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UNCERTAIN STATES /15



(IMAGE ON COVER)

JOHN GOTO

Kafka in America

I took him photographs of constructivist pictures. Kafka said, "They are merely dreams of a marvellous America, of a wonderland of unlimited possibilities. That is perfectly understandable, because Europe is becoming more and more a land of impossible limitations".
"Conversations with Kafka" Gustav Janouch.

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) never visited America, although it provided the setting for his first novel, *Der Verschollene* (*The Man Who Disappeared*), which was published under the title of *Amerika* in 1927. He worked on it intermittently between 1911 and 1914, after which he put the manuscript aside and it remained 'unfinished' at his death.

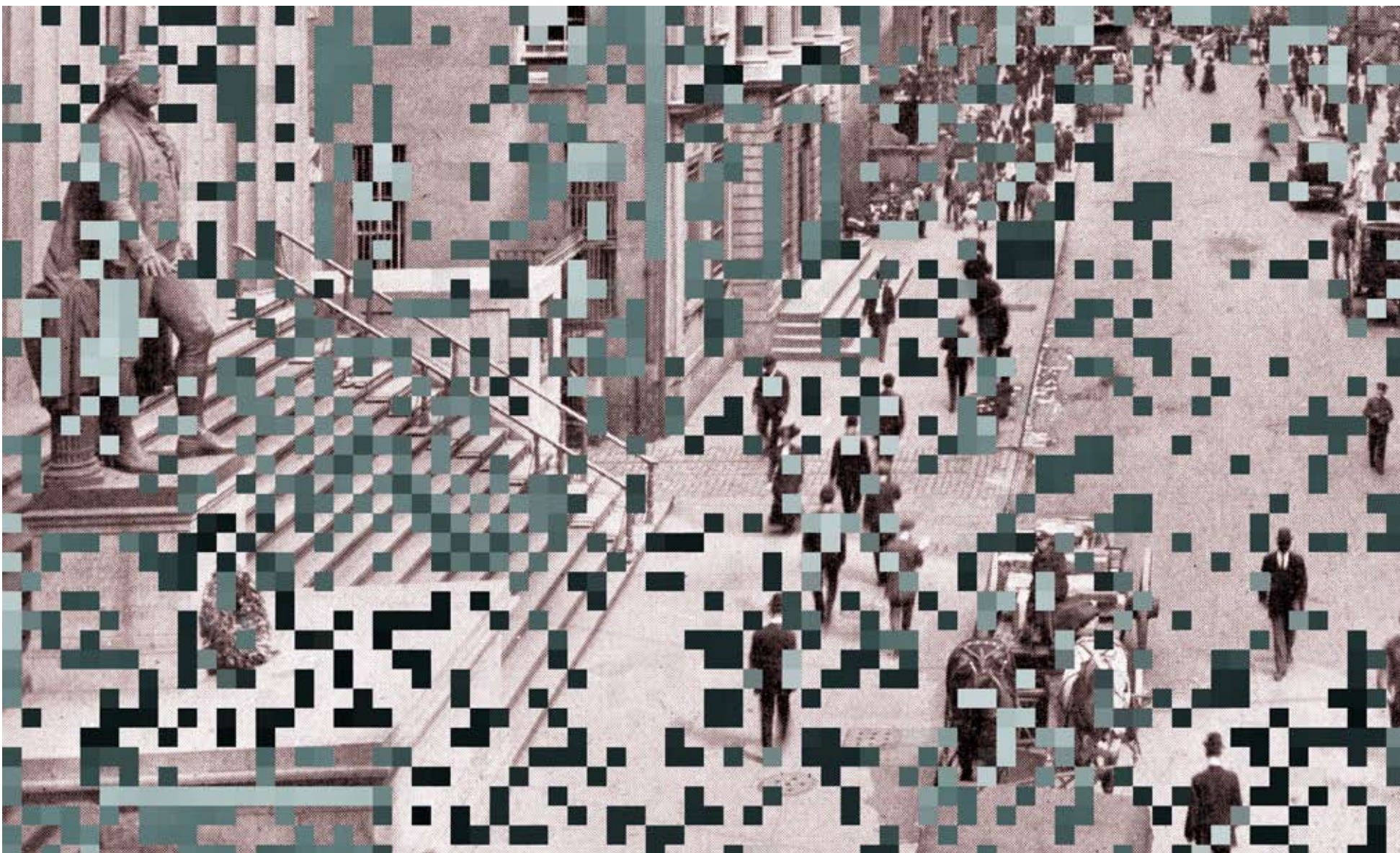
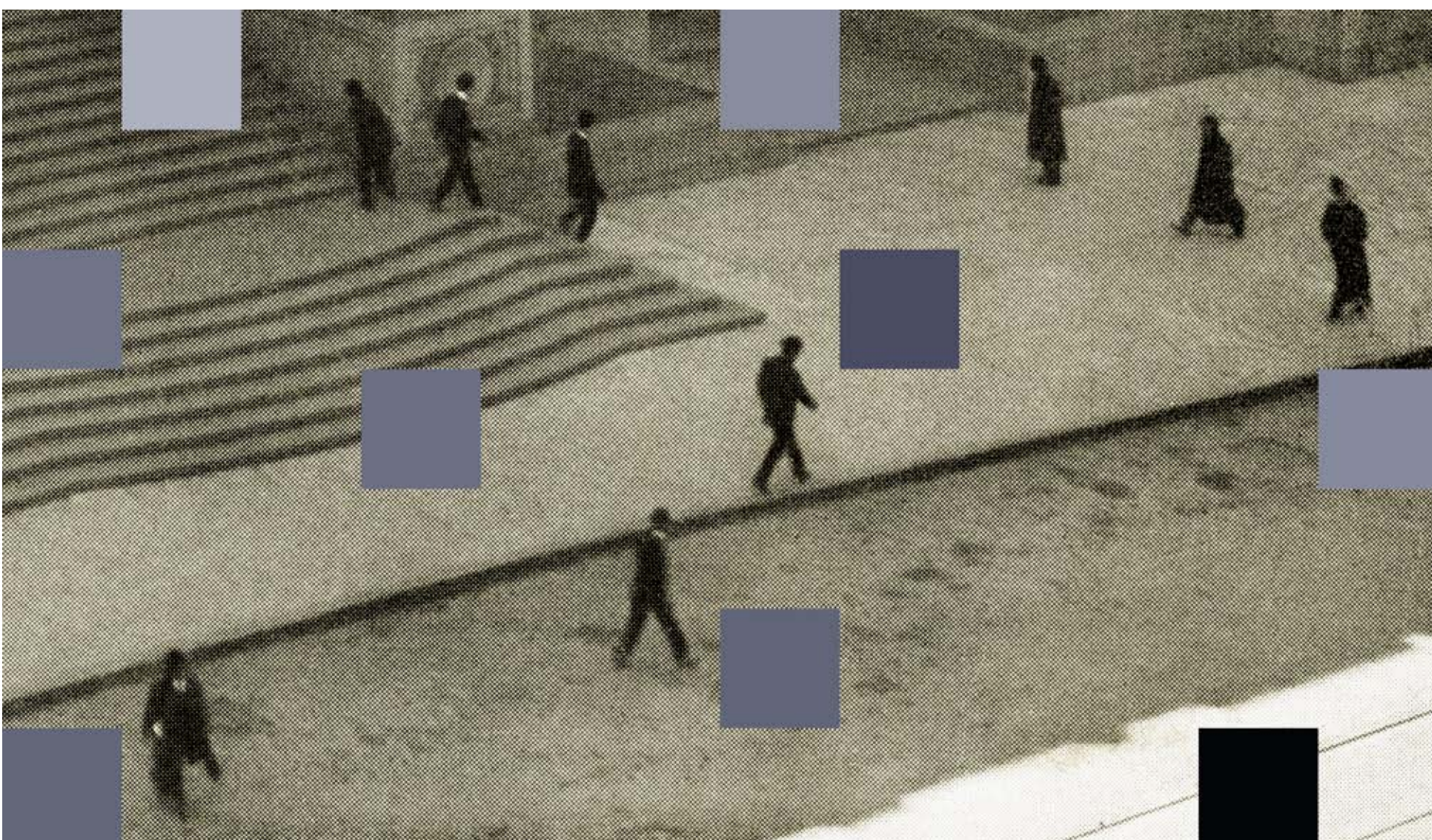
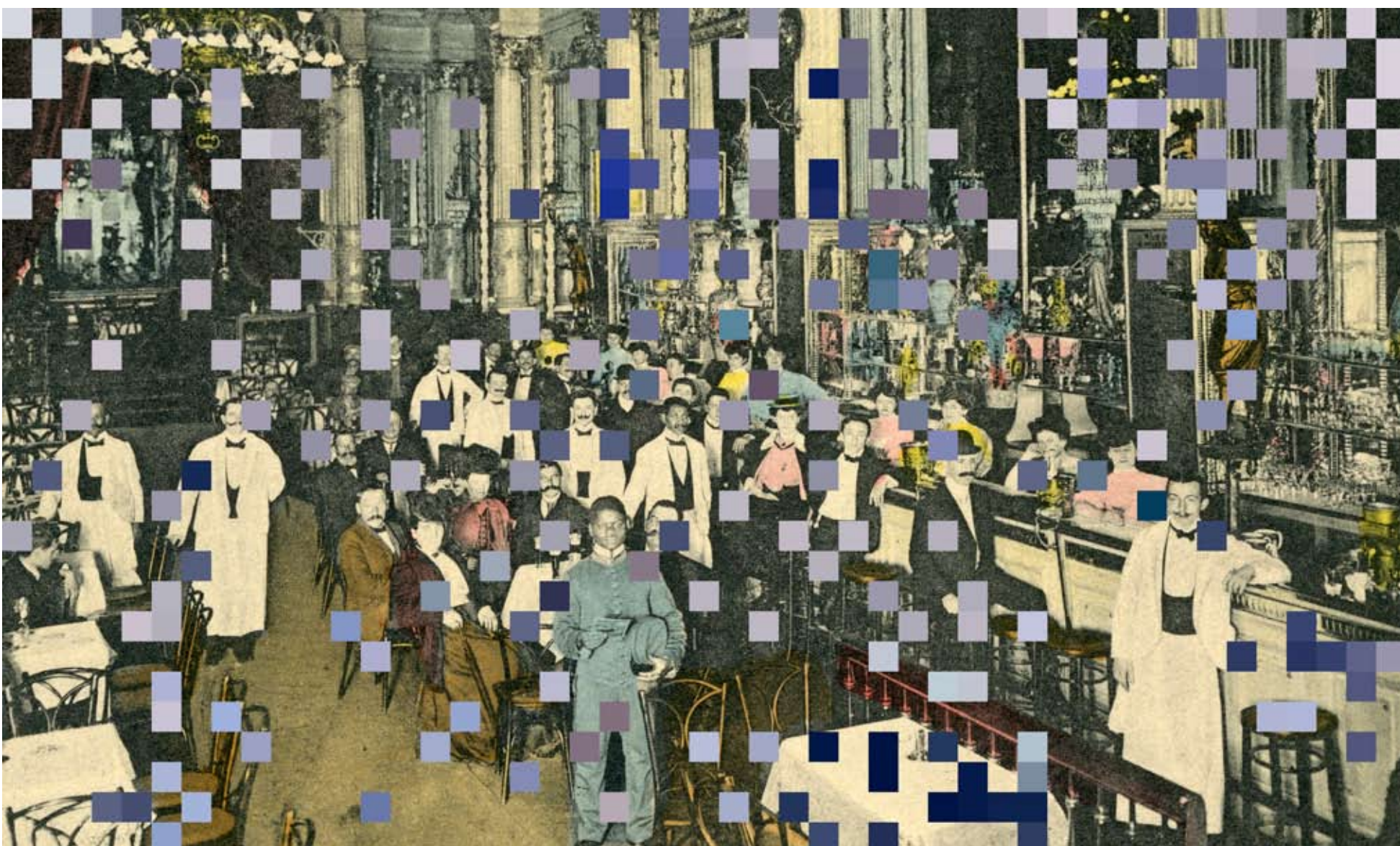
Kafka based his fictional America on a number of personal and published sources. Family members had emigrated to the States and wrote home or occasionally visited Prague. His maternal uncles Joseph and Alfred Loewy, and cousins Emil and Victor Kafka all spent time in North America. Of more significance in relation to the novel, which is set in New York, were his cousins Otto, who established himself as a successful businessman in the city, and Franz (known as Frank), his younger brother who joined him in 1909 at the age of sixteen. It must have been strange for the writer to have his namesake escaping the confines of Prague - which he didn't achieve himself until the end of his life - for the promised freedom of the New World.

Kafka was an avid reader of travel literature. Arthur Hiltischer's popular reports from America were first serialised in newspapers and then published with illustrative photographs as '*Amerika: Heute und morgen*', of which Kafka owned a copy. Other literary sources claimed as influences include Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* and *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. Furthermore, Kafka attended Dr Fantisek Soukup's lectures in Prague about his travels in America, and received oral reports from two returned workmen.

Kafka preferred the 'repose of gaze' offered by the photograph to the mobile vision of cinema. But scrutinising photographs does not always lead to intimacy or knowledge, and instead can produce feelings of estrangement and alienation. The fragmented city depicted by Kafka seems infused with a malevolent spirit, which compresses its space, rendering negative all that was new and hopeful. Indeed, the American 'rags to riches' myth found in Horatio Alger's stories is turned on its head in Kafka's novel as the young immigrant, Karl Rossmann, slides inexorably down the social ladder.

Goto's series is set in and around New York City, circa 1914. Like Kafka, Goto has not visited America, and has similarly constructed his city using photographic, literary and critical sources. The image of a wealthy, technological, modern city, with its institutions and instruments of power, is disrupted by arcane eruptions of negative space.

www.johngoto.org.uk



TRUTH AND FICTION AFTER THATCHER

NICK HAEFFNER
SENIOR LECTURER IN ART AND MEDIA

At some unspecified point it became naive to assert that photographs tell the truth. Their relationship to the real world was revealed as highly partial, both in the sense that the photographic image is only a part of reality and in the sense that the photographer takes a particular angle on the subject which is both optical and ideological. The onslaught of Photoshop and digital imaging has only made the crisis of photographic representation more acute. Maybe there is no unmediated access to 'reality'. The camera is certainly not objective. Obviously, everything is subjective, isn't it?

To anyone with a degree in the humanities or social sciences since the 1970s, all of this is likely to be familiar. In fact, it's part of the reason why the images in this edition of *Uncertain States* came to be produced and how such images came to have considerable currency in the art world. Once it became accepted that photographs don't or can't deal with objective truths the path was open for artists to embrace fictionality and deconstruct the truth effects of photography.

There's a story about fiction that I've always liked. On seeing a final cut of the film *Fargo* for the first time, actor William H. Macy was surprised to read in the opening credits that the film was based on a true story. When he approached the Coen brothers, who wrote the film, Macy was dismayed to learn that the Coens had apparently lied to the audience: the film was not based on actual events, they informed him. When Macy remonstrated with the brothers that this was a dishonest thing to do to the audience they laughed and told Macy that everyone knew that they were making a fiction film and in a fiction film you can tell the audience whatever you want. The moment the film starts rolling, the audience enters the fictional world. Anything can be said or can happen in that fictional world and the storyteller is not bound by any contract to tell the truth, so why not lie extravagantly and have fun? More fool the audience if they are credulous enough to forget that they are watching a fiction.



Many photographers have also begun to say 'to hell with reality'. If everything is some kind of construction, let's embrace fiction and expose attempts to fool the viewer into thinking that it has some privileged relationship to an external world. Why be bound by worthy injunctions to document the world as it 'supposedly really is? Isn't realism a hopelessly impoverished vocation for a medium capable of such extravagant lies, elaborate deconstructions and florid fantasies? Let's have staged images, obviously manipulated images, images which obviously refer to generic conventions and, above all, images which celebrate the artificial as the closest we'll ever get to 'nature', 'authenticity' or the 'natural'.

All well and good. And in the last few decades it's as though photography has found new voices it didn't know it had. So why not just sit back and enjoy the show? The spectacles of staged, fictional and deconstructed photography have made their peace with visual pleasure again after an iffy moment when Laura Mulvey wagged her finger at what she saw around her and licensed a new Puritanism which looked on suspiciously at the whole concept of pleasure in visual culture.

In place of the Puritanism, a new pluralism has been welcomed into contemporary photographic practice. Who can tell others what photography should be about today? Isn't it the case that photography today is whatever you personally want it to be and that's the great thing about it. 'Who am I to say what the meaning of an image is? Isn't it the case that it means whatever you personally think it means? And that's a good thing, isn't it? Isn't it the case that the world and everything in it doesn't have intrinsic value? Things are worth whatever you personally think they are worth. And that's a good thing, isn't it?

On the other hand: no, no, no - this all wrong. It's not the case that photography is whatever you personally want it to be and in any case that wouldn't be a good thing even if it were true. It's not the case that a photograph means whatever you personally want to it to mean and if that were the case you'd be a bit mentally ill. Some things do have a kind of intrinsic value and if you can't accept that then your values will remain warped until you do. Somewhere along the line, the project to question

the links between representation, reality and objectivity got horribly twisted. The project got caught up in a totally false assumption about what a human being is. In fact, it's hard to say whether Baudrillard or Margaret Thatcher have contributed more to the situation today. Who said 'all history is myth'? Levi-Strauss? Michel Foucault? Jacques Derrida? No, it was Thatcher's great mentor Enoch Powell. Like many critical thinkers on the postmodern Left, Right wingers have never been very interested in realism, objectivity or rationality. The aim of critical theory has been to replace the theory of individualism with the theory of social relations and as well all know, Thatcher didn't believe that social relations existed. As is well known she claimed 'there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families'.

Of course, plenty of people before the Thatcher era thought of the artist as the supreme individual and conceived of the response to art as a purely personal one. However, what Thatcher brought to the picnic, at least in the UK, was the attempt to discredit any sense of the collective and shared nature of creation and experience. Individualism was a hammer she used to attack previously entrenched ideas that sharing, co-operation and mutuality are indispensable components of a culture. In the battle she waged, individualism was essential to her view of a competitive market economy.

And now I'm going to say that thing that always seems to shock and upset people: a human being is not really an individual at all. Each of us is a distinctive person, that much I will happily grant you. However, human individualism is a category error, a contradiction in terms because one person is not separate from another person: we are involved with each other and in each other's lives. We cannot extricate ourselves from our relationships with others, and these relationships existed before we even learned to think of ourselves as an individual. In technical terms, we are not autonomous individuals (that is to say, we are not independent of each other), we are heteronomous people (we are dependent on each other, for our ideas, inspiration, hate objects, love objects, and reassurance).

The apparently subjective meaning, value and approach taken to photography that I referred to above is actually a rather incoherent nonsensical dogma we've all been encouraged to learn and parrot at every possible opportunity, especially since Margaret Hilda Thatcher seized power in 1979. Since then, I've lost count of the number of people who have said to me (thinking that they have the smart answer) 'it's all subjective, isn't it?' At this point, the teacher in me feels like going out and shooting myself. Fair enough, human beings lack the capacity to generate an objective account of the world. For one thing, there's simply too much data and too much difficulty in determining the meaning and value of all the possible data that could be relevant. For another thing, human beings seem to be hard wired to have values and beliefs which are not the direct result of hard evidence but often seem to be held in spite of that kind of evidence. Social scientists have long (and often successfully) argued that facts and values are not separable. So, if there is no objectivity it must be obvious that everything is, in fact, subjective. Totally subjective, even. And this is where the whole thing starts to go horribly wrong. It starts to go horribly wrong because just as there is no transcendental objectivity, there is no individual subjectivity either. Where once the great threat to human civilisation was that policy makers, scientists, social scientists and leaders of all sorts worshipped a false God of objective truth, the great danger facing us today is that we have all come to believe in the opposite, but no less fallacious, assertion that all truth is subjective.

Why is this so wrong? To many people, nothing feels more intuitive, nothing more natural, than to believe that the truth is what I alone feel in my own head and heart. Big names like Shakespeare, John Locke, Dostoyevsky, Max Stirner, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Ayn Rand, Gordon Gekko and Woody Allen are often wheeled out in support of this idea. Some major world religions, such as Protestantism, seem to be built around the idea. Since the free market revolution, spearheaded by Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s, economics and politics all seem to reinforce the idea that we are atomised individuals maximising our personal preferences and competing with each other in a great global market place.

So how far will this belief in the supreme sovereignty of the individual get me in the post-Thatcher universe? Not very far. If I am true to my subjective belief that the true vocation of photography is my own unique, uncompromising and personal vision for it, and if this is my personal belief and no one else's, I will be ignored by all the major magazines, agencies, galleries and curators. If I hold a strong personal conviction that Christina

De Middel should have won the Deutsche Bourse prize, rather than Broomberg and Chanarin, the judges are hardly likely to take the prize from the winners and give it to someone else.

If, as I have already read in a post online, one person holds the subjective view that the photographs taken at Abu Ghraib prison were not really torture but just some harmless horseplay, or that the events that they appeared to depict didn't happen at all, those views are likely to be pulled apart by almost everyone else contributing to the discussion. If I think that *Rhein II* by Andreas Gursky, which recently sold for the record figure of \$4.3m is worth no more than \$50, its market value will in no way be affected by my subjective judgement on the matter.



The simple truth is that we would be clinically insane to always act on a professed belief that 'everything is subjective', and that's because it manifestly isn't the case. In the cases mentioned above, the problem is that the subjective individualist totally fails to understand what institutions are and how they work. There is a refusal to acknowledge that so many things work, not on subjective, gut responses but on the basis of institutionalised 'group think'. But there are other types of error. Take the often voiced expression 'heartfelt'. Most people still talk as though there is the head, used for thinking, but what really matters is what you feel in your heart. What's wrong with this picture? For a start, the seat of the emotions is not the heart. That particular organ is for pumping blood. The emotions are actually located in the brain. What I think, what I feel and what I have learned from others are not separate things, they are totally intertwined. Feelings about things or people change according to what know about them. Similarly, what we know about them is coloured by what we feel about them.

So if I say that both objectivity and subjectivity are both impossible, what's left? The answer is simple but apparently beyond the imagination of most people in our society today. The truth is neither something 'objective' that transcends human beings, nor is it located in each individual: it is a form of shared belief. Beliefs exist in social relations and institutions, not in the heads of supposed individuals.

You can call this shared, ongoing dialogue a variety of things. Intersubjectivity is perhaps the most favoured term of the moment although I am starting to prefer the word mutuality. Mutuality carries the sense that not only is it necessary and good that we share a variety of beliefs and values with each other, it's also good that we do things together. I first came across the term when I heard the musician Ry Cooder use it as the highest term of praise when describing his experience of working with the Buena Vista Social Club. Having been in many bands I understand very well that when very different people can learn to work together it's a wonderful thing. The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, consisting of Israeli and Arab musicians, is another great example of mutuality. No doubt Adam Broomberg and Daniel Chanarin also understand how mutuality could make photography more like sex and less like masturbation. And of course *Uncertain States* itself is a co-operative enterprise, dedicated not to consensus but to sharing a lively (intersubjective) debate about what photography is.

A note of caution here: a belief is not true just because it is shared. Plenty mistaken beliefs are shared beliefs. The novels of Philip K. Dick are frequently set in a future where a kind of collective hallucination has taken the place of reality, which can no longer easily be distinguished from it. But crucially, a belief could not act as truth if it were not shared. Against certain religious views of truth, the rationalist would have to accept that a truth that cannot be shared is not really a truth at all. Unless at least one other person is capable of sharing your account of the truth, you're probably some kind of sociopath who is unlikely to be worth listening to anyway. Truth becomes truth for human beings because it comes to be shared and because it appears true in the same way to more than one person.

Whether a belief is really THE truth or just a shared belief can often be determined through the test of practice. Just as with personal beliefs, many shared beliefs turn out not to work in practice. If our minds are healthy, we will drop that belief or modify it and try to make the adjustment with

those around us. I may believe that a five year old child could take a better photograph than William Eggleston. But unless I can convince enough people (including artworld specialists) that I am speaking the truth, my opinion is likely to carry very little weight. After all, as the saying goes, opinions are like arseholes, everyone has one.

Surely, I hear someone say, the meaning and value of a photograph, particularly an art photograph is, and should be, just a subjective affair. To such an objection, I will answer: you are simply wrong, there is no purely subjective response to an image. It just does not work this way. It's a nonsense because, firstly our responses are not purely subjective (they are based on what we have already modelled from the languages we learn and from the views of others around us) and secondly because as I've already said, a theoretically pure personal response could never be shared with anyone else. The meaning of an image is to be found in the relationship between the image, the viewer and the shared cultural history which has formed both of them.

We are not radically separate individuals, we're nodes in a network of significant others. Even if we desperately wanted to, we couldn't become asocial beings who refuse to accept our intrinsic connectedness. When we act as if we not individuals, but rather always already cognitively and emotionally joined with others around us, we are realising our humanity. When we conceive of ourselves as 'just individuals', our development stunted by our obsession with personal subjectivity, we become selfish, narcissistic, solipsistic and unhappy souls, constantly brooding on our own feelings of dissatisfaction. Overwhelmingly, studies on happiness conclude that it is consequent on an overriding factor: good relations with others. That is, relations of trust, respect, co-operation and open dialogue.

Yet we live in a world that has gone gaga about the individual, the personal and the subjective. It's all about me, me, me and me. When did this obsession with subjectivity take root? I blame Thatcher. Well, not just Thatcher obviously, but the ideology she shared with a number of other right wing nuts and liberal economists. Thatcher did not simply have a personal feeling that the concept of the individual must obliterate the memory of collectivism. She learned about this from her forebears: Hayek, Friedman, Rand, Powell and many others. She plugged into the whole cultural history of individualism. In fact, she wanted everyone to experience the epiphany she had experienced when reading Hayek's anti-collectivist tract 'The Road to Serfdom' and suggested that copies of the book should be distributed throughout government and the civil service.

After her death people started coming out with a lot of guff about how Thatcher was a supreme individual who spoke her own mind, how she didn't care what people thought of her because she was her own woman and so on. Many people lamented that politicians today, unlike Thatcher, are afraid to be themselves. All this is, of course, utter rubbish. It was Thatcher who first took image management and the manipulation of public opinion deadly seriously. She hired Gordon Reece, a PR specialist to give her a thorough make over, which included lowering her voice a whole octave, because she was afraid that people found her real voice too shrill and annoying. Any trace of her original Lincolnshire accent had long been concealed by the silly posh voice he coached her in. Reece told Thatcher what to wear and what not to wear. He also did his best to keep her away from TV interviewers who might drill down to the real Thatcher. Then she engaged ad agency Saatchi and Saatchi to package her politics in a way that didn't alienate people as much as when she tried to articulate them in her own terms. Her press officer Bernard Ingham and her good friend Rupert Murdoch were always on hand to help her spin her politics in a more populist fashion than she was capable of herself. They helped to saturate the media with a lot of empty rhetoric about freedom and individualism which helped to conceal just how authoritarian Thatcher herself was.

Then there was the lobbying: after she left office, she took a directorship at Phillip Morris, the tobacco giant, lobbying for them in spite of her professed disapproval of smoking. Where's the fabled integrity there? When Thatcher really did start to speak her own mind, after she quit politics, people just thought she was a bit potty.

For instance, in a 1998 speech to the Commonwealth Convention Centre in Louisville she said of single mothers that 'it is far better to put these people in the hands of a very good religious organisation, and the mother as well.' On another occasion she was called out in a TV interview ranting against 'people who drool and drivel that they care' by Jonathan Dimbleby who asked, 'is

that what you really think of people who care'? Like the alien I remember from an old Star Trek episode, many of Thatcher's real views were far too ugly to be looked on to all but a few, so she morphed her shape into something more acceptable.

Some people seem to think that what one thinks about Thatcher is a matter of personal preference when it's mostly about shared experience. If you live in the North of England, the likelihood is that you hate Thatcher partly because of your shared experience of what her policies did to that region. If you work in the public sector you know that Thatcher and those who came after her were just itching to hand your job over to some 'highly efficient' private service provider like - er, G4S or Atos.

Since Thatcher began her all out attack on collectivism, radical individualism is an untruth that has been relentlessly marketed around the world by people who have a psychotic need to believe in possessive individualism. Typically, these are people who have increased their share of wealth and don't accept that anyone else deserves any credit for that achievements. This is usually mean and selfish nonsense. Increasingly, these people resent having to pay taxes.



Fortunately, there is a worldwide community of people who share a broad preference for 'my' truth. There are actually more people in the US who support the 99% movement (which is in favour of a more collectivist approach) than support the Tea Party (which says it's all about individual freedom) but you'd never know that from the media coverage each group receives. I'm greatly strengthened in my personal commitment to ideas of cooperation and mutuality by the fact that I share them with so many other people. This is in no small measure because there are many valid reasons for believing that Thatcher and other like minded people helped to bring about a dysfunctional and failing economic, social and political system in which already obscenely well paid people are seen to be living in their own private fantasy world where they believe that they actually deserve huge bonuses for failure or malpractice. People like Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve lived in a strange fictional bubble, unable to reality test their opinions about how the economy should be run. When the financial crash of 2007 happened, Greenspan broke down in front of global TV as he confessed that he was in a state of 'shocked disbelief' that his conviction that banks should be left to their own devices had turned out to be so disastrous.

There is a growing and shared recognition that the banks did not tell the truth to the public and the truth is that the banking system, based on the idea that some individuals could be allowed to make up their own rules and set fictional inter-bank lending rates according to their own personal preferences, is well and truly fucked. This is not an objective scientific observation. Neither is it a subjective belief. It is a shared belief which is turning out to be true in practice.

So let's hear it for shared truth. Let's hear it for photographic practice that can conceive of photography as a form of fiction through which we can share our truths in new and surprising ways. Let's hear it for photography that wants to share its truths, about itself, about the worlds it constructs for us and about the very real social, political and economic processes that are currently making the lives of the poorest off in our society such shared hell.

Last year I put on an exhibition of photographs called *Hackney Afterwards*. The images were intended to be fictional, although they alluded to an experience we now share: extreme weather events. The photographs were taken with a digital camera converted for extra sensitivity to infrared light. The resulting colour shifts give an unearthly and unnatural appearance to what is photographed, particularly buildings, skies and foliage. Like some of the other images in this issue of *Uncertain States*, they are concerned with the relationship between what is considered manmade and what is 'nature'. I hoped that the images would feed into the ongoing discussion about climate change and the role of humans in it.

Now tell me it's all subjective. Go ahead punk - make my day.

Nick Haeffner
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GRACE LAU

ADDRESSING DEATH
"Death is radically resistant to the order of representation. Representations of death are misrepresentations, or rather representations of an absence"
 (Simon Critchley, *Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature*. London Routledge, 1997).

Fascination and fear, discomfort and denial... the concept of death evokes complex and ambivalent feelings from us all. Despite the daily confrontation of imagery about violence spewed out over mass media in print and on screen, the language of death remains ephemeral and defies demystification. Contrary to religious belief, some of us don't feel reassured by consuming that much visual information, whether Christian iconography or other; it only emphasizes our vulnerable physicality and our mortality. In life, we have our control and our privacy; in death, we lose control and belong to nobody. Death and decay, war and disease, crime and punishment in both religion and law, just remember how Christ died. Unfortunately, the more images we are fed, the more insatiable we become. Human nature is driven towards the ultimate.

In history, the tradition of post-mortem portraiture in painting can be traced back to the Middle Ages in Christian Europe. These paintings acted as memento mori, to remind the living of their mortality and encourage them to prepare their souls, as well as being keepsake for the bereaved left behind. The invention of photography in the mid nineteenth century carried on the tradition using the new technology to introduce realistic representations of the dead, so that post-mortem portraits appeared to hover in an 'undead zone', seemingly alive in dress and pose, yet clearly not. Examples are presented in early elegiac daguerreotypes showing dead infants fully clothed and posed as if asleep in their cots.

Later, contemporary photographers in the fine art tradition, such as Andres Serrano (*The Morgue*, 1990s), Sue Fox and Clare Strand explored post-mortem imagery – as shown in *"The Dead"* exhibition, 1996, curated by Val Williams and Greg Hobson at the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford. This exhibition covered both conceptual notions of death and documentary evidence of violent death. The act of photography has been theorized as 'a

moment of death' in that a live subject captured through the camera lens has been immortalized forever, even though that single moment has died. But the physicality of that live subject at that moment remains forever sealed alive through the artificial medium of film or printed paper, and through the inherent control of the photography process over temporal and spatial elements.

My own enquiry into representing death emerged from recent work about the passing of time in terms of the aging process, inspired by TS Eliot's "time past and time present are perhaps both present in time future..." which led me to the inevitable question of the ultimate: death. But I do not wish to make post-mortem memorabilia. Nor do I wish to make morbid or macabre clichéd documentary type images. I am more concerned in the 'undead zone' in relation to the passage of time, how to represent that which cannot be visually represented; except as an absence? Using photography's inherent power to imprint an instant as a permanent living instant, my objective is to imprint a live person with their future death in one single portrait. Compressing time both past, present and future, and within the genre of studio

portrait photography, I arranged my constructed studio set-up; a theatre and performance representing death.

My last project involved recreating an embellished, constructed, highly exotic Oriental portrait studio in which I photographed the diverse "21st century types" of contemporary society. This new project is in sharp contrast and presents a "studio" of stark, pared down size and shape: a simple black wooden coffin in which to frame my portraits of death. The work in process is additionally an exploration into the genre of portrait photography and how we, as artists/photographers, construct our own versions and interpretations of the subjects we portray. There is no such thing as literal representation, I believe; each and every portrait we make has embedded a layer of mirror that reflects our own selves and souls, in search.

Whilst most of my photography work evolves around the genre of portraiture, I make work that develops organically, dependent upon my original concept and context and the nature of my subjects. In this case, I selected my subjects

according to their response to my concept of death. I asked for volunteers to pose as if in death, lying within my coffin and in their choice of clothes, holding their favourite personal object. For them, it is a theatre performance and I am director; it is a collaboration, as in all my series of portraits. My subjects are effectively taking control and enacting their 'perfect death' whilst still alive. So, time past and time present is conflated to show time future. And so they are immortalized.

Refs:
The Dead: exhibition catalogue, Val Williams and Greg Hobson (National Museum for Photography, Film & Television, Bradford, 1995)
Photography and Death, Audrey Linkman (Reaktion Books, 2011)
Art and Death, Chris Townsend (I.B. Tauris, 2008)
The Four Quartets, TS Eliot

www.phghastings.co.uk



JOHN PAUL EVANS

Stilled Lives

My work references the way photography has been deployed to reinforce notions of gender in western society.

Writers such as John Berger, Laura Mulvey and Richard Dyer have correlated binary concepts of male/female with activity and passivity and looking and being looked at.

Through personal practice, an attempt is made to eschew this active/passive binary when photographing the male body. This has involved a variety of picture-making strategies that have been influenced and informed by constructionist conceptualizations of the body.

The photographic methods used in my practice are performative and engage with processes such as stillness, or repetitious bodily movement, in order to reveal an unconscious or un-prepossessed state to the camera, with the aim of transcending patriarchal codes and 'becoming' something alternative, something 'queer'.

In addressing the process of naturalization we might consider Judith Butler's suggestion:

"If gender is something that one becomes-but can never be-then gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity, and that gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort".¹

'Stilled Lives' are a series of self-portraits that reference artworks from western history.

The pinhole photographs need extended exposure, which requires the sitter to perform stasis for this primitive technology. (on average 3-6 minutes)

Remaining still for prolonged periods is reminiscent of the life model's role, becoming petrified in the temporal drift.

Walter Benjamin believed that in early examples of photography, something akin to an 'aura' was captured through the long exposures necessary to record the image:

"The procedure itself taught the models to live inside rather than outside the moment. During the long duration of these shots they grew as it were into the picture".²

The work addresses the cultural legacies of gendered roles in referencing the way the western art has historically equated gender with posture.

www.johnpaulevans.co.uk/

1. Judith Butler – *Gender Trouble*
2. Walter Benjamin - *A Short History of Photography*



TOR SIMEN ULSTEIN

Toten

The pictures are all taken in a make-believe town called Toten. In this town strange happenings seem to occur. I am not able to grasp the real condition of this town. So far my camera has revealed Toten as a place where people live in a mysterious existence and so therefore they invent everyday situations, which have nothing everyday about them. I don't want to reveal or tell their secrets, but my impression is, that this is not a life you would want to wake up in.

It is not a documentary, but an interpretation of the situations and people I have come across. Each photo has its own story to tell. It's hard to get under the skin of these inhabitants, their dark life has made them shy and not very welcoming. Still I travel there for short periods of time, and try to get as close as possible. I observe them passing their time, and as day draws to night, in silence, I immortalize them with my camera. Not a day goes by that I don't find myself in my make-believe town. or is it..?

<http://ts-ulstein.com/toten.html>

Tor Simen Ulstein and Charlie Fjåtström will be showing work along side three other photographers at Cre8 Gallery

80 Eastway, Hackney Wick, London, E9 5JH, Opening 5th September 7pm. All welcome





JULIAN BENJAMIN

Experiments in social fiction
Traditionally, photography offers evidence, or fact. Occasionally even definitive proof. Perhaps it's been a while since it showed us anything with such certainty. The digital incarnation of photography is too malleable, too easily manipulated. And while this may be the case, a photograph is still an object that implies authenticity.

The use of digital manipulation in this work should be, if the picture succeeds, imperceptible. It should be so because all elements of the image are 'true'. They are all 'there'. Any incongruities between elements within an image are a result of the passing of time. Digital manipulation simply allows elements from different moments to occupy the same image.

The scenarios depicted are being manipulated from the moment the camera comes out of the box: from the moment I arrange myself, the camera and the subject in front of it; by the way the subject responds to our presence and that of the camera. Digital post production is simply a way of rearranging pixels, it is not a way of rearranging the expression on someone's face.

Whilst I wouldn't want to expressly break down how each picture was made, the viewer becomes aware of the game being played: after all, most of the images are improbable; some are impossible.

I like to think that these images have as much in common with cinema as still photography- the end result has as little to do with the moment of its creation as possible. There is no attempt here to describe any kind of 'real' narrative.

In fact the opposite is the case: any kind of conventional narrative or reading of the image is contradicted by the improbability of what is being portrayed.

These are not pictures of things, these are pictures of ideas. I'm not saying this thing happened, I'm saying this idea happened.

And this is the photograph to prove it.

www.julianbenjamin.co.uk



JOHN WILSON

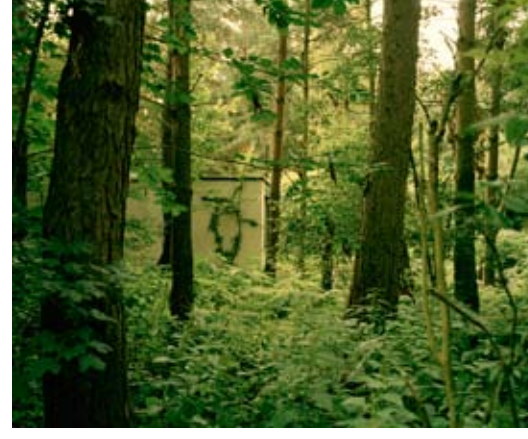
Within the Green
I shot this series of images after visiting a holiday village in Elvedon Forest, Suffolk. Whilst in the village I was struck by the beauty and slightly eerie nature of my surroundings, particularly the way the holiday villas were positioned within the forest.

I found the idea that this holiday park was created specifically so that visitors could holiday 'within a forest' quite fascinating, as the forest was a man-made construction and the villas were positioned for privacy from other guests.

This positioning and false sense of isolation led to a peculiarly voyeuristic aesthetic that combined with the beautiful light within the forest became the images I produced to bring the viewer into my perception of this environment.

In my work I capture the innate beauty of my surroundings, the light, the composition or the "occurrence" of a scene, while lending to the image, the emotion and atmosphere that I have personally experienced while viewing the subject matter.

www.johnwilsonphotography.com



CHARLIE FJÄTSTRÖM

Ten ways to kill yourself
I create art because that is the only way that I feel that I can make a difference to peoples lives, I could of course become a politician but the problem with that is that I don't listen to any politicians myself so why should anyone listen to me if I were one. When I look at art that is strongly political, I feel so much more and I understand what the artwork says to me in another way than if a person tells me what to think. Usually in my artwork I want to get people thinking about a political or social question that I feel does not get enough attention in our society. Maybe my viewers will not feel the same way I do but at least they will start to think about it.

My current project is called "Ten ways to kill yourself" and it is a guidebook on how to commit suicide. It is presented with pictures on one side of the book and a short description on the opposite side. The ways that you can kill yourself through this book are humorous not realistic ways of committing suicide and they would take long time to implement so that you have a lot of time on you to think about your life and the act of destroying it. The project is not about giving people who have suicidal thoughts a handbook so that they can go home and kill themselves rather this is a project to get people thinking about suicide in another way than how they do now or

start to think about it at all. Suicide is caused by illness and people need to get help with their feeling before it is to late, and it could happen to your family or to your friends as well.

The book was the starting point for this whole project I wanted to create a book with a name that gave people such a bad feeling that they had to pick it up and look in it.

This is how I want my work to be perceived, with a sense of dark humour about a serious subject. I work with this project because we can help so many people to get their life together and show them that there is always something that is worth living for. This is my way to get peoples eyes on this subject.

"The so-called "psychotically depressed" person who tries to kill herself doesn't do so out of quote "hopelessness" or any abstract conviction that life's assets and debits do not square. And surely not because death seems suddenly appealing. The person in whom its invisible agony reaches a certain unendurable level will eventually jump from the window of a burning high-rise. Make no mistake about people who leap from burning windows. Their terror of falling from a great height is still just as great as it

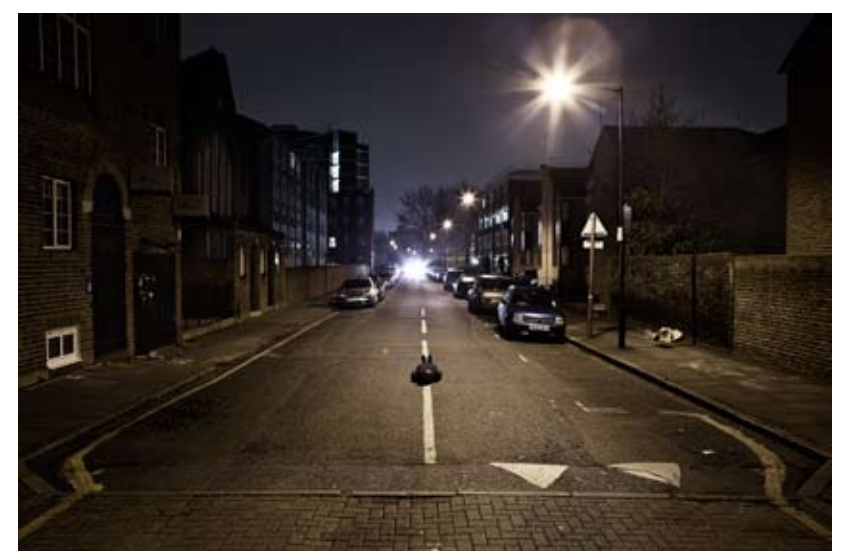
would be for you or me standing speculatively at the same window just checking out the view; i.e. the fear of falling remains a constant. The variable here is the other terror, the fire's flames: when the flames get close enough, falling to death becomes the slightly less terrible of two terrors. It's not Desiring the fall; it's terror of the flames. And yet nobody down on the sidewalk, looking up and yelling "Don't!" and "Hang on!", can understand the jump. Not really. You'd have to have personally been trapped and felt flames to really understand a terror way beyond falling."

www.facebook.com/charliefjastromphotography
twitter.com/fjastrom
charliefjastrom.tumblr.com/

David Foster Wallace
Infinite Jest

Tor Simen Usten and Charlie Fjätström will be showing work along side three other photographers at Cre8 Gallery

80 Eastway, Hackney Wick, London, E9 5JH, Opening 5th September 7pm. All welcome





ETIENNE CLEMENT

"We all live in the world as we imagine it, as we create it." Andrei Tarkovsky / Nostalghia

When it comes to creative play, there are two types of children. Those who build structures, be they complex towers in their minds or structures with Meccano, and those who build stories; not that the two are mutually exclusive but in play they often polarise. The child's theatre, a cardboard interior often made in the form of a pop-up book, becomes the ultimate non-architectural space. It is all innards and no architectural structure. It is all dress and no frame, whilst the Meccano tower is the essence of rationalised integrity with little space for humanity. This of course is an unacceptable dichotomy. Etienne Clément's intensely alluring but deviously complex works weave these two types of play together. The formal drama of architecture abouts the personal and political allegories of his play-mobile-esque narratives. They jar, when Clément wants them to and then merge in a tricky fashion when he wants to entice the viewer into closer communion.

Clément is a 'storysmith'. Ingredients for his

narratives are both fact and fiction. It allows him to make up stories, to 'start' legends in any particular place he chooses.

He builds up stories combining either solid and verified historical events or mythological/biblical themes and outright pure invention. The outcome, a new story where the fact/fiction boundaries are blurred.

His works investigate the legendary, creating narratives that are never being entirely believed by the viewer, but also never being resolutely doubted. They examine the suspended state of uncertainty.

Visually they displace the viewer, disrupting their perception of 'real' or 'unreal', 'staged' or 'un-staged'. His theatres become a place to freely construct, a site for play and an area of experimentation. His carefully constructed tableaux provide selective reference points to the real world, making it increasingly difficult for viewers to understand their position within that world and thus creating a displaced sense of certainty.

Miniature figures inhabit Clément's tableaux. Most are plastic, the sexiness of plastic mixing with its pathetic ephemerality. However, once the figures are enlarged and taken from their symbolic, generic meaningfulness and given their place at the centre of the melodrama, a change takes place. From their mass produced absurdity, via the depth of their surface, emerges a certain profundity. Acting as touchstones for contemporary desire, the figures in Clément's works invite you to question the hierarchy of truth that is placed on all narratives, objects and places.

More recently, Clément has been looking into scaling up his work life size using performers to re-enact his miniature sets narratives.

Etienne is currently represented by Alon Zakaim Fine Art on Cork Street, London and he is an artist member of the Contemporary Art Society (CAS).

www.etienneclément.com



HEATHER MCDONOUGH

Wallpaper Journals

This new work brings together aspects of three unconnected women's lives and explores the process of memory and time, narrative and non-narrative sequences.

These photographs are about disappearance and the transitory state. Our interior spaces reflect our presence. Once we are gone, we leave only wallpaper.

This work brings together fact and fiction, actual and imagined stories.

Story telling is the process of recalling and curating memory.

I examine my own working practice and bring together images from my own archives and combine them with found imagery and specifically made photographs.

The stories are retold through books, projection and photographic prints.

'I never really got to know Doris. I know she liked plain Victoria sponges. She made some wonderful black and white photographs of the Festival of Britain in 1951. She travelled widely, she was a very proud gardener, and she really loved roses.'

Ann has lived next to Doris since the 1950s.

Ann has four boys and one girl, all grown up with children of their own. Livingstone, the second son, has now bought Doris's house. Livingstone told me that when he was growing up, if ever a ball went over the wall to Doris's garden, she would keep the ball. Now Livingstone is clearing out Doris's house, and he has found a big cardboard box, full of balls.

I have been given Doris's sideboard, and it sits beneath the window from which I used to see her peering out opposite. It matches our piano beautifully. I also have Doris's camera, and the small handful of photos that still exist of her life.'

www.heathermcdonough.com/

29 Oct - 8 Nov:
Heather McDonough and Adele Watsat Four Corners

New Creative Markets:
10x10 Exhibition Programme 2013

121 Roman Rd, London E2 0QN

Private view:
18.30-20.30 on 30 October.

Artists in conversation:
18.30-20.00 on 6 November.



10x10

Four Corners New Creative Markets: 10x10 Exhibition Programme 2013

10x10 will be a fast moving, 10 week programme of exhibitions and events that presents ten projects by ten artists / photographers on Four Corners New Creative Markets programme. Six exhibitions will be marked by private views and special events. For details visit: www.fourcornersfilm.co.uk

1 October - 7 December 2013: | 10.00 - 18.00 Monday to Saturday. | Admission Free.



NEW CREATIVE MARKETS



European Regional Development Fund
Project Part-Financed by the European Union

FIRST TUESDAY TALKS AT THE CAT AND MUTTON | BROADWAY MARKET | EAST LONDON | 7.30-9PM

AUGUST 6TH
GRACE LAU
"TYPES" - THE CONSTRUCTED STUDIO PORTRAIT

SEPTEMBER 3RD
KENNARDPHILLIPPS
CUT THE FUCK UP

OCTOBER 1ST
TOM HUNTER
TOM HUNTER A LIFE IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART

NOVEMBER 5TH
HEATHER MCDONOUGH
STORYBOOK

Uncertain States is a lens-based artist collective who are passionate in creating, discussing and promoting photography. In this volatile global climate the work reflects some of our current concerns and challenges how perception is formed in our society on issues as diverse as politics, religion, and personal identity. For your on-line copy, visit www.uncertainstates.com or e-mail info@uncertainstates.com for a hard copy.



We welcome submissions from lens-based artists for further publication. For all enquiries please contact info@uncertainstates.com

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