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What the Subject Did

Negotiating agency within representation



The set of *The Lisa and John Slideshow* at The Mac Theatre, Belfast. 2018 (I).

PhD by Published Works

University of Sussex

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What the Subject Did

Negotiating agency within representation

This PhD thesis discusses my 2017 project *Lisa and John*, a radical response to an earlier photographic project, interrogating recurring theoretical questions that challenge the discourse of social documentary photography. As a significant piece of research, devised with those depicted within the photographs, *Lisa and John* presents an original contribution to knowledge questioning representational methods through a critical intervention employing participation, performance and three-dimensionality.

Keywords:

subject agency; expanded documentary photography; participatory practice; archive intervention; performance of the photographic subject; representational critique; verbatim theatre; photography and theatre;

David Moore

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This thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other University for a degree.

David Moore 14/12/23

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Abstract

Lisa and John is a radical re-imagination of an earlier photographic project. As an intervention devised through participation with those depicted within the photographs, the project interrogates recurring theoretical questions that challenge the discourse of social documentary photography through alternate mediums. *Lisa and John* presents distinct contributions to knowledge, to question representational methods evoking what else was knowable from the terrain of possibilities when the sovereign images were captured, reaching into photographs, to open contextual focus on the social, political and relational aspects of production. The critical commentary identifies the project in the context of expanded documentary photography as a substantial piece of practice-based research.

After a chance meeting with Lisa in 2015, I invited her and her former husband John, both of whom were portrayed within my series *Pictures from the Real World: Colour Photographs, 1987-88* (Moore, 2013), to review the full body of documentary photographs interpreting their own lives. The couple's participation as former subjects facilitated a step into the space of production, providing the catalyst for *Lisa and John*, itself, a response through the media of performance and three-dimensionality that renegotiated the initiating project. This submission for PhD by Publication comprises; theatrical maquettes representing the making of the earlier photographs, and a verbatim play based on conversations with Lisa and John, who were depicted in the earlier series.

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Research methodologies

What the Subject Did is a critical reflection of two connected practice-led research outcomes spanning nearly thirty years. It includes a written text and two bodies of work, one produced in 1988, the latter in 2017. It articulates the research questions of the works under discussion, explaining how my practice contributes to an existing body of knowledge. My research methodology in production of *Lisa and John* employed a heuristic approach through iterative working methods and both conscious and unconscious regard to texts and precedent. Within this I adopt secondary research methods of revisiting and examining pre-existing data of my own to explore specific themes within practice, enabling a nuanced understanding of how the interventions I made were experienced, produced and performed. The secondary pre-production process included participatory engagement with former subjects of the earlier works and was approached as potentially restorative event. Both participants were fully informed of the process throughout and consent was renegotiated periodically as to the eventual outcome. An element of trust was evident from the outset building on previous historic engagements.

Introduction

This thesis was initiated through a desire to understand how my practice had arrived at this point. The project *Lisa and John* expands existing theoretical and practice-based knowledge within related historical and contemporary discourse of documentary representation. It excavates latent claims from historic photographs, producing a consultative template for ongoing artistic practice and pedagogy.

DAVE MOORE



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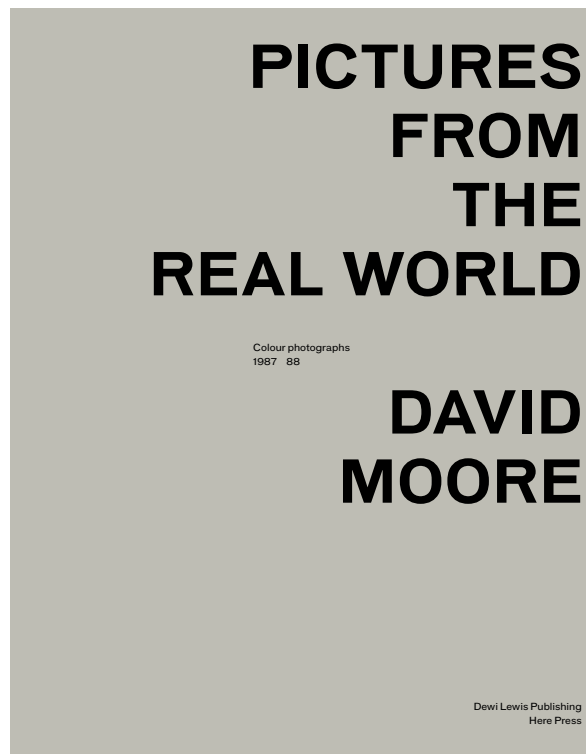
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Pictures from the Real World in *State of the Art*, *Creative Camera* magazine. 1988 (II).

The project presents a series of radical interventions that renegotiate my earlier body of work, *Pictures from the Real World: Colour Photographs, 1987-88* (2013). The revisionist gestures within *Lisa and John* propose alternate perspectives on the sovereign works currency, effect and ethics, through an initializing participatory engagement that asked those within the picture to select and discuss content. Thereafter the former subjects' revision catalysed my critical 're-writing' of specific photographs as three-dimensional

scale models. *Lisa and John Oh my Days!* presents material photographic object as tableaux, reconfiguring the staging of known photographs in museal form. Thirdly, also as a consequence of initial participation, I developed a verbatim theatrical performance, *The Lisa and John Slideshow*, that enabled the former subject, by proxy, to re-enter the photograph, to speak of *and* to their own representations (1) (2).

The originating series, *Pictures from the Real World* was published as a monograph in 2013 and continues to be widely exhibited and collected. The photographs represented the lives of working-class families on the Osmaston Estate in the City of Derby and included Lisa and John's family.



Cover of *Pictures from the Real World*. *Colour photographs, 1987-88*. David Moore. (2013) (III).

Made whilst studying BA Photography at West Surrey College of Art and Design, Farnham, England, as my outgoing and final project, its first publication appeared in *Creative Camera*, an independent photography magazine, within an editorial entitled 'State of the Art' in summer 1988 and later disseminated within a receptive art-photography discourse of exhibition and publication (3).

My revision of *Pictures from the Real World*, alongside an accumulation of critical practice produced since that time, underwrites the enquiry of *Lisa and John* to seek redress. Through performance and three dimensionality; *Lisa and John* addresses recurring theoretical questions within the discourse where subjects are denied agency within hegemonic constraints. As a contribution to knowledge, I will argue that, through a performance of social agency, my interventions disturb and deny those legacies, using dialectical methods of engagement and a renegotiation of representation.

The question asked within this commentary is: **How can unequal power relations within photographic representation of working-class communities be renegotiated through trans-media practice, including participation, three-dimensionality and the use of theatre?**

Literature Review

In the intervening periods between the two projects under discussion, differing interests have influenced my practice. Some were assimilated culturally and through the methodological development of my work, others through critical texts. Whilst a

student photographer, my early projects developed within contrasting theoretical positions. Firstly, the revitalized modernism of 'New British Colour' that perpetuated pre-existing relational paradigms between producer and subject (4). And secondly, post-structural theories that offered pejorative critiques of representation and documentary photography. Each position differed, presenting the visceral energy of the former, alongside an alternate model calling for the subject to be positioned as a potential collaborator. Whilst I explored within each discourse, my colour documentary practice became dominant through considerable early momentum as a known series within the canon of British Photography.

The 'recurring' questions that this thesis presents within representational theory are situated within the prevalence of economic and social disparities. They manifest between the producer and subject through the visual reproduction, and affirmation, of signifiers of class leading to stereotyping, or, where the image is understood as a stable unit of fixed knowledge within a discourse that assumes that such images, alone, may be purposeful as instruments of social change. To develop the conversation regarding these areas, I refer to writers and artists whose work has engaged critically with representation of societal encounters through realism. I consider related theoretical observations developed within *Lisa and John* that build upon or expand precedent and where I considered there to be anomalies and inconsistencies. In the works, my renegotiations of the original encounter kept in mind Hindess and Hirst observations, that any useful critique of representation 'does not exist outside the process of representation' (1977, cited Roberts, 1998).

My re-acquaintance with the voices of both John Tagg (1988) and Allan Sekula (1983) (1986), challenging the discourse of documentary photography from differing perspectives at around the same time as the production of *Pictures from the Real World*, locates my own historical practice within related hegemonic social and political apparatus. Sekula's critique of documentary photography as a tool for activism, extends his understanding of the genre as a reiteration of existing power structures (1983). Yet, the premise of his view, that the 'archive has to be read from below, from a position of solidarity with those displaced, deformed, silenced or made invisible by the machineries of profit' aligns with my methodological approach within *Lisa and John* (ibid). Alongside the couple I build upon this theoretical notion, expanding my practice enabling new perspectives of the location and purpose of images within *Pictures from the Real World*.

Lisa and John disturbs the relationship between the objectifying tendencies in documentary practice of those within the frame. Tagg's systemic analysis locates photography within a broader field of media studies and also as a reflection of the power that it is located within (1988, pp. 1-26). His understanding of documentary photography as a panoptic tool of classification, surveillance, and control become relevant and often these re-negotiations of social power through participatory re-framing, to reveal and challenge precedent. Within this thesis, such observations have allowed recognition of a participatory turn in my own practice that refers to Tagg yet also identifies a tendency in photographic theory to speak for the figure in ways that corral the figure within the image. My analysis of an essay by Steve Edwards argues that

the photographic subject can escape both the academy's critique of realist paradigms as well any systemic and class-bound rhetoric within documentary practice to speak for themselves, constructing a crucial platform to identify the need for alternate models (1984, pp. 12-23). This facilitates an aspect of the contribution to knowledge within *Lisa and John*, where a dialectical, reconfigured representational vehicle sees the former subject as active.

John Roberts locates both Sekula and Tagg within a 'social power' model of critique (1998, p.4). As a practising artist I am grateful for Roberts' critical de-constructivist arguments supporting the material realities of society, upholding the value of realism (ibid. p.145). Roberts noted that 'since the late 1970s' photographic theory and history have had two main targets, modernism and positivism', identifying the 'social power model' (Tagg and Sekula), alongside 'critical deconstructionism' as having the most significance within an 'anti realist bias' (ibid). His opposition to such 'theoretical consensus' that 'discredits the very possibility of truth and further separates the avant-garde critique of positivism from working-class politics', has currency within *Lisa and John's* rewriting of the image through the employment of alternate media (ibid). My decision to use verbatim, narrative driven theatre, alongside the figurative realism of the maquettes challenges this understanding. For the couple too, the currency of realism maintains a significant familial value.

Within this process I referred and responded to prior interventions in my practice and other participatory works that advocated self-representation. Anthony Luvera's *Assisted*

Portraits renegotiate the representation of those affected by homelessness through methodologies designed to facilitate representational control (2002- ongoing). Working within a constant review, facilitated through instant film or digital monitors, and having chosen when to take the image and what is in the background, each of Luvera's collaborators ostensibly maintain control of their self-presentation. Luvera's expanded documentary practice enriches communality and social empowerment beyond the image. For him, 'the making of an assisted self-portrait as a method is founded on pedagogy and an ongoing dialogue with each participant about representation and self-presentation' (2022) (5). Through my development of *Lisa and John*, clear differences surfaced in contrast to this work, and I questioned the participants' portrayal.



Assisted Self-Portrait of Momodou Njie. Anthony Luvera. 2013-14 (IV).

Although each image when displayed presents the figure within it contextualized as ‘being affected by homelessness’, partially re-iterating a panopticism despite the preventative measures that Luvera has built around production, their status remains as *still-subjects* reinforced within the scrutiny of their mute bodies. Articulating the premise of *Lisa and John* through the production of new photographs of the couple risked submitting the family to a refreshed scrutiny, inviting ‘before and after’ comparisons and invalidating critique of *Lisa and John*. My decision not to, emphasized the necessity of a dialectical resolution beyond a panoptic regime.

As a central alignment to the democratizing gestures within *Lisa and John*, Ariella Azoulay posits the devised construction of ‘civil imagination’ to build upon humanitarian ambitions of documentary discourse (2008) (2019). Azoulay advances the idea of ‘citizens of photography’, an emboldening of audience responsibility within a notion of ‘watching photographs’, that describe engagements through a tripart intersection of *image, viewer, response* (2008, pp. 18-19). Her ‘watching’ assumes potential multiple readings, and the possibilities of change through social agency as a gesture of communality, obliging the citizen viewer to become actant in response. As within *Lisa and John*’s re-reading of their selections of photographs, proposing recontextualization, Azoulay’s model, projects the photograph as a catalyst, writing that: ‘The photo acts, thus making others act.’ (ibid).

Such an intervention refers to the ways in which societal hegemony defines that which is allowed to be seen, heard, or made available whilst reading photographs. Outside of photography's ontological constraints alternate inadmissible knowledge lies in abeyance (in *Lisa and John*, the voices of those within the picture). Within *Lisa and John*, the consultative review of the sovereign work rewrites histories, presenting unanticipated outcomes yet does not fully mirror the manner in which Azoulay obligates the 'citizen'. Within *Lisa and John* it is the figure within the image who responds to their own histories, rather than the tales of others, offering a variation of the dialectic that she proposes.

Azoulay writes that when there is an absence of information within discourse, 'individuals effectively collaborate with the ruling power even when they may be explicitly opposed to its actions' (2008, pp. 150-158). This is also expressed within Michel Foucault's analysis of Roman Catholic confession, a cultural mechanism for knowledge production through the admission of an ostensible truth, where representation selects only the 'truth' of what is hegemonically allowable from the complexities of the circumstances it describes (1978, p. 18). This becomes a useful and analogous model, proposing that, as audiences negotiate meaning from and through photographs, unstated context can be added *a priori*, and unless challenged, dominant power relations are re-iterated.

Of relevance is my discussion of the 'choreography' at play during the making of *Pictures from the Real World*, a hidden awareness of my presence as a photographer,

something unacknowledged in my final edit. As I will discuss, whilst it was clear in retrospect that the couple, as subjects in 1987-88, were performing agency to me, I chose to exclude their gestures in favour of a sense of my own desire for *vérité*. Yet those same gestures, within *Lisa and John* were later acknowledged contributing to the challenge presented in the works as the couple stepped into a space of production through an overview of their own representations.

As I will discuss the move to performance in *Lisa and John* was the result of several factors and theoretically, my work built upon and expanded precedent from a variety of sources. In 2010, I was introduced to the emancipatory practice of Forum Theatre, developed by Augusto Boal (2008 p.139). Boal's model emphasized the significance of marginal figures within performance, moving away from classical plays to enable working-class audience members to build a more direct familiarity with the theatrical narratives before them (6). Realising that his actors were taking fewer political risks than local audiences, Boal encouraged participation to address local issues, enabling audience to contribute, changing the narrative of theatrical and therefore representational action as a live event. I identified analogies between Azoulay's advocacy of reconsiderations of the image, and Boal's revisionist theatrical performances, where in collaboration with the spectator, scenes are performed a second time in the same sitting for the purpose of review by those attending performances of Forum Theatre.

Additionally, the visual and historical anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards (2001) (2005), writes of photographs as social and material entities as they are returned to the communities that they represent, often after generational intervals. Within the context of social performativity and as a description of the ‘theatricality’ of material photographs and their cultural value, her discussion of the reception of such images enabled me to re-see Lisa and John’s haptic responses to the content of my own photographs, that were then employed as dramatic gestures to challenge panopticism within performance. Her understanding of the value of such indeterminacy echoes my own argument and discussion of what *The Lisa and John Slideshow* achieved in performance. Here the relevance of *liveness* (and therefore non-panoptic) is reiterated within a comparative analysis of feminist scholar Peggy Phelan whose discussion of varying representational modes, ‘the camera, the canvas, the theatrical frame, language itself’ echoed my own in terms of the ontological fluidity of the performance acting against fixity (2009). She argued that ‘Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations’ (ibid).

The rewriting of the image from the source toward alternate tableaux in *Lisa and John* is a significant gesture. If a representation is performed again, differing questions of their purpose, function and efficacy emerge, and occasionally representation may collapse. As I will describe, within *Lisa and John* realism is acknowledged as an inherent construction aligning with Tagg’s acknowledgement of predetermined agendas influencing the ways in which certain photographs are formed (7). The possibilities of

Brechtian theories of ‘distanciation’ or ‘alienation affect’ are employed within *The Lisa and John Slideshow* to enable such confluences of fiction and document within both the maquettes and the theatrical performance, extemporizing the real as a point of contestation (8). Bertolt Brecht’s ‘dialectical theatre’ sought to confound an audience’s comfortable empathic identification with narrative when presented as through conventional realism (Brooker, 2003, p. 5). Within *Lisa and John*, I employed such methodologies to problematize my own representation of working-class communities yet avoided the shadow of Brecht as propagandist in favour of the couple’s voices being heard. *The Lisa and John Slideshow* strives for equity through participation and a theoretical achievement of the play is to offer a theatrical representation that tells more than the photographs. To achieve this, the participatory process and reclamation of the sovereign photographs emerge as theatrical actions of empowerment and realisations of the ways in which the former subjects’ interpretations of their own representations offer new knowledge.

Conversely, the concept of *Lisa and John* expands the works of scholars who have investigated related performative *tableaux*, particularly where those within the frame were scrutinized within disciplinary contexts, and that scrutiny contributed to the construction of archetypes in response to prevailing interests. Georges Didi-Huberman’s analysis of the performative display of pathologies within the Salpêtrière Hospital, France in the 1880s, described patients who were coerced to perform ‘evidence’ of maladies, verified by photographic images that fed back into the affirmation and perpetuation of Dr Charcot’s theories (Didi-Huberman and Charcot, 2003, pp. 175-258).

Didi-Huberman is interested in *resistance* within such performances, where patients failed or refused to comply. Similarly, Randall Rogers' account of Congolese nationals, brought to the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition, United States, of 1908 for purposes of public display, focussed on proto-amateur photographers recording life-size tableaux constructed to replicate the realities of Congolese lives (2008, pp. 347-366). Rogers' study reviewed performances to the camera by the Congolese, understood as conscious displays of savagery within an index of hegemonical and racist anticipation of *the other*. Yet, the Congolese would also occasionally refuse their performative obligations, instead presenting an 'insubordination', visibly ridiculing the premise, performing exaggerated mimicry of what was anticipated (ibid). Both examples, revealed spaces of resistance within revisionist readings of historic bodies of photographic works as subjects responded with innate human agency to reorientate their position within a prevailing discourse.

Given that within *Lisa and John* there is a reclamation of vernacular realism by the families, my contextual referencing has prioritized accessible outcomes. Other models have acknowledged the possibilities of democratically aligned engagement between participants. Bruno LaTour's 'Actor Network Theory' (1990), is such a framework, challenging traditional distinctions between human and non-human entities using the concept of 'actants' and their capacity to influence events and context. The implications of Latour's theoretical propositions, whilst describing a 'sociology of associations' has considerable distance from *Lisa and John's* 'reading from below' that extemporizes necessarily *recognisable* resolutions for social empowerment as a realistically and *realist*

material outcome. The questions have to be put back to the people to be retranslated and reconfigured. *Lisa and John* achieves this beyond Latour proposals, within a relatively equitable vehicle (9).

Contribution to Knowledge

After re-affirming that photography and photographic meaning is created and received within institutionalized systems of production and reception, my question, *'How can unequal power relations within photographic representation of working-class communities be renegotiated through trans-media practice, including participation, three-dimensionality and the use of theatre'* remains.

Lisa and John is located within an 'expanded field' of documentary practice, as described by Lucy Soutter, who identifies works that explore 'specific aspects of existing art forms' and are often mercurial as to their precise identity (2018, p. 136). Building upon a nexus of precedent in the following sections I will discuss how the drawing together of representational, anthropological and Brechtian theories have developed a template to critique representational modes within documentary photography and present sculptural and performance-based practice as alternatives to renegotiate former bodies of work. This methodological innovation negotiates the question through three significant interventions, discussed here in associated sections, contributing to the discourse.

Firstly, within **The participatory process and construction of agency**, my return to, and the acceptance of the body of work, by the former subject for the express intent of a

critical review catalysed all aspects of the project's direction. Within a dialectical approach the former subject was invited to contribute and publicly reclaim the image. Throughout this thesis I have referred to both Lisa and John as *former* subjects and the word 'subject' is contextualised within the title in the past tense. This indicates a transition that occurred during the production of *Lisa and John* signalling the development of my working methods through the couple's accepted invitation to participate.

Secondly, in **Re-writing the image-transferring indexicality in *Lisa and John*** I will discuss the appropriation of museal modes, that re-wrote the two-dimensional image in three dimensions through the employment an apposite form. Of significance is how the project acknowledged aspects of production of publicly known photographs through multi-perspectival audience engagement in an unprecedented manner and how the maquettes formed an illustrative template for the entire project

Thirdly, the section, ***The Lisa and John Slideshow, theatre as dialectical documentary practice*** discusses identifies and utilizes theatrical performance as a discrete challenge to photographic stasis and cultural fixity through performed social agency, as the former subjects re-enter the photographic frame within a fiction to re-articulate its *purpose*. As the most significant of my outcomes, it's expansion of my former documentary practice to publicly re-orientate and democratize the images for those represented within them is a contribution to existing knowledge that draws on the interventionist nature of the works and employment of other media as described. *The*

Lisa and John Slideshow creates a fictional encounter that maintain an indexical connection through verbatim allowing the couple to speak back to the photographs within which their representations were inscribed.

As contributions to knowledge, all elements can be understood as a necessary migration, using alternate media to speak beyond the limitations of documentary photography as a critical challenge to the presenting circumstances. All three interventions sustain new conversations and construct new evidence to oppose cultural and photographic fixity through participation and re-imagining within a template for future works.

The participatory process and a construction of agency

In this section, I will review the development of the participatory turn in my practice and consider the efficacy of social agency as experienced by Lisa and John, detailing how the couple negotiated the works and how those responses were re-articulated.

In 2015, I invited Lisa and John, both represented within *Pictures from the Real World* and now divorced for over twenty years, to review the sovereign body of work from which the publication was drawn and offering them a full view of everything produced. The couple's individual re-evaluation of the former series provided a platform enabling a critical intervention into the narrative of the former work as a renegotiation and reimagination of precedent. In the late 1980's and at a time of high unemployment and a decrease in living standards in England, the term 'concerned photography' signalled a practice within which the photographer's social conscience had been activated. Often, this problematically assumed that a need already evident in the subject, could be alleviated by photographing an apparent symptom (10).

At this time, the term gained currency within the discourse of British photography, overlooking arguments that to photograph others may also perform panoptic reiterations of stasis, rather than making any systemic societal contribution. I considered that my own documentary practice potentially contributed to a visual social history of England at that time and my intentions within the project were to respond to the circumstances with complex and empathetic photographs of the families I worked

with. I made no claims to political efficacy through *Pictures from the Real World*, nor assumed any need with Lisa and John's family.



Untitled from the series *Pictures from the Real World*. David Moore. (2013) (V).

Yet I was simultaneously aware that my methodologies of production and dissemination were compromised. I understood that my observations as a photographer mirrored my interiority and were contextualized within discourses of social power, as defined by Foucault and others to critique documentary practice pejoratively. Writing in 1986, Allan Sekula noted that, 'for Foucault, panopticism provides the central metaphor for modern disciplinary power based on isolation, individuation, and supervision' (Foucault,

1977, cited in Sekula, 1986, p. 9). Foucault's notions of the inert body and the creation of the 'fixed' subject that through processes of domination and control presented echoes in the currency of critical theory to disassemble documentary practice in the academy. As introduced, this was taken up by various writers discussing photography through de-constructivist models, an emergent discourse that scrutinized what John Roberts described as the 'silences and omissions' of documentary practices (1998, p.4). Yet within art school, as a wilful continuance of photographic modernism, theoretical confluences of realism and positivism, that which post-structural critique positioned as justification to disassemble and discredit representational modes, did not prevent the production of documentary work. Through an acquiescence and negotiation of this critique there developed an understanding of the genre as subjective visual expression, moving away from the obligations of factual reporting and allowing the 'opinionated' document to emerge as an accepted working outcome. Within my work, this was highlighted by David Brittain in a short review of *Pictures from the Real World*, when he suggested that 'the most radical aspect of these pictures, is Moore's refusal of the role of neutral observer' (2013).

John Tagg discussed a 'binding quality' of inequity where photographic representations of poverty appear, rooted at a 'pre-manipulative, rhetorical level' suggesting that peripheral agendas of deservedness are routinely incorporated within such hegemonic flow (1988. p. 160). Steve Edwards, also writing during the same period that *Pictures from the Real World* was produced, draws attention to similar expectations within an historic *Picture Post* editorial, where Nathan Turner, a ground worker from County

Durham, England, is presented as ostensibly disempowered through unemployment. In 1933, as subject of a state-sponsored 'Industrial Transfer', Turner was relocated to the south of England to live and work (1984, pp. 12-23).

Picture Post, February 11, 1939



Out Of Work For 144 Years, A Durham Miner Gets A Fresh Start

At his local Employment Exchange, Nathan Turner, an unemployed Durham miner, hears he has been accepted as tenant for a cottage homestead at Reading, away from the depressed areas. Pictures on the following pages show the Turners' family transfer.

UNEMPLOYED!

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INDUSTRIAL TRANSFERS

In this last article on unemployment, PICTURE POST shows how the Ministry of Labour moves unemployed families from the Special Areas to districts where they can find work, or begin life again on homesteads. In the last three years, more than 21,500 families have been so transferred.

WHEN he was just 14 years old, Nathan Turner, son of a miner, went down a Durham coal mine to do his first day's work. That was 40 years ago, Queen Victoria was on the throne and coal was still the foundation of Britain's soaring industrial wealth.

A few days ago, on a grey, drizzling morning, Nathan Turner stood at the top of the shaft, long since closed, where he had once worked. He was saying good-bye to his trade of mining, and to the town where he had spent his whole life. He was going south, to begin again.

The story of Nathan Turner is, largely, the story of Britain's coal mines. For twenty-five years he worked in the same pit, often earning good money, seldom missing a day's work, saving a little, contented with little, sober and industrious. He married and had children.

Then came 1924, black year for the miners. He fell out of work. That was 14 years ago. Since then, he has had exactly 36 weeks' work. Thirty-six weeks in 14 years. His savings have gone. He lives on the dole. He has six children, all boys. The eldest is at a training centre for unemployed; the next two have jobs; the three youngest, eight, five and three years old, have never known their father to be at work.

Now, at 54, Turner is grey-haired, lined, a little bent. He has the small, strong body of the miner, but his arms have lost their strength and skill. He will never work in a mine again; he could not stand the "hard graft."

But he aches for work. He wants his wife and children to see him working. He wants to win back his strength and self-respect, he wants his boys to have a better chance in life than he did.

Nearly all his friends and associations are in Durham, but he wants to get away from this town, where out of 16,000 insured workers, 3,950 are unemployed—one man in five. Where, for 21 years, he, his wife and children lived in one dank bedroom and a kitchen. Where he has drawn the dole so long.

The opportunity to go came to him a few weeks ago. He has been accepted by the Land Settlement Association as a tenant for their new cottage homestead estate at Caversham, Reading. The Land Settlement Association, acting through the Commissioner of the Special Areas and the Unemployment Assistance Board, recruits workless men with large families for these homesteads. The men may not find outside work, but they have land to cultivate, a useful, healthy occupation which restores them physically and mentally, and

PICTURE POST

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'Unemployed!'. *Picture Post*. Unknown photographer. (1939) (VI).

Edwards argued that the authority of the magazine editorial, ideologically managed and stereotypically objectified Turner who was 'bound up within a discourse of philanthropy and reform' (ibid). Yet, we hear nothing from Turner himself, as he becomes subject to two competing analyses: *Picture Post's* rhetoric around the triumph of his 'relocation', alongside Edwards' Freudian and semiotic analysis of the magazines reporting.

Each commentary projects its own ideological claims onto the figure of the worker, firstly reaffirming a need for redemption from poverty within *Picture Post*, and secondly a psychoanalytical objectification from Edwards that, whilst critiquing the article's premise, offers a theoretical response that further objectifies Turner as the subject. One orthodoxy is asserted over another, both omitting to consider any account of Turner's own persona, thoughts or feelings, either literally or conjecturally. Turner becomes an excluded figure with no potential for agency as to his own representation.

Lisa and John critically explores such theoretical blind-spots, facilitating the words of those within the image, to expose and disturb, the imposition of pre-ordained representational agendas within documentary practice, particularly where ostensibly dispossessed communities are portrayed.

'Fancy People'. Reclaiming photographs through social performativity.

In 1987, as an early response to similar observations, I explored alternative ways of interpreting the lives of the families I was photographing. During the same production period of *Pictures from the Real World*, I began to experiment with differing methodologies as research, allowing me to consider subject agency to critically test the work I was making through participatory methods. Whilst utilizing a realist colour aesthetic, the production of *Pictures from the Real World* was participatory by default, reliant on a continual 'off-stage' dialogue that influenced both my own and the family's parameters within the various homes I worked within as a negotiation of each other's presence. I responded to this choreography through experimental works, produced

through participation with Lisa's and John's family that indicate reflexive explorations of the possibilities of their social agency within an ongoing practice, to some extent, making our conversations visible.



John with Flowers from *Collaborative Portraits*. David Moore / John Mosley. (1987-88) (VII)

The unpublished series, *Collaborative Portraits*, saw the families formally contribute towards the construction of photographs that described aspects of their own lives (1987-88) (vii). Each tableau used staging and considered *mise-en-scène*, employing trans-disciplinary methods that were part-performance, part-document, involving an informal consultative process with Lisa and John. The works were exhibited within the first exhibitions of *Pictures from the Real World*. I displayed the monochrome photographs discontinuously within a linear sequence of the better-known images, thus interrupting the then-dominant narrative of 'new colour' with descriptions of the same lives from alternate perspectives. This presented a dialogue between differing methods

of engagement, implicitly acknowledging colour documentary photography as only one of many alternate representational methods to convey lives and presenting as a clear precedent for the trans-media migration in *Lisa and John*.

In 2016, after meeting Lisa and John separately, each were keen to see the images of their younger selves. I left double-sized copies of the original analogue contact prints with each of them and arranged subsequent meetings where I made audio recordings as they discussed their selections. In separate homes, the photographs became performative catalysts, opening latent and sometimes opposing family narratives that ran through the entire project, their interrogation of my representations of their lives, providing material for the eventual onward process. Elizabeth Edwards describes such interventions as ‘micro-engagements [...] that threaten and disrupt’ (2001, p. 13). What she refers to as the ‘social biographies’ of photographs were explored by former subjects, eventually revising their representational contexts.

Throughout production of *Lisa and John*, I positioned ‘agency’ as having capacity to resist or ‘act’, along with the ‘possibility of making a difference’ (Giddens, 1984, cited in Caldwell, 2007). It became necessary to understand how the original body of work would be perceived and what might develop within the participatory turn of the work’s trajectory. Foucault’s understanding that discourse can be self-defining exacerbated my understanding of this, arguing that discourses are ‘structured in such a way that they can determine who the ‘subject’ is, as well as defining, limiting, and controlling the relation between how subjects perceive themselves’ (Foucault, 1977, cited in Sekula,

1986, p. 138). This observation prompted questioning of the methodological efficacy within which agency was experienced by the couple, affirming *Lisa and John* as a site for onward critical reflection.

As the participatory methodology evolved, the couple expressed their views openly as the content of the photographs began to be known. Elizabeth Edwards refers to photography within the context of the production and performance of both photographer and subject within a discourse of social performativity and within *Lisa and John* her ideas illustrated the potential effectiveness of considering a critique of representation from an alternate platform (2001, pp. 16-23). Edwards argues that as framing and selectivity ontologically restrict what photographs convey, the medium as an already muted form forces emphasis on 'theatricality' where photographs might be said to perform the mutability of their signifying structures whilst projected into differing spaces. Through consideration of context and conjecture, I shall discuss how *Lisa and John* builds upon such observations through the couples' participation.

Many of the photographs I produced in 1987-88 would reinforce assumptions of economic need, through the representation of the material living conditions of the homes I worked within, as they unavoidably scrutinize surface appearance within an inherent, corrective analysis that colludes with potential hegemonic assumption when one views photographs of working-class communities (VIII). This was observed and acknowledged by John who asserts his own corrections of an image questioning the possibility of its negative reception, again referring to Tagg's 'binding rhetoric of

deservedness’ where assumptions are made from surface appearance and contextual placement of images of apparent poverty (1988). John responded; ‘I’m just looking at the pictures and thinking we looked like poor people, but I was working... we weren’t on the dole’ (Moore. D. 2019).



John's choices. *The Lisa and John Slideshow*. David Moore. (1987/2019) (VIII).

Allan Sekula argued that photographs hold more value or significance than others based upon cultural, social and economic criteria (1983). Such ‘privileged objects’ maybe associated with specific narratives that carry agendas and ambitions driven by artistic discourse. Throughout production of *Lisa and John*, neither of the couple had interest in my aesthetic considerations, instead vocalizing inaccuracies as they prioritized their own selections, their reflexivity connecting the entire project, becoming its eventual subject matter. During production, their self-awareness of their own representation

was evident. Throughout, neither I, nor the adults of any of the families I worked with, would encourage any direct engagement with the lens. Yet there developed an unspoken contract of performance and performativity within which both Lisa and John would occasionally ask if I wanted them to ‘do anything’ for the purpose of picture-making a performative and instinctive response when cameras are produced within social settings.

Cultural historian Annette Kuhn defines a separation between a ‘personal moment of memory’ and ‘the social moment of making memory’. Such responses became apparent within the couples’ desire to construct scenarios for me to photograph and acquire family keepsakes that affirmed representations of parenting and family life on their own terms (1995).



John's choices. *The Lisa and John Slideshow*. David Moore. (1987/2019) (IX).

The families suggestions for staged photographs often involved their children, and might include the reading of a night-time story, bathing a child and so on but also other pursuits. Whilst such suggestions always became pictures, the images I made were never carried into my final edit as the methodological approach, a paradigmatically constructed idea of the presence of the photographer having no effect, would not allow any explicitly contrived circumstances to influence my work. Yet, selected by the couple over a gap of nearly thirty years, many of these same images resurfaced, presenting the familial as priority and extending their plurality. I understood these gestures as opposition to, not only the 'artiness' of my photographs, as defined by Lisa, but validations of Lisa's and John's historical contributions within the process. As challenges to how my photographs had been influenced by legacies of documentary practice these gestures formed an entirely separate discourse of revisionist participation.



John's choices. *The Lisa and John Slideshow*. David Moore. (1987/2019) (X).

To illustrate this, in 1987, John, as a keen bodybuilder, trained in a makeshift bedroom gym within which I would occasionally make photographs, choosing a single image to use within the final edit of *Pictures from the Real World* (xiii). Whilst doing so, John requested that I take photographs fully focussed on him and I obliged. In 2016, whilst making selections from the entire project, he rejected my contextually observant photograph, revealing a wider view of the dishevelled bedroom with his daughter Nickola, out of focus in the foreground, subsequently choosing the tightly cropped image requested twenty-five years before (x). Beyond John's selection, perhaps a memory of youth and favourite activity, or a concern that my photograph revealed an untidy domestic environment, is a participatory turn that contributes to a recovery of his own representation as a personal keepsake.



Lisa's choices. *The Lisa and John Slideshow*. David Moore. (1987/2019) (xi).

Richard Hoggart observed that, for working-class communities, the 'ambivalence towards things artistic' becomes a mistrustful association with 'fancy people', highlighting points of resistance present within the couple's responses (1995, p. 71).

Lisa occasionally expressed that, for her, my selection of photographs was borne from an apparently pointless discourse, actively disassociating herself from its methods: 'lots of them were quite weird... quite arty... in a lot of the contact sheets, so nothing for me really' (2019, p. 36).

At other times, Lisa's focus on her own representation was also evident. Whilst critiquing my editing, as here with her selection of images from her daughter Nickola's birthday party, she indicated the presence of representational tropes, arguing for what should and should not be included;

Lisa: Yes... this is Nickola's birthday party, blowing out candles... there was a picture of one of my cakes next to an ashtray that David printed for himself and says that he didn't notice the ashtray next to it... but this is a better one for me...(...)...anyway Craig wanted me to use the photo with the ashtray 'it's more true to life!' he said... but I chose this one... with the sunlight... I love this picture.' (Moore. D. 2019, p. 29).

Both Lisa and John's internal dialogues exemplified several points of opposition to my own ambitions, including their unequivocal assertions over the photographs inference of negativity. Their critique of the process allowed pertinent insights that I was later able to platform in performance. For Lisa, having made her point, any

misrepresentation is overridden by the pleasure of reseeing those within the image and the photograph again became a 'common cultural artifact' with familial purpose, no longer a 'privileged object', as described by Sekula.

Rewriting the Image-transferring indexicality in *Lisa and John*

Following the initial participatory process, I devised *Lisa and John, Oh my Days!*, an installation of 1/25th scale theatrical models or 'maquettes', referencing museum-like dioramas, showing 'the photographer at the scene'. I directed a commercial model-maker, after making production sketches; imaginary tableaux, that previsualised the object through the use of contact prints, work prints and memory (XII).



Production sketch. *Lisa and John, Oh my Days!* David Moore. (2016) (XII).

Oh my Days! offers audiences a view on the construction of photographs revealing detail disallowed by the sovereign images, to reconsider power relations inherent

within *Pictures from the Real World*, as an encounter only previously experienced through a two-dimensional photograph. Here I will discuss the context within which the three-dimensional maquettes developed as representational vehicles, and how the re-writing of the photograph to sculptural form became significant. I shall describe how they functioned as objects in the gallery space, alongside the original prints, and the potential of audience performativity with their materiality.

Barthes writings allude to dialectical consideration of elements within photographs; making analogies via *studium* of an implied mis-en-scene through arrangements of *interests* within the image; 'I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions' [1977]. Within *Oh my Days!*, sovereign images are disassembled, reappearing as tableaux-bound maquettes. Designed to show a literal overview of a moment of exposure, each model reinterprets a specific image from *Pictures from the Real World* including the photographer figure *in flagrante* and a contextual reveal of the room within which the images were made (11). Through scrutiny of the production of a specific photographic moment, the maquettes refer to ontological boundaries, as the photographer figure, camera in hand, is clearly selecting a particular viewpoint from myriad possibilities.

Writing of expanded photographic practices, Lucy Soutter proposes that the potential of any photographic outcome will always inhabit some other configuration, referring to Geoffrey Batchen's contention that 'to see what the photograph is, we first negotiate whatever material form it has taken' (Batchen, 1997, cited in Soutter, 2018). Conversely within *Lisa and John*, the maquette's construction was influenced by precedent.

Located within a museal discourse, they present as apposite receptacles to hold and re-interpret the possibilities of my photographs. As three-dimensional figurative objects depicting society, they utilize the precedent of the *diorama*, that alongside the *panorama* as examples of pre-optical representation, perpetuated sublime and idyllic views for public consumption as a propagation of colonial expansionism (Plunkett, J, 2013) (12). In *Oh my Days!* my referencing of these *apparati* to critique lens-based systems of twentieth-century knowledge production, subverts the maquettes' provenance through a re-purposing of their original function; a subordination of the form that they inhabit as revisionist documentary practice rather than a perpetuation of hegemonic values.



Untitled from the series *Pictures from the Real World*. David Moore. (1987) (XIII).

Documentation of *Lisa and John, Oh my Days!* David Moore. (2017) (XIV).

In 2019, the curator Val Williams wrote that, as a character within the maquettes, 'David' becomes 'a discordant element' in the domestic scenes. As throughout *Lisa and John*, the photographer figure as *leitmotif*, acknowledges and absorbs critique from the former subjects. As a significant precedent, his visibility in *Oh my Days!* alerts the

audience to the connective themes of performance and performativity within a dialectical complicity of fiction and the photographic real. One might understand that removal of the figure would compliantly *auto-resolve* the tableaux within anticipation of the genre, where the operator and the apparatus of production should remain out of sight (Moore, 2019).



Lisa and John, Oh my Days! [Detail] David Moore. (2017) (XV).

The maquettes are situated within a wider context of material responses developed by artists responding to limitations within documentary photography. Tom Hunter's *The Ghetto, Street Model* reveals squats in Hackney, London, where he once lived. Inside the dwellings, several photographs of the artist looking back contest an anticipation that the subject may only appear once in any representational mode (1994) (13), (XVI).



The Ghetto no 4. [Detail]. Tom Hunter. (1994) (XVI).



Red Building in Forest, Hale, Alabama. William Christenberry. (1984-85) (XVII).

Also employing a multi-genre practice, the photographer William Christenberry produced what he described as ‘building constructions’ from memory, based upon recall and his own early photographs. Rather than rely on linear measurements, he sought to evoke the feeling of the original photographic encounter amidst an enquiry into his upbringing in the rural deep south of the United States (Lawlor Cohen, 1988) (14). In an interview, Christenberry said, ‘I’ve always had the desire to defeat the two-

dimensional picture plane', acknowledging the need to expand beyond the performance of the photographs alone to evoke the actual circumstances in other form. (ibid) (XVII). The methodologies employed within the framework of *Oh my Days!* diverge from the precedented discussed, as they become part of the reconfiguration of established photographs as integral within a broader and extensive intervention.

I considered how the maquettes having metamorphosed two dimensional photographs three-dimensionally, would affect the ways in which their content was received in a physical space. Lucy Soutter contended that such audience performativity with three-dimensional artworks 'deepens our relationship, encouraging us to factor in our bodies and our social and cultural context' (2018, p. 136).



Documentation of *Lisa and John* installed at Belfast Exposed. David Moore. (2018) (XVIII).

A useful counterpoint is David Claerbout's *King* that articulates a perspective beyond 'analogous seeing' similarly expanding the territory of a vernacular image through conjecture (2015).

Claerbout's film depicts the journey of roving camera as it enters a previously static two-dimensional photographic image, offering a fluid multi-perspectival view of the *mis-en-scene* whilst gallery audiences stand to view it. The camera, rather than an activated audience, provides an alternate perspective, as it travels *within* the digitally rendered roomscape, submitting the subjects of the image to near 360 degrees of scrutiny. The *dérive* of 'King' remains within the twelve-minute assemblage of multiple scanned imagery that Claerbout describes as 'durational sculpture' (Brown, 2016) and the work opens a new relational position to the photographic image in the conditions of its presentation, installed at scale yet assumes a passive position for audience. In contrast, any engagement with *Oh my Days!* becomes a temporal event, governed by the audience, that reviews the material surface and considers their intent through a potential 360 degrees circumnavigation. As audience members negotiate the maquettes their performativity contributes to a cumulative dialectic with three-dimensional objects further contributing to an unlearning of the original image (15).

As a larger gesture of political redress in *Lisa and John*, the maquettes illustrate the interventionist methodology and its scrutiny of the genre. Their use also aligns with the theatrical realism of *The Lisa and John Slideshow* to allow broad audience access. Each

precedent is borne from a desire to expand ontological restrictions of the photograph as the indexicality of the sovereign image migrates.



Documentation in situ. *Lisa and John, Oh my Days!* David Moore. (2017) (XIX).

The Lisa and John Slideshow – Theatre as dialectical documentary practice



Performance documentation of *The Lisa and John Slideshow*, Derby Theatre. (2017) (XX).

[the subject] 'comes to life out of the picture, makes demands, activates, tries to pull strings, hovers in the air, commands, seduces, repels, troubles, and irritates.' Ariella Azoulay.2010

As a performance of the initializing process, *The Lisa and John Slideshow* sees Lisa and John as theatrical characters, considering the selected body of work within a theatrical *denouement* (16). Onstage discourse reclaims the images through the verbatim script derived from the participatory sessions with the couple. Whilst opening a systemic and localized critique of documentary photography, the theatrical play, written and directed by the author, is an unprecedented gesture, as it brings photography to theatre exploring how dialectically formed realism might manifest in performance. The play moves beyond a theoretical conjecture addressing photography's theatricality to

actualize its premise through practice on behalf of the former subject. Here I will give account of its methods and how it offers a template for a re-negotiation of social histories. Described by Elizabeth Edwards as a heuristic device of performativity, the 'slideshow' is understood as a colonial apparatus of knowledge production, aligning with the C19th provenance of the previously discussed maquettes where I intended that a mechanism of delivery, in its reappropriation of a recognised apparatus, would, consciously and simultaneously, evoke, and usurp, its referential source (17).

The establishing scene presents a momentary *tableau vivant* as stage lights rise from total darkness and 'Lisa and John' gradually appear within a minimalist setting of chairs, a table and a projection screen (1). Initially, both characters are still, as though within a photograph, returning the gaze of the audience from a static position that draws attention to their fixed location within *Pictures from the Real World*. The 'slideshow' is projected from behind the audience whilst the name of its operator is acknowledged by 'Lisa'. The premise sees the characters discussing their selections of photographs with each other and the audience. As the photographs are called up, they catalyse memory, conflicting recollections of family life and relational circumstances between the family and the photographer 'David'. *The Lisa and John Slideshow* is cyclical; words performed at the outset are repeated at the end with differing direction and dramaturgical intent. As the last line is spoken there is an instant cut to theatrical blackout.

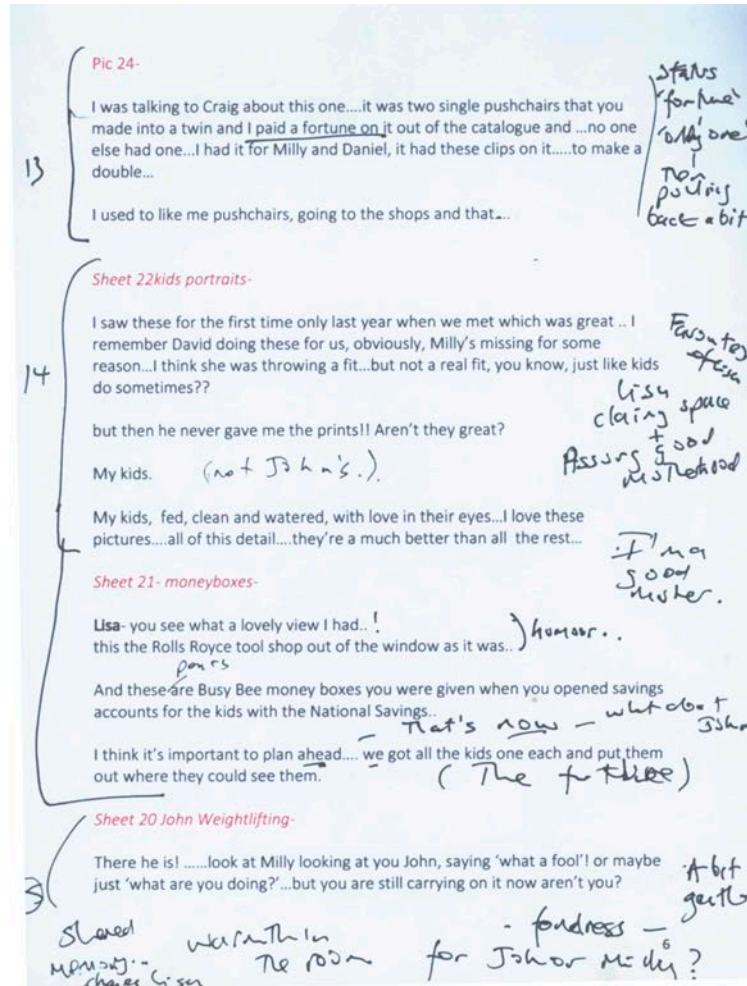
The early stages of *Lisa and John* and specifically the verbatim script were informed through participatory dialogue. This initialising participation in *Lisa and John* developed the script, after the couple refused my request to present their photographs in the

public domain. With no experience of public speaking, such an act would have subjected them to a secondary visual scrutiny, thus aligning with my earlier choice not to rephotograph them at the outset of the project. Grant Kester located the *conversation*, as an apposite methodology: 'While it is common for a work of art to provoke dialogue among viewers this typically occurs in response to a finished object...the emergence of a body of contemporary art practice concerned with collaborative, and potentially emancipatory, forms of dialogue and conversation means that conversation becomes an integral part of the work itself' (2004). Subsequently, I then staged the conversation as a performance, allowing me to expand research precedent by conflating the indexical verbatim, replacing the requirement of the couple's presence, within a socially orientated theatrical methodology that presents 'the real' as malleable platform to discuss photography's veracity. As part of this process, alongside dramaturgical design and direction, script approval was granted from the couple and the actors travelled to meet their 'characters', performing script read-throughs in Lisa's home. These exchanges of social and representational power formed a foundation for *Lisa and John*'s contribution to knowledge as we, myself, the actors and producer, became custodians of the couple's agency.

How Theatre?

Within *The Lisa and John Slideshow*, as with *Look at Us!*, an alternate outcome recontextualises photographs. Whilst the sovereign image remains, its subsequent iterations are proposed in an alternate form, held in performance through the indexicality of verbatim. Roland Barthes, discussing 'post-Brechtian theatre' described a

'carrying over of meaning towards another politics' when the containment of tableaux is broken, acknowledging a 'dispersion of *mise en scène*...the pulling to pieces of the 'composition', (1977, p72).



Working script from *The Lisa and John Slideshow*. (2017) (XXI).

As a placeholder for the boundaries of representational *mis-en-scene*, the stage presents as a physical and metaphorical tableau of associated photographic constraints where the discussed photographs are re-imagined through script and action. My critical interest in the performance of the figure within those constraints became pertinent to the way content was being revised in *Lisa and John*. In my historical practice, this has

been explored at various junctures in research and practice, forming a foundation supporting *Lisa and John's* premise. It has included the facilitation of former subjects within the previously discussed *Collaborative Portraits*, as well as relatively recent work exploring a variety of scenarios around the anticipation of subject archetypes to interrogate the production of knowledge within differing contexts of performance (1987) (18).

At the time of its premiere, *The Lisa and John Slideshow* was unique in its referencing and use of photography and photographic representation as its central theme. Within the histories of theatre, photography has appeared as metaphor or instrumental to plot as early as the late nineteenth century. Joel Anderson has written of numerous references to the medium within theatrical plays (2015). *The Wild Duck* (Ibsen.1884) offers an allegorical critique of photography as a commercially driven portraitist seeks to operate within the modernity of the nineteenth century. More contemporarily, within *The Seven Streams of the River Ota* (Lepage, R. 1994), notions of photography are used within varying contexts, spanning years and connecting families in the wake of the Hiroshima bombing as generations seek to assemble fading memories from photographs that have been partially destroyed. *The Lisa and John Slideshow* navigates related territory, yet stages documentary photography as the protagonist.

The Photographic Imaginary

Within the play I produced intentional narrative anomalies to work against what Brecht described as 'steadiness', offering confections that when performed through realist fiction, point towards a purposeful representational collapse. As with Brechtian

precedent, gestures appear that are designed to dissolve the 'fourth wall' within which, actors provoke eye contact and speak to the audience, ostensibly seeking reciprocity through discussion of the photographs. These methods draw attention to the artifice of *The Lisa and John Slideshow*, employing 'alienation theory' or the use of the 'distancing effect', as a theatrical mechanism to re-see content. This is clear in the inclusion of Lisa's line that she had contacted David 'on Twitter' revealing, perhaps, an unanticipated modernity within Lisa's life that challenged potential character stereotyping (Moore, 2019 p. 10). A further pertinent example finds 'Lisa' articulating the uncertainty of her role on stage as she refers to (the actual) Lisa's refusal to do so, conflating the fictional and the real as theatrical playfulness *and* a statement of facts asserting the literal circumstances.

Lisa: David asked me if I would do this presentation here tonight myself; there was no way... I think actors were probably better really. (ibid. p. 11).

In a similar extension of theatrical reflexivity, the character, 'David', as photographer located in the auditorium, answers a challenge from 'Lisa' in an unanticipated gesture that further transforms the live experience for the audience, developing a dialectic between what is performed onstage and off stage, as he speaks back to answer her question.

Lisa: I like this one, it shows exactly where we were in relation to what it is now... I thought it might be a good project for David to go back and take some pictures in the same house... but I can't remember what you said...?

David: *Oh! I went and knocked but it didn't go any further Lisa.* (ibid. p. 25)

Reiterating the participatory elements of *Lisa and John*, such dialogue articulates the refusal of fixed representational locations. As with Brecht's *The Messingkauf Dialogues* (1939-42) where an unfinished theoretical discussion is both of itself, and a rumination of the play being performed, I develop such distancing within *The Lisa and John Slideshow* to disturb the performativity of the representational premise from within the work.

Related to this playfulness as a device to 'make strange', and exacerbate the potential of the verbatim script, the performance occasionally draws upon the unconscious of both characters, producing reveries where representation takes shape from the imaginary, interpolated with social actuality as an uncertain sense of recall. Ariella Azoulay's description of 'phantom-photographs' offers a model whereby social and physical contexts are interpolated by memory and myth thus allowing the creation of a further discourse of fiction and uncertainty [2008. p.10]. These interludes depart from the realist narratives, exacerbating the indeterminacy of the already complex layers of representation as part of the work's purpose. They playfully extemporize the photographic real in unexpected ways. Here, a reminiscence by 'John', located between the real and the imagined, becomes an image in its own description.

John: *I like all them old pictures, back in the day, shops ...the 50's and 60's, butchers – with all the meat hanging outside... all lined up for Christmas ...Christmas fayre, at the*

butchers ...You couldn't do that now, health and safety, you know... something true to life... and nobody died, nobody died (Moore. D. 2019, p. 2).

Speaking of the world that Lisa's and John's parents grew up within, this final section of the play presents a fragmented referencing of 'old pictures' as nostalgic simulacra. The images described were held in memory and conflated into a performance that carries the 'the real' as metonym, further alerting the audience to ways in which truth is anticipated from a performance of realism.

Gestus as a theatrical challenge to panopticism

Significantly, *The Lisa and John Slideshow* applied *gestus*, literally 'gesture', a Brechtian neologism to disturb the certainties of representation in performance. *Gestus* describes an action that 'need not restrict itself to a series of socially significant gestures' (Barnett, 2000, p. 96). As a significant and indeterminate currency within the play, *gestus* becomes a significant critical mechanism problematizing the fixed image to position performance as a significant response to the ways in which photographic representation may be undermined. Whilst sitting with Lisa and then John, recording their responses to images in the earlier stages of the project, each occasionally implied rather than directly stated, a criticism of the other, responding in ways that were beyond language through physical gestures or silence.

Significantly, within live performance, such mercurial signs, remain outside of the bounds of panoptic perspectives, functioning as a theoretical challenge and evasion of

fixity. What is inexpressible in words, becomes a flow of theatrical actions; signifiers that potentially reorientate narrative through the natural development of physical acting. Whilst such indeterminacy may be observed with stilled imagery, as within the illustrative photograph, in live performance it passes fleetingly (XXII).



Performance documentation of *The Lisa and John Slideshow*, Derby Theatre. (2017) (XXII).

Gestus also presents within the play's oratory context. Here 'Lisa' responds non-verbally to 'John's' claim of parental efficacy:

John: *...And all of the kids know where I am at the end of the day... but 'cos I am working all the time I don't go around and impose... they come and see me, when they like...*

Lisa: ... (Moore, 2019, p. 55)

Observed (or not) in performance, this section introduces a momentary silent gesture as speech-act; *gestus* beyond orality written into the verbatim script. Such observations can again be located within legacies of anthropological discourse, building upon

Elizabeth Edwards' research to consider the significance of haptic engagement with material photographs, where 'silence, the absence of voice or sound, can be equally significant' (2005, pp. 37-38). Within *The Lisa and John Slideshow*, *gestus* represents the characters' interiority, as unconsciously acknowledged acts that reside outside of panoptic confines yet resonate as mnemonically irretrievable actions.



Post premiere panel of *The Lisa and John Slideshow* at Derby Theatre. 2017 (XXIII).

From a personal perspective, *Lisa and John* actualized after the first performance of *The Lisa and John Slideshow* at Derby Theatre in March 2017. Although the couple could not attend due to illness, two of their children, Clare and Nickola, both of whom featured within the edit of *Pictures from the Real World*, were present. Nickola joined the actors, producer, Professor Val Williams, and I for a public discussion after the performance, sharing the platform and contributing to the discussion. Her presence on stage extended the dialogical premise of *Lisa and John*. Whilst this opportunity for Nickola to discuss the representation of her family's life symbolically resolved the project, I was

conscious that differing outcomes for the play had been missed. The first performances of *The Lisa and John Slideshow* were publicized as free events within the context of an international photography festival and, as such, found mainly a photography-art audience. My hope for a performance at the heart of the Osmaston Estate did not materialize as the momentum of funding and production opportunities presented other directions that were both distracting and financially necessary to follow. A variation of Boal's 'Forum Theatre', facilitated within the locale that embodied the content of the work, through a devising of site-specific citizen-led dialogue, presents an example of alternate community focus that would have further tested the social usefulness of *The Lisa and John Slideshow* with non-artists.

Regardless of location, however, through a referencing of fictional and non-fictional narratives, the play offered perspectives on how the theatrical depiction of social agency re-affirmed *representation* as a contestable space. As the audience and characters verify the images together as they are projected on stage, what is portrayed is a rupture and reclamation of a body of photographic work, as staging, script and direction provide a theatrical challenge to documentary photography. Symbolically those within the picture lead the action through a performance of the participant's agency, shifting the territory of fixed representation to a live, fluid and responsive tableaux.

For the play's audience, a literal reading of Azoulay's conjectural hypothesis, that the spectator finds the 'power to turn a still image into a theatre stage' extends the

photograph's potential. Throughout the performance secondary and extended viewings and discussion of the images, reorientate meaning and ownership and new responsibilities are incurred for the committed viewer. Azoulay's focus on such engagements and what may come of them, suggests that 'the participant has to intervene decisively in the dramatic action and change it' (2008, p. 117). Within *The Lisa and John Slideshow*, it is the former subjects' response, as spectators of their own photographed lives, who assert an analysis and recontextualization of the photographs provenance.

Conclusion

Lisa and John is a late reflection, presenting the necessity of a critical revision that does not acquiesce to anticipated narratives of a mid-career artist. Edward Said's essay, *Thoughts on Late Style*, discusses similar manifestations, describing 'artistic lateness, not as harmony and resolution, but as intransigence, difficulty and contradiction', revealing other artists' impulses for redrafting or disregarding their early practice through the creation of iconoclastic new works (2004).

Through the migration of content to an alternate representational vehicle, the trans-media methods employed within *Lisa and John* unequivocally posit that the cruellest of representations may be discussed and repurposed rather than removed from view, advocating a continual dialogue around cultural artefacts as they are temporally repositioned. Within *Lisa and John*, the couple's responses re-catalyse the photographs from a familial perspective, signalling that my documentation of their earlier lives was indicative of agendas borne that had little significance to their own histories. In this sense, *Lisa and John* has developed an innovative means within which photographic ontology and the process of knowledge production becomes the *subject*, retaining focus upon equity through dialectical methods. In turn, this questions a misleading discourse of ameliorative social change alongside a depoliticized position that absolves photographers of any social responsibilities whilst representing certain societal groups.

Within Lisa and John theoretical ideas are positioned within accessible platforms. *Lisa and John* forms a template for perpetuation of a critically informed document, where the former subjects' words re-orientate the photographs as a fluid performance, offering narrative against stasis and indeterminacy against certainty.

Appendix

(App1)- David Moore-Autoethnography

Notes

(1) Regarding the title and use of, 'Lisa and John', throughout this thesis. I use the italicized *Lisa and John* when discussing the project and the non-italicized use of inverted commas; 'Lisa and John', when referring to the couple as character. I also use: Lisa and John, when referring to the couple in real life

I use the phrase 'sovereign' throughout this thesis in reference to the original body of work that *Pictures from the World* was drawn from; that is, my own practice that subsequently formed the edited body of work within the book and the exhibition of the same name.

(2) *The Lisa and John Slideshow* and *Oh my Days!* were first shown at Format International Photography Festival in Derby in 2017

(3) *Creative Camera* was an independent magazine of photography. 'Creative Camera, from its launch as Camera Owner in 1964 to its eventually demise under the DPICT title in 2001, are an invaluable resource encompassing contemporary and historical photography in the latter part of the 20th century.' Available at: <https://the-golden-fleece.co.uk/wp/creative-camera-indexing> (Accessed: 1 June 2022).

(4) *New British Colour* was a term coined during the 1980s as a means of making discrete, a photographic practice that was sourced within differing precedents to that of American practice. In the UK, it was initially associated with the photographers Martin Parr and Paul Graham, both of whom were my tutors at West Surrey College of Art and Design. 'Since 1980 British photography has assumed a new and vital identity.' (Kismaric, S. 1990) The paradigms described refer to a disparity between social class and mobility of those making the photographs vs those within the frame. Whilst not referred to specifically in the main text, Martha Rosler commented that 'Documentary

as we know it, carries old information about a group of powerless people to another group addressed as socially powerful' [Rosler, M. 1981 2004 p179] Yet, this is context dependent and makes assumptions of who audience are, mode, and timing of delivery, and I make such observations in this text.

(5) Email conversation between the author and Anthony Luvera, November 2022.

(6) 'Forum Theatre' was a mechanism to facilitate social change through devised theatre using non-performers. Boal understood this as a gesture that opposed a theatrical imitation of tragedy prevalent within 'Aristotelian theatre' (McLavery-Robinson, 2016). Available at: <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/augusto-boal-theatre-oppressed> (Accessed: 3 May 2020). Boal wrote in 1966; the plays dealt with anything that was Brazilian: bribery in provincial soccer games, strikes against capitalists, adultery in a small village, sub-human living conditions of railway employees, bandits (*cangaceiros*) in the North-east, and the popular belief in visions of the Holy Virgin and devils, etc.' (Boal, 2008, p. 139). 'Forum Theatre' was precipitated by a chance intervention by one audience member, 'Virgilio', who asked actors to join in a rebellion against a local landowner and was refused. 'Forum Theatre' presents a scene which is normally run from beginning to end. Afterwards, it is re-run, but spectators can interrupt (by calling out 'stop!') and take the place of an 'actor'. This involved performing the play twice as audience members were invited to offer alternate endings, usually against the 'oppressor' (McLavery-Robinson, 2016).

(7) This statement was initiated by Jacques Rancière's remark, 'It isn't that the documentary sides with the real against the inventions of fiction, it's just that documentary, instead of treating the real as an effect to be produced, treats it as a fact to be understood' (2008). It refers to Rancière's larger enquiry of 'dissensus', a reorganisation of pre-determined 'regimes' of what is visible in society, determining who participates or who does not participate in political and social life. Other scholars too, consider that truth within documentary practices are manifestations of other social and political agendas.

(8) 'Alienation effect' is a term derived from the theoretical and theatrical practice of the German Marxist playwright and poet, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). Brecht sought to discover ways of dramatizing Karl Marx's insights into the ways in which capitalism works. (Brooker, 2003, p. 5). Available at: <https://narrative-environments.github.io/CourseCompendium/Alienation-Effect-Verfremdungseffekt.html> (Accessed: 24 April 2022). I also employ the term 'distancing effect' to recognise an appropriation within *Lisa and John* that aligns with a larger intention to occasionally 'make strange' through an apparently anomalous intervention, and in doing so alert the audience towards a critical consideration of what is before them. 'Alienation effect' is another term for the same method, to encourage the audience to respond 'consciously' (Willett, 1964).

(9) Latour's proposition is an equalling of all participants within diverse relational networks. He writes of 'The attribution of human, unhuman, nonhuman, inhuman, characteristics; the distribution of properties among these entities; the connections established between them' (1990). Latour explains that 'An actant can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of an action' (1990). This is challenged by Dave Elder-Vass who argues that a discourse that levels the actions of humans with the inherent behaviour of non-humans has lost sight of the inherent function of being human (2019). 'It is not dualist, for example, to think of human beings as *different* from other kinds of things.' says Elder-Vass (ibid).

(10) Cornell Capa chose the phrase 'concerned photographer' to describe those photographers who demonstrated in their work 'a humanitarian impulse to use pictures to educate and change the world, not just to record it' (Capa, n.d.). See this article: *Cornell Capa Concerned Photographer*. Available at: <https://www.icp.org/exhibitions/cornell-capa-concerned-photographer> (Accessed: 23 June 2021).

(11) To initiate the maquettes' construction, I referred to the original contact sheets, sketching renderings of each photograph, then commissioned a theatrical model-maker who I directed in production. They were produced at 1/24th scale, mounted on 1.5m

plinths and displayed within acrylic containers. In the gallery space, they are installed adjacent to the framed photographs from which they are sourced.

(12) The Diorama was proposed and developed by Louis Daguerre and Charles Bouton as a touring event for public view (Wood, 1993, pp. 284-295). Elizabeth Edwards noted that such 'magic lantern' events used projected photographs as reaffirmation and enhancement of the production of anthropological meaning within the development of university pedagogy (2001, p.46)

(13) *The Ghetto, Street Model* (1994) by Tom Hunter. Available at: <https://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/144496.html> (Accessed: 18 May 2022). In an Email conversation between the author and Tom Hunter, the artist wrote, 'I'm in one house looking out of two different windows and one doorway. I am also in the doorway of the house next door. So, I can be seen in four different locations at the same time looking at the viewer. This was to disrupt the viewers' understanding of the notion of photographic documentary reality'.

(14) William Christenberry modelled his sculptural pieces, working from images and memory, relying on 'imagination rather than measurements' to make them. According to The Getty Museum, 'Christenberry hoped to evoke the feeling of the original building and its environs' in a description of *Red Building in Forest, Hale, Alabama*. Available at: <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/128182/william-christenberry-red-building-in-forest-hale-alabama-american-1984-1985> (Accessed: 3 June 2022).

(15) As an unintended consequence of the process this expanded re-imagining, presents as a lament for not only the medium but the methodology of capture of 'the other' that it portrays, now confined to a finite museal stasis. The museal interpretation and three-dimensional realism embalms the past encounter within a *Barthesian* analogy of death, 'Death is the *eidos* of the Photograph' (1980).

(16) The play was first performed at Derby Theatre on 25 March 2017 as part of the Format International Photography Festival. During 2017-18, *The Lisa and John Slideshow* was performed to varying audiences in professional theatres in the United Kingdom, including The Mac Theatre, Belfast, and The Regent Street Cinema, London.

Additionally, a live rehearsal as a free public event was enacted as part of a series of research events at the London College of Communication, London, England. Available at: <https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/10873> (Accessed: 22 August 2021).

(17) Whilst the use of the noun 'slideshow' has connotations of domesticity, it is also drawn from the author's role as an educator.

(18) These have included various untitled pieces that have experimented with film and performance as interventions and includes; in 2013 asking an Afro-Caribbean female actor to offer an unannounced introduction to an internal postgraduate symposium, *Memory and the Present*, introducing herself as 'David Moore' whilst reading from a prepared script, and in 2014, commissioning two actors to perform a series of interventions as elderly people with little income, losing change within the campus of Central Saint Martins, London.

Illustrations

- I. Copeland, D. The set of *The Lisa and John Slideshow* at The Mac Theatre, Belfast. 2018. Courtesy of the photographer.
- II. Moore, D. (1988). *State of the Art*. *Creative Camera* magazine, 1988 – Issue 8/9. London, pp. 34-37.
- III. Moore, D. (2013). Cover of *Pictures from the Real World*. *Colour photographs, 1987-88*. London: Dewi Lewis / HerePress.
- IV. Luvera, A. (2013-14). *Assisted Self-Portrait of Momodou Njie* from *Assembly* by Anthony Luvera. Courtesy of the photographer.
- V. Moore, D. (2013). Untitled from the series *Pictures from the Real World*. London: Dewi Lewis / HerePress.

- VI. 'Unemployed!' *Picture Post*, vol. 2, no. 6, 11 Feb. 1939, pp. 43-51. *Picture Post* Historical Archive, 1938-1957. Reproduced under the 'fair dealing' agreement (CDPA, 1988).
- VII. Moore, D. / Mosley, J. (1987-88). 'John with Flowers' from *Collaborative Portraits*. [unpublished].
- VIII. Moore, D. (2019). John's choices. [Swords on wall] *The Lisa and John Slideshow*. London: Makina Books.
- IX. Moore, D. (2019). John's choices. [Bedtime reading] *The Lisa and John Slideshow*. London: Makina Books.
- X. Moore, D. (2019). John's choices. [Weightlifting] *The Lisa and John Slideshow*. London: Makina Books.
- XI. Moore, D. (2019). Lisa's choices. [Birthday Party] *The Lisa and John Slideshow*. London: Makina Books.
- XII. Moore, D. (2017). Production sketch. *Lisa and John, Oh my Days!*
- XIII. Moore, D. (1987). Untitled from the series *Pictures from the Real World*.
- XIV. Moore, D. (2017). Documentation [Weightlifting] *Lisa and John, Oh my Days!*
- XV. Moore, D. (2017). Documentation [David] *Lisa and John, Oh my Days!*
- XVI. Hunter, T. (1994). Detail. *The Ghetto no 4*. Courtesy of the photographer.
- XVII. Christenberry, W. (1984-85). Red Building in Forest, Hale, Alabama. Courtesy of J. Paul Getty Museum.
- XVIII. Moore, D. (2018). Documentation *Lisa and John at Belfast Exposed*
- XIX. Moore, D. (2017). Documentation in situ. Format Festival of Photography. *Lisa and John, Oh my Days!*
- XX. Beaney, C. (2017). Performance documentation of *The Lisa and John Slideshow*, Derby Theatre. Courtesy of the photographer.
- XXI. Moore, D. (2017). Working script from *The Lisa and John Slideshow*.
- XXII. Beaney, C. (2017). Performance documentation of *The Lisa and John Slideshow*, Derby Theatre. [Lisa] Courtesy of the photographer.
- XXIII. Winter, S. (2017). Post premiere panel of *The Lisa and John Slideshow* at Derby Theatre. Courtesy of the photographer.

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