

HOMEWORK TASK – first lesson back after the summer holidays!

1) REVIEW A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

- Visit a photographic exhibition in London or your local area.
- Gather information on the photographers and their work who are exhibiting (include descriptions of the images exhibited).
- Take your own photos of the images exhibited in the exhibition (if you're allowed to) or source them on the internet later.
- Then write a review of the exhibition from your perspective (minimum 600 words). This review should include your gathered information and images to illustrate, as well as your opinion.

BELOW ARE 3 EXAMPLES OF REVIEWS, TAKEN FROM 3 DIFFERENT WRITERS PERSPECTIVES SCRUTINISING THE SAME EXHIBITION. READ THESE REVIEWS TO HELP YOU STRUCTURE YOUR OWN WORK.

Reading list for AS Photography

Books:

Bieger-Thielemann (2007) 20th CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHY: Museum Ludwig Cologne Taschen, Cologne. ISBN 978-38228-4083-2

Golden, R (1999) C20th PHOTOGRAPHY Carlton Books Limited, London. ISBN 1-84222-239-2

Phaidon (1997) THE PHOTO BOOK Phaidon Press Limited, London. ISBN 0-7148-3634-6

Also have a look in the Photography section in Waterstones' book store and the school library

Websites:

www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk

www.tate.org.uk

www.iniva.org

www.art2day.co.uk

www.britishmuseum.org

www.artsmia.org

www.walkerart.org

www.getty.edu

www.moma.org

www.metmuseum.org

www.sfmoma.org

www.guggenheim.org

www.artincontext.org

www.photonet.org.uk

www.bfi.org.uk

www.timeout.com

During the first 6 weeks of the AS Photography course you will be investigating photographers who create 'photograms'.

A photogram is a photographic image made without a camera by placing objects directly onto the surface of a light-sensitive material such as photographic paper and then exposing it to light. The usual result is a negative shadow image that shows variations in tone that depends upon the transparency of the objects used. Areas of the paper that have received no light appear white; those exposed through transparent or semi-transparent objects appear grey. The technique is sometimes called cameraless photography.

You will then create your own series of 'photograms', experimenting in the darkroom as well as using Photoshop.

The following photographers create photograms as part of their portfolio of work. Take a look at them to see who may inspire your own ideas.

Liz Murfitt
Man Ray
Laurence Ripsher
Liz Wolfe
Matt Siber
Luigi Veronesi
William Talbot Fox

Dave Eva
Christain Schad
Joanchin Schund
Tom Ang
Jeffrey Woln
David Cross
James Thew

Wendy Mukluk
Lazlo Moholy-Nagy
Henk von Resenbergen
Lorna Simpson
Kelly Gardner
Anna Atkins
Eugene Angel

1) Out of Focus - Photography at the Saatchi Gallery

25 April, 2012 by Tom Jeffreys

Tom Jeffreys picks out the highlights in Saatchi's first major photography exhibition in over a decade.

In a neat bit of timing, cloud-computing service Google Drive is officially unveiled on exactly the same day as the Saatchi Gallery opens its first major photography show in over a decade.



Marlo Pascual "Untitled"



Yumiko Utsu's Octopus Portrait

Going the extra mile

as ever, Google are not just sponsoring the main exhibition, but have also teamed up with the Saatchi Gallery to present the Google Photography Prize, on show at the same time as Out of Focus on the gallery's top floor. What's interesting, and simultaneously both hopeful and depressing, is that some of the works in this section are actually of more interest than those in the main show. There's a number of tentative reasons why this might be – from the vast space of the ground floor galleries, which tend to suit installation and large-scale sculpture, to some curious curatorial decisions that see Katy Grannan's images hung far too low and Noemie Goudal's beguiling works hidden away in a room otherwise dominated by Matt Collishaw's gargantuan (and dreadful) ceramic works.

But the main problem is that vast swathes of the work just aren't very interesting. Grannan's ageing LA boulevardiers are standard Guardian Weekend stuff; David Benjamin Sherry's large-scale landscapes are pleasant enough but little else; Al Steiner wearily bangs the queered porn gong; and Louis Gispert trots out the old fact/fiction dichotomy in works of brash, crass symbolism.

There's lots of (more or less ironically) retro Americana; lots of identity construction; a fair bit of soft-focus nudity; and endless examples of photocollage and the juxtaposition of contrasting images. You'd think a whole room of John Stezaker would be enough, but no – there's also work by a good three or four artists all employing



Mitch Epstein "BP Carson Refinery", California



John Stezakers' "Marriage L"

roughly similar techniques. It's frequently this way with exhibitions at the Saatchi Gallery. But what is also usually true is that hidden among the boring, the predictable and the over-enlarged is some brilliant work. Mitch Epstein's pin-sharp depictions of oil refineries are powerful and intriguing, particularly one that sees a lawn and line of trees approach

the machinery's dusky glare like it's some kind of grand, secluded stately home. There's something subtly enticing about Nicole Wermers' Rococo storerooms full of gilt and mirrors and dusty white busts, whilst Marlo Pascual [pictured above] is the pick of several artists pushing the limits of photography as physical medium. Meanwhile Broomberg and Chanarin introduce a much-needed note of the political, their fist-clenched crowd interestingly similar to that in Ryan McGinley's depiction of a Morrissey concert.

It's good to see some younger names in there too, although it would have been nice to see more from Johnny Briggs (who is represented by just the one darkly sinister piece) and Noemie Goudal. As mentioned, Goudal's work is my personal highlight, but her complex, elaborately constructed images are not shown in their best light here.



Nicole Wermer "Buhuu Suite – Calais 2"



Johnny Briggs "Comfort Object"

To be honest, they've never looked better than when exhibited in a dishevelled old building on the Clerkenwell Road in 2010.



Noemie Goudal "Les amants (Cascade)"

Hoping to follow in the footsteps of Goudal and Briggs are the ten finalists of the Google Photography Prize, who are well served by exhibiting on a smaller scale and in the smaller space on the gallery's third floor. The highlights here are the night-time explorations of Dana Stirling and Sasha Tamarin (both from Israel, interestingly) although Stirling's strong, suggestive compositions edge it for me.



Dana Stirling "Night"

I also really like Zhao Yi's repetitive explorations of the soullessness of the modern academic institution, a lonely pursuit of the hallowed hollowness of 'excellence'. His photos suggest a sense of isolation, and at the same time offer views on national identity. Interestingly, there's actually been speculative talk of a Google University (and there's already a programme called the Google Teacher Academy). One can only begin to wonder what kind of images that might produce.



Zhao Yi "Untitled"

[Out of Focus - Photography](#) and the [Google Photography Prize](#) are at the Saatchi Gallery until 22nd July 2012.

2) Out of Focus - Photography at the Saatchi Gallery

29 April, 2012 by Charles Darwent

Out of focus. On the face of it, not a promising name for an exhibition of photographs. But happily the show is at the Saatchi Gallery, which means that *Out of Focus* is contemporary, which means that the title is an in-joke.

Once upon a time, photography was an orderly discipline, mechanically driven and, on one level, mechanistic, reliant on the arcana of shutter speeds and focal lengths as painting was on a knowledge of varnishes and glazes. The invention of photography brought about a crisis in 19th-century painting that did away with those traditional limning skills. Now, in the 21st century, the camera is facing a crisis of its own.



Yumiko Utsu's Octopus Portrait

Digital technology and Adobe Photoshop mean that anyone can do pretty much anything, photo-wise. And, having done it, the results can be uploaded on to the internet in seconds, offering instant fame of a kind Louis Daguerre could only have dreamed of. The old sub-divisions of photography – street, studio, fashion, reportage and, latterly, art – are things of an increasingly distant past, as are the assorted skills that went with them. Being in focus is the least of a contemporary photographer's worries. And so, presumably, the title of the Saatchi show.

Take 38 photographers from around the world these days and you will find no focus at all, in the sense of a consensus about what photography is or is there for. In times of revolution, everything's up for grabs. Does that surprise you? Of course not: history has always been that way. Take one photographer from this show – Katy Grannan, say, whose work is on the cover of its catalogue – and much the same applies.

Grannan's photographs are from a series called Boulevard, the roads of their title being in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Each shot is of a single subject: a woman with a black eye, a repellently hairy man, a fat woman baring one tattooed breast, a shirtless biker with a pair of baby rabbits, a man in a floral print frock. A tale of everyday folk, at least if, like Grannan, you grew up in the long shadow of Diane Arbus.

But what *kind* of photographs are these? I only ask because the images themselves press the point so urgently. They are, at their most literal, portraits, even if their collective subtitle is Anonymous. They are also, or at least pretend to be, street photographs, although their subjects have clearly been posed. These days, Grannan's images might even count as fashion: it is not hard to imagine the Boulevard pictures in *Vogue*. The last thing her portraits seem to be about is revelation or engagement. Their subjects exist only as a locus for Grannan to meditate on her own place in the world, to agonise over what kind of photographer she is, or what photography is.

I don't mean that insultingly. At best (or worst?), her images have a deadness that I would imagine is entirely intentional. The Boulevard pictures illustrate all too horribly Warhol's dictum about 15 minutes of fame, now made possible by digital technology. To quote Gilbert and Sullivan – a hateful thing I hope I shall never have to do again – "If everyone's somebody /Then no one's anybody". And at the heart of this existential worry about how and what we see in photographs is photography itself, once so rational, so disinterested, so skilled.

And that, I guess, is the story of this show, if there is one. David Benjamin Sherry might be a landscape photographer *à la* Ansel Adams, except of course, he isn't. Like Grannan, he did a Master of Fine Arts at Yale; like Grannan, he is an art photographer, the subject of his *Hyperborealis* is art photography. Mariah Robertson, also American, makes 100ft-long shots which start on the ceiling, slip down the wall and crumple along the floor: photography as sculpture. And so on. There are individual images in *Out of Focus* that catch the eye as images rather than as manifestos of cultural anxiety – I particularly liked Yumiko Utsu's *Octopus Portrait* – but on the whole this show is rather depressing.

3) Out of Focus: Photography at the Saatchi Gallery

September 2012 by Brian Dillon

Out Of Focus- really? No smart individual at Saatchi thought better of that? After some incredulity, one had to assume that the title of the gallery's first major photography exhibition in almost a decade was truly meant in the manner it seemed. That is to say, it was a clunkily punning admission that among the 38 artists on show, no consensus would emerge about the present state of photography, still less where it might be headed. So far, so conventional: Fealty to the medium has been beside the point for some time, at best one option among others for artists who „work with photography“ (a pretty limp phrase in its own right). Except that somebody at Saatchi also wanted this to be a show „about“ photographs today in the wider culture- there was some press-pack throat-clearing about social media, Flickr, and so on. All told, and in light of the vast ranges of quality therein, „Out of Focus“ starts to read avoidably, you'd think- like a description of the exhibition itself and its ambitions.



Of course, the immediately vexing curatorial problem was how to make a decade's acquisitions look like something more than a shopping list, especially given that neither Charles Saatchi nor his gallery has evinced much interest or expertise in the subject over the years. The extent of the confusion this challenge had wrought was perhaps best expressed by William A. Ewing's catalogue essay, by turns excitable and flat-footed. Ewing works hard to convince that certain uppercase themes dominate the show- Body, Face, Landscape, Mind, Bonds. There is, I suspect, a reason these topics get bigger, vaguer, and less convincing as the list progresses: Ewing is strenuously avoiding the question of whether a guiding sensibility or taste is at work here. The answer is that it certainly seemed to be, though it was hard to know which was more dispiriting: the often glib choice of works, or the less than robust efforts at making them cohere or even registering the interest of their disparity.

Things were initially encouraging, if somewhat grandiosely presented. Katy Grannan's „Boulevard“ series of 2010-11 is comprised of large-scale portraits- 20 of them lined the first room in the show- of anonymous individuals who responded to the artist's advertisement for subjects in Los Angeles and San Francisco. (Ewing makes something, needlessly I think, of the putative paradox of an anonymous portrait.) Under the merciless West Coast sunlight, these figures strike variously aggrandising and fragile attitudes against a series of minimally distinguishable white walls. There's a tremendously hirsute man, some mottled or blurry older women with the air of forgotten reclusive movie stars, a handful of transvestites and other of indeterminate ambitions, gender-wise. The light democratises- flesh sags, cheeks hollow into harsh shadows- but each self-invented character is rendered with discrete and monumental precision.

Grannan's photographs are at once moving, formally impressive, and, in this context somehow not to be trusted. The suspicion is that they are in the Saatchi show for quite shallow reasons, an easy amalgam of scale and prurience. It's not that there is much, or anything, very shocking in „Out of Focus“- more a sense that the informing way of seeing is apt to halt at the level of prompt recognition. Having done the roomful of big grisly portraits, it must be time for the roomful of big eerie landscapes. And here they are seven of them, courtesy of David Benjamin Sherry: mountainous views saturated in color casts of different hues: blood red, acid yellow, sugary violet. Sherry's romanticism feels both knowing and naive: alive enough to everyone from Ansel Adams to Robert Smithson, but oddly onedimensional in its use of these chromatic veils to estrange such imagery. Still, like Grannan's works, they have a monumental presence, and this room felt a deal more coherent than the next, in which Mitch Epstein's perspectives of U.S. oil refineries and Matthew Day Jackson's wry photographs

of clumps of rock and cliff with accidental anthropomorphic profiles were almost drained of visual energy and conceptual intrigue by Luis Gispert's manipulated landscapes glimpsed from inside glitzy tricked-out truck cabs. So much for Landscape, with something of Faces and Bodies, which returned in a selection of Ryan McGinley's nudes, at large in nature and caves.

Though it was not bruted much in the exhibition's attendant texts, a good deal of „Out of Focus“ turned out to be concerned with photographic collage- a genre in which, whatever their provenance or import, things tend to be in focus. There was a room devoted to John Stezaker: 31 works, among them his customary cuts and splices between vintage actors' portraits, and eight from the „Old Masks“ series, in which arches and bridges obscure and complete photographic portraits of old men. So skilful and achieved, and still resonant in Stezaker's work that here is threatened to shame less thoughtful but more expansive artists. Mariah Robertson's fractured diversions of Man Ray and El Lissitzky are possessed of humour and energy- one print unravelled itself along floor, wall, and ceiling and would have been 100 feet long if fully unrolled- that saves them from the impression given by a lot of the work in the show that it simply didn't deserve such scale. (Mat Collishaw's 10-to-16-foot-tall pixel mosaics from media images were an especially inflated and vacuous case in point.)

Time and again, certain conjunctions did the strongest work no favours and exposed the weaker work to comparisons that have to be blamed on the context, both restrictive and vague: photography supposedly tout court. None of this is to say that „Out Of Focus,“ however thinly conceived, was without its straightforwardly impressive discoveries. David Noonan's screen-printed repurposing of black-and-white images of ritual and theatrical or musical performances hardly qualify as photography per se, but in their odd and ecstatic invocation of certain countercultural motifs of half a century ago, they felt among the most current works on view, and perhaps too a surprising acquisition for Saatchi. And for some years Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin have been producing work that, having emerged from a more conventional (though very smartly realised) photographic practice, now risks sometimes astonishing historical and conceptual ruses. Another heartening surprise here was the appearance of eight nudes (exhibited in negative) from the series „ALIAS: Dora Fobert,“ 2011, for which they invented a fictional photographer from the Polish ghetto of World War II and made work in her name.

The photographs were shown at Saatchi alongside untitled circular images from the artists' research into a photographic archive of the Troubles in Belfast: Those pictures are blown up from portions of monochrome prints covered by small red stickers in the archive. It's a minimal and canny interventions that, in the context of „Out Of Focus,“ seemed a rigorous act of concentrated looking rather than east spectacle.