

Using place as a tool how does visual culture affect our history?

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Authors Declaration

I, the undersigned Rhys Morgan, hereby affirm that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis does not include any material previously published by others, except where proper acknowledgment has been provided.

Date: 12/12/2024

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Introduction

The concept of place has been mainly central to both human experience and cultural expression. Place factors into our perception and influences with the world around us. This includes art, photography, architecture, cinema and digital media: place can define more than just a mere backdrop. For instance, it can be utilised as a tool that expresses narratives, emotions as well as social identities within visual culture. In this independent inquiry I will be exploring the intricate relationship of place as a concept. As well as its implication within art and other forms of visual culture as a tool, following this I will

investigate its effects on our history. To do this I will be breaking down my question into three chapters. In chapter one I will research place and its use as a tool in expanding creative elements for cinema. Next chapter two will inspect place and its involvement in art as a focal point to human history. Chapter three will consist of investigating the utilisation of place to reflect cultural lifestyle and identity in photography. Finally, I will conclude with my findings and refer to my hypothesis, in order to subsequently give an answer to the question I have raised. Theories and references related to this topic will be used, to strengthen my analysis to dissect the effects that transpire.

I hypothesise that physical environments (e.g. architecture, nature, landscape) can be utilised as tools through visual culture (e.g. art, design, media) to influence collective memory and historical perception. These places when represented or altered function as methods that shape societal understanding of the past, reinforcing cultural identities and influencing behaviours in both present and future.

Most forms of visual culture can exist longer than the creator to be appreciated by generations to come much like a good book, film or art piece it becomes a part of us and our history as well as what we share with the world. Hence why I pose the question using place as a tool how visual culture affect our history, as it invites a deeper examination of its role in both physical and symbolic forms within art. investigate mediums of visual culture using place as a tool and examine what influences are present and why. Following this I shall support my findings with theories and references related to this topic, strengthening my analysis to dissect the effects that transpire.

Chapter 1: Historical Development of using place as a tool in cinema

Understanding conceptual tools within visual culture is not dissimilar to the tools of any other kind, they just exist to be used to alter a perception or instigate thought processes to an audience, target group or subject. For example, the use of composition and framing for a photographer, specific choice of colour palette for a painter, texture, and material for a sculptor or even combination of words for an illustrator is a skill to understand the value and influence a particular tool can have. Once understood that tool can be applied in numerous of diverse ways to convey a message, statement, or question.

Studying visual culture is something practiced across the world as early as school, and as human beings it is in our nature to question as we approach encounters with anything new, we do not fully understand with curiosity. That instinct is always a driving factor within visual culture, this can be seen through a film that sparks question among its plot or characters between fans or viewers. Symbolism and representation play a huge role in this as they define the context behind themes conveyed, and place is just as important in this sense.

Introducing audience to depictions or enactments of historical events, societies even culture is important to engage the viewer with emotions like intrigue, relatability, and curiosity.



Fig 2. *Seven Samurai*

Take Seven Samurai (Kurosawa, 1954) for example, is a classic film from Japan that depicts seven samurai defending a town from bandits, it is structured brilliantly to display the notions of honour, loyalty, sacrifice, and the complexity of human nature. This independent film caught the attention of the western world and was revered still to this day as masterpiece, soon after its release Hollywood had in a way soft rebooted the film in the “American image” and titled it The Magnificent Seven (Sturges, 1960) changing the place and culture allows this version to have a slightly different narrative and being based in the wild west engages directly to the western viewers, who no doubt were the target audience.

Both films have an intertwining relationship with place as its vital to both character narrative and plot, the two settings of the world both have similar roles in reflecting cultural values in a historical context. In a book titled *Art and visual culture* (Walker (2002)

interestingly states, "Arguably, visual representations are not just reflections or refractions of historical reality, they are historical documents in their own right" (p. 56).

Seven samurai's success compelled the magnificent seven director John Sturges to reimagine the plot in a western format yet still incorporating the traits of these samurai's being honour, loyalty, sacrifice and so on, are undoubtedly part of the samurai culture in 16th century feudal Japan. This movie uses Japan (place) in its plot line to emphasise that samurai and their traditional methods are dying out, the heavy focus on culture and tradition adds to the character intrigue and development each of seven samurai. While in America the magnificent seven focused on the relatively lawless land, where townsfolk turned to a band of gunslingers and misfits due to the lack of authority. in contrast to Seven Samurai these misfits stepping up to defend the townsfolk is the focal point of intrigue for character development.



Fig 4. *The Magnificent Seven*

This is supported in a blog written by Robin Syversen “The characters, though reimagined, maintain the core traits and motivations of their samurai counterparts, a trend that spread like wildfire throughout the Western genre after *Seven Samurai* was released.” (JCABlog, 2024) [OBJ]. Feudal Japan and its cultural traits were significantly influential for the making of *Seven Samurai* and clearly carried over into the *Magnificent seven* and other western media / films, it's a vital essence of cultural reflections and human behaviour that shape historical memory as well as influencing social understanding of evolutionary change. Furthermore, reflecting the code of honour these characters express through the place they are bound to protect, as its their duty as samurai / gunslingers to protect the weak farmers / settlers that have come to them for help.

This highlights the clear genre conventions present, without Japan and its diverse cultural history in the picture, the rural, isolated microcosm of a feudal society brings the tension of a different class and obligations of the samurai to a much more historical representation. Similarly, the same goes for the western genre which presents a pioneering spirit, serving as a metaphor for the wild human condition in early settler's civilisation. Which also contributes to western marketing and influence at the time for example the long and impressionable effects of Marlboro man and popularity of the 'western image', "Cowboys were cool, and this had an influence ranging far beyond just the cigarette market." (JTTB Blog, no date).

Without this depth to a location films like Seven Samurai and any adaptation/influence in the western world would cease to be, as place in this sense is crucial to visual artforms that followed suit.

Cinema as a form of visual culture has existed as long as early photography, but as previously stated place has a layer of depth to something like a film which leads me to question does the use of CGI or green screen in cinema's more modern visual culture strip away the intricacies that I have mentioned?

The use of location in this sense can be explained to create/film something that is not easy or dangerous to do in a physical sense however as explained by (Groth-Reidy, 2023) in this article "CGI has become, without a doubt, much more realistic over time, but even the newest technology very rarely looks as authentic as practical effects on a high definition screen." This is a known fact that digital technology used alongside producing the moving image has improved in quality. However the use of artists and builders for location sets

and costumes has become more slim with less practical approaches the over inclusion of CGI and VFX becomes distracting, which becomes a missed opportunity to use something as simple as an on set location like a town, forest or city as a focal point to exhibit realistic themes in a films narrative. CGI or green screen can create a suggestion of place rather than existing as a physical plain, and as it is used to save money it immediately factors in limitations caused from a financial outlook rather than an artistic approach.



Fig 5. *Ford Vs Ferrari*

This notion is further supported by the video essay '*Because Green Screens Are for Suckers*' (Cinemastix, 2023, 2:36-3:07). Cinemastix analyses the meticulous structure and the insightful approach to the value of working with a physical location, particularly in the context of the modern Hollywood film *Ford v Ferrari* (Mangold, 2019). When tasked with depicting a seemingly simple interaction between a father and son on an empty runway, Mangold had the option to cut corners by using a green screen to circumvent the

challenges posed by real-time runway traffic. Instead, he chose to engage with the complexities of filming in a real location abiding by rules and time limits, thereby enhancing the authenticity and meaningfulness of the scene.

However, he chose to orchestrate alongside his cinematographer Phedon Papamichael, to utilise the space and time of that moment. Dusk falling over a runway with uncontrollable light sources and airway traffic restricting time is not too far from the obstacles faced with the older films that had no access to VFX (visual effects), they had to deal with weather patterns and inconveniences as they went along. This more traditional / historical approach allows for such an important moment in the film to not only be recognised for its challenging nature to shoot but also, considered to be more thoughtful and unique due to the attentive nature of its production. Being a film based on motor racing, having a grounded empathetic scene could have been located in any other location. What makes this scene so unique is due to the fact both father and son are sitting on a runway typically used for drag racing. The father and son both look towards the horizon as the father describes the perfect lap. The father uses the runway as a way to immerse his son in the moment 'the perfect lap' as life lessons and to teach how to dream big. Place being both a physical use and key conceptual plot point to a character's perception and ideology, for example a father trying to use the runway as an analogy to teach his son to aim high and dream big.

If done using CGI there would have been a possibility this scene would not have had the same intricacy. This inevitably takes away quality from the subject as over applied digitalisation becomes destructive to the authenticity of the creative process, when a

director or cinematographer shoots in real locations or base sets in a particular way there's always transparently inherent connections to history, geography and culture that is sadly lost when it is instead rendered digital.

Nevertheless, the realness of place being appreciated are apparent in early cinema much like what I have addressed in the examples above. However, it begs the question does VFX and CGI allow for more creative and expansive forms of visual culture that cannot be done using realism techniques?



Fig 6. *Avatar*

One could argue that on the other hand CGI and VFX are a modern means of creating new visual culture within cinema that has not been produced in the past, being more flexible and imaginative to how space is constructed. For example, these tropes can be seen in a much clear manner in the film *Avatar* (Cameron, 2009) ^[10] being a solely reliant on VFX to

bring life and visual scope to a world completely alien to our own, it serves as blank canvas to insert visual, cultural, and societal features into 'Pandora's' relationship with relatability in human characteristics within the film. Using historical themes regarding colonialism to depict human invasion, as well as visual and physical features to the indigenous race of 'Na'Vi' that inhabit Pandora that resemble a historically accurate similarity to the native American image, creating a distinct sense of overarching motifs like vulnerability, racism and segregation that are instantly recognisable and relatable to our own history. According to Robins (2010) "The film is a wake-up call – reminding us of the dangers of greed, unconsciousness, disconnection, insensitivity, violence, and arrogance, both globally and personally." and this can be seen through the film in the main character's (Jake Sully) realisation of these dangers through his military regiment.

Engaging with relatability in a project that departs from traditional, location and environmental based mediums can be seen as an entirely new way of using place or its digital counterpart as a tool. CGI and VFX represent new innovative methods of incorporating place into a film. Yet there is a fundamental distinction between digital and physical location-based art forms in cinema. In this case as mentioned by Berger "the reciprocal nature of vision is more fundamental than that of spoken dialogue" (Berger, 1972, p. 8). Which applies to physical location and their ability not to rely on a perfect outcome. Instead, they inherently contain an element of unpredictability, capturing fleeting moments that cannot be artificially constructed.

Chapter 2: Artistic engagement with turmoil and historical memory through the concept of place

Human history contains a multitude of art that's evolved over time. Earliest forms of art like cave paintings are believed to be a record Human interactions and experiences or perhaps beliefs. Evolution of art and its nature to change / take new form is fascinating to me, look at the development from early cave paintings or hieroglyphics to the level of symbolism and understanding of architecture / religion from the Middle Ages to the renaissance. Art is ever changing, and it has a special place in human history, as it delves into the human instinct to question, create and understand. Since the 19th – 20th century to present day art has adapted and changed in many ways, with movements like surrealism being the act of channelling unconsciousness as a means to create and think imaginatively offering new direction to art. As well as questioning traditional notions of what art can be.

Art however has also been used to reflect on specific parts of human history. Conflict is a large part of our collective history and forever will be studied out of instinct and curiosity. Art has contributed to many responses in the effects of war, one of the most recognised antiwar artworks was Goya's, (1810-1820) *The disasters of War* in response to the peninsula war. Which went on to influence and inspire artists like Pablo Picasso as well as the novel "for whom the bells tolls" by Ernest Hemingway (park west gallery, 2024). War in human history cannot be mentioned without acknowledging the scale and effect of World War 2. Which brings me to my next figure, this piece of literature is a powerful yet dark insight to the turmoil of World War 2.

Death Fugue

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at sundown
we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night
we drink it and drink it
we dig a grave in the breezes there one lies unconfined
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents
he writes
he writes when dusk falls to Germany your golden
hair Margarete
he writes it and steps out of doors and the stars are

flashing he whistles his pack out
he whistles his Jews out in earth has them dig for a
grave
he commands us strike up for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you in the morning at noon we drink you at
sundown
we drink and we drink you
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents
he writes
he writes when dusk falls to Germany your golden hair
Margarete
your ashen hair Sulamith we dig a grave in the breezes
there one lies unconfined

He calls out jab deeper into the earth you lot you
others sing now and play
he grabs at the iron in his belt he waves it his
eyes are blue
jab deeper you lot with your spades you others play
on for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon in the morning we drink you
at sundown
we drink and we drink you
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Sulamith he plays with the serpents
He calls out more sweetly play death death is a master
from Germany
he calls out more darkly now stroke your strings then
as smoke you will rise into air
then a grave you will have in the clouds there one

lies unconfined

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night

Paul Celan

Figure 7 (Celan, 1944)

Death Fugue recounts the suffering of holocaust victims in the concentration camps where the atrocities of gas chambers and maltreatment of Jews, and others who did not fit the Aryan image Nazi's idolised. The poems stanzas structure a fugue to mirror the trauma that occurred, Celan's compactly layered language is emphasised particularly in his use of

recurring phrases like “black milk of daybreak” which evokes a musical rhythm, creating a haunting mediation on the horrors of genocide. Repeating a phrase such as “Black milk of daybreak” strikes a harsher more horrifying image to the reader than what it would if they were to read it as one line, the reason for this is due to Celan's ability to use a word like ‘milk’ which gives life as well as sustenance and turn its nature to a more ominous approach. He does this by using ‘black milk’ as an opposite, serving as a symbol to the inversion of life’s development to death under oppressive circumstance, Celan also repeats “we drink you” throughout and this repetition refines the overshadowed presence of death symbolising that death was all that surrounded the victims .Which enhances a quote that doesn't get repeated greatly due to the build-up it inherits from the later. For instance, “death comes as a master from Deutchland” associate’s words such as mastery and death together to highlight that death has come from Germany solidifying it as the place where the Nazi’s mastery of these barbaric acts originated. Celan uses the two women mentioned in the poem to represent the themes of misconduct, grief and death, followed with the enduring power of memory, for instance Margerete appears throughout the poem alongside descriptions of Germany and golden hair which are another direct influence on nazi ideals on the Aryan Race. While Shulamite is repeatedly followed by ‘ashen hair’ as well as appear alongside the act of digging, danger and death which reflects the victims of the camps and their suffering. This poem leaves the reader to comprehend the sheer impossibility of escape from the trauma it exemplifies on our own human history. Although Death Fugue is a poem, it creates a visual construct of this camp, with the use of language Celan creates there is no doubt to his fulfilment on depicting the dismay, loss

and grief in these camps, and stands as a poignant reminder of the atrocities of the past following the enduring impact they have on individual and collective memory. Upon reading this poem it plainly reflects human history's tragic side, but it does so through using place in a creative manner, for instance the creativity comes from the rhythmic nature to the stanza and using a concentration camp is key to represent the traumatic history of that time.



Kiefer, (1983) Margarethe.

Anselm Kiefer, born in 1945 he grew up alongside the aftermath of the war, he is an artist who is renowned for creating powerful artwork that engage with the past. Growing up in

post war Germany, Kiefer experienced firsthand the societal trauma and sense of guilt surrounding the holocaust. This personal and collective history integrated with Kiefer's practice, which serves as a form of protest against the silence surrounding the war, in addition to this Kiefer explores multiple histories and media that imprint on his work. using the events of the second world war as one of these means, Kiefer fosters critical engagement with its memory which is apparent in Kiefer's art response to Poem Death fugue (Celan, 1944). His paintings reflect the reaction as he addresses the tenacious tension between memory and forgetting, which are essential symbolism in his work.

Much like Goya's, (1810-1820) The disasters of War influencing Picasso, Kiefer's engagement with Celan's poem through his paintings demonstrates not only his empathy but his concurrence with the poets' sensitive themes, both paintings are deliberately juxtaposed, representing the contrasting characters within the poem. Margarete is constructed with layers of paint, lead, fibres and straw the latter symbolising the colour of her hair in the poem and the of the 'Aryan image' "Your golden hair Margarete" (Celan, 1944). The use of straw as an organic and temporal adds as a tactile quality to Kiefer's portrayal. However, the use of lead is a material that is highly toxic and harbours a very dense structure to which speaks volumes towards Kiefer's response to this 'Aryan image.' He utilises this image that the Nazi's looked up to, as a way to use a material such as lead in order to weigh it down and inlay themes that can be described as self-destructive, harmful, and stupid.



Kiefer, (1983) *Shulamite*.

In contrast, a more somber approach is invoked with Kiefer's next painting *Shulamite* Kiefer, (1983) by visualising the poems reiteration of “your ashenous hair Shulamite” by using dark earthy material comparable to ash and other natural pigments. This distinction is imperative, as it reflects the burnt, tragic melancholy of death and its embodiment of the ashen remains of those who perished who share that same ashen colour that Shulamite has in her hair. The noticeable shift in material used in this painting compared to the straw in *Margarete* enhances the focal point of each painting's personality, Kiefer utilises this to

exploring the dichotomy between innocence and victimhood, between idealised Aryan purity and the horror of genocidal violence.

Furthermore, Kiefer's reimagining of Nazi memorial hall is particularly interesting, the hall was originally built as a funeral hall for soldiers and monument to Nazi ideals, according to (Jozefacka, 2018) it was designed by Wilhem Kreis who built a successful career in architecture after he joined the Nazi party in 1933, and within a few years he was working on state commissions designing war cemeteries, memorials, and mausoleums. His ability to turn this place into a memorial for the victims of the holocaust is a powerful act of historical reclamation, by transforming it into a menacing 'oven' forcing the viewer to correlate this location to the design and imagery to the gas chambers bringing the afterthought of the victims in the holocaust to the forefront of the paintings statement, cementing Kiefer's ability to use sensitive imagery as an act of protest to not forget this tragic point in human history.

According to (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988, p.2) "The landscape is not simply a setting it is a cultural product, constructed and mediated by social, political and ideological forces" which suggests that architecture such as Kreis's memorial hall is a cultural product. More importantly it's a powerful example of controlling the memory of history and what is remembered. In this case the funeral hall holds power over the memory of fallen soldiers who were considered Nazi war heroes. The clarity in Cosgrove and Daniel's statement highlights how Kiefer has used this structure and its control over memory to invert its purpose and imagery, of which to hold its Nazi connections accountable the concentration

camps and slaughter of innocent lives. This is how Kiefer expands on materiality and juxtaposition within place to allow both artworks reanimate the poems descriptions.

This falls under Adorno's theory of "non-identity thinking" (Cook, 2008, p. 11) He states, "objects will satisfy concepts by only making good on their own inanimate potential that some emphatic concepts evoke or intimate." I believe this to be a key factor in Kiefer's work as he emulates the concept of Celan's as well as use this imagery to convey a powerful message of remembrance through dark, confrontational, and impressionable use of place intertwining with physical materiality. This form of visual culture does not only use place as a form to reflect human history through art, but it also goes the extra mile to educate and raise awareness through employing physicality in its construction. This engagement with place is another example of how historical perception through art can educate sensitive topics with creative mindsets / work conveying significant messages much like Kiefer.

Chapter 3: The preservation of place and identity in photography

Photography has always had an ability to capture things that other forms of visual culture cannot like painting and sculpture. and this concept can be traced to theories around realism. In the book *The Meaning of Photography* (Kesley. Stimson. 2008) refer to Stiegler's reflection theory, "Photography represents a will to see reality as a materialisation of certain conceptions of reality in images." (Kesley. Stimson. 2008, p.194). Identity for instance is a human conception that incorporates everything about an individual that

makes them unique to who they are. This includes everything from personality, demeanour, characteristics and looks, voice, understanding and of course place. Place has a vital role in our idea of culture and when it comes to photography, places and their cultural traits / lifestyle could not be preserved any better.



Davidson, (1959)



Davidson, (1959)

Bruce Davidson, an American photographer, is renowned for his ability to capture the essence of place and identity. Early in his career, he concentrated on places like New York City, immersing himself in the lives of its diverse communities. One of his most notable images can be seen above as figure 12 and 13, consisting of a young teenager working on a

Cadillac de Ville in Brooklyn. Image one accurately displays the lifestyle of young people in New York at the time, one of hardship, poverty, and loneliness. While image two depicts the gang's juvenile delinquency, but on a deeper level it creates a sense of play as these individuals are still young teenagers.

Davidson recounts in an interview with TIME (Davidson, 2017) on how he visited these individuals, they were in a gang called the “Jokers”. They were young poor and sad according to Davidson, however he got along quite well with them and was able to document their lifestyle through photography. He further expresses how there was nothing for them in the community leading to heavy alcoholism and heavy drug use.

Brooklyn gangs by Bruce Davidson captures a visual representation of Tajfel’s Social identity theory, “Tajfel’s classic definition of social identity as an “individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (McKeown, Haji, & Ferguson. 2016). This correlates to Davidson’s statement on “there was nothing for them in the community.” It also highlights the level of deprivation young people were left with, as they turned to gangs not just due to financial hardship. More interestingly they turned towards gangs for comfort, friendship, and a sense of community they had lacked.

Remarkably, Davidson’s Brooklyn gang series moves away from themes of extravagant Hollywood depictions of young gangs and leans more towards the efforts of realism in capturing these young adolescents' lifestyle. Making these individuals relatable and humanised, using New York and its depravity Davidson documents the Brooklyn gang and

their interaction with the city as well as their quest in social identity. He preserves this nature of curiosity and innocence within his imagery of New York and its capability for opportunists like the 'Jokers' to exist and get by as seen in figure 12. As well as escape from their struggles and hardship in their own close centred community.



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Figure 14. Davidson, (1960)



Figure 15. Davidson, (1960)

Unlike New York, Wales during the 60s had a different kind of depravity that existed being an industrial country, with large coal deposits lifestyle here was much different to the Brooklyn gangs. Davidson ventured to the Ebbw valley a region affected by social deprivation and economic stagnation due to the decline of coal mining. His approach in this project was much different to the Brooklyn gangs. As explained in video essay *the traveller who enters a strange country* (Gwalia News, 2020). Davidson was able to capture the quiet dignity of the miners, he admitted “I thought it was so beautiful, yet so devastatingly awful.” A landscape that was both desolate and rugged environment, ravaged by industrial exploitation yet still defined by the remnants of a working-class

culture. The valley's barren and harsh terrain, characterized by the scars of mining and decaying infrastructure, provided a dramatic backdrop to the lives of those who inhabited it, and Davidson's photographs captured this environment with a sense of both bleakness and resilience. Davidson's work in the Ebbw Valley stands in sharp contrast to his previous projects in urban centres like New York and London, where infrastructure was more developed, and industrialization had a vastly different impact on social dynamics. In these cities, the rapid pace of modernization, coupled with the growth of consumerism and capitalist economies, produced a distinct set of social realities. However, in the Ebbw Valley, the priority of the mines as the central economic force shaped a community whose daily existence revolved around the physical and mental demands of underground labour.

Another thing mentioned in Gwalia news is that Davidson uses purity as a focal point to this work. For example, Figure 14 emphasises the innocence of youth that is soon lost in adulthood as reality becomes increasingly prominent. The child all dressed in white while the father covered in coal dust and dark clothes stands testament to those themes. In figures 14 its clear the father is a miner, who would have worked alongside others in the mines, life was marked by exhaustion, a harsh sense of stoicism. Limited prospects for social mobility, a reality that Davidson sought to document with great authenticity. This is apparent in their body language and facial expressions again highlighting the high level of dignity that these men had.

Focusing on the somber realities of the miners and their families, Davidson effectively conveys the psychological and emotional toll of industrial labour. His photography goes beyond mere documentary, it captures how a place such as the valleys imbued a deep

sense of melancholy, yet they also suggest the quiet dignity of a community defined by its resilience in the face of hardship.

An often-overlooked role in the lives of the miners, Horses served as both companions and indispensable workers in the harsh underground environment. These animals, tasked with carrying heavy loads, manoeuvring where mechanical machines could not reach, and providing essential transport within the mines, were not merely tools of labour. They were vital to the miner's survival, this is supported by (horse journals, 2024) "They were, after all, their means to their only livelihood." In many ways the horses were treated as extended members of family, sharing in the gruelling physical demands of the work, and offering a sense of companionship and solidarity in an otherwise isolating environment. It is also mentioned how when these demands often took a life of the horses, grief, empathy, and humanity were key features the miners displayed, as stated "A horse was killed in his colliery. As it was pulled out in a dram, all the shift workers stood in a line with their helmets off in respect and sang a sad Welsh hymn as he passed by" (horse journals, 2024).

Davidson's ability to understand place as a tool for storytelling is evident in his photographic practice. By integrating himself he learns to view them not just as physical spaces but as systems of relationships that govern the lives of their inhabitants. Preserving these identities and how their surroundings have a deeper impact on their lives. Referring to Stiegler's reflection theory he also states that "we have moved on from objectivity of photography, but we do still regard photography as in some ways reflections of our reality" (Kesley. Stimson. 2008, p.197).

In this case I believe Davidson's work as a documentary photographer in these two series. Stands as an example of how photography is more than just reflection it is the preservation of the fleeting. The Brooklyn gangs are dependent on the city scape as their playground to momentarily forget about their hardship and troubling situations explained by Davidson, as for Welsh miners Davidson conveys how these relationships, whether between men and horses or men and mines, reflect broader themes of interdependence, survival, and cultural continuity in places shaped by industry and hardship.

Conclusion

This study has divided its original question into three chapters, throughout the analysis it has become clear that physical spaces are more than mere backdrops for human activity. Physical environments, such as architecture, nature, and landscape, can be utilized as powerful tools through visual culture shape historical perception. Place is an active agent in the formation of historical narratives, as it often embodies symbolic meanings that evoke specific memories and emotional responses. influencing how individuals and communities perceive historical events and their cultural significance. In this way, visual culture does not just reflect reality but actively participates in the construction of historical meaning, offering new ways of engaging with and understanding the past.

Moving through each chapter only backed these themes, as hypothesised our history is affected by place's ability to transcend its basic affiliation and become more conceptual. Offering profound implications for how societies understand their past and envision their future Recognizing the potential of physical environments as sites of memory and identity formation, we can better understand the role of art, design, and media in constructing the narratives that shape our collective consciousness.

I shall end this investigation with a quote from Daniel Cosgrove that I believe summarise my points perfectly. "Landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring, or symbolizing surroundings" (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988, p. 1).

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Annotated bibliography

Cosgrove, D. (1988) *The Iconography of Landscape*. New York, USA: Cambridge university press.

This book covers a very broad topic, for instance it seeks to define the landscape and its cultural significance. The iconography of landscape includes more than just images, subjects such as poetry, maps, architectural design and paintings which are perfect for incorporating visual culture. Furthermore, I believe this book's key asset is its collection of fourteen scholars who have diverse discipline and background in social sciences and cultural studies, this allows for widespread viewpoints on the book's subject material.

The examination on landscapes throughout history as well as specific places/depictions of their cultural significance is not the only important factor to this book that I would like to explore, there is an impression of recurring themes such as nature, power dynamics, political influence, colonialism, globalization and landscape identity. These key factors are useful for my research because to understand the relationship of a place to visual culture it is important to comprehend how landscape has influenced our history in visual culture as well as our societal development.

Walker, J.A. (1997) *Visual Culture: An Introduction*. Britain: Manchester University press.

Visual culture can be defined in many ways, Visual imagery and representation also can be influenced by societal norms, values and beliefs. Walker defines these aspects by looking into historical context, tracing its roots to art history all the way to contemporary media. Side by side this he draws perspective from cultural studies, sociology and media studies to analyse visual culture comprehensively.

He states, "Visual culture can be roughly defined by material artefacts, buildings, areas, images, media and performances, which are produced by human imagination" What walker means by this is they all serve a purpose as symbols, aesthetics or political/ritualistic ideologies which address a sense of cultural significance. This is incredibly useful as this book has much more information on understanding visual culture and its traits, uses as well as history. In order to understand the relationship place has with visual culture I must first learn more about visual culture's capabilities and nature.

Cook, D. (2008) Theodor Adorno: Key concepts [eBook]. Taylor and Francis

This book offers a comprehensive overview of the key concepts in the philosophy of Theodor Adorno, a prominent figure of the Frankfurt School. Cook explores Adorno's critical theory, including his thoughts on culture, society, aesthetics, and enlightenment. The book breaks down Adorno's complex ideas into accessible chapters, providing clarity on his influence in philosophy, sociology, and political theory.

Cook's work is valuable for anyone studying critical theory and the Frankfurt School, as it serves as a detailed introduction to Adorno's intellectual contributions. The book is particularly useful for understanding Adorno's views on culture industry and his critique of modernity. This resource will be especially beneficial for those interested in the intersection of philosophy and sociology.

McKeown, Shelley., Haji, Reeshma., & Ferguson, Neil. (Eds.). (2016). *Understanding Peace and Conflict Through Social Identity Theory: Contemporary Global Perspectives* (1st ed. 2016.). Springer International Publishing.

This edited volume applies Social Identity Theory (SIT) to understanding peace and conflict in contemporary global contexts. It includes contributions from various scholars who examine how group identities influence conflicts and peacebuilding processes in diverse regions. The book explores case studies from areas such as the Middle East, Northern

Ireland, and Africa, and assesses how collective identity shapes political, cultural, and social dynamics.

This book is an essential resource for anyone researching conflict resolution, political psychology, or the role of identity in global affairs. The use of Social Identity Theory provides a theoretical framework for analysing conflicts and offers insights into the psychological mechanisms that drive group behaviour. For my studies, this book will be particularly useful in exploring the relationship between group identity and conflict.

Kelsey, S. and Stimson, B., (2008). *The Meaning of Photography*. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute

In *The Meaning of Photography*, Kelsey and Stimson explore the philosophical and cultural significance of photography. They examine how the medium has evolved from its inception to its current role in art, journalism, and everyday life. The book considers the aesthetic, ethical, and social dimensions of photography.

This book is an important resource for students and scholars interested in photography, visual culture, and the philosophy of art. Kelsey and Stimson provide both historical context and contemporary insights into the impact of photography on society. For my research, this book will be invaluable in understanding the role of photography in shaping cultural narratives and its influence on media and communication.