

Name: Eszti Fulop

Module; Research in practice

Lecture; Paul Duerinckx

Word count: 2372

In this essay I will be exploring this three key words memory, hauntology and materiality. These key words relate to my practice because my work has always tried to explore the relationship of memory and photography how photographs can be ghost of the past. I bring out these themes by experimenting with different chemical process to help bring these themes alive. My practice tries to explore the theme of memory and hauntology by layering object from the place to capture the essence of a place. In the hopes of exploring the past is present now in that place, this creates an abnormal effect in my work where my viewers cannot discern the real world. Material and process helps these themes to come to life by exploring the right methods that help the audience see the themes within the process. The theorists I will be looking at are

Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* and Mark Fisher *Ghost of my Life*. The range of artists I will be discussing is Tacia Dean, Damine Hirst and Hiroshi Sugimoto as their works explore the topics of the key words that have been chosen for the research topic.

Key word: Memory

In this section we will begin to explore the relationship between photographs and memory.

Lucreess Van Groningen talks about how she was fascinated by the relationship between photography and memory (Van Groningen, 2004). Groningen talks about how common it is for people to capture special moments such as holidays, Christmas, and birthdays. Then she discovers pictures from her childhood and begins to talk in detail about them. Commenting on an old family photo, she noted that the image was not of high quality, but that “there are layers to uncover from a sociological perspective, it reveals what Christmas looked like in the 70s” (Van Groningen, 2004). She explains how the photo had held this emotional hold over her.

“This photo holds a wealth of personal memories and emotion for me like details of my grandmother brooch” (Van Groningen, 2004). Groningen’s conclusion is “some argue that taking pictures prevent us truly living in the moment, inhibiting a memory others believe photography aids memory” (Van Groningen, 2004). Human memories are unreliable according to scientists as people can often misremember certain events and can create memories of stuff that never happened (Marshall, 2023). “Memory works, our findings actually reveal a memory system that is adapted to the world we live in” (Marshall, 2023)

A personal archive of photographs can serve as a record of a life. This is true when it comes to the context of Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* (2008) as he explores how photographs can speak of history. Barthes explores this context by looking at old photographs of his mother after she died to see if he could “find something that speaks of his mam” (Ahmed, 2017). By doing

this he found out that “Barthes consider that time when his mother was alive before him its history a period that is good to see and acknowledge but not recognizable to him since he did not exist at that time” (Ahmed, 2017) I also agree with Barthes context to this as in previous project I was looking at photographs of my grandad after he died to make project. I found the images of his life before I knew him had more of impact as seeing a different part of his life was exploring this concept in my work by blurring the picture to capture the element of grief. To conclude, a photograph can trigger a memory even whether viewer has no personal experience of the time or place depicted in the image.



Figure 1 Tacita Dean Disappearance at sea (1966)

Tactia Dean *disappearance at sea* is a 1966 16mm colour film with sound filmed at ST abb head in Berwick Nootan England (Tate, 2019). The film has captured the close rotating of the lighthouse. Light and shadow create images that evoke a sense of nostalgia and unease, inviting viewers to contemplate the ghosts of the past in the present (Tate, 2019). These images capture the liminal space between land and water, where traces of human presence intersect with the vastness of the natural world. The work has the concept of “feelings of temporal dissociation dean create the passage of time does not correspond with real time” (Tate, 2019) The works relates back to Fisher concept of “Time just got mixed, jumbled up together, making

no sort of sense” (Fisher, 2022). This explores this theme well because we have no sense of time and the past but somehow it manages to creep back in to the present. This work explores this well because it is showing that the past is always there but rather jumbled up making no sense.

Key word hauntology

Hauntology is the range of ideas reflecting to the cultural theme of the past, as in the meaning of ghost. French philosopher Jacques Derrida describes hauntology as “hauntology may sound like the study of invited ghost and ghouls, it is actually a concept that considers the real-world effects of how dead futures can haunt the present” (Ashford, 2000). The question that needs an answer is how hauntology comes into play with images, are photographs ghost of the past? Many people believe that a camera can capture a “spirit invisible to the naked eye” (National Science Museum, 2004). This belief came from the work of the photographer William Hope Mangles to capture photograph plate of ghostly faces that have not been visible to the room. Spirit photography often “capture these often-elusive phenomena, serving to confirm spiritualist understanding of reality (National Science Museum, 2004). This suggests that photographs play a role in how ghost can haunt the past by capturing the moments of everyday life.

The book *Hauntology* by Mervyn Covery explores how hauntology is featured in contemporary art (Covery, 2023). Covery makes an interesting comment on hauntology: “The former haunts the present from the past, an event, idea or entity whose moments is past, but which continues to make it present future” (Covery, 2023). This implies that this ghostly effect is always haunting us in the present day but people entity that have already passed away. This can be shown in

photographs as they capture an archive of a person life which has this element of hauntology to it.

The book *Ghost of my life* by Mark Fisher explores and argues that we are haunted by futures that failed to happen (Fisher, 2022). Fisher comments that “there something quite arcane or mystical about unearthing all these old records, these old sounds, these ghosts of people trapped in recording from, and revoking them into something new, giving them a new lease of life” (Fisher, 2022,P , 7). This quote of relate to my practice because I try to take object from place and create them into something new within my work to give them a new lease of life.



Figure 2 Hiroshi Sugimoto Seascapes (2004)

Hiroshi Sugimoto explores the topic around memory and time (Sugimotos, 2004). The work seascape is documenting and photographing the different seas. His images evoke a sense of contemplation and transcendence, inviting viewers to reflect on the eternal qualities of the natural world and the memories associated with specific places. Sugimoto work create this effect “theme in a timeless manner that blurs the line between reality and abstraction” (Sugimotos, 2004). Sugimoto works relates to one of Fisher theory point in *the ghost of my life* where he says, “The jumbling up of time, the montaging of earlier eras, has ceased to be worthy of comment it is now so prevalent that is no longer even noticed” (Fisher, 2022, P, 6). This

suggest that work invokes these ideas that we are trapped in the space of time and the work represent this by blurring the line between reality and abstraction.

Looking back at the work of Tacita Dean, themes of Hauntology are also present. Dean`s work disappearance at sea addresses the two themes of memory and hauntology. The work exploring the concept of the film has captured the close rotating of the lighthouse. Light and shadow create images that evoke a sense of nostalgia and unease, inviting viewers to contemplate the ghosts of the past in the present (Tate, 2019). These images capture the liminal space between land and water, where traces of human presence intersect with the vastness of the natural world. The works relates back to Fisher concept of “Time just got mixed, jumbled up together, making no sort of sense” (Fisher, 2022, P, 9). This explores this theme well because we have no sense of time and the past but somehow it Manges to creep back in to the present.

Key word materiality, process, and methodology

In this section we will discuss that many artist concerns are not the artwork they make but rather the artist process (Grant, 2004). Kim Grant makes an interesting statement “in doing, so she shows how process is an intrinsic part of aesthetic theory that connects to Importance of contemporary art” (Grant, 2004). This suggest that many artists may benefit from focusing more on the materials and process they use and how the define the conceptual theme of their work. according to Tate the artist main focus when working with different process and materials is to “an empathies on the results on practical materials of carrying out the process determined by the artist” (Tate, 2012) this implies that Artists should focus on the result of the procedures

used than try and find conceptual them for the work but let the material and the process speaks for itself.

We will begin to research into a range of online sources on why it is important to have the good methodology in your practice and the theory behind art methodology. “We look through the lens of art methodology. Each methodology is a unique perspective that helps us understand face of the artwork” (*Art history methodologies* 2002). I agree with this statement because in my own practice I use a range of different methods to help contextualise the themes within my body of work. Another point the article make is that every person brings a unique point to art, but it is important to remember that methodologies help us understand are work even better. This suggest that the best outcome is when you find the right methods that help contextualise and understand the artist work.



Figure 3 Damine Hirst (2012)

In this section we will explore the artist Damine Hirst and the range of methods and material he uses in his work. the work explores a range of different techniques such as sculpture, painting,

and conceptual art (Hirst, 2012). Hirst work try to explore the theme of life and death. His best-known artwork are his paintings. Hirst painting have two different methods which are the argument of colour sports are known as sport painting his second method is creating by centrifugal force and his canvass on a spinner and pause the paint as it spins (Hirst, 2012). This art is good example on the correct way of displaying a range of methods of work that works for the themes the artist is addressing. another point is the artist is clearly using a range of different experimentations in his work to help find the right methods and materials to best support the themes within his work. This demonstrates how finding the right methods and material to use it just as important for the artist development into the practice just as much as theoretical research.



Figure 4 Undertow, Fulop (2024)

In my own practice I engage with processes and materials to explore this relationship that we have with photographs and memory. This ghostly effect can be shown in photographs as they capture an archive of a person's life or of a site and have this element of memory and hauntology to the work. Materials and physical process help me to explore the themes of memory and hauntology. One example from my work is *Undertow* (see figure 4), which has images of the beach printed on acetate with a photogram layer of sea water on top through double exposure, to show the relationship between the people and the sea. The process and methods of working help explore the essence and memory of that place, how over time it will have changed due to geological time and climate change. So, looking back at the photos after that site has changed due to several factors it will have this element of hauntology as it is a reminder of what the place used to look like. These process help bring these themes alive; by having a double layer exposure of the place and the object of that place, it helps us to explore the concept of what that site is all about in the current timeframe. My practice centres on how with the right process and materials and methods your audience will be able to understand the artist themes you are trying to explore.

This essay addresses the current topic around how memory and hauntology can change people respective to our relationship with photographs. My conclusion is that is that memory and hauntology are linked together because there is element of photographs haunting us from the past that can trigger a memory in us. A place can hold a memory by still having an entity of that timescale within that site this then creates an element of hauntology. As with Barthes theories, this can trigger a memory even wherever viewer has no personal experience of the time or place depicted in the image. Hauntology comes into this relationship with photography because though "hauntology may sound like the study of invited ghost and ghouls, it is a concept that considers the real word effects of how dead futures can haunt the present" (Fisher, 2022, p,10).

This implies that this ghostly effect is always haunting us in the present day by people or entities that have already passed away.

Based on this research the question that I am interested in researching for my dissertation is:

How do photographs shape and alter our memories, both individually and collectively, and how can photographers use this connection in their work?

List of Figures

Figure 1 Tacia Dean Dissaprence at sea (1966).....	3
Figure 2 Hiroshi Sugimoto Seascape (2004)	5
Figure 3 Damine Hirst (2012).....	7
Figure 4 Undertow, Fulop (2024)	8

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