

'The type of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it establishes not a consciousness of the being-there of the thing... but an awareness of its having-been-there. What we have is a new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction of the here-now and the there-then' (Barthes, 1977 p.44).

To what extent, and with what impact can photography create a 'conjunction of the here and now and then and there' through the development of a relationship between memory, identity and place?

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Summary of Topic

Inspired by a combination of reflections on the writing of commentators such as Barthes and evaluation of the work of a range of photographers and their influence on my own developing artistic vision and creative and applied practice, this research question seeks to explore three interwoven strands of analysis with the overall intention of developing new perspectives on the role, importance and impact of photography in building memory and personal identity through an enhanced understanding of place.

‘The type of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it establishes not a consciousness of the being-there of the thing... but an awareness of its having-been-there. What we have is a new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction of the here-now and the there-then’ (Barthes, 1977 p.44).

To what extent, and with what impact can photography create a ‘conjunction of the here and now and then and there’ through the development of a relationship between memory, identity and place?

Introduction

Inspired by a combination of reflections on the writing of commentators such as Barthes and evaluation of the work of range of artists and their influence on my own creative vision and applied practice, this research question seeks to explore three interwoven strands of analysis with the overall intention of developing new perspectives on the role, importance and impact of photography in building memory and personal identity through an enhanced understanding of place: “spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority” (Barthes, 1977 p.44).

In Chapter 1 I critically evaluate the body of academic literature about the relationship between photography and memory, identity and place.

In Chapter 2, and using this research context as a baseline, I assess the work of practising photographers who also explore these themes and how they have influenced the development of my own work. This will additionally focus on the visceral significance and personal meaning of studying in the ‘place’ of Swansea and how this has both shaped my own creative vision and is now reflected thematically in

a developing body of work, providing a unifying sense of purpose and intent which uniquely define me as a photographer.

Chapter 3 reviews and evaluates how I have practically applied this research and intent in vocational settings relating to dementia care during two voluntary placements exploring the role of photographs in stimulating memory – and hence personal identity.

These three strands of analysis and evaluation will in conclusion lead to a new and personal perspective on photography's 'illogical conjunction of the here-now and the there-then': namely that it is the symbiotic relationship between photography and the concepts of memory, identity and place that make it a unique artistic medium, which in addition to the aesthetic can also play a practical role in medical care (Barthes, 1977 p.44).

Chapter 1

As a precursor to my research it was important to establish working definitions of the three core concepts and their relationship to the photographic image (Appendix 1).

Although written from the perspective of a philosopher and literary theorist, Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (1993) is widely regarded as the seminal work on the relationship between photography and memory. His commentary therefore provides the logical starting for my critical evaluation of research relating to it, and its influence on my developing practice. In it, Barthes specifically seeks to find the 'essence' of his mother through the medium of photography (1993 p.66). Central to this process is his consideration of the so-called 'Winter Garden' photo – an image of his own mother when she was a five-year-old child (Barthes, 1993). Despite searching through several photographs of her, the only one that he feels truly captures her

'essence' is this one (Barthes, 1993 p.66, 109). Barthes (1993) believes that despite the image depicting his mother as a child, this is how he perceives her in his present, suggesting how a photograph can capture the essence of a loved one. As Barthes puts it 'In order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes' (1993, p. 53). Barthes has his own terminology to describe this sensation: the 'punctum'- an 'arrow' which shoots from the image and 'strikes' the viewer ('Spectator') (1993). The 'punctum' of this image, and the 'wound' that draws him in, is the 'look' on the face of his mother as a child. This perspective on how memory and photography can correlate was influential in shaping the approach taken in my *Traces Through Time* project, where I explored my Nana's past and my connection to her through images of *her* past in Swansea.

Barthes chooses not to publish the Winter Garden as a photograph in the text because it would just appear to be a 'normal' photograph to other spectators and would not cause them the same 'wound' as it does to him (1993 p.73). Instead, he describes it as his 'Ariadne', suggesting that it has almost 'holy' significance, immortalising his mother's memory, which lives on because of it (1993, p.73).

Barthes' commentary has been criticised for not being that of a practitioner (Dillon, 2011). However, Brian Dillon argues it is precisely Barthes' lack of a technical perspective that make his reflections on the relationship between the photographic image and memory so powerful: '[he] has no interest in the techniques of photography.... It's this... embrace of the subjective which allows Barthes to begin the quest that makes his book so moving. Having lost his mother... he goes looking for her among old photographs....' (2011)

A concept which flows from Barthes' exploration of the relationship between photography and memory is that of 'Prosthetic Memory', developed by Alison Landsberg (2004). This explores how a photograph or film coverage of an event can, even if you did not experience it directly yourself at the time, create a 'prosthetic' and emotionally connective experience for the viewer (Landsberg, 2004). This approach has been particularly influential in stimulating my sense of curiosity in exploring the provenance of images and how they can still resonate in the present.

The relationship between photography and memory explored in *Camera Lucida* - and separately developed by Landsberg - is further considered, and challenged, by Berger in his 1980 essay *Uses of Photography* (1980). In it he argues that the image has become a 'record' of an event which acts as a 'replacement' for our concept of memory (Berger, 1980 p.50). 'Unlike any other visual image, a photograph is not a rendering, an imitation or an interpretation of a subject, but actually a trace of it. No painting or drawing, however naturalist, belongs to the subject in the way that a photograph does' (Berger, 1980 p.50).

Berger goes on to contend that this is due to the camera making the human mind's 'judgement' over what is 'remembered' and what is 'forgotten' irrelevant due to it capturing exactly what is there at that present moment (1980 p.54). This contrasts to Barthes' emphasis on the 'essence' of his mother in the 'Winter Garden' photograph; Barthes is prosthetically applying his memory of his mother as an adult onto the child version of her captured in the image, while Berger argues that photography makes the need to do so unnecessary altogether (1993 p.106), (1980 p.54). A wider critique of Berger's arguments is considered in Appendix 2.

In addition to exploring works that consider the relationship between *photography* and memory, identity and place, it is of course informative to set this in the context of a literature review which offers wider theoretical reflection (Appendix 3).

Chapter 2

A range of practising photographers and artists have explored the relationship between photography, memory, identity and place and have therefore influenced my own approach to integrating these themes into my work.

Firstly, Colin Gray's *In Sickness and in Health* documents the deterioration of his parents' health, culminating in his mother's death (2010). Gray's use of objects - for example, his mother's favourite wine glass - to convey this sense of deterioration and how it altered his own perception of his parents' identities was particularly influential on my exploration of the themes of memory and identity in *Traces Through Time* (Gray, 2010). For example, I chose objects to shoot through that are of significance and meaning to the individual whose life is the focus of the work - in this case my Nana's crystal and vase. The use of objects in Gray's work, and subsequently my own, to convey memory reflects the relationship between 'the here and now and then and there' (Barthes, 1977 p.44). Gray captures this in his portrait of his mother shot through her wine glass, portraying her present identity in the moment in contrast to his perception or memory of her (Gray 2010). The use of my Nana's crystal when re-shooting and re-interpreting the places featured in the photographs of her additionally builds upon this idea of how the lens and objects can be used in conjunction to reflect not only the theme of memory but additionally how this connects to those of identity and place.



Fig 1. *Unknown*, Gray, 2010



Fig 2. *Looking Back*, Peaple, 2022.

Figures 1 and 2 exemplify this in different ways. Gray's image is framed in such a way you can still see the wine glass he's photographing his mother through, creating the impression that even though he is capturing her in the present moment, he is viewing her based upon a memory associated with it. My own image from *Traces Through Time*, on the other hand, is taken through my Nana's crystal, entirely combining her in the present, looking back through the fragmentations created by the crystal, at her childhood self with her father. Both images aim to convey how an object of personal significance can convey the owner's identity and the memory associated with it.

Julie Cullen's *Through the Looking Glass* is exploration of her friend's traumatic brain injury and the 'brain fog' suffered as a result (Cullen, No Date). Like Gray, she uses a range of objects, such as a shattered mirror and glass ball, to visually communicate her friend's struggle with their recollection (Stenger, 2019). In doing so, she illustrates how photography, in conjunction with a reflective object, can visually project the state of someone's mind - and by extension how they experience the sensation of memory, in a way no other art medium can achieve. This also

influenced the decision-making behind my technique of shooting through crystals and glass, specifically in this case to create a sense of distortion and the 'blur' of memory and distant recollection. This reinforces the idea of the photograph being able to capture the 'essence' of a memory as described by Barthes; Cullen's images capture the interference of processing the 'essence' of a memory through the use of glass, while my own work aims to capture the sensation of experiencing it to the fullest in relation to place through the fragmentations created by use of my Nana's crystal (1993 p.73). Figures 3 and 4 illustrate this comparison. My photograph of Caswell Bay taken through it is designed to evoke a dreamlike quality of memory from distant childhood.



Fig 3. Unknown, Cullen, No Date



Fig 4. Caswell Bay Reflections, Peaple, 2022.

This approach is also particularly significant in the work of Stephen Gill. *Outside In* investigates how the placement of objects both *within* and *in front of* the lens of his camera can convey the 'weaknesses' and 'subjective strengths' of photography

(2010). In contrast to those so far discussed, Gill uses materials such as sea weed *in* the lens of his camera as a way to carry the 'spirit' or 'essence' of the place they are from into the image itself (2010), (1993 p.73). This technical use of materials to capture of the essence of - or 'place' - where they are from, is an aspect of the medium's 'genius' that I explore further in my own practice throughout my Thomas' Swansea project (Barthes, 1993 p.3). For example, I have collected vegetation from Cwmdonkin Park, mixed it with water and applied to prints of my work. This demonstrates how photography, through the theme of place, can reflect the 'awareness of its having-been-there' through the use of materials from the location itself - such as those Stephen Gill collected from the beaches of the seaside town and overlayed on a photograph or the soil collected from Cwmdonkin Park – as illustrated in Figure 5 and 6.

The image from Gills' *Outside In* features a city landscape with various materials such as soil and seaweed from the area overlayed upon it, bringing in the physical 'essence' of the place alongside what was captured by the camera (Barthes, 1993 p.73). That from my own practice is a test image of Cwmdonkin Park, printed and mixed with materials from the park itself. In doing so I intended to capture the 'spirit' of the park both through the lens of my camera and the collected materials.



Fig 5. *Unknown*, Gill, 2010



Fig 6. *Test Print #1*, Peaple, 2022

Thomas Friedrich Schafer's *Experimental Spaces* project features sets that are inspired by the memories of his family home, focusing on the 'fragments' of those memories which defined his sense of 'place' within it (Mistry, 2017). He does so with intention of visually stimulating the spectator's own memories of their childhood in a prosthetic fashion to 'evoke the experience of nostalgia' in relation to 'place' (Mistry, 2017). This echoes Landsberg's (2004) concept, a pervasive influence on my work, as previously noted. It also especially resonates with Barthes' (1977, p.44) observations about photography establishing "not a consciousness of the being-there of the thing... but an awareness of its having-been-there".

Alec Soth's *Sleeping by the Mississippi* focuses on his road trip, pausing to explore the area and 'to connect' with the State through the people living there (Bourgeois-Vignon, 2017). He argues that photography does not convey 'the deep truth of a person', but instead captures a fragment of it, hinting that the photograph can only reflect the basic essence of a person

and their identity in the place and time of it being taken (Bourgeois-Vignon, 2017). Sloth's approach was particularly influential on that I took when revisiting the original locations of the photographs from my Nana's past to reshoot and reinterpret them – and I also specifically visited locations significant to Thomas or mentioned in his works. This was particularly important in the Thomas project as, having no personal connection to him, I could only reflect his 'essence' through the descriptions of places featured in his works and recorded commentary (Barthes, 1993). However, by contrast, in *Traces Through Time* I could capture the 'essence' of my Nana in relation to the place more truthfully due to having a more detailed and thorough first-hand account of her memories in addition to the photographs she gave me (Barthes, 1993 p.106).

The image from *Sleeping by The Mississippi* in Figure 7. captures the 'essence' of the 'place', a cemetery in 'Fountain City', through use of contrasting elements - such as the graves resembling the past memory of those who lived there with the modern petrol station below, bringing the viewer back into the present (Barthes, 1993 p.73). I took a similar approach with my own image from *Traces Through Time* (Figure 8) depicting my Nana's childhood home but, unlike Soth's, it is shot through a crystal, fragmenting it, with the addition of the overlaid image of her with her father, contrasting the 'essence' of both the past and present (Barthes, 1993 p.73). Combining the use of the crystal with additional imagery captures the 'essence' of the 'place' of her home, alongside that of my Nana and Great Grandfather in the original photo (Barthes, 1993 p.73). The last image taken from my Thomas' Swansea project (Figure 9) uses similar techniques to capture the 'essence' of

Cwmdonkin Park and Thomas' descriptions of it from *The Hunchback in The Park*, including the 'garden lock' and 'trees and water' (Thomas, 2014 p.80). I similarly used the crystal, but with the addition of a water-sprayed screen to shoot Cwmdonkin Park Gate and the Water gardens. Alongside capturing the 'essence' of the park, I hoped to reflect it in relation to the theme of isolation and the dreamlike world the Hunchback inhabits within the poem (Barthes, 1993).

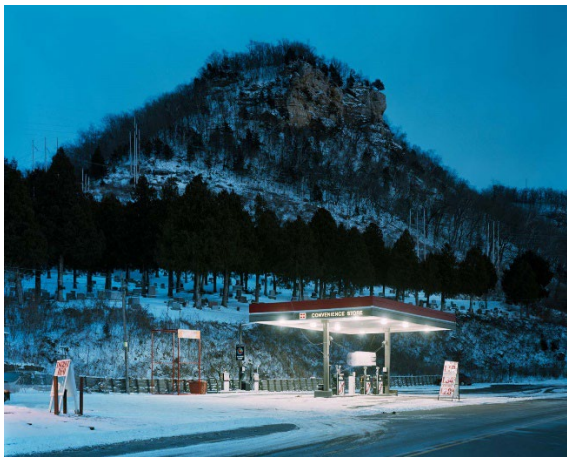


Fig 7. Cemetery, Fountain City, Soth, 2002



Fig 8. Murton Memories, Peaple, 2022

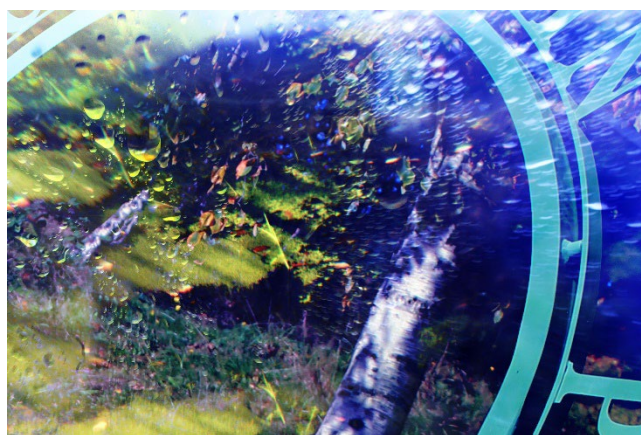


Fig 9. "Garden Lock", Peaple, 2022

Amy Parrish's *Check The Mail for Her Letter* features a series of experiments based on family photographs, highlighting her Grandmother who had recently died following a struggle with Dementia (Harbadge, 2020). Parrish alters each photograph to 'visualise' the 'fragmented recollection' experienced by those who suffer from memory loss and how they process this through 'dreams' (Harbadge, 2020; Parrish, 2022). She accomplished this by adjusting each image using a gouache and wax pencil, aiming to imitate 'slippages' - a symptom her own Grandmother experienced in relation to memory loss (2022). This was a key stimuli to my initial decision to explore the relationship between photography and memory in *Traces Through Time* and then subsequently – and practically - apply this in my Photo Reminiscence workshops, in turn building upon approaches by Aëgerter (2016).

In this context, the themes of memory, identity and place and the relationship between them explored by these artists have inspired creative curiosity and are now a recurrent motif in my own work, defining its current focus and development.

Their first exploration came from my proposal to base the 2021 group exhibition on the significance of Swansea Marina to the city's 'essence' (Barthes, 1993). This in turn was based on discussions with my Nana about her father's experiences working there during WWII and photographs of him still held by her. The proposal was to combine these photographs with the recollections she shared.

Although the proposal was not accepted, its themes relating to memory and place did feed through into the agreed project on Swansea Market (Figure 10). Further discussions with my Nana were based on her memories of the Market, which informed my research and input.

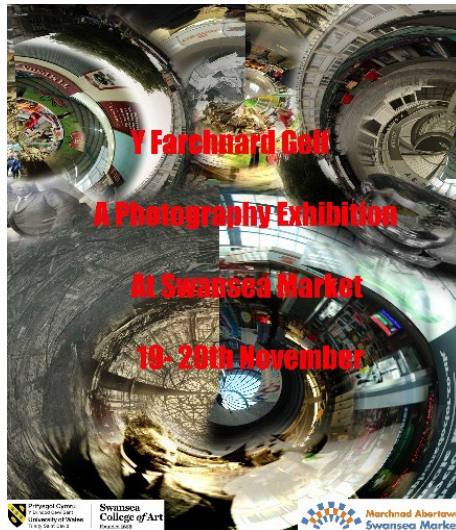


Fig 10. *Y Farchnard Gell* Poster, *Peuple*, 2021

The creative curiosity stimulated by this project in turn inspired my decision to further explore the relationship of the photograph to these themes through my own family heritage in what was to develop into *Traces Through Time* (Figure 11).

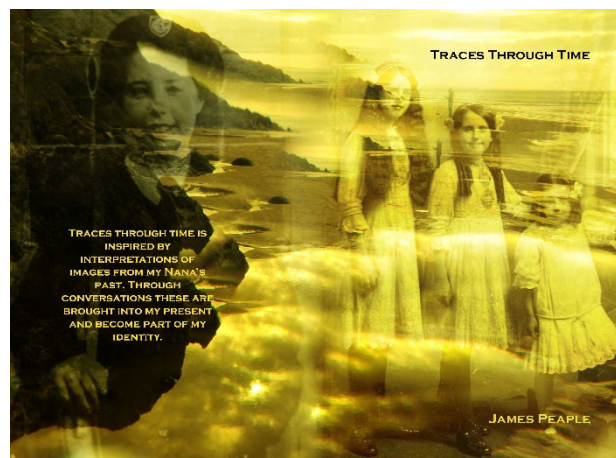


Fig 11. *Traces Through Time* Cover Design, *Peuple*, 2022.

This was based around a collection of photographs of my Nana and her family's life in Swansea in the first half of the 20th Century. Critically, it also involved *conversations* with my Nana about their significance and resonance, helping to build my understanding of their importance, and that of the 'place' they were taken, in relation to her identity. In this respect the project offered the opportunity to explore

and test Barthes' concept of "conjunction of the here-now and the there-then" (Barthes, 1977 P.44). I therefore revisited the sites contained within these photographs and shot them through my Nana's crystal and vase. This was important in order to establish a direct connection to her in the artistic process. I then digitally combined the images together to bring the essence of *her* past into *my* present day, studying as a student in Swansea. In doing so I wanted to convey importance of the memories contained within the photographs in relation to Swansea as a *place* itself.

In further developing the project, and as previously noted, I initially researched Gray's *In Sickness and In Health*, which emerged as a key influence in deciding it's basic idea and the techniques of shooting through resonant objects. This then led me to explore Soth's *Sleeping by the Mississippi*. His work was particularly significant in my growing appreciation of the importance of a direct connection between memory and location or 'place'. Finally, there was the aforementioned influence of Cullen's *Through the Looking Glass*. Her approach was especially influential in the visual outcome of my work as I assimilated her use of glass objects in my image making. I wanted to use my Nana's crystal to photograph my images through and merge them with Nana's own photographs to convey the 'essence' of those memories being brought into the present (Barthes, 1993 p.73).

Building on the significance of the relationship of what is in front of the lens to the intent and message of the artistic outcome, I concurrently researched artists who have experimented with this concept as this could be seen as a manifestation of the 'conjunction of the here-now and the there-then'(Barthes 1977 p.44). Initially, as previously noted, I explored Gill's *Outside In* series in which he literally put objects into the lens or 'body' of his camera and then took a series of photographs based on

this (Gill, 2010). His work was another which heavily influenced my decision to use my Nana's crystal in front my own camera lens during the shoots.

The project proved crucial in developing a sense of my own *identity* and belonging in relation to the *place* and community of Swansea as a whole, subsequently reflected in a decision to send it to Ffoto Gallery's 'Communities of Choice' exhibition open call (See Appendix 4).

As a result of my reflections on the themes in *Traces Through Time*, the next phase of my exploration of the relationship between photography, memory, identity and place began to coalesce around the significance of Swansea to Dylan Thomas' work as an artist. The significance of the 'place' of Swansea to Thomas' creative development is much documented (A.Davies, 2014). This influence is clear in Thomas' memorable description of Swansea as an "ugly, lovely town ... crawling, sprawling... by the side of a long splendid curving shore" (Thomas, 1954). He stated that 'this sea town was my world' and a number of 'places' in and around the city are closely connected to his development as a writer, and seen as a key influence (Appendix 5). Thomas perhaps most clearly articulated these influences in the 1943 radio broadcast *Reminiscences of Childhood*, which also provide a context to what is perhaps his most famous work, *Under Milk Wood*.

Conceptually, I therefore decided to combine my own, contemporary photography of these significant 'places' with historic images and extracts from Thomas' writings to create a photo book and proposed mini exhibition.

I have liaised closely with both the Dylan Thomas Centre and the curators of 5 Cwmdonkin Drive in relation to the research, planning and delivery of both. As a result, the working title for my upcoming body of work is:

'An ugly, lovely town ... crawling, sprawling... by the side of a long splendid curving shore'. Dylan Thomas' Swansea: Memory, Identity and Place.

This sense of 'place', and that of belonging associated with it, which Thomas experienced in Swansea during his early years was key in developing his creative vision and resultant literary works. As James A Davies comments: "Swansea was the greatest formative influence on Dylan Thomas", playing a key role in shaping his identity (A.Davies, 2014 P.11). The 'essence' of a memory described by Barthes (1993) in relation to the notion of place is in fact one of the underlying themes of Thomas' work. For example, Cwmdonkin Park - a place where Dylan spent much of his time during these 'formative years' - is recurring setting for his poems and short stories. In *Return Journey* the park resembles Thomas' childhood innocence in a Swansea devastated after the blitz, where he writes "the childish, lonely, remembered music fingering on the suddenly gentle wind" which also changes as the 'dusk was folding the park around' (Thomas, 2014 p.323). This shows how his own perception of the park clashes with its present state – and suggests how a 'place' and the memories created during those 'formative' years are central to shaping an artist's identity and their creative vision and practice.

As a result, and as an integral part of this process, I therefore extended my research from *Traces Through Time* to photographers and artists who specifically explore the theme of memory in the context of 'place'. This started with Susan Hiller's *Monument*, a work which explores themes such as memory and time through photographs of memorial plaques (Tate, 2022). Her work was a particular influence on deciding to begin my early research shoots at 5 Cwmdonkin Drive, the physical 'place' where Thomas was born and spent his formative years. This is of course also recorded by it's own commemorative plaque on the building. The approach links to

Berger's commentary on how photography has become a 'replacement' of how we view memory; because Hillier has captured these plaques in a photographic form they have become immortalised, therefore removing the need to reminisce on seeing them individually in person (1980).

I subsequently researched Francisco Souto's 'collateral' image series *Ecos de la Memoria*. This focuses on the 'small moments that stick with you' through graphite drawings, which highlight the locations depicted by them being positioned at the bottom of the artwork, otherwise dominated by the clear open skies (Awilliams, 2022). This approach reinforced the importance of visiting locations that feature in Thomas' work - including Cwmdonkin Park, the setting for *The Hunchback in the Park* and Rhossili, which provides the backdrop for *Extraordinary Little Cough*.

Next, and from a related perspective, in his *Experimental Spaces* project Thomas Fredrich Schaefer aims to take the 'essence' of these 'small moments' in relation to the 'place' of the childhood home and use it to stimulate the spectator's own memories of childhood (Mistry, 2017).

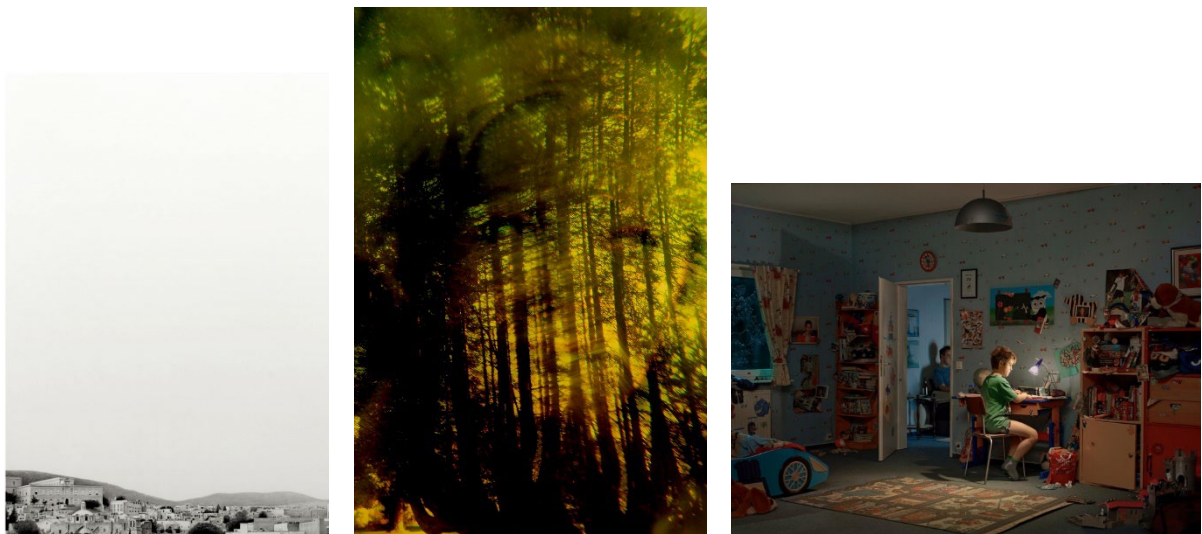


Fig 12. Cityscapes #2 Zacatecas, Mexico, Souto, no date Fig 13 "Figure Without Fault", Peaple, 2022. Fig 14. *Experimental Spaces* #1, Schaefer, 2017

For example, Figure 12 shows Souto's *Cityscapes #2 Zacatecas, Mexico* - a black and white graphite drawing of the city of Zacatecas (Awilliams, 2022). The city itself is dwarfed by the sky to replicate the idea that 'essence' of the place is being "filtered through the lens of memory", suggesting that only the fragments of a 'place' remain in our memory after we experience it (2022). My own juxtaposed image from the shoot at Cwmdonkin Park (Figure 13) is based on a description from the *Hunchback in The Park*: "a woman, figure without fault". I used an image of Greta Garbo from Thomas' bedroom and merged it with the trees from the park which stood 'straight and tall' (Thomas, 2014 p.80). I integrated this to reflect how the 'essence' of Thomas' own memories filtered down to his own practice and stories (Barthes, 1993). Finally, Figure 14, Schaefer's *Experimental Places #1* captures his own childhood memories of 'angrily' doing homework while his father watches TV. Schafer recreated the environment of his childhood home and tried to capture this 'essence' through objects, stating that they are "reference points on which we frame our memories" (Mistry, 2017).

Additionally, I considered Ibrahim El-Salahi's *Reborn Sounds of Childhood Dreams*, which portrays the spirituality created when 'memory and dreams past and present collide' (Memory Coursework Guide, 2022). I appreciated the way which he created a strange juxtaposition of excitement and a sense of the unnatural (*Reborn Sounds of Childhood Dreams I*, 2013). His approach specifically influenced that taken in my shoots of Cwmdonkin Park, where I sought to capture underlying themes from *The Hunchback In The Park*.

Following this, I explored Liu Baomin's work, which aims to convey a 'tension between reality and illusion' through a hyper- realistic 'splitting' portrayal of his subjects through 'wet glass' (Stephen Kelly Creative, 2012). This was a major

influence in deciding the visual outcomes of my work as I undertook a number of shoots implementing this technique. This is illustrated in Figures 15 and 16.



Fig 15. *Self Portrait #2*, Baomin, No Date



Fig 16. *"The Shimmering Sea"*, Peaple, 2022

Baomin's image conveys this 'tension between reality and illusion' through the use of 'hyper realistic' cuts in his oil painting, as if his subjects were projected through a layer of glass. The fragmentations which are produced by the cuts help to represent the conflicting nature of 'reality and illusion' that is a key element of Barthes' (1993) idea of 'essence': memory by its nature is unreliable - we only recall fragmentations of it so that it becomes almost an 'illusion' in comparison to the reality of experiencing the event in the moment it took place (Kelly, 2012). In my own image from Thomas' Swansea, I tried to reflect this idea through the use of my crystal and a water-sprayed Perspex screen, fragmenting the 'shimmering sea' of Rhossili described by him in *Extraordinary Little Cough* (Thomas, 2014 P.202).

Penultimately, I reflected on David Szauder's *Failed Memories* series, which explores how 'human and digital' memory are more interconnected than we think (Smail, 2014). Szauder believes that humans can 'store' memories onto a 'hard

drive' in a similar manner to computers and that just like them human memory fades or 'corrupts' over time (Jablotschkin, 2020). This was particularly influential in the later development of my project, when I merged together digital negatives of the various shoots with their original digital counterparts, as illustrated in Figures 17 and 18.

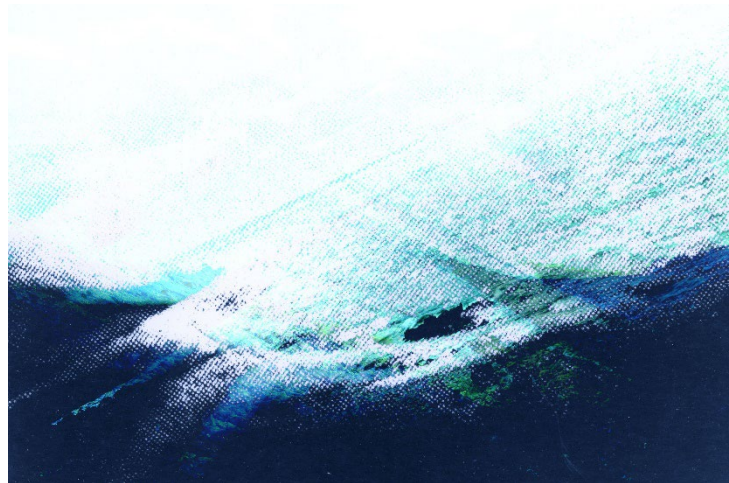
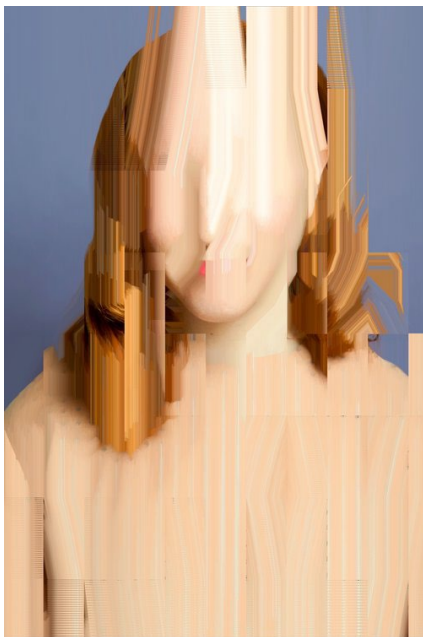


Fig 17. Szuander, Unknown, 2014 Fig 18. "The Shimmering Sea" Faded, Peaple, 2022

Szuander's image consists of a woman whose face has blurred out of all recognition digitally, exploring the parallels between human and digital memory, and how like digital memory, human memory can become 'corrupted' over time (Jablotschkin, 2020). For my own project I wanted to integrate elements of what I had learned from the dementia workshops I had run over the summer, so I merged the grainy analogue prints with their colourful original digital counterparts. In doing so I wanted to explore the 'fading' of our memories over time. This also contrasts with ideas

Berger discusses in the *Uses of Photography*, where he argues that photography has 'replaced' our concept of memory; as Szaunder's work suggests, photography can be used to show how our memory deteriorates over time (Berger, 1980).

Lastly, I critically assessed the work of Miyuki Takanashi who aims to portray the 'beauty and thoughts of life'(Kooness.com, 2022). A consistent theme in this portrayal is memory and its manifestations in the subjects of her work. I was interested in Takanashi's use of colours to convey 'floating' nature of reminiscence (Kooness.com, 2022). Takanashi's art style has been particularly influential throughout my whole project, as illustrated in Figures 19 and 20.



Fig 19. *Floating Memory*, Takanashi, 2018 Fig 20. *"The Shimmering Sea" with text*, Peaple, 2022

Takanashi's *Floating Memory* painting conveys the subject's 'thoughts of life' through her use of colour to visually demonstrate concepts such as 'memory' (Kooness.com, 2022). This was something I aimed to reflect within my own 'shimmering sea' image from my shoot in Rhossili, based upon a description given by Thomas in *Extraordinary Little Cough* (Thomas, 2014 P.202). I used my Crystal in combination

with a Perspex screen to convey this idea, altering the colours to a light blue tone to reflect the 'shimmering' nature of the sea, with the fragmentations and cuts produced by the objects I had used, representing the hazy, unrefined nature of reminiscing.

Chapter 3

My concurrent decision to apply learning in relation to the three themes in a practical setting stemmed from a developing curiosity about how photography could be used to help those who struggle with their own reminiscence, in turn reflecting research undertaken for *Traces Through Time*. This curiosity led me to explore vocational applications such as dementia care and active volunteering.

My interest in the relationship between photography and how it helps those with memory loss started with research into Lawrence Aëgerter,'s project, *Photographic Treatment (2016)*. She approached her goal of improving the lives of those effected through a collection of 'photographic diptychs' containing images which were paired together with the aim of testing the cognitive functions of dementia patients (Aëgerter,2016). Inspired by this approach, I wanted to seek my own opportunities to develop a series of reminiscence workshops in appropriate settings over the summer vacation. These would additionally offer a practical opportunity to challenge and test a number of Barthes' assumptions about 'the type of consciousness the photograph involves' and in particular his argument that "it establishes not a consciousness of the being-there of the thing.... the photograph being an illogical conjunction of the here-now and the there-then." (Barthes, 1977 p.44)

My approach was developed in two separate but related phases – one with the Fair Close Day Centre and the other with Willows Edge residential Care Home, both in Newbury (Figure 21). They offered different settings, some different challenges, but also common themes in terms of learning, planning and delivery - and the evaluation of impact (see separate Visual Diary).

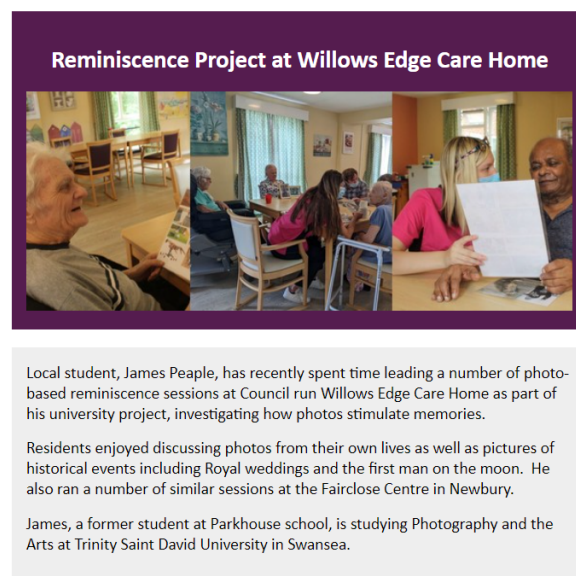


Fig 21. Reminiscence Project, West Berkshire Council, 2022

I planned initial sessions around individual participants sharing personal photos from their family past. The feedback from the evaluation form I designed indicated that they found the discussions around them rewarding and had never used images in this way a means of stimulating memory before the session, despite having their photographs at home. Based on the feedback the most effective reminiscence triggers were of specific photographs that contained certain memories that were special to the participants.

My second series of sessions provided the opportunity to work with groups rather than individuals, using general stimulus photos. I decided to use a combination of photos illustrating memories that were precious to me on the basis that, by sharing my own memories with the participants, it would make it easier for them to share theirs with me. Alongside these, I also created a series of general visuals of what I thought could potentially be of interest to the residents. These included images of famous singers and sporting events as well as those from the seaside in the 1960s, TV shows and cats and dogs to see if they would potentially trigger any memories of their own pets. I subsequently received further information about the participants' hobbies and interests so could then tailor my visuals to each individual, which I hoped would stimulate memories more meaningfully and directly. During the sessions, the participants in fact interacted positively with both the tailored and more general images.

An important aspect of the sessions was the evaluation of impact. The following represent the key points of learning from that evaluation based on the self-evaluation forms I therefore designed for participants.

Firstly, that interaction with images is a distinctively individual process. For the first session I designed photo sheets based on what I thought were the general interests of each participant. As with Aëgerter's use of photographic diptychs to simulate brain activity, I hoped these would trigger memories based on the resonance of the visuals presented (2016). Additionally, some of the participants themselves brought images that had sentimental value to them. The questions I asked based on both were designed to see if the 'essence' of the photos used could 'pierce' the participants and potentially stimulate memories within them, in a manner similar to Barthes' concept of the 'punctum' (1993 p.106; p.27). While I felt I had managed to establish a

connection with most participants through the selected images, I did struggle more with those who had more extreme forms of dementia and became more quickly fatigued.

Secondly, I therefore realised I that I needed to regularly develop new themes for my photo sheets to avoid repetition. When looking back on Aëgerter's project, I noted that she developed 65 themes for each set of photographs and, based on this, decided to develop visuals based on a range of themed historical events (Photographic Treatment, 2015). This proved to be a very successful approach, with many of the participants recognising photos of well-known events and people depicted within the images. For example, showing a participant a photo of royal wedding triggered them to reminisce about their own experiences of a wedding.

However, perhaps the primary lesson I learned from these sessions was the unique satisfaction of taking key concepts from my practice and applying them to real world scenarios to positively help others and, I believe, to demonstrate how photography is indeed 'unprecedented' as an art form in its power to stimulate reflection in those who suffer from memory loss through its 'conjunction of the here-now and the there-then.'(Barthes, 1977 p.44).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that Barthes was right in identifying the 'unprecedented' nature of photography; it indeed uniquely captures the 'essence' of each of the three key themes of memory, identity and place (1993 p.106). Crucially, it is the *symbiotic* relationship between photography and these concepts that make it such a unique artistic medium, which in addition to the aesthetic can also play a practical role in addressing conditions associated with memory loss. The importance of the *dialogue*

that the photograph can create between the past and the present – the ‘conjunction of the here-now and the there-then’ - is essential to understanding a wider dialogue between humans themselves; when we look back to the places and people that are captured within the image realm it helps give us a greater sense of identity, belonging and overall purpose. Through this Photography can therefore make us more human through it’s ‘conjunction between the here and now and the there then’ (Barthes, 1977 p.44). These reflections have played a key role in helping shape my own artistic vision. As I state on my website:

“I am a Photographer whose work aims to explore the relationships between past, present and future. In doing so I seek to explore how cultural connections between people, places and objects develop and are communicated through image to audience.” (Peaple, 2022)

They have also ignited in me an ‘unprecedented’ passion and vocational sense of purpose by exploring the power of the photo to create ‘an awareness of... having been there’ in those suffering from memory loss. And in this respect the medium is therefore now also shaping my own identity and sense of place in society; a new, and very powerful, ‘type of consciousness’; (Barthes, 1977 p.44).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions of Memory, Identity and Place

Firstly, a basic definition of memory is the ‘process of taking in information from the world around us, processing it, storing it and later recalling that information, sometimes many years later’ (Fil.ion.ucl, 2022). This concept of ‘taking in the information from the world around us’ is an aspect of memory that forms the basis of Alison Landsberg’s *Prosthetic Memory* (2004). In it, Landsberg discusses how being shown an image or watching a news story of an event can cause the viewer to have an emotional, ‘prosthetic’ experience, as if they were there physically experiencing the event themselves at the time. It is this concept of ‘prosthetic memory’ that is referenced prominently throughout my analysis of the relationship of photography to it, and also the interaction with the other two core concepts of identity and place.

Secondly, a common definition of identity is ‘the distinguishing character or personality of an individual’ (Merriam Webster, 2022). The concept of identity being the ‘distinguishing’ element or definition of a person’s self is a very broad and complex one, as explored further by Jason Satterfield in *The Iceberg - Visible and Hidden Identity* (Satterfield, 2017). In terms of relationships, at one basic level any act of taking a photograph might be seen as an expression of identity, from the now ubiquitous social media profile picture to the traditional family holiday photo. However, as is explored in my text, the interactions are far more complex and multi-layered.

Thirdly, the concept of place is often defined as being ‘an area, town, building etc...’ or ‘to give something emphasis, importance etc.’ (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). It therefore has at least two elements associated with it, one related to geography and physical spaces or constructions, the other to anthropological and sociological

concepts of *belonging*. These two different concepts of place are explored by a number of different photographers with different emphases, which are considered throughout my evaluation.

Appendix B: a critique of Berger's arguments

Berger's essay is itself a response to Susan Sontag's arguments from *On Photography* in which she states that the medium is becoming a replacement for reality and integral to how society structures itself and its view of the world (Sontag, 2008).

The strengths of Berger's approach lie in his views on how photography redefines our view of memory and distinctions between its private and public uses. Kai Berrmann, in his overview of Berger's work, also supports the argument that the photograph has replaced our idea of 'memory', leading society to view memories or historical events as a 'spectacle' (Berrmann, 2018). Their weaker aspects relate to being based too heavily around his own political views (in part a response to those of Sontag's) which can leave them lacking objectivity. This is reinforced by Sagar Kolte who comments on how there are 'undeniably political' underpinnings to Berger's response to Sontag, but that he still manages to offer 'important insights' into the relationship of photography to memory (Kolte, 2013).

Appendix C: wider literature review

Major thinkers who explore the broader concept of identity include Sigmund Freud and Erick Erikson. Freud's seminal psychoanalytic framework considers the concept of identity through firstly, the 'Id' composed from instinct and desire; secondly, a 'Super Ego' stemming from our core values and morals and finally 'Ego' which balances them out to create our identity (*Psychology Today*, 2022). Erikson analyses the concept of identity in relation to an eight-stage life cycle. In this a number of different selves such as the parent, career or sexual self are merged together by the 'Ego Identity' to create a stable sense of identity (*Psychology Today*, 2022). It is particularly interesting that one recent commentator, Mary Bergstein, has specifically reflected on the relationship between Freud's psychoanalytic framework and photography, describing the mind's eye which captures the multifarious experiences which shape identity as the equivalent of a camera's lens (Harvard Book Store, 2022).

From a related perspective, some texts have also sought to directly develop theories of identity and the self and their relationship to the image and image making. Perhaps most interestingly in this context, there are those developed by the sociologist Anthony Giddens in *Modernity and Self Identity* (Thompson, 2016). Giddens reflects on how "new mechanisms of self identity" such as mobile phones, social media and image editing software can impact on our identity and how it can now be continuously shaped and presented to the world.

Appendix D: Ffoto Gallery's 'Communities of Choice' exhibition open call application

Project Proposal

'Communities of Choice' Project Proposal

Traces Through Time

James Peaple

'The type of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it establishes not a consciousness of the being-there of the thing... but an awareness of its having-been-there. What we have is a new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction of the here-now and the there-then' (Barthes)

My 'Communities of Choice' project proposal focuses on the theme of *identity*.

It explores the role of photography in building relationships between memory and identity through an enhanced understanding of place; of community.

In doing so it draws upon my major second-year undergraduate Photography in the Arts project at the University of Wales Trinity St.David's in Swansea, exploring memory, place and identity: 'Traces Through Time'.

'Traces Through time' explores and reinterprets original photographs from my Nana's childhood growing up in communities in Swansea in the 1930s, 40s and 50's. We discussed their significance to her and how important they had been in shaping her, her family's and friend's identities in a shared community together. The resultant photobook and exhibition made creative connections between past memories, places and identity, including my own present identity as I interacted with them,

visiting locations, undertaking new shoots and discussing memories of those communities with my Nana. In doing so I learnt more about her identity and the community which shaped and my identity, and the relationship am now forging with that community as a practising photography student within it. That relationship is both aesthetic and visceral.

In creating the images attached, I visited various locations featured within my Nana's photographs, rephotographing each of them through my Nana's crystal an item of personal significance to her. I then digitally edited the crystalised effect and merged it with elements from my Nana's archived photographs to reflect how the essence of the past memories are still being felt in the present.

'Traces Through Time' additionally builds developmentally from research and work produced for an earlier second year group exhibition 'Y Farchnard Gelf' which explored the significance on Swansea Market within the community. My work for it also drew on my family's memories of the market from the early 20th century onwards.

The themes explored in this work has live and vocational applications where I am currently working on a voluntary basis with dementia patients to use their photographic images of community to revisit a sense of identify and self.

Appendix E: Places in and around Swansea which feature in Dylan Thomas' works

'Places' and locations in and around Swansea of particular significance to his body or work and therefore featured in my project include:

- 5 Cwmdonkin drive, in the uplands, where he was born and lived until 1937
- Cwmdonkin Park, where he played as a child and was the influence for his early poem 'The Hunchback in the Park'
- The Uplands Tavern
- High Street
- Rhossili Bay