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Higginbottom, Richard

The erotics of knowledge and the seduction of aesthetics

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Title: *The erotics of knowledge and the seduction of aesthetics: Acknowledging the tension between the photograph as document and the photograph as an image, this dissertation explores the book Cut/Weld as an example of how documentary photographic practices operate within an art discourse.*

Name: Richard Higginbottom

Qualification: Masters by Research

Year: 2017

Department of: Art, Design & Architecture

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## Introduction

A photograph is never one thing. It exists on a sliding scale where both the artist and audience can decide where it sits. A magazine image, for example, originally intended for a Marlborough cigarette advertisement and recontextualized by Richard Prince becomes a work of art. The abandoned, shredded vernacular photographs hunted for on the street by Joachim Schmidt become a work of art. 24 hours worth of photographs uploaded to Flickr on a specific day, printed by Erik Kessels become images exhibited within a gallery space. Artistic intervention and the debate between the photograph as a record and as a means of creative expression of ideas are of key importance. The rationale for this text is to investigate the tension between the photograph as a document and an image as well as how the work from my photographic series *Cut/Weld* is an example of how documentary practice exists within an art discourse. There is a certain seduction of aesthetics that exists and a lot of decisions have been made to inform the final series presented in book form.

In *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973-1983* (1984) Allan Sekula sought to portray the inextricable bond between labour and material culture, drawing deeply on Marxist theory to argue passionately for a collective model of progress. He comments extensively on the way that photographs are made and how they are experienced. In the chapter titled *On the Invention of Photographic Meaning* Sekula introduces the reader to the meaning of photographs and explores how meaning can be defined by the culture in which a photograph exists. He describes the photograph as a “token of exchange” (Sekula, 1984:3) and as something that despite its early associations with truth, is very much open to interpretation and debate.

We have a faith in photography and this is what the introduction of photography has done. From its emergence in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, photography was initially purported to be witness of truth. Allan Sekula (1984) writes of the now outdated and perhaps mythical allegations that,

*...the photograph is seen as a re-presentation of nature itself, as an unmediated copy of the real world...The propositions carried through the medium are unbiased and therefore true...In nineteenth-century writings on photography we repeatedly encounter the notion of the unmediated agency of nature. (Sekula 1984:5)*



What Sekula then goes on to state, in keeping with the ideas in this text, is that the photograph is “imagined to have a primitive core of meaning” and that “any meaningful encounter with the photograph must necessarily occur at the level of connotation.” (Sekula 1984:5). Sekula is confirming that every photograph should be viewed as a sign with embedded meaning and connotative qualities. The photograph is no longer simply a document to, say, show us what something looks like. It is instead a way to convey a message.

The audience links the documentary approach to image making with truthfulness, proof and validity of subject matter. Martha Rosler touches upon this in her text titled *In, Around, and Afterthoughts (on documentary photography)* (2004). Within this text Rosler comments on early 1900’s documentary photography, especially in the USA, as a way to aid social reform. Highlighting the plight of the poor and the difference of social strata was viewed as being one of the strengths of documentary photography. Moving into a neo-liberal climate of self-interest, traditional documentary photographic practice loses its claim to working for social reform to become merely a visualization of anguish. A new cultural direction meant that these photographs were losing the positive association of reformatory qualities and were being ignored by an inward facing population.

*An insistence, further, that the ordered world of business-as-usual take account of that reality behind those images newly seen, a reality newly elevated into consideration simply by being photographed and thus exemplified and made concrete. (Rosler 2004:185).*

Photography and the street have long been associated with one another and for practitioners from Robert Frank to Alex Webb, Eugene Atget to Thijs Wassink & Ruben Lundgren, the street has been a rich playground for image-makers since the medium’s conception. This is a vast area within photography, with a plethora of approaches ranging from up close, invasive and unforgiving, to poetic, reserved and playful. It is the work of early documentary photographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that are of particular interest in this text and the ways they play with notions of truth through different approaches and aesthetics will be explored. It is also noteworthy that the images within *Cut/Weld* are a development of this way of working.

A photographer widely known and celebrated for their photographs of the street is Robert Doisneau. Doisneau, who made a majority of his work in the 1950's in Paris, is famed for one image in particular titled *The Kiss* (fig.1). This image depicts a young couple on the Parisian street in an embrace. The couple kisses fleetingly whilst the rest of the city continues to go about its daily routine. This version of the street is seemingly unremarkable and is not about the representation of the Paris streets in their entirety – this would be difficult, as the representation of an entire city is virtually impossible via any medium, let alone photography. The image does, however, contain a poetic and momentary insight into the workings of the space. This on one hand is a straight documentation, but the image contains just enough ambiguity to invite the viewer to consider the spirit of a city such as Paris as well as the temporary act captured by the photographer. Doisneau hints at what Paris is like as a city by creating images with rich narrative potential.

This narrative potential may well have arisen due to the strong accusations that *The Kiss* was in fact set up. This would move the photograph closer to an artwork or image as opposed to a document. It is suggested that Doisneau used models to stage the vision that he premeditated and captured as a photograph. That fact that the image became synonymous with Paris is more to do with the relationship between cultural stereotypes and iconic imagery. This image became a universal symbol for the romance of this city and is now hugely popular across the globe. Despite this, the photograph is only one version of the city and makes a comment on how one representation of a city can become iconic and yet is still not the absolute truth.

## **The Photograph as Document and the Photograph as Art**

*Who is Speaking thus? Some Questions about Documentary Photography* by Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1991) is a piece of writing that offers a persuasive insight into the discourse of documentary photography. It explores historic as well as contemporary issues pertaining to the medium and has been particularly influential to this text due to the examination of external elements such as politics, the photographer's view, the act of looking, as well as cultural and societal issues that all underpin my practice and research.

Solomon-Godeau (1991) comments on documentary as thus:

*...part of a larger system of visual communication, as both conduit and agent of ideology, purveyor of empirical evidence and visual 'truths,' documentary photography can be analysed as a sign system possessed of its own accretion of visual and signifying codes determining reception and instrumentality.*  
(Solomon-Godeau 1991:170).

Solomon-Godeau (1991) speaks of the machine of the camera, a thing that was, historically, deemed to work independently of its operator as a means to describe the world. We afforded the camera a nature of objectivity because it was a mechanical and technical scientific process where light bounces off the real world and onto the camera's film or digital sensor. Solomon-Godeau (1991) notes that the photograph was seen as a truthful document or 'nature's pencil', yet we now engage with the photographs as images because of the specific technical, aesthetic and discursive qualities pertaining to them. Art promotes the photograph as ambiguous and interpretative. By moving away from the truth, image-makers have the ability to play with the possibilities of the photograph, encouraging an almost anti-truth.

*Documentary is thought to be art when it transcends its reference to the world, when the work can be regarded, first and foremost, as an act of self-expression on the part of the artist.* (Sekula 1984:236).

David Campany (2006) states that,

*Photographs are highly mobile images. Made at particular times, often for particular reasons, they can reappear in other circumstances. Some of the best-known photos have had long lives and numerous manifestations...Many*

*are essentially simple...Others are more pliable, yielding to different demands, shifting in meaning, lending themselves to different ends.*  
(Campany, 2006:51)

The interpretation and reinterpretation of the photographic image is important and context is one of the things that blur the lines between a photograph as a document and a photograph being considered as art. *Making History: Art and Documentary in Britain from 1929 to Now* is an illuminating summation of the working methods of a range of documentary practitioners. The essay within by David Campany (2006) titled *The career of a photographer, the career of a photograph*, discusses the work of Bill Brandt, arousing ideas of context and how photography can exist in a number of discourses. Campany explores the work of Brandt in relation to its existence in an art and commercial publication setting. This opens up questions of interpretation and the idea that the image is never one thing – it exists in a world defined and guided by its interpretation. This is a key consideration in my text, and thoughts on early documentary photography needed to be considered in order to establish how my work, an adaptation of this image making method, fits into the current photographic climate. It is within this text that Campany (2006) discusses a photograph titled *Parlourmaid and Under-parlourmaid Ready to Serve Dinner* (1933) (fig.2) by Bill Brandt. This example functions in a number of ways as a photograph. It would very easily work within the pages of a newspaper to document or illustrate the 1930's way of working life. Yet it's compositional elegance, poetic realism and technical quality ensures that this image would survive within any given context. This photograph was first seen in Brandt's book titled *The English at Home* (1936), an art object containing documentary photographs that were reinforced by a vision and artistic intentions. This image was astutely sequenced next to a photograph of Regency homes that encourages the viewer to think sequentially and consider the relationship between the two. *The English at Home* (1936) differs from a context where Brandt's photographs were also seen. In 1939, these photographs were removed from their more art-based context to a more vernacular issue of *The Picture Post*, a weekly magazine. Brandt's photographs were published as a photo-story comprising of 21 photographs and text titled *The Perfect Parlourmaid*. The use of captioning, layout, editing decisions and sequencing amounted to a photo-story that illustrates more of a stereotypical depiction of the daily life of a parlourmaid. This photo-story documents a specific element of daily life and shares it with a particular audience. What this shows is the blurring of the documentary

photograph and even the photograph in general terms. It could be stated that photographs exist on a sliding scale between the document and art and it is important to reinforce the idea that a photograph is never simply the sum of its parts. This is something that will be considered and opened out further in this text.

It is additionally important to introduce the word 'image' in relation to this text. The word is a manifestation of the decisions made by myself as a photographer and relates closely to my own way of making photographs. The image is being used to work on the level of metaphor, as opposed to acting as visual evidence of simply what is there. This is a very particular way of using photography and is a departure from the medical photograph or mug shot and their evidential usage. The 'image' in this text is more lyrical, evocative and ambiguous. It is very much open to interpretation by the viewer through their own experiences and their ability to unpick a photograph. Bill Brandt's photography is an excellent example of how photography can function in a range of contexts and discourses. The images created by Brandt at this time are in one manifestation straight documents of 1930's Britain. They are also art objects that make astute comments, contain artistic and technical depth as well as photographic beauty.

### **Paul Graham and the Artistic Document**

Paul Graham is a photographer whose images, like those of Bill Brandt, tread the line between photographic document and photographic image. The bodies of photography created by Graham exist within an art discourse and there is a tension between his photographic strategy and the ideas he attempts to communicate in his vast number of photographic series. The use of aesthetics in Graham's work is particularly varied and the way in which he uses photographs and the camera is seemingly an attempt to link the act of making photographs directly to the concept. This photographer operates in a manner that adopts a somewhat obvious technical link to the straight photographic conventions of Garry Winogrand, Robert Frank or Walker Evans yet manages to communicate vastly different ideas across his diverse photographic portfolio. References to three of Paul Graham's series will be discussed below in an attempt to link his practice to the wider scope of this text and some of the ideas present in my own photographic practice.

#### ***Troubled Land***

In *Troubled Land*, made between 1984-86, Graham makes heavy use of the land within his images and is making a comment about conflict in Northern Ireland and the landscape photograph is his vehicle to do so. Here, Graham is photographing conflict with an almost anti-photojournalistic approach – the work makes subtle hints at the notion of conflict without directly referencing any acts that might typically be associated with conflict. This use of landscape photography and its subtle nuances is a compelling metaphor and is one of the things that Paul Graham manages to do successfully within most of his bodies of work. The photographic strategy employed by the photographer asks the viewer to study the pictures in close detail. The images of what often appear to be seductive landscapes have embedded suggestions within them that ask the viewer to consider conflict, how the images reflect this and how they then interpret this notion. *Troubled Land* avoids the usual religious labels that have been used to describe this conflict and re-situates it as a battle over national sovereignty of the North of Ireland. The diminished, small indicators of conflict within the images connote the causal, everyday, almost banal quality of this 400-year struggle. One image that does this particularly well and ties in with the document becoming art is (fig.3). This photograph shows an ordinary looking street, one that could be seen in any part of Northern Ireland, perhaps. Graham manages to transform the banal into something with three-dimensional qualities, compositional astuteness and a subtle comment on the problems of the time. This photograph has been framed in a way that offers us details in the

foreground as we see graffiti linking to the notion of conflict. We also witness a person running away in the distance of the frame. These are some of the details and methods that allude to conflict in a subtle way. It is the metaphorical intentions, even the use of a roundabout in the image makes a comment about the cyclical, ongoing nature of the conflict, that are so well implemented. Use of traces of human presence and intelligent use of photographic information helps the viewer see the image as more than a pleasing landscape photograph. This is a strategy employed in *Cut/Weld* and the use of the non-event to make suggestions could certainly be deemed a close link to my own practice.

### ***American Night***

*American Night*, the first embodiment of Graham's American trilogy, is another example of photographic approaches that create meaning and challenge the traditions of documentary photographic practice. Within this series, containing three different image-making strategies, Graham uses exposure and slow shutter speeds to create bleached subjects consumed and overwhelmed by whiteness (fig.4). A lot of the images make comment on America, the country in which the work was made, and its fractured socio-cultural climate. Graham predominantly turns his camera to the overlooked social groups within society. The work deals with the divide in America between 1998 & 2002, again, through a photographic approach within which technique and the mechanics of the camera are at the forefront. This work is also about the economic apartheid in America, the almost invisible figures, struggling to get by in a turbulent climate are almost exclusively of African American descent. Their poverty is also signaled by the fact that they are pedestrian in the images. These individuals are set against the gleaming SUVs of Technicolor affluence to further highlight this divide. As Graham says in relation to this, "anyone who comes to the United States with open eyes cannot fail to be moved by racial/social inequalities here. It's the elephant in the room. To make work here, and *not* take that into account seems to me to be plainly ridiculous, and it makes you part of the problem..." (Graham, 2015:21). Graham uses the functionality of the camera to comment on the lack of structure, the difficulty to make out a subject and the struggle of surviving this relentless whiteness. The overexposed photographs are used to hint towards those who are the directionless within America.

These images of intense whiteness are sporadically interspersed with very sharp, colorful and technically flawless photographs of newly built family properties. These photographs, an example of Graham's second photographic approach, have an

air of the American ideal about them with picture-perfect blue skies and freshly laid, verdant greens. (fig.5). Much like the content, the images are technically immaculate and this is what Graham does so well; he uses the camera, a mechanical tool, and operates it so that it can best function to illustrate something conceptually. It is his continued shift in approaches stylistically, photographically and through subject matter, that give his work a fluidity and relevance. Not only do the photographs offer the viewer insight into a new way of working from a photographer who has been active for several decades, it also highlights a lack of pretense and a desire to ensure that his tool, the camera, is functioning in a way that will best do justice to the ideas that he is attempting to communicate. In *American Night* in particular, Graham is breaking the photograph to push artistic strategies and play with the tension between the photograph as a document and as an image. By challenging photographic conventions via use of exposure, the photographer is using aesthetics to create meaning and to transform the photograph from a straight document into an image.

The third approach made by Graham in this work sees him taking to the street. An outsider, similar to Robert Frank in the 1950's, Graham was exploring the USA streets with his camera and came back with dark, fractured and slightly unsettling images. A photograph of a lady sat on a sidewalk resting partway between light and shadow acts as a poignant metaphor for change and a split within society. (fig.6). The use of light feels very important in this work and operates in a way that is beautiful yet feels merciless. It is as though the people that Graham photographs on the street are being swallowed up by darkness. This use of the golden hour light, so traditionally aesthetically pleasing and warm, becomes the opposite due to those photographed, their struggle and the photographer's awareness of this. By using such a jarring juxtaposition between light and subject, Graham's intentions are clear. He is the creator and facilitator of photographic meaning, thus transforming the photographs he makes from documents to images.

### ***The Present***

This section of text has been informed by the writings of David Chandler, in particular his essay titled *Consciousness Breathing: Paul Graham's American trilogy*. This detailed photographic review of the work made by Paul Graham offers insight into the considered nature of Graham's approach to image making. This text opens up a range of critical links to Graham's working methods, and explores the motives behind his practice in a way that



contextualises his methodology. Chandler writes of the ambiguous nature of the art image, as well as the way that human presence within the landscape shapes the way it functions and vice versa. *Consciousness Breathing* opens up ideas of aesthetics, gesture, American Politics, the street and its photographic lineage in addition to America's rich photographic canon as he writes of practitioners like Walker Evans, Joel Sternfeld and Stephen Shore whom are all pivotal in using the street/documentary image within an art discourse. In *The Present*, Graham adopted yet another visual strategy in an attempt to coherently illustrate his concepts. Within this series of images, Graham examines and creates a re-imagining of the decisive moment through the conventions of street photography whilst challenging issues hiding behind the surface of the photograph. The human condition and the state of America as a country are issues that are simmering beneath and within the physical photographs. Graham uses the tropes of this photographic genre in an attempt to subvert it. The photographs of the New York streets in *The Present* are a direct comment on looking, seeing and the way we experience our surrounding environment. Despite Graham adopting the colour documentary style that has been utilized for decades, and could even be deemed repetitive and formulaic in some instances, it is Graham's presentation method in particular that helps move the street genre in a forward direction. *The Present* was published as a photographic book where images were displayed in pairs and triptychs to show moments separated by the passing of a short segment of time shot from the same viewpoint (fig.7). This method of presentation and use of the book as a vehicle to shape the way the work is viewed, allowed the photographer to play with the tropes of the street as a genre. The book contains gatefolds that can be opened out to reveal one photographic moment only to present us with an alternative version of this moment as we open out the page. This is a reference to seeing and is something that feels more in keeping with a communicative artwork instead of a book as holder or carrier of documents. The meticulous, complex design and process of experiencing the book helps the viewer to consider the act of seeing and reinforces the way that the street can be used in a multitude of ways. We look in one direction and then another, we see one thing and then our focus and interest shifts. Graham is playing with notions of the everyday and routine to engage and communicate a version of the street in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is felt that a singular photograph of, say hypothetically, an overweight person standing in front of a fast food restaurant consuming junk food is not overly sensational. It simply tells us what is there and the things that we already know are happening. Work made in this

vein is not challenging this genre of photography. It is simply adding to the rhetoric of an oversaturated and a working method perhaps driven by nostalgia for the past. Is there any need to create another Cartier-Bresson? Can the street be used in a more forward-thinking manner?

What are notable in *The Present* are the photographer's awareness and ability to pay attention to an action without the obvious consideration of a singular, definitive photographic moment. Graham appears to be more interested in ideas of the gestures made by those captured, his own gesture as a photographer as well as the passing of time. This is a movement away from time frozen and toward time passing. In relation to gesture, Paul Graham's photography in *The Present* is linked closely to what Vilem Flusser writes of in his book *Gestures* (2014). Flusser states that there is an element of manipulation by the photographer when he is making images. Flusser feels that the act of photographing is just as important as the photograph's subject. It is clear in the work of Graham that there is a palpable sense of movement, searching and discovery in the photographs. Flusser notes that,

*The photographer cannot help manipulating the situation. His very presence is a manipulation. And he cannot avoid being affected by the situation. He is changed simply by being there. The objectivity of an image (an idea) can only ever be the result of manipulation (observation) of one situation or another. Each idea is false to the extent that it manipulates what it takes into consideration, and in this sense, it is 'art', which is to say fiction. (Flusser 2014:79).*

This quote successfully reinforces the concept that the photographic act can be seen as that very thing, an 'act'. The photographer is present, engaging in a process of manipulation through making pictures and does this further through editing, sequencing and presenting the work. This, it could be stated, is the creation of art by advancing documentary traditions. It should be stated that Graham's photographic sequences in *The Present* are a definite development of the street photography of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The photography in this series feels relaxed and observed as opposed to grabbed, brash or hunted for.

## **Technological Interventions**

Villem Flusser's text *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* is integral to this chapter, as Flusser's way of thinking about photography was revolutionary. He analysed photographic aesthetics in relation to social forms and this was pertinent to both my practice and writing. Flusser's text was influential as it focuses on social and industrial change, something that is touched upon in my own text. "As an object, as a thing, the photograph is practically without value; a flyer and no more." (Flusser 2000: 51). This is a thought-provoking comment on meaning, context and how a photograph can be transformed when its use is taken into consideration. When a photograph is moved away from its original context and exhibited as art, we view it as something far removed from its original intentions. This highlights the transformative nature of discourse linking to the work of Richard Mosse, Hiroshi Sugimoto and William Eggleston whom are discussed in this chapter.

A way that photography has become removed from the straight document and placed into an artistic discourse is through the photographer's technological intervention. Processes have been adopted, refined and adapted to shift the photograph away from the objective and into the artistic. The photograph could be described as something that exists on a pendulum-like scale that swings between the document and art. It is the creator who decides where the photograph sits depending on, in this instance, the technological approach. It should, however, be noted that whether a photograph is considered a simple visual document, a work of art, historical evidence or a collector's item is more determined by the discourse within which it operates. The work of Richard Mosse discussed below is a strong opening example of this. Context and where the photograph exists are imperative.

### **Richard Mosse**

In his moving image piece titled *Incoming*, Mosse makes use of photo imaging equipment that was designed to create surveillance of refugees and migrants as they attempt to escape their location. (fig.8). Mosse removed these cameras, with the ability to detect the human body from over 30km away, from their original context and means to make images that are,

*"Alluding literally and metaphorically to hypothermia, mortality, epidemic, global warming, weapons targeting, border surveillance, xenophobia, and the 'bare life' of stateless people, Mosse's use of a military telephoto camera*

*serves as an attempt to reveal its internal logic – to see the way missiles see”*  
(Mack Books, 2017).

Whether or not the viewer recognises this on viewing is irrelevant, but what this quote does highlight is the artist’s desire to make a statement and introduce important sociopolitical issues through the use of visual imagery. This type of imagery, which would usually be reserved for the military, is transformed due to the intentions, ideas and concerns of the artist. Throughout *Incoming*, Mosse invites the viewer to examine the images in a way that is far removed from human vision or their original context. This engages the viewer in a way that asks them to consider the images in new manners and on the artist’s terms. Mosse has used this technology and working method to challenge the photographic medium and create an aesthetic that has never before been seen within the art world. By doing so, and through the use of an image making method that only registers the contours of heat, Mosse uses a very systematic and evidence based mode of capture to comment on how refugees and migrants are often seen as being faceless and delicate existences caught up in a deplorable geopolitical crisis.

It is this *modus operandi* and the visual strategy employed by Mosse in *Incoming* that highlights the tension between document and image. Viewed outside of the gallery-based installation or the artist book as standalone stills, these are documents and evidence that would not normally be associated with the world in which Mosse makes them exist. What this does is reinforce the aforementioned notion that a photograph is never just one thing. The intentions of Mosse for these images differ from that of their original context. In this instance, it is a creative, artistic and political statement and a visual strategy that allows Mosse to make a direct and aesthetically relevant comment on serious issues. It is also noteworthy that this type of imagery becomes something else once extracted from its context. We begin to talk about this type of image as a ‘Richard Mosse’ and almost forget about the military usage as documentary evidence. This idea is very pertinent to images that exist within an art discourse.

### **Hiroshi Sugimoto**

As discussed above, Photographic process is being embraced more often to challenge the medium and how photographs are perceived. This has been implemented in the work of Hiroshi Sugimoto. In his *Drive-In-Cinema* series from 1993, Sugimoto uses the camera to transform the photograph from the descriptive to

the artistic (fig.9). The photographer made images at drive-in movie theatres, composed photographs containing the cinema screen and the surrounding topographic information, and then exposed the image for the entirety of the film's running time. This meant that incredibly long shutter speeds were being used which, in turn, produced an overexposed view of the cinema screen. This created a bright white, ethereal-looking image that offers the viewer no visual information as to what was being screened. These images are partially documentary. They depict the surroundings in clear detail and yet the technological approach has created something that could be described as quasi-documentary – there is an amalgamation of dreamlike and real, playful and straight, artistic and illustrative. Using the camera in a forward thinking manner and not simply using it as a means to describe helps to achieve this. The photographer has created an image that is more elusive than the descriptive. Sugimoto has crafted images that engage on a different level due to the way that they ask the viewer to not simply accept what they are viewing but instead absorb, ask questions and become immersed in the image as art. The relationship between time and its transference into a two dimensional image is also something for the viewer to consider. The draw of the bright light of the screen acts as a magnet to captivate and pull in the viewer of the image and this has been achieved via Sugimoto's successful and insightful technological intervention. Sugimoto has used technical decisions to reach a particular type of image. There is a link between *Cut/Weld* and the practice of Sugimoto. He has documented an event at a movie theatre but has used the camera's technology to add meaning and aesthetic interest. There is a feeling of the draw of technology and the idea of celebrity as well as the all-consuming nature of the film industry. I have used straight photography in an attempt to play with the conventions of historic street and documentary practice. There is a similar use of light in my own practice to that used by Sugimoto. He uses long exposures and makes technical choices to shift his work from documentation to art, through use of the light of the cinema screen as a metaphor for those in the modern world being drawn to the glamour of cinema and the growing nature of technology. Similarly in *Cut/Weld*, light is utilised in several images to shift the work away from the idea that the pictures simply document the city to a more symbolic or metaphorical reading. For example, light has been used to raise awareness to the three chairs, pot plant and graffiti that are the main focus of the image (fig 10). The light functions in a transformative manner giving the image pictorial depth, intensified colour vibrancy and added contrast. Sugimoto's and my own work evidence the aforementioned similarities that helps documentary practice exist within an art discourse.

## **William Eggleston**

Another photographer using technology and approach to shift their photographic practice toward the direction of art was William Eggleston. In the 1960's and 70's Eggleston became one of the first photographers given validation for his use of colour images within a predominantly black & white contemporary climate. From the mid-1960's, Eggleston exclusively used colour transparency film which was aimed at the amateur photography market. This meant that Eggleston's work contained a vernacular aesthetic that was typically seen in family albums and associated with advertising imagery. Despite this, Eggleston had a very specific and powerful photographic method that enabled him to heighten the everyday. Eggleston photographed the commonplace, the everyday and the ordinary. His focus was on motor vehicles, diner tables, liquor store signs and the world in which the photographer found himself on a day-to-day basis. Eggleston photographed his home environment, Memphis, Tennessee, in a way that was true to it but was almost not this place. (fig.11) The photographer made images in a way that used the location within which to make the work, however the work was never about the place itself. It was a way to capture a spirit of the location through a relentless photographic investigation of subject matter. This certainly disconnects Eggleston from a lot of street photographers of the time as his work had a subtlety and ambivalence. Although possibly describable as commonplace in terms of subject matter, Eggleston's compositional ability, awareness of colour and his ability to transform an everyday observation into a complex and formally engaging work of art was his forte. Again, this style of photography has a subject matter that could be associated with documentary photography. Eggleston photographs real things, existing in the world to be observed by many. It is his compositional approach, use of light and colour, as well as his subtle playfulness with scale, form and subject matter that swing the work toward the direction of art.

*Many of Eggleston's great photographs make a point of seeming to show nothing at all. In his remarkable picture of a laundry room, the white appliances sit squarely at angles to themselves, defining the neat and inglorious space in a harmony of edges. A vacuum cleaner and chair pose side by side, and a yellow laundry basket sits atop one of the machines, just to one side of a water heater in the corner, all of them like the attributes of a saint who forgot to appear in her own altarpiece. (Nemerov, 2017:5).*

In addition to this, William Eggleston uses the technological intervention of the dye-transfer printing process to transform the appearance of his work. This intensifies the colour vibrancy within the images and is a process by which individual layers of red, green and blue dye are transferred onto photographic paper to make deep, rich and colour-intense prints. This working method was viewed as something that sat outside of the photographic art world and it was Eggleston's integrity and vision that led to its acceptance. By utilizing the dye transfer printing process, the photographer elevated the work and led to a process based transformation of the everyday. This technological intervention is something that highlights a clear artistic intention from the photographer and his work, which exists in the context of galleries, artist's books and print editions. All of these are closely linked to an art discourse. Following on from the aforementioned practitioners whose works align to my own, the following chapter will be a summarisation of the process of making the Cut/Weld series. The theoretical influence and the practicalities of making the work will be investigated in relation to the dissertation title.

## **Cut/Weld**

The photographs that amount to *Cut/Weld* were made in various cities around the world and, in one way, have been made in the traditional spirit of documentary photography. These are photographs captured at a specific moment in time, of a specific subject that capture a particular unfolding of the city and everyday acts. The work is rooted in the traditions of documentary practice where the photographer hunts for the image: the use of the word shooting is particularly apt, as the photographer hunts for the prey, or photographs in this manifestation, through anticipation, opportunity, instinct and miles of walking. This type of practice is associated with notions of truth as Allan Sekula writes,

*...the camera serves to ideologically naturalize the eye of the observer. Photography, according to this belief, reproduces the visible world: the camera is an engine of fact, the generator of a duplicate world of fetishized appearances, independent of human practice. (Sekula, 1984:140).*

## **Certeau and ‘the everyday’**

The seminal essay titled *Walking in the City* by Michel de Certeau (1984) has informed the writing of this work by introducing ways of navigating the city and viewing this space with an ‘erotic of knowledge’ that comes from viewing the city from an elevated position. The text explores the differences of knowing, seeing and experiencing the vast span of the city. Of particular interest was the difference between the ‘solar eye’ and the ‘pedestrian city’. The ‘solar eye’ views the city from an objective distance, whereas the ‘pedestrian city’ is a more complex series of narratives, interactions and experiences by those at ground level. De Certeau outlines and explains these differences in depth. *Cut/Weld* being informed by this text means that the work contains an artistic intervention and the work is no longer a strict documentation of the city. It is now moving towards an artistic imagining of this space with reference to the way we experience and practice everyday life. De Certeau undermines the notion that a city can be ‘captured’ or ‘seen’ in its totality, describing the urban spaces as being populated by a “swarming mass as an innumerable collection of singularities.” (De Certeau, 1984:97). This was one of the key contemplated texts whilst making the work. *Walking in the City* (1984) explores de Certeau’s view and witnessing of a city through his experience of standing on the 100<sup>th</sup> floor of the World Trade Centre, New York’s tallest building. He describes being able to look out over the entirety of the city and what it is to view what is below him objectively. This feeling of objectivity is brought about by



what de Certeau describes voyeuristically as “a solar Eye, looking down like a god... the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more” (Certeau, 1984: 92). This description is different to the work in *Cut/Weld* as the work is less about objectivity, a way in which photography was described so much in the nineteenth Century, and more to do with experience. The work is intended to invite the viewer to engage in the act of interpretation. *Cut/Weld* as a series is more likened to de Certeau’s description of walking in the city. De Certeau expresses his preference to walking instead of viewing the city from a reserved, elevated distance. He argues that experiencing the pedestrian city has “its own rhetoric” and a massive variety of people navigate it in their own particular way. He states “the network of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator”. The latter quote has a particular resonance with the photography in *Cut/Weld*. De Certeau is deducing that the city is a particularly complex place where stories and events are continually unfolding yet not always witnessed. This notion is very pertinent to *Cut/Weld* where there is a continuing underlying struggle with the challenge in representing a space like the city in its entirety. In de Certeau’s opinion the walking pedestrian has his or her own style or type of language. In *Walking in the City* (1984), the pedestrian uses the streets in such a way that give them new meaning and are removed from their original intentions. This is an interesting comment on the human species and how spaces like cities were intended to accommodate them for many intentions, yet these intentions alter over time. Pedestrians, for de Certeau, are those characterizing the urban space based on the way that they bring their own individual imagination to it. They do this by, “linking acts and footsteps, opening meanings and directions, these words operate in the name of an emptying-out and wearing away of their primary role. They become liberated spaces that can be occupied”. The characters and events containing people in *Cut/Weld* relate to this quote. Those photographed are these very characters, forging their own version of the city and are examples of the stories that de Certeau tells. These stories are often unseen and perhaps they can stay this way, but these are stories or events that could not be viewed by the objective ‘solar eye’. It is too objective, too distant and too removed from the details and small gestures that are unfolding at pedestrian level. The everyday and abovementioned ideas play a pivotal role in *Cut/Weld* and this theorizing and conceptual drive adds another method by which documentary photographs exist as an artwork.

Michel de Certeau’s “singularities”, and ways in which I could approach this photographically, were at the forefront when making the images. Again, this moves

the work further away from a documentary piece of work about the city to a more deliberated look at the city as a stage, where these singularities can unfold, be observed and then interpreted by the camera. The very notion of making a photograph, in whatever context, where time is cut through and sliced, is an abstraction of reality in itself. Furthermore, the photographs in *Cut/Weld* are deliberately ambiguous and elusive. The truthful document is less significant and instead the possibilities of the space are more noteworthy. These images are an intentional meditation on the city and not a definitive objective statement such as “this is what the city looks like” or “this is what it is like to be within a city”; instead, the photographs are a collection and sequence of moments that can be pieced together and interpreted by the viewer.

## **Making Photographs**

There was a range of factors that I took into consideration whilst making the photographs for *Cut/Weld* and these will be examined below.

Firstly, there is a stylistic resistance of documentary photographic practice in the way that the work has been composed. There is an intentional departure from the masculine act of street photography, an act that could be deemed uncomfortably close, invasive and unforgiving. *Cut Weld's* images were made from a respectful distance and allow the viewer to consider the subtleties and intricate details of the entire space within which the work was made. There are numerous small details within the scene that allow the viewer to spend time with each image and begin to piece together a personal response as to what unfolds on each page. In addition to this, the camera is pointed very deliberately at specific events and sometimes non-events within the space of the city. The decision as to whether to photograph events or non-events is an interesting notion. In this case, let's consider the images with people present and those without as a way to discuss said events and non-events. The city contains people as a core component whom use the space that they occupy in different ways. It is the people within the city whom have been photographed and photographed in a specific way. When making images of people, I attempt to create a tension or difficulty in interpreting what is being recorded. These are events in which people stop momentarily, close their eyes whilst walking, or navigate the city with arms outstretched in front of them holding a piece of paper in their mouth, for example. All of these are events and occurrences, yet they are ambiguous and make the viewer and photographer question what is happening. I look for 'moments' that feel indefinable and ask questions as a way to further engage the viewer and question the actions of those present within the world of the frame.

The non-events, or photographs from the series not containing people, are made in a manner that introduces metaphor to reinforce the notion of the ever-changing city. A discarded piece of fruit on the floor (fig.12) surrounded by what appears to be crystals of salt stands in for the people, buildings or the numerous things that will ultimately develop as the city shifts. This image also suggests the presence of perhaps one of the subjects from the event photographs in the book. Again, an image of a box in a window display (fig.13) has been photographed in an allegorical way. The box has an appearance of a coffin with its rich wooden exterior and feels jarring. The box shifts from its original usage and becomes something else through the act of being photographed. The box, in terms of the book's edit, is now a coffin

and has been used in the sequence to ask the viewer to consider the city, the other religious motifs running throughout the book and how this can relate to change and the work in its entirety. All of this reinforces the use of the photograph as an image and to suggest and connote those things that are not present, and are perhaps impossible to be present, in the frame. Non-events are photographed to suggest events and to encourage ideas.

An image of a shirtless man (fig.14) crouching down on the concrete to seemingly rearrange a bag full of possessions is followed by an image of a white wall that contains a dripping stain (fig.15). Also, within the same wall image is a green drinking straw, the shadow of a nearby street sign and a collection of cigarette butts that feel like they are taking shelter in the space where the sidewalk and building meet. This acts as a metaphor for the temporal and fleeting nature of the city. The aforementioned objects in the image, for instance, could stand in for the people who appear within the rest of the book. They are present, but are constantly changing; they are there, but will move on or removed over time. The previously mentioned photograph of the shirtless man (fig.14) is also filled with additional meaning away from the denotative. This person is shirtless within a built up environment where there are four other people clearly fully clothed and engaged in typical everyday activities. We see people who appear to be shoppers or on the way to work during the middle of a weekday. This man, with shaved head, very slim build and who is breaking routine becomes a symbol for difference and the desire to challenge the everyday acts of a city. There is a certain notion of social strata at play within this photograph where the man could be deemed to be lower in social class than others within the scene – this character becomes almost deviant in his activities and gestures as he moves away from the typical. This subject could be viewed as unemployed or lower class because of his appearance and lack of societal conformity. Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947) was written at the time of post-war consumerism. Lefebvre writes of the 'trivial' details of quotidian life that are so important in my text and links closely to human gesture, aspects of the everyday experience, societal function in relation to this. The book focuses on capitalism, alienation and their effect on the everyday. Lefebvre's writings state a desire for a drive away from alienation in order to create a more successful and developed society.

As the photographer I have specifically selected what to make photographs of and this highlights the intentional move away from documentary practice and a shift towards the photograph as an image. Within *Cut/Weld*, the photograph, or the image in this instance, is used as a manifestation of the decisions made by myself as a photographer. The image is being used to work on the level of metaphor, as opposed to act as visual evidence of what is there. Every photograph, whether documentary, medical or holiday snapshot is an image so it is important to note that the kind of image being discussed here is one of metaphor, prompt and suggestion. These photographs were not made to be definitive or even answer any questions, they were made as exploration, to ask questions and create an art object whilst echoing an approach that matches documentary practice, “straight” photography. In relation to “straight” photography, these images are not manipulated digitally, what is manipulated, however, is the world and space that is viewed and cut through by the photographer. Decision-making, timing, framing and vision all come into play here – these are the photographer’s interventions.

*Cut/Weld* is leaning closer to the photograph as an image and this is exemplified within the very first photograph of the book’s sequence. The viewer is introduced to the work through a street scene (fig.16) depicting a diverse mix of people occupying the city as they wait or move through a busy, built up and in-flux area. The bright sunlight falls on an individual dressed in all white with a t-shirt that has “character” written across its chest in capital letters. The work is introduced to the viewer on the photographer’s terms. This part of the image acts as a primer or a motif suggesting that the book will contain a selection of ‘characters’ that have been selected through the intervention and decisions of the photographer. These characters are what the photographer deems an important strand within the work and the street as a theatre becomes an apt comparison.

Image selection could be deemed important in any photographic series but it must be discussed in relation to *Cut/Weld*. The photographer has not simply included every photograph to show the entirety of the imagery shot. There were around a thousand photographs made to create the book and a certain criteria was devised in order for the image to be included in the final book to move the documentary photographs into an art discourse.

### **Post-Shoot Criteria**

Once the images had been made, there were very specific criteria devised that helped inform the selection of the photographs. These artistic decisions were created as a way to produce a cohesive series of photographs that operate within the art-based context of the photographic book. The criteria will be discussed in detail below under separate subheadings.

### **Light & Aesthetic Beauty**

The use of light and aesthetic beauty is the first criteria and artistic intervention that acts as a development of the traditions of documentary/street photography. The use of hard light and shadows is another methodology that has been adopted and considered by the photographer in depth. In a way similar to the work of Eugene Atget or Joel Meyerowitz, the work was regularly made beneath bright sunlight that creates pockets of light and constructs photographs within photographs through intense patches of light and shadow. Selecting and controlling the type of light means a decision has been made by the photographer to depict a version of reality matching their intentions. Light has been used consistently throughout the making of the work as something transformative and as a method of elevating the aesthetics of the depicted world of the image. An example where this comes into play is (fig.17). This image sees two key figures within the frame. One is a lady carrying an over the shoulder bag who is walking through an area of shadow on a summer's day. The second subject is a man in the distance of the photograph, thrown out of focus and stood as if waiting for something in a patch of bright, hard sunlight. The viewer's attention is shifted through the frame, past the female figure and to this shirtless man. The mix of light and the fact that these two individuals have been rendered within the same image creates a dialogue between the pair. The light helps to intensify this as we see the lady in the shadow approaching the man in the light of the distance. This opens up a narrative as we begin to envisage the forthcoming encounter between the two individuals we see but cannot fully identify.

### **Change and Development**

The second desired criteria looked for by the photographer when editing the images into a series was change and development. The city as an ever changing, temporal space is hinted at in the photographs and subtle clues are offered through documentary style images. An example in the book where this has been implemented is in the image of a street scene featuring individuals travelling through the city (fig.16). Some are stationary, some move, some have their identity

cut through by the edge of the frame. The directional difference of movement acts as a metaphor for change and transience. The light draws attention to some subjects and hides others, another subtle metaphor for a city in flux containing elements there and soon to be gone.

### **A Resistance of Conformity**

People resisting conformity and using the space in a manner that is jarring is an additional example of the desired photographic criteria to help the work function as art. This notion can be seen in one of the later images within the wider sequence. The photograph (fig.18) depicts a man with a mass of messy blonde hair standing on one leg beside a litterbin in an almost unidentifiable act. The street that he inhabits is partially cordoned off by red and white tape and the tape leads the viewer into this subject. It is additionally noticeable that the tape is fixed and functioning due to it being secured around 3 litterbins. There is a particular uneasiness, unreadable air and slightly comic nature to this photograph. These elements led to its inclusion in the sequence and to create a comment on the document and its readability or lack thereof.

### **The Ambiguous Image**

A key influence upon this section of writing was the book *Documentary Now! Contemporary strategies in photography, film and the visual arts* by Giertsberg, F. et al (2005). It analyses the struggle between fact and fiction in relation to documentary film and photographic practice. The essay within this book by Ine Gevers looks at the notion of postdocumentary within which artists manage to “stretch the boundaries of perception in such a way that space is offered to that which exists beyond the stereotype”. (Gevers 2005:83). Gevers writes of ethics and aesthetics and how this is a relationship that needs to be re-examined in particular reference to the transference of documents into art, something that was particularly apt in relation to my own research. In relation to this text, a final criterion linking to a resistance of conformity is ambiguity. The photographs within *Cut/Weld* are intentionally ambiguous and contain an element of the unclear or incomprehensible. In one image (fig.19), for example, a lady waits motionless in the middle of a brightly lit East End street in London. She is clutching a screwed up piece of paper. Her expression is that of somebody who is confused and it looks as though she is lost in thought and distracted by some internal dialogue. As a viewer, we importantly begin to ask questions. Why has this lady stopped? What is she

thinking? Is the importance of the piece of paper noteworthy? Is she in distress? This is illustrating the character being momentarily pulled away from routine activity that so many using the city are involved in. It is this kind of moment that appeals to the photographer and enables the photograph to be entered into the process of editing.

Ambiguity, again, comes in the form of a photograph of a man (fig.20) who is also within the built up city centre. This subject is carrying a book that appears to be the bible with its gilded edge and turned over front cover due to the way it is being handled. He is navigating the city and a majority of those around him are dressed in shorts and t-shirt. This man is the main focus of the photograph. The photographer approached and captured this man because of his smart dress, appearance incongruous with those around him and because he was holding this book. It felt divergent to a lot of the commonplace behaviour that was unfolding within his presence. Perhaps the photograph can be interpreted with a response suggesting that this man had simply been to church, works for the church or is passing through the streets to reach a desired destination. What, however, is of interest in this photograph is the possibilities of this urban space. Not only is there a subject, whose activity is difficult to decipher, there are several additional events or everyday activities at play. Two men walk side by side and appear to be in discussion with one another. Another man engages in conversation with somebody on the other end of his mobile telephone. All of these elements are, perhaps, happenstance but they begin to amount to a visual hint at the possibilities of the city. The following quote highlights the notion that even if you are to shoot in a documentary style or work within a real and tangible world, despite your intentions of objectivity you will soon be dubbed an artist.

*Whoever acts in public, deploying his individuality and creativity to make his or her voice heard or to show an image and attributing to himself a certain autonomy in regard to the world and its institutions, is, sooner or later 'an artist'. (Gevers, 2005:85).*

Although this method of making documentary photography could be deemed uninformed, critically inept or even self-indulgent, it can still be viewed as political and as a mode to open up the intricate workings of the world to the viewer. Under the title, *Personal is Political*, Gevers writes, “on the basis of personal experience, truths can be formed and put into context in such a way that the viewer can



supplement them with his/her own experiences and observations”. Gevers continues to state that, “photographs and films challenge viewers to see beyond what is already known, beyond their own limits, so as to leave the realm of the known and take oneself there where one does not expect, is expected to be.” (Gevers,2005:96). Gevers also highlights that,

*Photographers and artists have shifted their attention to ‘the small’, the personal. Their goal, it seems, is no longer to change the world but to know it. (Gevers, 2005:95).*

This passage of text reflects some of the personal observations and intentions of the photographer whilst making *Cut/Weld*. The twenty-one images are designed so that each is consumed in a way that is more than the sum of its parts. The viewer is invited to look beyond the pictorial world of the frame and draw from personal experience. These kinds of images ask the viewer to bring something extra to the work and imprint a part of him or herself onto this intentionally ambiguous imagery. This imprint could be from a standpoint of narrative, interpretation or experience. This postdocumentary (Gevers, 2005) way of making the work is far removed from the notions of objectivity witnessed in the work of practitioners such as Bruce Gilden or William Klein. Unlike their photographs, there is a deliberate restraint by the photographer and this disconnects the work in *Cut Weld* from their manifestations of street photography. The book has been carefully and meticulously edited, yet with this in mind the book could still be viewed as one version of the city amongst many potential versions.

## **Meditations on Selections:**

### **The Transformative Nature of Sequencing**

The photographic book and its continuing popularity within the contemporary photography climate is an important vehicle for many of the photographers discussed here. It is particularly important in relation to the *Cut/Weld* series. The photobook is becoming an increasingly popular vehicle for people to share their photography, which in turn means that the vast popularity of creating a book could lead to its creation to be seen as a fad. There are a lot of practitioners creating books for the sake of publishing something and it is these kinds of books that do not adhere to the following advice or processes.

Photobooks should be meticulously edited and sequenced in a manner that creates relationships between images and enables photographs to ‘talk to’ each other. Some of these decisions can simply be formal or connected to colour, but it is the more astute and ambiguous decisions, the small hints or quiet whispers that excite and add interest with the turning of the page. By sequencing the book in an exciting way the photographer, publisher and designer (or the collaborative coming together of all three) are contributing something to the larger conversation about the photobook and how it can transform the work, as opposed to going through the motions to put out work in a self-indulgent, self-satisfying manner.

Joerg Colberg (2016) introduces the notion of sequencing in his *Understanding Photo Books* in simple terms and uses the book *This Equals That* (2014) by Tamara Shopsin and Jason Fulford as a reference. This book, designed and formatted like a children’s book, thus a design aspect that hints at simplicity and game-like sensibilities, implements what could at first be described as very simple sequencing devices. The book is made up of images that bare a very similar formal relationship to each other. A photograph of a flag (fig.21) shares the same spread as a photograph of an illustration of a female with hair blowing to one side. The flag on the left of the spread and the hair on the right contain very similar visual attributes. They both have a similar scale within the square frame and both illustrate their subject’s movement in the same direction – toward the right as you look at the spread. Colberg (2016) notes when talking about a similar set of images that,

*...the correspondence in formal elements brings the two pictures into a dialogue. Specifically, once the viewer realizes the formal similarities, she*

*or he will establish a relationship between the pictures. That aspect of recognition in a viewer's mind is of utmost importance for the process of editing and sequencing, since it can also work when two similar pictures are not seen next to each other. (Colberg 2016:93)*

When considering the flag image next to the female illustration we see an obvious formal similarity and complimentary colours but these observations allow us to open the image up in more depth. We begin to notice the inversion of black and white in the photograph's subject; we additionally see the hair-like ripples in the flag and perhaps begin to take on an existentialist comment on the connectivity of all things. What is most important here is that we begin to question and engage with the relationship between the two, be they by juxtaposition or similarity and this is an important lesson.

*This Equals That* is an important photobook and could be used as a primer to photographic sequencing. By picking up on the similarities in photographs placed side-by-side, we in turn begin to notice the differences, not in a gimmicky manner, but in a way that encourages the viewer to engage with photography in more robust ways. As Colberg notes, "the book offers invaluable lessons for any photographer interested in understanding the relationships between pairs of pictures" (Colberg 2016:92).

The use of motion, energy and to view sequencing like a wave is an interesting way to consider this act. A book has a front and back cover and it is the person sequencing the work's job to not simply show one photograph after another. Instead it is to make the viewer's experience have meaning and coherence. The decisions as to which images follow one another should be a way for the viewer to make sense of the photographer's intentions. You pair up photographs or build shorter sequences of images within the whole in an attempt to solidify your photographic or conceptual intentions. Thankfully there is no set formula for how a photographic book should be sequenced and this is something that makes the creative process of sequencing a book so exciting. Starting with a series of blank pages and then using the photographs to take the audience on the intended journey is a captivating process. Strong sequencing can add depth, meaning and energy. A well-sequenced book could be the difference between a reader continuing on the journey of the work or putting the object down. You could, as an example, start the book on a note of ambiguity to draw in the viewer or with something that acts as an establishing shot

would in a film – a visual medium with similarities to the photobook but one that should be treated as a different entity. These two mediums work on individual levels; still images versus moving sequences and the use of sound in a film, for example, separate these art forms. Take the opening image (fig.16) in *Cut/Weld*, for example. It acts as an establishing shot to offer the viewer an insight as to what is to come and to establish context. There are ‘characters’ present and the busy, urban street is depicted. People are using the city in a multitude of ways, and businesses operate and are used in a routine, almost regimented manner. This is the photographer opening up the work on their terms. Despite this, the photographer is not implying that the viewer should expect more of the same but instead is using the image as a starting point and a way in. This introductory image is followed by an all white statue, which occupies a similar space on the page to the main subject in the previous image, a male dressed head to toe in white. The turning of the page presents the viewer with a visually similar, yet this time lifeless, ‘character’ or subject to allude to the variety of encounters within the space of the city. This sequencing decision hints at the constant cutting and changing of this kind of space. Everything is shifting relentlessly.

An element of chance has also been utilised within the sequencing of *Cut/Weld*. Some images have been paired or follow each other for the reason that they have very little visual or formal relationship. This decision was implemented to make a comment on the sporadic and fluctuating space of the city. We use and explore the city in manifold ways and this sequential decision was implemented to hint at this idea. An example of this is in the last two spreads within the book. The viewer is presented with an image of a shrink-wrapped pallet on a street corner in waning afternoon sunlight. Following this image is a photograph of a lady sitting on the floor of a city centre street surrounded by scaffolding (fig.22). She appears to be consuming food of some description. The sequencing choices here, like the act of the subject itself, feels slightly jarring and off kilter. This has been done intentionally to represent this way of viewing a city and the actions of those within it. Sequencing choices can reinforce the intentions of the photographer and the image on the page. The sequential movement through the world of the book is another example of artistic intervention and an important tool to recognise, consider and apply as a photographer.

Sequencing gives the practitioner a means to inform the reading of the work and to move a collection of edited photographs into an artistic comment that is rich with

meaning. This, it could be argued, is a process that can bring life and energy to images, resulting in new meaning through image relationships. Even if a body of work were to be sequenced with no formal similarities then this is just as valid so long as this is done in a manner that communicates ideas coherently. Take the work in Leonie Hampton's book, *In the Shadow of Things*, for example. This is a complex sequencing model where there is little formal or subject resonance between images. Each photograph marginally links to the one before it and by doing this, Hampton asks the viewer to piece together subtle clues and take small steps into a resolution and the uncovering of the work's meaning. In one image (fig.23) we see a young male outside a small house wearing what appears to be a pair of boxer shorts and a t-shirt. He has been captured frozen in mid air as he jumps or even falls. This image is loaded with tension and ambiguity, which leads to it being difficult to read. This could be argued to be one of the things that help to distinguish the photograph as a document and that as an image - readability.

This photograph is followed in the sequence by an interior shot (fig.24) of a table with a pot plant and two spoons sitting upon it. The viewer is moved indoors via the turning of the page and is not sure if they are now viewing the same house they just witnessed the exterior of. By pairing these two images, the photographer gives away small clues and adds tension to the narrative. The viewer is slowly and carefully being offered the narrative intentions of the photographer. This subtlety and astuteness should be commended. This is quiet photography with a quiet sequence and yet feels brave, ambitious and thought provoking. A work of art filled with photographic images, perhaps.

With reference to sequencing and the order of photographs within a book, scale and size on the page is an important factor. Use of white space on a page can act as a metaphor for silence or distance whereas the full bleed images within Japanese provoke era books, for example, convey a relentless feeling of intense immersion. Scale is an important vehicle to inject meaning and communication into a photographic book. This has been implemented in the making of the *Cut/Weld* photographic book and is an artistic decision that acts as a metaphor for contemplation and as punctuation to the work. Some images are larger or smaller than others with the bookwork containing three different image sizes. This is meant to suggest the notion of chance and encounters within the city. We view the space in a range of ways and the different image sizes are intended to link to vision and seeing, on a similar level to Paul Graham's *American Night*. We view something in

one way and then our attention and focus shifts whilst moving around the city. This is reflected in the changing image sizes as the page is turned. A suggestive method has been employed in the design of the book and this is another device that has been injected into the work to make a series of images that reflect change, confusion and the sporadic nature of the city. This, along with the methods discussed within this text evidences ways photographic documents, as well as my own photographic practice can be transformed through artistic intervention to exist within an art discourse.

## Figures



Figure 1: 'Kiss by the Hotel de Ville', 1950. © Robert Doisneau.



Figure 2: 'Parlourmaid and Under-parlourmaid Ready to Serve Dinner', 1933 © Bill Brandt.





Figure 3: 'Roundabout, Andersonstown, Belfast' 1984, from the series Troubled Land. © Paul Graham.



Figure 4: 'Man Walking in White Shirt, Atlanta', 1998, from the series *American Night*. © Paul Graham.



Figure 5: 'Untitled', 1998, from the series American Night. © Paul Graham.



Figure 6: 'Untitled', 1999, from the series American Night © Paul Graham.





Figure 7: 'Untitled', 2010, from the series *The Present*. © Paul Graham.



Figure 8: 'Untitled' 2016, from the series *Incoming*. © Richard Mosse.



Figure 9: 'Studio Drive-In, Culver City', 1993. © Hiroshi Sugimoto.



Figure 10: 'Image 15', 2017, from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.



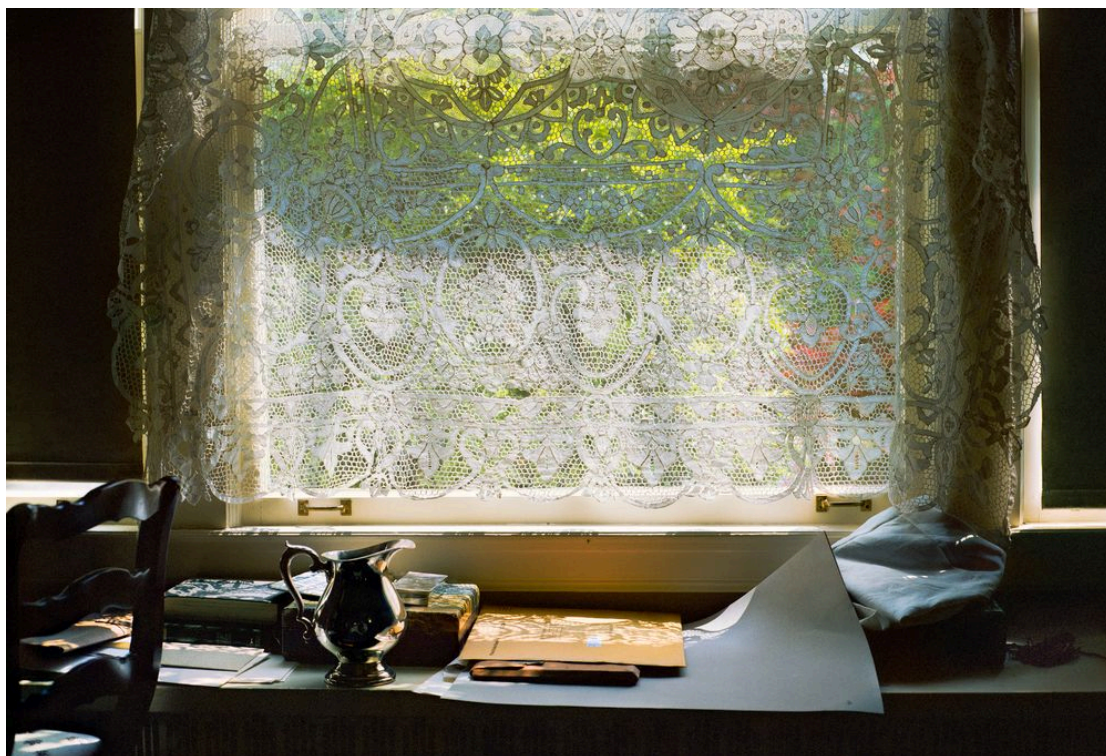


Figure 11: 'Untitled', 1988, from the series *The Democratic Forest*. © William Eggleston.



Figure 12: 'Image 03', 2017, from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.



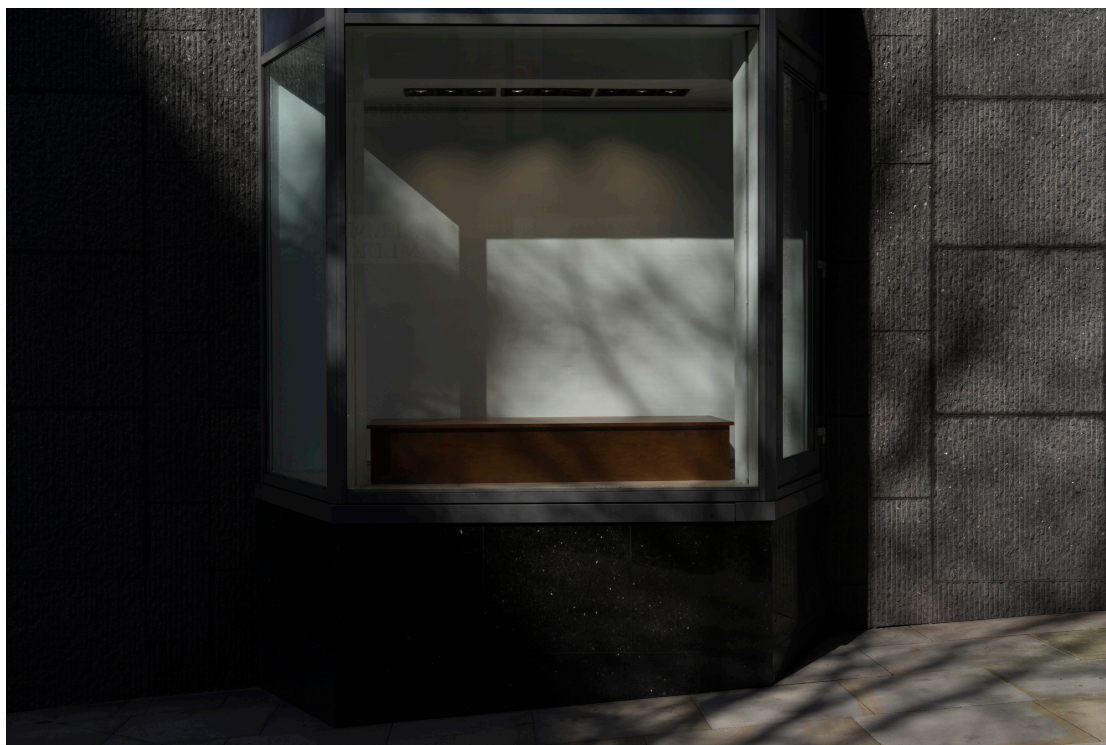


Figure 13: 'Image 13', 2016, from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.



Figure 14: 'Image 04', 2016, from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.



Figure 15: 'Image 06', 2017, from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.





Figure 16: 'Image 01', 2017, from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.



Figure 17: 'Image 00', 2016, from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.



Figure 18: 'Image 14', 2016, from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.





Figure 19: 'Image 11', from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.



Figure 20: 'Image 10', 2016, from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.





Figure 21: 'Image 21', 2017, from the series Cut/Weld. © Richard Higginbottom.



Figure 22: Untitled spread, 2011, from the series 'This Equals That'. © Jason Fulford.



Figure 23: 'David and Jake #1', 2008, from the series *In the Shadow of Things*. © Leonie Hampton.



Figure 24: 'Interior #2', 2008, from the series *In the Shadow of Things*, © Leonie Hampton.

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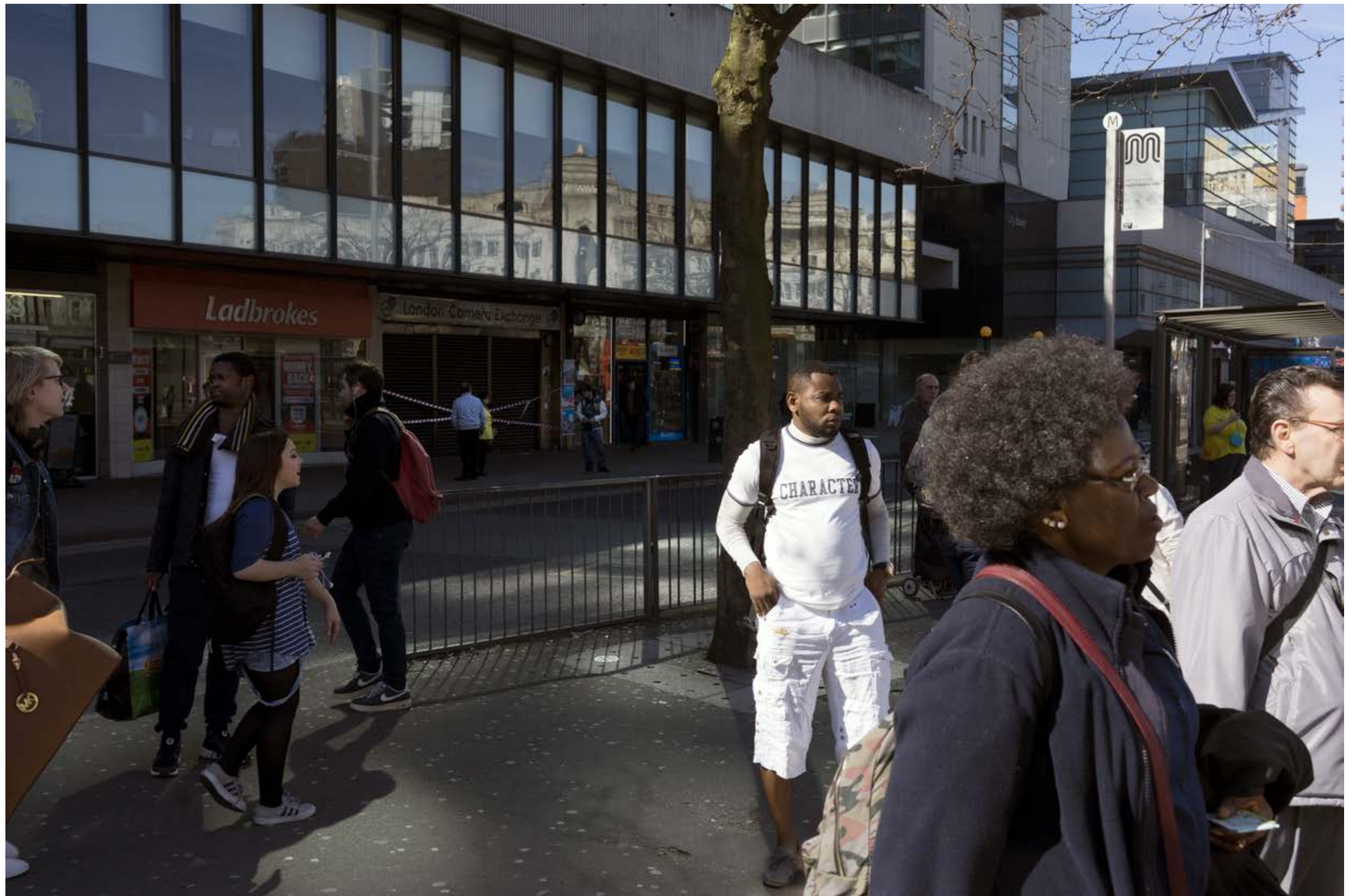




CUT/WELD

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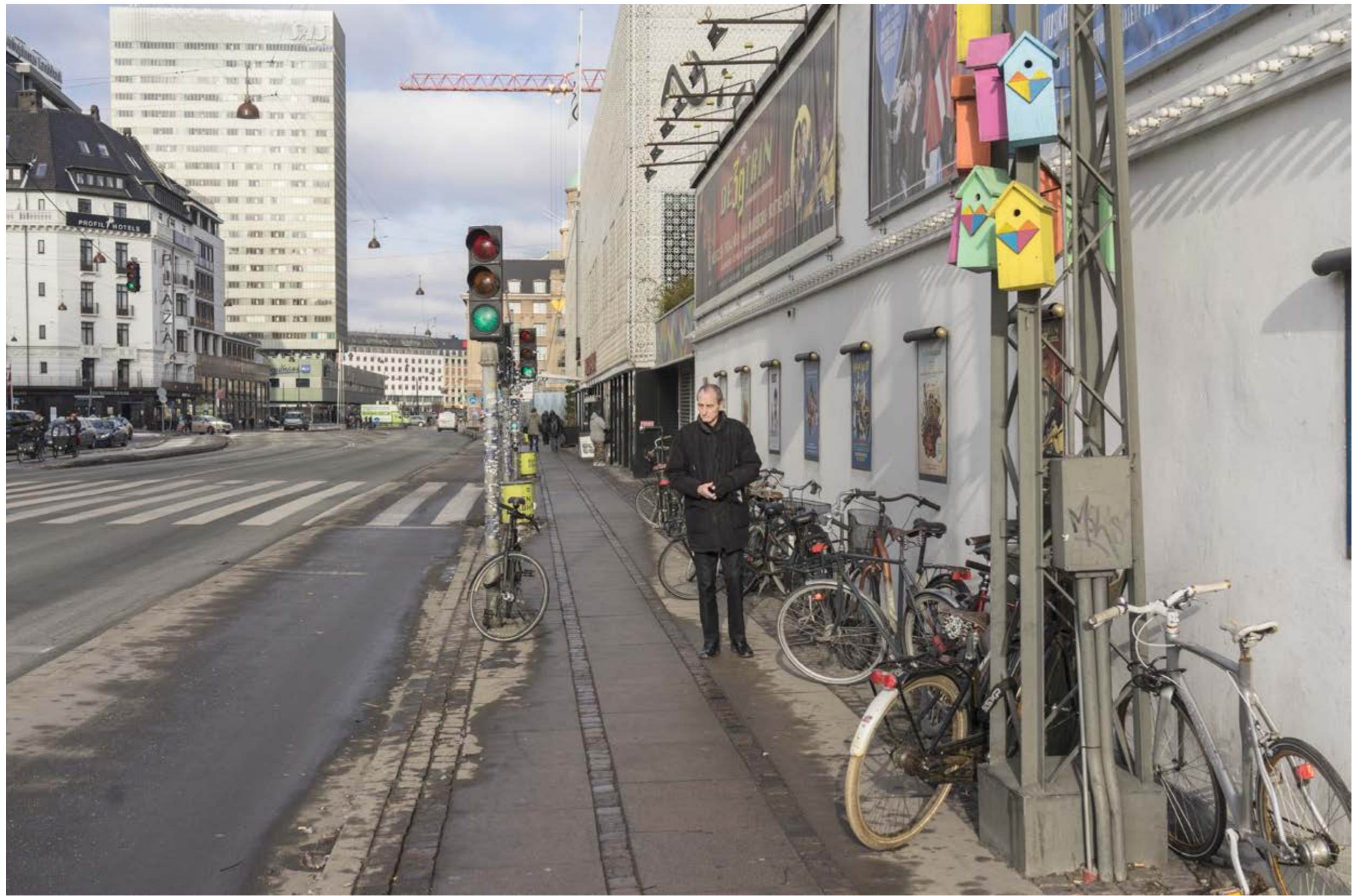


































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