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Reconsidering History Painting

D C GLEDHILL

PhD 2019

Reconsidering History Painting

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Abstract

This thesis accompanies a body of practical work as the submission for a practice-based investigation of history painting. It proposes that a contemporary form of history painting can be developed by drawing upon micro-historical source material including photographs, documents and letters. It addresses research questions related to the nature of such a practice and its relevance to the present day, and represents a contribution to knowledge by setting out a range of models for a form of contemporary painting capable of reflexively engaging with historical subjects and themes.

The thesis sets out the art historical precedents and theoretical contexts of the practical work, and documents the methodologies and evolution of the three major projects. The theoretical research, drawn from art history (Bann, 1984; Green and Seddon 2000), historiography (White, 1973; 1978; 1987), photography (Green and Lowry, 2003; Berger, 2013), archaeology (Schofield, 2005; 2006), and geography (Relph, 1976; Soja, 1989), contributed consistently and critically to the development of the work, and as a result, each chapter contains an embedded literature review. The Appendix contains supplementary written material, together with visual documentation of all the practical work and the exhibitions in which it has featured.

During the course of study, the aims of the research shifted considerably. What began as an attempt to devise a form of photo-derived painting capable of contributing to public discourse about current political conflicts, became problematic as a result of issues relating to the provenance and nature of the source material. These difficulties led to an exploration of the potential for a form of history painting based on the acquisition of accredited second-hand amateur snapshots, seen as both iconic records and traces of social activity. This, in turn, opened up a greater range of historical source material and subject matter for treatment, and led to a diversification of media to include film,

printmaking, and assemblage. The research aims were reframed in terms of the production of series of works intended to embody the past as a spatial, temporal, and social phenomenon that both promotes and resists interpretation. The need to integrate a sense of contemporary relevance into the practice and to acknowledge my own agency in the research, resulted in an expanded conception of history painting, in which paintings feature as key elements amongst works in a range of media, all of which are of equal significance for the conception of each project.

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Note on titles

Wherever possible, the titles of my own individual works are derived from inscriptions on the reverse of the source photographs. In the absence of an inscription, the paintings are given a generic title based on the location, subject or timeframe of their exposure, or else left 'untitled'.

All titles of works are italicised, whilst those of projects (understood as series, or bodies of work) are in roman typeface without inverted commas. Titles of exhibitions are in roman typeface with inverted commas.

Whilst unfamiliar foreign terms have been italicised, foreign place names are in roman typeface due to the large number referred to in this thesis.

Films

The films *Abordnung*, *Soviet,* and *Fürstner,* are contained on a DVD enclosed with this thesis. *Abordnung* is discussed in Chapter Two as part of Poland 1940-1941. *Soviet* and *Fürstner* are discussed in Chapter Three as part of The Berlin Olympic Village Project.

Film A. David Gledhill (2015) *Abordnung.* Video, 21m 51s.
Film B. David Gledhill (2016) *Soviet.* Video, 11m 42s.
Film C. David Gledhill (2016) *Fürstner.* Video, 4m 42s.

Introduction

1. Overview of the research

This research project consists of three main bodies of practical work and a number of individual paintings, together with a critical analysis. The aim of the project is to develop a contemporary form of history painting. In this context, history painting is conceived as the representation of past events, locations and individuals, by contrast with current forms of practice that take as their primary focus the history of painting, the genre of history painting, or the nature of visual representation. The work is intended to engage with extra-aesthetic content, where the term aesthetic is taken as referring to the implicit formal properties of works of art, as distinct from non-artistic spatial, temporal and social phenomena. The practice is dependent upon research into the social, historical, political and geographical contexts of its source material, and is conceived as a content-led form of representation.

The practical projects described in the thesis are series of works largely based on second-hand photographs and documents acquired from flea markets and online sources. At the start of the research, the working methodology involved the location and acquisition of these sources, and the selection of material for transcription into paintings. During the period of study this methodology developed to include the production of paintings from my own photographic material, and the diversification of media to include printmaking, film and assemblage. Work in these additional media initially supported and contextualised the paintings, however, as the practice proceeded, what had seemed to be supplementary works became integral to the conception of each subsequent project: an approach that eventually led to the inclusion of both paintings and source material as elements in mixed-media presentations.

The aim to develop a contemporary form of history painting gave rise to a number of research questions that were addressed in the practical work undertaken between 2013 and 2019. These questions revolve around the form

such a practice might take, and its relevance to the present day, and are as follows:

- How can amateur snapshots, documents and letters form the basis of an historiographical painting practice?
- How can a form of contemporary history painting be developed that is adequate to the representation of the past as a spatial, temporal and social phenomenon?
- How can a research-driven form of history painting that is relevant to current political circumstances be developed?

These questions constitute the core problematic that is investigated in this practice-based research project. Further research questions emerging from each project are addressed in the individual chapters.

My work is rooted in the European humanist tradition of group figure painting as outlined in key texts discussed in Section 4 of this Introduction, rather than in the genre of classical history painting developed and formalised during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the depiction of episodes from the Bible, and Greek or Roman mythology. It does, however, relate to those instances of history painting in which artists such as Jacques-Louis David and Francisco Goya addressed subject matter contemporary with their own experience. The further precedent set by Edouard Manet's (1867-69) extensive use of postcards, photographs and newspaper reports as reference material for the paintings and print entitled *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* provides a more specific context for my practice, which emerges from the contemporary use of photographic sources to produce paintings about politically or historically significant events. However, my use of photographs is predicated upon the conception of photography as both an iconic record and a social activity. The provenance of the photographs, research into the historical and geographical circumstances of their production, and their attribution to, and depiction of particular individuals, are central aspects of the work. In that respect, the

paintings can be described as reframing the social production and iconic content of the photographs.

The practice constitutes a contribution to knowledge in its development of a number of new approaches to a research-driven and content-led form of contemporary history painting. By contrast with the photo-derived paintings of Gerhard Richter, Luc Tuymans, Wilhelm Sasnal and John Keane discussed in Chapter One, this involves the faithful transcription of the entire iconic content of the source photograph without omissions or additions, and excludes any cropping, collage, montage or blurring techniques. In order to distinguish it from these forms of painting, it can be described as photo-informed, in that the iconic information in the source photograph is preserved and augmented, whereas in the work of Richter, Tuymans, Sasnal, and Keane, who use photographs partly as a point of departure for an investigation of representation, the source photograph is subject to a process of abstraction. The practice is also distinct from photorealism, in that the precise replication of the source photograph is not the objective (see Chapter Two, Sections 2.5 and 2.6).

This augmentation consists in the enhancement of the tonal range and apparent tactility of the forms in the source photograph, together with the increased scale and materiality of the corresponding painting. The subtractive method of painting employed in the practice and described in Chapter Two, sets up a homologous relationship between the painting and the photograph, in that the primed canvas is instrumental in the tonal range of the paintings in the same way that the photographic paper enables contrasts of light and shade in a printed snapshot. This approach, for which no precedents have come to light during the course of the research, is a contribution to the range of oil painting techniques that can be applied to working with photographs.

The development of an historiographical method capable of reflecting both upon its own conditions of possibility and agency in the production of history, led from the use of a single photographic source in the form of a photograph album with limited provenance in the project entitled Poland 1940-1941 (2014-15), to multiple sources and an expanded range of media in The Berlin Olympic Village Project (2015-17). These changes provided a broader range of historical perspectives and a greater temporal span within which the subject matter could be elaborated. In turn, this led to the direct incorporation of the source material into mixed-media assemblages in the project entitled *Karel*/Karl (2017-19). These contrasting approaches demonstrate a range of models for the production of series of works addressing historical subjects and themes, and represent the main contribution to knowledge made by the research project.

The first paintings produced at the start of the research were intended as interventions in current public discourse relating to political conflict. The Martyr and Vietnam series were made between 2013 and 2014, and were abandoned as a result of the absence of provenance relating to the source material, which made research into the circumstances of its production impossible. Following a reassessment of the aims of the research, the series of paintings entitled Poland 1940-1941 was produced between 2014 and 2015. These paintings were based on photographs in an album presumed to have been compiled by a German administrator seconded to Poland during the Second World War. The paintings were accompanied by a film describing the inception of the project and depicting the locations in the photographs as they appeared in 2015 during a research trip to Poland.

A research trip to Berlin in 2015 launched The Berlin Olympic Village Project, which was concluded in 2017. In addition to paintings, this project included prints, films, and an assemblage relating to aspects of the 1936 Olympic Village, and the changing uses of the site since its construction. Selections from the series were shown alongside works by the three other artists involved in the

project in two major exhibitions in Berlin during 2016, and one in Bolton in 2017 (see Chapter Three).

Production of *Karel*/Karl began in 2017 and concluded in 2019. This series is based on a box of photographs and personal documents discovered in a flea market in Frankfurt, and includes both individual paintings and assemblages that incorporate paintings, furniture, printed ephemera, laser prints and all the material contained in the box. These latter works represent a departure from previous models of the practice in which painting is conceived as the dominant element. However, the paintings included in the assemblages entitled *Karl Hofmann* (2019) and *Elfi Hofmann* (2019) are still key to their meaning, and justify the continuing use of history painting as a classification, albeit in an expanded form (Figure 53 and Appendix E, Figures F9-15).

Theoretical research consistently and critically informed and extended the practice, and the conceptual terms used in the thesis are drawn from art history (Bann, 1984; Owens, 1992; Green and Seddon, 2000), historiography (White, 1973; 1978; 1987; 1992), photographic theory (Green and Lowry, 2003; Berger, 2013), archaeology (Schofield 2005; 2006) and geography (Relph, 1976; Soja, 1989). As part of this introductory chapter, it is necessary to specify the key conceptual terminologies for each stage of the project, and the particular sense in which these terms are understood is set out below.

As indicated above, throughout the thesis, photographs are construed as traces of social activity rather than as 'objective' visual records (Green and Lowry, 2003). Whilst photographs are not seen as documenting any essential or verifiable truth, they are read as visual evidence of past realities, in the sense that the people, places, and things depicted in them are assumed to have been present in front of the camera at the time the decision to take the photograph was taken. The social conception of photography employed throughout the research is based upon this temporally, spatially and socially situated decision-making, and the iconic content of the resulting photographs.

At the point where the aims of the research were reassessed, the practice was reconceived as a contemporary form of history painting. The application of the term 'contemporary' initially related to the span of my own experience, or the past 50 years. After the abandonment of the Martyr and Vietnam series in 2014, this timeframe was construed as that represented by collective living memory, or the past 100 years (Friedlander, 1993:viii).

Concepts taken from Hayden White's (1973; 1978; 1987) work were particularly formative during the production of Poland 1940-1941, as discussed in Chapter Two. The nature of the source material for this project necessitated an enquiry into historical narrative, and White's critique of the narrativisation of past events as an implicitly aesthetic and ideological process encouraged an investigation of the album as a visual narrative independent of the intentions of the compiler, and a subsequent distancing from their decision-making. White's analysis of the chronicle and annal forms as unresolved or non-narrative historical records that defer interpretation onto the reader, was instrumental in the conception and display of the paintings, in which the narrative order suggested by the album was dispensed with, and the photographs were treated as individual fragments, none of which inaugurated or concluded the sequence.

The Berlin Olympic Village Project as described in Chapter Three, was informed by a reading of postmodern geography in which place has been seen as a condensation of location, human activity and the social production of meaning through time (Relph, 1976:46). This theoretical research led to the use of a wider range of visual material, including my own photographic and video documentation of the site, in order to evoke the changing meaning of the Berlin Olympic Village through its various incarnations as athlete's accommodation, military installation, and tourist attraction.

Finally, in Chapter Four, Craig Owens' (1992) essays on allegory in visual art illuminated the means by which the representation of historical sites, events and individuals in painting can take on a contemporary relevance. For Owens,

allegory occurs whenever 'one text is doubled by another' (1992:53), and he indicates that practices based on photography, that acknowledge the transience and visual fragmentation implicit to that medium, lend themselves to the vertical associations that connect events in the past with the present (1992:57). Owens was indebted to Walter Benjamin (1999), whose 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940) reclaims the past for the present through a process of recognition, whereby past events resonate with current political circumstances. Owens' writing, together with John Berger's notion of a 'radial system' (2013:60), by which photographs can be reintegrated into social memory, prompted the incorporation of the source photographs and documents into the assemblage entitled *Karl Hofmann* (2019) discussed in Chapter Four.

In this introductory chapter, I examine the broad cultural context within which, I argue, it has become possible to envisage a research-driven and content-led form of history painting. I go on to discuss two paintings that are part of the practice-based research for this thesis. The practice is predicated upon the continuing acquisition of second-hand photographic material, and as such the process of locating this material is integral to the meaning of all the work. As a prelude to the fuller discussion of painting and photography in Chapters Two and Three, I consider aspects of these two paintings in the light of the activity of collecting. I also identify the art historical precedents and formal characteristics that underpin the practical work, and consider its ethical implications. I conclude by outlining the structure of the thesis.

2. Why now? Painting history today

Figure 1. Dexter Dalwood (2005) *The Poll Tax Riots.* Oil on canvas, 250 x 340 cm, private collection. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

This project tests the thesis that the use of amateur snapshots and related documentary material to produce series of paintings and works in other media, can convey a sense of the past as a social, spatial and temporal phenomenon. Such a practice is founded upon the treatment of photographs as traces of the social activity of their subjects, and explores the possibility that a contemporary form of history painting can offer insights into, and promote the comprehension of past events in terms of their relevance to the present day.

Global economic and cultural shifts during the past decade have reanimated the possibility of devising a form of painting that can address historical subject matter at the same time as it acknowledges its status as representation. It is necessary to examine arguments in the published literature that consider wider

cultural, economic and philosophical perspectives on history as a discipline (Green and Seddon, 2000) since a working awareness of the conditions of possibility for an artistic practice can provide alternatives for its further development. These arguments are also invaluable for situating the practice in the field of contemporary painting, and in providing a point of departure for alternative forms and methodologies such as my own, that invest painting with extra-aesthetic content in the sense discussed above.

In an interview conducted for the catalogue of the Tate Britain exhibition 'Fighting History' (2015), Dexter Dalwood confirms that he makes paintings that engage with history, but conceives his practice as being principally concerned with the history of painting itself. Dalwood (2015:53) claims that this preoccupation should be acknowledged in any form of contemporary history painting, and his work *The Poll Tax Riots* (2005) achieves this blend of references to both public life and art history through the layering and juxtaposition of passages in both realist and abstract idioms (Figure 1). History painting is understood here, first and foremost, as a genre of Western art, or in Dalwood's terms, as a 'vast bank of images that can be recycled by artists' (2015:53), rather than as a means of understanding or interpreting the past. Dalwood claims that film and photography have made historical accuracy in painting redundant, and that artists are therefore free to 'recreate and reconstruct in any way they like' (2015:44). He concludes by lamenting the impossibility of offering any faithful account of history, whether one is witnessing or representing it, because of the inevitable subjectivity of individual perspectives on past events.

This sense of historical representation as contingent, constructed and subjective is explored with reference to narrative in the work of the historiographer Hayden White, for whom 'there are no grounds to be found in the historical record for preferring one way of construing its meaning over another' (1987:75). In *Metahistory*, White (1973) claims that since the nineteenth century, the prevailing mode of historical consciousness has been one of ironic

detachment from the means of representation, but adds with a note of optimism, that a number of other postures are available, and that the 'reconstitution of history as a form of intellectual activity which is at once poetic, scientific and philosophical in its concerns' (1973:xii) may still be feasible. This observation is significant in that it opens a path beyond the relativism that has been attributed to White and other postmodern historiographers (Evans, 1997:238). I will return to White's work throughout this thesis for the parallels it draws between historical narrative and art, and for its analysis of modes of historical representation that can be adapted for an artistic practice.

The significance of White's writing for modern and contemporary painting is explored in David Green and Peter Seddon's (2000) edited collection of essays entitled *History Painting Reassessed*. This text is the primary source for this practice-based research project, and is referred to throughout. It constitutes the armature upon which the research has been conceived, developed and tested, and provides the immediate critical context and point of departure for the practice across the three major projects. In their Introduction, Green and Seddon provide an overview of societal, political and cultural shifts in thinking about history that have prompted renewed discussion about history painting. Despite significant changes in the global economic and political landscape since publication in 2000, particularly as a result of the long-term effects of the 2008 recession, it is necessary to recap their findings in order to arrive at a sense of some of the problems and challenges implicit in the attempt to develop a contemporary form of history painting.

Green and Seddon examine changes in the concept of history writing brought about by post-structuralism, whereby the past is seen as distant and only retrievable through its representations. This position contrasts with nineteenth-century conceptions of the continuity of the past with the present. Citing White, the authors assert that narrative history is equivalent to fiction in terms of its emplotment and modes of argumentation. However, they point out that a

distinction can be drawn between this aestheticisation of history through narrative form, and the direct personal experience of past events on empirical grounds. Whether or not this distinction is sustainable, it does at least suggest that the authors consider some aspects of first-hand experience to be irreducible to representation. This partial exception became significant for my own practice during the preliminary site visit to the Athlete's Village constructed for the Berlin Olympic Games, (see Chapter Three).

Whilst a distinction is drawn between historical representation and empirical first-hand experience in this way, Green and Seddon put the latter category to one side without returning to it in their text. They go on to observe that once the status of historical narrative is questioned, it also becomes contestable and relativised, and that totalising histories have given way to competing accounts of the past. They point out that even this position was subsequently eclipsed in writings by Jean Baudrillard (1984) and Francis Fukuyama (1992) that announced the end of history itself, and what was seen as the triumph of 'liberal democracy and free markets' (1995:29). Baudrillard claimed that the past only survives in its documentary representations, and that we are somehow in a post-historical condition. At the same time, Fukuyama's diagnosis of the end of ideological conflict seemed to be confirmed by the collapse of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe. The authors also cite Fredric Jameson's (1984) writing on the simulacrum whereby history is recalled as pastiche, most obviously in cinema and literature. From Jameson's perspective, the triumph of spatiality over temporality as a means of social evolution has created a psychosocial condition whereby signifiers are detached and floating, and there is no sense of either self or history. He relates this to economic and technological developments, and diagnoses it as a form of cultural schizophrenia.

Green and Seddon stress the importance of the above developments to any discussion of history painting. For them, such a discussion requires the recognition of the historical situatedness of artistic practices, as a prerequisite

for any consideration of the representation of history in painting. They go on to gloss the development of history painting as a genre, pointing out that certain aspects of it, such as the commitment to generalised notions of truth-value on the part of history painters have survived, but have been internalised by artists into a critique of painting itself. This is the point in their commentary where the resurgent potential of painting as a means of representing historical subject matter is considered:

> The consequences of this from our own vantage point *beyond* modernism is that any adequate account of the possibilities for a contemporary historiographical practice is dependent not only on an awareness of the traditions of history painting but also of the more recent history *of* painting. (2000:12)

This observation indicates some of the parameters of a viable form of contemporary history painting, and it will be seen that situating such a practice within both the tradition of history painting and the recent history of painting, whilst distinguishing it from other practice in the field, represents the means by which a contribution to knowledge can be demonstrated.

The problematic outlined in Green and Seddon's Introduction has been engaged with by a number of contemporary artists who have addressed the history of history painting through a process of formal innovation, or a critique of painting as a medium. In David Green's (2000) contribution to *History Painting Reassessed,* he discusses the work of Gerhard Richter as an instance of this form of history painting, and it would seem possible to add Dexter Dalwood in the light of his remarks above. In Jonathan Harris' (2000) analysis of T.J. Clark's writings on abstract expressionism, Harris points out that even Jackson Pollock's painting is arguably an attempt to generalise meaning from its historical circumstances, and that it can therefore be said to be 'work on history' (2000:27). Green and Seddon conclude their Introduction by describing much of the work discussed in *History Painting Reassessed* as being historiographical, in that it is about the constructed nature of the representation of history.

Whilst it is difficult to disagree with their concluding statement that 'the imaging of history cannot be separated from the history of images' (Green and Seddon, 2000:16), there seems to be no reason why strategies proceeding from disciplines such as archaeology and geography that artists have been employing in other media such as film and photography, should not be available to painters. In *Combat Archaeology* for example, John Schofield (2005) considers the involvement of artists such as Jane and Louise Wilson, and Angus Boulton, in the recording, interpretation and preservation of modern historical sites, concluding that: 'Artistic representation can also play a significant role in increasing public understanding of the physical remains of war' (2005:79). In *Constructing Place: When artists and archaeologists meet,* Schofield goes further, drawing explicit parallels between the methods used by archaeologists and those of artists, and praising the latter for their 'lack of constraint' (2006:22) in capturing the character of place:

> Art and archaeology can become much closer than they are presently, both as research practices and for experiencing, interpreting and theorising the contemporary past, pooling memory and materiality to create new and previously unforeseen views of the familiar world around us. (2006:22)

Schofield applies the term 'consilience' (2006:23) to define the process by which methods drawn from the sciences and the humanities can converge to generate knowledge. Schofield's definition recalls White's construction of a form of history that can be 'poetic, scientific and philosophical' (1973:xii).

As T.J. Clark (2016) hints at the conclusion of his article 'Picasso and the Fall of Europe', we are re-entering a time of escalating nationalist sentiment in which works that interpret place-specific historical events such as *Guernica* (1937), have a renewed relevance. Drastic changes in Western economic and political circumstances, seen in the light of a resurgence of populism, protectionism in trade, and escalating geopolitical conflict, suggest that the 'fundamental reassessment of history itself as a discursive practice' (2000:16) referred to by Green and Seddon, is an ongoing process.

In his own contribution to *History Painting Reassessed,* Brandon Taylor (2000) poses the question: 'Under what formal and institutional conditions could 'history painting' become a reality in late twentieth and early twenty-first century culture?' (2000:66). Having identified financial disinterestedness and abstract social virtue as defining characteristics of eighteenth-century history painting, Taylor concludes by remarking that the prerequisites for a critical contemporary form of the genre are artistic freedom from commercial considerations, and 'grounding in perceived social and economic contradictions' (2000:80). Gregory Sholette's characterisation of the art world as being structurally dependent upon the exclusion of the vast majority of practitioners, would seem to provide the first of these requirements (2011:3). Many artists choose to work outside commercial constraints, preferring to mobilise peer to peer networks, and Sholette admiringly describes those who sustain a critical practice in this way as 'dark matter' (2011:1). He goes on to assert that the fundamental material circumstances of most artists have not changed for centuries (2011:125). In global terms on the other hand, the return to marked ideological differences in world politics, together with increasing disparities in income levels (Harvey, 2014:164), the impact of technological advances and environmental degradation, have supplied the contradictions that may have seemed less obvious in 2000. In other words, the increasing engagement of artists with historical and political subjects and themes can be linked both to dramatic changes in economic, political and cultural circumstances since 2008, and also to shifts in the means by which they sustain their practices (Sholette, 2011:186).

The challenge implicit in the aim to develop a contemporary form of history painting is, as Green and Seddon suggest, to combine elements of the tradition of history painting with a distinctive contribution to the field of contemporary painting about history. It is my contention that this is possible through the reconsideration of the source material employed, together with the formal parameters and conceptual underpinning of history painting as a means of representing the past.

3. Practical methodology: the acquisition of source material

All the practical work produced during the period of study was at least partly enabled by the availability of second-hand amateur photographic images, documents, and letters. This material is either stumbled across or sought out and acquired from flea markets and online sources, and is purchased as single snapshots or in albums and other forms of bounded sets. A number of individual paintings have been produced that relate to the timeframe or events depicted in the three larger series, and in this section, I discuss two paintings that were made in 2015, between Poland 1940-1941 and The Berlin Olympic Village Project*,* and that extended the research undertaken to support those projects.

Whilst these paintings illustrate the kind of material that can be obtained from different sources, they also reflect an evolving methodology in that the first painting resulted from a chance discovery and only related to other work coincidentally, whilst the second painting was produced from a photograph that was sought out, selected and acquired in response to an historiographical debate. I will address the relationship of painting to photography in my work more fully in Chapters Two and Three, but for now it is necessary to indicate the significance of the means by which these source images were obtained, in relation to the development of my working methodology.

3.1 Flea markets

In his examination of Richter's photo-derived works, Rainer Rochlitz (2000) describes the criteria by which some photographs lend themselves to transcription into painting. Rochlitz' comments are pertinent to my own practice in that he identifies a quality that distinguishes some amateur snapshot photography from professional photographic practices such as the studio portrait or photojournalism: 'they must bear witness to practices, pleasures,

Figure 2. David Gledhill (2015) *Hans and Hinga at Bad Freienwald September 1933.* Oil on canvas, 153 x 205 cm.

lifestyles, utopias which make them into emblems of an involuntary historiography' (2000:115).

Rochlitz identifies the selection of the image and the pleasure involved in painting it, as the key artistic elements of Richter's practice in this area, adding that the photographic source should somehow demonstrate a lack of resolution or completeness, without which its duplication in painting could not contribute any meaning. This sense of incompleteness could derive, for example, from what we now know of the historical significance of the location, depicted activity, or time at which the photograph was taken. Rochlitz' observations indicate the foundations from which an historiographical painting practice based on the use of second-hand photographs might be built, and provide the criteria by which the source material for all the projects discussed below was selected.

The painting entitled *Hans and Hinga at Bad Freienwalde September 1933* (2015) for example, features a couple on a see-saw at the construction site of a ski slope that was later in use during the Winter Olympic Games of 1936 (Figure 2). The source photograph shows the site after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in January 1933, and the woman to the left of the image is making a hand gesture that could be read as a Sieg Heil salute. Although completed before work began on The Berlin Olympic Village Project, the painting relates to the later series by virtue of its sporting location. The title is taken from an inscription on the back of the photograph, which was found in 2012 in a box at a permanent flea market (since closed) under railway arches in Berlin (Figure 74).

The availability in Germany of photographs documenting civilian life before, during, and after the Second World War, is perhaps understandable in the light of the increasing popularity of amateur photography from the 1930s onwards. As Frances Guerin points out, amongst European peoples, Germans were particularly encouraged to record their everyday lives by the National Socialists, and assisted in this through the rapid development of photographic technology by companies such as I.G. Farben and Agfa (2012:29). This enthusiasm for amateur photography persisted through the post-war years of the communist administration in East Germany (Fulbrook, 2008:69). The combination of widespread camera use and the nature of some of the resulting snapshots and albums in the context of German post-war attitudes, may explain the continuing proliferation of interesting material from this period in flea markets in Germany. Another factor may be rooted in cultural attitudes to inherited personal effects amongst younger generations of Germans, possibly living in smaller homes and reluctant to preserve photographic material dating from the years prior to 1945.

The photograph was selected for transcription into painting in 2015 by virtue of the ambiguity of the hand gesture, which from the perspective of the present day, seems at odds both with what the woman is doing and her facial

expression. As Rochlitz remarks of the subject in Gerhard Richter's (1965) painting *Onkel Rudi*, it constitutes an 'involuntary historiography' in that the woman's 'gaze is imbued with political blindness' (2000:116). Nevertheless, it accords with the findings of Eric A. Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband, that during the 1930s, the majority of German citizens cheerfully endorsed National Socialism: 'the majority of respondents stated that they had believed in National Socialism and shared at least some Nazi ideals' (2006:388).

Johnson and Reuband's study of pre-war German attitudes to Hitler and Nazism had informed work on the series Poland 1940-1941, which is based upon a photograph album that includes images of the Jewish residents of Sosnowiec in southern Poland wearing armbands (see Chapter Two). Research into the attitudes of the German civil administration to the ghettoisation of Jews (Fulbrook, 2012), led on to a wider enquiry into domestic German civilian attitudes to the Third Reich. In turn, this prompted the retrieval and use of the photograph in question, and it can be seen that the ad hoc acquisition of second-hand photographs from flea markets can either result in their immediate use in the production of paintings, or add to an informal archive that can be turned to in the light of other projects.

3.2 Auction websites

Whilst interesting photographs are readily available in flea markets, the process of finding them is necessarily haphazard. In my case, this has led to the accumulation of large numbers of snapshots that may, or may not be useful at some point. This material then necessitates storage, some form of filing system, and conservation. By contrast, the use of auction websites enables the targeting of images dating from a particular time and place, with the added advantage of the opportunity to study them online before bidding.

Figure 3. Unknown photographer (no date) *Untitled.* Photograph. Collection of David Gledhill

Although there is no guarantee of success and prices are generally higher, sites such as eBay can provide vital primary source material for projects already underway. This shift in the method of acquiring sources was critical to the completion of The Berlin Olympic Village Project, and active searching rather than chance discoveries brought my methodology closer to that of an historian attempting to approach a subject from a fresh perspective, through the use of primary archive material sought out on the basis of a prior interest.

Between the completion of Poland 1940-1941 and the start of The Berlin Olympic Village Project, I obtained two photographs from eBay of German officers relaxing on the deck of a ship. Having researched the history of the Eastern Front in connection with a planned visit to Poland, and investigated some of the debates relating both to the participation in (Hilberg, 1992; Fulbrook, 2012), and representation of the Holocaust (Friedländer, 1992; LaCapra, 1994), I was interested in locating images that could be used to call

into question the limits of Nazi ideological indoctrination.[1] Conflicting and contested accounts (Goldhagen, 1997; Finkelstein and Birn, 1998), framed the issue of the degree of culpability for atrocities of both German civilians and soldiers enlisted in the *Wehrmacht*. Amongst photographs acquired online at this time, these snapshots were interesting in the sense that, apart from the uniforms, the individuals pictured could have been tourists. Indeed, the Nazi 'Strength Through Joy' programme organised cruises for German workers aboard vessels such as the *Wilhelm Gustloff*. However, soldiers were not included in this programme, which was cancelled at the outbreak of the Second World War (Large, 2007:183).

Of the two photographs purchased, the image selected for painting (Figure 4), carried a more marked connotation in that the officer in the foreground appears to be earnestly studying a large book. The contrast between the demeanour of this officer, who has refrained from taking his cap off, and the other bareheaded officers and enlisted men around him, suggests an equivalence between ideological investment and military rank. This observation is, of course, entirely conjectural, and the painting is intended as a prompt for reflection, rather than as an indictment of an individual. In other words, whilst it is a relatively faithful transcription of the iconic content of the source photograph (see Chapter Two, Sections 2.5 and 2.6), that source has been selected on the basis that it promotes speculation and interpretation by the viewer. As indicated by Rochlitz, the process of finding and selecting the photograph is thereby integral to the meaning of the painting (2000:116).

By the time this painting was in production, I had accumulated a sizeable collection of negatives, photographs, 35mm slides, and 8mm home movies with a view to their possible incorporation in artistic projects. My practical

[1] The field trip to Poland, which resulted in the film *Abordnung*, took place in August 2015, after the completion of the paintings comprising Poland 1940-1941, and immediately before the visit to the Berlin Olympic Athlete's Village, which started The Berlin Olympic Village Project.

Figure 4. David Gledhill (2015) *Untitled (Officers on Deck)*. Oil on canvas, 181 x 122 cm.

methodology was evolving towards a more systematic and focused use of photographs, as outlined above, and yet I continued to acquire material whenever possible, regardless of its immediate utility. Awareness of my working methods amongst other practitioners and curators resulted in the inclusion of my work in an exhibition about the use of private archives in contemporary art, and this prompted a fuller consideration of collecting, and its significance for my own practice.[2]

[2] The exhibition was entitled 'Hankering for Classification' (2014) and is discussed in Chapter Two.

3.3 Collecting

Whether or not the search for primary photographic source material can be described as collecting, it is not simply a periodic means of gathering visual documentation purely for its iconic content. A drive to locate, retrieve and rehabilitate images seen as lost or discarded tokens or markers of individual and collective experience lies at the root of my practice, and informs the choice of photographs to work with. Pierre Nora (1989) is critical of this impulse, characterising it as symptomatic of the colonisation of spontaneous collective memory by historiography. Nora's critical assessment of this condition calls for a consideration of photographs as 'sifted and sorted historical traces' (1989:8), whilst Baudrillard's (2005) construction of collecting as a neurotic and narcissistic activity is built upon the notion of the collector as someone who acquires objects and removes them from circulation. Baudrillard suggests however, that ownership is essential to mental well-being because it acts as a distraction from the relentless passage of time towards one's demise. The ordering of a collection is a pastime that makes time 'navigable in either direction' (2005:102).[3]

Susan Stewart (2007) addresses another issue pertinent to the use of analogue photography in painting. She contends that the mediation of experience in contemporary life induces a desire for authenticity that centres on the object. The idea of a meaningful object that is a trace of a presence lost to us through our own immediate bodily experience could be applied to old photographs. Stewart posits the souvenir as the archetypal object of that kind, estranged from its producer and bound to a narrative 'through a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or use value; it is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia' (2007:135).

[3] See Appendix A for a further discussion of Baudrillard's ideas.

The souvenir is metonymic: a sample of the thing it refers to, as the photograph is sometimes seen as a trace of the subject it depicts (Sontag, 2013:21; Berger, 2013:57). Stewart compares the photograph to a pressed flower, as a preserved instant of time that can be narrated, through a storytelling that itself becomes an object of nostalgia. She points out that the sepia toned photograph is an instance of our need for souvenirs to instantly exhibit their own historical significance with regard to our lives. The last photograph in the album used for the series Poland 1940-1941, discussed in Chapter Two, is sepia coloured in this way. Stewart goes further by claiming that the souvenir embodies a flight from the present, construed as being too alienating, towards 'an imagined pre-lapsarian experience; experience as it might be '"directly lived"' (2007:140). In this construction, authentic experience consists in whatever is distant in time.

Qualitative distinctions frequently made between analogue and digital photography compound the idea of the paper snapshot as an authentic means of access to past experience (Van Gelder and Westgeest, 2011:31). Boxes of old photographs in flea markets present us with a profusion of unedited excerpts from lost narratives about memory, and as Jane Fletcher and Greg Lucas remind us, the analogue image cannot be 'deleted in camera, as digital can' (2013:34). In relation to my own practice, the rarity, inaccessibility and uniqueness of old photographs contribute to the drive to acquire them, but the overriding motivation is the recovery of evidence about the experience of the past, via the two-way navigability referred to by Baudrillard.

Stewart also emphasises the estrangement of the collection from its origins in labour and use value, and its consequent fetishisation. The scene of acquisition, such as the flea market, replaces the scene of production as the source of the object. The domestic display of the collection replicates this point of acquisition and underlines the seriality by which objects in a collection exist exclusively in relation to one another and the collector, rather than to the producer or nature. Martha Langford (2008:77) brings this critique to bear on Tacita Dean's (2001)

photographic book *Floh*, which reproduces photographs sourced from flea markets (see Appendix A).

As an artist, sensitivity to, and investment in the provenance and social uses of photographs becomes absolutely critical here. The snapshot continues to present the best opportunity to work with photographs that have negligible, or at least affordable exchange value, and are rich in meanings that may elude one in the short term, but may be revealed at some future date. These meanings remain latent until further research unlocks them, and emerge from photographs conceived as traces of social acts. Where possible, this research should encompass the testimonies of the photographers and subjects, in addition to the time, place and social circumstances of the production of the photographs. Snapshots are not to be read purely as self-referential aesthetic objects, or as necessarily more authentic simply because they are pre-digital. As Lynn Berger (2009) points out, photography is a social practice and will always be informed by rituals, conventions and restrictions. My use of second-hand photographs to make paintings is not predicated on the perceived authenticity of the photographs or their depicted activities, but rather, as Berger indicates, on the authenticity of the intentions behind their production (2009:45).

The critical assessment of the consequences for human memory of the treatment of the past in terms of its material remains and representations (Nora, 1989; Baudrillard, 2005), can be contested through the use of these representations to redirect attention onto overlooked episodes and perspectives. In artistic form, micro-historical evidence, understood as informal private rather than public records, may contribute to the understanding of past social contexts and behaviours and their mediation by practices such as photography and letter writing (Edwards, 2001:3). This cultural strategy is predicated upon recent developments in historiography which synthesise postmodern assertions of the constructed, subjective, and ideological nature of historical discourse (White, 1973; 1978; 1987) with a turn to previously overlooked sources of historical testimony such as photograph albums, letters

and diaries. Linda Hutcheon argues that this renegotiation of the distinction between public and private records as historiographical source material is a specifically feminist agenda, emerging from postmodernism itself (1989:156). John Berger's related distinction between public and private photography, proposes the use of the private photograph, or snapshot, as a means of retrieving a social and political function for photography (2013:73). Berger's writing was fundamental to the development of the research, and I will explore his advocacy of the 'gathering' of private photographs and their 'transformation into experience' (2013:104) further below.

For example, Walter Kempowski's (2014) edited collection of wartime diaries, memoirs and letters entitled *Swansong 1945*, in which the author reconstructs four key dates during 1945 as recorded by a broad variety of European citizens, demonstrates the power of a discontinuous sequencing of testimonies. In this case, micro-historical evidence is grouped together according to temporal simultaneity and geographical disparity. *Swansong 1945* is interesting in that it dispenses with a linear narrative of its subject, redirecting the reader's attention onto fragmentary accounts of the same events, as experienced by disparate individuals across the European theatre of war. Kempowski manages to reintegrate a sense of space into the representation of the past, and the diversity of his sources was another formative influence on the development of The Berlin Olympic Village Project. I will return to his work in Chapter Three.

This legitimation of a broader range of demotic source material has enabled the historian, and indeed, the history painter, to draw upon and mobilise the material manifestations of more than one ideological standpoint in the depiction of past events. The professional historian selecting facts to compose an historical narrative, the private citizen carrying a camera and present at a place and time of historical significance, the photojournalist or military photographer attempting to record that place and time in a particular manner, and the contemporary artist drawing on all these sources, inevitably bring differing intentions, methods and perspectives to the same subject. The careful

selection of a range of such material can enable the production of bodies of work that combine these various voices in their mediated forms as texts and photographs. This diversity of sources enables the representation of a past event, location or social group from several points of view, whilst implicitly acknowledging the mediating nature of the various forms of documentation by means of the contrasts between them. In this way, an historiographical painting practice drawing upon a range of sources can demonstrate a reflexivity, at the same time as it projects an account of the past as a multi-perspectival phenomenon.

4. Art historical precedents and formal parameters of the practice

In this section, I use a painting from the series *Karel*/Karl to identify the art historical precedents and formal principles that have underpinned the research throughout the period of study. I make an initial distinction between the humanist tradition of figure composition and the genre of classical history painting that emerged from it. I go on to introduce the idea of the *tableau* as proposed by Denis Diderot, and to draw a connection between Diderot's conception of composition in painting and the 'alternative photography' (2013:57) proposed by John Berger. I conclude by examining the series form as a means of articulating a sense of the past, and discuss historical and contemporary examples of series of paintings, in order to contextualise the practice in its current form.

Untitled (Figure 5A) was painted in July 2018. It is based on a photograph from a box of documents found in a flea market in Frankfurt in 2016 (Figures 49, 51, 52 and 54). An examination of these papers revealed that the box belonged to an ethnic German carpenter called Karl Hofmann, who was born in 1906 in Kopaniny in the Karlovy Vary region of western Czechoslovakia, immediately

http://www.sightswithin.com/Nicolas.Poussin/Et_in_Arcadia_Ego_(1637-1639).jpg

Figure 5A. David Gledhill (2018) *Untitled.* Oil on canvas, 92 x 135 cm.

Figure 5B. Nicolas Poussin (1637-38) *Et in Arcadia Ego.* Oil on canvas, 85 x 121 cm. [Accessed on 6th July 2019]

adjacent to the border with Germany.[4] The painting represents a group of four individuals posing outdoors in front of a grass covered hut or den. The subjects appear to be playing a war game, and the source photograph has been carefully framed and posed. The painting is designated *Untitled* because there is no inscription on the reverse of the photograph, but related images from the box that are dated, suggest that it was taken at some point in the mid 1930s: a time of rising political tension between Germany and Czechoslovakia (Orzoff, 2009:174). The boys in the image would have been known to Hofmann, and were probably also ethnic Germans living in the Sudetenland: a territory incorporated into Germany in September 1938 as part of the Munich Agreement (Orzoff, 2009:196).

4.1 Group figure composition and history painting

From the Renaissance onwards, group figure composition was extolled as the pinnacle of aspiration for painters. In his treatise *On Painting* written in 1435, Alberti introduced the concept of *istoria*, which he praised as 'the greatest work of the painter' (1966:72). John R. Spencer points out in the introduction to his translation of *Della Pittura,* that there is no contemporary equivalent for the term *istoria*, but that its basic elements are the use of ancient Greek and Roman themes and the projection of emotion in painting through gesture and posture (1966:24). Alberti distinguished the *istoria* as multiple figure composition featuring a variety of poses, in which the planes of each form are rendered with grace, proportions are faithfully conveyed by study from nature, and gestures are appropriate to the subject (1966:72-77). Alberti also advocates the inclusion of a figure apparently directly addressing the viewer in order to reinforce the story, and the standing figure in *Untitled* performs this role effectively: 'with an angry face and with flashing eyes, so that no one should come near' (1966:78).

[4] I will discuss the significance of the contents of the box for the project entitled *Karel*/Karl more fully in Chapter Four.

Spencer argues that Alberti's *istoria* is not to be confused with the tenets of history painting as formulated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that Alberti's fairly broad advice was taken up, narrowed, and made inflexible by subsequent generations of artists and academic commentators (1966:12). Alberti's text is inseparable from the interests and aspirations of the intellectual community of Florence in the fifteenth century and underlines the social responsibility of the artist in relation to both the production and reception of the work: 'The work of the painter attempts to be pleasing to the multitude; therefore do not disdain the judgment and views of the multitude when it is possible to satisfy their opinions' (1966:97).

All the key elements of Alberti's remarks on painting and the *istoria* are reiterated and developed in the writings of Leonardo da Vinci on painting, which span a thirty-year period from the late 1480s: assiduous study from nature, variety of pose and type in figure composition, communication of emotion through posture, and the importance of seeking advice during the process of painting (Kemp and Walker, 2001:193-204). Da Vinci expands upon Alberti's remarks with extended observations from the natural world, theoretical findings from his studies of colour as a function of light, perspective, proportion, and anatomy, together with recommendations and prohibitions for the painter arising from his experience of practice. In a passage from the translation by Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker (2001) strikingly similar to Alberti's remark that 'The istoria will move the soul of the beholder when each man painted there clearly shows the movement of his own soul' (1966:77), da Vinci states: 'That which is included in narrative paintings ought to move those who behold and admire them in the same way as the protagonist of the narrative is moved' (2001:220). There is a clear theme running through both texts, of the empathetic identification of the viewer with the figures in a painting as the litmus test of the effectiveness of a composition. Painting is conceived as an imitative art (2001:13) and its purpose is to bring honour to the painter and to 'draw spectators to stop in admiration and delight' (2001:195).

The subsequent rationalisation of group figure composition as history painting in the seventeenth century, occurred via a linked series of occlusions and dilations of aspects of these founding texts of humanist art commentary. One such link can be detected in 'Observations on Painting' by Nicolas Poussin (1672), in which he asserted that 'lowly and base subjects should be scorned' (2000:73). Poussin introduced a categorisation of composition according to 'modes' appropriate to certain subjects. Attributed to the Greeks, these modes were defined as 'the ratio, or the measure and the form we employ to do anything' (2000:69), and this rationalisation of subjects into classes with different tones or qualities was extended and formalised in writing by French academicians such as Roland Fréart and André Félibién. Writing in 1662, Fréart disapproved of artists seeking the opinions of others about the progress of works, and admonished them to follow the 'Rules and Maximes' of ancient art instead (Harrison et al, 2000:92). In a lecture of 1672, Giovanni Pietro Bellori, an Italian academician, extolled a Platonic 'Idea' above nature, and denigrated the senses as the province of the 'common people' (Harrison et al, 2000:100).

In his account of a series of lectures held at the *Academie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* in Paris in 1667, Félibién set out a hierarchy of subject matter insisting that painters must depict 'History and Fable', and emulate the historian in representing 'great Actions' (2000:112). Félibién drew a distinction between theory and practice approximately equivalent to the conception and execution of the work: a distinction Alberti would have found unacceptable (1966:29). Each history painting must have only one subject and one principal character, and all the figures must be composed to suggest the preceding and ensuing scenes in the depicted narrative. The painter's deployment of composition, colour, and tonal contrast, should 'preserve a general Union throughout the Body, by which one may at first Sight have a strong Idea of the whole Subject' (2000:115). By contrast with these requirements, Alberti recommended that artists should strive for a 'copiousness and variety' (1966:75) of figures, animals, objects and settings with which to 'capture the eye of whatever learned or unlearned person' (1966:75) sees their work.

Félibién advocated allegory as the prime means by which painters might express their own thoughts as well as imitating nature (2000:112), and allegory was closely associated with history painting at precisely the point where it was formalised as a means of visualising various literary sources. Indeed, Norman Bryson (1981) points out that 'linguistic saturation' (1981:43-44) was the means by which history painting was elevated to the apex of the hierarchy of genres. However, this is not to suggest that allegory as a means of signification is somehow defunct or incompatible with non-narrative forms of representation, and I return to the possibility of an allegorical form of contemporary history painting in Chapter Four.

Both the source photograph and the painting *Untitled* are group figure compositions featuring a posed *tableau* of individuals depicted in a shallow foreground space, demarcated by the hut behind them. Beyond this, a field is bordered in the distance by trees, creating a clearly defined schema within which the subjects are centrally placed. The frieze-like lateral spread of figures in the foreground and the enclosing landscape are redolent of *Et in Arcadia Ego* by Poussin (1637-38) for example (Figure 5B), and also many of David's group figure compositions (Friedlander, 1952:24). The young man to the right of the group appears to be the leader, and has a superior and defiant expression. As the only standing figure, his dominance in the composition is unchallenged, and there is a clear suggestion that the hut has been recently built and that the boys are preparing to defend themselves against future attackers. In this way, the photograph is suggestive of possible preceding and ensuing moments, in the sense articulated by Félibién.

The source snapshot for *Untitled* is another instance of the kind of photograph identified by Rochlitz as 'an involuntary historiography' (2000:115). The proud and belligerent poses adopted by the four youths seem to anticipate the conflict that would engulf the region during the Second World War, whilst at the same time, the frontal theatrical composition is reminiscent of classical history painting. Although *Untitled* calls to mind some of the formal

characteristics outlined by Félibién, its incorporation into *Karel*/Karl as one amongst a range of source photographs, brackets its idiomatic qualities, underlining their availability as conventions across both painting and photography, rather than advocating their consistent and exclusive use. Rochlitz describes how painting can draw attention to the 'pictorial heritage' (2000:105) of photography in this way.

4.2 Denis Diderot and Jacques-Louis David

In *Absorption and Theatricality*, Michael Fried (1980) discusses the anti-Rococo movement of the eighteenth century, and its key critical figures including Denis Diderot, who, whilst extolling the paintings of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin and Jean-Baptiste Greuze in his Salon reviews of the 1760s, was again insistent on the need for the representation of the 'human body in action' (1980:75) as the supreme form of painting. Diderot seemed to seek a return to some of the basic humanist principles espoused by Alberti, by making the case for a form of naturalism that would make figure paintings convincing, and in landscape, invite a sense of imaginative immersion, or reverie. His writing centred on the general potential of painting to arrest and engage, to provide an emotional charge, and to hold the viewer before the image for as long as possible: 'First touch me, astonish me, tear me to pieces, make me shudder, weep, and tremble, make me angry; then soothe my eyes, if you can' (Goodman, 1995:222).

Diderot's advocacy of the truth-value of genre painting with its 'stricter adherence to nature' (1995:230), anticipates the turn to a new form of history painting founded on a sense of intimacy with its subject matter (Duro, 2005:695). Diderot conceived genre painting as including still life and 'scenes from everyday domestic life' (Goodman, 1995:230), only distinguishing it from history painting on the basis of the greater degree of imagination and poetry he perceived in the latter. The new thematic emphasis in late eighteenth-century history painting has been summarised as 'diverse, anecdotal, circumstantial, and engaging' (Duro, 2005:695), and *The Death of Marat* by David (1793)

Figure 6. Jacques-Louis David (1793) *The Death of Marat.* Oil on canvas, 165 x 128 cm [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

exemplifies this tendency. In accordance with Diderot's suggested blend of the naturalism and truth-value of genre painting with the poetry and grandeur of history painting, David combined an aptitude for realism with 'that ability to stylize and simplify which his classical education had taught him' (Friedlander, 1952:24).David had visited Marat the day before he was murdered, and was attempting to produce an image so compelling and naturalistic, that it conveyed the impression of human presence (Vaughan and Weston, 2000:29). The painting was conceived as a means of broad, popular address and was produced and reproduced in painted copies and prints. Its display in the courtyard of the Louvre during a ceremonial procession encouraged Parisians to pay their respects to a martyr of the revolution (Lee, 1999:168).

I first saw *The Death of Marat* in the early 1980s. It seemed to me that the illusion of tactile corporeality that it manifested, combined with the representation of an event of political significance, constituted a model for a painting practice that could stimulate an empathetic investment on the part of the viewer, whilst also prompting wider reflection upon the nature of political conflict. Subsequent encounters with later works by other artists, including *The Third of May 1808* by Francisco Goya (1814) and *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* by Manet (1867-69), focused this conviction and have directed the overall development of my practice from that point to the present. Taken together, these paintings are instances of a tendency within the broader tradition of history painting, in which artists have depicted events contemporaneous with their own experience.

4.3 The tableau and photography

As Simon Lee (1999:171) points out, David's *Marat* is less factually accurate than persuasive, and the moment the artist has chosen to depict is one that carries little suggestion of preceding or succeeding events (Vaughan and Weston, 2000:7), recalling Diderot's admonition that: 'There are only a few circumstances in which it's not contrary to truth or interest to evoke a moment that's already in the past or is yet to come' (Goodman, 1995:220-221). Diderot's aversion to the artifice of theatricality in Rococo painting, led him to formulate the principle of the *tableau*, or instant in the narrative that the painter selects to represent (Goodman, 1995:220). By contrast with the views of Félibién, Diderot insisted that the episode presented in a figure painting should be self-contained, in order to convince the viewer of the reality of the scene, as in *The Death of Marat*. Fried (1980) observes that whilst Diderot's theorising was derived from the theatre, a new conception of causality constitutes its central principle. Diderot draws a distinction between 'attitude' and 'action' in both drama and painting, the former being mannered and false, the latter natural and spontaneous (1980:101). These distinctions are tied into his preoccupation

with causality, in that scenes should be depicted as occurring not for the viewer, but in and of themselves. The characters in a painting should be engrossed in the action represented through the *tableau*, which must be conceived and composed as though the viewer did not exist.

Diderot insisted that any extraneous characters or situations must be eliminated in the interest of expressive unity, which in every figure and in the composition as a whole, is predicated on the functional unity of the human form itself. Fried goes on to discuss Diderot's views on the human soul, which he construed as a state of being that is immediately apparent to the self. A painting should be constituted so as to express its subject instantaneously, in the same way that the soul is an instantaneous sensation for the mind (1980:75). Diderot emphasised that the pictorial composition must be comprehensible at a glance, free from allegory, and historical in subject, making it, in Fried's words 'universally intelligible' (1980:90). Diderot's recommendations extend Alberti's conviction in the broad accessibility of painting (Alberti, 1966:27), by contrast with the writing of theorists such as Bellori during the intervening centuries (Harrison et al, 2000:100).

Fried points out that for Diderot, the tableau represented an 'external, "objective" equivalent for his own sense of himself as an integral yet continuously changing being' (1985:91). Fried's remarks, taken together with Diderot's reflections on the key moment in an action: 'the artist has only one that lasts no longer than the blink of an eye' (Goodman, 1995:223), are suggestive of the photographic image, which according to Berger 'isolates, preserves and presents a moment taken from a continuum' (2013:20). In an argument that calls to mind Diderot's conception of dramatic action, Berger claims that unlike painting, photography has no language of its own with which to produce an equivalent for the world, and must be read in terms of the 'language of events' (2013:20). Jean-François Chevrier draws a more direct comparison between Diderot's theorising and the use of amateur photographs in painting, by citing Gerhard Richter's remark that 'A photo is already a little

tableau' (2000:35) as an indication that painting snapshots somehow completes or resolves these imperfect and spontaneous images.

Both Chevrier (2000:35) and Berger make the distinction between professional, or public photographs, and personal snapshots, which for Berger are excised from a 'life being lived' (2013:53). He claims that this distinction can be transcended so that the 'past becomes an integral part of the process of people making their own history' (2013:57). Berger is not prescriptive about how this might be achieved, but, as stated above, proposes the construction of a 'radial system' by which any photograph can be integrated into a context with other photographs and writing, whereby it is seen in both personal and political terms. Arguably, the snapshots in the box formerly belonging to Karl Hofmann, taken together with the official and personal documents, combine both public and private histories and enable Berger's transcendence, in order 'to incorporate photography into social and political memory' (2013:57). The source photograph for *Untitled*, whilst clearly not derived from mythological or Biblical subject matter, is a tableau composed in a manner reminiscent of classical history painting and can be curated into a 'radial system' with other works. The transcription of photographic images into painting can underline these shared conventions of picturing, and, as Rosemary Hawker puts it 'set the contours of both media atremble' (2002:553).[5]

My practice proceeds from the broad humanist tradition of group figure composition, rather than from the tenets of classical history painting, conceived by Félibién and others as the depiction of allegorical narratives derived from the Bible and Greek or Roman mythology. Subjects are drawn from the photographic documentation of private individuals, rather than invented on the basis of one or another literary source. As Spencer observes, Alberti's conception of painting draws upon its universal qualities to appeal to the widest

[5] I explore the significance of the translation of photographs into painted form in my own work more fully in Chapter Two.

possible audiences, and is not necessarily confined to historical or narrative subjects (1966:13). Diderot's insistence that: 'A composition, which must be exposed to the eyes of a crowd of all sorts of beholders, will be faulty if it is not intelligible to a man of simple common sense' (1980:95) reinforces this principle of broad accessibility. As suggested, there is a parallel here with the use of photographic sources in painting, and Rainer Rochlitz argues that as a virtually universally legible medium, photography has 'reintegrated representation, figuration, the subject and narration' (2000:103) into painting. It is this democratisation of painting by photography that is a prerequisite of engagement with social, historical and political themes, because, as Rochlitz argues, for most people 'contemporary painting concerns only the elites' (2000:105).

4.4 The series form

All the bodies of work discussed in this critical appraisal and based on bounded sets of images, were conceived as series. Stephen Bann (1984) provides a provenance for the series form in art, rooted in the historiography of the early nineteenth century. He characterises it as a drive towards a greater transparency and truth to historical fact. Bann quotes Leopold Von Ranke, widely regarded as the father of modern historiography, who asserted that history should 'show how, essentially, things happened' (1984:8). Bann identifies two key strategies by which early nineteenth-century visual artists approached the historical as subject matter. These strategies were intended to 'excite the free play of thought and interpretation, rather than to foreclose it' (2000:2), and are integral to my own developing conception of a contemporary form of history painting.

The first of them, the 'technical surprise' (1984:57), necessitates a novel new medium or technique, in combination with telling incidental detail that exceeds the requirements of the theme. Secondly, this redundant but arresting element

needs to be integrated into an 'historical series' (1984:62), by which the image, or a combination of text and image, can be made to evoke the historical. Once again, there are echoes here of Berger's 'radial system', to which I will return below.

The series form enables painting to become more adequate to the depiction of complex historical circumstances. Bann attributes this adequacy to the 'structured articulation in time' (1984:62) of the series, arguing with reference to early nineteenth-century culture, that the sequence of rooms in a museum in the case of historical artefacts, and displays of works in the Academy in that of paintings, created the contexts whereby the viewer could be enveloped in an 'illusion of the past' (1984:82).

From the start of the research, I was concerned to investigate whether the series form could substantially broaden the possibilities for engagement with the past, beyond the emblematising tendency of individual paintings to suggest generic reflections on the human condition. Georges Didi-Huberman explores this potential of the series, or montage, in his defence of the validity of Holocaust image-making. He contends that the inadequacy of the single image to the truth, can be at least partially compensated for by the temporal sequence across several images (2012:125). Instances of contemporary series of paintings addressing historical subject matter are not commonplace, but the opportunity to view Gerhard Richter's (1988) *October 18, 1977* during his retrospective 'Panorama' at the Tate Modern in 2011 prior to the course of study, provided an important source of comparison with my own developing objectives.

The importance of the *October* cycle for my work, resides in its serial structure and the continuities and disjunctions between its fifteen constituent paintings. As Georg Lukacs observes in relation to Honoré de Balzac's (1829-47) *Comedie Humaine*: 'Each part, novel or short story, contains only a small segment, though complete in itself. But the greatness of his conception is that the whole

is constantly present in the parts' (2006:99). There are significant differences between Richter's work and my own which I will explore more thoroughly in Chapter One, however his use of the series form provided the most immediate context for my own decision to work in series throughout the projects discussed in this thesis.

4.5 Historical and contemporary precedents

Figure 7. Edouard Manet (1867) *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian.* Oil on canvas, 195.9 x 259.7 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston [Accessed on 27th May 2019]

A precedent for the ambiguities of Richter's *October* cycle can be found in *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* by Manet (1867-69) (Elderfield, 2006:147). Over the course of working on the four canvasses that comprised the project, Manet altered the uniforms of the firing squad (Figure 7), making them look less typically Mexican, and more French (Jones, 1981:14). Manet's sympathies with the Republican cause and the circumstances of Maximilian's plight, may have informed the particularly ambiguous tone of the earliest painting in the series

(Jones, 1981:14). His use of mediated sources such as newspaper reports and photographs of Maximilian, a puppet Emperor eventually abandoned by Napoleon III, taken in the context of his immersion in the European painting tradition, make Manet's series signally different from earlier history paintings. With the *Maximilian* paintings Manet offered an alternative reading of the events that can be interpreted as critical of Napoleon III. Indeed, the lithograph he produced on the subject was censored (Elderfield, 2006:116), and the final version of the painting was banned from the Salon of 1869 (Wilson-Bareau et al., 1992:100). He also used the firing squad figure grouping in a later watercolour entitled *The Barricade* (1871), which depicts the execution of Commune members by French troops loyal to the Government. Clearly there is a suggestion in the earlier works, that Maximilian was condemned by the French, despite being shot by the Mexicans (Jones, 1981:14).

John Elderfield (2006) points out the continuity with earlier nineteenth-century history painting in terms of the foregrounding of the individual soldier's experience, the painterly freedom of execution, and the dream-like quality that contributes to the ambiguity of the *Maximilian* paintings: aspects embraced by the contemporary painters referred to above and discussed in Chapter One (Storr, 2003:253). The sources that Manet used as reference material for the works also constitute a bridge to the *October* paintings (Elderfield, 2006:147). However, there is no equivalent for the targeted political critique integral to Manet's paintings in the *October* cycle, and Richter has denied any interest in 'political content or historical truth' (2002:175).

Like the *Maximilian* paintings, the *October* cycle is dependent for its content on mass-reproduced sources, and as a series of paintings displayed together, it also circumvents what Walter Benjamin identifies as a central problematic of the reception of painting compared with cinema: 'Painting by its nature, cannot provide an object of simultaneous collective reception' (2008:36). Anyone who visited 'Panorama' can attest to the falsity of that generalisation. Furthermore, *October 18, 1977* re-engages some of the principles of late eighteenth-century

history painting, described by Brandon Taylor as 'socially virtuous, abstract and non-commercial' (2000b:66). These qualities, as manifested in the work of David in particular, set out some of the parameters within, or against which, all of the work described in this thesis is conceived.

To recap, my work is rooted in the European humanist painting tradition, as manifested in the commentaries of Alberti and Diderot, and proceeds from the shift towards contemporary subject matter in late eighteenth-century history painting. Whilst individual source photographs may employ compositional conventions familiar from classical history painting, the corresponding paintings are integrated into series of works that subsume multiple conventions, and do not correspond with any literary source. *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* and *October 18, 1977* offer two contrasting precedents for the adoption of the series form, and in their use of popular photographic sources constitute the closest context for the projects discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

5. Ethical implications of the practice

All the projects discussed in this thesis were, at least partly, adapted from snapshots and related ephemera purchased from European sources during the past ten years, and originally produced between 1930 and 1945. The ethics and legalities of using second-hand images of individuals to make works in which those individuals remain identifiable, are complex. The drive to do so is a result of the compulsion to rescue, and somehow revivify, lost or discarded photographs seen as traces of the social activity of their makers. The lives and experiences of these amateur photographers and their subjects are significant to the development of each project, and for that reason, genuine efforts are made to discover more about them. For example, a previous project based on an East German family photograph album resulted in the return of the album to its intended recipient: a Doctor's daughter separated from her parents after her marriage and relocation to West Germany in the 1950s (see Appendix A).

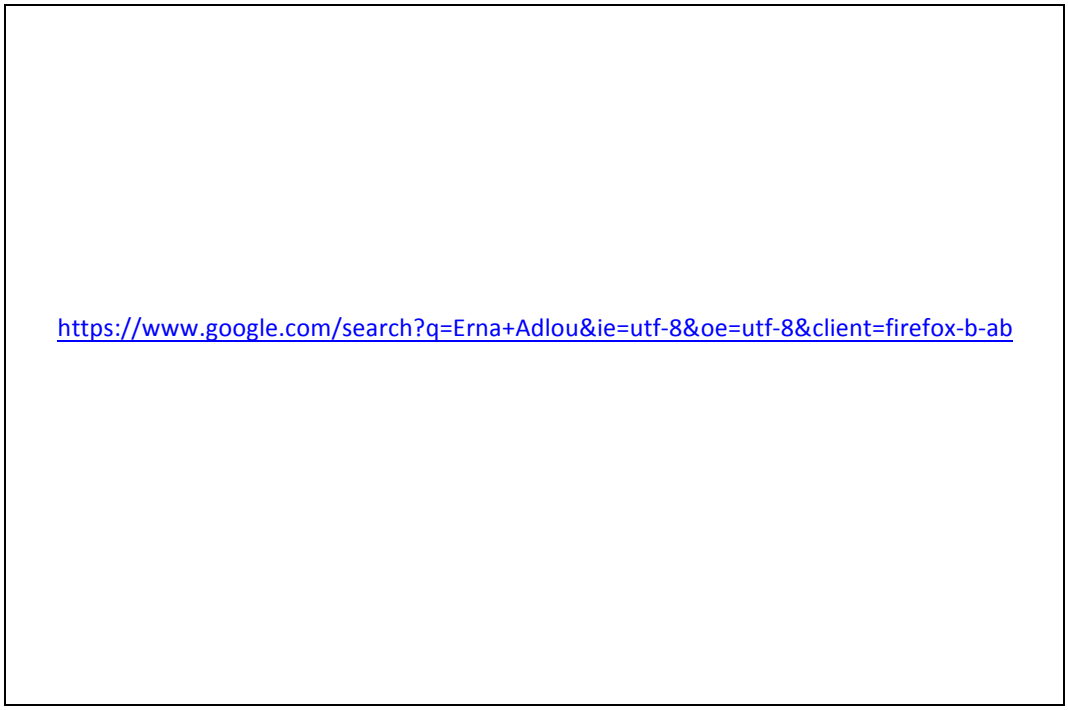

Figure 8. Google (no date) *Screenshot of the results of a Google search for Erna Adlou* [Online image] [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Current law in the United Kingdom states that a photograph is subject to copyright for up to 70 years from the end of the calendar year in which the photographer died.[6] Photographic images for which the original copyright holder cannot be traced, may still be used by applying for an 'Orphan Works Licence', although it is not clear from Government literature on the subject whether non-mechanical means of reproduction such as painting require such a licence, particularly where amateur snapshots are concerned.[7] Regardless of legislation, and whatever the photographic source, the objective to find the original photographer or subject and their relatives or friends, is integral to each project.

6 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/481194/c-notice-201401.pdf

7 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/copyright-orphan-works#costs-application-and-licence-fees

When individuals depicted in photographs are named, sometimes in inscriptions in albums, or on the reverse of individual snapshots, a certain amount of research can be conducted online. However, many official archives held in other countries cannot be accessed remotely, and without detailed information, research trips are likely to prove fruitless and time-consuming. The unofficial and informal nature of most snapshots and photograph albums means that a subject's profession, responsibilities, and employer's name are seldom noted. Even if an archival search based on a name is successful, it may not lead to a living relative who is in a position to authorise the use of the photographs. Where detailed information such as a street name and house number is to hand, it may be much easier to locate and contact family members, friends or neighbours of an individual identifiable in a photograph or album. *Karel*/Karl, discussed in Chapter Four, is a case in point, and I am currently planning a visit to Germany in order to develop the scope of this project further.

An unforeseen aspect of working with amateur snapshots of named subjects, is that eventually, internet searches for those subjects give prominence to media coverage of the projects and the resulting exhibitions. This means that relatives of the individuals concerned may be exposed to potentially upsetting interpretations of the lives of their loved ones while researching their own family histories online. The fact that basing an historiographical painting practice on photographic evidence of the lives of others has ramifications beyond artistic contexts, is both the motivation for the work and also its central ethical issue. In the light of the results of a recent Google search for Erna Adlou (Figure 8), I have decided that where photographic sources include named individuals, I will not publish images of the paintings produced from them online, until every effort has been made to gain the permission of those concerned.

Despite the problems encountered to date in tracing the individuals depicted in the photographs that the following projects are based upon, I am still attempting to do so. If anyone should have any information as to their

whereabouts, or those of their descendants, I would be extremely grateful to hear from them.

6. Structure of the thesis

This thesis outlines an evolving practical methodology for a form of history painting, with reference to two abandoned, two incomplete, and three completed series of works entitled Poland 1940-1941*,* The Berlin Olympic Village Project and *Karel*/Karl, together with a number of individual paintings. These projects are based on a range of photographic material and proceed from a synthesis of research into history painting, historiography, photography, the relation of painting to photography, and of both to history. This constellation of disciplines is mapped via an investigation of their theoretical contexts, and because the theoretical material has played such an important role in the development of the work at every stage, each chapter of the thesis contains an embedded literature review. In addition, key texts by Hayden White (1973; 1978; 1987), and Stephen Bann (1984) relating to the various forms of historical representation, and others in which the use of photographs to tell alternative histories is advocated, such as John Berger's (2013) *Understanding a Photograph*, are cited throughout.

In Chapter One, I examine two discontinued series of paintings in order to recap the issues that led to the reassessment of my initial aims at an early stage of the research process. These aims shifted from the production of paintings intended to contribute to public discourse about recent political conflict, towards the representation and interpretation of a wider range of historical events and circumstances. I contextualise these early series in a field of works by contemporary artists engaged with what could be described as a form of photo-derived history painting, in order to distinguish their approaches from my own, and to establish the point of departure for the projects discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

Chapter Two provides an account of the photograph album used as source material for Poland 1940-1941 as both a set of snapshots taken in a particular location, and as a visual narrative. Mary Fulbrook's (2012) book entitled *A Small Town Near Auschwitz*, suggested much of the social and historical framework for the project, whilst illuminating many of the historiographical factors at play in it, and is discussed at length. As a single source research project, Poland 1940-1941 raised issues about replicating the decision-making of the album's compiler, and White's analysis of alternative historiographical forms such as the annal (1987:1-25), suggested ways of negotiating this difficulty.

The question of the relation of the paintings to the photographs leads to a comparison of photography and painting as performative processes, and this is followed by a discussion of the equivalences and distinctions between the photographs and the paintings, which applies to all the monochrome works produced across the three major projects. The potential for a contemporary form of history painting to mediate the witnessing of historical events is framed by recent historiographical debates relating to the representation of the Holocaust, and the various exhibitions of the work allowed for the application of these ideas in practice. To conclude the chapter, the work of a number of artists drawing upon photographic sources is discussed in terms of how those sources are integrated into their work, and how interpretation is deferred onto the viewer, a strategy adopted in both the project and its accompanying film, *Abordnung* (2015).

In Chapter Three, I discuss The Berlin Olympic Village Project, and argue that an engagement with place offers a means of moving beyond a dependence on second-hand photographic material, and a way of encountering the past as lived experience in the sense suggested by Green and Seddon (2000:1). The 'spatial turn' in postmodern geography has contributed to the growth of what Edward W. Soja calls a 'politically charged historical geography' (1989:73) in which the importance of place to historical development has been clarified. I propose that the prioritising of the site visit and the production of works across

media that respond to the poetics of particular historical locations, can broaden the possibilities of a contemporary history painting beyond what Baudrillard called 'retro fascination' (1994:44) and counter to Dalwood's assertion that 'it's kind of impossible to do any sort of genuine account of anything' (2015:53).

Chapter Four explores three projects drawing upon mixed sources including inscribed photographs, official documents and letters, in order to portray named individuals as historical subjects. The need to situate myself more clearly in relation to these subjects, and to make the work more reflexive of its conditions of possibility in the acquisition of second-hand material, led to a further reassessment of both production and display. The project *Karel*/Karl comprises paintings and assemblages that integrate this source material with objects relating to the subject's professional life, making my own agency as collector self-evident. The process by which the immediate material setting of the paintings became integral to their signification is the key development from both the previous projects.

It can be seen that the revised aim of working towards a contemporary form of history painting started a process in which my working methodology became subject to continuing revision. This was a result of several factors, including dissatisfaction with outcomes, constraints relating to the display of the work, and insights gleaned from secondary research. The methodology is therefore founded upon the principle of close critical reflection, by which periodic reassessments of the sources, media, processes, display and reception of the work are made.

The appendices contain information that complements the main body of the thesis, but which is not essential to the central argument. Appendix A offers an overview of the development of the practical work leading up to the course of study. It includes a discussion of Baudrillard's work on collecting that approaches the subject from a psychological viewpoint somewhat tangential to the analysis of the process described above. Appendix A also refers to the work

of artists who have responded to the amateur snapshot and the album format, in order to illuminate some of the problems implicit in working from second-hand material of this kind. Appendix B describes the research undertaken to identify the location in the photographs used for Poland 1940-1941, and provides historical information about the administration of the region and the timeframe covered in the album. It therefore demonstrates the extent of the historical research that accompanies the decision to work with a set of images for which minimal provenance is available.

While there is extensive discussion of the technical and formal aspects of the monochrome paintings in Chapter Two, it is framed largely in terms of the relation of the paintings to their source photographs. By contrast, Appendix C gives a fuller account of the painting process in relation to the history of western European figurative painting techniques. Appendix D is a paper presented to the Left Conference: Photography and Film Criticism, in Lisbon during November 2018. The paper is a summary of the main thrust of the thesis and argues for an historiographical painting practice capable of reflecting on current political developments. Appendix E is a complete visual catalogue of the practical work completed during the course of study, and Appendix F documents the exhibitions in which the work has featured. Appendix G is a list of works displayed in each of these exhibitions.

Throughout, the thesis considers the potential for a painting practice to interpret past events and there is a development from the position taken in the earliest works discussed in Chapter One. During the production of the Martyr and Vietnam series, an assumption was made that painting can contribute directly and critically to public discourse about conflict. In Chapter Two, I conclude that because of the nature of the source material, the series Poland 1940-1941 should defer interpretation to the viewer. In Chapter Three, the possibility of interpretation is reconsidered in the light of the site visit that initiated The Berlin Olympic Village Project. As an enquiry into the significance of place in history, this project was informed by a widening of the range of

source material employed, and the use of a number of contrasting media and idioms. The issue of interpretation is therefore seen to be contingent upon the breadth of sources, themes, and approaches, and Chapter Four breaks with the problematic linguistic model of historiographical method that underpins the earlier chapters, by drawing upon Craig Owens' conception of allegory as a supplementary meaning added to 'appropriated imagery' (1992:54). It combines an account of *Karel*/Karl and other incomplete projects addressing historical themes through the lives of named individuals, with a general conclusion.

Chapter One: Painting, politics and history

Figure 9. David Gledhill (2014) *Martyr 1.* Oil on canvas, 165 x 228 cm.

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the shift in the aims of my research away from the production of a didactic form of painting about recent political conflict, and towards the development of a contemporary form of history painting. This shift occurred at an early stage of the research process, and resulted in the abandonment of the two series of paintings discussed below. I situate these series in a field of recent paintings by Wilhelm Sasnal, John Keane, Luc Tuymans and Gerhard Richter, whilst indicating key points of divergence that have continued to guide the overall development of the research.

The Martyr and Vietnam series use photographic source material in order to address the theme of political violence, and I conclude by accounting for the difficulties attendant upon the use of photographs in the production of works intended to contribute to public political discourse. These issues led to the reconsideration of the photographic source as evidence of social activity rather

than as an objective visual record, and the start of a process by which it was progressively integrated into the work, initially as still images in films made to accompany Poland 1940-1941 (2014-15) and as part of The Berlin Olympic Village Project (2015-17), and eventually as elements in mixed-media assemblages in *Karel*/Karl (2017-19).

1. Painting and politics

Figure 10. David Gledhill (2014) *Martyr 2.* Oil on canvas, 165 x 228 cm.

The Martyr and Vietnam series were made between Autumn 2013 and Spring 2014, and were the first paintings produced during the period of study. They represented a conscious attempt to make work in response to the tradition of images of contemporary political violence, such as those by Jacques-Louis David and Edouard Manet discussed above. The paintings were intended to explore the potential for art to mobilise political agency, and in that respect, they manifested one pole of a spectrum of historically significant subject matter that could conceivably be treated in painting. Working with images of extreme

political violence brought issues connected with the use of found photographs, and the relation of painting to photography and politics into sharp focus. I will discuss these first paintings in the context of contemporary work by other artists, all of whom have drawn upon photographically mediated source material.

I have selected these artists in order to highlight a number of key arguments about the potential for painting to contribute to political debate, while identifying the terms that might enable or limit such a contribution. Whilst I draw a distinction between the photo-derived work of these artists and my own photo-informed approach that applies to all the practical work described in this thesis, it will be seen that the choice of source material for these paintings created difficulties that led to the reassessment of my approach to historical subject matter.[8] In the subsequent project, this manifested itself as a turn from the representation of the victims of recent political violence, to that of the facilitators of an historical conflict.

1.1 Contemporary subject matter

At the start of the period of study, 'contemporary subject matter' was construed to denote events of historical significance that have occurred during my own lifetime, or a period covering the past 50 years. In those terms, *Martyr 1* and *2* (Figures 9 and 10), constituted an attempt to use photographic source material in order to represent indigenous victims of a contemporary conflict, in this case the Second Gulf War, which took place between 2003 and 2011.

[8] The relationship of painting to photography in the work of these artists has been described in different terms by commentators referred to in this Chapter, including Rainer Rochlitz (2000), David Green (2000), Robert Storr (2010) and Peter Geimer (2012). I have used the term photo-derived in order to indicate that the artists discussed use photographic sources as a point of departure for painting, and to distinguish their work from my own photo-informed approach.

Both paintings are relatively large, measuring 165 x 228 cm, and are built up in layers of opaque pigment and glazes in order to suggest a visual equivalent to the material qualities of their subject matter. In that respect they share with Wilhelm Sasnal's (2011) painting *Gaddafi*, an identification of the medium with what is represented (Figure 11). The paint is applied in an impasto manner, and as objects constructed from wood, canvas and pigment, the paintings enlist their own materiality in the process of signification.[9] Where they differ from *Gaddafi*, is in the attempt to approximate the materiality of the pigment to that of the forms depicted in the photograph, rather than to the painterly gesture of late modernist abstraction, which, in *Gaddafi*, is made to stand in for the effects of physical violence.

To that extent, the Martyr paintings are realist, or metonymic in intent, whilst Sasnal's painting is metaphorical. Linda Nochlin describes the metonymic mode as a 'linking of elements by sheer contiguity' (1971:182), and Peter Brooks refers to an 'accumulation of things' (2005:16) by which meaning is conveyed metonymically in realism. In other words, in the Martyr paintings, meaning is not superimposed on the source photograph by selection, omission, substitution, alteration or exaggeration of its iconic content, but is implicit in the representation of the circumstantial details of the depicted scene.

The depiction of the immediate surroundings of the corpse depicted in *Martyr 1* denotes a shallow depression in the ground, with what appear to be either tank tracks, or mud churned by tracks. In this way, the painting restores a sense of agency both to the victim and the forces that opposed him, by providing easily deducible evidence of military activity. By contrast, the flattening of the background in John Keane's (2008) painting *Bomb Head* for example (Figure 12), eliminates a signifying element of the circumstance being represented.

[9] An opaque layer of oil paint that can be as thick as toothpaste (Langmuir and Lynton, 2000:504).

Figure 11. Wilhelm Sasnal (2011) *Gaddafi.* Oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm, Tate Modern [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Figure 12. John Keane (2008) *Bomb Head.* Oil on linen, 177 x 194 cm, Flowers Gallery, London [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Bomb Head depicts a decapitated head in what appears to be a desert setting, with the strong implication that this is a Muslim victim of the war in Iraq or Afghanistan. However, the background has been generalised and rendered in a broad manner that emphasises the artist's application of the medium at the expense of any specific information about the landscape. As in Sasnal's painting, Keane has used a gestural approach, taking advantage of a freedom of execution rooted in abstract painting (Rosenberg, 1970:36). The head itself is out of focus and emblematic of victimhood in general, rather than the fate of the individual subject.

The technique of blurring photo-derived images in the process of painting was developed by Gerhard Richter in the 1960s. In his essay 'Reflections on the Work of Gerhard Richter', David Green asserts that Richter's photo-derived paintings undercut photography's 'claims to historical authenticity' (2000:47) by diffusing its focal sharpness. He suggests that a contemporary form of history painting should acknowledge both a dependence on photography, and as a consequence, the fragmentary nature of past events. Green concludes by suggesting that Richter's works are a contribution to the reassessment of photographs as iconic traces that do not necessarily present a true picture of the past. This is achieved through the incorporation of the instantaneous photographic image, seen as an index of a past moment, into the unchanging material presence of the painted canvas. Green relates this impulse to Walter Benjamin's advocacy of a political instrumentality for photography based on 'disarticulating the relationship between photography and 'truth'' (2000:46). Green's observations were critical to the research from this point forward, and I will return to Benjamin's theories and reassess the political potential of painting from photographs in Chapter Four.

Richter's (1988) *October 18, 1977* involved the research and acquisition of press and police images of the Red Army Faction (RAF): a West German terrorist organization active in the 1960s and 1970s (Richter, 2002:183). These images are a point of reference in commentaries on the work (Storr 2000:100), but

Figure 13. Gerhard Richter (1988) *Man Shot Down 1.* Oil on canvas, 100.5 x 140.5cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

citations of photographers or sources are not integral to the series. Richter has said that the paintings were not motivated by any sympathy with the declared aims of the RAF, but rather by grief for their fate (2002:174) and an admiration for 'the terrorists' energy, their uncompromising determination and their absolute bravery' (2002:173). According to Richter, the demise of the group is emblematic of the nature of 'inhuman reality' (2002:175).

It can be seen that in the paintings of Sasnal, Keane and Richter, the materiality of the medium is used to generalise meaning by the use of non-representational painterly mark-making, or blurring techniques. Christian Boltanski also employs blurring in order to abstract meaning from particular images in his assemblages with found photographs, and I will discuss his work further in Chapter Two. By contrast, *Martyr 1* and *Martyr 2* preserve the distinctive characteristics of both their subjects and the surrounding terrain, as recorded in the source photographs.

1.2 Photo-derived painting and meaning

Figure 14. Luc Tuymans (2005) *The Secretary of State.* Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 61.9 cm [Accessed on 16th July 2019]

In Sasnal's *Gaddafi* paintings, Richter's *October* cycle and Keane's *Bomb Head* there is a dependence on photojournalism and a filtering out of circumstantial detail. As a consequence, the viewer is encouraged to draw generic meanings, both about the incidents invoked, and the acts of photographic representation through which they are socially constituted as atrocities. The strategy of blurring photo-derived images in the process of painting has been described by Richter in the following terms: 'I first paint the pictures very precisely from the photograph, sometimes more realistically than the originals. That comes with experience. And the result is, of course, an unendurable picture from every point of view' (2002:189). Richter points out with reference to *October 18, 1977*, that the effect of blurring is to transform the horror of a photograph into something that can be grieved (2002:189). He contends that this sublimation of horror into grief through painting makes the horror endurable, and can confer

meaning on an event that may otherwise seem incomprehensible (2002:194). For example, Richter's (2005) painting *September*, has been described by Robert Storr as a rendering of 'the elusive reality of human suffering' (2010:53), where its source photographs can convey only 'voyeuristic gratification' (2010:53). Again, this is to suggest an intrinsic qualitative difference between painting and photography whereby painting necessarily diffuses the specific content of photography as 'a reliable purveyor of fact' (2010:50).

Another problem arising from the use of photographic sources in the representation of recent or contemporary political events emerges in the work of Luc Tuymans. Tuymans has addressed Belgian colonialism through mediated images taken from photographic, television and film sources, reiterating in interviews that he is trying 'to create a feeling of distrust of the image - of every type of imagery, basically - because an image can always be manipulated' (Marcus, 2009:online). When interviewed in 2013 about his painting of Condoleezza Rice (Figure 14) entitled *The Secretary of State*, Tuymans (2005) had this to say: 'While some interpreted this portrait as a critique, others saw it as an iconic tribute to Rice – similar to Warhol's Marilyn Monroe' (Civle-Üye, 2013). Arguably, there is an acquiescence in the role of the viewer in constructing the meaning of the work here, and Tuymans is careful to select source images that carry an ambiguous signification (Civle-Üye, 2013). His caution about narrowing or prescribing the meaning of his work, inevitably restricts the potential for his practice to contribute to political debate, possibly to an even greater extent than Richter's.

In *Thinking Through Painting,* Peter Geimer (2012) critiques claims made for the semantic openness of Tuymans' work and by extension all the above-mentioned contemporary painters. He contends that the celebration of Tuymans' paintings tends to be at the cost of downgrading his photographic sources by comparison with the somehow privileged status of painting as a medium. Storr performs the same downgrading of photography in relation to Richter's *September* in the passage quoted above. In reference to Tuymans' (1998) painting *Der Architekt*,

Figure 15. Luc Tuymans (1998) *Der Architekt*. Oil on canvas, 110 x 140 cm [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

which depicts Albert Speer on skis in a still from a home movie (Figure 15), Geimer says:

> Only when the film image of the fallen Speer has been made to appear as "disappointingly banal" is it possible for the hand of the painter to elevate it to the status of art. But there is nothing justifying this seemingly obvious hierarchy. In fact, it is questionable whether Tuymans's version in oil boasts a higher complexity than that of the historical film. (2012:31)

Geimer casts doubt on the alleged reflexivity of Tuymans' work, and the ability of his 'consciously emptied' photo-derived paintings to add meaning to the images they draw upon (2012:39).

The blurring, emptying, and subsumption of uncredited photographs into painting, as in the work of all the artists cited above, overlooks the social agency of their photographers, simply dissolving it into the aesthetic ideology of

painting. In Storr's construction of photo-derived painting, its emblematic or 'auratic' status (Benjamin, 2008:24), is the guarantor of its consolatory effect, in that it tends to abstract meaning from the particular phenomenon towards the generalised category. Thus, Richter's *October* cycle could be claimed to be about grief, rather than about the question of whether a group of left-wing terrorists were unlawfully killed in prison. The construction of Richter's process as principally concerned with critiquing photographic representation, accords with a general consensus of scepticism regarding art as a means of direct engagement with political themes.

At this point in my research I was concerned to discover whether the closer fusion of painting and photography could make of painting's emblematic function, in Georg Lukacs' terms, a means to 'the integration of the enduring aesthetic value of the work of art into the historical process' (1978:88). It occurred to me that the mutually transforming effects of each medium upon the other, including their respective conventions of display and reception, may activate a new critical potential not previously apparent in either medium alone. John Berger recognised this potential for the reframing of photography in his proposal for a new form of photographic narrative that approximates to memory itself, rather than to any linear story form (2013:104). Like Owens' work on allegory, Berger's narrative is expressed in terms reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's reflections on historical materialism in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', written in 1940: 'The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized' (1999:247). Benjamin's use of photographic metaphors to evoke a materialist approach to history in his writing, suggest the snapshot as an effective means of representing historical events in the light of their relevance to the present day, and Berger points out that a private photograph represents an excised instant in time that can be returned to a 'living context', where it generates meaning as a cherished memento (2013:57). He proposes an alternative photography whereby any photograph can be reconnected with 'social memory and social action' (2013:60), through its integration in a new context composed of other

photographs and documents for example, in which it becomes capable of activating unlimited associations.

None of the artists cited above profess any interest in the authors of the photographs they appropriate for their paintings. Indeed, Tuymans has been subject to legal proceedings relating to his unauthorised use of press photographs (Carvajal, 2015:online). In their work, photographs are construed primarily as an effective means of problematising representation, a strategy that emerged in the light of photography's susceptibility to editorial interference in the mass media and politics (Wells, 2003:304). This co-opting and misuse of photography by print, broadcast and online media is a point of departure and locus of meaning for the work of Tuymans, Richter and Sasnal. In other words, their work proceeds from a conception of photographs as disputable iconic records, rather than as traces of a social process, as in Berger's writing.

The indistinct quality of all the cited paintings seems to be an attempt to redeem the particular, through the generalising painterly means at the artists' disposal. As Mieke Bal observes, paraphrasing Adorno in her contribution to the exhibition catalogue *Beautiful Suffering*: 'there is no more radical way of erasing violence than to make something appealing from it, thus mitigating it, giving it beauty, and unwittingly redeeming it' (2007:105). In the next section I discuss how this problematic impacted my own work, and the resulting changes to the aims of my research.

1.3 Painting and conflict

Richter, Sasnal and Tuymans work within a conception of art as an autonomous aesthetic activity that somehow consoles, compensates and partly redeems a world in which our efforts to create a better society by political or revolutionary means are doomed to failure. This view has a long provenance in both modern and postmodern theoretical writing about art (Bell, 1928; Lyotard, 1984).

For example, in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Herbert Marcuse (1978) claimed that the aesthetic autonomy of art means that it can posit an alternative world, and in so doing 'represents the ultimate goal of all revolutions: the freedom and happiness of the individual' (1978:69). He conceived the quality that makes art 'artistic' as a trans-historical constant, but then concluded that 'the aesthetic form removes art from the actuality of the class struggle' (1978:8). This removal acts to retard the likelihood of progressive change by the retirement of the political drive to the imagination. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag (2004) concluded that photographic images of the victims of war merely provoke the questioning of authority without leading to direct action (2004:104), and in this respect, Sontag is in agreement with Jacques Rancière (2011), who asserted, with reference to a montage by Martha Rosler (Figure 17), that knowledge of a political circumstance does not necessarily lead to a desire to change it (2011:27).

In *The Emancipated Spectator,* Rancière (2011) argues that aesthetic experience can reframe our assumptions about the world and social relations, as well as disrupt our sense of what is knowable and achievable, but that this is at the cost of a lack of direct instrumentality (2011:72). By contrast, international relations scholar Roland Bleiker (2012) insists that art *can* contribute to discussions about conflict on the basis of the process of abstraction inherent in aesthetic representation, which, he claims, can contribute new perspectives to traditionally rational and instrumental policy making (2012:46). Bleiker is

unusual in that he advocates a political use value for art in this way, but concludes that 'a painting […] can never tell us what to do' (2012:188).

It can be seen that there is a broad consensus about the ineffectiveness of art as a means to direct political change. This scepticism becomes paradoxically emphatic when what Igor Golomstock called the 'megamachine' (2011:xiii) of the totalitarian state, recognises the ideological utility of artistic production. The decline of history painting during the nineteenth century has been attributed to its 'accommodation to political authority' (Green and Seddon, 2000:9), and it seems clear that a reassessment of the representation of conflict is necessary in order to sustain the critical or dissident potential of painting *about* history. However, if painting is to convey anything other than a general lament for the human cost of politically motivated violence, it would need to address itself to the specific causes, agents, circumstances and victims of that violence. This would involve moving beyond what Geimer calls the 'Tuymans strategy' (2012:39): an approach that attempts to preserve the aesthetic autonomy of painting, whilst incorporating political themes. In this way, Geimer observes: 'A political dimension of painting is partially cited while remaining so unbinding and free of risk that one could say everything and nothing about it' (2012:39).

In attempting to confront this problematic, I approached the subject of political violence in a manner that drew attention to the specific incident, without overtly abstracting it. Like John Keane, in the Martyr series I chose to depict victims of the Second Gulf War, but rather than diffuse distinguishing features by blurring them, I maintained a sharpness of focus and a relative visual equivalence of the rendering to the source photograph. The intention was to enlist the mimetic aptitudes of oil paint in the depiction of extreme subject matter, in order to ascertain the limits of the aesthetic autonomy that has been attributed to painting. This involved an attempt to make paintings in which the content was so visceral and immediate, that it could, at least temporarily, distract the viewer from their status as crafted artefacts.

Figure 16. Thomas Hirschhorn (2008) *UR-Collage 125D.* Print, cardboard and adhesive tape, 42 x 41 cm, Gladstone Gallery [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

The ethical dimension of the representation of conflict hinges upon this restoration of subjecthood to the depiction of victims. *Bomb Head* and *Gaddafi* offer images of the subject as corpse that fail to convey human agency, or in the latter case, the sense of a 'tyrant turned victim' (Witkowski, 2012:online). In *Martyr 2* (Figure 10), the bullet wound in the subject's chest indicates how he was killed, and implies the actions of his adversary. The dagger in the *Death of Marat* performs this function in David's painting (Figure 6). This relation of aggressor to victim has to be built in to any representation of conflict if it is to hold political potential. If the tension with an (absent) aggressor is omitted, the image necessarily takes on a timeless emblematic quality, whereby it can stand in for any victim of political violence. In this way, mortality as the lowest common denominator of conflict is repeatedly invoked, leading to a moral fatalism whereby war is seen as eternal and irremediable (Sontag, 2004:64).

Figure 17. Martha Rosler (2004) *Gladiators* from *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home.* Photomontage, 50.8 x 60.96 cm, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, Chicago [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

This, in turn, induces an abdication of responsibility amongst communities directly implicated in violence, to act to prevent it (Berger, 2013:33).

Artists working in media other than painting, employ information about specific individuals involved in conflicts such as the Second Gulf War, in a range of ways. Steve McQueen's (2007) *Queen and Country,* a cabinet containing drawers of stamps featuring photographic portraits of the British servicemen and women killed in Iraq, is a fusion of commemoration, mourning, and anti-war protest from a domestic perspective.

Thomas Hirschhorn (2008) has used photographs of corpses juxtaposed with glamour shots from magazines, in a series entitled *Ur-Collages* (Figure 16). The power of these works derives from the visual echoes and equivalences set up between drastically contrasting images, such that Hirschhorn seems to be

suggesting a causal connection between Western consumption and the political violence that arguably sustains it. This dialectical visualisation of conflict has also been employed by Martha Rosler (1967-2004) in two series of photographic montages entitled *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home*, the second of which addressed the Gulf War and included *Gladiators* (2004) (Figure 17). However, images such as those used by Hirschhorn and Rosler have not been widely incorporated into paintings in a manner that preserves their disturbingly explicit iconic content.

Martyr 1 and *2* were intended to address this apparent restriction in painting relating to recent conflict, by depicting indigenous victims of Western military operations as political subjects. The paintings are based on images that were originally posted on a website that purported to be a politically neutral repository of photographs taken by US service personnel in theatres of conflict in the Middle East.[10] The website itself has since been closed, however, many similar images can be viewed simply by entering a selection of search terms into Google. The images used are records of losses sustained by the insurgents, and in their original form, obviously could not be read as instances of their chosen means of self-memorialisation. As Sontag points out: 'The frankest representations of war, and of disaster-injured bodies, are of those who seem most foreign, therefore least likely to be known. With subjects closer to home, the photographer is expected to be more discreet' (2004:55). In *Body Horror*, John Taylor points out that images of foreign victims of Western military violence are suppressed by the media, resulting in a 'derealisation' whereby the public are unable to accept responsibility for conflicts or to act to prevent them (1998:157-58).

[10] www.undermars.com.

Figure 18. Leon Golub (1973) *Vietnam II.* Acrylic on linen, 305 x 1,219 cm, Tate Modern, London [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

The title of the Martyr series was intended to open up the possibility of an alternative reading of the images, by contrast with the objectifying tone of *Bomb Head* and other paintings in the group of cited works by Keane, including *Bag Head*, *Rag Head*, *Jar Head* and *Bag Dad*. In *Martyr 1* and *Martyr 2* the subjects may ultimately be seen in other terms: via their own construction of the meaning of death in the defence of their territory.[11]

Whereas in the cited works, Sasnal, Richter, and Keane focus exclusively on the victims of violence, like Manet, Leon Golub frequently depicted aggressor and victim in the same composition, and his practice drew heavily on photographic sources, which he collected obsessively for decades (Bird, 2000:57). These sources are not credited or immediately evident in his paintings however, which appear to have been freely executed and stylised. The limited palette of colours, stark and angular drawing, torn support, and steel eyelets by which *Vietnam II* (1973) is attached to the wall, are analogous to the harshness and brutality of the subject matter (Figure 18). The painting is redolent of a ripped tarpaulin, or a makeshift shelter, and the unprimed support eliminates any connotation of transcendence through pristine craft finish.

[11] While Keane may be taking up slang terminology used by coalition forces in an ironic manner here, its reiteration tends to confirm rather than critique the attitudes expressed.

Golub has assessed every material element of the painting in the light of its consonance with the subject. Arguably, amongst painters espousing politically radical views through the depiction of threatened violence, rather than exclusively aesthetic radicalism through formal innovation, Golub has gone furthest to assimilate the extremity of its content into the conception of his work. However, his signature style of 'expressive realism' (Bird, 2000:56) is self-referential, and ultimately distracts the viewer from the subject matter of his paintings. The unusually distressed support is striking, but also somewhat theatrical in a gallery context, and in his departure from the use of standard supports, Golub falls back onto a self-conscious form of technical innovation. This is a critique Fredric Jameson directs at Walter Benjamin's 'productionist' theory of radical practice, in which the methods of production are considered separately from their social relations: 'It is clear that Benjamin, following Brecht, tended to hypostasize techniques in abstraction from relations of production, and to idealize diversions in ignorance of the social determinants of their reproduction' (1977:107). Jameson points out the lack of a 'differential historical analysis of separate aesthetic forms' (1977:108) in Benjamin's theory, in an argument that reminds us that the social and institutional dimensions of the field of painting must be accounted for in the development of technical innovations. Indeed, Benjamin's optimism about the revolutionary potential of cinema was not borne out in the post-war period.

In all the paintings discussed in this thesis, I have used a uniform combination of canvas and stretcher support regardless of the subject matter, and in preference to unconventional supports. The intention here is to minimise attention drawn to innovations in the presentation of the work at the expense of engagement with the iconic content. I address the significance of the material construction of the paintings further in Appendix C, but for now this approach can be related to Diderot's (1765) remarks in his 'Notes on Painting', to the effect that: 'Everything is connected, everything coheres. Art and artist are forgotten. It's no longer a question of a canvas but of nature, of a portion of the universe' (1995:205). That is, the painting is intended to refer the viewer

first and foremost, to the iconic content of the source photograph, regardless of whether that content is verifiable. Additionally, as the research progressed, the institutional context and display setting became more and more significant, and in some exhibitions obstructive to the aims of the work. As a result, the need to find settings and spaces that promote rather than diffuse the reception of the content became paramount (see Chapters Three and Four).

Whilst Golub's signature style of painting is immediately recognisable, in a photo-informed practice, as defined in the Introduction above, the decentring of what could be called the artist's voice or distinctive manner, may enable a closer critical symbiosis between the intentions of the photographers and those of the artists who use their work. Lynne Berger (2009) praises Joachim Schmid for his use of found photographs in a manner that 'challenges a more traditional view of the artist as an identifiable, authoritative and deliberate *auteur*' (2009:33). At a basic level, it is an artistic courtesy to credit sources wherever possible, but there is also a prospect of empathetic extension on the part of the artist in the move to pluralise the authorial presence in the work. There is also the possibility of a critical distancing from the ideological perspective of the original photographer, via the transcription of their photographs. This possibility is discussed by Rainer Rochlitz in relation to Richter's work, and Rochlitz asserts that a painting based on a photograph can transform the latter into a 'sign revealing a way of seeing' (2000:105). This is a particularly important consideration in the case of photographs taken by the victors in a conflict scenario, and another issue I will return to in Chapter Two, in relation to an album of photographs probably taken by German civil administrators during the Second World War.

John Berger's proposed alternative photographic narrative form is also based upon this minimisation of the author's presence: 'The teller becomes less present, less insistent, for he no longer employs words of his own; he speaks only through quotations, through his choice and placing of the photographs' (2013:104). To the end of adapting Berger's new photographic narrative form to

my own purposes, a far closer interrogation and synthesis of the photographic source material began to seem necessary at this point, in order to take account of the agency of its authors, and to develop a much fuller sense of the context of their decision-making.

1.4 Changes to the aims of the research

Despite the relatively sharp focus and fidelity to the immediate circumstances of the terrain in the Martyr paintings, as hand-crafted approximations of low-resolution digital images, they inevitably abstract from, and substitute painterly effects for, indistinct visual information. Their didactic purpose overextends this lack of information without accounting for how, why, when, where, by whom and of whom they were taken and distributed. In other words, their social conditions of production and consumption, as indicated in Jameson's critique of Benjamin above, and outlined by Sontag (2004:55), are overlooked in favour of their polemical utility. The shocking and repellent nature of the images also acts to occlude this sense of social agency, and ultimately reduces, rather than enhances, their political efficacy. Whilst the original digital images do retain a sense of conflict as a two-sided process, my use of titles that inferred a critique of Western actions in the Middle East meant that the overtly political connotation of the work was confined to the accompanying textual element. The problem of the extraneousness of explanatory text in the presentation of a project also arose in a different way in connection with the series Poland 1940-1941, and is discussed again in Chapter Two.

The same problems impacted upon a second group of paintings produced immediately after the Martyr series. The paintings were based on 35mm slides taken by American servicemen during the Vietnam War (Figure 19). The slides were purchased from an auction website, and were dated from 1967 to 1973. However, the absence of any information identifying either the location, the photographer/s, or the subjects, discouraged further research and limited the

Figure 19. David Gledhill (2014) *Vietnam 1.* Oil on canvas*,* 92 x 134 cm.

scope for the development of the series.[12] The impossibility of crediting those responsible for the slides or depicted in them, also made the prospect of using them to make work intended to be critical of US foreign policy ethically questionable, in that those depicted may not have seen active combat.

At this point, I began to look for source material with a documented provenance in an attempt to make the photographic act, rather than the ontological status of photography, integral to the conception of the work. In their essay 'From presence to the performative: rethinking photographic indexicality', David Green and Joanna Lowry point out that photographs are indexical 'because, first and foremost, they were taken' (2003:48). Prior to any conjecture on whether a photograph transmits an objective record of reality, the fact of its having been taken suggests that its objectivity is 'discursively produced' (2003:58). In other

[12] The slides arrived in boxes with unrelated inscriptions, and sets featuring the same individuals appeared to be split across several batches purchased on separate occasions.

words, it is a product of a process of designation by an individual in an identifiable social context.

This new emphasis required a much more research-driven approach to the production of paintings, to provide a multi-perspectival, or in Berger's terms 'radial' representation of the subject matter. The combination of a new social conception of photography and ethical issues relating to the use of unaccredited photographs of unnamed victims in order to stimulate awareness of conflict, necessitated a wider conception of agency in historical and political circumstances. The chance discovery of an inscribed German photograph album dating from 1941, in the light of Raul Hilberg's account of the 'vast establishment of familiar functionaries' (1992:ix) in the Third Reich, and Mary Fulbrook's forensic examination of the culpability of 'Hitler's facilitators' (2012:356), suggested a different approach to the representation of conflict, based on images with a definite provenance. This repositioning of the practice within what I describe above as the spectrum of historical subject matter, resulted in the production of two series of paintings and associated works, in which I was able to ascertain some of the circumstances of the production of the source photographs, to undertake site visits, and to diversify media in order to represent the past as a social, spatial, and temporal realm. The aims of the research therefore changed towards the use of amateur photographs to depict more distant historical events, seen as foreshadowing current political circumstances. This involved a re-conception of 'contemporary subject matter' to mean events of historical significance within collective living memory, rather than exclusively my own lifespan. The availability of amateur snapshots dating back to the 1920s facilitated this development and significantly extended the scope of the practice to include a broad range of social groups, either impacted by, or implicated in, the regimes responsible for the major conflicts of the twentieth century.

In addition to this re-conception of the photographic source as a record of social activity, the key outcome of this early stage of the research was the positioning of the practice in relation to the field of contemporary photo-derived painting. As discussed above, the avoidance of any cropping, collaging, montaging or blurring of the source material, and the relative fidelity of the paintings to the iconic content of the photographs on which they are based, distinguishes the practice and constitutes a contribution to knowledge in terms of the broadening of the range of strategies by which photographic sources might be integrated into painting. The precise nature of the relationship of the paintings to their sources is explored in greater depth in the next chapter, but the fundamental distinction here is that a photo-informed rather than a photo-derived methodology has been employed, in order to sustain the specificity of the source as a record of situated social activity undertaken by particular individuals under particular conditions.

Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined the changes to the aims of my research from a polemical to an historiographical form of painting. I described two series of paintings made in response to instances of history painting addressing contemporary political violence, produced during a period extending from *The Death of Marat* by Jacques-Louis David (1793), to *Gaddafi* by Wilhelm Sasnal (2011). The Martyr and Vietnam series were intended to contribute to discussions about conflict by restoring a sense of subjecthood to the agents and victims of Western military actions across two historically specific theatres of conflict. Produced at the start of the course of study, these series can also be seen in the context of contemporary photo-derived painting addressing political conflict, in which meaning is abstracted from photographic documentation through the use of blurring techniques or gestural mark-making. By contrast with these forms of practice, my work utilises a photo-informed approach which sustains a fidelity to the iconic content of the source. Whilst this approach was

employed throughout the research, in these first series it was used in order to stimulate awareness of political violence beyond the limits of the process of aesthetic abstraction and the critique of representation. Both series were abandoned as a result of the absence of provenance for the source material used, which limited prospects for further research into its conditions of production.

These issues of attribution, combined with observations by a range of commentators regarding the political limits of representation, contributed to a reassessment of my research aims. This process enabled the use of a broader range of second-hand amateur photographic material, and brought about a shift of focus from the perpetrators and victims of conflict, to the wider social groups impacted by, or implicated in it. At the same time, John Berger's non-prescriptive advocacy of a new spatialised form of photographic narrative, provided a model for a research-driven practice capable of incorporating both textual and visual material. This was essentially a shift from an engagement with the assumed veracity of the photographic image, towards an investigation through painting, of photography as a social activity.

Subsequently, the research shifted trajectory from a speculative exploration of the means by which painting might achieve a form of political agency, to the development of a contemporary form of history painting. The frame of reference was extended from a period bracketed by my own recollection, to one of collective memory, as manifested in amateur snapshot photographs and related documents produced during the past 100 years. This shift was brought about by the need to incorporate the social, geographical and temporal contexts of the photographic source material, as well as the agency of the photographers, into the conception and development of the work.

Chapter Two: Poland 1940 – 1941

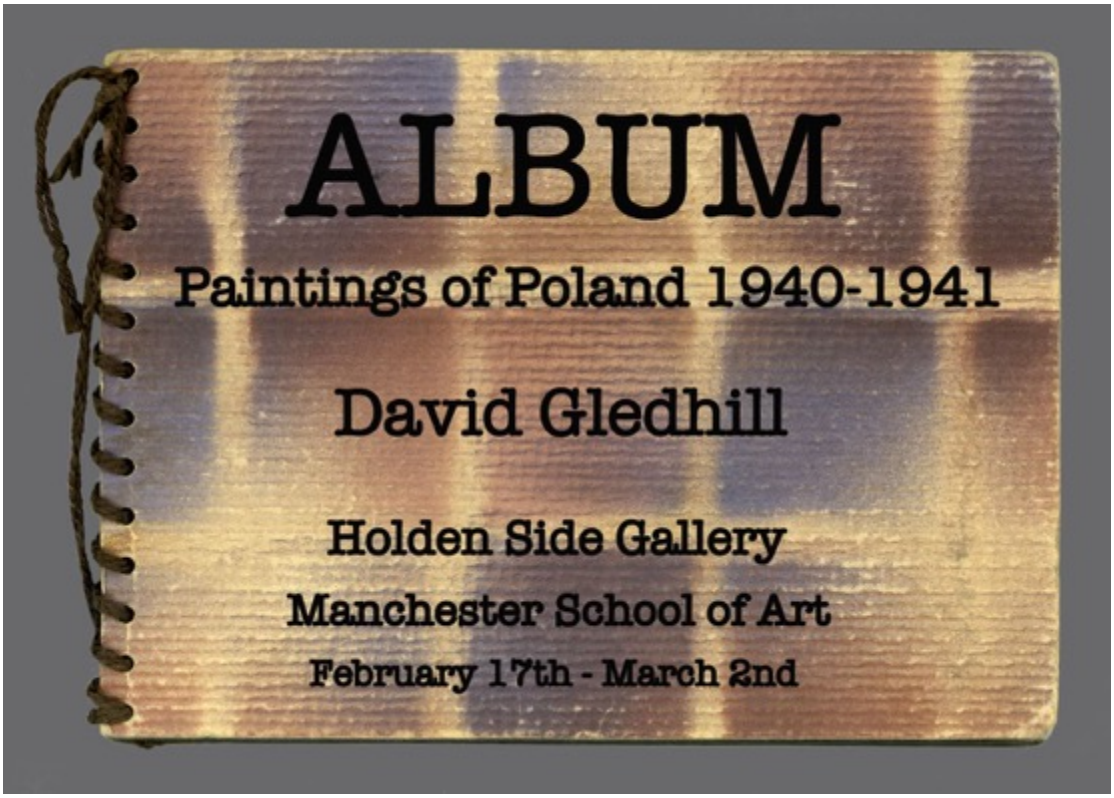

Figure 20. David Gledhill *Poster for 'Album' exhibition at Grosvenor Gallery, Manchester School of Art*.

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss a body of work entitled Poland 1940-1941 (2014-15), comprised of eleven paintings and a film. The objective to integrate a sense of the social agency of the original photographer(s) into the conception of the work, directed the decision to base a project on an amateur photograph album purchased from a flea market in Frankfurt in 2013. This album contains an inscription which includes the date June 1940, the name Erna Adlou, and the location Ostoberschlesien, or Eastern Upper Silesia. The provenance of the album thereby enabled further investigation of the historical, social, and geographical circumstances of its production (see Appendix B).

The album was apparently composed as a linked sequence of episodes, largely featuring the same group of individuals. It prompted an investigation of historiographical theories relating to the shared characteristics of historical and fictional narratives that, in turn, informed the development of the project, the treatment of the subject matter and the display of the work. These theories are pertinent to the extent that amateur photograph albums have been described as a function of the 'desire to tell a story' (Struk, 2011:51). Albums and sequences of photographs relating to the Holocaust have also been the objects of ethical and historiographical debates, and later in this Chapter I consider the overall implications of these debates for the adoption, deferral or rejection of narrative form.

After this consideration of narrative, I go on to examine the shared performative aspects of painting and photography, and the material and iconic similarities and differences between the paintings and the photographs, in order to arrive at a sense of the contribution made to the meaning of the work by their transcription into painted form. The particular technique employed in the making of the paintings was also used in the subsequent two series discussed in Chapters Three and Four, and the account of it provided here applies to all the works based on second-hand photographic sources referred to in this thesis.[13]

This was the first project to be completed during the period of study, and has been exhibited in several contexts, including open studios in 2014 and 2015, a group exhibition in 2014 and a one-person show at the Grosvenor Gallery at Manchester School of Art in 2015. The significance of these contexts will be assessed below. Poland 1940-1941 was also the first project to include a film,

[13] The novel material and technical aspects of the various stages of production in relation to the history of Western figurative painting techniques, are explored in Appendix C.

Inside front cover of the album with inscription.

Photographs 1 – 3

Photographs 4 – 5

Photographs 6 - 7

Photographs 8 – 9

Photographs 10 – 11

Photographs 12 – 13

Photographs 14 – 15 and 16 (below)

Figure 21. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album*. Collection of David Gledhill

and the relation of *Abordnung* to the paintings and the overall conception of the project is also considered. At this stage of the research, projects consistently proceeded from the discovery of sets of second-hand photographs, and the objective in this chapter is to consider whether a figurative painting practice based on found photographs can facilitate a process of historical witnessing, and if so, how that might be achieved.

Having distinguished the practice from the field of photo-derived painting in Chapter One, I conclude this Chapter by situating the project in the context of works by contemporary artists who engage with history through the medium of photography, including both amateur snapshots and their own photographs.

1. Poland 1940-1941 as historical representation

The photograph album used as source material for Poland 1940-1941 measures 11 cm by 16 cm, and contains 16 photographs with two missing (Figure 21). There are two dates inscribed in the album: one inside the front cover, and one on the reverse of the last photograph. The former reads '*Juni 1940',* and the latter, 17 December 1941. These dates are referenced in the title of the project, although it is quite possible that photographs in the album were taken either before or after them.

The inscription on the inside front cover reads '*Adlou Erna's abordnung nach Polen im Juni 1940 (Ostoberschlesien)*', which translates as 'Erna Adlou's secondment to Poland in June 1940 (Eastern Upper Silesia)'. Using Google Earth, it was possible to identify the location in images four to nine as Sosnowiec, a large town in southern Poland approximately 30 km from Oświęcim (Auschwitz). The remaining locations were unidentifiable, although

there are bodies of water near Sosnowiec that may have provided the setting for photographs 11 to 14.[14]

This was the first project for which an identifiable geographical location became a central consideration in the development of the work. The discovery that several of the photographs had been taken in Sosnowiec, designated by Mary Fulbrook as the 'antechamber of Auschwitz' (2012:356), meant that from an early stage, the possibility of investigating specific sites of historical importance in the area became apparent. The resulting research trip enabled the production of a film about the project, and started the process of diversification of source material and media that culminated in The Berlin Olympic Village Project (2015-17), and *Karel*/Karl (2017-19), and which is ongoing.

1.1 A Small Town near Auschwitz

The dates in the album suggested that the depicted subjects were civilian administrators, possibly drafted in to either Sosnowiec or neighbouring Bedzin as what Mary Fulbrook calls 'facilitators of Nazi rule' (2012:9). Fulbrook's (2012) book, entitled *A Small Town Near Auschwitz*, examines the career of Udo Klausa, the *Landrat* or District Administrator of the Bedzin and Sosnowiec area at the time the subjects in the photographs were present. In it, she provides a succinct account of the responsibilities of the civil administration:

> Removing Jews from areas to be occupied by Germans, and displacing and exploiting Poles, were, for anyone working under the direction of the Ministry of the Interior at the time, included under what was meant by 'purely administration'. The civil service was intrinsically political, inescapably caught up in and compromised by the aims of the Third Reich and its Führer, Adolf Hitler. (2012:10)

[14] An account of the process by which the location was ascertained is included in Appendix B.

In the preface, Fulbrook declares her personal connection with Klausa, who was married to her godmother Alexandra, a school friend of Fulbrook's mother. Fulbrook also establishes both her own presence in the text as author, and the significance of the themes of memory and representation: 'embedded in this exploration are unsettling personal uncertainties as I seek to confront an emergent historical view of the *Landrat* with his own later version of his past' (2012:4).

This powerful emotional drive to uncover the precise nature of the participation of an individual in a theatre of conflict, where that individual is personally known to the author, is one that also motivates much of my own recent work as a result of my father's verbal accounts of his wartime experiences. In my own case, this drive is diffused into a general curiosity about German perspectives on the Second World War, a curiosity that was sanctioned during my childhood. Marianne Hirsch's (2001) term 'postmemory', evokes the mixture of intimidation, emotional oppression and reverence that the children of the wartime generation may feel towards their parents' experiences: 'experiences that they "remember" only as the narratives and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental as to constitute memories in their own right' (2001:218).

Fulbrook's 'need to know' (2012:22) the extent of Klausa's culpability for events in the Bedzin area for which he was responsible, is, as Hirsch confesses, indicative of 'the experience of those who, like me, have grown up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth' (2001:221). Fulbrook stresses that any professional historian could have told the same story given access to the same documents, but as it proceeds, the book takes on the quality of a personal mission, perhaps as a result of what she calls 'a greater emotional investment in trying to arrive at an adequate interpretation' (2012:22). The reader empathises with Fulbrook's determination to discover the truth about a man she had known for decades. This is what propels the book as a case study of a middle

rank bureaucrat, and his accommodation to, and misgivings about, evolving Nazi policies.

In his description of the careers of three officials from the area of Poland known during the Second World War as the General Government: Franz Rademacher, Harald Turner and Hans Biebow, Christopher Browning provides a useful summary of the process by which this kind of accommodation came about:

> The personal adjustment that each had to make flowed so naturally out of the logic of his past conception of the Jewish question, and dovetailed so completely with his own career self-interest, that there was no sudden crisis of conscience, no traumatic agonizing, no consciousness of crossing an abyss, virtually no foot-dragging, and only occasional attempts to escape personal involvement, provided that it could be done without damage to career. (1995:143)

Fulbrook's dual presence in her text as both professional historian and family friend of its principal character, is made explicit through her intermittent first-person narration of the research process, and this distinguishes it from Browning's equally methodical but more distanced approach. Whilst the later chapters in the book comprise what seems to be a chronological narrative of the escalation of persecution, there are frequent recaps and temporal dislocations as different aspects of the predicament of the Jews under Klausa's jurisdiction, and different survivor testimonies are examined. For example, public hangings are cited in connection with black market dealing because of the scarcity of food in Chapter Seven (2012:177), and again in Chapter Eight (2012:205), as an element in the general escalation towards genocide during 1941-1942. There is a sense of the rubbing of Fulbrook's narrative against its source chronicle that recalls Roland Barthes' distinction between the temporality of the historical narrative and the chronology of the events themselves, in 'The Discourse of History' (1981:8).

Borrowing his terms from Roman Jakobson, Barthes distinguishes three principle methods by which the historian integrates his or her own temporality with that of the events they are describing, which he calls 'organizing shifters' (1981:9). Firstly, the historian may seem to accelerate the passage of time by taking less time to recount longer intervals. Secondly, they may accentuate the depth of time by referring to the origins or beginnings of a newly introduced character in the narrative, as Fulbrook does in Chapter Four. The third kind of organizing shifter is the preface, in which the historian inaugurates their narrative, thereby bridging the time referred to in the 'utterance', or what is said, and the present 'act of uttering'. In *A Small Town Near Auschwitz,* Fulbrook uses the preface to introduce herself as the writer, and talks through her ambivalence about embarking on the project in the light of her personal connections with the subject, concluding that 'it is not what might be called a purely academic account' (2012:viii). Fulbrook's frequent first-person intrusions into the historical material convince the reader that, at the very least, the book is truthful about the difficulties entailed in its production. The emotional tone that these intrusions carry, distract one from the means by which Fulbrook, as an historian, legitimates her account of the period, by foregrounding the subjectivity of that account, rather than attempting to pass it off as objectively true or definitive. As Hayden White remarks, the discourse employed by historians *constitutes* the objects of study, whilst pretending to simply analyse them objectively (1978:2). By substituting emotional candidness for claims of historical truth, Fulbrook at least convinces the reader of her honesty, if not, for Klausa's surviving family members, the justness of her final verdict (2012:350).

Fulbrook's comparison of survivor accounts, official reports, excerpts from his wife's letters, Klausa's memoirs, and his trial during the Ludwigsburg hearings in Germany in the 1960s and 70s, build up a case against him that is persuasive in its revision of his judicial acquittal. Throughout the book, Fulbrook carefully balances the evidence both for and against Klausa, concluding that his claims of ignorance are typical of the widespread postwar disavowal of responsibility for genocide amongst Germans. Fulbrook advocates an approach to the subject

that considers the contributions of the facilitators as well as the immediate perpetrators and victims, grounded as these facilitators were, in their 'unthinking roles as carriers of racist practices in everyday life' (2012:349). The application to present day conflicts is not lost on Fulbrook, who reminds us that the world is 'still marked by ideologically inspired acts of violence and genocide' (2012:342).

All these aspects of Fulbrook's text raised issues that were formative in my approach to the project. Factors relating to the nature of the subjects' involvement in the region, the implications of this involvement for the artistic treatment of the album, the nature of my own agency in the production and display of the work, and its relevance to present day political circumstances are explored below. The research into the location, timeframe and individuals depicted in the album is discussed in Appendix B.

In the final chapter, the author's anger towards Klausa gradually gives way to a broader reflection upon the 'structures of power' (2012:342) that were shaped by, and in turn, formed the German civil administration in their support of a system that enabled genocide. Fulbrook's model of a more dialectical examination of the subject is the net historiographical outcome of the project, but the strains upon the form of the book exerted by her personal involvement with the subject seem to yield instead, a new reflexive kind of historical narrative in which every contributing voice is relativised, and absolute historical truth recedes. Her book combines the widest range of cited sources, a kind of authorial confessional, and a protracted indictment of its subject that only makes sense as an attempt to 'gain glimpses, collate fragments, and to try to develop some sense of what went on in this antechamber of Auschwitz' (2012:356).

As White points out, in traditional historiography an historian is free to employ narrative at intervals in a text in order to set out 'what really happened' (1987:28), and may then break off to address the reader directly in order to

interpret these events. This latter 'dissertative' mode (1987:28) may offer a false interpretation, as Fulbrook herself admits, but as White insists, the story form of the narrative is already potentially in itself a misrepresentation, particularly where it draws upon oral histories (1978:58). Fulbrook does not expatiate at length on the limitations of the survivor testimonies she mobilises, preferring to cite them in order to provide a fuller picture of the consequences of Klausa's performance of his duties. However, her incorporation of herself in the story and the contrasting of her own views with those of the Klausa family, underline the multivalent nature of the 'empirical evidence' (2012:349) that she draws upon. What we are left with in Fulbrook's book, is the advocacy of a more balanced study of the period, that examines the full spectrum of involvement with the Holocaust, from facilitators to perpetrators and victims: 'We have, now, to put these different sides of the story together, to understand how events could unfold in the way they did' (2012:355).

Whilst the book does 'rage' at Klausa, the importance of 'understanding the preconditions of mass murder' (2012:343) is ultimately more significant than his individual culpability, and as Fulbrook (2012:337) declares: 'The ordinary Nazi's have to be written back in', if this is to be achieved. Fulbrook's admission in the text that the conclusions she has drawn may represent a 'glass half full' (2012:349), makes a clean breast of both the subjective and selective nature of recall, and the necessity of situating the listener, in this case herself, in any dealings with historical witnessing. As Frances Guerin points out: 'The ethical weight of this process demands that the psychoanalyst-listener also be a witness to his or her self' (2012:26).

In his review of Fulbrook's book, Avraham Barkai (2013) draws a parallel with *The Flat,* a film directed by Arnon Goldfinger (2011), in which Goldfinger attempts to comprehend his Jewish grandparents' continued friendship with a prominent Nazi after the war: 'His declared aim to make this film was to find an answer to his uneasy feelings about this renewal. In the end he had to admit that he could not find it' (2013:417). To an extent, Fulbrook's book supports

James Young's (2000) assertion that history must encompass the means by which historical events are documented or recounted, as an integral part of any search for 'verifiable fact' (2000:11). However, despite Fulbrook's convincing indictment of Klausa, her book cannot fully explain, work through, or extirpate the powerful feelings engendered in the author by her family connections with the *Landrat* of Bedzin. The historian's 'meticulous' (Barkai, 2013:414) research methodology, and the compound form of *A Small Town Near Auschwitz*, cannot fully exorcise the emotional surplus of the events of the period under study, or provide definitive answers in response to the 'need to know'. As Fulbrook concludes: 'It is impossible to convey the full magnitude of the events and the multitude of experiences of those living through these times' (2012:356).

Fulbrook's book was invaluable during the research into the timeframe of the album and likely responsibilities of its subjects, and also for the planning of the research visit to Sosnowiec. Encountered during the production of Poland 1940-1941, it provided a model of historiographical practice that informed the development of the project, and particularly that of The Berlin Olympic Village Project, as described in Chapter Three. Fulbrook's 'collation of fragments' was taken as the organising principle of Poland 1940-1941, in which a series of snapshots were transcribed into paintings and displayed in arrangements that disassembled the narrative implicit in their source album, as discussed below. The range of material that Fulbrook draws upon and her explicit presence in her text as author, were taken as the point of departure for The Berlin Olympic Village Project, in which disparate visual and textual material provided a collage of differing temporal perspectives on a geographical site of historical significance, making my curation of these elements self-evident.

By contrast with the evidence and methodology brought to bear on her subject by Fulbrook, Poland 1940-1941 draws exclusively upon the iconic content of the photographs in the album, and no other documents relating to the individuals, location, or timeframe, were incorporated into the presentation of the work.

Whilst the precise nature of the responsibilities held by the subjects in the photographs may form the basis of further enquiry, for the duration of the production of the paintings they were assumed to be German civil administrators assigned to Poland during the Second World War, but beyond this, no further judgement was intended. Indeed, as Janina Struk reminds us with reference to albums without captions, it is difficult to gauge the ideological convictions of a photographer from a photograph alone (2004:68).

As an artistic project, Poland 1940-1941 was not necessarily subject to the same professional strictures as a 'scholarly work' (2012:viii) such as Fulbrook's, and yet, as previously noted, postmodern historiographers such as White draw parallels between historical and fictional accounts of past events that appear to sanction both disciplines to borrow methods freely from one another. White claims that historical narratives are 'verbal fictions' (1978:82), comparing them with novels. If narrative is hard to avoid as a means of imposing meaning on the past, a project that entailed the production of paintings from a photograph album was enmeshed in narrative from the outset.

Regardless of whether photograph albums tell stories as Struk claims, the snapshots are amateur images, and as Guerin argues, amateur images promote narrativisation through their technical and aesthetic shortcomings (2012:24). The viewer contributes a compensatory narrative to make up for these shortcomings and ambiguities. The physical distance between the amateur photographer and their subject, the distance in time between the original exposure and its later viewing, and most importantly perhaps, the historical distance between the events as represented in the images and those same events as they are depicted in our own time, all stimulate us to introduce ourselves as agents into the spaces of interpretation offered by the photographs. Put simply, we tend to tell ourselves stories to fill in the gaps in the information contained in old photographs.

In addition to the narrative connotations of photographs arranged in an album format, the series form employed in Poland 1940-1941 will inevitably tend to prompt narrative interpretation, particularly since the same individuals feature in several of the paintings. As Stephen Bann points out, an historical series is generally construed culturally in narrative terms, despite the validity of historical annals for example, which simply present sequences of events without any sense of 'discursive continuity' (1984:62). To determine whether the paintings in Poland 1940-1941 make up a story, and if so, whose story it is, will necessitate a brief examination of historical narrative as an explanatory strategy.

1.2 Historical narrative

The structuralist analysis of historiography propounded by White (1973) and Barthes (1981) amongst others, proposes that all historical narratives are essentially literary or poetic, and ideological. Both authors claim that historical discourses, whether narrative history or philosophy of history, are prefigured using linguistic tropes, such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche or irony, and refer to a selected set of facts, that are then subsumed into a narrative form such as romance, tragedy, comedy or epic, and interpreted to ideological ends using an identifiable mode of argument. According to White, the interpretative strategies that historians bring to their accounts of past events, and which pretend to a degree of objectivity, simply disguise the equally likely possibility that the past 'makes no sense whatsoever' (1987:73). Objectivity is an effect of discourse rather than a means to the truthful representation of the historical record.

Neither Barthes nor White dispute the existence or nature of historical facts as verifiable objects of study, prior to their formulation into narrative history. However, as soon as these facts are developed beyond the annal or chronicle in which they are recorded, they take on one or another literary form, after which

their referent becomes 'narrativity' itself rather than the events ostensibly referred to (White, 1987:30). In *The Content of the Form*, White asserts that 'any given set of real events can be emplotted in a number of ways' (1987:44). This does not grant the historian the license to deny that events occurred, or to misrepresent events 'whose reality remains attestable on the level of '"positive" historical inquiry' (1987:78). However, the meaning of historical narrative is figurative, and allegorical or mythic, in that it 'tests the capacity of a culture's fictions to endow real events with the kinds of meaning that literature displays' (1987:45). Again, White omits to describe what kinds of meanings literary works produce.

White does not concede that because of the promiscuity of the historical record, the practice of history itself has no truth-value, but asserts instead that the truth-value engendered by historical narrative is of a kind produced by works of art or fiction (1987:57). In *Tropics of Discourse,* White lambasts historians who adhere to mid nineteenth-century literary realist conventions for their supposed objectivity, rather than taking advantage of the many formal and expressive innovations of modernist fiction (1978:42-43), because in modern times 'discontinuity, disruption, and chaos is our lot' (1978:50). According to White, his own position, along with the majority of contemporary historians, is ironic, in that he assumes a mistrust of language as a means of access to the historical truth. That is to say, his own tropic prefiguration of history is ironic (White, 1973:xii).

So, White's account of historical discourse establishes a common ground between historical narratives and other works of imagination, only drawing a distinction between history and fiction on the basis of the reference to empirically verifiable events exterior to the text in the former, as opposed to invented ones in the latter (1987:44). Whilst White is predominantly concerned with linguistic art forms, simply because an artistic work is composed of visual images, we cannot assume it has no implicit narrative content. W.J.T. Mitchell has surveyed the history of distinctions between images and written or spoken

language, observing that history painting provides a 'language precise enough to let us verbalise what depicted figures are thinking, feeling, or saying' (1986:41).

The critique of narrative history propounded by White and Barthes, suggested that careful consideration had to be given to the use of the album, both in terms of the danger of making assumptions about the moral culpability of its subjects, and of inadvertently replicating the attitudes underpinning its production as a kind of story.

1.3 Poland 1940-1941 and narrative

If the paintings alone were to offer any critical judgement on the German civilian administration of Poland, or the horrors of Nazism, the iconic content of the photographs would need to be altered, exaggerated or distorted, or the paintings displayed in conjunction with textual and other documentary material. Instead, and by contrast with the sources used for the Vietnam and Martyr series discussed in Chapter One, the provenance of the album prompted me to investigate the social context of its production more closely, and for this investigation to contribute to the conception of the work.

In the years leading up to the Second World War, the Nazis encouraged amateur photography as a means of embodying and extending the National Socialist ideals of family and community (Guerin, 2012:75). Magazines such as *Photofreund* advocated the documentation of everyday life in the Third Reich as a celebration of German racial purity, and when Germans travelled abroad in wartime, this spirit informed the recording of 'exotic indigenous people and their culture' (Struk, 2004:24). As Struk observes, German soldiers frequently photographed Jews in the ghettos of Poland, partly as a nervous response to propaganda about 'a threat to the health and morality of every good Aryan' (2004:59). Susie Linfield quotes Joe J. Heydecker, who worked as a lab

technician for a Propaganda Company of the German army, talking about the levels of awareness of the plight of the Jews amongst Nazi administrators: 'My wife told me that all the officials of the civilian administration, from the highest ranks down to secretaries, talked about Auschwitz and Treblinka and the liquidation of the Jews without the slightest demur' (2012:86).

The strikingly anodyne nature of the snapshots in the album called to mind Hannah Arendt's use of the phrase 'the banality of evil' (1963:287), to describe the apparent obliviousness of Adolf Eichmann to the gravity of the crimes for which he was tried in 1961. In the postscript to her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt (1963) critiques the absence of any adequate legal categories that could have been applied to the unprecedented crimes of the Nazis, and in particular to counter Eichmann's defence that he was 'only a "tiny cog" in the machinery of the Final Solution' (1963:289). Arendt's analysis of the trial, and her use of the phrase 'administrative massacres' (1963:288) to describe the culpability of the bureaucratic agencies of Nazi Germany, helped to frame a more cautious and considered approach to the project and its moral implications.

In addition, Fulbrook's painstaking analysis of the degree and nature of the culpability of the facilitators of Nazi rule, concludes with a declaration of the impossibility of adequately describing or understanding the Nazi genocide on the basis of 'any historical account' (2012:356). Fulbrook's conclusion set another ethical and semantic horizon for the project, and complemented Berel Lang's advocacy of the chronicle as the only historiographical form adequate to the representation of the 'Final Solution' (1992:307). In the light of Lang's moral imperative to avoid narrative or figurative language, an alternative strategy taking account of photographs as 'traces' (Zelizer, 2001:223) was considered. Rather than attempting to use the snapshots in the album as the basis for a counter-narrative, or a critical commentary on Nazi racial theory, they could instead be considered as a discontinuous set of momentary visual records. Indeed, Fulbrook's claim that the most we can expect to do is to 'gain glimpses, collate fragments' (2012:356) is echoed in a passage in his essay 'Narrativity in

the Representation of Reality', in which White asks: 'Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles, and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see "the end" in every beginning?' (1987:24).

White proposes an alternative form of history that makes a point of simply reproducing the sequence of events in any set without lending them any logical or plot-like structure by imposing syntactical emphasis on one or another of them. White's hypothetical chronicle would suggest that seriality is the only sense that can be made of the past. One event simply follows another. His illustration includes quotation marks by which a set of occurrences notated as a chronological "*a, b, c, d, e……., n*" (1978:93) can be seen to have been deliberately left uninflected. White construes histories that use the chronicle form in this way as 'antidotes to their false or overemplotted counterparts' (1978:93).

Applied to photographs in an album, White's sequence proposes a strategy by which a 'cognitively responsible history' (1978:93) might be produced. Regardless of what White means by this phrase, unless the album is included alongside the paintings, the viewer will remain unaware of the sequence of images in it. Additionally, the original order of the exposure of the photographs is unrecoverable, and the arrangement of the photographs in the album cannot be assumed to be an accurate chronicle of events as they happened. The key point here though, is that the agency of the artist or historian in refraining from arranging or rearranging the facts to tell a different story, needs to be made evident somehow in the uninflected sequence that White suggests. In that way, Erna Adlou's visual construction of her *abordnung* would neither be reiterated in its original form, nor contrived into a new and critical narrative form, for example by curating paintings of the ghetto scenes as the culminating images in the sequence. How could the paintings 'quote' the photographs as traces, without necessarily interpreting them?

Geoffrey Batchen characterises the photograph album as a 'vehicle for storytelling' (2008:135), in which the apparently chronological sequencing of the individual snapshots acts as a structure to support the narrative. The Erna Adlou album has been contrived to start with images of departure on a station platform, includes a tour of the open ghetto on Modrzejowska Street in Sosnowiec and scenes of summer bathing, before concluding with a posed domestic interior that reads as a kind of reunion for Advent in December 1941. The overall impression is of an exciting foreign posting, with a sense of group cohesion and geniality. The abandonment of this narrative sequencing would, in White's terms, offer a more objective representation of reality, or at least photograph albums 'either as mere sequence without beginning or end or as sequences of beginnings that only terminate and never conclude' (1987:24). Clearly the curation of the project in exhibition settings is crucial to this aspect of the intended meaning. In Section 2.8 below, I examine each of the iterations of the display of the paintings in terms of their consonance with these objectives.

2. Production of the paintings

The meaning of the paintings does not consist exclusively in the avoidance of their original narrative order as photographs in an album, and this effect could be achieved through the enlargement and rearrangement of the photographs themselves. Furthermore, the wider tonal contrasts, and even the material qualities of the canvas and stretcher of each painting, could be replicated by processing the images digitally and printing them onto a deep-sided canvas support. In order to determine what the transcription of the photographs adds or subtracts from their meaning as images, it is necessary to examine some aspects of the paintings that distinguish them materially and semantically from the photographs. The points I consider also contribute to the sense in which the paintings defer narrative interpretation, *prior* to their arrangement in an

exhibition. The following sections apply to all the paintings based on second-hand snapshots produced during the period of study.

2.1 Painting and photography as performative processes

I start this section by reintegrating an expanded sense of the process of making paintings into constructions of their meaning. In *Art as Performance,* David Davies counters the claim that the proper focus of analysis is the art object in isolation, with the argument that 'artistic appreciation must take detailed account of the history of making of a product of artistic activity' (2004:66). Davies distinguishes between several moments in the production of a work: an 'intentional generative' act, a 'vehicular medium' or specific materials, and an 'artistic medium', understood as the set of shared conventions by which the physical media are manipulated and through which the artist makes 'a statement', and produces a 'focus of appreciation' (2004:80). Davies' contention that art is a performative process in which the artist is free to nominate any part of the process as a focus, is helpful in mapping some common ground between photography and painting.

Davies points out that if the artist has manipulated the vehicular medium in a way that is germane to the appreciation of the work, that technique should be considered as integral to its meaning. This manipulation could include, for example, the decision to use only black pigment and a subtractive method of paint application, as in Poland 1940-1941 (see Section 2.3), so that the viewer must 'refer the manifest work to the generative performance' (2004:71).[15] In this statement, Davies echoes Harold Rosenberg's slightly narrower conception of painting as an act, rather than simply an object. Although Rosenberg's existential construction of 'action painting' in 'The American Action Painters', first published in 1952, precludes representation, he does at least reintegrate

[15] Empirically this is the case, as visitors to the studio frequently scrutinise the paintings closely in an attempt to work out how they were made.

the activity of the painter into the interpretation of painting, and along with it: 'Anything that has to do with action – psychology, philosophy, history, mythology' (1970:39).

Davies goes on to argue that the collecting of the source material, the making of studies and the process of production itself are also integral to appreciation, even if there is no material evidence of these 'explorations' in the finished work (2004:82). These stages in the production generated the choice of '*that* vehicle to articulate *that* artistic statement' (Davies, 2004:83). In other words, the paintings are traces, or evidence of the activity of the artist leading up to their completion. This will be seen to be the case with the photographs of David Levinthal referred to below, and Levinthal considers the activity of collecting the vintage figurines he uses as integral to the works he produces with them (Young, 2000:51).

Both John Berger (2013:57) and Susan Sontag (2004:21) talk about the photograph as a 'trace'. In semiotic terms, a trace translates as an index, and photographs are frequently referred to as indexical signs, in that they are ostensibly caused by the reflection of light from their subjects (Van Gelder and Westgeest, 2011:34). It is necessary to extend this sense of the photographic trace to accommodate the idea of the snapshots in the album as evidence of photographic acts or performances having taken place, in the way that Davies proposes. David Green and Joanna Lowry (2003) discuss this twofold sense of the indexicality of photography with reference to *Inert Gas Series* by Robert Barry (1969), in which the artist photographed the release of colourless gas into the air around Los Angeles. The resulting photographs, in which only the landscape setting of the work is visible, redistribute the documentary function of the photograph onto the 'performative gesture' of the artist (2003:48).

So, photographs have been read as both traces of the real, and of the intentional act of the photographer, involving the decision to purchase and carry a camera, record an event, select exposure settings, frame and direct the

subject(s) and release the shutter. Both photography and painting are intentional social activities involving preparatory stages and a performative dimension that connects them as practices, regardless of distinctions relating to their alleged objectivity. As media they are eminently suited to exchanges of iconic content, and many people experience paintings primarily through the medium of photographic reproduction, whilst having also become accustomed to paintings that resemble photographs in one sense or another.

Davies proposes that as an 'intentionally guided process', the preparatory stages and time taken to produce a work of art nominate the 'focus of appreciation' (2004:83). He goes as far as to suggest that works of art are 'more akin to processes than to their products' (2004:91), and this is where his approach is suggestive of further possibilities in the development of a contemporary form of history painting. The focus of appreciation could be dispersed across other material in the same way that contemporary artists such as Jamie Shovlin or Simon Starling exhibit textual documentation as well as, or instead of, visual works. Davies' observations later contributed to the decision to integrate the source photographs and documents into the culminating works in the series entitled *Karel*/Karl (see Chapter Four).

At the very least, Davies' construction of art as a process, maps some common ground between photographs and paintings that can be taken as the basis for the citation of photography *as an intentional activity* within painting as a related but different activity. If photography and painting are both performative processes, how do the paintings in the series Poland 1940-1941 actually differ from the photographs they are based on and what does the difference mean? To find out it is necessary to examine the process of production of the paintings.

2.2 The processing of the photographs

Figure 22. David Gledhill (2014) *Poland 1940-1941 (16)*. Oil on canvas 152 x 214 cm.

Digital technology is essential to the production of these paintings and other related series because printed amateur snapshots dating from this period are generally small, and can contain a great deal of iconic content that may be indistinct or otherwise difficult to discern. Depending on the format, analogue source material is first of all either scanned, or digitally photographed on a light box. Once it is in a digital form it can be enlarged, cropped, and altered on a computer in order to make the process of transcription easier.[16] Small, indistinct areas can be magnified and their tonal contrasts enhanced, so that they approximate to the scale of their painted equivalents. The resulting digital

[16] Other recent projects have been adapted from a post-war East German family photograph album found in the same flea market, boxes of pre-war French glass negatives, American press photographs of the House Un-American Activities Committee trials obtained online, and individual snapshots discovered in junk shops and markets in Berlin, Paris, and Athens.

prints can then be simply held in the hand and referred to whilst the painting is in progress. Each photograph from the album was scanned at 1200 dpi (dots per inch) to enable details to be enlarged on a computer without pixelation, and printed on A4 photographic paper. *Poland 1940-1941 (16)* (Figure 22) necessitated a total of 60 of these A4 prints from the scan of the photograph, which measures 9 x 11.5 cm in its original form.

Most of the source images I have used over the past ten years have been 'analogue' or film photographs taken by amateur photographers.[17] These black and white snapshots would generally have been made using an approximate manual exposure setting, in which the camera takes as the average reading, or middle (grey) tone, the light reflected from the chosen point of focus. For the outdoor scenes in the album, the photographer may have assessed the light levels and set the aperture and shutter speed before starting to take photographs, which would have left them free to simply focus and release the shutter. The album features several groups of photographs that appear to have been pre-set this way, to the extent that they have evidently been taken in rapid succession, or their subjects are in motion: notably the station departure scenes at the beginning, the street scenes shot on Modrzejowska Street in Sosnowiec in the middle, and the three bathing scenes towards the end.

With an interior scene photographed using overhead artificial light such as photograph 16, in which the camera has been focused on the faces, there are inevitably some underexposed areas such as the clock and the clothing, and overexposed areas such as the white tablecloth in the foreground. Had the camera been focused on the clothing, the faces would have been overexposed and the light areas even more bleached out. Had it been focused on the white

[17] The photographs in the album used as source material for Poland 1940-1941 may have been taken with an Agfa box camera, or possibly a Leica: 'It is estimated that in 1936 between 5 and 6 million Germans owned cameras' (Guerin, 2012:40).

Figure 23. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) (above) *Erna Adlou album*: d*etail of the tablecloth from the lower left corner of photograph 16*, and (below) *Erna Adlou album: detail adjusted to show pattern on tablecloth.* Collection of David Gledhill.

tablecloth, the pattern would have been more visible but the rest of the scene would have been underexposed and very dark. The tonal balance in the photograph, and therefore its legibility, is very much the result of conscious choices made bearing the technical limits of the medium in mind.

Vilém Flusser (1983) discusses this interaction of photographer and apparatus as a coming together and conflict of intentions that must be decoded in terms of how far the photographer has succeeded in subordinating the camera to their interests. The black and white shots in the album are evidence of the compromises made during encoding, and the limitations of the apparatus must be taken into account during the selection, processing and transcription of the photographs into paintings. As Flusser warns, if we fail to consider the camera as an agent in the production of images ‘photographs remain undecoded and appear to be representations of states of things in the world out there’ (1983:48). The specific ways in which the paintings adhere to, or digress from the photographs in the light of their contingent nature, are discussed later in this section, but for now, Flusser’s observations underline both the performative nature of photography, and the debatable aspects of photographic indexicality when it is construed as a guarantee of objectivity.

Once a photograph has been scanned, the under or overexposed areas can be adjusted using digital software, and a surprising amount of detail retrieved (Figure 23). As well as being entirely enabled by digital technology, the paintings are effectively transcriptions from an ideal exposure in which the maximum quantity of visual information has been salvaged. This is achieved by the printing of multiple copies of each part of the composition using different contrast levels, and is the equivalent of the combination of several different exposures or negatives in film photography, known as bracketing, or else the superimposition of contrasting digital images of the same subject using *HDR* (high dynamic range imaging) software, each image having a different aperture, shutter speed and ISO (International Standards Organisation) setting.

In that sense, the original photographs are raw material for reworking visually using digital technology. It is important to note, however, that no forms are digitally erased or added and the iconic content that is revealed is implicit in the photographs themselves. In the examples (Figure 23), a detail of the tablecloth was cropped from the lower left-hand side of photograph 16 in the album, and the shadows and highlights adjusted using Photoshop. A detail such as this can be used to introduce surface texture and information into the painting that is not discernable by eye in the original photographic print.

This evidence of mediation by digital technology is significant because of its effect upon the viewer's sense of the appropriate reading of the paintings. The question of whether they are to be read primarily by reference to painting as an autonomous, self-contained discipline, is cut across by their obvious indebtedness to their photographic sources. Whilst the paintings can fairly easily be deduced to have been transcribed from digitally processed scans of analogue photographs, this processing should not appear to have resulted in any deliberate distortion of the iconic content. As discussed above, no connotative alteration of the iconic content of the photographs is intended during the making of the paintings. Instead, effort is focused on the restoration or approximation of missing or indistinct visual information (see 2.5 and 2.6 below). This distinguishes the paintings from photo-derived works by Richter, Keane and Boltanski as discussed in Chapter One, in which blurring has been used to generalise meaning from particular images, and, as indicated, warrants the application of the phrase photo-informed, in that the entirety and focal clarity of the iconic information has been preserved.

2.3 The subtractive painting technique

Like photography, painting involves decision-making about the material aspects of production that are conditioned by, and then incorporated into, the evolving semantic potential of the work. In my own case, this evolution has taken place over the course of years of work, and is not an even development towards a preconceived aim. Painting is a dialectical engagement with materials and technologies that possess their own inherent qualities, limitations and potentialities, in the sense described by Flusser with regard to photography. Any distinctive use of these materials or technologies emerges from working empirical knowledge of previous usage, nuanced by creative intentions that are at least partly at odds with that knowledge, and yet remain somehow workable. In a discipline that can involve a number of material substances that may have an unpredictable effect upon one another, innovation in the service of creative intentions can involve the conscious elimination or reduction of choice, as well as its multiplication.

In Poland 1940-1941, a subtractive technique is used, whereby the primed surface of each canvas works together with superimposed layers of Ivory Black pigment of varied translucency, to represent the iconic content of the corresponding photograph. There is no transcription of this visual content into wholly additive or cumulative painterly terms, except in the residual sense that discontinuous and fragmentary layers of black paint overlap through the process of application and removal of paint on a daily basis. The forms are not modelled by applied paint alone in these accumulated layers. Each layer is always at least partially wiped away, so that the white primed canvas contributes to the representational function of the paint across the entire surface of the canvas. Because of this, the technique is distinct from *grisaille* or monochromatic paintings that employ black and white paint mixed together. Pablo Picasso's (1937) *Guernica*, and Gerhard Richter's (1988) *Tote* (Figure 24) are examples of grisaille works that employ a mixture of black and white oil paint to achieve a range of intermediate grey tones.

The closest approximation to the technique used in all the monochrome paintings discussed in this thesis, is underpainting. This technique was part of the preparatory stages of European figurative painting from the Renaissance to the late nineteenth century and the resurgence of *alla prima* (at first attempt) approaches in Impressionism (Doerner, 1949:199). Still in use as an initial 'roughing in' stage in contemporary painting, underpainting is one of several methods by which a painting can be constructed in layers for ease of execution and durability (Valli and Dessanaye, 2014:64). With traditional underpainting, a monochrome sketch is used as a guide and gradually obscured with further layers of paint in a range of colours. In those terms, the Poland 1940-1941 paintings are deliberately and evidently left unfinished, missing their outer skins as a denial of craft resolution and closure. As monochrome renderings, made using a subtractive technique similar to the removal of charcoal with an eraser in drawing, they are intended to seem austere and meager by comparison to polychromatic paintings layered with progressively 'fatter' or more oily pigment, and offering an appearance of plenitude, such as the Martyr and Vietnam series discussed in Chapter One. This withholding of surface resolution works alongside the avoidance of narrative coherence in the display of the work and the decision not to privilege particular images in the series as either inaugurating or concluding it, to convey a formal and material equivalent for the inconclusive or unknowable nature of the circumstances depicted in the photographs.

As far as it has been possible to ascertain, the precise technique used in the series Poland 1940-1941, and in the monochrome paintings that comprise part of both The Berlin Olympic Village Project and *Karel*/Karl, has no exact precedents in the history of oil painting. A survey exhibition entitled 'Monochrome' at the National Gallery in 2017 included many examples of grisaille painting, unfinished oil studies with exposed areas of underpainting, and prints and drawings including untouched areas of paper, but no paintings produced by a process involving the application and removal of one pigment.

An interesting comparison can be made, however, with the painting *Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus would Freeze* by printmaker Hendrik Goltzius (1606). In this large-scale work on canvas, Goltzius used pen and brown ink and a hatching technique adapted from his prints. The result is a 'pen painting', and as Lelia Packer points out, with this unique work, Goltzius blurred distinctions between media and created 'a completely new type of object' (2017:147). The use of a technique (hatching) associated with one medium, on a support (canvas) associated with another, is broadly comparable with the use of a subtractive charcoal drawing technique in oil painting on canvas. Goltzius also employed the white primed ground throughout the composition, as a means of modelling form through tonal contrast.

There are significant distinctions however, in that Goltzius' work utilised drawing media as well as techniques, whereas the paintings that make up the series Poland 1940-1941 employ a drawing technique foreign to oil painting: erasure. The paintings are intended to be homologous with photographs in that the white primed canvas provides the lighter areas of the composition in the same way that photographic paper enables contrasts of light and dark in a photographic print. The wiping away of applied pigment is the method used to achieve this homology, and the paintings have a distinctive appearance by comparison with other monochromatic figurative painting as a result. This subtractive approach represents a contribution to the range of oil painting techniques that can be applied to working with photographic sources. The further material, technical and formal affinities and distinctions between the paintings and the photographs are the subject of the next section.

2.4 The materiality of painting

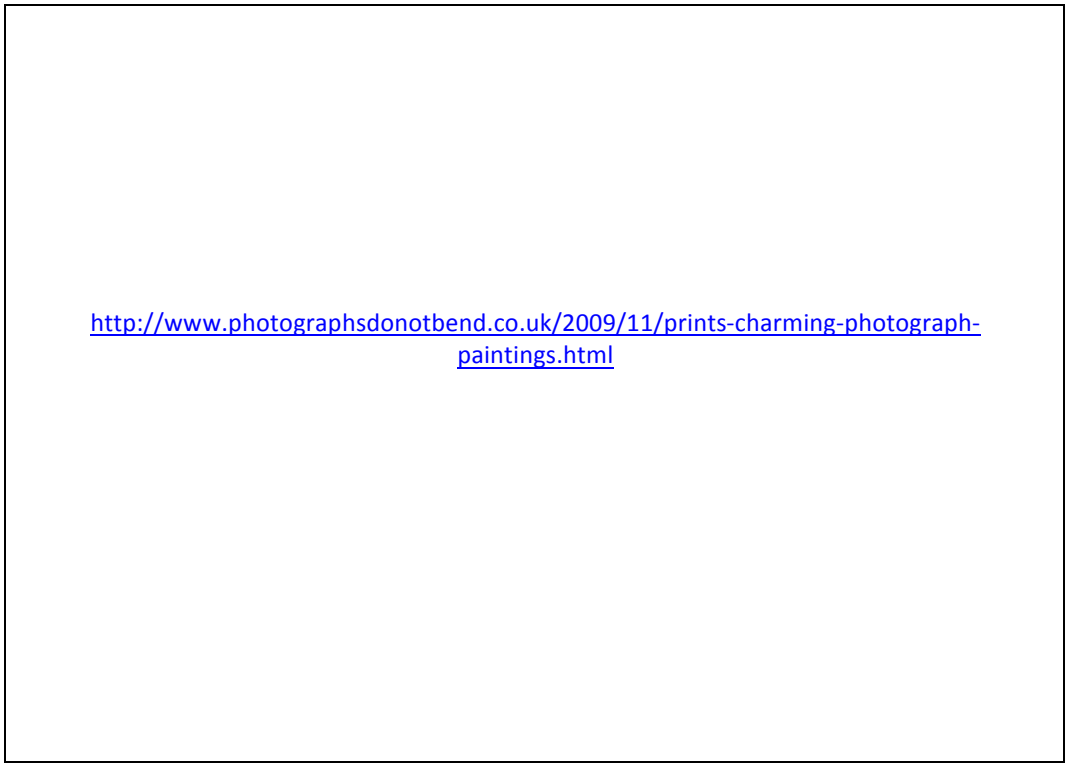

Figure 24. Gerhard Richter (1988) *Tote*. Oil on canvas, 62 x 73 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

The fact that the paintings have been made by hand is evident in their surface, or facture. They are *not* enlarged, printed photographs, and as such, any apprehension of them as paintings will have to take the process of their production into account. In addition, because the paintings are the result of their own time-consuming process, and are not indexically linked with their subjects in one of the senses that the photographs are, they cannot be assessed in the same terms as those photographs (Green, 2000:43-44). The paintings are not 'emanations' (1993:88) in Barthes words, and are not connected to their referents in any causal sense. The photographs and the paintings are both kinds of performance that entail different traditions, technologies and techniques, and are instances of their different methods and social conditions of production. The making of the photographs, their instantaneous exposure and

incorporation in an album, subsequent recovery from the flea market and transcription into paint, are all intrinsic aspects of the meaning of the paintings.

The process of painting the people, places and things in the series Poland 1940-1941 was guided by the cognitive model of the three-dimensional forms in the photographs, and informed by the body-memory of similar forms from first-hand experience. This model subtends and guides the process of paint application. Where the intention is to create the illusion of volumetric and realistic forms in recessive space in this way, the process of painting is akin to an extended tactile encounter with the subjects of the photographs. The pigment is brushed around and across the forms as though being applied directly to the subjects being rendered. Julian Bell (1999) discusses this approach in relation to nineteenth-century realism, although it substantially predates it (Alberti, 1966:89). Using the work of Gustave Courbet as an example, Bell evokes the sensual appeal implicit in the identification of all subject matter with the substance of the paint itself:

> As if the experience of the painting were the experience of the thing itself: as if the brush loaded with paint touching the canvas were the actual finger feeling the actual solid volume; as if everything that could be seen, near and far, apple and sky, could be touched in this way. (1999:64-65)

The end in view is the illusion of tactile material presence behind the flat surface of the canvas: a quality attributed to Socialist Realist painting by Alla Efimova, who cites 'the painterly manipulation of light effects' (1997:78) as the key means by which this is achieved. This 'feeling of "life"' (1997:78), is intended to invite an empathetic investment in the subject of the painting.

In my practice, the representation of historical subjects using photographic sources is founded on the possibility of identification with the individuals in the paintings, leading to imaginative reflection on the part of the viewer. This is an intention that Robert Storr attributes to Gerhard Richter, with regard to

Figure 25. L-R Comparison of painted head from David Gledhill (2015) *Poland 1940-1941 (14)* and Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album*: c*rop from photograph 14.* Collection of David Gledhill

October 18, 1977, as discussed above (2000:133). However, as noted in Chapter One, David Green observes that in painting from photographs, Richter strips his sources of their indexicality by blurring them, thereby eliminating the quality of sharpness of focus that underwrites claims of correspondence between photographs and their subjects (2000:44). According to Green, while photographic indexicality is premised on the momentary and time-specific qualities of photography, painting exists in a perpetual present, available for what he calls 'contemplative engagement' (2000:45). In looking at *October 18, 1977* (Figure 24) the viewer has to switch back and forth between the photographic and the painterly aspects of the work, and for Green, quoting Benjamin Buchloh, this sets up a 'productive uncertainty' in Richter's paintings (2000:46).

By contrast with Richter's subversion of one form of photographic indexicality as a way of casting doubt on the objectivity of photographic, and by extension all representation, Poland 1940-1941 is an attempt to supplement, or embody that indexicality, and to restore tangibility to the iconic content of the amateur photographs in the album. This process is intended to perform the opposite

function in relation to the source photograph: the augmentation of photographic iconic clarity through the combination of restored focus with tactile painterly illusionism. These are the means by which the practice diverges from that of Richter and related contemporary painters addressing events of historical significance.

This distinction between Richter's approach and my own is made clear in a comparison of *Tote* (Figure 24) with *Poland 1940-1941 (14)* (Figures 25 and 103). The bleached-out photographic highlights evident in the former, which make the forms appear flatter, are substituted by tonal modelling in the latter, which, as a technique, tends to enhance the impression of tactility. The materially evident reality of pigment on canvas augments the iconic truth claims made for photography via this enhancement of volumetric presence, but without confirming those claims. Indeed, it is impossible for paintings to guarantee the objectivity of photographs. In this way, a different kind of 'productive uncertainty' is achieved, in which the indistinct, flat, grey forms in the original photographs are made to seem solid and palpable in the paintings. This is one aspect of the intended augmentation of the iconic content of the photographic source, and I will expand upon the other means by which this augmentation is achieved in the following sections.

2.5 The intentional similarities between the paintings and the source photographs

After the enhancement of the apparent tactility of the photographs, the visual equivalences and differences between the painted and photographed forms are the locus of the second contribution made by the manipulation of what Davies calls the 'vehicular medium'. The painterly approximations to, and digressions from the photos, as layered over the course of their making, are the most immediate indication of the paintings having been made by hand. For example, in Figure 25, although the tonal contrasts in the painting could have been

achieved by digital adjustment of the photograph, the paint handling produces an inadvertent variation on the relative proportions and the surface texture of the forms, in a way that presents evidence of the painting as a palimpsest of its own production. In addition, no technical aids such as a grid to transfer the composition, or the projection of the photograph onto the canvas, have been used in the production of the paintings.

The works are instances of painting in the literal sense of applications of liquid media to a surface, and at the same time are clearly not painting in the sense of the invention or reinvention of forms at the whim of the artist. At the same time, they are obviously not photographs printed on canvas. The material, formal, and iconic similarities between the paintings and the photographs are all intentional and can be listed as follows:

A. They depict people, places, things and events that the artist cannot possibly have observed directly, and so must have been derived from other people's photographic documentation.

B. The individual subjects depicted are not in any sense generalised or idealised, and seem plausibly distinctive in appearance.

C. The circumstances depicted are of a momentary nature, and appear subject to imminent change.

D. The paintings evidently preserve most of the proportions, visible features, relative scale and spatial relations of the forms in the photographs.

E. The forms are depicted as volumetric, in an illusionary space that opens out behind a flat surface, as they are in photographs.

F. Because no forms are deliberately omitted from the paintings, they have the same sense of repleteness that the source photographs have.[18]

G. The primed ground is instrumental in the tonal range of the paintings, in the same way that the white of the paper provides the lighter passages in a black and white photographic print.

H. The paintings appear monochromatic like black and white photographs.

I. They have graduated tonal transitions that appear photographic in character.

J. They have a 'grain' that is similar to the grain of some photographs taken in low light conditions. This is achieved by the dragging of dry paint across the weave of the canvas: a technique called scumbling.

K. When the paintings are finished they are covered with a glaze solution containing a small quantity of raw umber pigment. This glaze lends the paintings a satin finish that approximates to the sheen of a photographic print. The glaze layer can be adjusted to make a more or less explicit reference to the sepia hue familiar from vintage analogue photographic prints.

The aspects listed above, represent the extent to which the paintings are intended to approximate to photography as a means of recording the world, without precisely reproducing the appearance of particular photographs. Taken

[18] If a form is omitted from an otherwise faithful rendering of the iconic content of a photograph, there is a discernable sense of a gap, or of something missing. This is either a result of prior awareness of the content of the original photograph, or else it suggests that however casually taken, photographs *do* constitute a record of how things were from a particular point of view at a particular time, and that they are pre-consciously or consciously composed to include sets of objects and people that are in some kind of necessary or causal relation to each other. Luc Tuymans frequently omits or effaces forms from his paintings, which retain a sense of lacunae in the composition whether or not one is aware of the source photograph. Examples include *Die Zeit* (1988), an image of prominent Nazi Reinhard Heydrich, and *An Architect* (1998) which represents Albert Speer skiing in a still from a home movie (Figure 15).

together, they clearly point the viewer to the use of photographic source material in the production of the paintings.

Lisa Gitelman argues that the advent of a medium provides a new site for the social negotiation of meaning (2006:6), and that new media should be understood not simply in terms of innovations in technology, but as part of a complex social, material, and cultural context of engagement with representation. As the means by which media inscribe their content become more familiar, they are perceived to be transparent, and Gitelman reminds us that our sense of history is bound up with this process of inscription (2006:21). The paintings depend for their engagement with social, historical and political issues on the extent to which the photographs they refer to are generally socially *accepted* to be truthful representations of what they depict, regardless of whether they are or not. The viewer is intended to make a double deduction as it were: to recognise Poland 1940-1941 as a series of hand-made paintings based on photographs, and to respond to them as evidence of the social production of those photographs, because of the perceived likelihood of the paintings being faithful transcriptions, by the means listed above.

This is central to the aim of this project and is dependent on the source material being analogue or film, rather than digital photography. As Gitelman observes, an analogue photograph is 'caused in the moment of the past that it represents', whereas digital images 'recomplicate the notion of a photographic index altogether' (2006:5). Digital photography is readily susceptible to undetectable computer manipulation, and this compromises social estimations of its truth-value. Indeed, the advent of digital photography has arguably eliminated any remaining distinctions between photography and painting, in that both media now afford the practitioner virtually unlimited creative scope. Of course, analogue photography can also be altered, and yet these alterations are usually detectable, and furthermore are rarely used by amateurs in assembling snapshot albums.

This does not constitute a contribution to discussions of the *actual* truth-value of photography, it is merely an observation about the extent to which photographs are *perceived* to be alterable for any reason after they have been taken. Analogue photography cannot be claimed to be any truer than digital photography simply because it is harder to make undetectable alterations. Indeed, as John Tagg points out, citing the example of a faked photograph of Senator Millard Tydings talking to communist leader Earl Browder, that lost the Senator his seat in Congress: 'the existence of a photograph is no guarantee of a corresponding pre-photographic existent' (1988:2).

The perceived truth-value in analogue photography consists in the belief that the people, places and things depicted in film photographs were indeed in front of the lens when the film was exposed, and that they looked to the eye, more or less like they do in the photograph. This is the kind of minimal *perceived* truth-value that the paintings aspire to relay. Any conjecture about whether the photographs have a particular moral significance, or portray a crime, are a part of the subjective response proceeding from this minimal perceived truth-value. This was another consideration that contributed to the decision to defer interpretation to the viewer, and I will return to the issue of the interpretation of the work below.

2.6 The intentional distinctions between the paintings and the source photographs

Figure 26. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: photograph 16.* Collection of David Gledhill

It is important that the paintings are understood to be paintings, at the same time as they are recognised to share some of the characteristics of the photographs they are adapted from. Whilst there are a number of similarities as described above, there are also key differences. The combination of these similarities and differences is intended to constitute a dialectic between the photographs and paintings. This acts to suspend assumptions based on the relative cultural or 'truth' value of both photography and painting, and invests the paintings with an indeterminate status, or 'productive uncertainty' in Green's terms. This indeterminacy then becomes the site in which the viewer responds to the work. Rosemary Hawker contends that only the citation of photography in painting can illuminate the idiomatic, or unique qualities of

both practices, qualities that may be less apparent in either medium alone (2002:553). She concludes that the greater truth of representation as a mediating process can only be grasped through this citation of one medium by another (2002:553). Whilst this is an important aspect of the paintings, it is not the semantic horizon of the practice, as discussed in the Introduction.

Beginning with the material nature of the photographs and paintings, it is clear that they are different kinds of objects made from different material substances. The photograph of five individuals reproduced in Figure 26, is, in a literal sense, a piece of thin photosensitive card bearing an image which has been processed from a negative using a photographic enlarger and chemicals. Whether or not the photograph is an objective, truthful record or trace of the circumstances it depicts, as some commentators claim, is a philosophical question that continues to be debated (Scruton, 1981; Walton, 1984; Currie, 1991; Ethington, 2010; Nanay, 2010; Benovsky, 2011; Hopkins, 2012). It is certain however, that as an object, the photograph in question is a certain size and weight and that it carries an image of a group of people sat in a room behind a table, and in front of a window. This image has been produced by reflected light momentarily entering a camera lens and falling on celluloid coated with light-sensitive chemicals.

On the other hand, the paintings are made from canvas stretched across wooden frames, and covered with translucent layers of black paint. Despite the possibility of printing photographic images onto all manner of supports including canvas, it is difficult to sustain the belief that the paintings are photographic prints. There are usually paint marks on the edges, variations in the surface finish, visible brush-marks, brush hairs embedded in the primer, and discrepancies in the drawing that will contradict the assumption. The following are aspects of the source photograph that the equivalent painting does not replicate:

A.2 The size of the original photographic print. (See the next section for a fuller discussion of this point.)

B.2 Some effects related to depth of field (how much of the image is in focus and to what apparent distance from the eye). Whilst areas of the photograph that are indecipherable because they are out of focus are approximated in paint, on occasion the focus is manipulated in the paintings to direct attention onto the subjects.

C.2 Image disruption: hairs, scratches or scuffs on the print, optical distortion including lens flare and the curving of vertical forms at the edge of the print, due to the size of the lens. These are eliminated by extension of surrounding passages in the case of flare and blemishes, or restoration of the vertical in the case of warping.

D.2 Minute detail such as readable text, that is too small to render precisely in paint. These are translated as similar, but not identical marks on the canvas. These approximate marks could be argued to be 'autographic' or distinctive painterly gestures, calling attention to their own qualities in addition to representing forms in the photograph. It is therefore important that this independent life of the painterly mark is controlled, so that the painting does not take on an overtly expressive or virtuosic quality. The intention is not to direct too much attention to the means of rendering at the expense of the subject matter.

E.2 The exact tonal range and distribution of tonal values in the original photograph. The tonal range is often increased in order to enhance the apparent tactility of the forms, as discussed above. In order to establish a believable sense of space in a painting, significant forms must project by contrast with darker or lighter contexts.

F.2 Invisibility of surface pattern or forms because of over, or underexposure of the negative. In photographs with bright featureless backgrounds due to overexposure, or deep shadows, adjusted prints revealing unseen texture and forms are used to restore iconic content that is present, but not visible in the print (Figure 23).

G.2 The exact surface texture of forms in the photograph where they are visible. In the paintings, complex surface patterns are painted to approximate the original, rather than, for example, projected onto the canvas for precise reproduction.

H.2 The white border of the photographic print. To include the white border of the print in the painting would be to portray the photograph as a cultural and material artefact, ahead of any impression of the iconic content of the image.[19]

I.2 The photograph as seen when mounted in the album.[20]

These are all senses in which the paintings are *not* photorealistic or exactly like the photographs they are based on. Photorealism is here taken to entail the reproduction of the precise manner in which a camera records reflected light, and the specific qualities of the resulting photographic print. It has been described as a continuation of what John Russell Taylor has called 'a quest for minute accuracy' (2009:25) dating back to the early Renaissance and the work of Giotto di Bondone. Of the multifarious uses artists have made of photography since its advent, photorealism was specifically intended to

[19] In 1968, Vija Celmins made a series of meticulous graphite drawings of crumpled photographs pinned to a wall. Celmins used this approach to draw attention to the materiality of the photographic print as an object.

[20] If the album page was included in the painting of each snapshot, the sense of bodily orientation to historical individuals would be secondary to recognition of the conventions of photograph album composition: the commemoration of social life, the maintenance of social, familial, professional and ideological hierarchies, and the generation of social capital (Langford, 2001). Issues such as these are explored by Christian Boltanski (1991) through the use of the photo album form in *Sans-Souci*, discussed in Appendix A.

minimise the expressive potential of the medium and particularly the painterly mark, a device that had acquired mythic status in modernist abstraction during the 1940s and 1950s (Bolter and Grusin, 2000:121).

There is a clear divergence between painting that strives for, as Linda Chase says of Malcolm Morley's prototypical photorealist paintings of the mid 1960s: 'meticulous fidelity to the photographic source' (2013:21), and paintings that disregard the qualities of photographs as listed above from A.2 to I.2 in favour of a broad handling and the moderation of detail in the interest of pictorial unity (see D.2 and G.2). However, there is a shared concern with photorealism in what Brendan Prendeville calls 'putting the surface at risk by opening it to non-art' (2000:175), or in other words, the insistence upon the primacy of extra-aesthetic content and the overt reference to an amateur photographic source.

So, photography has been attributed with two contrasting forms of indexicality. On the one hand, a photograph is claimed to embody an objective visual record of its subject in so far as the photographic image is caused by light reflected from that subject, and on the other, to constitute evidence of a photographic act having taken place. The paintings make no attempt to substantiate the first of these forms of indexicality, instead augmenting the clarity, tonal range and volumetric illusionism of their source photographs in order to invite the identification of the viewer. They are transcriptions of digitally processed analogue photographs, as augmented by materials and techniques associated with drawing and painting. In other words, they are intended as indeterminate objects, based on a blend of the performative, iconic, material, and semantic attributes and aptitudes of both photography and painting.

The paintings do not engage with the materiality of the photographs as objects, in the sense discussed by Langford (2008:80) and Batchen (2008:135). Equally, the social uses of the photographs in their album context are not referenced in the paintings. This reference may be reintroduced, for example in the title and

poster of an exhibition (Figure 20), but it is not intrinsic in the paintings themselves. Poland 1940-1941 is intended to connect the viewer firstly with what is construed to be the social, professional, historical, geographical and political milieu of the photographer(s) and depicted subjects, via the citation of photographic acts that took place within that milieu. These acts, which are instances of the second form of indexicality discussed above, are the focus of the project.

2.7 Size and scale

Most of the photographs are approximately 10 cm x 7 cm, with the exception of the last image in the album which is 9 cm x 11.5 cm. Eight of the paintings measure 153 cm x 231-237 cm, with a second group of three paintings measuring 39 cm x 59 cm. Not only are all the paintings much bigger than the photographs, but the scale of the figures in the eight larger paintings is inevitably closer to life-size. Scale is here construed to mean the size of a form in a painting relative to an external common standard: in this case, the average human form.

The photographs presented an opportunity to paint life-sized figures in order to engage the viewer in a bodily identification with the depicted individuals, some of whom feature throughout the album. In his 'Notes on Sculpture' written in 1966, Robert Morris (1992) observed that when looking at works of art, one uses one's own body as an index of scale. The smaller the work relative to the viewer, the more intimate it seems, and the larger, the more public. If one is to preserve the entirety of a larger work in view, one must stand back to accommodate it. In this way, large-scale paintings command more space between themselves and the viewer (1992:831).

The sense of bodily orientation to the paintings locks their iconic content into the viewer's sense of their own presence in relation to them. This 'locking in' means that the viewer is involved in a physical relationship that grounds their experience of the painting in their own immediate spatial, social and temporal circumstances. With regard to the eight larger paintings in the series, the distance by which one can comfortably take in the entire composition establishes a social dimension to the viewing of the work (Figure 29). Whilst the painted surface can, of course, be examined at close range, to apprehend the entire painting at a distance, places the viewer in a public context in the gallery space, as well as enabling an engagement with the conventional display of group unity that the photographs depict. Other gallery visitors may enter into the viewer's peripheral vision, or pass between the viewer and the painting, lending a sense of social awareness to the experience of the work that is consonant with the content of the photographs. If the figures were smaller than life-sized, the intimate mode of encounter with the work would reduce the potential for bodily identification with the subjects, calling attention instead, to the craft and material aspects of the paintings as objects.

In order for the figures to have a scale of 1:1 in this way, the supports needed to be at least 60 ins or 153 cm in their smaller dimension. Technical and practical considerations limited this dimension to 153 cm as the indistinct nature of substantial areas of the photographs, due to under and over-exposure, would have made the paintings extremely difficult to resolve on a larger scale. The three smaller paintings were based on images that featured indistinct, blurred or too little iconic information to sustain enlargement, or else the subjects in them would have been substantially bigger than life-sized.

Because the iconic content of the photographs was to be transferred to the painting without omissions or distortions, to increase the scale of the figures in the source photograph for *Poland 1940-1941 (16)* (Figure 22) for example, to life-sized in the painting, it was also critical to preserve the height to width ratio of the photograph. Each photograph was scanned and the digital image file

imported into Photoshop. The *Image>image size* function was used to set the preferred height or width of the painting and the program determined the remaining dimension, preserving the proportions of the source image. In this way, each canvas represented a scaled-up version of its source photograph.[21]

The increase in scale of the figures in the paintings is another of the means by which the iconic content of the photographs has been augmented. The combination of transcription into painting as a material process, including the widening of the tonal range and the enhancement of the iconic tactility and clarity of the source image, together with its scaling up, distinguishes the paintings from the snapshots in the album, and constitutes this process of augmentation. Whilst it remains a contributory aspect of their intended meaning that the paintings are read as being based on photographs, the particular manner and duration of their transcription as paintings, is also partly constitutive of that meaning.[22]

2.8 The display of the work

Throughout this project, the photographs were treated as discrete units of visual information, rather than as an apparently chronological and connected succession of visual episodes that prompt a verbal narrative, in the way that photograph albums sometimes do (Langford, 2001:20). The overall impression of normality and continuity that the album suggests can be seen to be partly a product of the sequencing of the snaps (Figure 21), and the paintings as a group were not intended to reproduce the decision-making of the album's compiler, beyond the photographer's chosen moment of exposure for each

[21] Poland *1940-1941 (16)* was the first painting to be produced, and its height was taken as the root dimension for the remainder of the series. Because photograph 16 in the album is larger than the other snapshots, this means that the series does not consistently preserve the relative sizes of the original photographs.

[22] The various practical stages of the production process, and the broader significance of the support, ground, subtractive painting method and glaze coat in the context of Western painting techniques are discussed in Appendix C.

Figure 27. David Gledhill (2014-2015) (above) *'War and Racism' at Rogue Open Studios 2014*, and (below) *'Abordnung' at Rogue Open Studios 2015*. Photographs.

photograph. Furthermore, for exhibition purposes, the selection from amongst the completed series and their arrangement, was always partly contingent upon the size and proportions of the spaces in which they were displayed. Some of these spaces therefore acted to reinforce the sense in which the decision to defer narrative interpretation to the viewer was a deliberate aspect of the conception of the series. Other contexts were more problematic, and the experience of exhibiting the work in these conditions, informed decision-making in subsequent displays.

In 2014, and again in 2015, paintings from the series were displayed in an Open Studio setting at Rogue Studios in Manchester (Figure 27). In the first of these displays, entitled 'War and Racism', the juxtaposition of *Poland 1940-1941 (7)*, which depicts a Jewish inhabitant of Sosnowiec wearing an armband, with

Figure 28. David Gledhill (2014) *'Hankering for Classification' 15 November-20 December 2014*. Federation House, Manchester. Photograph.

Poland 1940-1941 (3) and *Poland 1940-1941 (16),* in which groups of individuals are represented smiling for the camera, produced an extreme contrast in subject matter. This clash of self-presentation by the individuals in the latter paintings, with the obvious absence of consent to be photographed in the former, implied an extraneous judgement on my part that was at odds with the intention to refrain from directing interpretation of the work.

In 'Abordnung', the second Open Studios presentation of the ongoing series, three paintings depicting individuals apparently enjoying a holiday together were displayed in the same space. The consistency of mood across all three paintings unified the display, and deflected any cues for interpretation onto the accompanying text panel, visible on the right-hand side of the lower installation shot in Figure 27. This gave the viewer sufficient historical context in order to ascertain the timeframe and likely social and political connotations of the series, but did not include inferences or assertions of agency or guilt on the part of

those pictured.[23] Pierre Bourdieu points out the constructed nature of self-presentation in composed, frontal photographs of this kind: 'offering a regulated image of oneself is a way of imposing the rules of one's own perception' (2003:83). As well as being embedded in the original snapshots, this imposition and its implications at this particular historical juncture are available to be read in the paintings.

In the exhibition 'Hankering for Classification', an individual painting from the series was exhibited on a large wooden structure that also supported pieces by other artists working with archival sources of one kind or another. The album itself was displayed on a circular table attached to the end of the structure, and could be examined by visitors to the exhibition (Figure 28). Clearly, an individual painting, detached from any kind of relation to a series, cannot be construed as representing an episode in an extended visual narrative, and in that sense the exhibition setting supported the intention behind the work. In addition, the display effectively nominated the collecting of photograph albums as a 'focus of appreciation' (Davies, 2004:80) in the production of the paintings. The emphasis on the derivation of the painting from a single image in an album also reinforced the individual snapshots as 'sequences of beginnings' (1987:24) in White's terms. However, the curatorial framework of collecting took precedence as the organising principle of the exhibition, and effectively minimised the significance of the content of all the selected artists' works.

[23] The text panel read as follows: 'The paintings in this exhibition are based on photographs from an album that was discovered in a flea market in Frankfurt in 2013. The album contains a handwritten inscription that reads *'Adlou Erna's abordnung nach Polen im Juni 1940' (Ostoberschlesien)'*. *Abordnung* means secondment, delegation or deputation in German. The last photograph has the date 17th December 1941 pencilled on the back. The photographs were taken in and around Sosnowiec, a town near the border with Germany in a part of Poland known at the time as Eastern Upper Silesia. This part of Poland was one of the first to be invaded after the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939.'

Figure 29. David Gledhill (2015) '*Album' at the Grosvenor Gallery, February 2015*. Photographs.Top L-R: David Gledhill (2014) *Poland 1940-1941 (16)*, *(3)* and *(7)*. Bottom L-R: David Gledhill (2015) *Poland 1940-1941 (12)* and *(14).*

'Album' at the Grosvenor Gallery at Manchester School of Art, represented the most comprehensive and satisfactory instance of the curation of the project to date. Despite the inclusion of *Poland 1940-1941 (7),* as seen on the top right in Figure 29, the square floor plan of the gallery and grouping of the work meant that the remaining four paintings produced a context in which this image was not immediately obtrusive, to the extent that it was in 'War and Racism' (Figure 27), in which each wall of the studio had a single painting mounted on it. In 'Album', the paintings adjacent to *Poland 1940-1941 (7)* remained in peripheral vision, and the similar sized *Poland 1940-1941 (3)* somewhat diffused its presence*,* in that it featured a comparable perspective and outdoor setting. Nevertheless, the inclusion of an image suggestive of inflicted impoverishment and subjection such as this, alongside scenes of contrived self-presentation, once again threatened to impose an extrinsic authorial interpretation on the paintings along the lines of Fulbrook's summary of the responsibilities of the German civil administration of the region (2012:10).

At the time of writing, a definitive display of the paintings and the accompanying film *Abordnung,* completed after the exhibitions, is still to be finalised. This exhibition would draw on the experience of the previous displays, and focus on the administrators and their self-presentation in the photographs, rather than on the Jewish inhabitants of Sosnowiec as depicted by them. The reasons for this are partly ethical and I will review arguments relating to the representation of the Holocaust and expand upon this decision in Section 4.

The consistency in size of the canvasses displayed in these exhibitions, and their arrangement in the various display spaces discussed, combined to suggest that whatever their original context as snapshots, the paintings were not being curated in order to mimic the sequencing of a photograph album. In this way, the paintings, by contrast with a comparable series of enlarged prints of the snapshots, *had* to be read as a consciously uninflected sequence of images that do not constitute an endorsement of the original sequence, or an alternative narrative about Erna Adlou's *abordnung.* As labour-intensive productions, it

would make no sense at all for the display of the paintings to arbitrarily shuffle the sequencing of the album, unless it was a deliberate strategy by which to distance the paintings from the decision-making of the compiler. The paintings effectively disengage the photographs from their order in the album and restore them to the status of 'contiguously related fragments' (White, 1978:125). The viewer is then free to synthesise a narrative meaning from them if they choose to, but this meaning is evidently not incorporated in the work either prior to, or at the point of its reception.

3. Abordnung

As the series of paintings based on the album neared completion, I travelled to Poland to visit Sosnowiec and to find the locations in the snapshots. The idea of looking for the sites depicted in the album had formed during the latter weeks of painting, and had come to seem an inevitable one. My intention was to make a film to explain the project and its origins in the discovery of the album, and to explore any surviving buildings and landmarks that could offer new perspectives on the history of the German occupation. The resulting film *Abordnung* (2015), provides a contextual account of the making of the paintings, underlining the craft aspects of their production, and distinguishing them from, but establishing their origins in the photographs, and indirectly, the locations where they were taken. It had not occurred to me at any point during the project to diversify the material I had been drawing upon by using my own photographs or video footage of Sosnowiec as sources for paintings. Coming as it did, at the end of a concentrated period of work with the snapshots, the research trip and resulting film seemed to me to be a supplementary element in an already concluded body of work.

Abordnung was filmed in and around Sosnowiec and neighbouring Bedzin, and at Oświęcim (Auschwitz), with the assistance of a Polish anthropology student from the University of Manchester. I filmed at a series of significant locations

sourced from *A Small Town Near Auschwitz,* using a static tripod, and also attempted to find the vantage points on Modrzejowska Street from which the six photographs of the centre of Sosnowiec had been taken.

While filming, I met Pawel Styblinski, who runs a stationery business from the courtyard of 33 Modrzejowska Street. Pawel introduced me to his sister Maria, who offered to show me their family photographs, and consented to be interviewed about her parents' life during the 1930s and 1940s. Maria told me that her father had bought the building in 1948, having run businesses from other addresses in Sosnowiec during the 1930s. She remembered him expressing bewilderment that the Jewish citizens of Sosnowiec had apparently acquiesced in being rounded up, marched along Modrzejowska Street, and transported to Auschwitz. Maria showed me the cellar of the property, where Jewish families had hidden from the Nazis. These sequences were incorporated into the film, and I also conducted an interview with amateur local historian Anna Urgacz and her husband Artur, during which we discussed the history of Sosnowiec and its Jewish population, as well as current Polish attitudes to British policy during the Second World War.

Abordnung employs a compound form, cutting between scenes filmed at Rogue Artists' Studios in Manchester and locations in Poland, and employing conventions familiar from television documentaries (interviews) and some artists' video (static shots with ambient sound). During the editing process, I attempted to transpose the approach I had developed in response to my historiographical research, into a moving image format. *Abordnung* included short factual subtitles about the invasion of Poland, the remains of the Synagogue, the former headquarters of the Sosnowiec Jewish Council, and the orphanage at Bedzin, which was used by the Germans as a transit camp or *Dulag* (Appendix E, Figure C13). No connections were established, or conclusions drawn from this succession of sites. As White remarks about facts presented in annals: 'They seem to have the same order of importance or unimportance' (1987:7). The final version of the film included scenes in which I

held up digital prints of the original photographs in front of the present-day streets, matching the architectural forms in the photographs as closely as possible with the surviving buildings (Appendix E, Figure C12). This device was intended to link the historic photographic content of the project with its referent in a similar way to Shimon Attie's work, described below, but in a much more overtly contrived manner in which my own agency in the process was self-evident. A similar device is also employed in *Fotoamator*, directed by Dariusz Jablonski (1998), in which contemporary film footage of Lodz in Poland is cross-faded into colour slides taken by Walter Genewein, an accountant in the Lodz ghetto.

Although *Abordnung* includes factual historical information and interview footage that may be redolent of a documentary approach to the subject, no attempt is made to construct a narrative or draw a conclusion from the experience of visiting Sosnowiec, or from the events that took place there during the Second World War. There is no audio commentary explaining the significance of the sites, and the textual material makes no judgements and draws no conclusions from the visit. The only narrative elements of the film are the sequences during which Maria Styblinski reminisces about her parents, and recalls their remarks about the treatment of Poles and Jews from the town. The film concludes with a brief sequence filmed in the camps at Auschwitz and Auschwitz Birkenau during a guided tour (Appendix E, Figure C14). At the camps, the presence and monologue of the tour guide reinforces the sense of history as a constructed narrative, and the stark contrast of these scenes with the visually static and purely factual description of the historic sites in Sosnowiec, is intended to emphasise the obtrusive nature of sense-making approaches to a phenomenon that defies comprehension.

Abordnung attempts to make the discovery of the photographs and the production of the paintings into constituent parts of the presentation of the project. Scenes filmed at the studio and at the locations in the photographs, connect painting and photography as situated social performances that relate

to each other on the basis of this shared status. The making of the paintings was contingent upon the photographs having been taken by historical subjects in a particular location, and *Abordnung* is intended to illuminate this contingency. In this way, the project is seen to be reflexive of its conditions of possibility. However, rather than incorporating this reflexivity into the individual paintings, it is displaced into the relationship between the paintings and the film.

The making of *Abordnung* was the first attempt in an ongoing effort to expand my practice to include media other than painting, in order to achieve this reflexivity between elements in a series or project. The experience of interviewing residents of Sosnowiec demonstrated to me that at the very least, the past is a multi-perspectival phenomenon, and that I would need to find a way to explore contrasting timeframes, and to incorporate a range of voices into the work, if it was to be in any way adequate to the historical representation of past events or circumstances. The movement in the film between my own studio, contemporary Sosnowiec and the historic photographs featured throughout *Abordnung,* including the wall-mounted photographic enlargements at Auschwitz, indicated to me the complex interplay of past and present, and their representations in some historic locations. This sense of the layering of history was explored much further in The Berlin Olympic Village Project*,* as described in Chapter Three.

Although I am present in *Abordnung* as collector, artist, and researcher in conversation with some of the interviewees, the film was intended to be supplementary to the paintings rather than an independent work in its own right. The precedent set by Mary Fulbrook's authorial presence throughout *A Small Town Near Auschwitz,* convinced me of the need to situate myself as artist in relation to the other testimonies subsumed into the project, in order to clarify my own agency in the production of meaning. The making of *Abordnung* focused this need and led to the further diversification of media and sources in The Berlin Olympic Village Project. At the conclusion of Poland 1940-1941, it

prompted the consideration of the process of painting from photographs as a form of historical witnessing.

4. Poland 1940-1941, Maus and witnessing history

Frances Guerin argues that both photographic and painted images can bring an event into 'iconic presence', and thereby mediate the process of witnessing historical circumstances in a manner that is not dependent upon their verifiably objective or empirical status (2007:12). Both Guerin and Annette Kuhn advocate an engagement with the past using photographs that are acknowledged to be fallible as visual documents, but which can create a field or network of possible exchanges: 'In this network, the image itself figures largely as a trace, a clue: necessary, but not sufficient, to the activity of meaning making' (Kuhn, 2002:12).

In *Family Secrets*, Kuhn (2002) outlines a practical form of 'memory work' utilizing photographs, that she argues can connect with wider political consciousness. This is founded on a step-by-step investigation of the photograph from a number of perspectives. Kuhn suggests we describe the subjects in a photograph, and then visualise ourselves as each of them one by one while verbalising our responses. We should move on to ask where, when, how, by whom, and why the photograph was taken, before considering the techniques, aesthetic quality and conventions used, and concluding with an investigation of the contexts of reception: asking who it was made for, who saw it when it was taken, and who sees it now. She concludes that 'memory work' can promote understanding of the present through fresh comprehension of the past, and that 'political action need not be undertaken at the cost of the inner life' (2002:8). This is an empowering process that promotes 'the development of a critical and questioning attitude' (2002:8) in the viewer, which is precisely the desired response to the paintings. Whilst Kuhn is discussing family photographs

here, the process of enquiry and immersion can be extended to paintings that evidently engage with the iconic content of photographs.

This view has not gone unchallenged however, and in *Empathic Vision*, Jill Bennett (2005) mounts a sustained attack on the idea that intersubjective identification is a politically adequate objective in the representation of trauma and conflict, including the Holocaust. Bennett contrasts work that stimulates what Brecht called 'crude empathy' (2005:111) on the part of the viewer, based on 'the tendency to abstract from the specifics of the life depicted and identify with a single emotion or affect', with art that offers 'an image of the force of trauma – of its capacity to infuse and transform bodies, objects and spaces' (2005:69).

Bennett argues that the formal language of avant-garde practice is the only adequate resource for the attempt to convey traumatic subjects in art. She takes the avant-garde on face value as a marginal practice best suited to conveying states of mind outside ordinary cognition, and equates it with a 'politically progressive art practice' (2005:15). In *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger (1984) argued that this trans-historical conception of a perpetual avant-garde is contradictory, in that the modernist avant-gardes opened the field to a disparate range of approaches that rendered the notion of an implicitly advanced practice impossible. Bürger denies the charge levelled by Bennett at realism, which she describes reductively as 'a vehicle for interpersonal transmission of experience' (2005:7). He asserts that 'The time has gone when one could argue against the use of realist techniques because the historical development had passed beyond them' (1984:63).

In linking affect exclusively with traumatic themes, Bennett is limiting empathic engagement with art to extreme states of emotional disturbance. There is no reason why her endorsement of Gilles Deleuze's idea that sensation is a precursor to critical thought in art cannot be applied to a realist depiction of past events, which, for many, might provide 'a more effective trigger for

profound thought because of the way it grasps us, forcing us to engage involuntarily' (Bennett, 2005:7). Where photographs taken by amateurs at an historical site are the source, the traumatic need never be depicted directly, but rather implied through the use of visual records that instead, demonstrate the persistence of social and cultural codes of behavior through times of conflict. The emphasis on the social consumption of images in Guerin and Kuhn's accounts, offers a model for the conception of painting that Poland 1940-1941 propounds. The paintings are conceived in terms of how they can be used by the viewer as a prompt for reflections about the past. This function of the paintings as prompts or clues, is predicated upon the attributes of photographs as iconic traces, but not founded upon assertions of their objectivity, as discussed above.

The dates inscribed in the album situate it during a period in which the expropriation, exploitation, confinement and maltreatment of Polish Jews were becoming increasingly programmatic and severe. As Christopher Browning points out, the implementation of these policies was not exclusively a top-down process, but was also facilitated by the initiative of the civil administration (2004:214). Working with any images relating to conflict inevitably entails the consideration of ethical issues, but the problems implicit in the representation of genocide have been construed to be particularly acute in the case of those events leading up to and constituting the Holocaust. In *Memory History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*, Saul Friedländer (1993) considers the representation of the Holocaust in both historiography and art in the light of what he sees as its unprecedented nature. He describes a number of the difficulties faced by historians in accounting for events that are fundamentally repellant at a species level, including the issue of whether Nazi policies were a culmination or a destruction of rational modernity, and the incomprehensibility of the coexistence of apocalyptic conditions in the death camps, with comparatively normal life in some territories immediately outside them.

Friedländer claims that as the 'fundamental referent of State criminality' (1993:52-53), the 'Final Solution' carries with it a moral imperative as regards its representation, that conflicts with what both he and White identify as the prevalent mode of modern historiography: the ironic (White, 1973:37). The clash here is between what White describes as ironic self-consciousness about the inadequacy of language, with what Friedländer describes as the need to bear witness (1993:55). It will be seen that this tension appears to have been worked through to an extent in *Writing on the Wall* by Shimon Attie (1992), *Mein Kampf* by David Levinthal (1996), and *Grosse Hamburger Strasse* by Christian Boltanski (2012), via the avoidance or displacement of narrative outside of the work itself, and also through the incorporation of photography, a medium generally read as offering a transparent view onto its subject. The use of photography in this way is not unproblematic however, and all three of these projects grapple with the reliability of photographic records in different ways.

In Poland 1940-1941, the generative act of transcribing the photographs and attempting to create a sense of human presence in the paintings can also be construed as enabling a process of witnessing. Guerin argues that an amateur photographic image can 'mediate between intersubjective relations that are commonly accepted to animate the process of witnessing itself' (2012:25). Elizabeth Edwards (2001) extends this agency of photographs into a notion of their performativity, whereby 'photographs focus seeing and attention in a certain way' (2001:17). In Guerin's account the survivor of a conflict recounts their experience to a listener, who, in turn, must bear witness to their own role in the shaping of that testimony. As the survivor-listener relationship is made public in the form of books, films, or exhibitions, subsequent generations are also enabled in the process of witnessing. As mentioned above, the need to account for my own role in the process of collecting and working with photographic material relating to the lives of others, became more urgent at this point in the research. Guerin's account of the survivor-listener relationship and Fulbrook's presence as author in her text provided a general model for a more reflexive historiographical practice that guided the development of the

research and informed the production of *Abordnung,* as a means of framing my agency in the production of the paintings.

Art Spiegelman's (2003) *Maus* exemplifies this survivor-listener relationship. Like *A Small Town Near Auschwitz*, *Maus* is a narrative of the Holocaust in Eastern Upper Silesia and its unresolvable emotional effects, not only upon the victims, but upon succeeding generations. By contrast with Fulbrook's book, in which the facilitators', perpetrators', and victims' testimonies are heard together, *Maus* is primarily a survivor's tale, in which the motives of the perpetrators of the Holocaust are not examined psychologically, or portrayed in other than one-dimensional terms. There are however, a number of structural similarities between *A Small Town Near Auschwitz* and *Maus*, which alternates a narrative account of Spiegelman's father Vladek's experience of the war in Sosnowiec, with the story of how Spiegelman negotiated the disclosure of these memories, thereby juxtaposing two narrative timeframes. In the same way, Fulbrook's book alternates passages evoking events in Bedzin between 1940 and 1945, with those that place her in relation to its central character and his family at the time of writing. Beyond this, there is a similar sense of the complexity of the personal relationships that drive both works, each of which is a volatile mixture of family loyalty and barely suppressed anger. *Maus* however, is far more explicit in its evocation of the psychological burden carried by the children of the war generation: a form of angst that drives all the works cited in this chapter to a greater or lesser extent.

Whereas Fulbrook's primary and secondary sources are cited in extensive notes at the back of her book, as befits a 'scholarly work' (2012:vii), Spiegelman's are not disclosed in the original text of *Maus*. In *MetaMaus* (2011) however, with its accompanying interactive DVD entitled *The Complete Maus*, samples of this material are made available. In the audio clip that accompanies the digital image of page 180 of *Maus*, Spiegelman refers to his book as a 'document', going on to observe that:

> I felt I was taking a deposition, and that deposition required more information than could be given by writing the words down of the deposition. And in order to do that accurately it was necessary to try to understand who it is that's witnessing and who it is that's hearing and transmitting that witnessing. (2011:0mins 7)

For Spiegelman, working in the genre of the graphic novel and employing a large number of individual panels to tell a story that he acknowledges is packed with incident, historical accuracy is less important than this need to situate the source and teller of the story in relation to one another (Miller, 2003:45). Young picks up on this aspect of *Maus*, noting that:

> What might appear as historical errors of fact in *Maus,* such as the pictures of Poles – one in a Nazi uniform and others saying, "Heil Hitler", when it would have been almost impossible to find any Pole saluting Hitler to another Pole during the war or to find a Polish Nazi – are accurate representations of his father's possibly faulty memory. (2000:39)

In order to achieve this positioning of the 'informer' and the 'utterer' (1981:8) in Barthes' terms, *Maus* is even more reflexive than *A Small Town Near Auschwitz*. Whilst Fulbrook's book includes first person interventions by the author, arising partly from a need to declare her vested interest in the narrative and the conflicts this caused her, *Maus* is at least as much about the character Art's relationship with his father, both as a child in the opening scene of *Maus I,* and as he interacts with Vladek during the taping of his testimony, as it is about his father's recollections of Auschwitz (Spiegelman, 2011:43). It is the scenes that take place between Art and Vladek that frame Vladek's memories. The effects of dealing with Vladek are exhausting, inducing 'self-loathing' in Art through the comparison of his own meagre life experiences with his father's (Young, 2000:35): a comparison as Marianne Hirsch notes, that can lead to the vicarious adoption of parental memories:

> It is a question of adopting the traumatic experiences – and thus also the memories – of others as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one's own life story. (2001:221)

As Spiegelman makes clear in *Metamaus,* however, Art is not intended to be read as an entirely sympathetic character, nor indeed as synonymous with the author of the book (2011:35). Spiegelman is presenting a narrative version of the series of encounters during which his father disclosed his wartime experiences, and the effect these encounters and other family events had on their relationship. The passages about the war are a story within a story, that is, in turn, framed in Chapter Two of *Maus II,* as the character Art reflects upon the fame and attention that the publication of *Maus I* has brought him (2003:201). There are therefore *three* distinct time periods at play in *Maus*: Vladek's memories of Poland, Art's memories of interviewing Vladek, and finally the period of the making of *Maus*, which began in 1978, four years before Vladek's death in 1982, and ended in 1991 (Spiegelman, 2011:180). Both Spiegelman and Fulbrook insert framing passages such as this into their narratives. They allow for the inclusion of further reflection upon the process of writing (or drawing) the book within the text itself, and activate a sense of the present as a contingent realm, subject to pressures, conflicts and compromises, and offering little added objectivity or clarity of perspective on the distant past that both books seek to engage with.

Despite this apparent intractability of the past, both authors aver that their books are fundamentally about memory. As Spiegelman says: 'The subject of *Maus* is the retrieval of memory and ultimately, the creation of memory' (2011:73). Fulbrook is perhaps less willing to create or invent scenarios that may not have happened in the way they are described, at least not without flagging them up as such, but still concedes that 'there is no such thing as 'collective memory', but rather, many conflicting interpretations' (2012:16). Despite the suggestion that memory, either individual or collective, is susceptible to elisions, omissions and contortions, both authors make the attempt to recover something of the nature of events in this 'antechamber of Auschwitz' (Fulbrook, 2012:356), and it is this same effort that stimulates the drive to incorporate extra-aesthetic historical material into painting, and that has sustained all the research described in this thesis.

With the passage of time, the task of historical witnessing remains crucial but inevitably becomes more mediated. Hirsch's term 'postmemory' (2001:221) is significant here, and she describes an 'intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance' (2001:221), open to anyone who empathises with the victims of conflict. In the case of the artist working with snapshots taken in wartime, witnessing may include reading around the subject, visiting the sites, conjecturing about the roles played by individuals, and imagining the conditions of existence in the depicted location, as well as, and alongside, the actual process of painting. Once the paintings are completed, they join other cultural forms as one of a range of means by which other people can bear witness, at a temporal distance from the events themselves.

Hirsch makes the point that photographs can reproduce the original trauma of conflict in second generation witnesses, and 'it is only when they are redeployed, in new texts and new contexts, that they regain a capacity to enable a postmemorial working through' (2001:238). The empathetic and mediating activities performed by the artist in the process of transcribing the photographs *transform* them and as Hirsch argues, prevent them inflicting the same kind of trauma in their new form as drawings or paintings, for example. It is arguable that the act of appropriation and transformation of the photographs brackets the intentions of their original producers, providing a distancing effect. The viewer does not experience the point of view of the photographer directly, but rather as a form of quotation within the painted image.

In Poland 1940-1941, the social circumstances of the production of the photographs are an aspect of the content of the paintings. The paintings provide a mediated opportunity to witness the act of the photographs being taken, but this witnessing does not take the form of a first-hand experience of the event, and the paintings as paintings cannot attempt to deceive the viewer about their own reliability as historical documents. Neither do they attempt to impose a sense-making strategy or promote an interpretation of the photographs. Indeed, as Edwards points out, photographs, like any other

records, are already interpretations of their referents (2001:9). The paintings augment and re-present the iconic content of the photographs, which are seen as constituent parts of historically specific acts of interpretation by their photographer(s), involving the selection and framing of subjects, the contrivance of poses, smiling and facing the camera.

Friedländer concludes his survey of the problems inherent in the representation of the 'Final Solution' with some remarks about possible approaches to the subject, approaches which have informed the production of Poland 1940-1941: 'The inability to say, the apparent pathology of obsessive recall, the seemingly simplistic refusal of historiographical closure may ultimately be the only self-evident sequels of an unmasterable past' (1993:62). The 'obsessive' attention to iconic detail in the paintings, the several deferrals or refusals that they manifest: of exact photographic reproduction, of narrative context, of colour, of inflexion, and of surface finish, are all directed towards the articulation of the ethical representation of photographic evidence, or interpretative trace, with what White calls 'the praxis of present social formations' (1987:102). It must be stressed that this is not a presumption of political instrumentality, but rather an intention to make the work relevant to contemporary circumstances.

Some commentators have argued for a form of engagement beyond witnessing, however. In his examination of the role of memory in relation to the Holocaust, Dominick LaCapra (1998) applies Freudian psychoanalytic categories to the problem of the representation of unprecedented 'limit-cases' (1998:41). His arguments are pertinent here because of the difficulties inherent in using source material authored during conflicts, whereby there is a danger of 'replicating in one's own voice' (1998:42), the attitudes of those implicated, whether perpetrator, facilitator, resister or victim. LaCapra suggests that beyond witnessing, which can potentially foreclose 'critical distance' (1998:24), the historian (or artist) should engage with a process of 'working through' that applies historical evidence including 'memory work' to present day political action: 'In order to change a state of affairs in a desirable manner, effective

agency may have to go beyond witnessing to take up more comprehensive modes of political and social practice' (1998:12).

Narrative or storytelling is acknowledged to be an implicit part of the process of witnessing. In Poland 1940-1941, the narrative is not implicit in the paintings, but must be produced by the viewer. As John Berger observes: 'Photographs in themselves do not narrate' (2013:52), and the same is true for paintings based on photographs. All that can be said about the photographs is that they were taken, and the paintings reiterate that fact in related but different terms. The meanings suggested by the iconic content of the individual paintings are contained in incidental visual details that can be read off the surface of the photographs, such as the armbands worn in the street scenes, or the third-class railway carriage in photographs one and two. These visual cues, like those discussed by Guerin, have a generic quality that makes them 'open to appropriation in the memories we author' (2012:29). Guerin argues that amateur photographs enable our investment in their iconic content, and the paintings extend this potential, bracketing their original photographer's intentions and making them available for new interpretative responses. As LaCapra writes: 'the manner in which one engages the past affects the attempt to construct the present and the future' (1998:72). I will discuss further the specific means by which paintings can relate to present-day circumstances in Chapter Four. In the next section, I turn to the work of three artists who have engaged with issues relating to the use of photographs in acts of historical witnessing, in order to survey some of the difficulties implicit in such an artistic strategy.

5. Working with history: three examples

The attempt to revivify the amateur snapshots used in Poland 1940-1941, runs counter to the blurring of source photographs in order to enlist them in a process of mourning, as discussed in Chapter One. The series is intended as a contribution to the closer critical scrutiny of unthinking civilian complicity in state violence, as evidenced in the act of routinely recording everyday life in the midst of conflict. However, this general meaning is not imposed on the source material through its distortion, cropping, blurring, accompaniment by didactic text, or incorporation into an historically resonant context. Instead, the relatively faithful transcription of the iconic content of the photographs, which are already situated acts of interpretation on the part of the photographer(s), enables that content to suggest its own meanings, which the viewer is free to interpret.

In *At Memory's Edge,* James E. Young observes that post-war generations of historians, artists, and architects who feel compelled to address the Holocaust as subject matter, but who did not witness the events of the war first-hand, only have books, films, photographs, their parents' memories, and their own childhood games to draw upon (2000:1). In other words, the process of 'second generation witnessing' is necessarily socially or culturally mediated. Young, echoing Guerin (2012:24), contends that artists should acknowledge this mediation implicitly in the work they produce: 'part of what a post-Holocaust generation must ethically represent is the experience of the memory-act itself' (2000:9). Rather than the events themselves, the means of their transmission become the object of memory. Indeed, in a statement redolent of White and made in reference to *Maus,* Young insists that 'the facts of history and their memory exist side by side, mutually dependent for sustenance and meaning' (2000:39).

In terms of the sources they draw upon and the interpretation they give to these sources, historians and artists alike are inevitably confined within the sense-making conventions of representation, because 'it is not a matter of choosing between objectivity and distortion, but rather between different strategies for constituting "reality" in thought so as to deal with it in different ways, each of which has its own ethical implications' (White, 1978:22).
A fundamental distinction can be drawn however, between historical works that incorporate text, narratives, anecdotes, testimonies and oral histories in addition to visual sources such as photographs, and those that are principally or purely visual at the point of reception. Where written or spoken language are absent, the viewer is encouraged to bring their own narratives to the experience of the work. The production of narrative as a sense-making process thereby becomes apparent as a self-conscious activity of the perceiving subject, rather than as an aspect of the works. Young draws this distinction in his consideration of a number of artists working with photographic sources, and dealing with the Holocaust as subject matter. Whilst proceeding from research findings not dissimilar to those of an historian, these artists are also concerned with 'the stories viewers tell themselves about what they see' (Young, 2000:51), in the same sense as Guerin discusses with regard to amateur photographs and their potential in acts of witnessing.

Shimon Attie, an artist commended by Young for fulfilling the imperative to take account of the mediated nature of postmemory, produced a series of works during the 1990s that bear directly on the use of photographic primary sources. Attie's (1991-96) *Sites Unseen*, a series of projects in which the artist projected slides made from photographs of members of lost Jewish communities directly onto buildings, trains, and waterways in Berlin, Dresden, Cologne, Copenhagen, and Amsterdam, made the mediated nature of history explicit, whilst attempting to reanimate memory in the very locations now marked by the absence of Holocaust victims.

Figure 30. Shimon Attie (1992) *Almadtstrasse (formerly Grenadierstrasse and corner of Schendelgasse), Religious Book Salesman, 1930*. Slide projection, dimensions variable, Almadtstrasse, Berlin. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

In the first project of the series, entitled *Writing on the Wall*, Attie (1991-3) unearthed photographs of the Jewish population of the Scheunenviertel district of Berlin from archives in the city. Having found the precise locations of about a quarter of the images and using nearby sites for the remainder, Attie set about projecting slides of them onto buildings for one or two consecutive nights at a time. These interventions were also documented photographically, and the resulting prints are all that remain of the project. According to Young, Attie is acutely aware of the difference between the two stages of the work, privileging the projections over their documentation (2000:67). The spatio-temporal experience of these projections provoked a range of responses from local people, including anger and indignation: responses that Attie argues were integral to the works and which, in at least one case, included a narrative of self-exculpation involving the assertion of legal ownership of a building confiscated from a Jew (Young, 2000:72).

Attie wanted to 'touch those spaces' (Young, 2000:70), in a process that, as Hirsch points out, merges the photographic icon and index with one of its referents: the location in which it was taken (2012:265). The absence of the

individuals recorded in these photographs is made more palpable through the coincidences and discrepancies between their depicted settings, and the reality of the same places at the time of Attie's visit. With regard to the latitude he allowed himself in the matching of photograph to location, Attie has stated that he is mindful of the distinction between the methodologies of historians and artists, prioritising the latter where compromises have to be made (Hirsch, 2012:265).

Attie's use of photographs is predicated on their evidential status as traces of the real, rather than as traces of photographic acts made *by* rather than simply *of* specific individuals. His work emerges from a tradition of thought and commentary about photography that has a long provenance reaching back to the advent of the process in the 1830s, culminating in *Camera Lucida* by Roland Barthes (1993), first published in 1980. Much of the emotive power of Attie's project would be dissipated if it were perceived to incorporate a critique of the verity of photography at the same time as it attempts to evoke a vanished community by photographic means, particularly in view of the circumstances of that community's disappearance. If, as Young claims, Attie's works 'transform the sites of history into the sites of memory' (2000:62), his aim would be seriously undermined by the kind of analysis of the relationship of photographs to history made by Elizabeth Edwards (2001) in *Raw Histories* for example.

As mentioned above, Edwards argues that old photographs inscribe a culturally determined *interpretation* of their subjects, in the same way that other historical sources do (2001:9). Photographs do not constitute memories, or return the past to the present in a manner supportive of Barthes' assertion that they are 'an emanation of *past reality*: a *magic*, not an art' (1993:88). They do not, simply by virtue of their visual nature, present us with a fuller picture of the historical truth. Photographs are fragmentary, instantaneous records of excerpts from a diachronic continuum, and their decontextualisation and re-use in the present day, amplifies and reinforces the distance of the past from the present. Separated from the specific cultural conditions of its production, in

which constructed meaning has been naturalised as image, any photograph becomes polysemous and available to interpretation. This interpretation however, is on the basis of its perceived symbolic meaning, through a process in which a cultural signified is mistaken for its referent (Edwards, 2001:8-9).

Edwards, like Guerin and Berger, does allow for this loss of context in the act of looking at old photographs to take on a performative value however, as an exchange capable of generating new meanings and social relations, and Attie's work is staged in the space between the unknowable quality of the photographs he uses, and the social histories that he reactivates with them. The problems attendant upon the use of photographs as a means to reinscribe cultural memory in the present day become more apparent however, when those photographs are recognised as historically specific in their meaning.

The danger of making assumptions based on a reading of cultural remnants such as photographs as, for example, symbols of a vanished community, is recognised and accounted for by other artists using the medium to address historical subjects. As mentioned above, Dariusz Jablonski's (1998) film *Fotoamator* includes slow panning shots across colour slides photographed in the Lodz ghetto between 1941 and 1944 by its chief accountant Walter Genewein. By highlighting the contrived compositions and accidental inclusions in some of Genewein's slides in this way, Ulrich Baer concludes that 'the Nazis' effects on contemporary ways of seeing are best resisted by turning their favored media against them' (2002:176). Baer advocates reading Nazi photographs 'against the grain' in a critical analysis that prevents their subjects remaining 'stereotyped icons of an ideology that aimed at stripping them of their humanity' (2002:174). By contrast with Attie's work, the intentions and decisions of the photographers are central to the meaning of Poland 1940-1941, and, with one exception, the paintings draw upon those images in which the subjects are clearly willing participants, rather than objects of scrutiny.

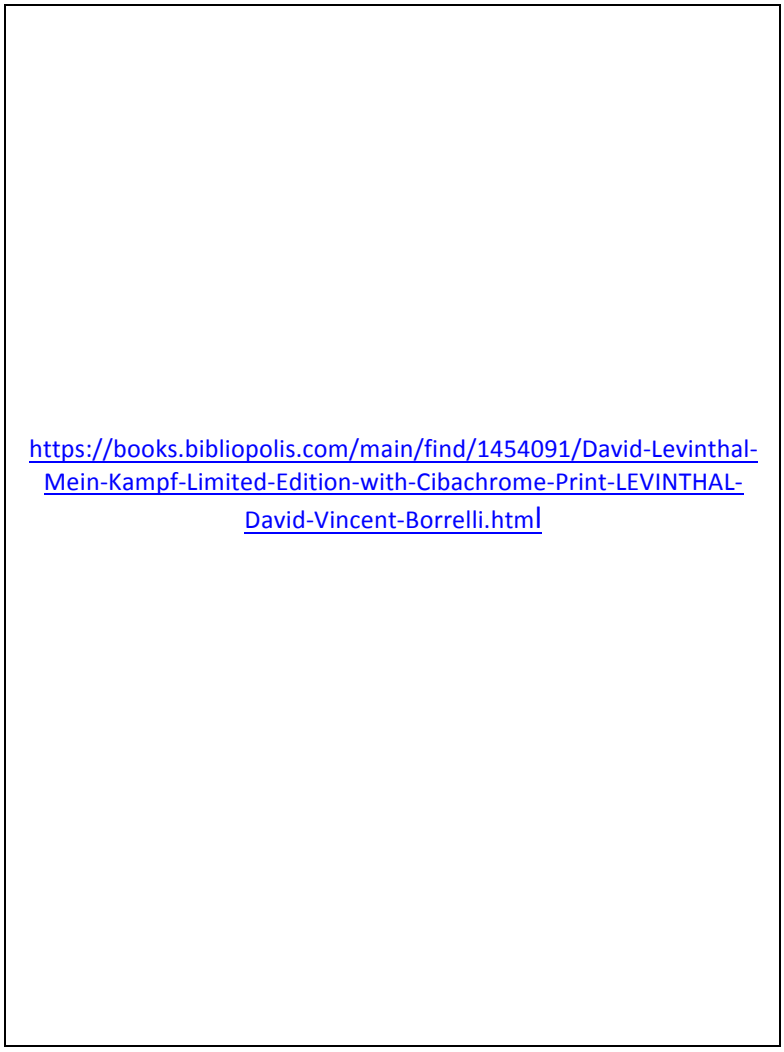

Figure 31. David Levinthal (1996) *Mein Kampf*. Twin Palms Publishing, Santa Fe. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

In *Mein Kampf*, David Levinthal (1996), whose work, like Jablonski's, re-examines Nazi imagery, acknowledges human agency in photographic acts and the contrived nature of photographic seeing, at the same time as he addresses the means by which memory is transmitted. A series of large-scale polaroid photographs of figurines posed to represent scenes from the Holocaust (Figure 31), they use the childhood ritual of playing war as a point of departure for a meditation on both toys and photography as prosthetic substitutes for first-hand experience. Levinthal's pursuit of the vintage toys that he uses in these *tableaux* are a part of the meaning of the project, which, like Poland 1940-1941,

has a wider performative scope (Young, 2000:51). The photographs merge the domesticity and obsessiveness of the collector and wargamer, with the vicarious fascination of the second-generation witness. Some of the images are based on widely circulated photographs of atrocities perpetrated by the Germans on the Eastern Front, but they are heavily blurred, evocative of the imprecision of memory rather than straining for elusive evidential status. Levinthal wants the viewer to contribute their own narrative interpretation of each image. As Young writes: 'These pieces depend upon narrative for their lives, animated by the stories we tell about them' (2000:51). He concludes that Levinthal's photographs ask more questions than they attempt to answer (2000:54). In the context of Levinthal's work, Fulbrook's 'need to know' (2012:22) is indefinitely suspended, and her interrogation of the facts on our behalf, becomes an interrogation of the image by the viewer. Equally, the multiple timeframes of 'past' and 'present' that Spiegelman employs to produce a story capable of reflecting upon its own inadequacy, are collapsed and rendered simultaneously in Attie's photographic projections. As Hirsch writes: 'we see faces looking ahead towards a future they were never to have. The photograph's temporal irony elicits mourning and empathy' (2012:267).

In Attie's works, photographs are exploited for their instantaneity and discontinuity, and for the atomised but convergent perspectives they can offer on the community they depict. This is the approach taken up by the paintings in Poland 1940-1941, which, I have argued, resist drawing conclusions from their photographic sources, treating them instead as a discontinuous set of visual prompts for the viewer's own narrative construction of past circumstances. The paintings resist the openness of meaning that Attie's projections conjure, partly because of the ethical problems implicit in records produced by facilitators rather than victims, and also because they are mediated by the traditions and techniques of painting, and do not carry the same kind of emotive charge that photographs do. Barthes' evocation of photography as 'the return of the dead' (1993:9), could be taken as Attie's point of departure here, whereas John Tagg's insistence that photography produces a new reality rather

Figure 32. Christian Boltanski (2012) *Grosse Hamburger Strasse*. Photographic print on linen cloth, acrylic paint, metal frame, installation on iron rod photographic print: 150 x 110 cm, Iron rod: 198 x 166 cm. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

than delivering 'the mark of a past presence' (1988:3), would prove problematic for Attie's project, but perhaps more workable for a group of paintings based on photographs. In that sense, the paintings are self-evidently new artistic productions based on historic photographs and unlike Attie's work, do not seek to retrieve the past for the present in the same way (Young, 2000:67).

Christian Boltanski has produced a large body of work across several decades, that draws upon found photographic images for their ability to refer the viewer to historical events. His *Jewish School of Grosse Hamburger Strasse in Berlin in 1938* (2012) is a project based on a photograph of the children of a Jewish school that the artist found while making an installation entitled *The Missing House* (1990). The latter work consisted of twelve plaques attached to the end walls of two buildings on either side of an empty lot on the street of the same name. The missing building had been destroyed during the Second World War,

and the plaques included the names of the residents, their occupations, and the period of their residency. Boltanski later discovered that until 1942, the residents had been Jewish, but that after deportation they had been replaced by Aryan Germans, and that this latter group had been the victims of the allied bombing raid that destroyed the house. The artist's assistants also produced a set of vitrines containing the results of their research into the lives of the residents, which was eventually deposited with a local museum. Brett Ashley Kaplan has written about the reduced impact of this work, which adopts historical research methods at the expense of what he calls 'intense and intimate contemplation' (2007:147). The contrast between *The Missing House* and *Grosse Hamburger Strasse* is indicative of the range of possible approaches to historical content and differing emotive potential of textual and visual works, and Kaplan concludes that in Boltanski's case, the more historically accurate, the less 'meaningful and evocative' (2007:145) his work becomes.

The photograph found by Boltanski gave rise to a range of works cropped from the main image and displayed in a number of formats, including atop metal stands, under spotlights, and as single framed enlargements. Amongst these other configurations of portraits excised from the photograph, were a set of twelve enlarged and blurred images printed onto linen and installed in two rows of six with a fan, which blows across and disturbs the hanging images into movement (Figure 32). The blurring of these images suggests an affinity of intention with Levinthal's *Mein Kampf,* in which the particular is apparently made universal by the generalisation of visual information. Boltanski has talked about his treatment of photographic portraits in these terms: 'For me it's very important to start with a real image […] Then I blow it up to make it universal' (Hirsch, 2012:262). Hirsch however, is critical of Boltanski's universalism, because of the doubt it casts on the referentiality of the photographic image. The cropping, enlargement, and blurring of found images to evoke broad themes of mortality and mourning, as discussed in Chapter One, obscures the specific social conditions and agencies that caused the suffering in the first place. As the events of the war fall out of living memory, Hirsch perceives a risk

in such decontextualisation, and the absence of 'the anchors of agency and responsibility' (2012:264) in Boltanski's work.

The implicit destabilisation of the veracity of photographic records in both Boltanski and Richter's work, strips them of their indexicality as images produced by, and of, particular individuals, and pushes them into a symbolic relation to their perceived historical referents. There is an uncomfortable contradiction in both artists' use of photographs to memorialise victimhood whilst at the same time problematising photographic objectivity. This approach ultimately undercuts the power of Boltanski's work, leaving us with the vague sense of a crime against humanity, but no means of protesting it. In that sense, both Richter's *October* cycle and Boltanski's photo-derived work appear to be locked in a state of mourning. Where Attie compensates for the decontextualisation of his sources by reinscribing them in their original locations and thereby celebrating their specificity, Boltanski de-territorialises his images and presses them into service as generic symbols of absence and loss.

In its imposition of a stable meaning on White's 'congeries of contiguously related fragments' (1978:125), Boltanski's work contrasts with the attempt made in Poland 1940-1941 to resist closed semantic connotations and to direct attention towards empirical and micro-historical content. In an extension of his use of Freudian categories to historicise the Holocaust as 'limit event' (1998:53), LaCapra warns against 'transference', or the emotional over-identification with victims of the 'Nazi genocide', because of the risk of becoming trapped in the state of persecution. In a passage that can be applied to the cited works by both Attie and Boltanski, LaCapra argues that: 'To act out a transferential relation is to repeat the past compulsively as if it were fully present, to relive it typically in a manic or melancholy manner' (1998:54). He insists that historical events must be critically engaged with rather than 'normalised', or simply relived over and over again for their emotional intensity, as in Boltanski's work.

Growing awareness of the common ground shared by historians and artists has enabled both disciplines to borrow from one another's methodologies in the production of works about history. Boltanski's, and to an extent Attie's works, illustrate the problems that can arise when photographic images of deceased individuals are used in artistic contexts, especially where some kind of memorial function is being asked of them. The people in these images acquire a depersonalised symbolic meaning, at the expense of the very individuality whose loss is being mourned. This contradiction is inevitably more acute where images of victims are being used, and with the exception of one photograph in the album, the street scenes depicting the Jews of Sosnowiec wearing armbands have not been transcribed for that reason. As explained in Section 2.8 above, those exhibitions that included this image suggested a didactic intervention and an imposed meaning not implicit in the individual source photographs, but evident in their juxtaposition.

Despite the difficulties discussed above, Shimon Attie, David Levinthal and Christian Boltanski succeed in deferring the narrative interpretation of their work, by obscuring or recontextualising the very documentary forms of evidence they draw upon, rather than by using them as guarantors of the historical veracity of their projects. By abandoning the more overt explanatory strategies such as narrative and argument through accompanying text, Attie, Levinthal, and Boltanski hand the responsibility for the storytelling and sense-making entirely over to the viewer, while insisting on the primacy of the visual over the textual in memory work. Whether or not they can sustain this primacy is less significant than the precedent they create for an historiographical practice that exploits the specifically iconic potential of photographic records for producing meanings that have no equivalent in written works.

Poland 1940-1941 diverges significantly from the work of the cited artists in that it resists the superimposition of meaning onto its source photographs, treating them instead as existing interpretations of their referents, as Edwards suggests (2001:9). Where the subjects of Attie, Levinthal, and Boltanski's works

are unknown, prosthetic or obscured, the identity of the individuals in the snapshots from the album are central to the conception of the project, and research into their likely circumstances at the time the photographs were taken has been extensive (Arendt, 1963; Hilberg, 1992; Majer, 2003; Browning, 2004; Snyder, 2011; Fulbrook, 2012), and is ongoing. The production of *Abordnung* constitutes a part of this research, and the film is significant in that it extends the semantic scope of the project beyond the paintings in isolation. This partial redistribution of the meaning of the project onto the relationship of the paintings to the film, relieves the paintings of the burden of sustaining its entire significance. As Edwards indicates, despite their apparent realism, photographs do not readily disclose their meaning and must be combined with other historical sources if they are to contribute to the articulation of the past (2001:9). Citing Walter Benjamin, whose writing I will return to in Chapter Four, Edwards draws a parallel between the photographer and the historian (or artist), suggesting that both call attention to 'the fragment and the materiality of the past as manifestations of unique experience' (2001:10). This is the approach that guided the production of Poland 1940-1941, and that is developed further in the projects described in Chapters Three and Four.

Conclusion

Poland 1940-1941 was the first body of work to be completed during the course of study. Consisting of 11 paintings and an accompanying film, the project was based upon a German photograph album containing an inscription that included a name, location and timeframe. By contrast with previous series that utilised anonymous source material, this information enabled research into the social, historical and geographical contexts of the album's production. The majority of the photographs were taken in Sosnowiec in Southern Poland between June 1940 and December 1941, and the use of the term *abordnung* or secondment in the inscription, suggested that the subjects had been present in the region in a professional capacity. For the duration of the project they were assumed to

have been German civil administrators, and an account of the administration of the region by historian Mary Fulbrook provided an historiographical model, and vital factual information for the development of the practical work and the subsequent research visit to Sosnowiec.

The sequencing of the snapshots in the album was suggestive of a linked series of episodes and a chronological timeline that may have acted as a prompt for storytelling, and as a result, working with the album necessitated an investigation of historical narrative. Hayden White's historiographical study of narrative as a sense-making strategy highlighted the constructed and ideological nature of history writing, and proposed alternative means of conveying the historical record. White's analysis contributed to the decision to abandon the existing order of the images in the album, and to treat the photographs as discrete visual fragments in a manner that prevented any of them being read as instigating, critiquing, or concluding the sequence.

Both the photographs and the paintings were conceived as traces of social performances or processes, and these were the grounds for the framing of the photographs as both iconic records and social acts. By contrast with the work of artists addressing historical subject matter by blurring or treating photographic sources in order to abstract universal meaning, in Poland 1940-1941 the iconic content of the photographs was preserved and augmented during the production of the paintings. This augmentation represents a contribution to the range of strategies that can be employed by artists to address historical subjects and themes. It entailed the restoration of focal clarity and the broadening of the tonal range and apparent tactility of the forms in the photographs, together with the increased scale and materiality of the paintings.

The film *Abordnung* made the shared performative aspects of painting and photography explicit by documenting the sites of production of both the paintings and the snapshots. Filmed in Manchester and Poland, *Abordnung* included factual subtitles and depicted significant locations in the album, but

without employing a narrative form to explain or interpret the paintings, photographs, or events of the time. Intended as a supplement to the paintings, *Abordnung* also employed the annal form adopted throughout the project in the light of the historiographical research. It represented the start of a process of diversification of media and sources by which the research began to take account of the past as a multi-perspectival phenomenon.

Exhibitions of the work from Poland 1940-1941 were intended to demonstrate that as transcriptions of individual photographs that digress somewhat from their sources, the works defer narrative interpretation to the viewer. Because they do not constitute a narrative, the paintings do not take on the moralising and ideological function of traditional historical narratives. Their relationship to the past consists in their re-mediation of photographs as part of a process of witnessing their production in a theatre of conflict. The motivation for this process is to understand and represent the past outside of the means of its domestication by narrative, rather than to explain, interpret, or condemn the behaviour of the individuals involved.

Historiographical and ethical debates relating to the representation of the Holocaust raised the issue of the agency of the artist or historian in the transmission of historical testimony. Whilst Fulbrook situates herself in relation to her subject through the use of authorial interjections in the narrative, this relationship is made structural in *Maus* by Art Spiegelman. Like Fulbrook's book, *Maus* is set in the same location and timeframe as Poland 1940-1941, and Spiegelman's approach highlighted the need to incorporate a clearer sense of my own agency in the production of the work into the conception of this, and subsequent projects.

In the works of Shimon Attie, David Levinthal and Christian Boltanski, photographs are used to convey themes of memory and mourning, whilst historical research remains as a subtext. The photographic content of their work is implicitly acknowledged to be constructed, but in Attie's and Boltanski's work

symbolic meanings are attributed to their source images that commentators have found problematic. Images of individuals stand in for lost communities in a manner that has been read as somehow repeating their original victimisation on the basis of assumed generic racial characteristics. The problematic use of photographs by these artists nevertheless invites the viewer's production of narrative without prescribing its content, or indeed, making any false claims for its objectivity. By contrast with the work of these artists, Poland 1940-1941 resists the abstraction of meaning from its sources, instead reiterating them as social acts in a related but different medium, in which their iconic specificity remains intact.

Poland 1940-1941 was part of an ongoing enquiry into the possibility of developing an approach to history painting capable of avoiding both the contrivance of narrative, and the subjection of particular historical sources or individuals to generalised meanings. In order to realise a representation of the past based upon its spatial, as well as temporal co-ordinates, these objectives would lead to a diversification of media and sources by which a greater range of testimonies and perspectives could be incorporated into a project. It will be seen in Chapter Three that the need to move beyond Green and Seddon's distinction between narrative history and first-hand experience (2000:1), was enabled by the prioritisation of the site visit as the point of departure for The Berlin Olympic Village Project. This change of methodology was crucial to the objectives of incorporating my own agency as an element in the conception of the project, and working beyond the critique of representation as the semantic horizon of a contemporary form of history painting.

Chapter Three: The Berlin Olympic Village Project

Figure 33. David Gledhill (2016) *Stand with visitor information at the 1936 Olympic Village.* Photograph.

Introduction

After the completion of Poland 1940-1941 (2014-15), an opportunity arose to produce work in response to the Athlete's Village constructed for the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. In 2014, a company called Palis Advisory AG had initiated a programme of collaborations between British and German artists, entitled 'Bridging the Gap'. The Director of Palis Advisory visited my studio in January 2015, and subsequently attended the 'Album' exhibition (see Chapter Two), inviting me to take part in a project to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games in 2016.

From the start of this project, the site visit to the Village took precedence as the point of departure for the work produced. The brief interval between the conclusion of Poland 1940-1941 and the visit to Berlin (30 August to 2 September 2015), meant that there was no time to acquire source material, to plan, or to make work beforehand. The practical need to form impressions of the site during the visit, combined with the short lead-in to the first exhibition of the work, timed to coincide with the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in July 2016, necessitated a change to my previous working methods. Whereas beforehand, groups of found photographic images acquired in an ad hoc manner had provided the basis for series of paintings, on this occasion less labour-intensive media would also be employed in order to produce the required volume of work (see Sections 5.3 and 5.4 below). Also, my own film and photographic documentation of the site unexpectedly provided a visual counterpoint to the period postcards and snapshots collected after returning to the United Kingdom, so that an expanded temporal framework for the project became possible, spanning both pre-Second World War and contemporary perspectives on the site.

The decision to broaden my approach in order to encompass both new media and my own photographic source material, helped to realise, and then extended the objectives carried forward from previous series. The investigation

of historiographical theories during Poland 1940-1941 was combined with conceptualisations of space and place rooted in postmodern geography. These theories reassert the significance of place in the historical process, and were applied using classifications, methods, and objectives derived from John Schofield's (2005) *Combat Archaeology*, in order to integrate the experience of place with both primary visual sources and secondary historiographical material. This change of methodology demonstrated to me the importance of continuing to reassess my objectives, and of adopting an evolving conception of history painting as an expanded practice.

In this chapter, I will describe the significance of these theories of space and place, postmodern geography, and archaeology, for the conception and production of The Berlin Olympic Village Project (2015-17). I will go on to describe the relationship and distinctions between the paintings, prints, films and assemblage that comprised my contribution to the project. Aspects of the work will also be contextualised in a field of contemporary practice that engages with historical subject matter by simultaneously employing a metonymic approach to the accumulation of images or testimonies, whilst maintaining a critical distance from the means by which this material is presented. The combination of an essentially documentary approach to content, with an implied acknowledgement of the mediating nature of language, informs the work of both Susan Hiller and Walter Kempowski discussed below, and became significant for my own research in various ways. The application of this twofold perspective on subject matter to the production of a body of work about history, was one of the central problems I wanted to address after concluding Poland 1940-1941, with its attendant ethical issues relating to the use of images of victims produced by individuals potentially amongst the facilitators of political violence. How could this new project faithfully document the distinctive people and places of the 1936 Games, whilst simultaneously examining the conventions by which they are represented?

1. The Berlin Olympic Village Project and methodology

The work produced for The Berlin Olympic Village Project was made in response to a site visit in August and September 2015, to the Athlete's Village constructed for the 1936 Olympic Games. By the conclusion of the project, thirteen paintings, ten unique gum-arabic transfer prints, two films and an assemblage had been completed, of which a selection were installed at the Berlin headquarters of exhibition sponsors Deutsche Kreditbank Stiftung (DKB Trust), during July and August 2016. This exhibition, entitled 'Olydo Berlin 16', was then transferred to the gymnasium at the Athlete's Village during September 2016, as part of Germany's Day of the Open Monument.[24] A third exhibition, entitled 'Berlin 1936', took place at neo:gallery 23 in Bolton between 18 March and 30 April 2017.

The reduction of the total number of finished works exhibited in Germany, at the request of DKB Trust and the curator of the exhibition, was indicative of the controversial nature of the subject matter, and bears out Brandon Taylor's (2000a:80) misgivings about the prospects for a critical form of history painting in an age of corporate sponsorship. However, it also reflects the potential for a contemporary form of history painting to address challenging themes from historical perspectives. The final showing of the project was curated by the participating artists from the complete range of work produced, and featured material considered unsuitable for exhibition in a corporate context in Germany at the time. I will return to this issue below.

As an ensemble, my work addressed some of the various means by which the Olympic Village and an individual associated with it, have been represented since its construction in the early 1930s. It will be seen that there is a web of

[24] In Germany, Heritage Day, or the Day of the Open Monument, takes place in September each year. Members of the public are able to access sites and buildings not normally open to visitors. https://www.berlin.de/en/events/2860241-2842498-heritage-day.en.html

cross-referencing between the works, all of which are based on photographic or film source material, either historical or contemporary in nature.

This project was the first to proceed from a site visit. As such, it manifested a shift of emphasis from previous projects in which the acquisition of second-hand photographic source material formed the starting point, and any subsequent site visits were intended to contextualise the production of the paintings, by finding the locations in the photographs. This new significance of the site visit prompted me to investigate theories of space and place as categories, and led on to an examination of the field of contemporary archaeology, in which an engagement with the historic military site plays a central methodological role. It is necessary to recap this line of enquiry in order to clarify the ramifications of place-based research for this stage of my own evolving conception of a visual historiographical practice.

1.1 Space and place

In *Postmodern Geographies*, Edward W. Soja (1989) surveys the field of modern human geography since the 1960s, pulling together theorists and key texts that have contributed to a reassertion of the importance of space in the critical social sciences. Soja points out the historicist foundations of Western Marxism and other critical disciplines, and attributes their privileging of the temporal over the spatial to the adaptation of the principles of natural science, in which cause and effect are seen as exclusively sequential. Drawing on writings by Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, Soja points out that capitalist development is geographically uneven, and that an understanding of the social production of space and power relations is crucial to any critically engaged practice. He calls for the reintegration of a postmodern critical human geography with history, in order to restore a three-way dialectic of space, time and social being. In his assertion of space as a dimension that is actively politicised in different ways through the social production and contestation of meaning, Soja opens up the

possibility of a form of visual art based on an engagement with historical locations that is not exclusively constructed on an historiographical model. But how might historical subject matter be articulated via the spatial realm, in order to move beyond the relativism that Hayden White and others have claimed is endemic to historical narrative? To answer this question, it is necessary to identify those aspects of space and place that may be accessible to artistic engagement.

Architectural theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz claims that the distinction between space and place resides in the production of human meaning through artistic activity, via a process of 'symbolisation' (1980:17). In attempting to arrive at a definition of place, Norberg-Schulz starts by distinguishing between an abstract scientific conception of space, and 'existential space', which refers to the human experience of, and relationship to landscape (1980:5). Human beings act on the natural environment in order to create bounded dwellings, concretising meaning through creative activity, primarily building. The term he uses to describe these meanings is 'character': 'A place is a space that has a distinct character' (1980:5). In the built environment, character consists in material architectural features and their functions, as well as the atmospherics that they generate. Norberg-Schulz conceives the role of the arts in the production of meaning, as 'to gather the contradictions and complexities of the life-world' (1980:23). The importance of poetics is central to his thesis, and suggests a range of possibilities for an artistic practice predicated on the experience of place: 'Only poetry in all its forms […] makes human existence meaningful, and meaning is the fundamental human need' (1980:23).

Whilst the focus of Norberg-Schulz's text is architectural, his citation of Georg Trakl's (1913) poem *A Winter Evening*, extends his conception of art as a means of working on or with the landscape in order to gather meaning, to draw a distinction between poetry and science. The former 'concretizes basic properties of existence' (1980:10), acting to root general meanings in the particular, whilst science acts in the opposite direction, abstracting generalised

meaning from the particular. Art thereby produces meaning from the particularities that science overlooks, and the experiences unaccounted for by scientific objectivity might be made to yield meanings that can explain 'the phenomena of everyday life' (1980:18).

A more specific realisation of this aspect of Norberg-Schulz's thesis is provided in Michael Mayerfeld Bell's (1997) essay 'The Ghosts of Place'. Bell grounds the particularity of place in the perception of the presence of human spirits, claiming that the way we make space into place is by ascribing a social meaning to it through 'ritual care', resenting for example, the intrusion of developers into the shrine of a place's former inhabitants (1997:820). We think of places as shrines because we construe them as having ghosts, in the same way that we ascribe 'animating spirit' to individuals, and we produce ghosts in order to feel a social connection with the past. Bell's essay insightfully accounts for the sense of urgency that drove my encounter with the Athlete's Village: an experience of human presence possibly stimulated by awareness of the inevitable redevelopment of the less spectacular but most evocative buildings, including Wolfgang Fürstner's house (see Section 2 below).

For Tim Edensor, writing about the presence of past lives in industrial ruins, such ghosts and their material traces embody messages from beyond everyday discourse, disrupting the dominant readings of the built environment and prompting alternative narratives 'suffused with affect' (2005:163). The ghosts of industrial ruins license contestatory accounts of the past, partly through the remembrance of the unsung lives of those who laboured in such places, but also because: 'The objects, spaces and traces found in ruins highlight the radical undecidability of the past, its mystery, but they simultaneously invoke a need to tell stories about it' (2005:164).

1.2 Research questions and approach to the project

Key research questions that arose at an early stage of the project were as follows:

- If space is not simply a static container in which history happens, but an active force in the production of social life, how might a site such as the Olympic Village, with its military provenance, be used as the starting point for an artistic interpretation of place? [26]
- How can a phenomenological encounter with place be integrated into a practical methodology, in order that a series of artworks might offer explanations or interpretations of a particular site?

The observations of Norberg-Schulz, Mayerfield Bell, and Edensor, sketch out the parameters of an artistic approach that engages with the poetics and meanings of particular locations, drawing upon representations and narratives associated with them, but proposing alternative readings based upon the first-hand experience of place, and of human presence 'understood at an intuitive and affective level' (Edensor, 2005:164). These readings may centre on Norberg-Schulz's 'contradictions and complexities' as constituted, for example, in disputed interpretations of the lives of individuals associated with historical sites, or else on their contradictory ideological or political contexts and uses. The Athlete's Village is especially rich in such complexities and contradictions.

The history of the Village is entangled with its military provenance, and as David Clay Large points out, it was built and administrated by the *Wehrmacht*, and reverted to their use immediately after the Games were concluded (2007:158). John Schofield's (2006) *Combat Archaeology* cites Graves Brown's rationale for the archaeology of modern conflict as a means of critiquing society and

[26] The Olympic Village was constructed by the *Wehrmacht* next to a large military base in Doberitz from which the *Kapp Putsch* was launched. This base is currently disused and semi-derelict (Large, 2007:156).

proposing improvements, but also as a method for questioning assumptions and received knowledge 'for example from official histories' (2005:29).[25] This model of the archaeology of conflict is reminiscent of Edensor's assertion of the need to 'supplement commodified, official and expert memories and interrogate the principles which underpin their construction' (2005:164), and suggests an historiographical utility for the investigation of sites of conflict. Both Schofield and Edensor confirm Soja's assertion that 'social life must be seen as both space-forming and space contingent, a producer and a product of spatiality' (1989:129).

Schofield breaks down the material culture of modern warfare into its constituent manifestations, providing an overview of sources that might be integrated into an approach to historical themes in art. Landscape, buildings, monuments, military hardware, objects, oral histories, historical records, photographs, film, and artistic expressions such as murals, are the sources of material evidence for the interpretation of modern conflict, with landscape representing the best opportunity to 'examine the cultural effects of warfare' (2005:80). In The Berlin Olympic Village Project, I attempted to work with as many of these material resources as possible, in order to produce both a record and an interpretation of the site and its representations. The landscape of the Village, its buildings (including murals), historical narratives about the 1936 Olympics, my own film and photographic records, historic photographs, mass-produced printed ephemera, and an object taken from the site itself, were the sources from which the project was realised.

Taking Schofield's overview as a structure with which to approach The Berlin Olympic Village Project helped to clarify the value of the Village as place, since the importance of the site is generally self-evident in archaeology. The first-hand experience of the Athlete's Village, its atmospherics and ambience of

[25] In Schofield's book, the modern period is defined as extending from 1934 to 1974, and is marked by the availability of oral historical evidence and primary sources.

abandonment and ruination, shaped the conception of the project from the outset. The geographical particularity and nature of the site as a spatial manifestation of a political ideology can be ascertained from historiographical sources, but a far richer encounter with place is yielded by immersion in the actual location itself.

Contemporary archaeology can set out the range of material evidence available for recording, but the actual mode of encounter with the site is critical to the process of interpretation. Edward Relph's (1976) *Place and Placelessness* discusses the phenomenology of place in terms that help to clarify a frame of mind best suited to the reception of meaning in situ. In attempting to define place, Relph arrives at a threefold distinction between observable geographical features, human activity, and significance or meanings (1976:46). However, he goes on to discuss 'spirit of place' as a quality only available through direct experience. This experience is predicated upon a distinction between inside and outside, that for Relph 'provides the essence of place' (1976:49). In his analysis of various kinds of 'insideness' and 'outsideness', Relph defines 'empathetic insideness' as a process of understanding 'not merely by looking at a place, but seeing into and appreciating the essential elements of its identity' (1976:54).

Whilst difficult to elaborate, this kind of being in place means becoming open to Edensor's affective and sensual impressions, and drawing on one's own experiences in the effort to 'understand that place is rich in meaning' (Relph, 1976:54). The visit to the Village was conducted in the spirit of Relph's sense of 'empathetic insideness', with a view to encountering impressions and meanings native to the site. Inevitably, these impressions and meanings are contingent to an extent on one's prior personal experience and cultural conditioning. Nevertheless, the Village itself was constructed in the spirit of the German national myth of the woodland community (Schama, 1995), and while there is a sense of this intention in the dispersal of the buildings and the landscaping, the

Figure 34. David Gledhill (2016) *Russian Army canteen at the Olympic Village: screenshot from Soviet*. 11m:37s, HD video.

founding myth of German national identity in *Germania* by Tacitus (2015), written circa 98AD, is not necessarily familiar to the non-German visitor. In other words, despite the necessity of drawing upon one's own existing knowledge in order to recognise the meaning of an historical site, openness in Relph's terms, can still potentially yield new insights into the spirit of place.

The site visit to the Athlete's Village had a transformative effect on my working methodology. The subsequent investigation of the significance of space and place, and the social production of meaning as a necessarily spatial process, underlined the importance of an immersion in the actual locations of historical events rather than simply their representations. This is potentially an approach that can bridge the perceived divide between the past and present as discussed in Green and Seddon's Introduction to *History Painting Reassessed*, and also supplement White's 'ironic' mode of historical discourse by locating meaning in the first-hand experience of place. For example, in *Space Invaders*, James Lingwood (1993) describes the European site-specific practices of the 1960s as:

> an investigation of depth as well as surface, of the past as part of the present rather than as remote history, of the environment as being constituted not only by its physical features but by the social and political forces which have formed it and continue to condition an understanding of it. (1993:25)

In this model of a spatialised artistic practice, the political meanings of a site can continue to inform responses to it long after the events that distinguished it as a place are concluded. Lingwood suggests that an artist seeking to address historical or political issues can ground their work in the 'tangible context of those realities as much as through their representations' (1993:26). In the spirit of these remarks, the exhibition 'Olydo Berlin 16' transferred to the Olympic Village during September 2016, where it was viewed by German audiences in the setting that inspired the work, and used as the basis for a series of talks and guided tours (Figure 33). I will discuss the Project exhibitions further in Section 6 below.

This research into theories of postmodern geography and combat archaeology was conducted after returning from Berlin. It convinced me that my own experience and documentation of the site could provide a counterpoint to the historic images that I managed to acquire shortly after starting work on the project in Manchester. Contrary to the suggestion that the past is only available to us through its representations (Nora, 1989; Baudrillard, 1994), it is still accessible via the places of the present. In the next section I recount the visit to Elstal in the context of some phenomenological theories of place that I was familiar with at the time, and that provided an initial focus for my experience of the site.

2. The site visit to Elstal, Wustermark near Berlin

Figure 35. David Gledhill (2016) *The Kommandantenhaus at the Berlin Olympic Village: screenshot* from *Fürstner.* 4m:42s, HD video.

The Berlin Olympic Village was constructed between 1934 and 1936, and after the Games, was in use as a military hospital until the end of the Second World War. Located in the former East Germany, it was occupied and used as a forward reconnaissance base by the Russian Army from 1945 until 1992, when it was abandoned. The site combines surviving buildings from both the Nazi and communist phases of its history, and of the original buildings used during the Olympics, the *Hindenburghaus* or cultural centre, the *Speisehaus der Nationen* or dining facility, the *Kommandantenhaus* occupied by Wolfgang Fürstner, the swimming pool, and the gymnasium, are relatively intact, the latter two buildings having been restored by DKB Trust. However, there is no trace of the original reception building, near to which most of the snapshots I obtained after returning to the United Kingdom were taken. Nearly all of the athlete's cottages, the open-air bar, shops, and lakeside sauna, have also been demolished or collapsed, and the ornamental lake has been drained. The Russian housing blocks, used to accommodate soldiers and their families, have been gutted, but remain standing.

The experience of the sprawling 134 acre site was demanding in several senses. The visit took place between Sunday 30 August and Wednesday 2 September 2015, during a summer of record temperatures in the Berlin area.[27] The heat and the extent of the site made taking photographs and shooting film quite arduous but also meant that despite the camera frequently overheating, lighting conditions were close to ideal. At this stage, no decisions had been made regarding the subject matter, compositional conventions, or thematic emphasis of the work, in order that the environment itself might suggest possible approaches. The need to thoroughly document the buildings and landscape from as many points of view as possible in order to allow for a range of artistic responses, meant that the pace of work was intensive.

On the first day, the first building viewed was the refurbished gymnasium, which contains a vaulting horse and a large steel Olympic sign used during the Games. The gymnasium also houses a model of the Village, and has been set up as a starting point for guided tours, however, the nearby *Kommandantenhaus* was far more evocative (Figure 35). Seldom depicted in either historical accounts or contemporary online sources, the house presented an arresting but forlorn sight, and was immediately compelling as a subject. Close to the current entrance of the Village, and set back from the running track at the crest of a shallow slope, it overlooks what was originally an ornamental lake and athlete's sauna facility. This lake features prominently in part two of Leni Riefenstahl's (1938) documentary film *Olympia*. The house was partly boarded and securely locked, and its modest proportions, overgrown drive, and rusted water hydrant, lent it an ambience of recent abandonment.

27 https://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/EDDT/2015/8/31/DailyHistory.html?req_city=&req_state=&req_statename=&reqdb.zip=&reqdb.magic=&reqdb.wmo=

The Village is open for small guided tours between April and October each year, and visitors are accompanied to the largest of the surviving buildings and shown a refurbished athlete's cottage purportedly used by the American team. This building features a furnished bedroom where it is claimed that four times gold medal winner Jesse Owens slept, but has little of the poignancy of the *Kommandantenhaus*, which was occupied by the overseer and *Kommandant* of the Village, Wolfgang Fürstner, until his suicide in August 1936. The *Kommandantenhaus* is not included in the tour and, like many other areas of the site, is roped off. Although the artists involved in the project were initially accompanied by a guide, on the second day we were permitted to explore the site unaccompanied, and I was able to film and photograph the grounds around the house, and between the house and the lake. The visit gave rise to the decision to produce a body of work addressing the representation of Fürstner as a controversial figure in the history of both the Berlin Olympics and the German Army.[28]

The impression created by Fürstner's house echoed Gaston Bachelard's evocation of the archetypal house in *The Poetics of Space,* as a force that integrates memory, thought, and dreams (1969:6). As a former domestic dwelling, it concentrates the sensation of place as a locus of meaning that the larger site disperses through its vast size and changing function over time. Furthermore, it contains the various spaces that Bachelard lists as having particular resonance: bedrooms, living room, corridors and garret. According to Bachelard, these and other 'nooks' in the archetypal house are the spaces we daydreamed in as children, and the memory of these spaces and our use of them is carried from house to house as we age. The abrupt verticality and pitched roof of Fürstner's house, answered to Bachelard's structuring of the

[28] Wolfgang Fürstner's grandfather was Jewish, and in accordance with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, and before the Games began, he was stripped of his German citizenship and replaced as Commander of the Village by the Aryan, Lieutenant Colonel Werner Gilsa. Fürstner attended a dinner to celebrate Gilsa's appointment and on 19 August 1936, three days after the Games had ended, he shot himself, either at home, or in some accounts, at his barracks.

Figure 36. David Gledhill (2016) *Staircase at the Kommandant's House: screenshot from Fürstner.* 4m:42s, HD video.

polarities of attic and cellar as zones of clear thought and dark anxieties respectively. His notion of the psychological centrality of the house as the source of our formative experience of place, is reinforced by the path leading directly to the front door: an axis that encouraged the use of the documentary convention of frontal composition in both the opening scene of the film *Fürstner,* and the painting made from it (Figure 35 and Appendix E, Figure E12).

Bachelard's extended rumination on the significance of the cellar explains the fascination exerted upon me by the railings that led to a doorway beneath the house (Figure 36): a fascination that was amplified by other cellar spaces around the Village. Accounts of the use of these spaces for the torture of political dissidents during the Soviet period suggested an additional meaning relating specifically to the political history of the Village.[29] This is an instance of the interplay between aspects of the site as place in Relph's schema, that came into focus after encountering it in person.

[29] http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2176977/Adolf-Hitlers-Olympic-Village-1936-Conservationists-race-save-forgotten-relic-infamous-Nazi-Games.html.

After spending time exploring the rest of the site without experiencing any strong compulsion to record what I saw, I settled on the *Hindenburghaus* as a second focus of interest. The entrance to this building is virtually unchanged since its construction, with no altered, demolished or added elements. It contains a preserved Nazi wall relief (Figure 37), and three Soviet era murals, two of which are situated in side rooms formerly used by the Russian Army as a canteen (Figure 34). The first-floor hall was used for classical music recitals and theatrical performances during the Games, and includes a raised stage with proscenium arch and a mural of Lenin (Appendix E, Figures E8 and E9 for the paintings of these subjects). During the years of Russian occupation, the Nazi relief was preserved but covered with a tarpaulin. The relief is on the other side of the wall that features the mural of Lenin, so that the building constitutes a material palimpsest of the political history of the Village.

For security reasons, I was locked into the *Hindenburghaus* for a period of hours without food, water or lavatory facilities: an experience that led to an accidental bodily interaction with the staircase of the building. Despite the comic overtones of this episode, it catalysed a powerful and uncanny sense of contiguity with the materiality of the site, and indirectly, to the ghosts of the historical subjects that populated it. This experience felt similar to that of visiting the grave of a public figure and feeling a frisson of bodily proximity to the remains of an individual previously known only through biographical sources. Colin Renfrew provides an account of a similar shock of connectedness with historical subjects, felt in response to messages and names scratched inside ancient Greek vessels (2003:167). This sense of connectedness, felt throughout the three days on site, compounded the decision to address the representation of Fürstner as one strand of the project. It also led to the production of a series of gum-arabic transfer prints depicting the staircase (Appendix E, Figures E14-18), that suggested a visual equivalent for the presence of the past within the spaces of the present, as indicated by Lingwood above. I will discuss these prints further in Section 5 below.

Figure 37. David Gledhill (2016) *Nazi wall relief at the Hindenburghaus.* Photograph.

My solitary and undirected interaction with the *Hindenburghaus* was partly conditioned by very bright light entering from one side of the building, and causing constantly shifting reflected patterns on the floor of the lobby, stairs and concert hall on the first floor (see the film *Soviet*). The stillness and silence of this space stimulated a reflective consideration of the period fixtures, including the amateurish and apparently hurried execution of the Lenin mural. A harmony of pale pink and yellow décor lent the theatre an aesthetically pleasing, but also disquietingly anodyne appearance in the light of the political history of its use. In that regard, my knowledge of the period framed my personal interpretation of the meanings latent in this and other buildings encountered.

As with the *Kommandantenhaus*, an overview of the political meanings and significance of the *Hindenburghaus* could have been arrived at from a distance via secondary research, and yet the actual experience of it yielded a different set of insights and intuitions. As a relatively intact survivor of two political regimes and decades of abandonment, it is included in public tours of the

Village. These are infrequent and during the three hours I spent locked in the building, I was only interrupted by tourists once. Their necessarily brief experience of the building, was recorded and included in a film entitled *Soviet*, that, by contrast with *Fürstner*, documents the Russian use of the site through a series of shots of the buildings, interiors, murals, and graffiti left by the Soviet Army.

The unforeseen and specifically sensual and affective qualities of the location under particular conditions of light, not only suggested the choice of motifs, compositional conventions, and media to be used, but also enabled the combination of all three of Relph's definitions of place: observable geographical features, human activity, and significance or meanings, so that it could be portrayed as 'an entanglement of diverse elements and strands using stories of people and things' (Cresswell, 2015:57). The history of the Village clearly marks it as a socially constructed location: the product of the intentional activity of groups of people acting in accordance with one or another political ideology. This would seem to make it eminently suited to analysis in those terms. However, as J.E. Malpas, (no date, cited in Cresswell 2015) points out, a social constructionist interpretation does not account for the relation of disparate elements inside a place, as well as between one place and another. In basic terms, a definition of place such as Relph's, that is founded on the dualism of inside/outside, fails to explain places as 'internally heterogeneous' (Cresswell, 2015:48). Whilst Relph's notion of 'empathetic insideness' was useful in maintaining an openness to first-hand impressions of the site, the experience of the Olympic Village was one of heterogeneity, partly because of the clash of architectural styles between the Nazi and communist-era buildings, but also because of the contrasts between absent, restored, and derelict buildings, sporting and domestic facilities, maintained and overgrown landscape, and clusters of buildings with closely planted trees. In other words, distinctions between inside and outside the Olympic Village as place, fail to account for the drastic contrasts within the site.

Moving beyond Relph, Doreen Massey (2005, cited in Cresswell 2015) contends that place can only be understood in terms of process and flux, rather than as a pre-given and bounded entity with a fixed identity and an inside and outside. Her term 'throwntogetherness', emerged from the flow of change and constant ethnic reconfiguration that she witnessed in the suburb of London where she lived. Massey conceived this as a positive process, and her conception confirms Soja's three-way dialectic of space, time, and social being, as a far more sophisticated and open-ended account of place than those that privilege synchronic and idealist notions of inside and outside.

In the interest of evoking the Village as subject to changing interpretation, and as process as well as place, Massey's notion of 'throwntogetherness' was translated through the use of a combination of media, subjects, themes, and timeframes. For example, works based on Fürstner's house engaged with the poetics of the building through a combination of paintings based on my own photographs, and screenshots taken from a film that also incorporated postcards dating from the 1930s (Appendix E, Figures E12-13, and E24). Works based on the *Hindenburghaus* drew attention to the changing and socially constructed political history of the site via a combination of film, painting, and printmaking. Landscape paintings (Appendix E, Figures E10-13) employed a painterly idiom and drew upon Romantic landscape theory, whilst being evidently derived from contemporary video stills, by virtue of their elongated format and polychromatic palette. Works based on amateur snapshots of the site acquired after the visit (Appendix E, Figures E3-7), conveyed the social status of sporting celebrity in 1930s Germany, and the conception of the Games as a popular pageant for political ends. The combination of all the work together, had the effect of relativising any one homogeneous approach, idiom or theme, in the interest of suggesting the complexity and contested nature of the Village and its representations, through its articulation with time and political history. At the same time, the works across media were intended to evoke the human presences that haunt the site, and that are perceptible as a condensation of the drive to understand the past as lived experience, through

the process of immersion in the places of the present. This approach was made possible by the visit to Elstal, and could not have been devised or anticipated by any other means.

3. The location and acquisition of a range of visual and written archive material

The primary film and photographic source material produced on site during the visit described above, was later supplemented by second-hand photographic images and a book purchased from an auction website. The material acquired after the site visit falls into the following groupings:

- Three postcards published by the *Reichsportsverlag, Berlin*. The photographer is uncredited.
- Two postcards published by *Verlag: Hans Andres, Berlin* and photographed by Hans Hartz.[30]
- One image from a part work, photographed by *Schirner*.
- Thirteen snapshots taken by an unknown photographer or photographers at the Olympic Village during the 1936 Games.
- A press photograph of the *Hindenburghaus* or cultural building at the Village taken in 1939. Copyrighted by *Presse Illustrationen Hoffmann, Berlin*.
- A book entitled *Olympia 1936* by Willi Fr. Konitzer, published by the *Reichssportsverlag* in 1936.

Unlike previous projects, this material was sought out after the site visit, rather than discovered by chance beforehand, and continued the approach to sourcing

[30] During a 40-year career, Hartz was known as 'Mr Postcard' and specialised in landscape motifs. His archive of negatives was deposited at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin in 1997.

Figure 38. Unknown photographer (1936) *Untitled.* Photograph. Collection of David Gledhill

material that began with the photographs of Nazi Officers aboard a ship discussed in the Introduction. To begin with, the commercially produced postcards were acquired, as no amateur photographs of the Village were available at that time. Luckily, several batches of snapshots were listed on eBay within a timeframe that made completion of paintings possible before the deadline of June 2016, decided upon in order to enable drying and transportation of the works to Berlin for the first exhibition in July. The differences between commercially produced and amateur photographs of the Village were evident in the absence of people in the commercial images, many of which had been retouched, and the variable quality of focus, tilted compositions, and occasionally unfortunate facial expressions in the snapshots

(Figure 38). In addition to the postcards and snapshots, a portrait photograph of Wolfgang Fürstner was sourced from *Google Images*.

Taken together, the second-hand photographic material provided sources for the representation of the Village as it was during 1936. These images enabled a contrast to be set up between the intended and celebrated use of the Village during the pre-war period, and its current status as economically unviable tourist attraction. The use of different kinds of photographs to bridge different phases in the history of a place is integral to the aim of addressing historical subjects in terms of their articulation in time, and this is a developing aspect of the research that I will expand upon in the next section.

4. Historical and theoretical research from secondary sources

Alongside the consideration of space and place, the historiography of the Village and related theoretical material also contributed to the shaping of the project. The two themes that emerged after the research trip, were pursued because they developed impressions and intimations experienced on the site itself. Broadly speaking, these themes relate to the landscape and architecture of the site, and an individual associated with it.

4.1 Landscape

Situated 28 kilometres west of Berlin, the Village combined a number of functions other than accommodation for the international community of athletes competing in the 1936 Summer Olympics. A gymnasium, swimming pool, running track, concert hall, international dining facilities, and a lake with a sauna were also provided. It was, in effect, a complete self-contained community set in specially planted woodland consisting of silver birch, larch, and pine trees (Walters, 2006:169).

Figure 39. David Gledhill (2016) *Site of the ornamental lake at the Olympic Village: screenshot from Fürstner.* 4m:42s, HD video.

As indicated above, it would seem that the site's designer and *Kommandant* of the Village, Wolfgang Fürstner, intended the integration of woodland and training facilities as an updated model of the mythic German tribal community. In *Landscape and Memory*, Simon Schama provides a cultural history of the German national myth as set out in Tacitus' *Germania*: a text coveted by the Nazis (1995:76). According to Tacitus, the Germanic tribes inhabited a land that 'bristles with forests or reeks with swamps' (2015:loc 42), and were untainted by the decadent luxuries of Roman society. Their ethnic purity, social structures, tribal customs, and military triumphs over the Romans, were a source of admiration for Tacitus, and his text constituted the founding myth of Germany as a woodland community for generations of German writers, artists, and historians, including Caspar David Friedrich and the Brothers Grimm. Quoting Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl (1851-69), whose *Natural History of the German People* set out a German 'sociology of habitat' (1995:114), Schama concluded that for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, German woods were '"what made Germany German"' (1995:116).

The primary photographic and film material gathered on site, combined landscape and architectural interior compositions that were developed in order to reference this centrality of a constructed sense of natural landscape in German culture. As mentioned above, most of the grounds at the Village are roped off, with signs that read *Historisches Flache, bitte nicht betreten!* (Figure 39).[31] This emphatic statement of the indivisibility of space and history has the effect of focusing the visitor's attention on the origins of the Village during the 1930s, eliding the intervening decades of Soviet occupation that allegedly led to the accidental draining of the lake (Appendix E, Figure E24), and general decline of many of the buildings.

In her article 'The Vanishing Canvas: Notes on German Romantic Landscape Aesthetics', Alice Kuzniar (1988) points out that although there are few extended commentaries on German Romantic landscape aesthetics, incidental remarks and observations made by a number of writers constitute a fairly consistent set of parameters for the formulation of basic principles. Of particular relevance here, is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's assertion in *Maxims and Reflections*, first published in 1833, that landscape painting evokes not what is materially present in the landscape, but what is absent, and that any depiction must inevitably remind the viewer that what is seen in a painting is not real, and is no longer present (Kuzniar, 1988:359). This observation suggested the inclusion of the guided tour scene in the film *Soviet*, in which official designations of the Village as an 'Historic Area' are seen to depend upon the constant efforts of the owners to overcome the temporal remoteness of the present-day site from the historical circumstances of its construction and use during the Olympics.

The question that Kuzniar poses herself at the start of her text can be taken as a guiding consideration for The Berlin Olympic Village Project: 'How is it that absence, non-representation, and immateriality can be portrayed in an art that

[31] Historic area, please do not enter!

copies from the concrete world of nature?' (1988:359). In other words, how can abstract themes relating to history and representation be conveyed in works that depict the material environment of the Village in a realist manner? Kuzniar develops her argument further by glossing comparisons made by Schiller, Schlegel and others, between landscape painting and music, on the basis of painting's ability to convey the form, rather than the specific content of feeling. In that sense, landscape painting, like music, is an emotive and suggestive, rather than conceptual genre. Furthermore, in Romantic aesthetics, landscape paintings are viewed as temporal sequences of moments or passages reminiscent of the flow of motifs in a musical composition.

This aspect of the experience of landscape as a succession of discrete passages that are somehow unified by a sense of mythic narrative, can be applied to the original planning and landscaping of the Village, which is laid out as a constellation of scenic zones suited to a range of activities, and linked by paths. It can also be related to White's characterisation of history as a 'congeries of contiguously related fragments' (1978:125). The dispersal of passages of landscape both within individual paintings, and between paintings and films in a series of works, may potentially embody 'cognitively responsible' (White, 1978:93) historiographical practice, as a fabrication of aesthetic moments, no longer reflective of any prototype either in nature or culture. In other words, as an 'absence' in Kuzniar's terms. Indeed, the temporal contrasts and contradictions between the monochrome paintings based on 1930s snapshots, the polychromatic paintings from contemporary video stills and photographs, and the video sequences shot around the site and incorporating vintage postcards, undercut any sense of the permanence of the Village in any of its represented forms.

Whilst parallels between painting and music seem fitting, the medium of film offers a closer equivalent to this Romantic conception of landscape painting, on the basis of the editing together of separately filmed individual shots into a sequence. This comes across particularly acutely in the second part of *Olympia,*

Figure 40. *Olympia* Part 2. (1938) L. Riefenstahl [Online] Available through Youtube. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

which opens with a depiction of runners and bathers in the mist-wreathed early morning light of the Village. The film goes on to show the athletes training, exercising (Figure 40), and relaxing in the grounds of the Village, and this succession of stylistically disparate shots is only unified by Herbert Windt's triumphal musical score. Large (2007) points out that *Olympia* is not simply a manifestation of Riefenstahl's personal aesthetics, but harmonises with the Nazi cult of physical perfection. The Olympic Village is portrayed as the archetypal German woodland community: 'an expression of the profound communitarian ethos supposedly at the heart of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*' (2007:309).

Using the Village as subject matter, this German Romantic aesthetic ideology can be critiqued for the message it carries forward from Tacitus' notion of the German woodland tribes being 'free from all taint of intermarriages' (2015:loc 34): a precedent for Nazi racial theories. The Olympic Village can be approached as an instance of a landscape that is still being overloaded with significance, in a

way that problematically extends Germany's preoccupation with its own mythic origins and recent political history. Schama indicates the currency of this issue in German politics: 'The long undeniable connections between the mythic memory of the forest and militant nationalism have created a zone of great moral angst in Germany' (1995:119).

The possibility of the representation of the Olympic Village as an instance of the intractability of myth in political philosophies such as fascism, emerged from the investigation of the historical and theoretical commentaries cited above. These texts also reinforced the use of film in addition to paintings, because of its suitability for the depiction of landscape as a sequence of visual moments united by mythic narrative. The sheer accumulation of landscape motifs in both paintings and films in the project, constitutes a metonymic approach to the representation of the Village, that restages its mythic foundations in allegorical terms. Edensor points out that ruined sites such as the Olympic Village allegorise memory in that they are discontinuous, fragmentary, and 'labyrinthine' (2005:140). Craig Owens also cites the ruin as an archetypical allegorical phenomenon, and the dessication of the Village into the enclosing landscape enables the investment in the work of this sense of 'history as an irretrievable process of decay, a progressive distancing from origin' (1992:55). I will return to Owens' writing on allegory in Chapter Four.

4.2 Wolfgang Fürstner

Most accounts of the 1936 Olympics adhere to a standardised version of Wolfgang Fürstner's career (Hilton, 2006; Walters, 2006; Large, 2007). It is suggested that his demotion as *Kommandant* of the Olympic Village shortly before the Games began, was the eventual result of the discovery in 1934 of his Jewish ancestry by the Berlin NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche*

Arbeiterpartei, or Nazi Party).[32] The combination of this demotion and the prospect of the termination of his military career are claimed to have led to Fürstner's suicide (Walters, 2006:297). This account suggests that the pretext that Fürstner lacked the vitality to safeguard the Village against wear and tear was concocted purely as justification for the loss of his post. This subterfuge was allegedly intended to avoid embarrassment in the presence of the world's media. Apparently, in accordance with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, he was stripped of his German citizenship and replaced by the Aryan, Lieutenant Colonel Werner Gilsa. Fürstner attended a dinner to celebrate Gilsa's appointment, and on 18 August, two days after the Games had ended, shot himself, either at home or at his barracks.[33] His suicide was covered up, and he was awarded a posthumous decoration before being given an official burial in the *Invalidenfriedhof* military cemetery in Berlin.

This version of events has been questioned in a biography by Roland Kopp (2009). Kopp argues that the factors that led to Fürstner's suicide are more complicated than a simple case of race persecution, and that aside from his demotion, there is no evidence to suggest that he was the victim of racial slurs, or that his dismissal from the *Wehrmacht* following the Games was a foregone conclusion (Kluge, 2009:76). Instead Kopp cites emotional distress as a more likely cause, pointing out that Fürstner's wife had threatened to leave him. In addition, accusations of his mismanagement of the Village, which had been subject to a tide of some 400,000 visitors between its opening on 1 May and 15 June 1936 (Hilton, 2006:48), may actually have had a devastating effect on his professional pride. This failure to maintain order was noted by Carl Diem, the main German organiser of the Games (Kluge, 2009:76).

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[32] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolfgang_F%C3%BCrstner

[33] In David Clay Large's account, Fürtsner did not attend the dinner and shot himself at the *Kommandantenhaus* on Tuesday 18 August. Christopher Hilton claims that Fürstner did attend the dinner on that date, but shot himself at his barracks afterwards. In Guy Walters' version the dinner took place on Friday 21 August and Fürstner excused himself, returning home to commit suicide. Wikipedia (see footnote 32) has 19 August as the date of the suicide.

The contested narrative of Fürstner's life and death are indicative of some of the issues raised by White, in that political expediency seems to be the conditioning element in the various interpretations of the historical facts:

> Does this imply that historical knowledge, or, rather, the kind of discourses produced by historians, finds the measure of its validity in its status as an instrument of a political program or an ideology that rationalizes, when it does not inspire, such a program? (1987:80)

A review of Kopp's book points out that attempts by Fürstner's family to rehabilitate him as a victim of Nazism, overlook the fact that he was a dedicated career officer who was decorated for his conduct during the First World War, and filmed and photographed in the company of Hitler and Goebbels right up to the end of his life (Kluge, 2009:76).

These competing accounts of his state of mind, informed the production of a group of works focusing on the representation of Fürstner across a range of media. The use of his house and portrait (Figure 41) as motifs across film, paintings, and prints, directs attention towards the contested narrative of Fürstner's life: a narrative that is surprisingly underexamined in the recent literature on the Games. As with the theme of landscape, my intention here was to probe the ideological construction and historiography of the Berlin Olympics but without positing an alternative reading of Fürstner's life or death. I will discuss these works in the next section.

5. The production of a series of works emerging from the above

The visual material both produced on site and collected afterwards, and the theories recapped above, coalesced at a geographical and temporal remove from the Village. In effect, the experience of visiting the site became a memory, and a filtering process occurred by which motifs and themes that may have seemed central, peripheral or irrelevant to the project at first, emerged in a different light. With the passage of time, some experiences grew in significance

and others diminished. On site, a substantial amount of time was spent exploring and filming the crumbled foundations of athletes' cottages around the perimeter of the running track, with a view to suggesting an archaeological perspective along the lines of many of Mark Dion's projects (Renfrew, 2003:87). This idea was subsequently rejected. The post-visit research had the effect of minimising some strong impressions and enriching others. The experience of walking through the curving corridors of the derelict *Speisehaus,* and exploring its canteen spaces, one of which contains a Nazi wall text, was powerful at the time, but seemed less so afterwards as the project began to focus on the heterogeneity of the site and its use over time, and in a wider sense, on the theme of history itself.

Work began in September 2015, following the conclusion of Poland 1940-1941. Between September 2015 and March 2016, paintings were produced from the portrait photograph listed in Section 3 of this chapter (Figure 41), one of the postcards (Appendix E, Figure E2), one of my own photographs of the *Hindenburghaus* (Appendix E, Figure E8), four of the film stills (Appendix E, Figures E9, E10, E11, E12), and three of the snapshots (Appendix E, Figures E3, E4, E5). Two films entitled *Fürstner* and *Soviet* were edited from the video sequences shot on site, and stills from *Soviet* and the portrait photograph of Fürstner were used to make gum-arabic transfer prints (Appendix E, Figures E14-E23). A selection was then made from amongst these works by Wolfgang Schnurr of Palis Advisory AG for the two 'Olydo Berlin 16' exhibitions in Berlin. A second group of works was produced between September 2016 and February 2017. Paintings were made from a photograph of Fürstner's house (Appendix E, Figure E13), and two more of the snapshots (Appendix E, Figures E6 and E7). In addition, an assemblage was made from a glass light fixture found in one of the Soviet housing blocks during the Day of the Open Monument (Appendix E, Figure E30). Both groups of works were available for inclusion in the exhibition 'Berlin 1936' at neo:gallery 23 in Bolton.

Despite the variety of media and sources, the project as a whole was conceived as a series. Stephen Bann provides a theoretical articulation of the historical series that informed the thinking behind the project (1984:62), and the adoption of the serial form is addressed in the Introduction to this thesis. Close attention to the iconic content of the source photographs, and their transcription into painting via a novel technique, together with the use of the serial form, were intended to produce a non-narrative sense of, in Bann's phrase: 'persistence and articulation in time' (1984:68). In the case of the Olympic Village, this persistence is that of the site itself through the drastic political upheavals of the twentieth century.

5.1 The paintings

The first painting produced for the project was based on an official military portrait photograph of Wolfgang Fürstner that was sourced online (Figure 41). This image conveys the construction of the career officer described by Kopp. The Fürstner painting and the paintings based on the postcard and the second-hand snapshots, were produced using the technique of paint application and subtraction, together with a monochrome palette overlaid by a coloured glaze, as described in Chapter Two and Appendix C.

Returning to my own contemporary documentation of the Village, and in the light of the initial work with Fürstner's portrait and research into Romantic landscape aesthetics, I went on to make four paintings of the *Kommandantenhaus* and surrounding woodland (Appendix E, Figures E10-13). These paintings were based on a photograph and high definition video stills from *Fürstner,* thereby cross-referencing the paintings with the films. The elegiac tone of the film, partly conveyed by the soundtrack, is undercut by the use of a frontal compositional schema in the paintings, that is familiar from documentary photography (see Appendix A). Two further paintings based on stills from *Soviet*, depicted the colonnade of trees used as the setting for the

Figure 41. David Gledhill (2015) *Wolfgang Fürstner*. Oil on canvas, 112 x 80 cm.

opening sequence from part two of *Olympia*, and the Lenin mural in the *Hindenburghaus* as they were in 2015.

Seen together in exhibition contexts, this cross-referencing makes it clear that the conventions used in both the films and the paintings are constitutive of their meaning. The paintings employ the cumulative and additive method of painting in layers of pigment described with reference to the Martyr series in Chapter One, and were executed more broadly than the portrait. A combination of impasto paint application with a more naturalistic colour palette, and the use of glazes to establish shadows and to unify the composition, gave these paintings a somewhat more diffused and spontaneous appearance. This looser approach was intended to suggest an interpretation of the poetics of the films,

and as a counterpoint to the sharper focus and more pronounced tonal contrasts in the monochrome paintings.

These two sets of paintings established the timeframe for the project, which spanned the 80 years between 1936 and 2016. Monochrome and polychromatic paintings combined a self-evident reference to their respective photographic origins, with a depiction of the site at its inception and in its contemporary semi-dereliction: a state also suggestive of the obsolescence of both Nazism and communism as political philosophies. The contrasting techniques and styles relativised each set of paintings so that neither group could be construed as idiomatically sufficient to the representation of the subject.

5.2 The films

The two films produced for the project represented a conscious break with the chronicle-like approach used in *Abordnung* (see Chapter Two)*,* which included interviews, factual subtitles, and some sense of culmination in the scenes filmed at Auschwitz. *Fürstner* was shot largely around the *Kommandantenhaus,* and along the perimeter of the lake where Leni Riefenstahl filmed the opening of part two of *Olympia* (Appendix E, Figure E24). It contains no subtitles, and employs a more open-ended and visually allusive form than *Abordnung*. *Soviet* was filmed in the *Hindenburghaus*, and in the abandoned housing blocks used by the Russian Army, and surveys the material remains of their occupation of the site.

Fürstner engages with the poetics of the site by linking shots of the house and surrounding landscape with the fourth movement of *Funeral Music* by Paul Hindemith, a German composer with a particularly vexed relationship to the Nazi regime. Composed in 1936 as a memorial for the death of King George V*,* this late Romantic music unifies a sequence of still shots in a manner that seems to condense meaning from what may otherwise appear to be a set of arbitrary

Figure 42. David Gledhill (2016) *The Hindenburghaus: screenshot from Soviet.* 11m:37s, HD video.

motifs. The slow pace of *Fürstner* counterposes my own leisurely, undirected negotiation of the site with the rapid and 'seamless forms of mobility' (2005:95) that Edensor associates with tourism. The concluding slow motion scene of a tourist group at the site is intended to reinforce this contrast (Appendix E, Figure E26).

Borrowing a device from *Fotoamator, Fürstner* includes crossfades between souvenir postcard images of the Village as it was at the time of the Games, and the present-day ruination of the house and lake, thereby integrating some of the source material listed in Section 3 directly into the production. The use of film as an alternative means of incorporating historical material that had started with *Abordnung,* was extended in *Fürstner,* in that the latter film was intended as an artistic production integral to The Berlin Olympic Village Project, whereas the former was largely an attempt to contextualise the production of the paintings made for Poland 1940-1941. Accordingly, the postcards are included in *Fürstner* in order to convey the effects of the passage of time on the site as a locus of political ideology, rather than as a means of underlining the performative aspects of the project.

Soviet evokes the poetics of the more recent Russian abandonment of the site as emblematic of its heterogeneity and contested legacy. The soundtrack of the film was edited together from a number of unused shots, and each scene is not necessarily accompanied by its ambient sound. The film is mostly composed of static tripod sequences of the surviving Russian buildings and murals. However, the camera was hand-held during the scenes filmed inside a Soviet housing block, and these interiors include the sound of footsteps, conveying a sense of human agency, both in the making of the film, and the location. Discarded shoes, a sweater, and personalised graffiti evoke the disappearance of a once thriving, but uncommemorated military community (Appendix E, Figure E27). A torn calendar for 1989 marks the termination of the Russian use of the site, simultaneously inaugurating its subsequent transformation into a tourist attraction (Appendix E, Figure E28). However, there are no images from the Soviet period amongst the photographic banners festooned about the Village by site owners DKB Trust, despite the fact that it was occupied for longer by the Russians than by the German Army.

5.3 The prints

The two sequences of prints produced for 'Olydo Berlin 16' were made using a gum-arabic transfer printmaking technique (Appendix E, Figures E14-23). Digital image files were manipulated in Photoshop to increase their tonal range, 'flipped' horizontally and printed onto paper using a toner-based printer. The prints were then cropped, coated with gum-arabic solution, and inked using a roller. The ink was wiped away where required, and the inked paper laid on a piece of melamine laminate, overlaid with paper, and put through a printing press.

It can be seen that these images are fashioned using a partially subtractive method of ink removal, and that the light source in the image comes from the paper support. These aspects of the process were homologous with the

Figure 43. David Gledhill (2016) *Treppe im Hindenburghaus (5)*. Gum-arabic and oil-based ink on paper, 43 x 56 cm (framed).

monochrome painting technique used for Poland 1940-1941, and for some of the paintings made for The Berlin Olympic Village Project. Each print is hand-crafted during the process of ink removal and unique in appearance, where the aim of much print production is uniformity and consistency.

The *Fürstner* prints (Appendix E, Figures E19-23) were made from a cropped version of the photographic portrait of Fürstner sourced online. The crop omitted Fürstner's military decorations, and each of the prints created a variation of his features in a manner characteristic of this technique, which combines elements of the original photographic reproduction with ink freely applied with a roller. The prints are intended to convey the mutability of constructions of identity based on apparently documentary sources, through contrasting impressions of the single digital image they are based on. Whilst this kind of transfer printmaking can result in a close approximation of the source, the disputed circumstances of Fürstner's life and death led to the reassessment of what may have seemed technically substandard outcomes, in that they conveyed a sense of the *Kommandant* as an unknowable object of speculation.

The interiors of the *Hindenburghaus* staircase (Figure 43), were adapted from stills of video sequences used in the film *Soviet.* As mentioned above, the gum-arabic technique can introduce a good deal of visual texture and noise to the original image, lending a distressed and aged appearance to what, in the case of the interiors, were new high-definition digital video images. In that regard, the prints appeared to bridge the intervening decades between the present incarnation of the Village as tourist attraction and the 1936 Games. This effect was unforeseen at the time of the making of the prints, but was consistent with the objective of depicting, in Lingwood's terms 'the past as part of the present' (1993:25). As a technique, gum-arabic transfer printmaking also answered to the experience of connectedness with the past that the visit to the *Hindenburghaus* engendered.

5.4 The assemblage

The assemblage entitled *Bathroom Light Fixture: Housing Block 284* (2017), (Figure 44) was made from a glass globe that was salvaged from a Soviet era housing block at the Village on 11 September 2016, during the Day of the Open Monument. The housing blocks at the Village had been gutted of their contents and were in a state of semi-dereliction (see *Soviet* for evidence of the condition of these buildings). Later, an obsolete light socket was purchased online, and a red light bulb fitted. This was illuminated throughout the exhibition 'Berlin 1936' at neo:gallery 23 (Appendix F, Figure O6), where it was wall mounted in a darkened part of the gallery used for projecting the films *Soviet* and *Fürstner.*

This work went largely unnoticed during the exhibition, and since the exhibits were numbered in accordance with a printed list, rather than individually labelled and credited, it was difficult to attribute it to any of the artists. *Bathroom Light Fixture: Housing Block 284* was intended as a means of combining an authentic material artefact from the Village with a visual metaphor for the commemoration of communism as a political ideology. The

Figure 44. David Gledhill (2017) *Bathroom Light Fixture: Housing Block 284.* Assemblage with light fixture, dimensions variable.

generic nature of the glass fixture undercuts its origins in precisely the kind of Soviet architectural form, or *Plattenbauten* (prefabricated high-rise block), that is frequently referred to as an exemplar of all that was uniquely shoddy and substandard in the social housing of Eastern Bloc countries (Fulbrook, 2008:52). During the making of the work, it emerged that the same fixtures were used in western European countries.

The combination of the assemblage with the paintings, prints, and films, was intended to pluralise the artistic response to the changing uses of the site, and to make my own agency in the project explicit, via this diversification. The conventions of each medium and idiom were framed by the clashes and continuities between works, rather than through their combination in individual pieces, such as the excerpts from abstract paintings used by Dexter Dalwood in *The Poll Tax Riots* to remind the viewer of the history of the medium. Once again, Rosemary Hawker's observation that the idiomatic nature of a medium can only be made explicit through its incorporation in another, is relevant here

(2002:553). The Berlin Olympic Village Project extended the reflexivity of Poland 1940-1941 by multiplying the range and combinations of media and sources.

It can be seen that my contribution to The Berlin Olympic Village Project included works that depicted the landscape, fixtures, buildings, and *Kommandant* of the site, as recorded in both historic and contemporary photographic evidence. It used the serial form and a combination of media in order to constitute a sense of the 'persistence and articulation' (Bann, 1984:68) of the Village through time, in terms of its various incarnations as Olympic athlete's accommodation, Soviet military installation and tourist attraction.

6. The exhibitions: 'Olydo Berlin 16' and 'Berlin 1936'

The Berlin Olympic Village Project was site-responsive in the sense that the initial visit was formative in the conception, structure and thematics of the project. The work was exhibited as 'Olydo Berlin 16' in the atrium of DKB in central Berlin during July and August 2016 (Figure 45), and then transferred to the gymnasium at the Olympic Village in September 2016 (Figure 46). Although the work was displayed at the Olympic Village for one day during Germany's Day of the Open Monument, it did not constitute an intervention comparable with Christian Boltanski's (1990) *The Missing House* for example, as discussed in Chapter Two. Boltanski's approach, which has been employed by many other artists, signally alters and is integral to the site to which it responds, either for a fixed period, or permanently.[34]

[34] For example, the *Stolperstein* or 'stumbling stone' project by German sculptor Gunter Demnig (1992-ongoing), memorialises the victims of Nazi persecution in the form of brass covered cobble stones laid in pavements outside the former homes of Jewish citizens across Europe.

Figure 45. David Gledhill (2016) *Installation view of 'Olydo Berlin 16' at Deutsche Kreditbank AG in Berlin*. Photograph.

In The Berlin Olympic Village Project, the site itself is not a necessary context for the display of the work and no materials were taken from it during the first visit, to be displayed or incorporated into works in the way that Mark Dion (1999) did during his *Tate Thames Dig* for example.[35] As Renfrew points out, Dion critically blurs the boundaries between art and archaeology, and by extension, all Western models of information gathering, by throwing the performative emphasis of this project onto the process of excavation and classification of worthless detritus (2003:104). By contrast, my practice is entirely studio-based and all the works are studio productions. Although photographs were taken and film shot on site, no works were completed at the Village during the three days of the visit and the photographs have not been exhibited as part of the project. The work could be displayed anywhere without loss of significance.

[35] The glass bathroom fixture used for the assemblage was discovered at the site during the gymnasium exhibition and only exhibited in 'Berlin 1936' during 2017.

Figure 46. David Gledhill (2016) *Installation view of 'Olydo Berlin 16' at the gymnasium of the Athlete's Village.* Photograph.

Inevitably, the selection of works included in the two exhibitions in Germany contributed to the reproduction of the Village as an historic site. This process is repeated in many contexts and forms, including the historiography of the Games, feature films, online blogs and reports, a PhD thesis sponsored and published by DKB Trust, and the guided tours mentioned above.[36]

Both exhibitions were funded by the DKB Trust as part of their cultural programme, a catalogue was produced (Schnurr, 2016), and at the exhibition in the Athlete's Village, information points featuring works by each of the artists were placed at the corresponding locations (Figure 33). The exhibitions were

[36] Histories of the Games include Christopher Hilton's (2006) *Hitler's Olympics*, Guy Walters' (2006) *Berlin Games*, and David Clay Large's (2007) *Nazi Games*, films include *Berlin 36*, directed by Kaspar Heidelbach (2009), and *Race* directed by Stephen Hopkins (2017). Blogs can be found at https://www.abandonedberlin.com/2016/08/olympic-village-berlin-1936.html and http://www.thirdreichruins.com/olympichdsport.html and the PhD thesis is entitled *Das Olympische Dorf von 1936* (Hubner, 2015).

intended to raise public awareness of the historic value of the site, and DKB Trust purchased representative works by all the participating artists for their collection.

The first 'Olydo Berlin 16' exhibition was timed to coincide with the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, an association which reinforced the construction of the site as, first and foremost, an historic sporting venue. The subtitle of the exhibition: '80 Years of the Olympic Village at Elstal, Berlin', further underlined this interpretation and occluded the later history of the site as a Soviet military installation, the Village only having been in use by the Germans as a sporting venue and later a military hospital between 1936 and 1945.

The four participating artists approached the project from differing perspectives. Wolf Bertram Becker produced a series of paintings in a semi-abstract and painterly idiom that responded to the architectural structures of the key surviving buildings at the Village. Bertram Becker's works were studio productions based on sketches and watercolours made on site, and employing a palette of saturated hues. Margaret Cahill's paintings and collages featured the *Kommandantenhaus* and other accommodation blocks as central motifs in a sequence of freely executed dream-like landscape images evoking the poetics of abandonment, characterised by Edensor as 'the unending diversity of unencoded material juxtapositions' (2005:77). Cahill incorporated tissue paper prints of her own photographs of the site as elements in both paintings and collages. Peter Lewis made a series of ceramic vessels and plaques based on commemorative forms produced as souvenirs of the Games, and incorporating text and image transfers derived from postage stamps, the Olympic motto, and photographs of competitors.[37]

[37] 'I call the youth of the world' https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1936_Summer_Olympics

The unitary nature of these artists' contributions to the project stood in contrast to the multiple sources, media and techniques employed in my own work. The objective to disrupt any consistent connotative agenda, and to mobilise both historical and contemporary source material, resulted in a range of work with less visual unity than Poland 1940-1941. Whilst this polyglot approach was entirely intentional, it resulted in a slight disjunction between my own work and that of the other artists. By necessity, there was little prior consultation between the participants, all of whom produced autonomous bodies of work that were used as the basis for a selection by the curator. In the first 'Olydo Berlin 16' exhibition, these works were arranged to form a virtual tour of the Village, starting with the entrance building as depicted in my paintings, and proceeding via Cahill's images of Fürstner's house, towards the swimming pool and the *Speisehaus,* as represented in Bertram-Becker's paintings and Lewis's ceramics.

At a late stage of the production period, works focusing on individuals associated with the Games were vetoed at the behest of DKB Trust, including the painting, prints and film featuring images of Wolfgang Fürstner. By contrast, 'Berlin 1936' (Figure 47), contained several of the images that were excluded from the German exhibitions on the basis of their provocative nature, and in the light of the rise of right-wing political factions in Germany and Austria. It would seem that there has been a further development beyond what Brandon Taylor nominated as the primary obstacle to contemporary history painting in 2000: 'ideological otherness has become converted into relations of richer and poorer' (2000a:79). Arguably, the latest systemic crisis in the global financial market has revived the older ideological oppositions that may have seemed extinct as a result of the prevalence of centrist politics at the turn of the millennium.

Figure 47. David Gledhill (2017) *Entrance to 'Berlin 1936' exhibition at neo:gallery 23 in Bolton.* Photograph.

'Berlin 1936' was curated by the four participating artists, and was a more comprehensive overview of the work produced to date than 'Olydo Berlin 16'. The size of neo:gallery23 in the Marketplace shopping centre in Bolton, meant that a greater number of works could be shown, and that long expanses of formerly retail wall space could be used for sequences of paintings, without crowding (Figure 47). Works were largely grouped by medium and artist, although the films *Fürstner* and *Soviet* were projected at a distance from the paintings, and the prints and assemblage were isolated and in close proximity to works by the other artists. This dispersal meant that it was difficult for the viewer to attribute individual pieces, with the result that the mutually relativising effect within my own body of work was somewhat dislocated. The experience of organising the exhibition, including the design of the banners seen in Figure 47, convinced me of the need for a closer consideration of display as an integral aspect of the meaning of a body of work. This is an issue I will address in relation to *Karel*/Karl in Chapter Four.

7. Related work by a contemporary artist and a novelist

Figure 48. Susan Hiller (2002-2005) The J. Street Project. Mixed-media installation, dimensions variable. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

As suggested above, the range of media and approaches employed in The Berlin Olympic Village Project was intended to give it a critical dimension with regard to the representation of Wolfgang Fürstner, and the landscaping of the site as a manifestation of German nationalist ideology. Precedents for this approach are difficult to find, but elements of it are contained in Susan Hiller's (2002-5) The J. Street Project, which consists of a film, a series of photographs, a book, a map, a list of street names, and in exhibition contexts, an information resource. It provides a model for projects in which contrasting forms of documentation are used to represent the same subject.

The J. Street Project began in 2002, when Hiller noticed a street in Berlin with the name *Judenstrasse*. Surprised by the continued use of this term in the light of the expulsion and extermination of Germany's Jewish population during the Second World War, she went on to locate all 303 existing streets and public rights of way in Germany that include the prefix *Juden* or *Jude*, photographed them, and shot film sequences of them from a static camera. The streets had been renamed in the 1930s by the Nazis, and during the postwar de-

Nazification process, had been changed back to their previous designations. Hiller found that of the complete list of street names that she could trace, several had been renamed again. While working on the project, she engaged in conversations with residents that she claims illustrated a range of attitudes, including civic pride and mild anti-semitism (Contemporary Jewish Museum, 2009:9mins 30).

The locations varied from urban, to suburban and rural settings, and the film scene for each location included more than one shot, but focused on an identifying signpost, framed both from a distance to allow for peripheral incident and also in close-up. The film consists of these scenes edited together to form a sequence of 67 minutes duration. The photographs are all composed in portrait format, include the street signs, and are framed and mounted for exhibition display in a uniform grid arrangement (Figure 48). The photographs were also published in book form.

The J. Street Project explores the geographic specificity of place and the social production of meaning, through the process of inventorising locations linked by naming and renaming. It also engages with the social construction of place on the basis of its ethnic composition and contested nature. There is no equivalent investment in the 'spirit of place' however, and as Hiller indicates, the photographs were composed artlessly in an approximation of a purely utilitarian visual survey (Contemporary Jewish Museum, 2009:14mins 35). In its museological presentation, an approach shared with other of Hiller's projects, The J. Street Project stands in for an absence of existing research into the etymology of German Jewish street names, as well as for the absence of the Jewish communities that once inhabited these locations. Unlike Boltanski's *The Missing House,* however, it allows for the 'intense and intimate contemplation' (Kaplan, 2007:147) that the latter project forecloses. How is this done?

As Paula Carabell (2006) points out in her review of the book, to an audience alerted by the title and theme of the project, the incidental inclusions in the photographs, such as a road sign depicting a mother and child, a discarded toy, or glimpses of paths and railway lines leading into the distance, inevitably carry suggestions of Jewish persecution. In an interview conducted at the Contemporary Jewish Museum, Hiller disavows an expressive agenda, preferring to 'leave the emotional response up to the viewer to construct' (2009:13mins 35). On the other hand, as Jorg Heiser observes, the soundtrack of the film overlays the sound of carillon bells playing a song banned by the Nazis, across several consecutive scenes that cannot have been filmed at the same place and time (2011:131). In other words, Heiser claims, the conventions of film editing have been employed to contrive an artistic equivalent of the mixed emotions one might have at the sight of a Jewish street name in Germany today, resulting in a 'precarious tension between conceptually structured contemplation and documentary evidence' (Heiser,2011:134). Hiller's project is rooted in a preoccupation with language and its political instrumentalisation, rather than with place *per se*. Nevertheless, The J. Street Project, in which a certain amount of emotive resonance is retained and integrated into what the artist calls a 'cool and minimal' presentation (Contemporary Jewish Museum, 2009:13mins 30), in order to formally embody a complex and conflicted experience of location, is, in that respect, another effective model for a research-driven historiographical art practice.

The mutual relativisation of the elements of The J. Street Project corresponds with that of The Berlin Olympic Village Project. In the latter, differing representational idioms cast a degree of doubt on the authenticity and authority of one another. One fairly clear consequence of the use of a range of photographic and film sources rather than a photograph album for example, is a reduction of narrative potential as an aspect of the project. Langford describes the photograph album as 'one way of preserving the structures of oral tradition' (2001:21), and there may have been some narrative suggestivity in the snapshots purchased online after the research trip to the Athlete's Village.

However, these photographs were not taken from an album and I was not able to acquire all the available images. In addition, none of them feature the photographer him or herself, except as a shadow or partial reflection (Figure 38). They are fairly typical tourist snaps, albeit rare ones, of a highly-orchestrated show event in which little was left to chance by those running the Village (Walters, 2006:221). The postcards and press photograph are largely devoid of figures or incident and highly conventional.

Any narrative potential implicit in The Berlin Olympic Village Project subsists in the viewer's awareness of the circumstances of the 1936 Olympic Games as the Nazi Olympics. This minimisation of narrative as a function of the relation of the works to one another, extends the fracturing of narrative in Poland 1940-1941, in which a uniform series of paintings based on one source were presented as an uninflected, non-chronological and non-cumulative visual annal. In the absence of overarching narrative potential, the paintings sustain a metonymic engagement with the iconic content of the photographs. As with previous series including Poland 1940-1941, the apparent proportions of forms, their spatial relations and surface texture are preserved, whilst the tonal contrast and modelling are augmented in order to enhance the illusion of sculptural or volumetric presence. The general objective here is to make the material elements of the Olympic Village and its inhabitants more visually immediate and tactile-seeming, in order to situate the historical themes of the project in a concrete material and social context. These broader historical themes are set back at a distance, as it were, behind the presentation of the quotidian circumstances of time, place and being.

A series of works produced from disparate sources may also approximate to what White called the ironic mode which, with metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, is one of four 'deep structural forms of the historical imagination' (1973:31). However, as White indicates, the ironic mode tends to 'inspire a Mandarin-like disdain for those seeking to grasp the nature of social reality in either science or art' (1973:38). Since the complete foreclosure of any prospect

of comprehension of the social or historical reality of the Village was not the objective here, irony was modulated with metonymy in order to yield a more nuanced approach to the subject matter. To that end, the landscape, architecture and individuals represented in the series were depicted as they appear in the source photographs, whilst the contrasts amongst these photographic sources, the media used to transcribe them, and the various stylistic inflections within each group of works, acted to establish an ironic distancing.

This approach finds echoes in a novel by Walter Kempowski (2015) entitled *All for Nothing,* that takes as its subject the withdrawal of German citizens from East Prussia in January 1945. As Karina Berger remarks*, All for Nothing* is written as a conventional narrative, despite key events being reiterated from the perspectives of different characters, and the discontinuity caused by the interspersing of excerpts from popular song lyrics throughout the text (2011:216). The use of this device is redolent of Charles Reade's (1861) *The Cloister and the Hearth* as described by Bann, in which Reade uses a variety of devices including musical notation, to 'stress the discontinuity of the narrative on the structural and syntactic levels' (1984:154-155). However, Berger goes on to argue that the evident reflexivity and intertextuality of *All for Nothing* subverts the impression of any concealed historiographical or ideological argument, opening up the possibility of a critique of received history. Berger claims that it is difficult to identify with, or even to pity the characters and their fate, the death of one protagonist, for example, being described with a brutal casualness: 'The bomb had hit Auntie. Helene Harnisch was dead. Born 1885, died January 1945, unmarried. Two months before her sixtieth birthday. It had smashed her chest open' (Kempowski, 2015:294).

While Kempowski evinces an ironic detachment from the fate of his characters by avoiding the revisionist construction of German civilians as victims that Günter Grass (2002) seems to endorse in *Crabwalk* for example*,* he also meticulously evokes the material contents of the *Georgenhof*, a large house

that is the central motif of the novel, in a manner that makes the consequences of the collapse of the German war effort for ordinary lives more graspable *as experience*.[38] The house also corresponds closely with Bachelard's archetype of the birth house: 'Each one of its nooks and corners was a resting-place for daydreaming' (1969:15). Thus, a phenomenological sense of the materiality and atmospherics of place is embedded in the novel despite its ironic tone. The tension in *All for Nothing* between the description of mundane objects and momentous events as mediated by the behaviour of the characters and this ironic detachment from language, strikes me as a model that can be adapted for other media, including painting. The novel moves beyond the distinction that Green and Seddon draw between 'living or experiencing history […] and telling or writing history' (2000:1), in order to do both at the same time.

All for Nothing deploys Bann's 'technical surprise' in order to create a new sense of history in the spirit of early nineteenth-century historiography, but without the conviction in the power of language to present the essential truth of historical events. Indeed, Kempowski's (2014) anthology of diary extracts entitled *Swansong 1945*, which documents four key dates at the close of the war from the myriad perspectives of civilians, soldiers, prisoners, and political leaders, bears out this failure of language, while providing a tantalising glimpse of the past in terms of the lived experience of others. These testimonies are, of course, themselves mediated by language and narrative, with the distinction that much of what they recount remains obscured from us because it is not explained or contextualised by Kempowski as editor.

[38] *All for Nothing* ends at the quayside at the *Frisches Haff* or Vistula Lagoon on the current Russian/Polish border, as the surviving member of the featured family waits to board a rescue ship. *Crabwalk* is concerned with the historical fate and transgenerational significance of the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, one such rescue ship, that was torpedoed and sunk by the Russians in January 1945.

Kempowski was an avid collector of second-hand photographs, letters and diaries and his attempt to produce a more empathetic history through the forensic curation of other people's everyday experiences is an approach that informs my own practice. His work represents a conjunction of the ironic prefiguring of historical enquiry that White claims has been prevalent since the mid-nineteenth century (1973:xii), with the previously dominant metonymic conception of historical representation, which set out to recover a sense of the past through the meticulous documentation and ordering of its material culture (Bann, 1984:82). Ludmilla Jordanova asserts with respect to written histories, that awareness of the constructed nature of history 'is perfectly compatible with recognising both its genuine significance and its capacity to speak meaningfully about past times' (2006:8). The collection and reworking of primary sources across media and idioms, along the lines set out by both Hiller and Kempowski, in both of whose work a muted emotive charge is retained within a research-driven methodology, strikes me as another starting point for a fruitful approach to a content-led and critical historiographical practice in art.

The revision of my working methodology in The Berlin Olympic Village Project, enabled me to approach the subject from a range of perspectives. The resulting body of work responded to an experience of place, which was subsequently incorporated into a treatment of the Berlin Olympic Village that took account of its constitution in language and as representation. My intention with this body of work was to offer a broader view of the subject whilst avoiding the complications associated with single source research as discussed in Chapter Two. Where Poland 1940-1941 disassembled the narrative proposed in the Erna Adlou album and deferred its interpretation to the viewer, the extended temporal span of The Berlin Olympic Village Project between 1936 and 2016, meant that it became possible to propound an interpretation of the site in terms of the means by which place and time are articulated in history.

Conclusion

The Berlin Olympic Village Project is a group of works that were produced in response to a site visit and subsequent research into the history of the Athlete's Village constructed for the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. It draws upon photographic, film, printed, and online material produced both at the time of the Games and in 2015. The project crystallised a new development in my research into the representation of historical subjects and themes. Rather than working exclusively with a set of amateur snapshots and concluding the project by making a film, my unforeseen responses to the Athlete's Village as an historical site opened out a range of perspectives on the interplay of place and time. These could not have been suggested by historiographical accounts, research conducted at a distance, or photographs acquired either before or afterwards as source material.

The project was developed out of an engagement with a threefold conception of place, comprising geographical and architectural features, the social and political production of meaning through time, and first-hand intimations arising from the 'spirit of place'. It attempts to critique historiographical representations of the site through the production of works that cross-reference one another, while undercutting any sense of overarching narrative or definitive approach. The use of contrasting idioms signalled the complex interplay of immediate first-hand impressions and representations that the experience, and research into the history of the site suggested. The project therefore does not constitute a new history of the Village, but instead demonstrates that a sense of location is produced by contesting representations, but that these representations alone cannot fully account for the poetics of place.

This direct encounter with place is more closely linked to what Green and Seddon refer to as 'living or experiencing history' (2000:1), than it is with the process of constructing an historical narrative about a particular location. The

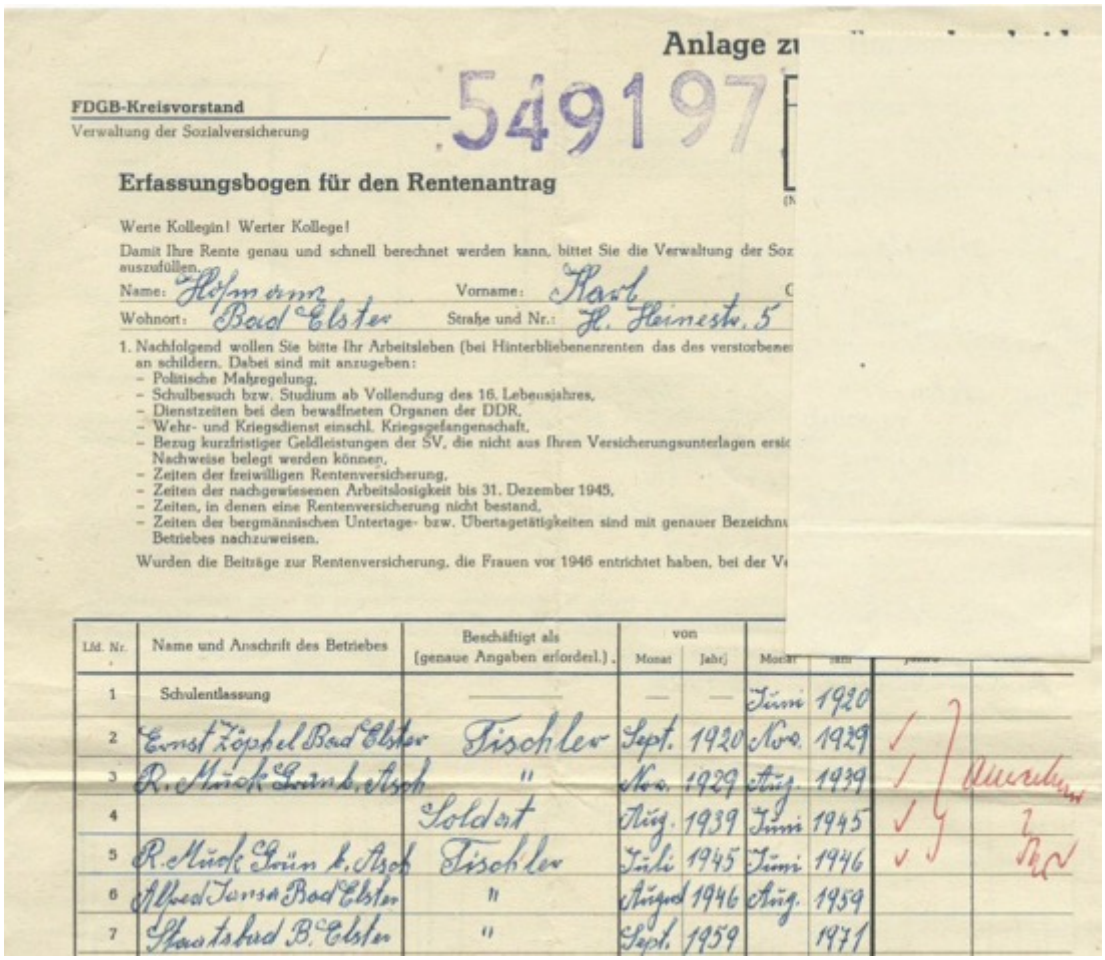
practical methods of contemporary archaeology, proceeding from the recording and interpretation of material remains, buildings, murals, and landscapes, provide an iconic repertoire that can be infused with a sense of the 'ghosts of place', while furnishing the motifs by which a visual practice might convey historical meaning without telling a story.

This was a key moment in the development of the practical methodology in that it implicated my own agency in the production of the work much more clearly. The combination of paintings based on amateur snapshots, online sources and mass-produced postcards, with prints and paintings based on my own photographs and films, integrated both my research activity and first-hand responses to the site into the structure of the project. The multiple perspectives on the Village that were opened out by the experience of its internal heterogeneity, and subsequent enquiry into its changing ideological and political meanings, were translated into an approach that embraced different media, techniques, and conventions, rather than any unified or consistent treatment. If a contemporary form of history painting is to engage seriously with the historical as it is currently understood, the role of visual language in the production of meaning must be acknowledged in this way. In the cited examples by Susan Hiller and Walter Kempowski, an ironic and detached mode of presentation does not completely deny the viewer their intuitive responses or independent construction of meaning. The Berlin Olympic Village Project represented a further development towards the aim of producing works that critically and reflexively address historical subjects and themes on the basis of both their temporal *and* spatial particularities, social construction, past representation, and ongoing significance.

Poland 1940-1941 employed a single source in order to apply a model of history as a principally temporal phenomenon, in that the timeframe of the album was one of exceptional historical interest. By contrast, The Berlin Olympic Village Project investigated the articulation of time and place by examining a specific location in its various manifestations over a much longer period. In the next

Chapter, I describe three projects that draw upon photographs and both official and personal documents, to explore the conception of history as a social process, and its implications for named individuals.

Chapter Four: *Karel*/Karl and the individual in history



Anlage z

FDGB-Kreisvorstand
Verwaltung der Sozialversicherung

549197

Erfassungsbogen für den Rentenantrag

Werte Kollegin! Werter Kollege!

Damit Ihre Rente genau und schnell berechnet werden kann, bittet Sie die Verwaltung der Soz
auszufüllen.

Name: Hofmann Vorname: Karl

Wohnort: Bad Elster Straße und Nr.: H. Heinestr. 5

1. Nachfolgend wollen Sie bitte Ihr Arbeitsleben (bei Hinterbliebenenrenten das des verstorbene
an schildern. Dabei sind mit anzugeben:
- Politische Maßregelung,
- Schulbesuch bzw. Studium ab Vollendung des 16. Lebensjahres,
- Dienstzeiten bei den bewaffneten Organen der DDR,
- Wehr- und Kriegsdienst einschl. Kriegsgefangenschaft,
- Bezug kurzfristiger Geldleistungen der SV, die nicht aus Ihren Versicherungsunterlagen ersic
Nachweise belegt werden können,
- Zeiten der freiwilligen Rentenversicherung,
- Zeiten der nachgewiesenen Arbeitslosigkeit bis 31. Dezember 1945,
- Zeiten, in denen eine Rentenversicherung nicht bestand,
- Zeiten der bergmännischen Untertage- bzw. Übertagetätigkeiten sind mit genauer Bezeichnu
Betriebes nachzuweisen.

Wurden die Beiträge zur Rentenversicherung, die Frauen vor 1946 entrichtet haben, bei der V

Lfd. Nr.	Name und Anschrift des Betriebes	Beschäftigt als (genaue Angaben erforderl.)	von Monat	von Jahr	bis Monat	bis Jahr		
1	Schulentlassung		—	—	Juni	1920		
2	Ernst Zöphel Bad Elster	Tischler	Sept.	1920	Nov.	1929	✓	
3	R. Mück Grün b. Asch	"	Nov.	1929	Aug.	1939	✓	Wehrdienst
4		Soldat	Aug.	1939	Juni	1945	✓	
5	R. Mück Grün b. Asch	Tischler	Juli	1945	Juni	1946	✓	
6	Alfred Jansa Bad Elster	"	August	1946	Aug.	1959		
7	Staatsbad B. Elster	"	Sept.	1959		1971		

Figure 49. *Karl Hofmann's registration document for a pension application, showing his employers and occupations*. Collection of David Gledhill

Introduction

After the 'Berlin 1936' exhibition that concluded The Berlin Olympic Village Project (2015-17), I started to work with several different sets of photographs and associated documents acquired during research trips to Germany. Having completed two projects based on photographic images for which only minimal provenance was available, I wanted to draw upon a wider range of sources, including personal, official and legal documents, that could establish a more comprehensive and detailed social context for the production of the photographs and the depicted subjects. Whilst the experience of the site visit to the Berlin Olympic Village had integrated a phenomenological encounter with place into the conception of the work produced for that project, the three

contrasting new projects that followed, offered a means of extending the investigation of historical representation in terms of the impact of past events upon identifiable individuals.

In this concluding chapter, I describe these three projects. One of them is complete, another is underway, and the most recent is still at an early research stage; taken together, they indicate the range of an ongoing enquiry into the use of micro-historical evidence to reintegrate historical content into painting. As stated in the Introduction, in this context historical content is taken to mean extra-aesthetic phenomena pertinent to historically significant events and sites. All three projects focus on named individuals, and their historical thematics emerge from the actions and experiences of those individuals, as recorded by themselves and their friends, families, and professional contacts.

The research projects undertaken prior to *Karel*/Karl (2017-19) established a timeframe that covers the build-up to and the first two years of the Second World War from a predominantly German perspective. The three main projects outlined in the thesis are linked to the extent that they represent contrasting instances of the dissemination and assimilation of political ideology in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, as manifested in surviving documents, material artefacts and locations. The fascination that guides the search for such material is with the process of ideological indoctrination and its impact on the lives of those subjected to it. How do individuals and social groups embrace, negotiate, or resist the prevailing political climate, and what behaviours, compromises and conflicts arise because of it? Furthermore, how do a nation's citizens become convinced of extremist political ideologies, and how are those ideologies mediated through social, visual and material practices such as photography, architecture and sport?

Both Poland 1940-1941 (2014-15) and The Berlin Olympic Village Project were intended to raise these questions. Rather than attempting to provide an explanation of the historical evidence as a narrative historian might, each series

constituted a kind of allegory of the means by which, in our own time, extremism can take hold of a population. Having considered allegory as an integral signifying aspect of classical history painting and as a narrative strategy, I wanted to investigate its potential for drawing connections between past events and the present day. However, in the light of the attempt in both Poland 1940-1941 and The Berlin Olympic Village Project to avoid narrative approaches to the series form, it became necessary to look for an alternative and non-narrative conception of allegory that could provide a model for a visual historiographical practice of contemporary relevance.

In 'The Allegorical Impulse', Craig Owens argues for a critical reassessment of allegory, pointing out its association with history painting, as well as its re-emergence in contemporary art (1992:56). Owens asserts that allegory is capable of generating metaphorical meaning from 'strategies of accumulation' (1992:56), and cites the appropriation of photographic source material by artists as an allegorical impulse (1992:54). In this final chapter, I propose a general methodology for the production of a contemporary form of history painting incorporating allegory as its primary means of signification. Whilst the projects discussed in this chapter focus once again on the period leading up to and including the Second World War, this methodology is applicable to any time, place, or community. The chapter closes with a general conclusion summing up the findings from the research to date.

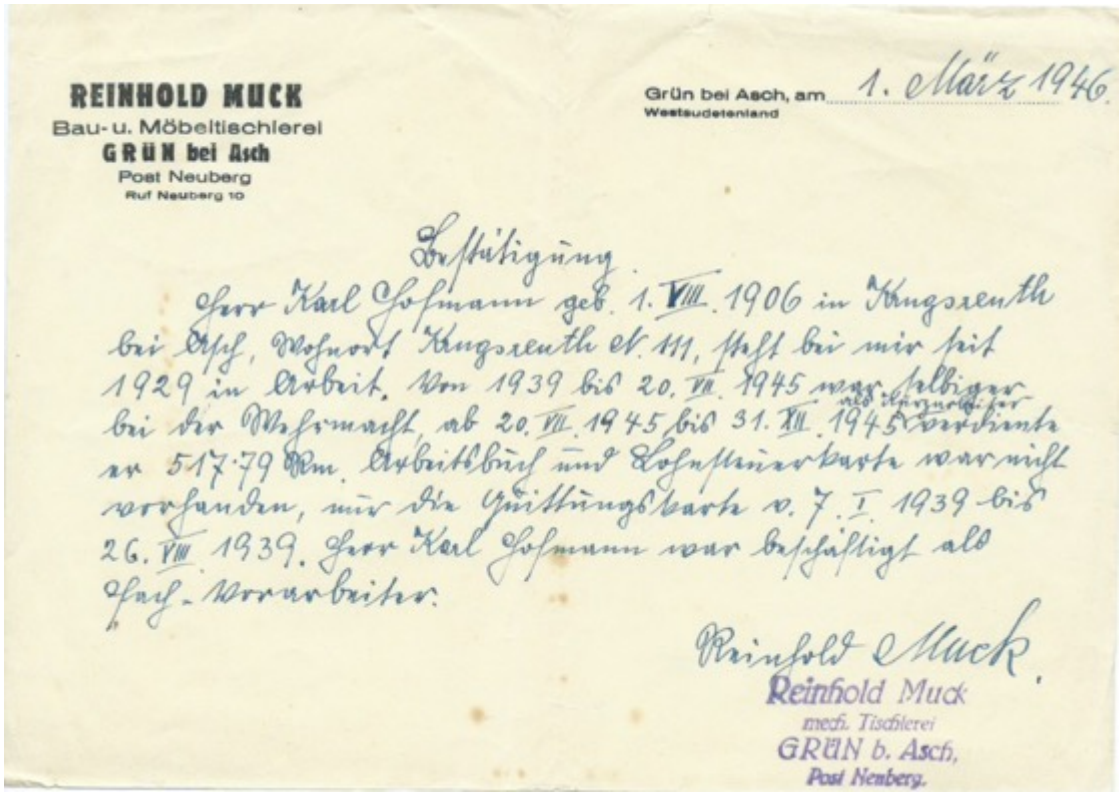
1. *Karel*/Karl

The main focus of the two projects undertaken immediately prior to *Karel*/Karl were a particular timeframe (Poland 1940-1941), and a specific location of political interest (The Berlin Olympic Village Project). In each case, the nature of the source material conditioned the parameters of the project. The use of the album in Poland 1940-1941 prompted the deferral of interpretation to the viewer, whilst the range of material used for The Berlin Olympic Village Project

Figure 50. David Gledhill (2017) *Karl Hofmann.* Oil on canvas, 51 x 39 cm.

enabled a consideration of the historical process as one combining temporal and spatial dimensions, through the representation of one particular site over a period of 80 years.

The realisation that I had yet to use a single lifetime or a family unit as an historical framework, and that such a perspective could afford another kind of engagement with the past, led me to turn to a box of papers and photographs purchased from a flea market in Frankfurt in 2016. In addition, frustration relating to the display and reception of the previous projects (Chapter Two Section 2.8, and Chapter Three Section 6) meant that a reassessment of the presentation of the work became urgent. Constraining factors such as external curatorial agendas, corporate censorship, and the limitations and compromises


REINHOLD MUCK
Bau- u. Möbeltischlerei
GRÜN bei Asch
Post Neuberg
Ruf Neuberg 10

Grün bei Asch, am 1. März 1946
Westsudetenland

Bestätigung

Herr Karl Hofmann geb. 1. VIII. 1906 in Kingsreuth bei Asch, Wohnort Kingsreuth Nr. 111, steht bei mir seit 1929 in Arbeit. Von 1939 bis 20. VII. 1945 war selbiger bei der Wehrmacht, ab 20. VII. 1945 bis 31. XII. 1945 verrichtete er 517·79 Rm. Arbeitsbuch und Lohnsteuerkarte waren nicht vorhanden, nur die Quittungskarte v. 7. I. 1939 bis 26. VIII 1939. Herr Karl Hofmann war beschäftigt als Hauptarbeiter.

Reinhold Muck.

Reinhold Muck
mech. Tischlerei
GRÜN b. Asch,
Post Neuberg.

Figure 51. *Employment record for Karl Hofmann written by his employer Reinhold Muck in 1946*. Collection of David Gledhill

of the group exhibition format, meant that the impact of previous bodies of work had been somewhat dissipated. Also, in a practice that is partly intended to problematise narrative as an historiographical method, the use of written material in the form of wall-mounted text panels, meant that the primary interpretative prompt was extrinsic to the work itself. The incorporation of original documents that could historically situate the iconic content of the project, would relieve the necessity for extraneous commentary.

Accordingly, in July 2017 I started work on a new project based on the contents of the box. These documents belonged to Karl Hofmann, an ethnic German carpenter from a village called Kopaniny in the Karlovy Vary region of what is now the Czech Republic.[39] They make it relatively easy to ascertain where

[39] In the Czechoslovakian documents relating to Hofmann, including his military service record, his name is spelled Karel Hoffmann.

Hofmann was and what he was doing between his birth in 1906 and retirement in 1971. For example, Hofmann's registration document for his pension application (Figure 49), lists his employers and occupations between September 1920 and 1971. These apparently mundane biographical details place Hofmann in the midst of some of the biggest social upheavals in global history. He was born on the extreme western edge of what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was dissolved in October 1918 at the end of the First World War. Ethnic Germans made up 23% of the population of the newly created Czechoslovakia (Bažant et al., 2010:242), and yet by the mid 1930s they represented 60% of the total unemployed population (Douglas, 2012:12). Adverse employment conditions and the rise of Adolf Hitler accelerated the growth of separatist sentiment amongst the political parties of the German population, and following the Munich Agreement of September 1938 and subsequent German invasion of Austria in March 1939, Hofmann joined the *Wehrmacht*. After the War, his relocation to Bad Elster made him a citizen of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and eventually, in 1990, a witness to the reunification of Germany. The latest document in the box, dated 1990, is a bank statement detailing the conversion of Hofmann's East German savings into Deutschmarks (Figure 52).

Hofmann's life spanned six political administrations of the same geographical area of central Europe: the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Czechoslovakia, The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the Third Czechoslovakian Republic, the German Democratic Republic, and the Federal Republic of Germany. In the middle of this historical span is the period in May 1945 when German rule came to an end and reprisals against Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia began. At this point, Hofmann returned to work in Grün bei Asch near Kopaniny, before crossing the border to Bad Elster in June 1946, possibly evading the worst aspects of what R.M Douglas calls 'the largest forced population transfer […] in human history' (2012:1). The documents constitute an annal of Hofmann's life, and provide clues as to the social impact of these historic developments. Taken

Deutsche Post

Abrechnung über Guthabenumstellung

Postsparkassenamt Berlin

HS4240

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+	ZINSENGUTSCHRIFT PER 30.06.1990	M	333,93
=	UMZUSTELLENDES GUTHABEN	M	21.683,73
	BETRAG IM VERHAELTNIS 1 M : 1 DM	DM	6.000,00
	BETRAG IM VERHAELTNIS 2 M : 1 DM	DM	7.841,87
=	NEUES GUTHABEN NACH UMSTELLUNG	DM	13.841,87
-	AUSZAHLUNGSQUITTUNG	DM	0,00

DEUTSCHE POST, PSPKA BERLIN, 1003

-POSTSACHE- 942-161283

HOFMANN,KARL
K LIEBKNECHT STR 63
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UMSTELLUNGS-
GUTHABEN
IN DM

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Figure 52. *Bank statement showing the conversion of Karl Hofmann's savings to Deutschmarks after the reunification of Germany in 1990.* Collection of David Gledhill

together with Poland 1940-1941 and The Berlin Olympic Village Project, *Karel*/Karl completes an informal trilogy of projects that describe the arc of the rise and fall of Nazi Germany and the effects of this process on the civilian bystanders, facilitators, and perpetrators of the regime.

In his study of the expulsion of ethnic Germans or *Volksdeutsch* from Eastern Europe, Douglas uses a number of named individuals to illustrate certain aspects of their collective plight (2002:130). This is an established historiographical approach and one which, according to Ludmilla Jordanova

'sees the subject as a point at which diverse historical forces converge' (2006:45). This approach can also be adopted as an artistic strategy, with Hofmann and his wife Elfi acting as typical characters in the sense proposed by Georg Lukacs. Lukacs provided a theory of typicality in socialist realism that distinguishes between the 'average' and the 'type' in terms of the embodiment in the latter of the 'most significant directions of social development' (1978:78). By contrast, the portrayal of the average 'results in diluting and deadening' (1978:78) the social and moral contradictions of the age.

As mentioned, in the case of the Hofmann box there is sufficient documentary evidence to collate an annal of his lifetime, but apart from a single letter written to him, there is no evidence of what Hofmann felt or thought about the events he experienced. Nevertheless, an artistic project such as *Karel*/Karl need not conjecture on this aspect of Hofmann's life, representing him instead, as a means of 'constructing a *histoire totale* on a limited scale' (Jordanova, 2006:46), or in other words, as a way to focus a range of historical themes through a single lifespan as a 'type'. This strategy is reminiscent of Christian Norberg-Schulz's distinction between scientific and artistic methodologies as discussed in Chapter Three. The principle of rooting general meanings in the particular phenomenon is an artistic approach that can preserve the specific qualities of the subject, whilst also suggesting its broader significance. This approach can be explored in two directions: towards the universal, as in the work of Gerhard Richter and Christian Boltanski discussed above, or towards the particular, as in my own practice.

The project consists of seven completed paintings, wooden laser cuts of Hofmann's border pass (Appendix E, Figures F1-8), employment record (Figure 51) and bank statement (Figure 52), and two mixed-media assemblages incorporating the photographs, documents, laser cuts and paintings, with suitcases and furniture (Appendix E, Figures F9-15). The reproduction of Hofmann's documents as wooden replicas, underlines the continuity of his professional life throughout the turmoil of the historical events he experienced.

Figure 53. David Gledhill (2018) *Karl Hofmann*. Oil on canvas with photographs, documents, found furniture, map and suitcases, 114 x 183 cm.

Whilst at first, a number of the items in the box seemed suitable for translation into laser cuts in this way, the discovery of a wooden storage cupboard at Rogue Studios suggested an alternative means of incorporating the papers and photographs into the presentation of the project. The entire contents of the Hofmann box, including the photographs, border pass, Hofmann's military service record, land deed, house blueprint, and various testimonials, are displayed under glass on shelves inside the cupboard, on top of which two of the paintings are mounted inside Czech *Kazeto* suitcases dating from the 1940s (Figure 53). The paintings are based on the photographic portrait of the young Hofmann that is attached to his 1936 border pass, and a small passport photograph of the elderly Hofmann from the box. Taken at least 30 years apart, these images bracket Hofmann's professional life. The suitcases are suggestive of the upheaval experienced by Hofmann during the Second World War, but also as a general result of regime change in the border region he inhabited for his entire lifetime. On the reverse of the cupboard, a reproduction of a map of Czechoslovakia (Appendix E, Figure F12) illustrating the path of the German invasion and occupation of 1939 provides historical context for this upheaval, but without narrative explication. An additional piece entitled *Elfi Hofmann,* (Appendix E, Figures F13-15), combines postcards of the State Baths at Bad Elster dating from the period when Hofmann worked there, with another *Kazeto* suitcase, laser cuts of the bank statement and the original decorative box that contained the documents.

The combination of paintings with items of furniture extends the use of a found object in The Berlin Olympic Village Project. The objective is for the paintings to acquire a new resonance through their integration into artefacts synonymous with their subject's lifelong trade. The paintings enter a dialogue with their immediate material support, partially removing them from what Brian O'Doherty called the 'pristine placeless white cube' (1999:79) of the gallery space. The suitcases and cupboard contribute the primary material context for the paintings, which can no longer be evacuated of non-aesthetic content by the enclosing space, in the way that O'Doherty describes as a function of the

modernist drive to progressively incorporate the gallery as a signifying element in painting (1999:14). By removing the paintings from the wall and attaching them instead to utilitarian objects, the 'transposition of perception from life to formal values' (1999:15) that the gallery induces, is at least delayed. Of course, as O'Doherty indicates, even utilitarian objects are aestheticised in a purpose-built 'unshadowed, white, clean, artificial' gallery (1999:15).

The selection of alternative and more historically resonant exhibition venues could expand this model of research-driven painting practice, incorporating the display space as a connotative element in terms other than those indicated by O'Doherty. Peter Geimer notes with reference to an aborted plan to exhibit Luc Tuymans' paintings at the site of the Wannsee Conference, that 'their exchange with the historic aura' (2012:27) of the site would have been more powerful than that afforded by a museum. Geimer concludes that Tuymans' paintings would have been 'effortlessly enmeshed in the spell of world history' (2012:28) in such a context.

Hofmann's life as a carpenter suggests a number of possibilities for integrating paintings, documents, found objects and location into an ensemble that provides its own visual context, for example, an exhibition of the works at the Staatsbad at Bad Elster (Saxon State Baths) where Hofmann was employed from 1959 to his retirement in 1971. This would build upon the precedent of the 'Olydo Berlin 16' exhibition in the gymnasium at the Berlin Olympic Village, where the content of paintings, film and prints could be related directly to the location. Also, the range of Hofmann's papers provides sufficient information about him to dispense with the necessity of incorporating supplementary historical contextualisation in any exhibition of the project. The box also contains several documents with addresses in the former GDR, making the prospect of locating Hofmann's friends, neighbours or family descendants more feasible.

Figure 54. *Detail of blueprint for a house in Kopaniny, Czech Republic*. Collection of David Gledhill

Karel/Karl was completed in July 2019, and was not initiated by a site visit. The box contains a deed of purchase for a plot of land in Kopaniny dated April 1903 and signed by Hofmann's father, together with an architect's blueprint for a house to be constructed on it (Figure 54). The house appears to have many of the archetypal qualities that made Wolfgang Fürstner's house such a compelling motif. Had a site visit been possible, film and photographic documentation of this house and the landscape between Bad Elster, Kopaniny and Grün bei Asch may have opened out unforeseeable aspects of the project. However, the existing material lent itself first and foremost to a reconsideration of the presentation and curation of the work, as a means of addressing the frustrations associated with the exhibitions of the previous two projects.

1.1 Related works

In Chapters Two and Three, works by contemporary practitioners in media other than painting have been cited, in order to investigate a range of strategies for constructing historical accounts of the past, and where appropriate, to consider their adaptation for an historiographical painting practice. In the case of *Karel*/Karl, there are numerous precedents in Czech literature and film for making the Second World War, and specifically the period between May and July 1945, the central focus in the treatment of Hofmann's life. These include the novels *The Cowards* (Škvorecký, 1958), and *The Little Town Where Time Stood Still* (Hrabal, 1973), and the films *The Shop on the High Street* (1965), *Coach to Vienna* (1966) and *Adelheid* (1969). As indicated, the six political transitions listed above also qualify Hofmann as an emblematic point of convergence for the depiction of general historical themes and forces. These include issues relating to political border conflicts, expropriation, ethnic cleansing, and the advantages of possessing artisan skills adaptable for successive political regimes.

Hofmann spent 39 years on one side of a border zone and approximately 45 years on the other, so the end of the Second World War represents a kind of fulcrum in his life. Whilst none of the novels or films referred to take an entire lifetime as a framework, they do focus on nearby locations or comparable individuals, and enable a closer estimation of some of the forces that impacted upon Hofmann up to this midpoint of his experience. It should be noted that other than featuring characters at points of crisis or revelation, the following works relate to the project by virtue of subject matter rather than formal characteristics. They also confirm the general artistic viability of addressing social and political themes by drawing from concrete historical circumstances.

The Cowards by Josef Škvorecký (1958) evokes the experiences of a group of young jazz musicians in Kostelec during six consecutive days in May 1945.[40] The novel is told in the first person, and combines a distracted adolescent interior monologue with a linear narrative that provides a glimpse of the confusion and tense atmosphere at the end of German rule in the region. Hofmann's circumstances before and after leaving the *Wehrmacht* in June 1945 are unclear, but the relative brevity of his postwar employment in the Third Czechoslovakian Republic, and its termination at the point in June 1946 when the Czech Interim National Assembly had just ratified the Beneš Decrees of 1945, dispossessing ethnic Germans of their citizenship and property, are suggestive of urgent decision-making.

A number of films produced during the Czech New Wave of the 1960s focused on ethnic conflict during the Second World War and its aftermath. The central character in *The Shop on the High Street*, directed by Ján Kadár (1965), is a Slovakian carpenter who is appointed by his brother-in-law, an officer in the Nazi-aligned *Hlinka Guard*, as the 'Aryan Protector' of an elderly Jewish haberdasher. The film conveys the moral consequences of acquiescence in the Nazi occupation, but also portrays the milieu of the small-town carpenter in a manner that helps to situate Hofmann in a concrete social, economic and material circumstance. As an ethnic German, Hofmann may have welcomed the occupation, and as Douglas points out:

> While many were conscripted into the German armed forces, many more who might have avoided doing so volunteered their services out of ideological conviction, the hope of proving their "Germanness" to their professed co-racials, or the expectation of future reward. (2012:60)

[40] *The Cowards* is set between 5 May and 11 May 1945. These are the dates of the final German withdrawal from Czechoslovakia. Kostelec is 109 kilometres from Kopaniny.

Figure 55. Unknown photographer (no date) *Untitled.* Photograph. Collection of David Gledhill

A direct parallel with the protagonist of Kadár*'s* film, who is an ethnic Slovak, is difficult to make, but the compromised attitude to the Jewish community as evinced by his behaviour towards the elderly shopkeeper, stands as an illustration of the potential consequences of Hofmann's own conflicted position. An earlier film entitled *Marijka the Unfaithful* (1934) is set in a peasant woodcutter community in Subcarpathian Ruthenia at the extreme eastern point of Czechoslovakia. The film is an infidelity drama, but the depiction of exploitative and opportunist Czech and Jewish characters suggests some of the ethnic tensions in the young Czechoslovakian state, which was the product of

compromised decision-making by the allied victors after the First World War.[41]

Whilst cultural and economic conditions in Ruthenia were distinct from those in Czechoslovakia as a whole (Bažant et al., 2010:246), the film is, at the very least, contemporaneous with Hofmann's experience of his trade in the new State. The photograph from the Hofmann box in Figure 55 has no inscription, but represents a family group and an occupation that both films take as their point of dramatic departure. Hofmann would have been familiar with the process of cutting and preparing timber, as featured in the photograph and the films. All the characters discussed above are, of course, fictional, whilst Hofmann was a real individual. However, there is nothing to prevent the documented lives of real people from being incorporated into works of art (see the Introduction, Section 5). The process by which either fictional or real characters are integrated into artistic works is the same in both cases.

Hayden White has asserted that both narrative history and literature share modes of meaning production that act as 'distillates of the historical experience of a people, a group, a culture' (1987:44-45). These shared modes generate patterns of meaning from real or imagined events in a manner that White claims is founded in myth, and fundamentally allegorical: 'A narrative account is always a figurative account, an allegory' (1987:48). Bill Nichols (1981) also characterises film narrative as mythic, in that the formal sequencing of events in a film tends to suggest the resolution of conflict implicit in an initial premise. This explanatory strategy is intended to 'provide models for action in the present' (1981:76) and in this relevance to present-day situations, narrative films, such as the examples cited above, can also be construed as allegorical.

[41] The incorporation of the Sudetenland, with its sizeable ethnic German population, into Czechoslovakia after the First World War was contrary to the allies' declared preference for self-determination of peoples (Douglas, 2012:8).

Karel/Karl employs an annal rather than a narrative form, and the figurative mode is metonymic, in that images, documents and material relating to Hofmann's life are transcribed and composed or arranged syntagmatically, in linguistic terms, to stand for a greater whole. Owens argues that allegory proceeds from works in which structure is conceived as sequence or as an accumulation of fragments (1992:57), as in the arrangement of the photographs and documents in the assemblage entitled *Karl Hofmann* (2019). It locates meaning production outside the work itself, in the comparison of one set of elements, events or timeframe with another, and can derive from both metaphoric and metonymic modes of signification such as that described above. This adaptability of allegory, that is able to mobilise a range of what White calls 'modes of emplotment' (1987:44), nominates it as a method of meaning production for the use of material such as the Hofmann box in order to make work that has a contemporary resonance, but without the use of either narrative, metaphor, or symbol. I explore this possibility further in Section 4 below.

2. Ruth Finger

A body of work with the provisional title Ruth Finger is currently underway, and a number of gum-arabic transfer prints have been produced as a starting point (Figure 57). These prints are based on a snapshot in a small leather photo wallet that was purchased from a Berlin flea market in 2015, during the research trip to the Olympic Village. The wallet contains 28 photographs, six of which have inscriptions on the reverse, and five of these inscribed photographs are dated, placing the majority of the set in a timeframe between 1941 and 1944, judging by similarities of dress and setting between the dated and undated prints. There are duplicates of four of the photographs, which have been printed in both black and white, and a sepia hue. The wallet contains no other documentation.

Figure 56. L-R Unknown photographer (1943) *Schnappschup von Ruth Finger im Klotze/Altmark.* and *Detail showing Hitler Youth and NSDAP membership badges*. Photograph. Collection of David Gledhill

Most of the photographs show Finger at work in an office, walking along a country lane, or in the company of a young man in a uniform. They convey the high spirits of what appears to be an exuberant youth, enjoying life in the company of her family, friends and partner. The wallet was possibly intended as a keepsake, and I have collected several pocket-sized albums produced during wartime, and containing photographs of young girls posing in woods or meadows holding flowers. The Ruth Finger photographs struck me as a particularly affecting group in that they are artfully composed to seem spontaneous, and force a sense of carefree innocence and optimism into contiguity with evidence of required conformity to an odious political ideology (Figure 56).

In one of the photographs (Figure 58), apparently taken outdoors at a picnic or beer garden, caps with badges worn by the Reich Labour Service can be seen. This was a Nazi State organisation for men aged between 18 and 25, intended as a prerequisite for military training, and combining agricultural and manual work with an element of political indoctrination. After 1939, it was also compulsory for young women, and it is likely that both Finger and her partner were serving at the time the photographs were taken. The degree of political

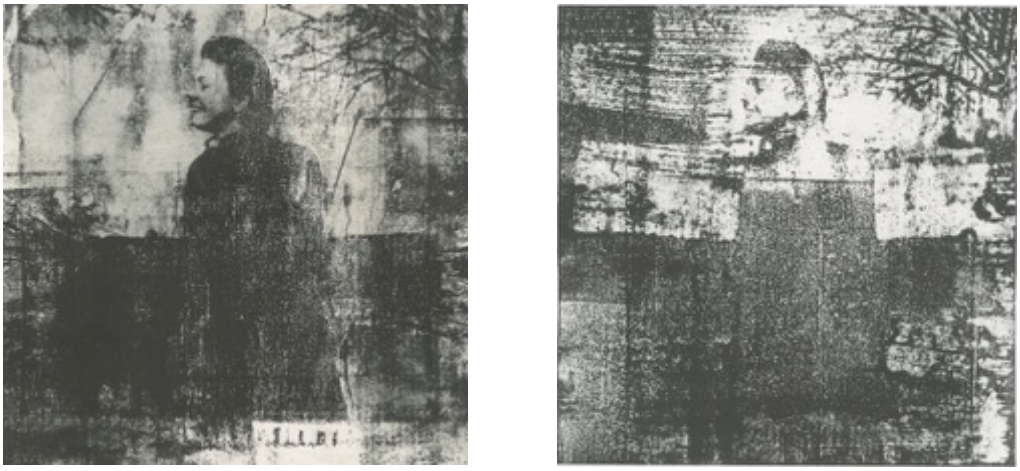

Figure 57. L-R David Gledhill (2018) *Ruth Finger 1* and *2.* Gum-arabic prints on paper, 19 x 19 cm.

conviction felt by the subjects in these photographs is, of course, unknowable, but as with the *Karel*/Karl project, this is not an impediment to the use of the material for artistic purposes, in that judgment, blame or incrimination of individuals are not the aim. Rather, the work produced from the photographs will attempt to explore how snapshot images mask their political content through a form of ritualised behaviour to camera that Ernst Van Alphen describes as activating the 'familial gaze' (1999:46).

Van Alphen concludes his assessment of Christian Boltanski's (1991) *Sans Souci*, a facsimile of a Nazi family album, with the remark that we cannot see the Nazi personality in photographs (such as those of Ruth Finger), because all we recognise 'is what we have in common with them. We see only familial circumstances' (1999:48). However, as Catherine Zuromskis (2013) observes, this appeal to familiar family culture is not innocent: the snapshooter always 'embraces a host of public ideals and norms and the economic, religious and political agendas that create them' (2013:89). Lynne Berger concurs, reminding us that the authenticity we might attribute to photographs is a product of those same 'social or political intentions, cultural norms and values' (2009:45).

Figure 58. Unknown photographer (1941) *Pfingsten 1941*. Photograph. Collection of David Gledhill

As noted in Chapter Two, the National Socialists encouraged amateur photographic documentation of the Home Front precisely because it reinforced 'the perfection of life in the National Socialist State' (Guerin, 2012:75). In that sense amongst others, Finger is not being indicted of a crime via the process of transcription of these images into print or painting. Rather, the artistic theme of the project is the social production of political conviction, as manifested through situated photographic practices that are partly products of that conviction, and the paintings frame the photographs in those terms.

Where the material to hand is principally photographic, as with the Ruth Finger album and the album used for Poland 1940-1941, and other than brief inscriptions there are no factual documents to situate the subject, the nature of the apparently spontaneous snapshot as a highly conventionalised ideological product becomes a paramount consideration. Whatever historic content can be discerned tends to be incidental, and can only be interpreted in terms of the

prevailing social and photographic conventions of the time, conventions that determine the choice of occasion, location, framing, poses, facial expressions and social uses of the snapshot. As Zuromskis observes, the snapshot is as much a product of the drive to create a conventional image as a record of an individual personal moment (2013:34). Nevertheless, this does not exhaust such images as indicators of the enforced normalisation of political extremism (Figure 56).

The appeal of these photographs makes the badges and uniforms seem almost peripheral and irrelevant, and their distracting sentimental quality can be augmented through print and painting so that it becomes evident as a socially contrived effect. Gum-arabic transfer printmaking lends itself to this end, in that it tends to result in textured variations that retain a residual photographic quality, highlighting the promiscuity of the snapshot image as signifier. These variations also imply the gulf between photographic images and their referents, in that we learn nothing about an individual from their photographic representation. Instead, as Rochlitz indicates, photographic images such as those of Ruth Finger, constitute an 'involuntary historiography' (2000:115), that conveys the individual as a type in a specific set of social and political circumstances, the full significance of which can only be grasped in retrospect.

A triptych of paintings transcribed from three of the snapshots of Finger walking on a country path was produced in 2019 (Appendix E, Figures G3-6). This is the first use of this tripartite format during the programme of research, and represents a departure from the proposed models of painting discussed in earlier chapters, in which the source photographs are treated as discrete iconic traces. At this stage, it is unforeseen how this work will contribute to the development of the research, although the principle of considering any formal, material or contextual means of conveying the social and historical significance of the source material is implicit in the development of each body of work.

3. Hedwig Wessendorf

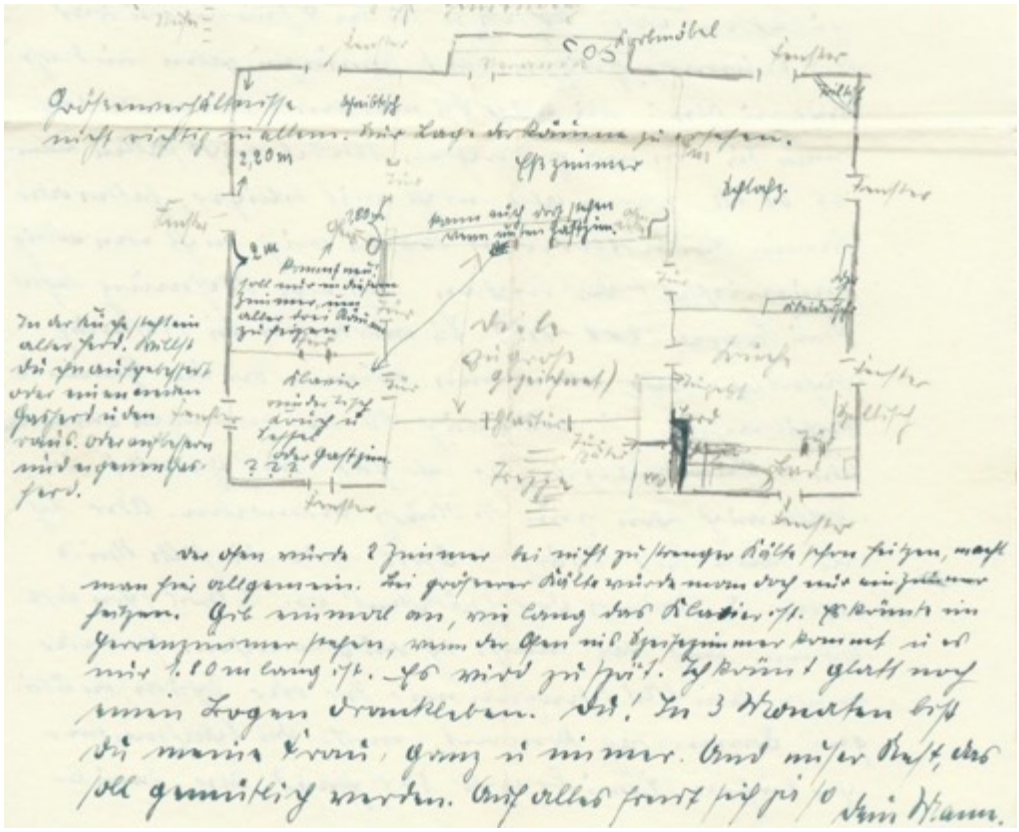

Figure 59. *Letter from Hans Roter to Hedwig Wessendorf dated Gmünd, 19 June 1937.* Collection of David Gledhill

The discovery of a large box of handwritten correspondence at Frankfurt flea market has not yet resulted in any new work. The majority of the letters were written by one Hedwig Wessendorf to a Doctor Hans Roter, and span the period 1932 to 1937. They are accompanied by a selection of photographs, some of which have dates or inscriptions in the same handwriting. The circumstances of the discovery of the box amongst loose, mixed photographs and printed ephemera, meant that some of the snapshots in it may not be related to the letters. This means that effort must be made to establish the consistent appearance of individuals or locations before the photographs can be attributed to Wessendorf and Roter. The letters appear to be written in standard, rather than 'Old German' or *Sütterlinschrift,* a script taught in German schools up to 1941, which makes translation of prewar German handwriting extremely

difficult.[42] To date (September 2019), I have had a number of the letters translated and they appear to focus exclusively on domestic matters.

Many of the letters contain pressed herbs or flowers, and one includes a plan for a house, accompanied by a map of Schwäbisch Gmünd in the German state of Baden-Württemberg (Figure 59). The extensive documentation in the letters, including addresses, will enable further research into the lives of their authors, and if they contain any commentary on wider political developments, they may constitute an illuminating demotic record of the period. Even if the correspondents confined themselves to domestic matters throughout the period, the letters, which form an almost week by week record of their interactions, could still shed light on the ways some German citizens negotiated the spread of Nazism, perhaps by attempting to ignore it.

IN CAMERA

IT WAS Onkel F who gave the Maltese Falcon to Father and Mother. He didn't call it that himself, but he did claim to have picked it up on a trip to a Mediterranean island. Father, who liked to watch American detective movies, named it. No one seemed to know what bird it was meant to be, but it was, at least, about the size of a small falcon.

I remember a time when the statuette was absent from its usual place in the centre of the dining table. I asked J if he had broken it and hidden the pieces. He said not. I thought about asking Mother if she had moved it, but decided against this in case it invited suspicion.

Onkel F had visited that day, with G. I do remember that.

The statuette reappeared a few days later. I noticed while we were eating supper that it was back in its place at the centre of the table.

'Look!' I blurted out. 'The bird is back.'

'The only bird you need to worry about,' Father boomed in his pretend-serious voice, 'is the one on your plate… before it flies away.' And then he grasped his lapels with his fingers and jerked his elbows several times out to the side. In case we hadn't understood, he also gave a series of loud squawks.

'Otto!' Mother scolded him.

'Forgive me, my dear. I don't know what came over me.'

Once Mother had returned her attention to her plate, Father looked over at me, his eyes magnified behind his spectacles, and smiled quickly before looking down.

It struck me that Onkel F had dropped in earlier in the day, accompanied by G. I was about to remark on the coincidence of their visits with the disappearance and reappearance of the Maltese Falcon, but stopped myself for some reason that I didn't quite understand.

18

IN CAMERA

19

Figure 60. David Gledhill and Nicholas Royle (2016) *Pages from In Camera.* Negative Press: London.

[42] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%BCtterlin

In the case of a project involving both photographs and documents or letters, the mediating nature of sign systems in general must still be accounted for, but the range of different signifying practices to be drawn upon, does some of the work of foregrounding their constructed nature, by bringing them into close proximity for contrast and comparison. A previous collaboration with novelist Nicholas Royle (2016) resulted in a publication entitled *In Camera*, in which paintings from snapshots in a 1950s East German family photograph album were reproduced alongside single page stories based on the paintings (Figure 60). This format is adaptable for a series of paintings accompanied by translated letters, a combination that could also be exhibited in a gallery setting.

No matter how prosaic the contents, the letters and photographs represent an opportunity to retrieve a textual and visual record from a period of escalating international political tension. The prospect of similar tensions informing contemporary political discourse makes this retrieval and re-presentation of micro-historical material a means to, in Owens' words 'rescue from historical oblivion that which threatens to disappear' (1992:52-53). In the following section, I will examine Owens' reconsideration of allegory as a way of recovering the significance of the past for the present, and its importance for my own practice.

4. History painting and allegory

In the introduction to his book *Spectral Evidence*, Ulrich Baer suggests that our conceptual models of history are rooted in ancient Greek thought, citing Heraclitus' metaphor of time as a flowing river as the origin of the impulse to attribute a narrative form to past events (2002:3-5). Baer discusses Democritus' contrasting notion of world events as drops of rain, as one suggestive of the atomised and fragmentary quality of the photographic record. The tension between these models of history is evident in many of the theoretical sources referred to in this thesis. Hayden White's characterisation of historical facts as

'a congeries of contiguously related fragments' (1978:125), and Mary Fulbrook's struggle to 'collate fragments' (2012:356), indicate the contrivances and limitations of the narrative approach to the historical record. On the other hand, John Berger's claim that the photograph 'removes its appearance from the flow of appearances' (2013:52), and Walter Benjamin's photographic conception of history as 'an image that flashes up at the instant when it can be recognised' (1999:247), begin to suggest that an alternative artistic historiographical practice based on photographs might be feasible. The consonance of photography with the Democritean conception of history enables the construction of a non-narrative form capable of recognising and representing experience as 'open ended' in Baer's terms, because photographs 'open up a future that is not known and, because it is unknown, might yet be changed' (2002:182).

Like experience, photographs can be understood as 'explosive bursts of isolated events' (Baer, 2002:6), rather than as excerpts from a story, the end of which is inevitable. The discontinuous series form as discussed in Chapter Two, answers to that model of experience, creating a non-narrative 'persistence of effect' (1984:62) that Stephen Bann also attributes to combinations of image and text in contemporary art, and Bann agrees with White that there are other methods than narrative by which a sense of history can be invoked. With paintings based on his own archive of photographs, and objects associated with his lifelong profession, *Karel*/Karl is intended to suggest this 'persistence of effect' by combining elements that provide a visual annal of Hofmann's life. Berger's 'photographic narrative form' (2013:99) is also discontinuous, and may contain images from different times and places. His 'radial system' approximates to memory, in which disparate events and timeframes can coexist, and in this way, a collection of photographic images (or paintings) can be transformed into experience and prompt reflection. Berger's equation between photography, memory, and experience proposes an empowering subjective form of historiographical practice based on the use of amateur photographs 'chosen from the billions which exist' (2013:103).

Craig Owens' essay 'The Allegorical Impulse' echoes White's observations on the annal and chronicle forms, where Owens attributes an allegorical character to artistic 'strategies of accumulation' (1992:56) such as Berger's. Owens nominates the artistic act of simply placing one thing after another in a fragmented sequence as a paradigm of allegorical practice. He proposes allegory as a counter-narrative form, in that one set of events is read in terms of another one, via what he describes as 'vertical […] correspondences' (1992:57). Allegories disassociate the constituent parts of a narrative into a non-cumulative sequence, which Owens indicates can be spatial or temporal. He is attempting to rehabilitate allegory as a means of reading contemporary art, and usefully transposes White's principally literary conception of historical method into terms applicable to a visual historiographical practice.

Owens points out that as an attitude, the allegorical impulse is rooted in a desire to recover an historical past that may seem closed off and irretrievable. This is consonant with my own motivation for collecting second-hand photographs and documents as discussed in the Introduction, and also symptomatic of resistance to the lapsing of a sense of historical continuity, as described by Jean Baudrillard (1994:43) and Pierre Nora (1989). Owens attributes the critical suppression of allegory in art to its association with history painting, in which artists selected a single, or 'pregnant' moment to represent, as a means of condensing narrative and making it more amenable to allegorical projection in time. It has been argued that this, in turn, led to the dessication of much nineteenth-century history painting into the visual inventorising of historical costume and objects (Bann, 1984:75). Owens charts the modernist disavowal of allegory as a signifying mode on the basis of assertions of its extraneousness to aesthetic form, seen as the essence of art by modernist theorists from Clive Bell (1928) in 1914, to Clement Greenberg (2003) writing in 1960. From Owens' perspective, the decline of history painting is bound up with this critical rejection of allegory, and he cites Edouard Manet's (1867-69) use of the same firing squad in *The Execution of Maximilian* and *The Barricade* (1871),

discussed in the Introduction, as evidence of an allegorical device that has been overlooked in modernist critical discourse on the artist (1992:61).

Owens goes on to apply his revitalised conception of allegory to a range of contemporary art forms including land art and minimalism, but it is his application of it to photography that is most pertinent for my own practice. He claims that the urge to preserve appearances that underpins photography 'is one of the strongest impulses in allegory' (1992:56), stressing the fragmentary and contingent nature of the photograph. Furthermore, Owens links allegory to the appropriation of film and photographic images by artists, claiming that those who work with such images do not uncover their original meaning, but add new meaning. Referring to the photo-derived paintings of Troy Brauntuch, Owens concludes: 'they both solicit and frustrate our desire that the image be transparent to its signification. As a result, they appear strangely incomplete – fragments or runes which must be deciphered' (1992:55). This sense of photographs as clues from which the viewer constructs meaning about the past, underpins the use of snapshots in all the projects discussed above. Owens also indicates the allegorical significance of ruins in site-specific practices, where the psychological meaning of a particular location is integrated with its physical characteristics: a conception of place that informed The Berlin Olympic Village Project.

Owens' restoration of allegory as a mode of signification, incorporating a broad and inclusive range of practices, and establishing a community of meaning that bridges history painting, modernism, and contemporary art, also provides a purpose for the citing of past events in a contemporary form of history painting. His analysis is heavily indebted to Benjamin, whose 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', written in 1940, evokes the connection of the past to the present as 'a memory that flashes up at a moment of danger' (1999:247). Benjamin describes a dialectical relationship in which, rather than attempting to discern cause and effect in chronological sequences of historical facts, historians can identify a

Figure 61. Robert Rauschenberg (1959-60) *Allegory.* Combine: oil, paper, fabric, printed paper, wood, and umbrella on canvas and metal, sand, and glue on mirrored panel, 72 x 120 x 11 3/4 ins, collection of Museum Ludwig Cologne [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

correspondence between the present and the past, in a process that is fundamentally allegorical.

Although Owens does not expand on the significance of place or the spatial distribution of works in his conception of allegory in part one of 'The Allegorical Impulse', in part two he discusses the heterogeneity of the material elements of *Allegory* by Robert Rauschenberg (1959-60) as a form of 'site specificity' (1992:78). Describing the work as a 'dumping ground' (1992:76) of various fragments, Owens makes the claim that the implicit critique of systems of ordering, classification, and meaning in the piece, make the museum its inevitable and necessary destination. As a kind of site-specific work, *Allegory,* like the paintings of Manet, requires a museum context in order to activate its

deconstruction of the sense-making strategies that the museum institutionalises. In his own consideration of the museum as a site of historical representation, Bann cites two contrasting nineteenth-century Parisian museums in order to trace the origins of what he identifies as metonymic and synecdochic modes of display, still in use today (1984:91). Alexandre Lenoir's collection of sculptural fragments rescued from destruction during the French revolution was displayed chronologically by century, whilst Alexandre Du Sommerard's (1832-42) *Museé de Cluny* created an illusion of the past by enclosing the visitor in a reconstruction of historical space, taking advantage of the historical ambience of the building itself. This sense of the power of context in the evocation of the past, can be extended to history painting conceived as a collection of works, documents and objects displayed in a 'historically authentic milieu' (Bann, 1984:84), in order to convey a sense of the past as lived experience, whilst maximizing the allegorical impact of the work. The use of the gymnasium at the Athlete's Village for the second 'Olydo Berlin 16' exhibition performed this same function.

Bann's distinction between the chronological and illusionistic museological modes as historical representations, cannot be straightforwardly transposed into a contemporary historiographical painting practice, in that the works produced are not themselves historical artefacts. However, the integration of paintings, prints and films into a sympathetic context such as the gymnasium, can focus the historical effect by illuminating the iconic content of the work, at the same time as it reminds the viewer of its artificiality. The use of easels to display the paintings in the gymnasium of the Athlete's Village made this aspect of the project explicit. The art is *about* the place that encloses and amplifies it, but not *of* it, as it were.

A flexible approach to the curation of projects, by which they can be exhibited either in settings related to their subject matter, *or* in dedicated gallery spaces, would mirror the mix of display strategies in major museums, a mix that simultaneously relativises any one approach. This incorporation of the display

context in the conception of a project, affords a range of experience and interpretation, and importantly, foregrounds the past as retrievable and relevant to the present. The three iterations of The Berlin Olympic Village Project in Berlin and Bolton employed contrasting curatorial approaches and locations that operated in different ways to project the content of the work, whilst illuminating the traditions and conventions through which that content was realised.

The possibility of a contemporary form of history painting capable of representing past circumstances whilst acknowledging the history of painting as a discipline, is dependent on this diversification of media and display contexts. History paintings based on lost or discarded snapshot photographs, that augment the iconic content of those photographs as situated social photographic acts, can also reflexively disclose their own mediating agency where they are brought into proximity to works in other media, documents and objects in an historically appropriate setting.

General Conclusion

In this thesis, I have accounted for changes that have taken place during the continuing development of an historiographical painting practice. Contrasting bodies of source material have been used to produce six series of works in total, each of which effectively proposes a different approach to the representation of the past in painting. The first two series resulted in a major revision of my working aims, as discussed in Chapter One. Three subsequent projects, described in Chapters Two, Three, and Four, were completed and exhibited, and the latest, described in Chapter Four, is ongoing. Taken together, these projects represent the trajectory of my research, the aim of which is to sustain a critical approach to the production of paintings and associated works adequate to the representation of past events, circumstances, sites, and social activity.

The first paintings produced during the period of study were based on low resolution unaccredited digital photographs obtained online. These works were intended to test the aesthetic limits of painting as a medium, by transcribing images of the victims of conflict whilst attempting to preserve the iconic integrity and visceral horror of the source photograph. This approach was conceived as an alternative to those used by many contemporary painters addressing conflict, who have employed painterly mark making and blurring techniques to abstract generalised meanings from the particularities of their sources.

Theoretical arguments casting doubt on the direct political instrumentality of art, in conjunction with the absence of provenance relating to the selected source images, prompted the reconsideration of photographs as iconic traces of situated social activity, and the decision to work with material for which identifying information was available. The project entitled Poland 1940-1941 was based on an inscribed photograph album which provided the opportunity to investigate the social, historical, and geographical circumstances of its production. As a body of work drawing upon a single source, care was taken to avoid replication of the decision-making of the album's compiler, and to defer the interpretation of the resulting paintings to the viewer. This was achieved by the treatment of each source photograph as an individual fragment in a discontinuous sequence: an approach suggested by Hayden White's critique of historical narrative, and John Berger's proposal of a photographic narrative form based upon a 'radial system'.

These, and all the subsequent paintings based on second-hand amateur snapshots were produced using a subtractive technique by which the range of tonal contrasts, focal clarity, and apparent tactility of the forms in the photographs were enhanced, and which, together with the increased scale and materiality of the paintings, constituted an augmentation of the iconic content of the source material. The paintings reframed the production of the photographs as socially situated acts resulting in iconic records that need not be

read as objective or evidential, but which can be used by the viewer as a means of speculation about past events. In turn, the accompanying film *Abordnung* reframed the production of the paintings in the context of the acquisition of the album and the investigation of the locations featured in it. This approach, incorporating paintings and a supporting film, constitutes a model by which an individual bounded set, such as an album or set of negatives, might be used as the basis for a project that offers a reflection on its own conditions of possibility, whilst presenting an opportunity to witness and interpret photographs as the product of social activity in a particular time and place.

The need to make my own agency in the production of the works more evident, and to draw upon more than one source in order to propose an interpretation of an historical theme, led to the incorporation of a greater range of visual material into the next project, which proceeded from a site visit to the Berlin Olympic Village in 2015. This first-hand encounter with an historic location reinforced a sense of the 'spirit of place' as subject to changing significance, and necessitated a greater temporal span across which the subject could be explored. The use of second-hand snapshots, vintage postcards, online images, and my own photographs and video footage, enabled a cross-referencing between material produced at the time of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and from 2015. A diversification of media to include printmaking, film and assemblage also allowed for the mobilisation of a wider range of contrasting artistic conventions and idioms, in a body of work that addressed a particular historical site in terms of its social, geographical, and political transformation through time.

The Berlin Olympic Village Project explored the fundamental significance of place in the historical process, through the depiction of the Village in its various manifestations as sporting facility, military installation and tourist attraction. In this way, a more reflexive approach was developed, in which paintings and other works presented a multi-perspectival interpretation of an historical subject, and in which representation was also acknowledged as a mediating

practice. Contrasting approaches to the curation of works from the project in exhibitions in Germany and the United Kingdom provided a range of alternatives by which a contemporary form of history painting might enlist its display context as an aspect of its meaning.

Whereas previous projects had primarily addressed a limited timeframe or a particular site as a locus of the historical process, the project entitled *Karel*/Karl represented an opportunity to focus historical themes through the lifetime of a named individual. Difficulties with exhibition formats encountered during the previous projects underlined the need to explore alternative means of combining paintings with historical source material, and John Berger's advocacy of a 'field of coexistence' (2013:105) by which photographs can recover social and political utility through their integration with other documentation in a new context, suggested the incorporation of the source material directly into the work. This dispensed with the need for extraneous textual explanation, and made my own agency as collector self-evident, by including paintings, objects and a personal archive of photographs and documents in assemblages. *Karel*/Karl demonstrates that a contemporary form of history painting need not confine itself to purely visual source material, but can directly incorporate a broad range of documents, images and other related ephemera into a mixed-media format, in response to which the viewer can piece together their own interpretation of the evidence.

In the Introduction, I referred to three key research questions that have guided the practical work discussed in this thesis: how can amateur snapshots, documents and letters form the basis of an historiographical painting practice, how can a form of contemporary history painting be developed that is adequate to the representation of the past as a spatial, temporal and social phenomenon, and how can a research-driven form of history painting that is relevant to current political circumstances be developed? The projects undertaken have explored a number of ways in which micro-historical material such as snapshot photographs and private documents can be used as the basis for series of works

about the past. They have investigated methods for representing the past principally in terms of a specific timeframe (Poland 1940-1941), a particular place of historic interest (The Berlin Olympic Village Project), and a named individual (*Karel*/Karl). Beyond this primary focus, all three projects have also accounted for temporal, spatial and social factors in the elaboration of their historical thematics. By addressing their sources as discrete and discontinuous records available for conjectural readings, these projects also propose a methodology by which paintings and works in other media can be produced and displayed in order to generate historical meanings about the past, in terms that are relevant to the present day.

It can be seen that this research has had to acknowledge the mediated and conventional nature of both painting and photography as disciplines, but that mediation has not been taken as the terminal point of the enquiry. Instead, photographs have been construed as evidence of historically situated photographic acts having taken place 'as a form of designation that draws reality into the image field' (Green and Lowry, 2003:48). Changing conceptions of history as a discipline have also been accounted for, and yet the possibility and relevance of representing the past, and promoting the historical interpretation of past events in painting have been asserted throughout.

As Green and Seddon remind us, historical representations are 'forged in and through visual language' (2000:15). Without denying that painting is a visual practice with its own history, I have argued that an expanded form of history painting encompassing works in other media as well as textual sources, can suggest what Hayden White calls 'paradigms of ways that reality offers itself to perception' (1987:25). White is referring to annals and chronicles as non-narrative forms of historiography here, and it is difficult to make a direct comparison between a chronologically ordered annal and a spatial display of paintings. However, if the 'moralizing impulse' (1987:24) that White claims is endemic to narrativity is to be avoided and yet some kind of historical effect is sought for, forms must be devised that present historical evidence as a 'mere

sequence without beginning or end or as sequences of beginnings that only terminate and never conclude' (1987:24).

Conceived as series of disparate elements, each of which tacitly unmasks the others, the projects described above embody the past as a spatial, temporal and social phenomenon that both promotes and resists interpretation. In proposing a closer community of artist, photographer, subject and viewer in which each makes a critical contribution to the production of meaning, they are intended to stimulate reflection upon history as a field for collective action, based on the acknowledgment that what is past is of significance for the present.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Looking for photographs

Introduction

Figure 62. David Gledhill (2012) *Photographs at a flea market on the Schaumainkai in Frankfurt: screenshot from Renate.* 19m:27s, HD video.

In the following discussion about the sourcing of photographs, I begin with an account of the reasoning behind the turn from the use of my own photographs, to that of second-hand snapshots in my work. This leads on to a description of how I go about collecting photographs: an activity that involves drawing distinctions between types of photographic material and different strategies for searching, locating and acquiring it. I go on to examine the wider cultural contexts of collecting, drawing on the work of a number of theorists, including Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin, Jean Baudrillard, Susan Stewart, and Martha Langford. I conclude by sketching out an evolving methodology by which the process of acquisition and use can take on an integral meaning within each project, rather than constituting an autonomous pre-production activity governed by habits or compulsions extraneous to the intended meaning of the work. This methodology will include strategies by which I address issues relating to commodity fetishism, collecting, and the restoration of use value to the source photographs.

1. Using photographs to make paintings

Figure 63. David Gledhill (2002) *46 – 44*. Oil on canvas, 168 x 214 cm.

I have been using photographs in my practice as a painter since 2001. Initially photographs of myself and friends provided visual reference for paintings featuring groups of figures in non-specific settings. These works focused on the symbolic relations between larger than life-sized characters, rendering any depicted interior or exterior context supportive, but not necessarily instrumental to the suggested narrative.

Growing frustration with the sense of abstraction from any historically specific social context or circumstance in these works, prompted me to embark upon a series of paintings based on my own photographs of the housing estate in the Midlands where I spent my childhood and youth. These paintings contained no invented or exaggerated forms, or disruptions to the spatial logic of the

photographic sources. The iconic information in the photographs was rendered by hand from small standard prints, using burnt umber pigment over a white primed ground that had been evenly coated with yellow ochre oil paint. The paintings were executed using a wash technique (see Appendix C), with pigment first applied, and then removed to reveal the ochre underpainting. The paintings were finally glazed using colours suggested by the interior décor of my family home.

The source photographs for these paintings were composed so that the frontal aspects of major volumetric forms such as buildings, were arranged parallel to the picture plane (Figure 63). This approach was derived from the work of a number of American photographers active in the 1930s such as Walker Evans, and from contemporary photographic artists such as Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Thomas Struth and Thomas Ruff, whose work was inspired by the documentary tradition. Evans made an important distinction between documentary photography and 'documentary style' in an interview for *Art in America* magazine in 1971: 'It should be documentary style, because documentary is police photography of a scene and a murder' (Thompson, 1994:216). Evans' remarks confirm the derivation of this compositional device from documentary photography, and in so doing, establish it as a convention. The intention with these paintings was to create an inventory of the housing estate as a locus of my personal development, and as an index of wider social aspiration. The compositional framing of the source photographs was part of an attempt to perform this operation reflexively through the use of a photographic idiom with a well-documented history (Stott, 1986).

Excluding pedestrians from each photograph, I placed the viewer in the role of protagonist, or subject of the paintings, rather than attempting to prompt vicarious identification with depicted figures. The use of a limited range of monochrome glazes throughout the entire series was intended to generate a colour mood that would mediate the viewer's perception of the depicted sites in an evidently non-naturalistic manner.

2. Using second-hand photographs

Figure 64. Unknown photographer (no date) *Untitled.* 35mm slides. Collection of David Gledhill

My ongoing investigation of the aesthetic and institutional origins of 1930s documentary style photography and the social and political engagement of Evans, Dorothea Lange and Ben Shahn for example, suggested the use of second-hand amateur snapshots as an alternative to my own photographs. This decision opened up the prospect of access to a vast archive of images taken since the advent of photography in the 1830s. Initially I was interested in using amateur photographs from the USA in order to mimic Evans' compositional style by cropping and processing images, which could then be painted (Figure 64). However, beyond this approach, amateur photographic material relating to issues of continuing political relevance might be utilised. Class and ideological conflict, and the post-war narrowing of political discourse in Western nations could potentially be explored using images produced by individuals who had recorded their own lives under particular regimes or political circumstances. Specifically, the means by which visual material is used to maintain regimes and ideologies might be examined and critiqued through the translation of press and propaganda images into painting, and their reframing in the context of an exhibition. The instantaneous availability of photographic images through the

Internet makes the appropriation of source material for painting convenient and affordable. However, the approach I was developing, in which the painting would effectively return the photograph to a public context, called for the use of material that had not already been widely circulated.

At the time of the initial decision to look for photographs to work from, I had moved on from working with images of my hometown, to the representation of the wider built environment as an indicator of social stratification. Art galleries, office blocks, shops, factories, mills, industrial estates and housing developments seemed to materialise a hierarchical model of society reinforced through the myriad associations that such building types evoke for different groups of people. Judging by responses to the work when exhibited, this process hinged upon a process of recognition, often accompanied by anecdotal confirmation of the conditioning effect of place on memory by the viewer.

Having begun to use found photographs in 2005, I continued to work both from these new sources, and my own photographs of buildings in the United Kingdom and abroad. Eventually the frontal compositional style I had habitually employed in my own photographs began to seem constricting and mannered, and I started to appreciate and prefer the haphazard and ad hoc quality of the framing in the second-hand material I was accumulating.

The ongoing project to produce an inventory of architectural forms in terms of their social resonances, led me to initially look for second-hand photographs of buildings and sites beyond my own immediate environment. A trip to Frankfurt, where I was able to visit a large flea market held regularly on the Shaumainkai in the centre of the city, gave me the opportunity both to gather new material and also to centre a group of paintings in the experience and point of view of another individual.

On this first visit to Germany, I was able to buy a substantial number of 35mm slides taken by an architect with an evident drive to record the widest possible range of buildings both in Europe and the USA. As is often the case, a few items on the dealer's stall having caught my eye, I had to arrange to visit him at home in the suburbs of the city, where he had a garage packed from floor to ceiling with second-hand furniture, books and bric-a-brac. Amongst this confusion, and conveniently close to the doors, were dozens of identical slide storage boxes containing what seemed to constitute an archive of images acquired from a house clearance. In addition to the boxes of slides there were folders of business documents relating to the architect's practice together with personal papers. These documents and papers were unaffordable, and of less obvious interest than the slides of buildings at this stage in my research (see Chapter Four). However, being unable to purchase this additional material compromised the provenance of the slides, and later became an issue I wanted to address by looking for sets of photographs with some form of integral annotation.[43]

Having sampled the contents by holding slides from several boxes up to the light, I purchased as many as I could carry. The slides were interesting because of the fleeting nature of the architect's encounter with some of these sites, which had compelled him to include not only the design aspects, but also the wider environmental context and glimpses of the social uses of the selected buildings (Figure 65). This early experience of looking for second-hand photographs to work with came to represent one variation of a pattern of searching, negotiation and acquisition that was repeated in subsequent trips abroad. Second-hand dealers at large flea markets on the continent often bring a sample selection of their stock to fairs, and then offer to provide more material either at another fair by appointment, or directly from a storage facility.

[43] The photograph album presented the most obvious example of a bounded set of images, arranged to form a narrative and often supplemented by inscriptions.

Figure 65. Unknown photographer (no date) *Untitled.* 35mm slide. Collection of David Gledhill

Having produced the first of a discontinuous series of 'Found Image' paintings from a slide in this set (Figure 66), I went on to acquire several further sets of 35mm slides of buildings and housing developments in the USA from an online auction website. These buying decisions continued to be guided by an enthusiasm for the work of the key American realist photographers of the 1930s and also the paintings of Edward Hopper. The principal feature of Hopper's work that seemed relevant to the aim of producing paintings about the subjective experience of the built environment, was the lighting of his characteristic works. Strong lateral lighting effects on the frontages, or gable ends of buildings, occasionally disrupted the structural coherence of the architectural form in the interests of conveying the affective experience of certain kinds of buildings at particular times of day (Figure 67).

Figure 66. David Gledhill (2005) *Found Image (1)*. Oil on canvas, 173 x 241 cm.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Hopper

Figure 67. Edward Hopper (1925) *The House by the Railroad*. Oil on canvas, 61 x 73.7 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Figure 68. Unknown photographer (no date) *Untitled.* 35mm slide. Collection of David Gledhill

The slides bought online were generally in sets of either 18 or 36, depending upon the number of exposures on the original films. Smaller groups and occasionally individual slides were purchased where the images were well enough exposed, free of the red caste that seems to afflict many transparencies over time, characteristic of an architectural genre, and of interest both compositionally, and in terms of what Roland Barthes called the 'punctum' (1993:42), or compelling inadvertent inclusion in the image. For example, the 35 mm slide in Figure 68 combines a lighting scheme and architectural subject reminiscent of Hopper's work with a number of uncontrived elements that combine to connect the viewer directly with the scene. The tangled hoses that mimic the cast shadows of tree branches and the man on the left wearing a grey-green overall and a fedora hat constitute two such 'puncta' for me.

Figure 69. Unknown photographer (no date) *Untitled.* Photograph. Collection of David Gledhill

During this time, I was also searching second-hand outlets in the UK, including bookshops, junk and antique shops, markets, and vintage and collector's fairs, for photographs of other subjects to work with. Generally speaking, individual snapshots of buildings from these sources tended to be of houses, often with their owners or tenants in the foreground (Figure 69). As Pierre Bourdieu argues, such photographs prioritise the reinforcement of static social relations over the celebration of individuality (2003:83). Whilst the representation of proud ownership seems to constitute one of the central motivations of vernacular photography, and as such, carries associations many people can engage with, after making several paintings from these kinds of images, I became frustrated with the very compositional tropes that had initially attracted me to the genre. The homogeneity of these informal records of ownership and social status contained too little visual evidence of conflicting forces in the social practices that they emerged from. The process of working from them also seemed to engage a sense of nostalgia that cut across the wider political implications I was pursuing. The same misgivings began to afflict the

work I was still producing from my own photographs and I began to look for sources that would provide a more obvious sense of ideological conflict.

The occasional series of found image paintings I had been working on since 2005*,* had included paintings of buildings, landscapes, allotments, objects, and interiors transcribed from individual black and white snapshots sourced in the UK and abroad, but the range of subject matter was broadening out to include photographs of interiors in which figures dominated the frame (Figure 70). A group of photographs selected from a large box of individual snapshots at a flea market in Berlin in 2007 (Figure 74), facilitated this shift towards the use of images that recorded domestic activities in politically volatile circumstances, as mediated by photographic conventions.

Neujahr 1938/39 (Figure 70), the title of which was derived from an inscription on the reverse of the photograph, was a key painting in this regard: a consciously composed scene of domestic harmony and celebration that represents the coming together of an enthusiasm for photographic technology, with a portentous moment in modern history. By 1939, 10% of the German population owned cameras, and the National Socialist German Worker's Party was advocating the recording of every aspect of life by amateur photographers, as a means of promoting a powerful sense of national identity (Bopp, 2013:551). The inscription anchored the photograph in a particular historical circumstance, and as Ransom Riggs points out in *Talking Pictures,* an illustrated survey of his collection of inscribed photographs, inscriptions 'allow us to recognise something of ourselves in the blurred and yellowing faces of our forebears' (2012:13). This recognition seemed to offer both myself as the artist, and the viewer, a potentially closer empathetic engagement with the subject matter.

Figure 70. David Gledhill (2011) *Neujahr 1937/38*. Oil on canvas, 122 x 173 cm.

The broadening out of the subject matter in these searches occurred simultaneously with the discovery of the availability of photographic media other than the paper snapshot or the amateur 35mm slide. Several boxed sets of pre-Second World War French glass negatives obtained online from a dealer who had bought the contents of a defunct photography studio, provided material that formalised family hierarchies through simple repeated seating arrangements (Figure 71).

Another online source offered a set of Russian tourist slides of sites in the USSR associated with Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's life and career, and resulted in the production of two paintings of his desk surrounded by bookshelves and writing equipment. The construction of Lenin as the earnest scholar and heir to Marx is made palpable in these depictions of his artfully arranged study. Further commercially produced slides from the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), included montaged images of attempted escapees and their various

Figure 71. Unknown photographer (no date) *Untitled.* Glass negative. Collection of David Gledhill

plans for crossing into West Berlin. Other amateur 35mm slides showed scenes of street life in Berlin alongside the wall.

Material such as this, that was intended to reproduce an ideologically streamlined vision of political history from one perspective or another, offered an opportunity to produce an extended account of how, in John Tagg's words, photographs 'are never evidence of history; they are themselves the historical' (1993:65). This sense of dealing with material that is in itself historical, is addressed in Geoffrey Batchen's (2008) essay 'Snapshots', in which he advocates an alternative reading of vernacular photography, not in terms of the distinguishing formal qualities of exceptional shots, but rather for their use value in social networks and rituals. As Batchen says, the advent of digital photography means that analogue photography is literally becoming a thing of the past: 'snapshots are themselves historical objects' (2008:130).
This notion of the use value of the snapshot as material historical artefact, in addition to whatever interest is generated by the objects, people or places

depicted and the manner of their picturing, led me to the realisation that working with photographs grouped into album formats could offer a potentially fuller account of the 'photograph as both a complex social device and a personal talisman' (Batchen, 2008:133). In order to draw upon the potential of photographic sources for the purposes of historical witnessing as advocated by Frances Guerin (Loew et al., 2007; Guerin, 2012), it began to seem crucial to engage with the social production of photography, rather than simply the formal aspects and iconic content of individual snaps.

Despite having accumulated several sets of images from dealers both in person and online since 2005, up until 2008 I had not used them to produce extended sequences of paintings. My diverse collecting habits were bringing in material that I had no immediate use for within the parameters of the work I was producing. Whilst several of the official, institutional, and tourist sets lent themselves to the study of propaganda for example, the absence of any sense of consistent individual agency and the obviously contrived nature of the shots lent them a stilted air. I began to consciously look for a bounded set of amateur images with an identifiable provenance, that would somehow provide an insight into the photographic construction of self, and the significance of the photographer's social circumstances under particular historical conditions.

3. Using photograph albums

The ongoing difficulty of locating useable photographic material on a regular basis, in tandem with the desire to work in a series and to explore the relations *between* images in addition to their individual resonances, meant that I was passing from the use of individual found snapshots, to the active sourcing of photographs in album formats. Before the transition from finding to sourcing photographs became a conscious one, I had been given a second-hand album from the former GDR as a gift. The album had been purchased in 2006 from

Figure 72. David Gledhill (2012) *Pages from the Dr. Munscheid album*. Photograph.

the same dealer in Frankfurt who had sold me the 35mm slides taken by the architect mentioned above. At the time, the photographs in the album seemed to have too narrow a tonal range and too much incidental content such as domestic clutter, for them to be suitable for painting. However, the experience of producing other paintings from black and white photographs had convinced me that the limited tonal range of a set of snapshots need not preclude their adaptation into paintings, provided the prints were of sufficient quality to allow for digital scanning and the adjustment of contrast and exposure (see Chapter Two). The ensuing Dr. Munscheid project was produced between 2008 and 2011, and eventually consisted of 30 paintings based on the photographs in the album, together with a film entitled *Renate* (Figure 77).

Sozialismus - beste Prophylaxe

Bericht von der Festveranstaltung am gestrigen Tag des Gesundheitswesens im Festsaal des halleschen Puschkinhauses

Angehörige der medizinischen Intelligenz, des mittleren medizinischen Personals und Mitarbeiter des Gesundheitswesens unseres Kreises fanden sich gestern im halleschen Puschkinhaus zusammen, um ihren Ehrentag — den Tag des Gesundheitswesens — feierlich zu begehen. Mit ihnen waren Abordnungen aller Parteien und Massenorganisationen, Delegationen aus Betrieben und Genossenschaften erschienen. Besonders herzlich wurden zwei sowjetische Aerzte begrüßt, die auch an diesem Tage die feste Freundschaft zwischen der Sowjetunion und der DDR dokumentierten.

Den Dank an unsere medizinische Intelligenz, an die medizinischen Fachkräfte und alle Mitarbeiter des Gesundheitswesens sprach der Vorsitzende des Rates des Kreises, Karl-Heinz Dietrich, zugleich im Namen der Bevölkerung aus.

Die Sorge um den Menschen, führte er in seinem Referat u. a. aus, stand in der deutschen Geschichte noch nie so im Mittelpunkt wie heute in unserem Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staat. Unseren Aerzten und Helfern des Gesundheitswesens wurde damit eine gute Grundlage für ihren Humanismus der Tat geschaffen. Auch die Erfolge, die wir auf dem Gebiete des Gesundheits- und Sozialwesens in unserem Kreis erzielten, legen davon bereites Zeugnis ab. „Wer aber Menschen vor Krankheiten schützt und ihnen hilft", sagte Karl-Heinz Dietrich, „der weiß auch zutiefst darum, daß es seine größte Aufgabe ist, für die Sicherung und Erhaltung des Friedens zu kämpfen, denn die gefährlichste Krankheit, das ist der Krieg, und die beste Prophylaxe ist der Sozialismus."

Ein Bild Westdeutschlands zeichnete Karl-Heinz Dietrich, als er von der dortigen Situation in der medizinischen Wissenschaft sprach: Geld für die medizinische Forschung, wenn sie den Interessen des Monopolkapitals dient, Geld für die Aluminiatung, aber keine Stipendien für Westdeutschlands Medizinstudenten, Medikamentenskandale und Spiel mit der menschlichen Gesundheit, denn es regiert der Profit.

Auch auf dem Gebiet des Gesundheits- und Sozialwesens beweist also das Beispiel unserer Republik, daß Westdeutschland eine ganze geschichtliche Epoche zurückgeblieben ist.

Ein Höhepunkt der Festveranstaltung war es, als der Vorsitzende des Rates des Kreises verdiente Aerzte und Mitarbeiter des Gesundheitswesens auszeichnete. Immer wieder erlitte herzlicher Beifall für die ausgezeichneten Aerzte, für die Gemeindeschwestern, Apotheker und die Mitarbeiter der Bessersiedler Kinderkrippe.

Ein Unterhaltungsorchester des halleschen Konservatoriums und der Violinist Heinz Ulrich umrahmten und beendeten diese wahrhaft festliche Veranstaltung im Puschkinhaus.

Ausgezeichnet wurden aus Anlaß des Tages des Gesundheitswesens:

Herr Dr. med. Schulz, Kreisarzt, mit dem Titel „Medizinalrat";
Herr Dr. med. Munscheid, Teutschenthal, mit dem Titel „Sanitätsrat".
Ausgezeichnet wurden ferner:
Hanna Bude, Gemeindeschwester in Osiecze,
Erna Schmidt, Gemeindeschwester in Hohenweiden,
Karoline Eismann, Gemeindeschwester in Lochau,
das Kollektiv der Kinderkrippe Bessersiedl,
Apotheker Heyse, Teutschenthal,
Apothekerassistent Hildebrandt, Löbejün.

FÜR GUTE ARBEIT vom Staate der Arbeiter und Bauern geehrt: Kreisarzt Dr. Schulz, dem am gestrigen Tag des Gesundheitswesens der Titel „Medizinalrat" verliehen wurde, und Herr Dr. Munscheid, seit gestern Sanitätsrat. Lesen Sie dazu nebenstehenden Artikel. Aufn.: Plewa

Figure 73. Newspaper cutting from the *Dr. Munscheid album.* Collection of David Gledhill

The album itself, bound in green leather and annotated by hand in a decorative script, was an impressive object (Figure 72). Inscribed by the Doctor as a 5th wedding anniversary gift for his daughter in 1957, it later transpired that it had been misplaced and never received. Composed as a souvenir of childhood, the album combined photographs taken between 1952 and 1962, with some postcards from the pre-Second World War period. The photographs taken between 1957 and 1962 were slipped into the back of the album, as though being saved for later inclusion. The album also contained a typed testimonial speech and a newspaper cutting featuring an article about the presentation of an award to the Doctor (Figure 73).

By comparison with previous sets of images, and with its accompanying textual material, the album constituted a more complete construction of family and professional life at a time of recent regime change in East Germany. Prior to the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, 7,500 Doctors had left the GDR for the West,

and as Mary Fulbrook notes in her book *The People's State*, the authorities were concerned that amongst those who remained, too few were prepared to work in smaller rural communities such as Teutschenthal In Saxony-Anhalt, the town featured in the album (2008:204).

The possibility of researching the historical background to a photograph album, where there is sufficient written provenance or visual clues as to its date and place of production, offers scope for producing a set of paintings based on verifiable social circumstances beyond those generally offered by individual snapshots. This approach represents an extension of Martha Langford's 'oral-photographic framework' (2001:20), in which the album is seen as the visual component of an oral narrative performance in a specific social and historical context. This performance, whilst obviously unrepeatable by subsequent owners or researchers, can be used as a conceptual model of the album as a material production with a social use value. A reconstruction of that use value and its wider historical and political contexts, rather than an appraisal of, for example, the intrinsic formal qualities of the individual photographs, as in Tacita Dean's book *Floh* (Figure 75), can then be used as the basis of an artistic project.

Regardless of the conventional nature of the framing, choice of subject matter and self-presentation of those depicted, photographs in album formats combine to constitute evidence of how photographic practices were conceived by social groups at particular points in history, and are inflected in certain respects by the attitudes and drives of those groups within their national contexts. Where the profession of the photographer, subject, or producer of the album is known, as with the Dr. Munscheid album, it becomes possible to gain a clearer picture of the forces and conflicts that impact upon the lives being documented. The problem remains however, as to how this supplementary background research material can be integrated into the presentation of the paintings.

One solution to this problem developed out of a collaboration with author Nicholas Royle entitled *In Camera*, published in 2016 (Figure 60). Royle wrote a series of linked short fictional pieces in response to the paintings from this series, that centred on the family life of a doctor in East Germany during the 1950s. The protagonist of the book is the Doctor's daughter, whose curiosity and play inadvertently involve her in aspects of state surveillance. Interspersed throughout the collection are a number of stories set after the reunification of Germany, as the daughter, now an adult, talks to a friend working for the Civil Service about her father's implication in the regime.

As fictions based on the author's own factual research, the stories draw the paintings towards the status of generalised visual signifiers of the apparently austere and antediluvian nature of East German provincial life in the 1950s, as described by Fulbrook (2008:62). In the context of the book, the paintings are still clearly based on photographs, but reproduced as a complement to the writing, they enter into a different relation to their subject matter than that allowed for by a conventional gallery presentation. Through transcription into paintings, the photographs are effectively reunited with an accompanying narrative, written rather than spoken, thereby acquiring a new use value in a form analogous to that of the original album. However, without direct reproduction of the photographs, in this context the paintings avoid the deskilling of the original photographer that Langford talks about in relation to *Floh* (2008:79).

An alternative means of integrating other forms of testimony with the material in the album arose from the discovery that the original intended recipient, Frau Renate Manjock (born Munscheid) was still alive, and living at a residential home outside Frankfurt. Whilst making the paintings, East German neighbours in Manchester had put me in contact with a dentist in Teutschenthal, who had occupied the house after the death of Dr. Munscheid in 1972. The dentist, in turn, put me in contact with the nephew of Frau Manjock, who acted as intermediary, arranging for me to visit her in Kronberg.

I travelled to Frankfurt in January 2011, returned the album to Frau Manjock, and filmed an extensive interview with her in which she reminisced about her childhood in the former GDR and identified many of the individuals in the album (Figure 77). Frau Manjock told me the story of her father's death and the dispersal of his property, conjecturing that the album had been concealed in a piece of her father's furniture, and that after the death of her uncle, who had inherited the furniture, the album had presumably been lost.

At the point where the possibility of visiting Frau Manjock arose, my intention was to return the album and to film an interview that would become an integral part of any presentation of the paintings. The experience of finding Frau Manjock, returning the album to her and discussing its contents, had provided me with a method by which, as Berger suggests, photographs could be 'restored to a living context' (2013:105). Discovering the pre-history of the Munscheid album prior to its arrival at the flea market meant that the point of sale could no longer be taken as its origin. The narrative of its production, its original intended purpose, and the meaning of the content of the photographs themselves, had proved to be recoverable.

During a further visit to the same flea market in Frankfurt in 2013, I was consciously looking for a second album to work with. The Dr. Munscheid project had opened out multiple possibilities for producing work based on historical research, and for using photographs in the context of both film, paintings and books. A multi-platform presentation could potentially engage the subject matter from a variety of perspectives, in terms of both the media used and the range of testimonies invoked. The contingent nature of the photographs need not necessarily provide the only footing upon which the aim of bearing witness to historical events by artistic means is predicated.

The album used for the project Poland 1940-1941 (2014-15) was bought at the Schaumainkai flea market in Frankfurt in 2013. As soon as I realised that it included images of what appeared to be a ghetto, I closed it and gathered some

other photographs together to buy as a job lot. This was a deliberate attempt to keep the cost of the album down by hiding it amongst less remarkable material, as previous enquiries in the same flea market that day seemed to suggest that complete albums were priced at around 50 Euros. The dealer leafed through the album before pricing it, declaring that because it had historical interest he couldn't ask for less than 30 Euros. I happily paid the full price and he went on to tell me that he had many such albums, and that if I wanted to look at them, he would bring them to a flea market taking place the following day.

As noted above, this exchange is fairly typical of the many I have had since starting to work with second-hand photographs. Dealers tend to tantalise customers with accounts of recent sales (usually a matter of hours, or even minutes beforehand) of precisely the kind of material one is searching for, or else claim to possess it in abundance if one is prepared to attend another event, or visit them at their storage facility, as mentioned above. This narrative tends to contribute to a state of agitation and thwarted acquisitive desire that bears some similarity to a mania for collection as an end in itself. It is necessary to address collecting more closely, as it has been theorised in a manner pertinent to the development of the methodology I have been discussing.

4. Collecting photographs

Since starting to use second-hand photographs to make paintings in 2005, the location and acquisition of new source material has become a complex and demanding discipline. A visit to any unfamiliar town or city in the UK or abroad, tends to be fraught with an agitated drive to find likely sources of desirable material. Walter Benjamin describes this altered perspective on travel with regard to book collecting: 'Collectors are people with a tactical instinct; their experience teaches them that when they capture a strange city, the smallest antique shop can be a fortress, the most remote stationery store a key position' (1999:64). As Benjamin suggests, established shop or market-based dealers are

Figure 74. Google Maps. (2008) *The Zille-Hof flea market in Berlin (now closed).* [Online image] [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

usually in peripheral locations, on the outskirts and well away from the central shopping streets (Figure 74). For myself, weekly or monthly flea markets of repute form the basis upon which foreign trips are arranged, or else interrupt other planned activities abroad when they are stumbled upon accidentally. Searching through boxes of bric-a-brac under tables for hours on end, can obviously be a profoundly antisocial activity when one is with less interested friends or family members.

The intense anticipation experienced in the weeks or even months prior to a visit, escalates dramatically when approaching a market or a dealer's stall on the day. This excitation only passes off when a substantial cache of useable photographs has been found, leading to a condition of euphoria that can last for weeks. Any purchase of new material is, however, frequently undercut later on by the thought that other more interesting images have been missed, or else regret that items that seemed unaffordable, or which induced indecision, were

not acquired regardless of doubt or expense. For example, Figure 62 shows a box of photographs that I filmed on a visit to a flea market whilst in Frankfurt to interview Frau Manjock. I still bitterly regret not buying the photographs that appear in the box in this footage. This waking agitation is accompanied by occasional vivid dreams about derelict buildings with abandoned offices full of photographic records, or else photographic developer's premises with original snaps taped to the walls. This latter dream was probably inspired by the experience of renting a studio in just such a building in Brighton in the 1980s, long before I began working with photographs and indeed, before the widespread use of digital cameras and the possibility of home printing.

All the feelings and fantasies attendant upon accumulating photographs, or any other collectable artefact, could constitute a kind of fetishism, induced partly by the perceived rarity, obscurity, and inaccessibility of the images being sought for.[44] A globalised trade in second-hand goods, boosted by the internet but still thriving at street level, means that wherever one goes there is a prospect of finding source material of revelatory quality. It is necessary to consider whether the material I have acquired constitutes a collection and whether therefore, I am a collector of photographs, and what consequences this may have for my practice as an artist. In other words, does my own experience of buying and accumulating photographs confirm or refute Benjamin's claim that for a collector: 'ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects' (1999:69).

[44] This inaccessibility is compounded by the fact that the most interesting vernacular material is to be found on the European mainland, as the scene of the major conflicts of the twentieth century, and whilst the material is not always too expensive in itself, travel and accommodation costs mean that regular research trips are out of the question.

4.1 Photographs as commodities

Towards the end of the section on the commodity in the first volume of *Capital*, Marx (1990) distinguishes two aspects of the products of labour: their use value for whatever purpose, and under capitalism, their exchange value measured in terms of the quantity of human labour power invested in them. Commodity fetishism arises from the misconception that exchange value is a materially implicit quality of the products of labour, rather than a socially devised means of prioritising the process of production over the producers themselves: 'as much a self-evident and nature-imposed necessity as productive labour itself' (Marx, 1990:175). The naturalisation of exchange value alienates the producer from the products of their own labour. All commodities thereby acquire a common measure of value and can be related to each other on that basis in a collection for example, obscuring the circumstances and agents of their actual production and intended use. The point of acquisition becomes the origin of the commodity.

In *The System of Objects* published in 1968*,* Jean Baudrillard (2005) extends Marx's discussion of exchange value in terms of possession, adding a post-Marxist psychological and sociological interpretation of the activity of collecting as the principal means of realising an ideal form of ownership. In a collection and divorced from their function, objects take on an abstract relation to each other and to the collector. This abstraction compels the collector to carry on accumulating objects, not for their use, but for their membership of a series: a compulsion that offers the satisfaction of possession without the distraction of utility.

The remainder of Baudrillard's contentions about the motivation to collect, including the urge to cheat death via the survival of the collection, the perverse satisfaction of withholding beauty from others, and the sexual perversion represented by the collection as fragmented object of desire, are less resonant in my case than his concluding distinction between simple accumulation and

collecting proper. His hierarchical conception of possession elevates collecting to a potentially cultural pursuit that may be manifested through exhibitions and 'projects' (2005:111). Collecting tends to link the collector to wider society and is not just an act of retention, as disordered accumulation tends to be. This social connection may be based, for example, on an appeal to others to help the collector to complete the collection. My own entreaties to friends and family members to look out for old photographs have only occasionally resulted in new finds, and these have never, to date, resulted in new work. The prospect of completing a collection of old photographs is, at any rate, impossible, leaving the collection permanently complete in its incompletion.

Baudrillard is not forthcoming about the nature of the projects he discusses, but the general connotation of public exposure is perhaps common to the sense of a project as a body of artistic work. The transposition of a series of photographs into paintings for example, enables the reinsertion of the collection into the public sphere. Baudrillard asserts that the collector is always drawn back into a state of solitude, because of his or her misrecognition of the objective discontinuity of the collection as a subjective wholeness. It is possible that the solitude that may be a prerequisite of the craft of painting, can tend to make the consolations of collecting more appealing as an ordering and controlling activity, especially in a competitive field in which opportunities for the exposure of one's work are scarce. Nevertheless, the end in view is always the production of more paintings, and a solid artistic commitment should condition the activity of collecting as an open-ended dialogue with visual material that may or may not lend itself on first sight to transcription, but which may provoke a change of artistic trajectory. That is not to say that the drive to retain, sequester and order objects is not simply transferred to the stock of unsold paintings in the artist's storeroom.

The challenge implicit in Baudrillard's remarks are for both the collector and the artist to set up a dialectical relationship with their collections, whereby they can function as more than simply a reflection of personal proclivities or status.

Throughout Baudrillard's argument, the collection is seen as a self-contained entity, privately gathered, owned and ordered by individuals driven by psychological and social forces beyond their own recognition. Certain aspects of the collector's mindset may apply to my own practice, and yet the material is sought out exclusively on the basis of its potential for re-use in painting. It thereby takes on a new use value, and the idea of rescuing apparently unwanted photographs has become integral to the motivation for finding and working with individual snapshots and albums. Ultimately, producing the paintings drastically reduces the frisson of ownership as it attaches to the photographs, and the experience of returning the photograph album to its intended recipient in the Dr. Munscheid project, created a precedent which remains implicit in all the subsequent projects addressed in this thesis.

4.2 The photograph album in contemporary art

The desire to accumulate other people's photographs could be characterised as a fetishism of commodified objects, which were originally the by-product of social labour and had a prior use value. Second-hand photographs have been divorced from their original use as 'prompts for speech' (Batchen, 2008:135), and have a fairly stable market price as commodities: a price increasingly inflated by their popularity with artists, as many dealers have informed me. There is competition amongst students, artists including those of the stature of Tacita Dean and Christian Boltanski, and collectors and publishers such as Erik Kessells, to acquire the most interesting snapshots: a fact that makes finding useable material even more fraught an activity for those of more modest means. One is never alone when looking through a box of old photographs at a flea market. As Lynn Berger remarks: 'artists, journalists, and collectors who work with (relatively) anonymous amateur photography are everywhere to be found' (2009:36).

Figure 75. Tacita Dean (2001) *Floh*. Book. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

The use of albums to produce sequences of paintings that depend for their meaning upon the correspondences and continuities between photographs, rather than their individual distinguishing qualities, may represent one means of engaging with snapshots without commodifying them. A number of artists have used the photograph album format to produce works that set up a dialogue between images in this way. However, this is not a strategy that has eluded critique. Martha Langford cites Tacita Dean's (2001) *Floh,* an artist's book that reproduces snapshots sourced from flea markets, as an instance of a work that makes 'our sense of loss even keener' (2008:80) by severing its source images from their own materiality. For Langford, Dean's treatment of found photographs in *Floh*, which are selected on the basis of their unintended aesthetic interest, cropped to the image, and laid out tastefully in a manner familiar from books of art photography (Figure 75), severs them from the tears, crimps and stains that are their material signs of usage. This sanitising process

Figure 76. Christian Boltanski (1991) *Sans Souci*. Book. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

repeats the estrangement from memory caused by their original loss. Langford suggests that Dean is complicit in the commodification of the second-hand photograph, asserting a privileged artistic judgement over the original photographers, and reinforcing the fetishisation of exchange value by implicating the point of discovery in the flea market as the origin of the snaps (2008:80). Dean was explicit about this in a statement written to accompany the project: 'Floh exists in the continuum and will one day, I hope, return, ownerless and silent to its origins in the flea market' (2003:50).

Once a high-profile artist has become associated with the use of second-hand photographs, such images can be re-commodified through their circulation in the art market. Working with photographs in album formats as opposed to individual snaps, is no less politically fraught a process (Strauss, 2005:9). As Susan Stewart puts it, collectables are 'objects abstracted from use value and materiality within a magic cycle of self-referential exchange' (2007:165). Arguably, Dean's work, along with related projects including Christian

Boltanski's (1991) *Sans-Souci*, (Figure 76), that reproduce the album form while selecting the contents from multiple sources, foreground the artist as collector at the expense of the photographer as producer, disinvesting the photographer's work of its intended social use and fetishising it.

Sans-Souci, which translates as without worry or carefree, is a book printed to look like a photograph album, complete with tissue paper interleaves. The photographs reproduced in it are found images of German soldiers relaxing with family and friends on leave during the Second World War. Unusually in Boltanski's practice, *Sans-Souci* shows us the perpetrators rather than the victims, and begins to address conflict directly, in a way that his installations avoid. Whereas his assemblages of tins, lamps, blurred enlarged photographs and clothing evoke in the viewer an unnamed evil anterior to the act of mourning, *Sans-Souci* presents us with the 'banality of evil' (Arendt, 1963): its domesticity, mundanity and social structuration in domestic and military settings.

Sans-Souci is also distinct from much of Boltanski's work, in that the photographs themselves are not universalised by blurring. The demotic quality of these images of family life activates what Marianne Hirsch calls 'familial looking' (2012:267) in the viewer. Our recognition of the situations, poses and social purposes of these photographs puts us inside the album, figuratively speaking. By substituting such individual narratives with signifiers of anonymous collective fate, much of Boltanski's work enacts the incomprehensible trauma and elusiveness of 'postmemory': a term coined by Hirsch to describe the memories inherited by children of the survivors of extreme events, who have 'grown up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own stories are displaced by the powerful stories of the previous generation' (2001:220). However, *Sans-Souci* restores a sense of agency, and as Boltanski pointed out in an interview with Tamar Garb:

Figure 77. David Gledhill (2012) *Frau Renate Manjock looking at the Dr. Munscheid album*. Screenshot from *Renate*. 19m:27s, HD video.

> It's a book with no text, but if you 'read' it, it leaves you with a question. Perhaps this is the question about whether one is guilty or not guilty. About being a victim or a criminal – or both. But not necessarily in the context of the Holocaust. (2005:42)

The book was produced at the time of the first Gulf War (1990-1991), and Boltanski is fairly explicit about the kinds of meanings he feels are engendered by the work, drawing parallels with TV footage of US troops returning from the Middle East (Garb, 2005:42). Despite the familiar domestic form of the photo album as employed by Boltanski in *Sans-Souci,* which activates associations derived from the ritual of looking at such albums, the artist's selection of unrelated images foregrounds his own activity as collector in a way that, once again, effaces the agency of the original photographers, in that they are not named or credited.

The aim of addressing a past event from multiple perspectives through photographic and other evidence, requires sensitivity to the snapshot as a 'fragile talisman' (Batchen, 2008:113). Any artistic use of other people's

photographs should surely take account of the affective and social purposes of those images, as well as the conditions of possibility by which they are obtained on the open market. In other words, photographs need to be seen as material traces of social activity rather than simply as novel compositions, or generic historical tokens. I discuss this alternative conception of photographic indexicality more fully in Chapter Two, and this realisation contributed to the revision of my working aims and practical methods, as discussed in Chapter One.

The return of the photograph album to its intended owner in the Dr. Munscheid project (Figure 77), signalled a turning point in my own collecting, and while at the time it simply seemed like the right thing to do, it presented the possibility of developing a methodology by which collecting could be made a reflexive and integral part of the conception of the work. Film or photographic documentation, contextualising the production of an album at a particular place and time, or of the act of returning the photographs to some form of appropriate living context, alongside presentations of paintings based on those photographs, could potentially address their commodification and removal from social use value.

This was the point in the development of my practice that I had reached by the start of the course of study, and the projects that followed investigated a number of contrasting means of engaging with sets of photographic and other documents, in order to make the production and acquisition of the source material a structural element in the conception of the work. Indeed, a critical awareness of the social, economic and psychological forces at play in the systematic accumulation of any kind of object, can inform aspects of their creative use in ways that can, in turn, give an account of those forces as virtually inescapable mediators of social being.

Appendix B: Researching the album

1. Researching the location

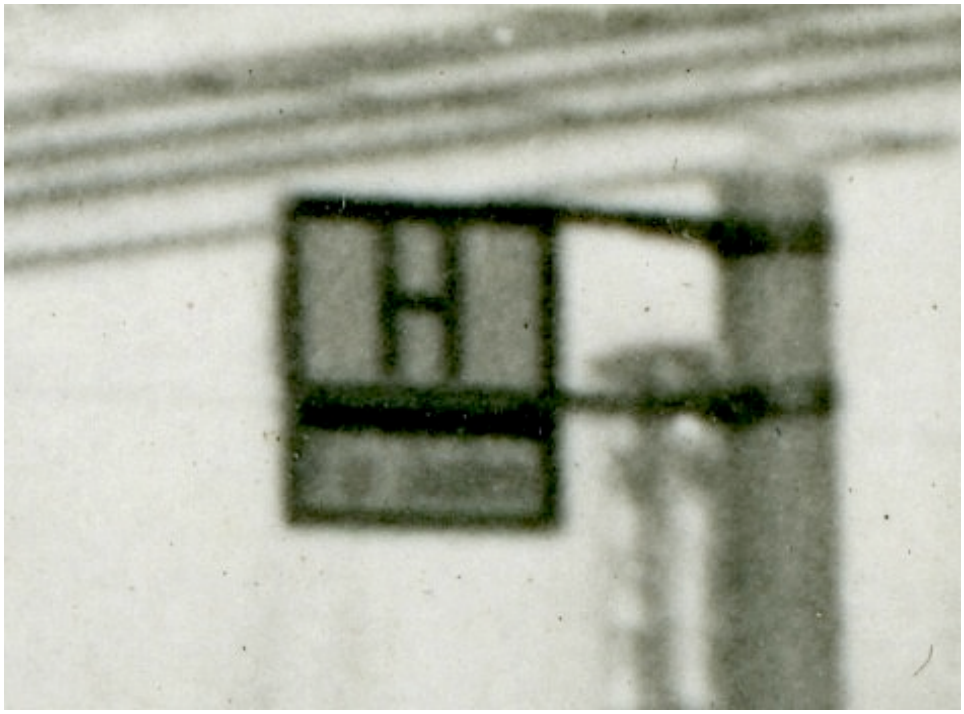


Figure 78. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: detail of photograph nine*. Collection of David Gledhill

The project entitled Poland 1940-1941 (2014-15) is based on a photograph album containing eight pages and sixteen snapshots (Figure 21). On two of the pages there are adhesive corners from which the photographs have been removed, and two pages have two photographs attached instead of one. At first, I had assumed that the album was a record of a trip to Poland in June 1940, and that the six images of city streets depicted Warsaw at the time of the ghetto (April 1940 - May 1943). Apart from the names of the businesses seen in photograph eight (Figure 79), there were no other street signs or landmarks by which to identify the location, other than a tram or bus stop with a sign that appeared to read '*Juden*' (Figure 78), and a two-storey neoclassical building in an open space that may have been a railway station. Both these visual clues appear in photograph nine (Figure 81).

Figure 79. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: detail of photograph eight.* Collection of David Gledhill

The inscription in the front of the album (Ostoberschlesien) focused my attention on Eastern Upper Silesia, and using Wikipedia as a source, I identified a number of towns and cities in that area, and undertook a Google Image and Google Earth search for each of them. None of the buildings visible in the photographs appeared in any of the images retrieved by Google. I eliminated all the possibilities listed in the Wikipedia entry for Eastern Upper Silesia, including Beuthen, Gleiwitz, Hindenburg in Oberschlesien, Kattowitz and Königshütte. I also searched under 'Railway Stations in Upper Silesia', 'Jewish ghettos in Upper Silesia', 'Johann Hozolhof', 'E & W Borys', and 'A. Thuring, Optiker', together with various combinations of the search terms.

A Google search for 'A. Thuring Okularium' retrieved a book entitled *Reflections of the End of an Era* by Jerzy Einhorn (2005), a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto who went on to become a medical specialist in endocrinology in the USA after the war. This memoir contains three references to a Johann Thuring:

Figure 80. Google Maps. (2013) *Sosnowiec Railway Station* [Online image][Accessed on 15th August 2018]

> Hala, my other sister, lived with her husband in a small apartment in Myslowice and I visited them occasionally. Hala was married to Johann Thuring, the manager of the optical department of the firm 'Okularium'. Janek Thuring called himself Johann. He was the son of Silesian Germans and considered himself German. (Einhorn, 2005:26)

I searched under Myslowice in Google Images but again failed to find any visual similarities with any of the buildings in the photographs. Turning to a published diary entitled *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto* by historian Emmanuel Ringelblum, I came across an entry referring to other ghettos in Upper Silesia: 'There was supposed to be a ghetto in Sosnowiec' (2006:106). Entering Sosnowiec into Google Maps I was able to use Google Earth to obtain an image of the station buildings (Figure 80), which are recognizable in photograph nine. The town in photographs three to nine, and the location in Ostoberschlesien where the bulk of the album's photographs were taken, was indisputably Sosnowiec.

The next task was to locate the specific streets where individual photographs were taken. Whilst photograph four was clearly taken at some distance from the centre of Sosnowiec, photographs five to nine could conceivably have been taken on the same street. A further Google Image search using the terms 'Sosnowiec Ghetto' yielded a map drawn up by the German authorities (Figure 82). Comparison with a contemporary map of Sosnowiec suggested Modrzejowska Street as a possible location for a number of the other photographs in the series.[45]

Figure 81. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: photograph nine.* Collection of David Gledhill

Modrzejowska Street is pedestrianised and is not available to view with Google Earth. However, several still photographs of the street on Google Images suggested it as the likely route taken by the photographer(s) through the city.

[45] Later research identified the area shaded on the map as the working class Srodula district of Sosnowiec and not the presumed location. Srodula became the site of the closed ghetto in 1942.

The contemporary image (Figure 83) appeared to correspond in some respects with photographs five, six and seven. On the right, a number of balconies appear in the same configuration as those in photograph six. The extended frontage and surface detailing of the green painted building on the right also appeared to be replicated in the original photograph.

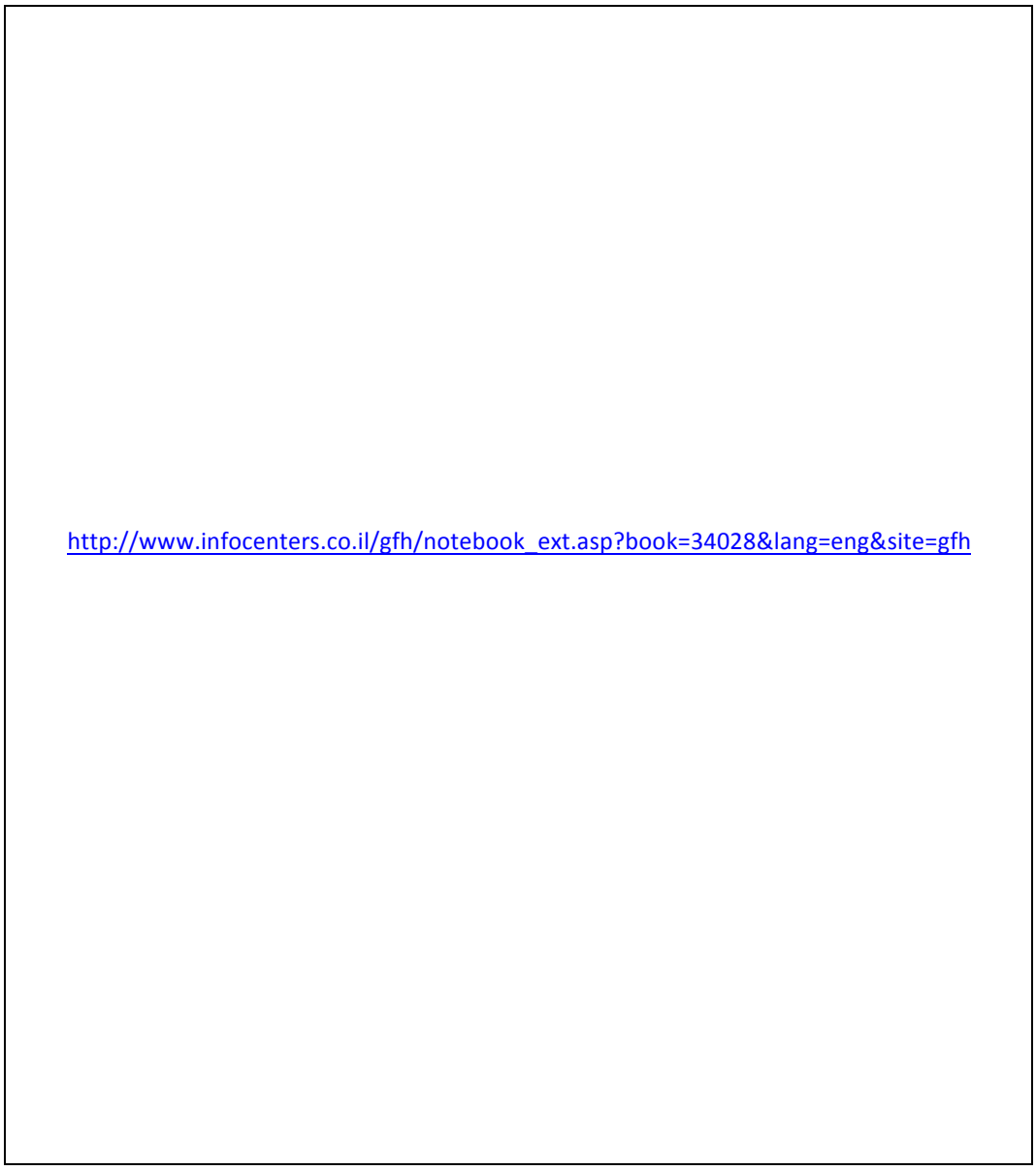


Figure 82. Ghetto Fighters House Archive. (no date) *Map of the Bedzin and Sosnowiec Ghettos.* [Online image] [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

https://media-cdn.tripadvisor.com/media/photo-s/01/1f/48/8a/modrzejowska-street.jpg

Figure 83. Trip Advisor. (no date) *Modrzejowska Street* [Online image] [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Figure 84. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: photograph six.* Collection of David Gledhill

Figure 85. Heath, A. (2009) *Archival film of the ghettos in Dąbrowa Górnicza and Będzin part 1 of 2* [Online video] [Accessed on 20th July 2018]

The Wikipedia entry for Sosnowiec Ghetto also provided an important cultural reference.[46] Art Spiegelman's (2003) graphic novels *Maus* and *Maus II*, document his father's experiences in wartime Poland, and several scenes are set in the Sosnowiec ghetto. Modrzejowska Street features in the works, which raise and address many of the issues attendant upon any attempt to represent the Holocaust (see Chapter Two, Section Four).

The general Google search for Sosnowiec Ghetto also located some film footage shot on a street remarkably similar in appearance to Modrzejowska Street (Figure 85). This material is subtitled *Archival film of the ghettos in Dąbrowa Górnicza and Będzin part 1 of 2* (Heath, 2009:3 mins 25). Sosnowiec, Bedzin, and Dąbrowa Górnicza are approximately six kilometres apart and form a triangle of

[46] (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sosnowiec_Ghetto)

Figure 86. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: detail of photograph six.* Collection of David Gledhill

towns close to Katowice, the capital of the Silesian Voivodeship since its formation in 1999.

Looking for further confirmation of Modrzejowska Street as the location of photographs five to nine in the album, and bearing in mind the generic nature of the architecture, I attempted to identify a more distinctive building just visible in the distance on the left side of photograph six (Figure 86). I was able to trace this now demolished exhibition hall through Google Images, and it appears on the postcard in Figure 87, which was taken from a position looking back up Modrzejowska Street from the further end.

This confirmed Modrzejowska Street as the site of photographs five, six and seven. This busy street was clearly at the social heart of Sosnowiec and the ghetto before it was closed. I still needed to identify the location of photograph

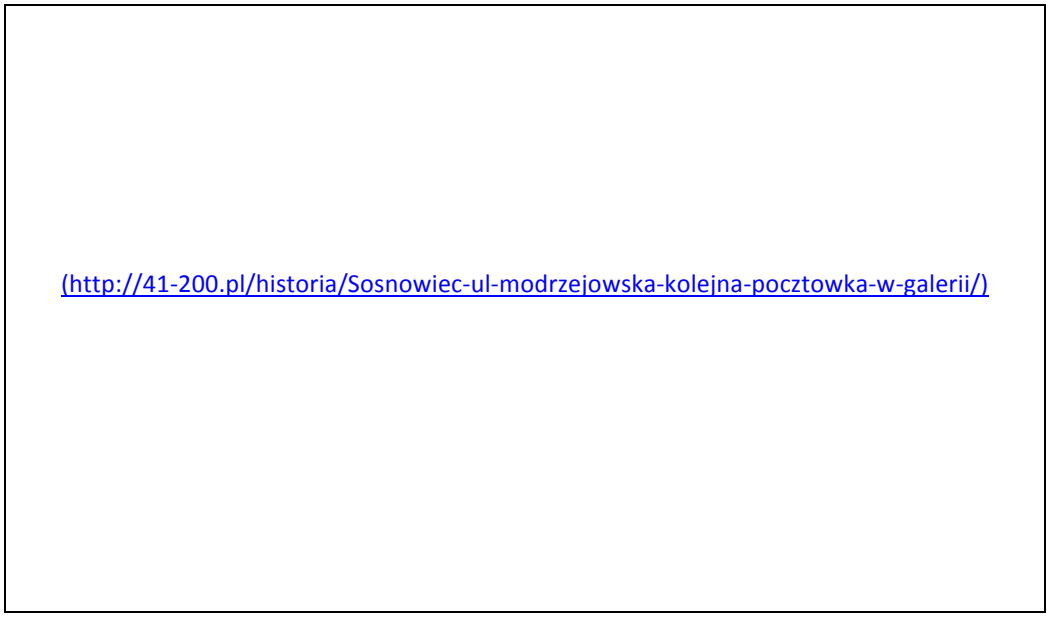


Figure 87. Sosnowiec 41-200.pl dobry adres. (no date) *Modrzejowska Street* [Online image] [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

eight. It seemed likely to be of a site near to Modrzejowska Street, although with redevelopment and no access via Google Earth, it proved more difficult to find. Finally, an image in Google Images (Figure 88) appeared to correspond with a building glimpsed in the background of photograph eight (Figure 89). I still needed to confirm that this building, which has clearly been extensively refurbished, was the building in the photograph. On the same Google Images page as Figure 88, I discovered a website dedicated to the history of Sosnowiec which featured the contemporary building with its precise location and provenance. An article entitled, 'The story of one building: Sosnowiec, Warsaw 18 / Modrzejowska', contained the following reference, translated through Google (my underlining):

> Mendel Goldner (Goldszer) led plant here watchmaker and sale of jewellery. Similarly I. Fuerstenberg, which opened in Binderów watch shop of "Omega" by offering additional products and silver plate, white metal headdress, jewellery, gold and diamonds, jewellery with precious stones, and optical equipment (spectacles, pince-nez, theatre binoculars). 3' (Urgacz, 2013)

https://www.slaskie.travel/en-US/Poi/Pokaz/15859/1902/zabytkowa-zabudowa-ul-modrzejowskiej-w-sosnowcu

Figure 88. Slaskie Travel. (no date) *Modrzejowska Street* [Online image] [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Figure 89. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: photograph eight.* Collection of David Gledhill

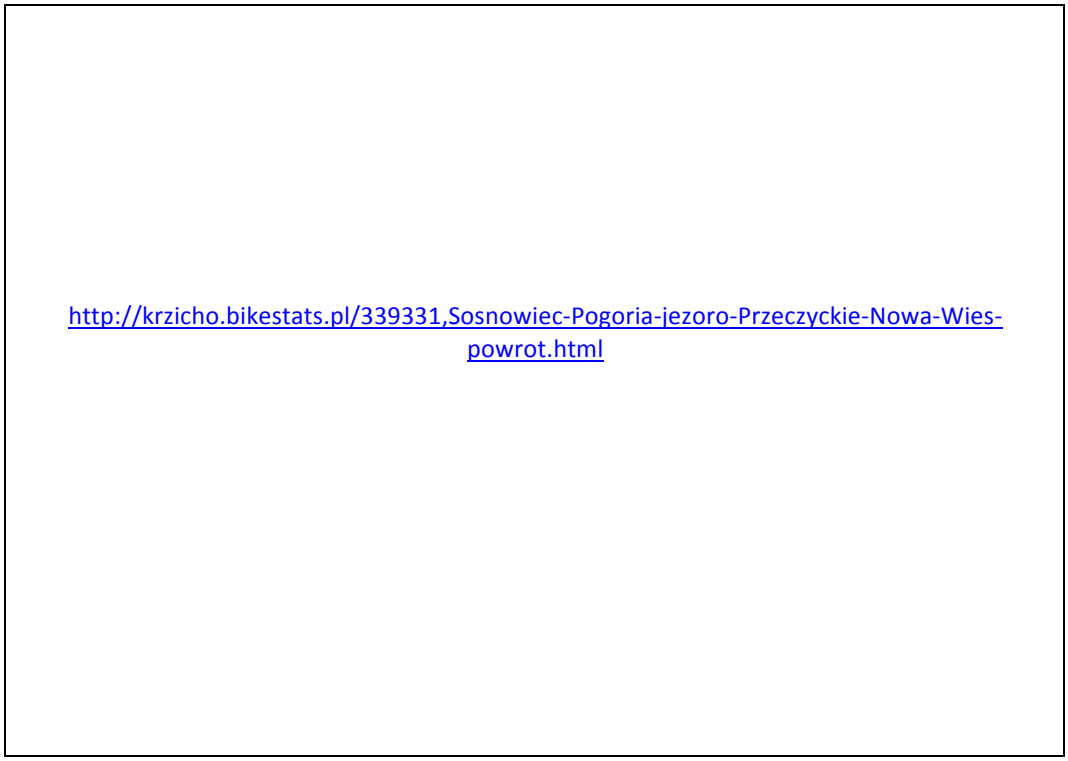


Figure 90. bikestats. (no date) *Lake Pogoria.* [Online image] [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

The article recounted the history of the building from its construction by Max and William Binderow in the 1880s to the present day. I emailed the author, Anna Urgacz, asking her to confirm the identity of the building, and she replied: 'Yes, in the background I see the building of Modrzejowska 3/Warszawska 18 Street. What about companies, I recognise "Okularium" - it was the shop with optical articles' (Urgacz, 2014). I had identified the location of photographs five to nine. The locations of photographs one to three, and ten to sixteen remain unknown, and were unrecognisable to Ms. Urgacz.

Amongst these, the three photographs of bathing (twelve to fourteen) may have been taken at one of the ponds or reservoirs near to Sosnowiec: the Morawa, Borki, Stawiki, and Hubertus ponds, or Lake Pogoria reservoirs (Figure 90). Lake Pogoria was flooded in 1943, somewhat later than the date of the album. However, the surrounding landscape is similar to that glimpsed in photographs twelve (Figure 91), thirteen and fourteen. It is possible that there

Figure 91. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: photograph twelve.* Collection of David Gledhill

were wetlands in the vicinity of the site, which was flooded to create these reservoirs. Both the ponds and Lake Pogoria are popular with bathers to this day.

2. Researching the time frame

The album is unusual in that it constitutes a visual record of what may be either a secondment of civil servants, or a migration by German settlers to a recently annexed territory that had previously been integrated into Germany. Upper Silesia became part of the German Empire in 1871. Following the end of the First World War, Eastern Upper Silesia was ceded to Polish rule, while Western Upper Silesia remained a part of the Weimar Republic, and was named the Province of Upper Silesia (Kochanski, 2012:12). After the invasion of Poland in September 1939, Eastern Upper Silesia was annexed to the renamed Province of Silesia under the direct control of the German Reich.

According to most accounts, Sosnowiec was occupied on 4 September 1939: a matter of days after the invasion of Poland by German forces on 1 September. The first few days of the German presence in the town were brutal: 'The policy of German terror began on 4 September in Katowice, when the German security police murdered 250 Poles. Jews were also targeted, particularly in Bedzin, Katowice and Sosnowiec' (Kochanski, 2012:70). The Great Synagogue in Sosnowiec was burned down on 9 September 1939, and Jews were dispossessed of their businesses, homes, and property. The Nazis went on to set up a *Judenrat* or Jewish Council, and began transporting Jews from smaller towns to Sosnowiec and neighbouring Bedzin. A series of purges of the Polish population of Eastern Upper Silesia was accompanied by the resettling of ethnic Germans from the Baltic countries. Between 1939 and 1942, 40,000 Poles were expelled and a further 25,000 killed, whilst 250,000 Germans were resettled in the region. Forced labour camps and factories in Sosnowiec provided German companies with essential wartime supplies:

> In February 1941, there were organized workshops, so called "Schneidersammellwerkstatte" (concentrated sewing workshops). The owner of this factory was Hans Held from Berlin. The factory was located on Modrzejowska street #20. In this workshop clothing was produced. Soon there was organized a division of the concern on Sadowa street #10 where military uniforms were produced. On Pilsudskiego street #70, corsets and female clothing articles were produced.
> (Brechner, 1997:online)

According to the following account it would appear that the situation settled somewhat, relative to other parts of Poland:

> During 1940-41 the situation in Bedzin, Sosnowiec and Dabrowa was considered somewhat better than elsewhere in occupied Poland. There, the Jews resided in open ghettos and their lives retained a semblance of normalcy. As a result, thousands of Jews from central Poland sought refuge there. In addition to this influx, several thousand Jews from the district were forcibly resettled in Bedzin and Sosnowiec at this time, among them the Jews from Oświęcim, who arrived in the spring of 1941 prior to the opening of Auschwitz-Birkenau.
> (United States Holocaust History Museum, no date)

The two dates inscribed in the album are June 1940 (inside front cover) and 17/12/1941 (reverse of photograph sixteen). The album therefore documents a period of nineteen months in total. The photographs fall into five groups by apparent location and may have all been taken on one roll of film with eighteen exposures. The groups are as follows:

1. The initial scenes of departure from an unidentifiable railway station (photographs one and two). Photographs one and two possibly date from early summer 1940 as the woman standing on the platform has removed her coat and is pictured in a blouse. This would conform with the inscription of June 1940.

2. The seven photographs (three-nine) taken in or near the centre of Sosnowiec are likely to date from the winter of 1940 (or possibly 1941 if the photographs in the album are not arranged chronologically). The first photograph shows two of the women and one of the men on the steps of a *Gaststatte*, or restaurant. They are wearing winter clothes but conditions appear bright and dry. The first three letters of the second word on the signboard read 'haa…' In photograph three there is snow on the ground, and the remaining five feature wet streets. All the individuals glimpsed in the streets are warmly dressed.

3. The cottage and coastal scene that follow (photographs ten and eleven), appear to have been taken in the autumn or winter of either 1940 or 1941 as the trees are bare in photograph ten, and the group of figures on the beach in photograph eleven are dressed in overcoats.

4. The bathing sequence of three photographs and the photograph of three women walking on a country road (photographs twelve to fifteen), must have been taken either in the summer of 1940, or 1941 if the album has been assembled chronologically.

5. The interior scene dated 17/12/41 (photograph sixteen).

Figure 92. Unknown photographer Jewish deportees from the Lodz ghetto who are being taken to the Chelmno death camp, are transferred from a closed passenger train to a train of open cars at the Kolo train station. Photograph. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum) [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Aside from the last image in the album, any attempt to date the above groups more exactly would be difficult. So far, I have not been able to trace the train carriage number in the railway station photographs, although the carriage door design conforms with German 3rd class passenger coaches of the 1940s. The photograph in Figure 92 is the closest match of any obtainable online by use of the search terms 'German', 'railway', 'train', '3rd class', 'carriage', 'coach', and 'Poland', in any combination. Although the image is indistinct, there appear to be doors with rounded windows between pairs of windows with a metal rail running underneath. This particular train was used to transport inmates of the Lodz ghetto to the Chelmno extermination camp in 1942 and so was in use in Poland at the time.

A further search on Youtube using the terms 'Poland train 1940' yielded a colour film entitled *1940 German Road Workers Trip to Occupied Poland* (Figure 93). This film provided visual confirmation that the train in photographs one

and two was a German train (Romano-Archives, 2010:3 mins 27). This in turn adds substance to the probability that the subjects are likely to be German nationals rather than ethnic Germans from the Baltic being resettled in Eastern Upper Silesia. This raises the likelihood that they are German administrators, drafted in to run the newly formed Province of Silesia under the Third Reich (see Section 3: Researching the People).

With regard to the ghetto images, according to Robert Gellately: 'Jews (aged 7 and older) were forced to wear the yellow star (from 15 September 1941)' (2001:131). However, the compulsory wearing of armbands had been introduced in the conquered Polish territories beforehand: 'From February 1940, all male and female Jews were required to wear on their left arm a white band 15 cm. (6 in.) wide with a blue Star of David on the band' (Brechner, 1997:online). Armbands are clearly being worn on the left arm in the photographs taken on Modrzejowska Street. However, if the armband was compulsory for all Jews over seven years old from February 1940, it remains impossible to date the ghetto photographs definitively within the nineteen - month timeframe of the album.

During the period covered by the album, the ghetto at Sosnowiec, including Modrzejowska Street, was open, meaning that non-Jews could enter, and Jews could leave either by segregated tram or by foot, provided they return by the curfew of 6-8pm in the winter and 5-9pm in the summer (Brechner, 1997:online). This suggests that throughout this period and the timeframe of the album, Germans would have been able, had they wished, to take photographs of groups of Jewish people in the streets of Sosnowiec without hindrance. This would be much more difficult in a closed ghetto without permission. Mass transports from the Sosnowiec area to labour or concentration camps commenced in May 1942 (Fulbrook, 2012:222). Further transports took place in June and August of 1942. Between October 1942 and April 1943, the ghetto was moved to the Srodula working class district of

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MiRA9kdP6D8

Figure 93. Romano-Archives (2010) *1940 German Road Workers Trip to Occupied Poland* [Online video] [Accessed on 20th July 2018]

Figure 94. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: photograph one.* Collection of David Gledhill

Sosnowiec and was closed on 10 March 1943 (Fulbrook, 2012:283). After another series of mass transports to Auschwitz extermination camp, the ghetto was finally liquidated in January of 1944.

3. Researching the people

Figure 95. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album*: *photograph sixteen.* Collection of David Gledhill

In *Non-Germans under the Third Reich* by Diemut Majer, the author offers a description of the kinds of individuals that were attracted to administrative work in the 'General Government' on behalf of the Reich:

> These individuals from whom the team of *Kreishauptleute* and their offices were in part chosen, were dynamic forces from the economy, the party and the administration who were weary of the rigid bureaucracy of the Reich and the arrogance of the specialist administrations and

> came to the East to "experience something" but also to be "pioneers"; for the regime, they therefore represented a welcome pool of active young executive personnel (government officials, lawyers, economic experts, graduates of NSDAP cadre schools etc). (2003:278)

Whilst the administration of the annexed territory of Eastern Upper Silesia was distinct from that of the central area of Poland known as the *Generalgouvernement*, the cited contrast between the types required for each province is nevertheless illuminating. Most German civil servants had been drafted into the *Wehrmacht* by the outbreak of war. If the depicted group are *Wehrmacht* administrators, they must at the very least have verbally endorsed the ideals of National Socialism. Civil servants who happened to be members of other political parties during the 1930s were progressively eliminated from the Service (Majer, 2003).

Unless the railway station photographs at the start of the album show them arriving in Poland rather than departing from Germany, the individuals in most of the photographs must have known each other before serving in Sosnowiec. They are shown at the front of the album, having boarded the train, standing in pairs at the windows. One of the women seems to be seeing the others off, although she appears in subsequent images, and is holding the hands of one of the couples at the left-hand carriage window (Figure 94). This intimate gesture suggests, at the least, a cordial professional relationship.

The male on the left-hand side in both the station photographs does not reappear in the album. One of the men and two of the women reappear on the steps of the *Gastatte* in photograph three. One of the men and all of the women in these station photographs appear in the snowy street scene (photograph four). In the clifftop scene (photograph eleven), the figures are too distant to distinguish. In the bathing scenes (photographs twelve to fourteen), there are six women, but only three of them bear any resemblance to those that have appeared to that point. In the last photograph, only one of the women is obviously recognisable from the previous photographs. The man in

this interior scene may be the same as the man in the first few images, but seems older and heavier in build. It seems likely that an initial group boarded the train and were supplemented by colleagues from the same office or department during the timeframe covered by the album. The only woman that appears throughout the album seems likely to be the Erna Adlou referred to in the inscription.

As a consciously sequenced collection of images, the album has a simple but coherent structure. It includes images that evoke a sense of purpose and competence, anticipation, professional pride, morbid curiosity, and above all, a cohesive group spirit. That the album contains visual inconsistencies adds to a sense of play in the narrative it evokes. It has been compiled to tell, or support the telling of a story, or to commemorate a particular interlude of great interest and perhaps excitement. It opens with a departure (or arrival), followed by a number of contrasting locations and seasons, culminating in a final image of informal domestic unity, harmony and celebration. There is little, if any, sense of conflicting emotion or doubt, and the participants are smiling broadly throughout. One detail however, seems to hint at the onset of mixed feelings or fatigue, or at least can be read in those terms. There is a marked contrast between the expression of the man in photograph three, and that of the man in photograph sixteen (Figure 97). Whilst they may not be the same individual, clearly some form of stress or tiredness has taken its toll on at least one of the men over the intervening eighteen months.

To get some sense of the kinds of events, incidents, and issues that German civil servants may have experienced, or have had to address, will require some wider account of developments in the war in Poland between June 1940 and December 1941. As Norman Davies (1981) points out in his history of Poland, entitled *God's Playground*, immediately after the invasion on 1 September 1939: 'Poles occupying desirable residencies in the middle-class suburbs were

Figure 96. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: detail of photograph three*. Collection of David Gledhill

Figure 97. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: detail of photograph sixteen.* Collection of David Gledhill

expropriated without redress to make way for the influx of German officials and their families' (1981:445). It is highly likely that if they are officials, the individuals depicted in the album will have been given flats previously owned by better off Poles or Jews.

The photographs taken in the streets of Sosnowiec reflect what Janina Struk refers to in *Photographing the Holocaust* as:

> an endless source of fascination and curiosity to members of the Wehrmacht. To enter the ghetto was to catch a glimpse of a foreign and exotic environment; a world apart. They did not see the ghettos as products of the Nazi regime, but as the natural habitat of the Jews. (2004:76)

The two largest ghettos in Poland were those of Lodz and Warsaw. The Lodz ghetto was closed at the end of April 1940, prior to the arrival in Poland of the group in the album (Browning, 1992:32). The Warsaw ghetto was closed in November of 1940, while the group were in Sosnowiec (Browning, 1992:34). Despite the very public nature of the deportation of Jews from German cities and towns, sometimes by open truck to the local railway station, the Nazis took some care to prevent images of the suffering in the ghettos from reaching the wider world. Although it was forbidden to take photographs in case they fell into enemy hands, German officials could issue passes for the purpose of documenting conditions. Janina Struk recounts the case of Joe J. Heydecker, who worked as a lab technician for a Propaganda Company of the German army:

> On 1st March 1941 Heydecker made his last excursion in the ghetto with three colleagues. Heydecker's wife who worked for the Warsaw government of occupation, managed to secure her husband and his colleagues official ghetto passes by 'doing business particularly with Leica cameras'. (2004:79)

Nazi officials clearly possessed means of gaining entry to closed ghettos. By the end of May 1941, 3,821 people had starved to death in the Warsaw ghetto (Struk, 2004:79). The group in the album must have been aware of the confinement in the Lodz ghetto as they arrived in Sosnowiec. They would have become aware of the state of the Warsaw ghetto before the last picture was taken, and took the opportunity to photograph the open ghetto at Sosnowiec before it was moved and closed.

Mary Fulbrook provides a catalogue of atrocities perpetrated against Jews, Poles, and captured Russians during the latter part of the period in question, and after the invasion of the Soviet Union:

> Following the invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, there were widespread killings of Jewish civilians in Eastern Europe, often by shooting into mass graves dug especially for the purpose, sometimes also by burning or hanging or more random shooting. From September 1941 experiments took place on Soviet prisoners of war in Auschwitz with the use of Zyklon B gas for killing, and in December 1941 murder by exhaust fumes piped into the inside of trucks filled with Jews started at Chelmno, some 40 miles from the ghetto of Lodz. (2012:6)

If our group were indeed civil servants living and working in Sosnowiec during this period, they would have been aware of, or complicit in, the dispossession, abuse, arrest and deportation to work camps, harassment, beating and murder of the Polish and Jewish population of the town. In *Hitler's Furies*, Wendy Lower (2014) estimates a total of 5,000 female administrators working in Nazi occupied Poland, with each one reporting to five men. She insists that 'their routine procedures generated unprecedented crimes' (2014:99), and that 'none could claim ignorance of the human impact of her work' (2014:99). Further to these crimes, Fulbrook cites a meeting of police and civil officials in January of 1941, at which it was decided to progressively concentrate the Jews into the poorer districts of Sosnowiec. Administrators would have been involved in organising the removal of Jews from their existing accommodation, and the reallocation of their property to ethnic German colonists, or Jews cleared from

locations the Nazis had other plans for, including Oświęcim (Auschwitz). These Jews would be re-transported to the expanded extermination camp at Auschwitz within two years of arriving in Sosnowiec. Of the pre-war population of 30,000, soon augmented to 45,000 by the influx from other nearby towns, virtually all the Jews of Sosnowiec were exterminated by the Nazis before December 1943.

The album constitutes evidence of the collision of unprecedented historical events with the generally prevailing social conventions of photography, and as such, offers an opportunity to explore a number of themes relating to both history and representation in one body of work. There is an extremely uncomfortable sense of the professed obliviousness of many German civilians to the genocide in which they played a part, acted out through the blithe rituals of posed snapshot photography. There is a kind of superimposed double signification by which photographing each other cheerfully in the midst of cruelty and injustice must have seemed the ideal means by which to materially embody the internalised triumph of German racial superiority. As Struk points out:

> As photographs of social occasions, picture-postcard views and hangings were pasted onto the pages of German photo albums, so were photographs from the ghettos. They were kept as private mementos, or to pass on to friends or colleagues. (2004:76)

These photographs are an index of the naturalisation of anti-semitism amongst the German population, that began with Hitler's electoral victory of 1933, and escalated throughout the 1930s, becoming by January 1942 and the Wannsee Conference, a credo of systematic extermination (Browning, 2004:416). They provide a testament of a destination to which racist political ideology can lead a previously tolerant population. In an extensive survey in which Jewish survivors were asked about anti-semitism prior to 1933:

> The answers they gave indicate that most Jews had apparently enjoyed cordial relations with non-Jews before the Nazi years. While only 3 percent of the respondents rated their families' treatment as having been either "unfriendly or mostly unfriendly" before 1933, 69 percent rated it as having been "friendly or mostly friendly" at that time. Soon after 1933, however, the situation changed dramatically and grew ever worse over time. (Johnson and Reuband, 2006:389)

By the time the last photograph in the album had been taken, Hitler's long-held conviction that Germany must be *Judenfrei,* was about to be superceded by a campaign to systematically eliminate the entire Jewish populations of the conquered lands throughout Europe.

Appendix C: Painting Poland 1940-1941

1. Tonal painting

The paintings in the series Poland 1940-1941 are based on black and white photographs and are figurative, realist and tonal in conception. The impression of volumetric forms in space is achieved by the modelling of those forms from light to dark in accordance with a directional light source, rather than by optical recession and projection as realised through contrasts of warmer and cooler colours, as in some modernist painting.

The internal coherence of tonal realist paintings is achieved through this incorporation of a consistent light source throughout the composition. Light is fundamental to visual perception, and during the Renaissance it came to be construed as the means by which form could be revealed to the eye in painting (Arnheim, 1974; Ball, 2002). The drive to evolve an equivalent for effects of light in painting, has been traced by many commentators to the work of Giotto di Bondone, in which figures and compositions were conceived and composed with a degree of naturalism unprecedented at the time (Gombrich, 1995:201). Julian Bell describes the twofold development in Giotto's work of 'the picture that seemed to be a window' (1999:52), and the use of Brunelleschi's system of perspective to create a convincing sense of space within that window. In his *Della Pittura* of 1435, Alberti (1966) formulated the practical means by which painters were to realise this new translation of light into paint, in the following terms: 'The painter will find nothing with which to represent the luster of light but white and in the same manner only black to indicate the shadows' (1966:50). Writing later in the fifteenth century, Leonardo da Vinci was emphatic about this new conception of painting: 'Lights and darks, together with foreshortening, comprise the excellence of the science of painting' (2001:88).

These foundational texts of Western painting set a rational, scientific and empirical agenda for painting as a translation of optical and spatial experience into two-dimensional form. Heinrich Wolfflin describes the changing function of

light in painting between the early Renaissance and Baroque periods, in terms of its evolving symbolic, narrative, and formal function within composition, citing da Vinci's recommendation 'to place light forms on dark and the dark on light' (1950:85). By the late eighteenth century and the history paintings of David, light is a principal device by which the painting generates meaning, and, according to Andrew Benjamin: 'how the painting allows itself to be seen' (2004:48).

The Poland 1940-1941 paintings do not depart schematically from the relative tonal values of the photographs in the album, but contrasts are enhanced in response to what Ernst Gombrich identified as the narrowness of the gradations of grey in a photograph: 'Not one of these tones, of course, corresponds to what we call 'reality'' (2002:30). The paintings take advantage of the freedoms developed through the history of tonal painting, in order to *interpret* the tonality of the source photographs beyond their evident range. For example, in cases where a photograph has been taken outdoors and the camera has been focused on the faces of the subjects, the sky, where visible, will appear bleached out. To translate the powerfully recessive quality of a blue sky into a coherent tonal equivalent, necessitates the darkening of the sky in the painting as compared with the photograph (Figures 102 and 103).

All the techniques employed in the process of paint application are intended to build on the scale of the figures and the relationship of the paintings to the photographs as discussed in Chapter Two. The photographs record reflected light without giving a sense of the mass and surface texture of the forms underneath the light, as it were. The paintings enhance the *impression* of volumetric forms conveyed by the photographs, through the augmentation of the tactile and haptic qualities of their iconic content. In order to do this, the paintings mobilise their materiality, scale, and the means I have identified by which they adhere to, and digress from the source photographs (see Chapter Two, Sections 2.5 and 2.6), in order to convey a sense of human presence.

2. The significance of the stretcher design.

The objective of augmenting the material, formal, and semantic qualities of the source photographs begins with the design of the stretcher. The stretchers used in these paintings are intended to reinforce the evident material distinctions between the paintings and their source photographs. The photographs are small paper objects, whilst the paintings are made from cotton canvas on a wooden frame, coated with rabbit skin glue size and oil-based primer, and then painted using Ivory Black oil pigment (see Sections 2 to 8 below). Both the photographs and printed enlargements can easily be lifted and held in one hand, yet the painting is extremely heavy to lift. These obvious distinctions are nevertheless important, because the viewer's *estimation* of the size, weight and physical intractability of the painting as an object, must inform their response to it.

The canvas is stretched over a timber frame construction and stapled into place. The stretcher is 7 cm deep at the sides, and acts to enhance the sense of the painting as a physical object projecting from the wall into the viewer's space. In 'The Work of Art as Object', Richard Wollheim (2003) suggests that the conception of paintings as objects was an overt tenet of modernism, whereas in pre-modern painting it was tacitly acknowledged through, for example, the gestural brushwork that remained visible in the underpainting of works of the Venetian school.[47] Wollheim groups a number of modernist techniques and approaches together as evidence for this theory. These include the incorporation of the unprimed canvas, collaged elements, non-naturalistic colour and drawing, non-linear perspective, and 'the incorporation of the edge' (2003:804).

Whilst not all these strategies are employed in Poland 1940-1941 (2014-15) in order to foreground their objecthood, the paintings are executed in a non-naturalistic monochrome that restrains their illusionism in some respects. The

[47] See Section 2 for a discussion of Venetian painting technique.

white primed edge or side, which is visible because the paintings are deliberately left unframed, also underscores the physicality of the painting, continuously reminding the viewer that whatever impression is made by the painted image on the front surface of the canvas, it is nevertheless a hand-crafted, shallow box-like object.

Although the painted surface may appear to have spatial depth as in a view through a window, it is also projected forwards by the stretcher. Wollheim discusses this coincidence of surface and what he calls the 'ground' in an analysis of *La Fenetre Ouverte* by Henri Matisse (1913). He traces the conception of the ground from its absence in cave painting, via its role as background in pre-modern European painting, to its identification with surface in modernism. He points out that the painting by Matisse encourages the viewer to associate the ground with the surface, so that in a painting of a view through a window 'It is made clear, at one and the same time, that the view isn't an object but it is as though it were.' (Wollheim, 2003:808).

Interpreting surface as flatness rather than as an indicator of objecthood, Clement Greenberg characterised modernism as a progressive inversion of the primacy of spatial illusion over the picture plane, whereby the first thing one notices about a modern painting is its flatness (2003:775). Extending Greenberg's argument, Michael Fried (1998) subsequently critiqued the notion of objecthood in the work of minimalist sculptors like Robert Morris as innately theatrical, in that it enlists the viewer and the gallery context in the production of meaning. Fried argued that modernist works are self-sufficient and essentially optical, condemning the theatricality of minimalism and its substitution of the instantaneity of modernist works with the extended but inconclusive temporality of brute substance (1998:153).

Whilst these essentially formalist debates have been suspended in the wake of post-modern strategies of pastiche, appropriation, and relational aesthetics, awareness of issues related to the ground, surface, and flatness are integral to

any critically informed painting. The works under discussion are intended to bridge the illusionism of pre-modern tonal painting and the object status of modernist works. In this instance objecthood is understood in the sense identified by Wollheim: a painting is a 'physical object', or a construction of wood and canvas with a surface and sides, and Greenberg's conception of flatness is not endorsed (2003:804). The sense of the objecthood of the canvas acts to confirm the general apprehension of physicality by which the life-sized figures in the painting are intended to seem more real than those in the photograph. The objective here is a *transfer* or association of the sense of physicality from the support to the image, via the integration of the ground into the paint surface, as described in the next section.

In *Poland 1940-1941 (16)* (Figure 22) the monochrome rendering, combined with the projection of the painted surface from the wall, sets up a spatial tension that is intended to generate two simultaneous realisations in the viewer: that the painting represents the objects, people and space in the photograph, and that this illusionistic effect is provided by a materially substantial object. This is by contrast with the 'illusion of an illusion' (Bolter and Grusin, 2000:122) in photorealist painting, whereby the illusionism of the painted surface replicates the illusionism of the source photograph, with the support and ground remaining unincorporated in the signification.

3. The preparation of the canvas and the significance of the incorporation of the ground in the context of Western painting

The series of paintings entitled Poland 1940-1941 and *Karel*/Karl (2017-19), together with many of the paintings included in The Berlin Olympic Village Project (2015-17), were produced using a technique of paint application and removal. This method necessitates the preparation of the canvas with particular solutions before painting begins. The canvas is prepared with two coats of rabbit skin glue size, which acts to seal it for oil painting, and without which the

linseed oil in the oil paint would pass through the weave of the canvas, drying out the paint surface and leading to rapid cracking. Glue size is a traditional treatment for canvas and wood and is supplied in a granulated form. Together with the primer coats, it enables the paint to be moved around the surface of the canvas with a brush or rag after application. After both coats of size have been left overnight to dry, the first coat of primer is applied. This is an oil-based primer, and is thinned with white spirit in a ratio of 5 parts primer to one part white spirit, to reduce its viscosity and aid smooth application and even coverage. A second, slightly thicker coat is applied after 24 hours. Two coats of primer are necessary so that later applications of oil paint can be easily altered or removed, a requirement of the technique used throughout the work. Oil-based primer is used because gesso and alkyd-based primers both have a 'tooth' which restricts the manipulation of applied coats of paint and impedes paint removal.

The works under discussion are paintings in the sense that they are made with liquid media applied with brushes to a traditional support of canvas stretched across wood. They thereby conform to historical criteria by which painting has been distinguishable from other media. They retain these aspects in common with historically specific conceptions of painting that may no longer apply to the entire field. It is however, possible to innovate in painting by reassessing materials and techniques that have been, but are no longer widely used, as well as by addressing subjects or themes that are more generally taken up in other disciplines.

The aim of the series Poland 1940-1941 is the representation of past events, rather than the critique of, or innovation in, one or another of the formal aspects of painting. It does not, for example, represent an attempt to problematise the limitations of the material support of easel painting, in the way that the work of abstract painters such as Frank Stella, Alexis Harding or Angela De La Cruz does. Neither is it an attempt to transcend these limitations, as the work of Katharina Grosse or Zhang Enli may do. Despite this refusal, the

technique used is distinct from existing technical approaches to tonal figurative painting, in that at least as much time is spent removing paint as applying it, and much of the paint *is* actually removed during the process of painting. In order to ascertain precisely how this technique is distinctive, it is necessary to return to the consideration of the nature and purpose of the 'support' and the 'ground' in the history of European painting.

Whilst the purpose of the support is relatively self-explanatory, the ramifications of certain choices of support for the 'ground' and the subsequent application of paint are critical. Max Doerner provides a concise definition of the function of the ground in painting: 'Grounds are applied to textile fabrics, woods and the like to make the surface tighter, less absorbent, and more luminous, and so enable the artist better to realize his objective and give durability to his work' (1949:3). The ground, as indicated by Wollheim (2003:807), is co-extensive with the support and provides a material context or substrate for the forms of the painting. Because the canvas entirely covers the stretcher, and is primed on the front and the sides, the ground participates optically in the reception of the work and is always visible. The canvas is primed white to set up a light source behind the painted forms, and this light source is incorporated into the painting by rubbing back to the primed ground with rags and cotton buds soaked in turpentine.

Before turning to the consequences of decisions about the support and ground, I would like to briefly consider two variations on a generalised conceptualisation of painting technique, regardless of the surface to be used. These approaches were documented during the 1500s and remain in use in contemporary painting.

3.1 Florentine painting technique

Figure 98. Michelangelo Buonarotti (c1497) *The Manchester Madonna (the Madonna and Child with St John and Angels)*. Tempera on panel, 105 x 76 cm, National Gallery, London [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Accounts of Renaissance painting techniques provide a foundational set of working principles for tonal painting, many of which have remained in place to the present day. The nature of the support and the ground, and methods of applying paint, were discussed in the light of their mimetic and expressive potential. Giorgio Vasari's (1960) treatise on the techniques of art, published in 1550 as a part of his *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and*

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unfinished_portrait_of_General_Bonaparte	https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/438749188679765305/

Figure 99A. Jacques-Louis David (1798) *Napoleon.* Oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm, The Louvre, Paris. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Figure 99B Michael Borremans (2010) *Girl with Feathers*. Oil on canvas, 42 x 36 cm, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Architects, contains a written summary of Florentine painting methods that provides a basic working guide to tonal painting. Vasari recommends that the artist should begin with a contour drawing onto the support, whether wall, canvas, or wood. This line drawing, when 'correct and in proportion' (1960:207), enables the addition of tones that create the impression of volumetric form. Vasari advises the painter to mix at least three different tones in advance for each colour used: 'Having then made the mixtures […] we proceed to fill in the outlines putting in the proper place the lights and darks, the half tones and the lowered tones of the half tints and the lights' (1960:209).

This approach, which clearly prioritises drawing, is based on that of fresco painting, which necessitates thorough preparation and rapid execution before the plaster dries. The 'filling up the outlines' that Vasari recommends, is part of

a cumulative *alla prima* (at first attempt) technique, which allows for little optical interplay between the paint layers, of which there are fewer than in contemporaneous Venetian painting. Examples of unfinished Florentine Renaissance paintings clearly show patches of blank white panel or canvas, with areas worked up to a more or less finished state (Figure 98). There appear to be few, if any, intermediate stages between preparing or priming the support and modelling the forms in their final appearance, although in the example by Michelangelo (Figure 98), a green grey mid-tone has been applied to the flesh areas of the composition.

The *alla prima* method, over a sized, primed or coloured support, sometimes incorporating a flat monochrome underpainting in combination with an initial brush, charcoal or pencil drawing, has been used by artists since the Renaissance. It is founded on a fundamental distinction between the purely utilitarian preparation of the ground and the artistic execution of the subsequent paint layers. These layers are applied 'wet into wet', usually in one session of work. In the examples by Jacques-Louis David and Michaël Borremans (Figure 99A/B), despite the differences in the wider cultural context and signification of the two paintings, the same Florentine method has been used.

3.2 Venetian painting technique

James Ward (1921) provides a parallel account of Venetian technique, which differs in several respects. The painter would begin with a coarse canvas support, which was primed with a mixture of tempera made from white chalk and size.[48] The artist would then sketch out the composition directly onto the canvas, as in the Florentine example. Next, the canvas would be given a second coat of size to seal the drawing in. A translucent monochromatic rendering of the composition was then made in tempera or oil. After this had dried 'a second painting, executed in a thick and solid impasto, was frankly applied, showing a

[48] Tempera is usually made from a mixture of pigment with water and egg yolk or whole egg (Langmuir and Lynton, 2000:680).

certain *bravura* and vigorous strokes of the brush, in order to give further texture' (Ward, 1921:59). This was then over-painted with a combination of translucent glazes and semi-opaque overtones. The emphasis on distinctive brushwork is in stark contrast to the precedence given to drawing in the Florentine approach, but whilst the underpainting was occasionally left visible in some parts of Venetian paintings, this is to an even greater extent a cumulative, or additive approach involving more elaborate layering of pigment in stages (Ayres, 1985:79).

Returning to the choice of support, Ward specifies canvas in his description, which is significant because the techniques employed in painting on canvas differ substantially from those of panel painting. Wooden panels gradually gave way to canvas as the preferred support of the majority of painters between 1500 and 1700, because canvas offered greater flexibility of scale and transportability (Langmuir and Lynton, 2000:514). However, unlike canvas, close-grained wooden panels could sustain a brilliant white gesso ground that in turn enabled painters to use repeated transparent and translucent glazes over a thin monochromatic underpainting in order to build up powerful illusionistic effects in jewel-like colours. Alternatively, a ground of transparent size on a wooden panel allowed for the incorporation of the grain of the wood into paintings, an approach used by Mannerist painters (Ayres, 1985:78).

Flemish and Dutch painters working on panels prepared with gesso, under-painted in tempera and overlaid a 'complicated series of oil glazes' (Ayres, 1985:99). Northern Renaissance panel paintings preserved the brilliance of oil colours, using the white of the ground to infuse a brightness into the composition that is often lost in paintings on canvas:

> In contrast to the Dutch, the Italians used the *alla prima* or direct method of painting in oil. This resulted in the inevitable *pentimento* (alterations), the use of toned grounds and solid underpainting, which have tended to deaden the brilliance of the pigments and narrow the tonal range. (Ayres, 1985:99)

The ground is thereby employed as a source of light in much panel painting, whereas from the onset of its use as a support in late fifteenth-century Italian painting, canvas has called for a mixing of light and dark tones in pigment, and the use of impasto paint application in order to sustain the brilliance of the colours and the lightest passages of paint: 'An impasto on gesso would have destroyed the inner reflected light of the ground whereas impasto on canvas maintained the brilliance of pigments which would otherwise be discoloured from the front and, through the canvas, from the back' (Ayres, 1985:80).

It is clear that the choice of support is a significant factor in the priming and the execution of the painting, enabling some effects and inhibiting others. The choice of support also conditions the way in which the ground is either enlisted or eliminated as a contributing element to the overall effect of the work. The two fundamental variations in technique described above are the filling in of a contour drawing in the Florentine manner, or the superimposition of layers of translucent, opaque and glazed colour in the Venetian method. The paintings in the series Poland 1940-1941 are distinct from both these approaches in that the white ground is not coated with a continuous skin of paint as in the Florentine model, nor does it evenly illuminate semi-transparent glaze layers of contrasting tone and hue, sustaining their brilliance: it actively *constitutes* the tonal contrast itself. Regardless of the emphasis on drawing or free brushwork, in both Florentine and Venetian traditional painting on either panel or canvas, the white ground is completely over-painted with pigment that models the forms. The only distinction is that in *alla prima* painting, the colours and tones are mixed on the palette, whereas in painting employing glazes and layering of colour, the mixing is optical and takes place between layers on the canvas.

3.3 Watercolour technique

Figure 100. John Constable (1835) *Stonehenge*. Watercolour on paper, 38.7 x 59.7 cm, The Victoria and Albert Museum. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Watercolour is another medium in which the white of the support contributes luminosity to the finished painting. James Ayres describes John Constable's (1835) laborious efforts to scrape back to the white of the paper during the making of his watercolour of *Stonehenge* (Figure 100), concluding that 'the use of solid white gouache would have been a soft option indeed' (1985:107). In much watercolour painting, the white of the paper is left exposed in the lightest areas of the composition, whilst also providing the luminosity for the washes and semi-opaque passages that model the forms. In this sense there is a similarity with the methods used in Poland 1940-1941, and Ayres points out the transferability of watercolour techniques to oil painting, presumably construing oil painting in terms of panel painting, or at least the Venetian approach in general (1985:107). There are distinctions to be made however. In Poland 1940-1941, the primed canvas is incorporated with differing densities of layered black pigment throughout the painting, to produce a wide range of tonal variations.

The greater opacity, body, and viscosity of oil paint, combined with the specific materiality of the canvas and wood support, and the fact of the white ground having been applied rather than being intrinsic to the support as with paper, are all significant material differences between oil and watercolour painting. Forms depicted in watercolour carry a sense of insubstantiality because of the vehicle (water), and blotting rather than wiping is used to modulate tone and intensity of hue. The pigment inevitably soaks into the paper, rather than sitting on top of the primed support as it is likely to do with oil painting. Also, in practice many watercolourists employ white gouache pigment, as the paper cannot withstand repeated blotting without degrading (Fisher et al., 200:74). In that regard, watercolour painting starts to resemble oil painting, as paint removal gives way to additive tonal mixing of colours with white pigment. The contemporary watercolours of Tim Gardner are an instance of the medium approximating to tonal oil painting in terms of its cumulative opacity.

The key to the distinctive nature of the technique used in Poland 1940-1941, lies in the particular employment of the primed ground in the modelling of the forms. Whilst artists have blotted back to a white paper surface in watercolour painting, or left areas of a canvas untouched in oil painting, there appear to be no precedents for the consistent employment of the ground in combination with one non-chromatic oil colour (Ivory Black pigment) in the modelling of forms throughout the composition. As discussed above, this use of the ground is intended to infuse the representation with a material presence that is derived from the utilitarian nature of the applied primer. The painting is partly constituted by a material substrate that has been left to dry before the image has been superimposed, and in that sense is homologous with the use of the white paper as the light source in a photographic print.

4. Technical aids

https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/walter-richard-sickert-the-servant-of-abraham-r1135621	https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/walter-richard-sickert-the-servant-of-abraham-r1135621

Figure 101A. Walter Sickert (1929) *Photographic study for The Servant of Abraham.* Photograph. The Tate Gallery, London. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

Figure 101B. Walter Sickert (1929) *The Servant of Abraham*. Oil on canvas, 61 x 50.8 cm, The Tate Gallery, London. [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

In *Secret Knowledge,* David Hockney (2001) makes the claim that artists have been using optical devices such as mirrors, lenses, and the *camera obscura,* to project images of their subjects as an aid in painting and drawing since the early fifteenth century. He argues that the powerful chiaroscuro effects and sharply defined shadows in later Renaissance painting are partly due to the strong lighting needed to produce a clear, legible image using optics. The use of photographs to make paintings from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, would, in this account, represent the culmination of a drive to greater verisimilitude.

This may have been the case up to the late nineteenth century where Hockney closes his account. However, the paintings in this project engage in a dialectic with their sources, rather than a mimetic transfer of qualities from one medium to another, and in that sense are comparable with the work of Luc Tuymans,

Wilhelm Sasnal and Gerhard Richter discussed in Chapter One. In the work of these artists, elements of the source photograph are altered, omitted, cropped or blurred, prior to, or in the process of painting, whereas in all the paintings based on second-hand snapshots discussed in this thesis, the iconic content is incorporated into the painting in its entirety. That is not to say that the source photographs are not processed or edited at all however. The extent to which the paintings simultaneously replicate and digress from the iconic content of the photographs is discussed in Chapter Two Sections 2.5 and 2.6.
The overall intention is to augment the iconic content and meaning of the photographs, and this objective entails the *avoidance* of optical or technical aids in the transfer of the composition from the photograph to the canvas.

Many painters who work from photographs use an 'overhead' or digital projector to cast a projection of an acetate copy of the photograph, or a digital image file onto the canvas (Cane et al., 2013). This is in order to ensure that the relative proportions of forms in the painting are exactly equivalent to those in the photograph. The projected forms may be drawn onto the canvas before painting, or else the entire painting process may be undertaken whilst the projection is in place. A more traditional means of achieving a similar result involves the drawing of a grid directly onto the source drawing or photographic print, and an equivalent number of larger squares onto the canvas. As with projection, the effect of this scaling-up technique is to reduce the risk that the relative scale of forms in the painting will diverge from those in the source drawing or photograph (Figure 101A and B). Amongst painters working with photographs, Chuck Close uses this means of increasing the scale of his source photographs (Cane et al., 2013).

A virtually unavoidable effect of painting without such precautions, is that forms tend to expand with working, altering their scale relative to other forms. These departures may be tolerated, sought after, or planned for as expressive or formal devices, tending to result in an overt sense of the painting as an authored cultural artefact. Whilst all paintings are a sum of assumed, selected

or broken conventions (Harris 2000:21), realist conventions are intended to partially distract the viewer from their status as devices (Nochlin, 1971:238). This can allow for a potentially closer immersion in the subject matter. Since in these paintings, the intended effect is of a faithful rendering of an external referent (as mediated by photography), in its apparent proportions and from one consistent point of view, overt kinds of distortion that are not present in the photograph are not sought for. Instead, the goal is to convince the viewer of the equivalence between the painting and the iconic content of a corresponding photograph. However, conversely, the use of technical devices to minimise the risk of departure from the source image, tends to impede the freedom to incorporate marginal digressions in the modelling of the forms. Without technical aids, inadvertent subtle departures from exactitude can be capitalised upon to introduce visual emphasis, and to reinforce the tactility or significance of some forms in the photograph. Such small digressions also contribute a sense of tension, whereby the viewer is required to interrogate the painting more closely, in an effort to determine the degree of its fidelity to a photographic prototype.

5. Starting the painting

Before starting, a basic set of A4 prints is produced, including one of the entire photograph, the same photograph digitally under and overexposed, a crop of each half of the image, and a set of portraits of all the subjects. These are then laid out on a table, taken up as necessary, and held in the left hand as the paint is applied with a brush held in the right hand. During the early stages of painting, it is crucial to look closely at the print of the entire composition, and to make ongoing and frequent assessments of the broad proportions and relations of forms to one another and to the edge of the canvas, rather than focusing for prolonged periods on one small area. The composition is developed across the entire canvas, rather than treated as a visual inventory of discrete objects that

Figure 102. Unknown photographer (1940-1941) *Erna Adlou album: photograph fourteen*. Collection of David Gledhill

Figure 103. David Gledhill (2014) *Poland 1940-1941 (14).* Oil on canvas, 152 x 232 cm.

Figure 104. David Gledhill (2014) *Massing in the basic tonal values in Poland 1940-1941 (3) on day one*. Photograph.

can be fully rendered individually, one at a time. In that sense it 'develops' in a manner analogous with a photograph in a darkroom developing tray. The reason for this is that pictorial unity is the overriding formative consideration throughout the painting process.[49]

[49] This classical aesthetic concept was summarised by Aristotle in his '*Poetics'* (Murray and Dorsch, 2000). As a guiding aesthetic principle, unity was heavily contested during the modernist period, notably by Theodore Adorno (2002) in his *Aesthetic Theory*, which was first published in 1970.

Figure 105. Dressler, D. (2016) *Illustration showing the basic tonal range in figurative painting.* [Online image] [Accessed on 15th August 2018]

The first day of work involves the 'massing in' of the basic forms and the structure and contours of the composition with a selection of large brushes. In this way, the entire canvas is composed and roughed in broadly, and without detail (Figure 104). This is a standard underpainting technique as used in tonal painting since the Renaissance: 'The general effect of the picture is first blocked in loosely and sketchily with semi-opaque tones, usually brown or green' (Doerner, 1949:189). However, the technique employed in this series is distinct from that of pre-modern painting, in that layers of opaque paint are not simply added on top of the monochrome underpainting, eventually obscuring it. Instead, the tonal range of the composition is gradually widened by the daily application of semi-transparent layers of black paint, which are repeatedly over-painted, and then removed in selected areas to produce the cast shadows, reflected light, shadows, mid-tones, illuminated areas, and highlights by which forms are modelled in a tonal rendering (Figure 105).

Generally in tonal painting, the lighter areas in a composition are produced by 'tinting', or mixing white with other colours. These areas of an oil painting would have a thicker, or impasto application of paint, because lighter pigments such as white or yellow pollute by contact with other colours, and sink and become transparent unless applied more thickly than other pigments. This approach tends to lend the surface of an oil painting a sculpted, textured appearance or skin, known as the *facture*. The objective in the paintings under discussion is to produce a facture that bears some similarity to that of a photograph, therefore white paint is not used, and the black paint is instead removed to allow the white of the primed canvas to stand in for white pigment. The painting has the quality of a multi-layered but translucent palimpsest with a pictorial light source lying behind the paint skin, rather than integrated into the blended paint itself. The white primed canvas that provides this light source is unvaried and non-representational, whereas in paintings that employ tinting as a technique, the light source is an integral element of the representation as bodied forth in the paint.

In addition to the evident status of the support as an object made of canvas and wood, the externality of the light source and its utilitarian nature are intended to lend a perceptibly material quality to the representation. All these devices are integrated into the image in order to produce a sense of palpable physical reality in excess of that manifested by the photograph. Whilst the paintings and the photographs are homologous in that they both share an external light source (primed canvas or paper), the light source of the paintings is more substantive than that of the photographs, is applied to the support and is materially equivalent and at the same time supportive of the subsequent paint layers. As such, it enhances the sense of the painting as a real object in space standing for other real objects and people in space.

6. Progress of the painting

Figure 106. David Gledhill (2014) *Poland 1940-1941 (3).* Oil on canvas, 234 x 153 cm.

The objective that drives the progress of the painting from the initial setting up of the image to its resolution, is the achievement of a sense of human presence. As the painting progresses, the degree of detail is enhanced and smaller areas with a concentration of visual information, such as faces or patterned fabrics, are refined and sharpened. This is achieved by applying pigment in approximate

conformity with a form discernable in a photograph, which will usually be seen as a dark shape against a lighter ground, or vice versa. The tonal contrast internal to this form is then introduced by removing paint with a rag or a cotton bud, in a process similar to the use of an eraser in charcoal drawing. Alternatively, relatively light forms can be introduced or re-established by removing paint across a larger area with a rag soaked in turpentine.

Day by day, forms are coaxed into closer and closer equivalence with those in the printed details from the scanned original source, albeit scaled up by eye from the hand-held prints as described above. Areas of shadow are deepened by applying translucent washes of oil paint thinned with a mixture of turpentine and daily increased amounts of linseed oil. Care must be taken to preserve some visual evidence of forms within the shaded areas, in order that the shadow does not project from the composition as an opaque, flat graphic form. When a broad area of shadow is being repeatedly washed in order to darken the tone, rags are used to remove some of the paint from the shadowed area to suggest forms visible there (see the lower left side of Figure 106). This process of refining areas of the composition, deepening shadows and re-establishing lighter passages by wiping away paint, requires dozens of prints from the original digital scan of the source photograph, for use as reference. Variations of the original tonal balance in the cropped details of the image are produced in Photoshop, and printed onto A4 photographic paper. By the latter stages of a painting these may total 80-150 in number.

Throughout the painting process, care is also taken to blend areas of relative light and shade at their points of contact, so that gradual transitions are established where necessary, and the naturalistic appearance of the painting enhanced. Also during the later stages of the painting, when the bulk of the detail is established and refined, a large decorators brush loaded with undiluted pigment is dragged lightly across and round the forms, following the contours of

the basic underlying volumetric structure.[50] For example, this may be an egg form for the human head, or a tubular form for trees, curtains or clothing. This technique, known as *scumbling*, deposits faint parallel hatched marks onto the canvas and acts to simplify the overall rendering, suppressing detail and enhancing the impression of three-dimensional form in space, whilst organizing and reinforcing the general tonal balance, and pulling together, or unifying the composition. Scumbling also introduces a grain to the image where the weave of the canvas has picked up the pigment. This grain is similar to the grain of a photograph taken using 'fast' film (high ISO rating) in low lighting. In this way, a further visual equivalence with the photograph is suggested (see Chapter Two, Section 2.6).

After the initial setting up of the image, the painting process is one of extended effort to lend a vivid, tactile, and volumetric or sculptural feel to forms that, in the original, seem flat and vaguely defined. This process animates the iconic content of the photograph, so that the smallest detail acquires an illusionistic presence that can make the subject and theme more visually immediate.
The initial period of working may extend across several weeks of three to six hours per day, after which the painting will be put aside. The next painting will be started and brought to a similar state of resolution, after which the first painting will be taken up again. This is because the painting process tends to induce the perception of an imagined resolution in the work; there is an impression of the premature achievement of the end in view, which disperses once the painting is put aside, or turned to the wall. Generally speaking, the longer the painting is worked on during each bout of activity, the greater the likelihood of mistakes in the drawing and modelling of the forms being made, and yet not being perceived as such. This self-deception occurs throughout the making of the painting, but is usually countered by regular breaks and overnight absence from the studio. After such a break, any problems with the drawing or tonal range will have become more apparent through a process of de-

[50] See the film *Abordnung* for visual documentation of this process.

familiarisation that is critical to the completion of the work. The decision as to whether to retain these digressions from the forms in the photograph can then be taken.

The painting is considered finished when it seems to convey a compelling sense of living human presence in an historically specific enclosing pictorial space, and when nothing obtrudes from the composition as being unconvincingly rendered in those terms. It should encourage identification with the situation or individuals represented, so that curiosity, imaginative speculation, empathy and reflection might be stimulated, as discussed (Figure 106). These forms of investment are intended to lead on, via the process described by Annette Kuhn above, to an awareness of the political ramifications of the images (2002:8).

In conclusion, the technique used in Poland 1940-1941 is subtractive, involving the application of Ivory Black oil pigment without the addition of white pigment. In the early stages, the paint is applied with a range of large brushes and then wiped back or removed with rags, to introduce contrast, and to facilitate the modelling of forms. These lighter areas derive from the white primed surface of the canvas, rather than a mixture of black and white oil paint. The identification of blended paint with the surface texture of the depicted form, as in much realist painting, is substituted by an identification of the paint with the nature of the photographic print: an identification founded on the exteriority of the light source that reveals its content, and extended through the evenness of the painted surface and sheen of the final glaze coat.

The information recorded on the print is retranslated in the painting as sensuous and particular form in a palpable space, not through an equivalent paint 'skin', but via a reinvestment of tactility in the evidence presented by reflected light. As Julian Bell points out with reference to traditional additive methods of oil painting in *What is Painting,* the 'continuous spread of this sensitive ooze' (1999:88) across the surface of the canvas draws attention to the activity of the painter as much as to the qualities of the depicted forms. The

technique employed in Poland 1940-1941 has, by contrast, been developed to promote an alternative impression of form existing relatively independently of the painter's agency. This independence of the painted image is intended to restore immediacy to the painting through a sustained homology with photography that is not dependent on the precise replication of the iconic content of the photographic image.

7. Glazing

Glazing is the process by which paint is applied in a semi-transparent linseed oil or resin-based solution, in order to produce a rich jewel-like surface through optical mixing of hues. These colours are perceived through accumulated translucent layers on the surface of the painting, rather than via the physical mixing and application of hues from the palette. In use since the Renaissance, it is a key technical procedure by which naturalistic effects of light and shade are produced. Commercial glaze solutions dry in approximately 24 hours, are slightly glossy and create a varnish-like shine across the surface of a painting: 'The word "glaze" suggests the "glassy" effect it may give to a picture' (Doerner, 1949:188).

In his essay 'Cézanne and the Unity of Modern Art' written in 1951, Clement Greenberg (1993) discussed the painter's conception of form as a fusion of the impressionist colour palette and the unity and tangibility of 'old master' painting. The attenuated brushwork employed by Cézanne simultaneously pulled forms forwards onto the picture plane, while preserving their tangibility in depth. This pushing and pulling of form called attention to the surface of the canvas in a manner that gave 'the picture plane its due as a physical entity' (1993:86). By contrast, according to Greenberg, the old masters had used glazes and blending of tones 'to create a neutral, translucent texture through which the illusion could glow with the least acknowledgement of the medium' (1993:86).

In Poland 1940-1941, glazes are used in this way to neutralise the surface of the canvas as the locus of painterly effects. The uniform sheen of the glaze acts to seal the composition into an illusionistic spatial field opening behind the picture plane. Like a varnish, a glaze will also have the effect of optically unifying the composition. Regardless of the variety of forms depicted, the viewer is compelled to read the painting as a single object possessing a light-reflecting surface in its own right. Scanning the painting across its surface reveals very little variation, and as a consequence, attention reverts to the people, places and things apparently organised behind the surface. This slight sheen across the canvas also acts to restore the tonal depth of the darker passages of the painting, and to deepen the depicted space of the composition.

When the painting is completed, it is left to dry for up to three months. This is the minimum recommended time for drying prior to the application of a final 'glaze' where a commercial glaze solution has not been used in the earlier stages. The glaze used is a resin-based solution that can be mixed with paint and used at any stage in the production of the painting. In the case of the paintings under discussion, it is only used at the end of the process. In this series of paintings, layers of paint have been built up with washes of turpentine and small quantities of linseed oil as mentioned above, and the final glaze coat is a mixture of a small quantity of 'raw umber' pigment with a commercial glaze solution called *Liquin*. This raw umber glaze coat warms the composition slightly, as umber is a grey-brown hue that is similar to the sepia colour of some old photographs. Applied very sparingly, it has the effect of enhancing the impact of the painting, because as a warm hue it projects optically from a neutral grey or 'cooler' ground. After a few weeks the final glaze coat will 'sink in' somewhat, and six months after glazing the painting can be varnished, if desired.

The application of a uniform glaze coat across the entire surface of the canvas is a somewhat unconventional use of the technique, since glazing is generally deployed in isolated areas of a composition to produce translucent shadow effects, or iridescent passages of more than one apparent hue. In Poland 1940-1941 it is, in effect, used as a varnish coat, with the significant difference that unlike varnish, it cannot be removed once applied. This is significant in that the glaze coat is integral to the paintings in the same way that a sepia-tinted photographic print on paper cannot be 'restored' to black and white. Whilst the glaze coat is not intended to be synonymous with the sepia tinting of some photographs, it does represent another sense in which the paintings are materially homologous with photographic prints on paper.

The completed and glazed canvas recruits its support and ground, together with the subtractive technique, rather than broken brushwork or any of the formal means of foregrounding flatness that Greenberg discusses, in order to set up a sense of 'the picture as an object' (1993:87). This objecthood is intended to transfer to the iconic content of the painting in order to boost its immediacy and to underpin the illusion of presence. In that regard, the 'human interest' that Greenberg consigned 'to the outer darkness of academicism' (1993:82) is absolutely paramount in this project.

Appendix D: Seeing Clearly. The politics of focus in contemporary photo-derived painting. Paper presented at The Left Conference: Photography and Film Criticism, at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon (November 9-10 2018).

Drastic and ongoing changes in the global political landscape since 2008 have made the question of the relationship of visual art to history and politics an urgent one for artists. According to Rainer Rochlitz, as a medium that is virtually universally legible, photography has 'reintegrated representation, figuration, the subject and narration' (2000:103) into painting. It is this democratization of painting by photography that is a prerequisite of social and political engagement, because for most people 'contemporary painting concerns only the elites' (2000:105).

Since the 1960s, painters have used photographs or film of events of political significance in order to critique representation. These images may have had a previous circulation in print or TV journalism, or more recently through online media. In order to consider the potential for contemporary painting to contribute to public discussions about political issues, I would like to group together a number of artists whose work references events bearing on Western foreign policy, and shares a formal characteristic that, I will argue, restricts its potential to contribute to political debate.

A precedent for the use of photographic sources to propound a political viewpoint in painting can be found in Edouard Manet's paintings of *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* made between 1867 and 1869. While working on the several canvasses that comprise the project, Manet altered the uniforms of the firing squad, making them look less typically Mexican and more French (Jones, 1981:14). Manet's sympathy with the Republican cause may explain the ambiguous tone of the earliest work in the series, and is underlined in his later use of the firing squad grouping from the Maximilian paintings in a watercolour of 1871 entitled *The Barricade,* which depicts the execution of Commune members by French troops loyal to the Government. Clearly there is a suggestion that Maximilian was effectively condemned by the French, despite being shot by the Mexicans (Jones, 1981:14).

It is the built-in 'promiscuity' of meaning in the Maximilian paintings, rather than their radical political content, that informs the work of contemporary artists such as Wilhelm Sasnal, Gerhard Richter, and John Keane, all of whom have produced works in response to September 11th, the 'War on Terror', or the 'Arab Spring'. Sasnal has exhibited three paintings of the corpse of Colonel Gaddafi lying on a blood-stained mattress on the floor of a storage freezer in Misrata on 21 October 2011. The paintings have been adapted from either still photographs or amateur video material, and a viewing of this footage on Youtube conveys the hysteria and chaos, but also the wider ethnic and political circumstances of the Libyan revolution, as NATO troops are seen failing to intervene in the spectacle of mob justice. That *Gaddafi* (2011) conveys little beyond a vaguely surreal painterly metaphor for the physical brutalisation of the victim, may have led Sasnal to include more context in *Gaddafi 3* (2011), which features five figures standing around the mattress, upon which Gaddafi is seen dead, but bodily whole. *Gaddafi 3* is more effective in suggesting a deposed authority figure surrounded by his captors, and yet the painting is only anchored in a specific political incident by its title.

As Sasnal himself declared in an interview with Angela Bellini:

> There is always some reference to reality. If it sometimes turns into abstraction, it's because I see paintings as essentially very sensual. If they are vague, it's because I want to give people many different ways to read it. (Bellini, 2005)

That Sasnal continues to paint political authority figures suggests an investment in content, and yet his acquiescence in ambiguity undercuts the significance of his subject choices. As blogger and artist Viktor Witkowski observes:

> To replace Gaddafi with an array of different-colored dabs of oil paint is neither radical nor enlightening. The videos and photographs of Gaddafi's last moments show a tyrant turned victim. How can we depict his opposed roles in one painting? Aren't these questions worth asking for painters? (Witkowski, 2012:online)

This critique is extended in Peter Geimer's essay 'Painting and Atrocity' (2012), in which Geimer questions the assertion that painting can somehow amplify the meaning implicit in photographs or films: 'It sips at the real, at the atrocity of the gas chamber and the banality of evil, while at the same time managing to remain in the preserve of autonomous art' (2012:36).

British artist John Keane's (2008) *Bomb Head* depicts a decapitated head in a desert setting with the strong implication that this is a Muslim victim of the second Gulf war in Iraq or Afghanistan. This setting has been generalised and rendered in a broad manner that emphasises the medium and its application at the expense of any information about the terrain. The head itself is out of focus and suggestive of victimhood in general, rather than the individual fate of the subject. Keane has made similar remarks about his work to those made by Sasnal:

> I don't expect what I do to change the world and people's attitudes. It would be nice if it did. But I certainly don't have those grandiose aspirations. I'm saying "this is my take on this" and if it hits a chord with anyone, then I think "good". (Bakewell, 2003)

Gerhard Richter (1988) points out with reference to his cycle of paintings entitled *October 18, 1977*, that the effect of blurring is to transform the horror of a photograph into something that can be grieved (2002:189). The sublimation of horror into grief through painting makes the horror endurable, and can confer meaning on an event that may otherwise seem incomprehensible. Richter's (2005) painting *September* depicts both World Trade Centre buildings ablaze after United Airlines Flight 175 struck the South Tower. The painting was initially executed as a photorealistic image until the artist dragged blue-grey pigment across it with a palette knife, partially obscuring any detail from the previous layer of paint. *September* is vague, blurred and generalised, removing it from any specific moment recorded by the source photograph, and Robert Storr interprets this generalisation as a kind of painterly distancing (2010:52). Here again is the implicit privileging of painting over photography in the

depiction of historical subjects that Geimer interrogates with regard to Luc Tuymans' painting *Der Architekt* of 1998:

> Only when the film image of the fallen Speer has been made to appear as "disappointingly banal" is it possible for the hand of the painter to elevate it to the status of art. But there is nothing justifying this seemingly obvious hierarchy. In fact, it is questionable whether Tuymans's version in oil boasts a higher complexity than that of the historical film. (Geimer, 2012:31)

The critical privileging of painting over photography and film is based on the assumption that all photographic material is somehow voyeuristic. In Storr's interpretation of *September*, by removing it from the incidental details of the event, Richter is making a broad statement about human suffering that takes no sides and reaches no conclusions beyond the reiteration of suffering as the eternal fate of humanity. As Richter points out: 'Agony, desperation and helplessness cannot be presented except aesthetically, because their source is the wounding of beauty' (Storr, 2010:54).

As a response to a politically inspired act of terrorism, *September* refrains from engaging in any illuminating dialectic about the possible motivations behind the attack, which have been framed by Susan Sontag as retaliation for US foreign policy:

> Where is the acknowledgement that this was not a cowardly attack on "civilization" or "liberty" or "humanity" or "the free world" but an attack on the world's self-proclaimed super-power, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions? (Storr, 2010:36)

Richter's well-documented aversion to political ideology and his use of multiple genres of painting is illustrative of the cultural discourse of the post-communist era in European societies, described by David Harvey, amongst others, as being rooted in major shifts in the economic and political history of the 'late capitalist' period. Discussing Wim Wenders' (1987) film *Wings of Desire* for example, Harvey has this to say: 'Death, birth, anxiety, pleasure, loneliness are all

aestheticised on the same plane, empty of any sense of class struggle, or of ethical or moral commentary' (1990:316). Richter, Sasnal and Tuymans work within a conception of art as an autonomous aesthetic activity that somehow consoles, compensates and partly redeems a world in which our efforts to create a better society by political or revolutionary means are doomed to failure. This view has a long provenance in both modern and postmodern theoretical writing about art.

For example, Herbert Marcuse, claimed that the aesthetic autonomy of art means that it can propose an alternative world, and in so doing 'represents the ultimate goal of all revolutions: the freedom and happiness of the individual' (1978:69). He conceived the quality that makes art 'artistic' as a trans-historical constant but then concluded that 'the aesthetic form removes art from the actuality of the class struggle' (1978:8). This removal acts to restrict the likelihood of progressive change by the retirement of the political drive to the imagination. Susan Sontag (2004:104) concluded that photographic images of the victims of war merely provoke the questioning of authority without leading to direct action, and in this respect, Sontag was in agreement with Jacques Rancière (2011:27), who asserted that knowledge of a political circumstance does not necessarily lead to a desire to change it. In *The Emancipated Spectator,* Rancière (2011) argues that aesthetic experience can reframe our assumptions about the world and social relations, as well as disrupt our sense of what is knowable and achievable, but that this is at the cost of a lack of direct instrumentality (2011:72). By contrast, international relations scholar Roland Bleiker insists that art *can* contribute to discussions about conflict on the basis of the process of abstraction inherent in aesthetic representation, which he claims can contribute new perspectives to traditionally rational and instrumental policy making (2012:46). Bleiker is unusual in that he advocates a political use value for art in this way, but concludes that 'a painting […] can never tell us what to do' (2012:188).

It can be seen that there is a broad consensus about the ineffectuality of art as a means to political change. However, by contrast with the use of photographs in art as a way of redeeming violence through the universalisation of meaning, John Berger argues for an alternative form of photographic narrative, drawing upon ordinary snapshots, which for him, are mementos excised from a 'life being lived' (2013:53). Berger proposes the construction of a 'radial system' or constellation of images, by which any photograph can be integrated into a context composed of other images, documents or text whereby it is seen in both personal *and* political terms. Berger argues that in this way, the 'past becomes an integral part of the process of people making their own history' (2013:60).

Both Berger (2013:51) and Sontag (2004:21) talk about the photograph as a 'trace', and photographs are frequently referred to as indexical signs, in that they are ostensibly caused by the reflection of light from their subjects. I would like to expand this sense of the photographic trace, to accommodate the idea of snapshots as evidence of photographic acts, or social performances having taken place. David Green and Joanna Lowry (2003) discuss this twofold sense of the indexicality of photography with reference to *Inert Gas Series* by Robert Barry (1969), in which the artist photographed the release of colourless gas into the air around Los Angeles. Only the landscape setting of the work is visible in these images, which redistribute the documentary function of the photograph onto the 'performative gesture' of the artist (2003:48).

So, a film photograph is not simply the result of the impact of light upon chemically coated celluloid, but also the trace of intentional social activity. Photography shares this performative aspect with painting, and regardless of ongoing disputes relating to the relative objectivity of the two media, by citing photography as a social performance, painting can promote reflection on political issues as manifested in the lived experience and decision-making of citizen photographers. For painters using second-hand photographs as source material, this will necessarily involve crediting the original photographers

wherever possible, but beyond issues relating to provenance, also enables further research into the social and political contexts of their photographs.

My own research has involved the production of series of paintings based upon sets of photographs discovered in European flea markets, or purchased from online auction websites. A recent group of works transcribed from photographs and documents formerly belonging to a Sudeten German carpenter from Czechoslovakia, brought into focus a number of issues relating to ethnicity and national identity. These pre-Second World War snapshots, taken together with the documents, including ID cards, land deeds, receipts, bank statements and a house blueprint, combine both public and private histories and enable Berger's new form of photographic narrative, in order 'to incorporate photography into social and political memory'. The transcription of photographic images into painting can also underline the conventions of picturing shared by both disciplines, or as Rosemary Hawker suggests: 'set the contours of both media atremble' (2002:553).

But how might paintings based on second-hand amateur photographs promote reflection on contemporary political circumstances? Frances Guerin argues that both photographic and painted images can bring an event into 'iconic presence' (2007:12), and mediate the process of witnessing history, in a manner that is not dependent upon their verifiably objective or empirical status. Both Guerin and Annette Kuhn advocate an engagement with the past using photographs that are acknowledged to be fallible as visual documents, but which can create a field or network of possible exchanges: 'In this network, the image itself figures largely as a trace, a clue: necessary, but not sufficient, to the activity of meaning making' (Kuhn, 2002:12). The emphasis on the social uses of photographs in these accounts offers a model for the conception of painting that I would like to propound. Painting can be conceived in terms of how it can be used by the viewer as a prompt for reflections about the past. This function of painting as a prompt or clue is predicated upon the use of photographs as traces of social activity, but is not founded upon assertions of their objectivity.

Berger's new photographic narrative is discontinuous, so that the photographs incorporated in it can approximate to memory, in which events from different times and places coexist. In 'The Allegorical Impulse', Craig Owens (1992) asserts that allegory is capable of generating metaphorical meaning from 'strategies of accumulation' such as Berger's, and cites the appropriation of photographic source material by artists as an allegorical impulse (1992:56). Owens claims that the urge to preserve appearances that underpins photography 'is one of the strongest impulses in allegory' (Owens, 1992:56), going on to stress the fragmentary and contingent nature of the photograph, which lends it to vertical associations from the past to the present day.

Owens' rehabilitation of allegory as a mode of signification provides a purpose for the citation of historical events in a contemporary form of history painting based on found photographs. His analysis is heavily indebted to Walter Benjamin, whose 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940) evokes the connection of the past to the present as 'a memory that flashes up at a moment of danger' (1999:247). Benjamin describes a dialectical relationship in which, rather than attempting to discern cause and effect in chronological sequences of historical facts, historians can identify correspondences between the past and the present in a process that is fundamentally allegorical. With the rise of new forms of right-wing populism across Europe, we are in that moment of danger today, and Benjamin's work has never been more relevant.

Appendix E: Works

(2013-2019)

The Martyr paintings

(2013-2014)

Figure A1. David Gledhill (2013) *Martyr 1*. Oil on canvas, 165 x 228 cm.

Figure A2. David Gledhill (2014) *Martyr 2*. Oil on canvas, 165 x 228 cm.

The Vietnam paintings

(2014)

Figure B1. David Gledhill (2014) *Vietnam (1)*. Oil on canvas, 92 x 134 cm.

Figure B2. David Gledhill (2014) *Vietnam (2).* Oil on canvas, 92 x 134 cm.

Figure B3. David Gledhill (2014) *Vietnam (3)*. Oil on canvas, 61 x 92 cm.

Poland 1940-1941

(2014-2015)

Figure C1. David Gledhill (2014) *Poland 1940-1941 (16)*. Oil on canvas, 153 x 214 cm.

Figure C2. David Gledhill (2014) *Poland 1940-1941 (4)*. Oil on canvas, 153 x 231 cm.

Figure C3. David Gledhill (2015) *Poland 1940-1941 (14)*. Oil on canvas, 153 x 234 cm.

Figure C4. David Gledhill (2015) *Poland 1940-1941 (1).* Oil on canvas, 153 x 234 cm.

Figure C5. David Gledhill (2014) *Poland 1940-1941 (11)*. Oil on canvas, 39 x 59 cm.

Figure C6. David Gledhill (2015) *Poland 1940-1941 (12)*. Oil on canvas, 153 x 232 cm.

Figure C7. David Gledhill (2014) *Poland 1940-1941 (7)*. Oil on canvas, 234 x 153 cm.

Figure C8. David Gledhill (2014) *Poland 1940-1941 (3)*. Oil on canvas, 234 x 153 cm.

Figure C9. David Gledhill (2015) *Poland 1940-1941 (10)*. Oil on canvas, 59 x 39 cm.

Figure C10. David Gledhill (2015) *Poland 1940-1941 (2)*. Oil on canvas, 61 x 38 cm.

Figure C11. David Gledhill (2014) *Poland 1940-1941 (15)*. Oil on canvas, 232 x 153 cm.

Figure C12. David Gledhill (2018) *Screenshot from Abordnung* (2015) HD video, 21m 51s.

Figure C13. David Gledhill (2018) *Screenshot from Abordnung* (2015) HD video, 21m 51s.

Figure C14. David Gledhill (2018) *Screenshot from Abordnung* (2015) HD video, 21m 51s.

Figure C15. David Gledhill (2018) *Screenshot from Abordnung* (2015) HD video, 21m 51s.

Individual paintings

(2015-2019)

Figure D1. David Gledhill (2015) *Hans and Hinga at Bad Freienwalde, September 1933.*
Oil on canvas, 153 x 205 cm.

Figure D2. David Gledhill (2015) *Untitled (Officers on Deck).* Oil on canvas, 181 x 122 cm.

Figure D3. David Gledhill (2019) *Wegscheide Juli 1930.* Oil on canvas, 214 x 153 cm.

Figure D4. David Gledhill (2019) *3 Janvier 1933.* Oil on canvas, 153 x 202 cm.

Figure D5. David Gledhill (2019) *Untitled.* Oil on canvas, 49 x 38 cm.

The Berlin Olympic Village Project

(2015-2017)

Figure E1. David Gledhill (2015) *Wolfgang Fürstner*. Oil on canvas, 112 x 80 cm.

Figure E2. David Gledhill (2015) *Wohnhaus an der oberen Dorfaue*. Oil on canvas, 92 x 148 cm.

Figure E3. David Gledhill (2016) *Olympisches Dorf (3)*. Oil on canvas, 122 x 168 cm.

Figure E4. David Gledhill (2016) *Olympisches Dorf (1).* Oil on canvas, 154 x 128 cm.

Figure E5. David Gledhill (2016) *Olympisches Dorf (2)*. Oil on canvas, 168 x 122 cm.

Figure E6. David Gledhill (2017) *Olympisches Dorf (4)*. Oil on canvas, 122 x 178 cm.

Figure E7. David Gledhill (2017) *Olympisches Dorf (5)*. Oil on canvas, 122 x 178 cm.

Figure E8. David Gledhill (2016) *Hindenburghaus (1)*. Oil on canvas, 122 x 185 cm.

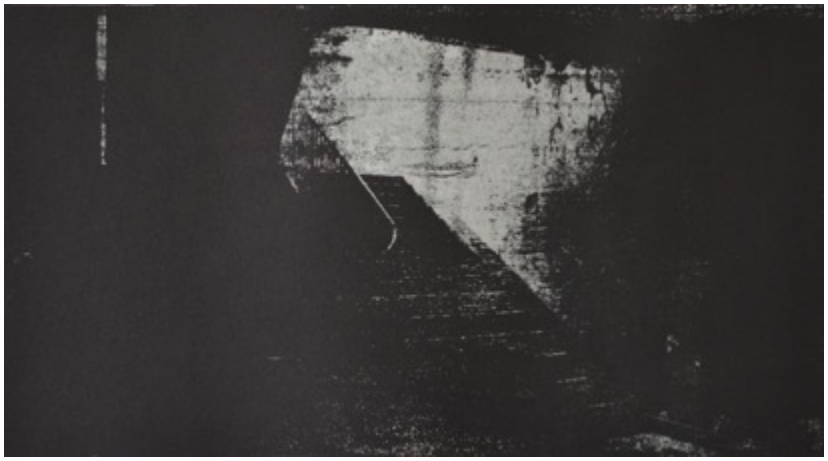
Figure E9. David Gledhill (2016) *Hindenburghaus (2)*. Oil on canvas, 122 x 218 cm.

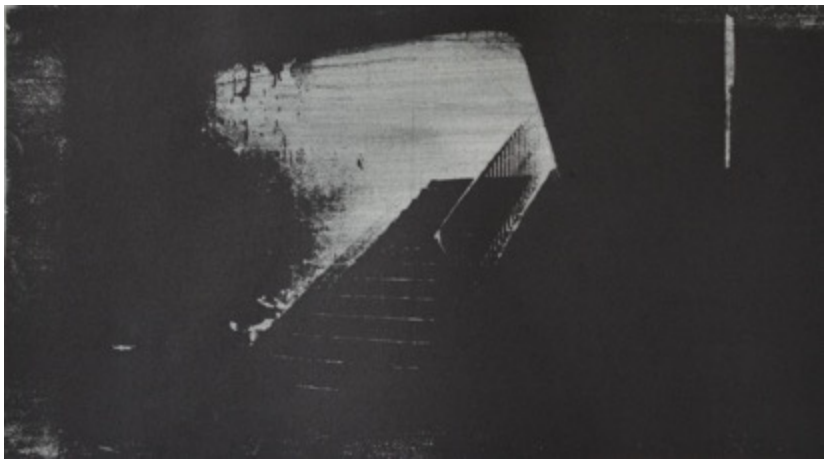
Figure E10. David Gledhill (2016) *Historische Flache bitte nicht betreten!* Oil on canvas, 92 x 162 cm.

Figure E11. David Gledhill (2016) *Kolonnade*. Oil on canvas, 122 x 218 cm.

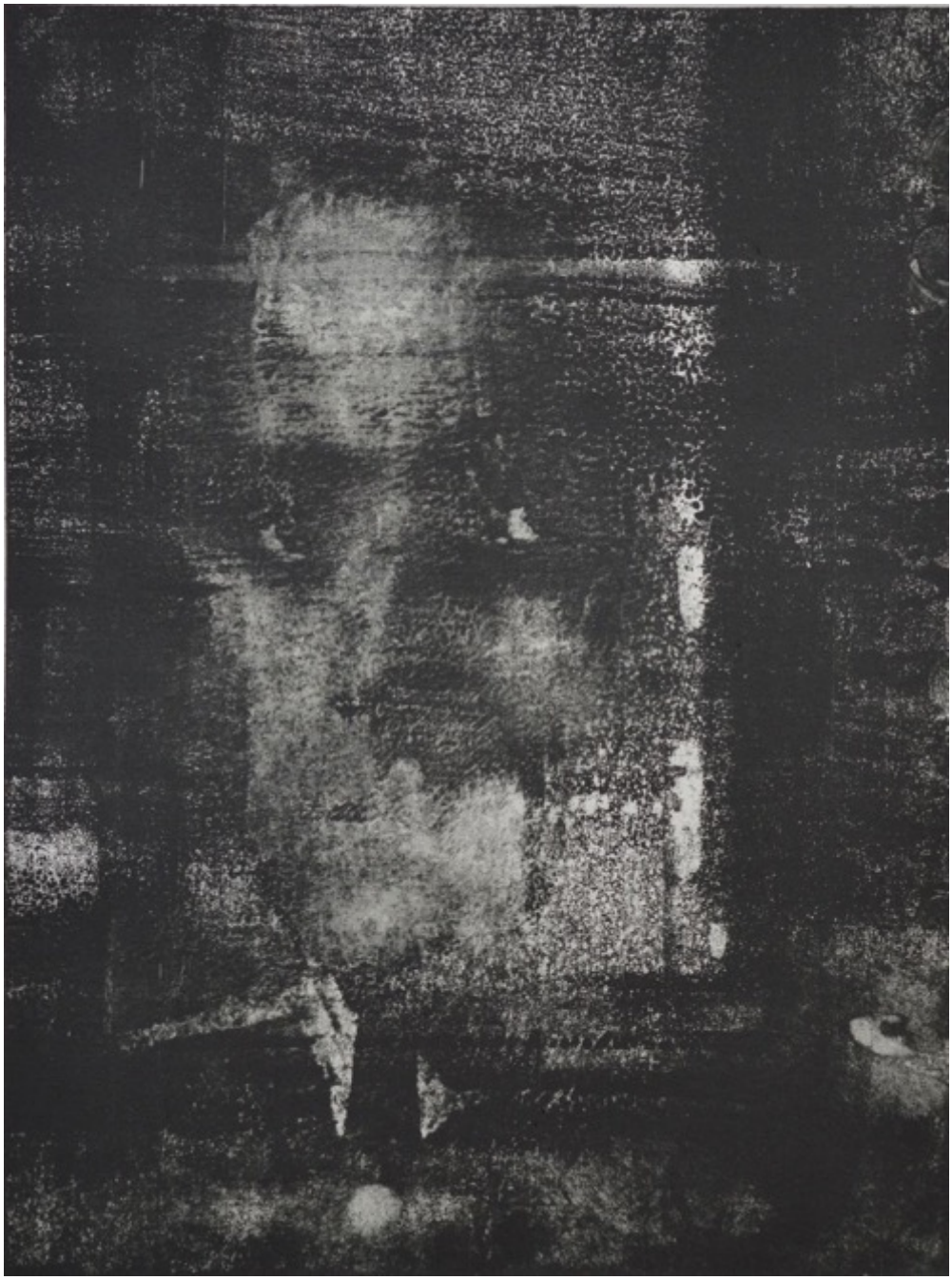
Figure E12. David Gledhill (2016) *Kommandantenhaus (1)*. Oil on canvas, 92 x 162 cm.

Figure E13. David Gledhill (2017) *Kommandantenhaus (2)*. Oil on canvas, 122 x 185 cm.





Figures E14-18. David Gledhill (2016) *Treppe im Hindenburghaus (1-5)*. Gum arabic and oil-based ink on paper, 43 x 56 cm (framed).



Figures E19-23. David Gledhill (2016) *Fürstner (1-5)*. Gum arabic and oil-based ink on paper, 56 x 43 (framed).

Figure E24. David Gledhill (2018*) Screenshot from Fürstner* (2016) HD video, 4m:42s.

Figure E25. David Gledhill (2018) *Screenshot from Fürstner* (2016) HD video, 4m:42s.

Figure E26. David Gledhill (2018) *Screenshot from Fürstner* (2016) HD video, 4m:42s.

Figure E27. David Gledhill (2018) *Screenshot from Soviet* (2016) HD video, 11m:37s.

Figure E28. David Gledhill (2018) *Screenshot from Soviet* (2016) HD video, 11m:37s.

Figure E29. David Gledhill (2018) *Screenshot from Soviet* (2016) HD video, 11m:37s.

Figure E30. David Gledhill (2017) *Bathroom Fixture from Accommodation Block 285*. Mixed media assemblage, dimensions variable.

***Karel*/Karl**

(2017-2019)

Figure F1. David Gledhill (2017) *Karl Hofmann*. Oil on canvas, 51 x 39 cm.

Figure F2. David Gledhill (2017) *Elfi Hofmann (1)*. Oil on canvas, 51 x 39 cm.

Figure F3. David Gledhill (2018) *Elfi Hofmann (2)*. Oil on canvas, 48 x 39 cm.

Figure F4. David Gledhill (2018) *Untitled (1)*. Oil on canvas, 93 x 135 cm.

Figure F5. David Gledhill (2018) *Untitled (2)*. Oil on canvas, 156 x 91 cm.

Figure F6. David Gledhill (2019) *Zum Andenken in Rückkehr aus der Gefangenschaft. Am 8 Juni 1948. Aufgenommen in Ansbach.* Oil on canvas, 55 x 38 cm.

Figure F7. David Gledhill (2017) *Geselligkeits Verein Frohsinn (Social Club) 1935*. Oil on canvas, 123 x 176 cm.

Figure F8. David Gledhill (2018) *Border Pass belonging to Karl Hofmann.* Laser cut on wood, 15 x 21 cm

Figure F9. David Gledhill (2019) *Karl Hofmann.* Paintings with suitcases, laser cuts on wood, documents, photographs, map and found furniture, dimensions variable.

Figure F10. David Gledhill (2019) *Karl Hofmann* (detail). Paintings with suitcases, laser cuts on wood, documents, photographs, map and found furniture, dimensions variable.

Figure F11. David Gledhill (2019) *Karl Hofmann* (detail). Paintings with suitcases, laser cuts on wood, documents, photographs, map and found furniture, dimensions variable.

Figure F12. David Gledhill (2019) *Karl Hofmann* (detail). Paintings with suitcases, laser cuts on wood, documents, photographs, map and found furniture, dimensions variable.

Figure F13. David Gledhill (2019) *Elfi Hofmann.* Painting with flowers, postcards, bookcase, laser cuts on wood, suitcase.

Figure F14. David Gledhill (2019) *Elfi Hofmann* (detail). Painting with flowers, postcards, bookcase, laser cuts on wood, suitcase.

Figure F15. David Gledhill (2019) *Elfi Hofmann* (detail). Painting with flowers, postcards, bookcase, laser cuts on wood, suitcase.

Ruth Finger

(2019)

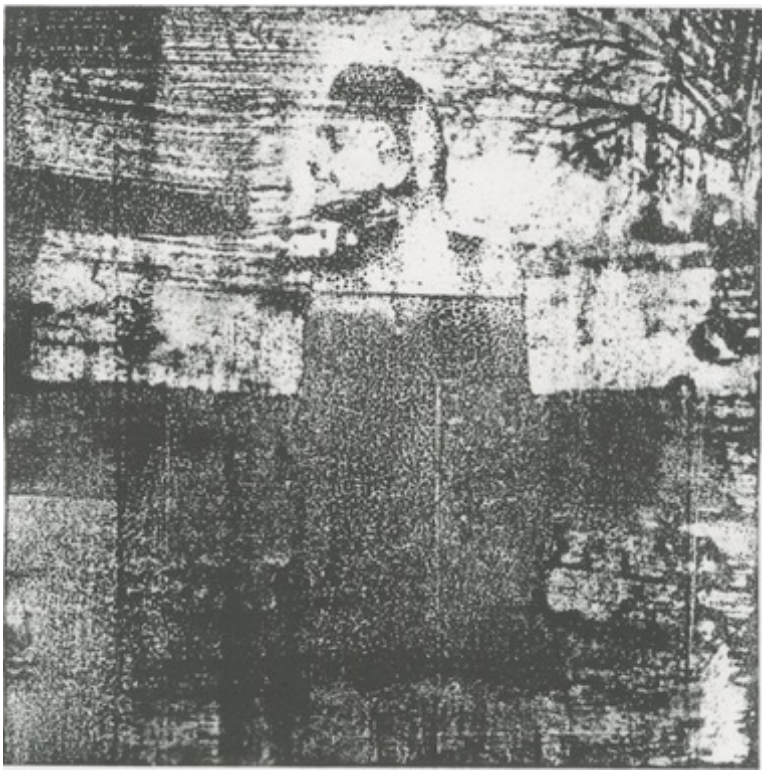


Figure G1-2. David Gledhill (2018) *Ruth Finger (1)* and *(2)*. Gum Arabic and oil-based ink on paper.

Figure G3. David Gledhill (2018) *Ruth Finger* (left panel). Oil on canvas, 152 x 152 cm.

Figure G4. David Gledhill (2018) *Ruth Finger* (centre panel). Oil on canvas, 152 x 152 cm.

Figure G5. David Gledhill (2018) *Ruth Finger* (right panel). Oil on canvas, 152 x 152 cm.

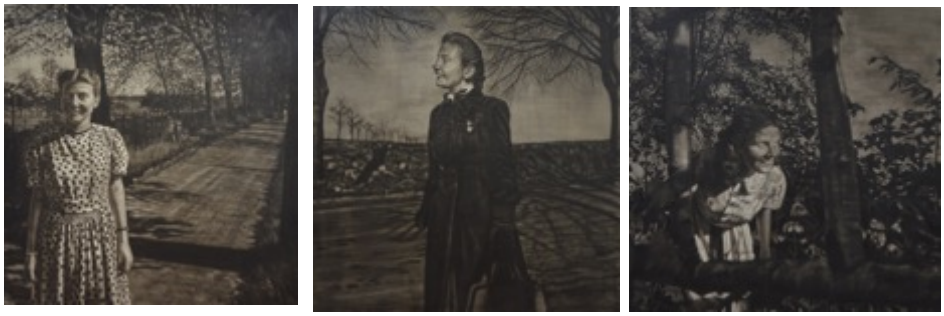


Figure G6. David Gledhill (2018) *Ruth Finger.* Oil on canvas, dimensions as above.

Appendix F: Exhibitions

‘War and Racism’

Rogue Open Studios
26 September - 28 September 2014

Figure H1. David Gledhill (2014) ‘*War and Racism’ installation view*. Photograph. L-R: *Poland 1940-1941 (3), Poland 1940-1941 (16),* and *Poland 1940-1941 (7).*

‘Abordnung’

Rogue Open Studios
10 July - 12 July 2015

Figure I1. David Gledhill (2015) ‘*Abordnung’ installation view*. Photograph. L-R: *Poland 1940-1941 (4), Poland 1940-1941 (14),* and *Poland 1940-1941 (15).*

‘Hankering for Classification’

Toast, Federation House, Manchester
15 November – 20 December 2014

Figure J1. David Gledhill (2015) '*Hankering for Classification' installation view with Poland 1940-1941 (16).* Photograph.

Figure J2. David Gledhill (2015) '*Hankering for Classification' installation view with Poland 1940-1941 (16)*. Photograph.

‘Album’

Grosvenor Gallery, Manchester School of Art
17 February – 2 March 2015

Figure K1. David Gledhill (2015) '*Album' installation view.* Photograph. L-R: *Poland 1940-1941 (16), Poland 1940-1941 (3),* and *Poland 1940-1941 (7).*

Figure K2. David Gledhill (2015) '*Album' installation view.* Photograph. L-R: *Poland 1940-1941 (12*), and *Poland 1940-1941 (14).*

Figure K3. David Gledhill (2015) '*Album' installation view.* Photograph. L-R: *Poland 1940-1941 (12)*, and *Poland 1940-1941 (14).*

Figure K4. David Gledhill (2015) '*Album' installation view.* Photograph. L-R: *Poland 1940-1941 (3)* and *Poland 1940-1941 (7)*

’Olydo Berlin 16’ (1)

Deutsche Kreditbank AG, Berlin
19 July – 26 August 2016

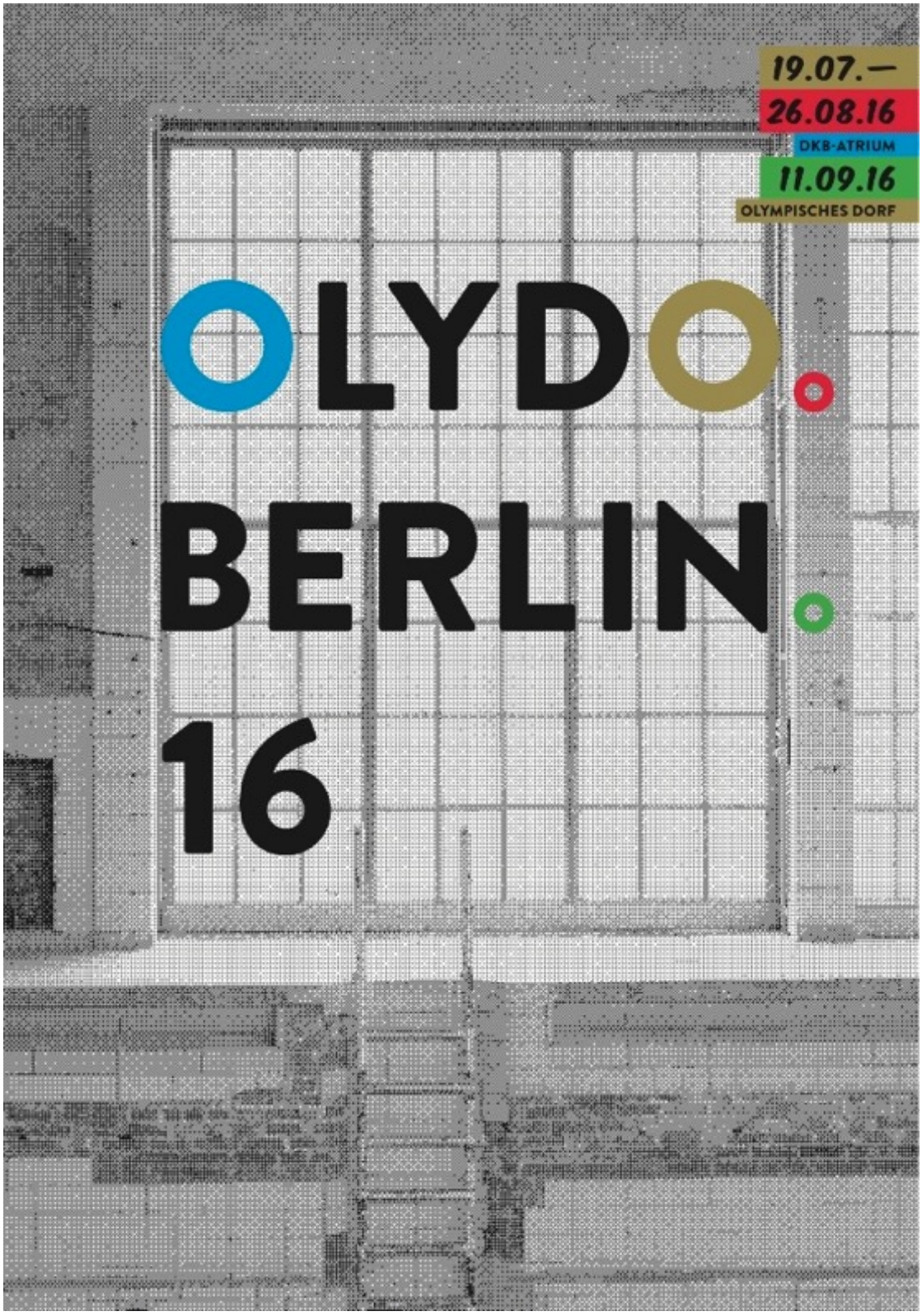


Figure L1. ‘Olydo Berlin 16’ poster design.

Figure L2. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' installation view*. Photograph.

Figure L3. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' installation view*. Photograph.

Figure L4. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' installation view*. Photograph L-R: *Olympische Dorf (1),* and *Olympische Dorf (3)*

Figure L5. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' installation view*. Photograph. L-R: *Wohnhaus an der oberen Dorfaue*, and *Olympisches Dorf (2)*

Figure L6. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' installation view with Hindenburghaus (2)*. Photograph.

Figure L7. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' installation view with Kommandantenhaus (1)*. Photograph.

Figure L8. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' installation view with still from Soviet*. Photograph.

‘Olydo Berlin 16’ (2)

Berlin Olympic Village Gymnasium, Elstal
11 September 2016

Figure M1. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' entrance*. Photograph.

Figure M2. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' installation view*. Photograph. L-R: *Olympisches Dorf (3), Olympisches Dorf (1)* and *Olympisches Dorf (2*)

Figure M3. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' installation view*. Photograph.

Figure M4. David Gledhill (2016) '*Olydo Berlin 16' Information stand*. Photograph.

‘Berlin 1936’

Rogue Open Studios
15 October - 17 October 2016

Figures N1 and N2. David Gledhill (2016) '*Berlin 1936' installation views.* With (above) L-R Hindenburghaus (2) and Kolonnade and (below) Olympische Dorf 1). Photograph.

‘Berlin 1936: Olympic Village Project’

neo:gallery 23, The Marketplace, Bolton
18 March – 30 April 2017

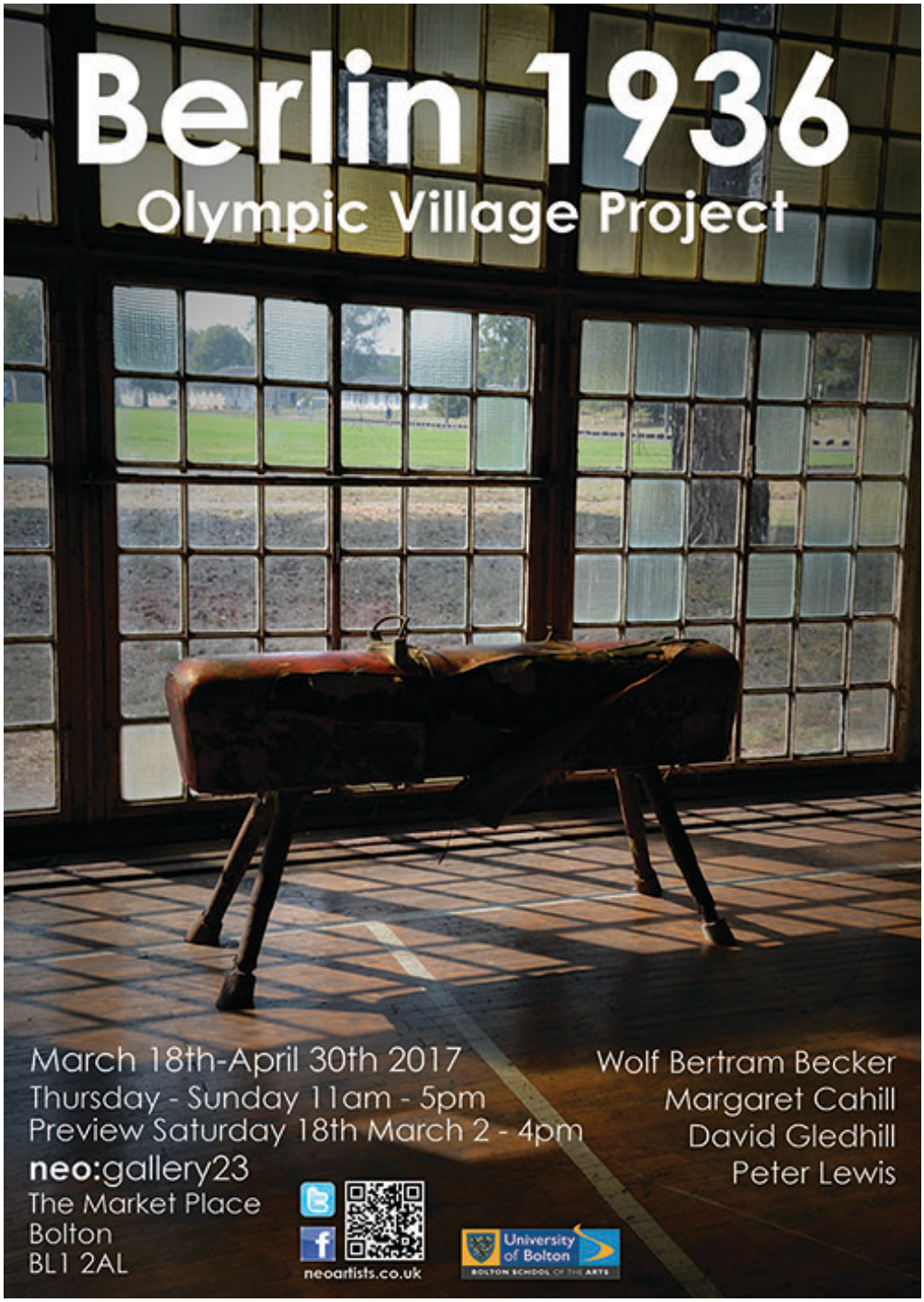


Figure O1. David Gledhill and Ged Young (2017) *Poster design for 'Berlin 1936'*.

Figure O2. David Gledhill (2017) '*Berlin 1936' installation view*. Photograph.

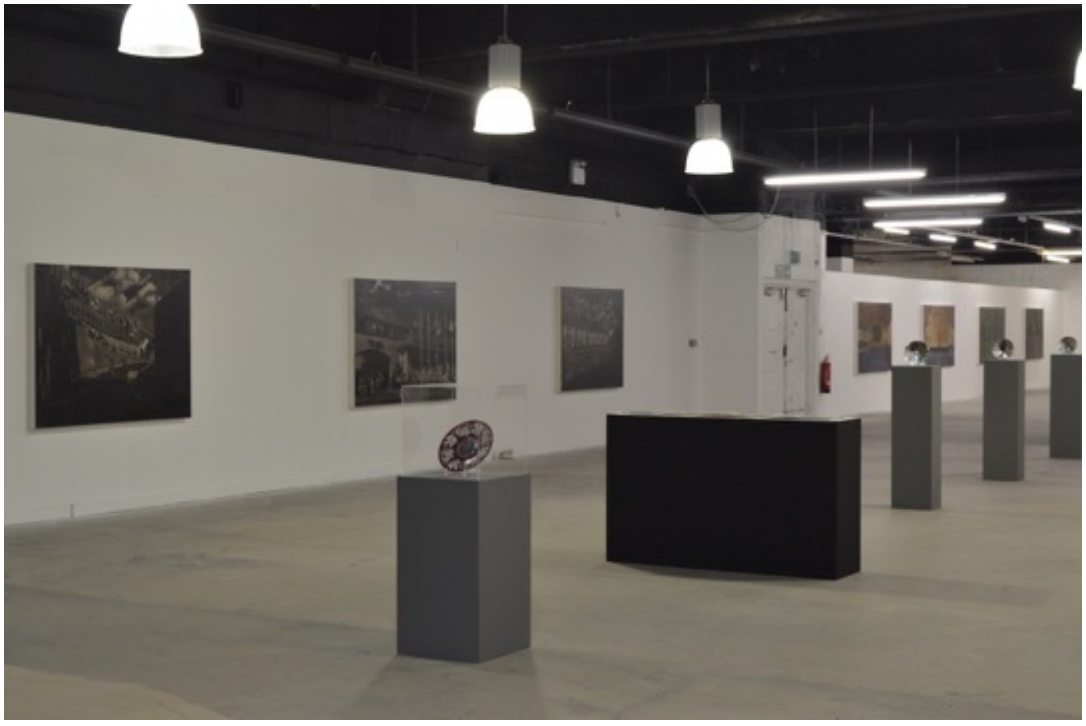


Figure O3. David Gledhill (2017) '*Berlin 1936' installation view*. Photograph.

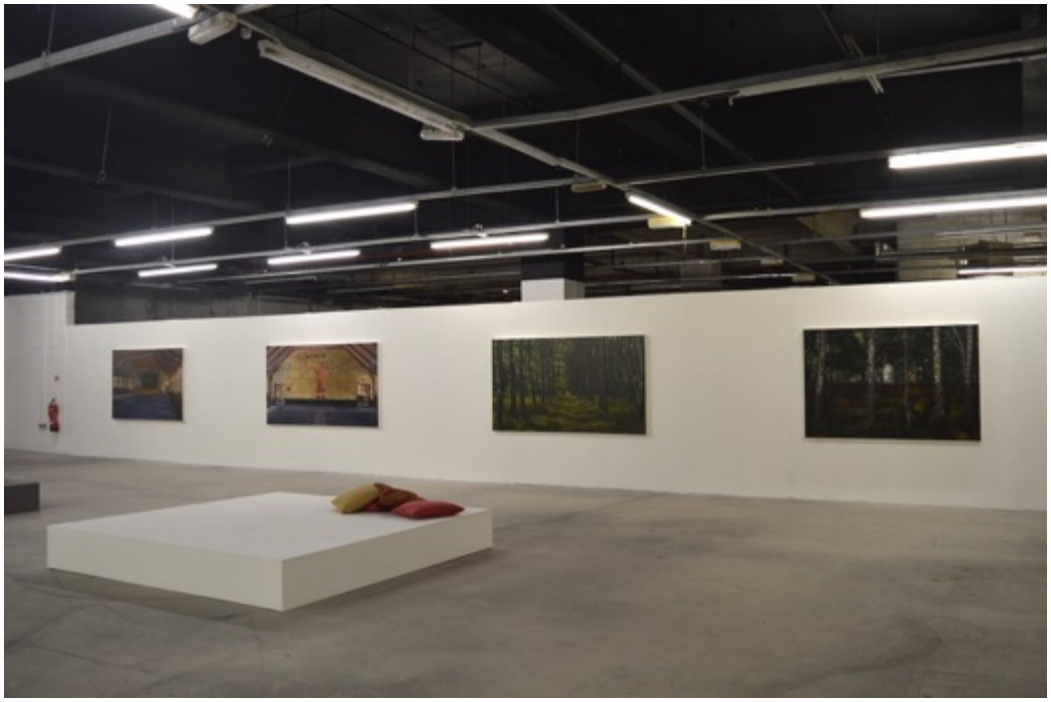


Figure O4. David Gledhill (2017) '*Berlin 1936' installation view*. Photograph.

Figure O5. David Gledhill (2017) '*Berlin 1936' installation view with Wolfgang Fürstner*. Photograph.

Figure O6. David Gledhill (2017) '*Berlin 1936' installation view*. Photograph.

Figure O7. David Gledhill (2017) '*Berlin 1936' installation view with still from Soviet*. Photograph.

‘Manifestation’

Rogue Project Space, 12 July-13 September, 2019

Figure P1. David Gledhill (2019) ‘*Manifestation’ installation view with Karl Hofmann*. Photograph.

Appendix G: List of works exhibited 2013-2019

1. 'War and Racism' (Rogue Studios, 20-28 September 2014)

Poland 1940-1941 (3) (2014) Oil on canvas, 234 x 153 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (16) (2014) Oil on canvas, 153 x 214 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (7) (2014) Oil on canvas, 234 x 153 cm

Vietnam (1) (2014) Oil on canvas, 92 x 134 cm

Martyr (1) (2014) Oil on canvas, 165 x 228 cm

2. 'Hankering for Classification' (Toast, Federation House, 15 November-20 December 2014)

Poland 1940-1941 (16) Oil on canvas, 153 x 214 cm

3. 'Abordnung' (Rogue Studios, 10-12 July, 2015)

Poland 1940-1941 (1) Oil on canvas, 153 x 234 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (2) Oil on canvas, 61 x 38 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (3) Oil on canvas, 234 x 153 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (4) Oil on canvas, 153 x 231 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (10) Oil on canvas, 59 x 39 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (14) Oil on canvas, 153 x 234 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (15) Oil on canvas, 232 x 153 cm

4. 'Facilitators, perpetrators, victims' (Rogue Studios, 24-25 October 2015)

Hans and Hinga at Bad Freienwalde, September 1933 (2015) Oil on canvas 153 x 205 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (4) Oil on canvas, 153 x 231 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (7) Oil on canvas, 234 x 153 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (14) Oil on canvas, 153 x 234 cm

Untitled (Officers on Deck) (2015) Oil on canvas, 181 x 122 cm

5. 'Album' (Grosvenor Gallery, Manchester School of Art, 17 February-2 March 2016)

Poland 1940-1941 (16) Oil on canvas, 153 x 214 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (3) Oil on canvas, 234 x 153 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (7) Oil on canvas, 234 x 153 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (12) Oil on canvas, 153 x 232 cm

Poland 1940-1941 (14) Oil on canvas, 153 x 234 cm

6. 'Olydo Berlin 16' (1) (Deutsche Kreditbank AG, Berlin 19 July-26 August 2016)

Olympisches Dorf (1) (2016) Oil on canvas, 154 x 128 cm

Olympisches Dorf (2) (2016) Oil on canvas, 168 x 122 cm

Olympisches Dorf (3) (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 168 cm

Kommandantenhaus (1) (2016) Oil on canvas, 92 x 162 cm

Wohnhaus an der oberen Dorfaue (2016) Oil on canvas, 92 x 148 cm

Hindenburghaus (2) (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 218 cm

Treppe im Hindenburghaus (1-5) (2016) Gum arabic and oil-based ink on paper, 43 x 56 cm (framed)

Soviet (2016) HD video, 11m:37s

7. 'Olydo Berlin 16' (2) (Berlin Olympic Village, 11 September 2016)

Olympisches Dorf (1) (2016) Oil on canvas, 154 x 128 cm

Olympisches Dorf (2) (2016) Oil on canvas, 168 x 122 cm

Olympisches Dorf (3) (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 168 cm

Kommandantenhaus (1) (2016) Oil on canvas, 92 x 162 cm

Wohnhaus an der oberen Dorfaue (2016) Oil on canvas, 92 x 148 cm

Hindenburghaus (2) (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 218 cm

Treppe im Hindenburghaus (1-5) (2016) Gum arabic and oil-based ink on paper, 43 x 56 cm (framed)

Soviet (2016) HD video, 11m:37s

8. 'Berlin 1936' (Rogue Studios, 15-16 October 2016)

Wolfgang Fürstner (2015) Oil on canvas, 112 x 80 cm

Olympisches Dorf (1) (2016) Oil on canvas, 154 x 128 cm

Olympisches Dorf (3) (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 168 cm

Kolonnade (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 218 cm

Hindenburghaus (2) (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 218 cm

Fürstner (2016) HD video, 4m:42s

Fürstner (1) (2016) Gum arabic and oil-based ink on paper, 56 x 43 (framed)

Fürstner (2) (2016) Gum arabic and oil-based ink on paper, 56 x 43 (framed)

9. 'Berlin 1936: Olympic Village Project' (neo:gallery 23, Bolton, 18 March-30 April 2017)

Wolfgang Fürstner (2015) Oil on canvas, 112 x 80 cm

Olympisches Dorf (1) (2016) Oil on canvas, 154 x 128 cm

Olympisches Dorf (3) (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 168 cm

Olympisches Dorf (4) (2017) Oil on canvas, 122 x 178 cm

Olympisches Dorf (5) (2017) Oil on canvas, 122 x 178 cm

Kolonnade (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 218 cm

Hindenburghaus (1) (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 185 cm

Hindenburghaus (2) (2016) Oil on canvas, 122 x 218 cm

Kommandantenhaus (2) (2017) Oil on canvas, 122 x 185 cm

Treppe im Hindenburghaus (1,3,5) (2016) Gum arabic and oil-based ink on paper, 43 x 56 cm (framed)

Fürstner (2) (2016) Gum arabic and oil-based ink on paper, 56 x 43 (framed)

Fürstner (2016) HD video, 4m:42s

Soviet (2016) HD video, 11m:37s

10. 'Manifestation' (Rogue Studios, 12 July-13 September 2019)

Karl Hofmann (2019) Found furniture, paintings, photographs, documents, map