

Annotated Bibliography

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Kirsty Mitchell (2015) *Wonderland*

Wonderland was created over five years as a visual story born out of grief and memory. The project documents Kirsty Mitchell's personal journey following the death of her mother, whom she honours through elaborate, fantastical photographs. Each image within *Wonderland* represents a piece of her healing process, turning emotional pain into visual beauty. Mitchell built everything by hand, from the costumes and props to the elaborate natural sets, creating a dreamlike world filled with symbolic characters. One notable example is the image of Queen Armada, shown half-submerged in a lake surrounded by paper boats folded from her mother's childhood books. These boats represent memory and legacy, while the queen symbolises Mitchell herself taking control of her emotions and her story. *Wonderland* blends photography with sculpture, fashion design, and narrative art, creating a deeply personal yet universal portrayal of loss and transformation. For my own research, this book is significant because it demonstrates how visual storytelling and character creation can serve as tools for emotional recovery and communication.

Alex Prager (2018) *Silver Lake Drive*

Silver Lake Drive is a collection that captures the cinematic imagination of Alex Prager, blending glamour, nostalgia, and emotional complexity. Her images are heavily stylised and use vivid colour, theatrical lighting, and staged performances that resemble film stills. At first glance, her characters appear perfect and composed, but a closer look reveals tension and discomfort beneath the surface. In her photograph series *Face in the Crowd*, for example, hundreds of people are shown smiling or engaging in social scenes, yet each face carries an expression of detachment or loneliness. Prager's work comments on modern life, media culture, and the façades people construct to mask vulnerability. *Silver Lake Drive* gathers a decade of her creative output, offering an evolving exploration of identity and performance. Her imagery uses visual exaggeration to comment on emotional truth, showing how photography can both imitate and critique reality. This makes her work crucial to my study of emotional storytelling, as she uses character design and atmosphere to express ideas about anxiety, isolation, and human connection through surreal but relatable scenes.

Kimarie Richardson (2012) *Fantasy Portrait Photography*

Richardson's book takes a more technical approach to the concept of character creation. Rather than focusing primarily on her own emotions, she explores the use of fantasy portraiture to embody ideas and archetypes. Her work is symbolic, using costume, makeup, and lighting to turn her subjects into mythological or fantastical beings. She provides detailed explanations of how to plan, build, and photograph these scenes, emphasising the importance of concept and visual symbolism. Her portraits often represent broader social or emotional themes, such as strength, vulnerability, and transformation. By translating reality into fantasy, Richardson reveals truths about the human condition that are easier to understand when wrapped in imaginative form. In *Fantasy Portrait Photography*, she combines technical knowledge with artistic intuition, teaching how to create photographs that are both visually captivating and emotionally resonant. Her approach provides a valuable contrast to Mitchell and Prager, as it grounds emotion within craft, showing how storytelling can emerge through structure, planning, and controlled creativity.

David Levi Strauss (2021) *Speaking with Photographs*

David Levi Strauss approaches photography as a philosophical and psychological form of language. In *Speaking with Photographs*, he focuses on the relationship between the photographer, the subject, and the viewer, examining how images communicate feelings that words cannot. The book consists of essays and interviews that explore why artists often prefer the camera to the pen, finding greater honesty and vulnerability in imagery. Strauss suggests that photographs can speak emotional truths even when they are staged or constructed, because they carry the psychological imprint of the creator. He also looks at how meaning changes once an image leaves the photographer's hands and enters the world, inviting viewers to interpret and project their own emotions onto it. What I find most useful about Strauss's work is his focus on intention, the motivation behind image-making and how personal experience shapes creative decisions. His writing encourages deeper reflection on why photographers choose certain symbols or aesthetics to convey their message, which directly supports my exploration of how emotion can be embedded in visual storytelling.

David duChemin (2011) *Photographically Speaking*

In *Photographically Speaking*, David duChemin examines photography as a language made up of visual grammar and vocabulary. He teaches how to read an image by analysing composition, gesture, perspective, and light, and how these choices shape emotional response. DuChemin argues that understanding these visual elements allows artists to express more deliberate and powerful ideas through their work. He challenges the reader to go beyond simply liking an image and to instead ask why it works and what it communicates. For my project, this book provides the theoretical framework needed to connect the emotional and narrative aspects of photography with

its technical foundations. DuChemin's approach shows that every choice, where the subject is placed, how the light falls, what colour dominates, contributes to storytelling. His teachings link the metaphorical expression found in Mitchell and Prager's works with a clearer understanding of how those feelings are constructed through the camera's language.

Michael Freeman (2007) *The Photographer's Eye*

Michael Freeman's *The Photographer's Eye* provides an in-depth look at the principles of visual design and composition in photography. He explains how lines, balance, rhythm, and framing can direct the viewer's attention and create meaning. Freeman describes the act of photographing as one of constant decision-making, where the artist must choose how to interpret and organise the world within a frame. The book also explores how emotional tone is affected by technical factors such as colour temperature, spatial depth, and contrast. His methodical analysis complements the more emotionally driven works of the other authors, providing a framework for understanding how emotion and narrative can be conveyed visually. By studying Freeman's theories, I can better understand how the arrangement of visual elements supports the storytelling seen in works like *Wonderland* and *Silver Lake Drive*. It helps bridge the gap between feeling and form, emotion and execution.

Conclusion and Moving Forward

Together, these six books create a comprehensive foundation for exploring how emotion and identity are expressed through photography. Each author contributes a unique viewpoint. Mitchell transforms grief into fantasy, Prager examines the performance of identity, Richardson explores symbolic character creation, Strauss studies the psychological reasons behind image-making, duChemin explains the language of composition, and Freeman provides the structural theory behind how photographs communicate meaning. My intention is to draw connections between the emotional content of an image and the technical and conceptual choices that give it form.

By studying these sources, I will explore how photographers build characters and environments that act as extensions of the self, how they use metaphor and symbolism to tell visual stories, and how formal decisions like lighting, framing, and colour enhance those emotional narratives. Each book, in its own way, reveals how photography becomes a tool for self-expression, storytelling, and reflection. They demonstrate that behind every photograph lies not only technical skill but also a human desire to be understood, to speak without words. Through these studies, I aim to uncover how creative storytelling in photography can bridge the gap between reality and imagination, transforming private emotions into shared visual experiences.