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**Tracing the Social Contract of Photography:**

**How do we evidence the social collaborative engagement  
process in photography without undermining the value of the  
final visual outcome?**

**Elizabeth Wewiora**

**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of  
MA (by Research)**

**Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
Manchester School of Art**

**October 2018**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to reposition photography as a socially engaged arts practice, through the analyses of a body of recent practice based research. Firstly a nine-month residency working in collaboration with Over60s social housing group, Many Hands Craft Collective, in Ancoats, Manchester. Secondly a public residency & exhibition with the communities associated with the Mersey Ferries, in Merseyside. Both projects are framed and critiqued within the context of my previous and current professional practice, which spans fine art photography, arts education, curation and engagement.

The research focuses more heavily on the residency with Many Hands Craft Collective. This residency challenged my current thinking around socially engaged photography practice, and resulted in a re-assessment of what I term to be collaboration and co-authorship. Collectively the critique of both projects raise questions around how those involved can affect the style and validation of the final visual outcomes. This critique, therefore, includes questioning what one means by validation and value. It does this through exploring different agendas and perspectives the photographer, community collaborators and audiences place in the construction and resolution of such projects.

The thesis sets out the theoretical framework for which the practice-based research is delivered, supporting but challenging to what extent, there is a 'social contract', inherent in this medium as argued by Azoulay. The framework pays consideration to photography's conflicted history, positioned between Ranciere's thinking of photography as a "trace of the true" against Sontag's view of photography as enabling the "voyeuristic stroller". For the purposes of this research, which actively privileges the process of social engaged practice in photography, weight is given to Ranciere's and Azoulay's argument. The thesis further explores the principles of Helguera's *layers of participation*, which discusses different approaches socially engaged art practitioners use for their collaboration with others. I specifically focus on the *creative and collaborative participation* methodology, which enables the most active and accessible approach to co-authoring art projects.

The overarching aims of this practice based research, therefore, is to reflect upon how the principals of co-authorship in socially engaged photography can be challenged and developed.

## Introduction

This research project sets out to explore and re-evaluate the role photography can have within socially engaged arts practice. The thesis, which forms part of this project, does not try to avoid the complexities and tensions photography might hold within this field. The history of photography can be seen as a complex one. It is a medium torn between theorist Jacques Rancière's description as 'a trace of the true'<sup>1</sup> and writer Susan Sontag's view of photography as enabling a 'voyeuristic stroller'.<sup>2</sup> Sontag's analysis draws us to the conventional notion of photography as a singular and obtrusive activity, both in the use of the single camera and the single photographer who captures it. To focus on Sontag's view of photography, however, is to completely overlook its overwhelming history as a democratic medium. One can see examples of this democratic approach to image making from community photography projects that emerged in the UK and America in the 1970s<sup>3</sup> through to the current era of the selfie.<sup>4</sup> In both instances one cannot ignore photography's inherent ability to enable social agency for self-representation. This thesis will therefore seek to highlight photography's potential to create something, which not only acts as a democratic image, but that can hold agency for both the photographer and those it seeks to represent.

It will do this through framing photography within the history of socially engaged arts practice itself and asking the following question: How do we evidence the collaborative social engagement process in photography without undermining the value of the final visual outcome? This question has been considered through the definition that socially engaged arts practice 'needs to be considered as a process as well as a physical product'<sup>5</sup> but how does one affect the other when using photography as the principal medium for

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<sup>1</sup> Rancière, J. (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator*. London: Verso, p. 34

<sup>2</sup> Sontag, S. (2001), *On Photography*. Picador: USA. p.50

<sup>3</sup> Jo Spence and Terry Denner's Half Moon Workshop project and associated magazine *Camerawork* is just one example of socially driven photography initiative from this period. *The Camerawork Essays: Context and Meaning in Photography*, Jessica Evans (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1997) offers an extensive description of both projects

<sup>4</sup> The selfie is discussed in depth by Anthropologist (of smart phones and smart ageing), Dan Miller. <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/global-social-media/2014/04/01/know-thy-selfie/> reflects the phenomenon with self-representation through smart phones. Article accessed July 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Kester, G (1998). *Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework For Littoral Art*. Variant Supplement, p. 3

engagement? In order to analyse this question, the thesis has been formed of three distinct but interlinked chapters, **Practitioner and Approach**, **Community Collaborators and Outcomes and Audience**. These chapters reflect, for me, the three main elements that bring together any socially engaged art project and are explained in detail further into this introduction.

If one considers the first chapter, Practitioner and Approach, then it is important to offer some of my own personal and professional context. My current practice is formed as both a photographic artist<sup>6</sup> and producer.<sup>7</sup> With an educational background in fine art photography, my practice explores the everyday. My focus is often on local communities as microcosms of humanity, reflecting on society at points of loss and change. From 2009-2015 my practice took a distinct shift away from fine art photography into socially engaged arts programming. This was as a result of being invited to take part in a project as a socially engaged photographer. From this, I began for the first time to encounter a potential conflict as the photographer who had been invited to collaborate directly with communities, but one who upon reflection at the time, had only been an observer of them. From my undergraduate experience of art school, I found there was a focus on the student to consider photography through their very own observations and personal viewpoints. I would argue, however, that socially engaged arts practice hinges on the complete opposite. It is about knowing how to work in a critically engaged, collaborative and active way with the world around you. As a consequence, the notion of the socially engaged photographer, for me, created a series of ethical concerns around photography as a tool for documentation.

I should state at this point this is not a criticism of my undergraduate studies, as my time spent at art school supported a strong understanding in my own relationship to photography as an art form, for which I was ultimately inspired

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<sup>6</sup> I will define why I want to use the word 'photographic artist' rather than photographer in Chapter one, and discuss the current debates around why the term is or is not used within socially engaged photography practice.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin, W.(1998)*The Author as Producer*. London: Verso., In this context Benjamin is discussing the role of producer as an author who is politically active and driven towards the social struggle. In current contemporary visual arts sector, the term Producer is often referred to the main point of contact between artist and commissioner/ arts organisation, working through the logistics of production rather than the curatorial framework in which that artwork is developed for the public.

and which continues to resonate in aspects of my practice to date. In this respect there may well be further discussion around the need for a greater inclusion of socially engaged art approaches taught, or at least discussed, across all art school courses regardless of medium. This is something I envisage my conclusion may revise. I would argue, though, that it was the nine years of wider arts sector experience I undertook, which truly paved the way for my photography and socially engaged arts practice to find common ground. What does this mean then for bringing the two areas together, and asserting photography as a socially engaged practice?

Writer and theorist Grant Kester defines socially engaged arts practice as something, which allows ‘the viewer to speak back to the artist in a certain way, in which the reply becomes in effect a part of the work itself’.<sup>8</sup> In Kester’s definition, socially engaged art needs to rely on a two-way dialogue for its very existence: an ongoing process of conversation and compromise between artist and community collaborator (or other). How then can photography be used within this field, when more often than not the photographer is ‘exhibiting the signs on human bodies of thoughts and feelings that are not their own’?<sup>9</sup>

To explore this question I will discuss the potential for photography within socially engaged practice through the critique and reflection of two recent socially engaged photography projects. These projects were undertaken as practice-based research, in collaboration with two distinct communities across the North West of England. Within these two projects, I took the role of photographic artist. My approach to delivery was, however, informed by my wider professional background across arts engagement, curation, arts education and socially engaged arts programming. This will be discussed in detail in the following chapters and will address the various methodologies that were utilized across both projects as a result.

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<sup>8</sup> Kester, G. (1998) *Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework For Littoral Art* (Variant Supplement,) p. 3

<sup>9</sup> Rancière, J. (2011) *The Emancipated Spectator* ,p. 61



The two projects discussed in this thesis act as critical and comparative tools for analyzing photography as a socially engaged arts practice. They allow for a reflective assessment of what I consider the potential to co-author photographic work. Co-authorship is based for me on the principals of artist and writer Pablo Helguera's most active 'layer of participation'.<sup>10</sup> (See figure 1).

**1. Nominal participation.** The visitor or viewer contemplates the work in a reflective manner, in passive detachment that is nonetheless a form of participation. The artist Muntadas posted this warning for one of his exhibitions: "Attention: Perception Requires Participation."

Education for Socially Engaged Art — 15

**2. Directed participation.** The visitor completes a simple task to contribute to the creation of the work (for example, Yoko Ono's *Wish Tree* [1996] in which visitors are encouraged to write a wish on a piece of paper and hang it on a tree).

**3. Creative participation.** The visitor provides content for a component of the work within a structure established by the artist (for example, Allison Smith's work *The Muster* [2005], in which fifty volunteers in Civil War uniforms engaged in a reenactment, declaring the causes for which they, personally, were fighting).

**4. Collaborative participation.** The visitor shares responsibility for developing the structure and content of the work in collaboration and direct dialogue with the artist (Caroline Woolard's ongoing project "Our Goods", where participants offer goods or services on the basis of interest and need, is an example of this way of working).

**Figure 1: Pablo Helguera's Layers of Participation model in Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011)**

Helguera describes this layer, 'Collaborative Participation'<sup>11</sup> as,

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<sup>10</sup> Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books. p.15

<sup>11</sup> Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, p. 15

‘The visitor shares responsibility for developing the structure and content of the work in collaboration and direct dialogue with the artist’.<sup>12</sup>

Within this definition there is a clear argument that the ideas and processes behind the work produced are collaborative and co-authored endeavors. What, however, does this look like as a socially engaged photographic practice, and how is this evidenced in the final visual outcomes? To unravel this enquiry, the very notion of co-authorship is questioned throughout the thesis as each project reveals changing meanings and interpretations by those involved. What does co-authoring photographic work mean and look like to the photographic artist, to the collaborating community, and to the audience who view the final work? To reflect upon the three viewpoints, the thesis must also be split into these three separate but interlinked parts. Essentially the chapters are broken down into distinct elements of what makes up the whole of those involved in socially engaged arts projects.

Having already discussed the contents of the first chapter, one must now introduce the position of the Community Collaborator/s involved. The second chapter will discuss the main specific project undertaken for this research, *Present and Continuous* (January 2017 – Current) and the communities who collaborated in this project, as an in-depth case study. As an analysis of the engagement process that took place, the second chapter takes a more narrative structure to reflect this.

*Present and Continuous* was a project which resulted from a nine-month collaboration with local over 60s craft group, Many Hands Craft Collective. This project will be discussed throughout the thesis as the crux of the practice based research. The collective have an existing relationship with me through previous curatorial work. They had never before worked with me, however, as a photographic artist, nor had they used photography as a medium for creating work before. Together we worked to explore the research question through the process of spending time together and creating photographic

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<sup>12</sup> Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, p. 15

work. This was done through an open ended and process led series of photography sessions. The resulting visual outcomes were not pre-determined but rather products that reflected the collaboration. The pre-existing relationship I had to the group created both positive pathways, but also barriers to positioning myself as the photographic artist within the collaborative dynamic. This relationship dynamic will be discussed in detail in the second chapter, from the viewpoint of both the group and myself.

The second chapter will also introduce the secondary project, *Ferry Folk* (July 2017 – March 2018), which is an example of my current professional practice. This project consisted of a six-month residency with communities associated with the Mersey Ferries. The project was supported by cultural and public sector partners and resulted in cross-site exhibitions at Open Eye Gallery and the Museum of Liverpool. Whilst a socially engaged approach to practice was employed (see appendix 1 for full project description) the context of the project created a series of restrictions to the engagement process. These restrictions included the physical setting of where the project took place, and restricted time made available to work with the majority of the community involved. The subsequent reflection, however, offered enlightening commentary on the role of co-curating final work. It also generated reflection on how communities may respond on a variety of levels to the invitation to co-author their own story through photography.

Both projects and the relationships that emerged between photographic artist and community will be discussed and undoubtedly will raise more questions and analysis of my own artistic practice as a result. Thoughts around an expanding notion of what fine art photographic practice is and can be within socially engaged practice will also be addressed and developed as my methods to share these approaches to the medium are delivered in collaboration with others. Whilst the analysis of how the practitioner and community perceive and engage in the collaboration is discussed, there is still a third viewpoint to consider.

In order to analyze the visual outcomes produced fully, one must consider the audience who view and engage with the artwork. It is this final viewpoint that

forms the third chapter, the Outcomes and Audience. In doing so this chapter will ultimately address the research question: How can one evidence the collaborative social engagement process in photography without undermining the value of the final visual outcomes? This chapter will question who is responsible for these visual outcomes, discussing roles of co-curation within collaborative photography. It will consider who the audiences are, and what value means to them in each instance. As a photographic artist, I would argue that I would at least in part seek validation from my own cultural sector.

There is a lack of concrete research, however, around how one currently validates artistic quality and outcomes in socially engaged art projects. This has led to recent debate and research amongst the cultural sector.<sup>13</sup> Discussions to date have been formed on how one validates the practice outside of the gallery environment and raises concerns of existing hierarchies within our own cultural validation system. Whilst more dialogue and debate is developing in the sector as a whole, for photography as a socially engaged arts practice, there appears to be even less research and critical writing to reference. There has only been one major publication, in writer and academic Daniel Palmer's *Photography and Collaboration*, which challenges notions that photography is 'conventionally understood as a practice engaged in by solo, even solitary, operators'.<sup>14</sup> Palmer does this through offering case studies of practitioners in the field who actively seek out co-authored and socially engaged approaches to photography, such as Wendy Ewald and Anthony Luvera. With the exception of this recent publication and a smaller number of self-published works or articles (which will be discussed later in the thesis), still little exists around the discussion of photography as tool for co-authorship and co-production. Why then has photography been so overlooked in the critical and historical writing of socially engaged arts practice?

This question has been one of the driving forces of this research project;

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.art.mmu.ac.uk/staff/download/validation-beyond-the-gallery.pdf> is just one example of current debates and research into the appropriate methods of validating socially engaged arts practice within the sector. This report was published by Amanda Ravetz and Lucy Wright at Manchester School of Art for UK artist membership organisation Axisweb. Accessed in November 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Palmer, D. (2013) *A Collaborative turn in Contemporary Photography?* (Taylor and Francis: Photographies, Vol 6 No.1) p.117-125

investigating a gap in critical theory that, I would reflect, led to some of the previous tensions in my own practice. In the case of Palmer, the author does actively describe two photographers as clear case studies to champion role of photography as socially engaged art. Whilst strong examples, they are still few in number, and the same names are all too often utilised when discussing the topic amongst the sector. This can often undermine the actual diversity and range of practices being discussed and potentially then delivered within the field. Curiously for the discussion of photography as a socially engaged and co-authored practice, the relevant chapters of Palmer's book are also restricted to one of four. The majority of Palmer's discussion has had to look at photography and collaboration within the context of a much broader meaning. Despite its limitations, *Photography and Collaboration* marks the beginning of what I feel is some well-needed critical analysis of this type of work, something which to date has been marginalised in photographic or socially engaged arts theory. The question of why photography has been marginalised within socially engaged art theory will also, therefore be queried in Chapter one.

The thesis ultimately seeks to foreground photography's position within socially engaged practice. It does this through the repositioning of my own work and approach within the field, namely from the viewpoint of analysing the potential of co-authorship and collaborative production in image making. It further questions the consideration and importance of ongoing discussions around process versus visual outcomes in socially engaged art and our mechanisms for validating such work in the cultural sector. Perhaps some of the findings from this thesis can expand out to the wider photographic sector, echo and enrich what some peers in the field are already trying to vocalise.<sup>15</sup> In doing so it will no doubt raise current tensions in the field and question the definition of this practice itself.

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<sup>15</sup> Palmer, D. (2017) *Photography and Collaboration*. New York: Bloomsbury, p.7, the author raised how the critical and political enthusiasm for collaboration has curiously not spilled into the photographic discourse.

## Chapter One

### Practitioner and Approach

Analysing the position of one artistic medium within the context of another can be a complex endeavor. It is, however, the task set out in this thesis' research question: to re-position the role of photography within socially engaged arts practice. It has been essential to firstly analyse my own critical understanding of both art forms in their own right. In reviewing my own relationship to both photography and socially engaged arts practice, I have been able to create my own position, as to when photography may or may not define itself as a form of socially engaged arts practice.

Whilst undertaking this practice-based research, I found it necessary to locate firstly my own position within the diverse, broad genres of photography. Commercial, editorial, photojournalism, fashion, social documentary, fine art: they are a handful of the many strands of photographic practice. Whilst they all use photography as a tool for visual communication their motivations, approaches and visual outcomes are often strikingly different. The introduction of this thesis has already indicated my specific background in fine art photography and my self-definition as a photographic artist, rather than a photographer. This definition has been first and foremost essential in understanding where my own practice sits within the photographic genres. Secondly it reflects some previous tensions I felt with photography and socially engaged practice. Namely, that as a photographic artist, my work is informed and rooted in photography as a medium, but not restricted by it. Why though is it important for a practitioner to identify themselves as a photographic artist or fine art photographer, within the context of delivering socially engaged art projects? Why not simply say, photographer?

Philosopher and writer Walter Benjamin discusses photography's complex history, analysing how various aspects of photographic usage can conflict and confuse a reader's interpretation of its ultimate purpose. From one perspective, he argues that photographic technology shifted 'the total function of art ... Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another

practice – politics’.<sup>16</sup> In opening up the discussion of photography’s ability to shift who can view art and create it,

‘quantity has been transmuted into quality. The greatly increased mass of participants has produced a change in the mode of participation,’<sup>17</sup>

echoing theorist Rancière’s view, that photography created a platform for democratic expression. Benjamin goes on, however, to remind us of ‘the way certain modish photographers proceed in order to make human misery an object of consumption’.<sup>18</sup> According to Rancière this is exactly why ‘the philosopher criticises the photographer, for having wanted to witness’<sup>19</sup>, an approach arguably far removed from the socio-political drive collaborative methodologies employed in socially engaged arts practice. These opposing purposes of the same medium highlight why practitioners may find it so critical to distinguish and define where their individual photographic practice and purpose lies. If one is drawn to photography as a political tool for democratic representation but then finds their medium associated within the world of voyeurism, this potentially undermines the value of the photographic work they were trying to produce. Benjamin’s strikingly different roles for the medium in society, demonstrates the need for such definitions within this field.

The term photography has also been too broadly used or misunderstood within the context of socially engaged arts practice. This for me only re-affirms the potential issues with discussing the medium within its broader definition.

Palmer quite rightly points to writers such as Claire Bishop, as a prime example of this misplaced positioning of the medium. Palmer states that Bishop,

“treats photography as a passive medium of documentation. Once again, photography’s active role as an enabling medium of participation and collaboration is rendered invisible – another motivation for the

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<sup>16</sup> Benjamin, W. (1968) *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books p.224

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin, W. (1986) *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, p.15

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin, W. (1998 first published 1966), *The Author as Producer, in Understanding Brecht*. London: Verso.

<sup>19</sup> Rancière, J. (2011) *The Emancipated Spectator* p.91

current research'.<sup>20</sup>

I completely echo Palmer's frustrations here and would suggest Bishop's viewpoint overlooks Rancière's earlier reflections of photography as a participatory and political act in its own right. Both the participatory and political form the principals of socially engaged arts practice, which have shared 'goals of deliberative democracy and discourse ethics'.<sup>21</sup> I would, however, also suggest it is not simply socially engaged art theorists who might be missing the potential of discussing photography within the role of socially engaged arts.

Whilst Palmer does discuss three key practitioners, who exemplify a strong socially engaged photographic practice (Wendy Ewald and Anthony Luvera to name two) there is a frustration in finding the same case studies and practitioners included for his research. I have certainly found inspiration in both practitioners work and both are discussed later in this chapter. I would argue, however, that if we continue to canonize certain practitioners' work in this discussion, then one might stunt the variety of work that emerging practitioners can look to for guidance and potential styles of practice. It is for this reason I have included interviews with two lesser known but equally integral practitioners through a recent set of collaborative projects with Open Eye Gallery<sup>22</sup> called *Culture Shifts*<sup>23</sup>, to discuss the potential of photography within socially engaged arts practice.

*Culture Shifts* was an eighteen month socially engaged photography programme, which I produced as part of my role as creative producer at Open Eye Gallery. The gallery itself is a photography organisation with a forty-year history of supporting photographic practice based in North West England. The organisation, in recent years has been challenging its own position in the sector and relevancy to the public. In essence, the organisation has been

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<sup>20</sup> Palmer, D. (2017) *Photography and Collaboration*. New York: Bloomsbury, p.14

<sup>21</sup> Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art*. p.7

<sup>22</sup> Open Eye Gallery an arts organisation dedicated to photography and lens based media, with a forty-year history and the only gallery of dedicated to photography in the North West, England. <https://openeye.org.uk/about/>

<sup>23</sup> *Culture Shifts* was an eighteen month socially engaged photography programme at Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, England funded through Arts Council England Strategic touring funding. <https://openeye.org.uk/projects/culture-shifts/>



responding to the fact that photography has changed so dramatically within our everyday lives. It is not only photographers who are making a statement through the use of a camera lens, but society itself. Mobile devices and social media have transformed the way the public use the medium. People now capture and curate their own identities at the touch of a button. How then can a photography gallery be relevant to society today?

Open Eye Gallery's approach to consider this question has been through actively bringing communities and photographers together to co-author new photographic works addressing the topic itself. *Culture Shifts* was a programme, which sought to explore this and involved twelve photographers working across seven distinct communities. Open Eye Gallery are not the only gallery expanding their approaches to, and championing of, socially engaged photography practice. Organisations such as Photofusion (Brixton, London)<sup>24</sup>, online forum [socialpractice.com](http://socialpractice.com)<sup>25</sup> and Street Level Photoworks (Glasgow)<sup>26</sup> are just a number of organisations with a history in socially driven and now I would suggest a socially engaged approach to photographic practice. It is worth noting that a larger scale of research, beyond this thesis, to record these organisations' developmental changes would be a welcomed endeavor for the sector. For the purposes of this research, I will focus the discussion on two of the photographers from the recent *Culture Shifts* programme. My role of producer for the programme, moreover, offers particularly useful insight into both the processes and outcomes of each project the photographers' worked within.

Of the twelve photographers involved in the programme both Robert

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<sup>24</sup> Photofusion have a long-standing community programme and have recently completed their first major socially engaged residency programme called *Taking Part* as well as establishing short courses for practitioners interested in socially engaged practice. <https://www.photofusion.org/community-projects/>

<sup>25</sup> [socialpractice.com](http://socialpractice.com) was established by a cohort of international photographers interested in exploring socially engaged approaches to documentary photography practice. Established by Gemma Rose Turnbull, Eliza Gregory and Mark Strandquist. The site acts as a valuable resource for the current debate but predominantly discusses international projects although more recent UK projects such as *Taking Part* (Photofusion) and *Culture Shifts* (Open Eye Gallery) have been included.

<sup>26</sup> Street Level Photoworks are a photography gallery in Glasgow, Scotland with a long-standing community programme in particular their award winning project working with refugees and asylums in Glasgow called *Multi-Story* (2004-2010).

Parkinson and Tony Mallon, notably, define their own practice as photographic artists, rather than simply photographers. During interviews over the evaluation period of *Culture Shifts*, both practitioners raised potential issues or concerns with simply using the word photographer within their socially engaged projects<sup>27</sup>. This brings the discussion back to an apparent need for practitioners to define specific genres of the medium. So one asks again why not simply say, photographer?

Benjamin, discusses an additional conflicting use of the medium which may offer some insight into this question.

‘A photography which is able to relate a tin of canned food to the universe, yet cannot grasp a single one of the human connections in which that tin exists; a photography which even in its most dreamlike compositions is more concerned with eventual salability than with understanding [...] the true facts of this photographic creativity is the advertisement’<sup>28</sup>.

If photography can be associated within a world of capitalistic consumerism, then like both Mallon and Parkinson, I would consider the term photographic artist to be a crucial self-definition for explaining my practice to others. It is interesting to note, that both practitioners originally studied fine art rather than photography. I have already discussed why both practitioners do not feel comfortable to describe themselves as photographer. Equally then why do Mallon, Parkinson and myself not simply say artist?

Parkinson and Mallon actively choose to work with photography as their main medium for collaborative image making within their socially engaged arts practice. Both practitioners’ work is informed by the principles of photography as an accessible and democratic tool to work with others. As Mallon suggests, ‘I was actually trained in fine art and moved into working with photography as

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<sup>27</sup> In interviews as part of the evaluation of the *Culture Shifts* programme, (February - April 2018), Robert Parkinson pointed out that the phrase ‘photographer is too vast and open, therefore it could be a little vague’ for the type of work he looks to produce. Tony Mallon pointed more to the issue that for him ‘the word is more often than not associated with the commercial industry’.

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin, W. (1979) *A Short History of Photography* [cited in: *Photography/Politics: One, Photography Workshop*, London p. 57

it suited the process of working with others'.<sup>29</sup> By actively choosing to work with the photographic medium in this context, both practitioners offer positive signs towards photography's inherent place within socially engaged arts practice.

Parkinson echoes this preference to use the photographic medium when he states,

'My projects are around the fact that I love talking to and working with people and that is exactly what photography enables, it's the relationship with the people that I like'.<sup>30</sup>

Parkinson's statement also raises the idea of photography's ability to enable a social encounter. Curator and photography theorist Ariella Azoulay takes the view that 'the photograph is never solely the realization of the preconceived plan or vision of a single author, but is rather the outcome of an encounter'.<sup>31</sup> I agree with both Azoulay and Parkinson's view that photography can act as a powerful dialogical tool; an aspect that underpins many socially engaged arts projects, and in stark contrast to the monological<sup>32</sup> focus of single author/ artist voice.

There is, however, a striking difference between Azoulay and Parkinson's understanding and definition of a dialogical encounter. Within Parkinson's *Culture Shifts* project *As and When*<sup>33</sup>, the dialogue present in this project came through the process and action of making photographs together with his community collaborators. In Azoulay's description, the dialogue is something that may take place whilst the photographer captures their subject matter within a social context. Azoulay's description of a dialogical encounter is in relation to examples of social documentary images often during war and

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<sup>29</sup> In interview with Tony Mallon, April 2018

<sup>30</sup> In interview with Robert Parkinson, February 2018

<sup>31</sup> Azoulay A. (2012) *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*. London: Verso, pp. 219-20

<sup>32</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin is a philosopher concerned with the debate between a monological and dialogical approach to communication and authorship in society. Mikhail Bakhtin. (1982) *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*. USA: University of Texas Press Slavic Series offers insight into this discussion.

<sup>33</sup> *As and When*, one of the *Culture Shifts* residency projects for Open Eye Gallery with photographic artists Robert Parkinson, Gary Bratchford and communities in Halton, Merseyside, England, 2016-18 [https://www.dropbox.com/s/1qc3q5h6htc3375/Culture%20Shifts%20\\_As%20and%20When\\_PaaSP.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/1qc3q5h6htc3375/Culture%20Shifts%20_As%20and%20When_PaaSP.pdf?dl=0)

conflict. Whilst a 'civil contract'<sup>34</sup> may well be present in the work produced, there is lack of shared dialogue and therefore authorship in concepts behind, and delivery of, the image making itself. Ultimately the work Azoulay refers to will remain a social documentary photography practice, not a socially engaged photography practice. Perhaps, then, it is the connections, synergies – and ultimately differences – between these two practices that have caused, for me, earlier tensions between photography and socially engaged art. It is for this reason the history of social documentary photography, and socially engaged arts must be discussed within this thesis.

### **Defining difference: the term social in photography**

In order to define the difference between social documentary photography and photography as a socially engaged arts practice, one must first consider the context from which both forms of practice emerged. Socially engaged arts practice developed in the 1960s and 1970s taking both inspiration from, and in support of, social change sweeping through America and the West. Writer and Curator Tom Finklepearl offers extensive historical context of socially engaged arts practice in his book, *What We Made* (2013). He discusses how in the 1960s, when social change was seen as possible, socially engaged art was seen as a way of giving a voice to society's disenfranchised.<sup>35</sup> If one considers social documentary photography in the UK, which also emerged in the 1960s, there are some key political and social considerations, which certainly connected the two at the time.

From the 1960s through to the 1980s photography saw a rise in social realism<sup>36</sup>: an era of image making which saw photographers using a photo-journalistic approach to capture the everyday realities of the UK population. The political context of this time in Britain echoed that of Finklepearl's

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<sup>34</sup> Azoulay, A. (2008) *The Civil Contract of Photography*. USA: MIT Press.

<sup>35</sup> In Tom Finklepearl's (2013) *What we Made*. USA: Duke Press, the writer offers an extensive account of the emergence of socially engaged arts practice in America from the 1960s and how practitioners were often influenced by the civil rights movement of the era, including most notably photographer Wendy Ewald who was inspired by the Black project movement in Detroit as a young woman at the time.

<sup>36</sup> Social realism was the term used for work produced by artists, which aimed to draw attention to the everyday conditions of the working class, often as a socio-political act. *Walker Evans: Photographs for the Farm Security Administration 1935-1938* (Da Capo Paperback) Facsimile, 1975 offers useful insight to this style of practice

America. This was an era where working class communities suffered at the hands of the Conservative government's neoliberal economic policy<sup>37</sup> resulting in de-industrialisation and the growth of global capitalism. In the political decades known as Thatcherism, the country saw the privatisation of nationalised industries, an increase in un-employment from 1.5million to 2million within the first year of the conservative party in power, and the marginalization of trade unions.<sup>38</sup> Social documentary photographers such as Daniel Meadows<sup>39</sup>, (to name one of many), were seeking to represent the real lives of those affected by the social and economic changes taking place at the time (most often the working classes). Projects such as his Greame Street Free Studio project in the 1970s<sup>40</sup>, where Meadows offered free portraits in an old barber's shop for the community of Manchester's Moss Side, is a sound example of this. Finklepearl's describes socially engaged arts projects as,

'Works that examine or enact the social dimension of the cooperative venture, blurring issues of authorship, crossing social boundaries and engaging participants for durations that stretch from days to months to years'.<sup>41</sup>

Based on this definition one can start to unpick the key distinctions between Meadow's work as social documentary, and projects that can be defined as socially engaged photography. Meadows was engaging participants for a duration of time, and a dialogue of exchange must have taken place for the portrait to have happened. The photographer could be seen as the visual storyteller revealing everyday community life to the general public, and in Meadows' case he offered something back to his participants with a free portrait. Whilst some social documentary approaches like Meadows may then invite cooperation through their subject matter, there is never any evidence of a blurring of authorship present. Ultimately the authorship and control of representation remains with the photographer.

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<sup>37</sup> For a definition of neoliberalism, see David Harvey, (2005). *A Brief History of. Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University. Press.

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/pm\\_and\\_pol\\_tl\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/pm_and_pol_tl_01.shtml) offers useful overview into the history and policies of each British political party over the past 100 years.

<sup>39</sup> Meadows, D and Williams, V (1997) *Daniel Meadows, National Portraits: Photographs from the 1970s by Daniel Meadows*. Viewpoint Photography Gallery & Artbase Studios.

<sup>40</sup> Williams, V (2010) *The Daniel Meadows Archive: The Shop on Greame Street, 1972*, Photography and Culture, Vol 3:1, p81-89

<sup>41</sup> Finklepearl, T. (2013) *What we Made*. USA: Duke Press, p. 30

By contrast there are a number of practitioners and collectives from as early as the 1970s who were attempting to rebalance power dynamics of representation that continued to exist in social documentary photography. In 1974 photographers Jo Spence and Terry Dennet set up the Photography workshop Ltd, and associated magazine, *Camerawork*.<sup>42</sup> Both are often referenced as strong examples of photographers 'encouraging a democratising practice of photography'.<sup>43</sup> They were one of a number of organisations or collectives who championed community photography<sup>44</sup> in the UK at the time. They offered photography workshops to children and families within local communities, to develop their own photographic skills outside of traditional educational settings. In this sense, they created a platform through photography, as theorist Jacques Rancière argues, to support 'a community of narrators and translators'.<sup>45</sup>

Such projects certainly offered a platform for social action but they do not necessarily demonstrate collaboration and co-authorship between photographer and community. If one considers Helguera's ultimate 'layer of participation' – the 'collaborative participation'<sup>46</sup> layer – when discussing socially engaged arts project, one could argue it still falls short of demonstrating photography's full potential as a socially engaged arts practice. There was no real opportunity for those they sought to represent to co-author the critical meaning behind the photographs created. Nor was there any opportunity for photographer and participant to collaborate on the final production of images produced.

Palmer does reference photographers such as Wendy Ewald and Anthony Luvera, however, as practitioners who actively 'recruit(s) multiple or collective photographic voices with the aim of creating more inclusive documentary

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<sup>42</sup> Evans, J. (1997) *The Camerawork Essays*. London: Rivers Oram Press

<sup>43</sup> Evans, J. (1997) *The Camerawork Essays* p.15

<sup>44</sup> Dr Noni Stacy is a PHD candidate researching the community photography in Britain in the 1970s. Her essay offers useful examples of the breadth of practice and organisations involved at the time, *Community Photography in Britain in the 1970s: Photography, Pedagogy and Dreams*, (Archive magazine, 2011)

<sup>45</sup> Rancière, J. (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 22

<sup>46</sup> Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for socially engaged Art*, p.7

forms'.<sup>47</sup> Palmer's case studies discuss the varying approaches each practitioner takes to facilitation, collaboration and a release of authorship of the camera itself to the communities they are engaging with. In doing so, their works 'simultaneously take inspiration from and complicates simple criticisms of documentary photography'.<sup>48</sup> The work is actively turning the power dynamics of social documentary practice on its head. Whilst I admire the independent work of both photographers, there have been limitations to positioning my own practice in socially engaged photography using these references. I would reflect that this is due to the critique of such practice often being limited to practitioners who actively employ social documentary visual aesthetics, for example portraiture. My own earlier photographic work rarely used portraiture or other classic documentary styles of photography. In fact my previous work intentionally avoided both social documentary or portrait based work, particularly when I was asked to present work as a socially engaged artist.<sup>49</sup> Writers Mark Durden and Craig Richardson in their publication *Face On, Photography as a Social Exchange*, list the tensions of representing others through portraiture. One often needs to consider the motivations the photographer has on turning the camera on the lives of others, which vary,

'to differing degrees, varied relationships and feelings – exploitative, respectful, disempowering, empowering, cruel, loving, ethical, aesthetic and so on'.<sup>50</sup>

I feel it was these considerations that pushed photography away from my relationship to socially engaged arts in the first instance.

In contrast, if one considers my own relationship to photography, as an undergraduate studying fine art photography, you were encouraged to challenge your own understanding and relationship to the medium. This for me led to a focus on exploring the medium as a process of image making and abstraction of the every day. Unless working with heavily staged scenes using

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<sup>47</sup> Palmer, D (2017) *Photography and Collaboration*. p.77

<sup>48</sup> Palmer, D (2017). *Photography and Collaboration*,p.79

<sup>49</sup> *Allotment Diaries* 2011-12 is an example of my previous practice where tension resulted from being asked to document the Allotments communities across the UK (See Appendix 3).

<sup>50</sup> Durden, M and Richardson,C. (2002) *Face On: Photography as Social Exchange*. London: Blackdog Publishing,p.7

participants who were close peers or relatives, seldom was the human figure or representation of 'another' even present in my work (see figure 2).



Figure 2: Untitled, from *The Things Between Series*, © Elizabeth Wewiora, 2008

As a photographic artist, I became particularly focused around the tensions between analogue and digital technologies. This was particularly relevant as a practitioner studying between 2004-2008, where I witnessed as many peers working with analogue techniques as often as digital, or regularly flitting between the two. I found a connection to the specific qualities of traditional photographic processes. This was both due to the pace of production it allowed for, the layers of process it revealed and the uncertainty of the final outcome (see appendix 2). Through letting go of the need to know what the final image would be before I produced it, I was pushing the boundaries of what the photograph could be as a result. In doing so, simultaneously I could let go of the authorship of the image. So in what way does a fine art photographic practice resonate with such well-respected practitioners as Ewald, working in the socially engaged photography field today?

In projects such as *Towards a Promised Land* (Margate, UK, 2003-2006)<sup>51</sup>, Ewald's approach to image making, includes the production of photographic works with overlaid and often handwritten text. Palmer suggests the final works 'resemble conceptual documents'.<sup>52</sup> *Towards a Promised Land* resulted in a large scale and public realm installation of the collaborative portraits and

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<sup>51</sup> *Towards a Promised Land* was a commission with Wendy Ewald by London based organisation Art Angel, working with refugee and migrant young people in Margate, a coastal town in South East England (2003-2006).

<sup>52</sup> Palmer, D. (2011) *Photography and Collaboration*, p. 83

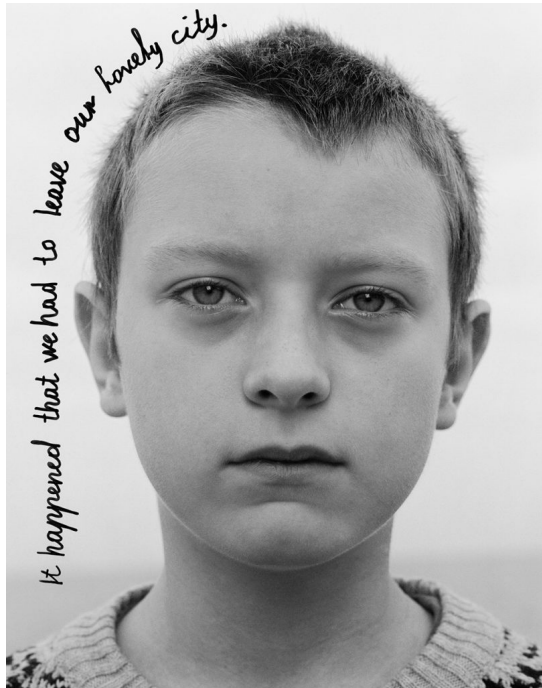


hand-written statements of the children involved (see figure 3). Writer and academic Liz Wells writes about the polysemic nature of combining image and text, collectively working to create a single artwork, noting that this 'can contribute to the claim of the status of the image as art'.<sup>53</sup> As a practitioner who defines my own practice as a photographic artist who intentionally incorporates such techniques in my work, it resonates that Well's discussion around the use of titling sits within her chapter, which specifically discusses when photography is an art. Through this description one can begin to re-analyse the connections between my own work and that of Ewald's. Ewald lets go of the control of image making through actively collaborating with others and allows for the process of making itself to become the principal concept of the work. Ewald's work also involves working strongly with the photographic medium but does not feel restricted by its final visual outcomes through the overlay of handwritten text and mark making. This crucially is where my own practice and Ewald's may seek common ground. I too had always considered the process of making as the creative idea. I had just yet to explore this with others.

As already suggested, with the exception of Ewald, I struggled in my earlier career to find a variety of photographers whose work resonated with my own visual form and relationship to photography, as well as my own ethical considerations and approaches to collaboration in socially engaged arts. An area of my practice, which did actively support my approach to socially engaged arts, however, was in my various roles in arts education and facilitation.

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<sup>53</sup> Wells, L. (2003) *Photography a Critical Introduction*. Third edition London: Routledge, p. 280



**Figure 3: Uryi, Born 1995, Belarus; arrived in Margate 2004. Current whereabouts unknown, © Wendy Ewald, commissioned by Art Angel, 2003-2006**

In order to consider the influence of arts education on my own practice, I looked to the writings of Felicity Allen, founding director of the UK national organisation for arts education, *Engage*. In her work, Allen actively discusses the emergence of the role of arts education within cultural institutions, notably from the 1970s onwards. There is no coincidence that the emergence of arts education joined the timeline of social documentary photography and socially engaged arts. Allen recalls the emergence of this arts education role as to 'shift art from a monolithic and narcissistic position into a dialogic, open and pluristic set of tendencies that renegotiate issues of representation, institutional critique and inter-disciplinarily'.<sup>54</sup>

I have undertaken a number of roles, considered arts education over the past nine years (see appendix 5): programme and engagement coordinator, School art teacher assistant, education and outreach, communities curator etc., all of which challenged and developed my own understanding of who is represented within the arts, and to what extent the art world is made

<sup>54</sup> Allen, F. (2008) *Situating gallery education*. London: Tate Encounters, Edition 2, p.2

accessible for all to engage with it. Similar to Allen's reference to arts education shifting the arts into a platform for dialogue, I began to see the critical importance of a two-way exchange with others in my photographic work. Theorists and writers Grant Kester, Nicholas Bourriaud<sup>55</sup> and Helguera all re-affirm that socially engaged arts practice hinges on the existence of 'verbal exchange with others as a tool'<sup>56</sup> for engagement. It seems through this definition the processes and methodologies to arts education and socially engaged arts are inherently connected through a dialogical approach. My practice and experience within arts education, has ultimately developed my interest in dialogical and facilitation-based methods, which my earlier photographic work alone could not offer for a socially engaged arts practice.

This is not to say that photographs do not inherently have dialogical principals. As the participatory photography organisation Photovoice<sup>57</sup> point out, 'a photograph can carry layers of information despite being a recording of just an instant in time'.<sup>58</sup> I would suggest, however, that it was my wider experience of arts educational roles and producing socially engaged arts projects, which offered the confidence and re-awakening in my practice to unlock photography as dialogical tool. Reflecting on the earlier discussions around the work of Ewald and Luvera, there is clear evidence of an arts education and facilitation approach to working with photography and others. Ewald describes her approach to image making as involving 'the co-creation of images and some kind of pedagogical operation'.<sup>59</sup> In doing so she is simultaneously utilising the principles of arts education and facilitation as a way of learning with and empowering her collaborators, whilst seeing the teaching as a political act of art in its own right. In this sense, one can understand the positive role that education and facilitation have in enacting

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<sup>55</sup> French curator Nicholas Bourriaud identified a shift in contemporary arts practice hinges on the dialogical nature. He defined the practice as Relational Aesthetics. 'A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space', *Relational Aesthetics*, (Les presses du reel, 2002) p. 113.

<sup>56</sup> Helguera, P (2011) Education for Socially Engaged Art, p.41

<sup>57</sup> Photovoice are an international organisation that deliver 'participatory photography projects for social change'. <https://photovoice.org/>

<sup>58</sup> Photovoice was coined as a methodological approach in participatory photography in 1995, [https://photovoice.org/methodologyseries/method\\_05/ppforadvocacy.pdf](https://photovoice.org/methodologyseries/method_05/ppforadvocacy.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Ewald, W as quoted in *Collaboration and Photography*, Palmer, D p. 81

social agency, understanding the methods and motivations of others' work such as Jo Spence and Terry Dennet.

A number of the Open Eye Gallery *Culture Shifts* practitioners also employed similar dialogical and facilitation techniques in their work, approaches inherent in Allen's arts education. When discussing two of the projects, *Winds of Change*<sup>60</sup> and *As and When*<sup>61</sup>, all three practitioners involved used these specific methods of engagement. Practitioners Gary Bratchford and Robert Parkinson focused specifically on the facilitation process of enabling the community to create the photographs themselves in *As and When*. Mallon, on the other hand, combined methods of facilitation with co-producing photographic work, blurring the lines of who the photographer is within the context of the community dynamic (see figure 4 and figure 5). In a sense he became part of the community group itself, a facilitator of the photographic collaboration rather than the leading artist.<sup>62</sup>



**Figure 4: Northwood Golden Years group creating final work for *Winds of Change* exhibition, part of *Culture Shifts*, 2017**

**Figure 5: *June Making Tea, Winds of Change Series*  
Both Images © Tony Mallon and Northwood Golden Year's group, 2016-18**

Mallon's approach for me resonates with Helguera's collaborative participation model of socially engaged arts, which I have focused on for my own practice based research projects. Regardless of Mallon, Bratchford and Parkinson's

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<sup>60</sup> *Winds of Change*, collaborative project by photographic artist Tony Mallon and the Northwood Golden Year's group in Merseyside, part of the *Culture Shifts* socially engaged programme, Open Eye Gallery, 2016-18

<sup>61</sup> *As and When*, one of the *Culture Shifts* residency projects for Open Eye Gallery with photographic artists Robert Parkinson, Gary Bratchford and communities in Halton, Merseyside, England, 2016-18

<sup>62</sup> Wewiora, E. (2018) *Winds of Change - a Collaborative project.*, [www.asocialpractice.com](http://www.asocialpractice.com) article.

varying approach to practice, strands of collaboration and co-authorship are inherent in their projects. Furthermore the techniques of arts education and facilitation are utilised throughout. Collectively they act as a useful reference and reflection for those seeking out examples of socially engaged photography practice.

Both the previous and more recent practitioners' work considered in this chapter have created useful paradigms to base my own approach to photography as a socially engaged arts practice. The complex history and terminology which simultaneously ties and separates social documentary photography practice, socially engaged arts, and socially engaged photography has also been discussed in order support my individual approach and style of practice. Often the differences and connections found between each practice are located in the hierarchy of who retains authorship of the concepts behind and production of the artwork. For me, these factors will remain at the forefront of my ethical and aesthetic considerations for any given collaborative photographic project.

This chapter has laid the foundations of my methodological approach for both the collaborative photography projects I would go on to deliver. The artist, however, will only ever offer one half of any collaborative process. In order to fully understand the potential of photography as a socially engaged arts practice, one must analyse the ways in which those we wish to work with respond to the invitation to collaborate.

## Chapter Two

### The Community Collaborators

This chapter discusses the process behind the co-authorship of ideas and co-production of image making, which took place between two collaborative photography projects. Both projects (*Present and Continuous* and *Ferry Folk*) formed the practice-based research to support and inform the overall research question. In contrast to the first chapter, which focused on the context of the practitioner and their approach, this chapter will now focus on the community collaborators themselves. Ultimately this section of the thesis questions to what extent the community affects the decisions and directions such projects may develop. Moreover what can be learnt from the community collaborators in terms of the role photography has within socially engaged art? It is therefore necessary to introduce each of the communities involved, to offer context on how they found an interest and agency in the work produced.

For the *Present and Continuous* project I would collaborate with Many Hands Craft Collective. The group are a local Over60s craft group who I have worked with through various curatorial and facilitation roles for the past five years.<sup>63</sup> The collective formed out of a number of local residents who shared an interest in knitting and are based at Victoria Square, one of the oldest social housing buildings in Europe. It is one of the remaining Victorian buildings of its kind, which presently has avoided re-development in Ancoats, an inner city suburb of East Manchester, England. In recent years the area has demonstrated all the typical changes apparent in a process of gentrification.<sup>64</sup> Whilst buildings get knocked down, built up, communities' displaced and new communities welcomed, Victoria Square and its residents remain steady though surrounded by an ever-changing skyline.

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<sup>63</sup> I have worked as a creative producer with Many Hands Craft Collective and residents from the Victoria Square Housing building (Ancoats, Manchester) for over six years on a curatorial programme called Northern Art Carbooty. Each year artists work with the Collective and residents to produce artwork for sale at the annual event. <https://wewioraprojects.com/northern-art-carbooty-13/>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.slideshare.net/SoBEVPSeries/urban-regeneration-in-greater-manchester>. Accessed in June 2018

As a collective they have been involved in many participatory-based projects before and so one could argue the invitation to ask the group to undertake this research project was a logical decision. The reason for working with Many Hands Craft Collective, however, was a decision based on appropriateness and ethical considerations to working with a community within a research project. Curator and writer Claire Doherty discusses how in many instances, where artists work with communities, there are practices, 'though they employ a process of complicit engagement, are clearly initiated and ultimately directed by the artist'.<sup>65</sup> In this sense, the community remains the participant and the artist remains the author. Whilst Doherty ultimately points out that some autonomy must always lie with the instigator of a project, usually the artist, I would argue certain approaches to invitation, delivery and evaluation can support a more overall co-authored project.

It is for this reason the invitation made to Many Hands Craft Collective was to undertake a collaborative journey with the artist from the on-set. This meant co-authoring the meaning behind the work, collaboratively exploring approaches to images making and co-curating the final outcomes. Moreover, the group were invited to collaboratively analyse the effectiveness of photography as a socially engaged medium with the practitioner. In essence, they were to become collaborators in unpicking the research question itself. This was a decision made at the beginning of the project with the group, in an active attempt to breakdown potential hierarchies that continue to exist within the current validation system of socially engaged art practice. Helguera argues that often within the critical writing of art history,

'the voice of the public is generally missing [...] in projects where the experience of a group of participants lies at the core of the work, it seems incongruous not to record their responses'.<sup>66</sup>

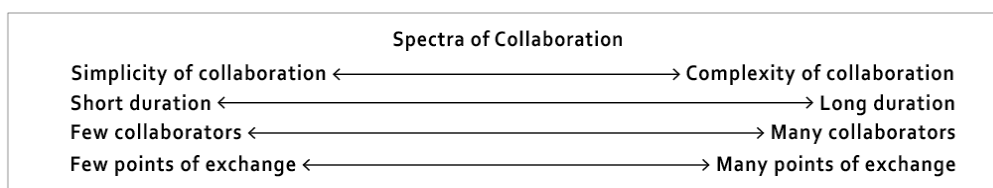
Through the process of involving the group in the analysis of the actual collaboration, I aim to encourage the sector to reposition their thinking around how one validates such practice. The second chapter, therefore, gives as much voice to the community collaborators as it does for the practitioner.

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<sup>65</sup> Doherty, C. (2004), *Contemporary Art: From Studio to Situation* (London: Blackdog Publishing, p.19

<sup>66</sup> Helguera, P. (2011). *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, p. 73

In contrast, with *Ferry Folk*, the community I would collaborate with would be, on the whole, unknown. Based on and around the Mersey Ferries, the public I would meet would be formed of staff, local commuters and tourists. The amount of time I would have with each of these individuals would vary greatly as the project progressed. How would they want to engage or collaborate, if at all? Unlike the first project, the consultation process took place with the organisational partner (Merseytravel), rather than directly with the individuals I would work with. Photographer and writer Eliza Gregory, alongside other practitioners exploring photography as a social practice<sup>67</sup>, discusses the affects of working within a 'spectra of collaboration'<sup>68</sup> (See figure 6). Unlike Helguera's layers of participation, which focuses on the overall approach the practitioner intends to employ, Gregory's model acknowledges and considers the context of each project.



**Figure 6: A Spectra of Collaboration diagram produced for the *Locating the potential of socially engaged photography* broadsheet, Article by Eliza Gregory, Compiled by Gemma-Rose Turnbull Vol. 1 Version 1, 2014**

It is these variables that ultimately will affect the possibilities for collaboration. The 'spectra of collaboration'<sup>69</sup>, acts as valuable reference point for examining the potential limitations behind such collaborative photographic projects, particularly *Ferry Folk*.

On the contrary, with Many Hands Craft Collective, I would arguably have the most potential to develop Helguera's 'collaborative participation'<sup>70</sup> model. I

<sup>67</sup> Gregory, E and Turnbull, G, (2014) . *Locating the potential of socially engaged photography* broadsheet, published on asocialpractice.com. Accessed November 2016

<sup>68</sup> Gregory, E (2014), Spectra of Collaboration in *Locating the potential of socially engaged photography* broadsheet, Accessed November 2016

<sup>69</sup> Gregory, E. (2014). Spectra of Collaboration in *Locating the potential of socially engaged photography* broadsheet, Accessed November 2016

<sup>70</sup> Helguera, P (2011), Education for Socially Engaged Art p.15



had a valuable duration of time to collaborate with the group, knew the number of people involved and the regularity I would be meeting them. In an article, *A Conversation on Social Collaboration*, artist and writer Doug Ashford discusses with artist Wendy Ewald the potential 'dark side of community-based practices'.<sup>71</sup> He discusses when artists are often parachuted into a community setting, create work based on what they find and move on. This is something I actively wanted to avoid with *Ferry Folk*, but feel that the conditions of the project would not necessarily support this. In contrast the long-term relationship with Many Hands Craft Collective would suggest this a far less likely outcome of the collaboration. Would there however, be any potential issues arising from working with an existing group to explore a new research project?

In the 2017 conference, *Collaboration in Research and Artistic Practice*<sup>72</sup> speaker and researcher Fearghus Roulston<sup>73</sup> suggested that pre-existing relationships bring their own set of complexities to collaborative projects. In his closing statement he asked the audience to consider 'how does your personal relationship affect your approach and honesty to the practice'?<sup>74</sup> Would my own previous relationship affect the level I would be willing to push the collaboration? Would the group be able to distinguish my previous role as producer with this new role as photographic artist and how would this affect the process and outcomes of the project? These questions were something that would inevitably re-surface throughout the delivery of the project and are discussed in the following case studies.

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<sup>71</sup> Ashford, D and Ewald, W et al. (2006) *A Conversation on Social Collaboration* Art Journal, 65:2, p58-83

<sup>72</sup> *Collaboration in Research and Artistic Practice* was a conference hosted by Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Manchester in 2017. During the conference a number of speakers discussed the complex ethical considerations to collaborative research.

<sup>73</sup> <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/re/mnh/projects/the-northern-ireland-troubles-and-peace-process-legacies,-silences-and-memories-in-conflict-transformation> and information specifically on the Common Ground conference <https://commongroundmcr.wordpress.com/2016/12/14/report-on-subject-of-study-collaboration-in-research-and-artistic-practice-sarah-feinstein-and-pauline-hadaway/>

<sup>74</sup> Roulston, F. In discussion at the conference (as listed above), 2017

## Ferry Folk – An Overview

*Ferry Folk* was never initially intended to be part of this practice-based research project. It is used more for reflection and comparison enveloping the main collaborative project with Many Hands Craft Collective. Although it is not discussed in detail in this chapter, the project still warrants an overview to offer context of those involved. The community collaborators in this instance were made up of various Merseytravel<sup>75</sup> staff, tourists and commuters associated with the Mersey Ferries. The majority of engagement took place on a one to one level. Each individual I met was, on the whole eager to engage with the project and identified with the idea of me as the photographic artist in residence. The engagement was, however, limited in most instances to short conversations and audio recordings, through taking part in portraits or contributing old or recent imagery or stories for the project. In many respects it began through its delivery of portraits to feel like a social documentary project<sup>76</sup> (see figure 7). Ultimately, the opportunity to collaborate with the community was often reduced to forty-five minute boat journey, restricting the collaborative conditions as described in Gregory's 'spectra of collaboration'.<sup>77</sup> Opportunities did, however, present themselves to support greater authorship of the photographic work both in the editing and curatorial stages of the project. A more critical analysis of *Ferry Folk* will be discussed in chapter three, where the focus is on co-authorship of visual outcomes produced.

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<sup>75</sup> Merseytravel is the passenger transport executive responsible for the coordination of public transport in the Liverpool City Region, North West England and partnered on the commissioning of the *Ferry Folk* project, with myself as photographic artist in residence on their Mersey Ferries vessels and landing areas.

<sup>76</sup> I was able to run a series of additional practical based photography workshops with Merseytravel staff, with the premise that as individuals they would go on to produce their own photographic work in the future. There was also a smaller collaborative project with a local social history group, the Digital Ambassadors, who created their own responsive work exploring personal memories of New Brighton. Whilst I would argue both of these strands involved more regular contact with individuals this would be considered additional participatory elements to the core photographic commission with Merseytravel.

<sup>77</sup> Gregory, E (2014) Spectra of Collaboration in *Locating the potential of socially engaged photography* broadsheet



Figure 7: *The Ganesh Family Festival* part of *Ferry Folk* series, © Elizabeth Wewiora, 2018

### **A Case study – Present and Continuous**

*Present and Continuous* reflects the process of an in-depth nine-month collaboration with Many Hands Craft Collective. This particular case study articulates how ultimately the community collaborators' journey is as integral to the process as the photographic artist's, and starts as the process began; with the very first session.

Ashford suggests that the 'key part of collaboration is that producers and consumers see themselves differently'.<sup>78</sup> This suggests that key and distinguished roles need to exist within any collaboration and so the first session with Many Hands Craft Collective, began with a presentation of my previous photographic work. Whilst I found this a necessary activity, I did so with some initial tension, as Rancière suggests, through inviting others to become viewers of your work the 'spectator remains immobile in her seat, passive'.<sup>79</sup> By not sharing my artistic practice and intentions with the group at this stage, however, I would not be creating a transparent basis from which to start. Socially engaged photographer Tony Mallon often begins any collaborative project by introducing his own practice. This is not for the

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<sup>78</sup> Ashford, D (2006), *A Conversation on Social Collaboration*, p. 64

<sup>79</sup> Rancière, J. (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator* p. 2

purposes of leading the group ‘to work in the same way as he had traditionally, but to give overview and insight into the potential ways of developing their own project’.<sup>80</sup> In the case of sharing my own practice, it attempted to act as a platform for discussion but also to re-iterate my new role as photographic artist, rather than producer.

Kester suggests that socially engaged arts practice is based on the principals of a two-way exchange, where the work ‘allows the viewer to speak back to the artist in a certain way, in which the reply becomes in effect a part of the work itself’.<sup>81</sup> For me, this reply should not only come from the responses to my own work, but in the dialogue that forms from each other’s ideas and stories. I, therefore, invited the group to bring a selection of their own for discussion. Each group member chose to bring old photographs of themselves, friends or relations (see figure 8).



**Figure 8: *Christine’s Grandparents*, image brought in for the first session, part Many Hands Craft Collective project**

The group responded to each other’s images through an interest in the handling and discussion of the old photographs as objects. This was a similar response to the physical artworks I had also brought in as part of my initial artist presentation, which included photographs, which has transformed into fabric, film slides and book works. Society now, predominantly experiences photography as a digital encounter, through social media and through mobile devices. If the group were to consider the medium as a process of making, it

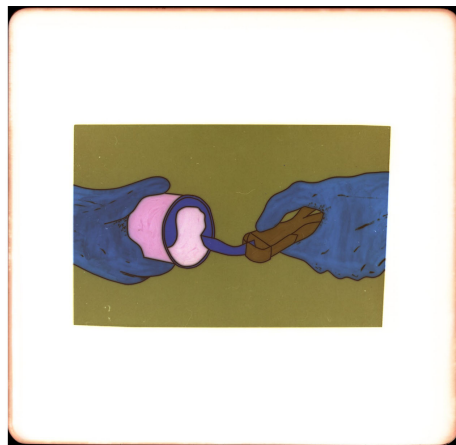
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<sup>80</sup> Wewiora, E (2018), *Winds of Change - a Collaborative project*, [asocialpractice.com](http://asocialpractice.com) article.

<sup>81</sup> Kester, G, (1998). *Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework For Littoral Art*, Variant Supplement, p.3

felt necessary to re-connect photography's relationship to materiality.<sup>82</sup> One of the group members commented, 'ah, photography isn't just clicking the camera, there are different types and techniques, it is an art form'.<sup>83</sup> His response suggests that by handling the artwork as a tangible object, photography, transcended for him beyond a tool for digital documentation.

These old photographs animated a further discussion around personal memories and a local social history of East Manchester, where most of the group reside. The idea of the past was referenced through the age, feel and discoloration of the photographs, and connecting photography's relationship to memory.<sup>84</sup> As Rancière states, 'the texture of the photograph bears the stamp of times past'.<sup>85</sup> The physicality of the old photographs and physical artworks both acted as a prompt for dialogue with the group. As a photographic artist, who often works with found or old photographs through a process of archiving or appropriation, I was particularly drawn to the group's response to the old imagery. This started to form ideas around we might work with this type of imagery as the project progressed (see figure 9).



**Figure 9: From the series, *From Co-op With Love*, found slide, hand drawn illustration overlay and photographic print, © Elizabeth Wewiora, 2016**

<sup>82</sup> In this sense, materiality relates to the physicality of the photograph as object. As with much of my own work there is an interest in the handling of photographic medium as a reflection of its making process. Photoworks produced an article in their Photoworks publication 18, 2011 which discusses the materiality of photography in detail <https://photoworks.org.uk/photographys-new-materiality/#close-no>

<sup>83</sup> Ged, Many Hands Craft Collective in discussion at the first session, Feb 2017

<sup>84</sup> In *Roland Barthes: Camera Lucida – Reflections On Photography* (2006) Vintage Classics, Barthes discusses photography's relationship to memory and nostalgia throughout his writings on the subject matter.

<sup>85</sup> Rancière, J (2009). *The Emancipated Spectator* p. 114

## Challenges to the co-authored and co-produced approach

As the photographic artist, the first session had created a framework for the rest of the project to develop. Responding to the initial positivity of working with found and old imagery from the group, I chose to develop this line of enquiry further. This next session explored captioning and titling of old personal photographs in an attempt to create new narratives<sup>86</sup> (see figure pair 10). My own photographic practice often incorporates text with image and often this is with the intention of anchoring new meaning, reiterating Well's statement of the intentions of claiming the 'image as art'<sup>87</sup> through combining both elements.



**Figure pair 10: Images from the second session with Many Hands Craft Collective, using their old photographs on acetate to create new meaning with additional hand-writing and text, February 2017.**

**Images © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2017**

Many Hands Craft Collective, however, did not seem to have the same interest in the relationship between text and image. The group instead voiced a collective interest in 'starting the actual project'<sup>88</sup> and several questions were asked as to when the group would start learning some photographic techniques. I had envisaged developing a structure for the project based on

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<sup>86</sup> Copies of each member's old photographs are printed onto acetate. The group is then invited to add their own personal message, quotation or everyday object and drawing overlaying the original image. These are then presented on an overhead projector as a presentation to the full group as a collaborative workshop activity exploring photography and narrative.

<sup>87</sup> Wells, L. (2003) *Photography a Critical Introduction*, third edition London: Routledge, p. 280

<sup>88</sup> Christine, Member of Many Hands Craft Collective, asked this half way through the second session, February 2017

concepts and themes but my suggestion of the photo-elicitation activity was immediately challenged and replaced in favor of a desire to start taking new photographs. There was, however, a hesitance as the photographic artist to start making any actual photographic work. For me, the project had not yet created a space to 'share responsibility for developing the structure and content of the work'.<sup>89</sup> How would we as a collaborative group create artwork if we did not know what the ideas and focus of our work were to be about?

Rancière suggests that each,

'Intellectual act is a path traced between a form of ignorance and a form of knowledge, a path that constantly abolishes any fixity and hierarchy of positions'.<sup>90</sup>

As a practitioner who wanted to retain an open-ended process, with a collaborative approach to decision making, it therefore felt necessary to reflect Rancière's statement, abolishing my initial structure for the project, and taking the preference of the overall collective. A series of practical sessions were therefore delivered together, ranging from pinhole cameras and cyanotype printing to working with analogue medium format cameras and DSLRs. This included mimicking a technique, which the group had been particularly drawn to from my previous artist presentation<sup>91</sup> (see figure 11, 12 and 13).

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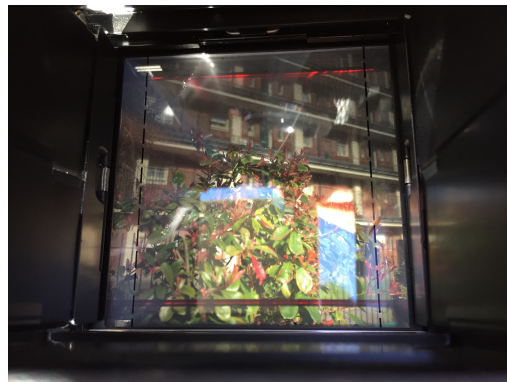
<sup>89</sup> Helguera, P. (2011), *Education for Socially Engaged Art* p.15

<sup>90</sup> Rancière, J (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator* p. 11

<sup>91</sup> This technique blurs the relationship between old and new photographic processes through capturing a viewpoint from a double lens, one digital and one analogue.



**Figure 11: from the series, *Record, Archive, Rewind*. This work was produced for the last open studios at Rogue Artist Studios, Manchester as a result of the building's closure due to redevelopment in the area. © Elizabeth Wewiora, 2016**



**Figure 12 & 13, Many Hands Craft Collective member, working with the same technique used in Figure 11 to produce imagery of Victoria Square, Figure 9 shows the results Image © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2017**

Exploring photography as a process of making and techniques is closely tied into my own relationship to the medium and so perhaps this approach inherently needed to form part of the collaborative process. Helguera would suggest that in many socially engaged art projects, the 'process itself becomes the fabrication of the work'.<sup>92</sup> Group member, Ged, reflected that the group felt encouraged and positive by these practical sessions,

<sup>92</sup> Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for Socially engaged Art*, p. 12



'So far through Liz's knowledge and expertise, the group have managed to create a collection of images covering various techniques from "basic" pin-hole camera shots to more creative effects using two cameras working in conjunction with each other, producing a "framed" effect. I never expected to learn so much.'<sup>93</sup>

There is, however, something missing from this statement's account of the process: a sense of two-way dialogue. Rancière believes that in order to create an: 'aesthetics of art in society [one must] create a community of narrators and translators'.<sup>94</sup> I had at this point, only supported the group to become photographic makers developing practical skills. If one considers the earlier discussion of work by Jo Spence and Terry Dennett, whose Half Moon workshop initiative put the photographic skills in the hands of the public, one can see the difference between the facilitative and co-authored approach. Whilst Spence and Dennett handed the skills and tools of photography over to the public as political act, they were not creating a situation for practitioner and community to collaborate on the ideas behind the imagery made. How then would I bring the photographic expertise of the practitioner together with the ideas of the community collaborators, beyond simply sharing photographic skills?

Many Hands Craft Collective are ultimately the experts in their own story; I am the photographic artist, made welcome, but an outsider to their local context. It was necessary to create opportunities for the group to discuss their own ideas within the weekly sessions. There was a certain level of negotiation here, to incorporate time to accommodate both the practical image making the group were enjoying, and the focus, as the practitioner, I was trying to find. I would use tea breaks between activity to incorporate asking the group some key questions. What, for example, did they want to the photographic work to do or say? What was its purpose? Who, if at all, did they want to see the work they were producing? The question of who they might want to view the work, created a noticeable shift in the group's willingness to discuss potential ideas. Sarah Fisher, Director of Open Eye Gallery, often argues for the importance

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<sup>93</sup> Written statement by Ged, one of the Many Hands Craft Collective group, June 2018

<sup>94</sup> Rancière, J (2009)*The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 11

of considering what the community collaborators want from the visual outcomes produced in such projects. She states,

‘there is something very interesting in seeing the participants of a collaborative project work towards something they know will be seen by the public. It gives a sense of professionalism, ownership and validation to the work they have produced’.<sup>95</sup>

The group responded positively to the idea of sharing their work publicly, echoing Fisher’s statement. Perhaps then the discussion of an exhibition or public showcase should have been raised at the very beginning of the project. As a project that had no set outcomes, however, this seemed for me as the artist instigator too presumptuous at the time.

### **Co-creating visual metaphors**

This new focus to present work for the public, created a new space for the group to start working through a process developing visual ideas. Working with the ideas of visual metaphors, a technique I have used in previous facilitation workshops, we used a diverse range of images from the internet or photo books<sup>96</sup> as prompts for discussion. The group considered how the affects of tone, colour, framing and so on, impacted the understanding of the image’s subject matter. (See figure 14 and 15). Reflecting collectively upon these images, the group then formed their own visual narrative, based on nine key words.

### **Present and Continuous**

**Growing**

**Togetherness**

**Well Being/ Reduce Isolation – contemplating isolation?**

**Social**

**Creative**

**Multi Talented**

**Friendship**

**Community**

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<sup>95</sup> Sarah Fisher in discussion at the *Learning Lab* event, *How do we co-author culture?* at the Atkinson, Southport, 29 January 2018, part of *Culture Shifts*, Open Eye Gallery . This event brought together the photographers, partners and communities involved in each of the *Culture Shifts* project.

<sup>96</sup> A combination of other practitioners works, my own and randomly user generated images from the internet (sourced by the group) were used for the visual metaphor activities to ensure a diverse range of images were available without too much bias on a particular style or form.



**Figure 14 and Figure 15: Images of Many Hands Craft Collective discussing and forming visual metaphors, Images © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2017**

As Kester suggests, for any socially engaged artwork to develop, one,

'involves the creative orchestration of collaborative encounters and conversations [...] these exchanges can catalyse surprisingly powerful transformations in the consciousness of their participants'.<sup>97</sup>

For Many Hands Craft Collective, these nine words would act as a pivotal structure for the group, and had awakened and transformed in the 'consciousness of [the] participants'.<sup>98</sup> The group were now co-authoring the ideas behind the photographic work, with myself and each other. How would this transition into a process of co-production?

### **Collaborative Production**

To echo Helguera's collaborative participation methodology through this collaboration, it was imperative to implement approaches for the co-production of the final photographic work. Photography, however, has often found itself restricted by the idea that its production comes through a solo act. Writer Geoffrey Batchen dismisses this notion and suggests that photographs are 'often a collective enterprise stretched over a considerable time period'.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Kester, G (2005) *Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially Engaged Art*. In Z. Kocur and S. Leung, (2012) Ed. *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 76-100.

<sup>98</sup> Kester, *Conversations Pieces (2005): The Role of Dialogue in Socially Engaged Art*. p. 76-100

<sup>99</sup> Batchen, G (2012), *Photography and Authorship*, Still Searching blog, Winterthur Fotomuseum, October 7, available <https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still-searching/articles/26932>. Accessed May 2018

Taking inspiration from practitioners such as Wendy Ewald and Tony Mallon, I wanted through the production to challenge the audience to consider

‘who actually makes an image, who is the photographer, who the subject, who is the observer and who the observed’.<sup>100</sup>

The methods, employed with Many Hands Craft Collective to support co-production were therefore formed of a number of distinct but interlinked activities, aimed to disrupt the notion between photographer and subject matter.

The group collectively went on a series of photo-walks, where every individual had their own camera and worked to source imagery relating to one of the key nine phrases (see figures 16 and 17). I became another member of the collective on the photo-walk, given a word to explore like the others, rather than leading the walk. As a collective we also all agreed to document each other during the photo-walks, as a further collaborative process. In doing so each individual’s work and role held as much agency as the next, working to a collective agenda. The group would also re-visit some of the photographic techniques we had explored at the beginning of the project, with a new critical eye on how certain styles of imagery evoke certain meaning or emotion (see figure 18).



**Figure 16 and figure 17: Images created by one of the group in response to phrase, *Present and Continuous*, April 2017 Images © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2017**

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<sup>100</sup> Ewald, W. (2011). *Literacy through photography*, USA: Teachers College Press and CDS Books of the Center for Documentary Studies, p. 326



Figure 18: *Searching from Isolation*, from the *Present and Continuous* project, © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2017

Batchen often queries the authorship in photography, suggesting many hands are in fact involved in the process.

‘At what point in the process of production and reproduction is a photograph made? Where is the boundary between the creative moment we acknowledge as involving ‘authorship’ and mere labour’?<sup>101</sup>

An unexpected but welcomed artist residency project, *The Bathroom Darkroom Project*<sup>102</sup> created an opportunity for the group to and myself to further blur the authorship of photography through the labor process of the final printing. The project itself was an open call by Manchester Curators Rachel Burns and Lydia Marley, to take up a two-day residency within their student house in South Manchester. The bathroom was transformed into a black and white darkroom for artists to print on-site.

Both the group and I were able to undertake a process-led investigation of another person’s domestic domain, acting as a new setting to respond to.

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<sup>101</sup> Batchen, G (2012), *Photography and Authorship*

<sup>102</sup> *Bathroom Darkroom Project* was an open call by local curators Rachel Burns and Lydia Marley. Photographic artists were invited to propose how they would use the darkroom facilities installed within their own domestic setting in Chorlton, a South Manchester suburb usually associated with students. The selected artists had a two-day period using the domestic space itself as the context to create work from (see appendix 6 for full description of the Bathroom Darkroom project).

Group member Charlie, reflected, ‘I particularly enjoyed the bathroom darkroom part of the project, it was different to what we normally do – getting out to Chorlton, being around someone else’s domestic space for a change’.<sup>103</sup> The project proved popular but moreover challenged notions of where socially engaged photography projects usually take place. In this instance they had become my residency collaborators for a professional opportunity, resulting in an exhibition and publication.<sup>104</sup> (See figure 19 and 20).

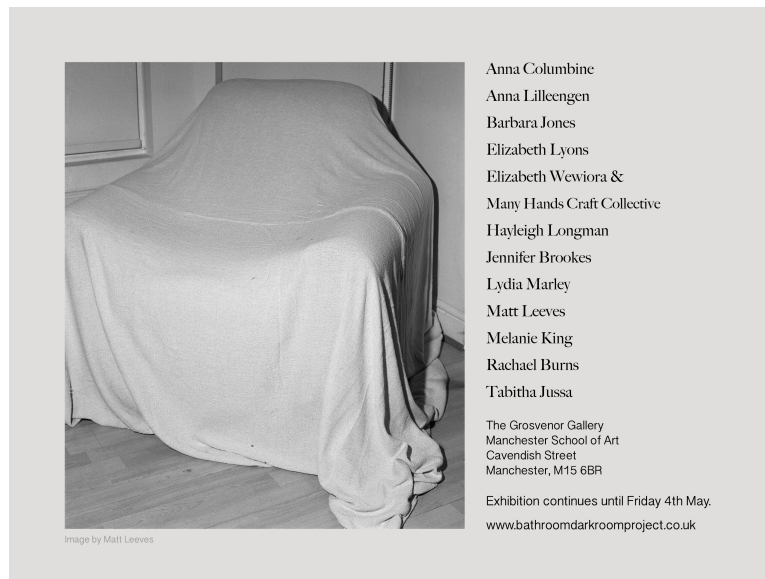


**Figure 19: Image from the Bathroom Darkroom Project, © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2017**

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<sup>103</sup> Charlie, Many Hands Craft Collective member, discussing the overall project in final evaluation interviews, July 2018

<sup>104</sup> The Bathroom Dark Room project resulted in an exhibition and publication in April 2018 at the Grosvenor Gallery, Manchester School of Art, placing the group within a professional group exhibition context. More information about the project as an exhibition and publication can be found at the <https://www.bathroomdarkroomproject.co.uk/#0>



**Figure 20: e-invite for the *Bathroom Darkroom Project* exhibition, highlighting Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective as a collaboration. Image courtesy of Curator Rachel Burns, 2018**

A third strand of production was delivered through a collective decision to create more controlled shots of objects, which responded to the nine key phrases. A pop up studio was created in the group's community centre. This also became the backdrop for a series of collaborative portraits, which would go on to represent their final phrase, diversity. As highlighted in the first chapter, I had previous tensions with the use of portraiture in socially engaged arts projects. Writer and artist Martha Rosler raises a concern over the 'naïve assumption that only self representations can solve the problem of the unequal power in the photographic transactions'.<sup>105</sup> How then would I work with the group to co-create a series of photographic portraits, which offered agency and shared ownership in the process of representation?

Photographer Anthony Luvera has developed a strong history of socially engaged photography, which enquires into 'participation and self-representation with groups of marginalized individuals'.<sup>106</sup> Often the community collaborators Luvera works with are supported to create their own self-portrait. Within Luvera's on-going series, *Photographs and Assisted Self-*

<sup>105</sup> Rosler, M (1999: 2004). 'Post-Documentary, Post-Photography?' in *Decoys and Disruptions, Selected Writings, 1975-2001*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p. 227

<sup>106</sup> Luvera, A. (2013) *Not Going Shopping*, foreword of the newspaper publication

*Portraits (2002 - ongoing)* he attempts to blur distinctions between ‘the participant as “subject” and [himself] as the “photographer” during the photographic sitting’.<sup>107</sup> Luvera’s work certainly blurs the lines of authorship between photographer and those he is supporting to self-represent. This research project, however, is not seeking to assist in self-representation. It is attempting to explore a collaborative representation through a collective process of photographic production.

In order to reflect these aims, the group and I actively took on varied and overlapping roles within the photographic production of each portrait. These moved fluidly between what or who would be in front of the camera, the arrangement for the backdrop, the camera set up and angle, handling of the flash and the pressing the actual shutter. These photographs were referred, by the group, as collaborative portraits, acting as a collaborative process of representation (see figure 21).



**Figure 21: *Rose and Jim*, searching for diversity from *Present and Continuous* project, © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2017**

These images also highlighted a collective interest in the significance of colour (see figure 22). During earlier discussions, the group and I looked into

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<sup>107</sup> Luvera, A (2006) *Photographs and Assisted Portraits*, Source: *Photographic Review*, Issue 47, <http://www.luvera.com/photographs-and-assisted-self-portraits/>. Accessed September 2016



the potential of colour as a means of inviting emotion or underlining meaning into an otherwise everyday image. The group honed in on specific shades of green and teal, the colour of the group's own logo. Group member Elaine stated, 'this colour summarises us so well, it is calming, mature and steady'.<sup>108</sup> The group were now using constructed photography as a way to take ownership of their own representation. Wells suggested the 'conceptual engineering of the artist is clearly evident'<sup>109</sup> within constructed photography. The group's ability to make use of the colour as a repeated motif of identity suggested an altogether different relationship to the medium. Elaine summarised this shift with, 'I don't take snaps now, I take photographs'.<sup>110</sup>



**Figure 22: Interpretation for *Growing*, by Elaine, *Present and Continuous* project, © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2017**

Whilst the project demonstrated an overall positive response to collaborate, there were also moments of skepticism or uncertainty from both the group and myself. Throughout the process, there was one element, however, which remained constant. An interest and willingness to work with the photographic medium together, which came as much from the group in the end as it did from myself. One member reflected,

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<sup>108</sup> Elaine, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, July 2018

<sup>109</sup> Wells, *Photography - A Critical Introduction* (2003) p. 278

<sup>110</sup> Elaine, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, July 2018

'I found it all very collaborative, we all joined in. Sometimes I took the images, sometimes I was in them, and other times I was helping you or others'.<sup>111</sup>

Group member, Elaine, stated,

'it felt like the project belonged to us, you came to us on an equal basis. We had our own experiences which you worked with'.<sup>112</sup>

These statements demonstrate how photography was and can be used in a socially engaged way, supporting in this instance the 'collaborative participation'<sup>113</sup> model. In doing the group took on the 'the role of active interpreters, who develop their own transition in order to appropriate the story and make it their own story'.<sup>114</sup> Whilst both the photographic artist and community collaborator saw the potential of photography as a socially engaged practice, this still begs the question as to whether the visual outcomes produced successfully evidenced the social engagement process that took place. To analyse this ultimate research question it is imperative to consider the third collaborator inherent in any socially engaged arts project; the audience.

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<sup>111</sup> Ged, Many Hands Craft Collective member, during evaluation interviews, June 2018

<sup>112</sup> Elaine, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, July 2018

<sup>113</sup> Helguera, P, (2011) *Education for Socially engaged Art*, p. 15

<sup>114</sup> Rancière, J (2009). *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 22

## Chapter three

### Outcomes and Audience

According to writer and curator Pablo Helguera,

‘most artists who produce socially engaged works are interested in creating a kind of collective art that impacts the public sphere in a deep and meaningful way’,<sup>115</sup>

Who, however, is the public one wants to reach through such projects? Are the outcomes curated and presented in such a way as to reach a particular audience, or do new audiences come as a result of the work produced? In order to consider these questions, this chapter will focus on the co-curation and dissemination of both collaborative photography projects as well as the audiences who viewed the final outcomes. *Ferry Folk* will warrant more discussion as arguably the most potential for collaboration in this project was through the co-curation and dissemination of the photographic work produced<sup>116</sup>. The role of co-curation in *Present and Continuous* also affected the dynamics of the collaboration and is discussed throughout in comparison.

It is important to re-introduce my own professional context as a curator and a producer. I have nine years experience of working within the arts sector; curating projects from contemporary gallery exhibitions and residences to public, large-scale socially engaged events. If one considers curation as a methodology in its own right, then arguably my expertise would support the community collaborators involved to employ varied methods of ‘making things public’.<sup>117</sup> To what extent, would my own curatorial experience support or alternatively complicate the approach to co-curation? Moreover, to what extent did the community collaborators involved in the curatorial process affect the visual outcomes and how audiences would view them?

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<sup>115</sup> Helguera, P (2011) *Education for Socially engaged Art*, p. 7

<sup>116</sup> *Ferry Folk* was an example of my current professional practice, which took place whilst the main research based project was in progress. It was not strictly seen as the core practice based research as it included public funding support, commissioning and was for public dissemination whilst this research project was still be delivered. It does however act as a valuable comparison in terms of my own photographic practice and approach to socially engaged art project, particularly in terms of the role of co-curation in projects where there are limitations to the co-production process (see appendix 1 for a full project overview).

<sup>117</sup> Lind M, (1746: 2011) *Selected Writing by Maria Lind*, Berlin: New York Sternberg Press. Lind discusses this notion of curatorial practice throughout this publication.

## Locating authorship in co-curation

As writer and academic Stevie Bezencenet states the,

‘skills which are necessary to community projects using photography are not only visual ones – the production of the image may be only part of the process, which may involve collective debate and authorship, research and writing... organisation and campaigning, and always, a consideration of the audience and how they will be able to interrelate with the work.’<sup>118</sup>

The various elements Bezencenet discusses (all of which come after the fact of the production of the image) were considered and negotiated throughout the co-curation, organisation and execution of both collaborative projects. Once again, the extent and methods employed to co-curate differed widely in each instance. The following case studies will reflect on how the co-authorship of ideas and shared agency in photographic work can be created through a process of co-curation.

### **A Case Study – the co-curation of *Ferry Folk***

*Ferry Folk* acts as an example of a project framed within socially engaged arts practice, but one where the social engagement process in the co-production of work felt restricted. Chapter two already discussed the limitations to engagement and collaboration with the communities involved in this project. Regardless of this, the residency itself resulted in a plethora of material collated including documentary photography, audioscapes, donated imagery and personal stories of those I met along the way. This material still felt very much in the hands of myself, as the single artist and author, which had not been my intention for the project. How, then, could I re-invite these individuals to join in a collaborative conversation about the development and presentation of the work?

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<sup>118</sup> Bezencenet, S (1986), *Photography and the community in photographic practices: towards a different image in Stevie Bezencenet and Phillip Corrigan*. London: Comedia Publishing, p. 143–144.

I suggest that this project found its collaborative potential through creating opportunities in its co-curation. Helguera suggests socially engaged art projects are often created in a response to create more intimate and physical encounters as we move ever more into a virtual world of interaction. Nonetheless he accepts that, 'social networks and other online platforms can be very beneficial vehicles for continuing work that has been started in person'.<sup>119</sup> For *Ferry Folk* this was an essential vehicle for continuing a dialogue with those individuals I had initially engaged with. It allowed for the community collaborators to work on their own selection and arrangement of images, making active decisions their representation and producing their own texts to accompany these. This at least allowed for the process of engagement to transcend from Helguera's directed to creative participation<sup>120</sup> model.

Presenting visual outcomes of a socially engaged project is not, however, simply a process of editing a final selection of images. One also needs to consider in what context the work engages with the audience. For *Ferry Folk* these decisions still remained with myself as the photographic artist and exhibiting partners. The decision to encase photographic works within an interactive pier head viewfinder installation was my own. (see grid figure 23). This concept was informed through a response to the Museum's waterfront surroundings and the fact that the audiences who engage with the Museum of Liverpool<sup>121</sup> on the whole expect to be able to interact with museum gallery displays. I also decided to produce a map-based artwork, which would bring all the communities stories together alongside their portraits on Open Eye Gallery's external wall (see figure 24). This idea was however informed by and in consultation with those included in the final installation, and would not of existed without – the contributions of the individuals. Nevertheless, ultimately the authorship of the final presentation and exhibition of works in remained with myself as photographic artist. Did this impact the audience's

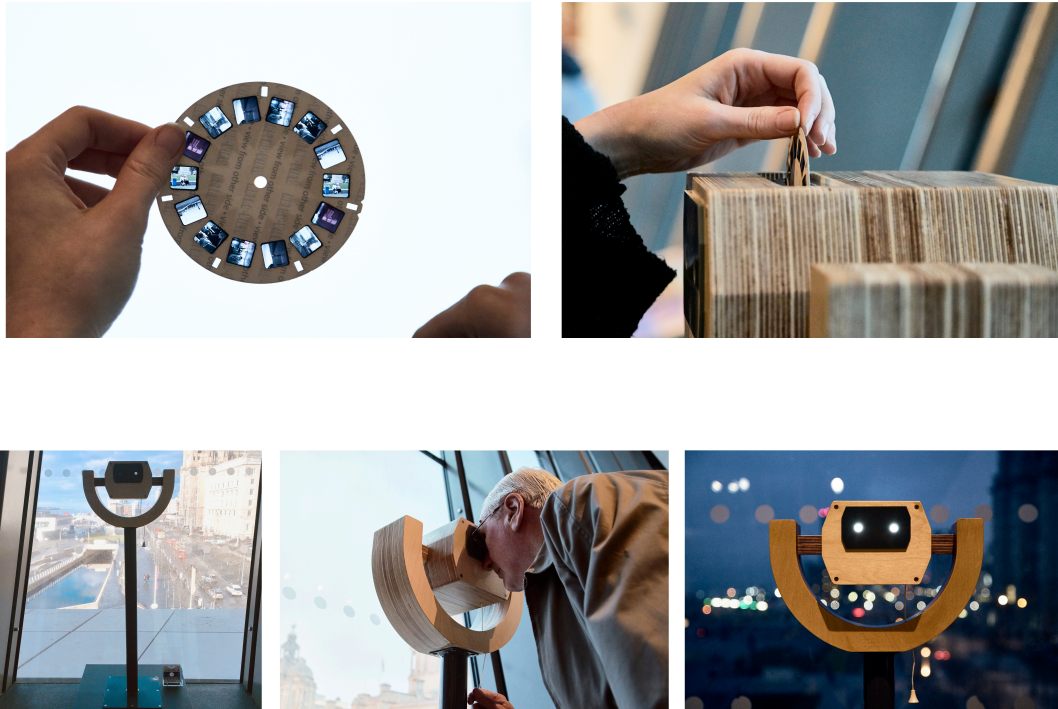
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<sup>119</sup> Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for Socially engaged Art*, p. 18

<sup>120</sup> Helguera, P. (2011), *Education for Socially Engaged Art* p.15 – the reader can refer back to Figure 1, introduction p. 6 of this thesis for a full description of each layer of participation.

<sup>121</sup> Museum of Liverpool is located on the Liverpool waterfront, adjacent to the Mersey Ferries Pier Head terminal and were approached as a suitable partner for the Ferry Folk project.  
<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/index.aspx>

reflections of the project as a process of a social engagement with photography? Would I be seen as the author of the process, whilst those who I worked with the subject matter?



**Figure 23: Grid selection of images from *Ferry Folk Pier head Viewfinder*, for Ferry Folk, at Museum of Liverpool, January 2018, commissioned by Merseytravel and supported by Arts Council England. © Elizabeth Wewiora 2018**

General audience feedback was collated for the evaluation for the project, which although not originally intended to analyse these questions, do offer some useful insight<sup>122</sup>. Comments included ‘vivid thoughtful art interventions’<sup>123</sup> and ‘great photos and personal stories’.<sup>124</sup> Those involved in working together on developing the content of the project offered more in-depth feedback. One such individual replied with,

<sup>122</sup> For transparency it is important to note that this feedback forms some of the content for a summary evaluation report, created for the purposes of the funder Arts Council England (see appendix 1 – *Ferry Folk* overview). The visitor feedback gathered therefore, is more of generalized review of the project, and so one can only analyse it from this limited perspective for the purposes of this research question.

<sup>123</sup> Public feedback collated via comment sheets within the Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, March 2018.

<sup>124</sup> Public feedback collated via comment sheets within the Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, January 2018.

‘Thank you very much for the lovely photograph of my Dad. It was his 85th birthday and the Manchester Ship Canal cruise was a complete surprise to him but he had the most fabulous day and enjoyed nothing more than being able to re-live his memories and to chat with you on the day. He has put a few words together he would like to add to his image for the project.’<sup>125</sup>



**Figure 24: *Ferry Folk*, (vinyl map work), at Open Eye Gallery, January 2018 commissioned by Merseytravel and supported by Arts Council England. © Elizabeth Wewiora. Photo credit © Robert Battersby for Open Eye Gallery opening event night.**

Photographer and writer Eliza Gregory comments on how the true agency behind photography is often the hidden elements and are in the ‘relationships, compassion, patience, and listening that go on between photographer and subject matter’.<sup>126</sup> The feedback collated suggests some of these hidden elements were actually recognised in the work produced. Their reflections, however, lack any suggestion of ‘collaborative participation’.<sup>127</sup> *Ferry Folk* therefore acts as a welcome reminder of how external factors can and will

<sup>125</sup> Written feedback taken from an email correspondence with the daughter of one of the men who took part in the *Ferry Folk* project, as quoted in the *Ferry Folk* evaluation report.

<sup>126</sup> Gregory, E. (2014) *Locating the potential of socially engaged photography* broadsheet

<sup>127</sup> Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, p.15

ultimately affect the potential for collaboration. Gregory's 'spectra of collaboration'<sup>128</sup> acts as a realistic framework to sit alongside Helguera's 'layers of participation'.<sup>129</sup> *Ferry Folk* was to some extent an example of both the potential barriers to, but also the possibilities of, creating co-authored photography within a restricted collaboration. The work with Many Hands Craft Collective, however, did not have such limitations. To what extent then did this project evidence the social engagement process inherent in the visual outcomes produced?

### **Co-curating with Many Hands Craft Collective**

The co-curation of work with Many Hands Craft Collective involved many of the earlier processes discussed throughout chapter two. These were often formed of on-going dialogue around the editing and selection process of photographs, incorporating discussion around sequencing, framing and creating a series of photographs as visual narratives. In *Ferry Folk*, only I as the photographic artist, created the majority of photographs. With the Many Hands Craft Collective, however we had co-authored and co-produced a diverse range of photographs. The processes and techniques the collaboration incorporated were also diverse. Individually, whilst each image was considered carefully in terms of why it should be produced in a particular way, collectively there was no set visual style. Similar to the group, it was formed of many individual voices and preferences. How, though, would this range of photographic content and material come together to form one concise visual narrative for exhibition?

Whilst *Ferry Folk* had a clear set of expected outputs for public exhibition, the collaboration with Many Hands Craft Collective had no pre-determined or set outcomes. The project was based on an open-ended process of photographic sessions. The decision to exhibit the works publicly was therefore a result of this process. In one respect the project was freed from having to focus on the potential of an end result. With this freedom, however, there came a lack of consistency of what was produced. To consider the possibilities of exhibiting

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<sup>128</sup> Gregory, E. (2014) Spectra of Collaboration in *Locating the potential of socially engaged photography* broadsheet

<sup>129</sup> Helguera, P. (2011), *Education for Socially Engaged Art* (2011), p.15



this photographic work, firstly there needed to be a discussion around suitable exhibition venues. There was a debate between the group and I around the relevancy of showcasing work within a cultural organisation or a community setting. Jim stated, 'I want to share what I have learnt, I want it to be professional'.<sup>130</sup> For the group a professional showcase meant exhibiting outside their own community centre and into the cultural sector. As a curator, I have my own considerations as to how and where socially engaged arts project are exhibited, and in some cases, would have previously disagreed with the opinion of the group. In an article for Engage<sup>131</sup> I co-produced an interview-based article, with Manchester artist Niki Colclough discussing this very concern. Speaking as the curator, I raised potential ethical and critical concerns around creating visual presentations of socially engaged arts projects in a gallery environment, which had no connection to the community involved.<sup>132</sup> In the article, Colclough<sup>133</sup> responded with

'It's important that social practice comes into galleries too, because they are a platform for conversation, where we could start to reach people who aren't currently keyed into these agendas. So if you make and show within a community, that's great, but then it only stays in that community'.<sup>134</sup>

Colclough's statement suggests the gallery acts as a platform for sharing, and ultimately creates a greater public exposure for the project. If the purpose of this research project is to analyse to what extent others can see the social engagement process behind the artwork produced, then as Many Hands Craft Collective suggested, it would need presenting in a public, professional context. There is a wider debate around the necessity for more socially engaged arts practices to be profiled within cultural institutions to support the validation of its practice amongst its own sector. If one is to reposition

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<sup>130</sup> Jim, Many Hands Craft Collective member, during the delivery sessions, March 2017

<sup>131</sup> Engage is an advocacy and training network for gallery education. They support arts educators, organisations and artists to work together with communities. They hold annual themed conferences and publications for the sector.

<sup>132</sup> Engage 39: *Visual Arts and Wellbeing* (London: Engage) [www.engage.org.journal.aspx?id=47](http://www.engage.org.journal.aspx?id=47)

<sup>133</sup> Niki Colclough is a Manchester, England based socially engaged arts practitioner specialising in arts and health programmes. <https://www.paradise-works.com/niki-colclough>

<sup>134</sup> Colclough, N. (2017) Engage 39: *Visual Arts and Wellbeing*, London: Engage. [www.engage.org.journal.aspx?id=47](http://www.engage.org.journal.aspx?id=47)

photography within socially engaged arts practice, then the cultural sector that supports these art forms needs to engage in the discussion of its validation.

In consultation with the group, I approached a number of cultural institutions, which would potentially host the exhibition. The Manchester Craft and Design Centre (MCDC) agreed to host the project. As the practitioner, I was particularly interested in connecting this cultural organisation with the group as a considered approach to bringing the project to a close. Wendy Ewald suggests the importance of,

‘Going in, starting something, and leaving [...] them with the tools to carry on if they want to. In many of the situations I've worked, this is the best model, because if you stay you may too strongly influence what happens within a community’.<sup>135</sup>

I could see MCDC as a suitable longer-term cultural partner, which the group could engage with beyond the project. Both MCDC and I agreed Many Hands Craft Collective would work well with the organisation as a group connecting to craft and design. Moreover as local residents based within a ten-minute walk of the craft centre, the group were part of the community they were actively trying to engage. What affect, then, with the venue partner in place, did the co-curation process have on the final visual outcomes we would share with the public?

### **Co-curating *Present and Continuous***

Three curatorial sessions took place, as well as a number of cultural gallery exhibition site visits<sup>136</sup> for reference and inspiration, in the lead up to the final selection of work and arrangement for the exhibition. Whilst nearly all of the group members were keen to attend the cultural venue visits, a smaller sub-group formed to take forward the curation of the final exhibition, *Present and Continuous*. This sub-group met with both the arts officer at MCDC and I to discuss the possibilities of the exhibition within the building's project space. This involved reflecting back on the original nine descriptive words, as well as all of the pre-selected imagery, which the group felt were the strongest

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<sup>135</sup> Ewald, W (2006), *A Conversation on Social Collaboration*, p. 74

<sup>136</sup> The cultural visits included Open Eye Gallery (Liverpool), Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (Liverpool) and Manchester Art Gallery (Manchester), all showcasing either photography or lens based media at the time.

images for presenting their 'own story'.<sup>137</sup> Examples of possible types of printing and presentation were shared as a tool to stimulate discussion such as types of paper finish, vinyl printing and scale of image all being considered.

Whilst the sub-group had actively contributed to the discussion, I was aware that my expertise and knowledge in curation took on a larger voice. My role as a photographic artist and curator seemed not only important to the considerations of the exhibition, but also to the group. One of the Many Hands Craft Collective members reflected, 'I think you took more of a lead at curating the exhibition, but we were thankful for it. I had no idea we had done so much'.<sup>138</sup> I could see the diversity of photographic work produced, whilst existing as interesting single images, did not necessarily work cohesively together in their current raw form. Curation, for me, is not only focused on the ability to form alternative narratives from single works; it is also a way of collating and organising 'the cluttered fabric of the world'.<sup>139</sup> In many respects my own photographic practice seeks to do the same: to record, archive and re-present the world around us in new or unexpected ways. Collectively we discussed how one could communicate a narrative not only through connections in subject matter, but also through visually stitching together commonality inherent in individual artworks. This could be through matching motifs of colour, light, scale or repetition.

This resulted in a number of visual decisions, which ultimately led to the final exhibition. The images relating to the word growing were presented on fabric so as to allow for movement in the image. The old family album images were presented within a handling box to create an archive of the collective's individual past (see figure 25 and 27).

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<sup>137</sup> Rancière, J (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 22

<sup>138</sup> Elaine, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, July 2018

<sup>139</sup> Roelstraete, D (2009), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/04/68582/the-way-of-the-shovel-on-the-archeological-imaginary-in-art/> - Accessed June 2017



**Figure 25: Family Archive box, part of *Present and Continuous* Exhibition, Manchester Craft and Design Centre, January 2018 © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2018**

Images that reflected the nine key words were edited into black and white to visually sit alongside the images formed of green and teal (See figure 26). A wooden structure juxtaposed against an otherwise domestic installation of artworks, referenced the group's welcoming community spirit despite the re-development and building works encroaching upon their local neighbourhood (see figure 28). A poem written by group member Charlie, that incorporated the nine words, was produced into a vinyl wall work bringing the whole installation together. These various creative elements were ideas of the individuals who made up the sub-group, brought together by myself as curator.



**Figure 26: Final design layouts for exhibition prints, part of *Present and Continuous* Exhibition, Manchester Craft and Design Centre, January 2018**

© Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2018

A hybrid of ideas came together as a single photographic installation, which portrayed a collective message. Ashford writes about the nature of such projects commenting,

‘A collaborative project is never formally one-dimensional [...] projects were always multiform. Aesthetics were reflective of an idea of inclusive politics’.<sup>140</sup>

This statement is, for me, profoundly reflective of the Many Hands Craft Collective project and the nature in which it was ultimately curated. In some instances the authorship of the artist or curator was challenged or removed completely. There were certain works<sup>141</sup>, selected and showcased which I would not of included if I had the decision alone. For the group some of these works were too important to be removed. For me, this took precedence for their inclusion overall and opens up debate about how different individuals place different merit on a visual image. Just as in any professional exhibition context, Many Hands Craft Collective supported the installation and co-hosted

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<sup>140</sup> Ashford, D. (2006) *A Conversation on Social Collaboration*, p. 72

<sup>141</sup> An example of this was in the later edition of a moving portrait video piece they had wished to include, after seeing a similar technique used in a video installation at Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, Liverpool. I felt the videos were not very tightly framed and that there was little time for post-production to retain the quality of the video. The group felt it brought the whole project together playing on the theme of *Present and Continuous* as they appear to be still within what is actually a moving image. It was included in the final exhibition and suited the installation but as an individual artist I would have omitted the piece.

the exhibition, sharing the invigilation of the space during its showcase. This offered multiple voices to discuss the project with the audiences who would view the work. The exhibition handout was also produced collectively, between group member Ged and myself. (See appendix 4).

This descriptive analysis of the process of co-creation aims to offer an overview of the ultimate decision-making that took place. Arguably the process of curation with Many Hands Craft Collective was a far more collaborative endeavor, than the co-curation offered within the *Ferry Folk* project. Yet I would suggest there was more control, from myself during this curatorial stage than the earlier stages of the project with Many Hands Craft Collective. On the contrary, I actively sought to open up dialogue in the co-curation of *Ferry Folk*, but with the visual form already set by myself as the solo photographic artist. This suggests that the collaborative dynamics of such projects will always shift depending on the responses and interests of those we are seeking to co-author work with.

### **The Third Viewpoint**

To understand the potential of photography as a form of socially engaged practice, one still needs to assess whether the photographic work produced visually reflected the durational, collaborative process that took place. In order to answer this question, one must consider the viewpoints of the multiple audiences connected to such a project. Helguera suggests in socially engaged arts practice, 'the audience is often inextricable from the work'.<sup>142</sup> Based on this statement, the following reflections represent the perceptions of the community collaborators involved, the general public who viewed the exhibition and the viewpoints of the cultural venue partner, who collectively represent the audience. Two statements collated by Many Hands Craft Collective offer potential opposing views. Elaine stated that,

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<sup>142</sup> Helguera, (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, p.21

‘you are an acorn, setting the seeds. The project has become an oak tree, with all the different people coming together. You see it so clearly in the exhibition’.<sup>143</sup>

This suggests that for Elaine the exhibition successfully evidenced the experience of a collaborative social engagement process. Charlie in contrast stated,

‘we could have shown more sides of our craft skills at the exhibition. I wanted to do some painting for example, whilst I was there to entice more people in but I was on my own that day so decided it would be better to chat to people about the photographs’.<sup>144</sup>

Charlie’s comment suggests by focusing the exhibition of work solely on the collaborative photographic experience, I was perhaps undermining the group’s potential to showcase their other forms of art and craft making to the public.

It was also curious to note the reflective descriptions of my role in the project, from Many Hands Craft Collective. The women in the group used phrases such as, ‘you were there to encourage us’<sup>145</sup>, ‘collaborator’<sup>146</sup> or ‘artistic friend’.<sup>147</sup> In contrast the men used specific titles as ‘supervisor’<sup>148</sup> and ‘advisor’<sup>149</sup> suggesting a teacher and student relationship akin to facilitation rather than active collaboration. Why would gender potentially affect the way an individual would relate to the role of the artist for what essentially was the same collaborative project? Or was this simply a coincidence? This is something for consideration, but which I feel goes beyond the focus of the specific research questions considered in this thesis.

Public feedback suggested a general understanding for the collaborative social engagement process of the work produced. Comments collated included,

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<sup>143</sup> Elaine, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, July 2018

<sup>144</sup> Charlie Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, May 2018

<sup>145</sup> Dot, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, June 2018

<sup>146</sup> Elaine, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, July 2018

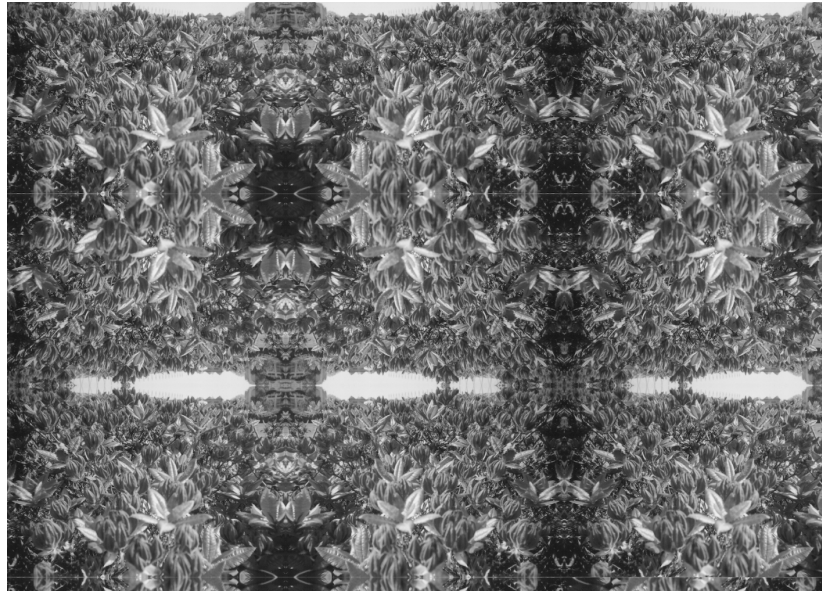
<sup>147</sup> Rose, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, July 2018

<sup>148</sup> Charlie, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, May 2018

<sup>149</sup> Ged, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, June 2018

‘a fabulous collective project where the passion for the project is clear from the participants. I really like the prints on fabric’.<sup>150</sup>

This comment, although positive of the project, suggests a distinction between artist as instigator and community as participant.



**Figure 27: Growing, digital print on cotton, final work for *Present and Continuous* exhibition, © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2018**

Another comment included, ‘great sense of quiet power, a great collective’.<sup>151</sup> This resonates with the idea that there are no participants or artists, simply a collective. Despite the differences, both comments suggest the artwork did reveal some sense of collaborative social engagement process. The cultural sector, in this case, The Director and visual arts officer at the MCDC concluded,

‘From our point of view as hosts, the exhibition was a really successful demonstration of how a community, brought together by their location and their shared interest in craft, could work together. There were obviously a variety of viewpoints, interests and backgrounds for the

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<sup>150</sup> Anonymous Comment left in the exhibition comments book, Manchester Craft and Design Centre, on 23 January 2018

<sup>151</sup> Anonymous comment left in the exhibition comments book, Manchester Craft and Design Centre, on 22 January 2018



participants, but were brought together by Liz to work on something collaborative'.<sup>152</sup>

They go on to conclude,

'There was a really strong aesthetic in the exhibition, it was great to see the photography as a medium presented in a variety of ways, e.g. the wall hanging and moving portraits. The set up of the room was really inviting to visitors, it made you feel part of the group and gave you a greater insight into their community'.<sup>153</sup>



Figure 28: Exhibition installation image, Present and Continuous Exhibition, Manchester Craft and Design Centre, January 2018

© Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2018

What do these responses offer in relation to the overall research question? The cultural partner defined the value of the visual outcomes to be the 'aesthetic' of the photographic work produced, in particular congratulating the methods employed to expand the way the medium could be presented. This suggests that a strong visual outcome can be maintained whilst also evidencing the social engagement process. For me, I would suggest a deeper

<sup>152</sup> Collective written statement by the Director and Art officer at Manchester Craft and Design Centre, 16 February 2018

<sup>153</sup> Collective written statement by the Director and Art officer at Manchester Craft and Design Centre, 16 February 2018

value in such projects ultimately lies individually with the various parties directly involved. For those who were part of the collaborative process, the 'effects of the project may outlast its ephemeral presentation'.<sup>154</sup>

The structure of each chapter in this thesis has attempted to offer equal voice for the reflections of the photographic artist, the community collaborators and indeed the audience. The conclusion will therefore look to do the same, assessing the overall impact these two collaborative photography projects and their multiple voices have had on tracing the social contract in socially engaged photographic work.

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<sup>154</sup> Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art* (2011) p. 12

## Conclusion

This research project set out to explore and re-evaluate the role photography can have within socially engaged arts practice. Both collaborative photography projects and accompanying thesis acted as springboards for analysis and reflection. It was also first necessary to consider the critical theory of photography itself, both in terms of its democratic potential versus its singular and subjective view. Susan Sontag raises the issue of representation of others in photography,

‘by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects.’<sup>155</sup>

In contrast, the views of theorists such as Ariella Azoulay point to the inherent ‘civil contract’,<sup>156</sup> which must exist between photographer and subject matter during a process of documentary image making. Sontag’s viewpoint has acted as a useful reminder to practitioners like myself, who actively want to engage with others in our photographic work: Who and why are we seeking to engage, through the photographic process, and how will they be represented as a result? Sontag’s comment reiterates a tension I once felt with the medium; one that led to a reluctance to engage in the representation of others using social documentary techniques of practice. It is for this reason the specific genres of photography were also discussed in order to understand their position within the context of socially engaged arts practice. In doing so, I was able to locate my own photographic practice and my own ethical considerations to representation, agency and collaboration.

This thesis further raised questions around what dialogue currently exists around socially engaged photography amongst the sector. For me, the research undertaken has demonstrated that there is still a lack of diversity in the in the critical writing around practitioners employing socially engaged photographic approaches. Whilst a number of photographers are referenced within the field as examples of best practice, such as Wendy Ewald and Anthony Luvera, there is still a need and desire to uncover a broader portfolio

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<sup>155</sup> Sontag, S (2011) *On Photography* p.16

<sup>156</sup> Azoulay, A. (2008) *The Civil Contract of Photography* USA: MIT Press.

of practitioners working in this way. Is the sector currently too focused on critically analysing the works of a few individual practitioners, rather than focusing on the plethora of collaborative photography projects which exist between photographers and communities across the country? If one considers the very principles of socially engaged art, which relies on a two-way dialogue, I would argue the sector should be looking more towards examples of collaborative projects rather than just individual practitioners. This would mean a move towards analyzing both the practitioner and community's voice within such projects. It is for this consideration, that this thesis has taken on a structure to echo the multiple voices at play in any given collaboration. With all the voices now present, what did those involved learn and conclude from the collaborative photography projects in question?

For myself, as the practitioner, the two collaborative photography projects acted as opportunities to test out methodologies of socially engaged photographic practice from two very different positions of what photographer and writer Eliza Gregory calls the 'spectra of collaboration'.<sup>157</sup> The project with Many Hands Craft Collective benefited from a long-term, in-depth and open-ended collaboration process. The *Ferry Folk* project, however, was restricted in time, access to potential community collaborators and somewhat pre-determined outcomes. In this sense both projects reinforced the nature of all socially engaged arts projects; that the context of the project will always affect the extent of the collaboration. In *Ferry Folk*, however, I was reminded of the potential of photography as a medium to exist as a collaborative process, beyond the initial production of an image. The photographic artist can create opportunities for co-authorship in the editorial and curation process despite potential limitations in the process of image making.

Both projects, and the research embedded around them, have also opened up more questions and considerations for my own individual practice, which will be developed beyond the life span of these projects. The process of working in a collaborative way with others has opened up a whole new

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<sup>157</sup> Gregory, E. (2014) Spectra of Collaboration in *Locating the potential of socially engaged photography* broadsheet

consideration to my practice; namely, a new understanding and curiosity in photography as a performative process. As Helguera states,

‘performance is embedded in socially engaged arts, not only because socially engaged arts is performative but because it borrows from several conceptual mechanisms and strategies that are derived from the history of performance art’.<sup>158</sup>

I have always used the camera and the photographic medium in a process led and almost performative way, but previously this exploration of the medium had been a solo act. Over the nine-month period of collaboration with Many Hands Craft Collective, there was strong sense of collective exploration and playfulness, which echoes, upon reflection the very crux of my own relationship to photography. What if the act of making photographic works collaboratively is in fact the performance itself? This question will be something for future investigation and analysis, as a result of this research project.

The community collaborators themselves have also shifted their understanding of the photographic medium through such collaborative projects. Many Hands Craft Collective member, Dot, suggested,

‘I am an artist now using photography, the project has made me realise this... I would describe photography to others now, in my own way, using my own words and language about how I feel and what I know about it now. I see it as a valuable art to get your message across, to create messages together’.<sup>159</sup>

This statement suggests a new understanding of the potential for photography to unlock a socially engaged and collaborative process from the community collaborators themselves.

This thesis laid out to offer three distinct but interlinked voices, which make up any socially engaged art project. It is necessary to also reflect upon the audience who viewed the final work. Chapter three summarised that both the general public and the cultural venue host were visually drawn to the

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<sup>158</sup> Helguera, P. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, p. 68

<sup>159</sup> Dot, Many Hands Craft Collective member, in evaluation interviews, June 2018

exhibition *Present and Continuous*. Whilst their comments suggested the collaborative process could be located in the final works produced, the work itself was also considered to offer a 'strong aesthetic'.<sup>160</sup> Bishop would argue on the contrary, that 'to grasp participatory art from images alone is almost impossible'.<sup>161</sup> Bishop is, in particular, discussing the shortfalls of photographic documentation of socially engaged arts practice, as it can never really offer the full concept or context to a project. Photographer and academic, Gemma-Rose Turnbull has written about some of the most pertinent and current debates on socially engaged photography practice in recent years. She points out that socially engaged photography, 'particularly treads the line of a dual horizon -- addressing both its immediate participants and subsequent audiences -- because the mediating third term is present in both the process and as the outcome'.<sup>162</sup>

The photographic work produced in the *Present and Continuous* exhibition was never created with the intention of documenting a socially engaged process. The photographic works produced were the socially engaged arts practice. As Turnbull suggests, the photographic medium plays a particularly unique role within socially engaged arts, when used as the creative medium of the collaboration. With this in mind, and with support from the social housing provider of Victoria Square Housing, where Many Hands Craft Collective are based, a publication is now being co-designed by the group, myself and an external collaborating designer. This publication will act as a new manifestation of the public dissemination of the project and combines photographic works produced as both the process of making and documentation as one whole. Photography's dual purpose, therefore, transcends other mediums in the ability to evidence a socially engaged process, without undermining the visual imagery produced and shared with audiences.

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<sup>160</sup> Collective written statement by the Director and Art officer at Manchester Craft and Design Centre, 16 February 2018

<sup>161</sup> Bishop, C. (2012). *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso Books, p.5

<sup>162</sup> Turnbull, G. (2015) *Surface tension: Navigating socially engaged documentary photographic practices*. NORDICOM Review: Nordic Research on Media and Communication, Vol 36.1, p. 79

I want to conclude with a final reference to Benjamin, and his concern with the multi-faceted role photography plays within society. Whilst Benjamin acknowledges the medium offers an immediate democratic tool for mass participation, he also suggests that quality potentially is replaced with quantity. Collaborative photography projects such as *Present and Continuous*, however, shift the potential meaning of quality and quantity and what both can offer. What if the quantity is in the number of voices present, and the quality is in the valuable and necessary time needed for such collaborative projects to develop? Photography in its immediacy, I would argue, makes the very most of the time given for any collaboration and will for me remain steady as a powerful tool for socially engaged arts practice. This research project has ultimately offered a new way of working with the photographic medium; a strong collaborative aesthetic, which I would urge other photographic practitioners to consider when challenging notions of authorship and agency within this medium.

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**Figure 6:** A Spectra of Collaboration diagram produced for the *Locating the potential of socially engaged photography* broadsheet, Article by Eliza Gregory, Compiled by Gemma-Rose Turnbull Vol. 1 Version 1, 2014. Available online: [www.asocialpractice.com](http://www.asocialpractice.com)

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**Figure 12 & 13,** Many Hands Craft Collective member, working with the same technique used in Figure 11 to produce imagery of Victoria Square, Figure 9 shows the results Image © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2017

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**Figure 16 and figure 17:** Images created by one of the group members in response to the phrase, *Present and Continuous*, April 2017 Images © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2018.

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**Figure 19:** Image from the Bathroom Darkroom Project, © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2017. Available online:

<https://elizabethwewiorablog.wordpress.com/2017/10/17/bathroom-darkroom-an-invitation-to-collaborate/>

**Figure 20:** e-invite for the *Bathroom Darkroom* Project exhibition, highlighting Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective as a collaboration. Image courtesy of Curator Rachel Burns, 2018. Available online:

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**Figure 24:** *Ferry Folk*, (vinyl map work), at Open Eye Gallery, January 2018 commissioned by Merseytravel and supported by Arts Council England. © Elizabeth Wewiora. Photo credit © Robert Battersby for Open Eye Gallery opening event night. Available online: <https://www.elizabeth-wewiora.com/#/ferry-folk-1/>

**Figure 25:** Family Archive box, part of *Present and Continuous* Exhibition, Manchester Craft and Design Centre, January 2018 © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2018

**Figure 26:** Final design layouts for exhibition prints, part of *Present and Continuous* Exhibition, Manchester Craft and Design Centre, January 2018 © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2018

**Figure 27:** *Growing*, digital print on cotton, final work for *Present and Continuous* exhibition, © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2018

**Figure 28:** Exhibition installation image, *Present and Continuous* Exhibition, Manchester Craft and Design Centre, January 2018 © Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, 2018

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Appendix 1 is a press release for the *Ferry Folk* project, released in December 2017 via Merseytravel and Open Eye Gallery to offer context to the full project contents and its description to the public.

Press Release: For Immediate Release

## Ferry Folk

*Exhibition reflecting the contemporary view of the Mersey Ferries Community*

**12 January - 25 March 2018**

**Cross-site exhibition at Open Eye Gallery, Museum of Liverpool and online at [photostories.org.uk](http://photostories.org.uk)**

**Preview event**

**Thursday 11 January**

**3.30pm at Museum of Liverpool**

**5pm at Open Eye Gallery**

**Mann Island Choir performances at 4.20pm and 6pm at partner venues retrospectively**

Elizabeth Wewiora, Creative Producer & Photographer at **Open Eye Gallery** has spent the past 5 months as artist in residence on the Mersey Ferries. She was invited to create a new body of artwork that captures a contemporary view of the Mersey Ferry view whilst still reflecting its rich past. The project was commissioned in partnership with Merseytravel, Museum of Liverpool, Open Eye Gallery and supported by Grants for the Arts, Arts Council England.

Working closely with the Mersey Ferries staff, commuters and daily tourists, Elizabeth created opportunities for individual's stories and memories of the ferry to be shared. Elizabeth often utilises photography and video as tools to reflect the people and places around her. This is not simply through a process of documentation, but more through exposing the often hidden conversations that take place between any photographer and the community they seek to capture. Working closely with local people and those with connections to the Ferry, subjects in-fact became collaborators, with different individuals responding to the invitation to participate in a variety of ways.

***Ferry Folk*** is the result of this collaborative photography project, and is presented across Museum of Liverpool, Open Eye Gallery and digitally via [photostories.org.uk](http://photostories.org.uk)

At the Museum of Liverpool we are presented with two distinct but interlinked works. A series of photo stories, that play throughout the day in the Museum of Liverpool's digital atrium screen. These works represent a series of in-depth and ongoing collaborations between the artist and a series of local residents who she

met with on the Ferry. The images not only capture their time on the ferry but extend out to reflect their wider life story. A selection of these images have also been created in collaboration with local Over60s group, the Digital Ambassadors - creating their own artwork in response to their first experience of the Mersey ferries and trips down memory lane to New Brighton.

A wider selection of photographs portraying the both the landscape and people who make up the ferry are showcased within an interactive Pier Head viewfinder, installed at the Museum of Liverpool's very own The People's Republic Gallery. With this work the invitation is for the public to participate by selecting and interacting with the images they wish to view.

Elizabeth met many tourists during the Summer peak of her ferry river explorer trips, some very local and others from around the globe. With a fleeting chance to meet and find out more about each visitor, follow up conversations via letters, email and social media allowed her to continue to their dialogue in more depth. A photographic series of portraits, conversations and accompanying map work are exhibited on the exterior of Open Eye Gallery's building to reflecting these dialogues.

Finally Elizabeth presents a series of *Ferry Folk* stories as you enter Open Eye Gallery: audioscapes captured from the whole variety of staff, commuters and tourists she encountered along the way, all with their own rich story to share about what brings them to the ferry. Additional photographic and video work will also be displayed online via [photostories.org.uk](http://photostories.org.uk), alongside work created by the Digital Ambassadors group and the Merseytravel staff, after a series of photography workshops led by Elizabeth as part of the wider programme.

*Ferry Folk* launches as a contemporary view to coincide with The UK premier of *The Pier Head - Tom Wood* in Liverpool, that will be on at Open Eye Gallery over that period. Between 1978-2002, Tom Wood took the Mersey Ferry almost every day. Whilst waiting for the boat or crossing the river, he took photos. Selected from 1000s of rolls of film, this show looks at people in transit.

To celebrate the opening event the Mann Island choir will be performing at Museum of Liverpool (4.20pm) and 6pm (Open Eye Gallery) with a selection of nautical songs. Open Eye Gallery will be open from 5PM for a free public launch of *The Pier Head - Tom Wood*.

Elizabeth will also be delivering a family-friendly workshop in February where the public can capture their own portraits and imagery of the Pier Head using an interactive light and shadow activity. The work created will be presenting during the final two weeks of the exhibition in March on the Museum of Liverpool's digital atrium screen. Date to be confirmed.

Thanks goes to creative partners M3 Industries and Wild Ilk Graphics for their collaboration on fabrication work and map design.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

For access to Image for PR and marketing please use the link provided here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/j9dps83w05nvmqe/AAAmXqZbXlvVtpT900MwFW9fa?dl=0>

For more information about the artist or project please feel free to visit:

[www.openeye.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.openeye.org.uk/whats-on) and

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/events/displayevent.aspx?EventId=35340>

[www.elizabeth-wewiora.com](http://www.elizabeth-wewiora.com) or contact [liz@openeye.org.uk](mailto:liz@openeye.org.uk)

Open Eye Gallery, founded in 1977, is an independent, not-for-profit photography gallery based in Liverpool. One of the UK's leading photography spaces, it is the only gallery dedicated to photography and related media in the North West of England.

Open Eye Gallery works with people to explore photography's unique ability to connect, to tell stories, to inquire, to reflect on humanity's past and present, and to celebrate its diversity and creativity.

Open Eye Gallery has consistently championed photography as an art form that is relevant to everyone. As well as presenting a programme of international, high-quality exhibitions we also house a permanent Archive containing photographs from the 1930s to the present day.

We support established and emerging artists, developing practical, critical and professional skills among photography practitioners; we also offer training and development opportunities to people within our local community.

Open Eye Gallery is supported by Arts Council England and Liverpool City Council. It is a National Portfolio Organisation.

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# OPEN EYE GALLERY





## **Appendix 2**

Appendix 2 is a critical review of recent photographic projects (2015-2017,) in relation to own work being produced whilst undertaking the Masters by Research to offer context of practice over this period.

### **Critical review of recent practice (November 2017)**

**Elizabeth Wewiora**

I have always been drawn to the qualities of analog and traditional photographic processes, how it forces you to consider a corner or crevice of a space and the light, which hits its surface. It invites you to re-frame your world through an alternative view. In recent work, '**Record, Archive, Rewind**' I created a series of photographic, moving image and installation based works in response to the recent news of the forthcoming closure and sale of Crusader Mill. This particular building was at the time home to Rogue Artist Studios, which has a 20-year history of occupying the industrial space, and was at the time my current studio base. In early 2017, however, it was confirmed as a new development site for inner city apartments, beginning work later in that year.

The work attempted to blur the boundaries between a past and present narrative that existed within the building. I wanted to play with the frictions between shifting technologies and industries that once existed within the building, connecting my own interest in tensions which exist between old and new photographic process, between the digital and analogue.

Crusader Mill has been home to industry and creativity from as far back as its textile industrial history to use as artist studios today. Despite the shifts in purpose, there remained a process of making and labour taking place behind its doors. Upon hearing that this use of the building had reached its final chapter, I wanted to donate some final labour back to the space.

Using the viewfinder a broken Mamiya 67 medium format camera through the lens of a digital smart phone camera, I was able to capture imagery of the Mill in particular way. I was able to slow down the process of image making and created a double view affect of the now and then. By using the analog view to frame and freeze the subject matter, I felt I could hold on to the building for that little bit longer. Occasionally an image will include the insertion of a textile pattern work, also designed by myself and based on an object I found on my first day in the studio.

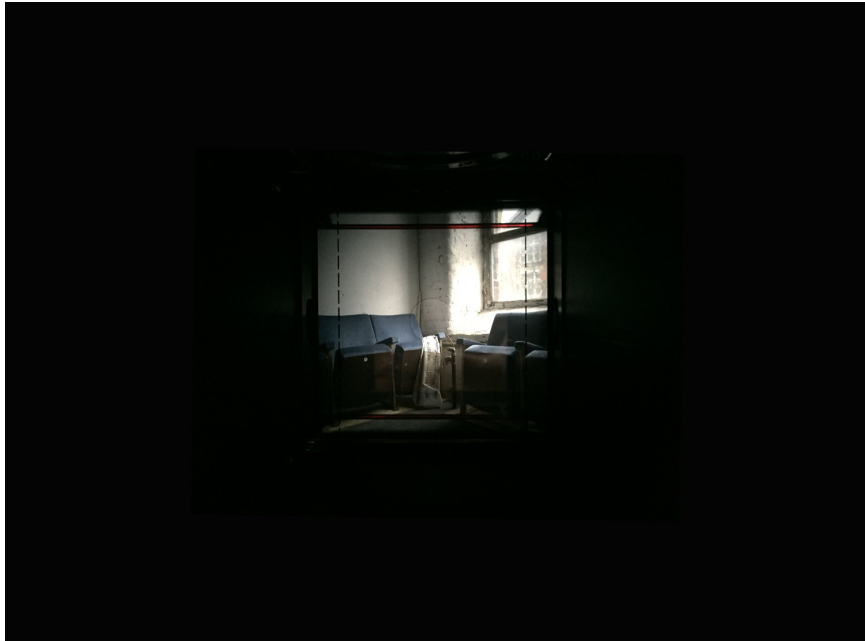


Image from *Record, Archive, Rewind*, series (2017) © Elizabeth Wewiora 2018

The still images alone however, didn't seem to fully reflect the process of play and investigation between the subject matter, the camera and myself as the photographer. The work needed to develop further, in the form of moving image echoing my fond emotions to the sounds of analog technology. A slideshow of images are played on an old box monitor screen, each image snapping to the next with the sound of an overhead projector slide, clicking to its next image. The audience it is not a slide projection, but its familiarity holds the belief – even for a short while.

Upon reflection, my work here is trying to capture an image, which captures the camera as the physical gesture of a process, to reveal the object, which in fact always sits as the in-between.

Referencing the archival past and history of documentation, overhead projector slides make an appearance within another recent body of work, entitled '***With Co-op with love***'. This body of work is created from salvaged slides of 1960s failed testing products from the basement of one of Manchester's old Co-op buildings, Federation House.

As part of the Castlefield Gallery's New Art Spaces initiative the building was able to host a vast number of artist studios and project/ gallery spaces, bringing the once vacant space back to life. Unfortunately last year the space was sold on, and now it remains empty waiting, one again, to be re-animated by the next potential sector. The work acts as homage to production past and present. A representation of chains of activity now forgotten for this building, from the photographer who was responsible for collating and documented a series of failed products who would never make it to market, to myself as an photographer re-appropriating this imagery as a celebration of past.

The slides were taken from the basement upon hearing of our vacation, and again it was from a sense of urgency which drove me to save something of its past. In a similar vein to the work created at Rogue studios, this work captures our relationship to space, and our labour within it, and is often created at the point of risk or potential loss.



Image *From Co-Op with Love series*, © Elizabeth Wewiora 2018

The techniques and themes present in both works attempt to blur the boundaries between a past and present narrative, and plays with the frictions between shifting technologies and industries that once existed within the building, albeit not an immediate priority for the group, but still a sense of recognition and discussion to the fact. As a photographer interested in the tensions between digital and analog, there is an interesting analogy here, between labor and production – past and new, and again this question of photography's role as the 'in-between'; the 'mediator'.

Despite my previous years of work in art facilitation and curation of socially engaged arts practice, this recent work seems quite removed from human interaction, apart from my own with the camera and the place. Working collaboratively with communities and within social contexts, I have often found myself as the role of mediator or facilitator, offering photography as a point of skill sharing and exchange. Despite a sense of confidence and experience in this collaborative arena, I have neglected to expose my true approach and interpretation to photography as a medium, and how I choose to work with the camera to reveal the world around me to others.

If my work is presenting itself as an opportunity for creating a statement for communities often lost, then it feels timely to shift this way of working into the very community arena I have years of experience working with.



### Appendix 3

Appendix 3 is a critical reflection of the *Allotment Diaries* project, (2012) which was as an example of where a photography project became a socially engaged artist residency and marked a shift in my practice.

**Allotment Diaries and Environmental Hubs' (2011-12)** acted as a pivotal turning point in my artistic practice. As a result of an education and outreach internship at CCA (Centre for Contemporary Arts) in Glasgow, which focused on environmental topics, I was invited by the UK Allotment society to document allotment sites across the country. I quickly became frustrated with the lack of critical engagement and depth I felt I could gain from these documentary photographic visits.

As a result I applied to Grants for the Arts, Arts Council England, to support a three month residency specifically within one allotment site to engage and collaborate with the residents who made up this specific community. Whilst photography was used as a means of documentation, the project became much more about the process of dialogue and exchange with the residents involved. As a visual artist I found myself creating a series of event based activities, text based artworks, which would remain on the site as a legacy of the project, a series of video interviews and invited other artists to further collaborate and create interventions within the space. Whilst I had moved into a socially engaged approach to practice, I had abandoned photography as medium for this type of project. I had become disillusioned by the role of photography within a socially engaged practice, and for many years found more confidence in keeping the two separate, and focusing on socially engaged arts practice as a curatorial endeavour. A full overview of the project can be found here: <https://www.elizabeth-wewiora.com/#/allotmentdiaries/>



Images left to right: Film Still from Allotment Diaries interviews, Residency Shed and Text panel work installed on site, 2012, © Elizabeth Wewiora 2018

## **Appendix 4**

Appendix 4 is the exhibition interpretation handout offered alongside the Present and Continuous exhibition at Manchester Craft and Design Centre (January 2018), written collaboratively with one of the Many Hands Craft Collective members, Ged.

## ***Present and Continuous***

### ***Exploring photography as a collaborative endeavor***

#### **About the project**

***Present and Continuous*** is the result of a 9-month collaborative project between photographic artist and producer Elizabeth Wewiora and Many Hands Craft Collective, an Over60s group based within Ancoats. The group itself regularly meet within Victoria Square, a Northwards Housing building, one of the oldest social housing buildings in Europe.

The project seeks to explore the role of photography as a tool for social engagement. It further looks to analyse how this medium, arguably one of the most accessible forms of communication today, can be used as a way to co-author work between photographer and community. In essence work, which collaboratively expresses what really matters to those involved, both now and in the future.

*Present and Continuous* is an exhibition which brings together the work of all involved, with a collaborative approach to the conceptual ideas, production of work, editing and final curation of its public showcase. The group decided to focus on what brings them together as a collective and why this collective, through a shared passion for craft and creativity, now consider themselves a community.

Ideas were developed through time spent discussing existing visual metaphors, exploring photography as archive, representation through portraiture and the relationship between photography and the printed image. Many images focus on the positivity of craft and social gathering as a means to wellbeing and a sense of togetherness. The group are keen through their visual message to break down stigma that being old means being isolated. A teal green colour palette is regularly utilised within an otherwise black and white body of work. Whilst the monochrome prints reference the collective's relationship to past and present, the use of teal and green acts as a fond reference to the Many Hands Craft Collective logo – a symbol of which they feel all brings them together.

Based predominantly within the community centre at Victoria Square, although some members come from as far as Oldham to attend each week, the building itself and its surrounding area became another focal point.

Whilst Victoria Square remains a towering example of Ancoats's industrial past, the area around the building is constantly shifting and developing under the inevitability of urban regeneration. A selection of the work produced references the collective's reflections on how the current urban landscape is being shifted. The images seek to visualize their feelings towards a pace in change out-with their control.

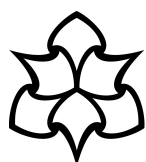
*"Victoria Square built in 1894 (and a listed building) lends itself well to providing photographic opportunities, with it's lovely large garden as the centre piece of the square, it's own architecture and current major regeneration being carried out in the surrounding areas. This provides very much an "old, new and future" aspect, used to great advantage in the group when out capturing images with Liz's support and guidance."* Ged – Many Hands Craft Collective member

The work is all brought together with a poem produced by Many Hands Craft Collective member, Charlie. The poem utilizes the collective words or phrases the group decided to identify with throughout the duration of the project.

Elizabeth Wewiora has a long standing relationship with the local craft group, through various curatorial projects but **Present and Continuous** marks the first time she would work with the group as a socially engaged photographer. It also marked the first time the craft group would work with photography and lens based media as a medium for creative expression. In this sense the pair (artist and community) took on photography together as a new collaborative endeavor.

*Present and Continuous* is part of a practice based Masters by Research project at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, by Elizabeth Wewiora and local communities across the North West.

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## Appendix 5

Below contains my curator / creative producer and Arts Education CV as reference to my wider experience in the professional arts sector.

### ART CURRICULUM VITAE - ELIZABETH WEWIORA

#### OVERVIEW

I am a photographic artist and Curator based between North West England and Glasgow.

I am currently the Creative Producer at Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, Managing the regional strategic touring programme, *Culture Shifts* and forthcoming Heritage Lottery Funded young people's programme, *Our North*. I am also one half of curatorial and producer agency, Wewiora and Booth (formally wewioraprojects).

I am a Board member for Redeye Photography Network, Manchester, supporting programming, fundraising and collaborative practices in the field.

I am also a visiting lecturer/ speaker at Manchester School of Art for BA Photography & Media students, University of Central Lancashire and am a contributor to the international photography as social practice platform, [asocialpractice.com](http://asocialpractice.com).

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#### EDUCATION TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

College/ University	Qualification and Grade
Glasgow School of Art	BA (Hons) Degree in Fine Art Photography and Film, Awarded 2,1 with Distinction in Historical and Critical Studies. (June 2008)

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#### PREVIOUS EMPLOYEMENT AND WORK EXPERIENCE HISTORY

Employer	Job Title, Date of Employment & List of responsibilities
FACT (Found ation for Art and Creativ e Techno logy) Liverpool	<b>Communities Curator-Producer (part-time) 22/04/2015 – September 2016</b> As part of the Collaboration team my role was to programme, deliver and develop collaborative projects between artists and community. Working from strategy level to hands on facilitation, I managed a new Heritage Lottery Funded project, 'Tagging Communities', the digital Over 60s programme, and developed and delivered FACTs existing Veterans programme with a pilot Veterans in Prison programme with artists Larry Achiampong and David Blandy. I am also initiated and developed a new



ol specific new Care based digital artist residency commission with key Care and health partners across Merseyside which since leaving has now began its delivery phase.

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**March 2015 – March 2017**

Regional #PayingArtists Campaign Advocate for Glasgow, A-N, including reporting and advocacy work.

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**Learning and Engagement Coordinator (part time) 27/03/14 – 21/04/2015**

Devising and delivering the learning and engagement programme for GSS, as the first of its kind for the organisation. Leading on a major programme ‘**Creative Cargo**’ which utilises the Forth and Clyde Canal and a mobile floating workshop barge as an alternative space for exploration, engagement, activity and showcasing of community collaborative work. ([www.creativecargo.org](http://www.creativecargo.org))

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**2013 – Current:** Wewiora and Booth (formally wewioraprojects) is a curatorial collaboration and producing agency. We work across disciplines, connect artists at different career stages and from ranging backgrounds, often working in partnership and with alternative contexts ranging from health, housing and media partners, to clubs, museums, libraries, heritage and pop up spaces, as well as outdoors.

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I have produced and delivered programmes including Northern Art Carbooty, Carbootymcr, Blackpool Art Carbooty including Leftcoast supported ‘Pier to Pier’ live art commission, Hankering for Classification group exhibition at TOAST (Federations House, Castlefield Gallery New Art Spaces) and National touring programme Tall Tales.

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Commissions and developed projects have included working with artists such as Beth Collar, Ruth Barker, Poppy Whatmore, TOAST, Emily Speed, Richard Shields, Makers Dozen, Richard Shields, Harry Clayton Right, David Gee, on69a, Nicola Smith and Lucy Harvey.

For more information visit [www.wewioraprojects.com](http://www.wewioraprojects.com)

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y Art**

**Programme and Engagement Coordinator 04/2010 – 04/2014**

Leading on the residency programme, first step graduate showcase, project space programme and all engagement programmes including a 3 year START Schools programme with Prince’s Foundation for Children and the Arts and two major Asia Triennial Manchester engagement projects as well as developing and establishing an Arts and Health programme in partnership

Manchester

with MRI which still runs today.

Curator of the socially engaged stand of programme and Taiwanese programme across all departments. Curator for main gallery exhibitions for 2013 – January 2014 including national touring programme for Wu Chi-Tsung and group exhibition 'Tipping Point' with Cindie Cheung, Andrew Lim and Jamie Lau.

**Centre  
For  
Contemporary  
Arts  
(CCA)**  
Glasgow

**Education and Out Reach Programmer & Coordinator. 01/09 – 09/10**

This was the first education and out reach project of its type for the CCA, and so alongside the Director, I conceived and established the programme, allowing me to continue advisory roles with the input into both the design and establishment of future intern programmes which are now running. I was also hired as a workshop facilitator to specifically work on the creation of a sensory garden with a Primary School in the Drumchapel area as well as becoming an exhibiting artist as a result of the programme.

**ASSOCIATED TRAINING**

**Arts Award Advisor** Arts Award training for Bronze and Silver Arts Awards with young people & schools

Working with young people and well being  
**42<sup>nd</sup> Street, Manchester**

Recent training session with 42<sup>nd</sup> Street on working with young people and well-being. Refresher training course, specifically looking into attachment. (September 2013)

Liverpool Health Consortium

Connect 5, Mental Health Training, level 1 and 2 (2015)

**Safeguarding training**

Safeguarding in the Arts, TIPP, 2012 & 2013

## Appendix 6

**Appendix 6 is a critical piece of writing included in the Bathroom Darkroom Project, which became part of the overall collaborative photography project with Many Hands Craft Collective as part of this research project.**

### A Domestic Exchange

What does it mean to be invited into someone else's domain, not as a social guest but as a curious investigator and maker? Two local photographers in Manchester, Rachel Burns and Lydia Marley have opened up a dialogue to explore the idea further, by turning their home into a residency space and their bathroom into a darkroom.

Both photographers live in shared accommodation in South Manchester, in a typical large house usually occupied by students or recent young graduates. Interested in the current economic climate where large shared rented living is seen as a necessity rather than a choice, Rachel and Lydia invited a host of local photographers in to their domestic space to respond to the dynamics and styles of shared living.

Many Hands Craft Collective, an Over60s crafts group based at Victoria Square Housing in Ancoats, are my current and on-going photography collaborators. Together we are questioning the role of photography as a collaborative tool and how we work together to expose the process behind our collective work. The group themselves are formed mostly of Victoria Square residents, a 200 year old social housing building made up of as many flats as it's grand age. This Victorian building represents a very different demographic of the Manchester community, but similarly live within this notion of the shared rent based property market.

It seemed a perfect opportunity to merge the two domestic spaces and indeed residents – and so the residency took place with a number of the Many Hands Crafts Collective group creating imagery, through film photography and pinhole camera's, in response to their new surroundings.

Day 1 saw the group co-create the work within the house, bringing some of their own domestic props or responding instinctively to objects already within the space. We also tried out a number of pinhole cameras so that the group could see the darkroom process in action on the same day. Then Day 2 was spent printing the images captured the day before – a day working in silo due to the scale of the pop up darkroom.

The images created so far reflect a sense of the nostalgic we can't seem to escape from when exploring the domestic, but also with Many Hands Craft Collective, a particular sense of humor and playful curiosity that undoubtedly shines through as their very conscious "style" of self representation. The wider group were then invited to work through all the contact sheets created, working through a collective editing process for final images and prints for final exhibition and showcasing.

Elizabeth Wewiora  
May 2017

## Appendix 7

Appendix 7 is a separate collection of handling and sample items, contained within a handling box. These items represent artworks produced as result of the two collaborative photography projects. The items are intended to offer a sense, to the viewer, of the tangible nature of the works produced and the way the photographic medium was handled in each instance.

The handling box contains:

- A sample of the *growing*, fabric artwork produced as a result of the Many Hands Craft Collective collaborative project, presented as part of *Present and Continuous*, at Manchester Craft and Design Centre, 2018
- A sample of the family archive images re-printed as a result of the Many Hands Craft Collective collaborative project, presented as part of *Present and Continuous*, at Manchester Craft and Design Centre, January 2018
- An example of the teal and black and white edited imagery, as a result of the Many Hands Craft Collective collaborative project, presented as part of *Present and Continuous*, at Manchester Craft and Design Centre, January 2018
- An example of the viewfinder photographic slides produced as a result of the Ferry Folk project, presented at Museum of Liverpool, January – March 2018