

Student Name: Emily Thomas

Student number: 1901425

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Photography to me has always been an expressive outlet as everything you do within photography or view is open to interpretation as subject matters can be so broad and mean so many different things to different people. When I was 9, I got my first camera to capture memories and my surroundings as it was something my father used to do while growing up. On birthdays or Christmas, he would always have a camera in his hand taking photos of his surroundings which inspired and got me into taking photos. Reflecting back on why I began taking photos got me thinking on how we capture emotions and save the photos to look back on years down the line. Not only through personal photos or old photos do we feel an impact we also feel an impact when we see a piece of art or photos within the news. This got me thinking about the psychological factors behind photography so for my dissertation proposal I would like to explore how emotions are captured within photographs and how photographs can have an impact on an audience causing involuntary or voluntary feelings.

Emotions

Emotions are a big part of what makes everyone human as we all feel whether you verbalise those emotions or keep them hidden, they very much exist and are normal to experience. There are 3 components that are psychologically linked to emotions which are “A subjective experience, a Physiological response and behavioural/expressive response.” (verywellmind, 2019) Paul Eckman believes that there are 6 main emotions that are universal throughout humans which is “fear, disgust, anger, surprise, happiness and sadness” (Chapter 3, Basic Emotions) These are believed to be the main emotions shown but we don’t always show each emotion in a certain way as each situation can cause a different reaction which is important to understand. You can also experience physical reactions to visual images such as having pain in your stomach from anxiety or head pounding due to fear etc. Our

surroundings and upbringing I feel have a significant impact on how you express emotions and express yourself. Society standards and pressures especially have an effect on how people express themselves due to stereotypes such as men tend to be told to 'man up' or that expressing feelings makes them weak while woman is often called too sensitive or crazy depending on how they express their emotions. Stereotypes are something that I personally despise, in 2021 the world is moving forward a lot and moving away from stereotypes by just letting people exist, which is how it should be.

Figure 1 – “What Real Women Laugh Like” (Fernhout, 2016)



The above photographs were taken by Maud Fernhout for her project “What Real Women Laugh Like” which is all about women embracing their natural laugh and encourages them to not feel embarrassed over their laugh. While studying Anthropology and psychology major, she came to the conclusion that many women are embarrassed about how they look

while their laughing. At first this seems like something so basic women just expressing happiness but it's actually a thing that many women I know and myself have dealt with as growing up a lot of us were told that we didn't look attractive if we laughed in such an outward manner. I myself was taught to be respectful and chuckle with a hand over my mouth but that's not a true representation. More on the topic of how images can cause the viewer to have a reaction I personally find these pictures amazing something about seeing authentic laughter and happiness just brings the same energy to myself, but it also involuntarily makes me feel bad that there's so many women with the same issues but other than that the photos are very expressive and add a little joy. Expressing emotions through photography and topics such as this can be a form of therapy for people.

Figure 2 – “Boys don't cry” (Giovanni Corabi, 2017)



Similarly, to the previous photographer Giovanni Corabi focuses on expressing emotion through her work by breaking stereotypes. This project is based on the world of men and all

the things they have to put up with due to society pressures. The most important part to take away from her work is how in each photo every man is photographed differently to show there is no one way to represent masculinity. Once again Giovanni Corabi has provided representation for many men who are struggling with society standards. I feel this project could cause a mix of reactions and emotions for the audience as some people don't like seeing men feel comfortable within themselves. Emotions can also be expressed in any type of photographs such as landscape, nature, wildlife but I chose to focus mainly on Portraits as they are something that has interested me the past year as capturing emotion through people is a great outlet to have. "The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe" (John Berger, Pg. 8) this to me means shows that our reactions to images can be a reaction of what we already know meaning a similar experience or going back to how we feel we should express emotions due to society.

Memories

Photography gives the opportunity for a memory to be saved and tell a story which can allow a connection to an image whether you're a part of the image or not. There's no doubt that we all have photographs that mean a lot to us from either when we were younger or before we were born, we grow up hearing stories from people before us and hear other versions of their own stories. We interpret photos and reminisce on other people's memories. I find it interesting how through years an image can still hold so much emotion behind it.

Figure 3 “Thomas Friedrich Schaefer, Experimental spaces” (2017)



Thomas Friedrich Schaefer is a German photographer who has taken photos of fragments of memories of growing up along with that he wants to bring back viewers own childhood memories. In the photo on the left the child represents him angrily sitting and doing his homework while his father is watching from the other room. When I first seen that photo, it unlocked a memory of how when I was a kid doing homework my father would sit in the living room while my sister and I would be at the table pouting as the rooms were joined so we weren't able to go anywhere without finishing all the homework. That's something else that photography can do it, it visually and psychologically can trigger memories. The photo on the right is part of the collection and is just named as "Experimental spaces #6" the reason behind this is so people are able to create their own connections and memories to the photos while appreciating Schaefer work. The most special part about this series is how each person who views it will have a different view of the images and it will possibly remind

them of a memory or connection to something they didn't know they had which brings back the involuntary or voluntary feelings.

“remembering as a creative act, as the creation of joyful moments in which present, and past are brought together” – (Van Campen, page 54) which can represent how photography can create new experiences from old and new memories, along with different decades. I think there's something fascinating in the memories that exist before myself or that i can no longer recall. I also wonder if time goes on does the memory become stronger or lose significant meaning. Another thing that got me thinking about memories and emotions was reading a blog on how even siblings have different experiences growing up. My sister is only 2 years older than me so we have mainly similar memories and experiences but speaking to her the other day we realised how somethings were in fact different but i also believe it's to do with personal beliefs and how you perceive things which kind of runs back to how photographs can make different people experience a range of certain emotions.

Figure 4 (Toshifumi Kitamura,2011)



Figure 5 (Kazuhiro Nogi,2021)



These two photos represent the same place but 10 years apart, taken by two separate photographers. The image on the left (taken by Toshifumi Kitamura) is the remains of one of

the most powerful earthquakes in Japan that also caused a tsunami as well, which left the devastating image on the left. The image on the right (taken by Kazuhiro Nogi) is the place 10 years later where looking at that you wouldn't have imagined that something like that could've happened less than a decade ago. I wanted to include this within my proposal as I felt it would represent how time and memories can change, so many people vividly were affected by the disaster yet there's a whole new memory and story that comes from it in 2021. I think it's an amazing piece that shows how past and present can coexist but also cause "an involuntary, sensory-induced, vivid and emotional reliving of events from the past" (Van Campen, page 47)

Manipulation

For my last keyword I am going to look into how images can be manipulated on purpose so that it can cause a greater reaction from the viewer. Manipulation is one of my favourite techniques to do within photography as it can totally transform a photograph to add more depth. Manipulation is a very artistic form of expression though it can be used negatively through media. In the digital realm it is often used to touch up models in the fashion industry, blur a background or through journalism where its hard to identify if an image is truth or not. In this day and age technology is so advanced that the possibilities for editing is endless, you can change colour, textures, shape and distortion. Grayscale or black and white photography is an element to manipulation that can totally change a photograph meaning at a click of a button. Black and white photography was invented in the 1820's when the first camera was made since then photography has come a long way, but the black and white film or effect has stayed quite popular throughout the photography years. In my opinion, the world is always so bright and full of colour which doesn't represent the world

24/7 so for that changing an image to monochrome can actually make you pause for a second and pay attention to all the detail so that every emotion can be felt from the image. The time can also help reflect on how the image makes you feel. You can see a lot within a black and white portrait as every inch of detail of a person's face makes their expression stand out. The emotions and feelings don't seem to be as prominent when the photography is in colour which is why black, and white is a go to for dark, mysterious topics as I feel within the work I have showed people that my work they look more closely at black and white as if they are examining every part to feel all that is being portrayed.

Figure 6 'untitled' Stephan Vosloo



This is an example on how strong black and white can change a whole image. This was taken by the Photographer Stephan Vosloo, the photo has an extremely deep and inspirational story behind it. The woman in the photo was raped at 16 years old which led her to get pregnant, in the picture she's holding the only photo she had of her daughter before she was put up for adoption. She prayed to meet her daughter one day and would write letters

to her daughter, one day her phone rang and her granddaughter was on the other line, they were finally able to connect. The attention to detail just captures the story beautifully, a heart-breaking story turned sweet, but the composition of the photo clutched to her chest can show the emotion. This photo and story has made me deeply emotion as there's so many similar stories out there. Photography can truly make your whole perspective change.

In conclusion, the keywords Emotions, Memories and Manipulation have expanded my knowledge a lot and will help guide my dissertation in the upcoming year. There are many factors the connection of a photograph and their audience "behind perception, emotion, creativity, personal identity, interpersonal communication, and human relationships help explain how we create visual images, how we share them, and how people react to what they see" (John Suler's, Image and psyche) this couldn't be more true as feel everything we experience through relationships we then teach or express to others it is part of our development as humans. This makes a perfect opportunity to use photography and visual imagery to portray relationships as we want to share so that others can react. For my dissertation I would like to focus on how we interpret emotions through photography and get more in depth with the meaning behind it. By using photographic images we are forming connections between normalising emotions and seeing what can come from certain images.

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Illustrations list

Figure 1 “ What Real Women Laugh Like”, Maud Fernhout (2016)

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Figure 2 “Boys don’t cry”, Giovanni Corabi (2017)

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Figure 3 “ Experimental spaces”, Thomas Friedrich Schaefer (2017)

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Figure 4, Toshifumi Kitamura (2011)

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Figure 5, Kazuhiro Nogi (2021)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/10/japans-2011-tsunami-then-and-now-in-pictures>

Figure 6, Stephan Vosloo

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