The Narrated Self

How can the combination of writing and photography be used to represent individual experience?

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Bachelor of Visual Arts with Honours

An exhibition of visual artworks and exegetical dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This practice-led doctoral project explores the synthesis of the two powerful communicative modes of representation in contemporary culture: text and the photograph. The visual artworks created through this research use personal narrative in ways that seek to unsettle the recognised descriptive and representational modes and composites for using text and photographs. The majority of the works are large photographs combined with short stories. These personal narratives are made up of letters cut into the photograph and often form an additional shape or vignette within or over the photographic image. This configuration intends to disrupt the usual expectation for reading or illustrating narrative and aims to create new understanding of the nature of the photograph and the role it plays in creating narrative worlds.

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Martin Smith
June 2018

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed

Name: Martin Smith

Parts of this research have been published in exhibitions during the course of the project. Major exhibitions include:

- *The Perfect Price for Donny* (2011, appendix 5) at Ryan Renshaw Gallery, Brisbane
- *New Work* (2012, appendix 6) at Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne
- *More Sex, Less Death* (2014, appendix 7) at Ryan Renshaw Gallery, Brisbane
- *I'm Sick of Sittin''Round Here, Tryin' to Write this Book* (2015, appendix 8) Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne
- *That's What Tortures Me* (2016, appendix 9), Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane
- *The Only Option Available* (2018, appendix 10), Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne

Introduction

The greatest influence in the construction of my own personal narrative is my speech impediment. I have a stammer, my father had a stammer, my brother has a stammer, my sister had a stammer, but my mother took her to a speech therapist to correct it (this is another story). I grew up too embarrassed to speak so I spent my formative years watching and observing. The inability to express myself during this time left an indelible mark on my personal history. My difficulties with verbal communication has fuelled a desire to create artworks that record, reflect and reveal personal experience.

Since 2004, I have been creating and exhibiting artworks that consist of text in the form of a story that is hand-cut from the surface of a photograph. The excised texts are vignettes of personal experience told through a photograph. Before commencing my PhD in March 2011, the photographs that I was producing were very simple, snapshot images such as non-descript landscapes or close ups of vegetation that allowed for the addition of text because they did not contain too much contextual information. From the outset, a major focus of this PhD was to concentrate on making more complex and evocative photographs, as I was concerned that they were being overtaken and dominated by the text. The challenge was to create photographs that implied more complex scenarios while still being contextually open to receiving and transmitting the text. Making new images required a balance between containing interesting information and not containing too much information. This process stayed with me throughout my candidature and, I believe, was only resolved in 2016 with the presentation of the exhibition *More Sex, Less Death* (2014, appendix 7). The subsequent exhibitions then coalesced and developed the ideas to become more cohesive.

The other focus in undertaking my PhD was to develop and experiment with the narratives in the text to explore how personal experience can be represented in an artwork. In the works made prior to my candidature, the text represented events in a humorous manner, but I gave little thought to constructing alternative narrative worlds within them. Since my research has developed and synchronised with my studio investigation, so the text in my work has explored diverse narrative worlds such as the metalepsis, the fork-path narrative, and the unreliable narrator. These narrative structures were incorporated in the artworks in 2016, but

the genesis of the text development started with *The Perfect Price for Donny* (2011, appendix 5).

This investigation into narrative is paired with a narratological study of the combination of text and image. The field of studies for image and text would seem to be very well served when the literature is surveyed, with well-established journals such as *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* (established 1985), *Image and Text* (established 1992), and *Image and Narrative* (established 2000). However, in each case, these journals are primarily aimed at researchers working with the text or discursive side of this image/text divide.[1] In other words, the research focusses on *into* or *through* art images, including photo-image practices, with very little concern for research *for* art practice, as in my case, where the outcome is embodied in the creative work. Although the subtitle of *Word and Image* might imply inclusion of creative research into the visual, the research is primarily aimed at art historians or literary studies researchers, with a broad historical focus for ancient, medieval to current periods but very few articles on contemporary art. *Image and Text*, published by the University of Pretoria, began with a focus on design but since 2011 it has been "repositioned as a multi- and interdisciplinary journal that orbits around the nexus of visual culture", as noted on its website. Nevertheless, articles on design remain a significant focus of the journal and, while photography is often analysed, very little interest is taken in a broader interpretation of narrative.[2] *Image and Narrative* is published by Open Universities Press and, with its focus "on visual narratology and word and image studies in the broadest sense of the term", obviously has most relevance to my study, but again very few studies in this journal have directly impacted my research.

This exegesis traces the development of my theoretical and studio research over the course of the PhD. Chapter 1 is largely devoted to forms of narrative because of the importance of the field of narrativity to my research. The theoretical framework described in this chapter understandably also includes an analysis of photographic theory relevant to my interest in personal narrative and the photograph. However, the specific theories dealing with text and photography are extended upon within the studio methodology chapter of Chapter 3. Prior to

[1] *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* is published by Taylor & Francis (Routledge). See https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/twim20.
[2] *Image and Text* is published by the University of Pretoria. See http://www.imageandtext.up.ac.za/.

this, Chapter 2 provides an extended analysis of three highly relevant works of art by established practitioners that each illuminates an aspect of my own approach. I undertake a comparative analysis with examples of my own studio research.

My artworks are integrated into all chapters of the exegesis to mirror the reality of my research that interweaves discursive and studio practices; however, Chapter 4 deals with the chronological development of my exhibited works. Significantly, I do not engage the aesthetics of images or aesthetic discourse more generally. This is for strategic reasons because of my use of heuristic and associated methodologies using personal narratives in tandem with the wider discourse on the mechanics of photographic representation of text and image. In established heuristic method, and particularly in the contemporary variant of autoethnography, the value of the outcome of the work is sometimes measured by the "aesthetic" qualities of the text. It would be simply too confounding to be discussing aesthetic features or elements that required constant qualification as relating to story or photograph.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

An understanding of narrative structures is key to conceptualising and disseminating my visual research. The texts that I fuse to the photographs through the process of excision are constructed to illuminate the role that narrative plays in the formulation of meaning, but also in the construction of personal identity. The photographs that are created to receive the text are crafted to provide a vehicle for the creation of narratives. Any reading of the visual research of this PhD requires a practical knowledge of the definition, structure, and form of narrative, narratology, and narrativity, especially in relation to the construction of identity, the creation of narrative structures, and the unique spatial and temporal nature of a photograph. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to provide those distinctions that form the theoretical foundation of these photographic/textual-based artworks.

Before highlighting the discursive theoretical background, I should note that the physical act of excision in my practice performs an important role in the reception and operation of the image/text synthesis. Cutting into the surface of a photograph is different by degree and type to cutting the surface of a painted canvas, for example. If anything, the self-conscious rupture of the canvas in painting has become an act of enhancement, as demonstrated by those such as Lucio Fontana (1899–1968) in the 1950s to contemporary artists such as Dana Schutz (b. 1976).[3] The situation is different with photography; as Barbara Savedoff showed in her pre-digital era analysis of photographs of torn movie posters, the disruption of the flat surface of the photograph has a particular "power to disturb us".[4] With the move towards the dominance of the screen image since the latter part of the twentieth century, there has been a renewed interest in the "viscerality" of artistic surfaces, as Terry Smith and others have pointed out.[5] Since the quality of the electronically generated screen image has become the measure against which all images are compared, there has been some abbreviation of the distance between painting and photography. As Richard Shiff has noted, "Video exposes the material thickness of thin photographic emulsion and does the same to any thin, emulsion-like surface

[3] "Dana Schutz," Artnet, http://www.artnet.com/artists/dana-schutz/set-up-xU4rz3l4s0fe6vCPRvDxJw2, last accessed 18 May 2018.
[4] Barbara E. Savedoff "Transforming Images: Photographs of Representations," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 50, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 94.
[5] Terry Smith, ed., *Impossible Presence: Surface and Screen in the Photogenic Era* (Sydney: Power Institute, 2001).

of painting. Our response is a changed sense of the materiality of images."[6] With this re-materialisation of the photograph, the presence of the individual artist in the making has been re-established to some degree. In the case of my work, the text excised from the photograph becomes emphatic material evidence of the presence of the narrator.

The insertion of a textual narrative into the material surface of the photograph is an important aspect in understanding the visual research. Since access to digital technologies has become more available and photography is being combined seamlessly with other media the material properties of the photograph continue to be explored. While the narratology applied throughout the exegesis is derived mainly from literary sources it is worth noting several influential exhibitions such as *The Anxiety of Photography* at the Aspen Museum of Art[7] and *Ocean of Images* at The Museum of Modern Art,[8] the essay *The Object Lost and Found* by curator Matthew Thompson[9] and the books *Words Without Pictures* by Charlotte Cotton and Alex Klein[10] and *The Miracle of Analogy* by Kaja Silverman[11] respond to artists and artworks that combine various media to extend the notions of photography. As the primary studio methodology employed through the studio research is the combination of textual narratives and photography the application of a literary narratology is consistent.

French semiologist Roland Barthes stated in his essay "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" that "narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself".[12] According to Barthes, narrative is present in all cultures and takes many forms, including myths, folklore, music, novels, poetry and comics.[13] Narrative is a basic construct of human beings and fundamental to how people interpret memory, process, time and conceive of our identities.[14] It is also crucial to how people provide meaning and context to the experiences encountered in daily life. When asked about the events of the individual's day, there is a tendency to leave out the most mundane events and condense the

[6] Richard Shiff, "Realism of Low Resolution, Digitisation and Modern Painting*,"* in ibid., 78.
[7] Thompson, Matthew. "The Anxiety of Photography." edited by *Aspen Art Museum*. Aspen Colorado, 2011.
[8] Quentin Bajac, [curator], "Ocean of Images: New Photography 2015." In *New Photography*, edited by Museum of Modern Art. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2015.
[9] Thompson, Matthew. "The Object Lost and Found." *Aspen Art Museum* (2011).
[10] Klein, Alex, Charlotte Cotton, and Art Los Angeles County Museum of. *Words without Pictures*. 1st Aperture ed. London; New York;: Aperture, 2009.
[11] Silverman, Kaja. *The Miracle of Analogy, or, the History of Photography, Part 1.* Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 2015.
[12] Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Flamingo, 1984), 79.
[13] Bronwen Thomas, *Narrative: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1.
[14] H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2 ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

enormity of life into simple narratives that explain the movements in space and time. People do this without consciously thinking about the complex structures being adhered to. Needless to say, the photograph, both in formal and snapshot iterations, plays a significant role in this—"my first car", "our wedding", and so on.

Using narrative as a structural framework for decoding the studio research allows for multiple interpretations and conclusions. In American psychologists Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh's book *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture*, the authors note the "irreducibly ambiguous meanings of any narrative utterance".[15] It is the ambiguous nature of the narrative utterance that my studio research utilises to blend media and stories into open-ended narratives. This literal compounding of text narrative and photographic image evokes and inverts Barthes's initial interpretation of the photograph as a "message without a code" just as it embellishes his later call, in *Camera Lucida,* to draw attention to the essential mystery of the photograph: "to confront in it the waking of intractable reality".[16] Each completed visual work represents an episode of a life, a splice of time, told through text and photograph, that does not seek narrative conclusion and is part of a much larger whole. A complete study of the influence of narrative on the visual works that comprise this PhD research and our lives is beyond the scope of this exegesis, but it does strive to present relevant ideas and concepts that aid in reading the visual research through a narrative lens.

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for my investigation. It gives particular importance to narrative and is divided into four sections that explore divergent yet related topics: Narrative; Personal History and Context; Narrative Worlds; and A Photograph. The first section, Narrative, is centred around the definitions of narrative, narrativity, narratology, story, and discourse. This section utilises the writing of American narratologist H. Porter Abbott, American psychologist Robyn Fivush, German philosopher Dieter Teichert, American narratologist David Herman, Israeli Professor of Comparative English Studies Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Dutch narratologist Mieke Bal, American Professor of English Brian Richardson, and English, Media and Communication academic Bronwen Thomas.

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[15] Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh, *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture* Vol. 1 (Amsterdam and Great Britain: John Benjamins Pub. Co, 2001), 5.
[16] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), 119.

Having established the definitions and conditions of narrative, the next section, Cognitive Narrative and Personal History, discusses cognitive narrative theory to examine how narratives are used to form and interpret personal histories. In this section, an examination of Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's writing on the novel provides a pathway for contextualising personal histories within recognised literary structures. The third section, Narrative Worlds, defines and outlines the various narrative structures that are used in this visual research, such as epistolary narratives, the metalepsis, fork-path narratives and the unreliable narrator. These narrative structures are utilised to disrupt, distort, and divulge the narrative layers that exist within the studio research of this PhD and, more broadly, our lives. In order to understand how narratives create multiple narrative worlds,[17] this section also explains Bakhtin's conceptualisation of narrative space, the *chronotrope*, where the spatial and temporal layers of the story-world converge, allowing for the creation of other layers within the narrative.

The final section of this chapter, A Photograph, examines the narrativity of a single photograph. The initial discussion in this section highlights how narrative is contextualised within the reading of a photograph and the differences between the narrative of language and the narrative of imagery. The next part of this section examines the often-used narrative framework of the 'decisive moment' in relation to French photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson. The last part of the section defines and outlines the framework of 'frames and scripts' as an alternative method for reading the narrativity of a photograph. The text *Photography, Narrative, Time: Imaging our Forensic Imagination* by Australian photo-theorist Greg Battye will be used extensively in the discussion of frames and scripts to build the narrative framework through which to read the photographic element in the visual research of this PhD.[18]

[17] The term narrative worlds are defined by Abbott and Chatman as "…the mental models that readers and audiences create as they try to make sense of and interpret narratives, imaginatively reconstructing aspects of the context or of the characters' lives that may not be overtly or fully delineated". Porter H Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. 2 ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 167.

[18] Greg Battye, *Photography, Narrative, Time: Imaging Our Forensic Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

1.1 Narrative

Narratives were used by humans long before a name was given to them.[19] The ability to form narratives is a uniquely human trait as we are the only species that seemingly possesses both language and the ability to recognise the passing of time.[20] The function that narratives play in life is best described by H. Porter Abbott in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*: "narrative is the principal way in which our species organises its understanding of time".[21] Children develop and start to place a subject with a verb, such as in "I just ate cake", at around four or five, an age that coincides with our first memories.[22] This has led some to theorise that memory does not exist without narrative as there is no mental record of the individual's existence till the formation and expression of self through narratives. In her book *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self*, Robyn Fivush explains the role of narrative in the development of an autobiographical memory:

> Autobiographical memory emerges during the latter part of the pre-school years and suggests a new level of self-understanding. This level of self-understanding integrates *action* and *consciousness* into a whole self, and establishes a self-history as unique to the self, differentiated from others' experiential histories.[23]

According to Fivush, narrative aids in the establishment of autobiographical memory that links actions to consciousness and provides the tools for us to create a unique identity.

In the academic field of narrative theory, there are different definitions of narrative. Abbott considers the range of different ideas surrounding the description of events, sequence, and causality in his definition of narrative, which he posits as "the representation of an event or a series of events".[24] In his essay "Narrative, Identity and the Self", Dieter Teichert defines narrative as "…a semiotic, mostly linguistic presentation of at least two successive states of

[19] Ibid., xv.
[20] Ibid., 1.
[21] Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 3.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Robyn Fivush, *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self* (Mahwah, NJ; London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003), 7, my italics.
[24] Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 13.

affairs, events or actions",[25] while David Herman states in *Basic Elements of Narrative* that "At a minimum, stories concern temporal sequences—situations and events unfolding in time."[26]

For this exegesis, I have chosen the broadest definition of narrative as articulated by Abbott as "the representation of an event or a series of events".[27] According to Abbott, "… the capacity to represent an event, either in words or in some other way, is the key gift [of narrative] and it produces the building blocks out of which all the more complex forms are built".[28]

Some scholars (for example, Barthes and Rimmon-Kenan) require more than two sequences to be represented to qualify as a narrative, while others (for example, Bal and Richardson) require an actor/narrator to be present to relate the narrative. I chose Abbott's definition because it refers to the representation of events, which allows for the use of media other than text. The representation of events articulated by Abbott can refer to text but equally to the application of paint, the use of actors, cameras, etc.

Outlining the definition of narrative is important for the exegesis as it provides the parameters with which to decide whether elements within my PhD studio research constitute a narrative. Of interest is being able to confirm the level or amount of narrative that exists within media or an artefact. The reading and evaluation of a narrative or ascertaining an artefact's narrativity will be examined next.

Narratology and Narrativity

The terms 'narratology' and 'narrativity' are used throughout the exegesis to discuss the study of narrative (narratology) and the degree to which a text lends itself to be interpreted as a story (narrativity). This section expands on these terms and gives examples of their use.

[25] Dieter Teichert, "Narrative, Identity and the Self," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 11, no. 10–11 (2004): 181.
[26] David Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2009), 1.
[27] Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 13.
[28] Ibid.

Narratology developed in the 1960s and 1970s as a structuralist method for studying written narrative texts, with a primary focus on literature. In recent years, it has branched out into a more interdisciplinary model that explores the semiotic and cultural theory of narrative texts and contexts.[29] The term 'narrative texts' is based on different media that organise meaning based around narrative lines. This can include texts but also images, dance, theatre, public spaces, acts of remembrance and celebration, sporting events, and fashion.

In using narrative as a theoretical framework, I will also be exploring the narrativity of the studio research. Narrativity refers to the level to which the narrative lends itself to being interpreted as a story. A simple narrative such as "For sale, baby shoes" does not lend itself to an extended contemplation of the event portrayed. However, if you add the two words "never worn" at the end—so "For sale, baby shoes, never worn"[30]—the space for a more complex narrative is created. Why have the baby shoes never been worn? Has the baby passed away? According to Abbott, there is no definitive test to evaluate the level of narrativity in any media or to the number of characters, words, ideas, events depicted to increase any media's narrative potential. Like much to do with the study of narrative and its quality, meaning is left to subjective human response.

Narratology establishes terms that are used to distinguish certain elements of the narrative to provide the reader with the skills to differentiate between the 'what' and the 'how' or what the narrative is about in relation to the way the story is being told. In "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives", Barthes made it explicit that in a complex system such as narrative, an organising structure must be used.[31] The structure allows us to show that narrative is not just a mass of propositions or utterances but an enormous collection of elements that collude to construct a narrative. The two main terms used to interpret narratives and to structure their creation and dissemination in culture are 'discourse' and 'story', which will be more fully explained in the next section.

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[29] David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), ix.

[30] The phrase "For sale, baby shoes, never worn" is regarded as the shortest novel ever written. The writer is unknown, but the phrase is used to exemplify how much can be said with the fewest words. Josh Jones, "The (Urban) Legend of Ernest Hemingway's Six-Word Story: 'For Sale, Baby Shoes, Never Worn'." *Open Culture*, 24 March 2015, http://www.openculture.com/2015/03/the-urban-legend-of-ernest-hemingways-six-word-story.html.

[31] Barthes, *Image, Music, Text,* 79-124

Discourse and Story

This section extrapolates the terms 'discourse' and 'story' to provide a framework for understanding the unique qualities of narrative. In outlining the definitions of discourse and story, I will be primarily drawing from Abbott and the American film and literary professor Seymour Chatman (whom Abbott quotes). By utilising Abbott's method for differentiating and explaining discourse and story, a thorough understanding of the distinctions and boundaries of the terms will emerge that will provide a pathway to the formation of multi-world narratives.

The most important element in the chosen definition of narrative as "the representation of an event or a series of events" is the *representation* of *events* within a temporal space. It is important to note that not every piece of text or painting or film is a narrative. To be considered a narrative, the entity in question must consist of a story (the event or a sequence of events) and a narrative discourse (how the story is represented). Later in this section, a practical example of the qualities of story and discourse will be outlined.

Bronwen Thomas provides a simple definition of story in her book *Narrative: The Basics*: "Story is used in narrative theory to refer to the chronological sequence of events that underlie the narrative … the events that you would include if you wanted to give someone a flavour of what the narrative is about."[32] According to Thomas, story is not just the description of the action but also the order in which the events unfold. The story is used to better understand the choices that are being made to tell a particular tale. As will be further explained later in this chapter, the same story can be told in various orders and still contain the same meaning. The other important element in gaining an understanding from the narrative is how the events in the story are represented, which is referred to in this exegesis as narrative discourse.[33]

Narrative discourse pertains to the way in which a story is told and the internal world created by the reader/viewer that the story takes place within. In literature, this can refer to similes,

[32] Thomas, *Narrative: The Basics*, 8.
[33] For clarity, I have used Abbott's terms of 'story' and 'narrative' discourse in referring to these two characteristics of narrative. Scholars using a Russian formalist model, such Bal and Richardson, use the terms *fabula* (story) and *Sjuzet* (narrative discourse). Thomas uses the words 'story' and 'storyworld' when referencing narrative discourse.

metaphors, and other narrative devices such as the metalepsis and fork-path narratives (which will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter). The narrative discourse is the author's style in telling the story and their ability to create internal images in the mind of their audience. Chatman provides another delineation of the terms and also elucidates on the nature of time within the narrative:

> Narrative entails movement through time not only "externally" (the duration of the presentation of the novel, film, play) but also "internally" (the duration of the sequence of events that constitute the plot). The first operates in that dimension of narrative called Discourse…, the second in that called Story…
>
> Non-narrative text-types do not have an internal time sequence, even though obviously they take time to read, view or hear. Their underlying structures are static or atemporal.[34]

To put this another way, reading a non-narrative text, such as this section of the exegesis, the only time involved is the time it takes to read it and the order is the structure of the exegesis. The exegesis is, for the most part, not set within a 'story-time' and mostly does not include events that occur within a temporal space.[35] The structure of the exegesis is used to, hopefully, allow for the logical (and at times chronological) flow of information, not to provide the reader with any narrative understanding.

An understanding of the mechanisms of story and discourse is an important aspect of extracting meaning from narratives and it is worth extrapolating further on Abbott's explanation of story and discourse. For this part, I have also used Abbott's explanatory model to outline the different terms.

In each presentation of a narrative, there is the 'external' time that it takes to view the film, read the novel, or watch the play in question as well as the temporal space that the narrative/story is set in, such as present, past, future. The events presented in the narrative also occur in a designed order that affects how the story is represented and interpreted. Within the narrative, there is also an 'internal' time that the story events are presented in and an order that creates coherence. The order and time of the discourse can be different to the order and time of the story, yet still create a coherent narrative. Within a few sentences that

[34] Chatman quoted in Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 16.
[35] When writing about the studio research in Chapters 2 and 4, and detailing my own narratives, there is a story-world and a timeline. This comment refers to the theoretical text.

take thirty seconds to read and comprehend, one can conflate and represent several hours of real time. For example:

> When he finally finished lunch, it marked the most peculiar start to the day. It had begun by waking in the wrong bed, eating his son's lunch, wearing his wife's underwear and falling asleep on the train and waking up in Darra.

The order of the sentence can change but the narrative coherence remains the same.

> After waking up and eating lunch in Darra, he started to recall the rest of this peculiar day including wearing his wife's underwear, eating his son's lunch and waking up in the wrong bed.

Other changes can occur but the story still remain intact: the narrative voice can change from third person to first person and specific moments within the narrative can be heightened but resemble the previous narratives. For example,

> I only remember the morning. I woke up in James's bed with him on the floor, sound asleep. In an effort to get moving, I had a shower and grabbed what I thought was my own underwear from the drawer, but they ended up being Jill's. But this was the least of my worries. I grabbed the prepared lunch on the counter and headed off to work. On the way there I fell asleep and awoke in Darra starving. It was then I realised I had taken James's lunch. This has been the worst morning ever. I should have left the bar when Max left.

Narrative discourse is endlessly malleable. It can be stretched forward and backward, change tense and voice and narrative time, as information is deciphered from the narrative, it is reassembled in the correct order to make it a story. The events depicted within a story can take a minute, an hour, a day, or a lifetime, but as the events are depicted, humans place them within a chronological time of earliest to latest. The order of the events and the length of time they take within the story are often quite different from the time and the order of events within the narrative discourse.

Using the last story written above as an example, the order of the narrative discourse is as follows:

Time	**Event**
Present	Waking up and remembering
Earlier in the day	Waking in bed, showering, wearing wrong underwear, grabbing lunch, going to work
Midday	Waking in Darra, eating lunch
Present	Remembering morning
Previous evening	Feeling regret at not leaving the bar

The time sequence presented within the discourse allows one to position present and past events next to each other, whereas the story places the sequence of events into a chronological order.

Time	**Event**
Previous evening	Feeling regret at not leaving the bar
Morning	Waking in bed, showering, wearing wrong underwear, grabbing lunch, going to work, waking in Darra, eating lunch, remembering morning
Midday	Eating wrong lunch, remembering night before

One of the benefits of narrative is that the discourse can possess a temporal space and order while the story occupies another temporal space and order. It is through the aligning of the discourse and the story that the narrative coherence is created

As mentioned previously, the options available in organising the structure of the narrative discourse are endless and provide the author/artist with the opportunity to conflate multiple times, events, and spaces within the design of the narrative. The discourse represents the narrative, providing it with its flavour, its essence, its tone, and its effect. The discourse sets the story within a designed environment and provides the reader/viewer with an emotional intention to receive the events depicted in the story.

Defining the effects of discourse and story is important in contextualising my research project, as the stories of my personal experiences incorporated into my artworks are told through a variety of narrative discourses. Each new visual work presents an opportunity to experiment with how the story is told and what narrative strategies can be used to entice the viewer to completely read the text, from fork-path narratives to metalepsis narratives (which will both be discussed in 1.3 Narrative Worlds). As each artwork represents a vignette of personal experience the ways narratives are interpreted and incorporated within life is examined in the next section.

1.2: Cognitive Narrative and Personal History

This section discusses the use of narrative in the development of personal histories, including the choices made in how individual stories are told and developed. Also discussed is the importance of context in deciding what aspects of our personal histories are told and retold. This section is also important in understanding the narrativity of a photograph (discussed specifically in section 1.4 A Photograph), as context plays a pivotal role in framing photography within a narrative structure. This section will draw upon the writing of Professor of Rhetoric and Linguistics Barbara Johnstone, American psychologist Jerome Bruner, American linguists William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, English Professor of Language Monika Fludernik, and Russian literary critic and scholar Mikhail Bakhtin.

The use of narrative in fields such as ethnography, anthropology, and other human sciences as the means through which social and cultural life are interpreted and understood is becoming more widely considered. The increasing focus on narrative as a method of interpreting and rationalising our lives is discussed by Barbara Johnstone in her essay "Discourse Analysis and Narrative". She writes, "The essence of humanness, long characterised as the tendency to make sense of the world through rationality, has come increasingly to be described as the tendency to tell stories, to make sense of the world through narrative."[36]

The tendency to make sense of the world through narratives is also addressed by Jerome Bruner in his essay titled "Life as Narrative", where he states that narratives do not happen,

[36] Barbara Johnstone, "Discourse Analysis and Narrative," in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. Deborah Schiffin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi Hamilton (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 635.

they are "created". The stories that define and shape us are contextualised by the community that we live in and the culture/family that formed us. Bruner asserts that the phrase "life imitates art and art imitates life" can also be read as "narrative imitates life and life imitates narrative".[37] This refers to the notion that our sense of the world that we live in and the concept of ourselves is shaped by the narrativising process. Bruner states, "There is no such thing psychologically as 'life itself.' At the very least, it is a selective achievement of memory recall: beyond that, recounting one's life is an interpretive feat."[38]

Bruner then goes on to state that the ways of telling stories and the means of conceptualising our lives becomes habitual and creates a pattern for how experience is structured. He argues: "…that a life as led is inseparable from a life as told—or more bluntly, a life is not 'how it was' but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold".[39]

The daily influence of narratives in the descriptions of events can also be extrapolated into larger, more overarching narratives that are used to construct versions of our personal identity. The events that make up our collective experiences are grouped together and from here an identity is created that reflects the individual's interpretation of these events.

For their essay "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience", William Labov and Joshua Waletzky studied the structure of oral or "natural" narratives as a means of examining how language operates between people. They studied the underlying narrative structures at play and what purpose/s are served when the individual's stories are narrated. According to Labov and Waletzky, when narrating ourselves to others, the primary purpose is more than just being able to tell a good "yarn"; it is to save "face".[40] In any given situation, the narrator wishes to maintain a certain control of the narrative that presents them in a positive way. To illustrate their point, Labov and Waletzky use the example of a somebody on a first date, stating that it is unusual for them to discuss personal failings and anxieties and that it generally serves them better to dwell on more uplifting and courageous endeavours. In

[37] Bruner, "Life as Narrative," 692.
[38] Ibid., 693.
[39] Ibid., 708.
[40] William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience," in *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts: Proceedings of the 1966 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society,* ed. June Helm, 12–44. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967. Subsequently published in *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7, no. 1–4 (1997): 3–38. *Face* refers to a positive self-image that narrators wish to project while in conversation with others.

conversations, the search to describe the self as committed and determined rather than overly competitive; sensitive and caring rather than clingy and needy; hard-working rather than being a workaholic.[41] In her essay "Identity/Alterity", Monika Fludernik discusses the self-narrating process as a fiction that we tell ourselves: "Images projected in conversational narrative, like images of one's self that one tries to live up to in one's behaviour…are fictions/fantasies that the narrator is at pains to uphold narratively, self-images to emulate and realize."[42]

Fludernik's reference to the 'fiction/fantasies' that the narrator creates and upholds suggests that larger narratives are formulated that frame the individual's life. One of the most recognised narrative forms is the novel, a literary form that is influential in the study of narrative but also in the creation of identity. An influential figure in the study of narrative, Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novelistic discourse reveals analogies between the discourse of novels, personal history, and autobiographical memory. Bakhtin describes the language of life narrative in figurative terms or tropes, which is linked to how novels are read and understood.[43] He draws parallels between characteristics of the modern novel, such as its sense of "temporality, polyphony and intertextuality (that is, every text derives from, and refers to, further texts)",[44] and the narrative construction of a life. As every self-narrative is part of a life that is developing and changing, acquiring knowledge, imagination and skills, the narrative is also developing to adapt to new contexts and ways of telling stories. This development of a self-narrative therefore allows for actual stories of real life to weave and integrate with potential stories of a possible life that has infinite permutations.[45] As a consequence, life narratives, like most narrative texts such as novels, films, plays and art, can also be treated as open and without end. There are an infinite number of ways to tell and retell our stories as life provides us with new opportunities to recontextualise the past, present, and possible futures. The narratives that are told to the self and revealed to others are being reworked, changed, emphasised, and fictionalised.

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Monika Fludernik, "Identity/Alterity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 261.
[43] Bakhtin cited in Brockmeier and Carbaugh, *Narrative and Identity*, 7.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., 8.

In everyone's lives, there are unrealised opportunities, unfulfilled chances, demands and options that, according to Bakhtin, correlate with the genre of the novel. He suggests that we are constantly making ourselves and are unable to settle on one true identity. This is similar to the novel in the way that regardless of how thorough a characterisation is, there is always something left over—an unrealised "surplus of humanness".[46] As such, Brockmeier and Carbaugh argue that life narratives are not only connected to actual life stories but can also be used as a method for exploring multiple self-identities.

Brockmeier and Carbaugh state that the role of narrative in the construction of our 'identity' is limiting in that on any given day, we exist as multiple 'identities'. The person within his or her family is different to the person presented to the barista making his or her morning coffee, to work colleagues, and to the people in our communities. It is therefore more accurate to speak of our identities rather than our singular identity. In the desire to accurately explore the role of narratives in the construction of our identities, it is worth considering the idea that within a singular written work, there can be multiple narrative layers that contribute to the interpretation and understanding of stories. The process of how the narrative layers are combined or condensed creates a narrative world that the stories exist within.

1.3 Narrative Worlds

This section defines how narratives create and converge time and space within a story-world to form multiple narrative worlds. In the studio research, the interdisciplinary use of text, image, form, and mark-making produces independent narrative layers. The narrative layers 'stack' up, creating a complex story-world that produces multiple narrative synergies. The aim of the studio research is to collapse and adapt the different narrative layers to make the viewer aware of the existence of the narrative layers and the influence they have on how personal narratives are shaped.

An important concept in the creation and fusion of time and space in narratives is that of the *chronotrope*, a theory developed by Bakhtin as a means to conceptualise the convergence of the spatial and temporal dimensions of a fictional world. Defining and explaining the effect

[46] M. M. Bakhtin and Michael Holquist. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Vol. 1. (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), 37.

and consequence of the chronotrope is worthwhile as it provides the conditions that allow for multiple narrative worlds to inhabit, interact, and disrupt the flow of the story. Within several of the artworks produced for this research project, multiple narrative worlds have been established through the use of the epistolary voice, the metalepsis, fork-path narratives, and the unreliable narrator (each of which will be defined and their conditions for use explained below). Through the application of these narrative worlds, the mechanics of narrative become observable. Abbott explains the desire for the creation of narrative worlds within fiction as well as 'life': "Every day we hope, dream, fear, urge, hypothesise, fantasise and in many other ways create worlds that don't come into being. They remain possible worlds, yet without them life would be hard to conceive."[47]

An aim of the studio research of this PhD is to create multi-layered narratives that reference several distinct narrative functions. These functions include to write stories that entertain and elicit memories of past experiences, to create "possible worlds"[48] where imagined scenes seem conceivable, to highlight the role that narrative plays in the development of our personal identity, to use a photograph as one medium through which to tell stories, and to develop new narrative worlds that the stories inhabit. Any discussion about narrative is also a discussion about time and also place.[49] The ability of narratives to position the reader within a time and place is crucial in any understanding of narrative function.

Time, Space, and the Chronotrope

> We grasp narrative of any length not only in time but in space as well.[50]

An important aspect in any discussion about narratives is space, which is more obvious in filmic and theatrical narratives. In filmic narratives, the camera and action move through a pictorial space that positions the viewer within a depicted space. In the theatre, even on a bare stage, the actors and action are situated within a theatricalised, pre-determined, and deliberate artificial space. Within written or oral narratives, the temporal and spatial dimensions of the narrative create the imagined world that the story is actioned in. In the story (as opposed to film or theatre), the narrative time and space seem to fuse together in the imagined world of

[47]Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 167.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., 160.
[50] Ibid.

the story. Once the reader recognises the temporal and spatial dimensions of the story, multiple narrative worlds can be born within that space.

In his essay, "Forms of Time and the Chronotrope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics", Bakhtin states that narrative texts are the depiction of a sequence of events that are played out within a fictional world, which he coined the chronotrope. This word combines the Greek words for time and space as a means to define and describe the condition of narrative where the temporal and spatial world of the text are fused. He states his argument best in the following passage:

> In the literary artistic chronotrope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. The intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotrope.[51]

In Bakhtin's theory, the fusing of time and space that creates a chronotrope is the "organising centre" for the narrative. It provides "the meaning that shapes the narrative".[52] It is like the background for all that occurs within the story. It is omnipresent but never there, like the 'lighting' of a photo-realist painting, the 'onions and garlic' of a pasta sauce, or the 'court' that a basketball game is played on. Bakhtin states that "narrative [is] shaped by a specific way of conceptualising the possibilities of action".[53] The chronotrope serves as the primary point from which the narrative takes place. It positions the story in a spatial and temporal dimension that allows the reader to conceptualise the events depicted in the fictional world.

Similarly, Abbott describes the convergence of time and space in American short-fiction author Alice Munroe's story-world in his analysis of her *Short Stories*:

> With their different players, settings and contexts, these strips of memory bind together complexities of thought and feeling that co-exist in the narrator's conscious. Of course, all three could not have come into being without the dimensions of time and space, yet in consciousness they take on a new kind of being, coming together in ways that exceed the coordinates of time and space.[54]

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[51] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and the Chronotrope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, 84.
[52] Ibid., 250.
[53] Ibid., 370.
[54] Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 166–67.

While a complete discussion of the premise and purpose of the chronotrope is well beyond the scope of this exegesis, it is important to mention in contextualising this research. As discussed earlier, the conflation and compression of time and space allows for experimentation in the story-world in terms of character, setting, and context. In the following sections, four narrative worlds will be defined and discussed to further build on and subsequently disrupt, disturb and reveal the narratives that are situated within fictional stories as well as our own life stories. They are as follows:

- Epistolary voice—A story told through letters or diary entries to give a greater sense of the thought processes of the narrator.
- Metalepsis—where the narrator is also an agent in the narration.
- Fork-path narratives—where a narrative device such as a tunnel or wardrobe is used to propel the narrative to unexpected places and events.
- The unreliable narrator—where the voice of a character provides signs that the information presented is not truthful. The picaro, madman, waif, and the clown will be discussed.

Epistolary Voice

The epistolary voice will be examined through the English literary stylistics academic Joe Bray in his book *The Epistolary Novel* (2003). The Epistolary voice is a first-person account of events told through the writings of an individual in the form of a diary, or to others in the form of letters. It is used throughout the studio research to better represent the consciousness of the narrator. It might be argued that the current interest in narrative theory across many education and humanities disciplines, especially given its particular prominence in Britain, could have its origins in the government-sponsored epistolary "Mass Observation" project, which ran from 1937 to the 1960s in Britain in which hundreds of ordinary men and women were encouraged to keep full personal diaries on a daily basis.[55]

[55] The Mass Observation Archive is now held by the University of Sussex in England and full details of the archive along with its more recent revivals are available at http://www.sussex.ac.uk/library/specialcollections/massobssearch

Bray explains that the epistolary method is another example of the way that the novel is "… an attempt to render individual psychology, to delve into the mind of it characters".[56] The epistolary is more than just unfiltered ruminations on personal experience. When used correctly, Bray explains, it can be effective in representing the "divided minds" of the characters.[57] Bray cites Janet Altman, who writes, "for the letter novelist the choice of epistle as narrative instrument can foster certain patterns of thematic emphasis, narrative action, character types, and narrative self-consciousness".[58] As a form, the letter is one of the most direct ways to represent the inner world of the characters within the story. There is an intimacy in reading correspondence that is meant for only selective individuals that is unattainable in third-person renditions of the same story.

Metalepsis

This part examines the narrative world of the metalepsis, one that contains both the external (narrator) and internal world (narration). It will draw upon the writing of French literary critic Gerard Genette and the English Professor of English John Pier. A metalepsis occurs when the external narrator enters the internal world of the story, either in the form of a character or an event. A recent example of a narrative metalepsis is the film *Adaptation* (2002), where the scriptwriter, Charlie Kaufman, played by Nicolas Cage, is also a character in the film whose movements, dialogue, and reactions are directly related to his writing the script. As the author, Charlie Kaufman is racked with self-doubt about the script he is commissioned to write, and the audience witnesses the results of his writing in both the external world of the narrator and internal world of the narration. The two narrative worlds of discourse and story are conflated in such a way that it is not known whether the story is contaminated by the discourse or vice versa.

The study of narrative metalepsis was propagated by Genette. His book *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* uses a structuralist model to study Marcel Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time*, not as a study of value of language but more to uncover the multiple structures of narrative. Genette writes about narrative, or diegetic, levels. The levels are similar to Abbott's definitions of discourse (narrative) and story (the narration). However, Genette's

[56] Joe Bray, *The Epistolary Novel: Representation of Consciousness*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 12.
[57] Ibid., 13.
[58] Janet Gurkin Altman, quoted in, Bray, *The Epistolary Novel*, 14.

model also includes a level called the 'narrating'. This is the 'how' of the narrative: "the real or fictive act that produces the discourse—in other words, the very fact of recounting".[59] Narrative metalepsis is when the levels are blended, resulting in "intrusions [that] disturb, to say the least, the distinction between levels".[60] By the narrator being an aspect of the narration, the blending of the narrative layers reveals their existence.

Since the initial study of narrative metalepsis, narratologists have defined it in a variety of ways. Abbott describes it as "The world of production that contains both the story-world and the world of narration."[61] The blending of the narrative layers causes a disruptive event in the reading of the narrative. In theatre, film, literature and painting, the use of a narrative metalepsis has become more popular as a method for disrupting the usual flow of the narrative and for highlighting the layers of narrative. In his insightful e-journal *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, Pier describes the use of narrative metalepsis:

> … with metalepsis, the author pretends to intervene in a story which is in fact a representation, so that transgression of the threshold of embedding merges with that of the threshold of representation, affirming the existence of the very boundaries that are effaced.[62]

Pier confirms the existence of the narrative layers that the metalepsis reveals. In my visual research, metalepsis is used to make the reader aware of the position of the narrator and that they are reading a narrative.

Fork-Path Narratives

Within this PhD studio research, fork-path narratives are also used to subvert the normative world that the narratives exist in. Throughout my practice, I have often described these as 'Simpson' narratives, with reference to the popular animated series *The Simpsons*, where the story that starts an episode is not the story that ends the episode.[63] The shift in narrative focus has been a major influence in the creation of the studio research and its disruptive qualities call for some further examination in this section.

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[59] Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 13.
[60] Ibid., 88.
[61] Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 170.
[62] John Pier, "Metalepsis," *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, last modified 13 March 2013, http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Metalepsis.
[63] Matt Groening, James L. Brooks, and Simon Sam, *The Simpsons*, 22 minutes. 20th Century Fox, 1989–.

Narrative provides us with the opportunity to explore 'possible worlds' that would normally be outside of the realm of our experience. The purpose of these possible worlds is to conjure fantastic environments, characters, and scenarios that excite and expand our notions of reality. One technique for creating competing worlds within the narrative is called creating fork-path narratives, examples of which can be found in many popular stories, such as C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*[64] and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.[65] These narratives begin in one imagined world and, through the use of a mechanism, another world is made available to the characters. The mechanism in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is the passing through the wardrobe. The story begins as a British war story, but travelling through a wardrobe leads the four children who are the protagonists of the story to continue in an alternate world where their skills are required to rescue the participants of the new world. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the fork-path narrative is dependent on Alice falling through the rabbit hole to travel from one world to another. The new world operates in a different reality to the world Alice left, and she has to acclimatise to the new conditions. The mechanism creates the opportunity to build other worlds, or narrative layers, that then interact with each other in ways that create confusion, drama, tension, or humour.

Unreliable Narrator

My studio research utilises the methodology of the unreliable narrator to further undermine the veracity and intent of the narrative. This part will investigate the unreliable narrator through the writing of American literary critics Wayne C. Booth and William Riggan. The term 'unreliable narrator' usually refers to first-person narratives where the unreliability of the narrator to accurately convey the events of the story becomes obvious.[66] The uncloaking of the narrator's veracity happens either initially or towards the end of the story, so that the events that occur or have occurred are filtered through a fogged lens. The narrative world of the unreliable narrator is one that is constantly in flux as the narrator stumbles through the story.

[64] C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (London, Harper Collins, 1950).
[65] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (New York, Macmillan, 1865).
[66] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*., 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

An excellent example of the unreliable narrator is the main character of The Dude in the 2001 film *The Big Lebowski* by American film-makers Joel and Ethan Coen. The Dude, played by Jeff Bridges, tries to find the people who urinated on his rug, but because of his marijuana use, his recollections are considered doubtful, as exemplified in the following monologue:

> Man…I've got certain information…alright, certain things have come to light…and, you know, has it ever occurred to you, that instead of…ah...you know, running around blaming me…you know given the nature of all this new shit…you know, this could be…ah, ah, ah, a lot more, ah, ah, ah complex, I mean it might not be just a simple, ah, ah…you know.[67]

In his book *Picaros, Madmen, Naifs and Clowns: The Unreliable First-Person Narrator*, Riggan categorised the various examples of unreliable narrators in primarily first-person narratives. He provided four main definitions of unreliable narrators: The Picaro, the Clown, the Madman, and the Naif.

The Picaro is considered an unreliable narrator because the character is considered to be a petty criminal, a rogue, or grafter looking out for their needs above all others. A contemporary version of the unreliable narrator is infamous American gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson in his drug-fuelled account of the Mint 400 motorcycle race in Las Vegas, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1972).

The Clown does not take the narration seriously and deliberately deceives and creates diversions throughout the story to play with the reader's expectations. The clown narrator plays with the truth without any sense of consequence. Of the clown, Riggan states: "Whether a transient or a permanent retainer of the house, such a parasite earned his keep through the amusement and diversion which his presence provided for host and guest alike."[68]

The Madman is considered unreliable because of mental illness or trauma. The full realisation of the madness of the narrator can be made in the beginning of the story but it can also be made available through a slow progression of events that lead to a conclusion of madness. Riggan clarifies the way the madman is considered an unreliable narrator: "Form and content thus coalesce to present not a picture of the narrator's past and present external

[67] Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, dirs., *The Big Lebowski,* Polygram Filmed Entertainment, 1998.
[68] William Edward Riggan, Jr, "Picaros, Madmen, Naifs, and Clowns: The Unreliable First-Person Narrator," PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1978, 95.

reality, but rather one of his present psychological derangement and, in many cases, his criminal culpability."[69]

The Naif is immature or limited in their knowledge of the world. They have a childlike naivety to situations and their role within society. The eponymous character in the 1994 feature film *Forrest Gump* by Robert Zemeckis is an example of the naif. The film explores thirty years in the life of the title character as he tells his story to people on a park bench. The tale includes fanciful recollections, including his meeting with many US presidents, running across the US several times, and being a world champion table tennis player. These events could not be true but because they are told through a child-like voice, the audience listens intently and wants to believe Forrest. Riggan also defines the traits of the naif in this passage:

> The naif…does not carry the stigma of the society which his account calls into question, for he views and encounters that society essentially unmarked by its traits, bringing with him only the "wonder" of adolescence or the incomprehension of simple naivete.[70]

As in all the examples of the unreliable narrator, the role of the naif is to confuse and subvert the narrative. By questioning the veracity of the information presented to us through these characters, readers and viewers become aware of the multiple narrative worlds that are created and exercised.

Throughout this section, the contextual themes have been framed around narratives that usually exist within extended temporal narratives, such as literature, film, and theatre. The narrative structures that exist within these media, through the use of time, are allowed to develop and deepen the spatial and temporal experience of the viewer. In the visual research, the narrative frameworks that have been previously discussed such as the metalepsis and the fork-path narrative are fused within the unique spatial and temporal world of the photograph. The next section will examine the narrative of the photograph, its limitations of meaning, and how the photograph is linked to written representations. The history, description, and practice of text and image will be further explored in Chapter 3.

[69] Ibid., 172–73.
[70] Ibid., 206.

1.4 A Photograph

In the visual artworks that are the outcome of this studio research, text is excised out of a photograph. The narrative worlds of epistolary, metalepsis, the fork-path narrative, and the unreliable narrator are utilised in the construction of the text, but they are literally read through a photograph. Reading the text through a photograph disrupts the viewer's ability to consistently read the photographic and textual content. It's beyond the scope of this exegesis to outline the entirety of photographic theory in regard to memory, time, place and narrative. However, this section provides a brief outline of the writing and ideas that inform the role of the singular photograph in the studio research.

This section is divided into three parts. The first part examines the writing on photographic narrativity through a comparison of language and imagery from independent media theorist Marie-Laure Ryan. The second part discusses American cultural theorist Emma Kafalenos's writing on the photograph presenting a sliver of a narrative—a small slice of a larger whole. Kafalenos's writing is a springboard onto the key point of this part that examines the theory of the 'decisive moment' as championed by French photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson. The decisive moment is a traditional method for conceptualising time within the photograph and as such needs to be unpacked in relation to narrativity. The final part of this section defines and explores a theory borrowed from cognitive psychology of 'frames and scripts' as an alternative method for thinking of narrativity in the photograph. This part will also examine the narrativity of a photograph through the writing of Australian cultural historian Greg Battye, Gestalt psychology and the work of Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, and the American artificial intelligence theorists Roger Schank and Robert Albelson. Overall, this section offers an alternative to the notion of the decisive moment and puts forward a case for the use of known frames and scripts as constants and that narrativity can occur through the disruption and distortion of perceived events.

It is an important and deliberate action that this section is titled 'A Photograph', as it will examine the narrativity of a singular image, not the presentation of sequential images. Books on narrative and text, such as Professor of European Literature Clive Scott's *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language*[71] and American English Professor Wendy Steiner's

[71] Clive Scott, *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language* (London: Reaktion, 1999).

Pictorial Narrativity[72] discuss the narrativity of images through the deliberate sequential placement of images either in publication or the gallery. The photographs composed for this artistic research are single photographs that receive and transmit narratives. They are not meant to be read sequentially; rather, they are individual responses to the written text. For this reason, an analysis of a single photographic image is more productive than a review of a narrative series.

In his book *Photography, Narrative, Time: Imaging Our Forensic Imagination*, Battye outlines the traditional theory of photographic narrativity linked to French photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson's notion of the 'decisive moment'. In his photographs, Cartier-Bresson sought to capture the decisive moment in any interaction that could represent the whole event. The power of reproducing this sliver of time was that it placed the viewer in the middle of an event that allowed for imagining of the time before and after the exposure was taken. By representing an event in a single frame, the inference of cause and effect provided a degree of narrativity.

Battye offers an alternative theory for photographic narrativity, utilising tools from cognitive psychology known as frames and scripts that uses known spaces and actions as constants so that narrativity can occur through the disruption and distortion of perceived events. In relation to the photograph, the theory of frames and scripts offers a narrative alternative to the decisive moment and the duration of exposure as the only useful depiction of time within photography.

Photographic Narrativity

The photograph is a unique space that represents the past in the present. It pauses a moment in real time and provides a vehicle for memory and recollection. The photograph's ability to simultaneously present the past in the present is examined in French, film theorist Christian Metz's essay "Photography and Fetish". He states "Photography has a third character in common with death: the snapshot, like death it is an instantaneous abduction of the object out of the world into another world, into another kind of time."[73] However, it offers a narrative,

[72] Wendy Steiner, "Pictorial Narrativity," in Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 145–178.
[73] Metz, Christian. "Photography and Fetish." *October* no. 34, Autumn (1985): 84.

and therefore begs the question: what are the differences between textual and visual narratives? This section examines the narrativity of a photograph and its relationship with language, presenting a case for defining narrative within cognitive terms. It draws from the work of Swiss literary scholar Marie-Laure Ryan, German dramatist Gotthold Lessing, and English photographer and writer David Bate.

As noted earlier, the definition of narrative adopted in this exegesis is the representation of an event or a series of events. The single photographic image freezes a moment in time and presents a scene from a particular angle, distance, and scope. As a reductive medium, the photograph can reduce the entirety of an event to a single frame. Being able to capture an event at an unknown time of the narrative sequence, the photograph offers the viewer an array of narrative possibilities either in the past, present, or future. Every viewer will therefore seek to travel down a unique narrative path within the represented event. It follows that the pictorial narrative is not as reliable in contextualising the event as language is.[74] Ryan makes an argument for language having the highest degree of media narrativity: "It seems clear that of all the semiotic codes language is the best suited to storytelling. Every narrative can be summarized in language, but very few can be retold through pictures exclusively."[75]

She therefore proposes to make a distinction between language and image by suggesting that there are different levels of narrativity between objects "being a narrative" and "possessing narrativity".[76] Ryan argues that language can describe action in ways that images cannot, because images alone lack the code, grammar, and syntax required to articulate specific meanings.[77] A simple statement such as "Sophie cannot eat beans" cannot be delivered with the same level of accuracy and surety through an image alone. Ryan suggests that images cannot present words such as "aren't", because they cannot capture negatives. Ryan states: "Since pictures left by themselves, lack the ability to articulate specific propositions and to explicate casual relations, their principal narrative option is…the illustrative mode".[78] While this argument seems to support the idea that narrative is located at the locus of language, Ryan puts forward an alternative proposition, that if narrative is defined in cognitive terms,

[74] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 140.
[75] Ibid., 10.
[76] Ibid., 9.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 139.

then it becomes a mental image and not purely a linguistic object. According to Ryan, in a cinematic narrative, the brain can link together divergent images to make a narrative sequence. For example, if one watches a movie showing an image of the ocean, an image of a woman looking forlorn on a beach staring at the ocean, an image of a ship starting to enter the frame, and then an image cutting back to the woman smiling on the beach, it's not inconceivable for them to make a connection between the woman waiting for a man to return and, depending on the time frame shown in the costumes, then to make connections with various conflicts that occurred during this time. The image here is not seen as another way of telling the narrative but as a means of evoking it or recalling the story from memory. Narrative images have a symbiotic relation with the verbal as they import psychological motivations, emotions, and characterisations from the main story and provide visualisations of facial features, colouring, and costuming, among many other qualities. The relationship between image and language forms a powerful combination where each component fills in the missing gaps of the other.

The photographic representation of an event can evoke narrative out of one image through the use of the 'pregnant moment'. Gotthold Lessing wrote in the eighteenth century that the pregnant moment of a story is "where the past, present and future of the story can be read, summed up, 'at a glance'".[79] The pregnant moment seeks to locate the point where a future and past can be anticipated and predicted. Kafalenos states:

> A painting or a photograph with narrative implications offers the perceiver an experience that is comparable to entering a narrative *in medias res:* we ask ourselves what has happened, what is about to occur and where we are in the sequence of a narrative.[80]

According to Bate, Cartier-Bresson retitled the pregnant moment within the photographic canon as the decisive moment.[81] The decisive moment is considered to be the point within an event that provides the optimum moment to contextualise it within a larger story. Before continuing, it is worth briefly exploring the concept of the decisive moment and temporality within a larger discussion of photographic narrative, as it provides a point of departure for further discussion.

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[79] David Bate, *Photography: The Key Concepts* (New York: Berg, 2009), 56.
[80] Kafalenos quoted in Ryan, *Narrative across Media* 140, original italics.
[81] Bate, *Photography*, 56.

The Decisive Moment

The theory of the decisive moment is important as it offers the notion that at a certain point in a sequence of events, a single frame can represent a scene. Championed by Cartier-Bresson, the decisive moment is best displayed in his 1932 photograph *Place de l'Europe, Paris* (figure 1).

Figure 1. Henri Cartier-Bresson *Place de l'Europe* 1932

In Bate's view, the idea of the decisive moment combines the notion of freezing and capturing the instantaneous in photography with an older strategy in art history of story-telling within one picture. Even though historic paintings were not made in an instant, they also had to conceive of ways of depicting an entire narrative in one frame—a moment of anticipation when the future of the story is in the process of being determined.[82] Cartier-Bresson characterises the decisive moment in this quote:

[82] Ibid.

> We work in unison with movement as though it were a presentiment of the way in which life itself unfolds. But inside movement there is one moment at which the elements in motion are in balance. Photography must seize upon this moment and hold immobile the equilibrium of it.[83]

The narrative that the decisive moment depicts is not of the scale and ambition presented in historic paintings; they represent a 'degree of narrativity' rather than a more complex and evolved narrative. Referring to *Place de l'Europe, Paris*, Battye discusses the narrativity of the image by pointing out that there is a sense of the past in the ripples that have gathered along the rungs of the ladder and that the future can be predetermined through the inevitable splash and inconvenience of being wet that will occur when the gentleman hits the puddle. Within the picture, it would be pure conjecture to make assumptions about the gentleman's occupation, age, purpose, and reasons for walking into a puddle. The title presents the context of place but provides no further narrative information.

It worth noting that Cartier-Bresson was discussing the narrativity of a single photograph in relation to photojournalism or street photography, which has different conventions than painting, for example. The exploration of the decisive moment contextualises the studio research because when I first started combining photographs and text in my art practice in 2004, the photographs were taken on the street and sought to provide a sliver of a narrative that was then added to by the text. The text sought to fill in the gaps of the photograph. As the project developed over the course of the PhD, the photographs started to take on a more complex and ambitious role. It became an aim of the project to make photographs that possessed a greater connection to a narrative of human experience. The intention was to produce photographs that responded to experience and personal narratives through scenes that disrupted and distorted our notions of time and place. Furthermore, the intention was to produce photographs that approached narrative in a cognitive sense as opposed to the temporal notions of the decisive moment. It was also an aim to develop a framework that could be used to describe the narrativity of a still life or a landscape, not just photographs produced within the conventions of the photojournalistic tradition.

[83] Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Michael L. Sand. *The Mind's Eye: Writings on Photography and Photographers*. 1st ed. New York, N.Y: Aperture, 1999. 32-33

Using the theoretical framework of frames and scripts, which has been developed from cognitive psychology, supports the aims of these photographs and is the focus of the last part of this section.

Frames and Scripts

Defining and exploring the theories that underpin the frames and scripts framework is important in contextualising the photographic aspect of the artistic research. This part of the section builds on the ideas first explored in section 1.2 Cognitive Narrative and Personal History, especially in relation to how narratives are connected to the nature of human existence. The ways that scripts are framed through previous experience and narratives are formed through the disruption of the expected script will be examined in this part, and it forms the basis of the cognitive narrative framework through which the studio research should be viewed.

The use of frames and scripts as a framework for discussing photographs is borrowed from Gestalt psychology and the work of Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget's work with children. Gestalt theory is used within the principles of design and music. It was first articulated in Germany in 1910 by German psychologists Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, and Wolfgang Kohler through their studies into how the brain interprets individual musical notes not as single sounds but in a way that combines the score into a "whole effect" or gestalt.[84] Their work with music was also applied to design where form became a fundamental ingredient in perception. They held the view that a form composed of various separate parts, such as dots, dashes, colours or designed letters, would be perceptually combined and perceived as being a whole and possessing that form. This idea has been important in the development of design principles but also within photography, especially for the construction of images that combine objects or events that are similar. The use of Gestalt meant that separate objects shown together will be perceived as being part of a whole as opposed to being read as what they are, outside of the construction of the image.[85] An important aspect of Gestalt theory that is also related to frames and scripts is the interplay between what is known about being in and experiencing the outside world and the knowledge of those actions and events that are then brought into a narrative world.

[84] Roy R. Behrens, "Art, Design and Gestalt Theory," *Leonardo* 31, no. 4 (1998): 299.
[85] Ibid., 132.

Greg Battye discusses the use of frames and scripts as strategies for turning a generalised notion of 'context' into something more tangible, to provide us with a framework to interpret specific types of context.[86] Battye defines frames as "essentially static situations", such as the arrangement of the walls, ceilings, and the objects that populate a room, such as a stove, refrigerator and dining table that form a "kitchen".[87] Scripts are "sequences of action that are standardized" and performed and repeated by many varied individuals, such as using a fork to stabilise food, a knife to cut the food, and a fork to transport the food into one's mouth. The known script, the consumption of food, occurs within a known frame, the kitchen.

American artificial intelligence theorists Roger Schank and Robert Abelson define a script as follows:

> A script is a structure that describes an appropriate sequence of events in a particular context. A script is made up of slots and requirements about what can fill those slots. The structure is an interconnected whole, and what is in one slot affects what can be in another. Scripts handle stylized everyday situations […] a script is a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation.[88]

Schank and Abelson's definition of scripts proposes that through the depiction of standardised events, scripts provide an expanded notion of time within non-verbal media. As in Gestalt theory, the knowledge and practice of lived experience—the repetition and performance of daily rituals—is brought into our reading of represented events in photographs. Using the notion of scripts to read photographs proposes another way to experience time and duration than that offered by the decisive moment.

In order for the still image to become a narrative, the standardised or implied knowledge that the viewer brings with them becomes infused with events represented in the photograph. While a series of images that depict a subject putting toothpaste on their toothbrush, then putting the brush in their mouth and brushing their teeth, is a logical sequence of events, it is not an interesting narrative. In order for narrativity to occur, there is a requirement for a clash between the viewer's expectations and the sequence of depicted events. Battye describes this action:

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[86] Battye, *Photography, Narrative, Time*, 133.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Schank and Abelson quoted in ibid.

> Narrative occurs not in the sequence of events that is 'in' the text itself—not, in other words, where early narratologists were looking to find it—but in the interface, the interplay, between text and viewer/reader.[89]

According to Battye, narrativity occurs in the interplay between what is expected through the standardised actions in scripts and what is then portrayed in the image. For a narrative to have 'tellability'—to be worthy of being told—it must contain a recognisable script but also include a departure, surprise, or deferment from the script. The decisive moment of Cartier-Bresson alludes to a past and future through the freezing of time at a signature moment in the narrative. The narrative continues before and after the shutter has captured the event, allowing the viewer to see only a sliver of time, but still able to imagine the immediate future.

The use of the decisive moment as a narrative framework for a photograph is also quite limited to the photojournalist. The use of frames and scripts as a narrative framework draws on implied knowledge and recognition of form; can be applied to still life, family photography, landscapes and portraiture; and is a more active and fluid method for reading the photographs in the studio research. In relation to narrative photographs that make documentary "truth" claims, William Mitchell has noted that both evidence of external context for authentication along with "internal coherence" is required before their veracity is accepted.[90]

This chapter has introduced all of the narrative elements that are used throughout the studio research of this PhD. The essential overarching narrative framework was introduced through the definition of narrative, narrativity, and narratology as well as the exploration of story and discourse as a means of discerning the difference between the events described in the story and how it is told. The ways in which narrative influences our daily lives and the construction of identity are important in understanding changes in the form of the practice-led research. The creation of multiple narrative worlds is explored and experimented with in the text that is excised out of the photograph. This physical manipulation and formation of the text becomes very important because it relates to how the narrative is disrupted and distorted within the

[89] Battye, *Photography, Narrative, Time*, 135.
[90] William J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 42.

production of each finished work. The final section provided an overview of the various theories around the narrativity of a photograph and outlined the framework of ‘frames and scripts’ that is utilised in the studio research. Overall, this chapter has sought to highlight the way that the narrative world inhabited by the photographic component of the studio research can be understood through implied knowledge and the recognition of form.

Chapter 2: The Contemporary Field

This chapter seeks to position my studio research within the field of contemporary art and to provide links with and departures from other established practitioners both within Australia and internationally. As would be expected, I am unaware of any contemporary practitioner who replicates the characteristics, intentions, and outcomes of my own project or practice. However, there are a number of practitioners whose work I can establish a connection with, either through the way it has a resonance with my own thinking or contains a similar challenging of accepted conventions of practice. The relevance of these practitioners to this PhD research is specific to the creation of narrative worlds through the combination of text, in the form of personal stories, combined with photography. The list of such practitioners is not insignificant when the scope is extended to the fields of contemporary art such as the artist's book, photo-essay, and multi-modal performance, and literary forms such as the graphic novel or digital storytelling. However, I have restricted analysis to artists who use photographic image and narrative text. Prominent international photo-image practitioners such as Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger who incorporate non-narrative or declarative text or statements in their works have naturally fallen outside of my field of interest. There is no doubting the evocative power of the use of image and text in Taryn Simon's exhibition and artist's book *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar* (2007), but this work fits most comfortably into the documentary genre of photography.[91] Those working with photography who have some affinity with my interest in narrative include Duane Michels, who has used the addition of narrative text to subvert or sometimes bowdlerise the meaning of his photographs since the 1970s; Jim Goldberg, whose influential photobook *Rich and Poor* from 1984 applied handwritten biographical vignettes from the subjects of his photographs; and Jeff Wolin, who has produced a number of photo-projects where he applies handwritten stories or comments over the related images of his subjects.[92]

[91] Taryn Simon, *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar,* Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (Mar 9–Jun 24), 2007. Book of the same title published 2007 and several editions since, the latest by Hatje Cantz in 2013. A version of the exhibition was also mounted in Brisbane at the IMA (29 August–17 October 2009).

[92] Duane Michals (born 1932), biography available at: https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/duane-michals?all/all/all/all/0. Jim Goldberg's "Rich and Poor" series was original exhibited in 1983 alongside Robert Adams and Joel Sternfeld in the *Three Americans* exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, and was published the following year by Random House and republished by Steidl in 2014. For information on projects by Jeffrey Wolin, see http://www.jeffreywolin.com/index.php.

African-American artists Lorna Simpson and Carrie Mae Weems often combine text and photography in their work, with the latter sometimes overlaying text on the image; however, their clear critical imperative to deconstruct established racist expectations in the US overrides my interest in narrativity.[93]

To help locate and differentiate my approach, I have chosen to analyse the work of three selected practitioners who were chosen because each represents a particular approach to narrativity and use of the text/photograph synthesis. It is worth acknowledging that the three exemplars I have chosen are all male. While I have previously made mention of several female practitioners such as Lorna Simpson, Carrie Mae Weens, Taryn Simon, Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger who use text and image to engage and question feminine expectations and experience, the choice to consider male exemplars is not through any gender bias but to reflect and represent a similar interrogation of the male voice that is present within my own studio research.

The Australian photographic artist and performer William Yang was selected because his work *Allen* from the monologue *Sadness* (1990) presents an effective or powerful use of the well-established and mutually reinforcing relationship between text and a photograph to drive the narrative. American writer and photographer Paul Kwiatkowski was selected for his 'illustrated novel' *And Every Day Was Overcast* (2013) because he uses a parallel strategy to my own of using a mixture of actual photographs of the protagonists in the narrative along with randomly selected photographs. Finally, the Dutch writer and artist Nikel van Duijvenboden was selected because he adopts the most radical treatment of the photograph in his artwork *The Grand Absence* (2003) by removing the image entirely and presenting only the text. In summary, the examples represent three of the four possible treatments of the text/photography binary: the interdependent or bonded text and photograph; the loosely contiguous combination of text and photograph; and the text with implied or invisible photograph. The fourth possibility of the photograph without text, as in the photoessay or

[93] For Lorna Simpson's biography, see Anthony Craine, "Lorna Simpson," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated 8 May 2018, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lorna-Simpson; for Carrie Mae Weems's biography, see Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, "Carrie Mae Weems," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated 13 April 2018, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Carrie-Mae-Weems.

photo-narrative without any text narration, such as the famous ongoing series of the *Brown Sisters* by Nicholas Nixon, is not explored here as it sits outside my enterprise.[94]

During the early phases of my candidature, I interviewed Yang via telephone and van Duijvenboden via email (appendix 3) and have had time to critically evaluate the intentions and outputs of each and the relationship of their work to my practice, and these are detailed in this chapter. Apart from historically contextualising their work, I have particularly focused on the use of narrative within the chosen artworks, including detailing the narrative worlds that are created; the use of text and photography within a narrative framework; and the correlations and departures within each artist's work in comparison to my own. My outputs that will be discussed in relation to these artists' work are *Money Laughed at My Sausage* (2015, figure 5), *Kinga Nikka* (2014, figure 6) and *The Perfect Price for Donny* (2011, appendix 4).

Each of the three analytical sections will follow a tripartite sequence investigating narrativity, text and photography, and comparative alignment.

2.1 William Yang – "Allan" from the Monologue "Sadness"

This section will examine William Yang's series "*Allan*" from the Monologue *"Sadness"* (1990). The first part examines the narrativity of the series and the use of an epistolary narrative structure. The second part outlines how text and photography are incorporated within the narrative and the position of the photograph within the story of Yang's narrative. The final part compares Yang's epistolary narrative with my own in the work *Money Laughed at My Sausage* (2015). Yang's series of nineteen images is held in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra.[95] The information for this section has been drawn from his curriculum vitae,[96] an interview between Yang and Australian independent

[94] See Hannah Kim, "Nicholas Nixon: 40 Years of the Brown Sisters," *Inside/Out, A MoMA/MoMA PS1 Blog*, posted 5 December 2015, https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2014/12/05/nicholas-nixon-40-years-of-the-brown-sisters/.
[95] The entire series can be viewed on the National Gallery of Australia website: "William Yang, Allan," National Gallery of Australia, https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=26853, last accessed 22 May 2018.
[96] "William Yang," Andrew Baker Art Dealer, http://www.andrew-baker.com/wy.html, last accessed 18 April 2018.

curator and photographer Sarah Rhodes,[97] and an interview I conducted with Yang on 29 August 2012.[98]

As well as his photographic practice, Yang has been performing monologues in front of a slideshow of his images since the late 1980s. His third performance of this ilk—titled *Sadness* (1989)—explored his Chinese heritage and wove together stories surrounding the death of friends and colleagues in Sydney due to the initial spread of HIV/AIDS. In his interview with Rhodes, Yang notes that he started to place himself in his performances and pictures as he was interested in creating connections between himself and his audience, to create an honest experience that was free from self-promotion or spin. He mentions that it was from performing his stage shows that he noticed a connection was being made in his audience between his stories and the images on the screen, and so he started to write directly onto the surface of his photographic prints. As he stated to Rhodes, "My handwriting helps people associate the print with me."[99] These associations between the description of the text and the representation of the photograph provoked Yang to inscribe his narratives onto the surface of the photographs. A selection of works from the series will be presented here to illustrate Yang's methods.

[97] Sarah Rhodes, "William Yang: Oscillating between Shock and Sadness, Beauty, Delight and Humour," *Time Machine*, April 2013, http://timemachinemag.com/qa/william-yang/.
[98] Yang was born in Mareeba in Northern Queensland in 1943. He graduated from architecture at the University of Queensland in 1968 and moved to Sydney in 1969. Yang began as a playwright then shifted to documenting the gay and party scene in Sydney, with his first photographic exhibition titled *Sydneyphiles*, which was held at the Australian Centre of Photography in 1977. Since then, Yang has held numerous exhibitions in Australia, Asia, Europe, and the USA. His work is held in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Queensland Art Gallery, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography.
[99] Rhodes, "William Yang."

Figure 2. William Yang, *"Allan"*, from the Monologue *"Sadness"* 1990.[100]

"Allan" from the Monologue *"Sadness"* (1990) visually and textually documents the decline and eventual death of Yang's ex-lover Allan. Intimate photographs that document the last days of Allan's life are combined with a first-person account that describes Yang and Allan's past and Allan's present situation.

The narrativity in the series is very strong, as it uses a number of narrative elements. The serial nature of the photographs shows a sequence of events that transpires over time and place. The story follows Allan through recoveries in his health then his eventual decline and death. Yang introduces the character of Allan as somebody who was once in his life, then

[100] The text in *1. "Allan",* from the Monologue *"Sadness"* (figure 2) reads:
I hadn't seen Allan for about three years. I lost contact with him when he moved to Melbourne. I heard that he was back in Sydney, I heard that he was sick. I was in Ward 17 of St Vincent's Hospital, that's the AIDS ward, visiting someone else. When I looked through one of the doors and I saw Allan and I recognised him immediately…but he had changed.
He seemed like an old man and I had a strong desire to burst into tears.

left, and has now returned. Later in the text, he reveals their previous relationship:

> For me the attraction was mainly physical and even then I wondered if I'd still like him when he lost his boyish looks.[101]

The story generally follows a chronological path with brief lapses in the past to give context to the relationship of Allan to Yang. It is through the gradual release of information that the viewer/reader is able to gain an insight and eventually empathy with Allan's fight and Yang's grief.

The discourse layer within the narrative of the series also adds emotional value to the relationship. The epistolary voice of the narrator is told through their hand-writing, and the text reads like a series of letters. Private thoughts and events are revealed throughout the series, providing access to Yang's community. The cursive script provides a human element to the narrator. As Yang has stated, the handwriting associates the details of the story with him. The writing provides a perceived layer of veracity to the story and to its telling. Marking the photograph in this way also gives the impression that the endlessly reproducible photographic print has been marked unique and singular. It adds weight to the object of the photograph and subject of the narrative.

The text retells moments that could only occur in private and reveals character-forming information from both the narrator and the subject. In *16. "Allan"* from the Monologue *"Sadness"* (figure 3), we get a sense of what Allan and Yang's relationship was like and the complexities of human interaction:

> When we got back to his room the nurses were making his bed and they asked us to wait. He had his hand on the arm of the chair and I put my hand over his. (I had already said goodbye to Allan weeks ago, I told him that I loved him and he had smiled and said "that's good". It wasn't the response I wanted, in fact I thought "you've always taken everything for granted.").[102]

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[101] William Yang, *9. "Allan",* from the Monologue *"Sadness"*, 1990, gelatine silver photograph, ink.

[102] William Yang, *16. "Allan",* from the monologue *"Sadness"*, 1990, gelatine silver photograph, ink. Collection: National Gallery of Australia. The text reads:
When we got back to his room the nurses were making his bed and they asked us to wait. He had his hand on the arm of the chair and I put my hand over his. (I had already said goodbye to Allan weeks ago, I told him that I loved him and he had smiled and said "that's good". It wasn't the response I wanted, in fact I thought "you've always taken everything for granted.") But as we were waiting he lifted up my hand and when it was at the level of his face he lightly dropped his forehead on it.

He was young when I met him, years ago, and our relationship had been full of fun, zany, exciting, sexy, but never tender…until now in this unexpected, moment of grace.

This quote extends on the nature of their relationship and how Yang was upset by the original response he got from Allan when he professed his love. The text also provides details of the complexity of their relationship and how even when faced with the death of a friend, personal affirmation is sought of one's place within their lives. It is an epistolary story that uses an unaffected language as there are very few emotive phrases; the text is descriptive rather than interpretive. Connections are made and bonds formed between the characters through the interplay between text and image.

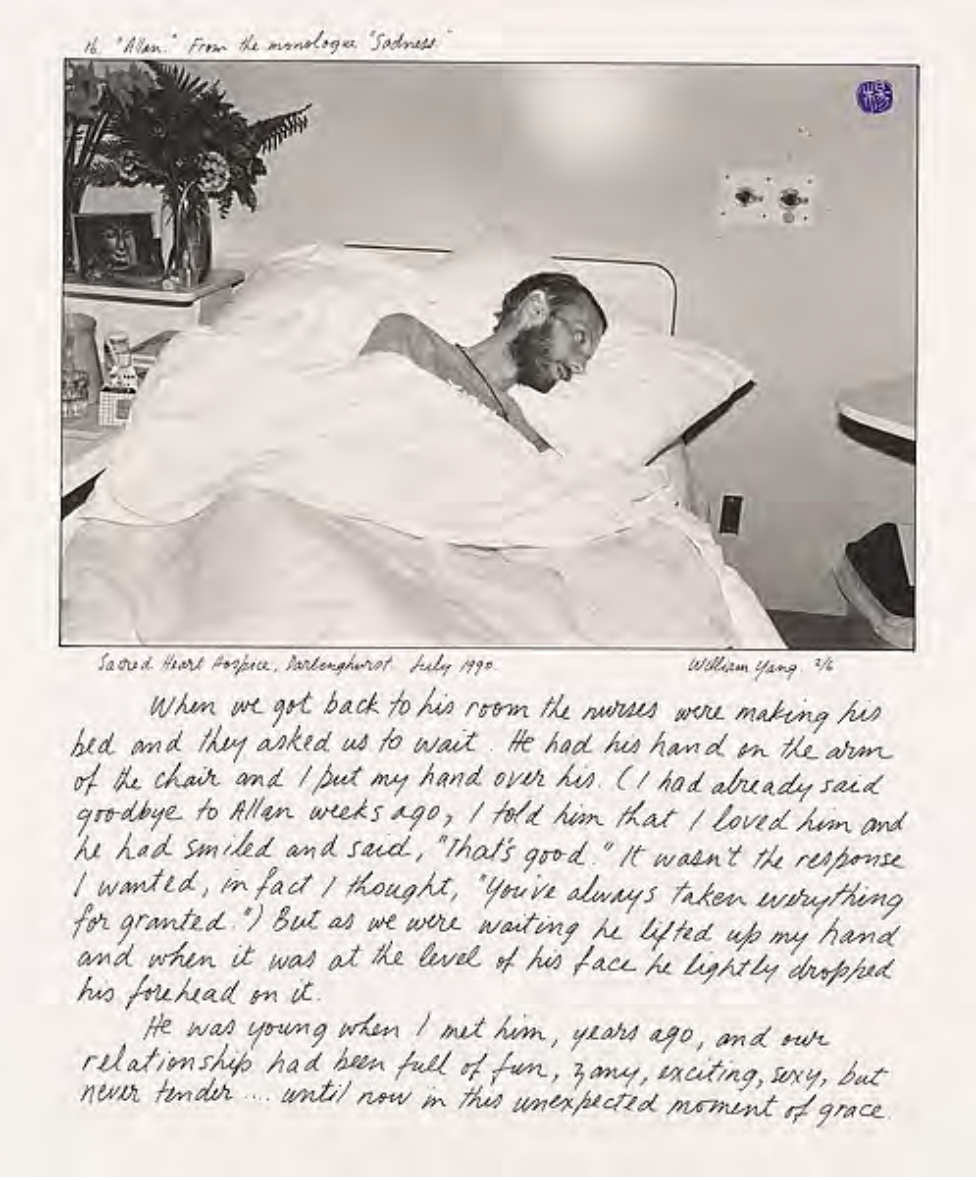

Figure 3. William Yang *"Allan"*, from the Monologue *"Sadness"*, 1990

The following examination of the use of text and image in the series will utilise French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's text *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*[103] to discuss the motivations of family photography. The argument centres around the narrative qualities of the text and image and the communicative value that each component provides. This part also outlines how the text describes the stages of Allan's death while the images confirm the descriptions. Finally, it analyses the visual style of the photographs that allow for Yang's deadpan text to resonate further than the use of text alone would.

Yang's photographs that receive and transmit the text are intimate. They utilise a number of stylistic and contextual conventions from family photography; for example, the way the subject looks directly into the lens and the documentation of the personal and the intimate, as if the subject is familiar with and trusting of the photographer. In using the style of family photography, Yang is also able to use the associations with family photography in his narratives. The 'script' of family photography suggests community, support, love, and friendship. Using the script of family, Yang links the photographs with all the connotations and feelings that belong to it. In his discussion of family photography, Bourdieu states:

> Because the family photograph is a ritual of the domestic cult in which the family is both the subject and object, because it expresses the celebratory sense which the family group gives to itself, and which it reinforces by giving its expression, the need for photographs and the need to take photographs (the internalization of the social function of this practice) are felt all the more intensely the more integrated the group and the more the group is captured at a moment of it highest integration.[104]

An inescapable aspect in reading the series is the fact that Yang is gay. The images were taken in 1990 when the gay community was reeling from many AIDS-related diseases and deaths. Through the use of family photography, Yang is using a script that "expresses the celebratory sense which the family group gives to itself".[105] The images are a celebration of a life and a connection to community.

The photographs chronicle Allan's gradual decline. When they are viewed together, one is able to compare Allan's features from his youth with those he had in death. Because of the chronological nature of the photographs, one can create a sense of the story being conveyed but the clarity of the narrative is not guaranteed. It would be a fair assessment to assume that

[103] Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).
[104] Ibid., 19.
[105] Ibid., 18.

viewing the photographs alone document a man with an illness who has passed away in the penultimate frame. The details are provided through the text; the viewer is able to ascertain that the man is called Allan, what the relationship is between him and the author/photographer, what their past was, where Allan is living, and who his close friends are. The final frame of Allan before his death is more poignant because of the empathy that viewers have for Allan as they have witnessed the effects of his illness. The text in these frames adds details that the images could not.

In image number 14 (figure 4) in the series, Yang tells of the day when he and their friend Jeffrey had to convince Allan that Jeffrey and his friends were no longer able to provide the care that Allan required. They convinced Allan to move into a hospice. The first line of this entry is "His whole face seemed to have caved in",[106] with the photograph showing how the illness has rendered Allan's face gaunt and emaciated. The photograph affirms the text in a way that would not be possible with just words. The author is believed because of the veracity of the documentary evidence, which adds weight to all the statements that are made throughout the series. The image of Allan in his bed is heightened when it is compared to earlier images of Allan when he is well. The photograph also points to the inevitable tragedy of the situation. The combination of non-emotive, descriptive text and family photography extends the narrative reach of each medium.

The text in Yang's series acts in a similar way to a caption. In his book *The Spoken Image*, Clive Scott categorises certain titles or captions as being a "destination" because it "explains and synthesizes the image, gives it its coherence".[107] The use of text as a form of destination in Yang's series confirms the claims made in the story, and the photographs confirm and validate the chronological events outlined in the text. While the photographs add to the mood of the discourse, the anchor that synthesises the text to the photograph is located primarily in the story aspect of the narrative. The confirmation of the text through the photograph is an aspect of Yang's practice that differs from my own (this will be discussed later in the chapter), but an aspect that we share is the use of an epistolary voice.

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[106] William Yang *14. "Allan", from the monologue "Sadness"* 1990, gelatine silver photograph, ink. Collection: National Gallery of Australia. The text in the image reads:
His whole face seemed to have caved in.

It became apparent that Jeffrey and our friends could not look after Allan at home. He had his clearer moments and it was during one of these that we asked him if he would go into the hospice and reluctantly he agreed.

[107] Clive Scott. *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language*. (London: Reaktion, 1999) 47.

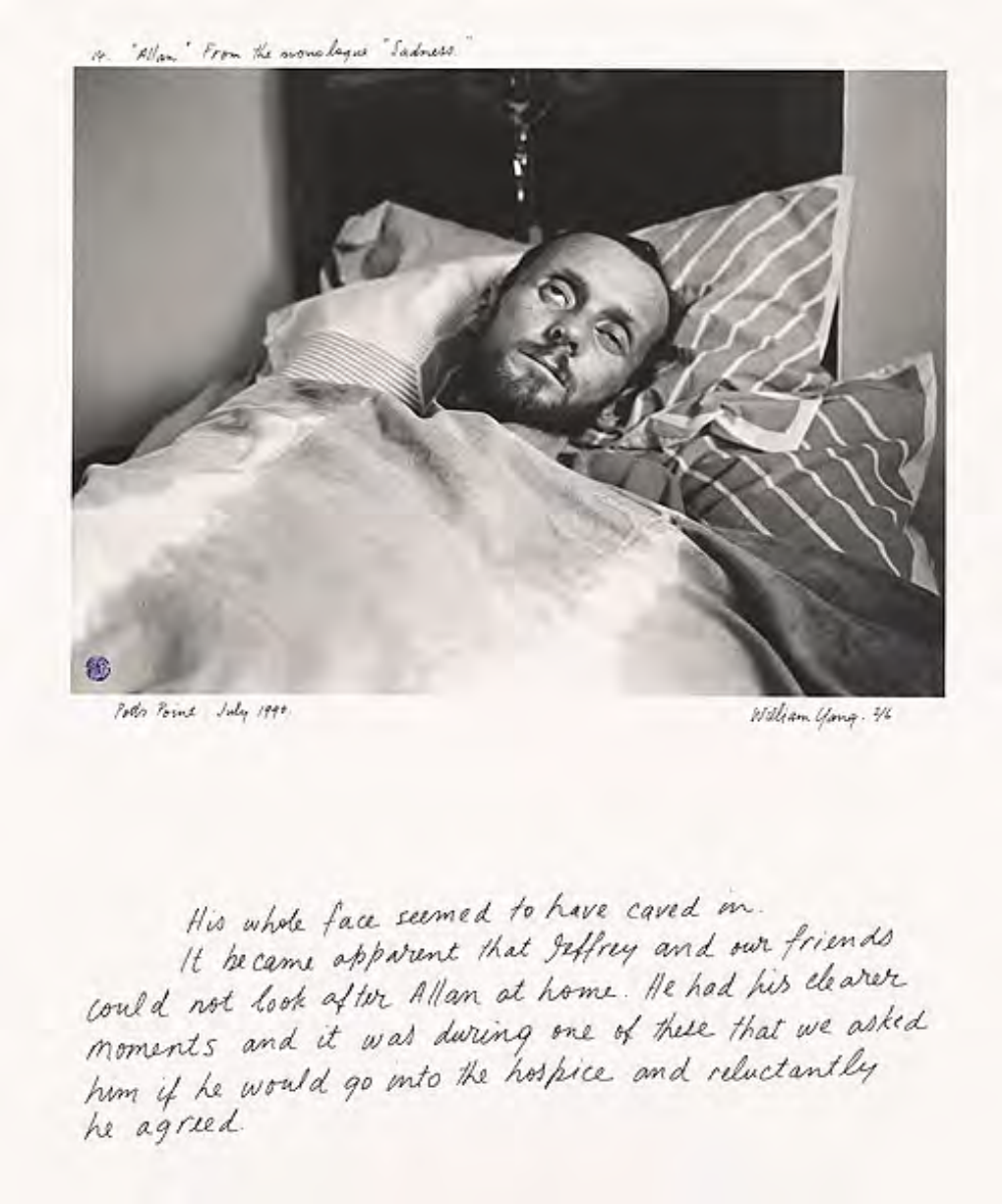

Figure 4. William Yang. *"Allan"*, from the Monologue *"Sadness"*, gelatine silver photograph, ink. 1990

Comparative Alignment

Here I bring my own work in alignment with the images and processes of Yang's project. The artworks will be contextualised within the frameworks of narrativity and the application of text and image. The creation of sympathetic characters through an epistolary voice will be explained through American popular fiction writer Stephen King's analysis of his own writing process. The image I will be comparing to Yang's series is my work *Money Laughed at My Sausage* (2015, figure 5).

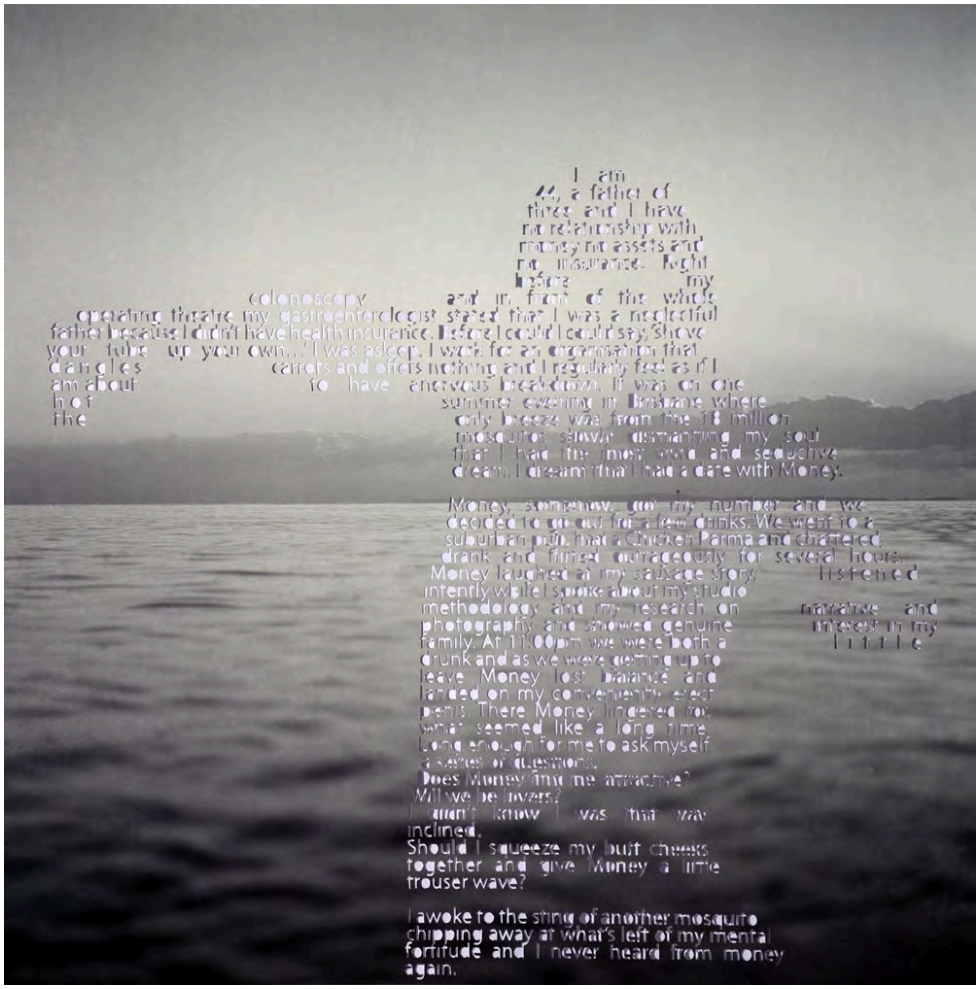

Figure 5. Martin Smith *Money Laughed at My Sausage*, pigment print with cut-out letters, 2015

The text excised from the photograph reads:

> I am 44, a father of three and I have no relationship with money no assets and no insurance. Right before my colonoscopy and in front of the whole operating theatre my gastroenterologist stated that I was a neglectful father because I didn't have health insurance. Before I could I could say, 'shove your tube up your own…' I was asleep. I work for an organisation that dangles carrots and offers nothing and I regularly feel as if I am about to have a nervous breakdown. It was on one hot summer evening in Brisbane where the only breeze was from the 18 million mosquitos slowly dismantling my soul that I had the most vivid and seductive dream. I dreamt that I had a date with Money.
>
> Money, somehow, got my number and we decided to go out for a few drinks. We went to a suburban pub, had a Chicken Parma and chattered, drank and flirted outrageously for several hours. Money laughed at my sausage story, listened intently while I spoke about my studio methodology and my research on narrative and photography and showed genuine interest in my family. At 11:00pm we were both a little drunk and as we were getting up to leave Money lost balance and landed on my conveniently erect penis. There Money lingered for, what seemed like a long time. Long enough for me to ask myself a series of questions,
> Does Money find me attractive?
> Will we be lovers?
> I didn't know I was that way inclined?
> Should I squeeze my butt cheeks together and give Money a little trouser wave?
>
> I awoke to the sting of another mosquito chipping away at what's left of my mental fortitude and I never heard from money again.

Yang and I both use an epistolary voice in the text element of the artwork. The text reveals private thoughts, events, and feelings. It makes connections to the reader through a revelation of self to build sympathy towards the characters. King analyses his own writing process in his book *On Writing,* examining the ways that he has created sympathy in his characters, especially ones that were flawed. In the following, he discusses the protagonist Annie Wilkes from his novel *Misery*:[108]

> And if I am able, even briefly, to give you a Wilkes'-eye-view of the world—if I can make you understand her madness—then perhaps I can make her someone you sympathize with or even identify with. The result? She's more frightening than ever, because she's close to real.[109]

Providing the reader with the character's point of view that reveals the inner thoughts and that reflects the characters' honest conditions and reactions allows for a greater emotional connection with the reader. Through text and photography, Yang honestly records the events and his reactions surrounding Allan's last days. The access that an epistolary voice grants us to the feelings and emotions of the character's in Yang's portrayal of Allen positions us within the narrative and grants us permission to respond to the events in the story.

The text from my artwork does not relate to events as dramatic as Yang's, mine are trivial in comparison. The epistolary voice used allows the reader access to the inner thoughts of the author/artist and reads like a diary entry. The story in *Money Laughed at My Sausage* describes my insecurities around money and the quest to find it and keep it. Money is a non-gendered, ambivalent character that I try to date in *Money Laughed at My Sausage*. The narrative of the text is a first-person account of a dream and follows a disastrous first date where the highlight is Money laughing at my sausage joke. It also details a true encounter with a gastroenterologist and their scolding of me for my lack of private health insurance. The narrative world that both Yang and I explore in these works is a private account of personal events. Our works are written to resemble letters or diary entries as the stories are told through the retelling of events that lead to the revelation of personal details. Even though the events depicted in our stories are incredibly divergent, we both use an epistolary voice to build sympathetic reactions to the characters and events depicted in the artworks. Where we

[108] Stephen King, *Misery* (New York: Viking, 1987).
[109] Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* (New York: Scribner, 2000), 192.

differ is how the text and photography are combined and how this affects the reading of the final artwork.

Yang hand writes his text below the photograph, while I hand cut my text from the photograph. Yang's application of the text below the photograph works in a similar way to a caption. The text and the photograph operate as binaries, but the final meaning is attained through their collective reading. The photograph in Yang's series supports the affirmations of the text. One reads the text and then looks at the photograph for the supporting information. Scott refers to the act of reading text then looking to the photograph for meaning as a process similar to understanding a rebus.[110] To use the text and photograph in this way "deliver[s] the photograph from its inherent gratuitousness, incoherence, randomness, and make it the instrument of a design".[111] Without the text, the photographs could not reveal the story behind them or the depth of information. Without the photographs, the validity of the text would be undermined and the sense of familial love the work emits would not be as overwhelming. The inability of the photograph to identify its subject leaves it vulnerable to being recontextualised for multiple purposes. Yang's use of text and photography identifies the subject of his series and validates the authenticity of the text and image through an anchoring of the story to its representation.

Money Laughed at My Sausage is indicative of many of the artworks produced during this PhD, which diverges from Yang in the application of text and photography. Yang uses the relationship of text and photography to affirm the claims made by both to create a deeper understanding of the subject through the descriptive and representative links that he provides. By contrast, *Money Laughed at My Sausage* provides no discernible links between the text and the photograph. The locus of understanding with my artworks is not in the conjunction and affirmation of the text to the photograph, but in the combination of each representative element in the artwork. Each artwork tells a story by an actor in a space; it is in the blending of these that creates understanding. In the next section, 2.2 Paul Kwiatkowski – *And Every Day Was Overcast,* I will be extrapolating and expanding on the blending of text and photography within my visual research to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the narrative.

[110] A rebus is a puzzle that uses individual letters and pictures to refer to a word/phrase. A very simple rebus is the popular souvenir t-shirt from New York "I ♥ NY".
[111] Scott, *The Spoken Image*, 49.

2.2 Paul Kwiatkowski – And Every Day Was Overcast

This section will examine Paul Kwiatkowski's *And Every Day Was Overcast.*[112] This illustrated novel of 2013 examines the teenage years of Kwiatkowski growing up in the South Florida town of Loxahatchee. The information from this section will be built through the writing of American essayist Susan Sontag, British philosopher Nigel Warburton, interviews with Kwiatkowski, reviews and an analysis of the publication based on its narrativity, the use of text and image within a narrative structure, and a comparison with my artwork *Kinga Nikka* (2014, figure 6).

And Every Day Was Overcast describes the isolated, bored, and drug-addled teenage years of American author and photographer Paul Kwiatkowski. Born and raised in the shadow of Cape Canaveral, Kwiatkowski begins the book with the explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger in 1989 as a metaphor for a community that is secluded and safe but is keeping a lot of things quiet. The publication is Kwiatkowski's first novel, but he has gone on to produce several feature articles for magazines such as *Dazed and Confused* and *Fault Magazine.*

The following discussion of narrativity of the publication will primarily examine the textual component of the novel and extrapolate on the story and the use of a confessional narrative voice. It will also reproduce components of the writing to display the vernacular tone of the illustrated novel.[113] Kwiatkowski's use of novelistic text with photographs is a contemporary version of a form utilised by French surrealist Andre Breton's *Nadja,* German, novelist W. B. Sebald's *Austerlitz,* Walker Evans and James Agee's *Let us now praise famous men* and John Berger and Jean Mohr's *A Fortunate Man: The Story of a Country Doctor.*[114] The use of the photograph within these novels is to verify and connect the photograph to the text. Within

[112] Paul Kwiatkowski, *And Every Day Was* Overcast (New York: Black Balloon, 2013).
[113] According to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, a confessional narrative "…implies that the speaker or writer wishes or even needs to reveal something that is hidden, possibly shameful and difficult to articulate. The confessional tradition … will rest its claim to authenticity and importance on it revelatory quality, which may be self-accusatory or self-exculpatory, and is usually both. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 82.
[114] Breton, André. *Nadja*. New York: Grove Press, 1960,
Sebald, Winfried Georg. *Austerlitz*. Germany: C. Hanser, 2001.
Agee, James, and Walker Evans. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. 1st Mariner Books ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
John Berger, Jean Mohr. *A Fortunate Man: The Story of a Country Doctor*. New York: Vintage International, 1997.

Kwitkowski's illustrated novel the photographs don't validate the information contained in the text but operate within the discourse of the narrative, providing a mood rather than description.

The novel is a first-person account of youth published in episodes. Each new chapter adds to a story that describes a descent into a drug-fuelled depravity. Several characters emerge and disappear throughout the publication, with Kwiatkowski as the link between the different chapters. Each chapter can be read on its own without any prior knowledge of the preceding chapters and the end of one chapter does not foretell the beginning of the next; it is as if they have been dropped into the narrative. It is a confessional narrative of self-contained stories that are collected together to form a larger volume. Starting each chapter is like starting a new book, with the only constants being Kwiatkowski and Loxahatchee.

Kwiatkowski's illustrated novel is an explicit, adolescent confession of drug use, sexual discovery, and physical abuse. The stories begin in 1991 with an infatuation with Mallory from *Family Ties:*

> During moments of distress, I often thought about Mallory from *Family Ties*. In the show she wasn't depicted as especially nurturing. I guess I wasn't looking for stability. Maybe I just wanted a pretty girl in my life?[115]

The final chapter is set in 1999 where Kwiatkowski and his friend Kyle are inhaling Freon—an unstable refrigerant that causes hallucinations—from the school's air conditioning unit.

> Kyle sucked in the stream of hissing air until his expression went slack. His lips trembled as his complexion marbled toward pale blue. He flipped his shirt over his face. There was silence followed by the Sharpie pen splashing into the water. I asked Kyle if he was okay. I told him he was scaring me. Minutes dragged before the dark breath stain on his shirt widened.[116]

The illustrated novel combines text with snapshot images taken on a disposable 35mm camera. Similar to Yang's work, the language used is descriptive rather than emotive. The events that are described carry with them their own emotional charge. The language is so deadpan that it feels like a police report. This is especially true when detailing one of the more disturbing stories, the physical assault of the neighbourhood loner Cobain by a friend named Trick:

[115] Kwiatkowski, *And Every Day Was Overcast*, 15.
[116] Ibid., 277.

> As Cobain approached the 7-Eleven, I saw Trick rush at him, cornering him back against the store's window. I thought about running out to defuse the situation, but instead I stood there, riveted and watched.
>
> Cobain stood still, silent and trembling, and Trick threw his weight behind a sucker punch to the eye. Cobain never cried out. He just stumbled and slapped against the window. It sounded like moist meat thumping tile.[117]

The language is frank and unapologetically offensive in its portrayal of a youth spent watching and partaking in drug use and uncomfortable sexual encounters, but rarely intervening to help. It is a destructive narrative of youth, but the honesty of Kwiatkowski's story is the most disarming quality of the narrative.

Each chapter is also separated by a series of photographs without captions that, unlike Yang's, do not relate to the events in the story. These uncontextualised photographs flavour the narrative; they are part of the discourse as opposed to the story. The photographs anchor the discourse in a narrative of suburban decay, chaos, and debris.

The following exploration of the use of vernacular text and photography throughout the publication will demonstrate how the discourse of the writing is heightened by the photography, providing the reader with a more acute sense of the decayed environment that the novel is located in.

The publication is called an illustrated novel because as well as containing sixteen written chapters, it has 117 photographs that are a mix of those taken by Kwiatkowski during his adolescence as well as found photographs. In the chapter titled "1998: Kid Tested, Mother Approved, Part II", Kwiatkowski writes of a sexual encounter with Hailey, the mother of his friend's girlfriend:

> Sitting in the other side of the couch, I made a half-assed attempt at small talk. She stayed friendly enough but unresponsive. There was a lot of staring followed by a long pause during which I panicked thinking of the right thing to say. She giggled. I could tell she enjoyed watching me squirm.
>
> In an almost commanding but tender voice, she asked me to help her move two boxes from her room into the attic. I noticed the boxes weren't sealed. They were filled with boring shit like documents, books, albums, and opened envelopes. They were mainly family photos as well as personal outtakes of Hailey in the mix. I was

[117] Ibid., 95.

> never much of a thief but stealing those pictures was one of the best crimes I ever committed.
>
> Everything after that felt like a dream. When she kissed me my stomach raised up and felt hollow. She pulled down my collar, leading my head between her legs. Having pussy come to me this effortlessly was unreal. With her panties still on, I pulled her thong to the side, then ate her out. Along with Hailey's guidance she was the first woman I ever made cum, and in return she let me finish in her mouth.[118]

The photographs that proceed this text are uncaptioned images of indiscriminate landscapes and an unnamed lady getting dressed. Are these the images that Kwiatkowski stole? Are they photographs of another woman who was present? Or are they found photographs that are woven into this element of the narrative to allude to the stolen image? The meaning of the photographs floats throughout the novel and validates the description of a place where societal strata and community norms are less important than primal urges.

As mentioned earlier, the photographs have no captions or contextual clues to their existence, so the viewer is not sure which ones are by Kwiatkwoski and which ones are found. In *On Photography*, Sontag claims that because the photograph is an isolated slice of time removed from its original context, photography cannot narrate. Rather, it is "a trace, something stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask".[119] While the photograph cannot narrate with the same accuracy as text, its depictions of events imply a past and a future beyond the original photograph. Warburton states:

> When presented with a photograph of a family of emaciated Ethiopians, we can quite reliably infer from the photograph that the people pictured had not eaten for many days before the photograph was taken.[120]

While the photographs that accompany the text provide no validation to the claims made by the text, they imply through their depiction of disaffected youth, un-manicured lawns, disused buildings and voyeuristic portraits of young women of a community struggling with the needs of its citizens. The crassness of Kwiatkowski's photographs—taken with disposable 35mm cameras—amplifies the crassness of the writing. They are vernacular and private photographs that support the confessional narrative of the writing through their unfiltered

[118] Ibid., 243.
[119] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979), 154.
[120] Nigel Warburton, "Photography," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009),

portrayal of people who may or may not be associated with the text. The people portrayed in the photographs reflect the community rather than the individual characters in the novel. The lack of contextualisation of the photographs creates an uneasy combination with the text. The natural inclination is to associate the events and characters that are depicted in the preceding text with the images that follow, but this strategy is not supported by how the text and photographs are displayed. The photographs support the claims of the discourse rather than the story. In Yang's series, the photographs validate the information presented in the text, but Kwiatkowski's vernacular photographs validate the crudeness of the subject matter and the authenticity of his description of the environment in which the novel is set. They aid in evoking a story-world that is vulgar, lost, and lawless.

Comparative Analysis

The element of this illustrated novel that is most relevant to my studio research is the use of a confessional narrative voice in the text and photography that does not validate the claims of the text but seeks to situate the narrative within an illustrated environment. The writing and photography from the chapter "1996 Face Breaker" (Appendix 1) from *Every Day Was Overcast* will be comparatively aligned with the work *King Nikka* (2014, figure 6).

Both projects use a confessional narrative voice. While both the texts portray events from adolescence, Kwiatkowski details more salacious and dangerous events than I do. The text for *Kinga Nikka* discusses a school excursion where I was placed between the legs of my Romanian English teacher. The confessional nature of Kwiatkowski's text creates an aura of risky and dangerous behaviour that is confirmed through his portrayals of illicit drug use and sexual awakenings. While throughout my work with text and photography I have explored issues of drug use and sexual clumsiness, the text in *Kinga Nikka* is meant to amuse rather than shock through immersing the reader in the thoughts of a shy and sexually immature youth. The character portrayal of Paul Kwiatkowski is not immediately likeable; he is abusive, voyeuristic, and opportunistic. In one story, he is trying to get a girl he has called 'Face Breaker' to have sex with him. His description of her is not kind:

> Face Breaker was a scrawny redhead who exclusively wore white hoodies, flared jeans that sagged around her ass, and giant hoop earrings. She slicked back her hair into a ponytail so tight it glistened under park floodlights. We called her Face

> Breaker because she'd get drunk and make out with any guy, no matter how gross. Her drink of choice was mixed fruit flavour St. Ides.[121]

Kwiatkowski's crude language in describing Face Breaker mirrors the environment that the events are set in. In *Kinga Nikka*, my language of description is not as bleak:

> We were at the park with our teacher, Kinga Nikka, a lovely English teacher in her late 40's from Romania who arrived in Australia the year before. She was wearing what, in some cultures could be considered a bathing suit, but in other less liberal cultures would be called 'your underwear'.[122]

In order for Kwiatkowski to have sex with Face Breaker, he concocts a plan to get her drunk on St Ides (a malt liqueur) and the only way to do that is to get a local vagrant named Dan to buy him the alcohol. The only way he can get Dan to buy him alcohol is to show him his penis:

> I pulled down my pants mid-thigh, flashing him a solid look at my cock. Aside from pissing in public, I'd never allowed my penis to hang so freely. The air around it felt icy hot. I knew that moment would be one of the final death throes of my former self.[123]

The events depicted in Kwiatkowski's story of sexual awakening are confronting and difficult to read. The language is direct and focussed on telling the events. In *Kinga Nikka*, the events depicted are also of a sexual awakening, but they are more innocent and not as confronting. An example of this is when I was waiting to go down the slide:

> We joined the queue for the largest most deadly slide in the park and just as I was about to shoot down the slide Ms Nikka sat down at the start of the slide, put me between her legs and said 'let's go down together'. As I was getting ready to go I felt something scratching my back like a small rodent. I looked down and saw what looked like a Stello pad with a rubber band wrapped around the middle of it. Her pubes were totally up for a day at the waterpark and they didn't care who knew.[124]

Kwiatkowski's story ends with Face Breaker, her friend Jalenne, and him in the bathroom of a community pool. Jalenne has had too much to drink and has collapsed, but neither Kwiatkowski or Face Breaker are concerned for her condition:

> Jalenne's disintegration was just the confidence booster I needed. I pushed us out of sight into a toilet stall, slid my hand down Face Breaker's pants, and gloriously finger-fucked her. Beneath the bathroom stall, I could see Jalenne's arm sporadically

[121] Kwiatkowski, *And Every Day Was Overcast*, 154.
[122] Martin Smith, *Kinga Nikka* (2014).
[123] Kwiatkowski, *And Every Day Was Overcast*, 156.
[124] Smith, *Kinga Nikka.*

> jump and spasm, causing an empty bottle of St Ides to roll across the floor. As I worked Face Breaker's pants down, I noticed the inside of her thighs were dotted with cigarette burns. I wondered whether or not they were self-inflicted. I clearly had no idea what I was doing, but she let me work at it until my fingers pruned.[125]

It is a difficult passage to read and comprehend. The lack of regard for their friend's well-being coupled with the description of the sex displays a selfishness that is disturbing in its portrayal. There is no empathy or sympathy shown for the other characters in the story. Kwiatkowski still refers to the girl as Face Breaker and never reveals her real name. The environment and community that the story takes place in is cruel, harsh, and lonely. *Kinga Nikka* ends with my English teacher and I being shot into the pool at the bottom of the slide:

> At the end of the slide you were shot out into a deep pool and as I hit the pool every muscle in my body was tense waiting for the inevitable splash from Ms Nikka. She entered the water and engulfed me in her voluptuous body. We both came to the surface grinning but for different reasons.[126]

The stories end with vastly different experiences. My depiction of Kinga Nikka is not flattering but it is not cruel. I have tried to use humour and a lighter tone in my writing to depict the events.

The writing for both stories tell of sexual encounters during adolescence with very different narrative voices. Kwiatkowski creates a bleak world that revolves around fulfilling sexual desires in whatever way possible. The place in which the story is set is also desolate, soulless, and lost. The photographs that follow this passage of text, even though they are not contextualised, also validate this description of place. They show unnamed, overgrown, suburban carparks that may be where Kwiatkowski showed Dan his penis or where Face Breaker and Jalenne used to sit. They show an anonymous girl sitting in a space and a toilet cubicle that may be where the encounter with Face Breaker may have taken place; photographs of young people in a classroom imitating a symbol for cunnilingus; an out-of-focus photograph of two girls kissing; and an anonymous male youth holding weapons. The sequence of photographs implies a narrative of drunken sexual encounters in cubicles and reinforces the narrative of desolation and depravity. While they do not directly refer to the events in the text, they refer to the sentiments evoked from the text.

[125] Kwiatkowski, *And Every Day Was Overcast*, 158.
[126] Smith, *Kinga Nikka.*

In *Kinga Nikka*, the text is in the shape of a human figure standing on a carpet in front of a sloth. There are no references to any of these elements in the story. The text is told through an absurd photographic scenario to validate the narrative voice in the text. The story is a humorous account of an interaction with one of my teachers. It is one that I have told to a number of people over the years as indicative of my schooling. The event hasn't led to any emotional baggage, unlike Kwiatkowski, but it has led to the formation of my personal identity. When viewing the entire collection of my artworks events that are dramatic with events that are more mundane. The collection of these stories are the ones that eventually create a version of myself. In a similar way to Kwiatkowski's work, the photograph reaffirms the environment that I wish the story to be understood through. It is playful, humorous and absurd; the human figure, surrounded by wooden blocks, in front of a sloth confirms these intentions. A more comprehensive analysis of my artworks from this series will be undertaken in Chapter 4: Outcomes.

This section has examined the publication by Paul Kwiatkowski *And Every Day Was Overcast.* It ascertained its narrativity through the use of a confessional narrative voice told in episodes. The collective episodes work to provide an overview of Kwiatkowski's troubled adolescence in Loxahatchee, Florida. It then analysed the text and photography components of the publication and determined that the photographs add to the disconsolate and dysfunctional discourse that the text outlines. The photographs imply a connection to the text without being as explicit as Yang's photographs. The final part compared a chapter of Kwiatkowski's novel with an artwork from my PhD. Kwiatkoski's bleak coming-of-age narrative is compared alongside my more innocent and mundane story. This provided the background for a comparison of the photographs that both adhere to the discursive environment that is depicted in the text.

Figure 6. Martin Smith, *Kinga Nikka*, inkjet print with cut-out letters, 2014

The school organized an excursion at the end of grade 10 to the Ferny Grove Woolshed. It was a working farm that also included waterslides. We arrived ready to go down the slides but we had to watch a sheep get shorn, a cow get milked and a tree get planted. This was excruciating when we could hear other children shouting and laughing on the waterslides. When the educational shit was over we were allowed to go into the waterpark. We were at the park with our teacher, Kinga Nikka, a lovely English teacher in her late 40's from Romania who arrived in Australia the year before. She was wearing what, in some cultures could be considered a bathing suit, but in other less liberal cultures would be called 'your underwear'.

We joined the queue for the largest most deadly slide in the park and just as I was about to shoot down the slide Ms Nikka sat down at the start of the slide, put me between her legs and said 'let's go

> down together'. As I was getting ready to go I felt something scratching my back like a small rodent. I looked down and saw what looked like a Stello pad with a rubber band wrapped around the middle of it. Her pubes were totally up for a day at the waterpark and they didn't care who knew.
>
> Before I could protest she pushed off and we went hurtling down the slide. It started off OK with her wrapping her arms and pubes around me but as the slide got faster and twistier her body and pubes stopped playing by the rules. I felt a Yellow Fin Tuna slapping against my face only to realize later that it was her breasts. They were fleshy and wet but also had bone in them. By this stage I was concentrating all my energy on not moving just trying to prevent our bodies from touching.
>
> At the end of the slide you were shot out into a deep pool and as I hit the pool every muscle in my body was tense waiting for the inevitable splash from Ms Nikka. She entered the water and engulfed me in her voluptuous body. We both came to the surface grinning but for different reasons.

2.3 Nikel van Duijvenboden – *The Grand Absence*

This section will examine the artwork *The Grand Absence* (2003, Appendix 2) by Dutch photographer, writer, and artist Nikel van Duijvenboden. Information from this section will be drawn from a profile written by Los Angeles–based writer and photographer Alex Klein in *Foam Magazine* and an interview I conducted with the artist on 13 September 2013 (Appendix 3).

The Grand Absence consists exclusively of text; it is a written artwork that uses fiction as a means to investigate the complex relationship between words and images. A visualisation of the text through the use of an embedded narrative will be defined and explained in the first part of this section. The definition and explanation of embedded narratives will be drawn from the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*.[127] As there is no photograph in the artwork, an argument will be made that the locus of understanding between the text and the photograph is formed through rhetoric as opposed to narrative. The final part will compare van Duijvenboden's text with my artwork *The Perfect Price for Donny* (2011, Appendix 4), which is an artwork consisting entirely of text that formed the basis for collaged photographs.

Born in 1981 in Amsterdam, Nikel van Duijvenboden was educated as a photographer. He turned to writing to address concerns he had with the nature of photography that the medium could not address on its own. In our interview conducted over email in 2013, van Duijvenboden discusses his relationship with writing and his disillusion with photography:

[127] Herman, Jahn, and Ryan, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory.*

> Writing was already inherent before I decided to become an artist. My parents were preoccupied with language, its origin and meaning, and so was I at an early stage. In a certain sense, working with images has always felt more remote to me. At the art academy, I gradually grew disillusioned with the singularity of the photographic image. I was interested in the nature of photography, in terms of context and process. Photographic history and theory didn't necessarily concern me at that point. I was looking for ways to describe and analyse the act of looking without having to make images. I wanted to be stuck in the process forever.[128]

In finding ways to "describe and analyse the act of looking", van Duijvenboden wrote a collection of fictional essays titled *The Grand Absence,* originally performed as a spoken word piece in an empty gallery. Only the title work will be examined in this analysis. Since publishing this collection of fictional essays, van Duijvenboden has published several books, including *Plateau*,[129] as well as made installations and held performances. His artistic practice investigates the complex relationship of words and imagery and asks whether mental images can replace physical ones. An important aspect of his writing is experimenting with narrative forms and theoretical texts.

The following investigation of the narrativity of *The Grand Absence* and the construction of multiple narrative worlds is not anchored to material photographs since for van Duijvenboden, representation through the word is the crux of his visual art practice.

> I consider both working with images and writing as a form of visual art. Labelling might seem irrelevant from a content-driven, process-oriented point of view, but defining what I do became an essential aspect of my practice. Sometimes it feels like it is my practice.[130]

The Grand Absence is a theoretical discussion between van Duijvenboden and his father. Written as a dialogue, the story explores the value of beauty in the photograph and the legitimacy of critique. The text uses narrative structures such as embedded narratives to provide the framework for a theoretical discussion that would usually have a low level of narrativity. The defining of his writing as visual art is an important distinction in any discussion on van Duijvenboden's artistic practice. The construction of a narrative in *The Grand Absence* allows van Duijvenboden to assert a claim that the work is visual art as opposed to an essay. The story describes the process of conceptualising and creating his graduate photographs that are never seen. The discourse is through a dialogue with his father and the use of an embedded narrative, which is defined as follows:

[128] Nikel van Duijvenboden, email correspondence with the author, 18 September 2012. See Appendix 3.
[129] Nikel van Duijvenboden, *Plateau* (Amsterdam: Roma Publications, 2008).
[130] Ibid.

> …the literary device of the 'story within a story', the structure by which a character in a narrative text becomes the narrator of a second narrative text framed by the first one.[131]

While this may seem quite specific, embedded narrative is a widely used method for creating multiple narrative layers within a story. The opening paragraph of *The Grand Absence* creates the narrative framework for the exploration of his ideas. It reads:

> The day after my graduate show opened, my father rang me up from abroad. He asked what the opening had been like and how the exhibition was going.
> 'It's a shame you can't be here' was the first thing I said.
> 'I am trying to visualize it from here. I was hoping you'd be able to feed me a few details', he said cheerfully.[132]

Here, van Duijvenboden establishes the primary narrative at the discourse level, which is a dialogue between himself and his father about his graduate exhibition. Once this narrative layer is formed, a theoretical discussion on the merits of beauty in art develops between the two characters that is framed through an auxiliary narrative involving his Uncle Robert:

> 'I had a conversation with Uncle Robert', was the only thing I could think of.
> 'So I heard. And?'
> 'He didn't understand any of it.'
> 'It depends of course on whether you are willing to explain your work and what tone of voice you use. From what I heard, you were rather condescending.'
> 'Me? That was him, more likely. He kept repeating, "So you've been studying for four years to become an *artist?*" He really wondered what I'd been doing all that time.
> It was quiet on the other end of the line. No sign of instant understanding, as I had perhaps secretly hoped for.
> 'He just didn't *look',* I went on. 'Or, he looked, but he didn't see. He considered my work from another level.'
> 'On what level did he look, you think?'
> 'He was looking for something beautiful. And found nothing, of course.'
> 'He didn't think your photos are beautiful?'
> 'They *aren't.'*
> Again, silence.
> 'No', I asserted firmly, in order not to sound insecure. 'It has no function. Beauty has nothing to do with what I'm trying to say.'
> 'What are you trying to say?'[133]

Using an embedded narrative within the discourse affects the way the viewer interacts with theoretical ideas articulated in the text. In the usual reading of theory, the audience is engaging directly with the rhetoric of the text. The ideas are expressed by the writer and we

[131] Herman, Jahn, and Ryan, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, 134.
[132] Nikel van Duijvenboden, *The Grand Absence* (Amsterdam: Roma Publications, 2003), 3.
[133] Ibid., 4, original italics.

evaluate them through the veracity of the argument. With *The Grand Absence*, we engage with the theoretical discussion through the author, Uncle Robert, and the father. As the theoretical argument/story is articulated in the text, the reader has to conceptualise the theories as well as the relationship between the characters. By embedding a traditionally restricted narrative of a theoretical discussion within a more accessible narrative of familial relations, the ideas that *The Grand Absence* refers to are mediated through several narrative and rhetorical layers. This is evident is the following passage:

> When I started this graduation project, I wrote in my notebook: 'A problem of art photography is that before it can communicate clearly, it first must take a position on theoretical questions about photography itself.'
> To nuance that position a bit, afterwards I wrote the following paragraphs:
> 'Often it determines its place in this theoretical spectrum with the help of style. The process connected to this is a question of convention. A photo has a certain style, is associated with a movement in art history or on the contrary, with ignoring the question marks of its own origin, and only then does it communicate clearly. These steps are performed in a matter of seconds.'[134]

The combination of narrative and rhetoric provides an easier environment for the expression of complex concepts while maintaining a theoretical integrity. While the theoretical arguments remain unresolved, the narrative between the characters culminates with an allusion to the fact that they were estranged and have come together again.

> It was quiet for a while on the other side of the line. I couldn't tell whether he was thinking or waiting for my reply. Then he said:
> 'If I could come, then I'd only be coming to see what photos with nothing in them look like.'
> 'If only that were true.'
> 'What do you mean, that there was nothing in them, or that I could come?'
> 'Both.'[135]

The narrative resolution at the climax of the story provides an end point for the theoretical discussion as well. The theoretical ideas expressed throughout the story are left open; their role is to embed the story within narrative but also rhetoric. It is through narrative that van Duijvenboden describes the photographs that he has taken for his graduate exhibition, but he does not show them. His descriptions of images that only exist in textual representations within the created narrative world are envisioned within the narrative, but it is through rhetoric that they meet the expectations of the text.

[134] Ibid., 6.
[135] Ibid., 9.

The relationship between text and the photograph is unusual in *The Grand Absence* as there is no photograph physically represented. This requires the audience to conjure the image in their imagination with reference to the descriptions in the text. The facility to imagine the scenes referred to is reliant on the experiences of the reader. If the reader has a limited frame of reference to the depicted scenes, then the inferred images are more abstracted. In Yang's series, the locus of understanding between the text and photograph was in the story. In Kwiatkowski's illustrated novel, the text met the photographs in the discourse. I contend that in *The Grand Absence* the text and photograph meet outside of the narrative structure: they correlate within rhetoric.

The events depicted within the story occur within a narrative framework. The conversation between van Duijvenboden and his father, the rumination on Uncle Robert's reaction to his artworks, and the explication on the ideas of theorists such Allan Sekula and William Jan Otten all occur within a narrative world constructed by van Duijvenboden. The narrative device of the dialogue with his father presents the events in a chronological sequence that bears the ingredients of a narrative. The photographs that are represented by text are an aspect of this narrative world and are discussed in this passage:

> 'For example, I've made a photograph about objectivity—'
>
> 'No', he interrupted me, 'Describe what does that photo look like. What would I see if I stood in front of that photo?'
> "A square. From a bird's eye-view perspective.'
> 'What kind of square?'
> "A square in a city. The houses are neither modern nor old-fashioned. There is a small public garden, and some parked cars that don't really stand out.'
> 'People?'
> 'No people.'
> 'Okay. I can see it. Why a square? Why that square?'
> 'I think it's easy to get an overview of a square. That's characteristic of squares. Why that particular square…no idea. I didn't know what else to photograph. I'm not concerned with specific features and certainly not with showing something extraordinary. What matters to me is the way of looking. The bird's eye-view perspective is like the omniscient narrator. The photo as omniscience. Because it looks out over everything, a certain objectivity prevails, but still, only one thing can be viewed at a time. A choice has to be made, such as by our own gaze.'[136]

This passage presents the description of a photograph that may or may not have been taken. Through language, it seeks to evoke a mental image of what the photograph may look like. An aerial view of a people-less square with some houses and parked cars could allude to

[136] Ibid., 5.

hundreds of different places that we have visited or seen through other photographs. While a mental picture is conjured through the language used, its representational reach is constrained through our own experiences of such places speaking to the limitations of text to accurately represent descriptions of the world compared to photographs. The absence of the photograph to verify the claims in the text means that the locus of understanding exists neither in the story, such as in Yang's series, or in the discourse, such as in Kwiatkowski's illustrated novel. Through the nature of van Duijvenboden's theoretical writing, the text and photograph meet in a third layer outside of narrative—the layer of rhetoric. While photographs and events are often described in text, their representation is situated within narrative frameworks. By detailing the people, events, or things located in a frame, an author evokes images in our minds that correlate with these descriptions. The difference in van Duijvenboden's photographic descriptions is that he is proposing the evocation of a photograph that can only be realised in a theoretical context. The description of a people-less square in a non-discrete place once realised in words must then be representational. American English professor James Heffernan writes in relation to the textual representation of visual phenomena, or ekphrasis, that "what *ekphrasis* represents in words, therefore, must itself be *representational*".[137] The objectivity that van Duijvenboden asks, that the un-realised photograph be viewed through, is impossible as the image can only be envisaged through an individual's subjectivity, their own experience of such environments.

In an interview with Klein, van Duijvenboden articulates his position in relation to the text/image relationship:

> I do believe that there can exist something like a third layer in between text and image. But it is a very intricate and therefore complicated affair. How does one prevent that the one becomes subordinate to the other? …I think it has to do with a certain openness: text and image need to wide enough apart to create a space for interpretation, but they need to be close enough to suggest that there might be a link. At the same time, they both need to be somehow unresolved.[138]

The third layer that van Duijvenboden discusses in this interview is rhetoric. There is no anchor within his representations of text and photography for them to meet within a narrative world. His descriptions of taking the photograph reside in narrative, but the representation and expectation of the photograph reside within the limited narrative world of rhetoric.

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[137] James Heffernan, cited in Herman, Jahn, and Ryan, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, 133, original italics.
[138] Alex Klein, "Nikel van Duijvenboden: The Grand Absence / Plateau," *Foam Magazine* 21, 173.

Comparative Alignment

I will compare *The Grand Absence* with the text component from my exhibition *The Perfect Price for Donny* (2011, Appendix 4). The exhibition had twelve components: one large text piece, one installation, five photographs, and five photo-collages that responded to the ideas in the text. This part will examine the use of rhetoric in presenting extended pieces of text within a visual art context.

The text for *The Perfect Price for Donny* was written over two weeks during a writing exercise where I would read a text for one hour then write for one hour. At the time, I was reading several novels and articles, which influenced the writing that followed. After two weeks, I had generated a large amount of unedited text, some of it nonsense and other parts worth pursuing. The final text is an amalgamation of various stories that are embedded within a narrative framed around my inability to concentrate on one task.

After completing the story, I was interested in re-contextualising the text so that it was read as an art object as opposed to a narrative. The final text was printed on vinyl and then installed directly on the gallery wall. The photographs and photo-collages were then positioned alongside the text (figures 7 and 8). *The Grand Absence* was performed in an empty gallery and the described photographs are realised through a rhetorical framework. *The Perfect Price for Donny* is written and read as a story; it doesn't claim any theoretical position in the text, but its illustrative representation within a gallery context does. The public installation of the text sought to alter the environment in which narratives are usually read and understood. It moved from a private environment to a public environment. The reading of the text becomes a public performance that also affects the discourse of the story. The story is read through the context of the gallery, a place where artworks are viewed and discussed. The story is realised and understood through the presentation of an art object. While van Duijvenboden's presentation sought to understand the reception of a photograph within a rhetorical framework, the presentation of the text for *The Perfect Price for Donny* seeks to understand the reception of a narrative within a rhetorical framework.

Figure 7. Martin Smith, *Perfect Price for Donny* (installation) 2011

Figure 8. Martin Smith, *Perfect Price for Donny* (installation) 2011

These three sections analysed the use of narrative worlds, the meeting point of the text and photograph, and made comparisons between my work and that of Australian photographer William Yang, American writer Paul Kwiatkowski, and Dutch artist Nikel van Duijvenboden. Each artist included narrative worlds in their text: Yang used an epistolary voice, Kwiatkowski wrote a confessional narrative, while van Duijvenboden utilised an embedded narrative. In this chapter, I have examined where the text met the photograph in the narrative: Yang's text responded to the photographs in the story, Kwiatkowski's photographs populated the discourse and provided mood and atmosphere for the text, and van Duijvenboden's un-realised photographs embedded in a theoretical dialogue found meaning within a rhetorical layer. I identified that Yang and I both use an epistolary voice, that Kwiatkowski's photographs that populate the discourse resonate with my own photographs, that present the environment that the narrative occurs within and that van Duijvenboden's experimental rhetorical narratives resonate with my own practice of presenting illustrated narratives.

Chapter 3: Studio Methodology

Much of Chapter 1 was devoted to theorising narrative since the formulation of a story is a fundamental core of my practice. Nevertheless, this conceptual basis for my studio production is one part of the research process that results in the final resolution in the creative output. In this chapter, I will outline and define the studio methodologies that reflect the aim of the PhD project to explore how text and photography portray personal experience through the establishment of narrative worlds. The overarching methodology is a blended practice-led, heuristic inquiry that applies methods of creative synthesis of text and photography. The first section of this chapter will position my approach within the practice-led field of research and will then outline my particular interest in heuristic methodology. The second section will investigate the relationship of text and image in the creation of my work. The first part outlines a brief history of how text and image is used in advertising, photojournalism, and art. The second part explains how I have composed the text and created the photographs for this PhD research.

3.1 Practice-Led Research

Because of my teaching responsibilities, my doctoral candidature has been an extended one, but this has allowed me to observe the accelerated changes in the acceptance of studio research over recent years and the extended scope of available methodologies. When I began the research in 2011, the common or key texts in the field were Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt's *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* and Graeme Sullivan's *Art as Research*, both of which were heavily dependent on methodologies borrowed from humanities and education research.[139] My early reading and approach had been very much influenced by British educationist Christopher Frayling's influential paper "Research in Art and Design" precisely because he had adopted, or at least proposed, the most radical position; namely, that the final creative output embodied the research.[140] Despite the profusion of publications on creative arts research since 2011, there have been few to take up this more radical position, with the most notable exception being Tom Barone and Elliott Eisner's *Arts*

[139] Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010); Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in Visual Arts*. 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010).
[140] Christopher Frayling, "Research in Art and Design," *Royal College of Art, Research Papers* 1, no. 1 (1993): 4–9.

Based Research, though it has not fully impacted the field in Australia.[141]

In his paper "Research in Art and Design", Christopher Frayling sought to provide a strategy for research institutions for the formalised study of the practice of visual art. He identified three categories of research in this area: research *into*, *through*, and *for* art and design,[142]

Research *into* art and design is perhaps the most popular and well-known example of research in the visual arts. This involves historical research, investigations into aesthetic and perceptual theories as well as theoretical and philosophical perspectives of art and design. It is commonly undertaken within Art History departments of university and normally lends itself to an extended written thesis. Research *through* art and design involves projects where the researcher has a definitive plan that requires the development of technology or new processes. The project is usually supported by a research diary and a report that outlines the conclusions.

The contentious assertion in Frayling's paper was research *for* art and design. The results of this method of inquiry are "embodied in the artefact", where the goal is not communicative knowledge in a linguistic tradition "but [rather] in the sense of visual or iconic or imagistic communication".[143] This research is more than an argument drawn from the collection of reference materials but seeks to embody new pathways for the direction of visual art through the production and output of new artefacts.

An interesting insight towards the end of Frayling's paper provides a link to the next section of this chapter. To further contextualise his thoughts, he includes a quote from the aunt of novelist E. M. Forster: "How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?" Frayling compares this to the research outcomes from 'research into art and design'. To realign with the outcomes from 'research through art and design', he then changes the quote to "How can I tell what I think till I see what I make and do?" His last change is then in response to

[141] Tom Barone and Elliot W. Eisner, *Arts Based Research* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012). As with many methodology studies, Barone and Eisner seek a methodology that will cross art forms—in this case, principally visual art and music—and this generic approach does seem to confound rather than clarify application of a method to specific fields. This non-specific approach becomes more confusing when anthologies include applied fields of education and art therapy combined with non-instrumental practices such as my own. An example of this is Shaun McNiff's edited collection *Art as Research: Opportunities and Challenges* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013).
[142] Barone and Eisner, *Arts Based Research*, 5.
[143] Ibid.

'research for art and design': "How can I tell what I am till I see what I make and do?"[144]

The reframing of practice-based research as a question of autobiography and the expression of personal experience relates to the aims reflected in my application of multiple narrative worlds, combining story-telling with a photograph to represent, disrupt, and reveal personal experience.

Frayling's original proposals have become part of what is now widely recognised as practice-based or practice-led research in the creative fields in the UK and Australia. At the very least, because of Frayling's legacy, creative arts researchers no longer have to continually justify their role in the research landscape in Academe.[145]

In the early stages of my research, I was seeking a methodology that would allow a more formal or controlled examination and expression of personal phenomena. This is what led me to heuristic research methods and the writing and practice of American psychologist Clark Moustakas. However, as the project progressed, this seeking of formal procedural methodology became less of an imperative. Nevertheless, my engagement with heuristic research methodology for the investigation of personal experience did progress the early phases of my research.

Heuristic research was introduced in Moustakas's publication *Loneliness* (1961), which chronicled his personal journey through loneliness after the death of his mother and young daughter, and it used first-hand and historical case studies to create his thesis.[146] Heuristic research calls for an emphasis on self-disclosure: opening one's own life and experiences to an audience as a means of facilitating dialogue with others. As Moustakas states, "At the heart of heuristics lies an emphasis on disclosing the self as a way of facilitating disclosure from others—a response to the tacit dimension within oneself sparks a similar call from others."[147] This aspect certainly has relevance to my project but fits with a more general and accepted sense that personal narrative can be a useful methodology in creative research just

[144] Ibid.
[145] For the legacy of Frayling's impact, see Toby Juliff, et al., "Praxis Now: Frayling's 'Research in Art and Design' 24 Years on," *2017 ACUADS Conference proceedings*, https://acuads.com.au/conference/conference-2017.
[146] Clark E. Moustakas, *Loneliness* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996); Clark Moustakas, *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications* (Newbury Park: Sage Publication, 1990).
[147] Ibid., 15.

as tacit knowledge is no longer dismissed as an illegitimate research mode. I should also note that so called autoethnographic and other self-reflective approaches have absorbed or developed much of Moustakas's original methodology.[148]

Moustakas was important in foregrounding tacit knowledge as part of his conception of heuristic methodology. Moustakas defines tacit knowledge as the unconscious skills that are applied to everyday acts; for example, the way that a face can be recognised out of the multitude of faces that are encountered every day. Tacit knowledge is used to understand personal experience. A person can be read and understood as being upset through actions such as raising the volume of their voice or rubbing their eyes and crying. This tacit knowledge can then be called upon to respond to phenomena.[149] Moustakas asserts, "When we curtail the tacit in research, we limit possibilities for knowing. We restrict the potential for new awareness and understanding. We reduce the range and depth of meanings that are inherent in every significant human experience."[150]

Reviewing Moustakas's method, Sandy Sela-Smith frames a heuristic methodology for use in projects that are at the last frontier of human inquiry. She states, "This final frontier, I propose, is the interiority of our experience, where feeling, which may previously not have been noticed as significant, is not just a core component of the terrain but the dominant one."[151] Sela-Smith refers to the study of personal experience through the subjectivity of the researcher; that is, the researcher is the subject and object of the research. The heuristic process is open to knowledge that is embodied and incorporated within our ideas of self. The dissemination and understanding of self is in reference to and contextualised within a dynamic and ever-changing self.[152] Sela-Smith, in her description of the development of the heuristic method, mentions the work of Michael Polanyi and his notion that through every encounter we have with another, we grow and take that knowledge into the next encounter.[153] The heuristic method provides researchers with the tools to analyse and interpret personal experience within the context of the evolving human subject.

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[148] See, for example, Heewon Chang, *Autoethnography as Method* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
[149] Ibid., 22.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Sandy Sela-Smith, "Heuristic Research: A Review and Critique of Moustakas's Method," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 42, no. 3 (2002): 54.
[152] Ibid., 55.
[153] Ibid.

Moustakas's outlining of six phases of heuristic was no doubt an overdetermined enterprise, but his description of "Initial Engagement" proved helpful.[154] In outlining the process in this phase, Moustakas states, "Within each researcher exists a topic, theme, problem, or question that represents a critical interest and area of search."[155] He suggests that the researcher engage in self-dialogue and reflective thought to find the question that resonates and can hold the researcher's interest for an extended period of time. I engaged with the practical processes of heuristic research during my candidature and it provided an invaluable method for outlining my concerns and motivations for creating my studio research. Following is an example of how these methods were incorporated in the preparatory stages of my studio research.

My sister passed away in 1999, and my father in 2004. The death of these two influential people in presented me with responsibilities and issues that I had never previously considered.

In preparing my sister's funeral, I collated photographs of her and by her and tried to connect the physical representation of her in the snapshots with the cognitive representation of her seen through her eyes. The two characters were at odds with each other. My sister's right leg was amputated as a consequence of her having cancer at the age of fourteen. In all images of her after her operation, she is wearing an artificial leg, so she appears stilted and uncomfortable and seemingly battling with her disability while the photographs she took are exciting, full of humour, awe and comfort in her difference, she photographed her legs with the artificial one emphasised.

While I was preparing my father's funeral, many people spoke about a character who was foreign to me. I had known an unhappy man who drank too much, worked too much, and was uncommunicative. The stories that flowed after his passing were of a congenial man who was the life of the party and had interests, hobbies, and influences that I unaware of.

After these two deaths and the subsequent mourning, I became interested in what materials are left behind following a person's death and how an identity or character is formed by these media. We compile Photographs, stories, music, and fashion and meaning is formed

[154] Moustakas's six phases were: Initial engagement, immersion in the question, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis.
[155] Sela-Smith, "Heuristic Research," 28.

through the collection of these artefacts. The question that then led to my artistic inquiry was "what are the structures that create, form, and define our personal experiences?"

While these thoughts and questions informed the creation of works before the commencement of my PhD, the concerted effort to focus on the question and afforded time that has been given to it has led to fundamental shifts in how the artworks have been made. It was a sustained period of immersion in the fundamental understanding of the question that led to the new pathways that will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Following the call by Moustakas for a phase of immersion, I was reading autobiographies to gauge how different authors approached and expressed personal experience. Among them were the writings of American humourist David Sedaris,[156] Norwegian autobiographer Karl Ove Knausgård,[157] American postmodern writer Paul Auster,[158] and the photo-illustrated novel of American photographer/author Paul Kwiatkowski, *And Every Day Was Overcast*, previously discussed.[159]

I also took every chance to present my research to peers and to discuss my responses to the data that I was collecting. I engaged in writing exercises where I would read for one hour then immediately write for one hour. I undertook this over the course of two weeks and then edited the writing into a piece that became *The Perfect Price for Donny* (Appendix 4). This was an intensive creative phase that yielded draft responses. There followed the critical reflection or what Moustakas would have described as "Incubation" which allows for the workings of the tacit dimension to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside one's immediate awareness.[160] The singularly important outcome of this reflection was the importance of understanding the nature of narrative and narratology in my research.

The most "illuminating" aspect of this, to use Moustakas's term, was that I began to see that my ongoing investigation of personal experience through text and photography was creating a form that resembled a novel read through photographs. For me, this was a new way of

[156] David Sedaris, *Me Talk Pretty One Day* (Boston, MA: Back Bay Books, 2001).
[157] Karl Ove Knausgård,and Don Bartlett, *My Struggle* (Brooklyn: Archipelago Books, 2012)
[158] Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).
[159] Kwiatkowski, *And Every Day Was Overcast*.
[160] Ibid., 29.

thinking about my entire practice and reinvigorated my energies in continuing to pursue many of the themes that ignited my interests at the beginning of my journey.[161]

The adaption of heuristic research was framed around 'how' the studio research was completed methodologically. Since commencing my artistic practice, I have experimented with the combination of text and image. This has taken many forms, such as personal stories cut into vernacular, snapshot or amateur photographs; cut-out letters resurrected and attached to the gallery wall, photographs, or paper; short phrases written onto photographs; and longer fictional stories used to inform the creation of photographs. The next section explores the combination of text and image historically and rhetorically and then outlines how it has been used within this visual research.

3.2 Studio Method: Text and Image

> Language is one species of genus sign and
> Pictorial representations are another species of the same genus
> These two species can be wedded to one another.
> They can be either politely and comfortably
> (as when an illustration is wedded to a text or a caption to a drawing)
> or they can start an illicit liaison
> so intimately integrated
> that one doesn't know any more
> who is the bride and who is the bridegroom.
>
> —Stefan Thermerson (1966)[162]

The studio method that I have used in the visual research is the combination of text—in the form of short stories that explore personal experience through an epistolary application of narrative worlds—and a photograph. The use of text is an indelible aspect of my practice; its form, presentation, and expression play a key role in most of my artworks. The applied method combines two communicative modes in the studio research to examine multiple narrative worlds and represent, disrupt, and reveal personal experience.

This section examines the combination of text and a photograph for creating the studio research and how they have evolved over the course of the PhD. It will outline how text and

[161] The reframing of the practice as a novel will be discussed more in Chapter 4: Outcomes.

[162] Stefan Themerson, "Ideogrammes Lyriques," *Typographica* (December 1966), quoted in Aimee Selby, ed., *Art and Text* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2009), 1.

photography is applied in the commercial, documentary, and familial fields of photography and, using these applications as an influence, explain how the visual research simultaneously expands on and subverts these recognised usages. The first part examines the discussions surrounding the use of text and a photograph in press, advertising, and art; the relationship between the two; and how meaning is constructed through them. I draw upon the writing of English linguist Clive Scott to frame the discussion on the general usage of text/image in society, particularly his publication on the text/image relationship, *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language*.[163] I also refer to Will Hill's essay "The Schwitters Legacy: Language and Art in the Early Twentieth Century"[164] and Mary Price's book *The Photograph: A Strange, Confined Space*,[165] which both extrapolate on the differences between the two communicative modes. The multi-modal communication of text and image is introduced through the work of English linguist John Bateman's *Text and Image: A Critical Introduction to Visual/Verbal Divide*.[166]

The next part traces how the role of the photograph in my artworks has changed since the inception of the process, with a new way of conceptualising and producing the images commencing in 2014. The final part examines the application of pictorial human forms that are created out of the personal stories. The visual representation of text and its connection to meaning is explored through French modernist poet Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*.

Text and Photography

According to Scott, the combination of text and photography is ubiquitous, from the caption in press and commercial photography, the title in art, to the accompanying verbal commentary in family photography.[167] The locus of understanding in news photography is in the synchronisation between caption and image. Meaning is deciphered through the believable relationship between what is described in the text and what the photograph represents. In commercial and illustrated images, the text needs to refer to an object depicted

[163] Scott, *The Spoken Image.*
[164] Will Hill, "The Schwitters Legacy: Language and Art in the Early Twentieth Century," in *Art and Text*, ed. Aimee Selby (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2009), 12
[165] Mary Price, *The Photograph: A Strange Confined Space* (California: Stanford University Press, 1994),
[166] John A. Bateman, *Text and Image: A Critical Introduction to the Visual-Verbal Divide* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
[167] Scott, *The Spoken Image*, 52.

in the photograph for the customer to link the description with the object and the cost.[168] Scott explains that the title in art photography is used as a destination, a point of departure, and as a parallel but displaced commentary.[169] Words are primarily spoken in the example of family photography. Without the verbal commentary providing familial context and history, the figures portrayed in family photography are state-less, lost, and belong to no-one. In these examples, the text describes what is represented in the photograph.

Hill presents the relationship between text and image as the "language of description meets the language of representation".[170] Price notes "the language of description is deeply implicated in how a viewer looks at photographs. Description may be title, caption or text."[171] Price and Hill both refer to text as being descriptive, with its role being to contextualise the photograph. Scott describes the caption in relation to the photograph as a binary relationship, where they are conceived and interpreted independent of each other.

> The caption never coincides with the image, never exists in the same time: it either precedes the image, as it may in a rebus—the image is called upon to encode or enigmatize the caption—or succeeds it acts as a reaction. Consequently, meaning itself is displaced, removed from the image: the image is either only part of a metaphor or the instigator of a presiding voice which, in return, endows it with a justification.[172]

According to Scott, the photograph receives the text and is a passive participant to the "presiding voice" of the text. When one reads works that combine text and image, the dominant voice that determines meaning is typically situated within the descriptive text. The representative qualities of the image aid in justifying the claims made by the words.

Bateman distinguishes the text–image combination as "multi-modal", and as "the investigation of diverse modes of expression and their combinations".[173] According to Bateman, the combination of two or more modes of communication, when used productively, can create more information than the use of a single mode. To be used productively, the process is more than just placing the two modes next to each other, but to resonate "…there must be some contact, some internal properties that allow multiplication to take place".[174] For

[168] Ibid., 48.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Hill, "The Schwitters Legacy," 1.
[171] Price, *The Photograph*, 1.
[172] Scott, *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language*, 53.
[173] Bateman, *Text and Image*, 6.
[174] Ibid.

my artworks, I decided to avoid direct connections between the text and the object/subject depicted in the photograph. While the text is written and designed to be read in a literary sense, it is also purposely embedded into the image so that both modes of communication are evenly proportioned and have an effect on each other. There is an interdependent relationship between the text and image within the studio research, but because they lack known references to each other, it is difficult to read them as having one logical meaning. They aim to "co-determine" each other's viability to such a degree that an interpretation can take place.[175]

When I was conceptualising the studio research in this PhD, the relationship of text to image was of prime concern, especially when the image is a photograph, which as stated, is usually seen as the supportive voice to the affirmation of the text. The usual descriptive and representational cues for marrying text and image are absent and the integration of text directly into the surface of the photograph is divergent from recognised methods of incorporating language and photography. As text is often used to narrate what is 'in' the photographs, the finished artworks narrate 'through' the photographs. The combination of both text and image sought to create an alternative and disruptive space where understanding wasn't located in the binary reading of both but in the inclusive reading of the image as a whole. The artworks produced during the PhD conflate the text and the photograph, so that one cannot be read outside of the other, thereby conjoining the narrative worlds of both the text and the photograph. Neither the text nor the photograph was dominant or subservient, but both served to represent and reveal aspects of personal experience.

The Photographic Method

This part will examine how my photographs evolved over the course of the studio research. It will outline the procedural changes that occurred in the thinking and the method for constructing the photographic images that simultaneously contradict, receive, and transmit the text. It will draw from the writing of Barthes with reference to the context of a photograph. I will analyse photographs that were first created using the method of text excised from photographs and compare them with photographs created for an exhibition ten years later. The development of the photograph correlates with a refinement of thinking and a

[175] Ibid., 39.

deeper engagement with narrative theories. The photographs that have been created for the studio research are intrinsically linked with events that have occurred in my daily life. Therefore, in outlining the photographic method, personal narratives are interwoven with the analysis, so as to provide procedural context.

Shortly after my father passed away in 2004, I was asked by a local artist-run gallery called The Farm to exhibit new work for their space. I already had some work that was ready to be installed, but I also wanted to make work responding to my father's death. I decided to take some landscape photographs of Sandgate in Brisbane, which is where I grew up. The photograph of Sandgate as chosen because it represented a place of significance for my father and me. I then cut the lyrics to the Johnny Cash song "I Walk the Line"[176] out of the photograph. The resultant image was titled *Ronald Desmond 2004* (2004, figure 9). When the image was installed, I collected the released letters and scattered them below the print to mimic the tears that had been shed since his passing. At the time, making this artwork was a very reactive process as I was consulting with my family as to what song we should play at his funeral. I wanted Johnny Cash because I remember driving in the car with my father during my youth and listening to country music radio with him.

[176] Johnny Cash, "I Walk the Line," in *With His Hot and Blue Guitar* (Memphis: Sun Records, 1956).

Figure 9. Martin Smith, *Ronald Desmond 2004* (installation view), 2004

The landscape photograph was a reaction to place, a memory marker. It showed the place where I grew up and with which I associated my relationship to my father. The song lyrics were also a memory marker as they were associated with a memory of him. The photograph wasn't a reaction to the song lyrics, nor did it serve to represent them; it was a connected memory, meant to be read and experienced together. The song lyrics were excised from the photograph with a blade to infuse the two memories, one of place (landscape) and the other of time (song lyrics). The photographs from this point on in my practice were vernacular

photographs created through a process of shooting when I was travelling or walking to and from my work, out with my family, or going through my archive. They were people-less and often depicted mundane spaces without known contextual markers. I was driven to take images that were temporal and spatially contracted so that the added text created the context that was lacking in the photographs. Bateman cites Barthes, who expanded on this idea by claiming that all images are "polysemous: they imply, underlying their signifiers, a 'floating chain' of signified, the reader able to choose some and ignore others".[177] Barthes claimed that societies find ways to fix the 'floating chains' to make photographs meaningful. The obvious method of fixing meaning to photographs is through captions or titles, but in these early works the aim was to 'connect' the text and photograph to the memories that remain with us throughout our lives. The effect of memory was reinforced through the act of hand-cutting the text from the photograph, as it manifests like a scar, a permanent reminder of an event and its consequences. As my reading into narrative progressed, I wished to create more complex photographs that incorporated aspects of memory but that also spoke to the role that narrative plays in the formation of identity. In the early artworks, the photographs were an anonymous space, but as the PhD progressed, they became a more identifiable place where personal narratives can be presented. The first incarnation of these new photographs was for the exhibition *More Sex, Less Death* (2014).

In some ways, serendipity plays a role in creating new artworks. In this case, my next-door neighbour was throwing out a carpet. Seeing that this beautifully textured and coloured piece of carpet was about to go in the skip, I decided to put it under my house instead and use it as the base for a stage. In previous exhibitions, the text was cut directly out of un-manipulated, vernacular photographs; for *More Sex, Less Death*, the photographs that were usually used to receive the text were turned into backdrops, which gave them the perception of depth. The combination of vernacular backdrops within a staged environment was used to disrupt the known reception of the photographs; for example, *Yes and Yes* (2014, figure 10). The perceived stage mirrored the space where actors are called on to perform roles. This idea reflects Bruner's assertion that was outlined in Chapter 1, that "…that a life as led is inseparable from a life as told—or more bluntly, a life is not 'how it was' but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold".[178] This quote was represented in the photograph through the creation of a metaphorical stage that allows for the telling and

[177] Barthes, quoted in Bateman, *Text and Image*, 34.
[178] Jerome Bruner, "Life as Narrative," *Social Research* 71, no. 3 (2004): 691–710.

retelling of the story of our lives to ourselves. The use of the carpet suggested that the stage was not public but private to suggest that the stories that are told are told to ourselves. The stage was private, meant for personal reflection, which is also reflected in the text. The text sought to create narrative worlds but was written in an epistolary voice. It is a letter to myself.

Figure 10. Martin Smith, *Yes and Yes*, pigment print with hand-cut letters, 2014

> My father did shift work at the airport for 36 years, this explains a lot. If he was on the morning shift he had a routine where he would sleep till 3:30pm then we would drive to the Brighton Hotel, pick up a six-pack of XXXX and he would drink two on the way home. Because he was driving, my job was to hand them to him; otherwise it would have been dangerous. He would quickly finish off the other four when we got home. This would often result in an inconsistent mood and it was also the queue for me to be anywhere else.

> As opposed to being at home and tip-toeing around the house I decided that I would become a paperboy. I thought how hard could it be wandering the neighbourhood, talking to old people and handing them their Northside Chronicle. After accepting the job I realized that I was a lazy shit and didn't want to do it anymore. I had the job for exactly three weeks. The first week I got bored after five streets and decided to go home and watch Happy Days (I was such a Potsie).
>
> After that my 14 year old brain did the math and came to the conclusion that instead of walking the streets putting newspapers into letterboxes it would be easier to cart 300 Northside Chronicles up my street (approx. 300m), around the corner (approx. 73m), over the busy intersection (approx. 25m), down the park (approx. 200m) and then throw the newspapers into the lagoon. Not a bad days work. #perfectcrime
>
> A few days later after Dad had done a week of morning shifts and just after he had finished the last of the six-pack the editor of the Northside Chronicle called our house to ask whether or not…
> a) I was the reason nobody in my area had received a paper in three weeks and b) if I was responsible for throwing them into the lagoon.
> yes and yes.
>
> My father had a very strong work ethic and assumed that I, being his offspring, had a similar work ethic (he was so wrong) so when the man accused me of these heinous crimes he went to town on the poor man giving him a spray that would render him immobile. I only found out about this after because mum asked me if I knew anything about it and I stated that I threw the papers in the lagoon because I didn't think anyone would care and anyone who did care wasn't worth caring about.

Text as Pictorial Form

This part examines a key change in my depiction of the text in my artworks. As the project progressed, I began designing the text into pictorial human forms to follow the shift in my understanding of the role that narrative plays in the formation of self and the relationship between our personal stories and their representation of identity. In this section, I draw upon the writing of Jens Brockmeier and Donal Carbaugh, who were discussed in Chapter 1, and also that of another American psychologist, Jerome Bruner. The use of text as a pictorial representation will be discussed through French modernist poet Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*. According to Apollinaire, concrete poetry sought to critique the meaning systems of language by highlighting the complex relationship between the sound a word makes and its cultural construction.

When I first began making images with text excised from them, the text would take up the whole pictorial plane, as in *Ronald Desmond 2004* (figure 9). The size of the image was dependent on the amount of text that had to be cut out of the photograph. As I continued to explore new processes for combining text and image, I began to design text around an aspect of the image. For example, I fitted text into a compositional shape such as a shadow or a tree or a geometric form like a circle. When I was constructing the text-based works for the exhibition *More Sex, Less Death*, the stories took the shape of pictorial forms, most

noticeably a human figure (as in *Yes and Yes*, figure 10). The figurative transformation of the text added another narrative layer to the artworks as the textual figures were either in the act of performance, such as dance, or standing rigid as if posing for a photograph.

Narrative Identity

The concept that narrative and narrativity play such an influential role in the construction of identity changed my thinking and required a response within the visual research. On any given day, people have many experiences, from the mundane to the extraordinary, trivial to revolutionary, domestic to social; as people go through the routines that their body requires for a sustainable life, including bowel movements, sex, breathing, and eating. However, when asked to describe their day, the body functions, the mundane, the trivial are removed and the individual's day is condensed into a narrative that follows social conventions. It is usually the highlights, 'the best of' the individuals' day, and their lives generally, that are rendered as narratives. In their book *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture*, Brockmeier and Carbaugh state:

> …that such a complex and fleeting construction as human identity—the self in time—can *only* exist as a narrative construction. Without the narrative fabric, it seems difficult to even think of human temporality and historicity at all…the very idea of human identity—perhaps we can say the very possibility of human identity—is tied to the very notion of narrative and narrativity.[179]

The narratives that are told within social communities are often different from the ones told within the family, which are also different from the ones told within the individual. The same event is told differently to several different people in different ways. Narrative allows people to constantly reframe themselves to suit the social situation, whether that is - formal or casual, social or familial. The process of recalling and retelling your life experiences is outlined by Bruner as follows, "When somebody tells you his life…it is always a cognitive achievement rather than a through-the-clear-crystal recital of something univocally given."[180] The way an identity, a character, or a figure is created out of the narratives of people's lives was the impetus for forming the figures out of text.

[179] Brockmeier and Carbaugh, *Narrative and Identity*, 15.
[180] Bruner, "Life as Narrative," 692.

The pictorial figures presented in the images are usually framed to appear as if they were an aspect of the original photograph in that the shape is included in the photographic composition. The pictorial figure constructed of text stands for a human presence, which alludes to an identity, gender, and age. The narrative is then hand-cut out of a photograph, providing a physical imprint of the identity that is rendered as text.

The text as figure also alludes to the notion that after death, identity and character are told through narrative. It is as if physical-selves are replaced by narrative-selves. Bruner addresses the idea of how 'a life' is constituted:

> We seem to have no other way of describing "lived time" save in the form of narrative. Which is not to say there are not other temporal forms that can be imposed on the experience of time, but none of them succeeds in capturing the sense of *lived* time: not clock or calendrical time forms, not serial or cyclical orders, not any of these.[181]

As such, I altered the form of the text to address new concerns in relation to the influence of narratives in the formation of personal identity. I also changed the text to highlight the representational limitations of text. The new pictorial form of the text sought to address the sound that a word or phrase makes and the images that that word presents to the reader. For example, when we hear the word 'dog', we think of a four-legged mammal that sheds hair and is completely obsessed with our thongs. The idea that the sound a word makes is linked to the thing it represents is important because, as the text took on a human form, it represents the narrative told within the self. This is not always the image that is presented to the public, but the stories told by ourselves to ourselves. The alteration of the text sought to highlight the telling of the narrative with the form of the narrative.

Stories and Images

The graphic representation of text and form in my artworks resembles Apollinaire's pictorial poems called *Callingrams*. These graphic typological poems from 1918 created text that mimicked the shape of the 'thing' that the text referenced. Apollinaire used text, type, and image to question the "ambiguous relationships between descriptive and representational codes".[182]

[181] Ibid.
[182] Hill, "The Schwitters Legacy," 10.

As noted above, Hill posits that text is descriptive while the image is representational.[183] In Apollinaire's poems, the form the text takes is in direct relation to the themes it describes. For example, writings about a revolver take the form of a gun, as seen in figure 11. Apollinaire's pictorial poems sought to highlight the relationship between the word and the phrase and its representation. The word 'revolver' doesn't reference what the object looks like, yet most people would be able to picture a revolver when it is mentioned. Hill refers to this when discussing Apollinaire's poems:

> To give text a pictorial form reveals complex contradictions between the visual representation and linguistic description and reminds us that language is a fragile and illogical construct, bound to its subject by cultural compact alone. While we take for granted the equivalence between the word and its subject, they are not linked by any resemblance, but only by the shared perception of meaning inherent in language.[184]

[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.

Figure 11. Guillaume Apollinaire *Revolver, drawing for the Calligramme "Éventail des saveurs"* 1917–18

Apollinaire was interested in replacing the sound qualities of words and phrases with a visual representation, concluding that language is bound to its subject by cultural connections alone. In the studio research, this concept was used to emphasise that the language we use to create identity—the stories that create and define us—is also a cultural construct. The work seeks to reveal that the relationship between narrative and identity is as intertwined and as constructed as the relationship between a word and its meaning. The text as a pictorial form reinforces the

notion that the stories that are used to create and define our character are a construct for an audience. The audience is our family, the community, but also ourselves.

The photograph, the story, and the human form in the visual research were all constructed to fit into a system for understanding for how narratives are made, interpreted, and understood. When all the final artworks are exhibited, they are not necessarily meant to make sense as a linear narrative, but the individual components create an epistolary account of events that are constructed into a long-form narrative. The studio methodologies of practice-led research, heuristic method, and a synthesising of text and image provided an invaluable impetus for the studio research to evolve in directions that reflected new thinking and reactions to the portrayal of personal experience. The following chapter will discuss the visual outcomes made over the course of this research.

Chapter 4: Outcomes

This chapter discusses the outcomes of the studio research, illustrating the progression of the artistic research as the theoretical framework was refined and the methodical processes were applied. Over the course of the PhD, I have held six solo exhibitions in varying locations throughout Australia and the United States of America.[185] This chapter will detail the conceptual intent for each exhibition alongside an artwork/s that manifests the influences and outcomes of my research. An analysis will follow each, highlighting the construction and application of narrative worlds and the use of text and photography to reveal and reflect personal experience.

Throughout my candidature, I have experimented with different forms of narrative that sometimes conflict with each other. In some artworks, I have used a confessional voice to build trust in the narrator and the narration, while in others I have used the voice of the naif to question the validity of the narration. Each artwork is seen as part of a larger whole and the collective body of artworks addresses the complexity and diversity of our life narratives. With the commencement of my PhD, I had the time to reflect on my whole practice, and I began to see the collected artworks that utilise text and photography as a novel. The novel is finished when I am finished and is composed of individual episodes that follow no chronological order.[186]Seeing my work as a novel read through a series of photographs has been an interesting development in the conceptualisation of my practice although I don't mean this to evoke John Berger's famous imaginative rendering of a peasant woman's life in 150 random photographs, particularly since, unlike Berger's nonlinear narrative, my collection of works include photograph and text.[187] I do not intend to develop this background metaphor of an illustrated novel at this stage and it may have been triggered by conceptualising the final doctoral exhibition. Even so, my PhD exhibition is an opportunity to

[185] *The Perfect Price for Donny* (2011) was exhibited at Ryan Renshaw Gallery, Brisbane (appendix 5); *New Work* (2012) was exhibited at Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne (appendix 6); *More Sex, Less Death* (2014) was exhibited at Ryan Renshaw Gallery, Brisbane (appendix 7); *I'm Sick of Sittin''Round Here, Tryin' to Write this Book* (2015) was exhibited at Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne (appendix 8); *That's What Tortures Me* (2016) was exhibited at Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane (appendix 9); *The Only Option Available* (2018) was exhibited at Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne (appendix 10). The studio research was also exhibited at United Photo Industries in Brooklyn and The Australian Embassy in Manhattan in 2013.
[186] While the creation of a novel read through a photograph has been an interesting development in the conceptualisation of my practice, it will not be discussed in this exegesis.
[187] John Berger and Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling: A Possible Theory of Photography* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

present an abridged version of the novel as it will include a number of artworks from different exhibitions.[188]

An aspect in my studio work that has taken on increasing significance in understanding its mode of operation is the inclusion of the letters that have been hand-cut from the surface of the photograph within the picture frame, as seen in figure 12. On closer inspection, one can see that these letters are not perfect and there are scratches on the photograph from the blade. When I first began making text and photography artworks in 2004, the letters were scattered on the floor beneath the work. For example, in *Ronald Desmond 2004* (2004, figure 9), they symbolised the tears that my mother had shed after the death of my father and sister. Since this time, the released letters have become contained in the frame, representing that a change has taken place in the contextualisation of the text and photograph. The fallen letters, in figure 12, present an autumnal scene within the frame, symbolising that a change is occurring in the relationship between the text and the photograph.

Figure 12. Martin Smith, *Installation detail*, 2014

[188] I have been fortunate throughout my candidature that some of the artworks presented in this chapter have been acquired by private and public collections. While every effort will be made to collect and present these works at the final exhibition, it is currently unconfirmed which artworks will be available for assessment.

The released letters have also been resurrected to create artworks that explore the construction of language. These artworks are loosely titled *Resurrection* works, as they examine the combination of individual letters in the formation of language, with an example of these works being *More Sex, Less Death* (2014, figure 13). Works that feature the released letters as material metaphors or symbolic substitutes will be included in the final exhibition because they not only provide the useful link in the evolution of the form of the text, but also act as a key mechanism for a fusion or disruption of our understanding of a differentiation between text and photograph in creating a narrative world.

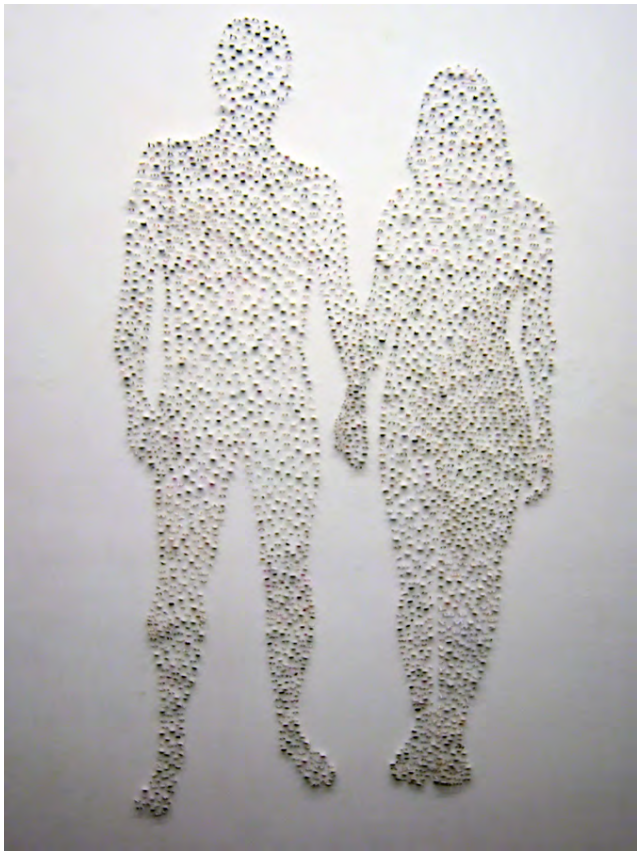

Figure 13. Martin Smith, *More Sex, Less Death* (installation) 2014

The works that will be presented for analysis have been drawn from the following six exhibitions: *The Perfect Price for Donny* (2011, appendix 5), *New Work* (2012, appendix 6), *More Sex, Less Death* (2014, appendix7), *I'm Sick of Sittin''Round Here, Tryin' to Write this Book* (2015, appendix 8), *That's What Tortures Me* (2016, appendix 9), and *The Only Option Available* (2018, appendix 10). The strategy employed in this chapter is to discuss specific artworks from each iteration of the ideas and experiments to express a detailed analysis of the artistic outcomes.

Throughout my candidature, I have also been creating artworks that do not use the combination of text and photography. These works are shown in the appendix for each exhibition but do not form part of the analysis for this chapter. Some of these artworks have been influential in the development of the studio research outputs using text/photography and these works will be included in the final exhibition.

4.1: The Perfect Price for Donny

For this exhibition, twelve artworks were produced: a large text wall, an installation of cut-out letters, five photographs of my family, and five photo-collages. The works that will be analysed from this exhibition are the photographs of my family, and are from the *Revelation* series (2011–2015). While this series currently consists of seven artworks, only *Revelation #1* to #5 (figures 14–18) are presented here, because they appeared in *The Perfect Price for Donny*, while *Revelation #6* and *Revelation #7* were made in 2015. I exhibited all five prints in *The Perfect Price for Donny*, but on reflection *Revelation #5* will be omitted from my final exhibition I feel that the sentiment of the photograph is not an accurate portrayal of my role as a father.

Figure 14. Martin Smith, *Revelation #1* 2011

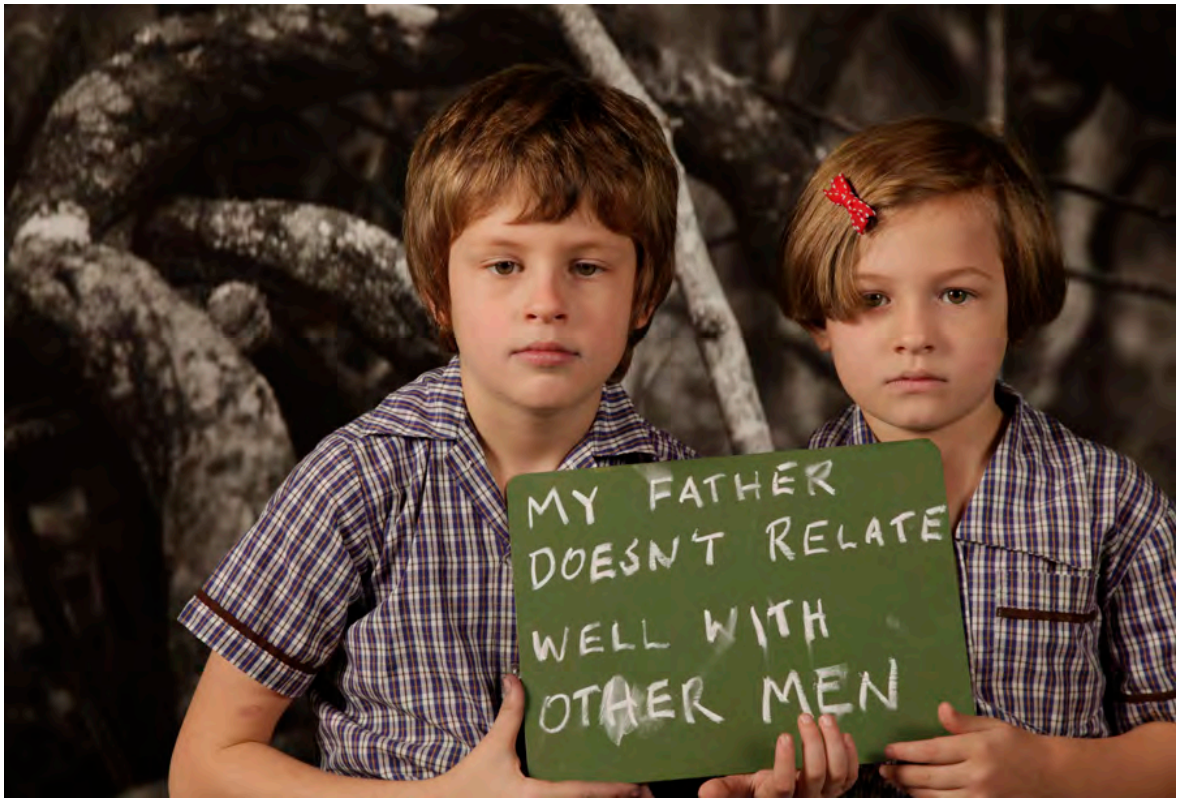

Figure 15. Martin Smith, *Revelation #2,* 2011

Figure 16. Martin Smith, *Revelation #3,* 2011

Figure 17. Martin Smith, *Revelation #4*, 2011

Figure 18. Martin Smith, *Revelation #5,* 2011

Narrativity

The *Revelation* series of photographs were created directly after finishing the text *The Perfect Price for Donny* (appendix 4) and they experimented with the position and placement of the narrator within the artwork. The story that the series explores was inspired by the conversations I was having with other parents at my children's sporting events. When I articulated to other parents that I was an artist, I recognised that there was a noticeable shift in their interest. By contrast, I noticed that certain professions were met with much greater affection, especially tradespeople. Many of the other parents were in the process of undergoing home renovations, and it occurred to me that the parents' interest had a direct correlation to how useful, or not, one might be in helping them with their impending renovations. The text and photographs that were made for this series were based on qualities I possessed and how 'useful' they were in the suburbs of renovation. They also commented on an infallibility of character that the men around me were portraying and I was questioning its validity.

The five photographs all begin with the phrase “My father…” and tell of flaws in my character in relation to being a ‘suburban man’, as evidenced by my inability to build with wood or to earn a significant income through my art practice. The text was conceived as conversations that my children may have with a therapist after my passing. As such, it predicts how my role and skills as a father will be defined in the future as opposed to how they are perceived now. I am both the narrator (as I am telling the stories) and the narrated. Even though the photographs are of my children, I am the subject of the photographs. Blending the narrative layers between narrator and narrated is one of the characteristics of a metalepsis. Using a metalepsis creates a narrative world where the children that are in the photograph are not the subject of the photograph but the object that provides the vehicle for the narrative. The narrative was also written to be self-asserting because using one’s children as a vehicle for a personal musing on your value is the sign of a very flawed human being. The discourse of the photographs also adds to the familial narrative, as they are modelled around known tropes of family photography.

Text and Photography

This part examines the combination of text and photography in the *Revelation* series, with an emphasis on the representation of text within the photographic frame and the intended connection between the story in the text and the discourse of the photograph.

The text in the *Revelation* series is depicted in the photographic frame rather than being excised from the photograph. This was a significant change in the production and distribution of these photographs, as I had the opportunity to reproduce and reprint the final artworks. The other major shift was composing and producing the photographs in a studio environment. The use of backdrops and portable studio lighting was new to the production of my photographs and became a technique I used in subsequent exhibitions.

The narrative centres on my anxieties as a parent and how they may be reflected in my children, and the discourse was delivered through known tropes of family photography, such as the family portrait, the school portrait, and the documentation of achievement. While the text does not relate directly to the events depicted in the photographs, the anchor binding the text and photograph is the representation of family. The over-riding voice of the

narrator/father is embedded within the implied narrative of domestic relations. *Revelation #4* is a photograph of my daughter dressed in a tutu, holding a plaque that should acknowledge her achievement but that has instead become a proclamation about my uselessness in building stuff out of wood. This is reinforced in the photograph through the shoddiness in the construction of the shield. The text undermines the implied narrative of success in the photograph and transfers it to the unseen narrator/father/photographer. A recognised link between the text and the photograph is the most obvious in this series, as it was important to link myself as the father with children through the use of family photography.[189]

4.2: New Work

After constructing a metalepsis in *The Perfect Price for Donny*, I had an opportunity the following year to explore the potential for distorting and disrupting narrative in the exhibition *New Work*. For this exhibition, ten artworks were produced, five of which were photographs with text cut out of the surface and five were works on paper that combined resurrected letters with text. The three works that will be analysed from this exhibition are from the latter group and are titled *Mother's Father* (figure 19), *Father's Mother* (figure 20), and *Brother's Sister* (figure 21).

[189] From this series, *Revelation #1* was short-listed for the Bowness Prize at Monash Gallery of Art in Melbourne, and I was commissioned to make *Revelation #7* that was installed as a billboard as part of the Brisbane City Councils' Laneways Project (artwork can be viewed at http://www.martinsmith.net.au/album/commissions.html.) When I was creating new artworks for the exhibition that followed *The Perfect Price for Donny*, I was interested in continuing to experiment with the creation of narrative worlds through text and photography, especially the application of fork-path narratives.

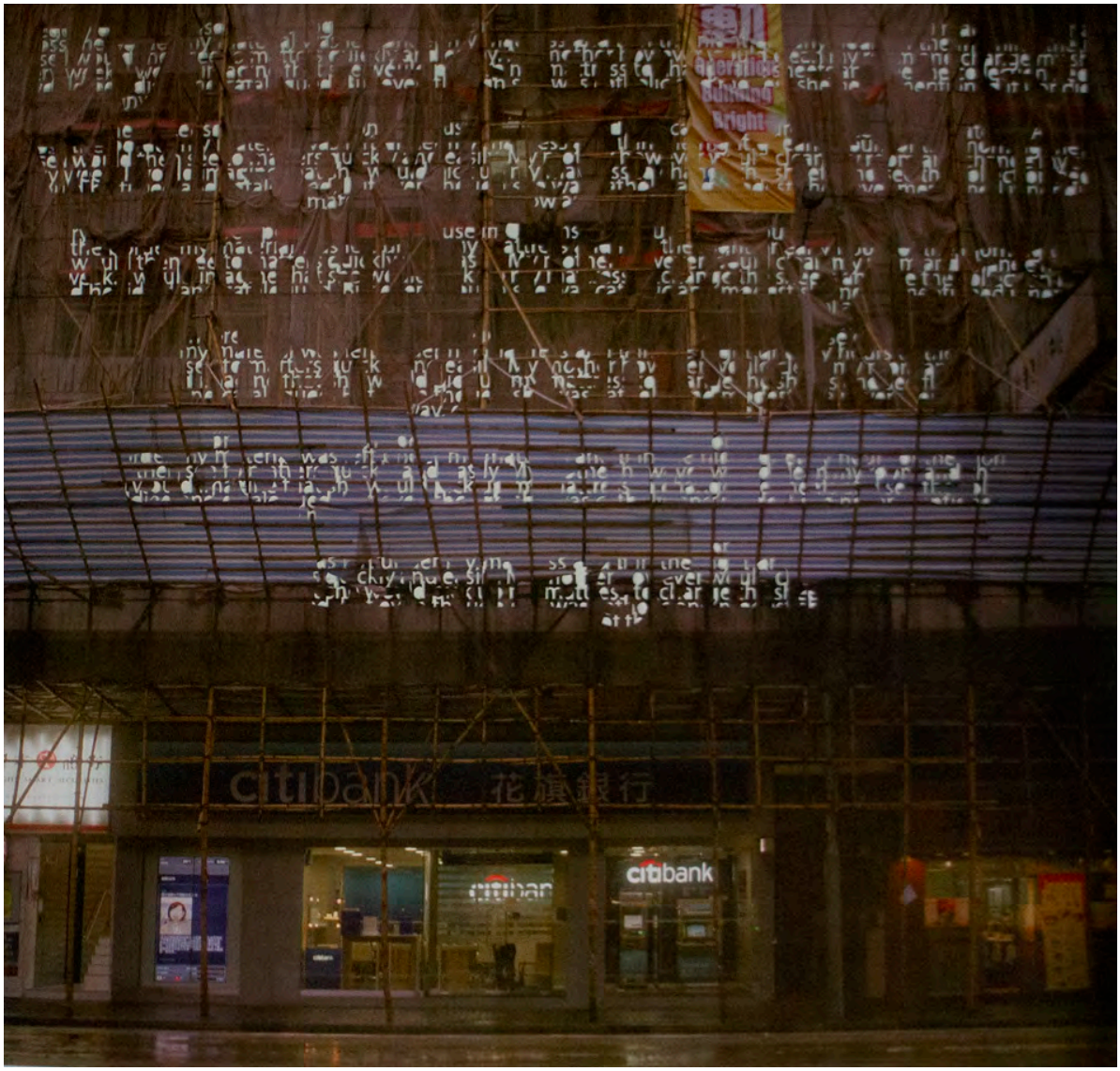

Figure 19. Martin Smith, *Father's Mother*, 2012

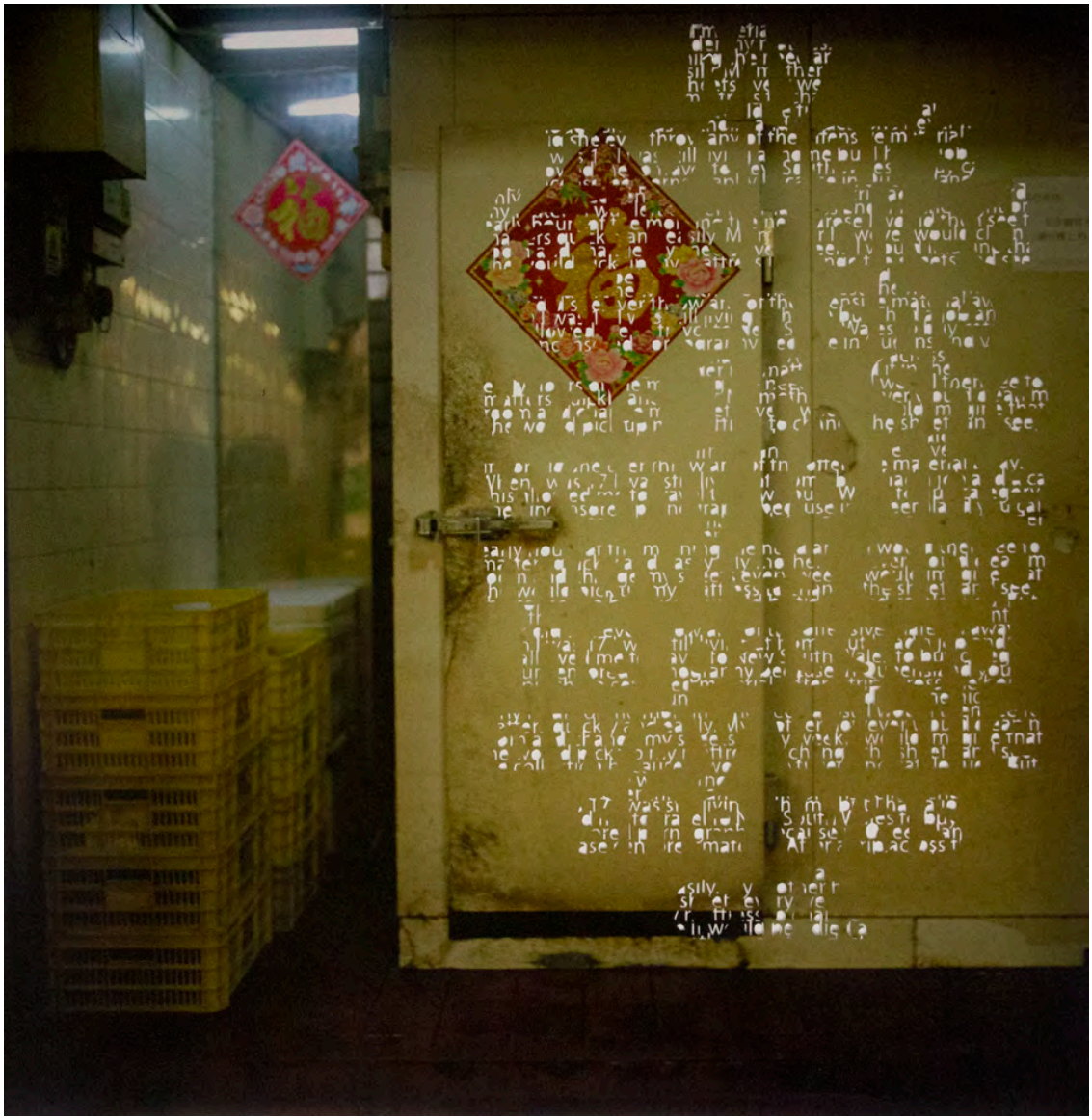

Figure 20. Martin Smith, *Mother's Father*, 2012

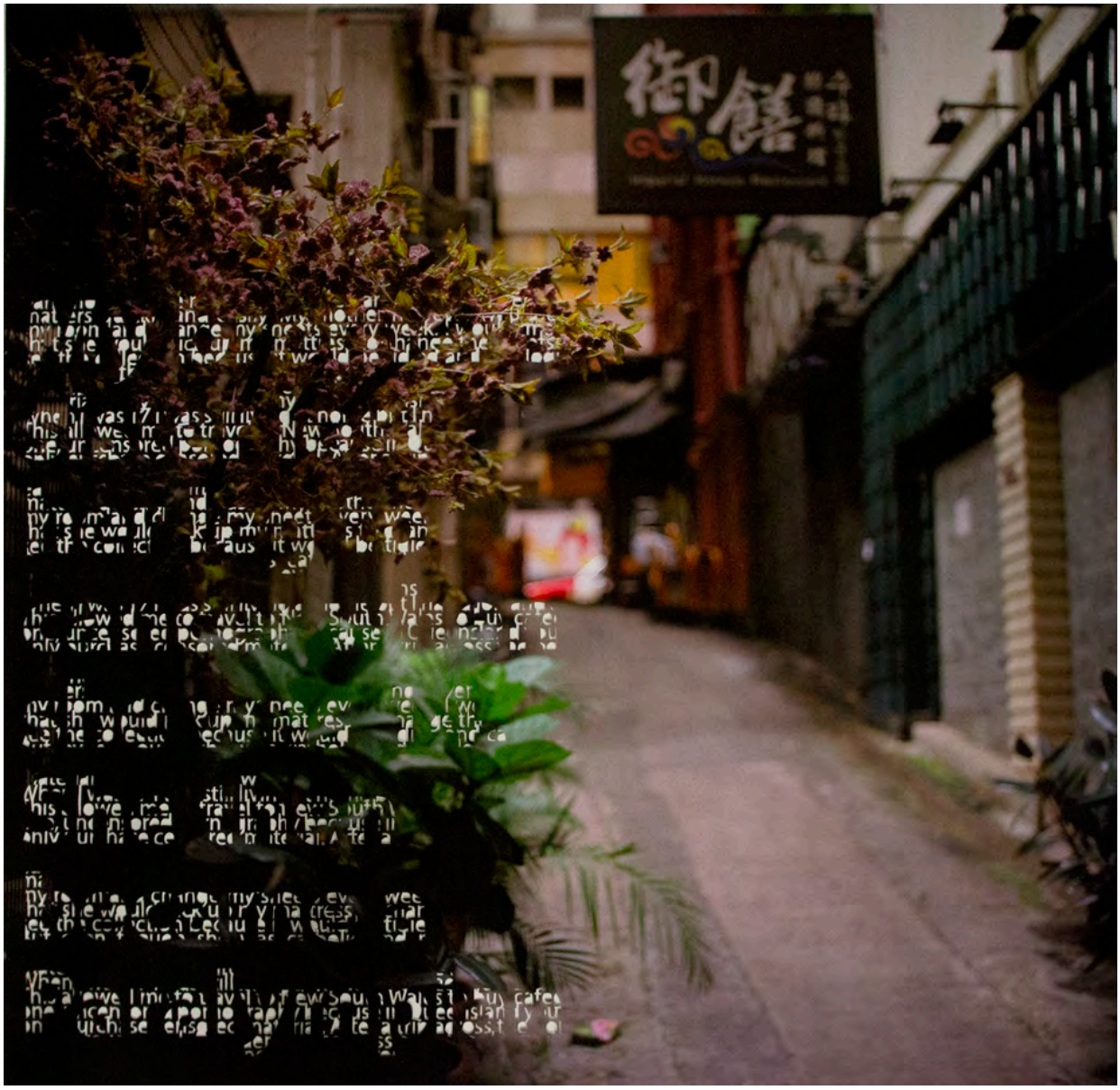

Figure 21. Martin Smith, *Brother's Sister*, 2012

The conceptual intent for this show emerged from my research into the cognitive choices that we make when developing the narrative that represents our personal histories, as outlined in Chapter 1.2. This exhibition also represented the application of fork-path narratives to create two possible worlds that exist simultaneously and separately. My heuristic engagement with the representation of personal experience also influenced the changes in the ways the text and photograph were combined and meaning was elicited. In creating the artworks under discussion, I was interested in the stories that linger in our subconscious, that tell an alternative narrative to the one that we tell ourselves. The hidden story is a confession that is not told to others but influences how other events in life are interpreted.

The most influential reading at this point in time was Bruner's "Life as Narrative" and his statement quoted earlier: "There is no such thing psychologically as 'life itself.' At the very least, it is a selective achievement of memory recall: beyond that, recounting one's life is an interpretive feat."[190] The concept that 'life itself' is created as an interpretation of the phenomena around us caused me to alter the ways I fundamentally thought about my artistic practice. The text and how it is represented with the artworks needed a different form and additional significance in order to convey narrative's effect on how I react and respond to personal experience. The artworks created for *New Works* were the first stage in the development of a textual form.

Narrativity

This section examines the textual component of the artworks, with an emphasis on the stylistic decision to combine two separate pieces of text into the one representative layer. It will also outline the conceptual intent of the works, the two narrative styles, and the use of a fork-path narrative to propel the reader from one possible world to an alternative world.

The text in the three works analysed in this section were made through the combination of two separate and complete narratives. The 'readable' or foreground text for each artwork reads as follows:

- My father's mother died while giving birth to his brother. This baby was then given up for adoption and never seen again.
- My mother's father died when she was 16. She went to the movies and he passed away while she was out.
- My brother's sister lost her leg to cancer when she was 14. She then became a Paralympian.

The letters for each piece of text are formed through an 'un-readable' or background story titled *When I was 17,* that reads:

> When I was 17 I was still living at home but I had a job and a car. This allowed me to travel to New South Wales to buy category one, uncensored pornography because in Queensland you can only purchase censored material. After a trip across the

[190] Bruner, "Life as Narrative," 692.

> border my material was left under my mattress and if in the night or early hours of the morning the need arose I would then see to matters quickly and easily. My mother however would clean my room and change my sheets every week. I would imagine that she would pick up my mattress to change the sheets and see the collection because it would be tidied and catalogued. But even though she was catholic and modest she never mentioned it nor did she ever throw any of the offensive material away.

The background story is particularly embarrassing and something that I have never brought up with my mother or anyone since. It is a memory that frames my interactions with my mother as she knows about my pornography collection but has never mentioned it. Through the treatment of the text, the significant events that have formed our family narrative such as my grandmother's passing, my grandfather's passing, and my sister's cancer treatment, these events are then physically formed through my recollection of purchasing and hiding pornography. The two narratives operate simultaneously but only one is visible. The background narrative creates the environment for the foreground narrative to be seen and interpreted. The conceptual intent of this approach was to demonstrate that memories are formed, shaped, and materialised through a construction of 'life itself'. The narratives that frame the events of an individual's life and how they are interpreted are chosen.

The background narrative of my trips to New South Wales to buy pornography is embedded into the familial history narratives. The two narratives also follow different styles. The background text is an epistolary tale written like a diary entry, it is a private event that is represented but not published. The foreground text retells dramatic events like a catalogue entry, referencing the style of obituaries, where our surviving relations are stated as brother to…, husband to…, or father to…. Each text piece begins with the familial positioning of the subject, promoting a narrative that I am estranged from them through another member of the family, that the story of their passing or their cancer treatment is filtered through another family member. This reflects my position in the family; being the youngest, I felt that all information was filtered through others. I had to wait until I was old enough or in the right position to receive the information.

In constructing the framework to represent two simultaneous narratives, I used a fork-path narrative. As mentioned in Chapter 1.3, a fork-path narrative requires the use of a mechanism to propel the narrative from one possible world to an alternative possible world. In the three artworks chosen, the narrative is situated within both worlds simultaneously but requires the

viewer/reader to exit one in order to read the other. The act of trying to read the background text propels the viewer/reader out of the world of familial history and into an epistolary world of personal recollection. Conversely, when the viewer/reader exits the world of personal recollection, they are positioned in the world of family history. Operating separately and consecutively, the two narratives mirror the interpretive feat of recounting one's life through a variety of different experiences and choices. The convergence of two narrative worlds informing and responding to each other is predicated through an anonymous photograph, adding another layer to the dissemination of meaning.

Text and Photography

This part will examine the combination of text and photography in the chosen artworks, with particular emphasis on the photograph's role in promoting a discourse of isolation and solace within the artworks. It will also outline how the function of the photograph in my art practice changed after this exhibition.

The photographs that formed the base for the artworks were all taken in Hong Kong when I was travelling there as part of the Hong Kong Art Fair. I had written the story about my pornography collection and was unsure as to whether or not I could publish it. While I was in Hong Kong, I was aware that my young family was struggling at home without me. Every morning, I would walk the streets of Hong Kong for two hours, photographing alleyways, shop-fronts, and vistas. The motivation was to capture a sense of estrangement from the environment to capture a sense of loneliness and unease. When I was conceptualising the exhibition, the motivation in choosing the photographs was to reflect the duality and confusion of the text. As in my earlier works, the photographs were meant to reflect the discourse that the story was told through. The text in the artworks, however, was not a traditional story. Rather, the discourse that the text was read through was the convergence of narrative layers, and the photographs, while visually pleasing, did not advance or distort the narrative. In the artworks I made before commencing my PhD, there was not an obvious anchor between the text and the photograph, but they joined within the discourse component of the narrative because the story was able to evoke a narrative world that was affirmed through the photograph. In the artworks for *New Work*, the readable text was a catalogue of familial history and did not require the photograph to position it within a discursive environment.

As a result of the methods employed in this exhibition, I understood more about how the text and photograph were influencing each other. The major change in thinking in this exhibition was the text being formed by another text. The narrative was represented as story and discourse, but in this exhibition, it also became a physical form. This was a major breakthrough in my artistic research and was reflected on and refined in subsequent exhibitions. The other issue that emerged from this exhibition was the desire to produce photographs that responded to more than just the discourse of the narrative. They needed to evolve in the same way the text was evolving—to reflect the influence of narrative in the way we understand 'life itself'.[191]

4.3: More Sex, Less Death

The exhibition *More Sex, Less Death* consisted of eight elements: three artworks that combined text and a photograph, two large text pieces, two smaller artworks that combined text and cut-out letters, and one installation of cut-out letters glued onto the wall of the gallery. The artwork that will be analysed as part of this section is entitled *Stand Up* (2014, figure 22) and was one of the three large text and photography works from this exhibition. *Kinga Nikka* (figure 6), which was analysed beside Paul Kwiatkowski's *And Every Day Was Overcast* in Chapter 2, was also part of this exhibition. The first part of this section will outline the narrativity of the text, with an emphasis on the creation of a metalepsis in the narrative world, while the second will discuss the text as physical form and the creation of a photographic stage for the text to be performed in.

[191] Bruner, "Life as Narrative," 692.

Figure 22. Martin Smith, *Stand Up,* 2014

In conceptualising the artworks for *More Sex, Less Death*, I was aware of the successes and failings of the previous exhibition. Of particular attention was highlighting the role of narrative in the formation of identity, especially the concept expressed in Chapter 1.2 of narrating ourself to ourself. In *New Work*, the strategy was to read one narrative through the form of another. The evolution of the text into a physical form was continued with this

exhibition, but instead of the text becoming another narrative, it took a human form. After *New Work*, I was interested in the photograph reflecting some of the intentions of the text; in particular, representing a space where the narrative is situated to reveal the existence and function of narratives in our formation and expression of self. This was envisaged through a photograph that simultaneously depicts a space where personal narratives are created and also where they are reflected. This space was conceived through the creation of a stage that mixed private thoughts with public discussion. A convergence of two environments where different internal and external narratives occur. With the photograph representing a stage, text was written that also replicated the process of narrating ourself to ourself in the form of stand-up comedy. It reads:

> My dad was a lecturer at university and an artist, not like…a you know cockhead artist.... more like a, 'oh right you're an artist'. What they really meant was, 'that explains why you and your kids are such freaks'. He lectured in the Photography Department but he had a speech impediment that not only made his lectures a lot longer than they needed to be but he couldn't actually say the word 'photography'. When people asked him where he worked he would shorten it to, 'You know the thing where you are out and you see something nice and think that would look good and you use a camera to frame and expose the original thing and then you process and print it till you get the paper thing that looks like the thing you used the camera to take a picture of the original thing with' and they would say "What…photography?" "Yeah that's it".
>
> For about 4 years of my life my dad was doing his PhD in narrative studies. When he was about to hand in something he would start talking about his research at the dinner table. He would say that narrative is all around us, that we understand and organize our lives through narrative. That the study of narrative is a study of human experience and I needed to think about it more.
>
> All I heard was that I'm not getting anything new, anytime soon.

The text that is excised out of the photograph is a fabricated comedy routine that one of my children would tell about having me as their father. The text creates a metalepsis in a similar way to the text in the *Revelations* series, as it uses a future voice to refer to a narrator who is also the subject of the narration. This technique collapses the narrative layers and makes the narrative visible, thus providing the impetus for rendering it into the form of a human.

Narrativity

This part will outline the conceptual intention of the text, and the application of a metalepsis, including how it disrupts and distorts time and space within the narrative. The text was conceived as a stand-up comedy routine written about my role as a father but delivered by one of my children sometime in the future. The text continues on from a work that pre-dates my PhD titled *Hello Newmarket Hotel*, where I performed and documented a stand-up comedy routine at an 'open-mic' night[192] that graphically outlined corporeal punishment in primary schools in the early 1980s. In the performance, I invited a friend onto the stage who was dressed as a Christian Brother and he gave me 'six cuts' with a strap. The aims of *Hello Newmarket Hotel* were to experiment with altering the context of the audience experience by performing art to a comedy audience, to explore performance as another avenue for the dissemination of my stories, and to comment on the cruelty of corporeal punishment to children.

The text for *Stand Up* mirrors a known trope of stand-up comedy of discussing the failings of one's parent. It sets up the character of 'the father' through my profession, mentions my speech impediment for a cheap laugh, and references this PhD as a means of insinuating that I was more interested in thinking than making money, as confirmed by the last line: "All I heard was that I'm not getting anything new, anytime soon."[193] It is written as a short monologue delivered as part of a larger performance but has the components of a metalepsis in that the narrator is also the narrated. The narrative layers are combined through the infiltration of the narrator into the story. The start of the text refers to "My Dad", when this character is the narrator and author of the text, not the performer.

The application of a metalepsis in the artwork disrupts the notion of time and space within the discourse layer of the narrative as the performer of the routine needs to be in the future to be discussing the events of the present. Using a known discourse of stand-up comedy implies that the text should be delivered on a stage in front of an audience. However, the metalepsis converges the narrative layers into an undefined time and place where it is unknown where

[192] Martin Smith, *Hello Newmarket Hotel*, 2011, video. Available to view at https://vimeo.com/18941272.
[193] Smith, *Stand Up*.

the narrative is performed, for whom, and by whom. There are several possible worlds created by the text and, as mentioned in Chapter 1.3, our 'life narrative' is constantly being influenced and altered as potential stories mix with actual stories. The blending of narrative layers that the metalepsis provides mirrors the process of how we are combining and constructing our life narratives through the individual interpretation of personal experience. The open-ended nature of constructing our life narratives is further emphasised by the visual representations that accompany the text as they do not validate the claims in the story but rather imply an actor operating within a domestic and social space where the claims of the text are being actioned.

Text and Photography

This section will examine the construction of text into a human form, which replicates the endless and incomplete process of rendering and actioning a life. It will also discuss the photograph as a private and public space where the narrator can narrate to themselves.

The creation of *Stand Up* marked a significant shift in the direction of my studio research. Following on from the artworks included in *New Work*, constructing text into a represented form was a breakthrough in defining the influence of narratives in our lives. A human form created by text suggests that our identity is constructed, stabilised, and actioned through narratives. The form also suggests that the life narratives that are being generated, lived, applied, contextualised, recontextualised, performed, fictionalised and converged are all actioned through the construct of a human that is flawed and incomplete. A figure created and interpreted through stories reinforces Bakhtin's concept of the novel that, regardless of how thorough a characterisation is—whether in a novel or in our own lives—there is always something left out, something left over, "a surplus of humanness". [194] The incomplete and floating figure mirrors the process of building a human character from the possible and actual events of our lives. There are infinite options available when we choose to render ourselves through our experiences, and the form of the person that is presented through this process can never be complete. The figure that receives and transmits the text is isolated in a photograph that depicts a stage that is both domestic and social, private and public; it is a converged space that neither affirms its existence or denies it.

[194] M. M. Bakhtin and Michael Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Vol. 1 (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), 37.

After the completion of *New Work*, I was determined to activate the photograph in a similar way to the text. Specifically, I wanted the photographs to provide more than simply a discourse illustrating the intentions of the text. In response to my reading on narratives and how they represent space and time, I decided to explore the temporal and spatial dimensions of photographic narrative. As noted previously in this exegesis, Bakhtin describes time and space as the "organising centre" for narratives, as they provide the "meaning that shapes the narrative".[195] The depiction of space whether through text, staging, photography or paint provides a means of conceptualising the intention and possibilities of a narrative.

The photograph in *Stand Up* depicts a space constructed of a domestic carpet and a backdrop of a snowy landscape. The constructed space is neither public or private; it is a convergence of the domestic (the carpet) and the social (the snowy landscape). Conceived as a stage, the space responds to the discursive aspect of the text and anchors the reading of the photograph to the performative characteristics of the text. The representation of a figure that is created through narrative but resides in both the private and public space reiterates that the act of constructing our life narratives is present when we are alone and in public. The photograph for *Stand Up* was conceived as a convergence of a spatial and temporal world that reinforces the notion that the performance of ourself to ourself is constant and never-ending.

The construction of a figure created from narrative and a photographic stage that unites two distinct environments was a breakthrough in the studio research. These techniques were subsequently consolidated and expanded throughout the rest of my PhD. It is important to note that the creation of these works is costly and time-consuming and it demanded a change in how I conceived the works. In the past, I would write the text and take the photograph separately and intuitively combine them and cut the text out. These works required a more systematic approach to the construction of the individual artworks as there were several different processes to complete, including writing the text, taking the background photograph, printing the background, positioning and shooting the backdrop in an environment, photographing the figure that is then transferred to text, and cutting the text out of the artwork. This change in method added time to the completion of my PhD, but was important in the conceptual development of the studio research. The exhibition that followed

[195] Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and the Chronotrope in the Novel," 84.

More Sex, Less Death expanded on some of these developments but also reverted back to some earlier techniques.

4.4 I'm Sick of Sittin' 'Round Here Tryin' to Write This Book

The exhibition *I'm Sick of Sittin' 'Round Here Tryin' to Write This Book* consisted of nine artworks, four of which were photographs with text cut out of them and five photographs with text written directly onto the surface of the print.[196] This section will examine the artwork *Experiment with Verbs* (2015, figure 23), which falls into the former category. The narrativity of this artwork will be analysed through the use of an unreliable narrator in that the construction of the narrative world questions the validity of the narrator, thereby making the reader aware of the existence of the narrative. The text and photography will be analysed through the competing discourses of a dancing textual figure cut out of a photograph of an unnamed person.

The artworks created for *I'm Sick of Sittin' 'Round Here Tryin' to Write This Book* responded to the strengths and weaknesses of the previous exhibition. When conceiving the artworks for this exhibition, I was still unsure of how the new combination of text as a human form and a photograph that converges two environments was perceived. At a meeting with my supervisor after the exhibition *More Sex, Less Death*, the feedback was that the artworks were "too literal", that I was trying too hard to represent the link between narratives and the formation of personal identity. This prompted me to slightly alter how I approached the creation of artworks for this exhibition. While I continued to explore the use of textual human forms to represent the role of narrative in our lives, I reprised earlier methods of cutting the text directly out of a photograph.

Another text and photography artwork that I made for this exhibition was *Money Laughed at My Sausage,* which I have analysed beside William Yang's artworks in Chapter 3.1. The two works were written concurrently and both applied the unreliable narrator to construct a narrative world of fantasy around the acquisition of money and the description of sex.

[196] Martin Smith, *Experiment with Verbs*, 2015, ink-jet print with cut-out letters.

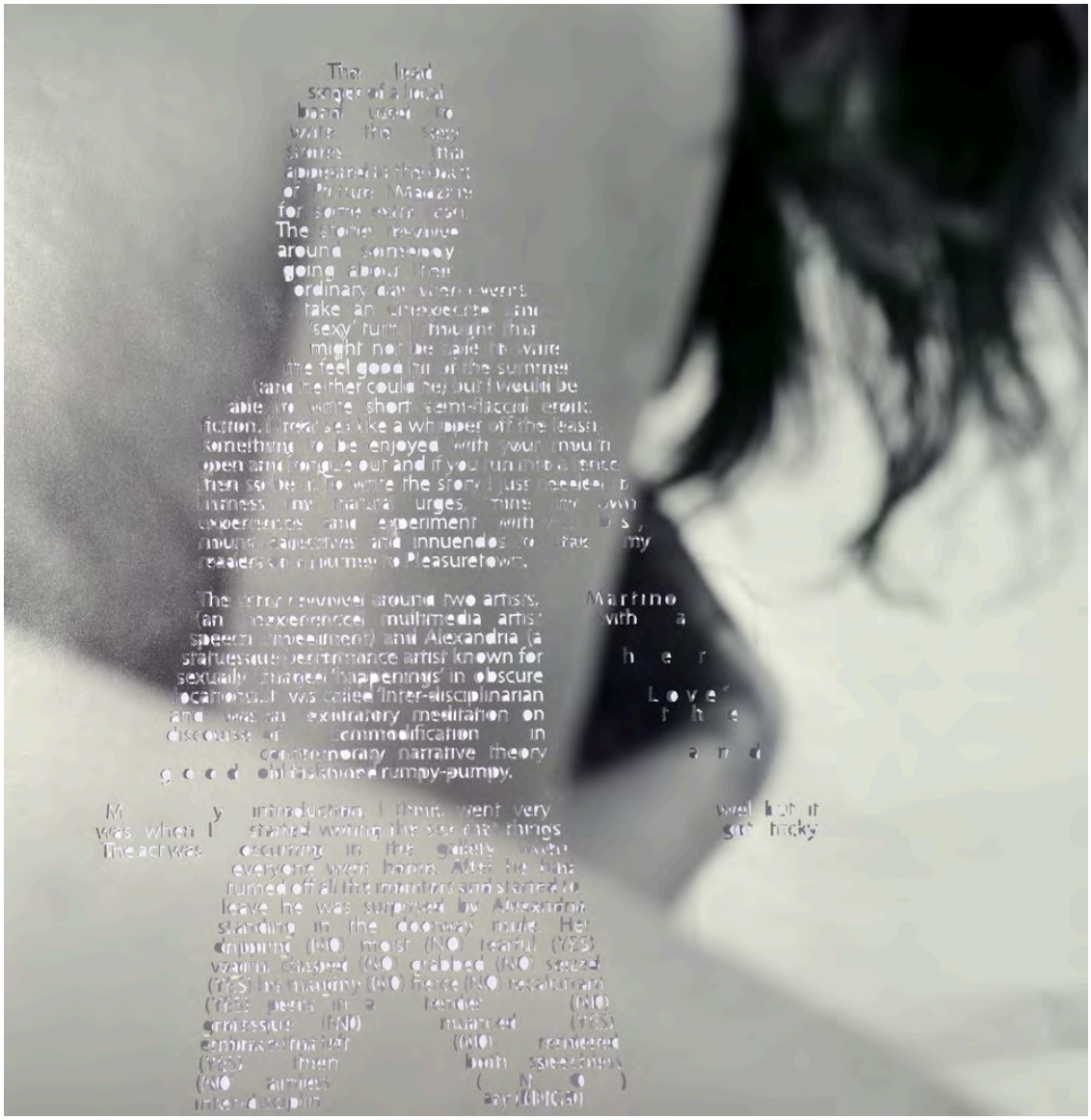

Figure 23. Martin Smith, *Experiment with Verbs,* 2015

I remember reading an article about a local band where the lead singer used to write the sexy stories that appeared at the back of Picture Magazine for some extra cash. The stories revolved around somebody going about their ordinary day when events take an unexpected and 'sexy' turn. I thought that I may not be able to write the feel good hit of the summer (and neither could he) but I would be able to write short semi-flaccid erotic fiction. I treat sex like a whippet off the leash, something to be enjoyed with your mouth open and tongue out and if you run into a fence then so be it. To write the story I just needed to harness my natural urges, mine my own experiences and experiment with verbs, nouns, adjectives and innuendos to take my readers on a journey to Pleasuretown.

The story revolved around two artists Martino (an inexperienced multimedia artist with a speech impediment) and Alexandria (a statuesque performance artist known for her sexually charged 'happenings' in obscure locations). It was called 'Inter-disciplinary Love' and was an exploratory meditation on the discourse of commodification in contemporary narrative theory and good old fashioned rumpy-pumpy.

My introduction, I think, went very well but it was when I started writing the sex that things got tricky. The act was occurring in the gallery when everyone went home. Martino was surprised that after he had turned off all the monitors and started to head towards the door Alexandria was standing at the doorway nude. Her dripping (NO) moist (NO) tearful (YES) vagina clasped (NO) grabbed (NO) seized (YES) his naughty (NO) fierce (NO) recalcitrant (YES) penis in a tender (NO) grotesque (NO) nuanced (YES) embrace that left (NO) rendered (YES) them both speechless (NO) aimless (NO) inter-disciplinary (BINGO).

Narrativity

Experiment with Verbs describes my attempt to write erotic fiction after reading that a member of a prominent band used to write the sex stories at back of the adult publication *Picture Magazine*. It details the character of Martino, an inexperienced multimedia artist with a speech impediment (no relation), and his quest to bed Alexandria. The story was also an attempt to recontextualise the phrase "interdisciplinary" from a visual art context to an erotic fiction context. At the time, I was writing a lot of job applications and there was a need for teachers to have an interdisciplinary practice. I wondered whether the word could be transposed from art to sex (I don't think it can).

The story is an absurd farce that is told through a naïve narrator who is inexperienced in writing erotic fiction and creating an environment where characters would be likely to have sex. The narrator, through his perfunctory and adolescent explanations of a sexual act, inhabits the qualities of the naif. As defined in Chapter 1.3, the naif brings a child-like naivety to situations and their place within the community. The naif is an unreliable narrator, as their descriptions of events cannot be trusted because their view of the world is childish, adolescent and not fully formed. The use of the naif as the narrator is more obvious in the text for *Experiment with Verbs*, but it is an aspect of the character that I have created to represent myself in some of my artworks. While the naif has been employed in the text of some of the artworks, it also counteracted by a confessional voice in other artworks.[197] When crafting the text that is excised from the photograph, I depict events where I am at my most confused, inebriated, and naïve. The naif is used as an unreliable narrator to create a narrative world that confuses and subverts the narrative by creating doubt in the validity of the information that is described. In questioning the accuracy of the text, the reader becomes aware that the narrative is a construct. The exposing of the narrative as an element that is made then positions the visual representations within this narrative world. The character of the naif is reinforced through the implied dancing of the textual figure but frozen within the body of an unknown person.

[197] The confessional narrative voice is used in *Perceived Indifference* to build trust in the narrator of that story.

Text and Photography

This part will outline the competing discourses that exist within the combination of text and photography in *Experiment with Verbs*. The naïve narrator of the text is continued in the implied dancing figure. There was a desire to convey movement within the textual forms to counteract the rigidity of the text, and the outline of the figure was made from a series of photographs I took of my children dancing. The chosen form implies that the figure is caught in the middle of a more elaborate movement. As the text deals with adult themes in a childish manner, the frivolity of the figure's movement reiterates the intentions of the text. The text and the figure are read and experienced through a nude photograph of an unnamed person. The frivolity and fun of the text and figure are not reciprocated in the photograph. A competing discourse is created between the more formal and reserved pictorial representation of the woman and the whimsy of the text and the figure. The intention was to create a dynamism between the two competing discourses that elevates the reading of the text and figure and also lessens the formalism of the photographed woman.

After reflecting on the works from *More Sex, Less Death* and *I'm Sick of Sittin' 'Round Here Tryin' to Write This Book*, I decided to imbue future artworks with more complex narratives. I recognised that the combination of text, form, and photography offered an opportunity to push the artworks to express competing or divergent narratives. Following these two exhibitions, the narratives within the artworks expanded to express more intricate and nuanced subjects. For the next exhibition, I was able to develop and refine the ideas from the previous presentations and to disrupt and reveal personal experience through the construction of multiple narrative worlds.

To avoid repetition in the discussion, the sections that follow will not be analysed in the same fashion as the preceding sections because the artworks made following the *I'm Sick of Sittin' 'Round Here Tryin' to Write This Book* exhibition maintained the same methodology of excising text in a human shape form out of a photograph that converges two environments. While each artwork displays subtle differences within the constructed narrative worlds and considered pictorial options within the composition of the photograph, there was a conceptual stabilising within the production and thinking around the artworks.

4.5: That's What Tortures Me

The exhibition *That's What Tortures Me* consisted of nine artworks: five artworks with text cut out of photographs, two photographs with painted elements, one sculpture, and one text work with cut-out letters glued onto the surface. The work that will be analysed from this exhibition is *Perceived Indifference* (2016, figure 24). The first part will briefly discuss the narrativity of the artwork, with an emphasis on the application of a confessional narrative. The narrative world created in *Perceived Indifference* is similar to the artworks previously analysed in this chapter, except it utilises a confessional narrative as opposed to a metalepsis or an unreliable narrator. The next part will examine the text, form, and photography of the artwork with reference to the construction of a multi-layered narrative outlining my relationship with my wife.

The artworks for *That's What Tortures Me* emerged from the amalgamation of the ideas explored in *More Sex, Less Death* and *I'm Sick of Sittin' 'Round Here Tryin' to Write This Book.* In regards to the application of text and photography, this exhibition signified a stabilisation in the methodology for creating and presenting the artworks. Having had time to reflect on the outcomes of the two previous exhibitions, I wanted to further explore creating a photograph that converges two environments and that features text forming figures that reinforce the discourse of the narrative.

The story in *Perceived Indifference* describes an odd, ongoing relationship with the Woolworths Supermarket, or Woolies, in the northern Brisbane suburb of Sandgate. It was the place of my first job and also the place where I met my wife. The first part of the story positions the narrative as a coming-of-age tale about my first experience at work. The narrative then travels to when I had finished my degree and needed to fulfil a commitment to take still photography at a friend's short film and ended up meeting my wife. The narrative uses the phrase "perceived indifference" throughout to suggest that the space hasn't changed in over twenty years as it appears throughout the story even though several years have passed between the first part of the story and its conclusion.

A confessional narrative is established at the beginning of the story when I detail my working life and my relationship with my boss Knob, and continues through the story, ending with the

detail about my wife's wedding ring. The confessional narrative is required to build a sense of trust within the narrative, so that the expression of love at the conclusion is considered genuine. The sharing of personal details, such as the origin of the text that is engraved on my wife's ring adds to the faith in the validity and accuracy of the narrative. While the events that are described in the story revolve around my meeting with and eventual marriage to my wife, the text, form and photography also validate the details mentioned in the story. The text forms two figures that are leaning towards each other. The figure on the left is male and the figure on the right female. The aspect of the narrative that details my employment at Woolworths creates the male figure and the typeface is sans-serif. The opposing figure is created through the second part of the story and is formed through a serif typeface. The difference in the typefaces addresses the different focus of the story, as it moves from an individual to the couple. In conceptualising the textual forms, I wanted to experiment with ways to create tension between the two figures. The rigidity of the male figure is counterbalanced by the ease of the female figure.

The photograph was taken on the road in the middle of the night. A backdrop of a rocky landscape was created and installed behind a cycling icon on a road near my house. The conflation of the background photograph and the road creates a stage that the narrative is performed on. As the text is written and read through the photograph, there is a constant back and forth between the text and photograph; one can't read the text without experiencing the photograph and vice versa. The photograph therefore provides the space in which the narrative is situated in. The usual representation of both a road and a landscape is disrupted through the deliberate positioning of them overlapping each other. The conflicted photographic space does not follow the expected scripts of each component as it becomes obvious that it is a constructed environment built to house the narrative. The exposure of the artificial space highlights the creation of the narrative. While the events depicted in the story are true, the articulation, dissemination, and interpretation of the narrative are subjective and infinite.

The next section examines the final series of artworks created for PhD and recognises the consolidation and stabilisation of ideas that have occurred during my candidature.

Figure 24. Martin Smith, *Perceived Indifference*, 2016

"Perceived Indifference" was the last thing you saw as you went from the staff offices down to the deli at Woolies, Sandgate. It was my first job and my first encounter with an irrational boss. I can't remember his name, but for now let's call him Knob. Knob was about forty-six, had blond streaks and used to wear heeled boots and a big old Texan belt buckle to contain his ample stomach. He moved me from the deli when a customer complained that I used a hanky and not a tissue when handling the small goods…fair enough really. From there I was the trolley boy and used to walk many kilometres in search of trollies. I eventually came to the conclusion that a career in grocery retail was not for me and resigned. As I was hardly employee of the month material I assumed that Knob would just offer perceived indifference to my leaving. But instead he went ape-shit yelling and pointing and pulling his pants up, calling me a fucking arsehole and then told me to never come into the store again.

Twelve years later I am sitting on my couch in Paddington comfortably stoned after completing the last assignment for university, when I remember that I had agreed to do photo stills for a student film at Woolies Sandgate. Thinking of all the ways to cancel I relented thinking that I could at least get some KFC chips with extra seasoning on the way. With perceived indifference I arrived onto the set to find the usual crew of students busily working away on film about chickens and Xmas. I found my friend Marissa who was doing art department and she introduced me to Marisa who was helping out in art department. I interrupted them to offer her a chip and she politely refused. The

> first shot was in frozen foods and because both stills and assistant art department are not critical to anything Marisa and I hung out the back. Over her shoulder I noticed frozen rice in a bag. Intrigued by this product I asked aloud "Why would anyone need frozen rice in a bag?" Agreeing with observation Marisa then started telling me about $80.00 melons in Japan. THE BEST SEGUE EVER.
> Many years later when asking Marisa to marry me I couldn't afford a stone so I etched the text *"frozen rice in a bag"* onto a gold ring, it's in Italian though, cause I'm classy.

4.6: The Only Option Available

The exhibition *The Only Option Available* consisted of thirteen artworks: four photographs with text cut out of them, four photographic collages, and a series of five unaltered photographs. All four text and photography artworks will be analysed from this exhibition, and are titled *Greatest Weakness* (2018, figure 26), *Foamcore* (2018, figure 27), *Cynicism* (2018, figure 28), and *Jetlag* (2018, figure 29). The final section of this chapter recognises the coalescence and fusion of the conceptual framework and the studio methodology from previous exhibitions and will outline the process for creating the artworks. Consequently, the narrativity and application of text and photography will not be discussed. The four artworks will be described collectively as they were all completed during a three-month artist residency I had in New York in 2017.[198] The text is an epistolary account of some of my experiences and observations while living in New York, and early drafts of it were published as "Stand Clear of the Open Doors, Please" in the Verso-Art-Writing blog.[199]

The text was initially created through a process where I would enter the studio and write directly onto the studio walls. I would then cut out the photograph that was on the back page of the local *New York Post* that day and use the excised letters to create the human form on the wall. This process was engaged as a means to calm my anxieties about being away from my family for so long. It gave me a purpose and opened up new and previously unknown methods for creating the text. Some of the text was nonsense, but on other days I found that I could coalesce concise ideas and create threads that could be extrapolated on later. At the end of the residency, I had a wall of text and textual forms that were drafts for further experiments (figure 25).

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[198] The artist residency at New York Artist Residency and Studios (NARS), Brooklyn, New York in Oct–Dec 2017.
[199] Martin Smith, "Stand Clear of the Closing Doors, Please," in *Verso-art-writing*, blog edited by Alex Beckinsale and Christina Peek Edwina Cooper, 26 January 2018, https://www.verso-art-writing.com/blog/2018/1/26/stand-clear-of-the-closing-doors-please.

Figure 25. Martin Smith, studio detail, 2017

During the residency, I also took several thousand photographs, adopting a similar method of collection as the one I used for the photographs in *New Work.* I would walk the city and photograph, constantly looking for moments, abstractions in the landscape, or ironic scenes that could be used in the artworks. After collating all the photographs, I printed a select few into backdrops and set them up within locations around Brisbane, converging the two landscapes together. An alternative series of photographs on people taking 'selfies' at major tourist attractions was also produced while I was completing the residency. These photographs were then used as the shapes that formed the text, where it seems like they are interacting and responding to the backgrounds. The conceptual intent was to experiment with the usual vantage of first-person narration that is used throughout the studio research. Through their supposed interplay, the textual forms are photographed photographing the landscape switching the narrative voice from first-person in the text to third-person in the photographs.

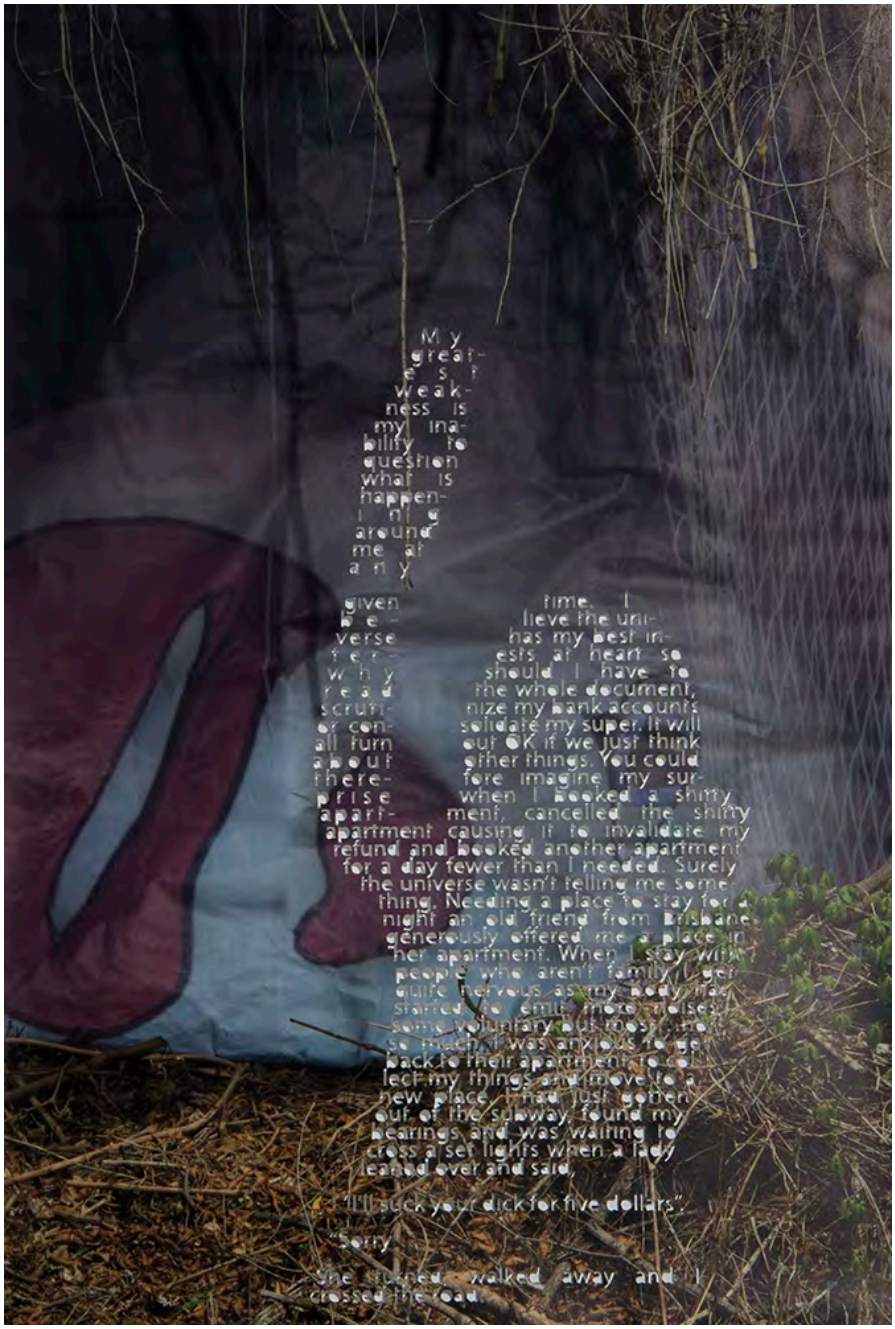

Figure 26. Martin Smith, *My Greatest Weakness,* 2018

My greatest weakness is my inability to question what is happening around me at any given time. I believe the universe has my best interests at heart so why should I have to read the whole document, scrutinize my bank accounts or consolidate my super. It will all turn out OK if we just think about other things. You could therefore imagine my surprise when I booked a shitty apartment, cancelled the shitty apartment causing it to invalidate my refund and booked another apartment for a day fewer than I needed. Surely the universe wasn't telling me something. Needing a place to stay for a night an old friend from Brisbane generously offered me a place in her apartment. When I stay with people who aren't family I get quite nervous as my body has started to emit more noises, some voluntary but most…not so much. I was anxious to get back to their apartment, to collect my things and move to a new place. I had just gotten out of the subway, found my bearings and was waiting to cross a set lights when a lady leaned over and said,
"I'll suck your dick for five dollars".
"Sorry"
She turned, walked away and I crossed the road.

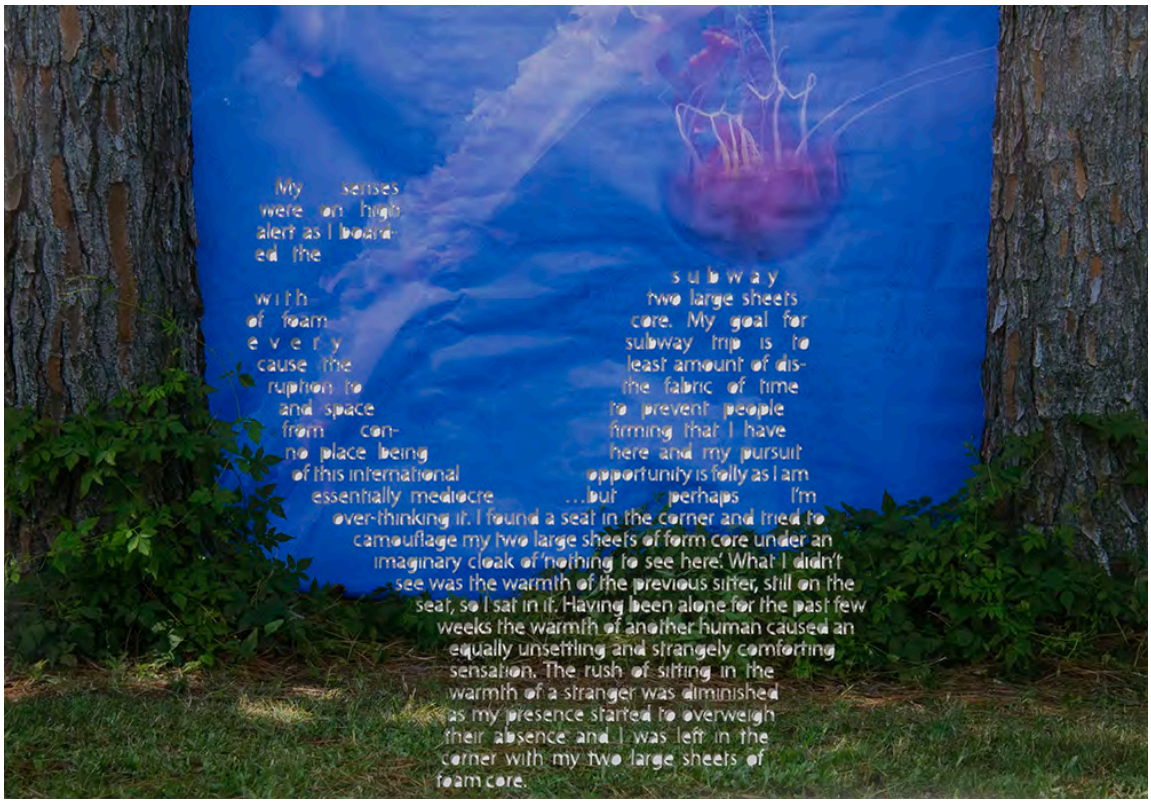

Figure 27. Martin Smith, *Foamcore*, 2018

My senses were on high alert as I boarded the subway with two large sheets of foam core. My goal for every subway trip is to cause the least amount of disruption to the fabric of time and space to prevent people from confirming that I have no place being here and my pursuit of this international opportunity is folly as I am essentially mediocre…but perhaps I'm over-thinking it. I found a seat in the corner and tried to camouflage my two large sheets of form core under an imaginary cloak of 'nothing to see here'. What I didn't see was the warmth of the previous sitter, still on the seat, so I sat in it. Having been alone for the past few weeks the warmth of another human caused an equally unsettling and strangely comforting sensation. The rush of sitting in the warmth of a stranger was diminished as my presence started to overweigh their absence and I was left in the corner with my two large sheets of foam core.

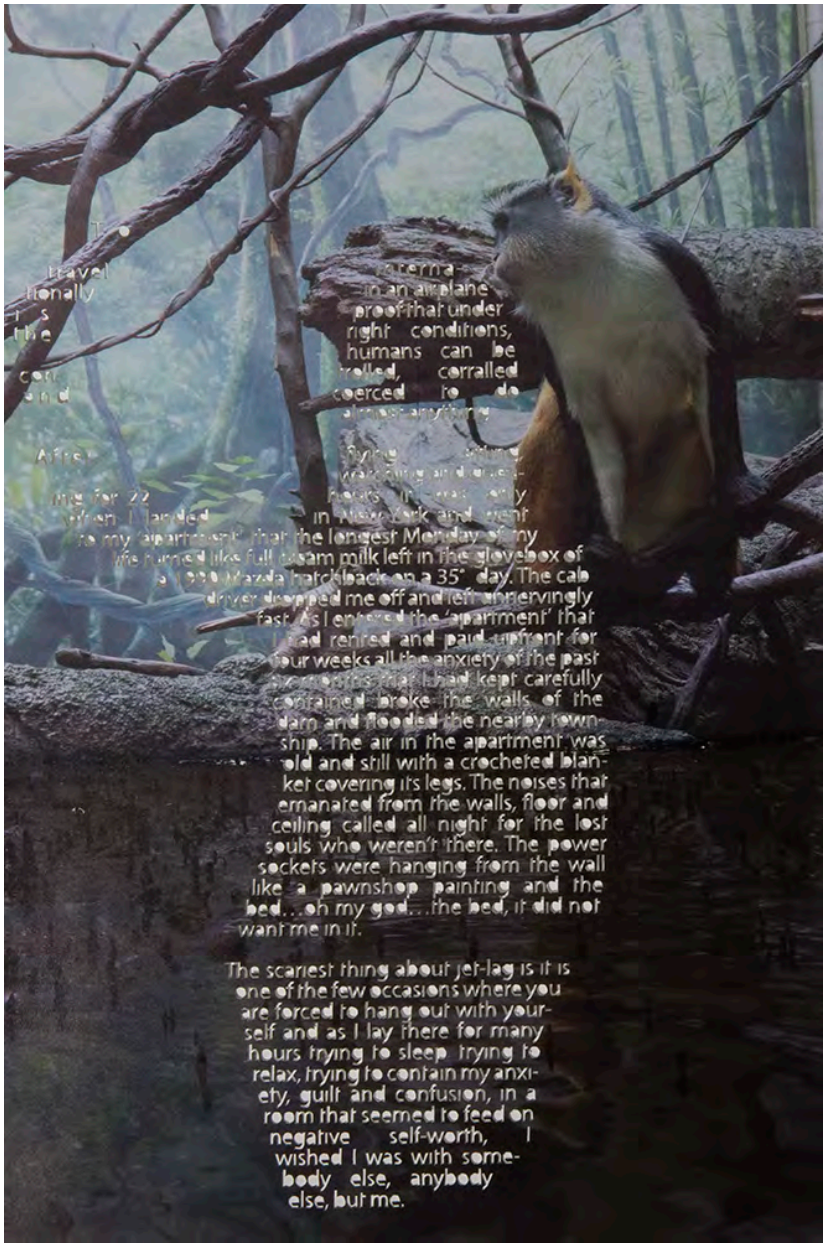

Figure 28. Martin Smith, *Jet-lag,* 2018

Travelling internationally in an airplane is proof that under the right conditions, humans can be controlled, corralled and coerced to do almost anything.
After flying, sitting, watching and queuing for 22 hours it was only when I landed in New York and went to my "apartment" that the longest Monday of my life turned like full cream milk left in the glovebox of a 1990 Mazda hatchback on a 35° day. The cab driver dropped me off and left unnervingly fast. As I entered the "apartment" that I had rented and paid upfront for four weeks all the anxiety of the past six months that I had kept carefully contained broke the walls of the dam and flooded the nearby township. The air in the apartment was old and still with a crocheted blanket covering its legs. The noises that emanated from the walls, floor and ceiling called all night for the lost souls who weren't there. The power sockets were hanging from the wall like a pawnshop painting and the bed…oh my god…the bed, it did not want me in it.
The scariest thing about jet-lag is it is one of the few occasions where you are forced to hang out with yourself and as I lay there for many hours trying to sleep, trying to relax, trying to contain my anxiety, guilt and confusion, in a room that seemed to feed on negative self-worth, I wished I was with somebody else, anybody else, but me.

Figure 29. Martin Smith, *Cynicism,* 2018

The former campaign manager of the current President of the United States of America, Donald J Trump, was indicted for, conspiracy, money laundering and providing false statements. I was on the subway trying to follow the story by updating my Twitter feed at every stop. It was during one update that instead of wallowing in the details of a corrupt, irrational President I got the news that a classmate from high school had passed away. I deliberately haven't seen anyone from school in over 25 years. I lost contact with them after I started studying photography and got tired of them asking if I was going to shoot for Playboy. I felt that I had outgrown the relationships of my youth and didn't wish to travel back to a time that still feels uncomfortable.

When Frank passed away people expressed appreciation at the ongoing friendship that our class had maintained as many of them through death, divorce or work had become isolated from their present community. One classmate reflected on his battle with mental illness and isolation and expressed profound relief that he had rediscovered an old community that reflected a side of him that had been lost in the years since. In a Facebook group created for our 30th reunion I kept reading the replies of support, watching the size of the 'thumbs up' emoji increase and the endless drinking memes with a confusion that bordered on cynicism. The comfort felt through reconnecting and recontextualising your past has been of great solace to many of the men I went through high school with and as this group gets closer to 50 they decided it is important to make peace with the demons that divide.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced and analysed the use of narrative, text, and photography over six exhibitions of artworks over a period of seven years. In relation to *The Perfect Price for Donny*, I discussed the creation of multiple narrative worlds within an extended text. In *New Work*, I analysed the text being formed by another text, marking the start of the narrative becoming a physical form, and the photographs responding to more than just the discourse of the narrative, so as to reflect the influence of narrative in the way 'life itself' is understood.[200]

In the critical reflection on *More Sex, Less Death*, I discussed the text taking the shape of a human form and the photographs converging two environments to mirror that the performance of our life narrative is constant. In the section on *I'm Sick of Sittin''Round Here, Tryin' to Write this Book,* the emphasis was on the creation of divergent narratives to disrupt the story and make the narrative layers visible. The key to *That's What Tortures Me* was a consolidation of the methodology of text, form, and photography to present more complex narratives scenarios. The most recent body of work, *The Only Option Available,* represents a pivotal point in the trajectory of my studio research in that the textual forms are interacting with the backgrounds through the incorporation of the action for a 'selfie'. This adds another layer of complexity to the narrative as it positions the forms into a third-person narration as opposed to a first-person narration.

The final presentation of my studio research from my candidature represents a milestone for my practice as it confirms and validates the theoretical and methodological framework that was developed and applied in completing my PhD. The initial desire to bring awareness to and representation of the narratives that inform and create our personal identity led to the creation of narrative worlds in the text, the development of the textual human forms, and the construction of convergent photographic environments. The combination of these diverse elements creates a narrative that expresses personal experience while revealing the mechanisms of its creation. Each exhibition of my studio research progressed the theoretical and methodological framework to a natural conclusion. While the studio research will

[200] Bruner, "Life as Narrative," 692.

continue to develop and expand its ambitions and level of visibility, the process of formalising my practice has been enriching and fruitful.

Conclusion

This exegesis has traced the development of my PhD visual research and studio outcomes, which has grappled with how personal experience can be expressed through a combination of text and photography. Chapter 1 introduced and outlined the theoretical framework of narrative and narratology. After providing a theoretical background of the field, narrative was defined as the "representation of an event or a series of events".[201] The internal structure of narrative was explained as the combination of 'story' (the events as described) and 'discourse' (how the story is represented). Extrapolating these terms was important as they provided a narrative model through which to analyse my studio research and the artworks of my contemporaries.

This chapter also examined the field of cognitive narrative to consider how narratives are incorporated and interpreted in our daily lives. This section highlighted the concept outlined by Bruner that our ability to recount and recall the events of our lives is an interpretive feat that is framed through narrative. The idea that memory recall and dissemination are reliant on our personal interpretation of events was significant in the development of the studio research as it informed the modification of the text into a visual representation of the process of recollection. A definition and examination of the use of narrative worlds followed. I referenced Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the *chronoscope* as the mechanism that narratives use to converge time and space into one layer to allow for the projection of possible narrative worlds.[202] The narrative worlds of epistolary, metalepsis, fork-path narratives, and the unreliable narrator were all defined, with examples provided of their implementation. Understanding narrative worlds was important as it provided a method to reveal the existence, structure and reach of the narratives in the studio research.

[201] Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative,* 13.
[202] Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and the Chronotrope in the Novel," 84.

The final section of Chapter 1 examined the narrativity of a photograph, providing a theoretical background of the study of narrative within photography, including the 'decisive moment' coined by Henri Cartier-Bresson and the incorporation of narrative through a series of photographs. The key theory extrapolated by Battye that underpinned this section was the use of frames and scripts as a method for reading the 'implied' narrative from a photograph.[203] The implementation of frames and scripts into the conceptualising of the photographs provided insights into how the usual flow of a narrative reading could be distorted and disrupted through altering the collection of objects and events that are represented in the photograph.

After the establishment of a narrative framework, Chapter 2 contextualised the studio research within the contemporary field. A sample of artists who work with the combination of text and photography was outlined, including Australian photographer William Yang, American writer Paul Kwiatkowski, and Dutch artist Nikel van Duijvenboden. The various methods in which the three artists connect the text to the photograph were analysed in selected works of theirs. Yang's more traditional method of validating the content of the text through the complementary photograph differed from Kwiatkowski's more unconventional snapshot photographs that do not validate the claims of the text but represent the discourse that the story is told through. The extended text piece of van Duijvenboden that described the content and concept of the photograph without showing it was analysed as a rhetorical work that required narrative as a means of positioning it within the visual arts. Within the artworks of each practitioner, I found aspects that resonated with my own process in relation to the creation of narrative worlds, but that diverged in the method of linking the text to the objects and events represented in the photographs. The photograph in my work does not validate the claims in the text, but is situated between the narrative and its meaning.

Chapter 3 summarised my use of a blended studio methodology that combined practice-led research for art and design, heuristic research, and the use of text and photography discourse. I referred to Christopher Frayling's original and still relevant paper from 1993, which outlined the field of practice-led research, and then discussed the practical application of Clark Moustakas's heuristic research methodology. These two methodologies that value intuitive and tacit knowledge provided the foundations for disciplined experimentation in the

[203] Battye, *Photography, Narrative, Time,* 135.

processes and production of the studio research. The final section examined the combination of text and photography within contemporary society and also within the artworks. Emphasis was given to the development of text as a pictorial form and how this was utilised within the studio research to reveal the narratives that inform our lives.

The final chapter surveyed the studio research and provided a chronological account of the development of the artworks from the commencement of the PhD to its completion. Significant breakthroughs occurred through the candidature as my reading into the structure and influence of narratives in our lives was reflected in the studio research. These breakthroughs were the creation of narrative worlds such as the metalepsis and the fork-path narrative as a method for revealing the existence of narratives, the development of text as a pictorial form making the narrative a material element and creating photographs that present a vignette of possible worlds that exist between the narrative and its meaning.

The mechanisms I have created, developed and implemented in the creation of the artworks express personal experience through the universal form of narrative. The personal vignettes are depersonalised through the process of excising the non-existent text from the surface of a photograph, making the text a ghost photograph and the photograph a text. The locus of understanding between the text and the photograph is not found through the traditional methods of validation of the two modes, but in a space outside the text and removed from the representation of the photograph and found in the material surface of the artwork. The released letters that are gathered at the base of the artwork evoke the process of creating our life narratives through the basic materials, the individual letters, that collectively form stories and form our sense of self. Throughout life, stories are narrated within individuals to create and destroy narrative worlds that define and confirm the individual's presence in life.

I set out in this project to develop a greater understanding of the role of text and a photograph in the formation of personal identity through narrative. In achieving this, I have made a contribution to our understanding of how a particular synthesis of text and photographic image can transcend the specificity of its individual and often banal personal elements to create a universal narrative world.

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Appendix 1

Paul Kwiatkowski – And Every Day Was Overcast

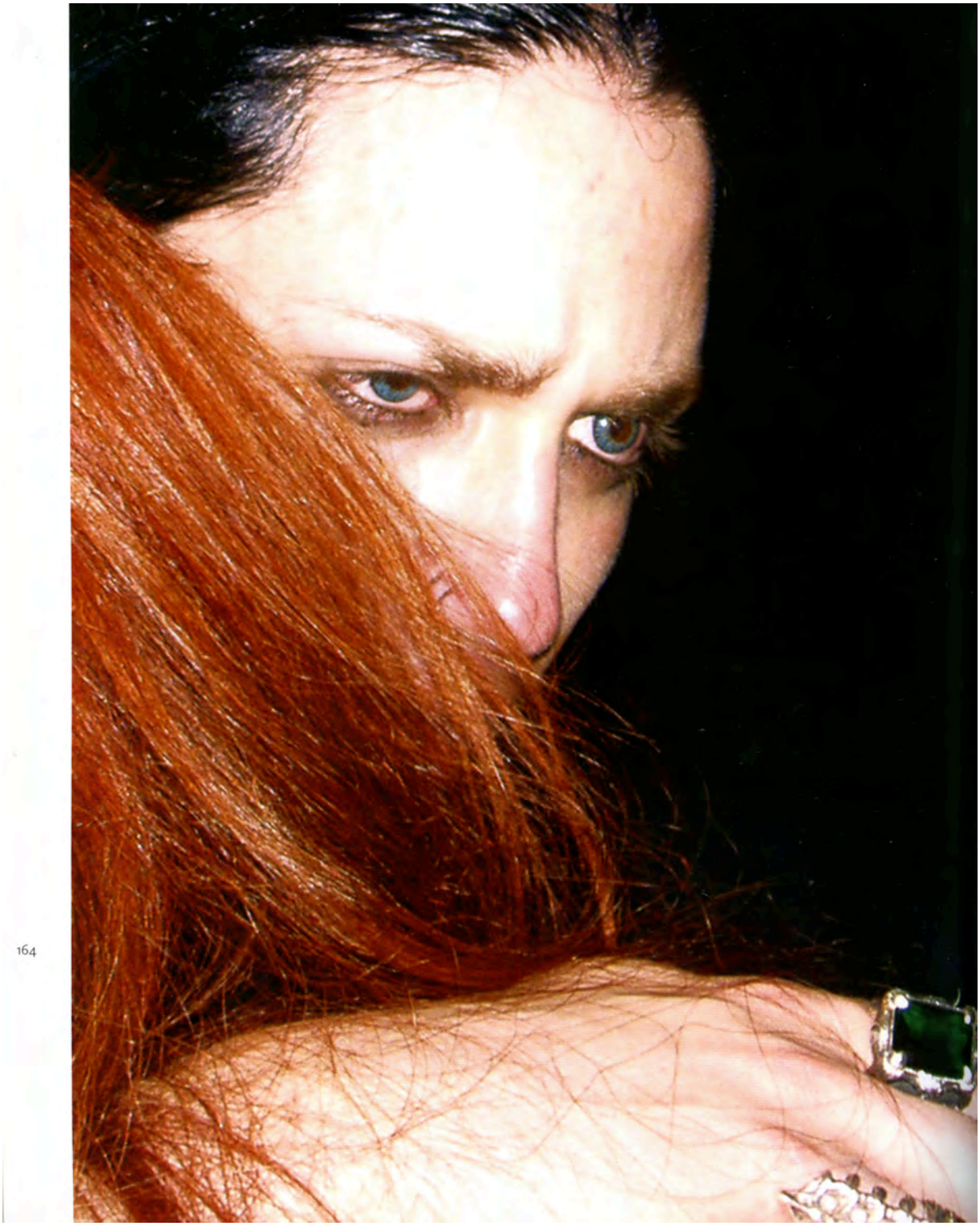
1996 Face Breaker

162

1996: FACE BREAKER

AND EVERY DAY WAS OVERCAST

PAUL KWIATKOWSKI



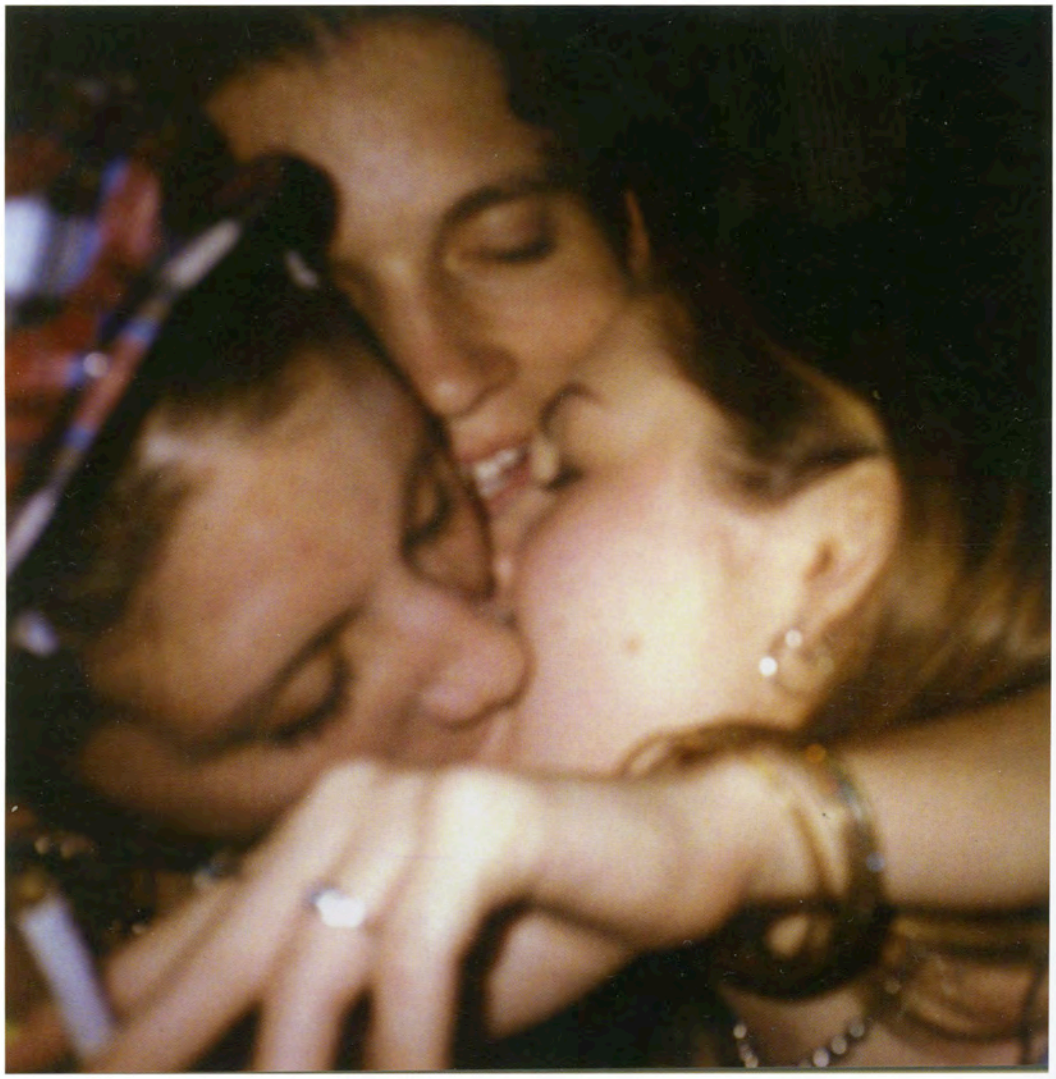
164


Corona
Coca-Cola

166

1996: FACE BREAKER AND EVERY DAY WAS OVERCAST PAUL KWIATKOWSKI


MEN



168

1996: FACE BREAKER AND EVERY DAY WAS OVERCAST PAUL KWIATKOWSKI

169

170

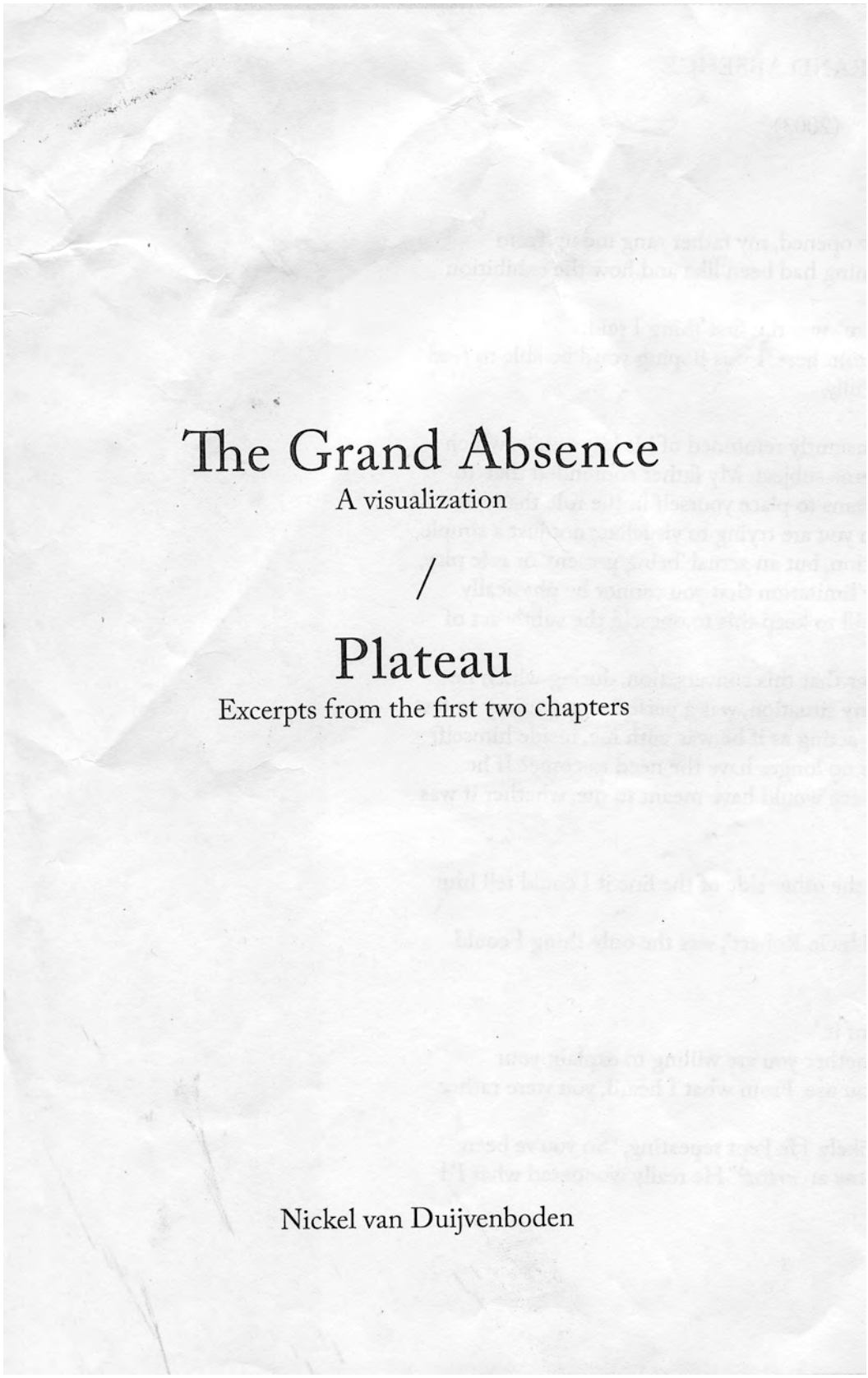
1996: FACE BREAKER

AND EVERY DAY WAS OVERCAST

PAUL KWIATKOWSKI

Appendix 2

Nikel van Duijvenboden – The Grand Absence



THE GRAND ABSENCE

(2003)

The day after my graduate show opened, my father rang me up from abroad. He asked what the opening had been like and how the exhibition was going.

'It's a shame you can't be here', was the first thing I said.

'I am trying to visualize it from here. I was hoping you'd be able to feed me a few details', he said cheerfully.

To visualize something. I was instantly reminded of his last article, which was coincidentally about this same subject. My father contended that 'to visualize something' actually means to place yourself in the role that you would have had in the situation you are trying to visualize; not just a simple, cerebral visualization or projection, but an actual 'being present' or role play, acting if you will, with the only limitation that you cannot be physically present. With age comes the skill to keep this to oneself; the subtle act of inner visualization.

I didn't dare to tell my father that this conversation, during which he was making a visualization of my situation, was a perfect opportunity to test out his assertion. Was he really acting as if he was with me, inside himself? After we had spoken, would he no longer have the need to come? If he only knew how much his presence would have meant to me, whether it was mental or physical.

I heard my father asking from the other side of the line if I could tell him about the last few days.

'I had a conversation with Uncle Robert', was the only thing I could think of.

'So I heard. And?'

'He didn't understand any of it.'

'It depends of course on whether you are willing to explain your work and what tone of voice you use. From what I heard, you were rather condescending.'

'Me? That was him, more likely. He kept repeating, "So you've been studying for four years to become an *artist*?" He really wondered what I'd been doing all that time.'

It was quiet on the other end of the line. No sign of instant understanding, as I had perhaps secretly hoped for.

'He just didn't *look*', I went on. 'Or, he looked, but he didn't see. He considered my work from another level.'

'On what level did he look, you think?'

'He was looking for something beautiful. And found nothing, of course.'

'He didn't think your photos are beautiful?'

'They *aren't*.'

Again, silence.

'No', I asserted firmly, in order not to sound insecure. 'It has no function. Beauty has nothing to do with what I'm trying to say.'

'What are you trying to say then?'

This is the Great Inescapable Question that nearly all artists are asked with every endeavour. We know the question inside and out, in all its forms; we know the precise moment at which it will be asked, can feel it coming flawlessly; we know the tone in which it will be asked, the look that accompanies the words. The only thing the artist doesn't know is the clever retort.

Someone once said that the major difference between art and science consists in the ability to 'vulgarize' the findings of a scientific or artistic study. He explained that scientific findings (a theorem, a solution) can be simplified so that everyone or nearly everyone can understand them, but a work of art exists by the grace of its impossibility of simplification. Doing so would destroy the essence of what makes it art.[1]

Perhaps this is the reason artists don't have a clever answer, and why, with those artists that do have one ready, the answer is usually much more interesting than their artwork. Perhaps it is also the reason people become artists: because they already suspect they are more likely to find their answers in a form other than the logical and verbal.

'What are you trying to say?' Everyone would ask this question, because they want to feel involved as soon as they are able to see what you have made. One of the first things you learn is that you can't exclude anyone; you can't simply say: you are not part of my audience. The louder you say that, the more people want to belong to that group, and the more adamantly they'll insist that they do.

(1) Words to this effect were spoken by Jean-Baptiste Joly, director of Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, during the *Artistic Research* symposium in April 2003 in Maison Descartes in Amsterdam

'What are you trying to say then?'

'That's the same thing Uncle Robert said.'

'It is a totally valid and obvious question.'

'Hasn't it already occurred to you that the best answer I can give to that question is found in my work? That I didn't study photography to learn how to talk?'

My father chuckled. 'I know you. You're evading the question. I know that you have absolutely no difficulty expressing yourself.'

'Then perhaps the question is too abstract. As if I'm working on a microscopic level the whole time and suddenly I'm asked to give an overview of my work, to look up from the eyepiece and to place an infinite number of details, like a completed mosaic, within an all-encompassing framework of life and to survey the relationships with all sorts of vital questions at a single glance.'

'Photos are so concrete, son', said my father, still with the same derision in his voice. 'Why can't you be, too? All the photos that pass by in my visualization – also yours – have that concreteness. Describe a photo you've taken.'

'For example, I've made a photograph about objectivity —'

'No', he interrupted me, 'Describe what that photo looks like. What would I see if I stood in front of that photo?'

'A square. From a bird's eye-view perspective.'

'What kind of square?'

'A square in a city. The houses are neither modern nor old-fashioned. There is a small public garden, and some parked cars that don't really stand out.'

'People?'

'No people.'

'Okay. I can see it. Why a square? Why that square?'

'I think it's easy to get an overview of a square. That's a characteristic of squares. Why that particular square … no idea. I didn't know what else to photograph. I'm not concerned with specific features and certainly not with showing something extraordinary. What matters to me is the way of looking. The bird's eye-view perspective is like the omniscient narrator. The photo as omniscience. Because it looks out over everything, a certain objectivity prevails, but still, only one thing can be viewed at a time. A choice has to be made, such as by our own gaze.'

'How do I know it's about that when I'm standing in front of the photo?'

'I don't know. But that's how art is, Dad. The most you can do is

provide a small hint, for instance by hanging the photo with other photos that have the same characteristics or just the opposite, with very different ones, by varying the presentation. If need be, you can make up a title.'

When I started this graduation project, I wrote in my notebook: 'A problem of art photography is that before it can communicate clearly, it first must take a position on theoretical questions about photography itself.'

To nuance that position a bit, afterwards I wrote the following paragraphs:

'Often it determines its place in this theoretical spectrum with the help of style. The process connected to this is a question of convention. A photo has a certain style, is associated with a movement in art history or on the contrary, with ignoring the question marks of its own origin, and only then does it communicate clearly. These steps are performed in a matter of seconds.

It can be seen immediately that a 4 x 6 inch photo of a sunset in no way refers to a theoretical photographic concept. With a large photo in a museological context, however, in which the photographer has not chosen a traditional, aesthetic form, the somewhat practiced viewer looks for signs of reference to a specific type of photography, in which this concept is significant.

You could express this more simply with the following question: if it's not about showing something with an immediately clear meaning (aesthetically, historically, socially, etc.), what is it about?

The first reaction of the viewer is to explore choices of style and form, which provide insight into the way the photographer approached his or her subject. If the relationship of the photographer to the subject is not made clear through style or form, a communication problem ensues. In other words, if an art photographer must include the implicit message 'this is art' in his or her photo – which is generally expected by the viewer – he or she *cannot* make a small colour photograph of a sunset, no matter what the intention. This restriction is probably not limited to this specific case, and if one doesn't comply with it, it prompts protest.

Allan Sekula's photo series *Fish Story* was shown in 2002 at Documenta11, hanging in a central location and a large number of spaces. I and the other people with whom I viewed the photos couldn't help but feel a form of indignation about the way the photos had been taken and presented. They looked like amateur photos ('badly' printed, incomprehensible or – conversely – too obvious framing) and were also presented like that (different-coloured mats, framed in reflective glass,

hung at slightly varying heights, two photos taken nearly simultaneously hanging next to each other).

After I got home, those facts started me thinking: why should a Documenta participant, a renowned artist and writer of critically acclaimed essays on photo theory, choose this form of presentation? It began to dawn on me that Sekula had very consciously chosen this style and presentation. This suspicion was confirmed when I read the following passage in one of his essays: 'The ills of photography are the ills of aestheticism. Aestheticism must be superseded, in its entirety, for a meaningful art, of any sort, to emerge'.[2]

It is clear that Sekula is consciously trying to change the conventional meaning mechanism of photography and with this knowledge, that he views aesthetics as an obstacle. In first viewing the presentation, I and other experienced viewers were not able to let go of the conventional way of viewing. The context (which kept me thinking about it once I got home) and what I read more or less cured me of these conventions.

And yet, what was hanging at Documenta did not communicate with me, because there was a discrepancy between the language of form and the content. More so, I didn't even see the content; at least, I can't remember it.'

To see nothing. This eclipse-like sensation must have been what my uncle felt. But is it then really true that art photography either presupposes prior knowledge by the viewer or requires a verbal explanation? Which in fact, if you think about it, amounts to the same thing, namely that art can only be understood with a textbook.

If that is true and, by being an artist, I have accepted this, then I could ask myself whether I make art with my father in mind as a potential viewer. To be honest, I can't imagine who else I make art for, other than for people such as he, who could understand it if they put their minds to it, and also for him personally, because he's my father and I want nothing more than for him to be proud of me.

'I can visualize something from what you're saying', says my father in reply to my explanation about generating meaning with a context. 'But what is it that you want to make clear by placing the photos next to each other? What do they have in common?'

'I think that they are all more about photography itself than the subject. At least, that's what I hope.'

(2) Allan Sekula, 'On the Invention of Photographic Meaning' In: *Thinking Photography*, ed. Victor Burgin Macmillan, 1982

Sooner or later, I imagine, a photographer will revolt against his camera. At one point he learned to operate it, then became fused with it, at its mercy [...] – and suddenly the point has been reached that the most natural has become unbearable, because the camera is always aimed at something, it can never look the other way, through the eye, into consciousness.[3]

I am living proof that this impression by Dutch author Willem Jan Otten is accurate. That quality of photography he calls 'the most natural', I keep running into it. Now, too, in this very conversation.

'It would be best if I had no subject at all', I continued. 'That's also the reason I don't know why I photographed that particular square. The square doesn't interest me, and the way I photographed it probably ensured that it wouldn't be interesting to you and Uncle Robert either. That is precisely what's good about it. It's a clue to something else, because there has to be a reason, after all, why that photo was made. Only, people are so used to photography being about beauty and the extraordinary that they give up as soon as there's no evidence of that.'

'I don't know whether I'd give up', my father sounds surprisingly earnest, as if he is talking to himself. 'Probably. Because where's the legitimacy of the image if it doesn't serve as the convincing packaging of an idea?'

'I think that's a dangerous statement. It's aesthetic packaging that keeps me looking at photos from the third world, completely without any feeling, because its beauty prevents me from seeing what's going on. Beauty is a disguise. I may sound like a Calvinist, but aesthetics causes a split between what there is to see and what I mean. It would be the same as that article that you gave me a while ago, but then in a popular science style.'

'We're discussing an *image*, boy. That always has a pronounced aesthetic value, because the viewer has a first impression. Text doesn't work that way.'

'You're right. But if my images were too dazzling to the eye people would walk right by. One of the tasks of art, in my eyes, is to be something other than entertainment, because what would remain if people could just absorb my images indiscriminately and walk on by without asking themselves even one single question?'

'Maybe then I should ask: why do I have to see the images, now that you've explained this to me? What do the photos add?'

'Exactly what I just said. You're asking me, not the other way round. In the photos, I ask the question and you are challenged to answer for yourself. It should be a learning process.'

(3) Willem Jan Otten, 'The Art of Being There' In: *The Fourth Wall; Photography as Theatre* Fragment, Amsterdam 1991

'See, that doesn't convince me. What makes me doubt the way you use photography is that you don't want to do anything with it that can only be done with photography – it could be done with words as well. Besides, if it's not about beauty, not about the exceptional and if the whole subject doesn't even interest you, what then are the criteria for quality? Why should you choose one picture over the other if one says just as much about photography as the other?'

'Those could be my words.'

'But they are not the words of a photographer. I keep wondering what effect your thinking has on the act of making a photograph.'

'Now, that is the only thing I still haven't been able to reconcile', I contemplated. 'My thoughts on photography can never go beyond the act itself. It doesn't seem to apply once I stand there with the camera in front of my... *subject matter*. I'm not able to transfer what we are talking about to the images.'

'If everything you've just told me is in fact what you want to convey, why would I still need to come and see the photos?'

'Well, it is still intriguing, at the very least, that we have only been able to have this conversation because we both *know* that the photos are actually hanging there. That in itself is a reason to come, right?'

'But if all that you've said doesn't account for what you've photographed, and if you can in no way explain why you set out with that heavy camera, stopped walking at a certain place and time, placed your camera and took the shot, then it sounds to me like an absurd project. Certainly after this discussion. Pointless.'

It was quiet for a while on the other side of the line. I couldn't tell whether he was thinking or waiting for my reply. Then he said:

'If I could come, then I'd only be coming to see what photos with nothing in them look like.'

'If only that were true.'

'What do you mean, that there was nothing in them, or that I could come?'

'Both.'

Appendix 3

Interview between myself (MS) and Nikel van Duijvenboden (NvB) conducted over email 18st September 2012

MS: Firstly what led you to start writing and what were your intentions?

NvD: Writing was already inherent before I decided to become an artist. My parents were preoccupied with language, its origin and meaning, and so was I at an early stage. In a certain sense, working with images has always felt more remote to me. At the art academy, I gradually grew disillusioned with the singularity of the photographic image. I was interested in the nature of photography, in terms of context and process. Photographic history and theory didn't necessarily concern me at that point. I was looking for ways to describe and analyse the act of looking without having to make images. I wanted to be stuck in the process forever.

MS: You say that you are a photographer and that this is an 'entry point'. Would you say that you write 'through' photography as opposed to 'about' or 'for' it? I am interested in your text because it is like you are writing about the limitations and the possibilities of the medium at the same time.

NvD: I wouldn't call myself a photographer. I graduated without showing any images and hadn't published any professional images until five years after. Since then, I sporadically use photography in my work, but I consider both working with images and writing as a form of visual art. Labelling might seem irrelevant from a content-driven, process-oriented point of view, but defining what I do became an essential aspect of my practice. Sometimes it feels like it is my practice. Conversely, if I focus on a story for months on end, it may feel like that's the only thing that counts. It's confusing – but not entirely unintentionally.

In a sense my work as a whole deals with conventions, yet the individual works have distinct themes, which are necessarily linked with existing art, literature, and music. In recent years, many people have come up to me and asked: 'Why don't you just say you're a writer?' I've asked myself that question on numerous occasions, and sometimes – when I am pessimistic – I contemplate 'giving up' art altogether. In fact, it's not a matter of choice; it is determined by the work and its reception. If I would say that I am a literary author, it would alter the meaning of my work. It would perhaps function better within a certain framework, but I'm afraid it would also lose a reflective, discursive dimension. It would certainly lose an indecisiveness, an insecurity or self-questioning element, which I think belongs to art.

Photography is an 'entry point' in the sense that it opens up an entire field of analogies, attitudes, consequences and conditions. My work used to be more about the gaze, representation, and our relation with reality, but now it is more about the urge to record things, prevent them from being forgotten, and the idea that the act of recording actually turns you into a first-person narrator. My fascination with in the autobiographical record, whether it's written, visual or aural, originates from my use of photography. For readers of literature, the relation with photography might not be discernible anymore. Which isn't undesirable; it means they have a more direct experience of a text's tenor. Visual artists and the art audience generally do take my position into account, which is a more indirect approach. Ideally, the work engages with both modes of understanding.

MS: In your interview in Foam you spoke about a "third layer" between words and image. For me, in my work, I find that the words articulate the internal while images represent the external. It is in the mingling of these two states that create an abstracted yet richer understanding of phenomena.

NvD: That makes sense to me. As of late, words and images have drifted further apart in my practice. In hindsight, this seems inevitable. It has much to do with the question whether writing in an art context can ever be truly autonomous. The last four years I have been collaborating with Geert Goiris, a visual artist from Belgium. He approached me after reading *Plateau*, which seemed to fuse with his approach of landscape photography. From the outset, we agreed to make a book with his photos and a short fiction of mine, whereby both halves would be totally autonomous. It was a test as to whether this strategy could work.

Up to that point, I had written several contributions to art projects from a similar vantage point: creating an autonomous imaginary space that would indirectly influence the reading of the other works. *We would come to doubt*, a collaboration with documentary photographer Wytske van Keulen, is an example of this. This time, however, the urge to write fiction had dissipated. I ended up writing a somewhat psychological *roman à clef* about a solitary desert journey, which only corresponded to Geert's photographs in a remote sense. In most respects, there was an underlying discrepancy. The story was obviously not about the photographs.

When I sent him the first complete draft, after one and a half years of work, he contemplated it for a long time and finally reached the conclusion that the connection with his photographs was lost. He wrote to me: 'Two strong things put together can cripple each other.' This was true in both directions. We then made the mutual decision not to make the book together. This experience has had a big impact on me, especially since the circumstances for a 'third layer'-type amalgamation were ideal. There was a real understanding, we knew what we were doing right until the end.

Looking back, I've invariably had difficulties defining my position within collaborative projects. Text tends to take on a certain role, especially in a book. I usually ended up taking an antagonistic position, doing exactly what was not expected so as to maintain a certain autonomy. But that still is a position of dependency. Honestly, and without bitterness, I cannot mention a single case where this strategy has led to true equality or unity. The result is either disparate or subordinate.

MS: Do you want your audience to imagine the photograph that would have been taken in a particular scene?

NvD: I want them to feel the compulsive desire that leads to making photographs, or any type of record. It is a reconstruction, or better yet a construction, of a process. The end result is only interesting in so far as it allows the unfolding of a process.

MS: In "Embedded Texts" you write about the desire to record silence and "plateau" the work down to map a landscape? For me your writing possesses a tension in the way that our actions and desires will never be fully met, either through the image or the processes of creation. Essentially it seems to be about futility and that appeals to me.

NvD: Right, it is about futility and desire. When I think about it, the art, literature and music that is really meaningful to me, all has an element of consolation.

Appendix 4

The Perfect Price for Donny (text)

Most of my time had been spent trying to break the psychological barrier of 90 minutes of continuous concentration. My current personal best was still well below expectation.

Thursday, April 16th, 2009
11:13am-12: 36pm
23 Stevenson Street, PADDINGTON, QLD
20° C

As a means of governing the legitimacy of any given activity I had conceived a set of rules.

1. When engaging in concerted concentration the aforementioned concentrator had to sit in the same spot. Movement is only legitimate if it is to pick up a new text, writing implement, beverage or Snickers.
2. Text that the aforementioned concentrator is permitted to read must be based on pre-proposed, pertinent, theoretical topics.
3. Any written activity that the aforementioned concentrator engages in must be deliberate, thought provoking and without affectation.
4. At the beginning of any pre-proposed concentratory activity the aforementioned concentrator must record date, time, location and outdoor temperature to get accurate results. The times will be plotted to provide historical data for future researchers.

Friday December 19th 2008
2:10pm-2: 43pm
43 Dunsford St, ZILLMERE, QLD
32°C

Today was going very well. I had not let my mind wander to concentration breaking thoughts such as music, Dim-Sims or Firemen (bloody Firemen my eternal nemesis). Today my mind was a sponge. I was an agile intellectual capable of absorbing endless amounts of knowledge. I was feeling empowered, beautifully brisk and wanted the world to know it. The phone rang. I answered it. God damn you.

Wednesday June 23rd 2010
10:15am-11: 33am
Edward St, BRISBANE, QLD
18° C

'Hello' I said, cursing my own failure.

‘Hello this is Tanya, I don’t know if you remember me?’

‘Tanya…Tanya…Tanya…umm, oh right Tanya…….

Tanya was from my theatre days when I was 17 years old and possessed with deluded dreams of being an actor. We were both new members of The Sacred Heart Players, which was an assemblage of amateur thespians who met weekly in the hall of Sacred Heart Church, and we had landed the leads in the production of ‘A Perfect Price for Donny’ written by Roger Fagan. Roger was an elderly member of the group and ‘The Perfect Price for Donny’ was his first and only play. Roger had worked at the railways for 32 years and had been writing ‘A Perfect Price for Donny’ on and off over those 32 years. He had not started another play, he hadn’t written any short stories, prose or even a Haiku. Since he had retired two years earlier he finally realised his dream of finishing ‘A Perfect Price for Donny’ at the age of 68.

During his time at the railways Roger was a shunter and that was all he did. He didn’t apply for promotions or transfers. He had seen the change from diesel to electric, the diminishment of the union and his colleague Keith become a double amputee after being caught between two trains. Roger had to pull the carriages apart, perform the essential first-aid and call the paramedics. Roger was also there when Keith’s wife and daughter left him. Keith was too old and disabled to find a new life or wife and would spend hours on the phone to Roger recounting his best years while wishing he was dead. Roger never turned up late or called in for a sickie. He took his annual leave in winter to allow those with kids to take the summer. Roger was the ideal employee and after 32 years he had paid off his house overlooking the bay and received a handsome superannuation package that gave him the chance to finish his opus ‘The Perfect Price for Donny’.

The story of Keith and Roger’s relationship would have been a great play for The Sacred Heart Players - full of drama, tragedy with a bittersweet ending (Keith won a bronze medal at the 1984 Paralympics, there were only 4 double amputees in the event, still he beat the 15 year old from Nebraska). However, the play was, by all reasonable accounts,‘horrendous’*. The theatre reviewer for *The Bayside Chronicle* Tristram Honderich, a former high school drama teacher who reviewed all the local theatre productions at no cost, described it as *‘having no coherent narrative…the performances were nonsensical and pouty’*.

The only part of the play that touched on the themes of an elderly man who looked back on his life with a sense of regret or surrender was a soliloquy delivered by Harry, Donny’s father. Its arrival in the play is *‘out of context but displays a poetic sensibility that should have been explored further’**.

HARRY

A birthday is not a day to celebrate. Why would you celebrate being another year older, another year where you weren’t where you thought you would be?

At this age you should be better. Better at life, better at death and better at just being.

Depressed at the feeling of wasted energy and wasted ambition. Ambition was a sure-fire path to depression. Why want, why achieve, why strive when it can all come to you by lying down and accepting

the inevitable. Why work hard at something when you can work average at something average and over time become above average.

I had auditioned for the part of Donny. It was my first role for The Sacred Heart Players and I took it really seriously. Donny was a welder from the wrong side of the tracks whose future mother-in-law was secretly trying to sell him on the black market to keep him away from her daughter, Ann, who was played with *'cardboard like intensity'** by Tanya. The ironic twist was that the dodgy black market client that the mother-in-law was trying to do the trade with was actually Ann who was looking for her *'one true love'***. For research I had gone to my uncle's factory to try and gain some insight into being a welder from the wrong side of the tracks. The problem was that my uncle was a refrigeration mechanic from a very nice suburban neighbourhood and me hanging around started to freak out his apprentices. During the 8 gruelling weeks of rehearsal Tanya and I started to get along quite well. Tanya was a law student and really wanted to be a lawyer. She was only doing the play because her law lecturer had advised them to do amateur theatre as a way of honing their interrogation skills and learning techniques for public speaking. I was trying to be Judd Nelson and she didn't know who Judd Nelson was.

At the end of the play there was a kissing scene when Donny and Ann are finally able to express their '*burning love'*** and over the course of the season the kiss started to become more passionate and some feelings towards each other started to affirm. After the season finished Tanya and I decided to see 'A Few Good Men' together. Tanya loved the *You can't handle the truth* scene and spoke incessantly about how true to life it was whereas I was distracted by other things, any things. I started to notice her eyes and how they seemed out of shape, like they belonged somewhere else, on someone else. It was like they didn't move. Whenever she spoke or gesticulated wildly they stayed still refusing to budge. They were the most unambitious eyes ever, it was like they'd reached their pinnacle of expressiveness and had no more to do. Normally this wouldn't have concerned me as much as it did

At the end of the date we hugged and tried an awkward kiss but the flame that was palpable during the finale of 'The Perfect Price for Donny' had expired and I avoided seeing her again. I hadn't had any lingering issues with Tanya and I was sure she didn't have any with me. She was a pleasant person even if her eyes were unambitious. Today, however, 18 years later, Tanya was trying to contact me and this was freaking me out.

'Yes, I do, we were the leads in the hit farce 'The Perfect Price for Donny' for The Sacred Heart Players, 'Is everything OK ? This is a surprise, that must have been nearly 20 years ago'

'Yes it's me. I just wanted to ask you something from that time and if you don't remember than that is fine. It is a little embarrassing so please forgive me'

'Yes, Yes of course, fire away I will try and remember'

There was quite a long uncomfortable pause then Tanya asked, “What did you think of me? …You know back then”

‘Sorry what do you mean?’

‘This is stupid of me…sorry to bother you, but some patterns have kept repeating in my life and I was just curious as to what you thought about me…you know…sorry…I’m just trying to gain some insight into my life”

‘Well…um…that was a long time ago and we were very young’

And then she hung up.

Wednesday 21st September 2011

09:09am – 10:34

119 Archer Street GORDON PARK

24° C

* Denotes Tristram Honderich’s words, not mine.

** Denotes Roger Fagen’s words not mine.

Appendix 5

***The Perfect Price for Donny* – Ryan Renshaw Gallery, 2011**
(artworks- not already presented)

Figure 30. Martin Smith, *Donny #1,* 2011

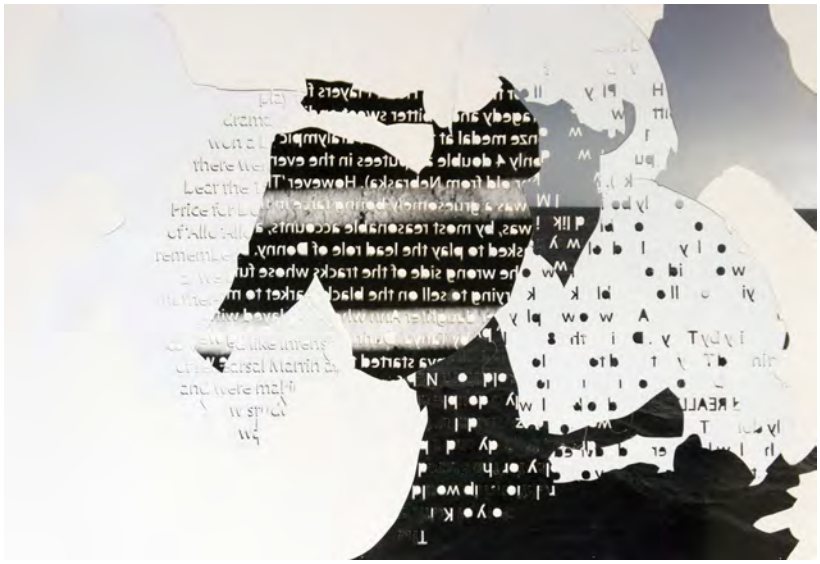


Figure 31. Martin Smith, *Donny #2*, 2011

Figure 32. Martin Smith, *Donny #3*, 2011

Figure 33. Martin Smith, *Donny #3*, 2011


Figure 34. Martin Smith, *Donny #5,* 2011


Figure 35. Martin Smith, *Boy,* 2011

Figure 36. Martin Smith, Installation, 2011

Figure 37. Martin Smith, Installation, 2011

Appendix 6

New Work, Sophie Gannon Gallery, 2012
(artworks- not already presented)

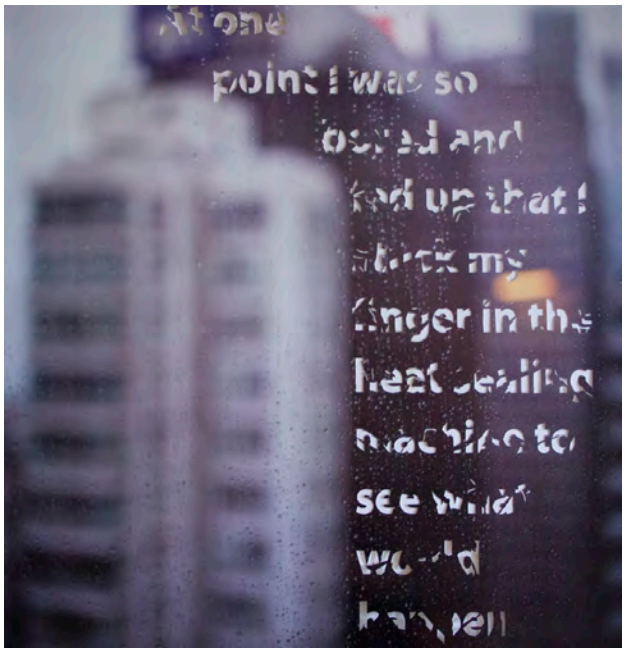


Figure 38. Martin Smith, *Heat Sealing*, 2012

Figure 39. Martin Smith, *Storage/Pleasure*, 2012

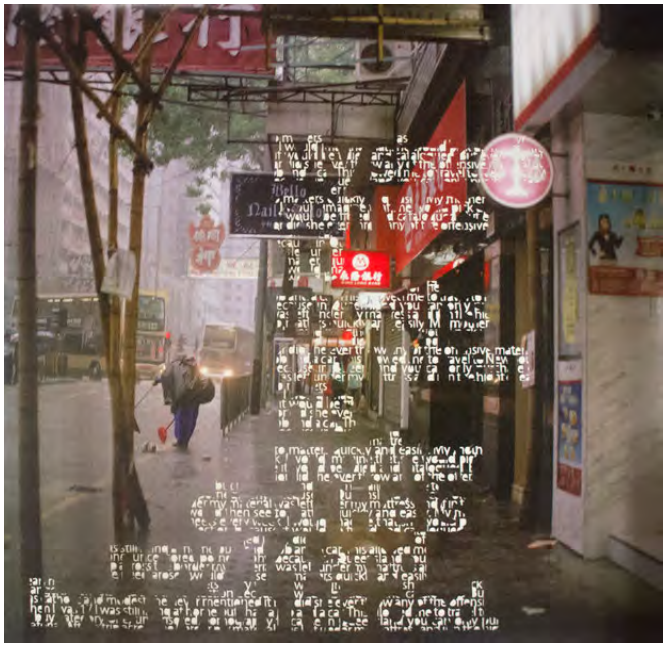


Figure 40. Martin Smith, *Sister's Son*, 2012

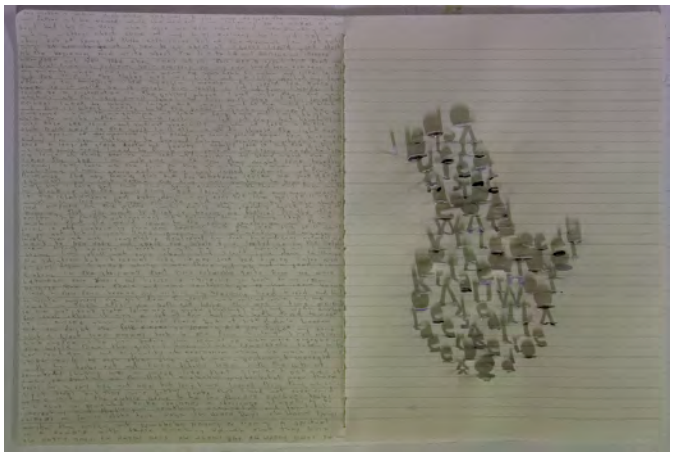


Figure 41. Martin Smith, *Exercise #1*, 2012

Figure 42. Martin Smith, *Exercise #2*, 2012

Figure 43. Martin Smith, *Exercise #3,* 2012

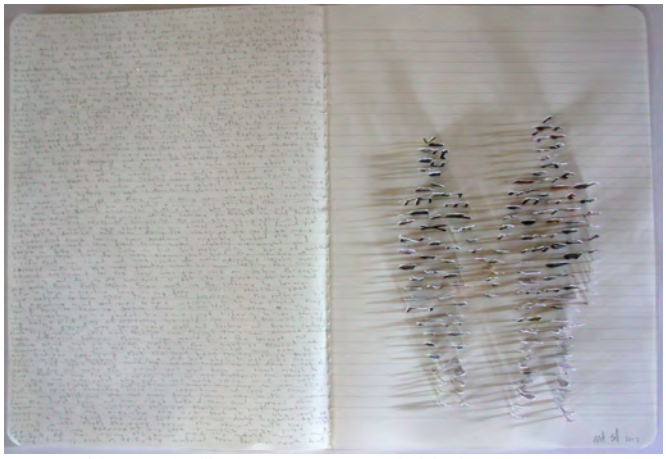


Figure 44. Martin Smith, *Exercise #4,* 2012

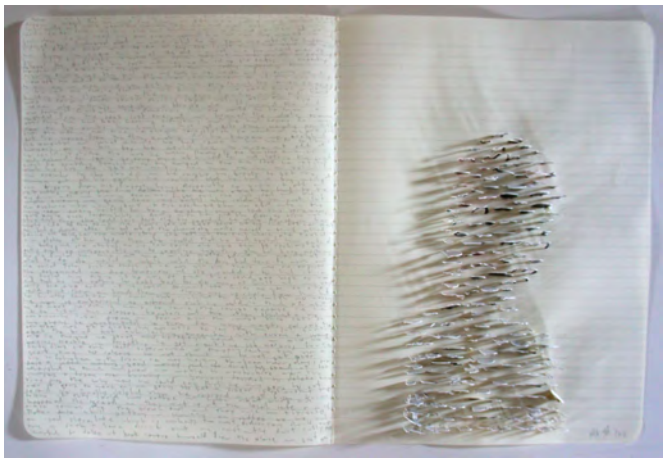


Figure 45. Martin Smith, *Exercise #5,* 2012

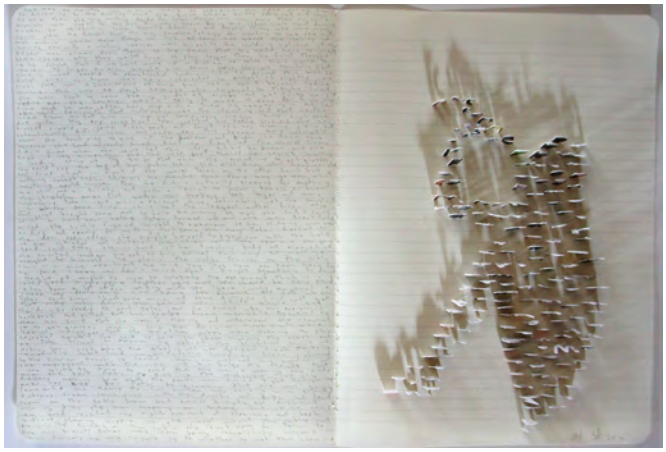


Figure 46. Martin Smith, *Exercise #6,* 2012

Appendix 7

***More Sex, Less Death* - Ryan Renshaw Gallery, 2014**
(artworks- not already presented)

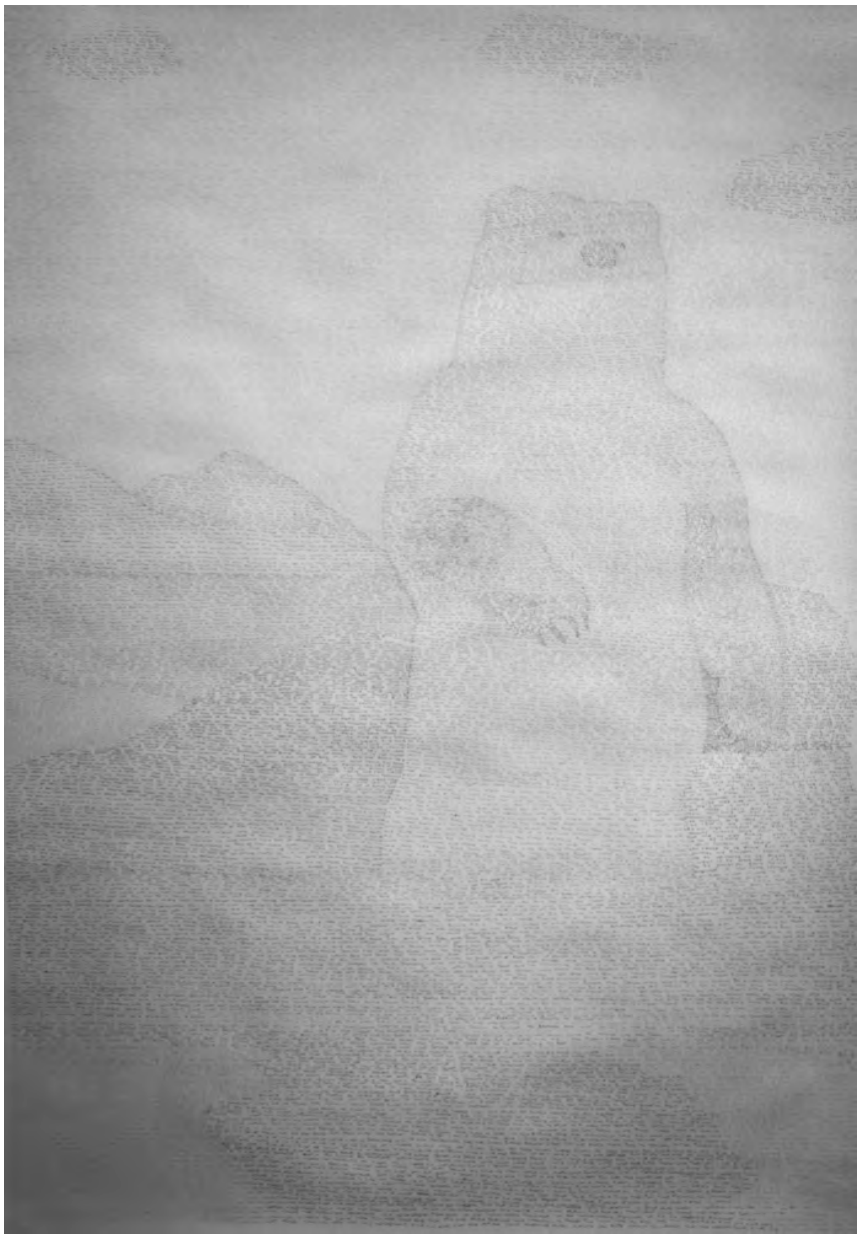


Figure 47. Martin Smith, *Bear*, 2014

Figure 48. Martin Smith, *Money*, 2014

Figure 49. Martin Smith, *Untitled #2,* 2014

Figure 50. Martin Smith, *Untitled #1*, 2014

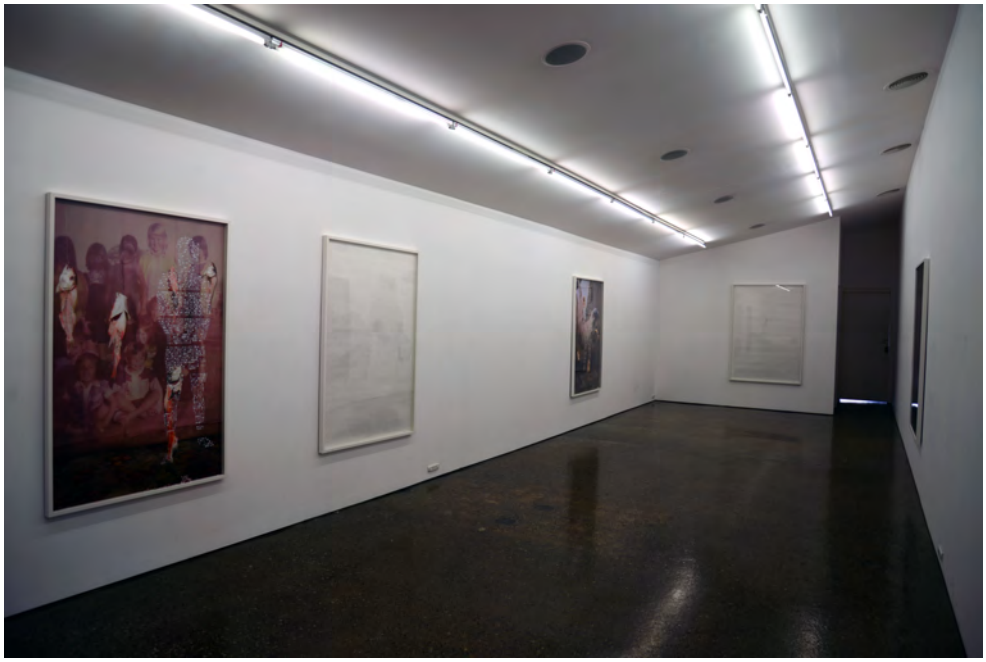


Figure 51. Martin Smith, Installation, 2014

Appendix 8

I'm Sick of Sittin' 'Round Here Tryin' to Write This Book – Sophie Gannon Gallery 2015 (artworks- not already presented)

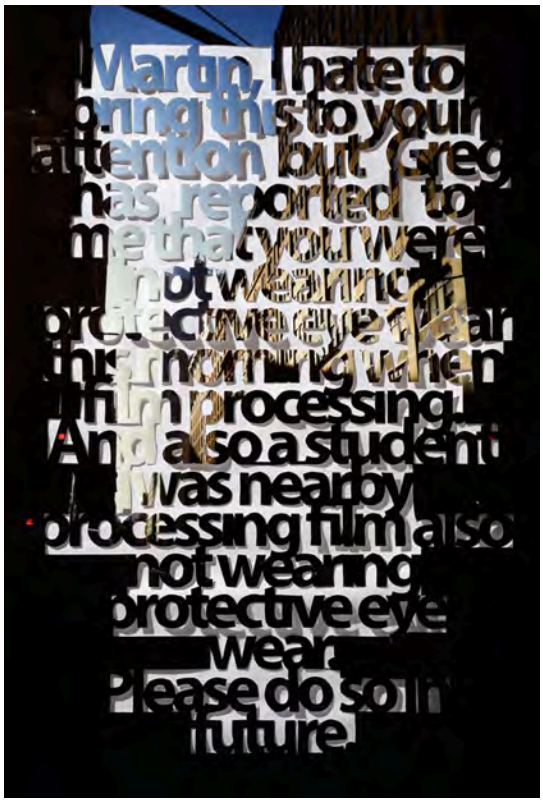


Figure 52. Martin Smith, *Eyewear,* 2015

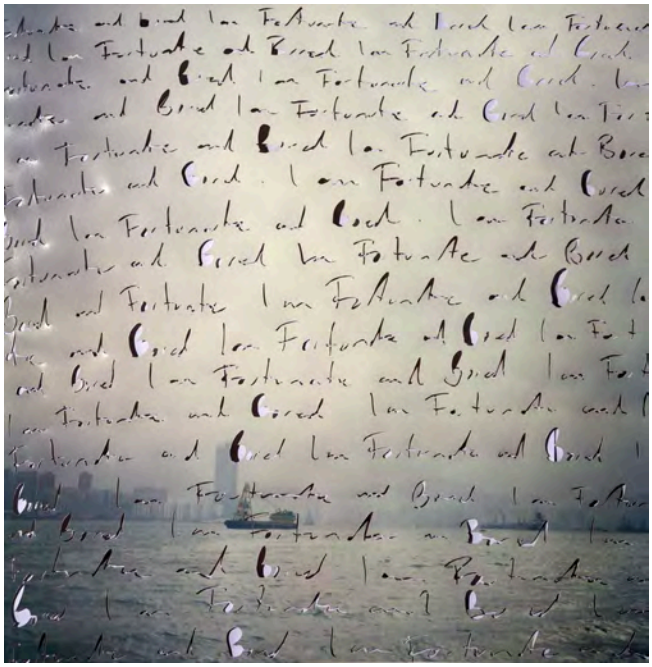


Figure 53. Martin Smith, *Fortunate and Bored,* 2015

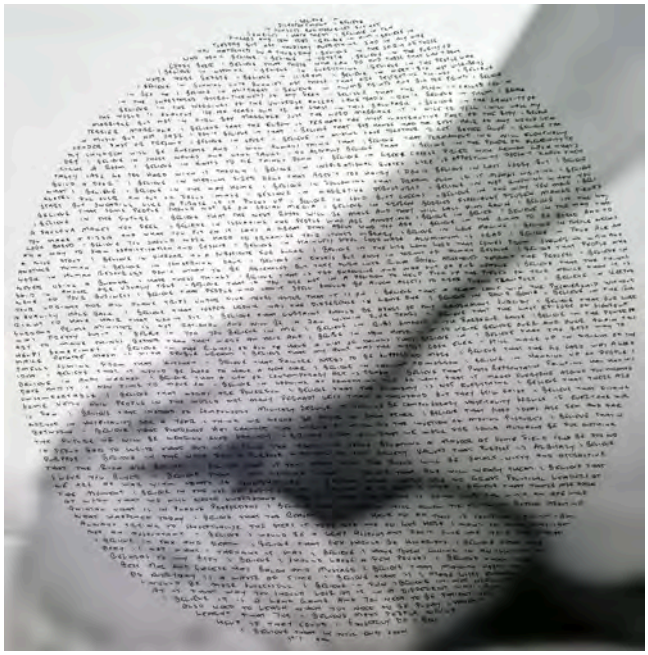


Figure 54. Martin Smith, *I Believe in,* 2015

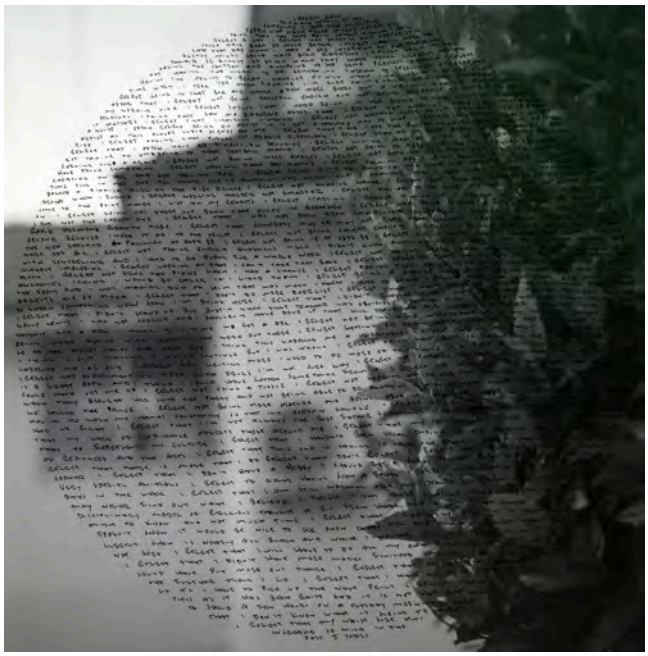


Figure 55. Martin Smith, *I Regret,* 2015

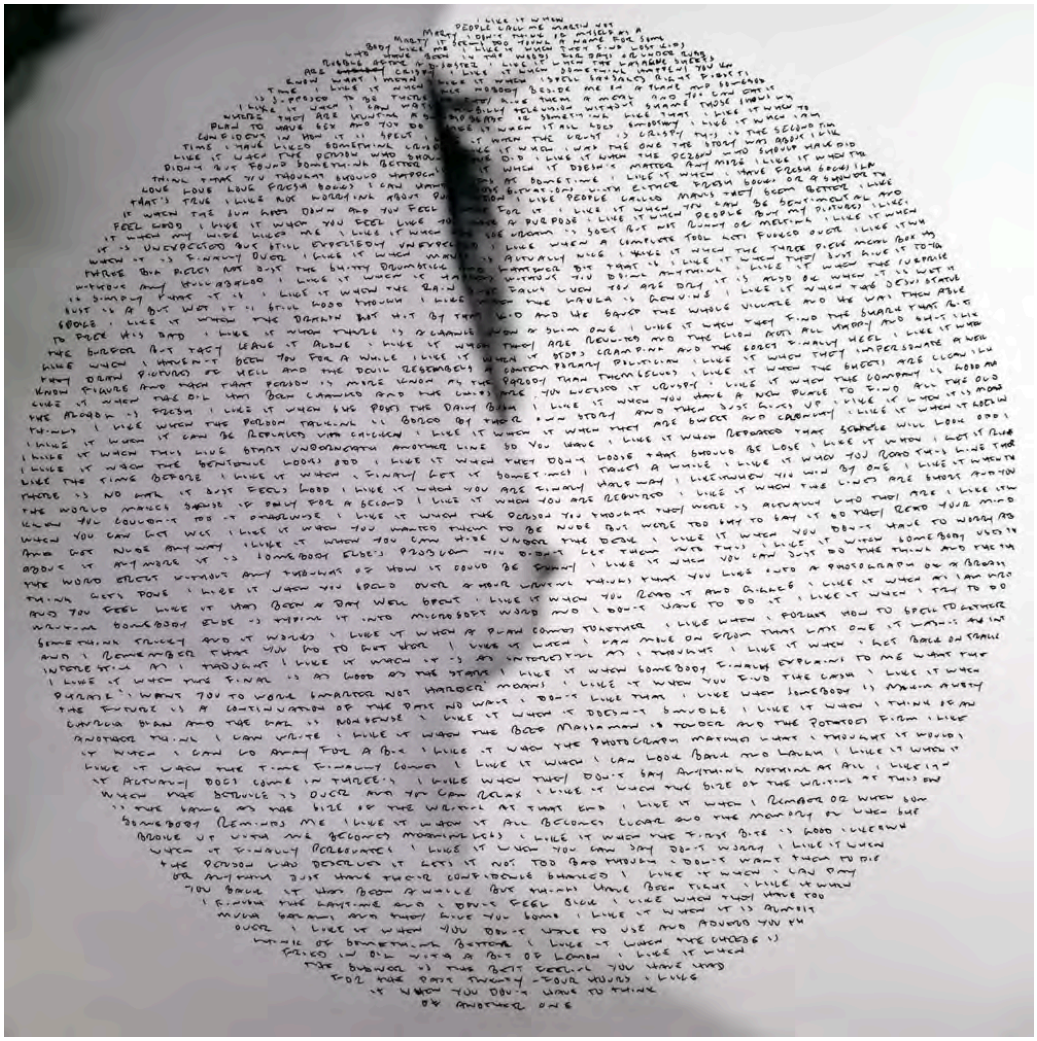


Figure 56. Martin Smith, *I Like It When*, 2015

Appendix 9

That's What Tortures Me – Jan Murphy Gallery 2016
(artworks- not already presented)

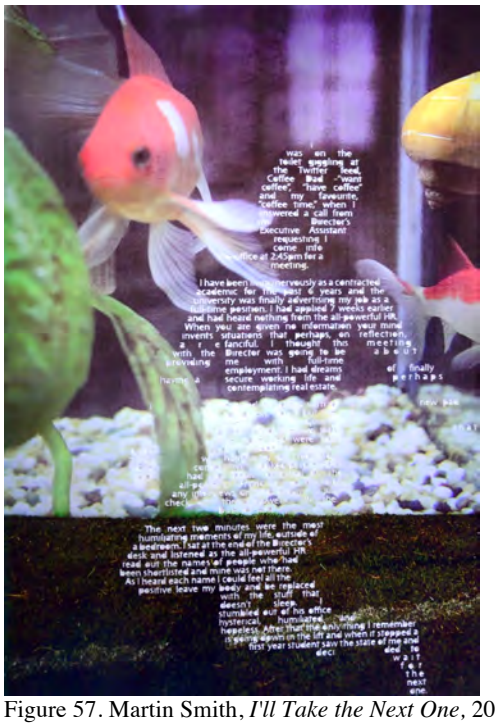


Figure 57. Martin Smith, *I'll Take the Next One*, 2016

Figure 58. Martin Smith, *Cutting Text*, 2016

Figure 59. Martin Smith, *And That's What Tortures Me,* 2016

Figure 60. Martin Smith, *God Only Knows,* 2016

Figure 61. Martin Smith, *Unfortunately on This Occasion*, 2016

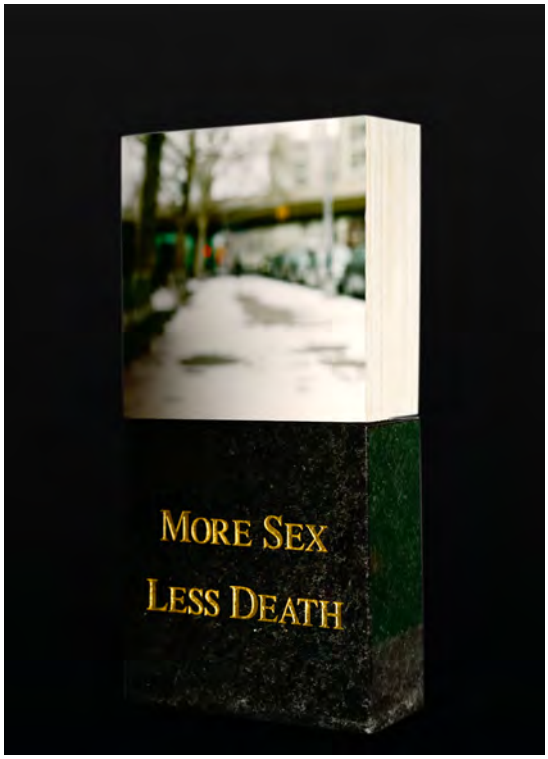


Figure 62. Martin Smith, *Credo,* 2016

Figure 63. Martin Smith, *43rd, Birthday*, 2016

Figure 64. Martin Smith, *Eating a Hotdog on 5th Avenue*, 2016

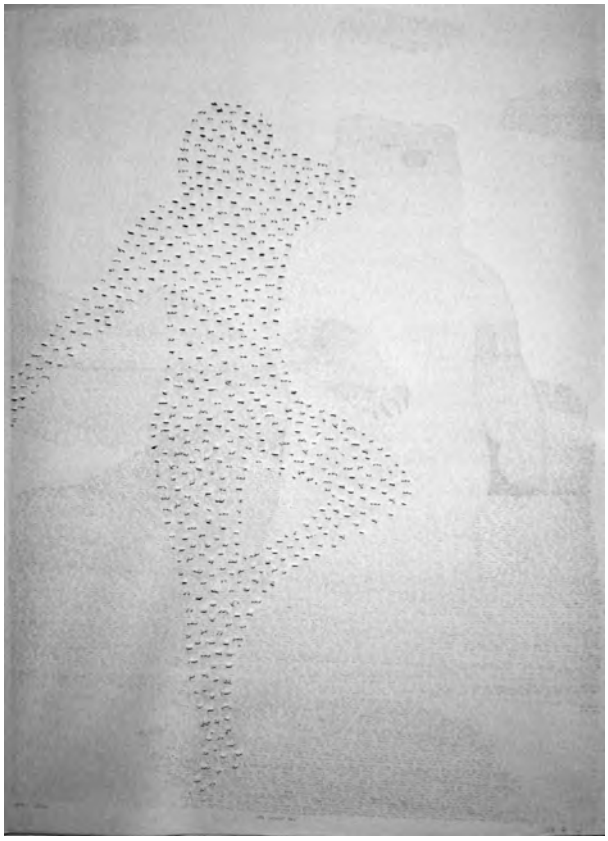


Figure 65. Martin Smith, *Life Without You,* 2016

Figure 66. Martin Smith, *Santa Monica,* 2016

Appendix 10

The Only Option Available – Sophie Gannon Gallery 2018
(artworks- not already presented)

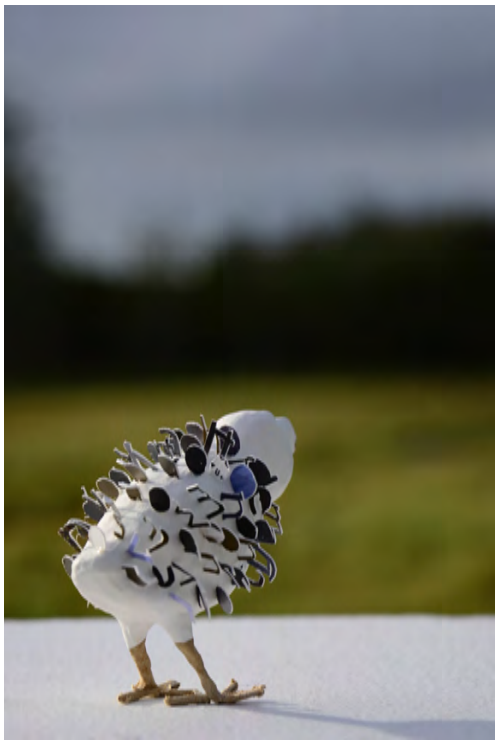


Figure 67. Martin Smith, *It's Difficult to Love*, 2018

Figure 68. Martin Smith, *I Get to Emerge From It*, 2018

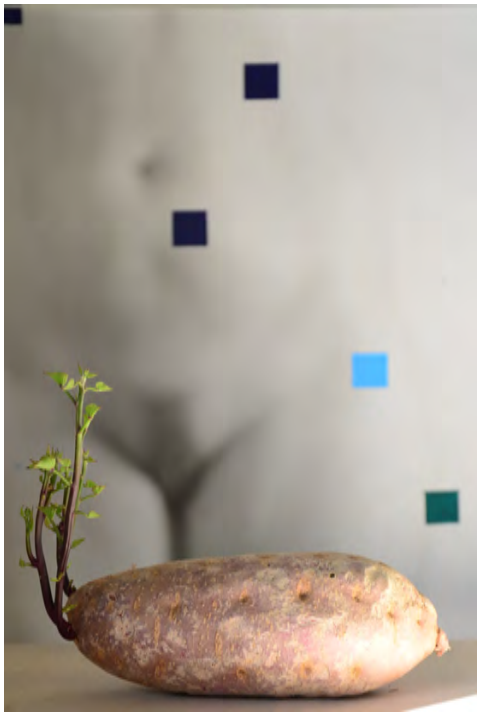


Figure 69. Martin Smith, *Linked by Absence*, 2018

Figure 70. Martin Smith, *The Embrace of Mediocre Ideas*, 2018

Figure 71. Martin Smith, *You Too Need Comfort*, 2018

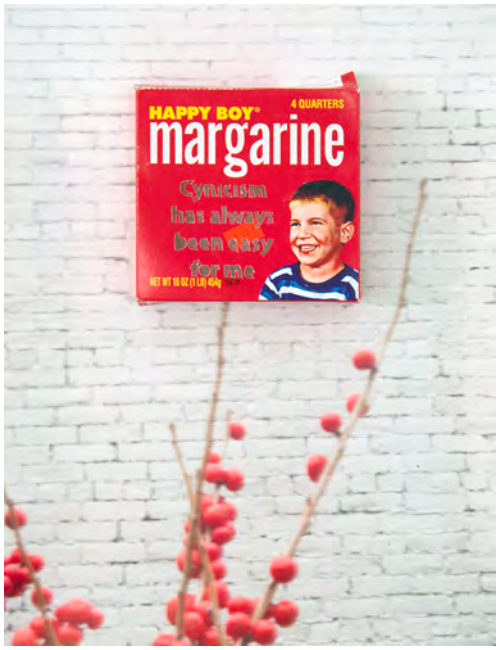


Figure 72. Martin Smith, *Cynicism*,2018

Figure 73. Martin Smith, *m,n,a,e*, 2018

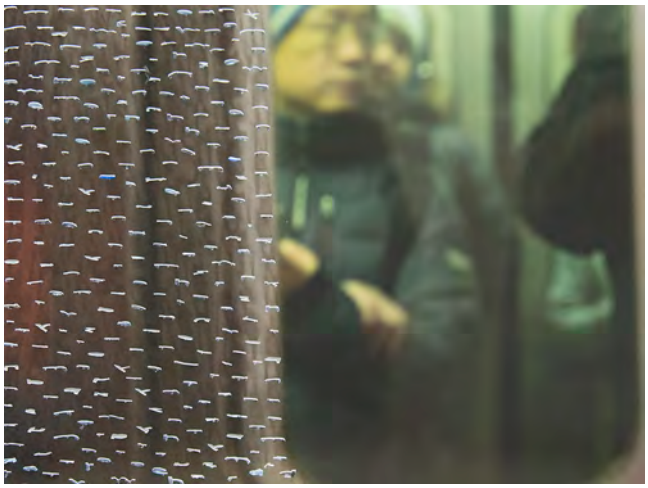


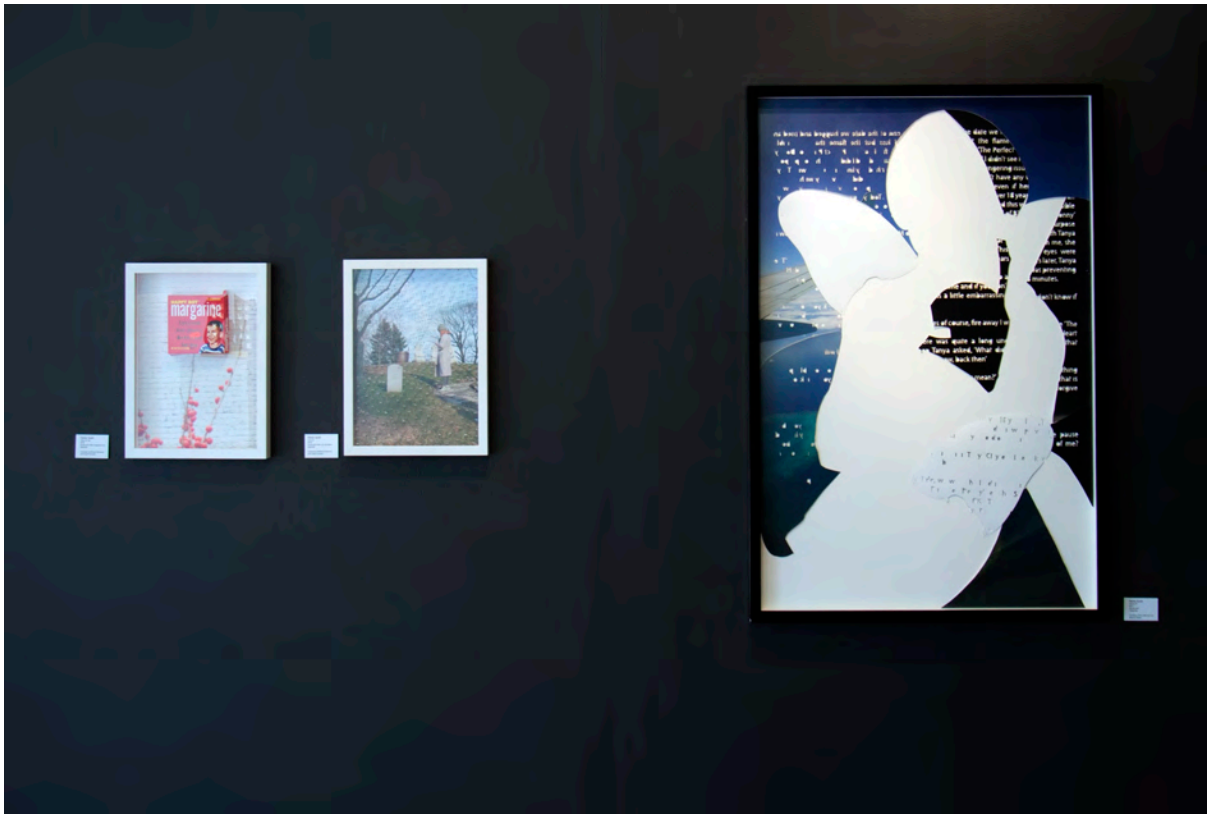
Figure 74. Martin Smith, *Ride*, 2018

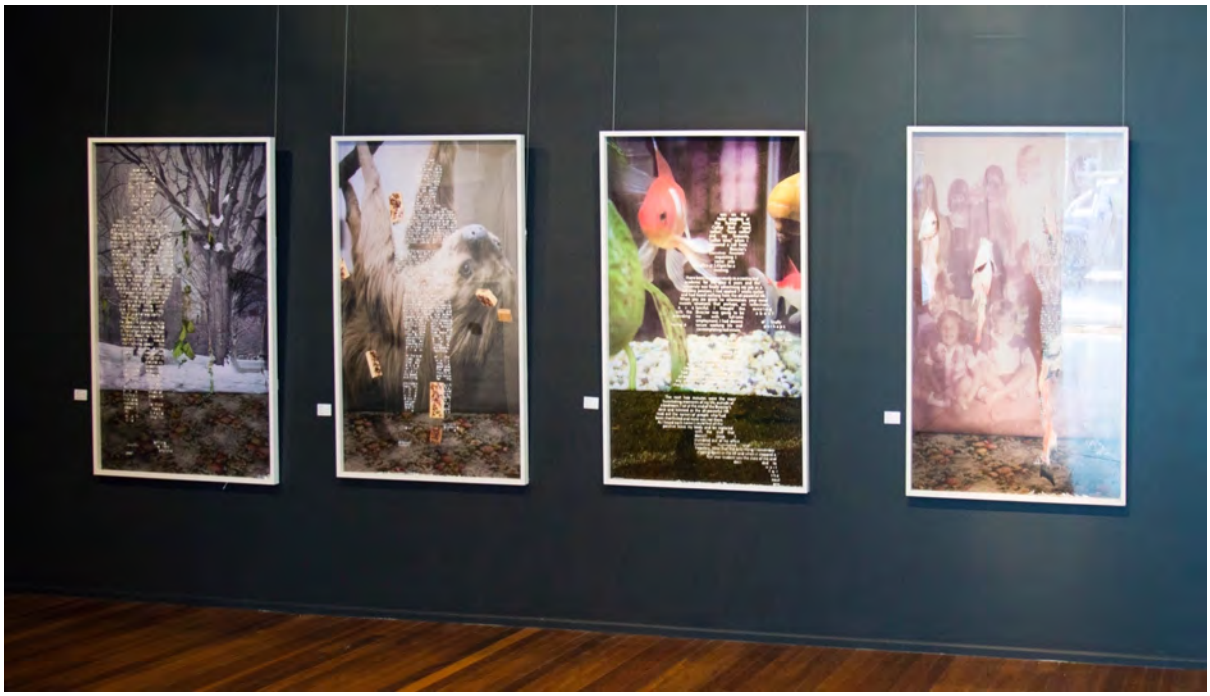
Figure 75. Martin Smith, *I Wish I Could Say I Handled it Well*, 2018

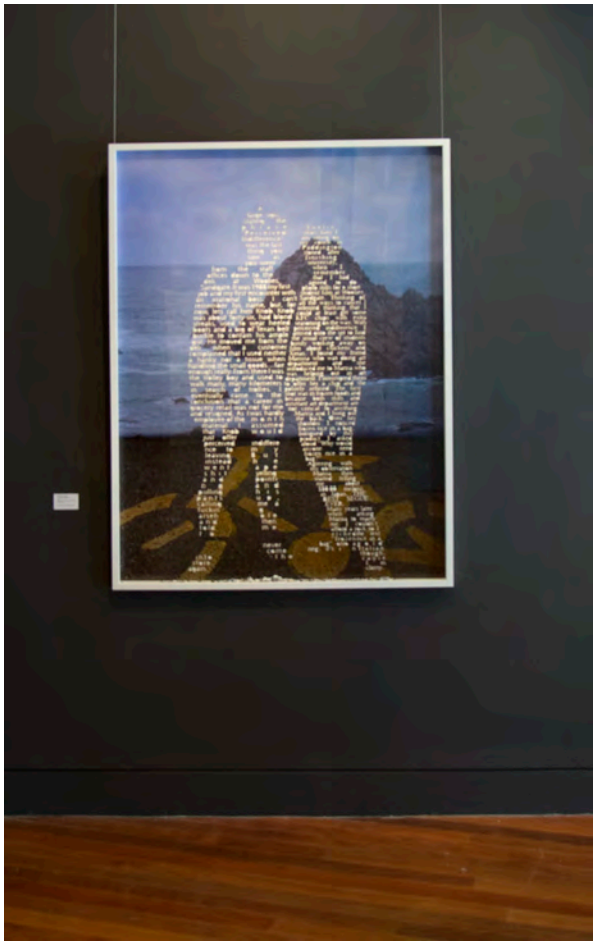
Appendix 11

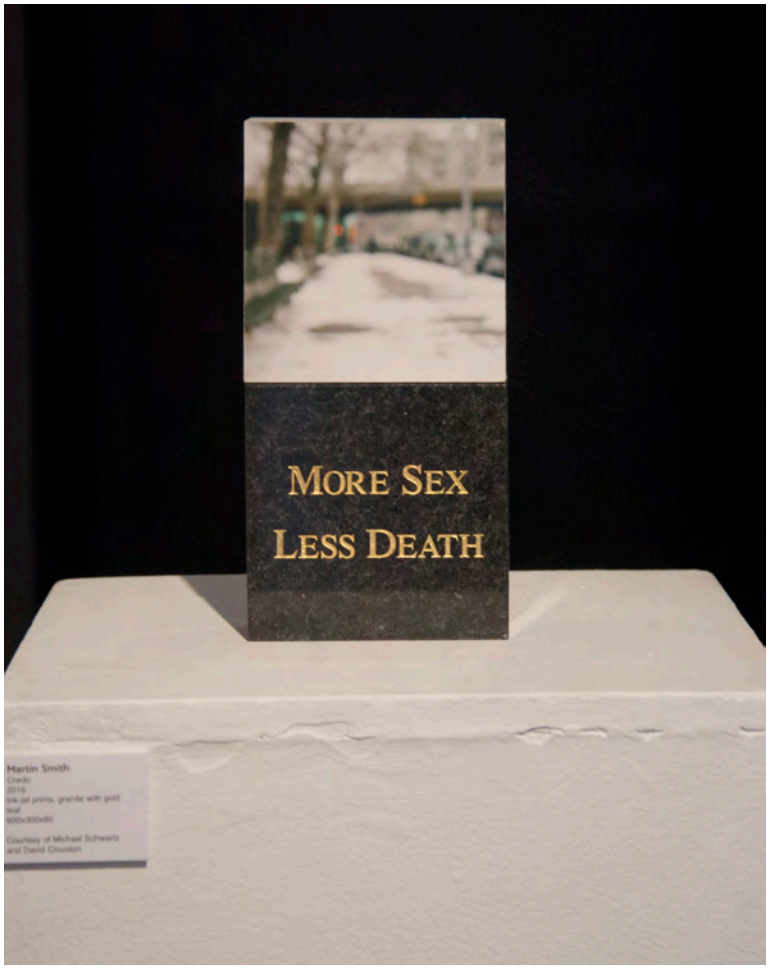
The Narrated Self – POP Gallery 2018
(Final exhibition)


The "Unfortunately On This Occasion"
Martin Smith
The unfortunately on this occasion memorial shield
2016
Ink-jet prints, brass and wood
450x650x
Courtesy of the artist and Jan Murphy Gallery


margarine






MORE SEX
LESS DEATH
Martin Smith


The pleas-
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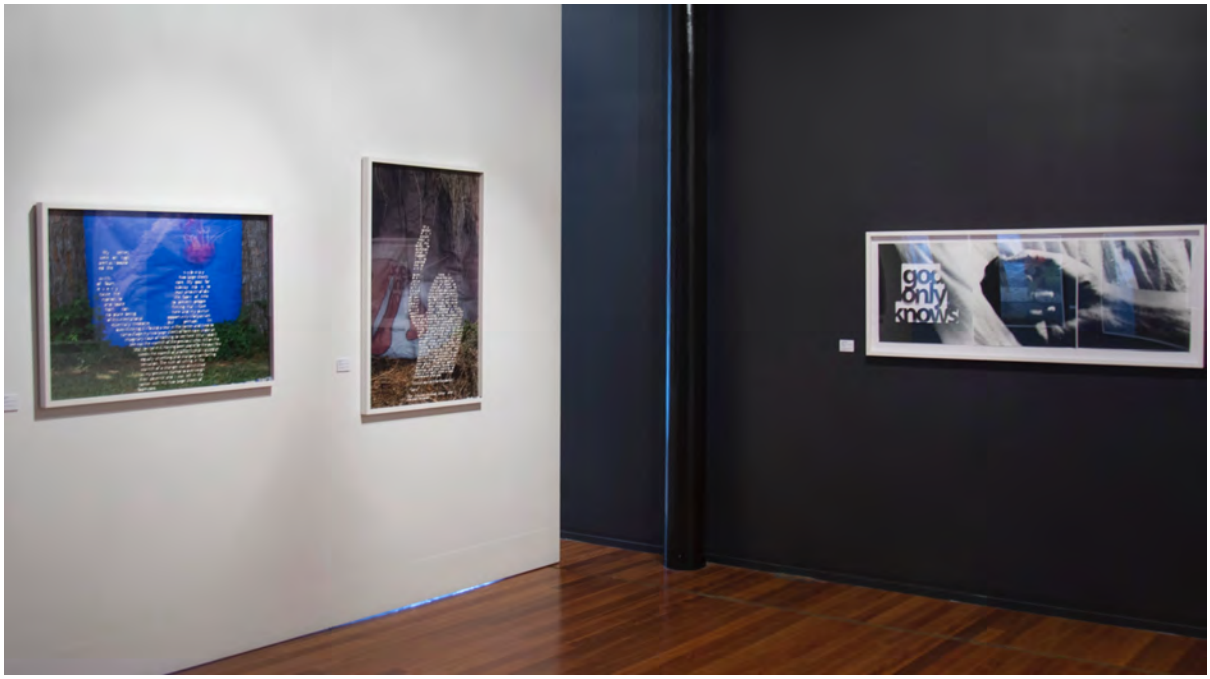
got only moms