

# Photographic Practice and the Status of Superposition: Image, Observation, Event

A Practice-based PhD (2014-2021)



From *In Superposition: Ice and land, Iceland, 2018*

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## Abstract

This PhD presents a new paradigm in photographic discourse derived from a creative interpretation of the status of superposition.

Superposition is a term used to describe the status of matter in all its conceivable positions at once, as well as in the physical realm: such as where objects are placed in relation to each other. At a quantum level, invisible matter is described in states of superposition in the absence of any system or device for existential measurement or observation. Upon an act of detection, the status of superposition is said to collapse as the position or state of matter becomes measured or observed; the multi-status of the superposition collapses into a single or defined position or state. As a notion that describes the status of matter in all its conceivable positions or states prior to an act of determination (observation, detection or measurement), superposition is thus a very useful term for the consideration of photographic practice in its exploration of light, matter, the relation of objects in time and space, and human intervention.

*Photographic Practice and the Status of Superposition: Image, Observation, Event* is an experimental investigation into the how superposition can be used to develop photographic practice and discourse. The methodology is articulated in written part(icle)s that apply a theoretical framework of superposition in a general way to photography genres; some photographs are intended to collapse superpositions, others are intended to construct the status of superposition. In a particular matrix of photography and performance, the process of collapse and construct can be repetitive and iterative. This framework as a methodology is applied in the making and showing of new photographic works that explore the status of superposition in practice, in all conceivable states of construction into superposition status (in-status) and collapse from superposition status (in-collapse), in a series of exhibited iterations of disseminated research in non-standard photography.

The development of a theory of superposition that includes both the status of superposition and the collapse from superposition (in-status and in-collapse), offers up a new paradigm for photography and a new contribution to photographic discourse and practice. This is a photographic imperative, that must be a photograph/ photographed. All conceivable states of superposition are in-photo (in-status and in-collapse), as lived experience in the event of making and in the event of observing/ viewing the photograph(ic) (in-presence). Photography can characterise or embody this quantum theory in a manner that no other form or material of representation can. The states of superposition are entangled with photography (technology) as recurring status and collapse, and ultimately as the human condition.

## Acknowledgements

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I have placed myself in a state of superposition many times, especially when conducting my own real-life double-slit experiment in a personal capacity during the time of this study. The collapse of this status has permanently changed my life. One superposition collapsed and another one formed as, it would seem, it always does. I would like to thank all those who were there with the safety net as I leapt into the void, especially my parents Lise and Frank, and Minna for support and occasional assistance. I would also like to thank my children Bibi, Finn and Mia Maya, and my wider circuit of friends and colleagues, who have allowed me to bring the concept and word 'superposition' into everyday language.

During the process of collapsing the superposition of this PhD, I have talked with many people; family, friends, colleagues and associates. I would like to thank them all. I would also like to thank those who I interviewed as part of this study, during its formative phase: Professor Myungshik Kim, Chair in Theoretical Quantum Information Sciences at Imperial College, London; John Hilliard, Artist; and Michael Snow, Artist. Gratitude too to both artists for permitting reproductions in the thesis, as well as to Elina Brotherus, Calum Colvin and J. Paul Getty Trust. Thank you also to all those who listened and responded with interest, including the various student groups I have had the pleasure of working with both formally and informally. I would like to thank the colleagues and organisations who hosted and supported the practice-based iterations and their dissemination, including staff at Novia University of Applied Sciences, Jakobstad, (Finland), Aalto University, Helsinki, (Finland), Ljosmyndaskolinn School of Photography, Reykjavik (Iceland), Paris College of Art (France) and Wolverhampton University (UK). Much gratitude of course to my own institution, London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London for providing this opportunity in the first place.

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## Introduction

Everyday lives across the world have been impacted recently. An “invisible enemy” (Donald Trump, 2020; Boris Johnson, 2021) has permeated our bodies at a quantum level, manifest through the indication of a test, symptoms, illness or death.<sup>1</sup> Although we have been presented with the graphics of the Covid-19 virus at a micro level (that made its way onto the helmets of Indian police at a macro level in March 2020), the virus itself is essentially lost in the bigger picture, like the grain/ pixel of a photograph. Our attention is pointed instead towards other references, like social, and economical, cultural and political agendas alongside health and education (much like the attendant focus of photography). The invisible enemy has interfered with the patterns of normal life, forcing us into isolation and invisibility, sealed in our domestic boxes and seen only on the screens of various technical apparatus and platforms to connect and confirm our existence to others.<sup>2</sup> We are unable see the thing that has stopped us from being able to see each other. This appears to be an instance when the *“blurring microscopic might have a chance to leak into the world of macroscopic objects, especially during measurements when the microscopic system interacts with a macroscopic measuring instrument, the notion of blurring goes wrong”* (where ‘blurring’ is a metaphor “to wrestle with the idea of quantum indeterminacy or uncertainty” (Barad, 2007). Here, we have been presented with an array of graphic, figurative and statistical measurements since March 2020 to determine the health of the nation (in England) against scientific and political modelling systems. The ‘slides’ have accompanied political press conferences and presentations throughout the pandemic (in England).

Terms like uncertainty, self-isolation, observation, experiment and ‘test and trace’<sup>3</sup> and a digital ‘ping’ that collapses free movement, together with an enhanced awareness of the presence and power of an invisible world, of both virus and technology (one natural, the other manufactured – as we are led to believe), have come into mainstream use and consciousness across the globe. Definitions of virus ‘variants’ have come to be couched within broad-based criteria albeit with some different measurement value, for example Alpha, Beta, Delta and Omicron B.<sup>4</sup> At a granular level it is conceivable that there are



<sup>1</sup> Lateral Flow Test Covid-19 ‘Positive’ result as indicated by double-slits: C+T (13.12.21)

<sup>2</sup> During ‘lockdowns’ people were instructed to stay at home wherever possible, although this did not apply to ‘key workers’

<sup>3</sup> NHS Test and Trace was introduced on 28 May 2020 as a central part of the UK government’s COVID-19 recovery strategy.

<sup>4</sup> Measurements are key to our understanding if not our structuring of things in life – clocks for example are a measurement of time, rather than time itself (although this does not mean that we understand time)

as many individual variants as there have been individual cases of coronavirus.<sup>5</sup> The manifestos of reproduction might appear to be broadly the same on a macro level.<sup>6</sup> At a molecular level each variant is conceivably as different as each body that it transgresses from its status of superposition, like all forms of mutation, reproduction or editions (photography included), with a dependence on the (host) body much like the image and its photographic substrate or condition.

Photography's own ontology is premised on a similar co-dependency. Like most, if not all forms of representation or media, photography has a referent or index that points to material other than itself; photography observes other matter(s). This assertion is not meant to be divisive or binary between photography and its other(s), since this would counter-act the status of co-dependency. That said, there is a plethora of theories and practices that attempt to disaggregate this status, to develop an understanding of photography in the proposition of a range of conceivable defined separations of photographic dualities.<sup>7</sup> Instead, this assertion is to acknowledge that any discourse on photography is both complex and multiple, as it should be, not least because of the attendant discourse brought by the index or referent.<sup>8</sup> Photography invites '*inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy*' (Sontag, 1977: 23) with a 'wisdom' that is to say: "*There is the surface. Now think – or rather feel, intuit – what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way.*" (ibid)

In a process of disaggregation, discussions on photography tend to place the particulars, material or specifics of the image over any photographic interest (as happens in fashion photography, or wildlife photography or example) - that which Sontag has named as 'the reality'. The presiding of referent over image (or at least the attempt to separate these) is a misleading inevitability - even though photography is seemingly extricable from this scenario by virtue of its transparency or invisibility, as Sontag suggests in the realm of 'what is beyond it'. Roland Barthes articulates this in his own seminal (and sentimental) reflections on photography as:

*"The Photograph belongs to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both: the windowpane and the*

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<sup>5</sup> The first known case of a double variant in a patient was reported 11.07.21, when an elderly (unvaccinated) woman in Belgium died with both Alpha and Beta variants detected at the same time

<sup>6</sup> The same can be said of the appearance analogue and digital, that might look the same superficially

<sup>7</sup> For example: John Szarkowski, *Mirrors and Windows* (1978); Bill Jay, *Naturalistic and Humanistic* (1982); negative and positive; digital and analogue; still and moving; the *Epic and the Everyday* (Hayward Gallery, 1984/ Bevan, MA Fashion Photography, 2009-)

<sup>8</sup> "*already in use in the production of meanings, and photography has no choice but to operate upon such meanings. There is, then, a 'pre-photographic' stage in the photographic production of meaning that must be accounted for.*" (Burgin, 1982)

*landscape, and why not: Good and Evil, desire and its object: dualities we can conceive<sup>9</sup> but not perceive (I didn't yet know that this stubbornness of the Referent in always being there would produce the essence I was looking for)."*  
(Barthes, 1980: 6)

By his own admission, Barthes seems to suggest that he began his account in *Camera Lucida* with the presumption that a disaggregation of photography from its referent was possible, (as suggested by his words in brackets).<sup>10</sup> A disaggregation of this co-dependency might seem to be at least plausible, because of the transparency<sup>11</sup> or rendered invisibility of photography as a mediation or medium of representation – like a clear suspension fluid. Barthes writes that: '*whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see*' (ibid: 6). That photography can be seen through, is see-through and 'always invisible', is not the same thing as not-being-there or being absent. Photography is 'always' omni-present, if not explicitly so, like a virus and its host. However, it is possible to consider a genre or image of photography where the referent is not so conceivably distinct from its image in this nuance of co-dependency. Instead, the photograph is itself the referent or the transparency of photography is disrupted in some way. In a simultaneous and entangled status of photography as the referent to its (own) photograph, the point is that photography itself becomes the intended and the primary interest or material of the image. Interestingly, this can be said about the work of the pioneers of photography (William Henry Fox Talbot, (1800-1877); Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851); Hippolyte Bayard (1801-1887)) who were developing their image-making attempts while pointing their cameras at seemingly arbitrary things (or referents) such as at a lattice window, at shelves of articles of china, or out of a window at a street, for example. Initially, the primary interest of these inventors was the technicalities of the photographic process under development and how well an image could be rendered; the 'pencil of nature' at work, where nature literally reproduced or drew itself (Talbot, 1844-46). Since this time, of course the subject matter of these images is no longer seen as being arbitrary (as will be discussed later), especially when the lens of one pioneer is apparently pointing at his own drowned body (Bayard, 1840). In the passage of time, the reception and comprehension of these reproductions (or variants) has inevitably shifted together with the

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<sup>9</sup> The word 'conceive' is important to the status of superposition

<sup>10</sup> Also, his ultimate quest in the book to find his mother from a photograph of her (unpublished), which he fails to do – he is unable to separate her from the photograph

<sup>11</sup> Positive film is known as 'transparencies'

understanding of the nuanced differences in their techniques, and the idiosyncratic deployment of these at the time of development.<sup>12</sup>

The focus of photography changes as the technical capacity and the apparatus develops, and it is possible to plot a technical thread within the multiple histories of photography that is seen to facilitate many (new) photographic referents.<sup>13</sup> This is much like other parallel (industrial) developments over the same period, in manufacturing, in science, in technology, in fashion, and in transport for example. For photography, developments in film speed and camera portability effected where and why the camera integrated into the world to give it visibility, and how this has shaped and contributed to knowledge.

These two criteria of speed and portability seem to remain key drivers of technical advancements today, perhaps at a point now where anything faster or more portable would almost need to see into the future to be any better, or perhaps operate at the quantum level – which may in fact turn out to be a sensible response to a global pandemic.

In plotting an artistic history (or thread), a particular photographic practice emerged through an engagement with the activities of Conceptual Art and Performance Art around the 1960s that had a renewed interest in the materials or capability of photography (like those early pioneers). A new photographic genre emerged along with video. These lens-based media were initially used as methods to document various performed acts or objects of temporality or ephemerality in time and space as (living) sculpture or bodies in performance.<sup>14</sup> Time-based events became entangled with a photographic permanency, bringing about new time-based concepts in the medium of photography itself. The deployment of photography surpassed its initial use to simply record acts or objects, and a new practice emerged through this particular engagement with an activity or performance, in the perception of action. This is the focus of this study: a practice of photography that did not shake the vestiges of its encounters in time and space with sculpture or with a body in performance, but rather was shaped by these entanglements.

Exploring photography's relationship with performance as a set of shifting categories between photography and performance, engages in the debate concerning purpose, status and artwork.<sup>15</sup> In the

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<sup>12</sup> One interesting analogy here that continues the parallel thread of Covid-19 with photography, is the recent development of the vaccines. Here, this analogy can be thought of in terms of how there was a scientific race to develop a successful vaccine method from a number of options that all strived to achieve the same result, and also how in the end a favoured version was a gift from the state to the people, in a similar manner to the democratisation of photography. See Instagram posts dated 5.04.2020 & 23.11.2020, Annex Section\_1: *Instagram Posts*

<sup>13</sup> As it would be to plot other historical threads

<sup>14</sup> Ref. Lucy Lippard. Six years: the dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972

<sup>15</sup> Often intended as part of the debate of the work



relationship between photography and performance, there are instances where the performance is clearly the artwork (and referent); there is a dual proposition where this relationship is less distinct; and there is a point where photography is clearly purposed as the artwork. There is nevertheless always a particular ontology and co-dependency between photography and performance in all cases that can be considered in relation to the superposition, either in status or as a collapse of superposition.

Chapter 1 sets out four conditions in which photography is seen in relation to the superposition: 1 A Phenomenological idea of where/ what Photography is; 2 When Photography becomes a Photograph; 3 On the Subject Matter; and 4 In the Viewing of Photographs. In Chapter 2, three categories of the relationship between photography and performance are identified and developed. The categories are defined by the nature of the connection between the photography and the performance as: Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness*; Category 2 Photography and Performance: *Active Audience or Witness*; and Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography*. Across these, the conceivable distinction between photography and performance is progressively narrowed, to a point where there is an entanglement of photography and performance. The performance shifts into the site of photograph, and the photographic outcome is (or becomes) the performance or the event, as a proposition where the performance is the event of photography<sup>16</sup> – there is nothing outside of the image, no performance without the photography, no landscape without the windowpane (Barthes, 1980). In all categories, and irrespective of the extent of co-dependency, the photograph has a similar dual status, an ontological duality alluded to earlier.<sup>17</sup> Here, the photograph oscillates between an observation of a performance or event - and this is the matter other than itself, or what is beyond it (Sontag, 1977) - to being the sole site, the basis of, or the event where the photograph is the performance, and the act or gesture of the photograph is the referent – everything is in the photograph.

The coexistence of the material and matter of photography and performance leads to a theoretical state of superposition. Moreover, the methodologies of photography and performance combined, bring the terms of *observation* and *event* as common to both disciplines. The terms of superposition as a conceivable positionality or status, also bring together these same terms of *observation* and *event*, as well as the concepts of *coexistence*, *simultaneous* and *multiple states*.<sup>18</sup> The combination of these

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<sup>16</sup> As opposed to a more common situation where there may be no photograph without the performance

<sup>17</sup> As it always does

<sup>18</sup> Again, much as photography does on its own

terms of reference to the categories of photography in relation to performance, is especially core to the occasion or category when photography *is* the performance (Chapter 2, Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography*). Moreover, on this occasion it is likely that in the performance, or even as performer, photography is used intentionally (or even by default) as an act of its own observation – a photograph that is either intended to be or can be seen as a photograph about (the act of) photography. Such unordinary or non-standard photographic self-observation or self-reflexivity, where photography itself as matter or process is the imperative of a performed event in observation, can be considered in terms of meta-, as meta-photography.<sup>19</sup> In practice, being self-reflexive or self-observing is the lived-experience of at least the (meta-)event, if not of a wider existence or autoethnography of the artist (or character of photography) in the photograph.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The terms here, of ordinary and non-(standard) photography are intended to refer to James Elkins (2011) and François Laruelle (2011) respectively, both of whom articulate a photographic discourse in relation to ideas of the ordinary or standard/ non-standard that are useful to this study, but not defining of it

<sup>20</sup> *Studies in Meta-Photography* (1) and (2), Düsseldorf (2015) and (2016) respectively are entirely self-reflective of their own making as the lived experience of the artist opening the curtain (shutter) of one window momentarily for an exposure, drawing it, and then moving to the other window and repeating the process. A two-window room was used for its visual reference to the double-slit. Further studies can be seen on pages 89 and 94



This is certainly the case alluded to in the Acknowledgements section: “*I have placed myself in a state of superposition many times,*” as a reflection on the need for self-observation in order to remedy or collapse this status, even if “*one superposition collapsed and another one formed, as, it would seem, it always does*” (Bevan, 2021). This practice is described in more detail in Chapter 4 The Practice Elements.

The creative interpretation of superposition in-status and in-collapse is at the basis of the framework used to define and develop a theoretical analysis of photography, a research methodology and a practical exploration of a photographic engagement (entanglement) with performance. This framework is the proposition for Paul Bevan’s new practice-based research from 2014 and the iterative dissemination of this material since 2016 that is central to this study.<sup>21</sup> This framework also provides a theoretical basis for reviews of Bevan’s earlier works from 1984 onwards, as well as a new way to consider the practice of other selected artists working in this area.<sup>22</sup> The development of a theory of superposition in this study, necessarily draws on two experiments that are known to articulate the state of superposition in scientific and notional ways (but do not explain it). These experiments are known as the *Double-Slit Experiment (1801)* and *Schrödinger’s Cat (1935)* - a thought experiment devised by and named after Austrian-Irish physicist, Erwin Schrödinger.

Together with the substantive written part, the cycles of Bevan’s iterative practice-based research have developed a place for understanding the superposition of the performance, event or act of (self-) observation on photography, photographer/ artist and the viewer/ observer. Such self-reflexivity of photography on photography can be termed as meta-photography, a description of a state that exposes either the process or matter of photography (or indeed both), otherwise invisible or transparent in standard photography. The state or place of superposition extends into the dissemination of the practical work created for this study, where the act (or performance) of observation by an audience also becomes a material part of the research framework and articulation of the superposition.

The state of superposition also applies to the status of the photographer/ artist in this new work, as an image and body that conceivably exists in front of and behind the camera at the same time (in

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<sup>21</sup> *Paul Bevan: In Superposition (2016); In Superposition (again) (2017); In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland (2018); Zoopraxiscope: from In Superposition: Ice and land (2019)*

<sup>22</sup> *Cezanne Goes on Holiday (1984), How my Body Copes (1984) and Vannkanten (at the water’s edge) (1984)*

production/ in performance). This status is subsequently then (re-)occupied by the viewer in the moment or act of observation in front of the work at its dissemination, in a manner that is intended to construct the state of superposition (even if momentarily, prior to its collapse).<sup>23</sup> Here, there is an inevitable chronology in superposition construction and then collapse that cannot be escapable from the passage of time, and is possibly even built into time's arrow.<sup>24</sup> The earliest use of the term superposition from 1656 was in relation to the ongoing physical and chronological placement of one thing over the other, where the law of superposition determined the age of geological substrates according to their natural order of layers.<sup>25</sup> This concept in layered substrates, and certainly the notion of an omnipresence of photography in all its conceivable forms in time and format, leads to the assertion that photography is itself in a state of superposition. This can be expanded further into the notion that ultimately the status of superposition is a human condition as a fundamental state of being and relativity, that implicitly and explicitly underscores this study in *Photographic Practice and the Status of Superposition: Image, Observation, Event*, if not everything.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "It may well be that our sense of the presence, power, and authenticity of these pieces derives not from treating the document as an indexical access point to a past event but from perceiving the document itself as a performance that directly reflects an artist's aesthetic project or sensibility and for which we are the present audience" (Auslander, 2006)

<sup>24</sup> Ref. Yves Lomax, 'Sometime(s)' in *Writing the Image* (2000)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/superposition#h1>

<sup>26</sup> Including, the PhD itself that I did not yet know needed to be collapsed from its own superposition (a similar position stated by Barthes at the outset of *Camera Lucida*, expressing a yet unforeseen realisation regarding the 'stubbornness' of the omnipresent referent)

## Chapter 1 Developing a Theory of Superposition in relation to Photography

Superposition describes the status of matter in all its conceivable positions, when an actual position is not (yet) known or visible. At the quantum level, sub-atomic matter is invisible, concealed or hidden, in the absence of specific processes, devices or apparatus for a measurement or an observation. Thus, investigations into material and its behaviour in the quantum world, start with a status of the superposition. In this way, matter remains in an indeterminate state until an effective act of detection or observation is made as a measurement to determine its status. In photography, the observation of matter is (often) made in its behaviour, as an effect or an indication (as measurement) rather than by actually seeing the matter itself (including the visibility of photography). So, the detection of matter (for example: light and movement in relation to the performance of photography) might be considered as only indicative or indexical of the (existence of the) matter. Once the presence or status of matter has been evidenced as indicated, the status of superposition is said to collapse. On the occasion that the position of the matter becomes fixed, known or visible, it is no longer in a conceivable superposition. This may be relative (in time and space) and determined by a particular vantage point in the space of a specific moment in time of either a permanent or temporary duration. The collapsed superposition is not a state of no return; once observation is finished or apparatus switched off for example, matter may well return to a status of superposition once more, however collapsed it might have been.

In classical physics, larger matter can usually be seen or encountered directly in a macro format, and visible without the need for specific processes, devices or apparatus, unless otherwise hidden or concealed. In quantum physics, sub-atomic matter is indeterminate in an invisible or an uncertain state, as suggested. However, this difference is not to say that all parts of classical physics or the supra-atomic world are always determinate and not without secrets. This is more by way of benchmarking a principled differential that provides the structure for a theoretical framework between the macro and the micro, and a benchmark that might offer up new and meaningful cross-referencing. The quantum theory of superposition draws on experiments where superposition is indicated in a micro setting and thought about in a macro context, perhaps like the structure and proposition of the photographic image. Both domains of sub- and supra-atomic have their respective idiosyncratic theories that are built upon ongoing iterative cycles of experimentation, analysis, interpretation and embodiment, for example. This thesis takes these iterations as interconnected. The superposition as defined is to be taken here as a

state that can apply beyond the microscopic, invisible sub-atomic domain and useful for the macro, visible world. In this thesis, it is argued that the status of superposition is transgressive.

Karen Barad asks:

*“Isn’t quantum behaviour, like superpositions, for example, limited in principle to the microscopic domain? Despite the popularity of this misconception, this simply does not seem to be the case. No empirical evidence exists to support the assertion that there are two different domains of physical laws: one developed by quantum physics and another by classical mechanics.”*

(Barad, 2007:279)

So too photography then, in all its conceivable ways and its various manifestos across art and science, is itself not unfamiliar with transgressive tendencies and applications. Photography, like the superposition, is an equally suitable proposition for a transgression between the quantum and the classical. Perhaps natively liminal, photography is infinitely and inexhaustibly subjected to oscillations between the matter and material of physical (and meta-physical) laws at both a macro and micro level. In theory and in practice then, photography can be a proposition and a presentation of the state of the superposition, as a photographic imperative.

This thesis defines four conditions in which to place photography as in the state of superposition as a theoretical framework. These conditions are set out, and then this framework is used throughout to consider, articulate and describe photographic practice and methodology. This matrix of conditions considers matters of photography being in the state (or stasis) of superposition, as well as photography being a trigger for the state of (inducing) the superposition (in-status), and bringing about the collapse of the superposition (in-collapse).

The four conditions might be defined as: (1) A phenomenological idea or concept of where or what photography is; (2) the process of actualisation when photography becomes a or *the* photograph (and the role of the photographer as observer or performer); (3) the subject-matter of the photograph, in terms of both representation and referent; (4) the matter and occasion of viewing photographs, as a subsequent or further act of observation, and the role of the viewer as observer or performer.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Points 2, 3 and 4 may be similar to the three ‘sites’ identified as production, image, and audience (Rose, 2001)

## 1 A Phenomenological idea of where and what Photography is

Photography is essentially invisible, in a principled and latent state of potential. In this state, photography exists in all of its conceivable possibilities, both everywhere and nowhere in and as an array of potential and infinite alternative photographs. As an omnipresent presence, photography can be regarded as in the state superposition, as in-status.<sup>28</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum of invisibility to visibility, photography has another omnipresence. In its over-visibility or ubiquity, photographs are literally everywhere and all the time. Over forty years ago when Susan Sontag (1933-2004) published the seminal *On Photography*, Sontag wrote that “*the world now contains more photographs than bricks*” (Sontag, 1977: 105).<sup>29</sup> It is conceivable that since then, now there may be as many photographs in the world as grains of sand; the brick has exploded into its granular parts, and each part or particle now a new photograph.<sup>30</sup> According to the introduction of the Helsinki Photomedia conference in 2014,

*“The total amount of photographs taken each day has exploded beyond human grasp: hundreds of thousands of photographs are uploaded to the Internet every minute. Huge quantity combined with the short life span of images and the complex patterns of their circulation constitutes significant methodological problems for empirical photography research”*

and

*“In the new technological environment of photography, the familiar questions, “Where is the photograph?” and “What is the photographic?”, have a new resonance. They are no longer questions of unity of place, medium or material inscription.”* (Introduction: Photography Research Exposed to the Parergonal Phenomenon of "Photographic Powers", MIKA ELO page 8 - Photographic Powers, Helsinki Photomedia 2014)

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<sup>28</sup> *Photography, you might say, is us. A century and a half after its invention, it is less a "form of human expression" than an inextricable part of the human condition and contemporary landscape, something involuntary and inescapable, almost like weather. [...][photography] is the most omnipresent of all art forms.* (Roberta Smith, 1999)

<sup>29</sup> The brick seems an entirely appropriate material analogy for the photograph, with each respective unit uniquely contributing to social, cultural, material and other construction, and each unit being lost en masse

<sup>30</sup> Think of the shed in Cornelia Parker's *Cold, Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, 1991

As this fractal increase on photography's numerical expansion continues exponentially, a notional point at the other parameter end of the invisible to visible axis is reached, where photography is so visible, so present, that we can no longer see it.<sup>31</sup> Our vision of photography is blinded by its ubiquity. The over-saturation of photographs has the (unintended/ converse) effect that photography becomes invisible, and questions are no longer of the order regarding 'unity of place'.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, at the point on a temporality line of the before a photograph to the after the photograph, in the invisible to the overly visible respectively, photography is at each time and parameter end (phenomenologically) in a state of superposition.

## 2 When Photography becomes a Photograph

If (phenomenologically) photography exists in the state of superposition in a latent state as above in the before, then the point of collapse from this status must occur in and at the moment of the photographic act. In quantum mechanics, the superposition of matter is said to collapse at the moment of the act of (its) observation or detection. As in quantum physics, so also in photography, the act of observation or indeed the presence of the observer, effects the system that is being observed. Observation is enacted in both the processes of photographing and the process of viewing of photographs, and in both instances a pre-existing status of superposition is collapsed. From in-status, the superposition is in-collapse.

For the photographer, the act of photographic observation brings about the collapse of the superposition of photography in the very moment when photography is actuated to become a photograph. In his essay *The Gesture of Photographing* (2011), Vilém Flüsser writes of the photographer who:

*"sees possible pictures and as he looks in this futurological way he chooses his own picture from those available to him."* (Flüsser, 2000)

Flüsser's description supports the proposition that photography is in the state of the superposition in its latency of many available alternatives. Flüsser writes that the photographer "*rejects all the possible pictures, except this one, to the realm of lost virtualities*" (ibid). Flüsser again supports the proposition of a superposition of conceivable alternatives because there is a default or intended act of determination, of choice that the photographer actively makes in choosing one single possibility over all other multiple and

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<sup>31</sup> Much like the expression we cannot see the woods for the trees

<sup>32</sup> Like a collapsed superposition, a determinate state



conceivable alternatives (Barthes, 1980).<sup>33</sup> All other rejected possibilities remain invisible and are lost. This process may also be an editing exercise, as an equally valid act of choice (or judgement) that isolates one image over all other alternatives to be selected (in post-production), equally realised in a photographic gesture or 'decisive moment' (Cartier-Bresson, 1908-2004). Whether this moment happens in the air, or subsequently off a contact sheet,<sup>34</sup> the same principle would apply - although in the latter instance a photographer might be making a second level choice, albeit one that can remain equally hidden or concealed (unpublished and 'lost' (Flüsser, 2000)). The 'decisive moments' of Henri Cartier-Bresson may be somewhat mythologised through undisclosed contact sheets, however there is no denying the significance of the expression or the experience of choice from alternatives in a sequence or series of attempts, or indeed the sensation of seeing 'the one' even surrounded by other attempts at the time – all decisive in their own moments.<sup>35</sup> Cartier-Bresson is certainly credited to behold the kind of futurological vision that Flüsser writes about, by reportedly waiting on street corners until the geometry of his subjects pictorially collided in the way in which he anticipated and expected.<sup>36</sup> Whether the subsequent photographic outcome was in actuality the single take that bolstered his photographic prowess, or whether this was the visible tip of a pile of hidden contact sheets that concealed other attempts is perhaps a matter of semantics (like geological substrates that remain in superposition themselves). The process of choice still applies either way, and photographers who follow the same photographic protocol or style will know that.

This process of selection as a measurement is described from a scientific perspective, as Karan Barad describes:

*“But the point applies as well when we make a measurement on an atom or some other particle: we don't find it in a superposition of eigenstates, but rather in one of the possible eigenstates. The point is that measurement resolves the indeterminacy. When we observe a system, it ceases to be in a superposition.*

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<sup>33</sup> The decision to photograph at one moment rather than another is an aspect of photographic practice that has been pondered on or studied: for example, “*why choose (why photograph) this object, this moment, rather than some other?*” (Barthes, 1984). It is considered to be especially significant in documentary photography, where a 'decisive moment' is a key element to 'taking' a photograph (Henri Cartier-Bresson 1908-2004). This aspect can be extended to include choices (and decisive moments) in looking at photographs too.

<sup>34</sup> Contact sheet is a name for printed images in sequence, without enlargement from the original negative size

<sup>35</sup> Interestingly at the time of writing, artist photographer Miles Aldridge is exhibiting his 'vintage' contact sheets from past photographic productions that reveal not just unpublished alternative pictures, but also hand cut-outs and interventions by Aldridge that reveal his own choices and moments of decision in *Miles Aldridge: Process*, Lyndsey Ingram, London. 27 July- 17 September, 2021. In an accompanying video, Aldridge says: “*Uncertainty is the magic of photography*” (Aldridge, 2021)

<sup>36</sup> Another mythology perhaps

*But how is the indeterminacy resolved? By what mechanism does the system go from a superposition of eigenstates to a definite value measured for the corresponding property? It seems as if the wave function has somehow “collapsed” from a superposition (or entanglement) to one in which all the coefficients except one of them are set to zero, that is, in which only one of the possible eigenstates appears to be selected.”*

(Barad, 2007:280)

As well as taking, making or editing photographs, this process may also apply to the viewing of photographs as an equally selective resolution of the indeterminate and the seemingly infinite stream of photographic ubiquity. In singling out a photograph from a mass of photographs for example, there is a decisive moment of determination of visibility, and again *‘when we observe a system, it ceases to be in the superposition’* (ibid). Imagine isolating one brick from a brick wall or finding one grain of sand from a beach of billions; it is the same thing. Indeed, it is most likely a critical practice to take the brick from the wall, in order to satisfy the intention of the brick from the topology or surface of the wall. On photography, François Laruelle suggests:

*“...if its being-immanent is rigorously maintained so as to affirm its reality, there is no longer need of a thousand photos, of an unlimited-becoming-photographic; ‘a’ photo, one solitary photo alone, is enough to satisfy the photographic intention and to fulfil it.”* (Laruelle, 2011: 25)

Whenever photography is enacted (or performed), it is (however marginally) an act of its own observation, measurement or intention – a baseline for meta-photography as a *“photo considered no longer in its representational content, but in its essence or its immanent-being, only ‘refers us back’ to that essence.”* (ibid: 27)

Flüsser seems also to support the notion that photography is inherently self-reflexive, irrespective of the dominance of the subject matter or referent as described earlier. Flüsser writes:

*“For the moment we try to describe the gesture of photographing in order to study it, we are startled by a strange phenomenon. What we are doing seems to be an attempt, if in a metaphorical sense, to ‘photograph’ the gesture.”*

(Flüsser, 1991:284)<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> and what Laruelle calls *“an attempt to photograph photography”* (Laruelle, 2011: 27)

For Flüsser, the photographic gesture is by default a moment of (invisible) self-reflexivity or self-observation. In arguing for a singular state and or system for the photograph, both Laruelle and Flüsser, present respective positions which are at odds with the state of superposition as presented by this thesis argument. As the thesis presents, in its actualisation, photography necessarily brings about its own 'collapse' from the state of superposition. It is never a singular system. Moreover, given the attendance of the referent or index of the photograph as already established, in its collapse, photography also takes with it whatever subject is under observation by association: the subject matter.

### 3 On the Subject Matter

The subject matter is also matter for a conceivable state of superposition in the moment prior to the act of its observation by the photographer in seen in the photograph. The precise extent or nature of the status of superposition of the subject matter, may be defined by the semantic and operational difference between the 'making' and the 'taking' of photographs, and in its own pre-existing state of animacy or inanimacy. Either way, the photographic act provides some tangibility to subject matter of

*"a universe of 'whirling particles' - imperceptible molecules, sub-atomic particles, magnetic charges - and [makes] something intelligible from it. "*

(Nancy Ann Roth, 2011 – translator and introduction *The Gesture of Photographing*, Vilém Flüsser, 2011)

Once more, drawing on Flüsser to support this definition, Flüsser writes that the 'technical image' (as he refers to the photograph) is used to "*fix subjects that exist in four-dimensional time and space onto a two-dimensional surface*" (ibid).

The description that the photograph makes 'something intelligible' or 'fixes subjects' is well understood and is a consequentiality that aligns well with the quest for meaning or knowledge that is similarly engaged with the collapse of the superposition, and surely part of the rationale for the desire to collapse superpositions, any superposition.<sup>38</sup> Thus, it inevitably follows that the superposition of the subject matter collapses as an integral and inevitable part of the photographic package, suggesting a (theoretical) double-collapse of states: firstly, in the photographic gesture of the collapse of the superposition of photography itself; and secondly, the collapse of the superposition of the subject matter

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<sup>38</sup> 'Fix' is also the name for one of the three chemical baths in the process of film development/ photographic printing

by association, both becoming simultaneously 'fixed' or collapsed together, a photographic state or stasis, as a kind of in-collapse entanglement. This introduces the theory that the photograph itself goes on to become the site for a new and next stage of superposition. The coexistence of compressed (eigen-) states (Barad, 2007) is ready for further observation, re-view or (un-)entanglement, as part of the process of determination, finding meaning or making something intelligible.

#### 4 In the Viewing of Photographs

As well as the (singular) moment of realisation in the face of a photographic ubiquity as described in Condition 2, the viewing of photographs presents a similar conceivable state of superposition in both superposition in-status construction and superposition status in-collapse. The observer of photographs (usually) encounters the photograph in a secondary act of observation, when the image and the viewer (momentarily) collide in the same time and space, in-presence. This moment of collision all the more studious,<sup>39</sup> since there is (usually) a significant separation or void between the viewer and the photographer from the first or primary act of observation, in which the superposition again collapses, (or implodes by virtue of being in the present, together, in the same moment). James Elkins writes that "*Our ordinary observations of photographs are stories about acts of looking that we have not really performed*" (Elkins, 2011: 124).<sup>40</sup> Here, the story about the act of looking is distinct from the act of looking performed by the photographer. The separation or gap between photograph and viewer is critical here, since it acts like a vacuum, pulling in as well as blowing out. As an event in itself the gap in viewing photography, is parallel to or analogous with the gap between photography and performance (or the story, Elkins, 2011), and all conceivable (super-) positions in-between (to be developed in the next chapter on photography and performance).

There is an intended state in practice (and in theory) where there is no separation between the stories performed (ibid) by both viewer and photographer, and the gap is eliminated in some way. In this event, the observation becomes an integral part to the making of the work or its performance, a scenario that might suggest the work does not exist until it is observed (another state of the superposition followed by its collapse). This is not (simply) an existentialist principle on being, although requisite of co-presence would seem to underscore any collapse from an otherwise undisturbed and ongoing status of the

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<sup>39</sup> Barthes' '*Stadium*' and '*Punctum*' (1981)

<sup>40</sup> Elkins' book title is a further reference to the question posed earlier regarding "*What Photography Is*"

superposition. This is more by way of the artistic intention or strategy to engage the participation or (physical) intervention of the viewer as part of the story, beyond (simply) just being there.

This scenario was explored in a series of works collectively titled *Interval* (Bevan, 1999-), that involved the making and exhibiting a set of large-scale photographic images and projections.<sup>41</sup> In exhibition, a tower structure of tiered projectors invited the intervention of the viewer in the act of observation, by becoming an interference object that disrupted the beamed light of the projection onto the wall. The physical presence of the viewer caused the effect of blocking one tier of projected images from the projection tower, and instead replaced the image with the shadow image of the observer (a single and brutal interference pattern from light to dark). In order to view the work, the presence of the viewer necessarily absented an element of the (projected) image, and thus the story of the act of looking is performed (Elkins, 2011) and a superposition is momentarily collapsed.

In an essay by Damian Sutton in the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition *Interval* (1999), Sutton writes in response to conversations with Paul Bevan:

*“We are separated from the occurrence of the photograph. We merely experience the still image as time in parenthesis, divorced from our own perception, a closed document. We fail to recognise the interface through which we understand, or not, the image before us, as viewer, and the image appears transparent, hidden beneath the aesthetic conventions of composition and representation. Conventions which fix the tableau without the moment: a pictorial representation of the denial of perception. What fills this gap between the viewer and the image is the fine and intricate structure of contemplation, an instant that is experienced, lost and replaced every moment of our lives.”*

(Sutton, 1999 – The photographic image as ‘undiscovered country’. From conversations with Paul Bevan, INTERVAL, 1999)

This separation alludes to the interplay between photography and performance that is expanded in the next chapter. The intended and primary point of the photograph in this ontology is for the viewer to stand in the gap left after the performance or the occurrence of the photograph, and to embody the ‘*act of looking that we have not really performed*’ (Elkins, 2011)). In this ontology too, the gap or void

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<sup>41</sup> *Interval* can now be seen as a single-slit experiment (in retrospect)

belonging to the 'conventions of representation' (Sutton, 1999), is precisely a space or place of the superposition: in status, observation, event.

The viewer's '*separation from the occurrence of the photograph*' (Sutton, 1999) or the site of its production (Rose, 2001) creates a void or gap that is filled by contemplation, as a superseding and recurring experience in every moment of observation in the real time and presence of the viewer. Each instance is a process of the duration of a collapsed superposition as the void draws the viewer in. When the act of viewing photographs goes beyond the 'ordinary' or non-standard and is (somehow) integrated into a performed act of being present and observing (in some way), the gap or void is thus filled or superseded by a new occurrence of the photograph as performance, and not one (simply) predicated on that which has already been seen or performed (Elkins, 2011).

The conditions for a further state of superposition at this point then, must go beyond the passive 'experience' (Sutton, 1999) and the 'ordinary observation' (Elkins, 2011) to become an active and intended incorporation of the viewer or observer (by the artist). In this way, the presence of the observer becomes implicated in the (art) work, as a process to make or take the event of viewing into a further research iteration of the superposition in construction and in collapse. This displaces the original 'gap' (or void) to generate a new superposition construction and collapse relationship in the act of viewing or observing each time, as an intended research and collaborative component of collective engagement that is 'experienced, lost and replaced' (Sutton, 1999) on display (that can also be observed by other viewers).<sup>42</sup>

The conditions of 1- 4 set out the framework and methodology for developing a practical and theoretical place of the state of superposition in-status and in-collapse (in superposition and from superposition) in photography as the core research proposition and investigation of this study. This is explored and evidenced through the practice-based research iterations that are core parts and entangled particles of this PhD.

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<sup>42</sup> An example of this is seen in the piece *The Artist is Present*, by Marina Abramovic. The mutual gaze between present artist and present viewer is a moment of mutual superposition collapse. This is a spectacle enjoyed by other viewers, as discussed later

## Chapter 2 Photography and Performance: A Contextual Review

The relationship between photography and performance is an entangled one. In the early 1960s, photography was engaged in a new way by artists who were working in (suitably) conceptual, time-based or ephemeral ways, in the landscape, with sculpture or with their own bodies for example. Photography was deployed as a (suitable) method for documentation, as well as a means for artists to make attendant photo-works as part of an expanded practice.<sup>43</sup> With both a loosening of any definitive parameters and the moment of fusion of photography with performance, the relationship of performance with photography also reaches further back in time before the period of 1960s and also extends beyond the function of documentation.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the relationship between photography and performance is entangled with varying degrees of the performance being the photographic imperative to be in-photo and/or indeed as part of the observation/ viewing of the work (where the observer is in-presence), which is of importance here. As an act that has time-based fundamentals in both operation and exposure, the photographic occasion itself can be considered as a performance or at least as a performative gesture in both time and space. The gesture of photography is a performed event, intended or not (Flüsser, 2011). This act applies not only at the site of (photographic) production of making or taking photographs, but also at the sites of the image and at the dissemination or audience engagement (Rose, 2001). This relationship presents a further matrix of appropriate and apposite terminology or terms of reference for photography and performance, on which to build a discourse within and against the theory of superposition as defined and to be elaborated on further, as status, observation and event. It is worth describing the relationship between photography and performance at this point, in order to develop a more specific and intended interplay between photography, performance and the superposition. This can be described in three categories defined for the purposes of this study: *Passive witness*; *Active audience*; and *Performed photography or meta-photography*. Belonging to each category is a defining characteristic that can be derived from the very first moments the technology or image of photography began to fix to a surface, and thereby survived to allow for some future reflexive and creative interpretations. These particular attachments or attributes serve to support the distinction

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<sup>43</sup> Ref. Michael Snow interview

<sup>44</sup> Before performance became an art 'genre', and as seen for example in a show at the time of writing in the Centre Pompidou exhibition *Women in Abstraction*, Paris. Many works dating from 1860s-1980s present new discoveries by woman artists, who according to the text "*suffer from a lack of visibility*" – no doubt reflecting a sentiment increasingly shared by a new generation of curators seeking to bring previously unseen work into view, as a kind of curatorial act of collapsing this superposition ([www.centrepompidou.fr/en/program/calendar/event/OmzSxFv](http://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/program/calendar/event/OmzSxFv))

between the three categories, and exemplify where a loosening of the notion of performance in relation to photography is useful and relevant. The work of three contemporary pioneers of photography in the 1830s provide a classifying paradigm for each category. These are: William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877); Hippolyte Bayard (1801-1887); and Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851). Each pioneer was working to develop and patent a particular kind of photographic process and technique, and attendant material reference. In this way, as well as serving to define one relational category between photography and performance, each pioneer also usefully aligns with a particular photographic paradigm that applies to each category.

### Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness*

In the first category, photography is positioned as a *passive witness* to a performance event or object made by an artist. The artwork is situated within the time-based performance work, happening, or ephemeral sculpture for example, and the photographic part is one or the method of documenting the work for wider dissemination to an extended audience. In this category, there is a clear demarcation between photograph and artwork; the status of art is intended to reside outside of the photograph in the event or object itself, rather than any photograph(s) of it.<sup>45</sup> This category would include the work of Body Artists for example, where the artwork is specifically based on some kind of physical or visceral event or happening on or to the body of the artist or performer.<sup>46</sup> Here, the material impact on the body as a transformation or body state of the artist in performance, is the point of the artwork. This aspect is always more important than any photographic record of it, even if without the photographic record or documentation an otherwise absent audience would have no knowledge or awareness of the artwork (matters of veracity notwithstanding). This deployment and extended use of photography also applies in the tradition of Land Art for example, where the land-artist makes a temporary or isolated intervention in the landscape, often in remote or extreme conditions.<sup>47</sup> The photographic record of this is intended to bring the work back or extend it to a studio, gallery, publication or marketplace, as well as to retain a permanent record of the piece.

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<sup>45</sup> *The Object of Performance*, Sayre, H.M. (1989)

<sup>46</sup> Body Art (c.1960 -)

<sup>47</sup> Land Art (c. 1960s – 1970s)



As passive witness, the photographer is often a separate entity or body to that of the artist, although this is not a requirement. In the case of Land Art for example, the isolated land-artist may also be the one who takes the photographic material or evidence of the work due to practicalities and the intention to retain the integrity and source of all the work once brought back onto the gallery context or public domain. Even when the photographer is independent to the artist or performer, the artist may provide some directions to the photographer as part of the observation or recording process, such as vantage point, time of day and so on. This does not change the ontology of the artwork itself, since this is not made specifically or solely for the camera or to be photographed. The artwork is intended to exist in its own right in the world, and would exist whether photographed or observed, or not. The photograph is subservient to the objective of the work, as is also the photographer to the remit of the art/ artist.

There are many practitioners in this category who are primarily performance or body artists, and whose selected work is considered to support the clarification of this category. It is interesting to note that much of this practice is now both known and preserved through its photographic legacy. The photographic record inevitably assumes an elevated status in time that might arguably come to approximate the value of the artwork at least in sentiment, as the sole portal or trigger to the work. There is often no other surviving artefact or no other evidence that the work ever existed or occurred. The work shifts from its original intended state of existential separation or independence from photography, to existing only in photograph(s). However, this does not shift or change the place or status of artwork.

At the emergence of performance art and in particular body art, that might also be thought of as research in action, there are differences between the kind of work that was being made by men and the kind of work that was being made by women as they turned to their own bodies and bodily material. This is worth mentioning in relation to the notion that gender is performed, and perhaps more so with regards to contemporary thinking around non-gender performance of the self (non-binary).<sup>48</sup> On reflection, much of the work at this time was comparatively binary that might be seen in the context of a second wave of feminism, and the visibility of female artists. Male artists working at this time, seemed focused on making works of endurance or audacity. These artists were performing stunts of power or provocation that tested the extent of their body or their capacity to cope or endure, with the idea that the

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<sup>48</sup> The status and recent emergence in the use and expression of non-binary, is interesting in a digital/ analogue context – see also footnote 61

work was a kind of interplay between the visceral and the cerebral, the body and the mind. Such constructed or consequential lived experience(s) on the body, served to extend the mind or wisdom of the artist through an extreme experience or even a near death survival, to become like a Shaman, for example.<sup>49</sup> Artists even played with the conceivable possibility of death through performance, in work that was about taking on external forces or engineering physical challenges to break or extend their own physical capabilities and possibilities.<sup>50</sup>

The work of female artists was more intrinsic, and perhaps focused on reclaiming their own bodies as otherwise described as external objects of desire. The work which they performed rejected the objective gaze in favor of something more interior and self-referential. Of course, like any review or research of past works, it is important to see this in the context of other contemporary visual practice, and the social, and political culture of the time. Interestingly, today there seems to be an emerging new generation of performance artists and a resurging interest in the work of from this earlier period.<sup>51</sup> This may indicate a desire to engage with real bodily experience in the face of much simulated and augmented realities in our own social, political and technical culture, or in a 'mixed reality' of an alternative or self-authored reality.<sup>52</sup>

Examples of male artists that would fall into this category include American artist Chris Burden (1946-2015). Burden worked across sculpture, installation art, and performance, and used photography as a means to document many acts of performance from the 1970s onwards. These performance works were often quite extreme, with an intended element of self-danger or harm, where Burden deliberately placed himself in situations of constructed or potential risk. A good example of this is *Deadman* (1972), where Burden lay inside a canvas wrap on the ground of a highway in California with a road flare light at either end.<sup>53</sup> Bystanders reported a dead man to the emergency services, an outcome that led to his arrest. Burden's work seems to test or experiment with (his own) fate or the capacity of (human) endurance in real life situations. In *Velvet Water* (1974) Burden attempts to breath water in front of a

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<sup>49</sup> Joseph Beuys is a good example here, who was brought back to life with the use of certain materials (fat, felt) that then went on to become the mainstay of his art works – although there is some additive element of performed mythology around this, as part of the artists story (auto-ethnography)

<sup>50</sup> What does not kill you makes you stronger

<sup>51</sup> For example, the Richard Souton Gallery, London is a champion of this genre today, specifically Eleanor Antin, and Carolee Schneeman. Marina Abramovic is also highly present, showing at the Truman Brewery, East London at the time of writing, and with a forthcoming exhibition at the Royal Academy

<sup>52</sup> Marina Abramovic talks about 'mixed reality' in the interview accompanying her exhibition Marina Abramovic in Traces, Old Truman Brewery, London September 10-12, 2021

<sup>53</sup> As distinct from Bagism, created by John Lennon and Yoko Ono in the 1960s where the body is concealed in a bag so as to deny any kind of prejudice based on body appearance

live audience, and in *TV Hijack* (1972) in front of a live TV broadcast where Burden is being interviewed, he holds the interviewer at knifepoint threatening to kill her if the live transmission is switched off.

Although he subsequently destroyed this particular show reel, Burden's work ethic is shown through the photographic (and video) records of his stunts. His work is not about making the photographic outcome, since these acts are performed beyond the purpose of the photographic frame. However, the photographic legacy of Burden's work is necessary to convey, endorse and certify his artistic manifesto and his life as an artist. This photographic record of Burden's work is invaluable and increasingly important, since these ephemeral events are gone forever (along with Burden himself).

Another (male) artist working in this category is Austrian Otto Mühl (1925-2013). Mühl moved from working on canvas to working with his own body flesh and carnal fluid as the tools of live art from around 1966 as part of the formation of Viennese Actionism.<sup>54</sup> Mühl engaged in many visceral activities that were also filmed and photographed, as a means of recording the work. The film and photographic imagery of this work is distinct and separate from the art work, serving as a representation of it; importantly, the place of the art remains situated in the activities. There is much that can be said about the ramifications and reach of his work in both political and community terms, and there is no question that the documentary material of the performance work was central to his way of working and permanently extending his manifesto to a wider audience. Mühl's biography is underpinned by a transition from art to life, although his transgression into sexual offences leading to his arrest and imprisonment in 1991, is an unfortunate deviation from this.

There are other male artists that fall into this category of performance that directly extend or test their bodies in some way, as the form, intention and status of their art practice.<sup>55</sup> The need to photograph this is driven by matters of provenance and legacy, to evidence and preserve an otherwise remote or ephemeral activity in time and space. The event itself is not directed at or made for the camera, and the status of the photograph(s) is as a passive witness or audience. The photograph(s) is not intended to add any kind of photographic discourse to the work, and the works are discussed strictly in the context of performance/ body art (even if in retrospect the role and capacity of photography in this regard has

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<sup>54</sup> Viennese Actionism was a local and independent movement to develop performance and body art in the 1960s, mainly led by Mühl and 3 other male artists: Günter Brus, Herman Nitsch, and Rudolf Schwarzkogler – all of whom could also be included as case studies of this category, working in similarly energetic and sometimes violent ways.

<sup>55</sup> For example: Stelarc (b.1946); Franco B (b.1960); Andre Stitt (b.1958); Stuart Brisley (b.1933)

become a valid topic for analysis, the assigned category here is a case in point). This does not underestimate the importance of the role that photography plays in the category.

As suggested previously, in general female artists of this time were performing sentiments of embodiment. Instead of some kind of encounter with or against an external element, these artists sought to make subjective connections with an internal order in some way, which may in the end have something to do with the intrinsic qualities and characteristics of each sex (even if this may be a dubious, unspoken binary supposition). One example of this would be the work of Carolee Schneemann (1939-2019), an American artist working with performance across media, including the use of photography. A significant piece titled *Interior Scroll* (1975) was performed in front of an audience comprising mainly of women artists. In this work, Schneemann draws on various artistic contextual references through readings and other matters (a trope of Schneemann's work), in the lead up to pulling out a long and thin paper scroll from inside her vagina upon which there is typed text. As well as the scroll itself, what remains of this work is the photographic documentation of it, with the accompanying text.<sup>56</sup> In a recent comprehensive retrospective exhibition at MoMA's PS1 in New York (2017-18), Schneemann's work was exhibited as a coordinated ensemble of material artefacts, all of which have some kind of performative connection as props or outcomes of performance. These are the lasting remnants of an event, where the event is always more important than its aftermath, and now the lasting remnants of the artist herself (who is no longer alive). The photographic elements serve as provenance of the various performance happenings and to visually contextualise the attendant material. While the photography (and video) is indeed vital visual-reference material, it is not the point or purpose of Schneemann's work (or life).



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From *Interior Scroll* (1975), image taken at *Kinetic Painting*, MoMA, PS1 | October 22, 2017- March 11, 2018

Another significant artist is Serbian, Marina Abramovic. So significant in fact that Abramovic has literally become an institution; the Marina Abramovic Institute was developed following Abramovic's major retrospective at MoMA in 2010. In this exhibition, Abramovic perform 716 hours of her piece entitled *The Artist is Present* (2010-) during which over 750,000 visitors (and strangers to Abramovic), engaged in a mutual gaze with the artist.<sup>57</sup> Abramovic, dressed in red, sat at a table with an empty chair opposite. Members of the public occupied the empty seat one at a time and effectively collapsed their own superposition in the presence of the artist as a mutual observation took hold until the participant decided to break off. This performance in observation was at the same time the spectacle for the other visitors to observe, who waited their turn or were simply present too, for the duration.

The Marina Abramovic institute continues to define the importance of duration in performance, which is seen as a fundamental element to the experience of being present or mindful (the artist is present).

Abramovic herself has endured a long-standing career as an artist and is also known for an early career collaboration with Ulay (Frank Uwe Laysiepen, 1943-2020) between 1976-1988.<sup>58</sup> Working as a performance artist with her own body, Abramovic's work is also seen in the context of feminism and subjectivity, a position constructed and occupied in much of the work she made with her male collaborator<sup>59</sup> <sup>60</sup>. This female-male collaboration allowed the artists to embody the gender of their other as collaborator, with Ulay acting out the male of Abramovic and Abramovic playing the female part of Ulay. As a unit, they combined all conceivable gender states from man to woman, and all in between states of non-binary iterations.<sup>61</sup>

In the absence of any audience, the work would not exist. Abramovic's work requires the presence of the observer together and in the same moment that the artist is present.<sup>62</sup> This is the point of the

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<sup>57</sup> Except Ulay, who made an incredibly moving and emotional surprise appearance

<sup>58</sup> Marina Abramovic and Ulay developed a manifesto under the title of Relational Works that committed to "*Art Vital: No fixed living space, permanent movement, direct contact, local relation, self-selection, passing limitations, taking risks, mobile energy*" (a kind of permanent state of superposition)

<sup>59</sup> For example, *Imponderabilia* (Bologna, 1977) also known as *Naked Doorway*, or *A living Door of the Museum*, where Abramovic and Ulay are both standing naked and facing inwards, creating a small slit/ narrowed doorway through which gallery viewers must enter the gallery and in so doing decide between facing (and rubbing) against Marina or Ulay. This piece was planned to be re-staged (not with Abramovic) at the Royal Academy, London in 2020, rescheduled to 2023. This is planned to involve multiple, non-binary sexualities to narrow the doorway

<sup>60</sup> In a conversation broadcast 20.05.21 as part of Sotheby's celebrating (Women) Artists, Abramovic described the union of herself and Ulay that he was coming from photography, and she from performance. She also commented that their collaboration allowed them to embody their own sexuality, since prior to coming together each artist alone had to account for feminine and masculine particles as an individual, thereby in collaboration no longer needing to singularly embody this duality anymore. The unity allowed them to be, and explore, their own genders (Abramovic, 2021)

<sup>61</sup> It could be argued that the concept of non-binary is a state of superposition. The contemporary application of this in a combined gender of they/ them rather than she/he, seems to fit the idea of a gender superposition that rejects a singular definition

<sup>62</sup> This is a state of collapsed superposition to be picked up again later

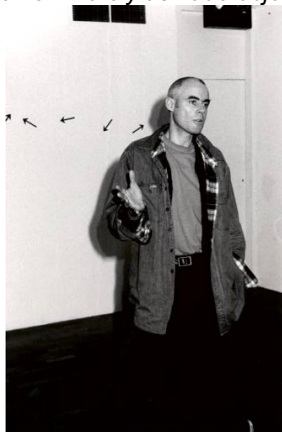
artwork, and the photographic material is key to a wider dissemination of the story for others to observe, even if this becomes a different experience or story (Elkins, 2011). Photographic material from both the artists referenced here (and others), features in an array of publications and exhibitions about performance, rather than about photography.<sup>63</sup> This is a category area that has been widely researched and published, and clearly one of the beneficial legacies that photographic record provides. For example, the publication *The Object of Performance*, Henry M. Sayre (1989); and exhibition *Out of Actions. Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* (1998), curated by Paul Schimmel. Both Schneeman and Abramovic are asserting a performed protest against a subordinate role in a dominant patriarchal system. The performance has a political purpose then, and since the original actions in time and space are gone, their residual reverie can be drawn into a variety of subsequent contextual political debates and discourses. The (retrospective) process of positioning practice into theory or other such contexts by others, is itself a method to draw down the meaning of a work, intended or not by the artist, as a process of collapsing all conceivable interpretations.<sup>64</sup>

In the case of Land Art, artists like Richard Long (b.1945) use photography to bring back the image of the work from the landscape location for example, where there is (often) no other audience than the artist with camera. Although the images are very impressive and clearly demonstrate skill and consideration in photographic composition and representation, the photographs remain largely distinct and purposefully evidential, and often form part of an extended interplay with text or other methods of visual communication as alternative artwork.<sup>65</sup> Some Land Art pieces are monumental and epic, like

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<sup>63</sup> For example: Vito Acconci (1940-2017); Laurie Anderson (b. 1947); Eleanor Antin (b.1935)

<sup>64</sup> For example, on Schneemann: "By using her body as her primary medium, Schneemann emphasized women's agency, situating women as both the creator and an active part of the creation itself, giving the female form in art a subjectivity it previously lacked. She firmly established her practice in opposition to the traditional representation of women merely as nude objects." (www.theartstory.org/artist-schneeman-carolee)



<sup>65</sup>

For example, arrows on the wall showing wind direction in the work of Richard Long. Photograph taken while Richard Long discussed his work in the gallery at the Arnolfini, Bristol c.1989

Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970),<sup>66</sup> and much of Christo's work, for example, which could conceivably be seen from space, and photographed from high in the air. Visitors to *Spiral Jetty* which has now re-emerged after 30 years of underwater invisibility, are required to leave no trace.<sup>67</sup> A further example of work in this category, as well as a work that has a significant time-based component is *Wheatfield – A Confrontation: Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan* by Agnes Denes (1982). A 2-acre wheat field was planted on a landfill worth billions of dollars in downtown Manhattan. The field was carefully maintained and harvested after a 4-month period and yielded a large amount of quality wheat. The piece is intended to reference (mis-)management of socio-political welfare, with the site being especially poignant. There are many photographs of this piece, and of course a series of documentary images made by Denes herself, in order to record this extraordinary work. A further dimension of the work includes a steel capsule in a lead box that is buried in nine feet of concrete, marked by a plaque.<sup>68</sup> Inside the steel capsule is a microfilm of a set of completed survey questionnaires remarking on the human condition of the time; of socio-economic values, of the quality of life and ideas around the future of humanity. It is intended that this part of the work is broken open in the future, in 2979.<sup>69</sup> These artists are not making their work for the photographic part, rather they are making use of photography for observation purposes and to make a record of the work that is itself left or marked out in situ in the landscape. There is no photographic intervention in the happening or artwork itself; instead, the pencil of nature is at work and photography is a passive observer. Accordingly, the category classifying paradigm for this use or deployment of photography comes from William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877), an English scientist and pioneer of photography. Around 1835, Fox Talbot invented a version of photography that become known as the calotype process. Fox Talbot effectively developed the negative/ positive process of photography that took hold for mass production and mass use as a democratised mainstream process of photography that is still used to this day. Unlike the others that were being pioneered at the time, this technique allowed for multiple 'positive' photographic print reproductions from the original 'negative' image.<sup>70</sup> In terms of the process, the other known pioneers developed methods that produced a single image directly onto a glass or a metal plate, that was already a 'positive' and had no reproductive capacity; these techniques were not intended for

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<sup>66</sup> The construction of *Spiral Jetty* was documented in a 32-minute colour film, also titled *Spiral Jetty*.

<sup>67</sup> Unlike Abramovic's work

<sup>68</sup> It is as if the cat and the vile of uranium are absent

<sup>69</sup> There are many such time capsules planted in Earth and even in Space – all can currently be thought of as in a state of superposition, with the fate of their contents concealed inside heavy duty materials

<sup>70</sup> To be elaborated on in the following two categories

further second-generation reproduction, but instead produced singular and bespoke images that happened to be of superior quality. Defining for this category then, is the manner of the unmediated and (divine) act of photographic observation, without any (further) human intervention other than the operational and logistical parts. Fox Talbot published the first ever photographic volume of books that were titled *The Pencil of Nature* (1844-46), which asserted his stance and ideology that the photograph was a direct trace of the world, and celebrated the proposition that nature seemed to literally draw itself. In this way, he proposed that the photograph was an unprecedented and new form of document, especially useful as evidence and provenance. Fox Talbot is said to have referred to the photograph that he made of his *Articles of China* (1843/44) for example, that in the event that such possessions might be 'purloined by a thief', the photograph would provide indisputable evidence and incontrovertible proof of ownership of these valuable objects for the purposes of any subsequent insurance claim. Fox Talbot's work and process gives rise to the notion of the indexical as discussed earlier, and that the photograph is a faithful representation and points at something in the world in front of the camera, in the way that the index finger does. The volumes of *The Pencil of Nature* (1844-46) were intended to support this aspect as Fox Talbot positioned his camera apparatus to allow nature to draw itself as photograph, which the photograph then pointed right back at. The photograph was essentially a technical reproduction and pioneered to fix an image of an object or scenario that exists in the world. The calotype was, and remains, technically separable from its referent. A further example of this is Fox Talbot's iconic image *Latticed Window* (1835) which is the oldest known 'negative' in existence, and that the latticed window itself is still preserved and in existence at Lacock Abbey where it is possible to stand in the same spot as Fox Talbot did around 186 years ago.<sup>71</sup>



<sup>71</sup>

The actual latticed window at Lacock Abbey. Paul Bevan (2014), after Fox Talbot, *Latticed Window* (with the Camera Obscura), (August, 1835)



## Category 2 Photography and Performance: *Active Audience or Witness*

In this category, photography is not passive, but takes the position that might be considered as an *active audience or witness*. In this case, the performance or artwork is intended to be made or directed at the camera. The photograph can be referred to as a directed image, when an event or spectacle is performed specially for the camera and to be photographed. Although the work becomes situated in the photographic outcome and validated by the photographic act, the event can still exist or occur independently to its photographic observation, as a superposition status of both outside- and in-photo. The photographic outcome shares in the point of the work and is more than documentation or a record of the performance or object, as in Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness*. In this instance, the work might be conducted in collaboration between artist and photographer or might involve the artist working with photography.<sup>72</sup>

The classifying paradigm for this category from the time of the emergence of photography, is *Self Portrait as Drowned Man* by Hippolyte Bayard (1840). Bayard (1801-1887) released an image of himself (as self-portrait) having committed suicide by drowning (as drowned man). This image was designed to show that Bayard had taken his own life and provided the explanation for this mortal act as stated on the reverse of the printed image in an accompanying written statement.<sup>73</sup> In his photograph, Bayard appears to have taken his own life, an act motivated by disdain. Bayard had been denied French state recognition for his work as a pioneer of photography.<sup>74</sup> The photograph and text both present ontologies that question the acclaimed status of M. Bayard as dead, or at least should suggest that Bayard was simultaneously both dead and alive.<sup>75</sup> The title of *self-portrait* begs questions of logistics. How could he manage to perform the act of suicide in front of his own camera, and then effectively make a posthumous self-portrait. There is no suggestion that the photography was made by anyone other than M. Bayard. In the same way, the production of the printed image and the addition of the hand-written annotation on its reverse, and the subsequent orchestrated circulation of the image, all

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<sup>72</sup> Here, there is a semantic difference between the notion of artist working with photography and (artist as) photographer.

<sup>73</sup> *The corpse which you see here is that of M. Bayard, inventor of the process that has just been shown to you. As far as I know this indefatigable experimenter has been occupied for about three years with his discovery. The Government which has been only too generous to Monsieur Daguerre, has said it can do nothing for Monsieur Bayard, and the poor wretch has drowned himself. Oh the vagaries of human life....! ...He has been at the morgue for several days, and no-one has recognized or claimed him.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, you'd better pass along for fear of offending your sense of smell, for as you can observe, the face and hands of the gentleman are beginning to decay.* (Bayard, 1840)

<sup>74</sup> Instead the French government lavished recognition on another pioneer of a photographic process ('M. Daguerre')

<sup>75</sup> A suicidal superposition, and a status akin to *Schrodinger's Cat* (1935)

required strategic intervention and collusion. Although he could conceivably have performed this (publicity) stunt in the absence of the camera, this would have been a futile act. Indeed, the precise purpose of this act was to be witnessed by the camera as the active audience to his performance. Bayard's point or purpose of this photograph was to send a visual statement with accompanying text out into the world for an intended and desired effect. This may not have shifted the official state recognition for photographic invention (from Daguerre) towards Bayard, but it is certainly possible to acknowledge Bayard for his innovative application of photography. In production, Bayard demonstrates an unprecedented foresight of the potential impact of the image beyond his own life (when his is considered drowned), and he also demonstrates an unprecedented use of photography as the site of an act or performance. Bayard may not have gained recognition for his photographic process, but he can be regarded as a pioneer of staged photography or the directed image in this iconic photograph. Much later, Keith Arnatt (1930-2008) performed an act of *Self-Burial* (1969) to camera.



*Self-Burial*, Keith Arnatt (1969) © Keith Arnatt Estate. All rights reserved. DACS

This work is not meant to be a direct reference to Bayard's act of self-portrait/ suicide; however, it creates a similar dilemma. Arnatt's *Self-Burial* is a nine-image photographic sequence of Keith Arnatt himself standing straight-up in front of the camera, progressively disappearing into the ground beneath his feet. The sequence begins with a full body upright portrait and ends with a mound of earth underneath which we are led to believe the Arnatt is buried. The photographs between these, plot the progressive disappearance of the artist. The questions regarding the logistics of this production are equally valid to those with M. Bayard's production before. Arnatt similarly presents a photo-work where his performance as an event for the camera is the point of the work (of art). In this work, Arnatt is asserting his own status and recognition as an artist, perhaps an unintended similarity to Bayard's own claim and visual response with commentary on his state of recognition (or the lack of it).<sup>76</sup> Arnatt used photography to make a number of works at this time that were in response to contemporary art. *Self-Burial* in particular was appropriating certain practices of Land Art, where the artwork disappears into the landscape.<sup>77</sup> In *Self-Burial*, Arnatt as artist disappears into the land, shifting the element that disappears from artwork to artist. In this way, Arnatt is (also) constructing or performing a proposition of the conceivable status of being simultaneously alive and dead and, (again like Bayard) is doing so while also being on both sides of the camera at the same time (given the use of *self* in each title).<sup>78</sup> The fact that Arnatt would have needed to dig more earth out from under his feet between each stage of the sequence (or someone else had to in order to stage the sequence) is a performance that could have occurred irrespective of the photograph.<sup>79</sup> The fact that he stood upright to the end, looking into the lens of his camera with each new pose, when he needed to trigger the shutter of his lens, even at the point when he is largely buried in the ground (or someone else had to in order to stage the sequence), is defining of this category of photography and performance. There is a shift in the status of artwork from performance to photography, even though this does not make Arnatt a 'photographer'.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, this was also a marking a shifting ground of photography as art (with artist not photographer), and this status was central to the acquisition of *Self-Burial* by the Tate Gallery, London, in 1973. The collection

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<sup>76</sup> Keith Arnatt, *Trouser - Word Piece* (1972) – see footnote 209

<sup>77</sup> For example, work that was shown in the exhibition *Sculpture in the Environment*, across New York in 1967. A noteworthy piece would be Claes Oldenburg's *Placid Civil Monument* which was a large hole in Central Park that was dug out and then refilled. Arnatt responded to this with a work titled *Invisible Hole Revealed by the Shadow of the Artist* (1969)

<sup>78</sup> (again) *Schrodinger's Cat* (1935)

<sup>79</sup> Although it is conceivable that in reality this work may have been made in reverse; Arnatt first dug the hole, and gradually filled it in standing on a higher ground at each stage and then reversing the sequence of this series

<sup>80</sup> Although Arnatt went on to become seen primarily as a photographer

of photography was not part of the acquisition policy of the Tate Gallery at this time. That this work was seen primarily in the context of photography, is a view that supports the ontological shift alluded to above in this category towards photography. Arnatt (and others) argued that when photographs were made by (real) artists as an intrinsic part of their practice, there was a distinction between this and photographs that were made by photographers (as non-artists), and thereby not considered suitable for the Tate Gallery collection. This debate gave rise to another well-known work by Keith Arnatt, *Trouser – Word Piece* (1972) where Arnatt is pictured holding a placard reading, I AM A REAL ARTIST.<sup>81</sup> Arnatt's missive and provocation here was to affirm his status as an artist, even if he was working with photography.<sup>82</sup> Arnatt was also asserting an absolute authenticity in his use of the word 'real', that rejects any conceivable ways of being not real<sup>83</sup>. The status of photography within the context of art is also the basis of an essay Arnatt wrote titled '*Sausages and Food*' (1972) in which he essentially argues that sausages (photography) is a type of food (art).<sup>84</sup> Arnatt's *Self-Burial* work was also a part of the *Gerry Shum Television Interference Project* (1969), in which the images were shown on German television during peak viewing time in October 1969. One photograph appeared each day, momentarily interfering in the scheduled broadcast without explanation or apparent purpose and leaving viewers uncertain and somewhat bemused about what they had just observed. The intention of the project (as suggested by the title) was to make a direct intervention in peoples' homes via the television, as a novel and experimental interference in the pattern of normal domestic viewing.<sup>85</sup> The effective displacement of the average observer into another or different space on account of seeing something unexpected, is an extension of the event in this work.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> See footnote 209

<sup>82</sup> As a kind of collapse of an otherwise possible superposition of being both/ neither artist nor photographer

<sup>83</sup> Accompanying this work is some text (again like Bayard). Arnatt uses a passage from John Austin, "(The) function of 'real' is not to contribute positively to the characterisation of anything, but to exclude possible ways of being **not** real – and to be quite different for things of different kinds. It is this identity of general function combined with immense diversity in specific applications which gives to the word 'real' the, at first sight, baffling feature of having neither one single 'meaning', nor yet ambiguity, a number of different meanings". This seems to put the word and meaning of 'real' into a state of superposition.

<sup>84</sup> This argument was made at a time when sausages themselves may not have been entirely accepted as food, or at least a poor version of food (and possibly even a class divider). On the other hand, the sausage in Germany has an altogether different legacy; probably not part of the Gerry Shum agenda, but an interesting observation nonetheless

<sup>85</sup> Even if the television was relatively new at this time, some kind of routine or regular viewing would have taken hold

<sup>86</sup> Arnatt's piece was included within this project as part of a discourse on Land Art and Video Art, and used as part of the proposition that the interference itself was the work of art. It is felt that the premature death of Gerry Schum (1938-1973) was a significant loss to the development of Video Art

On 23 October 1960, Yves Klein (1928-1962) performed arguably his most iconic image titled *Leap into the Void* (1960), in collaboration with Harry Shunk and Janos Kender. Klein is photographed suspended in mid-air above the street, in a gravity defying poise in a trajectory leaping off a window ledge from a building. As in many of his performances, Klein is wearing his (signature) tuxedo outfit. Klein is dressed to perform as part of his theatrical repertoire. The street immediately below him is empty. In the most known image of *Leap into the Void*, there is a cyclist in the background who is cycling away from the scene, and who would have recently passed under the window ledge in the constructed narrative of the event. In the background, he is now seemingly oblivious to the stunt being performed behind him in the *mise-en-scène*. The presence of the cyclist is an important element to provide a component of normality, or at least to ground the image into a framework of authenticity. This part also plays a contrasting everyday particle to backdrop an act that is altogether more epic.<sup>87</sup> The identity of the cyclist is not known, although it could conceivably be Klein himself. In a lesser known image, the cyclist has gone. Given the familiarity of the version with cyclist, it is as if the cyclist has been removed, gone or disappeared, itself into the void. In relation to the theatre of the void, as a pairing of images, this takes on the theme in a profound and different way to the image of a leaping Klein; in this alternative image, there is an expectation to also see the cyclist there, when it is not.<sup>88</sup>



*Leap into the Void / (Saut dans le Vide)*, Yves Klein, Fontenay-aux-Roses, France, October 23 1960  
 Photograph: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2014.R.20) - with and without cyclist<sup>89</sup>

<sup>87</sup> A project title that is firmly established in the MA Fashion Photography (LCF) with its resonances with both fashion and photography – *The Everyday and the Epic*

<sup>88</sup> Much like the (poster) image of the landscape without the figure, viewed retrospectively, see footnote 217

<sup>89</sup> Alternative version without the cyclist, reproduced above © Succession Yves Klein c/o ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. There was even a third version with Klein's car, but this one was never released

It is (now) known that the photograph *Leap into the Void* is actually a two-frame composite between the top-half section of Klein in mid-air flight, and the adjoining lower-half section of the empty street (with/without cyclist). The lower-half section of the empty street replaced the lower-half section of the street space of the original image, where a gathering of men is holding a safety net to catch Klein as he inevitably falls from his leap.<sup>90</sup> These men have been erased into the void by the replacement of another lower-half section, leaving instead an image of an empty street in which they were never there. Clearly this shifts the status of the new image in relation to the event, as a seamless combination of the top-section of the original image with Klein leaping into the void and the lower-section of another image of an empty street below.<sup>91</sup> As such, the image of *Leap into the Void*, and much of Klein's practice, raises matters of visibility and invisibility, and redaction and veracity. Even though the image may not be thought of as an entirely accurate rendition of the scene in its entirety, Klein nevertheless performed the leap for camera. The difference is in what was seen to be below him at the time of this stunt. The work is credited to Klein, but the photography to Harry Shunk, who was a regular photographer of Klein's work. Technically, the image of *Leap into the Void* is and is not a documentary image of a performance by Klein for camera (if we assume that Klein made the leap), but it is also an image of an event that did not happen beyond the image itself. The leap might be real, but the photographic image of it is not. Thus, the performance begins to shift into the photographic; the photographic outcome is the desired effect that trades on all the underpinning values and status of photography to provide a semblance of



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Yves Klein, preparatory photographs for *Leap into the Void/ Saut dans le vide*, Fontenay-aux-Roses, France, October 23 1960 - © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2014.R.20)

<sup>91</sup> An image of a gang of men holding a net under a window ledge with no leaping Klein is an image that exists only in thought – but nevertheless would be conceivable. To join the top-section of the other image with the lower-section of the original image, would be the alternative version of Klein leaping into the void. However, this image does not exist. It, along with the concept of an invisible Klein, are in the state of superposition. The idea of no Klein where he would be expected to be in this alternative image, as an act of disappearance or invisibility is referred to later in relation to the practice-based elements of Paul Bevan, *In Superposition* (2016)

veracity, supported by the cyclist as a contribution to that sentiment. Although the event could exist independently to its photographic representation in the world, it is not meant to.<sup>92</sup> In fact, if it had, Klein would surely have suffered greater injury than he reportedly did (since he would have fallen to the empty street below him).<sup>93</sup> In a sense, this image is a semi-thought-experiment of in-photo and outside the photograph, and draws on the status of superposition in several ways. Klein is both leaping into the void, and not leaping into the void (but into a net). A suspension of disbelief on a scale that matches Klein's suspended figure is required in the observation of this work. As a thought experiment, it can be conceived as a double-slit experiment. The image is split horizontally across the middle section, with the whole made up of two half-slits. The image is also an interference pattern of one version and another brought together, like the wave and the particle behaviours of light in the interference pattern of the double-slit experiment or the joining of light and dark, on and off, on a screen.<sup>94</sup>

Another artist for this category is Ana Mendieta (1948-1985). Mendieta was a Cuban artist who is perhaps best known<sup>95</sup> for her 'earth-body' artworks series that involved her body placed into the natural landscape,<sup>96</sup> that often included moving elements of fire and water for example. Her oeuvre was to use photography and video to observe and record her body actions and events that she performed for the camera. Although Mendieta's work largely exists as photographs and videos and is exhibited as such, she is not seen specifically as a video artist or a photographer. Mendieta is rather an artist who used her own body, and live experience as a direct attempt to extend physical and spiritual (re)connections with the earth.<sup>97</sup> The camera apparatus is positioned to actively observe and record these events, and to bring this material into gallery, studio, and publication context (logistically similar but conceptually different to Richard Long, for example, in *Category 1 Photography and Performance: Passive Witness*). These actions were intended to be recorded on camera, but also to be seen to exist outside of this photographic time and space as real events with potency. Mendieta would also perform in front of a live audience too. For example, in her work *Body Tracks* (1982), she soaked her hands and arms in animal-blood and drew them down on paper as a performative action in front of a live audience. The resulting

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<sup>92</sup> beyond the image, there is only a void

<sup>93</sup> Klein died 2 years later, although not attributed to this incident, he nevertheless appeared to live his life on the edge

<sup>94</sup> The image(s) have been interfered with

<sup>95</sup> Mendieta is also known to have been the girlfriend of artist Carl André. Mendieta mysteriously fell from the balcony of André's apartment to her death in New York in 1985.

<sup>96</sup> Mendieta's works might also be considered in terms of Land Art

<sup>97</sup> Mendieta was geographically displaced as a young immigrant from Cuba to the U.S. and this had a profound effect on her desire to physically connect with earth

drawings of directly traced body impressions, have both a documentary aspect and an intended indexicality of the event.<sup>98</sup> Interestingly, these are somewhat reminiscent of Klein's *Anthropometry* (1960) works, where female participants were painted in Yves Klein Blue pigment and used as human paintbrushes to leave their direct body impressions onto canvases.<sup>99</sup> That said, Mendieta's manifesto was altogether different, since the purpose of her work comprised other agendas, primarily around her own agency and diaspora.

Cindy Sherman (b.1954) is also an artist for this category. Sherman has made a lifetime of self-portraits for her camera, but never as herself (self-portrait). Sherman is always someone else, dressed-up specifically to be photographed as a performing character in her own self-directed setup. Sherman is on both sides of the camera at the same time, invisible as the photographer other than on the few occasional explicit connections to her apparatus by a shutter release cable, for example in the *Bus Riders* series (1976). At a major recent retrospective of Sherman's work at the National Portrait Gallery (27 June to 15 September 2019), the curator Paul Moorhouse gave an exhibition tour. Moorhouse introduced Sherman's methodology by paraphrasing Sherman's teacher Barbara Jo Revelle's response to Sherman's acts of dressing-up while Sherman was her student: "*why don't you make art out of it and use photography to document that*" (Moorhouse, 2019).<sup>100</sup> This is a fair description of how Sherman went on to 'use' photography in her work, whether this can be directly attributed to this response or not, Sherman uses photography to present (document) her art. Her art is in the performed array of multiple appearances, photographed in a (cinematic) moment from an untold narrative, left open ended for the observer to fill in the gap.<sup>101</sup> Sherman's narrative is of stories that not even she has lived (Elkins, 2011). In fact, the (real) story of the photographs, is in the performance of the character Sherman is portraying; there is no further narrative or timeline, no before and after, other than the construction of the photographic image itself. The photograph is crucial to the scenario and the proposition of the *Untitled Film Still*, for example, and Sherman knowingly exploits the rhetoric and the semiotics of non-verbal communication in the terms of camera position, angle, vantage point, lighting and so on as part of the narrative. The scene itself exists as a studio setup, projection or a location setting that is directed at the

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<sup>98</sup> In an essay for the publication accompanying the exhibition *L'Empreinte* at the Centre Pompidou in 1997, George Didi-Huberman discussed the hand-print as a form of representation that closed the gap between the mimetic-reflection and its model, which is perhaps the very gap referred to earlier between photograph and referent and the closing of which is more challenging for photography

<sup>99</sup> In these performances, Yves Klein is orchestrating the action while dressed in tuxedo

<sup>100</sup> Cindy Sherman describes Barbara Jo Revelle, her teacher at Buffalo, New York ((1972-76) as "my influential photo teacher in college" ([artxcindysherman.tumblr.com](https://artxcindysherman.tumblr.com))

<sup>101</sup> Especially so with the title of 'Untitled Film Still'



camera. Sherman herself, is both present and absent in her work, visible and invisible in disguise, and sometimes showing us the material edges between a state of fact and fiction, with the line of a mask disrupting the masquerade. Like many of these practitioners already discussed, Sherman is on both side of the camera at the same time, even if she is not explicitly utilising the term *self* in the titles; these are perhaps non-self, self-portraits, and Sherman (herself) is in the state of superposition. Sherman is also in the state of superposition in an extraordinary omnipresence of multiple identities throughout her work, with any singular or fixed (self-)representation of Cindy Sherman forever escaping the observer; Sherman resides in superposition, and never allows herself to collapse from this status.

Finnish artist Elina Brotherus (b. 1972) similarly performs for camera, and is also both the photographer and the photographed. Where Sherman's work draws upon (often fictional) cinematic moments, and more recently remediated representations of woman with their own (hi)stories often visible in their façade, setting and context as a replacement of the *film-still* series,<sup>102</sup> Brotherus' repertoire takes reference from art (hi)story,<sup>103</sup> and her own encounters (her-story), interpretation or embodiment of this. Brotherus' work intentionally points at an artistic movement or an individual artist and their discourse, which Brotherus somehow engages with or embodies in situ and through performance for the camera. Unlike Sherman, Brotherus always appears (performs<sup>104</sup>) as herself, with the singular and recognisable appearance of her own identify (dressed and sometimes undressed) as an intended constant in changing surroundings (in a Finnish or French landscape, for example). This is the point of Brotherus' work; Brotherus is often in a dialogue with an absent participant, who becomes present through implication, suggestion and reference.<sup>105</sup> The absent participant might be another artist, living or dead, or in an increasingly established practice might even be her(self).<sup>106</sup> Where Cindy Sherman seems to negate an auto-ethnographic approach (although Sherman is central to her work), Elina Brotherus is directly exploring this. As with Sherman, these are directed photographic productions where the event exists independently to the photograph, albeit momentarily and specifically for photographic observation and finesse. The work oscillates between being located inside the photograph, and a performance for camera out-side of it; and ultimately being both. There are intended layers of meaning to these images,

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<sup>102</sup> Here, it is suggested that the woman at least own their own stories rather than playing out someone else's as an actor in a film-still, albeit still fictional because these women do not actually exist

<sup>103</sup> which a number of Sherman works do too, in her painterly remakes, for example

<sup>104</sup> Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, published in 1959

<sup>105</sup> Although Brotherus did a performance piece with the artist Erwin Wurm, as a series of *One Minute Sculptures*, (2017), which is a trope Erwin Wurm.

<sup>106</sup> It is well known that Brotherus was not able to have a child and this is one subtext to her work, sometimes explicitly so, for example the image titled *My Dog Is Cuter Than Your Ugly Baby* (2013)

and although there are numerous levels of interpretation, the intended layer is constructed around a certain degree of pre-existing knowledge, or what Barthes calls his *studium* (Barthes, 1981).<sup>107</sup> In the case of Sherman, her characters are based on a cinematic genre, types of film and types of female character casting; the stereotype is generic rather than specific. Together, we have a mutual understanding of this, and together this understanding underscores the work. This is the same for the work that Sherman made after the *film-still* series, where Sherman continues to play with types of representation and (stereo-)types of (now older) women, perhaps especially American women. With Brotherus, the kind of prerequisite understanding where needed, comes from knowing about the references she is making and perhaps also about Brotherus herself. In the absence of this knowledge, the image might be just a photograph of someone (Elina Brotherus) standing in a field of sunflowers with a yellow bag on her head (2016) for example, or Brotherus standing with her back towards the camera in an image titled *Der Wanderer 2* (2003) from a numbered series using the same title and referencing the Casper David Friedrich painting *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (*Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*) (1818).<sup>108</sup>



*Der Wanderer 2*, Elina Brotherus (2004)<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> The *studium* is the term that Barthes gives to the phenomenological experience of viewing photography that is based on a common or consensual measure. With that common understanding, there is a collective viewing experience that can be felt by more than one observer (unlike the *Punctum* which is much more individual). In the case of Brotherus, a prior knowledge of the artist or artwork being referenced for example, would generate a certain agreed and consensual interpretation – at least at the primary response level

<sup>108</sup> Brotherus is also intending to embody the vantage point of *Der Wanderer*, but as a woman – *Die Wanderer*, perhaps

<sup>109</sup> Reproduced with permission from the artist 80x97cm, from the series *The New Painting*. Chromogenic colour print from 6x7 negative, edition 6 + 2 AP

Of course, in time, as the biography of these practitioners continues to build through their respective bodies of work, their works inevitably become self-reflexive and self-referential in a process of cross-referencing with other works within their own practice (although this can be said about many/ any artist, and what Bill Jay calls 'the life attitude' of an artist (Jay, 1979)). In this critical mass of works over time, the ethos of the work (as well as the work ethic) becomes progressively enhanced, recognisable and measurable.

Gregory Crewdson (b.1962) is another practitioner for this category. Crewdson is a significant contemporary photographic artist who makes large-scale photographic productions that verge on the scale of conventional cinematography. With a consistency in production value and style, Crewdson constructs elaborate, big-budget sets for his large format camera. The photograph is the directed, decisive and epic moment of the constructed scenario in action.<sup>110</sup> Much of his work presents a state of photographic stasis, a suspended place in the time of a liminal moment held forever in what might be conceived as an in-between (perhaps just like the ontology of a *film-still*).<sup>111</sup> Crewdson repeatedly uses a number of threshold-symbols that signify a condition of liminality: a half empty/ half full glass of water (a suspension of clear liquid and metaphor); a door slightly ajar to the outside (neither open nor closed), with blown-in snow along the interior floor; while a half dressed young woman sits on a sofa; with a blank expression seemingly unaffected or unaware of the obvious chill; an interior setting populated by people who seem void of any expression or awareness; sometimes standing in doorways or in a space; where carefully crafted window frames separate and illuminate an outside world beyond the interior space. Crewdson's photographic gesture seems to reside at the edges of the dark side of the American vernacular, as seen in a series suitably entitled *Twilight* (1998-2002). These details are all carefully attended to, and visible from the position of the (ideal) place of the camera from which the scene or moment is photographed and needs to be seen by the spectator (the vantage point). This aspect is pertinent to how the camera (photographer) already fixes the frame for the observer.

The requirement for a specific and fixed spot for the photographic gesture of a scenario directed at the camera, is seen particularly in *constructed photographic artworks* by Calum Colvin (b.1964). Where Crewdson takes a macro approach to his sets, Colvin's stage is comparatively micro. Colvin's work is often made in the corner of a room for example, as opposed to an open urban-landscape setting. Both

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<sup>110</sup> Even if nothing is actually moving

<sup>111</sup> Julia Fullerton-Batten did a series titled *In-Between* (2009-10). However, since these are primarily digital post-production composites, they are only superficially relevant to this category – even if they are very interesting

artists design their work for a single and significant vantage point for the camera, although arguably with Crewdson there may be some flexibility in the precise position of his apparatus – the same scene can conceivably be seen from a slightly different angle, perhaps. Colvin's camera positioning in relation to his work, is critically fixed to the outcome. Colvin, a painter by training, paints line and illusive form onto and across a 3-dimensional object-based setting. This might be a set-up in the corner of a room for example, where there are some household objects (like books) and pieces of furniture (like chairs, or a table). Through the lens of the camera, the painted lines come together to create a new and alternative image in the scene (often figurative). The single lens perspective has the effect of flattening the 3-dimensional space into a 2-dimensional image, due to the dominance of the painted lines and form onto and across the objects. The photographic outcome oscillates between the 2-dimensional illusion of the painted image, and the 3-dimensional (illusion) of the objects and space (although now itself a 2-dimensional photographic representation). While the painted *mise en scène* exists independently of the photograph, it is specifically made and directed for the camera, and collectively designed to be seen as a photograph. Although this same effect might be observed by physically standing in the same place as the camera and looking at the scene, this is not the point of the work. Only Colvin himself has had the artists privilege to see the work from a range of disjointed angles, and we can only imagine him composing his work in time and checking in space through the camera frame for the one permanent image that is required. All other images (positions) are rejected, since any other place would collapse the rendered composition that the single vantage point brings to his arrangement. In the other instances, alternative views would conceivably provide a different view of the scene, if not the edges of the constructed photographic artwork – something that Cindy Sherman plays with by allowing the edges of her masks to be visible, for example, as a clue to the masquerade or the fabrication. Colvin's photographs are a doubly enhanced remark (possibly unintended) on the normal effect brought with representation, and the collapse of 3 (and 4)-dimensions into the photographic stasis, as his lines and objects are drawn into the 2-dimensional surface of the photographic layer itself. Colvin's constructed photographic artworks successfully oscillate between the states of 2- and 3-dimensions, as well as contributing to the discourse between painting, photography and surface.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> It is interesting to consider Colvin's work in relation to Georges Rousse (b. 1947). Rousse makes large scale installations of a scenario similar to Colvin, but where the viewer is free to roam in the space of a disjointed set that comes together only from a particular standpoint. Rousse allows the viewer to embody the (position of Colvin's) camera in a stage where there is one ideal spectator position. This place can be considered as the spot where the superposition collapses. Colvin must have seen Rousse's works

Colvin's *Death of Venus* (1986) is typical of this series, albeit an early work from the series that became progressively more complex in multi-layered, constructed photographic scenarios. The photographic artwork shows an obvious reference to *The Birth of Venus*, Sandro Botticelli (c.1485), with the image of Venus painted across the objects in a 3-dimensional corner space, and an array of other attendant visual references. Colvin's title of *The Death of Venus* gives this particular piece additional reverie in the context of this study. As part of the object arrangements, an Action Man style figure stands next to a goldfish bowl, poised with an axe and ready to take a swing at the glass container with the fish inside (a fish called *Venus*?)<sup>113</sup>



*Death of Venus*, Calum Colvin (1986)<sup>114</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Action Man is an action figure toy launched in Britain in 1966, now discontinued

<sup>114</sup> Reproduced with permission from the artist

Not only does the interplaying of titles allude to life and death, but the possible triggering of the axe swing in an extended narrative theoretically places the goldfish into an indeterminate fate/ state that is conceivably aligned to the superposition of *Schrödinger's Cat* (1935), with its similarly plausible, fate/state determining trigger mechanism (albeit concealed).<sup>115</sup>

The dimensional interplay between photography and performance (painting) is negotiable, but ultimately the camera is used as the (only) ideal spectator, and photography is the medium of choice for the making, observation and representation of the performed or constructed image, artwork or event. The camera is the active witness to the performance, with an intended and more purposeful triangulation between performance or event and photography, and the artist and the observer (the audience) by way of the directed image. The camera is the intended first (or only) observer of the work, and as such photography is central to the discussion of these works, rather than peripheral as in the Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness*. The status of superposition begins to emerge as a theoretical framework in which to discuss these works too, as the photographic element is of a higher order than in Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness* alongside the enactment of the performance or event for camera, the status of the 'work' is in a superposition, which accounts for Keith Arnatt's apparent need to define the status of his work without it falling into a gap or void - in his case between the states of art and photography.<sup>116</sup>

Early works by Paul Bevan, in which he begins to develop a practice in this category, are worth considering at this point to articulate how states of superposition can be understood as becoming *The Superposition*. Beginning with a work titled *Cezanne goes on Holiday* (1984), Bevan was given a provocation to respond to a simple 8' by 4' measurement. Bevan decided to take this rectangle into the local high street, mark it out at floor level, and then lie within this defined space for a period of 30 minutes. A camera and camera operator are present as active witness to this happening, with the instruction to photograph Bevan every 2.5 minutes as he lay in the drawn-out 8' x 4' area. The intention was a photographic outcome comprising 12 images showing Bevan lying in the precinct over a 30-minute duration. As it turned out, towards the end of the 30 minutes an ambulance was summoned to 'attend to a dead body' (as reported to Hampshire Ambulance) lying outside the shop *Russell and*

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<sup>115</sup> On whether Colvin had considered the superposition as a reference before: "Not specifically, but there is an element of that I think in a lot of work I do. Which might explain why I have never been attracted to film-making" (Colvin to Bevan, 2021)

<sup>116</sup> On reflection, this need to label seems rather inane, although it was perfectly serious and necessary at the time – even with the element of wit in Arnatt's response to this dilemma and his deadpan approach to self-portrait

*Bromley*. This outcome was unintended, although on reflection not inconceivable, even if Bevan (as performing artist) can be seen engaging with the public observers in the photographs. The spectacle of the event itself was unambiguously constructed and theatrical, since observers could clearly see the arrangement, that included the presence of the camera operator. Nevertheless, an interpretation of the happening prompted an unknown third-party to call the emergency services,<sup>117</sup> and Bevan was unwittingly placed into the state of superposition of both dead and alive and remains so until the arrival of the ambulance, and a mutual observation occurs.<sup>118</sup> The ambulance staff realise that the dead body is an alive body; Bevan realises he has been reported as a *deadman*.<sup>119</sup> The pre-planned photographic documentation was disrupted by this unexpected outcome, and so a stamped<sup>120</sup> and authenticated statement is obtained subsequently, which reads: “*I hereby certify that at 4.40pm on 20 November 1984, an ambulance was summoned to tend the needs of a body reported to be lying dead out-side the shop Russell and Bromley in the Winchester shopping precinct.*”<sup>121 122</sup>

*How my Body Copes* (Bevan, 1985) is a 12-hour performance work similarly staged. A camera is set up as the active witness to an event that is about to unfold. Positioned in front of a large fir tree in an outside garden, the opening photograph of the series shows (a naked) Bevan wearing a large coat, entering into a canvas wrap on the ground under the tree. The following image shows the canvas wrapped around a body shape, with the assumption that Bevan is now lying concealed inside the canvas wrap. There is a clock to the left of frame, showing the time as 7 o'clock (in the morning). The photographs continue throughout the day, fixed in the same place over the next 12-hours. The bag remains static with Bevan concealed inside, and the clock moves forward by an hour in each subsequent photograph. This is designed to show the duration of the work. Unusually, it begins to snow, and the snow begins to settle on the ground. Around midday, the snow starts to melt, and through the remainder of the photographs the snow all but disappears. This fortunate weather occurrence naturally supersedes the function of the clock to provide a more authentic time frame of the duration of the piece.<sup>123</sup> At the end of the work at 7pm, Bevan reappears from the canvas wrap.

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<sup>117</sup> I am unaware who made this call, and whether in fact this call was made in earnest

<sup>118</sup> Like *Schrodinger's Cat*

<sup>119</sup> Connection with Chris Burden's *Deadman* (1972) intended

<sup>120</sup> Hampshire Ambulance Authority

<sup>121</sup> This statement is reminiscent of that on the reverse of Bayard's *Self-Portrait as Drowned Man* (1840)

<sup>122</sup> There is a European superstition that if a person is quite unintentionally reported to be dead when they are not dead, then they will gain an extra ten years of life

<sup>123</sup> It was important that the photographs managed to convey the duration of time. It is conceivable that the clock alone may not have fully ratified this.

Until this moment of observation, the state or fate of the body inside the wrap has remained unknown and hidden to the camera or observer. This can be considered as a state of superposition; conceivably dead and alive at the same time.

A further outcome of the work is a section of handwritten annotations on a part of the inside of the canvas that was especially primed in order to allow for an interior scribe throughout the duration of the performance. This is intended to invest an additional element to the material culture of the canvas, in addition to any impression or fluid left by the body shrouded within. Part of the discourse of this work was to extend the idea of painting by using canvas, as a material normally associated with painting.<sup>124</sup> This material becomes another outcome of the work, along with the photography.



9am from *How my Body Copes*, Paul Bevan (1985)

A further example for this category is the photo-series titled *Vannkanten* (1984) (Norwegian for at *the water's edge*). The first photograph shows a dressed figure (Bevan) standing at the water's edge facing out to the sea at a location in Kragerø, on the south coast of Norway. In the next image, one item of clothing has been removed and is now lying discarded on the ground by the feet of the figure.

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<sup>124</sup> Ref. Calum Colvin as before



In the next image, a further item of clothing has also been removed and similarly placed. This process of undressing between photographs continues until the man is fully naked.



*Vannkanten*, Paul Bevan (1984)

Once fully undressed, the man jumps into the water and is subsequently photographed in a suspended leap above the surface of the sea. He is wearing the item of clothing that was the last to be discarded. In the following image, the figure is again observed suspended mid-air above the water surface, wearing the next item of clothing from the discarded garment pile. This process of dressing between photographs continues until he is fully dressed once more. In this section of the series, each image shows an increasing puddle of water forming around the discarded clothing pile, inversely proportionate to a diminishing pile of clothes. In the final image, Bevan is once again standing at the water's edge returning to the same pose and position of the very first picture. Except, at the end, Bevan is clearly sodden. This difference is status (from dry to wet), but in the same place, embodies a profound and metaphoric transformation in time.

On *Vannkanten*, Bevan writes:

*"I find myself at this water's edge often enough to know that at this place I'm at the brink, the in-between. At the place where the land meets the sea and the sea meets the land, I'm at the precipice, the peripatetic time and place between states: of dry and wet; clad and unclad; and at a stretch, of living and dead. (Heidegger, 2011). Photography, my friend and life-time accessory is there with me, ever ready, poised in the same peripatetic moment to witness the transformation that I'm about to engage. All that is to come, the before to the after of the decisive and transformative act, physically and conceptually, in the real time and real place (of real experience), is about to become visually crystallised so you too can be or 'be-come' there in a future 'sometime', in another place (of another experience) – like right now perhaps."* (Bevan, 2018)

This seems to encapsulate the relationship that photography has to performance in this category. There are a number of key exhibitions and associated publications built around the premise of this category. Unlike the previous Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness*, these take a more central interest in the photograph. These include: *Photography as Performance* (1986) at the Photographers' Gallery, London (1986); *Live art on Camera: Performance and Photography* (2007) at the John Hansard Gallery, Southampton (2007) and SPACE Gallery, London (2008); and *Performing for the Camera* (2016), shown at the Tate Gallery, London (2016). It is also clear that this continues to be

of ongoing interest in both the gallery sector and marketplace, as seen in certain recent exhibition initiatives and expositions.<sup>125</sup>

In each case, the curatorial initiative for these expositions focuses primarily on the photographic entanglement with performance. This is either as the documentation of an event (more Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness*) or the outcome of the directed image as event (Category 2 Photography and Performance: *Active Audience or Witness*) and examines the visual and theoretical matrix of the relationship between photography and performance as a particular genre of art practice that takes us to the edge of the next category.

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<sup>125</sup> For example: at Photo London 2021, a number of exhibiting galleries showcased performative based works, and Richard Saltoun exhibiting Eleanor Antin and Carolee Schneeman as part of *On Hannah Arendt: Eight Proposals for Exhibition* throughout 2021. Such work continues to find new interest, audiences and investors

### Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography is Performed or Meta-Photography*

The third category develops a relationship where photography itself is intrinsic to the performance, and the photographic outcome is the performance of photography itself. This can be considered as photography performed or meta-photography. The (gesture of) photography is central to what is observed as the image of the event. In this category, photography and performance become unified through process, apparatus and in outcome in-photo, in a manner unlike both of the previous category definitions. The matter of photography that is observed or visualised as the image is not separable or otherwise independent to the photograph, as is conceivable in both previous categories. In the deployment or performance of a photographic technique or duration, an element of what might be thought of as the photographic condition defines the work in a manner beyond Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness* and Category 2 Photography and Performance: *Active Audience or Witness*. This might be either through an inherent photographic effect or characteristic, or the apparatus, or because photography (or *the* photography) is the subject, process, exploration, or the imperative for the work, that must be photograph.<sup>126</sup> The event or performance is an intended observation of photography, as a status of the superposition that is self-reflexive in a meta-photography that becomes both performance and photography at the same time.<sup>127</sup> Although there are some similar characteristics to Category 2 Photography and Performance: *Active Audience or Witness*, the crucial distinction here is that the performance is (in) the photograph or photo-work and as such does not, nor cannot, exist (as rendered) in an outside indexical world. Importantly, the rendition of the performance is an event that occurs essentially in the presence of the apparatus: in front of the camera and conceivably behind it, and not afterwards in a post-production (digital) domain. While a post-production process may well produce imagery of similar or even better appearance to the visual outcome that is performed, in practice there is an ontological distinction that excludes a digital simulation kind of work here (even if this is an interesting debate).

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<sup>126</sup> The sole referent

<sup>127</sup> In superposition

A post-production performance does not point to a performed event in the manner of interest here (again, even if this is an interesting debate and alternative manner of performance).<sup>128</sup>

A further important characteristic for this Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography is Performed or Meta-Photography* is an enhanced level of the experimental. Unlike the other categories, there is (often) less pre-conception in the photographic element or outcome; it is essentially indeterminate, until made and seen. In the other categories, there is a comparatively tighter framework of operation in the observation of an enactment, performance or scene that is (apparently) more rigorously pre-visualised or determinate. In this category, the element of experimentation is necessarily an integral part of the process, and in this way the outcome becomes or evolves as part of the performance from initially uncertain or indeterminate state. An authentic combination of uncertainty or the indeterminate together with the terms of *experimentation* and *observation*, bring us closer to a scientific model of action or practice-based research for the superposition.<sup>129</sup> Experimentation and observation are fundamental to scientific research methods, and in particular to quantum level investigation or experiments, which suitably situates this Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography* within a research context that best fits the theory of superposition (even as a science-based concept). In this category the practice of photography connects with quantum physics at a level beyond any other or even any other form of representation; “an objective photographic field but without photographed objects, doubtless has internal criteria close in

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<sup>128</sup> For example, the difference between *The Observatory* (Page 88) and *Mia Maya on the Beach* (2014) (below) – similar in appearance, however the performance element in *Mia Maya on the Beach* is a simulacra effect and a performance in post-production.



<sup>129</sup> Something that has become more familiar as the (scientific) world seeks to understand and collapse the state of superposition of Covid-19 (May 2020)

*type to those of scientific thought*” and *“that is no longer an imitation, a tracing an emanation, a ‘representation’ of what is photographed.”* (Laruelle, 2011: 93) This *internal criteria* is what this thesis describes as the Superposition. The practice of photography both captures and creates the perception and status of the image as both static and dynamic, and the processes involved. The superposition can be approached and defined in terms of its status, for example as a ‘pure state’, according to discussions with Professor Myungshik Kim, Chair in Theoretical Quantum Information Sciences and Professor at the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Department of Physics at Imperial College, London:

*“So, ...quantum mechanical superposition is a pure state, it’s very pure, and if I have a good devise, I should be able to find you, for instance, in a dynamic and static state at the same time – but I do not because my perception and my way to perceive you is either static or dynamic. That is why as soon as I observe you, you are either static or dynamic. But it’s not because you are not in a mixture of the two... it’s very purely because of the detection process. Anyway, so that’s the [effect], even though it’s very good to try that. Also, classically, there is a mixture, and a mixture can also explain quite a lot of things – like uncertainty [for example].”*

(Bevan Interview with Prof Myungshik Kim, 29 September 2016)

The state of ‘static or dynamic’ is found in the early-stage photographic paradigm for this Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography* of Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre and the image titled *Boulevard du Temple* (1839). This image provides a good conceptual basis for this category. Daguerre’s photograph is taken of a busy, bustling and dynamic market street in Paris, the Boulevard du Temple. However, the photograph shows an empty street except for the dark outline of a single human figure, who is static. It is known that the photographic substrate of Daguerre’s material would have required a relatively long time for exposure, since his emerging technique used chemistry that had comparatively low light sensitivity by today’s standards. Therefore, while Daguerre was exposing his Daguerrotype plate, the dynamic population on the street literally walked its way into invisibility,<sup>130</sup> except for the static and solid structures of the boulevard furniture, its buildings and trees, and most importantly a single figure of a man who defied oblivion as his feet remained grounded

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<sup>130</sup> Oblivion or even ‘the void’

throughout the exposure.<sup>131</sup> This observation of the street can only be seen in this photograph. The image is a scenario of an event that is not separable from the photograph, since the depicted scene did not exist outside of the image in this way. The photograph is the sole site for the event- there is nothing outside of the photo.<sup>132</sup> This thinking also defines the concept of meta-photography, as a photographic self-reflexive observation on the photographic condition of photography itself. In meta-photography, the matter of photography as process, material or apparatus is no longer invisible or transparent, but becomes present(-ed) through its own (self)observation, to become visible and accessible.

Another early example of a conscious attempt to both visualise and access the space of photographic matter through performance, was made around 1910-11 by the Bragaglia Brothers (Anton Giulio Bragaglia (1890-1960) and Arturo (1893- 1962)).<sup>133</sup> Interestingly (and suitably) they named their work *photodynamism*,<sup>134</sup> and produced a series of photographs that coincided with the emergence of Futurism at this time.<sup>135</sup> The Bragaglia Brothers performed a set of actions for camera with the purpose of attempting to enter into or inside photography. The actions performed were designed to be simple and complete choreographs, like bowing, greeting, and smoking for example, allowing for a single image to observe the event in its entirety. The brothers performed these acts to their camera with an open shutter, with the intention that the photograph is made through the duration of the action; “*it’s being is its doing, or performativity*” (Mullarkey, 2012: 143). The visual effect traces the entire act, and the images are fluid and dematerialised in this respect; static and dynamic. It is possible to recognise the action that is being performed, and this is aided by the title caption of the photographs.<sup>136</sup> The

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<sup>131</sup> This man is apparently having his shoes polished or attended to; an activity that would have required him to remain still and in place

<sup>132</sup> A conceivable void, perhaps

<sup>133</sup> Perhaps another kind of ‘void’

<sup>134</sup> Photodynamism (or Fotodinamismo) is an iteration of static and dynamic (Myungshik, 2016)

<sup>135</sup> An Italian art movement that aimed to capture the dynamism of the modern world of the early Twentieth Century

<sup>136</sup> For example: *The Smoke- The Match – The Cigarette / Il Fumatore – Il Cerino – La Sigaretta*, 1911



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status of performance is formalised in dressed attire and framed composition, and the construction and delivery of a photographic performance is apparent and clearly intended. Anton Bragaglia described the trajectory of movement as *“that which exerts a fascination over our senses, the vertiginous lyrical expression of life, the lively invoker of the magnificent dynamic feeling with which the universe incessantly vibrates.”* (Bragaglia, 1911). It would seem that Anton Bragaglia is describing the invisible and constant movement of particles at an atomic level. This sentiment also connects well with the *“universe of ‘whirling particles’ – imperceptible molecules, sub-atomic particles, magnetic charges”* (Nancy Ann Roth, 2011 – translator and introduction *The Gesture of Photographing*, Vilém Flusser, 2011, referred to in Chapter 1).

Much later, the work of Francesca Woodman (1958-1981) seems equally predicated on a fascination with an incessant vibration. Woodman’s best-known works show a universe of a similarly intended whirling particles in the dematerialisation of a body in movement. Woodman’s photographs show human figures (normally herself) in a state of flux between a material and an immaterial body as ‘in-itself’ and *being-photo* of the body/ object. These images can be seen in relation to *The Concept of Non-Photography*, as François Laruelle writes:

*“The duality of the reproduced object and its manifestation in the photographic mode allows us to understand what the latter grasps in principle, what it is. The photo – not in its material support, but in its being-photo of the object – is none other than that which, through vision-force, is given immediately as the ‘in-itself’ of the object.”* (Laruelle, 2011: 21)

Woodman used and understood photographic properties or ‘the photographic mode’ to produce images that proposed combinations of both presence and absence, in a serial attempt to both be and to reject at the same time her own physicality.<sup>137</sup> *“Even when wholly present in the picture as the subject of her self-portraits, Woodman is never quite with us, never quite with herself,”* writes Chris Townsend (Townsend, 2016: 7). Many of her photographs would have been made using an extended shutter speed on her camera, that would allow for temporary performed actions to be observed by an open camera eye, similar to the process of the Bragaglia Brothers and indeed Daguerre before all.<sup>138</sup> Of

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<sup>137</sup> This is perhaps a psychological state that ultimately led to her tragically taking her own life. Woodman’s work now seems especially poignant in this respect, and her work has received most of its critical attention and acclaim following her death.

<sup>138</sup> Again, *“it’s being is its doing, or performativity”* (Mullarkey, 2012: 143)



course, Woodman's work is driven by different personal and professional initiatives and enquiry, and her work has been widely exhibited and discussed against other initiatives and enquiries around gender, sexuality and the body for example. Woodman sadly took her own life in 1981 by leaping from a window in an act of suicide, and this offers up a further (posthumous) reading on her work.<sup>139</sup> Much of her work shows herself and other females often naked or partly dressed and blurred into backgrounds or obscured by objects performing for camera. There is a performativity to Woodman's work that is playful but also authentic, and part of her agenda is surely contained within the methodology of her practice that is equally authentic and playful. A rare piece of Super 8mm film shows her working in progress and creating a body shape masked out on the floor using white powder for an image made in Providence, Rhode Island (1976).<sup>140</sup> She is heard to exclaim a gesture of surprised joy, and it is not difficult to imagine that she might have made similar responses on seeing her photographic outcomes as they too arrive from a methodologically indeterminate state. On top of that, the images themselves remain visually indeterminate by intent, even if Woodman herself might have regarded them as determinate.<sup>141</sup> Artist Duane Michals referred to Woodman as a "*phoet*", part photographer and part poet, in a recent online interview discussion as an extended programme of Photo London 2021, 19 September 2021 (Michals, 2021).

Duane Michals (b.1932) is best known for his sequential photographic works that present scenarios or narratives that often appear to be from the supernatural. Michals uses certain characteristics and techniques of photography in his work, including textual annotation in order to combine parallel or alternative states into a single frame or story. This is (often) achieved through double or half exposure in camera or darkroom, where a figure is either repeated or made transparent respectively in the photographic process. In this way, there is a conceivable coexistence of dual or superimposed states, that puts Michals' work into a state of superposition.<sup>142</sup> Similar to other practitioners in this category, Michals himself is often on both sides of his camera apparatus. In *Self-portrait As If I Were Dead* (1970), Michals is seen standing dressed in black and looking down on to his own (apparently dead) body lying on a slab next to him under a sheet; in this, Michals is both living and dead.

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<sup>139</sup> The many connections here are uncanny

<sup>140</sup> This was seen in an exhibition at the Finnish Museum of Photography 24.8-16.10.2017 titled *Francesca Woodman: On Being an Angel*. (Note the title of the show, and the reference to a supernatural being: angel)

<sup>141</sup> In other words, determining the result that Woodman would have been looking for

<sup>142</sup> A similar word to superposition; superimposition might be one possible state of superposition

Of an image titled *Alive and Dead* (1972), Max Kozloff writes:

*“The man who walks out of the door is “alive”, but the man who comes back in that same door, and who is now a blur, is alleged to be “dead”. How can it be denied that the blur is itself a new impression never seen before except in photography? Photographers are students of movement, apprenticed to light as their only teacher. The man who came into the room, the “dead” man, has arrived.”* (Kozloff, 1989:56)

Kozloff is remarking on an image that only photography can observe or show. This is a defining characteristic of this category. Photography shows us something otherwise invisible (this is not the same as out of reach); *“the blur is a new impression never seen before except in photography”* (ibid) as a further conceivable connection to quantum physics. Indeed, Michals himself is interested in quantum physics as demonstrated by works such as the series titled *Madame Schrödinger’s Cat* (1998), as well as his references to uncertainty (for example *Dr Heisenberg’s Magic Mirror of Uncertainty* (1998) and Michals’ extensive use of mirrors in his work as a mechanism to articulate dualism and (self-) reflexivity.<sup>143</sup>

John Hilliard (b.1945) is a particularly good candidate for this category. Hilliard has spent his life (career) making photographic works that are largely occupied with photographic properties, material and processes. This has led to a number of significant reflexive observations and visualisations on photography in image and event. In an interview, John Hilliard commented: *“if I look around, it’s very hard to come up with too many examples of other people having such a thorough obsession with the means of the medium itself, all it’s specifics, as a subject.”* (Hilliard to Bevan, 2014). There is a recurrent theme and methodology in Hilliard’s work that is based on the construction of conceivable dualities of coexistent opposition, including the dynamic and the static: *“That’s to do with motion and stasis”* (ibid)

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<sup>143</sup> On Dr Heisenberg, see footnote 169. In a recent online interview discussion as an extended programme of Photo London 2021, 19 September 2021, Michals discussed his approach to photographing the artist Magritte in the ‘nature of Magritte’s works’ using mirrors and double exposure as a visual articulation of superposition. As discussed later in *The Superposition as Human Condition*, Magritte’s definition of the ‘human condition’ is an obvious connection to superposition, even if this has never before been considered as such

*“I think in my work you get a lot of recapture of strategies although they are recaptured in a different way and in a different context. But that kind of dual opposition between moving camera, stationary subject / moving subject, stationary camera – you know, there is a kind of recurrence of that sort of opposition.” (Hilliard to Bevan, 2014)*

There are a number of key works that were discussed with Hilliard in an interview as part of this study. In particular is a work titled *Camera Recording Its Own Condition (7 Apertures, 10 Speeds, 2 Mirrors)* (1971). This work is a grid of 70 images showing every conceivable combination (condition) of shutter speed and aperture as a series of images that are “*effectively the same photo*” (ibid). The camera is photographing its own condition of different shutter speed and aperture combinations straight-on into a mirror. These measurements are visible and readable in the image, both directly as reflected image and also in a further small mirror that is positioned to show the aperture setting f-stop number on the lens ring for each exposure. These are a key part of the overall image. Each photograph is the instant and direct exposure of itself, and the printed exposure is a self-observation of all the conceivable exposures of the combined states of shutter speed and aperture. The combinations are also visible and readable in the tone of each image.

Together the 70-image grid (7x10) arrangement makes a total visual impact where the overall tonality of the work goes from light to dark, from over-exposure to under-exposure. Dividing this, is a mid-point diagonal line of images that are correctly exposed in the grey zone system.<sup>144</sup> The reflected image of the apparatus is obliterated in the light of over-exposure, becoming visible when the settings match the ‘condition’, and then disappearing once more in the darkness of under-exposure. Together with the disappearance of the camera, this work is conceivably the starting principle of an interference pattern of strips of light and dark.

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<sup>144</sup> But with negligibly varying depth of field



*Camera Recording Its Own Condition (7 Apertures, 10 Speeds, 2 Mirrors)*, John Hilliard (1971)<sup>145</sup>

A discussion about *Camera Recording Its Own Condition* with the artist unfolds below:

*Paul Bevan (PB): Is there a sense in that, in a way you are going from black to white, that actually then the - if I'm thinking back in terms of my dialogue with Authorization as a piece that is a narrative of its own making as well as being a piece about the obliteration of the artist and the camera and so on, so is that piece then about - do we read it as a sort of linear narrative in that is going from absolute black to absolute white, or is it actually a single image in which all possible positions exist at once*

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<sup>145</sup> Reproduced with permission from the artist

*John Hillard (JH): Well it's both, isn't it. I mean you see the grid, and you have an overview of that transition from complete over exposure to complete underexposure through a sort of middle range of median exposures, but then if you want to go through it, as it were chronologically, you'd have to decide what the chronology was – did I start with 1 second, or did I start with 1/500<sup>th</sup> of a second*

*PB: How did you make it*

*JH: I can't remember....my guess is that I probably started with the...I don't know. I honestly can't remember, I was going to say that I probably started with...*

*PB: You could tell if you still had the negs, couldn't you, because you could see the chronology there [Hilliard has lost the negatives]*

*JH: Yes, you are right. Now I think what I did there was effectively a printed contact sheet that is laid out in order, and the contact sheet is then, it must have been starting at the longest exposure in that case. I think it must have started at let's say it was f 2.8 at 1 second or whatever it was – yes I think so. I think I laid it out eventually as it was shot. I haven't really thought about that*

*PB: I guess the whole exposure time adds up to 2 seconds or something...*

*JH: Less than 2 seconds*

*PB: But it probably took you, what a couple of hours or... [laugh]*

*JH: Again, I can't remember [laugh].*

*PB: Where did you make that?*

*JH: I made it at the where place I lived and worked at the time, which was near Parliament Hill Fields, and it's a really crappy camera – it's a Praktica*

*PB: Yes, that sort of adds to it though [laugh]*

*JH. Within the limits of my information (which might not be that great), but if I look around, it's very hard to come up with too many examples of other people having such a thorough obsession with the means of the medium itself, all it's specifics, as a subject. Or if it's not a subject in its own right, as something which is very manifestly articulated within each piece of work, so that there's*

*always the potential of photography for being blurred or unfocussed or for producing a negative image.* (Hilliard to Bevan, 2014)

Hilliard's work also characterises meta-photography, as defined in the small essay *Photography on Photography (Meta-Photography)* (Bevan, 2016) written for *What is Photographic Research?* (2016).<sup>146</sup> A further significant example for this category as mentioned in the interview with John Hilliard above, is made by artist Michal Snow (b.1929). The work of particular contextual reference is titled *Authorization* (1969). This is discussed in an email correspondence with Snow as part of this study. In the work *Authorization*, the 'Author' as artist and camera progressively disappear. Coincidentally, this work was made in the same year as Keith Arnatt's *Self-Burial* (1969).<sup>147</sup> In this work, the use of the mirror in production, but as importantly in the object and dissemination of the work is a key component in the triangulation with the previous artists (Duane Michals and John Hilliard). Moreover, this work has a direct relationship to the theory of superposition.

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<sup>146</sup> *Photography on Photography (Meta-Photography)* – written as part of this research and published in *What is Photographic Research?* (2016)

In what ways and to what extent is it possible for photography to be self-reflexive or self-researching? To some extent all photographs are reflexive on photography, in so far as photography asserts itself as image, in image and as photograph. Photographs are also a *measure* or *observation* of photography, but as a kind of invisible substrate to observations of some other attendant thing that is more (and primarily) visible. Roland Barthes writes 'whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see.' (Barthes, 1981:6) Explicit photographic reflexivity is unusual; photographs are not usually about photography, rather something else - a photograph's object, index, referent, or even maker. In looking at photographs or discussing them, we mainly see or talk about the matter of the subject (subject matter), or 'that [which] has been' (Barthes, 1981) or which 'must be' (Sontag, 1977). Susan Sontag writes: 'There is the surface. Now think – or rather feel, intuit – what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way' (ibid, 1977: 23). Photography itself is a surface, interface or suspension, much like a window or mirror that remains 'invisible' (Alberti, 1435/ 1991; Szarkowski, 1978). Louis Marin writes: 'the invisibility of the support surface is the condition of possibility for the visibility of the world represented' (Marin, 2002: 312), and so the invisibility of photography is a pre-requisite to the visibility of the 'world represented'. In this way, the photograph *becomes* its object, index or referent, or what André Bazin (2004) calls 'the model': 'The photographic image is the object itself... it shares, by virtue of the very process of it's becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it is the model' (Bazin, 2004: 14). The photograph's meaning is predicated upon that of the 'model', since the model is 'already in use in the production of meanings, and photography has no choice but to operate upon such meanings' (Burgin, 1982: 69). This is perhaps why James Elkins (2011) states that photography has no 'genius' of its own, nor exists 'in itself'. Photographic reflexivity (or what might be termed *meta-photography*) defies this and any pre-existing meaning, since there is no pre-existing 'model'. Rather than a photograph's adherence to its referent, the referent adheres instead to the 'photographic' through and in duration. This may be a reversed relationship between photograph and object, where the *visibility* of the support surface becomes the key condition (Marin's clause minus the 'in'- visibility). The index does not exist 'already', and cannot be pointed at or to should the camera be removed (like the 'imagined number' that can only exist as or in an equation).

Barthes, Roland, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (London, 1981)

Bazin, André, *What is Cinema* (USA, 2004)

Burgin, Victor (ed), *Thinking Photography* (London, 1982)

Elkins, James, *What Photography is* (London, 2011)

Marin, Louis, *On Representation* (USA, 2002)

Sontag, Susan, *On Photography* (London, 1977)

Szarkowski, John, *Mirrors and Windows* (USA, 1978)

<sup>147</sup> On this work, Snow says "I don't/ didn't know Keith Arnatt's "Self-Burial". (Snow to Bevan, 2014)

On this photo-work, Snow writes:<sup>148</sup>

*"I shopped for and bought the framed mirror first. "Authorization" was entirely pre-planned. I didn't "test" it. Yes, the final work is "a document of its own making". I'm proud of the title, it is completely appropriate, isn't it? The "author" had to be somewhat visible but not too much because that would have made it a "self-portrait". The presence of part of the author's image is like "touch" in painting. Without the image of the author, there'd be no Authorization. See attached "A Wooden Look" another Polaroid work made around the same time.*

*Yes, it's about both appearance and disappearance of the author/artist in making the work. I don't/ didn't know Keith Arnatt's "Self-Burial"."*

(Snow to Bevan, 2014)

*Authorization* (1969) is a photo-work made directly onto and into a mirror. The work plots the event of its own making, hence the title. Snow begins by setting up the camera in front of the mirror in order for it to photograph itself and Snow straight on (similar to Hilliard in this respect, albeit zoomed out).<sup>149</sup> Snow has already defined a rectangular shape on the surface of the mirror with some sticky tape, measured to fit four Polaroids as 2x2 portrait format. His first (Polaroid) photograph shows an uninterrupted reflection of himself and camera in the mirror, as author(s). He then sticks this image into the top left-hand corner of the tape frame he has already stuck onto the glass; we know this because this is where it is placed on the mirror and re-photographed in situ. Since the camera apparatus is directly level with the frame, the placement of this first Polaroid has the effect of covering over that part of the reflection in the mirror, both the camera and Snow. He then photographs this and repeats the act of sticking the next image into the space to the right of the first image, and thereby blocking the same proportion of the reflected image of him and the camera. He takes a third image, and places this into the bottom-left part of the defined taped-frame on the mirror and repeats this process to arrive at the fourth image that completely fills the frame on the surface of the mirror.

His image and that of the camera reflected in the mirror becomes progressively obstructed though this process, as seen in each subsequent stage. The mirror surface becomes increasingly covered. Snow

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<sup>148</sup> *My first "photo-work" is Four to Five, made in 1962, when "photo-works" didn't exist as a category* (Snow to Bevan, 2014)

<sup>149</sup> *"I found out a bit about John Hilliard's work when I had my show at Arnolfini in 2002."* (Snow to Bevan)

makes a final fifth image as a photograph of the other four contained together in the taped-frame on the surface. This fifth image is placed at the top left of the mirror, outside of the taped-frame. Interestingly, the depth of field in the work is very narrow and retains only the sharpness of his reflected image, and not the photographs being stuck onto the surface of the mirror. This aspect keeps the focus on the disappearing reflected image, rather than the objects that are causing this disappearance.



*Authorization*, Michael Snow (1969)<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Reproduced with permission from the artist



When *Authorization* (1969) is exhibited (and photographed for reproduction purposes),<sup>151</sup> the present viewer or observer is also reflected as an image in the work.<sup>152</sup> Snow describes his perceived actions of the viewer thus:<sup>153</sup>

*“Authorization probably is perceived thusly: One arrives in front of it, notes that oneself and the rest of the room are visible in it (it’s a mirror), inspects the photographs, realizes that they fix 4 actions that took place in the past in front of the mirror. Glance to the “leaving” corner photo and leave.”*

(Snow to Bevan, 2014)

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<sup>151</sup> *The photo documentation of Authorization has been difficult. After the work was acquired by the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, they photographed it. I received a copy of their photo and was alarmed that the image did not indicate that the surface of the work was mostly mirror. I found out that the National Gallery’s photographer had been worried that his tripod and some of him would be visible in his photo of the work so he made a panel/mask of cardboard with a hole for the camera lens behind which he and his tripod were hidden. The National Gallery then made a new one, quite good, with the tripod visible [shown above]. However, I was at the time designing the book “Michael Snow / A Survey” and somehow the rejected photo got used in that book and has turned up elsewhere too. (Snow to Bevan, 2014)*

<sup>152</sup> Image of Bevan and Snow in *Authorization*, in 2002



<sup>153</sup> It is not clear whether this perception is based on Snow’s own observation of this process, or not

Snow seems to understate the significance of the presence of the observer in the work, as a 'note' (ibid). In this moment, the superposition of the viewer collapses in the individual moment of self encounter, caught up in the self-reflexivity of being in the work. The viewer is present and visible, and uniquely part of the activity of the work until ready to 'leave' (ibid). The photo-work itself exists in a permanent state for re-invention in each viewing, each time a new story (Sutton, 1999; Elkins, 2011) as if the mirror is now an open shutter reflecting back the image that is standing in front of it at the time. *Authorization* is in a constant state of becoming (Bankston on Deleuze, 2017) that is only realised in the individual and singular moment of observation. The viewer occupies the same position originally occupied by Snow and camera in front of the mirror. This experience is different for each viewer on every occasion in time: the past, the present and the future. In parallel to this timeline of a past, present and future, are the actions that Snow himself took in the construction of the work and the visual punctuations of past, present and future he made in the stages of making the work, that are now embodied in the piece.<sup>154</sup> Snow comments on the contrast between the "static" framed section of the photographs inside the rectangular tape area, and the top left photograph. He likens this fifth image to the spectator as a separate element that also "leaves" the ensemble:

*"The top left photo is not part of the "static" embalmed viewing involved in the four centre photos. Like the spectator it "leaves" the ensemble, isn't, in a sense, part of it."* (Snow to Bevan, 2014)

The top left photo is a gesture towards the spectator. Snow seems to have made this image as a gesture of his own observation of the 'four centre photos'. He included it in the work, but separate to the ensemble in his agency as first spectator of the finished performed piece. He then placed it on the work, outside of the frame ("it isn't part of it" (Snow, 2014)). This is perhaps Snow's considered and necessary final gesture to end the piece, part of it and not part of it as the final punctuation of the (record of the) work centred around the four-staged 'authorization' he performs. Snow comments: *"Authorization is "additive" like a painting whose each stroke is a photo. A selection, some of the flux (life) that is normal to a mirror has been fixed."* (ibid). This remark is a central point of theory of superposition (the flux of life) and the moment of the superposition collapse (fixed). This comment not

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<sup>154</sup> The future refers both to the time-based element in the production of the work (e.g. at the point of the first polaroid, the second was yet to come – and so on), but also to the fact that on a mirror, the photo-work is itself a piece that will be different in every future viewing context

only engages in a debate around painting and photography, but also encapsulates one description of the process of photography itself, albeit very briefly.

The process of hiding or revealing the artist and apparatus in terms of self-observation, is significant to this category. This is an act of performed self-observation as a process, measurement or detection to make visible inherent photographic features otherwise or normally invisible, including the artist. This is often a shifting or evolving process in time. There are further examples, and this contextual analysis is by no means exhaustive.<sup>155</sup> A key collection of photographic works that would belong in this category, are brought together in the exhibition and accompanying book titled *Vanishing Presence* (1989).

*Vanishing Presence* was an exhibition originated at the Walker Art Centre in 1989. In the Forward, Martin Freedman describes the status of the work in the exhibition as images that reveal photography to “exist in a mysterious limbo” and that “in the aggregate, pose questions about the nature of photography itself.” (Friedman, 1989:6)

The title of this exhibition and book suggests a state of paradox. This is a status that has been attributed to photography by a number of theorists and practitioners, and in a number of contextual dualities alluded to as early in the Introduction section. In a further comparative paradox in representation, photography is often compared to painting. Snow is a case in point above, as he considers the formalities of an “additive” process like painting. As a time-based process in which the work emerges, this comparison would seem quite apt in this category. The book by Pierre Taminiaux *The Paradox of Photography* (2009), brings together the thinking and discourses of four French theorists: Baudelaire; Breton; Valéry; and Roland Barthes’ who has argued that photography can only ever be a poor relation to painting, and comparisons with cinema are more appropriate. It would be possible to argue that in fact photography is best seen in relation to performance, and that this category (along with the other categories) makes this point. Taminiaux also discusses the temporality of photography in not having a future (according to Bathes). He writes that for Barthes:

*“Photography only represents a past reality (“ça a été”). It is always bound to what has been, and as such it cannot be part of a philosophy that emphasises the paramount value of the future: not from an epistemological standpoint, and certainly not from a social or political one. One might even argue that, for Barthes, photography holds no future at all. It is either a “being-there”, an*

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<sup>155</sup> Other examples include the works of Helena Almeida (1934-2018), and *Mirror Film* (1972) by David Dye

*existential presence for the isolated subject here and now, or a form that is irresistibly drawn towards events and occurrences that are buried in the personal history of this subject.” (Taminiaux, 2008)*

It is possible to argue that the presence of the spectator, and especially the spectators yet to come to be reflected in Snow’s photo-work, positions *Authorization* within a philosophy that especially values the future; there are acts of observation yet to come, and observers yet to ‘be there’, and to be seen/ reflected in the mirror.

The implication of the viewer or the observer in the work is a further defining aspect of this category. In this context, this second level of observation is an addition to the notion of the observer’s paradox. This paradox is based in the premise that the observer effects a system (or whatever is being observed). This is as significant to scientific experiments on the superposition, as it is to photographic practice.<sup>156</sup> When the observation of a work by the viewer is an active, additive or participatory act (such as being reflected in the mirror of the *Authorization* piece, as Snow points out), a further (and intended) paradox occurs. The observer effects the work and brings a performative aspect or change into the moment of observation.<sup>157</sup> In this instance, the presence of the superposition and its collapse is exactly that described in 4 In the Viewing of Photographs in Chapter 1, only here there is a special inseparability of photograph from (viewing) event, and a parallel closing of the ‘gap’ between observer and work as there is between photography and performance in this category.

In summary, in Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness* photography is appropriately used as a means of recording or documenting an event or happening that is otherwise temporally or spatially out of reach in time or space to a wider audience. This particular relationship between the photography and performance is less significant to this study, albeit this is useful to demonstrate one gap parameter between the real and the illusive, the (event of the) photograph and the (event of the) performance, as well as the distinction between the performer and the photographer. The idea of the ‘gap’ is significant to this category. The gap is a proportional consequence to the space

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<sup>156</sup> Especially to documentary photography, and in order to avoid this paradox, the photographer will often attempt their own invisibility – a kind of self-imposed superposition.

<sup>157</sup> An existing example of this is from *Out of this Time* exhibition, from EXIT series (2001), Paul Bevan – See image on Page 73

between the effect and its causes, when the performance or event is not directed at the camera, in this case. Photography is a separate cause from the effect of the performance, which is intended to exceed this cause. To support this:

*“at first approach, an event is thus the effect that seems to exceed its causes – and the space of an event is that which opens up by the gap that separates an effect from its causes.” (Zizek, 2014:3)*

To some extent, this gap exists in every photograph, and every photograph is an event. In Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness*, the photography is not the primary object of concern, but rather the happening or object being represented. Therefore, there is a gap between the image (cause) and the event (effect), where the effect is always more important than the cause. Whilst this category is not the focus for this study, it does provide an important and useful contextual reference.

In Category 2 Photography and Performance: *Active Audience or Witness*, the photographic element is more significant, since the performed act is directed at the camera. The photographic outcome is partly the effect, although the image and the event might remain ontologically divisible; the gap remains, but it is conceptually reduced.

In Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography*, there is no division or gap between photography and performance, and photography becomes visible through its own inherent performative effects and self-observation at a meta-level in(side) the photograph. This can be described as meta-photography and where the gap between image and event is closed by a direct correlation between cause and effect. This can occur at the site of production of the work, in its making; and in the moment of viewing the work, in the moment of observation. Both sites of making and viewing are entangled with a performative element that is integral to the (meta)mediation and experience of the work (photograph) to cause an effect within the space of an event (Zizek, 2014).

In theory, photographic reflexivity in this way is unusual or is not 'ordinary' (Elkins, 2011); photographs are not usually about their own event, beyond an inherent collapse of the superposition as already described in Chapter 1. Ordinary photographs are normally about something else, predominantly a photograph's object, index, referent, and even maker. This is why James Elkins states that photography has no "*genius*" of its own, nor does it exist "in itself" (Elkins, 2011). Meaning is already invested in the referent or model, and so with the transparency of photography or no genius, meaning is dominated by the model. Photography itself is invisible (in a state of superposition). The notion of a

meta-photography, defies this (default) reliance on a 'model', and with it any pre-existing meaning, since there is no pre-existing model. In the case of meta-photography, the referent adheres to the photograph – or is in-photo, rather than the photograph adhering to its (external) referent. This may be an opposite relationship between photograph and object then, where the visibility of the support surface becomes the condition or event for the visibility of an alternative world represented.<sup>158</sup> The index is (in) a void, and does not exist 'already' in a pre-photographic sense (Burgin, 1982), and cannot be pointed at or to should the camera be removed; the superposition of photography has collapsed to become visibly reflexive (Athanasopoulos, 2013), in a more 'internal' way (Laruelle, 2011).<sup>159</sup>

*“The enigma common to photography and fractality resides in the immanence to self that necessitates the abandonment of external interpretative frameworks and the rediscovery of the internal point of identification of contrary properties as opposed predicates, an identification which the photo does not become but which it is, its photo-logical tenor. The paradox culminates with photography: the more one affirms the theoretical autonomy of the visual order, the more one must renounce the old concept, now maladapted, of intuition or intuitivity; detach it from its context of perception and representation, even that of image (extended, dependent on a surface) and think the photographic state of things in a more 'internal' or more 'immanent' way.” (Laruelle, 2011: 77)<sup>160</sup>*

As previously suggested to some extent all photographs are reflexive on photography, in so far as photography must assert itself to become image, in image and as photograph. Ordinarily, photographs are a measure or observation of photography, as the invisible substrate to attendant observations of another thing or being that is primarily visible and detectable, as in classical physics and that might be

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<sup>158</sup> Marin (2002) minus the 'in'- visibility – refer to footnote 146

<sup>159</sup> Like an 'imagined number' that exists only as or in an equation, and cannot be removed from that condition, seen below as the disappearing man in-photo, apparently being watched doing so by the surrounding group



From *Galerie* (1989-91)

<sup>160</sup> This is unlike Sontag's earlier 'invitation' on reality on page 6 and footnote 146

considered as standard photography. The photography of Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography* belongs to a non-standard photography, or what François Laruelle calls *non-photography*. This suggests a mode that operates outside of a standard photographic aesthetic or classical representational framework, and one that equally demands a non-standard reception, escaping *ordinary observations* (Elkins, 2011: 124). This is an idea that moves away from classical physics, and where “*its discoveries can be mapped on to those of the other sciences - quantum mechanics and fractal geometry for instance*” (Mullarkey, 2012: 145) and “*that of ‘superposition’*” (Laruelle, 2011: viii).

Even ordinary receptions or spectacles of photography, can come up against the superposition. Roland Barthes, a self-confessed spectator of photographs, writes of his personal attempts to find the essence of his mother from an image of her in a winter garden of 1898, in his reflections on photography *Camera Lucida* (1981): “*there she is,*” he exclaims. Barthes chooses not to publish this particular image along with a number of other reproductions in the book, but instead describes it with words. It must exist only in the mind of the reader. Of the *Winter Garden* image, he writes, “*It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture*” (Barthes, 1981); for the reader, the image stays in a state of superposition. Barthes’ attempts to enter into the image to encounter and further know his mother from this photograph, fails; rather he comes up against it.<sup>161</sup> On his attempted entry, he finds only the ‘grain’ of the photograph. In his attempt for a more intimate detection of his mother, the image collapses into its constituent granular parts and the total sum of these is lost.<sup>162</sup> With reference to his suggestion that the ‘photograph is always invisible’, Barthes is lost in the void or space between the photograph and his mother; in this place, he has nothing other than indeterminacy. Both he and her are in a superposition. In this blind space he concludes: “*ultimately - or at the limit - in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes*” (Barthes, 1981:53). Barthes seems to be suggesting that eventually or at its parameters, photography is best seen in its invisibility or in the void that it brings or creates. He seems to suggest that if we want to see a photograph, we should look away. Somehow photography is best left in its status of un-collapsed superposition, and that in order to see a photograph well, we should avoid looking at it. It is a sentiment that might be read in terms of how observation operates at the quantum level, and effects the system or thing under observation: that the attempt to be see or

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<sup>161</sup> As spectator, he is unable to enter the space of the photograph in the manner of the photo-dynamics of the Bragaglia Brothers

<sup>162</sup> Think again of the shed in Cornelia Parker’s *Cold, Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, 1991

observe destroys or at least changes what is under observation; to avoid its destruction it is best not to look, since we will fail to see it (anyway).

A similar realisation of the futility to see anything (real) in a photograph, is a condition expressed by Duane Michals in his *Failed Attempt to Photograph Reality* of 1975. In his *Failed Attempt to Photograph Reality*, Michals reverts to just annotated words that are written in the place of the image onto photographic paper. As a photograph, he writes:

*"How foolish of me to believe that it would be that easy. I had confused the appearance of trees and automobiles, and people with reality itself, and believed that a photograph of these appearances to be a photograph of it. It is a melancholy truth that I will never be able to photograph it and can only fail. I am a reflection, photographing other reflections within a reflection. To photograph reality is to photograph nothing."* (Michals, 1975)

Unlike Barthes, Michals is not a spectator of photography, but a dedicated practitioner of photography. Perhaps Michals is here sharing in the sentiment expressed by Laruelle in the Preface to *The Concept of Non-Photography* in the belief of the "one single photo [that] is enough to express a real that all photographers aspire one day to capture, without ever quite succeeding in doing so" (Laruelle, 2011: vii). Michals is not known for his attempts to 'photograph reality'; Michals has spent a lifetime exploring the possibilities of photography at its limits. Making photographic works that go beyond the physical, visible and knowable, and into the field of conceived meta-physics (meta-photography), and the status of superposition, Michals often ventures into the realms of the thought experiment, as in, 'what if...'. For example, he shows us Christ in a series *Christ in New York* (1981), and angels, for example *The Fallen Angel* (1968), and images of an afterlife, for example *Self-Portrait As If I Were Dead* (1970) as already discussed. In all of these, a suspension of disbelief is required, especially in terms of the 'self-portrait' at the level of the superposition. Taking the positions of Laruelle (in theory) and Michals (in practice) that it is not possible to photograph reality or the real, it would seem that photography is unable to collapse the superposition of the real or reality. Instead, the real or reality remains suspended; Barthes' sentiment that in order to see these, one should look away seems to work here. The practical examples of Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography*, are not-attempts to photograph the real or reality, but more the *Identity* of photography (Laruelle, 2011).



As previously suggested, Michals' attempt to create a self-portrait as if dead recalls the much earlier paradigm of *Self Portrait as a Drowned Man* (1840) by Hippolyte Bayard (1801-1887).

The photographic depiction of the idea of death (as opposed to its actuality), and especially in conjunction with the 'self', proposes a life and death dilemma within the site of the image (Bayard, Michals and Keith Arnatt's *Self-Burial* (1969) as previously discussed). These works all set the condition for the superposition, and present visual thought experiments similar to that of Erwin Schrödinger and his cat, in the infamous *Schrödinger's Cat* (1935) thought experiment. This is one key experiment in the articulation of the superposition to be developed in the next chapter,

The other experiment to consider, is a double interval structure. This develops out of series entitled *INTERVAL* (Bevan, 1998-91) that offers examples of visual and embodied superpositions.

In *INTERVAL*, the photographic work depicts spatial and temporal voids as empty corridors or fragmented bodies in flux, for example, that are intended to be reflexive of the inherent space, gap or 'interval' between the photograph and even, in terms of body, camera and image. At exhibition, the voids come to be embodied by the viewer, through the use of an interactive display method. For example, the body of the viewer is required in some way to fill the void of a constructed liminal state as a body and a shadow between a projection and screen, as in-presence (see below). Another example of this is in the moment of observing a lenticular, where the viewer is (almost automatically) compelled to physically oscillate from side to side in front of it.<sup>163</sup>



From exhibition *Out of this Time* (2001), from EXIT series (1999-), Paul Bevan, double-projection piece

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<sup>163</sup> Lenticular printing is a technology in which printed images are given the illusion of depth or movement when the image is viewed from different angles. This is achieved by printing more than one image in alternate vertical strips and then displayed behind a lenticular lens/ screen

where one projection is displaced in the act of observation, causing the projected figure to exit<sup>164</sup>

On the *Interval* series, Graham Coulter-Smith writes:

*“The split screen of Galerie [previous work, 1991] is reiterated in INTERVAL as the imposing barrier of a cleft which appears to subject the interfering gaze to its own interference – like the famous double slit experiments with photons – those minimal ‘photographic’ particles - that initiated the lacuna in physics created by quantum theory.” (Cleaving within the Cleft, Graham Coulter-Smith 1998 from conversations with Paul Bevan, INTERVAL catalogue)*

INTERVAL was a series about gaps or voids (as intervals), and on reflection now, also encapsulates the superposition. Moreover, the connection this series made with the *Double-Slit Experiment* is somewhat prophetic and is very significant to this study. The *Double-Slit Experiment* consists of two intervals and is the other of the two articulations of the superposition that are core to the theory and the practice-based research propositions of this study to be explored in the next chapter.

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<sup>164</sup> This exhibition was in response to 9/11, which was an event of epic proportions in reality and as mediated spectacle around the world. The exhibition brought together photography work from various parts of the world including Norway, but especially New York, where a series of EXIT signs were appropriately used as a metaphoric graphic interface between one space and another, and one time and another. 9/11 continues to be a significant event, marking a point of no return in recent history, and an event that will be referred to again in the conclusion of this work

### Chapter 3 Superposition in Context: Experiments and Applications

The creative interpretation of the state of superposition is used to develop a theoretical model that can be applied to aspects of photography as outlined in Chapter 1, as cycles of in-status and in-collapse. This develops further in the relationship of photography and performance as defined in Chapter 2, as varying degrees of entanglement, culminating in the event of performance being the photographic imperative that must be in-photo. As a photographic outcome in all cases, photography + performance = photography or  $1+1=1$ . Laruelle might call this 'Idempotency', as Mullarkey writes:

*"...which has, in mathematics the formula,  $1+1=1$ . And in Non-Newtonian Physics it has the quantum mechanical phenomenon of 'superposition' (where all the possible states of a physical system coexist, including mutually exclusive ones<sup>165</sup>). And in Non-Photography it has the ontological facet of being 'in-photo'."* (Mullarkey, 2012: 152)

However, in particular, the '*facet of being 'in-photo'*' works best in the context of the practice and thinking defined in the Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography*. Herein lies the photographic imperative for being photo, or in-photo, that matches the ontology of Laruelle's model of Non-Photography: here, photography + performance = non-photography. There is no external referent in the world – all conceivable positions are 'in-photo' as the photographic imperative (where all possible states of a physical system coexist – as superposition), and beyond this, there is nothing, only a void.<sup>166</sup>

The proposition of this category is evidenced in the practice-based research of this study, developed through iterative and progressive cycles of photographic experimentation, production and dissemination.<sup>167</sup> While superposition may have been considered by others as stated (even inadvertently), nowhere is there a more comprehensive and demonstrated development as a theory and in practice that considers superposition both in-status, and from that status in-collapse in relation to photography.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> In particular *life and death*, as a recurring superposition throughout this study

<sup>166</sup> The term 'in-photo' has been used already in this text, but here it connects with Laruelle

<sup>167</sup> In particular the studies in meta-photography, and all iterative elements that require the presence of the observer/ viewer (to also be 'in', so to speak) – ref also footnote 262

<sup>168</sup> As articulated in Chapter 1, and considered against the categories of Chapter 2

The practice-based research is informed by two key experiments in quantum investigation and the articulation of the superposition.<sup>169</sup> These experiments are interpreted into the framework of the theory of superposition, and their interpretation is core to the development of a practice-based methodology. In this way, these experiments support a new way of thinking about a particular practice and discourse of photography that has been developed at the core of this study as a new contribution to knowledge. The two experiments referred to are: The *Double-Slit Experiment* (1801/ 1925, 1927) and *Schrödinger's Cat* (1935).

The *Double-Slit Experiment* was first performed by Thomas Young in 1801, and then subsequently by Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg between 1925 and 1927 amongst others, during a time that became known as the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum mechanics.<sup>170</sup> The *Double-Slit Experiment* is an important articulation of a superposition, since it appears to suggest that particles can have a simultaneous wave function. In this experiment, when light is projected at two slits, a particular light pattern can be seen on the screen on the other side of the double slits. The light pattern comprises of alternate light and dark stripes; this effectively is an interference pattern. Interference patterns are made when waves collide, so the presence of this pattern indicates the presence of waves.<sup>171</sup> In the *Double-Slit Experiment* the interference pattern is a series of light and dark bands, which is a visible version of a peak and trough collision of waves. The interference pattern is also linked to the concept of probability, as part of the theory of superposition:

*“.....that's exactly the same And now, the wave going up and down, so you mentioned probability - wave going up, that's probability high, wave going down, that's probability low. And that is shown, that's surely wave, and if that is shown by a particle, then we have to think that – oh particle has a wave nature, and that can only be described by quantum mechanics.”*

(Myungshik to Bevan, 2016)

In the interference pattern of high and low, of light and dark, the concept of probability emerges in the indication or the differential of a higher probability and a lower probability. In the case of the

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<sup>169</sup> Already established as a good fit for thinking 'non-photography'

<sup>170</sup> A collection of views on quantum mechanics primarily developed between 1925-27 became known as the Copenhagen Interpretation and was primarily attributed to Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, although the views were not always in agreement and there is some mythology around the agenda at the time

<sup>171</sup> This pattern can be seen when two waves collide in water for example rippling out from two stones dropped together in close proximity, and an interference pattern of peaks and troughs form in the water as the waves combine or counteract

interference pattern, this is seen in the difference between brightness (as higher probability) and darkness (as lower probability). Thus, the interference pattern provides a measurement of probability, as well as the indication that particles have a wave nature (ibid). The status of superposition then, is articulated and visualised in the apparent simultaneous existence of waves *and* particles, and also in the detection of probability (as a concept on the axis of uncertainty). In order for there to be probability, there must also be possibilities, in this case light and/or dark, particle and/or wave. In the *Double-Slit Experiment*, light photons also have the possibility to pass through one or other of the two slits, and as long as this possibility remains, so too will the interference pattern as a probability indicator of the light and dark alternatives of high and low probabilities respectively. As already discussed, the state of superposition is a status of conceivable invisible matter, that might be here or might be there, for example. In an act of observation or detection to make this matter visible, this status of superposition is collapsed. This process also occurs in the case of the *Double-Slit Experiment*. In an attempt to observe the photons in order to determine their behaviour in this experiment, detectors are placed at the slits. In the moment that these are activated, the interference pattern disappears and the probability differential is flattened. Such observation of matter reduces the possibilities of its behaviour, and so the aspect of probability is eliminated. The disappearance of the interference pattern also collapses the simultaneous duality of wave and particle, thereby collapsing the status of superposition. The act of observing this event changes it, or even brings it into existence, on the basis that an objective reality only exists when it is observed:<sup>172</sup> “*by giving the observer such a privileged status, the Copenhagen Interpretation denies the existence of an objective reality that exists in the absence of observation.*” (Al-Khalili: 128, 2003) <sup>173 174</sup>

The *Double-Slit Experiment* shows the effect (or construction) of superposition also causes the brink of collapse of the superposition (with or without the act of observation). It also models the futility of the attempt to see the very thing that is the subject of (attempted) observation.<sup>175</sup> The effect of the

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<sup>172</sup> Just as in the act of photography, and indeed in the Indeed, at the basis for the use of photography and its deployment in Category 1 and 2 of Chapter 2 as passive and active witness, respectively

<sup>173</sup> However, think also of Barthes' statement that “*in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes*” (Barthes, 1981:53) discussed earlier (page 71)

<sup>174</sup> However, also in relation to Category 1, the Copenhagen Interpretation “*states that we can never describe a quantum system independently of a measuring apparatus. It is a meaningless question to ask about the state of a system [performance] in the absence of the measuring device [photography], since we can only learn about the system if we take it in conjunction with the device we use to look at it.* (Al-Khalili: 123, 2003)

<sup>175</sup> Think again of Barthes' sentiment above

behaviour is seen (the actual behaviour only indicated) in the interference pattern, and any attempt to actually see this (as objective reality, (ibid)) and thereby understand it, is denied.

*Paul Bevan (PB): But is there still something that baffles...is there still something that you don't understand. Is there still, in the double-slit experiment, is there an element of that, that's inexplicable?*

*Professor Myungshik Kim (MK): the very question you asked me, is still a puzzle to us...[right] so how does the particle know that it has got just one pathway to go through. Does it know at the beginning of the journey, or does it know when it hits the slit, or it doesn't know at all, but still the natures of it naturally that we don't know [?] so we have to find it out.*

*PB: But the particle doesn't know anything,*

*MK: It doesn't have the power to think*

*PB: But it behaves as if it does*

*MK: Exactly, that's right*

*PB: Because that interests me, from an artistic point of view...to play with that uncertainty or that kind of level of 'how do we know' 'how does that behavior work'*

*MK: Yes, so how does it know that it should show the particle behavior or wave behavior [right] - so, depending on the experiment set-up, we get the wave behavior or particle behavior. Does it know before the journey to the experimental set-up, or the journey itself determines which characteristic of the system to show.*

*PB: What difference would it make if we did know that*

*MK: In fact, we know that it's the system itself...before the journey it doesn't know. But somehow the system itself decides which property of the particle of the system be manifested in this experimental set-up. The system itself will decide, that's what we know but still we have to prove it. And people say, by the way...how about this theory, how about that theory – so still there are people who come up with different ideas...*

*(Professor Myungshik Kim to Bevan, 2016).*

This seems like an open invitation from Professor and Chair in Theoretical Quantum Information Sciences, Professor Myungshik Kim, to offer up a creative interpretation within the context of a meta-photography and photography and performance.

*PB: I've just made, or I had an exhibition in Finland where I made this double-slit, a life size double-slit structure that people walked through, either one slit or the other. There was a detector at each slit, and as the particle, as the body walked through, that person was detected and the image changed. So, it was quite a simple Arduino set up that meant the picture changed as the person walked through, and the pictures were of me standing at a water's edge, so you have waves....*

*M: So, you have the big slits, people go through, and once a person goes through one slit, and the image...*

*PB: So, there were images projected onto these slits...*

*M: Where is your image?*

*PB: They were on the screens, so that the slits were basically gaps in a large white structure, and onto that structure was a projector from over there, and also on the other side, a projector. So when people walked through, the image on the screen changes, but also because part of that image went through the slit, they could see that their role as an observer, they had changed the projection, and so they could see that their observation had changed the image and that their own superposition had collapsed by being observed and being present*

*M: I should see that, but it's not necessarily the exact reflection of quantum mechanics and superposition – [mine?], no....but then I love it!*

*PB: It was a sort of creative response to this idea of a particle moving through a slit and being observed, but changing the system by virtue of observation, they changed the system – and that to me is quite fundamental to quantum physics – that by observing the system, you also effect that system, is that correct?*

*M: Yes, that's true, that's right.... (Myungshik to Bevan, 2016)*

The other key experiment of quantum investigation and articulation of the superposition is a thought experiment. A thought experiment in itself is worth considering in relation to photography (and performance). A thought experiment is by definition a hypothesis for the purpose of considering the consequences of an idea or action. The thought experiment might be an idea that applies to photography then, as both a pre- and post- photographic event. The development of a hypothesis in order to consider the consequences of an action, is often the pre-requisite stage in the taking of photographs or the making of photo-works.<sup>176</sup> It is certainly conceivable that many of the works considered in the previous chapter that involve a series of acts, initially existed as a thought experiment, especially where these are 'constructed'. It is also conceivable to think of the photograph or photo-work itself as a thought experiment in its proposition to the viewer.<sup>177</sup> This idea that the photograph is a thought experiment, may be especially pertinent for the work of Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography* from Chapter 2, when the 'objective reality' (Al-Khalili, 2003) is one that is especially thought through photography. The fundamental matter of probability at the basis of the quantum system (as discussed earlier in the significance of an interference pattern), is also a matter for thought here, in relation to what is being observed in the some of the) works of Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography*, although the meaning of probability here might be less about possibilities and more about likeliness or the level of chance.

The thought experiment referred to here, known as *Schrödinger's Cat* (1935), is used to "*dramatize the difficulties of coming to an adequate understanding of the nature of measurement.*" (Barad, 2007: 275). Erwin Schrödinger (1887-1961) an Austrian Physicist, introduces this "cat paradox" thought experiment as part of a discussion on measurement called "Are the Variables Really Blurred?" His point was to attempt to bring considerations about the state of a quantum system from the microscopic domain into the macroscopic level of objects, and cats. His thought experiment places a living cat into a sealed box with a vial of uranium. Inside the box with the cat and the vial, there is trigger mechanism that can cause the vial to break open and for the radioactive material to leak. The leak of radioactive material would kill the cat. The thought experiment is designed to consider the consequences of the hypothesis. In

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<sup>176</sup> U.S. street photographer Garry Winogrand (1928-1984), is often quoted as saying "*I photograph something to see what it looks like photographed*" or words to that effect

<sup>177</sup> Again: "*Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy*" or "*There is the surface. Now think – or rather feel, intuit – what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way*" (Sontag: 1973, 23)



classical physics and without the need to observe the status of the cat in the box, it is reasonable to suggest there is an even probability that the cat is either alive or it is dead. According to quantum thinking, and in the absence of observation, the cat is in the status of the superposition of being both dead and alive.<sup>178</sup> The blurring between the micro and the macro, of quantum and classical, and the obvious paradox proposed by this thought experiment, are key ideas to connect with photographic practice and the state of the superposition.

## On Paradox

Right from its inception, the first iterations of photography were inherently paradoxical. As already used for categorical definition, the example of Jacques Louis Monde Daguerre's *Boulevard du Temple*, Paris of 1838, reveals the mediums limited capacity for an accurate representation. This image contains elements of the paradox of representation, but also the dual state of the superposition: firstly, in the absence of the walkers who have literally walked themselves into invisibility, and secondly in the collapsed presence of the single figure transfixed in the eternity of this image. The concurrent image developed by Hippolyte Bayard, *Self-Portrait as Drowned Man* in 1840 as previously discussed, is another example of a superposition in the making, particularly in relation to *Schrödinger's Cat*; a dead man has made a self-portrait. He is dead and alive.<sup>179</sup>

There are established discourses in photography that propose similarly oppositional or dual positions that are co-existent, for example: Roland Barthes: *Stadium and Punctum* (Camera Lucida, 1981); Bill Jay: *Naturalistic and Humanistic* (Negative and Positive, 1979); Susan Sontag: *Art and Documentary* (On Photography, 1977); John Szarkowski: *Mirrors and Windows* (MoMA exhibition and catalogue, 1978). Mainly, these are terms of reference or parameters within which to develop an ontological understanding of photography in context, since we never encounter photographs in a vacuum. Such discourses also seek to create a protocol or structure for certain kinds of practice and/or experience of photography from an operational or curatorial perspective or that of the spectator, for example (phenomenologically). Roland Barthes, firmly asserts his position as a spectator of photography in his

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<sup>178</sup> Bayard "Self-Portrait as Drowned Man" is effectively a thought experiment

<sup>179</sup> Although his intended message was to show this tragic act as a response to the lack of recognition of his own pioneering work in the development of photography, his remorse is unjustified. It can be claimed that his contribution to photography was indeed significant and went beyond technicalities. Bayard may not have realised that his actual contribution was to introduce the notion of concept and constructed event

quest to find his mother in *The Winter Garden*, as previously discussed - both she and the image remain in the superposition. Susan Sontag's relationship with photography was probably enhanced through her real-life partnership and visual engagement with photographer Annie Leibovitz. Such texts assert some clarity or determinism by attempting to classify photography, into distinctive types, purposes or experiences at the sites of production, image and audience (Rose, 2001), although arguably less so at 'production', given this is not a site occupied by these authors. However, this assertion is also an attempt to collapse an otherwise theoretical superposition of photography, and attach some theory, reading or grounding, even if this approach is itself a "*paradox that culminates with photography*" (Laruelle, 2011). This ontology has become further complicated as definitions of photography and its apparatus become increasingly diverse and sophisticated, as already suggested.

It is this that led to the exploration of the notion of *superposition*, and the possibility that the superposition can also be embodied in production, in image and in audience, in both theory and practice; thus, the status of superposition also becomes part of the condition of being human, being present, being absent and being visible or invisible.

## The Superposition as Human Condition

It is possible to consider the superposition as a phenomenon of the human condition, as part of the condition of being alive and mobile. Artist, Rene Magritte's (1898-1967) made two paintings entitled '*The Human Condition*' (1933 and 1935), and these provide a fitting example to support this consideration and definition of the human condition.<sup>180</sup> About these, Magritte says:

*"In front of a window seen from inside a room, I placed a painting representing exactly that portion of the landscape covered by the painting. Thus, the tree in the picture hid the tree behind it, outside the room. For the spectator, it was both inside the room within the painting and outside in the real landscape."*

(Magritte, 1933)

This seems to perfectly describe the status of the superposition. The tree is both inside the room and outside the room in the landscape at the same time. Given the title of these works as 'The Human Condition', this would support the concept that the state of superposition is a human condition.

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<sup>180</sup> The same year as *Schrödinger's Cat* (1935)

Thus, it becomes conceivable that we live in a status of superposition (and a continuous brink of collapse).<sup>181</sup> Each one of us a body or particle, moving around in time and space and from the vantage point of a single individual (me/ you), there are a seemingly infinite number of other particles (bodies) out there, known to us or unknown to us and unobserved strangers, all existing in superposition. Brief encounters, fleeting observations, or chance meetings collapse this status, from the momentary to the life-long, as our lives collide with other lives in time and space. From brief eye contact that collapses the superposition in a moment of acknowledgement in an otherwise fleeting or random encounter with a stranger, from something of life-changing proportion (like falling in love or saving a life for example) to a moment lost in the realm of lost virtualities (Flüsser, 2011), would all comprise states from the superposition to its collapse, returning once again when out of sight and out of mind.<sup>182</sup> The appeal to record such encounters is what underpins most street photography, precisely to give a decisive and lasting significance to an otherwise transient moment.

Street photography really emerged when the apparatus of photography become more portable and responsive. In the constant development of newer and better devices to observe our own image (or state of being) there is a basic human need or desire to see ourselves and to see others. A narcissistic gaze born in an image reflected in a pool of water (or so the story goes), then through the looking glass and into the camera, and now a multi-functioning, instantaneous, and smart imaging device of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that marks the point of no return (Pavel Büchler, 1999).<sup>183</sup> Today, imaging technologists seem to increasingly strive to provide confirmation of our existence within the same instant, and similarly affirm the existence of others too. Given the level of consumption of such devices, it would seem that we are complicit in this supply and demand equation. Digital channels proffer an augmented reality in the present, with negligible time lag or processing time compared to previous communication or imaging technologies (like the telegram, fax machine or even the Daguerreotype). Now, the screen or camera

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<sup>181</sup> Ref. page 77

<sup>182</sup> Duane Michals' sequence "*Chance Meeting*", 1972 is a great visual example of an encounter between two men that should occur, but does not. Think also of the movie film "*Sliding Doors*", Peter Howitt (1998)

<sup>183</sup> Within these so-called newer technologies, there remains some semblance of the essence and discourse 'on photography' (Sontag) as we have historically known it. By embracing these developments, photography itself has been enhanced rather than replaced, in ways that may have tested its very terms and definition. There have been many conferences attempting to define or redefine photography, as well as books - for example, James Elkins asks (or states) *What Photography Is* (2011) – and the matter of 'what is a photograph' is certainly a subtext to this study. In the process of redefinition where photography has not come to be defined by a single technology, process or particular set of apparatus, the term photography now incorporates a range of diverse imaging media and ontologies. In this way, it could be said that photography itself is in a technical superposition, defined by an array of alternative software and hardware. Indeed, much contemporary photographic practice seems to reflect on this multi-status, in a manner that I might call meta-photography (or metaphor-tography), as a practice that attempts to observe, reflect and critique this

observes our position in an ever-present time and place, with little or no space for the status of the superposition to emerge. This photo-time compression into the now, is also arguably at the expense of any kind of meaningful reflection; our digital-selves live right alongside us with no space or gap in-between.

Our current visual apparatuses instantly collapse our superposition, affirming our status and existence to ourselves (as 'selfie') and others in time and place.<sup>184</sup> Photography fundamentally serves to confirm our existence, or as Joan Fontcuberta writes: "*I photograph, therefore I exist*", and in the passive: "*I am photographed, therefore I exist*" (2014:15). Fontcuberta's sentiment on photography is clearly designed to resonate with Descartes' much earlier sentiment on thought of 1637: "*I think, therefore I am*" (Cogito, ergo sum). If both *thinking* and *photography* confirm our existence then,<sup>185</sup> thought like the photograph, must have a grounding effect or be a burden that effectively causes the collapse of the superposition of the human condition to bring us into a present or decisive moment. This might be one definition of the term of 'mindfulness', as an intended state of consciousness to focus the mind and bring it/us into the present moment and to achieve a sense of well-being. The state of mindfulness then as a conscious method to collapse the superposition, may be an anti-dote to the status of superposition, as a way to bring us back into ourselves as mind and body (collapsing a superposition of a simultaneous online and offline existence for example), thereby further supporting the notion that the superposition can be considered an (everyday) human condition.<sup>186</sup>

If thought (Descartes, 1637) and photography (Fontcuberta, 2014) confirm our existence and one (intended cause of the) effect of both thought and photography is to collapse the superposition of the human condition, then I might claim that: "*I exist when I collapse the superposition*" or "*I am a collapsed superposition, therefore I exist.*"

"Now then, over to *me*," Paul Bevan.

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<sup>184</sup> The meaning of 'selfie' as a term, seems to have emerged as a result of smart phones having cameras that are both front facing, and back facing. In the window and the mirror of the smart phone, we are easily able to turn the camera onto our selves for a 'selfie'. Instagram #selfie, 457m posts @ 25.09.21

<sup>185</sup> Ref: *the denial of the existence of an objective reality that exists in the absence of observation.*" (Al-Khalili, 2003:128)

<sup>186</sup> The *Abramovic Method* is an example of this, as an artistic mandate (Marina Abramovic, 2021)

## Chapter 4 The Practice Elements

### Introduction: A Contextual Analysis of my own Practice

There is an extensive trail of relevant undertakings behind me that give context to this study in terms of practical work, in writings and in teaching. Moreover, this study has retrospectively given a new context to these, and this has been increasingly interesting and meaningful. It would seem that the superposition has been an ever-present particle of my practice, but I did not yet know the term of reference.<sup>187</sup> Looking backward it makes sense to bring some of these elements forward, and to briefly re-purpose some of this material into this new framework and knowledge.

I do not aim to present an entire biography here, there are nevertheless some selected seminal steps that have led to this PhD that are worthy of inclusion. For example, as a combined physics and art student, I made a painting depicting *The Physicist 1* (1984) as a figure in flux with annotated words.<sup>188</sup>



*The Physicist 1* (1984)

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<sup>187</sup> Like Barthes, and his similar predicament prior to writing *Camera Lucida*, 1981

<sup>188</sup> The words read: "I came up with a really strange one – He was yelling at me with his hand in the air. He was a physicist. His sounding cry was of solid wave form and his hand was imprinted with his work. His movement had fixed direction mapped out by arrows in mid-air. These things were real, yet the theories of physics would deny them all. With what he did not know – no one knew." (from *The Physicist 1*, Bevan, 1984)

My interest in photography emerged through enactments and experiments for camera that included science-based ones, with an interest in the event of the image as experiments in time and space, and how the results became photographs.<sup>189</sup> In time, the enactments became formalised as performance, and always purposed towards my camera and a photographic outcome. My own work has come to reside across Category 2 Photography and Performance: *Active Audience or Witness* and Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography*, as defined in Chapter 2. In acting out a curiosity for the visual effect and being motivated by never quite knowing how something might turn out, I have developed a photographic intuition and a way of working in photography.<sup>190</sup> These combinations of enactment and image, and an uncertainty-led process towards an outcome, (often repeated) has been a constant image-based remit, resulting in embodied photographs and statements.<sup>191</sup> For example, “*Blinded by Purpose*” (1989), is an image showing the (real) artist attached to camera with a cable release like an umbilical cord, surrounded by art works and bearing a placard suggesting an embodied status of superposition (retrospectively asserted).<sup>192</sup>



*Blinded by Purpose* (1989)

<sup>189</sup> For example, images as measurements of matter falling, like balls

<sup>190</sup> As identified in the practice of Francesca Woodman

<sup>191</sup> I AM CAMERA

<sup>192</sup> The wearing of the placard references *Trouser-Word Piece*, Keith Arnatt (1972) footnote 209

This work makes as a statement akin to the notion described earlier in Chapter 1 on the status of photography as being so visible, so present, that we can no longer see it. Here, the same is being said of 'purpose' (an equally intangible phenomenon), reflecting the inability for a clear vision in a condition of overwhelming (conceivable) possibilities; an artist blocked by too many options for making, surrounded by his work, rather than a blindness caused by a lack of vision.

At the same time, I was also taking images that were of clear-sight and decisive photographic moments of superpositions collapsed, for example in a series titled *Galerie* (1989-91), where serendipitous moments of collision between observers and art works in galleries across Europe became the subject matter of my camera. Below is an example of this, in a moment of re-mediation as the woman fashions the painted images she is observing and photographing, as I photograph her. This image works in the context of the theory of superposition at a number of levels as acts of reciprocal observation are played out in the same moment.



From *Galerie* (1989-91)

Matters of dress and embodiment in performance are explored in the essay *The Suit to Perform In* (1985), that explores the role of fashion choices in the performance of the self or other, and as an identity or brand for the performing self.<sup>193</sup> An example of the role of dress in performance is seen in the image *The Observatory* (1995), where the performer transforms from one dressed identity to another (East to West or West to East) through a series of performed weather-based measurements in-between the fashion transgression. The image shows the entire event, photographed by an open shutter observing the duration of the piece for approximately one continuous 20-minute exposure as the event unfolded.<sup>194</sup> Specific parts are selectively lit during the performance as I also moved about in the space in front of the camera and on-stage as performing photographer, seen only by the light trace of the hand-held flash head of the apparatus.



*The Observatory* (1995)

The photographic outcome above unifies time in space, much like the description Michael Snow gives to the additive process *Authorizaton*, (1969) (Page 64). This image can be conceived as a permanent state of superposition where both one thing and its other co-exist as (depicted) subject matter and conceived also in method as defined by the term meta-photography; it reflects on and comes back to its

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<sup>193</sup> For example, Yves Klein as already mentioned; Joseph Beuys, and his signature dress of hat and utility vest

<sup>194</sup> Much like an extended photo-dynamic process, like that of the Bragaglia Brothers discussed earlier (Page 55)



own process as performed photography. This methodology is played out in the various *Studies in Meta-Photography* made in Dusseldorf, Germany, and Jakobstad, Finland.<sup>195</sup>



*Study in Meta-Photography*, Düsseldorf (2020) (with earlier (2015) study on screen)



*Study in Meta-Photography*, Jakobstad (2021) (with PhD draft on table)

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<sup>195</sup> See also footnote 20, page 10

The photographic ontology of the meta-photograph and the Category 3 defined in Chapter 2 does not permit a separation of image from event, which was already explored in my essay *Between the Sheets* (1985). The essay was originally prompted by a series of photographs made over five consecutive nights in January 1986 where a camera is placed to observe me sleeping in bed over a 5-hour period, and a 16x20 inch sheet of black and white photographic paper is placed directly beneath my body in the bed with me. In effect I am a body situated between camera and photographic paper (in-photo), both recording a state of being-body, but (in the same space time) mindfully unaware or elsewhere (asleep).<sup>196</sup>



*Through the night*, from *Sleep and Brother Death* (1986)

*Between the Sheets* references the materiality of the photograph, and the idea that were the layers of a photograph pulled apart in a physical investigation to explore what is between the sheets (of paper), there would be no findings and all aspects would be lost.<sup>197</sup> This is particularly the case for Category 3,

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<sup>196</sup> This was also part of a project on the close proximity of sleep and death, at least in terms of image and appearance – an uncertain duality that is relevant to this study

<sup>197</sup> The window is torn from its landscape (Barthes, 1981)

that in a notional way is especially vacuous between the sheets. Ultimately there is nothing between the sheets; all photographs are illusive.<sup>198</sup> Photographic viewing is then an act of suspended disbelief, or suspension and disbelief as explored in the paper *Photographic Suspension and Disbelief: Fashioned bodies in Oscillation* (2011).<sup>199</sup> Without going into too much detail here, the relationship between photography and the fashioned body is also underpinned by aspects of performance and interplays between fashion and photography. These elements are entangled in the ethos of the various academic courses I have led in a fashion context in Higher Education.<sup>200</sup> Project themes of *Mirrors and Windows* and *The Everyday and the Epic*<sup>201</sup> and pathway routes named *Photography and Interface*<sup>202</sup> present provocative dualities in a discourse that applies to both fashion and photography.<sup>203</sup>

The ontological consideration of photography by definition and apparatus underpins much of my work as an academic and teacher. It also comes from the manner in which I have deployed and performed photography as an artist over the last 30 years, striving to give photography itself some kind of visible or 'subjective' element in the work. This is done through lighting or delayed exposure technique, or a direct link to camera apparatus with a cable release or mirror, for example, like some of the work already discussed. The mirror has featured heavily in my own work, as both visual prop but also as idea of (self-)reflection and other. Indeed, the original title for this PhD was *Meta-Photography In Relation and Realisation Of the Real (MIRROR)* as a proposition that meta-photography has a closer relationship with what might be considered as real life in all its 2-, 3- and 4- dimensional glory.<sup>204 205</sup>

This study has not shifted far from that, as the state of superposition emerges as a more significant finding in a photographic context in its relationship with the human condition (as real-life). One relevant practical study in respect of the auto-logical acronym *MIRROR* from 2014 is worth showing here. This was a moving image work that involved two models moving in synchronised choreography that mirror each other while also filming each other. This work is designed for an opposite double-screen

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<sup>198</sup> As Barthes finds too as spectator, and Michals as photographer

<sup>199</sup> First presented at *Construct: The Body in Flux*, Symposium, Southampton, 2011

<sup>200</sup> I have initiated, written and led a range of photography-oriented course at undergraduate and post-graduate within and without a fashion context at HE since 1989

<sup>201</sup> Both are project themes from Units titled *Interplays: Fashion and Photography* and *New Iterations in Fashion Photography* respectively, that I have written - here a clear triangulation between my research and my teaching, albeit unpublicised

<sup>202</sup> Southampton Solent University, where I established a new BA (Hons) Photography in 1997

<sup>203</sup> Separately and together: as fashion photography

<sup>204</sup> Not the same thing that Al-Khalili describes as 'objective reality' (2003)

<sup>205</sup> "...a good description of photography necessitates that one treat it as an essence unto itself; [...] that one recognize the existence, not just of a photographic art, but of an authentic photographic thought; the existence, beyond the components of technology and image production, of a certain specific relation to the real, one which knows itself as such" (Laruelle, 2011: 6)

presentation, as an effective a mise-en-abyme conceived as an infinite mirror reflection in which the observer is immersed in the space between the double-screens.<sup>206</sup>



*Mise-en-Abayme* (2014)<sup>207</sup>

The models are dressed in Armando Chant designs where one outfit is the negative/ positive of the other that in combination would double-up into either a solid black or a solid white, as a dark and light that references both an interference pattern and the material of black and white photography.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> The format for presentation of this work would be a large wall-based projection, on opposite sides with the viewer entering in between (as yet unrealised)



<sup>207</sup> Then, shown as opposite wall projections in *Iteration 8*:

<sup>208</sup> [www.armandochant.com](http://www.armandochant.com)

This oscillation between the image and the material of photography is one example of many of the co-existence of dual or multiple states in the work, along with paradox, indeterminacy, observation, event and measurements that all lead to the finding of the superposition.

My work and discourse evade a deterministic stance suggested by the texts referred to earlier; I do occupy the position or site of production as a maker, and in a way that might be described as indeterminate or already in superposition. This has been historically problematic for me in terms of my own positioning as a (real) artist.<sup>209</sup> This is consistent with my own research and practice in photography, with an agenda to propagate and explore a visual territory that is intentionally and naturally in flux; a space that oscillates between states, and thus with the possibility of all conceivable states at the same time. My parallel (and sometimes entangled) careers as artist and academic have also fostered dual positions as author in both artistic and teaching endeavours.

*On Photography and Performance Art* (1988) and *On the Death and Resurrection of the Author – A Critical Interpretation* (1988) were both formative essays in this regard and were a part of my early education. The titles of these texts are good indicators of that there is a direct correlation with the work of this study, some thirty-three years later, and I make no apology that many of the contextual references in photography used in this work may seem somewhat dated. I believe in the notion of

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<sup>209</sup> Again, Keith Arnatt, *Trouser – Word Piece* (1972)

**Keith Arnatt**  
**TROUSER - WORD PIECE**

"It is usually thought, and I dare say usually rightly thought, that what one might call the affirmative use of a term is basic – that, to understand 'x', we need to know what it is to be x, or to be an x, and that knowing this apprises us of what it is *not* to be x, not to be an x. But with 'real' .... it is the **negative** use that wears the trousers. That is, a definite sense attaches to the assertion that something is real, a real such-and-such, only in the light of a specific way in which it might be, or might have been, **not** real. 'A real duck' differs from the simple 'a duck' only in that it is used to exclude various ways of being not a real duck – but a dummy, a toy, a picture, a decoy, &c.; and moreover I don't know **just** how to take the assertion that it's a real duck unless I know **just** what, on that particular occasion, the speaker had in mind to exclude .... (The) function of 'real' is not to contribute positively to the characterization of anything, but to exclude possible ways of being **not** real – and these ways are both numerous for particular kinds of things, and liable to be quite different for things of different kinds. It is this identity of general function combined with immense diversity in specific applications which gives the word 'real' the, at first sight, baffling feature of having neither one single 'meaning', nor yet ambiguity, a number of different meanings."  
John Austin, "Sense and Sensibilia."

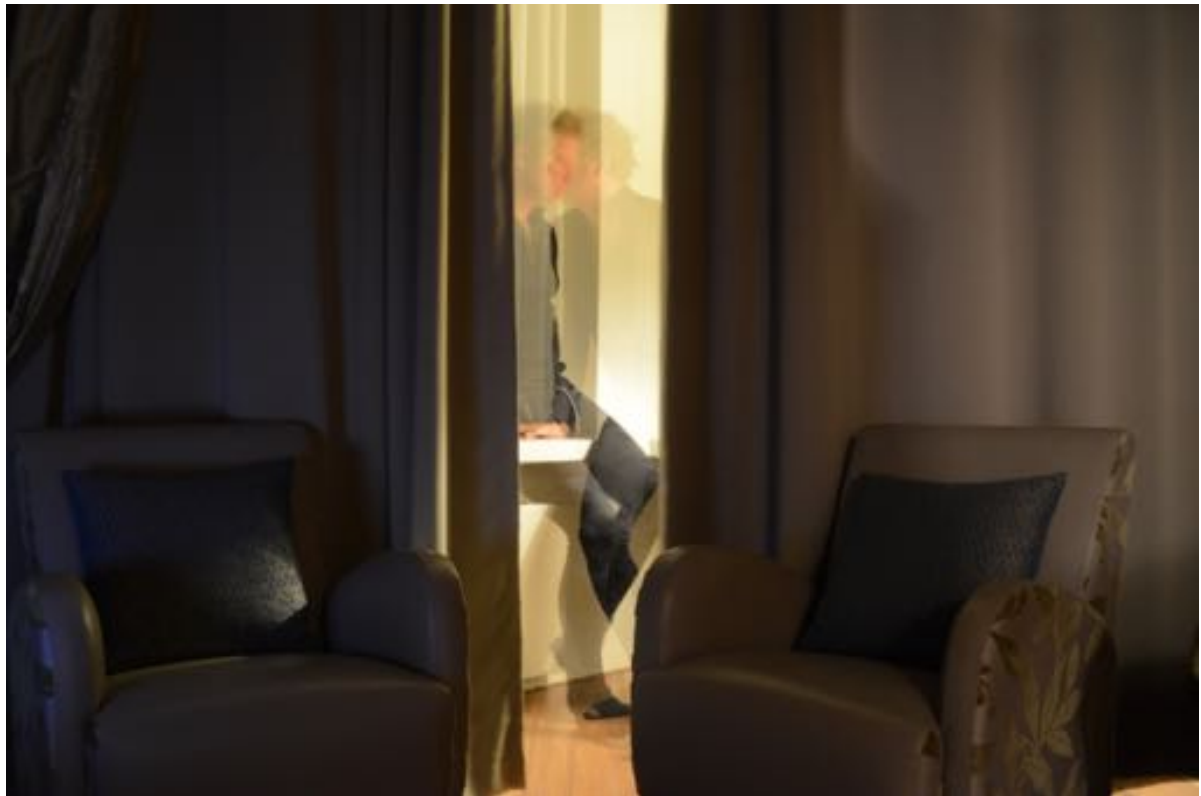


continuity, even if there have been many new waves washing up on the shores of photographic critique.

The waters' edge is a place that I return to time and again, as seen by *Vankanten* (Norway, 1985)

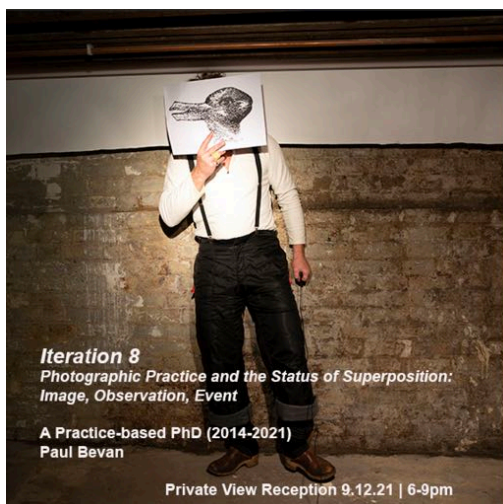
reforming into *In Superposition* (Finland, 2016) some thirty years later, as a clear case of the unexpected and visual triangulation between looking backwards and looking forwards.<sup>210</sup>

The theory of the superposition has emerged from a realisation that this applies to much of my past work. A previous long-term project and exhibition entitled *Interval*, in retrospect is essentially one slit of



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*Study in Meta-Photography*, Helsinki (2014) – looking backwards and looking forwards at the same time (with a similar ambiguity and superposition as the so-called 'duck-rabbit' illusion that first appeared in a German humour magazine in 1892 and referenced on invite to reception for *Iteration 8*, below



the two in the Double-Slit Experiment. The project *Interval* is based around the temporal and special structure of a single slit, and in this way is a precursor to the two intervals of the *double slit experiment*. Graham Coulter-Smith articulated this in the exhibition catalogue INTERVAL, 1998, through our conversations together.

*“The split screen of Galerie [earlier work] is reiterated in INTERVAL as the imposing barrier of a cleft which appears to subject the interfering gaze to its own interference – like the famous double slit experiments with photons – those minimal ‘photographic’ particles – that initiated the lacuna in physics created by quantum theory.*

*Subatomic phenomena can never be fully revealed by even the most powerful visual prostheses. Such subtle phenomena can only be represented as spectral traces on a photographic emulsion. It is as if one could only see the vapour trail of an aircraft, while the aircraft itself remained forever invisible. Does visual technology simply enable us to see our universe and ourselves better, or does our obsession with ever more ingenious representational devices also uncover a dimension of phenomena that we will never be able to grasp?”* From *Cleaving within the Cleft*, Graham Coulter-Smith 1998 from conversations with Paul Bevan, INTERVAL catalogue.

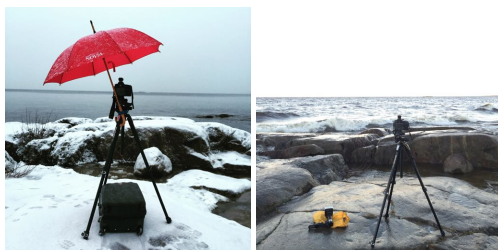
## New Practice-Based Iterations

The term iteration is used to signal that there are intended cycles of repetition within the practice-based research (Smith and Dean, 2009). These are developed as individual and identifiable progressions of the thesis, throughout which the theory of superposition is a continuous research initiative that is iterated in aspects of production, in the work and at its dissemination (recurring combinations of in-status, in-collapse and in-photo). Each iteration leads to the next in some way, taking forward new findings or outcomes that have been made, observed, or performed.

Iteration 1: *Paul Bevan: In Superposition*, Galleri GRO, Jakobstad, Finland, March 17 - April 2, 2016

The first practical particle of the PhD towards a visual experimentation and articulation of the superposition, was to make a series of photographic images for an exhibition planned for a Finnish gallery. The exhibition was a site-specific installation in Galleri GRO, Jakobstad, Finland from March 17 to April 2, 2016, titled *Paul Bevan: In Superposition*.

The photographic series consisted of two different productions, both made at the waters' edge on a coast-line location. One set of images was shot on location in Finland in December 2015, at a place called Fåboda on the Gulf of Bothnia near the gallery in Jakobstad. The other series was made on Coney Island, New York, in January 2016. These locations are conceivably on opposite of the same expanse of water. The framing composition was the same in each series of photographs: a body (the artist, me) is photographed in a position either to the left of the frame or the right of the frame, standing at the water's edge. I am holding a remote flashlight that is triggered at the moment of camera exposure/ observation. The sea water, waves, and a horizon line, are in the background of this figurative foreground. The pictures in Finland were made across two consecutive days. On one day the air is fused with airborne snowflakes that are illuminated by the flashlight. Air breath is also visible, due to the temperature. This gives a particular granular appearance to the air that is conceivably at an atomic level.<sup>211</sup> The point was to make an extensive run of pictures, in order for there to be a critical mass of many hundreds of photographs to use in the planned installation. This would also provide a sufficient amount from which to make a more refined selection of individual images based on certain criteria, subsequently. Although the pictures at Fåboda were made across two consecutive days in December 2015, the weather conditions might suggest otherwise; this was another fortuitous weather condition.<sup>212</sup>



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Camera set-up on location, Fåboda on the Gulf of Bothnia, Finland, 18 and 19 December, 2015

<sup>212</sup> Like that in *How My Body Copes* (1985), page 120-122



Examples made at Fáboda, Finland, 18 and 19 December, 2015



Examples made at Coney Island, New York, January 17, 2016



The position of the 'body' in the image is intended to relate directly to the imagined position of each slit in the *Double Slit Experiment*. If the overall frame is thought of as a solid panel, the body is designed to stand in the place where a slit would conceivably be, with one on either side. The body might be considered as a particle then, and the hand-held flashlight references the light photon of the experiment at each slit position. The waves in the background, are a loose reference the interference pattern caused in the wave presence and behaviour of the double slit experiment.

In the gallery, a large-scale double slit structure was built from wood and painted white. This was a human-sized construction, designed to stand in the middle of the exhibition space. Each slit was large enough for an observer to pass through.<sup>213</sup> This structure was also designed to act as a projection screen, onto which the images were projected. The rest of the gallery space was dark. On one side of the structure, the images from Fåboda were projected, and on the other side the images from Coney Island were projected. In each case the image fell onto the respective surface, and the figurative element of the picture was intended to pass through the slit and project onto the wall behind due to its compositional position. The projected image was approximately life-size, and therefore matched the



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construction of life-size double-slit structure, Gallerie GRO

physical presence of the observer when also passing through each the slit. From over 1000 images, 149 were selected from the location of Fáboda, and 99 selected from those made at Coney Island. On entering the space, the viewer immediately became part of the work. In order to observe the work, the viewer necessarily interfered with the light beam emanating from the projector. At a certain point, the observer's presence blocked the comparable body-sized image in the projection and cast a replacement body-shadow that repeated or mirrored this.<sup>214</sup> This action of walking towards and through one or other slit, was a probability that occurred without the need for instruction. This was one method of engagement; the observer experienced the work in real-time and became implicated in this experience through a performed observation of the piece. In being present, the notional superposition of the observer collapsed, by virtue of their visible presence in the work.<sup>215</sup> A further level of engagement and additional collapse of the superposition came when the viewer physically passed through either slit, with a probability of entering one and leaving through the other. Taking the *Double-Slit Experiment* as a model, small detectors or sensors were installed in the wall structure of each slit. Each detector was linked to the projection, one for each side of the wall structure.

Installation view of double-slit structure, showing the image change triggered by the detector.



<sup>214</sup>

<sup>215</sup> Similar to Snow's *Authorisation* (1969), page 64



A Detector mounted into the wall



The Arduino circuit board that triggers a random change in the projected image<sup>216</sup>

Upon detecting the presence of an observer, the detector was programmed to trigger a random change of the image projected being projected to another image from the series.

This modelled the *Double-Slit Experiment* and the effect the detectors had on the behaviour of the particles, and how the act of observation impacts on any system being observed. This is a second level collapse in superposition. Each notional collapse occurs at the time the status of the observer becomes known and confirmed, and each time triggering an impact to the work: in the first instance, the presence of the shadow or obstruction in the projection effects the overall image, and in the second instance the presence of the observer triggers a change to the projected image via detection.

At the same time, the superposition of the projected body or particle in the image also collapses. In the viewing of the work, the observer brings the status of the work into being in the act of observation, albeit then causing a change in the image, its disappearance and displacement/ replacement. The viewer also brings the artist into the moment in observation of the figure, as a kind of *'there it (he) is'* (Sontag, 1977).

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<sup>216</sup> One detector was linked to the series from Fáboda, and the other detector to the series from Coney Island. Each was wired to an Arduino circuit board (see above) that was connected to a computer running bespoke code in open source software *Processing 3*, that determined the actions: distance of infra-red detection, random selection and number of images

The photographs made on location at both Fåboda and Coney Island can be seen in terms of directed images of the artist (me) performing for the camera. At each location, the camera function was turned on to an automated timed setting to take a photograph every 4 seconds. In front of the camera, I am standing in a position close to the water's edge, with my back to the camera and facing out to the sea. I am holding a remote flashlight, that is triggered by an infrared signal at the moment of each exposure. This flash-light is both a source of light as well as a hand-held prop. The light emitted with each flash is intended to illuminate the body but also as a source of light, it is intended to reference the science of 'light' that is used in the *Double-Slit Experiment*. The precise effect of this varies across the series, from the flashlight as light source to the instances when the beam of the light itself takes on a photon-like appearance in the image. In this set up at each location, with the camera on a tripod, I am moving from the left side to the right side of the frame/ rock, occupying alternate positions on each side of the frame/ rock in time for each exposure. This makes a large number of images at each place, with the camera set to a continuous 4-second interval between exposures.

The method used in making these photographs in sequence and as an event, is assimilated in the gallery, through the image-change that is instigated by the sensors to play out the images in a sequence (albeit randomly). In this manner, there is an attempt to fill the void between event and event, as the viewing of these images becomes a similarly sequenced event in real time for the observer, and occurred in the act of observation.

In the image used on the exhibition poster, the landscape at the waters' edge is empty. There is an illumination of the snowflakes as particles in the air, but no figure. This can also be seen as the trace of a body that is no longer visible or present; an exploded body of cold dark matter.<sup>217</sup> Each snowflake becomes a (light) particle, or piece of matter. As the poster image, this may well be the first visual encounter that the audience had of the exhibition. However, when seen *after* a visit to the installation and the observer knows that all the images used in the exhibition showed a body figure in the image, the poster has a different reference. It is as if the body, no longer seen in the poster image, is now itself *in superposition (again)*.<sup>218 219</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Cornelia Parker, (1991)

<sup>218</sup> Like the (disappearance of the) cyclist in relation to *Leap into the Void*, Yves Klein, 1960 – see footnote 88

<sup>219</sup> This became the title of the next major iteration: *In Superposition (again)*, Oxo Gallery, London, March 29 to April 16, 2017



Paul Bevan: *In Superposition*, exhibition poster image

In the installation, there were a number of significant logistical issues that needed to be overcome in the set up.<sup>220</sup> In the end, this worked well enough to achieve the desired effect in the presentation of the research proposition.

The work was well received. The exhibition reception Private View was on Thursday 17 March and followed a brief artist's talk about the context and content of the work. At the talk, I presented the theory of superposition to a listening audience to include the idea that at that point, the exhibition *In*

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<sup>220</sup> The projection equipment for the event was generously supplied by SONY. As requested, SONY had provided extreme wide angle projectors VPL-SX236 with a ratio of 0.46:1. These projectors are designed to achieve a large projected image from a short distance, and therefore matched the spatial restrictions of the gallery space. However, due to the design of the projector unit itself, it had to be positioned either on the floor, or, with the projected image inverted, positioned upside down on the ceiling. Each position would have a similar effect. However, in the installation set-up with the wall and the double-slits/ gaps, the section and element of the image that passed through the slits either rose high up onto the ceiling or fell directly onto the floor behind respectively. Neither of these was acceptable, and the projector unit offered insufficient adjustment on the projector menu and functionality to move the image up or down respectively. Therefore, the units had to be replaced with SONY VPL CH355. These projectors have a projection ratio of 1.5:1, which is not such a wide projected image in a confined space. With these replacement projectors, although the projected image was smaller than I had originally planned, the section of the frame that was designed to pass through the slits in the constructed wall, did so and remained reasonably level. Rather than falling onto the ceiling or floor with the wider-angled projector positioned on the floor or ceiling respectively, the projected image now fell onto the wall-based screens behind the main double-slit wall

*Superposition* itself was in superposition for them.<sup>221</sup> Since I was talking about an exhibition that they had not yet seen, the exhibition did not exist to them in an external world.

The artist's statement for this exhibition reads: *"In superposition brings together a number of ideas on photography, performance and observation. The term 'superposition' describes an object when it's status is unknown and all possible positions coexist. This potential of multiple states collapses into a single state at the point the object is detected or observed, much like in the decisive moment of a photograph.*

*In this installation, Paul Bevan explores the notion of the body as an object/ image in superposition.*

*Referencing the Double-Slit Experiment used to observe light as both wave and particle, Bevan projects a series of photographic images through a double-slit structure of himself standing at the water's edge on locations in Fäboda (Finland) and Coney Island (New York). Not only does each image represent a notional collapse of his own superposition in time and place as a performed event for the camera, but a further collapse of this status occurs in the moment each image is viewed by an observer.*

*In this act of observation, the notional superposition of the viewer also collapses into the present moment: their actual presence is detected by a device that projects a new image from the series and they also physically impact on the light projection itself.*

*In this way, the piece attempts to create a unified experience between artist and observer of a momentary collapse in superposition."*

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<sup>221</sup><http://gallerigro.blogspot.co.uk/2016/03/vernissage-173-1900.html>

**ills cancern  
iljer oss  
prisad  
hollywood**

**Chief Svarvers dok-  
stärfilm "Tills cancern  
iljer oss" har vunnit  
sta pris i sin kategori på  
festivalen Hollywood  
International Independent  
Cinema Awards.**

... som på svenska har  
titeln "Tills cancern iljer oss".  
... i kategorin Bäst utvald  
... Enligt Jan Olof  
... det bästa vid en film  
... Den är ju det enda av en film  
... går nästan helt på sin plats  
... för vilken uppsättning som  
...

... filmen har tidigare blivit utvald  
... till det officiella programmet  
... av Internationalen Stockholm  
... i New York och Singapore.  
... juligen kommer även utgå  
... av att det är en av de mest  
... till filmen till en pris på 100 000  
... och Sverige har så på den  
... spelat fram filmen som till  
... tillig utgåvan.  
... har också förklarad  
... 2017 som sin utgåva.  
... "Tills cancern iljer oss" är  
... av skådespelaren Peter  
... Den var i september 2011  
... Peter Strickers diagnosis  
... med glömskans grad 4,  
... är en av de allra viktigaste  
... i världen.  
... han upptäckte var samma  
... att göra en vårdtagning för  
... närmare, men några mån-  
... er senare, när hans diagnos  
... hade förändrats, sådd det till  
... han inte skulle komma till  
... sjukhuset längre till Paul  
... och filmen. Jan Olof Svar-  
... som också var Strickers gode  
... vän och som också är en av  
... de mest betydande personer  
... i filmen. Peter Strickers  
... i september 2011 då Peter  
... Strickers hade blivit utvald  
... till att göra en vårdtagning  
... för sin sjukdom.



Chief Svarvers dokumentar  
i Magdalens församling. De-  
mentansen Peter Strickers  
spelar cancerns är utvald på  
Hollywood International  
Cinema Awards.



Paul Bevan vid installationen  
"In superposition" i Galleri Grö.  
Utställningen öppnas i kväll,  
17.03.2016 kl. 19.00.

**Han går genom  
verken, in i bilden**

**FOTOGRAFI.** Med "In superposition" vill Paul Bevan undersöka hur  
objekt går från gränslösa till begränsade i ögonblicket de observeras.

**Paul Bevan** är konstnär och  
Galleri Grö, Campus Malmö  
17.03.2016  
www.gallerigrö.se

På de vita, fristående väggarna i gal-  
leriet projiceras en bild av en sol-  
lig, kall vinterhav. Den grö vatt-  
ret står stilla och ljudlös i foto-  
grafiet som den verkliga scenen.  
En konstnär som Paul Bevan, står  
med ryggen mot betraktaren.  
När man rör sig går man in i bilden  
och ser den verkliga scenen. Men  
när man rör sig, blir man också en  
del av bilden.  
- I mina verk skapar jag ofta  
scener där jag spelar rollen som  
konstnären och leker med tiden, rum-  
met och betraktaren. En bild har  
en yta, men också en djup, säger  
Paul Bevan.  
- Det finns en del av mig själv  
i de här verken, men jag vill gärna  
att folk tar det som reflekterar över  
det.

Med "In superposition" vill Paul  
Bevan undersöka hur objekt går  
från gränslösa, periferare och  
"En bild har en yta,  
men också ett skeg  
till."

... observation, själva verket "In  
superposition" kommer från konstnärens  
och beskriver just sagt ett objekt  
vars rum är rikligt, och alla objek-  
tens möjligheter till observation.  
Men i samma ögonblick som objek-  
tet speglar sig i betraktaren - så-  
som det möter alla ögonblicket när  
en fotograf står i rummet - förändras de  
många möjligheter till en enda.

**DET ÄR EN STUND** i verkligheten när  
någon står med ryggen mot på plats.  
- Fotografien speglar betraktaren  
och de mer jag ser vad som fotograf,  
dessa mer förstår jag faktiskt koppla  
ett, säger Bevan.  
Många betraktare av fotografier har  
en känsla av att de är i rummet. Paul  
Bevan vill ge dessa fotografier en  
känsla av att de är i rummet.  
- När man betraktar ett fotografi  
ser man ofta vad det är för något, inte  
själva fotografiet.  
Paul Bevan har flera gånger varit  
gästkonstnär i Galleri Grö, utställning  
i Campus Malmö och har flera  
utställningar i andra utställningsrum  
i Stockholm.  
Installationen i Galleri Grö  
visar upp tre konstverk som  
består av tre olika fotografier som  
har varit utställda i London.  
Det har varit en utställning av tre  
utställningar i London.  
- Många av mina verk handlar om



Paul Bevan är konstnär, fotograf och utställningskonstnär.

... att se scenen från en bild och  
... sådana. Jag tror att det är  
... som det är i verkligheten, så  
... för i sig själv en performance. Det  
... för att det är det enda som  
... säger Bevan.

**RENSADES** om världen är en värld  
"In superposition" är en värld som  
betraktaren går in i.  
På en vit vägg i galleriet står  
Paul Bevan fotografier vid  
fotografier som är i sig själva  
fotografier. På den andra projek-  
tion är Paul Bevan från Campus  
Malmö i New York.  
- Jag gör det som en utställning



Newspaper reporting from the Österbottens Tidning, 17.03.2016<sup>222</sup>

<sup>222</sup> Translation from newspaper article: Österbottens Tidning, 17.03.2016:

*On the white, free standing walls of the gallery is projected an image of a desolate, cold winter beach. The grey water laps (frozen and silent in the photograph) against the snow-covered beach. A man dressed in black, Paul Bevan, stands with his back to the viewer. The viewer can walk between the walls. When you move inside the work, the man moves, both on the walls and onto the actual viewer. -In my work I often stage scenarios where I am performing in front of the camera and playing with two-, three- and four-dimensions. An image has a surface, but also an element of time, says Paul Bevan. -I have my reasons for creating this work, but I would like people to take it in and reflect on it themselves.*





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So, in "In superposition" Paul Bevan wants to bring together various ideas around art photography, performance and observation. The actual term 'superposition' comes from quantum theory and describes in short when an object whose status is unknown, and all conceivable possible locations coexist.

But in the same moment that the object is detected or observed - like in the crucial moment when a photograph is taken - the many possibilities change to a single one.

There is a moment in eternity when things, as they say, fall into place.

-The essence of photography interests me. The more I read about photography, the more I understand the capacity of the photograph, says Bevan.

Many consider a photograph just like a mirror or reference. Paul Bevan wants to give photography itself a visibility rather than it being transparent.

-When you view a photograph, you see what is represented, not the photograph itself.

Paul Bevan has been a guest lecturer several times within the art education department of Campus Allegro and he has conducted workshops with photo-students.

The installation in Galleri Gro, that opens for the art public at tonight's 'vernissage', he considers a bit of an experiment and is part of the doctoral thesis he is working on with the University of the Arts London.

-It has been a challenge to build the installation, he states.

-Much of my work deals with the idea of combining an image with an event. I try to collapse the gap between them, so the photograph itself becomes a performance. The viewing of the work is also part of that, says Bevan.

Sensors are detecting 'in superposition' and change the work when the viewer enters into it.

On one side of the walls, Paul Bevan photographed at Fåboda beach on a ruffled December-day. On the other, he projects photographs from Coney Island in New York.

-I like the idea that these places are opposite each other on other sides of the world, he says.

-This helps to create a duality and a dilemma between one thing and its opposite. Moreover, I have always been fascinated by the place where the land meets the sea.

This is also a kind of contrast, and a form of superposition where the water rolls back and forth.

-The next step is to document the exhibition in its entirety.

Sofie Stara (translation: Paul Bevan)

Iteration 2: part of *UAL Photography Research*, shown at Camberwell Space Projects, Camberwell College of Arts, University of the Arts, London (UAL), November 29 - December 16, 2016

The next exhibited iteration was part of *UAL Photography Research*, shown at Camberwell Space Projects, Camberwell College of Arts between November 29 to December 16, 2016. This exhibit further formalised the engagement with the work by an observer as an act of interference. This work used the image that had previously featured on the exhibition poster in which there is no figure, as a large wall-hung print. Directly in front of this stood a projector, projecting an additional image onto the image on the wall. The additional image was an identical composition to the wall image, except significantly there was a figure standing on the rock to the left of the frame in the projected image. This set-up was effectively a corridor in the gallery space, so it was always necessary for a viewer to walk between the projector and the wall in order to view the work. In this place, the observer necessarily blocks out the projected image; the figure in the projection disappears and is replaced by the outline shadow of the viewer in the present moment. This absence of the artist, brought about by the presence of the viewer through the act of observation, has a dual effect: the (image of the) artist is put into the superposition, at the same the superposition of the observer is collapsed. The presence of the observer brings the work into the present moment, for an individual and singular (performative) experience.<sup>223</sup> This draws on a method I had developed as part of viewing a series entitled *EXIT* (1999-2001). In this, the observer also displaced a projected image of a figure, replacing it with their own figure outline as shadow. The EXIT sign in the image remained a constant and important graphic sign and word, remarking on the occasion the projected figure is displaced by the viewer, and the threshold moment of combined states of presence and absence.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Again, referencing the process of viewing *Authorization*, Michael Snow (1969)

<sup>224</sup> An inherent status of photography itself



225

Camberwell Space Projects, Camberwell College of Arts  
*UAL Photography Research*, November 29 - December 16, 2016

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<sup>225</sup> Model: Anne Williams

Iteration 3: *Paul Bevan: In Superposition (again)*, Oxo Gallery, London, March 29 - April 16, 2017

The third iteration was a solo exhibition mounted at Oxo Gallery, London, March 29<sup>226</sup> to April 16, 2017 titled *Paul Bevan: In Superposition (again)*.<sup>227</sup> This exhibition was a significant undertaking.

This exhibition showed 10 large-scale prints selected from the series made in Finland, Fåboda, as a selection of images from the original critical mass. The prints were all wall-mounted around the gallery space and paired around the structure of a double slit. In each pairing, the left image showed the figure (of the artist) standing to the left of the frame. On the right image, the figure stood to the right. This format was consistent with the earlier presentation and screening onto the double slit structure of the exhibition in Iteration 1, where the figure either passed through the left or the right opening in the screen. In this exhibition, the projection piece from Iteration 2 was also shown. This was positioned in the gallery space in a manner that required the observer to pass through and block the projection beam, as before. The wall mounted image and the projector were placed on opposite walls of a narrow area where the observer would necessary pass through as a condition of observing the exhibition. The much earlier photo-work entitled *Vannkanten* (at the water's edge), Norway, 1988, was also shown here. This work is a series of 16 photographs made on the south coast of Norway and described in Category 2 of Chapter 2 (Page 46). This is the first exhibited iteration that brings an older work together with the new work, within the discourse of the superposition for this study.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> The day that the UK government triggered 'Article 50' to begin the EXIT from the EU

<sup>227</sup> Picking up on *Paul Bevan: In Superposition*, Iteration 1

<sup>228</sup> Although the discourse on the relationship between photography and performance has been a long-standing element in my work



Installation view of *Paul Bevan: In Superposition (again)* (2017)

During the period of the exhibition, I was present in the gallery every day, and dressed in the same outfit that I wore in the photographs from location at Fåboda on the gallery walls. I visibly mirrored the appearance of the figure in all of the works and presented an immediate visual connection with the work for the gallery visitor. This embodiment through dress, extended the work into the space of the gallery, by adding a live or performative element that effectively collapsed my own superposition, otherwise presented in the multiple states seen across the images. It was interesting to observe the moment of realisation occur for the viewer, upon seeing me in relation to the depicted figure in the work; some comfort was derived in knowing that the 'artist is present'<sup>229</sup> or at least some satisfaction taken in knowing something for certain about the exhibition (i.e., that the man in the photographs, was the man in the gallery).<sup>230</sup> This aspect of determination arising out of an initially indeterminate moment of entry into the exhibition was a notable moment that was expressed both verbally and non-verbally by the visitors; I saw this.<sup>231</sup>

During this exhibition, I developed a new work entitled *Waves and Particles* (2017). As part of the large print display, two images from the series were especially placed next to one another on a wall following the left and right format. The left photograph showed an image where the body is standing to the left of the frame. Here, the figure is posed facing the camera, and therefore looking at the audience. On the right side, in the right-hand image, the figure is standing to the right of the frame with his back to the camera and looking out to the sea.

All viewers who entered the gallery space were invited to physically place a sticky-backed white dot (particle) directly into one of the prints "*on or around the body*" (Bevan, 2017). This invitation happened throughout the twenty days of the exhibition, and I engaged the participation from citizens of over fifty different countries, who collaborated in the process of making *Waves and Particles*, (2017). This series of 20 images shows the daily addition of white dot (particles) onto each of the photographic prints on the wall. Each white dot marks the exact moment that the observer was present, who was literally touching the work as they each pushed the white dot onto the image, sticking it on a chosen part of the

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<sup>229</sup> Similar to the title of the performance by Marina Abramovic: *The Artist is Present* (2012)

<sup>230</sup> Fred Ritchin's book, *In our own image: The coming Revolution in Photography of 1990* –begins with a number of observations about the digital change that is underway by this point, and offers up anecdotal realisations when looking at large advertising photographs in the New York Subway, that the people depicted in the photographs might not actually exist at all in any material sense and in the way that the people sitting under the advert do. The point being not so much that the guy fashioning the suit, for example, was a model (i.e. not posing as himself), "*but was he, looking so much like the people sitting on the seats below him, somewhere a man?*" [and in the superposition] (Ritchin, 1990: 3)

<sup>231</sup> An experience that is either by design or default to (arguably) the first encounter of any art exhibit

images.<sup>232</sup> The number of dots is largely even between both works, showing an even probability of the dot being placed on the left or right image (slit). As this action continued, a gradual and inevitable disappearance of the (image of the) artist in the photograph played out. This process was significant as an event in arising determination, in much the same way that occurred when the viewer connected the presence of the artist with the figure in (all the) work. The proposition to stick a white particle onto the work was initially met with a degree of uncertainty regarding where to place the dot.<sup>233</sup> In the initial stages, most people seemed to gravitate to the face, hands and heart areas. It was surprising how quickly the face area was defaced in each image. There were a few observers who decided to place their dots in more remote areas of the pictures, choosing a place where the dot itself was less visible and taking on some semblance of the superposition theory itself, when the white dot disappeared into



232

Image grid showing a small sample of participants placing particles onto the work – See Annex Section\_2: The Making of *Waves and Particles* for full participation

<sup>233</sup> This also resonates with the gesture of photography itself, in choosing one moment or encounter over other possibilities

the whiteness of the snow for example<sup>234</sup>. I provided some context for the experiment in discussion with the participants, and there was also some wall text providing background information on the exhibition in relation to the theory of superposition. The participants knowingly engaged in the process of making *Waves and Particles* (2017).<sup>235</sup>

In *Waves and Particles* (2017), the progressive disappearance of the artist in series indirectly references formalities of both the polaroid sequence in *Authorization* (Snow, 1969) and Keith Arnatt's *Self-Burial* (1969).

The title is intended to directly reference the dilemma of the double-slit experiment in terms of the coexistence of particles and waves. This is one connection to the superposition. Further articulations of *In Superposition (again)* are embodied by the observer. The superposition of the observer collapsed (for me) the moment they entered the gallery space. Any individual could conceivably have entered the space, and a specific individual did, each time.

The collapse of the superposition of the observer is permanently registered in the personal placement of the dot onto one of the pictures. Pressed on by their own digit, there is likely an (invisible) unique fingerprinted trace on each dot. Following this encounter, the observer left the gallery space to return once more into the superposition (for me), existing again in some unknown status.

Moreover, upon each act of observation and additional particle placement by the viewer and consequential increased invisibility of the (image of the) artist, the artist too is placed into a superposition status, where this status is the result of being concealed. Here, the link between superposition (collapse) and the process or act of observation is made.

I took note of the nationality of the participants in *Waves and Particles*, London 2017.<sup>236</sup> This is mapped for reference, and to visualise the dispersed community of participants across the world, who return once more to a status of superposition after the event (of observation, and of being observed). This global element is represented by the token dot of observation, that I knew I would return to in the future.

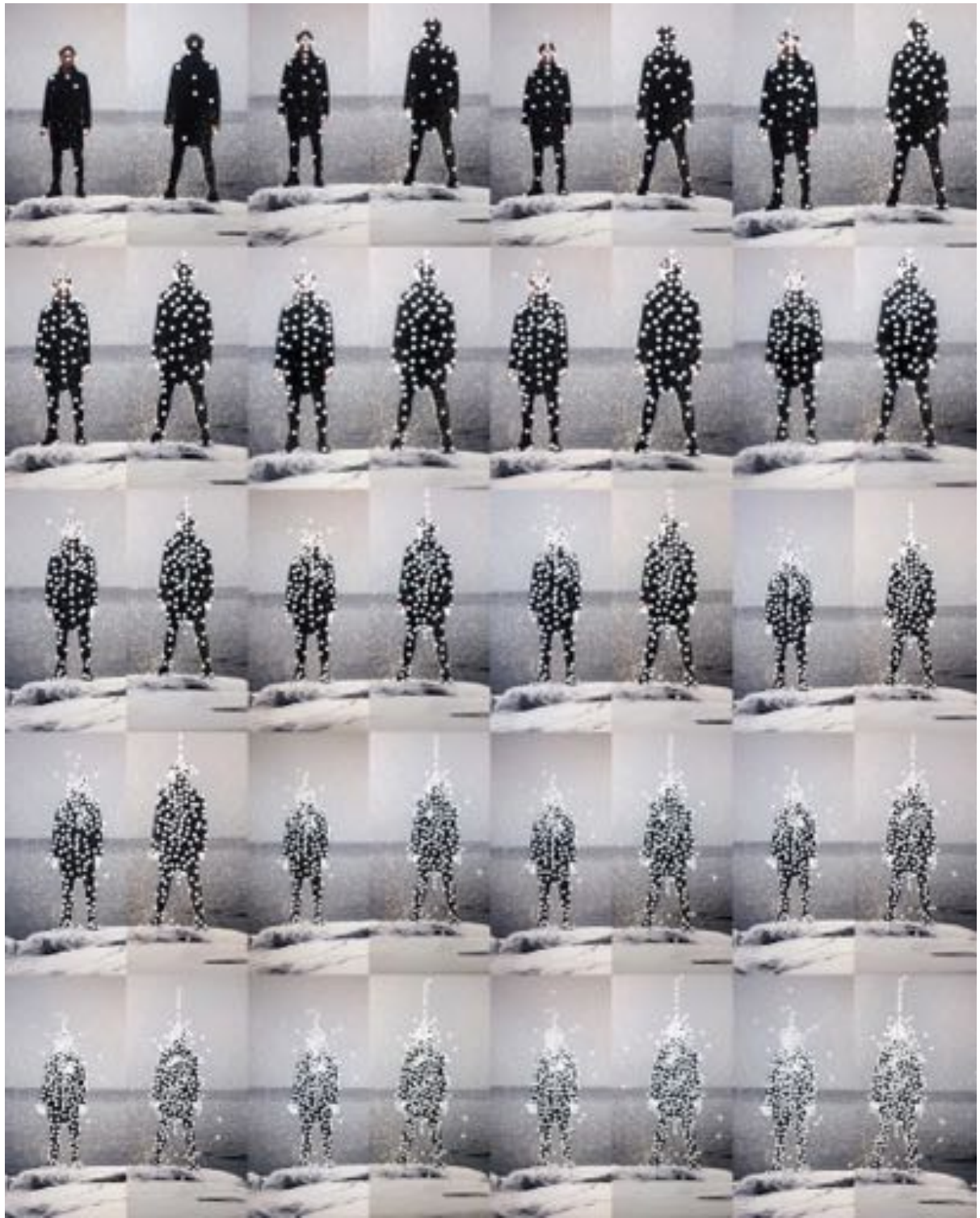
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<sup>234</sup> Like the body in the cover image of this study on a macro level, from *In Superposition: Ice and Land*, Iceland (2018)

<sup>235</sup> See Annex Section 2: The Making of *Waves and Particles*

<sup>236</sup> As an aside, the exhibition opened on the day that *Article 50* was triggered for BREXIT. I initially set out recording the country of origin of the visitors and participants, in the hope of achieving a similar article of 50 different countries in an act of defiance to BREXIT. In the end, there were over 50 different nationalities that engaged with *Waves and Particles* (2017), and visited the exhibition *Paul Bevan: In Superposition (again)*





*Waves and Particles* (2017)

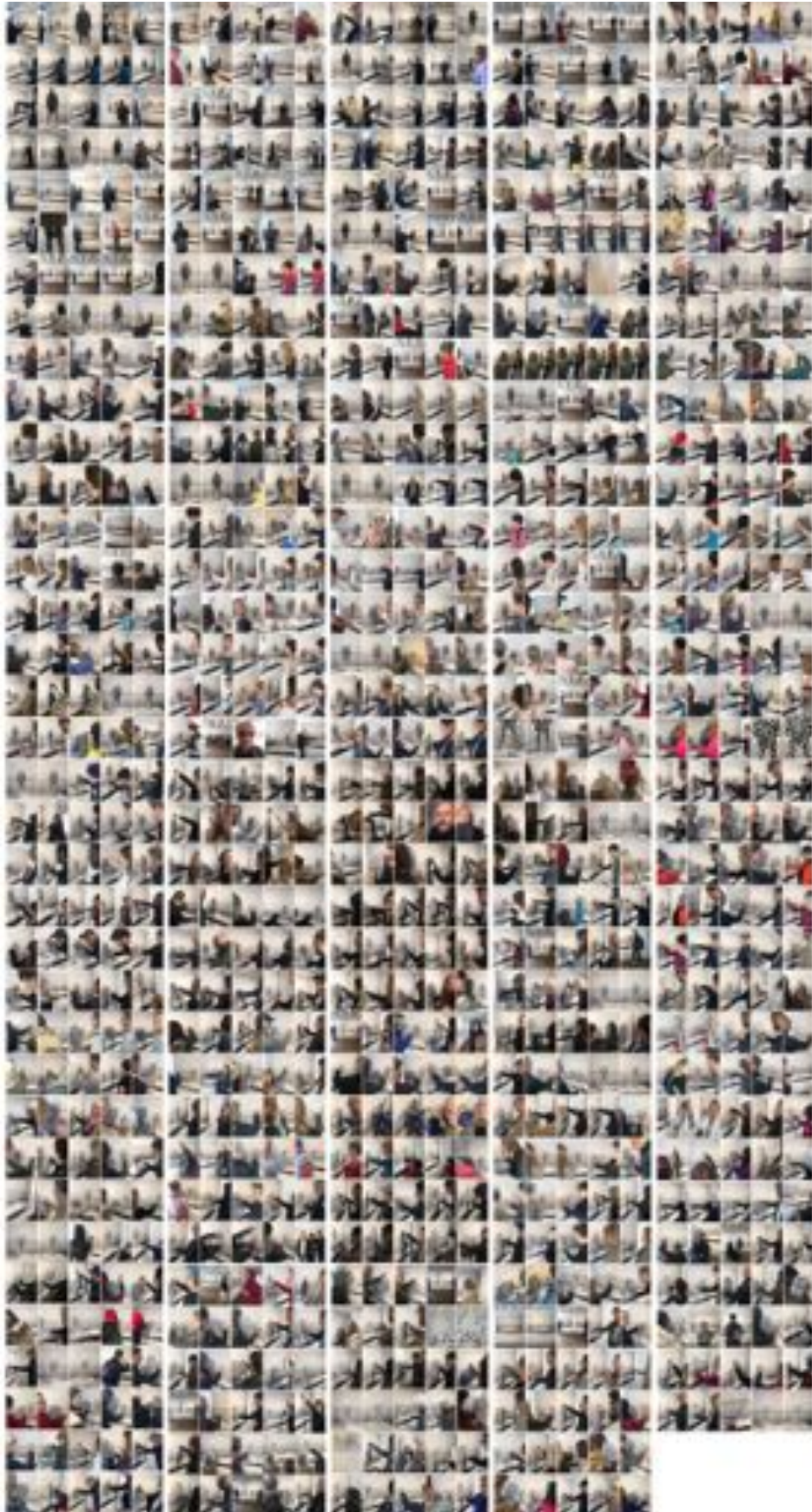
Final images on wall, installation shot (1)



Final images on wall, installation shot (2)



*Double-Slit Experiment* (2017)



The participants in *Waves and Particles*, 2017 – see also Annex Section\_2: The Making of *Waves and Particles*



Mapping the locations of participants in *Waves and Particles* (2017)

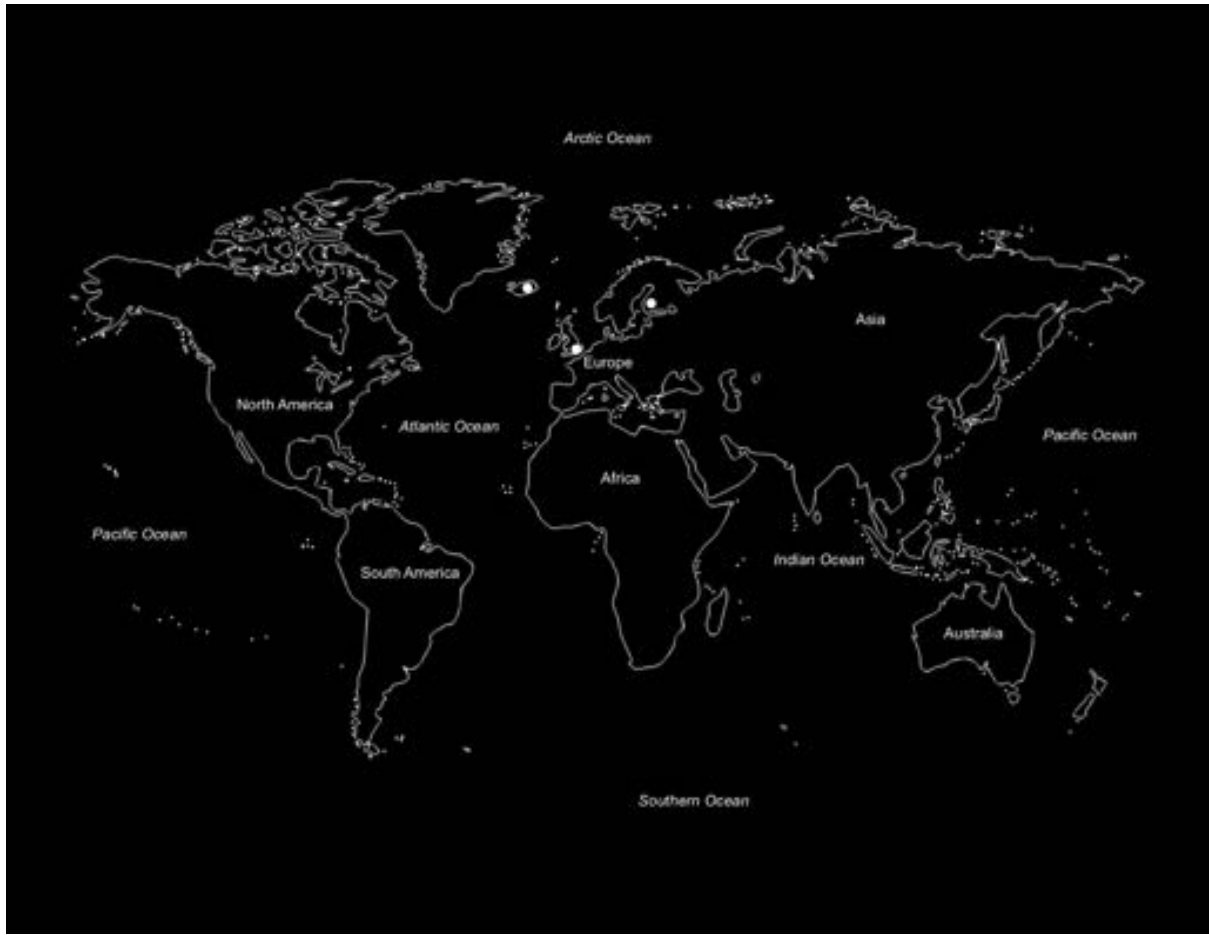
Iteration 4: *Paul Bevan: In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland)*, Ramskram Gallery of Contemporary photography, Reykjavik, Iceland, March 3 - April 1, 2018

Iteration 4 of the work took place in Reykjavik, Iceland, at Ramskram Gallery of Contemporary photography, from March 3 to April 1, 2018. This exhibition was titled *Paul Bevan: In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland)*.

For this exhibition, I printed a new edition of selected images from the series made at Fåboda, Finland, 2016. In the Ramskram Gallery, I again invited the participation of the viewers to place a white dot (particle) directly onto the work “*on or around the body*” (Bevan, 2018). Here, I used only a single image rather than the two-image format used in London, partly because I was expecting a much smaller number of visitors due to the difference in population levels between the two capital cities. I used an image of the figure looking to camera/ audience and standing to the left side of the frame. Interestingly, the participants in Iceland avoided covering the area of the face, leaving my gaze uncovered (see below). This was in stark contrast to the observers that participated in London Iteration 2, where the face areas on both images were quickly covered over within the first day.



from *Paul Bevan: In Superposition: Ice and land (2018)* – audience participation as observation



Mapping the locations of participants at *In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland)*

In the exhibition *In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland)*, 2018, I decided to add a further piece of past work to the show. In a similar way to the addition of *Vannkanten, Norway (1985)* at Iteration 2, a revised significance was given in this context to another previous piece of work. The piece is titled *How my Body Copes (1985)*. This is an intended inclusion in order to bring this work into the iterative discourse and practical presentation of the theory of superposition. As discussed in Category 2 of Chapter 2, in this work I lay under a large fir tree, concealed in a canvas wrap for a continuous 12-hour period. The (my) hidden or concealed body in the bag is a perfect *Schrödinger's Cat (1935)*. From the outside (to an observer), my body is in a state of superposition in an unknown condition and conceivably both dead and alive at the same time. In the photographs, the state of superposition is particularly pertinent also to the question as to whether I am in there at all.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> This work was also a nod to Chris Burden's *Deadman (1972)* – where Burden lay on the boulevard in California surrounded by passing traffic. His own wrap is illuminated with a flare at either end, however the risk to his own safety is not entirely mitigated (a theme to much of Burden's works)



From *How my Body Copes* (1985)

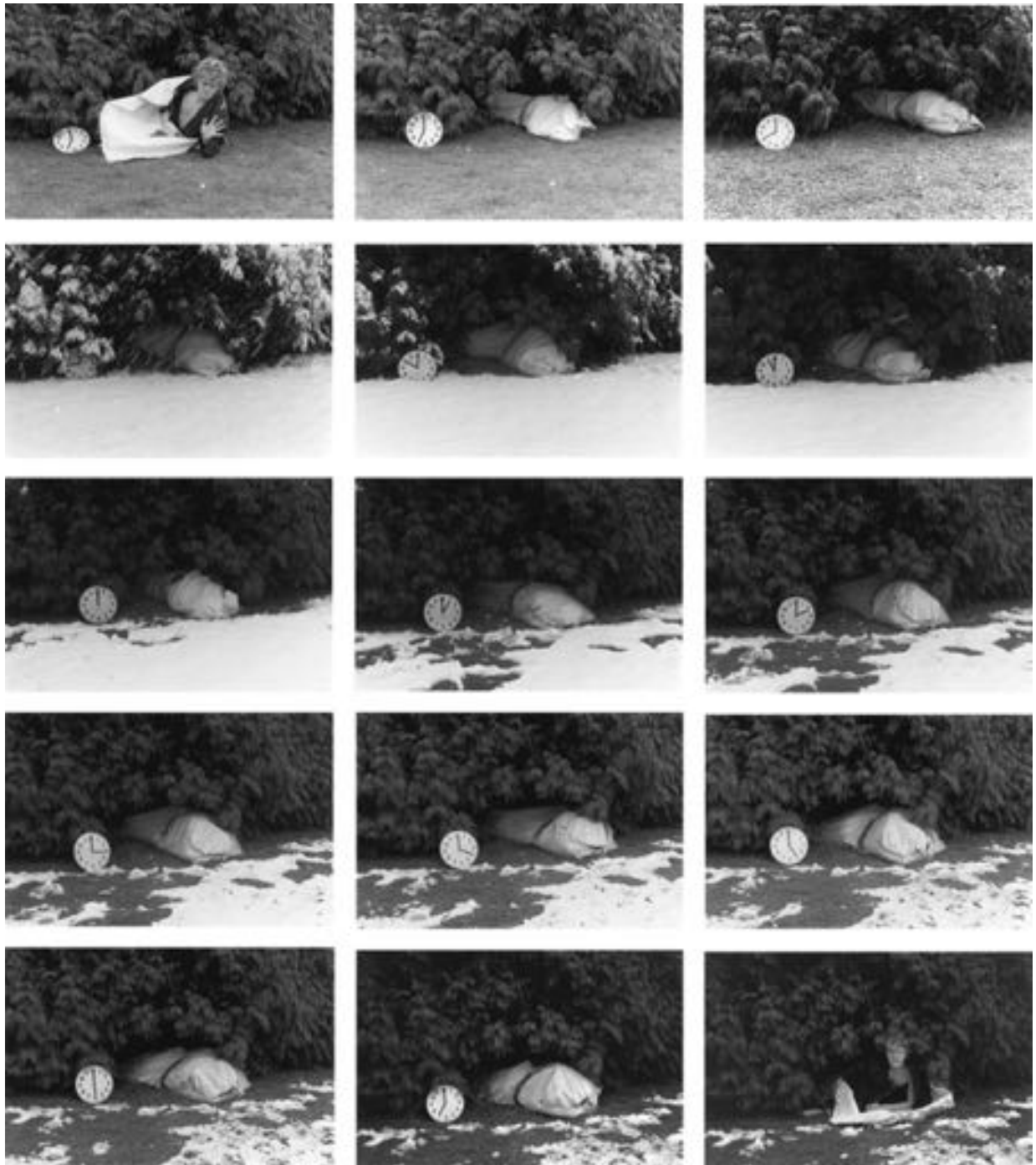




7 am from *How my Body Copes* (1985)



*How My Body Copes* (1985/ 2018) – presented at *In Superposition: Ice and land*, (2018)  
A series of photographs showing a 12-hour period of lying inside a canvas wrap, 7am-7pm.



*How my Body Copes* (1985)

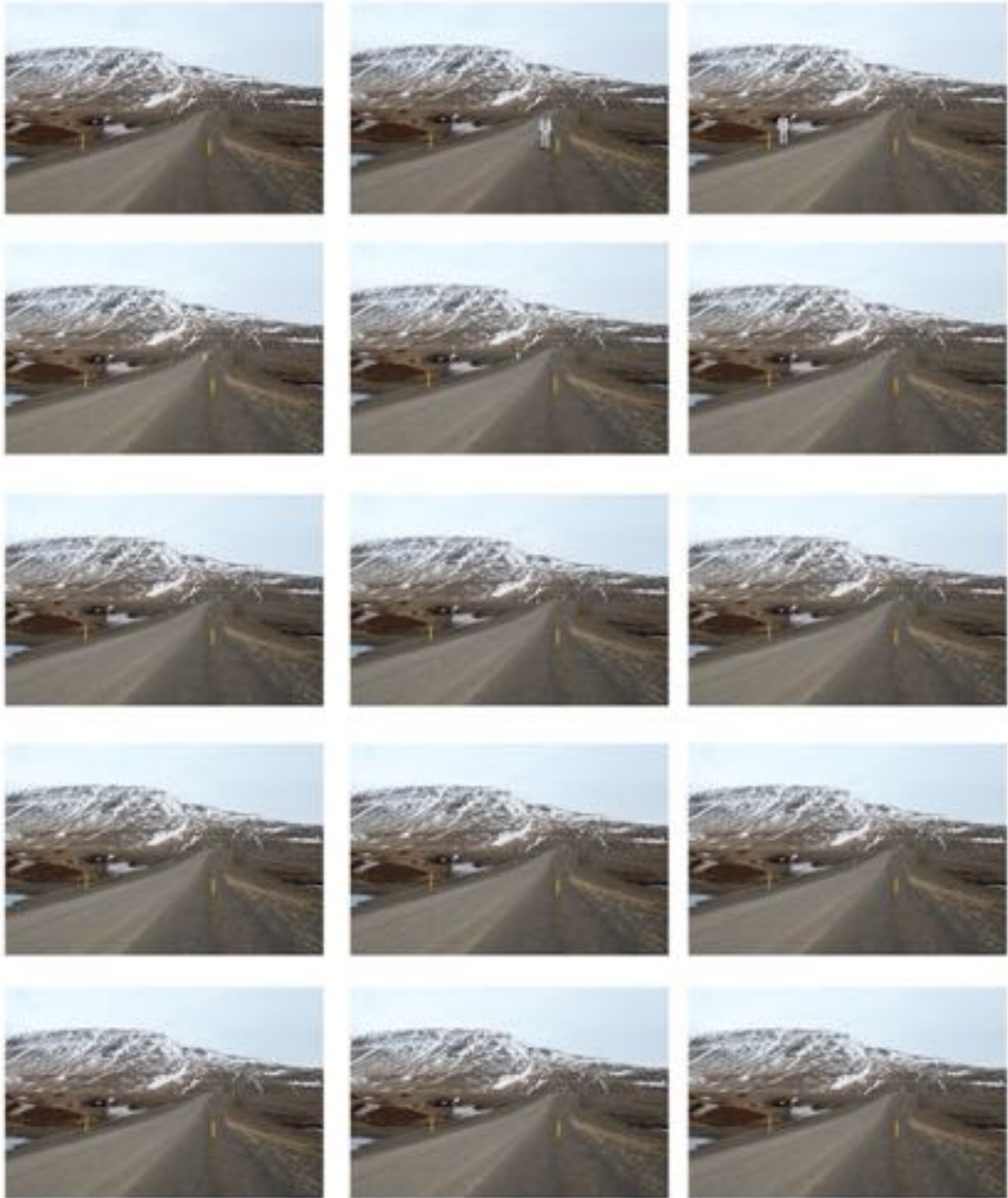
During the time of the exhibition, I assumed the role of an artist in residence in Iceland. I went out into the extraordinary and unique landscape outside of Reykjavik to produce a number of new photographic works that expanding on the title of the show *In Superposition: Ice and land, Iceland*.



Examples of images developed to extend *In Superposition: Ice and land, Iceland, 2018*



Examples of images developed to extend *In Superposition: Ice and land, Iceland, 2018*



Example of images developed to extend *In Superposition: Ice and land, Iceland, 2018*.  
*Disappearing up the Road (2018)*

I performed a series that became titled *On Not Becoming Caspar David Friedrich*, Snæfellsnes, Iceland (2018). In this series, I made multiple attempts to embody the position of Der Wanderer in Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer (Wanderer above the Sea of Fog)* (1818), painted 200 years previously. Friedrich's painting shows a single man (Der Wanderer) standing with his

back to the spectator, apparently looking out across a rocky peak above the clouds. Having (supposedly) conquered the precipice, the Wanderer is standing transfixed in the contemplation of an unknown and uncertain future; he is a figure representing both power and vulnerability. This is a seminal landscape painting that emerged during the period of Romanticism, that explored new contemporary religious, spiritual and mythological human desires and longings to be a part of nature (a type of human condition). The single figure standing against the sublime terrain, is at the same time part of and separate from the landscape, however ultimately an observer of it.<sup>238</sup> The painting itself, positions its own viewer in a similar stance, necessarily occupying an observer of an observer behind the Wanderer.<sup>239</sup>

The photo-series intentionally evokes Friedrich's painting, however, never fully realises it. In this way, a simulation of the image is absent, but the painting is somehow present in a mythical image-state, bringing in all the attendant discourses surrounding the original work, but in association or by absence. I am (strategically) physically incapable of triggering the photographic apparatus by pressing the shutter release, and to move to the desired pose within the self-timed 10-second interval before the shutter is released.<sup>240</sup> This process is (intentionally) compromised by the state of being behind the camera (photographer) and then in front of the camera (performer) at the same time. In the act of failing to reach or embody the position of Der Wanderer, I present instead alternative states that are limited by the condition and the capacity to play out an idealized (painted) image. This work becomes a comment on the human condition,<sup>241</sup> and an intended interplay between photography, performance and now painting. Furthermore, this series is a champion of the superposition as a preferred albeit messy state of existence.<sup>242</sup> As a rejection to collapse into the singular, decisive and absolute moment of the original work (as an idealised state), my own multiple states of the indeterminate and self-reflexivity actually identify with the presiding elemental concept of Der Wanderer himself; he is similarly encountering and embodying the indeterminate in a state of (eternal) superposition.

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<sup>238</sup> At a stretch, like the tree in Magritte's *The Human Condition*, (1933 and 1935)

<sup>239</sup> Much like my image from *Galerie*, page 87

<sup>240</sup> With a path between camera and peak becoming increasingly worn

<sup>241</sup> In the manner previously described

<sup>242</sup> Again, as a condition of being human



*On Not Becoming Der Wanderer (after Caspar David Friedrich), Snæfellsnes, Iceland (2018)*

Iteration 5 & 6: *On Not Becoming Der Wanderer (after Caspar David Friedrich), Snæfellsnes, Iceland (2018)*, as photographs exhibited at *Breaking Myth*, Palermo, Sicily, June 16 - November 4, 2018, and *On Not Becoming Der Wanderer (after Caspar David Friedrich), Snæfellsnes, Iceland (2018)*, as film screening *On Failure*, at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 24 November, 2018

The new work that was made in Iceland *On Not Becoming Der Wanderer (after Caspar David Friedrich), Snæfellsnes, Iceland (2018)* was exhibited in a selected group exhibition in Palermo entitled *Breaking Myth* from June 16 to November 4, 2018. The accompanying exhibition text read:

*In the photo-series On Not Becoming Der Wanderer (after Caspar David Friedrich), Snæfellsnes, Iceland (2018), Bevan makes multiple attempts to reach a position that embodies Der Wanderer in Caspar David Friedrich's painting Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer (Wanderer above the Sea of Fog). Friedrich's painting shows a single man (Der Wanderer) standing with his back to the spectator on a rocky peak above the clouds. Having (supposedly) conquered the precipice, he stands transfixed in contemplation of an unknown future; here is a figure of both power and vulnerability. This is a seminal landscape painting that emerged around 1818 during the period of Romanticism, exploring new religious, spiritual and mythological desires or longings to be part of nature.*

*Bevan's photo-series intentionally evokes Friedrich's painting, while never fully realising it. In its absence, the painting is present as a mythical image, and all attendant discourse surrounding the original work is brought to bear by association. In the act of failing to reach the position of Der Wanderer, Bevan presents alternative states that are limited by the capacity to play out an idealized (painted) image - a comment on the human condition, and a passing interplay between photography, painting and performance. Bevan is unable to trigger the photograph and get to the desired pose within the self-timed 10 seconds, intentionally compromised by the status of being at once behind and then in front of the camera. Furthermore, but not exhaustively, this series is*



*also a champion of the 'superposition' as a preferred but messy status of existence. In a rejection to collapse into the singular, decisive and absolute moment of the original work, Bevan's multiple states of in-determination, self-reflexively identify with the elemental concept of Der Wanderer himself, who is similarly encountering the indeterminate.*

*In this way, at a number of levels the photo-series embodies the notion and principle of myth itself. (Bevan, 2018)*



*On Not Becoming Caspar David Friedrich, from Breaking Myth, Palermo June 16 to November 4, 2018 (installation image)*

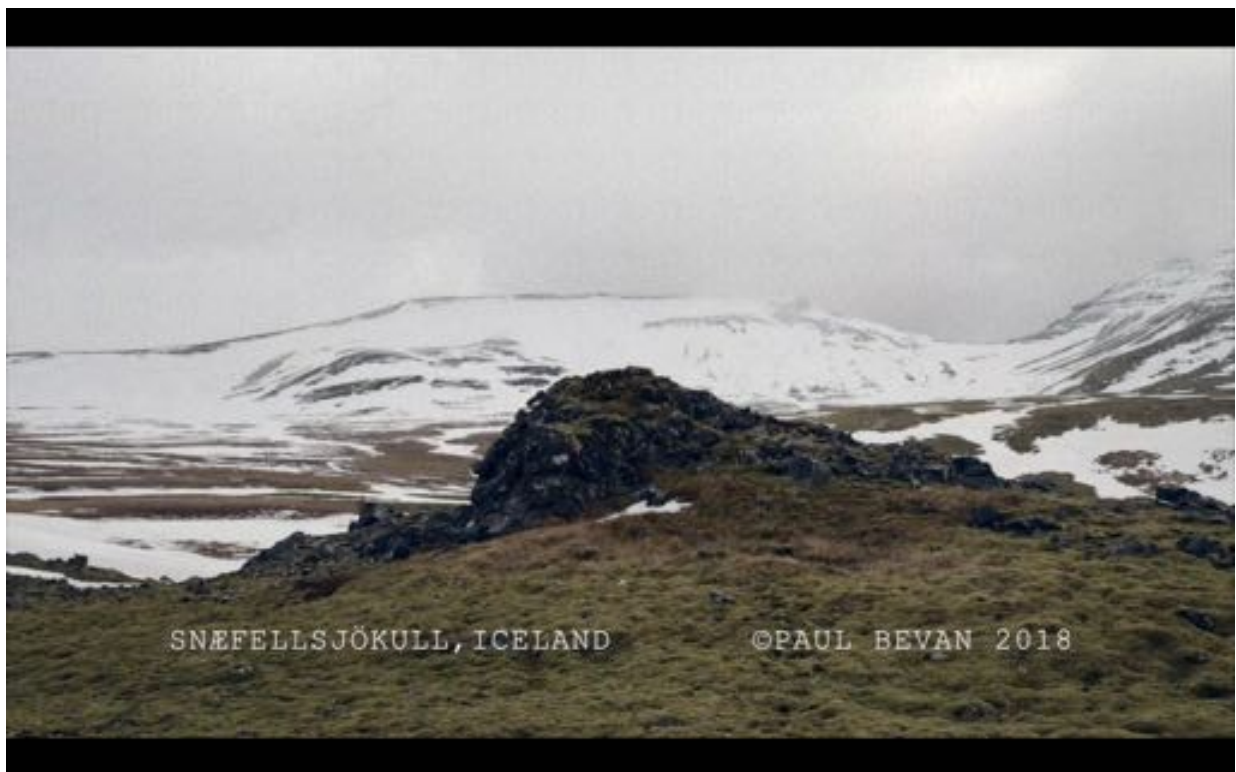
This series also became a 6-minute film made up of a sequence of stills, in response to an invitation to be part of a film screening in the Palais de Tokyo, Paris on 24 November 2018 on the theme of failure. This was an initiative in conjunction with Vestoj.<sup>243</sup>

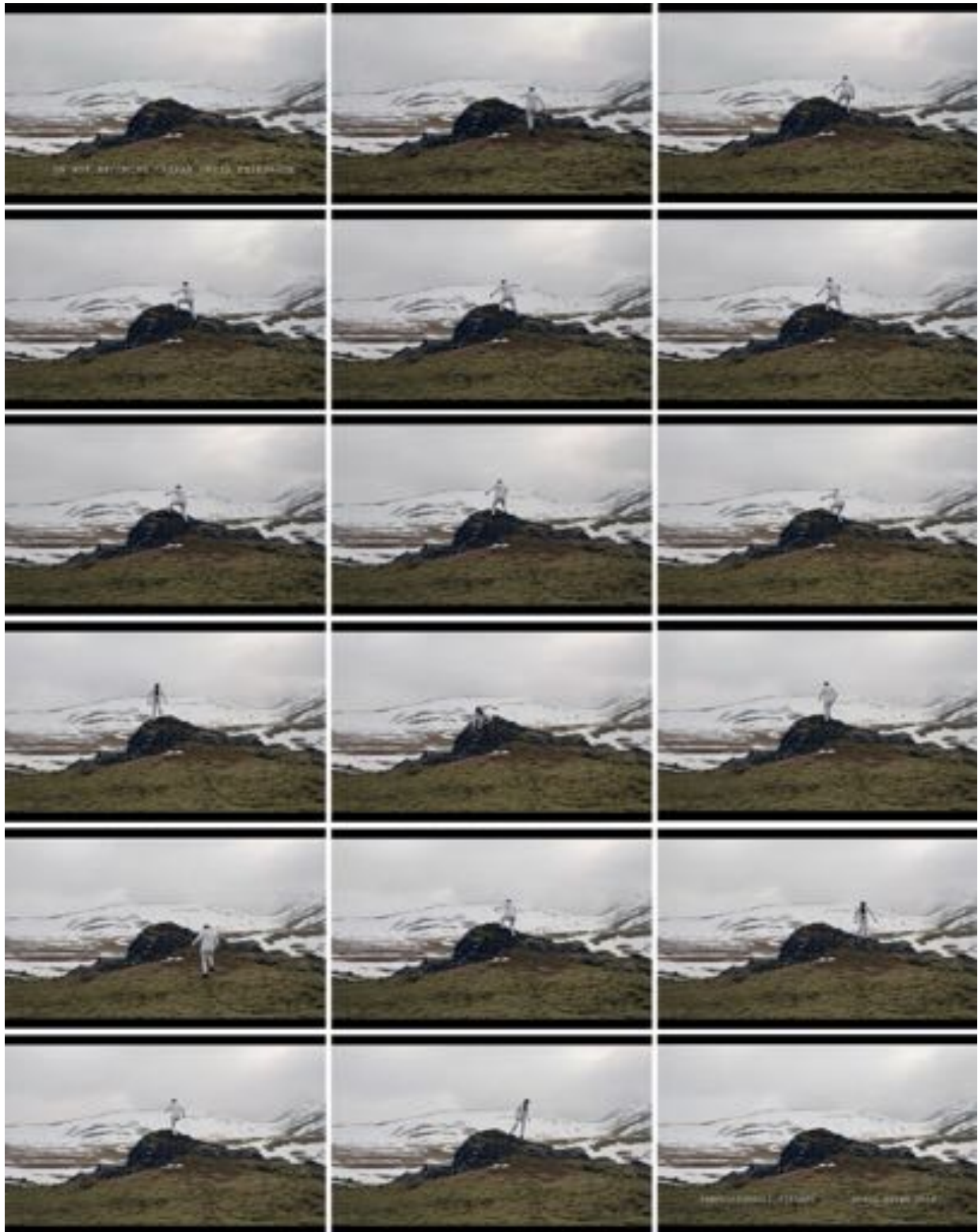


*On Not Becoming Caspar David Friedrich*, film screening at Palais de Tokyo, Paris. 24 November 2018 (installation image)

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<sup>243</sup> Vestoj is an annual academic journal about fashion and dress. Each edition is themed. Issue six was on failure





film stills from *On Not Becoming Caspar David Friedrich*, (2018) video 6'58" – screened at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 24 November 2018

Iteration 7: *Zoopraxiscope*, from *In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland, 2018)*, Paris, April 4 - April 22, 2019

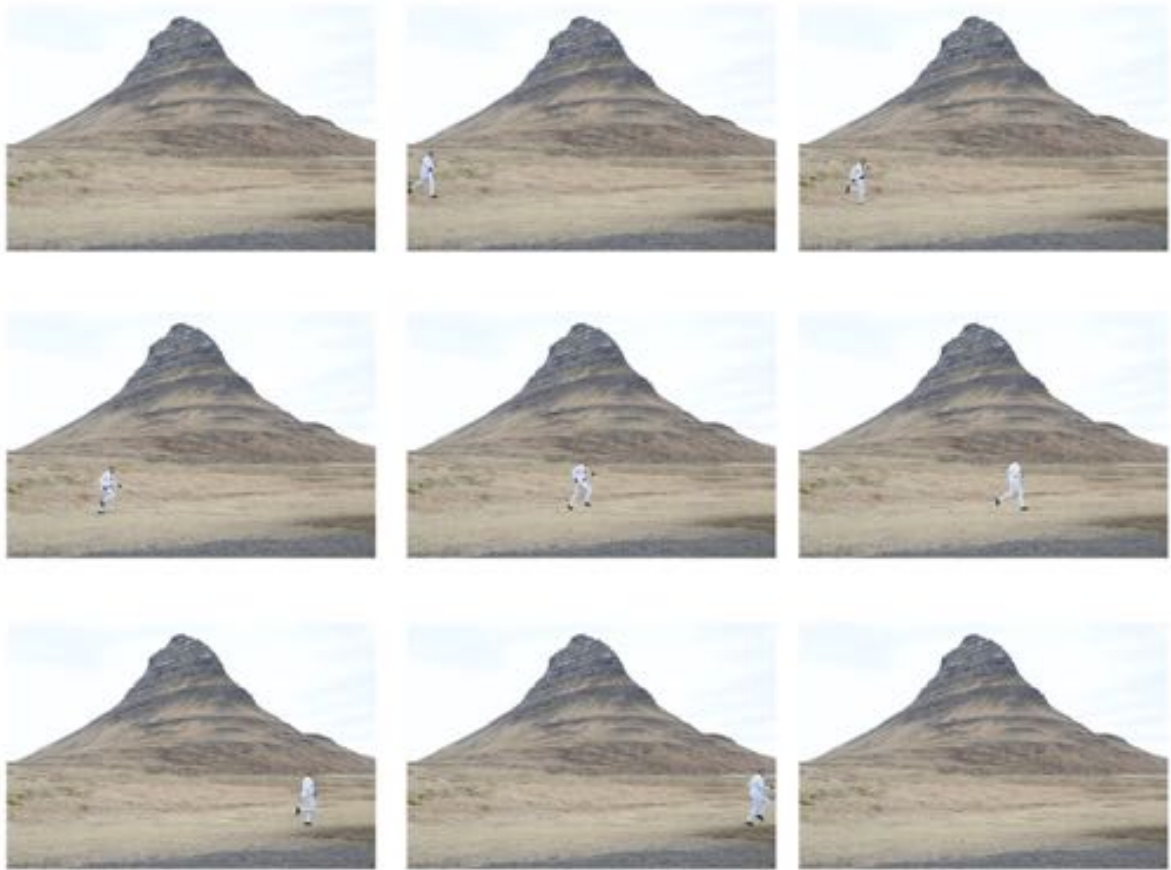
This exhibition was part of the Mois de la Photo-OFF 2019, a photography festival that is held across a number of venues in Paris. The exhibition uses a further series of images made during the residency in Iceland, developing on the iteration *In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland) (2018)*.

I was offered to exhibit a work in Le L.A.B, a glass structure in a park area of the Square des Batignolles in 17e, Paris. I decided that the glass allowed me to make a work that could be observed from both inside and outside of the K.A.B structure. The images I used were from a work titled *The Running Man (2019)* and show me in a series of photographs running across a landmark landscape in Iceland from both left to right and then also from right to left. In Le K.A.B structure, I placed these in series so that from the outside I was running in one direction, and on the inside, I was running in the other direction. This effectively turned the circular structure of Le K.A.B into a zoopraxiscope, an apparatus pioneered by Eadweard Muybridge around 1879 to display images with the illusion of movement. A zoopraxiscope is designed to spin on a central axis, with a sequence of images observed through a single slit from a fixed standpoint. In *Zoopraxiscope: from In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland 2018)*, the observer is instead required to walk or run around the circular architectural structure of the K.A.B, and thus to embody the zoopraxiscope through motion. This state of observation worked inside and outside of the building, since the direction of the runner was mirrored by the direction that the viewer used to circulate the work.

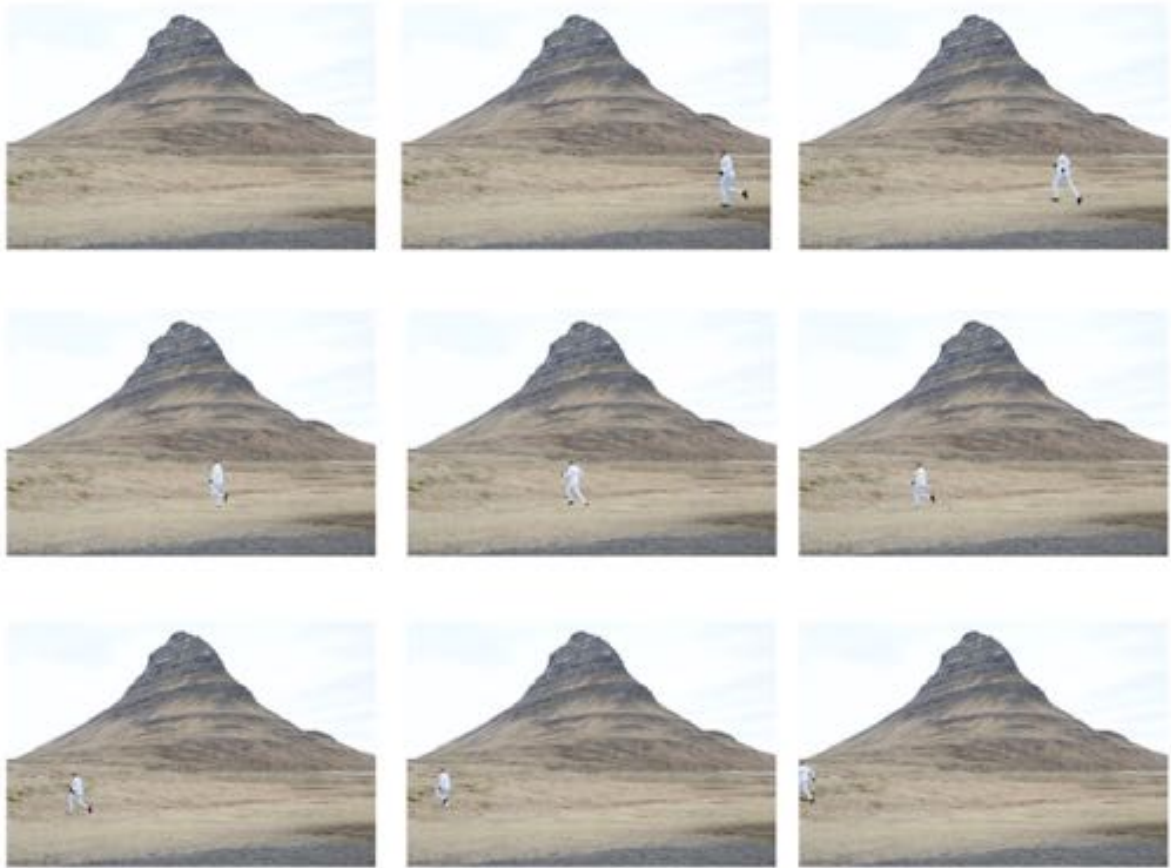
Instead of observing motion through a single slit while remaining static, the observer is required to become dynamic and embody the motion of the zoopraxiscope. The structure remains static, while the observer becomes the slit in-motion moving in the same direction as *The Running Man (2018)*, as an event of photo-dynamism that is both a performance and a spectacle.



From *The Running Man* (2018)

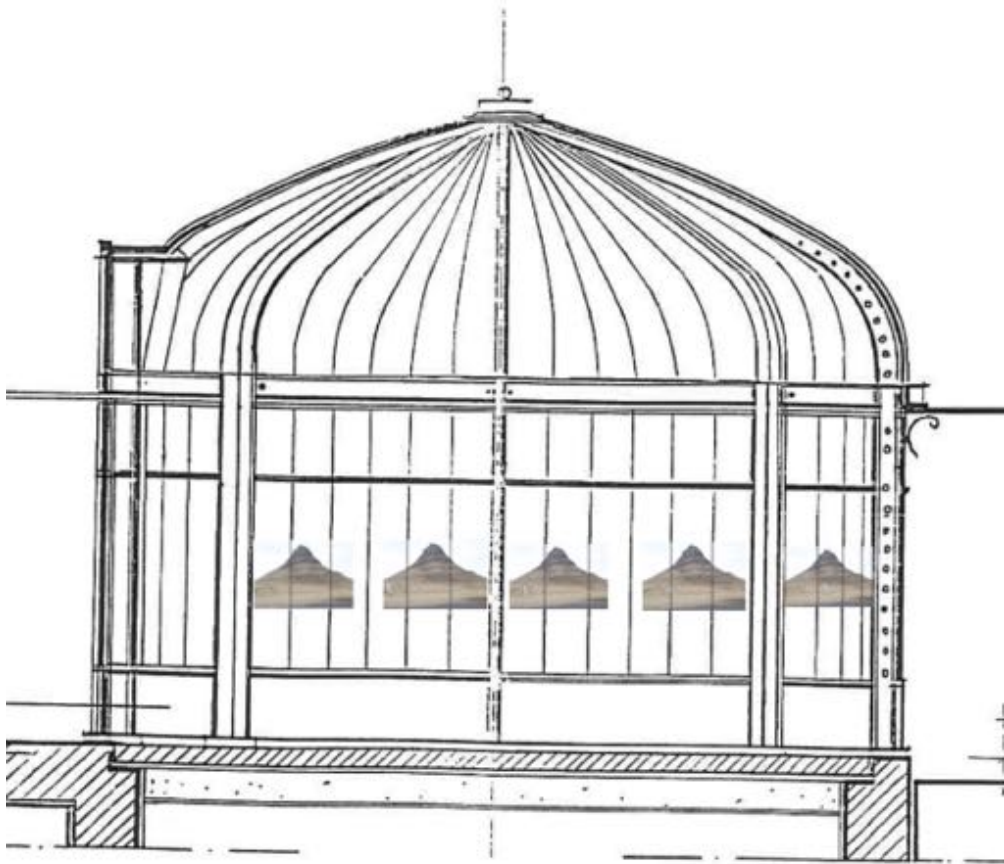


*The Running Man* (2018), Left to Right



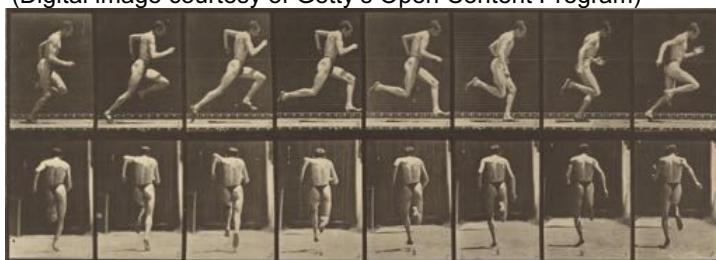
*The Running Man* (2018), Right to Left





Study drawing for *Zoopraxiscope*, from *In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland 2018)*, 2019  
 “*Zoopraxiscope*, from *In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland 2018)*’ shows photographs of Bevan running across the Kirkjufell landscape (Iceland) in one direction on the outside and the other direction in the inside of K.A.B. The work uses the architecture of the K.A.B to reference the zoopraxiscope, an apparatus pioneered by Eadweard Muybridge to display images with the illusion of movement <sup>244</sup>. The work is from an ongoing series titled ‘*In Superposition*’, bringing together photography and performance with quantum theory ideas on observation and states of in/visibility, recently shown in London, Paris, Reykjavik, Jakobstad (Finland) and Palermo.” (Bevan, 2019)

<sup>244</sup> For example, *Sixteen Views of a Man Sprinting*, Eadweard Muybridge, from *Animal Locomotion (1887)* (Digital image courtesy of Getty’s Open Content Program)



Installation set-up







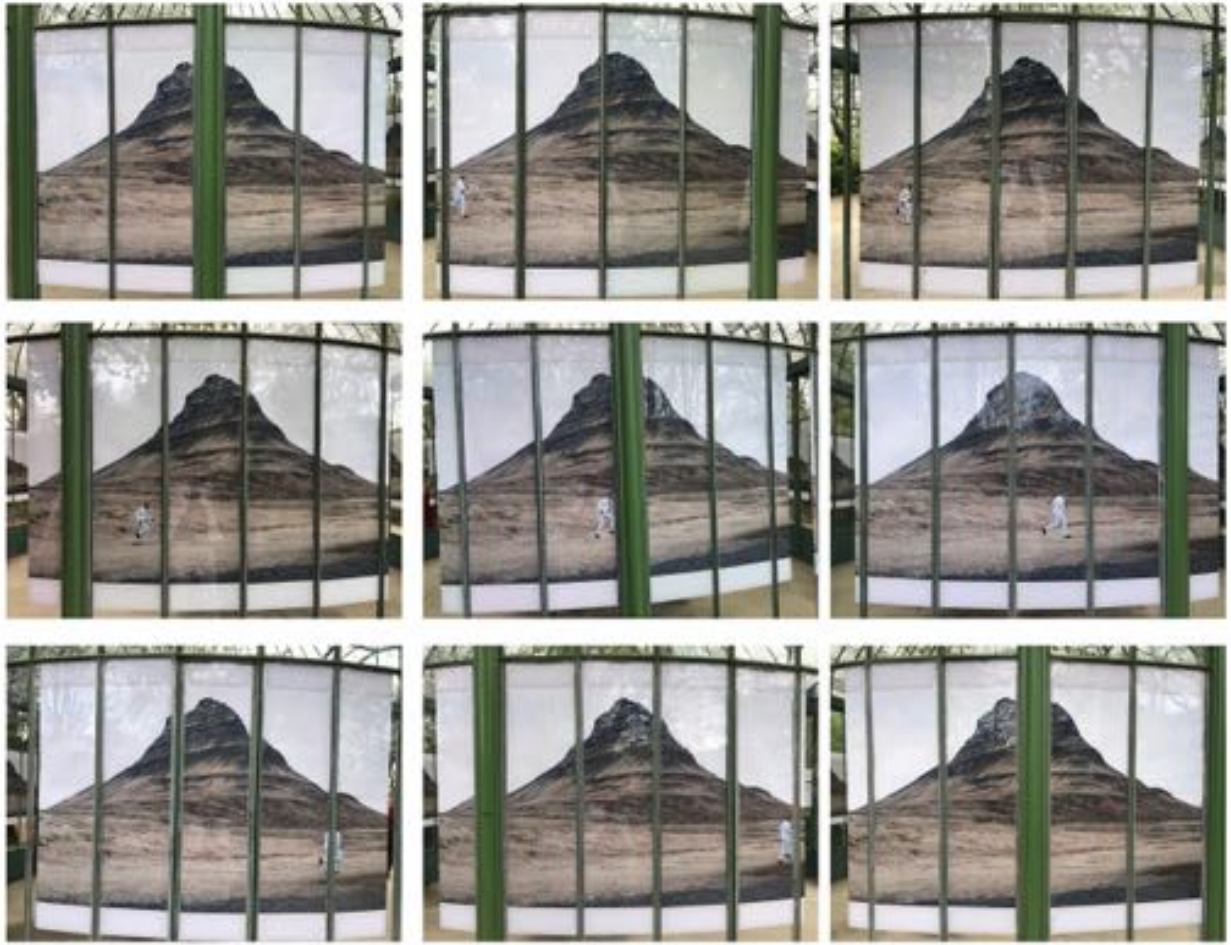




Installation image, from the inside



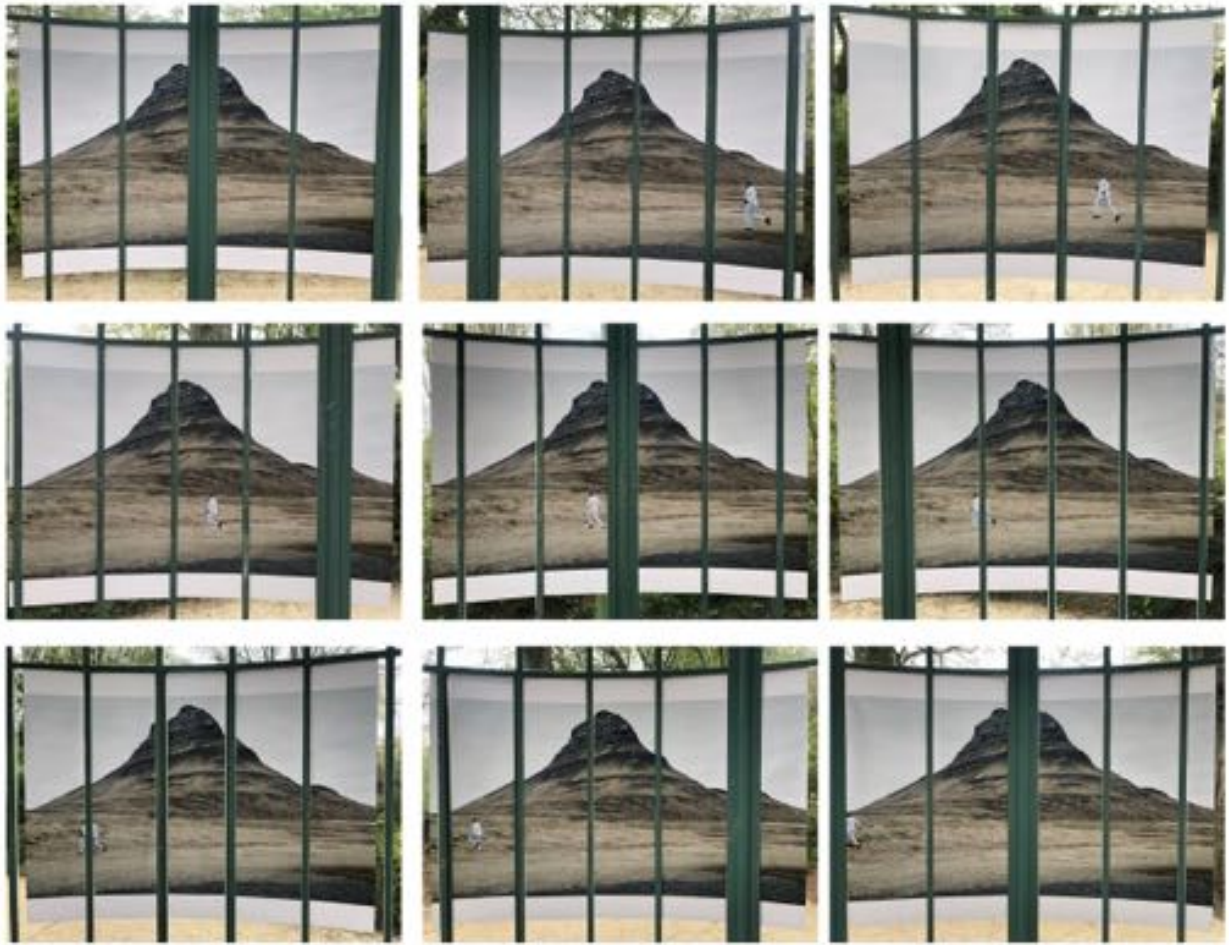
Opening reception with the Mairie, 17e Paris, 4 April 2019. As with Iteration 3, I am dressed in exactly the same outfit that I am wearing in the work



*Zoopraxiscope, from In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland 2018), Paris, 2019, outside sequence* <sup>245</sup>



245



*Zoopraxiscope, from In Superposition: Ice and land (Iceland 2018), Paris, 2019, inside sequence* <sup>246</sup>

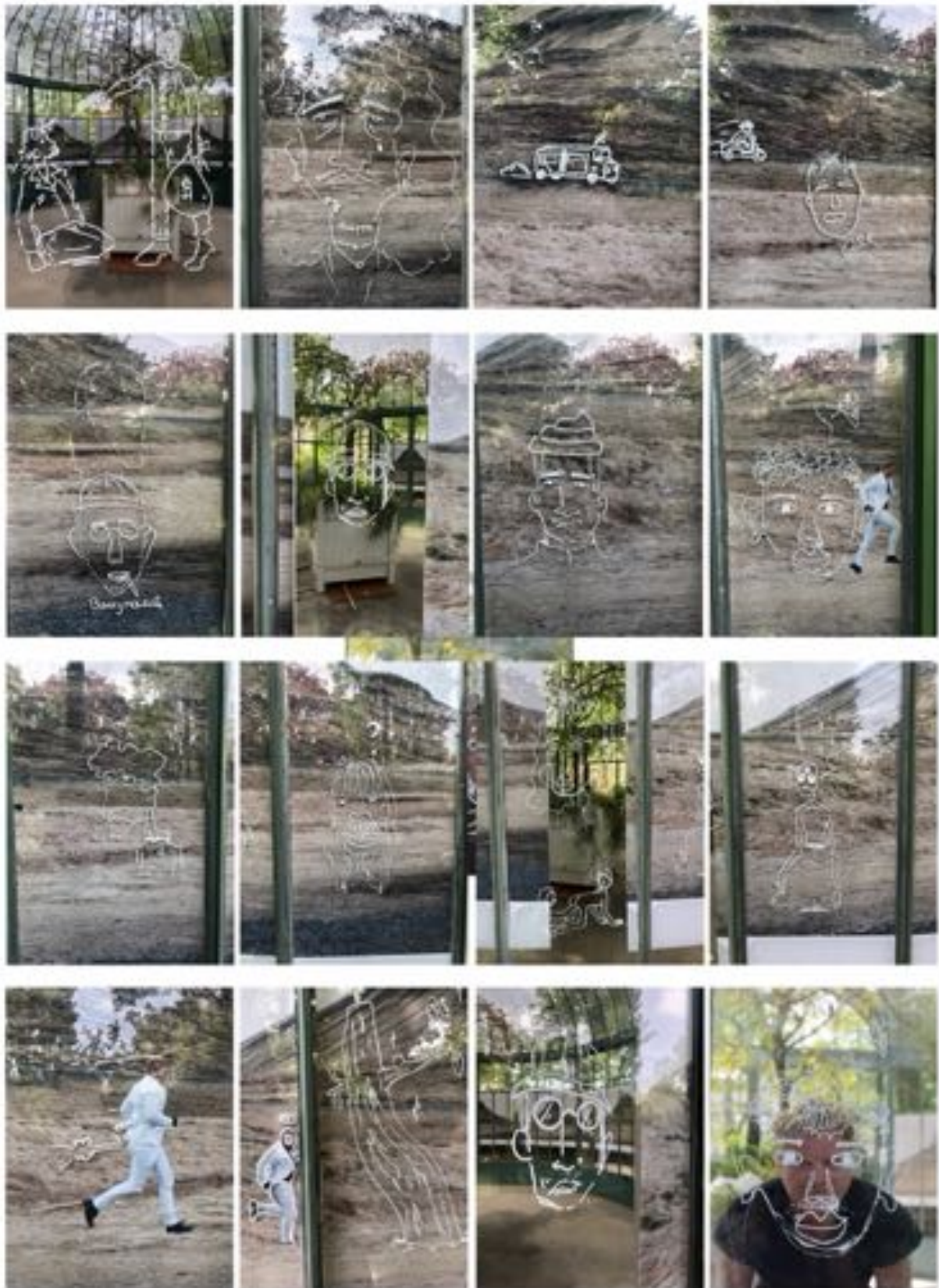


246





Drawings found on top of the photographs, and left on the glass at exhibition take-down



More drawings found on top of the photographs, and left on the glass at exhibition take-down

Once the work was removed, the drawings remained in place, but as interventions that were now separated from the trigger event that caused their effect. Out of the gap between presence and absence a new event of was created that is similar to the concept of the photographic strips hanging in space, but without the architectural substrate of the building.<sup>247</sup>



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<sup>247</sup> As planned for *Iteration 8*

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

There are many conclusions to be had from this study, some of which remain rightly open and ongoing. The core findings of a theoretical context for the superposition in relation to photography in general, and on photography specifically in relation to performance, offer a new paradigmatic contribution to knowledge in this field. In a general sense, it is possible to suggest that there is a certain use of photography that is intended to collapse superpositions, and there is a certain use of photography that is intended to construct superpositions. In the former use, photography might be deployed as a means of recording data or presenting a certain document or even what might still be considered as documentary photography. In the latter, photographs might be intended to be ambiguous and less objective.<sup>248</sup> With this, come terms that are common to both quantum physics and photography, and that are usefully applied in each case: including observation, measurement, systems, apparatus, and detection. On this basis, the theoretical framework of superposition can be seen as transferable in instances where some or all of these terms would apply. Equally, the categories of Chapter 2 Photography and Performance: A Contextual Review are transferable to other occasions where there is a spectacle and an audience. Certainly Category 1 Photography and Performance: *Passive Witness* would be applicable to watching a film-screening or attending a theatrical production in a conventional sense for example, and Category 2 Photography and Performance: *Active Audience or Witness* taking this to a more interactive or dialectic model. Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography Performed or Meta-Photography* is specific to (the site of) photography and therefore less transferable, although other media have their own meta- moments; paintings about painting or theatre about theatre for example, collapse their own idiosyncratic superpositions.<sup>249 250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> This notion fits well within the discourse of dual assertions on photography discussed earlier in the Introduction, footnote 7, and On Paradox, Chapter 3, and the notion of a photography that collapses superpositions might be considered alongside Szarkowski's definition of *window*, and those that construct superpositions with *mirror* (Szarkowski, 1978) for example— it is worth noting that as with Szarkowski's axis, there would also be an axis in this case (that there are conceivable positions in between collapse and construct, so to speak)

<sup>249</sup> It seems relevant too, on the definition and new currency of the term meta- that Mark Zuckerberg CEO of Facebook announced a rebranding of his company as *Meta* in October 2021, describing a meta-verse as a more expansive version of Facebook, which is arguably a self-observing and vanity (social) medium. Interesting too is the new logo that resembles the shape 8 (or  $\infty$ ) in *Iteration 8*

<sup>250</sup> The theory of superposition can also be applied to *the media* (as in mass communication) as a seemingly constant method (/circus) for collapsing superpositions; where people are/ where they say they are, what they are doing/ what they say they are doing is an ongoing process of unfolding discoveries and truths/ lies in everyday current affairs and events that everyday people are not normally privy or witness to (other than through the media). The notion of a meta-media might be conceived when one form of mass media cross-references and ricochets against others in an echo-chamber of perpetuating and entangled narratives of truths and untruths that seem impossible to tell apart – perhaps in a meta-verse, or in what Guy Debord titled *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967)

Quantum thinking in relation to the theoretical framework of superposition is specific to photography: *superposition offers up a new paradigm for photography to characterise or embody quantum theory in a manner unlike other comparable forms or materials of representation.*<sup>251 252</sup>

On photography and performance, the seminal pivotal point occurs when photography shifts from being a measurement of performance, to performance being a measurement of photography. In the end, this difference might be thought of as photography-based performance and performance-based photography. While this might be regarded as a shift in (discipline) emphasis where the point of the work is either based in the realms of performance or photography, the superposition of the disciplines can be thought of as an entanglement. This realisation may be the most significant outcome. On entanglement, Al-Khalili writes:

*If two quantum particles interact with each other they can become correlated in the sense that their fates will be intertwined for ever, however far apart they get- until that is, one of them interacts with a measuring devise. The way this manifests itself mathematically is that they would be described by just one unified wavefunction that contains the combined and shared information about both their quantum states. Now it is possible for one of the particles to be put into superposition, for instance if it encounters a double slit. If this happens, the second particle will also be forced into a superposition of different states that depend on (or, more technically, are correlated with) each of the two alternatives of the first particle. The wavefunction is now said to describe an 'entangled state'.*

(Al-Khalili, 2012: 84)

Think here of the 'two quantum particles' as photography and performance. Think of the 'measuring devise' as a 'dissemination context that reaches an attendant audience'. Think of the 'unified wavefunction' as 'the photograph'. It is possible for either the photographic element or the performative element to be 'put into superposition', for instance when it encounters a 'double slit'. Here, think of the 'double slit as 'some kind of moment or apparatus that sends one of the elements into a superposition', in the way that the double slit experiment does. In the case of the photography and performance

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<sup>251</sup> As stated in the Abstract

<sup>252</sup> See Calum Colvin's observation as to why he has "never been attracted to film-making" (footnote 115)

dynamic, this might be a 'critical intervention or context' that puts one of the elements in oscillation or flux. This affects the status of the other part(-icle), that similarly begins to oscillate according to the parameter(s) of its first counterpart(-icle). For example, take *Leap into the Void*, Yves Klein, 1960. As discussed earlier, Klein is photographed in a gravity defying leap from a window ledge above an empty street (apart from the cyclist passing through the scene in the background). As soon as we come to know that the bottom part of the image is a section that was replaced, literally double slitting the photographic print, the photograph is put into (another) superposition.<sup>253</sup> It both is and is not a reality of the performance, at the same time. The performed leap into the void is therefore also put into superposition, as the second part(-icle). According to one part of the photograph, Klein leapt into the void. According to the other, he did not – or at least was not in the air when that part of the picture was taken.<sup>254</sup> The wavefunction [photograph] is now said to describe an 'entangled state' (ibid).<sup>255</sup> So, if photography and performance interact with each other they can become correlated in the sense that their fates will be intertwined for ever, however far apart they get- until that is, one of them interacts with a dissemination context that reaches an attendant audience. The way this manifests itself mathematically is that they would be described by just one unified photograph that contains the combined and shared information about both their quantum states. Now it is possible for one of the part(-icles) to be put into superposition, for instance if it encounters a critical intervention or context that puts one of the elements in oscillation or flux. If this happens, the second part(-icle) will also be forced into a superposition of different states that depend on (or, more technically, are correlated with) each of the two alternatives of the first part(-icle). The photograph is now said to describe an entangled state.

The entangled status of photography and performance, and their intertwined fates in this context, with the possibility that one part(-icle) 'can be put into superposition', might be the most appropriate description and offer up a conclusive model with which to consider all aspects from this study.

In theory, this approach seems (conceivably) plausible, perhaps whenever it is possible to put one or other part in superposition (and this may not always be possible or appropriate). Ultimately, it might come down to what are the triggers that can do this, and whether indeed this comes back to the initial

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<sup>253</sup> Klein is already in superposition – as discussed earlier

<sup>254</sup> but was in a void

<sup>255</sup> Which may be precisely Klein's discourse

inability to separate out the particles from the whole. We already know that Barthes' attempt to pull his mother from the winter garden, only sent her further into a state of superposition, and Barthes himself collapsed in front of a dissected image. Perhaps this shows that at the limit, the criteria is always outside of or beyond the image itself and emerges only in and through our interaction(s) with it in both a physical and metaphysical way, sometimes as maker and observer and sometimes only as observer.<sup>256</sup> As a final case study/ proposition, there are (conceivable) plausible reasons to consider the image that came to be known as *The Falling Man* (2001), taken by Associated Press photographer Richard Drew. The image was taken as part of a sequence of images in the epic and chaotic event of 9/11 when so called 'jumpers' leapt out of the smashed windows of the burning Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001. Initially published with the reports the following day, the image was quickly withdrawn among other similar pictures of falling bodies after the initial sensationalist fog lifted. No one knew the identities of the jumpers, and besides, these images were clearly taken of people living out their final seconds of life. The jumper is literally falling to a brutal death, in the last moment of life; a micro version of the image that shows the aeroplane still fully intact with living souls on board, a split second before tower impact. Like Barthes' observation in *Camera Lucida* of Alexander Gardner's *Portrait of Lewis Payne* (1865) on death-row "he is dead and he is going to die..." (Barthes, 1981: 95); they are dead, and they are going to die. These images have a poignancy beyond the void of Yves Klein's leap. There are no (erased) gang of men holding a safety net ready to catch the man in the street below, and no oblivious cyclist in the background of the image.<sup>257</sup> Yet, these images (conceivably) connect. Although the identity of the falling man may now be known, for a long time it was not.<sup>258</sup> There was much speculation about who he is and what his job was, based on his apparent stature and dress, his boots, black trousers, white shirt with yellow under vest, all used as attempts to identify him. For a time, he was in a superposition of a number of conceivable identities, photographed in a state of superposition of life and death, with the image itself placed under a legal and ethical superposition of enforced invisibility.

The single image that emerged from the series was different from the others. The pose of the man in this photograph is comparatively more composed than all the others that show a more chaotic and

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<sup>256</sup> Death of the author

<sup>257</sup> It might be possible to suggest that society was oblivious in the run up to this catastrophic event beyond which there is no return

<sup>258</sup> The possible identity of the falling man is Jonathan Briley, a 43-year-old sound engineer who worked at *Windows on the World* restaurant

flailing figure in free-fall. In this image, there is a palatable aesthetic that gives it a pictorial edge and affords a momentary suspension from the disbelief of the most gruesome event. In this decisive moment, the man is almost in control, as he is in the air and standing out from the rigid backdrop of the building. The structure of the building makes for repeated lines of dark and light stripes across the entire background of the image. These resemble the interference pattern of the double slit experiment that articulates the state of superposition in a coexistence of waves and particles. The falling man is the particle detected against the wave of interference at a point of no return.<sup>259</sup> His figure is immortalised forever in the state of superposition in a moment of suspended isolation.<sup>260</sup> In the picture of this moment, the falling man is both dead and alive. *The Falling Man* is conceivably both the double-slit experiment, and the thought experiment that is *Schrodinger's Cat*. Another version of the human condition of the state of superposition can be found in the tragedy of this image.<sup>261</sup>

See footnote 242, and a statement on an existing pre-occupation with the event of 9/11 in footnote 164



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<sup>259</sup> Pavel Büchler talks about how the inception of photography drew a point of no return in *Ghost Stories, Stray Thoughts on Photography and Film* (1999)

<sup>260</sup> He is the man in the Daguerre's *Boulevard de Temple* (1839), who also has a similar pose (and is dead)

<sup>261</sup> Refer to an image from *The Running Man* (2018) – there is a similar pose; compare 'screen-grab' from documentary on *The Falling Man*, and inverted image from *The Running Man* below



*Iteration 8: Photographic Practice and the Status of Superposition: Image, Observation, Event.* Fashion Space Gallery, London, December 2, 2021– January 30, 2022



Wall detail from *Double-Slit Experiment* (2017/2021)  
with view of section from *The Running Man/ The Falling Man: The Human Condition* (2021) from  
*Zoopraxiscope*, from *In Superposition: Ice and land* (Iceland, 2018), Paris (2019)

The detail shown above is seen in the slit between the works of *Double-Slit Experiment* (2017/2021)

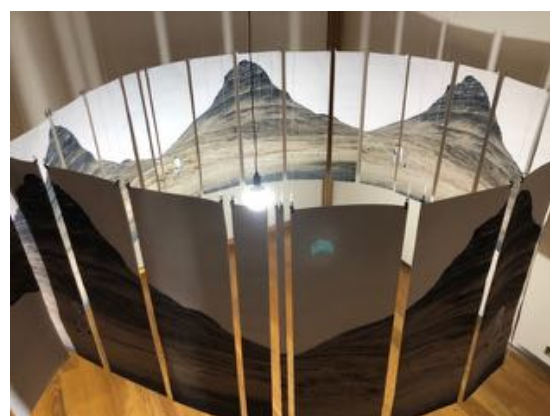
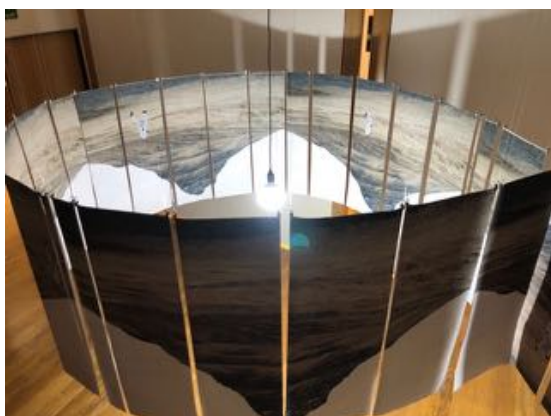


*Double-Slit Experiment* (2017/2021)

On the other side of the wall is *The Running Man/ The Falling Man: The Human Condition* (2021)  
From *Zoopraxiscope*, from *In Superposition: Ice and land* (Iceland, 2018), Paris (2019)



*The Running Man/ The Falling Man: The Human Condition* (2021) is seen through the gap of the *Double-Slit Experiment* (2017/2021) illustrated by the red arrow above. This is a (inevitable/ imperative) PhD moment, bringing together all conceivable superpositions in-status and in-collapse. <sup>262</sup>



falling | running

<sup>262</sup> *Schrödinger's Cat with the Double-Slit Experiment*



*The Running Man/ The Falling Man: The Human Condition* (2021)  
From *Zoopraxiscope*, from *In Superposition: Ice and land* (Iceland, 2018), Paris (2019)

Installation images showing the intended interference pattern on the walls of light and dark bands

*Iteration 8: Photographic Practice and the Status of Superposition: Image, Observation, Event*

is the eighth and final iteration of the PhD. It is a culmination of works to conclude the study as a new and final iteration on the status of superposition, constructed (in-status) and collapsed (in-collapse) around the notion of the human condition in the work and in the real time experience of (being with) the works.<sup>263</sup> Thus, as a necessary and inevitable imperative, Iteration 8 bringing together the conceivable parts of the iterations that have gone before, into this new and final status of superposition: image, observation, event. As part of this conclusion, a performed reading of the thesis is presented as a single-take 4°40'30" video recording/ performance *PhD Reading* (2021); here, the artist is present.<sup>264</sup>



*PhD Reading*, 4°40'30" video (2021)

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<sup>263</sup> Ref. footnote 166 – that the observer/ viewer is also 'in', so to speak

<sup>264</sup> Without the footnotes



"I did it," Paul Bevan.

The END.

## Glossary of Terms

### *The Double-Slit Experiment*

The *Double-Slit Experiment* was first performed by Thomas Young in 1801, and then subsequently by Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg between 1925 and 1927 amongst others, during a time that became known as the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum mechanics. The *Double-Slit Experiment* is an important articulation of a superposition, since it appears to suggest that particles can have a simultaneous wave function. In this experiment, when light is projected at two slits, a particular light pattern can be seen on the screen on the other side of the double slits. The light pattern comprises of alternate light and dark stripes; this effectively is an interference pattern.

### The Human Condition

The human condition is essentially a matter of life and death, and all conceivable positions in between. A particular definition of the human condition is taken from Rene Magritte's two paintings entitled *The Human Condition* (1933 and 1935), in which he seems to be describing exactly the status of superposition. This supports my assertion that the superposition can be seen as a human condition as concluded, and shown in part of *Iteration 8*, where *The Running Man/ The Falling Man: The Human Condition* (2021) presents a superposition of running and falling, as life and death, in a conceptual model of *Schrödinger's Cat*.

### Interference Pattern

Interference patterns are made when waves collide, so an interference pattern indicates the presence of waves. In this study, this is specifically in relation to the superposition behaviour of light in the *Double-Slit Experiment* for example, but the connection to water is also made in the work *Waves and Particles* (2017). In the interference pattern of high and low, of light and dark, the concept of probability emerges is the indication or the differential of a higher probability and a lower probability. In the case of the interference pattern, this is seen in the difference between brightness (as higher probability) and darkness (as lower probability). Thus, the interference pattern provides a measurement of probability, as well as the indication that particles have a wave nature.

Other forms of interference are referenced, for example the *Gerry Schum Television Interference Project* (1969); the band of white to dark in *Camera Recording Its Own Condition*, John Hilliard (1971); the bands in the background structure of *The Falling Man*, Richard Drew (2001); and the interference with the patterns of normal life caused by Covid-19 particles.

## Iteration

Iteration is used to describe the disseminated practice-based elements that progress through the PhD study (2014-2021). There are intended cycles of repetition in the processes and even in the use of material works, in order to generate a sequence of meaningful outcomes. Each iteration is an identifiable progression of the thesis, throughout which the framework of superposition is developed as a continuously iterated initiative. Each iteration leads to the next in some way, taking forward new findings or outcomes that have been made, observed, or performed. The overall series of iterations (1-8) comprise the practice-based components of the PhD, and embody the thesis.

## Meta-Photography

A photographic self-observation or self-reflexivity, where photography itself as matter or process is the purpose of a performed event in observation, can be thought of as meta-photography. In practice, being self-reflexive or self-observing is the lived-experience of at least the (meta-)event, if not of a wider existence or autoethnography of the artist or the character of photography. Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography is Performed or Meta-Photography* develops a relationship where photography itself is intrinsic to the performance, and the photographic outcome is the performance of photography itself. This can be considered as photography performed or meta-photography. The (gesture of) photography is central to what is observed as the image of a photographic event that is in-photo – see the various *Studies in Meta-Photography* (2014-2021).

## Non-photography (or non-standard photography)

Non-photography is not a negation of photography. Non-photography is a term that describes a photography that uses photographic material and apparatus to produce an outcome that is not for an ordinary or standard photographic purpose or function. Laruelle adds the word *standard* to the term *non-philosophy* as *non-standard philosophy* (*Philosophie Non-Standard*, 2010), and since non-

philosophy is seen as non-photography "*in another name*" (Mullarkey, 2012:145), the same addition here is useful: *non-standard photography*. A non-standard photography might be thought of as a practice of photography that operates outside of a 'standard' photographic aesthetic or representational framework and one that equally demands a non-standard reception, escaping *ordinary observations* (Elkins, 2011: 124). This non-standard mode of thinking aligns with quantum physics.

Here, Category 3 Photography and Performance: *Photography is Performed or Meta-Photography* is the category fit for non-photography and the *Studies in Meta-Photography* (2014-2021) are visually defining.

## Performance

Performance here is situated within an art-based context, rather than in the theatre. Although in the context of theatre, performance still has an audience, it is less likely to extend beyond the audience as passive witness (of *Category 1 Photography and Performance: Passive Witness*), in the manner that performance as art does (for example Body Art as performance). The relationship that performance has with photography (for camera) and as photography (meta-photography) is of particular relevance and focus for this study. Performance in this way also interplays with the term *event*.

## Quantum Physics and Quantum Mechanics

Quantum Physics and Quantum Mechanics are taken as terms of reference to the sub-atomic world that is not visible without systems, devices or experiments that indicate the presence, properties and behaviour of matter at this level. It is precisely this invisibility that connects with photography as matter and process, at a granular, optical and phenomenological state, as well as ontological and behavioural in terms of experimentation and human intervention.

## *Schrödinger's Cat*

Erwin Schrödinger (1887-1961) an Austrian Physicist, introduces this "cat paradox" thought experiment in 1935. His point was to attempt to bring considerations about the state of a quantum system from the microscopic domain into the macroscopic level of objects, and cats. His thought experiment places a living cat into a sealed box with a vial of uranium. Inside the box with the cat and the vial, there is trigger mechanism that can cause the vial to break open and for the radioactive material to leak. The leak of radioactive material would kill the cat. The thought experiment is designed to consider the



consequences of the hypothesis. In classical physics and without the need to observe the status of the cat in the box, it is reasonable to suggest there is an even probability that the cat is either alive or it is dead. According to quantum thinking, and in the absence of observation, the cat is in the status of the superposition of being both dead *and* alive.<sup>265</sup>

## Superposition

Superposition is a term used to describe the status of matter in all its conceivable positions at once, when the actual position is not (yet) known or visible as well as in the physical realm: such as where objects are placed in relation to each other. At a quantum level, invisible matter is described in states of superposition in the absence of any system or device for existential measurement or observation. Upon an act of detection, the status of superposition is said to collapse as the position or state of matter becomes measured or observed; the multi-status of the superposition collapses into a single or defined position or state. As a notion that describes the status of matter in all its conceivable positions or states prior to an act of determination (observation, detection or measurement), superposition is a term for the consideration of photographic practice in its exploration of light, matter, the relation of objects in time and space, and human interventions. This study takes a creative interpretation of the superposition as a status (in-status) and in a collapse (in-collapse), and how photography is a means for (ongoing) collapsing and constructing superpositions. The status of superposition is more complex and multiplex than the terms of simultaneous co-existence or co-dependence, although these can be seen as subtexts of superposition (and indeed photography).

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<sup>265</sup> As an aside, and by way of extension/ triangulation of the 'non-'provocations of François Laruelle, in the development of a non-theology in *Future Christ* (2010), Laruelle writes of "*the superposition of the two rivers, of life and of death.*" (Laruelle, 2010: 110)

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Introduction: Photography Research Exposed to the Parergonal Phenomenon of "Photographic Powers", MIKA ELO page 8 - Photographic Powers, Helsinki Photomedia 2014.

Annex Section\_1: Instagram Posts



**PBEVAN Posts**

Liked by frankbevan and 124 others

**pbevan** As I listen to the reports about the efficacy of the three emerging Covid vaccines, I draw a parallel with the emergence of three photographs in the late 1830s as 1. Daguerre; 2. Bayard & 3. Fox Talbot each independently pioneered a version of technical picture making, and each one a different paradigm (a difference still relevant to a discourse on photography today). And like photography, I wonder which of the three vaccines will ultimately become the most accessible and widely available to the people - following similar acts of approval, reproducibility and democratisation

Edited · 30w


**photoagular** Well Fox Talbot was the most accessible to the public. Does that mean you think the Oxford(Astrazeneca will prevail? It's cheaper and doesn't require the complicated refrigeration so it's easier to transport and administer. Interesting

20w · 1 like · Reply

Reply to photoagular...

**le\_jardinier\_de\_la\_plage** Pasteur is the name around Vaccine but no one remember Antoine Béchamp !!! One got sponsor by big Pharma. Good look for everyone !!! Remember \* Claire Séverac \*\*

Add a comment as pbevan...



**PBEVAN Posts**

Liked by valeria.cerchi and 125 others

**pbevan** As I listen to the reports about the efficacy of the three emerging Covid vaccines, I draw a parallel with the emergence of three photographs in... more

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**le\_jardinier\_de\_la\_plage** Pasteur is the name around Vaccine but no one remember Antoine Béchamp !!! One got sponsor by big Pharma. Good look for everyone !!! Remember \* Claire Séverac \*\*

**photoagular** Well Fox Talbot was the most accessible to the public. Does that mean you think the Oxford(Astrazeneca will prevail? It's

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**pbevan** As I listen to the reports about the efficacy of the three emerging Covid vaccines, I draw a parallel with the emergence of three photographs in the late 1830s as 1. Daguerre; 2. Bayard & 3. Fox Talbot each independently pioneered a version of technical picture making, and each one a different paradigm (a difference still relevant to a discourse on photography today). And like photography, I wonder which of the three vaccines will ultimately become the most accessible and widely available to the people - following similar acts of approval, reproducibility and democratisation

Instagram post, 23 November 2020



**pbevan**  
London, United Kingdom



Liked by frankbevan and 65 others

**pbevan** #SchrogindersCat or #WhiteElephant ?  
#NewhamTemporaryMorgue  
#Superposition and Covid-19 (23.03.20)

The world enters a new order as we face an 'invisible enemy' and an 'invisible killer' (Trump, 2020; Johnson, 2020) in the form of a virus known as #Covid-19. Not for the last 100 years has the invisible had such massive impact on everyday life, bringing a global health pandemic and economic and social uncertainty. We collectively embody Schrodinger's Cat, as a thought experiment that articulated (and ridiculed) the state of superposition of an invisible (hidden) body that is simultaneously dead and alive. Notionally and in reality, we are similarly at once alive and dead hiding in a 'social distance', awaiting the (self-) observation to collapse a state of unprecedented individual and mass superposition. Although even with the symptoms of Covid-19, without a test the fate of the body is

sealed further into the state of superposition on the mandate of hidden 'self-isolation', both with and without the virus. Similarly, until the act of observation to determine the precise animation of Schrodinger's Cat, it remains thus: #InSuperposition Covid-19 is itself also in the state of superposition. The virus seemingly exists at a quantum level, invisible and omnipresent in all conceivable places at once, collapsing only in the manifestation of illness or antibody detection. Such measures are the observation of behaviour or affect, rather than the thing itself. We do not see the virus. Similar to the superposition shown in the Double Slit Experiment, where an interference pattern of projected light and dark on a screen is seen when two slits are bombarded with (light) photons. The pattern indicates the presence of waves, but the act to see the photon particles and waves is rendered futile. The observation or detection of the particles at the slit position, causes the interference pattern to disappear and the superposition status of wave and particle collapses. We are left baffled. In the dark. It's as if the photons are aware of the act of observation, and their behaviour changes. Back to the virus, this may not bode well.

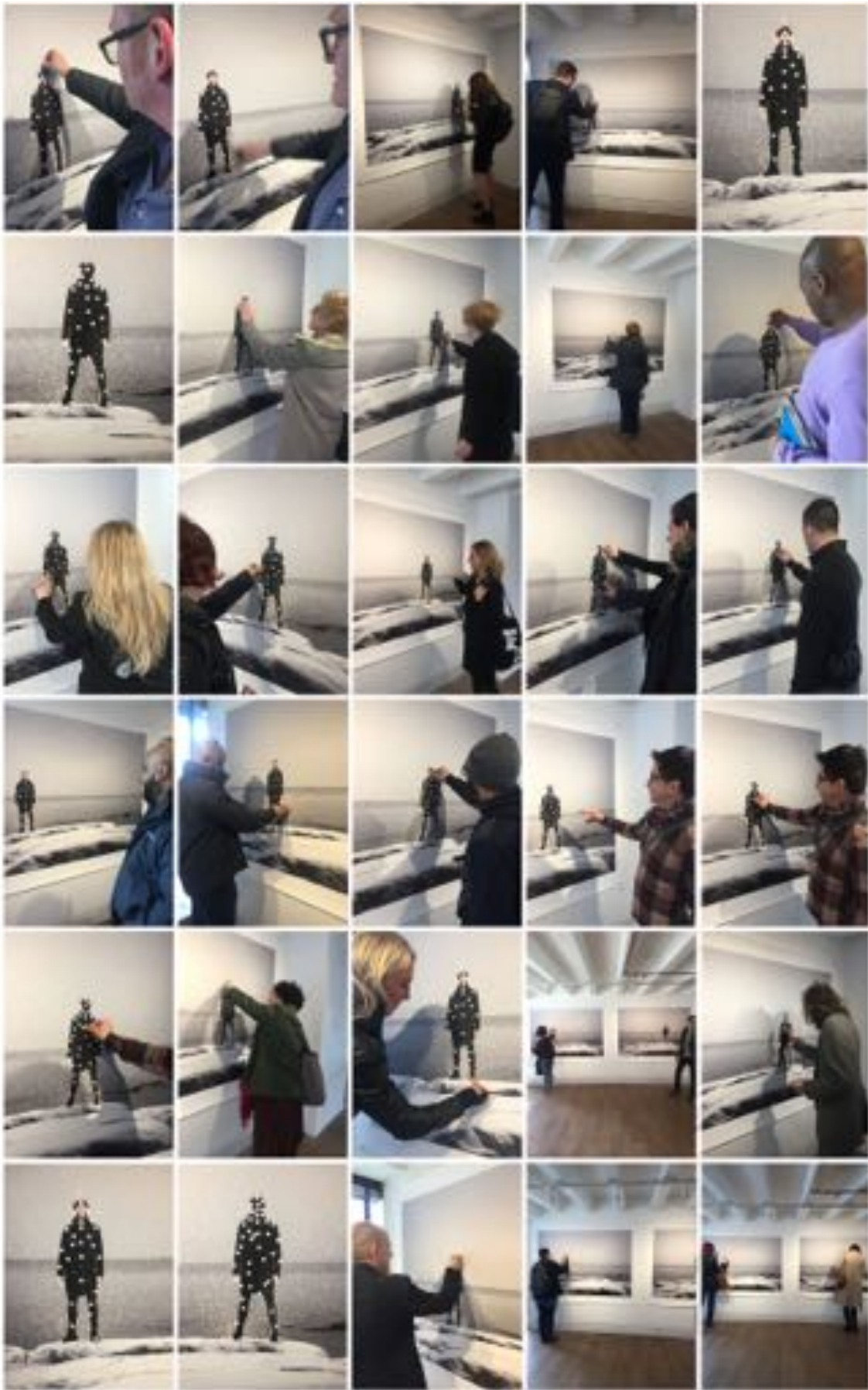
Instagram post, 5 April 2020

**Annex Section\_2:** The Making of *Waves and Particles* (2017)



























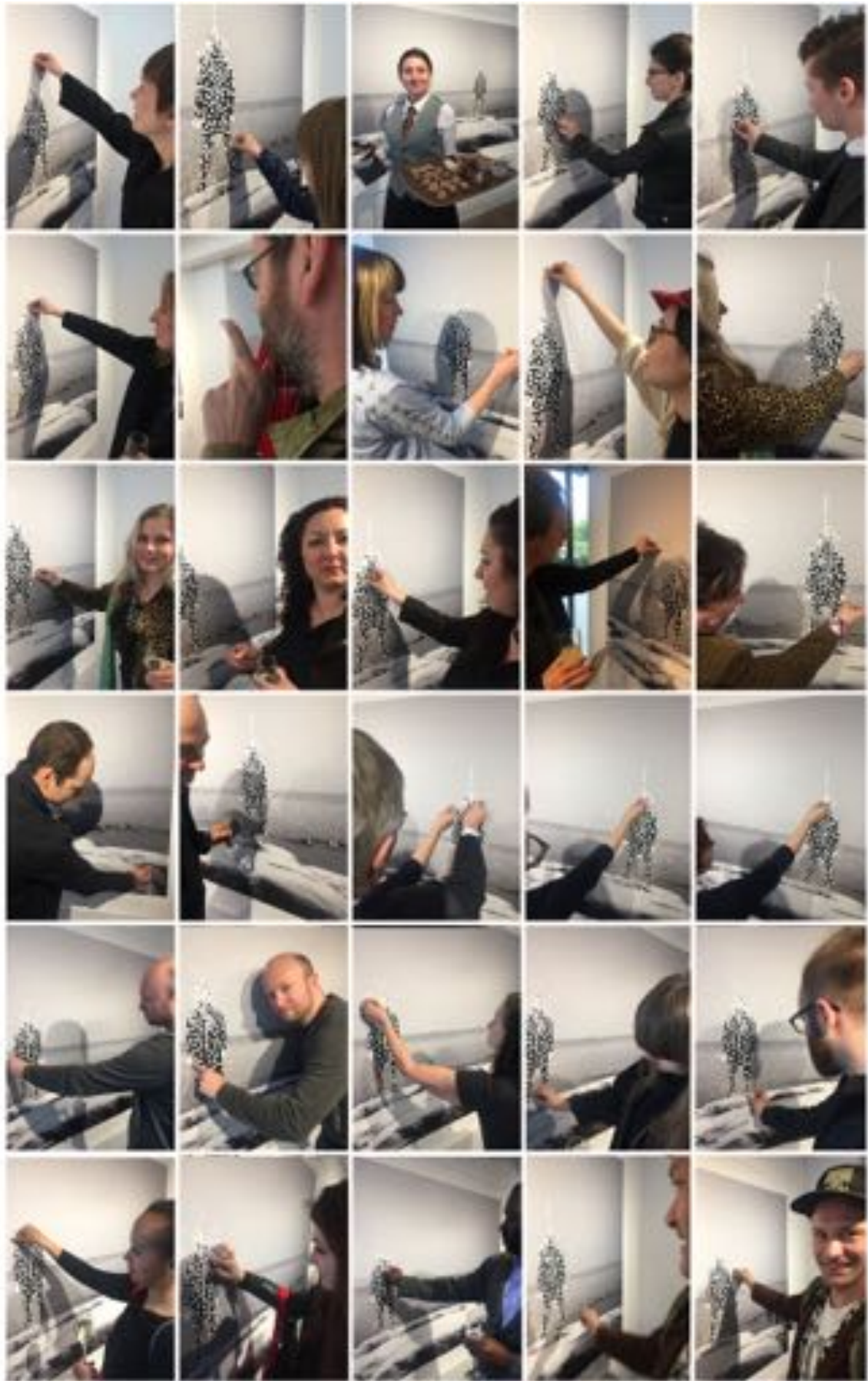






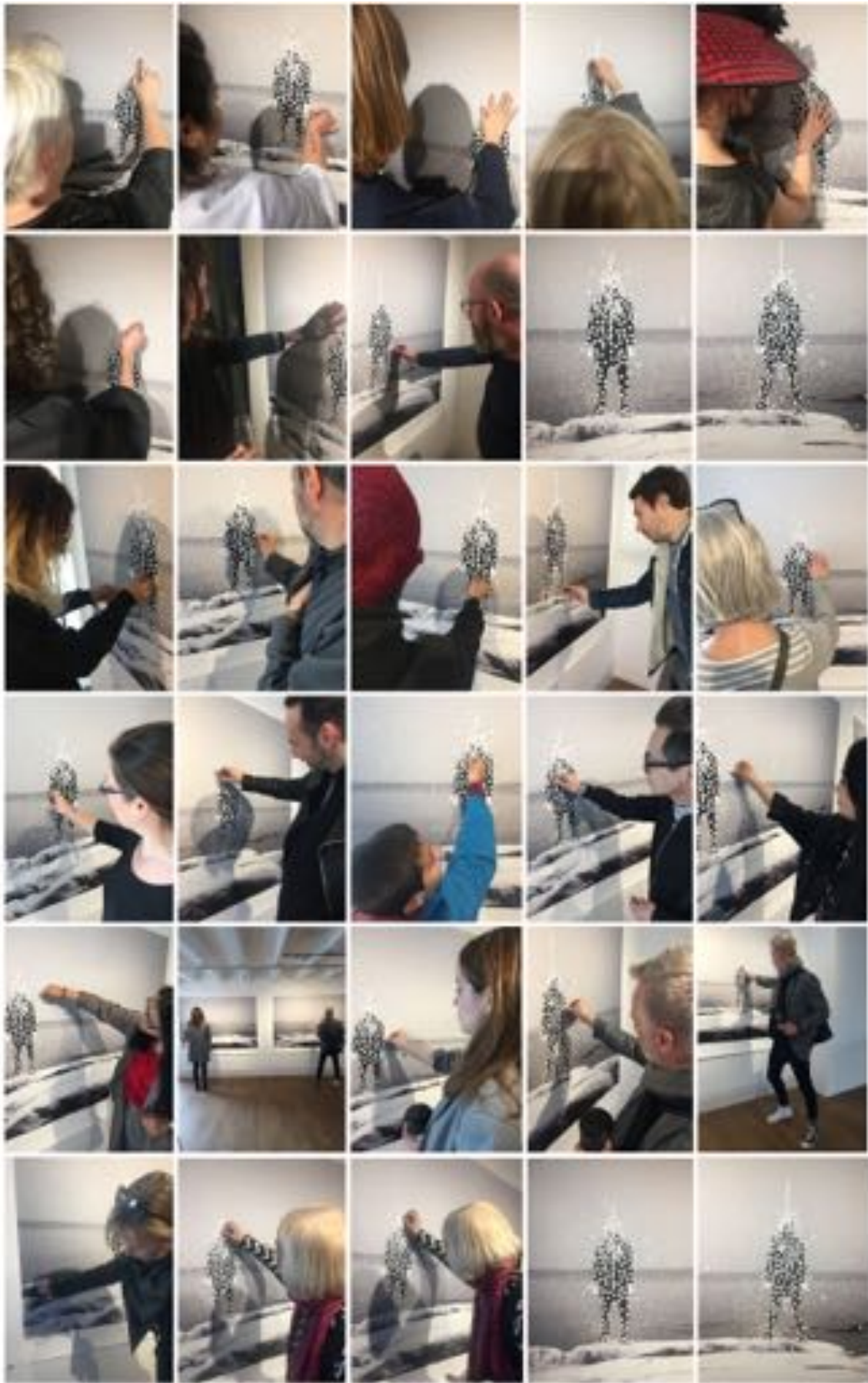






































*Suomenlinna and/or Sveaborg, Helsinki, February 2022*

Photographic Practice and the Status of Superposition: Image, Observation, Event  
A practice-based PhD (2014-2021)

In loving memory of my dear mum (25.04.1939-11.03.2022)



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