

## Project Proposal - Elleke Hageman - November 3d 2014 - Trimester 4

*Tentative title*

*There is no truth, there is no reality.*

*Introduction*

I am very much interested in the border between what I am at the moment calling "personal reality" and reality. This theory I have borders at a solipsistic point of view.

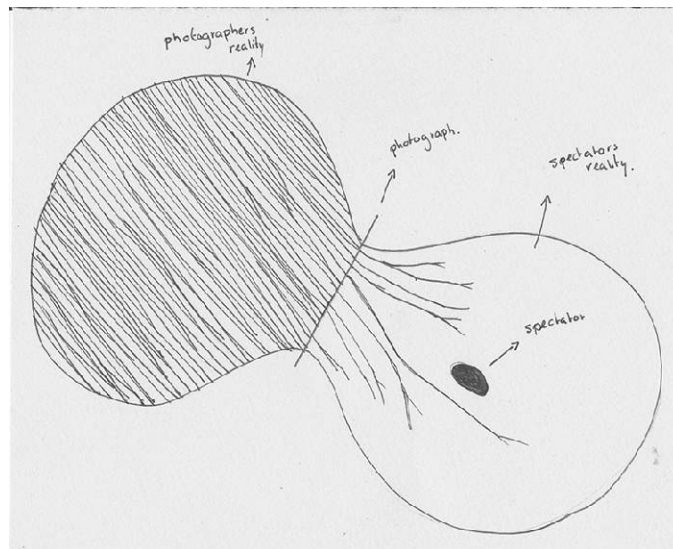
In my opinion every human being has something which I am at the moment calling personal reality. This does not refer to the material reality in which we live, so places, spaces and objects around us, but rather is our interpretation of the material reality.

Every experience, impression, idea, thought, emotion becomes a facet in personal reality out of which personal reality is constructed. This construction will never coincide with reality because it is simply impossible to have knowledge and perceive everything that is in reality and therefore create an image that is similar to reality. Which also means that every experience becomes a segment of a successive experience

It happens to be so that in order to be able to memorize things we de-construct and re-construct images. When we look at an image we only see small segments at one time this is the de-construction of an image. In our mind we re-construct this image again and store it in our memory. Imagery and perception overlap. Visual imagery triggers memory. Which in his case influences perception. (the cognitive animal. 351)

Added to that is that the personal reality is a reformation of the influence of interpretation for a part of the personal reality is created through imagination. The blanks in reality can be filled in by imagination and imagination can extend and alter reality.

So for me the photograph does not stop at the edges of the frame; rather the image is the collision and could be a merger of the personal reality of the photographer and the spectator. I would even like to go so far and say that a photograph can be an alteration or reformation of the spectators personal reality. The personal reality of the photographer is represented in large measures through formal decisions. So what he depicts and how. When a spectator looks at an image something in the photograph triggers his interpretation which is similar to what Roland Barthes refers to as the *punctum*. "It is what I add to the photograph but what is nonetheless already there". The *punctum* the way Barthes describes it is like an electrical shock it is a part of the depiction in the image which triggers a memory. In my theory this *punctum* collides with that what was an equivalent of that *punctum* for the photographer and in this way becomes a connection between the two personal realities.



For example: A photographer makes a photograph of a woman with a necklace. This woman with the necklace reminds him of an amazing 18<sup>th</sup> century novel which he read a couple of years ago and gave him a certain feeling. When the spectator looks at this picture the necklace reminds him of that which his grandmother always used to wear and gives him a certain emotive experience. In that moment the two personal realities collide and merge with each other, in that moment the photographer and the spectator are connected.

This punctum becomes the communal memory. The memory which is the connection between the photographer and the spectator.

The photographer has more control over the on-frame narrative he hands the symbols to the spectator and in this way constructs a framework in which the the spectator implements his or her own narrative. Nonetheless there is also the interpretation if the spectator and whatever he or she adds from personal experience.

A photograph contains an on-frame narrative and an off-frame narrative. The on-frame refers to whatever is visible in the photograph and constructed by the photographer through formal decisions, what he depicts and symbolism. The off-frame narrative is created by the spectator and is whatever he imagines that will happen in the narrative that happens outside of the frame or whatever is visible inside of the frame. The off-frame is the extension of whatever is on-frame and is hallucinated or dreamed by the spectator. (Metz, 1985).

The work that I would like to show during my graduation exhibition will be an installation in combination with photography which will be a depiction of different realities and a will be a space in which the spectators personal reality is deformed through confrontation with a material object that is the manifestation of his visual counterpart on-frame.

It appears that images are generated in parts which means that they need to be put together in correct spatial configuration (The cognitive animal, 351) In this way also increasing the lexis, the unit of reading (Hjelmslev), from the on-frame into the off-frame and thus have an effect on the spectators own interpretation or in this sense confronting him with his own imagination his own hallucination, interpretation.

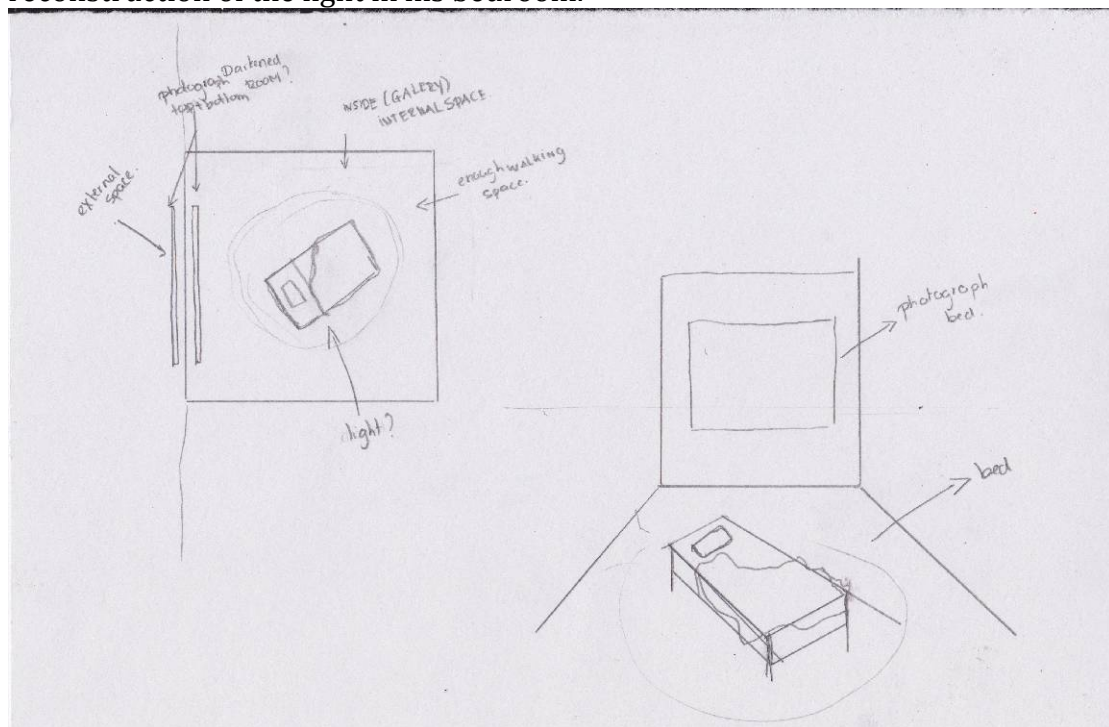
### *Project Description*

The initial idea of my installation is that I make a photograph, with a top and bottom perspective, of my fathers empty, slept in bed, made his bedroom in Nijmegen. The same bed will be placed in the exhibition space. The photographs will be hung on the interior and exterior of the space (preferably in a somewhat similar perspective).

The photographs and the bed will become a reference towards each other, towards different representations of the bed. Towards the personal reality and the material reality. But in the same time refer to different places and times; the interior and exterior of the space, two different cities and the present and the past.

Next to that I want to bring the catalyst of my emotions, my father, into the exhibition space lying in his bed for a short while (during the opening? Or another time). Leaving only the remains of his presence, the marks he makes in the bed his scent, whatever it is he leaves behind. In this way he will be implemented in my personal reality which is my art and will have communicated with that of the spectator. But because he will only be there a short while he will become a story, a fiction in that for the people to come.

Preferably the lighting will be either a dramatisation of the bed or a reconstruction of the light in his bedroom.



I want to influence the off frame narrative, and create an actual space for the spectator to walk around in. Which could be a collision with his personal reality and my own personal reality. Creating a more tactile experience and a more immersive feeling.

Aims for practical experiments:

How to use an object in the off-frame and let it communicate with the on-frame and vice versa.

Small experiments with photography and objects in which the objects or depictions of the outside and inside the photograph are visually connected in a certain way or literally similar.

Letting an object of-frame illustrate an idea about an object or form inner-frame.

Tests with performing in photography.

Create small installations which integrate photography and other mediums.

Small experiments in which an object communicates with it's surrounding.

Content:

In my previous projects and experiments I often had a fascination with the border between reality, personal reality and fiction.

The inspiration for my photographs often derives from my imagination and the mythification of my life and surroundings. The photographs are on the border of reality and the implementation of my personal perspective on reality.



This interest in the border between real and fiction is shown in the series about places which are cinematographically lit or have the appearance of a filmset (fig. right).



Or the research on my father where I implemented my own impression of our relationship into an image and setting which I photographed (fig. left).

The work "What You See Is Not A Universal Truth" how there is no truth in perception and addressing certain laid upon structures in different sections in society through which the individual interprets.

(<http://vimeo.com/82128438>).



In the past couple of weeks I have been making prototypes which have to do with testing out practicalities for my graduation project:



This photograph where I placed a cube on a photograph of a model which is actually holding the cube. The shadow on the body is actually inside the photograph. The object which casts the shadow is outside the photograph.



A sculpture in a tree where the medium is communicating with it's surrounding.

Relation to a larger context:

Besides the references to Barthes, Metz and the cognitive animal which have already been made previously in the text, the relation to larger context can also be found in:

Gregor Schneider often immerses his spectator in his works and plays with visibility and invisibility. For example *house Ur* which is a house in which he build replicas of existing rooms inside their original. The spectator is often only aware of the replica.

Pierre Huyghe has in his work *Untilled* at documenta 13 questions if an exhibition can "leak" into reality (Banff centre, 2012). Where Huyghe questions as to whether we can imagine a universe that's less anthropocentric, a world of thought and active life that's not based especially on humans (db-artmag, 2012). A reality different from ours.

Furthermore in a Tate Talk (2006) he explains "You built up a fiction and you give yourself the real means to discover or to verify the existence of this postulate/hypothesis.[...] I am not interested in reality as a given, I am not interested in building a fiction. I am interested in re-scripting re-inventing reality and then make a document of that [...] Once you catch reality somewhere else you can't just it somewhere. Down there I had an experience and recreating the experience here."

Hito Steyerl claims: "Images have started crossing the screen and materializing. During the crossing images are destroyed. Images are littering our reality." (New School, 2013). She has a somewhat different statement than mine about the construction of reality. She claims that images are influencing our reality but creating a wrong perspective. They have created an unreal reality which doesn't coincide but which transforms our society into something that we think it is because we have seen it like that in an image. Afterwards we try to alter reality towards what we have learned it to be from images.

But the similarity in our point of views lies more in the crossing of images through a screen or medium. And is interesting when for me when I am speaking about invading personal reality.

In *Tractatus* Wittgenstein talks about the troublesome relationship of language with reality. Language are symbols but never completely communicate reality because psychologically we're unable to make a logically perfect language. Furthermore he compares linguistics to geometry. "A geometrical figure may be projected in many ways: each of these ways corresponds to a different language, but the projective properties of the original figure remain unchanged whichever of these ways may be adopted." This is a theory which can be connected to my perspective on personal reality.

"We make for ourselves pictures of facts. A picture is a model of reality and to the objects in the reality corresponds the element of the picture, the picture in itself is a fact." Where Wittgenstein draws a connection between the communication between objects in an image and reality.

Which in turn is connected to the cognitive animal: Mental image transformation (rotating objects mentally) faithfully reflects the physical properties of objects. The complexity of the object doesn't affect the ease with which we can perceive an object rotating. Mental transformations mirror the real world, imaging rotations take longer if the rotation would be difficult in real world.

Mental images mirror perception for example imagery maintains momentum.

Why do mental representations act in the same way as the real? Because the mental entity is not autonomous but represents the movement of a physical entity.

Onorato and Krebs a contemporary photography-duo who play with photography and perception and visual deception.

## Bibliography

books and articles:

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"*Photography and Fetish*, Christian Metz"

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"Robert Smithson"

"*Galapagos*, Kurt Vonnegut"

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Interviews:

*Pierre Huyghe, The Retreat Documenta (13)*, Banff Centre

<http://youtu.be/aRC5iFlxfnU>

*Pierre Huyghe*,

*Hito Steyrl*

*Francis Bacon South Bank Show*, BBC

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<http://db-artmag.com/en/71/feature/loss-of-artistic-control-pierre-huyghes-biotope-at-documenta/>

## The Photographic Universe | Photography and Political Agency? with Victoria Hattam and Hito Steyerl