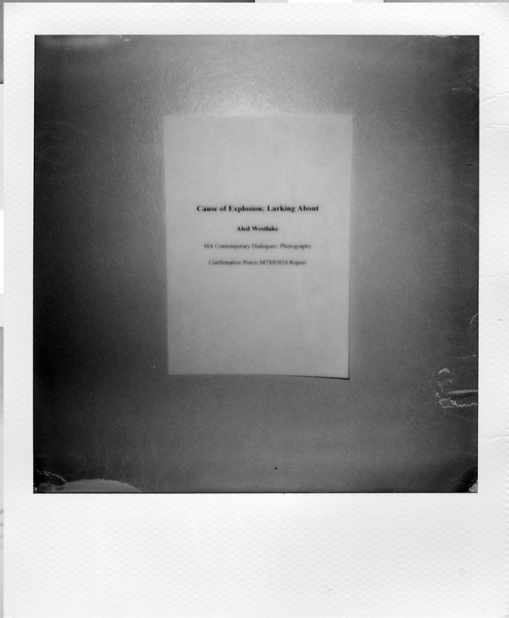
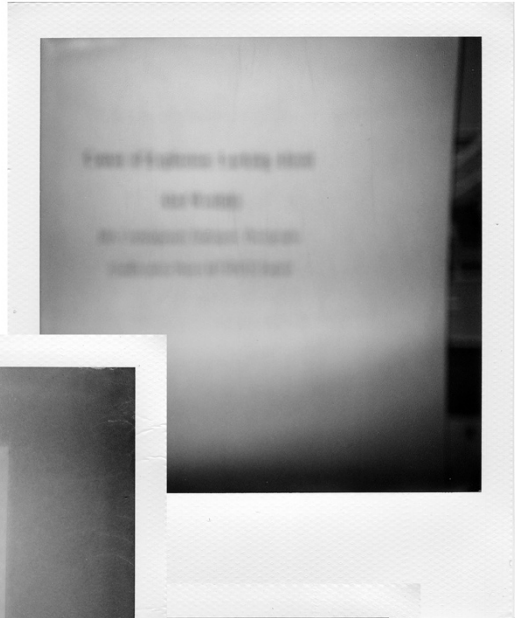




Cause of Explosion; Larking About

Aled Westlake

MA Contemporary Dialogues: Photography

Confirmative Praxis M7X02024 Report

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Introduction

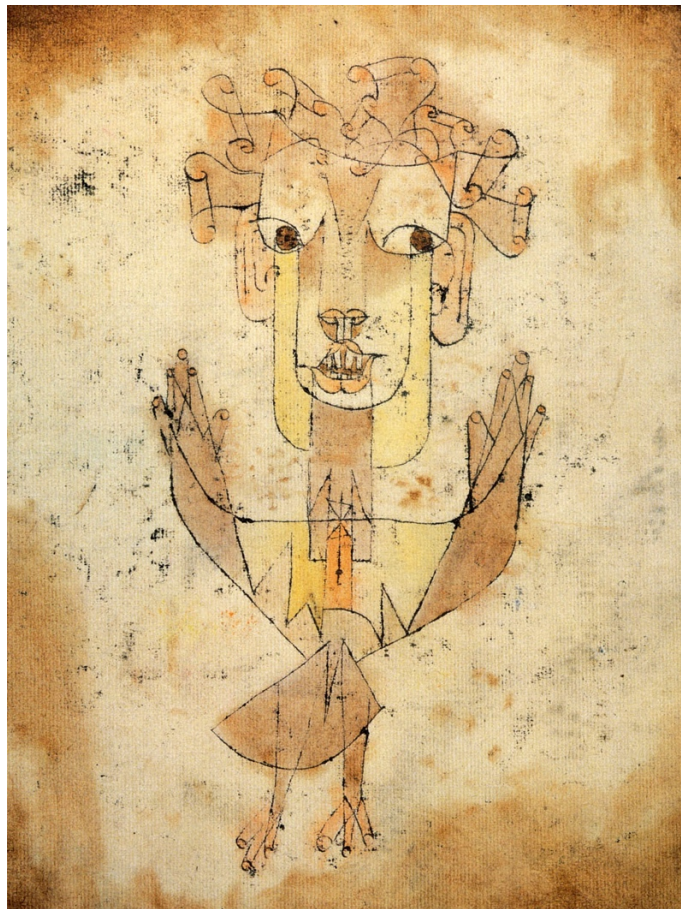


Fig 1. Paul Klee, 1920. *Angelus Novus* [Oil Transfer] At: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin, 1968)

In February 2019 I travelled to Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Whilst there I visited Tuol Sleng, a former high school converted into a prison camp during the Khmer Rouge regime. Today it is a museum, preserving the former classrooms in its prison form to inform and educate the world about the horrors and genocidal crimes committed within its walls. I was deeply moved by one non-descript room, containing thousands of archival prisoner portraits. Every person, mostly still unidentified, in each photograph had been murdered by soldiers of the regime at the prison. I became overwhelmed by the scale, the uniformity, and the banality of

evil which had been presented to me. Whilst some preferred to leave the room swiftly due to its sobering contents, I felt it was important to remain and study every photograph individually. At this moment my relationship with photography had changed.

I want to explore the role of the archive and archivist and how that impacts the emotional response a viewer has. In this report I will discuss and deconstruct the links of the archive with memory through a local case study of Pembrey Munition Works and the story of the Canary Girls. My practice accumulated into producing the project *Cause of Explosion; Larking About*, a reactional piece attempting to deconstruct the visceral response to the available archive of Pembrey.

Part One – Memory, Photography and the archive

Photography and memory have always been entwined. The two have a deeper association more than any other medium. Photography's common purpose has been to record and document moments in time. A photograph is an attempt not only to harness a moment in time but also a moment of sentiment. Photography is a tool which we use to place checkpoints in the continuous passage of time, this pause is called a memory. The photograph serves as a portal to the viewer to mentally return or journey to a specific point in the past to re-experience a certain emotive or sentimental event. Whilst this memory is visceral it is both individual and common to all.

In *Camera Lucida* (1980), Roland Barthes deconstructs this phenomenon through discussing the photograph of his late mother as a child. Without showing the photograph to the viewer, Barthes articulates that the image encapsulates the quality of her manner, an honest exemplification of her true likeness. Through understanding this we can see photography can transport the viewer through an emotional cycle which is engraved within the frame. The photograph to invoke sentimental memory of strong emotions such as grief or love.

The practice of accumulating memories using photographs has resulted in the common place and multiculturally practiced method of the photo album. This is a form of archiving using not only a system of documentation but also a structure of permanence for interpretation of the past. The individual photographs assemble to build a solid arrangement of memory for the viewer and bolster a sense of identity and place. The album can take many forms, a

traditional family photo album, a holiday or travel album, or simply as a gallery in the home. Photographs are sometimes the only evidence of a memory; therefore, the photograph can be considered evidence and the solitary truth of an events occurrence.

A commonly held belief is that photography is factual, detached from influence. Archivists and historians use photography in order to reinforce their records, supplying more materials to establish a clearer and stronger structure for their gaze into the past. In a perfect environment, this tool can give us clarity into a collective experience. Using many different perspectives in order to establish a more detailed and comprehensive representation of what we consider the past and in return our standpoint and identity today. The process of accumulation of individual memory as an archive is seen as smaller torches of light coming together to illuminate and guide the viewer into the past. Jacques Derrida in *Archive Fever* (1996), considers the archive is of human fruition, therefore inherently shaped by the established narrative by the governing individual or group. The archive can be manipulated, shaped, emphasised, curated and censored. Whether this is intentional or not is up to subjectification, but an archive is always shaped by the archivist's gaze. When navigating the archive, what was considered a pathway of lights leading into the past may feature dark spots, missing memories. Without prior knowledge of this the viewer is left to skip and ignore these dark spots and disregard its importance to an archive's structure and in return the collective identity of a community.

Despite the archive's best intentions, it is of human design. Memory also is subjective, limited and of mortal condition. The responsibility of the archive is to remember but because of human nature is subject to fallibility and inconsistent memory.

We equate forgetting with the trivial or the unbearable...we have a place to put the unbearable... but we believe that; the memory, the experience, the desire, are still there... capable of returning. (Phillips, 2006).

Collective forgetting is interpreted as an inevitability, but can this archival side effect be influenced? In *The Body and The Archive* (1986), Allan Sekula argues that avoiding the authentic experiences and contributions provided by the working class, the influence on narrative by the capitalist establishment can ensure it continue to thrive and dominate. Considering Sekula's argument, this makes the archive unreliable and therefore our memory is also unreliable, with ideology trumping authentic vision.

Contemporary photographers Charles Fox and Christian Patterson have individually explored archive from different methods and accumulated it into book format, both attempting to explore the 'dark spots'.

Buried (2019), Charles Fox explores the complex brutal dictatorship of the Khmer Rouge. Fox focuses in on a single family, using the Rama family photographic albums as a means to tell their story either side of the four years of terror. The family's photo albums were buried in order to keep their identities



Fig 2. Charles Fox, 2019. *Buried*, Photograph of the father. Catfish Books.

hidden from persecution. The literal darkness kept the family identity guarded. Darkness is a constant theme throughout the book in contradiction to the usual typical innocent imagery such as children playing. The unseen moments which occurred between these innocent images is the true terror, left for the viewers imagination. Rebecca Solnit writes about darkness;

Most people are afraid of the dark. Literally when it comes to children, while many adults fear, above all, the darkness that is the unknown, the unseeable, the obscure. And yet the night in which distinctions and definitions cannot be readily made is the same night in which love is made, in which things merge, change, become enchanted, aroused, impregnated, possessed, released, renewed. (Solnit, 2014)

Archive Fever (1995), Jacques Derrida states “The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come”. By undertaking this belief, the archive becomes a place of negotiation rather than that of authority, using the archive as a site of exploration, cultivation, expression and interpretation. This ethos was instrumental to the work of Christian Patterson’s *Redheaded Peckerwood (2011)*.

It is an interpretation of history that operates like memory and gives the past life in the present. Patterson mines the archive and injects the past with possibility, making art that is at once both contemporaneous and historical. His refusal to delineate what is real and what is fiction prevents us from mentally shelving the events as part of history. Forget considering them only in a passive, distanced way. We must actively

engage with our imaginations and our memories, and in that hazy interior realm where they intersect. (Irvine, 2011).

Patterson interlaces archival photographs and documental evidence with his own photographs captured from his own journey, retracing the steps of the young couple wanted for murder. Akin to a detective's evidence folder, *Redheaded Peckerwood* interprets a world in which the events took place, less about demonising the young couple but an attempt to comprehend the nurtured environment which lead them to commit such crimes. Using various photographic techniques, styles and perspectives, Patterson uses his own interpretation of the events and locations not as a literal retelling but as story of sympathy and sensitivity which is lacked by other works, inspired by the couple's story, i.e. *Badlands* (1973). Patterson leads the reader through a journey, guiding us through the archive to see beyond the official archival authority truth and asking the reader to question and consider the human side of the archive.

Using my Tuol Sleng experience as an "access point" into the experience of memory, I want to explore the emotional response of the archive.

Part Two – Cause of Explosion; Larking About



Fig 3. Aled Westlake, 2021. *Cause of Explosion; Larking About* [Book]

Sekula's argument provided an interesting perspective on the politics of the archive and eventual influence on collective memory. Sekula claims intentional manipulation hinders the progress and validation of the working class, which in return alters perceptions for future generations, creating a repeating cycle of suppression and collective forgetting (1986).

Despite this, as non-archivists, we entrust historians and archivists to form an honest comprehensive record of human history and experiences. I wanted to investigate this notion myself, can this potential injustice be prevalent in contemporary society, have we inadvertently caused an erasure of a memory?

This praxis began when a local referred to the Pembrey Munition Works as...

“...that time those women were getting blown up”. (unknown, personal conversation, March 2020)

The Pembrey Munition Works, Carmarthenshire was in operation from the late 1800s to the 1950s. Now a country park, the munition works remaining structures became obvious once presented and offer an eerie reminder of a location's prior embodiment. The fact they were “getting blown up”, as the local put it, was due to the unsafe working environment that the predominantly female workforce encountered. Around the UK, hundreds of munition workers died in accidental explosions and many were injured whilst assembling munitions for British war efforts. Among other severe health side effects, exposure to dangerous chemicals led to jaundice, causing their skin, teeth, and hair to turn yellow, which ultimately led to the female workforce assuming the nickname “The Canary Girls”. These hazardous side-effects continued to develop long after the factories shut and even affected their offspring. Despite the Canary Girls' contribution to the war effort and their influential part in gender equality in the workplace, such as equal pay for women which was revolutionary at the time, no official recognition has ever been awarded. (Potts and Rimmer, 2017)

This level of disregard for recognition could be seen as something from a lifetime ago, with an assumption that these circumstances could never be replicated now, but we have seen this past year during the COVID 19 pandemic, how vital a controlling narrative is to influence people's attitudes and interpretation of an event.

The narrative key workers have been subjected to is a shared experience, analogous to that which the Canary Girls endured. During the times the factories were open, when an inadvertent explosion occurred, the factory heads ensured a blackout of external investigators in the media, they developed and manipulated their own narrative to deflect responsibility onto the worker despite blatant mismanagement. In consequent inquests the argument of malpractice by the workers was commonly accepted by the selected jury. One explosion inquiry concluded with the judgment:

“Cause of explosion; larking about” (Weekly Mail, 1882)

As a society, how has this evocative language and these generalised judgments impacted our form of remembering these workers and our attitudes towards their sacrifice?

The Denial of Death (1973), writer Ernest Becker explores the idea of ‘hero systems’, believing a person’s natural response to death is one of narcissism. Everyone questions their own mortality but accepting fate can be another factor. We all like to believe our lives follow a plot similar to a film, ultimately leading to a heroic and redeeming moment. This trait is so common that established powers capitalise on this sentiment, reflected by the prevalence of marketing propaganda and the success of War Films.

Man breaks through the bounds of merely cultural heroism; he destroys the character lie that had him perform as a hero in the everyday social scheme of things; and by

doing so he opens himself up to infinity, to the possibility of cosmic heroism He links his secret inner self, his authentic talent, his deepest feelings of uniqueness ... to the very ground of creation. Out of the ruins of the broken cultural self there remains the mystery of the private, invisible, inner self which yearned for ultimate significance. ... This invisible mystery at the heart of [the] creature now attains cosmic significance by affirming its connection with the invisible mystery at the heart of creation. (Becker, 1973)

The anxiety of vulnerability can also explain how the munition workers are not recognised. Perhaps the thought of accidental death by an inconsequential act in a supposedly safe government controlled job does not support the idea of sacrifice to the hero system.

Pembrey Munition works is now a pine-covered country park. Hidden amongst the pines are tunnels and tracks which were used extensively to distribute munitions and explosive materials throughout the site, unravelling the original appearance I falsely perceived of the park. Originally, I had assumed the park was a natural remnant, protected from outside interference of building contractors or developers, but this could not be further from the truth. My initial reaction to this revelation was quite positive, believing I had stumbled upon a hidden and important local 'gem'. This positivity soon soured when my research revealed the conditions and fatal explosions. My memories were now tainted by both a self-imposed guilt to my obliviousness to the park's history, and also the frustration that no clear memorial or commemorative monument to that history was present. Even though the structural remains still exist at the park, they are not preserved, they are left to decay, fading away to be erased by nature. The unease I felt is explained by Mark Fisher in the book *The Weird and The Eerie*

(2016), who states we find the eerie more readily in landscapes empty of human life.

Standing in the factory remains evokes eeriness, they stand silent in dense forestry, alien to the surrounding landscape. Metaphorically, this situation represents the story of the canary girls, hidden within the dense historical records of both World Wars lay their formidable story of sacrifice left to decay for the landscape to progress forwards.

The project was to explore the emotional response to the archive and of memory loss, so the plan was to document the space in its liminal transition. Inspired by contemporary photographers such as Mark Mahaney, Bryan Schutmaat, and Mark Power, I returned to the location with a 5x4 large format camera in an attempt to capture and record the remaining structures following records and maps provided by local historian, Alice Pyper (2017). After several excursions with the large format camera, I realised that the act of carrying heavy equipment to predetermined spots, the deliberate act of taking the photograph and future developing of the images, did not sit comfortably with me. The control of the factory heads over workers and narrative had echoes in the deliberateness and pre-determined selection of locations coupled with the detailed development process.

I agree with Roland Barthes views that photography is a product or act of sentimentality (1980). As I struggled to form a connection with the 5x4 photographs, I decided to switch to the opposite of the planned formality of large format photography, to instant film, in particular to Polaroid Film. Polaroid has long had affiliations with memory and the past, in particular nostalgia. Photographer Martin Parr has referred to Polaroid photography as 'processed nostalgia' (O'Hagan, 2010). I selected Polaroid not only for the memory affiliated connotations but also the process in which it performs in capturing a photograph. At the

opposite end of the scale to the 5x4 camera, with the lightweight Polaroid camera it is difficult to control all aspects of the process. The photographer makes a vague attempt at composition and has a limited ability to alter the developing.

Often creased or marked, with their colours slightly faded, they evoke another time, one that already seems impossibly distant. What's more, they lend that era an aura of mystery and romance – even when they are blurred or badly composed. That was part of the charm of the unwieldy, hard-to-focus camera. (Wenders, 2017)



Fig 4. Aled Westlake, 2021. *Untitled from Cause of Explosion; Larking About* [Polaroid]

Due to this, an accurate physical image can be composed. The final image, for example, can be impacted by temperature. The images become mystically hazy when cold and chemically damaged when hot. A Polaroid photograph holds greater sentimentality in comparison to that of the 5x4, meaning like a memory, we gather and embrace many pieces of information to form a cohesive image regardless of the finer details. Benjamin alludes to these unintended unique imperfections;

All the artistic preparations of the photographer and the design of in the positioning of the model to the contrary, the viewer feels an irresistible compulsion to seek the tiny spark of accident, the here and now. In such a picture, that spark has, as it were, burned through the person in the image with reality, finding the indiscernible place in the condition of that long past minute where the future is nesting, even today, so eloquently that we looking back can discover it (Benjamin, 1980)



Fig 5. Aled Westlake, 2021. *Untitled from Cause of Explosion; Larking About* [Polaroid]

In contemporary commercial photography, an obsession over perfection dominates the market. When considering this solicitation of influence and alteration on images, authenticity will always be questioned. By using Polaroid instant film, the authenticity remains truer in comparison, but as Benjamin states, this unique authenticity is not a product of the photographers will, but the accumulation of the process and environment of taking the photograph. In this case, this authenticity or uniqueness is delivered by the individual development of the Polaroid photograph, each artefact unique to its stamp in time in the past. Akin to Barthes's notion of a photograph's effect on the viewer, Benjamin suggests all photographs have a fixed aura. This aura cannot be replicated or reproduced but remains with the original, fixed in time and place. Polaroid photographs manifest not only a physical and

emotional bond developed in the moment but are also a result of time and environment. The deliberateness and routine of the 5x4 camera, presented a less authentic experience in the situation.

This praxis culminated in producing the book, *Cause of Explosion; Larking About*. The book features the Polaroid photographs I amassed during this project and the photographs themselves can fall into two separate categories.

First are the Polaroids from various locations around what was Pembrey Munition Works, a physical but also psychological journey heavily influenced by historical Roman and Greek techniques, the method of Loci (Cicero, M.T. & Caplan, H., 1954). The method of loci is a strategy of memory, navigating a location to invoke memory prompts. These prompts are intertwined with the location's identity uniquely for the individual which influence their thought process. The images I produced evoke memories and emotions which are condensed into the Polaroid artefact. The method in which I would perform this ritual was to randomly journey through the site, not follow maps as with the 5x4 camera, and anticipate until a moment of eeriness overwhelmed me. At that moment I would press the shutter of the Polaroid camera holding from my chest, with minimal attention given to composition. Reflecting on Barthes's writings on the Winter Garden Photograph, he is reading the affect which encompasses the frame of his mother's photograph, where I attempt in my Polaroids to manifest the emotional and memory reaction of the moment and attempt to fit and contain this within the Polaroid frame.

Initially the images may appear random, which to an extent is true, but amassed together a clearer journey is slowly revealed. It became clear during the practice that moments of influence came spontaneously, similar to memory, and not regimented and predicable.

In juxtaposition to these images are accompanying Polaroids featuring the Canary Girls. The inclusion and presence of the human form lay stark in comparison to the void landscape from the first collection of Polaroids. The images are appropriated scenes from government archives, again using Polaroid film. The original films produced and published by the government are untruths, with the superficial intention to document and publicise the everyday working of a typical munition worker during the war. This is propaganda packaged as an authentic fly on the wall visit to production factories. The scenes shot are heavily directed and deliberately composed, the women workers in the films acting as committed professionals contributing proudly and resolutely in spite of the dangerous matter of their work. The propaganda films are communicating a clear language, an undisputed message which perpetuates their perspective to attempt to influence viewers' understanding of a world which is usually shrouded in mystery and darkness to the public. In hindsight, we can now recognise this as an unauthentic message as details of the working conditions and hazardous side effects imposed on the workers. The impact these films have on the wider public contributes to a false narrative which ultimately feeds and alters the collective memory.



Fig 6. Aled Westlake, 2021. *Untitled from Cause of Explosion; Larking About* [Polaroid]

Compared to the Polaroids I photographed at location, these images were captured separately and away from the location. The essence that was attempted with the location-based photographs was to retain memory, pause a liminal process and record the unique authentic moment. With the photographs of the Canary Girls, the aim was to appropriate the scenes but for to then extinguish its original message. The images are heavily influenced by the Japanese photographic style and magazines *Provoke* (1968). Originating from the 1960s – 80s, *Provoke* left a profound influence on Japanese photography. Being counter establishment to its core against traditional glossy perfect photography at the time, its visual style broke conventional photographic language, leaving interpretation open to be more subjective. Known as ‘are-bure-boke’, the images themselves appear chaotic, grainy and disorderly, which was reflective of Japanese post war society at the time. In my Polaroids, a similar message is attempting to be conveyed. Stylistically, the images appear blurred, highly

contrasted and over exposed, the finer details within the images washed-out. Subjectively, it is ambiguous as to whether the image is fading away or forming, like a metaphorical representation of the memory. A dream-like filter appears to cover the original scene, whether this provokes a hopeful or lurid interpretation is up to the viewer. Either way, having appropriated these images from rigidly orchestrated propaganda and adapted them to remove its core promotional language, the work attempts to overrule established narrative.



Fig 7. Aled Westlake, 2021. *Untitled from Cause of Explosion; Larking About* [Polaroid]

The juxtaposition of the Polaroids indicates moments in the past, and we are revisiting memories which repeat a journey. The book attempts to incite an active engagement with imagination but also with memory, to comprehend an interpretation of a moment from recent

history which is interweaved with imagery from contemporary landscapes. This removes the barrier set by the archive, that what is in the past remains behind us and encourages the notion that a location's history is ever present in its identity holistically, despite their physical erasure.

The form and design of the book is heavily influenced by the concept of a photo album. Throughout the process of taking Polaroid images, my commitment to the memory they represent became protective. Understanding that whilst their vulnerability and inimitable qualities were always known and key to the project, these attributes evoked a possessive materialistic reaction. This sacred quality of the Polaroids reminded me of that of a personal photographic album, which in turn presented the perfect framing for the work. An album's purpose is to showcase memories, and to display achievements, but to also persevere and survive in memory. The book imitates this preservation, but through an author's curatorial control. The book is a physical embodiment of my attempts to preserve my memories in how I reacted to the subject. Photographic albums are always authored and serve as a personal record, whilst it is an archival record, the author's narrative imprint is forever present. Compared to a conventional photobook, forming a photo album demonstrates an act of symbolic activity by the author, an attempt to reign and comprehend memory into a digestible form.

I have always believed the installation of this work would not feature in a typical gallery setting. As this practice has always been location focused, the current culmination of the installation should be incorporated within the site. An integral challenge proposed by the subject was highlighting endured collective forgetting in local society.

A contemporary cultural movement which targets this issue is street art. Street art has a consistency in approach which artists such as JR, Shepard Fairey, and Peter Drew all commonly share, which is to provoke the public and encourage them to stop, think and question their surroundings. To achieve this, they draw upon notions of Heidegger's phenomenology (Heidegger, Macquarrie and Robinson, 1962). and the theories of situationism (Debord and Knabb, 2000). In essence, the purpose of street art is to present a counter-narrative to an established story and accepted collective memory, in an attempt to challenge the spectacle within which people have nested themselves. Guy Debord encouraged this experience, to resist the path of least resistance and to observe our surroundings, which was the core to his strategy in the *Theory of The Derive* (1956). The strategy implores the audience to explore a geographical space in order to incite new experiences and discussion, whether this is socially or internally. The "*Cause of explosion; larking about*" installation encourages this strategy, acting as a collaborative experience between the location and the audience. This experience is also assisted by the inclusion of photographs from the archive. Inspired by Sekula's opinions of the archive, I believed it to be vital to display photographs of the munition workers from their own perspective. Sekula argues the politicisation of the archive positions itself to dismiss and undermine the working class. Due to this, when we reflect on history, we may overlook the experiences and influences working class culture contributes to a nation's and society's identity. Influenced and inspired by the works of artists such as Jeremy Deller, this work seeks to encourage a power shift in narrative and display that should be handed to the worker. Rather than using archival imagery generated and controlled by the state, the individual worker should have the authority in how they are perceived and viewed. However, for this to be achievable the work must employ the current capitalist tools of production, and this is achieved by selecting and

displaying only the photographs the munition workers paid to produce in personal photoshoots. All archive images sourced and used in the installation were produced by the workers for the workers out of their own money, giving them the control over appearance and own presentation. By doing this, the political barrier which blinds the archive and alters collective memory is removed. Therefore, rather than what the establishment-controlled narrative wants society to believe, the photographs by the workers offer an authentic authorship, far closer to how they would wish to be viewed. The photographs in the installation are wheat-pasted onto the surfaces of the remaining structures to bind them in memory, akin to a commemorative monument. Displaying the images physically around the structures invokes memories similar to the memory palace, which derives from the aforementioned method of loci. This simplistic act of a memory palace is evident in many of the works of French artist Christian Boltanski, such as in his work *Monument to the Lycée Chases (1989)*. With a focus on the victims without glorifying the act, this installation approach retains the audience's attention and helps them digest very emotive and tragic subject matter.



Fig 8. Aled Westlake, 2021. *Cause of Explosion; Larking About Installation* [Wheatpaste Installation]

The processes and methods used in the Pembrey installation embody an important DIY ethos of the praxis, such as the use of homemade wheat-based glue and plain printed paper. Having the photographs produced and displayed in such a homemade technique, emphasises an important counter-effort at play. The materials used also mean the photographic installations are temporary, over time the paper and glue will disintegrate, implying a temporariness to the piece. This seems appropriate, as traditionally commemorative monuments for injustices or sacrifice are permanent, to solidify in collective memory. The desired effect of the installation is not meant to evoke distain to the audience but to celebrate contribution and sacrifice whilst also encourage re-evaluation of space and location to question whether a location's preservation also supports preservation of memory.

To add an additional dimension to my installation I have added a soundtrack of a local man verbalising key phrases from the archive. I believe this enhances the context and emotion of the archive. This was inspired by a visiting talk by photographer Daniel Meadows (Ffoton, 2021), deconstructing his recent work of revisiting his own photographic archive and combining images with recorded sound interviews.



Fig 9. Aled Westlake, 2021. *Cause of Explosion; Larking About Installation* [Wheatpaste Installation]

Conclusion

My intention was to shine a light on a dark spot to illuminate a dimmed memory within the archive, to divert collective outlook and to appreciate influences which may fall victim to an authoritative narrative. By contributing personal photos and my own pieces, this offers an alternative to the official narrative and governmental archive. I have challenged our typical understanding and teachings of how we view our local history and heritage.

The story and work that the Canary Girls contributed to this country's victory in two world wars is remarkable and believing I would be able to produce a piece to justify their sacrifice would be naive. This project has started me on a journey to a continue delving into archive, knowing I've only scratched the surface of the subject.

It would be difficult not to mention the context and climate which this work had to be produced within. There were many constantly emerging challenges during this project due to COVID-19 pandemic. For example, I was unable to visit Kew Imperial War Museum. Working within the site at Pembrey Country Park became impossible for a long period due lockdown. This was also the case with workshops and facilities at the university.

However, it has also provided myself with new tools and techniques which will be continued and explored with my future practice, for example wheatpasting. This practice encouraged me to venture out of my comfort zone and attempt various processes and methods. I used a variety of cameras on different ends of the scales in terms of practicability and application,

which pushed me to consider my own relationship with not only simply how a photograph is taken but also re-evaluate the nuanced considerations which are considered in the process leading up to the photograph being taken.

I gained more confidence in exploring and experimenting at home in different mediums such as screen printing and eventually wheatpasting. After this current deadline, I want to further pursue this mixture of photographic practice with the DIY applications as a means to installation and exhibit. The pandemic brought not only negatives, there were opportunities. I see this as more for continuation and eventual further personal development.

Looking forward from the current conclusion of this practice I am continually captivated by the archive and searching of dark spots. Both through the continuation of the subject of the Canary Girls or other stories, I find my practice is anchored in investigating heritage and the collective memory.

Setting out I attempted to investigate the relationship between memory and the archive, I achieved this by shining a light on an archival dark spot. I sense I have only begun to journey down the route of the archive and memory and accepting that no memory is truly forgotten when at least someone is unknowingly searching for it.

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