Photojournalism in the digital age is subject to many complexities and the role of the photojournalist continues to develop. Current debates and discussions surrounding the practice of photojournalism include but are not limited to: responsible representation, manipulation, citizen contribution and the evolution of digital technology. With photojournalism expanding and diversifying there appears to be less control over the nature and the authors of the content produced. In addition to this, the parameters of the professional photojournalist are in a continuing state of flux: a concept predating digital, but amplified by it (Ritchin 2014: 13).

It can be argued that photojournalism formed the understanding of photography as evidence, as it placed a demand on the photographer to create visual representations of the event or issue being investigated (Rosler 2004a: 264). The photograph assumed this demanded role of truth teller despite the apparent limitations to representation posed by the singular framed moment. In addition, despite manipulation always being present in photographic history, speculations about photographic ‘truth’ appeared to gain
more prominence (Sontag 1978: 52). The launch of Photoshop Version 1 in 1990 meant that the process of manipulation was accessible to anyone, not just the industry (Adobe n.d.). The resulting ease of manipulation provoked a redefinition of photographic meaning in photojournalism. It now appeared to resemble a visual metaphor instead of the original, evidential form desired. It is thought that digital technology has increased the potential of the image to narrate. However it also appears to have cracked the credibility that the photograph used to possess (Rosler 2004b: 188).

Analogue photography in photojournalism originated around the framing of a moment, which then became heavily associated with ‘straight’ or evidential photography (Rosler 2004a: 264). These singular images were integrated into the current format of news, acting as an entry point for the viewer. However when forming a narrative in photography, usually a sequence of images is needed. It could be seen that the singular analogue photograph is limited in capacity, bound by the frame (Rosler 2004b: 189 and 190). In contrast the digital image is a coded entity, considered as fluid and able to exist in both the latent and manifest state almost simultaneously (Fontcuberta 2014: 37). Although still bound by the edges of the frame digital photography appears to have the capacity to change the current forms of narration.

Ritchin likened digital imagery to that of ‘quantum physics’ (Worth 2013b) where the more we try and investigate and examine, the more the data fluctuates. We can extend this metaphor and describe analogue photography as chemistry in both a literal and conceptual sense. Although there are many possibilities, each one can be explained by a series of chemical reactions, constructed and carried out by the practitioner. It has been stated that the purpose of photography is to be ‘useful in the world’ and the capacity of digital technology could take photojournalism further however it needs the practitioner to become ‘proactive’ and take on the responsibility (Worth 2013b). Perhaps the fluid nature of the digital image will encourage new explorations in this field.

Photojournalism itself emerged with the industrialisation of news and the surge of mass markets, both contributing to the creation of the illustrated magazine, or photo essay (Warner Marien 2002: 8). The evolution of digital technology has allowed photojournalists and photo editors to explore new methods of narrating an event. Where the photo essay was product of industrialisation, digital technology provides the photojournalist with an escape into new forms of media (Worth 2013b). Time Magazine has certainly embraced this liberation by producing dynamic new features like ‘Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek’ (Ritchin 2013: 59) ‘Faces of The Dead’ (Ritchin 2013: 94) and ‘Watching Syria’s War’ (Ritchin 2013: 92). The use of moving image, sound, interactivity and creative data visualisation in these features support the explorations into new, effective narrative forms, which perhaps could not be achieved through the single photograph (Rosler 2004b: 189–190). In a recent interview, Stephen Mayes described digital, online photojournalism as rolling, a continuous stream of information (Worth 2013b). This environment is perhaps suited to a more creative, contextualised and comprehensive narrative moving away from the safety of the photo essay format.

The digital native culture has fully accepted the new form of photographic image; the instantaneous nature along with the developing communication infrastructure has helped shape the current mass image culture. This dynamic conflicts with the ideology of Walter Benjamin who discussed the loss of aura through reproduction and proximity. (Benjamin 1992: 225). The tools of this mass image culture can
be integrated into photojournalism as demonstrated by Benjamin Lowy, who used a combination of smartphone photography and the application Hipstamatic to produce his images (Ritchin 2013: 68). However they were met with negativity, head of a photojournalist festival Jean-Francois Leroy stated that using an app reduced the control over the photograph and actually worked to 'standardise photography' (Ritchin 2013: 69). Lowy’s images are accessible and familiar, with the aesthetic and format referencing social media such as Instagram. This technique allows the audience to relate and consume the content easily. However the danger of producing this comfortable imagery is that the content doesn’t work to challenge or provoke the viewer, referencing the current trend of main-stream media producing content the audience want to see not what they need to know (TED 2011). The mass image culture has generated an archive of safe, consumable imagery that works to promote, not provoke.

Current photojournalism can be perceived as ‘Networked’ (Beckett 2008: 2) with citizens and professionals contributing content. The millennium saw an increase of citizen journalism in media with the 911 attacks acting as the catalyst. Imagery from camera phones became more commonplace in photojournalism as the holder of a smartphone can become an instantaneous producer and publisher. This was particularly evident in the coverage of the 2001 Twin Towers attack and the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, which comprised of still image and moving image content. The raw aesthetic of citizen camera content often convinces the viewer that fabrication is less likely. Reduced naivety to manipulation has even provoked the public to question aesthetically perfect images, despite any status of legitimacy. The proximity of the citizen to their environment could also improve their representation. This insider status coupled with a greater awareness generates new questions (La Grange 2005: 125). With no belief in the image, and more citizens taking up a camera, is there actually a demand for the professional photojournalist anymore?

Manipulation is a process that was present in analogue photojournalism, however it has gained more awareness in the digital age. Both Ritchin and Rosler addressed the February 1982 National Geographic cover in reference to photographic truth (Ritchin 1990: 26, Rosler 2004a: 271). The distance between the pyramids was digitally altered, potentially destroying their historic association to ‘immutability’ (Rosler 2004a: 270). The parameters of manipulation in photojournalism have never been defined which has perhaps allowed instances in which images are changed to achieve ‘conceptual accuracy’ and ‘aesthetic pleasure’. (Rosler: 2004a: 276). Ethical guidelines in relation to the practise of manipulation must be defined in the context of photojournalism (and distanced from conceptualism) to avoid the exploitation of the audience through naivety (Bersak 2006).

A photojournalist’s role can be to construct a representation of victimisation and suffering. There is a responsibility on their part to photograph in a manner that avoids exploitation and misrepresentation, far from Barthes’ original dynamic of operator and target (Barthes 1993: 9). Abigail Solomon Godeau in her ‘Inside/Out’ essay examined the stance taken by photographers in representation of vulnerable subjects, which is especially complex when the photographer isn’t native to the culture and environment. In Kevin Carter’s well-known image, his ‘outsider’ approach could be viewed as imperialistic as there is no personal involvement or connection (La Grange 2005: 125). The distance created in the image reduces the relationship between the photographer and subject to an observing eye (Ritchin 2014: 36). However this is the stance photojournalism desires to achieve objectivity. It has produced iconic imagery Barthes would define, as punctum, drawing an emotional response, but is that enough to help the victim?
A comprehensive understanding of the subject's situation might establish continuing support from the audience. Perhaps the future structure of photojournalism should begin with an objective ‘outsider’ image to capture audience attention, which then leads to the larger, more informed body of work producing using the ‘insider’ approach (La Grange 2005: 125). This could work to solve the notion of subject exploitation and misrepresentation.

In photographic representation, context is the defining concept, however it is equally important to establish the right context for the final outcome (Rosler 2004a: 263, Johnston: 2011). The photojournalist’s responsibility extends past the action of taking a photograph; the imagery must be circulated to the right channels. Marcus Bleasdale has avoided ‘preaching to the already converted’, (Worth 2013a), choosing to adapt his body of work ‘Rape Of A Nation’ (Bleasdale 2008) into different forms to engage with alternative audiences. In contrast to this, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin created the body of work named ‘The Day That Nobody Died’ to comment on the practise of photojournalism (Broomberg and Chanarin 2008). The work was pieces of photographic paper exposed to the sun over the course of a day and has been exhibited in the contemporary art community most recently at the Shanghai Biennale. The significance of this work was the conceptual nature, which means it would be most effective in an environment where it would be perceived as art. Although the work is associated with photojournalism, to publish it in the environment of this genre would be taking it out of context and reducing the capacity to communicate effectively. Conceptual photography is a separate genre and needs distancing from the informative imagery normally associated with photojournalism (Rosler 2004a: 259).

It would be accurate to state that the digital age has changed the field of photojournalism, however it would be more perceptive to suggest that it has amplified some of the existing issues. The photograph as evidence has had an unstable history perhaps due to the limitations of the single–image approach (Renaldi 2014). The nature of the digital image and the techniques made available through digital technology has facilitated a new mode of delivery, which is more contextualised (Johnston 2011). Though with the format of print journalism and objective imagery remaining ever present, it appears that a balance of reactionary and proactive, insider and outsider photojournalism is approaching (Worth 2013, La Grange 2005: 125).

However there are considerations that must be addressed such as truthful representation, manipulation, contextual information, circulation to appropriate channels and photographic responsibility (Rosler 2004a: 271, Ritchin 2009: 26, Johnston 2011, Bleasdale 2008). In addition, the parameters of the professional in the current state of photojournalism still need establishing in order to maintain quality in the field (Ritchin 2014: 13). After investigating it would appear that when confronted with complexity, the photojournalist (professional or citizen) must produce an effective, innovative narrative with the tools available, which depicts a responsible, informed representation of the subject. It should challenge and provoke a response from the right audience and be viewed in the appropriate environment (Johnston 2011).
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March 2, 2015 / Photojournalism Now: Roles and Responsibilities / analogue, CollectiveVision, digital, digitalphotography, documentary, FredRitchin, image, information, internet, journalism, manipulation, media, narrative, News, OnlineCulture, phonar, photo, photograph, photographer, Photography, photojournalism, photojournalist, power, reportage, representation, technology / Leave a comment

New Digital Techniques in Photojournalism

The transition from analogue to digital photography has facilitated new forms of photography including the increasing prevalence of moving image and sound in photographic work. According to practitioner and writer Joan Fontcuberta where the analogue photograph is static and linear, the digital image is fluid and able to exist in the latent and manifest state almost simultaneously. Where analogue was often criticised for being too slow, the digital image has the capacity to innovate photojournalism in terms of both speed and delivery. The emergence of immersive and interactive media has transformed the practice of photojournalism and created the opportunity for new modes of delivery. However in the current state of photojournalism it appears that format of the singular image in the context of the photoessay is remaining present, perhaps photojournalists needs to break the framework that analogue has laid down in order to progress and produce effective, digital photojournalism.

Stephen Mayes characterised digital technology as the escape from the photoessay which was a product of industrialisation. Time Magazine have embraced this liberation and worked to create innovative new features such as Snowfall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek, Faces of The Dead and Watching Syria’s War. Snowfall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek is a digital feature which tracks the timeline of an avalanche that affected the lives of many people.
Despite sharing a resemblance with the format of the traditional photoessay, as the viewer scrolls down through the feature the capacity of digital technology is revealed with embedded photographs, video and sound. In addition to this the viewer takes an active role in reading as they can choose to activate or deactivate the content in the feature. Time Magazine also produced Faces of the Dead which features creative data visualisation combined with photography to produce an interactive feature.

Each portrait is made up of many little squares which the viewer can choose to click on; each individual square represents a U.S soldier who has been killed in action and by clicking their square the photograph of him and information about him can be seen. It is a creative construction that is extremely thought provoking when the meaning is understood, the viewer is confronted with the knowledge that all the tiny squares resemble the death of a person and the effect created is serious and reflective. In addition to this Time Magazine have established the platform Watching Syria's War which is comprised of video content contributed by citizens which is then organised and archived into different categories.
Fred Ritchin stated that photography and video are intertwined, there can now be a photofilm and a film still each existing as separate entities. In photojournalism now, video is just as important as photography as the kinetic properties allow for a greater capacity of representation and information. The element of citizen participation also contributes to a more accurate representation as they have the ‘insider’ status Abigail Solomon Godeau explores. The digital techniques used by Time Magazine explore and demonstrate the capacity and potential for digital photojournalism. The use of moving image, still image, sound, data visualisation and data visualisation works to create a more informed, contextualised feature which will work to engage and provoke the audience to take social action. It is evident that digital technology has the potential to innovate the field of photojournalism however it needs practitioners and organisations to take on the challenge.

The project ‘This Is Kroo Bay’ by Save The Children uses new digital techniques to examine and portray the lifestyle and stories of a particular culture.

The use of sound, image and moving image immerses the viewer into the situation and lends to a more participatory viewing experience. By drawing away from the limitative single image approach we allow for new modes of delivery which are comprehensive and contextualised from which the viewer can learn more from what they could possibly learn from the single image format. In this sense, aesthetic and
linguistic context works together to form a larger, more informed narrative. However the slower pace of this approach could conflict with the accelerated speed of the current news cycle, in terms of reactive photography, the single image could be considered the most appropriate format because of the simplicity and compatibility. Fred Ritchin debates that as photojournalists campaigning for social change, there needs to be more ‘proactive’ photography, negotiating issues before they happen as opposed to reacting to the events afterwards. If the nature and dynamic of the news cycle can be adapted to suit proactive practitioners, the capacity of photojournalism could grow to seeking preventative social change.

Accompanying new digital technology is the creation of a different type of media, social media which was primarily invented to facilitate communication on a global scale. As Stephen Mayes identified, we are now producing content for the screen and the idea of screen culture is predomately associated with social media communication. Where the photoessay was product of industrialisation, it could be perceived that social media is the product of digitisation. With the production of communication technology comes the idea of intelligent technology; it is now possible to Internet software to seek and store metadata about each individual which then builds up a picture of trends, habit and preferences. This knowledge is then sold to third parties who choose to target the individuals with specific adverts, search results and suggestions. This process has contributed to the formation of what TED speaker Eli Pariser characterises as ‘online filter bubbles’ which construct and shape the information seen by each individual.

The idea of digital technology shaping the information that is seen by each individual is perhaps destructing the ideology behind the democratic state; freedom of information. By shaping results, technology is effectively restricting other results meaning that the citizen has less control over the photojournalism they can see. There are alternative search engines such as DuckDuckGo which doesn’t track and store search inputs however there are not widely known. As the public continues to search using this tracker technology they risk becoming a spectacle, perhaps with the stored information there will be more discovered instances such as Abu Ghraib. The concept of intelligent technology deciding which information the citizen sees is perhaps comparative to the choice made by conventional media and social media in deciding what the audience needs to know. However this technology increasingly restricts the challenging content and presents the public with information it consider they desire. The evolution of new digital technology has perhaps facilitated a trend in photojournalism where the viewer is no longer confronted with the provoking imagery that will facilitate social change.

Overall it is evident that technology has the capacity to innovate and revolutionise photojournalism with the introduction of new elements such as moving image, sound, interactivity and data visualisation. These new modes of delivery have developed a form of photojournalism which is more informed and contextualised and will perhaps be more effective at narration. However the development of intelligent technology is perhaps threatening the purpose of photojournalism to inform. By giving it the power to restrict and tailor the content seen by each individual the technology deconstructs the notion of presenting content that the public needs to know and instead gives them content it expects them to desire. In order to progress and discover the full potential of digital technology to narrate it appears that intelligent technology needs to be addressed and negotiated to avoid the manipulation of important information.
Historically in the practice of photojournalism, conventional media was the sole form of publishing and the format was predominately the illustrated magazine or photo essay. Industrialisation facilitated the invention of the printing press which meant that the magazine and newspaper could be reproduced quickly on a mass scale. As a result, photojournalism could be distributed to a larger number of viewers than ever before which meant that the images were being seen by a wider audience. With the invention of digital technology the photojournalist was introduced to range of new techniques which could be used to display their imagery such as moving image and web space. Digital communication and transmission of images also improved which accelerated the pace of photojournalism which had been previously held back due to the slower photographic process of analogue. Communication diversified and expanded out with the creation of social media in the late 1900s which allowed Internet users to connect with each other in a manner previously unseen. The framework and technology of social media continued to develop and the integration of photo/video uploading meant that the user could become a publisher of content. Now in the current state of photojournalism there appears to be a overlap and a conflict between conventional media and social media in relation to the practice of photojournalism and the dissemination of information.

There appears to have been a convergence between social media and conventional media and between the citizen and professional photojournalist. Writer Charlie Beckett in his book Supermedia describe current journalism at ‘networked’ with both professional organisations and citizens contributing image and moving image content. Conventional media has attempted to participate in social media, The National Geographic now has an Instagram where the employed photojournalists can post images which will then be seen by the organisation’s 30 million followers.
This attempt by conventional media indicates that the digital native culture is an audience with which they want to engage and the best method for this is transmission through social media. However the structure and social media could perhaps have an impact on the professional photojournalism seen in conventional media; Instagram is restrictive in the fact that it only allows a square format so the original photograph taken has to be cropped which could manipulate the meaning and effect intended. In addition to this photojournalism has seen new methods in producing imagery such as Benjamin Lowy who used smartphone imagery and the application Hipstamatic to produce his photojournalism content.

The aesthetic of his images, achieved through applying a ‘filter’ (preconceived set of editing actions), became so popular that a ‘Lowy’ filter has been created which enables the app user to replicate Lowy’s style. This imagery heavily references the style of images seen on social media such as Instagram and is perhaps softer, more aesthetically pleasing than the majority of imagery we usually associate with photojournalism such as the image by Nick Ut of the girl whose village was attacked with Napalm in Vietnam. These photographers could be considered as too ‘soft’ for photojournalism, the purpose of which is to provoke a response from the reader in order to make social change. Lowy’s images however are comfortable and convenient to consume therefore the reader doesn’t react as much to them. By attempting to link and reference social media it appears that the professional form of photojournalism reduced it’s power to provoke and inform.

The purpose behind social media is to communicate, where previously this may have been predominately text-based, in the current state of photojournalism and communication it can be perceived as increasingly image-based. Where the photoessay was the product of industrialisation, it could be
considered that social media is the product of digitisation and the practice of photojournalism appears to evolve into different forms in order to maintain commercial gain as well as disseminating information. Social media now stands as the largest archive of free image and moving image content which has encouraged conventional media to dip in and acquire content to display using conventional platforms. Perhaps the most influential example of this was the happenings in the Abu Ghraib Prison where it was alleged that U.S soldiers subjected their prisoners to torture.

The significance of this event was that the participants actually shared the documentation of the happenings using social media and were consequently identified as the perpetrators. In this case social media resembled the both the organisation responsible for this crime to to discovered and the organisation responsible for publishing the official story covering it. In extension, the radical group ISIS is using social media in order to spread their ideology and construct an image of terror. The conventional media outlets that are using social media to disseminate information could potentially be perceived as linked to these radical groups in their choice of platform. The blurred boundaries of participation and publication seen in social media could initiate an element of corruption in the practice of photojournalism. If the audience can’t distinguish what is informative and what is performative, the original purpose of photojournalism is rendered mute and could actually begin to encourage destructive, not constructive social change.

The convergence between social media was perhaps inevitable as conventional media would appear foolish not to engage with the mass audience of digital natives using social media to communicate. However once the lines between conventional and social, informative and performative are lost; it could cause confusion over what the purpose of the image being viewed actually is. In addition to this, volatile organisations are now attempting to exploit the audience of social media by taking advantage of
collective mass image trends and the power of social media to communicate specific imagery and ideology. If the future of photojournalism is to continue being networked there perhaps needs to be a clearer distinction between informative and social imagery to enable the audience to respond in the appropriate manner. In addition, the content from professional, informative photojournalists needs to maintain the notion of photographic realism and quality to avoid being associated with social media by the aesthetic and therefore reduces the capacity to provoke. The purpose of photojournalism is to facilitate social change and this could be established through the use of both conventional media and social media however the issues associated with each form need to be addressed in order to protect the audience.

February 27, 2015 / Photography in Context, Photojournalism Now: Roles and Responsibilities / CollectiveVision, digital, digitalphotography, history, image, internet, journalism, media, narrative, OnlineCulture, photo, photograph, photographer, Photography, photojournalist, power, reportage, Symposium, technology / Leave a comment

Mass Image Culture

Kodak and Polaroid were the first creators of the instantaneous image making, the public immediately took to this idea and the popularity of this instant image culture has grown with the development of digital technology. With more user friendly cameras and most smartphones encompassing adequate level camera technology, the public have been enabled to produce imagery that they perhaps wouldn’t have been capable of using a film camera. In addition to this, the developed communication infrastructure has facilitated the establishment of various social media platforms, all of which allow the sharing of image and moving image content. The public can now produce and instantly share images with the world using their portable networked device. The digital device is limitless and allows for the production of endless images whereas film cameras used to be more restrictive. All these factors have contributed to the current mass image culture, where there are more images produced in a day than ever before. However with social media now representing the largest free archive of image and moving image content; can the photojournalist produce imagery that will be noticed? Or will the professional be usurped by citizen content altogether?
The original definition of the term image is a formulation of metaphors and similes which indicate meaning; in the digital age however the term has been adapted and manipulated to reference different photography practices. In the context of Phonar, Jonathan Worth and other writers/practitioners have characterised an opposition between the term photograph and the term image. Where the photograph very much refers to the analogue print; the image refers to the coded digital entity which is fluid and able to exist in the latent and manifest form almost at once. Stephen Mayes describes a new medium of photography which has been formed due to instantaneous photography and the sharing culture. He characterised the content on social media as ‘experiential photography’ where the user captures a raw thought and releases it for the world to see. One aspect of photography that has become particularly prevalent in this experiential medium is the self-portrait, or recently characterised as the ‘selfie’. The invention of front-facing cameras has allowed the user to construct a self-portrait in a manner not available before the digital age of photography.
This mass image trend has been recognised globally with the term being included in the Oxford Dictionary and it being referenced in high scale events such as The Oscars. Celebrity Kim Kardashian has basically shaped her career and exposure using the digital self-portrait. Photography has always been used as self-expression, but now with the limitless form of digital image-making, the holder of a smartphone can use their device as a constant tool of self-expression and construct a detailed image-based identity. However with the citizen empowered in relation to their own representation and producing an archive of self-portraiture, is the work of a photojournalist redundant? Is there a need to be trained in the art of representation anymore to be qualified construct a form of pictorial identity as the digital technology enables a form of convenient, quality and instant photography that could render the needs of the photojournalist unwanted.

Marshall McLuhan references mass media in his book Understanding Media, he describes every form of media and possession as an extension of the self. Previously the predominant forms of expression were through possessions such as the house, car and all these were indications of style and the presence of wealth. However social media and photography has facilitated a new dialogue of self expression which opens self expression up to anyone capable of owning a smartphone. As previously discussed, the self-portrait has now become the dominant mode of self expression, particularly in the digital native generation which has contributed to the mass image culture. McLuhan also references mass trends and collective experience in discussing that the tribal nature in mass online culture is particularly strong perhaps influenced by the sense of detachment to online life. As a result society has seen a new wave of terminology to address volatile actions seen in online culture such as ‘trolling’, ‘catfishing’ and ‘revenge porn’; some of which have now had laws passed to enable prosecution. In addition to this there have been some individuals and organisations utilising the nature of the mass image culture to attract attention and spread destructive ideology such as the self proclaimed ‘ISIS’.
This radical Islamist group have been attempting to spread their ideology and recruit members to their cause. Their image is predominately constructed through moving image footage of graphic nature which is then spread using social media in order to attract an audience. Fred Ritchin in his first book explored the capacity of digital technology to construct our own image, a power which was only previously held by high level individuals. Part of the reason why ISIS have been so successful is the capacity to construct their own image and disseminate their ideology using digital technology and the mass image culture. As addressed in my post on hacking; there will always be individuals that choose to target and exploit and as the number of images produced and shared gradually increases, perhaps the number of these volatile individuals will also increase.

Writer Walter Benjamin was one of the earliest individuals to identify the increase of images through reproduction and the effect it could have. He discussed the concept of ‘aura’, a feeling that is established by distance, for example an individual can be in the aura of a distant mountain range; this aura can be deconstructed by reducing the distance, or creating a reproduction of the original. Benjamin describes that as the reproductions increase; the desire to see the original decreases because the individual no longer feels the need to seek it. As a result the value of the original could appear to decrease because of the loss in interest. In photography the concept of reproduction has changed through the transition from analogue to digital; where the analogue print has a longer, consecutive process of reproduction and an original negative, the digital image is fluid and can be reproduced in an instant, with no indication as to what constitutes as ‘the original’. The ease of reproduction and the capacity to search and obtain images through Internet search engines and social media has perhaps contributed to a devaluation of the image which is also encouraged by the hacker culture. The digital image instead of remaining as a photograph, has been characterised as just information and in the digital age there is a expected entitlement to free information. For the photojournalist, despite the capacity of digital technology to narrative effectively it means that their work is under threat from devaluation due to reproduction. In addition to this, the photojournalist is threatened by the capacity of social media to act as a free image archive which could mean the professional photographer is usurped by

The mass image culture is a trend brought about by the transition from analogue to digital, it has facilitated the citizen to explore a new medium of self-expression using their networked camera device however it has also enabled individuals to exploit it. The apparent loss of aura and the fluctuating nature of the digital image has become a challenge to the photojournalist as their work is under threat from devaluation due to reproduction. In addition to this, the photojournalist is threatened by the capacity of social media to act as a free image archive which could mean the professional photographer is usurped by
the new experiential medium Stephen Mayes described. Overall the current state of the image is fluctuating, causing a redefinition by some practitioners to distance the analogue print away from the digital image as the properties of both are extremely different. It is unclear whether the mass image culture either compliments or destructs the current practice of photojournalism. Time will be the factor in tracking the nature of the image and the whether the mass image culture will destruct it’s value in the digital form.

February 27, 2015 / Photography in Context, Photojournalism Now: Roles and Responsibilities / analogue, CollectiveVision, digital, digitalphotography, Facebook, flickr, image, Instagram, internet, journalism, media, News, OnlineCulture, phonar, photo, photograph, photographer, Photography, photojournalism, photojournalist, Symposium, technology, tumblr, twitter, youtube / Leave a comment

**Final Visual Outcome**

The role of the photojournalist extends past the act of taking a photograph, the photographer must decide what format their work will take and what environment it should be viewed in. Previously the photojournalist would predominately present their photographs to the photo-editor of the conventional organisation who would then work with the main content editor to decide which photographs would be used where and how they would be laid out. Now the dynamic has changed due to social media and other publishing platforms, in an interview with Jonathan Worth Marcus Bleasdale stressed that photographers aren’t just that anymore, they are publishers too. With more spaces in which to display their photographs, photojournalists appear to be breaking away from the conventional photo essay format, not just because of the new digital techniques available but because it allows them to have control over the content they produce. Perhaps instead of the professional photojournalist being in danger, the real threat is to the photo-editor as their role can now be bypassed.

With the content of photojournalism changing perhaps the environment of the final visual outcome
needs to be changed too. The World Press Photo competition winners participate in a global tour around the world, these photojournalist type photographs being viewed in a gallery-like space is quite different from that of the original photo essay, however there is still the notion of aesthetic and context research.

Photographic based artists Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin created a body of work called ‘The Day Nobody Died’ which explores a different side to war, the banality in between the portions of explosive action.

The work consisted of large piece of photographic paper which were exposed to the sun on a day in which no soldiers were killed. The significance of this work was the conceptual nature, which means that it is most effective in a conceptual-type space such as an art gallery. Another similar practice that is perhaps geared to the gallery environment is documentary photography; unlike photojournalism, documentary photography is a longer, drawn out process which focuses more on making an artistic statement. Photographer David Moore said that his documentary practice was highly subjective, used to make a comment rather than to factually inform. The gallery spaces allows this open interpretation with the simplistic surroundings allowing the viewer to project their own emotions and feelings to create a
meaning. However the purpose of photojournalism isn’t to comment, it is to inform; by displaying photojournalism in an art-based environment it could be seen that the purpose of the image has been corrupted. Martha Rosler stated that it is important to distance informative photography from conceptual photography in relation to photographic manipulation, however is this concept just as important when referring to the context in which it is viewed?

Marcus Bleasdale is a photojournalist who is perhaps most well known for his body of work Rape Of A Nation which depicted the conflict surrounding the mineral market in the Congo. This work was influential however Bleasdale didn’t leave it there; he stated that by publishing in the conventional photo essay the photojournalist is ‘preaching to the already converted’.

Bleasdale negotiated this notion by choosing to adapt Rape Of A Nation into different forms to engage with different audiences; first into a series of graphic comics to engage with a much younger audience and now into a video game which would engage digital natives with the interactivity.
It was the adaptation of this body of work into different forms that made it effective for each audience it was intended for. Bleasdale demonstrates the active role a photojournalist can have in the production and dissemination of their own work. The collaborative nature of each adaptation also expands the work into different mediums which could potentially increase it’s capacity to continue informing and engaging news audiences. With the change from analogue to digital there is now a wealth of new possibilities open to the photojournalist in terms of taking ownership of their work and adapting it to engage with different audiences, in new innovative ways. In an interview with Jonathan Worth, photojournalist Shahidul Alam stated that ‘photography is a tool’, and as Marcus Bleasdale demonstrates, it can be continuously evolving.

It is clear that the role of the photojournalist has changed in the digital age, however there are other complexities aside from the obvious issues such as manipulation and misrepresentation. As the genre expands and diversifies it is becoming increasingly complex to identify the appropriate format and environment for the final visual outcome. However after investigating it would appear that the photojournalist must take ownership of their own work to ensure it completes the purpose for which it was made. Informative imagery must be distanced from that of conceptualist imagery, however that doesn’t mean that photojournalism doesn’t belong in a gallery environment. In addition to this the audience for which the work for must be considered in order to use the right photographic techniques. The notion of collaborative negotiation between other mediums poses a solution to the complexities and would appear to open up new possibilities for the practice of photojournalism. However it needs the practitioner to take on responsibility and adapt their role from photographer, to publisher.
The idea of authorship and ownership of imagery has become increasingly complex in the era of digital photojournalism and photography as a medium. The ease of reproduction and dissemination in the medium of digital photography has facilitated the capacity to produce, publish and share content online; however it has also allowed competent individuals to steal and ‘hack’ this content. A hacker is defined as a person who uses technology to access information that is meant to be off limits. In relation to photojournalism hacking can be characterised as the unauthorised reproduction and sharing of imagery that is deemed to be the property of the photojournalist who produced it or the organisation it was produced for. The ethos of the digital era appears to be that all information should be free, which has perhaps been encouraged by the fact that social media now has the status of being the largest free archive of imagery and moving image. There are many complexities in the digital online culture in relation to security and protecting information; as the digital image is coded information, it is also at risk.

Does hacker culture encourage or actually devalue the digital image? Or has the growth of social media and the mass image culture contributed to this desire for free information. A range of photographers have chosen to stop taking images and instead work with ‘found’ or ‘appropriated’ photography; which essentially is acquiring imagery either physical or digitally and producing work with them. Photographic artists Broomberg and Chanarin chose to take Brecht’s book ‘War Primer’ and create a second version named ‘War Primer 2’ in which they physically deconstructed the old content of the book and combined it with imagery from taken from digital sources which complimented and contrasted the nature and dynamic of modern day war and terror.
The process which Broomberg and Chanarin used to obtain their imagery can certainly be perceived as hacking, they took old analogue imagery taken and belonging to one photographer and combined it with digital imagery sourced or ‘hacked’ online despite the ownership of the imagery; the imagery from the Abu Gharib scandal was purchased is now owned by AP but Broomberg and Chanarin didn’t pay a fee to use it. Are Broomberg and Chanarin contributing to the hacker culture that has been created by digital age and subsequently are they putting the professional photojournalist at risk? Or are they simply reacting to the saturation of imagery generated by the mass image culture? There are many questions surrounding the process of hacking in relation to photography and photographic art that currently appear to be unanswerable, most specifically in relation to commercial value. It still remains to be seen whether the
There is the notion that the process of hacking can be used for an ethical reason, with organisations such as the Chaos Computer Club who worked with the Birmingham Open Media lab to create installation pieces which comment on the security systems created by companies which claim to protect their users. The current installation is a project by the CCC which features the work of hacker Starbug, who responded to Apple's release of the iPhone which had touch recognition software by successfully hacking it with a fabricated finger print, just two days after it's release.

A video of the process behind it, combined with a collaborative installation piece on retina software acts to raise awareness about the flaws in modern security systems. The Computer Chaos Club constantly works to address the flaws which could potentially put citizens in danger using creative, conceptual projects to provoke change. Their practice is working to eventually protect information through the process of hacking.

The act of hacking, although used by some to make a positive statement, is used by others for destructive purposes. The anonymous forum 4chan has been behind a number of hacking scandals and internet hoaxes which demonstrates the power an individual can hold in relation to information. In 2014, a mass of nude photographs depicting celebrities and citizens were hacked and released on the 4chan forum as a demonstration of the weaknesses in cloud storage.
The publishing took place in waves which saw some of the favourite female celebrities depicted nude in photographs that they probably taken assuming they would never be seen. The destruction of privacy caused a massive backlash from the public, as the popular Jennifer Lawrence was one of those targeted, however the images kept coming. In addition to this a Florida Art Gallery proposed to use the photographs for an exhibition called ‘No Delete’ which was consequently met with equal disproval. 4chan was also responsible for the Internet hoax ‘cut for Bieber’ which resulted in a mass of images on social media depicting the fans of Justin Bieber self-harming in an attempt to join this fabricated campaign.

The purpose behind this campaign was perhaps to demonstrate the power of social media and how engagement with one concept can occur on a mass scale, however the content of this hoax was extremely volatile and consequently put masses of citizens in danger. With experiments and statements such as this, can the explorations into hacker activity ever be deemed as acceptable? Although previous statements such from the CCC have been to try and eventually protect the citizen, the fact that they have partaken in an illegal activity by breaching security to access information appears corrupt.

Overall it appears that the practice of hacking is open to interpretation and encompasses a wide range of activity, both positive and negative. Work from artists such as Broomberg and Chanarin who use appropriated photography could potentially be considered as hackers because they take the imagery without the permission of the original user. However this could pose a threat to the professional photojournalist as it puts their commercial viability at risk if the digital image is completely devalued. It is evident that social media has become an important part of digital photojournalism as a free image archive, this also contributes to the threat to the professional photojournalist. However the practice of hacking by some individuals is perhaps corrupting social media, despite attempts from organisations such as the CCC who are working to raise awareness over security flaws. The current state of photojournalism is constantly fluctuating with issues such as the security, devaluation and hacking challenging the status of the digital photojournalist image. In order to continue making social change,
perhaps the practice of hacking needs to be addressed and negotiated to protect those who practice in photojournalism, both citizen and professional.

February 26, 2015 / Photography in Context, Photojournalism Now: Roles and Responsibilities / 4chan, analogue, BOMlab, Broomberg and Chanarin, CCC, citizen, computer, digital, hacker, hackerism, information, internet, journalism, leaked, online, photo, Photography, photojournalism, photojournalist, professional, scandal / Leave a comment

Representation in Photojournalism

Photojournalism is the pictorial representation of events and happenings around the world; predominately part of the action that is represented, is done so through portraits of the people involved. Although the portraiture imagery of cultural history is perhaps more associated with documentary photography, a large part of photojournalism is the representation of the subjects and their story. There is a lot of meaning created through the practice of representation therefore the photojournalist needs to address many aspects when approaching the photographic process. These include the idea of photographic realism, the meaning that will be taken from the image and the idea of context, where it will be displayed. The photojournalism image needs to tell a story and to do so the representation needs to be effective.

Abigail Solomon Godeau explored the stance taken by photographers in the representation of vulnerable subjects, which is becomes more challenging when the photographer isn’t native to the environment. She addressed Diana Arbus’ body of work in which she photographed the outcasts of Western society. Godeau describes that Arbus holds an ‘outsider’ status meaning she hasn’t immersed herself into the environment of her subject and therefore can’t fully understand their situation. In this instance the better approach would be to take an ‘insider’ stance, to delve into the contextual surroundings and as a result, produce an informed representation of the subject which will ultimately be more accurate. However there is always an element of constructed identity in representation, and it is possible that despite the photographer’s best intention that the subject’s themselves could construct a representation that is not entirely accurate. Ultimately it is the photographer’s role to immerse themselves in the environment in which they are photographing in order to produce a contextually informed representation using the
The idea of using different methods in representation could be utilised by photojournalists in order to produce new, innovative images. Although portraiture and art photography is created for a different purpose than photojournalism, there are approaches that the photojournalist could consider and adapt. Sara Davidmann is a fine art photographer who investigated the identity and stories of transgender individuals through a collaborative photographic project. The subjects had an active role in their representation as they felt they had been misrepresented negatively in the majority of previous imagery.

The notion of collaborative negotiation in representation is one that photojournalists could apply to their practice as it allows the subject to have greater control over the manner in which they are being depicted. However this means the photojournalist would have to compromise to get a shot with which both the subject and photographer can relate to and feel satisfied. This could mean that the photographer might come away with images that are less visually powerful however the representation will be more accurate in terms of how the subject wishes to present themselves. In addition to this, text-based photographic artist David Rule has investigated how the use of text can compliment, contradict or even replace the pictorial representation. The idea of linguistic context is not new in photojournalism as an image is always accompanied by a caption or story however we are yet to see text fully incorporated into the image itself. Perhaps the notion of using words and images effectively together could be a new, effective approach for the photojournalist to consider. Martha Rosler is another example of a photographer creating a relationship between text and imagery to create an alternative perspective on the concept of representation.
Her project The Bowery worked to avoid the obvious representation of alcoholics who would inhabit this area; instead of photographing the alcoholics themselves she photographed the doorways in which they passed time, and coupled these with words which worked to symbolise and associate with the social impression of an alcoholic. Although this work was conceptual in nature and perhaps criticises the obvious representational approach that photojournalists typically take, there is definitely a lesson to be learnt in experimenting with different forms of representation. Fred Ritchin claimed that we as a society have become desensitised to violence so perhaps an alternative technique will negotiate this issue and produce imagery that will attract attention in a new way. These projects negotiate the idea of context in the aesthetic and linguistic sense, a concept that a photographer must continuously consider when photographing their subjects, as a photojournalist image is meant to inform.

Overall representation is a concept that is negotiated in all forms of photography however in order for photojournalism to progress, they perhaps need to move away from the obvious forms of representation to which the audience could be desensitised due to the saturation of imagery in the current environment of photojournalism. Lessons can be learnt from practitioners such as Sara Davidmann, David Rule and Martha Rosler in relation to approaching representation differently. The idea of aesthetic and linguistic context must be addressed by the photojournalist to ensure the image is interpreted correctly. In addition to this, the photojournalist should consider the ‘insider’ stance explored by Abigail Solomon Godeau to ensure they have the contextual information which will ultimately create an informed representation. However it must always be remembered that representation is a process which is constructed and subjective; there will always be an element of performance for subject and an element of artistic ideology from the photographer. As long as the issues accompanying representation are addressed and negotiated, the photojournalist can work to produce an informed, accurate representation which will both inform the audience and please the subject.

February 26, 2015 / Photography in Context, Photojournalism Now: Roles and Responsibilities / analogue, CollectiveVision, digital, digitalphotography, documentary, image, internet, photo, photograph, photographer, Photography, photojournalism, photojournalist, reading, representation, Symposium / Leave a comment
Photojournalism is a particular form of journalism (the collecting, editing, and presenting of news material for publication or broadcast) that employs images in order to tell a news story. It is now usually understood to refer only to still images, but in some cases the term also refers to video used in broadcast journalism. Photojournalism is distinguished from other close branches of photography (e.g., documentary photography, social documentary photography, street photography or celebrity Discussing the roles and responsibilities of the journalist with reference to my own experience of working as a journalist.

Journalists have a number of roles and responsibilities that they must consider throughout the course of their entire career; but of course this depends upon the area of journalism with which they are involved. For the sake of my report I will be concentrating on the main area of journalism we have explored thus far and that is reporting the news. In fulfilling their role, photojournalists may work as freelance press photographers to cover an event and sell the images to a newspaper or web news agency. They negotiate price of photography and services provided. They also convert images to digital format to allow for web use. The job description example below gives major duties, tasks, and responsibilities that commonly make up the photojournalist role: Use a variety of cameras to take photographs of important locations, people, events or moments. Process photos by developing negatives or editing digital images to produce clear visuals.