



DUREGRAPH

Exploring duration in the
post-photographic image

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DUREGRAPH

Exploring duration in the
post-photographic image

This work is dedicated to my loving parents, who raised me to nurture the art of questioning.

This thesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology
in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Design.

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ABSTRACT

This practice-led research project artistically considers how experienced time might be perceived in manipulated photographic images. The inquiry is developed through a series of digital images whose content is renegotiated over time while the subject in the photograph remains within the frame. The resulting duregraphs, constitute an unstable space between a photographic composite and a moving image. The aims of the thesis are to question conventions of power in viewing and to expand how we might conceive time as duration within digital photographic images.

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Finally I thank the Lord, who continues to sustain me.

**ATTESTATION OF
AUTHORSHIP**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly indicated), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

DAVID VAN VLIET
MAY 7, 2020

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I retain copyright in all images and artwork produced and presented as part of this thesis apart from the following images that are the intellectual property of others:

FIGURE 2.1.

Adams, A. (1941). *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico* [photograph]. The Ansel Adams Gallery.

FIGURE 2.2.

Muybridge, E. (1878, June 19). *The Horse in Motion* [photograph]. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

FIGURE 2.3.

Claerbout, D. (2001). *Vietnam, 1967, near Duc Pho (reconstruction after Hiromishi Mine)* [frame grab from single-channel video projection].

FIGURE 2.4.

Viola, B. (2000). *The Quintet of the Astonished*.

FIGURE 2.5.

Mölder, M. (n.d.). Frame grab of untitled cinemagraph of couple standing by the ocean. Cinemagraph.nl. <https://www.cinemagraph.nl/portfolios/de-baron/>



DAVID VAN VLIET

MAY 7, 2020

**ETHICS APPROVAL AND
CONSENTS**

AUTEC approval for this project was not required because the models featured in the images were professionally contracted.

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¹ See <https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fair-use/what-is-fair-use/>

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with a practice-led study² that enquires into a space between photography and moving image. The research interfaces a body of designed artefacts (duregraphs) and an exegetical document. In such research, the AUT Postgraduate Handbook states, “...practice does not serve to illustrate theory but is more appropriately understood as the site of research” (2019, p. 103). The research question that this study asks is:

"How might a portrait produced at the intersection of photography and moving image be used to challenge expectations about time, anticipation, immediacy and meaning?"

2 Candy states that “the primary focus of...[practice-led] research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice. Such research includes practice as an integral part of its method” (2006, p. 1).

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale for the study is twofold. The way we treat images has changed in an increasingly digital environment. This has resulted in opportunities to communicate in new, complex and nuanced ways (Benson, 2013). Given the ubiquitous use of portraiture to sell everything from commodities to political ideologies, this research questions the nature of an image so we might rethink not only how we conceive portrayals of identity, but also our spectatorship when the power dynamic is shifted and our assumed dominance over a portrait is challenged.

Second, we live in a contemporary environment of ‘message immediacy’, where duration with image messages is condensed. Increasingly, ideas like “Immediate Ask + Immediate Response = Immediate Success” (Stamatoulakis, 2017, para. 3), and “Now-ness” (Magoffin, 2016, para. 3), are advocated as “the new necessity when it comes to putting data into action to drive consumer experiences and conversions in the moment” (Magoffin, 2016, para. 3). However, this study posits a counter position. It suggests that we might be rewarded for an extended duration of time spent with an image. Here, the value of the image message is not aligned with “timeliness and immediacy” (Magoffin, 2016, para. 21), but with an experience of beneficial waiting in an environment where anticipation and patient waiting produces value.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study proposes three significant contributions. First, it contributes, through a body of practice and exegetical writing, to knowledge relating to time as duration and how this might be artistically exercised and embodied in photographic portraiture.

Second, it contributes to thinking at the intersection of photography and film, where synergies are used to create hybrid artforms and new meaning (Streitberger & van Gelder, 2010).

Finally, the project contributes to discourses surrounding the ‘reading’ of portraiture when time and movement create shifts in the image’s dynamic and our power relation to it.

KEY TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

Given the artistic nature of the research, I appreciate that definitions can vary according to context, so in certain instances in this study I use words in distinctive ways. Accordingly, a brief consideration of four key words used in the thesis may be helpful.

DUREGRAPH

‘Duregraph’ is a neologism. It is a term I have coined to describe photographic images that contain movement and, thus, articulate an experience of time. The word relates to the French word *durée* (duration) used by Bergson (1911) to define his notion of duration. It is combined with the Greek word *graphé* (representation). A duregraph is, therefore, a digitally presented photograph that reveals an encapsulation of time that plays out as subtle or unexpected motion.

PHOTOGRAPH

I define a photograph as a record of a presence created by a camera (Mortensen Steagall, 2019). A photograph may be either an analogue or a digital text, which comprises a single frame and remains stationary. However, I use the term ‘photographic image’ to refer to photographic imagery that records a physical presence but may contain elements of movement.

POST-PHOTOGRAPHY

The term post-photographic has been used by writers like Sonesson (1999) and Mitchell (1992) to describe a shift in the way that photographic images are created and treated in a modern, digital environment, so they have increased transferability, mutability, and overlaps with other media. Sonesson uses the term to refer to a method of “creating pictures which have come into being after photography, which are more or less connected to the computer” (1999, p. 1).

DURATION

Duration is used in this research to describe a qualitative experience of time where the concept of time is an experience rather than a chronological progression. My definition draws from Bergson’s (1911) discussion in *Matter and Memory*, where he proposes that one’s perception of time and space can be understood through the duration of experience.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE EXEGESIS

This exegesis consists of four chapters, preceded by an introduction and summarised in a conclusion. It also contains an appendix.

The first chapter positions the researcher within the inquiry. Here, I discuss my upbringing and the way it has contributed to the questions that I ask in the study. This background is useful because during my inquiry I use a process of internal questioning, and that draws my subjective understanding of what I encounter.

The second chapter contains a review of contextual knowledge. I use the term ‘a review of knowledge’ to encompass related written theory and practice. The chapter considers four arenas: time, photography, the role of the spectator and a review of practitioners’ work relating to my practice.

In the third chapter, I discuss the research design underpinning the inquiry. Here I consider the artistic paradigm, and heuristic and reflective nature of the research. My methods are also unpacked and their significance to the project is discussed. The chapter concludes with a critique of the methodology. The fourth chapter offers a critical commentary of my research that reflects on the designed artefacts and critical ideas that have shaped each image. This chapter describes each image individually and concludes with a discussion of the nature of their exhibition.

The conclusion provides a summary of the research and a consideration of its contribution to knowledge. I also discuss potential future directions that might be investigated following the completion of the thesis. The appendix contains a reflective log as a record of my thinking across the trajectory of the project.

THE NATURE OF THE PRACTICE

The practice is presented as an interactive website containing five images, each showing a portrait of an individual or a group. Each duregraph is approximately one minute in duration and is constructed in a photographic studio environment. The images initially appear still, but gradually the viewer perceives subtle movement. In these works, one is invited to invest time to experience challenges to immediacy, anticipation, time, enigma and meaning.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

Having provided an introduction to the thesis, we cross now into the body of the exegesis. Given the subjective nature of my research, I will begin by first discussing my position in relation to the study and the evolutionary trajectory that brought the research question into being.



1

POSITIONING
THE RESEARCHER



POSITIONING
THE RESEARCHER

I was home schooled until the age of 14. My early education was shaped by my parents’ belief that a child should learn at their own pace, in creative environments filled with the wonder of exploration. I grew up receiving activities to break down and investigate. This forged in me a self-driven quality and a hunger for inquiry. My learning was a balance between self-directed work and one-on-one teaching. The parameters of my classroom were acres of farmland and the potentials of imagination (Figure 1.1).

THE AGENCY OF DRAWING

Often, for our English lessons, my mother would read to us, and I would draw as I listened. I became familiar from an early age with being able to bring imaginary things into existence. Drawing became a tool that I used to understand the world; to think, and to communicate. Illustrating fuelled my interest in the imaginary and the fictional, because I was attracted to the idea of making imaginary things real. I still employ drawing as a significant mode of thinking (Figure 1.2).

My father immigrated from the Netherlands, as did my mother’s parents before she was born. Because of this, I have been strongly influenced by the work of Dutch painters like Johannes Vermeer and Rembrandt van Rijn. Their pursuit of realism inspired me in the way that light and dark disclosed and revealed details, the drama of shadows and the depth of character that was revealed the longer I spent with their portraits.

MANIPULATION

My father runs an architectural office. He is practically minded, combining the sensibility of aesthetic care with the reason of logic. As I grew up, he provided me with a shed in which I could experiment with ideas. Often, I would play there making functioning objects from the fictional worlds of my imagination (Figure 1.3). The practical knowledge that I gained continues to influence the way I research, pursuing what is not known towards unimagined potential. I discover through practice.

FIGURE 1.1. PAGE BEFORE
A view of the boundary tree-line at my home in Te Kauwhata (March 2019).



My introduction to photography was within digital contexts. I have never worked with 35mm film and analogue systems. Because of this, I have always understood editing as part of the photographic process. I use the camera to create visual data that I can alter in my studio using digital tools, with computer programs allowing me to manipulate both still and moving images with much the same dexterity.

I took my first class in photography when I entered formal schooling. Here I was introduced to basic lighting and editing techniques, but it was only when I began my bachelor's degree that I encountered photographic language and visual semiotics. Consequently, I developed a curiosity about discourses that consider how a photograph might communicate.

During this period, I discovered the potentials of movement and time. I began questioning how moving images might carry messages through a sequence of frames. I considered the frame, the static shot, the viewer and the gaze. I was fascinated by the way still photography and moving image might speak to and against each other. I remember when I first saw a

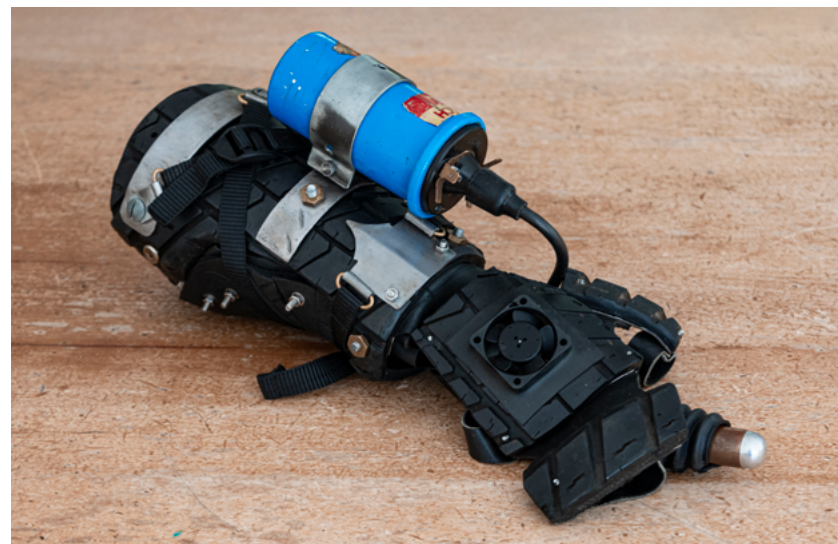


FIGURE 1.2. TOP

Example of a thumbnail sketch. Such images are not renderings of what will be made, but rather points in an ongoing thinking process. They may be likened to a form of shorthand for capturing a nuanced idea. Such images become an archive that enables me to trace pathways of my thinking processes (2019). © David van Vliet.

FIGURE 1.3. BOTTOM

A taser armpiece made from found materials.
© David van Vliet (2020).

cinemagraph³, and the internal conflict it caused me as I tried to reason whether it was a photograph or a video. It was almost magical the way the small movements in the image produced a new sense of ‘aliveness’. My mind was opened to the possibilities of co-existence (Figure 1.4). In the overlap between these media forms, I began to ask how digital manipulation might produce distinctive ways of talking and thinking about time.

Having now positioned myself in terms of the inquiry, it is useful to position the research itself in the context of existing knowledge.



FIGURE 1.4.

A series of augmented posters from my graduation show for the AUT Bachelor of Design in November 2018. In these images I was exploring the way technology might be used to change the way we consider time in a photograph. When activated through a mobile device, the portraits appeared in colour, and sound and subtle movements were revealed. © David van Vliet (2018).

3 Cinemagraphs are animated GIFs primarily composed of still images, with only a small part being looped in an infinite cycle of motion.



2

REVIEW OF KNOWLEDGE

REVIEW OF KNOWLEDGE

This chapter offers a review of knowledge that impacts on my research. It is divided into four broad areas: the first considers discourse relating to time; the second examines the nature of the photograph; the third considers the role and nature of the spectator; the fourth section discusses the practice that contextualises my work.

TIME

The concept of time has been present in human epistemology since we tried to understand the patterns of day and night and the cycles of the moon. These cycles were connected to food production and hunting seasons, and therefore vital for our existence (Weinert, 2013). The concept of time has challenged thinkers from diverse fields, including philosophy, biology and physics. According to Asiain, time has:

interested Man of all Ages, and the finest minds from Saint Augustine to Kant and Einstein have paid attention to its meaning, and the mystique shrouding its most notorious property: that of flowing only forward, its irreversibility. (1994, p. xiii)

Broadly speaking, time may be understood as both an external phenomenon that happens in the world, that is independent of the human perception, and something that is recognised through the observation of events.

Plato (427–347 B.C.) perceived a difference between the quotidian world (which changes daily according to our experiences) and the dimension of unchanged matters and forms that lie beneath our existence. According to him, the science of the natural world can never be precise because it is constantly changing. Accordingly, he argued that only mathematics could deal with timeless forms. Plato saw time as the “moving image of eternity” (1977, p. 51); a numeric progression.

The problem for Plato was that the perceivable realm has irregular oscillations and fluctuations such that the measurement of time cannot be precise. Instead, he associated time with the periodic movements of celestial bodies, as something outside the irregular world in which we live.

Plato’s attempt to place time measurement outside the realm of the human experience was influential in cosmology because it established an association with cosmic pattern regularity that is still used in disciplines like physics and astronomy. His notion of time influenced the idea of physical time.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) was Plato’s pupil, and he was the first Greek philosopher to advance time as a subjective notion. He suggested that it is not possible to consider time without a soul. He criticised Plato’s notion of time, arguing that time could not be associated with the movement of the planets because motion is measured in time; therefore time cannot be measured by motion. He argued that time could not identically match motion because motion has qualitative and quantitative fluctuations that imply magnitude and measurements.

For him, time was dependent on the perception of ‘the before and after’ of a movement—an awareness of the change. Accordingly, without the realisation of a change, he argued, there could be no perception of time, and without time it is impossible to measure the flow of change. He stated that “The time marks the movement, since it is its number, and the movement the time” (Aristotle, 2014, p. 373).

Aristotle’s notion of time was vital, because it valued the duration of experience rather than a discrete conception of time outside of human existence. It influenced thinking about a distinction between physical time (advanced by Plato) and a time that is dependent on the perception of events (a duration informed by the before and after). Significant in Aristotle’s argument was a notion of time as a subjective perception of physical events. In other words, he suggested a concept of time based on experience. He saw time as a kind of order rather than a kind of measure.

Saint Augustine⁴ of Hippo’s (354–430 A.D.) concept of time partially aligned with Aristotle’s because both thinkers considered time as dependent on a perception of change.⁵ However, he criticised Aristotle for having not sufficiently questioned the existence of time by the soul. In *The Confessions of Saint Augustine* (2013), St Augustine rejected the idea that time could have existed before God created the universe because, he argued, only God exists in a timeless form. He believed that time relies on an awareness of the before and after; a sequential relationship

⁴ Saint Augustine of Hippo has also been referred to in other literature by his Latin name, ‘Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis’. In this text I will refer to him by his English name.

⁵ Although writers like Morison (1971) argue that in Book XI of the *Confessions* St Augustine proposed a subjective account of time, Hernandez (2016) argues that in *On Genesis* (389 A.D.), he also suggested an objective account. Hernandez believes that St Augustine saw time as a creature of God that existed before human consciousness. Thus, Morison posits that St Augustine had two accounts of time, one objective and one subjective.

between physical events, starting with God’s creation of the universe. St Augustine illustrates this in his text *The City of God*, stating that “time does not exist without some movement and transition” (Augustine, 2014, p. 443).

However, St Augustine did not share the Platonic view of time in relation to celestial, cyclic events. He criticised this idea, arguing that if time was truly cyclic it would repeat itself. He stated:

[A]ccording to those philosophers, the same periods and events of time are repeated; as if, for example, the philosopher Plato, having taught in the school at Athens which is called the Academy, so, numberless ages before, at long but certain intervals, this same Plato, and the same school, and the same disciples existed, and so also are to be repeated during the countless cycles that are yet to be,—far be it, I say, from us to believe this. (2014, p. 499)

St Augustine did not value the measurement of time using metrics such as sundials or water clocks. He saw the human mind as the ‘instrument’ by which time was measured. Weinert, in discussing St Augustine’s concept of time, says “Events flow from future to past, through the present and leave traces on the human mind. It is these impressions, which the mind measures” (2013, p. 15). He observes that Augustine “endorses a physical notion of time but declares individual minds its metric when he asks himself how the passage of time is to be grasped (p. 23).

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) developed a relatively idealistic view of time, advancing an evolutionary process

in his treatise *General History of Nature and Theory of the Heavens* (1755). Expanding from a Copernican worldview (which was later refined by Galileo, Descartes and Newton), where the sun was argued as the centre of the planets’ orbits, Kant believed that the universe was not confined to the solar system and celestial bodies. For Kant, time was an unfolding and ongoing sequence, and his evolutionary view broke from the biblical six-day creation story.

Kant proposed an objective notion of time, in which it was perceived through the human mind. This followed Augustine’s argument that time only exists through individual comprehension. However, Kant deviated from his thinking because he did not define time through the human mind, but through a collective mind that he proposed as an element of human nature. Kant’s views may be framed as objective because he considered that the comprehension of time depended on objective events.

Edmund Husserl, considered to be the founder of the phenomenological⁶ movement, asserted that our grasp of reality is built on conscious awareness. He built his philosophy on the idea that time consciousness was a prerequisite for understanding the world, arguing that “the consciousness of space is the lived experience in which ‘intuition of space’ as perception...takes place” (Husserl, 1964, p. 23). Like Aristotle, Augustine and Kant, Husserl maintained that the perception of time is dependent on how one experiences it. He did not believe that time was created inside the human mind, but he argued it could only be understood through it.

In discussing Husserl’s phenomenological approach to time, Kelly states:

⁶ Phenomenology can be understood in terms of “the activity of giving an account (logos) of the way things appear (phainomenon)” (Kelly, n.d., para. 1).

Phenomenology offers neither metaphysical speculation about time's relation to motion (as does Aristotle), nor the psychological character of time's past and future moments (as does Augustine), nor transcendental-cognitive presumptions about time as a mind-dependent construct (as does Kant). (n.d., para. 1)

Husserl understood that experience is built on a temporal framework where any perception of the present is a relationship between a primal impression and a passing into retention. Without retention, he argued, our comprehension of the present moment can have no context.

In discussing retention, Husserl states:

Every actual now of consciousness...is subject to the law of modification. The now changes continuously from retention to retention. There results, therefore, a stable continuum which is such that every subsequent point is a retention for every earlier one. (1964, pp. 50–51)

Husserl therefore argues that a unified understanding of an object in time relies on retention.

Henri Bergson acknowledged the existence of time outside of the human mind, but he argued that the perception of time and space is understood through the duration of experience (Bergson, 1911). He understood time to exist as duration (*durée*), within a “qualitative multiplicity,” in which “several conscious states are organized into a whole, permeate one another, [and] gradually gain a richer content” (Bergson, 1957, p. 122).

Bergson suggests that it is through these conscious states, not through the distinguishing of events before and after, that we experience duration. He argues that duration is not made of events that are separated from one another

but, instead, it is a constant accumulative flow: a gradient between states of consciousness. Here, “pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego...refrains from separating its present state from its former states” (1957, p. 100).

Martin Heidegger, a student and assistant of Husserl's, made further developments in phenomenology. According to Heidegger, Husserl's time consciousness would result in a subject that was separate from the world because his idea of consciousness was based on a deduction and retention of successive events. Heidegger's approach to phenomenology was built on a practical basis of experience, in which he developed the concept of *Dasein*, or being-in-the-world. Heidegger understood that the experience of being occurs within the world and is understood through time. He stated, “The meaning of being is...interpreted from the perspective of time” (Heidegger, 2011, p. 140).

Heidegger considered time to be as a “sequence of ‘nows,’” explaining:

The sequence of “nows” is uninterrupted and has no gaps. No matter how ‘far’ we proceed in ‘dividing up’ the “now”, it is always now. The continuity of time is seen within the horizon of something which is indissolubly present-at-hand. (1962, pp. 423-424)

Heidegger did not privilege the idea of time as something that is stretched out in a linear way, but instead he argued that it is situated in the present.

Finally, it is useful to consider Merleau-Ponty's discussion of temporality in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (2005). Here, he suggests that it is impossible to split time from its subjective structure. Advancing Heidegger's *Dasein* (as being in the middle of the things),

Merleau-Ponty reinforced the role of the body. Following the phenomenological structure developed by Husserl and Heidegger, which includes the lived experience as a way to reflect on time, he proposed time as an example where it is possible to make explicit the implicit, creating a structure for subjectivity. This was possible, he argued, because “temporal dimensions...bear each other out and ever confine themselves to making explicit what was implied in each, being collectively expressive of that one single explosion or thrust that is subjectivity itself” (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p. 490).

In this research project, my thinking aligns with Aristotle, Augustine, Kant and Husserl in that I conceive time as being a perception, thus dependent largely on the way one experiences it. I am, in addition, influenced by Bergson's understanding of time as duration (*durée*). Thus, I see time as a psychological reality that is in a state of constant and continuous change. Although I accept that time can exist outside of the human mind (as in measurable, mathematical time), I conceive time and space as a duration of experience that is understood internally, through a differentiation of experienced events. It is this idea that forms the basis of my study.

My portraits contain provocations that challenge the borders of what is expected. Moments of co-dwelt, moving time (the experience of a shared moment when the viewer and the portrait's model appear to equate through movement in ‘real time’) disrupt the idea of the frozen photographic moment, (the petrification of time in an image). We engage with time in these works beyond mathematical accounting. Time is not an everlasting likeness moving according to number (Plato), instead I treat time as unstable and open to diverse interpretation.



FIGURE 2.1.

Adams, A. (1941). *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico* [photograph]. The Ansel Adams Gallery. <http://anseladams.com/ansel-adams-anecdotes/>. The commonly accepted commentary relating to this image was that it was a frantically captured, authentic record of a dying moment of sunset as it lit white crosses and buildings in a desert landscape. However, Richman-Abdou notes: “He took the precious film to his studio. Here, he developed the negative with multiple water baths to bring out its stark tones, but found it difficult to print. Over the next few years, he repeatedly revisited the negative, experimenting with different contrasts and printing techniques” (Richman-Abdou, 2018, para. 5).

DEFINING PHOTOGRAPHY

Because, in this thesis, I use the term ‘photographic image’ to describe “an analogue or digital record made by a camera, of a presence” (Mortensen Steagall, 2019, p. xxxiii), a photographic image may include images comprised of single or multiple frames.

There has been a complex, historical discussion about the relationship between a photograph and a realistic representation of the seen world. Questions about visual integrity have been challenged historically by photographers like Ansel Adams, whose *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico* (1941), while widely acknowledged as a masterpiece of landscape photography, was heavily refined in his darkroom and was not an accurate record of what his camera recorded in a moment in time (Figure 2.1).

Barthes (1977) argues that a photograph is a perfect analogue representation of reality, unachievable to the same level by different image-making forms, and Sontag (1977) suggests that photographs serve as evidence, showing a moment of undisputable reality rather than a representation of it. For Bazin and Gray (1960), the photograph assumes the role of the object it represents, freed from the mundane conditions ruled by time and space. Brubaker (1993) also adopts Bazin’s position, arguing that “photographs are objective representations, because they are mechanically or automatically made from phenomena in nature” (p. 59).

BARTHES

To describe the sensations of viewing photographs, Barthes (1981) draws on the Latin words *studium* and *punctum*. The word *studium* is used to describe the photographer’s intentions and the details of the image (in other words, the study of the photograph itself). *Punctum* (relating to the word puncture), he suggests, is something that ‘pricks’ or ‘bruises’ the viewer or stays with them even after seeing the image. It is an unintentional and emotional response determined by the viewer (Barthes, 1981).

In my research, I aim to disrupt the way stillness and movement might be perceived through portraits. The recognition of another ‘non-static’ human in the image (*studium*) can progress to *punctum* as a shift in the power dynamic arises from movement that occurs when observing the work. The sense of unsettledness that emanates from the image is a sensory, poignant, intensely subjective effect of the photograph on the viewer.

SONTAG

Susan Sontag (1977), in her seminal collection of essays *On Photography*, examines the way a photograph might be considered as a tool of power because it reflects reality accurately while still being shaped by the photographer’s actions (such as the adopted viewpoint, framing and exposure). Sontag considers the historical and present-day roles of photography in relation to capitalism and idealistic conceptions of America, put forth by writers like Walt Whitman.

For Sontag, photography holds significant authority in contemporary society. She suggests that such images are capable of replacing reality because they are not just an interpretation, but also ‘a relic of reality’, something taken straight from the real.

She positions the photographer as somebody with the power to immortalise a moment, and she argues that that moment can only ever exist again inside the photograph. She also suggests that a photograph becomes a possession in which the past exists for as long as the photograph as an artefact endures.

BENJAMIN

First published in 1936 and influential in John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972), Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* argues that an infinitely reproducible photograph lacks the aura of the unique work of art. In other words, unique works of art such as paintings possess aura but their photographic reproductions do not.

While paintings can be reproduced manually or by semi-mechanical processes, a photograph, he suggests, represents something new, which enables the image to be seen in very different contexts to the original and this has an impact on how the image is understood.

Benjamin argues that the context of a photograph changes the way a viewer understands what is depicted and he believes that the age of mechanical reproduction 'withers' the aura of a work of art. He claims:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. (2006, p. 116)

Interestingly, Yacavone (2013) suggests that there is a congruency between Benjamin's and Barthes's ideas because both thinkers draw our attention to issues related to dynamics of memory, time and subjectivity

between the viewer and the image that are unique to the photograph. She says:

Benjamin's and Barthes's interests in history, modernity and society are channelled and overlap through distinct concepts, including 'aura' and punctum, which shed light not only on the nature of the medium per se but also on fundamentally existential, psychological and cultural-historical experiences of photographic images. (Yacavone, 2013, pp. 4–5)

POST-PHOTOGRAPHY

Barthes, Sontag and Benjamin built their thinking about the photographic image based predominantly on analogue photography. The introduction of digital sensors, which have largely replaced film, opened a myriad of changes to the way photographs are made, distributed and consumed. A number of writers have noted that the growing digital environment of photography has challenged photography's original definitions and theoretical frameworks. In discussing this phenomenon they employ a range of terms including 'post-photography' (Mitchell, 1992), photography's 'expanded field' (Baker, 2005) and 'after photography' (Ritchin, 2010).

Ritchin (2010) discusses a change in the way photographs may be treated and understood following the introduction of digital technologies. For him, digital photography represents a fundamental paradigm shift rather than a simple change of tools. He supports his argument by considering both the ubiquity and malleability of digital photography, and he argues that digital photography has fundamentally shaken our belief in the image as proof. Ritchin suggests that the now ubiquitous use of digital cameras (especially those embedded in smartphones) has caused us look at the world 'second-hand' via images, and we have experienced a shift in social behaviour in which we increasingly groom, edit and present ourselves for image-

based consumption. This paradigm shift, Ritchin suggests, leaves room for questioning how other visual media might begin to overlap with the photograph through digital compositing and manipulation.

In this research project, my thinking is influenced by Barthes's concept of punctum and the way a subtle change in the image might trigger a subjective emotional response from the viewer. Also of relevance is Sontag's (1977) idea that a photograph may hold significant authority because it replaces reality, not only as an interpretation, but as 'a relic of reality'; something taken straight from the real. In the case of my work, this 'real' includes a rethinking of time in the photograph and I challenge the concept of reality as a 'frozen moment' of time, disrupting the stillness of the captured moment.

THE ROLE OF THE SPECTATOR

Of use in contextualising my work is a consideration of the way that we 'see' photographic images. Berger (2003) suggests that when we see images, we are seeing the image as it was seen by the image-maker. For Barthes (1977) a photograph is not only perceived and received, it is read. He suggests that a photographic image is also "connected more or less consciously by the public that consumes it to a traditional stock of signs" (p. 19). Of interest in my research is how one 'participates' when viewing an image of another person, and how the recognition of another person as a non-frozen 'relic of reality' (Sontag 1977) might draw out the *punctum* of a photographic image.

Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness* (1956) addresses a power dynamic that is negotiated when looking at the 'Other'. He describes this 'look' (*le regard*) as a subjective power difference between the viewer and what is being viewed. He suggests that the power is 'held' by the one who is looking, and the sensation of being seen by another person or thing makes us, as viewers, self-conscious of our

vulnerability. Rowse (n.d.) suggests that this power dynamic is challenged when direct address is seen in photography, when the subject looks directly into the camera lens (and thus ‘into’ the eyes of the viewer). This, he suggests, creates a ‘confrontation’ because it broaches a division that contracts to separate what is seen and what sees.

John Berger (1972), in *Ways of Seeing*, approaches the concept of the gaze in terms of a masculine point of view. He suggests that in contemporary society men are considered active beings who are judged on what they do, while women are seen as a passive presence, considered in relation to the way they see themselves. From a societal position, Berger suggests that the way women see themselves has been split into two. They are the surveyor (of themselves) or the surveyed (both by themselves and by the male who beholds them).

Mulvey (1975) addresses similar issues to Berger, from a cinematic point of view. She suggests that the act of looking is divided between the active/male and the passive/female. For Mulvey, the male gaze fixes on the female figure, projecting his fantasy onto her, while the female figure is styled for this purpose. The male gaze, she argues, is a result of a patriarchal society in which the male is given privilege over the female. Similar to Berger’s thinking, Mulvey argues that the male gaze examines, and the female is beheld.

Both Berger and Mulvey suggest that it is the spectator who is able to negotiate the power they hold over the viewed. They argue that this dynamic has emerged from the tangible practices of art, science and photography, which affect the cultural impression of what is depicted. The societal context of the image determines the masculine gaze rather than the image’s qualities.

In discussing the photography of Karimeh Abbud, Nassar (2007) notes that sometimes it is the photographer’s subject that disrupts the male gaze, because she ‘looks back’

directly into the lens of the camera and, by extension, at us (the spectators). In such instances, Nassar suggests, we are not encountering “a one-way relationship between the photographer and the photographed” but a gazing eye that “appears to be an intruding and interrogating eye that wants to see and to show” (2007, p. 4). Here, he suggests, the viewer is gazing into one world while the subject gazes sometimes in such a manner so “piecing that the eyes appear to be seeing through us as viewers.” Such portraits, he suggests, return “the gaze a thousand times, for [the subject gazes] back at every person who has seen her pose” (2007, p. 5).

This idea has been developed by Jarrett (2019), who suggests that making eye contact with someone causes us to become conscious that we are being judged and examined by another person, and as a result we become conscious of ourselves. He suggests that this involuntary level of social cognition is triggered by the eyes.

In my research I am interested in the gaze in relation to the way a dynamic is established between the viewer and the viewed. I am rethinking Sartre’s (1956) concept of *le regard*, accepting that although a subjective power difference exists between the viewer and what is being viewed, this power might not be held absolutely by the one who is looking. This is because my work often produces the sensation of being ‘seen’ by the subject of the portrait, resulting in a heightening of the viewer’s self-consciousness and vulnerability. Although I am interested in Berger’s (1972) consideration of the gendered gaze, my primary concern is in questioning how momentary ‘direct address’ (Jarrett, 2019), or unexpected movement, might challenge the presumed passivity of the portrait (and the model). As such, the study explores tensions within Berger’s and Mulvey’s (1975) male gaze so that a seemingly one-way relationship between the viewer and image is disrupted (Nassar, 2007).

RELATED PRACTICE

There are a small number of photographers currently exploring issues of movement within a photographic frame and four of them warrant consideration because they serve to contextualise my inquiry. They are Eadweard Muybridge, David Claerbout, Bill Viola and Michel Mölder.

MUYBRIDGE

Eadweard Muybridge (1830–1904) changed the way photographs were considered when he experimented with the speed at which photographs might be viewed. His most notable achievement, *Animal Locomotion* (1878), was one of the first photographic projects that sought to create motion from photography. By capturing (using mechanical recording techniques) the successive movement of animals into an image sequence (Figure 2.2), he was able to accurately demonstrate the dynamic manner in which movement occurs. His short and repetitive loops



FIGURE 2.2.

Muybridge, E. (1878, June 19). *The Horse in Motion* [photograph]. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. This image sequence created by Muybridge shows a horse at the different stages of running. His photographic images looped in a manner much like an animated GIF.

of a motion (using a zoopraxiscope)⁷ formed the vanguard of early explorations into relationships between the still photograph and movement.

CLAERBOUT

David Claerbout is a Belgian artist whose work explores relationships between photography and video through processes of digital compositing. The juxtaposition in his work between stillness and movement creates a tension in the ways that time is perceived because one is viewing, simultaneously, an image in the past (photographic stillness) and images within it that contain subtle movements, thus continuously affecting the present (through their movement) (Figure 2.3)⁸. He sees his work as a form of visual “resistance [that produces] openings in the interpretation of a fixed image” (Daly, 2009).

VIOLA

Bill Viola uses video artworks to explore perception “as an avenue to self-knowledge” (Viola, n.d.). His work explores the nature of stillness inside photographic images presented on large screens. In his compositions, motion is often slowed down or stopped completely. He says that his work has been influenced by Christian mysticism, Zen Buddhism and Islamic Sufism, and this has resulted in artworks that he considers as vehicles for inward searching.



FIGURE 2.3.

Claerbout, D. (2001), *Vietnam, 1967, near Duc Pho (reconstruction after Hiromishi Mine)* [frame grab from single-channel video projection]. This image (taken from a video interview with Claerbout) shows a wrecked plane in the process of crashing towards the ground. However, the object is permanently suspended in mid-air. Movement in the image appears as subtle shifts in light across the hills.

⁷ The zoopraxiscope was an instrument that worked much like a slide projector, projecting light through a circular glass plate onto which photographs had been transferred. These images were arranged in sequence around the edge of the plate, which was then rotated as light was shone through it, creating a short, looped moving image.

⁸ A portion of this work is accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTad4uUhK1o>.

His composite portraits, as in *The Quintet of the Astonished* (Figure 2.4)⁹, are sometimes lit with reference to Dutch and Renaissance paintings. The slow pace of movement in his work often heightens attention detail and asks the viewer to ‘dwell within’ meaning.

Viola’s images often contain a distinctive dualism in their considerations of opposites like light and dark, or life and death. In some instances, his work unfolds deep shifts in emotion that occur subtly over extended periods of time. As neither still frames nor real-time videos, the artworks challenge our idea of the passive subject operating under a dominant gaze.

My concerns are similar to Viola’s because I also employ subtle movement in my work. However, the sense of disruption in my portraits is sometimes more pronounced because I often employ direct address or cause movement to be sudden and unexpected.

MÖLDER

Michel Mölder is a photographer and cinematographer based in the Netherlands. He creates cinemagraphs that comprise a still frame containing a small amount of infinitely looped motion. Compositionally, Mölder’s cinemagraphs appear photographic, however there is a tension that exists in the balance between motion and stillness (Figure 2.5). We experience his work as a moment captured by the camera that continuously plays out in front of us. In his exploration of the possibilities of motion within a still frame, he challenges the concept of photography’s frozen moment of time.

The manipulation of ‘original’ footage and photographs that Mölder uses to create his images is a treatment that I have also used to create my duregraphs. However, Mölder’s cinemagraphs are constructed in short loops while my research aims to use movement in a less discernible way; occurring over a longer time where the viewer is caused to question whether the image is moving or not.

Having discussed the contextual knowledge that situates the research, it is useful to now consider the research paradigm, methodology and methods that were applied to my practice.



FIGURE 2.4.

Viola, B. (2000). *The Quintet of the Astonished*. Frame grab from Viola’s video piece showing a small group of people slowly reacting to an unseen event.



FIGURE 2.5.

Mölder, M. (n.d.). Frame grab of untitled cinemagraph of couple standing by the ocean. Cinemagraph.nl. <https://www.cinemagraph.nl/portfolios/de-baron/>
The portrait shows an elderly couple ‘frozen in time’ in the centre of the frame, with clouds and the ocean slowly moving behind them.

⁹ A portion of this video is accessible at <https://vimeo.com/15130088>.



3

RESEARCH
DESIGN

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter discusses the research design of the project. It locates the study paradigmatically, discusses the methodological approach, then unpacks the methods employed in the inquiry. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the strengths and challenges of the approach I have taken.

PARADIGM

Research paradigms are generally described as positivist, interpretivist, radical or post-structural (Sarantakos, 1993). Mackenzie and Knipe suggest that “the choice of the paradigm sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research.” They argue that “without nominating a paradigm as the first step, there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design” (2006, para. 6).

My research may be positioned within a post-positivist paradigm, because it aims to understand the world subjectively. However, it may be more usefully understood as ‘artistic research.’ Rust, Mottram and Till describe artistic research as research “in which the professional and or creative practices of art, design or architecture

play an instrumental part in an inquiry” (2007, p. 11). Gray (1996) suggests that such research is developed through generative and reflective practice, and Klein (2010) notes that artistic inquiries do not seek to deliver specific knowledge and, thus, they often engage with unconventional research methods. Klein describes artistic knowledge as “physical embodied knowledge [that is] felt knowledge” (2010, p. 6). As such, artistic knowledge is subjectively oriented and “acquired through sensory and emotional perception...through artistic experience, from which it cannot be separated.” Klein suggests that artistic knowledge may be “silent or verbal, declarative or procedural, implicit or explicit” (2010, p. 6).

METHODOLOGY

Given that this research emanates from an artistic practice-led paradigm, it is useful to consider the methodology employed in its explication. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that one’s methodology asks, “How can the inquirer go about finding out whatever they believe can be known?” (p. 108). In artistic inquiry I investigate these questions through practice, critical reflection on this practice, and iterative refinement of emerging outcomes.

In methodological terms, this project constitutes a practice-led inquiry, directed towards discovery through artistic practice. Ventling (2018, p. 124) argues that practice-led research involves a dynamic relationship between research and art practices. In my practice I often iteratively test a question and ‘feel’ my way forward. I am reminded, in this process, of Reason’s discussion when he argues, “we do not suppress our primary subjective experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed and swept along by it; rather, we raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process” (1988, p. 12). In this sense, my practice may be aligned with the tenets of heuristic inquiry.

Moustakas defines a heuristic inquiry as “a process of internal search[ing] through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis” (1990, p. 9). Heuristic inquiry enables a researcher to:

find knowledge, patterns or a desired result by intelligent, informal questioning and guesswork rather than by applying pre-established formulae. As a form of inquiry it utilises sophisticated levels of informed subjectivity and tacit knowledge to solve complex creative problems. (Ings, 2011, p. 73)

According to Ventling, the adaptability of the processes of heuristic inquiry, combined with its emphasis on a subjective personal viewpoint, make it “attractive and relevant to the field of artistic research” (2018, p. 127).

However, in my study, I occasionally moved outside of heuristic inquiry’s emphasis on interiority when I sought external feedback on iterative developments in my work. Sela-Smith, in her critique of Moustakas’ practice of heuristic research, cautions against opening such inquiries up to outside critique because, she suggests, this can lead to a “confusion of...different perspectives and different meanings, [that] can fully disorient the researcher doing self-inquiry” (2002, p. 71). Although I am aware of her cautioning, my approach aligns more with Ventling’s (2018) application of the methodology in design projects, where he argues that certain points of the research should be exteriorised so the researcher can assess the communicative clarity of what they are designing.

Within my heuristic inquiry I used Schön’s (2016) concept of reflective practice. This is a process in which the researcher actively reflects on what is being created, questioning both the effectiveness of the work in relation to the research, and the suitability of the way the research is framed.

METHODS

In developing the project, I employed distinct but interrelated methods that fell into four broad phases (Figure 3.1).

- 1. Phase one was concerned with ideation and planning activities.
- 2. The second phase involved the execution of the plan through shooting and experimenting in a studio.
- 3. The third phase involved processing captured data.
- 4. The final phase involved seeking strategic feedback that could impact on refinements to my designs.

Each of these phases was permeated with reflection. This is what drove the experimentation forward.¹⁰

¹⁰ Reflections on progress and planning are recorded in my reflective log. [See Appendix 1.]

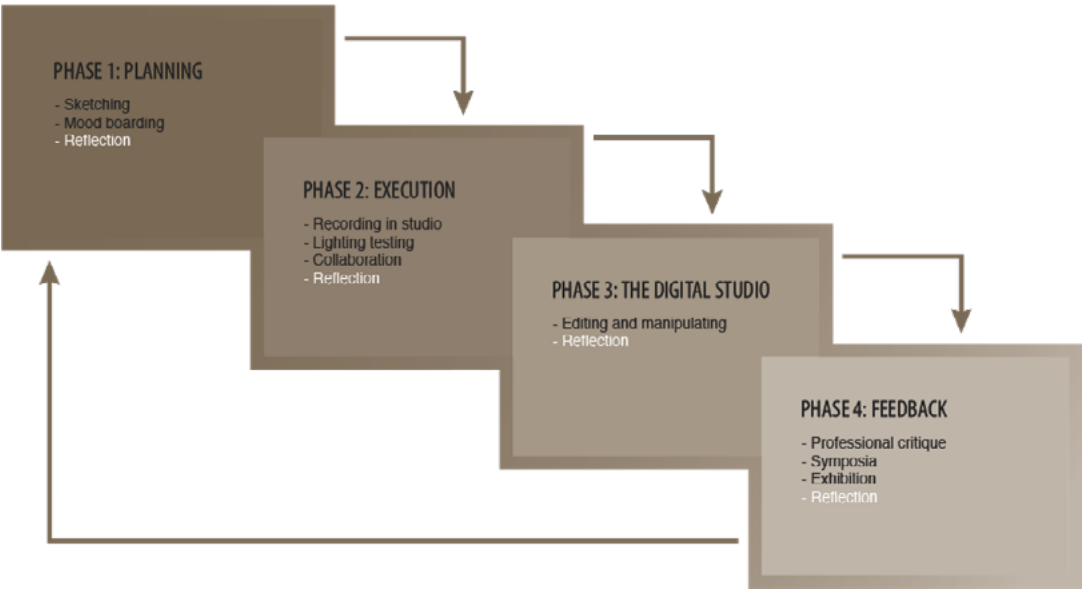


FIGURE 3.1.
Diagram of the stages of the research and related methods.

PHASE 1: PLANNING

SKETCHING

Pallasmaa argues that sketching can be a thinking process, in which:

The hand grasps the physicality and materiality of thought and turns it into a concrete image. In the arduous processes of designing, the hand often takes the lead in probing for a vision, or a vague inkling, which it eventually turns into a sketch, materializing thus the idea. (2017, p. 104)

Sketching is a method I used for visualising and planning iterations of my thinking. In this process I constructed ‘thumbnails’ in which I visualised possible compositions. These sketches developed and altered during the process of drawing because I was thinking in action (Schön, 2016). This was usually a very internal process where I did not use reference images; I was instead responding to potentials that arose in the process, entering into a self-dialogue and rendering my thinking explicit.

MOOD BOARDING

I used mood boarding¹¹ as a method for reflecting on compositions created by other practitioners (Figure 3.2). Perhaps because my fascination with portraiture has been influenced by Dutch painters like Rembrandt and Vermeer; I am particularly interested in how light (and its absence) constructs form and emphasis in complex compositions. My mood boards enabled me to compare and reflect on light, and also communicate approaches to my lighting assistant. Thus, mood boards became both instruments for planning compositions and sources of discussion in collaborative work.

¹¹ A mood board is a collection of images, textures or texts that are assembled onto a page when one is considering a particular idea. The assemblage creates a composite of visual material that can be used to reflect on ideas or communicate them to others. I used this method to visualise potential approaches to using colour, composition and light.

REFLECTIVE LOG

As indicated in Figure 3.1, reflection permeated all phases of my research. Although much of this was thinking that occurred inside the process of designing and working with models and the material I photographed, I also employed a reflective log that helped me to externalise and reflect on what I was discovering. I recorded ideas, experiments and questions in this document (Appendix 1). In this journal, I integrated elements of “the real ‘inner drama’ of research, with its intuitive base, its halting time-line, and its extensive recycling of concepts and perspectives” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 2).

The benefits of the reflective log were threefold. Firstly, it allowed me to record ideas as they arose, acting as a source that I could return to for both planning shoots and writing. Given that reflection occurred inside the making process, the notes I recorded permitted me to save thoughts and later draw connections between them. Such reflection in practice, Bolton describes as “paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively. This leads to developmental insight” (2010, p. xix). Thus, the journal became a synthesising document wherein I could reflect on thinking through a process of written self-dialogue.

Secondly, the log acted as an indicator of what contextual knowledge required discussion in my exegetical writing. Because in a practice-led study it is normally the practice that calls knowledge to itself, I was able to use notations in my journal to indicate when I turned to theory or other artists’ work to consider ideas emerging in my own experiments.

Finally, the reflective log was useful when planning future experiments because it provided a map of my thought trajectory, so I was able to use specific ideas as a reference, primarily when planning shoots.



FIGURE 3.2.

A mood board for a shoot in February 2020. Here I considered issues of lighting and group composition.

PHASE 2: EXECUTION

STUDIO RECORDING

A large part of my research took place in the photography studios at the university. I used a digital SLR (single lens reflex) camera for recording both my photographs and moving images. This is because this device allowed me to easily switch between recording stills and video. In later tests I chose to only use the video recording function of the camera because I discovered that using a frame grab from the recorded images was more effective.¹² Due to the nature of the digital camera, I could preview the images I recorded and adjust the composition based on what I could see on the screen.

TESTING LIGHTING

Photography is a medium that records the reflection of light into a digital sensor, and therefore light is fundamental in creating my images. My early investigations tested the potentials of both natural and artificial lighting setups (Figure 3.3). However, after numerous experiments I understood that, since I was using film recording to create images, traditional lighting rigs for portraiture would not work. Accordingly, I began experimenting with lighting schemes in studios, designing continuous lighting systems for use specifically with videos, and integrating flash systems lit by pilot bulbs. This approach enabled me to exert a greater level of control over light intensity and direction.

Although I wanted to achieve dramatic portraiture lighting, I also needed space for movement of the subjects.



FIGURE 3.3. Lighting setups in the first and second studio shoots of the project. The first shoot used video lighting. However, I found, after testing the flash system lights in the second shoot, the lighting was much softer on the subject. This softer lighting combined with the much darker background resulted in my decision to pursue the inquiry in a studio space that afforded more flexibility with lighting design.

12 When editing the images, I wanted the transition from stillness to movement to be as smooth as possible. By capturing stills from the video, I had a lot more control and choice over how the final image would appear. I was also able to achieve a smoother transition between movement and stillness because all of the recorded data was effectively taken from a single, sequential shot.

The nature of a duregraph is that it moves beyond a single ‘frozen’ moment where light and composition are rendered as static recordings. Because movement transitions inside these portraits, I needed to think about how light also transitioned as the form of the portrait evolved. A lighting design for the initial composition of a model would not normally work because the model moved within the frame. Light needed to respond to movement.

COLLABORATION

It was useful for me during the process of studio recording to seek out a network of experts with whom I could collaborate. This approach enabled me to locate resources for the shoots, draw upon informed technical or performance advice and lessen the financial cost of the research.¹³ Gray defines collaboration as a process of “practical support, criticism, encouragement [where] ideas are open to exchange and sharing” (1996, p. 12). This A project like this could potentially become very expensive and challenging in terms of resources. By creating networks with other researchers and practitioners, I was sometimes offered help in production that I would otherwise have had to pay for. In other cases, I was provided with materials from colleagues’ personal collections. differs from ‘cooperation’ within research that Roschelle and Teasley define as a process where one orchestrates a “division of labour among participants...where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving” (1995, p. 70). In a collaborative process I remain open to potentials inherent in the thinking of people with whom I work.

13 A project like this could potentially become very expensive and challenging in terms of resources. By creating networks with other researchers and practitioners, I was sometimes offered help in production that I would otherwise have had to pay for. In other cases, I was provided with materials from colleagues’ personal collections.

This is important in a studio shoot because as the director and photographer I need to remain as focused as possible on the ethos of the recording. To achieve this, I need to be ‘reflectively inside’ the evolution of what I am seeing.

Following discussions with other photographers and film directors I understood the potential of importing supplementary expertise in areas like lighting, costume and production.¹⁴ An example of this was the support I received from a costumer¹⁵ who not only helped me to source material but also understood how costumes must be mangaed during a shoot.

By employing significant levels of collaboration, not only was I able to focus on artistic issues at hand but I was also able to ask for advice and opinions from experts who were temporarily embodied in the inquiry. Because of this, I was able to remain “open to the discovery of phenomena, incongruent with the initial problem setting, on the basis of which [I was able to] reframe the problem” (Schön, 2016, p. 268).

In this project I contracted professional actors instead of models, because they were more familiar with performing ‘transitioning’ emotion for the camera. By this I mean they were able to shift from one emotional state to another during a continuous shot. Although I tried initially to direct the actors based on appearances I wanted to record, I quickly came to understand that to achieve better results I needed to discuss the ‘intension’ of a shoot with them. They wanted to work from a motivation. Accordingly, I began to construct ‘paragraph-stories’ that they could

14 By ‘production’ I mean the organising and on-site management of models, makeup, costume and peripheral issues like access, prop wrangling and catering.
15 Antony Mackle was instrumental in the shopping for and assembly of costumes.

respond to.¹⁶ This produced much higher levels of originality and ‘authenticity’ in the recordings.

PHASE 3: THE DIGITAL STUDIO

EDITING AND MANIPULATING

Once visual data had been recorded it was progressed iteratively through a range of experiments inside my digital studio. This involved many hours and I am reminded of Schön’s observation that during such periods one’s thinking “tends to change over periods of time longer than a single episode of practice, although particular events may trigger their change. And they are sometimes changed through the practitioner’s reflection on the events of his practice” (2016, p. 275). While editing and manipulating imagery¹⁷ I continued to reflect on potential. Because I had gathered a range of variations of each scenario, I was able to move between them, assessing and questioning potential emphases and nuances. Using manipulation and editing, I was able to change data from its original recorded state.

16 Here is an example of a story paragraph I used to help an actor orient himself inside a scenario.

You are a man who has, both physically and metaphorically, lost the shirt off his back. You know the camera is watching you. You are proud because you know you are being seen, yet inside you are broken. As you gaze toward the viewer, you cannot quite make him out. However just before you lose interest and look away, you realise that this may be the person who is responsible for your misery.

17 Most of the footage was manipulated using the timeline and masking functions in Adobe After Effects CC. At some points where more accurate editing of a still image was necessary, I used Adobe Photoshop CC, which enabled me to renegotiate finer details of the image. These programs allowed me to manipulate the original recorded material by seamlessly overlaying data. By using this technique and stretching time out, I was able to create moments of apparent stillness and periods of unexpected or subtle movement.

Often, editing images created varied results from the same footage. Discovery and experimentation with timing and the movement of elements within the frame was rich in this stage of the research. Because I was working heuristically, I tended to pull myself away from outside influences during this phase of the research, becoming embodied in what I was creating and sensing my way forward by questioning what was surfacing in front of and inside me. I was reminded here that Douglass and Moustakas note, “in its purest form, heuristics is a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know...through the internal pathways of the self” (1985, p. 63).

PHASE 4: FEEDBACK

PROFESSIONAL CRITIQUE

The final phase was not isolated from the three that preceded it. I sought feedback in Phases 1 and 2 and in the closing experiments of Phase 3. By engaging in critical discussions with experts I was able to improve both the clarity of my communication and the depth of my reflection. In the process of the inquiry I consulted with Dr Marcos Steagall (photographer), Professor Welby Ings (filmmaker), Gregory Bennet (digital artist), Meighan Ellis (photographer) and Dr Tatiana Tavares (an augmented-reality artist). Usually, professional feedback related to a specific idea of concern. However, I also set up viewings of my work in progress so we could discuss specific technical or conceptual issues. As both Ventling (2018) and Ings (2011) suggest, in a heuristic inquiry, it is necessary to maintain a level of discretion around feedback and I was careful not to accept or reject critique or advice immediately. Instead, I waited to see if it resonated with the practice or my intentions before acting upon it. The critical discussions helped me to draw correlations between practice and conceptual refinement, and to extend the breadth and depth of technical, aesthetic and theoretical considerations in the research.

SYMPOSIA

During the development of this project I also attended and presented my research at two symposia. These were the Link Symposium (2019) held at AUT South Campus and the AUT Postgraduate Symposium (2019) (Figure 3.4). In these relatively formal environments, I was able to open my thinking to an audience of researchers who were not photographers. This process forced me to clarify my communication by avoiding the use of jargon and disciplinary supposition. I was also able to use the insights of researchers in other fields to help diagnose what questions, conclusions and assumptions might need refining. By presenting ideas in symposia, I found that I was forced to articulate thinking that had been utilised but unspoken, thus bringing tacit thinking to the surface.

EXHIBITING WORK

I also took the opportunity during the project to present iterations of my thinking in an exhibition. Unlike symposia presentations where, in general, words replace the substance of practice, in an exhibition one can discuss the physical nature of one's work. This includes issues relating to installation, duration and changes in perception that occur after repeated viewings of a duregraph. I was also able to observe how long people would wait with a work, and which pieces they returned to multiple times.

My work in progress was presented at the Tika Tonu exhibition held at AUT South Campus from November 5–7, 2019 (Figure 3.5). The exposure of my experiments acted as a ‘testing ground’ before I began fine-tuning technical elements and initiating more advanced approaches to the work.



FIGURE 3.4. ABOVE

Presenting my thinking at the Link Symposium on August 6, 2019. My ideas were not concrete at this point. By presenting and discussing ideas in gestation I was able to refine the clarity of my thinking.

FIGURE 3.5. BELOW

An exhibition of my work featuring a series of five duregraphs on the screen and a poster that presented the project's abstract.

CRITIQUE OF THE METHODOLOGY

Heuristic inquiry as a methodological approach to artistic research is predicated on high levels of critical questioning: one relies on astute self-reflection supported by strategic external critique and advice. Such an approach offers both strengths and challenges.

STRENGTHS

The emphasis on discovery through questioning, in a heuristic inquiry, often led me to nurture questions, living with them for a long time; allowing discoveries to eventually manifest through practice. This valuing of questioning without an immediate, visualised solution often opened me up to richer thinking because it increased the amount of time I dwelt with an idea.

Heuristic inquiry also afforded me comparatively high levels of flexibility because it is not predicated on a predetermined formula or template for conducting research. This meant that I could maintain high levels of responsiveness to what I encountered, and I was able to move the research in directions that I had not anticipated at the outset of the project.

CHALLENGES

However, heuristic inquiry also posed a number of challenges. Due to the nature of indwelling within the practice, there was a significant risk that my questions might not lead to creating work but would result, instead, in more questions. To remedy this, I always responded to a question with practice. I sought answers through making. By using practice to lead the inquiry I was able to keep my thinking grounded inside the central question driving the thesis: How might a portrait produced at the intersection of photography and moving image be used to challenge expectations about time, anticipation, immediacy and meaning?

Opening the project up to external critique also posed a significant risk. It was important to only allow feedback at points when my questions had reached a suitable point of resolution. Due to the deeply personal nature of heuristic inquiry, I discovered that I could become very vulnerable to doubt; not in an enabling way, but as something that could impede or distort the way I was thinking. I think this was because in heuristic inquiry, unlike many other methodological approaches, there is no set formula against which one can justify one’s actions. Often, I found myself unable to defend ideas that ‘felt’ right. To address this situation, I tended to ‘protect’ my gestational thinking and make an idea. Only once it had form did I seek feedback. This is because once an idea was physical, I was able to externalise it and consider it more objectively.

Finally, in a heuristic inquiry a project can become very demanding of both time and resources. By creating networks with other researchers and practitioners, I was able to make strategic decisions about where to go for elements like talent, costumes and makeup. I also considered at the beginning of each shoot the financial implications of what I was doing, so my limited research resources could be distributed strategically across the trajectory of the study.¹⁸

18 Given my limited resources I also took on part-time work, so I was able to afford travel, material and production costs.



4

CRITICAL
COMMENTARY

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

This final chapter offers a critical commentary on the work produced as the practical component of this thesis. Each section begins with a physical description of the portrait, then this is followed by a critical consideration of key ideas within the work.

THE DUREGRAPHS

The purpose of these images is to explore how duration might expand ways in which we consider a photographic portrait. Each image encapsulates a different representation of moments in time, where motion is introduced and halted intermittently. This results in disruptions to our expectations of time, the gaze, anticipation, immediacy, enigma and meaning. Each of the portraits was driven by a short narrative of

experience that the models performed for the camera.¹⁹ As such, these are portraits of ideas rather than of individuals. This said, the ‘story’ behind each image is not necessary for the viewer to understand because it is not the primary focus of the work. These images ask the viewer to wait with them, rewarding their patience and attention with subtle transitions in detail. As the portraits move through time, so does the viewer’s sense of anticipation and meaning.

19 As discussed in Chapter 3, in each instance the actors were given a situation that involved a change in emotional state. Over 15 seconds they were asked to subtly transition through the scenario. Examples included:

“As you notice someone in front of you, staring, your gaze is redirected to them they are staring too long, and you are becoming mildly irritated by it.” [*The Pearl Earring*]

“You are unable to read and you have been given a book...you are now considering revealing the truth about your situation to the people around you.” [*The Reader*]

“As you play a domestic argument over, inside your head, you realise that you don’t care anymore. You feel empty. You drop your glass—a symbol of your feelings.” [*Champagne Tears*]



FIGURE 4.1.
Frame grabs from *The Pearl Earring* showing a
progression of movement. © David van Vliet (2020).

THE PEARL EARRING

DESCRIPTION

The subject, composition and lighting of this image (Figure 4.1)²⁰ were influenced by Johannes Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring*.²¹ In this work I employed a proportionately larger area of negative space than Vermeer did and I off-centred the subject; by using a substantial amount of dark background I was able to intensify the viewer’s attention onto subtle changes that occur in the model’s face. The costume and earring are set in cool hues and this draws attention to the comparatively warmer palette of her features. I used limited makeup, so the emphasis remains on the interplay between the earring and transitions in countenance on the model’s face.²²

20 To see this image online, click [here](#).

21 An image of Girl with a Pearl Earring can be seen at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Girl_with_a_Pearl_Earring.jpg

22 Makeup was primarily used to reduce the glare of the studio lights and to subtly emphasise the shape of the model’s eyes and lips.

MOTION AND EMOTION

In all of the duregraphs, motion plays a crucial part in changing our perception of time and meaning. As Husserl (1964) and Bergson (1911) note, it is the comprehension of events that unfold in the image that affects our understanding of experienced time. In breaking the stillness²³ of the photograph, our relationship with the portrait changes so we become sensitive to motion, and therefore to time passing. As *The Pearl Earring* plays out, motion occurs in two different ways. First, we see the gentle sway of the ear adornment, catching the light as it rolls across the model’s neck. The second change is more subtle, it occurs as a change in countenance, where the model moves from a state of proud remoteness to one of direct address where she accosts our gaze.

23 By “breaking the stillness,” I refer to a state of disrupted perception where, when viewing what purports to be a photograph, the viewer expects to behold a frozen moment in time. This expectation is challenged once the same subject is recorded using cinematic cameras, because an expansion of time has been introduced into the portrait

CHALLENGING THE GAZE

This transition challenges Berger’s (1972) idea of the one-way relationship of the male gaze. As the portrait plays out, we encounter conflict. We want to see what is revealed, but we are confronted for doing so. In directly addressing our gaze, the model breaks the passive state she possessed at the beginning of the duregraph, and she places us in the reversed role of being observed. She is no longer reduced to “object status” (Martinot, 2005, p. 43) but assumes a state of subject awareness. This transition reverses the power dynamic that Sartre suggests is held by the “one who is looking” (1956, p. 422). It challenges the convention that “women are represented as passive objects of male desire...[who are viewed] from the point of view of a heterosexual male” (Sampson, 2015, para. 5).



FIGURE 4.2.
Frame grabs from *The Reader* showing a progression
of movement. © David van Vliet (2020).

THE READER

DESCRIPTION

This portrait depicts a seated man engaged with a book (Figure 4.2)²⁴. The slightly desaturated colour palette is reduced to brown ochres, siennas and umbers. This reinforces the sombre tone of the portrait. Compositionally, I established a subtly warmer connection between the model's face and a non-functioning red lamp positioned in the background to the left.

This is a more passive portrait than *The Pearl Earring* because there is no direct address to the viewer. The subject in this image is turned away from us, focusing neither on the book nor the physical world around him. The image is structured inside a scalene triangle in a simple construction that connects the key elements within the work (the dead lamp, the book and the man). In classical tradition, such triangular compositions were often employed to create a sense of balance, relationality or harmony and the triangle here is used to emphasise connection between diverse elements. As such, it suggests that there may be some meaningful relationship.

The portrait is also constructed using the Rule of Thirds. In photography, this device involves dividing an image space in thirds both horizontally and vertically. The photographer's focal point is normally positioned around one of the intersections of the lines (Figure 4.3). This device encourages higher levels of 'searching' in the image because it avoids the terminal stability of centrality. Mathijssen notes, "By using a focal point on one of the intersections your eye is drawn their [*sic*] first and will automatically follow the rest of the artwork" (2010, para. 8). The compositional devices of the triangle and Rule of

Thirds serve to paradoxically stabilise and destabilise an image of a man who is himself an anomaly—despite his pose, he is clearly not reading the book he is holding.

MOTION AND EMOTION

The movement within this duregraph was created by masking selected footage; the book's pages were isolated and played in a repeatable loop.²⁵ The turning of a page is the first movement that we note, and it continues intermittently throughout the duration of the sequence. This movement suggests that the reader is in the pursuit of written content, even though, paradoxically, his eyes do not indicate such engagement. Eventually, he breaks away from the interiority of the book to look beyond it, continuing to turn pages while disregarding their content.

WITHHOLDING THE RETURNED GAZE

Emotionally, I wanted the viewer to empathise with the subject as they seek to understand what he is thinking. To enable a higher level of empathy, I posed the model in a comparatively passive state so that he makes no direct address to us at any point in the sequence. We witness change and paradox but remain in the position of one gazing at a troubled/troubling subject—without challenge. The gaze here is indicative of Jean-Paul Sartre's (1956) power dynamic that exists when one is looking at the 'Other' (*le regard*). Here, there is a subjective power difference between the viewer and what is being viewed, and power is 'held' by the viewer. Accordingly, the 'other' becomes comparatively passive.

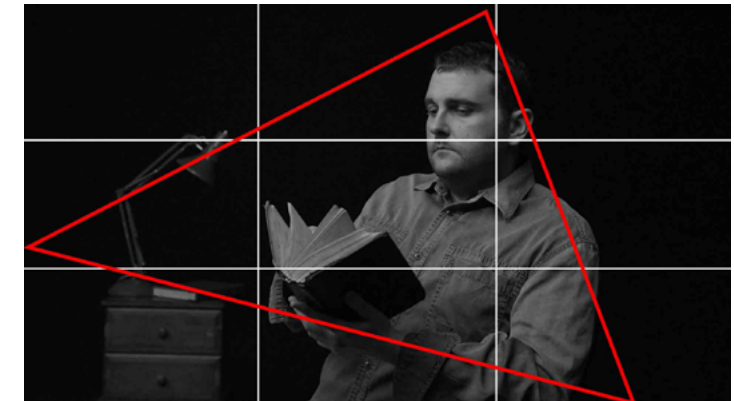


FIGURE 4.3.

Diagram of the triangular structure and the Rule of Thirds, in the composition of *The Reader*. © David van Vliet (2020).

²⁴ To see this image online, click [here](#).

²⁵ Michel Mölder uses a similar looped motion in his work.



FIGURE 4.4.

Frame grabs from *Champagne Tears* showing a progression of movement. © David van Vliet (2020).

CHAMPAGNE TEARS

DESCRIPTION

In this work (Figure 4.4)²⁶, I explored relationships between anticipation and discontinuity. Of all the portraits, *Champagne Tears* is the one that most obviously disrupts rational experiences of time and movement. The woman is dressed in black, so our attention is drawn to the relationship between her face and the glass. Initially her eyes are downcast.

The most sharply focused part of the image is the champagne glass and this, like *The Reader*'s light, is positioned in the first third of the frame. This glass is an accent that forms one extremity of a compositional structure based on contrast. Here form is divided into lit and unlit detail that constitutes conjoined triangles in the form of a 'W' (Figure 4.5). This device is used to emphasise both alienation and rhythm in the work: the model's glass is paradoxically connected to, and alienated from, her.

MOTION AND EMOTION

As the duregraph plays, we watch as the woman allows her glass to topple from her grasp and begin a temporary descent before enigmatically freezing in mid-air. This is both a disruption to stillness and a challenge to anticipation. Rational laws of time and motion are suspended in the left-hand third of the frame. Following the disruption, the knowingness of the model reveals itself in the second and third sections, in a slow but entirely logical manner. She looks up and pulls her hand away from the suspended glass. As she watches us, almost accusingly, her eyes fill with inexplicable tears. There is mystery and conflict here. The brightness of her slowly emerging tears is at exactly the same level of contrast as the light on the suspended glass. This feature of the portrait is designed to suggest an enigmatic correlation.

PUNCTUM

In relation to Barthes's (1977) thinking, our detection of content and movement (*studium*) in this portrait progresses to something that 'pricks' us with a sense of unsettledness. Barthes describes this as *punctum*; the intensely subjective response we have to an image that cannot be quantified by the details we see. Instead, punctum is something that we feel.

Although Barthes describes a photograph as a "living image of a dead thing" (1981, p. 79), a duregraph cannot make this claim because the image suggests 'livingness' in its disruption of frozen time. However, I would argue that in a duregraph one can still experience *punctum*, as a sensory, intensely subjective effect that the image has on the viewer. Barthes says, "The punctum of a photograph is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (1981, p. 27). Unlike a photograph, the *punctum* in a duregraph can unfurl across changes in time and motion in the same image, yet it can still produce or convey a meaning that is unique to the individual viewer of the image. The *punctum* in *Champagne Tears* punctuates the *studium* and the emotional tension in the work pierces the viewer. The experience of *punctum* is not absolute. Not every viewer will feel the same things about this image (they will not be pierced in the same way). This is because Barthes suggests that the *punctum* is not the sum of the contents of the photographic portrait but, rather, something that arises from details beyond the intension or control of the photographer.

Champagne Tears contains numerous triggers for *punctum*. There is the tension in an improbable pose, the meaning of an empty glass that falls then is impossibly suspended, the pain that is revealed in the shift of a model's gaze, the dramatic enigma of anticipation that refuses to play out logically. All these things unsettle us; they emanate outwards, beyond composed content, into the realm of subjective response.

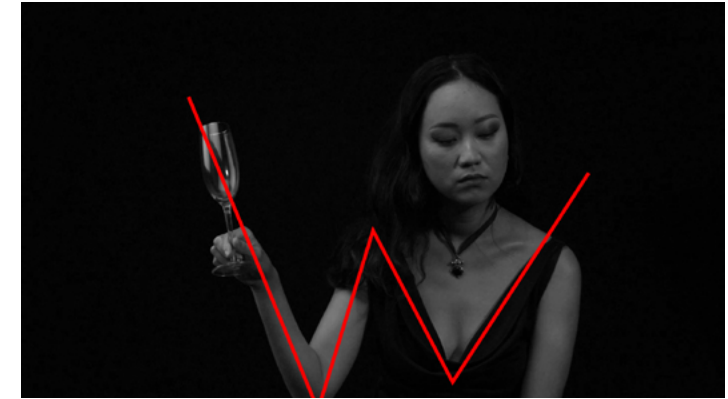


FIGURE 4.5.

Diagram of the composition of *Champagne Tears* employing two triangles. © David van Vliet (2020).

²⁶ To see this image online, click [here](#).



FIGURE 4.6.
Frame grabs from *Silk and Skull* showing a progression of movement. © David van Vliet (2020).

SILK AND SKULL

DESCRIPTION

This scene was loosely inspired by seated portraits of the Dutch masters where the subject was often dressed in dark clothing with a light-coloured collar to highlight the face.²⁷ *Silk and Skull* (Figure 4.6)²⁸ is a portrait of a woman who sits comfortably in a chair, her legs crossed and her arm positioned on the armrest. Her body is turned away from us, but her head is turned to meet our gaze. The combination of the striking tonal contrast and her body position is intended to suggest a feeling of assurance and perhaps wealth. However, the introduction of the goat skull changes how we might consider the subject, introducing a sense of unease.²⁹

The composition of this duregraph has also been structured using the Rule of Thirds. The woman's face is positioned on the same top-third axis as the goat's skull (Figure 4.7). The whiteness of the skull and her collar force our eyes to the region where subtle movement occurs.

Silk and Skull may be likened to some of Viola's images that contain dualities in their constructions of light and dark and life and death. However, the work also draws its influence from a genre of Netherlandish painting that was popularised



FIGURE 4.7.

Diagram of the triangular image structure in *Silk and Skull*.
© David van Vliet (2020).

in the 16th and 17th centuries. Generally constructed as still lifes or portraits, these paintings employed *vanitas* (symbols that remind us of the certainty of death, like skulls, rotted fruit, smoke or hourglasses). *Vanitas* is a Latin noun that alludes to the Hebrew word *hevel* (used in Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 12:8). The word is used to describe earthly concerns as transient and worthless (Fredericks, 1993). Dutch *vanitas* paintings alluded to this futility (and the inevitability of death) by contrasting symbols of opulence and death.³⁰

27 Evidence of this technique can be seen in Frans Hals' Portrait of a Woman (1638) (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait_of_a_Woman_by_Frans_Hals.jpg), and in Rembrandt van Rijn's Portrait of Nicolaes Ruts (1631) (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rembrandt_van_Rijn,_Nicolaes_Ruts,_1631.jpg)

28 To see this image online, click [here](#).

29 When people viewed this portrait, one of the questions I was asked was, "What does the image signify, given the inclusion of the skull and the red silk?"

There is no definitive answer for this. I intend that the portraits are enigmatic. As such, the signifiers within them are often 'floating'. The term 'floating signifier' comes from Claude Levi-Strauss, who uses the description to "represent an indeterminate value of signification, in itself devoid of meaning and thus susceptible of receiving any meaning at all" (Levi-Strauss, 1987, p. 55).

30 Significant examples include Vanitas Still-life (1668) by Maria van Oosterwijck (1630–1693) (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vanitas-Still_Life,_Oosterwijck.jpg); Adriaen van Utrecht's Vanitas: composition with flowers and skull (1642) (<http://omeka.wustl.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/flowerstilllives/17thand18thcenturies/vanitasstilllifewithflowersand>); and Vanitas by Jan Sanders van Hemessen (ca. 1535) (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lille_Hemessen_vanitas.JPG).

MOTION AND EMOTION

Unlike the other four duregraphs, *Silk and Skull* has no ‘starting movement’. It is not driven by an *obvious* event that causes us to anticipate further movement. Instead the image is in almost constant motion and the time that we experience within the portrait is felt more as a sense of anticipation for a realisation of meaning that refuses to become explicit. The woman’s hand holding the skull simply begins to rotate (almost imperceptibly), revealing the goat’s face. Meanwhile, her expression changes, her eyes widen slightly, and there is a suggestion of knowingness that appears in a subtle smile.

RETROSPECTIVE TIME

Due to the slower pace that this image possesses, movement may not be noticed as easily by a viewer while it is occurring. The anticipation of movement (given that this portrait is positioned in the context of the other images) heightens our level of anticipation and attention. In this portrait, time is suggested without there being obvious movement. This occurs when a viewer compares the opening and closing frames and realises that there are significant differences. Thus, realisation becomes retrospective. By this I mean that the full meaning of the duregraph may only be understood upon reflection after viewing the full duration of the transition. The accumulated memory of encountering the portrait and the viewer’s present perception is what Bergson (1957) attributed to duration and Husserl (1964) referred to as ‘retention’.

In terms of power relations, throughout this duregraph the woman maintains a state of direct address. She watches us with a gaze that persists much longer than would be comfortable for an audience in a filmed sequence. She dwells with more resilience in extended time. We remain aware that we are being watched by the subject, but as the change occurs, so does the way we feel that we are being seen. Kesner et al. argue that, when looking at portraits we are involved “in implicit inferences of the...subject’s mental states and emotions” (2018, p. 97). The woman in *Silk and Skull* watches us but gives away nothing about her mental state. She uses her persistent gaze to construct a wall. Although we sense subtle changes in her countenance, these are very slight and feel highly controlled. The power relation in this portrait shifts from Berger’s (1972) and Mulvey’s (1975) dominant male gaze to what both Nassar (2007) and Jarrett (2019) describe as a ‘disruption’ where the model ‘looks back’ directly into the lens of the camera, such that her gaze intrudes upon and interrogates us as spectators, disrupting our dominance and causing us to become conscious of ourselves.



FIGURE 4.8.
Frame grabs from *The Band* showing a progression
of movement© David van Vliet 2020.

THE BAND

DESCRIPTION

The final duregraph depicts a group of individuals (Figure 4.8)³¹. This image’s composition and character design were influenced by contemporary band photographs, religious works and structural approaches to dramatically lit group portrait paintings (refer to Figure 3.2). However, the portrait again draws inspiration from the work of Bill Viola.³² Like Champagne Tears and Silk and Skull, I designed the costuming in this portrait so it was relatively dark, to emphasise the models’ faces, and to avoid over-complicating the visual hierarchy of the image.³³

Transitions in this work are very subtle. The aim is not to create a gimmick but to intensify a state of anticipation and patient waiting. The heightened level of attentiveness this produces causes us to constantly look for details and spend time with an image that, if it was presented as a static print, we would be unlikely to afford it.

Compositionally, the image is constructed as an irregular pentagon. This asymmetrical shape composes individuals in the group, so their heads run in descending lines from the most prominent model. This arrangement suggests a certain hierarchy while creating a sense of connectivity. The structure also allows each model to pose for the camera in a unique manner while holding the collective nature of the group within a single geometrical structure (Figure 4.9).

31 To see this image online, click [here](#).

32 See Figure 2.4 for Viola’s *The Quintet of the Astonished* (2000) as an example of dramatically lit movement. In this instance I am influenced by the manner in which individuals in a composition might be grouped and lit so unfolding movement becomes part of an integrated dynamic.

33 Given that this duregraph had a lot more detail in it than the other images, there was risk that when viewing it, one might become distracted by too many elements. To combat this, I designed the models’ wardrobes to be relatively monochromatic, with only enough detail to suggest individual character distinctiveness.

MOTION AND EMOTION

Eye contact with the viewer is maintained by all members of the group throughout the duration of the image. Although the individuals appear before us as a composite unit, the models’ positions in time do not constitute an accurate, chronological record of how the image was originally recorded. In this duregraph, the first motion that occurs is the blinking of the man on the left, followed by the tilting of the woman’s head. Both movements have the function of ‘catalysing’ the viewer’s sensitivity to other developments in the image. As we watch, the man on the left subtly reveals a metal pipe that he has been concealing, turning his body towards us while maintaining his gaze. The man in the forefront of the composition appears to sense this gesture, revealing an increasingly anxious expression, and appearing to re-evaluate his position. (Although if we did not observe the appearance of the pipe, we might assume the man’s subtle change in expression to emanate from internal thoughts.) The man on the right remains motionless throughout the entire duration of the piece.



FIGURE 4.9.

Diagram showing the irregular pentagon structure employed for grouping the models in *The Band*. © David van Vliet (2020).

The portrait uses the narcissistic posturing for an audience that Ritchin (2010) discusses as a feature of post-photography. Here the models present themselves for the gaze but with a heightened sense of 'knowingness'. These poses come from a realm of image-based consumption where, on social media, we address cameras directly, poised and aware that we are presenting a carefully edited 'self' to the gaze of others.

ISOLATION, CONNECTION AND ENIGMA

For this image, I questioned how duration might be articulated through group portraiture, where the dynamic of viewing extends beyond a one-on-one relationship between the viewer and the viewed. What separates this image from the other duregraphs is the way in which the subjects appear to be emotionally isolated but may be aware of, and responding to, each other's movements. This presents an enigma. We wonder how it is that, because of their unrelenting direct address, they can still appear to respond to subtle actions in the people who are beyond their peripheral vision.

Both The Band and Champagne Tears are enigmatic because there is a breakdown in our expectations, based on 'familiar' experience. We do not expect certain occurrences or disconnections in a photographic portrait, and if movement occurs, we expect it to behave in ways that feel rational or

familiar. Hunt and McDaniel (1993) suggest that enigma occurs when our concepts of organisation and distinctiveness (which are important to memory) are disrupted in such a way that we are presented with conceptual inconsistencies and confusion. If an occurrence or object is not enigmatic, it is because it can be accommodated as something with reliable meaning that we can compare to rational expectations of similarity and difference that we have hitherto perceived of as 'normal'. The authors suggest that it is "similarity judgment" that enables simultaneous organisational and distinctiveness processing, which results in "a unique convergence on a particular item...and its relational processing" (p. 421). In other words, they suggest that we accommodate as meaningful and rational, experiences and artefacts that behave in ways that are consistent with our past experience of what is similar and different. These experiences converge on a new occurrence, and if we cannot recognise similarities we perceive it as enigmatic. The duregraphs I have created all challenge a viewer's 'similarity judgement' because they all behave in unaccountable ways. However, it is The Band, with its suggested internal awareness of actions that cannot be witnessed by the models, and Champagne Tears, with its unaccountable freezing of a glass and attitudinal assumption by the model that such an incident is normal, that do this in the most distinctive fashion.

PRESENTATION OF THE IMAGES

During the time that I was writing this final chapter in the exegesis, the world was confronted with the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequential national and international lockdowns. In New Zealand, the population was required to enter a state of individual or small-group isolation on Wednesday March 25, 2020. Because of the disruptions this has caused, it is not safe at this time to publicly exhibit the five portraits in the manner that was originally intended. I had planned a physical exhibition where I would display the work to the public on large screens, and then physically discuss the portraits in situ, with the thesis examiners.

Given the circumstances, I have decided instead to present the work as an online submission³⁴. Although such a format does not give the portraits the sense of scale that I had intended, nor the physical engagement I associate with standing in front of a work for the period of time it traditionally takes for it to communicate sufficient meaning,³⁵ an online exhibition offers a number of advantages.

An online space enables an ‘eternal’ environment, where a viewer’s ability to experience the work is not limited by the length of an exhibition nor the exigencies of gallery hours.³⁶ An online exhibition opens the project up to a potentially much wider, international viewership and the facility enables me (post-examination) to append my exegesis to the images

so their context can be considered in detail. Exhibiting the work in an online environment means that there are also multiple connections that can be made to the work through the dynamics of social media.

An online exhibition facilitates movement within the duregraphs in discrete settings that may be more ‘private’ than what might be experienced in the gallery. Each study can become the sole consideration of a period of time on a screen. The work can also be watched and re-watched without the disturbance of concurrent viewers.³⁷

Accordingly, this series of duregraphs is presented as an interactive website where each portrait occupies a separate page. The site’s homepage contains a thumbnail of each image, which, when selected, transports the viewer to a page that contains the portrait as a full-screen experience.

The colour palette of the site is minimal, using blacks and dark greys to simulate a relatively contemplative space. The menu enables viewers to access additional information on the project, and download the exegesis. This material provides contextual information for those who would like to learn more about the project. Finally, there is a space for viewers to contact me and leave feedback on the images. This facility has the ability to extend the final externalising process of this project, and to feed into my thinking about subsequent work that might emanate from the thesis.

³⁴ Available [here](#).

³⁵ When I consider my work, I think that dimensions of time within it are experiential. In a gallery setting one normally stands in front of a portrait and searches it as a physically static plane of potential experience. There is just the viewer and a frozen moment in time. With the duregraphs, this is disrupted, and I was interested in observing how this might impact on the amount of time spent in front of a piece of work and how this disruption influences rituals of viewing in a gallery space.

³⁶ Normally one might not expect to have more than 200 viewers during the 48 hours scheduled for a graduating exhibition at the university.

³⁷ Although only propositional, it is also possible that the atypical circumstances we are facing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic may result in a paradigm shift, where modes of viewing photographic portraiture may increase and metamorphosise exponentially.



5

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF THE EXEGESIS

This thesis poses the question:

"How might a portrait produced at the intersection of photography and moving image be used to challenge expectations about time, anticipation, immediacy and meaning?"

In this exegesis, I have considered how duration might be articulated through photographic portraiture and what implications and effects this might have on the role of the spectator. By renegotiating the speed and order that events occur within a photographic image, I have created a series of duregraphs that communicate a moment that continues to play out in front of us, challenging our conceptions of time, anticipation, immediacy and meaning. The photographic studies in the collection all use duration as a means of expanding how we might encounter a portrait. Each image represents time differently, but all activate and restrain movement intermittently. In doing so, they challenge how we view the subject (or subjects) in a portrait. When viewing these images, one experiences 'beneficial waiting' in an environment where such waiting may produce value.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Given that relatively little has been written about the duregraph (and related negotiations of time in photographic portraiture), I am considering revisiting parts of this exegesis to develop work for a peer-reviewed journal article for the *International Journal of the Image*.³⁸ This journal offers a site for researchers, theoreticians, practitioners and educators from diverse disciplines to publish research (including studies concerned with practice). The journal intends to hold an international conference in 2021 (after this year's event was cancelled because of the Covid 19 outbreak).³⁹ Such a conference offers an opportunity to present a paper. This means that a draft of my thinking can go through a process of peer feedback and critical advice before it is reconstituted as a submitted journal article.

³⁸ The *International Journal of the Image* [<https://ontheimage.com/journal>] is a preferred publication because it is peer reviewed and open access. This means that my thinking and examples of my work can be disseminated in both academic and professional contexts.

³⁹ As of the time of submission, a venue, date and call for papers has not yet been agreed for this event.

In addition, I am planning to exhibit the duregraphs in one of the St Paul St Galleries in 2021. This will provide me with an opportunity to observe the duregraphs' nature inside a space where scale and the physical atmosphere can impact in a different way on viewing (beyond the virtual online space I have created as the artefact for this research).

This thesis has afforded me an opportunity to design, articulate and contextualise a form of portraiture. I am interested in continuing this exploration with actors and environments to further examine how time, motion, enigma, expectation and attentive waiting might be employed to suggest meaning in an individual or group photograph.

It is also my intention to continue researching the potentials of the duregraph. At this point I plan to use this research as a basis for a future PhD study that might offer a useful contribution to practice and theoretical discourses concerning post-photographic imagery.

PERSONAL CONCLUSION

In this study, I have discovered how active testing and questioning within a heuristic inquiry can lead to rich discoveries, both in the topic of the research and in myself. I have developed a framework of methods that use a combination of internalising and externalising thinking processes. The resulting duregraphs have exercised a relationship between photographic stillness and motion to create a viewing experience that is unexpected and enigmatic. The portraits demonstrate how a manipulated post-photographic image can be used to explore subtleties of emotion and dynamics between the spectator and subject, in a way that neither a single photograph nor a moving can. The work rewards us for an extended duration of time spent with each image, where the value of a message is not aligned with “timeliness and immediacy” (Magoffin, 2016, para. 21) but with an experience of beneficial waiting.

Behind these images has been a transformation. This research journey has been one of growth and insight, and my hunger for discovery has grown with this. In drawing this body of research together, this thesis project has presented me with a rich array of questions and trajectories

... and I am excited at the prospect of pursuing them.

David van Vliet, May 7, 2020



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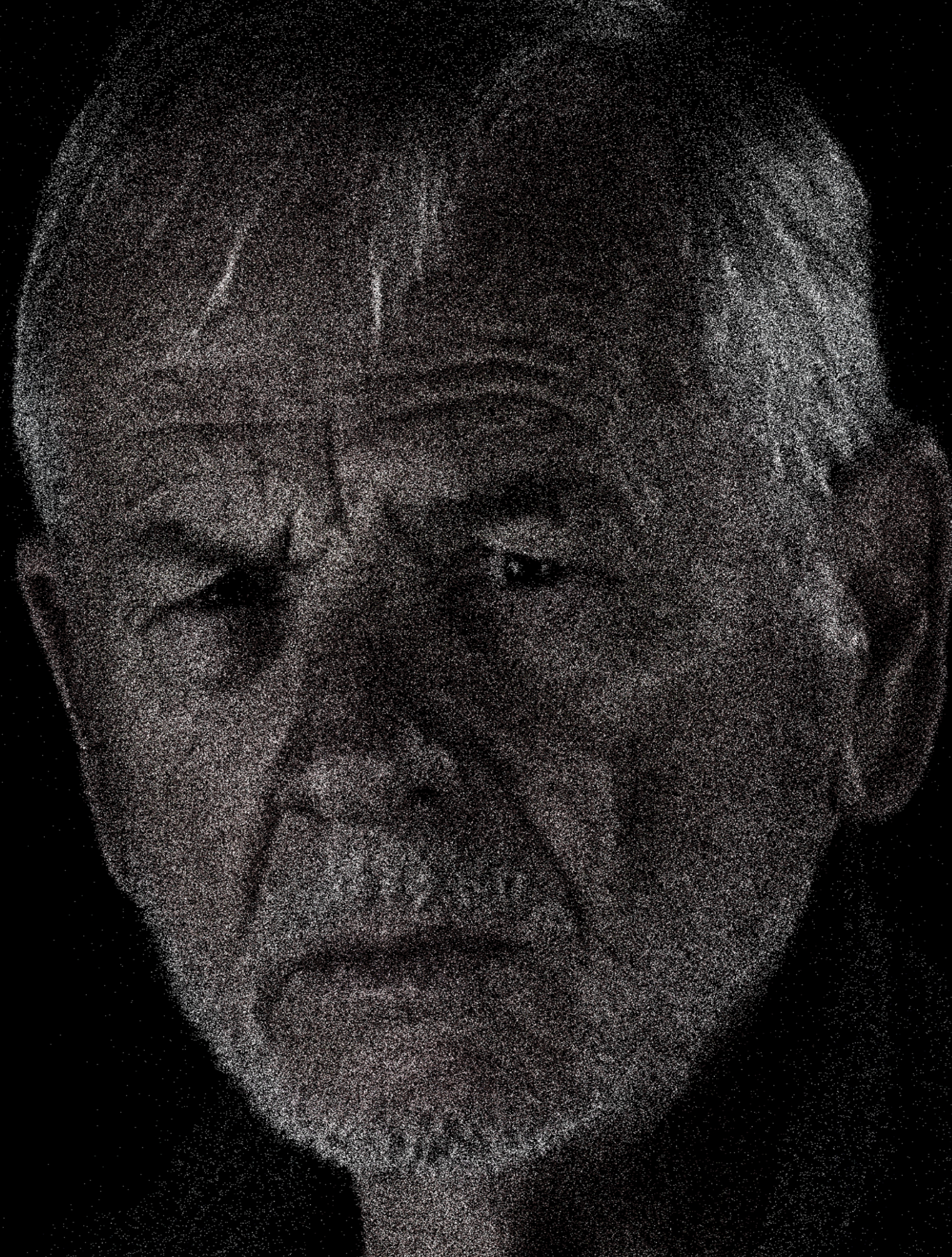
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7

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

REFLECTIVE LOG

This dated journal functioned as a reflective log of my thinking and experiments throughout the project. It is referred to in Chapter 3 of the exegesis.

JULY 19, 2019: A BRIEF THOUGHT ON FEELING TIME

I realise I may have asked this question already, but I think that one way to ask how experienced time plays out for viewers of duregraphs would be to ask how the time is felt. My current thinking is that although every person may experience time as they move through it, they may tune in or out of feeling it, depending on what they are doing. One example could be the way a person looks at a still photograph. When viewed, one does not become aware of how long they gaze at it. They might look and move on without reflection or consciousness of how long it ‘felt’. Alternatively, when watching a film, a 15-second shot might seem very long, because they are experiencing time pass in front of them consciously. This causes me to question whether the viewers are not experiencing duration because they have the power to stop viewing the photograph, knowing that nothing else will be revealed in the frame; whereas with a film, stopping viewing the image may result in missing out on other things to be revealed.



Setup of studio for Shoot 1.

AUGUST 14, 2019: SHOOT 1: THE COPY-STAND ROOM

This shoot was an engaging first experience using studio lighting for video. My initial testing and communicating with the model was natural, and in the beginning I did not stop to realise how unfamiliar it was to me. I was in a photographic studio, using a camera optimised for photographs. However, my treatment of the shot set-up and directing the model was what one might associate more with film directing. An example is the way I instructed Daniella (the model) to look in one direction and to look in another direction two minutes later. When the camera began recording, in most shots, I would remove myself to leave her alone with the camera to concentrate and not feel the pressure of me observing the filming. My perception of this situation is that modelling for a duregraph requires concentration and stillness, which could be impacted by having the photographer present. In this regard, I am wondering if such modelling might be a co-creative process.

AUGUST 17, 2019: EDITING

While editing the photographic images I collected on Wednesday, I noticed some things happening in my process. The first occurred during my manipulation of the length of time of the moving images. Usually, in the past, I have edited to a certain number of seconds and kept this shot length reasonably uniform throughout the film. However, while I am creating duregraphs I have completely ignored any kind of numerical representation of the time; instead I watch as I go—adjusting the length of the shot as I *‘feel’*... sometimes stretching the shot over a greater period, and at other times reducing it.

The second thing I noticed was a result of the first, where I am watching the duregraph play out, and the duration that I feel is vastly altered from the chronological time of the shot. In one instance, I was reflecting on a very slow-movement shot that plays for around four minutes, but it felt like only 30 seconds. After viewing this shot, I felt like I was emerging again to the ‘real time’, not the time in an altered state that I experienced in the duregraph. This feeling of emergence causes me to question which time is more important to me, and whether returning to ‘real time’ is in fact only returning to a comprehension of time that matches a chronological expectation to which I have become attuned.



Experimental portrait of Daniella van Vliet (August 17, 2019). In this edited experiment I was considering the way time might be experienced when viewing a portrait that is in almost constant motion, but at a very slow state of transition. The resulting image has a high level of tension as we watch the model slowly turn her head toward us. This image feels successful in raising levels of viewer anticipation. However, my lighting was problematic because as the face moved, we are unable to witness subtle changes in emotion.

AUGUST 19, 2019: EDITING AND DISCUSSION
WITH MARCOS

When asked how I knew what length of time was suitable between movements in the duregraph, I was unable to respond straight away. My answer to this question was that when the duration of the shot matched with an ‘internal rhythm’, I would consider it suitable. I have been thinking a lot about this point, and I am not sure if there is any kind of explicit definition for this at the moment. Strangely, the longer I edit a duregraph, the longer the duregraph seems to become. It is as if the time that I consider a ‘suitable time’ begins to expand as I immerse myself further into the image.

While discussing with Marcos about the time at which the movement begins in the duregraph, I used an example that resulted in a slight shift in my thinking. I thought that with numerical increments, a number only makes sense in relation to the beginning number. For example, five is understood only in knowing what one is. Similarly, five minutes is only measurable if one minute is understood. In this way, I am trying to detach a duregraph from any reference to this numerical time so that duration might be experienced without an ‘anchor’ in the numerical representation of time.

So far, I feel that the duregraphs that begin in stillness and gradually introduce slow and subtle movement are the most successful.

AUGUST 22, 2019: DISCUSSION WITH WELBY

During our conversation, I considered several ideas. I gathered a similar feeling during this meeting to that in my talk with Marcos, where the subtle movements seem more effective and refined than obvious changes in the image. Also, the darker background of the portrait seems to draw a viewer in more, having a mystery in the shadow that raises more questions of the image’s state of movement or stillness. Fowler (2013) refers to this idea as ‘potentiality’. It was suggested that I could pay closer attention to the colour of the model’s clothing in the next shoot, because the white shirt draws a lot of attention, intruding its presence over other details. Following this, I plan to draw some inspiration from some portrait paintings using dark backgrounds, such as Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring*.

I found our discussion on directing useful. Other helpful ideas from the discussion included:

- The power may lie in what is taken away from an image
- Consider the depth of identity in a model
- Consider stillness as something beyond the visual
- The Dutch ‘still life’ may be almost ironically addressed in a duregraph as a ‘living thing’ that is frozen in time.

AUGUST 3, 2019: SHOOT 2: USING THE BLACK
PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO

This shoot was constructive, and I found it useful in expanding my understanding of lighting portraits. Based on the experience that I gained in Shoot 1, I had a more precise direction for Shoot 2. I felt that the dark background created more depth in the image. Recording the portraits was different in this shoot, where I only recorded for around 15–45 seconds instead of minutes. This is based on the idea that the more subtle movement that I am trying to achieve in the image might require less time, thus a shorter recording. I found that in the long takes, the model would start to sway a little after posing for over a minute, so the end of most shots became unusable in post-production anyway. Towards the end of the shoot, I was trying to capture changes of emotion in the model’s countenance. I discovered that as I described the shots that I wanted, Daniella (the model) would be reacting to how I explained the way the shot would go. I experimented by asking her to look at the camera while I explained what would happen in the shot. This resulted in a genuine laugh or smile as I made a joke or an example of how she should look.



Frame grabs from a duregraph test with Daniella van Vliet (September 5, 2019), where genuine emotion from the model was captured. This test created an interesting emotional response when I played it back, however it also lacked subtlety.

SEPTEMBER 2, 2019: EDITING

I have been editing the recorded clips in the studio in the same order that I shot them, beginning with the first clip and working through sequentially. At this point I have only looked through the first few, all with similar lighting. I have found one clip which stands out to me—an unintentional break of character to smile about something as I explained the shot. This genuine flash of emotion lasted for about a second, and I stretched it out to a minute in duration. As I watched the edited clip play out, I realised that, out of empathy, as a viewer I am trying to understand the subtle smile on her face. However, when that becomes a grin, I do not empathise with it, instead, I become confused and almost offended, as if the duregraph subject is laughing at me. It is like a power shift has occurred. I now wonder whether it might be worth working with models' genuine reactions to things, or perhaps with actors who can embody themselves in a fictitious situation?

SEPTEMBER 7, 2019: EDITING

One minor problem that I seem to have is how to work around the model blinking throughout a take. So far, I have been working on the moving image in the time between the blinks, to avoid having a slow blink in the duregraph. In my last test editing, I tried removing the blinks by deleting that section of the timeline, then attempting to interpolate the ‘missing space’ in the clip where the blink once existed. This has proven more successful in the clips where the model does not move her head when she blinks. When the interpolated clip is played, the changes in the face before and after the blink become noticeable, but I have found it hard to pin down what changes. This could be an interesting disjunction to include in a duregraph, where there is an obvious movement that is not associated with any kind of natural bodily movement, skewing it from any natural expectation on the part of the viewer.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2019: DISCUSSION WITH MARCOS

While discussing these tests the general feel of them was positive, although at this point there are still clips captured in Shoot 2 that I have not edited. The masked motion that I have overlaid on some of the duregraphs is working in an interesting way, creating impossible motions rather than just slowing them down. The questions I attach to this impossible motion are:

Does it create a stronger reaction to the detection of that movement?

Would gently moving hair on a still portrait create a different reaction to a sudden blink or a turn of the head?

A movement in the hair implies something outside of the frame acting on the subject rather than the subject moving by choice. In a duregraph, where the only thing that moves is the model’s hair, she might seem oblivious to the movement happening. The same image where the hair is still but the model blinks might have a completely different power dynamic, where the model is in control of the movement and therefore could be in control of the image.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2019: EDITING

One thought that I just had while watching through some of my past experiments was that I tend to be drawn to those images that do not contain a *variety of types of movement*. For example, the images where only a blink occurs or only a wisp of hair moves I find more intriguing or effective than an image where the head turns, then the model blinks, then the hair moves. There appears to be considerable power in subtlety, and it entices a closer scrutiny from me as a viewer.

SEPTEMBER 25, 2019: WRITING

Aristotle, Physics, Book IV, Chapter 11:

But neither does time exist without change; for when the state of our own minds does not change at all, or we have not noticed its changing, we do not realize that time has elapsed, any more than those who are fabled to sleep among the heroes in Sardinia do when they are awakened; for they connect the earlier ‘now’ with the later and make them one, cutting out the interval because of their failure to notice it. So, just as, if the ‘now’ were not different but one and the same, there would not have been time, so too when its difference escapes our notice the interval does not seem to be time. If, then, the non-realization of the existence of time happens to us when we do not distinguish any change, but the soul seems to stay in one indivisible state, and when we perceive and distinguish we say time has elapsed, evidently time is not independent of movement and change. It is evident, then, that time is neither movement nor independent of movement. (2014, pp. 371)

This paragraph is a fascinating statement from Aristotle suggesting that time, as unnoticed, does not seem to pass at all. I agree with this statement; however, this raises an issue regarding the configuration of time sensitivity when applied to duregraphs. My thinking has been that when someone looks at a photograph or other still images, they do not acknowledge time, and for a brief moment (the comfortable viewing time) time does not pass. If, however this same still image is the result of a previous movement within the frame, perhaps the exact opposite might happen with time sensitivity. Instead of being unaware of time moving, the viewer would suddenly be very aware of time moving as they search and wait for movement in the now still image. This might be something like the agency of anticipation.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2019: REFLECTION ON READINGS

Time exists as one thing but we experience it as another thing. Reading the works of philosophers like Bergson and Heidegger and Deleuze, I am developing an increasing understanding of how they saw time. My view may not entirely match theirs, because currently I see time as something that does exist beyond the human experience—as the fourth dimension, for example. However it can only be physically understood through our experience of it—through our bodies. Time as a dimension continues to move whether we experience it or not. The idea of time as divided into segments through events (seconds, planetary rotations, lunar cycles, solar cycles) is valid for a universal understanding of time, but is only relevant in terms of humans' relation with other things. These things could be interactions between multiple people, such as a time to meet for coffee; or they might be interactions between a person and an object, such as a time to take a boiling pot from the stove. Time is measured in events because our lives are made up of events. Time itself is not dictated by events, only understood through their context. The use of seconds and minutes which are commonly used was also originally defined by natural phenomena.

The way I see my work breaking away from what I will call 'chronological time' is that I remove the reference points that indicate time and I ask the viewer to navigate the time of the image themselves. Instead of having specific references to seconds or minutes, a duregraph requires the viewer to wait an uncertain length of time in anticipation of events within the image, separate from chronological indications.

OCTOBER 2, 2019: TECHNICAL NOTE TO SELF

I think that in order to achieve the best movement of the hair of the model, I need to record at 120 fps and have some kind of frame to hold the head steady, because currently, even with editing frame by frame, the model's hair still seems to float around as separate from the head.

OCTOBER 3, 2019: THOUGHT ON TIME

If the image plays so that the viewer notices towards the end that a change has occurred, but cannot say exactly where, does this articulate time? Instead of a movement occurring and the viewer starting their 'internal clock', the viewer notices that the seemingly motionless image did in fact move and the motion of the image now occurs in their memory instead of the present moment, making time pass as enabled by the past. So, a realisation of time might be retrospective. This might demonstrate that the present moment is influenced by our memory of the past.

OCTOBER 21, 2019: DISCUSSION WITH MARCOS

During a discussion with Marcos, we considered a music video by Mardo El Noor that Tatiana showed to me. It used an interesting combination of photographic composition and lighting with movement. It provided an interesting reference for how bodily movements might be used in a more subtle way in my duregraph shoots. This sparked a conversation where I began to plan the next shoot, so I will concentrate on subtle movements of the model, and pay closer attention to the model's wardrobe and perhaps some props. After this discussion it is also becoming clearer that it may be necessary to construct a kind of frame to keep the model still. Or to use movements that do not cross two moving paths of motion, so that I can mask movements with more ease.

NOVEMBER 5, 2019: EXHIBITION OF PROGRESS

I have displayed some of my experiments in conjunction with a larger exhibition of undergraduate work. It was useful to receive feedback from people who were not familiar with my research. From my observation of the exhibit, spectators' responses were largely divided. They either did not notice any movement occurring at all or were surprised by movement and compelled to look for more movements that they might have missed. I assume at this point that the work may have not been as effective in this busy exhibition space as it might have been in a quieter room by itself. I remember a conversation with Welby where we discussed that stillness could also be a feeling—an environment in which the image is viewed.

NOVEMBER 13, 2019: IDEA ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTION AND STILLNESS

I have begun reading about the relationship between photography and motion. While looking at some of the photographs that Eadweard Muybridge created I have begun to think about what we, as spectators, consider to be motion. If motion is something that our brains fill in, can a sequence of images as frames be considered in the same way as that same sequence of images laid out on one page of print? As an example, could Muybridge's images of a horse in motion be considered 'in motion' in the same way that a video of a horse running is considered moving? My immediate response to this is 'No'. However, I consider the main thing that separates Muybridge's images of the horse running and a film of a horse running is their position in time.

NOVEMBER 28, 2019: POWER RELATIONSHIP IN
PHOTOGRAPHS

In trying to understand how a power dynamic might work between the viewer and the image, I had a thought about how movement might bring change into the image. Photographs are understood as a record of a moment that was, and now only exists within the photograph. Viewers hold power over the images because it is something that they can possess, trade, copy and use as a substitute for a memory. The stillness of a photograph is not really seen or considered because it is expected.

Movement in a photograph threatens these things. Looking at a photograph, the viewer will try to relate to it and fill in information or meaning. One might ask:

What happened in the moments before?

What happened immediately after the shot was taken?

These are questions that the viewer will feel safe to ask. I had the thought that if the photograph was a record of the past, movement in the photograph might bring it into the present. At least it would become a conscious moment of the present for the viewer.

DECEMBER 5, 2019: STILLNESS, IMMORTALITY AND
DEATH

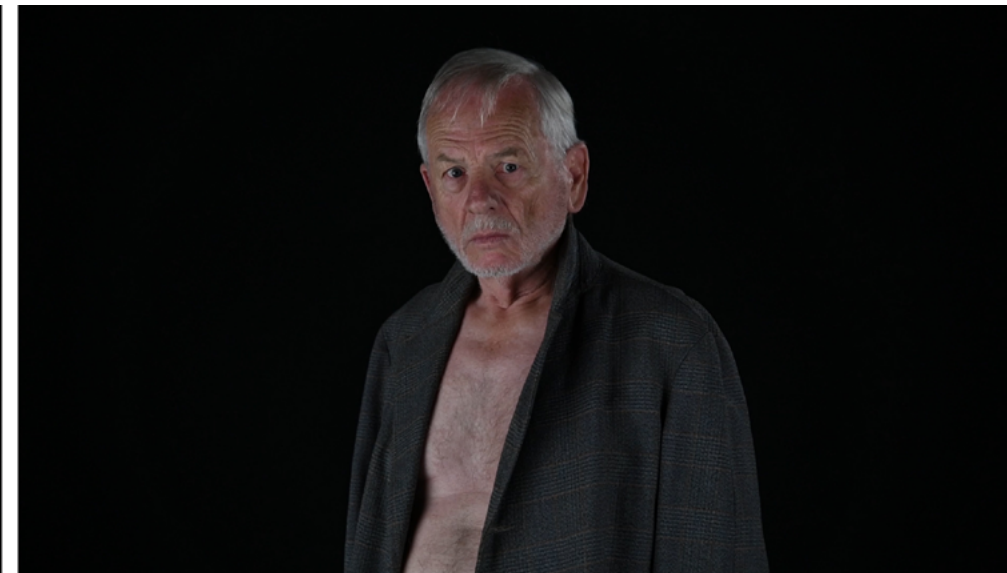
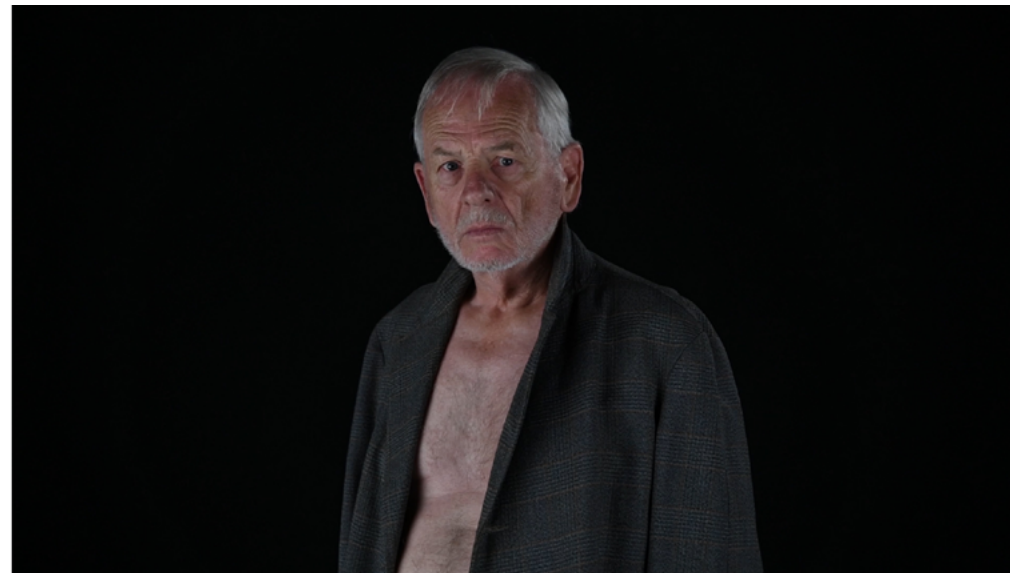
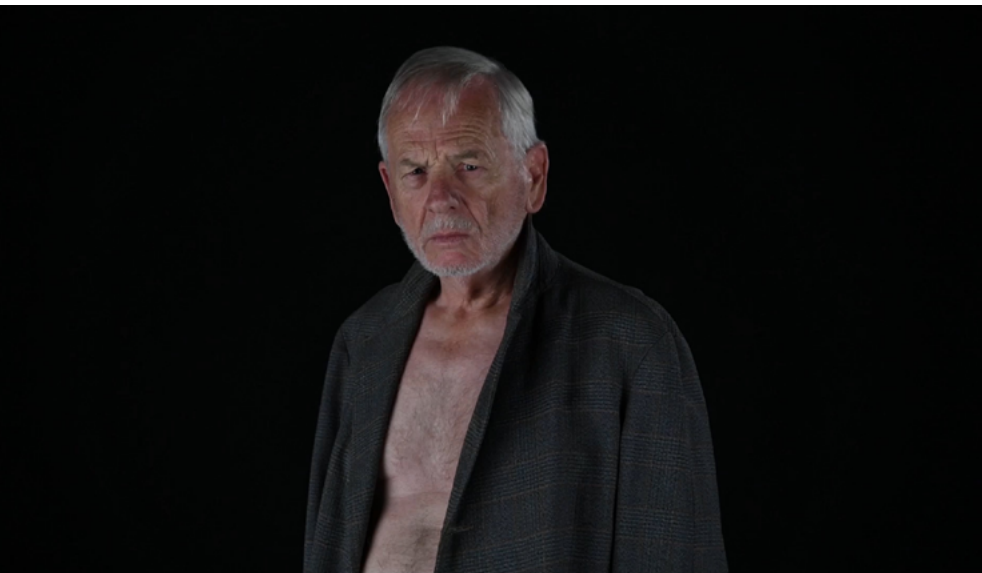
Recently I have come across some pieces of writing that consider interesting ways of treating motion and stillness. Caldwell (2004) suggests that there are multiple levels of stillness in the body, but the only time that true stillness can be achieved is in death, where even cellular movement ceases. While the article is concerned primarily with movement of humans rather than images, in the context of portraits that involve motion, they arguably become more 'alive' (if true stillness is death) through a small level of movement. Stillness can be observed and can also be felt on different levels.

On the other side of the discussion, Susan Sontag (1977) suggests that a kind of immortalisation occurs when a photograph is created, with the photograph existing indefinitely after the moment has passed.

How I understand this is that with the balance of stillness and motion, a kind of stasis can be formed, with time passing in a moment that has been both captured and created. Stillness is brought to life through movement, and movement contextualised by the moments without any. An image that moves through states of motion and stillness is reserved from both death and immortality.

DECEMBER 27, 2019: EYE CONTACT AND POWER

There has been a level of attention paid to eye contact (direct address) in my images to date. However, I have made a few findings that have helped shape how I might understand the way it could be understood, based on my existing comprehension of it. Sartre (1956) and some current psychologists and theorists (Jarrett, 2019) suggest that by becoming conscious of another's gaze upon us, we become self-conscious of ourselves as we discover that we are the subject of the thoughts of another. The same might be true for the photographic image, as if some inbuilt instinct creates a reaction to meeting another's gaze. Perhaps a tension could be developed by having a portrait observe us.



Frame grabs from a duregraph featuring the model John Brown (January 31, 2020). Rather than having only a physical renegotiation of the contents inside the frame, this experiment also contains an emotional shift. We are met with John's gaze for the entire duration of the piece, but as he moves through an emotional transition we are forced to empathise with him.

JANUARY 31, 2020: SHOOT 3

This shoot was a big step forward in relation to my practice. It was the first time that I have used professional talent and a considered wardrobe.

To arrange the costume for the photoshoot, I found that visiting charity stores provided a wide variety of clothes at a relatively cheap price. Due to the vast selection of clothing and materials that were available in these stores, the process of finding costumes was exploratory. Only a preconsidered idea of colour palette was in place. This resulted in sometimes having the 'story' of the duregraph being thought through while I was considering a particular garment. Based on findings from my previous shoots, the colour palette was kept relatively dark to focus more attention on the faces of the actors.

I had two actors participate in this shoot, whom I sourced through Starnow, an online talent directory. They were John Brown and Amalia Schroeder. The decision to use an actor instead of a photographic model was made because my images require a transition through

facial expression or emotion. What the actors would offer, that I considered models might not, was the ability to ‘become’ a character and make transitions while a camera was recording. I needed them to not only respond to specific direction about pose, but also to connect to a brief scenario that I would give them for each ‘scene’. This proved to be a new territory that I had not previously considered. In past shoots I have given basic instructions on how a movement should play out on screen, but in this shoot I was asked by John what he was responding to, to cause an emotion. In other words, it was necessary to give the actor a motivation so they could respond to a visualised scenario, rather than give them an emotion to be feeling. I could now see that specificity was important.

During my search through secondhand stores I met Antony Mackle, who provided incredibly useful advice on how to search stores by looking through as many as possible. Because of his past experience in fashion, I asked him to act as my assistant and wardrobe manager for the shoot. The benefits of this were twofold. First, he was able to provide some of his personal collection of garments for use in the shoot, which meant I had a greater variety of attire for the actors. Second, his assistance behind the scenes meant that I was able to immerse myself in the shooting process, concentrating on how I might create a realistic scenario for the actors to react to while they maintained almost complete physical stillness. I was incredibly grateful for his generosity and participation.

We treated the lighting differently in this shoot. Marcos and I discussed using a lighting setup that still drew influence from Vermeer, but with changes that would allow for the movement of the actor under the lighting, without casting strong shadows in unwanted places. The resulting setup was two softboxes, one on each side of the actors, and a snout light that illuminated them from behind, separating them from the background. This setup was used for most of the shots with minor variations to the lights’ intensities, especially the fill light.

The collaborative environment that was created during the shoot was incredibly constructive. I felt comfortable to ask for advice from all of the participants involved. This was both the longest studio shoot and the most participants I have ever worked with. Today represented a shift in my treatment of how the duregraph might reveal something that is unseen through the ‘performance’ of an actor (rather than through a simple renegotiation of what is in the frame). I do not really think at this point that a movement will be enough for my images, but instead I have decided to concentrate on the movement of an actor through an emotion or a thought pattern that unfolds before us with no clear indication as to what is happening. So, a balance between obvious action and its enigmatic context. This shift in emotional emphasis should result in a change to how we view an image.

FEBRUARY 4, 2020: DISCUSSION WITH MARCOS

During a discussion with Marcos regarding my last shoot, we talked about the position of these images between photography and moving image. When the image is moving it enters filmic territory, however, in its stillness it is photographic. One thought that I had during this discussion is that the moving elements of the image are used to transition between states of photographic stillness, still maintaining a ground that is primarily photographic.

To a certain degree I am uncertain where, between these two categories, my images lie. Because of the nature of film being many still frames shown in a second, it is easier for movement inside a photograph to be considered cinematic than it is for stillness inside cinema to be considered photographic. I realise that the ease that digital technologies provide in moving between these two areas relates to the idea of post-photography—an expansion of photography’s original definitions to overlap with other media.

FEBRUARY 11, 2020: THOUGHTS WHILE EDITING
FOOTAGE

One of the advantages that the steady light of the studio has given me is the congruency between multiple takes. While editing the footage from the last shoot, I have found myself using elements of two different takes of a scene in one composition to achieve the movement I am seeking. Even at this point in the project, I find myself constantly experimenting with the timing and intensity of the movement that occurs. In effect, I am creating a time inside the image that never existed in the real world—a simulacrum. I am using elements from different takes, rearranging and masking, and creating a lens-based record of an event that never occurred.

FEBRUARY 12, 2020: MEETINGS WITH GREG
BENNETT AND MEIGHAN ELLIS

These meetings were beneficial to my practice in a number of ways. I saw Greg and Meighan separately, discussing some of the edited images from my last shoot. Greg provided me with several sources that could feed contextually into my practice, introducing the idea of asynchronous time. I find myself questioning the choice of shooting the portraits in landscape orientation, and I will allow this thought to sit with me for a while. One of the things that Greg mentioned in relation to the framing of the images was the reference to horror films, where the space left behind the subject indicates that something unseen could creep into it.

Meighan's feedback was helpful in addressing potential technical issues in the work, asking questions of the intensity of the movement, whether some of the movements could be more subtle. I think it would be good to have a range of intensities of movements across the images displayed in the final exhibition to create a tension—where an established formula is not present across the images.

FEBRUARY 13, 2020: THOUGHTS WHILE MOOD
BOARDING

While planning for the next shoot, I found myself questioning again why I am so interested in the paintings. It is as if they occupy more of a stillness than photographs do. Perhaps this thought is due to how they were made. Photographs have the ability to arrest motion, whereas in most paintings the person or thing being painted is living but needs to remain still to be captured.

FEBRUARY 14, 2020: DISCUSSION WITH MARCOS

An interesting comment came up in my last chat with Marcos when we were discussing my images from the last shoot. This has to do with the different kinds of movement that occurred inside the images. I was saying that in my last shoot with John and Amalia, the primary agenda was to create movements that were driven by emotion or a change in emotion. These were most often gradual movements of the body.

I was saying that for the next shoot, the movements inside the images would be a mixture of all the previous shoots, in that some of the movements in the images would be present purely for the change of the 'internal clock' of the viewer, but there might also be the emotional performance of the actors that could change the power of the image over the course of its viewing.

FEBRUARY 19, 2020: DISCUSSION WITH WELBY

In this discussion with Welby my purpose was to begin planning my Critical Commentary chapter. This was the first time that we discussed the images that came out of my last shoot with Amalia and John. The general feeling was that the centre framing of the subject did not work very well. This was an oversight on my part during the shoot, where I was more concerned with costume, lighting and movement than I was with the shot's composition. This will be something I pay closer attention to in the next shoot.

One thought that emerged though our discussion was the idea that duregraphs are images that *reveal* things. This has been something that has driven the last two shoots without my being conscious about it. This is something that separates this kind of image from cinemagraphs. In both types of image there is a small amount of motion in a primarily still image. However, while a cinemagraph is in an infinite loop of motion, the duregraph introduces movement, changing time perception of the image and revealing things in the image that would otherwise remain hidden. I am now wondering if a duregraph could remain true to its definition without revealing things in the image.

For the next shoot, all of the scenes that I am planning have a brief story and motivation to guide the actor through the motion of the image. These are no longer than a paragraph. I am looking for an emotional or intriguing composition that might engage the viewer, even before any change occurs in the image.

FEBRUARY 27, 2020: REFLECTION WHILE SKETCHING

I have mentioned previously about the different 'kinds' of movement that duregraphs might feature—how the meaning of an image might change when a change in emotion or position is revealed, and how is this affected when some movements only occur for the purpose of creating time sensitivity. As I have been planning and sketching for the next photoshoot, I had a thought. There are certain movements that could change how the viewer treats the subject(s) of the image. When previously discussing things that are revealed in the image, my main thought was emotions or agendas that are 'written' onto the subject's face. I recently thought that this could also change by revealing an object in the image that could completely change the meaning. For example, in the next shoot I would like to try a group portrait of a band, however during the image playing, one of the band members might reveal a weapon, changing the group from a band to a gang. Subtle movements might still occur in the image in each of the characters, but only one would reveal the thing that will change the way we see the image

reveal to us that you
are in control

180 cm

Touhai 180
Kathy 171
Olis 182
Kieran 167



pipe comes from behind

MARCH 2, 2020: REFLECTION ON THE LAST
PHOTOSHOOT

The last photoshoot I completed took place over a weekend, and it consumed the most time that I have spent in studio so far. One of the biggest developments of my practice in the studio has been learning how to direct actors. I had thought previously that the best way to get a ‘performance’ from the actors in the duregraphs was to give them a mental image or scenario to drive them emotionally, leaving subtleties up to them in how they might approach an interpretation. This is largely how I directed the shoot on 30 January. With this recent shoot I realised that due to the nature of the ‘in-between’ space of these images, the way that I was directing also became most effective when I mixed the way I was directing between that of a photographer and of a film director. To put this into more simple terms, I was asking for very specific positions and movements from the actors (as a photographer might ask of a model), yet I was also choosing when to leave the performance open to their interpretation to still gain a natural display of the emotion of the piece (as a film director might do). The way that I chose when to position them and when to allow them to feel the performance was partially based on the actor’s abilities, however it was also driven by the image that remained in my head from planning each shot. When my preconception of the shot was more vague, I would often let the actors interpret the story I gave to them, picking up subtleties along the way and trying them again in subsequent takes.

In one instance I was planning for a scene in which the actor looks up from a book and moves his eyes around the room. In the first takes, I had Antony holding pieces of paper as markers for Zac Russel (the actor) to look at. When looking back at the footage, it was technically how I envisioned the piece but it lacked something. It could have been that it was too mechanical. I asked Zac to try again, but this time we did not have the markers, and I asked him to just imagine that he was looking around at other people’s faces. This gave a much more satisfactory performance and a much richer range of expression to choose from when it came to editing the footage.

MARCH 6, 2020: REFLECTION WHILE LOOKING
OVER FOOTAGE

It has just recently occurred to me how much I seek emotional resonance in the images that I am creating. When looking over the images that I captured in the shoot on Sunday, 1 March, I felt the exact ‘prick’ that Barthes (1977) discusses in relation to the punctum. This occurred after discovering that Toutai Palu (the actor) was actually crying during the take, and not just using facial expressions as I had thought during the shoot. This response I had was a powerful and involuntary reponse to what the image showed, and one that was revealed through the changing of the image.

MARCH 26, 2020: MY WORK CONSIDERING THE
GLOBAL CRISIS

I am heading into the finishing stages of my work, despite the global Covid-19 outbreak. As of yesterday there is a nation wide isolation and most businesses have closed, including the temporary closure of AUT’s campuses. We have all been told to stay at home for the next four weeks. With regards to my study this has meant adapting to a primarily online environment for feedback and meetings. I had a meeting with my supervisors yesterday through a video chat to discuss the next steps that I could take in the current environment. The biggest impact that this will have on my study is the potential postponing of my exhibition and examination of my work which was set to take place on 29 May. Instead of moving my exhibition to the end of the year, I am considering creating an online presentation of my work where examiners and the public can interact with the duregraphs. The advantage this might provide is a greater exposure of my work and the longevity of the display. Online, the portraits might effectively reach a far greater number of viewers than could be facilitated by a single exhibition. The only challenge that I can see at this point is that usually online videos have a playhead, so the viewer would be able to control the speed of the image. This is not something I want with my work. I will trial some approaches to the design of a website that precludes this facility.

APRIL 7, 2020: SELECTING DUREGRAPHS FOR
FINAL PRESENTATION

Coming into the finishing stages of this project, I have been considering why I have chosen the images that I have. In each studio session I learned new skills, both in directing and producing the duregraphs. The progression of my thinking through the project has naturally led to a refinement of the images I was creating. I have moved on from initial tests where I was primarily focused on the technicalities of movement to later experiments where I was more conscious of composition and the impact of emotion and enigma.

There were four primary criteria for choosing the final duregraphs for exhibition. First, the images I selected all had to share a level of believable emotion and subtlety. In my earlier experiments, the actor often moved away from embodying their character and began to over-perform and emote. While these duregaraphs were often technically successful they forfeited subtlety and compromised credibility. I wanted the final duregraphs to be of such a quality that a viewer might forget that they are looking at a hired professional in a photoshoot and instead feel that they are witnessing a subtle, believable event unfold.

Second, the images needed to demonstrate compositional intrigue that could hold a viewer's attention in moments of stillness. My early experiments did not have this, but as the project progressed, work surfaced that was compositionally more sophisticated.

I was also conscious not to select more than one image featuring the same actor, because I felt that this might draw undue attention to the model and deflect consideration away from transitions occurring within the work.

Finally, I wanted to exhibit work that rewarded patient waiting and heightened levels of attentiveness. In some early work transitions were either too fast, so a viewer might not feel the need to wait, or the image moved too slowly, and it was easy to lose patience and miss subtle transitions in the portrait. The final selection of images contains a variety of transitional pacing and intensities of revelation. However, they are all subtle and enigmatic.



8

APPENDIX
REFERENCES

APPENDIX REFERENCES

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