

Advanced Creative Enquiry

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A True Account / Speculation/ A false Family album/ To remember you differently/ reprise/ when the truth lies

Brief overview

5 key words:

1. Archive

2. Recontextualise

3. Authorship

4. Truth

5. Absence

Short summary of proposed project:

My project explores the archive a space where history has been told and documented. It is related to my research question “how might the act of reworking photographic archives reshape not only how we understand the past but also who has a right to tell it?,” while many artists have used archive material in their work. I want to explore to what boundaries you can push them to. By taking a piece of history and changing the context of the story.

The concept of this project is to take a story that has already been told and reframe it from a different perspective. In my previous work, I explored the use of archival images and developed my essay proposal around this theme. My motivation for this project comes from an interest in how archives can be reinterpreted to reveal new stories and challenge fixed narratives. I am drawn to the idea of shifting perspective, questioning who has the authority to tell history, and how meaning changes when materials are reworked. This aligns with my ongoing research into archives as spaces that hold both presence and absence. I want to create work that not only reflects on memory but also invites the viewer to reconsider what they think they know about the past.

For this project, I am considering the creation of a book as the primary outcome, experimenting with a range of paper types to evoke the right atmosphere and tactile quality. I am also interested in incorporating fabrics, either by printing images directly onto them or integrating them into the book as material elements if they connect meaningfully to the work. In addition, I want to experiment with new processes such as bleaching or burning to alter the surface of the images. Alongside this, I want to expand into digital media by exploring the use of video and sound, creating a more immersive and multi-sensory dimension to the project. I also want to explore doing some sort of immersive experience such as hanging things from the ceiling and creating an atmosphere with light and video.

Structure

Start Date	End Date	Activity / Task Detail
30/09/25	07/10/25	Begin by collecting visual references, sketching concepts, and mapping out experiment goals. Establish a simple schedule and list of materials.
07/10/25	14/10/25	Gather resources. Images and slides.
14/10/25	11/10/25	Prepare resources for experimenting. Scanning and printing. Editing images.
11/11/25	18/11/25	Rolling crit, show work, receive feedback and start improving.
18/11/25	2/12/25	Work on feedback. More experimenting based off feedback.
2/12/25	9/12/25	Get all my experiments ready for submission.

Jan - April	2026	• More delovoping ideas. • Finalise which images/slides will be shown. • Choose print sizes, papers, and materials if printing anything additional. • Order any remaining materials • Begin writing refined exhibition text: wall label, concept summary, and artist statement.
May	2026	Prepare and get ready for Swansea exhibition.
June	2026	Ready for London exhibition.

Budget

Description	Cost
Slides/photgrahs	£50
Mic	£30
Light box	£300
Other materials (hole puncher for slides, string, hooks, cloth)	£60
Prints	£100
Total cost	£540

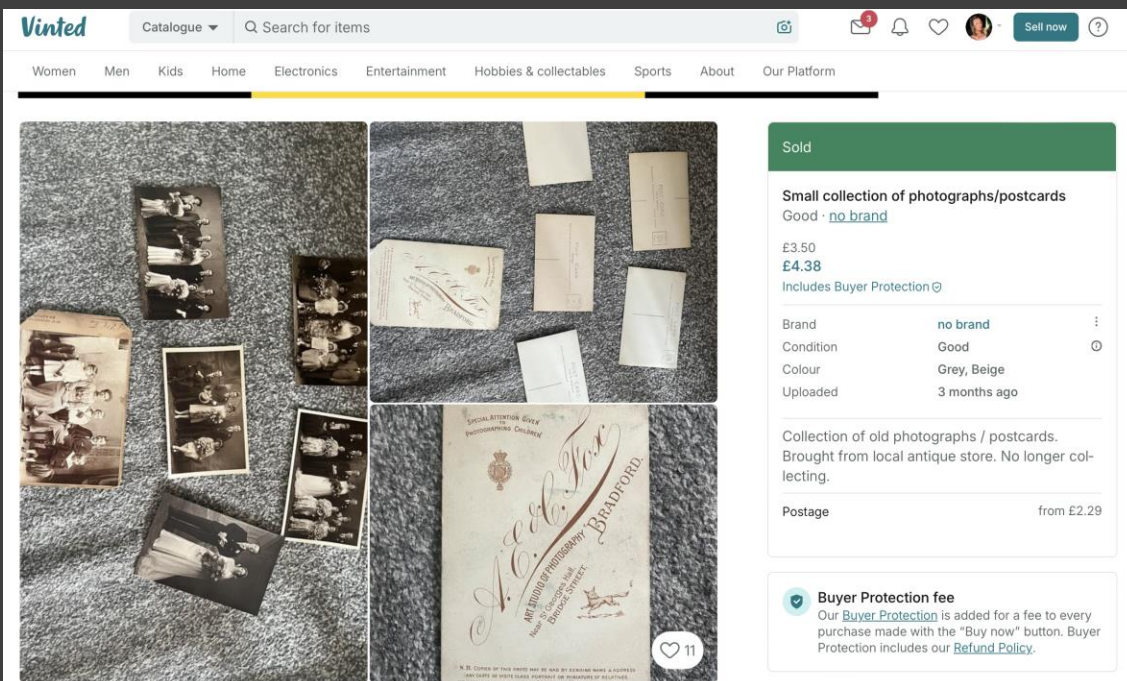
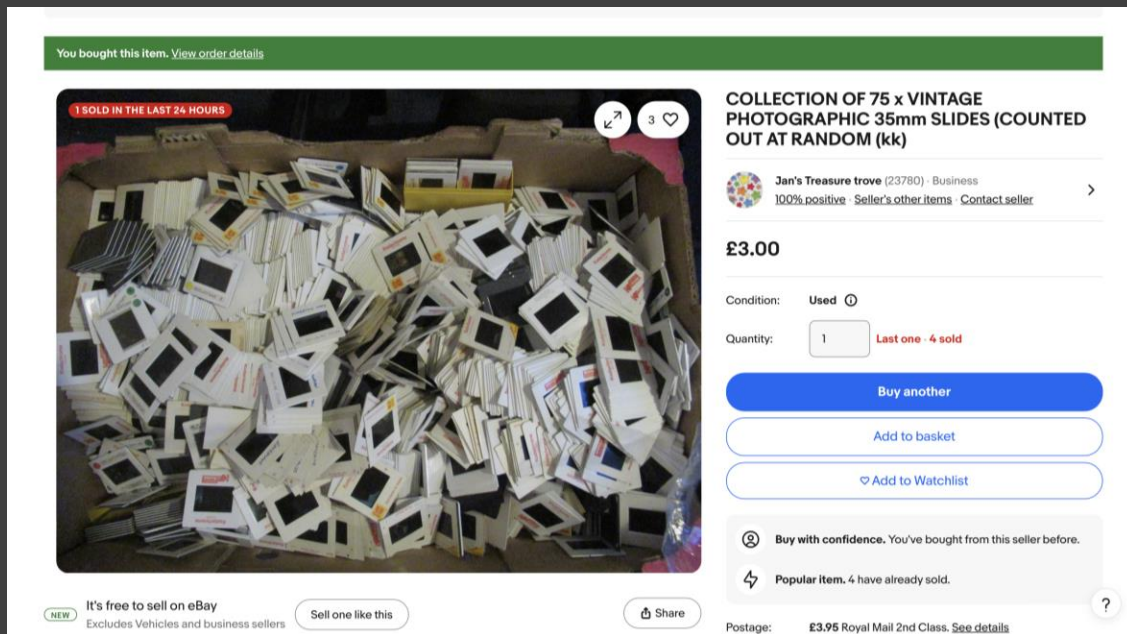
- Throughout this project I have explored a range of developmental opportunities, experiments, and processes that have helped shape a clearer direction for my final work. I began by collecting anonymous slides and vintage photographs, allowing myself to work with archival material detached from personal history. This opened up space to recontextualise images freely, experimenting with cutting, merging, and digitally glitching photographs to question authorship and the fragility of photographic truth. Creating a fast-paced video sequence, where each face appears for only 0.2 seconds, allowed me to test how archival memory can be animated, briefly revived, and just as quickly lost again.
- A key turning point came during my rolling crit, where viewers instinctively picked up the slides and held them to the light. This interaction revealed the significance of tactility and viewer participation. From this, I developed experiments using a lightbox, photographing the slides both arranged and scattered, and exploring overexposure as a metaphor for fading memory. I also created hanging slide mobiles, testing movement, fragility, and the atmospheric potential of suspended images.
- These experiments have helped me understand how the archive can become an immersive experience. They will inform the design of my final installation, combining video, light, and physical slides to create an engaging, interactive environment.

Risks for this project include ensuring that all elements fit together as a coherent sequence, which means I will need to plan the layout carefully, so the installation feels intentional rather than disjointed. Because I want the audience to interact with the slides, there is also a risk of pieces being damaged, misplaced, or handled incorrectly. The lightbox introduces potential health and safety concerns, so I must make sure it operates safely, does not overheat, and is positioned securely. Any wires used for the video or lightbox will need to be safely managed and taped down to prevent trip hazards or accidents.

Gathering resources

I've recently ordered a set of 35mm slides from eBay, all randomly selected, with no information about where they came from or who took them. The lack of context feels significant to me. In previous projects, I've often worked with images that carry personal meaning, where the context naturally shapes how I interpret and present them. This time, however, I want to explore what happens when that framework is completely removed.

Because my practice focuses on recontextualising archival imagery, working with anonymous and unfamiliar material feels like a new and liberating challenge. Without any prior knowledge or emotional connection to the images, I can approach them with a kind of openness, allowing new meanings to emerge through experimentation, rather than being guided by what I already know. There's something exciting about that uncertainty, about letting the images reveal their own potential narratives rather than trying to uncover their "true" origins. I'm really looking forward to receiving the slides and beginning this process of discovery, manipulation, and reinterpretation. I have also ordered some photographs/postcards from Vinted.

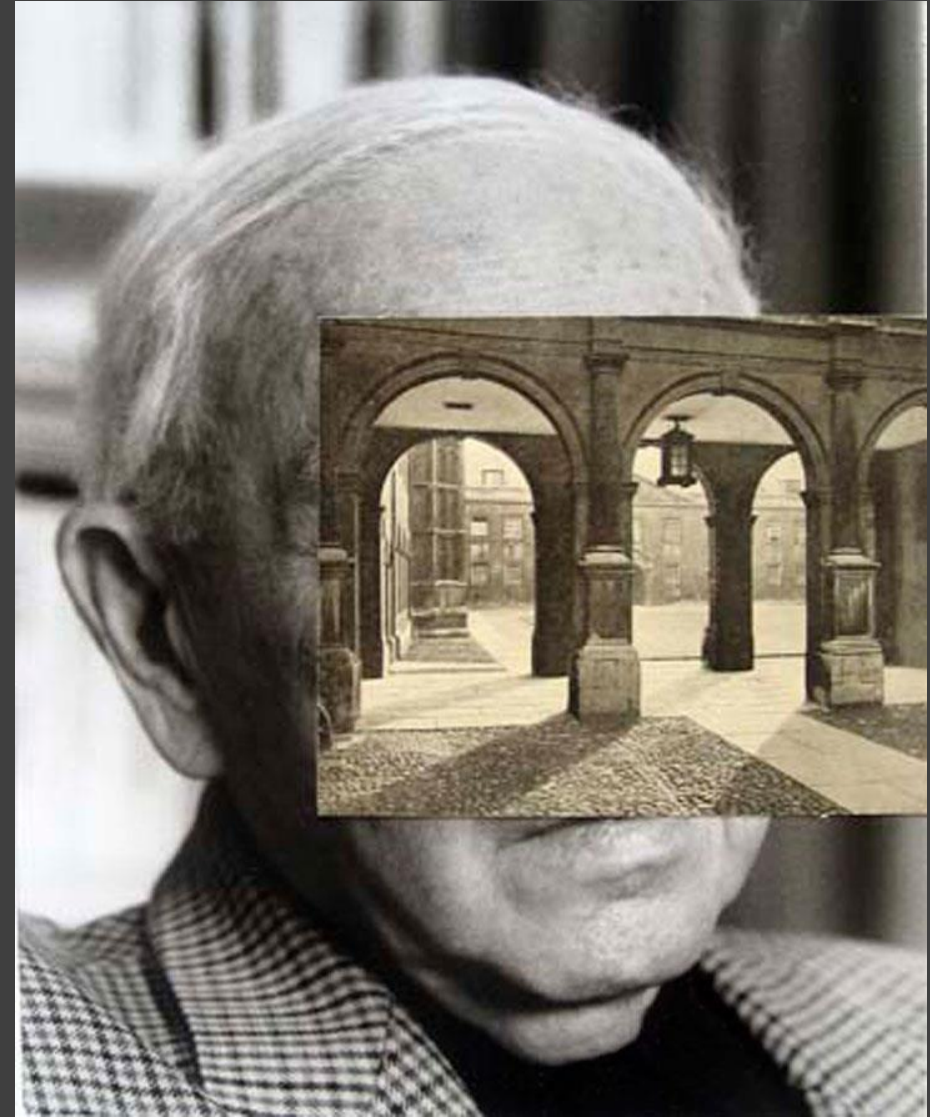


John Stezaker

John Stezaker's work rethinks what photographs mean and how we relate to them. Rather than seeing images as fixed records of truth or memory, he treats them as materials to be reshaped and reimagined. Using found photos from books, magazines, and postcards, he creates collages that disrupt familiar narratives and open new ways of seeing.

In his *Marriage* series, Stezaker merges portraits of classic film stars, blending male and female faces into uncanny hybrids. These combinations feel both familiar and unsettling, questioning ideas of identity, beauty, and celebrity. The work exposes how images shape, and distort, our sense of who people are.

By working with images from Hollywood's golden age, Stezaker plays with nostalgia and surrealism, turning symbols of glamour into strange relics of the past. His work reminds us that photographs aren't neutral; they carry the weight of time, culture, and desire.





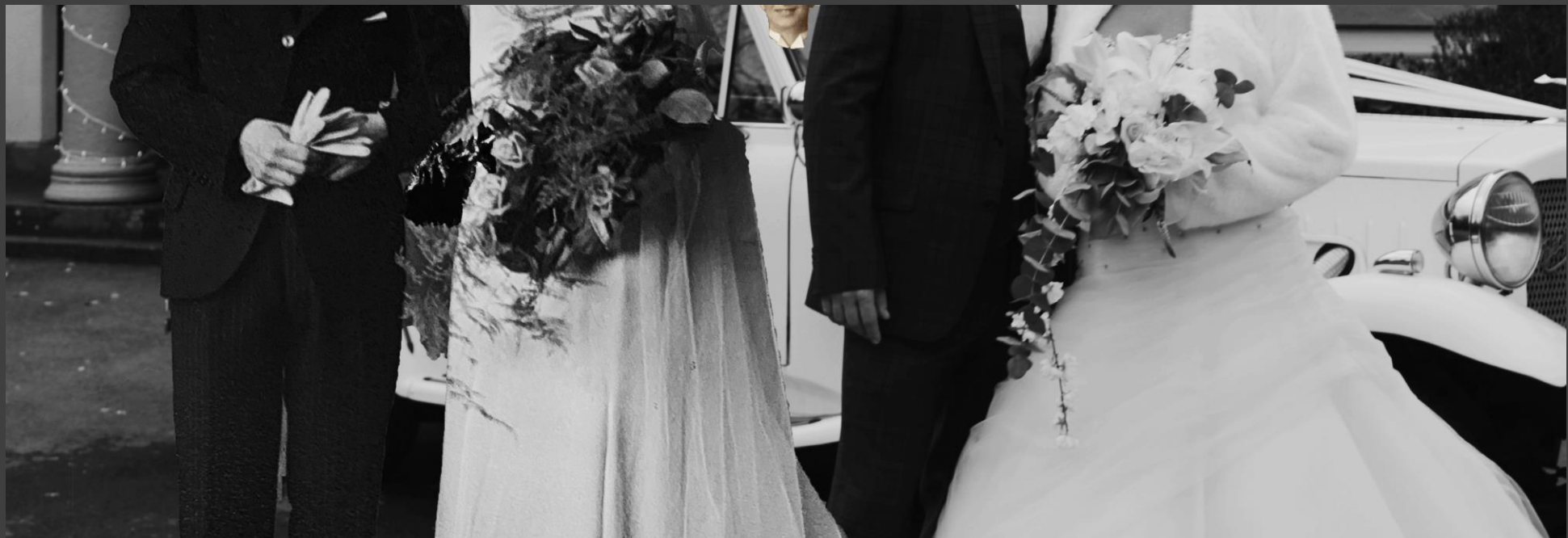












Explanation of images

- In the previous few slides are some examples of the work I have been doing.
- 1- I drew inspiration from John Stezaker because his approach to reworking found photographs aligns closely with my own interest in disrupting fixed narratives within the archive. His collages show how existing images can be transformed into something unfamiliar, prompting viewers to reconsider identity, memory, and the authority of the photographic record. Stezaker's ability to shift meaning through simple yet provocative interventions helped me think about how my own archival material could be recontextualised. His Marriage series, in particular, encouraged me to explore merging images to create new relationships between people, challenging the boundaries of time, authorship, and visual truth.
- 2 - In this image, I removed the heads of the people in the photograph. This was a way of suggesting that, although these individuals have almost certainly passed away, there is still a sense of their presence within the image. Their physical identities may be gone, but their spirit or trace remains. By obscuring their faces, I'm highlighting this idea of lingering existence, how these anonymous figures continue to have purpose and occupy space in the present through the photograph itself.
- 3 - The next few images follow a similar structure, but in one version the subjects' heads are glitched, and in another the disruption spreads across different parts of the photograph. What I'm trying to communicate is that these were once ordinary people having their photograph taken, at a wedding, probably in the early 1900s. Their images would originally have been held, cherished, and stored within a family archive. But over time, those photographs have been sold, circulated, and eventually bought online, ending up in my hands. By scanning them, I've brought these people into a digital world they never belonged to. The glitches are a way of visualising that tension. They hint at how strange or unsettling it feels to pull these images into a technological space that didn't exist for the people in them. Photographs of that era were tactile objects, meant to be kept close, passed down, or protected. The digital distortion becomes a reminder of the dislocation that occurs when something intimate and physical is transformed into something easily shared and detached from its original context.
- 4 - In the last two images, I placed figures from old wedding photographs into wedding images of my mother and stepdad. By merging these different moments in time, I wanted to explore how past and present can overlap within photographic memory. Bringing these anonymous people into my own family's images creates an unexpected connection between two couples who never knew each other yet now share the same frame. It highlights how photographs can collapse time, suggesting that histories, both personal and forgotten, can coexist. This intervention also questions who belongs in an archive and how images can be reimagined to create new relationships across generations.

Rolling crit

- This week I had my rolling crit, where I brought the work, I've produced so far along with the resources I've been collecting. When each group arrived in the Mac suite, something interesting happened before I even began presenting. Both groups immediately gravitated toward the slides I had left on the table. They instinctively picked them up, held them to the light, and started examining the images. They were noticeably more engaged with this than with the work I had planned to show, and rather than feeling discouraged, that reaction really stayed with me. Several people commented that they "could do this all day," and someone joked that "this could just be the exhibition," which made me think: what if it actually could?
- Their interaction revealed something I hadn't fully considered, the simple act of holding a slide up to the light can create a quiet, intimate encounter with an image. It made me rethink the direction of the project.
- As for the earlier images I had been working with, I'm beginning to feel they may not be the strongest path forward. They didn't generate much response or engagement during the crit, and that lack of connection is helping me recognise where the work naturally wants to go next.

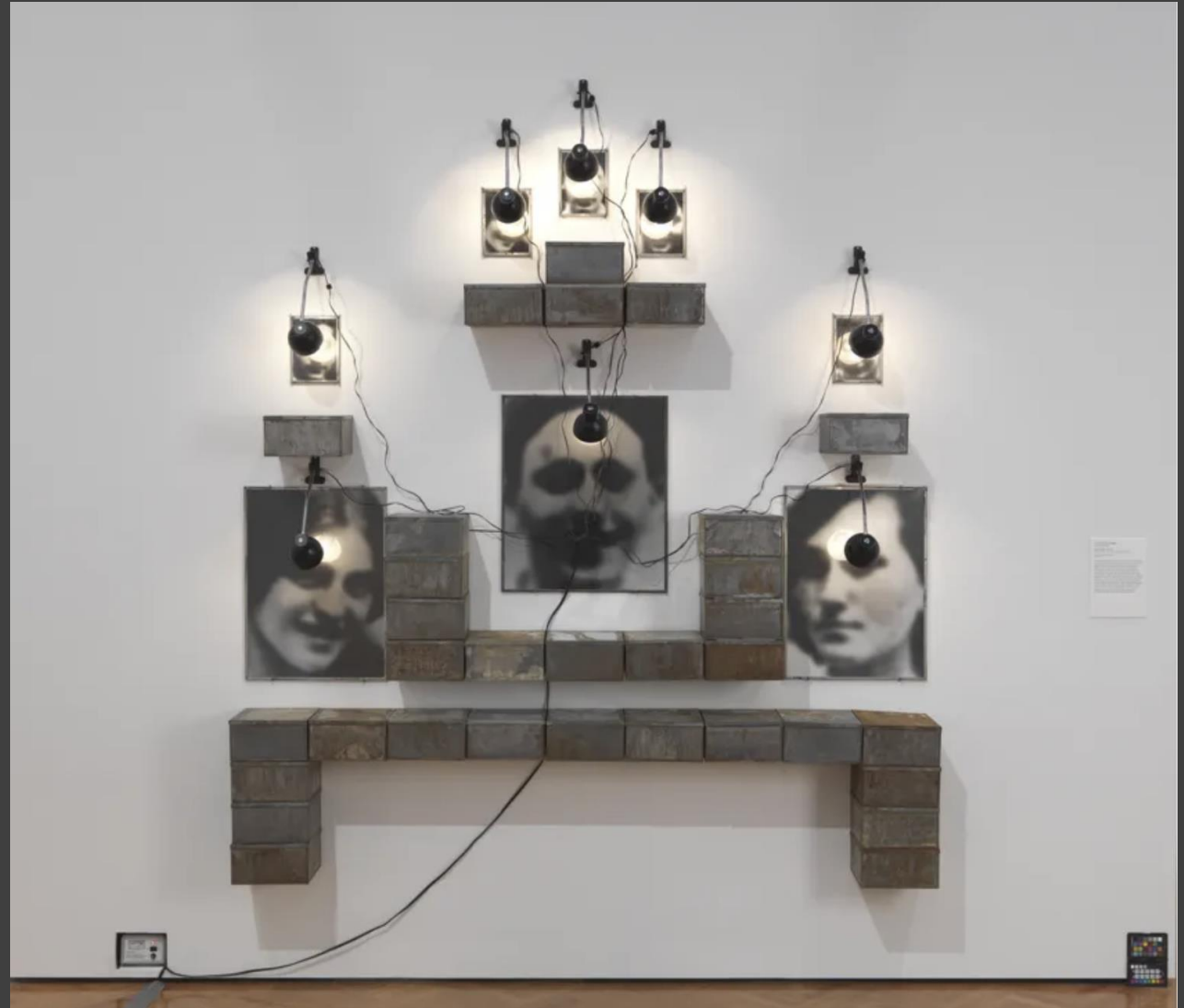
John Stezaker - video

- Following on from the rolling crit, Ryan also mentioned another piece by John Stezaker in which he creates fast-paced video sequences using a rapid succession of images. He suggested this could be a useful direction for me to explore, and it immediately made sense within the context of my project. Creating a video using all the faces from the images I've collected would allow me to animate the archive in a new way, letting these individuals briefly reappear before disappearing again. The rapid flicker of faces could highlight the sheer number of forgotten or displaced identities within the archive, emphasising how easily people slip out of history. It would also connect to my themes of memory, absence, and the instability of photographic truth, turning still portraits into a living, shifting sequence that resists being fixed in time.
- Which you can find the link to the video here <https://www.newarteditions.com/video-john-stezaker-resonating-nostalgic-lyricism/>
- So that is what I have now done. I cropped each photograph to isolate only the faces of the people in them, reducing the images to their most direct and human element. I then created a six-minute looping video where these faces appear for just 0.2 seconds each. This fast-paced sequence creates a constant rhythm of brief encounters, faces emerging and disappearing before you can fully register them. The intention is to mirror the fragility of archival memory and the way individuals can slip in and out of visibility over time. It gives each person a moment of presence while also emphasising how quickly those moments fade.
- Which you can find the link to the video here at <https://youtu.be/v9EeolfBbpc>

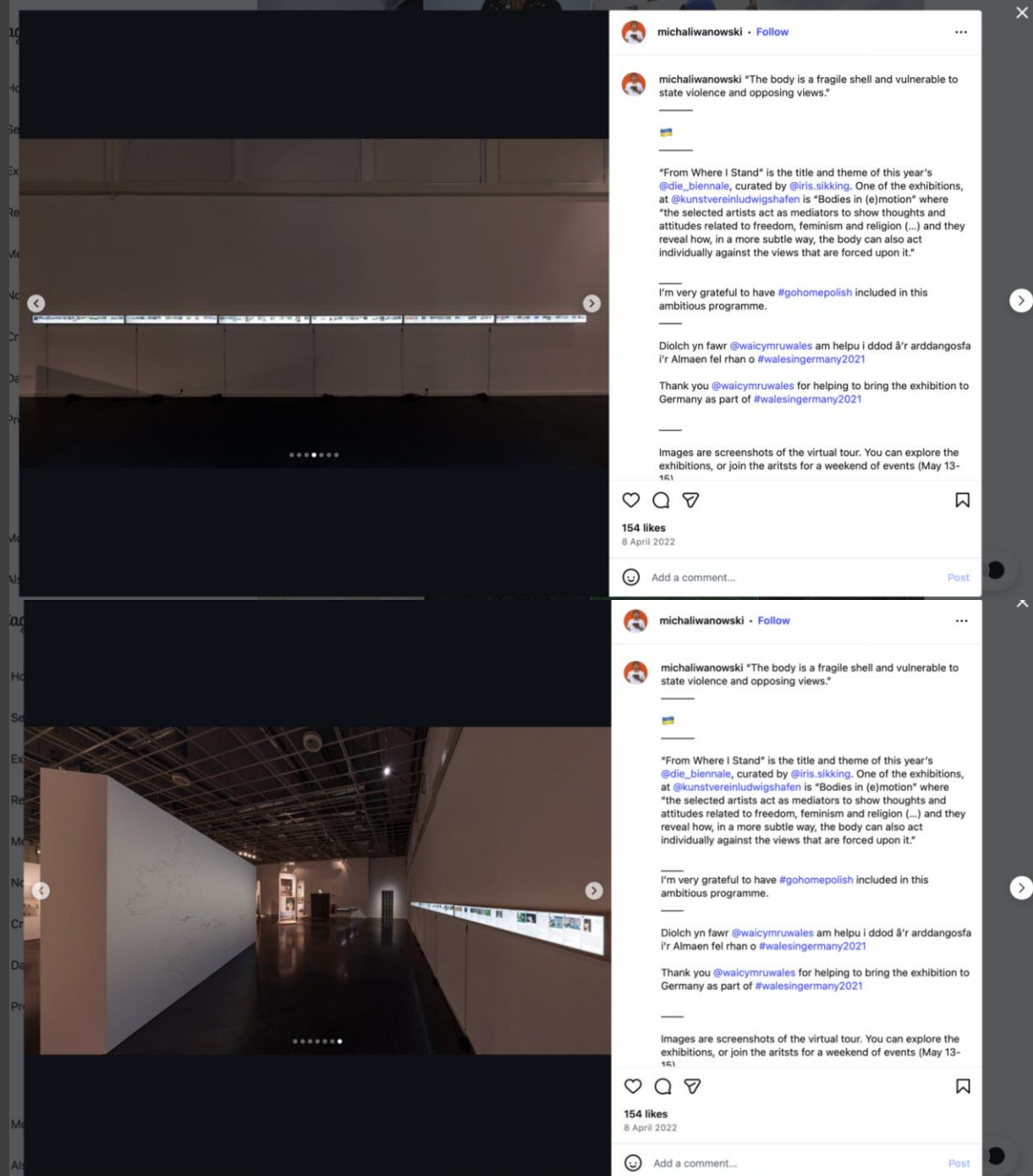
Christian Boltanski

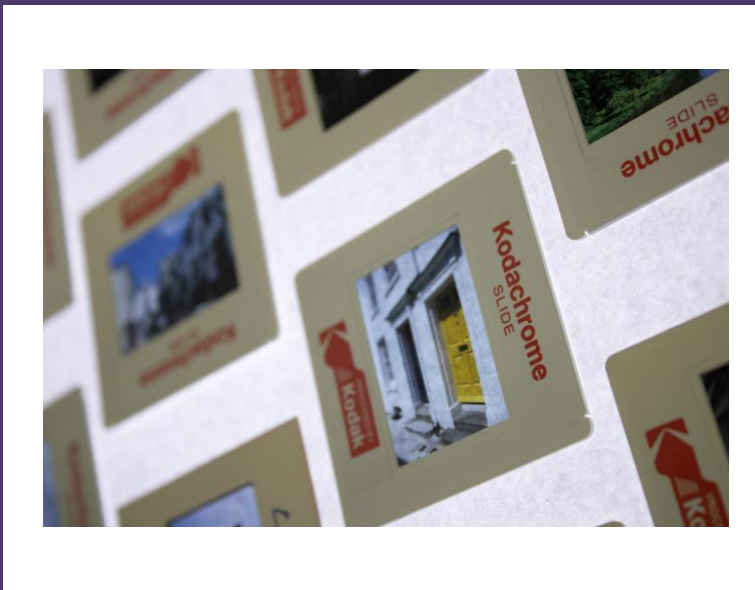
Christian Boltanski's *Autel de Lycée Chases* (1987–88) is a sculptural installation that presents enlarged photographs of a 1931 class at a Jewish high school in Vienna, framed by lamps. Shown without context, the images hint at the students' likely fate during the Holocaust, creating a haunting sense of absence and loss. The arrangement resembles an altarpiece, connecting ideas of memory, mourning, and ritual. Through this work, Boltanski explores the tension between what is revealed and what is obscured, reflecting on how art, unlike religion, raises questions rather than providing answers.

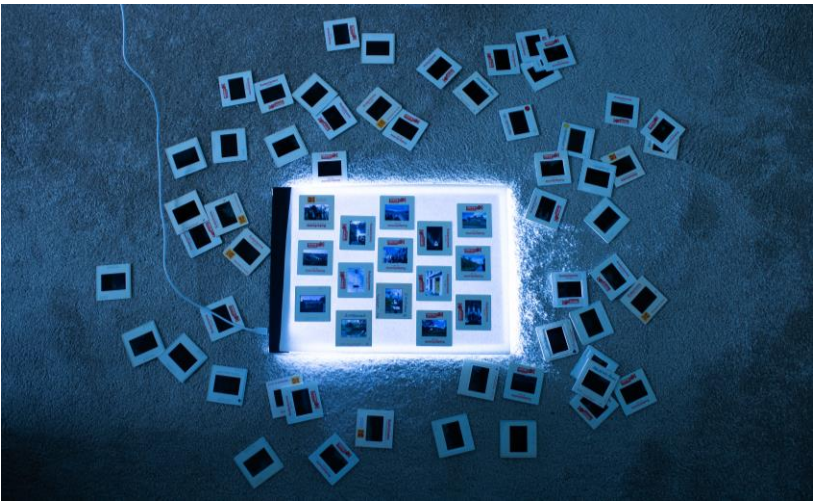
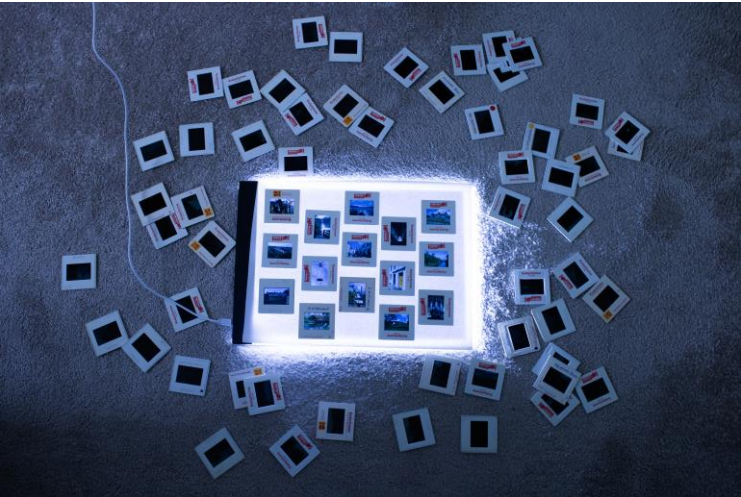
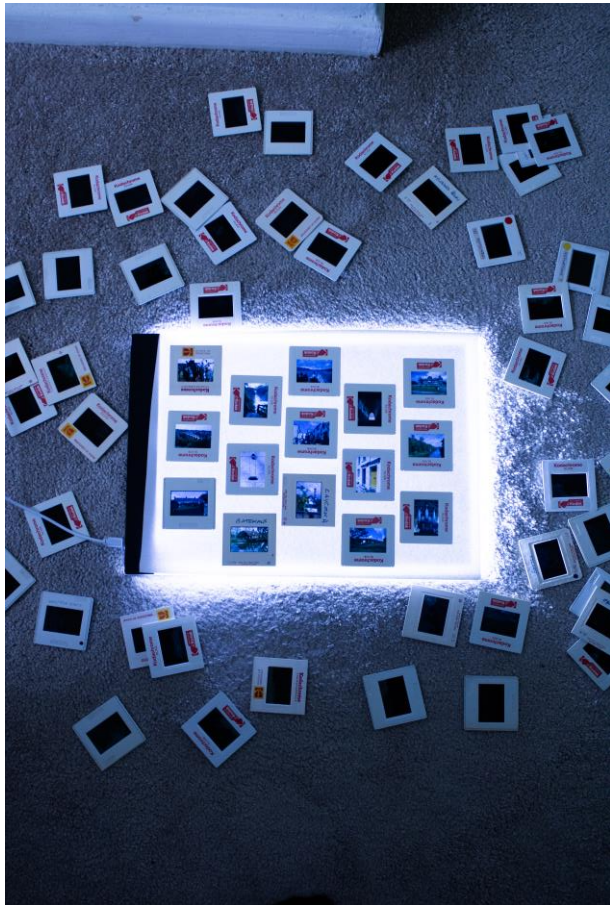
- Boltanski uses found photographs and objects to evoke the lives and absences of people he never knew.
- Inspired by Christian Boltanski's work, particularly *Autel de Lycée Chases* (1987–88), my project explores how photographs and personal archives can reveal connections between people across time and distance. Like Boltanski, who used old class photos and everyday objects to evoke memory and absence.



- When I was thinking how I could incorporate the slides into this project as they are I remember at the start of year two, we went to museum Wales in Cardiff. We saw the work exhibited by Michal Iwanowski "Go home Polish." Where Iwanowski walked 1,200 miles from Cardiff to his home village in Poland, following a straight line on a map over 105 days. The journey, documented through photographs and an Instagram diary, explores ideas of home, identity, and belonging in the context of Brexit. Combining endurance, self-portraiture, and interactions with people he met along the way, the work reflects on memory, human connection, and the experience of moving through landscape as both a personal and political exploration.
- In his exhibition, Iwanowski presented a lightbox running along half the walls, displaying the Instagram entries he made throughout his journey. This installation allowed viewers to follow his experiences, thoughts, and reflections in real time, combining the visual and textual documentation of his walk with an immersive, gallery-scale presentation.
- This piece of work really stuck in my memory and I wanted to draw inspiration from this work. So, I had the idea to put the slides onto a light box. Which are on the next slides.





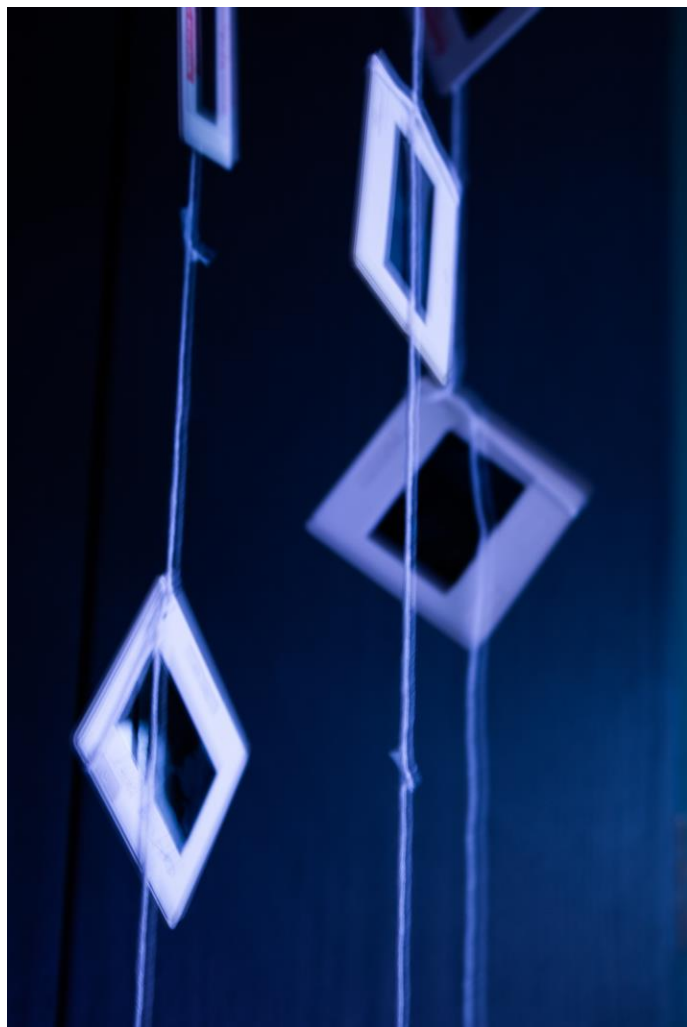


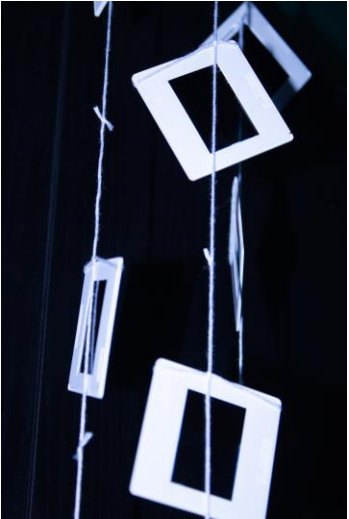
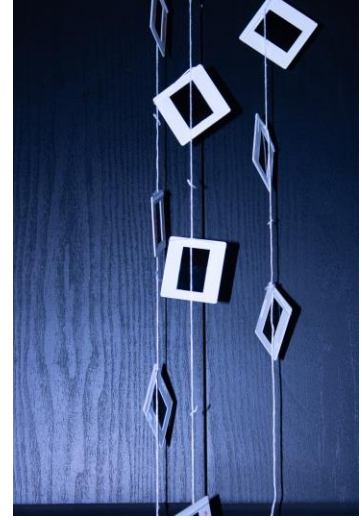
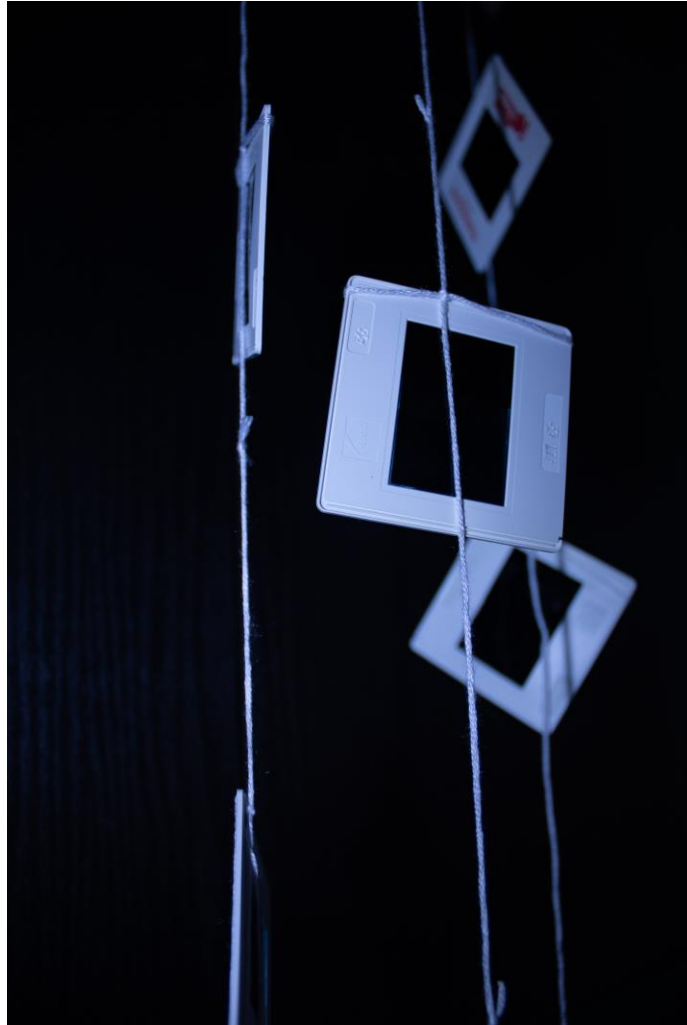
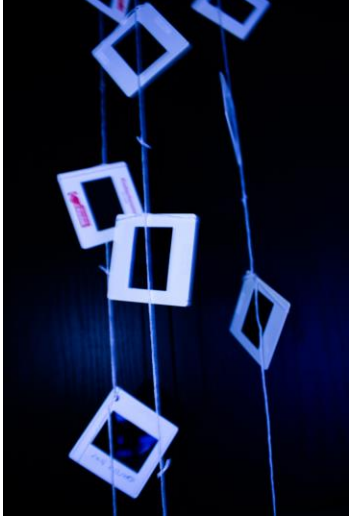
Lighting and installation Ideas

- As I mentioned in my rolling crit, I've been thinking more about keeping the slides intact and showing them as they are, rather than removing the images from them. There's something compelling about the unknown within the slides, the way viewers naturally hold them up to the light to discover what's inside. That sense of curiosity creates a more active form of engagement, inviting the audience to participate in uncovering the image instead of simply being presented with it. Showing the slides in their original form preserves that tactile, exploratory experience and strengthens the connection between the viewer and the archival material.
- I drew inspiration from Michał Iwanowski's work, particularly his lightbox installation displaying Instagram entries along the walls, which transformed his journey into an immersive, participatory experience. In these images, I have placed some slides onto a lightbox, some carefully arranged, others left scattered around it, reflecting a moment from the crit, where several people said they could engage with the slides all day. The work explores the potential of the archive as an interactive experience, where viewers can pick up, move, and swap slides, choosing which ones to examine closely. By inviting this tactile engagement, the piece emphasises curiosity, choice, and the personal connection that emerges when analogue images are handled directly, turning the archive into a living, participatory space rather than a static display.
- Displaying the slides on the wall, as Michał Iwanowski did with his lightbox, is an option I could consider. However, if I want viewers to be able to swap the slides freely, there are practical challenges. First, mounting a lightbox on a wall and sourcing one that isn't ridiculously expensive could be difficult. Second, I would need to find a way for the slides to stand upright, as they wouldn't be fixed to the lightbox, while still allowing for safe, easy handling. These considerations will influence how I develop the interactive aspect of the work.



The extreme overexposure in this photo adds an interesting layer to the work. The bright white centre, where the slides sit on the lightbox, almost wipes the images out completely, hinting at how archives can fade or disappear over time. It reminds me of old photos left in the sun too long, bleached, washed out, and slowly slipping away. That empty brightness in the middle creates a strong contrast with the surrounding slides that are still visible, emphasising this idea of presence and absence. It also reflects what it feels like to look through an archive: the light helps you see, but it can also blind you, revealing some things while hiding others.





- I've also started experimenting with the physicality of the slides by tying three of them to pieces of string and connecting them to form a kind of hanging slide mobile. This simple construction transforms the slides from static archival objects into something more sculptural and fragile. I'm considering suspending these mobiles within the space, allowing the slides to gently move and catch the light. As they shift, the images become momentarily visible and then disappear again, echoing the themes of presence, absence, and the partial visibility of archival histories.
- Alongside this, I photographed the mobile in a dark setting, capturing the slides as blurred, glowing fragments. The resulting images have a haunting, almost spectral quality, as if the figures within the slides are flickering between past and present. These photographs could stand as artworks themselves because they extend the narrative of the archive in a more atmospheric and abstract direction. They hold a sense of mystery and unsettlement, reflecting the way archival images often feel disconnected from their original stories. This experiment has opened up new possibilities for how the slides might function both as physical objects and as sources for further visual exploration.

- Out of all the ideas I have explored this semester, I feel that I am starting to develop a clear vision for my final piece of work. At this stage, I am still in an experimental phase, testing how different elements might come together. I can already see that after the video, the hanging slides, and the lightbox are incorporated, the combination of all three could create a compelling and immersive exhibition experience. Each element contributes in a different way: the video introduces movement and temporality, the hanging slides encourage intimate, tactile engagement, and the lightbox highlights the physical and visual qualities of the slides. One thing I realise I should have done during this phase is set up all three practices in the same space to see how they interact and complement each other. This would have given me a better sense of the overall flow and atmosphere of the exhibition. However, this is something I can explore at the start of next year, allowing me to refine the presentation and ensure that the final installation is cohesive, engaging, and fully realised.
- I'm also starting to think that adding a sound element could really strengthen the work. The video I've made is currently silent, but experimenting with audio could help shape the atmosphere of the whole installation. Sound could tie the different elements together, the lightbox, the hanging slides, and the fast-paced video, and make the space feel more immersive. It's something I'd like to explore further to see how it might change the mood or rhythm of the piece and help create the right environment for viewers to experience the work.