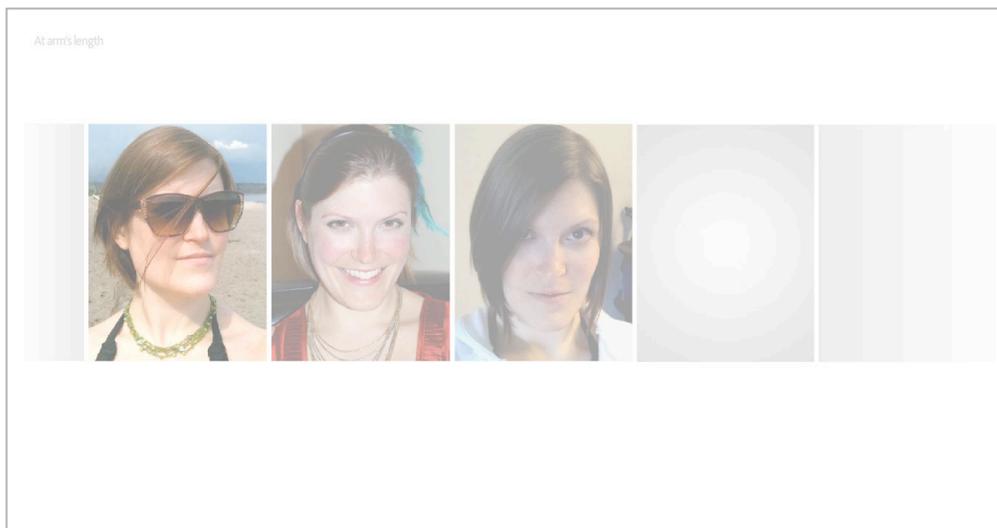


Figure 17. Opening webpage of *At Arm's Length* (2010).

Presented in a web browser, *At Arm's Length* begins with three close-cropped headshots arranged in horizontal alignment against a white background. The minimalist design can be seen as a nod to the supposed "neutrality" of the white-walled gallery or the interface of many photo-sharing sites such as Flickr.com. The series of images feature the same woman. In each, she appears styled diversely and in a different setting. In alignment on both sides, grey rectangles block out areas of the same size and shape as the images as though suggesting their continued succession on the horizontal. These rectangles fade out at the edges of the screen with the ephemeral nature of placeholders. Without interaction, the brightness of the images gently dwindles in and out as if floating on a liquid surface with the threat of submerging back into nothingness. If a cursor moves over an image, the space of the image plays a quick frame featuring the animated shutter of an iPhone camera application, before showing the portrait at full opacity. Lines of text commenting on the image appear in sequence below. A click of the mouse causes the chosen image to shrink and fade while the surrounding images vanish. Transitioning to a wide shot revealing the environment surrounding the woman at the moment the portrait was taken, the selected headshot moves towards the area of the larger image featuring the site of self-portraiture before disappearing altogether. In these wide shots, the subject can be seen acting as her own photographer, holding her camera phone in front of her. While the woman is posed setting up for the portrait, the viewer is privy to the cues of the setting existing beyond the portrait's framing. These

cues may be read in humorous contrast to visual narratives suggested in the headshots.

#### 4.2.1 The Beach



Figure 18. iPhone portrait on beach, *At Arm's Length* (2010).

In the first portrait, the subject is sporting large, dark sunglasses obscuring her eyes. Much like the tight lips of Claude Cahun in her *Self-portrait* (1927) with ascot and goggles, the subject's small smirk provides little information for the viewer to speculate on her mood. A green necklace and the straps of a halter-top are all that is seen of her attire. With her head positioned as if looking off to her left, a strand of auburn hair sweeps across her face. In the background, the stretch of sand and sliver of water suggest a beach. The sky is bright with a white cloud smudged in one corner. Mousing over the image reveals several lines of text below including the words, "OMG, you live in such a beautiful city! I would kill for a decent beach day!" The style of writing mimics comments made by users of online photo-sharing sites. Positioned below the image, it acts as captioning, planting suggestion.

Clicking on the image, the wide-shot exposes the subject posing in a small section of a beach. The beach is unpopulated by other visitors except for two figures sitting on a log far in the background. The majority of the sky is grey and clouded over. Thin trees, branches bare, are rooted in long, dry grass appearing in the foreground. The woman is sitting on a log with her fall coat pushed off her shoulders and shirt pulled down to accommodate only bikini straps in the frame of the portrait. On a stump beside her rests a purple umbrella along with her assorted belongings. The culmination of cues points away from the portrait's sunny scheme, towards a moment of fantasy created by an individual amongst the solitary hours of an autumn day.



**Figure 19. Wide-shot on beach, *At Arm's Length* (2010).**

#### 4.2.2 The Lobby



Figure 20. iPhone Portrait in lobby, *At Arm's Length* (2010).

Clicking on the wide shot of the beach brings the viewer back to the series of portraits. In the second image, the woman smiles radiantly into the camera, one eyebrow slightly arched, and her gaze reaching to engage warmly with the spectator. Gold and silver necklaces adorn her collarbone framed by the straps of a red satin dress. A turquoise feather appears in her hair as though plucked from one of the Machesa Casati's costumes. There are few details in the background apart from the edge of brown leather along the subject's shoulders and a neutral-toned wall. Resting the mouse over the image, text materializing below comments "Holy hot dress! Looks like I missed another crazy night..."

The wide shot reveals the woman taking her own picture while seated in a room. The room is painted in yellow and tan with recessed archways framing the wall in half-circles of maroon. The high ceiling and marble-tiled floor add to the formal nature of the space. The subject sits cross-legged in her party dress with black and gold high heels and matching purse completing her outfit. There is an empty leather chair to one side matching her seat, and poorly hung prints

adorning the walls. Around the corner from the subject, another woman in a red coat can be seen walking by a wall of elevators. The space appears to be the lobby of a building—a hotel, apartments, or offices. The viewer may speculate that the two women are connected. Perhaps the subject is waiting for a friend and taking pictures to pass time in the sterile surroundings. Or perhaps the red-coated woman is a stranger about to come around the corner and trigger momentary embarrassment with a glance towards the vamping photographer. The subject may be on the cusp of a glamorous social event, but in the flash of her portrait, she is alone.



**Figure 21. Wide-shot in lobby, *At Arm's Length* (2010).**

### 4.2.3 The Apartment



Figure 22. iPhone Portrait in apartment, *At Arm's Length* (2010).

The third portrait features the woman, hair sleek, looking intently into the camera. Unlike the accusatory gaze often employed by Cahun or the Marchesa's monstrous Belladonna stare, the subject's wide eyes and the subtle downward tilt of her chin verge on seductive. Hovering the mouse over the image, the text, "Hey sexy, we still on for Tuesday?" appears among the comments below. The background is flat beige with an edge of wooden furniture peaking out on one side. With only the neck of a white sweater featured in the portrait, the viewer may be surprised by the wide shot's colourful display: the subject stands to one side of a cluttered apartment, framing her picture so that an overhead light is hitting half of her face, and an area of bare wall acts as a backdrop. While her hair appears to have been freshly groomed, the portion of her body cropped out of the portrait is dressed in a casual sweatshirt and red flannel pyjama pants patterned comically with moose silhouettes. The room around her is adorned with a haphazard assortment of papers, books, bags, clothing, dishes, and knickknacks. The wide shot reads as a private instance, where subject and

setting are unprepared for public presentation beyond the tight framing of her camera phone.

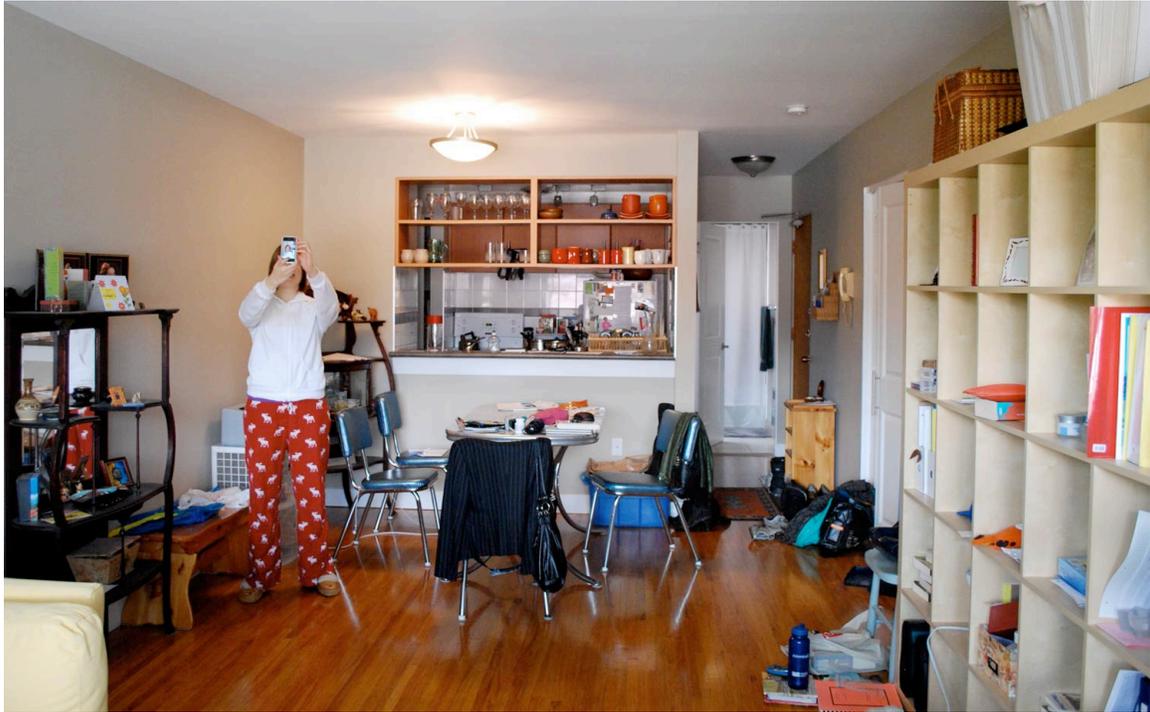


Figure 23. Wide-shot in apartment, *At Arm's Length* (2010).

#### 4.2.4 The Collection

The composition of the three portraits in *At Arm's Length* resembles that of images often charged with the task of representing identity. Traditional portraits used for documents such as passports, gym memberships, or school photos, are generally tightly framed on the subject, focusing attention on facial features. In the case of self-portraiture using a hand-held device, the length of the photographer's arm limits the framing. Without the aid of a tripod, the context is often cropped out of the image and the subject's face appears somewhat flatly in

the foreground. Each image of the series presents the subject dutifully displaying the norms of contemporary portraiture. In the mid-1930s, an article on American photography describes the goal of successful portraiture as capturing a natural facial expression:

*Our aim is to select as natural an expression as possible and to select the proper moment that it is best defined. The expression of the face is unquestionably the most important part of portraiture. It is the finishing touch towards which all effort is directed. The expression gives the spark of life to the image and that is as near as we can approximate the record of aliveness. (Jourdan, 1936, p. 738)*

In *At Arm's Length*, the facial expressions in the portraits rely on performativity to achieve a "natural" expression. Art historian Christina Kotchemidova writes that the appearance of naturalness in photography is constructed since "it is not people's normal expressions that are 'lifeless,' but photographs themselves. The liveliness of the human face does not consist in one particular expression or another, but in the incessant, dynamic change of expressions" (2005, p. 15). The freezing of expression in a photograph is what jeopardizes the subject's appearance of vitality. The subject in *At Arm's Length* uses her gaze, her smile, and her costuming to present the cultural values commonly promoted through imagery. Much like the subjects mentioned in Chapter 3 editing their portraits in the visualization class, the subject in the first portrait of the series enters into the realm of imagination as she pulls down her coat and shirt to appear as though wearing a bikini. In the third portrait, it is less a matter of deception than exclusion as the pyjama pants go unmentioned. A young woman on the beach or at a party, she looks content, vivacious, and

sultry. Her social identity is carefully managed through the tight cropping to withhold cues that may be inconsistent with her preferred self.

Viewers of online profile pictures on dating or social media sites may have reason to examine portraits in search of cues to a person's identity. Unlike Goffman's examples of social interaction, the portrait offers its limited information simultaneously. In visual language, "the units of meaning...establish relations of proximity without forming a sequence" (Kotchemidova, 2005, p. 13). The act of looking moves between a gestalt communication and a hunt for detail.

Sociologist Richard Sennett wrote about identifying detail and 'people watching' in 18<sup>th</sup> century European culture, emphasising the weight an observer would put on details of self-presentation as indications of character (1976, p. 161).

Online, the activity of people-watching translates into trolling through profiles. In the portraits of *At Arm's Length*, the viewer is denied access to the domain beyond the subject's face. With a click of the mouse, each portrait is transformed into a wide shot (a meta-image of sorts). The portraits are revealed as charades developed for the project rather than images plucked from personal albums. The wide shots use the filmic sense of Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* to construct a lush narrative world around the subject. The woman's environment becomes a film set dressed with ample signs while the viewer is positioned as a voyeur, a passer-by invisible to the preoccupied subject. In the act of creating the portrait, the subject's face is obscured. Her performance is for her own camera. The viewer watches as the subject constructs herself as an object, seemingly oblivious to the viewer's omnipotent gaze.

Informed by additional cues included in the wide-shots, viewers may find their first assumptions about the subject have shifted. With knowledge of the circumstances expanding beyond the arm's length of the subject, the viewer makes new meaning of the portraits. In the specific, the images can be seen to culminate as a character study of an individual constructing a socially engaging self through photography, while her daily life consists of time spent alone. Taken as a general comment, *At Arm's Length* points to questions around the disconnection between the lived experiences of subjects and the constructed self they choose to project in their online identities. Photographic activity becomes about imitation, trickery, and assembling a tableau of ciphers.

### 4.3 Process

*Some performances are carried off successfully with complete dishonesty, others with complete honesty: but for performances in general neither of these extremes is essential and neither, perhaps, is dramaturgically advisable.*

~ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 1957, p. 71

When I first approached Lisa Fletcher who plays the role of the subject in *At Arm's Length*, I explained my nebulous idea and added, "I thought you might be interested because you're an actress... and I saw on your Facebook page that you make, um, your own self-portraits." Truthfully, I went through the profiles of my social media 'friends' looking for inspiration. While several individuals posted exceedingly performative self-portraits, I suspected indulging critical analysis of such behaviour might not be to their tastes. In contrast, I felt Lisa's training as a professional clown implied a sense of humour potentially complementary to the undertakings I was proposing. Fortunately, I was right. We

started on the task of self-study. Both guilty of practicing self-portraiture, we each selected over a dozen images from our collections and interviewed one another about their content. This data was compiled in a website about the project under the section *snapshots of the self*.

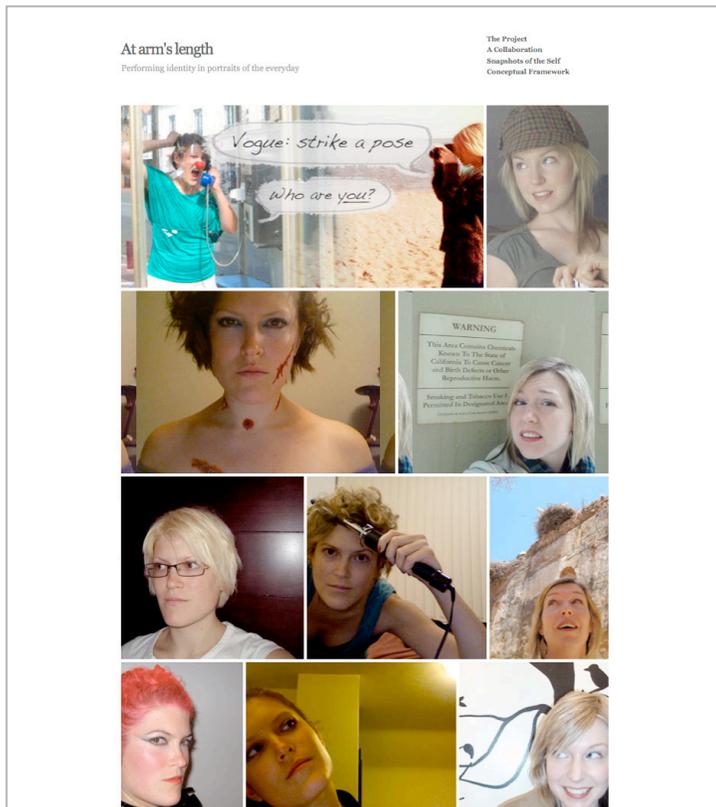
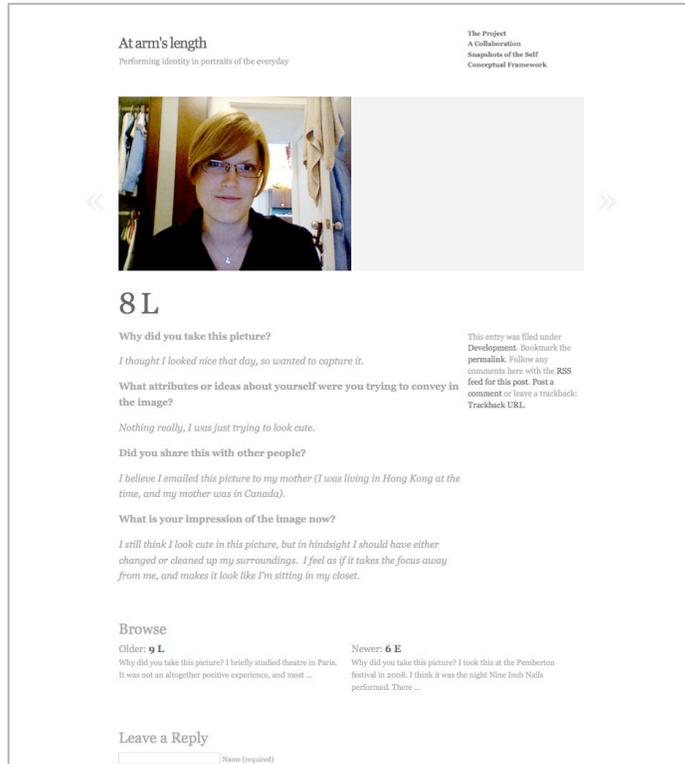


Figure 24. Webpage from project research blog, *At Arm's Length* (2010).

The portraits are displayed in a mosaic and can be selected as links to individual pages. We went through each image with the same set of questions, including:

- Why did you take this picture?
- What attributes or ideas about yourself were you trying to convey?
- Did you share this with other people?
- What is your impression of the image now?

Many of the images had been posted online or emailed to friends; however, others were kept private. The latter instances were all documents of memory. For one unshared image presenting a decidedly aggravated countenance, Lisa writes, “anytime I start feeling nostalgic for my time as a theater student in Paris, I look at this picture and it does the trick of reminding me just what it was like”. Of the images that were shared, the majority are conventionally flattering. In one, Lisa vamps in her Halloween costume, a bloodied femme fatale. In another, she looks off pensively to the corner of the frame. While her averted gaze in this image creates a sense of spontaneity, Lisa recalls the image being selected as the best of several. It was taken and shared online after a breakup with a boyfriend who “was very blunt with why he was ending things”. She took the portrait to prove her attractiveness — a characteristic frequently affirmed through written commentary after the image was posted online. Some of the images were taken with the intention of being humorous. Of one showing Lisa with newly platinum-dyed hair, she recalls, “I took a picture to show people what I would look like if I were related to the Malfoy character in the Harry Potter movies.” In others, imperfect cues are regretted with comments like, “I still think I look cute, but in hindsight I should have either changed or cleaned up my surroundings...it looks like I’m sitting in my closet.”



**Figure 25. Webpage from project research blog, *At Arm's Length* (2010).**

While at first our descriptions seemed potentially inconsequential, I began to realize how the self-questionnaires allowed us to describe and illicit information about the multidimensional nature of our own identities beyond any layers of vanity. Considering an image of myself posed coyly in front of an elaborately painted wall, I remembered that the wall was actually in a bathroom I came across during a trip to Montréal. I had been walking around by myself and feeling very self-conscious about revealing my deteriorated high school language skills in the predominately French-speaking neighbourhood. Something about how I remember feeling that day made me more reluctant to share the memory of having created the image in a bathroom, and having to explain that I was performing a “fun time” in an unfamiliar city. In looking at the performance of

social actors, Goffman commented that, while in the presence of others, “the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure” (1959, p. 30). In a photograph, these exaggerations of cues may be similarly employed in order to ensure the performance is communicated. Just as a worker may put effort into appearing productive in the presence of her boss, I was posing in order to show my enjoyment of a vacation for an audience of Facebook “friends.” In the instance of the bathroom shot, I had been performing to an extreme in order to hide my sense of vulnerability. In digging further into the circumstances around the creation of the image, I touched on the uncomfortable inadequacy I experienced that day and my lonely attempt to create a document implying otherwise.

Apart from learning more about the unexpected complexities of our past photographic activity, eliciting information from our own images through a process of collaborative reflection between participants worked well to solidify which ideas to pursue in the work. As researchers, we were able to “use the content of the images as vessels in which to invest meanings and through which to produce and represent [our] knowledge, self-identities, experiences and emotions” (Rose, 2001, p. 68). Much of our discussion was in the form of stories. Narrative became a method of sense making. Dan McAdams (2006) writes that we, as humans, make meaning of our lives through stories:

*Beginning in late adolescence and your adulthood, we construct integrative narratives of the self that selectively recall the past and wishfully anticipate the future to provide our lives with some semblance of unity, purpose, and identity.*

*Personal identity is the internalized and evolving life story that each of us is working on as we move through our adult lives. (p. 288)*

As collections, our self-portraits acted as illustrations of our 'life stories' and affected how we see our "plot[s] enacted over time" (McAdams, 2006, p. 76). Between our memories and current impressions, we were able to identify patterns and recurrent themes.

For the images of *At Arm's Length*, we selected locations where a subject might spend time alone. It was decided that a camera phone was the most appropriate tool for the self-portraits rather than another type of digital camera because it implies spontaneity. Research conducted by Daisuke Okabe and Mizuko Ito (2006) supports this notion:

*In comparison to the traditional camera, most of the images taken by camera phone are short-lived and ephemeral. The camera phone is a more ubiquitous and lightweight presence, and is used for more personal, less objectified viewpoint and sharing among intimates. Traditionally, the camera would get trotted out for special excursions and events—noteworthy moments bracketed off from the mundane ... The camera phone tends to be used more frequently as a kind of archive of a personal trajectory or viewpoint on the world, a collection of fragments of everyday life. (p. 99)*

Through the narratives of the images, one may speculate that reading on a March beach turned to imagining the coming summer, waiting in fancy clothes no one is around to see led to suggesting a more exciting setting, and hanging out in the clutter of a small apartment caused the photographer to experiment. There is a play between melancholy and performance. The series presents a sketch, an open-ended foundation rather than a fully fulfilled scheme. Based on the stories gathered through our research, the work could be expanded to explore a plethora of additional dramatizations.

#### 4.4 Further Considerations

One of the issues that arose in the making of *At Arm's Length* was the interface design. How to present the sets of images, portrait and wide shot, to create the feeling of stepping back from a photo into the setting in which it was taken? How is one to make the user feel as though they are first viewing a formal identity, and then transitioning to bear witness to a private moment? Jay Bolter (2003) wrote about the importance of design in shaping the user's experience noting, "every digital artefact needs at times to be visible to its user; it needs to be both a window and a mirror." Ideally, the user of *At Arm's Length* would recognize the first set of images shown in a browser as having a relationship with online profile pictures. After discovering the images are active links, the user would transition to regard the wide-shots without consideration for the browser's framing. The wide-shots are not to be interpreted directly as posted images. The portraits are the final products, while the wide-shots reveal the speculated process and act to inform the construction of narrative. The user is intended to look through the interface and imagine herself present in the scene.

By creating *At Arm's Length* as a web-based project, my interface objective was only partially achieved. Further exploration could play with the interface design to have a look and feel more closely resembling specific social media sites. Imagined as a gallery installation, the user could approach a monitor to click on the images, and then be faced with a large-scale projection of the wide-shot on the wall beyond the monitor. Adjusting the scale of the wide-shot would take it out of the confines of the web-browser and add potential for a more

immersive user experience. A series of wide-shots of a single situation, but taken from different angles could also work to build more complex information into the visual narrative of each instance. Finally, the creation of additional portraits featuring new subjects could work to strengthen ideas about shared and habitual behaviour. New identities could be interconnected through details presented in the wide-shots, thickening the narrative world and emphasizing social performance.

## **4.5 Summary**

In *At Arm's Length*, dramatized documents of self-portraiture are engineered to present irreverent commentary on the activity of creating and sharing images of the self. In the process of developing the work, artist and actress cast themselves as research subjects. Interviews and photo-based inquiry allowed them to identify themes and patterns from their own experiences. With the aim of creating humourous imagery that resonates with viewers, elements from lived events were woven through the scenarios constructed in the project. Displayed as images posted online, the sets of portraits and wide shots work to promote a dialogue around performativity and identity in contemporary culture. The techniques of self-study and role-play, each of which is utilized in the typically earnest act of self-portraiture, are exaggerated and transgress into subversion.

Self-portraits can be used to build identity; however, they are also often made with the intention of preserving the self in a document of memory. When the portrait's frame is expanded, details of costuming and setting can lead to

tangents of reminiscence. In the next chapter, I will look at the role of photographs as triggers for memory and what happens when the self is put in context.

## **5: BUILDING MEMORY: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **5.1 Introduction: The Self in Context**

I am sitting in the backseat beside a weary toddler as we cruise down Sunset Boulevard peering for celebrities and remnants of glam metal. We have had a full day of activity including an unfortunate knee-scraping fall for the youngest member of our party. After some protest, she accepted being strapped into her car seat, but her mood is wavering between serenading us with the alphabet and shrieking at the unreasonable absence of mangos in her immediate future. As her little face shows signs of scrunching into frustration, her mother reaches back to offer up an iPhone 4G. Sadie, at two years and four months, receives the phone, extends her tiny finger and selects the icon for the camera application. Her mother's phone is the newest model with a camera in the front so that the screen displays the face of its operator. Sadie gazes favourably at her golden curls, the phone acting as a hand mirror. After taking several haphazardly framed shots, she switches to the photo application and begins scrolling through images. She pauses on one taken earlier in the day at the museum of Le Brea Tar Pits. "Who's that?" I say, pointing at a photo of her little figure dwarfed by an animatronic sloth. "Sadie," she announces. Another image shows a Mammoth skeleton extending meters above her head. "And who's that?" I ask. "Sadie!" she squeals.



**Figure 26. Sadie Kydd, *Untitled (View from the backseat featuring sandals and green sippy-cup)*, (2011), taken with Apple iPhone 3G.**

Once home, we enact the analogue version. Sadie selects her photo album from a low shelf of the bookcase and plants herself in the middle of the living room. Rather than the once-standard assembly of prints stuck to cardboard with paper corners or yellowing under gluey plastic, Sadie's book has been designed with digital photographs and sent to Apple Inc. to be printed as a hardcover. She considers each page of smooth coated-stock before turning it clumsily. The images include a newborn in the arms of her beaming mother; a close-up on miniature digits wrapped around one of father's fingers. All the key characters are represented. On a spread showing sets of grandparents smiling down at bundles of baby, I ask, "Who's that?" Sadie inspects and replies, "Nana." Organised chronologically, the baby grows older as the pages turn. She is pictured crawling on hardwood floors in Vancouver, being pulled in a wagon through a California pumpkin patch in her first month of their move South, then

ambling like a local at a playground on Venice Beach. As an active viewer, Sadie is able to recognize the images of cousins, friends, uncles and pets. Always, she is able to identify herself.

Photography, in both digital and printed form, is embedded in Sadie's daily routine. Pictures provide distraction and comfort, while functioning as pedagogical tools. The activity of taking photographs is accessible, even for a two-year old. Liz Wells notes that typically children have little control over how they are portrayed in family photos. Personal pictures are specifically meant to portray the individual or the group to which they belong "*as they would wish to be seen* and as they have chosen to show themselves to one another," however, Wells explains, "the conventions of the group inevitably overrule the preferences of individual members" (Wells, 2010, p. 121). A wide range of images featuring Sadie, her friends and relatives, places she has visited or objects she has encountered are readily available for her perusal. With digital technology, she is able to review images from her car seat that were taken during an outing earlier the same day. While her mother and father create the bulk of images appearing in her printed album, she is keen to take her own pictures (many of which focus on the general area of her face or feet, depending on the camera). Digital cameras offer the same promise used by George Eastman to market Kodak in the early 1900's: "You press the button, we do the rest". The 'Box Brownie' model was said to be both affordable and easy enough for a child to use (Wells, 2010, p. 119).

Presently, the images in Sadie's album help her remember family members and friends living far away. With Sadie growing and learning everyday, her parents are motivated to document all of her changes for future recollection. Decades later, her albums may facilitate the performance of memory during social occasions or individual contemplation. In the project *Waves*, a photograph is animated as a visualization of memory. To provide context for further discussion of the project in Chapter 6, this chapter will look at the relationship between images and memory. Themes including the history of Kodak, family photography and its display in the home, tourist photography, and artistic explorations in domestic documentation will be explained and examined.

## 5.2 [Re]collection and the Image

In Freud's essay, *A Note upon the "Mystic Writing Pad"* (1984 [1925]), he gives the example that if he were to distrust his memory, he would create "a supplement and guarantee it's working by making a note in writing" (p. 429). He would then need only to recall the location of the note or "memory" in order to trigger recollection. He writes, "I can then 'reproduce' it at any time I like, with the certainty that it will have remained unaltered and so have escaped the possible distortions to which it might have been subjected in my actual memory" (p.429). An extreme example is seen in Christopher Nolan's film, *Memento* (2000). Suffering from short-term memory loss, the protagonist tattoos his body with elaborate notes to help him make sense of his daily experiences and piece together clues in his investigation of his wife's murder. Scholar of photographic culture David Bate describes Freud's differentiation between "Natural Memory",

or memory stored only in one's mind and "Artificial Memory," memory kept through the aid of technical devices in support of natural memory (2010, p. 244). A strict distinction seems problematic, as I would argue that "natural" memory is often triggered by unintended signs such as smells, sounds, or visuals that function by chance (rather than as intended recordings), to recall memories that may not otherwise surface.

Although not all memories are generated by visual signs, or take the form of imagery, Freud's essay, *Childhood Memories and Screen Memories*, suggests childhood memories are primarily *visual* (1980 [1901], p. 19) This idea applies to Ridley Scott's 1982 postmodern science-fiction film, *Blade Runner*, where the character of Rachel is convinced of the validity of her (fabricated) childhood through memory implants and photographs produced by Doctor Tyrell. A distrust of images as accurate triggers is expressed in Susan Sontag's book *On Photography* (1977). Sontag writes that the photograph is "not so much an instrument of memory as an invention of it or a replacement" (p. 165). Commenting on the influence of images, David Bates asks, "Is it that as the human faculty of memory internalizes photographic images, we no longer trust our memory as our own?" (2010, p. 251).

With photo editing techniques once reserved for commercial photography, and visual arts practices, now being widely used by consumers, all photographs are suspect. However, certain images have a way of being remembered. Roland Barthes addressed the impact an image can have on the spectator, identifying what he calls the "*punctum*" (1982, p 27). He describes the *punctum* as an

involuntary response to a photograph. Beyond the *studium* (the cultural or linguistic interpretation of an image), the *punctum* is a surprise for the viewer, a meaningful, personal reaction to the visual. Anne Marsh, author of *The Darkroom: Photograph and the theater of Desire* (2003), investigated the nature of the *punctum* stating, “although the photographer registers a ‘real’ which is in front of the camera, the Real which punctuates the picture (the *punctum*) is always seen through the screen of the Imaginary” (p. 95). The photograph conserves traces of memory as well as being a surface on which to project emotion. The image holds a moment in stillness and, in referencing people and places of the past, “the photograph can disturb the present moments and the contemporary landscape with troubling or nostalgic memories and with forgotten, or all too vividly remembered, histories” (McAllister, 2006, p. 1).

In Freudian theory, a memory from childhood can be “retroactive, that is, used to represent the thought and impressions of a later date” (Bates, 2010, p. 253). Californian artist Doug Muir created a series of reprints from black and white snapshots he took as a child. The reprints focus on facial expression and gestures that work to suggest interpersonal relationships that may not have been apparent to the participants at the time the snapshots were taken (Warner Marien, 2010, p. 469). In *My Brother Gary and his Girlfriend Joanie, Otisco Lake, Amber, New York, 1959*, a young man props himself casually against a porch banister enjoying a bottled drink with another young man, while a woman (presumably Joanie), looks at him admiringly, her legs and arms wrapped around the porch’s supporting post. The content of the original snapshot has not been

altered, but infused with new meaning by how it is now framed for the spectator.

In *A Short History of Photography* (1972), Walter Benjamin describes the

examining eye of the viewer:

*The spectator feels an irresistible compulsion to look for the tiny spark of chance, of the here and now, with which reality has, as it were, seared the character in the picture; to find that imperceptible point at which, in the immediacy of that long-past moment, the future so persuasively inserts itself that, looking back, we may rediscover it. (p. 7)*

For the spectator, images from the past can feel like storage units for forgotten traces and hints, as though looking hard enough at the performances of subjects or the details of staging will allow the spectator to unlock an embedded story, a coherent set of explanations. In photographs, memory is both stabilized and made fluid. Imagination and projection allow for elaboration on old narratives and reassessment of past assumptions. In the case of family photographs, shared imagery allows for the development of collective memory. Particularly when arranged in an album (printed or digital), family pictures work to establish an agreed upon version of history — evidence, however tenuous, of what happened and who was there to bear witness.

### **5.3 Kodak and the Domestic Photographer**

As George Eastman's technology became more affordable, Kodak began to focus their advertising on a specific market — middle class women. A print advertisement from 1889 reads, "Do you think baby will be quiet long enough to take her picture, Mama? Depicted in illustration, the young mother aims the lens at her infant, replying, "The Kodak will catch her whether she moves or not. It is

quick as a wink” (Wells, 2010, p. 144). The message emphasises the importance of keeping a record of the family, “catching” children in the instant before they grow a minute older. A boom in camera sales leading up to WWI peaked in 1917 with many families buying cameras to photograph their grown children who were then soldiers leaving for war (Coe and Gates, 1977, p. 34). For the loved ones of men who did not return, those final family photographs embody specific meaning. Benjamin (1969) writes on the significance of portraits as relics:

*The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expressions of the human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty. (p. 225, 226)*

In 1893, the ‘Kodak Girl’ was introduced to the pages of consumer magazines and surfaces of billboards. Her fashionable dress and carefree expression read as the ideal independent New Woman. While appearing first, rather incongruously, in illustration, by the 1930’s her persona was translated into photographs of fresh-faced models, which continued to emerge in Kodak’s advertising until the mid-twentieth century. An ad from October, 1926 uses the headline “Let Kodak keep the story”. Additional text reads, “In the house or out of doors, whenever there’s a home story you want to save, your Kodak saves it. Children are always little, and the scenes just as they used to be — in your Kodak album” (Kennel, 2007, p. 96). The visual shows a mother in a white dress adjusting a tripod. Her children eat lunch at a quaint kitchen table as she positions the camera at their eyelevel. She is removed from their social activity, standing off to one side as though she is directing actors. This is one of several

ads depicting women documenting their children through photography. The messaging works to promote picture-taking as a method of storytelling, and stressing the use of the camera to “counter the truancy of memory, particularly with regard to family stability” (Kennel, 2007, p 94). Marianne Hirsch (1997), a professor of English and researcher in the humanities, has written on the contradictory functions of family pictures:

*The family photograph... can reduce the strains of family life by sustaining an imagery of cohesion, even as it exacerbates them by creating images that real families cannot uphold. (p. 7)*

A grave example of these conflicting functions is found in Kristen Emiko McAllister’s research on family photographs from the WWII internment camps in British Columbia (2006). With many ethnic Japanese families forced to leave their homes and suffer unpleasant living conditions and separation from loved ones, the camps did not provide ideal staging. However, the tradition of family photography continued throughout internment. Some photographs show grouping of children and parents closely cropped so that very little of the context is recognizable. McAllister comments that the idea of Japanese Canadians bringing cameras into the camps “underlines how integral photography had become in constituting the self in relation to others” (p.88). In discussing the content of these family photographs, she notes, “Like the prewar photographs, the images from the camps were intimate records of family life, showing little of the emotional duress, anxieties and material hardships.” (p. 82).

The theme of memory and depiction of a joyous, cohesive family continues with varying aggression in Kodak’s campaigns into the 1960’s. Newly

appointed with colour film, Kodak introduced the 'Instamatic' series in 1963 (Ford 1989, p. 141). With an automatic flash making it more effective for indoor photography, the Instamatic's slogan read, "Memories are made of this" (Wells, 2010, p. 151). A benefit noted in the advertising messaging was its ease of use: a camera so simple to operate, even Mom can use it!

Around the same time as the introduction of Kodak's Instamatic, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu wrote *Un art moyen* (1965). Exploring the implications of family photography and the ritualistic sharing of photo albums, Bourdieu describes:

*To photograph one's children is to make oneself the historiographer of their childhood, and to create for them, as a sort of inheritance, the image of what they have been . . . The family album expresses the truth of social remembrance. Nothing is less like the artistic search for lost time than the showing of these family pictures, accompanied by commentaries – an initiation rite that families impose on all their new members. The images of the past arranged in chronological order, "the natural order" of social memory, arouse and transmit the remembrance of events worthy of preservation because the group sees a unifying factor in the monuments of its past unity, or what amounts to the same thing, because it derives from its past the confirmation of its present unity. (p. 53–54)*

This desire to create a sense of unity and belonging identified in the composition of photo albums can also be seen in the selection and arrangement of family photography displayed in the home.

### **5.3.1 Displaying the Family**

In his book *Inside Culture: Art and class in the American home* (1996), sociologist David Halle presents a analysis of the display of photography, art and artefacts in the private homes of Americans. Conducted in the early 1990's, his

research involved surveying residences from three neighbourhoods of New York: the upper-class urban area of Manhattan's Upper East Side, the working-lower-middle-class urban area of Greenpoint, and the upper-middle-class suburbs of Manhasset. By and large, persons interviewed were married and homeowners. In all the residences participating in the study, photos numbered around 25 per home and were often present in at least three rooms. Of all the 105 residences studied, almost all of the photos displayed featured family members exclusively. Exceptions such as group wedding photos, family portraits including much-loved nannies, or images of friends' babies made up less than 6% of photography in all three neighbourhoods. Not only here the photos often relatives—they were often the same relatives, focusing on the immediate nuclear family. Less than 10% of all homes featured images of family older than the grandparents of the adult residents. In every neighbourhood, the number of images was generally larger in the homes with children and grandchildren.

The social significance of family photographs can be seen in the subject matter chosen for display. Subjects are shown in situations of leisure: vacations and outings. Less than 30% in any neighbourhood depicted events of a formal nature such as graduations or weddings. Halle comments that these casual photographs “reflect the ideal of spending enjoyable moments in the company of intimate family members [and] give evidence through sheer numbers, of an ideal fulfilled” (p. 224). He traces this trend back to the impressionists when paintings began to portray images of average people in outdoor settings rather than focusing on portraits of imposing, powerful professionals.

Considering the popularity of depicting the family at leisure, it can be predicted that elements of discontent or rupture are banished from the walls. Of all the residences studied, less than two percent of photos of individual people were displayed as solitary objects—and three-quarters of those were children. The clustering of images is made easier by the moveable mode of display preferred for family photos. Freestanding frames that can sit on shelves or dressers were found to be far more popular than those requiring attachment to the wall. Visual connections are kept flexible. Halle speculates that the desire for adult residents to be pictured among family and the clustering of family photos on display “suggest some awareness of the fragility of the modern nuclear family, and the desire to capture and freeze moments of family togetherness” (p. 227).



**Figure 27. Photograph of the Mills family, as publishing in *The North Bay Nugget*, November 1960 on the occasion of Mary Mills (my grandmother) winning the ‘Mrs. Canada’ competition.**

### 5.3.2 Evidence of Leisure

*Like a magic lamp, the camcorder swallows the palace and sucks in the pond in front. In these tourists' minds, the Belvedere is reduced into an unfocused square image, cast with a bluish tint. The present is re-created to immortalize memories.*

~ Kim Young-ha, *I Have the Right to Destroy Myself*, 1996, p. 57

As noted in David Halle's research, times of leisure provide a popular setting for the creation of treasured family photographs. In adult life, an abundance of portraits are taken during vacations or travel experiences — to the extent that one report from the late 1970's claims that almost 70 percent of all photographs taken in the world each year are made by vacationers (Dennis, 1979). Although this number may have changed significantly with the availability of digital technology, a quick inspection of Flickr.com reveals that documenting tourist attractions remains a prevalent activity. Susan Sontag speaks of vacation photography as providing validation of experience and interpersonal relationships. Treated as evidence, the image become "proof that the trip was taken and fun was had" (1977, p.9).

Around 1910, an interest in the exotic and souvenirs of experience led to postcard sales rising to approximately 860 million per year (Pryce, 1994, p. 143). Kodak set out to encourage people to take their own photographs, installing road signs marking scenic views along highways of the United States. They read, 'Picture ahead! Kodak as you go!' (Graves and Payne, 1977, p. 8). In 1926, a Kodak ad appeals to the idea of ownership and personalized images with the messaging:

*Certainly you can buy pictures—made by other people of the things that interest them—but they can never be yours in the same intimate way as your pictures made with your ‘Kodak.’ ‘Kodak’ pictures are your own—your personal records of your own friends, your own “kiddies,” your own home, and your own rambles and your own holidays. (Wells, 2010, p 145)*

Liz Wells describes the feat of “capturing” holidays and exotic milieus on film as the “domestication of the unfamiliar”. She writes, “A site is not a sight until we’ve snapped it and made it ours, often by placing a familiar face...in an unfamiliar place” (p. 150). In this way, landscape acts as a backdrop for the performance of the subject. Referring to Erving Goffman’s concept of the presentation of self, Jonas Larsen, scholar of social geography, presents the perspective of landscape as a “stage”. Describing embodied performance, he notes that “places are not only or primarily visited for their immanent attributes but are also, and more centrally woven into the webs of stories and narratives people produce when they sustain and construct their social identities” (Larsen 2005, p. 416–434).

Korean-Canadian artist Jin-Me Yoon examines identity and tourist photography in her series *Souvenirs of the Self* (1991–2000). In the image *Rocky Mountain Road Trip*, Yoon poses as part of a group of tourists in front of a tour bus in Banff, Alberta. The group is arranged for a picture, each individual appearing happily frozen in a moment of laughter or performative grinning, with the exception of the artist. Yoon gazes at the camera with an expression seen in JK Keller’s “neutral” portraits, and an intent stare reminiscent of Claude Cahun’s defiant characters. On the placard of the tour bus appears the message, “Have a Nice Day.” Describing the process of constructing identity, Joanne Finkelstein

writes, “We position ourselves in certain situations as we might an object, thus we learn the constraints of circumstances and the versatility of our own performances” (2007, p. 109). Juxtaposing Yoon’s performance with that of the enthusiastic group works to visually isolate her as a subject and destabilize the construction of an otherwise archetypal vacation photograph.

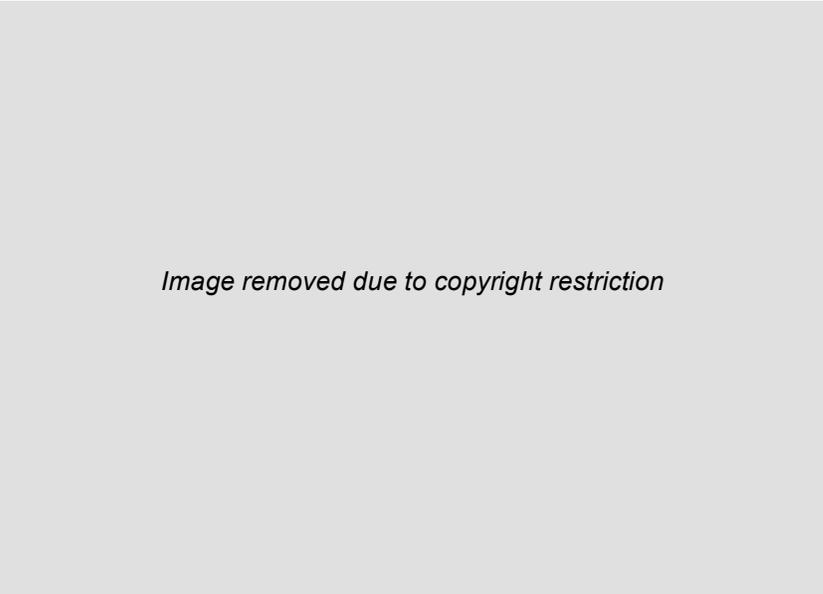
### 5.3.3 Constructs and Captures

*In the topography of the suburbs is revealed the topography of the family, the development, a network of social relations and their articulated absences. To walk in the suburbs is to announce a crippling, a renunciation of speed. In the suburbs only outsiders walk, while the houses are illuminated as stages, scenes of an uncertain actions.*

~Susan Steward, *On Longing*, 1993, p. 2

In the late 1970’s, artist Tina Barney began photographing her family and friends. Her images illustrate the lives of upper class American society in the confines of private spaces. All known to her, the subjects of Barney’s pictures are captured in instances rarely chosen for family photos. Rather than the conventionally positive performances practiced by those in the public eye, her subjects are in situations of rest, preoccupation, or transition. The tableaux of the series *Friends and Relatives* sometimes include one or more subjects looking at the camera, however most of those photographed seem otherwise engaged: directing children, debating with spouses, preparing food, or simply yawning. Barney describes her process as often “half impromptu and half planned” (p. 6 Barney, 1991, p. 3). Sometimes there is an amount of deliberate set dressing or instruction; however, often a composition is made by positioning her camera at a certain vantage point within a spontaneous family situation. The result of this

process is that many of Barney's images read as candid, with family members oblivious or indifferent to the camera. In *The Sunday New York Times* (1982), the weekend paper is divvied up and scattered across a kitchen table. Several individuals sit examining their portions of the paper while others tend to children or look on from the kitchen counter. Furthest from the lens, a woman holding a baby to her hip is the only one looking towards the camera. Her expression registers an air of irritation. Barney has responded to comments about the dispassionate nature of her characters, stating, "when people say that there is a distance, a stiffness in my photographs, that the people look like they do not connect, my answer is, that is the best we can do. This inability to show physical affection is in our heritage" (Barney and Grundberg, 1997, p. 10).



*Image removed due to copyright restriction*

**Figure 28.** Tina Barney, *Sunday New York Times*, 1982. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In another work from the series, *The Conversation* (1987), a man sits on steps between two rooms. Elbows on knees, he has the tan of a tennis player in white shorts and gelled blond hair. He is talking with a young woman standing in the foreground who could be his daughter. His face is frozen bizarrely mid-speech — mouth open, eyes shut. The young woman in the foreground looks down at her hands fussing with a sweater she is holding as if avoiding his gaze. Just behind the man, another woman can be seen approaching. Equally tan and clothed in white and peach, she could be the mother in this speculated equation. Her face is cropped above the nose so that only her open mouth offers a clue to her facial expression. Her hands are raised, palms open to the dispute as though trying to calm or stop the situation. The configuration of subjects positions the viewer a fourth member of the conversation. The spectator becomes an unseen infiltrator in the well-appointed home, a voyeur of those seemingly trivial, yet revealing everyday moments that are quickly forgotten by those who live them.

In contrast to Barney's smartly dressed relatives and comfortable decor, British artist Richard Billingham presents a family photo album of poverty, melancholy and violence. In his book *Ray's a Laugh* (1996), Billingham assembles a visual study of his father Raymond, a chronic alcoholic, his mother Elizabeth, a heavy woman with tattoos adorning her forearms, and his adolescent brother Jason who recently returned to live with the family after several years in foster care. In Billingham's images, his parents eat dinner off messily assembled plates balancing on their laps; they tend to their mutual

wounds in what looks like the aftermath of a fight; they fervently embrace, snorting and smoking. Portraits of his father show the man collapsed in a soiled bathroom, laughing hysterically, falling, or throwing the family cat across the room. Billingham's mother is seen working to complete a puzzle in a colourful muumuu, or smoking and gazing out the window. The family pets eat the spills off the floor or claw at each other in the hall. Throughout the book, images of songbirds and ducks provide relief from the claustrophobic interiors and close-ups of Billingham's disheartening relatives. The images feel as candid as Barney's, if not more so in their intimate content and grainy production. The viewer becomes one of the captives in the home, privy to documents revealing destructive behaviour certainly not illustrated in conventional family photography. "Kodak's advertising purged domestic photography of all traces of sorrow and death," writes Nancy Martha West in her book, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (2000, p. 1). Billingham's images offer no such filter.

*Image removed due to copyright restriction*

**Figure 29. Richard Billingham, *Untitled (Ray's a Laugh 6)*, 1995. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Reprinted in *Ray's a Laugh*, Billingham, R. (1996). Zurich: Scalo Publishing.**

The outwardly candid performances depicted in Barney's and Billingham's work is exchanged for static poses and uneasy grins in Annette Merrild's series, *Tourists* (2003). Featuring the artist and her husband as subjects, the photographs show the couple posing at various tourist attractions along the Pacific Coast of South America. In each image, Merrild is pictured holding a time-release trigger for the camera, implying the couple, perhaps documenting themselves with the aid of a tripod, has control over the act of photography. In Machu Picchu, Peru, the two appear with echoing walking sticks, fleece sweaters and cargo pants, standing on an elevated point with the ancient Incan city providing a backdrop. The grass is worn away in the area under their feet, implying the hill may serve as a popular stage for picture-takers. The facial expressions of the subjects are ambiguous. Each with a closed mouth and pale

eyes, the subjects present little indication of the cheery exuberance expected by conventional tourist photography. In her essay *Why We Say "Cheese": Producing the Smile in Snapshot Photography* (2005), researcher of communication Christina Kotchemidova comments that in the contemporary conventions of personal photography:

*The smile just sits in the visuals, taken for granted. It is assumed. In a McLuhanesque sense, it was internalized by the public as part of the informational environment of the technology that produced it. (p. 14)*

While first appearing as typical vacation shots, the images in *Tourists* use details in staging and performance to disrupt the spectators' assumptions. The activity of tourist photography and the documentation of travel experiences are made awkward, unnatural. The images form a narrative, "a dialect between what was expected and what came to pass" (Bruner, 2002. p. 31)

## **5.4 Conclusion**

Beginning in the early twentieth century, Kodak's campaigns for amateur photography push the function of images as narrative and mnemonic devices. With her Kodak camera, mother is able to freeze her child in youth, preserve family moments in happy smiles, and capture scenic vistas waiting just around the bend of the highway. Concepts such as Freud's *Mystic Writing-pad* and Barthes' *punctum* offer support for the potential of images as triggers for memories, while cultural theorists like Susan Sontag and David Bates question the accuracy of such memories and identify the photograph's ability to alter or replace what Freud would call "natural memory." Artist Doug Muir offers new

perspectives on images from his childhood, demonstrating the potential influence of time and the fluid nature of memory.

An investigation of the use of images in the home suggests that family photography is used to build narratives of group cohesion, contentment, and belonging. David Halle comments on family photographs chosen for display in the home, stating they “allow us to trace changing conceptions of the meaning of life” (Halle, 1991). The visual narratives of photographs chosen for exhibition in private space or in printed and digital albums can be analysed as representations of cultural and personal values carefully selected for preservation in collective and individual memory.

Choosing to document and construct moments predominately excluded from the photography of family albums, artists Tina Barney and Richard Billingham reveal instances of conflict, restlessness, and melancholy in the private sphere. Focusing her investigation outside the domestic experience, Annette Merrild plays with the formulaic nature of vacation photography and the performance of tourists in the production of travel ‘memories’. Described in the next chapter, the project *Waves* incorporates these ideas to present the transformation of an idyllic photograph into an animation of reminiscence. A couple’s picture-perfect performance is ruptured as memory is projected onto the image, bringing it to life

## 6: WAVES: A PROJECT ON MEMORY

### 6.1 Introduction: The Way We Were

*The making of snapshots and family albums ... can be treated as the construction of a symbolic world. This world of representation both reflects and promotes a particular look at life, a preferred version of life that will outlive us all.*

~ Richard Chalfen, 1998, p. 214



**Figure 30. Members of the Ashenhurst family, Mississauga, Ontario, 1965 (approx.).**

After my grandfather passed away in 2009, we hung around my aunt and uncle's home, looking through old photographs. In the assortment, I came across a marred snapshot I had never seen before. In the image, adolescent versions of my father and his two sisters pose for the camera. I was compelled to squirrel the photograph away in my luggage, safely tucked in the pages of a paperback. I am

not sure exactly why I feel such fondness towards the image, but I suspect it has something to do with my father's satirical expression. Upon returning home to Vancouver, I decided to make inquiries. I sent a digital copy to my relatives, asking them to share what they remembered about the photograph. While their responses were not contradictory, they were diverse. My uncle remembered that he took the photo of his siblings on his new Swinger camera. My aunt, pictured on the left in figure 30, thought it was taken at Christmas in 1965. Referring to her late sister on the right of my father, she wrote, "Charlie was big into Bob Dylan. She was home from University. This is a very rare photo as we were seldom together in our teens. We all had busy social lives." She went on to imagine the rest of the house, "Mom would be upstairs cooking dinner and Dad would be in his chair in the living room, reading the paper. A very 'Beaver Cleaver' type of family scene." She speculated on each subject's activities later in the evening, commenting, "I might go to my friend Valerie's house. Or Kellie (now Smith, then Bride) would come down and we'd put on some records, most likely the Beatles, and dance around in the den." My father thought it was taken earlier, 1961 or '63. He wrote:

I don't know who took the picture or why I'm trying to look tough, all 105 pounds of me, but I recognize the rec-room in the basement at Bramsey Drive and I even remember the hat Charlie is wearing...and the lamp on top of the TV (expensive '50's plastic), and the curtains over the windows ... I had just started smoking or was about to start.

With his aptitude for mathematics, it did not surprise me that my father remembered numerical facts. He included the number of residents in the town, of kids living on their street (60!), the digits of his post office box and the home

phone number, the cost of a 9-hole golf game, the hourly wage of his babysitting job and his paper route. His description of the neighbourhood mapped it out in blocks so that one could easily draw a rough map of the area.

Overall, participants described the period of time in which they thought the photograph was taken in a very positive light. My father wrote, “It was a time of great freedom for all of us. We were all mobile, we all had bicycles ... Parents didn’t ask and we didn’t tell them where we were going, who we were with, or when we might be coming home.” Californian artist Larry Sultan, who photographed his parents posed in subversive representations of ‘the American Dream,’ claims he was first inspired by the discovery of a box of home movies. Of the films, he explained, “They were remarkable, more like a record of hopes and fantasies than of actual events. It was as if my parents had projected their dreams onto film emulsion” (1992, p. 18). In *Waves*, sound and motion are the undoing of a sunny snapshot. Set in motion, the dream unfolds into complexities.

## **6.2 Description**

In *Waves*, a photograph comes to life to make manifest a tangent of memory. Growing from a single constructed image, an imagined narrative points to the performative tendencies of subjects in front of the camera and the transformation of an instant into a “cherished moment.” Sound is employed to create a more vivid, engaging experience for the viewer. As the photo shifts into stilted frames of video, an idyllic scene unravels. The figures become animated through additional images fading and blending into one another to build clumsy action. The subjects seem to argue, make-up and perhaps go their separate

ways. Fragments of a speculated soundscape and the appearance of elements of industry further complicate the initially pleasant composition.

*Waves* was displayed as an installation in the gallery show of the 2010 International Digital Media Arts Association Conference, IDEAS10: Art and Digital Narrative, at Emily Carr University in Vancouver. The footage from *Waves* can also be viewed as video posted on Vimeo.com. In the gallery space, the project uses an Apple iPad disguised in a white wooden frame and mounted on the wall as one might a photograph in the home. The 2 minutes of footage loops indefinitely.

### 6.2.1 The Happy Couple



Figure 31. Opening frame of *Waves* (2010).

In the initial image, a couple smiles for the camera before a blue-washed background of water, mountains and sky. With the man's arm resting across the woman's back and their bodies slightly inclined towards one another, the couple's pose implies a personal relationship and an acknowledged social unity. They take up approximately a sixth of the image, with mountains dividing the folds of water from the expanse of clear sky occupying the upper half of the frame. Lacking the details required to situate it in a specific location, the landscape reads as nonspecific: the bank of a river, or a ridge looking out to the ocean? It appears depopulated, vacant of industry or interference. Between the sun highlighting the features of the subjects and a calm breeze lifting the edge of the man's shirt, the image reads with the serenity of a painting made *en plein air*.

### 6.2.2 The Turn

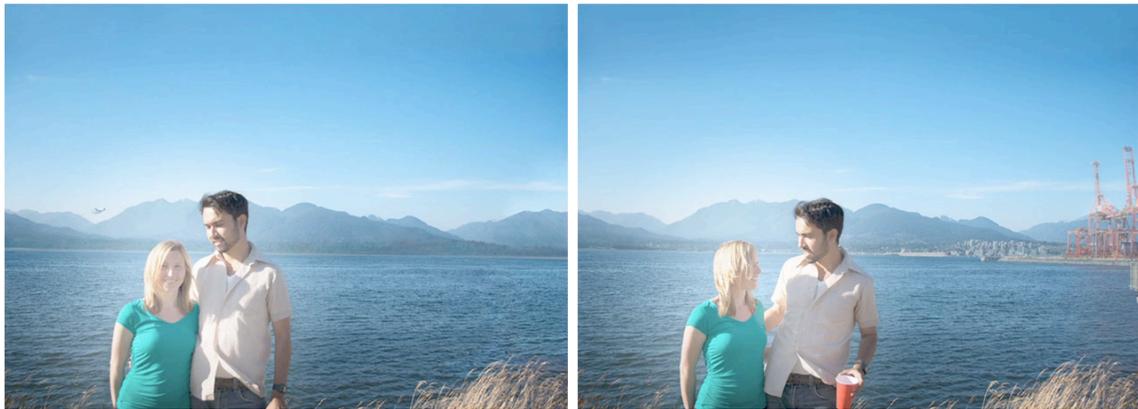


Figure 32. Frames at 00:27 and 00:33 seconds into *Waves* (2010).

There is no sound or movement for the first 10 seconds of footage, allowing the viewer to investigate this visual. When there is a shift towards animation, it appears in the form of a distant seagull crossing the sky. As the

white smudge appears and fades in increments across the horizontal, the sounds of waves lapping against a shore and the chortling of gulls rise from the silence. As if cued by the new noise of a sudden wind, the figure of the man turns his attention towards his companion. His movement is not fluid, but rather the replacement of one still image by another. Traces of his former pose form an aura for an instant while his new position takes hold. He has a red plastic cup in his hand. Are they at a party or picnic? A helicopter lands on the far bank behind the couple.

### 6.2.3 The Fight



Figure 33. Frames at 00:47 and 00:57 seconds into *Waves* (2010).

Transitioning with the same stilted motion, the man moves to confront the woman, twisting his body to face her. She turns her head away from the camera to look at him, as sounds of children playing and people talking is added to the audio. He regards her disapprovingly. At the right edge of the frame, a large industrial shipping crane can be seen fading into the landscape. Seeming to find the man's comment absurd, the woman rears her head in laughter. There is the

sound of a boat motor starting up in the background. The couple displays the motions of an argument, increasing their physical distance from one another as the soundscape continues to increase in volume. In a moment of calm, the man and woman look away from one another towards frustrated contemplation, however tension continues to rise with the subtle appearance of a large barge of freights at the loading dock in the distance. The noises of a hydraulic lift acts as punctuation when the woman's arm extends her arm to shove the man in anger. Motors rev and birds screech. A cruise ship approaches from the left of the frame.



**Figure 34. Frame at 01:01 of *Waves* (2010).**

## 6.2.4 Forgiveness



**Figure 35. Frames at 01:10 and 01:15 of *Waves* (2010).**

The figures appear to stew in their thoughts. The auditory activity diminishes, leaving the calmer sounds of water and children at play. Moving again towards one another, each holding a plastic cup, they seem to confer. Postures change, signalling flirtation. The cruise ship, barge and crane begin to retreat into the initial depopulated landscape. Only the sound of water remains as the man and woman embrace before the backdrop of untouched nature.



Figure 36. Frame at 01:21 of *Waves* (2010).

### 6.2.5 Banality



Figure 37. Frames at 01:31 and 01:46 of *Waves* (2010).

Slowly shifting to appear standing apart, the figures withdraw back into their own thoughts. The woman regards the remains of her beverage before drinking it down. The man gazes towards the horizon. The vibrancy of the image increases, and the tones darken with the sound of wind rustling through long grass.

### 6.2.6 Departure



Figure 38. Frames at 01:55 and 01:59 of *Waves* (2010).

The man's position transitions, his body turned away from the woman towards the right edge of the frame. The sound of footsteps crunching through dry grass can be heard as his figure fades into the background. Now alone in the visual, the woman looks on in his wake with an expression of apprehension reminiscent of the characters in Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–1980). Colours lighten and mute back to match the initial image of the sequence. The woman's downturned gaze is left in silence.



**Figure 39. Frame at 02:06 of *Waves* (2010).**

### **6.2.7 Rinse and Repeat**

The silence remains, but as the footage reaches its final seconds, the figure of the man reappears beside the woman. The image is restored to its initial composition. The couple smiles for the camera in front of the tranquil environment, uncluttered by industry. In several seconds, a small bird makes its way across the sky. The footage has started again, caught in a fated loop.



Figure 40. Frames at 02:09 and 02:14 of *Waves* (2010).

### 6.3 Discussion

*Things separate from their stories have no meaning. They are only shapes. Of a certain size and color. A certain weight. When their meaning has become lost to us they no longer have even a name. The story on the other hand can never be lost from its place in the world for it is that place. And that is what was to be found here. The corrido. The tale.*

~ Cormac McCarthy, *The Crossing*, 1994, p. 142

“Okay, now go to hit him,” I instruct from behind the camera. We are set up at Crab Park on Vancouver’s Eastside, and I have just refilled the red plastic cups of my gracious friends with lukewarm Rosé. While my volunteer models have been dating for several months, they are not naturally inclined towards extravagant displays of affection, much less physical assault. The park is located across the Burrard Inlet from the picturesque North Shore Mountains, but its shoreline hosts several monuments of industry including the international shipping docks. Although a distasteful venue for the scantily clad volleyball games practiced on Westside sands, it is undeniably pleasant on a sunny July day. The beach’s proximity to the Downtown Eastside appeals to visitors ranging from condo-dwelling hipsters to some of the city’s poorest. Adjacent to train

tracks, the usual soundscape offers little retreat from urbanity. I have chosen this location because it offers a plethora of elements to be edited *out*.

The footage in *Waves* was built from a series of still photographs taken with a Nikon D60 digital SLR camera. The initial image was reimagined using Photoshop to create a landscape void of industrial interference. Much as tourists might frame snapshots of baroque castles or medieval churches to exclude the contemporary chaos of power lines, traffic, or crowds, the initial image in *Waves* represents an idealized experience. Unfortunately, the serenity cannot be maintained. As the static image becomes unstable, layers of audio are added to the visual. The video progresses with sounds typically considered soothing: waves, wind, and birdcalls, interrupted by the offending noises of machinery.

For the subjects pictured in *Waves*, the setting is unstable. As tempers flare, the background becomes muddled with undesirable signs of human presence, visually evolving to reflect varying emotions and performances. The relationship of the subjects can be understood through Edward Hall's discussion of proxemics. In the initial image, the members of the couple have posed at an "intimate distance" where, if they were to look at one another, they could each only see the face or head of the other person (1966, p. 114). As they break their peaceful performances, they move to a "far personal distance" where each can observe the entire torso of the other person in their frames of vision. When the male subject makes his way out of the frame, he transitions from a personal to a social distance. We are left to imagine his continued path observed by the female

subject where he would appear at a “public distance,” his figure growing smaller with his departure.

The general colour treatment of the imagery is intended to reference that found in modern snapshot photography; however, a lightening of values around the figures offers the subtle hint of a theatrical spotlight. In the section of footage categorized in my description as “banality”, the vibrancy of the image changes to what communication researchers Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen have outlined as “high sensory modality.” The image displays “highly saturated colours naturalistically (1966, p. 256). This slight amplification of sensory modality is an attempt to imply a more vivid aspect of the memory.

In the case of a viewer reading the image as typical vacation photography, the shifting features of the environment and unbecoming performances of the subjects may create a sense of unease. As discussed in Chapter 5, the cultural convention of a photograph coded in such a way is that it was composed with the intention of conveying “significance to what is shown, and of satisfying certain expectations of people who will view the pictures at a later time” (Chalfen, 1987). Photographs framed and displayed become formal, autobiographical accounts used to enforce a positive social self, however, “less perhaps of the idiosyncratic aspects of the individual, autonomous self, and more of the conforming, corporate-family self” (Chalfen, 1987, p. 124). After the initial image, the performances in *Waves* are not “suitable for framing”. The reveal too much.

As described by Annette Kuhn, the studies of Martha Langford on family photo albums indicate the narrative quality of images seduces even those without

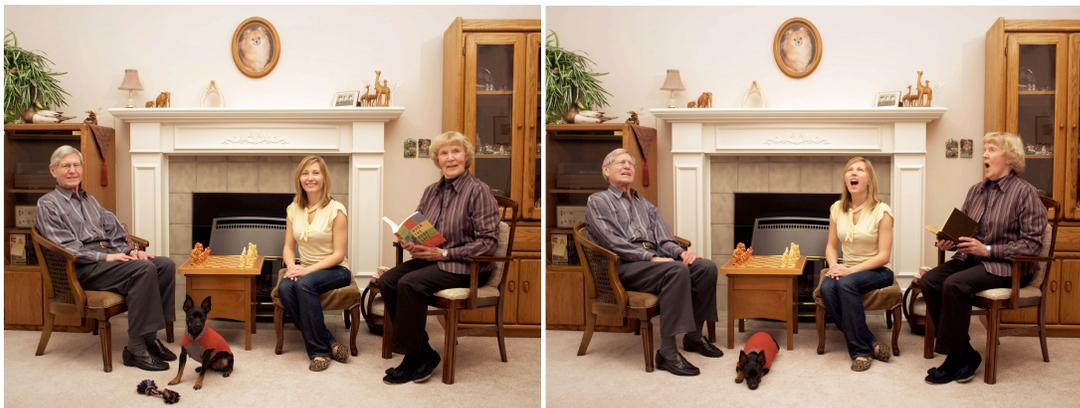
personal knowledge of the photographs to speculate on the relationships and situations pictured. After conducting viewings with both compilers of the albums and participants unfamiliar with the visual material, Langford noted, “even outsiders will weave stories around albums, stories which embody precisely the epic, anecdotal quality that marks the memory text” (Kuhn, 2007, 285; Langford, 2001, 175). For the viewers of *Waves*, the unexpected alterations to the visual relationships in the once mundanely pleasant photograph may disrupt their own speculation and make formal fame begin to feel awkward. The viewer’s role as an outsider and casual spectator is recast as video illustrates the photographs as “lively shadows” (Goffman, 1974, p. 161). Watching the footage, viewers may have the sensation that they have become privy to the memories of an imagined subject who is observing the image with lived experience of that moment in time. It is unclear if the footage is intended to represent specific events that took place in the minutes after the photograph was taken, or a general impression of the complexity of the couple’s relationship. The repetition of the footage leaves the viewer to wonder if the subjects actually part ways or if the narrative is an abstraction of continuous turbulence. Commenting on the process of interpreting photography, Annette Kuhn and Kristin Emiko McAllister (2006) have written:

*The very nature of photography as a medium disrupts the possibility of asserting a final and single Truth... The temporal disjuncture between the moment when the photograph was taken and subsequent moments when it is viewed, entails recognition of, at the very least, two different points of view: that of the photographer and that of the viewer. (p. 15)*

With each loop of *Waves*, the viewer is perpetually led to wonder if the image of the calm and smiling couple will be re-established and then perhaps, if it will last.

### 6.3.1 Reflection

Walter Benjamin explained the concept of a photograph's aura in terms of the perception and experience of the viewer in his essay, *One-Way Street* (1928). He describes the aura as, "a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be" (p.250). In its installation, *Waves* is loaded with oddity. Even in its initial stillness, the illumination of the image betrays its potential for animation. The project was inspired by an earlier interactive installation I worked on in the winter of 2009. Made in collaboration with Kristin Carlson, the project *Distancing* used a large-scale projection of an image resembling a family photograph. By entering into close proximity with the projection, the viewer could trigger the animation of the image and become a participant in the installation. As the image reveals itself as a video, subtle changes in content occur. Expressions fade and shift, forcing the participant to rebuild any speculative narrative they develop to explain the visual content. By changing their distance from the screen, the participant is able to move through the series of images, exploring alternate truths and constructions.



**Figure 41. Stills from *Distancing* (2009).**

In *Waves*, the narrative loop endures outside the viewer's control. Although I am satisfied with the automation of the footage, using the iPad to facilitate its presentation placed tight limitations on the size at which it was displayed. In future incarnations, I would like to play with scale and multiple screens hung salon-style. Following a similar pattern of motion and play between static and fluid imagery, additional videos could be displayed in close proximity, allowing their content to be interwoven to form new narratives and provide additional perspectives. Surrounding the smiling couple could hang: a portrait of the man as a child, a large cat basking on a porch, or a girl in front of the Eiffel tower. Any of these routinely pleasant images could act as animated comments, the subjects exchanging glances between their frames as the couple begins to quarrel. An intention of *Waves* and any additional imagery is to imply narrative without asserting a single perspective. In this way, the project mimics the uncertainty of memory mediated through photographs. Due to the mediation of comprehension by a visual, "the photograph evades the closure of complete(d) knowledge" (McAllister, 2006, p. 15). Much like memory, interpretation is fluid, arching forward and folding back on itself.

## **6.4 Summary**

To remember is to give meaning to personal experience. Over time, the natures of memories change as they fall subject to the filter of perspective, new information, and the process of forgetting. Photographs become documentation,

creating a sense that the details of an experience are fixed and knowable. David Bate writes, “as with human memory, we can no longer verify the original experience or sensation of the photograph, but the image provides a scene in which we may bring voluntary (*studium*) or involuntary (*punctum*) memories to bear upon it” (2010, p. 254). In *Waves*, shadows of memory lead the viewer through the story of a relationship. Sound and motion are used to divulge additional narration around a typically idyllic photograph. A smiling couple in a nondescript “natural” landscape, shift through annoyance, anger, contemplation, negotiation, forgiveness, reconsideration, and abandonment before finding themselves frozen again in their initial poses. The once tranquil, depopulated landscape mirrors the couple’s turmoil, adding it’s own tensions of industry and tourism to the restless imagery.

Still photographs may fail to provide accurate records of lived experience and even act to mislead the spectator; however, images do offer a focus for the spectator’s thoughts and projections. They present a space for contemplation and a starting point for the process of performing memory and storytelling. Portraits, family photographs, and vacation pictures build a sense of identity for the subject and their chosen audiences. Through a process of remembering, the subject is able to create her own narrative, a story of the self to be maintained and shared. In Chapter 7, I will consider the appeal of such stories and how contemporary technology allows for the creation and sharing of visual narratives to transpire at thrilling speeds.

## 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

*Fragmented views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a separate pseudo-world that can only be looked at.*

~ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 1967, p. 2

I am at a desk on the third floor of the Vancouver Public Library's central branch. The building is a monstrosity of Roman-inspired architecture with the 6 floors of the library stacked beside a covered concourse of commercial shops. Workstations pressed up against full-length windows tempt procrastinating readers and writers with views of the people passing through the mall below. Habitually turning my attention from the task at hand (coincidentally, the writing of this thesis), I stare off at teenagers consuming greasy pizza and English tutors gesturing expressively. Today is especially active. It is June 15, 2011 and the Vancouver Canucks are playing the Boston Bruins in the 7<sup>th</sup> game of the Stanley Cup Finals. The city is feverous with an excitement lacking since Vancouver hosted the Olympics in 2010. For days, blue and green hockey jerseys, flags, face paint, and short shorts baring the first signs of summer flesh have brightened the streets as visual reminders of a shared interest. Facebook displays images staged in sports bars and street parties showing subjects presenting spirited support for "our boys," the home team.

Aired during play-off games, a television commercial advertising the Canon Rebel digital SLR features a mother diligently capturing her son's hockey moves with her camera. She is depicted engaged in the activity of

documentation, madly shooting from the bleachers as he plays in a game. In the next scene, she presents him with the evidence of her efforts in the camera screen, seeking validation. The messaging of the commercial could easily belong to Kodak's 1930's campaign "Let Kodak keep the story" discussed in Chapter 5. In his study of photographic habits, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu observed, "Nothing may be photographed apart from that which must be photographed. The ceremony may be photographed because it is outside of the daily routine, and must be photographed because it realizes the image that the group seeks to give of itself as a group" (1965, p. 24). Likely the next step for Canon's fictional mother would be to post the images of her talented son to her Flickr account, plaguing relatives with digital evidence of his (and indirectly, her) accomplishments.

Once the Canucks made it to the Finals, large screens are setup in the downtown core beside the Canadian Broadcasting Centre. These screens allow fans to watch the action live, *en masse*. In an attempt to keep the viewing area secure, fans are channelled into fenced-off zones through checkpoints where their bags are searched for weapons and liquor. One such checkpoint is positioned adjacent to the North entrance to the Library building, creating a growing parade of jersey-clad bodies cutting through the concourse from the South door to avoid longer lines. From behind the fish tank glass of the Library windows, I observe groupings of fans flailing Canucks flags affixed to hockey sticks, sprinting for the opposing entrance powered by concentrated alcohol consumption, or getting distracted in the concourse by the offering of public

toilets and cheap food. An elderly gentleman works on a crossword puzzle from his usual seat at the coffee shop, looking up only to shoot condemning glances at a girl with a shirt featuring the disembodied heads of the Canuck's Sedin twins, Henrik and Daniel, positioned over each breast.

A group of girls in jerseys assemble themselves for a photograph. As the photographer counts down, the two subjects jump in unison. They land in giggles and rush over to examine the image in the camera's screen. It is 4:15 pm, 45 minutes to game time.



**Figure 42. Canucks fans take pictures at the central branch of the Vancouver Public Library, June 15, 2011.**

Later that evening, photographic activities increase. At home, we stand on the balcony watching the smoke from the car fires burning several blocks away before shutting the windows to keep out the stench of combustion. On television, a newscaster is moving through the rioting hordes, which started soon after the

Canuck's lost to Boston, 0 - 4. Behind him, jubilant young men pose for photographs in front of burning police cars and battered department stores. The crowd conspires with Smartphones and professional SLR cameras, documenting the live destruction and capturing portraits against the apocalyptic backdrop of the city. As the damage continues, the act of photography runs parallel to the vandalism, each endeavour seeming to feed the other. During this "timeout" from social norms, many performers seem oblivious to the potential for the video and photographs being taken around them to function as shameful evidence in the aftermath. Soon an interactive map is set up on Flickr.com, "match[ing] the photos that people uploaded during and after the riot with specific locations in downtown Vancouver, identifying a cluster of rioting activity" (Talmazan, 2011).

The next day, the Vancouver Police Department asks for footage and images of rioters to be emailed or posted to their Facebook site titled "Vancouver Riot Pics: Post Your Photos". Those images will be used to identify individuals taking part in destructive behaviour. The sites are flooded with responses. Perhaps the impromptu photojournalists who acted as hungry observers the night before are attempting to make up for their own involvement in the spectacle? Dr. Stuart Poyntz, a Professor at Simon Fraser University's School of Communications, is quoted in the *Surrey Now* newspaper commenting on the tremendous presence of cameras at the riots as creating a "peculiar stage". "I think cameras accelerate the intensity, and in this case, the violence that was on display," he ventures, adding, "Cameras have changed the way we perform to

each other” (Zytaruk, 2011). On the many incriminating images and Facebook status updates rioters posted during the action, he observes:

*Social media is such an extension of ourselves these days, especially for young people, that wreaking havoc and then tweeting about it immediately are part of one and the same performance.*

For the camera-wielding participants in Vancouver’s riot, the event became an opportunity to engage with the two key concepts discussed in this thesis: building identity and constructing memory. In some cases, photographers evoked the defence of passivity, claiming they were “just there” or “*only* taking pictures.” However, for many the lure of the spectacle and the sensation of capturing the action kept them drifting in the hordes long after police efforts were made to encourage disbanding. Is the delusion that an unusual photo opportunity justifies contributing to a climate of chaos — or the activity of documentation exempts the photographer from any moral obligation to interfere with unfolding events — perpetuated by the accessibility and structure of social media?

Particularly when considering subjects engaged in the dramatic social dynamics of youth, the ability to create images positioning the self in what appears to be a historically relevant event seems too tempting to pass up. Images from the riots show subjects conjuring poses, grins and hand gestures conventionally suited for festive social gatherings. In the video footage from news teams and amateur videographers taken during the initial hours of the riot, the abundance of posing for photographs is evident as subjects are shown vying for the ultimate backdrop: a couple freezes in a sideways embrace before a burning police car much as they might on the balcony of a cruise ship; a man poses

theatrically on the roof of a battered Volkswagen flaunting a hockey stick above his head like a hunter mocking his kill; a breakdancer strikes a precarious toe balance in front of a row of heavily armoured police while his friend snaps his portrait. Subjects interpreted the space as a rare set against which they could cast themselves as mischievous, exciting characters in the thick of the action. The urge to create documents of memory from the riot mirrored that of tourists on vacation. The riot was exotic and foreign, a marker of the relevance and breadth of the subject's experience. At the time, it seemed a good story to collect for the memoirs.

In the days following the raucous evening of June 15, 2011, the images and text produced during this vacation from social responsibility would quickly transform from personal documents of experience into public evidence of deviance. One young man calling himself Brock Anton was said to have updated his status with the extreme description, "Maced in the face, hit with a baton, tear gases twice, 6 broken fingers, blood everywhere ...flipped some cop cars, I'm on the news ... one word ... history:) :) :)." The posting disappeared after a friend commented, "Brockkk! Take this down!!! It's evidence!" (Wente, 2010, p. F9). After he was identified on Facebook, photographs of 17-year-old Nathan Kotylak showing the water polo champion appearing to hold a flaming shirt to the gas tank of a police car graced the front pages of several Vancouver news sources (CTVBC.ca, 2011). The teenager then appeared on video in a very different performance, as he tearfully apologized for his behaviour. His confession was one of several from rioters who found themselves newly repentant after being

identified in photographic 'evidence'. While the media produced and disseminated Kotylak's apology, less prestigious vandals turned to their familiar abettors, Facebook and Youtube, to propagate their performative attempts at constructing sympathetic identities.

## **7.1 Little Narratives**

In the mid-1990's, Mark Poster described the World Wide Web as a host for "little narratives". In line with the design of a postmodern society, Poster stated, "the Internet seems to encourage the proliferation of stories, local narratives without any totalizing gestures and it places senders and addressees in symmetrical relations" (1995, p. 23). Over a decade later, social media has made the development and maintenance of personal narratives a daily activity for many. While consumer culture emphasizes the importance of the individual through services and products geared towards self-improvement, the Internet provides the ability for a person to act as a brand. The beliefs and values of the brand are enforced through the constant generation of words and images. Liz Wells writes of the modernization of society since the Industrial Revolution, commenting, "The twentieth-century consumer-led economy has shifted these new individuals away from a culture based on work and self-discipline to one based on libidinous gratification which encourages us all to identify our pleasures in order to develop and refine them" (2010, p. 123). Online profiles ask users to list their "likes", "interests", and choices of various entertainments. These factors are integrated into the concept of a user's identity. Much like a traditional marketing campaign or the building of a cult, a poorly managed Twitter feed may

result in decreased “followers”. Sites such as Facebook or MySpace act as contemporary promenades with conventions mirroring those of late eighteenth century Parisian bourgeoisie. Richard Sennett writes:

*People took each other's appearance in the street immensely seriously: they believed they could fathom the character of those they saw ... Finding out about a person from how he or she looked became, therefore, a matter of looking for clues in the details of his costume. (1976, p. 161)*

Sennett's description portrays the lively city centres of Europe as stages upon which individuals continuously practised being “somebody”. In contemporary society, the offering of virtual gifts, acknowledgements or salutations written on each other's pages, allows individuals to publicly reinforce social connections within the larger group. Online “friendship” is obtained through a standardized click-through process that may simply result in the viewing of another's page (comparable to people watching), rather than any written exchange.

Images play a prominent role in the construction of online identity. With the help of wireless networks, camera phones and social media sites, photos can be taken, posted, and viewed in minutes. These images have the opportunity to act as “tactics”, as described by Michel de Certeau, to individualize one's experience of the world (1984). Even with the increased access to photographic documentation through web searches or photo-sharing sites, upon finding herself in a sea of photographers, the individual often feels encouraged to reach for her camera. As Susan Sontag notes, “Nobody takes the same picture of the same thing”, so “photographs are evidence not only of what's there but of what an individual sees, not just a record but an evaluation of the world” (1978, p. 88). To

a similar effect, when interviewed about *Camera Lucida*, Barthes stated, “I’m not a partisan of realism in art, or a supporter of positivism in the social sciences. I would therefore say that the photographer bears witness essentially to his own subjectivity” (Schwarz and Mandery, 1980, p. 356). In the process of developing *At Arm’s Length*, I was able to analyse how subjectivity plays into the staging of a photograph, and how identity is constructed through the performance of the subject and the framing of experience (both conceptually and literally). Self-expression is matched by a sense of control over the depiction of the present and perhaps the memories built around the photograph in the future.

On a table in Urban Outfitters, a predictably hip clothing store chain, I came across a book titled *The Art of iPhoneography: A Guide to Mobile Creativity* (2011) by Stephanie C. Roberts. Shaped like a giant iPhone, the book proposes potential content and techniques for the amateur photographer or “iPhoneographer” as Roberts defines. In Chapter 4, titled “Shoot How You Feel”, Roberts suggests to keep your iPhone on you at all times so that you can “quickly make images to express who you are, what you're thinking, or how you're feeling as you move through your day” (p. 74). She urges the reader to think of “iPhoneography” as “visual journaling”, advising:

*Notice what attracts your eye as your mood shifts. Consider how you might express what's on your mind or in your heart, using life as your canvas. Scan your image library and see what it might reveal about the rhythm of your emotions over time. iPhoneography can help you document not only the moments around you, but the evolution of what's going on inside you. (p. 74)*

While the language chosen for the messaging is aimed at a youthful audience (perhaps of budding narcissists), the proposal is intriguing. Taking pictures allows one to document one's own inner "evolution"?

In both of the projects discussed in the previous chapters, an "evolution" of the subject and, more so, the viewer's understanding of the subject, has occurred by way of unravelling conventionally composed images. In *At Arm's Length*, the subject's performance in a series of self-portraits is complicated by the addition of wide shots, which reveal supplementary information about the circumstances surrounding the activity of picture-taking. Reflecting the findings of my collaborator and myself in our analysis of source images from our own collections, the subject's identity in the self-portraits of *At Arm's Length* is exposed as a fabrication created through performative experimentation and mediation of experience. In *Waves*, the still image comes to life through sequenced images, which divulge a convoluted relationship between the subjects pictured. As signs of frustration and commotion taint the idyllic scene, the viewer may speculate on visual narrative and contemplate the performance involved in producing documents of memory. In each project, photographs are positioned as constructions of visual narrative, while photography is suggested as a method of making meaning. Describing the function of personal photographs, Patricia Holland (1991) writes:

*Snapshots are part of the material with which we make sense of our wider world. They are objects that take their place amongst the other objects that are part of our personal and collective past, part of the detailed and concrete existence with which we gain some control over our surroundings and negotiate the particularity of our circumstances. Snapshots contribute to the present-day historical consciousness in which our awareness of ourselves is embedded. (p. 10)*

In highly documented situations like Vancouver's Stanley Cup riots, that "awareness of ourselves" becomes part of the collective memory of the city and haunts the identities of those individuals caught in pixels.

## **7.2 Future Work**

Amongst the video footage aired during CTV's coverage of the riots during the evening of June 15, one amateur photographer can be spotted kneeling by a car fire behind the news announcer. In the forefront, the announcer works to communicate the drama of the situation with a knitted brow. Behind him the young man holds his camera phone increasingly closer to the flames, watching them intently through the lens. Suddenly he snatches his hand from the fire and leaps away, as if surprised by its heat. Like many of those documenting the unusual properties of the riot, the differentiation between human tissue and the mechanism of the camera appears blurred. Before the moment the photographer sensed heat, he acted as a cyborg, the fire safely contained in the screen of his phone. The activity of mediation, the potential of documentation and promise of self-expression, are seductive.

In this research I have used many examples from my own experience. I have done this in order to broaden my own understanding since I learn best through what David Kolb would call a "concrete experience" (1984), but also as a way to provide entry points connecting readers to the concepts. At this time, the possibilities of digital photography and social media are just beginning to be

realized. In 1996, Jacques Derrida questioned the changing status of the mind in relation to the developing technologies of literal and visual documentation:

*Is the psychic apparatus better represented or is it affected differently by all the technical mechanisms for archivization and for reproduction, for prostheses of so-called live memory, for simulacrum of living things which are, and will increasingly be, more refined, complicated, powerful... (p. 15)*

Reported by Stephen Hui of the Georgia Straight newspaper, northStudio, a Victoria-based web development company, created an interactive video of the Vancouver riot. The video allows the user to view several crowded and fiery sections of street from above in 360 degrees, “Because we haven't seen Vancouver's rioting from enough angles” (Hui, 2011). In the *Art of Self Invention* (2007), Joanne Finkelstein writes:

*Technological innovation has secured a sense of mastery over the physical environment but, as well, this freedom to produce brings a fear of unfettered possibilities. Historians of the middle classes have suggested that with this new freedom comes a need to identify basic human capacities that provide a sense of stability. (p. 135)*

While developing this research into identity and memory, I grew interested in the process and pressures of maintaining online identity and social relationships based primarily on the exchange of text and images. Photos posted to Facebook become documents supporting an online identity; however, often the motivation to share those images is to elicit response and cultivate social connections. What happens when the constructed identity online becomes more appealing than the burdens of the physical body? With memories filtered through performance and portraits perfected in Photoshop, the online representation

provides increased agency and social engagement. In the example of the man photographing the fire, the distraction of gathering documentation lured him away from the present, rendering him oblivious to the danger of the very real, non-digital flames. I propose that the advancement and accessibility of digital media will continue to create new avenues of exploration into the mediation of subjective experience, constructions of collective memory, and the individual's communication of self in relation to contemporary culture. ■

## APPENDIX

The DVD, attached, forms a part of this work.

To view *At Arms Length*, open the index.html file in a web browser (requires Flash player 8 or higher). To view *Waves*, file can be opened with QuickTime or other media players.

### Data Files:

- At Arms Length folder
  - AC\_RunActiveContent.js 8 KB
  - At-arms-length.swf 636 KB
  - Index.html 192 KB
- Waves folder
  - Waves\_footage.mov 47 MB

## REFERENCE LIST

- Avedon, R. (1993). Quoted in Phelan, P., *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. (pp 35-36). New York: Routledge.
- Baldacchino, J. (2009). Opening the picture: On the political responsibility of arts-based research: A review essay. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 10(3), (pp. 2–15).
- Barney, T. (1987). *Sunday New York Times*.
- Barney, T. (1987). *The Conversation*.
- Barney, T. (1991). *Friends and relations*, (1st ed.). Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Barney, T. and Grundberg, A. (1997). *Tina Barney Photographs: Theater of Manners*. Zurich: Scalo Publishing.
- Barthes, R. (1982). *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York NY: Hill and Wang.
- Bate, D. (2010). The Memory of Photography, *Photographies*, (3:2, 243 – 257).
- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Benjamin, W. (1939). On Some Motifs in Baudelaire. In *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, London: Fontana/Harper Collins, 1973, p. 182 (first published in German in 1955).
- Benjamin, W. (1972). A Short History of Photography. *Screen*, 13(1), 5-26.
- Benjamin, W. (1969), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York, NY: Schocken Books.
- Benjamin, W. (1985). *One-way Street and Other Writings*. London: Verso.
- Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Billingham, R. (1996). *Ray's a Laugh*. Zurich: Scalo Publishing.
- Bolter, J. (2003). *Windows and mirrors : interaction design, digital art, and the myth of transparency*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

- Bourdieu, P. (1965: 1990). *Photography: A middle-brow Art*. Trans. Shaun Whiteside. Stanford, UK: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., et al. (1965). *Un art moyen: essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*. Paris: Minuit.
- Bruner, J. (2002). *Making Stories: Law, literature, Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burnett, R. (2004). *How Images Think*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press,
- Butler-Kisber, L. (2010). *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Informed Perspectives*. London: Sage.
- Butler, J. (1993), *Bodies that matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, London: Routledge.
- Cahun, C. (1928). *Untitled (Self-Portrait)*.
- Cahun, C. (1929). *Le Mystere d'Adam*.
- Cahun, C. (1929). *Que Me Veux-tu?: Double Self-Portrait*.
- Cahun, C. (March 1926), *Carnaval en chambre*. In *La Ligne de Coeur*, No. 4.
- Chalfen, R. (1987). *Snapshot Versions of Life*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press.
- Chalfen, R. (1998). Interpreting Family Photography as Pictorial Communication. In Jon Prosser (Eds.), *Image-based Research* (pp. 214-234). London: Falmer Press.
- Coe, B. and Gates, P. (1977) *The Snapshot Photograph: The Rise of Popular Photography 1888–1939*. London: Ash and Grant.
- Collins, D. (1990). *The Story of Kodak*. New York: Abrams.
- Collins, G. (February 1990). A Portraitist's Romp Through Art History. In *The New York Times* n. p. Web. <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/02/01/arts/a-portraitist-s-romp-through-art-history.html>
- Cornelius, R. (1839), *Self-Portrait*.
- Cronin, Ó. (1998). Psychology and Photographic Theory. In Jon Prosser (Eds.), *Image-based Research* (pp. 69-83). London: Falmer Press, Taylor & Francis Inc.
- CTVBC.ca (2011). Water Polo Star Accused in Riots Turns Himself In. In *CTV News*, British Columbia. June 15, 2011. Web. [http://www.ctvbc.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20110618/bc\\_polo\\_player\\_turns\\_himself\\_in\\_110618?hub=BritishColumbia](http://www.ctvbc.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20110618/bc_polo_player_turns_himself_in_110618?hub=BritishColumbia).

- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practices of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press,
- Debord, G. (1967). *Society of the Spectacle*. London: Rebel Press.
- Dennis, L. (1979). *How to Take Better Travel Photographs*. Tucson: Fisher Publishing Co.
- Derrida, J. (1996). *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Trans. Eric Prenowitz. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Finkelstein, J. (2007). *The Art of Self Invention : Image and identity in popular visual culture*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Ford, C. (1989). *The Story of Popular Photography*. Brandford: Century Hutchinson Ltd./National Museum of Photography, Film and Television.
- Frayling, C. (1993). Research in art and design, *Royal College of Art Research Papers* (1, p. 1-5). London: Royal College of Art.
- Freud, S. (1980: 1901). Childhood Memories and Screen Memories, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, p. 83–93. New York: Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Freud, S. (1984: 1925). The 'Mystic Writing-Pad' On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis. *11 Penguin*, ed., (p 427-433). New York: Penguin Harmondsworth.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Graves, K. and Payne, M. (1977). *American Snapshots*. Oakland, CA: The Scrimshaw Press).
- Greenough, S., & National Gallery of Art (U.S.). (2007). *The art of the American snapshot, 1888-1978*. Princeto, N.J. ;Woodstock: Princeton University Press.
- Grocott, L. (2003). Speculation, Serendipity and Studio Anybody. In B. Laurel (Ed.), *Design research : methods and perspectives* (p. 83-93). Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press.
- Gye, L. (June 2007). Picture This: the Impact of Mobile Camera Phones on Personal Photographic Practices. In *Continuum*, 21: 2 (279–288).
- Hall, E. (1966). *The Hidden Dimension*. New York: Doubleday
- Halle, D. (1996). *Inside Culture: Art and Class in the American Home* (1st ed.). University Of Chicago Press.

- Hamilton, P. and Hargreaves, R. (2001). *The Beautiful and the Damned: The creation of Identity in Nineteenth Century Photography*. Hampshire UK: Lund Humphries,
- Harari, R. (2004). *Lacan's four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis: an introduction*. New York: Other Press.
- Harper, D. (1998). An Argument for Visual Sociology. In *Image-based Research*. Ed. Jon Prosser. London: Falmer Press, Taylor & Francis Inc. (pp. 24-41).
- Hirsch, M. (1997). *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Holland, P. (1991). Introduction: History, Memory and the Family Album. In *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography*. (pp. 1-14), Eds. Jo Spence and Patricia Holland. London: Virago Press
- Hui, S. (June 22, 2011). Vancouver riot in 360 degrees. In the *Georgia Straight*. <http://www.straight.com/article-400621/vancouver/vancouver-riot-360-degrees>
- Jourdan, A. (1936, November). Expression in portraiture. In *American Photography*, 30(11), (pp. 734–738).
- Keller, JK. (2008). *Living My Life Faser – 8 years of JK's Daily Photo Project*.
- Keller, JK. (2008). *The Adaption to My Generation (a daily photo project) - FAQs & Comments*, [http://www.c71123.com/daily\\_photo/faqac-1/](http://www.c71123.com/daily_photo/faqac-1/).
- Kennel, S. (2007). Casual, Modern 1920–1939. In *The Art of the American Snapshot, 1888-1978* (1st ed.). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Kessler, P. (October 21, 1983). Photography: An Early Artist. In *The Washington Post*, Web.
- Kim, Y. (2007). *I have the right to destroy myself*. Tran. C.-Y. Kim (1st ed.). Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Kodak, (October 1926). 'Let Kodak keep the story'. Pictorial Review. George Eastman House.
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience As The Source Of Learning And Development*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Kotchemidova, C. (2005). Why We Say "Cheese": Producing the Smile in Snapshot Photography. In *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 22(1), (pp. 2-25).
- Kress, G. and van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.

- Kuhn, A. (2007). Photography and cultural memory: a methodological exploration. In *Visual Studies*, 22(3), (pp. 283-292).
- Lacan, J. (1998). *The four fundamental concepts of psycho-analysis*. New York ; London: W.W. Norton.
- Larsen, J. (2005). Performativity of Tourist Photography. In *Space and Culture*. Vol.8, no. 4., (pp. 416–434)
- LeVine, R. (1982). *Culture, behaviour, and personality* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Aldine Press.
- Lisl, D. (1979), *How to Take Better Travel Photos*. Tucson, AZ: Fisher Publishing Inc.
- Lister, M. (2009). Photography in the age of electronic imaging. In Liz Wells (Eds.), *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (Forth). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lloyd, M. (2007). *Judith Butler: from norms to politics*. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity.
- Mäkelä, M. and Routarinne, S. (2007) *The Art of Research: Research Practices in Design*. In Helsinki: University of Art and Design Helsinki.
- Marien, M. (2010). *Photography: a cultural history* (3rd ed.). London: Laurence King.
- Marsh, A. (2003). *The Darkroom: Photography and the Theatre of Desire*. Melbourne: MacMillan Art Publishing.
- McAdams, D. (2006). *The redemptive self: stories Americans live by*. Oxford ;New York: Oxford University Press.
- McAllister, K. and Kuhn, A. (2006). *Locating Memory*. Oxford; New York, NY: Berghahn Books.
- McAllister, K. (2006). A Story of Escape: Family Photographs from Japanese Canadian Internment Camps. In *Locating Memory*. Annette Kuhn, ed, Kirsten McAllister ed. (pp. 81-112). Oxford; New York, NY: Berghahn Books.
- McCarthy, C. (1994). *The Crossing*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Melchior-Bonnet, S. (2002). *The Mirror : a history*. New York NY: Routledge.
- Muir, D. (2000). *My Brother Gary and his Girlfriend Joanie, Otisco Lake, American New York, 1959*. Gelatin silver print of snapshot.
- Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema. In *Screen*, Autumn, (pp. 6-18)

- Okabe, D. & Ito, M. (2006). Everyday contexts of camera phone use: steps toward technosocial ethnographic frameworks. In *Mobile Communication in Everyday Life: an Ethnographic View*, Eds J. Höflich & M. Hartmann. Berlin: Frank & Timme.
- Owens, C. (2006). The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, Part 2. In *Cindy Sherman*. Ed. Johanna Burton. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press.
- Pettersson, M. (2011). Depictive Traces: On the Phenomenology of Photography. In *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 69:2, Spring. Pooler GA: The American Society for Aesthetics.
- Poster, M. (1995). *The second media age*. Cambridge UK; Cambridge Mass.: Polity Press ; B. Blackwell.
- Poster, M. (1998). Postmodern Virtualities. In A. A. Berger (Ed.), *Postmodern Presence* (pp. 254 to 273). Walnut Creek, CA: Rowman AltaMira Press.
- Poster, M. (2002). Everyday (Virtual) Life. In *New Literary History*, 33(4), (pp. 743-760).
- Prosser, J and Schwartz, D. Photographs within the Sociological Research Process. In *Image-based Research*. Ed. Jon Prosser. Falmer Press, Taylor & Francis Inc., (pp. 115-130).
- Prosser, J. (1998). The status of image-based research. In *Image-based Research*. Ed. Jon Prosser. Falmer Press, Taylor & Francis Inc. (pp. 97-115).
- Pryce, W.T.R. (1994). Photographs and Picture Postcards. In M. Drake and R. Finnegan (Eds.) *Studying Family and Community History: 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and the Open University Press.
- Ray, M. (1963). *Self Portrait*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Robert, C. (1839). *Self-Portrait*. ARTstore. Retrieved from <http://library.artstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8CJGczl9NzldLS1WEDhzTnkrX3gofVp5eyl%3D&userId=gjNEdTY%3D&zoomparams=>
- Roberts, S. (2011). *The Art of iPhoneography: A Guide to Mobile Creativity*. New York, NY: Pixiq.
- Rose, G. (2001). *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Ryersson, S. and Yaccarino, M. (2004). *Infinite Variety: The life and legend of the Marchesa Casati* (Definitive ed., 1st University of Minnesota Press ed.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ryersson, S. Yaccarino, M. (2009). *The Marchesa Casati: Portraits of a Muse*. New York, NY: Abrams.
- Schwarz, A. and Mandery, G. (1980). On Photography. In *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962–1980*. Tans. Linda Coverdale. New York: Hill and Wang/Farra, Straus and Giroux.
- Sennett, R. (1976). *The Fall of Public Man*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Shaw, J. (2006). Narcissus and the Magic Mirror. In L. Downie (Ed.), *Don't kiss me: the art of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore* (pp. 24–32). New York N.Y.: Aperture Foundation.
- Sherman, C. (1977–1980). *Untitled Film Stills*.
- Sontag, S. (1977). *On Photography*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Spence, J. (1988). *Putting myself in the picture : a political, personal, and photographic autobiography* (1st ed.). Seattle, Washington: Real Comet Press.
- Steward, S. (1993). *On Longing*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Sullivan, G. (2009). *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Sultan, L. (1992). *Pictures from Home*. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams.
- Talmazan, Y. (2011). Vancouver Riot Map: photos of riot and looting locations. Global News, June 16. Web.  
<http://www.globalnews.ca/Vancouver+Riot+photos+riot+looting+locations/4959101/story.html>
- Thomas, D. (2007). Composites, multiplicities, complexities and duration. In L. Duxbury, E. M. Grierson, & D. Waites (Eds.) *Thinking through practice* (pp. 81–91). Melbourne, Vic., Australia: RMIT Publishing (published on Informit e-library, <http://search.informit.com.au>)
- Triandis, H. C. (1997). Cross-cultural perspectives on personality. In R. Hogan, J. Jones, & S. Briggs (Eds.), *Handbook of personality psychology* (pp. 439–464). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

- Van House, N., Davis, M., Ames, M., Finn, M., & Viswanathan, V. (2005). The uses of personal networked digital imaging (pp. 1853 - 1856). Presented at the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, Portland, OR, USA: Association for Computing Machinery. Retrieved from <http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1056808.1057039>
- Walker, J. (2005). *Mirrors and Shadows: The Digital Aestheticisation of Oneself*. IT University, Copenhagen, Proceedings, Digital Arts and Culture 2005. Retrieved from <https://bora.uib.no/dspace/handle/1956/1136>
- Warhol, A. (1963). In *Photo Booth Self Portrait*.
- Warner Marien, M. (2010). *Photography: A Cultural History* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Welby-Everard, M. (2006). Imaging the Actor: the Theatre of Claude Cahun. In *Oxford Art Journal*, 29.1, (pp. 1 -24).
- Wells, L. (2010). *Photography: a critical introduction* (4th ed.). London, UK: Routledge.
- Wente, M. (2011). Canada's Really Horrible Week. *The Globe and Mail*. June 18, 2011. Toronto, Canada.
- West, N. M. (2000). *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*. Virginia: University of Virginia Press.
- Yoon, J. (1991-2000). *Souvenirs of the Self (Rocky Mountain Bus Tour)*. Collection of the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery and Rennie Collection.
- Zytaruk, T. (2011). RIOT PHOTOS: Cameras, social media 'accelerate intensity' of mob mentality, says SFU prof. In the *Surrey NOW*, June 17. Web. <http://www.thenownewspaper.com/RIOT+PHOTOS+Cameras+social+media+accelerate+intensity+mentality+says+prof/4965897/story.html>