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I define myself as a *photomedia*¹ artist; employing media and processes defined primarily by their use of light, as opposed to the exclusive use of the photographic apparatus. Guided by my fascination with the physical properties and ethereal qualities of light I explore concepts of journey, place and ecologies of time.

Previously I identified exclusively as a photographer, defining all aspects of my (public and private) practice through the lens of the camera. Access to a colour darkroom has facilitated a broader palette from which I create work, thereby opening up new possibilities for the creation of camera-less or lens-less light objects and interventions, which currently take place at the printing stage in the colour darkroom. Unsurprisingly, undertaking a Masters in Lens-based Media has also opened up my practice to new methods. Consequently, the title of “photographer” now feels like a straightjacket, and no longer accurately represents my practice.

The term *photomedia* creates space for new temporal and spatial explorations through moving image, light projection and installation work; as well as alternative approaches to works on photosensitive surfaces—by incorporating light-painting methods in the darkroom and cyanotypes for example. I feel I now have space in which my practice can evolve and grow.

motivation + journeys.

I undertake two journeys in my practice.

Firstly, the real-world physical journey—as a traveller (commuter, emigrant, tourist)—provides the conditions for taking photographs. I tend to take photos in *other* places, in spaces away from my home space—elsewhere. This state of being, when one is literally transported away from familiar spaces, creates a psychological space for contemplation. Being somewhere else (in a place), or on the way to somewhere else (in a non-place²), is fertile ground for wandering thoughts, dreamlike states and reflection.

My wanderlust is not something I chose; and is probably a combination of nature and nurture. I recall that during my teenage years I was eager to travel and explore the world, to experience and take in that which falls outside of my own limited horizons. I sensed, even then, that travel could offer me an outside perspective on my own life; a *truer* education that would also satisfy my curiosity of this world, this universe, this life. My interest in journey is informed by my own experiences of travel and migration to a place from which “I am not from”, but also an awareness of how my identity is forged through the journeys of migration undertaken by members of my immediate family.

When situated “elsewhere” I am reminded that I am a foreigner, an “other”. However, when I travel, this otherness can lead to a sense of wonder (as opposed to ostracisation) and directs my attention inward. This contemplative state of being creates the conditions in which I often feel compelled to take photographs. There are moments of wonder, contemplation, loneliness that come from independent travel, independent migration; and I seek to capture those feelings through the work I create. There is an oneiric quality to such moments that I want to translate into my work. The art that moves me most is also work that speaks to such *magic*: that which lies beyond or in-between. *Magic* is that which cannot be easily explained through language alone; the causes of which are not immediately apparent. I believe this is the deep-seated core of my motivation to make *art*.

Secondly, I undertake a journey-through-process during the production phase of my practice (occurring mainly in the colour darkroom). Here my enduring fascination with light finds another form. This is a space in which I *make*, rather than *take* (a photograph). This is a space for play, experimentation and *thinking*—to borrow John Dunnigan’s term for “the union of critical making and critical thinking” (Dunnigan 2013, p.94).

Traditionally exposure time in photography is defined as the temporal gap between the shutter opening and closing; when a photograph is “taken”. In my practice, I would like to propose an alternative to this view; to offer a counterpoint to Henri Cartier-Bresson’s *decisive moment*. Taking the photograph is simply one part of my process. I consider the time the entire process takes—from the undertaking of a journey to the production of the final print in the darkroom—as the true exposure time in my work. This durational aspect to my practice feels important and speaks to the passage of time, as well as a passage *from, to* and *through* (physical and psychological) spaces.

context.

My practice sits within and is influenced by the work of contemporary photographic artists working with traditional as well as experimental methods. There are many artists working with experimental analogue photography techniques—Liz Nielsen, Nicolai Howalt, Walead Beshty, Chloe Sells, Adam Jeppesen, Jessica Eaton, Gundali Blum, Daniel T. Blum, Garry Fabian Miller; the list goes on and on. It seems artists are looking for a way to do something new with photographic media—through new forms of publishing, by incorporating new media technologies or through various forms of collage and montage—in order to create something that is less about documentation of the world around us, as it is a new interaction with and interpretation of that world.

However, historical art movements also deserve a mention here as I feel an affinity with the goals of Abstract Expressionism, the Bauhaus, Minimalism, Suprematism and artists who seek the experience of the “sublime” (as loaded and unfashionable a term as that is) such as James Turrell and Anish Kapoor.

graduation project. possible outcomes.

For my graduation project a combination of three possible outcomes present themselves— photographic prints, moving images and installation—creating a unified body of work in which individual artworks enter into a dialogue with each other, facilitating potential new meanings and associations in the mind of the viewer.

1. photographs and photographic prints

During my (European) summer break I travelled (as a tourist) for leisure and to meet with loved ones. I experimented with photographing the landscape through prisms to distort that which I saw through the camera lens. This material, in combination with photographs I took last year, will form my starting point for an exhibition of prints. [I will insert some images here]

Until now I have worked to a maximum scale of 30x40cm in the darkroom, using pre-cut sheets of photographic paper. I plan to increase the scale of my analogue photographic prints by working from a 30 inch (width) by 50 metre (length) roll increasing not only the physical scale (therefore immersive potential) of my work, but the technical degree of difficulty. As I am using the darkroom located at the Willem de Kooning Academy (WdKA) I will require the assistance and co-operation of the Image and Sound Station Instructors, namely Menno Boer and Jeroen de Wijs, for facilities maintenance and technical advice. For specialised analogue colour printing techniques I can also reach out to Peter Svensen—owner of Amsterdam photo lab Aap-lab, artist, and expert in analogue colour printing techniques.

N.B. For a detailed description of working methods please refer to my Essay on Method: *What Does It Take to Make a Contemplative Practice? : An Extended Essay*. <https://pzwiki.wdka.nl/mediadesign/Sonia/essayonmethod>

2. moving images

Increasingly, the moving image is being incorporated into my practice. In addition to the production of */// Pendulum*, an experimental short film I made earlier this year, I have shot short clips with my phone to *sketch* out ideas or capture moments that benefit from the longer temporal duration of video. The introduction of moving image creates another temporal dimension within my work, extending the time-space it resides in. This has the potential to create a space for contemplation in the mind of the viewer, creating a comparable moment of wonder to the one I experience on my various aforementioned journeys.

Recently, I've recorded slow motion sequences featuring reflections of street lamps on a water surface at night. The result is abstract—achieved through tight cropping, high contrast imagery and temporal distortion (due to the use of slow motion). It's difficult to make out if the subject matter is naturally occurring or digitally generated—I like this. My hope is that, although the viewer may not be able to discern exactly what they're looking at, their attention is arrested by the hypnotic effect. The working title for this work is *Internal Reflection*—a play on the literal and metaphoric meanings of the words. (N.B. link to example: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B3kiLFdFyRq/>)

In the coming months I plan to purchase a compact camera with high speed capture capabilities (Sony RX100 VII) and use the *2020 Eye Research Labs* project to develop my ideas further.

3. installation/light objects

Similarly, I believe incorporating an installation component can fulfil the same function as that of moving image i.e. to create a space for contemplation. However, the form that it will take remains open, and I must admit that I question if I am straying too far—from my centre, my comfort zone, my strengths. At the moment I'm considering light projections or an optical or kinetic object, using light altering materials and surfaces—plastic film, mirrors, prisms, lenses, water for example—set in motion through mechanical means. I look toward the work of artists who create (kinetic and fixed) light objects such as Alberto Biasi, Karl Gertsner and Dieter Jung.

I realise that in order to develop these ideas further dedicated time for experimentation and prototyping is imperative. To work towards that goal, I plan to book one of the private studios in the WdKA Drawing Station for a period of concentrated practice-based research. I also want to learn how to make a simple rotating motor and experiment with 3D printing in order to facilitate the mechanical aspects of installation work or for carrying out darkroom interventions at the printing stage. For technical assistance I will consult Javier Lloret (artist, PZI tutor and WdKA Interaction Station instructor) as the incorporating these new elements requires an expansion of my current skillset.

1. I refer to Jai McKenzie's definition of photomedia as described in her book *Light and Photomedia*: "The photographic devices that fall under the term photomedia are as broad as the etymological scope of the words photographic and media. Essentially I consider all devices that use light and media as photomedia including photography, cinema, video, television, mobile phones, computers and photocopiers" (McKenzie, 2014, p.1). By this definition the camera obscura and cyanotype also fall under the umbrella of photomedia.

2. Non-place is a term coined by Marc Augé in his book *Non-Places: An Introduction to an Anthology of Super Modernity*. Here *non-places* are defined as places we pass through, usually on the way to our destination; spaces that are devoid of emotional attachment or meaningful connections. Examples of *non-places* include airports, motorways, shopping complexes, hotels and trains. As artist Dexter Dalwood, whose recent work explores non-places, suggests, "these are spaces where you can carve out some genuine reflection."

references.

Dunnigan, John. (2013) 'Thinking'. In *The Art of Critical Making Rhode Island School of Design on Creative Practice*, Hoboken, N.J: Wiley, 94–115. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2015021011041> (November 4, 2019).

Frieze.com. (2019). *Dexter Dalwood's Newest Paintings Reflect on 'Non-Places'*. [online] Available at: <https://frieze.com/media/dexter-dalwoods-newest-paintings-reflect-non-places> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2019].

McKenzie, J. (2014) *Light and photomedia: a new history and future of the photographic image*. London: I.B. Taurus.

bibliography.

Please see Thesis Outline.

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1844 words with footnotes

1680 words without footnotes