

Annotated Bibliography

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Introduction

My research begins with four key sources: *Photographs, Objects, Histories* by Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart; *Sisters, Saints and Sibyls* by Nan Goldin; *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images*; and the documentary *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*, directed by Laura Poitras. Together, these works speak of the relationships between photography, materiality, symbolism and personal experience. Using them as a starting point for my dissertation, I will investigate the themes of Subject, Surface, Symbolic, Addiction and Family, considering how photographs and objects can communicate personal narratives of memory, identity, vulnerability and lived experience.

Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images – Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (2004) Book

In *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, editors Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart explore the idea that photographs should be understood not only as images, but also as physical objects. The book challenges the usual view of photography as a visual narration, arguing that its material qualities are just as important in forming how we experience and understand an image.

Through a collection of case studies, Edwards and Hart analyse how photographs gain meaning through their physical form, process and use. Looking at elements such as paper, framing, albums, and the ways photographs are handled or displayed can affect their emotional and symbolic meaning. The book gives us a base for exploring what happens when photography moves beyond its conventional surface and becomes an important part of another object.

This idea is particularly relevant to my own photographic practice, where I have experimented with alternative materials including glasses, seeds and tea bags, and I have questioned the boundaries between image and object. Similarly to what Edwards and Hart tell us, I have considered the relationship between a photograph's subject, its physical surface and its symbolic meaning, and that photographic meaning is not fixed within the image itself, but that it develops through the relationship between the photograph, the object and the people who interact with it. This is the foundation of my work over the last few years, and if I continue along this subject, this book will be a great advantage to my research towards my thesis.

All the Beauty and Bloodshed – Laura Poitras (2022) Documentary

Laura Poitras' documentary *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* explores the life and work of photographer and activist Nan Goldin, analysing the relationship between personal experience, photography, addiction and activism. Through interviews, family photographs, and footage of protests, Poitras combines Goldin's personal history with her campaign against the Sackler family and their role in the opioid crisis.

The central focus within the film is Goldin's photographic work, like that of *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, and *Sisters, Saints and Sibyls*, which documents her relationships, friendships and the life and suicide of her older sister. This work is a perfect example of how photographers document their own personal lives.

The images of her life and the life of those close to her become symbols of memory, identity, grief and addiction, and it's within these symbols that I find relevance to my own work. Watching this documentary, I am reminded of my own childhood growing up around addiction and then my imitation of this lifestyle into early adulthood and the continuous struggles I witness within my family back home.

This style of photographic biography is something I wish to explore, and I will continue my research by looking further into the works of Nan Goldin in hope of finding a starting point for my dissertation.

Sisters, Saints and Sibyls – Nan Goldin (2026) Book

Nan Goldin's book *Sisters, Saints and Sibyls* is a personal exploration of the life and death of her older sister, Barbara Goldin. By combining family photographs, medical documents and personal text, Goldin narrates Barbara's experiences of being institutionalised, her life struggles, the pressures of social conformity and her death. The work also speaks of Goldin's own experiences of addiction and mental health struggles.

This work relates closely to my own photographic practice, particularly my exploration of memory, absence and emotional attachment in *Conversations*. Similarly to Goldin, I use photographic imagery to form a connection with people who are no longer present, exploring how photographs can portray the topics of memory and conversation.

Furthermore, the photobook itself becomes significant as a physical object. Unlike a photograph viewed momentarily on a screen, a book can be held, revisited and carefully preserved, similarly to a family photo album. Its pages protect these personal images while allowing the viewer to touch another person's history. This relates to my investigation of Subject, Surface and Symbolic, questioning how the physical form of photographic work can alter its meaning. The book is both a box of memories and an object of remembrance, suggesting that preserving photographs can also become an act of protecting the people and relationships they represent.

The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images – Tacshen (2010) Book

The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images, edited by Ami Ronnberg and Kathleen Martin, explores the historical, and cultural meanings of symbols. Based on the theories of Carl Jung, the book looks at how images can connect with the human psyche and mutual experiences. The book uses images and essays to explore symbols found in nature, the human body, animals, plants, objects, rituals and spirituality. Rather than giving each symbol a fixed meaning, the book encourages readers to consider how they can have multiple interpretations depending on individual and cultural experiences.

This book relates to my photographic practice, particularly my exploration of how ordinary objects can communicate emotions and experiences. In my project *Conversations*, portraits are printed onto teabags, transforming an everyday object associated with comfort, routine and social connection into a vehicle for memory and conversation. The teabag becomes symbolic of relationships, absence and the longing to reconnect with people who are no longer present or with whom communication is difficult.

It supports my research into the relationship between subject, surface and symbolic meaning, encouraging me to think about how material choices influence the narrative of a photograph and transform it from an image into an emotionally powered object.